

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
NORMAN CARROLL
Torpedo Man, Navy, World War II
2004

OH
581

OH
581

Carroll, Norman. (1924-2015). Oral History Interview, 2004.

Approximate length: 1 hour 25 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Norman Carroll, a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania native, discusses his service as a torpedoman in the US Navy during World War II on the submarine USS *Guitarro*, in the Pacific theater of war, and operating in the South China Sea. Promising his mother that he would not join the submarine service, Carroll obtained his parents' permission to join the Navy upon completion of high school; his father had earlier served the Navy as a chief petty officer. Boot camp, and torpedo school, followed at Great Lakes Naval Training Station outside Chicago. Carroll volunteered for the all-volunteer sub service and was sent to New Haven, Connecticut for school. He proclaims his six weeks of submarine school "one of the best schools" in his experience; mornings were devoted to classes on the different compartments of a sub, with afternoon practice on "rust buckets" at sea. Carroll refers to the legendary chief petty officer who lent his surname to "Spritz's Navy," and his insistence that his charges surpass their Navy grade if they wished to be submariners. Sent for four weeks of advanced torpedo schooling in Key West, Florida, Carroll experienced the limitations of training on the old World War 1-era R-class subs. He explains the complications and trials of the steam torpedo, its effectiveness in the latter part of the war owing to the inventiveness of Vice-Admiral Charles Lockwood, the Commander of Submarines, Pacific Fleet. Carroll claims for Lockwood the devotion of submariners. He met his wife when sent to new construction at Wisconsin's Manitowoc Shipbuilding; he also met his ship, as an original crew member helping put the *Guitarro* in commission. On its Lake Michigan shake-down cruise, the new boat seemed like "heaven." He talks of learning to "clear the bridge," of the sequenced process of diving; the *Guitarro* in New Orleans, and traversing the Panama Canal. He defines "hot bunking," and speaks of shipboard conditions—they "lived like monkeys"—and of "amazing" camaraderie. Carroll relates their progression from sailing the South China Sea solo to being one of "Fenno's Ferrets" wolfpack. His twentieth birthday, in August 1944, was made more noteworthy spent at battle station, under fire. He describes the action of that day, and conveys the tension of being depth charged whilst "silent running." He furnishes the example of the fate of the USS *Golet*, another Manitowoc-built sub, as illustrative of the submariner's maxim on war patrols and "borrowed time." Carroll outlines his five war patrols on the *Guitarro*; he sets forth the sub's combat record. He points out that the percentage of Japanese shipping sunk by the sub force was disproportionate to the rest of the Navy. The war with Japan ended for Carroll and fellow crewman in the course of a ninety-day ship overhaul in June 1945 at San Francisco. He reflects on his brother's stint in the Philippines, and that of a father summoned to service from retirement. Carroll reenlisted for two years in the Navy. He shares a story about Rear Admiral Eugene Fluckey, one of the greatest sub commanders. Carroll, postwar, worked ten years at a Pennsylvania gas company, and operated a restaurant in Sister Bay for twenty-five years. A member of veterans organizations, he assists local tour guides by recounting his experiences.

Biographical Sketch:

Carroll (1924-2015) served aboard the submarine USS *Guitarro*, patrolling the South China Sea for one and a half years, during the Second World War. After the war he reenlisted in the Navy for two years. Post war he worked for a gas company in Pennsylvania, and opened his own restaurant in Wisconsin.

Interviewed by Terry MacDonald, 2004.
Transcribed by Telise Johnson, 2011.
Abstract by Jeff Javid, 2016

Transcribed Interview

MacDonald: This interview is with Norman Carroll who served with the US Navy aboard the submarine USS *Guitarro* [SS-363] during World War II. The interview is being conducted at Sister Bay, Wisconsin, at 653 Bayshore Drive on October 21, 2004, and the interviewer is Terry MacDonald.

Norman, can you tell us a little bit about your background and life circumstances before entering the military?

Carroll: Well, mostly, I was originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. And, uh, after I got out of high school I kept bugging my mother to join the Navy, and she kept stalling me and stalling me and my dad, too. And they finally consented to let me join the Navy providing I did not go on submarines [laughs].

MacDonald: And how old were you at that time?

Carroll: Eighteen. And after I—well, I went through boots [slang for boot camp] at Great Lakes [IL] and then went to Torpedo School at Great Lakes, and then it seemed like the nicest thing to go to New London, Connecticut. So I asked, volunteered, for submarine duty against my mother's wishes, but they sent me to Submarine School.

MacDonald: Now, in the submarines that took a special person. They didn't take everybody, did they?

Carroll: No. Submarines is a hundred percent volunteers. And if you don't want to go on submarines, or even if you're on submarines and you don't want to go out anymore, you can get off. No questions asked, nothing nasty put in your record or anything. So it was a good Navy for being in the service. They treated us very good for the circumstances.

MacDonald: What kind of training did you do at New London then?

Carroll: Submarine School is one of the best schools I ever went to because I was eventually going to be a torpedoman. That was what I went to school for at Great Lakes, and after the Submarine School they sent me to like an advanced torpedo school for submarine torpedoers. 'Cause they have torpedo tubes on surface ships, too, but this was a different setup.

MacDonald: What kind of training did you go through for submarine training?

Carroll: What you did was, it was basic training. Every morning we would go to class, and these instructors they would instruct us on a different compartment of the ship.

Then in that afternoon we'd go to sea on these here old rust buckets they were [laughs]. We weren't even allowed to use a chippin' hammer on 'em, because they were afraid they'd punch a hole, "Oh, we're diving in that." Darn thing ever [??]—Anyway, whatever you learned in class in the morning, you practiced at sea that afternoon under supervision, practice dives and everything. And, as far as the military goes, it was a very complete school.

And the first week we were kind of wise guys, only being eighteen/nineteen years old. We knew the Navy passing grade. I forget what it is now. But, anyway, so we didn't push ourselves too hard, but we got a passing grade according to the Navy standard.

But then after the test, then our instructor says, "You guys know a lot of you guys got the Navy passing grade, but the submarine standard is a little higher." I forget what it was now, but it was higher than regular. So they says, "All you guys that only got such-and-such grade, next week when go to day school you will also go to night school for a week and see if you can get your grades up to comply to submarine duty." And we all did. And we went in the—before you go into Submarine School, this chief torpedoman named [Charles] Spritz, and when you got—I don't know, did you ever see this movie, *Men of Honor*? When—what was his name? The chief master diver?

MacDonald: Yeah, I remember that.

Carroll: Yeah. He gets his guys up there, and he says, "I am Chief Master Diver So-And-So. I am God." I don't know if you remember that, but I do because it gave me a flashback to "Spritz's Navy." He got all us young kids out there in the—"I'm Chief Torpedoman Spritz. I run this submarine base before you go to Submarine School. And if I don't want you to go to Submarine School, you'll never get there."

And he was, like—alot of times in the service, you're walking down the street, you'd see an officer and you cross. You don't feel like saluting that day. When you saw Spritz coming down the same side of the street as you, and he's the chief, you crossed the street [laughs]. He would find something wrong no matter what.

One time we were waiting to get our liberty cards for the weekend, you know, and this one kid, he was in the yeoman's shack, and the yeoman was giving out the liberty cards. And this one guy came up for his liberty pass, and Chief Spritz says to him, "You expect to go on liberty?" He says, uh, "You know after you get a haircut Monday maybe you'll find time to go on liberty." Stuck for the weekend. [both laugh]

So there was stuff like that, but it was discipline he was instilling in us young kids, I imagine.

MacDonald: And he was a career man, huh? For many, many years.

Carroll: Oh, yeah. He was a twenty-year man and a real hardhead [both laugh]. But he—when you analyzed it there was a reason for all that stuff, you know. And when they wanted him to take over the receiving station in New London, Connecticut—before that they had a whole staff of officers and all that—when he took over, he says, “I’ll take over if I only have to answer to the captain of the base.” That was the only officer he was responsible for. I guess he did a good job, you know?

MacDonald: Mm-hmm.

Carroll: He had us—a lot of restrictions.

MacDonald: How long was the training in New England then?

