NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

WORLD WAR II NAVY VETERANS

Interviewee: Richard B. Sheffield

Interviewer: Dr. Evelyn M. Cherpak

Subject: U.S. Navy in World War II

Date: October 16, 2002

EMC: This is an oral history with Richard B. Sheffield of Middletown, Rhode Island. He will be telling us about his experiences in World War II. Today's date is October 16, 2002, and the interview is taking place in my office at the Naval War College. This is the curator of the Naval Historical Collection, Evelyn Cherpak. Mr. Sheffield, I'm very happy that you're here today to tell us about your experiences in the war in 1944-1945. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you a few personal questions for background. Can you tell me where you were born and when you were born?

RBS: I'm a native of Newport, Rhode Island. I was born in Newport on November 25, 1923.

EMC: Can you tell us a little about your family? What did your father do and did you have any brothers or sisters?

RBS: Yes. My father was a lawyer. We are an old Newport family. I am the fourth generation of lawyers in Newport. I have two older brothers who were both in the Navy in World War II and I have a sister. They are living.

EMC: Are your brothers in the area? Just curious, because they were in the Navy.

RBS: One lives in Kingston and he's retired from business. The other brother has a home in Newport which he visits. It's his summer home.

EMC: Oh, great. They'd be good candidates. Where did you go to college?

RBS: I went to Yale University in New Haven and that's where I got involved with the Navy. I, of course, grew up on the water living in Newport. When I was admitted to Yale, I thought that as I never had learned celestial navigation this would be a wonderful thing to do and I'd get a commission at the end of it. So I signed up for the NROTC at Yale in September of 1941.

EMC: Did you have to drill as part of your training?

RBS: Oh, yes. The first year was a normal college life, but after that it wasn't. We had marines from Guadalcanal who took care of our well being. We'd have to get up at 6:00 in the morning to exercise, run, and all that sort of thing. We had classes in the NROTC program in addition to the drilling.

EMC: So that was an addition to your regular college.

RBS: That's right.

EMC: What did you major in there?

RBS: I majored in International Relations.

EMC: And NROTC then went on, I guess, for three years.

RBS: Right. I entered the program in September 1941. Of course, the war broke out in December. I normally would have graduated in June 1944 and received my commission, but they called us out early. We were commissioned and I was sent to destroyer school, in Norfolk, VA in February of 1944.

EMC: Oh, so you graduated in December of 43?

RBS: No. I was suppose to graduate in June of '44. I got my diploma in Saipan.

EMC: Interesting. What was your rank when you joined?

RBS: In the NROTC program.

EMC: I mean when you went into the regular Navy.

RBS: I got my commission in February of 1944. I was an ensign.

EMC: You said you went to destroyer school. Where did you go to destroyer school?

RBS: In Norfolk, Virginia.

EMC: Do you remember how long that was?

RBS: It was from February through May. I joined the *Callaghan* in late May of 1944.

EMC: Did they prepare you there for your service on a destroyer? Do you remember what kind of things they taught you?

RBS: I just have to go back a little bit before Norfolk because it was one of the best things that ever happened to me. When we were cadets, whatever they called us in the NROTC program, they sent us to Guantanamo as a convoy escort from New York. And, of course, we went on the ship as the lowliest of the low and had to do the jobs of the able seamen on a converted minesweeper. It wasn't a mine sweeper. It was a Canadian corvette. That was the best thing that ever happened to me to see how the enlisted men had to live. You knew when you asked them to do something you knew what they had to do it. So that gave me a good perspective as to what it was like on the other side. Then I went to destroyer school. They taught all the usual things--- station keeping, navigation; it was a general course for that period and I don't remember the specific ones we were taught.

EMC: Right. They prepared you to serve on a destroyer. Were you assigned to the *Callaghan* and were you a plank owner?

RBS: No. The destroyer that was the *Callaghan* was actually built and launched in San Diego. I think it was a year earlier. No, I wasn't a plank owner, but I got my orders from the Norfolk Destroyer School to the *Callaghan*, which at that time was out in Pearl Harbor.

EMC: Oh, was it? So you had to go out there. What was your first billet on the ship when you landed in Pearl Harbor?

RBS: I was an assistant first lieutenant, in charge of the second division, the members of which they called the deck apes. They did all the manual labor of getting the ship in and out of port, maintaining the ship and so forth.

EMC: I see. That was a responsibility. How many men were you responsible for?

RBS: To start it was, I don't know, twenty five to thirty in my division. The interesting thing was I wasn't even twenty one years old at the time. We never took anyone on our ship that was over thirty years old. With a few exceptions most of them were all older than I was at the time.

EMC: Really. You were a young ensign giving them orders. How long did the ship stay in Pearl Harbor? Was it there for months?

RBS: No, it was there about a week. They were getting ready for the invasion of Saipan in the Marianas.

EMC: How many men were on the ship? Do you know?

RBS: In total, a Fletcher Class Destroyer, I don't know, 275 to 300 hundred on the ship.

EMC: But fewer officers than enlisted, I imagine.

RBS: Oh, yes. We had fourteen officers and the rest were chiefs and enlisted.

EMC: What were your quarters like? You had experienced the quarters of the enlisted rates when you were on that Canadian corvette, but what were yours like? Did you have to share?

RBS: Oh, yes. I had three people and I was in the top bunk, because I was the junior one. The main deck was about twelve inches above my head when I got in. And, of course, in the tropics the main deck heated up. The other thing was we did a lot of firing around the clock, and when we did the casing from number two mount, it dropped on the main deck right over my head. That could be continuous all night long. But I never even noticed it. We just got use to it.

EMC: Yes. I guess you were so exhausted from your day's labors. Did you ever have a chance to get off the ship when you were in Hawaii and go into Honolulu?

RBS: Oh, yes.

EMC: You were just there for a week.

RBS: That's right. I saw very little of it. Mostly, I got ashore in the base there. I think maybe I got into town once. But we were only there about a week before we took off.

EMC: Right. Who was the CO of your ship? The captain?

RBS: His name was Captain Johnson.

EC: Was he well liked and what kind of a guy was he?

RBS: He was a Captain Queeg. And I can tell you a lot of stories about him. But I don't know if this is the time. We got to the point where we thought he was going crazy and we got the doctor convinced to write to the higher ups in the medical corps. Luckily, before they acted on him; he was taken off the ship.

EMC: You must have had quite a time then.

RBS: Oh, I could tell you some stories. He would not walk on the deck at night because the crew would throw those heavy coffee mugs at him. He always had to have an officer that he was down on and they would eventually all be transferred off the ship. One of them was taken off in a stretcher because he ruined this guy's life and so it was a Caine Mutiny situation.

EMC: Oh, horrible.

RBS: But there was one good thing I would say. He was so tough that when the going got tough it wasn't that tough. I mean the way we had to live under this man.

EMC: That sounds horrible. Was he reservist or was he regular Navy?

RBS: No, he was a Mustang. He'd probably been kept out there too long and he turned sour. But that's another story.

EMC: Yes. That's another story as right. I was going to ask you what morale was like on the ship and that relates, of course, to the captain?

RBS: That's right. Because he was disliked by his superior officers and so forth, we got every dirty job there was to do. And as a result, again, that made us very confident at everything we did. The crew hated him. When we would load supplies, he would accuse the crew of, he loved canned turkey, and he would count the cartons of canned turkey that came aboard and if there was one missing, we had to stop everything we were doing and make a complete search of the ship. It was known by the officers where the turkey went. It went down in the bilges for the benefit of the crew. It was a bad situation for morale, but, as I say, when the chips were down they would fight, so that's what counts.

EMC: Was there any recreation available on the ship?

RBS: There was no recreation available. The only time we had recreation was when we were in port and they'd have old movies that they would show up on the foc'sle.

EMC: That's about it. But no games or anything.

RBS: No. We had serious problems.

EMC: Right. You were in a serious situation. Were you involved in crossing the line ceremony.

RBS: Yes, I was.

EMC: Can you describe those and what went on?

RBS: I sure can. We did it. It doesn't make any difference where it was, but when we were proceeding independently to do something at the time, I can't remember I think there was an ocean tug that had a guy with appendicitis and we went to help. It was an ocean going tug and we had to go down to intercept them and then the doctor talked by loudspeaker to their pharmacist's mate to diagnosis what he had. But anyway in going down there we crossed the line and, of course, Neptune came aboard and they shaved all my hair off my head. You had to wear your blues and, of course, in the tropics it was hot. Part of the detail was taking hose nozzles, which were six or each inches long, very heavy. You'd stand up as if they were glasses in the bow of the ship looking for Neptune. And

when he came aboard, they were easy on me, but if they didn't like you, the crew would give you a bad time.

EMC: Who was in charge of this?

RBS: Neptune. He was a chief, an enlisted man.

EMC: Oh, okay.

RBS: Officers weren't involved.

EMC: Right.

RBS: Then they had a tank set up and they had the chair, which you sat in after you got doused in the tank. It was charged electrically so that they gave you a shock in the chair and you were all wet so you got a good shock.

