

Transcription: Paul Dunn

Today is Wednesday, August 28, 2013. My name is James Crabtree and today I'll be interviewing Mr. Paul Dunn. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Dunn is at his residence in San Antonio. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for our program.

Paul Dunn: I think the best way to start is to go back to Pearl Harbor for me.

All right sir, sure, usually the first question I always like to ask though is if you'd just tell us briefly a little bit about your childhood and your life before you went into the military.

Paul Dunn: Well that's a good place because I graduated from high school in Kingston, New York, in June 1941. That fall I entered college at the state teacher's college in Oswego up on Lake Ontario, and I was in my first semester when December 7th rolled around.

Do you remember that day well, sir?

Paul Dunn: Very well. There were five of us freshmen living in a house and our landlord came in about 11 o'clock and it was a very cold day out there, and the first thing he did was look at the heater. He had a heavy jacket on, and he said I think it could use less gas, saving money of course, but then he followed it up with have you heard the radio? We said no. And he announced that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. That was the first we had heard. Of course we acted like just about everybody else. This must be a dream or something. This can't be real. It was just really hard to figure out what had happened and what effect it would have on us.

Had you ever heard of Pearl Harbor before that?

Paul Dunn: I may have. But well yeah, in a way because we were following the process of FDR, trying to expand the Navy, which included Pearl Harbor, so we did know something about it, but as to the significance of what another country has done to us was away from our minds for a while, but it didn't take long. We did go home. It was just before Christmas, and we did go home for Christmas, and when we came back to school, things had changed. Already a couple of people who were in the Reserve had signed in again. Two of them I know were in the Air Force of the Army Air Corps, two fraternity brothers, and then the rest of us began to think what about us? And one person in particular, Jack Murphy, was a friend of mine, classmate, we began to think, you know, we better do something fast or else we're going to wind up in a foxhole someplace. We had our mind set on the Navy. But by the time we got around to going to enlist, the enlistments had been closed, which didn't make sense to us then, but later we found out that the Navy was not prepared, the military was not prepared for a war, and so they had to construct boot camps, training camps, things like that, so there was no way that we were going to get in the Navy at that time. The following fall we did go back to our sophomore year, but I had talked to my dad who had a friend on the Kingston High draft board, and he talked to the chairman of the draft board and found out that there would be a way for me to get into the Navy. It was risky, but he said it was worthwhile. What happened was at that Christmas on '42, I got a screening call to come in and take a physical, and there I was, 18. Most of the people in were people being drafted at 35, 40 years old. Well there were a couple of us from high school that took the

screening board, and then we got another call for February 16th to show up in Albany, New York, where we would get our complete physical. Well we went up there, in fact we knew there would be a quota, and we were very upset when the train leaving Kingston was delayed by somebody doing something. Hurry up and wait type of thing. Well we got into the headquarters. I think it was an armory, and we began our all day physical. By I think it was about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, we heard that the quota for Navy that day was going to be 20, and we'd been there most of the morning wondering what time are we gonna get through here. About 4 o'clock, we finally signed the final papers and they told us, a friend of mine from high school, we were number 18 and 19, so we wound up in the Navy and they swore us in, and told us to reach Samson boot camp naval station the following week on February 23rd.

Where was that located?

Paul Dunn: It's in central New York near the Finger Lakes, if you're familiar with those.

I am.

Paul Dunn: OK, this was right on Seneca Lake, right dead center in the heart of the state. Actually it happened to be, I didn't know at the time, it was being constructed – my dad's birth place was about 10 miles from there, and in fact there was and still is an insane asylum that my mother was a nurse, and that's where my father met my mother, just a few miles from our boot camp.

Now when you were in college during the war, was there any risk that you would be drafted or was there a student deferment at that time? Could you have been drafted?

Paul Dunn: No, not at that age because they were drafting the upper 35's, 30-35 people at that time, and they wouldn't have reached us at all.

What was it that attracted you so much to the Navy?

