

WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

WORLD WAR II VETERANS

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NO. 331

ALBERT K. SHERMAN

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

2004

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NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND  
WORLD WAR II VETERANS

INTERVIEWEE: ALBERT K. SHERMAN

INTERVIEWER: DR. EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: WORLD WAR II VETERANS

DATE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2004

EMC: This is an interview with Mr. Albert K. Sherman on his naval service in subchasers in World War II. My name is Evelyn Cherpak. The interview is taking place at his home at 49 Indian Avenue in Middletown, Rhode Island. Mr. Sherman, I'm pleased that you were able to be available this afternoon to talk with us about your service in World War II, and I'd like to begin the interview by asking you where you were born and when you were born?

AKS: I was born in Newport, Rhode Island on January 12th, 1918.

EMC: And what did your parents do in Newport, Rhode Island?

AKS: Well, my mother had been a school teacher in the Boston school system. My father was at that time an employee of the Newport Trust Company. He later bought the Newport Daily News, which he owned when I was born.

EMC: So you were early on involved in the newspaper business, I guess.

AKS: I was.

EMC: From your early years. Where did you go to school in Newport?

AKS: Well, I went to Cranston-Calvert School through the seventh grade, eighth grade at Mumford School, and I went to Rogers High School for two years and then I went to Pomfret School for two years, and to Phillips Academy, Andover for a year. I went to Amherst College for four years.

EMC: And when did you graduate from Amherst?

AKS: 1940.

EMC: Oh, 1940. All right. Just before the war. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

AKS: Yes, I had one brother, Edward, who's older by two years.

EMC: Oh, okay. And what did you decide to do after you graduated from Amherst College?

AKS: Oh, I went into the newspaper --

EMC: Business. Here in Newport?

AKS: In Newport.

EMC: So you helped your father. You were with him at that point in time?

AKS: Well, he had died by then.

EMC: Oh.

AKS: He died in the early 30s.

EMC: Oh, then what happened to the newspaper then for that time frame when you weren't involved in the business, the family wasn't involved?

AKS: There was a hired head of it.

EMC: So you intended to work in that business and take it over then?

AKS: I planned that.

EMC: Oh, good. Well, where were you when Pearl Harbor was

attacked, December 7th, 1941? Do you remember that episode?

AKS: I was in Detroit. I was in an automobile riding somewhere. It came on the radio. And I was in Detroit. The Navy had something there that I was involved in.

EMC: Oh, interesting.

MS: Subchasers.

AKS: What?

MS: Your subchasers.

AKS: Subchasers.

MS: It was being built.

AKS: Yes, that's right, my subchaser, an SC Boat, SC-511, was being built in Detroit.

EMC: Oh, now, when did you join the Navy? If you graduated in 1940, did you join the Navy at that point in time or did you go directly into the newspaper business?

AKS: Oh, I think I was in the newspaper for a few months and then --

MS: You went to the "Prairie State."

AKS: "Prairie State," it was the old Battleship Illinois, which was tied up in the Hudson River.

EMC: Right.

AKS: It later moved up to Columbia University.

EMC: Oh, so you decided to join the Navy then shortly after 1940 then or '41?

AKS: I was in the Navy for, I think, a few months before Pearl Harbor.

EMC: Oh, you were?

AKS: Yes.

EMC: Well, what motivated you to join the Navy?

AKS: So I wouldn't get drafted.

EMC: Oh, really. Oh, that's good.

AKS: I preferred the Navy.

EMC: So you joined and why did you select the Navy?

AKS: Well, because I grew up in Newport, I suppose.

EMC: Close to the water, I assume. Did you have a boat when you were a youngster or did you sail?

AKS: I sailed a little.

EMC: You had --

AKS: Rowboats.

EMC: You knew about the Navy, and the Navy presence was obviously here, so I think it made an impact on you. So when December 7th, 1941 rolled around, you were in the service already? You were in the Navy.

AKS: Yes, I was.

EMC: And what was your reaction to the attack on Pearl Harbor? You were in Detroit.

AKS: Well, I guess I was astounded just like everyone else was. I remember thinking that the ship that I was on or was supposed -- I was sent out with another officer. He was the Captain and



I was everything else, so it was supposed to go back to New York for outfitting in October, and we arrived out there, and it was hardly anything more than a keel with a few ribs in it, and it wasn't finished until the following June when we left. We finally left Detroit.

EMC: So June '42 was when the ship was finished. What company was making it out there, do you remember? I didn't even know they had shipbuilding in Detroit.

MS: It was in Wyandotte, Michigan. Remember, Wyandotte?

AKS: Yes, it was a shipbuilding company on the Great Lakes that built a lot of small ships. This was only a 110 footer.

