

Harold P. Emlaw
Veteran

Mike Russert
Wayne Clarke
Interviewers

Interviewed on April 4, 2003, 2:15pm
Ogdensburg New York

Q: Okay, this is an interview with Harold Emlaw. The Anchor drop in, Ogdensburg NY. The twenty-fourth of April, 2003, approximately 2:15 pm. Interviewers are Mike Russert, Wayne Clark. Give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please.

HPE: Yes, Harold Paul Emlaw, born September 15 1925 Norfolk New York.

Q: Okay what was your education, prior to entering the military?

HPE: Eleventh grade.

Q: Okay, where were you, and what do you remember when you heard about Pearl Harbor.

HPE: I was fifteen at the time, and I was working in a service station in Massena. I worked there when School was out. This was, of course, Sunday. And, somebody come in and said "Pearl Harbor has been attacked." And, of course, that didn't really mean anything to me. I didn't know anything about Pearl Harbor. And then, of course, probably, I got to thinking about it more because people would start talking about it. But still it didn't sink in much at the time.

Q: Did you enlist? Or were you drafted?

HPE: I enlisted.

Q: Okay, do you know why you picked the Navy?

HPE: Well, probably because my brother was in the navy. And we were brought up on a river there at home. And we were always swimming all summer long. Of course, I like the water.

Q: And had you ever been on ships before?

HPE: No, I hadn't, more than a rowboat. [Laughter]

Q: Okay, why don't you tell us from where you started in service until you left. Where did you go for you basic and so on?

HPE: I went to Albany to have my physical from Norfolk. From there, I went to Sampson. And I went on active duty on September 14 1943, was when I was sworn in. And I spent eight weeks there. And from there, they shipped me to Chicago Illinois for Diesel School. And I think I was there about the same amount of time – 8 weeks. And I don't think I had a better liberty than in Chicago. Man, that was a super place for us guys. We lived on Navy Pier which is still there.

Q: Why did you like Chicago so much?

HPE: Well, all the time, there was something coming over the BX. So many sailors wanted this house for... well, especially on weekends for a Sunday dinner. And so many here for a party. And I took in a few of them. And of course, Illinois, if I remember at the time you couldn't drink unless you were twenty-one. But I was eighteen when I got there and it didn't matter where you went in and they'd serve you. Course, I wasn't a heavy drinker, but I liked the beer. And I met a girl there too. Of course, they always had a sailor's girl in every port, which I liked very much at the time. From there, I went to advanced Diesel School at Dare Born, the River Rooms plant. And I think it was another 8 weeks Diesel. And when I got done there, of course, I didn't want to leave because I had met my brother. And from there, we were assigned to a crew. Then we went down to Solomons Maryland for training on the LCIL. And we trained there not too long. And from there, they shipped a crew of us -twenty-two of us, and three officers, went to Barber New Jersey and picked up a new one, LCIL 602. And I can remember just as if it was yesterday; we went from Barber up to Pier 92. And as we were going in, I guess we had two or three civilian workers aboard and, of course, I was in the engine room. And we had this civilian down there breaking us in on the stuff, although we had been trained. And the skipper was going a little too fast -he was a JG- and he hit the pier and put a hole in the front. And if I remember correctly, he was trying to blame the engine room boys. There was two of us, plus this civilian. And he got us out of that. Otherwise, if we didn't move fast enough to get her in the stern and back her down. They put a hole in her, not too bad and they had somebody up with a patch and they welded it on. And from there we went back to Solomons. Then we went

to Virginia. And we trained on that for two or three weeks. And we'd make landings and back off and make landings. And from there we went to Panama we went through the Panama Canal in San Diego and did a little training there. And from San Diego, we went to Pearl Harbor. And that was something, when we first went to Pearl Harbor. We were going by and there was an Oklahoma, just a shell that was left, tied up there. And, of course, I'd never been in a place like that and it was. It as something you never forget. Then we got off and went into Honolulu for a little liberty. Ant I remember going by the pineapple place. Was it Dole? They had a big old sign there, shaped like a pineapple. Things like that, you didn't forget. And then when you got in town, sailors and marines and soldiers on a bar. It was hard to get a beer or something. And the lines were pretty long. Well we went from there and flew around a few different islands. And then we went to Quadulan Marshall Islands. Of course, these places were all secure then. And then from Quadulan we went to Eniwetok. From Eniwetok we went to Illithia, a toll which is in the Carolinas, the Carolan Islands. And they had a little island there, named Mog Mog. And there was a big Lagoon where I think I'm sure I've seen the fifth and third fleet in there all at once, because all you could see was carriers and big ships. And what our duty was for six months was in the morning we'd take off a bunch of sailors from one ship, take them on to this island. You got two cans of beer and a place for a little relaxation. And then we'd take them back and take another batch from that same ship in the afternoon to the same island.