EMC: Oh, how charming.

RBS: Yes. But it was an experience.

EMC: Yes. It was. I guess everybody has to go through it whenever they crossed the line.

RBS: Yes.

EMC: Where were you headed for when you left Pearl Harbor after that week that you were on the ship?

RBS: We were headed for an invasion of Saipan and Tinian.

EMC: That was June '44.

RBS: That's right.

EMC: Okay.

RBS: And I forgot to tell you I was sea sick for three weeks and all I ate were apples. And gradually I got over it.

EMC: That must have been horrible.

RBS: It was, but I did all my duties and so forth and, again, it was an experience.

EMC: Were a lot of the crew sick?

RBS: No. You know, sea sickness it was caused partly by nerves and I think I was a young kid, you know. I was only 20 years old. So I think it was a lot of nerves.

EMC: It's the movement on the ship.

RBS: Yes. Every ship has a different movement and when I get on a different ship I can feel the movement until I get use to it. I remember that. That was a tough time going out there.

EMC: Must have been horrible. Do you know how many knots they made a day?

RBS: In speed?

EMC: Yes, in speed.

RS: We were traveling with slow ships. We had transports, and we had, so I'd say in an operation like that maybe if you get up to fifteen knots that would be your top speed.

EMC: I see.

RBS: So it wasn't like a fast carrier.

EMC: You were moving slowly to go to Saipan and Tinian. Do you know how long this trip took from Pearl Harbor? Were you there in three or four weeks? Because you were going way out in the Pacific.

RBS: It probably took a week or ten days. I don't remember. I had a chart where I put everything on you can see the distances.

EMC: Oh, I see.

RBS: It took us quite a while to get out there.

EMC: I would think so. Now what kind of support did you provide for the attack and the invasion of Saipan and Tinian?

RBS: Come to think of it, we went to Eniwetok first on the way out. And that's why it might have taken a little more time than usual because we laid over in Eniwetok, which is a big atoll, sixty miles

across. And I had a funny experience. This is just personal. I knew I had made it when we got to Eniwetok because they let the officers go ashore and they give you a six pack of beer or something like that. So that was the only recreation we had out there. When we were coming back to the dock, I was coming down the dock, and there was a *Callaghan* whale boat there and there was a young officer who was running everything on the dock. He was an ensign. He told the *Callaghan* whale boat to shove off, not to wait for me, and they said were not going to leave until Sheffield gets in the whale boat.

EMC: Where were you?

RBS: I was walking down the dock to get to the whale boat.

EMC: Right, with the others.

RBS: So this young ensign said to the whale boat crew, your not going to do that. I'm going to put you all on report and they said that they had all been on the beach drinking, too. So the coxswain said we are not leaving here until Sheffield gets here. So I knew that I had been accepted by the crew at that point.

EMC: Right. Well, that's good. But then this fellow was throwing his weight around.

RBS: Oh, yes. He was some smart guy.

EMC: Did you have any friends? A special friend on the ship. Special officer friends that you were closer to than others.

RBS: The doctor really kept us all alive, because he didn't have the duties. He didn't have watch duties and all that sort of thing, and he kept us going from a psychological point of view. You know that maybe some day it will all be over and that kind of gave you hope. All the officers were friends. As I say in war you have the best friends you ever have in your life and you had the worst enemies.

EMC: Oh, sure because everybody is there to support everybody else. You depend on them.

RBS: Yes, right. So it's hard to pick one out.

EMC: I see.

RBS: But the exec was in a terrible position because he had to support this crazy captain and yet be one of the officers and that put him between a rock and a hard place. So he was not popular with the officers. I didn't think he had the guts to really be frank about the situation.

EMC: Was he a reservist?

RBS: No. He was a regular. We were mostly reservists.

EMC: Right, that is what I understood.

RBS: So that made a difference too. The doctor was the biggest help and all the others were all fighting together. You know it's a funny thing. I read this too, you can't get too close to people, because they may get killed the next day and that's hard.

EMC: Yes. Were any of your compatriots, classmates from Yale, assigned to your ship?

RBS: No.

EMC: So nobody you knew from school.

RBS: I almost killed one of them in Okinawa. That's another story, too.

EMC: Interesting. After you left Eniwetok, you were going onto the invasion of Saipan and Tinian, and did you see action during that time and what was the ship tasked with doing?

RBS: The invasion force had what they had called jeep carriers and they were some of those little carriers like the Japs attacked when they came through the Philippines when they took them under fire. They were built on a merchant ships hull and they called them jeep carriers. They had Marines and, I guess, Navy pilots that supported the troops on the ground at Saipan. Our job was to give them anti-aircraft or anti-submarine protection. So we were in the screen and we operated to the east of Saipan. When you launch the planes and you go into the wind and then you steam around and then when the planes come back you have to turn into the wind again, so it's a lot of going around. We didn't have a full screen like we had with the fast carriers, you know, destroyers all the way around. We had maybe

three or four carriers, so we would always be out ahead. When they reverse course, you had to get from the rear up to the front.

EMC: I see.

RBS: When they went into the wind, so there was a lot of maneuvering, and I learned a lot. The first battle of the Philippines Sea took place and the Japs came out and tried to interfere with the invasion. We had Japanese aircraft runs on us, but no suicide runs and they came out at night. The first time one made a run on us I thought my God, this guy is trying to kill me, which was quite a thing for a little boy from Newport, Rhode Island, to have a plane flying at you, trying to kill you. But I grew up that day.

EMC: Yes Oh, that's very scary. How far out were you? You said you were screening against subs and providing anti aircraft fire support.

RBS: Yes. We operated with the carriers.

EMC: Right.

RBS: And they probably were 15-20 miles away from the island.

EMC: Okay.

RBS: Sometimes we headed in close. You could see the island, but it was pretty much at sea. That's just to say as an aside from all my experience out there we never got ashore except on an atoll. We use to call it the back of the moon because all we saw was ocean. We rarely saw land.

EMC: I see. That could be tiresome after awhile, I would think.

RBS: It makes you start thinking differently.

EMC: Yes, right. What were your targets when you were firing?

RBS: When we get attacked by these Japanese planes they'd go after the carriers and take them under fire.

EMC: But you were also you said providing support against submarine attack.

RBS: Yes. We always stayed in front of the carriers. It wasn't a full screen, but it would be in semi-circle, half a circle.

EMC: Yes.

RBS: But we never had an attack from a submarine out there.

EMC: That's good. Did you ever bombard the island itself?

RBS: No, not Saipan.

EMC: Not Saipan. That's what I wondered.

RBS: This is strictly giving support to these aircraft carriers.

EMC: What was your reaction to battle at first?

RBS: What are we doing here.

EMC: And how did the crew react?

RBS: Everyone was scared.

EMC: I can imagine.

RBS: Later on, when it got real serious we had one. I felt very sympathetic to the all black crew on a gun.

EMC: Oh, really.

RBS: Yes. Stewards.

EMC: Oh, that's interesting. Oh, so they put them on guns?

RBS: Yes. General Quarters.

EMC: And everybody goes to their places.

RBS: And they left the gun. We did nothing as far as officers were concerned. The crew took care of them, because they made those guys know that we are all in this together and if they are not going to help us live, we were not going to help them live. And somehow the crew got them back or convinced them. They never left the gun again.

EMC: Isn't that interesting.

RBS: Yes. The interesting thing was normally they should have been court martialed and all kinds of things, you know.

EMC: Right.

RBS: As this thing goes on you see it. We became our own law, because we were so deep in the thing we had to do things that were not by the rules. I don't want to skip ahead, but it was standing operating orders in the destroyer fleet that you went to General Quarters when you had what they called a boggy within twenty five miles.

EMC: A boggy?

RBS: Yes. A boggy is an unidentified plane.

EMC: Okay.

RBS: Okay. And when we went to Okinawa we had boggys, twenty four hours a day within twenty five miles. And so we had our own rule that we never went to General Quarters, unless the Japanese planes were making an attack on us.

EMC: Because you would always be at General Quarters, otherwise.

RBS: We had a Commodore come out and he was shocked when he found that there was a plane twenty five miles and we weren't doing anything about it and we were not in General Quarters. So he ordered us to go to General Quarters, which we did. It only took him about a day and a half to get him tired out and exhausted, so he then adopted our rule.

EMC: Because if you're at General Quarters, everybody, I guess, is at the station, at their place and how long do they stay there?

RBS: That's right.

EMC: You know they may stay there for quite awhile.

RBS: We had to take drugs to stay awake.

EMC: Oh, really.

RBS: Yes. Sometimes we had General Quarters for a day and a half.

EMC: So you were up for a day and a half.

RBS: I'm getting off the subject now.

EMC: But that's good.

RBS: While I'm thinking of it, I came up to the bridge for General Quarters and when I was twenty one years old for a while I was the officer of the deck at General Quarters, which is next to the Captain, head command.

EMC: How did you achieve that?

