

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
PAUL M. HEGGE
Cook and Fire Director, Navy, World War II.

2001

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Hegge, Paul M., (1926-2007). Oral History Interview, 2001.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 20 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 20 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 20 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Paul M. Hegge, a Stoughton, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service with the Navy in the Pacific aboard LCI-399. Hegge talks about enlisting in the Navy, boot camp at Great Lakes (Illinois), and assignment to LCI-399. He discusses training washed-out Navy pilots to make amphibious landings, gunnery training, and taking over as the ship's cook. He touches on life aboard a Landing Craft Infantry ship: food, armaments, combat duties, and gaining his sea legs. Hegge mentions resupplying at Guadalcanal, failing to trade a ham to the natives for souvenirs, and the attack on Okinawa where his ship was the flotilla flagship and directed other landing crafts. During the assault of Okinawa, he recalls being ordered to stop firing guns after a plane was shot down by friendly fire. Hegge speaks of becoming ill, his evacuation to the hospital ship *USS Samaritan*, and passing through military hospitals in Saipan, Hawaii, and Oakland (California). He was diagnosed with nephritis and, at Great Lakes, was treated with scarlet fever plasma. Hegge comments on only receiving ten percent disability when his doctor recommended him for 100 percent and noticing his stay on Saipan was left off his paperwork. He touches on his medical discharge, attending school on the GI Bill, and switching careers after having health problems. He recalls having a racist sailor aboard the LCI-399 who did not get along with the ship's Black steward. Hegge talks about generally positive relations with the other men and officers aboard his ship, being given seven days restriction for flipping the bird to the executive officer, and shore leave in Baltimore (Maryland). Hegge states he is a member of the Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, and LCI National Association.

Biographical Sketch:

Hegge (1926-2007) served with the Navy from 1943 to 1945. He was born in Polk County (Wisconsin) and, at age five, was adopted by the Hegge family in Stoughton. After his service, he attended the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and the Notre Dame Extension Course to become a draftsman, discovered he was allergic to his drafting materials, and moved to Stoughton where he tended bar and worked the ranger station.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2001.
Transcribed by Katlyn Nelson, 2010.
Checked and corrected by Channing Welch, 2010.
Corrections typed in by Katheryn Mente, 2011.
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011.

Interview Transcript:

Jim: Okay. Talking to Paul Hegge. And it's the—ah—what is the date here? It's the 8th of April, the year 2001. Where were you born, Paul?

Paul: Polk County, Wisconsin.

Jim: Is that a town or is that a county?

Paul: County.

Jim: Yeah.

Paul: [Laughs]

Jim: Was that on a farm?

Paul: Up north.

Jim: In a— in a farm?

Paul: Yeah.

Jim: Ah, I see. Where did you—you grow up —there too, or?

Paul: I came here when I was 5 years old.

Jim: Ah. Well, you're really a Stoughtonite.

Paul: Oh yeah.

Jim: And —what year were you born, or when were you—

Paul: August 24, '26.

Jim: 1926. Okay. And —so what were you doing when World War II started?

Paul: I was in high school.

Jim: Okay. Did you think about leaving early?

Paul: I did.

Jim: 'Cause a lot—oh, you did leave early.

Paul: Oh yeah [laughs].

- Jim: A lot of kids did, I know.
- Paul: I left—I actually—I enlisted in December of '43. They told me to go home and finish high school.
- Jim: Uh huh.
- Paul: And I didn't really want to, but I came back and then they called me up, and I had to report to Milwaukee for another physical. So I went in in February—in February of '44.
- Jim: Okay. And—you joined the Navy then.
- Paul: Yeah.
- Jim: Went right to it. How'd you happen to pick the Navy?
- Paul: Well, I really don't know [laughs]. I think maybe because—well, the Hegges adopted me, and their son—Reverend Hegge had a son, Edwin, that was in the Navy in the Chinese situation quite a few years before.
- Jim: Oh, I see.
- Paul: So I just—and I had a sea bag downstairs waiting for me [laughs].
- Jim: You were born into it.
- Paul: I suppose it was contagious [laughs].
- Jim: Where did they send you when you joined?
- Paul: I went to Great Lakes for boot camp, four weeks. Came home on leave, went back to Great Lakes, and they had to assigned me to a barracks that was gonna be all guys goin' to corpsman school, to be corpsmen. And I had my sea bag and all my gear, and I put it on a cot, and they came up and says, "So and so and this bunch"—or whatever you wanna call it—"Board the train. You're going to Solomons, Maryland to the amphib base."
- Jim: So you weren't gonna be hospital corpsman after all.
- Paul: No—no [laughs].
- Jim: But they didn't discuss it with you, they just—

