

Harry Dallison Oral History Interview

JAMES LINDLEY: This is Dr. James Lindley. It is 1 December 2010. And I am interviewing Mr. Harry Dallison, D-A-L-L-I-S-O-N, who lives in Lynchburg, Virginia. Is that correct?

HARRY DALLISON: Yeah.

JL: The purpose of the National Museum of the Pacific War Oral History Project is to collect, preserve, and interpret the stories of World War II veterans, home front experiences, the life of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, and the old Nimitz Hotel, by means of audio and video recordings. The audio and video recordings of such interviews become part of the Center for Pacific War Studies, the Archives of the National Museum of the Pacific War, and the Texas Historical Commission. These recordings will be made available for historians and academic research by scholars. This is the part that I need you to acknowledge that I've read; acknowledge that you give us permission. Let me read the little preamble, and then I'll ask you to say that you acknowledge that we can use your story. "We, the undersigned, have read the above and voluntarily offer the National Museum of the Pacific War full use of the information contained on the audio and/or video recordings and any written text of their oral history for research.

In view of the scholarly value of this research material, we hereby assign rights, title, and interests pertaining to it to the National Museum of the Pacific War and the Texas Historical Commission." So if you agree, would you please indicate that you have heard what I had to say and that you understand it and that you agree to it?

HD: I understand it and I agree to it.

JL: All right. There's one more part. "I give permission for excerpts of my oral history to be used in the Nimitz Foundation publication, *The Nimitz News*, the programs, publications, and exhibits." And if you would, just acknowledge that you've understood what I had to say and that you give us permission.

HD: Yes, sir, you have permission.

JL: Let me first say thank you so much for taking the time to do this and for your service to our country. If you would, please begin by telling us your name, where you were born, and a little bit about your early life and how you came to join the Navy, and where you might have been on December the 7th. If you would start now, that would be fine.

HD: My name is Harry W. Dallison. I was born June the 10th, 1916, in the Women's Hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I first lived in Fawn Grove, Pennsylvania, my early school years. I was always interested in

submarines. So I decided if I ever were to get a chance, I'd like to be on a submarine. One day, my mother took me there. I pulled up to the Navy yard, and there was an old submarine there. I looked it over, went in it, and I thought, "Gee, I'd like to drive it." On May the 1st, 1944, I told my wife, [Cleda?], that since my two brothers-in-law were in the service, I should join. I felt guilty for not being in the service. So I volunteered for the Navy. I went to Radio School at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. That was for 26 weeks. About the 25th week, my wife came out to see me. And she said, "Where do you go from here?" I said, "We're going into the amphibs." She said, "Since you were always interested in submarines..." I said, "Yes, I was, but (inaudible) not to join the submarine service." So she said, "I'd rather you go in the submarine service." So I went to do it that day. And it so happened one of the guys there from New London interviewed me. And I met the qualifications. So I went to New London, Connecticut, for submarine school. The first person I met was a chief boatswain's mate called Charlie Spritz. He was a mean, nasty SOB of a guy. His job was to get the guys out that were not eligible for submarine school.

First thing I did, I met a psychiatrist. He asked me why I joined it and so on. Then he asked me if I had claustrophobia; and I said, "Of course not." Next thing I did, I went to the diving tower, which was a big 12-foot-diameter tank filled with water. It was there that I learned how to use the (inaudible) to make an escape from a submarine in case of emergency. First you go 12 feet, and then they lower you down (inaudible) don't spit the mouthpiece out (inaudible) through that, they take you down to 25 feet, 50 feet, and then to the bottom at 100-foot deep. And at the bottom, there's two mermaids painted on the side of half of the tank. (laughter) Anyway, I passed all that. Then I had a complete physical again, especially on my ears, to make sure the pressure didn't poke through my eardrums. Then I went to submarine school. They were all former submarine men. They taught me the rudiments of a submarine. You had to learn all the bow planes, the stern planes, and all the pipe and cables, what they all mean. And then we went onto a simulator. It was a platform. And you rode on the bow plane or the stern plane. And as you do them, the room would tilt. This was how they were on a submarine. After that, they said, "What would you like to be?" I said, "I'm a radio amateur. I'd like to be a radio man." So they sent me to Groton,

Connecticut, radio class for about a week. Then from there I took a week of radar training at Groton, Connecticut.

