



## ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

An interview with  
Joaquin (Jack) S. Theodore, 1905-1998

February 29, 1992



[MP3 Audio File](#) [Length: 1:01:24] (28.1 MB)

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### PREFACE

Joaquin (Jack) Theodore was interviewed for the San Diego Historical Society Oral History Program by Robert G. Wright on February 29, 1992. In this interview Mr. Theodore answers questions about his life as a fisherman and also his experiences as skipper of a YP patrol boat during World War II. Probably the best outline of Mr. Theodore's experiences were presented in a letter to him from the Portuguese Historical Center. This outline is quoted below.

"JACK THEODORE'S IMPRESSION OF SAN DIEGO WAS SO VERY FAVORABLE, THAT HE REMEMBERS THE DATE OF HIS ARRIVAL, MARCH 25, 1925. HE BECAME A CREW MEMBER ON THE 55 TON *UNCLE SAM*. AND WAS AMONG THE FIRST

TO FISH THE NEWLY FOUND BANK, THE "*UNCLE SAM*. BANK". AS THE TUNA CLIPPERS INCREASED IN SIZE AND BECAME MORE SOPHISTICATED SO DID JACK THEODORE, FOR HE BECAME ONE OF OUR FIRST PORTUGUESE SPEAKING NAVIGATORS AND HIS SERVICES WERE IN DEMAND. COMMUNITY AFFAIRS ALWAYS HELD HIS INTEREST AND HE WAS ALWAYS WILL TO HELP, BECOMING PRESIDENT OF THE PORTUGUESE AMERICAN SOCIAL CIVIC CLUB AS WELL AS FINANCIAL SECRETARY AND TREASURER FOR 32 CONSECUTIVE YEARS. HE ALSO SERVED AS A DIRECTOR IN THE *CABRILLO*. CLUB. AT THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR II, HE VOLUNTEERED FOR DUTY AND WAS ASSIGNED AS OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE USS YP 346, THE FORMER TUNA CLIPPER, *PROSPECT*. DURING THE CAMPAIGN IN THE SOLOMONS HE LANDED MARINE RAIDERS BEHIND JAPANESE LINES. HIS VESSEL WAS BROUGHT UNDER FIRE BY THE JAPANESE. IN NIGHT ACTION, THE VESSEL WAS DESTROYED AND HE HIMSELF WOUNDED. WE HAVE SEEN FIT TO HONOR JACK WITH A RECORD OF HIS GUADALCANAL ADVENTURE AS CAPTURED IN RICHARD TREGASKAS' GUADALCANAL DIARY IN OUR TUNA HALL OF PROGRESS, BECAUSE WE REMEMBER."

Thomas E. Walt, Editor  
May 28, 1996

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**Robert G. Wright:** Can you give me your full name?

**Joaquin S. Theodore:** Yes, Joaquin S. Theodore.

**RGW:** What does the "S" stand for?

**JST:** Swatterish. That was my mother's name, see. And I took the ... my father was an American citizen.

**RGW:** I see, and where were you born?

**JST:** Picquallen in the Azores.

**RGW:** When were you born?

**JST:** I was born there in May 28, 1905.

**RGW:** And in the meantime your father was an American citizen?

**JST:** Yes, but he was a whaler there, and he was fishing there.

**RGW:** He was a whaler too?

**JST:** Yeah, in smaller boats. There's seven men to a boat. They go out and harpoon the whales and.... RGW Wow.

**JST:** Yeah. My father was the skipper of one of those little boats.

**RGW:** When did you come to San Diego then?

**JST:** In 1925.

**RGW:** Your father brought you here?

**JST:** No. My father stayed back there.

**RGW:** Why did you come to San Diego?

**JST:** Well, I had another brother here and my father was so enthused about the United States that he used to tell us about a lot of things there. I said, well that's the life for me. Even when I was a small guy I wanted to come over here and try it.

**RGW:** Did you start fishing in the bait boats, or what?

**JST:** Yeah, bait boats, yes.

**RGW:** Do you remember the first boat you were on?

**JST:** Yes. There was the... Well, first I was in the small boats. I had a cousin that used to let us [fish for] small fish and rock cod. I worked with him for a little bit there, but then I changed to a bigger boat. You made a lot of change, you know, because you go with whatever you can make more money in.

**RGW:** Do you remember what boat you were on? The bigger boat?

**JST:** Well, it was the *UNCLE SAM*. It was owned by my cousin, Frank Silva.

**RGW:** It was named *UNCLE SAM*.

**JST:** The boat was the *UNCLE SAM*. yeah. And we found a bank there, way outside of the...

**RGW:** A fishing bank, yeah.

**JST:** A fishing bank there and you was good there. We used to go to Turtle Bay and everybody would anchor there because they left at a specified time and everybody would... The minute my cousin [would] lift up the anchor to sail, they would all pull up then to follow him, to find the good banks. But they never [could] because as soon as that night he put out the lights and she (.....)1 and they got lost and, indeed, they never caught him. Finally, they found the place he used. He was cocky, smart. He was very smart.

**RGW:** Yeah, yeah. That was Silva then?

**JST:** Frank Silva, yes. He was a cousin of mine over here. Andrew, that lives about two or three blocks away from me, he's the only one left. There was three boys and a girl that he had there. They are all dead except Andrew.

**RGW:** That was a tough job though, wasn't it, using the poles?

**JST:** Oh, yes. Actually, to go back a little bit, when I came from the old country, from there I went up to Santa Maria.

**RGW:** Oh, first?

**JST:** First yeah, because in Santa Maria I had three (..... Cannot decipher) uncles there, my mother's brothers. And my older brother was there too, at the time. They were farming beans up around Oakland and Santa Maria and so I worked there for a couple of years but I didn't like that. So I wanted to be close to the water. I was born close to the water. Then I decided to come to San Diego. I had a lot of relatives here, like Frank Silva, and he had two brothers here. They all had boats and I worked with one or another cousin on their smaller boats and then of course they started building bigger and bigger and bigger boats. Then I was on the Azorena. The biggest boat I was on was the Azorena. I was there for quite a while. Then I would do the *Normandy*. I was not...

