

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
KENNETH KALHAGEN  
Torpedoman, Navy, World War II  
1999

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**Kalhagen, Kenneth**, (1923- ). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 59 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 59 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 59 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Kenneth Kalhagen, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service with the Navy as a torpedoman striker aboard the USS Bush. Kalhagen discusses basic training in Camp Hill (Idaho), assignment to the brand-new USS Bush, and the boat's shakedown cruise. He comments on the relationship between officers and enlisted men and touches on training at the Naval Air Station at Alameda (California). He talks about daily life as a "striker," including dirty cleaning jobs, work with torpedoes, and "wheel watch" on the deck. Kalhagen describes the capabilities and armaments of the USS Bush. He mentions his first cruise to the Aleutian Islands where the Bush provided shore bombardment for the infantry units attempting to retake Attu, Siska, and Adak from the Japanese. He touches upon shipboard conditions, supporting the 32nd Division in New Guinea, and supporting Marine landings at several Pacific Islands. He recalls transporting wounded soldiers to hospital ships, delayed mail delivery, and liberty shore leave on the New Hebrides (South Pacific). He mentions chewing tobacco because smoking was not allowed on the ship. Kalhagen details the USS Bush's participation in the battle for Okinawa including firing the 20 millimeter gun, being forced to abandon ship after they were hit by three kamikaze planes, and waiting in the ocean to be rescued. He speaks of the number of casualties and he describes how two of his friends were killed. After being sent back to the United States, he touches upon receiving a furlough, discharge from service, using the GI Bill for home loans, and attending USS Bush reunions. He describes belonging to the Elks and the veteran work they do.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Kalhagen (b. 1923) grew up in Madison, Wisconsin and enlisted in the Navy in 1942. He served aboard the USS Bush, which was sunk during the battle for Okinawa. After his discharge he worked in the Madison police department until retirement.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 1999.

Transcribed by Elizabeth Hackett, 2009.

Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

**Interview Transcript:**

- James: It's the 30th of [unintelligible]—there you are. Okay, Ken Kalhagen. When were you born?
- Kalhagen: February 11, 1923.
- James: And in Madison?
- Kalhagen: Madison, Wisconsin. Town of Burke.
- James: Right. So, when you joined the Navy, that's what year?
- Kalhagen: December 7, 1942.
- James: Where did they send you? Did you join the Navy as a volunteer?
- Kalhagen: Yeah, enlisted. First went to Milwaukee for a physical, and returned to Madison, and they shipped us out of here to Farragut, Idaho.
- James: Oh!
- Kalhagen: To the new base they had out there.
- James: Rather than Great Lakes, where most people went.
- Kalhagen: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I got—went way out in the boondocks. (laughs)
- James: Yeah. And you had your—your basic training there.
- Kalhagen: Yeah, four weeks basic training, Camp Hill. Can't remember the company number anymore, but it was in Camp Hill in Farragut, Idaho.
- James: Oh, so after got through the core of your basic training, then they diverted you into some type of specialty. What was that?
- Kalhagen: No, no, I didn't go to a specialty. I went—I asked for sea duty, and they sent me right down to Treasure Island, San Francisco, where they put the crew together for the USS Bush. And at that time, they came around, asking for what they call "strikers" for different—
- James: Sure.
- Kalhagen: Units on the ship, and I got into the torpedo gang right away. And right after that, after we got in there, then they put the crew together, and they

sent me over to Alameda Naval Air Station, where they were getting the torpedoes ready for the ship to—for the shakedown cruises and that.

James: That's right. This was a brand-new ship you got.

Kalhagen: (coughs) Brand-new.

James: Yeah. New crew, new ship.

Kalhagen: New crew, new ship.

James: Everybody's green as hell.

Kalhagen: Well, now, we had some old-timers—

James: Did they?

Kalhagen: On it, too, they—we had, I think, a lot of our chiefs had been around, especially our torpedo chief. He had been on the Sturtevant when it was sunk on the Atlantic, wound up with a Bronze Star. We had two second-class torpedomen that were—were on a ship up in the North Pacific that got sunk. So we had some fellows that had been around quite a bit. But we still had a lot of green people on there.

James: Well, the Bush was—was—you know, didn't—didn't require any—any scraping of the hull. You had a brand new—

Kalhagen: No, no. (laughs)

James: Ship to take out of San Francisco.

Kalhagen: Yeah, it was—it was brand new, and first trip out, on a shakedown, we—everybody got sick, because nobody (laughs)—

James: Nobody was used to the destroyers.

Kalhagen: But not me. I—

James: Oh, you never did?

Kalhagen: I've never been seasick. Never. In fact, we go out on cruises now and then, and still don't bother me. That—that's—that's—that's a lot bigger thing than I was on.

James: You were in a minority. Right.

Kalhagen: Yeah, but they—there were a lot of fellows that got sick, and—but they—they all come together good, and had a good crew, real—real good crew. Our skipper at that time was a guy by the name of Smith. I think he was a captain when he come on. And I at first thought he was a mustang, but I later—later—which is somebody comes up through the ranks.

James: Oh, yes.

Kalhagen: But I later found out that he'd gone through Annapolis.

James: Been a corps—a corps school boy.

Kalhagen: And a—yeah.

James: Trade school boy.

Kalhagen: Told me he never had any math in high school to—you know—to really go into Annapolis with, but he wound up something like fortieth in his class.

James: Was there anybody else from Madison? Or—

Kalhagen: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Had a Robert Gallagher. (coughs) There were five Gallagher brothers in the service. And there were four of the Kalhagens in the service. And happened to wind up with one of the Gallaghers on my ship.

James: Oh, did you know him before?

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah. Yeah. We knew him. We were all born and raised out in the Sherman Park area.

James: Uh-huh.

Kalhagen: He wound up—up in Alaska. We went up—they sent us to Alaska first, for the Aleutian chain campaign and—and—

James: That was your first mission?

Kalhagen: Yep, that was the first one. Yep. We—

James: Tell me about the shakedown, before we get too far away. Is this—

Kalhagen: Oh, sure.

James: I know what that involves and—

Kalhagen: A shakedown was a—they were testing all the engines, testing all the crew to make sure they knew their stations, and when you went to general quarters, you would make sure everybody knew where they had to go, and what they had to do.

James: You kept repeating that until everybody got it down?

Kalhagen: Yeah, yeah, until they got it down good, and then—but that shakedown only took like a week or less.

James: Was it that long?

Kalhagen: Yeah, and then from there we—

James: Where did you learn about torpedoes?

Kalhagen: Aboard ship. (laughs)

James: Yeah, okay.

