

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
KENDALL E. NIEBUHR
Signalman, U.S. Navy Armed Guard, World War II.
1996

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Niebuhr, Kendall E., (1924-). Oral History Interview, 1996.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 115 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 115 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Abstract

Niebuhr, a Madison (Wisconsin) native, discusses his service with the U.S. Navy Armed Guard as a signalman during World War II providing many anecdotes of his military service during the interview. Niebuhr, the youngest child of nine, tells how his mother raised the family by selling fishing bait at the family bait station; now the Madison Chamber of Commerce parking lot. He details his underage enlistment for the “kiddy cruise” over his mother’s objections and being sworn into the Navy on October 27th, 1942. Niebuhr talks about his physical exam in Milwaukee and his basic training at Great Lakes (Illinois). He describes the rigors of preparing his clothing, weapons training, marching, and calisthenics. Niebuhr then attended signal school in Indianapolis (Indiana), where he encountered 16 weeks of intensive training. His first duty station was with the 13th Armed Guard Signal School, on Treasure Island in San Francisco where he was attached to the SS Del Brazil. Niebuhr describes the voyages he made with the Del Brazil including New Caledonia, New Zealand, Auckland, and Guadalcanal. Niebuhr tells how the Seabees established an earthen wharf (out of a jungle) in New Caledonia. He details one particular combat experience where a Japanese submarine fired torpedoes at his ship. After completing his duty on the Del Brazil, Niebuhr mentions being stationed in Brooklyn (New York) and setting sail with the SS Vera Cruz on trips to Trinidad, Brazil, and Venezuela. In between cruises, he married in Manhattan. He touches upon his excursions on the SS John Gorey to England and Cherbourg (France) where he was a member of the first convoy to move up the English Channel after the fall of France and the convoy’s employment of torpedo netting. He characterizes the differences between naval personnel and the merchant marine and details how they interacted with each other. Niebuhr outlines the pay for a seaman, 3rd Class and how the Navy Armed Guard computed sea pay. Niebuhr mentions storms at sea including a hurricane his ship got caught in off the coast of Philadelphia (Pennsylvania). He was then assigned to the SS Jeb Stuart where they evacuated men that had recently fought at the Battle of the Bulge out of Rouan (France). He chats about V-E Day celebrations in Marseille (France). After the war ended, Niebuhr did duty on the aircraft carrier Antietam and the cruiser USS Alaska before being discharged at Great Lakes in December 1945. He had numerous jobs after the war: whitewasher, cab driver, and commercial fisherman. He elaborates on how he settled into his permanent position as a firefighter in Madison. The interview concludes with Niebuhr chatting on his involvement with the American Legion, the VFW, and the US Navy Armed Guard organization.

Biographical Sketch

Niebuhr, (1924) served as a signalman in the U.S. Navy Armored Guard during WWII. He served in both the European and Pacific theatres before being discharged in December 1945.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1996

Transcribed by Rose Polacheck, 2004.

Transcription edited by Damon R. Bach & John J. McNally, 2006.

Interview Transcript

MARK: Okay, this is August 27, 1996, this is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veteran's Museum, doing an oral history interview this afternoon with Mr. Kendall Niebur, of Madison, a Veteran of the U.S. Navy Armed Guard during WW II. Good afternoon, thanks for coming in.

KENDALL: Thank you Mark.

MARK: I absolutely appreciate it. Why don't we start by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941?

KENDALL: Well, I'm a native Madisonian. I was born about eight blocks from this building down on Blair Street in 1924, October 28th. I was one of nine children. I was the only child of the nine, I'm the baby, I was the only child that was born in a hospital. The rest were all born at home. I grew up, my mother raised us kids by selling fishing bait, Niebur's Official Live Bait Station at 25 South Blair Street which is now gone. It is a parking lot for the Chamber of Commerce now. I grew up in this area, went to Central High School up here.

MARK: So when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred, you must have been in 9th, 10th grade?

KENDALL: No, I was in, I believe 11th. When the attack occurred, it was on a Sunday as you well know and I was out by Cottage Grove, rabbit hunting with my older brother. We had left about 6:00 in the morning and had heard nothing about the attack on Pearl Harbor until we got back and we were flabbergasted when we heard from my sister-in-law that we were soon to be entering into official war, but an undeclared war right at that time.

MARK: And it was fairly soon after that that you enlisted. How long was that exactly?

KENDALL: Well, being 17 years old, I had to have permission. My father was gone, he died in 1940, and my mother, her baby she wouldn't give permission to go into the navy. So it wasn't until October of the following of 1942, that I was able to put her on the spot so to say and say, hey, I'm going to enlist in the U.S. Navy. Now, you can have one of two choices. If I go in the regular navy without after my 18th birthday, I enlist for 6 years. If I go in before my 18th birthday, they will let me have what they call a kitty cruise until my 21st birthday. Well it just so happens that she let me go in, she signed for me, and I was sworn in October 27th at 9:00 in the evening, and at midnight I was 18, so I got in by three hours.

MARK: It sounds like you were pretty anxious to get in, and get in to the Navy in particular. First of all, what was the rush, and second of all, why the navy? Was it a spirit of patriotism?

KENDALL: I think it was patriotism, yes, definitely. I didn't like what the Japanese were doing to our people and I wanted to get in there and get at it. At the time, that summer when I got out of school, the U.S. Army Air Force was constructing Traux Field out here. I went out there and applied for a job and got a job as messenger for the post engineer. I worked with him for about three, four months and then he found out that I was going to enlist in the navy and oh he sort of threw a fit. Come on, he kept saying, "Kendall join the Air Force, the Army Air Force here, the U.S. Army." He said, "You don't need to worry" he says, "You join, I'll have you stationed here, and you'll be home every night and that." And I said, "I won't see any action?" "Well no," he says, "You want to be around your family, don't you?" I said, "No, I want to get out where the action is." So against his recommendation, I went into the Navy instead of the Army Air Force. At that time it was called the Army Air Force. Not the Air Force.

MARK: And why the navy? You had all these different services to chose from, you seem to have been set at a very early age.—

KENDALL: I love water and I just couldn't feel that I could do any better than to get in the navy and travel and that's exactly what I did.

MARK: Yes, indeed you did. Why don't you walk me through the induction process?

KENDALL: Well, I signed up I guess in the middle of October and they sent me down to Milwaukee for a physical exam. And that took a full day and then we'd come back to Madison and we waited around and waited around so that we could have a swearing in ceremony. Again they had this ceremony the 27th of October in the old Eagles Club where the city hall city-county building is now situated. And down in their banquet hall they had a big to-do about its sort of like a navy day for them. There was 21 of us that were sworn in and from the area. Couple of my, well at least one of my school mates was in there also. From there, the next day I was on a train heading for Milwaukee again, back to Milwaukee. We spent two days down there in a well they called it a hotel, I don't know what it really was?

MARK: A bit seedy for you?

KENDALL: A little seedy, and the food wasn't that great. And finally we got on a train, the group of us. They gathered a bunch of us, I think that there was something like 150 or so fellows that got on the train and went down to Great Lakes Naval Station. We were divided up there. I got sick on the way down and had to be taken to the hospital so I was taken away from my group of guys that I was going down with, but two days later I joined another group when I got out of the hospital, feeling good, joined another group and we started our boot training the first part of November, in 1942.

MARK: Now as you mentioned, you were pretty interested to get into the service, and the navy in particular, was that the case with the others around you, I mean those you were in basic training with? I mean, -- were --

KENDALL: Some of them were like that but I would have to say that the greater percentage of them wanted to get into the navy because they didn't want to get inducted into the army with the draft. They didn't want the army so they joined the navy as reservists. Me, I was joined as regular navy.

