

**Walter Roy Beach  
Veteran**

**Mike Russert  
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Interviewers**

**Interviewed on August 5, 2004 2:30pm  
Jefferson Ferry Center  
South Setauket, New York**

**Q:** Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth please?

**WB:** My full name is Walter Roy Beach. I was born in Queens, NY on July 4, 1926.

**Q:** What was your educational background prior to entering the service?

**WB:** I was seventeen, a senior in high school. I needed my mothers' signature to sign up. She made me promise to return to school once I returned from the service.

**Q:** So, you enlisted?

**WB:** That's correct I enlisted.

**Q:** Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

**WB:** I can't say exactly where I was, but like most people American's were up in arms, shook up over it. I couldn't wait to get into it.

**Q:** Why did you select the Navy?

**WB:** It was all the movies at the time. It was great seeing the sailors. I also had a cousin that was in the coast guards prior to Pearl Harbor. I would listen to all his experiences, and I felt as though I would like it, so I chose the Navy.

**Q:** Where were you stationed for basic training?

**WB:** I was stationed in Sampson, New York.

**Q:** What was it like being there? This was obviously your first time away from home?

**WB:** Oh yes, I was seventeen years old, but I loved the comradery there. Most of us young fellas were about the same age. There were a few older it was a new experience for me.

**Q:** Did you ever get home sick?

**WB:** I don't remember being home sick. At that time basic training was only five

weeks. I wasn't there very long.

**Q:** What were some of the things you did while at Sampson?

**WB:** Well, there's one thing that I did they put me on fire watch. We had cold stoves heating the barracks, I fell asleep with the stove on. I remember that well.... (Laughter)

**Q:** Did you sleep in hammocks, or bunks?

**WB:** No, we slept in bunks.

**Q:** Where were you stationed after Sampson?

**WB:** We went to the receiving station at pier 92 and from there immediately sent overseas. I rode on the Queen Mary and didn't get sick at all. There were no escorts, we zig zagged, and had some rough weather and a lot of army soldiers and a few sailors got sick. It was a five-to-six-day trip.

**Q:** When you went overseas were you assigned to a unit or a ship?

**WB:** I went to Rosely Scotland and stayed for quite a while before being shipped to London. They left us in a big field with nothing. Someone soon arrived with sandwiches and tea. It wasn't much but we were very thankful. It was there we were assigned to different ships. I went to LST 264 in The Isle of Wight.

**Q:** So, you went there as a replacement?

**WB:** Yes, I went as a replacement.

**Q:** When did you arrive in England?

**WB:** I can't give you an exact date... I would say-

**Q:** But you were pre-D Day, right?

**WB:** Oh yes, Pre-D Day around the end of April.

**Q:** What was your Assignment on the LST?

**WB:** I was a deck hand, moping, sweeping that kind of stuff. I was just a seaman second-class. Later, I moved to boat crew on the liberty and invasion boats.

**Q:** So, basically it was on the job training for you?

**WB:** Oh yes it was.

**Q:** How did you like being on the LST?

**WB:** I thought it was great. I loved it, we were more than just sailors, we were fighting sailors called the "Amfibs of the Unite with guns." [unclear] We even had emblems with guns and anchors on them.

**Q:** Were you put on any gun crews or anything?

**WB:** Yes, I was assigned the twenty and forty millimeter as a loader changing the magazine.

**Q:** How long were you on the ship before D-day?

**WB:** It was about two months. I have an experience about Rosely thought you might like to hear. A bunch of us fellas heard about a dance at the church. It was about twenty miles away, so we caught the bus and went to the dance. The Scottish people were so nice to us. We walked some of the girls home and asked, "where do we catch the bus back?" They said there are no buses tonight. We walked twenty miles back to the base, that was an experience. (smiles)

**Q:** Did you have much contact with the people in Scotland and England?

**WB:** No, not really, they did want us to fraternize with them before the invasion. In fact, prior to the invasion, we weren't allowed off the ship.

**Q:** Can you describe the activities right around D-day?

**WB:** We were loading the soldiers and equipment.

**Q:** What did you carry- in on D-day?

**WB:** No guns, just the soldiers

**Q:** I meant did you have tankers, and jeeps that kind of stuff?

**WB:** No just light stuff no guns.

**Q:** Which beach did you land at?

**WB:** Trying to remember... It was an English beach, we had English soldiers. I think it was gold, I made forty-one trips. Initially with the slow boats across, after so many trips we just ran the ship on the beach.

