

Charles L. Gott

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Question: If I can just get your first, middle and last name and the correct spelling so I have it on tape and then that let's me set audio at the same time.

Answer: Okay, my name is Charles L. Gott, G-O-T-T that is and Charles L.

Question: And L is for?

Answer: Lawrence.

Question: Okay, he says with hesitation.

Answer: Well, I was always called Larry, not Lawrence.

Question: Oh is that right? That's okay, my middle name is Gustav.

Answer: Well.. sorry about that. You had to live with it.

Question: So are you from Washington originally or?

Answer: No I was born and raised in eastern part of Kansas. So small town stuff.

Question: Well you know what the Wizard of Oz said, why would anyone want to go to Kansas so.

Answer: I don't want to go back.

Question: So how did you, when did you end up in the service?

Answer: Well, I'm a sucker for advertisements and I used to watch posters in the post office when I was a little boy and the recruiting posters from the Navy always got me and I always wanted to be in the Navy. Never wanted to do anything else but be in the Navy so I was very fortunate to be able to get into the Navy and make a career out of it. So I spent thirty years in the Navy.

Question: So did you choose or enlisted, drafted?

Answer: Well to make a real complicated story real short I went as soon as I was eighteen, I went to the recruiting office in Kansas City and tried to volunteer for the Navy but I couldn't pass the physical at that time because they were still using the standard that they used during the depression. And they didn't want a lot of people in the Navy so I couldn't get in the Navy at that time but shortly after Pearl Harbor, as soon as I could get my affairs organized, I went back and they didn't say anything about any problems and took you in the Navy and I stayed in.

Question: Now it's interesting cause you mentioned Pearl Harbor. I talked to another woman who was from Iowa and for her Pearl Harbor really didn't mean, I mean at that time much because they were so far removed from it. For you, did Pearl, hearing about Pearl Harbor was that big news?

Answer: Well, because I'd always wanted to be in the Navy and when I was, didn't get in, I went to work and I was working and I kept track of what was going on in world affairs and the location of Pearl Harbor didn't mean anything but the fact

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that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor meant a lot. And it meant that the door was going to be opened and I could get in the Navy. That's what it really meant to me and so at the time, I was working, building airplanes at McDonnell in St. Louis, Missouri. And a friend of mine and I had gone to a movie. We worked the midnight shift, we went to movies at odd times and we were settin' in a movie when they stopped it and told us.. announced about Pearl Harbor. And everybody got up and left the movie and half of them went to recruiting office. So yeah, it, I wasn't surprised by it at all. I knew there was gonna be a war eventually and of course, one was going on and I knew we were gonna get involved at some time or other.

Question: It's interesting because some people like yourself were scholars and studied a little bit of the world history and some were like me just trying to survive day to day, you know as a kid when I was kid that age. So, but you were, it sound like pretty world wise.

Answer: Well I was interested in what was going on because you know with the war in Europe in spite of the resistance, we obviously were going to get in it some time or other because England couldn't go it alone and they needed help. To me it was obvious and so I was keeping track of what was going on.

Question: Were your Mother and Father involved in your decision? I mean did you have to go and tell them that you were signing up and if so what did they?

Answer: Well, my Mother and Father knew that I wanted to be in the Navy and so they weren't surprised. Of course, my Father was in the Army during World War I and he went back into the Army in World War II and my older brother was in the Marines.. my younger brother in the Navy so we all went away and left Mom home alone.

Question: Wow. All the kids and Dad.

Answer: And Dad, right.

Question: Boy that had to be tough on your Mom.

Answer: It was indeed. It was a tough time for her and she went to live with her parents and she stayed with them until after the war was over with. I'm pretty sure it was that long. She was home when I got home but..

Question: It was a long time ago.

Answer: It was a few years ago, yes.

Question: What, so where did you do your training, Great Lakes?

Answer: Great Lakes. When I went to Great Lakes they were in a huge expansion program, expanding that to accommodate all of the people they were drafting into the Navy and it was mud and unpainted barracks. And it was a bad training camp because it was just really wasn't ready. The good part, the old part of the Great Lakes Naval Training Station was a beautiful thing... green drill fields and all that kind of stuff. We were over the hill in the mud and in the new barracks where they really didn't, they really weren't ready for them but they had to, they had to use them.

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Question: Had you ever been away from home before, out of Kansas? I mean you'd been to St. Louis, but..?

Answer: I went, just to spend a week with an uncle in Wyoming one summer between junior and senior in high school. But didn't get very far away from Kansas, no.