MARK: And you did your basic training in Great Lakes. What sort of training did you do exactly? How much of it was weapons, how much of it was marching around? How much was learning how to wear the uniform?

KENDALL: Well the first thing they really taught you down there when you went into the barracks was to get your clothes in proper condition and to keep clean. Because at that time, a shower to me was a real bonus because I had had very few showers in my life, up until then. Most of my younger life and that in Blair Street down there, all we did for taking a bath was we took a bath Saturday afternoon in a great big wooden cheese tub that my mother filled out of the warm water out of the stove that had a reservoir, a cold stove that had a reservoir where we got our warm water. All we ever had was one little faucet coming in to the house there on Blair Street. They taught us cleanliness. They emphasized cleanliness. They taught us how to wash the clothing, how to prepare it for hanging up drying. When it was dried, how to fold it so that it took up the least amount of space. We rolled our stuff in the navy. We put our uniforms underneath the mattresses so they could be pressed. And it was this type of material that you could do this with. I got to say cleanliness was I think one of the big things. Weapons training, we had very little actual weapons training. We, they used wooden sticks and that for us as guns, and marching was another big item because we had to learn all the various commands, and they took us out on the drill field. We had calisthenics, and it was in December and that and snow, on the ground. Our chief that was in charge of our company, he made sure that we were physically able to take care of ourself because he would take us out there and he'd say, "Now that one of things you guys got to do is, you got to play football." And he says, "I'm going to play football with you only thing is, he says, I'm going to carry the ball all the time." So he says, "Its up to you guys to stop me. Any which way you can." And I'll tell ya, there was many a bruises that developed from that man, Mr. Mock was his name. He put quite a few bruises on all of us. It was real physical.

MARK: What about discipline? Was it tough, was it something that you or perhaps others had trouble adjusting to, or was it not that tough to handle?

KENDALL: I can remember the young fellow that bunked next to me. If I remember right his name was Zoz, Z-O-Z. He cried every night. He was so lonesome and that that it was actually pathetic. And they finally took him out of the company. Discipline?

There was a certain amount of it but mostly it was the guys with the bigger muscles would take care of the guys with the smaller muscles.

MARK: Now, I went to basic training about 40 years afterwards, and one of the things that I remember is that people from all different parts of the country were all sort of melted together into military people. Was it the case with you? Were there people from the say the south or the east coast or something like that? Or would you say that it was more regional?

KENDALL: No, it was not. It was more regional. Because they did have separate naval training stations usually they went to the regional training station. I don't remember anybody that wasn't from like Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, that there type of thing.

MARK: Big ten states, basically.

KENDALL: Yes. Yes.

MARK: So after basic training, you went to special signal school?

KENDALL: Yes.

MARK: Which is after Christmas then? I am kind of interested in if you were in Christmas in basic training, what that must was like?

KENDALL: No, I was not, I was home. When we went in, into boot camp, we originally scheduled for four weeks of training. In our third week of training we got notice that we are going to have five weeks of boot training. So this took us up through the first part of December and then they, I would say it was pretty close to the middle part of December, they sent us home on what they called boot leave and I was home for Christmas but I had to go back right after wards. Between Christmas and New Years, I was sent to this place down in Indianapolis, Indiana, Butler University, which was a signal training class. When they tested you in the navy for your abilities, and then you put down your choices, my first choice was submarine, my second choice was UDT, Underwater Demolition Team, because I love to swim at that time. I got neither one of them. They said we are in need of signal men with your capability with your score and that, you are going to signal school. Well there was 200 and some of us that went down to Indianapolis from Great Lakes in this class, we were called Division 8 in Indianapolis. We had 16 weeks of intense training and I mean intense. Because we were there doing work I'd say a good eight hours a day on signaling. That was some were for blinker, various navy items, one of the big things was using something that people would call a rope, but I would call a line, the navy term is a line. There is only one rope in the navy and that rope is, huh, on the bell of a ship that's used. All navy stuff as far as training goes, it was intense, even physical. Butler University has a sunken bowl, for football and that and they would get us out there and we would

have to run up and down those bleachers, oh God, I don't know how many times each. The first time I swear it darn near killed me, but after a while, you get used to it and you could do pretty good. They really did well by us. They gave us, we had to stand guard duty. An 18 year old kid could see nothing but the enemy creeping up through the woods trying to get at the field house where the boys were, all that stuff, your imagination, it used to run wild with some of them. Because they would shoot at anything that they heard. They thought they heard people sneaking up and they would fire the gun at them. Well it turned out that we had a shotgun, is what our gun was actually, with three or four shells. And finally they took the shells away from us because they were using too many of them on rabbits and that that they had making noise around us, so that was one of the things.

MARK: This lasted how long, about 16 weeks long?

KENDALL: Sixteen weeks.

MARK: That's quite a long time. It must have been well into the spring before you went --

KENDALL: I think it was in April. April 12th was when I was separated from the signal school. I was attached to 13th to the Armed Guard Signal School, on Treasure Island in San Francisco.

MARK: What did you think about ending up in the Armed Guard? What did you know about it, I mean, when it came to your selections, you selected some very glamorous romantic areas that you didn't get into. I am wondering what your attitude was towards it?

K; We didn't know a thing about the Armed Guard. We knew nothing, as far as I knew, I was going to be handed the gun and guard something or the other. I didn't know until we got out to Frisco and they started telling us about what the Armed Guard was.

MARK: And why don't you explain exactly what is it?

KENDALL: Well the U.S. Navy Armed Guard was a group of men, Navy men aboard the Merchant Fleet during WW II. It encompassed about 6700 various merchant ships. Not necessarily all American. There was various other ones because as you know, there was many ships that flew other colors, such as Panama. Panamanian ships were quite prevalent out on the ocean. We manned those. There was gunners that took care of the guns, we had any where from a five-inch what they call a five-inch 50, a five-inch 51, and a five-inch 38. The five-inch 38 was a multiple use gun that could fire both surface and air craft. The 50 and 51 were only surface guns. We had a three-inch 50, which was either surface or air craft.

We had all kinds of 20-mm and as on my second ship, we also had 50 caliber machine guns on the bridge.

MARK: And at Treasure Island, I assume that this is where you learned about these weapons, what they were, how to use them in the mission and that sort of thing?

KENDALL: No. [Giggling] No. You were sent aboard ship and there you got, because each ship had a different type of armament.

MARK: So it was on the job training basically.

KENDALL: Right. Being a signalman, I had not too much to do with the arms. My job was communication.

MARK: Between the different ships or radio contact?

KENDALL: No radio, just visual signaling between the ships, shore and air craft, what ever. I was relegated to the job of loading a 20-mm cannon on the bridge and they put me through the rounds of loading and unloading the magazine from the gun. We didn't have any of these modern guns with so such-and-such a type of site, all we had was the bulls eye and you pray to God that you were shooting in the right direction. It wasn't that glamorous a deal, but it had to be done.

MARK: Yeah, what was your attitude towards that?

KENDALL: Loved it! Anything to do with fire arms, I'm for. I even went back when they were practicing, I knew how to, I stuck my nose in on some of this, and I learned how to handle the loading of the three-inch 50 and the five-inch 38 and the various jobs so that because at any given time if a crew is knocked out, maybe somebody else could take over. This had happened in the Armed Guard. The Armed Guard, we sailed, I don't think that there is a port in the world that the Armed Guard had not gone into. Some of the strangest places you would ever want to see, for instance, my tanker, the second ship, taking it up the Orinoco River in Venezuela. How do you turn a ship that long in a river that is only about 100 feet wider than the ship? I wondered, how did you do it? Well, I found out. [Laughter]

MARK: Now you got me curious.

