

Interview with Ottis Littlejohn

Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Program

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**Interviewed by Janis Kozlowski, National Park Service
Transcribed by Professional Transcripts**

This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The interview with Ottis Littlejohn was recorded with his permission on a digital recorder. Copies of the audio file are preserved in mp3, wav and wma formats and are on file at the offices of the National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska. All photos contributed by Mr. Littlejohn.

The transcript has been lightly edited.

0:00:08.4 Greetings and requesting permission to tape interview

Ottis Littlejohn: Hello?

Janis Kozlowski: Good morning, is this Mr. Ottis Littlejohn?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yes, it is.

Janis Kozlowski: This is Janis Kozlowski with the National Park Service in Anchorage.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yes, ma'am.

Janis Kozlowski: Is this morning going to be a good time to talk?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah, it'll be all right.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay, and is it okay if I tape the conversation?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay. All right.

Ottis Littlejohn: But, you gonna tell me when you start, huh?

Janis Kozlowski: Well, I turned the tape recorder on already.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, okay.

Janis Kozlowski: Is it okay to -- to get going with it?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah. That'll be fine.

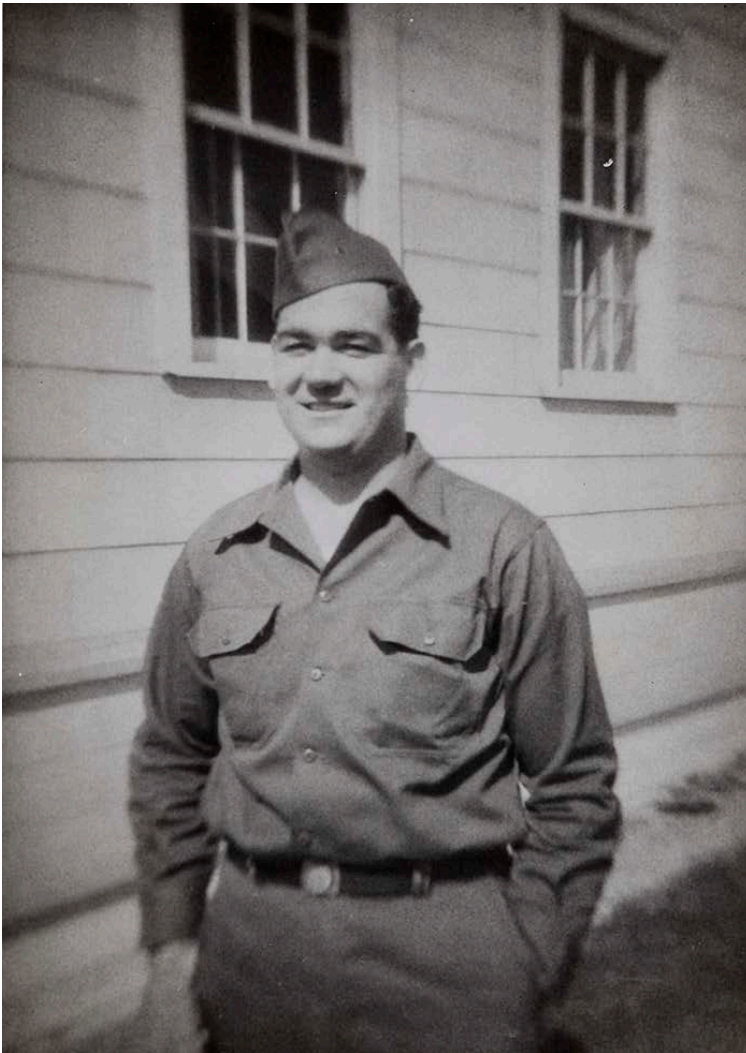
Janis Kozlowski: Okay. Okay, so can I -- can I start asking you questions?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, go ahead.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay. Okay, so could you tell me how you ended up getting into World War II? Were you drafted or did you enlist?

0:01:02.6 Mr. Littlejohn enlisted in 1941

Ottis Littlejohn: I enlisted. November 4, 1941.



Ottis Littlejohn. Great Lakes Naval Training Station, 1946. In a Navy experimental uniform (never adopted). Photo courtesy of Ottis Littlejohn.

Janis Kozlowski: And -- and what compelled you to do that?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, I was 20 years old and at that time where I lived there were no jobs around and I'd already been in the Civilian Conservation Corps a year and a half and so I just was ready to leave home and I decided the Navy would be a good place to spend 30 years.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) So you.....

Ottis Littlejohn: But I didn't. I enlisted for six years and got out a little under six years.

Janis Kozlowski: And why did you pick the Navy?

0:01:46.6 Mr. Littlejohn chose to enlist in the Navy

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, I've been asked that question before and it's hard to answer. I knew a man that had been in the Marines and that didn't appeal to me because of what he said and, I just didn't think I'd like the Army, so the Navy was the first choice.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you have other family members that had been in the Navy or was there anything in your -- in your past that kind of compelled you that way?

Ottis Littlejohn: No. No, I had two uncles in the Army, but no other relatives in the service that I knew of.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay, and -- and did you always live in Louisiana?

0:02:28.7 Mr. Littlejohn met his wife, got married, and lived in Illinois

Ottis Littlejohn: No. No, I was born in Jefferson, Texas, and that's only about 50-60 miles from here.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so you didn't move too far from home.

Ottis Littlejohn: No. Well, I lived up in Illinois almost 10 years, counting the time I was in the Navy.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, okay. Okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: I got married up there.

Janis Kozlowski: You met your wife up in -- up in Illinois?

Ottis Littlejohn: She was in the Navy too. She was a Navy nurse.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh!



Anne Krupa Littlejohn (center). Photo courtesy of Ottis Littlejohn.

Ottis Littlejohn: She was gold braid and I wasn't, but we didn't have any problem going together so she got out of the Navy before I did and when I got out I came home to Texas and stayed a little while and went back up there and we got married.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, okay. Is.....

Ottis Littlejohn: Lived up there several years after that.

Janis Kozlowski: Hmm, and then she moved down to Louisiana with you?

0:03:38.5 Moving back to Louisiana in 1954

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, I convinced her to come down here. You know, I worked up there and I didn't like that cold climate. I told her I knew a place where it was warmer.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) Yeah, it's.....

Ottis Littlejohn: I convinced her and we moved down here in 1954.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. Well, she must've liked it then. She stayed.

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, the first summer we lived down here was one of the hottest summers that Shreveport ever had and she was pregnant so, it was pretty hard to convince her to stay but she did.

Janis Kozlowski: And did the two of you ever serve together in the Navy?

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, we were at the same base but, I don't know, I guess -- well, not the same..... She was in a different category. She was a dietitian in a hospital where they served special meals for special patients.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, I see.

Ottis Littlejohn: I was in a police department.

0:04:33.6 Training at boot camp in San Diego when Pearl Harbor was attacked

Janis Kozlowski: Okay. Okay. So, what kind of training did the Navy give you and where did they train you when you got into the service?

Ottis Littlejohn: I went -- enlisted in Texarkana, Texas, and they sent me to Little Rock, and that's where I was actually inducted and then went to San Diego, then we had boot camp there, so we were about halfway through training when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, so we didn't finish training. We got shipped to Pearl Harbor.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, when did you end up in Pearl Harbor then? How quickly after the bombing?

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, let's see we got there -- I think it was like the 15th, and they sent us there and the first thing we did was unload an ammunition ship. That took about two or three weeks, and then I went aboard ship on January 10, 1942, and that's where I spent almost three years.

0:05:46.0 Patrolling the Hawaiian Islands

Janis Kozlowski: And where did that ship -- where did -- where were your missions on that ship?

Ottis Littlejohn: At first we patrolled around the Hawaiian Islands, and submarine patrol and radar patrol, and we'd go out and stay seven to nine days, and we'd come back in to port for supplies and refuel and..... So we spent several months doing that and one day we got a call to go out and check on a submarine that sunk a small freighter, so we went from Oahu over to the Hawaii Island and there were two other ships with us and we sunk that submarine. We got credit for it and our commander got a better command, but all we got was a pat on the back.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) No steak dinner or anything?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, no, nothing special. But after that, then we went to San Francisco and got new equipment, like radar, for instance, well, a better radar, and then on the way to Alaska.

Janis Kozlowski: Now, tell me, what ship were you on?

0:07:10.0 Description of the USS Long

Ottis Littlejohn: USS Long.

Janis Kozlowski: And what kind.....

Ottis Littlejohn: DMS-12.

Janis Kozlowski: And what kind of ship was the USS Long?

Ottis Littlejohn: It was a World War I series of destroyers and it was what they called a four piper, four stacks, and they took one of them out and put a fuel tank in there so we could stay out at sea longer, but they converted it to a minesweeper, so it was called a high-speed minesweeper, so that was our main job, you know, clearing harbors of mines.

Janis Kozlowski: So you started out clearing mines in the Hawaiian Islands?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, the first ones we did were in the Aleutians.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, okay. So you went from Hawaii up to Alaska on the Long?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, we went from Hawaii to San Francisco and got repairs and remodeling and then went to the Aleutians.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, I see, okay.

0:08:23.8 Heading to the Aleutians in 1942 and colliding with another ship

Ottis Littlejohn: So we went up there in July of '42 and, you know the fog was so thick..... You know how that fog is.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, yeah.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, so we were out there maneuvering and, you know, zig zagging. We had a fleet there and there were two ships that didn't get the order so one of them rammed us, and I had just come down from the bridge and I happened to look up and I saw that thing coming at us. It looked like a battleship. So I yelled on the bridge, right quick, ship on the starboard side. So, by that time of course we tried to go reverse and they tried to steer starboard, but they rammed us and knocked a big hole in the side and then slapped along the side and knocked another big hole in the rear, and the fog lifted right away and there they were sitting out there with the bow turned 90 degrees.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow!