Kalhagen: I was what they called a “striker.” I was a seaman.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: And as a striker, you’re the guy that gets to do all the dirty work, like what they call “diving the tubes,” to clean all the grease out of them, and—

James: Out of—out of the—

Kalhagen: Torpedo tubes.

James: Tube—tubes.

Kalhagen: Yeah, you got to crawl right through them. And I was a little skinny guy, so—

James: You’re just perfect.

Kalhagen: So they sent me through. (coughs) Yeah, they—it was real interesting. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the mechanical part of it. (coughs)

James: What did you clean them with?

Kalhagen: We cleaned the tubes with diesel fuel.

James: Did you put it on a rag and have—just—?

Kalhagen: On a rag, yeah. We took a rag, and put it on, and you crawled right back through with it, and—and—and once you got them all clean, then we greased them, and—and slid the torpedoes back into them, and—

James: How long was that good for?

Kalhagen: Well, it was good for quite a while. Yeah, we could—

James: In other words, you could put several torpedoes in—several torpedoes without having to go through all that.

Kalhagen: Yeah, we had five—two banks of five torpedoes, and one was between the two stacks, and one was after the after stack.

James: And one was between stacks could shoot down either beam?

Kalhagen: Yep, yep, you swing them out, and—

James: Had twin screws?

Kalhagen: Yep, twin screws on it.

James: How fast did that go?

Kalhagen: 37 knots.

James: That's pretty good.

Kalhagen: Or better.

James: Or better?

Kalhagen: Yeah, that's what it was—I think it's calculated at—

James: Do you recall what kind of engines(?) there were?

Kalhagen: It was steam, steam turbines.

James: Steam turbine.

Kalhagen: Steam turbines, and two big shafts that went back to the two screws and the—

James: And your quarters—did you have to share a bunk with another crewmate?

Kalhagen: Yeah.

James: Or did—

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we were—

James: You bunk [unintelligible]?

Kalhagen: We were—I think it was three high, or four high. I can't remember. Think it was three high. You only had about eighteen inches between them.

James: I understand.

Kalhagen: And the guy—and then on the bottom one, there were several small lockers. But that bunk had to be raised up every time, so you get—

James: Into your locker.

Kalhagen: Into your locker. I'll never forget—they were taking on bunker fuel, and they kind of overran it, and it went all over the—all over the decks—

James: In everybody's locker?

Kalhagen: And into our clothes, and (laughs) they had to finally clean that up with—the only thing that would cut it would be diesel fuel they used—the real gas—or the kerosene-type stuff.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: And—

James: That would dissolve it.

Kalhagen: Yeah. (clears throat)

James: Yeah, that was an oil—those steam turbines were running oil?

Kalhagen: Yeah, they were running oil, and (clears throat) we had four boilers, and I think two turbines that they fed with those four boilers. One on the starboard side, and one—one on the—

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagan: On the port side.



James: And how about eating? How about this wild crab?

Kalhagen: Well, we had a—the—the—

James: Eating chips(?), obviously.

Kalhagen: The crew's mess hall was down a set of ladders, and there was tables set up in there, that were anchored to the floor.

James: Course(?)

Kalhagen: And I'll never forget they used to feed us a lot of that tomato stew, with—they mixed bread in with it.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: And you put that on them trays, and all of a sudden the ship would go one way or the other, and the tomato stuff would be all over the deck, and oh—

James: A mess.

Kalhagen: It was good. I enjoyed it, though.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: I did. I really enjoyed it, as a young guy. There were a lot of tough things, but there were a lot of good things, too.

James: You were on—your watch was four hours on, and four hours off?

Kalhagen: Four hours off, yeah.

James: Round the clock?

Kalhagen: Round the clock. Four on, four off.

James: So then you caught your naps as you—

Kalhagen: In between, yeah. Torpedomen on our ship stood the wheel watches.

James: In addition?

Kalhagen: Yeah.

James: Yeah.

Kalhagen: Yeah, we—

James: Guess you could—didn't fuss with the torpedoes all the time.

Kalhagen: No, no. Nothing with the torpedoes all the time. And there—and we stood the wheel watches, steering the ship.

James: And the wheel watch—what was your responsibility?

Kalhagen: You had the officer of the deck there, and then lot of times, the captain would be sitting right along side of you, in—in his chair. And [the] officer of the deck would give you your—your—

James: Directions.

Kalhagen: Your directions, what—what headings to come to, and you had to watch the thing, the compass in front of you, and bring the ship over there.

James: Not difficult?

Kalhagen: Pardon?

James: Not difficult?

Kalhagen: No, no it wasn't. It had the big brass wheel with the—

James: Right.

Kalhagen: With the wood hand—ring on it.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: And that thing, you could really spin it. And then, my understanding is that if that went out—the hydraulics on that went out, then the carpenter's mate that had his place back and after steering thing—

James: Yeah, another scary—

Kalhagen: He had to take over, to steer, yeah.

James: That wouldn't be hydraulic, probably.

Kalhagen: No. Then, coming out of San Francisco, I don't know if you—you've probably been in and out of there—you get the groundswells.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: And you'd get up on them, and you'd—fantail would slide off on you, and of course, it changes your direction all the time.

James: Right. Kept you busy.

Kalhagen: And [I'll] never forget—we had a young ensign that just came aboard on our second trip out, and boy, he was all over me, that I wasn't staying on course. And Captain sat there and listened to it for a while. Pretty soon, he says, "*You get on the wheel!*"

James: I tried—you try it. Yeah.

Kalhagen: (laughs) Says—

James: It's—it's— (laughs)

Kalhagen: "You get on the wheel, see where you go." Well, I was on course all the time—

James: Right.

Kalhagen: But all it did was—you just bring it back every time.

James: Good for more(?)

Kalhagen: Yeah. Anyway, he kind of chewed him out and—

James: That settled that problem.

Kalhagen: Let him know—(laughs) yeah, a lot of—lot of stuff around like it. And he was great. He'd get the—the radiomen would type up the newsletter that came in, and everybody wanted to see it. And he—(laughs) he would sit there and look at the ensign, or whoever was there, because they were waiting for it, and he'd turn it over to the guy on a wheel, (laughs) just to antagonize him a little.

James: Upset everybody.

Kalhagen: Yeah, he was—he was really a good fellow. Yeah, sorry to miss him. He made one of our—made one of our reunions, and then he passed away.

James: Oh.

Kalhagen: T.A. Smith.

