

**Leonard Leroy Crawford
Veteran**

**Mike Russett
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Interviewers**

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

LC: Leonard Leroy Crawford. I was born March 13th, 1927, in Amsterdam New York.

Q: Ok. What was your educational background prior to entering service?

LC: Well, I was two months short of graduating from high school when I went in the service at 17.

Q: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

LC: I enlisted because I didn't wanna go in the army [Crawford laughs] and I knew soon as I got out of high school, they'd draft me so..

Q: So, was there a reason why you picked the navy besides not wanting to go in the army?

LC: Yeah prior to that in high school I was in a navy organization they had similar to ROTC uh what they have today, so I sort of went from there into the Navy.

Q: Now did you do any summer camps while you were in high school with this group?

LC: Uh no we had um monthly meetings and um learn flags you know and and that type of things.

Q: Did you wear uniforms or anything?

LC: Yeah we had a white shirt and blue pants and [unclear]

Q: Now who what was your instructor was he a navy person ex Navy?

LC: Yeah he was ex navy, a commander as I remember. Ship commander.

Q: And this was in your high school?

LC: No this was sponsored by the church

Q: Oh, the church. Ok. How many boys were in this group?

LC: We probably had 10 or 12 in the group.

Q: Did everyone go in the navy do you know?

LC: Uh I don't know.

Q: Ok just curious.

Q: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

LC: Yes, I I was home at the time and uh I was downtown uh as I remember um shopping with my mother, and it came over the loudspeaker at one of the stores[muffled] then everyone went into the street and start talking back and forth.

Q: Did you have any idea where Pearl Harbor was at the time?

LC: I knew it was over in the pacific that was about the extent of it.

Q: [Laughing].. Ok.

Q: When did you eventually go into the Navy itself?

LC: I went in the 4th of the, the 4th month and I believe the 20th day of 45. So the war wasn't quite over yet and uh I was at that age [unclear]

Q: Now you went to Sampson?

LC: I went to Sampson for training up in Geneva New York yup.

Q: About how long were you there?

LC: I was there 10 weeks

Q: What was it like there?

LC: Uh, cold, it was in the spring of the year and we had to stay on guard duty outside in little shag and uh it got cold it was wind off the lake there. It really got to ya. [Chuckle]

Q: Now that date you had barracks, there were barracks there..

LC: Yeah, oh yeah. Yep and a drill field.

Q: What were some of the things you learned up at Sampson?

LC: Well we learned uh wild fires and how to swim into the length of a large pool and I remember one instance where you had to climb a big ladder to a platform I'm gonna say it was probably 40 feet high and then jump off into the water and the kid in front of me didn't wanna go and they had this big rubber [mumbling, lost thought]... volleyball on the end of the stick, and they just gave them a whack and over he went.. whether he wanted to go or not. And just general rifle type of set up we had to do and learn how to take care of our clothes and clean our boots. Everybody put Clorox on them so they

would turn white of-course.

Q: What were the meals like there?

LC: They were very good yup with they had a Stuff on a shingle I won't mention it [laughing]. You know we had chicken and turkey you know we had good meals.

Q: Have you ever gone back to Sampson now that it's a

LC: No and I wish I get there [unclear, laughs]. It's still there.

Q: it's a state park now the state opened up a park and it's a museum and so on

Q: After you were in Sampson, where did you go?

LC: Newport Rhode Island. Pre-commissioning school. I was there only about a week or two and we caught a ship that went down to Norfolk in Newport News. The ship was built in Newport News, but it was commissioned in Norfolk. We went down there and joined the ship for the commission.

Q: Now what ship was that?

LC: The USS Midway. The called it CVV 41, now they call it CV41. I think the V stood for vessel and they dropped that.

Q: Now that's the commissioning of it up there?

LC: Yes the day they commissioned it.

Q: Now were you there that day?

LC: Yes

Q: What was it like? What was the ceremony like?

LC: Oh, they had many dignitaries and of course, and I can't remember I believe the president was there at the time, and we all stood along the rail, and then they hit the tracks down a way it went and... [unclear, laughter]

Q: What were your duties on the ship? Were you on board before it was commissioned?

LC: Uh, no. We went on the day it was commissioned.

Q: Oh, that was your first day on

LC: Yeah. We just kind of hung around until the big event.

