25 July 2001

Winkler: Hello, this is Dave Winkler I'm here with retired Admiral Wallace Dowd at his home here in, where are we?

Dowd: Silverdale Washington.

Winkler: Silverdale, Washington on the Hood Canal. This is tape one, side one. Admiral, thank you very much for having me out here. The first question I'd like to ask you is you were born in Cambridge, Massachusetts to a Navy family. Could you talk a little bit about your family and growing up?

Dowd: Sure, my dad was a member of the Class of 1920 at the Naval Academy. They graduated in 1919. He went to sea for three years as an Ensign. Then he went to MIT to become a Naval Architect. As a result he become a member of the Construction Corp. In those days the Construction Corp consisted of the top three percent of each class of the Naval Academy, and their job was to design and build ships. That was my dad's career.

He retired as a Rear Admiral. He had a very successful career. He was a wonderful naval officer. He was a marvelous father, and he inspired me to go into the Navy. I mean I wanted nothing but to be in the Navy.

Winkler: Now, if you're in Cambridge Massachusetts when you were born, obviously he had met your mother.

Dowd: Oh yes, he met her in San Francisco when he came into San Francisco Bay on a battleship, the Arkansas, at some dance or something like that. Met my mother and they were married subsequently after he graduated from the Naval Academy.

They had a very long and very happy life. He died in 1962, and that's a very interesting story. The Commandant of the 12th Naval District sent a message to Commander Service Force Sixth Fleet where I was serving at the time. The message said, "You'd better get home, your Dad's dying." So I flew form the middle of the Med in to Valencia Spain and was met by the Consulate General named Brooks Crawford. Brooks drove me out to the airport from the heliport. He said, "Wally, I have a package I'd like to have you take back to the United States."

I said, "Well, when somebody in the State Department asks a naval officer to take a package back it's crooked as a dog's hind leg. What's the problem?"

He said, "Well, look to whom it's address."

It was addressed to the President of the United States, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. I opened the package and it was a Bible. It was a Bible printed in 1510. I said, "Why are you asking me to take this back?"

He said, "Well, it's owned by a very wealthy Spaniard who wants the President to have it, but if he sends it to the President via the authorities in Madrid, they'll steal it. If he sends it via the State Department channels then the rules say that the State Department has to give it to the Ambassador to make the presentation and he'll steal it. So please take it back."

So I took it back. Polly and I slept on it that night in Madrid, and I took it back to Charleston and walked into the Customs Office and said, "You've got a problem."

He said, "What's the problem?"

I said, "Well, here's a package. Just give me a receipt." He looked at the address and said, "Will you please get the hell out of here, Commander?" So I went out and put US postage on the package. Two dollars and fifty cents or three dollars; dropped it in a mailbag. Today that item is one of the number one artifacts listed in the Kennedy library. That's how it got back. Hard to believe.

Winkler: Did you get back in time for your father?

Dowd: Yes, we got back and I went into the old man's room and said, "What's going on?"

He said, "What are you doing back here?"

I said, "Well, I just heard you weren't feeling well."

He says, "You're a goddamn liar."

I said, "No, how do I get a drink in this place?"

He said, "Well, go over and open the closet." I went over and opened the closet and he had a case of scotch, a case of bourbon, and a case of gin. So we had a bottle of bourbon that we worked on that afternoon.

That night the doctor came in and he said "I want to talk to you." He said, "Did you hear the story about when they brought your old man into the hospital?"

I said, "No."

He said, " Well, they brought him in on a gurney, took him up to the fifth floor and wheeled him out of the elevator." This was a Catholic hospital. "A sister in charge of the floor

named Marcianno, eighty-six years old at the time, shook her cane in his face and said, ‘You may have been an admiral in the Navy, but right now, you're just another patient of mine. Get back in that bed and go to bed and go to sleep.’

The old man didn't say a word. The next morning, Sister Marcianno walks into the room. ‘Well, did you have a nice evening last night, Admiral?’

He says, ‘No.’

She says, ‘Well, what's the problem?’

He said, ‘For all my years of life, I've heard that you Catholics have the best looking women on earth, but never have I seen such a bunch of old crows that you've got in this hospital.’

Sister Marcianno didn't say a word. She walked out, about an hour later she came back. She marched in the six prettiest nurses in the hospital and lined them around the bed, shook her cane in his face and said, ‘Take your choice. I don't want to hear another word out of you.’”

He took his choice and he died a happy man. Sister Marcianno died not very long thereafter. Interesting story.

Winkler: A little bit more about your father, the Construction Corps, what were some of the projects that he had responsibility for?

Dowd: Well, his job in a navy yard was as construction superintendent of a ship, or hull superintendent of a ship, or shop superintendent or the planning officer of the shipyard, or the production officer of the shipyard, and since there were only about a hundred and eighty officers in the Navy who were in the Construction Corps, they were all very well known. This was a profession he loved, and he was damn good at it, too. As a matter of fact, he put me to work when I was fifteen, in the shipyard behind a huge pair of gate shears and I worked for a guy named Sweat, S-w-e-a-t. Sweat would put the steel through the shears and my job was to keep the back of the shears cleaned out.

Why did he put me there? He put me there to teach me how to work. What else can you ask for?

Winkler: During World War II what were some of his responsibilities?

Dowd: During World War II, he was responsible for all of the ships built in the Great Lakes during a big part of the war, and as you may remember most of the LSTs were build in the Great Lakes and floated down the Chicago River and down the Mississippi to New Orleans where they were fitted out and then sent out to sea. So this was one of his jobs during World War II. He was also in the Bureau of Ships during World War II. He retired as having been the Shipyard

Commander at Pearl Harbor, the Shipyard Commander at Mare Island and the Senior Member of Board of Inspection and Survey in Bureau of Ships.

As a matter of fact, he was in Chicago when he swore me into the Navy. After I'd held up my hand and taken the oath, he looked at me and he said, "Son," he said, "I'm going to give you some advice." He said, "If I ever hear you say to somebody that you can't do something because the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts Manual says so," he says, "I'm going to kick your ass from here to Sunday." I've never forgotten that. He meant what he said. Quite a guy. I'd like to have been half the naval officer he was.

Winkler: So definitely a role model for you?

Dowd: Oh yes. No question.

Winkler: Because of his different duty stations, as a young lad growing up, you got to see different locations around the country?

Dowd: Yes, we lived in Norfolk, San Francisco, Pearl Harbor, and Charleston, South Carolina, among others. We moved, I would say every three years, three and a half years.

Winkler: You the only son, or you have brothers and sisters?

Dowd: Had a brother. I had a brother and he went to the Naval Academy. I couldn't go to the Naval Academy. When I was sixteen I had an appointment to the Naval Academy, but I couldn't pass the physical because I'd gone blind. As a result I lost out on that. Then the question was, well, how do I get a commission? The only answer in those days was you go to a naval ROTC unit, and there were only six of them in the country. One of them was at the University of Washington. Each of these six could offer one, sometimes two commissions in the regular Navy each year in the Supply Corps.

So that's the reason I went to the University of Washington. I went there with the sole objective of winning one of those commissions.

Winkler: Ok, well, you also got an education there. What did you study at the University of Washington?

Dowd: Business and Political Science, a combination of the two.

Winkler: University of Washington, can you talk a little bit out the ROTC unit? Was it a tight-knit group?

Dowd: Oh it was one of the most unusual groups of young people I've ever seen in my life. You know, you talk about fraternities. University of Washington had, when I was going there, about 400 young men go in the unit. No women in those days.

Winkler: Right.

Dowd: I would say eighty to ninety percent of those young men came from sea going families and most of them couldn't afford to send their sons to join a fraternity. So all of a sudden, the naval unit of the University of Washington became a fraternity for these young men. The name of the game was we beat the hell out of every fraternity that we could, in every sport we could, and as a result it became a very close-knit outfit. Here we are today, well 1942 to 2002, 60 some odd years, we're still the closest of friends, those of us that are still alive and came through World War II. We meet regularly and enjoy each other and the wives enjoy each other, too. It was a very unusual outfit. I don't think it will ever be repeated.

Winkler: You mentioned, as far as you were commissioned, well, you find out you were selected for Supply Corp. Well, let's see, where were you on December the 7th?

Dowd: December 7th, University of Washington.

Winkler: OK, what were your thoughts that day?

Dowd: How do I get the hell out of this place and get into the fleet?

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: But you couldn't do it. We could get out and enlist, but the professor of Naval Science and Tactics wouldn't let you do it. He insisted that you finish your college education and get your regular commission the way you were supposed to. Which, in hindsight was the right way to go.

Winkler: Right. You're thinking the long term there, versus –

Dowd: That's right, yes.

Winkler: And there was a large increase, influx as far as the Navy grew exponentially. You mentioned you were commissioned and your father actually commissioned you. What happened after you got commissioned?

Dowd: Well, we went to Supply Corps School at Harvard University. We'd been there a month and we were told, “We need some of you guys at sea, so who wants to go?” A bunch of us volunteered, so we had about six weeks in Supply Corps School and we were kicked out of there and said, "Go to sea."

We all went to sea right from there instead of a normal four-month course, we had about six weeks and then went to sea to do our job.

Winkler: Talk about reporting aboard your first ship.

Dowd: First ship, four-stack destroyer, USS Alden DD211. She'd just escaped from Asiatic Fleet, came back to Pearl Harbor. We joined her in Pearl Harbor, then went on to some convoy south of the Western Pacific, and finally moved from the Pacific into the Atlantic with the submarine convoys from Trinadad on south. Stayed on that for a year, and then the ship was ordered up to Boston to be converted into an APD, and at that stage of the game I had a set of orders to get off her.

Winkler: Usually, you remember reporting aboard, what was it, well, first of all you got to Pearl Harbor. How'd you get out there?

Dowd: That's interesting. I got out there on an Army APA. Sailed out of San Francisco, six days into Honolulu. Artie Shaw's band was on board. Polly knew that we were in Pearl Harbor when she heard Artie Shaw playing from the Royal Hawaiian. That's how she knew we were in Pearl Harbor. We weren't there very long.

Winkler: I guess, you bring up a good point is, Polly, your wife, where'd you meet her?

Dowd: Well, met her the year before graduation from the University. After completing Supply Corps School and on route to Pearl Harbor I took the train into Seattle. Arrived on Thursday night and she had arranged the marriage for Saturday night. We left on Sunday for San Francisco, and on Tuesday I left Polly in San Francisco and went out to meet the ship.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: That answer your question?

Winkler: Yes, that answers the question. That connects the dots. When you reached Hawaii, you arrived at Pearl Harbor and you saw the results of the Japanese attack.

Dowd: They were still very evident, yes.

Winkler: And then you report aboard your ship. Could you talk a little bit about your responsibilities as a Supply Corps Officer?

Dowd: Yes, I was ordered aboard the ship as Disbursing Officer of a destroyer division. Alden, Pope, and Pillsbury were the names of the ships. As disbursing officer, that was the payment part of the job, but the other part of the profession was doing what the skipper wanted you to do. We had a marvelous skipper. He was a Lieutenant Commander and he was a Cherokee Indian. He

name was Evans, Chief Evans is what they called him. Chief Evans was a marvelous ship handler and had lots of faith and trust in his officers onboard, and he had us all standing Officer of the Deck watches, underway and in maneuvers, and all the rest of it. He was just a wonderful teacher of ship handling.

