

Interview of William H. Davis

Interviewer: We'll get there. Are we rolling?

Unknown Person: Yes.

Interviewer: What's your full name?

William H. Davis: William Hershel Davis.

Interviewer: And where are you from?

William H. Davis: I was born in Montpelier, Idaho and moved to Salt Lake in about 1934, and I have been in Salt Lake since.

Interviewer: Did you go to high school in Salt Lake City?

William H. Davis: Yes, I went to West High School.

Interviewer: And what year did you graduate?

William H. Davis: About '38, I believe, somewhere around there.

Interviewer: And Pearl Harbor -- we always ask this same question with all your vets -- where were you when Pearl Harbor was hit? Do remember that day?

William H. Davis: I was washing -- I bought a new car and was washing -- my car at the service station on 2nd East, 3rd East and 2nd South. I remember very definitely was Pearl Harbor was hit.

Interviewer: Did you hear it on the radio in your car? How did you hear it?

William H. Davis: Yes, I heard it on the radio. I finished washing my car, went out to get some gas, and I heard it on the radio and somebody else was there and I said, "Well, looks like they're at it again." That's when the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: What were your feelings when you heard it?

William H. Davis: Oh, I had a friend that was Japanese. I went to his house one time and I asked him, "If the United States got into war with Japan, who would you fight for?" He said, "I would probably fight for the Japanese," and that was the end of the friendship.

Interviewer: So, where did you -- tell us again, you just told us a minute ago, why did you select the Navy? How did that happen?

William H. Davis: I don't know, I guess I'm a coward, but I don't think I could take the type of living you have when you're in the infantry, or when you're in the Marines. I guess I'm a coward, but I don't think I could have handled that. I think I would have broke-up.

Interviewer: So, you decided to join the Navy?

William H. Davis: Yes.

Interviewer: And when did you go in?

William H. Davis: I don't know the exact date, I'm sorry.

Interviewer: That's all right, I'm just asking generally.

William H. Davis: All right, about the middle '40's, '42 or '43, somewhere around there.

Interviewer: Was it long after Pearl Harbor?

William H. Davis: Yes, it was quite awhile because I got a job working at Hill Field in the electronics department. I worked up there for 14 months, I believe, and I then knew I was going to be drafted so I selected the Navy.

Interviewer: And you went to basic in--

William H. Davis: I was enlisted, they had an enlistment place on Motor Avenue in Salt Lake, and then I was shipped up to Farragut, Idaho, and we were there for, I believe, three months of boot camp.

Interviewer: And you from there to where?

William H. Davis: From there, I went to Camp Badger, Virginia. I spent quite a bit of time there, probably four, five, six, months, something like that. Then I was shipped to Fort Pierce, Florida in an amphibious training camp. And they gave us a bunch of Higgins boats that were full of water and in poor condition, and they said, "We want you to work on these boats and get them in working condition," which we did.

Interviewer: As an electrician, you would be responsible for part of the engine or what?

William H. Davis: Well, basically, yes. Just certain things, we had mechanics and people and corpsmen that were attached to our outfit and they went to work and then we had engineers that were trained in truck repairing and diesel repairing and they'd repair the boats and get them back in working condition.

Interviewer: Pardon me. So, you ended up, how did you -- I guess you went to England? How did you get to England?

William H. Davis: Then we were transferred from Fort Pierce, Florida, we were transferred to what they call Land's End in England. Believe me, it was cold there, that's where the wind blows year round. We were assigned to a unit there and lived in tents and if you talked to anybody -- when we first went there, they let us sit down to eat, eat our breakfast and dinner -- but if we talked to anybody, then they changed it and said "You have to stand now. You can't talk to each other while you're eating."

Interviewer: Was that just discipline or what?

William H. Davis: Yes, it was discipline. It was secret.

Interviewer: So, what you were doing was part of a secret part of the Navy at that time, D-Day?

William H. Davis: Yeah.

Interviewer: What made it so secret?

William H. Davis: Well, before I went in the Navy, I worked at Hill Field and we worked on some of the most secret radar we had. The Hill Field sent me to school on Canal Street to study radar, and they sent me to school twice to learn how to repair instruments. Then, when, I guess after that, is when they sent us to Land's End, England. We worked on radar that was mounted on the belly of our airplane and we could detect German submarines with it. It was top secret radar.

Interviewer: Was this microwave radar?