Q: Was there a shakedown cruise?

LC: Yeah we went to Trinidad shakedown cruise and then from there we went to Guantánamo Bay and sat out in the bay for a week. Then went back to Norfolk. Then from there we went up to the Arctic ocean. We were conducting an experiment. I guess you'd call it where they had new engine heaters from the airplanes that uh they put a big

tube up to the engine and started that up and blew hot air on it before they have flight and operations. We did that for about a week. It was cold out there, we saw glaciers and the ocean, it was crazy.

Q: What were your duties?

LC: Well, I was working out of the radio room. [Clears throat] Pardon me. I was striking for radio man in other words I was taking these important messages as they came over the radio to the captain and executive officers. I guess you'd call it a runner I'd run in between these two guys and get their signature and go back to to radio room and study for radio man. They taught me transmitters and stuff like that before I got discharged, so I wanted to learn how to be a radio man. [laughs]

Q: Where did you go after you were up in the Arctic?

We we came back to New York City, and they had the Navy in the harbor, and we anchored in the harbor along with the might moe and 3 or 4 other big ships and we sat there for I think it was 3 or 4 days and then went back to Norfolk. It wasn't soon after that that I remember that I got discharged you know the war had ended and I put in my six months old. I went to Lido Beach by trade and then I got discharged their home.

Q: what was it like on the midway while you were on it?

LC: Well, they had flight operations quite a number of times, and I have to sleep under the where they call it there when they felt they had a catapult I was with just one deck down. Every morning, they had fly operations that they would go off about 5:30 in the morning then we jump up out of the sack, and that was like a train you know it was really loud and we had card games I didn't do much more than radio things you know. I'm trying to think we didn't have any helicopters on the ship that was before those days, and I toured about all of the ship. We had I believe it was six decks and everybody every department was on special deck you know certain decks. I remember I was trying to be a radio man in there and they didn't have any radio board, so I think it was down in new Norfolk. I went to the shore and bought a cat and put it together and headed up for my walk there at night. I put the earphones on and listen.

Q: where were you at when it was announced that Japan had surrendered?

LC: I believe that we were in boots, because of the six months after that, and they let us out for a liberty of the day and we went into town, and of course everyone was revealing and having a great time and we spent the day in there in the evening and then

Q: how much time was that?

LC: I think it was around noon time.

Q: No, what town?

LC: Oh, that was Geneva. Then came back with him by Boston.

Q: what was it like in the streets of Geneva?

LC: Oh, everyone was hollering and screaming and carrying on pat each other on the back and having a great time. It was six months after that I got out you know that's when I got the shipping so most of my career was in peace time, but I had many good experiences on the ship.

Q: You said one of the funniest most inspiring things was when you were on the Arctic Sea why? What impressed you?

LC: What would impress me was the huge iceberg and we saw polar bears on some of the ice claws, and then the fact that it was so cold you'd have to really bundle up to go out on the rail you know to look around, but it was beautiful up there. It was really impressive.

Q: did you ever make use of the GI bill after you've got out?

LC: No well yes, I did. I bought a house on the G.I. bill and I started to a I was going to take my last two months of high school, but it ended up that I went back to my original high school and the others like me there, so we had to spend six months instead of two months to get to graduate and get our diploma.

Q: Did you ever use that 5220 club?

LC: No is that the real estate

Q: No that was the unemployment you got \$20 a week for 52 weeks.

LC: no, I came out and I got a job pretty quick as soon as I got out, I went to this factory, so I don't think I ever use that.

Q: Now your wife mentioned here that you saw dolphins.

LC: Oh yeah down on the way to Trinidad. They would follow the bow of the ship and we'd go up there and watch them off the bow and then we sometimes fish off the fan tail and one time we caught a big hammerhead shark about 10 feet long.

Q: [Laughs] What did you do with that?

LC: We had a big hook-on em and we yanked it and threw it back overboard again[laughing]

Q: Now there's something about a leave at Christmas time?

LC: yeah, I almost got a captain as mad as for that that was the first year I was in, and I was determined to go home, so I jumped on a bus and headed for where...

Q: Now where were you when you...