Carroll: Before you go there, you got to work your way, work parties and all that junk, like typical Navy stuff. The Submarine School was only six weeks, and Advanced Torpedo School was four weeks. And then from there, after I got out of Submarine School and Torpedo School, then they sent me down to Key West for a month on these old R-boats [R-class submarines from World War I].

And we went out—they had a big Sound School down at Key West at the time, I don’t know if they have it now or not. And we would go out every day and dive these old rust buckets. And the Sound School students would come out and try to find us with their sound gear.

And that’s what I was telling you before, we weren’t allowed to scrape any of the rust on the ship. I mean, we could scrape, but we weren’t allowed to use a chippin’ hammer. They were afraid to knock a hole in it. They were so old. These were from before the First World War, you know. And there was no—I don’t know how they got anybody to ride them things years back.

MacDonald: Were they able to dive any depth? Could you go down very far?

Carroll: Oh, yeah. We’d go down like a hundred feet or so. But we didn’t have any mess tables to eat. When it came time to eat they’d pass the word, “Three men at a time go back and get your plates of food and bring it up to the torpedo room.” And you’d sit down [laughs] on the deck and eat picnic style, you know.

Because, three men at a time, they didn’t want to lose the trim on the ship. If a half dozen went up then they’d have to pump water after, you know. When we would dive—later on the fleet—trim dives all the time--so when you went down you had your right positive or negative buoyancy, whatever they wanted.

MacDonald: Before you said you were in the Torpedo School. What did they train you as a torpedo man? What kind of training did you go through as a torpedo man?

Carroll: I mean, up at Great Lakes they trained you—a torpedo in those days was like a steam torpedo. It's kind of complicated. They have a 3,000 pound air flask in back of the warhead. And they have a combustion chamber that ignites the—alcohol is the fuel for torpedoes, and they have in this combustion flask a couple of Winchester caps go off and ignite the alcohol.

And they have air in there and water spraying in there because it gets such intense heat that it would melt the combustion flask if there wasn't water going on. And that generates steam, and in the back you have two turbines going different directions for the different propellers, and that propels it. And then they have a—I can't remember now, because I'll probably lie a little bit—but there's something like 12,000 pieces on a torpedo.

MacDonald: Wow!

Carroll: Counting all the screws and stuff. And I remember and they have a gyro that controls your angle when you fire it, whatever angle they set the gyro on. They impressed on us that when you oiled the gyro with a hypodermic needle, if you put two drops of oil on the right side you better put two drops of oil on the left side, or that'd knock it out of balance.

And they could get up to—I can't remember—like, 50,000 RPMs in, um, ten seconds or fifteen seconds from that initial shot of air is what would get the gyro rolling. And it would have been whatever angle when they—in the conning tower when the captain and the firing party would—whatever angles they were working [clanging noise] on their torpedo data computer.

And then in the torpedo room we had computers in those days. They called them what they were, torpedo data computer, but it was about the size of an apartment small refrigerator, like you find in a motel. But it was all gears; there was no chips like they have today. And they had three items like target speed, target roll on the bow, and the target distance. Then they cranked all of this into this torpedo data computer, and it would work out their answer for firing. Setting the gyro angle on the torpedo, basically it's what it all amounts to.

And then in the each torpedo room we had, oh, we called it a "Mickey Mouse." It was a Torpedo Data Computer Repeater. And whatever problem they were working out, we were cranking, and we matched the pointers. When our pointers were matched with the conning tower we'd squeeze the trigger on the handle, and they got a light up there and knew that our pointers were matched.

And what that did was automatically transmit the gyro angle that was being changed in the torpedo tubes automatically by what they were setting up in the

conning tower. State of the art at the time; it's all obsolete now but very complex. And then when they would fire the torpedo out the tube it didn't have to go straight. If the target was over here at zero-two-five, then whatever gyro angle, the torpedo would go out 500 or 600 feet before it was armed. So it wouldn't go off because that little impeller went through the water and armed the torpedo. And then it would head for the target and hopefully it hit.

But in the beginning of the war they had bum torpedoes. The exploder mechanism--they'd try for hittin' a ship, and they weren't going off.

MacDonald: Right.

Carroll: You read that—but they finally got it. Admiral [*Charles Andrews*] Lockwood, who was pretty much instrumental that I know of, and maybe there were other ones, but I can't remember their names.

MacDonald: And who was Admiral Lockwood? What was he, in charge of the submarine service?

Carroll: He was "The Man." They idolized him, because he was for all the crews, too. He was probably instrumental in making sure we got our two weeks R&R [rest and recuperation] every time we came in off a patrol. And what else can I say?

MacDonald: After you graduated out of Submarine School then, out at New London—

Carroll: I went down to Key West [Florida]. It was only for a month, but there was some more—we were being trained constantly. And then I went to new construction at Manitowoc. And I put the thirteenth submarine in commission there.

MacDonald: In Manitowoc, Wisconsin, right?

Carroll: Yes. And, uh, that's where I met "Blue Eyes."

MacDonald: And "Blue Eyes" is your wife? [Laughs]

Carroll: Yeah [laughs]. And we've been married fifty, I guess it was about fifty-eight years—

MacDonald: And what's her first name?

Carroll: Lenore.

MacDonald: Lenore, okay.

Carroll: Yeah. She was working as a waitress in one of the restaurants, and there I was. Anyway, from there we had our shakedown on Lake Michigan.

MacDonald: What was the name of the sub? The thirteenth sub that they built, what was the name of it?

Carroll: The USS *Guitarro*. I put it in commission. I stayed on it for like two years, and put it out of commission. And I was one of the original, what they call “plankowners” [a member of a ship’s crew when that ship was placed in commission]. And there was about seven or eight of us original plankowners that stayed on all that time. And then from there we went down after—

MacDonald: What was it like on a brand new ship, compared to the ones that you were training on?

Carroll: Oh, it was heaven! We thought, you know, being on one of them little old R-boats and, uh, it almost felt like we were on an aircraft carrier [both laugh]. We had bunks and places to sit down to eat, and we were air-conditioned. These R-boats, they had nothing. When they dove, boy [??], there was sweat [MacDonald laughs].

Anyway, it was an experience. And then we had our shakedown on Lake Michigan, and I was a lookout up on the periscope shears [the structure of the submarine that supports the periscope]. Am I taking too much time?

MacDonald: No, no.

Carroll: Cold, but I remember this one morning we was going out. We went out every day and dived and practiced, and they were—oh, so checking the ship is—you just got it from the Manitowoc shipyard, you know, and they wanted to make sure everything worked right. But also they were training us, and training us, and drilling, and drill, drill, drill. So you just—everything goes like clockwork.

For an example, before I got to be a torpedoman, even after I got to be a torpedoman. As a striker I was fortunate and had good night vision. So me and these other two fellows did a lot of night lookout duty. But anyway—we did day lookout duty, too.

But we were up in the periscope shears this morning, and it was goin’ out the Manitowoc River out into Lake Michigan for a trial. It was twenty-eight below zero. Once in a while some water would flush up on you, and it’d freeze to your clothes, and we had plenty of clothes. We were warm and all that but--and we’d get down below and try to get thawed out, and some of these old-timers—crusty [??] old-timers who’d been in the Navy like seven or eight years—they said, “Well, if you can survive Lake Michigan you’ll survive the war zone.” [MacDonald laughs] And we did. Anyway, from there we went down to, uh—no more questions about Manitowoc?

MacDonald: Go right ahead. You left Manitowoc to a home port someplace then, or where did you go?

Carroll: Pardon?

MacDonald: You left Manitowoc to go to home port someplace?

Carroll: No, we were on our way down—we went down to Lockport, Illinois. And there they pulled the periscopes out and laid them alongside the deck. And they put us in a floating drydock, and they pushed us down the Mississippi River from Lockport. And they had to take the periscopes off because some of the bridges were too low.

I didn't go on a trip. Half the crew got off. I got five days leave, went down to New Orleans, and waited for the boat to come in.

They had at that time top security. Every time a submarine went under one of the bridges, all traffic was stopped, the FBI or somebody in local police. No traffic over the bridge while the submarine was going under it--all the way down the Mississippi River.

