

Today is Tuesday, September 1, 2015 at the residence of Ernie Serena. My name is Fran Prokop and I am speaking with Ernest L. Serena., who served in the U.S. Navy and is a veteran of WWII. Mr. Serena learned of the Veterans' History Project through me, and he has kindly consented to participate in the National Archives Veterans' History Project. Here is his story:

When and where were you born?

I was born in Joliet, Illinois on January 18, 1923.

What were your parents' occupations?

My Dad had a grocery store during the Depression; he sold it about 1935. He was also in WWI –

How about your Mom?

My ma worked with him till 94.

Wow –

And you know what killed her – she started taking four aspirins a day. My wife was a Registered Nurse and she said, "Margaret, don't take those four aspirins." And my mother wouldn't listen.

Why did she start taking four aspirins?

She claimed she had all kinds of pain –

My God, that was too many.

And all of a sudden she started to get peaked-looking, you know, and they examined her and they said that she was bleeding in her stomach.

Sure; that's what aspirin does. It's a shame; that's too bad.

And of course, at 94, they resorted to exploratory, you know, and she couldn't take it.

That's too bad – Sorry.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

I had a brother.

And was he in the service ever?

He was in the service and he was a sailor.

Was he older or younger than you?

He was about two years younger than me. He sailed on an aircraft carrier. In one case, they were in the Philippines somewhere, and they got in a little inlet where there was a

fight going on between a Japanese fighter plane and a British warship. Now the British warship hit that plane, and the pilot had enough left to control where it went. And he aimed it at the boat my brother was on, right at the center where they lift the planes out, you know, and it killed 65 men. And my brother got the Purple Heart because some of the metal that flew from that – hit him in the leg.

That was in World War II also?

Yeah.

What did you do before entering the service?

I worked at W C L S , a local radio station.

What was your job there?

Engineer – licensed engineer by the Federal Communications Commission.

Oh, okay. How old were you when you went into the service?

I was about 13 or 14, something like that.

13 years old?

Yeah, I was pretty young, yeah, when they called me.

You said you were drafted, right?

Yeah –

But they don't draft – now when was this? When were you drafted?

That was about 1943, maybe.

Well, then you had to be about 20 years old – if you were born in 1923.

No, I wasn't 20 though.

Maybe you were 19.

Yeah. Or younger than that, even.

Well, I know other men who did go in who were 15 and 16, and they lied about their age and they got in.

Oh, yeah, that's true.

You were drafted; did you choose to go into the Navy or did they just put you there?

What happened is I went to this booth – or no, the desk – it was all full of desks in this room and there was a Navy and an Army man at the desk.

Was it in Joliet or was it in Chicago.

By that time it was Chicago.

Okay, so you went to a recruiting office in Chicago.

Yeah, so anyway they said that – they asked me where I wanted to go and I said I'll go in the Army. And the Navy man said “wait a minute; wait a minute. We got radar but we do not have any technicians, and in looking at your background and you worked in a radio station, so –

They wanted you in the Navy.

And at the next desk they said, “Hold out your hand, like that” – and he stamped U.S. NAVY across the back of my hand and he said, “You just volunteered.” So they said what we're going to do is send you to Wright Junior College –

Okay.

And from there I went to –

Wait a minute – how long were you at Wright?

About a month.

Oh, just one month, okay.

And from there I went to – it was a regular college – it was in the south, I think, Arkansas or one of them places, and I went there for three weeks. And I went from a Seamen to a Petty Officer 3rd Class. At the end of that you got the 3rd Class if you passed the three months that you were there. Then I went to San Francisco, Treasure Island. The first two months I was there I got a 3.5 – so they pushed me up to 2nd Class.

Okay, you got a promotion.

I got a promotion. So they said now, if you keep that 3.5 all the way to the end, you're gonna go to 1st Class. And I kept it to the end and I got 1st Class.

Okay, so this was all part of your boot camp, more or less, your training – your basic training?

Sort of, yeah.

But did you actually get any kind of basic training as far as physical stuff, you know.

Yes. I did go up in Utah – up north, almost to the Canadian border, you know that little strip that's right there.

North Utah, okay, for basic training.

That was basic training.

Do you remember the name of that base or wherever you were.

No, I forgot that.

It's funny that – usually the Navy, they send the guys right to Great Lakes for training – but you didn't go to Great Lakes.

No, didn't go to Great Lakes.