Question: So what was it like as a young kid going in to, all of sudden you're with a whole group of young boys and some young men and you're getting indoctrinated and..?

Answer: It was, it was an interesting experience. A group of us that had enlisted in Kansas City were directed to meet at the Union Depot in Kansas City and it was some big old fat Chief Petty Officer and he gathered us all together and put us on a train and herded us to Chicago. It was very interesting. They came from basically around Kansas and Missouri and so I don't remember much about the trip except the concern of everybody, some of them more concerned than others about leaving home.. and that part didn't bother me because I'd been away from home already working but some of them were a little upset about it and..

Question: I know some were leaving their parents for the first time or their girlfriend or their wife or..

Answer: Right, right. Several of them as I recall had been in the National Guard, the local National Guard organization but not many. You know, most of them are going into the Army already, but one or two went to the Navy.

Question: Did you know any of the gentlemen that were on the train with you or was this just..?

Answer: No, no I didn't know anybody; they were all strangers gathered together under the clock and didn't know any of them and when we got to Chicago, on the buses I think it was and went out to Great Lakes you didn't, I didn't even see anybody that was on the train with me being assigned to different companies and... just spread out, just mingled in with everybody else and count off and 1-2-3-4 you go there and 5-6-7-8 you go there and so it was quite a way to get indoctrinated.

Question: And that's how it is, isn't it? They just..

Answer: You're just a number then. It didn't really matter what, where you came from or what... you were just assembled and then okay, you go here and you go there and you didn't know who you were gonna end up with and it really didn't matter.

Question: So is that where you got shots and haircut, and..?

Answer: That's where you got shots and haircuts and that kind of thing and that was sort of your routine. Just get in line here and go through this one and get your hair cut and go in this one and take your clothes off and then you got all your shots in the arms and in the butt and then go through that door and get your clothes and they throw things at you and give you a great big bag and, sea bag and poke clothes in it and are you small, medium or large and small - it didn't make any

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difference, one size fits all and that is not new. They had it back in those days so. Sometimes you got a fit and sometimes you didn't. But it, you came out of all of this and you're really a changed individual, physically and mentally to a certain extent because you start thinking about different things as you go through this process. You know you're gettin' closer and closer to what you wanna' be or what you don't wanna' be, one or the other. But every one of, every one of them was volunteers. There weren't any draftees in that group that I was involved with at all. So they were all ready to go. And they rush you through boot camp very quickly.. like to get you out of there and assigned to units and you're into a training school to get you trained to do something for the Navy that the Navy wants you to do so it was a pretty quick process.

Question: Busy all the time, I mean, learning?

Answer: You were busy all the time throwing a rifle up and down and marching and you thought you were going to be a ground-pounder in the Army because we just spent so much time marching and drilling and carrying rifles and very little Navy at all.. other than the fact that you had a Navy uniform on and you really weren't yet in the Navy although you were. But there were no ships around and there was.. you could see some Petty Officers running the drills and all that sort of thing but you really hadn't learned very much about the Navy yet. They had as I recall it was one class every morning in which they taught you Navy regulations but that was very short and sweet and out of there. They really wanted you on the drill field learning how to behave and obey orders and march and that sort of stuff.

Question: So in Navy regulations who to salute, when to salute, how to salute..

Answer: Yeah, all that sort of stuff and living in the Navy and how, keeping out of trouble and who you had to salute and all this kind of stuff, yes.

Question: Did you do good at learning your lesson on how to stay out of trouble?

Answer: I, yeah, yeah, I really stayed out of trouble pretty much while I was in boot camp. During the boot camp they... to determine your skills or capabilities or to assess your skills and capabilities they give everybody an audio test and that was notes on the piano and which is the highest and which is the lowest and you have earphones on and all that kind of stuff.. and they were looking for sonarmen which was a new rate in the Navy at that time. They had just gotten some sonar equipment from the Royal Navy and learned a bit about anti-submarine warfare. And they were looking for people who could identify different pitches and notes so that they could use them for sonar operators. If you ping off of a sound... off of a submarine that's coming towards you it's come back as a higher pitch. It it's going away from you it's a lower pitch because the sound waves are either contracted or expanded and so this is what they were looking for is somebody who could tell. Well I had played a tuba in a band in high school and knew a little bit about music but not much but I was able to guess the difference in the tones. And so they said, okay, you're gonna go to sound school when you get through here. And I said, where's that and they said, well we don't know yet. There's one starting up in Key West, Florida and we're gonna' keep you here at the Navy Station until we figure out where you're gonna' go to school. So every morning after I finished boot camp I was assigned to what they called outgoing unit. That's people they don't what to do with, they put them in outgoing unit and every morning you were given a sack and a stick with a nail in the end of it and you marched around and picked up cigarette butts and

