

Wisconsin Public Television
World War II Stories Project

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
DONALD COLLINS
Radio Striker, Submariner, Navy, World War II.

2002

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Collins, Donald E. (1924-2006). Oral History Interview, 2002.

Video Recording : 5 videorecordings (ca. 145 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Abstract:

Donald E. Collins, a Sunbury, Pennsylvania native, discusses his World War II service in the Pacific theater as a radio striker aboard the *USS Finback*, a Navy submarine. Collins talks about being too light weight to join the Marines, enlisting in the Navy, boot camp at Sampson Naval Training Center (New York), and practical jokes played during time in an outgoing unit. He discusses assignment to code school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, meeting his future wife at a USO, attending submarine school at Naval Submarine Base New London (Connecticut), and being inspected for possession of liquor by Charles Spritz. Shipped to Hawaii aboard one of the “Kaiser's coffins” (an escort carrier built by Kaiser Shipbuilding Co.), Collins describes uneasy relations with the Seabees, earning extra money cutting meat, and being evacuated due to a fire. Assigned to the *USS Finback* (SS-230), he mentions crash course training in wolf pack procedure to work with other boats, and he explains their use of radio silence, LORAN (Long Range Navigation), and offensive tactics. He describes the different sounds heard while underwater, including identifying ships by the sound of their screws. Collins describes submarine rest camps and reflects on the privileges submariners had. He relates his first experience being near exploding depth charges, and he talks about duty in the conning tower and daily life. He talks about listening to Tokyo Rose, printing a ship newspaper, staying at the Royal Hawaiian hotel, having fun with gooney birds, and busting their captain, who had gotten in trouble for breaking into the beer hall, out of confined quarters to have a party. While at Midway, Collins details getting into a fight over a bottle of alcohol, being put in the brig, and their captain’s lying to the commodore that they would be demoted as punishment. Collins touches on the submariners’ relations with Marines and using a slot machine to get money from the relief crews for parties. He addresses diving procedures, attacking a tanker off of Iwo Jima, and avoiding enemy airplanes. While on air-sea rescue patrol, he talks about picking up George Bush and meeting him again after he became president. Collins describes good relationships with the officers aboard his boat and almost getting attacked by an American destroyer. He relates hearing about the atomic bombs and V-J Day celebrations. He portrays the treatment of two Japanese prisoners of war that they picked up from a ship they sank. While operating with Schnabel’s Sharks, he relates hunting German submarines and passing through mine fields, and he tells of a buddy’s submarine that was sunk by a mine. Collins describes life aboard the ship: constant pressure, food, card games, and qualification tests. He characterizes Admiral Lockwood, some of the men from the *Finback*, and his executive officer, who was a mustang. Collins analyzes World War II submarine statistics, and he describes going back to Hawaii years later and being invited aboard the *USS Queenfish*. While on Christmas leave, he recalls a memorable train ride home. He speaks of running grease guns to guerillas in the Philippines, a hot thirty hours

underwater, and turning down a job at Cramp Shipyard in Philadelphia. Collins highlights the importance of having a good sense of humor. After his discharge, he talks about getting married, using the GI Bill to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison, his career as a parole officer, and overcoming symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Collins mentions his time in the Reserves, working in a Naval Intelligence Unit that was located in someone's basement, and working with an ROTC unit.

Biographical Sketch:

Collins (1924-2006) served twelve patrols aboard the submarine *USS Finback* during World War II. He was born in Sunbury (Pennsylvania), grew up in New York City, and eventually settled in Portage (Wisconsin). He worked for the Division of Corrections in Madison, Wausau, and, for thirty-five years, in Portage (Wisconsin).

Citation Note:

Cite as: Donald Collins, Interview, conducted October 31, 2002 at Madison, Wisconsin by Mik Derks, Wisconsin World War II Stories, for Wisconsin Public Television.

Context Note:

Raw footage interview filmed by Wisconsin Public Television for its documentary series, "Wisconsin World War II Stories." Original WPT videocassette numbers were WCWW2-120, WCWW2-121, WCWW2-122, WCWW2-123, and WCWW2-124.

Related Materials Note:

Related Materials Note: Photographs of this narrator's military service can be found in Wisconsin Public Television. Wisconsin World War II Stories records (WVM Mss 1390).

Interviewed by Mik Derks, October 31, 2002

Transcribed by Wisconsin Public Television staff, n.d.

Transcript edited and reformatted by Wisconsin Veterans Museum staff, 2010

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010

Interview Transcript:

Mik: So, let's just start at the beginning when--I'm always interested in where people were and who they were when they realized that they were probably going to end up in the military and in the war. Where did you start?

Don: I was at home in Binghamton, New York, in the afternoon, and I was down on the floor reading the funny papers. The radio, it came through that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. So I ran downstairs and told my dad, and so he came up and was listening to the radio also. At that point we knew, so shortly after that, within the next, oh, two or three weeks, they were forming up a bomber squadron of Binghamton people. So I went down and applied. I made the mental okay, the physical, I was too short and I only weighed about 114 lbs. I had boxed in the CYO and Golden Gloves and a couple of other British clubs. So anyway, I tried to get that taken care of and the people where I worked fed me bananas, and the girls in the soda fountain were bringing me malts about three times a day. And ah--drinking milk to get up there, get the weight up. The height, the captain said, "Hey, son I got a way to do that. Just roll on the balls of your feet. You can make up that half-inch or so." So anyway, we went back two--three weeks later, I guess it was, and I still hadn't, I hadn't gained a pound, and so I then thought, I want to get into this thing. It was a different attitude, I think, than there is now. We were more trusting, I think, and I think the world was maybe, even with the war, a better place. But anyway, the thing about it was, I went to the Marine recruiting and the Marine looked at me and he says, "Son, what do you want to do?" I said, "I'd like to be a parachutist." I was looking for something with action. He started to laugh and he says, "Son, you know something? You jump out of that plane, you'd go up instead of going down." I decided I'd wait a little bit.

So I waited and they early-graduated me from high school along with a bunch of my buddies. We joined the Navy. And the Navy sent me to boot camp at, up at Lake Geneva. There was a Navy boot camp up there on the Finger Lakes. We were in boot camp, I think it was eleven, twelve weeks, something like that. Sampson was the name of the training station. It later became an Air Force training station for a while. Now it's part of the State University of New York. But it was colder than all get out there. You had to wear everything you had, you had to put on at night. You could hear the wind blowing through. And I can remember going out and I put my boots on backwards and I'm running toward the mess hall colder than all get out, the boots come together, trip me up and down I go in the snow. And everybody laughed at me. So that was boot camp. We came back from boots, we went into the OGU, and that was the Outgoing Unit.

Mik: Were you with a lot of your friends still?

Don: There were quite a few buddies. I know we won the rooster one time, we got chance to go into Geneva. Wow, that was a wild one. But we had a fellow, whether you can you this or not, I don't know, when we had the parade in the huge, huge Quonset. We had a parade, there were senators there and there were admirals there. I mean it was really a big thing. The whole unit, or the whole boot camp, was in this parade. We had one fella who, we called him Goosey Jacoma, because you could even, all you had to do is say, "Here it comes, Goosey," and boom he'd jump. So we're right in front of the reviewing stand and somebody says, "Gonna getcha, Goosey," and boom, up he went. We were restricted, but there were a lot of funny things that happened. I wound up anyway coming out of the OGU when we took the incoming unit, the real boots, the guys that hadn't started training yet. We told them, "You can't have candy bars here, you can't have cigarettes, you can't have that sort of thing, but if you give them to us, we'll hold 'em for you and see to it you get 'em." So we took care of things.

Then the OGU, which was outgoing, I had a lot of fun there. I got the measles. They sent me over to sick bay. You had a chore. You had to wash windows or something to get out. They told me to go and go into the room where they had the thing that they steamed the bedpans and the food trays and that sort of thing. I found by cracking that, that I could let a lot of steam into the room. So I started having the guys come in and pay me just to get their steam baths. So I made a little extra change. The boys kind of, after two or three days of this, I think they began to think, "Why should Collins be making this money this way?" What they did, they took my clothes and hid them. There was, at that time, a nurse out at the desk. And my bunk was on the other side of the corridor from where she was. It was getting close to taps and so I decided, "Well, I'm going to take my dignity," and so I marched right past her just as nude as a jaybird. As I went by I said, "By your leave, Ma'am," and went right on over to my bunk. And she was stunned.

And the next morning, I was released from sick bay. One of my buddies in the office told me, he said, "Don, miss the first call-up, because first call-up is radio school is going to be here. Oh no. You're tagged for radio school." He said, "The supernumerary, your supernumerary is gonna go to the University of Wisconsin." I said, "Well, suppose my supernumerary is there and I'm not, in the morning." He said, "Well then he'll go here and you'll go to the University of Wisconsin." So I made myself very scarce. I was assigned the University and he went there, which he didn't like at all. So anyway, I had god duty here. We stayed at Tripp Hall down on the lake. And we used the cafeteria, had our choices just like any other student. The only difference was we had certain protocol you had to

follow. It's there I met my wife, as a matter of fact--at a USO. There was a little Chinese laundry where we used to take our whites to be washed, down on Randall. Oh, we had a lot of different activities. We'd get off usually--

Mik: Tell me about meeting your wife?

Don: Well, I went to a USO with one of her friends. I saw her and I kind of left the friend. I went to her to ask her if she'd go out with me. "Sure, ya, well, ya, I guess." So anyway, we started dating. Her friend was very irate and called me a rat, a cad, and a bounder. Which I thought was a compliment at that time. Anyway, so then, later--just before we left, I proposed and she said she'd wait. Then I went to New London. I missed my date by about seven or eight days, for the simple reason that the date didn't coincide with the number of days I was supposed to go on delayed orders. I stayed at Binghamton extra time. I went into New London and checked in and the officer of the day says, "Wait a minute son. Where have you been for the last ten days? You're late." I said, "Sir, I went by the date rather than by the number of days on there, Sir. Just count 'em up." "All right, all right." So the next morning, I started school. I didn't get in to Spritz's Navy which, Spritz was a real taskmaster. Hard nose. He's still remembered. In fact they have a little patch that's now, some of our people have, Spritz's Navy. He had a blue room where, if you acted up, you had to go to the blue room. He really was a sailor's sailor. He was a deep-sea diver. They always said he got pretty pressure happy. Maybe he did, but he had a lot of weight. So anyway, he, I can remember going through the school and we had the simulators where you could dive the boat and so on and so forth and operate that way. It'd move with you and it was an exact copy of a control room.

