

[Sam] Dick, why don't you just go ahead and relate some of your stories.

[Dick] Okay, Sam. Since you want things that pertain to the Coast Guard, maybe I should tell you first of all how I became aware of the Coast Guard and began to become involved with the Coast Guard. This goes back to 1928. I had been graduated from high school for a year and had tried to go to college at George Washington University and had run out of funds and I got a job with the Royal Blue Line Sightseeing Company in Washington, D.C. which is my home town. And I was a barker, or what they called a lecturer, on a sightseeing bus making the various trips around town. Toward the end of my stay with the Royal Blue Line, they gave me a regular twice-weekly trip to the Naval Academy in Annapolis. And I had a small, 12-passenger bus and I both drove and lectured and served as the guide when we got out of the bus in points of interest in Annapolis and the Naval Academy. So that I became very familiar with the Naval Academy and with midshipman and their routine and so on and adopted the idea that maybe I should try to go to the Naval Academy since my college tries sort of flopped. And then I began going around Washington to try to get the interest of a representative or a senator from nearby who might be willing to let me take the examination, either as a principle or an alternate and I failed again badly. I got no interest whatsoever, but in one of the offices a kindly soul said one day, why don't you try the Coast Guard Academy? And I had never heard of the Coast Guard Academy, in fact, I had never heard of the Coast Guard. But they told me that in a small, red-bricked building at 15th and Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., I could visit and talk with somebody about the Coast Guard Academy and get some information which I did. And I became very interested. It sounded to me like it was the small addition of the Naval Academy and that is what I had wanted in the first place, so I decided that I would take the exam. I looked over the sample questions in the catalog and they didn't seem to hold any terror for me. I recognized all of the math problems and I made the mistake, however, of not doing very much brushing up. With the consequence that I flunked the math. And in those days, the Coast Guard entrance examination if you flunked the math, they didn't look any further. They just told you you were through, so I was so notified and it didn't make me happy, but it made me very determined. I wanted now to go to the Coast Guard Academy and by gad, I was going to make it. I knew it would have to be another

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year. Well, I signed up at a prep school and went to Emerson Institute in Washington, D.C. over near DuPont circle to get as many subjects as I could in preparation for the Coast Guard Academy exam. I had to go in the evening because I had a job at Barber and Ross Hardware Store in downtown Washington during this same period, making the lowly sum of \$12 a week incidently. But it kept body and soul together and kept my respect in the family and we went along like that. Well, I took the exam the second time and I did quite well and in fact, I came out number two and won an appointment to the academy. Well, eventually the day came when I had to leave hearth and home and start out on my lifetime adventure, as it turned out to be. And I got on the Federal Express from Washington's Union Station and went to New London overnight and arrived in New London in those days at about 4:30 in the morning. It was hardly light and this was on the 12th of August in 1929. I didn't know then, but found later that my class had been divided into three sections and I was in the first of the three sections to report in. I got off the train in New London and I saw another young man about my age, laden with suitcases. I was walking behind him toward the end of the station and decided that he must be going to the academy too. So when we arrived in the station, he sat down and I went over and stood by him and introduced myself and I asked him if he was going to the academy. He said he was and that his name was Jack Enthorne and he was from Baltimore. He had been on the same train with me of course. So, then he began to act somewhat aloof. He didn't seem to be too interested in me, but I was quite interested in him, because I wanted a companion to get to the academy with. So he was breaking out paper and pen and I asked him what he was going to do and he said "I am going to write a letter to my mother." So, I didn't have any paper or stamps and envelopes. So I said "well, that sounds like a good idea" and I sat down beside him and said "may I borrow a piece of your paper?" And he gave me a piece of paper and I started to write. When I got finished and he was finished, I said "heh, how about an envelope?" So he gave me an envelope and I addressed the envelope. And then I said, "how about a stamp?" Then I borrowed a stamp from him and by this time, he was really getting disgusted with me. And he was so snooty as a matter of fact that I asked him "heh, what's going on?" He said, "well, I don't know how well you stood coming into the class, but I wound up number four." And I said, "really, that's

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interesting." And I said, "I was number two." Well, you couldn't have seen a more deflated personality than that at the moment. But anyway, we went out to get directions to go to the academy and nobody seemed to know very much around the parade area around the station about how to do this and there were street cars running in those days in New London and somebody suggested a street car. Another fellow said, "look it's not that far, why don't you walk everybody does." So, we got directions to go down Bank Street to a place called Chapel's Coal Yard and right alongside Chapel's Coal Yard, there was a street or an alley and it was called Spar Yard Alley as a matter of fact. You go down Spar Yard Alley to the waterfront and there are the train tracks and the bridge coming over Shaw's Cove and a footbridge alongside which pedestrians could use. So, we went on our way and we were hauling our luggage and Jack said he had one suitcase that he said was full of books, so heavy in fact that every 50 to 100 feet, he had to stop and sit on the suitcase and catch his breath. Well, we kept on going, he got across Shaw's Cove, we went through a culvert under a street that was probably the dirtiest, filthiest, muckiest place I have ever seen in my life. And we came out on the other side and went up a short hill to a place called Howard Street that went up to the entrance to the academy. We were only about a half a block from the academy entrance at that point and I could see these two pillars on either side of the street that went into the academy reservation and a little sentry box on the left side and the place didn't look too good to me -- remembering the beautiful Naval Academy. I thought what am I getting into here and then an enlisted man, a sailor in whites who had only one arm came out of that sentry box to greet us, I almost turned around and started home. He was very pleasant and he told us that we were the first two members of the class of 1932 to enter the academy. And he said he would call the office of the day and they would come and meet us and escort us in. The office of the day turned out to be Ensign Bill Scheibel who had just graduated that year 1929 and the other members, two others, one was Georgie Miller and the other was Charlie Parrot. Three of them were waiting for us. Only Bill Scheibel on this date. Well, he took us in and we walked up the road, dragging our bags and he pointed out the cadet barracks down the street, after passing through stone row, the officer's quarters on the right side and the library on the left side all built of granite. And he said we couldn't occupy the cadet

barracks at that time because they were being renovated, but that we were going to go down to the waterfront down to the dock and be quartered on board the *Alexander Hamilton*, which was to me a wondrous thing. This beautiful, big ship. She was a three-masted barquentine and she had a stack. And I found out later the reciprocating engine and a scotch fire tube boiler which I fired for a good many hours later on.

[Sam] And coal?

[Dick] And coal burning, coal fire, you bet. But here we were and we were to stay there for awhile and so we were allowed by Bill Scheibel to pick any bunk that we wanted so Jack and I picked one of the double bunks. He picked the top one and I picked the lower one which I came to regret because I would always get my bunk made before he did in the morning and then he would walk all over my clean, folded sheets to make his bed. Anyway, the academy came and went and I maybe spent some of the happiest days of my life as a cadet during the three years I was at the academy. And either by coincidence or a miracle or what have you, I didn't change my number at all. I was number two every year I was at the academy. Two going in and two coming out. I graduated number two. I never could reach or beat Bill Snyder who was the senior man.

[Sam] How large was the incoming class?

[Dick] Our incoming class was 70 some. I have forgotten exactly what the figure was.

[Sam] And you graduated how many?

[Dick] 28. We had a total of 76 at one time. With the turnbacks we got from the class ahead and of that 76, we graduated 28. Well, my first permanent station after graduation was the *Sirenack* [phonetic] in Galveston, Texas and before that time came, I was married to my present wife Julie. Her name really is not Julie you know, it was Mildred. She was Mildred Gallup of the Gallup's of New England. We have just received recently a Gallup family geneology which is about yeh thick -- about two inches, maybe about 11 by 8 or something like that -- full of Gallups. Even I am in it by virtue of the marriage that we got. But I had to go down to Galveston in the ship from New London. She had been on a cruise and then Julie came down later over land, by train. But I have a lot of very interesting experiences in the *Sirenack* [phonetic]. I was in

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her for 37 months. The Commanding Officer at the time I reported in New London was Dovey K. Thompson, young Key Thompson's father and some month's later, he was relieved by Louie Leon Bennett, both of them were commanders at the time. And from then on, it appeared that when the spirit moved them they would swap jobs. One would be in headquarters doing what I don't remember and the other would see over the *Sirenack* [phonetic]. But I must have been with them two or three times it seems during the 37 months that I was with the ship. The executive officer when I reported was Siefert Olson, Lt. Commander Siefert Olson. He had been an engineer. He was an engineer in the Coast Guard when they decided to drop the corps of engineers and the use of the E and the purple between the stripes. And he qualified and became a general duty officer, a line officer and also qualified for engineering. Siefert was not the best of execs and he had some peculiarities. One of the things that we had fun with Siefert was he was taking a sort of a correspondence course in how to increase your vocabulary and the thing was called something like *A Word a Day*. The idea was that using the material that they sent to you, you would study the word, look at the word, know how to spell it, know how to pronounce it, know what the syllables were, where the accent was and the meaning of the word and then you would try to use that word as much as you could during that day. And according to that theory, at the end of the day, the word was yours. Well, when we, the JO's in the *Sirenack* [phonetic] found out about this, we were about to have a field day. We would sneak into Siefert Olsen's state room and find out what the word of the day was and then every time we heard him use it we would try to discredit his use of it or the meaning implied by giving a totally different meaning. And we had the poor guy really going over the jumps.

