

To: Sam Guill
From: Deborah Daline
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Don Elliott Transcript
785 lines x .10= \$78.50

Thank you!

Sam-

Called a couple times, but got
a machine - female voice.

Finally bought a VCR, so finished
this transcript! Feel a bit funny
about billing you for it after all
this time, but do want to get
it off my desk -

Watched the movie "Perfect Storm"
and was impressed by the role of
the Coast Guard in that true
story - have you seen it or read
the book - I recommed it!

Deborah

DONALD ELLIOTT

Sam: It's the 21 st day of October, 1989, I'm in Laguna Hills, California visiting with Don Elliot. Don has been relating a few tales about his entry into the merchant service and from there into the coast guard and I'll not detract any more from his story, Don, take it over.

Don: I was born in New London, Connecticut and never had any idea of becoming a coast guard officer. In fact the coast guard was not in New London when I was a boy growing up there, it was down in Maryland I believe, Curtis Bay. In fact, when I finally did get in the coast guard, I was down there giving examinations to merchant marine officers at Fort Trumble.

I left New London when I was about fourteen years old. My mother and sister and another brother went down to California, San Diego. I had graduated from Nathan Hale grammar school in New London just before we left for San Diego and I went to junior and senior high in San Diego.

In 1928, as a result of an accident I had on my motorcycle which resulted in my brother three years older having his leg cut off, I didn't continue my schooling in California. While my brother was convalescing, I had a letter from an older brother who was a captain on a ship down in west Africa asking if I would like to make a trip. I jumped at the chance to get away from home. I was just over sixteen and stayed on the ship for two years. At first I thought I'd like to be a radio operator because the radio operator on a ship had a cabin all to himself up on the boat deck and it seemed like a pretty soft job because every time they came into port, he could go ashore and come back when the ship was ready to sail. After I'd studied the dot/dashes for a while, I thought I might as well study to be a navigator. So with the help of my brother I was learning navigation on my trip down to Africa.

My brother got off that ship when we returned to the States and another captain came on by the name of Walters. The company was the American West African Line and they had been operating

on the coast for a number of years. But on the way back to Jacksonville the company had been sold to another line and I recall the crew painting the new stack emblem on the way back. The first chance that I had, I took the examination for third mate in Galveston, which I passed, and it was around August or September of 1930 that I got a job as third mate on a ship going to England. I think the reason why was able to get the job during the Depression was because all the ships hadn't tied on at that time. Most of the merchant ships were tying up and most of the tankers too. A lot of the officers on merchant ships had left them for that reason and they didn't want to take jobs as third mates, so that's the reason I got the job.

I stayed on that ship for eight months, made two trips to London and Liverpool and on the second trip the ship tied up. I went back to Galveston and had been serving as third officer and thought that was pretty good because I made twice the money as the APs. I went to Baytown, Texas and put my name in with the Hummel Oil Company for third mates job.

I might note that while running to England on cargo ship, I had one day on watch as third mate and saw a ship in the distance that looked like it was sinking. The chief mate happened to be up on bridge and I told him and he said that it was a tanker and they loaded those things right down to the deck level. He advised me to stay off those things cause they're always blowing up or having trouble. I understood that not many of the cargo ship men wanted to go on tankers. They didn't have any tanker regulations at that time- they would load gasoline and you could see the gas coming out- you had to be careful walking on the decks.

I wanted to continue sailing on my license so I left my name for thirds mate job and a week later they called me up to be a third mate to replace someone taken to the hospital. So I stayed with the Standard Oil of New Jersey, which it was called in those days, for about two and a half years.

The Standard Oil Company had bought the Pan Am tankers and they had thirty to forty of them tied up in the Patuxent river and they had about thirty of their own ships tied up there too. They

had maintenance crews aboard some of them painting and every once in a while, a ship would come in and be tied and another one would be reactivated.

I was there three to four months when the ship I was on was reactivated. It was an old German ship and had a beautiful salon in it, beautiful woodwork. I stayed on there for some time got my second mates license on it, then the Standard Oil Company let all the officers go that didn't have at least three years with the company or with Pan Am, so we went back to Texas, where I was making my home at that time.

A short time later, I got a job with the Detroit navigation Company. I was second mate on one of their small tankers called the Federal which operated primarily in the Gulf of Mexico. I stayed on that ship for two years, got my chief mates license while there, and then they tied that one up.