William H. Davis: Yes, it was 3,300 megacycles. That's a higher frequency than microwave.

Interviewer: Tell us about preparing for D-Day and tell us what, leading up to D-Day.

William H. Davis: Well, we were at Land's End, like I say in England, and we were transferred to England, and then we had to march from where we were, transferred in kind of a boot camp in England. We went to a marshaling area where we boarded ship, and then after we boarded ship, we sailed for England.

Interviewer: What kind of boat were you on? What kind of ship were you on?

William H. Davis: An APA 200, an Attack Personnel. We had, at one time when we were in maneuvers in Guadalcanal and through that area, why, at one time, we had 1,500 Marines on our ship.

Interviewer: So, yours was kind of a mother ship, then.

William H. Davis: Yes, I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself because we were transferred from boot camp, I'm sorry, I got so far ahead. I transferred from boot camp to Astoria, Oregon and took on a ship there. We went from there to California because we had a bent screw and had to have that replaced. Now, this was after we returned from England.

Interviewer: I see, I see.

William H. Davis: Sorry about that.

Interviewer: That's alright, we can go in any direction. It's fine for us, believe me. So you were what was the name of the APA 200?

William H. Davis: Well, we didn't have a ship when we landed in France. We were land-based, but we were transferred from Land's End in England to France aboard ship. It wasn't our ship, it was a way of transferring us.

Interviewer: You were passengers?

William H. Davis: Yes.

Interviewer: So you arrived on Omaha beach on D-plus 1, you were telling me?

William H. Davis: D-plus 2, on my birthday.

Interviewer: Which is June 8?

William H. Davis: June fifth. It was pretty close to my birthday, fifth or sixth.

Interviewer: Yeah. So tell us about when you arrived. You got into a landing craft? How did you get on to the beach?

William H. Davis: We landed in a Higgins boat, and they had these rope ladders down the side of the ship. I got so I could scramble up and down those things in nothing flat, but we went down these rope ladders into these Higgins boats, and from there, they landed us on the beach. They landed us in water, it was a little bit deep, and we had to swim in. It was kind of our own little island, and we kind of had to swim a little bit. Our beach master told us, he said, "You just put the back on one arm and if you lose it, we give you another one," and we landed on the beach.

Interviewer: What did you see when you landed on the beach? Tell us, describe the scene for us.

William H. Davis: Well, I never, ever discussed this with anybody, as to what I had seen on the beach. But there were dead people everywhere. I noticed one particular outfit that lost a lot of people was the Army Rangers. You could tell them by their uniforms. They lost a lot of Army Rangers. In fact, they said, if it hadn't have been the Army Engineers pitching in and helping, we would have lost the beach. It was -- dead everywhere, all kinds of conditions. The Germans

had what they called a "Belgian gate." It was a big gate that was on rollers and our small boats were coming in kind of high because they were built to come in high, and then drop down, drop the front end down. All these German Belgian gates had mines on the corners of them, and our ships would hit those mines and blow up -- a terrible sight that you'd see from what happened on that beach.

Interviewer: Lots of wreckage of things?

William H. Davis: There was wreckage, ships that were blown up, Higgins boats that were blown up.

Interviewer: Could you hear the fire?

William H. Davis: Yes, there was still firing. They couldn't reach us, where we were, because we came in at sea level. About, maybe, 100 yards back from the sea level, there was a big plateau, and the Germans were still firing mortar shells and stuff like this, but they couldn't get to us because they couldn't get to proper trajectory to bring these shells down to where we were located because we were below this plateau. So the ones that landed the second day were protected by that, but the people that were landed the first day weren't protected by that, and quite a few of them were. I think it was 26 or something like that were killed and all of our corpsman were killed that day. We had five corpsman attached to our outfit and they were killed the first day.

Interviewer: You were in combat, or before you'd gotten there?

William H. Davis: Well, I was not actually in combat, but we were armed and we were on the beach just like the other troops.

Interviewer: So, describe what you -- they immediately put you to work, I imagine. What did they have you start doing?

William H. Davis: Well, the first thing we started doing was digging a fox hole. I dug a fox hole and I dug it straight down and I didn't dig underneath on the bottom to where I could my feet out, and I had charley horses all night long. The next day I could hardly walk because the charley horses. I didn't do the hole properly where I could straighten out my feet. I had to sit on my feet all night. We had one fellow that -- I feel bad about, I feel bad about this because everybody was frightened and nobody would get out of the fox holes that night -- one fellow, I never did find out where he was, but he would cry out for help and this went on for a little while and finally ended.