Chief Evans had the ship all the way around to Boston when I left it. He, Chief Evans had orders at the same time to the USS Johnston as a prospective commanding officer, a new destroyer. Chief asked if I would want to go along with him. I said, "I'd love to go along with you." But at that stage of the game I was too senior to go along and they wouldn't let me go. Chief Evans took Johnston, and if you may remember Johnston was in the Battle off Samar in the Battle of Leyte Gulf which went down with heavy losses.

Winkler: Fending off, I guess, the Japanese battleship and cruiser attack. Very heroic action.

Dowd: Very heroic and that's what you'd expect from somebody like Chief Evans.

Winkler: The other individuals on the ship, you indicated that you got to do some watch standing.

Dowd: Oh, sure.

Winkler: OK, was that standard practice to have Supply Corp officers do some of that?

Dowd: I can't answer your questions, except to say in order to live with your fellow shipmates, you had to share the duties as they did. I stood Officer of the Deck watches on destroyers and on subsequent ships and if anybody came down and tried to give me a bunch of claptrap about you and the Supply Corp don't do the same things we do, I could say that's a bunch of bologna. I've stood as many watches as you have, underway and in port. It's important as to how you live with your shipmates.

Winkler: As far as the ship itself, you're talking about a ship that at that time was about thirty years old.

Dowd: You're talking about a ship that was three hundred and thirty-three feet long. She had a thirty-three foot beam, she could make 32 knots, and she was as uncomfortable as hell in any sea, but she did her job.

Winkler: You did escort duties. Did you ever come across, for example in the Atlantic, U-boats?

Dowd: The answer to your question is yes, and that was the name of the game. On contact you would drop the depth charges all over the place. The answer to your question is yes. Did we sink any? No, not that we know of, but we dropped a hell of a lot of depth charges.

Winkler: That in itself, you may have deterred, you know, attacks, so you just don't know.

Dowd: You just don't know.

Winkler: I've heard lots of stories about how you have a chief on board who takes the junior officer, you know, one of the responsibilities of a senior enlisted is to work with the junior officers. Did you have any experiences with the senior enlisted or -?

Dowd: Oh, yes, you bet, and in those days, the senior enlisted were Chief Petty Officers that had been in the Navy for twenty-five or thirty years. Been there a long time.

There was Chief Torpedoman's mate in Aldan named Ricktermeir and he was just one hell of a Chief Petty Officer. He had all the junior officers pretty much kowtowed as to what they should do and what they shouldn't do. He was a hell of a role model, too.

Winkler: Can you elaborate a little bit?

Dowd: Well, you know you're asking me to remember things. If you had a problem in a division with somebody, you'd go talk to the Chief, and say," How we going to handle this?" Well in those days the chief would say more often then not "Why don't you let me handle it?"

If you could solve the problem that way you avoid then, a hell of a lot of problems. Even during Vietnam days when I had a Master Chief working for me, and we went into one base and obviously it had been very poorly run and managed, I asked this Chief Petty Officer, Master Chief, "Can you handle it?"

He said, "Yes, Sir."

I said, "I'm not going to ask you any questions, just take care of it." I went back there a couple of months later; that place was straightened out from start to finish. He'd taken them behind the barn and he just beat the hell out of a few of them. But you can't admit to anything these days.

Winkler: Yes, any other aspects about that tour of duty with the Alden that, you know, good sea story?

Dowd: Oh, you're going back a lot of years, David.

Winkler: Yes.

Dowd: I think one of the, if you don't mind referring to the families for just a second. I wrote my Dad and said, "I think you ought to ask Polly to come stay with you and see you." The old man picked up on it rapidly and he got Polly and got her moving toward Chicago, and then when I got into New York, I called Chicago and said, "Where the hell are you, and why aren't you here?"

She got on the train and came in and she had one of these huge wicker baskets that telescopes, and all her belongings were in the wicker basket; tied up with a piece of line. I dragged that thing from the railroad station all the way over to the hotel. I'm trailing sugar all the way. In those days sugar was a rationed item.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: Polly had brought five pounds of sugar from San Francisco and it just leaked out all the way into the Commodore Hotel.

Incidentally, did anybody ever tell you that the Commodore Hotel in World War II was a sanctuary for people who wore a uniform? They gave tremendous rates for anybody who stayed with them.

Winkler: This was in New York?

Dowd: New York City. They just took awfully good care of people who wore a uniform.

Winkler: So that was a good opportunity, I guess to spend time with your recent new bride.

Dowd: Oh yes, we went out and rented an apartment in New York City after she arrived. Stayed there three days, had to give that up, went to Boston and stayed there two weeks and then had to give up a place there, and had a set of orders down to Savannah, Georgia. That ship was a wonderful place to start a career in the Navy.

Winkler: You mentioned you got new orders to –

Dowd: From Alden?

Winkler: Yes, then you got –

Dowd: Orders to the Supervisor Shipbuilding, Savannah, Georgia. It was a new outfit that was building British minesweepers and minesweepers for the American Navy. Our job was to outfit them and get them to sea.

I went down there and there was a big old pier called Ocean Steamship Terminal; a support pier, four railroad tracks under it. This pier had been used for handling cotton being

exported from Savannah, and blacks were the stevedores. Blacks lived in these box cars in this terminal. They had showers rigged outside of the boxcars. We had to clean up that terminal and turn it into a naval station. Which we did.

The job went very well except for the fact that the main thing we had to look out for was the Brits stealing from each other and trying to get material for their ships from other ships that were coming along later.

But anyway it was an interesting tour. It was a very short tour. I met a bluejacket down there named Ben Yeoman. Ben Yeoman was a Storekeeper Second Class in those days and Ben died this year, still a very dear friend. We went to visit them many, many times. They visited with us many, many times. Ben got out of the Navy and became an optometrist in Calhoun, Georgia. He owned three optometry shops when he finally quit. He was a member of the Carter gang and that whole group that came from that neck of the woods. A marvelous man and a great shipmate. I miss him.

Winkler: I guess you were down south at the time, you mentioned the blacks. I guess they had the Jim Crow Law?

Tape 1, side 1 stops.
Tape 1 Side 2 begins.

Dowd: In those days there was still very, very much segregation. Everything was segregated, the heads, the schools, everything. It was a different world. You can't even describe it today.
I think Polly has a good comment on that. There's a woman, a historian in Washington, DC, I am trying to think of her name, marvelous writer. Currently writing on the life of Lincoln. She wrote a marvelous book on the world of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Winkler: Is that Kerns Goodwin?

Dowd: Yes, Doris Kerns Goodwin.

Winkler: Yes, a good one.

Dowd: Doris remarked about the day that Eleanor went into Savannah and linked arms with the black women marching down the street, knocking the whites off the sidewalks and this kind of business. Polly was pulled into a store by a storeowner in order to avoid this. Doris Kerns Goodwin said she never had been able to verify that statement. Polly finally wrote her and said, "I'll verify it. I was there and I saw it." It's a different world. Life has changed.

Winkler: Your next duty station was a pre-commissioned ship, an aircraft carrier.

Dowd: Antietam, being built and fitted out in Philadelphia. We were up there about six months. Ship went to sea in the middle of winter. We had to load her out in the middle of the winter and a miserable winter it was, but everything worked out. We got her to sea. Went down south, went to Norfolk, went down to Guantanamo, and then back through the canal and out to the Pacific. She was a beautiful ship, a lot of fun to be onboard.

Winkler: What were your responsibilities?

Dowd: I was Stores Officer. I had responsibility for Aviation Stores and General Stores. So the storerooms were my responsibility. It was a fine ship. The skipper was a guy named Teague. Jimmy Teague was a classmate of my fathers. He used to give me hell. I enjoyed the old man. He was a lot of fun.

Winkler: Now you have an air wing onboard or an air group?

Dowd: Yes, an air group.

Winkler: What was the relationship between the air group and the carrier?

Dowd: Well, I think you know the answer to that. The CAG, Commander of the Air Group, he was responsible for the whole aviation organization while the skipper was responsible for the ship and being the hotel. I don't remember any conflicts, because the skipper was a naval aviator. CAG was a naval aviator named Pliney Holt. They were very close to each other. They talked all the time, and how do I know it? Well, I know it because my General Quarters station was a 40-millimeter quad mount just above the bridge. I'd be up there and I could watch what was going on, and they would just work together like a team.

Winkler: As far as your relationship, did you have a counterpart in the air group as far as supplies?

Dowd: No. No, the air group didn't have any. They depended upon us for everything.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: Air group came aboard with what they had, which was minimal, but it was our responsibility to have on board what they needed.

Winkler: OK, so as far as all the aircraft spares and everything, that was your job to keep that in stock and to keep those birds flying.

Dowd: That's affirmative.

Winkler: Ok, you just brought up an interesting point about your General Quarters Station. What'd you say was, as a Mount Officer?

Dowd: A 40-millimeter quad mount, yes.

Winkler: OK, talk about the time period. This is 1944 and what campaigns did the Antietam deploy to?

Dowd: In the Pacific, She was out there in Okinawa and everything thereafter.

Winkler: OK, early Iwo Jima?

Dowd: Yes.

Winkler: At this time you're dealing with Kamikazes?

Dowd: Yes.

Winkler: Discuss what it was like to be threatened by the –

Dowd: We didn't have that experience. Other Ships did but none of them hit us. We were very fortunate.

Winkler: They Try?

Dowd: I can't remember their even trying.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: No, I think we escaped the whole thing.

Winkler: Individuals onboard the ship besides the Captain, worthy of note?

Dowd: Worthy of Note. It's hard for me to go back and even remember names at this stage of the game. I can't think of any at the moment.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: I hope this is worthwhile. You want to keep this going, do you want to quit?

Winkler: You're doing great. Continuing on, the end of the war, do you remember what that was like?

Dowd: Yes, I was in a jeep carrier, called Badoing Straits. I'd just left Antietam. I had orders back to Washington, DC when the word came through that the bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. I stayed aboard Badoing Straits until they dumped me off in San Francisco, and then went back to Washington DC.

Winkler: Polly was in Washington, or did she meet you –

Dowd: Oh, yes, Polly was there. You bet your boots.

Winkler: OK, says here you went to the Bureau of Supply and Accounts in Washington, DC.

Dowd: That's right. Bureau of Supplies and Accounts is one of six or seven technical bureaus at that time. My orders were to go to the Office of Personnel Division of that organization. I had the Sea and Overseas desk. This was right during the period of demobilization. The Supply Corps was coming down from roughly eighteen thousand officers to about six thousand. My boss gave me a set of orders to go out into the Pacific and return the detailing of Supply Corps officers from area commanders back to Washington DC. I had the privilege of coming out into the Pacific and going to Pearl Harbor, Kwai, Eniwetok, Guam, the Philippines, Shanghai, and Tsingtao talking to all these people about bringing the detailing of officers back to Washington, DC. We did that. It took a long time, but we got it done. It was a marvelous experience for me. To be able to go around and visit all these places and meet all these officers.

Winkler: Which brings up a question. During the war the local commanders had a lot of prerogative as far as where people were detailed to?

Dowd: That's right, that's right. For example, if groups of officers were ordered to Commander Cruisers Destroyers Pacific, then Commander Cruises Destroyers Pacific decided which ship they would go on. The same thing for ComNavAirPac. Same thing ComSubPac. Each of these kingdoms had their own control.

