George E. Hepinstall
Veteran

Ed Rogers
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
Interviewers

Interviewed on
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Shaker High School, Niskayuna, NY

ER: Okay, Today is Monday, September 30, 2002. And this is the beginning of an interview with George Hepinstall. We're at his home in North East Greenbush, New York, and the address is 69 Old Red Mill Road. Mailing address is Rensselaer, New York. My name is Ed Roger, and I'm conducting this on behalf of the U.S. coast Guard Auxiliary. Good morning, Mr. Hepinstall.
GH: How are you today?

ER: I'm good. If you let me see. Could you tell me what your birth date was?
GH: My birthday was 1-16-25.

ER: 1-16-25.
GH: Okay.

ER: And the. Your affiliation in the military, what branch of service were you in?
GH: I was in the United States Navy.

ER: U.S. navy.
GH: U.S. navy, right.

ER: Did you serve in. In combat?
GH: We're in kind of, in the Mediterranean, We're in combat, yes. And in 44, 1944.

ER: Was that basically all of your military experience in the Navy in that war?
GH: Right. I just spent most of my time in the Mediterranean, back and forth in the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean. Right. Two years aboard a ship.

ER: What rank did you achieve?
GH: I ended up with what was then called Cox C-O-X, but now Boats Mate Class, I think.

ER: Okay. Now, did you. Were you drafted in into the Navy or did you enlist?
GH: Well, I. My birthday was on the 16th of January. I went down the draft board, told them I was going to go join a Navy. I went across the river and joined the Navy the same day. I was 18. Right. They didn't. They put me down as a drafted, but I was. I enlisted.

ER: You enlisted?
GH: Yeah.

ER: Okay. What drove you to do that? What were you feeling?
GH: I don't know. It was just everybody around was going in service and I figured it was my turn to follow suit. Right. There was nobody left at home.

ER: Where was home at that time?
GH: Home was down in Rensselaer. I lived in the city of Rensselaer at that time. Right.

ER: Can you remember what your first days were like when you joined the service?
GH: God, I know.

ER: It's a change from.
GH: It was a change what we're doing. Right. That's all I remember getting on the train and going to Samson, New York work. Where's Samson? Sampson is out near Geneva, New York. It was a boot camp for the Navy out there. I think I spent six or eight weeks out there. Really? Snow and wind and everything out there. It was so cold, we didn't even go out and parade.

ER: What time of year was this?
GH: It was in January. January 16th. Right. 1943. Right.

ER: What was the boot camp like? Were you Intense or did you have hard structures?
GH: Well, we had regular barracks, and trouble is, it was so much snow and cold we couldn't get out in March. And we'd done a lot of our marching and stuff, but they had a big field house up there, and it was schooling on this. You know, how to tie knots and how to do this and how to make your bunk up and all that stuff, you know, just regular.

ER: Do you remember how many people were at Samson at the same time you were?
GH: Oh, boy, it was. It was. It was tremendous. There was section after section after. I really don't know. It was just. I'd say in our barracks on the first floor, it was like a hundred men, maybe. On the second floor, there were barracks all the way around the compound, like. Right.

ER: How long were you there before you shipped out?
GH: I think was six or eight weeks, I think. Eight weeks. I think it was very short, very short period.

ER: And during that time, what did you learn? I mean, was it basically just drilling?
GH: Right. And. Oh, just marching and drilling and getting up early in the morning and doing kp. We had KP for a week. And, you know, I remember even just having fire watch, which was down, taking care of the boilers, and they had watched different things. It was just regular drilling, just constant drilling. That's all it was.

ER: Did you make any good friends during boot camp?
GH: Day boot camp? No, I don't remember any, but friends that actually I met, that I'm still interested in. A lot of my friends from school were in the same territory there that we met. That I met.

ER: How about your instructors? Any of them register with you?
GH: No, they don't. They don't. I just cannot remember that. That part of it is just gone to me for some reason. I remember they were tough in getting you up in the morning at 5 o' clock and then drilling all day and making bed watches and all this stuff. Right.