Interviewer: So he was a wounded fellow somewhere?

William H. Davis: Probably. The Germans had 88s, that was one of the, at that time was the best gun in the world. They could use it for anything -- for lobbing or for any kind of armament, and it was a tremendous gun. I stood by a projectile one time and it came up to my waist, it was that big of shell. The Germans had, would cut their trenches back at an angle, and then they would have one here and one down the beach a little farther and they would cut them at an angle and we couldn't knock them out because we couldn't see them. We knew where the fire was coming from, but we couldn't see the gun itself. They sent five tanks up to get this one German 88 and they finally -- the Germans knocked out two of our tanks right off the end of the ship, and then there were three others that got on the beach and finally one of them was able to get this German 88 knocked out.

Interviewer: Did you watch this when this was happening?

William H. Davis: No, this was the first day.

Interviewer: Oh.

William H. Davis: The shell fire that we received on the second day was, like I say, the Germans were firing from inland and they couldn't get the proper trajectory to get to us.

Interviewer: Hmm. So, what was your job at Omaha Beach? What were you put to work doing?

William H. Davis: Well, we were supposed to repair the Higgins boats, but they were shot up so bad that they were not very repairable. We would spot bombs and shell fragments and stuff like that and call the Army Engineers to come down and show them where they were and they would blow them up so nobody else would get hurt from them.

Interviewer: You were doing what at that time? You couldn't fix the boats, what did they have you do?

William H. Davis: Well, like I say, our beach master was organizing the beach for the troops so they could come in. The British were landing quite a few people -- military -- and they had such heavy packs on that they couldn't get them off. They weighed about 90 pounds, I think our packs weighed only 50 or 60 pounds. They landed a bunch of British troops that night and they all drowned because they couldn't get their packs off. Then they landed some Jeeps and such as that and they, they all swamped out because they weren't properly taken care of for water. I didn't have much respect for the British because their troops weren't -- their Navy personnel that landed weren't anywhere near trained as good as ours. I maybe shouldn't say that, but it showed up on the beach that they were not trained. We had well trained people -- I'm telling you -- to handle those small boats, Higgins boats, landing boats. I'm telling you, they could handle them. They knew how because when you bring one of those boats in, you turn up your engines, and the back of the boat, the stern of it goes down and the front comes up. Then when they land, they

are well in on the beach. The British were afraid to land their troops on the beach like we did because they were afraid they may get stuck on the beach and they didn't want to. Once you get the troops off the Higgins boats, the front end comes up and then you gun your engines to flow a lot of water up front, and then that starts the boat to float, then you go back out and get more troops -- very well trained outfit.

Interviewer: So, you were in the 7th--

William H. Davis: Beach Battalion.

Interviewer: Say that again, I'm sorry.

William H. Davis: The 7th Beach Battalion, but we only went as far as the high water line. We never went above the high water line.

Interviewer: What was the 7th Beach Battalion's responsibility? What was their job there?

William H. Davis: To maintain the craft and land the troops.

Interviewer: So, you were there how long? How many days?

William H. Davis: 23 days.

Interviewer: What did you do for those 23 days?

William H. Davis: Well, we helped to direct traffic for the other outfits that were on the beach and, like I say, we spotted shells and bombs and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Were you fairly busy?

William H. Davis: Not the last few days, no. The last few days, we didn't do very much. There wasn't anything we could do because our troops had gone in.

Interviewer: So, after you were done with Omaha Beach, where did you go then?

William H. Davis: We went to England to a rest camp, (inaudible), England, and we spent, oh I think we spent about six weeks or two months there. The only thing that we were required to do is we had to keep in shape by running two miles every day. This was up and down hills and such as this, and it was good exercise.

Interviewer: So--

William H. Davis: Then we went from there over to Dartmouth to the dentist to have our teeth fixed. One time we went over to Dartmouth in the harbor, and it was just absolutely full of rocket boats. These are Higgins boats with big racks in them that fired these -- I don't know how many shells that they had -- there was a lot of shells on this and they could fire these shells from racks in these Higgins boats. We went over and the harbor was just packed with these ships, or small boats. Then maybe a week or 10 days later, we went back to the dentist again and all these boats are gone. We were relieved because we thought we were going to have to go on another landing, but all these boats were gone and we didn't have to go on another landing, and then a little bit after that, why, they had some more landings in France. They had pulled all these small boats and went to France.

