

**Atlanta History Center  
Charles Auchmuty**

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MARY LYNN JOHNSON: I'm Mary Lynn Johnson. We're here today on Wednesday, June the 30 at the Veterans History Project interviews at the Atlanta History Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Auchmutey, would you introduce yourself.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I'm Charles Robert Auchmutey, Jr., and I live at 1090C North James Town Road, Decatur, Georgia 30033.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Mr. Auchmutey, could you tell me what war and branch and service you served in.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I was in World War II and I was in the Navy.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: And what was your rank?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I was a Senior Grade Lieutenant when I got out of the Navy.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: And where did you serve?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: In a lot of places.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: In a lot of places. [LAUGHTER] We'll hear more about that later.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Yes, uh-huh.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I enlisted.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: What was the reasons – what was going through your mind when you made the decision to enlist?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I knew that I had to enlist in something real quick or I was going to be drafted, and so I was in Rome, Georgia and I was kind of leaning toward the Marines for some reason. I don't know why. But the Marine,

recruiting office and the Navy recruiting office were only 20 feet or so apart. And I almost signed with the Marine, guy and I said, well, let me go out and think for a minute or two, and I came back and instead of going back into the Marine, office I walked into the Navy office to find out what they had to offer. And before I got out of the Navy place I had signed up to go into the Navy. And what I signed up for was -- I believe it was V6 or V7, one or the other, courses they offer where you go to Midshipman school for four months and if you pass, you come out and you are an ensign. And so, that's what I signed up for.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: What year was this?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: In 1942, probably around May or early June somewhere in 1942. But I was not called into service until October.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: So you joined so you would have more choice in what you were --

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, the V7 course gave you an opportunity to become a commissioned officer and there were three different schools. One at Columbia University, one at Northwestern University, and one at Notre Dame, and I was chosen to go to the Columbia University School, which I did.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: What do you recall about your early days in the service?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I guess it would start with being at Columbia University. The first thing I recall is—I was an old country boy. I grew up in Bartow County, and when I left Atlanta on a train for New York City I had never been to New York City. And another thing I had never done is—I didn't smoke—but before the train

got out of terminal station in Atlanta I bought a pack of Old Golds and started smoking, which I did until 1962, and then I stopped smoking. But I went to New York City and went to Columbia University, and the first 30 days you were there you were an apprentice seaman. And after 30 days probably ten or fifteen percent of the ones who were in that class didn't make it. And so, they were sort of kicked out. And then you became a midshipman. And for the next 90 days we were midshipman and we became known as the 90 day wonders. We were taking the same course they did in Annapolis. Of course ours were crash courses, you know, to do it in three months. And that's what we did in New York.

I was on the campus at Columbia University, John Jay Hall for about a month and a half and then I went aboard a training ship in the Hudson River a few blocks away. It used to be the old battleship *Illinois* back around the turn of the century. They made it into a training ship. But all midshipmen had to spend 30 days on board that thing to learn how to do different things aboard ship. And then I came back to John Jay Hall, which was one of the big dormitories at Columbia, and then I flunked navigation along with about three to four hundred people. But they didn't kick me out. They tutored us for about a day and a half and they gave us a second chance to take the exam over. This time I passed. So I was commissioned an ensign. And that was my Columbia University experience.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Do you remember what feelings you had as you enlisted and when you first got to New York? What was going through your mind and your heart?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I was lost when I got to New York because

when I got off at the Pennsylvania Station all I knew was I to report at 116<sup>th</sup> Street which is where Columbia University is. I rode my first subway and for a country boy that was quite an experience. But I got off at the right place and once I got there they took care of the rest of it.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Do you remember any of your instructors?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I remember one drill instructor. He was—we always thought maybe he came from the Marines school because he was real tough, but drill instructors are supposed to be tough. And I guess I remember him more than anything else because he chewed us all out from time to time and told how ignorant we were and all that kind of stuff, but he got us in shape.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: How did you cope with instructors like that, that might have been so different as your experiences as a civilian?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, you learn real quick that you're going to respect them. If you don't you get a boot in the britches. No, you have to. That's one of the first things you do learn in service, particularly in that branch or any branch I think in the officers training. You've got to learn to respect your senior officers. You got to salute them, you got to say "sir," you got to do that, and you better not say anything but that.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: After you left Columbia where did you go?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I went, the first place was to Little Creek, Virginia. And Little Creek, Virginia is really part of the suburb of Norfolk and that's where they had an amphibious training base. And we lived in tents. Well, there were a few Quonsets but mostly in tents, and it was in late February when we got down there and it was cold. And we spent, oh, two or three months learning how to operate boats, amphibious boats,

landing people ashore, and things like that. And we went to school. We had classes. That's what it was, just a training school. And it was a long and it was a very cold time. I know the day that we arrived there the first time, there was a group of us that came in by train, and we arrived at that base like about midnight. And they didn't think we were going to be there until the next day around nine, ten o'clock, so we were a little early and they weren't prepared for us that night. And there was a Quonset hut there. There was about 30 of us I guess in that group and they didn't have lights turned on in that place. And here it was still February and it was about 20 degrees and didn't have any heat. All they had was a bunch of beds with mattresses, didn't even have blankets or anything. They threw in some blankets, told us to leave our clothes on and just find something to roll up and try to be as comfortable as we could until daylight. And we were in there kind of fighting each other to get more blankets. [LAUGHTER] So it was quite a start the first night.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: How long did you stay in Little Creek?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: We were there about two, two and a half months, something like that.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: And where did you go after Little Creek?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: We went down to Fort Pierce, Florida for more amphibious training. That was advanced training down there. That's where we actually went out and did maneuvers. We went out, in other words, you thought you were going to Nassau you went so far out, and bring troops back in, and we did night landings and different things like that. And again, we lived in tents. And we learned real quick-like where we were. We were on one of the islands just off, about a mile off shore from Fort

Pierce, and they had the biggest mosquitoes I'd ever seen, but we could handle them. But what we didn't know how to handle was sand flies. They're so tiny. They had mosquito nets, and if you came back at night and had a light on in your tent, the mosquito net would keep the mosquitoes off of you. But those sand flies would come right through there and get in your hair, everything. Oh, it was miserable. It took a couple of nights of that and we realized you don't turn on a light after dark. So we would always go into town and do something in there and then come back in the dark, just grope around and then go to sleep. Then the flies didn't bother you. But don't turn on the light at night because those nets will not keep them out.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: How much free time did you have when you were at Fort Pierce and at Little Creek? And tell me some of things that you did.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, we were free at night. Most nights we got off at, say, five, six o'clock and the food was pretty good that was served out there. And a lot of times we'd go into town and would eat that. They had several pretty good restaurants in town. We'd go to a movie in town. For a town of ten to fifteen thousand people it wasn't bad at all. And one of the experiences that we had is they wanted to teach us how to—and I don't know why we had to do that—learn how to swim. We all were good swimmers. But they'd have us go out to the beach there and would test to see how long we could stay afloat, and the porpoises would come in and play with us. They scared the daylights out of us the first time they came in, because I thought it was a shark. But porpoises, they're friendly; they're playful. They like to come in and play with you.