Okay, so when did you go to San Francisco – after you were done with Utah? Or before?

I went to –

You got your 3rd Class, then 2nd Class and 1st Class –

I think it was before that I went to San Francisco.

Okay.

See, they had a big base – they have a big bay in there, and it was down in there, in fact it was kind of shallow water and I understood – what the Navy was using was an old – they had some concern over a party – something that went on there, you know. And I was there until – and when I finished there – oh, I know, when I finished there I went to Submarine School.

Oh, okay.

That was in New London, Connecticut.

That was like for advanced training, already.

Oh, yeah, and you know, the funny part of it is, I met a friend of mine reading an amateur radio book, and we got to be friendly. He was -- kind of took over for me because he was – he was about 28 or 29 and I was only 20.

Right, right.

And he said to me at the end when we finished up there, he says to me, “Did you think about what we're gonna do now that we're finished with the school out here?” I said, “No, I didn't think about it.” He says, “We're gonna volunteer for submarine school.”

And I said to him, “Yeah, we’ll go there, and you’re an old man, you’re 29 years old; you won’t pass it and I will.”

Right, ha, ha.

Well, we both passed it.

So that’s how you got into the submarines because of this guy. What was his name?

Clarence Billburg; he was from Chicago.

So he was a friend that you stayed with the whole time you were in the service?

Oh, yeah, um-hmm.

Okay, so you both volunteered for submarine duty and then you went to the submarine school in New London, right?

New London, yes. Now that was kinda rough because the first thing they did to you there – they put you in a chamber and they increased the pressure from five pounds to fifty, and you’d be surprised the guys that were screaming to get out of there.

Wow.

And the next thing they did, they had like a swimming pool that was 100 feet high – and you had to make an escape from 25 feet, 50 feet and 100 feet. And you made that escape by a ladder that surrounded the thing. And then when you got to the area, you had to come up from – you opened a little chamber that you went in, waterproof, and there was very little water in it; there was an output hatch and an input hatch. And you went in there. When you got in, here was an instructor that opened the valve so that water came in, and it kept coming up and up. When it stopped rising, it was the same pressure as outside.

I see.

Then they opened the door and you had to go out. And there was a line that was there. You put your hands around the line like this (indicating) right through your fingers and through your toes, and you just went up.

Oh, the line took you up.

No, the line was not movable.

You moved up.

You were the only one moving.

Okay.

And there was knots every ten feet. Every ten feet there was a knot; you stopped and you blew out the excess pressure. And then when you got to the top, of course you're right in the middle, you had to swim from there over to the side – one of the sides, yeah.

So this was all part of your training – submarine training.

Yeah, well, I was electronic technician but they were so short with electronics that they – I figured that we could figure out how the boat ran by ourselves.

Really.

So they did send us right out to – I was assigned to COM SUB SWPAC.

We're going to stop the recording for a moment.

We took a little break but we're back on the record now.

Ernie was telling me about the COM SUB Southwest Pacific. What were your duties there? What did you do there? Where did you go?

Actually, they were very anxious to get us in service. So we were not – the electronic technicians were so rare – the Navy, after WWII, they had only radio operators, and then radio technicians came along –

Okay

And radio technicians were so rare that they had to get us out of there and on duty as fast as they could; so they sent us to COM SUB SWPAC – that would be the southwest Pacific – the Commander of the southwest Pacific – and we of course, took a train to San Francisco. And from San Francisco we went south, across the equator and I think they did that purposely to stay away from Japanese.

Did you go on a submarine or regular troop ship?

No, no, just a troop ship.

Do you remember which one? You don't remember the name of it?

I think I do have a –

Like a log, or a diary, or something?

Um-hmm.

All right. If you find it, we can always add it in later.

But, you know, we got as far as New Guinea, and I don't know if the ship was – didn't have enough fuel to go any further, but they left us off in New Guinea right in the jungle.

Really? What were you supposed to do there in New Guinea?

Well, you know, we slept in huts that had a roof and a floor – no sides. And the floor was about five steps up from the ground. And the ground was solid plants –

Really –

And every night, just before the light went out, a tarantula that big (indicating) – at least that big, came in and walked all around – we're on the 2x4s – and you know, we didn't bother him and he didn't bother us.

So there was no town or village or anything that you remember – just New Guinea?

Well, it was New Guinea and we were there for, I think maybe two months. And then a ship, on the way to Australia, picked us up and took us to Brisbane.