Interviewer: So you ended up going back to the states for awhile?

William H. Davis: Yeah, we came back to the states on the USS Manhattan, and we got 21 days leave. Then from there, we went to California and were shipped from California up to Oregon to pick up the USS Marathon, and that was our ship.

Interviewer: You went into the Pacific on the Marathon?

William H. Davis: Yes.

Interviewer: And you ended up on Okinawa?

William H. Davis: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell us how you got there.

William H. Davis: Well, there's a little tiny island down just north east of Borneo, and it was called Espirito Santo, and it was just a real small island and they put us on this island for quite sometime, just kind of a place to stay in till they got things going. From there, we just took a complete chain of islands clear up through Guadalcanal and Okinawa and up to where they dropped the atomic bomb up there.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

William H. Davis: We were anchored in Okinawa, and about 1:30 in the morning, we took on a one man outfitted Japanese torpedo.

Interviewer: So you were attacked by a Japanese submarine?

William H. Davis: Yes, a one man submarine.

Interviewer: Did it hit your ship?

William H. Davis: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell us about that, all that happened there.

William H. Davis: Well, it was about 1:30 in the morning. I never slept below decks. It was so hot and smelly that I never slept below decks. I always slept above decks. On the bottom of a Higgins boat, there's kind of a hollow section in the middle of it on the bottom, and I would put my cot there, and sleep on the top side. This one night, why, I thought, well, they'd put a big canvas, tarp over the front of the ship, the number two hole, and I thought I would go up there and sleep because it would be out of the rain. We got quite a bit of rain out there. I decided, "Well, it's kind of late tonight. I will just put my cot underneath this boat where I've always been sleeping." Had I went up to the forward part of the ship where this canvass was strung up, I would have been killed because two of the people that were sleeping exactly where I would have been sleeping were both killed.

Interviewer: So, tell us about the noise and tell us about what you heard.

William H. Davis: Yeah. It just shook the ship. We had our electronics here was fastened to the deck by weld, and it broke a lot of these welds loose that were holding our electronics equipment and broke all of our antennas down. We had a lot of radio equipment, we were a command, kind of a command outfit there. We had a senior officer aboard that was kind of in a command position, and we had lot electronics and radio equipment aboard, including a radar, and it broke all the antennas down. Immediately, when we got hit, there was quite a few ships in the harbor. Boy, they immediately got underway and were going to pick up any, in case we sunk, they were going to pick up troops or whatever was in the water, but we didn't sink. We closed off our front part, number two hole with water tight doors and we saved the ship.

Interviewer: So you were hit pretty badly then.

William H. Davis: Yeah, we had a hole in the side of the ship that you could put two Jeeps in, side by side -- that big.

Interviewer: What was the noise like?

William H. Davis: Gee, I don't remember because I was kind of in the after part of the ship and the torpedo came in the forward part of the ship. I immediately got up, put my socks in my pocket, never put my socks on, and I woke to that around 10:00 that I did not have my socks on. But it was a terrible noise with all of this clanging above our antennas being broken, broke the insulators. I don't think we had communications for awhile because things were torn up so bad.

Interviewer: And many men killed?

William H. Davis: We lost 23 men in that hole where the torpedo went in. There was somebody -- I never did see this -- but somebody, we had a little guy aboard that he was just old enough to get into the Navy and he said, "How in the hell am I ever go to get out of here?" It mangled up the bunks so bad that he couldn't get out, and when they found him, why, he was right at the bottom of the ladder. He couldn't make it enough to get to the top of the ladder to get out.

Interviewer: So, they closed the water-tight door. What happened? Was the ship taken out of action or what?

William H. Davis: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: And were you towed?