One day we went out there and the jelly fish had come in. And I'm going to tell you that was a horror because the jelly fish can throw those stingers—they can leave a

whelp right across you, and boy, it hurts bad. And they do that periodically. They'll float in and for two or three days we didn't go by that beach because they were dangerous really. They can kill you if enough of them sting you. So anyway, it was a good experience but we were ready now after we got through at Fort Pierce.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, during your time at Columbia and Little Creek and Fort Pierce were you keeping up with the war?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Oh, yeah.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: And thinking about what role you were going to play in it?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, we knew by being assigned to the amphibious force what our role would be. And it was simply that, that we were the ones that were going to land Marines and soldiers on the enemy's doors. So we knew we would be shot at. But we knew, too, that we wouldn't be going ashore, ours was strictly boat, from ship to shore. You know, take boats, take in men, and we brought in their supplies too. So we knew what we were in for, but we didn't know where or when it was going to happen.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Did they give you any kind of clues or hints as to where you might go?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: No, of course not.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: They might not have even known themselves.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, they probably didn't at that time. They were just training you for—be ready at any place.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: So how long total was this segment of your training; from Columbia through Fort Pierce?



CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Toward, oh, better part of a year, toward September, October the next year I'd guess. I have it all written down right here. Yeah, there it is. I said we went back aboard ship in 19—, around October 1943. I started at Columbia in October 1942, so it was about a year for all of that. Four months I was in midshipman school and the rest of it was training, first at Little Creek and then at Fort Pierce. And, you want me to keep going?

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Uh-huh.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Okay. When we got through at Fort Pierce we were ready and we went right back up to the Norfolk area, but we did not go to a base. We went immediately aboard a ship at Portsmouth, Virginia. All of that is part of the Norfolk portion of, you know, Newport News and all the other—

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Yes, sir.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: —part of that is one area. And we went aboard the USS *Elmore*, which is an APA #42.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: What does that mean?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: It was an Assault Personnel Assault transport. It was a ship. It was 600 feet long, had a crew of around 600 people. And then we went aboard, probably 125, 130 of us were assigned just to the Amphibious Corps. And we did some training there for a month and a half or two months. But this was aboard ship training where we actually had boats aboard the ship that would be used for landing troops on the enemy shore. And we practiced landing again up in Chesapeake Bay and we had real boats with real—we practiced with real live ammunition stuff in one part of the bay up there where nobody was living, of course, that we would go in and simulate

landings. And the Navy would fire over our heads, you know the big guns and what not to get you used to what it was going be like when you actually went ashore. So we did that. And we trained. We trained how to get off a ship onto those boats, and you did it by cargo net. Those cargo nets is what they use to lift, of course, cargo to put into the ship's hold. But they would lower them over the side of the boat and of course they're like a mini step ladder really, and you had to learn how to go up and down that thing from the ship down to the boat. And you had troops aboard, too, that were training with you, because they're the ones that you were going to put ashore. So it was another about two month training period there and then we were ready to go.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: So you had, the ship had a crew of six or seven hundred.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: About six or seven hundred.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: And how many troops were able to be on there?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, okay. When the troops came aboard, and we didn't take them aboard in Norfolk, then we knew where we were going, which ocean we were going to be in. Because we left Norfolk headed to the Pacific Ocean. And so, the first thing we did was, we went to the Panama Canal. We went through the Canal and when we got through to the Pacific side to the town of Balboa or Panama City—actually Panama City is a city in the Republic of Panama and Balboa is the American portion of that—where they had, the Army/Navy was set up. We stopped there for only six or seven hours, but it was long enough that we were able to get what we call either the port or starboard side. You were divided into two sections. Only one side, and I think they flipped a coin. They gave about a four or five hour liberty in the city of Panama City,

enough that a couple of guys came back and had to go to sick bay. They caught a disease. They had found a place to go to.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Yeah.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Sailors do that in a hurry.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Yeah. [LAUGHTER]

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: And anyway, that was all we were at Panama City, and then we went on up the coast to San Diego. And I do remember going up the coast. We were in sight of Mexico two or three times, and as we went through the Gulf of Tehuantepec we had the darnedest storm you'd ever seen at that time. Boy, it rolled that ship like mad. And see, we were not loaded then so we were riding high. And then when we got to San Diego we went through another couple of months of training. And at San Diego we docked, actually tied up alongside a Broadway pier, downtown San Diego. And we would go out two or three times a week to San Clemente Island, out about 25 or 30 miles, out of sight of land, and the reason being is San Clemente had high surf, real high surf, and we wanted to practice at high surf. And we had troops. We would take troops aboard. As a matter of fact, they had 2,000 troops come aboard, that's how many we were going to haul. And we practiced with them for several, you know, three or four weeks to get them used to how to get off the boats, things like that.

And we'd come back into San Diego. As you reached the Point Loma as you enter San Diego harbor, ships were supposed to have a pilot come aboard to take them into the harbor. We didn't have to do that. Our captain, Captain Harris, was one of the best in the world and they knew it, and they would allow him to bring the ship all the way in and dock it himself. He was that good.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Wow.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: And let me tell you, sailors aboard our ship had a lot of pride and they rubbed it in on the other ships. Look what our captain can do. Yours can't do that. Anyway, we went through that period of training there for a while. And then finally, we left San Diego and we were gone 23 months.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Let me back up just a little bit. When you said the troops came on and you trained with them for a couple of months, was there any kind of feeling of competition among the branches of service, or were you—?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I don't think so. I really don't, because they knew what their role was and we knew what ours was. They knew the 600 aboard were there to operate the ship and knew the 100 or so, 150 of us were the ones that were going to operate the boats that put them ashore, and they brought their equipment ashore too. You know, jeeps and, not real heavy stuff. They had their own guns and all that stuff. But no, I don't think there was that. And, of course, they immediately started playing, rolling dice and playing cards and things like that to while away the time. I don't think there was any animosity between one branch and the other.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Could you tell us a little bit about what your specific job or assignment was?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, of course, you know when you board ship, our group, most of the time you're not landing troops, you know. You're going to have periods where you're not going to be involved in actual amphibious landings. And while you're doing that you are assigned duties aboard the ship itself. I was assistant gunnery officer, so I was only ensign, that's as low as you can get to be a commissioned officer.

