Robert Tidwell: This is Robert Tidwell speaking with Mr. Paul E. Ward who had served on *U.S.S. Frank E. Evans* from the 1940’s into the early 1950’s [February to October 1945]. Today is the 28th of July at approximately 9:00 in the morning Central Time. Just to start off Mr. Ward what was your childhood like in Columbus?

Paul Ward: I mainly remember the Depression. I grew up through the Depression. Had several boyfriends that we palled around with practically all the way through grade school and high school. I had an enjoyable life at that time even though things were tough. I look back on those now, had a lot of good times. We were poor, didn’t have much money. We all had little jobs here and there to try to make a nickel or a dime.

RT: How many siblings did you have?

PW: I had two brothers and a sister.

RT: Were they working jobs here and there as well?

PW: They were younger than me I was the oldest. Of course at that time the jobs I had were little trivial jobs. I carried papers and I also mopped the floors in a barbershop and did their windows weekly. The same way in a drug store.

RT: That’s pretty amazing that you did all of that and you went to school.
PW: The barbershop I did on Sunday because he was closed on Sunday. The
drug store I did early in the morning right after they opened up before they were too busy.
I had time to take care of the floors.
RT: There are very few kids today who would find the time to both work and go
to school. Not only work and go to school, but work two jobs.
PW: That’s right. I know. We used to play outside, now you hardly ever see
anybody playing outside anymore. Seems like they’re all inside working on their
computers.
RT: During your childhood did you ever give any kind of thought to ever joining
the military? Did you have any friends or relatives during your childhood who had
served?
PW: No, I didn’t.
RT: What prompted you eventually to go into the Navy?
PW: I think on my questionnaire that you gave me I stated that I was in high
school. Back in those days some of the fellows as soon as they turned 17, they joined the
National Guard. I had a friend who was in the Naval Reserve. He kept talking about
that. As soon as I turned 17, I enlisted in the Naval Reserve. That’s where you would go
to drill one night a week. In the summer time we would take a two-week cruise up on the
Great Lakes.
RT: What kind of vessel did you use on those cruises?
PW: The cruise up on the Great Lake was an old converted passenger ship. I still
have a picture of it. When they changed it over to a military type ship it was called the
_U.S.S. Wilmette._ I think that’s the name of a town someplace. It was just an old
converted passenger ship that we did our duty on for a two-week period. Of course back
in those days the starting pay when I went in to the Navy was $21.00 a month. When we
took the two-week cruise I got two week pay for that. Plus of course the food and things
like that, the necessities.
RT: That was pretty good deal especially at that time.
PW: Back at that time, it was yes.
RT: What kind of things did you do on these cruises?
PW: I only took the one cruise. My first and only cruise before I went into active duty was in 1939. They put me down in the fire room where the boilers are. I didn’t volunteer they just put me down there. That’s how I ended up doing that kind of work. We had to stand our four-hour watch. You’d be on duty four hours, then you’d be off eight. I don’t remember a whole lot now what I did when I was off other than of course eat and sleep. Probably had a few other things to do too, but I don’t recall just what they were other than just standing my regular four-hour watch. We’d cruise around up there on Lake Michigan. I remember on the weekend we went into a port, I think it was called Petoskey, Michigan where we got chance to go ashore. Had a lot of fun at 17 (laughs).

RT: So that’s where you had your introduction to working in boilers?

PW: Yes, right.

RT: Then it just went on from there, every other assignment was in boilers?

PW: Of course when I went on active duty that was my classification. I was considered a fireman at that time. I went right aboard the ship my duty was down in the fire room.

RT: What did you do in the fire room?

PW: In the fire room, I don’t know how familiar you are with those. The first ship I went aboard was in 1940. It was an old four-stack destroyer that had been built in 1919. Of course the war had ended by that time. They had a lot of those four stackers and the de-commissioned them. Long about 1939 or ’40 I don’t remember which they started putting those back in commission again. I guess they could see the war cloud. When I went aboard and was assigned to the fire room, there were two boilers. Two fire rooms with two boilers in each fire room. The fireboxes had 14 burners, oil fired. One of the first jobs I had was watching a steam gauge and controlling the amount of oil going into a particular firebox.

RT: How was the oil introduced in the firebox? Was it sprayed in there?