Q: How many of these men could you carry at a time in your ship?

HPE: Well, something like that, you could carry two hundred easy on deck. And these are some of the ships we serviced: *The Nevada, New Mexico, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Dakota, Massachusetts, Iowa, New Jersey, Missouri, Wisconsin*. And then we had ten heavy cruisers, five light cruisers, air craft carriers: *Enterprise, Essex, Intrepid, Randolph, Lexington*. And we had some escort carriers, a couple of those small carriers, some destroyers, and some miscellaneous ships. That was six months, that's all we did, take those boys in and take 'em back. And from Ilithia, we went down to Lady, in the Philippines. And of course, I'd been secure. And then from there, we went up to Guam. Guam, back to Eniwetok. From there, we went back to Quadulan. And Quadulan, back to the Wake Island. And at that time, the war was over. It finished because we were the first. There was, what? Three of us LCIs? We went in there to Wake Island. And our duty was to get all the guns and ammunition that we could carry and put it on the back of our little ship and take it out and we'd dump them over the side. And the captain said we could save one gun if anybody wanted one. So, I saved a Japanese 31 Caliber. And it's on the wall in the Legion in Norfolk. And the war was over. That was August. From there, we went back to Quadulan.

Q: Now, you said earlier you were at Okinawa?

HPE: Yes. We went back to Quadulan, Eniwetok, and Eniwetok, we went to Okinawa. And I didn't have any dates, but that's when the typhoon was on.

Q: Now, you were still in the LCI?

HPE: Yes.

Q: What was that like in the Typhoon?

HPE: [Laughter]. Just like a cork. She'd go up on the waves. Then come down and slap. And, of course, I was the engine man. We had four engines back to back. We had two screws, four engines back to back on the left, four engines back to back on the right. And one of the engines blew a piston. And the captain said "You need to get down and get underneath that and get that piston and change it."

Which we did, and boy, that was a sun of a gun. Of course, I was young and I didn't think much of it I guess, but... You couldn't eat. The cook would try to make you a sandwich. That was really something. And from there, we went back to the Philippines. And from the Philippines, we went to French-Indo-China, Hyfong. China was having trouble at the time, so what we did there, is we'd take the Chinese soldiers off the beach and we'd take them out to the larger ships. And I understood that they took to Framosa. And they an awful looking bunch of soldiers. I guess we were lucky.

Q: What way were they?

HPE: Dresses, and shoes, and they didn't have anything. I don't know how long we did that. Quite a while, give a ride out to the larger ships. And of course, this was when the war was over. And from there, we went back to Suvet Bay. Then, back to Guam, and back to the states. We went back to the Panama Canal. And we went into Charleston, and that's where they decommissioned. But when I got in there, I had enough points, like my brother, and I got off and they shipped me back to Needle Beach.

Q: Now, what was your reaction when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt?

HPE: I was very sad. I don't know as I might have cried.

Q: How about when you heard about the atomic bombs being dropped on Japan?

HPE: I was pretty happy about that. If I talked about President Roosevelt, I'd break down now. And today I'm a Republican. [Laughter]. But yes, when I heard about the atomic bomb, of course, we were up in the Philippines someplace when that happened. And we knew that the war wouldn't be much longer. But I think at the time there was talk – we went back into Eniwetok – they were going to put some different guns on our vessel for an invasion. That was the talk. And that's where we were, come to think of it now, when it came over that our president died.

Q: Now, where did you discharge?

HPE: At Needle Beach, Long Island.

Q: And how did you get home?

HPE: I got on a Trailway Bus. And when I got off, that was twelve miles from Norfolk. And I got right out on the roadside and a guy picked me up and he took me right home. And I can still remember how, going in the door, and there was my mother. I don't know if I let her know... [pause to dash tears away with a handkerchief] ... I'm what you call chicken aren't I?

