

WORLD WAR II VETERANS

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Interviewee: William Sheffield

Interviewer: Dr. Evelyn M. Cherpak

Subject: The Navy in World War II

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EMC: This is an oral history by William Sheffield who served in World War II in the Navy Department, on a subchaser in the Atlantic and on a destroyer transport in the Pacific. Today's date is April 15th, 2004. The interview is taking place in my office at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. I'm the curator of the Naval Historical Collection. Mr. Sheffield, I am pleased that you could come over from Kingston today for the interview on your service in World War II. I would like to begin by asking you a few personal informational questions about your background before you joined the service.

Where and when were you born?

WS: I was born in Newport, Rhode Island on November 26, 1919.

EMC: Were you brought up here?

WS: Yes, I went away to prep school and college, but spent summers in Newport.

EMC: Can you tell us where you went to prep school and college?

WS: I went to Governor Dummer Academy, for three years which is in Newburyport,

Massachusetts, beginning 1933 and graduating in 1937. Then I went to Brown University, and majored in economics and history, graduating in 1941. I attended Harvard Business School from September to December 1941, and left immediately to join the Navy in December after Pearl Harbor. I missed the first draft, because I was too young, but got picked up on the second draft as Number 10 and was spliced in, to the previous draft list. I was always interested in serving my country as a Naval Officer, because of all my contacts in Newport with the Navy.

EMC: Oh, so you were interested even before?

WS: I lived here in Newport and all my girlfriends, when I was growing up were Navy Juniors, and I married one. I had an Admiral in the Navy for a father-in-law when I married my first wife, and a General in the Army for a father-in-law, when I married my second wife.

EMC: Who was your first father-in-law?

WS: Admiral Joseph W. McColl. He was in World War I, and World War II. He started his career on subchaser in Turkey, similar to the one that I gave you the picture of. He went into the service right from the University of Pennsylvania. He was in submarines, destroyers, battleships, including command of ammunition ships and naval troop transports. He made the landing at Gela in Sicily while in command of the Florence Nightingale. He got all the troops ashore with no casualties. Later, his legs gave out while serving as Chief of Staff for Admiral Phillips in the Fifth Amphibious Force.

When I knew I was going to have to get into the service my first choice was to get into the Naval Air Branch because I had taken flight training and a FAA course, while at Brown, in the early spring of 1941. I tried to enlist in Boston. At that time they had just

closed their quotas, then I went to New York to the Naval District Headquarters and the quota was closed. Then I went to Philadelphia and the quota was closed. I ended up at Anacostia in Washington, D.C.

EMC: And this was in what month?

WS: I got to Anacostia in June or July 1941. I went through a physical exam, and I couldn't read the last page of the Japanese colorblind test. Due to this problem, they told me I was not qualified for flying but agreed to put in for a waiver, for a commission as an Ensign. They said they would let me know. I went back to Rhode Island, as planned, and started Harvard Business School in the fall. If I did not get into the Navy, and was called in the draft, then I planned to go into the Army or whatever. Actually, when Pearl Harbor was attacked within a very few days I was in the Navy. My commission had already been approved at the end of November 1941 without my knowledge. I got orders almost immediately to report to the Navy Department in Washington D.C.

EMC: I just wanted to ask you what your reaction to Pearl Harbor was?

WS: Well, we knew there was a war coming. Perhaps we were closer to the situation, because of our contacts with the Navy girls, and an occasional conversation with their fathers who were attending the War College. I went to dancing school with Margaret Spruance and the Hewitts. Naturally, I was surprised by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. I was up at Harvard Business School at the time when the news came over the wire.

EMC: You were assigned almost immediately you said after Pearl Harbor?

WS: Yes, I had orders to proceed immediately to Washington to the Navy Department as an Assistant Communication Watch Officer. Actually, I got down there and reported in

on a Friday, the 19th of December. The officer to whom I reported said, "Why don't you take the weekend off. It is your last weekend as a civilian before you get into the service." So, I did. I came back on Monday. From then on all the way through the service I missed by one day, all the promotion ALNAVS, so I was an Ensign six months longer than normal, and the same pattern followed me all the way to through to becoming a Lieutenant Commander.

EMC: So you were in Washington. You were going to be an Assistant Communications Watch Officer. What did that exactly entail?

WS: I was in the Navy Department Communications Office. There were four fellows in my group from business schools who immediately came into the service. I was from Harvard Business School. There was a fellow from Wharton. There was a fellow from Amos Tuck, from Dartmouth's Business School, and one from Michigan. We all were assigned originally to route messages, assign, and encode call signs for the ships at sea. They did not have satellites in those days. If you wanted to send a message to the Western Pacific, it had to be routed down the Atlantic Coast, to Brazil and across to Africa, and then over through Egypt, out to India to the Sundra Straits or to wherever the ships were located. We worked 12 on 12 off watches because there weren't enough people. We worked in our civilian clothes, because we couldn't get uniforms.

EMC: What building were you in?

WS: In the Main Navy Department Building. The Navy Department and the Army Department were side by side on Constitution Avenue, and there was a bridge connecting the 2nd floors of the buildings. We would get sick of the food -- at the Navy cafeteria, and then we would try the Army's food for a while, and then we would go back to the Navy

Building.

At the time, just as a matter of interest, they were broadcasting messages, in plain language, that wives or sweethearts wanted to send to sailors aboard ships. We encoded only the ship's call signs. The message went out in plain language. The German spies could follow a ship down the Atlantic coast by watching for the name of the fellow and the ship to which the message was to be sent. Messages would go out from the local Navy radio stations -- if the ship was heading for Miami, the first message would be sent out of Boston, then the next time a similar message would go out of New York. Then they would send another message out of Charleston. In this manner the Germans could track the ships progress to its destination. It didn't take long for the Navy to catch on, and they did stop that.

Our traffic load would lighten up sometimes in the late evening or in the early morning hours, and we'd pitch in and help the guys decoding messages in the code rooms. I, therefore, had the opportunity to see all the messages that went out to Pearl Harbor prior to December 7th, and form my own opinions as to how well prepared they should have been.

We were carefully watched by Naval Intelligence, because of our positions and the security of the information we dealt with.

EMC: Right. Did you find the work stressful?

WS: Not at that age. I was just barely 22 at the time.

As time went on, the traffic became so heavy that they split the coding workload. They established a separate code room for British communications. A couple of us were assigned to this code room, including myself. I was in charge of decoding all of the

British messages that went back and forth from England, and to and from the English ships.

EMC: That's interesting.

WS: We also had a special code book at the Navy Department (one copy only), and Whitehall at the British Admiralty had the only other copy. These code books were used to encode the messages from Roosevelt to Churchill and vice versa. When Roosevelt wished to send a message, and it was on my watch, I would get a call to go up to the White House to pick up the messages from Roosevelt. I would call down and order a car to pick me up in front of the Navy Department, and the driver would take me up to the White House. The control center at the White House was called the Map Room, formerly Lincoln's study. The officer in charge was Lieutenant Commander Robert Montgomery who had been a movie star. At the time the Battle of Bataan was being fought. There was a relief map of Bataan on the wall, and each time I'd go up, the line of map pins would be squeezed down toward Corregidor and of course, finally, you know the result. They would wheel Roosevelt down in his wheelchair and the watch officer would precis all of the important messages that had come in that day and put them on IBM cards. Then they'd put the cards in a rack in front of Roosevelt, for his perusal. If he wanted more information on any particular subject, they would go to the file and bring out a copy of the particular message he needed. He would write what he wanted, and then they would put it in an envelope, and I'd take it back to the Navy Department.

EMC: Did you meet Roosevelt? Did you see him?

WS: Oh, I saw him. But at that time, I was just an ensign.

EMC: You just probably saw him in passing. You were not talking to him.

WS: Well, he was, you know, jolly, sometimes, we didn't have any conversations, but he did acknowledge my presence.

One day I called down for a car, when I got down to the front door, there was a Cadillac or a Lincoln, a big car anyway, not the usual transportation. I opened the car door and I asked the driver, "Are you the driver to take me up to the White House." The fellow said, "I guess so" or something, so I popped in and off we went. I got the message and came back. About 30 or 40 minutes later I got a call, "Are you Ensign Sheffield," and this fellow said, "I am Commander Wellborn. I am Admiral Edward's chief of staff, and you stole the Admiral's car! I'd like you to report immediately to my office ". So I went to the Chief of Naval Operations Office and stood -- I can remember the blue thick pile carpet -- I stood there and I stood there and got my butt chewed out for about 40 minutes. The Commander was really furious. Finally he said, "When do you get off watch?" I said, "I get off at 8:00 tomorrow morning." He said, "Well, you are to be at Admirals Edward's office at 8:00 AM." I had been on watch for 12 hours and looked it. Admiral Edwards was very nice when he realized what happened. So, it blew over.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes.

WS: There were two other experiences that were notable. Everybody knows I guess, that we were working on breaking the German and Japanese codes. We had hundreds of IBM machines in buildings on each side of the wading pools between Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. Occasionally we would get messages in British Cipher, which had a special heading in English. [padding]. When these messages arrived with this certain heading, we would call a special number. A Navy Captain would come over and pick up these messages. When we finished decoding the message, it was still in a further

code, meaningless to us. I am sure these were the “enigma” messages that were coming from the German high command. The Captain who came over to pick them up had short cut gray hair, and of course, four stripes. He was the most “Krautey” looking Kraut you every saw in your life. I used to think to myself, I wonder if he is a spy, this fellow looks so German. I suppose he was German, but he spoke excellent English.

EMC: Sure, and translated.