Ottis Littlejohn: So, nobody got hurt, but the same thing happened to two other ships in the same fleet at the same time; course we got orders to go back to base. There was nothing we could do, so we got temporary repairs at Kodiak and then back to San Francisco for major repairs and then right back to the Aleutians.

Janis Kozlowski: That sounds like it was a pretty big accident. It's surprising nobody got hurt.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, it's just the way it hit, I guess. They hit us up close to the bow and since I happened to be where I was, I was the first one up on the fo'cas'le after the accident and lying up on our deck there was a box of tongue depressors (laughter). It came from their sick bay.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, it just came flying out (laughter)?

Ottis Littlejohn: It came flying out of their sick bay onto our main deck.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

0:10:42.9 A very slow ride to Kodiak to get the ship repaired

Ottis Littlejohn: But, like I said, when the fog lifted there we were, four ships unable to do anything, so we went back to Kodiak, about 3 or 4 knots. That's all we could make.

Janis Kozlowski: It took you three or four nights to get there or you stayed there.....

Ottis Littlejohn: Knots. Three or four knots, the speed.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, knots. Oh, I'm sorry.

Ottis Littlejohn: Barely moving.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, okay, and so it probably took you -- where were you at the time when the accident occurred?

Ottis Littlejohn: I don't know exactly.

Janis Kozlowski: But -- but maybe not very close to Kodiak.

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, not real close, no. It was somewhere further out, maybe toward Dutch Harbor, somewhere out that way.

Janis Kozlowski: Do -- and do you remember what the other ship's name was?

Ottis Littlejohn: I do. In fact I've got it -- Monaghan.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, the Monaghan, okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: And that happened on the 27th of July.

Janis Kozlowski: In '42?

Ottis Littlejohn: Right.

Janis Kozlowski: So, you made it -- you limped into Kodiak and they were able to do enough to put the ship together so you could sail to San Francisco?

Ottis Littlejohn: Right. Right.

0:12:01.1 Trip to San Francisco for repair after collision

Janis Kozlowski: And did you have any trouble getting to San Francisco?

Ottis Littlejohn: No. No, no trouble. They repaired it well enough to go and, you know, no leak or no storm apparently. I don't remember exactly, but we made it all right, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm, and how about the Monaghan? What happened to that, do you know?

Ottis Littlejohn: No. No, I don't. But, I think I'm -- I think I'm right that the Monaghan was sunk in a storm in the South Pacific later.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Ottis Littlejohn: A year or two later.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: I remember there were four ships that were sunk in this storm and the Monaghan was one of them.

0:12:55.6 Going home on leave and visiting family

Janis Kozlowski: Okay. So, so what happened after that, when you -- how long did you stay in San Francisco or what did you do after you left there?

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, probably no more than a month. I know that we were there long enough for some of the men to get leave to go home, and I don't remember if I went or not, but I was lucky enough to get home every year, you know, once a year, and I'd get a week's leave plus, you know, two days before and two days after, so that'd be 11 days. It'd take me six days on the road, so I'd get five days at home.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, I bet that went.....

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) But you visited your family?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah. I went home and, yeah, visited and.....

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

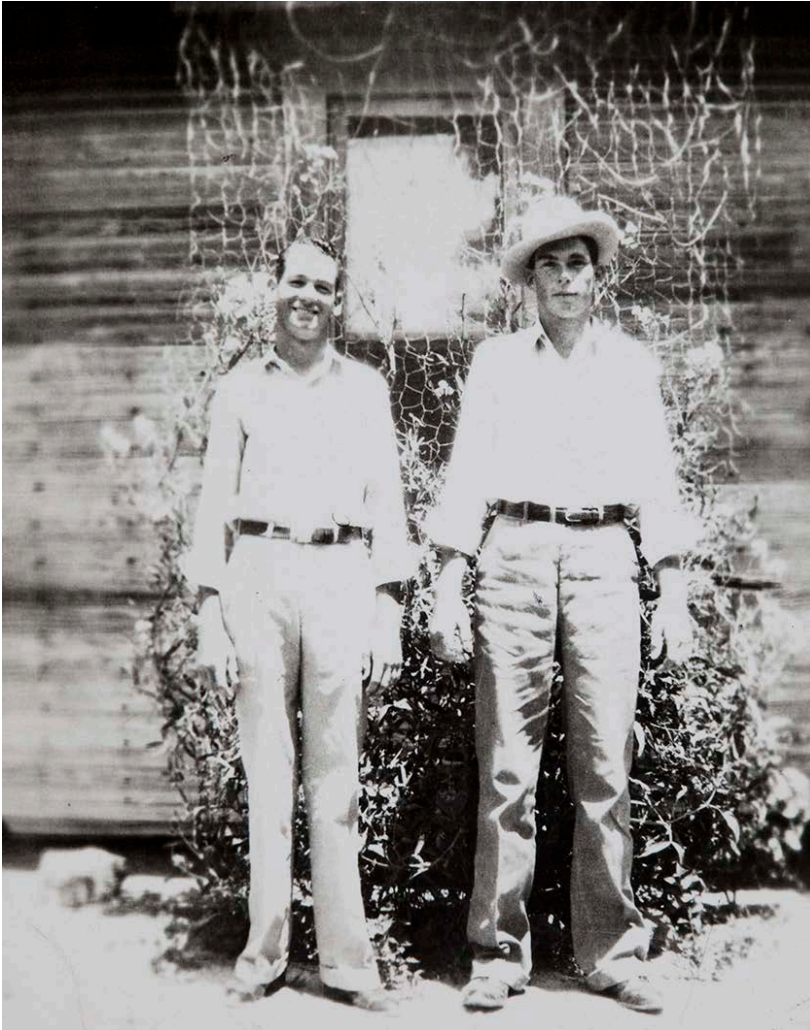
Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, it was good to be home.

0:14:26.3 Spending a cold year in the Aleutians

Janis Kozlowski: So how -- how was it -- well, you hadn't been in Alaska very long, so you didn't really probably know what you were getting into at that point when you first got leave out of San Francisco.

Ottis Littlejohn: No. Of course, when we left San Francisco the first time, we had no idea where we were going, because they don't -- they don't tell you ahead of time because everything is a secret. They don't want the news out, you know, where the fleet is going or where they're going to meet and all that. So, when we got to sea a little ways they issued us some cold weather clothing and headed north, so of course then we knew exactly where we were going and we got there. Well, first we had the collision and then went back up there a second time in September and stayed up there a whole year and left up there in September the next year, and that was a cold, cold year.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)



*Ottis at 16 years old
with brother Toby.
Photo courtesy of
Ottis Littlejohn.*

Ottis Littlejohn: That fog in the summertime, you couldn't see where you were going, and cold, wind and ice in the wintertime and -- and standing gun watch up on the top deck and of course that..... It was rough and I wouldn't want to go back up there.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: My daughter and son-in-law were up there in Anchorage and Fairbanks last September and they enjoyed it. Of course that was on the mainland and I never was on the mainland, just up and down the Aleutians and Kodiak, and up into the Bering Sea and all over the place. We went to Dutch Harbor. Oh, we must've been there a hundred times, and Adak, and Attu, and several others. Amchitka and Atka, Kodiak, all those islands we were.

Janis Kozlowski: Boy, it sounds like you hit all the -- all the ports there.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, we were at every port up there. You know, of course all the islands didn't have ports at that time and -- but we made them all, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. What was the biggest base for you in the Aleutians, or was there one?

Ottis Littlejohn: The biggest base?

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

0:17:22.8 Seeing war firsthand while on Attu

Ottis Littlejohn: I guess Dutch Harbor. We were in there more than others, and Kodiak, and later Kiska and Attu, of course we never went into a port there. You know, I mentioned to you the other day that I was on the island of Attu during a battle and we took an -- I was the coxswain of a 17-foot motor whale boat and we -- with a three-man crew. We took an officer over on the island for some reason, I don't know what. He got out of the boat and went over the hill so we had to stay with the boat, and I got out and walked around the island and I could see the war going on up on the side of the mountain, with all the smoke from the guns and I could see men running around up there, but I couldn't tell which was which, but that -- that's when the war was going on right that minute, and that was in May, I believe, and I remember walking around there and the flowers were coming up through the -- the tundra.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Ottis Littlejohn: And, people up there on the side of the mountain getting killed and freezing to death and, you know, they had lost their fingers and toes up there from the bad weather.

Janis Kozlowski: Did -- did you actually see some of that going on when you were on the island, or did some of them end up back on your ship, those wounded people or dead people?

Ottis Littlejohn: No. No. We never got any of them, but I read about it later about how that happened with their losing their toes and their fingers and it was just -- well, it was -- you know, even though it was May and June it was still cold up in those mountains. Well, as far as I was concerned, it was cold everywhere (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: Right, so you could see how it -- that could happen to someone, frozen toes and fingers, right?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. Yeah, definitely, because of the conditions that they had. They didn't have housing and no way to protect themselves from the weather. They'd dig these foxholes and get down in there where it was wet and muddy and, oh, yeah, it's -- it's easy to understand how that would happen.

0:19:52.6 Signaling the ship while stranded in the ocean

Janis Kozlowski: Where was -- where was your ship anchored out off of Attu? Was it Massacre Bay or Holtz Bay, do you remember?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, no, no. We were never anchored there.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Ottis Littlejohn: No, when -- like that time we left the ship to take this officer over there, the ship was still cruising around and then we'd go back. Of course, it was easy enough to see the ship in the daytime, but one time we had to go out at night and we had a signalman with us and we got out there in the middle of the ocean and the doggone motor conked out and the engineer couldn't get it started, so we had to signal back to the ship and we had this shotgun-type signal gun and it took him quite a while to find the ship, just -- just kept going around the horizon until we finally located him and told him what the problem was. So the chief engineer told him what to do and he did and got the thing started, so then they asked what we should do next, because we'd already spent an hour out there floating around, so they said well, come on back to the ship (laughter). We did. We never did take this officer that we were supposed to that night, you know.