PW: It’s pumped. We had the old reciprocating pumps. The oil had to be preheated in order to light the fire to start with after we raised the steam pressure up to 250 pounds I believe we carried at that time. These burners were kind of like a barrel, like a foot and a half long. On the end of the barrel was a plug and sort of a sprayer plate. The oil went in there on kind of an angle and of course ignited just as soon as it went in
because the fire was already going at that time. I just kept on. Continuously you kept
burning oil. Using more burners, the faster speed they required naturally we had to cut
down more burners to maintain a specific amount of steam pressure. When the ship
would slow down naturally we’d get the order through the enunciator. Then we’d have to
reduce the amount of the oil input going into the firebox

RT: Then after that did you receive further training in your particular duty
working with the boilers?
PW: I stayed in that. Like I said I was on that ship for four years that four
stacker. Had the same duties. I eventually had promotions I ended up I was in charge of
the fire room. It was my main duty then to see that all the other people in that particular
fire room were doing their jobs correctly. So I became a water tender. That was what
you eventually attained after being a fireman. I think I became a water tender in 1942. I
actually became a water tender first class. That’s what I was when I was transferred in
October of ’44 to what they called new construction. I was assigned to a new destroyer, a
brand new one which ultimately became the Frank E. Evans.

RT: Ok, so she was still under construction when you were assigned?
PW: Yes, still under construction.
RT: So this is even before her commissioning and everything? So you’re a plank
owner then?
PW: I’m a plank owner. I think I might have mentioned this before when I first
talked to you. When I was first assigned to the Frank E. Evans I was in Norfolk,
Virginia. Took the train up to Staten Island, New York. The ship was being built by the
Bethlehem Steel Works. For a few weeks, this was probably in December of ’44 for a
few weeks I lived in a rooming house. Each morning we would report down some place
in Staten Island. It was an old converted house, they were using it as a school. They had
kind of an instructor there who would teach us a lot about the newer ships. I think prior
to going on being assigned to the Evans I think in my questionnaire I marked down oil
burning school. I was looking at my old discharge papers today and it says water tenders
school. That was a school in Philadelphia. I did six weeks there to kind of update me so
to speak. Going from a ship that was built in 1919 to one being commissioned in ’45
there was quite a difference. A lot more modernization from one ship to the other.
RT: An entirely different design as well.

PW: Yes, much larger. Still had four boilers and the two fire rooms. But the steam pressure on the Evans was 615 pounds. We also had what they called super heated steam. You could send the steam through some other series of tubes to increase the temperature up to 850 degrees, which would allow them to make more speed and perform more efficiently.

RT: That would generate an incredible amount of pressure.

PW: Yes. Actually as far as the number of burners, were quite fewer on the Evans. I look back on that four stacker we had 14 burners. I tell some of these younger guys, they can’t believe that. Where as on the Evans we had a grand total of seven. We had what they called a divided furnace. A saturated side and a super heated side. On the saturated side we had four burners. On the super heated side we had three burners. Sometimes we would cruise without even using the super heater. Until they needed more speed.

RT: Then you would just light those additional.

PW: We’d have to light off the super heated side. Slowly bring the temperature up from what the temperature was. Checking back in some of my old books on 615 pounds of steam pressure, saturated temperature was 489 degrees. So when you’d light the super heater off, the steam would go through those too. We would increase it at a very slow rate up to a temperature of 850 degrees which made for a much more efficient operation and higher speeds.

RT: Going back to what you had said about your living conditions at that time. You said you lived in a boarding house, were you there with other military men?

PW: Just one other guy that was assigned to our ship was living at the same place. That was strictly boarding, rooming really. There was no food connected there. At that time they gave us so much money in order to buy our food because we weren’t aboard a ship or anything. I slept there and I ate in restaurants until the time the ship was commissioned when we went aboard it to live. He was the only one on the Evans that lived in that place. They kind of had a skeleton crew that was up there going to this additional school there in Staten Island. The fellows lived around various places.
RT: I would say you still had an opportunity to get to know those few select men pretty well?

PW: Right. Most of the ones in the advanced crew were engineers either in the engine room or the fire room.

RT: Getting accustomed to this new ship?

PW: Yes.

RT: When you first entered into the Naval Reserve did you ever give any thought to destroyers before hand?

PW: No, I don’t think I knew what a destroyer was.

RT: So whenever they told you that you were going to destroyers you said, “ok”?