ER: But you just got through it?
GH: Oh, yeah, it didn't bother me at all.

ER: So what was the next step then you left Sampson?
GH: My next step was I got transferred to Norfolk, Virginia, to the Naval hospital there to become. What were they, pharmacies in the Marine Corps? The Navy put them pharmacists in there, or medics, whatever they want to call at that time. And, oh, I just didn't like that at all. I didn't care for that. Oh, was studying all this stuff that wasn't for me. So there was about four of us went to the. I think it was Lieutenant Commander or something at that time, and told Them, you know, we just can't take this stuff. We want get out to sea on a ship. And Tuesday turned us the next day and shipped us right over to the Norfolk, another barracks. And they assigned us to a ship. What ship? The USS Smart DE257. And we went through all kinds of training over there. That was really a.

ER: Now that's hat's a destroyer escort?
GH: The same as we have down here in Albany. Yeah.

ER: And what's the role of a destroyer escort in the Navy? What function does it perform?
GH: Oh, they're submarines and convoy protection to outskirt the convoy or a carrier or that or submarine warfare, more or less is what it was for.

ER: So you moved to the DE in Norfolk?
GH: In Norfolk, not on the ship. We're in the barracks down there. Training. We went to training down there of all swimming and jumping in water and everything you do aboard ship, firing guns and going out and I think with little. Little creek and firing guns and all. We went right through the whole training. Then they shipped us to up to Boston, Mass. Which the ship was being built up there at that time. And we were in the barracks over in. I think it was Quincy. I'm not quite sure. Quincy. I think they call it Quincy Navy Yard. And then we were there for maybe a month before we went aboard ship and commissioned a ship. Then we took the ship down to.

ER: So this was a new ship.
GH: It's a brand new ship. Right. Commissioned. Right. And we took the ship down to

Bermuda on the shakedown cruise and back to Boston again. We're down there for a month, then back to Boston.

ER: Do you recall how many people were on the ship?
GH: I'd say around roughly 200 somewhere else. Around there they carry. Right.

ER: And what was the complement of officers to enlisted?
GH: I'd say we probably had 12 officers. 12 officers? I'd say around 12.

ER: So this was all part of the training. Now you're still in.
GH: Right, we're still in training. Right. We went down to Bermuda where shakedown crews and fire guns. Then we came back and load it all up ready for, you know, active duty.

ER: Can you remember what I mean? What were you or your friends thinking at that time? I mean, was this sort of like a fun, a lark thing or going to war?
GH: We're going to war. I just think it was just a bunch of us having a good time, I think is what it was. Right. Till you get out there after a while and you know, boom, boom, boom. Then you start thinking, oh, Lordy, we're going to get our socks knocked off here. But we Managed all the way through. We never had no problem.

ER: Mr. You didn't dwell on that much then.
GH: No, no. We always had a good time aboard ship. Movies and everything, you know, it was. We've had a few exciting times but.

ER: You know, like what can you remember?
GH: Like what exciting times meaning fighting into the service?

ER: Well yeah, you just said that. I guess you were talking about more into the. Into the combat situation. We'll get to that in a little bit. So what was your job or your assignment?
GH: When I went aboard ship I was a seaman. A seaman which Paint and chip and paint and our general quarter station. I was on a 1.1 gun as a trainer which. The trainer was a spotter and a trainer on there. That was my duty for general quarters.

ER: And the trainer moves, swings the gun.
GH: One that pointer point up, down. The trainer went sideways. Had to get this straight. I think that's the way it was.

ER: And the target would be aircraft.
GH: Aircraft.

ER: Right.
GH: Were strictly for aircraft. 1.1 was a four barrel gun which I can show you pictures of it.

ER: Here if you got one handy.
GH: That's a three inch over here somewhere. Okay. This is a one point gun here. See, it's four barrel guns sticking up there. Okay.

ER: Is that yours? This is your ship?
GH: Yeah, this is the ship I was on. Right. Trying to get better picture. Well that's it. But you're not looking at the right way. Oh, here it is again.

