

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
ROLLAND BARSNESS  
Quartermaster and Gunner, Navy, World War II

2001

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**Barsness, Rolland**, (1918-). Oral History Interview, 2001.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 63 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 63 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 63 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Rolland Barsness, an Edgerton, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service with the Navy as a quartermaster aboard the destroyer *USS Frazier*. Barsness talks about quartermaster school at Newport (Rhode Island), the duties of a Naval quartermaster, assignment to the *USS Frazier* (DD 607), and joining a squadron of twelve destroyers. He describes the *Frazier* and its armaments, and briefly speaks of an admiral or commodore who brought his own set of crew aboard and made the ship crowded. Barsness mentions escorting the *USS Wisconsin* across the Pacific, duty as a picket destroyer, and warning fishermen at Leyte to get their boats out of the way or be run over. Because they had a four-stripe officer aboard, he mentions they often got stuck with “some horrible duty” due to Senior Officer Present Afloat status. Barsness talks about firing gun support during the battle of Okinawa, the loud volume of the guns, and difficulty getting food from supply ships. He says he would volunteer to transfer supplies from bigger supply ships because it would earn him a good, hot meal. He talks about pulling downed airplane crews out of the water. At Corregidor Island, Barsness comments on the problems caused by floating mines and seeing the emaciated conditions of American prisoners of war. He talks about escorting a ship with MacArthur aboard. Barsness touches on getting ice cream from their destroyer tender, having a few days of liberty in Tokyo after the war, and passing through the Panama Canal. He highlights seeing a memorial service for American dead at Corregidor. He speaks of his return to the United States, train ride to Great Lakes (Illinois) for discharge, emotional reunions of *USS Frazier* veterans, and using the GI Bill to go to college.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Barsness (b.1918) served aboard a ship in a destroyer squadron in the Pacific theater of World War II. After the war he returned to Wisconsin, entered a career with Madison Newspapers, and became active in a *USS Frazier* veterans group, including fifteen years as the group’s chaplain.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2001.

Transcribed by Katy Marty, Volunteer, 2009.

Checked by Channing Welch, 2010.

Corrections typed in by Katy Marty, Volunteer, 2010.

Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

**Interview Transcript:**

James: Now, here we go talking to Rolland Barsness. Where, when were you born sir?

Rolland: June 5, 1918.

James: Sixty-two. Where?

Rolland: In Edgerton, Wisconsin. I know, I know the McIntoshs there.

James: Do you?

Rolland: Yes, right.

James: I was the seventh child born in that hospital.

Rolland: Is that right?

James: Yup.

Rolland: [laughs]

James: My mother was always very proud of that. Why I haven't the vaguest notion, but she, was proud of it.

Rolland: I was born at home because there wasn't a hospital in 1918.

James: I was going to say because that hospital had just started –

Rolland: That's right, mm hmm. That's why I was the seventh child because they had just opened that year, 1923.

Rolland: Both of our kids were born in Edgerton. Linda was born in ah--

James: A.J. Shearer.

Rolland: Oh, A. T.

James: A. T. Shearer. Yeah, I know him.

Rolland: A. T. Shearer, oh family and he would --

James: The god father, the first godfather of Edgerton, and the second one was Vic Falk [??]

Rolland: Oh, yeah, Vic Falk [??] That's right.

James: He was the second godfather.

Rolland: He married Marge Shearer.

James: Shearer.

Rolland: That's right.

James: Right. And the other one married the Posers.

Rolland: That's right. Yeah, Lib. Elizabeth.

James: She married Bob.

Rolland: That was Floyd's daughter. Floyd Shearer's daughter.

James: Right.

Rolland: Yup, I knew them all very well.

James: Did you know the other boys, the other Shearer boys?

Rolland: Mm hmm.

James: Tom [unintelligible], and Charlie.

Rolland: Charlie and Tom, Tom was a little younger. I knew Charlie, but I didn't know Tom.

James: Charlie was a --

Rolland: Yeah, he's passed away too.

James: He didn't -- Ends didn't meet for Charlie.

Rolland: No, something was --

James: He was a weird guy. He married a Mormon, ya know.

Rolland: He was [sighs] very --

James: And then she just up and left him.

Rolland: When he was young he was very uncoordinated. Really.

James: No kiddin'.

Rolland: Yeah, he was very uncoordinated.

James: Strange boy.

Rolland: Ya, but a nice guy.

James: He was pleasant enough. [laughs]

Rolland: Mmm hmm.

James: But I--

Rolland: Yeah.

James: Now, we need your approval so we can publish anything you give us here.

Rolland: Sure.

James: I have to give you this thing here.

Rolland: All right. [Pause in tape approx. 10 seconds]

James: What is today? Twenty-five.

Rolland: Today's the 25<sup>th</sup>.

James: The Korean War started.

Rolland: Six months 'til Christmas.

James: Korean War started.

Rolland: That's right. I was painting the house on St. Claire.

James: Were you? On St. Claire?

Rolland: You used to live the second or third block up.

James: Oh, you were -- right. Right across from the park.

Rolland: We were down --

James: On [unintelligible].

Rolland: We were down a block from #2 Green on Glenway.

James: Yeah. And your address sir.

Rolland: 3-9-0-2

James: 3 – 9?

Rolland: 3902 St. Claire.

James: 3902 St. Claire. And I was 40 somethin', 42.

Rolland: Mmm hmm that's right. Mmm hmm.

James: That's in 5-0-5?

Rolland: 1-1, 5-3-7-1-1.

James: Write in this empty space here.

Rolland: Mmm hmm. Sure.

James: George Custer got his on this.

Rolland: Right here, this?

James: In that empty space. Anywhere in there. You knew that didn't you?

Rolland: Who's that?

James: George Custer. Custer's last stand was on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June.

Rolland: I read that just the other day.

James: In 1876.

Rolland: In fact there's a story in the paper this morning on the American Indians.

James: 1876. Two big things happened on this date.

Rolland: Have you ever been at Little Big Horn?

James: No.

Rolland: It's kind of - - it's right near the Crow Indian reservation. They could be nasty sometimes – the crows. The Crow Indians. The reservation.

James: Oh, I see.

Rolland: At --

James: I have crows around my place that I --

Rolland: Those should be eliminated. [laughs]

James: Maybe the others too.

Rolland: Well, no –

James: I'm afraid of Indians.

Rolland: No, they were here before we were.

James: Yeah, I know but it doesn't make this their land.

Rolland: Yeah, that's true.

James: Yeah. I mean a lot of them were on the hoof all the time anyway.

Rolland: Oh sure. They were nomadic yeah.

James: There's very little culture from the American Indians. Very little culture. Even the Eskimos have more culture that has developed. You know when you go down to Mexico and you see those Indians. Some of the things they did.

Rolland: Ya.

James: They carved.

Rolland: That's right.

James: But most of the Indians were nomads.

Rolland: That's right, they were very nomadic.

James: Where ever the buffalo went they chased them down.

Rolland: They followed the buffalos.