Paul Dunn: I really don't know. I've thought about that a number of times. One thing, one contributor was when I moved to Kingston in my senior year and I had been in the Boy Scouts where I lived before, but one of the people I met in school was a member of the Sea Scouts and he invited me to one of their meetings which I went. I was very pleased to see it. And in fact the following week I signed up and I remained active in the Sea Scouts for my whole senior year. We had a building down on the Hudson River which had make-ups, mock-ups. We had a helm with a compass and an artificial wheel, various parts from a ship, where we could talk about the activities that take place on different parts of the ship. We had a row boat. Actually we were waiting when I finally had to leave, we were waiting for a launch that had been given to us by the Navy in Maine, and we had a couple of our parents were going to go up there with some real sailors, and bring that launch back to us, but they got caught in some weather and by the time I left to go to college, the big boat, probably about a 35-foot launch, was still sitting up in Maine. But I had thought about, well I can go back one step further. The year before I graduated I had a cousin who graduated and he wanted to go into the Navy as a member of the band. He played clarinet. And I went with my cousin and I hitchhiked with him into Oleann, New York – that's just west of Seneca Lake, and while he enlisted. He became part of the Navy at that time. So I also heard that he at the time of Pearl Harbor, his ship was outside of Pearl several miles, and they were heading into Pearl when the bombers came over, and they were ordered to turn around and go south down towards the big island of Hilo. So I had been following him. I guess I picked

up a little bit of the hero worship from my older cousin, because I was raised in Painted Post which is part of Appalachia actually, and there's one river, Cohoctan River which is not much, but there was no Navy around, but somehow I had picked up the bug. My father was in the Army during World War I.

Did you ever talk to him much about his experiences?

Paul Dunn: Oh, I heard quite a bit about his action. He was in the 82nd Division. He was in an ambulance company, and he saw plenty of action in the front lines in France. I later saw a letter that he had written to one of my aunts that he had thought about originally going into the Navy back in 1917, but something changed his mind and he went ahead and joined the Army.

Did you ever talk to him about your desire to join the Navy? Did he say anything to you, any advice?

Paul Dunn: Yeah, he wondered why, the same question as to why Navy, and I told him I kind of enjoyed the idea of being on board a ship. I thought that would be a good service, and it's really that simple. I would enjoy getting on board of a ship, no matter what. I wasn't thinking of a military ship, of course just thinking of a ship at all.

What was your basic training like?

Paul Dunn: My training, oh in boot camp. Well we took the GCT as you are familiar with, and we met on a Saturday, I think it was two weeks after boot started, and they started going over our scores as to what we wanted to do, and I was thinking of a torpedo man. I thought of the idea of the small motor operations. I thought that would be exciting. But the same day there was an announcement on the PA system that I did not, my hearing was not that bad then, but I did not hear what it was, but there was going to be an exam on the next Saturday morning from 8 to 10 or something like that, which, well I get out of two hours of drill, so I said OK. So I took the test and within two weeks we heard that we were going to, we had passed, some of us, and that there was going to be a more advanced test, and we found out this was Navy-wide, not just the boot camp. So a number of us took the second test and we passed again. Then we found out we were gonna be in, they did not use the word electronics back in those days, but they talked about a radio technician, which meant transmitters, radio receivers, sonar, that type of thing. So we took that and we passed, and one sideline in the boot camp was that our chief had heard that I had played drums in high school. He himself played a saxophone in a band. So he said what if I get you a drum? Parade drum, and you can drum up our drills outside so I could stand outside and watch the company march back and forth while I made some parade marches with the drum. We left boot camp, had a short home, and then come back to what they called, you might be familiar with the same name, OGU, outgoing unit, while we waited for our assignment. The tricky part about that is whenever a company was getting ready to get on a train, no matter what time of day or night, we had to be down in the mess hall, which sometimes meant getting up at 2 o'clock in the morning to get some guys ready to get on a train. And I was there I think two and a half weeks and we were ordered, we got our orders to get on the train, and curiously enough, we were on the New York Central, but we passed near Buffalo and crossed over into Canada to aim for Detroit.

Yeah, I guess that was a little bit quicker route.

Paul Dunn: So we went out of the country, but we went into what's called pre-radio at the foot of Lake Michigan, in Michigan City, Indiana, and this was again, it was a four-week program, high intense program, and it basically was math and then the use of a 2-Pi slide rule, and the talk we got while we were there was that this was still not giving us a shot at the Navy per se because if we flunked, we would be headed for the Amphibious Corps tackling islands and so on. So the pressure was on. But when we finished, we went in different directions. I don't know how many flunked or how many failed, but we were assigned to a primary school, one of which was is now the Naval Research Lab in Washington and Acostia, the second was Corpus Christi, and the third was Texas A&M. So we were the ones that headed for Texas A&M. I remember the old adjacent Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad going down there. We were assigned for a three-month, like a summer semester, in electrical engineering and radio physics. That was very intense. I'd had one year of physics and one year of chemistry before I got there, and this was part of the program in electrical engineering that I nearly flunked on that. I just never caught onto that until the end. We were there in fact, that was my first into the state of Texas, and we were I think, we were at attention, and we were at ease, all in whites, and we had a sandstorm, something I had never even heard of in the United States. When we got inside we had to empty everything out of our sea bag.