ER: Now these were all taken during training.
GH: During the training on the course of the two years I was in one year we had one cruise. We did have a fellow took a lot of pictures. An officer. Only one could take pictures.

ER: Oh really?
GH: Yeah, he was the only one allowed to take pictures. So he took all these pictures and made and he sold. He had to make a buck. And this is where you know we got these from.

ER: Yeah, that's great. Okay, so you, you were in Boston, in Quincy and going to Bermuda and stopped Bermuda, right. What was the next step?
GH: Our next trip was across the ocean. We took a convoy to Casablanca.

ER: So that was your. That was your first actual.
GH: That was our first actual going across the ocean with a convoy, yes.

ER: Were you, were you familiar with the ocean? Were you seasick?
GH: Oh, when I first went to Bermuda I was sicker than. Sicker than a dog. But you got over it then after that you were seem to be all right to this day I go out get seasick but there for after I got the first time. It didn't seem to bother you after that. Right, but it was rough, a lot of rough Waters. Yeah, and these things, really big storms. Oh yeah, these things really knocked the socks off these little deserts. They like puddle jumpers out there.

ER: What time of year were you crossing now? Summer.
GH: I don't know what the first trip was. I made 11 trips back and forth. That first trip was Casablanca. I have no idea what the date was. So you were escorting convoys, which was probably 80 ships or so. And usually in a convoy. It was the outskirts were Des. Then there was like maybe it might have been a carrier or something in there with you. And you just, you know, they went in a row across the ocean and well, we outskirted for submarines or whatever like that. If you got a contact, you'd see the convoy all split up. But then maybe the next day they'd all get back together again. But we didn't lose a ship really, did you?

ER: But were you attacked? Were there submarines?
GH: We always had submarines around. It was always, you know, submarines. Whether we just pushed them off or what, I don't know. But different. You could feel it during the night you have general quarters. You could feel different ships dropping depth charges off. Now we never did get a submarine or anything, but did you ever get shot at? Oh, yes. So. Well, I don't. What do you mean shot at?

ER: Well, was your ship attacked?
GH: Oh yeah, we were attacked in the Mediterranean on May 11, 1944. We were attacked by German. What are they? Uber. No, not yew. Boat. Aircraft. Oh, we were attacked by aircraft. This was the convoy under their attack, May of 1944. And we got 13 planes that night and five assistants. And that was the first convoy to go through without losing a ship in the Mediterranean.

ER: Through to where?
GH: Oh, I don't know where we're headed there. Probably to Brazerde maybe or where did we end up? Probably Brazerde or Palermo. So you did go there, go through there. And the different ships would break off and go to different cities. You all didn't go to one spot.

ER: Now everybody goes through Gibraltar.
GH: Everybody got to go through Gibraltar.

ER: And was that a hail?
GH: That was. Well, when you got to there, that was where usually you had to go down almost single file through there or two file. But that was where we really had a scoop because that's where the Germans always try to get your submarines into there. From the Azores into Gibraltar is where all the trouble was.

ER: So on that mission you got a bunch of.
GH: We got 13 that night.

ER: 13?
GH: We got two or. Yeah, 13 general planes destroyed, five assists and four probables. Now this was sent to me by my brother-in-law which he copied this out of the. The records down in Washington or somewhere.

ER: Were you on the guns that night?
GH: I was on the gun that night. Right. 1.1 gun. Whether we got hit or anything. Okay. That night, when you're on the 1.1 gun, I was a trainer pointer. But above us there was another fellow, two fellas who run. It was higher above us, and he run by a motor. They could run the 1.1 gun. And we were there in case that broke to take over down below.

ER: So you weren't able much to look at what was going on.
GH: Oh, I looked. Oh, I could see everything was going on. Let's say that night, though,

we laid a smoke screen around convoy and really cluttered ourselves in so, boy, they had to get right to you to see them. Right. You know, had to get down into the cloud. But they didn't get any of us that night. But that was one of our nights, you know. We're lucky. I will say we're lucky. Half the guy said we do it, you know.