KENDALL: Well we went in with the tide. See the tide goes up those rivers quite a ways. And you go in with the tide, and when you get up there far enough, you wait until you are starting to get a strong tide bringing you in, and then when you do, you go up above where you are going to dock, and the pilot will get it way over to one side of the river or the other, and then he calls for the helmsmen to put it hard over in the opposite direction. Which is nothing but a mud flap, or flat there with jungle. Well they put the bow of the ship about 50-75 feet up into the jungle over

this 40-50 foot mud flat so you were up there about 100-150 feet up out of water. Well then the tide coming in, it pulls you around, the stern around, and it pulls you out of that, and turns you right around just as nice as could be. You put the ship in slow speed ahead, or half speed ahead, and you go down to where your dock is, and you pull into the dock. You tie up there, then the tide doesn't bother ya. But, you go into the jungle, believe me, [laughing].

MARK: Well, I want to get into that actually. So you went to San Francisco and did some more training, and then you started going on ships. So you must have been out at sea doing your job sometime by mid-1943?

KENDALL: Yes. Well, on May 18th, I was assigned to the SS Del Brazil in Frisco. She sailed down the coast to Port Wyneme, CA where we picked up about 600 Seabees. On June 5th or 6th, we left Port Wyneme and we sailed for the South Pacific. We went to New Caledonia, is that the time frame?

MARK: That's all the way across the Pacific Ocean.

KENDALL: About, well let's see, we actually sailed the 9th of June and we arrived in New Caledonia on the 25th of June so it was 16 days, 17 days actually because you count the 9th, 17 days over there. We anchored out from the coast. There was a small town up there, in New Caledonia called Nouméa, and we anchored about 8-10 miles east of that on the island. Nothing but jungle. They put the rhino barges over the side of the ship because the ship that I was on carried troops and was a transport also. So it had equipment and that much like a landing transport. They put the Seabees over the side, they went in and they started. They got a couple of caterpillars on these barges and into shore and off and within a day they had pushed out an earthen wharf that they could take the supplies off of our ship and land the material and they started right away putting up quantum huts to take care of all of these 600 or so Seabees and they were ashore within a week, completely settled.

MARK: Pretty impressive operation I take it.

KENDALL: Yes, very much so.

MARK: So this was your first voyage over seas and your first extended trip on a ship. Now as I've talked to other vets, for example, infantry men that have gone over to Europe, they often describe their voyage over seas and describe sea sickness and that sort of thing. I mean you were a navy guy, but this was your first extended trip overseas, did you or perhaps others have some difficulty getting your sea legs as they say?

KENDALL: Some of them did. I might have a little. When we left San Francisco and sailed down the coast to Port Wyneme, we got outside the golden gate and out beyond,

oh there is a set of rocks out in front of San Francisco, I forget the name of them now, when we got beyond that where we turned south and headed down

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one of my first chow times aboard ship, I got in for, well the noon lunch or whatever you want to call it. I'm eating away there and all of a sudden general quarters takes off, and the first thing I thought, oh my God they are after us all ready. We can't even get away from the shore where they are gonna get us. Well, if I'm gonna go down, I'm gonna go down happy because I had noticed over on the one counter over there they had pies. And I grabbed a lemon meringue pie and I took it with me to my battle station [laughing] I figured if I'm gonna go down I'm gonna have something to eat. [Laughter] But as it turned out, it was a drill. So I had to take the pie back [laughing] to the chow line.

MARK: Nice try though. [Laughter] So during the course of the war, you said you served on several ships. Do you remember how many?

KENDALL: Yes, I sailed on four merchant ships and one U.S. Navy ship, well actually two, three. I keep going because I was troop, considered troop on a couple of them.

MARK: I suppose we should just discuss the different ships and where you went on them, if you can remember it in that sort of detail. For example, the first one you said was the Del Brazil.

KENDALL: Yeah, I got a listing here of what she did.

MARK: Well, I'm interested in hearing about it in your recollections of being on any particular ships.

KENDALL: Well, its sort of nice because this will answer one of your other questions that you wrote down on the list. When we left New Caledonia, we went to New Zealand. We pulled into Wellington, we left on the 25th of June, oh wait a minute now, July 6th, we left New Caledonia. July 10th we pulled into Wellington, New Zealand. We had a short liberty in that we picked up a certain number of marine professionals. I'll elaborate a little bit on that later. We left Wellington on the 16th of July and we arrived in Auckland on the 18th where we filled the compliment of the specialists up, and we left Auckland on the 23rd which was five days we were there in Auckland and we arrived back at Nouméa on the 26th and on the 27th in the morning, we got there late in the afternoon, and the morning of the 27th we left for Guadalcanal. We left the 27th and we arrived July 30th at Guadalcanal. We left Guadalcanal August 2nd and we arrived at Espiritu Santo New Hebrides on August 4th. Now in that trip there, from Guadalcanal to Espiritu Santo is where the Japanese subs tried for us. So you want me to elaborate a little on that or not?

MARK: Oh yeah, absolutely.

KENDALL: Okay. We were going in to Espiritu Santo, which was large navy base. It's a natural harbor and we were out probably I would say close to 75 miles steaming into along the coast. We were out from the coast probably four or five miles off shore when general quarters sounded and one of our look-outs cited three torpedoes coming at us. They bracketed us. But, evidently we were a little bit further than what they thought because the first torpedo went just barely under our bow, the second torpedo malfunctioned, which was coming directly amid ship, and the third torpedo went right underneath our stern. The one that malfunctioned, it come up to the surface and it skipped along the surface. It skipped out around our stern, out about a thousand yards and turned and come back at us and when it come back at us, it exploded. They couldn't, we were n the company of a navy tanker, a navy destroyer and a navy patrol craft. They couldn't pick anything up. But this wasn't the first attack that they had in this area. So we steamed for maybe an hour or so and we got a call from the stern look-out on our ship and the funny part of it was, this guy that called in, he gave a bearing and said periscope out at such and such a bearing, so many yards and so on and so forth, well it just so happened that I was the one on the bridge that had the phones and took that and we relayed it and being a signalman, we put up flags to the affect of a submarine which made us do more zigzagging, and at that time, I have to say I saw the most beautiful sight I have ever laid eyes on then, even until now. That destroyer, she was way out in front of us on our starboard, the right side of our ship. She was out there probably 1500 yards or so, and she heeled over, she made a turn, and he must have kicked that baby into flank speed because that ship really started to move. He came directly at our bow. All of the halyards on that destroyer were filled with flags telling the tanker what to do, telling the patrol craft what to do. They come directly at us and at the very last split second, the helmsmen turned her and he went down our starboard side. He wasn't 10 feet away from our ship when he went by us, and when they hit the stern of our ship, he took the bearing. And he went out looking. Well, they went out and we were continuing on and the ship went what we called, hull down, where is all you can see is just the top part of the mast, which his about 7 or 8 miles out there. They could not pick up anything. They couldn't find where that periscope had been. In the mean time, the patrol craft picked another one up. They did pick it up and they went after it, depth charging it, and the patrol craft is, oh I don't know, 100-120 feet long, not very big. When they dropped the cans off the fantail of that thing, when they went off, it raised the tail of that ship up in the air like that, put her back down and each one that went off, because it was fairly shallow. They got a probable. Probable sinking, they weren't sure, they thought they had debris in that but according to the record, they didn't get any debris.