WS: We actually did have a German spy in the British code room. At about 10:30 every night we would send out to the escort commander of the convoys crossing the Atlantic, their courses steer the next day. Because they feared compromising by the merchant ship captains, we would send the message to the escort commander with the points that the convoy was to go through in the next 24 hours. The escort commander would then relay the information by signal light to the rest of the escort ships and to the merchant ship captains. We had an officer named Ensign Birkenbilt, who was the fellow that came from Wharton. He was kind of a strange bird. He wouldn't eat with us in the Navy cafeteria. He would always say “I don't like the food here, and I'm going out to eat.” He'd leave the Navy Department Building and go up the street to a White Tower hamburger joint to get his meal. One day when I had the night watch, at about 7:00 AM the phone rang and a voice said, is Ensign Birkenbilt there. I said “no, sir”, and the voice said, when will he be in, and I said he should be in about quarter to 8:00 in the morning to relieve the watch. Then this fellow said, “When he comes in, pick up the phone and call this number and just say the words “Red Kelly” and hang up.” At 7:45 Birkenbilt came in. I dial a number and said the words, “Red Kelly.” Within the next five minutes in came two marines in dress blues with side arms. They said “Are you Ensign Birkenbilt,” and he

said, "Yes". The marines said "You will come with us," and that was the last we ever saw of him.

EMC: Was he German?

WS: Well, we don't know. He might have been of German extraction.

EMC: That's what I mean.

WS: We had no idea. I never heard a thing about it except the rumor that the same day they picked him up, they also picked up two Navy men at 90 Church Street in New York, and then three or four others at Argentia which was where the destroyers were based for Atlantic convoy duty.

He must have had a photographic mind. He'd walk by the coding machines that were encoding the convoy positions messages, memorize them, and then he would go up to the White Tower joint, and pass the information on to some cohort. He was relaying the convoy positions to the Germans, so they could assemble their submarines into a "wolfpack" to attack the convoy. Apparently, some telephone operator stayed on the line just long enough to pick up what she thought seemed strange. The operators were trained by the FBI to listen to telephone conversations, and to report anything that seemed unusual.

EMC: And you had a spy in your midst.

WS: Yes.

EMC: How did you spell his name? Is it Birkenbilt? Well, that's the way you pronounced it. We will write it that way. So he disappeared?

WS: Well, we never heard what happened to him.

EMC: That's quite something, so where did you live in Washington? Did you find an

apartment?

WS: When I got down there, I immediately started looking. There was not any information, and nobody was helping. I found a place in a cellar, where there were three or four other guys. We had sort of a curtains, or blankets hung between the cots.

EMC: Oh, for heaven sakes.

WS: I stayed there for a short time

. My wife to be who lived over in Arlington, asked me to a cocktail party. Her father was in the Bureau of Navigation and was in charge of Enlisted Detail at the time. At the party there was a fellow who worked for Federal Housing, whose name was Connie Bretch. He had an apartment on Church Street, which was off Dupont Circle. At the time, he had four bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen. He came from Raleigh, North Carolina. His mother sent his "mammy" up with him to cook and take care of him. I had a chat with him during the cocktail party, and he said. " I've got some room in my place, you can stay with me." So I moved in. We had Doris, the mammy, to see to our every need. It cost us I think 50 bucks a week for all the food and rent, facility -- telephones, utilities. Doris did everything else. Doris was black, big round, and short. At one time she had a fight with her sixth or seventh husband and went back to Raleigh for two or three weeks. Our bills jumped from 50 bucks to 150 bucks a week.

The building had four apartments in sort of a "U" shape. It turned out that we lived in a whorehouse. A madam ran an operation in one of the other apartments in the building. This apartment was located on the other side of the "U". We thought it was sort of strange because every once in a while we would see -- a young girl come out in the hall grab the paper in the morning and pop the door shut. Then we would see men coming up

the front steps in diplomatic clothes or very well dressed gentlemen that would make a visit. Of course, we discovered what was going on. The girls were pretty and quite intelligent, as behooves a high class place. When we were off the 12 hour shift, we would sometimes go up on the roof just to get a little sun, and we'd chat with the girls.

Later, we took in two other fellows in our apartment, an Ensign named Sommers and an Ensign named Ferguson with Connie Bretch and myself. We got Bretch into the Navy, and he got into intelligence. Later he was assigned to Egypt and ended up marrying King Farouk's sister. After the war he came back to Washington with her. The other two men were assigned to ships and went on the invasion of North Africa.

EMC: Wow, what a group.

WS: I wanted to go to sea. While I was in the Navy Department, I discovered that there was a new test for color blindness, so I went down to the Medical Department and took it. It consisted of identifying colored lights instead of reading the numbers out of a book. I didn't have any trouble at all. They qualified me for sea. This was what I wanted to do anyway, as I had sailed all my life up in Newport.

The Navy sent me, to Local Defense School in Boston and later to the Subchaser Training Center in Miami.

EMC: But how long were you in Washington?

WS: Eight months. I left there in August.

EMC: August of '42?

WS: Yes. At Local Defense School, in Boston, we used to call it Fargo College, because it was in the Fargo Building. It was really a useless course, where they taught us Navy Regs, and how to march out in the parking lot. That was about it.

EMC: Is that all?

WS: We went out on a couple of old yachts that were painted gray, but it was pretty elementary.

EMC: Because you would be involved in protecting a local community:

WS: No. It was not the local community. We were supposed to protect the coastline with converted yachts.

After I finished the two months in Boston, I went to the Subchaser Training Center down in Miami, and that was a first class operation. The commanding officer was named, either McDaniels or McDonald. He was a real fireball and gung ho. He had a merchant ship lifeboat that was shot up by the Germans, full of machine gun holes, placed in front of the Administration Building. They really preached the word.

EMC: How was the training there?

WS: It was good training. Navigation, and all the stuff that you might really need. I didn't need regular navigation. However they did teach you celestial navigation, command, gunnery, etc.

EMC: How long was the training course?

WS: It was two months.

EMC: Just like the local defense school, two months of training, classroom training I presume?

WS: Well, it was mostly classroom but we had more work at sea. We did make a trip on a subchaser down past Key West to Dry Tortugas and back. Occasionally, they would take us out at night on ships. Later in the winter, one of the British subchasers, a sister ship of the one that I was assigned to, was rammed off Miami. Someone thought it was a

submarine. Everybody got off all right, nobody was lost, but the ship sank.

EMC: How many were in this training center with you? How many fellows were in the class?

WS: I do not remember, but it was a full scale. There were probably several hundred.

EMC: So you were assigned. You did not request this at all?

WS: No. Of course I wanted to go to sea, so I requested destroyers.

EMC: The Navy put you in the subchasers. All right. They usually do that.

WS: Well, how I ever got into communications based on my previous experience, I'll never know.

EMC: After you finished the subchaser school, where were you sent?

WS: I was assigned to the SC-1468, which at that time was in the New York City area, in Tompkinsville. I didn't know exactly where Tompkinsville was. I think it's on Staten Island. Anyway, I flew up to New York, and joined the ship. I remember I left Miami, and all I had was a Navy black raincoat. I got to New York, and it was down to zero or below zero. I made my way to the ship, and when I got aboard all they had for heat in the officer's quarters was a little portable heater the size of a milk bottle. I think it was run with gasoline. That was it. There were two officers, the Captain and the exec. They were having a crap game on the table with big bucks, with two or three hundred dollars flowing back and forth. I said to myself, my God, what am I getting into.

I relieved the exec and shortly thereafter we headed for sea.

The captain of our ship immediately got seasick and went below and lay down on the deck of our quarters. Every time we would put to sea, he would disappear. He would arrive on deck after we were safely in the next harbor. He came from Kansas, and I

suppose he had never seen the ocean before.

Fortunately, we had a fellow who had been a first class seaman on the Lexington when it was sunk. They made him a chief. He and I took the ship down to Miami together. We had a very small crew, so we had to stand four on four off watches.

EMC: So the Captain was no help at all.

WS: The ship looked like no other subchaser I had ever seen, and well, it might be. It was a British "Fairmile" used to fight E boats in the English Channel. Built in Digby, Nova Scotia, designed for tropical duty. It had "no heat", no refrigeration, and was powered by two Hall Scott engines using 100 Octane Aviation Gas. The British gave the U S Navy eight of these ships to help relieve the serious loss of merchant ships and tankers by German submarines on the Atlantic Coast. Our armament was a three inch 23 gun, which I think they had on coast guard cutters in World War I. Later it was replaced by a single barrel 40 millimeter gun. Anyway, that's what we had to shoot at the Germans. We had a sponson on either side, port and starboard with a 20 millimeter gun. We had two "K" guns with depth charges and maybe 12 or so depth charges around the after part of the ship. We only had 12 men and two officers. The British used them like a PT boat in the English Channel. They'd go out for 24 or 48 hours and then come back, and everybody would get off and then they'd send another crew. We used them for five to seven days of continuous convoy duty.

The officers' quarters were aft on this ship, whereas on an American subchaser they were under the pilothouse. This made for a longer and more exposed trip to the bridge in times of trouble. In the officer's quarters we had a fresh water, a cold water line about the size of your little finger, no hot water at all, typical British Navy.

The aviation gas was always a concern. The gasoline tanks were steel, double lined with a self sealing material in between, so that a bullet hole would immediately seal itself.

We did have a couple of fires aboard. There was a CO2 system with a "pull" release in the pilothouse that would flood the engine room. One time when we were in a Navy Yard someplace, somebody threw a wool rag down the length on the engine room. There were enough fumes in the bilge for static electricity to kick off a blaze. The CO2 system put the fire out immediately. We had another fire when we were in Newport, later in the tour of the ship, which was dealt with effectively.

The one good thing the British did have for heavy weather were officers overcoats which we inherited. These were great. They were made of a heavy canvas, fleece-lined with a hood. They were far superior to the American heavy weather gear, which had a sort of an oil-skinned outboard cover with a mohair collar and no hood. We had to stand all our watches on the flying bridge winter, summer, spring, and fall as the bow gun mount blocked any vision from the pilothouse. In the winter when you were in the Atlantic and it was cold, the ice would form on your eyebrows and the spray would hit your face and freeze. The ice would melt, and the cold water would roll down you neck. We used to tie a towel around our necks, to absorb the cold water.