ER: Did you lose crewmen on your ship at all?
GH: No, we never lost a person. No. Never lost a person. That's one thing. We were lucky. We're just a lucky bunch. Right.

ER: So you were doing this, basically convoy duty, back and forth.
GH: I'm back for two years. Right.

ER: And how many convoys did you say?
GH: I think 11 times across the ocean. Right.

ER: Convoy in each direction?
GH: Yes. Back both ways. Right.

ER: So what was the Navy life like on the ship? I mean, did you get leave at all?
GH: I loved it. I loved it. I love this. Yes. Okay. You leave here and it take you probably 22 days to go across the ocean. Takes 18 to 22 days according how fast you were going. And when you got to Algiers or Iran, you got to go off the ship, you know, for your liberty and stuff. But when we crossed, we bring a convoy and we turn around and pick up another convoy and bring it back home. When we come back home to the States, we're always in the States for a couple of weeks anyway. Two or three. We got leave then. Always got leave.

ER: How long would you be on leave in Europe?
GH: A day or so. Just a day? Just a day. Sometimes just hours. They'd never let you get off too much. Maybe go like noon to 5 or something like that. Noon to 7. But we had a lot of dock parties, baseball games.

ER: But your real leave was back in the States?
GH: Back in the States, right? Yeah.

ER: And then you'd be off for how long?
GH: Well, we had a good commander. If you lived in Chicago and I lived in Albany. Here. I could give you my five day. We had five days apiece. I could give you my five days where you could take 10 days and go home. Where I was here in Albany and I could catch a train here on the 48 hours, up and back home. And we. We worked it that way. So, you know, next time that you. I'd get the 10 days and I'd go home. But we had a good crew. We had a good commander, which would let us do things like that.

ER: And was that. Do you think that was typical, or did you.
GH: I really. I really don't know. I couldn't tell you that. Whether you could long. The

commander said as long as we got two, three coxswains aboard, you know, that one could go and he could stay aboard.

ER: How'd you stay in touch with your family?
GH: Email. Email. Used to have them little emails. No, not email, V-mail. I think it emailed us today. Now, v-mail with a letter, little letters that you could put in and send back home. And when you get overseas, you'd have your mail there waiting for you and just letters back and forth. And I always had a little code with my mother, where I'd be when I come home. I write codes out, so I put in letters so nobody knew. What if they sent you the letters you sent back home?

ER: I've always heard that, you know, the Navy treats its crews very good in terms of food and stuff like that. Was that your experience?
GH: We had good food. We had good food, right.

ER: Plenty of it.
GH: Plenty of it, right. Never had no. I won't say trouble. Maybe the last few days. Coming back to the States, you were getting low and you ended up with. Well, I won't say it, but baloney is what they call it. Bologna or stuff like that.

ER: When you were on leave, did you recall any particularly unusual event or anything that was particularly funny or enjoyable?
GH: Oh, well, I always come home and enjoyed myself. I remember coming home for 30 days, and I spent time up helping a fellow paint a Barn, the whole 30 days, because that's all there was to do.

ER: So would you always come back here?
GH: Yeah, I always come back home. Right. No, one time we did, a bunch of us, we went to Chicago one time, got on the train and went out to this fellow's house in Chicago. Friend of ours was in the service and spent time out there and then come back home. About four of us went out there. I don't know why we done that. Just crazy thing. We all got together, went to his house and he was. Where'd he live in County? Machilli (?), Illinois, I think. Oh, as he lived. Okay.

ER: I guess you mentioned something like this before. You had some excitements and things like that during some of the convoy efforts. I guess there was that one night that you're talking about. Were there others that particularly stick in your mind?
GH: Not really. Just rough weather and more rough weather. Well, we never had. There were just submarines out there, which you'd get the sound of the submarine, and you'd lose them and, you know, you'd just be out maneuvering around the.

ER: Sound of the submarine.
GH: Right. Well, they had the sonar. Sonar on there which would ping, ping, ping. You pick up the sound. But then sometimes, whether they either went down or where they went, you'd lose it.

