Robert Tidwell: This is an oral history interview conducted with Jack Arnold
Druckemiller by Robert Tidwell on the eighth of August, 2003 at approximately nine
o’clock in the morning Central Time. Mr. Druckemiller.

Jack Druckemiller: Yes, good morning.

RT: Good morning. How are you today sir?

JD: Fine, thank you.

RT: Just to begin, what kind of a childhood did you have and where did you grow
up?

JD: I was born and raised in the little town of Marion, Indiana. The population
was about I don’t know fifty thousand. I grew up in that town under what I would
consider to be average conditions. I had an average childhood. By average I mean
normal childhood. I had no outstanding success as a child. I attended grade school,
 elementary school and high school in that city.

RT: From what you said the population was about fifty thousand. So it wasn’t a
small town by any means, but it wasn’t a large city.

JD: Right. Right.

RT: What sort of things did you do as child? Did you have any jobs when you
were younger?

JD: While I was in high school I had a few odd jobs to help provide some
spending money. I delivered groceries at that time. Small grocery stores offered delivery
service. I worked as a theatre usher and other odd jobs like that to make a little spending
money.

RT: You don’t see very many people offer grocery delivery anymore and I
haven’t seen a theatre usher in a long time.

JD: That’s for sure. Times have changed.

RT: You would say that your family’s condition was average, a little above
normal, a little below normal?

JD: I think I came from a family of average means. My father was a hard
working man. My father was a wholesale candy distributor, if you can imagine. He
distributed candy to small grocery drug stores and places of that nature where they would
purchase candy by the box. For example a Milky Way in those days cost I guess a nickel.
I can remember he sold a box of twenty-four Milky Ways for seventy-eight cents. He
made a living doing that kind of work for many years.

RT: Okay. So what kind of education did you have before you entered the Navy?

JD: Upon graduation from high school, which was in 1940 I hadn’t determined
exactly what I wanted to do. I suggested to my father that I was going to maybe work for
a while. He changed my mind rather quickly then and said, “No, you’re not. You’re
going to school now.” He didn’t want me to get out of the habit of studying. So, in the
fall of 1940 I entered a small college in my hometown. It was called Marion College.
It’s now called Indiana Westland University. It has grown considerably. I entered that
school and started on a general administrative type course, not yet knowing what I
wanted to do. As I approached my second year in that school I decided that I thought
engineering might be a field, which I might be able to succeed. I transferred from Marion
College at that time to Purdue University and started on a course leading to a degree in
electrical engineering, which I eventually obtained.

RT: What led you into electrical engineering?

JD: I don’t know. I really don’t know. I just liked electrical gadgets. Of course
electronics was starting to be an important part of our lives then. I think that’s probably
why I leaned that way.

RT: Do you still work as an electrical engineer?
JD: I don’t work now. I’m retired and been retired since 1987. I spent forty years in the electrical business with American Electric Power Company. Forty straight years, had no other job.

RT: That’s unheard of these days as well.

JD: Yes, indeed.

RT: Were they an electrical power provider or did they manufacture equipment?

JD: American Electric Power was the largest generator of power in the United Stats at the present time and incidentally owns the company where you are now speaking from, Lubbock, Texas.

RT: Okay.

JD: American Electric Power started in Central Indiana. That’s where the original company got its start. It became a large generator and distributor of power to many, many customers and has grown over the years. The company later on even got into nuclear business and I was involved in a portion of that. I spent the first seventeen or eighteen years with the company in sales. Sales involving sales to industrial accounts, commercial accounts, large commercial accounts and places like that. Where in those days, the power company provided people, employees who would go out and assist in recommending how electricity might be better used in their industry or business to make more money. That was the general idea of sales, electrical sales at that time. We helped with engineering problems that they might have. Later on I was changed to a different portion, part of the company in 1972. I was asked to move to the company’s new nuclear plant in Bridgemont, Michigan. I was surprised when they asked me to do that because I had no background in nuclear power generation at all. But the vice president of the company who invited me to go there, suggested that they wanted me to be there as a public affairs representative for the company. I did that for three years. In fulfilling that obligation I discovered that one of the problems of the company I was going to meet or going to encounter was that of the environment and its impact on the environment. People were concerned at that time about how nuclear energy was going to affect the environment. We even had people on the shore of Lake Michigan where the plant was built who though that the plant was going to heat the water in Lake Michigan so warm it would cook the fish. So we had a real problem in trying to explain to people how nuclear
power plants work and how safe they can be, spent three years of my life doing that. Then after that started, the environmental concern started. The company decided that we had other places in the company service area where environmental problems were a concern to people. So I was moved to the company’s headquarters here in Ft. Wayne where I now live. We established an environmental department to deal with those kind of problems, air, water, pollution, bi-products and so forth. I spent the last portion of my career with the company as the manager of that organization here in Ft. Wayne.

RT: Boy, that’s an incredible resume there.
JD: Well, I didn’t mean to be so long, but I guess it was.
RT: No problem. Did you get married before or after your time in the service?
JD: I was married after I got out of the service. I wasn’t married until I was an older guy. I don’t know. I was interested in marriage when I first went into the service, but because of me going one way and my wife to be or girlfriend at that time going another way we parted company and went our separate lives from there on. So I didn’t marry until after I had gotten out of the service.

