Oral History

Lieutenant Commander
John F. Floberg, USN

Interviewed by
David F. Winkler, Ph.D.
Naval Historical Foundation

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Oral History Program
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John F. Floberg, LCDR, USN

Appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air by President Truman on November 23, 1949, and confirmed by the Senate January 19, 1950, John F, Floberg succeeded to the vacancy created when Mr. Dan A. Kimball was elevated to the post of Under Secretary of the Navy.

Born in Chicago, Illinois, on October 28, 1915, Mr. Floberg was the son of Mrs. Emily Jurney Floberg and the late Mr. Frederick O. Floberg. He received his education from Loyola Academy and Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Arts from the latter in 1936. There he was editor of the College Yearbook and Literary Magazine; played on the varsity basketball team for two years; was a member, for three years, of the College Debating Team; and was a member of the Blue Key Society, Pi Alpha Lambda (social fraternity), and several honorary fraternities.

From 1936 to 1939 he studied Law at Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he earned a place on the editorial staff of the Harvard Law Review, was a member of Lincoln's Inn Society, and the Elihu Root Law Club. After graduation with the Bachelor of Laws degree, he was associated with the largest law firm in Chicago: Kirkland, Fleming, Green, Martin and Ellis.

In November 1941 Mr. Floberg moved to Washington, DC, to serve as a civilian in the Contracts Section of the Shipbuilding Division, Bureau of Ships, Navy Department. He volunteered for service in the US Naval Reserve, and, appointed Ensign, reported for active duty on December 27, 1941, shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He subsequently was promoted to Lieutenant (jg) on March 1, 1943; to Lieutenant on April 1, 1944; and to Lieutenant Commander, to date from October 19, 1945.

After accepting a commission in the Naval Reserve, Mr. Floberg continued duty in the Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, until detached in July 1942 for two months indoctrination at the Midshipmen's School, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. In September of the same year he reported to the Submarine Chaser Training Center, Miami, Florida, and following instruction there proceeded in December to the Seabrook Yacht Corporation, of Seabrook, Texas, where he assisted in fitting out the USS SC-770. He went aboard that submarine chaser upon her commissioning on January 1, 1943, and was in command from March 27, 1943 until December 1943.Under his command, the SC-770 participated in the Tunisian operations, Sicilian occupation, and Salerno landings.

He returned to the Submarine Chaser Training Center at Miami in January 1944, and after brief duty reported for three months instruction at the Ordnance and Gunnery School, Naval Gun Factory, Navy Yard, Washington, DC. In June 1944 he was transferred to the Naval Training

Station, Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, Virginia, in connection with Assembly and Training Program for Destroyer Escorts; and thence to the Navy Yard, New York, New York, for duty connected with fitting out the USS Goss (DE-444). He served aboard that destroyer escort from her commissioning in August 1944, until August 1945, during which period she participated in the Lingayen Gulf and other Lingayen landings, the assault and occupation of Iwo Jima and Okinawa; and the Third Fleet operations against Japan.

In August 1945, he was designated Executive Officer of the USS Bivin (DE 536), and in October assumed command of that vessel, being simultaneously promoted to Lieutenant Commander. He continued in command of the Bivin until March 1946, and after terminal leave was released from active duty on June 11, 1946. For World War II service he is entitled to the American Campaign Medal; the European- African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three combat stars; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four stars; the Philippine Liberations Ribbon with one star; the World War II Victory Medal; and the Navy Occupation Service Medal with Asia Clasp.

Mr. Floberg returned, after release from active duty, to the practice of law in Chicago, Illinois. He died on August 29, 2011.

Subjects Covered

13 May 1998

Born and raised in Chicago – time at Loyola University – considered becoming teacher
Entered Harvard Law School – on Harvard Law Review after 2nd year
Interned in summer 1938 with New York law firm – Started legal career in Chicago 1939

Discussion of pacifist attitude in America pre-WWII – German ethnic group in America
Offered jobs by both the Office of Production Management, labor group, and Navy – undecided
Took civilian job with Navy - assigned to the legal department of the Bureau of Ships

Applied for and accepted a commission as an Ensign – Pearl Harbor and chaos after
Put in chit for sea duty - 8 week training course and requested sub chaser assignment
Travelled to Seabrook TX for commissioning of and assignment to USS SC 770
SC 770 travelled from New Orleans to Key West – multiple sub hunts – ordered to Norfolk

Story of SC 770 caught in Atlantic hurricane of East Coast
Sailed to Bermuda then Oran in a convoy – Assigned to escort six LCT's from Oran to Cape Bon
German air raid in Algiers – order to go on the Sicily invasion – story of Gen Prescott briefing

Anti-mine actions in Micana Harbor then patrolling outside it – spent summer doing convoy work in Sicily
Assigned to the British Navy – sank mines and went on British convoy to Tripoli
Flew back to Norfolk abord DC-4 – honeymoon - ordered to SCTC for a refresher course

Requested government assignment, granted – assigned to Washington Navy Yard

Discussion of commission of *USS Goss*, DE 444 – sailed to Hawaii
Part of CVE convoy – discussion of operation in convoy off Luzon and Iwo Jima

13 May 1998

John F. Floberg

David Winkler,
Interviewer

WINKLER: Okay, today is May the 13th, 1998. This is Dave Winkler of the Naval Historical Foundation. I'm with John F. Floberg, who served during the second World War and then went on, shortly thereafter, to be assistant secretary of the Navy. What we'd like to do today is discuss his youth, growing up, and how he joined the Navy and his service during the war.

Sir, go ahead and talk about, well, where were you born?

FLOBERG: I was born in Chicago, my father was a good Swedish Lutheran and we were born in a good Scandinavian neighborhood on the west side of Chicago. And we lived there till I was about four years old.

But as I say, my good Swedish Lutheran father wanted my brother and me, he was two years younger than me, to be educated by the Jesuits. That sounds paradoxical, but he was very fond of them, just by limited exposure at that time. He judged by reputation more than anything else.

So we moved to St. Ignatius Parish on the north side of Chicago, so I went to St. Ignatius grammar school, Loyola Academy and Loyola University. By that time I had finished college and I had originally intended to be a school teacher because I loved my Latin and Greek and I had wanted to teach Latin and Greek, I guess because I enjoyed them so much. But when I was about halfway through my senior year in college, I realized that the teachers were paid nothing. In those days, a normal teacher was given $1800 year, but a head of a department or a university might be getting $2400 or $2600, maybe even as much as $3000. Well, my father wasn't wealthy, but I knew darn well I'd be unhappy working for that kind of money. Of course these figures have changed totally since then. And those were not bad figures. They weren't big figures, but they were comfortable incomes for people in those days.