PW: The way that all happened in 1940, early 1940 because I had graduated from high school and I had a job and still going to drill one night a week. They began asking for volunteers where we could enlist for three months up to a period of one year. I thought that would be a good way for me to find out if I liked the Navy. I signed up for six months. In July of ’40 is when I left home. I didn’t go to boot camp. I left home one day, got in Norfolk the next day and the second day after leaving home I was aboard the Ellis, which was the old four stacker. That was quite an experience.

RT: What were your classes like? Was it mostly books or did you have some hands on training to go along?

PW: The classes I had at the water tender school was a combination. We had books and they also had a mock boiler set up and everything there in Philadelphia. In the Philadelphia Navy Yard it looked just like a boiler aboard the Evans. They had the burners and everything. They would draw the steam down where you’d have to cut the burners in. We had actual training as well as books. Had an instructor that would also teach. That went on for about six weeks.

RT: When was the first time that you actually stepped into the boiler room on Evans?

PW: Prior to it being commissioned I’m trying to remember now probably in late December or early January. At that time the Evans had been launched but not commissioned. They were still working on it down in the engineering spaces. It was
pretty well finished. The instructor that we had there in Staten Island would give us little
problems to go aboard and find a specific valve down in the boiler room.

RT: To make sure that you knew where everything was in this new ship?
PW: Yes.

RT: So you had it pretty well committed to memory by the time you got in there?
PW: Yes. Of course a lot of it was familiar. The main difference between the
old destroyer and the new one was the super heater. That was the main difference and of
course carrying more steam pressure. All your theory was the same.

RT: Other than being a bit more modern, the vessels was largely the same?
PW: Yes, I used to say it was like going from hell to heaven the difference
between those two ships because of the difference in ages. The living conditions were
much better on the Evans than what they were on the Ellis.

RT: With fewer boilers?
PW: We had the same number of boilers, but fewer burners.

RT: Ok. With fewer burners.
PW: They had fewer burners and they had a valve. We called it a micrometer
valve. We could adjust the oil pressure to the burners from like 75 pounds up to like 350
pounds. So you could really do a lot of adjustment with just the micrometer valve. Of
course you didn’t need as many burners.

RT: With fewer burners was it relatively cooler than it was in the old four
stacker?
PW: It was much cooler in the new one because the boilers were encased. The
fire room itself, it’s atmospheric pressure. Whereas on the old four stacker we were all
under pressure because we had to go through an air lock to get into the fire room.
Whether you’re familiar with an air lock or not, as soon as you open the hatch a bell rings
down at the bottom of the air locker to inform people down there that the hatch is open.
As you go down into the air lock, you would close that hatch and then open the other one.
Because all the air that was supplied to the burners was the same air that we were getting.
The whole fire room was under pressure. I’m trying to think. The new ship, the fire
room the boilers were encased. All the air went in between the casing and the boilers.
The old ship the whole thing was under air pressure. It was much hotter in the old boiler room too in comparison with the new one.

RT: How were your living conditions aboard the ship, where you bunked?
PW: The living conditions were not too bad. On the old four stacker our bunks and our mess tables were in the same area. We did not have a regular chow hall. We ate and slept in the same compartment. Whereas on the Evans we had a regular chow hall that was separate from the living area. It was much more healthy.

RT: Did you have more room on the Evans was it a roomier ship?
PW: It was larger to some extent. Carried a few more men. As far as riding out in the ocean, the waves there wasn’t a whole lot of difference there. They still rolled a lot.

RT: So where aboard Evans were you quartered? Were you in the forward section?
PW: I was in the after section.

RT: Whereabouts?
PW: Clear at the extreme end. The after part of the ship was divided as I recall into two different living quarters. I was clear back where the fantail is.

RT: What was an average day like on the Evans?
PW: An average day if we were at sea was to stand your four-hour watch. Which could be 4:00 in the afternoon until 8:00. Then you’d go back at 4:00 in the morning until 8:00. It was called four on and eight off. That was an average day. Of course we ate at specific times at each day. If you happened to be on watch when it was time to eat, the crew that was coming on next would come down and relieve you so you could go have your food and then you’d go back and finish up your watch. Other than standing watch and eating at sea there wasn’t a whole lot that we did. We could read you know or sleep. There wasn’t a whole lot of turn to work to be done at that time because all the engineering spaces were all operating.