Then we got down the Mississippi River, got to New Orleans. It was called the Algiers Naval Base at the time. If they have it yet, I don't know. And from there we practiced some more—drill and drill and drill. And from there we went down the Panama Canal. And there was another captain in the Navy waitin' to make admiral. He put our skipper through all the tests that they have to make sure he's fit for command.

And in the beginning, when you first start learning to clear the bridge, they time you with a stopwatch. I think the first time it took like a minute or a minute and a half. I can't remember. Then the captain and the executive officer, "You gotta speed it up. You gotta to speed it up." And eventually after training you get to do it faster and faster and faster.

Then, after you're out on these trials and they got you down to precision—you could be down sixty-five feet in forty-five seconds—just like a rock. And when you're up in the periscope shears and they holler, "Clear the bridge," and the diving officer, the O.D. [Officer of the Deck] on the bridge would be the diving officer, he's hollering, "Clear the bridge! Dive! Dive! Dive!" And you could hear the air venting out of the tanks when you're on your way down, so it makes you move faster [laughs.]

MacDonald: You wanted to get down. So otherwise they left you up there, huh?

Carroll: Yeah, no. Some of them left, but we were fortunate, we never had a—

And then the quartermaster, he's the first one down the hatch. He has his hand on a lanyard, and he knew how many guys were on the bridge and lookout, and he counts. And the O.D. is usually the last one down. Then he'd pull the lanyard down, but the O.D. would close the hatch.

When you were on lookout, the first lookout down, he would take over the bow planes. That controls your depth. The second lookout down would control the stern planes. That controls your angle. And the last lookout down, he would take the wheel. And the guy that was on the wheel, he would come down and have to rig the bow planes out. Most days, he'd rig the bow planes out. Then he'd take over the trim manifold.

But every submarine was, maybe, a little different, according to the captain's orders. The captain was the supreme ruler on the ship, I think, like second to God.

MacDonald: Well, speaking of the crew then, how did the—how many men did they have aboard to crew? What made up the crew?

Carroll: Uh, we had about, counting the officers, we had about eighty. But we had to do a lot of hot bunking.

MacDonald: What do you mean by “hot bunking”?

Carroll: You didn't have enough bunks for all the crew. So like basically, like in the torpedo room, there was two bunks for three men. So when you got off watch you wakened up your relief. He would roll out of his bunk, and you would roll right in that bunk—very sanitary conditions [MacDonald laughs]. And they called it hot bunking because the bunk was still hot from the guy before and the same way wherever it was. And usually the senior men, they kept their bunks. But when we were juniors we had to share the bunks.

MacDonald: Now, the crew, they'd be in pretty close living then. You must become—knowing everybody aboard the ship. Did you make any lasting friendships?

Carroll: Oh, yeah. When we would—it was amazing. Like, we'd go to sea for sixty to ninety days. We never went ninety. Our longest was, I think, eighty—I might be wrong, but I think it was eighty-six days. That's enough.

And it's amazing. We'd come into port at the bay and jam together for all these days and nobody got too many showers either [laughs] 'cause water was at a premium for the batteries on the submarine. That was your main priority for your water. And then the second one was for cooking. And then if there was some left, the cooks and bakers and food handlers, they could take showers almost every day. They didn't because sometimes it was kind of skimpy, and you could not take a long shower. Wet down, shut it off, soap down, rinse, done. That quick, you know. So you didn't use too much water.

And, uh, what else was I going to say? Oh, I'll say after being together for sixty/eighty/ninety days at a time, you would think when you got back to—like we operated out of Perth, Australia, Freemantle, Australia. The Navy took over the hotels, and we'd live like kings for two weeks while the relief crew took over the ship, did all the painting and repairing, any new equipment that was installed on the ship. And you would think when we would get to the hotel we wouldn't even want to look at these other guys for two weeks. We did everything together. We stayed together in your groups, you know, all the torpedo gang hung pretty much together. And it was just amazing the camaraderie we had, even to this day, what's left of us, you know.

MacDonald: You still have reunions and things like that, huh?

Carroll: Ah, yeah, but our ranks are getting thin, which is normal, you know. And, the problem like I say, this one we just went to in Manitowoc [WI], there was four of us, but one was his ashes. The one guy came from Colorado. He was a fellow torpedoman buddy of mine. "Moose," we called him "Moose" because he was a real muscular guy: "Moose," you know. Then there's Jim Batafrano[?] from New Jersey. He was the quartermaster/signalman.

MacDonald: What was his name again—from New Jersey?

Carroll: Jim Batafrano.

MacDonald: Batafrano?

Carroll: Yeah, and this "Moose" was Rudy Bernau[?]. He lives in Colorado in the summer and Yuma, Arizona, in the winter.

And, uh, this one fella, he's retired from the Coast Guard. He lives on Guam. And he's been to a couple of our reunions. And this year he came to this reunion in Manitowoc. And his wife from Guam, she works for Continental Airlines, and his sister lives in California. They came because they had their father's ashes.

And they were so afraid they were going to get arrested for polluting. His father's request was, he wanted his ashes spread in the Manitowoc River. So we did this on the sly. We didn't make any big thing about it. But then I'm telling this here Dennis Purcell—his father's name was Joe Purcell. He was a quartermaster, super person. I says to Den, I says, "If you're worried about polluting this river with Joe's ashes, there's a car ferry down at the end of the dock there. Look at all the black smoke belching up. [both laugh] That's more pollution there than some ashes in the river."

Anyway, after we come off our patrol runs—

MacDonald: But before we get to that, you were doin' the training down off the coast of New Orleans, Louisiana. Then after you did your breakdown training, they give you the old [inaudible]—the Navy give you the okay to sail, then?

Carroll: Yeah, well we were—the skipper was being examined by these higher Navy officers, usually Navy captains. And when they gave him the okay he passed. Some of his qualifications were up for command. Then that was from New Orleans. Then we went to the Panama Canal. And the same stuff—drill, drill, drill—what we called monotony, but it got down to be precision. Like I say, we could dive sixty-five feet in forty-five seconds.

MacDonald: Do you know if, at that time, was there any U-boats [German submarines] in the Gulf of Mexico?

Carroll: Yeah. We had a contact, but they told us to “veer clear.” Don't even try 'cause they wanted us out in the Pacific. So we had one contact--didn't even bother us. We assumed it was because there was no recognitions or anything. So we proceeded to the Panama Canal. And I don't know if we were there a couple weeks—

MacDonald: And were you carrying arms at that time? Were you loaded with torpedoes?

Carroll: Yeah, when we left New Orleans we got loaded, yeah. We had full complement—twenty-four torpedoes and whatever else, the deck gun and machine gun and stuff. And from Panama, then we went to Pearl Harbor, and the same stuff. These staff officers come down and see how we're doing, and I guess we were—I can't remember. I think we were being graded on our performance, and they gave us permission to go out on our first war patrol.

MacDonald: Did you sail alone, or was there other submarines with you?

Carroll: In the beginning we were sailing alone, independents. And you had zones. But there was always submarines all up and down the South China Sea. I don't know how many they had out there at a time.

And then later on they put us in wolf packs. The first wolf pack we were in was this—he made admiral--this Navy commander. His name was [F.W.] Fenno [*narrator pronounces this FEE-no*], and we were known as “Fenno's Ferrets.”

MacDonald: How do you spell it?

Carroll: F-E-E-N-0, I think [*narrator's spelling is incorrect according to several websites*]. And I think he's dead now. So our skipper made admiral eventually, too. But, anyway, then there was like three or four submarines, and I don't remember, but we would get messages from Naval Intelligence to be at such-and-such spot and such-and-such time. And we would be there, and a convoy would

come through. They had all this top secret stuff. They were breaking the codes of the Japanese, too.

And first skipper we had, he made three patrol runs with us, and he got three Navy Crosses.

MacDonald: What did he have to do to earn a Navy Cross?

Carroll: I got it right here [laughs]. Uh, sink ships, basically.

Uh, here's just a little excerpts I'll give you. "Tenth of August, my twentieth birthday—a date to remember. Went to battle stations. Then we saw a mast—and blah, blah. And we saw a Katori-class light cruiser in column, uh—" **[End TAPE 1, Side A]**

MacDonald: "Describing, while being submerged in a submarine on patrol, they spot a Japanese light cruiser in the Pacific."