Then we had code. I'd already had code here at Wisconsin. You'd take code all day long and then at the end of the day they'd pick out maybe ten or fifteen five-letter groups and you'd better have them all perfect. So you might have 500 groups that day or what have you, and they'd pick out two or three groups. If they weren't perfect, boom, the next day you were going again--very rigid training. Our cooks went to a special school because they wanted us to have the best; which we did. They went to sort of a semi-gourmet school. It was all part of the training. When we left, we took our bags, sea bags, over to the loading platform. My dad had given me a pint of brandy, good brandy. I put it in my sea bag. Spritz came along with this Gestapo man we always called him, and he said, "Any of you fellas have booze, I want it out on the side of your sea bag." So I reached in, being a good little sailor, I reached in and I pull out the brandy and I set beside my sea bag. A couple of my shipmates did the same thing, but only two out of about fifty. So anyway, went down the line and Spritz stopped, "You have nothing in your sea bag?" "Nope." Wham, with the

club. You could smell the--he went down the line and everybody who had their own along side the bag he said, "OK, put 'em back in your sea bag. I didn't see 'em." But those that hid 'em—

So then we took a troop train and we headed out and we went up through Canada and over through Detroit, down that way. Then we went down to Kansas. I don't know if you ever heard of the Harvey Girls but we used to have our, we had breakfast at Harvey's a couple of times. We went right on over to, I believe it was, San Francisco. Once we got close to the coast the lights were all out on the trains at night. You were blacked out. We went to Port Hueneme, from Port Hueneme picked up one of Kaiser's coffins, we used to call 'em [small escort carriers built by Kaiser Shipbuilding Co.], and headed out. Nobody would tell us where we were going but when we were about a day and a half out, they started playing Hawaiian music, so we knew we were heading for Pearl. Everybody--it was crowded, they had I forget how many Seabees. They were down below, we were on the upper deck. There were only fifty of us. The Seabees, we didn't get along too well with 'em because they'd say, "Well how do you guys rate?" We always said, "Well, you're expendable." Always was the ultimate insult. But our training was one reason why we were given special--because we had that extra training, and what have you.

We finally got into Pearl. I volunteered on the ship, they asked if anybody knew how to cut meat. Well I had cut meat from the time I was ten--eleven years old working in a supermarket back in New York. I had a chance and I was able to eat sometimes with the galley crew. They were civilian. I'd get a roll of cold meat or something like that and I'd cut it up and sell it to the guys. What the heck. Everybody had some kind of a cumshaw racket going if they could. We finally made it in to Pearl. And was tied up along side, was on the tender, assigned to the tender. They had a fire. I was down getting a haircut below decks and she was tied up at the dock. Had a fire. They pulled the Jacob's ladders all down and we all were told to evacuate, but the fire didn't amount to much. Next day, well, my first experience in Hawaii was, they gave us liberty. Be back at a certain time. Went to Trader Vic's. They had on the doors of the johns, they had Wahines and I think Kanes. I didn't know what the hell a Wahine was from a Kane, and I had to go. Turns out I went through the wrong door. I was corrected very quickly. Then we shipped out from there.

Mik: You could pull that one forever.

Don: Pardon.

Mik: You could pull that one forever.

Don: Right.

Mik: Did you know at this point that you were going to submarines?

Don: Oh yeah. I had gone to sub school, and that was at New London. My mother and dad were very concerned when they knew that I was in sub school. So my mother kept asking me and my dad, I said, "No, no, no. I said what I am," I said, "I'm at New London but we're training in anti-submarine warfare on a destroyer because." So then of course they sent a newspaper article to the local paper that I had graduated from Submarine School and so on and so forth, and would be assigned. Anyway, they were a little unhappy about that. I said, "Well yeah, but it's what I want."

Mik: Was your radio training specifically for submarines, or was that in general when you were here?

Don: When it was here, it was in general. Because some guys went to battleships, some guys went to landing crafts. Various assignments. So then they beefed it up when we went to New London. But we didn't get any wolf pack until later and we got that after, when we were first assigned to a wolf pack. Then they gave us a crash course in wolf pack procedure.

Mik: What is wolf pack procedure?

Don: That's where you operate with one or two other boats or three, whatever-- wasn't patterned necessarily after the German wolf pack, because we had certain areas, which were assigned. But we also had radio silence, unless it was an emergency type situation. What made the Germans vulnerable was that they reported when they'd reached station. They would report and so on and so forth. We stayed in our areas unless something came up. We didn't break radio silence, so that the enemy couldn't necessarily zero in on us. That's where the Germans ran into problems, was when the triangulation system and everything. We usually operated alone in an area, and that was our area. Anything that was in that area was enemy. Like we always said, "There are two types of craft; one is submarines, the other, targets." That was our way of doing things. We operated differently. We used ours offensively. My wife said, "You can be pretty offensive." The thing about it is; we did. We would attack and attack.

Sometimes on the surface, I would say more often on the surface than submerged for the simple reason that you could go in and you could get the hell out of there in a hurry if you were on the surface. Underneath, you were more vulnerable. You could hear the pinging. You could tell when they were zeroed in on you. There'd be a pinging sound. The frequency of the pings would give you an indication also of how far away the pinging

ship was. You could hear that even without sound operation, believe it or not. We also would take advantage, and this was one place where being a sound operator and being in the conning tower on battle stations usually, you could see, there were charts which showed the different gradients in the water. In other words, there would be a salinity gradient and there would be a thermal gradient. What you'd try to do is find one of those gradients because it would change the depths, the pinging would mush up if it went--and give a wrong reading. We had various things that we would watch for. We would listen for sound and we could pick up the sound of shrimp crackling, of whales singing. We also could pick up ship sounds. Different ships had different sounds. The screws sounds were different. We could pick up that cavitation and then we would interpret it. Sometimes you got a real distance and other times you didn't. We had air radar also--we could pick up planes at a distance. Nothing like they have now. We had LORAN, which we would get signals from 2 stations, an NVN and an NPS, let's say. Then they would triangulate and take a sun line and know where we were. Navigational help. When we were in Pearl not too long, '86, we visited, and they had LORAN aboard, I mentioned, I said, "Gee, that looks like LORAN." He said, "Yeah, but there's one difference. We use satellites and they can pinpoint us right away." The thing was, there were many things that were different and there were many things that were the same. Basic things.

Mik: What does LORAN stand for [LONg RANge Navigation]?

Don: Gosh, I don't even remember what the--I don't even remember what--today is a day of initials. [laughs] I can't remember all of them. But that was one that we did use for navigational helps.

Mik: Did you have all that stuff when you first went in or did stuff keep coming along as you served?

Don: Well, what happened was, when I finally, I was assigned from the tender, I was assigned to the Finback. The tender contained the relief crew. Relief crew is made up of people who had gone through sub school and so on. Their job was, when a boat came in, and I should emphasize, they ARE boats, I don't care if they're 500 ft. long, a submarine is still a boat. That's a tradition. They would take over the boat during the time that you were at rest camp. We'd go for R&R. We'd stay at the Royal Hawaiian one place, at Gooneyville in Midway, at Camp Dealy on Guam, and Maduro in the Marshalls. So we had these--what it was, was ordinarily unlimited beer and just do what you wanted to do and have a good time. In Pearl, the word was out that if you find a submarine man, if he's causing some problems, call the base and we'll send somebody to come and pick him up. We were privileged, really.

What would happen was, right next to where my station was, was in the conning tower--was what they call the TDC, torpedo data computer. That one I remember. Because that would show the speed of the boat, it'd show distances, all those things would be cranked in. That was used basically to fire, to help fire. Sound was good. It would give you a general location but it wasn't that precise. The thing about it was, we would zero in and we'd run up ahead of the target, if we could and wait for it. Sometimes we'd surface and after we were out of sight of her, and let's say we were too far away for a shot and so what we would do is try to guesstimate where she would be at a certain time, and then we would dive, go a while, then surface. And then try to get up ahead of her so that we'd get a nice shot. It worked. It became pretty much procedure--end run, so to speak. Of course then sometimes you were subjected to depth-charging. Which is not a very pleasant thing. I know my first depth charge was rather an interesting thing. We were sitting having breakfast. One of the lookouts came tearing in to the after battery, where we were eating. He said, "Gosh, I saw it leave the plane, I saw it leave the plane." I said, "What left the plane?" Then KA-BOOM. She went off and I swear the hatch was lifted that much and there was blue flame, because they were all electrically so that it would show up on the Christmas tree whether you were water tight or not. So I swear when that went off, and I dropped my fork. I wasn't afraid, I just dropped my fork, I was startled. One of the old timers looked at me and said, "Well, Collie, we got your cherry that time." I don't know whether that's acceptable or not but it was my first shot. There were times when a depth charge would bounce off the deck and it wouldn't go off because it wasn't at the right depth. They were set for depth. That was all right until the end of the war when they, toward the end of the war when the Japanese, and we too, came up with a depth charge that would go off on contact. If it hit you, you'd had it. But we would--we would take that, and I can remember sometimes getting a few depth charges—[End of Tape WCWW2-120]

Mik: So what were you going to say?

Don: Couldn't remember.

Mik: While we were stopped, I wondered, I wanted to know when you talk about your position in the conning tower, could you just describe the conning tower and what all was in there?