ER: You could hear that on the ship. I mean, you could hear that pinging.
GH: Oh, yeah. Well, if you're up into the. Up into that. The sonar room. No, no, we always just got called the general quarters or something. See, we were way back. The sonar room was up front.

ER: So when you left the service, what was it, a two year enlistment, basically.
GH: I was in three years. No, I come back two years. And then I got transferred.

ER: To where?
GH: To Earl, New Jersey, which is the ammunition depot down there.

ER: What'd you do there?
GH: And shore patrol. I was shore patrol down there from June till February, I think it was, in Earl, New Jersey, which was great.

ER: Where'd you get trained for that down there?
GH: Just a shore patrol. Just police. You know, I was a coxswain and had a little, you know, authority. But we were just. That was an ammunition depot down there. Where? Oh, the sailors just come in and out. You checked your ID or you took your jeep and went downtown. I mean, just right around. Oh, just great, I thought.

ER: Sounds like you had a wonderful experience with the Navy.
GH: I did. Really. I thought it was. I just thought it was great.

ER: What do you remember your last day in the Navy?
GH: Now, getting out in. They sent me to Lido beach to get out.

ER: Okay.
GH: All I remember is getting everything. I said I left everything there. I said I didn't want nothing. Just give me clothes and go home. I should have taken half the stuff and come home, but I didn't and just got transferred and come on up home. That's all.

ER: And then that was back here.
GH: Back here. Done with the Navy right now. I was done with the Navy right then.

ER: What'd you do after that?
GH: Well, when I first got home, I got a job down in Hicks Mill and Rensselaer, which Was a woolen mill for about a year. And then my father run the service station up here in East Greenbush. And I come out, and he only had a little grocery store with two pumps in front of it. So he said to me, if you come out here and work, we'll build a service station. So we built on. And that's what I'd done for the rest of my life, was up the service station with my father.

ER: Now, you've maintained contact with. Have you maintained contact with some.
GH: Oh, yeah, I made contact with a lot of them.

ER: Right, and what's that like? I mean, do you write to them or do you see them?
GH: Oh, I see them. We used to have. We had a few unions along the line, but just getting. So does everybody get today's. They just don't want to. They don't want to travel.

ER: Yeah, where are they? Are they scattered all over the country?
GH: Oh, all over the country. I can go. I got a list here from California right through to Florida. All over. They're all over, really. They're all over. And you can't believe. I can't believe how old some of them are because I must have been just a kid, 18 years old, because some of these fellows are 87, 88, 89 years old, older. Fellas in. Was in there.

ER: You said that there were maybe a couple hundred people.
GH: A couple hundred? I'd say, yes.

ER: Would you think that you knew everybody's name or half of them?
GH: I'd say we knew three quarters of them. Yes. I'd say we knew everyone. Really? Because you were with them for, say, 22. They were with them a couple of years. You Know.

ER: Was most of the crew on the ship the whole time you were, or was there a lot of rotation?
GH: There was a lot of rotation, yes. Yes, because, like, we knew. I knew if I made coxswain, I was going to get transferred. And there was about eight of us in this division. We all said, Jesus, this is good. Why do we want to get transferred to something else? We had. So we all took the test and got Cox and we all got transferred. Once you made. Once you see, you got up and made a group, they transferred you to another ship or something.

ER: Did you go as a group then?
GH: We all got transferred together. To different parts? No, different parts. Now. There's one fella from New York City that got transferred with me. We ended up down in Pier 92, and he went down New Jersey with me, and he was aboard ship with me. But like other fellows. Well, when you get off ship, you got a 30 day leave, rehabilitation, whatever they call it. But most of the fellows had a choice of where to go. And most of them took close to home. You know what I'm trying to say?

ER: Yeah. Let me ask you, are there some particular photos in here that mean something to you especially or that we could just flip through quickly?
GH: Yeah, you can look at them.

ER: Well, they don't mean a whole lot to me.
GH: No. Plenty of cards there.

ER: Yeah.
GH: All right.

