

**Robert Freeman Melville
Veteran**

**Robert von Hasseln
Interviewer**

**New York State Military Museum
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RVH: Interview with Mr. Robert Freeman Melville on 13th of March 2001 at the Binghamton Armory. The interviewer is Lieutenant Colonel Robert von Hasseln. The videographer is Mr. Wayne Clarke. Mr. Melville, tell me when and where were you born?

RFM: I was born in Quincy, Massachusetts, February 3rd, 1925. I was born in the Quincy Hospital. My parents lived in Braintree, Massachusetts. That New England country for us, John Adams' birthplace and all that.

RVH: Did you grow up there?

RFM: We left that town when I was probably four or five years old and went to a small town called Abington, which is near Brockton, Massachusetts. We lived there until I got out of high school. I lived there until I left home to have a little adventure here in January, no, February 1943, then I went into the Navy. I lived there until then. I went through grade school and high school there.

RVH: Did you work when you got out of high school?

RFM: Yeah. At that time in one's life, one worked whenever one could. While I was in high school, I worked part-time in a grocery store. In the summer, I put in fifty one hours a week for nine dollars. Wages were a little lower then, but the nine dollars looked good. Before I worked in that store, the guy used to pay my brother and me for helping unload groceries and put them on the shelves. We each got three candy bars, which was three for a dime at that time. Then I worked in what was called a cut sole factory. This was a shoe manufacturing town in New England. Then they opened a shipyard there, and I worked there for a short period of time.

RVH: Which shipyard?

RFM: I worked in the Bethlehem-Hingham Shipyard, which was started by Bethlehem Steel, which ran Fore River Shipyard. They built big ships. I mean, they built carriers, battleships. They staffed the experienced people of this Bethlehem-Hingham Shipyard. I worked as a painter and helper. I was getting eighty five cents an hour. That was big-time money. I worked there, my father worked there, and my two brothers worked at Fore River for a short time.

RVH: What kind of ships were you building?

RFM: We were building mostly LSTs and LCIs, landing craft. Some of my jobs were crawling down in the ballast tanks and cleaning them up for painting. I had some harrowing experiences just doing that.

RVH: Like what?

RFM: Well, for example, these guys working there had never been in a shipyard. One day, I was crawling down in these ballast tanks. I was skinny, and I could get down through. I had a light on an extension cord that I carried with me. Suddenly, the damn light went out. I followed the line back to where I came in. It was pitch black, and I wound through all these places. I crawled back following my electric extension cord. I came out. Some guy had decided he needed to plug his line in, so he pulled mine out. One day I was working outside cleaning the bow of a ship for painting. I was standing on a scaffolding, and all of a sudden I felt it jiggle. I looked down, and one guy was taking down the scaffolding while I was standing on it. It was a crazy place to work with a lot of inexperienced people. But I wasn't there long.

RVH: It must have been very unusual, I mean, with all that war work going on and working around the clock.

RFM: I worked pretty regular hours because I was doing completely unskilled work. One of my brothers worked in what was called the mould loft. If you're familiar with the shipyard, that's a key area. The mould loft did the work for both Fore River and Bethlehem Hingham. For a while, until he went into the Army, he worked seven days a week, twelve hours a day. Just kept on going, because everything was dependent on getting that stuff out of the mould loft.

RVH: Before we go into your experiences in the Navy, do you remember anything about being a young man living in the United States? During the early war years? Did it change the way people acted?

RFM: Oh, yeah, in some ways it did. On the coast, we were subject to blackouts. We had to have all the shades pulled down at night and taped down. My father joined the State

Guard, which replaced the National Guard, when the National Guard was called up. He had missed both wars, and I think he felt guilty about it, so he joined the State Guard. But I think everybody knew that when we got out of school, we didn't have any uncertainty about what we were going to do when we got out of school. It was pretty clear. But I don't think it affected much in other ways. I had left by the time the serious rationing was underway. There was gasoline rationing while I was still there. But none of us had cars except my father, so it didn't make much difference.

RVH: What about civil defense? Was that a big concern?

RFM: There was talk about it, yeah. It came with the blackouts. There was some expressed fear, some justified apparently, that German U-boats were likely to get close to the coast. There was a sort of a feeling that there were potential threats. But I think, especially for a young man, I can't speak for my parents, of course, but at that age, we all thought we were immortal. Nothing bad could ever happen to us. I don't think we could do what you do in a war if you didn't have that feeling. Young people today have that feeling. They express it by driving in crazy ways and getting killed and things like that. But I think we knew this was serious business that was going on. I don't feel we felt threatened. My own feelings at that time about the war were, from the late 1930s, I felt the United States should be involved. I think part of the reason I went in the Navy when I did was the feeling that what was going on was our business, as well as the business of people in Europe. I was very, very supportive of all the attempts to assist, especially England. And I was very conscious of all that when I was at that age. I was a fairly serious young man.

RVH: Sounds like it. But that wasn't a very common attitude at the time, was it?

RFM: No, but, there were a lot of people, a lot of isolationists, a lot of people who said it was none of our business, and so a real battle went on. But I think more of that attitude existed, I believe, in the South, the Midwest. But in the East, there was much more feeling that this was something that was our business. This was something we had to be concerned about because we would be threatened.

RVH: How about your family? Did they share these sentiments?

RFM: Pretty much, yeah. Yeah. I was raised in a family of rock-ribbed Republicans, and I never heard any criticism of Roosevelt related to his preparing us for war, any notion that he was threatening to get us into war. They continued voting Republican, but that's because they voted for Wendell Willkie, and they supported Willkie, who was talking about one world, and the need for the United States to be involved. So, he expressed the

attitude that was more common even among the Republicans, that part of Massachusetts anyway.

RVH: One other question before we go into the Navy. Where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

RFM: I was in the city of Brockton, Massachusetts, where Rocky Marciano came from. I was there at a church thing which some of my brothers and sisters were involved in. We were over there at this young people's church meeting on that Sunday afternoon when they announced what was going on there. That was a shocker. There was no question about that.

RVH: What did you think? What about the people around you, how did they react?

RFM: Not with fear, but with determination that we had to get in there and now we had to do something. I think it erased any doubts that anybody might have had about our need to be involved. And not just a need to be involved in terms of defending ourselves in the Pacific, but our need to be involved fully in what was becoming obviously World War II.

RVH: So, tell me how you came to be in the Navy.