Carroll: "And astern were more ships. One escort was about 9,000 yards to seaward from the leading ship, bearing 3-2-0 relative from her. Picked a cruiser, still then unidentified, as first target with intent to fire stern tubes at her forward bow, tubes at the tanker, and remaining fish [*torpedoes*] at any targets of opportunity."

"With range to the target about forty [inaudible] yards, a new call was observed inboard of target group with angle on the bow. Consists of one small escort on the beach bow, two large AKAs [Attack Cargo Ships] in the column, and more ships astern. Small distance between columns prevented going between the two, and small distance to the beach prevented moving closer to the beach than we already were."

"Target was now identified as a Katori light cruiser with a high bow, single stack, and high four-and-a-half mainmast. Her resemblance to the Houston class of heavy cruisers is remarkable, with small hangars on the bow. It is believed that the small floatplane was hers because her catapult was bare and that she was providing part of the air coverage for the convoy when out of range of land-based planes."

"Waited until 10:29. Fired four torpedoes from the after torpedo tubes. At completion of firing were dead ahead of inboard column with a escort headed with its angle on the bow range of about fourteen hundred yards. No time to fire bow tubes, so we started down at ten thirty-two [10:32] hundred."

"First torpedo hit the cruiser. Second torpedo possibly hit the cruiser. Forth torpedo hit the AK. Heavy explosion from one of the torpedoed ships. The *Raton*, [*pronounced RAY-tahn*] which was another Manitowoc-built submarine, they reported that she observed our target burning furiously from stem to stern with

clouds of black and white smoke covering tops and even freeboard [distance from the waterline to the upper deck], and she looked to be in serious trouble. Inasmuch as Katori [inaudible] a plane as well as ammunition and torpedoes, it is believed that she experienced the explosion and thereafter the furious fire. Periscope observation about an hour and a half later at a range less than 4,000 yards [inaudible] no evidence of attack vessel, nor smoke or burning. Those raging fires were probably extinguished only one way. She is considered probably sunk.”

“From torpedo run and position of overlapping time[??] the [inaudible] medium AK, first depth charges, then under the convoy and counted forty-three depth charges during the next fifteen minutes--none close,” he says.

MacDonald: So, they knew you were in the area after you sunk ‘em—

Carroll: Oh, yeah.

MacDonald: And so the other ships started throwing the depth charges out.

Carroll: Well, see, I can’t remember now if we had electric torpedoes at the time or we had these steam torpedoes. When you fire steam torpedoes they leave a wake. And, what would happen, when you fired a steam torpedo in a daylight submerged attack, when these escorts would see the wake coming at the target they would race back the other way and start dropping depth charges on you. So possibly that could have happened, I don’t know.

MacDonald: So, when they dropped the depth charges, how far down did you guys—

Carroll: Oh, we were down, like, 300 feet. And that was supposed to be, I mean, our normal cruising deep depth was 300 feet. We went deeper already, but not by choice.

MacDonald: So, when the depth charges were going off near the submarine, can you kind of describe what was taking place down there?

Carroll: Yes. When they would pass the word--after that they would pass the word—“Rig for depth charge. Rig for silent running.” So, when you rig for depth charges, certain valves and stuff you have to open and close on the ship, and you pull all the hatches on the latches. And when they rig for silent running, they shut off the air-conditioner, all your ventilation, all your fans, so there’s no extra noise that they can detect with their sound gear.

And it would probably get up to a 120 degrees with not a breath of air moving and just like being in—I don’t know if you’re familiar with farming—but being in a haymow in the summer time. That’s comparable, except that when they drop depth charges it got a little noisier [MacDonald laughs.]

I have a little hearing problem now, but the VA says it's not associated with that.

But when we would get depth charged, if it was pretty good, for about three days later it sounded like you were talking in a drum until your ears come back to normal. And you can hear the depth charges, because there's two Winchester caps that works on the bellows principle. And these Winchester caps, when it's at the set depth, when they go off you can hear the "click, click," and you know there's gonna be some noise. Unless they're right on top, you know, you just hear, "Boom! Boom! Boom!"

And, anyway, there's one time I want to relate this severe depth charging. I don't know when you want to go into that. And, uh, the captain would try evasive tactics, and the thing was, everything when you rig for depth charge, rig for silent running, everything goes to hand control. And normally you have a hydraulic system for your steering and your bow and the stern plane. When you touch the wheel you're operating this here so-called Waterbury speed gear. Then it regulates the flow, hydraulic pressure.

But when you're rigged for depth charge and silent running, the big ships, really, you *crank*. You are the pump, and you would have to pump that. And you could—if you were doing any maneuvering they'd have a line of guys linin' up waitin' to take their turn because you could only last ten minutes on it because no air moving or nothing, and you'd just be-- we used to just put a towel around our neck and used it to—it was just constant sweat [laughs].

MacDonald: So, was it for young men or eighteen/nineteen years old or whatever, pretty terrifying to know that these depth charges were going off nearby?

Carroll: Uh, yeah. It was, uh, makes you homesick, you know? Some of the submarines I've traveled with some of the guys, but we never had any disasters like where guys crack up and stuff. But some of the submarines had guys that did do that when they got depth charged. They couldn't take it.

And, uh, even the crew, like, when we came in off of a patrol run, if a guy says, "I've had it. Get me out of here," they'd transfer him. Nothing put in his record about cowardice or anything. Just not his turn, you know?

We had another guy on a ship, he was in submarines out in the Philippine Islands when the war broke out. And I know this one time, he made thirteen war patrols. But when his thirteenth war patrol—he made fifteen total, but—he had twelve patrols in, and he asked the captain—'cause we were going to go out. It was going to be his thirteenth war patrol.

He asked if he could have permission to stay in for that patrol run if he could come back on board when the *Guitarro* came back in. And they gave him

permission. So when we went out on our patrol run for a couple months and came back, then he came back aboard ship. And he made a total of fifteen war patrols.

MacDonald: Now, when you describe a war patrol, you're talking of the period from when you leave your port—

Carroll: Yes.

MacDonald: Until you get back, the whole time you're out. And you said they could be two to three months?

Carroll: Yeah, yeah.

MacDonald: And you did five? How many of those did you do?

Carroll: Five. Usually when you made three, you were on borrowed time. That's what they told us. One of the submarines--if you want this little thing--it was called the *Golet*. That was one of the submarines built in Manitowoc that got sunk. They had four submarines got sunk that were built in Manitowoc.

When we went out on our first war patrol [bell clangs] we left Pearl Harbor. That's my father's ship's clock. When we left Pearl Harbor, we went to Midway to top off our fuel so we could stay out longer. We tied up alongside the *Golet*, and we knew some of these guys from Submarine School and all that.

And they looked like they needed help because the coat of paint was wore off and, you know, it looked pretty beat up. And we was talkin' to 'em, and they—I still remember this guy saying, "Boy, it's hell out there. When you go out there be careful and be on the ball." And he impressed me. And I guess we were on the ball because we came home.

And we went out on our first patrol. And then *they* left on their second patrol and got sunk. So it was kind of sad, I guess could—

Anyway, we went on our first patrol, and we passed—from Midway we were on our way to Formosa out in the South China Sea past the Philippines, and 100 mile area of Guam when they were having the Battle of Guam and Saipan. I don't know if you're familiar with that?

MacDonald: Mm-hmm.

Carroll: When there were Japanese people on Guam were jumping off the cliffs and committing suicide. We passed within a hundred miles of the area, and we didn't know it. But we got a battle star for that, you know.

Then we went off to, up in the South China Sea, and got—I guess you could say got the crap kicked out of us. But we did what we had to do, sinking ships and regular war patrol. We didn't get anything for that [both laugh]. We didn't care though, really. Other than we got a Submarine Combat Pin which was issued by Congress, and I have the pin. And then for each successful war patrol after that you'd get to put a gold star on it, or something.

MacDonald: Oh, it was similar to like the Bronze Star or battle stars that—

Carroll: Oh—

MacDonald: Similar to that.