James: I always remember that old joke they asked Sitting Bull. What they called the United States before the white man got there. "Ours," was the answer. [laughs]

Rolland: [laughs] Yeah.

James: Old joke.

Rolland: This one story I read about Wounded Knee where there was I don't know how many woman and children massacred, 300 or more.

James: That was very violent.

Rolland: Mm hmm.

James: Unnecessary violence.

Rolland: That's a blot on the --

James: It sure is.

Rolland: American history.

James: Well, there's a lot of blots against --

Rolland: There are a lot of them. That is correct.

James: They treated them very, very badly.

Rolland: Very badly. And they're still discriminated against, they say in the Southwest even more than the black race and in the Southeast.

James: I don't know about that.

Rolland: I have read that.

James: I've not heard that. Okay. And you entered military service when?

Rolland: I enlisted late 1943. I'm not remembering, I can't tell you the exact date.

James: That's all right. '43

Rolland: And right, right after, yeah that's right.

James: Did you volunteer to the Navy --



Rolland: I volunteered ya.

James: Or did they put you there?

Rolland: No, I volunteered for the Navy. I had no part of the Army because I hate mud.

James: [laughs]

Rolland: [laughs]

James: Okay. So and you took your training at Great Lakes I assume.

Rolland: Great Lakes, that is correct. Boot training.

James: And then they sent you to some corps school, what was that?

Rolland: Aptitude tests indicated that perhaps I might make a good quartermaster. So after I returned from boot leave, an out-going unit, OGU, I was sent with a group of people to Newport, Rhode Island.

James: Oh.

Rolland: The oldest base in the country.

James: Newport.

Rolland: Excellent food there, that's about all I could say for it.

James: Newport, Rhode Island. How --

Rolland: And then they closed the school there after a month or so and we went to Gulfport, Mississippi. The entire school went to Gulfport, Mississippi.

James: How long was that training?

Rolland: What was that? Four months -- I think it was four months.

James: They sent -- I know essentially what a quartermaster is, but I know I'm familiar with it with the Army because --

Rolland: Now that's confusing. It has nothing to do --

James: I know in the Navy it's different so --

Rolland: It's entire --

- James: For our records here tell me what a quartermaster is in the Navy is responsible for and does.
- Rolland: A naval quartermaster in the Navy a quartermaster is an assistant to the navigator. They are responsible for keeping the ship's log, manning the helm when necessary or supervising manning of the helm, keeping and correcting navigational charts, monitoring all the voice circuits on the bridge, assisting the navigator with taking star shots, sun lines and whatever. Which they no longer do, they use satellites now.
- James: Sure.
- Rolland: But they were directly responsible to the navigator.
- James: Did they teach you navigation in this school?
- Rolland: Not well, just the rudiments of it is not really--
- James: Right. Never did use that instrument, that --
- Rolland: The sextant?
- James: The sextant?
- Rolland: No, no the -- that was the navigators' instrument.
- James: Okay. He never let go of that.
- Rolland: No. And we also had to take care of the chronometers. We had four chronometers in a chest in the chart house. Just after the pilot house and we had to keep track of the humidity and had to keep track of the temperature every day, we had to make so many turns on each chronometer every day to wind it at a certain time.
- James: Those are spring run?
- Rolland: Those are spring wound. They were at the time because --
- James: So when you wound it then it couldn't go longer than a day but you just to be sure you did it everyday.
- Rolland: That is correct. You did it at the same time every day.
- James: Every day. You made sure --

Rolland: And during the mid-watch after midnight we had to go to the radio shack with a stopwatch and listen for the Greenwich, England time signal, and then we would keep track of how much time that he'd either gained or lost. Each individual chronometer. Because time is very critical to navigation.

James: Well, that's the longitude.

Rolland: That's right.

James: Yeah, that's that guy Johnston, Johnson or Johnston, from England who figured that out.

Rolland: Mmm hmm that's right.

James: He built that clock. I've seen that clock in the Greenwich Museum in --

Rolland: Mmm hmmm Yes, I've seen that.

James: *Outstanding* original piece of work.

Rolland: That's an interesting place. We were there with a group of people some years ago and I was the only one that walked up to the

James: Museum.

Rolland: The Royal Observatory.

James: It's quite a hike up there.

Rolland: And I waited until I got the time signal.

James: [laughs]

Rolland: I set my watch. [laughs]

James: Ah, oh cute. [laughs]

Rolland: And the naval museum they had , of course it's all British

James: Yeah.

Rolland: Is an excellent museum. British do a beautiful job. I enjoyed Grenache very much, very much.

James: Yeah, it's very nice. Okay. So now you got a ship. Did we go to a ship right after that school?

Rolland: Well, yes after the schooling we boarded a troop train the whole company and went to Camp Shoemaker, California which isn't far from near Stockton, not too far from San Francisco.

James: I know.

Rolland: And the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> day at 8 o'clock muster my name was called, grabbed my gear to head for a bus and there was two kinds of duty I really didn't care about. I didn't want amphibs and I wasn't too keen about a destroyer.

James: But they didn't discuss it with you did they?

Rolland: They didn't ask me, no, no way.

James: When you got on that bus you had absolutely no idea.

Rolland: Well, I did --

James: Oh, you did.

Rolland: Because as we boarded the bus boatswain's mate had probably checked off our names --

James: And you had someone [??] copy a sheet.

Rolland: And everybody, "What did I get? What ship did I get?"

James: Oh yeah.

Rolland: And they came to me, he said, "Hey you're the lucky one. You got a tin can."

James: That's just what you didn't want.

Rolland: I just wanted the -- I didn't want. But I was very fortunate. It was a good ship and a great crew and --

James: This is a DD?

Rolland: A DD, Dog Dog. Yup. DD 607.

James: DD 607. Name?

Rolland: USS Frazier. F-r-a-z- i-e-r.

James: Oh, gosh [Rolland laughs]. Sorry. I wasn't thinking [Rolland coughs]. F-r-a-z-i-e-r.

Rolland: Yup.

James: Was that a new ship?

Rolland: No, no, no. It had come back for routine repairs.

James: It's not a Fletcher class. It's not that old, was it?

Rolland: Well, yes it was.

James: A Fletcher class.

Rolland: It was – no, no, not a – not a – we had a – the captain's name was Fletcher.

James: Oh.

Rolland: He was regular Navy, and he hated reserves.

James: Oh wonderful. That's nice -- there's nothing unusual about that.

Rolland: I thought perhaps, when I read *The Caine Mutiny* or saw the movie afterward [James laughs] I thought perhaps Herman Wouk had been a member of the Frazier crew. No, we I think it was kind of a hybrid Bristol – Livermore class. It had a break in the [unintelligible] hold so.

James: So it was built after the war started.

Rolland: Oh, yes. I think in '42.

James: '42. That's a pretty new destroyer.

Rolland: Yeah, oh yeah.

James: And just before we leave that. The destroyer carried four five inch guns and --

Rolland: That is correct. And two twin forties, forty millimeters and I don't remember how many twenty millimeters we had. I just can't remember how many. And I think we had four torpedo tubes amidships.