But I was assistant gunnery officer and I worked with him on the guns. We had guns. We had five inch 38s, four inch Bofors they call it where you'd have four guns that would bang off at the same time, and we had 15 or 20, 20 millimeter guns, anti-aircraft guns. And we taught people how to use them and things like that. I was involved in that in the shipboard work itself, but then when it came time to land the troops I went back to the boats because that was my primary job.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: In between training. what kind of things for fun did you do on the ship?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, we had movies. We'd show movies and that's about it. And we had—a ship that large, you have a lot of things aboard ship. We made ice cream aboard and it was good. And then you had movies, and they had some good movies. And we ate well. I guess maybe that was the one thing that the Army and Marines were a little jealous of Navy people because the Navy people did eat good. They had good food aboard. And, of course, while the troops were aboard they ate well. Of course whenever they went ashore they started eating—

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: K-rations.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: K-rations, anything they could get, you know. So they were envious of us because we ate well even then.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: So you had left San Diego and you were heading into the Pacific. And you said you were gone for 23 months.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: We still didn't know where we were going as we went out. First thing, we stopped in Hawaii at what was called Lahaina Roads, which is down where Maui and Lanai—three or four of the major—not Oahu where Honolulu is

and not the Big Island either. But there's a cluster, Molokai, Maui, and Lanai, and this is a small town there and we stopped to get some supplies and things like that. We were only there about six or eight hours. One of the things I remember as we pulled into that area, we came through a rather—it's a channel about 15 or 20 between those islands. We went by Molokai, and we all knew that Molokai was at one time a leper colony, and of course, you know, we didn't know then, we didn't know whether to take a deep breath whenever we sailed by there or not. But, you know, of course, there was no harm there. So we stopped there briefly to get more supplies, and then we left again and headed towards Asia. And that was the first time, when we got out of Hawaii, for the first time they told us where we were going.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: What did you feel and what was going through your mind when you found out where you were going?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I think we were glad to find out, because you know, hey, we'd been looking forward to this. Not that we were really looking forward to it but we knew it was coming and we knew sooner or later it was going to have to be, because this was the early stages of the war against the Japanese. And so, we went on out and we were in convoy, of course. My ship was one of, oh, I don't know how many but there's a half a dozen of them that were sister ships. They all looked very much alike, and then there were other ships in there. That was a huge armada of ships.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: And you're still on the *Elmore* at this time?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I'm still on the *Elmore*, but we were now out in enemy territory, and so you had to watch out for submarines, so we had an escort of destroyers and destroyer escorts. Our type ships were all in the core of the thing because

we were not designed to fight submarines. Destroyers and destroyer escorts are designed to fight submarines, and so they were on the outer perimeter of the convoy, and they're the ones who have all the equipment and can detect a submarine. And we did have some contacts, but nobody got hit or anything like that. And then we went on to our first job.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: What was your first job?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: First job was Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Now Kwajalein is an atoll. An atoll is a bunch of islands around a lagoon, maybe half a dozen. The lagoon is calm on the inside, on the outside the ocean is pounding away at you. And Kwajalein was the name of the atoll. And the particular island that we were going to land Marines on—we had Marines—was, one of the islands was named Roi-Namur, that was only one of the many islands of that atoll. But the reason we picked that one is the Japanese, we knew there were several thousand of them on that particular atoll, that island. We knew that they had an air strip that needed to be destroyed. And we also knew that they had an ammunition dump where they kept a lot of ammunition. And so, that was our first landing. And we went in, and they knew we were coming, because our big ships, the battleships and cruisers and aircraft carriers, too, planes came in. And for about two or three days we bombed that island and we shot that island with big shells until all the coconut trees—there probably wasn't two dozen left standing on the whole island, just a bunch of stumps. And you would figure that there was nobody living on the island by then because we had killed so many, and then we went ashore. And I was in one of the waves that went ashore. And what we did is, our boat led probably a total of about ten boats loaded with about thirty some odd troops. And we knew exactly where to land it. And it had to be exact to the minute, to the

second, because we were having naval guns fire over. Since you, too, were there you'd get hit. So we started landing troops there. And so, we started landing troops there. We got shot at, and we had a few people who got hit aboard the boat, but for the most part it was not that difficult of a nature landing itself and we put Marines ashore. There was opposition and the Marines kind of over ran it pretty quickly. The biggest thing I can remember of that particular battle was there an ammunition dump just about a hundred feet from the beach, and we knew that there was ammunition in it, but we had a bad report on how much. We thought it was just a small amount of ammunition. And so we had, the Marines had a demolition crew to go in and to blow up that because they wanted to take that whole area and flatten it out and make a big landing strip where our planes could land. And what happened is, they deliberately set that thing off to blow it up, and we experienced what *Time* magazine called the largest man made explosion on earth prior to the A-bomb. I was a hundred yards from that when it went off and it was—well, it's hard to describe what happened. It blew a crater out of that thing, probably a hundred feet across and 30 or 40 feet deep. And the stuff that was in there, the concrete thing, it blew all to pieces, logs, concrete, dirt. It looked like it went a quarter of a mile into the air. It actually blotted out the sun. It was almost dark. And the concussion from that blast—I can remember my ears just bang, there was just no feeling at all. And then that stuff started coming down and it looked like it took three or four minutes for it all to hit the ground. And there were probably twelve or fifteen Marines were killed who were pretty close to the thing. And I remember that I was in what they call an LCM. It takes big tanks in to land, and it's a pretty good size boat, about 50 feet long. I can remember the explosion itself seemed to lift the boat clean out of the water. And then all the debris



started falling. None of us got hit, not by any big stuff. We got dirt all over us. But there was chunks falling around that. It's a wonder some of us weren't killed. But that is the thing I can remember most.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: That's pretty memorable.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: And then a little later on—we were there about three days because we had to unload the ship and bring the stuff in. And before, I'd say within 24 hours after we landed—well, first of all, they allowed us, there were no more Japanese living. The Marines had taken the island, so we went ashore and walked around just a little to see what—see, this is our first experience. And we saw pill boxes, and I counted 111 dead Japanese in one trench. Now, of course they'd been dead for one or two days, and that tropical sun. You can imagine how it was smelling by that time. And the Navy CBs came in, that's a civilian battalion that comes in and makes air fields, and they were good. They came in to bulldoze and what not, and in a matter of hours they probably pushed, I would guess, probably a thousand or more dead Japanese into that crater that was made and covered them over. And in just a few hours time they had that end of that island flattened out, packed down, flattened out, and we had planes landing on it.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: That's amazing.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: It is amazing how fast they could work.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: What kind of feelings did you have when you saw the enemy up close like that?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I didn't, I saw I think one or two live ones. There was a pier that was sticking out into the water about, oh, 75, 100 feet, that I guess