EMC: Oh, I see.

AKS: Subchaser, they called it. SC boat.

EMC: Oh, very good. Well, to get back to your joining the Navy. You said you did join, and where did you have to go enlist in the Navy? Was there a recruiting station in Newport or did you have to go to Boston?

MS: Boston?

AKS: I'm not sure where I went to sign up. I signed up and

went on a month's cruise and then three months out on an old battleship that was tied up in the Hudson River.

EMC: Oh, that's probably the "Prairie State."

AKS: "Prairie State."

MS: He was a 90-day wonder.

EMC: Oh, so did you go to Columbia University on this V-7 Program, maybe?

AKS: Yes, but it wasn't at Columbia. It was on a ship at that point, and the ship later was moved up the river.

EMC: Yeah, that's what somebody else was telling me, yes.

AKS: That was earlier than that. I was commissioned in June of '41.

EMC: Yes.

AKS: Before the war started.

EMC: Right. You went on cruises then. I assume that was your training?

AKS: Yes, I went on a cruise. What was it? I've forgotten the name of the ship. It was a big cruiser.

MS: Tell what kind of an officer you were when you graduated.

EMC: Oh, well, when he graduated from officer training?

MS: Yes.

AKS: Deck officer.

MS: Engineering officer.

AKS: Oh, that's right.

MS: Yes. Why?

AKS: I had one year of college mathematics because I either took that or I had to start Greek. So I took the math, and the Navy at that time thought that one year of college mathematics was enough to make an engineer out of me in the Navy, and I'm the kind of guy that turned the key to turn on the ignition and that's about all I know.

EMC: Oh, boy, so did you ever have to function as an engineering officer? I would assume that was in the engine room.

MS: Yes, you were first lieutenant on the --

AKS: Oh, yes, I was the engineering officer on an SC Boat, and I was EVG, and I had been over to the War College through a few friends and taking courses in navigation and all that summer and then I went to the V-7 school and found myself an engineer, which kind of annoyed me, but I soon became DEVG. I dropped the E.

EMC: What's DVEG?

AKS: Deck hand engineering.

EMC: Oh, deck hand engineering officer. Now, what would a deck officer do?

AKS: Stand deck watches and navigation and seamanship.

EMC: Oh, I see. Oh, good. That's interesting that you went to the War College and took these courses even before you -- or shortly after you enlisted, I guess.

AKS: They weren't really courses. A couple of us were going over there. The other fellow's father was an officer there, and he had a chief petty officer sort of taking us through some.

EMC: Oh, informal instruction. Oh, that's interesting. Well, you were a thrity-day wonder. Was that it?

MS: 90-day wonder.

AKS: 90-day.

EMC: 90-day wonder. They made an officer out of you after that. Where were you assigned after you finished your 90 days, your three months of training?

AKS: Okay, we went to Florida right away.

MS: I didn't know you then. You went to Detroit. I don't know if you went somewhere before that or not.

AKS: Oh, that's right. I went to Detroit to be on a subchaser, the CS-511, that was being built in a shipyard out on the Great Lakes, and I arrived there, I think, in the fall of -- early October maybe of '41, and expecting to be back in New York for outfitting at least by the middle of November, and the ship consisted of a couple of ribs, keels and a couple of ribs in it, and when we realized that, the captain and the other officer assigned to it; he was the captain and I was everything else, thought maybe we ought to find something a little better to do right away, quick. The Navy said, no, if we move you out, we've got to move somebody else in, so we stayed there and brought the

ship to New York the following spring, late spring.

EMC: Oh, so you were in Detroit for a good long time?

AKS: Yes.

EMC: And were you supervising the construction of this ship?

AKS: Theoretically, yes.

EMC: At least watching over what the shipbuilding company was doing with it. How did it get back to New York? Did you sail through the St. Lawrence Seaway?

AKS: Well, you go from Detroit across the lake to a barge in the Erie Canal and across the barge in the Erie Canal to the Hudson River and down the Hudson River to New York.

EMC: Oh, that was the way.

AKS: For outfitting, yes.

EMC: So you ended up in New York, I guess, was it at the Brooklyn Navy yard probably?

AKS: We were outfitted there.

EMC: Where did you head to?

AKS: Then we went down to Key West. That is where we were based. And we escorted ships through Key West to the mouth of the Mississippi, up the river, and we'd go up to New Orleans, and we would take them around to Cuba.

EMC: Oh.

AKS: The naval base there.

MS: Guantanamo.

AKS: Guantanamo, Cuba.

EMC: What kind of ships were you escorting?

AKS: Big ships.

EMC: Were they merchant ships?