James: Okay, All right.

Rolland: And then we had the K-Guns for depth charges.

James: Where were those depth charges kept?

Rolland: They were stowed aft. Yeah, they were --

James: Did you bring them up by an elevator?

Rolland: No, --

James: You had to drag them up.

Rolland: We weren't that fancy. Everything was manpowered. [laughs]

James: Those depth charges for the Y - Gun how big were they? I mean how heavy.

Rolland: Oh, I would say.

James: Could you pick one up?

Rolland: No, no I wouldn't be able to.

James: You couldn't --

Rolland: No, it would take two or three men to handle it.

James: Oh, I see. Now how did they get them up out of the hold then?

Rolland: Men carrying them --

James: Oh.

Rolland: As I recall.

James: You said it would take more than --

Rolland: I think it would take at least two men. I think --

James: To bring one up.

Rolland: See my station was on the bridge and I really didn't mess with those people back there.

James: I guess not. They must have been lower then lower for you to even talk to them.

Rolland: Oh yeah, nice guys though. Nice guys.

James: Okay.

Rolland: Yeah.

James: And what were -- how many people?

Rolland: Aboard ship, that's a complement? I think approximately 350, but we were a flagship. A DESRON 14, Destroyer Squadron 14 and we had a four striper. The captain of the ship was either a lieutenant commander or a commander, two and a half, or three stripes. But we had this --

James: Captain.

Rolland: We had a full captain. A four striper whom they called --

James: And he was head of the squadron.

Rolland: That was the squadron leader and he was addressed as "Commodore". Commodore was a --

James: I know [??] --

Rolland: A rank that was dropped many years ago, but they kind of just to set them apart they revived the rank.

James: You mean it wasn't his choice. It was the [unintelligible].

Rolland: No, no, no, it really wasn't. Well, he [laughs] --

James: Yeah, I'm sure he didn't [unintelligible].

Rolland: He didn't object. He didn't object.

James: [laughs]

Rolland: Oh, any way you could flatter them they were happy.

James: Commodore. Well, now what kind of a fleet did the commodore, you know, rule over? I mean I don't know how big your squadron was.

Rolland: There were fourteen -- oh my golly how many were there? DESRON 14, there were at least ten or twelve. You know I've forgotten now.

James: Well, roughly then.

Rolland: I would say at least a dozen.

James: A dozen --

Rolland: A dozen other destroyers.

James: That's all? No mine sweepers or--

Rolland: No, no, no just destroyers, --

James: Just destroyers.

Rolland: Destroyer Squadron 14. That --.

James: It seems like a high rank even for that many ships, but what do I know.

Rolland: Yeah.

James: Okay. So once you got aboard that how did you like that?

Rolland: I really enjoyed it. I had --

James: You thought it was going to be worse then it was, obviously.

Rolland: I -- We were crowded because with the commodore or the --

James: He took up two [unintelligible] spaces.

Rolland: He brought his own staff.

James: Oh, my.

Rolland: Another thirty-five, forty people so we had pretty near full -- we were --

James: He brought thirty-five along?

Rolland: Oh sure because he had his own signalmen, he had his own radiomen, he had his own staff officers --

James: Why couldn't he use the ones aboard your ship?



Rolland: That was beneath their dignity. [laughs]

James: Yeah, but I mean you'd see why you would be walking over each other.

Rolland: We were! We were crowded.

James: I mean if two guys are doing exactly the same thing.

Rolland: Yup. We – he had his own communication officer we had our communication officers.

James: That's bullshit.

Rolland: He had have his own signalmen, we had our signalmen they all worked together.

James: That's bullshit \_\_\_\_\_

Rolland: That's the *Navy*.

James: Ya, I know but that's not the Navy that I like to hear about.

Rolland: Well, I realize that but the Navy is --

James: That's ridiculous.

Rolland: Navy is built on tradition you know that period and most --

James: I spent a few years with them.

Rolland: The more you can pyramid the greater power you have.

James: I know, but that seems to be beyond logic that --

Rolland: I know it.

James: So, anyway.

Rolland: Logic doesn't fit into, that's an oxymoron when you're speaking logic and Navy.

James: And the service? Well --

Rolland: I always said there's a right way, the wrong way, the logical way and the Navy way.

James: Well, drat see now I'm going to be depressed now for a month.

Rolland: [laughs]

James: So where did you go?

Rolland: Well, we left San Francisco and went to Pearl Harbor, and one of the first escort missions we had was to escort the USS Wisconsin BB-64 from Pearl Harbor to Ulithi. Now, I was trying to remember whether Ulithi is either in the Marshal Islands or the Carolines or somewhere down in that area. It was a nine-day cruise in a following sea when and I was kind of a green helmsmen. And if you've ever steered a ship in a following sea, it's a little bit rough you can shoot off to the right or the left or you can dip or you can yaw.

James: I know. I got sick a number of times aboard [??] ship.

Rolland: Well, I made up my mind I was not going to be seasick. I had a horrible headache between San Francisco and Pearl but that passed. Never had any problem.

James: Oh, well, you're a better sailor than I.

Rolland: Well, I enjoyed it. I really love the sea. I really love the sea.

James: I enjoyed sitting in the prow of the hospital ship as we were coming back, those eighteen days coming back from Korea to --

Rolland: Oh, sure.

James: San Francisco.

Rolland: Yeah.

James: At about two miles an hour. Jesus Christ.

Rolland: [laughs]

James: You know, eighteen days and it had two of the days are the same because we crossed the International Date Line.

Rolland: That is correct. You --

James: The 30<sup>th</sup> of -- two 30<sup>th</sup> of October.

Rolland: But you missed one going out.

James: Yeah, I flew out.

Rolland: Oh, you flew out. But you still missed one.

James: That's right. [laughs]

Rolland: Somehow or another. [laughs]

James: Anyway, but I used to sit because I used to enjoy the marine life that would come up and --

Rolland: Oh, yes, oh the --

James: The dolphins would chase the ship. They loved it.

Rolland: Follow -- "The Sailor's Friend."

James: Yeah. You could always look down and see them. I enjoyed watching 'em.

Rolland: You won't find sharks in dolphin -- or porpoise waters.

James: Well, anyway. So off we go to Ulithi.

Rolland: Yeah From Ulithi, oh my gosh, where did we go? We had so many different assignments. We were here and there, all over. We operated with the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup>, the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleets at different times. We did a lot of escort work.

James: Before you get too far --

Rolland: Yeah, mm hmm.

James: When you did this escort work, was that solo or you're talking about the whole squadron here?

Rolland: No, usually, ah, two or three other destroyers.

James: Yeah, that was --

Rolland: Because he would dispatch these other destroyers. Some of the squadron were here. Some were there. Some were over here. But he kept track of all of them.

James: So you usually worked in groups of two or three.

Rolland: Two or three. We did a lot of escort work with the USS Meade. M-e-a- --

James: What was that?

Rolland: Another destroyer.

James: Oh.

Rolland: DD - 602 and

James: This because in pairs you can be on either side of the ship you're escorting.