Carroll: I don't want to put it up into the classification of Bronze Star, but we were very proud of them.

MacDonald: Well, the Bronze Battle Star, I meant, meaning that you were in that battle.

Carroll: It was recognition in the submarine force because not everybody was making war patrols, you know? But when you saw the Submarine Combat Pin, there was a lot of prestige involved.

And I didn't tell you before, when you go on a submarine—I don't know if you've ever seen the submarine insignia—in the old days we had a emblem on our sleeve. But now it's a pin, silver for enlisted men and gold for officers--dolphins with a submarine in the middle. And they call it, "You earned your dolphins."

And just because you're on a submarine, you don't get to wear dolphins. You have to get qualified. And to get qualified you have to know everything in every compartment on the ship for all your drills. And lots of studying--I think they gave you like six months or something. If you weren't qualified in six months they felt like you were wasting their time, and they'd transfer you. But almost everybody qualifies.

And to qualify you go through to each compartment on the ship with the leading petty officer, and he asks you all these questions. And if you qualify he'll initial the compartment he puts you through. Then when you get done with that then you go through with the Chief of the Boat. And if he signs your card then you go through with one of the officers. And they ask—like I was a seaman--how to put a main engine on the line, you know, and I wish I'd—I couldn't do it now, but at the time you were pretty fresh on all that stuff. So any compartment you're in, if something goes wrong, you know just what to do. That's part of submarine duty.

So when you get qualified then you very proudly wear your dolphins. You don't get any extra pay for it [MacDonald laughs] 'cause you were getting submarine

pay whether you were qualified or not. But once you get the dolphins you're considered "in."

MacDonald: Yeah. When you were in the South China Sea there, you mentioned you had a lot of action. How many ships did you sink? Did they keep a record of that, or how many tons? I think they did it in tons or something.

Carroll: We got tons—I don't know if it's here—oh, here it is. This is unofficial: 71,700 tons. And this was from our first three war patrols. It was fifteen ships.

MacDonald: Fifteen ships!

Carroll: Yeah. Then we laid a minefield later on, in the fifth patrol. And we got credit for two ships on that, too.

Anyway, I was telling you about this depth charging. We're done with that one, here's this. And this is—that was my twentieth birthday. And then about ten days later—I don't know if you want me to read this—

MacDonald: Summarize it if you'd like.

Carroll: Okay. Anyway, I think we sunk another cruiser. Then we went deep. Those escorts were getting too close.

[Reads] "The first barrage of heavy depth charges during the next eleven minutes, a total of fifty depth charges were dropped, all heavy and most close. This vessel has experienced four sustained depth charging in this patrol, with prolonged search after each one. But these depth charges dropped were the heaviest yet encountered. It is believed that depth charges heavier than 600 pounds are being used. Damage sustained included all bridge electrical circuits out. The bridge torpedo bearing transmitter was ruined."

And it works off your compass. They could put binoculars there, and whatever setting they set it would be transmitted down into the control room, the conning tower.

[Reads] "The JK and QC sound gear damaged. The packing ram on the port propeller shaft, which caused flooding of the motor room and spare parts locker, with subsequent damage to [inaudible]. A bucket brigade was necessary to keep ahead of the flooding." Nice day [laughs]. That's happened; nothing like having problems.

MacDonald: So your ship was—the depth charges comin' awful close to do the damage, then, right? Had to be very, very close to do the—

Carroll: At one of our reunions, this here engineer—I'll show you his picture if you want to see it—I have it in the other room. At one of the reunions, this Mr. [Arthur] Parr his name was—terrific officer—I says, “Hey, Art,” I says, relating this depth charge, I says, “A couple more feet we would have been in trouble, huh?” He says, “More like inches.” [MacDonald laughs]

MacDonald: That close.

Carroll: It blew out our running lights and the decking by the deck gun. I don't know if you've ever been on the submarine down in Manitowoc. You should do that once, just for the hell of it. It blew the wooden decking by the deck gun, it blew that all out. But, see, that's teakwood. It don't float to the surface, it sinks. And, uh, blew our running lights out, blew that out.

And the TBT [target bearing transmitter] has a two-inch thick glass that they told us was supposed to be able to withstand between sixteen and eighteen hundred pound pressure. That got pulverized, plus it blew the port packing.

MacDonald: And when they said that, and it started flooding the motor room and the spare parts room were you damaged? You were trained in damage control, of course. What was your job then?

Carroll: I was in the bucket brigade [laughs], because I was in the after torpedo room, and the maneuvering room was the next compartment. And, uh, see what happened, when it started flooding there, if the water would have got up—it's salt water—if it would have got up to the motor generators we were done.

So we had to bail solidly, too. We could put water in the torpedo room bilges. You couldn't hurt anything. And one of the electricians, he used to say he wrapped a big turkish-style bath towel around the power shaft to stem the flow of water coming in. So we bailed, and we got as much water as we could in the torpedo room bilges, 'cause you couldn't hurt anything there.

And then we start pouring it into the engine room bilges. And by that time we were getting a little heavy from all this extra water. Then we got clear, and they could pump it out. And then we surfaced and made our repairs—not to the TBT or the decking or anything, but got the packing gland fixed so it stemmed the flow of water coming in.

MacDonald: How long a time period was that from when they started dropping depth charges till you were able to surface?

Carroll: Well, let's see—7:21, 7:56—I don't know.

MacDonald: So, it was a day? Or was it a day or hours?

Carroll: Oh, no, it was hours, and we were able to—it was hours Let's see, that started at—oh, this one here—yeah, that started about seven o'clock. And then about twelve o'clock our captain said he got tired of being pushed around by escort vessels, one of which was pinging [sound from sonar detector] up ahead and one on the starboard quarter.

[Reads] "Came to periscope depth; two destroyers in the sight—one on the port bow, range: twenty-four hundred yards; one in the starboard quarter, range: four thousand. They were searching at seven knots, both pinging. And one medium AK [attack cargo ship] was observed heading up the coast, apparently the tail end of a convoy.

"Commenced approach and closest to destroyer fired four torpedoes at Fubuki/Hibiki-class destroyer. First torpedo ran for forty-five seconds and quit. Second torpedo hit with such after-force that the—observed a tremendous explosion which shook this vessel and temporarily blew out the QB [sonar operator] panel, electrical panel. Bits of metal rained in the air, some of which are [inaudible] struck the hull, and the range of firing about sixteen hundred yards."

Well, that was at—we commenced our attack at seven o'clock in the morning. And this was, like, noon. We don't want to miss lunch, I guess [MacDonald laughs]. [Reads] "Went deep and readied for depth charge. The clan [??] soon gathered, and the search was very efficient and well conducted using a retiring search curve [a search method].. No charges were dropped until six heavy, close depth charges were dropped which caused considerable or superficial damage. Many lightbulbs and shades were smashed throughout the ship. Gauges decalibrated, motor pool and T-lines broken, electrical circuits topside knocked out, master steam stop valves, plugs leaking."

Just another normal day. [MacDonald laughs] And the pinging faded out. When you're down there, you can hear them pinging through the hull. And you could hear the propellers. And when you would hear a ship speed up, you knew they had figured whereabouts you were, and they were going to drop a string of depth charges. They have to get out of the area, too, so they start blowing up.

I could never figure out when we'd sink a ship and there was a lot of Japanese floating around in the water, they didn't care about them. They just dropped depth charges, and then they killed the guys, you know, 'cause it ruptured their insides in the internal explosion [??]. That's what they were telling us, anyway. But they didn't care about survivors.

And neither did we, but that's war, you know?

MacDonald: Was it a whole year or so you patrolled in the South China Sea then in maneuver or a couple years, or how long were you—

Carroll: It was actually a year and a half. Basically, we made those three strenuous war patrols. But then targets started getting smaller. On our fourth patrol we were out eighty-six days, and there wasn't anything to be seen. We had a different skipper, and he wasn't as aggressive as the first one, but that's all right.

And then the fifth war patrol they dangled a carrot. They said, "We have a special mission. You're going to go out on. We can't tell you what it is. But if you proceed with this mission, then you go back to the States." Everybody wants to get back to the States so we go on the mission.