Wow. Well, what did you do there, for those two months?

Nothing, mainly.

They were so anxious to get you into the war – and you sat there for two months?

But I'll tell you, when you got up, in that area, under the equator, when you get up in the morning and you put your clothes on, they feel wet. We used to step off the steps going down, you were all right until you got off that last step – when you did, the whole – the whole floor of the earth went alive and started running. There were thousand leggers that big (indicating) and you step on them and they keep right on moving.

So you were really in the jungle! How did you live – what did you eat? Was there a military base there?

Actually, there was a – we had a kitchen there but we didn't have any food. And we were eating these big cans of pork and beans, they were about that big (indicating). And we not only ate them, but there happened to be a C.B. bunch close by – they couldn't get close to us fast enough to get some of that food. But about two miles down the road there was a hospital. So once in a great while we'd get over there and get a nice meal. And you know, we had – coming down from the jungle there was a stream – the Navy had built us a trough like that (indicating V-shaped), and that came out, it was about seven foot high, we used to go in that thing and take showers.

Ha, ha, take baths –

Yeah, we'd go in there, you know, about 6 or 7 of us with nothing on but our birthday suits, and here would come the nurses from the hospital –

Ha, ha –

With their jeeps, and we'd say, "Hi, girls; hi girls"; ha, ha.

Were the CBs there to build something-- further down – were they building the hospital or adding runways or something?

They were doing something else and I don't know exactly what it was.

So, now, all this training – do you remember when you got in in 1943 – Spring or Summer or Fall – what season – I'm trying to figure out when this was that you were in New Guinea – what year – was it 1944 – 'cuz you got in in '43 – so was this like a year later now?

Oh, yeah, probably about a year.

Okay.

I'll tell you, you know these troop ships were terrible – because they were very, very crowded. You stood up to eat and you only ate twice a day.

Wow. How about sleeping – with the hammocks five high.

Oh, five high? You just climbed right up there and got in bed.

How long were you on that ship before you got to New Guinea? Two weeks –

Oh, it was at least two weeks.

Was it a rough crossing?

No, the crossings were not too bad. And when we left there, we got a ship to Brisbane, and from Brisbane we went to Sydney -

Did you do all that by ship – to these different ports?

Oh, yeah.

But not by submarine, just by troop ship?

Oh, yeah, just by troop ship.

Well, when did you finally get onto a submarine?

I'm thinking – I think the first time we got on a submarine was at submarine school.

Oh, but I'm talking about in warfare – I don't mean just in school. Did you actually serve in a submarine during the war?

Oh, yeah.

Well, that's what I'm getting to. From Sydney where did you go?

Sydney, we just stayed there very, very few hours, and we went on and crossed the Outback – and the outback had – was a –it was a train run by the Australian Military and we were crossing the Outback. They had a kitchen car on the train, but no dining car. So they stopped the train and we'd get out to eat. And as soon as we got out to eat we were surrounded by Aborigines.

Really!

And you know what they wanted – the garbage! So they got all of our leftovers. They're an odd bunch, you know. They don't look like black people; they don't look like white people; they look like cavemen.

Um-hmm – I've seen them in pictures.

And that Outback of Australia – is absolutely nothing – nothing, it's terrible!

They're sort of like our American Indians – the Aborigines – they're native peoples. They were here first – like our American Indians.

Yeah, and of course, they're mainly up in the North of Australia – because they have jungles up there.

Hmmm! Okay, so you went by train through the Outback – and where did you go?

Where did you end up?

We ended up in Fremantle and Perth. Perth is a big city. And then of course there was a water system that went through there and on the other side of it was Fremantle. And our submarines all operated out of Fremantle.

Once you got to Perth, what did you do?

In Perth I was assigned to the mother ship.

Do you remember the name?

Yeah, it was the Anhedon – A-N-T-H-E-D-O-N.

That was a submarine?

No, that was a submarine tender.

What were your duties there?

An awful lot of technical stuff. I remember the first thing I had to do -- they had -- somebody developed a device to warn them in case of -- bombs dropped down deep.

Depth charges?

Depth charges.

It was a device that warned about depth charges.

And it told them exactly where they were. And this was not installed yet, so they looked at my background, and they gave me the job of putting it in.

Wow!

And of course I didn't have much experience with burning holes through the submarine, and then we had to put a packing system in there, run wires through there –

Wow –

And I had to do all of that.

