

Interview with Ralph Krafnick
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Interviewed by David Overy

Overy: Mr. Krafnick, when and where were you born?

Krafnick: I was born right here in St. Cloud on the tenth of May 1917. I went all through grade school here at St. Mary's grade school and went through Cathedral High School. I got out of high school in 1937 and I joined the Navy.

Overy: Why?

Krafnick: Well, at the time, things were kind of tough and they had the CCCs at the time and Civilian Conservation Corp, if you remember. If we could go in, we made thirty dollars a month--we got ten and the rest of it came home to the families to help the family because things weren't too good. There was depression and we were just getting over the depression years. I was in there and then I got out and I went back to school. I was a year behind, I missed a little bit. So, after I got out, I joined the Navy.

Overy: Was the CCC experience worthwhile?

Krafnick: Yeah. It was military. It seems to me, throughout my whole life, since I was a little guy--to me, military--I had it there all the time. I was with the CMTCs which was before that and that was a Civilian Military Training Corp. We used to go to Fort Snelling and have regular army sergeants that were there to give us all the information about the Army. We did a little drilling--

little things here and little things there. I was in the National Guard, and I was in it when I went in the service and I had to get a special discharge to get in. I went the National Guard when I was sixteen years old. I was a pretty good shot. This first lieutenant--he got me in so it worked out pretty good. That was a big help for me in the National Guard because at that time back in the late 30's, they had these--they had all this trouble down in the cities with all the unions and all that stuff. I don't quite remember most of it anymore--

Overy: But you were in on that?

Krafnick: Yes, I was in on that one part and it wasn't too good. Because we had (inaudible). We were going in this one area and up through this one alley so I was half scared to death, I was just a kid and I didn't know what was going on. Then they took me out of school to do this. I was still in high school. So the superintendent of the school, which was father Kevin got me out of there and stuck me right back in school. I was kind of glad of that. It seems funny how clear that comes to mind, but anyway that's the way it was. After I got out of school, I went in the Navy and I went to training in the Great Lakes. Our training was three months. After my training was just about over with--I was an athlete and at the time, was playing basketball with the Great Lakes team. My day came to go to sea and I wanted to go to sea in the worst way and they tried to talk me out of it. They wanted me to be a printer. I could have stayed right there.

Overy: Why the Navy particularly? Why did you join the Navy?

Krafnick: Well, the Navy just appealed to me. I could go places and I could do things I could be in the water, I love to swim. There isn't a quarry in this area that I have never been in. I just had the urge. I just wanted to go places, see things.

Overy: What was your training like at Great Lakes?

Krafnick: Oh, the training was tough them days--and they did a little bit of everything in training. I went through it in the wintertime. January, February, March--

Overy: 1937?

Krafnick: Well, it was December 1938 and 1937 when I went in. January was in '38. We were lucky we didn't have to get out in the water because the Great Lakes were froze up so we didn't have to get out there and paddle around with them big whale boats. So, that was pretty good, but we did a lot of things in the pool--they had a great big pool there. So we did a lot of things in there. And we were on the firing range and had all the close order drills. Then we were taught different things like on a ship, we had a building there that looked like a ship on the inside. We had the bells, and you had to learn to tie them--all that sort of thing, we had to tie all the knots. You had classes and you had to go. You went to these schools and you had to have certain marks to get out or else they'd drop you. It was kind of strict but it was good.

Overy: What was it like for a young kid from Central Minnesota to be in the Chicago area?

Krafnick: Well, I got into Chicago twice. I got on a doggone train and went into the loop of Chicago. I got off of this electric train and just stood there with my mouth open. I know everybody was wondering who I was. I had another buddy with me and he wasn't any better than I was. That's the way that was. And right now, I really couldn't tell you what we did, I forgot what we did. But we walked around the loop and seen all these great big buildings. We stayed in some hotel and there was some kind of a show on--something at night. I liked music and this fellow did too so we enjoyed that and we stayed overnight and we came back the next day. It was quite awesome--that Chicago. I don't think I've ever been back there once ever since I left it. That Chicago was something else. They call it windy city down there and it was. The wind

would blow right around those buildings. That kind of made an impression on my mind too. I remember that real well.

Overy: When did you ship out from Great Lakes?

Krafnick: Well, I got out in about April, I think it was. They held me back there for a while because I was playing basketball and it wasn't over yet. The seasons are different there in the service. They play when they can. So, this draft came up for destroyers so I was sent out to San Diego on this destroyer. This destroyer was this old World War I, Vinny. Right after World War I, it was commissioned. We called it--four pipers, four stacker tin can. It was a little one. We only had about ninety to ninety-two guys on it. We had four nice guns on it and we had torpedoes on it on the starboard. On the port side, we had two bags of tubes, four fish in each one--four torpedoes in each one and a lot of depth charges on the back. It was an old ship, but we kept her up and I'm kind of glad I got on that ship because you were right next to everything. On a bigger ship, it's a little different, but right here, you'd sleep right with everything, you'd eat right with everything on that little ship. And the ship's company, you're that much closer. You know everybody by first name and when you get on a big ship, it's not like that. You can be on it for a long time on a bigger ship and you've never seen a guy before. But here, you know them all. I did a lot, I was out in the Caribbean with it and we were all over.

Overy: What fleet were you with?

Krafnick: I was with the Seventh Fleet. We were with Halsey when we were out there. We just followed him all over. You didn't have no choice with him, he just went. All of a sudden, he'd get a hair crossed somewhere and away he'd go. And away we all took off with him. We would have followed him anyplace. The guy was sharp. He was no dummy, and he wasn't stupid either.

We found that out later. There were a lot of places that we could have got tied up, we could have got blasted, but he was smart enough to know. Before Halsey got ahold of us when we were out there in the Pacific, there was a general in the Army that was in senior command out there and we were taking orders from him when we first got out there. So, that was kind of tough. We were the first people that were out there in that route over there in the South Pacific, especially Guadalcanal. We took the first batch of rains that went in there and so that wasn't so easy. It was right there in Iron Bottom Bay. Anybody that was out there at the time could tell you what that's all about. A lot of ships sunk out there--Iron Bottom Bay. There were Japs in there so it was something else.

Overy: Let me ask you--I have never really talked with anybody that has been in a peace time Navy. What was that like? What did you do when you were on that destroyer? Where did you go?