RFM: I graduated from high school in 1942. I was only 17. I went off for the summer to work at a hotel in the Catskills, looking for something to do, not sure what I wanted to do. I had a sister who worked as a waitress in this hotel, and she got me a job up there. Then I came back and took these other jobs, in the shipyard and so forth, worked in a shoe factory. Increasingly, I wanted to get involved. Finally, I talked to my parents. My two brothers were older. They were still at home. I talked to my parents, and they said, Well, if that's what you want to do, we'll sign. I wasn't old enough yet to go on my own. Then, actually, in December or early January, a friend of mine and I went in together to enlist in the Navy. Why the Navy? Well, I don't know. Partly, people used to say, Join the Navy because the ships are so clean. Then you found out who kept them clean. I joined the Navy because I figured I took my bed with me if I was at sea. I didn't like the idea of slogging around in the mud. I didn't think I was cut out for that. By then I got tall, but I was skinny. My friend and I decided we'd go in. He was even a little younger than I was, and both of our parents agreed we could go in. We hitchhiked into Boston, which was the only satisfactory way to get there from our point of view. We got to the Fargo Building, went in and looked for the directory. My crazy friend looked at it and said, Oh boy, this is the Marine Corps here. Let's join the Marines. I said, Man, you have really flipped. No way I was joining the Marines. I was clearly not the Marine type. We both ended up going up and enlisting. That came right at the time when they had changed the law. Sometime in January or February, if you were over eighteen, you just couldn't enlist. The

only thing you could do was register for the draft and go where you were told to go. You didn't have that free choice. Well, they were trying to get as many guys in as they could before this deadline, so they delayed calling us. We stayed around home until February, I think it was February twelfth, thirteenth. Something like that. Finally, I got impatient. I called him back and said, Hey, I have been sworn in, but I just hadn't been called. I'm hanging around. Isn't it time to go? The guy said, Yeah, can you come in the day after tomorrow? That was in the middle of February. The sea had a certain appeal for me, which it still does. I read a lot of fiction and nonfiction about sea travel and merchant ships and everything else.

RVH: Where did they first send you in the Navy?

RFM: Sent to Sampson Naval Training Station, which was a weird experience. They took physical education instructors and made them chief petty officers and put them in charge of companies to run them through boot camp. Our chief was lazy, and his family moved up there with him. If it rained, you couldn't go out in the rain. You might get wet or something. He was always looking for excuses to have us sit down and study *The Bluejackets Manual* or something. Went through boot camp there at Sampson, marched around in circles and did all the things one does in boot camp. Learned how to make your bed and kept the place clean and stuff like that.

RVH: What was Sampson physically like?

RFM: Cold, barren. Right on the lake in the middle of winter, it was a pretty chilly place. They were still building it then, so it was still under construction. It was kind of a mess up there. Not very appealing. I didn't want to stay around there.

RVH: Do you remember anything else from your boot camp at Sampson?

RFM: Uh, nothing particular. Some of the craziness, I guess. You were in a barracks with two companies, one on each floor. They came through for inspections. I remember one time they came through and they couldn't find anything to complain about. The inspecting officer, whatever rank he was, couldn't find anything to complain about in ours. He went up to the company upstairs, then came running down the stairway, threw a shoulder block on the standing phone booth that was in there, and he found dust under the phone booth. So he had something to complain about. That kind of stuff went on. [smiles]

RVH: What did you make of all this? I mean, you came from a fairly rural environment, I guess, in Massachusetts.

RFM: Yeah, yeah.

RVH: Now you're all of a sudden your thrown into [unclear]. 17.21

RFM: I was kind of bewildered. At first, I was obviously very lonely until I got to know some people there and got to have some friends. I was very shy, so that made it harder for me, I think. The first night we got there, they made a big impression on us, I guess. We got there on a train in the middle of the night. The first thing, they marched us into the mess hall and gave us something to eat. First you got that metal tray, which was not too appealing. The mess hall was only open for feeding people coming in. They took a great big spoon and dropped one solid chunk of spaghetti, which was kind of cold. It was congealed, you know, and it hit that thing like that. [slaps hands together] Then a badly bruised apple and a cup of lousy coffee. I didn't drink coffee. That was not exactly a welcoming experience. Then, of course, in the morning, they humiliated you. The first thing you did was take all your clothes and pack them up. Then they went through and hit you with needles, one on each side as you went through. One guy hit you on one side, one guy hit you on the other side. Then they finally gave us a few clothes, which sort of fit, because they did it by guesswork. Then they sent us swimming, and by the end of the time we were swimming in this cold water, we couldn't move either arm. That was not exactly a good way to get introduced to the whole thing. As I said, I was very young. I was with a lot of guys from the Binghamton area, even though I was from Massachusetts. A bunch of the fellows who worked at IBM, and some of them I got to know real well, as well as you got to know people in boot camp. It was a relatively short time, sixteen weeks or whatever. I survived.

RVH: Where did you go after Sampson?

RFM: I was sent to Quartermaster Training School. In Newport, Rhode Island. What they did then, I don't know what they do now, they gave us all an examination, some kind of test. They asked us to prioritize what kind of a school we'd like to go to for training, rather than go straight to sea. I guess I chose meteorology and my second choice was quartermaster school, and I'm kind of glad I got to the quartermaster school. I graduated third in my class in high school. I came from a highly educated family. My mother was very well educated. We were all bright in different ways, and I was quite a student. I did well on this kind of aptitude test. They weren't looking for meteorologists, but they were looking for a lot of quartermasters, I guess. I ended up going to quartermaster school in Newport, Rhode Island. That was pretty good. The school was good. We had instructors who tried to teach us things. Who became friends. There were a couple of crazy things. There was a regulation that prohibited leaving the island that this sat on in Newport. Well, hell, I only lived a short distance away, so if they thought I was going to take two days and hang around Newport, they were crazy. So I hitchhiked home for a day. In fact, I took a guy with me once. Because my sister was getting married and they were short of

males to be in the service; one guy went home with me. We were both in it; we were both ushers. But nobody paid much attention to that. They worked us hard.

RVH: What kind of things did you learn?

RFM: Well, we studied the rudiments of navigation, that kind of thing. A lot of time was spent on that. Then also, we learned visual signaling. We learned semaphore and Morse Code light. A quartermaster also had to be a signalman, it turned out, as became clear later. Actually, I spent most of my time aboard ship as a signalman. Basically, because of the way my Captain looked at the role of the signalman. He had to have a full complement of signalmen, which a destroyer didn't really have, to meet his needs. They converted me to a signalman. I became a damn good signalman, as a matter of fact. We did that stuff for however long it was for. I don't remember how long it took us to get through there. Maybe that was what was sixteen weeks and boot camp was shorter. And then at the end, we were all assigned out. Oh, and at the end of the training, we went in as apprentice seamen. We came out as either Second-class seamen or First-Class Seamen Strikers. I was one of the lucky ones, I guess, hardworking or something. I became a Quartermaster Third Class. I came out as a petty officer before I'd ever set foot on a ship, which was a bit odd. By that time, I was pushing eighteen. After a very short stay at home, I headed to Norfolk, Virginia, where I joined the crew of the USS Twiggs.