MARK: So that was an exciting experience?

KENDALL: Very.

MARK: Scared?

KENDALL: I was at the time immediately, yes, but I was also worked up, just hoping that we could get everybody at the guns, just hoping that they'd bring something up that we could shoot at. So, we left, we went in to Espiritu Santo, and we anchored in there for a couple of days and then we turned around and then we headed home. On the 11th of September I was detached from the Del Brazil in Treasure Island. We stayed on leave, or I went home on leave from there and when I got back to Treasure Island I got on a draft and they sent me to the armed guard center in Brooklyn, October 20th was when we got there. Or, no that was when we left Treasure Island. On November 11th, I caught my second ship out of New York which was an old, old tanker by the name of SS Vera Cruz. She was built before WW I, saw service in the convoys of WW I and was doing her duty again during this war. We went, from New York we went to Aruba and we loaded up with oil in Aruba and come back to New York. Well, now I might say on the Del Brazil we had, we mounted four 3-inch .50s and one 5-inch .38 and why I think it was 8 .20-mm. On the Vera Cruz, we had a 5-inch .50, one of the oldest guns aboard merchant ships, and two out-classed .50-caliber steer horn machine guns on the bridge. That was the only armament we had on her. But went to Aruba, come back to New York, learned how to eat pizza. My first experience with pizza.

MARK: I assume in New York?

KENDALL: No, Bayo, New Jersey. The gunners mate, as a matter of fact, I just found him here and I just called him, not too long ago, Wercyski was his name, but a good Pollock, he took us guys out for pizza. But anyway, from there we went down to Trinidad and we went from Trinidad, we went to Recife, Brazil. While in Trinidad now, this is a big natural oh, what do I want to say, its bigger than a bay, its like a

MARK: Its an estuary.

KENDALL: Well, its like a great big, big lake. Many, many, many miles across and over on one end is the land Venezuela, well there is where you had to go, we had to go up into the Orinoco River, up in there, oh it took us about five hours of steaming up the river and that's where we had to turn around like I mentioned. I never knew that they did this sort of thing, but we docked there at this oil company's dock and took on a load of fuel. Did many things while we were there because it took a while and they gave us, the oil company really provided us with some entertainment.

MARK: Like what?

KENDALL: They took us over to this like a country club. They had a beautiful big, what do they called the center spot of a country club,

MARK: I don't belong to one, I don't know. [Laughter]

KENDALL: Well, its got various things in it, it had a bar, it had dining,

MARK: Club house maybe.

KENDALL: Club house, that's the word. And they had bowling, table tennis, everything like this. And the thing that impressed me the most was out there on the golf course when it got sort of in the evening, the frogs come out. They had a swimming pool and the frogs would come out and get in the swimming pool. Now when I am talking about a frog, I don't mean these little things we got around here. I'm talking about a frog that's as big as this sheet of paper, that you can put a hat on and he hops with the hat, away with your hat because that's what we, they put my hat on there. But that's how big, he probably weighed I'll say up to two and a half pounds. Anyway, that's the type of thing and they provided us during the day with baseball games with the various company players and that, they did a real good job.

MARK: Now, are these Americans working in Venezuela?

KENDALL: No, these were mostly, a combination. There was Americans, there was English and the Venezuelan, the native people. Which were very nice, very nice. But they had real good food, they fed us good, they provided all the drink. Only beer, they only had beer that we could have and being 18 years old, I wasn't used to beer yet, even from Wisconsin so I never really drank beer. I was always coke, coca-cola was the big thing. We really had, and then when we got all loaded up, we took off down the river again, down the Orinoco, out in this gulf, is what it was. It was called the Gulf of Paria. The Gulf of Paria was where the navy put their larger ships on trial runs, what they call shake-down. Now we saw one in there and I, from the time that I was on these other ships that I was on to the time that I finally got on the USS Alaska, she had been down there in the Gulf of Paria and we'd saw a capital ship like that but I couldn't identify it and I don't know whether it was her or not but it sure looked from I could remember. She sure looked the same. We went back to Trinidad, the other side of the gulf, and we got in convoy and we went down to Recife, Brazil. Now the fuel that we were hauling, we supplied the South-Atlantic fleet with fuel. We would take it in there and they would put it in bunkers and that finally send it out on tankers for the fleet to fuel at sea and that's what we were hauling down from Venezuela. We made four trips down there.

MARK: Trips back and forth.

KENDALL: Back and forth. One time we went down a little bit further to a place called Biea (?spelling?) and it was the same thing. I was detached from the Vera Cruz on the 14th, of August in 1944. Note that date, August 14th I was detached because its very significant to me.

MARK: Why is that?

KENDALL: Because the 17th, my wife had come to New York to be with me, and we went down to the navy building on Manhattan, on, right down at the tip of Manhattan in the navy building and we were married. We went home on leave then after the Vera Cruz, so the 17th of August, which this is the 27th, that was 52 years ago, so we just celebrated our 52nd.

MARK: Happy Anniversary!

KENDALL: Thanks! But anyway, we got married about 11:00 in the morning. We went out and we had all our gear packed. I was at the armed guard center, she was in this apartment she had. We met, I went over and picked her up and we went down to the Navy building, got married, grabbed a cab, and busted our tails getting over to Grand Central Station so that we could catch a train. They were closing the gate when we got there and we went running down the side and we just barely got on the train as it was pulling out, packed full of people, we were on a coach. What a wedding night, no, we had to stand up in the aisles in the coach, it was that crowded. Well, we sat on our luggage after a while, but it wasn't until probably 6, 7, or 8:00 in the afternoon or evening that she finally got a seat. The next day in the evening we were in Madison. I returned to the Brooklyn Armed Guard Center the first part of September. On Sept 7th, they assigned me to the USS, not USS, the SS John Gorey. Now they sent me by train down to Philadelphia, and there is a navy yard down there which is an ammunition depot. When they took us down from the train down to the ship, I thought oh boy what am I getting into here. There she lay, a Liberty ship, well I wanted to be on a Liberty ship because they were a heck of a lot nicer than the two previous ships and well there she lay, fully loaded, 10,000 tons of ammunition. We got on, I got on board and we took off right a way for Europe. We picked up a convoy right off of New England, or a part of it, and the rest we picked up off of Canada. We went the North Atlantic route to England which took us about 14 days. There was no, what we would call action. We had some scares but no ship got damaged or anything like that. We went over to Cherbourg, France where we unloaded and there believe it or not I got to meet my brother over there in France, from here.

MARK: I assume that was quite a coincidence, I mean, did you expect him to acquire him there?

KENDALL: No I didn't expect him but we were there a number of days and I had heard that he was in such an such an outfit and in trying to find out, by gosh I found out where he was and contacted him and he come over and stayed with me one night. And then we returned back to the United States. When we got off of the coast, we went over to England, the Southern Coast of England, we hit a fog. A fog that we had to cut our speed down to 4 or 5 knots. We couldn't, all day long, and trying to keep the other ships located, all you could locate them by was their horns, their

whistles that they would sound ever so many seconds. We got away from the coast and we finally run into a storm which cleared the fog off which was good. I couldn't believe it, these ships when they are empty, are just like bobbers, corks. Boy do they twist and turn when they got a little weather. Well we had a 17-day crossing, which was completely storm. You just can't you talk about, we talked earlier about people getting sea sick, people that had never been sea sick before, got sea sick. One little incident on that there deal was that see the armed guard, when we ate aboard a merchant ship, we had our own mess hall. And we were served by a mess boy from the merchant marine. Now, on these ships the galley was in the center part and they fed both the merchant and the armed guard, either way, one side and the other. Our mess boy, in this storm, he went berserk. And they finally tied, not tied him down, but forcibly held him and took him in and put him in a cabin all by himself, locked him in the cabin and he was not doing damage or anything like that, but he was just, you would think that he was trying to commit suicide or something like that . Well, it turned out I had been good friends with him and I finally talked the merchant officers into letting me go into the cabin with him and by golly I was lucky enough to calm him down. I got him calm, but they kept him in the cabin.