Don: Okay. In the forward end of the conning tower, there was a wheel. And it controlled, you know, the rudder. And in the after end of the conning tower was the TDC, and the sound gear, and the periscope went up through there, and also down into the control room. Usually the skipper and usually the gunnery officer or somebody was up there. And ah--then on the other side of the conning tower was the radar screen. The captain

could actually "fire one," and then in the torpedo room they would kick in a switch, and "fire two" and so on. The gyros would be set, could be set automatically through the TDC so that the torpedoes, they could be fired in sequence or whatever. However the captain wanted. And we had six forward tubes and four after tubes. I can't remember exactly how many torpedoes we carried but we had, we could fill in, you know, the tubes at least once. I can't remember, it's a long time ago, but I can remember the guys in the torpedo room, they slept on top of the torpedoes and what have you. [Waiting for siren to stop]

Mik: Go back about the guys in the torpedo room sleeping on their torpedoes.

Don: They did. They slept on or under. Bunks there. We were in the after battery. The officers' quarters were in the forward end of the boat--forward torpedo room. You had aboard, you had what we called the head, where we did our usual duties. We had air conditioning, which would frequently break down. Sometimes when we couldn't run the evaporators, we could drain the water from the air conditioning and splash it up over ourselves, and sometimes we couldn't do that, why we became rather gamy after a while. We had--when you went to the john, to the head, different names for it, but in the Navy it was the head. Why, you had to blow it into the tank and then to sea later, whenever you got the opportunity. If it wasn't proper sequence--to blow the head--why somebody might come up with freckles. That happened. We had a couple of the guys that could never blow the head properly, and we'd always say, "Uh oh, Dawson's at it again," because you'd hear him cussing, and he used to handle the officer's head.

The crew, everybody got along--I mean, you had to. Right by my station, the radio shack, I would pipe in, once in a while I'd pipe in Tokyo Rose to the guys. Got a big kick out of that because I can remember, I forget where we came in, maybe Midway. There were letters waiting from Juanita and she was saying, "Oh, you gotta hear the latest song," "Don't Fence Me In. Don't Fence Her In." We'd heard that on Tokyo Rose three--four weeks before. Tokyo Rose would say, like, "Oh, you boys on Finback." Oh. "You're opposite so and so. The Imperial Air Force will be out to greet you in the morning." Nine times out of ten she was right. There'd be a flight of Mitzies or, you know, whatever. They'd come out and we'd never pay too much attention to 'em because we could see 'em coming. It'd be on the radio, but once in a while they'd sneak in out of the clouds or something if the radar didn't pick 'em up. Then we'd just have to dive. That was all part of the game. Tokyo Rose, I think a lot of us felt badly that they sent her to prison because she was probably one of three, from what information we had. I thought she was quite a builder of like, you know, she'd say, "Say, is Johnny still your cook on Finback?" Ya know, "Yeah," Johnny was but, she'd say, "Well, Johnny, you know Marie

back in your old hometown of Indianapolis, she's going out with a 4-F now." Things like that. Everybody'd get a big kick out of it. "Hey, John, guess what?"

So there were all sorts of things we did for diversion. I can remember coming in on one of our last patrols before the war ended, maybe it was after 1944, early '45 maybe, I can't remember what. But I would pick up press, and that would come through about sixty words a minute. So I'd pick up press and then I'd put out a little newspaper, pass it around. When the cat houses closed in Pearl, I mean Honolulu, there was a time of mourning, you know. That used to be quite the thing, I don't know if you ever heard of that, but they'd be lined up for a block and a half to go in. Three dollars--three minutes. Three dollars--three minutes. I mean, that was their way. I had one of my shipmates, a good buddy, he came from a small town in California. The banker's wife in his hometown ran one of the big ones. I think the biggest one was called the New Senator, I don't know. Anyway, we got to go there and drink stateside whisky and talk to the girls, and believe it or not, we never bothered the girls. We'd sit with them. We'd play cards, talk to 'em. They always said one thing. "Any of you guys that marry one of us, you're gonna have the straightest wife anybody ever had. We've seen it all, we've done it all." They were good people. So that was just a sidelight.

We'd be two weeks at the Royal Hawaiian. I can remember one of the people saying, "Boy you guys are really lucky because, during peacetime it cost twenty-one dollars a day to stay here. Now it costs a couple hundred bucks a day." They'd have luaus for us and all that sort of thing. We had the run of the town and what have you. They had a huge garden area. I can remember coming, and you weren't supposed to bring anything in, and we used to throw our bottles over the fence. There was a big patch of soft earth, so the bottle wouldn't break. So we'd throw 'em over, then we'd pick 'em up and then take 'em back. I can remember we played football, one time, in one of the corridors, and it got kind of rough. We broke out some slats in the door. The old man came out. The old man, he was having a good time too. He wound up going off the balcony into the algarroba tree that was outside, sliding down apparently, I can't figure out how, but pretty soon he's come back up again. I remember when we were at Midway, one time, it was before Christmas, 1944, I believe. We pulled in, we were overdue and presumed lost. We were late. We had several Christmases because we went back and forth across the International Dateline. We couldn't communicate because our antennas had been blown off. We had no way communicating and we didn't dare go into any other area because we'd be vulnerable then. We could only dive for a short time because we had some problems with the diving planes which had been damaged. And the vents had been damaged. So anyway, we pulled in, and getting into Midway you had to make a real sharp turn. We were told to go

out around one more time before we came in. And so anyway--we came in, we got in okay. The old man went over to the Commodore. They had a Commodore then, they had no Commodores at all at the beginning of the war. But there were a lot of people that weren't worthy of being admirals, so they went back to the old commodore bit. We got in, the Captain and the Exec went over to see about getting some beer for us guys, and like I say, have a little party, "Let's have some fun, guys. You deserve it." The Commodore says, "No way. My storekeeper has hit the sack an hour ago, bra-bra-bra, bra bra." So anyway, they came out, the Captain and the Exec. The Exec was a mustang. He came up through the ranks. He wasn't an academy man. But anyway, they brought back beer and so on and so forth. And they were using the Commodore's Jeep. So, anyway they brought back all this stuff, the beer and what have you. The Commodore's jeep was there and my buddy, Dargatz, he was one of my best buddies. We said to the captain, "We'll take care of the jeep for you, Sir." He says, "Okay." So we pushed it over the end of the pier into eighty feet of water. I don't think they ever found it. I don't know. But anyway, we had a good time. The Captain was confined to quarters because, he and the Exec, the way they had gotten the beer, they came back to the boat, and every water-tight door, as you go through the boat, there was a big pair of shears. A big set of shears. They used those to cut the lock off the beer hall door. They were confined to quarters. I remember going over with a group of us, going over to the Officers' Quarters. We were Gooneyville Lodge, they were Gooneyville Hotel. That's the difference. We went over to get the Captain out. The Captain was--one of the people that was running the desk, an enlisted person, said, "You know, you can't--he's confined to quarters." We had a gunner's mate that was tough as nails. He reached across and he grabbed this guy and he started pulling him across. "Now you go get the captain out or we're coming in and get him." So anyway, the Captain came out. So did the Exec. And we had a big party. We enjoyed ourselves. So anyway, that took care of that.

Then Dargatz and I went over to the Marine station. That was beyond the airport. What the Marines were doing there at that time, we watched some of them. One of them in particular that we watched, because his job was to lift up the Gooney Birds from the nests and powder down. That would take away the lice and what have you. Then he would reach over and grab the next Gooney that went by and plop him down. The Goonies were our source of a lot of fun because they had to run to take off like an airplane. If they didn't get up enough speed to take off, they would go beak-down, you know. We used to put 'em up on top of the huts and let 'em run. They'd run from one end to the other and they couldn't take off and finally they'd try it and, boom, down they'd go. But they were protected. The Marines would fly out of there but they'd be waved off if there were Gooney Birds on the runway. They brought in soil from the states for a garden so they could have fresh vegetables on Midway. It was quite a sizeable garden on one

corner. The Marines, we used to go over there because they'd have booze. We'd go over and buy some.

One night we were coming back, Dargatz and I, and one of the Gestapo came and said, "Where are you guys going?" We said, "Well, we're heading back to—" "Alright, what'd you got there." "A little libation." "OK, give it to me." "Like hell we'll give it to you. You'll take it, water it down and sell it to somebody else." He insisted, "No way." So anyway, he says, "I'm gonna take it." Dargatz said, "No you're not." The guy started to swing at Dargatz and I grabbed the club, and I pulled, and it was hooked on to his wrist. He went down. About that time there were three more. Anyway, we did break the bottle, but we ended up in the brig on Midway, of all places. And we didn't have, they took all the--all they had was just a bare marble deck and we were in there. No blankets, no nothing. So then, we didn't get fed in the morning and pretty soon the Executive Officer came over and he said, "What are you guys in to anyway?" We told him. Had a chuckle. He said, "Have they fed you?" "No sir, we haven't ate a thing." "OK, we'll take care of that." So pretty soon, over comes the Captain, bringing our chow for us. He said, "OK, you guys are released. Okay? We told the Commodore, Collins, you're going to be broken in rank." Dargatz, he was Seaman First, he'd wind up Seaman Second. He said, "Also," he said, "You're going to have to do extra duty." So he said, "You report to the boat," which was tied up at the tender. The rest of the crew was at the party, at the party house. Anyway, we wound up doing extra duty, one day. You have to report every half-hour to the Chief of the Boat. So we did. And about nine in the evening we reported in--about nine, went back to the Chief and said, and the Chief said, "Well what the hell are you doing here?" "Well Sir, we were told," and you said SIR when you were on detention. Any other time it was Bill, John, Joe, Captain was, you know, very, very informal. Some of the captains, some of the officers'd say, "Hey, don't call me Sir unless there are other officers around. Don't even salute," because we were all in the same boat, so to speak. Anyway, that ended that. When we got to sea, the old man called Dargatz and I back and he says, "Well, I just want to tell you something. As far as the Commodore's concerned, he thinks you guys have lost your rank." He said, "You haven't." He said, "I told him I really punished ya and he accepted that. But," he said, "I sent him a copy of a message that was never sent, which reduced ya."