Was your friend Clarence with you at this job or did he –

No, instead of being sent with me, he was sent with a submarine called the THRESHER -- he got on the Thresher.

Okay, so you were with the submarine tender and you were installing the warning systems for depth charges.

Oh, yeah.

How long were you there doing that job?

Oh, it wasn't too long; probably a month; something like that.

Okay. So where did you go after that?

Oh, I went on and off for different jobs. One of the next jobs they wanted me to do -- with a camera, taking pictures through the periscope – but I didn't take it. I should have but I didn't.

Okay, so what did you do?

All the things in the submarine.

So they had you doing various jobs in submarines?

Um-hmm.

Did you ever get to be stationed on a submarine and actually go – travel in it?

Yes, I did.

When was that?

You see, we were there until 1944 – 1944 the tender left; we went to the Philippines – and I was on the deck one time when – at night I would copy how they would send

messages with light, you know, and I told the guy next to me, I said, “You know something, I just read a signal that the war was over!” And I just no sooner got that out of my mouth and every gun went off in Subic Bay.

Oh, really!

Was the Normandy or was that 1945?

That was 1945.

Yeah, so the next morning, see, we had been – previous to that we were in Australia. Now in Australia we all had girlfriends because there were no more men there – they were fighting the Japanese. So we were in Subic Bay, in the Philippines, the war ended and the next morning they got all the guys, they mustered all of them and they said, “Any of you guys who would go back to Australia to live, we’ll give you a discharge.” Right here.

To live in Australia permanently?

Permanently, yes.

Really? Why – because there were no men there? They wanted American men to go to Australia?

Yeah.

I had no idea –

Well, you know, of course, plenty of those men already had babies there.

Yeah, right. They already were fathers.

Sure. But we came back; we came back.

So you didn’t take them up on that.

No, I came back to the States on the USS Cayman –

That was a troop ship?

That was a submarine.

Did you ever operate the radios or equipment in the submarine when you were on board?

Not the radio, no; I stood a radar watch.

Was that your job on the ship?

Radar, yes, both operating and repairing. And you know the radar operation was right from the conning tower. You had the conning tower; you had the man on the wheel;

you had one man or two men that went up in the periscope shears? – the lookouts. And so, you know, you'd get kind of – kind of tiresome just to do the same thing all the time.

Yeah, right. You had to rotate jobs.

Rotate jobs, yeah, and when you rotate – you had that periscope (shear? Job – see, a submarine has a twelve-foot at least of bow; it doesn't go over the waves, it plows right through and it throws you all up in the air. You're up there for awhile, you're soaking wet –

With spray and everything – salt spray

Yeah, and so when you got off watch doing that, you come down in the forward torpedo room – that's where my bunk was – in the forward torpedo room – and as soon as you dried off you had to brush off all that salt.

Right, I'm sure it faded your uniforms – your clothing.

What we used to do, we'd go out there and just with – with tee shirts on, you know. Of course it was not warm out there either; you were in the South Pacific and it was not warm.

So did you ever see any actual combat while you were in the submarine?

Did you encounter enemy vessels?

No – I can't remember off hand.

So you never witnessed any casualties of war, did you?

Not anything bad, no.

How about friendships formed with other men besides Clarence. Did you make other friendships with sailors?

Oh, yeah.

People you communicated with afterwards – after you got back home?

Yeah, yeah. He still lives in Honolulu. What he did – we were in the Philippines, and of course the war ended. And he took a job with a private company that was working for the military, and he stayed out there for 14 years. He never married and he finally came back to Honolulu and bought a house, and he worked there until he retired and he's still in the house.

Still in the house in Honolulu?

Yeah.

Was he originally from the States?

Yeah, he was from up around Utah – from that area.

Oh, western, um-hmm. When you were in the service how were your communications from home? How did you stay in touch with family and friends – by letter or other communications –

Just letters.

Letters, packages, things like that.

Letters, and they were censored.

And how long would you say it took for a letter to reach you in the mail?

That's a hard one to remember. You know, when I was in Subic, in the Philippines, I had a cousin two years older than me that was killed in the area. What had happened - see the Japanese were retreating, and when they'd retreat, they'd put mines all under ground, and he stepped on one.

Yeah, they had a lot of land mines.

And he was my Aunt's only boy.

So how did you find out about that?

That I got a letter on.

Probably long after he was gone.

Oh, yeah.

