



## **William (Bill) Paul Wassmer**

United States Navy

Fireman First Class

Pacific Theater

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Interviewer:  
Rick Randle

**THIS INTERVIEW IS NOT EDITED FOR CONTENT, LANGUAGE OR HISTORICAL ACCURACY**

**Rick:** Tell us about your early experiences growing up and where you were on December 7th.

**Bill:** I grew up on a farm. My dad had a chicken farm and some pigs when I was young out on 5100 south and 900 east in Murray at that time. I was raised out there and went to Woodstock school and that's in the Granite School District. And then Irving Jr. High, which was in Holiday, which is no longer there, its Olympus High now. When I was young I worked in a slaughterhouse and I killed cows and horses, whatever it was I made ninety cents a week and the horses. The horses and the animals they killed were for mink fox and dog. Usually they were diseases or something was wrong with them. But I worked to work and I also milked cows and hoed corn for farmers, and I got paid very little but it was a lot of money for a kid in those days. My kids say "*ninety cents a week?*" I said for two bits I could buy every kid in my class some candy for twenty-five cents.

**Rick:** Movies were a dime in those days.

**Bill:** That's right. And we had to walk two and a half miles to go to a movie at the old Iris Theatre in Murray and they built a Murray theatre, and we'd walk over until I got a bicycle then I'd ride over and go to the shows.

**Rick:** Where were you on Pearl Harbor day on December 7th?

**Bill:** I can't remember exactly where I was. It probably didn't penetrate me too much when I was that young. My friend had an uncle that was in the army and he was in the Philippines and I guess when the war started, Pearl Harbor, I didn't think too much of it. I wanted to go in the Navy then to fight for the country then but it didn't penetrate me until this friend of mine told me his uncle was on the death march out of Corregidor and the more we talked (he was probably fifteen or sixteen), the more I wanted to go to war.

And so I worked at a lot of places when I was young. Before I went into the Navy I worked for the railroad. I worked for Walgreen's too. I brought in very little money, but at least I made enough to get by.

**Rick:** Did you get paid on those jobs?

**Bill:** Sometimes. But Walgreen's never did pay me.

**Rick:** Did you graduate from high school?

**Bill:** No, I went into the Navy before high school.

**Rick:** You got your parents to sign for you before the age of seventeen?

**Bill:** That's right. I went in August of 1944 and they sent me to San Diego boot camp. So I took the boot camp. Then they started to give me army training and I couldn't figure that out so I had a full pack and rifle and had to hike and go on my stomach up the hill and keep my head down and obstacle course and all this for the army. And I didn't realize I was getting what they call the amphibious corp. So you don't know if you're going to be on the land or sea so if you do get on land you're trained to fight and they put us through that. We learned out to fight with a knife and all this stuff for army training. We had to extend our boot camp for all this. Navy training in those days included sitting in a circle out in the bleachers with the sun on you and half asleep sometimes. But I went through that fine and it didn't bother me too much. We had a lot of things going on those days. We had the obstacle course on the march. We out did the marine on the marine base with our company at that time. So they sent us home for leave then I came back off of leave and ended up in Shoemaker California. I was suppose to board a ship and they put me as an alternate, when your last name has a "w" in it, you're going to be last to the shots, last to payroll, last of everything so I'd get everything for fleet landing and in those days you had your sleeping bag or your hammock, mattress, blanket and pillows. And you had to roll them and tie them around your seatback and you to pack them.

**Rick:** How much did they weigh?

**Bill:** I don't remember. It seemed like a hundred pounds. But you couldn't pack it too far because I use to pack a hundred pounds pretty easy and that was just awkward to pack anyway. You'd get back to fleet landing and they say "*alternate get back to your barracks.*" So I waited four ships and all of a sudden they gathered up all the alternates and put them on LCI's, which is landing craft infantry. I'd never seen the ocean and I didn't even know where I was going. They said, "*You're going to Hawaii.*" I said, "*Where's Hawaii?*" I had no idea. But they tried to find our ship and it was 2 o'clock in the morning they found our ship in San Pedro harbor and finally I got aboard and found a bunk. All of a sudden they woke me to tell me they were taking off. Here I didn't even know what kind of a ship I was on so you come out of that hole, and they backed up and came out of the bay.

**Rick:** What were your bunks like?

**Bill:** We had four bunks high and sometimes three depending on what hole you were in. They were just regular bunks with a rope and a canvas and you put your mattress on there and blanket and pillow. You had to pack your own blanket. We didn't use the hammock.

