

Lincoln Grahlf's Oral History Interview

CHARLIE SIMMONS: This is Charlie Simmons. Today is the 11th of May, 2012. I am interviewing Lincoln Grahlf's. This interview is taking place in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Nimitz Museum, and this interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. First, Lincoln, if I could welcome you to the Nimitz. I'm glad you were shipped through, or was able to get here. I would like for you to start off if you would, please by stating your name, your place of birth, and your date of birth.

LINCOLN GRAHLF'S: My name is Lincoln Grahlf's. I was born December 4th, 1922, in New Haven, Connecticut.

CS: Okay, and what sort of family did you have? Brothers and sisters?

LG: No, I'm an only child. My father was a World War I veteran, who had a temporary position with the Veterans Bureau as a counselor for World War I veterans who were being sent by the Veterans Bureau to school at Yale University at the time I was born. My parents go back four

generations in New York, so my parents were sort of temporarily out of town at the time.

CS: What did your father do?

LG: Well, after that, because he had lost -- he had a partial loss of hearing during the war, the Veterans Bureau sent him to school, to Columbia School of Journalism. And right out of Columbia School of Journalism in 1926, he went to work as a copy editor for the New York Times. And he held that job for the next 40 years. So in a way, we were very fortunate. My father got a steady job in 1926, and when the Depression came along, we were taken care of.

CS: Wow, some of the lucky ones. What was your growing up like? What sort of schools did you go to?

LG: I went to New York City Public Schools for the first, well, until I graduated from high school, or until I graduated from grade school, I'm sorry. Then my parents were divorced, and my mother decided to -- she did not have any college education. She decided to go to college. So we went upstate to a small town where she went to teacher's college. So I went to a small town junior high school. Then after she graduated, she got a job at a boarding school in Florida, and I went along with her. So I spent

two years at a high-class boarding school in Daytona Beach, Florida.

CS: Were you able to go to school there, then?

LG: Yes.

CS: Oh, that was nice.

LG: So in essence, I was able to see how the rich people live.

CS: You got to see both sides of the world that way, yes.

LG: And then we returned to New York, and my mother got a job teaching in a public school on Long Island. My senior year in high school, I went to public school on Long Island.

After I graduated, I went to Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, for one year. I graduated from high school in 1940, went to Antioch College in the school year '40-'41. I had kind of breezed through school without working very hard at it, so I didn't have very good study habits.

I was not a great scholar in college, and I dropped out at the end of the year. Went to work for Grumman Aircraft on Long Island. Worked for a year as a sheet metal fabricator on a Grumman Wildcat. And --

CS: This would have been 1941, is that correct?

LG: Nineteen forty-one, forty-two, yeah.

CS: Okay.

LG: Then I could feel the draft breathing down my neck, and I decided that I'd always had a dream of going to sea, so I enlisted in the Navy in October, 1942.

CS: So this is -- you just responded? Everybody was being drafted anyhow, so you decided that --

LG: My whole generation ended up in the service.

CS: Yes. Gee. Okay, so and after you joined, where did you go to boot camp?

LG: Newport, Rhode Island. They told me that that was the coldest winter they'd had in Newport since World War I.

CS: What was boot camp like? You did travel around, so you'd seen some of the country. You were not unfamiliar with meeting new people and experiencing new things, right?

LG: Well, you know, I enlisted for six years, and I didn't know whether I was going to stay in the Navy, or get out after the war. So I took it seriously. I learned all the rules and went by the book. It was pretty serious business for me. You know, the first time they took us out and started teaching us hand-to-hand combat, I said to myself, what did I get myself in for? But I got through boot camp. Went home on boot leave. Well, interestingly enough, during boot camp, they were screening us for assignments for after boot camp. One day they sent me to see the eye doctor.

And I wasn't wearing glasses when I went to the eye doctor, but they sent me to see the eye doctor because they had me slated to go to Range Finder Operator's School. And the doctor examined my eyes, and he said, "Son, do you wear glasses?" I said, "Well, I wear them for reading, sir." He said, "Do you want to do to this school?" I said, "Not particularly." He said, "okay, well, then I'll say I can't recommend you because after all, you'd have to be looking through the instruments without your glasses, and then putting them back on to do the work. That would be too clumsy, so I'll say no on this." So I got out going to Range Finder Operator's School.