RVH: Well, let me talk about that for a second. You came back home after all this Navy training in your Navy uniform. What kind of reaction did you get?

RFM: I don't know. My folks were proud of me. People were proud of me, I think.

RVH: Did you see anything differently than you had before you left? Look at things differently?

RFM: Well, I grew up some, fortunately. I was very young, as I said, when I got out of high school. I think I was more self-confident. I was more assured of myself, more comfortable, in part because I had made good friends while I was in the training school. We were in class together, and we did things together more. I was, I think, as I said, more self-confident, more assured of my own ability. I had an opportunity, which I hadn't had before, to in certain ways compare myself with others, and I found that I liked what I saw. I was pleased that I was in a kind of competitive environment with a bunch of guys and I more than held my own. That was good for me, I think.

RVH: It was the USS Twiggs that you joined?

RFM: Yeah. The Twiggs was not yet in commission. She was under construction in Charleston. They gathered the crew together at Norfolk. That was supposed to be some

kind of pre-boarding training. It was not much training. It was mainly getting us to know each other and to know the petty officers we were going to be serving with, some of them who were there. But a lot of it was a waste of time. They got you up before it was light and took you out there and did calisthenics. If you've ever seen morning calisthenics when it's really dark, we were standing there doing this, while this guy's up there going through the calisthenics and all that. [gestures doing the drills only with their fingers] We drilled around with fake guns on our shoulders and stuff like that. In boot camp they taught us how to shoot a gun. I guess we didn't have to do any of that when we were in training in Norfolk. I think they wanted to get the crew all gathered together and located and kind of organized. So that when we went aboard, we kind of knew where we were and who these guys were that were bossing us around. I think it really just served that kind of purpose, for the relatively short period of time we were there.

Then they shipped us down to Charleston, marched us aboard ship and said, This is where you're going to live, fellas. The ship was under construction. An interesting thing about putting ships in commission was that they were building a whole series of destroyers down there. I swear the last one must have had no equipment of any kind, because every night we went out with a jeep and stole stuff that we wanted more of off the docks. An extra this and an extra that. You went out at night, drew midnight stores, and got it installed on your ship. They must have run out of some stuff for the last one. It must have been a vacant hull by the time the guys got through with it. It was sort of equipping it to our likes and our expectations, or the officers' likes. We needed this, we needed that, and suddenly it appeared. I was at that point one began to feel one has really joined the Navy.

We were aboard for the commissioning, an impressive ceremony. About three quarters of the crew, I guess, had never been on a ship before. But we had a core of more experienced petty officers, and a group of officers, including the captain, the then-captain. And a group of officers and a group of senior petty officers, not chiefs, but a lot of first-class, second-class petty officers. They had been on the same ship together, the USS Gwin, which had been sunk with no loss of life. They were lucky the first time around. For example, on the bridge where I was, the first-class signalman and the first-class quartermaster were both from the Gwin. The communications officer on the ship who we served under, was from the Gwin, and it was just a crew of them all from the same ship. They tried to teach us how to be part of a destroyer crew. They were interesting guys. The chief quartermaster was a very quiet, unassuming guy. He taught me by example. There was a second-class quartermaster, but we didn't pay much attention to him. He was transferred off. But the first class, Andy Anderson, was a quiet,

unassuming guy. Little by little, he turned me into what a quartermaster ought to be. Little things, for example, he taught me.

RVH: Can you give me an example of some of those things?

RFM: Well, at one point, I had been stationed down in the steering engine room going in and out of port. We were doing a lot of exercises going in and out of port. Finally, they moved me up onto the bridge, and he had me take the wheel going in and out of port. When we got close to where we were going, he relieved me and took the wheel. One day, after we had left Charleston, we were going to Pearl Harbor. I went up and took the wheel, a special sea detail. I was standing there at the wheel and we were getting closer and closer to where we were going, and I was looking over my shoulder for Andy. Andy just walked away and left me there. From then on, I took the wheel in and out of port. I took the ship alongside for mail and everything like that. In fact, the captain preferred to have me. I'm obsessive, and if he said steer one hundred seventy four, I steered one hundred seventy four, not one hundred seventy six, not one hundred seventy five, not one hundred seventy three, I steered one hundred seventy four. I mean, he liked that obsessiveness of mine, I guess. He used to do that.

At that time, there was another chief quartermaster aboard also, who was not from that same group. He taught me some things, too. Between the two of them, these two guys moved me from feeling I was a member of the bridge crew to, I was one of the petty officers of the bridge crew. They made sure that if they told me to have something done, that I had it done, that I didn't do it myself. In fact, one day the chief just chewed me out because I was still down in the steering engine room. It had a leak and it needed to be cleaned. He called me up to the bridge and said, Have somebody clean up that steering engine room. I said, Okay, Chief, yes, Chief. I got somebody and went down with the guy and we started cleaning it up. Pretty soon, I got called up to the bridge and he said, I told you to have someone clean up the steering engine room. I did not tell you to clean up the steering engine room. Do you understand the difference? He was very, very firm about that. That stood me in good stead. I realized then that I had to behave as a very junior but a certain kind of officer on that ship. I had a lot of seamen under me on the bridge crew who were quite a bit older than I was. I learned that I had to make it clear to a couple of them, that they were Seaman Second Class and I was a Petty Officer First Class. You do what I tell you. One of them gave me a bad time when I was after him because he was supposed to be taking on ammunition. He was supposed to be working at it. He resented my telling him to do it. This was a guy named Ben Davis, called him Poppy. I said, You don't like it, and I don't like it because you're much older than I am. But I'm a Quartermaster Third Class [Petty Officer] and you are a Seaman Second Class, and I am

telling you, you will get down there on that detail or you'll be in deep trouble. From then on, I had no problem with him. He knew that he wasn't going to take advantage of me because I was young, and I knew that was the job I had to do. I did it.

The chief signalman was funny. The chief signalman taught me to be a really good signalman. He sat around and lined us all up, all these young guys and told us our strengths and weaknesses and what we had to work on. A real fine teacher and an absolutely wonderful signalman, unbelievable. He knew the damn General Signal Book by heart. When signals came on, he didn't have to look them up in the book. Flag signals, for example.

While we were at Norfolk, a lot of what happened on this ship iss related to this, my experience on it. I was still down in the aft steering engine room one day. We were pulling out and suddenly they turned the control over to me. I thought it was an exercise. It turned out we'd been hit by a merchantman backing out of the slip. We lost one guy. Damage to the ship and so forth. The captain thereafter was relieved. A new captain came aboard, a fellow named George Philip. I'll tell you more about him later. He was one of the finest gentlemen I've ever known. Superb guy. He'd been a gunnery officer and had a great record as a gunnery officer. He was an Annapolis man. And he believed that the reputation of his ship among other ships, among commanders of other ships and squadron commanders, depended to a significant extent on how alert we were to visual signals. So, his rule was simple. No one must ever send our Morse Code signal by light more than once. You had to answer it the first time. When there were flag hoists in the squadron, you got yours up first. That meant we had to have somebody on the bridge all the time with a long glass with an eye on the squadron commander's ship. We didn't have enough signalmen to do that, and that was when I became a signalman. My watch was changed from a quartermaster watch to a signal watch. I was the senior signalman on my watch, and I became a signalman.