So where were you when the war ended – were you on the submarine?

I was on the tender.

When you came back home, by ship, you just went on with your story – how was your reception when you finally got back home – you weren't married while you were in the Navy.

No. Oh, it was something – it really was.

How was your readjustment to civilian life – was that okay?

I didn't have too much trouble.

And you've had contact with fellow veterans over the years.

I used to, at one time, closer to the end of the war. We used to have – when we had a get-together – there'd be at least ten reunions.

Did you have membership in any veterans' organizations?

Oh, yeah, I belonged to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

VFW – okay, you still belong?

I still do; I also belong to the American Legion.

Ernie has a book here – he brought a pamphlet entitled “U.S. Subs in Action.”

Where did you get this from?

Just as you open it up you’ll see some writing –

“To Ernie Serena – Take her down to 90 feet and air the bedding – Bob Costen

That’s my friend who’s still in Honolulu.

Oh, that’s the guy in Honolulu – Bob Costen. This is a booklet – Squadron Signal Publications – it has photographs of submarines, black and white, all different classes of submarines. Is the submarine you were on in this book?

No – the Cayman –

It’s not pictured in here though.

No, no.

There are pictures of submarines either on the surface or barely coming up – mostly on the surface.

We lost 52 submarines –

During the war we lost 52 submarines? Wow.

Um-hmm.

What else do you know about submarines – things that you know.

That was terrible (referring to a photo)

Here’s a color photo – a submarine under water; this is 1944 – “Weather Measure 9” it says. There’s different classes of submarines pictured here – which class were you in.

After all the time I don’t remember.

Okay, here’s torpedoes, different types of submarines. So you didn’t feel claustrophobic in the submarine? It didn’t bother you at all?

Didn’t bother me at all.

People have to volunteer to be a submariner.

Yeah.

I went to the submarine at Jackson Park, the U-505; that was okay because it was on land. But just being under water –

I can still remember making a 600-foot dive.

Wow.

And you know there was a guy with me – when we get 600 feet, your hatches started to leak --

Really – pressure, huh?

And he started running – I said where do you think you're running to?

Ha, h a, ha. What was the longest that you were under water?

It wouldn't be hours?

Not – they really didn't like to stay under water too much – no. Coming back after – from – I was on the Cayman – we had – I think it was 18 submarines came back – 6, 6, 6 in a row – three rows. And we'd go down when the others would go down, for practice, you know.

It didn't get you nervous being under water or anything – didn't bother you?

Not in the least.

Wow – interesting.

How do you think that your military experience affected your life in general?

I don't know know really how to say that.

Well, I mean what do you think about your military service now that it's over?

How do you view it?

I liked it.

It was a positive experience in your life?

Um-hmm.

And you learned a lot of lessons from being in the service.

Oh, yeah, you do learn a lot.

I mean about independence and responsibility and things like that.

Um-hmm.

Very good – very interesting – this was a whole different story. I've never interviewed a submariner before so your story is unique and different. When you

finally got out of the service what did you do in civilian life – did you go back to your station?

I went right back to radio.

Radio – how did you get into TV then?

Well, I got into TV because TV wasn't that big when I first went back.

Well, you got out in '45 – so did you go right back to work after you got out of the service?

Oh, yeah, I went right back to work, yeah.

In the Chicago area?

Well, I think I went to the Joliet radio station.

Did you get your old job back at the old company or a new job?

Well, actually, what happened was I went back to the station that I was with – was W C L S – and while I was gone the call letters were changed to W J O L.

Oh, yeah, Joliet – they're still there today.

Now I went back to WJOL and I said to the manager there, "I come to get my job." He said, "I don't know you." And I said, "Well, I'm introducing myself." He said, "Well, go to -- WCLS went down to St. Louis – I said, "I'm not going to St. Louis. I want to work right here at WJOL." And then, you know, I was getting really a rough time and it dawned on me that we joined up with electricity workers in Chicago, just about three months before I left. So I called the manager of the electrician's workers and he said, "I'll have that job for you in two weeks."

No kidding.

And he did.

Wow – so what was your job there – what did you do?

Engineering.

What is that – just explain that.

Well, for one thing, the big thing on those stations was the station cannot go on the air unless there was a man with a 1st Class license.

Okay, that's the FCC, right?

Yeah.

And you had that, right?

Oh yeah, I had the 1st Class – 2nd Class and 3rd Class.