RT: Where did you meet your wife?
JD: I met my wife in my hometown of Marion believe it or not. She was over there visiting some people. She was from Muncie, Indiana, and she was over there visiting people at the time in Marion. I just casually met her and it all started that way.

RT: Did you go on to have children?
JD: I had two children. I had a daughter who is now deceased and a son. The son lives here in the same city I live in. He’s forty-two years old and never been married.

RT: Did he follow in your footsteps and go into electrical engineering?
JD: No, he didn’t. He’s into a different line. He’s in the landscaping business.

RT: Yes, that is a little bit different.
JD: Quite a bit, quite a change.

RT: What was your age when you decided to go into the Navy?
JD: I was age twenty. I enlisted in the Navy at Purdue. After I had transferred over there from the Marion College that I had originally talked about the draft was getting pretty prominent. All of us faced the fact that we were going to have to probably—if we were able we were going to have to serve the country. I took advantage
of the program. We had our choice at school. The Army was there. The Navy was there. Everybody was there to enlist people and get them into branches of the service. I chose the Navy and I enlisted December the 14th, 1942 as an apprentice seaman in the United States Naval Reserve for four years. That was my original agreement.

RT: In your questionnaire you had indicated that you had entered into something called the V-12 program.

JD: Yes. At that time the Navy had programs for people if they wanted to prepare to become officers. They had a program called V-5, which was for people who were interested in naval aviation and V-12 for the rest of us. I was placed in the V-12 program where I went on active duty. In the V-12 program as a matter of fact after my original enlistment at Purdue they had a unit there. All I had to do was move down the street about five blocks from where I lived to the dormitory which was at that time taken over by the Navy. I spent the next two semesters—I had four semesters of college at Marion. Then I spent the next two semesters—I’m sorry I spent two semesters at Purdue before going into the V-12 program. Then after I entered it I was placed in the V-12 program I spent two more semesters at Purdue. I had a total of eight semesters of college, but no degree at that time. That’s all it took to qualify you to go to one of the mid-shipman’s school. I was sent to the United States Naval Reserve man Shipment School at Columbia University in New York. I often think about the movie. I can’t remember the name of it where the guy who was going to become an ensign in the Navy got off the subway and went down the street to the school. That’s just exactly what I did. I was sent to Columbia University and I spent the next three and a half months there in a program that was casually referred to in the Navy as the ninety-day wonder program. I was commissioned an ensign in New York City at, believe it or not, at St. John the Divine Church, which by the way is still under construction. It never has been completed it’s so large. After being commissioned in that church, our class was all separated and sent different ways. My first assignment I was commissioned in June of 1944. My first assignment was to go to the small craft-training center in Miami, Florida. I thought, gee how lucky can you be? So I started my active duty in a career at that point.

RT: What prompted you to join the Navy? Did you have some friends who had said, “Join the Navy, I did,” or did you have some relatives who had been in the Navy?
JD: I had a good friend, a very close friend. We lived in the same fraternity. We both went down at the same time to sign up for the service. We knew that we were going to have to serve. I said, “You know I kind of like the looks of the Navy program. It just seems to me that it has a lot to offer.” His choice was the other way. He thought he would prefer to serve in the Army. We parted company at that point. He went one way and I went another. We’ve often talked about that. It was a matter of selection.

RT: What did you do at the small craft training center?

JD: The small craft training center was a place in Miami, Florida. We lived in the Columbus Hotel. That was the bachelor officers’ quarters in Miami. Went down the street to a large building where they had established a school that taught newly commissioned ensigns on how to serve on small craft. They had a lot of sub chasers. They had a lot of mine sweepers. They had a lot of other small craft used in the Navy at that time. I thought after going through that school and then going through that training that I would be assigned to a ship of that type. In the interim they decided to send me to the fleet sonar school at Key West, Florida, for five weeks where I trained to become an anti-submarine warfare officer. In other words, that’s the guy that has charge of the group of people on the ship who normally are in the anti-submarine warfare business. That was hot and heavy in the Atlantic at that particular time, lots of German submarines. They taught us how sonar works. Well, they taught us how to attack submarines. That was my next assignment, came back to Miami after that thinking that I was going to be sent to a ship that had anti-submarine warfare equipment, which the Evans did. I was sent to Norfolk, Virginia, and it was announced to me at that time that I was being sent there to assist in the formation of the crew for the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans.

RT: Fantastic. Did your transition into sonar school, was that based upon your experience studying for an electrical engineering degree do you think?

JD: Not exactly. You know I’ve never really given much thought as to how they chose people to go to sonar school. I’d had a little bit of a musical background. I had what I guess you’d call a pretty good ear for music. Sonar operation requires a very finely tuned ear to listen to the equipment and determine what’s happening. That may have been my entry into the sonar business or the anti-submarine warfare business. I don’t know. Had really little nothing to do with electrical engineering because the sonar
equipment was maintained by a different group of people on the ship as it was in all
cases. They have the regular electronics group that takes care and maintains those kind
of equipments. I don’t think it was really my degree at that time. As a matter of fact, I
had not completed the work for my degree, didn’t have the degree. At that time all I had
was eight semesters of college. Two of the semesters I took at Marion College did not
count toward the degree because they were just courses that didn’t apply. I had to
anticipate getting my degree after I was released from the service or released to inactive
duty after World War II.