**Rick:** I guess the top bunk would be best?

**Bill:** It was the best! You're suffocated in the lower ones. Going over, especially when we hit outside of Frisco we hit the land soils and most the crew got sick except me. So I had to stand these other watches for the guys at night. You had your glasses to see if anything was out there. I had eight hours on and two hours off. When I was young it didn't bother me much but we went all over. It was nine days to Hawaii from San Pedro and one guy got so sick we thought he was going to die but he didn't. He turned green I think. But we got him to Hawaii and he got healed, and he thought he was going to get off the ship and go land and they put him right back on again. He never got sick again.

This was the smallest ship at sea. An LCI's flank speed is eleven knots. It has two ramps off the side. It was in Normandy and it came through the Panama and that's where I caught it, in San Pedro when a lot of the crew got transferred. And there were a lot of the older guys on there also. It took fifty-five men to operate that ship. I was a seaman so I had to go up in the con and you've got this electric button for right and left on your steering and you had your EOT for your speeds and you have a blue light for lowering and raising the speed a little bit—the RPMs of your engine. So I was in that all this time going over. I remember getting to Hawaii and they ripped our ramps off and put three six-inch mortars on it. It had a mortar on each side of the ramp and one in the center of the wheel deck so they were training us how to shoot these mortars and go into the beach. There was one island in the Hawaiian Islands that we bombarded. We'd go in with our mortar shells and our anti-aircraft guns. We had 40 mm on it. And it had 420's on each side of the center of the ship. So we had five guns for anti-aircraft. We all got to practice to use them and they finally decided who was going to shoot what and who was going to be on what gun and they put me on number one gun which is on the bow. And that bow is just going like this (up/down) on the ocean.

**Rick:** How long was that ship?

**Bill:** I think it was 185 feet. It had eight diesels—four to a quad and they run each screw so you had twin screws and then you had two diesels for generators. There were 671's on the main and 271's on the generators. And so you had these in sequence to make sure they were all pulling the same on the big bull-gear. But we even had pitch control on that thing. So it had quite a bit on it but you got nine diesels when you're down in that engine room and that's where my ears got blown. You're down there four hours at a time you know?

**Rick:** Did you stay in Hawaii very long?

**Bill:** Just to get fitted up. When we got to Hawaii we had to tie up thirteen side by side because the harbor still hadn't been dredged.

**Rick:** While you were in Hawaii, that's when they retrofitted those mortars. Take us from there where you went.

**Bill:** We left Hawaii and we hit Saipan and took supplies, then to Guam and got more supplies. We stopped at Wake Island for a little while and I didn't know where we were at the time but they'd already been taken.

**Rick:** This is late in '44 was it?

**Bill:** Yes. Saipan and Wake were taken at that time so when we started over for Iwo (that was a secret name at that time), we could see the bombardment from the battle wagons and the cruisers bombarding Iwo Jima way out. We were probably a day out or so before we even got to that island because we traveled about nine knots. So as soon as we got there then we started firing our mortars. We would go in a circle. We'd fire, and this next one would fire behind, and you'd just keep firing until you ran out of ammunition and go low to get ammunition from the ammo ship and get it out of the crates and get ready to fire again.

**Rick:** How far were you off shore?

**Bill:** Well, in a lot of cases we went over fifty yards from the shore. We'd go right just about up to it. We did this for three days and four nights.

**Rick:** Were you getting any fire?

**Bill:** We got some mortar shells and hand-fire from rifle fire. We had one mortar hid our ship and it was a dud and bounced off. One mortar came over and hit the wheel deck right on our magazine and was a dud and so I ran down and picked it up and threw it up over the side and a lot of people can't remember that, but I do. I was shaking when I let it go over the side. And we watched the small boats getting mortar shells in and they're

blowing thirty or forty men at a time, they were just gone. They just kept going in. Every wave went in and they'd get a little more on the beach but there were others like us that were sunk down the line somewhere and sinking with the mortar shell because it wouldn't take too much to sink one. That was the roughest; to have small arms fire and mortar shells at us. We had one plane come over and we tried to knock it down and we knocked one of our own down at the same time. He was trying to get the Japanese plane at that time.

**Rick:** That happened more than I think we'd like to admit.

**Bill:** That's right. It does happen.

**Rick:** Did you stay off Iwo to see the flag go up?

**Bill:** I was right off that volcano when the first flag went up and I was right there when the second flag went up. When that first flag came up and went down again I thought, "*oh, we've lost it again.*" It wasn't too long after that a bigger flag went up.