boats docked on it. I guess it was low tide, because the pier was probably six or seven feet up above the water at that time. And we did, there were two Japanese under that pier in the cross pieces under there and they were living, and they had a gun and they took a few shots. Well, one of our boats spotted them immediately and swung a machine gun around and they were gone. They dropped into the water. We got them. Those are the only live Japs that I saw, because you don't take prisoners. At that stage they wouldn't allow you to take a prisoner, I mean the Japanese. They would rather be killed. And we did, we saw examples of the dead ones that we saw where it looked like about a third of them had taken their own lives by hara-kiri where they had taken their sword and ripped their innards out. And they did that. They committed suicide rather than be taken prisoner.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Did you ever have much time to think about what you were doing and how it made you feel or did you just do what you were trained to do?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I don't know. It was such a new experience, you know, where you're wide-eyed looking at all that. And I guess the first wide-eye was whenever that Japanese under the pier took a shot at our boat and the bullet had ricocheted a few feet in front of me. And then I knew, hey, we're in a war; we're getting shot at. And so, I don't know, it was quite an experience.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: And you're what, about 18, 19 years old at this time?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, let's see, that was 1944, no, yeah, 1944. No, I was 22 then.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: You were probably the old guy.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I was an old man by then.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: After you left this first engagement, the first battle, what did you do? Where did you and your ship go?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, our next one a little while later was a landing in Marshall Island, Eniwetok. Kwajalein was one that we landed in, and Eniwetok was another one. Eniwetok was not that difficult of a landing. We made it, and there was very little opposition, but we did make that landing. And then we left the area right then and had a little time off and went to the Illellice Islands to an atoll. The name of the atoll was Funifuti atoll. And all we were doing there was hauling in troops from one place to another. So we did that in between landings. And then after Funifuti we went to the most civilized island we ever saw in the Pacific and that was New Caledonia. That was all the way further on south. And by the way, going to the Illellice Islands for the first time we crossed the equator. The Navy has an initiation. When you cross the equator it can be a real, well, it's a fun time but it can be pretty rough. But since it was wartime we got by with just the minimum, you know. But we become a pollywog or whatever it is they call it after you cross the equator.

So we went on down to New Caledonia, and again we were ferrying troops and supplies and we were there about three days. And New Caledonia belonged to the French, and there was a town on New Caledonia, the capital of Noumea, a town of about 25 or 35 thousand people. It's the closest thing to civilization we saw in nearly two years. And we were there, and there again they had what was called the Pink House. And there again the sailors were lined up to go to the Pink House.

And we did two, we were hauling a lot of supplies using our boats, and we had, incidentally, four people were assigned to each boat. A guy called the Coxsain so he did

that, and had an engineer who took care of the motor, two other guys that would just handle the seamen duties on board the boat, and they took care of those boats whenever they were aboard ship. Each one was assigned, four of them were assigned one boat. Now, when they were out the ferrying troops around to bases and other ships and things like that, they were hauling a lot of food supplies. Well, they would break open K-rations and get the cheese out. Because the cheese was good, the rest of it wasn't any good. We'd throw the rest of it away. And they would get gallon cans of canned peaches, canned pears, because that was good, and they'd stash that away in their own boat so they could have goodies to eat on all the time.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: And after New Caledonia what was your next stop?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, the next stop is, we went to Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands. And the Solomon Islands consists of several islands, Guadalcanal, where the initial battle a year earlier was, the first time we put troops ashore to fight Japanese. And we had already 95 percent secured that island. It's a big island, about a hundred miles long, 30 miles across. And we had air field already established there, and we were there, and we started doing a little more training, landing training, things like that. We were also, in that area was Savo Island. Savo Island would become the centerpiece later for some of the great naval battles of the war where so many ships were sunk. One of them that was sunk there was USS *Atlanta*, a cruiser.

And then across also from Guadalcanal, I can remember all of these names, Tulagi, Tanambogo, and Gavutu, and Florida Islands, and these were all islands that had been fought for and we had already taken them and we had troops on them, but we were ferrying stuff around on that. And I do remember that on Gavutu and Tanambogo it

rained not once a day but at least three or four times a day, and I mean heavy downpours. And before the next rain came, that same place where it had rained earlier was already dusty. I mean, that tropical sun just slurped that water right up. And we had vehicles, you know, running over it all the time, and it made it from a mud hole to a dust pile every three or four hours.

And then on Florida Island, it was a beautiful island. It had a lot of coconut trees on it, and they had built an officers club and the name of it was Iron Bottom Bay Officers Club. It was named Iron Bottom Bay because of all the ships that were sunk just three or four miles out there from you. And it was a nice officers club and we went up there several times, and I still have a membership card to the Iron Bottom Bay Club. I don't imagine it's any good now but it was then. And that was on Florida Island.

And then we spent, oh, two or three months just ferrying troops around to those different islands in the Solomon Islands group. And we went as far on up as the, one of the islands north of the Guadalcanal was Bougainville and the Russell Islands. The Russell Islands had coconut plantations on them, and it was a beautiful sight because you saw the trees, I mean it looked like rows in a field, you know, coconuts. And they grew them, American interests there, and they would grow those and take the coconuts and make copra using that fiber out of the coconuts. We learned—and listen, I love a good, a green coconut is delicious. Some of those guys would show you, the natives would show you how you can take a green one before it gets, that shell gets too hard, take a machete. I wouldn't try it, but you can take it and whack the top off and you can turn it up and drink it. Delicious. Real good.

So we went to Bougainville. Then we went on up to the Admiralty Islands and

just a little above that, and then to New Britain, which is also another one of those big islands. And you're almost in New Guinea now, all those island where they're stretched out through there. We didn't make any actual combat landing, but we did land some troops on one of them.

So, then the big time. Do you want me to keep going?

