

Transcription

Interviewer: Sharon Berry

Interviewee: Richard Crabb

Subject: World War II

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Interviewer: Sharon Berry (SB)
Interviewee: Richard Crabb (RC)

INTERVIEW WITH MR. RICHARD R. CRABB, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1994

SB: Okay. What is your full name?

RC: Richard Ralph Crabb.

SB: Okay. Could you spell your last name?

RC: C-R-A-B-B. No "e" on there. Now I'm not that movie actor.

SB: Where were you born?

RC: Ishpeming, Michigan.

SB: And when?

RC: April 13, 1921

SB: Okay. What were your parent's names?

RC: My mother's name was Alfreda Marie Gustafson.

SB: Was it Alfreda with an "f" or "ph?"

RC: "F."

SB: And what was your father's name?

RC: Richard Crabb. No middle name on him.

SB: Where did you go to school?

RC: Well, I went to school in Ishpeming until the 5th grade, and at that time we moved to Negaunee. I finished high school in Negaunee, or from 5th grade to high school in Negaunee.

SB: What year did you finish high school?

RC: 1939.

SB: Did you marry?

RC: Um-hmm, yes.

SB: Who did you marry?

RC: Inez Marie Burkman.

SB: Would you spell her last name?

RC: B-U-R-K-M-A-N.

SB: How long were you married?

RC: Well, still married.

SB: Still married?

RC: Yeah. 1943 - let's total this up. Well, whatever it comes to.

SB: Forty-one years?

RC: Oh, no. Fifty-one years.

SB: Fifty-one, I can't add! I'm sorry.

RC: I can't either.

SB: Did you have any children?

RC: Yep, three children.

SB: What were their names? Or what are their names?

RC: The oldest is Richard Kenneth Crabb, and he lives out in Harvey. The middle one is Tamera. T-A-M-E-R-A Rae Crabb. And the other one is Gary Burkman Crabb. He lives in Marquette.

SB: Oh, wonderful. Basically, what were some of your life experiences up until the war? If you'd like to tell me any.

RC: Well, I graduated from high school, and worked for the L, S & I railroad for a year and that's about it.

SB: For which railroad?

RC: L, S, & I.

SB: For about a year, and then...

RC: And then I joined the Navy.

SB: That's when you joined the Navy.

RC: Um-hmm.

SB: Ah. What is your ethnic background?

RC: What do you mean by ethnic?

SB: Like, Finnish, Norwegian, Italian.

RC: Norwegian and English.

SB: Did you follow much international news before the war started?

RC: I hate to tell you this, no, because we didn't have the news coverage we got today.

SB: Right.

RC: I remember when I was a kid we all had to go and listen to, I think his name was Father Cochlin, on the news every Sunday night. And that's about all the news we ever got. He was quite a news correspondent. He was a Catholic priest, but he still was on the radio. And everybody had to shut-up in the house when he was on. You couldn't say a word.

SB: Did you enlist in the Navy, or were you..

RC: Yeah.

SB: And what year was that?

RC: That was 1941. Just the start of 1941.

SB: Okay. Now the next question is why did you choose the Navy? Like over the Army or Marines?

RC: Gee, that's a hard one to answer. I was always an avid swimmer. I guess that's the reason. That was one of my biggest hobbies, was swimming.

SB: When did you attend Basic Training, and where?

RC: That was in January of '41. And I was at Great Lakes, Illinois, Naval Training Center.

SB: Can you tell me any of your vivid - most vivid- memories? Of Basic?

RC: Oh well that part? Oh, you bet! First thing I remember was sleeping in a hammock. And it had to be as tight as a violin string, and you'd fall out. The second one was, I think it was a Saturday morning breakfast and we had beans and cornbread. Baked beans and cornbread, and I'd never heard of that for breakfast in my life. But that's two of the interesting parts there.

SB: Oh, that sounds great. Do you, did you meet any people in Basic Training that you ended up spending time with during the rest of your military career?

RC: Not very many, no. No. No. No.

SB: What was your military rank when the war started?

RC: Electrician Mate, Third Class.

SB: Electrician Mate, Third Class?

RC: Um-hmm.

SB: We'll go forward just a little bit. When did you get out of the service?

RC: September, 1960.

SB: And what was your rank then?

RC: Electrician's Mate, Chief. But, there's also something else that goes with that. That behind me there is a picture of the third nuclear submarine built.

SB: I was noticing that.

RC: I was the senior enlisted man aboard that submarine, which I was the last four or five I was on. The senior enlisted man practically makes you third in command on that submarine, so I just wanted to put that in.

SB: Oh, no, that's wonderful. Anything that you want to add, and just keep talking. I don't mind!

RC: Okay. Well, whatever you want, just ask. I'll give it to you.

SB: I definitely will.

RC: I got no secrets.

SB: Well, in what places, which ports - I don't know what is the appropriate - question, were you stationed in?

