

**Robert Yerick  
Veteran**

**Bill Payne  
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on March 13, 2005  
Saugerties New York**

**BP:** Today's date is March 13, 2005 and we're here with the Lamory Habet #72 Post at the American Legion and I'm Bill Payne, I'm interviewing Mayor Yerick and he served during what time?

**RY:** Korean War

**BP:** He served during the Korean War in the?

**RY:** US Navy

**BP:** In the US Navy. And also, here today is Kate Thornton, Kia Regshinski, and Matt Mcelwreath who are doing our technical work and also Commander Alan Regshinski who's are overall leader.

Let's get started.

**BP:** Mayor Yerick, your first name is Robert?

**RY:** That's correct.

**BP:** And were you drafted or did you enlist?

**RY:** I enlisted.

**BP:** You enlisted in the United States Navy?

**RY:** I enlisted in the United States Navy in 1950 and served for 4 years, right after. Did my boot training in Rhode Island, Newport Rhode Island, it was opened up for a short period of time, I was in one of the companies, one of the few companies that went through there. And I think there was only some less than 20 companies that went through there and then they converted it back to an officer's training school. I had quite an eventful experience, having never been away from home, it was an experience. I was a young smartass from a little village in Philmont and that was certainly a change and to start that end with the big boys and we had a petty chief who was called back in because of Korean conflicts, he had retired a chief petty officer and he was not a happy camper because he got called back in, so he shaved a lot of corners, I'm not going to give you his name but he shaved a lot of corners. He used to do our laundry, he used to rent his car to us, there were a lot of no noes that he provided us with but it was a good experience it certainly opened my eyes to a different world and as I said before I was a young, wise guy true to the streets with no education although I did graduate from high school further education on an informal basis and the service provided me with an education I was a pretty heavy drinker as a 16, 17, 18 year old kid and believe it or not when I went in the service I gave up drinking and the reason I gave up drinking was because I was

scared to death, I didn't know how long we were there and I didn't have my mother and father's guidance I had to fend for myself and alcohol just didn't fit into the picture, but I didn't give it up for too long, as I got a feel for myself and where I was I resumed my bad habits to some degree, but not to the extent as I did before so I was so I was very very proud not only to join the service, but I was very very proud of myself because of what I was doing with my life, as a result of going in the service.

**BP:** You picked the Navy?

**RY:** I picked the Navy simply because I as always led to believe that there were two branches of the service, that had expert education programs and Navy was one and the Air Force was the other. I contemplated the marines believe it or not at 117 pounds 5 foot 7, but the marines was more physical, and I just didn't fit that mold. I don't know if somebody told me that or I realized it but I just didn't fit that mold. So anyway, went through basic training I got just a little humor as with any training program they put you in the rifle range and I failed disastrously I saw more granny's drawers, that's the red flag that goes up when you miss the target, I saw more of those then finally the guy put me through and wasn't going to let me finish basic training, but anyway, I convinced him that was the right thing to do and I got a 96 hour pass and I went home and got married and he said this was after boot camp he said if I had known that I would have never given you the pass. But anyway, went to Virginia to a waiter ship.

**BP:** Newport News?

**RY:** It was Newport News and picked up the USS Gearing DD-710

**BP:** That's a destroyer right, Bob?

**RY:** Yah that's a destroyer. I remember the first time out, so rough, absolutely terrible we had to tie ourselves in and the whole 9 yards and I remember saying dear god if this is what I got to do for the rest of my 4 years take me now cause I'm not going to make, it was terrible, but my trip was on the USS Gearing as I said DD-710 was to go to Nepal to pick up the ship that I was assigned which was the USS Newport News, absolutely gorgeous ship it was a heavy cruiser and it had a higher population than the village I came from.

**BP:** Philmont Columbia County in New York?

**RY:** Philmont Columbia County with a seventeen hundred population and the Newport News's compliment was twenty-two hundred so it was like a young man going to the city, a little guy going to the city but it was a beautiful ship absolutely beautiful ship. I was always told that it was designed to be a luxury liner and because of the Korean conflict it was converted from a luxury liner to a heavy cruiser and it was a good experience. I went aboard as a deckhand and that's somebody that does all the painting and the scrubbing and blah blah blah blah and I said boy this is not my cup of tea so I finally convinced somebody and I don't know who it was that it was not my cup of tea and there was something else I could get into, so I got into communications crypto, teletype it was exciting it was very very exciting, not only did you meet a different element of people which was all the officers, but it was challenging work crypto graphics was challenging, teletype was challenging, back in 50 teletype was challenging and it was in the know we knew just about everything that was going on the ship and around

the ship so that was exciting and I served 4 years sea duty and in those 4 years sea duty I did six different tours in the Mediterranean and visited many countries Turkey, France, Germany, Italy and it was a very very great experience, wearing at times, so many times, but did some touring and had some good experiences. Got transferred from Newport, Rhode Island which was the home port of the Newport News, my buddy got transferred to the Des Moines which was homeport in Boston and I pulled some strings and got transferred to the Des Moines in Boston as well.