These ships were made of Philippine mahogany cross planked with a layer of linen in between. When we were operating in the Caribbean in the hot sun, day after day, the seams would open up. As soon as it got a little rough, the water would pour down through the deck and soak every thing below. Later we had an overhaul at Key West and the shipyard covered the deck with canvas and Ferox, so we didn't get soaked every time we went to sea.

Our 'sonar' was ASDIC and fixed [not trainable]. It had two angular beams, one on our port and one on the starboard, and one directly in front of the ship.. All the beams had an arc of about ten degrees. There was no way to plot an attack logically. If you picked up a contact on the starboard side, you did not know whether it was on the starboard or port until you swung the ship from port to starboard, and made a second contact.

The British also had a funny way of designing their hydraulic systems on ships. They did the same thing with the Vicount airplane that a few American airlines flew for a while and later got rid of. They had no checkpoints anywhere in their hydraulic systems. If a piece of operating equipment went down, you did not know whether the trouble was in your windshield wiper or your rudder or any other hydraulically controlled part of the ship. This resulted in a long and difficult task to locate the trouble.

On this British subchaser, too, there was no direction finder, no radar, etc. Everything had to be done by manual charting using parallel rules. You couldn't take a star sight. I tried once or twice, but we rolled so much that when I worked it out, the ship's position appeared to be at the junction of the Allegheny and the Mongahela Rivers in Pittsburgh. When we were looking for an island to go to, we would look for a cloud over the island, which is typical of islands in the Caribbean. It was not quite as bad as all that, but it was always reassuring that your navigation was working.

Anyway, the eight "Fairmiles" started down the coast for Miami. Our trip to Miami required a number of ports of call, because of fuel requirements and the inexperience of the officers and crew. As we went down the coast, our first stop was in Cape May and then we stopped at Norfolk, and next in Charleston.

EMC: Charleston, S.C

WS: We did pick up what we thought was an enemy contact on the way to Charleston, probably off Cape Hatteras. We all milled around for a while, dropped some charges, Then whatever it was disappeared so we proceeded on our way.

EMC: So maybe you hit it?

WS: No. I don't think so. Maybe we did, but there was no positive evidence.

Next we stopped in Jacksonville and finally arrived in Miami.

Each time we'd get into a port, we'd report to the base. The base personnel would come aboard to inspect us and say "What can we do to fix you up or repair you." On these ships nothing was like any US Navy ship. We did not have any spare parts, and neither did they. Once they got a good look at what our needs really were, they couldn't get rid of us fast enough. So we would get orders to move on. The night before we were scheduled to leave each Navy Yard, we would send out a midnight requisition party. They would get whatever we needed one way or another.

EMC: Oh, I see.

WS: We sailed the next morning so nobody was the wiser.

EMC: That's pretty good, but as far as repairing the subchaser, you know, if they didn't have any British parts they couldn't help.

You mentioned you got to Miami, and at least you arrived at that port, and did you take that subchaser into the Caribbean?

WS: Yes, we got a new captain, a fellow named Lawrence Gardner, who had been in the Navy a little longer than I had. He had been stationed at the San Juan Base. I think Admiral Ingersoll was in charge of the naval district down there. He had reported to Ingersoll.

WS: When we left Miami four ships, including our own, were ordered to Trinidad for Caribbean duty. The other three ships were ordered to Curacao, the eighth ship, having been rammed and sunk off Miami.

We were stationed at Trinidad at the Dragon's Mouth, which is at the mouth of the Orinoco river. There was a little Navy base there that we operated out of. They did have fuel that we could use, hot showers, and the other wonderful thing they had was Nestlé's vanilla ice cream and good hot chocolate sauce. This was a great treat. Showers were always welcome after a five day stint at sea, except when I was joined by a big brown tarantula, who I promptly escorted out of the shower with a broom.

Our primary duties were to convoy small freighters and oilers around to the different islands in the Caribbean. This usually meant seven days of watches of four on and four off in that burning sun. You would get up on the flying bridge in the morning, and your eyes would be burned out from trying to keep station all night on the convoy. It was difficult keeping station on the convoy at night with no radar. We had to keep visual touch with the freighters that we were convoying. There always was a sort of a Caribbean haze. It was not a thick fog, but it's a good heavy haze, and it would be the devil to try to keep stationed on a gray freighter at night making a zig-zag course.

The only coding equipment we had on board was the metal board with the strips. Often, you would get an "operational priority" message to decode as you were just coming off watch. We were required to immediately break messages designated "operational priority" and above. At the end of the watch, you 'd be burned out and you'd have to go down below and break the damn thing, with the ship pitching and rolling. When you were finished the message would say, you would pass a freighter in the night or a tug and

a tow or something else. That didn't help things a bit, because you would have passed the subject of the dispatch hours ago. Sleep was a precious commodity.

The silt filled waters of the Orinoco River extended a long way out into the Caribbean. Often, as we were approaching our base, there would be huge "whop", close to the ship. A large manta ray the size of a king size blanket would propel itself out of the water, like a dolphin, and then flop back. This would give one quite a start if you didn't happen to be looking in that direction at the time.

The United States had Navy seaplane bases on a number of the Caribbean islands. They had an air screen by PB5Y's that ran out for 300 miles for the protection of the Panama Canal. These bases had to be supplied. There was one at Antiqua, at St. Lucia, one on Grand Cayman, and several others. We would convoy small freighters up to these bases, and supply them with aviation gasoline, food and so forth. We even convoyed a merchant ship to the Bay of Pigs, near the Isle of Pines.

Another assignment we had was to go all around the island of Tobago down near Trinidad. We were testing the salinity of the water. We never knew why this was so important, but apparently it was.

One time we convoyed a freighter out to Barbados. This was the first freighter that had brought Irish potatoes to the island of Barbados since 1939, so we were royally welcomed. When they unloaded this freighter they used very large heavily built rowboats with long heavy oars, manned by ten to twelve black natives. There were no power driven lighters, and it took many trips to get the job done.

Originally shortly after the war started in Great Britain, there was a freighter in the harbor of Bridgetown, Barbados. They had a submarine net made of iron rings for the

protection of ships anchored there. A German submarine came in sailing right on the surface with a native bumboat sail rigged on their periscope and blew a hole in the submarine net with the first torpedo. They fired a second torpedo and sunk the freighter. At Trinidad they had an underwater cable stretched across the harbor entrance connecting the three islands at the mouth. The cable was to provide a warning of any invasion by a German submarine trying to enter the area. The islands were also fortified with shore batteries. Well, a German submarine did enter the harbor, but the local defense force would not believe it until the sub sank two or three ships. That night while the British subchasers, similar to ours, were searching the area, the German sub surfaced. The Germans turned on their running lights and because their boat was narrow, the British assumed it was another patrol boat. The shore batteries on the islands spotted the sub but could not communicate with the subchasers, and they could not depress the shore battery guns low enough to fire at the sub. So the Germans got away without a scratch. We were not in the area at the time all this happened.

At Grand Cayman, the mosquitoes were horrendous and you had to anchor, on a coral reef, because there was no satisfactory harbor. The reef bordered on the Cayman Trench. It goes down 5,000 feet or more. As we pulled in there to anchor there was a little black boy standing there on the shore, and he said, "Hoot man can I do your laundry for you?" in a perfect Scotch accent. Apparently, the islands originally were settled by Scots way back in the 1600's or 1700's. Most all the male population had been lost in hurricanes through the years. The female population mixed in with the blacks. It was just marsh and thousands of mosquitoes. I understand later that they used something like Agent Orange to kill the mosquitoes before the development of the island. In the 90's we talked to a

few people who live on the island now, and they said there was an unusual amount of cancer with a lot of miscarriages and other medical problems which they blamed on the chemical treatment used to rid the island of the mosquitoes.

EMC: Well, now it is a resort.

WS: Yes, it's a beautiful place.

EMC: We're going to the Caymans this year.

WS: Also, in the area north of Key West, there was a huge marshalling area for organizing the ships for the convoys. The oilers would come from Galveston, other ships came through Panama Canal. All the freighters and oil tankers would temporarily anchor in the back of Key West.. Here they were organized into convoys to sail to England or Africa. Often, we had the job of taking the empty sugar freighters over to Havana. It's about 90 miles. It would take us all day to take them over, then we'd spend the night, and we'd come back the next morning with the full ones.

EMC: In Havana, I assumed you got off the ship?

WS: Yes, those men with "leave" could leave the ship, and we would let the crew go on shore. For five dollars you could hire a taxi for all night. Rationing wasn't in effect in Cuba then, and we could have steaks and all kinds of wonderful food. We'd go and have a big meal. At that time there were still a few of the clubs running, and you could go see the show or visit two or three clubs. The driver would take you all around the Havana area for one taxi fair. On one trip the Captain left a bottle of Drambuie in a paper bag in the taxi. We came back in two or three weeks. We had another taxi driver and we told this fellow we had left a bottle of Drambuie in a paper bag, and sure enough, when he picked us up at one of the nightclubs, he had the same bottle in the same paper bag that

he had retrieved. The British had a storage space in our quarters for liquor. Often we would return to Key West with that void filled.

Havana at that time was very tightly controlled. Before we prepared to sail, we would call the American Embassy. They would notify the Havana police {Militia}. Every block had a policeman. He knew everything that was going on in his assigned area. The police would collect our crew, and deliver them to the dock in a paddy wagon. In the morning at dawn we would go out and sweep the harbor entrance before the sugar boats came out. Then we would escort them back to Key West.