Then, uh, that night we hear a thumping on the side of the ship, and it's a tugboat and a barge. And one guy hollers down the hatch in the torpedo room and wanted to know if this was the USS *Guitarro*. We said, "Yeah." He says, "We have your mines." I said, "We don't want any mines." He says, "Well, you gotta go out and lay a mine field."

So we laid this minefield up off the coast of Sumatra and the island of Berhala. Berhala Straits is where we laid the minefield, and we had to go in for eight hours at full speed, lay on the bottom for all day long until nightfall. We couldn't have the air conditioning on because the circulating water pump would stir up the mud, and we're only in a hundred feet of water.

So then that night when we got serviced, we—during the war we had turnbuckles on the hatches for depth charges so they wouldn't lift, you know, and leak. But then they passed the word, we're in this minefield, we're going up to this—they call it a strait. To me it looked like a channel, you know [laughs], and we had to take all the turnbuckles off the hatches, and they had us put on a better pair of dungarees than what we were wearing. Those were cutoffs out at sea. And they made us put on better clothing in case we had to abandon ship. It was getting touchy. We were on our own ship [both laugh].

Anyway, we went and laid in our minefield, and we went up this channel. We had one hour from the start. We start laying 'em in a S-shaped pattern up this here strait. When we got to the end where we were supposed to be we came back from the S-shaped pattern, so it was actually a figure-eight pattern. And we had one hour to get in and get out because the mines had a timing mechanism on 'em. And when they were—timing mechanism meant they were fully armed after one hour, and then we got out and spent another eight hours laid on the bottom in a hundred feet of water, and surfaced that night, and then we got clear. And I think they said we were coming right back to the States. I think it was eighty-six days later [MacDonald laughs]. Had some little side jobs they wanted done.

But it was a very interesting part of my young life at the time that left lasting memories.

MacDonald: Did you always go back to Australia?

Carroll: Yeah, we were fortunate. We pulled in to New Guinea once for repairs, 'cause our stern plane broke down on us, and the submarine tender there fixed us up. But all of our regular patrols were right out of Fremantle, Australia. And the Australian girls loved us.

MacDonald: When you were there, by any chance was there any like USO shows or any entertainment? What was that like, a big Naval base, or was it more than just a Naval base?

Carroll: It was a Naval base, a submarine base in Fremantle, for the submarines in the war or maybe a couple of 'em at one time. And the submarines would be nested outboardly. And these relief crews would come, and when we get our two weeks at the hotel, the relief crews—I think I told you before—they'd come and do all the repairing and painting, new equipment, and—

So, I forgot to tell you earlier, you asked the question. When we got a new commission, Manitowoc did such a terrific job on the boats, plus the cleaning. When we moved aboard it was like moving into a dollhouse. Everything was spick-and-span. They had the shipyard workers, cleaning crews in there. Everything shined, and that's the way we kept it. Afterwards, too, but there wasn't a thing we had to touch.

MacDonald: Good workers during the war.

Carroll: Oh, they were terrific. And the little—not that we were being elite, but we went to taverns, naturally, and when you went into a tavern on a Friday night, your money was no good. The shipyard workers, they knew us. We weren't in uniform; we had our cold weather gear on. But they knew we were sailors, and they'd say, "We'll build them if you'll sail them. Give 'em another beer." [both laugh] So there was a lot of good feelings amongst everybody.

MacDonald: And you met your wife here in Manitowoc.

Carroll: Yeah, yeah.

MacDonald: It was a good deal.

Carroll: Yeah, but if I say fifty-eight years, but she says I'm still on probation.

MacDonald: [Laughs.] So, when did you get the word that you were going to go back to the States, then?

Carroll: Pardon?

MacDonald: When did you get the word that you were done with your tour and were headed back?

Carroll: Uh, I don't know if it's in here.

MacDonald: It had to be pretty good news for ya.

Carroll: Yeah, they, maybe it's in this last page here somewhere. Ah, that's a different one. Yeah, it's about there. We left the 9th of April 1945 on the fifth war patrol, and after we laid our minefield and everything they had us covering an area for a while 'cause they thought there'd be some ships coming down, but there wasn't.

See, we were two percent of the Navy, the submarine personnel. I don't know if I told you that before. And we sunk over fifty-five percent of the Japanese shipping. And we had a loss of fifty-two submarines. So that's what, when we have our reunions, it's all about, you know?

MacDonald: Mm-hm.

Carroll: Ah, we left the 9th— [TAPE 1, Side B, ENDS]

MacDonald: Norman E. Carroll, U.S. Navy.

And we're at the point where he just completed his fifth war patrol laying minefields, and we're going to continue from that point.

Carroll: After we laid the minefield then—which was, uh—we left Australia the 9th of April, and we laid our minefield the 19th of April. And for two weeks, or whatever it was, we lived like monkeys because the mines are only half as big as a torpedo, and we had sixteen of them in the after torpedo Room, in the skids in the torpedo room.

So any time you went from the forward end of the torpedo room to the after end of the torpedo room you had to jump up on top of these mines and crawl on 'em. I had to do that for seventeen or eighteen days, whatever it was. So, another fringe benefit, I guess it was [both laugh].

And when we laid a minefield we fired them between the forward torpedo room and, uh, now I can't remember the exact number; it might be in there. They had about sixteen or eighteen. And we had about sixteen or eighteen in the aft. And every thirty seconds, either the forward torpedo room would fire one and thirty seconds later the after torpedo room.

And we had to reload these mines as fast as we could. I still remember 'cause we'd close the outer door, open the inner door, and it wasn't quite drained yet, and the whole torpedo room was practically flooding with water, but they were

pumping it out, too. And then we'd load another mine, and then they get all lined up. It was just very hectic.

MacDonald: A lot of work.

Carroll: Yeah, we earned our money. But, ah—oh, I'll show you these little pictures if you want to look at them.

MacDonald: Norm is sharing some pictures of his shipmates from the submarine.

Carroll: This is our Engineering Officer, Art Farr. This is Joe Purcell; he was the quartermaster. That's me. Here, I was telling you, there's the bottom pin, that's the Submarine Combat Pin. And the next pin is the qualification pin. I never made chief. And a guy said to me, "What are you wearing a chief's emblem on there?" I said, "My dad was a chief." So I wore that.

Anyway, when Art Farr retired he took up oil painting, and he painted this—supposed to be our ship. He presented it to the Maritime Museum [Manitowoc, WI] And then he also presented our battle flag.

At first we were called "Ricky's Raiders." We had this here Captain Haskins, Enrique D'Hamel Haskins. But then when he got transferred, we were called it "Nan hai Raiders"—that's the "China Sea Raiders." And by that time we had—these are merchant ships with the gumball or gumdrop, and the rising suns are men-of-war. And it's a total of seventeen ships.

MacDonald: Seventeen ships.

Carroll: Okay?

MacDonald: Mm-hm.

Carroll: And then when we were down in Manitowoc, when they were making this presentation, me and my buddy Joe—who has died this past year—we had to hold the flag up so they could take pictures for the museum.

And then after we sat back down, this Art Farr called, he says, "Will Joe Purcell and Norman Carroll please come back to the podium?" And you see this picture here, we're looking like we're goofy. But he did, he says, "I want to present you with *Guitarro* diamonds. I've been carrying them for sixty years," he says.

And we didn't even know what he was talking about. He says, "I've been carrying these for sixty years." Here's our starter running light that got blown out. There's a piece of the gyro repeater on the bridge with the two-inch-thick glass supposed to withstand between sixteen and eighteen hundred-pound pressure, and that got blown out [*sound of glass clatter on the table*]. So this touched you at the time.

MacDonald: You bet.

Carroll: And these, he presented them to us, and I really cherish them.

MacDonald: Mm-hm.

Carroll: And then that's that. I don't know how much more time you got.

MacDonald: Keep going.

Carroll: Okay.

MacDonald: I want to hear a little bit about how you got word that you were going to come back to the States, then.

Carroll: Yeah, we got back to the States in Hunters Point. Then the war was over—or, when the war did get over, I mean.

MacDonald: Were you sent back before the war ended?