LC: I was down in Norfolk headed home all right and headed to Christmas with the family. I only had a 48 hour leave so I had Christmas with the family then I came back well when I got back on the bus to Washington DC, they had a big snowstorm about 2 1/2 feet well we stopped right there. That was the end of the bus drive until the next morning, and so when I got back aboard ship, I was about an hour late and they had taken you know checked out with everybody and I wasn't there, so I got written up of-course and so I went in front of the captain and man, I was scared silly, and I had my hat in my hand, and the captain says well why were you late and I said I went to see my sick aunt in Washington DC and he kind of smirked[all laughing]. He knew I was telling a fib. He says you know you're only supposed to go 150 miles in a 48. Well, I says that is a little further while he says don't let it happen again I'm going to give you a fun easy off this time, so I avoided that one, [laughs]but I was scared I was sure I was going to the break.

Q: Did you join any veteran organizations at all?

LC: Uh yeah, I joined the veterans of foreign war for a while there and I was in the reserve after I got out for six months, and that was about it.

Q: Are you active or in the American Legion or AFW at all?

LC: No, I used to be but lately I go to their functions but that's about all.

Q: did you ever stay in contact with anyone that was in service with you?

LC: no, I had about five good buddies and all over the country so I just never you know, got in contact I can't remember some of their names even.

Q: how do you think your time in the service had a change or affect your life at all? Do you think it did?

LC: Oh yeah. That makes a man outta ya in a hurry and gives you a sense of responsibility. When you come out of there, you're pretty well set for life as far as young men go. we always say we oughta have mandatory a yearly service for all these kids that are in high school and we wouldn't have so much trouble mhm.

Q: Now you had a captain that wanted you to sign up again?

LC: No, he was a lieutenant JG he was ahead of the division and when I got uh when I got my orders to get discharged, he came to me one day and wanted me to re-up and stay because I was more experienced than the ones coming out of boots and he wanted

me to teach some radio stuff. But I had a girlfriend back home and you know how that goes being a family man and I said no but I wish many times that I had done that back then.

Q: Now if you hold that up. [Gives poster to Mr Crawford] That was taken at Sampson I see.

LC: yeah, this is a photograph of the class in Sampson and I'm the one right there. [Points to himself on photograph]

Q: Now would you explain what that is?

LC: This is a plank owner certificate they give you the original crew of the ship and it was given to each member of the crew who was commissioned. This is an Old Navy tradition that they give to the regional crew. We had 4500 men in the ship was 45,000 tons. So at the time it was the biggest ship going.

Q: Alright well thank you very much for your interview.

LC: [Laughs] Well, uh, hope I did alright there.

Q: Yes, you did.

Crawfords Wife: That was Joe Clark, his father was um Cusberg, Cusberg was married, so Joe Clark went for him and he was killed , so they named my grandfather Joe Clark and that's my uncle.

Q: do you know what unit he served in in the Civil War?

WIFE: No only the dates, 61 to 65. No I don't.

Q: who is the second person?

LC: That's my grandfather. He came over from Ireland and he joined the Civil War and he was a Landsman, which means he was in the Navy or in the marines. If they need him on land to fight, he would go on land. He had three ships that he served on, and at one point he fell overboard, and he must've got something in his lungs because that's what he died from.. years later. I never knew him because he died before I was born, but we have records of him so.

Q: Now the 3rd picture?

LC: that's me in my outfit.

Wife: now, where was that one taken do you remember?

LC: Uh I don't remember where that was taken. I think it was taken in Amsterdam after I got back.

Q: Ok how bout the next one?

LC: my daughter, the next one was my daughter she was in the Air Force and served at Sumter South Carolina. 1986

Q: Ok how about the marine that's below?

LC: that's my son he's been in for nine years he's stationed in Jacksonville. He's been overseas to Kuwait and a couple other spots over there and he's gonna take training next month for a being a recruiter out in San Diego.

Q: And the final picture?

LC: Oh that's my grandson. He just went over to Iraq. He lives in Naples and he just got out of high school and he's been home since for a couple of weeks and then went back again.

Q: He's in the army?

LC: He's in the army.

Q: Alright, ok, well thank you.

[Wife and LC looking through pictures, Leonard's sword and tassels and mumbled talking]

[MR looking at sword]

Q: What model sword is that, Mike?

Q: Looks like it's an 1863. It's Calvary.

[MR and WC discussing what LC should do to polish and upkeep the sword]