RT: So when you were sent to your advanced training such as the fleet sonar
school, what was your daily routine there? What was a typical day?

JD: The daily routine was to go to classrooms and learn and have training on
actual trainers that the Navy had designed at that time where they could imitate or make
you believe you were on a ship that was chasing a submarine. They had all that kind of
electronic equipment developed. That’s how they trained operators of the equipment.
They trained people to interpret the activities that were taking place. That was part of the
training. The rest of it was actually at sea. They had a lot of small ships down there, sub
chasers. They had converted some large yachts believe it or not that had been owned by
some of the wealthy people in the country. The Navy had more or less commandeered
those and they had converted them to training ships for sonar operation. We would go
out in the morning on these ships and spend the whole day out actually chasing
submarines, chasing U.S. submarines that would operate with us.

RT: That must have been interesting to train on a yacht.

JD: Yeah. It was pretty comfortable I’ll have to say that. Not exactly the same
kid of environment you got on a destroyer, but they were nice ships. I’ll have to agree.

RT: While you were still essentially in training did you have any particular
memorable moments, like a particularly interesting liberty that you had taken?

JD: In my class in Key West was an admiral. I’ve never to this day known what
an admiral was doing in the class. He was monitoring the class I think for the Navy. One
day he said to me, “How would you like to take a ride?” I said, “What do you mean?”
He said, “Well, tomorrow or the next day,” or whatever it was he said, “I’m going to go
down. They’ve invited me to come to Boca Chica Naval Air Station and they’re going to
take me on a ride out over the Caribbean to see how the naval air arm deals with
submarine activities.” I said, “Gee, that would be great”. He took me along on the flight.
I can’t even remember his name. We went to Boca Chica Naval Air Station, got aboard a
PBY, which is a slow flying boat and spent the entire day over the Caribbean at very low
levels working as trackers of submarines. They could track them from the air as well as
from ships on the surface. That was a rather interesting experience that I’ll never forget.

RT: Well, it gave you certainly a different perspective on the submarine warfare.

JD: It gave me an opportunity to see that not only did the surface ships develop
anti-submarine capability, but the Naval Air Arm as well had provided or would provide
a great deal of help in those instances.

RT: So what would you say was your best liberty?

JD: My best liberty?

RT: Sure.

JD: In Key West there isn’t such thing. I had several nice liberties in Miami,
Florida, when I was there. The people who lived in that area were quite generous as were
the people incidentally in New York when I was in midshipman’s school. Many, many
families offered opportunities for sailors such as we, were to come spend a Sunday with
them and have a nice meal at their home. Those were some of the memorable instances.
People were very friendly toward the service at that time and had a lot of nice
experiences that way. In Key West there weren’t very many opportunities to do things
like that. Most of our time was spent bumming around the town, which was very small at
that time. Maybe going out and getting a meal someplace that was different than what
we were used to at the school.

RT: At that time did you think that you were going to be assigned to the Atlantic
or did you think that you might be sent to the Pacific?

JD: I had no idea. I don’t think anybody in the part of the service that I was in
had that kind of opportunity. When you get assigned to a ship, you have to go where the
ship goes.

RT: Okay. When did you discover that you were going to be sent to the Pacific?

JD: We went to Norfolk, Virginia, and formed the crew for the ship. We knew
the ship would have to undergo as we moved the crew aboard. We knew that we would
have to undergo what they call shake down in the Navy. In other words to test the ship out and see if it’s going to hold up. If something’s going to break down, we want it to break down then instead of later on. After we had completed most of that shake down we of course were interested to know what we were going to do. Out of the blue came orders that we were to proceed through the Panama Canal and out to the West Pac, what they called West Pac at that time, to try to arrive in time to participate in the Okinawa campaign.

RT: That’s incredible. So what did you think of the Evans when you saw her?

How far along was she in her construction?

JD: The Evans was completed at that particular time. The Evans was launched in 1944, in October of 1944. It was actually placed under command in New York on February the 3rd, 1945. We were really just elated with the ship. It was a beautiful ship, brand new, brand new crew. We thought, gee, we’re getting the latest and it was at that particular time, the latest of the destroyers. It was what they called a short hull, Allen Sumner class destroyer. It had six five-inch 38 dual-purpose guns. It was loaded with anti-submarine warfare equipment, which of course at that time was a real concern. It’s funny the Navy developed a lot of anti-submarine warfare equipment. When anti-submarine warfare was actually starting to die out the effect of the submarines in the Pacific was almost negative considered to what it had been in the Atlantic. We were all elated with the fact that we had a brand new ship and we had a brand new crew. We had a great skipper, one of the nicest people I’ve ever met in my life. The crew I thought was very highly organized. It looked like we were going to be a real organization. Interesting fact, in going to the Pacific they had us escort one of the Navy’s two battle cruisers. Most people don’t even know that there was such a thing as a battle cruiser. At one time the Navy authorized the construction of three battle cruisers, which were very strange ships. They were about six hundred feet long and they were narrow. They said they were sharp as a knife because they appeared so long compared to their breadth. We were at that time ordered to escort the CB-2, which was the U.S.S. Guam out to Pearl Harbor. The worst part about it was the Navy forgot the design the fuel tanks on the battle cruiser weren’t large enough to allow it to travel very far without having to refuel. So we left the Panama Canal with the CB-2 with us. We were escorting it. The CB-2 because of its
fuel capacity and no place to refuel between Panama Canal and Pearl Harbor we made the trip at seven knots. It seemed like it took forever for us to get from the Panama Canal to Pearl Harbor. I don’t know how many miles that is, but that’s lot of nautical miles. It took many, many days for us to get there, but we eventually got the CB-2 to Pearl. The first CB, CB-1 was called the Alaska, the U.S.S. Alaska. The second one, the one that we escorted was the U.S.S. Guam. The third one was supposed to be the U.S.S. Kentucky—no, U.S.S. Hawaii. I’m sorry. The Navy decided before the third one was even completed after the hull had been laid in the shipyard the Navy decided to cancel it as a battle cruiser. They changed the ship from the hull up to an aircraft carrier.