**Rick:** And which one was the famous picture made. Was it the second one?

**Bill:** It was the second one.

**Rick:** Give us as much detail about that as you can. You were an eyewitness to that?

**Bill:** I was an eyewitness. We weren't too far from it and they were still bombarding people. But what happened was the Japanese dug in here and our shells were going over and didn't do too much good and they had caves there too and the rock of the volcano had caves all the way through it and they had been in that cave but when we were out there and watching we just yelled "*hurray.*" Then when we saw it come down we thought, "*oh oh.*" Then when it came back up again we knew it was taken. But the whole hadn't been taken at that time. There was still a lot of fighting left at Iwo Jima. A lot of marines got

killed at Iwo Jima. So, as I remember after we started heading elsewhere and I can't remember exactly where. I think it was Okinawa, but I can't remember if we stopped at that time. I was more shocked than scared. I was a young punk kid and all of a sudden your eyes get opened.

**Rick:** What was your job on that ship?

**Bill:** I was on the phones on number one gun. They had one that does the horizontal one vertical on the barrel—the gun, then they had one loading the magazine with four or five shells to a clip, and he'd have them on the side, and they'd throw them in the gun and they'd just pull them about that fast.

**Rick:** So you'd circle around then load up again so there was a constant barrage then?

**Bill:** Yeah, and the mortars were firing all the time. The mortar shells were in racks on the side. They'd take the mortar shell out and they had powder rings on and they had to take so many powder rings off if they wanted a shorter distance and then throw them in a bucket. Then they had a pin to pull out of the head when they dropped it in the mortar, and she'd fire off. So they just kept doing this and doing this and guys were falling asleep standing. You didn't get any sleep. You just had to keep firing until you loaded ammunition again and you had to start all over again.

**Rick:** That was pretty tough duty. Your role was not after they put those motors in. You weren't there to take GI's on to shore, it was more of a...

**Bill:** No. They eliminated the landing crate.

**Rick:** Tell us why you were in such a state of shock?

**Bill:** I don't know. When you see people getting killed. I was used to animals being killed as a young kid, but I'd never seen people get killed. So what you do you're in shock and looking at it. I wasn't scared, but I was just numb. A better word is numb. Then you'd shake your head and start moving again and then it's going on. You'd do what you could at this time. I never got scared. I would have gone to shore and fought right then and it wouldn't have made any difference to me. That's how I felt. I felt that this country was worth fighting for. And if it took my life, it was going to take my life. And I didn't think I was going to come back anyway when I went over. When we went from there we started from there we went to Okinawa and that ship I was on—you'd just try to get familiar with everybody you can, and some of them... I can remember this one guy, a radioman, and he says, *"I'll never go through another invasion, you watch it."* So I came out the bunk to go on watch and he was gall (?) and he had a knife this long and he was swinging it like this. He said, *"I'm going to cut all your heads off."*

**Rick:** This is after Iwo huh?

**Bill:** Yes. So we got the captain. He went in and took the knife from him. And he puked all over the captain. He was drunker than seven hundred dollars. He was transferred off of that ship that next day another ship going back. Then we got a letter from him later in Okinawa. He said he was having a ball in Frisco.

**Rick:** He did that on purpose?

**Bill:** Yes, he did that on purpose. He wasn't going to go through another invasion. And so he figured a way to get out of it.

**Rick:** That kind of attitude... you just consider yourself almost dead already then.

**Bill:** Yeah. It's a funny feeling. It's different. I know a lot of guys who were shaken from being scared. I never did that. My eyes were just wide open and I was shocked and numb from what's going on and then all of a sudden you go at it like it's nothing. You