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paper and that sort of thing. And I was about three weeks in outgoing unit, which was almost as long as I was in boot camp. And finally they said, okay we're gonna' send you down to Key West, Florida. So, it was the third or fourth class to go to that school. It was just a brand new school and a new rate. So I was fortunate. And you got.. you get 21 bucks a month as a recruit when you go in the Navy, back in those days and you of course when they tell you what your pay's gonna' be they also say, you have take out some life insurance so when you get killed we're gonna' send your Mamma a check. So you had to take some of your 21 bucks a month and buy life insurance and then it's your patriotic duty to buy a war bond, so the least you could take was \$7.50 a month and buy and after three or four months you'd get a war bond.. three, I don't remember. Anyway you gave, you gave them most of your money back in insurance and war bonds and all that kind of stuff. So that \$21 you never saw it. So, I was glad to go to sonar school because that was a real quick one. It was only about a six weeks school. As soon as you got out of there they made you a Third Class Petty Officer because you know this stuff and nobody else does. You were paid almost a hundred dollars a month then. It was a real quick pay raise. I saw more of that than I did the 21.

Question: So when you graduated, is that when you got your..?

Answer: Yeah, that's right.

Question: And tell me that story because it was a new..

Answer: That, it was a new rate in the Navy... it was a Sonarman and they did not have a, I don't remember what they called it now, rating badge to wear so it was decided that the sonar school and I don't know whether this was a Navy decision or what but they said okay you wear a Quartermaster rating badge but you wear it on a different arm of your uniform so that you, now you know you're a Petty Officer. Like I say the, that was fine and the money was great but the Shore Patrol really didn't know that they had this rating of the Sonarman with the rating badges on the wrong arm. Oh it was not pleasant. When we hit New York City, that's when the Shore Patrol grabbed you, you know. You now more than got off the train, there was eight of us on the same train going from Key West to New York City and all eight of us were grabbed and had to really talk out way out of it and explain to them that they really didn't know what was going on in the Navy yet because and that that really wasn't the right thing to say. That wasn't the right approach to take with the Shore Patrol. It was and you know it's... we left Key West... everybody was just new in the Navy and everybody had just got Third Class Petty Officer and alphabetically you were split up into groups and there was eight of us that was going to the same ship and so they put one guy in charge of the eight of us to make sure we got there. And our orders said something about reporting to a receiving station in New York on a day, on the 14th or something. I don't know what day it was. Well, we got in New York City early in the morning and none of us had ever been to New York City before and we made the decision that the day ended at midnight so if we got to this receiving station before midnight we'd be all right. When we got there about 11:30 at night the Officer in Charge of the station had a different view of when we should have gotten there. The Petty Officer who was in charge of our group was put in the brig and we were all assigned top bunks in the five high bunks in the receiving barracks on the pier, Pier 91 it was called in those days. That was an interesting day. The time we were there the guy stayed in the brig which was in a ship tied up beside the pier and it was serving as a Navy brig at that time. And he stayed there until we got permission to go over to the ship that we were gonna' be assigned to.

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And it was being built, a brand new ship being built in Kearny New Jersey, which is across the river and I don't know which one of the rivers it was. But anyway we were there in that receiving station about I think ten days and we because we were late getting in I never got out of the receiving station. You could see New York and you could see all kinds of things but you couldn't get out of the receiving station. That was the first mistake.

Question: So did you get to, did you tour New York before though, before you came out, is that why you were late, I mean did you?

Answer: We, we had, we found the closest, yeah, we did tour New York City a little bit. We were on the, in the bars down along the waterfront. So we never got up to Broadway and in to Radio City Music Hall, the opera or things like that. But none of us, we all came from the Midwest and none of us had ever been to New York before so it was an interesting thing.

Question: So getting to the bars was good enough.

Answer: It, that, it was all right. That was the way to start anyway cause we didn't know what was gonna' happened once we turned back in to the Navy. We didn't know so we were gonna' look a little bit before anyway.

Question: What was the ship that you were gonna' be put on that was just being commissioned, what was the name of it?

Answer: The ship's name was The Lavelette and it was named after a French admiral who had assisted the Navy in World War I so the Navy named this ship after him and it evolved all later on that this also was a city in New Jersey was named after him so it was a reasonably famous name but nobody ever heard of it. But it was a one of a class of destroyers called the Fletcher Class Destroyer and this was a workhorse of the fleet during World War II and particularly in the South Pacific.