That was at Texas A&M?

Paul Dunn: Yeah, at College Station, one of those surprises. One of the other surprises, well I'd been there a month or so, and I was taking a nap one Saturday afternoon, and I felt something, well first of all I thought I heard some twittering around, somebody talking or laughing, and I felt something rubbing against my back, and I was a little suspicious, and I wasn't sure whether to turn over and see what it was or not, but I heard the laughing then, and I turned over. I had an armadillo in bed with me. Another welcome to Texas.

Somebody had put it in there with you?

Paul Dunn: Yeah, they were joking about it. I'm sure the armadillo was more frightened than I was.

Sure. How long did you end up spending at Texas A&M?

Paul Dunn: That was intense. Basically we were talking, well we had math, of course, full time, we had radio physics which would now be called electronics, and we had electrical engineering which was mainly talking about motors and generators and how we produce electricity for the on-board ship. We were tested every week. Each Saturday morning we would walk into a room and with no papers, and they would give us a test, pass out the test. Then Monday we would hear from whoever we had for 1st Period would have our scores and he would pass out the scores to us.

How long, sir, did you spend at Texas A&M?

Paul Dunn: Three months. It was a full semester, yeah.

Was there any reason why they didn't consider you for officer candidate school at that point?

Paul Dunn: OK, I have to go back up a little bit now. While I was in Oswego at the Teacher's College, that spring after Pearl Harbor, there was a Navy group that came in, and they were

testing for people to go into V6 or V12, I forget which one it was, to go into naval aviation, and Jack Murphy and I both signed up for that and we were two of the first ones kicked out. As a child, four years old maybe, my father had built a swing in the backyard, and the first thing and the last thing he told me was don't jump out, and that's the first thing I did. My pants caught and I come down and landed on my right hand on my wrist, and I broke my wrist. One of the first things they asked in the physical was to turn your palms face down and then turn the palms face up, and I could not do it. Both hands actually. I broke the other one later on. So they just eliminated us. Very few got in.

So they eliminated you from flight school, but with your aptitude and the advanced studies you were doing with communications, I was wondering if they wouldn't have sent you to officer candidate school to be kind of a communications officer or something along those lines.

Paul Dunn: Well actually it did come up later on but in a different manner. When we were finishing secondary after Texas A&M, we went to Treasure Island, California, which was for ship duty. Corpus Christi of course was for aviation. And as we were finishing the six months training there, one of the officers, we were talking about our preferred duty assignments, and he said I already have one for you. I was going to sign up for auxiliary ship of some kind, and he said we are opening up a new secondary school at Navy Pier, and they are going to have a new school just like the one you just finished here in Treasure Island, and we are putting you on for the teaching staff. Well I had finished a year and a half of college, which was physics, etc., nothing about psychology or teaching methods, so I certainly was not ready to teach. So I just asked the guy if I could just please get my assignment and leave the teaching to somebody else who was a little bit more prepared in that way. That came up but not in college. It did not come up in those days. They have in places like Syracuse, but our Teacher's College, by the time that, oh even say a year after Pearl Harbor, we were below 500 students in there, and so we were really off the main track.

So tell us then, what was the first ship that you were assigned to?

Paul Dunn: The seaplane tender Cumberland Sound. Bill Davis and I, we graduated at the same time, and we both asked for auxiliary duty, and that could've been a seagoing tug, it could've been a tender, submarine tender, but we got our assignment and we wound up in Todd Pacific shipyards in Tacoma, Washington. There were two other ships in there at the same time. The ships were not finished, not ready for sea, and the commercial interests were still assembling and putting equipment on, so we had a layover there for over a month. In fact one of the first things that happened when we got into the shipyards, and we began overlooking, Bill and I were the only two there, we began looking at what kind of equipment we had. There was a duty officer, though a very limited need for him, but he came down to the radio shack and asked do we have a beacon? And yes, we did have a beacon. He said does it work? We had not tried it. So Bill and I tried to spark up the beacon transmitter, and it wouldn't send out a signal, and they told us that there was a Royal Canadian Airforce plane somewhere up over British Columbia that was looking for a landing place and they needed some kind of a beacon. Well when we found out we couldn't do it, we told them to go someplace else, but in the meantime we decided we wanted to find out why that transmitter was not working. By this time it was dark, and I took my first climb up a mast, all the way up to the top, and when I got up there I found there was a piece of terra cotta that was cracked so it couldn't produce. That was the last time we ever had to use that and it was working for us.