Winkler: OK, in your case though being assigned to the Antietam was that decision made from Washington, or in theater?

Dowd: That was made from Washington. That was made from Washington. But if the Antietam had been in the Pacific Fleet then I'd have been ordered to ComNavAirPac and he in turn would have to order me to the ship.

Winkler: OK, that follows in line for example with replacement pilots I've interviewed, where they'd be assigned out to Pearl and Pearl would determine which squadron they would be reassigned to.

Dowd: Same situation.

Winkler: Some of the other duties at the Bureau of Supply and Accounts, at that time were you still in the Pentagon or you still in the old Navy.

Dowd: Old Navy. Old Navy, 18th and Constitution.

Winkler: That's because the Pentagon was just recently opened during World War II.

Dowd: That's right. That's right.

Winkler: So, you were assigned out of there. Some of the other duties that you may have had at that time?

Dowd: Taking care of officers, officer detail.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: That was the whole job.

Winkler: All right, now at this time, you're a Lieutenant.

Dowd: That's right. Made Lieutenant Commander there, I think.

Winkler: OK, you've pretty much determined to stick with this as a career at the time?

Dowd: Oh, there's never been any doubt of my sticking to it as a career. Either sticking to it as a career or getting kicked out, one of the two.

Winkler: Had you done anything worthy of getting kicked out, ruffle any feathers?

Dowd: The answer to your question there is, I've been recommended for a General Court-Martial twice. One of them was in Charleston, South Carolina, because while we were outfitting ships in Savannah, we were not getting very responsive answers out of the Supply department in Charleston. This same storekeeper I was talking about earlier, he and I took a truck one night and drove from Savannah to Charleston and fortunately I knew what the stuff was that was in the shipyard. We took a pair of master keys along with us called "bolt cutters." We broke into the warehouse and got what we needed and drove back to Savannah. This wasn't exactly appreciated by the officer in charge, so that was one recommendation.

The other recommendation for a General Court came out in Okinawa in 1949, I'll get the year in just a second. Anyway my job was to reestablish the naval air facility at Naha, Okinawa. We were riding back to the ship, back to our quarters one night in a jeep and as we pulled alongside the Generals headquarters, colors sounded. There were four naval officers in the jeep.

We stopped, sat at attention until colors was over. Then we started to proceed and this great big MP comes out, holds his arm up, and says, came to me, I was driving, and said, "You're violating Army regulations."

I said, "What are you talking about?'

He said, "Well, you're suppose to dismount and salute."

I said, "Look soldier, I don't give a damn what the Army regulations say, I work by the Navy regulation, and they say that you're going to sit at attention until colors is over and then proceed," and I said, 'If you'll get the hell out of my way, I'm going home. Here's where I live."

We went home and were having a drink at the bar that night, five or six of us. I was fortunate to live with a whole bunch of pretty big men. In walks this MP with his supervisor, a Sergeant, and they proceed to tell us why the Army regulations, and what they were there for, had to write us up as criminals or whatever you called them. We decided we'd had enough so all of us got off the barstools and picked up two of them and threw them out of the quarters. The Army General didn't appreciate that.

That went all the way back to CincPacFlt where it was finally decided that the naval officers were observing naval regulations when they sat at attention, and that was the end of that.

So your answer to your question, two recommendations for General Court-Martial.

Winkler: OK, follow-up questions are very good. It mentions that you go to Graduate School at Stanford University. That probably was an enjoyable tour.

Dowd: That's one of the toughest tours I had in the Navy. We were in the first class to go to Stanford after World War II, and there were fifteen of us. We were as acceptable to the staff of that school, as a skunk at a lawn party, because they, the staff had, all during the war had had people coming right out of undergraduate and into graduate school.

Winkler: Right.

Dowd: Now here we were after World War II coming into this atmosphere, where really we didn't give a damn what happened during undergraduate school. We were there to learn something and we were not going to be treated like a bunch of young undergraduates. So this set up a conflict between the naval officers and the staff. Well, it was fascinating to me, when we finally got out of that place, number one man, number two man, number three man in the class were naval officers. All the rest were in the top ten or fifteen percent.

We were finally able to turn those professors around a little to say, "Hey we ought to think about those guys." It was tough work, because you had to overcome that, "What are these

guys doing here? What's this guy doing questioning me, what I'm saying?" Interesting time of our lives, but we worked our butts off.

Winkler: You know, that conflict with academia, I think continues today.

Dowd: Oh, does it?

Winkler: Oh yes, that's an experience I felt going to graduate school, because –

Dowd: Did you really?

Winkler: Yes, somebody with ten years of work experience behind them, having traveled the world, and then you have these kids come right out of undergraduate school into the graduate program and, you know, a lot of them wanted to become professors.

Dowd: Sure, and that was not our objective at all.

Winkler: Yes.

Dowd: But, it was a marvelous thing for the Navy. It trained us, it gave us some education that we couldn't have gotten anyplace else on earth, and it did us good stead for the rest of our naval careers.

Winkler: At the time, that was shore duty for you and Polly in a very nice location.

Dowd: Well, we lived in half a Quonset hut in San Bruno, and that was thirty miles south of Stanford. We had to drive that thirty miles back and forth each day, while the wives raised the kids in the Quonset huts.

The way the wives handled this was each night the wives would go with the children to another Quonset hut. All the wives and the kids were together in one Quonset and the husbands had complete quit and peacefulness so they could study. The only night that that didn't happen was Saturday night. Those gals did a lot to help us get through.

Winkler: You mention kids, at that time.

Dowd: We had two at that time. We had two girls and a boxer dog and all of us lived in that half a Quonset hut. Not much. Had to bore a hole in the deck for the icebox so it would drain completely. The ice would come every other day, twenty-five pounds.

Winkler: You then head up here to Whidbey Island.

Dowd: Whidbey Island, yes.

Winkler: Now just out of curiosity, the University of Washington was one of six ROTC units. Is there any other reason why you came to the Pacific Northwest?

Dowd: At that time?

Winkler: Yes.

Dowd: Yes, my wife has rheumatoid arthritis and I asked the Bureau, I said, "Please send me up here," where they had a rheumatoid arthritis expert. "I'd like very much to have at least six months where she could be under full treatment." And they were very kind and said yes.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: In those days for rheumatoid arthritis they injected her with gold, gold solutions.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: And that was a very interesting drill on her. We came up to Puget Sound and stayed until I had orders out of here. Whidbey was a great place to live. Have you ever been there?

Winkler: I'll be there next week.

Dowd: Well, you're going to be amazed. I was on the staff of Commander Fleet Air Wing Four, and he had PBM squadrons, PB4Y2 squadrons and then he got P2V squadrons. PB4Ys were phased out. And Commander Fleet Air Wing Four was responsible for naval aviation patrolling from Seattle, north out through the Aleutians and down through Midway into Honolulu.

Our first summer was taking two tenders out of Seattle and two squadrons of land planes and two squadrons of seaplanes. The planes would leapfrog a ship all the way up and out through the Aleutians, and down to Midway. We had a wonderful time.

Winkler: Is that on the Salisbury Sound?

Dowd: On the Salisbury Sound and Pine Island. Yes, and I was on the same ships later out in the Western Pacific.

Winkler: And your specific responsibilities was the parts support?

Dowd: It was logistics support, working for the air wing commander.
It was a good job.

Winkler: You also got to see some beautiful country.

Dowd: Just to go aside for a second, one night the boss was a Rear Admiral named Jack Perry. He was known as one of the meanest east end of a horse going west, in the Pacific Fleet. One evening his Marine orderly came down and said, "The Admiral wants to see you."
I went up to his cabin and walked in and the Admiral said, 'Dowd, do you fish?"

I said, 'Yes, sir."

He says, "Well go in and get me the rod out of my room, out of my cabin, get me a rod."

I went in a brought him a rod and he says, "Where's the tackle box?"

I said, "You didn't ask me to get the tackle box, Admiral, you asked me to get a rod."

He said, 'Well go back and get a tackle box."

So, I did. "Rig it."

So I did, I kept rigging it, and he said, "Ok, break it down." So I broke it down.

He said, "Be ready to go fishing in fifteen minutes."

I said, "Admiral, I don't have any gear."

He said, "What the hell do you think you've been playing with for the last half hour?"

So from then on in, starting from Ketchican going all the way out to the Aleutians, every night at about five o'clock, I'd crawl in that helicopter with Admiral Perry, and go inland about fifty or sixty miles, find a stream and bring back sacks full of trout. Unbelievable fishing in those days. So that was one real remembrance of that trip.

Winkler: Were you a fisherman before then?

Dowd: Yes.

Winkler: So, you appreciated the opportunity.

Dowd: Oh, you bet. Anybody who didn't appreciate it was an idiot.

Winkler: While you were attached to the air wing, the Korea War breaks out.

Dowd: That's right.

Winkler: Do you recall your reaction when that happened?

Dowd: Reaction?

Winkler: Yeah, what were your thoughts?

Dowd: I don't think thoughts had anything to do with it. We were, all of us on the staff knew what the war plans were for Fleet Air Wing Four and we just kept modifying those plans and bringing them up to date as much as we could. The Korean War didn't really hit me until I got a set of orders out of Fleet Air Wing Four to Fleet Air Wing One.

In the initial set of orders, Fleet Air Wing One was home ported in Guam. Polly and the kids would be able to come along and live in Guam. But those hopes were dashed in a real big hurry when the word came out that Fleet Air Wing One had left for the Western Pacific in the area of Korea. The families will not be permitted to go out to Guam.
That was a twenty, twenty-four month period that Polly stayed here in Seattle and I was out there.

We had seaplanes and land planes out there.

Winkler: What were some of your duties?

Dowd: Again as Supply Officer for Fleet Air Wing One, went on board the ship, on the staff and as such your job was to insure that the patrol planes had the material and the kind of support that they needed.

But one of the jobs was to, a couple of very interesting jobs. During one stint, we were sent to the Pescadores. You know where they are? The Pescadores are just off the coast of China right where Matsu is and Quemoy. Well the Pescadores is just a little bit to the east of those islands. Owned by the Chinese.

Well they sent us in there to support aircraft that were on patrol and nobody had ever been in the place before. Nobody from the US. We had to support the aircraft from the ship with damn little support from anything else. Every thing we had right there.

But an interesting part of it was we were asked to establish an Officer's Club on the beach. We had to clean out a Chinese whorehouse to do it.

If you've ever had the experience of cleaning out a Chinese whorehouse, you haven't been educated very well.

Another job was to go back and put Fleet Air Wing One detachment at the naval air facility Naha. That had been decommissioned after World War II, and we had to go back and re-commission it and bring it back into the Navy. That was an interesting story.

That's when I had the General Court Martial recommendation. The Army didn't exactly appreciate the Navy being there in their backyard. Very interesting.

Winkler: Those type of aircraft sometimes came under fire by the Chinese and the Russians?

Dowd: Yes.

Winkler: You recall any incidents?

Dowd: No.

Winkler: OK. Did you get out to Korea at anytime during the conflict?

Dowd: The answer's yes. We went to the Inchon area in Salisbury Sound and operated in that area for, oh, several months to relieve the people who were in that area in the war.

Winkler: Just conducting flight operations out of there?

Dowd: Yes. Do you know what the Salisbury Sound and Pine Island were? They were seaplane tenders.

