

**Joseph Edward Benoit
Veteran**

**Mike Russert & Wayne Clarke
Interviewers**

**Delmar, New York
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Joseph Edward Benoit: **JB**

Mike Russert / Wayne Clarke: **INT**

JB: my name is Joseph Edward Benoit, born in Western Massachusetts 1913. Went to Clark University in Western Massachusetts to become a doctor, was unable to finish do to the war. Went into the service in 1940, didn't want to join the Army so he went to his commander who was a very good friend of his and told the commander he wanted to join the Navy. In November 1940 he left and went to communication school for six weeks.

INT: Where did you go after communication school?

JB: After school I was transferred to Norfolk, Virginia.

INT: Did you learn semis and Morris code in communication school?

JB: Yes

INT: you were a signalman?

JB: Graduated Chief Signal man/ Chief Quetta Master.

INT: Did you used the light guns also?

JB: Yes

INT: Were you assigned a ship in Norfolk?

JB: A destroyer mine sweeper. That was when the East Coast was Torpedo junction Japanese were sweeping mines.

INT: Remember the name of the ship?

JB: Osprey was a terrible ship; it was too small.

INT: How many men were on the ship?

JB: There was about thirty men.

INT: Where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

JB: I was in Norfolk, Virginia on duty at the time and everyone came running back saying Pearl Harbor was bombed. His response was "where the hell is Pearl Harbor?" From that moment on they spent four hours on four hours off.

INT: how did you feel after you heard about that?

JB: I thought it was a ridiculous thing to happen to the United States.

INT: how long did you stay on Osprey?

JB: I was on the Osprey for about 2 years. Made a long trip to Tahiti. The sister ship on the star port side and we were on the port side sweeping for mines. It was a long trip. He grew a beard on the way down and then they got to Tahiti. They got out every morning at eight o'clock and wouldn't get back till five that evening. A lot of the time they did come back. They would stop at the other ports, on the east coast so they'd have to stay their overnight.

INT: So you did mostly Coastal Patrol?

JB: yep, it was a tough duty at first they would go out to the merchant ships and they would help. They started taking bodies out of the water. They did that for about half a day, then the Captain said, "You better stop doing that you'll be a dead duck, you're going to get hit, you got to keep moving."

INT: This is from the merchant ships getting torpedoed?

JB: Yes

INT: Your ship was a mine sweeper, now did you find any mines and if so what did you do? Did you explode them?

JB: Yes, we would drop the depth charges over the side.

INT: On this form it says that you were on a convoy to North Africa, now what kind of ship were you on for that?

JB: Osprey

INT: What did you do in North Africa?

JB: The same thing patrolling for mines.

INT: Did you get much time ashore?

JB: No we were on duty four hours on four hours off. I would sleep on the bridge, I had a mattress up there. I never left the pilot house. I was always helping the communication manage to get our position according to the stars.

INT: Now how long were you in North Africa?

JB: I'm not quite how long I was in North Africa.

INT: Did you head back to the states after?

JB: Came back to Norfolk, Virginia, I put a request in to go to a different ship. They said if I stayed aboard and went to lady. I didn't want to go the Captain said you got to go you know everything about this ship inside and out. You can't just get somebody to take your place. So anyways the only reason I made that trip was if my Captain gave me a transfer when I got back. He shook my hand and said yeah I guess you can transfer. Then I got shipped to New York and I was going to be put on an ammunition ship. Only it wasn't ready. So I was in New York for about six months, in school three nights a week. I was going to school there and then they assigned me to an attack cargo ship. Then we went to the west coast, then we started going through some invasions.

INT: What invasions were you involved in?

JB: Guam, Saipan, and Okinawa

INT: In Saipan and Quam were you under fire there?

JB: Yes we were.

INT: What did you do on the attack cargo ship during the invasion?

JB: We had a lot of people on there and we took them to different places.

INT: Did you put them into the landing crafts ashore?

JB: Yep

INT: Did you see any kamikazes?

JB: Yes often, they go for the front of your ship, very dangerous if the ship got hit. Our ship got hit then we had to stir it down below.

INT: Where was your ship when you got hit? What island?

JB: It was in Saipan.

INT: Did you feel the ship when the ship got hit?

JB: yes, the ship was shaking I thought it might tip over.

INT: Did it cause a lot of damage?

JB: Yes, couldn't hear the table, I was zigzagging all over the place. The typical way to have a cup of coffee, you had to hang it from the ceiling in order to pour your coffee.

INT: Did you see any USO shows?

JB: never saw a show, was always on the go.

INT: So you spent most of your time at sea?

JB: That's right.

INT: what was the food like on the ship?

JB: We had a good chef, always had good desserts and anytime we had to stop in port, we got injured and up in Seattle and had work done on the ship and the cook use to lay down on the deck because he would get sea sick often.

INT: Do you wish you stayed on the mine sweeper or were you glad to of changed?

JB: I was glad to leave the mine sweeper, and get on to the attack cargo.

INT: what land defense did the ship have? What guns?

JB: There were a lot of guns on the ship.

INT: Did you have any members of the Armed Guard?

JB: No

INT: Any stories? Any funny things?

JB: We went to Casablanca, we would go to shore every night and people use to invite us over for dinner.

INT: Did you maintain any friendships with other sailors?

JB: Yes, a lot of them were regular sailors it was their careers except the officers.

INT: When were you discharged?

JB: I was discharged October 1945

INT: Do you remember anything about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

JB: Yes, it didn't mean much to me.

INT: Where were you when the surrender took place by the Japanese?

JB: I was somewhere on Okinawa.

INT: Were you there for the typhoons?

JB: No

INT: When you were you discharged did you use the GI bill at all.

JB: No

INT: Did you join any veteran organizations?

JB: American Legion, I just became a member and paid my dues every year.

INT: How do you think your time in the service had affect or change on your life.

JB: I couldn't get out of there fast enough. When I got back to Boston and I was in Sick Bay officers would come in and ask me to stay in the Navy become a Chief Petty Officer.

INT: When you went into the service you were 27 years old you must have been one of the old ones.

JB: Yes, it was surprising how many were old.