RVH: Let's hold there for a minute because I have to change tapes. 13th of March 2001. Go ahead. You were telling us you became a signalman.

RFM: I became a signalman. I began at that time to build enormous respect for this captain. This built up all the time I was aboard ship, because I discovered that he had very high expectations for us. But he would go out of his way to thank you for a job well done. If he had to criticize anybody, he made sure it was in private, but if he complimented you, he made sure it was very public. He watched out and took every opportunity to express his confidence in the enlisted men. Just at the last reunion I went to, we were talking about the two different captains we had. Somebody said that Captain

George Philip was an enlisted man's captain. And that's the way we saw it. But that started just at the time that he first came aboard and started this expectation that we had.

After the ship went into commission, we spent some time in and out of Charleston. We did a shakedown out to Bermuda. Missed Bermuda by a substantial distance when we got there. I wasn't navigating, I don't know who was, but we missed. [laughs] We ended up finding Bermuda and also then went out into the Atlantic to escort a ship that had been damaged somehow. They weren't in combat, but I can't remember what happened to them. We had to go out and escort them in. We tugged them for a while until the tugs got there and brought them back in. We were doing exercises of various kinds out of Charleston during that time. When we finished that, we headed down through the Panama Canal, and rendezvoused with the USS...well, we did that before we got to the canal. We rendezvoused with the carrier USS Franklin, and the Task Force. We escorted the USS Franklin up as far as Pearl Harbor. All the time we were doing that, we had flag hoist competitions among the various ships. We had competition with the USS Franklin. They had I don't know how many damn flag bags and how many signalmen, but we had two flag bags and a small group of signalmen. But we got a flag hoisted up faster than they did. We were knee-deep in flags. No time to get them in the bag. You dug through trying to find an option somewhere, or a zebra, or whatever flag you needed to run up. But the captain just inspired us to say, Damn it, we're going to be the best signal ship in the fleet. He watched that, and praised us for it.

Later on...and this skips in time, but it's part of all this. One time we were in a formation with a squadron of destroyers. I guess I was in second class. Been promoted to Second Class Quartermaster. I was the signalman of the watch. But in the daytime, the whole signal crew had to be on the watch all day long every day. So everybody was up there, but I was the responsible signalman of the watch. A flag hoist went up, and the guy who had the long glass on the squadron called, Flag hoist! I got up my glasses. We were traveling with the wind, cruising with the wind. When that flag hoist came out of the squadron commander's flag bag, it came out and it just flopped right straight down. You couldn't see it at all. He was on a destroyer. I was watching. It was a signal, maybe half a dozen flags in the signal. I got every one of them that came out of the flag bag. As it flopped out, I caught it and called it, and then it drooped. They went up the mast and hung straight down on the mast. You couldn't see a thing. We ran it up partway as soon as we got it. The chief looked up, made sure he understood the signal. Then we two-blocked it. We were the only ones in the formation that had this damn flag hoist stop except the squadron commander.

It was chow time, so somebody relieved me and I went down to the mess hall to eat. Suddenly, I heard on the loudspeaker, Melville, Quartermaster Second Class, report to the bridge. Report to the bridge. So I went up the bridge. I was still very young. Why am I reporting to the bridge? What did I do? I got up there and he said, The Captain wants to see you. I said, What did I do now? I was really scared. He said, I just wanted to thank you for getting that flag hoist. [gets emotional] It was very moving to me that he really appreciated what an enlisted man did. He really appreciated that and went to that effort to thank me in public.

One time, I took a signal by light from a cruiser. Quartermasters on cruisers don't do signal work. When you're signaling with light, you hold the light down, you blinked the light, blinked the light to say, I received that word. Whatever it is you do is by whole words. And if you were really feeling cocky, and some days you were, you held the light down when the signal started, when the message started. You were saying to the signalman on the other end, Send just as fast as you can, man. I can get anything you signal. And I did this on a one hundred sixty word message, holding that damn thing down. Got to the end and there was a time that was very important, so I double-checked the time interrogatory and re-signaled the time. The guy said, Correct. I signaled, Roger, received, from the cruiser. The guy in the cruiser blinked the light at me. He was going to say something else. He said, INT, interrogatory, your rating. I said, Quartermaster Second Class and he didn't believe it. Quartermasters don't signal on cruisers. Then sent me the message, Well done. The captain read the message. He came over, he wanted to know who got the message, well done. Then he thanked me for it. That was a real officer, I think. That was my introduction to the captain.

RVH: So after you transited the canal, got to Pearl.

RFM: We went to Pearl Harbor. Let's see, the first time, [ponders] we went out to Pearl Harbor. I guess we went out about the time of the engagement of Saipan and Tinian Islands. We went up to Tinian. That's the first time we saw a Japanese airplane. Then afterwards, I can't remember why, we escorted someone back to Pearl Harbor. We went to Pearl Harbor again, and stayed there for about a week. They were equipping ships with the Long Range Navigation System, the LORAN navigation system. We were equipped with it, and I was sent to school to learn it in Pearl Harbor. But I think after that, it was just a series as we joined various shifting task forces and so forth. But our duty pretty much from then on at Leyte Gulf, Mindoro Island, Luzon, Lingayen Gulf, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa was all pretty much the same thing. We were generally in the group that escorted troop ships in, or a couple times we escorted the small carriers. We had some real experiences with those guys. Picked up something like two hundred men from the

USS Ommaney Bay, a small carrier, at Leyte, when they got sunk. Picked people out of the water and so forth. But mainly, we escorted the troops ships in, often to do shore bombardment but not always. Leyte Gulf, it was pretty much escorting them in.

Especially in Iwo and Okinawa, a lot of shore bombardment, a lot of that kind of duty. So that was our duty from then on. We were around for the famous battles of the Leyte Gulf, steamed around in the harbor, made as much smoke as we could possibly make from our stacks and our smoke-making machines. We stuck out from the smoke, which wasn't so good, but we were protecting the troops. It was hiding the battleships from the Japanese. Of course, about then, that's when they started doing the kamikazes. The first time, that was an experience. The first time you saw that, you didn't believe that was going to happen.

RVH: Tell us about it.