RBS: I say because I grew up in Newport and I lived all my early life on the sea with sailboats. And so I knew how to handle ships. This is just a personal thing. I never did anything except stand on watches on that ship, on the bridge, so my whole experience was running the ship from the bridge. We came up one night for General Quarters and I did not know where I was and I was kind of talking gibberish and the Captain said I'm relieving you right now. You go down and get back in your bunk, even though we were at General Quarters.

EMC: That was Johnson?

RBS: No, that's the good part.

EMC: Okay, somebody else.

RBS: Yes.

EMC: Didn't sound like him. The person you described.

RBS: All I am saying is that.

EMC: You were so exhausted. In a state of exhaustion.

RBS: Yes, and we use to take these no doze things.

EMC: That must have been awful. Even at that young age you just can't take that.

RBS: I tell you, the doctor, if we got people come to the ship, we would never take anybody over thirty years old because they couldn't take it. The captain was only thirty-two years old. He was a commander. I was twenty, twenty one. None of the officers, except maybe one engineer was over thirty. So it was a tough life.

EMC: Yes, it was tough being out there. Well, that's what you did at Saipan.

RBS: Right.

EMC: You screened the aircraft carriers. What about Tinian, that invasion.

RBS: Tinian was really a side part of that. Once they secured enough land to land planes on, on Saipan, it was a snap to take over Tinian. So our operation when they invaded Tinian, our planes were directed towards that, too. So that was not a big deal from our point of view.

EMC: Right. Your next invasion, I guess, was the Palaus. The *Callaghan* played an important part in the invasion of the Palaus.

RBS: Yes. That's right.

EMC: And what did you do there? Were you screening?

RBS: Then everything changed for us. We went back and we became part of a fast carrier group. Do you know anything about the fast carriers?

EMC: Halsey's?

RBS: Yes. It would either be Halsey's or Spruance's.

EMC: Third Fleet?

RBS: Third Fleet and the Fifth Fleet. And I can't remember.

EMC: Halsey's was the Third.

RBS: Was he the Third? Okay. You read the newspaper here and you'd think, "Oh boy, we got two fleets out there", so the guys are getting rest. A fleet came in as the Third Fleet and turned around, went out as the Fifth Fleet. So anyway we became part of that. Ours was always 38.3 or 58.3.

EMC: Your division?

RBS: Yes. Task Group, I think.

EMC: And you were with other ships, obviously, in that group.

RBS: Yes, in those fast carriers. There might be as many of 20-25 destroyers to cover this whole group.

EMC: Okay.

EMC: And you were with other ships obviously.

RBS: In those fast carriers, there would be as many as 20, 25 destroyers to cover this whole group. And then they'd have two big carriers at least. Sometimes they'd have two battleships. Sometimes they'd have two cruisers, so it as a big operation.

EMC: Yes. I'll say.

RBS: And when we went to Palaus, or whatever it was, I can remember seeing it but again our function was to stay with the carriers and provide anti-submarine protection and anti-aircraft protection. That was a quiet one as far as we were concerned. They are writing about it now and we should have never gone in there. The Marines took a beating and that's where the action was, on the beach.

EMC: It wasn't where you were. You were just a screening force again. Did your Captain change at that point?

RBS: I can't remember when he changed, but we then got a wonderful man named Bertholf, who's dead. I guess he had confidence in me because he kept me up on the bridge. He was from a Navy family. His father had been Superintendent of the Naval Academy.

EMC: Is it B-E-R-T-H-O-L-F?

RBS: Yes. I think that’s right.

EMC: Okay.

RBS: I can tell you about this Jap that came to Newport who wanted to know why the Captain saved his life. And I told this Jap that I think the reason he saved his life was that he was a very kind man and he did little things like that. There was a guy who could play the accordion and the Captain loved music. He had the guy up there under the bridge playing the accordion. It was like heaven. We lived in a world of steel and explosion and fear and here something like that was really great. And he had a way with the men. They would have died for that guy and he was wonderful. This is just the personality because you asked about him. I always figured he was what they called a Green Bowler.

EMC: What is that?

RBS: You don't know what a Green Bowler is.

EMC: No.

RBS: It's a secret society in Annapolis.

EMC: Oh.

RBS: They supposedly don't have it anymore.

EMC: I wouldn't think so.

RBS: When we would go into a port, he would go over to a big ship, a carrier or something and he always knew people there.

EMC: So he was an Annapolis grad?

RBS: Yes, he was an Annapolis grad. And he was very human. He's written some things about me, which I have here which pertains to his weaknesses in a way. When we went to Ulithi and some place like that, you'd get some relief by getting really drunk. When he'd come back he was too. He was a good looking man, he was in good physical shape and if I had the watch and he'd come from ashore he couldn't hardly get up on the ship.

EMC: Oh, good heavens.

RBS: And I'd make an effort to try and help him up on the deck. He'd get furious. "I can take care of myself". So I saw him in a lot of different situations and sometimes he didn't get up to the bridge at times. I was there so I was able to handle ship in times when maybe he should have been there.

EMC: Was he responsible or just?

RBS: Oh, he's very responsible. He was a nice guy. He was exhausted like everybody else. He was 32 years old. I thought of him as an old man.

EMC: Isn't that something. That's young.

RBS: I shouldn't tell you this stuff.

EMC: No, that's very interesting.

RBS: But he changed the whole personality of that ship.

EMC: That's important.

RBS: I had heard. I don't know if this is true. After the war was over he was on another destroyer. He, as Captain of the destroyer, had a collision. I don't know if that had anything to do with the war or not. That sort of ended his naval career. I think he went into the CIA after that and was stationed over in Stockholm, Sweden, which was a sweet deal.

EMC: So he was court martialed for that?

RBS: I don't know whether he was. I don't know because, you know, things happen and they don't happen. And if you're in the right.

EMC: Connections?

RBS: I'm a cynic in some way, because I been in politics and I know how things work sometimes. And I think he might have gotten enough luck. I don't think he was ever court martialed. I would think it terrible because he was such a leader in his own way. And the way he turned that crew around, so they loved this man and I'm telling you they would have followed him to hell, if he'd ask them to.

EMC: That's great. That's quite a contrast.

RBS: Oh, yes.

EMC: From the other fellow. One hundred eighty degrees.

RBS: The other fellow, I should tell this is a long story. Because I was telling someone last night when they were saying something about the Caine Mutiny. Oh, I was on the Caine. We were straffed and a guy got shot in the leg. The captain's sea cabin was up on the bridge and when he was in port he was down in his other cabin. The only place to put this guy, he was an enlisted man, was in the regular cabin. So the doctor put him in there. They got blood on the sheets and mattress of Captain Johnson. He was so mad that an enlisted man's blood was on his mattress. They had to take him out.

EMC: Can you imagine that?

RBS: I mean it seemed.

EMC: Too high and mighty.

RBS: Oh, yes. It's a different world.

EMC: It is. It's a world of rank and precedence and it's something that's foreign to you if your not in that. If you're in the civilian world, that's just not the way things operate. But rank is the defining element.

RBS: It's a terrible thing that happens to human beings, too. I mean under that fear and pressure you turn into one of those sub human beings. At times, you know, if you go to General Quarters and you're at dinner in the wardroom you just jump up in the chair and run right over the table through the dishes and everything to get out to your little station because they are going to get you.

EMC: Right. Self preservation.

RBS: Let's get back to the ship.

EMC: Okay. That's interesting.

RBS: While you say it is. I hope that it is. But that the trouble when you go through something like this it brings back a lot stuff.

EMC: That's good. We were talking about the invasion of the Palaus when you were part of the Task Force.

RBS: Yes. The big one.

EMC: The big one. Right and you were protecting them the same way, anti ASW.

RBS: Sometimes we must have been sent on a mission or something but we got in close enough to look at it. That's just one time. Otherwise it was over the horizon.

EMC: So you weren't really bombing the shore that time.

RBS: No.

EMC: After that invasion was over, you were supposed to support the invasion of the Philippines.

RBS: Right

EMC: In October 1944. Now were you involved in the Leyte operation?

RBS: Leyte?

EMC: Leyte Gulf.

RBS: Well, it all depends what you mean. We went there with the fast carriers again and we did, again we were always over the horizon. We never saw it. And we supplied the carrier force all the fighter protection over the battle ground from the aircraft, from the fast carriers. And we were protecting the fast carriers.

EMC: Were there any hits on those carriers then?

RBS: No. Not that early stage, because they hadn't really turned to the kamikazes.

EMC: At that point.

RBS: Yes.

EMC: So you were just protecting. You were involved in air strikes on Luzon, weren't you?

RBS: Yes, that was the other side. Maybe the east coast. Yes, it was all up and down there. You know we go out on these strikes and we hit Formosa and then we come down and hit Luzon. But the biggest thing about that operation was in December. You know we had to go through that typhoon.

EMC: Right, right. Yes, we want to talk about that, because that was quite something. Where were you when you were caught in the typhoon?

RBS: We were east of the Philippines and I don't remember exactly.

