California Maritime Academy Library

Interview with Lyll Surtees

Oral History Project

Interviewee: Lyll Surtees
Interviewer: Kristen Swader
Date: October 11, 2008

Place: Cal Maritime
Transcriber: Rev.com

Preface

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Lyll Surtees conducted by Kristen Swader on October 11, 2008. This interview is part of the Cal Maritime Oral History Project.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Lyll Surtees was a graduate of the class of 1943, Deck.

Abbreviation

SL: Lyll Surtees

KS: Kristen Swader

Interviewee: Lyll Surtees
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Interview

[00:37]

KS: Good day, today is October 11, 2008. My name is Kristen Swader, and I'm a cadet at the California Maritime Academy. Today I am interviewing Lyll Surtees, born August 26, 1924, for the California Maritime Academy Library Oral History Project. This interview is being recorded by Benjamin Bolin at the California Maritime Academy. What year did you graduate from CMA?

LS: 1943, December.

KS: In December, and how long did you take to get through?

LS: 17 months. We entered in June, July of 1942, one month after I got out of high school.

KS: And now you were, how old at that age?

LS: Well I was only 17 when I entered, and I was 19 years and four months when we graduated. It was, we graduated, no degree in those days.

KS: Right, but you did get a license when you graduated?

LS: We got a license and a commission in the Navy.

KS: Okay.

LS: Yep.

KS: And now, what degree program did you graduate in?

LS: Well in those days, you were either deck or engine, that was the two choices that you had. And the class was probably, I would probably guess 2/3 deck and about 1/3 engine, maybe not quite that much, but close to that.

[01:38]

KS: Why did you choose CMA?

LS: Because with as a kid, I wanted to go to sea, and I particularly wanted to join the Navy, and go to Annapolis. And my parents worked very, very hard to get me a, what do you call it, written...

KS: A Senator's letter.

LS: Senator, yeah. They did all kinds of political things for me, and I actually received an appointment as an alternate. And that lead to taking a physical exam, and that wound up, I could not pass the Annapolis requirement for eye color perception. So that eliminated Annapolis, I knew about Maritime Academy, so I took the test, and was accepted, and that was my second choice, so that's what got me here.

KS: So, you're originally from Martinez?

LS: I was originally born and raised in Martinez.

KS: Was it hard going to school so close to home, but never being able to go home?

LS: Well, we could go home, like on weekends. Although we rarely did.

KS: Right.

LS: The 17 months included no time off, and that was, you had liberty on weekends, and things of that nature, but there were no weeks off, type of thing, so.

[03:00]

KS: Why do you think others should choose CMA, or why did some of your friends choose CMA?

LS: Why did they choose CMA? Well, most of them, at the time we had all kind, well, some of them were draft dodgers or whatever, and I can think of in my class maybe a couple that might've fallen into that category. I think the rest of them were genuinely really interested in going to sea, I certainly was interested in making a full-time career, lifetime career out of it at the time.

[03:31]

KS: What was it like working on the Hawsepipe? I see that you worked on the yearbook.

LS: Well, it was my buddy actually, he was the editor of that thing and that was Kenny. The three of us, Kenny and Dean Ross and I, we used to fart around together, and after the war, we used to see, especially Ross I used to see him a lot. I helped him build a 32-foot sailboat at one time. That was when I was still working in California, and he was in the southern California area.

KS: Okay.

LS: So, we did a lot of floating around Catalina.

KS: Now we do three cruises, one to South America, one to southern Pacific, and one to the Orient.

LS: Good.

[04:26]

KS: Did you go on many cruises?

LS: Oh yeah, good old Golden Bear! Did we ever cruise! The ship, we were at the ferry building when I first came aboard, and we were there for a little over a year and a half. So, all the cruising, we would tie up on weekends, but generally go out on Tuesdays and Fridays, and we would go out and steam around South Bay or North Bay. We were not permitted to go under the gate.

KS: Okay.

LS: And then in the, I guess around second-class year, and our first-class year, they included trips up to Stockton.

KS: Okay.

LS: So that was the big cruise, to Stockton. We'd go up there and for a few days and come back. Which is interesting, my last trip to sea on a Liberty ship, we loaded out of Stockton.

[05:23]

KS: And what was the ship like? What was it like doing small cruises instead of…?