[Sam] That was sort of dirty pool wasn't it?

[Dick] Yeah. Well, it was kind of dirty pool, but we thought he had it coming to him.

Because he was the kind of a guy that when you went to him at the end of the day and asked permission to leave the ship, he would go down a whole list of things that he had told you do and want to know whether you had done them or not or how much progress you were making before he would let you go. And we didn't think that was very good. But it was still a good ship. We had a lot of good shipmates and a lot of good experiences. Well, my classmate Lauren Seager

was with me in that ship for a couple of years. I stayed three years and he was only there a couple. And Willard Smith who was the class of 33 and later commandant of the Coast Guard came along the following year when he graduated. So there were some good people in the ship.

[Sam] What sort of duty was the *Sirenack [phonetic]* doing?

[Dick] The *Sirenack [phonetic]* was on what might be called routine Coast Guard patrol in the Gulf of Mexico. We would go out for a week and stay in for a week and maybe it was ten days. The schedule varied somewhat, but it was a matter of going out and cruising at fairly slow speed.

[Sam] Were you involved in anti-smuggling rum?

[Dick] No, the rum war was sort of tapering off at this point. There wasn't so much whiskey and bottled spirits being smuggled at that time as there was Belgian alcohol and most of it was coming in on the upper east coast at that time.

[Sam] Explain Belgian alcohol.

[Dick] It was grain alcohol and I don't really know. I think it was in cans or jugs or something like that. I didn't ever see any as a matter of fact, but life on the *Sirenack [phonetic]* was good. I was married, of course, as I said. We had our first child, Bill, after the first year we were there. And so, I became interested in the mess bill in the *Sirenack [phonetic]*. And I thought that the mess bill was a little rich for my blood considering the fact that we were under at first a five, then a ten, then a 15 percent cut in pay because this was during the depression. And so, much to the surprise, but gratification of my mess mates in the ward room, when I offered to take the job of mess treasurer permanently, they acceded. They were glad to accept. So I took over the running of the ward room mess. And I say this with absolute honesty and a little pride that before they finally kicked me out of the job, I got the mess bill down to \$7 a month. Now, this is 1932 and 33 you understand.

[Sam] \$125 a month was base pay?

[Dick] \$125 was base pay, \$1,500 a year was our base pay as an ensign, but it was honest. I kept honest accounts and didn't steal anything from the general mess. I used a lot of general mess foods, of course. In fact, I got into a little trouble at one time. I decided that my analysis of

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the mess accounts indicated that one of the most expensive things that we had in our mess was tea bags. Now this is in the new era of tea, but tea bags were new at that time. And yet, the officers in the ward room liked to make tea, tea bags. So I thought gee, these are terribly expensive up at this specialty grocery where we got them, a place called Ganglers. And I said, we are going to have to do something about that. So I thought the mess attendants do nothing but sleep in the afternoon, so what the heck. I bought loose black tea from the general mess. I drew cheese cloth from the quarter master's stores. I got string, string was easily available. And I turned these mess boys to, instead of letting them sleep all afternoon, I turned them down to the ward room pantry, putting a heaping teaspoon of black tea into a little square of cheese cloth and tying it with a string tightly, but then I was up against a problem. I had to have a tag. All of the tea bags had a little tag on them and I had to have the tag or they would know that these were manufactured tea bags. So I told the mess attendants to save all of the tags and they don't throw the tags away. Remove the tags and put them on the manufactured tea bags. And you know, I got away with that for about a year. And one night, we were having supper and we were at sea and I was sitting next to Freddie Vederick, who was the navigator. And Freddie was dipping his tea bag and he happened to look at the tag and he turned to me and said "Dick, where are you getting your tea bags these days?" and I said "oh, Ganglers" he said "I think you better talk to those people," he said "I think they are giving you old stock." Well that involved some curiosity on the part of the other people at the table and before the conversation was done, I had been discovered and did I take a rip. We had another thing on that mess bill deal. We had a second class steward, a Philippino by the name of Vanegos and he was conscientious and a good steward and I told him that I thought that the mess bill was costing too much insofar as their commuted rations were concerned. I said, I thought they were eating too high on the hog and I suggested to him that he kind of cut down on the quality of the food they were eating and eat some more of the way we did. I didn't want them to eat any more poorly than we did, but I thought that they could eat about the same as we did. He said he would do it. One afternoon shortly after this, I was in my state room and I heard an awful racket down below in the ward room. If you remember those ships were open two decks over the ward room. And I went down

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into the ward room and it was coming from the pantry. So I went into the pantry and here was one of the steward's mates, they called them later, but mess attendant's they called them in those days. And this guy was inside the locker in which we kept the food. These steel mesh lockers and there was a padlock on it. He was inside and it was locked on the outside. He was banging on the door wanting to get out of there. I said, "what are you doing here?" He said "Vanegos, Vanegos, he put me here." So I sent for the steward and he had the key anyway and he came down and he let the boy out of the locker and I sent him off. And I said "Vanegos, what in the world is going on here?" He said "you told me we should cut down on the food and have meat and rice and something like that. He objected, so I put him in the brig." We had another incident in that ship. We used to go over to St. Petersburg on the east side of the gulf every year for short-range battle practice and small-arms target practice. And on this particular year, we had a draft of recruits from the recruiting station in Atlanta and they didn't give them much in the way of basic training in those if any at all. We got this group of raw recruits and in the bunch was a young, Greek boy. Tall, blond and good looking boy. He really looked like a Greek Adonis, but he was kind of thick between the ears and as a result as you might expect, the crew took advantage of it. He was the one they sent to the engine room for the bucket of steam and that sort of stuff you know. Well, getting ready for short-range battle practice, some of the crew got a hold of him and said now look, "your job is going to be to put the paint on the projectiles that we use to fire from the five-inch guns through the target. And the paint is the way we tell, when we look at the target, we tell which set of pointers manning the gun fired that projectile. But this paint has got to be fresh, it has to be wet so to leave some on the sides of the hole that it makes as it goes through the target. So they said that is going to be your job. So the day that we fire target practice, you go down to the paint locker and you draw a bucket of paint for each of the colors that we are going to use and get a paint brush and a bucket. And you stand by the muzzle of the gun and when the gun is fired, when the projectile leaves the muzzle of the gun, you take a swipe at it with this paint brush and that's how we'll know whose projectile it is. And do you know that on the day we fired -- everybody was busy and had forgotten all about this practical joke that they were trying to pull on this kid. He came up on deck with paint buckets and

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brushes. He was going to paint those projectiles as they came out of the muzzle. Well, one of the terms, the tours that Louie Bennett was the skipper, his wife Clara who was a big, assertive woman. Heart of gold. She was a wonderful gal, she really was, but she tried to wear the pants in that family and succeeded most of the time. And we were over on the east side of the gulf for the same deal, a short-range battle practice and small arms target practice, when we got a message telling us to return to Galveston to take a delegation from the major league baseball commission or association or whatever it was that was having a convention in Galveston. Take them for a ride around Galveston Harbor. After which, we would deliver them at the dock and then cast off and go back over to St. Petersburg to resume our battle practice and small arms target practice. We couldn't figure this out as we steamed head long across the gulf to the westward. We went in, went to the dock, picked up these people and took them out for a steamboat ride around the harbor and back into the dock. They got off and we shoved off and went back over to Petersburg. We found out ultimately that what had happened was that the Bennetts lived in the Buckineer Hotel which was the nice hotel right on the boulevard. That is a sea wall in Galveston and at dinner, breakfast, supper whatever, Clara had run into people from this baseball association and gotten acquainted with them and one of them mentioned to her that they thought it would be nice if they could take a ride in the Coast Guard cutter *Sirenack [phonetic]* as part of their convention activities. And she said, "well, that would be nice, but that's impossible because they are over at St. Petersburg on the eastern side of the gulf and they are in battle practice and small arms target practice. And "no, you will never get them back over here." Well that guy's dander got up and he got on the phone with somebody in Washington, D.C. and the result was that we went over and back again just to give them a ride around the harbor. Well, I eventually left the *Sirenack [phonetic]* after 37 months.

The next job was in the *Thetis*. That was the 165-foot patrol boat. And she was out of Boston. In fact, she berthed at the Naval shipyard which they called the Navy Yard in those days. I went to her and Norman Stiles was the Commanding Officer and Nat Fulford was the Executive Officer and Bill Childress (Childers?) was the next in line until I came along. I was one year senior to

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him. So I became the navigator. And, we sort of brushed the rum war while I was on the *Thetis*. We were in New England, of course, and that is where a great deal of the Belgian alcohol was being smuggled in. But it was a very friendly sort of situation. There was very little hostility such as had been reported in earlier years. When we fell in with a rummy, we knew that she was just as blind too and waiting for an opportunity to get past us and get it in. In particular, waiting for fog. In those days, we had no radar, of course, so if it got foggy, all they would do was wait until we were out of sight in the fog, they would douse their lights and make a dash for the beach. Otherwise, we would just lay too along near them, hold to. And one boat that I remember had a very queer name. It was *Madapalapadoo* and she was obviously laden with something and we were pretty sure it was alcohol because she was deep in the water. But she was still pretty speedy and we got to know some of the people in the crew of that ship. And we would exchange newspapers, magazines, even potatoes, onions and things like that. We did that fairly often, very friendly until the fog descended and then it was the cat and mouse game. They would take off and we would try to catch them. While I was in the ship, we never did. Never did catch them. When we lost them in the fog, that was the end of it. We had no radars back then.