Rolland: That is correct and the we had a lot of -- we had air search, surface search, radar and of course sonar and --

James: All those things on all the time?

Rolland: All the time.

James: Twenty-four hours a day.

Rolland: All the time that you were at sea they were on.

James: Escorting or not they were all on.

Rolland: Oh, yes.

James: Everything, in other words, when you're at sea you were searching.

Rolland: You're, that is correct.

James: On all modalities there.

Rolland: But that never replaced the human look-outs.

James: Oh, really. Out there with the glasses.

Rolland: With the glasses.

James: You had someone who had the glasses.

Rolland: We had some on the wing of each or either wing of the bridge.

James: How many?

Rolland: We had two men out there one on either wing with glasses doing a 180 degree sweep. Looking for periscopes or planes or whatever.

James: All the time?

Rolland: All the time.

James: You mean during the daylight.

Rolland: Well, I'll when we were under way. Not when we were --

James: How about when you were on your way at night?

Rolland: Even then, yup.

James: I'll be damned.

Rolland: Yup, because you never know, you just never know.

James: Yeah, of course, of course.

Rolland: A periscope can make a -- you know --

James: A trail right behind -- Even at night you could see the florescent stuff, couldn't ya?

Rolland: Now that -- that just intrigued me, the phosphorescence of salt water. It just intrigued me.

James: Yeah. It's very striking.

Rolland: And another thing we had to do we had degaussing coils. The whole ship is like a traveling magnet you know.

James: Right.

Rolland: And when we changed headings we had to change the setting on the degaussing coils to conform with our heading that would change the magnet of the ship.

James: That makes me laugh because they had that, one of those things aboard our hospital ship

Rolland: Ah ha.

James: And I was on that hospital ship a year and they never got it to work.

Rolland: Is that right? [laughs]

James: Yeah, it was just a – I mean just a – of course, all of the reservists, we just thought that was the funniest thing we'd ever heard, but the regulars, you know, who ran the ship --

Rolland: Oh yeah.

James: Apart from us docs who were in the hospital part.

Rolland: Sure.

James: "Our drivers," we used to refer to them, those guys, you know --

Rolland: Yeah.

James: We'd listen to them fuss and moan. They finally quit it because we started laughing at 'em [Rolland laughs]. They just were having a constant problem trying to deal with it. In print it was great, but it was hard to adjust.

Rolland: Yeah.

James: Really was [laughs].

Rolland: I'm sure, yeah.

James: So, and your trip to Ulithi was uneventful.

Rolland: Yes, ah --

James: That was in, still in '43 or was that in '44?

Rolland: No, that was in '44. No, it was in '44.

James: Okay. All right.

Rolland: Yeah.

James: And then you started making -- from there you would probably go back to Pearl and pick up somebody else.

Rolland: No, no we stayed out there.

James: Oh, I see.

Rolland: And we were assigned here or there. They needed somebody to escort this and --

James: Oh, Ulithi became your base.

Rolland: Not -- I don't think if we ever had a base.

James: Oh.

Rolland: We had the whole Pacific Ocean [laughs] really. Ah

James: Did you get any liberty there? Not that there's any --

Rolland: There's really no place to go.

James: There's very few places in --

Rolland: We finally did have, after, we went in with the invasion troops into the Philippines of course that wasn't until January of '45.

James: Philippines were in November of '44.

Rolland: November was it? November Whenever it was I tell you my.

James: Your memory. February '45 was Iwo. April '45 --

Rolland: Ya, that's right.

James: Was Okinawa. But November --

Rolland: I guess that's right.

James: The previous November --

Rolland: Yeah. I guess that's right.

James: Is when they hit Leyte Gulf, and you were at Leyte Gulf then.

Rolland: We were at Leyte Gulf, and then we also --

James: What would be your -- were you acting as a [Approx. 5 sec. pause in tape] but November --

Rolland: I guess that's right.

James: The previous November --

Rolland: Yeah.

James: Is when they hit Leyte Gulf, and you were at Leyte Gulf then.

Rolland: We were at Leyte Gulf, and then we also --

James: Now what would be your -- Were you acting as a picket?

Rolland: We act as a picket duties [??].

James: Picket Ship.

Rolland: Ahead of the main force --

James: Right.

Rolland: Out there all by ourselves. We had a lot of equipment, and we did have one man who could speak fluent Spanish. I remember we were going somewhere through some; a channel and we called "bum boats" Philippine bumboats, fishermen out there.

James: Were they like canoes or --

Rolland: Yeah, like a canoe.

James: Long canoe.

Rolland: Yeah, and this fella would go up on the bow and we'd get up as close as we could and he would speak to them in Spanish and tell them to get out of the area immediately. Otherwise they could be run over --

James: Run over.

Rolland: Sunk, whatever. So we just wanted to make sure that they, that's what they were, was fishermen. We ran I don't know how many of those because that was their livelihood.

James: But you saw no kamikazes up in Leyte?

Rolland: No. I saw a plane go down. Yes, I'm not sure you don't bother to --

James: But that was later that day.



Rolland: That was later, yeah.

James: Okay, and so you're at Liege Gulf for several days or -- you were in --

Rolland: No more than several days, yes.

James: You weren't involved in the battle that --

Rolland: No, no, we came in --

James: The Japanese came in great force and --

Rolland: No, but a lot of destroyers were.

James: They certainly were.

Rolland: In fact Admiral, what his name is, he referred to destroyers as the "little boys." "The little boys." [laughs] He gave them a great compliment that they --

James: Well, the advent of destroyers [??] --

Rolland: They were kind of expendable , you know.

James: Sure.

Rolland: They were expendable.

James: But the escort carriers and the destroyers were the ones that facde the major portion of the Japanese fleet.

Rolland: That is right, yeah.

James: And the Japanese lost their courage.

Rolland: Yup.

James: They could have wiped out that --

Rolland: That's right.

James: Whole operation very easily.

Rolland: They could of. The good Lord looks after us. In many --

James: Pretty lucky.

Rolland: Amen.

James: Pretty lucky. So then the next event was that Iwo Did you --

Rolland: No, we didn't get to Iwo. Ah. Where were we? Because we had a four striper we wound up as SOPA in areas. Senior Officer Present Afloat. He was kind of the administrator until the other authorities could come in and take over so we got stuck in some horrible duty like that. We got stuck in Lingayen after they pulled the main forces out.

James: Lingayen in the Philippines.

Rolland: The Philippines, yeah.

James: After they had already landed and --

Rolland: Oh yeah, after that we came in there with the troop transports and what have you and then we sailed back and forth, you know Lingayen has that thumb. We sailed back and forth across that thumb I don't know how many -- [laughs] -- thousands.

James: You didn't see any kamikazes then.

Rolland: We had -- they claimed it was either a "Betty" or a "Frank".

James: Well, that's pretty, -- that's a two man or --

Rolland: Yeah, that's right. That almost took our mast off one night, flying that low, but I don't think he they saw us though.

James: He didn't plan to do that.

Rolland: No, it was just a coincidence.