**RGW:** You were on the *Normandy*. huh?

**JST:** Yeah, the *Normandy*. I was there for quite awhile, and by that time that's when the war broke out, then of course, I got out. I left the boat and...

**RGW:** Well, let's not jump ahead too fast. So you started fishing in the late 1920's then, and through the 1930's?

**JST:** Yes, I got in some year... I think some year when... The year was February 1925.

**RGW:** February 1925? JST Yeah.

**RGW:** Things got a little tougher later on, during the Depression years, wasn't it?

**JST:** Oh yeah. Well the worst year was 1930.

**RGW:** Why was it worse in 1930?

**JST:** Well, the Depression...

**RGW:** Yeah.

**JST:** Then when I got engaged with my wife, I had a little bit of money. I saved it and I bought a lot out there in Point Loma and I was going to build a home so [when we) come back we have a home. And we did, you know. But then I was elected there... We had a strike. I used to belong to the fisherman's union, you know. And then they had a strike on account of the cannery. So, we were nine months inactive, so...

**RGW:** Nine months without...?

**JST:** Nine months without making a penny, so I lost my home.

**RGW:** Oh, boy.

**JST:** And my home is still there. It's on Evergreen there, right near the corner.

**RGW:** Yeah, yeah. The canneries had control of the tuna industry, didn't they?

**JST:** In a way, in a way, because they owed money to the canneries and they had to do what the canneries tell them. But, of course, like he says, everybody is in business to make money.

**RGW:** Oh, yeah.

**JST:** And, of course, the canneries don't want to pay anymore than they have to.

**RGW:** That's right. What canneries did you... Did you work for a cannery?

**JST:** Well, Van Camp.

**RGW:** Van Camp?

**JST:** Sun Harbor and other canneries. They were the biggest canneries they had.

**RGW:** Van Camp, and what was the other one?

**JST:** Van Camp and ah... Let's see, what was the other? There was another cannery in San Pedro that had a branch here in San Diego, too.

**RGW:** Did they control... Did they own part of the boats? Sometimes they financed the boats.

**JST:** Yeah, they financed the boats.

**RGW:** Do you remember what you were being paid? Were you paid by the ton?

**JST:** No, it was on a share basis there. The way they worked, they... We have to get food and stuff, and sometimes license and when we came in they paid all the expenses there and then the rest of it. There was so much for the boats and sometimes the skipper gets an extra share and then the rest is divided out equal to all the members of crew.

**RGW:** How far did you go? Did you go down off of the Galapagos, or where did you go fishing?

**JST:** Yeah, we worked a lot down the Galapagos because it was good fishing grounds there. The way it was better, it was because you could go there to those islands you could go get bait and come out and fish and the bait... sometimes dies or you run out of it and you had to get some more. So Galapagos was one of the best places for that.

**RGW:** So everything was close?

**JST:** They had a lot of bait there because salimas (sp?), the little...

**RGW:** Sardines, yeah.

**JST:** Then those little sardines. There are sardines there, but these were a bottom fish. They're real small, they're brown with golden stripes across there. They're called salimas. RGW Salimas?

**JST:** Salimas, yeah, and it was a good bait. There was a lot of it down there. I used to be a diver for the lot, too, by the way.

**RGW:** You'd dive down and...

**JST:** We had one of those things you put over there...

**RGW:** A helmet?

**JST:** A helmet, and of course we had the (.....) there and there's an air pump for the air. They had to pump the air because the water used to come up to here...

**RGW:** On your chin?

**JST:** If they don't pump the air then the water comes up, you know... So they gotta be careful. But I did a lot of that. I was...

**RGW:** You used the net to bring them in, didn't you?

**JST:** No, the net... No, we used the net after we find a school. We use the net (.....) down there because there was a lot of rocks there and move... So they could close up...

**RGW:** For the bait?

**JST:** For the bait, yeah.

**RGW:** Yeah, you dragged the net across the bottom and then it would catch up and then...

**JST:** Yeah, we had two or three guys on the side to bring things in so they can bring it up.

**RGW:** Bring it up.

**JST:** (.....) one fish starts around they all follow too. Before you know it you don't have no bait left.

**RGW:** Yeah, Yeah.

**JST:** It was hard work. Lotta work...

**RGW:** Oh, I imagine.

**JST:** 'Cause you fish all day, if you catch fish you have to ice it up. Nowadays, now they have... It was all brine, but in those days it was all ice, mostly ice. And you have to ice it up and then we get to go for (..... ) again, and a lot of times you didn't sleep, though.

**RGW:** Oh, I imagine.

**JST:** It was a hard life.

**RGW:** Meantime, were you interested in moving up and learning to be a skipper of your own boat?

**JST:** Yes, well I...

**RGW:** Study and...

**JST:** It was like I said, after they start building bigger boats, I decided that I can improve myself if I learned something. RGW Sure.

**JST:** One of the things... That is in the boats that I was the navigator and when we come ashore to the cannery the navigator used to run the scale and take the weights and the crew that was on there takes off the fish, and I said I'm going to be a navigator and I did. I got the... You can see the diploma there. I got my license and when I was a navigator, when the boat comes in I used to go the scale, taking the weights, because you have to watch those guys there.

**RGW:** In other words, when the tuna were unloaded from the boat they had to be weighed at the cannery and the cannery was not above cheating you then?

**JST:** No, once in awhile there were some guys there that would be better, but you had to watch them. So they were pretty honest.

**RGW:** Oh, were they pretty honest?

**JST:** In those days we didn't find people that would cheat like they do now. Now it's hard to live, we've all got to watch out or they'll rob you or something like that. In those days, you trust people though.