One of the [garbled] gave them $1800 a year and things of that sort and it seemed like a lot. Student aid, incidentally, was $20 a day for college, for people who were on student aid. So I decided I'd study law. My father was a lawyer and so he said, "If you're going to be studying law, then the only place to go is Harvard Law School." And that's how I happened to go to Harvard Law School.

Well, see, I was in the college class of 1936 and this was right in the middle of the depression. Toward the end, but still pretty well in the middle. And to get into Harvard Law School in those days, all you needed was to be in the upper quarter of your college class and to have the first semester tuition. The first semester's tuition, incidentally, was $200, because Harvard Law School cost $400 a year at that time. And that was a very high tuition, which was kept high deliberately by Harvard Law School so that other law schools could fleet up their tuitions. These figures sound absurd today, and they are absurd today, but that was the Depression period and before all this inflation that we have. You know, Bill Clinton tells us there's no inflation, but it's been pretty significant over the years and is now. But after I finished law school... Do you have any questions?

WINKLER: Could I interject just one thing? What year were you born in, anyway?

FLOBERG: I was born in 1915.

WINKLER: OK.

FLOBERG: October 28, 1915. And my brother was born May the twelfth, 1918. He was in the Navy, too. Well anyhow, after my second year of law school I was on the Harvard Law Review and that was a big entry route to a good job in those days, because jobs were hard to come by. But if you were a law review student who graduated from Harvard, Yale or Columbia, the University of Chicago, Stanford, Duke or some of the other well known law schools, then you had a good running head start.

So one of the ways to get hired was to have a summer job as a real intern with the New York law firms. And I spent the summer of 1938 at Root, Clarke, Butner, and Ballentine, which

was one of the prominent New York law firms. It's since had its name changed to Dewey Ballentine or something, I cannot remember the full name. And so we spent the summer, when I say "we," I mean three other boys, classmates of mine and I rented an apartment from a partner in Avis, Boke, Hardwell, Gardner, and Reeve [phonetic] which was the name, it may have changed since. It was a very nice apartment on 83rd street and we rented it fully furnished for, I think, $125 a month. Beautiful setup. I went to work, as did one of my roommates for Root Clarke, and we were paid the tremendous sum of $35 a week and the other law firms only paid $30 and they were very annoyed that Root Clarke was paying more than they were. But it was good experience and the thing it taught me principally was that I didn't want to live in New York.

So after the summer I went back to law school and finished up and went out to Chicago. Meanwhile I had made contact with a firm that was then known as Kirkland, Fleming, Green, Mark, and Wallace. It's now known as Kirkland and Wallace. I went to various law firms around Chicago and I decided to go with them, and I did. And I was with them from the summer of 1939 until the late summer of 1941. I left the firm at that time, with the approval of the firm-- I would say reluctant approval, because at that time, in the summer of 1941, it was absolutely impossible for the United States to get into the war. The spirit of the country was very pacifistic, and the President had promised that American boys would never fight in Europe again and that Europe's wars were to be settled by the European powers. He said that right in Chicago.

The people don't realize that the second largest genealogical group in the United States at that time, and it would almost be true today was the German group. Some 28% of the people in the United States that had some German blood. And 31% had British blood. In other words, it was almost even.

In Chicago, the Chicago Tribune was a very, very anti-British newspaper. Colonel McCormick hated them because they were so snooty and the whole momentum was anti-British. In the middle-west, because the Chicago Tribune was the influential voice in places like Milwaukee, St. Louis, Minneapolis, they all had local newspapers, but the influence from the Tribune was tremendous. As I say, there was no chance for us to get in the war, it was hopeless.

In the draft board-- I was in the local draft board in the Rogers Park area where I lived with my parents, and we had something like 450 people in the draft board, all potential draftees and I was on the level, just using that figure as an illustration, I was something like number 425. Those are not precise figures, I'm just using them to be illustrative. And they were taking four or five people a month. So I had an indefinite future ahead of me before I would ever be drafted. I might be too old and feeble by that time!

But along in about July, I would say, maybe it was August, I had a letter from a law school contemporary of mine, who was also a year behind me and he was on the law review when I was. And he said he was working in the Office of Production Management. This was an agency that had been established by the administration to build up our military production potential. And Donald Nelson, who had been the head of Sears-Roebuck, was the head of it at the time. And this friend of mine said that they were looking for lawyers and was I interested?

Well, as I say, I guess I did mention that I had spent all of 1941, not all but from about September of 1941 up until about Memorial Day of 1942...I think I might have these dates confused.

WINKLER: I'll check it out.

FLOBERG: Yeah. I'd spent that time working on a big lawsuit that we had and I'd spent it in New York where I worked in the office of Thomlin, Upbank and Carter, even though I was a Kirkland Fleming lawyer. And in those days the bar was very fussy about out of state lawyers. So when Thomlin, Upbank and Carter filed the brief on this big lawsuit on which I worked called Lowenstein against Pan American, they couldn't put my name on the brief. That's how fussy people were in those days, of course that's awfully different now.

I left that big lawsuit and I went to Chicago, back to Chicago, and I was assigned to an anti-trust case for Everett and Company. Well, anti-trust cases take forever, that's five years out of your life right there. And so when I got this letter from a friend of mine, Mark Leiber, who later, incidentally, was Assistant Secretary of Defense, and I was interested in what he had to offer. So I went down to Washington, again I'm not sure of the exact time, I think it was in the summer sometime to be interviewed by the head of the law department of the office of production management.

And he was a former partner in Covington and Burling there, and one of the most wonderful men I've ever known. To my astonishment, when I walked in down there, they practically threw their arms around me and kissed me on both cheeks and told me how desperately they needed lawyers and would I consider joining their group? It was an interesting group, they had some good people, and yes, I was interested. But I thought that before I'd say yes, I'd check that out.

I had a friend named [inaudible] McChesney who had been a partner in what was then Sidley, Austin, Burgess, and Harper. It's now Sidley and Austin in Chicago. I called him up on the phone and said, "I have a question I'd like to ask. Can I come over and talk to you?"

And he said, "Sure, come on over."

So I went over. He was, as I said, general counsel to the labor administration group of people, not the NLRB. It was not that kind of labor administration. It was labor procurement for plants...industrial plants and defense plants and so forth. So I called him and went over to see him and told him I had the chance to take this job. Would I be smart to take it? And he said, "Don't take it! We need lawyers here. We'll give you a better job." So he went on and told me all the things I could do if I worked for that group.