Krafnick: Well, we had a regular routine. On the destroyer--when I first got on it, I was on the deck force and it was my duty to keep the top side clean and keep it painted--and that's all you did was chip the paint all off and wire brushed it all and then the next day you painted it again. About three months later, you did the same thing. The outside--you kept it clean and the inside of the ship--we kept it clean and the compartments. We always went through our drills--like general quarter's drills and our ammunition loading and stuff like that--we had them drills all the time. You had your different conditions on the ship. Come in and out of port and sometimes you'd have these. When you come into port, you're always out there in the dress blues or whites or whatever you had. When you went out, it was the same way until you got so far out. Then they would send you back down to change your clothes and you went to work like you always did, except you're out at sea. The destroyer was a little different because that little rudder, she

bounced around quite a bit and when we hit some rough weather, it wasn't easy. We used to have a life line from our compartment all the way back apt because the head was back apt. So I was back apt and they had a cable that was strong and you had a life belt that you wore and you had a hook on it. When she was rolling, you'd reach over and hook that on and then you could go. Sometimes the ship would sit and go like this. There were two of us that were on this thing one time we went back to the head and it had rolled, the ship rolled and when it rolled over, the water was--we were laying almost flat on the deck because you couldn't stand on it. We were hanging onto that line for dear life and water was just below our feet. That kind of life was tough. A lot of times, you eat standing up with your chow in your hand because you couldn't sit down at the table because your buddy's food would be in your lap and mine would be in his or something like that. It was kind of tough. But going to sea wasn't all that bad. When you think about it, after all these years, I kind of enjoyed it. I still have a couple of buddies that I was with and we still talk about it--the old ship. And the old ship, which I didn't know until a couple of years ago--it sunk in the North Atlantic. It was out here on patrol duty. Somehow the depth charges, we use to call them the ash cans--they broke loose-four, five of them broke loose. When they broke loose, they dropped off the back of then and they went off at about fifty to sixty feet and blew the fantail right off the ship. The water, they told me, was about 30 to 35 degrees. They would never have lasted more than a couple of minutes in that water, but a big tanker happened to be right there and they called for help and they came alongside and took everybody out. There wasn't even a guy who even got his feet wet. So, it was fantastic how this happened. It was just a miracle I thought. Three of them guys that were on the ship when I got on there--we were all recruits together. We just got on the ship, back then in '38. These guys stayed on that ship all the time. The destroyer, it was a hard life. But the thing about the Navy is, once you get on one of

those destroyers, it's hard to get off. Because there is not too many people (inaudible) destroyer then. Once you get in, they like to keep you. I was on three of them--I was on three destroyers.

Overy: Is there a certain sense of esprit, of togetherness--"I'm proud I'm on a destroyer instead of"--

Krafnick: Yes. It was something else. We may squabble amongst ourselves, but we'd come back into port in San Diego or we'd get up into Long Beach or if we went to Bremerton. We had something major to be done with when we went to Bremerton. We would stick together. You get a larger ship--their class A uniform was strictly Navy. Ours--we had ours cut like we wanted. We had the bell bottoms, we had our jumpers cut, our pants cut like we wanted them and you'd really get dressed up. With the other ones, you had the old dress blues and they just hung on you like a gunny sack and it was just something else.

Overy: So you consider yourself kind of an elite group?

Krafnick: We did. We really did. And you could always tell--whenever a destroyer--when the guys had just come on from being out to sea for a while, you could always tell them when they hit the beach. When they got off, you could always tell them. On a ship, your feet were always spread apart because sometimes you didn't know which way the deck was going to go. You just get used to it. For the first couple of blocks, you can always tell the guy that first come off. They'd walk a little funny. Then when the bigger ships come in--the cruisers and battle ships whipping around, we always had a rough time with them guys because they always had their class A uniform on and they had to be strictly regulation and we didn't have to be that way. San Diego, that was destroyer town--that was ours. So, we could run around with our hat on the back of our heads, we never had to square our hat because our short patrol people were--which are like

a military police in the Army. We could get away with that kind of stuff. Except, when they came in--the flag came in, they had an admiral on them and our skipper was maybe just a commodore at the time. The other guy, he outranked himself, then we had a rough time--they gave us a pretty rough time. But we didn't mind. We had our own place and we knew where to go so it worked out pretty good.

Overy: What places did you visit? Where were you in the service?

Krafnick: I was all out in through the Caribbean, all out in through the Bahamas, out at St. Thomas, and the Virgin Islands---we made all of them. At Espirito Santo and we went around the horn.

Overy: That must have been pretty rough on a destroyer, wasn't it?

Krafnick: Yeah. The four of us little tin cans--we made it, we went around good, but there were two cruisers with us and they turned back. I remember, one was a marble head and one was a Raleigh. The Raleigh got sunk in Pearl Harbor, but they got her back--she got back in service. We sprung a few leaks too. We got quite a few leaks one time. Then we went up into Charleston in Carolina, up the river and that was something new. They opened up the town for us--it was just nice. I really enjoyed that. Peace time--they were just great.

Overy: Did you have any sense in these years that there was trouble coming? Senses from the officers or from the Navy personnel?

Krafnick: Yes, especially in 1939 – we really then. At the time, that's when I got off of the destroyer. Which was a stroke of luck. We were up in Bremerton, the destroyer was up in Bremerton. We had one of our shafts on the starboard side was out of line so we had to go up in

there to get it straightened out. When we were up there, I had a buddy of mine right here from St. Cloud that I went to high school with--we played basketball together. We went over there to the--he got me when I went over to see him and they had a basketball game that night so I went with him. I went over there and we were playing basketball over there and they were short a guy so he says, "Come on, why don't you play with us. Nobody will know the difference. Come on." So I did. I went and they gave me a suit and we just had a ball. We played there pretty near a whole week, at that time the ship was a *New Orleans*--a heavy cruiser. Whatever I was in, we won the title. One night after the last game, this man came down--an elderly gentleman--came down and asked me who I was and what ship I was on and here he was the skipper of the *New Orleans*. He was a captain. He says, "How would you like to get on the *New Orleans*?" I said, "I would love that." So he took my name, serial number, my skipper's name and he just said, "Now don't say anything to anybody, just go back to your ship." I went back to my ship, and a month later, I was on the *New Orleans*. That was how I got on. I was just luckier than the dickens. It was a bigger ship, I really enjoyed it. The living--you didn't get bossed around so much. The living was just great. I got on in '39. We left Bremerton and we went straight to the Hawaiian Islands--and called--Haudet they called it. It was the first Hawaiian detachment. It was all these ships--a detachment of ships. We went right to the Hawaiian Islands and that was quite a bunch of ships and we were stationed right there. This was in '39. And even then--we used to have a condition yellow and a condition red. A condition yellow, you were on alert that was all the time there. But when we were going in and out of port, it was a condition red. You manned guns, you manned everything. It was everything but being by the general quarters. The sirens didn't go off and all that. But it was even in, when you went out, we were out at sea at the time, they had what they called the darkened ship. If you opened up a hatch, the light went out. When you went inside the

hatch, the light came on. You couldn't be outside on the topside with whites on or a white hat because they could see you for miles. That's when the dungarees came in and you used them all the time. The whites weren't used too much anymore after that at all. That was in 1939. Our five inch guns were manned at this condition red and we maneuvered out there, boy. After that, there was no lollygagging around. When you were on maneuvers and different things, you were wide opened. And I was in the fire rooms at the time so I know they really worked us over. We could make it thirty to thirty-two knots like nobody's business.