wake up and you just do your job the best you can. Anyway, we headed for Okinawa and I can't remember for some reason. It had been a lot of years ago, but there was a typhoon in Okinawa. I can't remember if it was before the invasion or after but I think it was after. One of the carriers got ripped in half. We had to go into Okinawa harbor to get out of it. We were in 60 foot waves with that boat. So I remember you get on top and all of a sudden you're going down the hill like this and you hit the bottom and then you climb the hill like this and shake all the way up. So everything had to be tight. No water could get in that ship. But on the rail you would have been gone. I think it was after that happened that we left. You lose some of those things. Okinawa was probably more dramatic for the navy than for anybody else because of the kamikaze. What I remember about Okinawa is we were going into a village with a lighthouse and a wooden dock and a bunch of shacks. We were firing a 40 at the lighthouse trying to knock it down and the barrel got so hot I had to go get the hose and cool the barrel so we didn't have to change it so we just keep firing the gun. While we were doing this there was a destroyer off to the right of us. He got stuck on the reef, and went too far. The Japanese blew his whole bowl. So this stopped us from firing and we picked all the survivors up we could and a couple of other ships. So we picked up these guys; some were broken arms, some were bleeding and we had to pick them up and try to take care of them. Some were burned and everything else. We got as many as we could then I mentioned that the mortars had powder rings. We put them in a putt bucket, which is a regular bucket, and we gave these guys cigarettes and stuff and one guy threw a cigarette in that bucket. It was right next to the galley and the flame went down the galley and down the hallway and out the back and came on the wheel deck and lit some of the powder rings on live ammunition. I was on the bow up here and I was hanging over the rail ready to jump and then it went out. Here these guys were just coming off the ship, injured and jumping on the water, and some of them burned real bad and we had one of the crew guys came out and he was on fire and he said, *"What should I do? I got my money in my wallet. What should I do with my wallet?"* I said, *"Throw it down and go over the side."* He was worried more about his money than he was his life, but he lost his life too. We got all these guys back together again and got them on the ship and then we went over to the Missouri and transferred them over.

**Rick:** How did you pick these wounded guys up? Did they have to climb those rope ladders or did you have small boats?

**Bill:** We just pulled them aboard. We went over the side and got them the best way we could. Our ship wasn't too far from the water line anyway. We had, I don't know how many got killed on that because a lot of them to the Missouri and died. We had two crewmen die. They got burned so severely. I was a mess cook at that time and they got me off of the phone and told me to go down where the supplies were and get lard. I had to go get five-gallon containers of lard. They were just throwing lard all over these guys. Handfuls because they ran out of burn stuff. They were just covered with lard.

**Rick:** Thinking that it would help their burns?

**Bill:** That's all they knew. A little grease made them fry more. That's all it did. There were quite a number that really got injured on account of that one mistake that we probably made because we were trying to treat them right and we forgot about the powder rings and they're dangerous. But we could have blown the whole ship up because they were right above the magazine. We got them on board we could, and the injured and we tied up along side the Missouri and transferred them onto that ship.

**Rick:** And how did they transfer?

**Bill:** We tied right on to it, and they had to bring them up.

**Rick:** Were the seas very heavy?

**Bill:** We were in the harbor. You didn't have too much there. In a battle wagon you have eighteen inches of armor, and then you come above that and you have a little deck, and you could go up from there.

**Rick:** Little did you know that the Missouri was going to affect the Japanese surrender?

**Bill:** No. I think it's tied up in Hawaii now for a museum. Anyway, after that we were sitting in the harbor and in those days they had a picket line that went around the harbor, destroyers mainly and DE's. The kamikazes would come in. They'd come in low and then they'd get into the harbor then they'd dive into whomever. Some of these destroyers got sunk out there so they had to put LCI's out there for the picket line. We were lucky we didn't get out there. We just anchored in the harbor and here came two kamikazes. One hit a cruiser and went right through four decks and killed everybody in the sick bay. This one came right straight down at us. Our 20's quit, and our 40 just kept pumping and pumping. And he came down and I held my hand up and said, "*Not now lord.*" And that kamikaze and he just about took the flag off the mast. He went up again and he came down to hit a Dutch merchant ship and he missed it. He blew to pieces before he hit it but all that crew on the other side was in the water and I still think it wasn't my time. If he had hit us he would have split us right in half.

**Rick:** You had a lot of close calls.

**Bill:** Yes. And those kamikazes... all of a sudden here came one. We got at our guns and started firing and it had already hit another ship and we got chewed out for firing our guns without the captain's permission. We did it anyway. As I remember one guy could draw well and he put a poster on the bulletin board and it says, "*Wait until I talk to the captain.*" I'll never forget that!

**Rick:** Tell us about the Japanese civilians and what they were doing.

**Bill:** Naha was here and the cliffs were over here and the sea was over there and they were jumping off cliffs because they figured that Americans were going to kill them. They tell them what to do and they die for it. If you ever heard the story about Saipan, that's what happened there too. On this side it was flat and it came right into the harbor so they could just go right off into the ocean and swim over to the next island. I don't