That's interesting.

Paul Dunn: We did have a side trip. There was a guy came aboard who was from Tacoma, a radioman first class, he was going to be part of the crew, and one Saturday he said he'd like to take us on a little hike and the three of us went up to, in our best blues, up the side of Mount Ranier, and we went as far as we could. We got some into the snow, but our Navy shoes were a little bit too slippery for the terrain. We got a good view of the city of Tacoma and Seattle. It was nice, interesting. The last thing we did before we left Tacoma was there was an island in the Puget Sound that had a mockup of a ship of three decks made out of concrete instead of metal, and we learned how to handle hoses to fight fire. We spent the whole day up there.

I know that's a big deal aboard ship is being able to fight fires.

Paul Dunn: Yeah, you can't call on the company.

No, there's nowhere else to go.

Paul Dunn: Everybody has to do it themselves.

What did you think of life aboard ship? Was it what you expected?

Paul Dunn: Well, it was kind of exciting the first, we were actually getting used to each other and we had very few old timers, an awful lot of draftees at that time. We were mixed. We eventually wound up with over 2,000.

That's a large crew.

Paul Dunn: By the time we got through at Ulithi, we exceeded 2,800 which included some of the squadrons, too. We had 18 PVNs, and those people were included in that 2,800. Actually we had a nice knit crew in the radio shack II. There was radio I, and radio II. Radio I was where they had all the receivers. Radio II was where we had the transmitters. We had a crew that worked very well. We were all about the same age actually those days, and we got to know each other quite well. We had some characters just like everybody does. In fact one character comes to mind immediately. He was from Texas. Billy Nathan White, he was a striker, meaning he was a first class seaman, did not go to school but he was working to become a technician. A very quiet chap, and although there's no place to spend money, there was a payday, and each payday Billy would go get his check, get his cash, and he'd wait about an hour before anything happened, and then in about an hour he'd get up and go down below down among the rest of the crews, and he would stand there and he would not touch the dice, but he figured by the time an hour had passed, there are people who are sure that somebody's on a roll, and so he would just wait for somebody to offer him a bid against the guy on the roll, and each payday he came upstairs and went to the post office and made out a nice check to send back home.

That's interesting.

Paul Dunn: I had another experience with that same chap. We were up on, in addition to a mast, we had what's called kingposts. These kingposts, there were two of them, one on either side with a catwalk in between where we had a radar antenna, and I needed some help up there with one of those antennas, and Billy was the one I picked to go up with me and take a look at it. He went up first and he started leaning towards the center of the ship. We were underway. And I turned around and just as I was looking, he started to fall, and I grabbed him by the belt in the

back and managed to get him back up onto the catwalk, and we went down and went into the chief corps man and said let's talk about this. And Billy was told at that time by the corps man never get up above something like that again. Something in his makeup like mountain climbing or something, just he cannot handle height. He would automatically try to fall forward. So he was grounded.

Wow. Were you able to write many letters back home to your family while you were aboard ship?

Paul Dunn: Yes, but we couldn't tell them where we were. Yeah, and it's free mail, too, although it was censored.

Did you get V mail? Did they shrink the size of the letter down?

Paul Dunn: No, it was just they were small letters and they just stamped them and sent them forward. We had good mail service, very good service.

Did you feel like you knew what was going on in the rest of the world while you were aboard ship or did you feel kind of isolated?

Paul Dunn: No. We also had onboard ship a Cruise News I think is what it was called. Two mimeograph sheets with a little bit of news, but in those days, this was before TV and we weren't that up on everything that was going on in the world anyway. But one of the things we did have, we had an information officer who we would have movies at night at 8 o'clock and the information officer would be there about a quarter to 8. He was more of an intelligence officer than anything else. And he would give us breakdowns as to what was going on in the Philippines, what was going on in Saipan, places like that.

That's good, so you had some concept of the events of the world and the rest of the war.