Winkler: Right. Didn't they have like a big Gantry crane in the front?

Dowd: They had a huge crane back aft, and they had a big working area back aft, where they could bring a plane onboard and work on it.

Tape one, side two stops.
Tape Two, Side One Begins

Winkler: OK, continuing on this is tape two, side one. It is July 25th. This is Dave Winkler of the Naval Historical Foundation with Admiral Dowd and we were picking up with Fleet Air –

Dowd: Fleet Air Wing One.

Winkler: With One, you were talking about the Salisbury Sound and the aircraft tenders.

Dowd: They were very unique ships in that their primary purpose was to be able to take a squadron of PBMs or seaplanes and take them almost anywhere on earth and support them, and they did it.

It was an experience to serve on a ship like that. They were able to moor the aircraft at buoys and support them from there, or bring them on board and perform necessary repairs. It was a very unusual ship.

Winkler: As far as working with the officers and pilots, any recollections there?

Dowd: Just, I made some darn good friends and they remained friends the rest of my naval career. Particularly some of the pilots. Recollections just a lot of hard work and long hours, watch some dedicated men doing a job.

Winkler: Now, Fleet Air Wing One that was based out of Western Pacific at the time?

Dowd: Yes.

Winkler: Talk a little bit about detailing. When it came around for orders were you talking to somebody in Washington?

Dowd: No, in those days, you just waited until you got a set of orders, and you did what you were told. As my dad had told me years before, he said, "Look son, the detailers probably know better about where you should go than you do yourself, and you're going to get some good jobs and you're going to get some lousy jobs, but the name of the game is to do the best you can in each one of those jobs."

And he was so right. I didn't request at that stage of the game where I was going. I was given no opportunity where I was going. You got a set of orders and that's where you were going.

Winkler: Well, you had an opportunity I guess to come back here to the Pacific Northwest.

Dowd: I guess that you have to remember that in those days there weren't many Supply Corps officers who were at sea in the Western Pacific on a long tour of duty. You always had the opportunity to state your preferences for the next duty, but you had no contact with the detailer. I didn't in those days in the game. They knew I wanted to come back to the Pacific Northwest if I could, after having been out there for twenty, twenty-four months. They were very kind and said, "Come back to the shipyard here in Bremerton."

Winkler: At that time Polly was living still up here?

Dowd: She was living up here with her folks the whole time I was out.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: I had a set of orders coming back. She came over here to Bremerton to try and get a place to live. When I got home she had rounded up two places. One of them was a two-bedroom small house, here in the town of Bremerton. Owned by a shipyard master ship fitter and he came over to the house and we were looking at it. I said, "Look, why don't we put a third bedroom up in the attic?"

He said, "OK, I'll do that, if you'll help me to lay the flooring."

I said, "No problem. I'll help you."

He said, "I'll just have to raise the rent. You'll have another bedroom in there and that's going to cost me, and I'm going to have to raise the rent."

I said, " What are you going to have to raise it to?"

He said, "Well, from sixty to sixty-five dollars a month." So that's what he did. Sixty-five dollars a month for a three bedroom house. Today you think that's not much money.

Winkler: But that's a lot of money.

Dowd: That was a lot of money back then. So anyway, I came back here to Bremerton; worked in the shipyard, in the Supply Department in the shipyard as Control Superintendent, and very much enjoyed that job.

Winkler: What were some of the specific duties that you had?

Dowd: Specific duties, the Supply Department consisted of two major organizations, box kickers and paper pushers. In other words, somebody had to ask for some material and then you had to find where the hell it was. You had to move it, and pack it for shipment and then you had to ship it. But the box kickers around here kicked the boxes out the door as they went.

I was on the paper side of the coin, controls and all on that side of the coin. One of the major jobs in those days was fitting out new carriers. Or fitting out carriers with, who were coming back in for angle decks. And during that angle deck operation they refitted a whole bunch of compartments with a special aluminum, an anodized aluminum. It was fireproofed. It came out of one shop in Bridgeport, Connecticut. You know the name of the hat place that used to make all the hats for the civilian life.

Anyway, they were a sole supplier of that stuff. One of our jobs was to keep them under control and supply the materials. Interesting, I don't think any of those people are still alive that I was working with in those days.

Winkler: The organization as far as you're dealing with storekeepers?

Dowd: Let's talk just for a second about the organization of a shipyard. You had a handful of naval officers, and you had a bucketful of civil service employees. The naval officers ran the place and the civil service employees were the blue color labor. Back in those days, now.

So the boss was a naval officer; the Production Officer was a naval officer; the Planning Officer was a naval officer; the Supply Officer was a naval officer. Each of them had key officers under him, but the rest of the people down below were civilians.
So our job was to work with the civilian employees.

Winkler: Having worked basically, for example, onboard ship with military sailors, was that a change of pace for you?

Dowd: Oh completely, because you had to learn, you had to learn different rules of the ballgame. It's not like handling a bunch of 18, 19 year old Blue Jackets, it's handling a bunch of Civil Service employees that are probably 50, 55 years old and you're thirty and you've got to work with them and you have to live with them.

Winkler: So that was an education in itself?

Dowd: Oh, complete education, yes. Brand new education. No question. A good one, too.

Winkler: One of the things that kind of amazes me is the fact that today you can't do anything without a computer. Yet, back then, you know, you don't have computers. How'd you keep track of everything?

Dowd: I'm glad you brought that up. In 1952, the Shipyard Supply Department had trays of cards. They were called linedex cards or something like that. There was a card for each stock number and all transactions were entered with a pencil. So you had stock clerks responsible for a battery of these cards and they would handle, if a requisition came in they would check whether it was available or not. If it was available they had to deduct it from the total and strike a new balance, and so indicate on a piece of paper.

Well, IBM came out in 1952 with what they called punch cards. Do you remember what a punch card was?

Winkler: One of these cards with holes in it.

Dowd: Sure and you had a long rod that went through and you punched them. The first computer cards were punch cards put out by IBM, and we had the first ones ever put in, right here in Bremerton. That was my first experience with computers.

Winkler: How was that kind of track handled, as far as, did the folks from IBM come out to you and explain how this was going to work?

Dowd: No, the contract was let back in Washington by the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts with IBM. IBM was to come in and set up the system and train us and then get out, and they did.

Winkler: Did it work?

Dowd: It was better than the old cards. No question about it. Did it work? As well as it should? No.

Winkler: Were you able to save some labor there?

Dowd: The answer's, of course. Yes, we had to cut a number of civilian employees. The answer's yes, we did.

Winkler: I'm glad I brought that up because that's, you know, I guess the first case of computerization.

Dowd: That's the first case.

Winkler: Mention that you served under Captain B. D. "Bad Dog" Smith.

Dowd: Yes.

Winkler: Where did Bad Dog come from?

Dowd: That's a mean miserable son-of-a-bitch.

Winkler: Oh, OK, and then Walt Wright.

Dowd: Walt Wright relieved him and Walt Wright was a completely different human being. Wonderful man.

Winkler: It kind of mentions here in this biography we had talked earlier about working for your father, this was the yard that you had done some work?

Dowd: Oh yes, but see the work, let's go back. I went to high school in Charleston, South Carolina. My final year in high school was out here in Bremerton, Washington, when my dad

was transferred out here. So I was able to go to work in the shipyards on graduation from high school, before going to college. That's when I was able to get a job in the shipyard as a helper. That was back in '38.

Winkler: After that you were assigned to the Naval War College. You go across country to Newport.

Dowd: Newport, Rhode Island.

Winkler: Again, did these orders just –

Dowd: Let me stop you if I can, I'll give you another little story. While here in Bremerton, one night I got a set of orders to report to the Bureau of Ships and the Office of Naval Reactors.

The orders came on Friday and I was to report on Monday. Well, I didn't know what this was all about, so I took off. But before I went, the shipyard Commander, Rear Admiral Benny Haven got hold of me and said, "I want you to report to me the minute you get back to Bremerton. I don't care what hour of the day or night that might be."

"Yes, sir." So I went back and I was ushered into the Office of Naval Reactors. There were five of us and we were put through a week's indoctrination. At the end of this week's indoctrination period we were deemed worthy of visiting his holiness Hyman George Rickover.

So on Saturday morning I go into Captain Rickover's office, and I was greeted by, "Dowd, where'd you go to school?"

"University of Washington."

He said, "What did you study?" And I told him. He says, "Not very well educated, are you?"

I said, "That's a matter of opinion, Captain."

He said, "What do you read?"

I said, "*Time*, *Life*, *Saturday Evening Post, The Bureau of Supplies and Accounts Manual*."

"You're not very well read, either, are you?"

"How often do you have intercourse with your wife?"

I said, “None of your goddamn business,” and the situation went down hill from there, and he finally dismissed me. This other person that was in the office, one of his lackeys, walked me to the door and says, “Well, you’re going to be working for him.”
I said, “The hell I am.”

I went over to BUPERS, Officer Personnel Division. I said, “You order me to work for that son-of-a-bitch and I resign. Here’s my resignation. I’ll write it out ahead of time. Your choice.”

Well, they didn’t order me to work for him. I didn’t learn until much, much later, Rickover had worked for my Dad on a few occasions.

Winkler: Oh?

Dowd: And they didn’t get along worth a damn either. Rickover was out to nail me. Well, I escaped him. But Rickover got my brother. Forced him out of the Navy. I have very, very strong feelings on that man. Matter of fact, on the day before I retired from the Navy, he called me and was chewing my ass out about something. I forgot what it was. I had to say: “Admiral, you’re wrong. You don’t know what the hell you’re talking about.”

He said, “You can’t talk to me like that.”

“Yes sir, I can talk to you like that. If you want to meet me in the CNO’s office, I’ll meet you there in fifteen minutes.”

“Ah, go to hell, Dowd,” and hung up on the phone on me. A very bad situation. He’s not the paragon of virtue that many people have painted him as.

Winkler: Well I really never heard too many folks paint him as a paragon of virtue.

Dowd: Well, you came out here to ask naval experience and that’s an experience of my naval career.

Winkler: That’s a very good insight.

Dowd: He’s the only vindictive human being I’ve run into in the Navy. End of Sermon. Ok, I’ve vented my spleen.

Winkler: You’re not the first one to have a run in with Admiral Rickover.

Dowd: I know.

Winkler: OK, because of that you left Bremerton and you got the orders to the Naval War College.

Dowd: Went to the Naval War College. I was out there for a year. We lived in the brand new naval housing at Fort Adams. We were the first occupants. We moved in and two hurricanes went over the top of us. The wives were staying at Fort Adams. We were over at the War College. They went to bed with the kids and said, "to hell with it." A marvelous experience. Let me give you just a little aside.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: Classmates at the War College, we were all Lieutenant Commanders and Commanders in those days, and all of a sudden we were thrown in with people that we had never been with before, and we melded friendships at the Naval War College that stayed with us for the rest of my naval career.

I guess one of the most significant things I can tell you is, I went back to OPNAV, OP41, I knew at least nine flag officers on a first name basis, and just the ability to move a problem through the submarine community, aviation community, the surface community on a first name basis. Nobody's fighting for anything except what's the best thing to do. That experience at the War College paid off for me more than I can ever tell anybody.

Winkler: One thing is, well you mentioned you went to the University of Washington to the Navy ROTC unit, but for those who went to the Naval Academy, such as your father –

Dowd: And my brother.