know what it's called today, but we called it E island. There were a lot of caves there. One day a guy and I swam ashore to see what's on that island. We were anchored out. We got in these caves and they had these kamikaze boats. They put a mine on the back of them and they had them on rail. They go in these caves, onto the rail, out into the water and then they aim for a ship and they hit and explode. Apparently we hit them first, because they burned them up before they had a chance to get them out of these caves. We saw some Japanese from the side and so we took off. I didn't have knife on or anything. We took off for the ship. We swam back to the ship again and got on, but we could have got killed right there because we didn't know that there were still Japanese on the island. From then on we used to anchor in this channel. They had Japanese swimmers who came aboard and cut the guy's throat and then leave the ship. So we had to stand night and day--one guy on the fantail and one guy on the bow. The guy on the fantail had a 30mm caliber machine gun on the rail we had to use and the guy on the mid-ship had a sub Thompson, then the guy on the bow just had a carbine. Any noise in the water, you started to shoot and you didn't care because you weren't going to let anyone get about that ship. As I remember I was going on watch at twelve to four and this guy was sitting on the bow on number one gun and he was fast asleep. And I grabbed him and he went into shock. He was just stick. He came to and started swinging his arms at me. I said, *"You do it again, you're going over the side."* I lives were at stake. He never did it again. He was scared to death after I got through with him. I sat there at night and look and hear noises and I couldn't go to sleep. I don't know how he could. We never had anybody try to board our ship. We were lucky.

**Rick:** Did you have a specific job to do in that harbor?

**Bill:** No, just sit and wait for any kamikaze that came in and try to help knock them down.

**Rick:** How long were you there before Okinawa was taken?

**Bill:** It was taken before we left. We took the Philippines too. I went to the Philippines too, but never got a battle star because I was one week short of spending time in that area to get it. When you're in a battle zone, you have to spend so much time in that zone before you get the battle star.

**Rick:** After Okinawa it was near the end of the war. When did you hear about Hiroshima? Where were you?

**Bill:** I didn't hear about that for a long time. We were headed back for Hawaii. We had no idea.

**Rick:** Did you hear about VJ day?

**Bill:** Yes, we heard about that in the Philippines. We also heard about Roosevelt dying and I think that was when we were in Okinawa. In the Philippines we heard about VJ day and I think I have pictures of the Filipinos there waving, but after that I don't remember hearing when the bomb was dropped at all for a while.

**Rick:** What was it like when you heard that the Japanese had surrendered?

**Bill:** It was great! *"We're going home!"* That was in the Philippines when everything ended. We had to wait for a ship home. I thought we would take our ship back but they decommissioned it in the Philippines and gave it to the Filipinos. So I came back on a PA.

**Rick:** When the war ended, you were on shore in Manila?

**Bill:** I was on the ship, but I can't remember when and where.

**Rick:** In other words, you weren't there in the Philippine city to see the celebration?

**Bill:** No. The only place I went ashore was Manila. We had to dodge all the sunken ships in the harbor before we could get up the river. We were a small craft and could go up the river and tie at Manila. At that time there were very few buildings standing. It was bombarded. It was just about cleaned out, but there were some still standing.

**Rick:** I guess the Japanese garrisons that were there all surrendered?

**Bill:** Yes. They took them. It took awhile to take the Philippines, but they had to know the war was over and fought to the end because even Guam twenty years later had guys that had to give up because they didn't know the war had ended. The Philippines were the same way. There are a lot of islands in the Philippines and we traveled quite a few of them to take Filipino troops back to their home villages. Some of the villages had never seen a white man.

**Rick:** Did you get off the boat when you'd take them in?

**Bill:** Once in a while we did. I can't remember the name of this island, but we got off and they had a buffalo they were barbequing. They gave some to us. Their eyes were wide open. They couldn't believe white people were there. The Filipinos wouldn't eat anything but fish-heads and rice. We'd take about twenty or thirty troops and put them on board and try to feed them. Give them fish and rice, and that's fine. Give them pizza or fruit and they wouldn't eat it. They'd throw it over the side.

**Rick:** It would be a unique experience to walk among people who had never witnessed a white man or big boats.

**Bill:** I'll tell you another story I haven't told. A couple of crew got a dingy and went to a small island. They found a human skeleton, so they brought the skull back with them and put it down in the hole and we said, "*We go through another invasion, we're going to put that on our mast as we go in!*" That was the way we felt. I'll never forget we were in Pan A and we hit a sunken barge and ripped three tanks out: a water tank and two fuel tanks.

So we went back and tied up and signaled for a floating dry dock. We found one, and got in the dry dock and I still remember that these guys went down the hole and there was this skull down there. They came right out of the hole. They weren't going to work one minute down that hole with that skull. Even after everything was over, that guy took that skull home with him. He put it in a box and shipped it home. I don't know if that skull was a white man, a Japanese or Filipino.