CS: Okay, well, did you have another school lined up, or --

LG: No, but my first choice was quartermaster. But I went home on boot leave, not knowing what was going to happen to me. This was right around Christmas of 1942. We were losing ships and men like crazy at that time. So I went home on a week's boot leave, and when I came back, they lined us all up. In a way, you didn't know what was going to happen to you. It was a pretty bleak time. They called me out and said, "We're sending you to quartermaster's School right here in Newport for the next four months." And that was like a reprieve.

CS: Four months. Okay, so --

LG: Did I say four months? Three months, I'm sorry. It was a 12-week school.

CS: Okay. So --

LG: So I went to quartermaster's school and graduated at a quartermaster third class.

CS: Okay, and so this will bring you up to about February of --

LG: March of '43.

CS: March of '43? Okay. What happens then?

LG: They sent me to Brooklyn, to the Brooklyn Navy Yard barracks where I was told I was assigned to a ship that was still being built in Stamford, Connecticut, a PC, the PC-1211. As I said, she was still being built.

CS: Yeah.

LG: I didn't go aboard until August of '43, and we put her in commission then.

CS: Now, for the record, a PC is a -- is what?

LG: Patrol Craft.

CS: Patrol Craft. That's a small vessel that --

LG: Essential anti-submarine vessel.

CS: Anti-submarine, okay. Okay. So?

LG: And after we put her in commission, we were assigned to escort convoys, merchant convoys, up and down the East

Coast. At first, we were escorting convoys between Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Port of Spain, Trinidad. Then later, we got assigned to the run between Guantanamo By and New York. And that was good duty. The captain said, "If you guys get all the ship's work done on the Guantanamo end, I'll give you 24-hour liberty in New York. That's how we operated.

CS: Now, was your mother still living in New York at that time?

LG: My mother was living on Long Island.

CS: Long Island, okay.

LG: So was able to go visit her occasionally.

CS: Well, you would have had friends there too, after you graduated.

LG: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

CS: So that was more or less kind of home base for you.

LG: Home base, right. And that was great duty.

CS: Okay. So how long was this, your Caribbean and Gitmo to New York routine?

LG: About nine months.

CS: Okay. Did you do anti-submarine patrolling during this time? Or just escort?

LG: Escort duty and ant-submarine patrol.

CS: Okay. And did you ever find anything?

LG: We had some submarine contacts. We didn't get any kills, but we -- I like to believe we scared them away.

CS: Yeah. Well, there were a lot of U-boats that served in that area at the time.

LG: Oh, there were. They were. You know, as a quartermaster, one of my jobs was keeping that nautical charge up to date. And we were constantly getting reports of sunken vessels that we had to chart on them.

CS: Yeah, that was pretty ugly days.

LG: Anyway, let's see. I told you I was third class quartermaster. And the executive officer of the ship kept telling me, the captain, that really, I deserved to be promoted to second class. And the captain said, "Well, I've got a good bridge gang here. I don't want to promote anybody because then we'll be over-complement, and they'll transfer somebody off, and I'll lose my good crew." Finally, in March of '44, the captain promoted me to first class. Wouldn't you know, a month later I got orders transferring me to small craft training center in Miami, Florida. So I went through a refresher course in visual communications and navigation at small craft training center. And then they assigned me to a nucleus crew for a sea-going tugboat.

CS: Visual communications would be semaphore?

LG: Flashing light and semaphore, and flag hoist.

CS: Okay. And so you know all the flag combinations for all this --

LG: Oh, yeah.

CS: That's a very esoteric body of knowledge, I'm sure.

LG: And I eventually reached a speed of about eight or nine words per minute in flashing light, which was what we used most of the time.

CS: Yeah. Yeah. So okay, so you got assigned to a sea-going tug?

LG: Right. I was on a nucleus crew for the USS ATA-199, which again was just being built.

CS: So you're a plankowner, then?

LG: Yeah.