So that was the--when we were in Pearl, I remember one time in Honolulu, I think it was Aiea--we were at Aiea. One of our guys got beat up at a pool hall. So a group of us left the degaussing slip. They said, "Yeah, go ahead, it'll be another week before you guys are going to go out." So we went, and went to that pool hall and ripped up the tables and everything else. Shore Patrol driving by and we take off. Nothing ever came of it. They knew who it was, but we were gonna show 'em that you

can't do that. So, it worked. There were never any more problems. There were times when the Marines would get feisty. Like we went out early one time. The ol' man says, "There's nothing you guys can do so here." So he gave us passes to get out. Well, we went to the main gate and, "Sorry, we don't recognize those passes. That's tough." So we stood back from it, and they had a machine gun up on the roof of it. They would turn the machine gun on us. About that time some officer came by in a Jeep. Don't even know what branch he was with, but he came by with the Jeep and he says, "Hey guys what's the problem?" "Those Marines, they won't let us through. We got passes from our skipper." "All right, hop in, I'll take you out." So we went down to the next gate and took us. He said, "Oh, those are guys that are replacements from the states," he says, "they're still going by the book," he says. "No good sense." But anyway, we would go back to the boat then and a relief crew had worked it over. We had a slot machine. Our quartermaster would set it when the relief crew would come aboard so it wouldn't pay off too much. We used that money for parties. So, that was good.

Mik: You guys were terrible.

Don: We were. [laughs] As a matter of fact, I never had it done, but we were called the pirates of the sea one time. So when we got back, most of the guys went and had their ears pierced and had a gold earring put in. I got one of those squeeze type because I thought, "With this beautiful body, I don't want to, you know." I wouldn't get tattooed either because I said, "Gee, that's too permanent." So the guys would try every trick in the books to try to get me tattooed. It didn't ever happen. Maybe a little bit about how a submarine works. When you are ready to dive, what they do is, a man stands by what they call the Christmas tree. Red lights, green lights. When you dive you have a large pipe which is intake for the diesels, you had to have air intake. But that was about that big around. If that didn't close, you'd, probably the engine room would be flooded. You could still probably seal it off if there was anybody in there. That was tough. That was one thing you were to do. Don't wait. Seal it off. It may be your best buddy but you have to, the boat's more important--and the rest of the crew. So anyway, everything would close. The board would show red and then it would go down to green. Okay? Green board, pressure in the boat. You could feel the pressure. Then you'd dive. You'd be in the dive at that time. Already be diving before any of this happened. Before the vents closed or anything. You had a cushion of air that you floated, or went on, usually, when you were on the surface. Because you didn't want to spend a lot of time opening up the vents, so what you'd do is you'd just ride this cushion of air and then boom, as soon as you opened, then the water would flood right in. There's no waiting time. You had bow planes and stern planes that controlled the angle. You had redundancy. You had two sets, you had the power for the bow planes and stern planes

and then you had the hand--go crazy doing that. You had times when charging the batteries when you had to watch for the explosiveness and what have you. We ran into sampans, we ran into tankers.

We sank a tank tanker one night. I can remember that because I was in the conning tower and the old man let us have a shot of it, a picture of it. Looked through the scope, I should say. It was only toward the end of the war that the Navy provided special cameras for periscopes. So that they could get, so some of the best shots didn't come till the end of the war. By then the targets were going down. Pretty much. And we operated off Iwo Jima, Haha Jima, Chichi Jima and we were, at one point, we were told, "If you have choice between a tanker or a troop ship, get the tanker. The Marines will take care of the troops, but we want to keep the planes down." That was to protect the fleet. In that one patrol, I can recall, we were off, I think it was Iwo, and we were spotting gun positions and doing all that sort of thing. And we were told that we would have air cover at a certain time, the next day. So we surfaced and sure enough, here comes some planes in the distance. As they got close, I heard the lookout say, "Sir, I think they're Mitsies. Mitsubishi." So anyway, down we went. Everytime we'd come up there were Japanese planes up in the air. The next day, they weren't in the air. We didn't see any of 'em. We saw some of ours. We sometimes would spot hidden gun emplacements by swinging in close to shore, and let 'em take a shot at us, figuring they wouldn't have that--you know, weren't that effective so quickly. Picked up radar. Their radar was pretty crappy. They hadn't stolen it from us yet. So anyway, the time that we picked up Mr. Bush, was, we were on air-sea rescue. We'd been on air-sea rescue when the first '29 raid went on Tokyo. **[End of Tape WCWW2-121]**

Mik: So, we were on air-sea rescue?

Don: Right. On this one mission before they hit Tokyo, we were sending in daily, weather reports. Weather reports were in numbers which are longer and they take a little longer but we send in say, thirty--forty--fifty groups of five. Days, we thought, sure'd be great, Wow, this is great. Nothing happened, then it came a lousy day. Here they come. But they wanted more cloud cover so they could go above the clouds. I suppose, I don't think they were targeting too much, I think it was--I know sometimes the bombers would head out and there was no place for 'em to go because we hadn't taken Iwo yet or Chichi, or where they could go in an emergency. They had Dumbos up, and the Dumbos would be up above and they would give coordinates to where they would hear a flyer went down. We had a code, two-letter code that would change three or four times a day, and we would send that code to the aircraft and then they would verify and then we would say, "Okay we'll pick you up." But, I remember the one '29 we had in our sights and we were ready to go after him, but he never

responded--to the code. He kept stringing out and stringing out and stringing out. I don't know where he eventually wound up. We didn't get him. He must have splashed somewhere. And then another time, the Dumbo directed us to go north, about 200 miles from our position. There was a plane down in the water and what have you. We went north for about three or four hours at flank speed, about twenty knots—twenty-two knots maybe, and here we get the correction, it should have been twenty to the south. So they goofed up on that one. Don't know what happened to the pilot but it was a big aircraft.

Then when we picked up Mr. Bush, it was kind of interesting, we, all together we picked up five flyers, on that patrol. We never gave it a thought that this guy might be somebody. All we know is, there was a plane that said, "There's a flyer down." He came aboard. He became part of the crew. He stood watches, he did just like everybody else. You were expected to pull your weight. Actually it wasn't until he was running for the presidency that we found out, when he ran against Reagan. One of my friends had a nephew who was something to do with the Republican Party. He was aware of the fact that Bush had gone down. Then the commercial came up showing Bush being pulled out of the water, walking down the deck. Bill Edwards took those pictures, Lieutenant Edwards. Anyway, we picked him up and he stayed aboard. He was aboard about three weeks. We, I believe we underwent a light depth-charging during that period of time. Also, we sank a ship. So then we dropped him off. I can't remember--I'm trying to, whether we dropped him off at Midway or whether we dropped him off at Pearl. He flew back, he married Barbara and a year later our present President was born. So, godfathers we were. I remember I met with him down at the hotel on the corner, the square there. Can't think of the name of it. They changed names. We met there. What was odd was, I had worked with the Secret Service guys. There was one guy that was a threat. I believe Hubert Humphrey was going into Minneapolis or something and they wanted this guy, they wanted to know where he was and what he was doing. So I gave them that information but then I found-- I had a guy working in a print shop in Lodi. They had a new machine for duplicating. He had--was caught up around Black River Falls, and he had a stash of phony twenty dollar bills. He spent a few of 'em anyway. He passed a few of 'em. They weren't the greatest, but in a dark bar, easy to pass. And so when I gave the word to the Secret Service I think I know where copies were made and so on and so forth. I ordered the guy picked up and held. They checked it out and sure enough that was it. So when Mr. Bush came to town, he was already aware that I was in town. It was funny, the Secret Service agent said, "Gee Don, you're okay." So they just passed me right through, and of course all these big shot Republicans, "Well, who the hell was that?" I stood off to the side because I didn't know anybody there. Odie Fish and some of these people. Odie Cologne, I guess. Anyway, it didn't bother me, but I went over to the refreshment

table and helped myself. I figured that's what it was there for. And then he came in, and as he came in he went over to some of these and he was shaking hands with. Secret Service man, one of my friends, went over and he whispered something in his ear, and he broke with those guys and headed right over to me. He said, "Have you had anything to drink? Do you like a drink?" I said, "Yeah, that'd be kinda nice." So we went off to the side into a little room by ourselves and talked--for a while. And then came out and talked to the press. So then he said, "Is there anything I can do for you?" I said, "No, nothing." But Neal came up to Portage and right away looked me up. I introduced him around. Good looking' guy, so all the ladies in the sheriff's department and the welfare department were all--you know. But anyway, when we picked him up, as I say, we took him back and he flew back. We went on our way and went into the next patrol. And so, that happened on Sept. 2, 1944, when we picked him up.

Mik: What was he flying?

Don: PBF. He lost his crew. He had two men aboard. There was a radio operator and a gunner. They went down with the plane.

Mik: So the PBF was a seaplane?

Don: No, it was operated off a carrier--torpedo bomber-fighter--multi-purpose. I know he--he said it was fortunate we were there. I have a picture of him with the other flyers and underneath he wrote, "To Don Collins. Thanks for saving my life. You guys, you know, on Finback". Then we have pictures, my wife and I, at the Inaugural, Reagan Inaugural. I was ill when his Inaugural came. So we missed that one. But ah--the whole experience was really interesting. I've often wondered what happened to the other guys that we picked up. One of them came, rather interesting story, we had to swing in close to shore. We had to submerge because we were too close, and he grabbed, we had him grab the periscope, the old man kind of signaled up and down. He grabbed the periscope then he didn't want to let go of the rubber raft which was yellow and was a dead giveaway. Finally the old man up and downed the periscope a little bit and he got the message. Then we surfaced and picked him up.

Along toward the end we were using our twin forties or our fifties or our twenties. We had as much armament and firepower, I think, as most cruisers. Maybe more, because each torpedo, you know, was pretty heavy. You had to compensate for the weight of the torpedo when you'd fire it. You had to compensate for the weight. Usually that was by letting water in and then you'd blow the water out and fill the tube with another torpedo. The antennas for communication were strung from the, to the afterdeck. There was a T-bar, from the sides of the conning tower where they were hooking on. Then there was a, 'bout that big around, and the antennas

would go through there then it sealed, you know. But we couldn't communicate underwater. I understand that ELF is in trouble with some people, but I often said that, what are they thinking of? Let's say the people are under orders to reach a certain coordinate, and fire the nukes. How are they going to get through to them and tell 'em not to? So these people that are cutting these ELF lines are really doing great harm. Of course, it could go the other way, they could say, "Fire." The thing is that the aircraft that flew to a point and then they would turn around and come back, but that was because they received a signal to come back. We operated Wolf Pack. In Wolf Pack we would communicate occasionally by underwater sound. We could key on the sound heads.