Winkler: And your brother, the fact that they went through an experience similar to what you did at the Naval War College, where you built up relations that, I can see parallels where that helps the Navy in years later.

Dowd: Oh, of course, but you have to remember the peculiar situation in the Supply Corps. Let me go backward.

When I was commissioned in the Supply Corps of the Navy, I was commissioned as number three hundred and six. Now who were the other three hundred and five?

Well, ninety percent of them were extemporary officers of World War I. The other ten percent were Naval Academy who could not pass the physical one way or another.

Now the reputation of the Supply Corps at the start of World War II was pretty abysmal, because these temporary officers had really not recognized the fact that they existed for only one purpose, and that was to support the fleet.

In World War II we got all of these young guys in, the reservists –

Winkler: Right.

Dowd: who didn't have this thirty years of bureaucratic maneuvering and all of a sudden the whole atmosphere of Supply Corps changed, and the name of the game, even for those of us who came in World War II was to overcome the feeling on the part of many line officers that you guys are fighting us. Well, we're not fighting you. We're trying to help you. That's what we were trying, that's the reason we went to the Naval War College, is to learn who these people were, what they wanted and how they wanted to work, because from there on we'd be working for them, to support them. Do I make sense?

Winkler: Yes, there's a whole attitude shift.

Dowd: That's right.

Winkler: During World War II on several fronts, because of the influx of –

Dowd: Of young blood, thousands.

Winkler: Yes, young blood and thousands of Reservists, and one thing war is good for is upward mobility.

Dowd: And clean out some of the old tribe.

Winkler: And a lot of the old wood we discovered was just not up to the task at the beginning of World War II.

Dowd: That's right. No question about it, no question.

Winkler: That's a very good overview of, you know, status of Supply Corps and so going to the Naval War College as you mentioned you had a opportunity to, you say seventeen members of your class had achieved flag rank, including Admiral Bob Long.

Dowd: Yes, Bob Long remains a friend to today. As a matter of fact, right over there is a bronze nuclear submarine that Bob Long gave me. Heavier than hell. Bob Long gave it to me.
Bob Long was a hell of a naval officer. Have you interviewed him?

Winkler: No.

Dowd: Well, you should.

Winkler: I think oral historian of the Naval Institute may have gotten to him. So I think he's covered, Now you get ordered to the USS St. Paul.

Dowd: St. Paul, yes.

Winkler: Where was that home ported at?

Dowd: St. Paul was a flagship. She was home ported in Long Beach. She was the flagship for Commander Seventh Fleet in the Western Pacific. I was aboard her for eighteen months to two years, and most of that time we were deployed.

Winkler: Did Polly get a chance to go overseas to Japan?

Dowd: No, she stayed home alone.

Winkler: At that time you have what? Two girls?

Dowd: We only had two girls.

Winkler: OK, so she stayed home.

Dowd: She stayed in Long Beach.

Winkler: That was a very high visibility tour, because it's a flagship.

Dowd: Sure.

Winkler: As Supply Officer, I guess, you furnished the ship. Having a flag onboard makes, who was Seventh Fleet at the time?

Dowd: Let's see, I can see the guy. Dunk Donahoo was Chief of Staff, and a Captain. I knew you'd probably ask me that kind of a question. I can't answer the question right now, but I'll think about it.

Winkler: We can find out the answer.

Dowd: I'll find out the answer. Let me answer your question another way. I think you're leading to something.

In those days when the staff came onboard, the ship's company had two choices. One was to treat these newcomers as extra baggage. They were a pain in the ass and you did as little as you could to take care of them.

Well that's a sure way to ruin a naval career, because you can't pee up a rope, and you might as well learn when these bastards come onboard that he's the boss and the people that work for him have to be taken care of or they're going to get the word back to the boss that you're a lousy supporter of the outfit. So really the name of the game is to get into your crew, "hey, you take care of these guys." That's exactly what the St. Paul did.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: She was a beautiful ship. And we had a skipper named Jim Davis, one of our three skippers. Had another skipper who became VCNO named Claude Ricketts,

Winkler: Oh yes.

Dowd: Claude V. Ricketts was my first skipper. I came onboard and one of the things we had to do in those days was take certain inventories of materials. And I did, and the inventory didn't work out, so I finally had to go see Captain Ricketts.

"Captain, these inventories are all screwed up. We have two choices. One is I can refuse to take over and in that case you can keep the current supply officer onboard until the situation is squared away and you have a Board Investigation." I said, "The other choice is let me take over. Let me get it straightened out."

He said, "Well, how long do you think it will take to straighten it out?"

I said, "About three months."

He said, "Let's try it."

End of tape two, side one.
Beginning of tape two, side two.

Dowd: Claude Ricketts, would, as skipper of the ship would take her into Keelung Harbor and he'd come through that breakwater at fifteen or twenty knots and he'd head for the anchorage and he would order, "All back full," "Let go the anchor," liberty call would sound, and everything would happen at once. Just the most beautiful thing you ever saw. He'd drop that ship exactly on the anchor spot. He'd stop her cold right there. Both boat booms would come out. The ladders would go over the side and liberty call would be sounded. That ship was a home.

I've never seen any other naval officer handle a ship the way he could. Claude Ricketts, when he was relieved, came back to Long Beach and he visited the wives of every one of his officers, and said, "I've just been with your husband. He's doing well. He's out there in the Pacific. He's looking forward to coming home. Just wanted to stop by and tell you everything's going pretty good."

That takes a real man to do something like that.

Winkler: That's an excellent insight. Why don't we pick up tomorrow and finish up any other thoughts on the St. Paul and continue with the rest of your career. I think we made some good headway tonight.

28 July 2001

(Captain Ross Porter, USN (Ret.) will join as an interviewer.)

Winkler: 28th, OK, July 2001, continuing along here and we were talking about the St. Paul. As a flag ship you got to, basically you made major port calls, and carrying Seventh Fleet, probably and opportunity to host a lot of VIPS.

Dowd: Well, during that period, for example President Magsaysay of the Philippines died. So the St. Paul was sent into Manila to be the representative of the United States at the funeral. I don't know whether it's still done today. I'm sure it is, but when you have a flag ship coming into a port with a crew manning the rails in full dress whites, it's a very imposing ceremony, and to receive the dignitaries and let them see the ship, it's all a very unusual and different experience.

So St. Paul did visit practically every port in the Western Pacific carrying the flag, and I think she was probably the prettiest ship in the Navy. Her decks were all solid teak, fully swabbed every morning. She was just a beautiful, beautiful ship. She'd had, as you know, explosions in turret number two where they lost a whole bunch of blue jackets.

I guess the worst thing we had when I was onboard was a fire happened. This happened sometime around two in the morning. I was in my bunk and heard the alarm and ran forward. The fire was obviously in the galley of the Officer's Mess. The deep fat fryer switch had malfunctioned and the damn thing caught fire. I was at the head of a fire hose and that was not bad, but some idiot comes behind me with another hose and he turns it on, and hits me straight in the back. This is an interesting experience. I recommend it to all the officers.

So anyway, St. Paul has many wonderful memories. She visited everywhere in the Western Pacific. We had a marvelous time to meet people and know people.

Winkler: Did you have the opportunity to bring your wife out at anytime.

Dowd: In St. Paul, no, Polly had to stay back in Long Beach during the entire deployment. So she didn't come out. When I got orders to leave St. Paul and come back up here to Bremerton,

then she was looking for a house, and that's when I told you last night about finding a place here in Bremerton to live.

So we stayed here in the Bremerton facility from 1952 through '54; then went to the War College and then after the War College I went to sea.

Winkler: Then you went to St. Paul.

Dowd: Wait a minute now, yes, after the War College went to St. Paul and after St. Paul –

Winkler: You went to Philadelphia?

Dowd: Went to Philadelphia. Went to the General Stores Supply Office, which was an office to control the General Stores needed by the Navy all over the world. It was up in the Robins Avenue complex, where the naval aviation supply office was. It had around 400 civilians and roughly thirty, forty officers. It became the first target for the so-called nationalization of supply support services.

In other words, somebody in the Department of Defense decided that all of these services from each of the armed forces should be combined and under the Department of Defense.

Winkler: right.

Dowd: Which is probably one of the stupidest decisions we've made in our lives, but it was made. These items were transferred to the Department of Defense, the Defense Logistics Agency as it's called today.

Interesting tour of duty, very worrying tour of duty, because the name of the game is, are the ships going to get the support they need? As it was proven over the years following, they did not get the support they need. But that's history.

So following the General Services Supply Office, I had a set of orders to the staff of Commander Service Force, Sixth Fleet. It was homeported in Naples, Italy. The flag ship at that time was an AO, Mississinewa. Polly and the children flew into Italy and they were put up in a hotel where I left them there and went to join the ship, and stayed at sea on the staff for two years. Fortunately, we did have a homeport in Naples. We were able to come back every month or so and have a couple of nights with the families, which made all the difference in the world.

But the Service Force Sixth Fleet reported to Commander Sixth Fleet and had another command title called Commander Service Squadron Six. Theoretically, he reported to ComServLant. But in all reality, we considered our boss ComSixthFlt. We didn't pay much attention to those guys back in Norfolk.

The name of our game was how do we coordinate support of these carriers and these support ships as they maneuvered throughout the Med.

One of the interesting parts of that drill was loading out the AKS's, and the AFS's with fresh provisions from Valencia, Spain. Valencia, Spain was the center of all the citrus fruit produce of Spain. So we were able to get marvelous fresh items of produce for the ships. The AFS would leave Norfolk. She's sail into the Med, and come into Valencia and load up with fresh fruit and vegetables and then come out and replenish the Sixth Fleet and then go back into Valencia and replenish and come back out and work with the ships.

All other material had to come from the United States. So between what the AKS had on board, and what the AFS had on board, a supplement had to come by air and moved into, probably Naples was its first stop. From Naples it was loaded aboard the oilers and moved out to the Sixth Fleet ships. A very interesting drill, and a fine tour of duty.
Right at the end of that tour of duty, I was selected Captain and moved ashore.

Winkler: Now, a quick question. Your specific job on the staff was to arrange working with the Fleet Supply Officers to determine who needed what when?

Dowd: No. Our job as the staff of Commander Service Force Sixth Fleet was to insure that the AFSes and the AKSes were loaded properly to support the fleet, and that they were loaded properly with fleet freight coming in from Norfolk to either Spain, or Italy, or Greece and then moved forward to the carriers or the ships that needed the freight.
So our job was really to make sure that the ships were supported properly.

Winkler: Now, the –

Dowd: Now, in that same connection, we had another responsibility. That other responsibility was letting contracts to people who could sell merchandise to the Sixth Fleet.

Now, if I can take just a minute here, David, anybody who could get a contract to come onboard a Sixth Fleet ships was guaranteed to make a hell of a lot of money, and one of our biggest concerns was how do you get a reputable contractor? The Chinese moved into the area.

This was back in 1960 and the Chinese moved into the area for only one reason. That is to gather intelligence. So one of our jobs was to identify these people who had nefarious backgrounds and working with the Office of Naval Intelligence in those days. We had a very close relationship. In fact our house was bugged in Naples, our apartment by the ONI and the FBI to, when I'd get these Chinese and these other contractors up into the house to talk about contracts and make sure we collected as much information as we could.