Well, I was only in the *Thetis* about five months and then they sent me down to the *Algonquin* which was a 165-foot ice breaker and she was stationed in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. We went down to her just before Christmas and that turned out to be a very happy assignment. I was only in her about a year, but the skipper was Lyndon Spencer. And he was a prince. One of the best, maybe the best skipper I ever had. And the exec was Dickie Hoyle (class of 27, I believe). K.S. Davis, Kenneth Stoten Davis was the navigator. I was a student engineer. I had been assigned as student engineer in training. My classmate, Gibby Lynch was the Junior Officer. And we had one interesting experience involving a dead whale or I should say a long, dead whale. This whale drifted into Marblehead Harbor and the people in Marblehead set up a screen and the *Algonquin* was ordered to go up and get the whale and tow it off to sea and destroy it. Well, by the time we got up to Marblehead, we found out that the Marbleheadians or whatever they call themselves were impatient. They wouldn't wait for us. They commissioned somebody and had a boat there

to take hold of this thing by the tail and tow it out. And once they got it outside of their breakwater, to hell with it, they just let go of it. So we cruised around trying to find it. We never did find it. But we got a message, a screaming message which originated at a place called Beverly Farms Beach which was a very snooty area up there. It seems this whale had drifted ashore and become beached at Beverly Farms Beach. So we were told to go in and get it and take it out and destroy it. Well, when we got there, the whale was high and dry. The tide had gone out, so we went ashore and looked at it and we saw that it was long dead and it was a terrific stench. Within 50 feet of that whale it was terrible. So, we, I say I was an engineer so I was not directly involved, but a line was put on the tail of this whale as being the most solid part we could take hold of and we went back out to the ship at anchor waiting for high tide which was going to be about midnight. Well, midnight high tide meant that our boat crew had to go in. The towing crew with a power boat, which was going to do the initial pulling out to the ship, had to go in a couple of hours before that. Well that was the night of a big prize fight. The Lewis Schmelling fight I think it was. And Gibby Lynch, my classmate, was really a fight fan and he wanted to hear this fight (this was radio and not tv) in the worst way. But this was his job, he was the JO on deck. He took the boat crew and they went in and he missed the fight. I told him about it afterward. They did get the whale towed off the beach and we simply tied the whale up to the stern of the ship and waited for daylight. Daylight came, we got underway, towing the whale slowly until we got about 50 miles off shore and then the captain announced that he was going to hang a couple of demolition mines onto the whale and blow it up. Well, this was still Lyndon Spencer and I didn't know he had this streak in him, but for some reason, he wanted to be economical of the mines. He didn't want to hang any more on than he had to. I know that Gibby Lynch was trying to talk him into hanging about six mines on this thing to really give it a good blast. And I think he had to settle for something like two. So they went out and they had to climb out up on this whale in order to do this job.

[Sam] How big was this whale?

[Dick] I'm estimating now. I'm guessing 60 to 70 feet long.

[Sam] Could have been a blue whale then.

[Dick] I don't know. I'm not a whale man. I don't know what kind of a whale it was.

[Sam] That would be a monster.

[Dick] It was a big whale. And the blubber was so soft and rotten that when the boat crew climbed up on the carcass, they would sink to ankle depth in this stuff. Well, they hung the two mines on the mammal and they retreated and they fired the plunger and set off the mines. And there was a big explosion and there was crap all over the place. And that whale opened up and he really smelled, but it really didn't break it up. It blew a lot of the blubber off him, but the whale was still intact. So, Gibby brought his boat crew back to the ship and told the Captain that they were going to have to do something else. Either hang some more mines or what. But he said "Captain, I would appreciate it and I don't mind going out there again, but I would appreciate it if you would get me a new crew, because these guys are all sick." So, the Captain said, "I'll tell you what, I think what we ought to do instead of hanging anymore mines on him it, we'll just steam back and forth through him and let the screw chew him up. So that's what we did. And I'm telling you, the first time we went through that whale, you can't imagine the stench. It was so bad, I went down in the engine room and I could still smell the stench. So I went up my state room and I got some Aqua Velva and rubbed it into my mustache so that all I could smell was Aqua Velva at least for a while. Well, I'll tell you, we finally did cut the thing up by steaming back and forth through it, but it took some doing. Well, eventually Lyndon Spencer was transferred. He was sent to the district in Boston. He was relieved by Lester Wells, who was the lieutenant commander and I had never known Lester Wells before he came aboard as CO.

[Sam] Wasn't he an engineer?

[Dick] He may have been an engineer. He may have been an Siefert Olson type and qualified for. I don't know that he was an engineer. I'm not sure of that Sam. But at any rate, I was the student engineer, but also I had the corollary duty of managing the ship's service store. In fact, if I remember correctly, I started the ship's service store. I don't think they had one before I got to the ship and I talked to the skipper and he was agreeable, so we started a ship's service store. And I was given an expanded, metal locker down in the vicinity of the shaft alley where we stocked those few things that we had. We didn't have very much, just the necessities you know.

But among other things, we had those old fashioned tubular, brass cigarette lighters. That you know, you slide and it had a little wheel under it.

[Sam] Zippos?

[Dick] They weren't the Zippos that we know now, but we had three different kinds of these in that little ship service store. We had one kind that was made in the United States. We had another kind that was made in Japan. We had a third kind that was made in Austria. All of them were brass and all of them looked alike, but there was a difference. There was a difference in price for one thing. The Japanese was the cheapest, the U.S. was the middle and the Austrian was the most expensive. And the quality of workmanship was obvious. The Austrian was by far the best of the line. The U.S., I would say was second, and the Japanese was the least. Well, I was working down in the ship's service store one day, checking the stock or what have you, but who should appear but the skipper, Lester Wells. He came in and I showed him the stock and was telling him how we operated and how much business we did. The usual talking to your skipper about the store for which you were responsible. And then he said that he was interested in buying a cigarette lighter. So, oh boy, I wanted it in my hat. I broke out all three and I told him about them and I showed him and told him how much they were and he said, "Well, which one do you think I should buy?" I said, "there is no question about it Captain." I said, "I think you should buy the Austrian. It is the best lighter. It costs the most, but you get more for your money. It is the best lighter." So he said, "well, I don't know, I don't know." And he had the three of them there and he would finger them and he wound up buying the Japanese lighter. And that's when I began to think that maybe he was a little tight. And he went off with thing. Oh, before he left he said "now aren't you going to fill it for me?" I said, "Well, Captain, I have no way of doing that." I said "all of our fluid here is in sealed bottles and I can't open a bottle and give it to you because then I can't sell it." But I said, "a lot of the crew have this and even Mr. Lynch he's got some of the fluid. He'll fill it for you I'm sure." So he did. He went to Gibby Lynch and got Gibby Lynch to fill his lighter for him. And then the next day, it was a fairly rough day and that ship was a real roller. It was almost a good a roller as the wind class turned out to be later. And the only way you could be comfortable when you didn't have something you had to do, was to

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get in your bunk. So I was in my bunk and my bunk was right next to the chief engineer's who was a chief warrant officer by the name of Eldon Waigo, a hell of a nice guy. And I heard the Captain approach Waigo's state room and he said something like "hello, Mr. Waigo" "yes, captain" and I could hear Waigo getting out of his bunk. And the Captain said "Mr. Waigo, I've got a cigarette lighter here." I couldn't see this you know, I could just hear it. But it began to get so funny that I had to stuff the corner of my pillow into my mouth to keep from laughing. He said "I've got a lighter here that I bought in the ship's service store yesterday" and he said "I really believe that there is too much tension between the underside of the flint against the wheel that causes a spark." And I could just see him doing this you know. And he said "do you have a toolmaker in the black gang?" And Waigo said "I don't know Captain, maybe we do, but I'm not sure," but he says "I'm a pretty fair toolmaker, what is it you would like to have done?" He said, "I would like to relieve the pressure somewhat against the flint." He said, "it is wearing out too rapidly."