In 1935. I went on the only tanker that the Dall Line had. A lot of people didn't know that the Dall Line, which operated charter and some passenger ships, had a tanker but they did and it was named the Olympic.

I was there about six months and got off that and I went with the Sun Oil Company out of Baytown Texas. Stayed with them six or seven years, up until the war in Europe broke out. I got my masters license while on the ship, about 1937. I was master when the regular captain went on vacation. Just before Pearl Harbor time, we'd got orders to go out to Honolulu. They loaded us with aviation gas to take down to Johnson Island and we operated out of that area for a year or so. Came back to the States and they'd lost quite a few ships from the Sun Oil Company. I went as chief mate on a ship called the Bidwell, stayed about six months.

I had taken the exam for a hull inspector with the Department. of Inspection and Navigation some time before, and I got word that they wanted to see me in Baltimore. I went there and went down to Washington and got an assignment as assistant inspector of hulls in Providence, Rhode Island. This was 1943.

I'd been there a little while inspecting new construction in the area, and the coast guard took over the bureau and they wanted

all the inspectors to belong to the coast guard reserve. I held off awhile, as many did, because the coast guard only offered them lieutenant commissions, then after while they came back and offered lieutenant commanders commissions. In Newport Rhode island I was sworn in as a lieutenant and about fifteen minutes after, I was sworn in as lieutenant commander. They said I was too young to get an original lieutenant commanders commission. That was the story.

I stayed in Providence about two years. During that time I was handling examinations for mates, pilots and captains and part of the time I was acting shipping commissioner and intelligence officer. Then they started up a hull school in New York and Captain Bob Clark went down first and took the course. Then the boiler inspector, whose name was Bailey took the course. Captain Clark was sick and didn't come into the office very much and Bailey was gung ho about having hearings investigating casualties, so they sent another hull man down to take the course and he got sick so they decided to send me down.

I had been there a couple of weeks before I was approached by a coast guard officer from London who was looking for candidates to go to Europe in different areas and he asked if I'd like to go to Pacific. I said no, I was just out there. So he asked if I'd be interested in Europe and I said I wouldn't mind that.

Just before we graduated from our class, I think there were about 24 men in class, the senior man in class didn't like to get up to speak, so he selected me as a representative of the class to give a talk in a hotel in New York. I had to give a little spiel which went off alright, and the next day was handed an envelope with orders to go to London.

I had to go back to Providence first, where I told the officer in charge, Mr. Bailey, and he was all upset, said he was going to call Washington to get it stopped. I said he'd better look who the orders were signed by-. it was Admiral Chalker, assistant commandant at that time. I was glad to get out, but felt sort of bad about having a shore job at that time.

Sam: Do you recall what year?

Don: That was 1944. I went over to London and at that time Captain Richmond was senior coast guard officer in Europe. I was in London for a couple of weeks, then went over to Liverpool and relieved the officer in charge of the merchant marine detail there, Jim Donahue. He was a very big man. People asked him how tall he'd say five foot twenty. He was six foot eight.

He stayed there in Liverpool with me for several weeks, then was sent back to the States or someplace and I stayed in Liverpool. They had one tanker they wanted to have a hearing on the chief engineer because of the condition when it arrived in England. The chief engineer was a young fellow who had been in the navy. He had been on this D2 tanker in New York.

Those high pressure steam jobs had to have real pure water to put in the boilers and, through negligence on somebody's part, they didn't have sufficient water when they left New York. As a result, they fed the boilers fresh water with impurities and about halfway across the Atlantic, the throttles were freezing and the boilers were getting salted. The engineers on watch had to use a sledgehammer to control the throttle.

The ship had discharged in Wales someplace, and they wanted me to hold a hearing, as I was senior hearing officer at that time. I didn't know much about the tankers. Every time the Wakefield, a coast guard managed ship, came into Liverpool, I went aboard to talk to an old friend of mine who was the chief engineer, Bill Kaiser. about the boilers and machinery. At that time, Henry Was the exec boss on the Wakefield.