Well, I was a little puzzled then because, as I say, I was overwhelmed with the anxiety of the OPM idea and here I was overwhelmed again with the anxiety of this labor agency to hire me, so I called up a family friend, whom I didn't know, but my family knew him and I knew his brother a little bit. But they were older than I was. He worked in Secretary [inaudible name] office. I'm not sure what his exact line of responsibilities were, but anyhow, I called him up and

said I had a personal problem and could I come over and see him. He was in Main Navy, which was than on Constitution Avenue at 19th St.

And so I went over to see him and I walked into his office and I told him I had these two jobs, which one did he think I ought to take? It seemed like he had a lot of Washington exposure and he could help me make a decision.

He said, "Don't take either one of them, we need lawyers in the Navy." Now this is absolutely true. It's hard to believe that this happened, but this is absolutely true.

So he said, "Let me get Mr. Hetzel [phonetic] in here." Mr. Hetzel was Drew Hetzel, who had been a partner in one of the prominent law firms. Drew came in, and I guess Mr. Keith had told him I had this problem, and he said, "Well don't. We need lawyers desperately in the Navy. We're building up the Navy, which they were, and he said, "We could give you a good job here."

Well, I didn't know what to do. So I got on a train back to Chicago and I spoke to my father to get some guidance. And after a lot of discussion he said, "Well, sooner or later you'll be drafted, and we have a Navy tradition in the family, (I'll get into that later), and he said, "I think you ought to take the Navy job." Which I did.

So I left Kirkland Fleming in about September, I would say, of 1941. I think that date is correct. You can take a look at those other dates and see how they fit in. I went down and was hired by Drew and was put on payroll. I think it was $100 a month, I'm not sure now, it might have been $125, but it was in that area, which was a blow, but that was the way it was

I was assigned to the legal department of the Bureau of Ships, which was headed up by a fellow named Pat Hobson, who had been a partner in a Buffalo, NY, law firm and had a good reputation. I started working on the contract side of the Navy buildup, not pre-war because we weren't going to get into the war, but military industrial development.

It was a very interesting job and, as I say, we were then building shipyards, production facilities and all that kind of stuff. But I should point out that this was a left handed type of organization completely because the law provided that the judge advocate general was the lawyer for the Navy. Well, that was fine, but they had zero commercial experience. They were wonderful on maritime law and on all of the Navy regulations on Navy law and all things like that but they had zero commercial avocation. That's why Mr. Forrestal, who I parenthetically say is the outstanding American in my lifetime, had got hold of Hetzel to come down and head up a law department for the Navy Department. And Hetzel hired people and he got a lot of pretty good ones.

At each bureau in the Navy-- aeronautics, personnel, supplies and accounts, ships-- each one of them had a law office to handle the commercial side of their business. When I say this was sort of a behind the scenes operation, everybody knew what the statute provided. And so this was called the Office of Procurement Management. That was the euphemism which hid the fact that we were all practicing law.

There was never any conflict with the judge advocate general, incidentally. He was glad not to have to worry about these things. So it worked out fine and the Navy had good representation.

WINKLER: Were you a commissioned officer at the time?

FLOBERG: No, not then. I was a civilian then and I later applied for a commission as an officer, which was something a lot of other fellows were doing too.

WINKLER: OK.

FLOBERG: So, I took whatever exams I needed to take, the physical exams and all that kind of stuff. And I was paid at an ensign's rate. I think it was $125. I was working peacefully along with a lot of other people. We had about six or eight lawyers in the Bureau of Ships.

On December 7, 1941, I was in Washington, sitting in the Washington office that Sunday afternoon, listening to the Redskins football game over the radio, when the word came in that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and of course that threw the ball up in the air.

So, next morning we all went to work at the appropriate time. Oh, my friends were in utter chaos because of this. We didn't even know what had happened. All we knew was that there had been an attack and that the Japs were the ones who had done it. We didn't know the extent of the damage. That didn't become known till long afterwards. But in any event, the alarm bells all rang and we went there at 7:30 everyday for the work scheduled, and all kinds of things like that that Pearl Harbor stimulated.

By that time, I had my commission as an ensign. In the next day or two, all the people who were like I was, young and physically qualified, unmarried, put our chits in for sea duty. And I'm not just talking about lawyers, I'm talking about engineers and all the other kids who were there. Actually, they had built up a pretty good emergency staff all through those bureaus, including the Bureau of Ships.

So, when I put my chit in, I had to go through the chief of the bureau and I had to go up through Drew Hetzel, who was really my boss. So Drew did the same thing with me that he did with everybody else. He called me in and said, "Are you sure you want to do this?"

"Yes Drew, I'm sure."

"Now, do you realize that you're making life difficult for me? I have to get somebody to take your place. I have to break in a new assistant. And then we talked-- we talked about how this would probably be difficult for him. "Do you still want to do it?"

And I said, "Yes Drew, I do."

He said, "Okay, forwarded, approved."

That's what he did with every single person. He gave them the same kind of interview that he gave me, to be sure that this wasn't a passing fancy or something like that. And he never turned them down. He said he hoped everyone who requested sea duty got sea duty. And several did.

On Monday morning after the Pearl Harbor incident, there were hundreds of lawyers trying to get jobs in the Pentagon. Some of them draft dodgers, but a lot of them were just patriotic guys who wanted to work for the government since the damn Japs had attacked us. So I

don't criticize them. Some of them waited around for sea duty, same as I did, except it was at a different time and the war was at a different stage.

So I left, and I didn't go right away. It was probably June of '42, May or June, around there somewhere, before my orders came. And there was a school, at Northwestern in Chicago, which was called...I'll think of the name, I'll get it...but anyhow, there was a school which was like the V-7, which was for people who went in as midshipmen. But these people were all officers at this educational establishment in Abbott Hall. They took over Abbott Hall and we lived there and had our classes there. That was about a six or eight week course. I don't know exactly. And after we finished that, we had to request our assignment for various duties. And I requested submarine chasers because those were small ships and I thought it was the shortest road to getting a command, which it was. So I requested that. So they sent me down to a school for two weeks out at San Diego. And from there I went on to the sub chaser training center in Miami, which was an excellent school, incidentally, I might parenthetically say that the Navy schools that were active during the war were competitive with the best civilian schools that I attended. They were just as good as Loyola University or Harvard Law School, in their own way. So I had no problems with that.

Anyhow, I went down to NCPC and Captain Eugene F. McDaniel was the commander and he was a no baloney type of fellow. He was very serious and very good. He was all business, it seemed like.

I remember one time I happened to be on the second floor for some reason, where his office was. I heard him yell out, "That man came up that ladder one step at a time. Get him out of here before the sun sets." Now holy smokes, I had to be careful to come up two at a time whenever I went up there. But that was a trivial matter-- it was an excellent school.