LS: I haven't seen your current one, it was a little four hatch, fog island, World War I laker.

KS: Okay.

LS: So, it was very, very cramped quarters, with two high bunks. To me, the place was run like, when I couldn't go to Annapolis, and I came to this place, I thought it was Annapolis West, as a 17-year-old, because it was run, we were in uniform, we were constantly changing into this or that, sorta thing. The upperclassmen were god over the top of us.

KS: Yes.

LS: And we had to do all kinds of memorized things, carry matches, answer questions, silly questions, and do all that sort of thing. There were restricted areas on the ship, like from

the berth deck, we couldn't use the ladder that ran up to the mess deck, which was inside, out of the weather.

KS: Right.

LS: We had to go out on deck, things like, and as third classmen we also, my most hated duty was mess duty.

KS: Right.

LS: They did away with that, funny it was about the time we get first class, I guess. They went to a cafeteria style messing type of thing. So anyway, that was, life was very crowded. I think what, 120, 130 of us, just on a little ship. And it was at the ferry building, our classes were actually in the ferry building at that time, up on the second deck of the ferry building, there was a big, huge relief map of the state of California, and these classrooms were behind it.

KS: Okay.

LS: And so, this is where we primarily held classes.

[07:24]

KS: And now, you moved to CMA the summer before your graduating year?

LS: Yeah, it was either late July or early August, of [19]43 that the Navy took over the ferry building, and we were forced out and then, of course they started building up here. And so, we transferred, we moved the ship up in August, so we were actually here at Morrow Cove from say early August through December, when we graduated. We never got ashore, as far as living. They had temporary barracks were under construction, going up the hill here.

KS: Okay.

LS: But they hadn't been finished yet. So, we still lived aboard the ship the whole time while we were here. They did have some temporary wood buildings, or like an administration building, and a mess hall, that were built.

KS: Right.

LS: And so, we utilized, a couple of classrooms also.

KS: Okay.

LS: So that we could finish off a few of the classes. And then in our first class year, in wartime, they sent us, the whole class, the deck was sent over to San Francisco to attend gyro, Sperry brand, school to learn how to run a compass, which turned out to be very handy, since my first job out was as navigator in charge of the compass! And we also were from when the Naval Reserves sort of thing were sent down to, what was it, Point Montara, I think it is.

KS: Okay.

LS: Yeah, for gunnery, type...

KS: So, they sent you to many different places to study things that they didn't teach you here?

LS: The one thing that they didn't do, was ever take us aboard another ship! And when I reported to board that Liberty ship, was my first job, that was the first time I'd ever been on another ship other than the school ship. And basically, when I reported aboard, and I think I told you, just a couple days before Christmas, as a third mate, and the only existing deck officers, the captain and chief mate took off for a few days. It was godsend! Because I had three or four days there, where I probably run that ship, because I was left in charge of the thing. I found out a lot about that ship in that three or four days! I guess the other most interesting thing, which would, back to the curriculum, like for navigation. We were taught Dreisenstock and Ashton.

KS: Okay.

LS: Were the only two procedures that we did all our test work and all that sorta thing on. And as soon as I got aboard the Liberty, I found out that they had a set of H.O. 214 on there, and I taught myself in five days how to use 214, which that was the only thing that we used. And of course, with the Liberty ships, we were fortunate to have gyro compasses. We did not have radar, we did not have any kind of, any other kind of, you used a sextant, that was the you know.

[10:36]

KS: Yep. Who was your favorite instructor while you were here? Did you have specific?

LS: Yeah, probably my favorite was Mr. Miller. He was the seaman.

KS: Okay.

LS: I think they've named things around here after him, he was really quite popular, type of thing. We had a couple of other, Tubbs was the navigation instructor. He was tough, but really quite good. Summerhill, I think, was the one that taught cargo handling. And you know in those days, of course everything was brick bulk handling.

KS: Right.

LS: None of this container type of thing, so that was one of the standard questions on your mate's examination. You know how do you store cargo, be specific. Meanwhile, all categories, and all everything!

[11:30]

KS: Sorry. What did you think of the uniform when you were at CMA?