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Yes, sir. You know, we're almost to the end of this tape. Let me go ahead and switch sides of the tape now, so we won't interrupt the big one.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: All right.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Okay?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Okay.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: We've got about 15 minutes left.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Okay. We're good to go. You were going to talk about your next, the big engagement.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Okay. Just before the big engagement while we were still shuttling servicemen around, we took troops from the Guadalcanal area and we thought we were going to get to go to Sydney, Australia. And the idea was if there were troops that were tired, been fighting, and they needed a couple weeks of rest. And so, we were half way between Guadalcanal and Sydney, and of course the sailors aboard were looking forward to liberty at Sydney. And all of the sudden all the ships in that convoy did a 180 degree turn, which means we were headed back the way we came from. What in the world is going on? We didn't go to Sydney. They had gotten word that a few Japanese on Guadalcanal had broken out and offering a little resistance and they needed

some help. And these poor people had to go back and fight some more. So we did not get to go to Sydney.

Then the next thing was going to Guam. Now the battle at Guam, that's what this is right here, was July 21, 1944. Two of us aboard our ship were assigned temporarily to an LST. He was on one LST, I was on another. Because a LST is a ship that's 328 feet long, it's a flat bottom thing, it's a big ship, and it's designed—inside it looks like a parking lot where you've got, I've forgotten how many tanks they have in there but that's the idea, is landing the ship's tanks. It's loaded with tanks. And they needed a Navy person to lead those tanks in, and these were amphibious tanks. They could go in the water or they could go on land. And so, we were assigned temporary duty, and I was in charge in one LST to take all the tanks in there and land them on Guam. And my friend there, Warren, was on another LST. And so, we did, we took them ashore at Guam. There were other landings of course, other landing boats, but we were the ones that brought the tanks in. And we went in there, and we were about three days finishing that job, getting all the tanks in and other equipment, and there was some opposition. We got shot at, mortar fire, and some of our boats got hit. and we had some head casualties, but then we went back aboard ship after that landing. And not long after that I got awarded this commendation. We were the first officers aboard our ship who received commendations. And there it is right there. And that's me and my write-up back home—

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Tell us about that commendation.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I didn't know I was going to get it. I don't know what I did. We got shot at, but we got the tanks ashore. We got a good report from whoever the top boss was, and he sent it in. And Admiral Nimitz presented this same—

now, Admiral Nimitz wasn't there in person, but he presented it to me, and it made you feel real good. You were outstanding—of course that made big news back home, because they had my picture in the paper and quoted the [commendation]. And, of course, I have a thing at home, a plaque where that's framed, and I'm proud of it. But that was the Guam adventure.

And after Guam, some time a little later it was Saipan. Guam and Saipan and Tinian are three big islands that are in the Mariannas group. And you're getting closer to Japan as you move on toward Saipan and Tinian. Of course, I think it's Saipan later on, that's where your B29s are going to leave to go to Japan. I did not go ashore in Saipan, but I'm still on an LST and we did, we were more of a backup at that time. But the troops did go on and it was a battle there, and we took Saipan. And my ship was involved in that.

Then we came back and fiddled around the Guadalcanal area again. We were in and out of the Guadalcanal area for over a period of five or six months. We were in and out three or four times. And then we finally left Guadalcanal, and we went to New Guinea, Hollandia, New Guinea. Now, New Guinea, if you look at it on the map it looks like a turkey. I mean, really, it looks like an old droopy turkey. It's got the head and the long tail to it, and Hollandia is on the north shore of that. And it's just a little ol' small community there, but it's about as big as you find in New Guinea. And it belonged to the Dutch. You had British in New Guinea and you had Dutch in New Guinea. And this is Dutch New Guinea, and we went there and did a little practice landing.

But what I really remember there is there was a WAC Camp, Women Army Corps. Probably, I don't know how many, maybe 300 or so American WACs were living



in tents. Well, we made arrangement with whoever is in charge of the WAC camp that they would let maybe 10 or 12 of their ladies come and have a beach party with us. We would have the beer, and those who didn't drink beer, Cokes, and sandwiches and hot dogs and we'd go swimming and all that kind of stuff. See, we hadn't seen a white woman but one time. The ones that we saw in New Mia, New Caledonia, were French white girls, but that's all. Everything was black out there.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: So there was ten or twelve women and how many men?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I don't know how many of them, 25 or 30.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Oh, I was thinking a hundred.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I have a feeling it would have been just that, strictly a beach party, but it would have been fun. And so, I was nominated along with another guy named Harry Badalin [PHONETIC] to go to the camp and make the arrangements. So we went over there one day at lunch time and we went into the camp. And see, they had their lunch and all the girls were sprawled out in there on their cots, you know, in their scanties with the flaps up to get a little fresh air through there, and the headquarters is right in the middle of the camp. We walked in, we got whistled at. We made the arrangements. We were going to have a party like the next day, day after tomorrow, and guess what? We left before we had the party.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: The war called.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: We had to leave before we had the party. That was the New Guinea experience.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, we've got about five minutes left.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I'll tell you about Peleliu, Peleliu Island. That's the next major battle and the roughest battle I was ever in. Peleliu is one of the islands on that atoll, and this was sort of a semi-mountain. I mean, you know, it had hills two or three hundred feet high, and there are mostly coral caves and things like that. And for five days we ferried troops in there and landed them, and the only way you could get in there, there was reef out there and at low tide you couldn't get through. At high tide there was a channel deep enough that the boats would go through zig-zagging. Once you got inside that channel you could spread out and get your supplies and men ashore. And for five days we did that and, boy, did we get shot at. We had a lot of casualties. You did it one at a time. You'd go through and zig-zag because the Japanese were still in those caves up there, and they had mortars, and they were lobbing mortars down there and boy, they would pop. And those things look like water jumping up, but every time one of them popped it would, if it hit you it would tear you all to pieces, of course. That was a rough one for five days.

Now a little episode that happened just prior to that. We were aboard ship and when the troops were not aboard ship, every night we would have, two officers would go down where the troops would normally be to just inspect. Two of us went down one night and we went and looked into a head, which is a bathroom, and we found a homosexual act in progress. We didn't know what to do. And so we didn't report it that night. The next morning about ten o'clock the captain called me and the other officer up there, said, did you find so and so last night. I said yes. Why in the \_\_\_ didn't you come up and tell me? I'll not have that on this ship. So, anyway, we confirmed it, and he called the officer up and before the day was over that officer was on his way back to the United States. He

kicked him off the ship in a hurry.

Well, during this battle at Peleliu that was so bloody, after five days we hadn't shaved, hadn't bathed, we were whipped. One of my friends out in California, we were sitting around there and we were talking about the guy that went back. He said, "You know something," he said, "that SOB is back there in school at Harvard, and here we are having our asses shot at." He says, "There ain't no justice."