Janis Kozlowski: That's a bad combination in the Aleutians, dark and weathered and no engine.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, oh yeah. We were -- we kept floating towards the island and of course at that time we didn't know what was over there, but I guess it all worked out. I'm still here.

0:21:50.3 Patrolling near Attu for submarines and Japanese planes

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) Yeah. So -- so during the Battle of Attu how -- how long was your ship around the island?

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, all the time during the battle.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: Patrolling about there and anti-submarine patrol and radar, you know, because in case the Japanese planes came, we were there to do what we could.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you see any Japanese planes?

Ottis Littlejohn: Not at that particular time, but we saw some later around Amchitka. They came two different days. I think it was like December 31st and January 1st and they were dropping bombs around there. Of course, earlier they had bombed Dutch Harbor. You know, that was before they invaded Attu and Kiska, and they killed quite a few people in the bombing raids.

Janis Kozlowski: Were you anywhere near Dutch Harbor when that happened?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, no, that's -- when the Japanese invaded Attu and Kiska we were still down in South Pacific.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you hear anything about it?

Ottis Littlejohn: No. No, we didn't know anything about it at that time, no. That's like nowadays there's thousands and thousands of people that never heard of the war in the Aleutians.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: I talk to people all the time that never heard of it, but I try to tell them all I can about it because I like for people to know about the way I spent a year of my life.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm, yep. Yeah.....

Ottis Littlejohn: A miserable year.

0:23:43.5 Mr. Littlejohn describes the miserable weather in the Aleutians

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) Now, what made it so miserable in Alaska?

Ottis Littlejohn: The weather.

Janis Kozlowski: Just primarily the weather?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. Yeah, well, people that ask me about how I felt in the war with the Japanese and all that, but you don't -- you don't spend time thinking about that. You just take care of the situation at hand and if they shoot at you, you shoot back at them and you don't -- you don't worry about all those things, but the weather itself, you know, was just -- I can't even think of the word to call it. It was -- it was terrible, and cold and windy and ice. One time we came in to the harbor and the ship was just covered with ice and just, I mean like the -- the safety cables all the way around, they were about four to five times the size they should be and everything was solid ice, and it was so heavy we were even sinking down into the -- into the water. And we got into port and they passed the word, all hands chip ice. That meant the engineers and everybody, so we were up there chipping ice off the entire ship all the way up to the top decks, all the way down to the water line. There was so much ice.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow.

Ottis Littlejohn: And one time in particular I remember we were -- went to the recreation hall one night and it -- we had to walk back to the ship all the way around the harbor, which was about three miles, and the wind and ice were blowing so hard and

sleeting, we had to back into it, and then -- until we got around the curve and then we'd walk forward. When we got back to the ship this one man's beard was solid ice.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, boy!

0:25:51.6 Using a mountain as a navigation guide while out in the ocean at night

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, it was pretty cold, but..... And another time I was going in my boat, a 17-foot whale boat, across the harbor, which is like three miles or so, and it was going to be dark when I got back, so I picked out a mountain for a guideline so I could see it at night coming back. On the way back this one officer was riding with us and he told me, he said, Littlejohn it's a little bit starboard. I said, okay, so I'd go a little bit starboard and when he's not paying attention I'd get back in line with that mountain.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: So we'd go a little further, you know, Littlejohn, you're off course, a little bit starboard. Yes sir. So I'd do what he said and then when he's not paying attention I'd get back on my mountain. So we made it back to the ship and he says, yeah, see we made it!

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: Yes sir, we sure did! (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.) You had to balance doing what you were told with doing what you knew was the right thing.

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, yeah. I mean, I had sense enough to pick out that mountain because I knew it was going to be pitch dark coming back and there's -- you know, it's dark on ship. There's no lights. I mean, this harbor is dark. You can't even hardly see your hand in front of you.

Janis Kozlowski: Which harbor were you in at that time.

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, I've been looking at maps later and I think it must've been Dutch Harbor because the way it's laid out there. You know, I don't remember exactly, but I think that was probably where it was.

Janis Kozlowski: Uh-huh. Do you remember any other weather-related stories or things that happened that were memorable?

0:27:46.6 A big storm while awaiting parts in Kodiak

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah. One time we were tied up in Kodiak for 31 days. We had a problem with the propeller or impeller, whichever they called it, and ordered a new one and after about two weeks we hadn't -- hadn't heard anything about it so they

reordered it and come to find out the order had never went through, so we had to wait another two weeks and then a few days to put it on, so we were there 31 days, but we would go to classes and lectures and things like that, so one day we went to this lecture, which was a couple of miles from ship and the weather was pretty nice. We came out of there and boy this thing..... There was a storm. You know they call those williwaws.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: Those sudden storms that come up.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: And it was sleeting and snowing and boy it just -- it was a terrible storm. So here we are walking and So finally this one guy suggested, why don't we call the motor pool and maybe we can get somebody to pick us up. So we had this one officer with us and he called the motor pool and, sure enough, somebody came to pick us up in an open Jeep and got us back to the ship, but that was one of the worst storms I was ever in, with the blowing ice. Oh, man, it -- it was blowing so if it hit you in the face it'd cut your face.

Janis Kozlowski: Mmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: But that wasn't the only time. I mean, those storms would come regularly out at sea, wind blowing. It -- I wouldn't -- I don't know how those people live up there, but they do.

Janis Kozlowski: Did the weather have a big effect on your ship, or was your ship large enough that it was still pretty comfortable?

0:29:50.9 Four-hour gun watch shifts outside in the weather

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, it was comfortable in your living quarters, but we all stood gun watches and you had to be up there. Your gun watch was four hours and you had to spend four hours in the weather regardless of what it was. Now, we used to take turns going down below and like down to the ammunition room and get warmed up a little bit and you could spend 10 minutes down there and you'd come back up and let somebody else go, but there was no real good way to keep warm. We'd cover up with these big canvas gun covers and -- but that was your duty and you had to do it.

0:30:39.3 Clothing adequacy and preferring Army shoes to Navy ones

Janis Kozlowski: Well, did the equipment that they issued you in San Francisco -- was it adequate for Alaska?

Ottis Littlejohn: I -- yeah, yeah it was. We had heavy denim, I guess you'd call it, pants and jacket, and the jacket was -- I think they were both fur lined or some kind of lining in them, and -- and one time I spent quite a while over on the island when I had a sickness problem. They sent me over there to the hospital, and while I was over there I

got an Army jacket and Army shoes, and when I finally made it back to the ship I'd wear them aboard ship. One day one of the officers said to me, he says, you know you're out of uniform? Yes sir, I know it. Don't you think you ought to put your Navy shoes on? I said, yes sir. I never did.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: I wore those Army shoes until I wore them out.

Janis Kozlowski: Were they better than what the Navy gave you?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. Yeah, they were better. They were heavier and came up further on your ankles and all, and yeah, yeah they were better. They were made for land use and ours were not, you know.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: And the jacket was good. It really wasn't any better than ours, but it -- it was longer and it was better, a little better.

0:32:20.2 20-mm gunner duties and defective ammunition

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. So it sounds like when you were on the ship you manned the guns on your shift and you also operated this whale boat. Were those your primary duties?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, I was a 20-mm gunner, yeah. That was my military duties, 20 mm and..... So, we got to -- we never did get to shoot it, you know, in the real war part of it except this one time. This plane dove down on us and we got to shoot at him, but he went back into a cloud, but after that we got a letter from the Navy saying this certain ammunition was no good, lot number so and so, and that turned out that's what we had, so even if I hit the plane I didn't hit him in the right spot, but some of us said that I did hit him, but I wouldn't swear to it, but the projectile was supposed to explode when it hits, but it didn't. That's why it was -- it was defective and it didn't explode. Anyway, he got away.

Janis Kozlowski: Was that around Amchitka that you saw it, because you mentioned you saw some airplanes there?

Ottis Littlejohn: Right, right, that was at Amchitka, yeah. Yeah, they used to come over pretty regular, but they'd fly so doggone high. They were actually kind of like reconnaissance planes, but some of them would drop bombs on the air fields that we were trying to build there. They'd drop bombs on it and of course then you'd have to go repair it, so it took quite a few days longer to get it built.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: But, up there at -- there weren't too many Japanese planes and most of them got shot down and they didn't resupply them.....

Janis Kozlowski: Right. How about.....

Ottis Littlejohn:like we would have.

0:34:29.3 An Allied plane signaled to them for coordinates to Adak

Janis Kozlowski: How about U.S. airplanes? Did you see many of those?

Ottis Littlejohn: Many of which planes?

Janis Kozlowski: Any of the Allied Air Force, the U.S.....

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah.....

Janis Kozlowski:or Canadian planes?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah. They'd come around. They were flying regularly. One time we were out in the fog and we could hear this PBY flying around and around and around up there, and finally the fog lifted a little bit and he signaled down. He said request route or..... That's not the word, but he requested a way home to Adak, and the captain read the message and he said, send this back to him, request same (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: So, apparently he made it back and we did too, but we were cruising around between those islands and the radar man was reporting land astern, and radar wasn't really perfected at that time, or at least ours wasn't. Then all of a sudden the man up in the crow's nest yelled, land straight ahead. Well, the radar showed it in the rear.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh!

Ottis Littlejohn: But we managed to change course before we hit it, but -- but that's the way that fog was. You know, you'd get between those islands and it's pretty hard maneuvering.

Janis Kozlowski: And the radar was not well perfected at that time, right?

Ottis Littlejohn: Right, right.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Ottis Littlejohn: I think that's what they call a reciprocal echo, if that makes sense.