MARK: What was his problem, just the storm?

KENDALL: The storm. The ship was on the verge, let's put it this way, you would think that it was going to tip over. Well, as it so happened, she developed a crack in the steel plating across and in front of the forecandle where the mid part of the ship, right in front of that, she developed a crack in the plating, about an inch-and a half to two inches wide. Well, several Liberty ships had cracked like that and sunk, so we were quite leery. They went out in the storm and everything and welded pieces of steel across to hold it so she wouldn't crack any further. But anyway, this mess boy, when we got back to port, one of the first things they do when they get back to port is they sign off their ship. What they have to do is they have to pay in cash the merchant men, or they did at that time, Well the mess boy, he got his cash and I was out down the gangway on the dock when he come out. He had his money in his hand like this. He come down the gangway and the first thing he did was he dropped his sea bag, he got down on the ground and he kissed the ground and he said I'm never leaving you again. He says they are going to play hell in getting me back on one of those things so he got up and he come over to me and he says here Ken, here this is yours. He handed me, he held out the whole sheaf of money, he must have had about I'd say about \$1500 to \$2000 and at that time, that was a lot of money. He says, this is yours, you can have every bit of it for what you did for me, and I refused it. I wouldn't even take a penny of it because he was that kind of a friend and but he was from the Great lakes area here. He was from Minnesota and he had sailed on ore ships, but he had said nothing like that. But anyway.

MARK: Well, this brings up the topic I want to discuss anyway, and that was the Merchant Marine and the Navy guy's relationship with the Merchant Marine. You were on

these merchant ships, so the crew if I am not mistaken, was part Merchant Marine and then part Navy.

KENDALL: Well, actually, the Navy was separate from the merchant. We were just, we had certain duties and they had certain duties. We had the guns and signal equipment and we even stood, the only dual duty that was aboard the merchant ship was the radio. They had merchant radio operator and we had navy radio operators. They had no signal men, they had no gunners but they were trained, they filled in on guns for the loaders and that. Some of them were very helpful. There was quite a bit of bickering back and forth.

MARK: Well, so you see, that's what I am wondering about for example, I don't know if it is true, but from what I gather, the merchant men were paid a lot more than you guys were.

KENDALL: They were paid. Well, [laughter] there is a controversy about that. This mess boy, now a mess boy mind you, all his job was, was taking care of the mess hall. He had about \$1400 bucks for less than a two month trip. I was \$92/month.

MARK: I am not going to ask, but that seems to be a significant difference. [Laughing from both.]

KENDALL: And I was Third Class. The seamen got less than that. That \$92 was with sea pay because we were, I think I got \$78 and \$14, 20%

[End of Tape One, Side Two]

and I think it was sea pay. So what would 20% of \$78, about \$16, some where around \$92, \$95 was what I was getting, but we had to sail the same and we had to be out there if the enemy come. That was our job to be out there, trying to protect these guys. But there was, I will tell ya, there was a bond in the merchant marine too.

MARK: Between themselves?

KENDALL: No, between us. We were doing a job. We had, in the Armed Guard, we wanted to deliver and we did. That's what our motto says, that we wanted to deliver and we did. Because, what can a war ship do or a bunch of men on an island do when they don't have any food or ammunition, or that. People had to get that stuff to them. And it took the people that were planning this, to have this stuff there, oh my gosh, it took a magician you might say to move these ships around. We hauled 10,000 ton of ammunition which was a 105 and 155 mm howitzer shells, so you know, one ship load if they didn't have it, could cause something to happen on land that where they didn't get to. So, it was important that the Merchant Marine and the Navy work together. And in most instances, they did, there was a few hard heads.

MARK: Now this bickering that you mentioned, I said pay. Was that the source of this bickering, were there other things, was it just human nature or is there some specific things that tempered them off?

KENDALL: I would say that it was just human nature. The pay was the big big thing. The Merchant Marine ate the same as we did. We ate the same as they did. The only ones that ate different were the officers. They got a special dining room amid ships and they were served by 2 or 3 guys [10 Second BLANK PART OF TAPE]

I remember one particular incident about food that, we were talking about food. They would prepare, they had certain cooks with a certain class and then there was a class 1, class 2 cook, and then there was a cook's helper and that. Well I used to watch in the galley and that but where our folks was, we had to go by the galley all the time. One time this cook's helper, I happened to notice he was washing something in the sink. And the sinks, they had these stainless steel sinks and it turned out it was his clothing. He was washing his shorts and that and then I watched him soap up his socks and clean them off you know and just with the soap. He didn't rinse them but then the last thing he put in there was the ham that we had for supper and washed it in the same water, the same soapy water. He washed the ham off then he took the drain out and rinsed them all off. And I thought, oh my God [laughter] what kind of food are we going to have but it usually was pretty good. Good food.

MARK: So we got side-tracked there from the list of the ships. You got back from this the last voyage, back from there.

KENDALL: Well, we had to go down to a ship yard and what they did was they put a belly band on her, on the ship. This is ---

MARK: I assume, I don't know, I assume just what, a steel reinforcement?

KENDALL: It was steel plates. They were about 4-5 feet wide and about 15-16 feet long and these were riveted. The ship had all, when it was built it was welded so now they riveted this steel belt on the side of the ship, two thicknesses. Each one of these plates was about I would say a good inch or inch and a half thick and they made it two thicknesses. It went from about 40 feet from the bow all the way back to about 40 feet from the stern. That made us feel a lot better of course they fixed the crack in the deck too, and after we got that all done they give us our orders again and we went back down to Philadelphia, and we loaded up another load of ammunition and we started out of I can't think of the name of the bay that Philadelphia, Delaware Bay? We were coming out of there and low and behold we run into a hurricane. A good one, and we were in dire straits there with our ship. The pilot that we had aboard was supposed to have taken off, but the pilot boat couldn't get out. They got out but from what we heard later on, they cap-

sized and lost everybody on the pilot boat, but I can't say that for sure. But that's the story we heard, but he didn't get off till the next day. Well what the captain did was he said I'm not taking my ship out in this. He said, we are going to anchor. So what he did was put the bow of the ship into the wind, and when he got so far, he dropped an anchor. Well, these ships have, I don't know how many hundreds of feet of anchor chain, but, when he dropped that anchor, he let the ship come back a little ways, like maybe 300, 400 or 500 yards and he dropped the second one. Then he left that one out, so there we were with two anchors. When he closed of the engines, the wind still dragged us. Now we could tell this by the lights that we could see on shore or on the buoys, the readings on those. So he started the engines again, and put her in about one-third speed. We were just able to stop the anchors in the third speed from dragging and that's the way we stayed until the next day when the hurricane blew itself out. The flags that I had put up, my identification flags that I had put up on the halyard, we always did that when we were in port, that and the pilot flag, which was H, which was the pilot flag, when I went to look at them in the morning, there was nothing there but the rope. She'd whipped all the material completely off of the lanyard for the flags, but we raised anchor and we took off. We went back over we went back across the north Atlantic again. One of these trips, I don't remember which, as you know, you saw on my record that I donated a weight. One of them was on one of these trips that I picked that up. We got over to England, and they decided to send us up to Scotland. Well it just so happened that Calais, France had fallen, but they weren't sure about it. I don't know for some reason or another, they sent a convoy and we were the fist convoy up the English Channel through the lower end. It was so black, I've often heard, that it's so black that you can't see your hand in front of your face, and believe me, this was the night that you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. We had one heck of a time keeping it align with the ships in our convoy. The ship ahead of us was also a Liberty ship and on some of these ships they put what they call torpedo netting. You ever hear of that?