I forgot how long I was there for, but it was about six weeks, at least. I left there, anyways, to go to Seabrook, Texas, for the finishing construction and commissioning for the USS SC 770. So the captain designated was a fellow named Clark, and the third officer-- which an SC had in those days-- was a fellow named Escosene [phonetic], his name was Dan Escosene and he was the third officer; the captain, the exec and the third officer, and they were strictly on the basis of the date of our commissioning. The captain, actually, was older than we were, so he was a lieutenant junior grade. And I was a senior to Escosene, so I was the exec, and he was the third officer.

So we went to Seabrook, Texas, and construction was finished after another couple of weeks. As a matter of fact, it was after Christmas that the construction was finished. So if we work backward from that, we can see what time I got there. The ship went into commission on New Year's Eve of 1941. So there we were...

WINKLER: '41 or '42?

FLOBERG: New Year's Eve of '42. I beg your pardon, it was 1942. I think it was New Year's Eve, it was right between Christmas and New Year's, anyhow.

We had to do a little bit of fitting out there, before we could even take her to sea. So we tried after a week or two of fitting out, taking it across to New Orleans.

And there wasn't anyone on that ship who had ever been to sea before, except for the chief boatswain's mate; and the coxswain and maybe there was one other one, if there was, I really don't know who it was. These were all kids. These were 17, 18, 19 year old boys, with the exception of the two I mentioned. The people in the engine room were trained technicians, but they'd never been on a ship before.

So, in any event, we got to New Orleans and we got the guns on board, we got ammunition aboard, did that kind of stuff in New Orleans. And then, from there we went to Key West, which was the anti-submarine base for that part of the Atlantic Ocean, and we were there a little while. We went out on a couple of submarine hunts because ships were getting torpedoed all over the place. We never saw anything or did any particularly good, except patrol.

Then we were ordered up to Norfolk. We didn't really know what was going on, but we had our orders, so we went up to Norfolk. Incidentally, while we were in Miami, I relieved the captain of command of the 770. He was ordered out to the West Coast for something, I don't remember exactly what. But I took command and Dan Escosene became my second and we took a third officer on board, Marvin Ferris.

And Marvin was quite a character. He came from, I think, Georgia or South Carolina, and I don't think he had ever been outside the state until he went in the Navy. He was a very naive guy- not stupid, just naive.

So we left Miami for Norfolk and by the time we got out of Jacksonville, the ship was moving like crazy. Then all day it kept moving more and more and more. We throttled back to six knots or something like that, and we were in the middle of an Atlantic hurricane, bigger than that.

In those days, the weather forecasting was very critical. We had not been warned of anything like that. Boy, we had one heck of a time. In the first place, Ferris was sick- he never got out of his bunk. He wasn't the only one.

We had also taken on a radar at Miami. This was an S-1 radar and this of course was a tremendous innovation and asset. The radar operator was seasick, so we never had any radar, and that was true of two or three other people.

Oh, the ship was really powerless. We got down to about four knots. We couldn't see from where you're sitting to where I'm sitting. The water was pouring over everything.

In the middle of that night, about one or two o'clock in the morning, we were just barely keeping steerage. I felt this hand upon my shoulder, "Captain, captain, we're sinking."

Well, that's enough to get your attention, so I jumped out of my bunk, put on some clothes and had to get up to the forward compartment, which was flooded. And that's where a lot of our crew...of 25 probably 16 were up in that forward compartment, I'm guessing on that number, but that's an approximation.

And so I went up there and getting up there was a heck of a job. There were these waves pouring over and you had to wait till you had a hole in the waves and run up to the booby hatch

and get back. So I went up there and the people were all standing around and looking into the hatch in the deck of the forward compartment there. And water was sloshing back and forth.

I said, "Has anybody grabbed the pumps?"

"No sir."

"Well, for heaven's sake, lets start the pumps." So we start the pumps. They run about a minute, and stopped. So what was going on? One of the bluejackets went down into the bilge-- it was cold water, of course, this was, as I said, like February. He found the intake and the intake was all plugged up. So he cleaned out the intake and we started to pump it again for about two minutes. Then it stalled. And we kept doing that all night, until about daylight. We had, on the stern, a gasoline powered handybilly. Half a dozen of the biggest, strongest sailors we had maneuvered their way back to the stern-- with tall seas coming over the ship, it was hazardous as hell-- and they got hold of this big handybilly that must have weighed four or five hundred pounds and they scooted it up to the booby hatch, and had to put lines on it and drop it down to the compartment and, meanwhile, they were trying to keep the other pump working.

Got that thing down, hooked it up, and started the gasoline handybilly in the compartment, which is hazardous anyhow, with all that gasoline exhaust. And we did that for the next two or three minutes and it stops.

The sailors were going down there, and they'd catch the same thing-- all this gook in the intake. They were working on that and not making much progress. But then they had a hand-powered handybilly back there, I don't where the boatswain's mate had stolen it, but anyhow we had it, and it was lashed back on the fantail, and it too weighed four or five hundred pounds. So, again half a dozen of the biggest, toughest guys went back through this torrent of waves washing over the deck, got this thing, scooted it up to the hatch, and I don't remember whether they dropped that one down or not. I guess they did drop it down the hatch.

And so then we had men taking turns working on this big, handybilly type pump. The biggest, strongest, toughest guys. We had no food, of course, through all this time. It worked well because they were so damn strong. The other pumps kept stalling, but this we did pretty well on. We at least held our own with the water, it didn't get any worse.

All day. All that night. All the next day. And then the next morning it was beginning to taper off. Water was still coming over the ship, but it was nothing like it had been.

So what do we do now? Well, I went out to try to take some star sights. Instead of having a triangle the size of your fingernail on the chart, I had a triangle the size of the back of my hand. Because the ship was rising, the ship was moving, and I had to run out of the pilot house, take my sight and run back in before I got drenched with water, and so it was a pretty amateurish performance. But I figured, well, it's a triangle and you always put yourself in the middle of the triangle. And I said nobody knows how big the triangle is, I'll put myself in the middle of it, and chart my course there, which I did.

During the day, it tapered off, a lot. It was still sort of rough, but it was totally different and we could go back to about eight or nine knots. Just at twilight, just at twilight, up ahead of me was the Cape Henry lighthouse. All luck, all luck, but those sailors thought I was the greatest navigator since Columbus. It was really tremendous from the standpoint of a laugh.

WINKLER: Yeah.

FLOBERG: We pull into the Norfolk channel and we had a challenge, which I responded to and then we were told to, and then we were told to take boat number so and so at pier number such and such. That didn't mean much to me, at that time.