So between the Port Services contracts, here we're talking tugs and pilots, and boats to augment the boats onboard the ship for liberty purposes, plus the provisions contracts, plus the extra contracts, somebody had to supervise the kind of operation and that was one of our jobs.

Winkler: Of course, supervising you also would disbar certain contractors if they –

Dowd: The answer to your question is yes. To do that you had to have some pretty good information. Political considerations entered into this sort of a thing. As long as you could present enough concrete information that this particular individual was operating not in the best interest of the United States or the United States Navy, there's no question he could be disbarred, and ComSixthFlt would take that action. That action would come from recommedations made by ComServFor Sixth Fleet.

Winkler: The Service Force Commander was a Captain?

Dowd: Yes, he had all the oilers and the AFSes under his control.

Winkler: Ok, he's a line officer?

Dowd: Yes.

Winkler: Now, then you mentioned you were promoted to Captain and you stayed in the Mediterranean.

Dowd: Yes, ordered ashore to NSA, Naples. Naval Support Activity, Naples. Having served in Service for Sixth Fleet, operating out of Naples, there was a lot of experiences as to what kind of support you got out of this outfit. Frankly it wasn't much.

When I met ashore, the first meeting with the people in the Supply Department was, "We're going to have a little change in regulations here. From this day on one of you guys is going to meet every United States Navy ship that comes into Naples harbor. We're going to find out what the problems are and we're going to solve them."

Well that didn't make a lot of people very happy, that they had to get up at two o'clock in the morning or three o'clock in the morning and go out and ride a boat.
But anyway the name of the game, as far as I was concerned, was how do we support those ships and that was what we did.

Finally, Washington decided it was time for Dowd to come home.

Winkler: Just out of curiosity, how would you describe the quality of the Supply Corps Officers out in the fleet at the time?

Dowd: Superb. Ninety-nine point nine percent of them were ex young World War II officers, whose philosophy was what does the skipper need, what does the Navy need, and how we can we help them? Pretty damn independent about challenging bureaucracy, challenging regulations. How can we make it easier? How can we make it better?

So I can say it was absolutely great as far as I was concerned.

Winkler: The fact that, well there was advice your father once gave you as far as, you know, the rules and such, and so if you saw some officer bend the rules to get the job done, that would be something that, you know, you wouldn't frown upon?

Dowd: No. No, you don't frown on it. If somebody had done something illegal, that's a different situation. If somebody had bent a bureaucratic rule in order to accomplish a job, that's a different situation. You don't worry too much about that.

One of the jobs of a Supply Corps officer is to ensure that the laws of the United States of America are upheld. Particularly when it comes to procurement and ethical relationships with others in foreign governments with the United States. That's the thing you watch. You want to make sure that people don't get out of line there. It doesn't happen very often.

Winkler: While you were over in the Mediterranean there's two events that, you had the Cuban missile crisis during your –

Dowd: Yes.

Winkler: And then when you were in Italy, you had the death of President Kennedy. Any recollections of those two events?

Dowd: Well, of course. President Kennedy's death, I think it hit everybody in the Navy. It was a tremendous loss. We all had great expectations from him. You know he didn't serve very long, but in those few months that he did, people were pretty darn proud of what he had done. The Navy lost a great person when he died.

Winkler: And he was a contemporary of yours.

Dowd: I'm trying to go back and think in those days. In those days here was a guy that was young, charming, who had ideas about how our country was going. I don't know anybody who wasn't supporting him completely. Then to lose him. It was a blow.

Winkler: From there, you then got transferred back to Washington.

Dowd: Back to Washington; back to OpNav. That is probably one of the finest tours of duty I had in the Navy.

Winkler: As you were saying your tour in Washington, this was a most rewarding one.

Dowd: Yes, it was in OpNav and I reported directly to Op 04. His name was Lot Ensey, Vice Admiral Lot Ensey. As the job evolved it was really a liaison and a jointure between OpNav and the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. The name of the game was how do we convince the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts to do what Lot Ensey needed to have done for the logistics support of the fleet. I worked with his assistants and with other people in the E Ring. It was just a tremendous experience.

Of course, you know, one of the things that made it easier than anything else was having gone to the War College and knowing so many of those people. Knowing them by first name. Being able to go in their office and say, "Hey, we have a problem."

Winkler: Now one of the challenges during this period is you're dealing with reorganization throughout the Department of Defense with McNamara and his "whiz kids," and you're there during this period where this reorganization is occurring.

Dowd: Well, our job was to make sure that whatever these guys in McNamara's office wanted didn't tear apart the logistic support of the Navy.

As I will come to a little bit later, when the balloon goes up, the guy who's the boss of the task force or the fleet. Whatever it may be, need to be the boss of his own logistics support. Not somebody else. Not somebody in a uniform who reports to another organization completely. It just doesn't work. I'm convinced if the balloon goes up right now, today, in 2001, that one of the biggest problems we're going to have is support of the fleet from this Defense Logistics Agency. It just will not work and I'll tell you why.

If you're deployed let's say to the Western Pacific, afloat or ashore, supporting Marines or supporting the Navy, the concept of how material moves, if a requisition comes in from the Western Pacific, goes to the Defense Logistics Agency to one of their supporting outfits and they mark the item for the unit and they ship it out to Oakland. In Oakland all this stuff is thrown into a huge container and it's sent to the forward area.

Now, if you've been in the forward area in Vietnam or the Philippines or any of that part of the world in the middle of the monsoon season, the rain is just coming down like mad. You get a container full of thousands of parts, not segregated in any manner, shape or form, just all thrown into that container. Might go to fifty units. You're sitting out there looking at this stuff in the mud, saying, "How the hell do I segregate it?" That doesn't work.

In the first place the rains going to destroy your package. The papers that are supposed to control how the stuff moves, are soaking wet, ruined and all of a sudden you have nothing but chaos on your hands.

So there's only one answer to this sort of a thing. That is the guy in control in the Western Pacific has to say, you will, in the Oakland or San Francisco area, wherever you're shipping from, you're going to segregate material by ship or by unit and you're going to put that in a separate part of the container. All, everything going to that unit, and then you're going to move it forward with the documentation, so when it's received at the other end of the line, you open up the container, You've got a wall up here and everything forward of this wall goes to the USS Neversink. Everything to the next space goes to such and such, and next, off it goes to such and such. You just can't mix them all up in one big mess in a container.

Excuse me, I didn't mean to get off on this subject, but it's very important.

Winkler: And that's what, you know, your concerns about the jointness or in joint agency.

Dowd: Yes, because they're not interested in segregating in support of the customer. They're interested in satisfying the requisition as fast as they can and moving it to a designated place.

Winkler: The Bureau of Supply and Accounts, they did away with the bureau system so how did that evolve?

Dowd: Well, the Bureau's been part of the Navy since the early 1860s and in the 1950s the name was changed to the Naval Supply Systems Command, and it really was the same organization. Same old whore in a new dress. Responsibility didn't change a lot.

Subsequently, the people in control decided that all the accounting should be centralized and that was moved into the Department of Defense and other organizations and after that they decided the payroll function should be combined and that was pulled into another central organization. So the centralization came about slowly.

Tape two, side two ends.
Tape three side one begins.

Winkler: Today is July 28, this is the third tape, side one. Picking up with the Vietnam War and you're in the Pentagon.

Dowd: Right. The initial push during the Vietnamese War was moving the Navy and Marines into De Nang. The support responsibility for Da Nang was shifted to Commander Service Force Pacific Fleet.

Our job was to respond to whatever ComServPac needed to support that operation. Very early in the game, I was offered a set of orders to the National War College, and my answer to the then Chief of the Supply Corps, Rear Admiral Hersh Goldberg, was "My Gosh, we've got a war going on. No sense in my going to college. We're at war. Let me go out there and help with

what's happening in the Pacific." He agreed so I went to Service Force Sixth Fleet, ComServPac staff, and from there on in for the rest of my tour there, the name of the game was supporting the people in Vietnam, particularly the naval support groups in Da Nang and Saigon.

I made many, many trips out there to try and find out what the problems were and how could we solve them.

Winkler: So you spent quite a bit of time also in-country?

Dowd: Oh yes. Oh yes, I would spend at least, oh I'd say one out of every three months in-country. It was the only way you could learn what was going on.

Winkler: Could you give some examples of situation you came across?

Dowd: Oh, situations like moving cargo ships going into Da Nang to support the Marines. Responding to ammunition requirements, POL requirements coming out of Da Nang or Saigon, coordinating the movements and unloading of the ships.

The lines of communications were directly from those in-country to ComServPac to whoever we had to go through back in the United States. Wonderful support from most people. ComServPac was Rear Admiral Edwin B. Hooper, a dedicated naval officer and logistician.

Winkler: So you're over in Vietnam, so at that time you also picked up flag.

Dowd: Yes.

Winkler: Could you talk about that?

Dowd: How do you talk about it. It's a thrill. Something that doesn't happen very often. I was just absolutely delighted and what else can you say?

Winkler: How were you informed?

Dowd: My boss was a guy named Rear Admiral Elton Southerling and he got a call from Washington and he told me. That night we had a hell of a party there in Honolulu. It was time to leave Honolulu and that was when I went back to Charleston, South Carolina and took over the supply center there. From Charleston, I went to Washington as Vice Commander Naval Supply System Command.

Winkler: OK. Back in Vietnam, let's see, was Admiral Zumwalt the Navy Component Commander.

Dowd: No. Oh, Component Commander. Yes, he was. He was in Vietnam at that time.

Winkler: Any impressions about him as a leader.

Dowd: Him as a person and him as a leader, very strong impressions. Bud Zumwalt was a charismatic character who just kind of asked you to come in, he had ideas he wanted to and he needed people to help him and he just brought you in the fold. I thought the world of Bud.

As you know, in those stages of the game, he was a very young flag officer. On the other hand he had done a terrific job, and I got to know him as an individual and enjoyed him.

Winkler: One of his initiatives was to transfer the burden of the war fighting from the US Navy to the Vietnamese Navy, and I think that's what got him noticed in Washington. Any observations there?

Dowd: Well, to answer your question, I'm not sure it was Bud's idea to do that. As a naval historian you probably know more facts on that than I do.

Jumping from Pearl Harbor on the staff of ComServPac through Charleston back to the Naval Supply Systems Command, one day I got word from the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, a submariner, Chick Clary. Chick Clary called and said, "The boss wants you." Chick Clary said, "The boss wants you in Saigon in three days. The problem is the Vietnamese have collapsed in their logistics support."

So my answer to that was, this was Friday, I said, "Look, can you get back to the boss? Polly is going into the hospital on Saturday. She's having an examination. She won't come out until Tuesday. Can you possibly ask the boss if I can wait and get Polly out of the hospital and drive across the country to Oakland? Leave her and then fly out?"

He said, "Well, let me try." He called back a little while later and said, "That's fine."

So I went home. This was right across the street in Crystal City. Polly was there with her sister. I said, "Well, Polly, you're going in the hospital tomorrow. We're going to leave here on Tuesday when you come out of the hospital and you'd better pack your bags, because you only have today to do it."

With no real discussion she said, "OK." So she packed her bags and went in the hospital. She came out on Tuesday and we drove across the country in three days. I left her in Oakland. All of our furniture and everything was left in the apartment in Crystal City. Somebody else had the responsibility to move it and I went on out to Vietnam and left Polly in Oakland.