Mik: What does that mean, key on the sound heads?

Don: Oh, we could send out a signal on the sound heads. They were crystals. Your crystals would expand and contract and so on and so forth, with sound, and you pick 'em up. And then there were some that had a bar--a metal bar and they would pick up sound. In other words, we had about three sound systems that we operated with. All of them pretty effective. The thing was that they determined that they were not accurate enough on the sound to be able to fire. They preferred to have a sight which would be better actually.

Mik: Through the periscope?

Don: Yeah. Although, you know, we could pick it out. 180, 180, 180. I got a nickname one time, it was kind of funny. I had been up on the TDF, up on deck--the direction finder. RDF, radio dir-, and I was up on the deck and the captain, also called the conning tower but it's up in the fair water area. The lookouts are three, up above and they come down. We were up there, and the battle stations were ordered. The lookouts, when they drop, they drop. Then you hit the hatch and down you go, you don't touch anything. You can sometimes go two decks down and not even touch. So, I was stopped by the Exec, as I went through. He said, "Collins, take the wheel." I'd never taken the wheel, I'd had training but--and so the old man came down and what it was, there was a small picket boat, I don't know how small it was but anyway, was firing at us. So I can remember looking aft and seeing the flash, and then [sound effects] and down. And that's when it went down. I can remember my comment to the skipper was, "The sons of bitches are shooting' at us." "Clear the bridge. Dive, dive." We cleared the bridge, but I was on the wheel. Then the old man aborts the dive. Okay? Because he figured--so he was saying, "Right ten degrees rudder, left fifteen degrees rudder, right to such and such, left, so and so." Finally he said, "What's our bearing?" And I said, "Sir," I said, "We're at about 220." He said, "My god, we're supposed to be at 180." I said, "Well," he said, "You've turned around," he said, "We're heading right back for those

characters.” It must have scared 'em off, because they took off and went the other way. So after that, though, the old man would--you know, I was one of his convicts, me and Dargatz. But he changed my name. I became Old 180 out. 180 degrees out. But he always got a big kick out of that. We had pretty good officers.

Every once in a while we'd get some young guy come in that went to Boston College or something. Ninety-day wonder. I know this one in particular, he's a real nice guy, but I can remember him, he was in the control room plotting--and plotting on the plotting board with the skipper, and he'd say, “That's not the way we did it in the Cape Cod fishing fleet.” Skipper says, “We're not in the goddamn Cape Cod fishing fleet.” Or the communications officer who came into the radio shack, he didn't know much about communications, other than--and so he asked me for, you know, “What's this and what's that.” I told him. He said, “Could I have a manual?” I said, “Sure.” So I gave him the manual. Two days later he comes in and he says, “Now, Collins, I want to know: What is the resistance there.” I said, “I don't know, sir, that's what we--” “You don't know?” I said, “No I don't.” I said, “That's what we have the manual for.” I said, “We can't memorize every.” “Well, I'll see about that.” He went and told the old man. The old man says, “You know something? Don's been with me two runs and you've been with me, this is the first one, so when we get to Midway, if you're not happy, we can always drop you off.” Well Midway was like Siberia. If you ever saw a picture of it--white sand and Gooney Birds--that was it. That was the one place nobody wanted to go. I know one time we were going into Saipan, to refuel, actually. It was overnight and they hadn't completely secured Saipan at that time. One of our destroyers started making a run on us. One of our other boats was over on the other side on that track. So we communicated through, I said, “We'll broach and you're in a better position to take a shot.” “Sink the son of a gun,” our skipper said. So then he thought better and he said, “Well, we'll contact NPM.” So we sent an OU to NPM and told 'em. There's a destroyer making a run on us and we're on our way in and so they sent a message to the destroyer to lay off, which they did. But we found out later that, that skipper was decommissioned, so to speak. Had pretty serious, there were consequences. But, then we went out and off Japan we ran into snowstorms.

Mik: Making a run on you meant he was headed toward you?

Don: Oh, he--he wasn't throwing anything out but we knew he was making a run on us because he was getting into position. When you've been with the enemy, you get an idea of what it is that they're doing. So anyway, he laid off. We had a movie on deck that night. We had beer that they brought over. And of course we had visitors, because over on the base, or the shore, they didn't have any beer. So we gave it out to the Marines and

whoever came over. Cause we had it and they didn't. I guess one of the most interesting things was, we came in to Pearl one time. The Angry Shangri, the Shangri-La, named by Roosevelt as where the Japs flew, or where we flew into the first raid on Tokyo--Doolittle's raid. We came in through the harbor entrance, and we had to pass by the Angry Shangri, she was tied up. We had brought aboard, when we got to the harbor entrance, whaleboats came out and gave mail to us and oranges. So we were up on deck, a lot of us. We're eating oranges and reading our mail. The Old Man and the Exec are up in the conning tower. As we go by, we're all looking up and here they are, they're manning the rails and dipping the colors and giving us a salute--and the Old Man, yelling from the bridge, "Cripe sakes, on your feet, they're saluting us." And we could care less. We were eating our oranges. So anyway, we finally got in and we went to--I remember going over to the sound barge. When we were on the sound barge, a couple of guys and I, we took, from the--there was an Air, not an Air, it was an Army post right nearby. I remember we took this and went over to Brown Beach on the other side. I was thrown off the sound barge for acting up, and we would answer the phone and say, "Who is this?" "This is Lieutenant So and so." "Up yours, Lieutenant," and hang up. We really had a good time on the sound barge.

Mik: What is the sound barge?

Don: That's where, part of the training, it was kind of extra training. They had different sound heads they were using. So what they'd do is, ships that come in the harbor--but I can remember when we were there, we were tied up on V-E Day. And I can remember across from us, where we were tied up, there was a cruiser. And she was getting ready to go out. She was loading ammo, you could tell, the red flag was up. One of our guys was showing somebody, I can't recall who, maybe one of his buddies or something, anyway how you fire the torpedo, and he actually fired one. And it was heading right toward that, and they got that torpedo net up in a hurry. Saved the day. On V-J Day, it was funny, they were firing everything into the air. I mean, you could see it all over the place. On V-J Day, well a couple of days before, we were at rest, and I and another guy had been assigned to work in the lab up on one of the decks. One of the places, while the boat was being reconditioned, ready to go again--one of the quartermasters called me and said, "Hey, Collie, guess what?" "What?" "Oh, they got a huge bomb they're gonna drop on the Japanese if they don't surrender." "Oh, yeah, sure." He says, "Well the Swiss Red Cross is working with 'em, but they're not ready yet." So then a couple of days later he says, "They dropped the big bomb." I said, "They gonna surrender?" "Not yet, I don't think." So then the next day they dropped on Nagasaki--from Hiroshima to Nagasaki. So then we got the word that, hey, they're surrendering unconditionally. I don't know--to this day, I don't know--MacArthur had probably played it right, I don't know. But we were

quite upset at some of the things because we knew that another day's bombardment of certain areas would have saved a lot of lives. Like Enewetak and Kwajalein and so on. Some of the beachheads that they went to establish were--it was bad news. But, I don't know, we had little to say about that. But we did get copies of the various proposals for the invasion. There were three major, and it would have been hellish because every Jap--anese, politically correct, that's not what we called 'em, but every Japanese was actually going to be a fighter and it would have been hell because--I know the two prisoners that we picked up and dropped off, we sank a ship and we picked up two prisoners. One of them was an officer, the other one was an enlisted man. Enlisted man was a great guy, he had family and everything and we kind of treated him well. The other guy was an arrogant pup so he went down in the bilges; which is about as deep down as you can get. Dirty, smelly and what have you. We turned him over to the Marines and we told them to leave, leave our buddy here alone. Don't treat him too rough. He's a good guy. This guy you can do whatever you damn well please. Well they threw Charlie into the bottom of the boat and you never saw two Marines go over the side quicker than they did. We resented that because he had--we realized, here he's got a family, he's got two kids, you know, and we formed a bond with him. Liked him. The other guy, we didn't care. To show you there is a sense of humanity that remains--each doing his job. We did ours, they did theirs.

We never sank a submarine. We were on a patrol where we did go wolf pack. Schnabel's Sharks, we were called. We were lined up in the straits, now they're Taiwan. We were lined up there and we were to prevent German submarines which, after the end of the war in Europe, were to deliver plans and other parts for atomic weapons. Hopefully, the Germans thought that if the Japs could get--none of them got through. But we were in the inner sea and anything on the surface, during the day, was fair game. And we broached, at one point, and all we could think of was, "Boy, we hope the rat sure doesn't open up." She didn't. But one of those boats surrendered, another one was sunk and another one, I guess, they don't know what happened to it. We didn't get it. We went through a minefield, which was not charted. We had a lot of them charted. We'd get Japanese mine field, and we used to go through one strait, which was narrow. You had to go through it, pretty much, on the surface because the current was so strong. So you were kind of a target going through there, except you go through pretty fast. But they had never been able to mine it because of the current. When we went in one time, I can recall, there were mines all over the place. They had broken loose in a storm. And a storm in the Pacific, they're bad. So the Old Man was shooting 'em up and finally said, "Hell, we can't shoot 'em all up." Said, "They're as dangerous to them as they are to us in their present," but we had to dive at one point and some of the cables, we could actually hear 'em going along the side of the boat. Everybody kept saying, "I hope they don't catch, because if they do,

we're done." But we got through. Coming out, one of the boats we were supposed to rendezvous with didn't show up at the rendezvous point. The other boat did. We heard an explosion, and she never did show up. She went down. She'd gone down. I had a good friend that went down on the *Trigger*. It's funny, in a way, we were coming into port and he's heading out, for what turned out to be their final patrol. He hollered across, "Hey, Collie, take care of the girls while I'm gone." I said, "Don't you worry, we'll take care of 'em." He said, "You got any good movies?" "Yeah, we got some." So we switched movies with 'em. We were going in. He never made it back. We have a Submarine Veterans of WWII, and every meeting we memorialize the fifty-two boats that went down. We toll the bell. Give the name of the boat. Toll the bell, name of the boat. In reverse order, name of the boat, then the tolling of the bell. All fifty-two, and we have added the two that went down since. But that is part of it, we just don't forget. I know when we were in Pearl it made me feel-- **[End of Tape WCWW2-122]**

Mik: So do you have to be wild to get into a submarine or did it make you wild?