Paul Dunn: You know, we didn't hear much about the Atlantic or the European because there was so much. Where we were in Ulithi, there was 690 ships in there, and there was plenty of activity. I found out reading just this last year about when Halsey was in the Battle of the Philippines, some of his ships like cruisers and so on, when they were damaged they were sent back to Ulithi where we were to do repair work. So Ulithi was kind of the center of the Pacific for most of the activity, and that's what happened as far as our seaplanes were concerned. Our first assignment was to keep the sea lanes open, anti-sub patrol, ASP, because of the convoys that are heading towards Ulithi or other places, but mostly taking all the supplies for all of those ships, and there were some coming in from Australia at the same time. So we weren't the only tender. There were several other tenders out there with these PBNs, each flying an 8-hour route back and forth, searching for submarine duty. We had an interesting experience there. We knew there was a group, must have been 10 guys, who did not belong to any particular division, and we heard that they had a very special project. Well it finally leaked out little by little, but there was in the European theater in the Atlantic, the Germans had developed what was called an acoustic torpedo that was called Fido, and the Fido would be dropped from a plane in an area where there would be a ship. It followed the noise of a ship. So it was not as big as a regular torpedo, but it would hit the screws on the back of the ship and the ship was just lost. They also were using it against our submarines. Somebody, again in the Atlantic, developed something to fight against the Fido. Well what happened was this was the result on our ship, this was a group that was building, assembling Fido's on our ship, or PBN's, and they would work with a trio.

There would be a patrol boat, a small craft of 120 feet, something like that, and another would be a submarine. So this trio was working on keeping the lanes open with using the acoustic if need be. We never did find out if, the thing that had to happen was if the PBN dropped a Fido, they had to notify the other two to shut their engines down, but we never heard any follow-up on that. But we were quite sure the submarines had been pretty well taken care of by the time of '44 when we got out there. There were some obviously.

Did your ship ever make contact, do you remember seeing any Japanese vessels?

Paul Dunn: No. Well, let me tell you about a movie we had called *Something for the Boys*. It was supposed to start at 8 o'clock, and at about 10 minutes after 8:00, we got called to quarters, and we all went into our radio shack naturally, and nothing happened. We heard nothing. Then we secured ship. We found out the next day that there had been two planes 10 miles above us, photo reconnaissance taking pictures of all the ships there in Ulithi. Particularly they were after, we had a whole row of aircraft carriers. Two weeks later, they announced the same movie, *Something for the Boys*, and darned if it wasn't about 10 after 8:00 and it happened again. And this time the Marines came in with their F4U's and they chased the two planes who were up there, but the planes that were up there didn't have any armament, so the F4U's couldn't catch 'em, but we know now that we had been photographed, particularly the carriers. So we knew we could expect it. And it only happens in the movies, but *Something for the Boys* came again two weeks later, and we got the call to duty, all battle stations, and as we started down, we were up on the third deck, and as we started down, one of the kamikaze's hit the carrier Randolph right next to us, and the flames went up, somebody said 2 miles, probably so. As we were coming down, when we hit the main deck, there had been a group of new boots coming in from the U.S. standing with no stations yet, and they were just standing. Their faces were lit up red from this plane that had just exploded next to them. I'm sure that's one day they'll never forget. That plane we lost 27 sailors, and about 80 were wounded, but there was a second plane, two-engine bomber, that landed on the island in front of us, which thought it had interpreted a piece of macadam road with a couple of lights on it that had interpreted that as being one of the carriers, so it hit in the middle of this macadam road, and when they searched the debris the next day, they found some of the purple robes that are for the young kamikaze's. The other one we had, one of our crew had chronic seasickness, and he used to stay up on deck and lay down and have a crust of bread and some lemon all day long. He would still do his duty, but when he wasn't, he would be up there and one afternoon, shortly after we arrived in Ulithi, he saw something in the water and he said that in his mind it could've been, what do you call them, the tubes from a submarine?

A torpedo.

Paul Dunn: No.

A periscope.

Paul Dunn: Periscope, yeah, thank you. So he reported that to the officer of the day, and the officer of the day made a report to whoever is above him as far as the fleet goes, and within 15 minutes, that whole Ulithi, all those ships were banging their bells for general quarters. That thing was inside there for two days. We never did find it. There's only one exit, and that was covered by like a chain net that would be lowered when a ship wants to come in or go out when it's identified. And this being the days before helicopters, we wanted to get a slow plane of some kind up over the opening and use a couple of our ships going out as a decoy. Well, we ran some

decoys out and we never did find out. It must have been a miniature submarine, but it was pretty clever. They'd got away from us. The only damage was one landing craft who was loading ammunition at the time, and he was afraid he would be out in the open, and he tried to get back closer to shore, and he ran into some sandbars. Nothing exploded, but that was the only damage was done.