So I had studied up on my high pressure boilers and D2 tankers and had the hearing in Glasgow on the chief engineer. There was a lot of information and witnesses on board the ship to England. We held a hearing at some government. building there in Glasgow and the chief engineer had a Scottish barrister to defend him, provided by the British engineering union. He came to the hearing room on the date set and he had a frock and wig on, dressed up like you see

barristers in English movies. He asked it I minded- I was in my uniform.

We had the hearing and I revoked the chief engineer's license. Some time later, I understand that headquarters revised the decision a little bit, but later took it away and reissued a first assistant's license. There were a lot of problems overseas on the merchant ships. We'd go aboard when they arrived to see if there was any damage and when I'd go aboard with this Jim Donahue, there was never any question about our authority because he was really a big man.

There was a number of cases that struck me funny at the time. Now, as I think back, they weren't really so funny. One was a hearing in the office in Liverpool involving a young lad, an ordinary seaman on one of the ships, that was scared for his life because he thought somebody was trying to throw him overboard. I had a chief yeoman who talked to the man first and came to see me. He said I should hear the man's story because the other men wouldn't handle it right. The young man came in and he stuttered so bad it was almost impossible to understand him. Finally, I understood that the crew teased him because of this. He had attempted to join the army and navy and coast guard, all the services, but they all turned him down. Then somehow he was able to get a seaman's license and went aboard the merchant ship. At night, when he went on lookout, someone would grab him in the dark and make believe they were going to throw him overboard and he was scared to death.

I went down to the ship and talked to the captain and asked if he knew about it and he knew the crew teased the young man about the way he talked. I told him the man was afraid for his life and asked him to assemble the crew. They were brought in and I gave them a talking to- I told them this man was patriotic and tried to join all the services and the best he could get was this and they shouldn't tease him and if there was any more harassment there would be action taken against the parties involved. The ship left and I found out later it was all right.

There were a lot of problems on the ships we had to listen to and try to correct. I was in Liverpool as officer in charge of a detail there. I was stationed in a building along with the navy detail and I was given ration cards to live on the local market like the natives in England were doing. I got quarters in a hotel right in the middle of Liverpool and the windows had all been pulled out of the front of the building. There was bomb damage in the street across from it.

I recall we had to go down into the dining room to eat and once a week there was an egg put on my dresser- that was all you could get then. The windows had been boarded up with cardboard but the wind whistled around and it was cold.

I told some of the navy officers about the place and they said I should go over with them, they were living in the Central Hotel and it was nice and warm, steam heat. So I did get a room over there, but it was still cold at night.

We had to ride a ferry to and from work and it would be so foggy- you couldn't see your hand in front of you. When you left the ferry building, there was a monument in the middle of the street with a picket fence around it and we would walk right out until we came to that. Then we'd walk around the fence and strike off at the same angle to the hotel and feel along the front of building until we came to an opening and that was the entrance. Talk about navigation.

The Navy had a place to get liquor in Liverpool and every night four or five of us would come back on the same boat to the hotel. We'd go to one of our rooms and somebody would break out a bottle of scotch. We had four or five drinking glasses, and then we'd throw the bottle in the waste basket, and then go to our rooms.

One night we were in one fellows room, who was from New York. He said it was such a nice custom we'd started that he'd surprise his dad when he got home by saying let's have a drink, pour him a glass full of whiskey and throw the bottle in the waste basket. But it never happened, because this guy was coming home from a

dance in Liverpool one night and was in a bad accident and didn't make it-he never got back to have that drink with his dad.

I had been in Liverpool for about a year when I had orders to go to Antwerp to relieve Rob Edwards who was officer in charge over there.

Sam: So this would be very late 1944?

Don: Yes. I think the Battle of the Bulge was still on. December of 1944. The V1s and V2s came into Antwerp every hour on the hour. In fact, we got orders to sleep with our side arms on once in a while. I was billeted with the British navy there in a hotel on the 21st floor. There didn't seem to be anybody else up there, so I asked about it. I was told nobody went up there because the Century Hotel was wrecked next to it and it was higher. If a bomb hit the top of the Century and came down on the top of the hotel you wouldn't have a chance.

I stayed there and nothing landed on me, but they landed all around. You could hear the V1s coming, they sounded like a low flying airplane and then the noise would stop and a few seconds later you'd hear the boom. They'd take down half a block at least. The V2s, you didn't hear them coming, but they would take down a full block.