Well, after about 11 months in the *Algonquin*, I was sent down to Port Everglades in Florida you know. That is just north of Miami. Ft. Lauderdale is the nearest place to it, to report to the *Mojave*. And so Julie and I went down and I relieved, no I didn't either. I was just going to say I relieved Paul Tremble, but Paul Tremble was on deck and I was a student engineer so I didn't relieve him, but he left the ship just before I came aboard so I had always thought I sort of took his slot, but I will never forgive Paul for not having told me about that ship. Because I went aboard that ship like a babe in the woods, innocent, white as the drifted snow and what I found was not a very happy thing. It was the worst ship I have ever served in and the situation was terrible. The captain was Carl H. Abel, called him Moe. The XO was Bob Fury. The navigator was Phil Shaw. Chuck Columbus was the junior officer after Tremble left. Emanuel Desay was the chief engineering officer. Ted Eave was the first assistant engineer. I was the second assistant, but I wasn't qualified yet. I qualified in that ship. Well, the ship was divided into two camps: the captain on the one hand and the executive, Fury, on the other. And Phil Shaw was with the exec and Desay was with the captain. The junior officers, Columbus and me, after I got

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to the ship, were sort of on the fence. We didn't know which way to go, we just tried to keep out of trouble. This was really a nasty situation. I went aboard and met the OD, who was Columbus and I showed him my orders. In those days, we didn't give them to the OD, we would take them on and give them to the exec, which I proceeded to do. And I gave my orders to Fury, I was shown where my state room was and I immediately got out the best suit of whites that I had preparatory to meeting the captain and reporting formally to him. And I put on my best-dressed whites, white shoes, had my jacket hanging up on the door, my hat with a clean cap cover, my sword was up on the bunk and then I proceeded to settle myself into my room. Well, I went aboard at about 9:00 in the morning and it got to be about 10:30 and I thought gee I ought to be seeing the captain so I went looking for the exec and he was in the ship's office. And I said "Mr. Fury, when am I going to meet the Captain?" And he put me off "Oh, I'll let you know, no hurry. I got all this mail here." So I said "ok" and went back into my state room and it got to be about 11:30 and pretty soon they were calling lunch and I went out into the ward room and met all of the other officers and sat at the table. And then after lunch, I went around to Fury at the head of the table and said "Mr. Fury, are we going to meet the captain pretty soon?" He said "well, we have quarters at 1:00, so right after quarters I think would be a good time." So I went back to my state room. When they called quarters, I put on my uniform and I went topside. I fell in with the officers and I saw the captain and I saw him looking at me. And he was giving me a pretty fishy-eyed stare. But I was doing what I thought I was supposed to do, so I stayed where I was. Right after quarters, I went to see Fury again and I said "how about it?" And he said "oh, I've got a lot of mail and I have to take this up to the captain and when I have it, I'll take you up there." I said, "okay, well let me know." I went back to my state room, I had hardly started to do more of the settling of my state room, when the quarter master came and knocked on my door. He said "are you Lieutenant Schmidtman?" I said, "yes." He said "well, the captain wants to see you, now." And he turned and started away and he turned back and said "I think I ought to tell you that he seems mad about something." I said "okay, thanks very much." So I put on my beautiful, clean jacket, my hat, strapped on my sword and I dashed for the ship's office to get the exec and he wasn't there. So I started looking through the papers and I found my orders thankfully. So I

grabbed them and I dashed up the ladder and I knocked on the cabin door. And the voice inside said "come in." In a voice that I later found was not Abel's voice at all. This was the voice he used on occasion. So I went in. I had side-arms on my sword that were in accordance with regulations, I kept my hat on. And I stepped in and I said "Sir" handing him my orders. "Lieutenant Schmidtman reporting for duty." He snatched the orders and he started to bawl the hell out of me for being on board his ship since 9:00 in the morning and not having the civility to come up and make my presence known or to obey the regulations and report. And then he said "and furthermore, when you come into my cabin, you take off your hat." And I snatched my hat off my head immediately. And then he sort of calmed down and he offered me a seat. I sat down, he exchanged pleasantries, inquired about my family and whether we were settled and so on and on. And finally he said "well, that's all thank you" and I left. And I learned later with much chagrin that his wife was in the state room while all this was going on. And getting to know the family pretty well later, I could see what had happened between the two of them. She egging him on and me taking the brunt of it. Well, other than that, it wasn't too bad in the *Mojave*, but it didn't last very long either because I got orders from the Coast Guard yard after only five months on the *Mojave*. And the ship was going up there for availability, so I stayed in the ship and went up to the yard and reported in as their first machinery superintendent. Now, I had only been qualified for engineering for about six months or less than six months. I was only in the *Mojave* five months. But the yard had just changed over to a Naval shipyard organization and in that organization there was the industrial manager which was the top engineering man in the organization and then there was the production manager who was the next junior to him. And under the production manager was a hull superintendent and a machinery superintendent. I was the machinery superintendent. Really wet behind the ears, but determined to do a good job.

[Sam] Do you recall which year this was?

[Dick] 1937. And the CO was captain Reinberg, Leroy Reinberg. A grand old guy if there ever was one. Milton Daniels, Commander Daniels was the industrial manager and Ed Kent was the production superintendent. The hull superintendent was a chief warrant officer by the name of McCann, chief carpenter and I was the machinery superintendent. Well, this was the old yard

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and not many people remember it, I'm sure, but the old buildings were pretty small and the rooms in which we were located was really small. McCann's and my desk were right against each other front to front. And then we sat behind the desk with our backs to the wall and barely room enough for a chair. Off the ends of our desks was a drafting table on which we could lay out plans and what not and there was not room for anything else. If somebody came in to call, the only place I had to sit them to talk to in that office was the waste paper basket on which I would put a clipboard. I would turn the clipboard over and put it on top of the waste paper basket, but it was still fun. And while I was on this tour, I came up with the thought that an organization as big as this ought to have an officers' club. They ought to have a place where officers could congregate and maybe a liquor locker where they could buy some booze and have a drink and sit down and have a comfortable rest. I started looking around and found there was a framed building down near the waterfront whose ground floor was occupied by a sick bay and the top floor was used for nothing but storage. And it was wide open, there were no bulkheads up there. It must have been a sail loft or something at one time. I later found out that that building was the first Coast Guard Academy ashore. In the days when the revenue cutter service had their school of instruction at Rundell Cove. Rundell Cove was the name of the body of water at the yard and I think they called it the school of instruction at Rundell Cove. Well, the cadets in those days, revenue service cadets, lived on board ship. They had an old ship called the *Dobbin* [phonetic] I think where they were birthed, but they took their instruction in this building. So it was the first Coast Guard Academy ashore that we had because it wasn't the Coast Guard then, it was the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, but that's where it all began. Well, I had the idea that we ought to be able to use a little come shaw, a little persuasion, on the part of some of the master mechanics there at the yard with whom I had gotten quite friendly to get some bulkheads put up on that upper, open floor. And to build a bar and maybe some lockers for booze. Then with all the ships going out of commission at the yard at the time, they were just being sold for junk. Why not take some of the furniture out: tables, comfortable chairs, even lighting fixtures and so on. All of which we proceeded to do. Of course, I should back up little. I first went to Captain Reinberg and said "I have this idea, what do you think about it?" Well, Captain Reinberg liked

his nip now and then and he thought it was a great idea so he said "go ahead." In the meantime, Henry Undercockrel Shoul [phonetic] who was in the class of 31, a class ahead of us also was at the yard. He was the ordinance officer, I think. He heard about this and he volunteered to lend a hand. So I thought, well that's good. We'll have one on the deck side and one on the engineering side and between the two of us, we ought to be able to get this thing going. Actually, I should say not engineering, but industrial side. One on the administrative side and one on the industrial side. And it worked out beautifully. We did get a lot furniture, we did get the bulkheads put up and the place arranged and pretty comfortable and the lockers built. And we got the state's permission to license us to buy booze and to sell it which we did. And I remember Captain Reinberg's favorite was Old Obaholt [phonetic] and it worked out quite well. Well, when I left the Coast Guard yard it was to go to MIT to learn to be a Naval constructor. The Navy had a course at MIT which was called Naval Construction Course 13-8 and it was concerned primarily with shipbuilding and naval architecture. And I was put in the class and I had a heck of a time making the grade. Because when I had gone to the academy, of course, it was a three-year course. And we were suppose to have a year of calculus: a half year of differential and a half year of integral calculus. C.H. Peterson was our instructor and he was hardly one more than one chapter ahead of us. And so we didn't ever get integral calculus, we only had differential. And I had never been exposed to differential equations and all of these things were prerequisites for a course that we were going to have the very first semester at MIT, called advanced calculus. We had a review of math during the summer beginning in July and up to the academic year began which covered everything from college algebra through differential equations. And I was struggling trying to learn these things that I had never been exposed to without too much success. So that when the academic year began, I was really having a struggle. And fortunately, we had a professor by the name of Douglas a professor of mathematics who had had us during the summer. He knew my problem and he was very sympathetic and because of him and his patience, I was able to survive and actually pass the course. There is no question, the first semester I flunked it. He didn't flunk me, he gave me a passing grade, but the second semester I caught on and I passed. In fact with an H as they say at MIT which is the equivalent of an A. I

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mean it is passed with honor H. So poor old Hubert Chaffey who came along behind me, he was the second one appointed from the Coast Guard to take this course. He didn't make it, but it wasn't because he didn't have the ability to do it, just as well as I did, but he worried himself out of it. He just went to pop and finally left. But at the end of my second year at MIT, I was doing as well as most of my eight Navy classmates and better than some. I got a call from our faculty advisor who was Professional Lawrence B. Chapman who wrote *The Marine Power Plan*, which was one of our texts at the Coast Guard academy. Did you ever?

[Sam] Yes.