The worst gale we ever endured in the Caribbean was when we were convoying about a dozen small freighters, not big ones. We were to take them from Key West to Guantanamo. The trip started off as a nightmare. We were trying to get the freighters lined up and to get them to cut down the smoke from their smokestacks. Because, of course, the Germans could pick up the smoke and it would give away our position. We were moving our ship over toward one of these freighters. I yelled at the freighter Captain with the loud speaker to cut making such black smoke and also to get in line with the other ships. As I watched, the freighter the Captain was standing on his bridge outside his pilothouse. He signaled his helmsman to come over toward us. We were moving over toward him. He swung around and we swung around. Our stern ended up right in front of his bow. It wasn't ten or fifteen feet away. I looked up and this huge freighter's bow was plunging up and down through the waves. Our captain panicked, and I yelled over to our helmsman for full speed ahead and hard right. We got out of there. Later, as we started down through the Bahama Passage on the north side of Cuba, we ran into a storm, and it was a huge, huge storm. Of course, we had to stay up on the bridge

the whole time, because we couldn't see anything in the pilothouse. We couldn't see much from the flying bridge either, as the waves were pouring over us. We had a black steward's mate, who we were transporting to Guantanamo, and the guy went bonkers. Our ship was very small and there was no place to put him to keep him from killing himself, so we tied his hands and his feet, stretched him out on the deck, and let the water pour over him until, finally, he came around. We lost track of the whole convoy. All the ships the freighters and the escorts went in 16 different directions. It was just, save the ship and save your life kind of thing.

EMC: Very bad tropical storm then.

WS: In the morning the storm cleared as we came around the Cape on the eastern end of Cuba. We ran into huge rollers with long stretches in between the huge crests. It was like a Nantucket Sleigh Ride. We'd climb over the top of one and then we'd come roaring down the other side. The fellow on the helm had to spin the wheel one way and then spin the wheel the other, just to keep us from broaching. If we had ever gone sideways – that would have been the end of it. We finally made Guantanamo by ourselves. Just as we got there a German submarine torpedoed a freighter which was loaded with blockbusters and 20 millimeter shells. It was there one second, and it was gone the next. And everything was dropping out of the sky. We got into Guantanamo all right, and the ships we were convoying came in two or three days later. At one time we were running out of fuel, we went into Ciudad Trujillo in Santo Domingo.

EMC: Right.

WS: I think we used 2800 gallons of fuel. We had to load it individually from 55 gallon drums. We got enough to get out of there and get back to where we could fill up with

regular fuel.

EMC: Did you ever encounter any subs - - German subs, and did you ever attack any when you were in the Caribbean?

WS: We only saw one German submarine on the surface about 5 or 6 miles away. It was just at dusk when we were convoying a small freighter. I think it was between Martinique and Guadeloupe. It was off on the horizon. We were the only escort for the freighter, we were convoying and the sub was miles away and soon disappeared. We would have never gotten anywhere near him, he was so far away. So, it didn't make any sense to try to find him. We did report our sighting to the air anti-submarine patrol, so they could follow it up. Rumor had it that the French in Martinique were secretly supplying the German subs.

Another night I had the watch and the phosphorous in the water was very bright. I was on the bridge. I think we were off Dominica. I had the watch, and I looked over to the starboard and there, zing was a trail of phosphorous coming right at us, perpendicular to the ship. It went right underneath the bridge. Fortunately, we drew only about six or eight feet, but I'm sure it was a German torpedo that went right underneath us. The Germans just miscalculated our depth. We searched the area for a while but got no contact.

EMC: Oh, boy.

WS: Another experience. We were heading for San Juan running independently. We were coming around the eastern end of Puerto Rico. We were just off the island of Culebra, it was the middle of the day, and I looked over toward the shore of Culebra and here's this 55 gallon barrel floating more or less upright going along at a pretty good clip.

I thought, gee, there must be a whale of a current over there for that thing to be drifting that fast. When we got into San Juan, we picked up the mail. The mail included the O & I bulletin, with the info on the snorkel. It was the first anybody in our group knew anything about the snorkels on German submarines. I'm sure now looking back on it, that was what we had seen.. We would have, or might have had a shot at it, if we'd known what it was. It was dirty brown, and looked like an old barrel. A big 55 gallon barrel, just drifting fast.

EMC: Now, you were executive officer of this subchaser.

WS: Yes, I had been the executive officer since the first day I came aboard this subchaser.

EMC: Right. When did you become captain?

WS: When we left the Caribbean, we stopped off at Miami, Gardner was transferred and I became Captain. A third officer was assigned to the ship. This made standing watch a lot easier. We left the Miami area, and were ordered back up to New York. We made it to New York all right, but one of the sister ships ran out of gas off the New Jersey coast. There was a storm, almost like a hurricane, because it pushed a couple of freighters up on the beach in New Jersey. Our friend rolled so far that the yardarm was about a foot off the water. His radio was out and he had no power. Finally, he made contact with a freighter going by and they sent somebody to go pick him up. That must have been a really rough ride.

Being an old sailor, I remember only about four days when I thought it was really, really rough in my Navy career, a couple of days in Caribbean and then a couple of them in the Pacific off the coast of Japan.

Anyway, we got ordered up to Quonset Point.

EMC: Was it a happy ship, would you say?

WS: Oh, yes.

EMC: Did everybody get along?

WS: We got along fine, everybody ate together. The ship was only 112 feet long.

Quarters were so cramped there was no room for a wardroom. When we left port, we'd get cartons of beef, which were about eight inches thick and two or three feet square.

Because we had no refrigeration, we would boil up all the meat so it wouldn't spoil.

Sometimes we'd be at sea for from five to seven days in a row.

From New York we were ordered to Quonset Point to be attached to the Anti-Submarine Development Unit. This was great for me, because I had come from Newport, and now I was Captain of a Navy ship and I was cruising in familiar territory.

We had three kinds of duties. One would be to work with scientists who would bring newly developed equipment up to pretest out at sea. Many, many times we'd tell these fellows, you know, your equipment is going overboard if you don't let us tie it down. It's rough most of the time when you go to sea on a subchaser. They didn't wish to tie it down in any way. As soon as we got to sea overboard it would go.

One time we had Starling Burgess, who designed the cup defenders, the Ranger and the Enterprise for the America's Cup Races in the 30's. He had been a gunners mate in the Spanish American War and then he'd been in the Navy Department in World War I, and this time he decided to be a consultant. He was 75 years old then. He designed a projection to be attached to our bow to hold a piece of equipment. This structure was of cantilever construction, and made of wood. It hung out in the front of our bow for about

20 feet, so he could get a piece of magnetic gear as far away from the ship as possible.

With the magnetic gear you could locate a sub below the ocean's surface, but there was no way you could get a beam or bearing on it to locate its direction or progress.

EMC: A bearing or anything.

WS: It never worked out for the subchasers, but later they did use it on blimps at Gibraltar. The warm water from the Mediterranean was flowing out on the surface through the Straits, and the cold water from the Atlantic was flowing in underneath. Of course, this developed a barrier for any kind of Sonar gear. The German submarines could descend to 1000 feet. They would shut off their engines and drift through the Straits carried by the cold Atlantic current. The blimps with this magnetic equipment would fly over the Straits of Gibraltar. They'd pick up a German sub with the magnetic equipment. This gear would penetrate the sonar barrier. Together, with the use of hydrophones, they could track the sub into the Mediterranean. When the Germans got into the Mediterranean, the blimps would call in the troops. The destroyers could then pick them up on sonar and try to finish them off.

Our other duty was to work with our subs out of New London. Our assignment called for us to remain in the submarine training area and monitor the submarine below. When we were working off New London there wasn't much to do except to stay on station. We would throw overboard the cardboard boxes that our raw beef supplies came in. The hammerhead sharks would come to the surface and chomp the boxes. This provided target practice and amusement for the crew. Often, if we were going to be on station in this area the following day, we would put in to the New Harbor on Block Island for the night. Many times an "S" boat sub would join us. One night we were tied up at

Champlin's dock on the western side of the harbor. A very strong northeaster gale blew in. The wind was so strong pushing our ship against the dock that our engines were useless as far as getting away from the dock. The wind pushed the waters from Block Island Sound into the harbor through the entrance, and prevented the tide from flowing out. As a result the tidal flow lifted the ship above the pilings that supported the dock. The tops of the pilings were about a foot above our waterline. The waves were pounding the ship against the pilings and threatening to punch holes in the side of the ship. The whole crew spent the night using everything that could be converted into chafing gear to wrap around the pilings to protect the ship, mattresses, blankets, etc

We also worked south of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard to develop with the Navy air personnel, a program for training pilots in the use of carbide tip rockets. These rockets at would go below the surface and then level off at 50 feet and try to blow a hole in an enemy submarine. We would tow a target that looked about like your coat rack over there. It would produce a little rooster tail simulating a periscope. Then the planes would come in and make practice runs on it. We had photographic people on board, who were making films for training later on. Sometimes we would go into Menemsha Bight for the night and anchor and go out the next day. One day off Nantucket we got the word that they were calling off the flights early. So we were heading back toward Martha's Vineyard. I was down below taking a little snooze. All of a sudden there was this terrific explosion, and the stern went up in the air and the propellers were spinning out of water. I was coming up the ladder from our quarters when a deluge of water came down and soaked me. What happened was the Army was also practicing with 500 pound bombs. They mistook our target which we were towing at only about 300 feet astern, from theirs

which was normally towed by an Army vessel some 1,000 or 1,500 feet behind. They dropped two 500 pound bombs close to our stern.

EMC: Friendly fire.

WS: We had a similar thing happen at Quonset. We were going to sea on the Fourth of July. We sailed out of Quonset, and came around the end of Jamestown, and were heading down the bay to go out through the nets. I noticed a PT boat over by the testing station on the end of that Gould Island. I saw the PT boat roll a torpedo. I was on the bridge with the conn. The torpedo came around in a nice big arc and headed right for us. I gave full speed ahead and full right rudder and sounded general quarters, but the torpedo kept coming. It bounced off us and put a hole in our side. Then it ran up on the Jamestown shore where the power plant blew up. It hit right where the bulkhead support met the side of the ship. Because of the construction of cross planked mahogany and linen, it put a nice big dent there. Of course, it started to leak like the Dickens. Because the torpedo didn't have any powder in it, we weren't blown out of the water. We got torpedoed and bombed right here at home.