So we continued on, and I was trying to follow the lighted buoys. The only trouble with that was that there were ten million lights behind the lighted buoys, so I couldn't see the lighted buoys. The lights were flashing all over the place, everywhere. So I just had to go by guess and by God. It turned out all right. We got up to the Norfolk Navy Yard, more flashing lights. No one had had any sleep for about three days. The flashing light, we found out where it was. We tied up in front of USS Essex, which at that time was the biggest ship, or at least one of the biggest ships, in the Navy.

WINKLER: Yeah.

FLOBERG: And I can remember that our masthead came to just below the front deck, when were tied up. But anyhow, there we were in Norfolk. And we had to go through some supply routine and we also had to have some kind of, I don't know now what it was, some kind of special work done, at the Navy Yard, which I don't recall at the moment. They had to take the ship out of the water on a huge derrick. That's what they did with the SC's, they took them up.

Well, meanwhile, it turned out that the inspection of the forward compartment, which by now was drained of water, had...I guess someone inspected it and found out that the problem with the pumps down there was that the cook had stored all the dry cereal in the forward compartment. Dry cereal and the makings of oatmeal and stuff like that.

WINKLER: Right, right.

FLOBERG: And the boxes, the cartons had deteriorated, and so it was the cartons plus the paper from the cartons was that plugging up everything. And they were going to kill him, so much so that he left. He was gone about five days. He was afraid they were going to execute him!

But, anyhow, they did the work and we were put back in the water and we went across the Norfolk water to whatever town is across from the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, I think. We got our orders to sail with convoy number so and so on such and such a date, convoy commander so and so, escort commander so and so.

So I went to see them to get further instructions, which I did, and it got more detailed. There were about 96 ships, as I recall, on this convoy, this huge convoy.

I was in that particular part of the Norfolk establishment, and I met Chris Blythe [phonetic], who then was a wave officer stationed in Washington and who had come down to see me a couple of times on the weekends, when she had time off.

WINKLER: So you two first met while you were in Washington?

FLOBERG: No, we had known each other for some time. We had gone together and we knew each other pretty well. But, anyhow, the only reason I knew Chris was there was because she was coming to visit me on the SC and she asked somebody at the dock, "Where do I catch the boat to go across to this other Navy Yard across the way?"

And he said, "You go up through so and so."

So she went through that area. Well, anyhow she started out and up comes this small craft and she said, "Oh, I'm going to such and such a pier on the other side. Can you take me there?"

"Oh, yeah, we can do that."

So she got on the boat. She said there was quite a bit of conferencing between the officers on board and she didn't know what the problem was, but she thought, 'Gee, this is a nice boat.' It had beautiful woodwork and the furnishings were lovely and she thought, 'Gee, this is great.' It was quite a boat.

So they shoved off and started coming across there, and every ship they passed, they manned the rail and snapped to attention. I could hear bells ringing and all this noise.

WINKLER: Nice taxi.

FLOBERG: It was the barge! It was the admiral's barge and she was an ensign! And she was getting all these honors all the way across the Norfolk area there. But in any event, I don't know how she got back, but it wasn't on that barge.

So when the appropriate time came, we left there, left Norfolk in this convoy and steamed to Bermuda. In Bermuda we picked up the balance of the convoy. The total, as I said, was something like 96 ships and 30 escorts. There were destroyers, PC's, SC's, you name it.

So we left Bermuda after target practice and a few other kinds of training things down there. Steamed across and it took us between three or four weeks to get across the ocean because we were way south and we came up between the Canaries and the Madeiras because that was the safest area to go through.

We had only one submarine alert going over and it turned out to be a false alarm. But I remember that the convoy all went to general quarters, and we did too, for about an hour. After the hour was over, we were secured and I remember going down onto the main deck from the middle of the bridge, which was at the captain's battle station.

And we had one Negro on board, one colored boy and his name was Willie. Willie [inaudible]. Willie was sort of a comedian, he was really good for the ship. But he didn't have his shoes on and I said, "Willie, don't come out here without your shoes on. If we got a hit or anything, any kind of gunfire or anything else, your feet could get burned and you might get crippled and you wouldn't be able to help yourself."

And he said to me, "Captain, when I hear that alarm, I said to myself, 'Willie, you ain't got no time to stop for no shoes.'"

He said, "You know Captain, some of these boys are going to lose this war putting their shoes on."

SIDE TWO

WINKLER: And we continue...

FLOBERG: So anyhow, we headed across and as we got opposite Casablanca, halfway between the Canaries and the Madeiras, some of the ships broke off. When we got opposite Gibraltar some more ships broke off and when we got opposite Matur, a few more ships broke off. And finally, I was in the group that broke off at Oran and a few of them went on a little farther to Algiers. So by the time I went in, the ship convoy had shrunk considerably.

In the SC, we had 1,200 gallons of water. So we had buckets on the fantail. That was our water supply. Before we left Norfolk, we had two showers on board-- I had filled one shower with potatoes, the other shower with onions so nobody could get in and take a shower. And I took the pipes out of the water faucets and put them in my bunk so nobody could draw water, except the cook, who had water in the galley.

Anybody who wanted to wash went back to the fantail. We had buckets back there. You could take a shower with the bucket, you could wash your clothes with the bucket, you could do whatever you wanted with all these buckets. And that was all we had.

Well, when we got opposite Oran our orders were to go into Oran. We were up in the Med there, at the head of the channel, I forget exactly how far, but it was obviously going to be about three or four hours. I gave orders to take the last onions out of the one shower and the last potatoes out of the other. Everybody was to take a bath and put on their white uniforms. And they did and they were the cockiest sailors. They thought that Christopher Columbus had nothing on them on this trip.

And the morale was terrific. I was just pleased as I could be that the sailors thought they had achieved this enormous triumph in crossing that ocean. They looked wonderful-- all shaved and bathed in their whites. So, as I say, the morale was sky high.

Well, we tied up at the assigned place and I went over to report my presence to the Commander of Northwest African Waters, I think it was, whatever the proper command was in Oran.

And I walked in there and, lo and behold, who is the duty officer but one of the fellows who had been my roommate during the time I was in Washington working at the Bureau of Ships, Pat Molloy [phonetic]. And I walked in and said, "I'd like to report my presence."

He said, "I can't believe it. What are you doing here?"

I said, "Well, I'm captain of an anti-submarine ship, the SC 770.

He said, "Jesus Christ, we've lost the war!"

Anyhow, we were good friends and continue to be.

So we set sail, and we got an assignment, could we go from there up to where the Army was fighting to get on to Cape Bon, a place where the Germans were holding up their last defenses and I'd have to look at the chart again to see the name.

