

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
Rev. Waldo R. Wold,
U. S. Navy Chaplain, World War II

2003

OH
514

OH
514

Wold, Rev. Waldo R., (1912-), Oral History Interview, 2003

User copy, 2 sound cassettes (ca. 90 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy, 2 sound cassettes (ca. 90 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

ABSTRACT

Wold, of Milwaukee, Wis., discusses his World War II service with the Navy as a chaplain aboard the General William Mitchell (AP-114). He reviews his family's history, much of it spent in China. He remembers Pearl Harbor and his enlistment in the Navy. He describes his training in Williamsburg (Virginia), Norfolk (Virginia), and San Diego (California). He was assigned to the General William Mitchell (AP-114) from January 1944 to June 1945; manned by the Coast Guard, it was used to transport troops and supplies. He shares a story about transporting German prisoners and celebrating a religious service with them. He remembers going through the Panama Canal. When in Casablanca (Morocco), Wold held a communion service for Lutheran soldiers. He describes transporting wounded soldiers. He tells a story about transporting Chinese soldiers and serving as the interpreter. He remembers where he was on V-J Day. He describes his role as a minister in the Navy, and describes the duties of his other assignments as mail censor, motion picture officer, and entertainment officer. He remembers his last assignments were to the National Cemetery in San Francisco to conduct funerals and then to a casualty group that would tell families about a casualty. He shares several more stories about visiting and meeting people in Glasgow (Scotland), meeting a priest in Auckland (New Zealand), and touring Bombay (India). He concludes with a story about a confrontation with a captain.

Biographical Sketch

Waldo Wold (b. January 1912) enlisted in the Navy to serve as a chaplain on a transport ship. He was a Lieutenant commander at the end of the war and stayed in the reserves. He is a "plank owner", and was the minister for St. Mark's Parish in Madison.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2003.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2003.

Transcript edited by Rachel Reynard, 2004.

Interview Transcript

Driscoll: Okay, this is John Driscoll, and today is March 4, 2004. And we are at Laurel Hill, pardon, Laurel Oaks, in Milwaukee. And this is an interview with Waldo R. Wold, and Waldo is a veteran of the United States Navy, World War II. He was a chaplain, so good morning, and thanks for agreeing to the interview. And can we start off with you telling about your early life? Where you were born, and your education, and that.

Rev. Wold: My parents went to China in 1898, and they were there for the Boxer Uprising, to make things rather interesting. And in between times, they had some children. Came home of furlough. Went back to China, and they overthrew the Manchu Dynasty, in Beijing. And the minister, the United States minister, ordered all the Americans out of China, so the folks went down to Shanghai, the International Settlement. And I was born in the International Settlement in a flat underneath, a flat with the number three wife, that is the third wife, of the Provisional President of China, Li Yuan-hung lived with his ten-year-old son.

Driscoll: Okay.

Rev. Wold: And they disappeared one night. Which was quite normal for people of that kind of stature.

Driscoll: What was your birth date, Waldo?

Rev. Wold: In January, 1912.

Driscoll: 1912. Okay. Wow. That is interesting.

Rev. Wold: I would say, like that.

Driscoll: And then, how about, after that?

Rev. Wold: Then we went back upriver, the Yangtze River. My dad was elected president of a brand new theological seminary that was multinational. A faculty of Norwegian citizens, Finnish citizens, some Swedes and Americans. And it was quite a trick, with all these cultures. And Dad was president for fifteen years. Until he died in 1928.

Driscoll: That is so interesting.

Rev. Wold: And when I finally showed up in the Navy, somebody said, "I see here you were

born in China.” I said, “That’s right.” “You are a chaplain. What church?” I said, “Lutheran.” At the time we had a whole bunch of ethnic background names, Swedish Lutheran, Finnish Lutheran, and so on. And in my church, it was a Norwegian Lutheran church. An American born in China, belonged to the Norwegian Lutheran church. “What the Sam Hill are you doing in the United States Navy?” I said, “I am starting to wonder myself.”

Driscoll: That’s great. How about education, Waldo?

Rev. Wold: I had almost all of my elementary school in a missionary school on [Gee-gung?] on the border between Honan and [Hooga?] Provinces, north of Hankow. [Hoo-han?]

Driscoll: Okay.

Rev. Wold: So, when we were in Shanghai. I went to college at St. Olaf’s College, Northfield, Minnesota, and I had my theological training, four years of it in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Driscoll: Okay.

Rev. Wold: How is that?

Driscoll: Okay. One of the questions I ask World War II vets, do you remember Pearl Harbor Day?

Rev. Wold: Oh, very, very well.

Driscoll: Can you tell about that?

Rev. Wold: I had my first call, and I was answering my second call. And being installed as a Pastor, in Wells, Minnesota, near Albert Lea. And we were having lunch, and somebody came in and said, “The Japs bombed Pearl Harbor!” We couldn’t believe it. And somebody else came in and said the same thing. Had it on the radio.

Driscoll: I can remember it, too.

Rev. Wold: Pardon?

Driscoll: I remember it. I was four years old.

Rev. Wold: I can remember it just like it was yesterday. And one man said, “I have a son

- aboard one of the ships in Pearl Harbor.”
- Driscoll: Oh, wow.
- Rev. Wold: So, I went home with him. We had quite a visit. He was very concerned.
- Driscoll: Sure. Then, when did you go into the Navy?
- Rev. Wold: That is a very long story. I had a very dear friend who was a pastor at St. Cloud, Minnesota. I was in Little Falls. And he said, he was having such a wonderful time with the National Guard. Why didn't I join the National Guard. He said, "First, it's fun. It's interesting. You're sure to get a different point of view of living. And the pay that is attached to it is very, very nice." Well, that sounded interesting. So I interviewed, and I came home, and I was telling my wife about it. And she said, "You're not going!" And I said, "Why?" And she said, "We're going to have a baby." I said, "Okay, that is good enough a reason for that." So I got interviewed later, with an anti-aircraft battery, that went to Bataan.
- Driscoll: Oh, wow.
- Rev. Wold: And they all got captured. And my wife says, "Oh, no. You're not leaving. Not leaving me." And long before this ever happened. And then I started getting mail, big packages from the War Department. And all of a sudden the Navy got into the act. And I thought, a Norwegian shouldn't be in the Army. My family were Vikings from way, way back. So I put in an application for the Navy. And I wasn't sure I had to go. I was 4-D, and one Sunday morning a man giving out testimonial, not a testimonial, a testament, a little hymn book, to our men going into the service. One of the men went in with three children. Well, that answered that for me. I can't duck behind that. I was under the impression that it was very important that I go. It was when I finally did get in. I discovered something else. So that is how it happened.
- Driscoll: Okay. Where did you go in?
- Rev. Wold: Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Driscoll: Was there training for a chaplain?
- Rev. Wold: Oh, we were sent down to – that was one of the things that they get caught with your words. "Proceed and report" means leave right now, in so many hours, and you got so many days to make it. And you report in for duty. And I got sworn in and I had to proceed and report. And it has never been so hard in my life. A car, and a lot of furniture. Move the family from Wells, Minnesota, to Chicago. Went to William & Mary College in Williamsburg, Virginia. And I suddenly learned