- James: So, tell me what you did in Alaska.
- Kalhagen: Well, the first two times out of San Francisco, we took—we—we escorted convoys up to Dutch Harbor, and then later on, out into the chain, and at Adak, and then—then we were in on the landings at Sis—
- James: Siska—
- Kalhagen: Siska [Kiska?], Attu, Adak, well, the whole chain up there—we're in on that whole campaign up there.
- James: And then, while they were landing all that stuff, your—your duty was patrolling the harbor, to keep out submarines?
- Kalhagen: Well, no, well—and then bombardments, too. Oh, and bombardment, we—
- James: Oh, is that close enough—sort of—
- Kalhagen: We gave—yeah. Oh, yeah.
- James: What you have, five-inchers on your—
- Kalhagen: Five-inch—five-inch, .38s, and then we had the 40 mm, and the Bofors guns.
- James: Mm-hm.
- Kalhagen: And then 20 mm. Yeah, that's what they used is—mostly for bombardment, was the 40—
- James: Right.
- Kalhagen: 40s and the five-inch.
- James: Mm-hm. Just lob them in?
- Kalhagen: Yep. Wherever they called for it—
- James: Sure.
- Kalhagen: They had spotter planes up, and wherever they called for the firing power, that's what we did. We had one ship in our squadron up there, the Ammen, and she ran into a mine, blew the fantail off, and they limped all the way in with that. (clears throat) So after that Alaskan campaign, we

went to Pearl Harbor. We got into an awful storm our way down, tore our whaleboats away and busted the davits, and one of our forward guns was all beat up. And we went into Pearl Harbor, and they did all the repairs there, and then from there we headed to the South Pacific.

James: Mm-hm. How long does the repairs take?

Kalhagen: Oh, it's probably a week, I think. Because they really went to work. Boy, they just swarmed all over the ship and got it ready to go again.

James: Were there any ships lost in that storm?

Kalhagen: (coughs) No, not in that one. In fact, I think when we went down there, we were alone when we went down. I don't think there were any other ships with us at that time.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: Because we were supposed to join our destroyer squadron in the South Pacific.

James: That's what I'm [unintelligible] my next question. Did you operate with a group of other destroyers?

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah. Always. There were either four of us, or at times eight of us, operating—

James: Were they all plain destroyers, or were any D.E.s [destroyer escorts]?

Kalhagen: No, they were all regular destroyers then. They were mostly the Fletcher class. There was Ammen, Buchanan, Mullany, the Bush. I can't remember them all now—

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: But there was—there was eight of us that were in that squadron. But the Ammen, Mullany, the Bush, and the Buchanan usually operated together.

James: I see.

Kalhagen: And then we wound up with the Seventh Fleet.

James: So, leaving Pearl Harbor, we headed west?

Kalhagen: Yeah, toward Guadalcanal, Bougainville—

James: Did you stop at those places?

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah—well, no, not then, because they weren't secured yet—

James: Oh—oh—

Kalhagen: When we got down there.

James: [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: And we operated all along the New Guinea coast, with the—which was what, the 32nd Division, out of Madison, that—that went down there.

James: Wisconsin.

Kalhagen: Yeah, that Wisconsin 32nd Division was in there. I've talked to a lot of guys now that—

James: Hollandia.

Kalhagen: Yeah, that—yeah, Hollandia, Finchhaven—

James: Yeah, I know a lot of guys were in that.

Kalhagen: All of the coast. No, we were in Esperitu [Santo] and New Hebrides, all of the islands down in there.

James: Where did you get supplies?

Kalhagen: Once they secured—I think Hollandia was our main supply area. And then the New Hebrides and that—

James: Did—didn't—

Kalhagen: New Hebrides was a big supply area.

James: You can take them off a reefer.

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah.

James: We did that.

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Reefers, yeah. Yeah, I can remember them bringing that mutton out. (laughs)

James: Australia? Everybody talks about—

- Kalhagen: They take it out of the reefers on—on the beach, you know, where it was cool. And when—then the—(laughs) bring it out in them personnel carrier, or whatever they were. Then they'd pull up alongside, and then they'd throw that stuff up on the deck, and it'd get so slippery, and they'd eat the—oh, it was awful.
- James: Everybody hated that.
- Kalhagen: I hated it. I didn't like—
- James: They said that they hated that mutton.
- Kalhagen: I still haven't—I still won't eat mutton—
- James: Mm-hm.
- Kalhagen: Or even lamb. I—
- James: I've—I've spoken to about six guys now, who've had the opportunity—
- Kalhagen: (laughs)
- James: To feast on that Australian mutton, and not one of them said that they could stand it.
- Kalhagen: They could never fix it right. Boy, it was awful. We made the landings in Admiralty Islands, Bougainville, New Britain. Helped out with some of the stuff at Rabaul.
- James: Now, when you were doing these landings, what did you encounter? Any attacks out there?
- Kalhagen: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.
- James: But that was before the kamikazes got started.
- Kalhagen: Well, that was before the kamikazes got started, yeah.
- James: So—so what kind of attacks would—?
- Kalhagen: Yeah. Dive bombers and that—you know, off of—especially off of the Admiralty Islands. We had an Australian crew—or an Australian destroyer working with us, called the Warramunga [pronounces "Warmonger"]. They sent that in to—with—along with a minesweeper to sweep the harbor at Admiralty Islands and all of a sudden, the Warramunga turned

around, come pouring(?) out, and left the poor minesweeper in there all by itself. And I'll never forget when I saw these dive bombers come down. I thought they were our own planes, but they weren't. They were Japanese planes.

James: And?

Kalhagen: They—they kind of raked that minesweeper over a little bit. And they got out of there all right, but they did get the mines—the thing secured, too. I think—if I remember, we had the—I don't know if it was New Britain or Admiralty Islands—the First Dismounted Cavalry.

James: Oh, yeah?

Kalhagen: We put them guys ashore there. Then we—when we—after the bombardments and that, we laid off and took wounded back aboard our ship. And I'll never forget one guy, he was from Texas, he'd been in the Army something like twenty-five years, and he got hit right across the buttocks. And he says, "Now I got to go send me home, so I don't get in to none of this anymore."

James: Oh.

Kalhagen: But we took a lot of dead. That—we buried—

James: Good thing—France was aboard. You were prepared to—you were [unintelligible] somewhere else. I bet—

Kalhagen: No, no. We buried some of the guys at sea, and then the other casualties—we had a doctor aboard our ship.

James: Oh.

Kalhagen: We had the doctor for the squadron.

James: Oh, I see.

Kalhagen: And he was on our ship. And when we—we got to one of them hospital ships, then they transferred everybody over to it.

James: Do you recall any of the names of any hospital ships that were there?

Kalhagen: I think it was the Mercy, was one of them. I'm not positive. I remember seeing them, but I—I think—wasn't one called the Mercy? Got me on that.