James: Okay. And then at Okinawa.

Rolland: We were up in Okinawa, yeah.

James: On picket duty.

Rolland: We and shore fire support, and we did an awful lot of shore fire support.

James: With your five inchers.

- Rolland: With our five inchers. We actually could shoot over mountains. We had spotters ashore, and we had the same grids that they had. Like a – I don't know how much we expended one time trying to get rid of a telegraph line somewhere. Up 100, left 100, up 100, and oh geez. Well, we finally wore out one gun, number two gun. Shot the rifling in it. I think this is one of the reasons I have this hearing problem. If number two gun would get abaft a beam and fire it would blow the ports open and take half of my head with it, you see. So it –
- James: Yeah, you had to close those ---
- Rolland: They were dogged down, but if they weren't dogged down good and tight the vibration.
- James: Would shake them loose?
- Rolland: Would shake 'em loose, and then they'd blow open.
- James: And then when the port was open then the noise was intense.
- Rolland: Oh, you get the full force then yeah. Especially if it was abaft the beam.
- James: The noise is loud enough you couldn't talk with that.
- Rolland: It was very difficult to talk, yeah. We hollered. We hollered at one another a lot. Yeah.
- James: Generally when they decided to bombard the shore would that be for maybe an hour?
- Rolland: Oh, no, it'd go on for hours.
- James: Hours?
- Rolland: Hours and hours.
- James: You wouldn't think they'd have enough ammunition.
- Rolland: Into the night. Into the night. And they would ask for illumination, star shells, and the star shell has kind of a tail like a maple seed. It flutters around and just hangs above an area and it will very slowly it's kind of a phosphor bulb that just illuminates a whole area.
- James: I'll be darned.
- Rolland: No, we fired a lot at night. A lot at night.

James: You're supposed to be sleeping then.

Rolland: Yes, I know. [laughs]

James: That didn't do anything for your sleep.

Rolland: No, not a thing.

James: Did the ship shake when those things were fired?

Rolland: Oh, sure. Yeah, there was a certain amount of vibration, every time the--

James: How was the chow aboard ship?

Rolland: The what?

James: Chow.

Rolland: [sighs] Well, I guess that's one word for it. Never really -- we had one baker when I first went. He was only with us for five, six months. **[End of Tape 1, Side A Ca. 30 min.]** He was good. We had good bread. I enjoyed Wednesday's and Saturday's breakfast because we always got beans. I think the whole Navy wherever you are every Wednesday morning and every Saturday morning we had beans for breakfast.

James: [laughs] Keep everybody regular.

Rolland: [laughs] And Sunday evening of course was cold cuts and whatever.

James: Mmm hmmm.

Rolland: So, no it, we ran out of food one time. We got, as I say, we got stuck in the --

James: Yeah, how would you get resupplied? From a --

Rolland: We had to go, we finally where did we go? There was an A-K, a supply ship.

James: Mmm hmm.

Rolland: Or an APA, AKA, AKA.

James: You went along side and then --

- Rolland: Yeah, we went along --
- James: Begged and bowed --
- Rolland: This was one of the few times a few of us pulled rank. I made 2<sup>nd</sup> class Quartermaster. I pulled rank over the 3<sup>rd</sup> class, and I volunteer --
- James: Him --
- Rolland: To go with the working party on the supply ship because we'd be there during the noon hour sometime and we'd get a good hot meal of food right out of the States, ham and potatoes, good bread and ice cream.
- James: For a day.
- Rolland: Well, just for a couple of hours, yeah, just for a couple of hours back and forth, loading up. Just go over and get a good meal.
- James: The bigger ships had a great advantage.
- Rolland: Oh, yeah.
- James: On this one and other ways but in this one important one is that the food is always better on the bigger ship.
- Rolland: That is correct.
- James: The bigger the ship the better the chow.
- Rolland: That is correct, yeah. That is correct.
- James: Okay. And otherwise any other significant events occur in your travels around the Pacific?
- Rolland: Oh, we got the duty one time of sailing a great big rectangle in the South China Sea. Coincidentally they have the most beautiful sunsets in the world. Just absolutely breathtakingly beautiful. Now there was a B-24 base. I think it was on Mindoro. Yeah, it was on Mindoro that was raiding the engines. If they got some flack or something that injured the engine or hurt an engine or if they ran out of fuel they'd flop out there. It was our duty to search and rescue these downed fliers. I don't know how many different crews. Well, one of our reunions in Chicago some years ago we had some of the survivors that we picked up.
- James: Ah, that you'd picked up.

Rolland: At our reunion. [laughs].

James: How many airplanes did you 00 troops did you pick up?

Rolland: Oh golly, I don't remember now.

James: These are planes that generally ran out of gas?

Rolland: Yeah, usually run out of gas, a headwind, you know, and –

James: Right. Just couldn't make it back.

Rolland: They just couldn't get back in time. So and I remember we -- one in particular I had the early watch, and they had a little balloon with an antenna. They were sending out a signal which we picked up, and of course, going through the water we were quite quiet. Very early in the morning, here's -- I think there were four men in this raft

James: Mm hmm.

Rolland: And we were almost alongside before they realized we were in the area. And this one guy was so excited he –

James: How could you sneak up on them like that?

Rolland: Well, wind blowing you know and the famous --

James: Just happened to be looking in the right direction.

Rolland: Just happened. We were down wind from them. They wouldn't hear us.

James: Must have scared the heck out of them.

Rolland: We were making only probably five or six knots. We didn't want to run them over.

James: That screw didn't make much noise then.

Rolland: No and that's --, one guy looked up ,and he saw us, and he actually tried to run on the water. He was so --

James: He thought he was going to get rundown.

Rolland: He – no! He was so—

James: Oh tryin' -- towards you.

- Rolland: To get aboard the ship, get off that raft. No, we had – we picked up several crews up there. I don't remember how many, but –
- James: Did you just throw a landing net over the side and have them crawl up?
- Rolland: Had a ladder. Just a ladder we dropped down on the side. See, we didn't have much freeboard.
- James: That's right. Five feet?
- Rolland: No more than that, probably four. We had a very shallow draft. I think our draft was less than fifteen feet.
- James: Oh.
- Rolland: But, oh no, we even – there was an article in a week ago Sunday's Parade magazine about the prisoners from the "Bataan death march, from Corregidor to Bataan," and that was stuck with me all these three years.
- James: What?
- Rolland: What happened at Corregidor. That was the early part of the war even. Actually, in addition to Pearl Harbor our war in the Pacific started at Corregidor. And we were privileged to be part of a small task force the latter was part of the war.
- James: You got some of those guys back?
- Rolland: We took Corregidor, we went in early one morning in Manila Bay and shelled and then the paratroopers come in and so on and the Japs left. They cut dozens of floating mines from the shore.
- James: Who did?
- Rolland: The Japs that were on Corregidor. And of course, you know, those horns sticking up there, they hit you you're on your way down.
- James: So you got the rifles out and –
- Rolland: We got the 30 aught 6's, and we had the 20's and even the 40's if we could depress em low enough. Shooting up those mines.
- James: I know. I've talked to people who had done this, and they said –
- Rolland: Yeah.