what it means to bust in a hurry, and wait. I got there one day after they had assembled a class. So, two weeks to assemble the next class. That was the class I got in. And thirteen days of doing nothing is terrible! Except Williamsburg is interesting, and I enjoyed the history. The House of Burgesses, and listened to all the lectures given by the Rockefeller Foundation on re-building the place. So that was quite an education in itself.

Driscoll: That is where my wife and I honeymooned.

Rev. Wold: Oh, is that right?

Driscoll: Williamsburg. Yes, a pretty place.

Rev. Wold: Sang in the choir there in church. I enjoyed that, up in the balcony. We were there when the First Lord, the British First Sea Lord. I can't remember his name. Pound. Admiral Something Pound. He read scriptures for the Sunday morning service. Very interesting.

Driscoll: What training, well, you already were an ordained minister. What training did you go through?

Rev. Wold: Oh, eight weeks of classes. We were called Golden Boots, never could march worth a hoot. Had a drum and we never kept step. And I guess we all had our own length of pace. Walking. And we all did a lousy job. We learned how to write letters, read orders. You heard an awful lot of stories, sea stories, about ships sinking and floating, and I don't know what all. And it was rather interesting. But I didn't find anything that I could use later, except for the letters. You know, from, to. And I discovered that every address, they always did it backwards. All did it wrong.

Driscoll: How do you mean?

Rev. Wold: They put the "to" at the top, no, "from whom."

Driscoll: Oh. Okay, yea. They do. That is right.

Rev. Wold: And we went down for two weeks to Norfolk, and very interesting, learning how to run, I had certain barracks assigned, and instruction on what to do, and so on. That was more interesting than anything else. One of the old chiefs, that was the most interesting part, educational part, of the whole thing.

Driscoll: They run the Navy.

- Rev. Wold: They did. I don't know if they do anymore. They've completely, electronic and technology, and high tech.
- Driscoll: Yes. Then, after Norfolk?
- Rev. Wold: Pardon?
- Driscoll: After Norfolk, where did you go?
- Rev. Wold: Then I was assigned to San Diego. And I had the most remarkably understanding C O that I ever had in my life. He was Commander Rockey, Annapolis trained, and with many years in the Navy. He topped out before World War II, and came back in during the war. He ran the school. We had eight thousand men in schools.
- Driscoll: Oh. Wow.
- Rev. Wold: And there was one chaplain for torpedo, gunnery, supply, you name it. Machine, different machine tools, you name it. And my commanding officer was very understanding, and he said, "I have masts. I haven't got time to find out much about them. I want you, if you have any instinct that says there is something different here than their story, I want you to investigate. I'll tell you to investigate, but I want you to investigate what you feel there should be. And you keep me informed. And I'll stop in to check how you are doing." And he was fantastic.
- Driscoll: That is great.
- Rev. Wold: And when I finally got my orders out, I said, "Commander, if I could be assured of having commanding officers like you, I'd stay in the Navy for the rest of my life."
- Driscoll: How did he spell his name?
- Rev. Wold: R-o-c-k-e-y. And he had two fantastic stories.
- Driscoll: Then you got orders out?
- Rev. Wold: Then I got orders for sea duty. And I had visions of a sleek, lovely cruiser, or maybe a destroyer division. One of my friends, a chief, says, "You are on a garbage scow."
- Driscoll: And that was this?
- Rev. Wold: Yea. And I said, "I have no idea what this is all about." Well, he said, "You'll find

out.” And I sure did. The ship was one of the first completely manned by Coast Guards. Sailors and officers. So our doctors were Public Health, and the supply was Coast Guard, and the captain was an old, I think a rum-runner. I think he did that, sometimes. He’d catch runners when he was on duty. He was a fantastic ship handler. Unbelievable. But he ran a very strange kind of a ship. But during the war you had all kinds of C Os, and when I showed up they had no idea what Ch C meant. Chief something? They were waiting to see what I was.

Driscoll: This was the...?

Rev. Wold: *General William Mitchell*. AP114.

Driscoll: And you were on it from January, ‘44, to June, ‘45. There is a picture here of the *General William Mitchell*, and around the frame are all the ports, and if it is okay, I’ll just read them. It starts out here with Casablanca, Morocco. Glasgow, Scotland. Liverpool, England. Londonderry, Ireland. The Panama Canal. Guadalcanal. Pavuvu. The Russell Islands. Espiritu Santo. New Hebrides. Manus Admiralties. Coso [?] Passage. Palau Island. I had an uncle killed there. Tacloban. Leyte. Kiwan [?] Samar. Eniwetok. The Marshall Islands. Cook Strait. Melbourne, Australia. Auckland, New Zealand. Hobart, Tasmania. Bombay, India. Wow. That is a tour.

Rev. Wold: That wasn’t one stop. It was several stops at every one of them.

Driscoll: And this was mainly hauling troops, or cargo?

Rev. Wold: We hauled 5,500 every time we went out. And we came back, say, life from Casablanca, we came back with wounded. 3,500 wounded. With a mobile medical unit, nurses and doctors. And I had just a full time job comforting the fellows, telling them how we had just lost a ship. They had big eyes, and they were scared stiff. They were very badly banged up. Casts and amputees, and some of the bravest and most remarkable men I’ve ever known. And then when we were running into Liverpool, we were there, we made one trip back with German prisoners.

Driscoll: Oh, that is interesting.