[Dick] That was his book and he happened to be our faculty advisor. He sent for me and he said "you know, I just got a call from Dean Bunker." Dean Bunker was the dean of the graduate school and, of course, our whole class remembers the graduate school. Because it was a graduate course. And he said "he has just found out that you don't have any business being in the graduate school." And I knew exactly what he was talking about. When I entered MIT along with my classmates, we all had to fill out forms, applications and one was for the graduate school. It had your name, whatever. And where he said baccalaureate degree or degrees. I simply wrote graduate U.S. Coast Guard Academy, which was not a fib of course. I had no degree. And Dean Bunker two years later had just discovered it. And Chapman said, "however, he has a solution." And I said "what is that?" He said, "well, you have been writing a lot of library theses, you and your class" and I said "oh yes." He said Dean Bunker says "pick the best one in your estimation, submit it as a bachelor's thesis, and MIT will give you a bachelor's degree. So, I said "gee, that is pretty neat." And he said "yeah, I think so." And I said, "but you know it is a lot of foolishness." He said, "what do you mean?" I said "look I've been here for two years. I am making the grade honestly. Although I had a bad start, I am making the grade. Now what difference does it make whether I've got a couple of letters behind my name or not. If I can cut the mustard, why don't I belong here and why don't they allow me to finish on these terms?" He said "You mean you mean you don't want a bachelor's degree?" I said "No, no that's not what I mean. That's not what I mean at all, but it sounds like it's a little pompous. I mean they insist that I must have a bachelor's degree. It would make more sense to me if they made people take

an exam coming into this workplace to see if you could meet the workload or not, not look for the letters behind your name." He said "well, what are you going to do about it?" I said "I think I will write to my boss." That was Admiral Harvey Johnson, he was engineering chief at the time. I was one of his fair-haired boys I guess and he is the one who had sent me down to MIT to start this whole thing. So I did, I wrote to Harvey and the answer I got from Harvey was "he didn't care what I did as long as I didn't get kicked out of MIT." So I went back to Chapman and I showed him the letter. He said "what are you going to do?" I said "I'm just going to let Dean Bunker stew in his juice and see what he does. The ball is in his court now." And I went about my business. Well, that was in the later part of 1940 and in February of 1941, the Navy wanted their people. We weren't due to go until May of 1941. The Navy wanted their people, so the class was broken up. They were sent to duty in the Navy. And, of course, with no class I had to go to the Coast Guard. So I went to headquarters and then they sent me out to the Toledo Ship Building Company to start building the *Storis*. And I didn't know until the middle of 1941 whether I was going to get a master's degree or what they were going to do, but I did. They sent me a master's degree. And I don't know how many times this happened in the past, but I got a master's degree with no bachelor's degree. Later on, the academy gave all the graduates, including the three-year types a bachelor of science degree in engineering.

[Sam] And that B.S. is probably appropriate.

[Dick] Yeah probably. Well chosen. Well, my experience at the Toledo Ship Building Company was not only educational, but very pleasant. A nice bunch of people at the Toledo Ship. The head man on the scene was an Englishman by the name of Joel Rollinson, who had come over to Canada from England for Lloyds of London. And then they moved down into the states and got this job at Toledo Ship. He was the junior superintendent. We got along famously. We liked each other and we liked each other's families and although we had a lot of battles, we settled them peacefully and amicably and we got along fine. However, the *Storis* was designed to be an all-welded ship. Toledo Ship was not really qualified to build an all-welded ship. They didn't have enough welders for one thing. The only welding that they did was to patch up riveted ships which came in off the lakes. And as he said in the days when it was a shipbuilding

company, which they didn't do anymore at this time – this was 1941. He says “they used to build them by the mile and cut them off every 600 feet and put a bow and a stern on them” and they were all riveted, of course. Well, that meant that they had a large crew of riveting people. All of the trades, the heaters, the riveters, the holder uppers.

[Sam] And the buckers.

[Dick] The buckers right. And they were only willing to take the contract for the *Storis* if the Coast Guard would allow them to put rivets in that ship. So the Coast Guard made, what to my professional opinion was, a mistake. They told them they would do it. They would let them rivet and then they would let them weld. Well, according to what I had learned at MIT, that is the wrong to do. If you rivet first then you weld, at least that is the way it was done, and the process of welding with the heating and cooling will loosen rivets. Now you have got a hole through the ship with a loose rivet in it. You've got a leak. It is not the thing to do. You either go one way or the other, but that is the way they went. That was the first step. In the second place, they didn't know how to build a welded ship. By which I mean, when you build a welded ship, you get plates out of the structural shop, the ship fitter shop and you take them down to the building berth and you have to put them up against the frame of the ship and hold them in place until you get it welded. Well there are systems that have been devised using clips and wedges so that without drilling any holes in the plate, you can hold it in place until the welding has been completed. Well, Toledo Ship didn't know anything about that. They are ship fitters. They are experienced, professional artisans -- just didn't know how to do that. So, it became my job to teach these people. Now, I was fresh out of school. I was a lieutenant a two-striper and much younger than all of these people, but it was a gratifying job and I enjoyed doing it. And Harold Wood was my number one man, he was the prospective engineer officer for the *Storis* and he hadn't been to MIT, but he knew about welded ships. So the two of us took on this job and we had a heck of a time and we made a lot of mistakes and maybe let a lot of things go that we shouldn't have. At one point, we were calling the ship Patches because they were forever drilling holes where they shouldn't and we were making them cut these things out and put a patch on it in its place. A case in point was the main sea chest doubler. Now this, of course, is a plate that is

quilted on over the regular shell plate the hull plating of the ship and the regular shell had been in place for some time. Now, they were going to get out the sea chest doubler that had to have an opening cut in it for the sea chest, of course. And then be placed up against the ship and held there until the welders had welded it in place. Well, this was still the summer of 1941, the war hadn't started. So they were still on one shift a day. And it was my practice to walk through the yard down the building berth and look at what they had done for the day before I went home. The yard was closed down and everybody had gone. So there I was walking down looking down under the ship and I saw these spikes sticking down. Horns coming down out of the bottom of the ship. So I went up underneath the ship and damned if they hadn't drilled holes in that sea chest doubler and bolted it in place. So I was fit to be tied. The next morning I was in Joel Rollinson's office bright and early and I said "damn it Joel, they have done it again." And he said "what have they done?" and I told him and he sent for the quartermaster ship fitter, old Tom Naylor and he came in and we told him. And he looked at me with complete honesty and he said "how were we going to hold it up there while we weld, are you going to put somebody in it to stand under it?" I said "of course not, you use clips and wedges. You remember, you heard that before, clips and wedges. And you weld the clip to the shell plate and the clip comes across the new plate and you drive a wedge in it to hold it in place. And that is what you do until you get it welded." He said "oh well." So I said "okay Joel, throw it out, get a new one." And I said "I'm going to give you a break, I'm going to let you plug wall the holes you put in the shell. I ought to make you take the shell plates off too, but I'm not." So, "okay" he said. So Harold Wood and I used to say "this poor ship, god knows how long she's going to last, but it won't be very long." And here it is 1988 and the *Storis* is still in full commission and going like gangbusters.

[Sam] 50 years.

[Dick] Oh yes. Woody ought to be telling. You have had Woody on one of these, haven't you?

[Sam] Yes.

[Dick] Did he tell you about the fuel tanks in the *Storis*?

[Sam] No.

[Dick] Well, the specifications called for the interior plating, the interior side of the plating in where the fuel tanks are to be treated not painted, but treated with linseed oil. A linseed oil treatment which would then dissolve in the diesel fuel and go out with the diesel, but would protect the plate from rusting, corroding. Well the yard had another idea. They had some kind of patented paint that they wanted to use which would do the same thing, but better and cost less. And, of course, this was at this point, a fixed-price contract. This is before the cost-plus days after the war started, you had a lot of cost plus. In fact the *Mackinaw* was cost plus, the next ship that followed it. But, some knuckle head in naval engineering headquarters went along with the idea and nobody beat it down so they were allowed to put this, I can't remember the name, it was something like musterol [phonetic]. You know the stuff you rub on you. It had a name something like that -- musterol. It wasn't Rustoleum. Anyway, they painted this junk on the plates that were going into the fuel tank and poor old Woody had to live with it after he left with the ship. When they left in October of 1942 for Boston and had to go out through the St. Lawrence River. Fortunately, their fuel filters were duplex. They had duplex filters, but he said they actually had to have a man standing constantly over these filters because this musterol was washing off and remaining in suspension. See it didn't dissolve like the linseed oil would have, it remained in suspension and when it hit the filters, of course, it clogged the filters. And when that happened, they had to switch over to the other side and pull the filter and clean it, put it back in. I think they wound up putting cotton or bunting or something around which they could just strip off and throw away. But they were doing that constantly all the way around to Boston because of these jokers. Well they were good people. I liked them, they were all good people. Anyway, poor old Woody lived to regret that one.

[Sam] They had probably developed that for use in a steam job for bunker oil rather than for diesel oil.

[Dick] I really don't know. I don't know why it shouldn't have done the same thing with bunker oil because it was thick enough so it may not have even washed it off in the first place.

[Sam] Yeah and you don't have to filter that.

[Dick] But diesel oil is very penetrating. It is like Liquid Wrench practically and it caused a lot of trouble.

[Sam] I had similar problems in my boat.

