

**Edward Dressler
Veteran**

**Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on July 15, 2003
Location: Days Inn Hicksville, New York**

Q: Can you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?

ED: Edward Dressler, 5/21/25, Bronx NY

Q: What was your educational background prior to entering military service?

ED: High School Academic graduate

Q: Do you know where you were and what your reaction was when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

ED: It was like 9-11, They would live in infamy just like Roosevelt said and cause more of us to become more patriotic. It was something you didn't believe. It was just like 9-11 and had a lot of analogies.

Q: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

ED: I got out of high school and was drafted for the army but went down and enlisted in the navy. I always liked the naval part of everything. I enlisted in the navy instead of waiting to be drafted.

Q: Where did you go for your training?

ED: Samson naval training up in Lake Geneva New York.

Q: How long were you there and can you tell us some about your training?

ED: One thing that stands out is Lake Geneva was cold as hell right off the lake. One thing I learned was never volunteer in the service and the chief said who can play the drums and in my church band I happened to be the drummer and naturally you raise your hand your 17 -18 years old, I can play the drums and I ended up with blisters on my fingers and my thighs were black and blue from drilling all day long, march and I learned to never volunteer after that. That was one thing that stood out besides the cold weather. Then I wanted to be a gunner's mate and fight the war myself and because I was a high school graduate, they took me into the medical core and I went to Philadelphia medical training center and spend quite a few weeks there training and then shipped over to England.

Q: Did you have a specialty training you did in Philadelphia?

ED: Well it was for a hospitals pharmacists mate in other words you become the ships doctor

Q: So, you were a core man too then?

ED: Yes, that's what the training was for and you have the gunner's mates and the

machinists and so on and the last thing I wanted was to be in the medical core but it wound up great and I learned things that helped me throughout life, minor surgery, and things like that which helped me with different injuries on a ball field which I'll talk about later on.

Q: When you went over to England, how did you go over?

ED: I went over on the Queen Mary and there were 10,000 troops aboard with no escort.

Q: So, you were a single ship?

ED: Yes, and we were lucky we got over there because it would have been some catastrophe if it sunk. We slept in tiers of 6 bunks and I think there was 9,999 people sea sick on the way over.

Q: When you reach England where were you assigned?

ED: I went to a naval dispensary in Falmouth Cornwall England before the invasion and we were there quite a while before the invasion and then assigned to landing ship LST number 137 for the invasion.

Q: So, you went over for the invasion itself?

ED: Yes

Q: What do you recall about the invasion, the number of ships, planes going overhead?

ED: Well I haven't seen so many enemy ships in all my life. We took the British 8th army to Gold Beach. It wasn't as bad as Omaha and so on but there were quite a few boys lost. As they were going over the side and into the water and up to their necks in water, half of them were so sea sick to begin with they didn't care if they lived or died when they went in the water because it was so rough. When these ships opened up their barriers, talk about the 4th of July and I sustained a hearing loss due to all of the battleship gun fires and everything, 10 percent disability through that which I've sustained throughout my life and it's something I had to put up with and overcome. To see these ships and thousands of boys and hundreds of ships, battleships, cruisers and destroyers and landing ships and so on all firing at the same time was just like 4th of July multiplied a hundred times.

Q: Did you go on the beach at all?

ED: No, we did not go in we were a landing ship we opened the bow doors and the tanks and we had some LCI's on our tank deck too; which were put down which had troops on them and they went ashore. We took most of the wounded back to England and prisoners of war, we did different runs back and forth.

Q: Did you do any treatment of the wounded while you were on board?

ED: Yes, I did things you would not believe such as sutchering, medications and tourniquets and stopping the flow of blood, and different things a doctor would do in that emergency but there weren't enough doctors to go around and you just did things you were taught to do, things you never thought you could do. I never liked the site of blood but after a while it became second nature and I remember one soldier was crying

because he had lost his leg and I told him to look next to and it was a soldier with no legs. There's always someone worse off than you but that doesn't help their wound and you held their hand, gave them cigarettes, and tried to give them as much morphine as you could and help them as much as possible. It is something you will never forget, you never forget the smell of a dirty wound, that stays with you the rest of your life and when I was over there the one thing I remembered was my mother was the greatest in the world to me and she used to send me pictures of the war all the time and sent me this one picture not knowing I was in it, it was the invasion and I sent the picture back saying Ma this is me. So, she sent the picture to the daily news but how many mothers would send their son a picture of the war not knowing their son was in it. It was quite an oddity. While I was over there on leave one time in Falmouth England I met this English girl. In those days in high school you would hold a cheerleader's hand if you were a ball player and it wasn't like today. When I got over there I met this English girl she was 15 and I was 17 and I sent a note home to my mother that I was getting married. She sent a note back saying you marry her and you stay there, you are coming home and going to college and so on and that was the end of that romance. In those days, you listened to your mother but she was great.

Q: How long were you involved in taking prisoner and wounded back and forth from Normandy?

ED: Until the resistance was over and we established the beach head and then there was no need for it then. Then we did different duties in North Sea and Oslo and Norway and so on.

Q: Did you treat any of the German prisoners of war?