But I said, "Sure, but give me a couple of days to get refueled and watered and back into shape.

He said, "Sure, we'll leave in so and so days." And he said, "They have six LCT's that they want to get up there."

So when the time came, we started out. I was the only escort, there were six LCT's. I was the first to ride up the coast, of that group at least. I met a guy who was up at Algiers, but not in our group. I was the only one in our group who was ordered up the coast.

So, we lost one LCT to mechanical trouble at Tennares, which is a little town a day's cruise north of, or east I should say, of Oran. And then we went on from there to our destination. I can't remember what it was now, but I'm certain if I look at a chart I'll be able to remember because it was just short of where the fighting was going on. And we delivered our five LCT's. We lost the one, but we still had the rest.

These were loaded with ammunition -- all the way up, the whole open space in these LCT's was loaded with ammunition. And we were in this town, or whatever it was, in this harbor and they put us, three LCT's, two LCT's and me.

Oh, we had stopped in Algiers, that's right. On the way up we had stopped in Algiers for something, I can't remember now. And that was on the first air raid. Our first experience with war, really.

And, God, the bombs were dropping all over the place. They all dropped in the water, they didn't hit anything. That cultivated a sense of security, to me. I thought, "God, how can they drop all these bombs and never hit anything."

So we went ahead and left Algiers. We got to this other town, our destination, same thing. The Germans came in, they dropped bombs all over. The only thing I could think of was if one of those bombs ever hit one of the LCT's. The whole harbor could be destroyed.

WINKLER: That's right.

FLOBERG: But they didn't. They all landed in the water or they landed up on the beach somewhere. So we got our orders straightened out to return to Oran. I remember when we were leaving the harbor, the harbor guy up there in the tower flashed us the signal that said, "You can see we appreciated your arrival because of the warm reception that you had."

So anyhow we went back. One of the advantages to having a small ship is that no one knows about you or cares much about you. So we stopped at a couple of ports in North Africa on the way back. Only Americans and British -- these were all British ports. That worked out all right. We finally got back to Oran and then they ordered us from there to Matur to a base. They wanted to make sure we got some orders and then go out on a couple of convoy missions.

I remember one time, I don't know exactly where we were, but we returned from one of those convoy missions, we returned to Oran and Matur had been abandoned as a forward base.

So that was our trip, and we had no problems, except for one thing. All our health records and our pay records had been lost. So we had to get new health records, which meant going through all the health stuff all over again and we did that. And then pay records were a lot more difficult to re-establish.

Meanwhile, we were ordered to go on the Sicily invasion, which we did. We got the orders, we prepared to sail on whatever the task group was called, on such and such a date and the commander Task Group was admiral so and so, all the details. And we would have a briefing on such and such a date, probably about the second of July because D-Day was the tenth of July, 1943. D-Day was the tenth, I know that, so this was four or five days before that because the convoy wasn't going to be there to move very fast.

So we had a pretty big briefing in Karouba, that was where we were staying. K-A-R-O-U-B-A.

General Prescott, who was commander of the Third Division, and Admiral Connolly, who was the commander of this whole Naval force area, conducted the briefing. It went on for about three or four hours and it went through the whole thing, and they had certain officers come up and explain other things.

Then after they were all finished, General Prescott, who really was in command of this whole briefing said, "Any questions?"

Well, this fellow asked a question and that fellow asked a question. Somebody else asked a question and somebody else asked a question. No more questions.

Admiral Connolly said, "General, I have one question."

"Yes sir?"

He said, "We have noticed in the Pacific that when our ships are steaming at sea, that sometimes the sunlight reflects on windshields and they can be seen for up to 100 miles or more. Is there any way that we can cover all these vehicles' windshields so that they don't give out our position as we approach Sicily -- give our position and our route away too soon."

Prescott got up and turned to a colonel and said, "Colonel, before we sortie tomorrow, I want every windshield and every headlight covered with blackout cloth."

This fellow just said, "Yes, sir."

And I could just see the guy's wheels turning, thinking, "Where in the hell am I going to get blackout cloth from to cover all these truck windshields and all these headlights and so forth?" But by gosh, he did. When we sortied the next day, there was not a windshield to be seen.

So anyhow, we sortied, and it took us three or four days to get to Sicily the way we were going. The group I was with had probably 25 ships in that group, and so did several other groups heading for Sicily. And we got there on the ninth of July and H-hour was about four or five o'clock in the morning in Sicily.

They used us, the SC's, as wave commanders because the LCBD's and the LCM's and the LST's, and the LCT's and the LCD's had poor navigation capabilities. So in order to get them to the right beach at the right area, they had us for the wave masters because we had the navigation equipment. We'd pick up the wave and head in and when we got to as far as you could go without running aground, we'd flash the signal light across the horizon. By then they could see the beach, we were that close up. So that was how it was done.

But, in any event, then we went back out and we got our orders to join a submarine patrol outside the harbor and we did. But I remember going in there, deep in that harbor, what had

happened first was that one of the PC's, I forget the number, but the captain's name was Cain, C-A-I-N, he had steamed up to the net. The landings were on beaches, not in the harbor, but in daylight I could see it from where we were, clearly. He steamed up on orders to open up the net, they had nets across all these harbors. And he comes sailing over and the wind was blowing and he unlocked the net and he backed down to open up the net. And another SC and I had orders to go into the harbor and circle around the harbor. One of us went one way and the other one went the other way.

The theory was, if we didn't draw any fire, then they could start landing over the docks, which would be a lot better than over the beaches. So we didn't draw any fire. On the contrary as we went around Micana Harbor, all these Italians were out there waving at us. They were glad to see us because there was no fighting in Micana, all the fighting was on the beaches or behind the beaches. So anyhow, from there on they could use the harbor at Micana.

Meanwhile, the First Division was down a few miles in Gela. They really had a hell of a time. And then the Ninth Division was Scoblitti [phonetic]. And they were like we were-- they didn't have much contact in the landing areas, so our landing was pretty peaceful and so was the Ninth Division landing, but the First Division had a hell of a time and they came out of it successfully. At one point, the Germans were only a few hundred yards from the beach. So it worked out. I think it was destroyer gunfire that turned those tanks around.

So we were there in Micana [phonetic] for a couple of days. We sank a bunch of mines that floated and the minesweepers cut them loose. Not too many mines, I'd say we sank about three or four. Then I got orders to go west to patrol outside the harbor.