RT: Typically what did you do on a watch, a consistent watch?
PW: You would maintain the steam pressure. The water tender in charge would make sure everything was going ok and every hour we had to fill out a log indicating the temperatures and the pressures. Then of course the other water tender would have to
watch the water in the boilers, keep it at the proper level. Normal steaming it would go
along and there wouldn’t be a whole lot to do, especially if you kept it at one speed
because you had everything pretty well set. If you had to speed up or slow down then
you’d have to change the number of burners that you had and the amount of oil pressure
going to the burners.

RT: So on a fairly uneventful cruise, it could get pretty dull I would imagine?
PW: Yes.
RT: Then you’d look for things to entertain yourself.
PW: If you were off watch and you weren’t sleeping we had magazines we’d
pass around or read books. Each evening they’d show a movie in the mess hall. The
ones that weren’t on watch if they chose, they couldn’t put us all in there at one time. A
lot of us would go in and watch the movie.
RT: You said that you would read books. Did you have some sort of a library
aboard ship?
PW: No we didn’t have a library.
RT: So these were just books that people had brought with them.
PW: In the destroyer they’re very limited in space. We didn’t have a library.
RT: I didn’t know whether you had a small shelf of books.
PW: I don’t recall that at all. Everybody seemed like when we were in when they
went on liberty they’d maybe buy a magazine or two or a book. They’d get passed
around to everybody eventually.

RT: I imagine you would have the same movies over again until you reached
port.
PW: Sometimes we were able to, I don’t know how they did it now. We would
exchange movies with the other ships that were with us.
RT: So, just as the books and magazines got passed around from person to
person, the movies would get passed around from ship to ship.
PW: That’s right.
RT: How long were you in before you were sent to the Pacific theatre?
PW: The Frank E. Evans was commissioned in February of 1945. We did our
shake down cruise down in Guantanamo Bay. On May the 8th, which happened to be VE
Day we were going though the Panama Canal headed to the west coast. Along the way we didn’t even stop on the west coast side of the United States. We continued on to Pearl Harbor where we did some more shake down and firing of the guns and so forth. This was of course as I said in May of ’45. We continued going on further west stopping off at the Marshall Islands, had some recreation there.

RT: When you had this gunnery practice, when you were in Hawaii did you have some kind of a target?

PW: I’m trying to remember. Most of the time when that was going on I was down in the boiler room. I think it seems to me like they towed targets. They also had some aerial gunneries. It seemed like it was being towed by a plane. I can’t remember exactly what they were using for targets.

RT: You could probably hear all this when you were down below?

PW: Yes. We had five-inch guns on the Evans, which were pretty loud.

RT: Normally would there be much noise in the boiler room?

PW: Just more of a vibration is all. Of course we pretty well knew that we were going to be having gunnery practice. Being down in the boiler room it wasn’t a whole lot noisier than what it is normally. If you happened to be up on deck. I was up on deck a few times when they fired the guns. They always advised us to put cotton in our ears. Even though they were only five-inch guns they were still pretty loud. They jerked your head pretty good too when they went off.

RT: I would imagine. After you had received word that you were going to the Pacific what was the first engagement of first combat duty?

PW: Like I say we I’m trying to remember the dates. We were going through the canal in May. Probably by the time we got out to Iwojima, which had already been secured, that was in July of ’45. The war for all intensive purposes right in that area was pretty well over because the Japanese had surrendered at that time on Iwojima. From Iwojima we went to Okinawa. That’s where a lot of the kamikazes were doing all their damage. We didn’t get there until early August, probably around the first of August. There wasn’t a whole lot going on there. They were still doing picket duty, running plane guard for the carriers. There wasn’t a whole lot going on at that time. Of course I think it
was around the early part of August was when we first heard about the atomic bomb being dropped.

RT: So what were your reactions when you heard the news of the atomic bombings?

PW: We were pretty happy. We thought maybe this is going to end the war because right at that time we were massing. They were getting more ships in everyday there in Okinawa. I know at that time we were probably massing for the invasion of Japan, which I heard later on was set for November of that year. When we heard about that I was very happy about it. I think a few days later, they dropped the other one. Then shortly after that of course there was surrender. I was real glad about that.

RT: What kind of humorous experiences if any do you remember from your time either aboard Evans or even before then?

PW: I know I didn’t have anything listed on my questionnaire. I think probably the most humorous I remember was aboard the Ellis. That was the old DD I was on. When we crossed the equator of course all the fellows who had never done that they were called pollywogs. The old timers who had been across it before they were the shellbacks. So they put us through a lot of different initiations. As much as they could do on a small destroyer. They had the hoses and they were squirting us with them and making us do various little tricks. Kind of an initiation, a little bit of hazing. Nobody got hurt but that was kind of funny in hindsight.