Question: Was it considered state of the art?

Answer: Oh absolutely. It was state of the art with the exception of, it didn't have any radar when we were first commissioned and after our first cruise which was taking a convoy over to the invasion of Africa and when we came back we were sent in to the Navy yard and they took the Commodore's cabin away from him and put a radar room in there and installed radar. And that's... before that time, that made.. it had just about everything that was available in the way of warfare.

Question: So did you have sonar before the radar then?

Answer: Oh yeah. We had sonar before the radar because that was built in specifically for that particular, those particular classes of ships and they had just gotten some of them made based on and from plans that the British had supplied. So it did have sonar.

Question: Was the ship... it says.. I haven't talked to anybody that just got on a brand new ship out of the factory. Was it all put together well, I mean, we're building them fast so?

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Answer: Oh they were slapping them together real quick. It was really put together very well and we had no major problems at all that I was aware of either in the equipment or in the structure itself. They did a very good job.

Question: So do new ships have a, you know, new cars have that new car smell. Do new ships have that new ship smell?

Answer: No, not really, not really... smell fresh paint, that's what you smell. It was, in boot camp, when we were in boot camp you were issued a hammock and sea bag and you had pipe squares and you tied your hammock up on these pipes and you slept in a hammock and this class of ship was one of the first ones of that size that had bunks instead of hammocks so it was new.

Question: So where was your berth, how far down?

Answer: When I first went there my berth was back at the rear end of the ship and near the stern and the, it was, it was only one deck of living quarters so it was down just one level and underneath, almost underneath it were the propellers so when the ship would go up and down you, the propellers would make more or less noise churning the water so it wasn't the quietest place in the world to sleep. But you had a small locker assigned to you and you had a bunk and it was a lot better than the sea bag, it was a lot better than a hammock.

Question: Moving up in the world.

Answer: Moving up, yes, yes.

Question: So where was your, where was the sonar station for you?

Answer: The sonar station was a small room behind the bridge where the ship's operations took place, the Captain's station and the Officer of the Deck's station and the sonar room was right behind that so that you could get information to the people who needed it in a big hurry by hollering and using sound tubes and eventually you got speakers. But the concept at one time it was told me that they wanted to have the sonar room up close to the bridge so that the Captain could hear the sonar pings to find out for sure. I never saw them go back there for that reason so it, I think that might have just been somebody pulling my leg a little bit.

Question: How many people in the sonar room?

Answer: Well, in the sonar room is what they called the sonar stack which you use, you have a stack operator and then you had a recorder which recorded the range so you had a stack operator which trained the sound beam back and forth and you had a recorder operator which read off the range to targets if you got one. So there were two people in there all the time. And at general quarters when you were in battle stations ready to fight the ship, you had two operators of each one of those pieces of equipment so that you could spell each other off.

Question: So did you then, were you sitting there all, was there somebody there 24... 7, or only certain times that you would be monitoring?

Answer: When you were under way it would go all the time. And we had, your ships are divided into three watches. You stood four hours on and eight hours off

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and then back four hours on again. But we had two, the recorder operator was also a sonar operator so you shifted back and forth so you didn't have to set at the sonar for four hours solid, just rotated back and forth. And as they got more people and more qualified people we ran as many as four in there so that you rotate around. You get tired of hearing that ping, ping, ping all the time and it was good to have more than one operator.

Question: Yeah I imagine that's kind of a boring song after while.

Answer: It was indeed.

Question: Cause is that, is it just a rhythmic, it's just sort of a ping at a certain interval?

Answer: Yeah, you set the interval by determining how the sonar conditions, the water conditions and you can detect something out to 3,000 yards so sound travels so fast in salt water and you know what that is, you compute your time intervals so every blank number of seconds you'd get ping depending on what kind of range you want. And you could control that interval if you got a contact so that you ping on it more often, more current data to keep track of it. So it could be very tedious.

Question: So, and you're sitting there with headphones..?

Answer: You set there, actually it's on a speaker and everybody can hear this signal going out and everybody can hear echoes and lots of things make echoes, not just submarines. Fish make them; whales make them and the bottom, you get bottom reverberations and so you hear all kinds of noises and you hear, what you gotta' do is to try to pick out, okay could that possibly be a submarine I'm hearing this time as opposed to something else.

Question: And is it sending, is it sending a ping in a direction or..?