Again, I'll get this name...it was in Sicily and I was to patrol outside the harbor and I did. The only catch to that was that when I left I had the recognition signals for seven days. Now that included the time going over, which was about three or four days. I was on patrol outside Agrigento. And after I did that about four or five days, about four o'clock in the morning I heard this sound and it was a challenger. I flashed out SC 770, so I got another job...now on an SC, the captain is the signal officer, the medical officer, the personnel officer, and the morale officer, and that's the good thing about it, you're really everything. But anyhow, [inaudible]. I said, "I am the USS SC 770 and acknowledged that. Later on when I was back on reserve-- we sailed a lot on reserve at this time-- [inaudible name], who was a law school classmate of my brother, told me he was the guy who was challenging me for this big [inaudible]. And he said, "You don't know how close you came to being sunk because you have just the profile of a submarine. And he said if I were you and I were a submarine, I would've died. But that's how we did it.

After a few days, I was ordered back to reserve. We spent a decent part of the summer, probably July, either July or August, doing convoy work back in Sicily, including Palermo because that was captured. So first we were in the southern ports, then around to Palermo and we patrolled that harbor because the Germans, maybe it was the Italians, had worked out a system of limits and they used them in Alexandria Harbor to fix some ships.

And these guys were sailors and they'd come in and swim underwater, I don't know exactly how they did it, and they'd attach these little guns to rudder skuts, stuff like that to save

the ships. So we took turns, everybody on my boat one night and on someone else's boat the next night and we'd go out two shifts a night. And we'd go out every 30 minutes or so to patrol. And it was a really big challenge to service the ships. The ships weren't little.

But after doing that a few weeks, I was ordered back to reserve and I was relieved by a fellow named Joe Dunmire, who had an SC, a good friend of mine and a very nice guy.

So I went back to reserve. And then as I recall, actually that night, the port commander cleared me for patrol ships to spend a night at a harbor. And we went into the harbor, tied up in the dock at 10 or 11 o'clock at night, set up the [inaudible]

So then I was assigned to the British Navy. The American Navy headed operations from the southern part of the [inaudible], and the British Navy headed operations in the northern part of the [inaudible]. So I was in the British crew in my assignment, and that was the beach that was later captured from the sea. It was captured a couple days later. And half those fellows [inaudible]. So we went out again on patrol. We sank at least a dozen mines with machine gun fire. Got pretty good at it. They were [inaudible] mines. If you shot them with a machine gun fire they would just sink.

After that, I was with the British and sent on convoy to go to Tripoli, with a convoy out and a convoy back. And then coming back we were ready for a resupply mission. I was sent up to Taranto, with a convoy to Taranto, in the south of Italy. I was the only American ship in Taranto.

I was a Latin and Greek major in college, so I knew a lot about Italy. I went in to report to the Operations Officer and I said, "I'd love to go in and look around because I know where Hercules was buried and so on and so forth and I'm interested in the history of Italy-- I'd like to go in and look at some of these things."

"Oh," he said, "You can't go in there, that's British law."

"Well," I said, "I'm on assignment with British convoys."

So that night, they asked us again to the Officers Club, around six o'clock or seven o'clock. And who's sitting at our table but this Operations Officer. And I could tell by the red splotches on his cheeks that he was thoroughly enjoying his liquor. So I went over there and he waved when he saw me and he said, "Oh, the Americans."

So after about an hour and a couple more drinks, I had orders to come up the coast of Italy to Bari. B-A-R-I. They had a bunch of...I don't know what the British call them. They're like LCT's. They had a slightly different design, but they were LCT's. They had to be delivered to Bari. And I said, "Sure."

And I did. I left the next morning. And that was an eventful trip because there was a squall coming down over the Gulf of Taranto. A small craft with these LCT kind of ships were drifting all over and I was chasing them all over the water. And when we got back, I discovered later from the captain, who was an army officer incidentally, a British Army officer, that these ships had [inaudible] crews. And every time there'd be a big flash of light, we'd knock it down [inaudible]. And nobody was on the wheel. And that's why we were running all over the harbor.

But anyhow, we got to Bari. And I went up and saw the NOIC, the Naval Officer In Charge, the British Naval Officer In Charge, reporting my presence and I said, "I'd love to go up to Lake Begonia [phonetic]," where there was a big operation going on at the time.

The man said, "You can't go there, British law."

And I said, "Yeah, but I know this country from history and I've been to two of these landings now and so I know how it is."

So, I went up to church on Sunday morning, came back and changed, and standing next to the ship was an American Army officer with [inaudible]. The American officer was Louie Huot. H-O-U-T. And he was working for OSS. And we visited for quite a while and finally he said, "Would you like to go on an interesting mission?"

And I said, "Sure."

And he said, "Well, I have to go to the Island of Lissa, which is right here." It is also called Liss, depending on which dialect you use. He said, "I have to go up there to do a week of orders," and I told him we'd take him.

He said, "All right, I'll arrange it. We'll leave..." this was on Sunday, "we'll leave Tuesday morning, he said. "I'll get the orders from [inaudible]. And I'll get the ship all ready." [Inaudible]... Two kits. They looked like they were 50 years old apiece or something. And he got one kit and I got the other. [Inaudible]. He said he didn't understand it but he didn't have the orders. They wouldn't come until the next day.

So, the next day went by. We both went out and he said, "I cannot understand it." So we went out and came back and the next day before we went, I got orders to sail with convoy number R-362 to Bari. Convoy Commander so and so.

So I went up to see the NOIC. I said, " I can't do this because I have a commitment to Major Huot to go on a separate mission."

He said, "You will follow your orders and show up for convoy and sail tomorrow as ordered."

"Aye, aye sir." So I went up and quickly went right down to see Lou Hout...and he said, "That's how we got you." [Inaudible].

By that time it was October or November. I left the SC about December 21st or so, just before Christmas, and I got back to Chicago; I mean I got back to Norfolk. I was on the first plane that flew out of Port Leoni [phonetic] via the Azores and Bermuda to Norfolk. Other than that they cruised all the way down south and came up the coast of South America. But this was a big airplane, DC-4. My goodness, what a huge thing this was. It had this tremendous mileage capability. It could go a couple thousand miles. Today, you'd laugh out loud at something like that. But I ran into this naval officer who was really the fellow who was scouting this route. And so I told him I was trying to get back to the states and he invited me to come along. That's how I got back to the states.

And then to Bermuda and then to Norfolk. So then I called my engaged spouse, spouse to be, and told her I was there. She was at work at the time and was staying with cousins. So I went off to Chicago, saw my family and made a couple trips back to Washington. [Inaudible].

We had a very brief honeymoon. As a matter of fact, it was about three days. And I was ordered to SCTC for a refresher course. That's what I did. I left Washington for Norfolk and the refresher course, which was very good. As I say, that was a cracker jack school. We had to express a preference for what duty we wanted and I requested government because I knew if I were selected for government I'd go to the Washington Navy Yard.