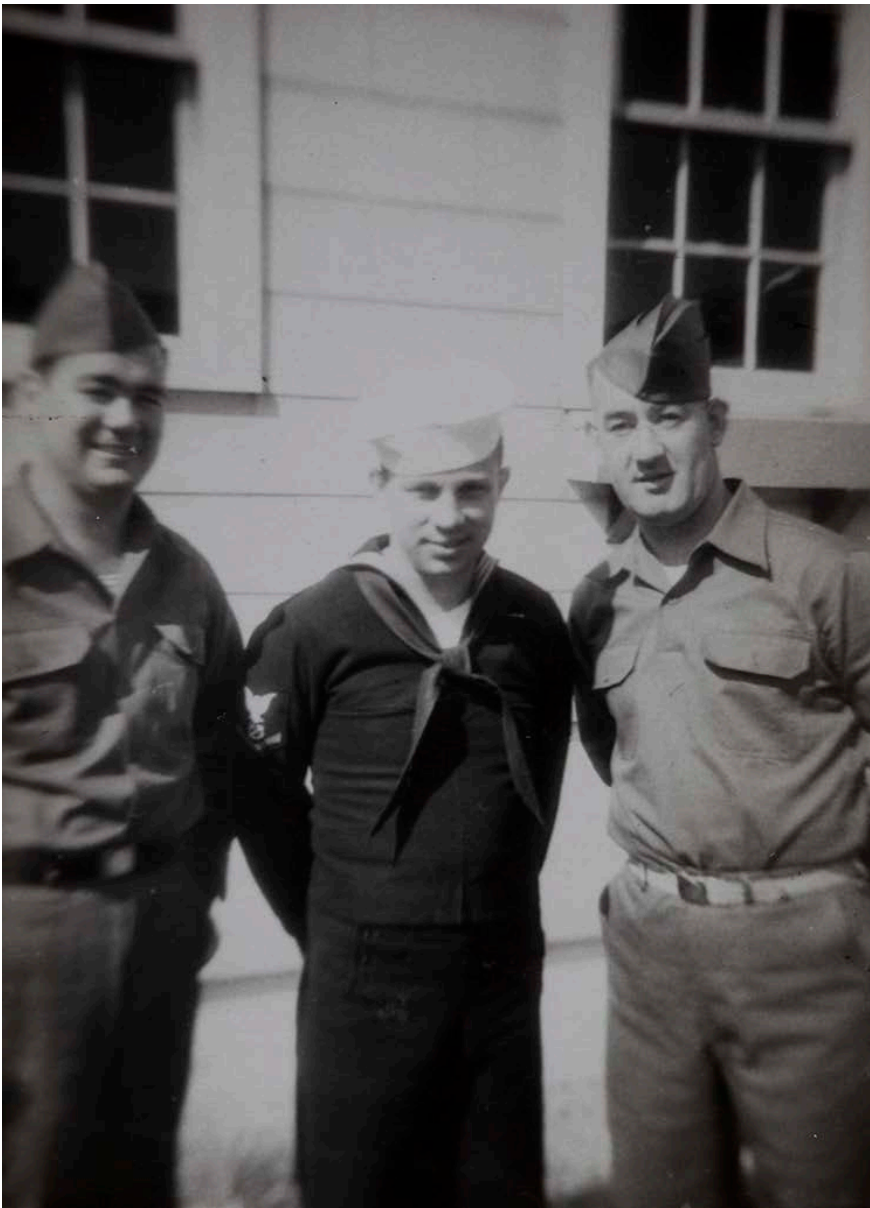
Janis Kozlowski: I'm not quite sure how those things work but, could the -- the fog could have mixed the signal?

Ottis Littlejohn: That's a possibility, but not being perfected at that time, you know, sometimes it just wouldn't work right, so.....

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: It's something you had to put up with. Later they perfected all that you know.

0:36:42.3 Ship personnel and sleeping quarters



Left to right: Ottis Littlejohn, Stanley Linek and Joe Carter. Bunk mates – three to a room. Great Lakes Naval Training Station, 1045-1946. Photo courtesy of Ottis Littlejohn.

Janis Kozlowski: So, on this -- on this ship, do you know -- do you have any idea how many guys were on the ship with you?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah. It'd run from 120 to 140. Sometimes they would send up replacements and we'd get too many. In other words, we didn't have room -- didn't have enough bunks for them and they'd have to sleep -- well, down in the Pacific of course they could sleep on deck or anywhere they wanted to, but they'd try to keep the crew to where everybody had a bunk to sleep in and if they sent us too many men then they'd just get rid of some. So it'd run from 120 to 140.

Janis Kozlowski: And where did the personnel exchanges occur?

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, sometimes people would get sick and they'd get transferred or if they made -- got advanced rank and then we would have too many of a certain rank and they'd transfer them to a bigger ship or, you know, some other duty and..... Well, I don't remember exactly why, but they were transferring people right and left, so that's the way the ship would vary in personnel.

Janis Kozlowski: And where did the exchanges occur, on -- at Dutch Harbor or Kodiak, or do you remember that?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, not particularly, but it -- it would be when we were in port. People would leave. I know this one fella was always so seasick he couldn't do anything, so he was aboard there two or three weeks and the first chance that he got -- went into a port, they transferred him because he -- you know he wasn't capable of doing anything, so you know, he got transferred to a land base.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

0:38:42.3 Soldier going AWOL in San Francisco

Ottis Littlejohn: And sometimes people would..... I can't think of the word. They'd -- they'd leave. A-W-O-L.

Janis Kozlowski: Really? So they would just jump off ship and not get back on?

Ottis Littlejohn: Right. When we were in San Francisco one time I was on the guard duty on the dock and this fella came by and just came walking up there and he says, hey you got a pencil. He says, I'm gonna make a phone call and I want to write down a number. So the phone booth was right outside the gate and, yeah, okay. I loaned him a pencil and he went into the phone booth and I didn't pay attention to him and when I had my back turned he took off.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh!

Ottis Littlejohn: Haven't seen him since (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: Oh! (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: Course I never did tell anybody that he passed me and got out.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, yeah. Would you have gotten in trouble for that?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, possibly but I never gave it much thought when he showed -- you know when the time came for roll call or whatever and he wasn't there. Of course they knew what happened. He -- he left. But, nobody ever asked me if he went by me or what. So, I kept quiet about it.

0:40:10.0 Morale on the ship

Janis Kozlowski: Well, what -- what was the kind of the feeling on the ship? What kind of morale did people have? Were they -- did they not like their -- their duties there in the Aleutians or -- or onboard that ship? Did you have a sense for that?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, everybody got along -- well, no, I wouldn't say everybody there's -- but generally there was a good -- good crew and well, we used to play cards, you know, and just pass the time. It wasn't bad at all because you had to make the best of it and, you know, why be grouchy and all that kind of stuff when you're gonna be there anyway, so you make the best of it. This one man in particular always had a chip on his shoulder and he got into several different fights, including with me. One night we headed out on the galley deckhouse and -- and he beat the heck out of me, so that's the last time I tried to fight anybody.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh! Do you remember what the fight was over?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. My duty was to wake men up when it was time for them to go on watch during the night or in the daytime, and so I'd wake him up and he'd grunt and groan. He just didn't want to get up, so I'd have to go back and call him a second time, sometimes a third time, so I lit into him pretty good about it and -- but, he being a grouchy fighting type anyway, he wanted to fight about it and he called me some dirty name that I didn't like so I hit him right in the nose as hard as I could. I think that's the only lick I got in.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh my gosh!

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) But he'd fight with others and he was fighting with a guy by the name McNair one time on the afterdeck house and ole -- McNair get him down and was beating him up real good and we let him go and Lawson would get McNair down and we'd pull him off. (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: So they fought until they both gave out and then -- but you know you get 120 men together you're gonna have -- that's gonna happen.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, they have to release some energy, huh?

Ottis Littlejohn: I guess you might call it that.

0:42:39.3 Playing cards to pass the time

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) What other kinds of things did you do for -- for entertainment besides playing cards and fighting? (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) Oh, I don't know. I would read, of course, and listen to the radio and several just plain little games like Acey Deucey I remember that we'd play quite a bit, card games like that and cards we'd play -- sometimes we'd play for match stems and sometimes for a little bit of money, but never anything big. I remember one night I played poker until midnight. I had to go on watch and it was on from midnight to 4 a.m., and I went back down there at 4 a.m. and the same game was still going.....

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn:so I sat down and played then until breakfast time and I won \$100.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow, that's big money.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, boy, was that big money. The next night I lost it in 15 minutes playing blackjack.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) Easy come, easy go.

0:43:56.9 Sending his earnings home during the war

Janis Kozlowski: Yep. What did you do with your money that you made in the service? Did you send it home or -- or did you lose it in card games?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh no. I never lost it in card games. I never lost any more than I won, because I didn't play all that often, and even if I did, mostly it was for pennies or nickels and not big money like that one particular game, but I had an allotment going home to my parents and -- so I didn't have an awful lot of money and didn't need money. You know, I had a bunk every night and three meals a day and I used to smoke cigars, but they were dirt cheap and -- so I guess I put in my time and called it living.

0:44:55.6 Trips to the islands to drink beer

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. Was there any alcohol on the boat?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, no, no. And then -- and don't call it a boat, now, it's a ship!

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, a ship, I'm sorry (laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) Oh, no, there's no alcohol and -- and I don't remember any in Alaska at all, but when we were down in the South Pacific the Liberty Party would get issued two bottles of beer and you could take it over on the island and drink it, but you could never drink it aboard ship.

Janis Kozlowski: Mmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: And this one time I was in charge of the party going over there and -- so I went around getting people's names to go on the boat, you know over to the island, and what we -- the way we'd work that, when they'd call the names they'd give them two bottles of beer and they'd climb down the ladder and get in the boat and then somebody would get the officer's attention on the ship and the ones that didn't want to go they'd climb back up and leave their beer down there, see.