Answer: It is directional but the width of the ark that it sent out was somewhere around 22 degrees if I remember correctly and you could, you had a crank that you turned and it showed you which way it was pointing and you'd change that crank about 10 degrees every time, between pings. You'd ping and you'd turn and then listen, ping, turn, and listen, and so that it was always and you just covered in front of you because you really weren't interested in the things behind you. You were looking for things in front of you.

Question: And you said about 300 yards?

Answer: Well that's 3,000 yards.

Question: Oh, 3,000 yards, okay.

Answer: Yeah, 3,000.

Question: 300 yards.

Answer: No, that's not very far.

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Question: By the time you ping them, you're in trouble.

Answer: You're in trouble, yeah. By that time you're almost losing contact and you're thinking about which depth charge you should use so no, 3,000 yards.

Question: Oh, okay.

Answer: As sonar improved, that range improved and you could control that by the frequency and the power, but that basically was what you used as an interval.

Question: Was it, now did I hear you right, the British developed sonar, is that?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Or perfected it?

Answer: They called it Asdic...(stood for Anti-submarine Detection Investigation Committee) acoustic.. I don't remember, but it was Asdic was the short name for it and when we got it we called it Sound-Ranging something or other, Sonar.

Question: So was it pretty well developed I mean, or was it still hit or miss on..?

Answer: Well it was still like any new thing it's still in beginning development and it kept, we kept improving on it and improving on it and eventually they improved the range and you have visual displays of the sound thing going out on a scope you could see the expanding circle and if it bounced off of a submarine why you could see a blip on it just like you could on a radar you know. So it, sonar improved rapidly during the course of the war.

Question: So you, by the time you were done, you had the visual?

Answer: No, well, no, that came later.

Question: Oh, okay.

Answer: When I was on the ship we did not have that capability. It was still the basic ping, train, listen, ping, train, listen.

Question: So what's the difference between active and passive sonar, is it two different?

Answer: Submarines, this of course didn't apply back at the time when I was a sonar operator. This is developments in the field of anti-submarine warfare and submarines make noise and you can hear their propeller going through the water cavitate and you can hear this cavitation if you have a good sonar. So there are times when you just listen. You don't, it's like submarines, they used to just listen for noises around them to make sure and so you could have a listening mode or you could have an active mode, a passive or active mode on your sonar. Listening back in the early days was very difficult because it was so directional but as you got these screens that you could see noises on, you could hear a noise and you could see a streak running out there. This is where that noise is coming from and you determine what that noise was and you go chase it you wanted to. But you have to be slow and quiet to do that or else you drown out the noise that he's making... you make

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more noise than they do. So, there is a difference between active and passive. Submarines use lots of passive whereas when you're really in the search mode, you're more active sonar, you use more active sonar.

Question: It's interesting cause in my head right now having seen so many movies I can hear the pinging sound. Do they do that accurate in movies, the ping that you hear?

Answer: Reasonably well yes, yes. And the echoes, yes.

Question: So it's "dong" and it sends one out..

Answer: Yep, and it comes back, if it bounces off a submarine it comes back "dong" again and as you close it then the sounds get closer and closer together; the echo gets closer so...

Question: So are you, if it goes out and bounces back are you listening to pitch?

Answer: You are listening to pitch.

Question: And timing?

Answer: Nah, the timing shows up on the recorder, the recorder when the sonar pings the recorder has a tracer that goes across the top of the sheet of paper and when it gets an echo it makes a mark on your range and so you, you're really interested in the difference in the pitch. The range is automatically shown up on your recorder.

Question: So if you're tone deaf you're not real good at..

Answer: Yeah, no, no, you're really not. Now the newer sonars do more display, video displays. You don't rely so much on tone and they probably got machines now that tells you the difference in the tone. We didn't have them in those days. I, as a sonar operator I was on watch one time off of the Atlantic coast and that was the days when the Germans were torpedoing tankers and ships right off the coast of New Jersey. You could see the ships burning out there. So we were out one day and I was on the sonar stack and I had an echo which I thought was a very good one. And we attacked it and blew up a whale so it wasn't a submarine - it was a whale. And after that I didn't stand many sonar watches. I was assigned other duties because I should have known the difference between the sound of a whale and the sound of a submarine but I went to quartermaster then and I did a lot of, I stood quartermaster watches and did navigation stuff. That was more interesting.

Question: I'll bet you that wasn't the only whale that was..

Answer: Oh no, no, no, no no.

Question: Cause it sounds like you had a lot of false reads.

Answer: Oh, you do. You could get all kinds of false reads and many attacks have been made on rocks and pinnacles on the bottom and that kind of stuff... lots of depth charges wasted on false targets.

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Question: So you, after the whale what did you go stand...