RT: In hindsight. During that initiation did you have the court of Neptunis Rex and all that?

PW: Another funny thing was we had one fellow on there he was Boatswin’s mate. He was an old timer. He probably had around 16 years in at that time. He had quite a belly on him. He was called some kind of a baby or something. Anyway he was dressed up like a baby. Just had a thing around him like a diaper. He was sitting there in a chair and us pollywogs had to go over and kiss him on the belly. Some of the guys didn’t want to do that. Of course they had these things they looked like socks I don’t know what they had in them. They’d whack them with that. Everybody finally got the message. In order to stop them from doing that, they’d kiss him on the belly. That was kind of funny.
RT: I could picture it. Just picturing it, it seems very, very humorous. I’m surprised you didn’t break out in laughter at that point.

PW: Probably did you know? I do remember that though. In fact I go on a Navy reunion every year with a lot of the guys from the old four stacker. We talk about that all the time.

RT: There are some events that will be forever burned into your memory I could see how that one would be.

PW: Yes.

RT: As part of your training especially on Evans, did you ever receive any kind of emergency training in the event that the ship had struck a mine or it was damaged, what have you?

PW: I know we used to have drills, collision drills. I don’t remember having any for striking mines.

RT: I just meant any kind of emergency in general, especially like a collision drill.

PW: We had collision drills and we had fire drills. That’s the two things. They would pull those off occasionally to keep everybody on their toes. We all had stations to go to whenever we were notified.

RT: So your station would have been the boiler room?

PW: My station was always down in the boiler room. Anytime there was anything going on really I never did really witness anything. I could hear it. At that time I was a smoker we’d just light up another cigarette and drink our coffee and say, “If we get hit, we get hit”. That’s the way we looked at it back then.

RT: That’s a pretty good attitude.

PW: That’s the way we felt. We wouldn’t have stood much of chance being down there in the boiler room if we got hit.

RT: So you didn’t get to see much of port during your time on Evans?

PW: On Evans, I’m trying to remember we didn’t get a whole lot of liberty. Prior to the war ending we got a little liberty of course there in Pearl Harbor before we went on further west. I don’t remember having any liberty after that until the war ended unofficially I guess it was. Really in August we got little bit of liberty there. We went to
Korea right after the war ended in ’45 and had some liberty there. I don’t remember too much liberty off of the Evans once we got out in the Pacific.

RT: When you were in Pearl Harbor on your way west, what did you do? Did you walk around Pearl Harbor?

PW: We went down. Of course like most young sailors we frequented the bars. Just walked around, did a little bit of sight seeing. Went down there onto Waikiki Beach and looked around a little bit there.

RT: Did you happen to see the remains of Arizona when you were down there?

PW: Yes, I did.

RT: What was your first reaction?

PW: I kind of knew what to expect because I’d seen pictures and everything. It was kind of sad. I have since been out there. I went out there a few years ago to Hawaii. We went aboard the memorial part where you can still see oil coming to the surface from the Arizona. I had a couple of friends from high school that were killed on the Arizona.

RT: That’s pretty amazing. You go all that way out into the Pacific and you actually get to see where people you knew had.

PW: They’re probably still aboard the Arizona, their bodies.

RT: That’s amazing. You stayed in the Navy?

PW: I stayed on the Evans of course until the war ended. At that time you had to have so many points for discharge because my time was up. My enlistment and everything had run out long before that. I had enough points right at that time they classified me as a military necessity until they were able to bring another water tender aboard to relieve me. So I was on there probably another six weeks after the war ended before I was discharged. A number of us had enough points at that time. So we all went back. I’m trying to remember whether it was an APA or an AKA, kind of like a troop ship took us back to Portland, Oregon. From there I took the train to Toledo, Ohio.

That’s where I got my discharge in November of 1945.

RT: That was your discharge from active service? Then you went back into the Reserves?