James: That none of us were as good a shot as we thought we were.

Rolland: That's true. [laughs]

James: He said they were damned hard to set off with a rifle.

Rolland: [laughs] Very, very --

James: You had to hit them just right.

Rolland: You have to hit the horn directly. Yeah, directly, yeah.

James: That wasn't so easy, you know. Everybody thought, "Ah, a piece of cake."

Rolland: Oh, no. No, no.

James: But it wasn't a piece of cake at all. It was hard.

Rolland: There - we had some good shots. We did get a few I'll tell ya but we had lookouts all over looking for mines that day.

James: Yes, I'm sure.

Rolland: And I, of course Corregidor has always had a special meaning for me for some reason or another.

James: I've interviewed thirteen guys.

Rolland: Is that right?

James: Who were prisoners of war --

Rolland: Ah ha.

James: From the Philippines.

Rolland: That has always stuck -- we were --

James: Some were on Corregidor [??] and others were on force [??] on the main land. They were driven down towards Corregidor, they finally surrendered down there.

Rolland: Yeah.

James: There was really two forces that the Japanese picked up.



Rolland: That's right.

James: And sent to –

Rolland: On Baton, the Baton peninsula, that's right.

James: Cabanatuan, that that was the main --

Rolland: But we were tied up at a destroyer tender near a hospital ship. As soon as Manila Bay was made secure and I saw some of these men that come out of Bilibid Prison in Manila and were brought off this hospital ship and that --

James: Walking death.

Rolland: Walking death, you're right absolutely. And why they had these striped pajamas on they looked just like Auschwitz. And that has stuck in my craw ever since and when I read about these men were treated made slave labor and what. And the way they are being treated today by our government.

James: Oh, these survivors?

Rolland: The survivors.

James: Yeah.

Rolland: And the Japanese that were interned in California have all those been paid what, \$10,000, a piece.

James: No.

Rolland: Oh, yes.

James: You mean you're talking the Japanese Americans who were --

Rolland: The Japanese Americans who were interred.

James: \$20,000.

Rolland: Twenty, was it twenty?

James: Twenty.

Rolland: \$20,000. All right.

James: Yeah, but they were Americans.

Rolland: That makes me twice as mad.

James: Yeah, but they were Americans.

Rolland: I realize that –

James: That’s not fair.

Rolland: But there is a definite national pride instilled in. I have known a Nisei who was born and raised in Hartford, and he told me one time. I tried my darndest to like that guy. And he told me one time his father was going back to Japan to where the family came from to bring their records up to date on the family in America. So there’s an instilled national pride. I --

James: People go back to Ireland for the same reason. Come on now.

Rolland: Yeah, but the Irish are a different people.

James: Well, yeah, that’s true, but it’s another problem. I mean --

Rolland: I’m sure it is but --

James: That’s why I try not to pass judgment on- -

Rolland: Well and I have lost so much regard for the VA, the Veterans Administration.

James: Yeah. We’re not going to discuss that. That’s --

Rolland: No, I know, but I just wanted you to know that I --

James: Well, that’s not news, you understand.

Rolland: No, I’m sure it isn’t. [laughs]

James: Half the people I interview –

Rolland: Uh huh.

James: Yeah. Matter of fact, one guy, he wouldn’t talk to me after he said, “Now this is” – you know, he just sat down –

Rolland: Yeah.

James: And he said, “Now this is going back to the Veterans –“

Rolland: Oh, yeah.

James: I said, “Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I have nothing to do with the Veterans Hospital.”

Rolland: “Oh,” I said, “That’s [unintelligible].” I want to talk about my disability.” I said, “I going to tell you. I don’t know anything about your disability.”

James: He was really depressed. He said “Aw, hell, I’m not [unintelligible].” I said, “You came to the wrong store here.”

Rolland: Yeah.

James: But that was kind of –

Rolland: And one of the late things we got, we got the duty one day to escort the USS Nashville.

James: That was F.D.R.’s.

Rolland: Ah. No --

James: No?

Rolland: What’s his name was aboard. “The American Caesar.”

James: Oh, MacArthur.

Rolland: MacArthur. We escorted him we had been down in the East Indies, we’d been down to Borneo we crossed the equator I even had, and I’m a shell back. Have you ever crossed the equator?

James: Mmm hmm.

Rolland: Yup, then you’re a shellback. Ah, we escorted the Nashville down there so General MacArthur could wade ashore and have his picture taken by the newsreels.

James: Marvelous [??]. Tell me the – when you were in Okinawa weren’t you out on picket duty with other destroyers? You must have had some kamikaze attacks.

Rolland: There were. I know we were fortunate. We were not in the area evidently where they were concentrated. But I do remember. We were close enough because I remember seeing the, I think they were Marine pilots with the napalm bombs in the F 44 Corsairs. They dropped those napalm bombs into the caves and –

James: Oh. Uh huh.

Rolland: Yeah.

James: Tell me now about – you had mentioned a destroyer tender. Weren't you in touch with them?

Rolland: Oh! Yeah, Once in awhile, we'd go up along side --

James: What did they do for you?

Rolland: They had -- we'd get some ice cream once in awhile from them. That was a real –

James: But they weren't a supply ship to you. They were a –

Rolland: They, no, they were more maintenance.

James: Yeah, they were a problem ship for you then.

Rolland: That's right.

James: If you had problems, that's where –

Rolland: If we had problems we –

James: With the engine or something like that.

Rolland: Engine or whatever.

James: And they had people aboard who could –

Rolland: They had mechanists –

James: Came aboard your ship and fix –

Rolland: That is correct. That's right.

James: That's the way – that's what they did.

- Rolland: If you get a little trouble with the engines leaking in the pipes or lines they come in and slug them up and things like that. Yup.
- James: I've not talked to anybody was on a submarine tender so I never knew, you know, the extent of what they did.
- Rolland: A sub tender.
- James: A thought a destroyer tender.
- Rolland: Destroyer tender, yeah. Mm hmm.
- James: Yeah.
- Rolland: Oh, they have the machine shops. They got everything. They can fabricate parts.
- James: Is that like LSD? You know that --
- Rolland: No, no no.
- James: You know that big ship --
- Rolland: No, no.
- James: You know, the one that can tip its rear end down and --
- Rolland: Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no.
- James: It's not that --
- Rolland: These are big ships. They're big old -- they were *old* ships. In fact one of 'ems name was the Dobbin. I think the number was "4". I think it was a World War I vessel. But they had reactivated and brought into World War II., but it had the equipment. It had the machines.
- James: Yeah, well at [unintelligible] those LSD's. They're huge ships but I was fascinated because the back end they can drop down. You know you can float your smaller craft in there, and then they can pick it up and --
- Rolland: Landing ship dock.
- James: Yeah, right it was a floating dry dock.
- Rolland: Some of those I understand were even made out of concrete.