MARK: No.

KENDALL: Well they put the booms out. Up forward and in the aft, they put a boom out and they rig a chain net with circle, with steel circles like this that are interwoven along the side so this is supposedly so that it doesn't set a torpedo off. That you know is likely that it is going to go in there and not set the torpedo off if you get it. Well, as it turned out, when dawn started to come, I couldn't believe my eyes, I looked out on our starboard beam, and here was our escort. I was flabbergasted. Here was this side paddle wheel, escort. The English had him, had pressed into service these channel boats with these wheels on the side for propulsion, and that's what they had the guns on and that was our protection. Well the Liberty ship ahead of us, all of a sudden, she veered off out away. Couldn't figure out what the hell was going on. Well then they started raising the nets, they had a torpedo in one of the nets. How they ever got it in there, we don't know. It must have been, they said that the German torpedo boats were out, but again, I saw the fish hanging there in the net. She was loaded with ammunition.

Well, if they had picked on us, with no net, or if it had gone through the net, we would have had a loud bang. But anyway, we unloaded, we got up to Scotland and we dropped anchor for a day and then they sent us back down again. We went into LeHavre. We unloaded in LeHavre, France and then we went back across the channel to the Thames River and I was detached on January 13, of 1945 from the Gorey and I was sent down, with our whole crew, our whole armed guard crew was detached and was sent down by motor, by truck, down to South Hampton. This took us, we had to stay one night in a small village in England and we got on a ship that same class of ship, it was a Liberty ship, but this was the JEB Stewart.

MARK: As in the confederate general?

KENDALL: The confederate general. We were attached to that ship on the 13th. We were in South Hampton so right away they started loading us. Well, what they loaded us with was hospital units. This whole hospital unit would come down to the dock in trucks. They would put four, they would swing this boom from the ship out over the dock and they would lower the hook and they would put four cables on a truck and hook it to this hook on our cable, lift the truck up, bring her over and put her down into the hole. They picked up each one of those trucks and all the equipment that they had, plus the men, and we took off from South Hampton. Well we went back over to LeHavre, but we did there was we went into the harbor and the new went up in through to the Seine River. We sailed up the Seine River in France up to Rouan, Rouan France. We got up to Rouan and they put us right in immediately to the dock area and within an hour the merchant seamen were unloading the trucks and that these hospital units. Take them off, put them down on the dock, they unhook the cables, a guy jumped in from the group standing on the wharf, would jump in from the outfit and take off. We heard that they were operating on people from the Battle of the Bulge within 24 hours, they were putting people on the table already. That they were doing it that fast. We went back over to South Hampton and did the same thing. Brought another group over and you know we were talking about food. The army had c-rations and that and they had this ship was equipped with a great big copper kettle on deck. What they would do is they would put case after case after case of c-rations in this big copper kettle, put water in it, and then they would put the steam to it from the ship and they would heat this up. Then they would take the water off and pass these hot cans of c-rations and that out to the troops. Well, the troops, there was officers in there, there was up as high as like colonels, doctors and that. And they were complaining about c-rations so us guys in the armed guard says, tell ya what we will do. We will trade you, we will trade, does our food look good? Ohhhh, oohhhhh, it looks like the Ritz for God's sake. Well, we'll trade you, you take our food and we'll take the c-rations because we were getting sick of that English food that we had to use. So we took the c-rations and we would take the c-rations in and open them up and put them in a pan and doctor them up with onion and that, and geez, it was delicious. [Laughter] We thought it was delicious and those guys thought our food, they would come in and they would sit down and this mess

boy would serve them, and you guys got it made they would say. Geez. But anyway, that's, we got done with two trips there and then we went back to New York and we got another cargo of general merchandize, material which we took back over and unloaded in France. Then when we were over there, this was getting later on in the year, in April, middle of April or so we got orders to take this one batch of material to Marseille, France. Well we had to go down and sail down the coast around Spain and in through the by the Rock of Gibraltar, into the Mediterranean and then back up to Marseille, France. Well we got up there and god, that place had been really beat. Everything was just pieces and we had to do all the unloading and that from the ship. The crew had to do it all themselves. There was no dock facilities whatsoever, but we were there, well first, I'll take that back. We laid an anchor out there for a day or so and then we went into the dock. All of a sudden, we had a real nice day. May 8th, 1945, V-E day and boy did we celebrate. Everybody, I'm telling ya all of the people in the town, they were out dancing, parading, drinking, eating. Anything and everything that was going on there. It really was one heck of a good day. I said to myself I'm going to celebrate this and I know how I am going to celebrate it. I'd never tasted champagne. I said I'm going to get me a bottle of champagne and take home for my wife. So I went and I talked to one of the Frenchmen there and he said he will get me a real good bottle of champagne but it would cost me some money. Well it turned out I had to give him \$20, twenty American dollars and he got me a bottle of champagne. I had a hell of a time smuggling that thing in past all the navy personnel and that, but I'd got it home. To make a long story short, when I opened it up, it tasted like vinegar and we didn't drink over a half a glass out of the whole bottle. And I don't know to this day whether that was really good champagne or not. But after that, right after that, the Stewart, we went over to Africa. Iran, Africa where we laid for just a few hours, and then we formed up another convoy, we still went in convoy and then we went back to the United States. I was detached from the JEB Stewart at that time on June 4th, 1945, is when I was detached from the Stewart. Jackie, my wife, come to New York and we were in the Armed Guard Center and I'd get liberty every so often, like two out of three days, to be with her and that. On July 13th, I got orders that I was going to be transferred back out to the west coast. So, I went to meet Jackie to tell her that. I got permission from the guy that was in charge of our outfit, and I says, you know, they held muster every 2-3 hours, and if you missed one, your tail was in trouble. Well, I says to the guy, I says, "Hey, I got my wife down there in the public meeting room and that, but what about these musters?" "Go on, get down there with them, I'll take care of it, I'll take care of it." "Okay." So down I went. I was with her a couple of hours down there and then I hear my name being called over the loud speaker. So I went back to my area and reported back to the what they call Master at Arms. You are on report! You are going to be penalized! I says, "Hey, I had permission to go down there, it's my wife, I'm getting ready to leave." "I don't give a darn about it, in so many words. You are on report!" "What's going to happen with me being on report." "You're on KP duty when you leave here, on the train, you're on KP duty." I said well that ain't the worst of it. We took the train out to San Diego, out to Camp Elliott, San

Diego. On the way out there, the first day I went to see about doing my KP work, well there are so many people on KP, you aren't on it till tomorrow. We are giving each one of you guys a day of KP. Okay. So the next day, they fed us twice a day on the train, that was all. They cooked everything themselves. We had a regular cooking car. Well, the next day I got on KP. My first job was breaking eggs into this big copper kettle again, only this was loose and you could move it around. So I started breaking eggs in there. I must have broke 20 – 30 dozen eggs in there. And I hit a rotten one. Oh did that egg stink. And it went in with the rest. I hollered at one of the cooks, I says, look what happened. I said, geez, what are we going to do. Can we dip this out? Yea, I'll dip it out alrighty, he says, he takes it over to the door of the train. We are moving down the tracks, he opens up the door, empties the whole thing right out the door. The whole works, all of those eggs. Now he says, get back there and get another batch of eggs in there. [Chuckling] And that's the way he got rid of the rotten egg. When I found out what was going on, when you were on KP duty, you could eat whatever you wanted. When you were as a troop, you got just so much. I says, you ain't getting me off of KP. I had KP the rest of the trip. The others guys, they were hollering that they wanted their turn. I said, no, at least I can pull this, I'll keep the KP and I did. I was helping them fix the food and that and I didn't go hungry. But anyway, that was on July 13th. Jackie, my wife, followed me out to California. On August 16th, of 1945, I got orders transferring me to receiving ship on Guam. I arrived out there aboard this is one of those ships I said a Navy ship was an attack transport is what it was. Well, what I didn't know was they were preparing for the invasion of Japan and this is right after, if I remember right, when did they drop the atom bomb?