I also had another experience when I was in Key West. Because my father-in-law was a submariner, I really wanted to be in submarines. But I couldn't because I had an overbite. In those days having no overbite was a requirement for the submarine service. I guess there would have been a problem if you were using the Munson lung with an overbite, if you had to escape a sub on the bottom of the ocean.

EMC: What's the Munson Lung?

WS: This was a breathing apparatus to help a person to escape a sunken submarine. My father-in-law was at torpedo school right after the World War I. He worked with a man

named Munson to develop this device in the tank at New London. I don't know if they still have the tank down there or not, but in those days they trained divers and submarine personnel there. You could get out of a sunken submarine as long as it wasn't too deep using this device. Today our subs go to such depths that the equipment is now obsolete. Using this breather, you could slowly work your way up to the surface from a sunken submarine by breathing through the mouthpiece.

Anyway, we were sitting in the officer's club in Key West with the Captain that I relieved eventually. He knew a submarine officer who joined us. They had some "S" boats or "R" boats in Key West they were using for training Brazilians and people from other nations. While we were sitting there, and I said, "Gee, I'd like to go out some day," and he said, "sure that would be fine. Come down tomorrow morning at 7:00 AM and we'll take you out". We didn't get out of the officer's club until pretty late that night. 7:00 AM rolled around, and in came my wake up call, "Sir, It's time for you to get up, sir," and I said, "Ugh, I can do it any day. Forget it." Well, that submarine went out that day and they never came back. Apparently, nobody knows why, of course, but the thinking is that a trainee probably opened a rear torpedo tube door by mistake, in a training session. If this is what really happened, it flooded the engine room. When salt water gets in the batteries, it develops a deadly gas.

There were three or four guys in the conning tower of the submarine, and they were the only ones saved. It went down like a lead balloon. The DE that was monitoring the sub on the surface didn't know what happened for quite a while. When they couldn't make contact with the sub, they retraced their course and came back. They found the quartermaster, the officer of the deck, and maybe somebody else, but that was all.

EMC: You missed the boat. You were lucky.

WS: There were a lot of times I was lucky.

EMC: That's really something. The decisions you make and you realize –

WS: Another couple of humorous events that happened while on this subchaser. On deck there was a round escape hatch from the engine room just large enough so a man could climb through it. I was standing near this hatch and we'd been practicing firing the 20 mm guns. I said "Secure from general quarters," and stepped back and went down through this hatch. I threw out my arms and saved a fast trip to the engine room, but it did skin my ribs. I got a few laughs, but no sympathy.

Another time we were in New York for repairs on the way up the coast. We were in Kill Van Kull, which is a very dirty sewery kind of waterway separating the part of Staten Island from New Jersey. We had been over to Ellis Island to top off our fuel tanks, from a tanker that had aviation gas. The shipyard insisted that we fill our tanks right to the very top and we weren't to use any gas to get to the shipyard. So we had a tug tow us back to the shipyard where they were going to work on the ship. The tug towed us up Kill Van Kull, and it shoved the ship alongside a steel-like camel that was between the shipyard dock and the ship. We got a line secured in the bow, but the stem was swinging out with the current. Of course we couldn't use our engines. So the tug captain said "Throw us a line and we'll get you in". We threw him a line and he hooked up, and he gave one tum at his propeller and we went "whammo" up against the steel camel. It slammed the side of the ship. I had a pair of binoculars around my neck, and I leaned over the starboard gun sponson to see what damage had been done. The binoculars shifted and so I continued right up in the air and over and dropped down between the steel camel and the

side of the ship. A perfect handstand dive.

EMC: That's not funny

WS: Well, the crew sure enjoyed it.

EMC: Did you get hurt?

WS: Not really, no, I just got wet, mucky stinky wet.

WS: While we were at Quonset one of our sister ships was docking behind carrier USS Ranger, which was one of the only aircraft carriers we had at the time, and he tore off three depth charges from rear of his ship. These immediately sunk underneath the Ranger's stern. I'll tell you all hell broke loose over that. Fortunately, the water was not deep enough to cause a serious problem.

We also had difficulty with the Quonset officer in charge of dispatching our ships. This officer was what we called a "ground swell".

EMC: What does that mean?

WS: Well, that's a fellow who was very wealthy, who probably lived down Bellevue Avenue here in Newport, and who never, never held a job in his life except to clip coupons. He got himself into the Navy and got ordered to a cushy job. He was a Commander. His job was to direct us to places where we were supposed to be effectively contributing to the war effort. The man was an absolute idiot, and total confusion resulted. Things like this would happen. We had to tear our engines down periodically and fix them up. We'd get availability for a day at the dock to tear the engines down. We would have all the parts laid out on the engine room floor. Two hours later we would have orders to proceed to sea. Other times we would be ordered to sea for a rendezvous and there wouldn't be anybody there. The situation was so bad that for peace of mind of

all the skippers, and for the good of the service, I went over his head. I visited the Admiral who was in charge of Quonset, and made him aware of the situation.

He had this "ground swell" delicately pushed aside and replaced him with a warrant officer who rapidly got things under control.

WS: In the late summer of 1944, we had a hurricane. Today it might be classified as a tropical storm. At any rate we were ordered to sea. I had been out sailing in a small sailboat on the morning of the 1938 hurricane, and watched some of the destruction at the Middletown beaches when it washed away houses and boats. There was no way I was going to ride out a hurricane at sea in a small ship.

So we got underway and came down into lower Narragansett Bay where there were the huge white moorings that they used to moor the Navy's capital ships. We ran the anchor chain out and up through the huge shackle on one of these mooring drums and back to the ship where we made the end fast. We were up all night during the storm. We had to use the engines to back down between the heavy gusts so the ship would not drift forward and damage the bow. So we survived with no damage and returned in the morning to our base at Quonset.

Our crew got to be pretty good friends with the Supply section, and since Supply had very little idea what a ship's needs were {they were used to airplanes not ships}, we got all kinds of things. We even had phosphor bronze lifelines on the ship. We got anything and everything we wanted, as compared to life when we made our initial trip down the Atlantic Coast to Miami.

WS: Then I left the ship and was ordered back to the Subchaser Training Center for the Advance Course.

EMC: In Miami.

WS: Yes, for two months.

EMC: An advanced course and then after you finished that you --

WS: Then I had follow up orders to Philadelphia for Fire Fighting and Damage Control School.

EMC: Oh, really. They were sending you to a lot of schools. What was the intent?

WS: Well, it was for additional training. Then I was assigned to Pre-Commissioning detail for a new ship that was being built. I was ordered to Charleston, South Carolina to be First Lieutenant on the William M. Hobby APD 95 a fast destroyer transport.

The William M. Hobby (DE-236) was laid down on 15 November 1943 at the Charleston Navy Yard. As she had been constructed in a dry-dock, there was no launching ceremony per se, and she was floated out on 2 February 1944. The ship was redesigned a fast transport, APD-95, on 17 July 1944: she was completed as such at her builder's yard. She was simultaneously christened and commissioned at Charleston on 4 April 1945. Miss Catherine Hobby, the sister of the late Commander Hobby, sponsored the ship; Lt. Comdr. Frank N. Christiansen, USNR, was her first commanding officer.

This duty was a different world -- It was more like the regular Navy.

WS: The Charleston Navy Yard was building a number of fast destroyer transports at the same time.

EMC: So what did you do while they were building the ship?

WS: If you were a damage control officer, you really had to know all parts of the ship.

You had to really spend the time studying the blueprints and familiarizing yourself with every nook and cranny from the bilge to the top of the mast.

One note: Today I have asbestos in my lungs. We all believe the only way in my life that I could have picked up the asbestos in my lungs was in that shipyard when they were painting the inside bulkheads of the ships and sprayed asbestos on those bulkheads to

reduce sweating in the tropics. Anyone in the future should be aware of such a hazard.

EMC: So you were a damage control officer?

WS: Well that sort of came with the territory with the job as being First Lieutenant.

EMC: A responsible position. You are third in command.

WS: Later, I became executive officer out in the Pacific.

We went through the regular training. We had sea trials and all kinds of drills that go with pre-shakedown. After commissioning, we sailed up to Norfolk to check in for all the other things that needed to be done. Then we embarked on our shakedown cruise to Guantanamo.

At Guantanamo Bay, Cuba we went through another set of rigorous training procedures and inspection routines.

Following shakedown training in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, William M. Hobby proceeded to Norfolk, VA. From 16 to 21 May, the new fast transport conducted an "amphibious shakedown", including bombardment exercises off Bloodsworth Island in Chesapeake Bay. After post-shakedown repairs at the Norfolk Navy Yard, William M. Hobby held additional shakedown gunnery training in Chesapeake Bay before she departed Hampton Roads, Va., on 3 June, bound for Panama in company with her sister ship Amesbury.

EMC: What was the size of the ship, and how many personnel did you carry?

WS: The ship had a compliment of 206 personnel with the capacity to carry 162 underwater demolition personnel. Oh, it's pretty big, compared to the subchaser. It was 306 feet long with a beam of 37 feet. It was a DE design converted to transport an underwater demolition team. We carried 4 special landing barges for the demolition team, and a small speed boat which served as the Captain's gig.

EMC: It's not a small ship by any means.

WS: It's a little smaller than a destroyer, more like the size of a World War I destroyer.

When we were in Norfolk undergoing final repairs and alterations before going to the

Pacific, we had a fire in the storage room for the chemical warfare equipment. The fire was started by a welder, who was welding on the outside of the aft bulkhead of the storage room. The clothing inside the storeroom caught fire, and the area was filled with dense smoke. One of the crewmen and myself donned rescue breathers, and with a fire hose, after some difficulty put the fire out. The lessons learned at fire fighting and damage control school really paid off. The experience I am sure would have stood me in good stead had we made the invasion of Japan as planned.