- Paul: No, no. No choice. They took just about the whole floor. And —got to Solomons, Maryland, and they assigned me to a [unintelligible], so I took my sea bag and dropped it by a cot—was gonna make it my cot. “Hegge, report down on the dock to 399.” [laughs] LCI 399. So I grabbed that, right down to the dock and aboard ship.
- Jim: Boy, they didn’t waste any time with you.
- Paul: No, they didn’t [laughs].
- Jim: You had no idea what kind of a ship you were going to?
- Paul: No—until I got on it.
- Jim: Yes. Did you ask where’s the rest of the ship or something or—
- Paul: No, no, no. [both laugh]. There were several of them lined up. ‘Cause I imagine—I don’t know how many people were on that train, ‘cause that train that took us from Great Lakes to Solomons, that must’ve taken all night, and we traveled at night. I think we went through every little village there was and hamlet and –
- Jim: So, now you were in the Atlantic Ocean then.
- Paul: Yeah, I was down at—well, actually what we did, we took washed out Navy pilots that just couldn’t make the grade. And we’d take them and enlisted men—we’d take them out and train them.
- Jim: Train them to do what?
- Paul: Landing operations. How to put them ashore and how to operate the ship.
- Jim: In landings.
- Paul: Yeah.
- Jim: That was the purpose of your ship?
- Paul: At that time, yeah.
- Jim: LCI [Landing Craft Infantry] means that you’re supposed to land troops.
- Paul: Landing Craft Infantry.
- Jim: Right.

- Paul: Yeah. So we'd take them out—well, we didn't have any troops with them—just to show them how to beach it and how to pull off the beach and—
- Jim: Did that pull into the beach like an LCI or—
- Paul: Yeah. Just pull right up on the beach.
- Jim: LST or an LSD.
- Paul: Yeah, yeah.
- Jim: Did you have any—drop an anchor to pull yourself back?
- Paul: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, that's what part of the training was. They had to learn approximately when to drop the anchor and—
- Jim: Right. Yeah, you don't want to drop it too soon.
- Paul: Anyway, we'd take 'em—we'd do— I can't remember if it was three weeks or a month we'd take 'em out. But then we'd take them out in the range, too, with an airplane that towed a sleeve, ya know, and practice gunnery.
- Jim: Oh, did ya get a chance to do that?
- Paul: Oh yeah, with them, yeah. 'Cause I was right between the number four—see, there was five guns. There's one in the bow, two in mid-ships, and two stern.
- Jim: 20mm?
- Paul: 20mm, yeah.
- Jim: All?
- Paul: Yeah, and I was on the—between the number four and number five on the back end of the ship.
- Jim: But you didn't have anything bigger than 20mm?
- Paul: No, unh unh.
- Jim: And how big a crew does an LCI have?
- Paul: Well, thirty-five and four officers.

Jim: Thirty-five and four officers.

Paul: Yeah. It's either thirty-five or thirty-one. I'd have to look it up in the—

Jim: Well, that's close enough.

Paul: Yeah.

Jim: And what was your specific job?

Paul: Well, I—when I got aboard, I was peeling potatoes [laughs]. But then, like I told you, this cook—we lost a cook. He got pushed off, so then I had to go in the galley and help cook. And then when we lost the regular cook, another cook—we lost him out in California. He had chronic sea-sickness. So there's no replacement. So we left California without him [laughs].

Jim: Well, you were a cook by that time, weren't you?

Paul: Oh, I was powdered eggs, powdered milk [laughs].

Jim: Yeah, didn't have to require much training for that.

Paul: No, no, no, no.

Jim: So, but that's what you did. You were the cook for the ship?

Paul: Well, not—yeah—basically, yeah. But then, see, during—well in combat, when we got into combat, I would be between number four gun and number five gun with the battle phones on.

Jim: With the what?