AKS: Merchant ships, yes, big merchant ships that were loaded with stuff, and they were very slow. The speed of the convoy would be about eight miles an hour.

EMC: Oh, that is slow.

AKS: It would take forever to get anywhere.

EMC: What was the role of the subchaser in escorting these?

AKS: Looking for submarines. I remember the first time we got over to New Orleans, there were half a dozen masts sticking up within sight of the mouth of the Mississippi. German submarines just sat there in the Gulf and popped them off as they came up. That was in early '41 before they got out all these escorts from the convoys.

EMC: Oh, even before the war began?

AKS: No, no.

EMC: Oh, it must have been '42.

AKS: Yes, it was.

EMC: Must have been '42, yes, that they were there, because the German submarines were in the Atlantic waters all up and down the coast.

AKS: They were up in the Gulf, too.

EMC: In the Gulf. They were a menace. That's right. So you mentioned the ship was 110 feet long, was that it?



AKS: Subchaser.

EMC: Subchaser.

AKS: SC Boats, they called them.

EMC: SC Boats, and how many men did it hold on it? How many in the crew?

AKS: Three officers and twenty-two men.

EMC: Twenty-two enlisted. And you were the deck and engineering officer on that?

AKS: The chief petty officer really was the engineering officer.

EMC: Right, and how was your captain? What did you think of him? Was he a good captain or?

AKS: Oh, he was a good guy, yes.

EMC: Was he --

AKS: Been in the naval academy for a couple of years.

MS: Came from an old Navy family.

AKS: What?

MS: Came from an old Navy family.

EMC: Oh, I see.

AKS: His name was Cluverius.

EMC: Oh, yes, yes, I've heard that name. So he was regular Navy.

AKS: No, he wasn't. He had not finished at the naval academy.

EMC: They took people out and made them captains of ships, uh-huh. Well, that's kind of interesting.

AKS: He joined a reserve outfit.

EMC: Because a lot of the fellows who were in the service were reservists that I've interviewed, just for the duration of the war, and that was it. So would you say your ship was a happy ship, a compatible ship?

AKS: Oh, sure, the little ones were very compatible.

EMC: What was your berthing like, your sleeping accommodations?  
Did you have a private area or --

AKS: The officers had a small room right underneath the bridge.  
I think we had only two officers in the beginning and then we  
had a third one, and there were three bunks in it.

EMC: Oh, so you had to share.

AKS: And then we had quarters, enlisted people forward and then  
the aft, I think were twenty-two enlisted, a couple of chiefs.

EMC: And that was it. How was your food on the subchaser?

AKS: It was pretty good, because we were operating from Key  
West to New Orleans a lot of the time, and we could get a lot of  
food in New Orleans, and if we had to, we could buy it at the  
market, sign a paper for it.

EMC: Oh, sign a check, so the Navy paid you well.

AKS: Yeah.

EMC: Did you ever have any encounters or were you ever shot at  
by German submarines when you were making these rounds between  
Key West?

AKS: No, I think when the submarines knew that there were escorts on these convoys, they stayed clear pretty much.

EMC: How many subchasers would escort a merchantship? Were you the only one or were there more?

AKS: No, there were usually three, I think. Three, maybe, depending on how many were available, of course -- three, anyway.

EMC: And you must have been armed with guns?

AKS: Yes.

EMC: What kind? Do you remember what kind of guns you had on there?

AKS: Well, we had two -- a 40 millimeter and two, 20s and a bunch of depth charges.

EMC: So if you saw a submarine, you'd obviously let go a depth charge probably or if you knew one was in the vicinity.

AKS: Well, we had a sounding unit.

EMC: Oh, sonar.

AKS: Sonar.

EMC: Yes, that was a development, a fairly recent development, I guess.

AKS: Yes.

EMC: And radar was recent, too, but that was -- you probably weren't equipped with radar, were you?

AKS: I think they were putting it on just as I left the ship.

EMC: That was later, I think, in the war. So was that where you basically spent most of your time in the Navy, escorting the vessels back and forth between New Orleans, and let's say, Cuba?

AKS: Well, I did that for a year, I guess.

EMC: Did you ever get off and have leave in any of these ports?

AKS: Yes, once I had leave for New Orleans for us to get married.

EMC: Oh, really, did you get married in New Orleans?

AKS: No, got married in Sewickley, Pennsylvania.

EMC: Oh.

MS: That was because your ship went into dry dock.

AKS: Yes, it went into --

MS: -- in Daytona Beach.

AKS: Yes.

MS: The shipyard there.

EMC: Oh, so the ship went into dry dock at a certain point in time and had to be repaired, or painted or something. Oh, so you got married then?

MS: So we got married then.

EMC: Oh.