The century hotel had dances in the ballroom. With army and navy bases around, there were nurses around.

One time, general Montgomery was visiting the port sector and they wanted all the officers that could be spared to go down there to assemble for him. I was in the group of naval officers and when he came along, he stopped in front of me and said: what's the coast guard doing here? I said :Belgium has a coast you know. Most of the British navy officers were very somber, didn't seem to have much to say except when they got into barrooms and drank gin and tonics. On VE day, they had the Royal Marine Band in there marching. There was a big celebration and the British were feeling no pain. I saw a British navy captain climbing a lamp post-it was amazing.

Right after VE day, I got orders to go up to Rotterdam to check the port to see if we could get ships in there with supplies. I recall being in the Hague.

A few days later, I got orders back to London and Commander Jewel told me that he had orders for me to go to Bremen to inspect vessels over there. I went to Germany and was given an beautiful office in a nice building, but the elevator was a little odd, it was like an endless belt and when you got to the floor, there was no door, and you just stepped out. It kept going around all the time- those Germans are efficient.

I was only there a couple of days when I realized I couldn't accomplish my mission because I was supposed to be taking care of problems on merchant ships and there weren't any there. I explained it to Admiral Robinson and sent down to Bremerhaven where I was provided with an office in what had been the submarine school that the navy had taken over there. I hadn't been there too long before the captain who was in charge of that base asked me to go down and take a look at the Europa alongside the dock.

There were two German passenger ships- blue ribbon winners of the North Atlantic, but one of them had caught fire and burned. I went down to the dock where she was tied up and there was a British soldier who sent me up the gangway. I walked all around and in the library, I noticed there were some light fixtures hanging from the walls with what looked like ordinary house wiring. I had a panel removed in that area and found that the wiring was ordinary house wiring and that the wire was laid in wooden troughs and cork put over the bulkhead that the paneling was attached to. I knew that the wiring wasn't in compliance with the US electrical code, so I had a little talk with the chief engineer. He and the captain, by the way, had gotten out of a concentration camp, had families over in Hoboken New Jersey, and there was some question as to how much allegiance they had to Germany. Anyway, I asked the chief engineer how many electrical fires they'd had aboard and he said three or four. It was understandable because of the type of wiring.

In fact, I had been in Hamburg on a ship the night the Europa caught fire. It was being fitted out for operation in the winter of 1929 and I was a sailor aboard ship and had seen a reflection in the sky over the shipyard, which was just around the corner. I told the mate on watch and we heard fire boats going up the river and heard it was the Europa and it was practically gutted.

But getting back to the inspection- I found all the fire hoses aboard were rotten and the extinguishers were antique. They had used the ship for quartering troops and the life boats had been taken off and they'd put landing craft on. I went back to the captain in charge of navy there and told him it was a firetrap and the sister ship had burned down. I recommended a couple of navy fire boats alongside, navy adapters on all fire hydrants, all new fire hoses and extinguishers. I told one of the navy officers that went aboard the ship with me that there was no flag flying on ship and told him to get an American flag on there.

There was a flag put on stern and they did get the boats alongside, new hoses and extinguishers on board and everything according to safety regulations. The life boats were over in the shipyard and I kept an eye on them because I found one place where they put some clay on one of the hulls. All the life boats were repaired and put back. The wires on the davits had to be replaced and because they'd been using landing craft on the ship, I had to test on all the davits. In doing so, I found that the life boats fully loaded would never have been able to have been lowered in case of emergency. The captain didn't believe it, so we tested them and I was correct. If they'd had an emergency it would have been a horrible catastrophe. He said he used to have lifeboat drills in New York, but with only half the crew. The life boat wenchs wouldn't lower the boats, so I checked the housing where the reels were and everything seemed all right, except there were air holes on each side of the housing and it wasn't quite to the top of the drum that the reel was on. I found that the equipment was patented by a Scottish firm and the Germans who had operated the ship couldn't account for it.

I had a Norwegian foreman doing repair work and he made suggestion: plugging up holes on side of the casing for wench and filling that up over the reel. Maybe that would permit the boats to be lowered. We did it and it worked. Later, I was asked to inspect the ship for a coast guard certificate and I had to laugh.