Carroll: Yes, not because of anything other—not because of the crew; the ship needed repairs. And we came back to Hunters Point for our yard overhaul. And that was in June, I think. Yeah, when we came back, was—the heck is it? We came back for our yard overhaul at Hunters Point which were fortunate. That was a very nice shipyard.

MacDonald: Where was that at again?

Carroll: Hunters Point, right outside of San Francisco in California.

MacDonald: Oh, okay.

Carroll: Right on the outskirts. We'd take a cab right into Frisco. That's closed now, I think. But it was a Navy shipyard, I think, during the war, or something.

Yeah, we moored, we had our overhaul at Hunters Point. We came back to the States in June of '45, and it took ninety days for a overhaul. And in the meantime, the war got over in August. So then they decommissioned us down at Mare Island Navy Yard. It's down by Vallejo, California. And the history ends.

MacDonald: So then they decommissioned the ship. And what did they do with the crew?

Carroll: Most of the guys were waiting to get out on points. And I had a vision of staying in the Navy. I reenlisted for two more years because I liked the Navy, you know.

MacDonald: And your dad, you mentioned it earlier, you father was a career—what was he in?

Carroll: He was a—you mean where did he go, or—

MacDonald: No, just what branch of service and what was—

Carroll: He was in the Navy. He was a chief quartermaster, and when they called him back in the Navy he had a lot of qualifications. He had a first mate's license for the Merchant Marine. He had a first-class pilot's license for the [inaudible] River, which entailed over sixty miles. And so they thought he'd be good to have out in Cape May, New Jersey. And they put him, he was the chief quartermaster, and they put him on this yard oiler [clock chimes].

MacDonald: But he originally had already retired from the Navy.

Carroll: Yeah.

MacDonald: And then he was called back during World War II.

Carroll: Yeah, he was over fifty years old, had his thirty years in, and they called him back in for four more years.

MacDonald: And then your brother also served in the—

Carroll: Yes. He was in the Army in the Philippines—eighteen-year-old kid. And when the war broke out they were told—he was in—it was the advent of radar. They called it Early Warning Aircraft Service. And they sent his whole company up to the northern tip of Luzon to set up this Early Warning Aircraft system. And on the way up they got this message from MacArthur's headquarters that the Japanese had attacked the Philippines and Pearl Harbor, and they were told to, "Destroy your equipment, disband, and fight it out for yourself." He was eighteen years old. Huh!

He had quite a harrowing three and a half years. I think it's harder on mothers, because we never knew if he was alive or dead. And all he was listed was "missing in action" by the Red Cross.

And after the war I came home on leave, and he happened to be home on leave, too. And we were reminiscing, and he was telling me where he was hiding out in the hills. And I was telling him where we were operating in the South China Sea, which was between Olongapo [Philippines] and Manilla Bay and Lingayen Gulf, in that area. And he says, "Well, you were only about ten miles away from me at that one time." [laughs.]

MacDonald: Is that right? Incredible, huh?

Carroll: Well, we didn't know anything.

MacDonald: Yeah.

Carroll: And he didn't know either, and then, uh, toward the end of the war they got some supplies then from—Navy submarines landed supplies and ammunition and food to some of these guys who were hiding out. And he said then he got this shirt, and it says, "Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot."

We were originally from Philadelphia. We knew this one woman, Mrs. Romano. She worked in a tailor shop there, making stuff like that. And he often wondered if she had any hand in making that shirt he put on.

MacDonald: Huh!

Carroll: For the last year and a half he was hiding out in the hills. They told him to go up in the mountains, but don't go on the other side because if you go on the other side you'll never come back. So he went up in the top of the mountains because the Japs were looking for all these guys hiding out.

And he spent the next year and a half, and all he had on was a pair of khaki shorts, no shoes. And he was hiding out with this Filipino army scout who taught him how to weave baskets. And they would weave baskets, and this Chinese farmer would come up every ten days or so with so many bamboo rods full of rice—who jeopardized his life for them guys—and then he'd take the baskets back.

And my brother would say—one time he says they had two dogs that were pets. He says and it got to be about fifteen days, and they thought maybe the Chinese farmer got captured. So, we only have one dog after that, you know, we had to eat the other one [MacDonald laughs].

Carroll: That's what they said when they came back. "Well, what did you eat?" And he says, "Well, rats, cats, dogs, and bats [??]."

Oh, here comes supervision. **[Momentary pause in recording]**

MacDonald: You reenlisted for two more years into the Navy?

Carroll: Yeah, because I liked the Navy very much. But then after the war it got very—you couldn't get promoted if you had a master's degree.

I was a torpedoman second class at that time. And I met a—we called 'em "Mustangs"; you know what a "Mustang" is in the Navy or the Coast Guard, an enlisted man that made officer, came up through the ranks.

We had a Chamber of Commerce dinner one night, and I met this here old “Mustang” lieutenant. We got talkin’ Navy and all that, and he says, “What did you ever get out of the Navy with?” “Oh, I was a torpedoman, and they froze the rate for—” You couldn’t get promoted, like I said, if you had a master’s degree they didn’t care ‘cause they were so overstaffed, top-heavy, with all the chiefs and stuff [??]

He says, “You were a Torpedoman.” He says, “Why didn’t you stick around? It was only froze for nine years.” [laughs.]

MacDonald: Ha, ha, ha, nine years.

Carroll: But they had an alternative plan later on. They were losing men. So what they did is they sent you to service schools, and you could change your rate to something that was maybe—like electronics or something if you were geared for that.

But—I don’t know if you’re familiar. In those days torpedomen, signalmen, gunner’s mates, quartermasters—we were right-arm rates. There was right-arm rates and left-arm rates. And the right-arm rates were classified as “men of war rates.” They were like the gunner’s mates, torpedomen, boatswain mates, and minemen, and quartermasters, and stuff.

MacDonald: What’s a left-arm rate, then?

Carroll: They were the Artificer Branch, they called it—machinist’s mates, cooks, bakers, pharmacist’s mates, anything else. But there were seven right-arm rates. And the rest were all left-arm rates.

MacDonald: Huh. Do you have any other stories about when you were in you want to relate too?

Carroll: Yeah, this here one here. I was telling you about “Ricky’s Raiders.” ‘Cause we were going out on our first patrol, and he was the new command. They thought they would give him an easy area off of Formosa instead of the Philippines because they thought it’d be quieter until he could get the feel of command, you know.

Which it takes a lot out of a man, being a captain of a ship, because you’re practically on call [inaudible] nervous breakdown. ‘Cause any contact, you had to wake up the captain.

Anyway, what he did, well, he was going to form commando groups and send us ashore [both laugh] if it was too quiet. But, fortunately, when we went off Formosa, there was a lot of ships to sink. So we had targets, and he abandoned the idea. But that was the original “Ricky’s Raiders”; that’s what he wanted to do. There was too many targets there to warrant going ashore.

And this wasn't our ship, but one of the other ships there—he wrote a book called *Thunder Below!* His name is, uh, Admiral [*Eugene B.*] Fluckey. He's still living [died 6/28/2007]. He got a Congressional Medal of Honor.

He sent a bunch of guys ashore, I think it was off the China coast, because he observed a train going by every day at the same time. So that night they got rubber rafts, and he sent the guys ashore. They put a demolition charge on the track. And when the train went over it blew up—just for something to do, you know [MacDonald laughs]. But he was such a nice guy. I have a picture of him, too. We went to a reunion once in Indianapolis, and he wrote this book, and he had his uniform on and Congressional Medal of Honor, and he was selling his book.

And I says to my wife, “Hey, there's Admiral Fluckey. I'm going to take his picture.” So I went up to the admiral, and I says, “Admiral, can I take your picture?” He says, “No.” Well, you know, an admiral, that's the law. He says, “Okay, get your wife over here to take my picture.” Then he put his arm around me, and we were both together. So it made the day for me.

MacDonald: Yeah, I bet, yeah. Okay, when you got out, then, Norm, what did you do when you got out of the Navy then?

Carroll: I came up here and spent a year and starved to death.

MacDonald: Up here, you mean in Door County [WI]?

Carroll: Yeah, because wherever we are this is the original homestead. That house down there is where my wife was born and raised, and this was the grandparents' house. This is a newer house; it was built in 1932.