RC: Let's see. When the war started, I was making neutrality patrols and I was watching German... Well, before the war started, actually. We were making neutrality patrols out of St. Thomas, in the Virgin Islands, watching German u-boats. They could go into a free French port, like Martinique, for 24 hours, and if they didn't get out of there, then we'd go on in. Supposedly shoot them out, but we didn't have to do that. But they didn't have much choice, they had to get out of there. 24 hours and out! That's where I was when the war started, 'er stationed. And after that, let's see. We were in the St. Thomas, in the Virgin Islands when World War II started. When the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor. We had just come in off a

neutrality patrol and we were having a big party. Well the party ended because we had to back to the ship and get on our way. So that was that.

SB: So that's where you were when you first heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed?

RC: Yep. Um-hmm, um-hmm.

SB: That cut your party short.

RC: Yeah, I think it lasted an hour and a half. So..

SB: And then what did you do after that?

RC: Well we went to Panama, then, and we ran... well what they call neutrality patrols out of Panama, until - oh, let me see - probably October or November, 1943. At which time I got transferred. To new construction, in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. I got on the third boat built out of Manitowoc, USS Pompon.

SB: What was that?

RC: The U.S.S. Pompon. P-O-M-P-O-N.

SB: Oh, okay.

RC: That was the third built boat out of Manitowoc, and we commissioned that in March 17th, St. Patrick's Day, 1943. And went to the Pacific. Of course, we had quite an experience there too. It's a freshwater lake, Lake Michigan, and when you take a submarine out there and test it, the water density is different than it is out on the ocean, and when you'd surface it'd be about thirty below and they'd have to chop the hatches open. You couldn't get them open any other way, you'd have so much ice on the boat and stuff like that, so, it was quite an experience.

SB: What were your experiences in the Pacific?

RC: Oh, well let's see. We went from Panama, to Brisbane, Australia. That's where we started making war patrols against the Japs out of Brisbane. Of course, we were making them all the way over there, but... That's was a wonderful country.

SB: Australia?

RC: Oh, yes. Beautiful. So we operated out of Brisbane, part of the time. And then we'd come back and go to Perth, Australia, which was on the other coast and operated out of there for a while. And then we operated

out of Guam, Saipan...

SB: Where is Saipan?

RC: Saipan? Oh that's an island not too far off Japanese...

SB: Oh, okay.

RC: You'll have to look that one up.

SB: Right, no that's okay.

RC: And that, oh maybe one or two out of Honolulu-- more patrols. But they'd last about 90 to 100 days. You never washed your face, brushed your teeth, or anything else, when you went on those war patrols. Because all the water you had, fresh water, was used for batteries, or cooking, and you didn't, weren't allowed to wash or anything else.

SB: That sounds like it would be an experience.

RC: Oh, I tell you smelled in them things! I remember after the... after the war was over, we were still riding those boats, I used to have to take my clothes off before my wife would let me in the house, they smelled so bad! Because that diesel oil in there, it just reeked right through your clothes. Now they got a plush outfit out there! They can take all the baths they want. They got sun-lamps, and electric organs and everything else, so.

SB: Oh, wow. I'm kind of going to go away from the questions a little bit.

RC: Go ahead, whatever you want to do.

SB: If you'd like to tell me any stories? Of, like some of your ports, or?

RC: I'll give you one.

SB: I'd like to have a few, if you'd like.

RC: No, I got one to give. In fact I'll give you two of them, you can copy them down, I think. No, go ahead. I'll get them, I got them laying on a table in there. I got them out for you, anyway.

SB: Oh, great. Well, what were your parent's reactions toward your involvement in the war?

RC: It's pretty hard to say. I can't really answer that one, I don't really know.

SB: Okay. How about, did you make some close friends with other people in the service?

RC: Oh everybody on that submarine was like a brother.

SB: Right.

RC: Um, you've got to know your job as well as I gotta know mine. And I gotta know yours like you know yours, because everybody's life is in everybody else's hands. And there's no room for error, period. Or you're looking up down there and you don't come back up.

SB: I understand that. This is kind of a loaded question. What were your feelings toward the enemy?

RC: Hate. I can give it to you in one word.

SB: Yeah.

RC: They took four years of my life out there, and they didn't give them back yet.

SB: I understand.

RC: Yeah, so that's what I feel about those people.

SB: About both... Both sides?

RC: No, the enemy.

SB: But I mean on both the European theater as well as the Pacific theater?

RC: Well, the European, the Germans didn't bother us that much because I wasn't as involved there as I was with the Japanese.

SB: What did you miss most about, when you were away from Marquette?

RC: This may sound kinda funny, but we have four seasons here. Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. And I think that's what I missed the most. Really.

SB: Oh, I understand.

RC: That might sound a little peculiar, but...

SB: Oh, no.

RC: But I give it to you honestly.

SB: I asked, we know where you were when you first heard

where Pearl, when Pearl Harbor was attacked. What was your reaction? How did you feel about it?

RC: Angry. We were on that picnic, and we were pretty angry, because we had to return and get underway. And we didn't have any choice, we had to go, and that was it. And I think there were a little hate there, too, after we found out the peculiarities. What ships got sunk and all that, and... Man, it was hate, that's right.

SB: Do you remember when the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan?

RC: I remember when the first one was dropped. We were tied up in Guam, getting ready to go out on a war patrol. We were going to go out in about two more days, and I think I was at the NCO [Non-commissioned Officer] Club, on Guam, when we got the news. We didn't think too much of it, what the heck, we didn't know nothing about an atomic bomb, what it was or anything else, you know. It was a long time afterwards we knew what devastation it really had done.