EMC: Most of the fellows were reservists on the ship?

WS: Before we left Norfolk for the Pacific after shakedown, they opened up the prisons, and sent us their prisoners to fill our ships compliment as we were considered expendable, because of the hazardous duty we were expected to perform as a part of the invasion of Japan.

This late addition to our crew made the job of every officer extremely difficult, as there were all kinds of psychos among the crew that came aboard at Norfolk.

Added to this, the Captain was an absolute ass. You've heard it so often, but this fellow was just, well he was very impressed with himself, and very bitter. He wouldn't even offer anybody a cigarette unless the person ranked him. Before we were about to go out to sea, we had some time in port where the wives could come down to Norfolk. He asked the wives all aboard. Just before we sailed he gave a stupid speech, which didn't help the morale of the wives at all.

Before the war he had graduated from the University of Washington, and gone into the reserves. He was assigned to a Navy ship. The academy boys stuck him, of course, with all the in port watches and other unpleasant duties, so he was really very bitter, and took

it out on everybody else when he became Captain of the USS Hobby.

Another amusing thing that often happened out at sea. There was a drain from the Captain's head that went down and out through the side of the ship in a storeroom where we kept all the provisions. Every time we'd get into port, the storeroom became absolutely jammed to the ceiling with provisions. You had to remove steel bars and take out the provisions in order to access this valve, and afterwards put them all back. Every time they piped general quarters, you had to close all the ports that lead out through the side of ship to the ocean, including this port in the storeroom which, of course was very difficult to get at.

The sailor whose assignment it was to complete this job would either forget -- when we secured or was too lazy to climb back over all that pile of supplies to open the drain.

Later the captain would take a shower with the drain closed.

EMC: When he flushed the toilet, it would back up into his shower.

WS: And so the call was "First Lieutenant report to the bridge" and the crew would just double up because they knew what was going to happen to me. I am sure they would miss opening this valve every once in a while just to get a laugh.

Well, anyway when we got to Colon, Panama and had liberty. I got the duty to stay on board with a third of the crew, and it turned into a wild melee ashore. We had been through such rough times with all the training, tests, etc. with no liberty that when the crew had their first chance to let go, everybody went for a real Roman holiday. The officers broke into the Panamanian radio station. They all got drunk and broadcast on the Panamanian radio, and the crew tried to drink everything in sight. The shore patrol would put them in the paddy wagon, and bring them down the dock. The guys on board were so

mad because they hadn't been allowed to go ashore, they had no mercy. We had a triangular boom with the winches on the stern of the ship. So we got out our cargo nets and brought them over to the dock. We loaded the inebriated crew in the cargo nets and lifted them up, and over to the ship. Of course, when they brought them down on the steel deck, the watch that had no liberty weren't gentle at all. They made sure that they all landed with a bang. We didn't have any underwater demolition team on board at the time, so we had a lot of empty bunks on the side of the ship. We dumped the drunken bodies in these bunks originally scheduled for the underwater demolition team.

EMC: Wonder that they didn't break any bones. And then you went on to the Pacific.

WS: William M. Hobby reached Christobal on 8 June 1945, completed the transit of the canal on the 10th, and set course for the California coast immediately thereafter. Arriving at San Diego on the 17th, the fast transport got underway for the Hawaiian Islands in company with Amesbury and O'Reilly, on the 20th.

The trip was uneventful except for one event that did take place. The captain was a S.O.P. and while on the bridge on a sunny day he spotted a bright object in the sky which he was convinced was a Japanese balloon supposedly carrying explosives. He ordered the crew of the "5" gun to open fire at it. I was not convinced so I went below and checked the Rude Star Finder and verified my earlier conclusion that it was Venus. I reported my findings to the Captain, but I made no impression. Ego took over, and he continued the firing. One of the other ships fired a shell or two, but soon realized what was going on and quit. We however continued. Finally I suggested we fire a star shell which would show an arc of light. That ended the fiasco.

Making Pearl Harbor on June 27th, William M. Hobby trained underwater demolition teams at Maaleea Bay, Maui, Territory of Hawaii, in July before she embarked UDT 29 for transportation to the West Coast. Departing the Hawaiian Islands on 2 August, William M. Hobby made port at Oceanside, California near San Diego -- one week later

While at Oceanside, the underwater demolition team proceeded with training exercises using the landing craft from the ship. The surf was very heavy and during one of the exercises one of the landing craft broached in the surf resulting in the loss of several of the swimmers.

Shifting briefly to San Pedro, the fast transport returned to the Oceanside and disembarked UDT 29 on 13 August 1945. The following day, Japan surrendered, ending the war in the Pacific.

On the 16th, of August the William M. Hobby sailed for Hawaii again. Reaching Pearl Harbor on the 22^d, the fast transport got underway on the 24th for the Marshall Islands, in company with Ira Jeffery and Blessman, and arrived at Eniwetok on 1 September. Pushing on to the Philippines we anchored in Manila Bay on the 5th. William M. Hobby cruised in the Philippine archipelago -- touching at Subic Bay Zamboanga, Mindanao, Bugo, Macajalar Bay, and from San Pedro Bay -- until she sailed for Okinawa, and from thence to Japan.

Prior to reaching the Marshall Islands we had a sailor come down with a case of appendicitis. The medical personnel aboard decided it was necessary to operate. The operation was performed on the wardroom table. The operation was a success, but the patient died, due to improper administration of the anesthesia by inexperienced medical personnel.

I don't know why we went down to Zamboanga but we did go down there and anchored, and I remember all the bumboats coming out with the native children that looked half Japanese. These little kids were all in dugout canoes and dived for coins.

We had all the plans for our part in the invasion of Japan aboard, all the charts and all the orders, even the beaches we were going to survey, and clear the underwater obstacles. I brought one of the charts home and made a lampshade out of it.

Thank God for the atomic bomb, because we probably would never have made it home. We were scheduled to survey the beaches 5 days before the invasion and return 3 days before D-day so that the underwater demolition team could destroy the underwater

obstacles that might impede the landings. We would have been a sitting duck.

The war was over, but we got immediate orders to proceed to Okinawa.

We picked up a team of specialists at Okinawa to jam all the breach blocks on the Japanese shore battery guns and deactivate the motor torpedo boats and the midget submarines in the Kure – Hiroshima area. The demolition team was also to survey the areas where the occupation troops were to be billeted. We got everybody on board, and took off for Japan. I was a navigator.

On the way we had one hell of a storm, with no means of getting any kind of a navigation fix. We were set by the Japanese current, and finally figured out that we were about 40 miles off course. We were off the coast of Japan, and it was dark and blowing and the waves were about 40 feet high. I had no idea where we were. All of a sudden, I saw a little blue light violently bobbing up and down ahead of us in the sea. I thought it might be a fishing boat. We sent out a signal with our call letters, and back came the reply. It was one of our Navy's carriers. Boy, what a relief, I sent a flashing message "can you give us our position," and he did and then also I said "Do you mind if we follow you into Osaka," and he said it was fine. So we got into Osaka with no further difficulties. That saved my skin.

We arrived in Osaka, and reported to the area Commanding Officer. We got orders, which we knew anyway. We were the first U.S.Navy ship to go into the Inland Sea in Southern Japan. Now, the U.S. Submarines had been in there without anybody knowing about it. We had to enter Bungo Suido, the southern entrance to the Inland Sea. This entrance had been mined by the Japanese. We entered Bungo Suido at daybreak on the first of October 1945. All we had to locate the mines was a Xeroxed piece of paper on

which our submarines had marked their estimate of the location of the Japanese mines in the entrance to the Inland Sea. I got bearings on everything on the shore, and I laid out the course on our chart to go through the minefield. When we started our journey, I was down in CIC. When it was time to make the zig-zag turn through the minefield, I went up to the bridge and looked over the side, and by God, there was a big old log the size of a telephone pole maybe eight or ten feet long with a rope on it. That was the Jap marker to make the turn. We hit it right on the button. That morning the ship sighted several floating mines off our port bow and destroyed them with a 40 mm, 20 mm, and rifle fire. When we arrived at the top of Bungo Suido, there was a Japanese naval ship about the size of an American PC, waiting for us. We took on board the Admiral of the naval base at Kure and an interpreter as hostages. Kure was in size about like Norfolk. We were the first United States surface ship to go into the southern part of Japan and into Inland Sea. Nobody knew what to expect.

The other thing that complicated the situation was that the U S Army Air Force had dropped pressure mines all up through the Inland Sea. The Inland Sea is filled with little tiny islands like mountain tops, on which the Japanese had made terraces, so at they could grow their vegetables and rice. So we had to be very careful, where there was any current between two islands. If we went over 2 ½ knots and created an equal amount of pressure on the bottom we could set off these U.S. pressure mines. I drew a ten mile circle around each position the air force had given us, just as a precaution. {When we had been in the Gulf of Mexico on the subchaser, we often were ordered to look for downed planes from McDill field. The Army Air Force navigation was terrible. We never found any planes. If we were lucky we might find an oil slick 20 miles from where

the plane was supposed to have gone down.)

The charts we used were made by the British government in 1700's, or so it seemed. Of course, they've been updated, but the British charts aren't like ours. If you can see a rock, they don't always put it on the chart. The Brits, however, were very good at chart making. In the early days they developed much of their information on the Western Pacific from working closely with their merchant fleet. We had a really old tide tables too, and did the best we could to reinterpret them, and tried to develop the degree of tidal current between the islands, so that we didn't go through any of the straits with a speed over two and a half knots. If the current was running with us, we could go to five knots, and if it was against us, we just had to heave to until it changed. Fortunately, we didn't run into any trouble.