There was a navy captain and a couple of army colonels, at that time. The army was carrying back ten thousand troops and they wanted lifesaving equipment for all of them and they asked me to inspect the ship. I said I couldn't- they'd have to have at least five boiler inspectors, five hull and electrical inspectors for a thorough inspection. They asked me to see if the fire fighting and lifesaving equipment were in proper order and I agreed. I ordered a lot of balsa rafts to take care of the number of people, and it was adequate. The navy finally took it back to the states with about five thousand troops. I got all the plans for the ship and books made up with the German translated into English so they could read it back at headquarters. Sent a big box of plans back for inspection. I think the ship was finally given to the French in reparation for Normandy. The plans for those two ships were laid down right after World War One.

The Navy designated me as acting American consul in Bremerhaven because American ships coming in had to have letters showing no quarantainable diseases in the port. As a result of getting that extra duty, I had all kinds of nationalities coming in the office to see how they could get to the US. I felt sorry for a lot of them, but the nearest place to get help was Copenhagen where there was an American consul.

I made a trip up to Copenhagen, but couldn't get down to Switzerland, even though they had RR going down to Switzerland and Paris. I had to go down to Paris once in a while to inspect ships while I was in Antwerp. American ships that had been damaged and repaired there. I wasn't interested in going there again, but I did want to get to Switzerland.

I finally was able to get up to Copenhagen by requesting orders to go there to have a conference and talk with the American consul. I

stopped at a hotel there and started getting phone calls from all kinds of people to take me her and there, but I didn't have time. One interesting request was from this man who had a big kennel and had a boxer, a young one. He wanted to give him to me with an understanding that I would show him in a dog show, so that he could drum up some business in America. I didn't know anything about that so I told him no. He said the dog knew exactly what to do, but I still didn't take him back.

Every once in a while I'd get requests to inspect a German ship in the Baltics. I went to Flensburg once, shortly after VE Day. The German army was marching down toward Hamburg and still had all their guns and equipment. I drove up in a jeep with the American flag on each fender and got some sour looks from the Germans- didn't know if I was going to get a shot in the back or not. When I got into Flensburg, the port was under black-uniformed storm troopers with skull and cross bones on their insignia. I got on board this big German passenger ship and inspected the fire fighting and lifesaving equipment and reported back to the London Maritime Commission people.

Some time later, I had to inspect some ships in Bremerhaven that were sent over from London and I met a very nice fellow from the maritime commission I got a letter from-the commission regarding my inspection of the ships.

Sam: You had something to do with the selecting of the coast guard training ship I believe.

Don: I knew an American naval officer with intelligence- he was actually a Swede. One day he told me that there were four training ships that were anchored just below Bremerhaven and one would be just right for the coast guard. I found that one of the smaller ones had been damaged and another had a fire bomb dropped on the port side of deck but had been repaired. I called London and talked to commander Jewel, told him about the training ships and so a week or two later I learned that Commander Crake was relieving Captain Jewel as officer in charge of Europe and they were

both coming over to meet me in Bremen to look at training ships. We got a car from the navy, went down to Cooks Harbor, took launch out to the Hasvessel and they seemed to think it was the right size. It was named after the junior youth leader under Hitler and the figurehead eagle had a leaf in its talons and a swastika in the middle. I explained the conditions of the other ships and I recommended the Hasvessel.. We went over the quarters and the engine room and they seemed to be quite pleased with the ship and flew back to London. I went back to Bremerhaven and some time later I learned that the coast guard was anxious to get it. Five months later, I was transferred back to the States and stationed in Galveston Texas. Prior to World War Two, I was on the list to go pilot on the Houston ship channel and I used to make my home with one of the Houston pilots. That was a pretty nice job because at that time they were making twenty-five thousand a year and they had a month off in the summertime. That was real plush to me. Big money.

Sam: To put that in perspective, at that time, during the thirties , a US Senator's salary was ten thousand a year, a congressman was seventy five hundred.