SB: And how did you feel about that?

RC: Oh, that's wonderful! Blow them off the map!

SB: How did you feel when the news reached you that Franklin Roosevelt had died?

RC: Well, we were kinda worried. Because we thought that we lost one of the greatest presidents we ever had. We probably did. And we didn't know what Harry Truman was at that time, you know.

SB: Right.

RC: As he turned out to be a great guy anyway, I guess. But we were kinda worried about that.

SB: Did you celebrate, when the war was over?

RC: Yeah, we celebrated, out on the ocean. Got orders to return to Pearl Harbor, and then we had two days in Pearl Harbor and then we got underway and back to New Orleans. That's when we celebrated, about a month later. We didn't have any time in-between times.

SB: So what did you do after the war? You stayed in the Navy.

RC: Well, lets see. We went to New Orleans, like I said, and I went home on 30 days leave. While home, I got a letter from the Secretary of the Navy, to sell Victory Bonds.

So I sold Victory Bonds for a month in an area around Canton, Ohio, Cleveland, and those places. Talking to high school kids, selling them savings stamps and stuff like that, to different clubs and that. And then I had to return. In the meantime, the boat I was on had gone to Lake Charles, Louisiana, so I had to report in down there, and I went back to New London, Connecticut. Put that one out of commission in Philadelphia, and then start on another one.

SB: Another submarine?

RC: Yeah, I had to go to another submarine after that.

SB: And then, which, what was.. Let's see, the last one you were on was the Pompon?

RC: No, that was..

SB: That was earlier.

RC: I'll give you them all.

SB: Oh, great.

RC: That first boat I was on was an S-boat, "S-11" it was called. And the S-15, they were sister ships, but they were old World War I submarines, now. I'm not kiddin' you.

SB: Oh, wow.

RC: And the engines that were on these boats were built in Germany, and they ran German U-boats during World War I. So they were ancient. And, then I went to the Pompon, I made nine war patrols on that one. Came back, put it out of commission. Went to the Flying Fish, which was the experimental sub that had duty with the underwater sound lab in New London, Connecticut, experimental boat. From there I went to the U.S.S. Raquin, which was a radar picket boat in Key West, Florida. From there I came back to New London, Connecticut, to the Sea Owl. From the Sea Owl, I out in a year and a half recruiting in Marquette. After that I went to the U.S.S. Kroker, which was SK - submarine-killer boat. And then I went aboard the U.S.S. Runner. And then I went aboard this here. That's twenty years wrapped up in one hour.

SB: And which one, what name was this one?

RC: This was the Sea Dragon.

SB: Sea Dragon.

RC: Nuclear boat. I was very fortunate in my career, from diesel power to ... There's not many people who can say that, from diesel-powered submarines to most modern nuclear power. That one there, I can gie you a story about that one [points to a painting of the Sea Dragon].

SB: Great.

RC: That's the only whale-killer in the world.

SB: The Sea Dragon?

RC: Yeah. We were making sea-trials out of Portsmouth, New Hampshire -- that's where it was built. We were on the surface one night, and of course we had Rickover with us.

SB: Had what?

RC: Admiral Rickover, he's supposed to be the father of those submarines. And we were doing about thirty knots on the surface and we hit a whale that was sleeping on the surface. The whale rolled over the top of us, because you don't have much freeway above water...

SB: Right.

RC: And done two-million dollars worth of damage to that boat! Pretty near sunk it.

SB: Must have been a big whale!

RC: It was. They never found the whale, but I can remember we were up topside trying to get it straightened out so we could get back to port, and all that Rickover was up there hollering. He wanted blubber samples! Blubber samples, well he got them! So, we spent another two months at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard making repairs. That boat was bent like a pretzel. That was an awful big whale. So we all got a certificate for being a "nuclear whale-killer."

SB: That sounds wonderful. Or not wonderful...

RC: Oh, it was an experience! You know, you're going thirty miles an hour with your car out there and all of a sudden come to a dead stop, bang! It stopped! Everybody fell down, or got thrown down. Nobody got hurt though, that's one good thing.

SB: Oh, that's good. So, you retired in September of 1960?

RC: Um-hmm.

SB: And, did you come back to Marquette, here?

RC: I want to tell you that, too. I retired, 11:00 in the morning, and I was working afternoon shift in that SAGE power plant out on K.I. Sawyer at 1600 that afternoon.

SB: Wonderful. Did you retire...I mean...

RC: I was in Portsmouth when I retired.

SB: Oh!

RC: See, that submarine there made the fastest trip across the top of the world. It went up through the Northwest Passage, up through Canada, under the ice. And I flew back from Alaska, and I waited a couple of weeks and got discharged. Then I had this job out here. So, get out 11:00 in the morning, jump on an airplane, go to work that afternoon out here.

SB: Oh, wow. And you worked in CE [Civil Engineering]?

RC: Not at that time. I worked for the Strategic Air Command there. That's when the base first started, they had that fighter group out there, they didn't have any bombers.

SB: Right.