**RGW:** Do you remember what the canneries paid you per ton?

**JST:** Oh, it all depends. That time that we had a strike there, they wanted \$100 a ton.

**RGW:** \$100 a ton.

**JST:** Yeah, and for tuna and skipjack, usually was a little bit lower, though and... But the canneries made a lot of money on that.

**RGW:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Nothing went to waste. JST No.

**RGW:** When did you take over your first boat, then? Must be in the 1930's somewhere.

**JST:** Well, let's see. The boats that I went... Well I run a boat, to a small boat, the *MONARCH* ....

**RGW:** The *MONARCH*.

**JST:** The *MONARCH*. I was skipper of that, but it was a small boat and I didn't like it. I was used to being on bigger boats, go to Galapagos, and then went to the Costa Rica. Some of those places. Sometimes (..... ) them out for bait and fish on the outside... RGW Sure.

**JST:** ...and they had better shares than the smaller boats?

**RGW:** Yeah, yeah. More money.

**JST:** More money.

**RGW:** On the bigger boat, more money.

**JST:** Yeah.

**RGW:** So when did you get... Did you take over as skipper of a bigger boat then?

**JST:** No, not of a bigger boat. I was navigator, but not the skipper, though.

**RGW:** Well, you weren't a skipper before the war started then?

**JST:** No, no.

**RGW:** You got your own boat after the war started then?

**JST:** No, I didn't have... I had part of a boat with somebody else was running it. I put some money in it with some brothers and they had a boat there and I put money in on it to be a...

**RGW:** Oh, you bought a share of the boat?

**JST:** Yeah, yeah.

**RGW:** Which boat was that?

**JST:** The *SUN VOYAGER*.

**RGW:** The SANTA VOYAGER?

**JST:** *SUN VOYAGER*. He worked for Sun Harbor...

**RGW:** Now, wait a minute. So what happened ... you bought a share of the *Sun Voyager* ...

**JST:** *SUN VOYAGER*.



**RGW:** And then you sold it to somebody else?

**JST:** Well, no I didn't sell it. The boat sunk. We got payment from the insurance company.

**RGW:** Oh. What happened? How did it sink?

**JST:** Well, the boat (.....) into the Galapagos and, like I said, the skipper was running the boat a little bit stupid. Let's put it this way. And then he read the instructions, 'cause he had instructions there that in order to (....) start to put the fish in it, the two black wells on the side of the boat, you have to empty a box on deck (.....) so after awhile there's too much weight, so they didn't do that. They fill up those two wells and the boat got too low. Before you know it, turned over and went down to the bottom and the engineer and the cook went down with the boat.

**RGW:** Oh, God. Was that before the war years?

**JST:** Yeah, yeah. Quite a bit before.

**RGW:** In other words, the bait tank is on deck and it's full of water.

**JST:** Yeah, but the wells too. They use bait in the wells. But those back wells is mostly for the... That's the first time (.....) get the fish first. But you gotta fill it up and cool the water with...

**RGW:** With the brine?

**JST:** With the brine, and when they fill up with the water the wood couldn't take (.....) and...

**RGW:** Yeah. Sunk right down, huh? Where were you then... What were you doing in December of 1941? Were you on a boat then?

**JST:** 1941. That's when the war broke out.

**RGW:** Yeah. You on a...

**JST:** No, I quit then. I been one trip on the *Monarch*. and then I enlisted on a bigger boat, so...

**RGW:** What was the bigger boat's name?

**JST:** The *AZOREANA*.

**RGW:** ZORIANNA?

**JST:** The *AZOREANA*. yeah.

**RGW:** It's not on this list. Is it here on the YP boats that we have?

**JST:** Here it is. Number Five.

**RGW:** Number Five?

**JST:** Yeah. *AZOREANA*.

**RGW:** You were on that, huh.

**JST:** Yeah, I was on that boat there.

**RGW:** During 1941?

**JST:** There was another guy who was skipper of the boat. I was just the navigator, that's it.

**RGW:** Sure. Well, you also fished, too, didn't you?

**JST:** Oh, yes, oh yeah. Fished just like anybody else.

**RGW:** Yeah. Yeah. So you were on A-ORIZANNA?

**JST:** *AZOREANA*. yeah.

**RGW:** A-z-o-r-e-a-n-a.

**JST:** Yeah. *AZOREANA*. Just like Azores. *AZOREANA*.

**RGW:** Yeah. Like old home.

**JST:** Yeah.

**RGW:** You were on there when the war broke out then?

**JST:** No, no. I was before that. When the war broke out I had left the *MONARCH*. and I was going to go on another boat... The *AZOREANA*. wasn't built. It was built at Campbells and I had a job to go on it there.

**RGW:** To go on it. Oh, you hadn't been to sea yet?

**JST:** No. Then when the war broke out I wasn't on any boat at all.

**RGW:** You weren't on any boat?

**JST:** I had a job to go to but so anyway after the... When the war broke out I work with (.....) for a year and the *CABRILLO*.

**RGW:** You worked on the *CABRILLO*. and...

**JST:** And the (.....) Joe Medina. He was well-known here in (.....) He was a good skipper. He was from my hometown, too. We went to school together over there and so I... Like I said, I wasn't doing anything, I was idle at the time there when the war broke out and then... He was older than I was, six months, and he got a notice from the Army to report to the Army. That was the draft there and at that I said, "Oh, my God. I don't want to go into the Army." I went in the Navy. That's when I signed up. I volunteered to go to the Navy.

**RGW:** Joined the Navy?

**JST:** Yeah.

**RGW:** You got a draft notice, so you joined the Navy?

**JST:** No, I didn't get a draft notice but I was afraid to get one...

**RGW:** Oh, yes, 'cause...

**JST:** Like Joe Medina. That's why I went into the Navy before I got drafted.

**RGW:** Now, you enlisted in the Navy?

**JST:** I enlisted. But I went in as an officer.

**RGW:** As an officer?

**JST:** For my experience navigating. I went in as an officer, as an...

**RGW:** A warrant officer?

**JST:** A warrant officer, yes.

**RGW:** Warrant officer.

**JST:** Yeah. And then I was promoted after I was a year there. I was two years over there in submarine nets in the bay there. There was a barge there that opened up the nets so the boats...