Don: No, [laughs] well, I think what it was, most of the time when you're underway, you're under pressure--because submarines had no friends. I mean, some of our flyboys actually sank one of our boats off the Panama Canal. So the flyboys were no friends of ours. Zoomies, flyboys we called 'em. So you were under a lot of pressure, a lot of tension most of the time. You played acey-deucey a lot. That was continual. We also had one of the longest rat poker games in history, I think. Started 1944 and in 1946, when this friend of mine was aboard *Finback*, that rat poker game was still going on. People would come and people would go. You did a lot of acey-deucey.

Mik: What is that, acey-deucey?

Don: It's played on a backgammon board type and--a variation, I guess. You ate a lot. When we would come ashore we'd always have a committee which would go into town and buy lobster, what have you, cans, you know, stuff like that. And so, when you'd come off watch, usually the cooks would have something special for you. Sometimes it might be jelly doughnuts or whatever. They were excellent. You never went hungry because, I can remember having turkey dinner on board where the turkey had been frozen in 1934 and '35, and we were eating it almost ten years later. And ah--it was good. But I remember one patrol where we ran out of most everything. Johnny had lard, and he had flour, and he had yeast. So what he was doing, he was making a roux and making a gravy, black gravy or dark gravy. He would put it over bread. He'd make bread, then that would be what we'd have. You know, breakfast, dinner and supper. That was kind of, got sick and tired of that. Another time we had eggs which had

been too long in the shell, because when he fried 'em up, we used to have steak and eggs quite a bit, the whites of 'em were green. So the guys were putting ketchup on 'em. Well if you can imagine a green egg with red ketchup. I didn't, I ate 'em the way they came but for the longest time, after the war, I could not eat ketchup. It just turned my stomach. But I got used to it. But, you say we were wild. I think what it was, this tension gets released, your pressure. You didn't experience fear at all, because everybody had a job to do and you'd better be able to do your job, because everybody else's depended. So when you did get where you could, you let it all hang out. Sometimes you'd say, "Oh my god, we came awful close such and such time, such and such time." There was no real fear at the time, but I think you were subliminally aware of the consequences of anybody screwing up. So, when you come aboard, I know the first patrol, there was additional pressure because--on the *Finback* you had to qualify on your first patrol. Qualify means you had to go through the entire boat with the lead in that particular compartment. You had to know what everything was, and how it operated. Then you go to the motor room, and then you'd go to the after battery, and then you'd go to the control room. You had to know where all the valves were, what they were for, what they did, and how you used them in an emergency. In other words you weren't a motormech but you could start the engines, or the motors, if you had to. You had to qualify on all of those things. Now you'd had that in Sub School also. But then the Chief of the Boat would take you through. And the Chief of the Boat, he was big honcho, really. He would take you through and he would point things out. "What's that for?" "That's high pressure air, Sir." And he was Sir when you were the student. That was the only time he was Sir. Then he had to take you through, then the Exec'd take you through.

Our Exec, he was a great guy. Like I said, he was a mustang. He came up through the ranks. So he figured he'd never get farther up than he was because the academy men had hang on it. But if you look back at the number of admirals that came out of the submarine fleet, it's amazing. I think proportionate we turned out more. We made up-- Actually I had some figures, I think, got 'em here, I think I put this down because--there were 249 subs that made war patrols. Fifty-two subs were lost, total of 1,392 Japanese vessels were sunk, and casualty rate, casualty rate was six times that of non-submariners. In other words we had six times. I read somewhere just recently that there were 250,000 actually qualified for submarines but only 16,000 ever went aboard the boat. Now there's a rotation that went on, you didn't stay on the same boat all the time. You'd be on maybe three--four patrols and then--but the exchange, it was like a football team. You replaced two or three guys--at a time, maybe. I can't recall anybody that went. We had an interesting situation though, one time. We had twin brothers who were pharmacists mates. We were tied up along side them one time when our pharmacist mate and his brother came

over and we were introduced. Well they were identical twins. We never knew for sure, and they made kind of a joke of it. We'd take off and somebody'd say, "Hey Doc, or Hey Bill." "What do you mean Bill? My name's Tom." We never knew for sure whether they were actually changing or not. But there were a lot of little things like that that went on.

Mik: But 249 subs and you sunk 1,300, more than 1,300 ships?

Don: Yeah, yeah. Actually, there were some battleships that were sunk too, that isn't mentioned in there. But there were cruisers, there was an aircraft carrier, there was a battleship that was sunk as she was coming out to shake down. She was sunk when she left the harbor entrance. Bang. She was hit. I know, along toward the end there, we were cruising around looking for targets. Sinking sampans with thermites and--you see a sampan and we'd throw a couple of the thermite slugs in there. Boom. She'd burn like--and the more water they got the hotter the burn. The Japanese had a bad habit of, bad habit for us, of putting diesels in some of the sampans, and carrying armaments--and so you had to be very careful.

Mik: How long would your patrol last?

Don: Forty-five days--sixty days. It varied according to your mission and where you were operating. I never operated in the Aleutians. *Finback* was in the Aleutians for one run but mostly the old S-boats handled that. We were one of the Gato Class, which is '41. I was reading the other day about one of the boats that was Gato but I'm not sure which one it was. We just got a listing of all our shipmates, members of the organization and those who are, we use the term, on eternal patrol. [smiles] It's getting longer every, every time. We're getting older. We're just hopeful that there'll be people coming up that will preserve our memorials. We have memorials like up at Manitowoc, that boat up there. But she'll deteriorate in time if they don't cover it. And there's one over in Michigan, and we have boats various places. Plus memorials. There's a memorial out in Salt Lake City. I was in contact from the guy who's on *Finback*. I called him one night, I found his name in this book that we got just recently. We had quite a long talk and he sent me pictures of the memorial they had built to the boats that went down. We still retain that. When we were on board the *Queenfish*, you noticed that picture, I had the patch on my sleeve, well now, and I guess since the war maybe, I don't know how long after, they start giving out silver dolphins to the enlisted men. So when we went on board *Queenfish*, which I had been told by Mr. Bush at the inauguration, we went to the reception and what have you, and he said, "Now, if there's anything I can do for you, you call my press secretary and he'll take care of it." So I called him and said we were going to Hawaii and we'd like to be able to go aboard one of the boats. They called a couple of days later and my wife couldn't remember the name of the lieutenant, but he was a lieutenant at

the Pentagon. I said, "Yeah, there's only a million." [laughs]. Anyway, she finally remembered. We called the number, I called the number. I told them what we wanted so they had a car for us at the hotel and a Navy commander driving. Took us to the museum then took us down to the *Queenfish* and we went aboard--and to the memorial, ultimately. I can remember going to, on the way to the sub base in the car. We were right next to the Royal Hawaiian where we had stayed and they didn't have any openings, so anyway, but they took us down there. We went to, Japanese tourists there with their little flags and their lock step, I don't know what they do, how they can have any fun. But anyway, on the way down, just jokingly, I kind of started to laugh, "Oh, Mr. Collins, what are you laughing about?" I said, "Well, for one thing, I don't think that a commander would be picking me up thirty--forty years ago," whenever it was. He said, "No probably not." He said, "But you know, Mr. Collins, your wife and your friends are not cleared to go aboard any of the boats." And just joking, I said, "Gee, George wouldn't like that." Just joking and I laughed. We went on, we went to the museum and he left. Pretty soon he came back. He says, "Oh, I'm taking you to the *Queenfish*." He said, "And oh, by the way," he said, "Your wife and friends are welcome to come aboard." "Good." So I told him all I had was the patch, I said, "I'm very proud of it but I just have the patch and now you guys get the." So, anyway, they took us on a complete tour. When we left, I got a set of dolphins, and I got pictures through the sub base, a history of the boat and the captain was from Belleville, I think. We talked with him and they showed us a movie of their mission to the North Pole. Showed the boat surface through the ice. And got a little vial of water from the North Pole, they said they gave every, every crewman got one. Plus some patches from the *Queenfish*. That was a great experience.

Mik: What do the dolphins signify?

Don: Signified that you had qualified, and that was the symbol of the submarine force. Also, I have a combat award. Every patrol that you went on that was successful, like we rescued flyers, we sank ships, you got, it was about that long and it's in the shape of a submarine with a scroll underneath. And there are places for three stars. Some put three silver stars, some put three gold stars, some put--to show additional kills. Maybe a diamond in the middle--something like that. I have that badge and--so it's the equivalent, I think of the combat infantrymen, and I think, in a sense, it's like combat infantrymen. Actually, out of only about one in every ten was in combat. Like I say, 16,000 of us were actually in combat.

Mik: How many patrols did you go on?