Paul: The big helmet with the phones inside.

Jim: Yes, what was your job then?

Paul: Take directions from the bridge—from the captain.

Jim: For these two guns.

Paul: Yeah, uh huh. To hold fire or whatever.

Jim: You were a fire director.

Paul: Well, I don't know what you'd call it.

Jim: That's what you call it!

Paul: 'Cause then at other times I'd be put in after steering, in case something got hit on the bridge—got hit, I could control the ship from the after steering, underneath the fantail.

Jim: Oh, I see. Okay, and so then you're still in the Atlantic now.

Paul: No, we—when we—well, we left there 'cause we went through Panama Canal on New Year's Eve.

Jim: You mean on New Year's Eve just before 1944 or '45?

Paul: '44.

Jim: Meaning the beginning of '44 or the begin—

Paul: The end of '44.

Jim: The beginning of '45.

Paul: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We went through the Panama Canal.

Jim: Okay.

Paul: Then we went up to San Diego. And because what they had done, they had taken—when they made us flot [flotilla] flags when we left the East Coast to go to the West Coast, they made us a flot flag. And they had to put up all these special radio antennas 'cause we had radio antennas all over the place. And we just got—we had a twenty-four hour pass out there at leave in San Diego, and then we took right off. We supplied and took off.

Jim: With another bunch of ships or like your own?

Paul: All by ourself.

Jim: All alone.

Paul: Yeah. Took off for Pearl Harbor, then we picked some more up there.

Jim: How did that ship ride the waves?

Paul: It's flat bottom. You judge it [laughs]!

Jim: Ah, boy. That was a tough ride.

- Paul: Well, you got used to it—walked a little different.
- Jim: They say you have to have three hands to be aboard ship. One to hang onto—with and the others to carry on your business.
- Paul: Yeah, well, it —actually from the States to Pearl was a comfortable ride. The toughest part we hit was one time out on the East Coast we went through a storm. But that was, well, actually I suppose people would consider it a rough ride, but you get used to it.
- Jim: I see.
- Paul: I mean you ride that darned thing for—well, from then ‘til when I got taken off in Okinawa, which would be, ah let’s see—one, two, three, four—four months.
- Jim: Four months later.
- Paul: Yeah, plus all the time on the East Coast, so you get used to it.
- Jim: Sure. After—how long were you in Hawaii?
- Paul: Not very long.
- Jim: And then where did they send you?
- Paul: Then we took off down to the Guadalcanal and different islands. I don’t remember ‘em all.
- Jim: Right. The Guadalcanal was pretty stable then.
- Paul: Yeah, yeah. There was still—well, there was still natives around, but— ‘cause I tried to swap a ham off—me and the boatswain, we tried to swap a five pound canned ham off for some souvenirs. The Marines must have fed ‘em full of ham because they would not eat it. They just dropped it right in the water. Five pound ham, down [laughs].
- Jim: Oh, my. So what was your duty in a place like Guadalcanal? ‘Cause you weren’t landing any troops.
- Paul: No, we were just resupplied.
- Jim: Oh, you became a supply ship?
- Paul: No, just for our own use. For our own—

Jim: Oh, I see. I was trying to figure out what they were doing with your ship.

Paul: We picked up some more there, and then we just worked our way back up, see.

Jim: Up where?

Paul: Up the islands, towards Okinawa.

Jim: Uh huh. Did you make any landings?

Paul: Oh, just at Okinawa.

Jim: You made that landing?

Paul: Yeah, the first day, we were right in on number one.

Jim: Ah, now we have something to talk about. Tell me about that.

Paul: Well, I don't remember the exact time that we did get in there. But we were right on top of it. We were right there the first minute of the invasion. But that even—you look—the skipper told us never to look up on account of the planes flying. Everybody was shooting at everybody. And finally the skipper—well, he called out, and told me to just tell these guys not to fire because they shot down one of our own planes. I don't know who—which ship did it, but all the—all the LCVP's, you know, landing craft vehicle personnel; LCT's, landing ship—landing craft tank, LST's; landing ship tank; LSD, landing ship dock, they were all firing. And ah—

Jim: Your 20 millimeters wouldn't have done much to them.

Paul: No, but somebody hit that plane!

Jim: Did they?