RT: So after you’d escorted the battle cruiser you then proceeded westward to—
JD: After we escorted the battle cruiser out to Hawaii we said goodbye to them and of course we were ordered to proceed on to Okinawa. We left Pearl Harbor. We went to the little island of Ulysses. We refueled there, went to the island of Guam, refueled there—no, I’m sorry the first one was Eniwetok, where the nuclear tests were made many years later. Then to Guam, then to Ulysses, then up to the Okinawa campaign, to Okinawa itself.

RT: What was the Evans role at Okinawa?
JD: At Okinawa the Navy had established nine picket stations, rated R picket stations around the island to try to be early warning stations, early warning facilities for Japanese suicide planes and bombers that were trying to approach the island because the U.S. forces had landed on Okinawa and were trying to secure the island at that time. So all of our time was spent on radar picket stations. We were sent to different ones on different trips out. There were a total of nine stations. You didn’t know which ones you were going to draw. It was just up to your luck. On the picket station we had four small craft with us, which we called small boys. They were small LCS (littoral combat ship) type ships that had rocket launchers. Why they had them out there with rocket launchers, because there’s nothing to launch a rocket at, when you’re fifty or sixty miles from Okinawa. They were along anyhow. I think they were there to pick the destroyers sailors up out of the water after the kamikazes landed on the destroyers. The Navy lost sixteen destroyers on those stations due to kamikaze action.

RT: You saw some of that kamikaze action I’ll wager?
JD: On July 29th, 1945, which incidentally was my birthday, we had just come back in from what we call RP-9, radar picket station 9. We spent four days out there. We had just come back in to Okinawa. We had let the fires die out under our boilers, except for one boiler that we keep going. We were going to have four days R&R (rest and recuperation) so to speak. In other words in port, just to maintain ship and get a little rest. Before the boilers had even gotten cool we got an emergency message to get underway again and go relieve this ship or go back out to RP-9 that the U.S.S. Callaghan which had relieved us on station had been taken under fire, not taken under fire but had been struck by a kamikaze plane and was in bad shape. So we had to reestablish fire in the boiler and get under way. We went out there at thirty some knots, as fast as we could and got out there after midnight. When we go there the Callaghan had sunk. The sea was full of sailors from the Callaghan trying to survive, oil all over everything. We spent the rest of the night pulling some of those fellows aboard as did some other ships that had been sent there to rescue them and bring them back in. Incidentally the funny part about it was about ten years later in my hometown after I had gotten out of the service I was in a supermarket. I was talking to one of the guys working in the supermarket. We got to telling sea stories. He told me he’d been on the destroyer that had been sunk at Okinawa. I said, “What ship?” He said, “Well, it was the Callaghan.” I said, “That’s amazing.” I said, “I was aboard the ship that helped rescue some of the people from the Callaghan.” I think he was one that we had probably picked up. I’m not certain. It was amazing. The Callaghan was the sixteenth and last destroyer sunk at Okinawa, a lot of damage done out there to the Navy ships. Many of the carriers were severely damaged by kamikaze planes. Some of them barely were able to make it back into port. That was the way the Okinawa campaign was fought as far as the Navy was concerned. Incidentally I got to go ashore for R&R. On the little Island of Ie Shima which is on the west side of Okinawa, Ie Shima is just a little atoll that sticks up out of the ocean. You can’t drink aboard a Navy ship, but we used to carry a little bit of beer along for the guys when we would get someplace where they would have some recreation they’d usually all go ashore and play baseball and get their ration of two cans of beer. That’s the island on which Ernie Pyle the writer from Indiana was killed, Ie Shima.
RT: That’s interesting. You’re from Indiana and then you go to an island where another Indianan had been.

JD: That’s right.

RT: So during your time in the Pacific you really did not have in terms of your personal job that is in anti-submarine warfare portion of the ship, you did not have much to do.

JD: I didn’t have much to do. I was made an assistant communication officer while aboard the ship because of the fact that they didn’t want to see me loafing I guess, not having anything to do. They put me in communications so that I could assist in some of the communications work. We had an awful lot of communications on a ship of that size that would come in encoded in secret so that the enemy of course couldn’t interpret it. We’d have to break the messages and so forth. They were official business of the Navy.