[Dick] An interesting thing happened in connection with the *Mackinaw* which was the next job the Coast Guard gave Toledo Ship and that was at the launching. Of course, both the *Storis* and the *Mackinaw* and common with most ships in the Great Lakes, it was launched side ways and they were dry docked. However, in the case of the *Storis*, she was a small enough ship so that there was plenty of room in the dry dock. In the case of the *Mackinaw*, the *Mackinaw's* beam was 75 feet and the dry dock was something like 80-feet wide. There was very little room to spare. And this caused my friend Joel Rollinson and others at the yard much concern. So much so that they contracted with the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, the Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering which was headed at that time by a fellow by the name of Capt. Byer, a naval architect and engineer. And they contracted with them to do a model launching series of tests and they built a scale model of the *Mackinaw's* hull. They built a scale model of the dry dock at Toledo Ship and then they experimented with three different levels of water in the dry dock to determine whether or not the ship would go off in the clear and drop or whether it would be damped as it slid down the ways sideways before it hit the water or at the fullest, when the dock was full of water whether it would be sufficient to actually stop here before she went causing her to pivot sideways into the dock. They wanted to know what was going to happen. They conducted the test. We got the results and it looked like it was going to be all right regardless of what the water level would be. But on the night before the launch, a northeast gale blew in and northeast gales, Toledo being at the southwest corner of Lake Erie always backed up a heck of a lot of water into that western end of Lake Erie. And it did on this occasion so that on the morning of the launch, the water was up over the edge of the dry dock. And I don't know how many feet, but it was about three or four feet above the edge of the dry dock and Joel Rollinson was about to have a fit and step it. He said now he was sure that they were in trouble. That definitely when the cradle when the launching cradle came down and contacted that water, well before it got to the dry dock, it was going to stop and we would be in

trouble. The ship would tip and fall over. And I didn't think that was going to happen considering the weight and mass of the whole business of the ship and the launching cradle that it would just keep going. I said I don't think you've got a thing to worry about. It is going to be all right. No, no he wouldn't accept it. Now Captain Byer, the head of the Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering at Ann Arbor had a class of naval reserve cadets, midshipman which he had proposed to bring down and witness the launching. So, I said to Joel "look, if Capt. Byer tells you he thinks it is okay, we launch." And Joel thought about it and said "well, I guess so." Well, my concern was that half of the Coast Guard and a quarter of the Navy and I don't know how many Army and others were there for the launching. Admiral Waesche's wife was a sponsor and Waesche was the Commandant, of course. He was there and people had gathered from all over, the hotels were full of them. And this big celebration was coming off the next day and to call that launching off, I said I just couldn't see it. But I still wouldn't have consented to launch if I didn't think it was going to be safe. So anyway, Capt. Byer finally arrived with his midshipman and we grabbed him and rushed him into the office and sat down with Joel Rollinson and talked about this. And he immediately said "No problem. Go ahead and launch, you have nothing to worry about." One thing we did, however, that turned out to be very smart. Originally, it had been decided that on the far side of the dry dock, they would have some stands for spectators so they could watch the launch. This was abandoned. The stands were, but we didn't allow anybody to go over there and it was dog gone good thing that we did because when the launch occurred those stands were washed entirely away. Everything was washed away, like in the Johnstown flood. So we were lucky on that point, but that was quite a launching. The good old *Mackinaw*.

[Sam] So it went off without a hitch?

[Dick] Well, as often happens with a side launch, when they cut the cables that were holding it back, she stuck. She didn't move, so then they had hydraulic jacks that they bring into play and start **pushing** forward and aft and when they do that, when you have to push usually one end starts before the other well they happened in this case, but it still didn't make any difference. It was only maybe a foot behind or something like that. It wasn't serious at all. After I left the

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Toledo Ship Building Company, Harvey Johnson sent me out to the University of California. This by now, we were in the war, of course. This was 1944 actually. And, as you may recall, we were having trouble with Liberty ships breaking in two, even breaking in three sometimes. And losing cargo. We didn't lose many lives. We lost a lot of ships and cargo and the Secretary of the Navy who was Frank Knox at that time designated Harvey Johnson, the Engineering Chief of the Coast Guard, which was in the Navy now of the war, to head a committee to study the problem and find a solution. And, it was called the Committee to Investigate the Design and Methods of Fabrication of Welded Steel Merchant Vessels. That was its title. And in the course of the investigation of the study, they had contracted with the University of California which had a tremendous – the biggest in the country – I think at that time, tinsel testing machine in their mechanical engineering laboratory. And a number of projects had been set up, among which was one to test the hatch covers of Liberty ships which were thought to be the trigger. They were thought to be the basic cause of these fractures. What would happen is a ship would go out loaded, get into an area of rough water and cold weather at low temperature and all of a sudden, bang, the crack would originate and cut the ship right in half. Just like that, she would be in two pieces. And it was what we call the brittle mode. In other words, it was like breaking glass. It was a brittle material breaking rather than a ductile material stretching which is what you would expect steel to do. So anyway, he said he needed somebody to go out and observe these tests and to be there on the job and to be his liaison, his contact man for things that might be and would be going on out on the west coast. So I went out there and I found this was one of the most interesting things I have ever done. It was really a wonderful experience to be in on this investigative work. But the machine as big as it was still wasn't big enough to test a whole hatch. So we had to take a corner of the hatch. The point at which we thought these fractures were developing. And we built a full-scale Liberty ship hatch corner and then we would pull it just as though it were being subjected to strain in the deck of a ship. And we learned a great deal. We learned, first of all, that what we were dealing with was a very hard, square notch. And, of course, mechanical engineers have known for ages that when you have a notch like that in a stressed structure, that corner is where the fracture is going to start and under proper conditions,

low temperature, high strain and pulled material, you will get a brittle fracture instead of a ductile fracture. So after we determined what we could from the existing hatch corner that was in the Liberty ships, we started trying to devise hatch corners that would do a better job as a solution. And in this endeavor we had a very interested observer – a graduate of the University of California at Berkley, in electrical engineering by the name of Harry Kennedy. And Harry Kennedy, a graduate of electrical engineering, went off after graduation to work for an electrical company and pretty soon after he had gotten into the electrical business, he decided that he had a bet for invention. And the way, this has nothing to do with the Coast Guard, I think it is interesting. The first job that he was _____ was Petaluma. Now we know Petaluma in the Coast Guard as a training station, the foundation knows it because they are building a big swimming pool there with foundation money and, of course, I am interested in the foundation. But in those days, it was known as the egg capital of the world. And one of the people that was producing eggs for storage and consumption was having trouble with a sanding machine. Now they used a sanding machine -- they sent eggs through a sanding machine to blast off the nest dirt and so on and at the very end, they patched the eggs through a bath of oil. And this was a very particular kind of oil. A very expensive oil and I have forgotten what kind of oil it was, but it was very expensive and it sealed the pores in the eggs and for cold-storage eggs, that was important. Well, they were having trouble with the thermostat regulating the temperature of this oil. And that is why they sent for Harry Kennedy. His electrical firm sent him there to correct the problem. Well as Harry used to tell the story, the solution to the problem was simple. You make some adjustments and everything was fine. But then he started to exercise his curiosity and he wanted to ask them, why must the oil be of this particular kind and at this particular temperature. He said “why couldn’t you use crank case oil for example?” Of course, he said crank case oil might be polluted with gasoline which would influence the taste of the egg, but ordinary crank case oil, but no gasoline in it might do just as well. “Oh, no, no, no, no, they said, it has got to be this oil and it has got to be this temperature. So he went home and he got to thinking about it. He said “I think these people are full of beans.” I think that I could design a sanding machine that would do a better job than they are doing at a much lower price. So he got in touch with them.

He said "heh, if I could do this with a cheaper machine and do the same job would you be interested?" They said, "oh, yes indeed we would, oh yes." So Harry designed an egg sander and he built a working model -- a full-scale working model. I don't know what kind of oil he was using, but it was cheap oil. And he had the sand and the blaster and so on and he invited some of these egg producers from Petaluma to come and see an inauguration of this new machine. So they came and as he told the story, he had this fella that he had picked up off the street somewhere to handle the eggs. And they had, I don't know how many cases of eggs, 30 to 40 cases of eggs to use in this show -- this demonstration. So Harry, after he went all over the thing and he checked all the settings and he looked in the one end and he went to the other, and finally, he said "okay gentlemen, if you're ready, turn the machine on and he said to his hired friend, start putting them in." So, he stood there and watched this guy putting them in case after case was going in the front end of the machine and then he took the people, let's go around and see what we have at this end. They looked at the other end and he looked and nothing happened, he looked inside, nothing happened. He said "heh, are the eggs still going in?" "Yeah, they are going in" "there is nothing coming out down here." So he pulled the switch and stopped it. Well, what had happened was that he had a vacuum just past the sand blaster which was supposed to suck all of the sand up out of the machine before the eggs went into the oil. Well the vacuum was set up a little too high and it was sucking all of the eggs up the stacks. He said, you never saw such a mess in your life up in that stack. But he went on to perfect this egg sander and he made a lot of money at it. He got out of the electrical business and continued as an inventor. And he is the man who invented the first machine welding procedure, call union melt. Harry Kennedy was the inventor of union melt. Well, Harry Kennedy also designed a hatch corner for Liberty ships which we were unable to break. Because the answer is, in a word, to convert a hard, square corner to a rounded, but not only in this direction but in all three directions it must be rounded so that the steel will be allowed to be ductile, elastic and not break as a piece of glass in brittle fashion. He invented a hatch corner that actually could not be broken. Well, the trouble was and there was always the catch. It was so expensive that ship builders couldn't afford to use it. So there had to be a middle ground, a less perfect type of hatch going in it. Just for the record, these

initial solution to the problem of the ship's breaking was what we called a crack stopper. And you are probably familiar with it. They would take a burning torch and just cut a slot in the deck, just inside of the gutter and the shell plate just below the deck outside, one next to the keel on either side of the keel and then put a double-riveted – rivet is the word here – double-riveted butt strap over the seam, the opening they had cut. And a brittle fracture might start, but it usually would stop at the first and sometimes we would go through to the second, but it would at least save the ship.