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: No justice.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: And that is the truth. And that's the Peleliu story.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, in the last minute or so that we have just give us some of your reflections or closing comments that you'd like to share about your overall experience or about, you know, what was going on back home with your family, or just anything you want to say.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, of course, the only contact I had, we got mail, you know. And sometimes we went three or four weeks without receiving mail. And we looked forward to that. And we used this, what did they call it? V-mail, I think, which was sort of a fast type mail thing, and I was on a censoring board, by the way. Every letter that left the ship had to be censored. In other words, you had to open it and read it to be sure they weren't acknowledging where we were going to next. And we had one ol' boy, he was from South Carolina, an ol' country boy, and when we had troops aboard he looked like a "Little Abner" type. He'd walk up, see they were rolling the dice; playing poker, things like that, and he'd come and say, "What are y'all doing?" And they'd invite him in. They didn't know it, but he was great. He'd clean them out. There's no telling how many one hundred dollar money orders I sent home that he had gotten off troops

playing poker and rolling dice. Anyway, that was one of the ways, you know, there's a lot of boredom.

When troops are aboard they had nothing else to do, so they're going to play cards and do things like that. I'll tell you one thing, Chaplains are busy. We had three chaplains. We had a Protestant, we had a Catholic, and we had a Rabbi. Guys didn't go to church aboard ship usually until the day before the landings, and then you couldn't pack them in the room, everybody. They were ready to go in there and make it right with their Lord before they made the landing. Everybody, like somebody wrote that book, that there are no atheists in foxholes. They knew they were going to be shot at the next day, so they were ready to go and be prayed for.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, Mr. Auchmutey, thank you so much for your time. You have a great story to tell.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Is that all of it?

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, we've got eight seconds.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: My goodness, I didn't get to tell you the best stories.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, you have to come back. But the tape is about to run out.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Okay.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: There it goes. I'm so sorry that you didn't get to say everything.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well . . . .

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: We can make a copy of that and put it with your

papers if you'd like.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: If you want to copy that you can.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Yes.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Because the next thing really and truly after Peleliu we went to the Philippines and my boat was the third one that landed next to where MacArthur made his landing.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Oh.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: And I was one of the witness to say that MacArthur backed out, made the guy back out into water, deep, so that he could have a picture of him made wading ashore. That did happen. And it was on, not that landing, not that trip in, but two or three trips later that this happened. That is a piece of shrapnel that hit my boat, killed two people, killed a troop, one sailor.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: May I open it?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Sure. And killed the guy about as far as me to you standing in front of me and that hit my kapok life jacket, which has a collar, hit me in the collar and knocked me down.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Wow.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: And if I hadn't had kapok life jacket on it would have ripped my throat out. So that's my souvenir.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Wow. I've never seen shrapnel before. I've always wondered when I read what it's—

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: That's part of a mortar. It bursts into thousands of pieces. Then we made two other landings in the Philippines and then we landed at

Okinawa. That's where all the kamikazes were. That was a hellish landing.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: You followed pretty much the same route my grandfather followed. He was at Guadal and Guam and Okinawa.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I know, over there about a year and a half ago, the night that I talked to about a hundred people at the church, after I got through—and this is the outline that I made for over there. And I got through there was about, oh, I guess at least a half a dozen guys came up and said, you know I was at so and so. Found out some of us were probably in the same convoy, you know.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Wow. Well, let me go make a copy of that if you don't mind.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Sure. Copy that.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Is there anything else in your box that you'd like to share, we made a copy of this already.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Oh, did you? Okay.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Yes, sir. Is there anything else you'd like to share with the History Center that we could make copies of?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I don't know. I have all kinds of tales here.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, we'll copy that too if you want to share it.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Yes. This right here really is a sort of tale about the whole thing that I just talked to you about. And a friend of mine—I got this about three or four years ago from him. He's trying to write a book on our ship. He asked me to furnish him with whatever I could think of.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: We left off at Peleliu and on our way to the

Philippines.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: The Philippines of course, as everyone knows, when Gen. MacArthur left the Philippines from Bataan and Corregidor he made a promise that he'd be back. It took a while but he did come back. And I was in the landing at Leyte, which was the first landing going back to the Philippines. And Gen. MacArthur was in that landing. And that is the landing where a picture was made of him wading ashore. And, of course, that was the picture that went around the world. But I also know that the guy that was also, the Coxswain of the boat that was landing him put the ramp down on dry land and he had him retract the boat out about 25 or 30 feet in water that was knee deep so he could be seen wading ashore, not just stepping ashore. I was three boats from him. I saw that happen. And I have found two other people that I know now who were in that and saw that, too. One of them even said that he was stationed at Borneo, one of the big islands before the Philippines, and two or three days before that he said they stopped there, and said General MacArthur rehearsed that landing at Borneo, the landing, so he could wade in. But so be it. We landed at Leyte and it was not that difficult of a landing really. And then we had two other landings in the Philippines. One at Mendoro, which is up from Manila and Luzon, and that was the easiest landing we had. The only casualty we had was one soldier got gored by a water buffalo. There were no Japs there. We fooled them on the landing.

And then we landed at Lingayen Gulf on north of there a pretty good ways. That one was a little bit of a rough landing and there was a good bit of in fighting after they got them ashore. But there were three different landings there and the thing I can remember most about the Philippine landing at Lingayen Gulf is we were in a typhoon

that was, I guess, the worse weather I was ever in my life. And we rode out that typhoon. It was in the South China Sea and to ride out a typhoon of that magnitude and in it there was a lot of ships. There was actually two or three of our ships capsized. Now I'm talking about some of the smaller ones. Because in a typhoon, if I remember correctly, for 24 hours we did not go anywhere. Now the propellers were going full steam but we weren't getting anywhere and that's the only way you can ride it out. You have to face it. Face it and in one minute your propellers will give you that and they'll shove you forward a hundred or two yards, and then the ship will go down that way and your propellers are in the air and they're not doing anything. And then the force of the wind will shove you back. So all you're doing is riding it out. If you turn broad side to it it will capsize you. If you turn your rear end to it, so to speak, it will probably put you head first out. So riding out that way is the only way we could do that. And we rode that thing out.

And along about that time during the Philippine landings were the great naval battles of the Philippines. Well, we were not in a fighting ship, you know, we didn't have guns and things to fight naval battles. And so, they got our ships out and they made us go back to Peleliu not all that far away, 500 miles maybe, to Peleliu where we'd only been there just a few months earlier at Bloody Nose Ridge but now it was peaceful. We went right back into that lagoon and waited for two or three days until those great naval battles had ended over there, because we didn't need to be around there. There was a lot of battleships and carriers, great battles that went on.