**RGW:** Oh, San Diego Bay?

**JST:** San Diego Bay, yes. I was there two years after... During the war. And...

**RGW:** Well, I thought Guadalcanal was in 19.., end of... JST 1942.

**RGW:** '42, but...?

**JST:** Yeah. Well, I got hurt in 1942, September 8, 1942.

**RGW:** Oh. Then you were on a submarine. That's after that?

**JST:** No, no. No, I was just (.....). Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. No, submarine (..... ) I got in there after the, after the... Wait a minute.

**RGW:** Well let's see. After you were wounded you got on the submarine nets.

**JST:** Yeah, because I was wounded and by... I was the (..... ) in other words, and my orders were that I couldn't go to sea again because I lost a lung there. RGW Yeah.

**JST:** I lost the right lung.

**RGW:** Okay, let's not jump ahead too fast. Now that you joined the Navy, did they put you on one of the YP boats? One of the tuna boats?

**JST:** Yeah, the number... It's over here, (APPARENTLY CONSULTING PAPERS WITH LIST OF BOATS) the *PROSPECT*. Number 32.

**RGW:** You were on the *PROSPECT*.

**JST:** I was the skipper that one there.

**RGW:** And was that... What was the YP number?

**JST:** 346. Right there.

**RGW:** YP 346 was the *PROSPECT*.

**JST:** Yeah, the *PROSPECT*. yeah. I was the skipper on that.

**RGW:** And did you go out as navigator, or what?

**JST:** On the *PROSPECT*. RGW Yeah.

**JST:** No. The *PROSPECT*. was taken in by the Navy and then they gave me the job of being the warrant officer and being skipper of this YP boat. I gave up my job on the *MONARCH* ...

**RGW:** You gave up the *MONARCH*.

**JST:** Yeah. I decided I had to (.....) 'cause the war... I didn't want to go into the Army.

**RGW:** Yeah.

**JST:** And the only way was to go into the Navy.

**RGW:** The Navy?

**JST:** As a volunteer. When I went in, of course, I went in as a warrant officer and then I got promoted after that. But I was two years over there but, over there in the Bay there. As the officer there. There were two officers there. One twenty-four hours on, twenty-four hours off and that was our...

**RGW:** Oh, on the submarine nets?

**JST:** On the submarine nets, yes.

**RGW:** Yes, but let's not get too far ahead. How did you... I understand the Navy took over the tuna boats in April 1942.

**JST:** Yeah. I was sworn in April, the 18th of April, 1942.

**RGW:** '42?

**JST:** Yeah, yeah. I was sworn in.

**RGW:** Sworn in.

**JST:** And I, let's see... Eddie Magruda was.... we were all together when we were sworn in as...

**RGW:** Eddie MacGru...? Edward Magruda?

**JST:** Magruda, yeah. And Ed, he was a pretty smart guy. He's a millionaire, in case you don't know. He's a millionaire. He made a lot of money with boats, though. He was lucky, but he was smart also.

**RGW:** Sure.

**JST:** But, anyway, the guy that took us over into the Navy was a lieutenant commander by the name of Kimmer.

**RGW:** Kimmer?

**JST:** Kimmer. Kimmer. He was a Navy man. Regular Navy.

**RGW:** Yeah. Kimmer?

**JST:** Yeah. And when it was all over, the guys there, I think there were maybe around 20, or maybe 25, that were sworn in and he said, Mr. Kimmer, why do you want a bunch of fishermen who don't know anything about the Navy." So he laughed, and he said, "We know that," he said, "but we know you guys are good navigators and you could handle ships. That's what we want you guys for". That was Mr. Kimmer's remarks.

**RGW:** Sure. The Navy had their eye on your boats, though, didn't they?

**JST:** Yeah. Well, they were very, very useful...

**RGW:** Why were they useful?

**JST:** Well, because they had good refrigeration, they could handle any kind of supplies to those places there.

**RGW:** You mean the islands? The Pacific islands?

**JST:** Yes, the Pacific islands. As a matter of fact, the Navy after they found out these boats were so helpful during the war, they built thirty of them.

**RGW:** On their own?

**JST:** On their own.

**RGW:** Here, in San Diego?

**JST:** They put them in, but by... Not all of them were commissioned, because in the meantime the war ended. And the Navy... It was good for the guys that sold their boats: if their boats came back, okay they were anxious to get them back. And after the boats that got lost, like mine and some of those others that got lost over there, they were anxious to get one of those new boats that they... The government was very good to the people there in the tuna fleet, I can say that.

**RGW:** So, in other words, the people who owned these particular tuna boats, sold them to the Navy and when the war was over they got them back...

**JST:** If they were still in commission, yeah.

**RGW:** And if they got sunk, the Navy gave them the new boats?

**JST:** No, they have to buy them, because when they got these boats they paid the owners for it, so they have to buy them back again. But it was reasonable.

**RGW:** Sure. Sure. What boat did you go on first, then?

**JST:** That was the *PROSPECT*.

**RGW:** The *PROSPECT*. The YP 346?

**JST:** Yeah, that's right.

**RGW:** What did you do? Load up with....

**JST:** Well, I'll take it from after we left the island (.....). We left here...It was around... Was in July... No, in April, April 18th, no, around the 20th, or something, to go to Pearl Harbor.