EMC: That was December 1944. Right? Did it come up suddenly? Was there any warning?

RBS: I guess the only way I can remember is to tell you what happened. I wrote an article. Somebody wrote to the Daily News and said that they never heard of these things.

EMC: I've checked some history books and it's not mentioned.

RBS: You probably never saw it in the Daily News.

EMC: No.

RBS: It was in the column. I wrote that. It might have been when you weren't here. The way I remember it was. We were operating again, with the fast carriers and they were supplying with the aircraft over the targets and were shooting up. So we were there basically providing anti-aircraft fire and anti-submarine protection. In the one afternoon it was gray. We were suppose to go along side the tanker to get fueled up. I think it was on this occasion that the sea began to build up and we had two guys on the foc'sle, who were swept off the foc'sle into the water. So we had to launch the whale boat and that was my regular job being on the bridge. By that time I think I was probably first lieutenant. So we have to launch a whale boat in the sea and I'd say the sea was running at 15-20 feet or something like that. Those guys really had guts. They were something. They went out and one guy, when the second wave went by, he was washed up

midships, but somebody grabbed him, but there was still a guy in the water. So we launched the whale boat and they went out with, this guy had a broken leg, and they rescued him and brought him and brought him back. Then the weather began to deteriorate more so they called off the fueling and then it really began to get bad and I remember our navigator. He kept saying why are we doing this. The way the winds blowing. Why are we going on this course? We should be going on a different course. Well, as it turned out Halsey took us right through the middle of this thing. I never seen you know, because when your on a ship all you see is the ocean and all you got to keep you out of the ocean is the ship and when you see that get higher than the ship. The waves get up to 50-60 feet.

EMC: 50-60 feet?

RBS: Yes. It scares you.

EMC: Wow.

RBS: That's why that girl that wrote, you know, The Perfect Storm.

EMC: Yes.

RBS: She didn't see the movie. She said the reason I didn't see the movie was there were two things that were wrong. In the movie, the guys get washed over board at night and they find them, which you never do. Anybody that goes over at night, you'll never find them.

EMC: Right.

RBS: Because you can't have lights and all that good stuff. The second thing she said was in the movie apparently they were raving like maniacs on the bridge because the situation is so bad. Then she says there's nobody raving. Everything is quiet. They're saying their prayers. Can we live through this thing? You know and these waves were coming over with the bow of ship going down. The ship is struggling to come up out of these waves instead of just going right on down.

EMC: Were people in their bunks then?

RBS: That's the crew. They have to go back to their quarters. So on the type destroyer, this Fletcher Class destroyer. The new class destroyers you can move along the deck without being out on the deck and exposed to the weather. You know it is all enclosed. So on a Fletcher Class you can't do that. So that is where they go and you can't eat. There's nothing to eat except that they make sandwiches the best they could. So it usually took two to three days.

EMC: Two to three days in a typhoon?

RBS: Yes, the affect of it. So you go into it, you have to have control. When you're in there you're only making enough turns to give you control. So sometimes you'll be making urns for 10 to 25 knots but you wouldn't be going anywhere. Then when the storm goes by you get a confused sea. You get these rogue waves and all that kind of stuff.

EMC: To get back to the typhoon that you were in for three days. I guess in the aftermath of it.

RBS: What I was just going to say was that the way we operated in the fast carriers was beautiful. We followed these typhoons in and stuck the Japs in their wake. I know we did it probably a couple of times at Formosa but most likely we did it in Japan. We'd have a strike the morning after the typhoon passed over. So they were all disorganized.

EMC: The enemy, obviously.

RBS: Yes. And as a result of that you'd go at high speed to get close enough to make the strike the next morning. So you'd be going through these confused seas, so it would be a very rough and bumpy ride. I counted them up one time and I think we were, there were eight hundred men and three destroyers we lost.

EMC: I was going to ask you. Did you lose any one on your ship?

RBS: No. We were lucky.

EMC: Okay. Eight hundred people lost?

RBS: Yes, on three destroyers. But what I was getting at was, so we fooled around with these typhoons a lot and I counted them up one time. We were involved in about seven, not directly, going through the middle of one like we did down at this one here, which was a terrible one, because they just didn't know what they were doing.

EMC: That was in the mistake on Halsey's part to go through.

RBS: Yes.

EMC: You would think he would have had some experience or some exposure.

RBS: Yes. There a book written on it.

EMC: Knowledge of it, you know.

RBS: But anyway. So just to finish up on this. The bad one. We turned on our search lights, which you never do. You know everything is dark, but for these poor guys to try to save them we turned on the search light and that was something. Because to do that we exposed our whole force to the Japs if they wanted to know.

EMC: Right. But they couldn't do anything either. The submarine could have maybe, but even with submarines you have problems with the heavy seas.

EMC: Right.

RBS: I met later, an officer who was a survivor. We talked and he said the problem for surviving you had a life jacket on, but the wind blows so hard that it blows the tops of the waves off. I live over on Indian Avenue and when we had a hurricane here the tops of the seas come right up the cliff and come right across the lawn and hit the house.

EMC: Oh, really.

RBS: Yes.

EMC: Good heavens.

RBS: But, you know, the wind is only eighty miles an hour or something around here. But it was getting over a hundred out there. And so he said, with your life jacket you go down to where the water is, which is maybe ten or fifteen feet below the spume. So you can drown in the spume because it's blowing so hard.

EMC: That's terrible.

RBS: And it puts the fear of God into you.

EMC: Needless to say.

RBS: Everybody's scared. Everybody used to say that they are afraid to say they are scared.

EMC: They are.

RBS: Oh, yes. You know you talk about heros and all that stuff.

EMC: Right.

RBS: It's the one that can keep control. That's what it really means.

EMC: In all these situations that you never faced before. Were any ships lost in this typhoon?

RBS: Three of them.

EMC: Three ships.

RBS: Three destroyers.

EMC: Three went down.

RBS: With all the crew. That's where the eight hundred men were.

EMC: Not swept overboard. That's awful.

RBS: What happened was that when you get, everybody knows this, when you get ready to fuel, you pump out all the water in your tanks, because once you use up fuel you put water in to give you stability. So to get rid of your fuel, you pump out the water and that's one of the great things that this skipper. The good skipper that we had Bertholf. He saw that he better start putting the water back in, which he did. And that gave us the stability to ride through the typhoon. These

other three, they didn't do it and as a result its like being top heavy, when they roll, the water got into the engine rooms and got on the circuit boards and they shorted out the electricity so that they lost steering control and power on those ships. So then they got into the trough of these seas, sideways, you know. Usually you try to keep the wave just on your bow. They got in sideways and, of course, tipped and the water poured in even more.

EMC: That's horrible. So was anybody rescued from those ships?

RBS: I talked to one survivor. I think there were maybe eight or ten or something like that, that got saved, but not many.

EMC: That is actually horrible. That's an experience and you had many others.

RS: I can tell you some stories that some people I've known here since the war. They were on some of those carriers. There was one prominent person and I can remember he was practically crying on the TBS. He had the TBS on, the way you talk between ships. Because he had a fire aboard. The carriers, the planes got loose and flipped on the service deck and gasoline caught on fire and they had all those problems.

EMC: Sounds miserable. That was one very outstanding experience, unforgettable in December 1944. But prior to that I wanted to ask about the torpedoing of the *Reno* in November. You said you were right next to or near that ship.

RBS: Yes. The *Reno* and also the other ship was the *Princeton*. We were there, but anyway the *Reno*, I didn't know at the time but Dick Alexander's father was the captain of the *Reno* and it was just a beautiful moonlight night. It was the fast carriers again. We were in the screen and they were somewhere in the middle and they were what you would call a light cruiser. Suddenly the torpedo hit and it was one of these long range Japanese torpedos that got them. I think it got them, if I remember, at the starboard side and they started to sink. But it wasn't a big deal.

EMC: Sinking a ship.

RBS: Well, no, I mean, you know. They had it under control, and we stood by them just to give them anti-submarine protection and it was at night. It was a beautiful moonlight night and I remember til this day and then we stayed with them awhile and then I don't know. We got relieved and somebody came and took them over and took them back. But the more impressionable one was the *Princeton*.

EMC: Okay.

RBS: You see I can't keep all that straight in my mind, and I don't know which came first. But the *Princeton* was an overcast day. I remember I was looking out there and I saw this plane come right out of the clouds and dive on the *Princeton*. It started fires and they lost control, I guess, because the cruiser went alongside them. We stood by, but we didn't ever go along side and eventually they had to shoot it. Sink the ship. But that was the most spectacular because of smoke and all that stuff.

EMC: What about the crew? Did they save many? Do you know? Or were you involved at all in the rescue?

RBS: No. We were off a little. Of course, most people were on the ship when it was hit. I think they saved a lot, too. I don't know the statistics.

EMC: You were at a little distance then.

RBS: That was not the big *Princeton*. That was a sort of a medium size carrier. Since then they built the new *Princeton*.