RC: That was quite an operation there, too.

SB: What did you do? For the...

RC: Well, I was the chief engineer of that power plant in the back there.

SB: Oh, okay. And when did you retire from K. I. Sawyer?

RC: K.I. Sawyer...October, 1986. Last day of October, 1986. Check that one out! That was the biggest party that was ever held at Sawyer! I'm not kiddin' you!

SB: Oh, no.

RC: Yea, I think that everybody and their brother was there. I had quite a reputation out there.

SB: All good, of course!

RC: Yeah, I mean that. Yeah, yeah. I had a darn good reputation out there.

SB: Well, that's good. And so what have you been doing with yourself...

RC: I don't know how I done things before when I was working! I haven't got enough time in the day now to do things I

gotta do! For some reason.

SB: Just keep doing one thing at a time, I guess.

RC: Ya, I guess so. Well, it's getting about snowmobile season, huntin' season is starting now.

SB: I'm assuming you hunt a little bit. [I noticed a mounted buck over my head.]

RC: Oh yeah, that's a monster. You couldn't eat that deer.

SB: That's a big deer...

RC: Too tough...It is. 220 pounds when he was dressed out.

SB: Oh, wow.

RC: Yeah. That deer didn't belong in that territory where I got him.

SB: Was that it the U.P here? I mean...

RC: Yeah, South of Ishpeming there.

SB: Oh, wow. Well, I think we still have time on the tape and so...

RC: Well, I'm going to give you those stories, anyway. Well, ask the questions you want to know about.

SB: Well, I just basically... I think I've asked all the questions that I want, so if you'd like to tell me anything, I would be very happy to listen...

RC: Well, I'll give you a couple of stories I got laying on the table there and you can have them.

SB: Okay.

RC: And you can read that "peep-show" business down there, maybe it won't be too humorous to you because...

SB: Okay.

RC: No, that was the only defense we ever had when the war started was submarines. Everything else was sunk. We spent an awful lot of time out on that ocean. Just about anything I think you've heard about submarines is true.

SB: Such as what? I haven't heard a lot.

RC: Well, we used to get two weeks of rest camp after every war patrol. You'd be out there for 90 days then you'd

get two weeks off, see. They'd put you up in a hotel and well, you just drank yourself, or whatever you wanted to do, and got rid of the scabies and everything else you had - take baths - and have a ball. Then go back, out you'd go. No choice, you just kept going.

SB: Yeah.

RC: Sometimes you'd be out there for months and never see nothing, next time you'd see all kinds of things.

SB: What did your wife think? With you being gone so long.

RC: Ah, worried, I guess. That's about all.

SB: I suppose knowing... Weren't you in the Navy when you married?

RC: Um-hmm.

SB: Yeah, so she kinda knew what she was getting into.

RC: Oh, those women aren't cream-puffs like they are today! They send them guys over to the Persian Gulf, they gotta send their wives to see psychiatrists and everything else, I don't understand it! Those women didn't have no choice, their guys were gone and that was it. Nobody took care of them while we were gone. They were on their own.

SB: What did she do during the war? While you were gone.

RC: Well, she worked for the American Red Cross here in Marquette for a while as a secretary. And that's about all, I guess.

SB: [Mr. Crabb sneezes.] I was going to say because there was a lot of the men population gone so the women kind of had to do what they had to do.

RC: That's right. They had to get along.

SB: Yep. I've got a few more questions that might be some of those...

RC: Okay, fine.

SB: What was on your mind when you headed overseas? When you headed to Japan, what were you thinking about? If you remember.

RC: Scared. I mean it. There was one war patrol where we took 111 depth charges in two and a half hours. And that's an awful lot of depth charges, I think that story

was in the paper.

SB: In the Mining Journal. I read that. That's kind of like, is that the pinging sound that you hear? Like on movies?

RC: Um-hmm.

SB: Wow.

RC: As long as you hear the little ping before the explosion, you're alright. If you don't hear that ping, you're dead! And, let's see...

SB: Were there, I don't know what the... Were any subs that you were in damaged? Through...

RC: I just gave you a story on that.

SB: Okay.

RC: That one was on the bottom, that should never have come up.

SB: Would I be able to make a copy of this?

RC: Well, you can have that one if you want. I've got other copies, yeah.

SB: Okay, wonderful

RC: Or if you want to send it back to me, go ahead, you can make a copy of it.

SB: Okay, I could do that.

RC: There might be some other malarkey on there, too. I mean different boats, but you'll just have the main article there anyway. No, I think that...everybody was our enemy. Airplanes, destroyers, everybody.

SB: Did you get a lot of action from airplanes?

RC: Only a couple of times, that's all.

SB: Because I... Well, the Air Force wasn't official until after that.

RC: No, no the Air Force didn't come into existence I think 'til '46.

SB: Right.

RC: But you had an Army Air Force...

SB: Right.

RC: That was the same thing.

SB: So, your different experiences both in - was it the Virgin Islands that you were in?

RC: Yeah.

SB: And, like Panama, and Australia. What was it like being in a foreign country?

RC: If I ever had to do it over again, I think there's two countries - I've been to most countries in this world, I think - there's two countries I'd like to go back to. I think one would be Australia, and Spain.