**RGW:** You mean as soon as you got sworn in, they shipped you right out?

**JST:** Yeah. Oh, yeah. I got command of the ship. I worked for three or four days. I went in there....

**RGW:** You went out as a navigator?

**JST:** Huh?

**RGW:** You went out as a navigator?

**JST:** No. No. When I took the *PROSPECT*. I was the commanding officer.

**RGW:** Oh, you were?

**JST:** Yeah. They put me in charge of that YP boat.

**RGW:** Who was crewing the ship, then?

**JST:** Well, they had people there from the Navy that was taking care of it.

**RGW:** There were Navy personnel on board?

**JST:** Yeah. A few, just to keep it (....) because those...

**RGW:** You had a few fishermen on there, didn't you? Guys you knew?

**JST:** I had quite a few guys that went in when I went in and they wanted to go with me, so I had quite a few guys, about four or five guys, they used to be fishermen, that were on my boat, yeah.

**RGW:** With you?

**JST:** Yeah.

**RGW:** Okay. Can you remember the name of some of those guys?

**JST:** Well, there's one guy now, I been out to the sea fishing there, by the name of... I saw his brother yesterday at the barbershop. Their name is Battaglia. This guy was the chief engineer on my YP boat. His name is Vince Battaglia.

**RGW:** Battaglia?

**JST:** Battaglia. He's Italian. Is Italian name and he's writing a book. He told us he's writing a book about this subject.

**RGW:** I hope to read it. What a... So did you go out... Did you carry any cargo to the Hawaiian Islands?

**JST:** Yeah. Once I took a load of apples and some fruits and I got them into the Hawaiian Island and then in the Hawaiian Islands they give me a lot of meats and stuff like that to take out. And believe it or not, when they send me out to (..... ).

**RGW:** From the Hawaiian Islands you went where?

**JST:** Went down south. First I stopped at Palmyra and I had a lot of turkeys and stuff like that. There was an admiral there. He asked me what I had and I told him and he asked, "Could I get some?" I said, "Sure." So I gave him a bunch of the turkeys... RGW Turkeys?

**JST:** Frozen turkeys. And then from there we went to Samoa and near Samoa I see Ed Varley, who was skipper of one of the YP boats and Ed M..... was there (.....) YP there in Samoa. Based in Samoa.

**RGW:** Yeah. You remember the name of the boats?

**JST:** Well, Ed M..... should know better than I do because he was there too.

**RGW:** Okay. We got that. The other fellow interviewed him. Did they put any guns on your boat?

**JST:** Yes, well before we left we had 20mm on the bait box there but it was cooled off by water. But then when I got into the ( .... ) they put more guns on me. They put in the back of the pilot house there they put two 1 inch (..... ) there. So I had this big 20mm and then I had this 50 caliber. I had four of those 50 caliber machine guns. They were just for (..... ) they were no good for nothing. I didn't even use them when I got hurt. I didn't even call headquarters because I was going into Tulagi and I knew the Japanese were shooting at me so I was trying to get in...

**RGW:** Yeah. Let's not jump ahead on that one. What a... Were you kind of nervous going over there, scared?

**JST:** No. No, I wasn't scared. I was at sea. That was my life.

**RGW:** Yeah, but you got some bad guys. The Japanese were...

**JST:** Yeah. I know, I know. That's why I resent that.

**RGW:** Resent what?

**JST:** Japanese. I don't like the Japanese.

**RGW:** You still don't?

**JST:** No. And I never will either. Over there when a lot of our planes go there sometimes because they used to fly up there if some of our planes..., some guys get(..... )and hit the water, some Japanese come down and shoot them. They were there and sometimes they were rescued by somebody. They came down and they shoot them right in the water. You think that's honesty?

**RGW:** No, no. You didn't see that happen though, did you?

**JST:** I heard a lot of [talk] in Guadalcanal. I heard about that, but I never seen [it].

**RGW:** So you were on your way to the Solomon Islands with a load of meat and vegetables for...



**JST:** That's right. And when I got into New Hebrides (..... ) there was a base there... a brigadier general there, in charge of the Army there. But there was Navy there too, but the Navy was under the jurisdiction of this general and he was my boss also. RGW Yeah.

**JST:** Then we stop in Samoa and we stopped in Fiji Islands and from there I went to New Hebrides.

**RGW:** Well, were you unloading?

**JST:** No, I give a lot of the stuff when I got to New Hebrides. I didn't want to get into any trouble, but I was still in trouble because I had one major from the Army come. I was asleep someplace there, I was asleep in the afternoon when he came in. He woke me up. They had learned that the Navy was getting a lot of meat and they weren't supposed to. The Army was supplying the Navy, I guess. And I said, "Well, I gave them some stuff." But I gave them quite a bit of stuff, though. And the Army found out and they came to me and asked me. I had to tell them, yes, yes, I did give them something.

**RGW:** Mostly, you were stopping off to get fuel, though, weren't you?

**JST:** Well, I loaded up with fuel in Samoa. The United States had a base there.

**RGW:** Now, the *Prospect*. was it diesel powered?

**JST:** Yeah, yeah, diesel. It wasn't very fast. Top speed was 10 knots.

**RGW:** 10 knots? How long a boat was it?

**JST:** I think it was about 120 feet, something like that. It was built at San Diego Marine Construction Company.

**RGW:** Who built it?

**JST:** San Diego Marine Construction Company at the foot of Crosby Street. You know that machine shop there? They used to build boats there?

**RGW:** No.

**JST:** San Diego Marine Construction Company.

**RGW:** San Diego Boat...?

**JST:** No, San Diego Marine Construction Company.

**RGW:** San Diego Marine Construction, foot of Crosby...

**JST:** That was the place where they built a lot of boats.

**RGW:** Yeah, it was wooden, wasn't it?

**JST:** Yeah, yeah, it was wood.

**RGW:** Out of oak?

**JST:** No. Oh, there was one made out of oak. That was the... I have to think for a minute.

**RGW:** Was your's built out of Douglas fir?

**JST:** Well, it was regular wood, like Campbell's used to build.

**RGW:** What were your orders to go to, down to Tulagi? I mean down to the...

**JST:** New Hebrides.

**RGW:** Down to New Hebrides.

**JST:** I got the orders in Pearl Harbor and they told me to stop at... at the... at the... that place (.....) what the hell's the name of the...