EMC: I remember. A woman that I knew, who is now deceased, her first husband was on that ship. I think he died on the *Princeton*, in that attack. The war is moving on and it's 1945 now and the invasions of Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and Tokyo. You were near there, according to what you told me before. Can you describe what you were doing at those sites?

RBS: That was a raid with the fast carriers. We were raiding Tokyo. The big excitement for us was, one of them for me, was coming from New England we got up near the Bonin Islands when we went by there there were blue whales. I saw three of them just at sunset. I'll never forget. Then as we went from the north of the Bonins a terrible thing happened. On every destroyer there an anti roll, a piece of metal that sticks out its about that high, about that wide on both sides of the ship. Ours came off on the port side and wrapped around the propeller. So here we were deep in Japanese territory and we were crippled. We only had one engine and I'm the first lieutenant, so I was suppose to solve that problem and luckily somebody had the inspiration. We sent a diver down, you know, a skin diver to look at it. This thing was wrapped around the propeller. Suddenly somebody had another inspiration. I don't know where they got it, but I heard since that it works. They put the propeller in reverse and it unwrapped the thing that was around it. But for a while it was touch and go.

EMC: You could get out of there.

RBS: Yes. And then, of course, the rest of the fleet went over the horizon and here we were all out there by ourselves. But luckily that worked out and we caught up.

EMC: You have to have some engineering capability to solve that problem. Did you? I would think.

RBS: Or practical sense.

EMC: Practical sense. Right.

RBS: It's like being out here where you run into a lobster buoy line on your sailboat that has an auxiliary engine. You run into a lobster pot and get the line wrapped around your engine shaft.

EMC: All these problems. What were those metal pieces sticking out of the side for? What was the purpose?

RBS: A destroyer rolls so much. It's called a bilge keel and is supposed to slow down the roll.

EMC: Oh, I see.

RS: That's another thing that I didn't talk about it, but I don't know. But in those typhoons you could hardly get out of the pilot house because you'd get blown away and with this steady water coming by the pilot house and this is thirty-five feet above normal sea level. And you'd watch the inclinometer, you know, and I didn't want to watch it, but I'm sure we rolled forty five degrees. Then you'd hang over there because the wind would be blowing and that's the risky part. If you get a rogue wave when you're there, you would get an extra push over. That was another big worry in the typhoon. We transported Chester Morris and a fellow named Ed Smith who was a Life photographer going up to Tokyo. Chester Morris was a movie actor. You probably never even heard of him.

EMC: No, I haven't heard of him.

RS: But we took him on the ship and this other fellow, Ed Smith, who was a rather famous photographer for Life Magazine. That poor guy, he had ulcers, and when he was on our ship he could only drink hot water. And he had to fly the next day to photograph the strike on Toyko, which he did. But anyway the morning after the strike we were discovered by a picket boat that opened fire on our ships and our job was to go in and destroy the picket boat and just do whatever we could.

EMC: Oh, so you had to take Japanese aboard.

RBS: Yes. This is the interesting thing. This boat was shot up so that the only part above the main deck was still floating. The captain was there. He was a fisherman, they weren't service people but they were out as sentries in the early morning. There were two crewmen or maybe just one crewman and the crewman was holding the captain in his arms and the captain's, half of his head was shot off.

EMC: Oh, dear!

RBS: And that Jap wouldn't come aboard our ship until the captain died and that to me was pretty impressive, because we were all standing around with Tommy guns and told him to get the hell out of there. This fellow would not give up until his captain died and then he came aboard. I guess there were two, because two came onboard, and we didn't know what to do with them and the crew all chanted B-29, B-29, and they knew what they were talking about, because this was later in the war. So what do we do with these guys? So when we came back we got down near Iwo Jima. It was the day after the Iwo Jima landing.

EMC: Oh, the taking of the island.

RBS: Yes. So they sent us in with our two Japs to give them to the Marines and put them on a prison ship. I don't know the survival rate for a Jap on Iwo Jima; it was point 0-0-0-0-5-6 or something like that. I don't know how these guys could ever get out of there alive. But I got to see Iwo Jima and that was something. It was nothing but a pile of ash and those poor guys had to go in terrible conditions, and I had the greatest respect for the marines.

EMC: Right, because the Japanese were in those caves. You couldn't dug it all out and reinforce themselves, so that was a horrible battle. But you weren't really involved in the Iwo Jima battle.

RBS: Nope. Just took them in.

EMC: Took your prisoners in.

RBS: Prisoners in. That's right.

EMC: Handed them over. Now you mentioned there was some Japanese person that came to Newport.

RBS: That was in Okinawa.

EMC: Oh, okay. That's Okinawa. Now were you involved in the Okinawa invasion?

RBS: Yes

EMC: And can you tell us what.

RBS: The prelude. We went with twenty nine destroyers and twenty nine got sunk or damaged. Talk about nerves, everyday you could scratch one off. And they knew we were coming and we were the next to last one to go.

EMC: The kamikazes were ready?

RBS: Yes. The last one is the *Cassin Young* and the *Indianapolis*. The *Cassin Young* wasn't with us, but it got sunk the night after we did. We went up there for two things, for fire support and early warning. We went up ten days before the invasion and that's really getting into the hot end of their territory. We were up there with the battle ships, ten destroyers and maybe some cruisers, but it was hot action and we pretended that we were getting ready for an invasion on the southside of the island when the true invasion came in on the westside. So we spent a lot of time on the southside, firing, making noises like we were getting ready for the invasion.

EMC: Now you were firing at the island itself?

RBS: Yes.

EMC: That's when you did that.

RBS: This is when we turned our fire into the island and did that.

EMC: Right.

RBS: So we were no longer with the carriers. It was just a group and every night we would retire away from shore and it was to try to draw Japs down to the south end of the island. Well, we got hopped a couple of mornings by kamikazes, as it was our first experiences with kamikazes. There was no defense against the kamikaze. When they start coming in we got hits on them, you know. A plane might even be falling apart, but the engine and the flames would keep coming right down. And they usually landed within fifty feet. One time one went between the two stacks on our destroyer and took the aerials out so that shows you how close they are. I came up from General Quarters. I came running up for General Quarters station and there were

pieces of aluminum coming down all around me and then the plane came down and crashed right next to me in the water. The only way we had to protect ourselves to keep it from crashing on us was when he got committed to the dive. If you change the direction of your ship quickly, he couldn't adjust to that once he got in the dive. So that's why we always got those close misses.

EMC: The navigators had to be very alert.

RBS: It was the man on the bridge. If you're at General Quarters, the captain gave you the orders, come on right, come on left. We had one at night. I thought I was a goner. We had two attacks at night. We hated the moonlight, because it exposed us. Up there, you would make smoke from the smoke generator and you tried to get as much smoke out so they couldn't see you. Well, this guy on this beautiful night saw our smoke and he followed it in and suddenly I was standing up there. We knew he was around because we were at General Quarters. All this sparkling light, coming at me and I moved to get behind this fire control director and he passed over us. He killed a guy on one of the guns, but he never hit our gun. He didn't attack further. That was one and then the other one at night was when I was up on the bridge. I had the watch until the Captain took over during General Quarters. You couldn't see this plane, but you could hear him diving at you and we couldn't see him, so we didn't know which way to turn. And he got louder and louder and I remember standing there, my whole life came in front of me, and I said this is it. He missed us by about fifty feet. So twelve of those happened.

EMC: That's very scary. Very scary time. Terrifying. Now what happens when your whole life passes before you? That's kind of interesting. What did you see?

RBS: It was all wrapped up in a nice little package.

EMC: Oh, really. That's what they say near death experiences, so it is true. Seems to be anyway.

RBS: That makes life seem dull after that. One of the general affects was it was hard for me to come back to a peaceful life. I read this and it stuck into my head. War is like nectar; it's life concentrated. You have your best friends, your worst enemies, and when you come back its all in slow motion. I would drive a car and I wanted to drive it into a stone wall just to hear the noise and the crashing.

EMC: Addicted to the noise and the crashing.

RBS: I have a daughter who is going through a lot of hairy experiences and I read this too that you get a tremendous kick from the adrenaline. I often worry about her, because she seems to be drawn to these things. I wasn't drawn to it, because I was exposed to them. I didn't have any option. But that's another story.

EMC: That's what they say. Dare devils are people taking chances doing things, like mountain climbing, or sky diving, or something, or are drawn to these very dangerous experiences.

RBS: It's this adrenaline thing.

EMC: Isn't that something. You did survive so far and you have survived, but the *Callaghan* didn't survive.

RBS: I gotta tell you one little thing.

EMC: Prior to that.

RBS: We were off the beach head there and we were lined up for breakfast. And there are two stories. I told you about that guy that was killed. We were lined up for breakfast and the crew lined up on the deck and then they went down through the hatch to the mess hall. This guy was smoking a cigarette went like that to get rid of the cigarette. He followed the cigarette out with his eye and my God there was a midget submarine just surfacing alongside of us, alongside of us!

EMC: Oh, wow. That nobody knew about.