William H. Davis: No, we stayed right where we were, and a little bit later on, they brought in a repair ship alongside and they took a huge patch or a kind of a patch over this hole that was in the side and pulled it up to the ship and then pumped the water out of the ship and then, when they pumped the water out of the ship, welders came in and cut all the bad metal out, and this was taking quite a bit of time, and after they got the water pumped out, they started cutting out certain parts of the metal. When they got all the metal cut out properly, they brought in great big sheets of steel and welded them over this place where you had the hole. After that, they took this patch off. This patch was put on the side of the ship and cables went clear under the ship and up the other side and pulled this patch up tight to keep the water out. The welders went and cut out the bad metal and put big new sheets of steel in there and got the ship going. It didn't ruin the engines or anything like that in the ship. After that, we went up to Nagasaki and picked up our troops that were in prison camps at Nagasaki. The troops walked right out through the radiation because they didn't know what the radiation was, and I don't suspect these troops lived long because they walked out right through the radiation where the bomb was dropped

Interviewer: What did they look like? Did they look--

William H. Davis: They looked pretty good, to be honest with you. They were not real skinny and thin or anything like that. They looked pretty good, but believe me, they were sure happy to be aboard ship when we took them aboard ship.

Interviewer: When you were back in Okinawa, were you also under aerial attack by Kamikazes?

William H. Davis: Yes. After we got the ship going, we were anchored and one morning the Japanese sent a reconnaissance plane over about 7:00 in the morning. The plane got away. They didn't shoot it down. That afternoon about 2:00 or 2:30, we had Kamikaze Japanese planes, I

don't remember how many there were, but we shot every one of them down and the only problem that we had is one of the Japanese airplanes went down close enough to capsize a small boat, but I think that all the people that were in the boat survived. We had a few people that were injured from shrapnel, but they got all the Japanese airplanes. That day or two, the morning before, we had pretty good protection from ships that were used, like DE submarines, or not submarines, but escorts and small escorts and stuff like this, and all these ships pulled out and started for the upper part of Okinawa. Well, that left us pretty vulnerable and that's when the Japanese found out we didn't have any protection, so they sent the Kamikaze planes down.

Interviewer: Where were you during the Kamikaze attacks? Were you on deck or down below?

William H. Davis: Yeah, I was on deck watching what was going on.

Interviewer: Were you manning a gun or anything?

William H. Davis: Nope, nope. I didn't man any gun or anything like that. I was responsible for maintaining some of the electronic gear.

Interviewer: For someone who's never seen a Kamikaze, describe it for us.

William H. Davis: Well, they are small airplanes that don't have any way of getting back to the home land. They are sent on a Kamikaze to do the damage and then go down or whatever. They were, I don't remember how many there were. There wasn't that many, maybe six or ten or something like that was all, and we shot them all down.

Interviewer: What's that like, standing on that deck and watching this coming at you?

William H. Davis: Well, just excitement. We didn't feel like we were in any danger, yet there were a few people that were injured by shrapnel from the Kamikaze airplanes or probably from our own shells.

Interviewer: So, where were you when you heard about Hiroshima and what did you think?

William H. Davis: Well, I didn't really think that when they came out and said it, gave us the figures, I didn't think much of it because I never heard of such a thing before and didn't think we had anything that was that drastic. So I didn't think too much about it.

Interviewer: Were you happy the war was over?

William H. Davis: Oh, boy. I think we got the information about, in the evening sometime that the Japanese had surrendered. Now, there was a radioman that was copying what they called "Fox" -- five or six figures -- and it's coded and it has to be put into a code machine so they could decide what the message was. He was copying Fox over his radio and all of a sudden he jumped up and said, "The Japanese surrendered!" We went out and just went outside the radio shack. We had never seen any fireworks like that in your whole life. Everything I think in the harbor was firing all kinds of shells and stuff like that because they had to call a "flash red" in order to stop it because people were going to get hurt from the firing, after they heard it that the Japanese had surrendered.

Interviewer: So, how did you get back home when the war ended?

William H. Davis: Well, I didn't, we had the ship, patch it up. I don't remember exactly where we started from. I believe we must have brought the troops back to the United States that came out from Nagasaki, the prisoners. I think we landed, it took us about 12 days, I believe at sea,

and I never saw a thing in 12 days except a couple of barrels, empty drums that were in the ocean. One day, we passed the USS -- gosh, I can't remember the ship. Anyway, two days after we passed this ship, and it was loaded with atomic energy parts, we were told. Two days after we seen this ship, it was sunk.

Interviewer: The Indianapolis?

William H. Davis: Yes, the Indianapolis. It was sunk two days after we had passed, and we were in the same lanes as this ship was in that was shot down by a Japanese ship, so we could have probably pretty easily have ended up this same way. The Indianapolis -- that was a terrible thing if you ever read the book on. The sharks were just -- just terrible.

Interviewer: How did you get back to the United States? When did you get back? Let's put it that way.