SB: Wonderful.

RC: The people there are so friendly and stuff.

SB: In both the countries?

RC: Yes.

SB: Wonderful.

RC: Yep.

SB: Had you been to any foreign countries before you went into the Navy?

RC: No, uh-uh, no.

SB: So, this was a neat experience.

RC: I guess it is, ya, sure. I been to lots of them since. It's always good to go some place where you haven't been.

SB: Did you ever learn any of the languages?

RC: No.

SB: Well, in Australia it's...

RC: In Australia it's just like us, except... You know, if you took a girl to a movie down there, they had to put a formal on. No, if you took them to dinner, they had to put a formal on. They had to really dress up in Australia. And don't ask me why, but that's just one of their habits, I guess. Whenever you saw an Australian lady, or whatever you want to say, out with an American or out with one of their own, they were always dressed up, really dressed. Long dresses, and everything else.

SB: Wow.

RC: So.

SB: Did you talk to any of the, like the other servicemen from those different countries at all?

RC: No, we were more or less on our own, you know. We... When we came in, we were put in the hotel and... We'd seen these servicemen, like... the Australians and the New Zealanders, they were always feuding just like cats and dogs. And they'd have riots out in the street, and stuff like that. But we were never involved in anything like that. But they were always fighting amongst themselves.

SB: I was just wondering what, like their views of what was going on in the world and the war, and...

RC: I imagine their views were just like ours, hated it.

SB: I'm sure.

RC: Actually, it took part of your life away, see. The best part, when you're young.

SB: There's only one that I haven't asked. What were your dreams or hopes, or maybe even worries before the war? Before you entered the Navy? And then, how about, like, after, and did they change and how did they change?

RC: I don't think I had much dreams before the war. All I wanted to do was to make an honest living, and after the war, I just wanted to get ahead. For some reason.

SB: That's a good dream.

RC: Um-hmm. That's about it, I think. But before the war I didn't have time to think about what's coming tomorrow - who the heck cared, you know? Just live today. Have a ball, and that was it. The war changed a lot of things.

SB: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

RC: Yeah, I got one brother.

SB: Was he...

RC: He was in the Army.

SB: Was he over in the European theater, or?

RC: Yeah, he was in the European theater, yeah.

SB: What was his name...or is his name?

RC: Jack. John.

SB: John, but he was called Jack?

RC: Um-hmm.

SB: I'll read this quickly.

RC: I thought you might be interested in that. That's a true story there.

SB: It is written by somebody on the ship?

RC: It came out of the log and that. They gotta log every move a ship makes out there, that's just like an airplane, got the same thing, I guess. That... the only trouble with that story is it don't tell you there. We thought we were going home, you know, and go back to a Navy yard. Oh we'd get a couple of, get a month or so off, and we'd have a ball back there. Maybe date an American woman, or something. Hell, they made us put that boat back together ourselves! I remember I had been up for, I don't think I slept for 14 days after that happened.

SB: After this one happened?

RC: That "Bucket Brigade" there.

SB: Oh, okay.

RC: And, we're living on Dramamine tablets, and I had a young lad by the name of Davidson from Minnesota, some place in Minnesota, I can't give you the name of the city, but. He had gone to school to become a chemist, and all of our electric motors had been under salt water for 10, 12, 14 hours, and we were trying to get this thing back together to run. Because without electric motor, those submarines won't run. He comes up to me and he says, "hey chief," he said, "I'll tell you what to do." I looked at him. He said, "didn't you ever see your mother making a stew on the stove and put salt in there and the top of the salt shaker fall off?" I said, "no, I never saw that." He said, "you never saw her stop the boiling action, slice raw potatoes in there?" "No." Well he said, "you go fill that tub, or whatever you got there full of water, and slice some raw potatoes" and he said "there's a chemical action that the potatoes will suck the salt out of, will attract the salt into the potato. Then rinse it off, bake it in the oven," he said, "and it'll be as good as new."

SB: So it took the salt off the engine?

RC: Took the salt off the motors, the electric motors. I looked at him kind of peculiar, I said "Geez, should I... Well, what the hell, I gotta try something!"

SB: Did it work?

RC: It worked!

SB: Oh, great!

RC: It worked. So if you ever over-salt something, stop the boiling action, or whatever it is, and slice raw potatoes in there and that potato will suck that salt right out of whatever you over-salted!

SB: Oh, that's neat, I never knew that!

RC: I didn't know it either.

SB: So, did you ever use it while cooking?

RC: No, I never tried it cooking. I never had that experience. But, it's supposed to work.

SB: But that's when you were fixing...

RC: Yeah, when we were trying to put this thing back together, because, without a radio, and without air, a submarine's got to run on the surface. We had to run on the surface, and there's airplanes going overhead, and there's also - Uncle Sam's got some gyps over there. There was only one port we could go to, we were pretty near in the Sea of Japan when that happened. And, well you've got to have communications. We used to see those B-29s flying over us, we were pretty wounded. And they had a light that shined down right on the water from their tail. That radio man was sitting in that radio shack with that emergency transmitter there, you know, that run with bicycle pedals on it. Could never raise one of them. Could not raise a one. But we got that sucker back to Midway, and that sub that saw us there was making a torpedo approach on us, it doesn't say in that article, but. They were ready to shoot.