ER: Is you. Are you.
GH: I'm not in any of these. Nope. I'm not in that. I'm not. I can name every one of them there, though. But I'm not in one of them at all. The only thing that's right must be in this. Must be in some kind of a driller action. You can see everybody at the guns, see? And okay, here we're laying the smoke screen here too, for some reason, you know.

ER: Now, this was. You said this was a new ship.
GH: That you were on. Yeah, this is a new ship. Right. The same as what's over in Albany.

ER: Did it hold up well?
GH: Yes, I thought it did really well. Okay, here's one thing that come to me. Where to go to was Christmas. We made a Santa Claus. Where's a couple more? And we went around the convoy through the ships, waving to everybody.

ER: Oh, that's great.
GH: The little ones are there. That there. I can't remember very well. All right. Everybody blew the whistles and. Yeah, that must have been Christmas Day. I don't even know.

ER: But this is while the convoy was moving. Right.
GH: Convoy was underway.

ER: Everybody's got to be alert.
GH: Yeah.

ER: Did you do something like that for Thanksgiving, too?
GH: No, that's the only thing I remember just. Was that Christmas? I don't know. Somebody got the idea of dressing up and going around.

ER: That's wonderful.
GH: Church service. We always held up on the foxhole here and the one fell out. Oh, we had church service up there in the movies.

ER: Where'd they show the movies?
GH: In the mess hall. But you can't even see. But that's where you can't even see the. Oh, here's the screen in this one. We all squeezed into there. Oh, the barber screen looks like a bed sheet and the barber cutting her hair. All right, then. This was refueling at sea. You had a refuel from a tanker at sea.

ER: How does that work? They pass a hose across.
GH: Yeah. You get up as close to this ship as you can and they shoot a gun over with a line on. You keep getting the line smaller. Smaller and gets To a big line. Then you pull your fuel line over and you put it in your tank. It clips on like, you know, clamps on, and then you just ride side by side, hope everything goes good.

ER: How long would it take to.
GH: Oh, it wouldn't take but 20 minutes or so. It didn't take long to pump fuel right over to us. Right.

ER: How much fuel would you get in 20 minutes?
GH: I have no idea. See, I wasn't involved in that. That was. That was more your engineer.

ER: Yeah.
GH: Transfer guys from ship to ship.

ER: Okay.
GH: Here he is in the middle. Okay, now, he was pulling the rope across, trying, you know what you had to do? You had to pull that fellow across. You had to keep that rope taut, and if you let it go, you had to work back and forth.

ER: He winds up in the water.
GH: Right just. Here he is. That's him coming across. And here's his baggage coming across. That's great. That's about it. Okay, that was exciting. All right. Now, you said how many officers. Can you count how many are in there?

ER: Looks to me. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
GH: Maybe 8. Okay. Then there had to be a couple up on watch while we're underway.

ER: Maybe eight.
GH: That's it.

ER: Well, it sounds like.
GH: Well, there's a rocking Gibraltar.

ER: Oh, yeah.
GH: This fella done a good job of taking pictures for it.

ER: Is this just a little buoy sitting out there?
GH: Yeah, it must be. I see that out there. Must be buoys going on through there. And the officers always had their deluxe quality set up there.

ER: Quality Set up there, they're young men, too, aren't they? So it sounds like you pretty much enjoyed your experience there, huh?
GH: I don't think the rest are just reunion pictures I got here. Okay.

ER: Well, let me see here. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that registers with you that you'd like to comment about?
GH: No, not really. That. We have these reunions and we do get together.

ER: When was the last reunion that you had?
GH: Well, it must be three years now.

ER: And where did you do that?
GH: That was in Las Vegas. I didn't go to that one, but they had it out in Las Vegas. Who organizes the first fellow? There was a fellow by the name of Sadowski. He lived in Florida. He started it. Well, and then from there, well, Gascapa, he took over, which he lives down the road here. He lives in Florida, but right now he's up here for the summer. He took over and we had it in Florida two or three times. We had a Niagara Falls one time. Las Vegas.