MARK: That was August 6th.

KENDALL: Something in there, and this was after that, but things hadn't been set or whatever because we were out to sea when they finally signed on the Missouri. But I arrived over in Guam on September 6th, 1945, and they put me in receiving ship, waiting. I had enough points, they granted you points for discharge, and I had enough to get out but you had to be assigned to a ship or station and nobody would take any guy with points enough to get out. They wouldn't take you. They would say we don't want this one. We will take somebody else. So anyway, I spent time there and finally they said well they were going to go into China. They figured they were going to set up bases and that in China. Well, they needed signalmen on shore to help take care of the shipping and that. So they put us aboard the aircraft carrier Antietam. They transferred us to China. We went up to Tsingtao, China. Now at Tsingtao we lay in there for a day or two, whatever it was, but then on November 10th, I was transferred off the Antedum to the heavy cruiser the USS Alaska, Seabee 1. Then after a few days at anchor there we took off and we headed back toward the United States but we made a couple of stops. On the 20th, about the 20th of Nov, we went into a place called Jinsen Korea. You ever hear of it?

MARK: Jinsen Korea? No.

KENDALL: Well, it ain't there anymore. What's there now is called Inchon. They changed the name and we picked up about 600 army troops aboard this battle cruiser and we brought them home. We stopped at Pearl Harbor to pick up supplies, provisions and then we headed for the mainland and boy did that golden gate ever look beautiful. I was discharged from the USS Alaska and assigned to a draft back to Great Lakes and I was discharged from the Navy the 14th of December of 1945 at Great Lakes. I had served my country what I figure 3 years, one month and 18 days. I went, not home here, but down to Indianapolis where my wife was because she was pregnant at that time. We came back

[End of Tape Two, Side One]

in 1946, May 1st of 1946 when I returned to Madison.

MARK: So, after the war then, you are discharged, now you got a wife, a child on the way in there, when it came to getting your life back on track after the war, for example, you had to find a job. There were a lot of veterans coming back at the time, did you have difficulty finding work? Or is this just, how did you go about finding work? How successful were you?

KENDALL: It was a little difficult but my brother-in-law, May 1st, him and my sister come down and brought my wife and baby and me with our goods back to Madison. He had a farm/barn whitewashing outfit and he needed help. So I helped him that summer. I tried a little bit of everything. I was whitewasher, I drove cab for Yellow Cab Company here in Madison. That fall, I even worked as a commercial fisherman netting carp out of Lake Monona and a couple of other lakes. My brother was warden for this commercial fisherman that I worked for and about in November, he took me aside, my brother did. He said get your butt up there to the play station or fire department and get the application for fireman.

MARK: And why was that?

KENDALL: Because they were putting on a new batch of fireman. They were just starting to recruit a new, and he says, you might just as well get into a good service where you get half-way decent pay and a fairly decent retirement. Well, I went in and I took the tests and out of about 200 guys, I'd come out about 7th. So I was one of the lucky ones. On February 1, 1947, 25 of us went on the Madison Fire Department. We changed the work schedule of the firemen because they had been working every other day, right straight through other than vacations. When the 25 of us went on board, we didn't take anything like they do now. They just said you are a fireman and that's it. They started a new process and they called them Kelly Days, whereas you work like seven days and you have a working day off, you work seven more working days and you have another. But there was another time in there that you worked so many times but then you didn't get a day

off. You had to go like 14 days without taking a, well, anyway, it worked out to I think it was 72 hours a week they averaged at that time. I went on the Fire Department February 1, 1947 and I retired from the Madison Fire Department February 1, 1980. I have done many things just to keep busy.

MARK: That's since 1980 right?

KENDALL: Even during the time we were on the fire department, I drove truck, I helped run a gravel pit, anything that I could to make a few extra bucks.

MARK: I'm kind of curious of those 25 guys that came in 1947, how many were vets, just out of curiosity?

KENDALL: I think all of them were, if I remember right, every one of them were vets.

MARK: That would be my suspicion. Now for federal employment and for state employment, there is a veterans points, now I mean this is working for the city. Were there veteran's points for the city as well, do you remember?

KENDALL: No. No. They just I think that, you see we had a physical test and that we had to perform and I think the military guys were in a lot better shape than most, really, I am serious.

MARK: That could very well be, I believe it. Now in terms of veteran's benefits that you got, I don't want to pry into your finances, I am just curious as to how widely these sorts of things were used. For example, home loan, did you ever use a VA home loan?

KENDALL: Yes I did.

MARK: Okay. Right after the war, or a couple of years after the war later on?

KENDALL: I got out in 1945 and I applied for my veteran's loan in 1954.

MARK: Was it federal or was it state, do you recall?

KENDALL: I think it was federal. I'm not sure. But I did use the 5220.

MARK: Oh, now there's one. Why don't you describe your experience with that? First of all, how did you find out about it?

KENDALL: Well, that was in your discharge and that.

MARK: They told you all of this before you left the service.

KENDALL: Yeah. Yeah, that you had the right for \$20 a week for 52 weeks, \$20. And I used, if I think if I remember right, I used something like four or five or six weeks and then I was working.

MARK: Now you were, as I recall for the 5220, you were supposed to go out and look for a job. Now this is temporary until you can find work. I've had some vets tell me that they didn't look terribly hard. What was your experience? You seem like a body that wants to be busy.

KENDALL: Well, see, this was at the time where I was going with my brother-in-law and I took the 5220 because we weren't making that much. Then when we started making a few bucks where I could take a few bucks home, extra, I stopped drawing.

MARK: So you were working, just not terribly gainfully as you would say.

KENDALL: Right.

MARK: I've just got one last area of questions, and that involves veteran's organizations and reunions and that sort of thing. Now we discussed this earlier, but let's start right after the war, when you came back, did you join any of the big groups like the Legion, or the VFW or that?

K; No, I did not.

MARK: Is there any particular reason, you just didn't have time, you didn't like the groups, never thought of it. Is there any reason for that?

KENDALL: My thoughts of them were that they weren't that good.

MARK: In what sense?

KENDALL: I just didn't care for them. I just didn't think why should I get involved in that. I joined when I got out and I was on the fire department, I did re-enlist in the Navy Reserve for four more years. One of my friends I joined an organization, a club, the Moose Club, because of they had done for the children and the old people. One of the guys that I was in there with, was fairly active in the VFW, but just before that, my brother, the one I had met in France, he lived down in Muscoda. He was one of the officers of that post down there for the American Legion. He got my other brother, there was three of us that was in service, the marine, there was the Army, the Marine and the Navy, the three of us. But the one down at Muscoda was Army and he got us to come down and we joined up with the American Legion down there, Post 85. I have kept my membership with them since then, I think its something like 20 something years ago that I joined them. But it wasn't until probably 10 or 12 years ago that I got involved with the VFW and this friend of mine that I was with, the Moose, and I like it real well. I don't

get to be with, I never had a meeting down at Muscoda, I've always been thinking about transferring to around here but it doesn't bother me one bit. This VFW, oh they've asked me to run for office and that which I've turned down because I just don't think I want to.