SB: But they never did?

RC: Nope. For some reason they didn't shoot. And that was a sister ship to that one. But like I say, they all look alike, you know, they're no different, German, Japanese, or whatever. They're all the same.

SB: Wow.

RC: Oh, you think back on it now, it was a lot of fun. But not at that time, it wasn't.

SB: Definitely.

RC: Very serious situation.

SB: Well now that you know the outcome.

RC: Well, we thought we knew the outcome when we were coming home, too. The instinct, the instinct to live will carry you through most conditions or situations. Had a gyrocompass on that boat, and that very one right there I think it still at a sperry gyrocompass in Brooklyn, New York. I had washed it off with fresh water, and started it up again. Took the vacuum out of the rotors, that's what keeps it going.

SB: The compass?

RC: Yeah. And it froze, with a two degree westerly error.

SB: That's not good, is it?

RC: That's beautiful!

SB: Oh that's good! Okay.

RC: It didn't have a variable error. It's two degree westerly error, they could navigate with it. Otherwise we would never been able to navigate with it. It was just an act of God, I think. It just wasn't our time to go, that's all.

SB: That's good.

RC: So we got into Midway, and they took four or five of us up to sick bay, or the hospital. You call it the hospital, we call it... Put us to bed, we slept for 24 hours. When you took them Dramamine pills away from us, you conked right out. Woke us up, says get back down there and start fixin' that boat, you got... You got a month, and you gotta get back out there. Oh lordy me, I said, that's it. Lots of planes came in Midway with a lot of parts.

SB: Definitely.

RC: We put it together.

SB: I haven't been able to read...very quickly.

RC: Oh that's alright, you can read that when you go to bed at night.

SB: So what did... Can I ask what exactly happened, I know it's in the story, but...

RC: We had a faulty hatch. We were clearing the bridge, and you spring the hatch down and then you dog it, and it never closed. And you got about a 26 inch round opening above your head there and the water coming in fast, it flooded the control room fully, 2/3 of the conning tower in the pump room.

SB: The what tower?

RC: Well that's the attack... There's a, when you come off the bridge you come through the first part, that's called the conning tower.

SB: Conning?

RC: Conning tower. C-O-N-N-I-N-G.

SB: Okay.

RC: That's where most of your torpedo data computers and stuff is in there. Then you drop down below, there's another one called the control room. That's where your plainsmen and most of your control turn, and below that's a pump room with all your pumps and stuff are. Well, those are completely flooded. You're helpless, because your radio shack is in one of those rooms. You're not talking to anybody anymore. It could have been worse, it could have gone back to the batteries, I guess, and we could have got salt water in those batteries, and probably died of chlorine gas or something.

SB: Wow. But you made it back to Midway.

RC: Oh, we got back there, fixed it up and made a couple more war patrols after that. Old clunker still kept going!

SB: Oh, wow.

RC: Yeah, well that's what I say, everybody's trained to such an, on those boats, and I think it's that way today, too. I know it was on that one up there. And a, everybody knows how to do everybody else's job, and how to fix anything. If not, they get kicked off and they go to the nearest greyhound, or destroyer. And that hurts a submarine sailor to get transferred to a surface vessel.

SB: Was there competition?

RC: No, there's so much pride in being a submariner that...

SB: That's wonderful.

RC: I don't remember what the exact percentage was, but I think we sunk over 65% of the Japanese ships. And there was only about less than 50 submarines at that time.

SB: Less than 50 submarines total?

RC: Yeah, when we first started, yeah.

SB: That's neat.

RC: Well it gradually grew. We got quite a few after that.

SB: Well, you proved worthy.

RC: Oh yeah, it was the only defense we had.

SB: Did you take any college when you were in? Any courses? Well, I suppose on a submarine it - well, I don't know. Do they have those?

RC: We didn't have it like you guys got it today.

SB: Yeah.

RC: We went to a nuclear-power school. We got a college education in about 6 weeks.

SB: Definitely.

RC: We had M.I.T. professors, they'd use words about that long. Couldn't talk the same language we could! Went to school from 6:00 in the morning 'til midnight. You had enough homework after midnight to keep you going until 3:00 in the morning, and then you got three hours sleep and back you went.

SB: And how long of a schooling was that?

RC: 6 Weeks.

SB: Oh, that's a lot...

RC: And you weren't even allowed to go home.

SB: Where did you take that?

RC: Out in Connecticut. It was a crash course, that's when they first started with those things.

SB: What year was that? Or about.

RC: What year? That was 1959 and '60. They really, you

didn't learn nothing. They beat it into you!

SB: Yeah, definitely!

RC: They brainwashed it into you.

SB: And you learned everything about the workings of the sub, and...

RC: It wasn't the workings of the sub, we knew what that was, but it was the workings of that reactor! Who cared how they built the darn thing from the ground up, all we wanted to be able to do was operate it! And then, you took one exam after another. There was no way of cheatin'.

SB: But you got through it.

RC: Oh, we made it alright. It was tough, but...

SB: That's long days!