Rev. Wold: Very interesting. And I asked the Army Provost if I could go back there. And he said, “You go back there on your own.” So I did. And they were Katholisch. And I said, “Ich bin evangelisch,” which was not quite true, but it was the best I could do. And then they said, “Haben sie rosen.” Rosaries. And I got a whole handful of them. So the next time I came back down, I had maybe a thousand of them in my hand. And I handed them out like they were handing out popcorn. And I had

services. One German boy did a nice job of interpreting. And I can't remember, I think "The Lord is my Shepherd," which I thought sounded like a very good text to use. I wasn't sure who I was talking to.

Driscoll: That is interesting. That is great.

Rev. Wold: Beautiful June day, and the ocean was as smooth as if it were made out of a mirror. Beautiful blue. And they sang. I had a pump organ, and the boy that played was an organist for a huge cathedral in Cologne, Germany. We put a microphone inside the organ so it would make big noise, and a big bull horn. And I don't know how many hundreds, a thousand or more, on the stern of the ship. And they sang, A Mighty Fortress. And I'd go with the hymns that I know in German. I know some of the German ones. And I don't know how many hymns they sang. I had no hymn books. All memory. Finally, they said, "We don't know any more." And I said, "You are way out ahead of me." Somebody said, "How about Stille Nacht [?]" So here, on that beautiful June afternoon, or morning, as calm as it could be in convoy coming back, here are hundreds of German prisoners sang "Heilige Nacht, Stille Nacht [?]"

Driscoll: That must have been something. I can imagine. Yea.

Rev. Wold: Have we got time yet?

Driscoll: Oh, we have plenty of time. I want to be sure we don't run out of tape before I flip it. Tremendous story. So, you started out in the Atlantic, well, of course, the Panama Canal, to the Pacific.

Rev. Wold: All the way to the Pacific.

Driscoll: And again, troops and cargo.

Rev. Wold: We picked up our troops in Norfolk. They were waiting for us in San Diego. And they shipped them all the way back across the states to Norfolk. And we picked them up and then we went through the Canal. And I did something. One of the things I could do. They would kid me about not knowing what the ship was all about. So I said, "I'll be in every nook and corner of that ship before I am done with it." The only place that I never got into were the oil bunkers. I never went down in there. I could of. I didn't want to take the chance of getting all smeared up. So we went through the Panama Canal. And the mast, back of the stacks. I was up on the truck.

Driscoll: Oh, wow.

Rev. Wold: That cross-piece. The truck. I was on the end of that watching the ship go through the locks.

Driscoll: That must have been something.

Rev. Wold: I was the lookout. I thought that was worth remembering. I thoroughly enjoyed it. And we watched a carrier launched in Norfolk, and we were standing on the top of the forward funnel.

Driscoll: That must have been something.

Rev. Wold: Inside, there is a deck. The stack itself is only about so around. The rest of it is all machinery and fans and generator. All the space is used. Long stacks gave us a push.

Driscoll: I never got up on the mast or a stack. I spent twenty-six months at sea, but I never got up there.

Rev. Wold: So they has no idea what to do with me.

Driscoll: Of course, that is good, you know. That could be good.

Rev. Wold: Good and bad. I had trouble with the captain, and he let loose with a whole armful of profanity. And the first couple of times I was horrified. What had I gotten into? I tried to figure out how to get out. And I figured I couldn't get out. Now, how am I going to make it good. And then it dawned on me, the old man was making fun of me.

Driscoll: I see. Okay.

Rev. Wold: Now, how do I answer him? So the next time I came in with a request, and he let me have it with a whole five minutes worth of profanity, I said, "Sir, from the way you are answering me, it is obvious you don't understand what I am talking about." And you be surprised how that shushed him up quicker than anything yet.

Driscoll: That is great.

Rev. Wold: I had to fight for my life. We put into Casablanca on Palm Sunday.

Driscoll: That would be--

Rev. Wold: 1944. And that was our last trip into Casablanca. I had some very good friends

that were chaplains, and the Episcopalian said, "I've got about twenty or thirty Lutheran boys who would love to have communion. Could you have communion for them?" I said, "I think I can do that." So I looked for the captain. No captain. I looked for the exe. No exec. Looked for the engineering officer. No engineering officer. Looked for the navigator. No navigator. So I took my ecclesiastical equipment along with me, and said to the O D, "I'm going to be in the camel barn." We had a camel barn then had turned into a chapel. "The stern line, running off to the bollard, well, over here is the chapel in the old camel barn. If there is any need, if you need me for anything, call me on the speaker system so I can hear it." So, I went down and had a most wonderful evening. Beautiful evening. Lovely moonlight. Full moon, or a near full moon, you know. And I think one of the boys was from St. Cloud, Minnesota, and I knew his people. They had a connection. Next morning, the exec wanted to see me. He put a call, and he was a four-striper. No nonsense, now. I am one and a half. High rank. Brand new, didn't know what I was supposed to be doing. And I stood there in his doorway, and I am thinking, "Now, what have I been up to?" I have been on long enough now to know that if they couldn't find me, they'd forget what they were looking for me for. And I stood there, waiting to see what it was all about. Finally, he says, "Chaplain, what have you been up to? You look so guilty!" And I said, "I don't know why. I was trying to think why you called me, and I've been standing here for five minutes." He said, "I'm sorry. I had to get this paperwork out of the way and I apologize for making you stand there. What have you been up to?" Well, I said, "To be honest, I will confess, I went ashore last night without permission except from the O D, and I had a communion service with the Lutheran boys in the camel barn, right under the stern of the ship." He said, "That is the nicest story."

[End of Side A of Tape 1]

"To be honest with you, I confess, I went ashore last night without permission except from the O D and I had a communion service with Lutheran boys in the camel barn right on the stern of the ship." [Backing up and repeating] I'll start with, the next morning the executive officer had me called on the loudspeaker system to report to his office. I stood there for about five minutes waiting to be recognized, and wondering what under the sun I was being called for. And I couldn't think what it was all about. And finally he looked up, and he said, "Chaplain, you look so guilty, what have you been up to? And I said, "I've been trying to think what I've done wrong that you should call me for, and let me stand like this." And he said, "I'm sorry. I had to get this paperwork and stuff out of the way, and I apologize for making you stand there. But you look so guilty. What have you been up to?" And I said, "Sir, last night I had a communion service for about twenty Lutheran boys in the camel barn right off the stern line of the ship. And I went to find the captain, no captain. Then I went to find you, and no you. Looked for the engineering officer, and he wasn't around. Looked for the

navigator and he wasn't around. So I went to the O D and I said where I am. And I had a lovely evening, and I came back, and nobody had asked for me. And I believe I wasn't even missed." He said, "What? You looked so guilty. What did you do?" And so the question from there on for the next many months until I finally got transferred off the ship, "What did you do that night in Casablanca?"