Don: That was in my mind when I left Germany, to get back to Texas and check up on the job I anticipated getting into. I got an assignment to Galvaston and saw an old acquaintance in the pilots association, my friend I used to live with, George Allen had passed away. And a number of older pilots I knew had retired. I wasn't around during the war, and they had to put on a lot of new pilots and when the war was over and the ships started coming in they were crammed with blues and I was forgotten about. I was in Galvaston for a year and a half and my wife, who'd come from Norfolk Virginia didn't like it at all. There were cockroaches about two inches long and water bugs. My children were young- my daughter three or four and my son a couple years older. My wife wanted to get back to Virginia if she could and I found out there was a need for hearing officers back in that area, The district

marine safety officer wouldn't allow any inspectors to get out of district once they got in. I mentioned it to an inspector in Galveston and he said they'd just throw my request into the waste basket. So I sent a letter to Captain Jewel and I got dispatch orders transferring me to Norfolk, Virginia as the officer in charge of re inspection.

I had a lot of investigation cases that I was on. in Norfolk. One of them was something that the coast guard may have learned something from- it was a Navy AVP tanker that was going out of Norfolk to Pendel Shoal at the same time a Valcorps, a liberty ship from Newport News, was going out. They were almost out Thimble shoal, and this coal cargo ship was going in the same direction. The beam of the Valcorps was on the port side when the captain on the other heard the siren going on the Valcorps. He glanced over there and saw men running, but thought they were having a drill. A little later he heard the siren and looked over again and he couldn't figure it out. As I recall, on the navy ship, they had a generator failure and that was the only one they had on. The telegraph was electric and the sound powered phone didn't work because it was dependent on electricity. All the communications were out. They couldn't call the emergency steering station or reach the engine room, so they dispatched a messenger to both right away, but the engine was going full ahead. The quarter master noticed it and would have stopped but he was loaded down with a full cargo of coal. He put it in reverse but not sufficient to prevent a collision. She came right across the bow and the contact was between the stem and the engine room. I think there was a gas tank back there somewhere because immediately there was a fire on Valcorps and they couldn't get aft from forward or vice versa. They jumped ship with May West life jackets, but they'd been using the CO2 out of them and depleted them so there weren't any good. It was one hell of a situation, one of the big casualties I investigated. Seemed like twenty to thirty Navy men died in that collision and the cause was cutting out the emergency generator too soon.

There was one big T2 tanker that went down in lake Charles. I used to get the job of getting all the witnesses and evidence together for the hearing.

Sam: So you were the investigating officer?

Don: Yes, but it wasn't called that. There were several cases down there that the district commander was in on as chairman of the Board of Investigations after I got down to Galveston. Then, I got transferred up to Norfolk and stayed there about five years, longest I was in any spot.

Sam: What years?

Don : 1948 to 1954. Then I got transferred to Yokohama, Japan and I was there for three years, opened the office there. I used to have a close liaison with the State Department people there and there were cases where I'd give information about narcotics. It was while I was there that I learned that there were 500 tons of opium around Hong Kong someplace.

I was supposed to relieve Commander Moratti who was coast officer liaison to some admiral in Tokyo. The Navy admiral was Mason. At that time, they were working on a plan to allow the Japanese to have the equivalent of the coast guard for a naval force. I went up there for a day and reported in and they told me I was to occupy a desk there. I said I shouldn't be there because my primary duty was licensing and certification of all the marine personnel the army and navy had there- tinkers and tailors and all. I said I'd help anyway I could, but I didn't stay in Tokyo, went back down and reported to Yokohama.

I got quarters in the big steamship building. It was interesting there because I was giving exams to captains and chief engineers and everyone that had a rating on American merchant ships. Seamen were having problems at that time, very militant. three to four hundred merchant seamen were supposed to be on the beach at Yokohama and the ports around Japan. They wanted to make a

trip to Korea during the fighting there.s Made more money over there in a war zone, so when a ship came back to Japan and was going to sail back to the States they would miss the ship purposely. I had to clean up the beach by making charges against a lot of these characters making a nuisance on shore and we did get rid of most of them.

Sam: Without a document, a man couldn't sail and had no justification for being in Japan?

Don: At the time we would prefer charges on them and allow them to go back aboard ship. The operators would be responsible for getting them back to the States. At that time we were not holding hearings. The administrative procedure had been passed and they had judges. That was the racket I should have gone into. I took a course in law from LaSalle University and I didn't realize what a big job I could have gotten into.

Sam: Didn't you send the charges to a hearing officer in Hawaii?

Don: Whichever port the ship was going back to and they would have the hearing. There were all sorts sailing on the ships and those that were able to pass the exams were given the licenses and certificates. I was there for three years and I think Ben Shumaker relieved me out there.