Paul: 'Cause he came over a ridge you could see off, well, I would say probably from here to Main Street bridge, if not a little further. He was puffin' smoke. And I—

Jim: Did you bring—come up to shore, or were you—

Paul: We were twenty yards off. I would say two-hundred yards off, I mean.

Jim: Did you land some troops there?

- Paul: No, we weren't with troop—we didn't carry troops. We were flotilla flag, the flot flag.
- Jim: I see. And what was your duty then?
- Paul: Well, our duty of the ship? That was it—well actually, we were like, I don't know exactly how many ships were with us, you know. But that picture I showed you, they were part of our flotilla. And we—our ship was basically in charge of—
- Jim: The others.
- Paul: The others. That was their job to land troops.
- Jim: Ah. So you had a, what, a three striper aboard?
- Paul: No, we just—well, I don't know what those guys, their ranks were, 'cause they stuck to themselves. Our skipper himself was only lieutenant junior grade.
- Jim: That's all it called for for your assigned ship.
- Paul: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But these other guys, they were staff—they were probably taking orders from another ship, ya know.
- Jim: I see.
- Paul: And ah—
- Jim: So when you got to Okinawa then you just sat in the harbor.
- Paul: Oh, right there off of Kan— Kantu [Gunto??]. There's a village of Kantu [??]. 'Cause our orders read to invade and occupy.
- Jim: So the invasion of Okinawa wasn't much. It was after they got in there where they got in trouble.
- Paul: Oh they—they claimed 'cause I – they said it was when I was talkin' to, I don't remember who it was, the boatswain's mate or whoever, that they'd had had reports that the island was cut in half in one hour –
- Jim: Yeah, right.
- Paul: From where we landed, latitude.

Jim: The Japanese moved most of their troops down to the south end.

Paul: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jim: So how long did you stay in Okinawa?

Paul: Well, I'd have to look—

Jim: Well, roughly.

Paul: I think it was nineteen days. Then I got sick.

Jim: Oh, how'd that happen?

Paul: I never found out. I could tell you what it was, but [laughs] you don't it on there. What it was, was that—well it developed—well, I got sick, and I vomited—

Jim: You got nephritis [unintelligible].

Paul: Chronic nephritis, yeah. That's what they labeled it as.

Jim: Well, chronic? It must've been acute if you were throwing up.

Paul: Yeah well see, the corpsman—our corpsman listed it as chronic nephritis. Then—'cause I swelled up—I couldn't even put my legs together. All the urine stayed in my system. And they transferred me to the *USS Samaritan*, and they put me on there, and I remember getting them. They put me in that bosun's chair, from ship to ship. They transferred me that way.

Jim: Where'd they take you off to? Where'd you go from your ship to?

Paul: The *USS Samaritan* right there at Okinawa.

Jim: Oh, the hospital ship.

Paul: Yeah. And then from there they took me to Pearl, but I don't remember a thing after I got in that hospital ship. They must've gave me something to knock me out.

Jim: Oh, really?

Paul: 'Cause the next thing I know I'm in Saipan.

Jim: You don't remember going to Hawaii?

Paul: Well, from Saipan I was taken to Hawaii.

Jim: Oh, but your ship from Okinawa went to Saipan.

Paul: Yeah, uh huh. And they dropped me off in Saipan.

Jim: What'd they do— put you in a hospital?

Paul: Hospital. And then —well, my right nut swelled up down to here.

Jim: Oh yeah.

Paul: And they were gonna operate. And they decided to just prop my legs up in the air, put me on a strict diet of no salt, high protein. And I lay in my bed, and I could count the bombers taking off from Tinian to bomb Japan.

Jim: Oh, yes.

Paul: I'd log 'em out at night, and I'd log 'em back in in the morning. And once in awhile you'd see one ditch.

Jim: Uh huh.

Paul: And then from Saipan they took me to Pearl. They flew me to Pearl. I was in Pearl I don't know how long.

Jim: You're feeling pretty good by then?

Paul: Well, actually, ya know, I should say I really wasn't sick, but they wouldn't let me do anything —strict bed patient.

Jim: Even after you got to —

Paul: Pearl.

Jim: Hawaii. Uh huh.

Paul: Pearl. And then they kept me there 'cause in Pearl they put me in the ward with a bunch of guys with broken bones and wounds and burns.