Spent a year here, picked up jobs I never thought I would do, like shovel manure, picking stones, and picking cherries. And we made enough money so we could go out to Pennsylvania. And eventually I went to work for the gas company out there, and I worked for them for ten years. But it was around-the-clock shift work all the time. In ten years of that, two Christmases off, and two of any other holiday.

The gas company was very good, but it's just that it was one of these jobs, around-the-clock jobs. And after you're there three years they said they “adopt” you. After I was there three years they put me on salary, you know. But it was an ideal salary because if you worked overtime you got paid for it. If you were out sick you still got paid for it. And you were not in the supervisor category.

When I went in the power department, I was the forty-two, number forty-two person in the power department. And when I quit ten years later I was number forty-one. Nobody quit. And when I quit they said I was crazy 'cause based on the work benefits and fringe--probably like the fire department, I don't know. But, basically they took such good care of you, fringe-wise, and you made a decent salary, you know.

But then I came up here, and we opened up the Carroll House Restaurant, and we ran that for twenty-five years. And here I am.

MacDonald: Yeah. When you got out, did you receive any veterans benefits at all from the government?

Carroll: I don't know—none that I—well, right now I get a lot of my medications.

MacDonald: Yeah, okay.

Carroll: And they told me I have a little touch of glaucoma, which runs in the family, 'cause they examined me when my aunt had glaucoma, and I mentioned it to them. And it's nothing serious, but they have drops they give me. You pay such a minimal amount, you know.

MacDonald: Mm-hm. But you didn't take any special training through the GI Bill, or anything like that, huh?

Carroll: Not to amount to anything because I was working shift work. You either had Mondays and Tuesdays off one shift, Tuesday and Wednesday off another shift, and Thursday and Friday another shift. So you really had no social life, and you couldn't do anything, you know.

MacDonald: Yeah. Did you join any veterans organizations when you—

Carroll: Yeah, I belong. I'm ashamed to say I'm not very active. I belong to the Sister Bay American Legion and the Liberty Grove VFW. And I also belong to SUBVETS, uh, World War II Veterans, and also the SUBVETS, Incorporated. We have two organizations. Other than that, I'm not that active.

But I do go down in the summer and assist the tour guides—not every day, it's not a full time—just on certain Thursdays during the summer they have us old clunkers come down, and so we can relate—like we're doing right now—relate some of our experiences to the people.

And I think—I don't know if you read that article. I always get a kick out of, like I said, the people always want to know what it's like being depth charged, if it's any relation to what you see in the movies? I always tell 'em, "Well, it's pretty much like the movies, except we didn't have any music." [both laugh] And they always get a kick out of that.

MacDonald: I know you just recently attended a reunion. Have you attended a number of reunions over the years?

Carroll: Yeah. The SUBVETS, the Submarine Veterans of World War II, we're thinning out pretty much. But I go to them. They're once a year, it's a national reunion, and I try to go wherever it is. Originally, the way it started, it was supposed to be in a different time zone every year, so that each group could have a chance to run it. But now our ranks are getting pretty thin so they try to have 'em wherever they can.

I didn't go to the last one because it was in Texas, in Dallas, Texas. And, oh, four or five years ago I went to one in Fort Worth, and the coldest day we had was ninety-five degrees. So I bypassed that one this year.

But last year we went to Buffalo, New York. And we never got treated so well in all our life by the people that recognized us as a veteran. Not that you're looking for recognition. But we have our submarine vests like these here things on the picture. And every time we went into a restaurant for supper at night usually the host or hostess, whatever, he would announce over the speaker, "And here come some submarine veterans from World War II." And they'd stand up and applaud—

MacDonald: Yeah, nice.

Carroll: And they'd shake your hand. Makes you feel good.

MacDonald : Yeah, good. Now looking back, how do you feel about your military and war experience? What did it mean to you as a young man and now looking back on it?

Carroll: Well, it's wonderful memories that I wouldn't really want to have to do again. And I wouldn't want to wish it on anybody else, you know. But the experiences were lifelong and impressive, and I can't say I didn't enjoy the military.

Sometimes it wasn't so nice, like anything in the service. And sometimes your officers weren't the greatest. But we had the majority of officers on submarines were very good, except for our torpedo officer wasn't the best [MacDonald laughs]. He was all right. But he was an Annapolis graduate, and he thought if he promoted you, the money was coming out of his pocket. So he wasn't too great for promoting people. But that's neither here nor there.

We had a lot of—I don't know if it—don't make any difference, but like—a lot of sea miles we traveled. I'm not sure, but I think we traveled over a hundred thousand miles on the *Guitarro*. And I think we made over a thousand dives. And we crossed the equator twelve times, and little things like that, you know.

MacDonald: Mm-hm. Did you keep in touch—you did keep in touch with a few of your crewmates and stuff over the years.

Carroll: Yeah. Not as close as we should. But every time a reunion would come around, this one guy, Bob Johnson—he's still alive, too. He lives out in Boston, or Massachusetts, somewhere out there. He's still living, but he missed this last one due to health conditions.

MacDonald: Well, do you have anything else you'd like to mention that we didn't cover that you think's necessary?

Carroll: No, just that we battled surface twice and shot it out with our deck gun.

MacDonald: Oh, is that right?

Carroll: Yeah. See, what happened toward the end of the war, targets were getting small. And some of these coastal tankers, one time we fired, the captain fired two torpedoes, and because they didn't take enough draft the torpedoes went under the—he says, "I want to get those guys when we surface tonight." So he decided to battle surface. And we did that twice. And we sunk these ships. You could see them burning and men—

It was close to shore. This one time we thought he'd—we was wondering about the captain's IQ because they kept hollering up. And I was in the gun crew, and you could hear this over the speaker, "Captain, we're in thirty-six feet of water." You know, f a plane woulda came over, you can't dive [inaudible].

MacDonald: No place to go.

Carroll: "That's all right," he says, "We'll be out of here pretty quick," or something like that. And we were firing at this one ship. I can't remember if it was a little oil tanker or cargo ship. And they start shooting back at us, and we seen these traces comin'. We laugh about it now, but we were standin' by the gun, and up on the bridge our torpedo officer says, "Seek cover!" We look, "Where the hell we gonna go?" [both laugh] Anyway, we did run around to the starboard side 'cause the bullets were coming from the port side. Nobody got hurt. It was an experience.

MacDonald: Yeah!

Carroll: But the *Guitarro* was a very good ship. The submarine Navy you ate very good because you had a higher food allowance than surface craft. And I guess it was for morale purposes. We didn't have too much other things going for us. And in those days you couldn't—I think probably you could feed a guy on surface craft for, like, sixty cents a day. And we got ninety cents a day.

Didn't happen every day, but if you had steak, steak got cooked the way you wanted it. If you had eggs, they got cooked the way you wanted 'em, as long as we had fresh stuff. When we'd load food we would load for ninety days. We had ninety days supply of food onboard.

MacDonald: You must have stuck it just about everywhere, huh?

Carroll: Yeah, we had took the stuff out of the cases, the canned goods, and we'd throw it in back of the framed spaces on the ship, and we had covers there. But we kept an inventory of where everything was, and we always made sure when we had this daisy chain of food being loaded on the ship, we always had a torpedoman at the gangway where the food came. He steered all the fruit juices and good stuff to the after torpedo room [both laugh].

But we had to keep an inventory. So if we wanted juice—because sometimes they were known to drink the torpedo juice. It was torpedo alcohol. It was a hundred and eighty-proof. Nobody got drunk, but they were—we put in our coffee once in a while.

MacDonald: Mm-hm.

Woman: Are you done with your interview? [Momentary pause in recording]
[unidentified]

MacDonald: You know, when you filled up, you guys made sure you got the good parts, huh?

Carroll: The good stuff, yeah.

MacDonald: The good stuff [laughs]. Well, I just want to say I appreciate you taking the time to do the interview today, Norman.

Carroll: Sure.

MacDonald: And I appreciate your service time, so—

Carroll: No, part of my life, and I enjoyed it to an extent, you know.

MacDonald: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Carroll: I appreciate it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]