RFM: When they first started, they were going after aircraft carriers for obvious reasons. The way they went after a carrier was they got up in the sun and tried to come in out of the sun. They just presumed we couldn't see them coming. Usually, we could if you kept your eye out for them and you had binoculars, especially if they were going after somebody else than you, because you had a different line of sight. You saw them going down, and you just couldn't believe they were not going to pull out. You just couldn't believe they were not going to pull out of it. But then they either crashed into the plane, the ship, or the sea. Usually into the sea, because they were pretty easy to elude when they were attacking that way, because they came straight down as fast as they could go and had no control. They had no maneuverability. They couldn't maneuver at all. If you maneuvered the ship a little, you avoided them. There were some hits with dreadful results. One of our sister ships, the [USS] Haraden was hit up there. We had to escort her back to safety. After that at Iwo, and especially at Okinawa, they changed their tactics and went after destroyers. That changed the ballgame. They changed the tactic in the sense that they came in low over the water. The radar had great difficulty picking them up over the water. Things low over the water didn't come in well on the radar. We lost them on the radar. But that was mainly going on at Iwo, but as I said, especially at Okinawa. They were really dreadful about that. Iwo was interesting. I had my binoculars on the island when the flag went up on [Mount] Suribachi.

RVH: You saw that?

RFM: I saw it go up. You were hanging around on the bridge. There was not much signaling going on. We were six hundred yards off the island doing fire support. That was not far when it came to looking through your binoculars. So I saw that go up.

RVH: The first one? Or the second time?

RFM: The first one, the real one. That was not a reenactment. That was real. The greatest impression I had of Iwo was watching these guys climbing into those little landing craft and heading for that beach. There was practically no beach there. Oh my God, just watching them go over there. You said, Oh my God, what a thing. Because they were under fire immediately as they headed in. We watched the frogmen go in before. You had to admire these guys, but that was a little less dangerous because the Japanese weren't keying in on them and firing at them, but those landing craft really took a beating. *Saving Private Ryan* later on in my life had a real impact, largely I think because of that. Boy, I just remember these guys doing that, knowing that they were kids my age, you know, saying, "Shooosh!" That was rough. That was rough.

Okinawa was another thing. Okinawa was, as you well know, the roughest thing the Navy faced, I think, in the entire war. We escorted troop ships in, and did a lot of shore bombardment. The day of the invasion— was it April 1st? [ponders] The day of the invasion, they had a ring of destroyers, a ring of cruisers, and a ring of battleships. By God, they were pounding that island. There, when the guys went ashore, there was nothing on the beach. Later on, it was really nasty, but there was nothing on the beach. Everything was wiped out. The tough duty for destroyers was the radar picket duty, where you went off on a radar picket line. The first time we went on radar picket duty was one of the days when the Japanese sent a lot of planes down. By the end of the day, on the northern part of the radar picket line, I don't think there was a ship up there that was the same ship that started the day. They were all hit. They were going back one after the other and being replaced. We went up onto one of the most northern points of the picket line where two previous destroyers had been. The second one relieved the first, we relieved the second, both of which had been hit. Then the thing stopped. We spent, I don't know, five days on radar picket duty and never saw a hostile character of any kind. We thought it was pretty good duty. But the second time wasn't so good.

On April 28th, I guess it was. Yeah, April 28th, we got hit. A kamikaze came in, but he flew too high, and he cleared the superstructure, but one of his wingtips hit a guy wire from the mast, and it just swung him back around. He came in from the port side, and hit the starboard forward just below the superstructure. Ten men were killed in that one. The executive officer was injured and a number of men were badly injured. We went in for repairs at Karamureto [Islands]. They patched us up and sent us back out.

The first night we were out, I think it was the first night, we were a little more nervous by that time. The immortality thing had worn off. Up until we got hit, I think we still believed that nothing bad could possibly happen to us. We saw other ships all beat to hell, and it wasn't going to happen to the [USS] Twigg. Well, then it did. I think it was the first night we were out. The captain was in his emergency cabin on the bridge. He came out to the bridge as he did when things were quiet. Right onto the bridge, the back part of the superstructure. He came out and all of a sudden he shouted, Hard left! to the helmsman, and we did a hard left. [gestures turning ninety degrees] We did this, and this airplane came down and hit the water right where we had been, loaded apparently with gasoline. Boy, that just thing went up in flames. That's when I found out that it's really true, your knees can knock. [laughs] Your knees can really move. That was scary, because I think at that time all of us realized that it was a dangerous business out there. You could get hurt.

Then we stayed out until June. On June 16th, two significant events [occured] The first one was that the captain received orders for us to rendezvous with the USS Paul Hamilton, our sister ship, and I think a tanker. We were to rendezvous at five o'clock in the morning and go back to the States, obviously to be reconditioned, to be ready to go back out to go to the invasion in Japan. Which was not to be, of course. We were stationed off the western coast side of Okinawa. We were not sure what happened. A plane came out of somewhere, we were not sure where. We were not at general quarters. We were at one lower level of readiness, because there were no reported ships or planes in the vicinity. Our job was to make sure that nobody escaped off the island. The Japanese were being pushed down to the edge, and we were just to provide harassment fire if it was needed or whatever there. We were moving very slowly, and were not at general quarters. A plane appeared from somewhere. One of the things we were told, and it's in that history that I gave you. One of our survivors was told by a Marine pilot that they had been out on a flight and had come back, and they suddenly discovered that there was one more plane in the formation with them than there was supposed to be. Before they could do anything about it, the plane took off. They heard an immediate explosion, and he thought that was the plane that got us. But whatever it was, they torpedoed forward. Hit in the vicinity of the forward magazines. We were fully loaded with five-inch and 42mm, the five-inch obviously was the big thing. It blew the entire front. Everything including the superstructure, the mast just went up this way, [gestures up and over] and lifted the deck right off. The mess hall was right over that. The Chief's quarters and the officers' quarters were over that area. Most of the officers were down there, except the one on watch and the captain and a couple others. A good number of the chiefs were down at chief quarters. The forward of the mess hall was a sleeping compartment, so everybody who was there was lost. A bunch of us had been on the bridge. When we

secured the General Quarters, somebody said, Let's go down to the mess hall and play cards. Well somebody, God bless him, I don't know which one it was, said, Oh, no, no. I've got to go write some letters. I said, Yeah, I really need to write a letter too. Some of the guys headed aft. Some headed down to their sleeping quarters forward. I headed for the chart room, which was one below the top deck of the bridge near the radio shack. I was in there when we got hit. I was in this thing that did this, [gestures arm pivoting up ninety degrees] and I still see the most scary thing, a wall of fire. A wall of fire between me and where I thought I wanted to go. But that wasn't where the hatch was. The door was down below me, it turned out. I swear I heard the wooden stool I was sitting on break, but that's maybe a figment of my imagination. I don't know. Somehow, I got out of there, crawled out and got over. Ended up on the main deck on the port side. Some people got off the bridge. The guy who became the executive officer was on the bridge, and he got off. He was talking to the captain about arrangements for returning the next morning. He must have headed toward the wheelhouse, and the captain maybe went out the other exit from his emergency cabin. The captain was killed. Some people were trapped up there. One of my friends was a torpedo man, and was up there in the torpedo phones. Finally, after years, it was difficult for him, told of overhearing a conversation between the communications officer, who was a lieutenant, and the chief signalman, the guy I respected so much, Bettis, the chief signalman. Apparently, both were trapped, and their clothes were burning. Bettis asked the officer if he had a knife, because Bettis wanted to slit his wrists because he was trapped. They had this conversation, and the officer told him, Hang in there, we'll get off. They both got killed. So it was like that. That was a bad experience.