Overy: What was your job?

Krafnick: I was in the fire rooms at the time and we had two big boilers in there and we had twelve burners on each boiler that's what I did. I was, at that time a young guy, a burner jumper we used to call them. When the water tender hollered for so many burners to be cut in, it was our responsibility to cut these burners in.

Overy: Like a boiler room?

Krafnick: Yeah. It was all high pressured. Simply heated steam. That was my job was down below and it was warm down there, it was hot. That was my job at the time.

Overy: Did you kind of worry about that in the event of combat being down in those boiler rooms?

Krafnick: Oh, sure. You always thought about it, but you had a job to do. Everybody had a job to do. When we did get in combat, you didn't know where they were coming from, what was going to happen or what kind of ship you had that you were fighting against. All the information we got, we got from a guy that was sitting on the top side. He was sitting way up on one of the

towers on the ship. He was up there to keep us from making smoke. If we didn't cut them burners in just, you'd have a blotch of smoke.

Overy: And possibly let anyone know where you were?

Krafnick: Yeah. Catch us with either white or black smoke. We had to be real careful about that. Then he would say and a lot of times he didn't know where we were. If we ever had engagement of some kind either early in the morning or late at night, you didn't know. It was hard to see--for him anyway. So we didn't know and what we didn't know didn't hurt us. One of those big guns would take off--we'd sit in front of the boiler. The boiler would be right here, which is about 3 or 4 feet and we'd be standing way back here and we couldn't go no further because our pumps and everything were on this side. When our big guns would go off and shoot, it would have kind of a vacuum here on the floor. That fire would jump out about that far. So, you had to be careful. And a lot of times you'd singe a little hair off your arms. So that was a little excitement. Scared you half to death. Anyway, it worked out--just one of them things that you had to contend with and you did. We had four of them fire room and we had two engine rooms. Later I got into the engine--I got out of that fire room. It was a little hairy out there when we were running around out there before the war. We knew and they knew. It got to the point where we couldn't throw garbage over the outside. We had a big garbage chute--all the ships did. You had your sharks and everything that followed you around whenever you threw over. After that, we got the regulation that we couldn't throw that stuff over the side anymore because we knew there were a lot of Japs in the area. Couldn't do anything about that I guess. It's good that we didn't know a lot of them things. But peace time in the Hawaiian Islands was fantastic. I got all over the islands. I made two, three of them. It was nice. I really enjoyed it over there. After the war started, it was tough.

Overy: How long had you been in port before Pearl Harbor Day?

Krafnick: Well, I'll tell you. I think we were in there three weeks before it started. We were tied up to the dock. One of our high pressure drain lines from the engine room--from the fire room to the engine room--sprung a leak. It's a big copper line. They had to take the whole deck out. We kind of had a flight there too--we had four airplanes on the ship. They had to open it so they could go down and pick it up and take it over to the yard. That's what was going on when they hit us. We couldn't move anyplace. We were getting all our electricity and all our water right from the dock--steam and everything right from the dock. We didn't have anything. We were there at least three weeks before it all happened.

Overy: Did you have a lot of liberty during that time?

Krafnick: Yeah. They had a lot of liberty and of course, I was an athlete, so I was on a baseball team. I played first base and for the baseball team and I still got the glove, I wouldn't give it up. You ought to see, it's the darndest thing--the gloves compared to what they are now. Now the glove comes from here to here, like a basket. They weren't like that when we were playing. We always had to play in the morning out there. That's why, at the time of the attack, I was on the top side playing catch warming up for a boat to come around and pick us up and take us over. We were going to play *Utah*. At 8:00 in the morning, we had a game. You couldn't play in the afternoon because it was too hot--it was a son of a gun. That's where we were.

Overy: You were on deck?

Krafnick: Oh yeah. I was on the top side. We had red and gray suits and about three fourths of it was red and the rest of it was gray and you could see us for twenty miles. Baseball uniforms. I

ran around in that baseball uniform for almost three days. We didn't want to go below because we didn't know what they were going to do or what was going to happen.

Overy: What was your first clue what was going on?

Krafnick: When we were up playing catch on the deck and all of a sudden, all these planes come in and they were diving. They hit everything at the same time. Ford Island over there where the Air Force was--they really got plastered. We could see the smoke and everything going and they were diving on us and they were strafing. Bullets were coming through the catapults and through the towers. We just stood there and looked, we couldn't figure it out just what was wrong because even then--in them days too, our own Air Force used to do the same thing. They used to dive on us out at sea and make all kinds of dummy runs, torpedo runs, and all that so we didn't pay any attention to it until we saw the little red meatballs on the side of the fuselage and on the wings and on the tail. Then we knew, then we knew. We were looking for a hole then. It's harder than hell to dig a foxhole in a steel deck. Just try it sometime. I ran in the hanger on deck and everybody else did too--there were all kinds of guys that didn't go down below. Then we started to get organized and I got in the ammunition handling crew. We were belting 30 caliber down in one of the mess halls. Then I was carrying belts up to where the machine gunners were. That's all we had at the time.

Overy: Didn't have any 20 millimeters or anything like that?

Krafnick: No, we had 1.1s on the fantail on the back of the ship and that was a new gun. We never had no 20 millimeter yet. They weren't out there yet. We had what they called 1.1s--it was a British gun that we used and they were water cooled. The funny part about that was the fellas--the gunners that had that--they were aboard, so they were throwing ammunition in that and

shooting the torpedo planes coming off the fantail, but it didn't last very long because they didn't have the water turned on and they burned them up. So, that was a mess--the gun was no good after that. We got them going, then everything had to be worked by hand because we didn't have any. All our juice and everything was cut off so we had quite a time there. Everything was locked up--ammunition lockers--everything was locked up. The policemen on the ship--they were running around with big ol' cable cutters and they were cutting every lock they seen. Then the guys that were down in ammunition, way down below--they brought the five inch up--anti-aircraft stuff--up to the top side and then they'd throw it in the five inch and then they'd fire. We had one gun going and I was on the one gun there for a little while. It was after I came back from carrying this ammunition. Boy, I tell ya, we got strafed. I don't know how close it came to me, but I could hear them whistle and sing. And I thought that was enough of that. I wasn't going back up there again. When I got down--we had Chaplain Forgey on our ship and he's the gentleman who wrote the song, "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition." He was running up and down the deck hollering, "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition." That was what he was saying. He was a college football player too and he was a big man. Our division--when we went to sea, we always played volleyball. I had a team and we'd always beat him and he didn't like that too well. What a gentleman he was. He was standing up on the top side and hollered at me. He says, "Come on, Krafnick, get your ass up here right now. I want you to help me load this gun." So, we got up there--he would take a shell when we came up to the deck and hand it to me, but he wouldn't put it in the gun. So, that's what I did and I must have thrown four or five shells. The gun that I was on belonged to the Marines. We had Marine detachment on the ship. Then I was relieved and I went back down below. After a couple hours, it was all over with. But we

were still scared stiff because they could have come right in and took over if they had a big enough landing course.