RT: So that was your average routine aboard the ship?

JD: That’s right.

RT: What other things did you do while you were aboard ship?

JD: After the Okinawa campaign ended and the island had been secured there was quite a bit of escorting to do. We did help escort. We worked with the task force, fast carrier task forces that were operating. I forget whether they were task force 57 and 77 I guess were the numbers. Anyhow we would get assigned as plane guard. The carriers when they normally are in launch or landing operations they have destroyers operating in certain positions around them that are considered to be plane guard stations. When a plane missed the ship in trying to land or didn’t make it off the ship when it was trying to take off, the carrier would be in a position to assist in rescuing the pilot or the crew of the ship at that time. So every carrier operated with plane guard during landing and take off operations. Landing and launching operations I guess you’d say.

RT: When you had some recreation time what did you do during your off hours?

JD: There wasn’t very many places to go. We did go into Buckner Bay at Okinawa and put the anchor down so to speak and swing around—what we called swinging around the hook. Just the fact that we got to relax was about the only entertainment we had at that time. There was no place to go. They couldn’t put us
ashore there. We were there with maybe a hundred other ships that were doing the same thing. It was just a matter of letting your hair down a little bit and relaxing and not having to worry about operations for a few days.

RT: So do you have any opportunity to watch any movies while aboard ship?
JD: Movies all the time were available. The Navy was very good about that. They passed the movies—every time we’d go along side a tanker and we refueled a lot at sea there was no place to refuel on shore in Okinawa, but we refueled at sea. The tankers of course would supply us with movies. That was an important part. We always got mail and movies from the tankers like that. That was our main bit of entertainment aboard the ship. There was usually a movie every night if you wanted to go.

RT: That’s not bad to have a movie every night.
JD: They had very good service I’ll have to say that as far as movies were concerned. They got some of the latest movies at that time available.
RT: Wow. That’s fantastic. Being resupplied while at sea, must have been a very delicate operation?
JD: Delicate operation. You wouldn’t believe how utterly dangerous it actually is. We used to refuel too from carriers. Carriers had quite a fuel supply. We would refuel from a carrier on the starboard side because the island is on the starboard side of a carrier, on the right side. The captain of the carrier could look down and see us on the right side whereas he couldn’t see us if we were on the port side because the flight deck would be in his way. The carriers often times would have fuel lines over to us and we would be refueling at a reasonable speed. The carrier would get orders to launch or to do something. We would have to turn along with the carrier with fuel lines over and pick up our speed at the same rate he did so until we could get disconnected if you know what I mean.
RT: That’s incredible.
JD: Very precarious operation but unbelievably effective.
RT: The helmsmen on both ships had to be very, very keen.
JD: We always used the best we had. Incidentally at the same time we were refueling it might be that they would be transferring sailors from the destroyer to the carrier if they were ill or if they hadn’t required surgery or something of that nature
because the carrier always had a larger hospital availability than the destroyer did. All we had was a sick bay.

RT: What kind of a physician did you have?
JD: Send them over on a line if you know what I mean. They put them in a harness and they put a line over to the ship. A trolley goes across and they take them over on a line like that. I forget what they call it, breech boy I guess. I don’t know. It’s been so long.

RT: On board Evans or similar destroyers what kind of physician did you have? Did you have a regular doctor or did you have a corpsman?
JD: We had a doctor, Dr. G.H. Hannigers. I can remember him well. He still lives out in the Pacific Northwest. He could take care of most problems that we had unless it was s surgical procedure, such as appendix. If someone had to have an appendix removed he couldn’t do that because he didn’t have the facilities. We would get alongside a carrier someplace and transfer the patient over so it could be done at the carrier or so we could get them ashore somehow to a hospital or someplace where it would have to be done. He could take care of setting bones or things like that. That was about the extent of it.

RT: You said that you remembered him well. Did you have any kind of an experience with him that would cause you to remember him that well?
JD: Let me tell you Dr. Hanniger’s secondary job on the ship was the guy who surveyed all the outgoing mail. Back when you had to have your mail examined so you wouldn’t be sending any secrets anywhere. He was the guy. I can see him sitting in the ward room now at the end of the table going through the mail. You wrote a letter, you put it in an envelope, you didn’t seal it. He went through the letter and made sure that there was nothing objectionable in the letter as far as the Navy was concerned, Navy activities. The letter got sealed and sent off the ship. He was our guy that did that.

RT: So what were you living conditions like aboard Evans?
JD: Living conditions were pretty descent. I lived in the forward officer’s quarters on the first deck below the main deck. Unfortunately that was the part where the six ensigns lived that later went down with the forward part of the ship off of Vietnam. Those people in those quarters did not survive the accident at sea. It was very
comfortable. There was two of us to a room. We had access to the main part of the ship by just going up one ladder, one inside ladder on the ship. We were in the wardroom area. Six of us down there and we had one shower. Like I said there was two to a room. We had double deck bunks, very comfortable. Had a little lavatory in the room. Had a nice place to store your underwear and your clothing. Got along pretty good that way.

Living conditions on a destroyer at that time were not all that bad. Now back on some of the cruise quarters the bunks I think got to be three high, which meant that instead of just one above—two-tiered, they were three-tiered. They were still comfortable. There was plenty of room, not like it would be on a submarine.