Jim: What were they treating you with then?

Paul: Nothing at that time. Just a diet of no salt and a lot of protein.

Jim: All your swellings had disappeared by then?

- Paul: Well, most of them, yeah. And then they sent me from there to—they flew me from there to Pearl. Pearl, they flew me to Oakland, California. And there they—they put me on medication.
- Jim: Do you recall what that was?
- Paul: No, they never told me. Just take your pills. And I was there for I don't know how long. And I ran into Herb Booth and Leroy Ausse there. They went downtown, they were going on liberty. They stopped in to see me. They went downtown to Chinatown, and they ran into Shirley Usher, from Stoughton. She came up and grabbed their lapels. 'Cause they were both sailors, she grabbed their lapels. And "Hey guys, what are you doin' here?" or something like that you know. They came back and reported to me what they had done. And then eventually they shipped me from Oakland, California on a hospital train, Pullman, to Great Lakes. And after about—they let me go home for 24 hours, or 72 hours, and I came back, and they let me go home for another 24. And then I came back from the 24 hour leave, and they then started experimenting.
- Jim: Oh, what was that?
- Paul: I was a guinea pig.
- Jim: Yeah. What'd they do?
- Paul: Well, there was four of us that had this same thing, and two of us took scarlet fever plasma, whole blood. I don't know how many times a week we got it, or I'd have to look it up on the records. But they got those records, too. But they—two of them died, and the two of us survived. But the doctor was from Kenosha, Wisconsin, but he never told me what had caused it. I never did find out what had caused it. And when they were giving me the blood, they put the blood in this arm, and they put another needle in this arm, but they never told me what this was.
- Jim: And they're still giving you pills?
- Paul: No, no more pills. Just scarlet fever plasma. It was whole blood taken from people that had scarlet fever. And—but it saved the kidney.
- Jim: Pardon me?
- Paul: It saved the kidney.
- Jim: Well, you've got two kidneys. What happened to the other one?
- Paul: Well, they said it was black. It was just laying there. No good.

Jim: Did they operate on you?

Paul: No, no, no. Unh unh.

Jim: Then how did they know it was black?

Paul: X-rays. 'Cause they put a needle in—

Jim: You mean they saw it wasn't working.

Paul: Yeah. No, it just didn't function, I 'spose. But they—they put a—shoot a needle in here, long, with a syringe, it was. Well, Dr. Samo [??] gave me one up here one time. I could put my—

Jim: To x-ray your kidneys.

Paul: Yeah.

Jim: So you only have one kidney that works.

Paul: Right.

Jim: Do you have any swelling of your ankles now?

Paul: Oh, every so often I get puffy; my feet swell up.

Jim: You must be on a 100 percent disability.

Paul: I'm only getting 10 percent.

Jim: I don't understand.

Paul: I don't either. I've argued with the VA about it. In fact, ah—1949 or '47, some place in there, I was in an accident down in Monticello when I was driving truck for Floyd Swenson. Rolled the truck over, and he had me to go to the doctor, and he got talkin' to me. He saw the tattoo on my arm and he says, "You were in the Navy" and I says, "Yeah." And he got talkin' for a little bit, and he asked me a lot of questions, and I told him I had chronic nephritis. And he says, "What are you getting?" and I said "Ten percent." And he says, "Gol darn. You should be gettin' a 100 percent."

Jim: That's right. I don't understand that.

- Paul: Absolutely [??] because right now I get 70 dollars a month and 10 cents from Uncle Sam plus my insurance pays me.
- Jim: I don't really understand that.
- Paul: The insurance is taken out of the 100 dollars.
- Jim: Did you have scarlet fever before you were in the Navy?
- Paul: I don't know. See, I don't know anything of my medical records prior to when I came to Stoughton 'cause I was adopted. My real parents—
- Jim: You remember when you were sick though, don't you?
- Paul: Oh I remember having the measles and mumps, yeah. But as far as scarlet fever, I don't.
- Jim: You don't remember?
- Paul: No, 'cause well, see, I was adopted by the Hegge's when I was little. And my real parents—I have no—
- Jim: I know, but I was just wondering if you remembered having a bout of fever.
- Paul: No, I don't.
- Jim: That's really strange. You should be on a 100 percent disability.
- Paul: Well, that's what I've thought too. That's what this Dr. Beckendorf [??] in Monticello told me, because he was on the VA advisory staff at that time.
- Jim: Well, did he say why they wouldn't give you a 100 percent?
- Paul: He just politely told me, he says "It's just beyond me." [??] I should be getting a 100 percent. That's all he told me.
- Jim: Yeah, I mean but why isn't somebody doing something about it?
- Paul: Well, you know, it took me up until here about two years ago to get my medical records.
- Jim: That's really strange.
- Paul: Yeah, because the only time I've been called into the VA was way back when, oh gosh, that'd be '48 maybe—