PW: Actually my time in the Reserves was up, but then they reorganized the Reserve about a year later. I think it was in ’46. I signed up for another four years. This
has nothing to do with the Evans. Two months before my enlistment was up, June 25, 1950 occurred. You know what happened then of course, the Korean Thing. I had two months to go. Truman added 12 more months to it. They called that Truman’s year. I got recalled to active service again in 1950. Went aboard another ship, almost a sister ship to the Evans called the Cunningham. It was DD-752. I had to stay aboard that until my 14 months was up. Then when I got discharged that time I’d had enough of the Reserves. Because at that time I had been married and had a child. I didn’t want anymore to do with the Navy.

RT: You had a family at that point?
PW: I had one child. After I got discharged in ’45 in ’47 I got married and had a daughter born in ’49. So I had a little girl when I was recalled into the Navy.

RT: When you were aboard Evans you wrote home fairly frequently?
PW: I wrote to my mother, more so than my dad. She corresponded. I think I had a couple of my buddies. One of them in particular who was never called in because he had a heart problem. We kept in contact during the war.

RT: What was the mail delivery like? Did they come into your bunk area and then just start handing out mail?
PW: Yes, that’s what they would do. They would deliver the mail in bags. Sometimes we’d be out to sea, we’d get mail. It was quite a time period between each mail delivery. Of course we had one fellow who was considered the postman. I guess he would separate that by the different compartments. Then they’d send it down to the various compartments. They called off the names, they call off your name you’d pick up your mail. We were always happy to get mail.

RT: Yes, you get to have word from home what was going on back there. What kind of things would you often discuss in your letters?
PW: We couldn’t tell them where we were. Everything even before the mail went off one of the officer’s would read through the things. If you had anything in there, they’d cut it out anyway. About all you could do was say you were at sea. You couldn’t even name the area or anything like that. Tell them how much you missed them and everything and how you were doing. Just generalities.
RT: Then the letters from home would contain all kinds of news on what was going on.
PW: My mother she would talk about the food rationing, the food stamps they would have that they needed for various items. My dad would talk about he was only allowed so much gas per week.
RT: What did your dad do?
PW: He was a salesman.
RT: I could see how gas rationing would really affect him.
RT: Yes, he didn’t travel outside the city. He had kind of like a route.
Customers in a certain area of town that he would call on all the time. I guess he had enough gas that he was able to handle that ok.
RT: Since a lot of it was in the city, he could take a bus if one was available.
PW: That’s right. At that time I don’t know if we had any buses. I think it was all still streetcars here in Columbus.
RT: Street cars?
PW: We had streetcars even after the war for sometimes before we went to buses.
RT: That’s fairly rare. There are very few cities today that have a streetcar system.
PW: We don’t have any anymore. In ’45 and ’46 even up until ’50 we still had streetcars in Columbus.
RT: That’s amazing. Between the time that you were released from the Navy and when you were called in again that’s when you found your wife?
PW: Yes, right. Between the time I was discharged. Shortly after I was discharged I went to Business College. Took accounting and then after I graduated from the business college I secured a job with a company. About that time I met my wife. Shortly thereafter we were married.
RT: Had y’all ever met one another before?
PW: No. I didn’t meet her until... I’m trying to remember. I think where my dad worked he worked for a furniture company. They sold furniture and clothing, bedroom furniture and this and that. He was telling me about this young lady that worked there as a bookkeeper. So I became a little interested. He gave me her name and phone number.
So I called her up and made a date with her. We dated for about six or seven months. I asked her to marry me. That’s what happened.

RT: Then you had a daughter fairly shortly thereafter?

PW: I had a daughter I’m trying to remember. I was married in September of ’47. My first daughter was born in February of ’49.

RT: That’s right I believe on your questionnaire you said you had three children?

PW: Yes, two girls and a boy.

RT: Did any of them follow in your footsteps and go in to the Navy?

PW: No.

RT: Compared to the other ships on which you had served, what did you think of the Evans in comparison?

PW: Like I say the only other ship I served on prior to the Evans was the four stacker. The Evans was much nicer. Much better all the way around.

RT: What did you think of your crewmates?

PW: Got along well with the crewmates. Never had any problems with anybody. Most of us, there were a few little age differences but not all that much. I'd say probably on the Evans of course at that time that was in ’45. In ’45 I was 23 years old at that time. We had probably had a range. We had some younger fellows that had just come into the Navy of course. They were probably like 18. Probably up to 30 or 32 years old.

RT: That’s a pretty good range. When I first went aboard the Ellis of course I was only 18, we had some guys on there that were 32. We thought they were old men. We’d call them ‘pappy’.

RT: Whenever you were on Evans did any of these much younger fellows who were fairly new did any of them have nicknames for you? Did any of them call you pappy?