Overy: It sounds like the response of the people on your ship was pretty quick to the crisis.

Krafnick: They were “right now.” I remember this master hand was out there and he had a forty-five, they all were forty-fives. He was out there firing that forty-five at them. That’s what it was. This buddy of mine that was on the *Nevada*--he was a cook on the *Nevada*. These torpedo planes--off the fantail of the ship when I was back there--they were coming right over the sub-base and it was so close--it was just like I’m looking you right square in the eye. That’s how close he was. Japanese planes coming right up, right over the water. I seen them drop the fish and hits *California*, the *Oklahoma*, and the *Nevada*. He was running over to this food locker and he was throwing potatoes at him. He had to do something so that’s what he was doing. That is funny too, well it really wasn’t funny--there’s so many incidents. Then the *Nevada* took off--they went right straight through the channel. The Japanese got on that *Nevada* like you wouldn’t believe. They thought that if they could sink it right there, that would be the end of everything. But they didn’t do it. It went off to one side--the *Nevada* did--and they beached it. They got it away from everything and they beached it. We always said the *Nevada* was the only ship in the United States Navy that abandoned ship when it was on the ground. Then, of course, they got off the ship--most of them got off the ship and took off. But some of them stayed on and manned the guns. But the captain gave orders to abandon ship.

Overy: Was your ship badly damaged?

Krafnick: No. We had a lot of holes in the stack and stuff and we had a wooden deck that was all splintered, but I would say no.

Overy: Nobody hurt?

Krafnick: No. I think we had one guy that got hurt. Outside that, we didn't have anybody. But we had a tanker that was right across from us. That tanker was a ramapul and it had about a million gallons of high test aviation gasoline in it and it was so full that any ordinary wave--it just washes up on deck. It had four torpedo boats in the skids on the top side and they were taking them to Wake Island. I can still see these guys--they were up in them boats firing them 50 calibers. I can still see them do that. About a week before, we didn't have too much ammunition because the *San Francisco* was right next to us on the other side of the dock. We took all our ammunition over to them. So they were firing like crazy. They had a small bomb, it went right down in this room and it killed a good friend of mine that I went through recruit school back in '38--'37. '38. He and I were real good buddies and we went through training together. It killed him--they had a few casualties--that Frisco. The Frisco was real good fighting ship. I think its got more battle stars than any other ship in the Navy. We were the second, I think. We were in just about every major engagement there was.

Overy: What happened after the attack? What did you do then?

Krafnick: Well, after it was all over with--that night was a bad night. We had a bunch of B-24s coming in from the States. These fellows that were on the radar, they knew that the Japanese were coming. He had reported it all. But they said these ships were coming in from the States and that's what they were. But they weren't. Anyway, that night they came in and they weren't manned--no armor at all. They came over--when they were ready to come in and land, all hell broke loose. I don't know how many we knocked off. Some of them even landed when they running out of gas, that was far as they could go. So that was a real mess.

Overy: Knocked down by friendly fire.

Krafnick: Yeah. And tracers, you wouldn't believe. Then after we were firing the stuff--the officer of the deck at the time would say, "Take cover," because that (??) that was way up on top that was busting, was all coming down. That could hurt you too you know. You could hear it singing and whistling, you could hear it when it hit the water. That night was a bad one. That was scary. We thought for sure they were going to land. When they went back, they took off. The Army were on a stick too at the time. They had all these fishing boats--the Japanese did. They went to sea. In case--if their pilots had to drop, bail out and hit the water, they'd go pick them up when they came back in. So, they came back in and when they come back in, they let them come in so close and then they--then the artillery that was sitting there on the beach up in the hills--they just blasted them out of the water.

Overy: These were Japanese National ships?

Krafnick: Yeah, Japanese--well, they were fishing boats.

Overy: They flew the Japanese flag and everything?

Krafnick: No, they were just ordinary boat, but owned by Japanese. Just in case they were picking these flyers up and coming back in. They didn't let any of them come back in, they just stopped everything. The Japanese--they're pretty sharp--they had their cars and stuff that they had right when it started. The arterial highway that went straight through--the most travel points that were on it, they had all these cars of theirs. They piled them up in these corners and they got out. So, they tied up everything. After it all happened, they had barbed wire all over, nobody walked around at night. If you had a light on at night anyplace, they shot it out. Some of the Japanese ran into these sugarcane fields and they just liked the fields. If they got out, fine. If they

didn't, that was okay, they didn't care. They really took a beating. Some of them were Americans. But we really didn't know. It is something how this grows on you. Even my kid's give me such a hard time because I'm so prejudice, because I wouldn't trust one as far as I could push a building. I have no use for them at all. Right now, it seems that old wheel is starting to come back, starting to change and here we go again. I can see it, you can see it, everybody can. They own so much and it's going to be tough again. It was quite something, that December 7th, although they were only over an hour and a half. There was two waves, it was something that you never forget. Especially the *Oklahoma* when it just turned--I was standing alongside the ship and the battleship was out there—the *Oklahoma*--it just rolled right over, the top side right up. I had a real good buddy in the Cities here that was on that *Oklahoma*. The next day, they had a guy out there--we were watching--and he was cutting a hole in the deck in the bottom of the ship because it was bottom up. He cut a hole in there and reached down and pulled somebody out. That was something. I'll never forget that or the oil that was burning on the water and hearing these guys holler. A lot of guys were out there in whale boats and big boats running through the water picking these people all up. That was something too.

Overy: What do you remember most about that day you think?

Krafnick: I don't know--one good thing about it was I got out of the whole thing and I've thanked the good Lord for that many times. The thing that I remember is the way the Navy got together and the quickness that they had to combat these people that came in. I don't think they believed that we could get that quick. From being dead in the water, and about 25 percent were on the beach. We didn't have that many people on the deck on the ships that could man these certain guns. It takes a special sort of guy that can do that. These guys are trained for that stuff. When they had general quarters, they were right there, they knew what to do and how to do it.

That goes for all the loaders and the people down in the magazine lockers down below--they all knew. It was really something to see them after that second wave came in. They just powdered them--and it was just something to watch. They just let them have it. Our ship, we couldn't do too much because most of our ammunition was on the *San Francisco*. So, whenever they do work like that, they're moving those things around--got all that powder and stuff out of there for fear she'd blow. I think that's what really impressed me most was when the second wave came in, there, they were just firing like crazy. We knocked down quite a few. A lot more than what they figured anyway.