LS: Well we had, I think we wore a dungarees mostly, for the work part of it, and for classes, for drill, inspections, and that sort of thing, we wore these 3/4 sleeve uniform. I don't know, what would you call this felt type uniform. And most of us had two uniforms, what would happen, they issued us one, and you bought a second one from an outgoing class that you used for just general classwork type of thing. So that was it. Dungarees and all that sort of thing, they had some of the laundry on board, but I was led to believe that most of our laundry we put them in bags, and I think they went to San Quinton. It was the contract on them. But we had a dress uniform, probably not too different from what you have now.

KS: Okay.

LS: When we were on leave, type of thing. We all wore the little narrow stripes, and you could hardly wait. They made us wear the little quarter stripe on our hats. Most of sneaked into 3/8 type ones. So that was, it was wartime you know.

KS: Right.

LS: Every place you went, everybody was in uniform, of one kind or another.

[13:12]

KS: Okay, what do you remember about your classmates?

LS: About my classmates? Oh, they were all a great, great bunch of people. You know all of them. I kept contact with as many of them as I could, even after the war. And especially, I would say four of them are still going. And I tried to talk them into coming to this thing here this time, but they weren't available. One of them wasn't available, and one them, just couldn't travel out of the San Diego area. So, you know we kept track of each other. And I thought they were all a pretty talented group. Pretty supportive of each other.

KS: Now did you ever work with any of your classmates, outside of CMA.

LS: The only one I ever worked with was for that first nine-month trip where there were two of us on that, and that was a nine-month expedition. Both of us sat for our second mates. I couldn't let the junior third mate get a second mate's license without me.

KS: Before the second mate did.

LS: Yeah so, we took up some valuable Sydney time, taking for a second mate, yeah.

[14:27]

KS: Now how was that? Like that was your first time out to sea, on that Liberty ship, how'd you like that?

LS: Oh, I thought it, well it was you know it was wartime. In fact, that first load, we went down to Hueneme, loaded the 104th CB's combat equipment. We took them to New Guinea, and along with quite a few passengers, CB passengers. Then it was a hurry up and wait type of situation, when you got into a place like Milne Bay, you anchored and then you waited and sat around the hook for sometimes days, if not weeks at a time, before the next, then we finally discharged them up at Finschhafen, Langemak Bay along the coast. And that was the first convoy work that we had to do. This was, this was, subsequently we did a lot of convoy, going up the Philippines, we did a lot of convoy work.

KS: Okay.

LS: I used to think that they've got a 19, 20, 21-year-old, and you're out running convoys, you're running with the other ship's 500 yards ahead of you, and 500 behind, and 500 to either side, and they've got a 20-year-old that's manning men on the bridge on one of these things, so that was a lot of responsibility.

KS: Wow.

LS: In those days.

[15:50]

KS: Yeah, for 19? What'd you guys do for fun or entertainment while you were at CMA?

LS: At CMA? They used to have a little, every once in a while, they would have a get together type of thing where they'd have everything from boxing matches, to playing jokes on each other, type of thing. There really wasn't a lot of organized entertainment on board. My roommates, if they had a spare minute, they had a cribbage board out and were playing, 15-2, 15-4 type of thing. We all waited for liberty, and Saturday mornings we drilled, under arms, we all drew rifles, with bayonets. There wasn't a very popular

occupation, but the winning platoon, they were divided up into platoons, generally got an extra hour of liberty, on Sunday night before they had to come back. And so that was the only incentive for doing well there. So, on weekends, if you had someplace to go, you could go, and I could go home to Martinez, it wasn't all that big of problem. So, I frequently did that, I of course at that time, still had a girlfriend back there, so that was some incentive to go back, yeah.

[17:23]

KS: To go back there. What are any traditions that you guys participated in?

LS: Well... Only the main tradition I guess, was the fact that the third class was dominated by the upper classes and you know, we had to memorize a set of swab rules, carry matches, do pushups on order, type of thing. I guess is where I thought I was still in Annapolis. So, it was great when you got to be, and then third classmen had mess duty, which was hated. Otherwise.

KS: Right.

LS: When you got to be a second and first classman, when you got to lord it over the lower classes, and you know which was part of the trade, of course. Which was to order the people around, not just on fun and nonsense, but on assignments aboard the ship, but that was it. We didn't have the opportunity like crossing the equator or doing any of those kinda things that you're talking about.

KS: Rites of passage.