CS: Okay. Which you would have been for the PC-1211, too?

LG: That's correct.

CS: So you're a double plankowner. That's pretty unusual. Okay, so you got aboard your new craft, and then where was this now?

LG: Well, we were a nucleus crew, so we went through training for, you know, the kind of things you have to do on an auxiliary vessel. We went through special cargo handling

and firefighting, and training of that sort. Then ultimately, the group of us, I forget how many of us there were, sent in -- oh, let me think. It was probably close to the end of August, beginning of September. They sent us to Orange, Texas. The ship was being built in Port Arthur, Texas, and they sent us to Orange, Texas.

CS: Okay. And you met your ship, and --

LG: And we spent a month in Orange waiting to be ordered aboard ship, and for the rest of our crew to come and meet us. Meanwhile, because I had a right arm rate -- and I don't know if you're familiar with the distinction; in those days there were seven specialties that wore their rating badge on their right arm, called the Seaman Branch. There's quartermaster's signalman, boats and mates, gunner's mates, torpedo man's mates and fire control man. That's only six. I don't remember what the seventh one was. But anyway, these were presumably the people who could take command in case the officers weren't there. We were kind of an elite group. So because of that, they made me master's arms of the recreation hall. And that's how I spent that month.

CS: So the -- when you went aboard, did you put to sea immediately. And now shakedown (inaudible)?

LG: Well, went aboard in Port Arthur, Texas. We went down to Galveston and went through our shakedown cruise out of Galveston.

CS: And the rest of the crew, the rest of the complement had --

LG: Had joined this --

CS: Had joined the nucleus --

LG: Right. Right.

CS: Okay. How many -- what was the --

LG: The total (inaudible) was -- I'm trying to think. I want to say 30 men and 5 officers.

CS: Okay. Okay, and so Galveston shakedown cruise, what period of time are we talking about now, then? This would be --

LG: We went in commission on the 10th of October. So October, it would be --

CS: It was late in the year of --

LG: It would probably be, by the time we finished the shakedown cruise, around Thanksgiving.

CS: Okay. So we're talking late November in 1944, right? This is '44?

LG: Yeah, we're talking about '44. Wait a minute, let me back it up. It would be early November.

CS: Okay. Okay. So --

LG: And then we received orders to rendezvous with three civilian tugs, Moran Towing Company tugs, towing three sections of an advance base floating drydock, sectional dry dock. They call it ABSD, Advance Base Sectional Drydock.

CS: Where did you rendezvous?

LG: We were supposed to rendezvous with them, let's see, we were supposed to go to New Orleans and receive further instructions in New Orleans, and then come out and rendezvous with them south of the Mississippi Delta.

CS: Okay, down and out in the Gulf.

LG: Yeah. We got to the Delta, and we received orders, forget about going to New Orleans. The convoy is already underway; you've got to catch up with them. So between there and Panama, we caught up with the convoy. And because the other three tugs were civilian tugs, we were OTC, or Officer in Tactical Command, was our skipper.

CS: Okay. So through the Panama Canal?

LG: We went through -- well, we got to Colón in Panama, and the port director said, "I've got a Navy tug here; I've got non-self-propelled equipment that I have to get from here to the Pacific." So we spent I don't know how long, but we spent at least 10 days there, with him using us to tow barges and stuff through the canal.

CS: Yeah? Okay. And you were going back and forth through the Panama Canal?

LG: Right. By that time, I was familiar enough with the ship, and the captain was familiar enough with me, and he wouldn't let anybody else on the wheel when anything really touchy was happening. So here I am at the wheel all the time, going back and forth through the canal. He even had his mess attendant bring me my food while I was on the wheel, which made me feel pretty important.

CS: Sure. I can imagine so. He's turning over the whole ship, I mean, the safety of the ship is --

LG: Well, we had canal pilots aboard, of course.

CS: But nonetheless, manning the wheel.

LG: Right. So then finally, the -- I guess Washington told the port director who let that tug go, and we had orders --

CS: Now, had you been keeping it -- was it drydock that you were towing? The sectional drydock? Was that waiting for you to get finished with your chores there in the Canal Zone?