Overy: Did you ever have any--in later years--any bad dreams about that day?

Krafnick: Yes I have. Every once in a while I'll wake up--it was that oil burning and them guys hollering in that oil. You couldn't get to them, you couldn't see them. I dream about it. About the attacks and that first plane that came over. He flew right over my head. He couldn't have been a hundred fifty feet above my head. They were all real close and they were strafing like crazy. You don't forget some of that stuff. Or how we were all cuddled up in that hanger there just waiting for somebody to say something, somebody to do something so we could all get going. Once we organized, it was alright, we had no trouble at all because a lot of the officers weren't there either.

Overy: So it was mostly enlisted men and chiefs who were--

Krafnick: Yeah, we had an old chief warrant officer. It was Chief Botsan that was on the ship and he kind of took charge of that. That old dude was sharp--he knew. There was some first lieutenant that was up there and he was hollering orders and he told him to go down below and get the hell out of the way. I'll never forget that.

Overy: How long were you in Pearl Harbor after Pearl Harbor Day until you shipped out?

Krafnick: Well, we were in Pearl Harbor about another ten days before we got out. It was ten days, I think. And put her all back. Then they took all our wooden decks off because that stuff would fly so they took all that out. Of course, all the deck hands, they were tickled to death about the deck because they didn't have to scrub it anymore. So it worked out and we went out to sea. We were the battle fleet—our cruiser, we were the biggest ship. Us and about twelve destroyers. We were all there was. At that time, we had some more coming in from the States. We were out there on Wake Island when this was going on—they took Wake Island too. We had quite a time out there--we did a lot of blasting out there. We were running around there quite a bit. Every once in a while, we'd come back into Pearl Harbor to tie and every time we came back in, we had to come by the Arizona. It was sunk there and there wasn't a dry eye. I don't care, as many times as I went by there, it was just something else. Just to see the ship. But every morning, they went out to put the flag up and every evening they went back out there and took it down. Right now, yet today, that ship is listed as a ship that's in a fleet--still active according to the United States Navy. Oil still coming out of it. We didn't have too much. They chased us around pretty good out there. At that time, it was most likely being on a defense because what we had to do was keep track of where they were as much as we could. There wasn't too much of them around. A lot of their airplanes were scouting. At that time, too, we had some more planes that came out and around so our defense was pretty good. The guys came back and it worked out pretty good.

Overy: You said you were the fleet for a while. When did you start getting reinforcements?

Krafnick: It didn't take long. Within a month, I know we had destroyers all over the place that I've never seen before that came off the west coast. That's when some of the light cruisers come

out so we had three-four of them. Then is when they started breaking us up into task forces as to where we could operate in different parts of the water out there.

Overy: But, this was still all part of the Seventh Fleet?

Krafnick: Oh, yes. At that time. They were still part of the Seventh and the Fourth. Halsey--he had everything. We did a lot of running around out there. There was no standing still. Everyone was jumpy then for a while until we got used to it.

Overy: You must have felt pretty lonely out there with all your battleships gone?

Krafnick: Yes. Our battle fleet was demolished, it was gone. We didn't have a one that was there that you could use. They were all World War I Vinnies too and they weren't very fast. Just seeing them is enough--when a guy looks at them, what it does to him mentally--by the time he straightens out, he's already had it. They figured out--if you wait so many seconds, then you've already had it because even on a destroyer--you go aboard a destroyer--on this one, we had a sign right above it when you came aboard. It says, "This ship in combat, if it lasts more than two minutes, you've done your job." The sign is right there. That's what they say, if that ship can last that long in combat, it's served its purpose. That's what they say.

Overy: That must give you a creepy feeling.

Krafnick: Sure it does. It does. But they want to let you know that and that's something about the Navy that they'll let you know. There was no horsing around. A lot of times when we'd get into something out there, we didn't know. Not only we didn't know, but the officers didn't know either. A lot of times, the guy that had the fleet--we knew that the ships were in a certain vicinity, but we didn't know where and we didn't know how many. Like the night we were out around

Savo Islands and we were with the Enterprise. We laid back with the Enterprise because our anti-aircraft batteries were better than any of the rest of the cruisers. The *U.S.S. Vinsens* was a heavy and the *Catabear*, which was Australian. We were all going into this. We knew the Japs had their fleet there. We didn't know how many. So, they pulled us back with the Enterprise and they took our airplane and they went in. Early the next morning--it wasn't even light yet--we had to go in off of Savo and we had to pick up survivors. They sunk both of their cruisers. They ran into their destroyer, they ran into their battleships, they had the whole works there and they just blasted our outfit. We stuck a couple of them destroyers and one or two of their cruisers.

Overy: What were the major actions that your ship was in after Pearl Harbor? You said you were at Guadalcanal?

Krafnick: Yes. We were in Guadalcanal, the Marshall Gilberts was at Wick. We were in the Coral Sea Battle. There was another big one, but Coral Sea was the turning point. That's when they ran in and they took all their ships back.

Overy: Were you at Midway?

Krafnick: Yes. We were at Midway. We had these eight inch guns. We could sit out there and just bang them. But when we got in closer, so our five inch could reach them too. And it really powdered them. That was something, sitting down below, listening to that. We were told what we were going to do. It came down over the phones that this is what we're doing so we would know. That helped. You get out there and the next day and there's empty shells laying all over the place and you wonder, geez. Later on during the war when I was on the other destroyer, that's when we had twins and quad-forties and twenties. If you want to see empty casings, you ought to see them. They're all over the deck and guys kicking them over the side so they could

have room to stand on, or else they'd be rolling. Them forties--that's the big shell, but the twenties are about like this. There was between four, six, or eight in a clip and you set that thing right down in there and that's all they do. One guy would have them. On that cruiser with all that banging going on, that was quite something. You couldn't get out--you had to go down through two airlocks to get down in the fire room because our fire room was all pressurized. The minute we lost our air, the fire would be out all over the place because it just sucks it right out the boilers. That one time, when they fired like that it kind of created a vacuum down there on the floor plate right there in front of the boiler and that fire would jump out at you. The five inch wasn't so bad, but it was the big ones.

Overy: What was bad about the job down there?

Krafnick: There wasn't really anything about it. You had a job to do and you didn't think about it that way. The bad thing about it, of course it was a fire and the oil was hot. You'd get burnt by the oil. Outside of that, you did your job. There wasn't anything bad about it. I kind of liked it. I thought it was great. I suppose you'll get a different opinion from somebody else. I had a job to do and knew if I didn't do it, they were going to have to put somebody else in there and that would make me kind of sore because I like to do it. I was good at what I was doing. There was only one other guy that run these burners faster than I could and he was a little Polack from Pennsylvania. There wasn't really anything I didn't like about it.

Overy: What about your officers on board ship?