James: Yeah, sure. That's—that's what I did in the Korean War.

Kalhagen: Oh, you did?

James: Was on a hospital ship.

Kalhagen: Which one was it?

James: Haven.

Kalhagen: Haven.

James: But that wasn't—

Kalhagen: See, I'm trying to think—

James: That wasn't there when you there.

Kalhagen: Oh.

James: Okay, most of the time, you have your trouble getting mail?

Kalhagen: Yeah, when we were at sea. You know, once in a while, they would transfer mail ship to ship, and we would pick some up. But if we were out for a month or better, and then got low on supplies, then soon as we got back in to the ports, then we picked our mail up. It was kind of slow coming.

James: Sure.

Kalhagen: Then we got—I can remember my mother—stepmother writing to me, and I think that one letter I got was two or three months old before I got it.

James: Do you remember spending any time ashore in these—in these island-hoppings that you did? Did you ever—

Kalhagen: Yeah, there was only—

James: Stopped at any base [unintelligible]?

Kalhagen: I think—we did at Hollandia and New Hebrides, I think it was.

James: Give you a chance to drink some beer?

Kalhagen: Yeah. New Hebrides had what they called Duffy's Tavern down there.

James: I see. What was that like?

Kalhagen: Well, can't explain it. (laughs) Well, they drove pipes down in the ground, and they put funnels on them, and there were just [unintelligible] rows of them. And guys that—everybody was given a certain amount of beer. But then guys would trade like cigarettes—

James: Sure.

Kalhagen: For beer and all that, and—

James: Were you a smoker?

Kalhagen: There was a—there was a few guys that really got drunk.

James: Yeah. Were you a smoker?

Kalhagen: Yes.

James: Oh, really?

Kalhagen: At that time I was.

James: Right, yeah.

Kalhagen: And a tobacco-chewer.

James: Yeah. Oh, really? Both, really?

Kalhagen: Well, you couldn't smoke aboard ship.

James: Yeah, right.

Kalhagen: Chew tobacco and spit it over the side.

James: Uh-huh. Right. You have to be sure it's on the right side, of course.

Kalhagen: Yeah, (laughs) out of the wind.

James: Right. But you had no trouble getting in—other than the beer, was the only time you were looking at your limited(?)

Kalhagen: Yeah. Yeah, I remember they—(coughs) on our ship one time, the captain had got a bunch of Australian beer, and he put it down in the—in the carpenter's locker and locked it in, because when we got back to the States, he was going to have a party for the whole crew, and use this.

Well, some guys got in and stole it, and boy, he really got mad. And I think the one guy was court-martialed.

James: Oh, really?

Kalhagen: Yeah. Yeah, he told me some—some real stories out in San Diego, when we had our first reunion, some stuff I never knew. Just a peach of a guy. I had a set of brown moccasins, ones that kind of metal—or leather lacings and that—

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: I was sitting on an impulse locker on day, and he come by, and he stood there for a while, looking at me, and said, “I think you better die them black.” (laughs) I know they weren’t regulation.

James: Right.

Kalhagen: And he said, “I think you better die them back—black.” Though—he was quite a guy.

James: What’s an impulse locker?

Kalhagen: Impulse locker’s like—for the torpedoes. We had a locker with these—they’re like a shell, like a three-inch shell, with just the case, and with the impulse—and those went into a thing on top of the torpedo tube, the—kind of a globe on it, and you’d shove that in there, close the breach on it, and then when they—you’d fire it electronically, or by hand with a lanyard, you could fire. And when that exploded, it put all that pressure down in the back of the torpedo, and pushed it out of the tube.

James: So the pressure that pushed the torpedo out of the tube was rare(?)—

Kalhagen: Yeah, it was—

James: Air pressure?

Kalhagen: Black powder. Yeah, it was—it—now—

James: Oh, the explosion of black powder.

Kalhagen: Yeah, and then it pushed it right out of the tube. And that’s where you—when you’d—like I was telling you, dive them tubes, it was—that’s why you got so black, because that black powder would get in there, and burn that—that grease and that. That—that was a dirty job.

- James: Which part was the dirty job?
- Kalhagen: Diving the tubes to clean them. Once—once you got a rate(?), then you let the—the new strikers do that. (laughs)
- James: I was going to say, sooner or later you got on top of that problem, right.
- Kalhagen: Yeah. Yeah, you got the new strikers would do it.
- James: Now, tell me then—so we're going to fire—start at the beginning, now. We're going to fire this torpedo. Are the torpedoes in—have—in the tube, ready to go, at all times?
- Kalhagen: Yeah, they're all ready. There's a lanyard on the—
- James: An impulse gadget is—
- Kalhagen: Yeah.
- James: In there, ready to fire.
- Kalhagen: That's ready to fire.
- James: That's fired just by pulling a lanyard [unintelligible]?
- Kalhagen: Either a lanyard or electronically. They could fire them from up on the—on the bridge. They had a box up on the bridge with a bunch of—
- James: Sure.
- Kalhagen: Pushbuttons on it, and once they—they would set them, then they could use that.
- James: Fire them all—
- Kalhagen: Yeah.
- James: The tubes at the same time?
- Kalhagen: They could fire all at the same time, or they could fire one at a time.
- James: Okay, so once it's fired, then what is your next move?
- Kalhagen: Well, there—when it's in the tube, you got the warhead on the front end of it. And on the warhead, there's a tunnel in there with an impeller in it, and there's a lanyard with a clip on it that kept that impeller from the wind

turning(?). And then once it shot out, that—that clip just pulled out with the—with the lanyard, and as soon as it hits the water, that impeller started turning, and when—as it turned, it armed the torpedo. It brought the igniter up in there, and then there's another charge, a booster charge, and the igniter gets lit—hit first. That shuts that—turns that on, explodes the booster charge. The booster charge explodes the big charge.

James: What was that big charge?

Kalhagen: 300 pounds of TNT.

James: TNT. Didn't you have [unintelligible]—you fired them, did you reload it right away?

Kalhagen: No, we carried ten tubes—ten—ten torpedoes. That was it.

James: So—

Kalhagen: And once they were gone, we were out of them. Yeah.

James: Well, you had five tubes—

Kalhagen: Five tubes on the forward one, and—and five on the—on the after one. Yeah. You can see them in some of the pictures.

James: So—so—so—that's right. So you—you—while you were afloat, all tubes were loaded with—

Kalhagen: Loaded—loaded, yeah. Mm-hm, ready to go.

James: Right. Didn't have to start them(?).

Kalhagen: (coughs) There was—

James: So when you want to get more torpedoes, where did they come from?