[Sam] So that was being done after the war?

[Dick] Oh yes, yes. Well, they know enough and I've been away from this for quite a while now, but they know enough about welding procedures and about shrinkages and so called locked up stresses, which is not a good term, now so that they don't have the same kind of problems that we used to have with welded structures. But, during the time we were working on this study, we used to look at the rivets in the San Francisco Bay Bridge as we would traverse between Berkley and the city and those columns are all riveted in case you didn't know. We would say "thank God for those rivets."

In this same job, we had a wonderful opportunity to go out to the Farallon Islands and inspect and go aboard the wreck of the Liberty ship, *Henry Berg* which came back from the South Pacific. And coming up in a fog to the Farallon Islands where they were due to change courses and head for the Golden Gate, they had radar, but somebody got fouled up and she piled up on the northwest corner of the Farallon Islands and broke up in three pieces. Well, we heard about it at the university which was where I was at the time. We couldn't wait to get out to the ship and look at her and here we had an example of what we were trying to find out about – what we were trying to solve. We wanted to see how she broke and take thickness measurements and photographs and sketches and so on and find out just how this thing happened – what the point of origin was and so on. So I was able to talk the 12th district into giving me. By this time, my staff out there, it was growing all the time and it had grown to about 20 some people. And we were all in the Coast Guard as people who were working on these projects were getting close to being inducted into the armed forces, the Coast Guard would grab them and give them either a

commission if they were a professor or enlist them if they were technicians and assign them to my staff. We called it the Coast Guard Research Unit is what we called it. Anyway, the district was willing to give us orders, send us out to the Farallons to give us the 19-foot motor surf boat with an enlisted crew from Alameda and we all went out. How did they get that 19 footer out there, I've forgotten? They must have sent it out in the ship. But we, the rest of us, flew. No, we didn't, I'm getting my stories mixed up. We all went out in this buoy tender with this 19-footer on board. And when we got out to the Farallons, we were faced with only one means of getting ashore. Of course, this has been going on for years. Yeah, come into a little cut in the rock and 20 feet up in the air was a derrick. A boom came out and it had a bucket or a basket or a platform that they would lower down, and the passengers would just get onto that and they would hoist them up. And in the case of our 19-footer they hoisted that up too and kept it up on the dock up there on top side. And the next day, we were lowered in the 19-footer and we went around the Farallons to the Henry Berg [phonetic] and when we got there we fortunately found some lines trailing over the side and one of the more agile enlisted people with us was able to scramble up the line and get on deck and then we made fast a jacobs ladder and he pulled it up and then we all got aboard. So we spent the day taking pictures and measurements and so on doing our thing and when it was all over, we went around back, got picked up again. Every day but one as I recall, we were able to go around. Well, we only missed one day of getting around to the wreck and on that one day our enlisted man went down on the rocks and collected abalone and one of my, in fact my JG and I, thought we would go around to the east end of the islands where there was a big bird colony a rookery and see what was around there. Well, we got bombarded by those birds to the extent that when I got home, I didn't know whether to send my jacket that I was wearing to the cleaners or sell it to the Pacific _____ Company.

[Sam] Is this a pause point? The machine just rolled.

[Dick] Well eventually, the war was over back to peace time ventures and I wound up as CO of the *Coos Bay* out of Portland, Maine. And believe me, at least in my experience, there has never been a happier ship than the *Coos Bay* when I was in her in 1951 and 1952.

[Sam] Now, she was one of the WAVPs

[Dick] She was an AVP 311 and my exec was Mike Benkert who was a two striper at the time and he, of course, was the secret. He was the answer. He had the happiest ship that I ever hoped to sail in. And the big thing we had facing us as I approached the end of my tour of duty was a trip to the refresher training unit down at Newport, Rhode Island. And as far as the records that I could find in the ship were concerned, the ship had never been through a refresher before. Not with the Coast Guard anyway, so we knew that there were going to be a lot of things that we were going to have to do from scratch. So we got all of the information we could ahead of time, of course, and we were working on it almost 24-hours a day and among other things, we went through our supply of helmets – steel helmets and plastic liners. And we found that a great many of the plastic liners were in such bad shape that they couldn't be used. So we had a little damage control shop on the after end of the deck house and they had collected all of these beaten up, no good throw away type plastic liners to be dropped over the side the next time we went to sea. Don't tell the environmentalists this, but in this happy ship, people had time to think of fun things to do. And some wag or maybe a group of them hit on the idea of let's not throw those liners away, lets fix them up, paint them, put designs on them. You know like pinwheels, 30 caliber shells sticking out and that sort of thing and maybe what we ought to do is start a space patrol. A *Coos Bay* space patrol and these helmets will be our mark of the space cadets and we'll have ranks and all that sort of thing. Well, this was all happening without my knowledge, I didn't have any idea that anything like this was going on.

[Sam] Was Mike driving this thing?

[Dick] Oh yeah. Mike was right there. He was in the forefront. And one day, Mike came up to the cabin and we were at sea. And he had a very stern look on his face and he said, "Captain, the crew is assembled on the mess deck and they would like to have you come down there." I said, "My god, what's happening Mike? Have we got a mutiny?" Well, he said, "I think you better come down. I think you better come. I think you better see this for yourself." Very stern looking. So I said "okay, lead the way." So the two of us went down the ladder and we went down the long passage from the starboard side. And as I stepped through the door into the mess deck, I could see people lined up on either side of the, like side boys and they had the damndest-

looking hats on and as I walked through, all of these eight, there were four on each side, four side boys on each side, they reached their right hand around behind their necks and they twiddled their left ear like this. That was the space salute that they had adopted and they were piping me on board into their spaceship. And they had a spokesman, mainly Mike Benkert, but they had ranks and they had other people and I've forgotten the ranks. Anyway, I was told the story about their originating this space patrol and adopting the hats and that sort of thing and they said "Captain, we would like to have you be our boss." And so they presented me with this space helmet. Can you see it?

[Sam] Yes. You have got a little twirly thing on top?

[Dick] Yes. A little spinner up there.

[Sam] Well, now can you salute?

[Dick] Oh sure, but you go like this you see.

[Sam] Does that make it twirl?

[Dick] I don't know whether it will twirl or not. Well, anyway, that was fine and there wasn't much notoriety about it until we went down to get our refresher training. And it was rough. We did very well as it turned out, but it was pretty rough. And after it was all over and we had turned around. We had taken the ship riders and the observers all in and let them all off at the dock and then we would cast and we were standing out of Newport Harbor. I was up on the bridge looking down on the _____ hole and I began to see people popping up out of hatches with their space helmets on – relaxing, you know. The tension was over and they were relaxing. And so I called the quartermaster and I said "get in touch with my steward and tell him to bring up my space helmet." So I got my space helmet on and I was standing up there in my space helmet. And what should come toward us past, but a Navy destroyer and we were passing port to port and as the Navy destroyer approached us, more and more people started coming up from down below with these space helmets on. And I could see the people on the bridge coming out with their glasses looking at us and saying what the hell is going on over there. Yep, good ole Mike Benkert and his space patrol.

Then when I left the *Coos Bay* I went to Cleveland. In the 9th district, I was Chief of the Engineering Division and during the time I was there -- that also was a pleasant, happy station assignment. And while I was there, Charlie Arington [phonetic]. Do you remember Charlie Arington? Well he was the comptroller, I think, at that time in headquarters and he had some of his field people checking on bases around the country and in particular, I know he went to the Buffalo base and to the Detroit base and he found that the inventories were just a mess. And so he wanted a true inventory of what was on hand and a decision made by his job -- as to what we were going to do about it. So, we went up and took the inventories and some of the results were quite surprising. For example, at the Detroit base, we found I don't know how many cases of United States flags with 45 stars in the field. We found distant saws like you wouldn't believe. They had enough distant saws to last a good 100 years.

[Sam] Good old hand saws?

[Dick] Carpenter saws, distant saws and so on. So Charlie was on the right track. They eventually sloughed all of that stuff out and they got it back in circulation except for the 45 star flags. I don't know what they ever did with those, but that was quite interesting. And then, along the same line, you've heard of Vern Gibson?

[Sam] Yes.

[Dick] Gib. Well Gib was chief of the civil engineering section in my division and a great guy and a very valuable assistant. He and I used to make trips quite often out into the field and visiting places like bases and electronic repair units and so on. And on this one occasion, we were visiting a life boat station up in the northern lakes somewhere. I don't remember the name of it. And looking through the station, we came to a locker and we asked the fellow -- the chief officer in charge to open the door and he said "I'm not very proud of this." And I said "never mind, open the door." So he put a key in the lock and unlocked it and opened it. It was like Fibber McGee's closet. It was filled practically to the molding of the door with brooms, swabs, soap powder. Lord, you name it, he had it. And in quantities that you wouldn't believe. This was a deep locker and it was full -- absolutely full. And I said "what in the world are you going to do with all of this stuff?" And he said "I don't know." And I said "what do you mean you don't

know. Didn't you order it? Somebody had to order it." He said "oh yeah, I ordered it." I said "why did you order it?" He said "have you ever seen the life boat station manual?" And I said "well I've seen it, I wouldn't say I was really familiar with it." He said "well, there is a section in there on supplies and it says plain as day that I am supposed to submit a quarterly requisition for all of these items. They are right there on the sample requisition. So I do. Every quarter, I send in a requisition for these same things and here they all are." Oh boy.