MS: And then we went to Daytona Beach. He was there for probably two months and then back to Key West.

EMC: Oh, so you followed him as a Navy wife.

MS: Yes.

EMC: -- so to speak in those days.

MS: We had to have all kinds of inoculations to go to Key West, because they were afraid it would be cut off from the United States, and we had to have yellow fever and all these things that you would have in the tropics, if you were going to the tropics, and they were very strict about that.

EMC: I wonder why they thought you'd be cut off?

MS: Well, they didn't know what was going to happen in the war. See, there were Germans submarines there, and they didn't know what might follow, I guess.

EMC: Wow.

AKS: It was quite a long way from Miami to Key West.

EMC: It is. I've been up and down there by bus.

MS: We took the bus, and it took about seven hours during the war to take the bus. The road had not been improved at all, and it was a long trip, and we couldn't get any Miami radio stations even. We could only get Havana on the radio.

EMC: Oh, for --

MS: It was like a little fishing village, you know, it really was.

EMC: In those days.

MS: In those days, it wasn't fancy at all.

EMC: No.

MS: It is now.

EMC: It is now.

AKS: Well, we were darn glad to be there.

MS: Yes, that's right.

EMC: And why were you glad to be there of all places?

AKS: Well, because otherwise, I might have been in the Mediterranean or Honolulu.

EMC: Sure, oh, at least you were in the US.

AKS: They had good quarters for the officers' wives in a very nice hotel.



EMC: Oh, you lived in a hotel then?

MS: We lived first at the La Concha, which was not taken -- not taken over by the Navy and then we later got into the Casa Marina, which the Navy was running for officers, and the La Concha was the closest I ever came to being hungry, because they had very little food, and all they had there was the food that the local -- king fish and red snapper, that was about it, and they'd have all these fancy things on the menu, but it all boiled down to king fish and red snapper, no butter, no rolls, no orange juice, as I remember, no eggs, and that was about it.

EMC: A restricted diet.

MS: Yes, but then when we got to the Casa Marina, things changed and that was great.

EMC: Oh, because the Navy provisions --

AKS: Officer's quarters.

EMC: Was the Casa Marina a hotel as well?

MS: It was a hotel, and it had been a resort hotel, and they had the same maitre d' there that had been there in the dining room when it was a resort hotel, and he looked down his nose at the Navy wives. He thought we were just, you know, nothing, and

scum, riffraff.

EMC: Oh, really. Oh, how awful.

MS: Oh, yes, he thought we were the pits.

AKS: It was a pretty important hotel. Only very wealthy people from the big cities came there.

EMC: And then all of a sudden, the Navy arrives. Oh, did you just have a room, was that it?

MS: We had a room there.

EMC: Oh, okay.

MS: And then he was gone most of the time, and after dinner the wives would go down and sit at the end of the pier and look to see if the convoy was coming in, and we'd sit and just stare at the horizon and look for a blinker, and somebody would say, I think I see one and then it would materialize that it really was a flashing blinker and that meant that the convoy was coming in, but it might not be your husband's convoy. It might be someone else's. But we'd all go running back to our rooms hoping for a telephone call.

EMC: Oh, that must have been quite an experience for you.

AKS: Fifty years ago, sixty years ago now.

MS: Sixty, yes.

AKS: Sixty.

MS: Sixty years ago, sixty-one. Actually, sixty-one years ago.

EMC: It was '43 --

MS: Yes.

EMC: -- that you were down there. Just as an aside, what did you do with your time all day besides sitting at the end of the pier in the evening?

MS: Well, I can't really remember. We'd read and play bridge and walk around town, go to the beach, swim.

EMC: Well, that's busy enough.

MS: It must have been pretty boring, but we did a lot of walking all around town, and it was a place we thought that we were very lucky that Al was an officer, because it was much more pleasant for officers than it would have been for enlisted men to live there, but then his brother went -- you tell them. This

is your interview.

EMC: What did your brother do?

AKS: My brother only had two years of college, so he could have gotten in as an officer early on, but he didn't get in and then he waited a while and then it was too late, so he was an enlisted man, and he was sent to Key West to get on a ship, and the ship had left the day before, so he was -- he was given some job locally and stayed there. I've forgotten what he was doing.

MS: I don't know, but they loved it. They rented a little house, and they got to know the local people.

AKS: He got a shore job there and was there for the rest of the war, wasn't he?

MS: Yes, he was.

EMC: Oh, really, oh, he was lucky.

AKS: Yes, he sure was.

MS: Tell about the subchaser training center.

EMC: Was that at Key West as well?

MS: No, that was in Miami.

AKS: That was in Miami.

EMC: Now, did you have to go through subchaser training before you went on the ship?