Krafnick: The officers were fine. The officers were good. Most of them were all on Annapolis (?) most of them at that time. They knew what they were doing and they knew how to handle the men. You had some that didn't and couldn't but they got along. They were fine. There wasn't

anything--especially in engineering where I but they got along. There wasn't anything-- especially in engineering where I was at--they knew what they were doing. You could talk to them. We had full commander. Commander Oliver, I'll never forget him. He'd be right down in the fire room with us. Wanted to know how we were doing and how things were going. When we were down there, we had chief petty officers right down in these fire rooms, right with us all the time. We had chiefs and firsts and second class, and recruits. The recruits--they usually stood there and just watched. After a while when they thought they could handle it--whenever we'd get out where it wasn't too rough and there was nothing going on, we'd let them get on the burners. You'd go so good with one burner, but when you had to change burner barrels, you had to pull them out and put a bigger nozzle on them and throw it in so you get more oil in it because when they opened up the throttle, the steam gauge would go down. So you had to be real careful about that. You had to keep your steam at a certain point. But the officers were fine, I didn't have any problems until later when we got a lot of these ninety day wonders. A lot of these guys came out of some big cooperation so they came in as commander, a captain, or a full lieutenant or something. They thought they were quite something so it created a little problem then. But outside of that, your regular officers, they were great.

Overy: Were there any particular tensions involved in being. Even on a large ship, you've got all these men living together constantly. Were there any problems in that direction? Just the fact that you're with the same people, the same ship all this time.

Krafnick: No, there wasn't any problem there at all. Everybody got together and like I said, you were in a compartment. If you had your job to do something in that compartment, you did it. If someone else had to do it for you, he made sure that you would do it the next time. There would be no horsing around. Cleanliness was really something. If we ran out of freshwater while we

were out at sea, we took showers with saltwater and we had saltwater soap. You better be clean because if you didn't--and we would do this by ourselves--if we had a guy who stood around there for four or five days and didn't take a shower, we took him up. We had a brush and we'd fix him--we'd give him a shower. They wouldn't do it again. And the guy that we did it to, made sure that everybody seen him in the shower because that's the way it was. The same way with your bed clothes. You had to be sure they were clean and if they weren't clean, somebody would be there to rip them off. And if you didn't have that clean stuff on there at night before you went to bed, he was hurt. That's the way it was. And you kept your lockers clean cause if you didn't, you had cockroaches there too just like any place else. If there were some cockroaches in somebody's locker, all his clothes would come out and would be laying on the deck. He had to scrub it all out his clothes and the whole deal before you put it back in. They were real fussy. When you're close together like that, you just have to have something like that. But we didn't have any problem. You could go take a shower and leave your wallet on your bunk or anything and go and come back and it was all right there. But afterwards, when certain other kind of people got in the Navy, then you couldn't do that anymore. We never had a lock on the locker. But after that, you had to start putting them on.

Overy: This is late in the war. They wouldn't be draftees would they?

Krafnick: Yeah, there were draftees. They would draft a certain amount. Some went to the Marines, Army, and the Navy. Then you had to be careful--you had to watch out. But if someone got caught stealing--stealing was bad if you got caught. They'd get you out of there right now.

Overy: What kind of disciplinary problems were there on board ship?

Krafnick: The guys sometimes would go out when they go to shore and come back and they'd maybe have a half of pint taped to their ankle or something. Sometime during the way route at sea--maybe two, three weeks, they would take a few of them and maybe get too much. If an officer got ahold of them before--well we'd hide them. That wasn't much of a problem. Some guys mentally couldn't take the close quarters like that for so long. That was kind of a problem. But outside of that, sometimes on a smaller ship, you ran out of chow and that made it a little different. Like on the destroyer--the first one I was on--when we go out to sea, we'd be out there for two weeks and the bread started getting moldy. You ate it--you took the mold off and you ate it. It was a problem, but we ate and didn't mind it because that's all we had and we knew we had to eat it so it wasn't so bad. The closeness and the being so close together, that was tough for some. So we watched out for each other. There wasn't near as much problem as a lot of people would think.

Overy: How different was life on board ship in the peacetime Navy--your particular experience in peacetime as opposed to war time. Was there a significant difference in the way you lived, what you did?

Krafnick: Yes, there was a difference. In a peacetime Navy, you were in a certain like I was in the engineering force. We used to call them the black (inaudible). Then there were the people that were in the machine shops, people that were in the engine rooms, and the people that were on the top side--gunner mason, torpedo men. They had their own section and they worked in that section and that's what they did. You had a certain job to do and you did it and things were fine. In war time, there was a lot of those things that they did away with. Everything was shortcutted. You didn't do so much painting anymore, didn't do so much chipping paint. All you did was you kept your weapons clean and kept them on the bow all the time. In an engineering space we had

to keep them boilers up to snuff and all our fuel pumps and our water pumps vacuum pumps--all that stuff had to be kept up to snuff. That was first. After that, then you clean. But when we got into some kind of action or something, you wanted to be sure that everything was working and you had to get in there fast, you had to get out fast. If you didn't get in fast enough, you maybe got nailed before you had a chance to get out. And if you didn't get out quick enough, you may be cut someplace where you shouldn't have cut if you'd have been with the rest of the ships. You want to be with the rest of them because you're pretty safe when you've got a crowd. But if you don't, then you're in trouble. If they catch you by yourself, then you're in trouble.

Overy: So your job of keeping those boilers going was right at the very heart of everything that that ship had to do.

Krafnick: You bet. If that boiler wasn't going, nobody went. That's where you were. You stayed there. We did our job and we kept it. When these planes--these Japs are coming in on the top side after us, them guys were up there with them guns and they were just blasting away at them. We knew they were doing their job, we were doing ours and that way, we could win this thing. That's what you thought about. We'd sit back there, they'd be blasting. We'd be saying give them hell and all that sort of thing. We needed each other and we had to have each other. If we didn't, then we're hurting.

Overy: You were talking about some contact with marines. Did you have much contact during World War II with people outside your ship, like marines and soldiers or native people in those areas?