I had tour of duty in headquarters as chief of the naval engineering division and nothing great happened there in that period that I can think of, but I then went to the *Eastwind* out of Boston. And I was in the *Eastwind* up in Thule, Greenland and we got word that an Army major general of transportation, and his name was Rush Lincoln and I knew him personally from the days when we were both Boy Scouts in Washington, D.C., he was in one troupe and I was in a different one, but we knew each other. And I thought, well this is great. I'll be glad to see old Rush. I haven't seen him in many, many years, so we made preparations. We were told that he was going to come aboard the *Eastwind*. He was going to visit all ships at the dock. He was sort of the Army's equivalent of the commander of the military sea transportation service. That was his job in the Army. So I said to my exec., "well, see if we have got a major general's flag because we want to give him the honors when he comes aboard we want to have flag to break." We didn't have an Army major general's flag. Thule is an Air Force base. The exec went up to headquarters, they didn't have an Army major general's flag, so I was beginning to think that well, we are just going to have to do without an Army major general's flag. And my exec was very industrious and ingenious. He says "don't give up yet." So he went off on a scrounging tour and to make a long story short, he came back with an Army major general's flag. Well not quite, he came back with the material to make an Army major general's flag. Because white material for the stars was no problem, but the red flag was the thing we were up against. He talked to chaplain at Thule out of some red material that he had ordered for curtains for the chapel and we made a major general's flag out of it. And when Rush Lincoln came aboard, we broke his flag. And, of course, I had to tell him the story. And he visited the ship – he inspected the ship. And I had him

up in the cabin for coffee and cookies or what have you and when he left, he looked up at that flag and he shook his head and went off down in the gangway. And they hadn't gotten to the end of the dock before one of his aides came running back up the gangway. And I said "what did you forget something." He said "well, I don't know how to put this, but General Lincoln wonders if you could see your way clear to letting him keep that flag?" And I said "by all means." I said "bring the General's flag." And we folded it and gave it to him.

That was, of course, on the west coast of Greenland. And one of the things that impresses everybody I guess that goes to Greenland is the difference between the civilization on the west coast as opposed to the civilization on the east coast. The Eskimos are much farther advanced into what we consider civilization on the west side, than they are in the east. So, when we were ordered around to Kulusuk, Kap Dan on the east side and our job was the extension of the dew line. They were extending the dew line from the two stations that they already had on the ice cap to one on either coast. These are radar stations, of course, surveillance stations. And the *Eastwind's* job was to if they ran into any ice to take care of it – to break the ice so that the people who were bringing in the supplies to build the stations and the air fields and what not could get in. So having finished the one on the west side, which was Tidderblack [phonetic] I think was the name of it, we now went around to the east side where they were going to build a station on Kap Dan.

[Sam] And you came sound around?

[Dick] Around Cape Farewell [phonetic] and up the east side. Well, we steamed up into Ammassalik Fjord and the town of Ammassalik which is to the west is where the governor general lives or did at that time. And his name was Kai Jensen, pronounced Kaienson. That's the way they say it, Kaienson was his name K-a-i J-e-n-s-e-n, Kai Jensen. He lived in Ammassalik. We went over and paid a call on him. I have another story on that, but when we first went in, we were no where near Ammassalik, the town of Ammassalik. We were on the east side of the fjord and trying to get into Kulusuk Harbor which was behind Kulusuk Island on which Kap Dan is located. That is the eastern-most point maybe the eastern-most point, pretty close to the eastern-most point of Greenland. And as we approached the water was beautiful,

clear as crystal. It looked as pristine as you can imagine and we could see Eskimos in kayaks with their little white sails up in front which is not a sail really. It is to make the seals think it is an iceberg or a bergie bit or something or a growler. Anyway, and then we saw oomeoks [phonetic], women's boats, skin boats and no where were any motor boats. No where were any civilized-looking boats and we began to think geez, are we the first ones to ever come into this place? And with that in mind, I thought well if this is the first time anybody has been in here, I had better be damned sure I know where all the rocks are. And not say whoops there goes one now. So we got out a helicopter. We had two helicopters. We got out a helicopter and we had the helicopter keep ahead of us and hover and look down and you could just see clear as a bell into the water – a beautiful, sunny day and when started ahead, we would know we were clear up to that point. And we were going in that gingerly. Charts we weren't too sure about. We did have charts, but they weren't too good. And here we are thinking that we are Columbus the 2nd you know. And we finally make the last turn into the harbor where we are going to anchor and here is a big, fat red Danish ship the *Tallidan* [phonetic]. She has been anchored there for three months. So that kind of took the wind out of our sails.

[Sam] Wasn't there the old air strip. I think that was Bluie East?

[Dick] That comes next. There was nothing on Kulusuk Island except an Eskimo village. But the *Tallidan* [phonetic] had brought in the Danish Art of Contractors from Denmark with a lot of materials to do the foundation work for the buildings that were going up, which were going to be actually built by U.S. contractors. But they were putting in the foundation and also working on the foundations of the air strip that was going in. And it was the *Tallidan* anyway and we got very friendly with the people on the *Tallidan*. We were invited over to a wonderful, Danish dinner on board. The skipper and chief engineer both had their wives on board with them. But the night that I'll never forget was the night we were invited ashore by the Danish Art of Contractors to have dinner with them. And the way that came about was that we learned, we found out by going ashore and visiting that these Danes were living in tents. No buildings ashore at all. They were living in tents and it got cold as Billy be damned at night I'll tell you. It was the middle of the summer, but it was cold. And their living conditions were primitive. They had no

plumbing, of course. They had very little washing or showering bathing facilities and they were living like aborigines. So I talked to the chief, the head engineer one day in the cabin of the *Eastwind*. And I said "look, I think that we can do something about making your life a little more pleasant." And I said "look, we've got a ship here anchored right off your beach. We've got warm, hot showers, we've got movies, we've got hot food." I said "why don't you divide your people up first into officers and enlisted types, so that we can take care of one in the enlisted mess and the officers in the ward room. And I said, we could divide them up into groups of say 10-15 and we could rotate them. Let them come up and spend the night. Come out take a shower, have dinner, see a movie, spend the night. Go back the next day, that night another group will come out and we can rotate these people and make their lives a little happier." Well, he thought that was the most wonderful thing he had ever heard. I said "well let's do it." So we started doing it and as a result, we were invited to come ashore and have dinner. All of the officers except the duty officer, the one who had the duty. We all went ashore and we went into this damned tent and cold, of course, it was after dark. And they had bottles of Johnny Walker and man, you just had to drink some of this Johnny Walker to get a fire going inside you it was that cold. When we were eating dinner, I kept thinking, I wish I had my gloves on. It was that cold. And by the time we got ready to leave, a fog had set in and we couldn't see a hundred feet off the beach and so we built -- there was a bunch of scrap lumber there and we built a big bon fire. And then we began shouting "*Eastwind, Eastwind*" and finally, we heard a put, put, put, put, chug, chug, chug, chug and we heard a boat and sure enough it was our boat and they saw the fire and they came in and picked us up and got us back to the ship again. But that was quite an experience. The only firearm that we saw, that I saw while we were there were on Eskimos, but only one firearm and that was a little 22-caliber rifle owned by the so-called sheriff of Kulusuk village. He had a 22-caliber rifle.

Now, about *Bluie East*. As the U.S. contractors came into Kulusuk, we had an underwater demolition team aboard that had to go in and see where there were any rocks and where the L.S.T. that was going to come in. A big L.S.T. And we wanted to get her right up on the beach to

Dick Schmidtman ()
RADM, Retired
Enispardin [phonetic], WA
Thursday, April 21, 1988

Well, I don't have much more Sam, thankfully, but I might mention the two fitness report quotations that I mentioned to you the other night. This is why I was in headquarters as what they called then an Assistant Chief of the Office of Operations. Don Morrison was the flag and the Chief of the Office of Operations, my boss. And so I used to handle fitness reports coming in from people on the staff. I seldom did very much in the way of writing on them, but I would pass them on to Don and he would finish them off. Now I will never forget these two items that he put in two separate times on the same officer's fitness report, whose name shall go unmentioned. But one of them was "a bull in a china shop with a heart of gold." And the other one was "often wrong, but never in doubt." And I think maybe that is a good way to finish off here.

[Sam] Well Dick, this has been a very productive afternoon. I don't know when I have gotten more chuckles out of a whole series of stories. And I want to thank you, eventually and that won't be too long in the future. I will have these tapes transcribed and they will be made available to anyone who wants them.

[Dick] I would love to have one and I will reimburse you for same.

[Sam] Well, I have a minimum charge on each tape. Anyway, thanks again and I'll shut this off.