So I wanted to ask you in your email to me, you mentioned being present in Tokyo Bay during the surrender ceremony.

Paul Dunn: Well you know, getting to Tokyo Bay was interesting. When we left Ulithi, we went to Saipan for a short, very brief time, and we were told we could go back to Anahuitac which was one of our old ports, and we were thinking rest and recreation. But by the time we had started out a couple of days going east, August 5th came around and Hiroshima happened. We kept going east to Ilog and Nagasaki, and that day, that evening we got our orders to turn around and head back and head into Okinawa. When we got near Okinawa, we had to go through a mine field and that's a nervous thing I never want to go through again because they were, it was 9 o'clock in the morning and they were announcing some rumors from Hirohito, and were certainly, couldn't wait to get out of that mine field before we could get excited. But that next day we were ordered to join Halsey's fleet, the big one, and our captain was designated CTG, command of a task group, and we had our ship and 10 other varying sizes, most of them smaller than we were, to join the huge flotilla that was headed towards Japan. We were not only darkened ship, we had our identification on, and I think it was the second day that our radar showed a plane coming from Luzon coming down our way towards all these ships, and nobody went to battle stations, but we could see the one plane coming down, it was a four-engine plane. It was one of our own U.S. Navy privateer. The guy had forgotten to turn on his transponder. I think eventually when he landed he probably found out that he could've been hit by all those ships coming down below. We landed in the outer base, Sagamiwan, which was the 27th of August, and even before that date was over, they picked six ships, we were one of them, to go through what they called the hole in the wall into Tokyo Bay. That had been mined by both the Japanese and us, and the first four ships in our little flotilla that was going in were destroyer mine sweepers, and we worried about the size. Those little mine sweepers are very narrow and we got this big tub, 64 feet across. But we got in there. The interesting thing when we got in there, there was all kinds of bells and whistles, the Japanese welcoming us in a way. They had also taken some of the prisoners of war that had been up in the hills and brought them down to the shore so that they would be ready to leave with us whenever they got in there. The next day, MacArthur landed, and some other ships including the Missouri came in, and it was September 2nd was the signing of the surrender.

Did you know that there was going to be a historic ceremony held there in the bay, a surrender ceremony?

Paul Dunn: At that time? Yes we did. In fact the advantage of radio in those days compared to what it is today was something else. There was a crew, private CBS I think it was out of San Francisco, that was announcing that it had been misty and foggy and as the signing was getting ready that the sun was coming out. Well we were close enough to know that there was no sunshine. It stayed foggy all day. But we were aware. We were within eyesight, we were within a couple hundred yards of the Missouri.

Could you make out some of the key figures like General MacArthur and General Wainwright and others that were aboard the ship?

Paul Dunn: Somebody upstairs in the officer's quarters might have had some binoculars to do that. We didn't. We knew who was there. They gave us a pretty good reading on that. We were assigned to Yokasuku then to set up another sea drum with our PBM's and we were still assigned some air sea rescue, but for the most part we began air mail and stuff like that carrying back and forth from Tokyo down to San Sabou down in southern Japan. I forget exactly what month it was, but most of us had our number of points ready to be discharged, but there were 11 of us in our communications division that were told we had to occupy some other ships to fill the spaces there, to keep those ships there. So 11 of us left the Comransou and when they returned to the U.S. I went aboard another small tender. At this time I was a first class petty officer, and I was the ranking non-commissioned officer on the ship, so I had the chief's quarters all to myself.

That's not bad.

Paul Dunn: But I only had one technician to begin with and then the next two weeks we began receiving some others from the U.S., people who had finished training or were in training and had not served, so they were assigned, they were brought out by personnel carriers to fill in the blank spaces for the people who had qualified to be discharged. So we had to have skeleton crews, but we did get some crews in from the U.S. to fill in.

Did you have any thought of remaining in the Navy, or did you plan on getting out once your points were up?