Don: Three. And, let's see, all were successful. I can remember in 1943, yeah, '43, just before Christmas. We were shipping out, within a week. So we

left New London on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad, and when she pulled into New London, it was jammed packed. So a buddy and I pushed one of these freight wagons up to the door and we shoved our way through--pushed our way through the people to get in there. My place, my station, I always called it, was either in a luggage rack, because I'm small, I can get up in the luggage rack and sleep between New London and New York. Or the john, I could put my keister here and my feet under here and my head up here. I pushed my way into the washroom, and there were some guys and they were talking and telling jokes and so on and so forth. So I told a joke. Everybody laughed, and the one fellow turned, it was an elderly priest. I said, "Oh, I'm sorry father, I didn't mean, I hope I didn't offend you." "No, no, no, son. No, no, no, son." So actually when it got kind of--they stopped in Rhode Island or someplace. And anyway, when we got out of the train, for some reason, and the good father said, "You know, son, I think I'll buy you lunch." So we went back to the car which was not crowded at all. He ordered up and he said, "Now, you order whatever you want, son." And I started ordering and the steward said, "No, no, no." Any service man that came in during that period got a free dinner. They had turkey and a whole schmear. Then the conductor came in, and I couldn't find my pass to be aboard. So anyway, we got in to New York and the priest said, "Oh, I saw it, I know he had one." Which wasn't true. But the priest said, "Fifty years," he said, "I've lived a very sedate life," he says, "And I'm gonna have a heck of a good time now. I'm going back home." Anyway, we got back and we got into, I think it was, Penn Station. I think it was Penn. We pulled in there and here this conductor gets out and here is the shore patrol. He's giving this shore patrol the story I come on without a ticket. So the shore patrol says, "That's right, yeah, yeah. It's all right, yeah." So he says, "I want something done with this man." He was an ornery son-of-a-gun. In the meantime I noticed that the priest and the shore patrol were moving away so that I was by the staircase. So they got going, and the conductor said something to me and I saw an opening and I took off up that staircase. And as I went up the staircase, the priest and the shore patrolmen said, "Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas." And I don't know whether that conductor ever stopped, you know, fuming. But he was something else. So that was the last time I was home for Christmas. But it was, I thought, an interesting exchange. I often wondered what that--priest, happened to him. He probably, well, he was retiring, and he probably living with a maiden aunt or maiden sister or something. Usually they do. But he was an awfully nice man. He couldn't understand, he was prepared to buy me dinner, but I didn't think he had too much. But you never know. It was a nice experience.

Mik: When you were up in the tower, at your radio—

Don: Conning tower?

- Mik: In the conning tower, what was it like for you when there were depth charges?
- Don: No different than when you were down below. In fact it was probably better because at least you had a hatch nearby that would take you outside. But chances are two to one you couldn't open it anyway. But you had an escape hatch in the forward torpedo room. But that, I think, when you stop and think of the depths we operated. I went up through the tower and you had to go fifty feet up. But you went through a pressure chamber first. Some guys couldn't take that so they never--and then you went down twelve and a half feet in a bell and you came up with the Munson lung. And then you went down to, I can't remember whether it was twenty-five feet or fifty. So anyway, I volunteered to go one hundred feet cause, what the heck. Being the shortest guy--it was funny. They had to flood it, you know, and build up the pressure so they could open the outer door, actually. So they opened this--or when they start flooding, here these other guys, I'm up to here in water and I'm already using the Munson and I'm looking up and here are some of these guys-- Anyway, you come out, immediately the pressure hits you and you're taken up, but you're on a line. And you lock your feet, and so on, on the line and go up. Every ten, about every ten feet you would stop, there'd be a knot you'd take three normal breaths. But you don't realize it but the pressure is great and your feet fly off, and they had swimmers down there and they put your feet on there and clamp your feet and then pat you on the back and motion you to go up and then you went up. So that you didn't have a problem--but, psychologically, that's fine, but the depths you were operating in most of the time, it was more psychological than--
- Mik: Than practical.
- Don: Than practical.
- Mik: You weren't going to get out that way.
- Don: I think we all knew that. But we were always camouflaged and we were out some places it was very deep, some places it wasn't very deep, some places it was sandy. Like off Java it was kind of sandy and you'd stand out like a sore thumb. You had to watch the shadows and you tried to stay in deeper water where you could. We, at one point, dropped off grease guns to the Philippines, the guerrillas.
- Mik: Real grease guns?
- Don: [makes machine gun sound]
- Mik: Oh, okay.

Don: They were cheap, pressed metal really, I mean they were good for maybe the equivalent of a couple of clips, two or three clips then they would, not fall apart, but they would get hot and they'd warp and what have you. But I mean, they were a quick fix. You know, there were a lot of things that went on that probably shouldn't have. We did things that we shouldn't have done and the enemy did too. We had one great admiral, Lockwood. He's the man, in spite of all the Navy politics, he was the one man who settled the torpedoes. When I first went aboard, the torpedoes were in bad shape. Hell, they'd go under, they'd go over, they'd do just about anything but what you wanted them to. They'd hit a target and bounce off. He did it. I remember being at Majuro one time when they were--we had been out around Truk, and Truk was neutralized. But they weren't sure. So they were going to run a mission flight over Truk and see what you'd do. And Admiral Lockwood, all the officers present, SOPA [Senior Officer Present Afloat] was aboard, let's see, one of the cruisers. I can remember they were all manning the rails for all of these admirals and we were out by the tender and we could see all this going on, and the guys in whites around the rails and the pipe was blowing and they were piping the guys aboard, admiral so and so and so and so. Then they were dismissed. And all of a sudden it gets frantic. Here comes Admiral Lockwood up and they weren't manning the rails and they were trying to get them to man the rails. He was wearing his khakis and an old Chief's hat with no insignia. That was the way he was. He was just one of the guys. I think the guys had gone to hell and back for him. Most of your commanding officers were that way. Those who weren't, didn't last long. Because surprisingly, even though most of the medals went to the brass, it was also understood that, "Captain, you better get along with your crew because otherwise you're not going to be around too long." We had good officers for most part.

Mik: How old was your captain?

Don: Our captain was probably in his thirties.

Mik: And how old was most of the crew?

Don: Most of the crew, probably eighteen—nineteen—twenty—twenty-two. We had one guy by the name of Dankmeyer who was a utility man. He could do anything. He could hook the ice cream maker up to one of the things so that nobody had to turn it. He was great. He was a brewmaster from Iowa. We had, oh, he was a little older than most. And we had a fella by the name of Fish. He was probably twenty-eight—twenty-nine. Fish was a guy who was always, always seasick. So the Old Man put him ashore at Midway one time and he got land sick, believe it or not. So he begged the Captain to go on one more patrol. The captain said, "Yeah, OK, but this time now you better watch yourself." So he did pretty well

that patrol. I don't know what his problem was, but he and I were good friends. And then there was a gunner's mate who'd been a professional wrestler. Like I say, I had done a little bit of amateur boxing. So we decided at one of the smokers during one of our rest times, put on a little routine. Good little man against a good big man. It was all programmed, I mean, I'd be thrown right out of the ring. Well you know, you land in the sand, pick yourself up and go back. Give him one and down he'd go. But usually ended up, why we'd hold each other's hand up and say, "Well a good little man and a good big man breaks even." It was always just fun. We made our own. [laughs]

Mik: How old was your Exec?

Don: Our Exec was probably, I would say thirty-eight or thirty-nine.

Mik: So he'd been in a long time.

Don: Well he had to be in quite a long time to come up through the ranks. The thing is, that the Academy kind of held an edge on a lot of the promotions. We had one captain, I never was fortunate enough to serve under him, by the name of John Tyree. Contrary to what people think, John was over six feet. He was a good size man. He developed and helped develop the new strategies for attack. He was called back to Washington, became a--an advisor to Roosevelt on submarine warfare. He became an admiral. I saw him again in 1988 and then I missed his--he had a nintieth birthday not too long ago. And I missed it, getting to the birthday party. But he was quite a guy. Gung ho Navy all the way. Which is great. We always had the expression that the Navy looks after its own. I think that's true. They'll spend a lot of time looking for just one man. I know when the *Squalus* went down, why they, thank God for Munson, he had the lung and he had the bell—[End of Tape WCWW2-123]

Mik: You said you were so busy during all the action that you never had a chance to be scared, and then later you said that was a close call. What do you think was your closest call?

Don: I think the time we were down for maybe thirty hours. It got so hot. If you ever were in heat which is like 136 degrees, and you didn't have much water to go with. I mean you'd sit down and it was hot. You'd grab, if you were working the wheel or anything, was hot to the touch. I'd say that was as close as anything, because we couldn't bring her back up again because they were up there. They had, I think, lost us, because we couldn't hear them pinging, but yet we knew they were there because we could hear the screws. I know, we stayed down and then finally we decided we had to come up, so blew everything. Another close call, I don't know whether it was programmed or not, but when we went out on training from Block--to

Block Island, they used to take the old o-boats out and they'd take trainees, new. We'd go out and I can remember they dove and they got stuck in the mud off Block Island. I remember the skipper saying, "All right, everybody to the after end." It was like shaking a car to get it out of the snow. We said, "Well why don't they blow negative?" And he said, "Because the cap probably won't hold." Negative tank was the one which was inside, it wasn't on the outside, the pressure hull. In fact there was only one hull on the O-Boats. The negative tank would have sunk the thing. Anyway, finally she broke loose and we came up and they sent a whaleboat out. The students got on the whaleboat and went into the base and they brought the boat in later. That was kind of hairy for your FIRST dive. You know, there were a lot of, like, I was offered new construction at Cramp Shipyard in Philadelphia. Well that was close to home. I turned it down because Cramp, it seemed to me, had a jinxed problem. One of the boats went out and she broke in two. Another one went out and dove into a reef. Another one was sunk off the Panama Canal, if I recall correctly. So I thought to myself, yeah, but we were figuring "Golden Gate in '48," that was the thought.

Mik: What does that mean, Golden Gate in '48?