- Jim: Have you gone up to the Veteran's Hospital for—
- Paul: I was just gonna tell you that. I got a notice to report to St. Mary's Veterans Administration. I went up there and they took urine samples. I wasn't supposed to eat anything or drink anything.
- Jim: This was the Veterans Hospital.
- Paul: Yeah, but they sent me to St. Mary's. And they took urine samples up there and x-rays up there. They had that needle with the long—
- Jim: Sure.
- Paul: And I stayed there two days, and they told me I could go home. So I went home and then, I don't know if you know Shad Ohansen [??], but he was tending bar at Rossi's [??] in McFarland at the time. And I stopped in there and hadn't eaten for two days. So I had a couple of martinis and a great big steak. I just got home and the phone rang. "Mr. Hegge" he says, "Paul, phone for you." "VA -St. Mary's," "We forgot to take the last test." I says, "Well, what are you gonna do?" I said, "I just had a steak and a couple martinis." She says, "Forget it." And I've never been contacted by 'em since 'til I contacted them about my medical records.
- Jim: That's too bad.
- Paul: Well, I've been up—I went down there to the senior center to talk to Maria Cleaver, and she's been digging around for some stuff for me, but hasn't come up with anything. Because, see, my hospital stay in Saipan is not even recorded. But I know I was there because I could lay in that bed, and I could—
- Jim: I'm sure it's recorded. They just don't have the—
- Paul: It's not on my paperwork.
- Jim: No, but it's on somebody else's paperwork.
- Paul: Well, I've got my discharge with me. It doesn't say a thing about it there, and I've got the medical records. It doesn't say a thing about it there.
- Jim: Hm. Okay, and after the war, did you use your GI Bill?
- Paul: Yeah, I went to college for two years. Basically two years.
- Jim: Where was that?

- Paul: Well, I went to MAT—I went to UW Whitewater for a year. Then I took a basic engineering course from Notre Dame Extension Course.
- Jim: Oh, I see. And so what did you do for a living then?
- Paul: Well, I was taking drafting, see. I ended up—I got a job with Jamesway over in Fort Atkinson. They modeled—remodeled barns.
- Jim: As a draftsman?
- Paul: Yeah.
- Jim: Well, that's a good job.
- Paul: But I got sick. About four months after I got there I got sick. Sicker than the Lord.
- Jim: From what?
- Paul: The material. The tracing cloth.
- Jim: You were allergic to it?
- Paul: Uh huh.
- Jim: You break out in hives?
- Paul: I just got sick. Like walking pneumonia constantly. And so they sent me to the doctor and the doctor told me point blank, "Get out of it." He says, "You're gonna be involved with this all your life." That was it. I packed up my tools. The guy sitting at the desk next to me, I says "Here, you can have 'em." Beause all the tools the government gave me, gave 'em to him. Threw out the window. See, and then besides that one year of basic engineering, I took a course at MATC, too, in drafting and designing.
- Jim: Ah yeah. Well, it seems to me there's other jobs you could do.
- Paul: Well, I just got ticked off. The schooling gone down the drain. So I just went up north, tended bar, worked the ranger station. [laughs]
- Jim: Oh! I see.
- Paul: Tended the bars at nights and worked the ranger station days.
- Jim: Get married?