LG: They were sitting on the Pacific end waiting for us.

CS: Okay. So when we were finally released, we took off across the Pacific. And here's the interesting thing; Panama Canal Zone, it was known that that was a place where there

were spies around, and it was kind of a touchy place for a country at war. So they ordered us, with these three civilian tugs towing the three drydocks, and we were in command, but we were acting as a retriever in case one of them had some trouble, we'd take over the tow. And we received orders to go from Panama to Manus Island, which is down south of the equator. It's east of New Guinea. Or excuse me, west of New Guinea.

So my boss, who was navigator on there, who was just a wonderful guy, he had 32 years in the Navy. He was a warrant chief boatswain. He had been a quartermaster. He was really a terrific navigator. And when we got orders to go to Manus Island, he should have kept -- well, what we ought to do is follow the equatorial countercurrent, which will help us to make better time. So here we are, just a couple of degrees off the equator, going along there. I don't know how far away it got when we got a message from Washington -- oh, I know what it was. The captain of one of the civilian tugs died. So they buried him at sea. And we broke radio silence to notify Washington that this guy had died, and latitude and longitude where he'd been buried at sea. And almost immediately, we get a message back from

Washington, saying, "Why are you there? Why didn't you follow my so-and-so order?" And apparently, it had been a ruse that they had sent us to this place south of the equator. After we were underway, they had sent a message diverting us. We were really supposed to go to Eniwetok . And here we were, way south of where they thought we should be. And so --

CS: You hadn't gotten the correction?

LG: The radio man had missed the message. And of course, he was disciplined for this, as you might suspect. And we got the correct message, and we changed course and went to Eniwetok . And then from Eniwetok , we went on to Ulithi and then to Leyte, and we were actually supposed to deliver the sectional drydock on the south end of Leyte Gulf. Which is what we did.

CS: Okay. And so this would have been, it must have taken you a month or two to get to all that.

LG: I think it was -- well, I do know we were 43 days at sea between Panama and Eniwetok .

CS: Yeah. You carried -- did your ship carry enough fuel to get that far? Or did you have to refuel?

LG: We refueled from the drydocks that were being towed.

CS: Oh, the drydocks had fuel. Okay.

LG: They had fuel on board.

CS: Okay. Okay, so you dropped your drydock in Leyte Gulf, and
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LG: And then we sat around Leyte Gulf for a while, doing odd chores that were assigned by the harbor master there. And, oh, I don't know, we were in around that part of the Pacific. I remember we went to Guam, we went to Tinian. We went all over the place doing odd jobs.

CS: Did you ever have any odd jobs towing damaged vessels from one point to another? Or was this mostly non-self-propelled --

LG: This was mostly bringing non-self-propelled stuff up from the rear areas to the forward areas, things of that sort. I do remember when they were -- one of the great experiences, when they were getting ready for the invasion of the Iwo, the LSTs would go up on the beach. They were loading at Leyte because there was a nice beach for them to go up on. And these LSTs, they had a stern anchor that they were supposed to drop way out, to help them pull off. I think some of these LST skippers were not savvy enough. They didn't drop that stern anchor far enough out. And they'd get up on the beach, they'd get it loaded, they'd be heavy, they couldn't get off. So the night before that

task force took off for Iwo, we spent the night running around, pulling those LSTs off the beach after they were loaded. That was the kind of thing we got stuck with.

CS: Well, it's a valuable job. It had to be done.

LG: Absolutely.

CS: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

LG: And then again, I can't pinpoint it for you in time, but it was early 1945 --

CS: I think it was February, '45.

LG: Yeah. And it was after that. They sent us down to the Russell Islands. They sent, let's see, I think there were three tugs they sent down there to the Russell Islands, which is, of course, the war had moved north from there. But the Russell Islands are near the Solomon Islands, you know, where there had been a lot of fighting. And there was a base there that assembled pontoons, the kind of pontoons they used for landing operations, and things that side. So they sent these three tugs with us in command to the Russell Islands to pick up some barges loaded with pontoons. We went down there, and loaded up with pontoons. And went from there, our orders were to take them to Okinawa.