And then I was shipped out to the West Coast, to San Diego, to the West Coast Sound School out at Loma Point off of San Diego. It was there that I learned about the different (inaudible) in the water such as fish, lobsters, and all kinds of things that make noises. Then I learned about the doppler. You keep a sonar, and you hit a key, and you'd send out a ping. And then it reflects back. It's either up- or down-doppler, which determines whether the target is coming towards you or going away from you. After that, I went back up to Mare Island to wait for a submarine to be [under?] the submarine. But in the meantime, I got the flu. They called it cat fever in those days. I laid there for about a week in the infirmary. And by that time, the war ended. So I never did make a war patrol. So I was sent to Hunters Point, California, to finish out my days there. And I was assigned to the *USS Pintado*, SS 387. And I guess we were there for about three months. And a friend of mine, a fella by the name of [Red Delenoy?], he and I met and got together. And of course, we had routines duties to do, because we were waiting for discharge. And he and I decided we would take care of cleaning up the

barracks. And that way, we only worked about three hours, and we'd have liberty the rest of the day. One night, we go down to the Mission District. We went into a bar. And while we're in there, Red got in an argument with a guy. And they said, "Let's go outside." So I went out with him. And he took a swing at the guy and he broke a big window. Anyway, the civilian disappeared. Two policemen came and grabbed us. They took care of Red; he'd cut his arm. And then I said, "Okay, we'll have to go back to the ship now." He says, "No, you're not. You're going to the Hall of Justice." (laughter) So we spent a night in the slammer at the Hall of Justice. The chief petty officer came in the next morning. We went up for a hearing. He said, "Just plead guilty." We were fined \$30 and restricted to our base for a month. That's about what we got out of that. So then I was discharged in April the 4th, 1946. And I was living in Pennsylvania then. That's the end of my service, as far as submarine activity is concerned. That last three months that I was at Hunters Point, we were on what they call the Submarine Relief School. I'm a little bit mixed up. But I think you got most of what I'm talking about.

JL: Yes, sir. I sure have. Let me ask you, what were you doing on December the 7th, 1941? Do you remember how you found out about Pearl Harbor?

HD: Yes. I was living in Philadelphia with my wife and my mother-in-law and I. We had the radio on, listening to Sammy Kaye, I think. They interrupted it. Then they mentioned that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. So the next day, my mother-in-law went home because she had two sons that were eligible for war duty. So I guess that's about all that I could tell you about it. You have any questions?

JL: When you were in Radio School or even when you were assigned to the *Pintado*, because this was after the war, did you listen to the Ham frequencies?

HD: Oh, yes. I do it today. Yeah, I'm living at (inaudible). It's an adult-care facility. And the only radio activity I have is only two meters, because I can't put up a high HF antenna.

JL: I suppose that you were a big CW operator.

HD: Oh, yeah. I could copy up to -- the first six weeks I was in radio school, I was allowed to copy press wireless while the other guys were also learning to type and learning to code. So at the end of six weeks, then I had what they call the fox watch. That was 10 words a minute. Of course, that's coded. It didn't make sense at all. I forgot to mention that while I was in Radio School, one of

the daily classes was what they call Procedure, which was what to say in a message and so on.

JL: It sounds like you had some wonderful experiences.

HD: Oh, I did. (laughs)

JL: I certainly appreciate you taking the time to tell us about your experience on the submarine and your Navy experience.

HD: I've just written my autobiography. It's about 60 pages, with a whole bunch of pictures in there. We had a picture of Charlie Spritz and the diving tower and so on.

JL: Very good. Let me say thank you, again, for taking the time to talk to us and to tell us your story. We certainly appreciate it. (off-topic dialogue; not transcribed)

HD: I certainly appreciate you interviewing me.

JL: Yes, sir. Thank you again for all of your service. And thank you for taking the time to talk to us.

HD: Yes, sir. Thank you very much for letting me have the interview.

JL: Okay, sir. You have a pleasant day.

HD: God bless you.

JL: And to you, too.

HD: Seventy-three.

JL: (laughs) Seventy-threes. Bye-bye.

END OF AUDIO FILE