- James: Yeah, but –
- Rolland: How they can make concrete float never did figure [laughs].
- James: [laughs] I don't know but I always remember – I talked to people who were – I had several patients on the hospital ship who came from one of those –
- Rolland: Oh yeah.
- James: And wounded, and he said, “That's one thing [??]. It's huge.” You know, they had the best of everything.
- Rolland: Oh, sure.
- James: Food and the best this and – He said life aboard there was really plush compared to anywhere else.
- Rolland: No, I, I have a lot of respect for submariners. I couldn't serve aboard one. I have been –
- James: Too much [??]claustrophobia?
- Rolland: Oh, I – I really don't have claustrophobia, but it's just the confinement. In fact while we were at sea I never slept in my rack. I had an assigned bunk aft on the port side.
- James: Near your office?
- Rolland: Pardon?
- James: Where your office was or - -
- Rolland: No, no, no, no just down the crew's quarters.
- James: Oh, I see.
- Rolland: But I never slept there. There was a ready box with 20 mm ammo in it on B-Deck. Just above the [unintelligible], and I established that as my territory, and it was respected. I had my mattress, flame proof cover, and. -  
-
- James: The admiral didn't mind.
- Rolland: Nah, as long as I didn't make him stumble over me. [laughs]

James: Right.

Rolland: And if we got bad weather we used to go outside the director deck [unintelligible] they had for fire support.

James: Okay. So when did you leave the Pacific Ocean?

Rolland: Was -- after the war we got orders. Our first orders were "Go to Shanghai," but they were canceled within a day or so. Then we got orders to go to Tokyo so we spent ten days or so in Tokyo Bay and I was privileged to have liberty in Tokyo and Yokohama. And then we got orders to return to the Philippines and conduct a memorial service at Corregidor.

James: Ah.

Rolland: This is why it has a very special meaning to me, Corregidor does.

James: Who was there?

Rolland: Oh, there was --

James: MacArthur?

Rolland: No, I don't remember him being there, but we had some very high ranking officers. We got the ship all cleaned up. Cleaned up the enunciator. Took off the paint and did every -- anyway we had --

James: The media was there in force.

Rolland: The what?

James: All the newspapers.

Rolland: All I guess, yeah, there were journalists there.

James: I'm sure.

Rolland: And there was Red Cross, and I don't know what other --

James: Red Cross.

Rolland: Yes, it was Red Cross workers, and I don't know what all came aboard ship and we went out and had a memorial service. I know there was a sub and we had a flyover of airplanes and we dropped the wreath of course for those that gave their lives in the defense of and the retaking of Corregidor

and that Bataan Peninsula. Then we left Manila on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1945. We proceeded through the San Bernardino Straits. Are you familiar with the San Bernardino?

James: Yes, I am.

Rolland: They have some of the greatest riptides in the world. There were six destroyers, six of us.

James: What prompted them to send you there?

Rolland: I have no idea. Tsk, Navy.

James: Yeah, I haven't been there, but I know about it.

Rolland: Well, anyway, we came back through the San Bernardino straits. We gauged it so we would go through early in the morning. We went to GQ –

James: Jesus.

Rolland: And I had the wheel when we first started out and the chief would relieve me then the 1<sup>st</sup> [Approx. 10 sec. pause in tape] of course the rudder was being hit back and forth, you know, and you were pitching and yawing and what have you. Get relief, then I go and watch. There were five destroyers in back of us. They were all over that ocean. Anyway, we finally got out of there.

James: Did everybody get through?

Rolland: We all got through no problem. We got to Pearl Harbor. We had a few days at Pearl Harbor. Had liberty then we proceeded on to San Diego? We observed Thanksgiving Day between Pearl Harbor and San Diego. And then again instead of giving us all of that food to eat, apples, oranges and stuff. You couldn't bring it back into the States so it had to go over the side. They could have set it out there; we could have all eaten it but no. Anyway, we were given San Diego for several days. Then we proceeded but we left about half the crew that had points ready for discharge, most of them California boys. Ah so we went with a skeleton crew down the Mexican coast to the Panama Canal. At that time we could get four destroyers in a lock. So that we went through with the lead one, and we had a pilot aboard, a man come aboard to guide us through. I asked. Of course it was raining. I asked him, I says "My gosh how often does it rain in this place?" He says "It rains in Panama whenever somewhere in the world a woman cries. So it's raining all the time." [laughs] But that was a very interesting passage through the canal. Went through the Caribbean up the east coast. Saturday, I think it was, about the 8th, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8th of December.



Beautiful day we were out on the deck sunning ourselves off the coast of Florida. As soon as we past Cape Hatteras -- This is where the Gulf Stream shoots over to Europe you know.

James: Things change.

Rolland: The temperature went down the temperature of the sea water went down. The wind started to blow, it started to rain then it started to snow. By the time we got to Boston, Massachusetts it was fifteen below zero. We were a Pacific ship and had taken all of the heating units out of the stacks. About the only heat in that ship was in the fireroom, and we took turns going down there and thawing out. But we got it. We tied up in Boston on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December, and the other quartermaster and I were ready for discharge and we had our papers all processed and I remember standing out there we got there about 7:00 o'clock and by 7:30 in the morning here comes station wagons. They called our names; we went down, saluted the quarterdeck, got in the wagon and never looked back. We were given liberty, we went and had a good meal, went to a show. I called my wife. I had a wife and a two year old daughter at the time.

James: Oh.

Rolland: And I said, "We're in Boston, but I have no idea when I'm going to be home." By God 8:00 o'clock the next morning they called my name to go over to the -- I think it was the Fargo building, something like that, and said that I was going to be given my own service jacket, all my records and seven others because I was a rating—I was even 2<sup>nd</sup> class.

James: I was going to say a 2<sup>nd</sup> class.

Rolland: The rest of them were below me. [laughs] And today I can't tell you who those other seven fellows were. They said, "If you want to wait a couple of days we'll get Pullman's for you." I said, "No, just give me the tickets." I went back and I got those seven fellas. We went down to the train [??] station. We got on the train, and I was discharged on Sunday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, 1945. I was "Back alive in '45." Yeah.

James: Right.

Rolland: "Back to the sticks in '46," You know that. [laughs]

James: I was "Golden Gate in '48" myself.

Rolland: Yeah. [laughs] No, I treasure the service that I had. I wouldn't do it again for a million dollars. But I -- ah --no, and some of the men, lifelong friends that I met. Most of them—

James: You still have – still in contact?

Rolland: Most of – oh, yes. Most of them are gone now.

James: Yeah.

Rolland: They're still are a few.

James: Yeah, but your Frazier --

Rolland: We have a reunion every other year. We have. We had a wonderful man got us together in 1980.

James: Boy that was nice.

Rolland; We hadn't seen one another in thirty-five years. We had our first reunion in Bremerton, Washington.

James: Mmm hmm.

Rolland: And I'll tell ya, to see grown men cry. [laughs]

James: I knew that you were going to say that. Right. There was just too much there was just too much I'm sure.

Rolland: And we were there, what, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and on Sunday morning we had a brunch and we started a tradition. After the brunch we all joined hands our wives, the sweet hearts, kids, whoever was with us the whole dining room would sing "Old Lang Syne." Usually we can't finish it.