Kalhagen: We had to go alongside of a tender, a destroyer tender, and—

James: High-speed(?)—

Kalhagen: Pick up our torpedoes, or get them—get them aboard at—in one of the secured ports, wherever—

James: You could swing them over to the—the hook—

Kalhagen: Yep, bring them over the liner, and then we'd pick them up with a davit.

James: You'd load them right away.

Kalhagen: No, we'd load them right away. That's what I was doing and this—but this was in port, I think, those pictures I had there. That's in port, we were loading.

James: Was that a difficult process?

Kalhagen: Well, yeah, it was. You've—lot of times, we'd have to dismantle them, too. But it's a lot of screws that are set in on them at an angle, all the way around, that holds the—the engine compartment in the back. (coughs) And then—then there's a big air flask that hold 28,000 pounds of air pressure in it. And when it—we ignite, the gyro compass would take over, start spinning, and then the igniter would ignite the alcohol, and that's what—what compressed the air coming out of the tank, with the heat, and then that went back through the two turbines that turned the two screws on it.

James: On the torpedo.

Kalhagen: Yep.

James: What was the propellant that makes those torpedoes go in the water?

Kalhagen: Compressed air.

James: What was the—the power behind the compressed air? I guess—

Kalhagen: Well, well, it—it—

James: Alcohol?

Kalhagen: It—it was preheated before it went into the turbines, and it would expand the air—

James: I see.

Kalhagen: Coming out of—coming out of the flask. (coughs) That's why torpedoes were so long, because you had that big air tank in between the warhead and the—and the engine in the back. (coughs)

James: Originally the torpedoes had a bad record in the Pacific—

Kalhagen: Yes.

James: Because they kept going under things.

Kalhagen: Yep. Yeah, they were—they were tough—just—

James: Some of them didn't explode.

Kalhagen: They were tough to shoot.

James: Tough to shoot, now?

Kalhagen: Yeah, we had to get them out, and get them going, and make them go where they were supposed to go.

James: And they [unintelligible] off course?

Kalhagen: Yeah.

James: Without—

Kalhagen: Yeah. Uh—

James: What was the problem?

Kalhagen: I think the gyro—the gyro in them was—

James: [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: Was—was—was either—it really didn't get spinning good when it was fired, and it—that controlled the fins on the back. There was—

James: Sure.

Kalhagen: There was two fins on the side and two on the uprights—one, and that controlled them.

James: Right.

Kalhagen: And if that gyro didn't work right—

James: It went(?) off course.

Kalhagen: You lost some time. They would go airborne on you and start skipping and diving and—

James: Oh, my.

Kalhagen: Yeah.

James: Yeah.

Kalhagen: Yeah, they were quite a piece of machinery.

James: Did they get better as the war moved on?

Kalhagen: Not—not with us. We had the same ones.

James: The same problem?

Kalhagen: We had what they—I think they were Mark 15s, they called them. They were a little different than the ones that they carried in the airplanes. They were shorter torpedoes.

James: On the subs.

Kalhagen: Yeah, on the subs—subs—no, subs carried same thing we did.

James: They did.

Kalhagen: Yeah, the bigger torpedoes. Yeah.

James: Apparently, the Japanese Long Lance torpedo was superior to anything the Americans had.

Kalhagen: Yeah, it was at one time. Yeah.

James: You ever see one of those?

Kalhagen: Nope, never saw them.

James: Apparently, they ran more consistently—

Kalhagen: Consistent than ours did, yeah. But we did the damage with them, I think, enough of it, anyway.

James: Did you hit something with our torpedoes—

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah.

James: While you were onboard the Bush?

Kalhagen: Nope, never.

James: Did you ever fire them in anger?



Kalhagen: Nope, never. (laughs)

James: Ever.

Kalhagen: We never got in that close.

James: I see.

Kalhagen: The Buchanan, she made a torpedo run on a—on a Jap battlewagon, I think. I'm not sure. I think it was the Buchanan. But they got right in so close that they couldn't even fire them.

James: Oh.

Kalhagen: They were just using their—their guns to rake the deck of the—the battlewagon.

James: That—that's dangerous [unintelligible] battle with 18-inch guns!

Kalhagen: (laughs) You got to—you got to get in there quick and get out! (laughs)

James: [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: But Buchanan got sunk. (coughs) Ammen got her stern blown off in Alaska. And I don't know—I think the Mullany got really beat up, too. But once they got up toward Okinawa, that's where they really took a real beating—a real beating.

James: Yeah, that's where the destroyers had some—such problem.

Kalhagen: I think that—I think they lost something like 20 or 28 destroyers up there. It was a tremendous amount. There was a—there was a book or something out on the—on the destroyers that were out there on picket duty. They really took a beating.

James: Yeah, that's picket duty. That's—

Kalhagen: Yeah.

James: That's where most of the destroyers were lost around—around—

Kalhagen: Yep. Yep. Yeah, between Okinawa and the Japanese mainland.

James: So tell me about your attacks from your kamikazes.

- Kalhagen: Oh—
- James: We're getting down to the key thing here. Let's start at the beginning, the first one, and go from there.
- Kalhagen: We—we got hit—we got hit three times.
- James: I know.
- Kalhagen: First one hit us right between the stacks, right—right on top of the number-one torpedo tubes. A good friend of mine, by the name of Tillman, that I ran around with all the time **[End of Side 1, Tape 1]**
- he was up on the tubes with the Chief Torpedoman, Mayhugh—Mayhugh—and I was back—back on the fantail, setting sights on a 20 mm, because that's what we did. We had—if you were in—under air attack, some of the torpedomen had to man guns, too. And after talking to Mayhugh, Mayhugh told him to jump, and he—off of the boat down onto the main deck. And he—he didn't do it, and he got killed.
- James: He told him to jump when he saw the plane coming in.
- Kalhagen: Yeah, mm-hm. Told him to get off, get down, because he could see where it was coming—coming right in between the stacks. After the first hit—
- James: Excuse me—did that come off right off the deck? Was the plane right on the deck?
- Kalhagen: Come—come right in—right in to the—the torpedo tubes. Oh, [unintelligible] come in? No.
- James: [unintelligible] in the water—did he come straight in on the water—
- Kalhagen: No, the—
- James: Or did he fly straight in to the boat(?)
- Kalhagen: No, the first one came in right straight down. Then—think I just think of the sequence here.
- James: Sure.
- Kalhagen: After the first one, the damage crew went—really went to work, and they—they kept the ship going.
- James: They didn't destroy your spirit.