- Driscoll: All right. Then, you mentioned about making the trips back to Norfolk and the quick turnaround and that.
- Rev. Wold: Oh, they were very quick runs back and forth. Yea. We had been gang-planked for thirty-six hours and we loaded wounded, and we would take them back. Very badly wounded, amputees and people who were in casts. About three thousand, three thousand five hundred of them.
- Driscoll: Did you have a medical staff aboard?
- Rev. Wold: We had four doctors of our own and a hundred and ten bed emergency hospital. We picked up MASH [mobile army surgical hospital] units with doctors and nurses and aides and everything, so they were well covered. It was a pretty interesting ministry to try to assure the boys that they would be the first to get off the ship if anything happened. But I'm not sure that I assured them too much. But I hoped I was doing that.
- Driscoll: Yea. And you mentioned going to the Pacific and picking up the Chinese.
- Rev. Wold: Oh, that was where the language wasn't in.
- Driscoll: The interpreter?
- Rev. Wold: The interpreter, when we picked up the unit, it was going to Vandenberg Field. And they had the whole unit completely organized from colonel down to the lowest buck private, and the interpreter didn't speak much English, but some of the officers did. But not too well. They could handle it but not that well. And the interpreter said, "I understand, I understand." But that was his total English. And the captain at that time got so fed up with the dirt that he got hold of me and said, "Can you interpret Chinese?" And I said, "I'm not that good anymore." I said, "I could have some years back but I haven't had much occasion for it." He said, "You can talk to them?" I said, "Yes, I can." "Come along with me." And he started in, and he let them have it with all the proper expurgatives. Quote, quote. And he said, "You say exactly what I am saying." And I thought, this is a different culture. In China, you don't curse in God's name. You call people by their ancestry and who their parentage. And that is the thing. And so started in by saying, "You can hear my *louban* [?], my old man?" I wasn't very current. I didn't

know what captain in Chinese was. "*Lauban*, my honored superior, is cursing you in English." I said, "My heart is very heavy. [Chinese expressions] And I was about to go, because it gets my heart, because it makes him feel so badly that he is so angry at you. And I will tell you why. Your place is filthy dirty." Only there are so many words, and I used the colloquium [Chinese expression] – you don't use them for expressing anger. But it was filthy dirty there and I went on so the captain could see that I wasn't interpreting that at all. And he walked off and left me high and dry, with a couple of hundred Chinese junior officers and [Chinese expression]. And they finally said, "Your customs are terrible." "Well, they are our customs. You have your [Chinese expression] but you are on our ship and our customs hold here. You will have to abide by our way. Why are we here?" I said, "I understand that you were assigned this because it was the only space you could get to go to the United States and you agreed to it." "Who takes care of your room?" I said, "Well, I am on the ship, I am part of the ship, and I have a cabin boy who comes in and makes my bed and takes care of my things so I have time, I put in awful long hours. Crazy things that I have had to do." And he says, "Well, why don't we have one?" I said, "We haven't got that many men." [Chinese expression] "Officers, Chinese officers, I don't know the difference." I said, "None of our boys know. And you are complaining about being grabbed to carry loads." I said, "I am very sorry about that but I can tell you how to handle it. How many of you can speak English?" "Well, five or six." "So, say, 'What do you want?' 'How many? How many men? Five men, ten men?'" So, when he comes from the galley, go down to the holds to bring up flour to make a ton of bread a day, carry up meat, carry up all kinds of dry stores, and they need bodies to do it. I said, "Just say, 'How many?' Ask how many do you want? And they can understand twenty, or fifteen, or whatever it is, and get your soldiers up, otherwise you are going to be grabbed by the sailors. And our sailors are big. Some of those cooks were huge. Not only tall, but they were big. And I said, "There were [Chinese expression]" They discovered that, too. They got punched a few times. And I said, "You don't have to take that." And I said, "Your place is dirty." And I showed them where the dirt was. And I said, "You should clean this up. Now if you don't want to do it, you are a [Chinese expression], let your enlisted come up here and you can swab the deck, but you will have to do it because we don't have men, don't have manpower. And you put cigarette butts in the big hold. This could be dangerous. We don't want a fire." I said, "You've got water, but that is for the ship, too. Not good." And then I said, "The captain is very angry at the amount of water that you use for showers. I can tell you, translate for you in to English, but I don't know how to make it understandable. [Chinese expression]. The pound. That is, how much. A pint is a pound. We have to make a hundred sixty thousand pounds of fresh water every day to run the ship and to drink, shower, and all the other purposes. But the main reason is to run the ship."

Driscoll: The boilers. Yea.

Rev. Wold: And I said, “You use the water and we may not have enough to go, and if you want to sit here with a dead ship in the water, you can take your shower.” I imagine I made my point. But I said, “You shower one minute, the wet, wash, rinse. Use your soap, and wash it off with a cloth, get out. Wash your clothes.” And then they laughed at me when I translated directly. Salt water, we understand salt water in English very clearly. And if you studied the Chinese, [Chinese expression], it is [Chinese expression], ocean water.

Driscoll: Okay.

Rev. Wold: And they laughed like mad when I was talking about [Chinese expression]. I forgot too much and I was so embarrassed.

Driscoll: That must have been interesting. That would have been an interesting situation.

Rev. Wold: That wasn't the only thing I had interesting. We had a bunch of missionaries on another trip, coming back from India. And the exec said, “They are the most unpopular people, the G Is, that you ever saw.” He said, “Don't tell me about it.” He said, “You should know. They would say, ‘The Lord will take care of us, until the last minute, then they would come with a package and want to get pulled out.’” Now, how true this was, I have no idea. I think most of it was apocryphal. But stories and stories, and stories can be nasty. And they can call for nasty words and comments. He said to me, “Chaplain, you keep those so and so missionaries in that corner there, and keep them out of my way, and out of the way of every body else, or else.” And one of the couples was a father and mother of one of my roommates from Shanghai. And a young woman, played the organ beautifully, was his sister. And she played for my services. We were two months all the way back to the States.