**RGW:** New Hebrides?

**JST:** No, no the (.....)

**RGW:** Solomon?

**JST:** Palmyra! I stopped there and then from there I went to Samoa. I was there five days and I got fuel and then I got water. As a matter of fact, they put my water in the water tank with pressure and busted the tank and I stayed there five days so they could fix it. And then from there I went to Fiji and then from Fiji to New Hebrides. I took all of those trips.

**RGW:** You were supposed to discharge down at the... Was [the] Guadalcanal fighting started yet?

**JST:** Yeah, I think so. I was already there when the United States took the airport there, the airfield.

**RGW:** Anderson Field, yeah.

**JST:** Yeah, and the moment I got up there... I went up there... We left... you heard about that. It was the two YP's. They left there with loads of gasoline for the planes. They were running short of gasoline there. So, we were supposed to have a destroyer for...

**RGW:** Escort?

**JST:** Escort, but we never seen the destroyer. But we got up there okay.

**RGW:** So, how did you get blown out of the water then?

**JST:** Well, I'll tell you. We left. We used to go to Tulagi because Tulagi had a nice bay and we came into Guadalcanal and picked up some marines. I had 100 marines aboard my ship and there's two APD's, they call them these little four stackers, you know?

**RGW:** Sure, they're real old.

**JST:** Yeah. They each had 200 marines aboard also. There were six hundred marines altogether in that group there. There were two destroyers, and two YP's and I had a 100 and the other YP had 100 and the two destroyers had 200 each so...

**RGW:** You had 100 marines on your boat?

**JST:** Yes, yes, yes.

**RGW:** Marine raiders?

**JST:** Raiders, yes. The Navy told the Americans that the Japs were [collecting] munitions there on a point called Taivu Point, which is just before you get to Guadalcanal. And so we made a raid on them. They found guns and stuff [that] we don't want... so they put some dynamite in and they blew them up and put them out of commission.

**RGW:** That's what the raid was about then?

**JST:** Well, to destroy whatever they were getting there and of course to chase the Japs away from there. There were quite a few Japs there, too and of course they took those guns there and took to the hills. We lost one marine but we killed forty-eight Japs.

**RGW:** Forty-eight for one marine, then?

**JST:** Yeah, and of course after we got through... but in the meantime the airplanes came from the other side and helped us out with the raid and so we picked up the guys from the beach. They told us to proceed there, so we came back to Guadalcanal, filled up with marines and then the commanding officer told us to proceed to Tulagi, you know, when we got through with this work. Tulagi was about 20 miles away, it takes about two hours and we started to go into Tulagi. It was two YP's, another one with me...

**RGW:** Do you remember the name of the other one?

**JST:** Yeah, I'll see... if you'll give me the list. I forget a lot.

**RGW:** It was the CHALLENGER. And it was sunk, too.

**JST:** Yes, CHALLENGER was the one that was up in the... that took a load of gasoline like anything.

**RGW:** Okay. So you two guys were going up...

**JST:** To Tulagi for the night, to get away from the... because Tulagi was (....) enclosed and then they had the guns there for the Japs couldn't come in or anything because they... but anyway, the Japs would start shooting (.....) Guadalcanal.

**RGW:** Now wait a minute. You were going back to Tulagi...

**JST:** After I left the marines at Guadalcanal. The commander told me to go to Tulagi...

**RGW:** And then while you were at sea, then the Japanese destroyer showed up?

**JST:** They used to call them the... What the hell did they used to call them? Ah, I don't know... Tokyo Express, I think it was! They used to call them that. You heard of that before? You heard of that...

**RGW:** Oh, yeah.

**JST:** They used to... there was supposed to be two destroyers that were shooting at us with this... with this... my gunsmith told me what it was, but I've forgotten now. It's the area of the shell, they go so far... it's like radar, you know. And it explodes. My deck, when I came down, was full of all that shrapnel and stuff like that.

**RGW:** So, in other words when the Japanese fired, they didn't have to hit your ship, it just exploded. It was timed to explode near your boat.

**JST:** I took one and beside that I told everybody to take shelter, who don't belong on deck, so they did. All of them. The only guys on top of the deck was me. I was on the bridge and the other guy at the wheel. The guy was from some place back east and when he got a piece of shrapnel in his arm, he cut his arm, broke his arm.

**RGW:** Oh, it did?

**JST:** Yeah, his left arm. RGW Shrapnel?

**JST:** Shrapnel, yeah. RGE Broke it; didn't cut it off?

**JST:** No. And he came to Pearl Harbor on the same ship that I came in, too.

**RGW:** Yeah. But let's not jump ahead there. You were under fire then from the Japanese?

**JST:** Yeah, under fire. And then, [it was] down there when I got hurt. I was in pain.

**RGW:** Oh, wait a minute now. A shell hit nearby your ship and then threw shrapnel...

**JST:** Yeah, shrapnel, right.

**RGW:** How did it enter your body then? The shrapnel. Where did it hit you?

**JST:** It hit in.

**RGW:** It came in from your back?

**JST:** Yeah, okay. You pull that up, you can see it close to my spine.

**RGW:** Ah, let's see.

**JST:** On the left.

**RGW:** You're on your back. Just between his shoulder blades is a mark right about, just to the left of your spine that shrapnel went right in there, didn't it?

**JST:** Right in there.

**RGW:** Into your lung.

**JST:** And it came out here.

**RGW:** Oh; it came out on your upper right breast?

**JST:** Yeah, but after I did it, they brought me to... They sent me to Pearl Harbor.

**RGW:** Now wait a minute, wait a minute. Did you feel sort of a burning sensation?

**JST:** Well, I was wounded so they treated me there.

**RGW:** Wait a minute. When you got hit like that did it knock you out or down...

**JST:** No, but it was so close to my spine that apparently it affected my walking or something then.

**RGW:** Oh, so you fell? You just collapsed?

**JST:** Yes. So I hollered over there to somebody for help. I had two marines that were on my ship, they were gunners and they came out and I told them, "Beach the ship."