I got down on the port side of the ship. I was slightly wounded. I didn't even realize it. We managed to get one of the life rafts over the side. Somebody still had a knife on hand to cut the line. So when we got as many men as we could find and hung on the outside of the life raft, we had one guy sitting in it. Many can't sit in a life raft. It's built for hanging on to, not sitting in. There was one guy in a kind of a fog. He had a little weak flashlight. He was holding his light so somebody could see us. We pulled away from the ship. In the meantime, as soon as I got down on deck, we saw the rear of the ship. I didn't know just where but it turned out it was at the number four gun. I saw that there was a raging fire there. The ship was rapidly sinking because the whole bow was gone. There wasn't anything that could possibly save that ship. The mast just laid straight out over the stacks, the bullnose [bulbous bow] was straight up in the air, and raging fire. We began to pull away. Apparently, back on the fantail, the guys were getting out of the engine room, the fire room. The people in the aft sleeping quarters were getting up on the deck. They realized that we just got to get the hell out of here, whether we were wounded or not, get

the wounded into whatever we can and get them off. About the time they realized that and got in the water and hadn't gone far. In the meantime, the 40mm shells were popping all around them because they were blowing up in the heat from the fire. But then the fire had gotten into the handling room of the 5-inch and then dropped down into the magazines and then blew the aft magazines. Boy, that didn't leave much ship in between. I was in the water, I don't know how long, maybe twenty, twenty five minutes, something like that. Then I got picked up by the USS Putnam, who picked up quite a few of us. When they started wiping the oil off my face, I discovered that I did have some cuts and bruises. My face was cut up, my shoulder and so forth, but not like a lot of guys. We had a radar technician who claimed he was the only guy who got off the ship without getting covered in oil. He got blown clear and he survived. God only knows how. We lost one hundred twenty six men that night. It's odd, you'll see it on the thing I gave you there, that among all the surface vessels of World War II, in terms of total absolute numbers killed, that ranked us thirtieth in World War II. If you did it on a percentage, it goes up to around twenty because some of those were carriers and cruisers and battleships and so forth. We could do without that being in that Hall of Fame. Then we were transferred. I was transferred to the [USS] Rescue, a hospital ship. A bunch of the guys were rescued. I went back to the field hospital at Guam and then came back to the States. By the time I reported back after survivor's leave, the war had ended.

RVH: What did you do after the war?

RFM: After the war, after I got out, I went to college, as I had always hoped I would be able to do. Went to Ohio Wesleyan University in Central Ohio. Graduated in 1950. Got married, had some children, went to graduate school. Went to graduate school at Harvard in economics and got a PhD. I started teaching, taught briefly at the University of Massachusetts, but then I was asked to go back to my alma mater, Ohio Wesleyan, and joined the faculty there, which I did. I left after six years, I guess it was. Did a tour of duty with the U.S. government working with the United States Congress on a study project. Then took a job at the struggling little Harpur College in Binghamton, New York. I came here. After three years, I took a two-year leave, and I went to Chile on the staff of Harvard University's Law School in what they called their International Tax Program and worked on studies of the tax system of Chile. I did that for two years with my family. A really nice experience for a family. A great experience for kids. Then I came back. I loved teaching, and I was reputed to be very good at it. I got hired here because of my reputation as a good teacher. I got back and I believe, in the spring, I was asked to be temporary chairman of my department, Economics. Then in the spring, they had restructured the university and they had two associate dean positions. The dean, who I had worked with and knew very well, came in and asked me if I would take a position

as Associate Dean for Administration. And after some complex reasoning about the whole thing, I decided I would try it because it's better to try it where you're teaching than go someplace else and try something like that. So try it where you're teaching; presumably they like you. And I decided I'd give it a try. I think it was eighteen years later that I stopped doing that. I completely changed my career. Stayed there until 1986 or 1987. For very complex and strange reasons, I was made managing director of a brand new performing arts center we had built on the campus. They even paid me while I did this job. So I did that for a few years, and then I said, It's time to retire. I wrote to the dean to whom I reported and who was a good friend of mine. We were colleagues. A woman. I wrote to her and said, I cannot go to the factory every day and still do the things I wanted to do. So this is to tell you that as of February 28th, 1990, I will resign. I didn't say I intend to resign, I said I will resign. And I've been enjoying retirement ever since.

RVH: Well, let's pause there. Tape three, interview of Mr. Robert Freeman Melville on 13 March 2001. Let me ask a couple of questions. Bounce around a little bit. Tell us about your children.

RFM: I have four children. The oldest two are boys, the younger two are girls. The two boys both live in Juneau, Alaska. The older of the two, really, his interest is in writing poetry, painting and writing. He went to RIT [Rochester Institute of Technology] after bouncing around a little, not knowing what he was going to do. He was a conscientious objector at the time of the Vietnam War. He bounced around not knowing what he was going to do, and then he ended up working for a newspaper for a short time, and then he went to printing school at Rochester Institute of Technology, which is a superb printing school, and graduated there. Met his wife, who was in the printing school. They decided when they graduated not to look for a printing job, but look for a job in Alaska. The main incentive being his wife's, my daughter-in-law, father owned a printing company in New Jersey. They wanted to get as far away from that printing company as they could, because they didn't want to end up having to run that printing company. They did it by going to Alaska. They own a copy company up in Juneau. They have four children. He succeeded in doing what he always said you have to do. If you're an artist, you've got to find a woman who can support you. He married this printer. They started the copy company. She decided she wanted to get back into running the copy company rather than raising the kids. He's a househusband who has time to do his art, his painting, and his poetry. He helps with the shop, does a lot of the bookkeeping on the computer. She really runs the shop, so he succeeded in working that one out.