Driscoll: That is a good story. What were you doing when V-J Day happened?

Rev. Wold: I was on a shopping trip with my wife and two sons in Oakland, California.

Driscoll: Oh, great! How did you hear the news?

Rev. Wold: Heard it over the loudspeaker system in the square at Oakland.

Driscoll: Okay.

Rev. Wold: And I said, “Let's get out of here.” And she said, “We better.” So she grabbed the little fellow, and I grabbed the bigger boy. And he went into the Navy during the, after he got through at the University of Wisconsin, and locked him in for the

duration of the Viet Nam War. Eight years. He came out a lieutenant commander, too.

Driscoll: You were a lieutenant commander when you came out?

Rev. Wold: Yes.

Driscoll: Then what did you do after the war?

Rev. Wold: I went to Madison, Wisconsin.

Driscoll: And you stayed in the reserves?

Rev. Wold: I stayed in the reserves there. I am a "plank owner."

Driscoll: Now, that center was on...?

Rev. Wold: That was on East Washington Avenue.

Driscoll: East Wash.

Rev. Wold: It no longer is, now. It's all gone.

Driscoll: I know where that was. It's out by the airport now, on Wright Street. But I know where that center was. And then, did you have a parish in Madison?

Rev. Wold: Yes. St. Marks, on Spruce Street.

Driscoll: You did stay in the reserves. How about VFW, or the Legion, or any of the vets organizations? Any reunions, or things like that?

Rev. Wold: Not a one. I've never heard of anything from the ship. The executive officer, we had the captain and the detail officer in New York City, where the ship was built, in Kearney, New Jersey, were on very un-speaking terms. And he proceeded to load about as many of his bad actors he could get off into our crew.

Driscoll: Okay.

Rev. Wold: At least that is the story I heard. And they gave me an awful bad time.

Driscoll: Yea. You said they were Coast Guards?

Rev. Wold: They were Coast Guards.

- Driscoll: Were they regulars? They weren't draftees, were they?
- Rev. Wold: Oh, they had half a dozen regulars, the people that ran the ship, the captain and the exec. Engineering officer, supply, top supply, and so on. They were all regulars.
- Driscoll: The crew?
- Rev. Wold: A good many of the chiefs. They were fantastic. I was very fond of them. It's against regulations but I would go down to their quarters at least once a week, to have coffee and visit. And they had more stories!
- Driscoll: Oh, sure.
- Rev. Wold: And I enjoyed them as much as anything I could tell.
- Driscoll: That's great.
- Rev. Wold: The thing that I discovered to my horror was that what I had been trained to do, read scriptures, talk about faith, conducting services, was the least wanted of anything that I had to offer.
- Driscoll: Oh? That's interesting.
- Rev. Wold: Only when we were going into combat.
- Driscoll: Yea, okay.
- Rev. Wold: On the way to North Africa, they knew we were going to be in combat pretty quick, and they were very interested. When we were going into Great Britain, from April, May, June, July, every time we crossed over, we crossed every month. One Sunday, or two Sundays, one Sunday I'd have communion, I'd have three thousand five hundred troops waiting for communion. But coming back, it started to let off.
- Driscoll: Okay. What other things, though, did you do?
- Rev. Wold: I was the censor. Mail censor. I was the motion picture officer. Got me in big trouble but that is another story. Fact is, I rather enjoyed it. They sent me all this stuff, and I got all the papers. It said, pick up two electrician mates, send them to motion picture school, to Brooklyn, and they will be trained on how to run the machine, and so on. I showed that to the exec, and he checked with the captain, and he said, so-and-so, you know how to do that. We can use them to do other

things than that stuff. And I wound up, was anybody trained? And I showed up to get the films. We put into New York. The fantastic guys, the yeomen who were running it were good friends of mine. Gave me good movies, even some that hadn't been showed before. And therein comes a story. I had no intention of going to the movies. I got so sick and tired of movies. I never cared much for them in the first place. I put my boy on the machine. I had a very good boy on the machine. And the chief to make sure there was all good order. And I got up all the tables out of the ward room and had four hundred people at a time watching movies. And they had seen them. So this one time, I didn't go. I was ashore. My motion picture operator was on leave, and I didn't know that. And he had asked another fellow from the electricians to run it. And the chief got somebody else to do it. Everything went fine, as far as I knew, until I showed up at the motion picture office in Brooklyn. And the three-striper, a young three-striper, had me standing there at attention. And he told me to stand at attention. And he read me off like you would never believe. We hadn't properly trained anybody. He could see that in the records. We were, everything we did was backwards, wrong. And worse than that, the film that they had showed the other night, they marked it down for a one. Did you know they gave grades to them? We could grade the movies. By the way, our boys liked the one, two, three, four. Four was tops. Three fives, three sixes, three sevens, two fives, and so on. And we would trade two fives for two fives, or three fives for three fives, and so on. But I got all ones from there on. And we had marked a brand new film a one. And worse than that, it was all scraped. I couldn't understand how that had happened. But I wasn't at any point getting irritated at that, I was looking at the guy reading me off and telling me how I should be hanged and quartered and smoked. His final shot was, "Chaplain, as long as you are on that ship, they are never going to have another movie above a one." And they didn't, either. They were terrible. Every one was a stinker. The climax to the whole story was, he looked at me and he said, "Are you taking me seriously?" Oh, I said, "Yes, commander, I am taking you very seriously." He said, "Why are you smirking?" I said, "I don't know. I wasn't aware of that, sir." But, I said, "I am just standing here in awe of the fact that you have now bawled me out for twenty minutes and you got all kinds of obscenity and profanity, and you haven't repeated yourself." He said, "Get out of here!"

Driscoll: That is good. That is good.

Rev. Wold: And we never got another good movie.

Driscoll: A little bit of authority, and sometimes it goes to people's heads. It's interesting. I assume any kind of hardship, or that, bad news and that, from home. That came through you also, didn't it?

Rev. Wold: Unfortunately, it did. I had all of that. I had a some aboard ship that got hardship

discharges. But it was worse when I was finally assigned to San Francisco, for my farewell. My valedictory duty. I was assigned to the National Cemetery, a couple of times a month, to conduct funerals. And that was ghastly. Three an hour.