I came back by way of a slow boat from China, a Navy transport. We went to Pusan, took some troops aboard, then went to Okanawa, stopped in Honolulu and then went into Seattle. I had orders to Mobile, Alabama and the ship that had all my household effects and aboard ran aground north of Pusan. All the stuff aboard was flooded with salt water except the stuff in number one hole and because I was at headquarters in Yokohama I found out my stuff was in the upper deck. We had to post a bond, several hundred dollars to get our stuff, because the shippers shared in the cost of the salvage of the ship.

I went to Mobile as an inspector at the shipyard and stayed there for three years. Then I was transferred to Philadelphia, was there for three years, then transferred to Honolulu where I was district marine safety officer. I was there for three years and then went back to headquarters as traveling inspector. I used to ride the big passenger ships in the Mediterranean and the big navy transports to different places.

A strange thing that happened on my first assignment going over the Mediterranean. I had an ensign along with me from the academy and he asked me if I could speak any Spanish. I said enough to get by on. We got off in Barcelona and I would stop and ask somebody directions and they would tell me in Spanish and look at me with a quizzical look wondering what nationality I was. I had studied Japanese when I was in Japan and a lot of Japanese words are similar to Spanish and I found that I was mixing them up.

I finished up in Washington in 1965 and retired on the third of June. I had thought about retiring in North Carolina, owned some property there, but that plan blew up because my wife of 24 years had passed away in September of 1964. My daughter had graduated from college and was teaching in a high school and my son was still going to college, so I decided to go back to sea.

I was offered a job as port captain with a company that did ship inspections. I don't know why they picked on me because I didn't know about the company. They were up in New York. I was with them about six months and I quit.

I was there during the big black out in October of 1966. I had an efficiency apartment in New Jersey, got on the train and rode to Penn station, walked a few blocks to the subway, rode to Times Square, change to one going up to Grand Central and then walked some more.

I was up on 24th floor the night the lights went out. Everybody stayed in the building until they found out the score. The subways had all stopped and there was no way for most people to get home unless they had a car. I had a little radio and could hear the news. The elevators weren't working, so people had to use the stairs. I

stayed in building that night and it got cold, so I went into the president's office where he had a big settee. I looked in his locker and got an overcoat and found a bottle of something. I had a couple of drinks and slept in office. The next morning around ten the power came back on and things got organized the next day. That was quite an experience.

I left that job and went with MSTS as a navigator. I went on one of their ships out to San Francisco and joined a ship to Oakland. From there we went to Tacoma and loaded a lot of soldiers from Fort Lewis and took them out to Okanawa and down to Viet Nam. They were unable to take loaded ships to Saigon, one could unload and the rest of them had to lay at anchor at the mouth of the Mekong river, which meant forty to fifty ships ready to be unloaded. Somebody thought of unloading ships unto barges and tugs taking them to various ports along the way. I found out from a friend that they were making big money and needed men, so I took a job with the Alaskan Log and Transport, a Seattle company. They had had the Dall Line supply contract and they got the contract in Viet Nam, but they had never operated ships overseas, so they wanted somebody to do something about the shipping commission regulations.

I went with the understanding that I would stay a month or two and then they would get somebody to take over the personnel monitors job and I would work on one of their tugs operating up there. When they got somebody to take over the personnel job, they said I was too valuable to them in the office and wanted me to stay. So they gave me some title and an increase in salary, which wasn't any where near the 3000 a month that I had heard tug captains were making.

Anyhow, I stayed on and I traveled quite a bit around Viet Nam to some obscure ports. That wasn't too good a job because I joined three other men from the office in renting a villa and it wasn't unusual for somebody having a party with the lights on to have the Viet Cong throw a hand grenade to liven things up.

I came back to the States and took a pilot job. I forget the name of the coast guard officer up there in charge of the marine operation.

Sam: Was it a civilian company?

Don: Yes, he was an ex coast guard captain.

The only recreation we had up there was playing golf or beach combing or fishing. The admiral in charge had been instrumental in getting ships filled with dirt and brought up there and made a golf course. Coral stuck up and your ball hit it and bounced from one end to the other. I was there for about a year and came back to States. Then I learned about the oil drilling, Global Marine. George Wilmer, who had been with me in Honolulu and was in Longbeach, told me they were looking for captains so I went to see them. I didn't know anything about drilling ships, but knew about an operation in the Santa Barbara Channel, so I went up there for a week to see them and it was interesting. So I signed a two year contract and went up to the Persian Gulf as a captain of the ship.