CS: Now was this before the invasion had started on Okinawa?

LG: Yes.

CS: Okay. Because that didn't start until, what, April? I think it was April, maybe, when --

LG: Something in my head says April 1st. Again, I --

CS: Okay, yeah, it's been --

LG: -- I don't have all these dates in my head.

CS: -- it's been a long time. It's been a long time, yes.

LG: I know where to look them up. So do you, I guess. So here are these three or four tugs, I think it was three tugs, each one pulling three barges, loaded with pontoons from south of the equator, all the way up to Okinawa. We get there, and here are all these barges loaded with pontoons. And we pull alongside this repair ship, and a lieutenant commander, a CB lieutenant commander comes aboard. And my CO says, "We're supposed to turn these over to you." Lieutenant commander looks out at all these pontoons, and he said, "I don't know what the hell I'm going to do with them. I got more pontoons than I can use."

CS: Oh. It probably happened pretty frequently.

LG: I always say we won the war with the tremendous production of our factories.

CS: Yeah. Yeah. So you're at Okinawa now.

LG: Yeah.

CS: And the fighting's going on in the island.

LG: And of course, one of the things that I remember about the time we were in what the Americans chose to call "Buckner Bay" in Okinawa, was that every night about the time the moon set, we could expect the Japanese planes to come over and bomb. And I can remember the boats running around, laying smoke over all the big ships. And we were sitting out there in the moonlight. I guess they figured the Japanese wouldn't waste their bombs on us.

CS: I suppose so.

LG: But it wasn't a good feeling.

CS: Yeah, I can imagine. Yeah.

LG: And then we got orders, finally, to tow the USS Hadley. And of course, are you familiar with the story, the Hadley, she had been on a picket line and had been hit by three, I believe, kamikaze planes, was dead in the water? They put her in drydock in Kerama Retto, I think, and patched her up. And she was floating, but she didn't have any -- her two main shafts were knocked out of line. So she didn't have any propulsion.

CS: So you first hooked up with the Hadley after she had been in drydock there?

LG: Yeah. Yeah.

CS: And they had gotten the holes patched up enough for her to get floated back to the --

LG: Right. Then we were ordered to tow her back to San Francisco.

CS: Okay. So how long did that take?

LG: We left Okinawa on the 29th of July, 1945. The third day out, a typhoon hit. And everybody who was in that part of the world remembers that typhoon, because I've run into other people --

CS: Absolutely. I know that typhoon well.

LG: Okay. We got through the typhoon, and in my book I have some of these details. One of the guys on the Hadley told me they saw -- they were watching the clinometer, and it went over the figure 56 or 57 degrees, hits me in my mind. Anyway, they rolled pretty far over, but they didn't capsize.

CS: And you're -- what was the length of -- how big was the ship you were on? The 199?

LG: The ATA-199 was 143 feet long, 33 feet wide.

CS: Pretty small vessel, then.

LG: Yeah.

CS: A lot smaller than (inaudible).

LG: Yeah. We were a small ocean-going tug. We had two General Motor diesels. We were diesel-electric powered. We had two 750 horsepower General Motor diesels for power.

CS: Okay, so --

LG: But it was a gutsy little ship.

CS: Okay, so you were about a month and a half, probably, getting back to San Francisco?

LG: We left Okinawa on the 29th of July. We pulled into San Francisco on the 26th of September. So it was just about two months.

CS: Two months. Phew.

LG: And the third, as I told you, the third day out, we hit this typhoon. We got through the typhoon. It began -- the waters began to come, and the tow line parted. If that tow line had let go in the middle of the typhoon, that ship and those guys would have been lost. So we were just, you know, everybody was very fortunate.

CS: That close.

LG: Yeah. But obviously, because of the typhoon, the convoy we were on broke up. We had to proceed independently. You didn't have much choice; you had to keep the ship oriented across the waves, not in the trough. So we ended up on Saipan. And we pulled into Saipan. And I remember, we

were moored at Saipan when we got word that the bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima.

CS: That must have been a good feeling.