RT: Oh, no, which is much, much more cramped.

JD: That’s right.

RT: Especially the submarines at that time. During your time aboard the Evans what would you say was probably your most memorable experience?

JD: The most memorable experience probably was the night we had to go out when the Callaghan was sunk, probably the one that sticks with me most. Other than that I don’t think of any others that were really outstanding.

RT: I’m sure that having a living situation where you are in rather cramped conditions with several people for long stretches of time. There must have been some times where someone did something particularly entertaining or at least something humorous happened. Did you actually have any particularly memorable humorous experiences?

JD: One night and the officers—everybody aboard the ship played cards. One night in the wardroom a group of the officers were sitting around the ward room table and they were playing poker. Now they weren’t playing poker with any money. They were just playing poker. The captain who was Harry Smith, like I told you a kindly, a kindly gentleman. He was just as nice as you’d ever want to know. Captain Smith at night if he was called because of something happening at sea, like a contact or a ship or something or possibility of getting involved with another ship that was ahead of us or around, the first thing he would do was his quarters were immediately forward of the CIC (combat information center). Captain Smith wore pajamas every night. If he was called he picked up his cap, his commander’s cap, put it on and walked back out of his quarters and into
the CIC where he could see the overall picture without having to go clear up to the bridge. He could find out exactly what was going on. Captain Smith was that kind of a guy. The night that the guys were around the wardroom table playing poker, Captain Smith was just walking around the deck. It was late at night. He was in his pajamas and he had his cap on. He looked in one of the portholes that you could see into the wardroom. He saw the guys playing poker. He knew poker from any other card game, he could tell. He walked in and said, “Gentlemen, don’t let me ever see this again,” and turned around and walked out. I want to tell you, he never saw it again. That’s all he had to say. He was a very understanding person, but everybody aboard the ship knew Captain Smith meant business when he said something. He was very fond, believe it or not of Avocet. Now Avocet was something like canned milk. In the morning we had something like oatmeal, prepared cooked cereal of some sort. Captain Smith always liked to have Avocet on his cooked cereal. The supply officer Jack Wassimer always made sure when he went into resupply the ship when we were in port he always made sure that he got a couple of cases of Avocet for Captain Smith.

RT: Well, you have to keep the captain happy.
JD: That’s right. He was a great one. I tell you I couldn’t have had a nicer commanding officer. I can’t say that for all of them. Some of them were very inept really or what I would consider inept. He was a very bright man. He had a lot of experience prior to taking command of the Evans. He knew the sailing business real well, very good.

RT: Since you were on the ship, before shake down and during shake down and from there on, shake down everyone is getting accustomed to a new ship. Were there any particularly humorous experiences during your shake down cruise?
JD: No, I don’t know of any particular humorous ones. We did have some breakdowns of some of the equipment. During shake down they take the ship out at sea. Actually you have a required full speed run for an hour or something like that. They actually crank this ship up to its highest speed and all kinds of readings are made to make sure the propulsion system is operating at its best. Under those conditions we might have had some humorous things, but I’m not aware of any. I remember we used to have an old chief commissary steward on the ship. I don’t even remember his name. He used to love
to fish. Anytime the ship was in port, even during shake down when we get to go in like
to Guantanamo Bay or something at night, he’d be on the fantail of the ship fishing. At
sea, since he was the chief commissary steward on the ship he had access to all kinds of
left over foods and things of that nature. I’ve seen him go back with a piece of beef that
was no longer useable and put it on a big hook and drag it behind the ship. Sometimes
even while the ship was underway he loved to fish for sharks. He would get a shark
occasionally now and then. I don’t know how he did it, but somehow he would strip the
shark and whatever kind of fish he would get it had a backbone to it, a spine. Get down
to the place where he ended up with a spine of fish that he would make into a walking
stick. Now, he’d been in the Navy too long.

RT: That is really unusual.

JD: It sure is.

RT: I understand that you had an experience with the ship’s whistle.

JD: When the ship was in commission or we got underway for the first time after
the commissioning we were at a pier in Brooklyn, New York. There were four brand
new destroyers all one division, destroyer division. It so happened that Captain Harry
Smith, my skipper, was the senior captain. Well, the way things go in the Navy the guy
that’s the most senior he gets to do things first. We had a ship outboard of us if you
know what I mean. We were alongside a pier and on the starboard right side against a
pier. On the left side was another destroyer just like ours tied to us. Because captain was
a senior guy they had to spring the other ship out away. I forget what they call doing
that. Anyhow they release the lines long enough that we can slip out from the ship
between the ship and the shore or the pier. We were ready to get underway and Captain
Smith was going to lead us out. We were going to go down for our shake down, down to
Guantanamo. I was at that particular time an anti-submarine officer I would have
absolutely nothing to do as far as sonar was concerned. So I was made the junior officer
of the deck. The junior officer of the deck, all he did was take orders from the senior
officer of the deck. So we were on the bridge in what we call our getting underway
condition. The captain was standing up on top of the pilothouse in his splendor. He was
a very nice looking man, very stately. He was standing there so that he could see behind
us and around us before we backed out into the east river. When we were ready to go and
he started the engines in reverse so that we could slowly start to back out, the procedure
is to give one prolonged blast on the whistle so that the people coming up and down
stream know that there’s a ship backing out. Well, when we got ready to go Captain
Smith said to Lieutenant Young, the officer on the deck, “Sound one prolonged blast.”
Lieutenant Young said to Ensign Druckemiller, “Sound one prolonged blast.” On the
front of the pilothouse was a big lever. You pulled down on that lever and that sounded
the whistle. The whistle was a steam whistle attached to the number one stack on the
ship, the front of it. When I pulled down on the lever to sound the one prolonged blast a
column of water came out of that whistle. It was about four inches in diameter and hit
the captain right in the face. His cap fell off. I can to this day hear him say, “Hey, what’s
going on?” It seemed as though the diaphragm of the whistle had failed and allowed
enough steam to leak up through the whistle, which had condensed. The whistle actually
contained a column of cold water at that time which is the blast that the captain got in the
face. Fortunately I didn’t get blamed for it. It was one of those things that you
experience on a shake down that had to be fixed.