William H. Davis: Well, I don't remember now the exact date that I was released, but you had to have so many points, and if you got to the place where you had enough points, you could be discharged. I had enough points. I think it was only a matter of a month or so or two where I had enough points where I could be discharged. We landed in Portland, I believe it was, and from Portland, we were transferred to a camp in California. We were discharged there, and that was on that island down in the bay there, anyway.

Interviewer: In San Francisco?

William H. Davis: Yes, and we were transferred to there and ended up, somebody was coming to Salt Lake and they had a car, so we rode with them and got back to Salt Lake the day before Christmas.

Interviewer: That must have been exciting.

William H. Davis: Very, very much so, because I was real uneasy. I didn't join the Navy Reserve because I was afraid, I just was really afraid I was going to be drawn back into the service to fight the Korean War. I think I was too old for that. I think I was 25, and they wanted younger people for that war. I was really worried I was going to be drawn back into that Korean War.

Interviewer: All right.

William H. Davis: But it never bothered me once I was discharged.

Interviewer: Natalie, do you have any questions?

Natalie: You said the last part of your time on D-plus 2, the last few days you were not very busy, but the days before that, I still am not clear what you were doing.

William H. Davis: We were directing traffic for one thing.

Natalie: Talk to Jeff.

William H. Davis: We were directing traffic that was coming in from the ships that were loaded with food and stuff like this, and also directing people to watch out for mines and shell fragments that hadn't been exploded and stuff like this.

Interviewer: So you were kind of a traffic cop.? Your unit was a traffic cop and--

William H. Davis: Our beach master was the master of the beach. Before, or shortly after they started landing, they towed in a huge dock that was all assembled, and they towed this in and anchored it and they could unload an LST with tanks and whatever they had within 15 or 20 minutes off of this ship. This was a huge dock that was, I guess it was maybe 100 feet long and I

don't know how wide, but it was a huge dock. We had a real rough sea a few days after this was landed, and it broke up a lot of it.

Interviewer: Do you remember that storm that broke it apart?

William H. Davis: Yes.

Interviewer: Describe that storm.

William H. Davis: All right. It just tore up everything. It was a huge storm. We just stayed in our fox hole.

Interviewer: Did you have any covers over your fox hole by then?

William H. Davis: Yeah, I had a companion. We were both in this fox hole, and we had scrounged up enough Army blankets and stuff like this to line it, and then we hollowed out one end of it, and the Germans would send their airplanes over every night, about 10:00 or 10:30, we could hear them coming, never dropped anything, but we put up a lot of flack to keep them high enough and then we also had these big balloons we would put up high at night so they couldn't come in and strafe.

Interviewer: Barrage balloons?

William H. Davis: Yes, big, huge, balloons. They would put these up at night to keep the Germans from coming in, but they came every night for quite a few nights, but never dropped anything and they were so high that we never were able to shoot any of them down. It was just kind of a torment about 10:30 every night. You could hear them just get a little bit louder and louder but they never dropped anything. The thing I've always wondered about is if we had taken, just, oh, two or three or four or five airplanes and just bombed the beach, bombed Omaha

Beach, it would have saved a lot of lives. They didn't drop any bombs on Omaha Beach -- none. Why, I don't know because this one German 88 -- our tanks had about two inches of armored steel on the front of them. These German 88s would go right through that, and we had two tanks that you cut off the end of the ship, and the Germans fired these shells down to stop them and after we'd been there for 23 days, these two big tanks were completely submerged in the mud. You couldn't see them.

Interviewer: Hmm.

William H. Davis: Then they had another ship. They called it the LCI's -- Landing Craft Infantry -- and it didn't open up the front of the ship like the big LST's would open up the front end of the ship. It was an older type ship, and it had a ladder that came down each side of the ship, and that's where the troops would go down, down those ladders and the Germans just aimed their .50 caliber machine guns and just killed a lot of people that were coming down those ladders. Then these Germans also sent down oil-filled shells, and these oil-filled shells would catch fire and you would be surprised what is on the ship, small ship, small landing craft, not the Higgins boats, but larger landing craft ships. You'd be surprised what's on those ships that will burn. Once that paint catches on fire, it burns.

Interviewer: Hmm. So you never went more than a couple hundred yards into France then during all that time?

William H. Davis: That's right.

Interviewer: That's how you saw France was at the beach.

William H. Davis: Yes, that's as far as we went.

Interviewer: Well--

End of recording.