LG: You know, when I think back on it, it was kind of a mixed feeling, because we had really thought we were going to drop this destroyer and go back and be in the action. And when you're in your twenties, you're kind of crazy. You want to be in the action. And all of a sudden, it was over. But then, as I say, it was a mixed feeling. Well, I'm glad it's over, but I missed out on the big one.

CS: Yeah. Well, I'm sure a lot of people felt that way. I know, I know what you mean.

LG: But now in my eighties, I say I'm so happy that it happened.

CS: Yeah. Your head says you're happy, but your heart really wanted to take -- see if you could pass the test. I think just about every man feels that way that I've ever talked to about it.

LG: Right. Then we proceeded from Saipan to Eniwetok to Pearl Harbor, to San Francisco. And in the course of that trip, the tow line parted nine times.

CS: Heavy seas?

LG: Hmm?

CS: Was it due to heavy seas?

LG: Who knows? They, you know, a lot of strain on it going that far.

CS: Yeah.

LG: And sure, we hit some heavy seas. Who knows what caused it to part? But I point out to people who ask me sometimes, our tow line was shackled to a link in the anchor chain of the Hadley. And every time it parted, it was one of the links of the anchor chain that let go, because the metal, you know, the metal in those links is more brittle than our cable would have been. And when I think back on it, that was probably by design to do it that way, because it was much easier to retrieve the anchor chain and hook into another length than it would have been to try to splice that tow line.

CS: Yeah. I can imagine that tow line must have been -- what sort of diameter are you talking about?

LG: This big around.

CS: Four or five inches, maybe? Four?

LG: I think it was six-inch circumference.

CS: six-inch circumference? Yeah? Well, that's -- so you got the Hadley back to San Francisco. Got her dropped off there, and then what happened? It was over?

LG: The war was over, but I still had three years left on my enlistment.

CS: You signed up for six, okay. How did you feel about that at that time? Were you --

LG: I still hadn't made up my mind about whether I was going to make a career of it or not. The Navy made up my mind later on, by the things that happened to me. We -- after we dropped off the Hadley, we were put in drydock, and some overall, and then we turned around and went back out to Pearl Harbor. And at that time, ComServPac had I don't know how many tugs sitting in Pearl Harbor. And they had a system where they rotated among the half a dozen or so tugs that they had there, ocean tugs I'm talking about, where one tug would have what we call the "ready-duty," and they would go out at 8:00 in the morning and patrol off the south end of Oahu in case of any difficulties. There were a lot of ships coming back from the Far East, and everybody wanted to get back to the States. So there were breakdowns, and people who were a little too eager and ran under a reef, or something like that. So they actually had a ready-duty tug out there during daylight hours. And the rest of the tugs were ready to go out. Oh, we very frequently would end up being sent, either if we were the

ready-duty tug, or sometimes when we were second in line. We'd be sent out to pick up some ship where the skipper got as far as Pearl Harbor, and he told the authorities there, "We're seaworthy, we're ready to go," because he wanted to get his ship and crew back to San Francisco. And they could get somewhere north of Molokai and break down, and we'd have to go out and tow them back. And we had a number of those.

So that was the kind of duty we had for a while. And then finally, let's see, in about -- I want to say about April, April or May of '46, I got orders transferring me to the USS Chowanoc, which was a fleet tug, a bigger tug, the ATF-100). And by this time, I was a first class quartermaster. They transferred me aboard the Chowanoc, in the chief quartermaster's berth, because they were short of chief quartermasters. And I lasted 10 days on the Chowanac, and they found a chief to take my place, and they put him there, and I got transferred again to an ATR.

CS: So you're first class, quartermaster first class?

LG: Yeah. And I got transferred to the ATR-40 after 10 days.

CS: And what was that?

LG: A rescue tug.

CS: Rescue tug. What is a rescue tug as opposed to a, say, a sea-going, or any other type of tug?