AKS: Well, I didn't. As a matter of fact, I went on a ship when it was being built, and they took me off after I'd been captain for a while and then I went to the subchaser training center and then I was on the staff there.

EMC: What did your training consist of? Do you remember, in Miami?

AKS: I gave a lecture on the duties of the first lieutenant, and I gave it; it's a two-hour lecture, and I gave it three times every Monday for nine months, and if you'd like to hear it, I --

EMC: You probably still know it by heart.

MS: And you taught docking.

AKS: Yes, I taught docking.

MS: At Fishers Island.

AKS: I'd take ten officers out, and we'd dock an SC Boat, and we'd dock it at Fishers Island, which is a little island going into the port of Miami.

MS: It's very fancy now. It was a Vanderbilt. They owned the island, and they had an estate there.

AKS: That's right.

MS: And it's now very fancy with condominiums and private homes.

EMC: Oh.

MS: And a ferry service going back and forth.

EMC: It must be quite large to hold all that.

MS: Yes, it was quite large.

AKS: Big island there.

EMC: Oh.

MS: Must have had a pretty good dock if you could dock your subchasers there.

EMC: Oh, so you gave instruction and you gave lectures when you were at the subchaser school. Now, did you move up to Miami at that point in time?

MS: Yes, yes, we did.

EMC: So this was after the service in Key West?

MS: Yes.

EMC: Oh, I see. You had finished your actual duty on the subchaser.

AKS: They sent me up to the school and a friend of mine who was on the faculty wanted to get out, and he said, wouldn't you like the job, and I said, oh, yes, I would, and so I got his job, and we were there for about a year.

MS: We were there for a year and then you went out to the Pacific.

AKS: Then I went out to the Pacific.

EMC: So you went out to the Pacific in about '44, I would think.

AKS: It was '45 by then, wasn't it?

EMC: Oh, could be '45.

MS: Buck was a year old. It was '44. '44 you went out there.  
In the spring of '44, I think it was, wasn't it?

AKS: When did the war end?

EMC: '45.

AKS: I was out there when the --

EMC: August.

MS: You were out there. You were all set to be in the invasion  
of Japan.

AKS: Yes.

EMC: Well, if you were sent out to the Pacific, where were you  
sent in the Pacific?

AKS: I was sent to a ship.

EMC: Do you remember what kind of a ship it was?



AKS: It was an AKA.

EMC: Which is a --

AKS: An attack transport.

EMC: Oh, attack transport vessel.

MS: Didn't you carry beer mostly?

AKS: What?

MS: You carried a lot of beer. Do you remember? Tell that story.

AKS: Oh, yeah, that was a funny story. I got on the ship in New York, I guess, it was. And I think we had something, like, was it 50 thousand cases of Ballantine's Ale --

EMC: Oh, my heavens.

AKS: -- to take to the officer's club in Honolulu. And we had to put a guard on it, because there was no way of locking it up, and we had a guard on it. And a guard over the guard, and we only lost a couple of cases.

EMC: Oh, that's not bad, considering.

MS: Tell her what your job was.

EMC: And yes, what were your duties?

MS: You were the first lieutenant.

AKS: I was the first lieutenant, yeah.

MS: And what did you have to test the fire extinguishers?

AKS: The what?

MS: The fire extinguishers. Remember that one?

AKS: Oh, yes, the fire extinguishers. We had this load of Army types that we were taking from one place to another. They knew that if you took a fire extinguisher and squirted it into a bucket of salt water, it cools the beer very nicely, and they had all been issued beer when they got on board our ship, which seemed a little unnecessary for us, but that was Army, and we soon found that all our fire extinguishers did not --

EMC: You couldn't use them anymore?

AKS: Yes.

EMC: They were worn out. Oh, isn't that something.

AKS: We had to fix that up in a hurry.

EMC: Now, when you were assigned to this attack transport, where was it sent in the South Pacific? Did it have a specific port that you went to?

MS: I think you were on the move most of the time, weren't you? You were in Leyte Gulf for a while. I know that.

AKS: Yes.

EMC: Oh, there was a battle there in October of '44.

MS: Yes.

EMC: Were you involved in that?

MS: It was after that.

EMC: Oh, okay, after that.

AKS: That's so long ago.

EMC: Right, it's only sixty years ago.

AKS: I got on the ship in Honolulu. Did I or did I get on in the West Coast? Do you remember?

MS: Well, you went out to San Francisco to be on one and then you -- I don't know, they sent you back to Virginia, and I think you got on the ship at Virginia Beach in Norfolk -- in Norfolk, because we went down to the Old Point Comfort Inn with Buck when you were there, and you got on that ship, and I watched it sail out and then the regular Navy wives told me, oh, you should never do that. That's very bad luck.