One of the interesting things that the Japanese Admiral told us through his interpreter, was that during the typhoons that swept through Okinawa, and Japan just after end of the war, they had a number of explosions out in the harbor, and they didn't know why. They knew of no reason for them. They were not sure what they were. Perhaps just the pressure from the typhoons depressing the ocean set those mines off, and so it did the minesweeping job for us. Several weeks later, before we brought any of the occupation troops into the area, they filled 6 old Liberty ships with kapok, and sailed them up through the Inland Sea to make sure it was safe to bring in the troop transports.

The other interesting thing that the Admiral told us was that the Japanese had had a fellow who worked with Oppenheimer at Berkley on the atomic bomb, and that they had a Japanese atomic project going. Their leader got an overdose of radiation and died. Fortunately for us, he never passed on most of his knowledge or enough of his knowledge

for his team to go any further, so the project fell apart. When we arrived at Hiro Wan, Honshu Japan, we dropped anchor and soon saw a motor boat with a tall thin black smokestack approaching. It looked like an old pleasure yacht you might have seen in the 1890's on Lake Winnapasauki, New Hampshire. It was about 30 feet long with an awning overhead with a fringe. It had an old steam engine for propulsion, which was fired with wood, and a tall black smokestack.

On board was a Japanese delegation that had come out to surrender to us. The party consisted of a delegate in a pinstripe suit with a black top hat, several army and navy officers with their baggy uniforms and an interpreter. We escorted them into the wardroom and after they surrendered and discussed concerns for our missions and needs, they left along with the hostages, the Admiral and his interpreter.

The ship's embarked UDT reconnoitered beaches and shore installations at Hiro Wan from 2 to 10 October to prepare the way for the arrival of American occupation troops in the Kure area.

Adjacent to our anchorage was an airfield and an airplane factory which Halsey had bombed, and left in twisted steel ruins. Afterwards, the Japanese had gone back in the factory and pulled out all the machinery and cleaned and fixed it up. They took it into the little village nearby, put a piece of machinery in each house and then they would carry the parts to build the Kamakase airplanes they were making from one house to the next. If they had lathe in one house, they'd work on that, and they'd take the part over to the next house and do the milling machine work and so forth. They had cut a hole in a nearby hill where they made a large cave. Here they assembled the parts for the engines, compasses etc. They were making the suicide bombers out of fabric and wood like we

used for the old planes in the old days. There were still a few of these damaged planes around on the airfield. Apparently, they had stopped the major Kamikaze campaign, because they were waiting. They were going to hold off until the troop transports came up, so they could sink a ship with ten thousand people on it rather than a destroyer with only 350.

Our captain wouldn't let any of our ship's personnel off the ship. He did let the demolition team go ashore to do their work, and they had a great time. They came back to the ship with Samurai swords, and souvenirs, which infuriated our crew.

I got to be pals with a Colonel in the Marine Corps, who was aboard. He had gotten himself assigned to the demolition group (which was going to deactivate everything) to go and look for his brother, who was Machine-Gun Kelly. The Colonel believed he was in a prison camp southeast of Hiroshima.

EMC: He was a POW?

WS: His brother shot 50 Japs during the battle of Corregidor, and was later captured. As a POW he made the death march up the Bataan peninsula, after being captured at Corregidor. He had supposedly ended up in prison to the southeast of Hiroshima. We learned later there was a Japanese prison down there. The Japs told us that as soon as the atomic bomb went off, they released all the prisoners there. The Colonel wanted somebody to go with him, so I conned our Captain into letting me go along with him. We commandeered a Japanese type jeep and rode all over Kure. We went up to Hiroshima, and this was only in early October so it wasn't long after the surrender. We didn't know anything about radiation, nobody had the slightest idea. We toured Kure and Hiroshima went up to the Admiral's house, had a drink of his whiskey and then we made a survey of

the naval base at Kure before we went on to Hiroshima. We walked all over the navy base, looked at all the equipment, much of which appeared very archaic. Anybody who thinks that those Japs wouldn't have fought to the last man, woman, and child is crazy. They had a whole bunch of motor torpedo boats with powder in the bow ready to ram. In the dry docks where the big Japanese battleships had been built, they had laid down 54 midget submarines.

The Japanese didn't seem to pay any attention at all to us. When we went by, they'd look at us and turn their heads away. Nobody made any attempt to talk to us. When we got up to Hiroshima, we did talk to a Japanese doctor who had trained in California, and spoke good English. He took us on a tour of one of the hospitals where we saw some of the survivors, and listened to his experiences. Hiroshima was just as you saw it in the pictures. The trees were just all burned. All the little branches were gone, but sometimes the big branches were kind of burned down to a point. It was as if a fiery tornado had hit the place. There were parts of the city that were absolutely not touched yet other parts that were completely devastated. We even checked out a Geisha house that wasn't touched at all. Actually the floors were still varnished and there were a couple of ladies in full regalia there. We just walked around after taking off our shoes. We walked all over the city but not too near the bomb crater. Then in the end I took the Colonel out to the southeast, and I dropped him off with a knapsack over his shoulder, and off he went to find his brother. I returned to the ship.

EMC: Well, didn't he have to come back to the ship?

WS: No he wasn't coming back to the ship. He was going to find his brother, and I don't know whether he ever did. We were in the area for sometime after that, but we never saw

him again.

On 11 October, 1945, William M. Hobby got underway for the island of Shikoku and arrived at the port of Misuhama later that day. The fast transport disembarked 15 American Army officers, 18 enlisted men, whom she had carried as passengers. We remained at anchor off Mitsuhama while UDT 5 reconnoitered the beaches there.

After returning once more to Hiro Wan, William M. Hobby got underway for the United States on 14 October. Proceeding via Guam, Eniwetok, Pearl Harbor, to San Diego, then via the Panama Canal, she arrived at Philadelphia on 9 December. The fast transport subsequently shifted southward via Norfolk to Green Cove Springs, Fla., where she arrived on 6 January 1946. She was decommissioned there and placed in reserve on 6 April 1946.

William M. Hobby remained in reserve until she was struck from the Navy list on 1 May 1967. Transferred to the government of South Korea on a grant-in-aid on 23 July 1967, the fast transport was renamed Chr Ju (PG-87). Initially classified as a gunboat, she was later reclassified in Korean service to APD-87 in 1972. She remained in service with the Korean Navy into 1979.

From Hawaii to San Diego it was cloudy for the full five days so we didn't get any star sights or any navigational help. It wasn't until we got close to San Diego that we could get radar or Loran bearings. In spite of the weather we sighted the San Clemente Islands right on target.

WS: But let's see if there was anything else I can think of. I got off at San Diego I had more than enough points, but I wasn't relieved from active duty until the end of November, and had terminal leave until February 7, 1946

EMC: Can I ask you a question about VJ Day, did you celebrate at all on VJ Day?

WS: We were on board ship. Everybody kind of said hurray or something like that, but there wasn't any galloping around or going bananas.

EMC: I just wondered. So were you discharged from active duty the end of November '45?

WS: From active duty. I didn't actually get out of the Navy until 1954.

EMC: Were you in the reserves then?

WS: If we had done this in the machine tool industry, if people had been interested and the government had realized what was to come, and the people and the government had invested in the machine tool factories, we wouldn't be in the position we are today.

WS: There was no labor cost. The plastic machinery couldn't be made any cheaper anywhere in the world.

EMC: Right, it's automatic, automated.

WS: The reason outsourcing is being done today is because it's cheaper, and the cost of the equipment has to be paid off with the money from the sale of the parts that are produced on this machinery. The savings for these modern plants came from the money that was saved by not investing large sums of money in inventory. By collapsing the time required to build a plastic machine we paid for the cost of the plant and the automated equipment.

EMC: Did you take advantage of the GI bill?

WS: No, I could have. But by that time the war ended, I had a wife and a child.

EMC: Oh, when were you married, during the war?

WS: Yes I was married in 1942.

EMC: Were you in Washington then?

WS: We were married in Washington, during the four days travel time to go from Local Defense School in Boston to Miami. I got married in Washington's Arlington Cemetery at the Fort Meyer Chapel in between funerals.

EMC: Oh for heaven sakes, there's a chapel there.

WS: Fort Meyer Chapel.

EMC: Did your family stay in Washington only for the wedding?

EMC: They just out did us, right. Absolutely, cheaper prices and --

WS: In the last job I had, before I retired I was as a Senior Operations Vice-President, in the plastics industry. I had six plants reporting to me. One of the plants that reported to me, actually, two of the plants were the most modern in the world.

EMC: Was this in Rhode Island?

WS: No, these plants were in North Carolina. I was headquartered in Cleveland.

At these plants we would order the parts, and the castings required. When the castings were delivered they would be placed on little platen like tables. Then an automatic cart, like a golf cart, would come and pick the table up and the part, and take it to the machine shop, where it would be delivered automatically to one of six huge machines that was going to work on it. The whole operation was controlled by a computer. The computer would assign the part to the machine that would most efficiently machine it. The machine had all the tools already in a tool carrier. The computer would tell the cart to go get such and such a part. It knew what work had been done on each part in the factory, and what hadn't been done, knew what parts -- what tools were in each the machine, so it matched the part with the machine. Then it would direct the cart to take the designated part to the selected machine. The part would then be produced in the most economical way. If a drill got dull or a tap broke, the machine would tell itself to go get another drill out of another pocket in the tool carrier. In the morning it would tell the technician on the read out screen to sharpen the tool in pocket number 16. The whole thing was automated. You could turn the lights out in the factory and production would continue all night long with no one in the building.

EMC: Automated.

WS: I didn't go to meetings, but I was still in the reserves, and I was assigned to be an executive transportation officer for New England when the Russian crisis was going on. My base of operations was to be in Woonsocket, R.I.

I never got called upon to do anything.