RC: You're darn right!

SB: That's all day!

RC: You bet they're long days. That was weekends included. But, that's alright. They had to have that program because they were getting these boats ready to go and they had to have crews to man them. And I guess it was all in the interest of safety, more than anything. But that's a pretty dangerous piece of machinery, that reactor. It was a wonderful life, anyway. I don't regret a day of it.

SB: That's wonderful. I'm still reading the "peep-show" article.

RC: Oh, that. I thought for a little humor there, I saw that article and I said I'll give it to her. Oh I remember one time we were in Albany, New York. We used to go on these Navy Day, that's 27th of October is Navy Day, and they'd put their ships in different ports and let the public come aboard and look at them, you know. The same way that you got out there when you have open house at Sawyer. And we were in Albany, New York, and panic went through the ship. Here I said, "what the hell's the matter, now?" Guy says, "Hey chief, you'd better come back to the after torpedo room. We got a problem back there." A hatch isn't too big around, but a lady had, was climbing down the ladder, and I don't know how to tell you this, but she got her rear end go below her knees. So she was in there like this! I said "Holy Christ, how the hell are we going to get her out of

here?" So I got the pharmacist mate back there and was trying to figure this out, and some old guy says "I'll get her out of there!" He says, "she's my wife, anyway." And he took his hat off and he says "here, hold that!" He said, "now get me down below" he said "and I'll bump her in the ass with my head!" Oh, I shouldn't have said that, but that's what happened.

SB: Oh, that's okay.

RC: But anyway, he kept poking her in the butt and we kept trying to pick her up by the arms, we finally got her out of there. But she was skinned. Her knees right here where they hit the rungs of the ladders, and that. And he thought it was a big joke, you know.

SB: Her husband?

RC: Yeah, and we're worried about getting sued! Oh boy!

SB: When was this? Do you remember what year?

RC: Oh, it must have been around '55 or '54, somewhere around there. Geez! I said, "My God, this is the end of the line!" Woman stuck in a hatch and we can't get her out. It's just like a big tube back there, because it goes pretty near down to the floor inside the deck, because it is used for an escape hatch. You dive under it, and then blow yourself out. And she was halfway down that thing! Well she got out of there, but the next day he come down to the boat before we left and invited the whole ship up to his house for dinner. But they all couldn't go, because one-third's always got to stay aboard. But we all went up there and had a good time. And she didn't think nothing of it.

SB: Oh, that's neat!

RC: Boy. She just let herself slip a little bit, and then she got in there in that position. Boy, oh, boy! If you ever get a chance, go aboard one of those things!

SB: I'd like to! I've never had the chance to recently, but now that I'm hearing some really neat stuff about it...

RC: There's one in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, which isn't too far from here.

SB: Oh, wow.

RC: I'd say it's about 250 miles.

SB: Do they still make them in Manitowoc?

RC: No, uh-uh.

SB: No.

RC: Nope.

SB: How about Portsmouth?

RC: Yeah, they still make them at Portsmouth.

SB: I've been to Portsmouth, my husband's from Maine.

RC: Well then you know about Kittery and all those places.

SB: Yep.

RC: I think that shipyard's still open up there. They might have closed that sucker, I don't...

SB: I'm not sure. Wow.

RC: That's the job here on this road. It's been all summer long with this thing. Yeah, if you get a chance, there's a U-boat in Chicago that you can tour, too.

SB: Oh, wow. I'm going to Chicago this weekend. That'd be really neat.

RC: Well, yeah, you can, they take tours on that. I don't know exactly where it is, but you can find out when you get down there.

SB: What's the difference between, like, a U-boat and a submarine? Are they the same thing?

RC: The same thing, yeah, but the Germans... We had better living conditions than the Germans. Their boats were lined inside with wood and they'd mold, and everything else, where we had stainless steel and stuff like that. But I think if you're writing this story you should, if you're going down there, take a tour down there. That's open house all the time down there.

SB: So, the living arrangements, I'm not very familiar with like submarine living arrangements. Are there, like, actual rooms? Or just...

RC: No, it's one big compartment.

SB: Yeah.

RC: And you get into a bunk there, and you lay in one position. You lay on your back or on your stomach, because there isn't room to lay on your side.

SB: Tight quarters.

RC: That's right.

SB: Especially without showers, or baths...

RC: Oh, you get used to that after a while. You haven't got any smell left after a while. No, you never got a shower. That was one thing you had to conserve on was fresh water, ooh, boy. You never brushed your teeth, I don't know. Anything! We used to call them "pig boats."

SB: Pig boats?

RC: That's because you smelled so bad, I'm telling you! We even tried one time to... Those old boats, World War I boats that were around, they put a condenser in there that- it used to be so hot in there, it was 120 degrees all the time. So they'd, they put a condenser in there so they could get water, actually it was human sweat that'd get on these coils, and then drop down into a bucket. So they said we could use that to bathe in, it was no good for anything else. Well we used that, and boy, oh, boy we all broke out with everything imaginable!

SB: Oh, no!

RC: It was such a contaminated water, so. Now today they got all the water they got all the water they want! Sunlamps! Everything. Fresh air down there, like you don't have up here. They make their own air. They're beautiful, except you don't have no sunshine. But that, you can live without that.