MARK: See, I was going to ask you if you were active in the organization holding offices and that sort of thing, and the answer to that would be no.

KENDALL: No. But, now, we come to this. This is different. This is a completely voluntary organization, US Navy Armed Guard group. It's the men that were in the Armed Guard during WW II. I have been quite active in that.

MARK: And when did all that start?

KENDALL: I would say maybe eight years ago. I kept looking in the VFW magazine and American Legion magazine for reunions. And about 8 years ago, or 8-9 years ago, something like that, I found one where it was going to be a reunion of armed guard people in Norfolk, Virginia. So I called and decided I was going to go. I got everything set up. About I would say probably four days three days before we were to leave to go out there, my wife and I went to a movie over here behind the old YWCA, there was a ---

MARK: I don't know, what was that called, I can't remember, it was posted recently.

KENDALL: I can't either. Anyway, we went to a movie there and we were sitting in the movie and all of sudden I started getting pains in my left arm. I thought, oh, oh, what is this going to be now? I want to go home. So we took off for home. I lived way out in the east side and while we were going out there by Gardner's, they had just opened up that trauma or emergency care there, across there, Dean Care, and the pain started getting so bad in my left arm, I said I can't get home I told my wife. So I went down and I wheeled around there where they can turn around and I come back and I went right across the front lawn of Dean Care into the parking lot and my wife helped me in there and I got in there. God they took me and put me on the stretcher, they started an IV, they give me nitro under the tongue, my blood pressure was high. Various things indicating a possible heart attack and so they said better call the ambulance. So the guys that come they knew me, because see well, after 33 years, see I was one of the first ones on the rescue squad here in Madison. I help set up the ambulance system here so I am quite proud of it. Anyway, they took me out to St. Mary's and I lay there for four days I think it was in intensive care. It was one afternoon the doctor comes in and he said well Ken, get your clothes on and get the heck out of here, we got sick people to take your place. We can't find anything wrong with you. Well, anyway, I missed that reunion. The next one was in San Francisco. Needless to say I made that. Well what happened was, you know you got, at that time we had 7-800 members, one here, one there, one over there.

When I got back from the Frisco one, I got a telephone call and this guy on the other end he says, are you Neibuhr? Were you out to Frisco? Yeah, I says, I was out to Frisco. He says I see you are listed in the armed guard there as being on the Del Brazil. I said yea I was. He said so was I, he said, which trip did you take? I said which trip are you talking about? He said are you on the one where we brought back casualties from Guadalcanal? And I said, no, I think that was the trip just before I got on. I got on after you guys got back from that. Oh, he says, you mean you were on the one were they threw the torpedoes at us. I said, yeah, that's the one. He said, you want to know something? He says you remember that periscope sighting off the stern? I said, yeah, I remember it well. He said, I was the one on the stern that cited that periscope. I was the one that gave it to the bridge. And I said you want to know something? I was the one on the bridge that took that message. Well, we became very, very fast friends right then and there. God rest his soul, he passed away here a couple of years ago. He lived down in Louisville, Kentucky. When he passed away I went down to his funeral and that and his wife, she was talking to some of the people and when I walked in with my wife, she looked at me, oh my god, she says, she said to the other people, this is Charlie's friend from Madison. The only armed guard friend he ever had after the war she says. I got to leave, I'm going with them. And she was so happy really to see us. He had a real wonderful funeral. He is the one who sent me the picture of that ship in here in that letter with the various times and that on it. He got all of that and he saw that I got it so it was something like that. Then when I got back, I started going to meetings of the armed guard down in Illinois.

MARK: Which happened how often?

KENDALL: It was about once every 3-4 months and they were having luncheons. So I went down there and I started, they had what they called their mini reunion, once a year. And the guys there at the luncheon, they says, are you coming to the mini reunion. I said, well I don't belong to your organization. Well, come on any way you are more than welcome, any armed guard is welcome. Okay, that's fine. I'll be there, so this was held down in Rockton, Illinois. There was about I would say about 25 of us that got together there and the old sea stories really flew.

MARK: All of them true no doubt?

KENDALL: Oh yeah, naturally. But we had a business meeting, and they asked, they said how would you like to join our organization? I said, well, I wouldn't mind joining, so the one guy says, why don't we take all of Wisconsin in with us? And, well it ended up you see, Illinois and Wisconsin, they'd brought us in with them and when they brought us in with them, they said in order to be fair about this now we are going to have to divide the work up and we are going to need somebody next year, after this year, next year to be skipper of our outfit and we would like it up in Wisconsin. So they pointed at me and said you are it. I said, I didn't get elected or anything. You're elected. So as it turned out, I took the job as skipper of the Illinois/Wisconsin group for the following year. We held our

reunion here in Madison and last year was the second time that we held our reunion here in Madison. We have gone over to what is it, the Quad Cities?

MARK: Davenport?

KENDALL: No, maybe it is Davenport. Illinois, Rock Island and that and we'd been there twice. This next year now we are getting ready for October here, we are going to Joliet. But here in about, well that is in October, the middle part of October, here in about a month, another armed guard couple and my wife and I were heading out to Lincoln, Nebraska. The guys from Lincoln, Nebraska have always come to the Wisconsin/Illinois group. They have been very faithful, they didn't have an organization of their own. Well, now we got them going and so just to reciprocate, we are going to show our backing of them by going out there and attending their reunion. Its been a very nice organization. I have found the fellow that, off of that first ship the Del Brazil, the second class signal man that was over me on board ship. He walked down Market Street after we got back and helped me pick my wife's engagement ring out. Well, I just found him here just about three months ago down in Wild Wood, Florida. So I'm looking forward to getting to see him.

MARK: Those are pretty much all my questions. Is there anything you would like to add to anything before we finish up?

KENDALL: No, I just hope that this goes well. That it can be taken care of, that it helps somebody. I just, oh you wanted to know about medals and that?

MARK: I did?

KENDALL: Yeah, it says in the papers.

MARK: Oh, yeah, things you donated and that.

KENDALL: Oh, I guess not.

MARK: I assume you listed them on here.

KENDALL: No I didn't, did I?

MARK: American Campaign, Pacific, European, Middle Eastern. They are all on here.

KENDALL: There isn't two of them on there, is there anything about China service?

MARK: Yeah, it says, China, WW II Victory. Is there something you wanted to say about them or?

KENDALL: No, its just that it took me this long to get them. I am just getting them now.

MARK: I suppose you got discharged and you didn't have any need to wear them.

KENDALL: No, I didn't have no need to wear them so, but I received confirmation on the Victory Medal, American Campaign, the Asiatic Pacific, Navy Occupation Medal for China, China Service Medal, European African Campaign Medal and WW II Victory Medal. I guess that I'm proud, I belong to the Navy League. I am still a Navy man at heart. If I had not met my wife, I would be in the navy if they would let me. I really would. I loved it. It isn't very often that you can say, you know they talk about sailing the seven seas, well I never got to sail the seven, I only got six of them. I missed the Indian Ocean. But, the Navy has been very good to me. It provided me with a lot of interesting spots, provided me with a very nice woman that I wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for her.

MARK: I suppose that's a great place to end too. Well, thanks for coming in.

KENDALL: You betcha.