Answer: I then became a Quartermaster and the Quartermaster is the one who helps the navigator, who keeps the ship's logs and does the, helps with the navigation of the ship. I enjoyed that much more than listening to the ping, ping, ping.

Question: I would imagine that would be like working at the Olympia Brewery watching beer bottles go by all day looking for that empty one.

Answer: Where's one I can have.

Question: Wow. So, now your ship, did you end up where, South Pacific or did you..?

Answer: Well, we, our first cruise, our first task was to go to Trinidad down near the equator and join a convoy of ships and escort them across to North Africa for the invasion of North Africa, near Casablanca. We, our division of destroyers, there were four in our division, went down there together and joined up with this convoy and took it across and soon as the invasion was over and the troops had moved to shore we were sent back to the states and we didn't stay around the invasion area very long. We did no shore bombardment or anything like that. We just escorted the ships over there, got them there and our division was detached and sent back and we went, all of us went into the Navy yard to get this conversion and get the radars put on. Okay, then we were sent down headed toward the South Pacific.

Question: Were you being tailed by submarines on any of these adventures?

Answer: Not that we know of. Not that we know.

Question: Cause again, that was your job, you were kind of protection, right?

Answer: Right, we were just escorting and providing sonar protection, ASW protection to the convoy.

Question: How'd you do with seasickness?

Answer: I was never seasick, never was sea sick, I was very fortunate. I watched a lot of people suffer severely, but I was very fortunate.

Question: One of the gentlemen we talked to today they were leaving out of San Francisco and they buttoned everything down and everybody went down to their bunks and he said, guys were getting sick left and right and they thought they were out to sea and they finally went out, they were still tied up.

Answer: I'm not surprised. A lot of it, a lot of it is mental.

Question: The, now you, your ship did get torpedoed, is that right?

Answer: The Lavelette yes, when we were sent to the Pacific and we were sent to Noumea New Caledonia, down in the Hebrides Islands, north of Australia. And at that time U.S. forces were invading Guadalcanal and other areas down in the

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Solomon Islands so our ship was assigned as an escort to a small carrier group and we were to go up, the carrier group was supposed to go up off the Guadalcanal and provide air cover for the Marines that were on the beach fighting and so we were escorting the aircraft carriers and these were jeep carriers, small ones, not the big battles ones, the small carriers. And this, we had, the first night out, the second night out on the way to Guadalcanal we received a message that a large number of Japanese airplanes were headed out direction and they didn't show up until after dark and we had a night engagement with them.

And that was the night that the Chicago, which was a big cruiser that was along with us was torpedoed.. and hit by two or three different torpedoes so that.. A Navy tug was sent out to tow the Chicago back because it was hurt so bad it was unable to go on its own power. My ship, the destroyer Lavelette and one other destroyer was left behind with the Chicago to provide protection for the Chicago. The rest of the ships all went on to do their air cover over Guadalcanal. And the next day, while the tug had showed up and it had the Chicago in tow and the two destroyers were just circling around it slowly keeping submarines away we got the word that another flight of aircraft, Japanese aircraft were headed out to get the Chicago. They wanted to finish it off obviously. They had crippled ship out there and they wanted to sink it. It was about sunset when they finally showed up and we saw it, they came over the horizon. We saw them and they circled around until they got down so that they were, the sun was behind them and we were looking right into the sun. Then they just came out of the sun right toward the Chicago. We shot about six of them down but they were dropping torpedoes all over the place and one of the torpedoes struck our ship. The others, three or four of them, hit the Chicago so the Chicago was sunk and our ship was, took a torpedo in the engine room and fire room and flooded two huge big spaces, knocked out all of our engines and knocked out our evaporators so we had no water to make steam with. So we could, we were dead in the water. We didn't have any compulsion. Twenty-nine of our sailors were killed in those paces. One of them, one guy got out of there and his job at general quarters was if they had problems, he was to go up top side and turn off the main steam valve so that.. And I'm not an engineer and I don't know what all this steam valve does but that was his job. And after we got hit he's the only guy who got out of the fire room cause everybody else was scalded and drowned and everything and he was burned to a crisp but he got up, came up out of the fire room and turned off this valve, died shortly thereafter. We were dead in the water. The Chicago was sunk. The tug that was on the Chicago, towing the Chicago came over and took us in tow and towed us back down to a repair spot. And so that we didn't have any power, we couldn't go on our own and it was a good thing that the tug was there. And the other destroyer, it didn't have any problems. It was not, it wasn't hit but it stayed around with us until we were towed back to the base. All of the people in the forward engine room and the forward fire room were killed because of the torpedo hit on the bulkhead separating those two spaces so it just automatically flooded both of those spaces. And destroyers are built compartmentalized so that you can in fact flood some spaces and not sink and still go ahead but I, I can't think other than a magazine of that torpedo would have hit a magazine it might have just blown the whole ship all to pieces but hitting where it did it hit the most crucial engineering spaces because that was where the main engine control was and that was where the evaporators were that made, we used to make the fresh water to operate our boilers. So it was bad... hit in crucial space in engineering. But we were fortunate that it did not hit a magazine because if it would have hit a magazine then... the next compartment forward of this forward engine room was a big magazine naturally but anyway it would really, would have probably blown the ship out of the water if it had hit the magazine.