Then after that ended, that also was about the time that Iwo Jima came along. Now, we did not go to Iwo Jima because we were being prepared to go to Okinawa. And Iwo Jima, you know what kind of landing that was. It was rough landing, a lot of—that's



the one that had the flag, planting of the flag there on that Mount Suribachi. Well, we were getting ready for Okinawa. And so we went to Okinawa. and Okinawa is getting much closer to Japan now. I believe that's in the Ryukyus Islands, big island. And we landed there on April 1, 1945, which was April fool's day, and it was a huge fleet of ships that landed, because we knew there'd be a lot of land fighting, because there were a lot of, big island, there were a lot of Japanese troops on the island. And I don't know, somehow or another we fooled them. They thought we were going to land on one side of the island, we sent enough ships on that side and started shooting, that it drew the Japanese troops to that side of the island. And then we, the bulk of the fleet went around the other side and we made a landing that was largely unopposed, the landing itself, before they realized that they'd been tricked. Of course, once they go ashore they were there for months, you know, fighting them. It was a bloody battle, the whole island was.

But what was bloody for us in the Navy—and we were there for five or six days on that side and it's this huge fleet of ships. That's when the Japanese came at us with their kamikaze attacks. And it was unbelievable. We'd experienced the kamikazes in the Philippines but they were rather isolated. But here, I think Japan threw everything in the world they had at us. Planes were in the air. They had ships, boats with bombs on them that would explode. They even had swimmers. On one or two occasions a swimmer came in with an explosive attached to him and he'd blow himself up and the ship. So for five days it was unbelievable. We saw a number of ships hit. We saw one of the battleships hit. We saw a sister ship hit the USS *DuPage*, which was a sister ship to us. And I thought that kamikaze had us because we were at general quarters, meaning we were at battle stations, and there were kamikaze planes in the air. And this one had been hit, but I

can see it now, off to our starboard he was hit and he was flaming, he was burning. But he was intent on hitting a ship as he came down. And as he came over I thought he was headed for us, our starboard side, but he cleared our mess right in front of about 40 feet around in front of me, by I'd say no more than three or four feet. So he went over us into USS *DuPage*, sister ship, was over, you know, two or three hundred yards on the other side of us, and he slammed right into that ship, broadside, killed about 30 people aboard that ship. It didn't sink it but it knocked a gaping hole in it and killed a whole lot of people. Also hit one of the battleships. I'm not sure; I think it was in *Nevada*. I'm not positive. But there were many ships hit. There was a lot of damage. That was a rough, rough, rough time. And the kamikaze's— we left.

We got orders in that our job was finished and for us to head back home, and so some of the ships took off from there. The kamikaze thing went on for another few days before they got it under control and then we left and we came on back and we stopped in the Hawaiian Islands. We went to Pearl Harbor, Honolulu. We were there two or three days and that really is the first time we had seen real civilization in nearly two years. And when we got to Honolulu the Royal Hawaiian and the Mowona Hotel were the two big ones on Waikiki Beach. Of course, now they got a lot of high rise ones there. And in the lobby of the Royal Hawaiian they had two huge vats of fresh milk, and I'd say nine out of ten sailors drank milk like mad rather than beer. They were milk starved. They hadn't had any fresh milk in two years. They knew that, too, and they had it ready for them.

And then we came on back home and we came to Seattle, Washington, and then the next day they sent us up to Everett about 20 miles north of Seattle, a town about

thirty, forty thousand people, and my ship went into dry dock for repairs. Well, we had leave, and so we all flew home. Most of us flew. And we went home and I came back to Seattle from the leave, and when I got back, there were three of us, had orders to leave the ship. And funny thing about it, the orders read "report to the nearest naval district for new assignment." And what we did, we caught a train to San Francisco. Of course, there was a naval base, there was a naval district in Seattle, but we went to San Francisco.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: It wasn't quite the nearest. [LAUGHTER]

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I have a friend that lives in San Francisco. And we got to San Francisco, we reported in. The first thing they said, "I bet you guys'd like to have some leave, wouldn't you?" And we said "sure." They gave me two more weeks of leave. They didn't know I just came back from leave. So I went home again. And when I came back, well, I had orders there to report to Charleston,, South Carolina, at the end of the leave. I did. And at Charleston they said report to San Francisco.

[LAUGHTER] So I caught a train all the way across country to San Francisco, and I spent several weeks going to school at Treasure Island, San Francisco. Best food I ever had in my life. We had German prisoners of war on Treasure Island and they were cooks. Oh, they made good food. And I think they thought my name was German, but it's not; it's Scottish. But they fed me the best apple pie and stuff like that, and they talked—you know, they spoke English. Several of them said they wanted to come back and live in America. They were nice guys. They were probably glad the war was over. And then I reported onto another doggone ship. And I had to go to Hawaii and wait for five or six weeks. It was a good duty. I had a friend out there that had a jeep from the motor pool. We went all over Oahu. We had more fun than a barrel of monkeys.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: We're fine. I was just making sure I was still –

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Anyway, after a while all we would do is report every morning and say, "Is my ship in yet?" "No, sir." "Check me off." We'd go to Waikiki Beach in that jeep and we just had more fun, you know, for five weeks. But I was running out of money, and your pay record was frozen because you weren't assigned anything. And finally they allowed me to go down to Admiral Nimitz' headquarters to see where my ship really was. And it was at Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands. They said it's not even coming to Hawaii. The next morning they had me on a plane, flew me back out to Johnson Island and so on, and I came out, back to Eniwetok where I had been on a landing some day, a time[?] area, reported aboard my ship there, and I was navigator.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Was this the *Hidalgo*?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: USS *Hidalgo*, yeah. And we were there just a few days and then we went to Guam, another return trip to Guam. Guam now, some months after, had been made over. It's real nice, you know. It didn't look like it was when I got the medal there that day. And we went to Guam and then from Guam we went to Shanghai, China. And we were in Shanghai for 23 days. Now, the war had ended now. The war had ended, we were in Shanghai and that probably was the greatest experience I've ever had in my life, 23 days in that huge place.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, tell me about the day the war ended and what you were doing that day.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I was in San Francisco before I went out for the new boat, to get the new ship, and that was V-J Day, and for three days and nights the people—and you know, there were Army, Navy, Marines all over the country out there,