Janis Kozlowski: Mmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: So, then the group that went over there on the island would have extra beer that way.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) They didn't trade it? They just left it with them?

Ottis Littlejohn: The beer?

Janis Kozlowski: Right.

Ottis Littlejohn: The -- the men that didn't want to go, they would do us a favor by doing that, you know? They'd get their beer and then they'd climb back aboard and stay there and we'd keep the beer.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay, so they didn't want anything for it. They weren't trying to get money off you to -- for their beer or anything.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh no! Oh, no, no, no. They'd just do it as a favor for us, yeah. So that way we'd get extra beer.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. So that was a rare thing though.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh yeah! Yeah, that was rare. We -- we'd just about every bunch that went over there would do that, yeah, but you know, we would do -- we wouldn't do that very often. I mean, we wouldn't be there at the islands. We were out on the water most of the time.

Janis Kozlowski: Right, right.

0:47:10.9 Refueling at sea in the South Pacific

Ottis Littlejohn: But, we'd go into these main islands for refueling. Sometimes we'd refuel at sea.

Janis Kozlowski: How did you refuel at sea?

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, they'd throw a rope over and we'd get a hold of that and then they'd tie it to the hose and then they'd bring the hose over from the tanker and, of course, connect it to our fuel tank and then they'd pump the fuel to us and when the tanks got full they'd just pull the hose back.

Janis Kozlowski: Did they have tankers in Alaska, or was that in the South Pacific that you used tankers?

Ottis Littlejohn: In the South Pacific.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

0:47:56.3 The invasion of Adak after the Japanese left

Ottis Littlejohn: I don't remember, and I'm quite sure we didn't refuel at sea in Alaska. We would go to Dutch Harbor or Kodiak and, I think mostly to Dutch Harbor, yeah. Of course Adak, you know, when we invaded Adak there was supposed to have been Japs there, but they got away and -- so after a couple of days they found out there was no Japanese there and we went into the harbor, but -- and the sunken Japanese ships, there's several of them sunk in the harbor and the masts were sticking up out of the water, so we went in there looking for a place to anchor or tie up and anyway we got orders right then to go to Hawaii. We didn't even anchor. We just made a circle around the harbor and came out and headed southeast.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so you didn't see much of that invasion of Kiska then?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah, we were there and -- but the invasion of Kiska there turned out to be no Japanese there and, of course, we didn't know that and the soldiers, they had to land in these certain -- different places and then they started shooting at each other and several of our men were killed by their own friendly fire, but.....

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn:so that's -- that's all the firing that was done there. There were no Japanese to shoot at.

Janis Kozlowski: Right. Did you -- did you see anything on -- that was going on on land from -- from where you were?

Ottis Littlejohn: No. No, but we were -- we were there but, you know, there was very little firing that went on and we saw the landings of course and -- but there was nothing else to see.

Janis Kozlowski: And did you -- did you get any news of what was happening when you were on board the ship, or did you hear about it later?

Ottis Littlejohn: You mean that was happening right there on the island?

Janis Kozlowski: Right, uh-huh.

Ottis Littlejohn: I don't remember that specifically. I think we probably heard about it right after it happened because I remember that there was no Japanese there and we knew that right away, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. Okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: Of course, it took a couple of days for them to actually -- to make sure there was none there, but yeah, we heard about it right away.

0:50:34.0 Getting sunburned on the way back to Hawaii

Janis Kozlowski: Okay, and -- and did you say you -- you were at Adak when you got called back to the South Pacific or to Hawaii?

Ottis Littlejohn: Right, right, and I remember when we left there we escorted one or two ships from there to Hawaii and two or three days out of the Aleutians the weather started getting warmer of course and some of these men started stripping off and, boy, were they going to get a suntan. So, me being from Texas, I knew what the sun could do and I told several of them -- I said you can't get a suntan like that. You're gonna get blistered. Oh, no, no, no, I'm gonna get a suntan. Oh, boy, two or three days in that sun they wound up with blisters for sure. Yeah, I told you so.

Janis Kozlowski: I bet they were in a lot of pain.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Those blisters can be -- be painful, yeah, but you know they'll -- they'll heal up pretty soon, so no real damage done, it's just that they wouldn't listen. So we went to Hawaii and then I remember this one man went to the hospital for some reason and they were gonna keep him there but he found out we were going to San Francisco and (laughter) he got out of the hospital somehow and went with us. So we escorted some ships from Hawaii to San Francisco, and I guess we must've gone for some repair and remodeling then. We did that three or four times.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, the.....

Ottis Littlejohn: And then right -- right back to the South Pacific.

0:52:25.9 Serving in the South Pacific

Janis Kozlowski: And what did you do in the South Pacific then?

Ottis Littlejohn: Same as we did in the Aleutians, you know, sweep mines and we'd go with the fleet wherever they went, and we made several invasions. Let's see, I've got some of them written down here. In the Marshall Islands, Kwajalein, we could see the Army and -- or Marines, I forget which it was. They would take one island, and this one place in particular, we could see them wading from one island to the other with their rifles above their head.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Ottis Littlejohn: And, so there -- Kwajalein, let's see, Enewetak and several Phoenix Islands. Well, we crossed the equator and went to the Phoenix Islands and we made several invasions there in those different islands, and went to New Guinea. We were at -- we went to Port Moresby, but that's another time we went there and didn't even anchor. We got orders to go somewhere else, so we went around the tip of New Guinea to Lae and from there we went up to the Admiralty Islands and that's where we made a mine sweep through there and when we went in through the harbor there were some treehouses there that the Japanese had and we asked permission from the Admiral to shoot them, so we did. We made (laughter) a circle around them and filled those treehouses full of bullets, and then after that we went to Hollandia, New Guinea. Now that Hollandia has a different name. They call it J -- Jayapura. J-A-Y-A-P-U-R-A. I don't know why they renamed it.

Janis Kozlowski: Hmm.

0:54:32.9 Invading Hollandia and experiencing fear

Ottis Littlejohn: But we went into the -- started into the harbor there to sweep mines and, you know, I can honestly say that that is the only time that I was really afraid of what was going to happen. We started into the harbor and we could see these shells hitting in front of us, the Japanese shooting at us, and -- and we had orders to go in there. Of course there was nothing we could do but go. And we kept getting closer and closer to these shells and then we had an Australian that was in command and he saw what was happening and he yelled on the ship to ship radio..... He says, you know, come out of there. Come out of there. He said (laughter) you can't win the war all by yourself.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: Boy, as soon as we got that order we did a full right rudder and out of there we came and then the cruisers started pounding the Japanese and they were shooting right over our head and you could see those shells. Those 8-inch shells, one right after the other and they pounded the harbor with them, and then we got orders to go back in there, and we did of course, and then we were -- with all our guns -- we were shooting all around the harbor and this one man, the trainer had his gun trained wrong and he was shooting over the harbor into the jungle, so we were all kind of laughing about that you know. Here he is shooting into the jungle and he's supposed to be shooting down in the harbor. So we found out later that the Japanese abandoned the harbor and they went to the jungle.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Ottis Littlejohn: So, if anybody hit a Jap he was doing it (laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: Oh (laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: But we shot the place up real good and made it back out of there.

Janis Kozlowski: It sounds like that must've got -- been a pretty exciting time, I mean, with -- with all the action going on. That must've been -- been a big deal for a young guy.

Ottis Littlejohn: It's a strange thing. Like I mentioned there before you don't -- you don't notice, you don't pay attention to what's going..... I guess you're so hepped up or something that it doesn't really strike you. You're just doing what you're supposed to be doing, and that's it. I remember this one fella was -- with the 3-inch gun, the big guns -- big for us, and they fired so many shells that the paint melted and was running down. This gunner mate yelled cease fire, cease fire. He says I gotta repaint that thing!

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: Course nobody paid any attention to him. They kept firing and all the paint melted and ran down and of course he did have to repaint it but.....

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) But not immediately!

Ottis Littlejohn: Ha! Not immediately, that's for sure.

0:57:39.1 "Okie" and his machinery skills

Janis Kozlowski: Were there guys -- other guys that you remember quite well because they were unique in some way?

Ottis Littlejohn: You know, I've been asked that question before. We didn't have any heroes if you want to put it that way. No. We had one man in particular I remember, from Oklahoma -- Enid, Oklahoma. His nickname, of course, was Okie, but he was a machinist and one time we were escorting some freighters and one of them broke down and so we had to make circles around him and protect him while he was dead in the water and they couldn't get it started, so we -- they wanted to know if we had somebody that could work on their engine, so we sent this Okie over there in a breeches buoy. Water was pretty rough and -- so we made it -- made it over there with him all right and it didn't take him less than a half hour. He had that thing going. And of course then we had to bring him back and he dipped down in the water that time. We got so close, like I said, the ocean was pretty rough. Well, I thought we were going to drown him, but we got him back all right. You know, I think that was pretty good on his part for doing that. That was a dangerous situation.



Saying "Goodbye" to Polizzi – who was being discharged. 1946. Left to right: Joe Carter, Ottis Littlejohn, Polizzi, McCarthy, Stanley Linek. Great Lakes Naval Training Station. Photo courtesy of Ottis Littlejohn.

Janis Kozlowski: Yep.

Ottis Littlejohn: But we got him over there and back all right.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm. Yeah, every -- in a war like that, every effort is important.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah. Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Everybody plays a role that -- that is important to keep -- keep things going.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. Yeah. You gotta do your assignment. If you don't do your assignment then things are not gonna work because it all has to be coordinated.

