

Charles Donovan: I left Seattle and was transferred down to Mare Island Navy Yard in San Francisco and picked up a troop ship from there and we went to Guam. And then I was assigned at Guam. I stayed there for, oh, maybe three or four weeks – in the jungles there in a tent. And then was assigned to a mine sweeper – the USS Concise – C-O-N-C-I-S-E ... AM-63. Oh, and by the way, the [USS] Spica was AK-16.

Janis Kozlowski: AK-16, OK.

Charles Donovan: And I was assigned to the Concise and was the senior radioman aboard. I forget, I had three or four radiomen underneath me – radio operators. And then we swept mines in the Lower Honshu Island in Japan. And of course, the mine sweepers would have what they called “Paravanes” – like a, it looked like a small float-like, at the end of a cable – one on each side of the ship. And those would extend out into the water for, oh, I don’t know, maybe 50 or 100 feet. And they would sweep the mines. They’d catch a hold of the cables that held the mines into the bottom of the ocean, or the harbor where they were settled, and they’d sweep up the mines.

And a couple of times, I can remember, we would try to shoot the ... blow up the mines with a rifle. Because they had these, like, spikes on them – that was the detonator – they’d hit whatever it was – a ship, or something, and blow it up. And I can remember we’d try to hit those spikes. And a couple of times, we blew a couple up. And then I can remember being in port in Wakayama – W-A-K ... waka ... W-A-K-A-Y-A-M-A – Wakayama, Japan.

And I can remember being there and going ashore, and ... it’s just a little town, but, quaint little town – of Japanese ... that was interesting.

Janis Kozlowski: And were you there after the war – after the Japanese surrendered?

Charles Donovan: No. On the way home, I was ... in 1945 ... I was on that Concise - from 1944 through December of 1945. I was discharged in 1945 and on the way home to the states - then the Japanese had surrendered while we were in route.

Janis Kozlowski: So, when you were in Wakayama, that was, that was still during war time then?

Charles Donovan: Yes. Because, we were sweeping the mines.

Janis Kozlowski: That mine sweeping sounds like a dangerous activity.

Charles Donovan: It could be, but it wasn’t for us, fortunately. It could be if you, you know, you hit one of these mines. But, basically, you ... most of the time, you’d never hit any of them, because the Paravanes were out on their cables and if they would, if they would explode, they’d explode far enough away from the ship that it wouldn’t bother the ship.

Janis Kozlowski: [Um-hum] And how close into Japan did you go to sweep? Was it; was it actually in the harbors?

Charles Donovan: Just in the harbor – Wakayama, or Lower Honshu Island Harbor.

Janis Kozlowski: OK. Well, weren’t they after you - trying ... when you ... in so close?

Charles Donovan: No. I'm sorry, the war was over when we were sweeping the mines.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. OK.

Charles Donovan: Over, in that area. But, the Japanese had not surrendered.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, I see. So, that was just maybe more of a, a bit of a neutral zone?

Charles Donovan: Right, right.