The ship as run down and didn't live up to safety requirements because it had been out of the states for several years, so I straightened things out. I was aboard the ship for two weeks and ashore for a week. I got around Iran quite a bit, made a point to go to all the big cities where they were famous for Persian rugs. One of the most interesting places was Isfahan which is supposed to have the most beautiful mosques in the world.

I stayed in the Persian Gulf for eight months, then went around and up to west coast of Africa and drilled off of the Spanish Sahara, then went up to Portugal and from there to Ireland where I finished up my contract.

They wanted me to go on another ship to the west cost of Malaysia with headquarters in Singapore, so I did that for about four months. I went down to Thailand to the Indian ocean and drilled off the west coast of Sumatra and back through the strait and the Java Sea and drilled in that area. I did that for about two years. I liked it very much and found that I could tolerate the hot weather better than real cold weather.

Sam: How long would you be on a drill site?

Don: Depended on how deep- it could take three to five months.

Sam: All that time the ship is anchored?

Don: We'd have as many as eight anchors out, piggy back anchors. The deepest we drilled there was around 1200 feet, that's why it got so rough. It got pretty rough with the western gales from the north Atlantic coming in and when we were drilling off the east coast of Scotland, between there and Norway. You have to keep eye on weather to give the drilling crew time to pull up the drill pipe. If the sea was coming in broadside you had to put your bow into it.

Sam: But the ship had to remain on site but not over the hole?

Don: When we were drilling off the Spanish Sahara, I had set a buoy out for the location and when I got there just about sundown, we anchored near the buoy. It was a beautiful clear night and I did some celestial navigation and it showed that the buoy wasn't in the right position.

The next morning the drilling people came out and wanted to know how long it would be before I could get the ship positioned. I told them it wasn't right according to my navigation. They said it was all done by electronics and they thought it was right. I said the position was way off because the depth of the water was much more. They checked and found it was true and said there must have been a seismic disturbance.

We squabbled for some time. I said it was within two ship lengths of the correct position. They argued about it and finally sent word back to the main office and they sent the head man out and he found that one of the positions was way off and I was right.

Normally celestial navigation isn't better, but that time it was.

Sam: When did you stop going to sea?

Don: Well, I was in the north sea for three years drilling, and when the weather got bad, went down to the west coast of Africa. After that we went down to the Mediterranean and drilled in the Adriatic and then went over to Spain and drilled and then down around St. George halfway down the east coast of Spain. Then we went back to the Adriatic and then back to east coast of Spain and from there we went back to Malta. From Malta we went up to Turkey, after that to the Black Sea off the north coast of Turkey. Lots of coal and gas, but not any oil.

I finished up ten years with the Global Marine in October of 1976. I went up to Malta where I had put money on a house. In Malta, all the houses are made out of limestone. They saw blocks of limestone, set it up on side and it hardens. The house I had was cold in wintertime with floors made of marble, but I stayed for a month. It had four bedroom and three baths. I used to have the owner's daughter clean the place once a week and I gave her ten dollars. It was nice.

That was all Catholic country and the priest would come by for a contribution. I had a stereo and a lot of opera music. One piece I thought was beautiful, about the eagles in Damascus. I'd have that on a little loud and the priest came by and mentioned it and wanted to listen. He liked to listen to my music.

Malta was all British for a time, then when they got out of Kenya, they got out of Malta too. Most of them were around the islands off east cost of Spain.

When I retired from Global Marine, I sent my stuff back to the States and went up to Stuttgart and was going to get a Mercedes and bring it back with me. My brother was stationed in Naples and he had recommended I buy one. They said they couldn't offer me a new car for at least six months, so I took a 1975 Mercedes in the meantime. I ended up buying a Volvo in Amsterdam and it gave me great service. I'm driving a Datsun now, and I have a Cadillac I drive once in a while. The Datsun is a better car than the Volvo. I spent the winter of 1976 in Spain and then I went up to France to visit a nephew living in Paris. In 1977, I came back to the States