Q: [Laughter]. No.

HPE: And the girl I married, of course, I'd known her all my life. We went to school together and church together. And my mother said, "Do you want to walk with me down to the store?"

And I said "Sure."

So, I walked with her. And we went by this girl's house and she was out raking. Her name was Francis Pakin. Her and her mother were out raking. And right then, I said "Would you like to go out tonight?" And I still have her. [Laughter]. We ended up with six children.

Q: How long have you been married?

HPE: We married in forty-six. That'd be fifty-seven? fifty-seven years this year.

Q: Now, did you go back in for Korea?

HPE: Yes, I did.

Q: Now, were you in the reserves?

HPE: I wasn't. A good friend of mine was on ship with me. He lived in Albuquerque, well he was going to school in Albuquerque, and we'd kept in touch. And he said "Come on out."

And so, I was working in the garage in Potsdam. I stuck with the mechanical business. And he said "Come on out. There's a lot of work out here." I got a new vehicle. I worked out at the Shiveley place and we had a new trailer, a house trailer. We hooked it on and went to Albuquerque. And I had two children then, and things weren't too good there, so... I liked the navy, I sure loved it so I went to the Navy reserves there, and I said "I'd like to get in the reserves and I want active duty." Okay, so, it wasn't too long before I got orders to report out to Treasure Island California. So, I went there, our family and we got a trailer park. Set them down and then I went back in and they flew me to Sesipoo Japan. And I went aboard the Bradford. That was a DE DD 545 destroyer. And, you go over there six months and back to the states six months. And I had no more than got there, and they were going to start back. So, we came right back to San Diego. And I got back there and got my family. But she wasn't up to living up in San Neardril up north. So, I went and got them and moved them down to San Diego. Rode the train. And my younger boy, he was three, and the girl was the oldest. She was five, I guess. But the younger boy developed Leukemia and we lost him six months. So, In the meantime, I went to the backboard of the ship and I said you gotta transfer me because they were going to go back. I said "My boy is in bad shape in the hospital." So, they put me on the USS Piedmont. It was a destroyer and repair ship. And my boy passed away. And, of course, we brought him back home and buried him. And we went back and the Piedmont sailed back to Japan. But I was only in for fifteen months. But if I could have stayed in the states with my family, I would have stayed in. Cause, I was a first-class petty officer at the time. Well, I stayed there till they went out of business. My dad and I went into business together.

Q: Did you ever stay in touch with anyone?

HPE: Just this one fellow, Jim Warren was his name. And he lives in Phoenix now. And I don't know, six or seven years ago, when we had our motor home, we drove out and spent a little time with him. And one other fellow, I got a call from him one day. Joe Moore, he was from Norfolk Virginia. He wanted me to put out an affidavit that he hurt his leg. While I was on the 20 Millimeter, gun, during my general quarters. And it did happen. One of the cartridges, or the container that holds the cartridges hit him in the leg. And he had a bad leg and he wanted to get certification of that. And then I had

another one, a boat's mate, he was from Chicago. This was a few years later. He wanted an affidavit that... I don't remember what it was. Something happened to him on ship. But time and all, it's hard to remember all those things. But I sent him an affidavit. I might have lied, I don't know...[Laughter]. It'd be under the GI bill- VA, I should say. But I had been lucky. Very lucky. Like I say, I still think of the Navy. I mean, on that small ship it was nice duty. We had a JG. He was a Jewish fellow, the captain. You couldn't ask for a better guy, like my brother.

Q: How would you say your time in the military affected your life? Do you think it did at all?

HPE: Yeah, it did a lot for me. Yeah, I grew up. I remember when I went down there, the first night to boot camp in Sampson. Boy that was like from day to night.

Q: Had you ever been away from home much?

HPE: No, I'd never been in the city. The biggest city I'd been in was Watertown when I went to sign up for the Navy. I'd never been away. But when I went into boot camp that first night, I wanted to go home. [Laughter]. But now there's a museum down there, and they have an association and I belong to the Color Guard. I'd go down in March on Memorial Day. We still hold it on the 30th.

Q: Besides that, do you belong to any other organizations? American Legion? Or...?

HPE: I belong to American Legion. That's a veteran's organization. But I belong to other things too.

Q: All right, well thank you very much.

HPE: You are entirely welcome.