**RGW:** Was the ship in fear of sinking or what?

**JST:** No, no, but it was on fire in the stern there and they were shooting.

**RGW:** Oh, there was fire in the stern of the ship?

**JST:** They [were] shooting at us and they probably could kill all of us but I told them to beach the ship, so they did. They headed for the point there in Tulagi and the boat stayed there. The next day (..... ), they knew the boat was there because by radar. The Japs came in the next day and shelled the God darned YP and caught it on fire and burned it (..... ) They told me later that the...

**RGW:** They sunk your ship, the *PROSPECT*.

**JST:** Yeah.

**RGW:** But was the ship hit? I thought I read somewhere it was the magazine. One of the ammunition magazines was hit. Is that not true?

**JST:** No. Not on my ship. We had these bait boats for... They had three (lockers?). The front, the middle and the back. We had all our ammunition in the back box. And apparently the Japs, the second time they came back and shelled the ship, (..... )

**RGW:** But before that, the day before when you got wounded, the *PROSPECT*. was still a pretty good boat. You just wanted to beach it to get out of the way of the Japanese?

**JST:** That's right, that's right. That's what it was about.

**RGW:** Yeah. Yeah. I see. I see. Nobody else was... Well then your helmsman was hurt, wounded?

**JST:** Yeah. Parnell was his name. He was my gunners mate. He was a nice kid. RGW Palmer?

**JST:** Ah, Parnell. Parnell.

**RGW:** Parnell. So the only... You were the only two wounded, then?

**JST:** Yes.

**RGW:** But the boat was never really directly hit?

**JST:** No, no.

**RGW:** Just the shrapnel?

**JST:** Just the shrapnel. Yeah, from the...

**RGW:** Oh, I see. Seems to me if I were on your small boat and two Japanese destroyers started shooting at me, I'd be kind of scared.

**JST:** Well, I was... sure we were scared. We knew that. But what are you going to do? You have a little ship there, you can't defend yourself. What are you going to do? The first thing I thought of was beach the ship. Get it away from the line of fire and I think it saved a lot of the guys. We lost one guy there. He was my electrician on the ship.

**RGW:** How did you lose him?

**JST:** Well, because he apparently... when I told them to take shelter they went all down there, but sometimes they come up to look around and see. He got hit with a piece of shrapnel, I guess. Some guy told me later that he was complaining, he was bleeding a little bit. But we were close to the beach and a lot of the guys jumped over the side then swim to the beach because it was close by. I like to think he did the same thing but apparently by bleeding or something like that, the blood, there were a lot of sharks there, so I think the sharks got him because the next day we found his life jacket but we never found him, so I think the sharks got him. He was German... No, he was French. I'd like to give his name, but my brain doesn't work.

**RGW:** No, that's all right. Do sharks really attack people when there's blood around?

**JST:** Oh, sure, sure. They're mean... those sharks. We used to catch them sometimes, when fishing tuna, they used to come around because...

**RGW:** Yeah, blood.

**JST:** Yeah, and we'd get the guns and shoot them and kill them. They're mean, though.

**RGW:** Then, at Tulagi you went to the medics and they...

**JST:** No, when I got in there then of course I went up to the beach and they put... It was raining that day, and they had a little cave there that was a shelter, there was no rain there, and there were some marines that were hurt, but they figured I was hurt more than they were so they put them out in the rain and put me in there. I was there two days, and then they brought me up to Pearl Harbor on a hospital ship. I was in Pearl Harbor about... I think it was about two or three months, and then they send me right to the States. I went to Oak Knoll, which...

**RGW:** Oak Knoll in Oakland?

**JST:** Yeah, Oakland.

**RGW:** Oak (Knoll) Naval Hospital up there?

**JST:** Yeah. I was there for quite awhile until they detach me to another place in... go to Riverside... I can't think of the name... in awhile I'll think of it, but there's a big hotel (..... ) and the Navy took it over for...

**RGW:** Rehab. Rehabilitation.

**JST:** Yeah. Rehabilitation.

**RGW:** Did you lose your lung?

**JST:** Yeah, 'cause...

**RGW:** You still lost...

**JST:** According to the...

**RGW:** Medics?

**JST:** No, the... the... when they take pic... they take the...

**RGW:** X-rays?

**JST:** X-rays. Yeah. They cut all the weak tubes into my lungs and then the lungs dried up. The doctors told me that would be all right. I would be only with one lung but I could live with one lung, which I have. I've been living with one lung since 1942.

**RGW:** Yeah. And no smoking?

**JST:** Oh, I used to smoke when I was on the dock in there, but the doctor told me I'd better quit, though, because if you should ever get the pneumonia with one lung you haven't got a chance. So I quit.

**RGW:** Yeah. Another inch or two you could have gone right through your heart.

**JST:** Oh, yeah. Well, if it would have come through it would have (.....) but it just (.....)

**RGW:** Well, did anybody ever give you the shrapnel?

**JST:** No, no, no, no.

**RGW:** But you have one piece?

**JST:** 'Cause I got it.

**RGW:** You got the one that hit you?

**JST:** Yes. It was...

**RGW:** I thought it went all the way through?

**JST:** No, no. It was lodged in here and when I got on the hospital ship from (. . . .) to Hawaii, the doctors fluoroscoped me and they saw a spot there, so that's what they (.....)

**RGW:** They (.....)

**JST:** Yes, yes. Of course, I was under the dope. When I woke up the doctor give me... said, "Here's a souvenir for you." Just like that.

**RGW:** Yeah. And there's the piece right there?

**JST:** That's it.

**RGW:** Let's see. Wow. Yeah. A piece of steel here about a... A little over an inch long and real jagged. It's an oblong piece of steel, smooth on one side and rough on the other and very heavy... it's heavy for its size.

**JST:** Was lodged in here.



**RGW:** Oh, God. That thing could really do a job on you. Sharp edges. Incredible. Feels like it weighs about four or five ounces or more. That's a tremendous souvenir. The outside is the smooth shell part. The inside where they blasted it out.

