

[OH2179.Konz-Krzyminski_file1_access_clip3.mp3]

[01:42:10]

When umm, nine months later, after my deployment – Europe was amazing. The chaplain was wonderful because he really—he helped me know about Europe in ways I never knew. And—

Halaska: Like what?

Konz-

Krzyminski: Oh, just, you know, “We’re going to Spain. If you want to buy something nice for your mother, you buy some Lladro’s porcelain.” Or, you know, and we still have a nativity set that I have to this day that I got for twenty-five bucks. It’s like \$375 now, and I got the whole, you know, thing that I bought in Torremolinos and— [coughs] and I learned about history, and culture, and buildings, and politics, and stuff that I just—I really had no interest or cared about. It just became part of my experience. And, you know, going past the rock of Gibraltar and, you know, finding out—you know, knowing we were near Morocco, and actually getting to a northern point in Italy which was, like, on the border of Germany. And I’m like, “Jeez, Germany? That’s my dad’s family.” You know, that whole thing. Getting to Rome. I mean, I was studying to be a priest. Being in Rome is, like, you know, pretty significant.

Halaska: Tell me about Rome.

Konz-

Krzyminski: [Gasps]

Halaska: What was it, like, being there, getting there?

Konz-

Krzyminski: Tony lived in Rome. [Both laughs] And his mother worked at the Vatican gift shop. And we stayed at her house. And she was amazed that I took so many baths. Like, because they, like [??] take a bath once a week back then. And, you know, I was like, “I want to take one every day.” [Halaska laughs] I think I was always respected as a s—as an American service member. I don’t think there was any kind of issue. And I was always, you know, as polite as I could be, as a representative of the Armed Forces and of the United States. I realized that when I enlisted, I r—I learned that I really didn’t belong to myself. I belonged to the military. And so my function was to behave in accordance to the military, that that’s what I was supposed to do. And that kind of—that fit in with my secret. You know, and it kind of felt safe because I didn’t have to talk to my family, either. I didn’t have to tell my family about stuff. You know, I can—I found some old letters. “My friend Tony,” you know, I would write about, or places we would go in, you know, the countryside of Italy. Or—I mean, I got to see parts of Europe with a native that I wouldn’t have seen.

[01:45:09]

And, you know, I'm generally an outgoing kind of guy, so, you know, when I met people in other ports, too, and Spain or—we—you know, other Italian ports, I was fine. And Gene was, like, you know, always a blast. We just had a good time, always, together.

So, you know, plus there were some public events that we had to do when we were—I remember being in Olassu [??], Italy. We had this day where we had, you know, people come on board the ship, and we had to do dress programs and, you know, for that. And I was studying to be a fourth class petty officer, a third class petty officer. I was doing the exams for it. In fact, passed the exams. No, I didn't. That was when we came back. Because that was a big issue with my discharge. So when we were supposed to leave, now, and head back to the United States, [coughs] after our deployment and our runs over there, I didn't think I could leave Tony. I thought, "I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if I can leave." And my friend Gene was like, "Oh, knock it off, Raymond." You know, and—you know, there was—because there was an—I had gone through separations from going from port to port, but I knew I was always going to see him again. But this was, like, the one coming back to the United States, and I actually considered going AWOL to stay in Italy because—it was crazy. It was a crazy, crazy, crazy—I mean, I didn't even think of the ramifications of going AWOL.

But it was so safe to actually kind of be who I was, really, with someone I enjoyed being with. And so, I mean, I really thought about that. But my friend Gene snapped me out of it, you know? It was pretty much drama. We were listening to Italian operas on the way back. [Both laugh] pretty tragic stuff.