Paul Dunn: I had an offer. In fact, each day I was with the executive officer, after the captain's meeting, the executive officer and one quartermaster and I would meet and map the day's routine for the whole crew, and I think it was after Christmas we were getting the word that we would probably be assigned another ship to go back to the U.S. sometime within the next two weeks, and the executive officer without saying you personally or something like that, he said you know, we're headed for Shanghai, and I was aware of that. And I said I really have no desire to go to Shanghai. And he suggested that if anybody would want to, which meant me of course, that there was a possibility of getting a warrant officer's ranking to stay for a while, stay with the ship. But I was kind of anxious to get back. We had a quite a trip coming back. We had been while we were in Tokyo, we had four different typhoons and then after we left – well one interesting thing, before we could leave, I was transferred to another ship to come back to the U.S. Each ship that left Tokyo in those days had to report into Tokyo to see how many spaces they could spare for some of the U.S. Army guys that had been back in China for all these 7 or 8 years. They had come out of China but they had no forward transportation. So we put our word in and we picked up 11 of them to come on board ship with us and take and go back with us. We were not too far from Tokyo, maybe a day, and we got the weather report was that we were headed for a typhoon coming our way. There was no place to go, so we figured the ship would just handle it and we kept going. We got hit full blast, and when we recovered, we had buckled plates that we were taking on water.

Wow, that's bad.

Paul Dunn: Out in the middle – well, the result was, we had some pumps operating and we had a couple of seamen sit with their feet down through the hatch, and when their feet got wet, they would turn the pumps back on. We came back across all the way to Hawaii at 4 knots. That's about 5 mph.

That's a long, slow boat ride.

Paul Dunn: Oh, it was a long one. We found we could get into to Fort Island and get the buckles repaired, but they said that they had cleaned up Fort Island after all the damages that had been done, and they had no room for any dry dock at all, so we had to go into Long Beach, California. Well, we got into dry dock in California and we had understood that our mission on this ship was to go to the U.S. for discharge, and one of the 11, a fellow named Harvey Demann was from Battle Creek, Michigan, and he said he was going to call his senator who happened to be Arthur Vanderburg.

Yeah, a very powerful senator, too. He was very well known. That was his uncle?

Paul Dunn: Well he knew him. He was a neighbor of his. But they had not met that often. But he told Harvey that you better stick with the ship and go ahead and follow it through. We've got to go through the canal up into New Orleans before you can get discharged. He said it would just be a mess if you tried to do something right now. He says we'd be talking about lawyers and things and we just don't want to. So we made our trip down through the Panama Canal, and had an interesting side ship to the Catoon Lake, our captain pulled into Catoon Lake and set in the nice fresh water. So we were diving off the ship into Catoon Lake. We also had a small boat off near us with a sharpshooter because there had known to be alligators in there. But it was the first fresh water we had seen and I was never a salt water man. So interesting, and then coming north from Panama towards New Orleans, it was a Friday afternoon when we were getting close, and the orders were that if we got into New Orleans before 5:00 in the afternoon, we could start our quarantine. Otherwise our quarantine would start at 0800 on Monday. So our little ship was just not gonna do that fast, and we got an order from the deck, get your stuff down here, get ready, and they had a speedboat that came out from New Orleans and picked us up, and we got in there about 4 o'clock before the quarantine.

So I bet you were able to have Lib O for a weekend then, liberty for a weekend?

Paul Dunn: Well yeah, that was also interesting was that weekend was Mardi Gras.

OK, yes sir.

Paul Dunn: So we got started back on Sunday morning and we got two troop trains, the old kind with the bunks cross-wise, not very comfortable. But they were the ones who took us back up, two groups, one train dropped off in Baltimore, and the other one, we came on all the way to New York City and we went out to Long Island where we spent a couple of days of last duty getting our papers ready and we got discharged on Friday, March 9th.

At that point did you go back home to New York?

Paul Dunn: Yeah, I took the West short train and my dad met me. Interesting enough, he figured I was not going to be interested in sitting around, and he'd asked the employment officer whom he knew personally, if he would stay open Saturday morning, so my dad took me up to the employment office Saturday morning and they had a job for me. There was a radio factory. Mason Radio had set up a factory there and they needed an extra hand of what they called subchassis inspector. So I had a job the first day I got back. And I couldn't go back to school yet. It was in March. But I didn't mention when I was in Saipan, the guy that Jack Murphy and I were trying to get into the Navy at the same time, and when we were in Saipan, somebody said

you have a visitor, and Jack Murphy walked in. He had been with a PBM himself and they were up behind Okinawa in what they called Karamareto, a bunch of islands, and they had been shot down. Their PBM had been shot down by friendly fire. There was another aircraft aiming at a Japanese plane and Murphy's ship got in between the plane and it and so they got shot down. His captain was in Saipan looking for a used PBM, so I told him, I said the next time we get together we'll be in school. So I called Jack when I got back to Kingston, and I said I'll be up to see you in July. He said good, I got a space for you in my bed. So I wound up Jack and I were together again. I did lose one good guy, one of my friends from high school, Tom Cully, and I had been very close friends, and he let me know when he was in Langley, I think, in Virginia, and he was studying to be a navigator, and when we were in Saipan, it was our first view of those B-29's, those huge planes, and it was then I had gotten a letter from Tommy that he was operating out of one of those from Tinian, making flights up to Tokyo. One of the days I heard about a couple of planes crashing, the B-29's being shot down, and shortly later my dad sent me the clippings from the newspaper. The first one was local boy missing, and then finally the second one was where he had been killed, he had been shot down.