LG: Well, the ATRs were wooden-hulled; they had reciprocating steam engines, as opposed to the diesel engines on the other tugs. And the main thing was, they had a lot of firefighting equipment. They had a high-pressure fire monitor on top of the pilothouse that would pump I don't know how many gallons of water per minute. It was designed to put out fires and rescue vessels in trouble, and things of that sort. And shortly after I was transferred to the ATR-40, I found out we were assigned to go to Bikini for the atomic bomb test. And we were a part --

CS: Did you tow anything down there? Or did you just go on your own?

LG: We just went with a bunch of other ships.

CS: Okay. Because they were -- yeah, they were bringing surplus ships in to be [destroyed?] --

LG: Most of those target ships --

CS: -- target ships?

LG: -- most of those target ships went there under their own power, and then they took the crews off when they got them there.

CS: Did they do any kind of a strip-down on those, taking any of the, like, the navigation equipment or anything like that off of there? Or they just --

LG: They left the equipment on there. They really wanted to see what happened to the equipment. In fact, I know I was in a working party that went aboard the USS Pennsylvania after the two bombs. And we went into the ward room, and the table in the ward room was set for a meal. I mean, that's how complete they had it.

CS: Yes. I had no idea.

LG: So anyway, then I went out to Bikini on the ATR-40. And we were in what was called the "salvage unit." We were nine nautical miles away for each of the detonations, and then we were back in alongside the target vessels in the lagoon four hours after the detonation.

CS: With the Geiger counter, I hope, operating?

LG: No.

CS: No? Oh, for crying out loud.

LG: No.

CS: Well, they really didn't understand radiation poisoning I think, then, because they had people that went in to Hiroshima weeks after the event.

LG: There were -- you can't give me -- some of those people knew. But they didn't want to slow down the operation for little technicalities like that. In one of the experiences I remember, and I've written this elsewhere, is what I was telling you, that after the -- (phone rings)

CS: Excuse me, I'm going to have to --

LG: Yeah.

(break in audio)

CS: Has it been -- it's a message. Okay, I'm sorry.

LG: After both Able and Baker shots, the USS Pennsylvania had a split seam someplace in her hull. She was taking on water. And we were sent alongside the Pennsylvania with orders to have a work crew go aboard and put submersible pumps down to keep her pumped out, so she wouldn't sink. And we had a guy from the atomic energy group with a Geiger counter, took readings and he did some calculations and said, "Safe exposure of anybody aboard this ship is X-number of minutes."

So we sent a work party over, and they spent that number of minutes over. And they came back, and then we sent another work party over. Pretty soon all the enlisted men on our ship had been over once for that number of minutes. So my

skipper gets on the voice radio, calls the group commander, tells him the situation, "Here's the situation. All my men have had safe exposure." Being quartermaster, I was on the bridge of the ship. I heard the response. The response that came back, so help me, was, "Safe exposure, my ass! Don't let that ship sink!" You know, this is where I become a little bit cynical about their safety measures. We had no goggles, we had no special clothing, hazmat clothing, we had nothing.

CS: Well, you were told to not look at the blast when they had the detonations, right? No?

LG: We were told, "Put your arm over your eyes, like that." When the detonation occurred, we were steaming in formation, I was on the wheel. So here I am steering the ship, you know?

CS: Oh! You're nine miles away?

LG: Yeah.

CS: Wasn't there a huge wave that was generated by those blasts?

LG: Well, we were outside the reef, so that didn't make a difference.

CS: Oh, okay. Yeah. Right.

LG: But the pressure wave in the atmosphere really felt like something was hitting you. It was that much of a concussion. And the other thing that I remember is, there were little particles, after a short time, there were little particles of debris floating in the air.

CS: Have you ever kept track of the live history of any of your shipmates on board there to see what the incidence of cancer was, I wonder?

LG: Well, I actually wrote my PhD dissertation based on questionnaires and interviews of atomic veterans.

CS: What was your PhD in?

LG: In sociology. And if I remember correctly, it was more than half of the subject. I had a random sample of guys from all the tests, the Pacific tests and the Nevada tests. I ran a sample of just under four hundred guys. And I know it was more than half of these guys that answered the question, "Have you ever had any illnesses that you attribute to your exposure to radiation?" Over half of the guys said yes. The question that's most pertinent to me is, I asked, "Have any of your children or grandchildren -- were any of your children or grandchildren born with some anomaly? Twenty-one percent of my sample said yes. Now,

the government claims that there's no genetic effect. And I question that.