Driscoll: Oh, wow.

Rev. Wold: Six and eight a day. Ten a day. Pretty horrible. But I didn't get it that often. And then, I think even worse than that, at the tail end of the Okinawa business, with all of the marines, and I went with a casualty group out of San Francisco. And I was the one who broke the news.

Driscoll: That would be hard to do.

Rev. Wold: Oh, sure.

Driscoll: I remember, although the chaplain didn't come, when my uncle was killed on Palau, the Palau group. And my grandmother just got a telegram. And that was pretty cold.

Rev. Wold: They had telegrams too. But we had a supply officer, an attorney, a casualty expert, and they had all the information that they needed to make a request for burial, and money.

Driscoll: I am going to switch this.

[End of Side B of Tape 1.]

These stories are so important. A lot of times fellows will say, "Well, I didn't do anything, but, you know, you were there, you were part of it. You know, you guys saved our world. You did.

Rev. Wold: I have some favorite stories. I'll tell you three or four of them. I won't take too long.

Driscoll: Take your time. We have plenty of time.

Rev. Wold: We put into Glasgow in the spring. In the harbor at Gourock, at the end of the lough, and it is gorgeous in the spring. Magnificent heather, it looks like very beautiful, thin flame, fire, all over the mountains. It was just beautiful. We wanted to spend some time in the hills, and this British bobby came up. "Sirs! Sirs! You can't go up there, sir." "Why can't we?" "You can't go up there. It is forbidden." "Well, why can't we go up?" "You can't go up. You mustn't go up. You'll have to come back. It's off limits." So we came back down. He said, "You can go into

Glasgow, or you can go to Edinburgh, but you can't go up that hill." Okay, we didn't go up the hill. So we went into Glasgow. And I had a lot of things I wanted to see. I wanted to see where David Livingstone, a great missionary, was born. Interesting.

Driscoll: Doctor Livingstone.

Rev. Wold: I wanted to see where he went to church. Tiny little chapel. In Duneden. And I wanted to buy something in Sauchihal street and I had a hard time finding anything I could buy. I remember it was a weird name. Main street of Glasgow. And I wanted to go and see the university. A fine one there known for its fabulous school of maritime law.

Driscoll: Oh, yea?

Rev. Wold: I wanted to see it. Curiosity. It was getting late in the afternoon, and I walked on. And suddenly I saw a fine looking gentleman with a coat over his shoulder. And he said, "Can I help you, sir?" And I said to him, "I'm just looking. I've heard of the university here, and I have read about it. I understand you have a remarkably fine school of maritime law." "Yes, we do that, and we have a good medical school. I am one of the principal partners and I teach here." I said, "How very interesting." He said, "Now, I'll tell you what you want to see. That building over there is the library. It got hit by a bomb. And this is such and such." And he said, "Now, where are you going?" I said, "I was just going to walk around because it is a beautiful campus and I like the trees, and the ivory, and so on." He said, "You better get out of here." He said, "We lock the place up." I said, "What?" "Yes," he said, "we lock up the walls, or the doors, the gates, of our university at six o'clock." I never heard of this in my life. He said, "We do that in U. K." I said, "Well, you do it." He said, "Now, where are you going to go?" I said, "I'll go back down town and find a restaurant and have something to eat, and then I'll take the bus back to Gourock and go back to the ship." "Well, will you honor us by having supper with my wife and me?"

Driscoll: How nice.

Rev. Wold: I said, "Oh, I couldn't do that." I said, "I just can't. Your diets are rather austere." He said, "Is that a reflection?" I said, "Not on your life. Have no concern about that." And he said, "Come along with me." Went to his house. He loves medicine. A doctor. Had a son who was in the British army as a doctor. Had a doctor who was a doctor. And she was with the Territorials. And we had supper. I can't remember all the things we had but it was a good supper. Lovely, lovely.

Driscoll: What a nice thing to do.

Rev. Wold: And he was very curious about where I was from. I told him my parish had been in Minnesota. He said, "Are you familiar with the Mayo brothers of Rochester hospital?" I've driven around it and through it, but I never had a reason for stopping to have anything examined or worked on, taken out. He laughed. He had some kind of scholarship there, for a few years. He was very familiar. And he said one of the things in Minnesota that he liked very much was the release time, for release education. So we spend much of the evening talking about release time from public school for an hour at the end of the day to have a little training. And he asked if I were in favor of it. And I said, "Not entirely. Your bad students disappeared and the good students were agitated." And I said, "I couldn't see that I was getting that much usefulness out of it." But there were some people that felt very keen about it. I didn't. We talked about the mechanics, and what have you. The daughter came, and suddenly all her wedding gifts. Oh, gorgeous antiques, glassware, metal, embroidered things. Beautiful, and they were the nicest people.

Driscoll: That was such a nice thing to do.

Rev. Wold: And for some reason they gave me a whole bundle of old newspapers. I can't remember what was in them. I know I took them back to the ship.

Driscoll: That's great.

Rev. Wold: I felt sort of badly that I couldn't, I didn't dare try to promise anything more than to thank them for a wonderful evening. I'll never forget that evening.

Driscoll: That was such a nice thing to do.

Rev. Wold: I had another delightful hour going to the big stores, another time in Glasgow, and finally one of the clerks came and said, "Can we help you?" And I said, "I don't know." "Do you have any coupons?" "I haven't anything. I just have money, and not too much of that." And he said, "Well, what were you trying to find?" And I said, "I've got two boys at home I'd love to get tam-o-shanters for." "Oh," he said, "sir, we don't have any tam-o-shanters that are bonny enough for your lads. I am so sorry. But sit down and have a cup of tea." And I went down into the tea room and we sat there talking. He said, "Where are you from?" I said, "Chicago." "Well, where were you born?" I said, "Shanghai." "How did you get to Shanghai?" I said, "That goes to my folks," "Did you know the A. P. Smiths?" "Oh, yes. They were very good friends of ours. My father and Missionary Smith were very good friends, and we were at their house many times." "Oh, how interesting. They lived just a few miles down the road, and then my next door neighbors." And I said, "Are you three touches away?"

Driscoll: That's great.