EMC: Oh, really, waving the ship good-bye.

MS: That's what they said. Maybe they don't do that, they don't say that anymore.

EMC: I don't know.

MS: They went from there, back out to the Pacific.

EMC: Were you in any --

AKS: You never lived in Honolulu, did you?

MS: No.

AKS: Yes, Charlotte Weis was out there, my cousin.

MS: Right.

EMC: Were you involved in any battles in the Pacific?

AKS: No.

EMC: No, no, battles. You were lucky. He didn't get involved.

AKS: By the time I got out, I think I had arrived in the Philippines the day that the war ended, I think.

MS: Yes.

EMC: August 15th, 1945.

MS: You went into Tokyo Bay though.

AKS: Yes.

MS: You got there, I guess that was after the war was over, yes.

EMC: After the cease-fire.

AKS: I think I went ashore and walked around.

EMC: Oh, really.

MS: Didn't you go to, you went to Hiroshima, too, didn't you, after the bomb had been dropped, because you said there was nothing. Everything was flattened except for a few safes sticking up. The rest of it was just pulverized.

AKS: Went ashore there and walked around.

EMC: Oh, you did. Nobody thought about the radiation, did they?

MS: I guess not.

AKS: It was really terrible, just sand and a few safes.

EMC: Oh, that's miserable, so you were preparing for the invasion of Tokyo, I guess, but you went in after VJ Day.

AKS: Yes, by the time I was ready to go it was all over.

EMC: Do you remember what your reaction was to the end of the war, to VJ Day?

AKS: Glee.

EMC: Glee. Did you celebrate at all?

AKS: Well, I was on a ship, and I guess we probably did some celebrating. I don't really remember.

MS: I thought he'd come home right away, but it didn't work out quite that way.

EMC: Well, what happened to you after the end of the war? What did the Navy do with you? You were on this attack transport and where did they send you next?

AKS: Well, I got off the ship not too long after that, and the ship I think after I got off, I think the ship went from Japan over to China, doing what, I don't know, goodwill.

EMC: But you got off of it before then?

AKS: Yes, I got off of it before then and got home.

EMC: Oh.

MS: Didn't you have to wait for a replacement?

AKS: No, the Captain said he wouldn't let me go until a replacement, then a so-called, "Al Nav" -- (Are you familiar with the term?) came out saying that everybody that had X number of points go to such and such a ship for transportation to San

Francisco. We were in Japan at the time.

EMC: Oh, oh, so you could be released then.

AKS: Everybody that had enough points.

EMC: Right.

AKS: So I snubbed my nose at the captain. See you later.

EMC: You needed a point system to be released.

MS: I thought he said he wouldn't let you go until your replacement came.

AKS: Yes, that's what he said until that "Al Nav" came out.

MS: Oh, okay.

EMC: Until the "Al Nav" came out and then you were out. When you were finally discharged from the Navy and where were you discharged?

AKS: I suppose, when I got back to San Francisco. Was that it?

MS: Well, you had terminal leave for quite a while, and I don't know -- did you have to go to Boston to get your papers? Do you



remember?

AKS: I don't remember.

MS: I don't remember.

EMC: So were you out by the end of 1945, do you think?

MS: Yes, by December of '45 you were out, yes.

EMC: And do you remember what your rank was when you left the service?

AKS: I was a lieutenant commander.

EMC: Oh, a lieutenant commander. Oh, that's quite good. You were promoted then along the way.

AKS: Well, everybody who was an ensign on such and such date is now a JG and the JGs are now lieutenants. It was automatic.

EMC: Oh, so you went up the chain, so to speak.

AKS: I think I was a lieutenant commander about the same time that I got out, wasn't I?

MS: You said you had the half stripe, the extra half stripe put

on your uniform to please your mother.

AKS: Yes.

MS: That's what he always said.

EMC: Oh.

MS: Because he did get out just about the time he made it.

AKS: I got paid as a lieutenant commander in all the leave that I had coming to me.

EMC: Well, you were in for '41, '42, 43 -- you were in almost five years.

MS: Five years, yes, he was.

EMC: That is a long time.

MS: He used to carry his civilian clothes around and wonder if he'd ever wear them again.

EMC: Oh, yes.

AKS: I had a sport jacket that you carried around.

MS: Yes, a sport jacket and gray flannels, right, that's right.

EMC: Can I ask you a question, Mrs. Sherman?

MS: Yes.

EMC: When your husband went to the South Pacific, where did you decide to live?

MS: Well, I went back to Sewickley, Pennsylvania, where my grandmother lived, and she was very warm and welcoming and seemed to want to have me, so I went with my son, who now is 60 years old, and he was then one and a half, and we went back and stayed with her.