RT: When you were at sea and whenever you pulled in to various ports, did you
ever visit Suruga Bay?

JD: What was that? Suruga Bay. Yeah, we had an opportunity to spend a
couple, three days. They drew straws, sent some of us ashore to a little R&R Suruga Bay
I think he called it. We were down there for awhile just to enjoy ourselves. Of course
there was plenty to drink and plenty to eat, nice food, all prepared by the Japanese. We
enjoyed ourselves there. I tell you that’s the only R&R type thing that I really had an
opportunity to take while serving on the ship.

RT: Who ran the facility?

JD: The facility was run by the Army.

RT: That must have been interesting to have the Army serve the Navy.

JD: The Army used Japanese people to serve the Navy. They didn’t do it
themselves, but that’s exactly the case. The Army did have control of all those facilities.

RT: You had mentioned on your way towards Okinawa that you had stopped off
in Guam. Were there any facilities there?
JD: In Guam we stopped in Apra Harbor. They had thousands and thousands of people going in and out of Guam at that time, Army, Navy and all. The only facility that we had at that time to enjoy was to get off the ship for a brief time and go ashore. They had a big Quonset hut, a huge Quonset hut. They served beer. The guys all wanted to go in there and get a can of beer. The only trouble was they didn’t have any ice to cool the beer so it was all hot beer. The building of course was about 120 degrees inside, and the beer was about the same temperature. That was the extent of it in Guam. Guam was very warm.

RT: You would think that with so much beer it would have been a popular place.

JD: That’s right.

RT: That must have been an interesting experience to have beer that warm.

JD: That was. It was not very good, but they had it available. It seems that now and then that can of beer was important to a lot of people, I don’t know. I’m not that much of a beer drinker myself, but I know back in those days I think it was more or less the change, something different to do.

RT: A break from routine at the very least.

JD: Break up the routine, exactly.

RT: While you were at sea, did you write to friends and family very often?

JD: As often as I could, yes. We had a lot of time to do things like that. The only problem was we never knew when we wrote the letter when it was going to get off the ship because you had to be certain places like I say alongside the carrier or tanker or someplace where you could transfer mail where you knew that it was going to be moving back toward home.

RT: Did your friends or family write letters to you very often?

JD: Got a lot of letters from home. Usually all in bunches.

RT: Was it mostly your family who wrote to you?

JD: My family, yes, and friends, a few friends that I had acquired over the years. I had some letters sent. Most of it was family activity.

RT: So you got a lot of news from home?

JD: Got all the news from home that I could handle.

RT: It was almost like having newspaper delivery?
JD: Exactly.

RT: Now we did have capability we had magazines that were subscribed to. I don’t know the Navy or somebody that would come in with the mail that people got to look at. No newspapers and such. We printed our own little newspaper on the ship. The communications department had the capability of picking up a news broadcast or news type programs. In those days the guys had to sit and copy that news by listening to dots and dashes. They don’t anymore. It goes through like facsimile and e-mail and every other thing. The guys within the radio shack would prepare a newsletter, usually each day that would tell us what was going on, most of the important happenings.

RT: Since you worked in the communications department for most of your time aboard Evans did you ever have an opportunity to listen to Tokyo Rose or anything similar?

JD: I never heard Tokyo Rose although some of those people did out there. Late at night particularly when there was not much traffic being exchange the radio operators had the freedom to tune around and listen to things like that. They probably heard things like that, I never did.

RT: Oh, okay. During your time aboard Evans or at least during your time in the service, what sorts of awards or citations or commendations did you receive?

JD: I got about eight or ten area campaign medals. I acquired some of those during my trip on the Evans. Then I acquired a few more when I was recalled in 1950. See I spent another two years back in the service having been recalled in 1950. I went back to another ship that was almost identical to the Evans and spent the greater part of two years aboard that ship. Well, aboard two ships, that one and another one later on. I spent three months, four months aboard it. So I acquired a campaign medal. I did not acquire any major medals of any kind other than the Korean Presidential Unit Citation and everybody got that during Korea. So that was the extent of it.

RT: What do you think about your experiences now when you look back on your time aboard the Frank E. Evans?