**Rick:** Tell us about getting back to the United States and getting discharged.

**Bill:** We got on that PA (transport merchant ship). I remember they gave me a top bunk and if I fell, it would have killed me, it was so high. So I found a bunch of mattresses in the hole. You had to get up in the morning and get in line for breakfast. By the time you had breakfast you had to get in line for lunch. By the time you had to lunch you had to get in line for dinner. And then you would have a little relaxation at night. We came back and went under the golden gate and I thought. *"Boy, it's all over!"* Well, I never was treated so bad in all my life as when I came back. All the glory was gone. The first ones who had come back had the glory and everything else. We came back and they didn't care who you were or what you did. I came back to Salt Lake City and couldn't get my old job back. They wouldn't give it to me. They didn't care, they were supposed to, but wouldn't do it. I tried to go school. They didn't want to get me into any schooling. They sent me to Hennegers for a while. I didn't want that kind of job. They wanted me to learn how to fly and I would if my ears had been better, but I couldn't understand that radio in the cockpit.

**Rick:** Didn't they have the GI bill where you could go to college?

**Bill:** They didn't have anything when I came back. I tried everything I could. I wanted to go to diesel school, and I couldn't get anything out of them. I got treated like dirt. You go in to get a job and they say, *"Oh you're just a veteran just like the rest of them."*

**Rick:** That's the first I've heard of that.

**Bill:** That's the way I was treated.

**Rick:** You got back a little bit later after the war was over. Was it late '45 or early '46?

**Bill:** 1946 when I got back. I was nineteen when I got back.

**Rick:** Go back to when you first saw the Golden Gate Bridge and what went through your mind.

**Bill:** Well, as I remember going under the Golden Gate Bridge was thrill to come back to the United States. It really was. It was a sight for sore eyes because we didn't go out under the Golden Gate, we went on the other side from San Pedro, and it was a sight. I thought, *"Boy this is really terrific!"* Then we got off the ship. Then we got over to Treasure Island and when you get out of the navy you go over there and they go through all of your gear and make sure you have nothing that belongs to the Navy. They'd even take a flash light away from you. So they're screening you all the way. Then you're discharged and then you found your own way home. I finally found a guy who took me home for twenty bucks. I hadn't got paid for six months. If you are on a small ship you don't get paid very often. If you do, you're probably in a poker or crap game or something's going on when you're boarding one of those ships. So I didn't have hardly any money to get home on.

**Rick:** Did your folks know you were coming home?

**Bill:** No. I didn't contact them and I couldn't because I didn't have any money to phone them. By the time mail had got there I would have been home. Sometimes we didn't have V-mail to send so we didn't send anything. When you're on a small ship you don't get the benefits. When they transferred mail from a big ship to yours sometimes it went in the drink before it got crossed. And if they sent any packages you had all the cookies they were eaten up with weevil. But anyway, starting back home I got that guy to take me and he wanted to give me a job cooking. He was a car dealer. He wanted to take me

out to go coyote hunting by a small plane. He wanted to camp and he wanted me to cook for him and wife while they were there. I didn't take the job. But I had to walk two and a half miles home. He let me on 4800 South and State Street. My folks lived on 5119 South and 900 East. I just had my navy uniform and that was it. I stopped at one of my friends before I went home. They were tickled to see me. It was a great feeling to be home again! I didn't think I was going to be home again. When you're that young everything is so new. You're trying to learn and remember all you can.

**Rick:** How old were you?

**Bill:** I was 17 when I went in and 19 when I got out. I went in August of 1944, and I think I got out in October of 1946.

(Regarding FDR dying)

We were all shocked to hear the president died. We couldn't figure out who would be our president because we all loved him. In those days FDR was everything there is in this country. There are very few against FDR especially during the war, so we were really shocked when that happened. And then when Truman took his place, we didn't know what was going to happen. The war was still going on when FDR died.

**Rick:** In fact they were still fighting in Europe.

**Bill:** So it was a real big shock for us when we heard that. I have a hard time remembering dates and times that many years ago.

**Rick:** It's interesting that you were on such a small ship that you didn't hear about the atomic bomb and VE day.

**Bill:** Radio silence all the time on that thing. All we heard was Tokyo Rose. We heard that nice music. She played good music. We always loved that music. That's the only thing we received. Are radio operator wasn't even operating unless he was told to. It was

a small radio too if I remember. And I don't think they used code. Mostly it was semi-four. We had a signalman who'd send semi-four to another ship. And they also had the light.