ED: We didn't take any wounded that I can remember but they were just like any other soldier, they weren't Nazis they were just German soldiers and I am German myself. I could have just as well been there as on the other side. You felt sorry for them in a way because we were glad to be captured and get a hot meal and be treated fairly as a matter of fact the Germans went by the Geneva Treaty which the Japanese did not. As soon as the war was over in the European theater we were supposed to go to the Japanese theater and wear a marine uniform with a navy rate and wear a side arm, a gun. Of course, the Japanese didn't go by the Geneva Treaty. They would shoot a core man so they couldn't take care of any other wounded. When they dropped the atomic bomb, it saved us from going over there and saved hundreds of thousands of American lives. A lot of people were against the atomic bomb but they didn't realize it saved a lot of American lives.

Q: After the resistance ended at D day you were in the North Sea area?

ED: Yes, we did shuttle back and forth to help the North Sea. I remember being out there one time and in those days' radar wasn't like it is today and we detected a Nazi sub and we had to shut off all of the engines and nobody could even talk. We had to wait and see if they detected us and everybody was just sitting there and any second we could have been blown sky high. It quite an experience to sit there and be blown up any second.

Q: What type of ship were you on?

ED: A landing ship the LST. It had a crew of over 300 to 400. Today I was the president of New York State LST association which encompasses all the counties in New York and to plan an association like that where everyone is around 80 years old you can't plan 5 years down the road. It is a tough thing to do some people can't drive, hear, or see. We did exist and we had one of the largest organization on Long Island now. At the Long Island, Amphibious forces association has around 180 to 200 people and we have dinners and picnics and so on and every time we meet they fight the war all over again.

Q: What were some of your duties until the end of the war?

ED: Well after the war I was back in England, then sent back to the Philadelphia naval hospital for a while and then I was discharged. Then I started private life again.

Q: Did you use the GI bill at all?

ED: Yes, I did. I went to NYU, New York University for one year. I was a catcher in baseball. I lived in St Alban in queens. NYU was in Washington square in New York and I would go to Washington heights for baseball practice and then get home at nine and would have to study. The next year I transferred to Hofstra University and spend three years there and placed against NYU in the same conference. Then I graduated from Hofstra and played semi pro ball and started an umpire's organization in softball, which today is one of the largest in the country. I subsequently became involved. I am now in the national softball hall of fame in Oklahoma City as an umpire.

Q: Did you ever use the 52-20 club?

ED: Yes, for three or four years. Every summer you sign and get your check but I was getting paid 2-3 nights a week and Sundays to play baseball. At that time five dollars a game. Five dollars in the 50's was good money with twenty dollars I was living like a king, I had more girlfriends in those days with all the money I was making. I had my own car and everything and it was really great. The GI bill was a wonderful thing.

Q: Did you join any other veteran organizations besides the amphibious force group?

ED: I was in VFW for a while and the American legion but it got to be too much and I became a mason during the masonic order. After graduating from Hofstra, I went back and became a recreation director for the national security department of recreation and parks. I went back to Hofstra as a professor for a few years. I enjoyed that because it became a university then, when I graduated it was a college. I married one of the girls that was my umpires, she was twenty years younger and we used to umpire together. One oddity was we worked the game together, being younger she was working the bases one game. We were working a tournament with a team from out of town. There was this guy running off the field and says to my wife "hey baby what are you doing after the game?" She said let me ask my husband, he is working plate. So, she comes in and I say what did this guy say to you? So, she told me and I said I was going to have some fun with this guy. He gets up to the plate and I say you should never try to pick up the plate umpires wife. So, with three pitches and all of them strikes. He turns around and I told

him not to say a word, the whole bench knew what happened and they were laughing like hell but that was an oddity.

Q: Do you go to any reunions?

ED: Yes, of course, in Oklahoma City and for the softball hall of fame and with the landing ships we go to a state reunion. They are great, the service has been good to me and so was the GI bill and so on. The one thing I thought of when I was in the service was not myself when I was wounded but was my mother and what she would think when she got the telegram. She was the only thing I thought about.

Q: Were you ever wounded?

ED: No, but I did get a 10% disability for the hearing loss.

Q: Do you recall if you had a reaction when presidents Roosevelt died?

ED: He was one of our greatest presidents as we all know. He died in office and helped the country out of its economic problems. His speech about living in infamy was one of the greatest I can remember. He was one of my greatest hero's and it was very emotional.

Q: How do you think your time in the service effected your life?

ED: I think I would have rather went right to college from high school but in those days, you took it for granted that when you graduated that is what you did. Some of the ball players I played with in baseball and basketball never came back. We never knew when we graduated we would say goodbye to somebody and never see them again. As a matter a fact we have a union the Maine maid in Jericho from my high school from my high school baseball team from 1943 believe it or not and last time we met was about a month ago. There was fifteen of us that played ball in Andrew Jackson high school in Queens in 1943. They talked about the last base hit they got and I remember the last basket I made in Madison square garden. It is just like how it is with veterans how they won the war by themselves but it's great to have these people still living and still remembering the era they made in 43. It been a good life, baseball and softball have been good to me. I have seen more states in the union than anybody I can imagine. I've been to Hawaii, Mexico, Canada, and Alaska all for softball and all expenses payed, it has been wonderful. My wife is still working as a high school special education teacher and we have a place in the Pocono's that we going to during the summer and it has been great.