Krafnick: Yes, we did. Especially when we got onward into the Talagi area which was part of the Florida group. The Japs were all in there even when we were there. That was the front line

then, but we were there. At night, they would come down and start a fire and blow something up. On the base, we had marines and there was army Personnel. We got along just fine. We were with a lot of Australians. They were a sharp group. It was fun watching them walk around doing their little thing. The Marines were a little different. We were with one of the divisions. We were with the Fourth one time and they had just come back from Bougainville and they'll tell you some gruesome stories. That was survival--there was no horsing around. Them guys--they're armed to the teeth. Just fantastic. You can always tell--they get a little moody. You can always tell -- After they were back for a while out of action--maybe three weeks to a month when they come back. They get back and rest in one of these areas. Then they're fine. It's great, you can go and talk to them about anything. But you get about two weeks before they're going to make a jump before they go back in action not too much activity, not too much talking. It's just like they do here, like a football or basketball game, you've got to psyche yourself up for the thing. This is what they do. They have these certain classes and have these officers come in and talk to them. Over there, officers didn't wear no insignias or nothing. You didn't know who was a private and who was an officer because they lost too many of them. The officers would wear anything--they were all grubby. They wore some of the damndest clothes you would ever want to see. But when they buckled up, there was no horsing around. You wouldn't hear a thing. Everybody's there that one day--you go in the next day and the whole works is gone. When they left one day off at Talogi, I never seen them after that. I don't know where the devil they went or what island they hit. They'd come back off Bougainville. One that I remember the most cause I was in on it was when we went to Guadalcanal. We took the marines in and dumped them off. We got out of there real quick. It was dark so Japs were all over the place. We got out of there and they did a real good job. They pushed them Japs all over back in there and then we relieved them. Somebody

else went in and took the Marines off and put the Army in there. The Army was in there for about a month and a half or two and we all had to go back in and take the Army out. The Japs had come back and pushed them right in the water. Then we had to dump the Marines back off. Then the Marines went back in and cleaned them out. It is hard--when we took them in (the Army), they took their own food and everything with them. They had a lot of food and stuff in crates. We had these great big nets. You'd put all the stuff in the net. The net was full of big corks and stuff--floaters. We threw all that food in there and it would float ashore. That's how they got their food. I remember, I was sitting on that side of the ship when these two officers--I think he was a one star or two star general--and a couple of colonels. They wanted our captain to lower a boat to take them in. He says, "There's your troops over there. And that boats going to stay right where it is so if you want to get over there, you just get your ass in the water and get it over there because we aren't going any farther. You better do it pretty quick because we're getting out of here." Everyone was on a schedule because when we were in there doing this, the Japs knew we were there. They had observers all over the place. I remember, they were throwing crates of potatoes in the water and they would float into the shore. I could hear them when they hit the water; it was too dark to see. That's the way that was and I guess it worked out. That kind of bother me too--I was thinking, Jesus, they're our guys, they're on our side. And we're doing that to them. That kind of bothered me. You start to think back--if we'd have been in that boat, in that situation, we'd have had to swim. So that kind of stuck with me for a while to think that you do that to your own people. But I'm sure that had happened all over. I don't care where you were. They took the Marines off and that was a battle worried bunch of guys. You couldn't even talk cross-eyed to them guys. They were really something.

Overy: What was there to do when you weren't working on board ship?

Krafnick: You could write letters, you could read and things like that. Sleep--sleep because sometimes you're sitting down there below and when you get in general quarters, you stay there. You don't get out of there. You stay right there until it gets over with. Again, when it's over with, it may be your turn to have the watch and you will have to stay there. But that is usually two hours off and two hours on. That's the way they did it. Then you'd swing it at midnight so you would catch the same one all the time. The ship itself was just fine. Getting on the ship--that was good. The duty was good. Then when you got on the beach that was a little different. You were under another command. Everything was different.

Overy: What was there to do on liberty? Where did you go on liberty?

Krafnick: I had a camera. I took pictures like crazy. So, that's what I did. If there was any place around there that was worthwhile sightseeing, I was there. If it was a place way off somewhere I couldn't reach, we'd always find a guy with a horse, or a donkey, or a cab--this buddy and I--we'd hire them and away we'd go.

Overy: What places did you visit on liberty?

Krafnick: One that was really interesting was in Port-au-Prince in the Haitian Islands. We seen it here a while back. They had that father, or what the hell they call him, he was a guy that just run off the island. Poppa Doc--that castle that he's got there, you wouldn't believe. It was absolutely fantastic. It was all white. It was just beautiful. Just shiny. People were running around with nothing. Hardly no clothes on and they were poor. Their housing was bad. We got into some of that and I took a lot of pictures. All the guards were six footers--big guys. I got a lot of pictures of them guys. The Port-au-Prince--I remember that. Then when we went to Espirito Santo. It was a village there and it was all French. It struck me funny--me, coming from

Minnesota and going over there and these people are all black and they're all talking French. That kind of hit me because I didn't think black people could talk French. A lot of people would give me a hard time about that, but that's the way I thought about it. I thought, Gee, these people are all talking French. Now that's something else.

Overy: This is in the West Indies?

Krafnick: Yeah. And the Fiji Islands were the same way. That wasn't too far away. Sometimes you'd wake up in the morning and you were at a different place. You didn't know where you were. They had a Catholic church. It was way up on top of the hill. You had to walk all the way up there. It was quite a ways. I went up there and I went in. The benches were just two by six nailed on some more two by six straight down. No back, no nothing. It was dusty, the wind blowing. We did talk to the priest too. I forget where he came from. The Virgin Islands and St. Thomas--that really impressed me too. Because when we went in there, you could see in a hundred feet of water the coral down below, just kind of white and you could see all the fish swimming. It was just beautiful. I thought that was really something else. Other than that, there wasn't too many places.

Overy: I don't imagine you got off ship too much when you were in a combat zone.

Krafnick: No, we really didn't. You stayed pretty close. I didn't want my buddy to go because when I looked over there in front of that boiler and I didn't see him there, I would wonder where the hell he went. We could handle that job. We knew what we were doing. If you had a new guy over there it was a little different. Or even if you knew the guy. We kind of had signals too. We'd look back and watch our water tanner in the back. He ran the blower because every time you'd cut a boiler and you don't have so much air pressure to keep that fire going--if you had too

much air, you had white smoke. If you didn't have enough air, you had black smoke. So you had to be real careful. Whatever he did, that protected everybody else. If you had a little black smoke, you had the captain and everybody right there just chewing you right out. At night it wasn't so bad.

Overy: You were saying that guys pretty much admired Halsey?

Krafnick: Yes, they did. They thought he wasn't quite all there for a while for what he did. But he had a reason and it just came down to that. When we went someplace and Halsey was out there--he was right out there with you. There was no horsing. His officers were right there too. Everybody was right there. He had a good combat mind. Technically, he was one of the best, we thought. Kincave was good. I don't know what fleet he had. Then they broke up. When we went to Philippine Liberation--we didn't get to see too much of that--we were with the fleet. It was alright, it worked out. When I had enough points and my time was out, we got back into the Hawaiian Islands. I came back and got another destroyer. It was a big one. It was a radar jammer. That we called them in those days. We used to go between the fleets. The Japs had a fleet and they were sending radar signals out and we'd be between them and our fleet. When they would send this radar out to pick up our ship, we'd jam it. We'd get out there, they'd send these--that's when we had the Kamikazes. We never got hit by one. After that part of it, we came back to Panama, that was an interesting place, I went through there 6 times through the canal. I went through it on the first destroyer, the second, the last destroyer was a heavy cruiser. I went through with all the ships. That was interesting how they did that. I took an awful lot of pictures of that. It was something else how they would fill up these different areas. They'd pick you up, higher and higher and bring you back down. It was something, it was really something.