Don: Well, we wouldn't get back home until '48. This was in '45, '44 actually and early '45. It was Golden Gate in '48 because we figured it was gonna go on for a while. If it hadn't been for the A-bomb, it would have gone on for a while. And so, anyway that was-- When we did come home, in September of '45, cause I married my wife October 1st, '45. But when we came through the Golden Gate, there was Alcatraz, but right above Alcatraz from the angle we came in, there was a huge sign that said, "Well done. Welcome home." Here we are, it looked like almost it was a sign above Alcatraz. We had fun with that. But you know, we found ways of making fun, in so many ways. I think the one thing, I always kept my sense of humor, and I never took myself too seriously, and I told one of my bosses when, I have to give you an idea of my philosophy, he said to me, "Don, how did you survive so long in this bureaucracy?" I worked thirty-six years. I said, "Well," I said, "You know, I never took myself too seriously. Come to think of it, I never took you too seriously either." And he started first to kind of cloud up, and then he started to laugh. He said, "Now I know how you made it." A lot of the younger guys would--and I think this happened on the boats too. There were some guys that didn't survive more than one patrol. But, I think--what it is, if you think that you are able to cure all the ills of the world, I recognize that I wasn't gonna make it with everybody. There were going to be failures. But that the onus was on them, it wasn't on me. You're given all the tools to work with, buster, work with 'em. If you don't, and you fail, that's your problem. I tried to tell these guys, you can't solve everybody's problems. You're gonna have losers and you're just gonna have to accept that. Work with the

ones who are willing to work and work with you, and you'll be all right. I think the same thing was true on the boat. There was some people that, we had only one that I recall. Pappy Adams, we called him. He was an older guy, a radar, and he took credit for getting the captain's radio up working again, had the Collins radio shielded and everything so there was no--and he took the credit for repairing that radio when his assistant was the one who repaired it. So anyway, Pappy wound up being Chief and he came aboard after he went into Pearl, or into Honolulu, he came in and he had beautiful whites on. We never wore fruit salad even though they had a fleet order that you were supposed to wear your fruit salad. We never did. When he came back, everybody waited and Lucy, juicy Lucy, hadn't been around so over the side he goes and he came up dripping all sorts of oil and what have you. Pulled him out with a boat hook. And that was it. He got the message. You had your way of getting across.

Mik: Lucy Juicy?

Don: Juicy Lucy. Yeah, that would go, it was a barge and it would go around and suck up the oil from the surface of the water. Could be a fire hazard, so she went around pretty regular.

Mik: Were you in touch with your fiancée, your girlfriend?

Don: Oh letters, letters. Yeah, yeah.

Mik: That you had met here and you stayed in touch with her and married her when you got back?

Don: Right, right. Fifty-seven years--we've been married.

Mik: Was she something that you were anxious to come back to?

Don: You bet. You bet--still anxious to come back to her when I'm gone, which is good. Even in marriage, I think you have to do that. You have to maintain your sense of humor. Not take little things too seriously. I think that's where problems come in. Some people--and on the boats, I mean, you know you could--you could really, you were in a position where you could develop antagonisms. But I think everybody knew they were interdependent. So you--you'd work together. And I think that's like marriage, you're interdependent but most people don't look at it that way. I don't think I ever cashed one of my checks. But I never worried too much about money. On the boats we got extra pay. We got extra overseas pay, we got extra hazardous pay. After we were married, I was going to school and, when I graduated, Professor or President Fred made the comment that he wished he could give two diplomas; one to the wives and one to the

graduates, because we had a large class of veterans when I graduated in '49.

Mik: Was that here?

Don: Yeah. I graduated in three years. Now I guess they get five, but, you know, I mean, things are different now.

Mik: G.I. Bill?

Don: Under GI Bill. Yeah, and then I bought, or we bought our home on the GI Bill. And we paid up that loan early. You know, they sold them to--they couldn't raise the interest rate. So I knew that. So what I did is, when I got down to what I thought was a level where I could pay off, I approached them and said, "Hey, look. You guys are only making four percent, you're losing money on me. If I come up with 2,500 hundred bucks, why don't we write this off?" And they did.

Mik: And what were you studying?

Don: I studied correctional administration and law and psychology. I dropped out of Law School because Juanita got sick and had to have surgery--had to go to work, but I had met with different people and became acquainted with them--people who might be able to help me go ahead; Barney Romnus for one--can't remember the city clerk, and Russ Oswald who was one of my friends right till the day he died. It's just making acquaintanceships with these people. It really helped me along the way. The one thing I always said was, I know one time I took an examination and I came out on top. So I went for the interview and I wasn't chosen, so I was talking to one of the guys who was in, and he says, "Well Don, you told them that there was very little coordination between this branch and this branch." And I said, "Yeah, that's true." "Yeah, you know it and they know it, but you're not supposed to say that." I said, "That's tough." I said it. It was true. "Yeah, we know that." I said, "Well you know, you can question my judgment, but never question my integrity and that was one thing I was always proud of." I was always square with people. I had guys that I sent up that used to come help me mow the lawn sometimes after they get out maybe ten years later. "Hey Don, it's kinda hot out, can we help you?" "Yeah," because I was fair. And they knew it.

Mik: What were you doing?

Don: I was a parole officer. I know I was offered at one point, to come down to Madison to be the assistant to the parole chief because I had written a couple of speeches for him. And he took me to a couple of national conferences. He offered me the job as his assistant. And I thought about it

and talked to Mike and, he was young, and my wife, and they said, "Whatever makes you happy, Dad." I went back and I told him, I said, "You know something, you don't like people who disagree with you. And if I think you're wrong, I'm gonna say so." I said, "So we wouldn't last together forty-five minutes." That was it, that's as far as I went. I didn't-- but him and I remained friends, although for a while I know somebody made a complaint about me writing a letter to the newspaper. So they made an investigation of me. But what they didn't know was as soon as they'd leave the barbershop, I'd get a call from the barber, "Hey Dan what are those two characters so." I was able to recite to 'em. So after that, for about two years, he kept referring to Collins' little kingdom because everything came out.

Mik: You probably had insight into--you go from being a wild submariner into being a parole officer.

Don: Well yeah, but you see, the thing is, that aside from being wild, you were also responsible. And I think that's the key. We accepted our responsibilities aboard the boat and we did what we had to do aboard the boat. On the outside, I accepted my responsibilities as they came along, family and others. And, you know, I didn't have, I didn't feel the kind of pressure I had before. So I was able to adjust. For the first year, maybe, I was probably pretty wild. But like I told my wife, I said, "Well, you know, for three years you're under a heck of a lot of pressure. It's all off now." But the only reaction I ever had was when we were in New York and we were all in a cab, and all of a sudden every nerve in my body seemed to let loose. I was shaking like a leaf. I even slipped off the seat. In a matter of two or three minutes and I was back up again and that was the last time, that was it. Then I had nightmares at one point for maybe six months or so. Numbers, and never knew what the numbers were. But I would shout out and wake up in a cold sweat. I'm sure they were related, but the thing is that I never made an issue of it. I think those things you outgrow. I think maybe, and I'm not criticizing them, but I think rather than reliving it all the time, the really bad parts you don't, but with the Vietnam people, I think they'd be better off if they would just put it behind them and say this is in the past. And we can't continually live it over again. You know, that would be my advice to 'em. But who am I? You know, we've become so critical of people, so highly critical, I would say more hypocritical than critical, when you look at it.

Mik: I have one last question.

Don: Sure.

Mik: When you talked about sending messages out, you talked about groups of five?

Don: Oh, well, okay. We had what we called a BIMEK FEMYH, B-I-M-E-K F-E-M-Y-H. And that was the key. Everything was in groups of five. The breakdown machines were in groups of five. Everything was in groups of five. Your weather reports were usually in groups of five. Numbers as opposed to letters. One thing of interest, I think, too, before we got off completely, we always were kind of told that the information as to convoys, where they were going, everything, was related to intelligence through the Koreans, who were seamen on vulnerable ships. However it was close to the end of the war before we realized that the codes had been broken all during the war, so that we knew from communications where the Japanese were going, what they were carrying and so on and so forth. That was the difference between us and the Germans. The Germans were in contact with headquarters, waiting and told where to go and what to do. We knew when we left where we were gonna go and what we were gonna do and what area we were to cover. So we really didn't have to communicate again and every communication makes you a little vulnerable. That I think was the difference.

Mik: So we knew everything the Japanese were saying but they said it was from Koreans just to cover that?

Don: That was the cover that even to us. I don't think our captain even knew. It was an interesting sidelight on that. And again, the same thing happened with the Germans, they broke their codes too. But we had a French teacher, professor here at the University [unintelligible]. And he was part of the Naval Intelligence Unit. When I joined, well I was in the Reserves, you were in the Reserves. He had a unit in his home, in the basement, and I was part of that unit. We had code machines down there and everything and his wife had to ring a bell to come down. She had to, there was a double door and you'd open the door and slide something in and she didn't know what was in that room. But we had different assignments and things to do. We were downright insidious. I won't tell you some of the things we do but there were several organizations on campus that weren't there after we were done working. And nobody was carried away or anything like that, but there were methods that we used to carry out our mission. I was in the ROTC, the Army unit, as part of my assignment. I made reports regularly and Colonel Haggarty, who was a good man, and I submitted a good report on him. He always wanted to go to the War College, and so about six months later, he was in the War College. Cause I gave him a good, he was a good officer, I mean he knew his business. He got along with people and he knew how to adapt. I know I use the Navy cadence when we were marching and that used to irritate him, until I think it was Mark Clark was here for a parade, and there were a high school band ahead of us, high school band behind our unit. I started the Navy cadence and we were the only, I think, ROTC outfit that was in step when they

went by. So he called me in and he said, "Alright Collins, you can use that goddamn cadence anytime you want."

Mik: What is the Navy cadence?

Don: Well, it was a [demonstrates]. A little rhythmic, not the 1, 2, 3, 4. I can't do it now like--[continues demonstrating], you made up a little things as you go. He liked that after he saw that it worked. I was collecting pay from two units, which you're not supposed to do. But that was my cover. I had my paints. I have pictures of myself going to the Mil Ball; Juanita and I--in my uniform. The only thing he insisted, I wear my dolphins on that uniform. And he was real proud to have those in the unit. It was real fun and I made it through. Three years I worked my butt off, but I made it. Kind of liked to gone on and finish but pressures were there and so anyway, I was happy with what I did. I enjoyed my work, I met with people. I wouldn't have made it as an administrator for one simple reason: I hate paperwork. I like people. I like people; bothers my wife because I'll speak to everybody and anybody. See somebody coming down the street, "Hi, how are you?" Go into a restaurant and I'll sit down and talk to the people next to me and my wife'd say, "You shouldn't do that." I said, "Look, if they don't want to talk, they won't." But I said, "You know, that guy runs the shoe store in Plainville, Illinois, and he's got three kids." And I said, "He's on a business trip." I said, "I suppose he was lonely." It's surprising how people are really willing, not--like in interviewing, just be loose. Hang loose. Yeah, it works.

Mik: I think we've got it.

Don: Well I hope so.

Mik: Thank you so much.

[End of Interview]