EMC: Oh, that's good.

MS: I've never forgotten one interesting thing. It was Christmas Eve when we left Miami Beach, and we were going -- he was being sent out to the ship that was going to be in the Pacific, and we went by train, and the train was absolutely jammed, and we stopped in Washington and had to change trains to get on the train to go out to Pittsburgh, and we were there for probably about six hours between trains, and I had to feed my baby, and there was no place to feed him, and I finally ended up putting him on the floor in the lady's room to try to get a bottle out of my bag to feed him, and just then, I don't know,

something flew by me that I just couldn't feed him there, and I didn't know what to do, so I went to Traveler's Aide and then they had the most wonderful group of women that -- I've forgotten, they were women volunteers. They had a place in Washington where people like me could go and take their babies to have a nap or a bath or feed them or whatever, and they had a woman with a station wagon, and she took me over to this very nice place, and I don't know what I would have done without it. It was just absolutely marvelous, then we got back on the train, and I remember we went through Baltimore, and there was a whole platform loaded with soldiers. They had a leave, a 48, I guess it was, and they were hoping to get home for Christmas before they were sent overseas, and our train was absolutely loaded. People were standing in the aisles and sitting on their suitcases, and we had to leave them on the platform. We couldn't take them, because there wasn't room on our train, and I always felt so badly for them. To think that that was their one chance to get home before going overseas.

EMC: And not enough planes.

MS: Those were rough days.

EMC: Yes, they were. How did rationing effect you?

MS: Oh, that -- you couldn't get anything really, but we were lucky, being in the Navy, we had a C ration card. It seems to

me. It was a C rationing. We had more gasoline than most civilians had, and I think we had points to buy meat, and I think maybe we were a little more -- we were treated a little more generously because of his being in the service. We had more points, if I can remember.

EMC: That's okay.

AKS: You getting all that on tape?

EMC: I'm getting all that down. Did you have a car when you were in the service?

MS: Yes, we did.

AKS: Living in Miami --

MS: Yes, we did. In Miami we did. We didn't have it in Key West. But we had it when they were in Miami. How it got there, I can't remember, but I know we had it.

AKS: Clara Anthony sent it down on a freight car.

MS: Oh, she did?

AKS: Yes.

EMC: Oh, that must have been the way if you didn't drive it.

MS: It was Rhode Island F1916, and we now have 1914, and your brother has 1915 -- sorry we didn't keep that, but we gave it up during the war.

AKS: We've had 1914 in the family since 1901.

EMC: Oh, wow, so you've kept that license plate, isn't that something. That's amazing.

MS: We still have it. It's nice.

EMC: Well, the war must have been quite a challenge for you, too, moving around, following your husband, but you were young.

MS: We were young, and some way or other everybody else was in the same boat, and you kind of just do what you had to do, and you know, things changed drastically, and you'd hope they'd improve eventually, which they did, but it seemed like it would be an awful long way off. It was a long five years.

EMC: Oh, yes, it was.

AKS: The teaching job in Miami was pretty easy.

MS: We were very lucky to have shore duty at that time.

AKS: Lucky duty.

MS: Yes, we really were.

EMC: You had an easier war -- your husband did.

MS: Yes, than a lot of people. We certainly did have, absolutely. But I remember when I spent the summer with Ms. Sherman in Newport. Is it running out?

EMC: No.

MS: And when he was out in the Pacific and a friend of ours, who had been in PT Boats came home on leave, and I saw him one night, and he said, "Oh, what's Al doing?" and I said, "Well, he's on an AKA out in the Pacific." And he said, "Oh, they're just sitting ducks."

EMC: That's nice.

MS: Thanks a lot.

EMC: Waiting to be shot at.

MS: But he didn't think too much of the AKAs, but anyway. You're lucky it wasn't shot at, he was very fortunate I think to

get back without anything --

EMC: Oh, yes.

MS: -- except just difficult times but not nearly as bad as many people had.

AKS: Very true.

EMC: That is true.

MS: He lost a lot of weight because he was seasick most of the time.

EMC: Oh, that's interesting, not very good.

AKS: Oh, I got over that after a while. I just didn't eat much.

EMC: If you have that, it's pretty bad.

MS: Yes.

EMC: I should have asked you before, did your family have any Navy connections at all?

AKS: No.



EMC: It was your Newport --

AKS: My father was quite deaf, so he wasn't in World War I at all, wasn't involved in that.

EMC: It was your Newport connection that kind of compelled you to go to the Navy.

MS: It was Captain Gibson.

AKS: Yes.

MS: Captain Gibson had quite an influence on you, I think, in going into the Navy.