- Kalhagen: No, that—no, they didn't get us. Then the second one, when he come in, he came—he came in at deck-level.
- James: What time? What time are we talking about? How much later?
- Kalhagen: Oh, probably twenty minutes or so.
- James: Okay.
- Kalhagen: And then when he hit, we almost got put in two. It took—stern and the—and the bow were almost separated. The captain told everybody to abandon ship, and they put lines out, but they were still moving. And they put lines out and told everybody to hang on to them until we see what that—they were going to do. So then he got some of the guys—
- James: Lines were just to hang on—
- Kalhagen: Just to hang on to, yeah.
- James: In came the ship didn't sink.
- Kalhagen: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, then they came back on the ship again, and then we got hit again, and that was it. It just split right in two. And all of the guys hit the water, and we lost 87 guys, I think, or 86 or 87 of the crew.
- James: And that third attack came how much later than the second?
- Kalhagen: Just a few minutes later. That was the end of it. Yeah.
- James: Right. So bang-bang-bang.
- Kalhagen: Yeah, they came in—in—in droves, when they came in. Everybody was trying to protect himself—all the ships were. And—and—
- James: You were firing 40s and 20s—
- Kalhagen: It didn't help—20 mm, 5 mili—or the 5-inch guns, and the—and the 40 mm guns—they were all firing. And that's what they were out there for, was try to protect these planes going in and—on these bomb runs, to Japan, and pick up what they had to ditch on the way back—to pick them up.
- James: Right.
- Kalhagen: And that's what the picket duty was. It was—

James: So your squadron—your squadron of four, they all got sunk?

Kalhagen: Most of them did, yeah. (coughs) I think the Mullany got—it really got beat up, but they made it back.

James: Oh!

Kalhagen: The Mullany made it back. They—they—they—I think they rebuilt the Mullany, and at the end of the war, it was sold to Taiwan or someplace like that.

James: Now, you did have attacks before this final day.

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah.

James: You had attacks—

Kalhagen: Prior to that, yeah. Yeah.

James: Strafing—strafing attacks—

Kalhagen: Yep.

James: That were not kamikaze. Or were all of them kamikazes at this point?

Kalhagen: Well, some were—some were shot down and never made it in, and—

James: So you shot down a few of the inseverables(?)

Kalhagen: Yep, and then after—after we went down, the guys were picked up by an LST. I got the name of that someplace. It's probably in that thing there. An LST picked us up and—

James: How long was that? How long were you in the water?

Kalhagen: Uh, I think it was like four hours, or five hours, something—you know, it went so fast that—

James: [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: And then we had our—had our life rafts off, got them in. We got the whaleboats in.

James: Everybody—most everybody who was able, got off the ship. Was that—?

Kalhagen: Yep, well—the ones that were—that—

James: Pick up the—the guys down—

Kalhagen: That—down below—the guys that really got—

James: [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: That—they had no chance.

James: They had no chance to get out.

Kalhagen: No, because it was split, and (hits table) down she went.

James: Yes.

Kalhagen: And a lot of them got killed when they hit, because it would—stuff went right down into the boiler rooms and that—and then your—all your ammunition is down in there. We—we had five handling rooms and—for ammunition storage.

James: Five separate rooms.

Kalhagen: Yeah, five separate ones. They fed each of those five-inch guns.

James: [unintelligible] You ever fire any of those five-inch guns?

Kalhagen: Oh, you bet. When I first went aboard, they—that was one of my jobs, is—

James: Oh, really?

Kalhagen: You stand inside of that turret and—

James: I see.

Kalhagen: The—the—the shell and—we had what they call “semi-fixed” ammunition. The shell would come up, you ram that in, then the—then we had the brass—brass canisters that would come up with the—with the powder charge in them.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: Then you ram that, and then they’d close the breach. Me—little skinny guy—I’m maybe—probably weighed 140 pounds. They got me lifting these 54-pound shells. And—

James: Get tired of that pretty quick(?)

Kalhagen: I said, “No, you get somebody else!” (laughs) But it—you did it. You had to do it.

James: Sure, sure [unintelligible] no choice.

Kalhagen: And then at times, if—if we were on a bombardment, sometimes the torpedomen would help clear the—the—the deck of the extra—the shells that were being kicked out.

James: [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: Yep. They tried to save some of the brass at times, if they could. If there’s—it was too busy, they just dumped them.

James: Sure. I see—five inch?

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah.

James: And sitting next to them, I’m sure that they gave you earplugs?

Kalhagen: No, just cotton.

James: Just cotton.

Kalhagen: Just chuck cotton in your ears and—

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: And the guys that—if you were handling the hot shells coming out from below the turret, everybody wore them asbestos—big asbestos gloves.

James: [unintelligible] they were really hot.

Kalhagen: Oh, they were hot. Boy, you were—they were hot when they come up—

James: You had to have protection.

Kalhagen: Yep. Yep. Yeah, you just—you just had to handle them for the few seconds to get rid of them, and then that was it.

James: How fast did that shoot?

- Kalhagen: Pretty darn—it all depends on how fast them guys could load. And they could—boy—
- James: The gun would take [unintelligible] as fast as you could get it in your barrel.
- Kalhagen: Yep, they could really pump them out. Five-inch .38s were—I don't know, like a Howitzer with the Army, or something like that—
- James: Yeah.
- Kalhagen: I suppose—
- James: 75.
- Kalhagen: And the faster you could put them in now, you could fire. And it was all done electronically, too.
- James: You didn't have to wear the [unintelligible].
- Kalhagen: Inside?
- James: Yeah.
- Kalhagen: No. Nuh-uh.
- James: The guy upstairs is down there(?)
- Kalhagen: No. You don't—yeah. What did they call that? It was—directional something. I don't know whatever “directional” means in that, but—but they—they—they brought them around. Fellow by the name of Lukowski—we were out off of—we come down from Alaska, they sent us out for target practice, out of Honolulu, in Pearl Harbor. And one of the guns wasn't set properly—the stops on it—so when they come around, when they get near the—the yard arms for the antennas and all that—
- James: Mm-hm.
- Kalhagen: They would—they couldn't fire.
- James: Right.
- Kalhagen: But somebody set it wrong, and one come out, and went off right—right overhead and killed Lukowski, and I know there was one guy sitting on a spool of wire, and a break in the deck(?), he got hit. I think there was five guys killed. Wanda(?) and I—

James: The guy swang(?) him towards the ship in fact(?).

Kalhagen: Yeah, it came around too far.

James: Yeah.

Kalhagen: And when the shell went out, it hit some of the stuff holding our antennas and that—and exploded. I think we lost five guys on that.

James: Oh, my.

Kalhagen: Yeah. Yeah.