So how did you make the switch to TV – you spent many years at our local Channel 7 WLS TV station. How did that come about?

Well, I went back to WJOL and then – you see, my wife was a nurse and she was taking care of a lady and the lady's husband worked at WLS. And one time I came back – I had left WJOL and went to WJJD in Chicago – I came home from work at one of the stations I was with and my wife said so and so was here from WLS and he said they're looking for a man. And I went out there and looked for the job and the guy that interviewed me said okay, I'll give you a job, but you're going to have to work midnights. See we used to go off the air at one o'clock and then we'd do technical work.

Oh, I see. So is that what you did – you worked midnights at first.

I work – oh, I hated that – I hate working midnights, but I did work there midnights. And then I got called back into the service. That's when they sent me to Japan.

Oh, really; you mean you were back in the service again? You didn't mention that before. Were you in the Reserves – is that it?

I was in the Reserves, yeah.

When did they call you back? – Like what year? Do you remember? Was it for the Korean War – 1950?

Yeah, I'd say it was 1950.

Well that started in 1950 – wow the Korean War, I didn't know – continue. So they notified you to come back so where did they send you when you first went back?

Instead of sending me to Korea, they took the men that were in Japan, the 7th Cavalry, and sent them over to Korea and they sent the sailors to Japan.

So is that where you went, to Japan?

Um-hmm. I was there two years.

Oh, my goodness, no, I didn't know that. So you were there in 1950 and '51 – do you recall the years?

Yeah, and you know something, I enjoyed working with the Japanese. I had 15 Japanese that worked for the Navy and they were (turn tape) -- They spoke good English but they spoke Japanese to me because they wanted me to learn –

Did you learn some Japanese?

Oh, yeah.

Were you married at this time?

I was married then, yeah.

So your wife stayed here and you went to Japan.

Yeah, my oldest girl was one year old when I left. I didn't see her till she was three.

Oh, my goodness. So you never came back during those two years. You didn't have any leave or anything?

No, nothing. And when I went back to Japan one time – I was in electronics – and one time the Lieutenant Commander who was in charge there, he said, "Tomorrow you and I are going – I want to take you for a ride." He didn't say what. So we went to Atsugi. Atsugi was a Navy Air Base that they had taken over and they had a brand new tower built, but nothing in it, just empty. On the way back he says to me, "What did you think of the tower?" And I said it looked good but it needs a lot of work." He said, "That's right, and tomorrow you're gonna leave with your Japanese crew and some sailors and you're gonna put all the electronics in there."

Really?

So we put everything in there. We worked for three weeks. Then when we finally got back he said to me, "When did you make 1st Class?" And I said 1944. He said "44 – what were you doing all those years. I said whatever the Navy wanted for me – for my ability. But he said, "Well, look, I want you to put up for Chief." I really would have liked to but I was afraid if I took Chief, I had already been gone a year – I thought maybe they'll keep me longer." So I told him I'm gonna skip that and not take Chief.

So you were there for two years, you turned down Chief, how much longer were you still there after that?

I finished the next year.

So you had two years in the Regular Navy again, not in the Reserves any more.

Oh, yeah.

Wow, so you were in both – but you didn't really see any combat action – you were always in the technical field?

I was always technical, yeah.

How did you get back to the States from Japan when your time was up?

They had a troop ship; it was on the way back.

So you made the crossing a few times –

Oh, yeah.

Under and over the water –

Yeah.

You really did double duty – served in WWII and Korea.

Yeah.

Well, you did your share. Very good – I think I covered everything that I need to cover. Is there anything else that you wish to add to the story?

That's about all I can think of.

You're a good storyteller – you tell the little nitty-gritty things of service. I appreciate it very much. Thank you for this interview and thank you for your service to our country.

You're welcome; glad to do it.

Ernie is continuing his story – when he came back on the Cayman he realized that according to the point system he was one-half point short.

I was on the Cayman and we were going up and down the coast of California and one day the Captain says, "We're gonna go and tie up with the Steelhead." (another ship).. So we got to the Steelhead and the Captain said, "1946 – we're going back to Pearl." And I said to him, "Captain, I'm short just a half point." He said, "That's your problem, not mine."

Really!

So I went back to Pearl.

That was 1946 already –

Yeah.

So you went back to Pearl Harbor just for that trip or did you have to stay in Pearl Harbor?

Yeah, we stayed there, yeah.

How long?