RBS: That's right. He calls up to the bridge and points to the sub. We were almost dead in the water, because were just waiting off the beach head there. So the Captain says: "fire the depth charge". So they fired the depth charge and, of course, practically lifted us right out of the water because it was so close. But we get some oil and there was supposedly another one down there. They never gave us a credit for a sure kill. We always claimed that we got two midget submarines that morning.

EMC: Isn't that something.

RBS: They were around. The other thing we had up there were suicide boats.

EMC: Was this off Okinawa?

RBS: Yes, right off the beach head before the invasion. The invasion was April 1st and we went up there on March. I don't know about the 20, about ten days before. It was just hostile. No support. Nobody was within a thousand miles. We made smoke, you know, and we'd lie in the smoke and so when the message came over that another destroyer was going to deliver some papers by whale boat. So out of the smoke comes out this whale boat, and this makes me get kind of upset about the one they got over there, you know, our destroyer that terrrorist shot up.

EMC: Oh, the *Cole*. The *Cole*, right.

RBS: We had guys with the tommy guns on the bow, tommy guns on the stern, and tommy guns midships. Out of the fog the word came that here comes this whale boat and they had these suicide boats up there. So they started to open fire on them.

EMC: Friendly fire?

RBS: Yes. Because nobody had told us that this boat was coming and it suddenly appeared. So I said whoa, whoa, whoa. It turns out it was the only time I met anybody that was in my NROTC class. His name was Don Green and he had command of this boat. That was the story.

EMC: Obviously no communication. Why didn't they communicate with your ship that it was coming? That's kind of ridiculous.

RS: They probably did, but nobody passed the word. It was like coming out of the fog.

EMC: Communications gap. They almost did kill one of your classmates.

RS: At the beach head, we were right in there shooting 40 millimeter guns right on the beach. We were maybe two hundred yards out. All the troops came through us. Our job was to support the Marines as they went up. I think it was the Sixth Marine Division. We went up the west coast to Ie Shima. And what we did there, when they nee ded fire support, they'd call on us and we'd fire on the target area. It was sad, but anyway because a lot of times we'd be under fire at night and they'd call for fire from us and they'd be over run. But we couldn't fire because we would be attacked. I don't know if that's fair or whether we should have been attacked and fired. That is the way they operated. Anyway, so we went through that phase. Then as the troops moved down Okinawa to the southern part we did this call fire and did intermittent firing at night. I told you how my bunk was right under where the shells came out and banged. We were in a place called Nakagusuku Wan, later called Buckner Bay, on the southeast side of Okinawa. It was raining, and it was tropical, and it was kind of hazy. We knew that these twin engine bombers were in the area. Suddenly we must have been ready to go to GQ because I was at my gun station and suddenly out of the mist, right close came down to portside there was a twin engine Betty, which is a twin engine bomber. It was like killing fish in a bowl. We opened fire and we took the whole side of that plane right out and it crashed. We sent a whale boat out and picked up the pilot and the co-pilot. The pilot didn't live but the co-pilot did and we brought him aboard. We transported him to a prisoner of war ship. Fifty years later, I get this call from the organizers who have the *Callaghan* reunion, saying do we mind if this Jap comes to the reunion.

EMC: They found him then?

RBS: He found us. Through the Jap Navy and the American Navy, he identified the *Callaghan* which was the one that shot him down. I didn't go to that reunion. Within in the last two or three years, I got a call that this fellow was coming to Newport and would I like to have lunch with him. So my wife and I had the lunch down at the New York Yacht Club, here in Newport if you can believe it, fifty two years after the event. This thing is fantastic. I mean that my life has been incredible.

EMC: Tell me about him.

RBS: He was born in February 1924 and I was born in the previous November. He went to, like I did, he went to a private school and he went to the Naval Academy. I, of course, didn't go to the Naval Academy. His family owned a packaging business, and when the war was over he went back and took control of that very successfully. He has four thousand employees.

EMC: Wow.

RBS: And he came with an entourage of interpreters and two assistants. They recorded everything that was said. It was the nicest thing that every happened to me from the war. But this tells you what I made reference to before. He wanted to know why our Captain saved his life and that was the only reason he wanted to come and talk to me, which was sort of interesting. As I told you, I knew this Captain well because I worked with him closely, because I was up on the bridge all the time.

EMC: That was Bertholf.

RBS: Bertholf, yes. So I told him that he was a very kind man. But there was another thing I didn't tell you about that. I don't know. This goes back when we went north to get the carriers that were coming down, this was the Second Battle of the Philippine Sea, the invasion of Luzon. Just to make a quick story. Johnson was the captain. Our job when we went north was to get these carriers that were coming down. This was after the typhoon, the big typhoon; our job was

to go investigate to see whether this Japanese carrier had actually sunk. We came over the horizon. We went to the location. There's about twenty five hundred Japs in the water, all hanging on to these little stools they have, all kinds of things. Johnson, he wants to run through there dropping depth charges.

EMC: Oh, lordy!

RBS: You know we had sound powered microphones connecting all the officers. The officers said "no way", would we depth charge and we told the Captain that and he backed down. That's the other side of saving lives.

EMC: And destroying them.

RBS: But anyway.

EMC: You were talking about the Japanese fellow that was in the plane, the pilot.

RBS: That was the story. Then he wanted to know. I guess it was just a question of ethics, you know, Americans would save the guys' lives, the two thousand in the water. When people say how kind the Americans are, listen I know some things that might not have been so kind. If Johnson had his way, he would have depth charged them. I figure they are not going to survive anyway, so why make it miserable for them. That takes care of that. So then we are back in Okinawa. So from those support things then they put us on early warning duty. They surrounded Okinawa with these radar pickets. The mortality rate was very high, but we got on to them late in the game, because we done all this in shore work. But we were attacked out there a couple of times, but the big night and this is another crazy thing, we got orders that we were going home and everybody was excited. We were leaving at two o'clock, we will call it the 29th, because that's the day. We were going to be relieved at two o'clock on this radar picket station and going home to the U.S.A.

EMC: That's fantastic.

RBS: And spirits were high. I had the watch on the bridge from eight o'clock to midnight. During my watch, these Army planes from Okinawa had been going down to Formosa, Taiwan, carrying out night strafing and all that good stuff. They were coming back and they weren't showing IFF. In other words, that's a system we had on our radar we can tell whether they were friends or foes and give them a certain signal. We always had the problem with the Army, because they weren't up to snuff on things. But when they got in close, they would show friendly. So I didn't go to General Quarters, because, say, when they get into twenty five miles they were showing friendly. When I went off watch at twelve o'clock I turned into my sack and I told my relief to keep an eye on these planes that were coming back from Okinawa because you may think they are boggies, enemy planes. But when they get in close they will show friendly.

EMC: Well, they maybe found out the signal. Were they friendly?

RBS: What happened. Yes, they did. On my watch there were no attacks.

EMC: So they were friendly.

RBS: But I go and turn in at midnight. At twelve thirty General Quarters goes. I know because I just came down from and we talked to our relief on my watch. I think it was one o'clock, that we were going to be relieved at one o'clock by this destroyer and proceed back to the United States. So I left my life jacket in my stateroom. I went up on deck. First thing I know they were firing away. Because we had done so much of the shore bombardment, you would throw a shell in the guns they just kind of rattle around because all whole guns need to be rebored. So, in other words, the guns get so many rounds. I think there were three thousands rounds on each gun, three thousand plus. There were five guns so there's fifteen thousand rounds that have been fired. So I go up on deck and I'm the first lieutenant. I see this thing coming right out of the darkness with a blue flame. He passes by and crashes into the back end of the ship. It was a big fire when the gasoline catches. But what happens is he's carrying a bomb, the bomb went down

into the upper handling room and caught fire up there and then the fire went into the magazine. And when it went into the magazine it really ended the ship. Near me came down. When that happened I was going up to, you know, on the destroyer you have it divided so that if you lose water pressure aft the system splits so you can get water pressure forward. So I was going up to the bow to see if we had water pressure. It was like somebody hit me with a two by four and decided to knock me right down on the deck with this explosion. So it was a mess. I can't tell you. So much happened. I have flashes in my mind that I started down the deck and there was ammunition, twenty millimeters, forty millimeter shells coming up the deck and what not. A guy came out of there and I helped him. I think it wasn't more then five or ten minutes then they passed the word, “Abandon Ship”. So then I had to make a decision.

EMC: What do you do?

RBS: Do I go down through the sinking ship and get my life jacket or do I take the chance. So I decided I'd go down and get my life jacket. I survived so far. So I went down, of course, I was first lieutenant. I couldn't go down and leave the doors open because that would have hurt the integrity of the ship and as I went down, I opened and closed every door that we had.

EMC: But could you get back up?

RS: Well, that was the question. You know when you have a fire at night like that other kamikazes are around. They are like a moth being attracted by a flame. So you never saw a guy go down three decks opening and closing things as fast as I did. I grabbed my lifejacket and they were all going over the side when I came up.

EMC: Right. Jumping into the ocean.