SB: How long would you be under for, for a time? I mean.

RC: You mean with these type here?

SB: Well, like during the war.

RC: During the war, you could make it, probably make it, for 72 hours. And then you'd run out of air.

SB: So you'd have to... How about with the nuclear, now?

RC: Indefinitely.

SB: Wow.

RC: When they leave port and they get to the breakwater, they submerge. They next time they surface is when they come back to that breakwater. The only thing they're limited with is food.

SB: Did you, like, during the war, did you have problems with the food situations?

RC: We had the best food alive. But, fresh food, yeah. We didn't have potatoes and stuff like that. Fresh vegetables would last maybe 3 weeks, and then we'd have to start eating out of the cans and stuff.

SB: Did you have the, I don't know, were they "C-rations" before?

RC: We don't have no C-rations.

SB: Okay.

RC: We had frozen eggs, which is just as good as when you crack a shell right now.

SB: Oh wow, I didn't know eggs could be frozen!

RC: Oh yeah, they froze them in a bucket and you'd dip them out with a ladle. You could have them sunny-side up, or whatever you wanted. And the only thing like I say was the vegetables, the fresh fruit and vegetables we had to substitute for. And every time you sat down to eat there was a little red pill laying on that plate.

SB: What was that for?

RC: Vitamin pill. We lived on vitamins because you had to have them. The lack to sunlight'd get you to...but we had a goodlife.

SB: That's good.

RC: Except it was dirty.

SB: Well, that's to be expected. So, when you would surface after the 72 hours, how long would you be surfaced?

RC: Just long enough to charge those batteries up. Sometimes it'd take 16 hours, sometimes 8. All depends on how many engines you were using to go to a different place, or if you could put them all on a battery and charge them up.

SB: And the batteries were to run the...

RC: Yeah, run the boat under water. They were electric motors. Now they run with the steam turbine off of the nuclear power plant.

SB: How do they charge?

RC: What?

SB: How do the batteries charge?

RC: They got an engine like in your car with a generator on the end of it.

SB: I guess I'm not very technically...

RC: Oh, that's all right, that's no problem.

SB: Technically inclined, I guess.

RC: That's where the water went, was the batteries.

SB: Right.

RC: Not to bathing, you weren't there for cosmetic reasons!

SB: No, that's before they allowed women on there, too. I think now, haven't they started...

RC: I don't know if they have or not.

SB: I don't know on subs, I know on other ships...

RC: Oh, we had women on them during the war. We'd pick up a couple of nurses from some place here and there and take them to. I know one boat there had, I don't know, 28 nurses on there I think they'd picked up there in the Philippines. Just before the Japs took over and took them out of there. they didn't have any problem with them women.

SB: Well, that's good.

RC: I don't see where there'd be a problem.

SB: Well, I meant for the cosmetic thing.

RC: Well, there wouldn't be so much privacy, but it could be fixed. You know.

SB: That's good.

RC: Yeah, so. I don't know if they got them on there yet, or not. The last I read, they hadn't, but they were talking about it. They're just as good as anybody else. I don't give a rip.

SB: Oh, definitely

RC: They want to take that life, let 'em go!

SB: Yep. Well is there anything else?

RC: I can't think of anything. You've got to pump the questions out.

SB: I know, I've given you all my questions that I've written down.

RC: I hope I gave you answers!

SB: Oh, you've given me plenty answers!

RC: Okay, alright.

SB: I was just wondering if there was any special stories that you would like to finish... I mean other than the one's you've given.

RC: I forget those stories. I'd just as soon forget there was ever a war on, myself. That's the way I feel about it.

SB: I understand.

RC: Now even when my grandchildren come over and start talking to me, I say "ah let's forget about that, and we'll talk about something else."

SB: Yeah. Well I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with me.

RC: No problem. I got more time than money, anyway. I shouldn't have said that, but what the heck! I think there's one other submariner in town and he tipped me off about this, about a week or so before you called. Dave McClintock, I don't know if you heard...

SB: Yeah, another person in my class...

RC: Yeah, Captain McClintock. Yeah. We're very good friends.

SB: Oh, wonderful.

RC: Then somebody drew another guy by the name of Bennett. But he turned her down, or turned him down. And I don't feel that way because a lot of people have helped me out, why shouldn't I help somebody else out.

SB: Well I really appreciate it.

RC: No, I mean it. And I didn't mind. As long as you don't mind my dirty house!

SB: Your house isn't dirty.

RC: Oh, lady!

SB: No, this is wonderful. But I'll give you, I'll give you this back. I've read this, this is a wonderful story. [A story unrelated to Mr. Crabb or a submarine he was on, it was merely a cute Navy story.]

RC: We can clip that one out if you want to take that.

SB: Oh, no. No, actually I'm just going to take this and make a copy of it, and I'll send it back to you. [See attached article.]

RC: Okay, whatever. Then if you need anything else give me a call, eh.

SB: Oh, I sure will.

RC: If I'm not home put it on that machine, I'll call you back.

SB: Oh, that's wonderful. I love machines. But I think I've got my hour...

[End of tape. End of interview.]