JD: My experience was a good one. I knock on wood occasionally that I didn’t get hurt. Nobody on the ships that I served in lost their life. I was fortunate. We had some accidents, but nobody was seriously injured. It was an experience that naturally I’ll
never forget. In fact I appreciated what the Navy provided for me during that time so much that I sent a total, a total now of twenty-six and a half years in the Naval Reserve. After I left the service after Korea even, I continued on in the Naval Reserve. For a number of years I represented the Naval Academy in this area of northeastern Indiana, southern Michigan and northwestern Ohio as what they call a blue and gold officer. I was available to consult with young men who were interested in knowing how to get in the Naval Academy. I did that for a period of years before my total retirement from the service, which took place in 1970.

RT: You remained very active in the Navy.
JD: I remained active in the Reserve program pretty much so yes. When I lived in Marion as I told you I made many, many trips back and forth between Marion and Muncie where there was a Naval Reserve training center, now the school of architecture for Ball State University.

RT: During your time aboard Evans, did you collect any souvenirs?
JD: I’ve got some souvenirs. I’ve got a Japanese rifle. I’ve got a Japanese parachute flare flag. Not the flag, a flare parachute. A silk parachute that is used to drop one of those things that makes a lot of light. I forget what you call them. It wasn’t an incendiary, but it was like a phosphorous type material that they would use. They could fire it up in the air and it would come down slowly and it would provide a tremendous amount of light.

RT: Like a starburst?
JD: Starburst, yes. Similar to that. This was the silk parachute that would be used to cause that to float down slowly. I’ve got one of those.

RT: How did you come by these?
JD: I came by them at the end of the service they sent us up in the northern part of the Sea of Japan really trying to rescue Jonathon Waynewright. We were up in that area and got a chance to go ashore up in that area to see what was going on. That was the extent of it. I picked up a few fragments at that point in time, a few little pieces of memorabilia.

RT: Do you have any other comments about wither your time in the service or your time aboard Frank E. Evans?
JD: Had a rather interesting trip to the west side of Korea at the end of the war. They sent us up to—I’ve got to be careful. I get World War II and Korea mixed in my mind, even with my friends I’ve developed in both of those places. Had an interesting trip up to a little town called Ongjin, O-N-G-J-I-N on the West Coast of Korea where we had heard that the Japanese had stored a lot of bombs and things of that type to use against the U.S. Navy if we attacked the mainland. Well, we never got that far of course because the atomic bomb stopped it from being that close. We were set up there with a Japanese mine sweeper. These guys were sent ashore to destroy. They were experts in destroying in ordinate work. They were there to destroy the ordinates that had been stored up there so it would no longer be hazardous to the people. I got to go on that trip. We were inland about four or five days in this little town. Just a short ways inland where we established kind of a camp in a cabin that was there. These Japanese people took these bombs and things and brought them out of caves and put them in a big hole out in the middle that had been established that they would explode them to destroy them. That was kind of a unique experience. That happened anyhow.

RT: When did you first hear about the collision between Evans and Melbourne?

JD: After I left the service, remember I had kept in pretty close contact with most of my friends, people that I knew had served at the same time I did. Of course they started some newsletters going around that told us about interesting things that may have happened. I think I learned about the collision through something like that and the newspaper articles that I saw where they reported the collision.

RT: What were your first thoughts?

JD: I was really disturbed. I thought that’s an unfortunate circumstance and there’s a nice ship that got the worst of it. The bad part about it at that particular time they weren’t quite sure about the loss of life, but it became to be substantial. That was the sad part about the whole thing.

RT: You’ve maintained close contact with your shipmates still?

JD: I’ve maintained close contact with many of my shipmates for fifty years. Still to this day, I just got a message just yesterday on email that one of the officers that I associated with on the ship his name was Fine, Jerome Fine. He was the assistant communications officer. He lived in New Jersey that he had passed away.
RT: Yes, I learned about that yesterday.
JD: Did you?
RT: Yeah.
JD: Jerry was a nice guy. We had to laugh about him. He was perpetually seasick. That was the worst part about it, but he was a nice guy. I kept in contact with him ever since we got out of the service.
RT: Someone tells me, it may have been you that Mr. Fine had let’s just say a crush on June Allison.
JD: It wasn’t me.
RT: Someone told me he often would refer to her as his girlfriend and that he had pictures of her.
JD: That sounds like something Eldon Keeler would have told you.
RT: Well, it’s most unfortunate that he passed.
JD: Yes. It was a sudden thing. The message I got indicated that he had a brain aneurysm or something of that nature which was rather quick.
RT: That’s my understanding from the family, yes. Well, I thank you very much for your time Mr. Druckemiller. We hope to see you again soon.
JD: Well, thank you. I was going to ask you one little thing here. Now the fella that I met at the convention, or the reunion, not the convention, the reunion, his name was Frankum.
RT: Yes, Ron Frankum.
JD: Is he still associated with this study?
RT: No, he has departed the archive.
JD: I kind of wondered since your name became a new one for me. I didn’t know what had happened to him. Well, that’s fine.
RT: We’re sad to see him go.
JD: I just want you to take care of my buddy Bobby Knight. I graduated from Purdue and he was the coach at Indiana. Of course we had nothing, but a battle up here all the time he was there.
RT: He’s behaved himself very well here.
JD: That’s good. I tell you what he can do a lot for a university. He has a name following that’s pretty good.