The second son is the brains of the outfit, a brilliant student. When he graduated from high school, he had the seventh highest Regents score in the state of New York. He remembers everything. He is a sponge for factual information. Went to college at Yale, did rather well. They told him he should major in science because he was very good at it. After one science chemistry course, he said he didn't like science. He wanted to study history. They thought he was crazy. He majored in history, went to graduate school at Duke, got a PhD in British Empire and Commonwealth history. Big market for those people, I'll tell you. [said sarcastically] He ended up going to Alaska to spend a year recuperating from all his years of study and working in the copy shop to stay alive. He's still in Alaska. That was ten, twelve years ago. No, it was more than that. It was a long time ago. He's been out there ever since, I guess maybe pushing fifteen years now. He's single and has made a great career out of involvement in the arts in Juneau, which has a big art colony, and spoiling his nieces and nephews. The other son has a daughter and three sons, so he's in charge of spoiling them and has a great time. I have a daughter, who ended up studying social work. She went to college at Oswego and then went to Ohio State and studied social work. Got a master's degree, married a clinical psychologist. They have two children, and live in Charlottesville, Virginia, a very nice place to live. And then I have one daughter who lives close to home here. She never thought of herself as a student, but ended up a lawyer. You get a doctorate in law when you go to law school. She's smart. She knows that you work to live, you don't live to work. She is a town attorney for Oswego, right near here. She is married and has one stepson, her husband's. She adopted a little baby girl from China a year and a half ago. That's my one granddaughter. That's the one that I see a lot because she's close to home. So they're all very successful in the sense that to me, they're all doing what they want to do. And that's the way to spend your life, it seems to me.

RVH: What are you doing in your retirement?

RFM: I do several things. I'm a voracious reader, but I read mainly United States history. I started with reading mainly history around the Civil War period, the political history leading up to the war, mainly the Reconstruction period. I try to stay away from battles. I don't enjoy battles anymore. But I work at that period in history. I read everything good about Lincoln that's been written about Lincoln. I've branched out. I went back to Colonial times. I read some European history, but I read an awful lot of history. I have the advantage of having a university library at my disposal, because as an emeritus professor, I have library privileges at the university. I get everything I want to read over there. With some help, mainly from books though, I taught myself to do matting and framing. I have a fine mat cutter, and I'm using just a basic table saw and a router. I make frames. I've got a couple things in the process that I'm framing. I enjoy doing that. I

particularly enjoy making something after spending my life pushing paper. I make things around the house. My wife will say, Gee, I could use such-and-such, and I end up making one. I've got a little table that I made to match a table that we bought. It involved setting a tile down into the top of the table. I made that with just these few tools. I've got to make a small one just like it so she can use it as a step stool because she needs a step stool. I've got things all around the house that I made just to fool around with wood in what I call the cluttered workshop. So I do that kind of thing. I've done quite a bit of work in the community. I was on the board of an arts organization for five or six years. For seven years, I was on the advisory board for the Broome County Department of Mental Health, where I learned a lot about various health infirmities and needs that people have and so forth. I have given up those kinds of things for a while. I work in one of the child food pantries in Broome County. I'm a househusband. I've taken up baking. I've got a bread machine. I bake bread.

RVH: How many years were you at Harpur?

RFM: Let's see, from 1961 to 1990, twenty nine years.

RVH: You must have seen an enormous amount of change in the city.

RFM: Oh my God, when I came, it was this little college with a few buildings, it didn't look like a university, and now it's a major university. I take a lot of pride in it, in the fact that I was there in that growth period. I went to Harpur because...even in Ohio, we knew about Harpur College in 1960. It was an interesting experiment in public education, a small prestigious liberal arts college in a state university system. When I got there, they already had superb students. I mean, some of these students were so damn good. One guy I had had an endowed chair at Cornell. I used to tell him that I always believed that I should turn out students who are better than me in my field. But he just went to extremes. He didn't have to go that far. He's really a brilliant guy, but a hell of a nice guy, and introduced me to his family and said I was the person that caused him to become an economist. I took great pride in these great students. We succeeded in making the transition from this small prestigious liberal arts college to a university of some size without losing the quality of the undergraduate program. The students were just as good and the faculty were just as devoted to teaching these good students. We managed to recruit to our faculty, and I was involved in some of this, people who were fine research scholars, but who loved to teach good undergraduate students. They [scholars] were hard to find. Scholars wanted to go off and do their thing. We had that kind of faculty who really liked working with our good students. I'm very proud of my contribution to that.

RVH: How was it possible to get a small college like that to grow into a university without losing quality?

RFM: I think two things happened. One, I think it was well established in its reputation for undergraduate education by the time the conversion was even thought of. I mean, we were getting students in competition with Cornell and we were cheaper, so we were winning a lot of that competition. I think the key was that as we recruited faculty, we talked with them and made clear the commitment we had to good quality undergraduate education. We promoted people whose real contribution to the university was through the teaching program, not through research, and gave tenure to such people. I came as an associate professor. I was promoted to full professor and tenured on the basis of my work in the undergraduate program. And when you did that, you sent a message to the faculty that it's okay to be a damn good teacher, and that contribution will be recognized and rewarded, maybe in different ways than the scholar is rewarded. We gave Distinguished Teaching Professor awards, and people recognized that. The intellectual climate was very good for undergraduate education.

RVH: Did you have any idea it was going to grow so much when you got here?

RFM: Oh, no. When I first came, they were talking about maybe getting to two thousand students or something. It was maybe twelve hundred to two thousand maybe. It was the scientists who pushed. Scientists, I think rightly said, In order to attract the kind of students they wanted to work with, they had to have good research programs going. In order to have good research programs going, they had to have good graduate students to work with. These things built back and forth on each other, and they were probably right. But the students are still good.

RVH: Earlier, you had talked about how the sea has always had sort of an appeal for you.

RFM: Did you ever read *Captain Hornblower*? Okay, I read it in high school and liked it. Never went to sea, but I just loved reading about the sea. There was a certain romance about it, I suppose, and it's something that has stayed with me. I still read about the sea. Have you ever read Patrick O'Brien's books? I've been through all of them, love them. I'm reading right now a history of the slave trade, but the part of what fascinates me is that it was the same kind of vessels that carried out the slave trade in the 1400s and 1500s that we talk about with Patrick O'Brien. They became men-of-war, some changes, but the basic ship remained the same. That fascinates me. Have you ever read a book called *The Yard*?

RVH: Oh, it just came out recently. About Baseline.

RFM: Yeah, it's really very good. One of the things that captivated me, we still launched a ship then the way they launched them back in the 1500s. It was the same process. There's something about that that I find interesting.

RVH: You also talked about how before the war you felt as a young man that it was important for the United States to be involved in the war in Europe.

RFM: Why? Because a civilization was about to be destroyed by a very evil person, a very evil group of people. I thought that it was the duty of the civilized world to support each other and save that civilization. A lot of people were getting killed. I didn't believe that we could lose Europe and England and survive in that kind of a world. I remember getting into an argument with my seventh grade teacher in 1937 about these kinds of things. I was married twice. My first wife, when I was first married, my father wrote to her and said, He's a good boy, but he is kind of serious. I'm less serious now than I was then, I guess. But it was a view I had of the world, I guess. I think it was influenced by my parents, my mother especially, a very well-educated woman, unusual for her generation.