Overy: Were you in the Navy also during Korea?

Krafnick: No. At that time, I was in the Army then. I came back and when I came back, I was recruiting in St. Cloud in the Navy. They had a V-6 program, which was a reserve program.

Overy: You came out of the Navy what ranking?

Krafnick: I came out of the Navy as a first class machinist. I was recruiting here for the Navy. They disbanded the V-6 program so they sent me a notice that I was going to have to report to San Diego on a destroyer. They are hard to get off of. The next day I got a call from the colonel in Minneapolis recruiting station and he asked me to come down so I went down there. He says, "Well, you're recruiting for the Navy and I like what you are doing." There was another guy and he was going to go too, but he didn't. I did. He said, "I tell you what, I'll give you rate for rate. You come in and go through our school. Our school is in Fort Lee, Virginia. Then you go to Chicago to Fort Sheridan. Then we'll send you right back to St. Cloud and you'll recruit." I said, "Can I believe you? Is your word pretty good?" "You got my word. You just do it." So I went home and talked to my wife. In the Army, when I move, the family goes. They move everybody. I went through everything. I went in. I did it and by gosh, they sent me right back to St. Cloud. When I get back to St. Cloud, I'm in an Army uniform. I got a picture.

Overy: Were you master sergeant?

Krafnick: Yes. And I stayed there for three and a half years. Korea came up. So that worked out just fine. I could have stayed. I was doing pretty good. But then I got an ulcer. I had a hard time just drinking water. So the doctor told me, "Either we're going to have to cut on you or you're going to have to get out of here. So I went home to the wife and told her about it and she said, "Well, you better get out." So that's what I did and they sent me in the engineers. I went in the

engineers and I went to Texas. They sent me down into Texas. I forget the name of the little town--Mineral Wells, Texas. I was down there about three months. They had housing on the base. They gave me the time to put the kids in school and the whole deal was just great. So we stayed there for quite a while--a year and a half or two years. Then we got orders to go to France at first. I was in a--SCAWAF troops was what they called it. It was a special category army with the Air Force. The Air Force didn't have any engineers so they took them out of the Army and stuck them in the Air Force. We wore the Army uniform, but we were fed, paid, and housed by the Air Force. It was SCAWAF- and nobody ever heard of them either. Then they changed them to Newfoundland. That was fine. I packed the family up and sent them home, sent them back here. All the kids were here. We had three--two boys and a girl. I went to Newfoundland. Got over there and the housing opened up on the base I sent for them. It was just great. They had schools right on the base and everything was right there. Except a Catholic school was outside. Engineers we had our own bus and they would bus them out of the school. I stayed there till '56 and after that I went to Fort Benning till '59. That was the end of my career. I was in special troop command. I worked with the post engineers. I was steam and gas mechanic for the post engineers. Had my own truck and everything. I had it made there and I liked the job. It was a very good job. Kelly Field was brand new and I had all the mess halls. I did all the maintenance all the gear that went in the mess halls. All the steam kettles and all the ranges and all that. That was all mine. And the steam under the buildings. I had a couple of these rebels with me that came from Alabama. I was down there three years, and I tell you these rebels are kind of hard shelled, if you remember. There was a couple I was with all that time and they still really wouldn't talk to me because I was a damn Yankee. There was a couple who invited me right in their house and fed me and everything, my whole family. At that time I had a little problem with

the first sergeant, but we won't get into that. Anyway, he had me on orders to go to Korea. I came back and I told my wife about it and she says, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm not going to Korea." And she said, "No you're not. How much time do you got? Do you have enough to retire?" I said, "I sure have." She said, "Let's go home." So I went up into headquarters and told them about it. I didn't even tell the first sergeant. He was madder than hell because he had to find somebody else to fill my spot. We got out of there July 1, 1959, retired, and came home. Within thirty days, I was working for the state for a reformatory. It was out there sitting on air boilers out there. The service to me and to the family was just great. I had a little girl born in Georgia and I had boy born in Newfoundland. The military was great to me and my family. It's a time of my life I will never forget.

Overy: No regrets?

Krafnick: No regrets. Not one. I miss it. If they would call me, I would go right now. But they wouldn't ask me to go. I thought an awful lot of it. It's just like anyplace else. You run into some of the finest people in the world. Then you turn around and run into a bunch of yahoos that don't know which end is up. When you tie them all together, it all comes out in the end. It's going to work out. If you've got a frame of mind like that and you keep your attitude in the right place, you don't have any problems.

Overy: One last question, with your service in World War II and all those years in the military, what went through your mind during the Vietnam War when young men were refusing to go or going to Canada, hiding. What was your view of that?

Krafnick: Well, to start off, I'm a genuine flag (raider?). Me and my country mean a lot to me. My two boys went and won over there. And I tell you, that didn't go too good with me. I'm

strong and there's a lot of us. When these guys went to Canada, it hurt me right to the quick to think that somebody would do it. Who would even do a thing like that? We'd get in more arguments over this. After it was all over with, we thought, well, that's good. They can stay in Canada. By the time we get back here, later President Ford--he wrote a letter and he let them all off the hook. That's what really hurts. How can he give amnesty to those people? They all should have been shot. I'm prejudiced as hell and I'm a strong believer in this country. Not like these guys that burn the flag. I get all excited. My boys know this too. You talk to anybody at the club and they'll tell you the same thing. Course, you get down there and you're going to get in an argument with all kinds of guys. I got mad one day. I came driving in the back of the club and there was a pickup sitting in the back and the name of it was a Mitsubishi. Mitsubishi dive bombers did all the dirty work in Pearl Harbor. I came busting in that club and said, "Hey, who the hell owns that thing?" A guy said, "I do." I said, "Are you a member?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "You mean to tell me that you're a member and you're driving something like that? You know what they did to us at Pearl Harbor and out there in the South Pacific?" "Yeah." "I don't mind you here. That's fine, but would you take that truck and park it in somebody else's yard? Get it the hell off of this lot?" The manager of the club got me by the hand. He said, "Hey Ralph, we got to get the hell out of here." And we did. But I never seen that truck parked back there. I never seen it after that. I have a special plate on my car. "Pearl Harbor Survivor." And a special plate on my old truck sitting out there, that they gave us. I was in Lavenders office when we first started this and we just got it this last year so that shows you how long it took them to give them to us. A guy in Minneapolis who's a Pearl Harbor survivor because he's got the plate that he's got on the back of a Honda. If I ever find out who the hell he is, he's in trouble. That's my

feelings and I can't put it strong enough about these people who went to Canada. I don't understand that at all. I just don't understand it.