And so, Don Proudy [phonetic] was the assignment officer and he gave me the orders to come to Washington. So that's how I got here in government, which was exactly what I wanted because it was an eight-week course, as I recall, and here I was with my bride. So it worked out very well for me.

From there I did the eight-week course and I was ordered out to join the pre-commissioning crew of the USS Goss, DE 444. And so I did. I went down to Norfolk and reported. The pre-commissioning crew was being assembled, officers and enlisted. So, we had to do a certain amount of drilling, so on and so forth [inaudible]. We did all this drilling and then I had to go up to New York with the commissioning crew to get the Goss, which was being built in the port of Newark. So we spent two or three weeks near there, and then we took across the New York island to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where she was put into commission.

It turned out to be an excellent ship. In fact, there was no real doubt in my mind that we were the best destroyer escort in the Navy. It was perfectly clear to us.

Claude Kirkpatrick [phonetic] was the captain He was a superb ship manager. He was terrible at [inaudible]. He was a lousy [inaudible], but he was a superb ship manager. I learned more about how to grow a ship from him than I ever hoped to learn from anybody else. It was incredible, he was so good. When he went to conduct a ship inspection, boy, he was terrific. He didn't worry about a piece of paper in a waste basket. He would examine the guns, the catapult, the engine room... I really learned more about how to inspect a ship than I ever believed I would have learned. He was just terrific. At ship handling, he was pretty good at that. As I said [inaudible].

We were out in the Pacific now, steaming for Hawaii. And we came upon a mine. [Tells a story about the captain and sinking the mine, but much of it is inaudible] ...sink it with small arms fire."

"No," he said, "it'll explode."

"No, I've done this a couple of dozen times. All you do is hit it, and it sinks."

"You're sure?"

"I'm sure. I've done this. I have all the experience."

So we got about 50 yards from the mine, maybe less than that, and we started shooting, boom, boom, boom, then "WAAAH." It exploded and all this smoke. All the sound gear went out, the lights went out, and everything went out. The [inaudible] counted 100. We saw a few mines after that and we sank them one mile in distance. It took all day to sink the damn things. But that's...[inaudible].

Well, anyhow, we shipped down to Bermuda and then we came back to Norfolk and then over to the Pacific via the Panama Canal. We transited the canal. By this time it was probably

September or October and we went through south of Hawaii. But, we stopped first of all in San Diego and San Francisco. When I was in San Francisco, I called home and my mother answered the phone. [This part inaudible].

I then went back to the ship and I tried to phone a friend of mine from law school. And I called to see if he was there and he wasn't. He was out overseas someplace.

But in any event, I went back to the ship and asked the Captain if I could go home to see my mother and he was very mad because we were supposed to sail to Hawaii the day after tomorrow. It was two days after Thanksgiving that we were supposed to sail. I had been out to his house the night before Thanksgiving. I saw him and he said, "If you go, you better be back."

I thought my mother really needed me at that time and I caught a plane with my priority passage, a DC-3. After three or four stops, I got to Chicago in the morning. I guess it was the day after Thanksgiving. I got to the funeral parlor about 11 o'clock in the morning and left four o'clock in the afternoon, got packed, caught the plane back, again several hops, got the harbor ferry, and got to the ship about 15 minutes before they turned on the lights. So, it was a very tight schedule.

In any event, as I say, we sailed from San Francisco down to the canal then up the West Coast. And then from San Francisco to Hawaii and from there we took ammunition over to [inaudible].

There were other supplies with us and we went to Amerita [phonetic] and a day or two later we went west to Uliffie [phonetic] and then up to Berinkie [phonetic], really just after the action took place. We cannot honestly say we were in the battle. That was really closed off before we got there. Still it was a pretty exciting place. The troops were ashore and that was interesting and our introduction to the Japanese. I can't honestly say we participated in the battle.

But in any event we were there a short time and then were ordered to [inaudible]. People were getting ready for the landing; let's see, the landing had already taken place. They already landed on Luzon. I don't remember where we sortied from, but in any event, we were transited to San Bernadine[phonetic], Australia.

We participated in...we were with a group that transmitted with submarine escorts, DBs, I think. It must have been some sort of escort command. [Inaudible]. There were about ten ships in that convoy. That may seem like a lot, but that's not a lot.

Every so often, I was up on the bridge; I was not on duty, but I was up on the open bridge; as we were speeding through the strait and a flight was coming back from CVE. This was a CVE convoy, that's what is was. And we had a battleship and it was a CVE convoy and this flight was coming back and we saw him in the front and then we went on and he kept coming back so he could get a better downward approach and while they were breaking out, one airplane moved off, came down and flew right in beyond the bay and that was the first exposure we had to kamikaze bombers.

WINKLER: Oh, I'll bet.

FLOBERG: And, actually, we weren't at general quarters, many of these guys just came in. Then we went to general quarters, but, of course, it was too late for [inaudible]. But he came in and went right through the flight deck and right through the header deck. The odd thing was that he hit the water. The evaporators and the pumps went up and killed about two men who were on evaporator watch down there and started a fire. We steamed along in formation for 30 minutes, or maybe it was an hour. The fire, as you could see, got bigger and finally [inaudible] they couldn't control anything from the ship. And they sent out a detachment and sent two DE's with it. They stopped, the ship came up, we circled and then picked the people off the ship and I think [inaudible name], as I recall, was the patrol watch. After they picked up all the crew on the CVE, they backed off and they torpedoed it. By that time, we were 20- 25 miles away. So, we could do it on our mission and that was from when [inaudible] where they had that guy in [inaudible]. We stayed with this group of CVE's all through landings there. After that, we went out for probably 30 days and we used to do it for 20 days.

Finally that part of the mission was completed and we were ordered back. I guess we [inaudible] and we prepared for the Iwo Jima. And we did the same thing-- we sailed out with the task group of CVE's we were escorting and went up to Iwo. And Iwo, from a flier's standpoint, was a relatively easy operation. By the way, to back up, we saw a lot of kamikazes. We weren't attacked, but we saw them hit lot of ships, I would say a dozen. This was early in the kamikaze business, too. Later on of course, [inaudible]. Iwo was too far for easy access for those kamikaze planes. There were a couple of them, but they were ineffective because they had such a long flight.

One of the ships was sunk by a submarine. I think it was one of the CVE's that was sunk by a submarine, and then we returned after 30 days to wherever it was, maybe it was longer than that, it probably was longer than that because the Iwo occupation took the Marines a heck of a long time to secure that place.

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