That's too bad.

Paul Dunn: And two weeks later, I got a letter from one of Tommy's last letters, that he was enjoying his new job. It was kind of tricky, but this was after he was already dead. I lost one fraternity brother, too, in Iwo Jima.

How was it that you eventually came to Texas? When did you come to Texas?

Paul Dunn: Well that's another story. After I graduated, I worked for the naval research laboratory as a civilian for 10 years, and then I joined the International Cooperation, well which is now Agency for International Development. So I spent 17 years traveling over, living overseas in the Philippines, Peru, Brazil, and my marriage broke up and I was assigned in 1977 to Cairo, and I had been dating another lady during those last couple of years, and after we got in Cairo, we tried to get our orders changed but it didn't work out, but she came over with me. So she flew over, we got married over there, and I decided to retire, not to retire per se, but to get out of the government service, and she was originally from Texas, Corpus Christi, well originally from San Antonio. But she had been living in Corpus. She had two sons, a daughter there, so our first stop back was we decided to sit down in Corpus for a while until we could find something. I had finished teaching. I was planning on trying to get another teaching job again. In fact I did. After I was in Corpus for a while I finished some other course work, brought it up to date, and I taught high school there for 11 years.

That's great.

Paul Dunn: San Antonio was, in 2006 we decided that we couldn't keep up a big house so we moved into a condo up here.

That's great. Well sir, I was going to mention to you, you know we save these interviews for posterity in our archives, and we have archives here that go back to the 1700s, and we have the Registro that Stephen F. Austin kept of the first settlers that came to Texas, and we have the land grant that David Crockett's widow received after he was killed at the Alamo, and with that in mind, is there anything you'd want to say to somebody listening to this interview, 100 or 200 years from now?

Paul Dunn: Oh, you mean as far as Texas?

Just anything, your time in the military, anything you'd want to say to somebody listening to this interview years and decades from now, something maybe I didn't ask about or just anything, sir.

Paul Dunn: You know, things have changed so fast. Now we don't meet each other in the battlefield. We have these drones. It's hard to say what the world is going to be like, but I would add one thing, that from my years overseas as a civilian working with Peruvians, working with Brazilians, I would encourage anybody to pursue either in the military or something like the Peace Corps, to get acquainted with the rest of the world. I think it's important, and I think we in the United States have learned an awful lot about the people who have been overseas. I have one nephew, grandson actually, who is a chief warrant and lived a lot of his life in Hawaii. I have seen so much of the people that have been overseas when they come back, how much the U.S. has gained from world experience, and I would encourage anybody to. In fact, one grandson who was taking courses at Lyndon Johnson school, what's the name of it?

Yeah, the LBJ School of –

Paul Dunn: San Marcos -

Oh OK, Texas State.

Paul Dunn: Yeah. One of his summers he took a summer program down in Belize in Central America. I think it was anthropology, and how much he learned from that. In fact my wife and I have been to many places. My second wife, my present wife. We took my grandson and we went down to Brazil and Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Panama, and they loved Panama.

That's great. Well sir, I really appreciate you taking the time to share some of your memories with us today. Like I had said before, it's an honor for our program, and in a week or two we're going to send you copies of this interview on CDs along with a certificate and letter signed by Commissioner Patterson. It's just a small way, small token of our appreciation for your service to our nation. And so I'll get in touch with you, sir, to get your address because I know you don't want to give that out on an interview, but I'll get your address and we'll put that in the mail to you.

Paul Dunn: Well I appreciate that.

Yes sir. So sir, it's been an honor, and I'll talk to you again soon, and also if you have any photographs or anything like that, that you'd want to share with us on our website we'd be glad to put copies of those on our website as well.

Paul Dunn: OK, I can't think of any right offhand, but I appreciate that.

All right sir, well take care and we'll talk to you again soon.

Paul Dunn: All right, thank you.

[End of recording]