**BP:** Was that a heavy cruiser also, Bob?

**RY:** Heavy cruiser also. And this was appropriate to understand his name was Joseph Patrick McMan and he and I were best of friends and we were for twenty years after and then we kind of lost contact with each other and then as I got assigned to the Des Moines, which was stationed in Boston, I had a very unfortunate accident for a short time thereafter I was hospitalized for a period of time and that brought about my discharge.

**BP:** What happened, Bob?

**RY:** I got broadsided by a governor and senator in New Jersey and that put me in the hospital for quite a period of time which I got discharged from. Now prior to going to the hospital I had taken the test for second class petty officer and I was a third class petty officer and while I was in the hospital they gave me the papers to say that I had passed and was going to be promoted to second class petty officer, but that never happened, I got out before that happened which didn't make any difference but just to some it all up during that period of time I got married as I mentioned before and my wife and I were talking about making the navy a premiere and as the result of the accident that didn't happen but the reason I mention that is because when I first went in I hated it I just hated it and I said to the chief petty officer I said that if you put me in the gally I'll cut my goddamn hand off and get out and he sat down and talked to me like a father and he convinced me that that wasn't the right thing to do although I don't think I would have ever done it but that was the attitude and compared that to the attitude I had prior to having an accident to take away my career, so anyway that's my career as far as the navy was concerned I was extremely proud I never saw any action never saw any battles or anything of that nature though I went through the routine, trial runs whatever you want to call it, but I was very very proud to serve my country, my father was never in the service, my brother just missed World War II, so I was the only one in my family that entered the service and had any service experience and I was very proud of that and I know that my mother and father and brother and sister, I know they were all extremely proud of me to. It turned my life around because my father didn't like me. He said you overextended your welcome, find a place to go, so anyway that was pretty much my career. I got out of the navy I came back to my little community, could not find a job and I had an aunt who lived in Nassau, but anyway...

**BP:** Long Island or New York state?

**RY:** Oh no, not Nassau, it was up around Albany. I can't think of it. Anyway, she worked for Mr. Delson, Delson at that time had a department store in Saugerties and that was one of five department stores he had and I was unable to find a job, so she said would you be interested in being interviewed by Mr. Delson and I said absolutely I'll take

anything and by the way I did go to school for retailing down in Washington DC, for those that don't know or had an opportunity to do the SS Kresge, SS Kresge was a five and dime store like Woolworth.

**BP:** Did you go to the school after you got out of the service?

**RY:** No, before I went in the service and I didn't stay with the program. I did for a short period of time, but I was in love and came back to Saugerties to my sweetheart blah blah blah, so anyway, coming into that program and she said would you be interested in an interview with Mr. Delson and I said absolutely, so I had an interview and he hired me and put me in the Saugerties store. That's how I came to Saugerties in 1954. Anyway so I worked there, met some wonderful people, fell in love with Saugerties because Saugerties was like going to the city for me, population of five thousand compared to seventeen hundred, so I worked for Delson for a year and then I had an opportunity to go to IBM and I went to IBM and I worked in machine canning, started out in machine canning, didn't even know what the machines were at that time. Educated myself I went to almost every day of school that was offered by IBM, law school, English, you name it I took it, it was all Tom Watson who lectured for education, so anyway I was in machinery canning and then I went to programming school, became a programmer, hated it, but never the less I became a programmer. I really wanted to be a manager I loved managing, I loved the diversity of management, I loved the responsibility, the authority. So I got into programming school, got out of programming school that it just wasn't my cup of tea and so I went from a professional area to a nonprofessional area just to get into management and I made a commitment to myself that if I do this that I would get back into a professional area within two years so I got out as a manager and went back in twenty-three months later as a manager in the area I came from and I had 33 plus years with IBM and at least 25 of that was in management, various levels of management, I had a short time in my career where I was in Kingston, with the exception of a very short stay or jaunt to headquarters to pick orders, I went down there as a special assignment, had people all over the world and the product we developed was an internal product for IBM called CMIS and it was, as I said, it was for internal use, it was used throughout the world at all the IBM locations and I think they still use it today, it was the control and tracking of a product from the absolute beginning to the end that's all the computerization of that product from beginning to end so I had good practice came and I retired in 1988 and again floundered, didn't know what to do with myself so I made a couple commitments to keep me on the straight and arrow. I tried everything I got on two or three board of directors for literacy senior projects, tended bar at the American Legion Post 72, anyway couldn't find myself, just didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew I had to do something because as I sat there in my house my four walls were closing in on me, so one day we were just chatting at lunch, two or three guys, the three of us were chatting and we didn't like what we saw in Saugerties, so we formed a new party the Division Party and that's in office today, by the way we sweat, so I've been involved in that since 1996 and I love it. This is an excellent community and from a comradery point of view, from a volunteerism point of view, helping those that need help, it's just a phenomenal community and it really is phenomenal and I really believe that Saugerties gave me something, I raised six children here in Saugerties and Saugerties had an annual positive impact on my life so I really believe I owe Saugerties something and I'm paying it back. I'm 75 years old and I'm still

out there every day working as the mayor of Saugerties and that's pretty much it, that's what I have to say.

**BP:** Thank you very much Bob, and good luck in the next election.

**RY:** If I get beat than I'm in trouble 'cause there's no opposition.