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Question: Did they have to and I don't know if this is Hollywood or if this is reality... could, do you know about the compartmentalization, when it starts sinking, did they have to seal off the compartment and seal..

Answer: Oh yes, oh yes. This, you had to, the force of this explosion had strained the bulkheads that do this compartmentalizing... that make this ship into compartments so we had to go and shore these things up with boards and two-by-fours and things so that they wouldn't collapse and where electrical wires and other penetrations go through these bulkheads you had to poke things in them and make sure that you didn't have the water coming through them so that the water was confined to the certain area that was flooded and couldn't get into the other compartments.

Question: So that then becomes basically a graveyard for..

Answer: It was in fact a graveyard for the people that were there except this one who escaped out of the fire room. There were a couple of other small injuries of people topside from some shrapnel that was flying around but they were not very much. But these people stayed in that compartment and it was flooded and you couldn't get into it. So we were towed back to a floating dry dock in Efate, the island of Efate, which is north of Noumea. And we were put in this dry dock and it took about three days to get there so we were put in this floating dry dock and the ship was lifted up out of the water. The Base Commander had a working party from other ships and other stations come over and undertake the task of removing the bodies so that our ship's company was not involved in that. That was a very good thing cause it wasn't a pleasant sight or odor. It just... pretty gruesome and nobody wanted to see their shipmates like that anyway so.

Question: Were they people, was the ship small enough that it was people that you knew?

Answer: We, I knew two or three of them but they worked in my watch section and in my, they weren't sonarmen. They were engineers so and it's amazing to me how they tend to, how the crew of a ship, tend to, small ship like this, tend to get together, engineers are with engineers and but, by design you're assigned bunks spread out all over the ship with different capabilities so some engineers are sleeping back in the back and some are sleeping up in the front and same with the sonarmen. We were spread out... we were not in the same compartment so I didn't know any of these sailors very well but I knew a lot of them by name and I ate with them and I played cards with them and that kind of thing but I didn't stand watches with them and that's where you really make your friendships.

Question: So you saw empty seats that were at the table.

Answer: Oh yeah, there was the people who didn't show up, yeah..

Question: Does that put into your mind, as a young kid, do you just say, ah, it's never gonna' be me or are you thinking..?

Answer: I, I was thinking that this is serious business and whatever you thought about it ahead of time and how much anybody had ever told you that this might happen it didn't really sink in until it actually did happen. And you could not,

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nobody could talk to you and make you visualize really how bad it was...it was a unique experience and a horrible experience and I don't want anybody to go through it again unless they have to. You just, one day, some guy's here and the next day he's not and you don't, you don't like that and it's not good.

Question: That wasn't part of the recruiting poster that you saw..

Answer: That was not on the recruiting poster. No, that didn't come through.

Question: So who did you view the enemy as then? Did you view it as a person or a people or a country or?

Answer: More as a people who were out to get me and I had to get them or I would be gotten and it, you know it was a country and you know that that country was at war with your country but even on a ship, when you're not eyeball to eyeball from, in trenches looking over the edge at each soldier's looking at each other. Even on the ships when you saw that airplane coming at you, you wanted to shoot it down. You didn't want it to get near you and that, country or whatever, it was an object that was coming after you and you wanted to get it out before it got there.

Question: So it sounds like it takes man back to a very basic law of survival..?

Answer: It really gets to that. It's you or me and you hope it's him. Yeah, it's a funny thing, it really isn't funny but it's, as you look at it, I looked at it, I used the term, they're using real bullets. And you've seen all kinds of things going on in movies of people shooting at each other and this and that and the other thing, but when you're standing up there on the bridge of that ship you see a plane coming at you, spurts of fire coming out of his wings, torpedoes coming out of the bomb bay of this plane, you know that that's real stuff and you better get him quick.