RBS: The terrible things like. These things I heard afterwards. Kids up on the foc'sle. They didn't know how to swim. They just jumped in without a life jacket. We had a guy in a midship

brig who had done something wrong and one of his buddies who was always in trouble on the ship went back to try and get him out and they were both lost. But I hear those stories.

EMC: Now, did you jump over the side?

RBS: Yes. So I get over the side. The life jacket, it's like a tire, an inner tube. So I started blowing it up. It won't hold the air. So what I did was it had a nozzle. I couldn't tighten it. It's suppose to hold at that time it was broken, so I just tied a knot in the thing after I get it blown up and that held it.

EMC: Oh, my God. What an experience.

RBS: Luckily, I got off on the windward side. So if you ever have to do this, remember this, because the ship was higher in the air than you are. So it blew the ship away and I stayed in the water. If you did it on the other side, it would blow the ship over on me. The big problem was sometimes they were lax about not setting the depth charges "off". In the destroyer there were a lot of depth charges and I didn't want to get this far and then die because I was blown up by one of them, so, luckily, I was on the right side of the ship.

EMC: Were people on the wrong side?

RBS: I don't know. They had what you call, coffin carriers. And these were smaller ships. When your out there on the radar picket. They had a coffin carrier with it, because the mortality rate was so high. Like I said, were up to thirty. We were the twenty ninth. So they were down there I heard afterwards. I never really talked to anybody about this because it's just me and nobody wants to talk about it. So we get in the water. There was one gunner's mate who I thought the world of, wonderfully calm. He was out there crying like a baby. I swam out to him and said: "knock it off," and he stopped. But there were little groups in the water. Then there were three destroyers out there. We got sunk. There were two there and they were trying to pick us up. It was a moonlight night, beautiful clouds, but they couldn't see us in the water. And

what happened was there were six planes, I think I learned. Somebody anonymous sent me a Japanese newspaper which called the group that came up that night from Formosa a rogue group. There was supposed to be six of them, so these other ships got hit. When they got attacked, they would throw on thirty five knots and come right through us. Again, I said, I've survived this far. I'm not going to get killed by one of our own ships. So whenever I saw a destroyer coming, I swam the other way. I said, I'll wait until the sun comes up.

EMC: That's a long time in the water.

RBS: It was. The water was warm, East China Sea. Probably was in the 70's. But you know after awhile you get the shakes, you know, the excitement, but you get tired.

EMC: Right.

RBS: And I'll tell you some romance, too, because it happened, but I don't know what it was. Something was brushing up against us in the water.

EMC: Wonder what it was. A dolphin?

RS: That's what I was always hoping it was. But we used to shoot sharks and it was pretty boring, but not big sharks. Just for something to do during the day time towards the end of the war. We would shoot sharks in the water with a rifle.

EMC: That's your recreation.

RBS: But something was in that water and it would brush up against you. I say I'm a romantic and probably I was going in my head, but I like to think that it was dolphins. Because we used to see thousands, they would come to us in a line, maybe a thousand dolphins. They would all be going like this and they'd come to the bow of the ship and they looked at the bow ship and they'd love to get on the bow of the and scratch their backs and then they go zoom out of the way. And they took turns coming up and doing it. It was fantastic.

EMC: When were you picked up?

RBS: I waited until the sun came back up and it came up about five o'clock, so I was in the water, maybe four hours.

EMC: And other people around you, too. And what ship picked you up?

RBS: Another destroyer, and I met a guy who was on that destroyer, who was in Newport forty-three years later.

EMC: We were talking about the destruction of the *Callaghan*, the sinking of the *Callaghan*.

RBS: There was the *Pritchard*. I think it was the *Ross* that was coming out to relieve us for the United States and, as I mentioned, after the war I met a fellow who was an ensign on the *Pritchard*. The only thing I remember about getting picked up was that they had cargo nets. It was at the stern and we were so tired from being in the water that they had to send people down because the ship would roll, and they'd help us get on the cargo nets. We headed back to Okinawa.

EMC: So you were pulled up by cargo nets? You had to climb into them.

RBS: No, what they did was. They were like rope ladders. They just put them over the side of the ship and you'd climb up.

EMC: Oh, I see.

RBS: The trouble is though that when the ship rolls, it rolls towards you, and you grab onto the cargo net and when the ship rolls back and it is suddenly pulling you out of the water and you don't have the strength to hold on. You drop back in the water.

EMC: That would be something, if you didn't have the strength to hold on. Do you know how fast your ship went down?

RBS: No. When I last saw it. It's hard to tell. We tried to reconstruct it after we assembled back in Okinawa. But I remember being in the water and I can remember these sharp explosions, which I think it was maybe an hour after we abandoned ship. They were either depth

charges exploding, or somebody thought that maybe the boilers when the ship went down, exploded. So I don't know. It was out of sight. This friend of mine who I met later, Ruben Clark, was the ensign on the *Prichard*. He watched our ship get hit. He said it was just like seeing the atomic bomb go off.

EMC: Did you lose any friends in this explosion? Were their losses of the crew?

RBS: Yes, about, I forget the exact figures but I always use these figures, about a third of the ship were either killed or injured. There was another coincidence. A fellow named Hugh Paine, who was in ROTC from Harvard and I was from Yale. He'd come on the ship just shortly before this and he had my old General Quarters station and he was killed on my General Quarters station. I had moved up.

EMC: Oh, that was a lucky break.

RBS: He was a friend in a sense that our lives were parallel. I told you earlier, but it was hard. It's a funny relationship. I think it's defensive. You don't want to have close friends too much, because they get killed. Where are you going to be? I don't know if that's right or not, but I was so confused.

EMC: That was the way it was. You were on the *Prichard* and you said you were sent back to Okinawa after that. What did you do then? Were you evacuated some place else?

RBS: Yes. We were put on a transport and sent to Ulithi, which is a thousand miles roughly to the east of the Philippines. When we were in Ulithi, they dropped the atomic bomb and that was the end of that. The war ended. They needed the ship to take troops to Japan. So they took us after to the Philippines, a thousand miles to the west and dumped us on the shore. You want to hear anymore of this?

EMC: Yes, sure.

RBS: So we were on the beach and it was very exciting because they had white nurses there.

EMC: Oh, yes. You hadn't seen a female in a year and a half.

RBS: When we saw a hospital ship in Ulithi the crew would go nuts. They'd all be fighting for the glasses to see these girls two miles away.

EMC: A shadowy figure is all you can see.

RBS: But these were real live ones and, of course, too, in the Philippines. We stayed there until a ship could take us to Seattle basically. We were put on a transport with a bunch of infantry soldiers that went to Seattle. Then I got to tell you. My life has been connected with water. When I was about six years old the family took us to Rangely Lake and to make a long story short: three boys ran down to the dock and there was a woman who was sitting down on the porch. She saw three go down and then she only saw two come back. She came down to investigate and she found me under the water and she saved my life.

EMC: Oh, really.

RBS: The reason I say that is because there's been a history of this. Then there was the *Callaghan* sinking. We got back to Seattle and I did a foolish thing. I hadn't had any real alcohol or done anything. So I went out and probably had too much to drink. Came back and hadn't had a bath. This was about ten o'clock at night.

EMC: Did you fall asleep?

RBS: I hadn't had a bath in a year and a half. So I drew a nice hot bath. I was one in one of the old hotels there. There was a six foot bath. So I get in the bath. The next thing I know I'm under the water looking up and I can see the light shimmering in the ceiling.

EMC: Fell asleep?

RBS: Yes. Isn’t that crazy?

EMC: Well, it could happen.

RS: It was one of those long baths and my legs just straightened right out and my feet didn't touch the end.

EMC: So you had some near drowning experiences. Were you discharged in Seattle?

RBS: No. I didn't have enough points.

EMC: Where did you go?

RBS: I went home for my survivor's leave and then I went to Boston to get my new orders. I went with my Mother and I was crushed because my new orders sent me back to Norfolk, where I started for destroyer school. I was so disappointed after having going through everything I had, but the Navy didn't appreciate that. They were sending me back to get the basics all over again.

EMC: Now where did you want to go?

RBS: I don't know where I wanted to go. I was so relieved to be out from under all that pressure that I just felt there was no recognition of what I done.

EMC: Oh, I see.

RBS: I went right back to square one. But that was the nicest thing that ever happened to me. My skipper, Bertholf, put me on a brand new destroyer the *Glennon (DD-840)*, which was down in Guantanamo. I was sent for six months on a good will cruise to Europe.

EMC: Fabulous. That's a great reward.

RBS: That was the nicest thing.

EMC: Was that in late '45?

RBS: Yes.

EMC: Must have been.

RBS: Because I left Boston. I joined *Glennon* in Guantanamo and we came up to Boston for Thanksgiving, I guess, and Christmas. So that would have been the year 1945. We left Boston to go to Europe. It was a cold day. It was either in January or February 1946.

EMC: Probably, yes. Oh that was fantastic. And you visited a lot of ports, I guess.