James: That [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: There was quit an inquiry when we got back into Pearl [Harbor]. I lost—buddy—Lukowski and Tillman. There was two guys I ran around with the most.

James: Yeah.

Kalhagen: Both of them went—one went down with the ship, and the other one was—

James: Did you ever hit anything with that five-incher, like an airplane?

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

James: You got(?)

Kalhagen: Well, you know, you're so busy, you don't—

James: You don't—

Kalhagen: You don't know who's hitting what.

James: What—I suppose [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: You got your 40 mms—

James: Other ships firing—

Kalhagen: Yeah, other ships firing, and you got your—you got—now, if we were going—let's see, there was—there was three 20 mms on the fantail. They had a kind of a tub, with a—like *this*.



James: Semicircle?

Kalhagen: Yeah, and—and we had three of them in there. We had four sets of the Bofors, which were double-barreled deals, and five five-inch guns. And if you got all of them going at once—

James: Yeah, it's the same—

Kalhagen: There was an awful lot of stuff going up there.

James: Okay.

Kalhagen: And I remember—

James: Tracers on those 20 mms—every fourth one a tracer? I don't remember.

Kalhagen: I don't remember how they were—would of—I just don't remember whether they were all—I remember we—we—we went out for target practice at Nouméa, I think it was, and they—they had some new ammunition—it was magnetic. When it get up close to the target, it would just explode, and—

James: Box seven fuse(?)

Kalhagen: Yeah, and those were used a lot after that. Yeah.

James: Yeah, that's a really effective—

Kalhagen: New—new ammunition came out—even then. Yeah, so—

James: Well, that's good. So they picked you up on this LST.

Kalhagen: Yeah, got us back to Los Negros [Island], and—

James: How long were you on that?

Kalhagen: Probably six hours, eight hours, or something like that.

James: [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: Yeah, and they got back, and I'm surprised we never got it again, when we were in that thing. But went back to Los Negros, and then everybody was kind of separated, and you lost track of people, and then they sent you home for rehabilitation leave. And then—

James: Sure.

Kalhagen: Went back. Yeah.

James: With an all-new(?) ship, you always get six months, in theory(?).

Kalhagen: Yeah, but—what—I forget where I wound up now. I think I wound up in—I got mustered out of Great Lakes, but I came through Bremerton, Washington, and then home.

James: Your—your crew never reassembled, then.

Kalhagen: (cough) No.

James: [unintelligible]

Kalhagen: No, never reassembled.

James: I suppose you never really saw hardly any of them until you had the reunion.

Kalhagen: Yeah, don't—no. I think I was in—going through San Diego on the way home, or something—or San Diego or Bremerton, I forget. And I saw some of the guys off of the Buchanan.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: And—which was sunk at New Britain.

James: Oh.

Kalhagen: And in fact, I run into some of them guys here, when I was home on leave once.

James: I see.

Kalhagen: Off of that ship.

James: Well, when you got—when you got out of—got up—got home, you were discharged, and you sent(?)—when was that now?

Kalhagen: January—

James: '46?

Kalhagen: Of '46, I think. January 16th, I think, I got out.

James: So what did we do, from the six months before you got out?

Kalhagen: Uh—

James: In Bremerton?

Kalhagen: I was in—I think I was in San Diego, at the Torpedo School there.

James: The war was over.

Kalhagen: Just sitting there, you know.

James: Oh, I see.

Kalhagen: Not doing much.

James: Mm-hm.

Kalhagen: And—and then—now—

James: Why didn't they send you home right away?

Kalhagen: Well, we did. We got the rehabilitation leave, and then I had to go back to—to San Diego.

James: Oh, okay.

Kalhagen: And then—because that was the Destroyer Base there.

James: I get it.

Kalhagen: And we went back there, we stayed at the Destroyer Base. Some guys—they just fluffed off. They didn't—

James: There wasn't anything to do.

Kalhagen: You didn't do much of anything, no. And then finally, they sent me up to Bremerton. I don't know why I went to Bremerton. But I went from Bremerton back to Great Lakes, and then I was mustered out.

James: In '46.

Kalhagen: Yep.

James: So you—what did you do with your GI Bill?

Kalhagen: Built a home. (laughs)

James: Five—just the five-percent loan?

Kalhagen: Yeah, I got the loan, built a home. That's all I ever did with it.

James: Well, that's something—that's—

Kalhagen: I was home from January to June, then I went on the police department, and worked there all the rest of the time, until I retired.

James: Until you retired.

Kalhagen: Retired 22 years ago in February.

James: 22?

Kalhagen: Be 22 years ago, I retired from the police department.

James: Your—who do you keep track of now, from—from the old days? You mentioned seeing the captain once.

Kalhagen: That—that—but yeah—there—there's a—there's a—quite a few guys now, that we—we—we contact with, all the time. We had our last reunion in Portland, Oregon.

James: Just the Bush? Or was the [unintelligible]—

Kalhagen: Just the Bush. Just the Bush.

James: Okay.

Kalhagen: Well—a couple of the guys off of that LST come to it all the time, too. They always come—

James: (laughs) Well, that's nice.

Kalhagen: They want to be with us, and we appreciate it. They—I keep track with quite a few guys, don't I(?)—with Thompson, and Jack Day, and Carney—

James: They're spread out all over the country?

Kalhagen: Oh, yeah. They're all over. And what we try to do with our reunions, is go East Coast once, Midwest—

James: Sure.

Kalhagen: West Coast, and come back again the other way. And it's working out pretty good.

James: So how many people will be at this year's reunion?

Kalhagen: Maybe 40 to 50 at the most. The guys are all—

James: Everybody dying.

Kalhagen: Passing away, yeah. They're going—

James: Well, you know, us World War Two folks are dying a thousand a day. Do you know that?

Kalhagen: I—I always(?) said, "I'm going to drink that bottle of champagne."

James: (laughs)

Kalhagen: (laughs) Be the last guy. (laughs)

James: Right.

Kalhagen: Yeah. Yeah.

James: Well, that's good.

Kalhagen: Yeah.

James: Yeah. They—did you join any veterans groups?

Kalhagen: Yes, I belong to the VFW. Start—I started out—

James: Are you active in it?

Kalhagen: No, not real active in that—in that.

James: Pay your dues, like the rest of us?

Kalhagen: Yeah, well, I pay my dues. I'm a life member out at the one at Truax.

James: Mm-hm.