Question: And they're close enough that you, I mean, when they drop one of those torpedoes, do you see it go in the water?

Answer: Oh, you see it go in the water, yes. We, as a matter of fact, we could, we watched the trail of this torpedo. We could see his bubbles from the torpedo motor.. surfacing and you could follow the track of this torpedo.. and we knew it was coming right towards us and we could not maneuver to get out of its way. And we thought maybe, instantaneous, just like boy, they're after that cruiser that's settin' deeper than this destroyer and it might pass under us but it didn't. But we did see, we had seen torpedoes go under ships looking for something else and not just go right directly under them. But that was the old, those were contact torpedoes. When they became acoustic torpedoes and that's where then they knew what they were. They just took apart whatever they got to hone in on and if they, they had a little sonar and those were these torpedoes and they ping on their target and close in on them and blow up. But in those days, in the early days of the war, the Japanese torpedoes were extremely good and we were having trouble with ours at that time so... they were big torpedoes and they did a lot of damage.

Question: I can't even imagine, cause you're on this large vessel being hit by a torpedo... what does it do... I mean, up, down, sideways, around?

Answer: It shakes... it lifts it up a little bit but it sent a huge great big wall of water up the side of the ship where it had hit and blown up and big geyser of water

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went up there. As a matter of fact one of the people who was injured on the deck was injured because the wall of water hit him and washed him away from his battle station and just.. But that's, that's minor stuff, it's, and the ship shakes and jars and bucks up a bit but it settles back down and you hope it don't settle too far. But it, if you're not, if you're not injured by the initial blast of this torpedo then you're all right. But...the...most of the people top side were manning guns anyway, most of the people above decks, were manning guns and shooting at these airplanes as they were coming in. And we shot down six of them I think it was. It was a flight of about fourteen if I remember that, I don't know the exact numbers, but we shot down a bunch of them and didn't get the right one.

Question: Having faced the enemy so close and for you and the theater that you were in being the Japanese government, what did you think when you heard about the bomb being dropped?

Answer: At the time I had gotten off of ships and I was back in this University of Minnesota going to Officer's Training School so my connections with the war at that time were what I could read in the Minneapolis newspapers. I knew that the war wasn't going to last long once I read that. I just said, that is so devastating that this can't last long. I for one was glad to see them take advantage of any technology that we had developed to avoid further loss of life and this was a tool of war that had been developed for that reason and it was used and I think in the long run it saved lots of lives, not only American but Japanese also. Cause if we would have gone ashore in Japan and the Japanese mentality was that fight till the end it would have been a lot of people killed, a lot more than were killed by the atomic bombs.

Question: Do you think having been in the throws of the enemy that that gave you a different or better understanding of that, that somebody who wasn't there didn't understand war?

Answer: I don't think if you've been shot at, if you haven't been shot at, you don't really know. I think when you've been shot at and you think, oh my God, that one almost got me you want to do, I want to do anything I can to stop that and if you've got a bigger bomb than they had, use it. Let's get this over with.

Question: What was the worst part of being in the service for you if there was one?

Answer: Well the worst part of being in the service didn't happen until after I was married and had a family and I was frequently on long deployments away from my family and that was the worst part of the service. You know, I wanted to be in the Navy and I'd always wanted to be in the Navy and I realized right off the bat that if you wanted to be married in the Navy, you, first of all, you gotta' want to go to sea because you, in the Navy you're gonna go to sea so you don't want to be sea sick every time you go out the door and you want to enjoy going to sea. Then you gotta marry a woman who'll tolerate you being away from home for extended periods. To be happy in the Navy you gotta like to go to sea and you gotta marry a woman who will put up with it... your absence. So, the worst part, as far as I was concerned was extended deployments away from home and the family. The war was, the war was bad but I was in a different situation at that time. I was a young, single man by myself. I had no real responsibilities at home or anything and so I was there to fight the war so that really didn't bother me. And the fact that you spent a long time over

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there, that was just part of the war. The ship that I went to, the first ship when I, that was commissioned was manned by new recruits basically. There were a few seasoned Petty Officers in every group, every division but basically these people were all either drafted or enlisted immediately after or shortly after Pearl Harbor and they came to the ship first duty station and for many of them it was their only duty station during the war. And even today, this ship's company has reunions. In fact we have one scheduled for just after Labor Day this year; and there will be maybe as many as 35 or 40 people still going, showing up at these reunions, but many of them have died off. When I went to the first reunion there were about 70 people who showed up and now it's about half that amount. But they were all shipmates in the war, the whole time in the war all the time they were in the service, is on this one ship.