PW: No I was never called pappy. My nickname was Pew. My initials are P-E-W. As you can see. So they’d say peeeww.

RT: As far as nicknames go, that’s pretty mild.

PW: Yes. Of course there might have been some that called me something different to my back. I don’t recall having any problems with anybody. If they were, they were just minor.
RT: When you finally left Evans what did you think about your time aboard
ship? Were you a little bit sad to leave the Evans?

PW: No I was very, very happy. I wanted to get back to Columbus. I wasn’t sad
at all.

RT: You’d had enough of the sea for a while?

PW: I’d had enough. I still made that big mistake later then of going back in the
Reserves. Which wasn’t too bad now that I look back at it.

RT: That’s pretty interesting that you’d been in destroyers through your entire
time. Starting off in a four stacker, which alone must have been an interesting
experience. Even at that time the four stackers were obsolete.

PW: They were really. That’s about all they had. When World War II broke out,
they had a few newer destroyers. They mainly had a lot of old four stackers they put
back in commission. That’s about all they had there for awhile until they started turning
them out, the newer destroyers.

RT: Then to go from the four stacker and nothing really in between and then you
are introduced to a ship such as the Evans which was very new. The paint was hardly
dry.

PW: Yes. Another interesting thing about that on the four stacker, that was the
Ellis, E-L-L-I-S. It’s number was DD1-54. I went to the 754. That was kind of an
oddity I thought. Going from 154 to 754.

RT: That’s interesting. That’s one heck of a coincidence.

PW: Yes it is. Of course I have a big picture of the *Frank E. Evans* hanging on
the wall in my family room now.

RT: Is this a photograph or is this a painting?

PW: It’s a drawing. Sometime I can’t remember just when it was I saw an article
in a Navy magazine that you could order pictures of any ship you served on. I already
had a good photograph of the Ellis, the four stacker but I didn’t have anything on the
Evans. So I sent in for it. It’s an 8x10 but it’s a drawing more than it is a photo. It’s just
a drawing of a 2200-ton class destroyer, which they all looked alike anyway. Then they
just insert the number 754 in the proper location.
RT: I imagine with all of your boiler experience you were pretty handy at home during the winter whenever you had to light an oil boiler.

PW: That’s another story when I first came home from World War II, I wanted to continue doing that kind of work. Firing oil fired boilers. The only thing is they didn’t have anything like that here in Columbus. Everything was coal fired. I did that for about six months. I didn’t like that work shoveling coal.

RT: Shoveling coal I would imagine would be a lot less pleasant then simply turning a knob or a dial.

PW: Yes, after about six months of that, my younger brother had started going to Business College. Of course when I was in high school I had taken the commercial courses, bookkeeping, typing, shorthand. I thought I might as well take advantage of this GI Bill. That’s when I resigned from that job and I went to Business College. Then of course I became an accountant after I graduated from Business College. I didn’t get back into anymore oil burning stuff other than of course the time when they recalled me in ’50.

I had another year or so aboard the ship.

RT: By then it was still old hat.

PW: Really it came right back to me.

RT: Especially since this was a ship as you said was similar.

PW: They were identical. In fact like I told you it was 752. It was just two ships before the Evans was built up in the same area. You couldn’t tell one from the other.

Other than the number.

RT: So you could pretty much do your job in your sleep?

PW: Yes, at that time I could. I think now I could still probably light one of those off if I had to. It might take me a little time to think about the proper steps.

RT: So how would you light one to begin with?

PW: Well the first step I always remember. The first step in lighting off a boiler is to remove the smokestack cover. That might sound silly, but it has been done. People have forgotten to remove that smokestack cover. They don’t last very long once they light that fire. Then of course after you remove the smokestack cover, you’ve got to make sure there is a certain amount of water in the boiler. It would be fairly low, but it would still be in the sight glass. There wouldn’t be any heat to it. Then you would have
to start circulating the oil through an oil heater to bring the oil up. I think you had to get
the temperature of the oil up to like 150 degrees. That was the flash point. Circulate the
oil to that proper temperature then you’d light your torch and turn on one of your valves
through the burner. Get one burner lit and that’s all you would light. You were always
instructed to bring your steam pressure up very slowly so as not to do any damage to the
boiler itself. It would eventually start forming steam because you had a valve that was on
top of the boiler that you had to open prior to starting before lighting off, which was
called an air cock. As soon as the boiler formed steam you’d hear steam coming out of
the air cock. You’d close off the air cock and then bring your steam pressure up to the
normal, to what it’s supposed to be. At that time, you’re ready to go.