they tore that place all to pieces. By that I mean celebrating. They broke into liquor stores. They had cable cars in San Francisco, which was one of the novel things there, and you know they'd come down Mason Street and get down to Market Street and the cable car driver would get off and he'd turn it around, spin it around on a turntable and head it back up the hill. They had a bunch of troops down there, or sailors, they were spinning the thing like a top. They did everything. You never heard of such things. And they finally issued an order that all service people be off the streets. Well, I was living in the Witcomb Hotel right there on Market Street, so I was allowed out of the hotel, but I had to get right back in it, and then they sent me out to Treasure Island. That's where I did the going to school out there for a while. And then I got the assignment to the other ship and went back out. But V-J Day was quite an experience. There was a lot of damage and it was all done celebrating. But there was a lot of damage done. The first day they left the liquor stores open and that was a mistake. The next two days they closed them but they started breaking in them anyway. Anything they could do to get the booze. So it was quite a thing.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Okay, well, let's move back to Shanghai.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Shanghai was quite an experience. There I rode in rickshaws with the Chinese pulling the thing, you know. And I remember one night Dave Mullitack [PHONETIC] and I, we were going out to the race track, which was about six miles from where we were docked. Right at the end of Nanking Road, which is a main drag of Shanghai. And he got one and I got another one. And we went out there and there was a club out there and we thought we were going to get a good steak, but it wasn't very good. But we did, we rode that rickshaw out there. And the rate of exchange money then

was about 1200 Chinese dollar to one American dollar. I mean, it was—you could go in and tell people that you spent so many thousand dollars for a meal—you're talking about Chinese money, and this guy, the poor guy that was hauling us out there, pulling that rickshaw, what he wanted, the fair was about 15 cents. And that other guy argued with him about it. He didn't want to pay him that fare. But anyway, Shanghai was quite an experience. We enjoyed that.

And then after Shanghai we left and headed back to the United States and we were—the first two or three days out we had to be—the war was over but there were mines floating around. You had to watch for them. And we'd spot one and then we'd shoot and it exploded, to keep from running into it. Well, after a couple of days we cleared that area and we were on our own. It took us 46 days. We just had more fun. We just took it easy. I read a book a day. The Navy said get rid of 90 percent of all your ammunition. We made a target and would tow it every afternoon behind the ship and go out and have target practice and enjoyed ourselves.

And in the meantime, they made me the Executive Officer of the ship, number two in command, and then we got to the Panama Canal, we went through the Canal and got on the Atlantic side and we were there a day or two. We were there during Mardi Gras season. And, boy, you haven't seen a Marti Gras season until you see how they do it down there. It was quite festive. And that's when we got on the ship. The two sister ships had orders to go to Norfolk and we were going to be commissioned there. And in Norfolk—that's when I did the Gulf Stream thing. We headed out just before dark and after dark—let's see, I was a navigator. I went up and said, hey, we can pick up that Gulf Stream—if you go on a straight course, tip of Cuba you're going to pick it up but it will

be about one o'clock in the morning. I said, we can change courses here and we can get into that thing by nine o'clock at night and it will add six knots speed to the ship. And we did that and got in it, and so the next morning sure enough here we were right off—beautiful. You weren't about eight or ten miles off shore, Miami Beach. And the Gulf Stream flows just like a river and we looked around and looked ahead. We didn't see the other ship so we looked behind us. He was about a mile behind us. We had passed him. And we stayed ahead of him because we stayed in the Gulf Stream almost to Norfolk. So we got there first and we won the steak dinner. That's what we had bet each other. We got there first.

And I don't know why they didn't tell me to get out of the Navy in Norfolk. They told me to report to the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida, so I got a train back to Jacksonville, went down there and went to the Naval Air Station. And about a day later I went in there and I was discharged from the Navy. And my wife-to-be was teaching school at Panama City, Florida, and I caught a bus from Jacksonville to Panama City and got over there. We made our plans for our wedding, which would have been another few weeks after that. And that is really the end of the story, I guess. Do you got any more questions?

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, I'd like you to share your shrapnel and your medals.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Oh, yeah.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Let me sort of focus the camera on that and you tell the story about what happened with your shrapnel there.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: This happened—this is a shrapnel right here. This

happened in the Philippines. Not on the landing, not at the landing that General MacArthur made. We made several other landings that same day and this was maybe a couple of landings after that. We went ashore and there was some resistance and there was some mortar fire, and my boat going in that time, the mortar hit my boat. And I had about 30 some odd soldiers in it, and it killed one soldier in the boat and the Coxswain. The guy who drives my boat was standing right in front me and the mortar tore him—oh, it just tore him all to pieces, killed him, and this piece of shrapnel hit me in my kapok life jacket, in the collar of it. If I hadn't had the collar on I'm sure it would have ripped me in the throat. But it hit that and it admitted itself in that kapok, and the force of this little thing here knocked me down. And that's how close that came. I don't know whether I had other bullets closer. I don't know. But this one would have hit me if it hadn't been for that life jacket. And so, that's the story of that thing.

And these ribbons, of course. Everybody got ribbons. You had an American ribbon, you had a Pacific, you had a Philippine, you had an Okinawa ribbon, and this particular one right here was the commendation that I received for Guam, right here. And all these others were—each star represents a battle. One big one here represents—when you get a big one that stood for five battles. So I don't know whether they all add up to nine battles or not—

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: That's how many battles you had total?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: That's how many—I had a total of nine battles in all of them, all of them in the Pacific.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, in the last couple of minutes do you have any closing comments you want to make about your overall experience, or just any parting



thoughts you want to share with us?

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I'll just say had I stayed in the Navy—see, I was a Senior Grade Lieutenant. I would have been promoted to Lieutenant Commander in two weeks, but I didn't stay in. And for a while there I wondered whether I'd made the right thing because I had done well, I think, in the Navy, and peacetime Navy is great. And, of course, the battles were over then. The only thing is, you're not at home, and I guess I wanted to be back here and so I chose to get out of the Navy. But it was quite an experience and that's been a long time ago.

Now I've remained in contact with some of the guys that I knew. One fairly recently, the last two or three years, lives—he was from San Francisco. It was where his mother and father lived and he was one of the ones that came down with me from Seattle when we were transferred. And I learned later when he was not home and I was there at Treasure Island, I ate with them several times and we corresponded for years and years. As a matter of fact, his daddy offered me a good job out there. He was a maritime time insurance guy. And I almost took it, but I didn't. But there's a lot of wonderful experiences in the Navy. And I'm glad I had them and I guess I'm glad I survived, but a lot of us didn't.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Well, thank you so much for sharing your story with us and bringing your medals and your shrapnel. We really appreciate what you've done for us.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: Well, I've enjoyed it.

MARY LYNN JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Auchmutey.

CHARLES AUCHMUTEY: I've enjoyed it.

**Charles Auchmutey**

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[END INTERVIEW]

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