RVH: Did we save the civilization?

RFM: We saved it from that threat, I think. One of the other things I read is the history of the Nazi period, and it's ugly, it's ugly, it's ugly. And the thing that's ugliest about it is the support that they received from the ordinary German people, and that's the frightening part. That's why I think it's so important to guard against this kind of thing because we're human beings and we slip into the ugliest kind of behavior.

RVH: Do you recall when you first heard about the atomic bombs dropping on Japan?

RFM: I was home on leave. I had gotten out of the Naval Hospital in Guam, came back to the U.S., and got back home. All of us were first given thirty days rest and recovery leave. They called it survivor's leave at that time. Then we were stationed at the nearest base to our homes for a minimum of ninety days or something like that. I finished my career discharging people at the Fargo Building, living at home, twenty miles south of Boston. Pretty good duty.

RVH: Did you have any feelings when you heard about the bomb being dropped?

RFM: I guess I was overwhelmed by the feeling of relief. I did believe, and I do believe now, that an invasion of Japan was going to be a bloody thing indeed. I think in retrospect, I think I'm right, not the people who said the Japanese were going to quit. The Japanese were training their civilians to fight in the streets and on the beaches. I had

reason to believe that the Japanese were willing to give up their lives for that country and for the rulers of that country. I had a lot of personal reasons to believe that.

RVH: Captain Philips was killed off of Okinawa.

RFM: Yeah, he was killed. There is a frigate named after him, the USS George Philip. He had the Navy Cross, and he was highly, highly, highly respected by his officer colleagues and by his enlisted men. I think that his leadership was recognized by the Navy in naming a ship after him. Very unusual for a destroyer commander to get a ship named after him. There was something that happened that I had had to miss. It was in Okinawa. They invited survivors of the [USS] Twiggs to join them at Okinawa. I couldn't make it because I was traveling overseas and just getting home the day it was happening. They had a memorial service. They located where the ship is lying and had a memorial service for the crew who died on the ship.

That was where something very important happened in terms of one of the things I want to tell you about, which I could do right now. The captain's son and daughter, George Philip Jr., George Philip III, and Snow Philip, the daughter, joined the group who went out to Okinawa to the memorial service. By that time, their mother was deceased and had been cremated, and they dropped her ashes over the spot where the ship was lying. At least in that sense they could be together. Following that, Snow Phillip, a journalist, on the Key West newspaper staff, wrote an article which most of us saw. She talked about that experience. She wrote this article for her newspaper. She wrote about this reunion and memorial service. But that took her then another step where she wrote about the great difficulty which she has, and which she thinks a lot of people her age have who lost their fathers in World War II when they were infants. Their mothers quite understandably remarried. For a lot of them, apparently, the mothers felt that to spend too much time telling the children what a wonderful man their father was and what a fine human being he was, not what a hero he was, would somehow be disloyal to the second husband. These people refer to themselves as quasi-orphans, and going through that begins to affect them when they reach their middle age. They begin to have very, very serious problems because they feel they didn't know their fathers. They didn't really know who their fathers really were because, in her case, it's the extreme, I guess. She knows her father's a hero. He had a ship named after him. Was he a warm human being or wasn't he? She doesn't know. She doesn't know any of these things. I took it upon myself last late fall, early winter, to write her a letter and to tell some of my stories about him as a human being. The way some of the things I've told you. His devotion to his men, for example. She wrote and thanked me. A very moving letter, and thanked me for this letter, and she had found it very moving. But expanded a little on this theme, it was so helpful to

her to hear from an enlisted man who had a different perspective than an officer had, a different relationship, and saw him in a different light and in a different way. I told her he was among the very few people I respected the most in my life. I saw how he responded when he had to write. He was up in the sea cabin, the emergency cabin off the bridge. He came out of there onto the bridge and I happened to know he'd been writing letters to the families of people who were lost. I saw what it was doing to him. I saw him jump vigorously to the defense of enlisted men. I overheard him. The only time I ever heard him chew somebody out in public was when he scolded an officer for denigrating the enlisted men. I told her about those things. But in writing back, she said, That was very helpful. It helped me move towards seeing him as a human man, human being, but there's still so much missing.

I happen to know of another case of someone who was the son, and in the same situation. His father was one of those guys killed in the Battle of the Bulge. He was a short time in the service and boom, he was gone. He [son] is now in his fifties. I have reason to have some contact with him. He's demonstrating some very strange behavior. Having to do with, [he believes] people owe him a lot. And I think it is this, he is a survivor and he's having a hard time with being a survivor. He's a survivor in the sense that his father was taken from him and he never got him back in any sense of the word. And now he thinks others owe him something. He's behaving very strangely from how he behaved when he was in his youth and in his earlier life. I think that there are a lot of people out there that are having this very difficult time. I don't think we think about them when we think about who are the victims of a war. They're very much victims. We don't ever think about them, but I do now because of these letters, this correspondence. Another family, a stepfather, doesn't quite do the trick.

RVH: How did you hear about this program?

RFM: I heard it on the radio, a local public station. I was given a number to call. And believing in the value of history, what we can learn, I decided it was the thing I ought to do. Prompted maybe in part by the fact that twice now, once for a grandson and once for a granddaughter of a sister, I've had to explain, talk about some of this. An interesting thing is that when I talked to my grandson about it, I sent him some material, some of the things I gave you. He was doing a report for class or something. Then he came up to visit, and we were sitting at my other daughter's pond, a week ago. My grandson from Charlottesville and his mother, my other daughter, were there. The son started asking me more about it, and my daughter said, Let me sit down here. I've never heard much of this. It's an interesting thing that I can remember more, and I was saying to your colleague here, I can remember more now about all this than I remembered when I was thirty or

thirty five. I was involved in my career, my family, everything else. These things become more and more important as you get older. I know before I started my reunion, there was a thing on a Sunday morning television show. Who was the guy who used to run this thing, he used to travel around the world, but he was showing something, and I was down getting breakfast. My current wife was upstairs, and she came down to see me weeping. They were showing a burial at sea, and I had experienced a burial at sea. When we escorted a sister ship, one of the guys we rescued died aboard ship, and we had a burial at sea. Seeing that again just brought all this out again. I think that happens to us as we get older. That kind of drove me to say I think we owe it to those who come after us to share some of this.

RVH: We'll give you the last word. Any last thoughts?

RFM: No, I'm glad you guys are doing this because I think it's important that it be done. And it's your last chance because we're getting older. Every issue I get of this, [shows a newsletter called *Scuttlebutt*] there's a new memoriam. [points to a couple names] Two very close friends here, and we're getting old and we're not going to live forever. If you don't do it now, it's not going to happen.

RVH: Thank you very much.