ER: How many people would come to this?
GH: Oh, geez. We get probably 30, 40. He's getting down, though. Now. There's right, it's. It's. It's down. There's probably only half. Every time we turn around, another one, another one is dying.

ER: The reason for this project is to catch some of these recollections while they're.
GH: Still there that night. I do remember that night, though, in the aircraft, that the cook was staying there. And he had a thing of potatoes. Throwing potatoes at the aircraft. I don't know how to expect to hit him. He was having a good time throwing potatoes. But we always had a good time for some reason. That's why we never had any problems, I guess. That's great. We got reprimanded once over in New London, Connecticut. They went to. They went ashore and they got in a fight. And the captain was the leader of the gang. And we got banded from New London, Connecticut. We couldn't go back there anymore. But we had a good captain. I think that's the main thing of service, if you have a good commander. A captain. Right.

ER: And how about. Were the rest of the officers good too?
GH: Yeah, we had a few. One guy we called Gertie, but he was all right. But he was always trying to catch somebody doing something he wasn't supposed to be doing. You know, he used to have a chair like this. And you have glasses to look out. And you'd be chair. You could fall asleep. He'd come up and rub his hands across one of the glasses like that. And if he didn't react, he'd know you. You shake it. Come on, you're sleeping. He was the only one ever to give us trouble with. Most of them were great egg's.

ER: Did they change a lot during the course of your time there? Did you get a lot of different.
GH: Did you have the same commander the whole time? No, they kind of worked their way up. We started off with a lieutenant commander, which he was a regular navy man. And then he went for one or two trips. And then a fellow by the name of Wetman took over. He was a Jewish kid, and he was there for quite a while. But then near the end he

got transferred. And the fellow who was behind him jumped up to command, which was yeoman. Mr. Yeoman, which. They're all good, you know. They worked their way up through the ranks in there. And as soon as they made the next rank, they got shipped out to another ship or something. That's it.

ER: Well, thank you very much.
GH: I lived a good life afterwards.

ER: Sounds like it? Yeah, sounds like. Sounds like there was some good luck involved.
GH: Oh, yeah, it was a lot. A lot of luck. Yeah, a lot of luck. Things we've done. We just can't believe we'd run aground once, you know, but over in Brazerde (?), right. Well, we're going in Brazerde and there was a ship that was sunk there, and we had to go between the ship and we had a. What do you call him? A pilot bringing us in. But he was speaking Italian. We said the old Jew guy couldn't speak Italian, so that's why we were on the ground. Boom.

ER: How'd you get off?
GH: The tug pulled us back off. Then they sent us down to or ran to dry dock and we were there for a couple days and back on our way again.

ER: No damage particularly.
GH: Well, the way I understand below your ship, your sonar drops down and that. Well, we hit that, I think, because we had no sonar to go back to Iran. Yeah, we got a lot of trouble. The crew got in a lot of trouble on the way. I will say that. Always in the trouble. What fights? You know, fights with the Arabs and who were over or ran. And you stood guard on the tailgate and on that. And the captain said, now, if anybody comes around, you shoot them. You shoot at them. And one night there was a guy out there, went around a rowboat in air. They pop, pop, pop, pop. And they got hell for that. They didn't say who's there or something, just. Just little things. But I loved it. I'd go back in now if the same crew and everything, I'd go back in.

ER: Good life.
GH: No, because even now I'm in contact with. Oh, geez, I don't know. I have a list here of. Oh, there's a whole list of crew that I keep contact with, send out, you know, but everybody like now we want to get together here in Albany and they want me to take over, which I think I'm going to try. Try to do, but there ain't that many who everybody you talk to say, oh, Jesus, so and so. Drop dead. I was talking to a fella out in California, which she's 80, some nurses in a nursing home. He couldn't make it, but his name was Gentile, but he was from Boston to begin with, you know, just. And some of the fellows you can talk to and they won't ever come to a reunion. I don't know why.

ER: People are funny. Yeah, well, thank you very much.
GH: Okay, no problem.

ER: Let me see if I can pack this up.
GH: I even think someday I can bring these down to this, the DE down here and see if they wanted them. You know, pictures like that.