- Paul: I didn't get married 'til I was 31.
- Jim: Then you came back to Stoughton.
- Paul: Oh, yeah. I never really left Stoughton. But all my friends are going, though.
- Jim: Sure. Well, they're all our age.
- Paul: Yeah, well, I'm 74.
- Jim: Well, I'm 78.
- Paul: Yeah. You don't look it. Must've led a clean life [laughs].
- Jim: Yeah right. Pure as the driven snow [both laughing]. So did you ever have any serious trouble aboard your ship?
- Paul: With some of the personnel. We had a kid from—I don't know if from North Carolina or South Carolina. Didn't like colored people. And we had a colored steward that couldn't read or write. So every time he got a paycheck I'd have to—he'd make his "x," and I'd have to verify it. And they tried to—they tried to—they hung him up by his feet. And the boatswain mate and I went down there and cut him loose. The kid got kicked off.
- Jim: Well, that's too bad. I don't like to hear that.
- Paul: No. But it actually was good harmonies for the whole crew. See, there's two of us from Wisconsin, Bob Baumgartner[??] and myself. And the rest of them were from the East Coast and the South. And one engineering officer lived in Punta Gorda, Florida. I used to contact him and call him up, but I called down there, and the phone number had been changed. So I just kinda imagine he's probably passed. Because he was—he would've been 84. Real nice guy. But we didn't have any trouble aboard the trip, except for the executive officer. He was kind of a—well, he used to be, what do you call it—a beat boy on the crew up in Wisconsin. And I gave him the bird one time, and he gave me seven days restriction.
- Jim: Oh. You made him angry.
- Paul: Yeah, but the best part of the whole restriction was the next day we shipped out. Took us that long to get to Panama. So we got to Panama, I was on liberty. But every year, every New Year's Eve when they have—or every election they have it's usually on a New Year's Eve, what I

understood. And they'd have riots so they wouldn't let us go ashore. We could go as far as the gate. That was as far as we could go. But my time was up then with my restrictions [laughs].

Jim: Sure. There was no place to go anyway.

Paul: I know the old man said to me once—he was asking me about it—I was up on the bridge with him. We were shootin' the breeze, and he said, "Why didn't you ever come to me, Paul?" I says, "Well, heck" I says, "Sir, you were on liberty." 'Cause I wanted to come home to get some other things too and he wouldn't let me. The exec wouldn't let me. But the skipper he was just a prince of a guy. But he ruled that ship with an iron fist. Didn't take any crap. Because well, like I told you, that cook, he got kicked off because of what he did. Yeah. He wanted to go to Roanoke, Virginia to see some gals that he knew, and he never made it [laughs].

Jim: Shore patrol picked him up before he got there?

Paul: Well, I don't know how he got back, but he was late, and the old man was—of course, see, a lot of these guys were on the LCI #1 that were on the 399 with me. I would say basically probably eight, maybe nine of 'em. So there was close—a real close friend I had was from Lowell, Massachusetts. We had liberty that one time. See, when we'd take these guys out to train 'em. We'd pull into—like once in awhile we'd pull right into Annapolis, Maryland. Because we'd have some of them people with us too, ya know. Because they'd make line officers out of 'em. And we'd get liberty. Just twelve hours. And that one time we pulled into—we went to Baltimore, and, we docked in Baltimore is it was. Eaton [??] the radio operator—radar—no, he's the radio operator said, "I know a couple of gals." He says, "Let's go look 'em up." "Okay, we'll go." On the way back—they weren't home—on the way back we went through the colored district of Baltimore. And Moe says, "Come on you Black. Get out here!" Well, he was about a little over six foot, slight build. I beat him back to town and down the street and aboard the ship before he even made the planks [laughs]. Because he'd used some pretty nasty language on 'em.

Jim: That's too bad [??]

Paul: But he—

Jim: The VFW, was that the only organization you joined after the war?

Paul: Oh, I belong to the DAV [Disabled American Veterans], life member; American Legion; and the LCI National [Association]. That's enough.

Jim: I'd say.

Paul: Well, the LCI National, now, I forgot to pay my dues. They charge a 100 dollars for life, or 10 dollars a year. But they don't send ya a dues notice. The head organization doesn't. All they do is they send ya, well—

Jim: It's all right [??].

Paul: I was gonna say put this thing down because I could show ya.

Jim: No, don't [??].

Paul: They send a newsletter out, and on it says if you've paid your dues or not. And I've never even paid attention to it, so I must not've re— redone it.

Jim: Well, I can't think of anything more to ask ya. Did you forget to tell me anything?

Paul: Not that I can remember.

Jim: Okay. Alright.

[End of Interview]