CS: Well, I would question it just on general principles. I mean --

LG: I would question it based on the reading I've done of some of the work by geneticists.

CS: Sure. Yeah, well, I mean just general knowledge of genetic mutations --

LG: Right.

CS: -- tell you that there has got to be some additional deterioration of the (inaudible).

LG: But the government would rather not -- some of these government bureaucrats see a possible implication of more liability for them. I guess that's the only explanation I can come up with. And to cut to the chase and finish up as fast as I can, we were running around that lagoon where those atomic bombs had been detonated from the 1st of July, when the shot Able was, until September. We were taking that -- as I told you, were steamship, so we were making fresh water out of that water in the lagoon. We were using that water for bathing, cooking, washing clothes and so forth. Then we went back to the States, decommissioned the ship. I went on 60 days' leave, reported back in to 12th

Naval district. Let's see, I got back to duty in March, and it was late April that I ended up in the hospital with an abscess on my face that nobody seemed to know, you know, it was a great big abscess that wouldn't go away. Then I started having a fever. I reported into Oak Knoll Hospital, and they tried massive shots of penicillin, Epsom salts, so you get all the standard thing. Nothing would touch it. And all of a sudden, after a few days in the hospital, I find myself in a private room. Well, they don't put enlisted men in a private room in a Naval hospital, at least I've never heard of it. Then a bunch of doctors come in, and one of them, obviously, was in charge. He said, "Now, this is the interesting case I've been telling you about." And finally one day, they take me down to x-ray. They put a lead shield over my eye, and hit this thing with x-ray. After two shots with x-ray, the abscess started getting better, and it cleared up. And this one old commander said to me when they were giving me the -- he said, "Now son, when I was a country doctor, which would be what I used to call the hair of the dog that bit you." And that was the only clue anybody ever gave me that they thought it had a connection with my exposure to radiation.

CS: Well, obviously the clues are there. The private room and the "interesting case," and so forth. Yeah.

LG: Yeah. But I consider myself very lucky it cleared up.

CS: Yeah.

LG: I only had one follow-up from that, and that was for about seven to nine months, I got boils all over my body. They'd clear up and I'd get some more.

CS: Did you ever report that to the medical authorities in the Navy?

LG: Yeah. I asked them for treatment for it.

CS: Yeah, okay. So that would have been on your record, too. So that is on record. Okay.

LG: Yeah. And I am in a position right now, I just -- I had an examination at the VA. I do have thyroid trouble, and they do acknowledge that that is from radioactive iodine.

CS: [To explain that?], yeah. Okay.

LG: But I had an examination at the VA a little over a year ago, and a radiation oncologist examined me, and he said I should file a claim and have a complete workup based on that claim. Well, just when I was going to file the claim, my wife was diagnosed with lymphoma. And so I put all things aside. She went through chemotherapy for the lymphoma, and thankfully she's in complete remission now.

CS: Oh, good. That's good.

LG: So I'm about to go back to the VA and file that claim. So that's my story.

CS: That's quite a story. Yeah. Well, I think probably this would be a good point to stop the recording then, although --

LG: Part of what I want to say to everybody is, I promised the other gentleman I'd send him a copy of the book that I wrote about the ATA-199. And in there, in the forward, I make a little pitch for auxiliary vessels. I say, you know, "My hat's off to all those guys on the fighting ships. But remember the job that we did on the auxiliaries, too."

CS: Sure. Yeah, well no, it's absolutely necessary job. And you saved a lot of lives. In some cases, it's like when you kept the destroyer on the tow line during that typhoon, you could have lost the whole -- you could have killed -- that typhoon could have killed a lot more of those guys than the Japanese did.

LG: Right.

CS: And so you were -- saving a life is sometimes as important as taking the enemy's life. I agree with you, that the --

LG: Tongue in cheek, I sometimes tell people I was lucky I
didn't have to shoot at anybody.

CS: Yeah.

LG: But I was still doing a job.

CS: And we thank you for that.

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