Rev. Wold: And then I said about the newspapers, when we were coming back from Bombay, India, we put into Auckland, New Zealand. I very carefully had my services early on Sunday morning. They have the Three Kings up at the tip of the island, little islands at the tip of the island. Got back down about fifty miles or so. And that is a beautiful part of Auckland. Gorgeous part. And we were coming into the harbor, and I had my services already all done. Didn't have that many out anyway. Coming home. So I said to the exec, "Commander Anderson, I am so home sick I'd love to go to church here, a proper church." I said, "I see one up the hill here." And I said, "I think we are early enough, I can make it. If I go quick, I can go to church." He said, "You certainly have my permission. Not only do you have my permission, but go down there and go ashore with the quartermaster when he takes his reading. So I went way down, down here [indicating on photo of ship] where they put a gangway out. And I went out with the garbage and the quartermaster. And I found a taxi. And I said, "There is a square-looking church up on the hill there." "Oh, St. Matthews cathedral." I said, "Can I get to church there." And he said, "You can." So I got in the taxi and rode up the hill. Gave the guy a couple of bucks of American money. Thrilled with it. And I saw down. And service was already going. And the canon, I guess that it the proper title for it. And he said, "We have an American padre with us this morning. If you will stay after the services, I would like to visit with you." So I did. But the ending hymn, they sang "Now this be it ever, as free men shall stand, between their loved homes and war's desolation." You know something, I was the only one in the crowd that didn't know it. And I waited. Perfectly charming old Church of England priest. Lovely, lovely man. And as Godly and as good as you can come. And he said, "Have dinner with my wife and me." Oh," I said, "I can't do that." "Oh, yes you can. We'd be honored to have you." So I stayed.

Driscoll: How nice.

Rev. Wold: I got invited more often that you would think.

Driscoll: Well, that's really nice. That's nice.

Rev. Wold: I've never had times there when I wasn't treated like a prince. I always got wonderful treatment. And so, I told him about my armful of newspapers from Scotland. He said, "Do you still have them?" I said, "They're a year old." "That's wonderful!" So I dropped them off for him.

Driscoll: That was nice. That's great. Well, okay, this is quite a remarkable story. Wow.

Rev. Wold: I have one more that I like.

- Driscoll: Oh, yea, sure, please so. We have plenty of time.
- Rev. Wold: We were in Bombay, India. We had been there a couple of times. We had a Red Cross hut at the end of the pier. And one of the boys ran off with the money. Which they very quickly, they never had any problems with that. The hut was for the boys that would like to sit down and write letters home and play ping pong, they would play cards, and so on. Not poker. Bridge or something like that. Hearts. They were well behaved. And the ladies that were in there, they were two or three motherly, gray-haired types. Lovely ladies. Awfully nice people there, and I liked them. And I made the point to cultivate them so they would know that I was interested, and they would tell the boys where I was. And they wanted to know if I had any extra books, paper backs, that I didn't have to account for. I said, "Yes, I did have a box full of them." I'd give them a couple of hundred, which I did. And they wanted to know if I had ping pong balls, and I did, and I gave them a couple dozen ping pong balls. I served as entertainment officer, too.
- Driscoll: Okay. Okay.
- Rev. Wold: Had bands and contests on the way out from the States.
- Driscoll: That's great.
- Rev. Wold: I tell you, I put in a big day of all kinds of things. And I said, "You've been so good to me and you have been fine to the crew. What can I do for you?" "Well," they said, "we haven't had a good ham in a couple of years." And I said, "Oh, you're asking something that is relatively hard. But," I said, "I maybe I can sense it." The captain had warned us. He came down to one of our get-togethers and said "Anybody who takes supplies off the ship would be court-martialed." So, I thought, "Oh. It's all worth the effort." So I talked to the supply officer and I said, "Bob, can you help me steal, or let me steal, a ham from the refrigerator?" "Yea," he said. So I went down and got a big cardboard box, lots of newspaper, and I got a huge eighteen-nineteen pound ham, oh, great big one. Put it in the carton, wrapped it all up with paper. Tied strings around it. And put it under my arm, and I went ashore with the garbage. I wasn't going to take a chance with the look-outs. And I thought if I am going to meet anybody, it would kind of be rare. I hadn't gone fifty steps, and guess who I walked into? The captain. It was a rather nice captain, then. And he said, where are you going, chaplain?" And I said, "Why, to the Red Cross, sir." "So, what have you got under your arm?" I said, "I've got a ham that I stole, sir." I said, "I stole a ham. The ladies are so nice." I said, "I thought I'd take a chance on it. I was hoping I wouldn't run into you." There is nothing like being honest. And he said, "May I see it?" I said, "You surely can." So I opened it up and he took a look at it. He said, "Going to the Red Cross?" I said, "Yes." "I haven't met you, have I?" I said, "No, sir." So I saluted him and he saluted me, and I went on to the Red Cross and he went back aboard ship.

Driscoll: That's good.

Rev. Wold: The ladies were just tickled. Golly, they thought probably they had wings and become angels. They were so thrilled.

Driscoll: That's great.

Rev. Wold: And they said, "What can we do for you?" I said, "You've done it all." They said, "Oh, no. We've got to do something special." One of them said, an Indian girl. Her father was the number one surgeon in Bombay. And they said, "She would be a marvelous tour guide." So they asked her. She had a Rolls-Royce, and was very willing to do it. Seven passenger. "So you have four of your fellow officers to go with you, and you've got yourself a tour.

Driscoll: That's a nice thing to do.

Rev. Wold: Yea, and we rode in that beautiful, gorgeous Rolls-Royce, and with a very pretty girl, and she knew her city like people who live in Milwaukee know the city of Milwaukee. And she took us to the hill – I can't think of the name of it – there were three gorgeous palaces. Mansions. One for Nehru. One for the fellow that headed up Pakistan, and Aga Khan. And she knew all of them, and knew the people that worked there. So she rapped at the door, and we were admitted in. We didn't go through the whole building. Big buildings. We went through the living rooms, and that sort of thing. But gorgeous museums. And exquisite carpets, beautiful tables, everything magnificent.

Driscoll: Well, what a nice thing for them to do for you.

Rev. Wold: It was lovely. And a fantastic morning out of it. And she took us around and showed us where the vultures tore up the dead bodies on top of the roof, and I don't know, all the happy things. We went shopping, too. And I had a thoroughly enjoyable day.