**Q:** Do you remember the night before seeing the planes go over, what was your reaction to that?

**WB:** I was amazed at just how many planes we had over there. There were hundreds and hundreds of ships on the beach.

**Q:** How far out were you?

**WB:** I would say about a half-mile, not much more.

**Q:** Did your ship come under fire and was it damaged?

**WB:** Not initially, we were under fire, but we weren't hit at that time. We had landing nets (cargo nets), and soldiers were climbing down. It was tough to see some of the soldiers that were hit crawling in. It was an experience; one you try to put in the back of your mind but every now and then it comes back to you.

**Q:** How many trips did you make in and out on D-day?

**WB:** It was a lot I can't remember. It was constant back and forth to the point that sergeants had to force some of the soldiers off into the water. We were on land but a Bon door [unclear] was dropped down into the water where there was debris and bodies.

**Q:** Did you go in again the second, third and fourth days?

**WB:** As soon as we unloaded, we went back for another load we made forty-one trips altogether no layovers.

**Q:** In what period did you do forty-one trips?

**WB:** We were there before D-day, so it was after D-day we'd come back to the states.

**Q:** Were all your landings on D-day on the British beaches?

**WB:** Yes, we had English soldiers. We had another thing happen. Later in convoy we were under attack in the submarine and some of the ships were sunk. I was on bywatch [unclear] we were going flank speed. I could see sailors and launchmen in the water and I'm plowing right through them. We weren't allowed to stop, that was a trouble thing to see another unfortunate part of war.

**Q:** Did you have a welding machine on board for repairs?

**WB:** Yes, we did. We were in a collision on the same river one time and there were soldiers in the forward compartment. The other LST anchor caught ours and ripped the whole side out of the ship. Fortunately, there were no soldiers in the outside bunk, but some of those on the inside were not as fortunate. We had a big hole on the side of the ship, for sure we were going to sink. We were able to run it right on to the beach and the shipfitters [unclear] put a temporary patch on so we didn't sink. We had some pretty good pumps and handy billys [unclear] that dropped down to pump out the water to keep us afloat.

**Q:** Were you always assigned to an LST?

**WB:** No, when we came back to the states in Little Creek, Virginia we ran small boats for fleet ships. Then we went over to LSD Dinner twenty (floating dock) to Gitmo [unclear] and ran all the small boats there. When we returned to Little Creek, we were instructing the army and some marine soldiers on small boats. I did that until I got out in June of 1946.

**Q:** You said you were on the dinner, was that the name of it?

**WB:** Yes, it was the LSD (the floating dock)

**Q:** What was it like on that ship compared to the LST?

**WB:** It was completely different. We weren't part of the ship's crew. We were separate from them small boats. We didn't spend much time there.

**Q:** Did you carry any kind of personal weapons at all?

**WB:** No, we didn't feel it was necessary. I got out in June 1946 and later recalled in 1951 to 1952.

**Q:** What did you do in that period?

**WB:** I went over to Bayonne New Jersey the Mothballed Fleet. I maintained the ship.

**Q:** Were you getting it ready to go to war?

**WB:** If needed, we had the Washington, and the Franklin there, but they were never recalled.

**Q:** What were your duties there between that time?

**WB:** Actually, there were a lot of young sailors there, we just worked parties and I kind of watched over things.

**Q:** When you finally discharged in 1952, did you make use of the G.I Bill at all?

**WB:** Yes, I got my pilot's license with the G.I Bill.

**Q:** Have you ever used the 5220Club?

**WB:** Oh yes, every one of them (Smiling)

**Q:** Did you get a Commercial license or just a private license?

**WB:** No, I didn't get a Commercial license. We were married at the time, and it got expensive. I'm satisfied with my private license.

**Q:** Do you still fly?

**WB:** Not in a long time, about three years now.

**Q:** Did you join any veteran organizations?

**WB:** I did for a while; I joined the American Legion in Franklin Square then I moved. I then got active in the voluntary fire department.

**Q:** Did you ever stay in contact with anyone that was in the service with you?

**WB:** I did not. I tried through the LST Organization, I wrote and posted letters one fella answered but he was off the ship before I got on. I tried but it just didn't work out.

**Q:** How do you think your time in the service had effect on your life or changed your life in anyway?

**WB:** It certainly changed my life; I might have gone to college but once I came back, I felt I was too old to attend college.

**Q:** But you finished high school, how was that?

**WB:** That was fun, the kids looked up to us, and teachers gave us breaks. It was a

few of us that returned, we thought we were Big Wigs (laughter). Like everything else you always remember the good things.