0:59:48.2 Using code in letters sent home

Janis Kozlowski: Right. Well, did your -- did your family know where you were when you were in the South Pacific or in Alaska? Were you -- were you able to tell them?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah. Yeah, they knew where I was, like when I was at home -- course when I went back I had no idea where we were going to go after we left San Francisco, so I left a little code with them and I told them when I write my letters that, you know, I would have this code to go by to tell them where I'm going, so they knew, yeah. It was against the rules to tell them where you're going because, you know, that's like..... I forget what the saying was, a slip of a lip can sink a ship or something like that.

Janis Kozlowski: Right.

Ottis Littlejohn: So, but, where they were in East Texas, I could tell them wherever I'm going and they're not gonna -- they're not gonna sink a ship by knowing.

1:00:53.4 Censoring of outgoing mail

Janis Kozlowski: Right. Did you -- did you see evidence that they censored your mail?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Incoming mail they never censored, but they censored all the mail going out, and -- and the officers did that. I don't know whether they had certain ones designated to do it and I don't know how well they read and censored but, oh yeah, every letter going out had to be censored.

Janis Kozlowski: Mmm. What.....

Ottis Littlejohn: We had -- we had what they called V-mail that the government printed and it was a little fold-up thing. You could write that and then fold it up, but you wouldn't seal it. The censor would do that, even seal it and send it, and it was free. You didn't have to pay for that mail.

Janis Kozlowski: But it -- it -- they looked for things like you telling them where you were at or what was happening from you -- from an insider's perspective. They would cut that out or X it out somehow?

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, I don't know how they did that. I -- my family never did tell me that so and so was censored. I don't know how they did that.....

Janis Kozlowski: Mmm, okay.

Ottis Littlejohn:whether they blacked it out or cut it out. I don't know.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you stay in contact with your future wife when you were in the Pacific?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, I didn't know her then.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, you didn't. Oh, it wasn't until you came back.

1:02:31.6 Mr. Littlejohn met his wife

Ottis Littlejohn: That's right. When I got transferred from my ship to Great Lakes Naval Base is when I met her.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: See, she was in the snack kitchen and we used to go -- you know they had several kitchens around the base and dining rooms and we could put an SP armband on and we could go anywhere we wanted to. So we went over to her place and I met her over there and her place had a special diet kitchen and a special room -- dining room for the ex prisoners and people that had to have special diets. So I'd go over there and eat with them. You know, I was not supposed to, but I did, so..... So we - - we went together there quite a while and she got out of the Navy and her home was up there in the Chicago suburbs, so I'd go over there and see her and back and forth. She'd come up and see me and when I got out and went home, came back up there and got married.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, okay. So you were out of the service then.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, when we got married, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: So that's -- course that's why I got out.

Janis Kozlowski: So -- so that you could get married and.....

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, well, when I -- when I signed up I meant to stay 30 years, but after I met her I changed my mind.

Janis Kozlowski: Women can do that, right?

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter).

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: They have quite an influence.

1:04:13.6 Profession as a cabinetmaker after leaving the Navy

Janis Kozlowski: So what did -- what kind of profession did you have after you left the Navy?

Ottis Littlejohn: I was a cabinetmaker.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, like kitchen cabinets, that kind of thing?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, yeah. We'd build all kind of cabinets and stereo equipment and music, you know, all the kind of cabinets and, not real furniture but some of it we'd make pretty nice furniture, yeah. And I did that for about 12 years and then I was advanced, I guess you'd call it, to the office and I would go out and measure the houses for cabinets and -- all kind of cabinets, and then I'd come back to the office and make a drawing of them and turn it in, you know, for the production part of it.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, okay. Did you.....

Ottis Littlejohn: So that was -- I liked that. That was -- that was a good job.

Janis Kozlowski: So the Navy didn't train you for that?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, no, no. I didn't -- no, no training. I was a boatswain's mate, so -- now there was no real training for that, like welding for instance. You know, we had a welder aboard ship. He was going to teach me how to weld one time, but I wasn't enthusiastic about it, so that didn't go very far.

Janis Kozlowski: Hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: No, I didn't learn any trade in the Navy. I learned the cabinetmaker on my own and, you know, with help from others and..... When I was in Illinois I worked for a big company up there in the boiler house making steam, big coal-burning boilers.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Ottis Littlejohn: I worked at that two or three years and then I was a water softener. You know, that was -- that took quite a bit of work doing that, but just about anybody could do it. And eventually I talked my wife into coming south and that's when I went to work in the cabinet shops.

Janis Kozlowski: Mmm. What kind of wood did you like to work with?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, we worked mostly with ash and oak and what was called imitation mahogany. Right off hand I can't remember the name of it. And we worked with some walnut. Walnut's real easy to work with. It's a hard wood, but it's easy to work with.

Janis Kozlowski: Mmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: But we worked mostly with ash.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay. And did you retire out of that business?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, yep. I worked for this one cabinet place for 25 years and 8 months.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow.

1:07:18.9 His wife worked 20 years as a registered nurse on the night shift in the emergency room

Ottis Littlejohn: Then retired. And when we came down here and the kids were small and my wife wasn't working, but, you know she was a registered nurse, and she was working part-time and when the kids got big enough to take care of themselves she went to work full time and -- for a few years and then she -- instead of working five days, she started working four. But she worked 20 years in the emergency room on the night shift.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh my gosh!

Ottis Littlejohn: From 11-7.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow, that's -- that's a tough time.

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, she -- she kind of liked it because she could take care of the kids and all that and work too. I don't know how she did it with the sleep she got, but she did and, you know, she'd have to take the kids to Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and swimming and just about anywhere they wanted to go she could do it.

Janis Kozlowski: Hmm. That's gotta be a tough shift at the hospital and in the emergency room. That's.....

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, she said that she could write a book, but she never did, so.....

Janis Kozlowski: I'll bet, yeah (laughter).

1:08:36.5 Mr. Littlejohn's wife passed away

Ottis Littlejohn: But, she passed away. Soon it will be nine years now.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. Oh, what happened to her? She -- she must've been -- well, she was in her 80s?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, yeah. She had a stroke and then she broke both arms and so she was in the nursing home, couldn't feed herself or couldn't do anything for herself with two broken arms.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, yeah.

Ottis Littlejohn: So she had that osteoporosis and, you know, that's the reason she broke her arms, so.....

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Ottis Littlejohn:and, so, she couldn't make it after that.

Janis Kozlowski: No.

1:09:19.5 Living with his family in a house he helped build

Ottis Littlejohn: But that's like I said, it'll soon be nine years. So now I live with my daughter and son-in-law and -- and I helped build this house.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, did you?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, we -- it -- we have a great big garage and workshop. We built it first and then we built a house and it took right at two years. My son-in-law and I built most of the house.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow! That's nice!

Ottis Littlejohn: So, I've got my -- I've got my apartment on one side and the living room, bedroom, bathroom, have my own thermostat, heater, air conditioner, so.....

Janis Kozlowski: Wow, that's a nice setup. You have your privacy, yet you're -- you're not just totally by yourself.

Ottis Littlejohn: That's right. I can go to the kitchen anytime I want to.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, that sounds pretty nice.

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) And my daughter cooks for me and, you know, and all that so..... But I fix my own breakfast, you know. I pour my own cereal.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: It sounds like you have a pretty good daughter, though.

1:10:36.9 His daughter's teaching and administrative career

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, she -- she was a high school teacher for 17 years and then she was assistant principal 14 years.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Ottis Littlejohn: So..... Oh, and by the way, this letter you wrote me when you sent that package?

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: I let her read it and she says that you are well coordinated.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, really? (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: And she said that you write a nice letter and it's -- everything is perfect.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, that's very nice of her.

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, I said that that -- I told her, I said, I'll tell her that because, you know, my daughter knows those things after teaching so long and then administration so long, that she can judge things like that.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, you made me nervous when you said she was a teacher and a principal. I thought I might not get a good grade (laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) No, she said you would get a good grade on that letter.

Janis Kozlowski: But I -- I did call your ship a boat there too. I noticed it later. I thought, oh, I shouldn't have done that (laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, there's a difference.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, I -- and I did -- I did know that but I -- I messed up there so.....

1:11:58.1 Reflecting on water rescues in Saipan

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, yeah. You know another little thing I'd like to tell you, like when we sent to Saipan. We made the invasion there and, of course, that was one of the biggest battles in the Pacific, and one of our planes was shot down, and we got orders to go pick him up when he landed in the -- in the ocean of course. And, so, they didn't put my boat in the water, they put the captain's gig in the water. His -- his boat is the same as mine except it's dressed up and got a canopy over it and all that. So, they went out to pick him up and the Japs started shooting at them, so they'd yell from the bridge in a megaphone and told them to come on back, come back, come back. So here this guy is out there floating in his -- his Mae West life jacket, so then after a few minutes -- well, our planes came over then and -- and bombed this gun that was shooting at him and then they went on and picked him up and got him in the boat all right and started back and the doggone motor conked out then.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh no!

Ottis Littlejohn: And here they were floating out there. So then they had to put my boat in the water and I had to go out and tow them in.....

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, boy! (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn:with the rescued pilot. So, then of course they brought him in there and a doctor had looked him over and everything and -- and they -- they'd cleaned him up and dried out his uniform and then the boat took him back. I don't remember now just where they took him, but anyway, they took him back and then he was flying again the next day in another plane. And during that same battle, shot down a Japanese plane and -- so we also got orders to go pick him up, and we were steaming full speed over there where we figured he was going to land, and he saw us coming so he cut his harness loose and committed suicide.

Janis Kozlowski: Is that right?

1:14:15.0 A piece of a parachute that was a souvenir he kept for years

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah, so then after that happened the captain asked the senior officer about permission to go over and pick up his parachute, so we did and got his parachute aboard and you could see right where he cut the harness.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Ottis Littlejohn: So we -- we took his parachute and cut it up in pieces and passed it around to the crew.