AKS: Yes.

EMC: And who was he?

MS: Well, I think he was a father of one of Al's best friends, and he probably would have been an admiral, right, you always said he would have been, but he had had a very bad stroke, so that he was retired by the time World War II came along, but he was a brilliant man, and his brother-in-law Admiral Tarrant and another admiral, who was quite important in World War II.

AKS: They were quite a Navy family.

MS: And you were very fond of him, and he had quite an influence on him, Captain Gibson did. You used to talk to him a lot. I think he influenced you to go into the Navy.

EMC: He steered you in that direction.

MS: Yes.

AKS: Well, Newport's a Navy town.

EMC: It is that.

AKS: I couldn't have gone into the Army. I wouldn't have been allowed back in town.

MS: That's right.

EMC: You would have been ostracized. Well, can you sum up your naval career for me? What was its significance for you, its impact on your life, if any? That's a tough question I know.

AKS: I don't know.

MS: I think it matured you.

AKS: Matured me fast, I think, yes. Faster than I might have matured if I hadn't been in the Navy. And I mean, I look at my own children that are the same age -- I guess, I really enjoyed the five years and made a lot of friends.

EMC: That's good.

AKS: Glad to get out.

EMC: I'm sure people were.

MS: But you had a lot of respect for the Navy.

AKS: Yes.

MS: They did a marvelous job of taking people like you and training you to do something that you never thought you'd be doing.

AKS: We were known as 90-day wonders.

MS: And doing it in such a way.

EMC: And doing it successfully.

MS: Yes, all these people, I don't know if it was ever done really to --

EMC: Amazing. Get the best out of them.

MS: Yes, they knew who would be capable of doing a certain job, apparently, and they'd train him to do it, and they'd pick right up on it. Wonderful.

AKS: Plus first they made an engineer out of me because I had one year of college math, and I'm the kind of guy that turns the key this way to turn the engine on and that's it.

EMC: And that's it.

AKS: So I got out of that. I became DEVG rapidly and dropped the E as soon as I could after taking some courses in navigation and seamanship.

EMC: Did what you were comfortable with. Did you maintain any connections with the Navy today here in town?

AKS: Not officially, no.

EMC: Or unofficially?

MS: You were in the Navy League for a long time. You're not anymore.

AKS: Yes, we go to Navy parties.

EMC: Are you a member of the Foundation, the War College Foundation?

MS: You're a founding member.

AKS: Yes, I'm a founding member.

EMC: That's certainly a naval affiliation. They have the Current Strategy Form and the lectures and all that that they sponsor. Did you find it difficult to return to civilian life in any way or was it just a very easy transition.

AKS: If I did, I have forgotten it by now. It's many, many, years ago.

EMC: Easy transition. What did you do after the war?  
Mr. Sherman, did you return home to Newport after the war?

AKS: Certainly did. We had been married by then. We had, Buck was what two years old by then?

MS: Yes.

EMC: And did you continue in the newspaper business? Were you the editor of the Newport Daily News?

AKS: My father owned it.

EMC: Right.

AKS: He bought it in 1917, and my brother and I inherited it, so I don't know what my title was.

MS: But didn't he leave it -- when he died -- he died at the age of 55 in 1934 and didn't he leave it so that it was in the hands of trustees, and they would decide when you were 30 whether to sell it or whether to keep it, because they depended on you to be the one that would run it, right?

AKS: I guess.

MS: And if they thought you were able, then they would keep it, turn it over to you and your brother, Ned. That's no help, is it? Would you rather go inside?

EMC: No, that's all right.

MS: Maybe I can close this.

EMC: We're just about to finish, so you ran the newspaper until you retired?

AKS: Yes, my brother and I did. He retired before I did.

EMC: And when did you retire?

AKS: When I was 66. How old am I now, 76?

MS: No, dear, you're 86, about to be 87.

AKS: Oh, I guess I've been retired for 20 years.

EMC: Twenty years.

MS: And you bought your brother out?

EMC: Oh.

AKS: I'm afraid I did, didn't I?

MS: Yes, you did and then you gave the paper to your children.

AKS: Yes.

EMC: Oh, do they run it now?

MS: We have four grandchildren involved with it.

EMC: Oh, wow.

MS: And our son is publisher now.

EMC: And your son is the publisher.

MS: Albert Sherman, Jr.

EMC: Right. That's very good. I thank you very, very much for the interview. If you don't have anymore comments on your naval career or anything to add, we can close, and I'll get this typed.

AKS: Oh, I always look back on it with a smile. I enjoyed it, particularly with so much Navy around here, you know, and growing up a lot of my friends were Navy Juniors.

EMC: Thank you very much.