One of the other interesting things, that happened after I left the Navy, I began working for a machine tool company, and one of my assignments was to go through the management training course, which took two years. Later, one of my assignments was to visit the mills that were making textile machinery and to prepare them to convert to making machine tool machinery for a war. I visited each textile manufacturing company in New England. I took the blueprints of all the machines that we manufactured at Brown & Sharpe, all of the directions, instructions, and everything that was associated with the manufacture of each type of machine. I worked with each company and set them up. If there was a Russian crisis, our government would send a telegram, and these plants would immediately switch production and start making machine tools for the production of parts, tanks, and planes, etc.

Today in the United States we're completely devoid of anything like this.

EMC: We can't produce machines to make war material.

WS: We have no machine tool producers. There is only one large machine tool company left in the United States.

EMC: Everything's done in Japan.

WS: Japan or someplace else in the world.

EMC: Outsourcing. That's unfortunate.

WS: It wasn't just outsourcing. They just out did us.

WS: Yes, only for the wedding. My wife and I took the train to Miami. We were together for a couple of months. After completing subchaser school I went back up to New York to pick up the subchaser. I returned to Miami with the ship, and then went to Key West. She stayed for three or four days in Key West and then flew home after being thrown off the airplanes four or five times during the trip.

I rented a little apartment over at Colonial Village, in Newport where she stayed for the rest of the war.

EMC: Right, That's still in existence.

WS: Of course, this was fortunate, because then by pure chance, I got sent up here on our subchaser for a short tour of duty two years later, and we had a few more months together off and on when I could get away. Then I went out to the Pacific.

EMC: Yes. That was quite a career, quite a story.

WS: I'm sure I left out some of the details but I think I covered the main events.

EMC: And very, very, interesting, and have you maintained any Navy connections after you left the reserves in '54?

WS: Only socially, I worked for Brown and Sharpe manufacturing Company in Providence for over 21 years. In 1967 I left. I could see the company was going down the tubes, so I went out to the Mid West and turned around little businesses that were losing money. That was fascinating. Then at a point my first wife who had gotten cancer some years earlier, became really sick and I had to cut down my travel. When you turn a business around, you've got to stimulate the sales force, get new products, and you're traveling all over, when the situation changed I had to stay home. So that's when I took the job in Cleveland in the plastic machinery industry. The reason I got out of the Naval

Reserve was that my company assigned me to start a plant in England. At that time Gary Powers was shot down in a U-2 spy plane.

EMC: Oh, Francis Gary Powers?

WS: The plant that I was to start would have served all of Europe on the free side of the Iron Curtain. If you crossed the Iron Curtain you were in trouble. In those days they put "United States Naval Reserve" on your passport. I figured if I'm traveling in civilian clothes from England to Italy or someplace, and we got pushed across the line of the Iron Curtain for whatever reason, and the airliner was ordered to ground by MIG's I might end up in the slammer or worse as a spy.

EMC: Oh, boy.

WS: I didn't really want to chance that, so that's why I resigned from the Navy in 1954.

EMC: Well, you had a good career and a long career.

WS: We moved back here after my first wife, Dot, died. I was a bachelor for six years, and then I married the Army general's daughter in 1989.

EMC: May I ask you who the Army general was?

WS: His name was Arthur Henry Rogers and he was I in the invasion of Africa and Europe. He was in the Mexican "War". He was in World War I, and he was in World War II.

EMC: You mean the Spanish American?

WS: No the Mexican War not the one in the 1800's.

EMC: That's 1846.

WS: No, no. The US army went down to Mexico and chased the outlaw Pauncho Villa and his army around 1915-16. He was in the National Guard from Yankton, S.D. when

all this occurred.

EMC: Invasion of Mexico. It really wasn't a war but --

WS: In 1940 the Army was slowly preparing for the war. He was sent up to Seward, Alaska to build a base, because they thought that sooner or later the Japanese were going to invade Alaska. He built the Army base there, and after Pearl Harbor he got ordered back to the U.S. He commanded a regiment in the infantry, and landed at Casablanca later in Sicily and Italy. I never got to talk to him, but I think he might have even landed in Sicily from the ship that my other father-in-law was commanding.

EMC: Oh, for heaven sakes, yes.

WS: He was in all those battles and he went over into Italy, and was wounded three or four times and got sent back to the United States. Later he returned to France during the occupation.

EMC: Oh, he had quite a career, too. It's amazing.

WS: Another story, I found out the other day that I had a great, great uncle who was in the War of 1812. He was a naval officer. After the War of 1812, he was discharged as were most of the naval officers. He got a job as a captain of a privateer, which was actually owned by the Argentine government, if you can believe that. They were cruising the South Atlantic, and came to St. Helena where Napoleon was spending his days in exile. Napoleon was located, apparently, on the other side of a cape, out of sight from the town on St. Helena. The British Admiral, who was in command of St. Helena was stationed in the town. A British frigate would come around the cape every morning and fire a gun to notify the Admiral that Napoleon was still safely ensconced. The privateer was a dead ringer for the British ship, and both ships even had one of the main sails that

was worn and dark. During the night there was a big storm, and the British ship was blown away off station. The privateer came in and Napoleon was riding a horse along the beach. The officers wanted to lower a boat and go ashore, and get him out of there, but the crew refused. I supposed that in those days on a privateer the crew had more of a voice in the operation of the ship. It wasn't like life on a British frigate. In the Royal Navy there was no election process what so ever.

EMC: They left him there.

WS: They left him there, but the history of the world might have changed if this event had, had a different outcome.

EMC: Wow, isn't that something. That is quite a story, so do you have any final comments on your naval career or experiences in World War II, anything in general or summing up?

WS: Well, I don't know, I always loved the Navy. Of course, we grew up with all those Navy gals, and I married one. There were always Navy ships out in the harbor. I can remember the Augusta out there and the Langley and the dirigibles coming and tying up to the mast. We had the Constellation at the Navy Base. We would take trips through it. Also, they had open houses on battleships. I might have even made a career of it, except that after the war I felt that the stagnation would be such, due to the competition from the Academy officers, it didn't make sense. My first father in law was a Lieutenant for a long, long time

EMC: Oh, they wanted out.

WS: Most of the Reserve Officers in my generation that had any real ambition wanted to move on and got out. That's why I didn't stay in. I could have brought the APD around

to Green Cove Springs Fla. as Captain to where they decommissioned her. But I had had enough. I wanted to get home to my wife and family.

EMC: Oh, sure, that was the trend, leave the Navy and go back to kind of a normal civilian life. Well, get back to normal after the war, and hope to establish -- or establish a new life anyway.

WS: We have belonged to the War College Foundation for over fifteen years.

EMC: Oh, the Foundation?

WS: Naturally.

EMC: Because your youngest brother was just elected trustee again?

WS: Oh, again. Well, he's been a trustee emeritus.

EMC: I did see that. He's gone very far.

WS: He was in the war for shorter time but he had much more of a battle career than I did.

EMC: Sure.

WS: And Ed -- there were three boys. We all were in the Navy. Ed was on a destroyer as a radar officer.

EMC: He must have been in the Pacific too.

WS: I don't know whether he ever got there or not.

EMC: Is he still alive?

WS: All three of us are still alive.

EMC: And where does he live?

WS: He lives in Philadelphia. He comes up to Newport in August.

EMC: Oh, I see.

WS: And my sister worked at the Torpedo Station making torpedoes.

EMC: You're kidding. What's her name?

WS: It's Agatha Littlefield Crocker. She was originally married to a Littlefield, now deceased. Her name is now Crocker. She lives in West Kingston on the land that was originally belonged to my father and grandfather.

EMC: She worked, you said at the Torpedo Station making primers for torpedoes.

WS: She said that, they told her not to work so hard, even though we were at war. This did not set well with a girl who had three brothers out fighting the war in the Navy.

EMC: I wonder if she'd be interested in being interviewed, because that would be kind of fascinating.

WS: She didn't work there very long. You could call her up and ask her. I'll give you her telephone number.

EMC: Because, you know, we don't have many reminiscences of women who worked at the Torpedo Station, or what it was like. May I ask how old is she is?

WS: I'm 85. Ed's 82. Rich is 81, and Ag is 78.

EMC: She is 78. Okay. Fantastic. We did have -- a couple of years ago some of the officers of the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities came down here and wanted to look at our Torpedo Station records. There were very interested, and they gave a little dramatic presentation or play about people who worked at the Torpedo Station, and they were interested in women, too, at the Torpedo Station at that time.

WS: Before the war, we used to go over to the torpedo station in the 1930's at Christmas time-- they had the Navy Junior dances in a place called "The House That Jack Built".

EMC: Oh, that used to be here on the base.

WS: Well, this was at the Torpedo Station. They also had dances for the Navy Juniors in one of the large halls at the Training Station.

In those days to get to the Torpedo Station, you had to take a ferry. The dances were always on the coldest nights and you would freeze your butt on the ferry ride dressed in a tuxedo.

EMC: Formal.

WS: Some of the girls lived in quarters at the torpedo Station and also at the Training Station, but most of them lived in town.

EMC: Margaret Spruance.

WS: No, she lived in town when we were there.

EMC: Oh, that's right, because he wasn't president. Of course, this is before.

WS: The commanding officer was a man we called B-O Leo. Leo Welsh was the head of the Training Station. And we got in trouble with him, because we had a few drinks and we were a bit rowdy.

EMC: Rowdy and making a lot of noise.

WS: Rowdy, and I'm not sure my brother didn't burn his initials in the floor of one of the quarters. He told one of the girls, well, we're taxpayers and this is part of our property.

We used to have a lot of fun in those days.

EMC: Oh, I'm sure you did.

WS: I got a great story about the hurricane, too, but some other time.

I'll tell you of a fellow who really would like to talk to you. His name is Craig Huff, and he is here in the summer. He has a summer place down in Green Hill, R.I. I'll ask him to call you. I will see him this weekend, and I'll give him your telephone number.

He was in LCI's or LST's.

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