Bud Zumwalt had given me a set of orders that said, in effect, you got out there and take a look at what's going on and I want everybody in the United States Navy to give you any help that you need.

I landed at Pearl Harbor and Chick Clary had moved from VCNO of the CincPacFleet and he met me at the airplane, and he said, "Here's another set of orders. You have my complete support asking everybody who needs your help to give it to you."

So it's one of these unique experiences when a Supply Corps officer goes into an arena and he's got complete support of the bosses all the way back to the top and people who are there know it, because they've been so advised.

So then it was a question of going around and taking a look with some awfully bright, smart guys, and the summation that Bud had made that the Vietnamese had fallen flat on their face was completely correct.

Porter: Was Bud CNO at this time?

Dowd: Bud was CNO at the time. So we developed a plan. How do we get out of this? We being a young Lieutenant Commander named Lynn Haslett, and myself and some others developed a plan and said, "What should we do to make the Vietnamese capable of supporting their own Navy?"

We had to go up and see COMmUSMACV, who was a guy named Crayton Abrams. General Abrams met us one night about 6 o'clock and we made a presentation to him and his staff saying, "Here's the problem. Here's how we think it needs to be fixed."

General Abrams, as the commander of all forces in Vietnam at that time says, "Well, what do you think your problems are going to be?"

I said, "Our problem is going to be the CNO of the Vietnamese navy."

He said, "Well, what's the problem?

I said, "He's going to resist. He's going to fight like mad because the plan was we re-take responsibilities for these thirty-five or forty logistic bases in the country and we re-inventory everything that's there to find out what the hell's going on."

Winkler: Right.

Dowd: "And we had to re-establish transportation capabilities throughout the Delta and to re-establish how materials are moved into the country."

The Vietnamese were bound to object to this and they were going to go to their own. Their CNO, a gentleman named Admiral Chon was going to be my problem and I told General Abrams.

General Abrams said, “That’s not a very real problem as far as I’m concerned, I’m going to make sure that you’re commissioned in the Vietnamese Navy tomorrow.” He said, “If you have any trouble with Chon, come back and tell me, and I can go to Thieu, President Thieu, and he can be shot in the next twenty-four hours.”

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: In other words, it was pretty good support. So the next day I did have a commission in the Vietnamese Navy, and it was Vice Commander Vietnamese Navy for Supply Support. This was broadcasted throughout the Vietnamese Navy, so that when we went into a base, the Vietnamese base commanders knew that I had the authority from the CNO of the Vietnamese Navy and they’d damn well better do what had to be done. It made the whole job so much easier, because there was cooperation. With that cooperation, over a period of about four to six months we were able to re-establish what was there and how it was controlled.

Part of that responsibility was down in the Delta and moving material from Saigon into the Delta was an impossible task. Somebody told us that the old Vietnamese railroad had a bunch of truck warehoused somewhere in Saigon. So we went and called on the President of the Vietnamese railroad. He agreed he had seventy-five brand new US cross-country trucks in a warehouse. We got thirty of those.

We had a young Lieutenant, LDO, Limited Duty Officer, named John Black, and I was able to say to him, "Black, you have just become the Jimmie Hoffa of the Delta. By Monday morning those trucks are going to start rolling and here are the routes they’re going to take and you are going to me riding them and you’re the boss."

That young guy took charge and he just did a marvelous job of opening up the whole Delta, using those trucks. He had to hire ferries and all this kind of business. Village chiefs had to be bribed and all the rest of it. He got the material through.

But that whole experience, go back to something else I mentioned to you earlier. Right at the outset it was obvious that ships bringing material into the Saigon Harbor dumped it for forty or fifty some-odd bases, in the middle of monsoon rainstorms with no control of what was to go where, it was just an unholy mess of trying to support this. Trying to segregate this and decide what went where, because it was all mixed up into one big wet pile of material and paper.

Porter: Kind of like World War II, early on.

Dowd: Exactly the same.

Porter: They had about, as I remember, about a hundred merchant ships in the harbor at Nuemea and they would just selectively unload them if they could find out what was aboard, and that was really screwed up, because I was down there then.

Dowd: But the beauty we had in the Vietnamese situation was at that time I was also CO of NSC Oakland, and I had a gent named Norm Kuhlman as Exec. I went back with a message to Ken Wheeler, who was the Chief at the time, and said words to the effect, "We have to start moving all materials destined to Navy units into NSC Oakland." NSC Oakland has to be charged with segregating that material by consignee, and then NSC Oakland has to be responsible for loading the containers or the ships so that the cargo is segregated by consignee, Ken Wheeler, Chief, agreed. Norm Kuhlman ran it from Oakland and it worked like a bloody charm. It was only because of that we were able to pull out of that situation.

Winkler: How long were you in country?

Dowd: First time, seven months, and then from there on in about every two months. It was a fascinating experience.

Winkler: As Vice Chief in the Vietnamese Navy, did you get two paychecks?

Dowd: No.

Winkler: OK, I had to ask that question.

Dowd: It would have been very nice to have been able to do it, but the answer is, No.

Winkler: Well, you brought up an important point is at that time you were Commanding Officer Navy Supply Center Oakland, California in ’71, ’72. That had to be the most active supply center in the country.

Dowd: That’s right. That’s right.

Winkler: You talk about one of the initiatives you’ve just taken. Any other recollections of your tour of duty there?

Dowd: Well, The only answer to your question is that all the materials for the Pacific Fleet, offshore, for naval activities offshore in the Pacific went through Oakland. So the name of the game was how do you get it out of here as fast as possible so it could be handled at the other end of the line.

Porter: They did then in the Vietnam War what they did in World War II.

Dowd: That’s right, and Oakland did the same thing in World War II.

Porter: That's why Oakland was established in the first place.

Winkler: How big was Oakland when you were there?

Dowd: How big? You talking about number of employees?

Winkler: Number of employees, and warehouse space.

Dowd: Number of employees, we had, my memories trying to come back, roughly four thousand; warehouse space, the largest in the world. Pier space, the whole waterfront of Oakland. Ships could come right along side and load outright from the center. How was it compared to World War II? I'd say World War II was twice the size.

Porter: But they learned how to do their chores.

Dowd: They learned a lot over the years. Polly worked at Oakland. She's one of the plank owners at Oakland.

Winkler: One of the things we were talking about when you were back in Bremerton is the use of computers. By that time, I imagine electronic data systems are in increasing use.

Dowd: When are you talking about now?

Winkler: When you were in Bremerton.

Dowd: The answer's yes. We'd moved into the Burroughs system and these replaced the IBM punched card systems. They were huge installation. I would say the one in Bremerton would take three times the size of this room. Air-conditioned and you had lines running everywhere. The memory was less than that machine I have right back there on the desk right now. But it was the state-of-the-art at the time and people worked their butts off to make it work and they did a pretty damn good job.

Porter: Well, the Navy supply system was automated in about '52, '63.

Dowd: Yes.

Porter: Long learning curve.
(Dowd leaves the room, brief break in tape)

Winkler: Continuing along, we were talking about Oakland as one of the largest logistic operations. From then you were selected as the Commander Naval Supply Systems Command and Chief of Supply Corps from '72 to '77.

Dowd: Yes that's right.

Winkler: How was the detailing done and how did you find out. How were you selected?

Dowd: How was I selected? The incumbent Chief, Ken Wheeler, made recommendations to the CNO, and the CNO made the decision.

Winkler: OK, so Admiral Zumwalt made the decision in your case.

Dowd: I think it was, yes.

Winkler: Yes, because he was the CNO. What were the challenges you had when you took over the job from Admiral Wheeler?

Dowd: The challenges were really three-fold. Number one was continuing support of the fleet, with the fleet commanders knowing you were there to support them. Two was trying to avoid the decimation of the Navy Supply System in support of the fleet by the people who were insisting upon centralization. Three was the morale of the officers in the Corps as to their future and whether they should stay in the Navy or not.

That was a fundamental part of the job. How do you attract these youngsters and make sure they stay and they become more senior people? Related to that was how do you convince them the only way you're going to succeed in the Navy is go to sea. You can't nest ashore.

Winkler: Right.

Dowd: When you get to be a three-stripper you'd better be at sea on a carrier or comparable ship and you'd better perform well, or you're not going to succeed.

Winkler: One of the things during this time period, is you're going to an all-volunteer force. You're also facing a tremendous reduction in the number of ships in the Navy. You have social turmoil, plus you have tensions and race relations. You had situations like the Hassayampa, was it the Kitty Hawk where you had some race riots. At the time there were some ratings in the Navy that related to the Supply Corps, such as, well they had the stewards that were limited to blacks and Filipinos. How did you handle these different challenges?

Dowd: (chuckle) You're touching on the core of the issue that was going on at the time.

Winkler: Yes.

Dowd: How do you handle them? You take one at a time and you hope and pray that you can do the right thing. We all had to go through the race relations briefings, or what do you call them, updates as to what you should be doing and shouldn't be doing.

The stewards in the Navy in those days were not primarily black. They were primarily Filipino. But the blacks were in there, too. The Filipinos had achieved the right to strike for additional rates and they were leaving the steward ratings like mad, which meant that the blacks were filling in more and more. It was during those days that the first young white boys started becoming stewards, and that was an interesting shift also. Complete different philosophy.

What did you do? You prayed that you made it through the next day, the next month, if you made the right decisions when the problems came up.

Winkler: The all-volunteer force versus draft age. What do you say of the quality?

Dowd: The quality, the recruiters claimed that the quality decreased. It's awfully hard to say, when you're looking at a particular, one problem here, one problem there and one problem there, that the quality overall decreased. I couldn't support that, but the politicians at the time that this was happening were saying that the quality was going down, particularly in the Army.
Not so much in the Navy, I don't think. We still had a pretty damn dedicated bunch of young men, no women.

Winkler: Right. Z-grams.

Dowd: Oh, yes, go ahead.

Winkler: Some of them were related to artifacts in exchanges; things you were supposed to sell in exchanges. You know, that had an impact directly, I imagine on Supply Corps issues.

Dowd: Oh, yes. Old timers, this is in the 1970 timeframe. Old timers in the Navy, many of them, resented what Bud was trying to do. On the other hand he was trying to do what was best for the Navy at the time.

Tape three, side one stops
Tape three, side two begins.

Dowd: Some of these old farts that didn't agree with him really should have gotten out of the Navy or been canned. Because Bud was working his damn tail off to improve the Navy.

Porter: I hope for him that DD-21 is going to be a success.

Dowd: So do I. He was quite a guy when you really come right down to it.

Winkler: During that time frame you had an opportunity to work for him. Do you have any examples of meetings with him where you were discussing some of these issues?

Dowd: Well, let's separate our timeframes. When he sent me out to Vietnam, he told Ken Wheeler and CinPacFlt, and ComNavForV, "Hey, Give Wally a hand and let him succeed." So Ken Wheeler as Chief of the Corps would do anything that was necessary to improve the support up to his departure from the job and he did. Ken would have his conferences with Bud, but I was out in Vietnam. I didn't have any conferences with anybody except by telephone calls in the middle of the night, with Wheeler. But, after I came back and relieved Ken then it was a different situation, and the answer was, yes, it was a real privilege to be able to attend the meetings with the CNO, and to express your own opinions.

Winkler: At the beginning of your tenure you have a change in CNOs after two years and Admiral Holloway come in. Different leadership style?