LS: Yeah, right.

[18:30]

KS: What were your most challenging courses?

LS: Oh, I'm sure the navigation was, everybody considered the most difficult. And it was difficult, because you know, you're learning to use a sextant inside of a place that you can't even find the horizon.

KS: Yeah.

LS: Was part of the difficulty on the thing, so I think that was, undoubtedly, the most difficult one.

KS: And so, it was mostly the material in the class, not necessarily the professor of the class?

LS: No, no, no, no, no.

KS: Were there any classes that you wanted to take, that you didn't have time to while you were here?

LS: There was no option for anything. Everything was, once you made the choice between deck and engine, that was it, everything was fixed, from then on, what you did. And you know, basically they, we chipped lots of rust, and did painting. We learned how to splice rope and wire, and they taught us all that sort of thing. And then we stood watches, on the sea watches, I was out there, we went through the usual, rotating right, and as you became a second classman, or first classman, you got a little bit more responsible job for each one of those. Although I can remember even as a first classman, they used to you know put a couple boys over the side and then they would try, the midshipman would go along side these as a training on ship handling type of. I never got to do that. There was such limited, limited amount of time on the thing. So, you know I stood lookout watches, and that sort of thing, but never that. So, when we actually got to sea, there was a sort of a learn on the job.

[20:40]

KS: How did you like being on a brand-new Liberty ship? What was that like?

LS: Oh, I thought it was great, on it! Especially after I learned my way around it. And I really wasn't worried, I really felt quite confident that I could do it. And that first night was an eye opener, that we spent out here. It being so rough, I personally lasted the number forward hatch jumbo gear, on that night. In fact, the forward gear, when it broke, it actually broke up one of the five-ton booms, like you see on the Liberty ship, and we had to have one of them replaced in Hueneme.

KS: Oh, wow.

LS: You know I was a 19-year-kid and I really thought I was with somebody, and then I was.

KS: Being a second mate at 19.

LS: 19, and we had, yeah, we picked all this fast news. There were 100 people on board, and I considered myself third in command. You know, and I was in command.

KS: Yeah.

LS: Eight hours of the day, I was the one that was running that ship. You know basically in those days, you'd obviously carried, each watch was couple ABs and an ordinary, that rotated one on the helm, and one of them lookout, and the other one as a messenger. And the armed guard put four people on a watch.

KS: Oh, wow.

LS: They would put a lookout, actually, these were on the three-inch gun forward, and two aft, and one up on the bridge.

KS: Okay.

LS: So, the bridge, you had yourself, the helmsman, and a merchant's lookout, and a navy lookout. Interesting enough, my experience was, that 90% of anything that got sighted, was sighted by the mate.

KS: Oh!

LS: The one who had the responsibility.

KS: The one that has to lookout the most.

LS: Yeah, right.

[22:40]

KS: Now you also graduated from Berkeley, with a degree in engineering?

LS: Yeah, chemical engineering. Yeah, after when I finally, in late [19]46, then I started Berkeley in January [19]47. Interesting enough, what we could, the credits I got out of here were I think 15 units, in meteorology and naval science.

KS: And that's the two that you can use.

LS: That was all that was transferable at the time. But anyway, I got BS degree in chemical engineering.

KS: Okay.

LS: Out of Berkeley, and then subsequently went to work for a large chemical corporation, which was taken over by an even larger resource company. So, we were in heavy chemical business, the nuclear business, the oil and gas production business, the coal mining business.

KS: It just grew and exploded, throughout, from [19]40 to late [19]80s.

LS: [19]80s, yeah.

KS: Yeah.

LS: Yeah that first plant that I went to work for was, we produced like 5,000 tons of chemical a day. That's 50 trillion carloads a day, that went down our own railroad. It was an immense operation.

KS: Oh my gosh.

LS: I managed an engineering group for it. We specified the materials of construction for everything that got built there, and for the other plants all over the country. We did failure analysis. If something broke or whatever, we determined whether it was a faulty material, faulty operation, or whatever, type of thing.

[24:29]

KS: Now why did you change your career?