**JST:** Yeah. Well, the doctor told me, "Here's a souvenir for you." When I think about it, what a souvenir!

**RGW:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**JST:** I can tell you, those doctors in the service today sure (.....)

**RGW:** Yeah. You got a Purple Heart for that, too, didn't you?

**JST:** Yes, I got a Purple Heart for that.

**RGW:** Then you ended up on the nets, submarine nets here in San Diego?

**JST:** When I came south after they released me for limited shore duty...

**RGW:** Limited duty?

**JST:** So they put me with the nets. I was there two years, then after the war they called me in and the Navy doctor [said], "We're going to retire you for disability." And they did. So I retired for disability.

**RGW:** So you got a disability check every month?

**JST:** Yeah, oh yeah.

**RGW:** After you got out of the Navy, what did you do for the rest of...

**JST:** Well, I was lucky. I was lucky. I'll tell you all of it. I was working for Lynch Shipbuilding on (.....) RGW Lynch?

**JST:** Lynch Shipbuilding Company. They had...

**RGW:** Lynch?

**JST:** Lynch. Lynch. They had a place there they used to do repairs on boats and they hired me to be a port captain because I knew everybody there. Got business for Lynch.

**RGW:** Where was it located at?

**JST:** Foot of 28th Street where...

**RGW:** Where National Steel is?

**JST:** Yeah. So while I was there(..... ) I also had a letter, I put away someplace but I lost it. I got a letter from the... from the... that place... Scripps. They had a lot of these ships. These ships go out for research and stuff and they asked me if I wanted to... that I had a job to go on one of those big ships there. I didn't go and I'll tell you why, because the doctor told me don't go fishing again. Because if I was going to sea I could have gone on the tuna boats. I had lot of (..... ).

**RGW:** Now you were on a fuel dock, too, weren't you?

**JST:** Yeah. I was (..... )the Union Oil dock for ten years though. For (..... ). (..... )was the owner. But I was in partnership with them. I make good money over there, too, by the way.

**RGW:** You told of an episode in the South Pacific... (A THIRD, UNIDENTIFIED, PERSON JOINS CONVERSATION AT THIS POINT) ??? Yeah, about the time they were challenged by one of their own... one of the big destroyers.

**RGW:** Their own destroyers? ??? They asked them for their code number and they hadn't even been issued a code number to identify themselves, and they were ready to blow these guys out of the sea.

**JST:** Oh, I'll tell you... I'll tell you...??? (..... ) who is signal when he says, "Tell 'em who we are, tell 'em where we're going, tell 'em what we're carrying." So in just plain English, they decided... so they let them go. The next day they picked up these guys from the Tucker. They picked them out of the water in the (..... ).

**JST:** I picked up ....

**RGW:** You mean the destroyer? ??? The destroyer (.....). He told me this just recently.

**JST:** Hey, let (.....) tape this here.

**RGW:** Go ahead. ??? I'm going, Pappy.

**JST:** Okay. Bye-bye sweetheart. ??? But that was a very interesting episode.

**JST:** I was waiting for (.....) where I was based there. It was (.....).There was a CV-2 with a seaplane tender. that was anchored there and I was to report to her(..... ). As a matter of fact I was working for them for awhile. And I left there at 4:00 in the afternoon, (..... ), because it was 200 miles to get up there so we'd be up there in the morning, but they told me there were mine fields there, however, the guy from the (..... ) told me that the communication officer there (..... ) made a big boo-boo because they were sending out all these places there... the instructions had codes for major war vessels, and minor war vessels, and mine was a minor war vessel. They didn't give me anything.

**RGW:** No code number?

**JST:** No, so the only thing I knew there was mines there so I was careful. About midnight we were going up there and the watchman said, "Hey, captain," he said, "there's something, a ship out here (..... ). I said, "Well, call the..." "call the..." the guy that does... what the hell do they call him... the signalman! The signalman! RGW Signalman?

**JST:** Yes. So they called the signalman, so he came up and they talked back and forth and they couldn't make no sense out of it. Finally, I think they got tired of each other and they finally told me, he said, "We can't understand each other." I said, "Call them, tell them that we're come from (..... ) and we're (.....)." So he did. So they let us go. By that time, the next morning we saw the destroyer (.....), he was just like that you know...

**RGW:** Split in half?

**JST:** Well, yeah. He hit a mine and ended up killing six people and then the boat was like that you know. And so when I got there, the Captain asked me if I could give him a tow, 'cause they're in deep water, to go into shallow water so they could save some of... So I said, "Sure." So I went along side him, he give me a line, I(..... )and I didn't have to put a guy there with a knife. (.....) cut,cut. So(..... )pulled him into eight fathoms,'cause I had a fathom meter,(..... ) I went out and picked up the men from the...

**RGW:** From that destroyer?

**JST:** From the destroyer. There were 165 of them. So we picked them up. We called for a pilot to (..... ). We went in there. While we were going in there was an officer there from the, there was a j.g. from the destroyer the Tucker. 374(..... ). And he came to me and he said, "You must have been the ship that we passed about midnight." He didn't know what... "If you didn't come out with an answer there, where you come from, we got four torpedoes and all of them straight on to you." They thought we were Jap submarines!

**RGW:** Yeah. Okay, thank you. Here's a letter from the Chief of Naval Personnel to Chief Warrant Officer W2 Joaquin S. Theodore USN Ret. Awards: You got a Purple Heart, and you got an American Campaign Medal, Asiatic/Pacific Campaign Medal, World War Two Victory Medal, Presidential Unit Citation Award First Marine Division for YP 239, YP 284, YP 346, which was yours.

**JST:** Yeah, 346.

**RGW:** And there also is a Secretary of the Navy, First Marine Division Reinforce from Major General Vandegriff telling about the marines at Guadalcanal and Tulagi.

***END OF INTERVIEW***

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