James: I'm sure. I'm sure. That would be too tough for me. Where's the admiral?

Rolland: Pardon?

James: Where's the Admiral.

Rolland: I have no idea.

James: You never saw or heard of him since?

Rolland: No, no, no.

James: You didn't read about him or anything?

Rolland: No, we've had --

James: He never came to any of these or --

Rolland: Well, we've had a couple of captains --

James: Right, but your admiral, your commodore.

Rolland: No, no, no. The commodore no. I don't know whatever happened to him. I'm sure he's gone because he was an older man at the time. Yeah.

James: What did you do then. When you got back home what did you do for work?

Rolland: Well, my wife says, "You are going to go to school and we're getting out of Edgerton."

James: GI Bill?

Rolland: The GI Bill. So I attended school --

James: World's greatest piece of legislation. [laughs]

Rolland: That and I have credited Ernie Pyle. A great. We were near where he was killed. He was killed in Aishima.

James: Aishima, yeah.

Rolland: We were in Okinawa area at the time. and I have given Ernie Pyle a lot of credit for that GI Bill getting passed.

James: Because?

Rolland: He was the man who got it through. I think he shamed Congress into doing it. No, it made just a world of difference in people like me.

James: It created another middle class for this country.

Rolland: It did absolutely.

James: People who would have just been common laborers suddenly had a chance to be lawyers, doctors and all those things.

Rolland: That is correct. Then I went to, I was fortunate enough one of my instructors said that the State Journal was looking for someone to work in their office.

James: You finished college?

Rolland: Yeah.

James: In what?

Rolland: It took two years; I had had some so I went to Madison Business College two years. And Don Anderson. did you ever know Don Anderson, publisher of the Wisconsin State Journal?

James: Of course. I'm a native.

Rolland: Don Anderson hired me and I, he was a wonderful man.

James: Yeah. What was your duty?

Rolland: Was, I became, well what today I guess you'd call controller. I was called auditor comptroller at the time. I worked for the State Journal and in '48 November 12, 1948. The Journal and the Times consolidated and formed Madison Newspapers. And I went to work for Madison Newspapers. Wisconsin State Journal and the Capitol Times the two holding companies became active companies. So I worked there for a little over thirty years and I retired --

James: Gave you a watch?

Rolland: No, in fact they gave me a slicing machine.

James: A slicing machine.

Rolland: A slicing machine.

James: You'd rather have that than --

Rolland: They called my wife when I was going to retire and says, "We want to buy him something on his retirement." This and that and the other, Malisa said no, no, no why don't you buy him something he won't buy himself but he really wants. A slicing machine. For meat, cheese, bread or whatever. It's wonderful! I love it.

James: It was a perfect gift.

Rolland: Perfect gift, and yesterday was the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my retirement. I've been retired twenty-four years.

James: Um, very good.

Rolland: After we built the new building out on Fish Hatchery Road I had had it. I was --

James: Time to hang it up.

Rolland: I had had was working six, seven days a week trying to keep things going.

James: Oh, that's too much.

Rolland: Just I was burned out.

James: Do did you join any veterans groups or is this the only --

Rolland: I am a member of the VFW.

James: Mm hmm. That's worthwhile.

Rolland: I joined some years ago. Took a life membership. So --

James: I think that's the only veterans organization that I would even though I didn't join any. That would be my only one that I would consider.

Rolland: I have great admiration for them.

James: Yeah, well I send them money. Every -- it seems like every month --

Rolland: I know, I --

James: I got so many stickers now that my \$10, I send them ten bucks and they just inundate me with stickers. That's alright.

Rolland: I know I have the same thing. No, I --

James: I feel I should give them something.

Rolland: Yeah, but this Tom Brokaw book here I have enjoyed that. I read it a couple of times.

James: That's very good.

Rolland: It is just excellent. And when I go and see these old people --

James: Those other old people.

Rolland: Those other old people now at these reunions. We had our last reunion last September in Atlanta, Georgia. And I've been blessed; I've been the chaplain for about the last fifteen years conducting memorial services for deceased members *and* or their wives.

James: Oh my.

Rolland: We have had some lovely ladies as part of our organization.

James: I'll bet, I'll bet.

Rolland: The fact that so many of the men are gone now --

James: [laughs] They're starting in a woman's group.

Rolland: We vote -- actually we voted that women now have equal rights as members.

James: Well, in a couple of years and, you know, they'll be gone now.

Rolland: They're going to have to turn off the lights.

James: I believe it. Ah, [laughs] that's cute. That's good.

Rolland: Yeah.

James: What else do I need to ask you. I can't think of it. Nothing in your training was missed? I mean when you look back they trained you well for the job they asked you to do.

Rolland: I was well pleased, yes. I was well pleased.

James: In other words you were ready to do --

Rolland: We learned the rudiments of --

James: Navigation.

Rolland: Blinker signal, light signal, Morse code, ah --

James: You learned to read the lights.

Rolland: Yes.

James: You did?

- Rolland: We did. And semaphore, you know, the flag and proper way of keeping ships logs. [End of Tape 1, Side B, and ca. 30 min.] Learned about the chronometers. The rudiments, the basic rudiments of navigation, what have you.
- James: Sounds like the training was excellent.
- Rolland: It was. We had some excellent instructors. I was well pleased with them.
- James: So if you had an eighteen year old boy wantin' to do something would you advise him to go into the Navy for a couple of years?
- Rolland: I absolutely would.
- James: Of course it would be more than a couple of years.
- Rolland: Definitely.
- James: But on the other hand they can get a \$65,000 scholarship --
- Rolland: That is right.
- James: College education.
- Rolland: That is correct.
- James: And trading four years for that I would think is a good deal. I think. I would advise any young guy.
- Rolland: Yeah. Some years ago, well, during the Vietnam debacle we were visiting friends one evening. Their eighteen-year-old son was just graduating from high school. He came over and sat on the davenport by me and was asking me about the Navy. I said "Eric," I say, "If my own son could pass the physical,"--Our Johnny is asthmatic--"I would definitely encourage him to go into the Navy." Anyway, a couple days later his dad called, "What were you and Eric talking about on the davenport the other day?" [James laughs] "Well, he asked me about the Navy and I told him about it. Why?" "He came home today, and says he's enlisted in the Navy."
- James: Very good.
- Rolland: And really, it did him a world of good.
- James: You grow up.
- Rolland: He grew up, you bet he did.

James: And then the thing I was impressed with, the people who were in the service back, you know, on the GI Bill and finished college. They were excellent students.

Rolland: Oh, yes.

James: The university had never had better students because they were focused, serious, you know, they knew what they were gettin'.

Rolland: Many of us were married and had families.

James: Right.

Rolland: And we had to –

James: Super students.

Rolland: We had to be a success.

James; Yeah. Right.

Rolland: We had to.

James: That always impressed me.

Rolland: Yeah.

James: All right now, I guess that does it. All right.

**[End of Interview]**