RT: I’d often wondered how the boilers were lit because I’ve read some books
where a ship had taken on water and they had to relight the boilers. I thought how do you
relight the boiler? Do you have some kind of special tool? You had said that you used a
torch. Did you have to actually insert the torch in the boiler?

PW: No. On the Evans we had a little hole that we stuck the torch into. As soon
as you turned the oil on of course you had to have your blowers going at the same time.
You had to have air. They would light right off.

RT: You could probably hear it.

PW: Yes, it would kind of make a little whooshing sound. You had little side
holes also that you could look right into the firebox. It didn’t take long to do that. On
that old four stacker, we didn’t need a torch. All we needed was a little rag. We’d lay to
over the burner soaked in kerosene I guess, light it. As soon as we turned the oil on the
air pressure that we had in the fire room itself would go right in with that. It would light
off right now too. It was a little bit different than it was on the newer ship.

RT: Yes, I think today they would call it a low-tech approach, using the rack.

PW: Another thing I don’t know. Maybe you’re familiar with it. They always
had a rule especially on that four stacker. Never light off your boiler off of a hot brick
wall. Sometimes when we would come into secure at that time we’d carry 250 pounds of
steam pressure steaming. When we’d go on auxiliary watch when we were in port we’d
let it drop down to 200 pounds. Sometimes that firewall would still be hot enough that
you could light that burner off without even using a match. That was a dangerous thing
to do though. You shouldn’t do it. Sometimes it would be hot enough you could still
light off that hot brick wall. You couldn’t do that on the Evans. You had to use a torch.

RT: So that’s how it’s done. That answers a lot of questions.

PW: Were you ever aboard any of those ships?

RT: No I can’t say that I was. I’ve read quite a bit about the oil-fired ships. I’ve
never seen any passage in any book where they mentioned how the lighting was actually
done or how the boiler system would actually operate.

PW: We had a lot of booklets back then. When I was first a fireman I would
study those. We had to take tests in order to get promotions up to the next rating. Had a
lot of good information in them. It was quite an experience.

RT: I would say so. As a plank owner of the Evans whenever she was
decommissioned were you ever offered any part of the Evans?

PW: I wasn’t on it. They decommissioned the Evans I don’t know what year,
probably between ’45 and ’50. Then when they put that back in commission that was
right practically next to the other ship I put in, in ’50. We operated together during the
Korean War. Then of course I don’t know if it was ever decommissioned again before it
was cut in half or not. I don’t know. I remember that happening because I still belong to
That happened in 1969.

RT: So what was your first reaction when you heard the news?

PW: That was sad, all the lives lost. Half of that went down, the other half they
used it for gunnery practice I understand afterwards.

RT: You definitely had an interesting career. Especially going all the way
through destroyers. Practically jumping from an antiquated destroyer straight into the
latest technology at the time.

PW: Yes, I tell you there’s such a difference. You can’t imagine the difference
really. You know today I belong to the Tin Can Sailors Association. They have a
number of World War II destroyers that are still what do they call them memorials?

RT: Yes.

PW: In various areas. Like they have one down in Baton Rouge Louisiana. The
Kidd. I went aboard that a few years ago with my wife and some of the old Navy
buddies. We were having a reunion down there. This was a ship that was built during
the ‘40s, during the war. It looked like an old model T to me. It was actually a pretty new
ship at the time that I went aboard it. I went aboard, well there’s been several. The
Kennedy is up in Falls River, Massachusetts. That’s that DD-850. It’s identical to the
Evans. Maybe a little bit different, practically the same. You look at those today and
how in the world did I ever live on anything like this? Of course when you’re a young
person you don’t think about all that.

RT: No. For one thing you have some sense I would say the adventure of what
you were doing. The sense of adventure anyway. You have so many other things to
occupy your mind. You don’t really think about those things until much later. I want to
thank you very much for you time and for speaking with me today. I wish you a very
good afternoon.

PW: You’re welcome.

RT: It’s fairly near.

PW: Well, it’s 11:00 here now. Have you gotten any rain out there?

RT: No we haven’t.

PW: We had another rainstorm last night here. We’ve had a very, very cool July.

It’s very unusual.