RBS: Oh, yes. We were based in England, in Southhampton, in Portsmouth, and it was the greatest thing that happened to me, because, psychologically, it helped me to readjust, because, as I said, we called our Pacific experience the back of the moon. We never saw anybody; we just had this awful life, just waiting to get it and no defense. And when we went all over Europe. Everyone turned out for us. We hadn't experienced the European war, but the people were so grateful to see us. We were the first Americans to go into Norway and we went to Sweden. We went all over, England, Belfast, Ireland, Scotland, Holland, Belgium.

EMC: Did you go to France at all? Italy?

RBS: No. We went to Gibraltar. But we never got any place in the Mediterranean. We didn't go to France. They wouldn't let us go to Ireland, except northern Ireland, because they had cooperated with the Nazis.

EMC: Well, that was great.

RBS: It was good.

EMC: Sounds like a very nice finish.

RBS: Then I came back and went to law school. I didn't know what to do with myself.

EMC: You mentioned you got your degree in Saipan, your undergraduate degree? Was it mailed to you?

RBS: Yes. It came out in a tube.

EMC: Oh, Okay. So it was mailed to you. So you finished school in three and a half years then, basically. Maybe you doubled up on your courses or something.

RBS: Yes. At Yale I got through in two and a half. Then I went to law school and got done in two and a half.

EMC: Two and a half at Yale? You must have taken a lot of courses.

RBS: I went around the clock.

EMC: Oh, you went in the summer, too.

RBS: Yes.

EMC: Oh, I didn't realize that.

RBS: I went in September '41 and I got out in February '44, so it was a little over two years.

EMC: So then you came back to Newport, Rhode Island, after you got out of the Navy. You must have gotten out of the Navy about the summer of '46?

RBS: Yes. I had the opportunity to come home from Europe in June of ’46. I was tempted. They were looking for officers to the atomic explosion in Bikini. And they tempted me with the idea of doing that. But I said no. I was having such a good time over here. I was single. I'm going to ship over until the ship comes back, so I did and the ship came back in August.

EMC: Back to Newport and then you decided to go to law school?

RBS: Yes.

EMC: Did you enter law school immediately?

RBS: I went in February of ‘47.

EMC: Where did you go?

RBS: I went to Harvard. I’ve seen both sides of it.

EMC: How did the war impact on your life? Because when you were talking, you said it did change your life. It made a great impact on it. Can you talk a little about that and how it affected you since?

RBS: This is sort of personal and emotional. First of all, I shouldn't be alive, so it was an opportunity that I wouldn't otherwise have. I had the choice to go to a place like New York. I had a family here, so I came back. My father was in World War I in the field artillery and he was a balloonist. That was very dangerous in those days, because the Germans use to come over,

see us, and then that's it. The hydrogen is inflammable and they'd shoot these balloonists. The guy would try to bail out and the balloon would come down on top. He didn't go that often. In my generation, I thought everybody has to go through war, because he did and I did.

EMC: That's true.

RBS: How can I say it. I thought I owed service. See, all my life I been serving people. I went to Andover and the whole theory of Andover is service. They say when you come to Andover your no longer a kid, you're a Andover man at the age of thirteen.

EMC: Fifteen or thirteen.

RBS: Then they say you are getting this wonderful education and you owe it to society. So when I came back to Newport, I felt that I owed somebody something for my survival. So that's how I got involved in the long projects like Newport Hospital. I don't mean to sound emotional, but the greatest thing I did do in Newport, I got that library out of that building to the new building.

EMC: Oh, Newport Public?

RBS: Yes.

EMC: That's a beautiful building.

RBS: Education. The reason I got involved over here was Bates. Admiral Bates asked me if I would become a part of it. But the reason why I really wanted to become a part of it was when I left Okinawa I said you'll never get me back on a destroyer because a lot of reasons, I guess. They didn't care. The war was almost over. We had no defense. It was a big psychological thing. Everyday you know you went up with those thirty ships and you could just cross them off smaller and smaller until we got it. Until that terrible thing of having all those nice guys on the ship never got home and they were talking about coming home. Most of the people on the ship

came from west of the Mississippi. They thought my accent was just a riot, because I would say "Go park the car in Harvard Yard".

EMC: Right you were an Ivy League and prep school person. Very different from the others.

RBS: I only had to talk to the family of one of the guys, a Polish fellow. I told them and they couldn't believe their son wasn't alive. I couldn't say that he didn't survive, but. Then the curious thing about that Jap coming here and then, you know, Admiral Rempt.

EMC: He's president here.

RBS: Yes, he had command of the second *Callaghan*.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sake.

RBS: He took it to where we were sunk and they shot off guns, threw flowers. I got a speech he gave because he was Captain of the second *Callaghan*.

EMC: Isn't that something. Interesting.

RBS: It's a small world.

EMC: All these connections, these tie ins, you know, here in Newport. So you came back here to practice law.

RBS: But I was telling you why I was interested in the Foundation. Because I knew that Nimitz had said that there was nothing new in World War II, except the kamikazes. And I thought, my God, they got to get something to solve this problem, because if they don't it's going to be awful and you will never get me back on a ship. But we didn't realize that. It was really the beginning of the missile war. I wasn't so shocked at 911 to have those planes fly in.

EMC: Because that's a kamikaze type thing.

RBS: Yes.

EMC: Absolutely. Same mentality. Sacrifice, and for a cause they think is great.

RBS: The other thing I was very interested in was the hospital. I was head of the hospital for eighteen years. I'll never forget when they picked us up on the *Prichard* and the wardroom on the destroyer was the operating room and until this day I can just see the poor bastards there in all stages of disrepair. I had to do something.

EMC: So you were involved in the Naval War College Foundation, the hospital, the library and, of course, the historical society.

RBS: My family came from here. There has been a Sheffield family here since 1840.

EMC: Isn't that amazing. I hope you have complete genealogy and all the rest.

RBS: I think it was my grandfather who was one of the founders of the historical society.

EMC: That could be.

RBS: Yes. It's on the plaque.

EMC: Did you get any medals for your service?

RBS: No. That's one thing that hangs over my head. I was recommended for a commendation medal, but it got lost somewhere.

EMC: In the bureaucracy, maybe.

RBS: Yes. The new executive who was here for the Current Strategy Forum. He and I were talking and he was recommended for, I don't know, the Navy Cross. The Captain got the Navy Cross, but the one below that he was suppose to get and he was asking me. So he probably should get a medal. You see all our records were lost on the ship.

EMC: Right, of course.

RBS: It was the end of the war.

EMC: I suppose you can get it now somehow if you started a letter writing campaign or something, but that would take a while. You know there was a fellow. I don't know if you

remember this in the paper, Bruce Cotta, got a medal for Vietnam and it was his friends who finally put it in for him, twenty or thirty years later.

RBS: I don't know. There are so many other people who deserve medals. I'm not going to pursue it.

EMC: You are not going to pursue it. Have there been any reunions on the *Callaghan* and have you attended any?

RBS: Yes. There have been several. I went to two when we first started. The Captain went to the first one, which was great, Bertholf, and some of the officers who were out in Chicago and I enjoyed that. But then frankly this problem was it kind of turned into a drinking party. I guess I had other things to do. They're still having them. I still get notices.

EMC: I'm sure they have. But it's for everybody who served in the C*allaghan*, right?

RBS: Yes. It's not the officers that run it. These are done just by the enlisted men. Some places the officers do it, but none of us are involved directly.

EMC: Do you know if there are any shipmates who are still alive? Have you ever kept in contact?

RBS: I was the youngest officer. A lot of them have died.

EMC: So you don't really know anybody else.

RBS: I'll be 79 next month.

EMC: So you don't really know anybody who is still around.

RS: No. And, as I say, all the officers and the crew came from out in the West. There are a couple from Maine. There was this kid from Massachusetts. I had to tell his family he really did die.

EMC: So you were tasked to do that by the Navy, I guess.

RBS: Yes, the Captain asked if we, officers, knew anybody in the area. As I say, most of them are out West.

EMC: That's a horrible duty.

RS: The worse thing about was they couldn't understand English. They had to bring in a women to act as a interpreter.

EMC: Do you have any other reminiscences or any other thing you want to add to your interview that we forgotten?

RBS: I took a dip into politics. I was a Senator for two years.

EMC: Oh, State Senator?

RBS: Yes. My great grandfather had been a Senator in Washington and my grandfather had been in the House of Representative.

EMC: In D.C.?

RBS: Washington.

EMC: Oh, so you have a political bent.

RBS: I grew up in a political family. My father was interested in politics. I think he ran for office and didn't get elected.

EMC: So you been up to the state house.

RBS: Yes.

EMC: Oh that's interesting. You been very, very active in the community over the years.

RBS: Yes. I see that as a payback, you know. I've been lucky.

EMC: Yes, lucky to survive those experiences for a year and a half. If you don't have anything else to add, we can conclude the interview. I want to thank you very much, Mr. Sheffield, for coming in.

RBS: Thank you for listening to me.

EMC: It was very interesting. Thank you.