Driscoll: What a nice thing to do.

Rev. Wold: And I thought, what a nice memory to have of Bombay.

Driscoll: Yea, yea. And all for a stolen ham.

Rev. Wold: For a stolen ham.

Driscoll: That is a great story. That captain of the ship, that was good.

Rev. Wold: We finally became friends. That's another story, too.

Driscoll: We still have time here.

Rev. Wold: Another one?

Driscoll: Oh, yea. This is wonderful. This is really great.

Rev. Wold: He was old Coast Guard, too. He was sure that I was hiding things because I would never tell who told me anything. And I didn't think it was my business to explain to him, but I wouldn't do it. And I could talk him out of this stuff. And I came with some rather bad news to him, to the exec. And we had a baseball team. I had the athletics, too. And we played a sister ship that we were in convoy with. And my team quit. They turned in all of their shoes and balls and bats and everything. That's it. And my band turned in their equipment, and the boxing team turned in all of their equipment. And I told that to the exec, and he said, "Why?" And I said, "I thought you ought to know. That is all I can tell you." Well, the next day was Sunday and between church services, the captain sent for me a marine. And the marine came and said, "The captain sends his respects, or his compliments. And he'd like to see you, right now." So, I said, "I got fifteen minutes. I'll go up." So I went up. And he said, "What are you telling the executive officer?" I said, "I had quite a good deal to tell him yesterday, but that is all I really had to tell him. I wanted him to know." And he said, "You tell me." I said, "The band had gone bad on me." He said, "There is more to it than that." I said, "Captain, I've got five hundred boys waiting for me for church services. I am sorry. I've got to take my Lord's orders ahead of yours." So I excused myself, and I went down on deck. I took on my church services. Well, I had the marine come to me at one o'clock in the afternoon. "Captain would like to see you." And I went up and he had the exec, and his writer was there. I said, "Should I have someone with me?" "Oh, no, this is just a friendly question and answer." And I said, "I'm not sure." "Well, you can be very sure we have no ulterior motives." And he started asking questions, and I answered them as well as I could. And he said, "What's the problem?" And I said, "If you want to ask what my opinion is, I can give you my opinion, but I am giving you my opinion." And I said, "I don't know if you want that, or not." Well, he said, "What's your opinion?" And I said, "Well, since the captain came aboard, you've tried to pull up the discipline, and you've been having court, masts, very often, and you've been fining people for doing what they normally did, come out on deck after they were done down in the boiler rooms, and cool off a bit in their dirty, wet t-shirts, before they went down for a shower. They got fined five dollars showing up on deck. And you've been calling them pretty tight." He said, "Do you sympathize with them?" I said, "Well, that is a very slippery word. What do you mean by 'sympathize'?" He said, "I've

told you what I mean, I want to know if you sympathize with them.” I said, “If the word is ‘sympathy,’ I’ll define it for you. If you mean sympathy, that I feel for the crew that they are having a hard time, the answer is yes. That doesn’t mean I am telling them you should do something about it, or there is something that can be done about it, the answer to that is an absolute no. I have been loyal to the captain and to the ship.” He said to the writer, “Erase all that last stuff. Put down that he answered yes to ‘sympathize.’” Then he turned to me and he said, “I’ve got you, now.” And I said, “What have you got?” And he said, “I’m going to have you court-martialed.” And I said, “Yes?” He said, “Yes, I am going to court-martial you.” I said, “You can’t.” He said, “Why? Why can’t I?” I said, “Navy Regs says I have got to have somebody of my corps on the court-martial board.”

Driscoll: That’s true.

Rev. Wold: “And there is nobody else on the ship. You can’t court-martial me until you have somebody from my corps on the board. So you will have to wait.” You should have seen him. All the air went out. He said, “I write your fitness report.” And I said, “Yes, sir, I know that.” He said, “Are you worried about that?” I said, “No, sir, not at all.” I said, “The captain is not remembering that I am a reserve and not intending to stay in the service.” And then he said, “I am going to put you ‘in hack.’” I said, “For how long, sir?” He said, “Two weeks.” I said, “That would be lovely. When can I start? Right now?” I got two stripes, now. He has four. And he said, “What do you mean?” I said, “I’m so tired. My legs hurt. I am tired all over and I would love to read some of my books. I’d love to have two weeks quiet.” He said, “You sound too willing.” And then I said, “Sir, you’ve given me three. I’ll give you two choices. I’ll write a letter, officially, via commanding officer for your endorsement to the Secretary of the Navy tendering my resignation and giving my reasons why. That I am not trusted. I am under suspicion. And I have not reason for being in that position. Or,” I said, “I can write to the Secretary of the Navy and request transfer to another ship, for your endorsement. Which do you choose? I’ll do it right now.” He said, “No, no, no. Don’t be in any hurry.” I knew I had him. And then he said, “Let’s just talk. Talk.” He said, “I don’t want any of your Synod kind of stuff.” I said, “Captain, look at the Navy Regulations. It says ‘The chaplain will conduct services according to the customs and usages of his own church.’ It has always been.” And every time he came with one, I had every word for it. When we finally got to the tail end, we became very good friends.”

Driscoll: Let me turn this over.

[End of Side A of Tape 2.]

I’ll wait just a second. There is a leader here. Okay, go ahead.

Rev. Wold: When we got to the tail end of my time, we were running through the Canal, up to Norfolk, and I had my orders to report to San Francisco, and I had an extra couple of weeks. We didn't stay long enough in San Francisco when we came in from the Philippines. The captain came up from Norfolk, Virginia, and invited me to supper.

Driscoll: Oh, yea?

Rev. Wold: And we, the two of us, had a delightful evening, believe me.

Driscoll: Oh, that's great.

Rev. Wold: And he said, "Chaplain, you scared the living hell out of me!" I said, "Why did you do that to me?" He said, "I have never had a chaplain and Captain [name] didn't tell me too much about you other than 'He didn't do well, at all.'" And he said, "I had an Army colonel and asked, 'How do you get along with chaplain?' And he said, 'I scare the hell out of him, and then he behaves himself.'" And he says, "You didn't scare worth a damn."

Driscoll: That's great. That is a great story. Well, look, I am going to wrap this up. This is tremendous. This is a tremendous story, I will tell you.

[End of Interview.]