Janis Kozlowski: So did you keep your piece?

Ottis Littlejohn: I kept it and came back and offered it to my girlfriend and she looked at it and she says oh, real silk. I said give me that thing.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: I took it away from her and wouldn't let her have it so.....

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: So I kept it and had it until recently, the last few years, and I don't know what happened to it, but I don't have it anymore.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, maybe it'll show up somewhere.

Ottis Littlejohn: I don't know who took it. I hope it didn't get thrown out, but I don't know where it is now.

Janis Kozlowski: Yikes -- sometimes small things like that can get misplaced.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, yeah, yep. That was one of my souvenirs.

1:15:27.8 Souvenirs brought home from Guadalcanal

Janis Kozlowski: Did you have any other souvenirs that you brought back from the war?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, I got some Japanese clips -- rifle clips with bullets in there that we got on the Guadalcanal. When I got transferred from my ship and they put us over on Guadalcanal and we were waiting for transportation back, we were there 29 days, so we used to roam around the island and we went to this Army camp. Nobody was there but the cooks, so we asked them where we could go to get some souvenirs, and he told us where some of the battles were up on the -- in the jungles up there, so we went and found these Japanese dugouts where they dug out the side of the hills and they would -- had the beds carved in the dirt where they'd sleep in there and we found a bunch of gas masks and bullets and all that and the masks -- gas masks had already rotted so -- except the lens, and I brought some of those home with me and -- and some of the gun clips with the bullets, and I've got one of them on my keychain right now.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so you -- you did keep those for all these years.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I've got more of them.

Janis Kozlowski: It gives you something to start a conversation with and tell people about your war experience.

1:17:11.3 Removing powder from shell casings

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) Yeah. Oh yeah, when we shot at that plane in the Aleutians I've got one of the casings and later several of us would get these 20-mm shells and take them apart and take all the powder out of it and everything, so I've got one of those in -- in the -- the casing, I guess you'd call it, sitting in my bathroom right now.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so you did -- did grab some good mementos of that time.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. Yeah. When -- when we were doing that we were taking these shells apart and taking the powder out, one of the officers came. We were way below deck in the engineering department. He caught us doing that and he bawled me out good because I was senior man down there. He said, you ought to know better than that. Well, I do know better. He says, all right, take all of them up and throw them overboard. So, we all marched up there and threw them overboard and went and got us some more and went back down there and finished our job.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) Young guys have to have something to occupy their time, right?

1:18:30.9 Laundry aboard the ship

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, you'd always find something to do. We -- we did our own laundry, a lot of us did, and we'd hang it down in that -- in the engineering department where it was a lot warmer down in there and dry. You'd hang your clothes down there to

dry them out and all, but some of the men would hire their laundry done, but I was born poor and I was able to do my own.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, you probably had the time to put into it periodically, right?

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, you had plenty of time. We'd stand watch like four hours at a time and -- and in the war zone you'd be on watch more regular, but you had plenty of time to do that and -- and you weren't going anywhere.

Janis Kozlowski: Right.

Ottis Littlejohn: All you had -- all you had was a ship that was 316 feet and 4 inches long and 39 feet wide. That was your territory.

Janis Kozlowski: Right. Right. Not -- not that much room for 120 guys.

1:19:46.0 Sleeping and eating aboard the ship in rough seas

Ottis Littlejohn: No. No, it wasn't, and of course in the Aleutians when it was always so rough and everything and you'd go to bed at night your bunk was held up -- it's secured on one side and it's hung by chains on the outside so you could fold it up, and you'd lay up in there, you'd put your arm around one chain and your foot around the other chain to keep from falling out.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: It was so rough. Sometimes it was so rough, they couldn't even cook in the kitchen and we'd get cold cuts and -- and they had these big kettles. I guess it must've been about 30-gallon kettles and they'd fill them about half full of soup. Otherwise, it'd splash all over. So we'd have soup and cold sandwiches.

Janis Kozlowski: In rough weather, that's all -- the best they could do for you.

Ottis Littlejohn: Right, right.

Janis Kozlowski: Was the food pretty good aboard the ship?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah. Yeah, it was -- it was good. I liked it but, you know, some people would gripe about it but those kind they'd gripe about anything. I don't know if they were used to better or they just wanted to gripe, but we had this one kid that came aboard as a replacement and one morning we had pancakes for breakfast and -- so he was late getting out on the job. The chief asked him, you know, where you been? He said, well I had to finish breakfast. He said, everybody else is up here. Yeah, but he said those pancakes were so good, he said, I ate 17 of them.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh! (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, my gosh!

Ottis Littlejohn: Young kid from Kansas. I forget his name but he gained about 15 or 20 pounds the first month he was there.

1:21:42.7 Exercising on the docks in Kodiak

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) Geez! Well, it was probably hard to get some exercise on the boat, wasn't it? Or on the ship, I'm sorry.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, I don't think anybody paid any attention to that. There was never any exercise routine, so I can't say that anybody got the proper exercise. I know it was never a group or anything. I guess it was just never even thought of.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: Now when we were tied up for that 31 days up in Kodiak, we would get out on the dock, the entire crew.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: We' get out on the dock and do exercises. That was a requirement.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: But out at sea, never did.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay. Well, I've had you talking for about an hour and 20 minutes. Do you think you could stand just a couple more questions or are -- would you like to cut it off here?

Ottis Littlejohn: You can go ahead and ask me anything you want to. I've got 'til lunchtime.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay (laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter.)

1:23:03.6 Aftermath of bombing of Dutch Harbor

Janis Kozlowski: Okay. You said you were in Dutch Harbor quite a few times. Do you.....

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember seeing any of the aftermath of the -- of the bombing there when -- when you were on the island?

Ottis Littlejohn: No. To be honest with you, I didn't even know it had been bombed.

Janis Kozlowski: Hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: I found out about that later and, yeah, so I didn't see anything. If I did, I don't -- I don't remember and it didn't register.

1:23:34.6 Encountering Native people in the Aleutians

Janis Kozlowski: Okay. Did -- did you ever encounter any Native people on any of the Aleutian Islands when you were on them?

Ottis Littlejohn: No. No, none whatsoever.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: Down in the South Pacific we did some, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: But not -- not in the Aleutians. Course I know like Attu, for instance, they'd already been shipped to Japan and, Kiska, I don't know what happened to them but, no I never did see any.

1:24:11.0 Reflecting on his thoughts when the war ended

Janis Kozlowski: Okay. So where were you when you were discharged from -- well, first of all, where were you when the war ended?

Ottis Littlejohn: At the Great Lakes Naval Base.

Janis Kozlowski: Okay, so you'd already been returned to the States.

Ottis Littlejohn: Right, right.

Janis Kozlowski: And what did you -- what was your thinking when you heard the war had ended?

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, I don't -- I don't remember particularly. You know, of course we were all glad and we heard about it and all that, but, you know, we were young men and we'd been through it all and, you know, things like that I guess are just not as important to..... You know, I remember it, but I can't say that it was a big day. Oh, we were glad of it, of course, but it had been a while since we had actually been in the war. You know, I was transferred, I think it was August of '44 and see then that was two years later.



V.J. Day, Great Lakes Naval Training Station, 1945. Photo courtesy of Ottis Littlejohn.

1:25:25.0 Transferring to Great Lakes Naval Base where he met his wife

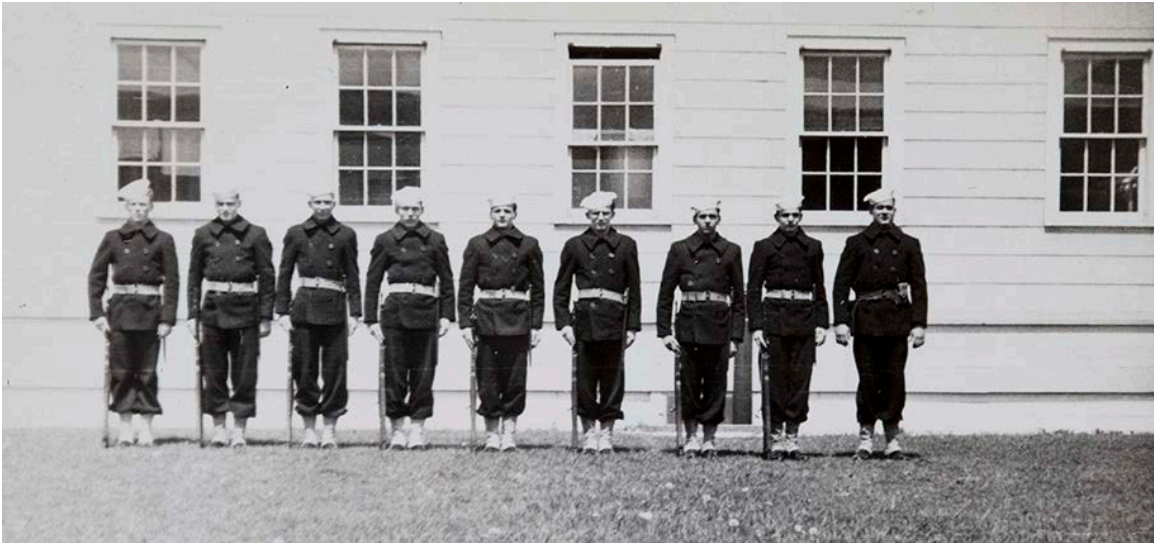
Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so you went to Great Lakes after you were discharged in '44?

Ottis Littlejohn: No, when I was transferred from my ship.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, okay.

Ottis Littlejohn: You know they -- actually when I left my ship they were transferring people back to the States for what they called new construction. You know, they would get a -- a cadre of men to put with recruits to run a new ship and that's what they sent us back for, because we were experienced. Well, when I got to San Francisco and the man in charge of reassignments was good enough to send me to Great Lakes instead of putting me aboard another ship..... I still thank him for that. I was there -- out there quite a while and I figured I'd just about done as much as I could or..... I was glad to get to go to Great Lakes.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm, and look at.....