Dowd: Completely different, not completely different. Different leadership style, yes. But a very wonderful leadership style. Admiral Holloway, Jimmie Holloway was very personable and was very approachable. But he could make his decisions very rapidly, which was his job. It was a pleasure working for him. You knew if you had to get to him, and express the situation you could do it.

Winkler: An example of a situation that might come to mind?

Dowd: No.

Winkler: OK, Any other recollections as you tour as Chief of Supply Corps as far as perhaps the professionalization of the Corps, schooling, some of the issues you may have taken?

Dowd: Well, there are two observations. Number one, remember in those days we had a Chief of Naval Material and this gent was named Ike Kidd. Theoretically we worked directly for Admiral Ike Kidd, but in reality we paid more attention to OpNav than we did Ike Kidd. I don't mean this in disrespect to Ike Kidd, but the money came out of the OpNav arena, not the Chief of Naval Material arena. So money controls what's going to happen and how it's going to happen. So Op 09B which was the money outfit was the one that we looked forward to and the one that we knew we had to work with regardless of what Ike Kidd wanted.

On the other hand, Ike was in command of the Bureaus and if a situation came up, say for example in the Med, this happened where we'd be sitting around and some flare up would come off in Tel Aviv or somewhere in the Middle East and Ike would say, "Wally, when you going to go out there?"

I'd say, "Well, I'm leaving tomorrow." In other words, I was going out and find out what the situation was and report back to Ike what I thought it was. Then Ike would take it forward to the CNO.

Ike Kidd was a hard man to work with, but he was an easy man to work with because as long as you were trying to do something for the fleet he supported you completely. If he thought you were not, he didn't support you worth a damn.

Unfortunately, his staff, Naval Materials Staff, was made up primarily of civilians who came out of the various Bureaus with an opportunity to get a promotion. Most of the naval officers were people who were just winding up their careers. So really the staff didn't have a hell of a big impact on how BuAir, BuShips, NavSup, or the Facilities Engineering Command worked.

We, the Chiefs of the Bureau worked directly with Ike Kidd and didn't pay a hell of a lot of attention to the staff. But a hell of a lot of attention to O9B where the money came from.

Winkler: OK. That's a very good insight, you know, the Golden Rule, "Ye who has the gold rules," is germane in this case.

Porter: You have money, you have people.

Dowd: Follow the money.

Porter: If the answer's no, why am I talking to you?

Winkler: Yes.

Dowd: Follow the money.

Porter: (chuckle) You betcha.

Winkler: As far as professionalization within the Supply Corps itself, could you address that?

Dowd: We had, there were two arenas that were of primary interest. One was the Supply Corps School down in Athens. What was the curriculum and what were you trying to train them for, and what were the subjects that needed to be addressed? That's one part of the problem.

The other problem is, not the problem, the other challenge was, your postgraduate capability. How many officers were you going to be capable of each year in sending to the various specialty schools to train them for whatever the Navy was going to need in the future? Those two subjects would take a hell of a lot of time.

Related to that was the enlisted side of the coin and that period of time was a shift where the storekeepers, the aviation storekeepers and the stewards and the cooks and the people of that ilk came under the Naval Supply Systems Command for control. That was a big change, because previously they were kind of out in left field. So the name of the game was how do you work with those various ratings to prescribe what qualifications were needed for advancement, etc, etc, etc. We had some wonderful people working on that.

Winkler: So, rate training became very important –

Dowd: That was probably one of the most important things going on, yes.

Winkler: And also working with the different schools, I guess were A and C schools?

Dowd: The answers yes, the officer's schools and the A and C schools.

Winkler: Although you were based out of Washington at the time, sounds like you spent a lot of time on the road?

Dowd: That's right. Can't learn what's going on in the Navy or the Corps or anything else sitting on your ass in Washington, D.C., period. So you best to decide early in the game who's going to get out there and find out and who's going to run the store back home.

Winkler: The people you had working for you on staff, did you have like any key right hand person that –

Dowd: Yes, of course, many. Primary ones would be the Vice Chief who was Gene Grinstead. Gene just was Mr. Insides. He knew what was going on. I knew what was going on. We had wonderful communications. I'd be traveling anywhere in the world and could still talk to him and it worked.

Winkler: Any other insights about your tour, because a five-year tour is a pretty long tour anywhere? So that must have been very rewarding.

Dowd: It was. During that tour, Ike Kidd, Chief of Naval Materials, and his successor Mike Michaelis lost their number two, and Ike Kidd asked me to come over and take over the Vice Chief of Naval Material job, in addition to my assistant job, which I did.

After a period of time, one day Ike said, "Wally, how'd you like to come over here and take on this job permanently?"

I said, "Well, how about giving me twenty-four hours to think about it?"

He said, “OK.”

So the next day I met Ike Kidd in his car and he said, “Have you thought about it?”

I said, ‘Yes, sir, I’ve thought about it. Very frankly,” I said, “I don’t want any part of the job.” I said, “Because you don’t get another nickel of pay. Secondly I’m nothing but a tin paper pusher for you, and thirdly I can do a hell of a lot more for the Navy and the Supply Corps staying where I am than I can coming over being your flunky. I really am not interested, and in addition to that Polly’s not doing well. I’ve got to make a decision very shortly about whether I stay in the Navy or I retire, and right now I’m beginning to think that her health is more important than almost anything else at this stage of the game. I know she can’t take on the responsibilities of the social side of the coin of being your #2.”

He said, “Fine Wally, I understand completely.” Subsequent to that he called and said, “Well, do you have somebody you want to recommend?” That was it from there on in.

Winkler: You’re talking about qualifying these staff officers to perform line duties, which you did, you mentioned, in World War II.

Dowd: What I’m saying is, the line of the Navy runs the Navy, period. If the Supply Corps of the Navy wants to be a true supporter of the fleet and of the Navy, they’ve got to support whatever the line wants. But the Supply Corps cannot understand what the line might want unless they’ve lived the life of at least a portion of a line officer, and have made friendships and have recognition from line officers that Supply Corps officers are pretty damn fine group of naval officers. These guys I need on my team!

I think that’s what you’re driving at.

Porter: Here’s a simple example. I know of a young Supply Corps officer on a nuclear submarine, early in the nuclear supply corp. Who was the officer of the deck at General Quarters? Herbie Harms.

Dowd: The name of the game.

Porter: That in my mind is the most significant thing that binds the Supply Corps to the Line and binds them to their mission. They are not something separate, and observing it from the outside, I thought this business of qualifying, particularly in warfare areas was a very critical thing, because it continues all during their career, and the associations and what they learn about it, etc.

Dowd: No question.

Porter: I can remember standing up, for instance, when Bud Zumwalt was a student. I can remember as a Supply Corps officer standing up and beginning to discuss the estimate of the situation and the development of the plan, etc. You know, the initial thing wasn't organized in the same sense in the development in these younger officers as they come up would at that time. You did it just by whatever you were doing, but I think in Wally's time, that was a very significant thing to me, from the outside, because I think it makes the Corps successful in what they're trying to do. It also makes the line trust this Corps in what they're trying to do, because they know they're working on their behalf.

Dowd: Again we go back to what was the Corps made of. We talked about this last night. What was it made of in the later thirties?

It was made up of ninety percent temporary officers from World War I.

Winkler: Right.

Dowd: Who were really nothing but glorified civil servants, and the line hated them because first of all people wouldn't do a damn thing to help them, and it took World War II and it took all those years after to that to finally develop a rapport to where really today it's a damn fine connection.

Winkler: Before we talk about your retirement, one thing you mentioned, we talked earlier about Polly, and the fact that she served the role during your career as far as, you mentioned, you know, her health and as far as her abilities to, I guess, perform socially. Can you talk a little about some of the things she did as a Navy wife; as the wife of a Supply Corps officer?

Dowd: Yes, I'd like to talk about that for a little while. Polly was a one hundred percent supporter of helping me in my career in the Navy. Now how did she do that?

In the first place she raised the kids, and she was the carpenter and the electrician, and the plumber and the chauffeur and all the rest of it when I was at sea and others were at sea, or gone. In addition, she was a social secretary. When we liked people, she would have them in the house for dinner. She'd have them stay over night. Our house was always open to people. She was always trying to help young women in any problems they might have in the raising of their own children and their own families and their own husbands being at sea. She was a hundred percent supporter of her husband.

As a matter of fact, without Polly, I'm not sure that I would have gone as far as I did. As a matter of fact, I know damn well I wouldn't have.

Winkler: I think some of the case, you know, where she'd write the, she traveled to Vietnam with you that one trip.

Dowd: No, she didn't travel to Vietnam with me. She was invited to come out.

Winkler: OK.

Dowd: I was there, and General Abrams invited her to come out. While she was there, she was taken on a tour of Vietnamese naval bases, up and down the Mekong River, and she came home and organized a nation-wide program to send Vietnamese Navy families things like soap, toothbrushes, material that could be made into dresses, or skirts, or pants. I don't know how many tons of material were sent over there, but she and other wives had collected them.

She worked in Navy relief. She worked in Red Cross. She worked in the hospitals. She did pretty well, pretty well grounded.

Winkler: So consequently, when you decided to retire, it was kind of like retirement for both of you.

Dowd: No, it was retirement for me, but not for Polly. My question before retirement came up was "Where do you want to live?"

She came back immediately and said, "Well, I'll be happy in Charleston, South Carolina, San Francisco Bay Area or somewhere in Pudget Sound. So we would up here, because we were fortunately enough to get this piece of property. I think she's been very happy up here. I have. We enjoy the Pacific Northwest. We like to fish. We like to be outdoors and this is one part of the country you can do it.

Winkler: Can you discuss you're actual retirement ceremony?

Dowd: Well, your office is right where it was. Right there in the Navy Yard. We went through the whole routine and afterwards when I came down off the platform, Polly was waiting for me. She handed me the checkbook. It's your responsibility from now on.

Winkler: Did you just go into retirement, or what were some of your post retirement activities?

Dowd: Well, I was fortunate enough to do a couple of things. One is become associated with a businessman in the northern part of this state and I worked with him as a consultant in his personal businesses for about six years. Then I was CEO of a company down in Portland, Oregon called Microtec, and they developed microfilm or microfiche information for doctors, department stores, and utilities. Finally I sold it.

Since 1978 I've been associated with the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind and in 1979 became Chairman of their Board and served as such for the next twenty-one years.

The Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind sales have gone from three million to twenty-two million. Our biggest customer is Boeing, about forty percent of our business, making twenty-two thousand parts for Boeing. We make nothing that we don't make for a profit. We get no support out of the US government or the State of Washington or anyone else, and we employ about four hundred people. The blind and deaf-blind make up over seventy-five percent of employees. They are very proud taxpaying citizens of our country, not on the dole. So we're kind of pleased about how that operation works.

Porter: I think the growth of the program in Seattle is remarkable.

Dowd: It really is.

Porter: The number of people who are in training programs and who are in useful positions for their own selves and are producing something that is worthwhile to all hands.

Dowd: Yes, it's been a real thrill to work with them. I'm still working with them.

Winkler: Well, it's getting late and we're just about to run out of tape.

Dowd: Well, David let me tell you something. It's been awfully nice having you out here. Thank you for coming.

Winkler: It's been a privilege.

Dowd: I hope this will be useful in some manner to your cause.

Winkler: It will.

The End.