- Kalhagen: And I originally joined Marion Cranefield's [Post], when it was up on the Square, here in the old—
- James: Oh.
- Kalhagen: Next-door to the Belmont Hotel.
- James: Mm-hm.
- Kalhagen: That's where I first started. My uncle got me into that when I was in the service here. Belonged to the Elks, which does tremendous amount of work for veterans.
- James: Oh, really?
- Kalhagen: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we have veterans officers and that. We go out to—
- James: Hospital?
- Kalhagen: VA Hospital, and they do a lot of stuff out there for them. We just sent \$3,000 out there for equipment that they need to entertain the guys with.
- James: That's nice.
- Kalhagen: But the Elks does an awful lot of veterans work.
- James: Veterans—mm-hm.
- Kalhagen: Now they just had a big drive for the Vets' Memorial in Washington, DC.
- James: Vets' Memorial (laughs)—
- Kalhagen: Yeah. Yeah.
- James: (laughs) They brag(?) me about every month, maybe more.
- Kalhagen: Yeah. (laughs). Yeah, it's fun. I enjoy it.
- James: So, anything you've forgotten? Any experience that you can think of that's—spill out in your mind, other—
- Kalhagen: No.
- James: You had such a horrendous, singular experience there—the water—that the risk—the pale(?)—

- Kalhagen: Well—I—you know—a lot of guys complain about this and that, and—I ought to—if I had to pay for all the things I saw when I was out there, I'd—it would cost me a fortune, the travel and that. And I—as a young kid, of course, you don't think about them things and—
- James: You think that your—the training you received was adequate for the job they asked you to do?
- Kalhagen: Yep. Yep. I think it was.
- James: You didn't feel that they forgot to tell you anything?
- Kalhagen: No, I think once—once you got aboard ship, the—the Chief Petty Officers were the guys that really ran the ships. And them guys—
- James: Made sure—
- Kalhagen: The one we had, White—he—he made his First Class and Second Class Petty Officers make sure everybody knew what they had to do, and—and we had a little—what they called a “torpedo shack” right underneath the number-two tubes and we'd have little sessions in there, about what you had to do.
- James: “You do this, and you do that”?
- Kalhagen: Yeah, and especially White and Lyman and Axelson, them guys had been on ships that had gone down.
- James: Sure(?).
- Kalhagen: And we'd go through the practice of what you had to do once that ship was hit. They—they—they—they were good teachers, from experience.
- James: I guess I didn't ask you this is—how—tell me about getting off the ship.  
**[Break in Recording]**
- Kalhagen: General quarters anyway.
- James: Yes.
- Kalhagen: And of course, half them lifejackets, I think, were getting so old, you know, the sun hitting them and the—but they—they—they held us up. Yeah, and then—then you could hang on to the rafts, too, if you had to.
- James: You didn't have to worry about being washed back into the ship—on the ship?

Kalhagen: No. Uh-uh.

James: How long it take that ship to go down?

Kalhagen: Boy—

James: Weeks?

Kalhagen: It's a—probably three or four minutes. Of course, your—

James: That long?

Kalhagen: We went—yeah—started breaking in two, and from the time it was hit the first time, to the second one, and then the third one really did it in.

James: Yeah.

Kalhagen: And that—that did it—just disintegrated then.

James: So you [unintelligible] had any chance to bring anything with them. They're just lucky to get out.

Kalhagen: Nope. No, you're lucky to get out.

James: No.

Kalhagen: I know that—I think the captain's log and the—and that were saved.

James: Oh, they were?

Kalhagen: Yeah, that—that was drilled into them, I think, to the officers.

James: Yeah, well, I'm—should, before they were ready to take it with them.

Kalhagen: Yeah. They had the pouches that would float and that, and—

James: Sure.

Kalhagen: Let them off(?).

James: Did they feed you any better aboard on that LST?

Kalhagen: I don't think so. They don't—they don't—I don't remember whether we did eat or not. I think more—guys were more—wanted to keep warm and that, you know, and that—that was a big thing.



- James: Yeah, [unintelligible].
- Kalhagen: Because that water was—the water was cool up there, pretty cool. (coughs) It's—she went down fifty miles north of Okinawa. It—I think that's in that—probably that Marianas Trench that goes on up through there. She down pretty deep. Captain Smith, out at San Diego, gave the most wonderful speech about the—they call them “the—the 47—or the—no, the 87 ghosts of the USS Bush.” And that they'll talk for on, forever and ever. It was really interesting the way he put it out.
- James: Okay. Your crew originally was how many?
- Kalhagen: We ran between—oh, like 280 up on to 310 or 3—320 at times. It all depends on how many guys had been transferred.
- James: You saved a lot of them.
- Kalhagen: Oh, yeah. Well, we—we lost about a third of our crew.
- James: Third of a crew.
- Kalhagen: Yeah. Because 87 guys—we were probably, at that time, at—at close to 300. Real interesting.
- James: Right. You don't have any post-trauma effects?
- Kalhagen: No, not me. I never did.
- James: You never had—no wake up with—that days or—
- Kalhagen: What—what—what—what kind of bothers me is I don't—some of these guys go through this stuff and I just—
- James: Everybody's [unintelligible].
- Kalhagen: I can't realize that they—that they—they have these things after—it never bothered me a bit.
- James: Well, I think it depends on the personality you bring to these situations.
- Kalhagen: Yeah, and I—I think it depended on where you were raised, and how you were raised, too.
- James: That's what I mean.

- Kalhagen: When your family—I was raised on a—around farms and that, you know, and used to seeing cattle slaughtered. (laughs)
- James: [unintelligible]
- Kalhagen: But it never really affected me that much. It—what really affected me the most, was when Lukowski got killed. That really affected me, because he was—he was a Polish kid out of Minnesota.
- James: Mm-hm.
- Kalhagen: And then Tillman was—my other buddy—was out of Dover, New Jersey. And we always hung together all the time. And when one of them guys went, you know, that's when it kind of really, really hurt.
- James: [unintelligible]
- Kalhagen: But outside of that, I come home, I just went right about my business, and went back to work.
- James: Just glad you made it.
- Kalhagen: Yup.
- James: That's the feeling most people have. [unintelligible]
- Kalhagen: I talk to some of the guys, like—are up at Elks with us all the time now. Wally Wallace, he—he was in—Iwo Jima, I think, Guadalcanal. He just got shot all to pieces, but he still made it. And he—he—
- James: Who's this?
- Kalhagen: Wally Wallace.
- James: Does he live in Madison?
- Kalhagen: Yeah, yeah. He's a—he's a member of our Elks Club.
- James: You should get him for this(?) Maybe I should be talking to him.
- Kalhagen: Yeah, I imagine—
- James: I wonder—
- Kalhagen: He'd sit down with you, and tell you—

James: [unintelligible]

**[End of Interview]**