Military funeral firing squad. Ottis Littlejohn was the squad leader. 1946. Left to right: Mills, Kotelis, Unknown, Alton, Getsinger, Stall, Floyd, Reynolds, Ottis Littlejohn. Photo courtesy of Ottis Littlejohn.

Ottis Littlejohn: So they put me in a police department up there and -- so I did my thing.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, boy oh boy. I wonder how that happened!

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: Here I am an East Texas cotton farmer and -- and I go around -- halfway around the world and I meet a woman in Illinois.

Janis Kozlowski: Right. Yeah.

Ottis Littlejohn: And she was from New Jersey and her daddy got transferred to Chicago and that's how she happened to be there. So, you know, strange things happen.

Janis Kozlowski: Yep, yep, they sure do.

Ottis Littlejohn: So we lived -- we lived together 55 1/2 years so..... And she came down here from the north. She'd never been south before, but she managed it all right.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, sometimes us Yankee girls don't make it very well in the south (laughter).

1:27:33.0 Large number of retirees living in Louisiana

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) You know, I know quite a few of them though now, like we had this telephone manufacturing here and, of course they brought men in from other areas to the -- the officers I guess you'd call it. The engineers and all that came with the telephone company, and there's a whole bunch of them here that are retired and the military. You see, we've got Barksdale Air Force Base and after they do their time and they get discharged, they retire here and there's hundreds of them.

Janis Kozlowski: Hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: From all over everywhere.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. Well, it's nice living down there from what I saw. I can see why they would go.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah. Yeah, it's -- it's nice. I like it. You know, your buildings are air conditioned. Just about every building you go into is air conditioned and well heated in the wintertime and sometimes in the hospitals or doctor's offices, you go in there and you freeze to death and you come outside and it feels good.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) Yeah. I know that feeling that you're talking about.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, you said you'd been to Natchitoches. Where's your hometown?

1:28:59.1 Janis' hometown and ages of Mr. Littlejohn and his family

Janis Kozlowski: Well, I -- I spent 18 years in -- in lower Michigan.....

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski:and then I was in the upper part of Michigan another eight years, I guess, and then I moved to Alaska, so I -- I've been to -- I've been in Alaska since I was about 26.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh.

Janis Kozlowski: And I'm not 26 anymore.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, you're probably no more than 30 though.

Janis Kozlowski: No, no. I must sound young, but I'm not. I'll be -- next week I'll be 53.

Ottis Littlejohn: Five-three?

Janis Kozlowski: Yes.

Ottis Littlejohn: 53?

Janis Kozlowski: Yep.

Ottis Littlejohn: My daughter I was just telling you about is -- next month or so she's gonna be 62.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, my gosh, we're getting -- we're close in age.

Ottis Littlejohn: And my youngest daughter is four-and-a-half years younger than that. My son is -- he's gonna be 63 next month.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh my.

Ottis Littlejohn: And in August I'm gonna be 91.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, boy!

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) A lot of people don't think I'm that old, but I was born in 1921.....

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, you.....

Ottis Littlejohn: That makes me 91.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, you don't -- you seem like a young guy at -- at heart and in your voice. You have a real strong voice.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. I plan to be around a while.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, good. I think the south is good for longevity. It keeps people going.

1:30:37.3 Mr. Littlejohn's daily activity regimen

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, I don't know if it's that or not, but I exercise every day and we've got some good doctors around here and lots of good pills.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) What kind of exercise do you like to do?

Ottis Littlejohn: I -- I get up at 5:30 every morning and I exercise until 6 and that's just bending and twisting and I've got some 2-pound weights that I do arm exercises with and leg kicks and then I lean over the chair and, you know, stretch my back and shoulders and it's just -- just generally like that and -- and I walk around. I don't do much walking, but I do walk inside the house quite a bit.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: A big circle around inside the house and I did that yesterday for quite a while.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: So, and then I've got a woodwork shop that I work in and right now my son-in-law has got an old car in there he's rebuilding, so I don't have much room to work, but I spend some time in there.

Janis Kozlowski: That's good. It sounds like you keep active.

1:31:56.1 Helping at church

Ottis Littlejohn: I do and I do little repair jobs at the church and I just did one last week and -- and I build things for them, tables and rostrums and different things and we have Wednesday night suppers at church and I work there in the kitchen and the hardest part of serving a meal like that is cleaning up.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Ottis Littlejohn: So we have to do all that and during Lent, right now, we have a fish fry every Friday night for seven Fridays, you know, the men's club makes extra money for the church.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: So I try to keep busy.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, it sounds like you do.

Ottis Littlejohn: I do a lot of yard work and we've got flowerbeds galore and -- and that takes a lot of work and -- so I -- I do try to keep busy.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, well that -- that's good for a person, no matter what age, right?

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, yeah that's for sure. Yeah. Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

1:33:12.0 Mr. Littlejohn' appreciation for the things he has received from Janis

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, look, you said that you had another book that you might send me about Kiska, huh?

Janis Kozlowski: I do.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Actually I put it in the mail for you yesterday.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, okay, that's good. All right. I appreciate that.

Janis Kozlowski: It's.....

Ottis Littlejohn: And I appreciate the other things you sent me and that story of that Attu boy.

Janis Kozlowski: Mm-hmm, yep.

Ottis Littlejohn: That -- that's a real neat story.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, good. It's -- it's one that hasn't been told before, so I thought it might be popular and people might be interested in hearing it.

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, I read it and -- and I, yeah, I think just about anybody would like it and I know that every chance I get I tell people about the war in the Aleutians and so many people don't know about it and I think they should, so all that you can get out on it -- put out for people to read or hear about, that's good.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, we're trying. We've got some other things in the works right now that we should have printed later this year and I'll make sure you get copies of them.

1:34:19.9 It was a rough year spent in the Aleutians

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, I sure would appreciate that, cause that little over a year I spent up there is -- you know, that was -- now I would class it as torture.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter.)

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, that was -- that was a terrible year with that weather, the fog and all that. It just -- and the cold and the ice. But, you know, when you're a young man, you can do it, but you still remember it.

Janis Kozlowski: Right, right, and did it seem like torture when you were there or just in retrospect?

Ottis Littlejohn: Well, it was inconvenient and it worked on you. You didn't like it, but you didn't let it hinder you or your work. You did what you're supposed to do and all that and -- and of course that's what I've tried to do all my life, but, it was -- it was bad. It was really bad and I wouldn't want to repeat it and I wouldn't want anybody else to unless -- like people that live there. If they like it, more power to them, but, it's not for me. So, in Anchorage it's not all that bad is it?

Janis Kozlowski: Well, this winter's been a little rough but, no it's -- you know the weather's a little bit more milder because of the ocean effect.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: You know, we still get winds, but not -- not as bad as the Aleutians.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: It's just been frigidly cold and we've gotten, how many inches -- we've gotten 152 inches of snow this year, I think it is.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yow!

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, so it's (laughter).....

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: My muscles are well-developed this year. I've been shoveling a lot (laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, yeah. Well, that's -- like -- like I said, you just put up with it.

Janis Kozlowski: Right.

Ottis Littlejohn: You live there and you -- you tolerate it.

Janis Kozlowski: Right. And if you don't know any better you just -- doesn't seem so bad right (laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter) Yeah, that's when I lived up in Illinois, those -- I said to myself, I know better. I know where there's a warmer place.

Janis Kozlowski: (Laughter) Well, after we went to Natchitoches and found out how nice it was one November we thought, boy it's pretty nice down there in Louisiana. We should take a look at that.

1:36:51.6 Highlights and history of Natchitoches

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, yeah. My daughter, son-in-law and I went to Natchitoches oh two or three months ago, I guess, and -- and he -- my son-in-law is from Kansas and he really liked Natchitoches, you know. He says this is really neat. And we went to that famous restaurant there they call Lasyone's, and I mean, that place is known for -- all around here. Everybody says you don't go to Natchitoches without going to Lasyone's, you know, and it's good. We went to a museum down there. You know the French settled Natchitoches. In fact, it's the oldest town in Louisiana.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, that's right, mm-hmm.

Ottis Littlejohn: Natchitoches. So this old fort that they had there -- it's been rebuilt and all, and they had a man explaining the whole thing, and you'd go around and it's real interesting, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. Well, we hope to get back there again soon, because our friends are down there quite often.

Ottis Littlejohn: You know, they made that movie, oh heck, I can't think of the name of it now, with Dolly Parton, and.....

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. Oh, I know which one you mean. With -- yeah, yeah we stayed in a bed and breakfast there and right across the street was where they filmed most of it.

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: I can't remember the name now.

Ottis Littlejohn: Oh, I can't either right this minute, but anyway, yeah, they made that movie there and it was really a good movie. I've seen it two or three times and the last time I saw it was even better than the first time.

Janis Kozlowski: That is a good movie, yeah.

Ottis Littlejohn: Steel Magnolias.

Janis Kozlowski: That's right. Yeah, that's what it is (laughter).

Ottis Littlejohn: (Laughter.)

Janis Kozlowski: A lot of big.....

Ottis Littlejohn: All right.

1:38:56.0 Transcription of interview

Janis Kozlowski: Well, thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it. You know, what I'll do is, we have some people that professionally transcribe these interviews.....

Ottis Littlejohn: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski:and once that gets done I'll send it back to you to take a look at and see if -- if we have any questions about it or see how you feel about it after you -- you have a chance to take a look.

Ottis Littlejohn: All right. I would appreciate that.

End of interview at 1:39:21.3



Ottis Littlejohn, February 1941. Grand Junction, Colorado. Photo courtesy of Ottis Littlejohn.