Well, it wasn't that long because they – once we got there they said get on the bus and go over to the port there – and when a ship comes by that's going to the States, you can come back on that one.

Wow! Unbelievable, isn't that something?

OKAY, so did you have any higher rank when you were in the second time?

No, it was still 1st Class.

Was it any particular ship or division that you were attached to in the Korean War? Was it a base in Japan?

In the Korean War – yeah, we went back on a troop ship; we left Japan on a troop ship.

Where did you stay while in Japan?

We stayed on the Navy base.

What base was that?

Y-O-K-U-S-K-A Navy base.

And that's where you spent those two years, basically/

Um-hmm.

And you never got any R & R in those two years? You just stayed there?

Um-hmm.

You didn't complain?

Didn't do any good to complain.

I guess. Would you say you were drafted the second time – you were drafted; you didn't enlist to go; they called you back.

It was a – you see, I used to go down to Rockdale and they had meetings, federal meetings, and that's how I really got stuck in the war.

But you were drafted; you didn't really enlist of your own volition; they wanted you to go and you went.

Yeah.

So I would say you were drafted the second time.

I guess you could call it that, yeah.

I would think so; and those service dates were from June of 1950 when the war started –

I think around that time.

So when did you get out – was it two whole years?

It was two years, yes, two years.

I'll say 1952.

And you know, when I got out the second time, I got off the bus in Joliet and I picked up a taxi and he drove me in the alley in back of my house, and on the porch my dog was sitting there. When I opened that door, the dog ran over and jumped all over me.

He knew you right away.

Did he ever!

I didn't ask you about medals or service awards that you got either during the first enlistment or the second.

I got eight all together.

You don't know what they are offhand?

Well, let's see – I got the World War II, I got the Philippines – issued by the Philippine government, and Korea and Korea Operations, and Asiatic Pacific. In fact, you know what I got – one of the girls here took them and put them all in -- they're all up on my wall.

Good! You know what you should do – why don't you look up there and write them down so you can give them to me and I'll include them in here.

I'll do that.

That would be the best. So eight different medals and you can tell me exactly what they are. Okay, I'm glad we went on. I think that really covers it now. We almost didn't get that Korean War in there, my goodness, that's pretty important. Again, I'll say thank you and we'll include those eight medals in the final draft.

Ernie has a book of submarines that we looked through – he was explaining

When you live on a submarine there's nothing in here – this is the superstructure.

It's a superstructure; what it's for is to put guns on and you lived below here – from here down (indicating).

How many feet are underneath the water?

Oh, I'd say about 18 feet.

Even though this is on the surface, right?

Yeah, yeah.

And were the bunks even tighter on submarines than they were on regular troop ships? Sleeping area – or about the same?

Well, not too bad.

We're looking through photos in this submarine book – go ahead –

How wide were the submarines?

About 12 feet maybe.

That's all, 12 feet wide?

Yeah.

That's not very wide – wow!

Maybe more than that.

They sure look wider than 12 feet – I would say gotta be 20 feet at least. I can only judge by the one I saw at the Museum of Science & Industry – that was a German sub – the U-505.

Yeah. But you can see here where the guns are –

Yes, I see.

That's a cannon, actually.

I can't get over that those guns stayed on the surface even when you went under water.

That one does because you can't do anything with it.

But they were protected and you could shoot with them once you came back up again.

Yeah. This is probably a 40 mm machine gun.

We're looking at submarines in the Narwhal Class.

Now, you see the new submarines they're building today – these boats are 1,600 tons – now the new boats they're building today – they're 14,000 tons.

Well those are nuclear submarines.

Not only that, the nuclear boats create oxygen. Now these boats here from WWII – they do not produce any oxygen.

How did you get the oxygen; you had to re-circulate it, right?

You had to open the hatches every once in awhile.

Wow – that’s why they didn’t stay down too much longer. These new ones stay down a lot longer.

The new boats – they can stay down forever.

Here’s a P Class Submarine – these are official photographs – not to be released for publication. So were many of our submarines destroyed in the war?

Fifty-two.

Were destroyed?

Yes. Never came back.

And how many did we have – total amount?

I don’t really know what the total is –

They probably didn’t announce it. This is the Salmon and Sargo Class submarines – these are 1938 – the Sargo is 1944 – wow!

How many men were in a submarine?

Sixty-five to 70.

A lot of guys. Okay, we’re through looking at the book; thank you again.

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