LS: Well that was basically, it was because, I found out early on that I had this slight color perception problem. It wasn't severe, I still got a reserve commission in the Navy, on the thing. But at the end of the war, after another couple of trips, I could see the handwriting on the wall. They were cutting back on ships, and sort of thing. And I always said, sooner or later, somebody was gonna use that as an excuse, and if you couldn't maintain your license on it, you were out of it, so I went to a second fallback choice. My father had been a chemical engineer, working for the oil companies. And I guess I thought I was gonna work for an oil company, which I never did. Well, other than, for my firm to wind up, was in the oil and gas business. And did a lot of, in fact my only sea time then was, I spent a lot of time in the Gulf of Mexico, offshore, production platforms, and drilling platforms. We had the responsibility for one, what they were made out of, what they were coated with, and how they were protected, like with cathodic protection, type of thing, so we did all that.

KS: Now, did you ever think about working on the offshore boats that are going out?

LS: We mostly went by helicopter.

KS: Helicopter.

LS: Yeah, yeah. The hours and hours they would assign the helicopter to us, and I'd put a team out there and we would sometimes visit 200 platforms inside of three days, and that just meant jumping from one.

KS: Oh my gosh!

LS: Yeah.

KS: How did you make the transition to Oklahoma, from being near the water in Martinez?

LS: Well, it wasn't easy. Of course, I was coming out of a chemical plant, in southern California, out on the desert. And the company got bought out by a firm that was headquartered in Oklahoma City, and so I had a good job, and was offered an even better, the job was gonna expand because there were a lot more plants that I was gonna be responsible for, so. I was offered the transfer, and so I took it. And so that's where we went for 20 years.

KS: Okay so you've been Oklahoma for 20 years?

LS: I've actually been longer than that, I worked there for 20 years, and I retired in [19]90.

KS: Okay.

LS: So, it's been, what, 18 years since then.

[27:13]

KS: Now how did your degree at Cal Maritime affect your career now, or the career that you had afterwards?

LS: I think you know basically, that and the career responsibility, of being able to handle lots of things under crisis conditions, type of thing. Just gave us, I think a lot of real confidence, that you could do things. And the study, you know you were pushed to do them, so I think it was excellent training. You know I look back on it as one of the, remembered it as one of the best years of my life now. As a third classman, I wasn't so sure, but other than that, I think it was great, yeah.

KS: Do you have anything else to add, anything you'd like to say?

LS: No, nothing, you know I continue to be interested, I follow the Maritime industry, I subscribe to a lot of the technical magazines that are published, other than the cruise type thing, which I and my wife have done a lot of. I just like going to sea, whether we ever get anyplace or not, I still like the sea part of it. In fact, in the earlier days, even the cruise ships, I was able to tuck my way onto bridges, and maybe engine rooms.

KS: Yep.

LS: But they won't let you do that anymore. I still enjoy it. So, I follow you know, what goes on, that and as well as in my other profession that I had, in the materials corrosion type work.

KS: Now back--

LS: And things have changed here, you know I know, we went from what essentially was a trade school.

KS: Right.

LS: Type of thing, into a university type. And even when we were, back then I think with Dr. Dwyer, he was talking about eventually he was gonna work towards a degree program, and you know eventually you got there. Money was always a problem for the place.

KS: Yes.

LS: Where it was gonna come from, and you've gone to, what this is your fourth school ship, I think, since.

KS: Yeah.

LS: Not counting the little yacht that they had over at Tiburon. In fact, I just got through reading a book, there's a new book out on Kings Point. And interesting enough, their history, pretty well parallels what we have here. Where they transferred into academic type, degree. And even though they're federally funded, getting money was always a problem for them, too. So, it was a very parallel type operation.

[30:10]

KS: Now, was the Liberty ship that you went out on, was that the only ship that you went out? Or what all other ships have you gone out?

LS: That first trip was it was nine months' worth.

KS: Right.

LS: We had a good time, you know the Philippines, where you went back down to Australia, and we loaded rations and hope our Tasmania, which wound up being what our favorite port probably, next to Sydney.

KS: Why was that your favorite port?

LS: Oh, the way we got treated, the local population. I still remember Sicily. From there. But, anyway, yeah as a matter of fact, Victoria invited the officers, when you arrive in an Australian port, and especially during the wartime, on a Sunday, everything going on was a Salvation Army band was marching up and down the street, and I answered their invitation, for the officers to come for dinner someplace. I signed up for, or called the one that was a Miss, she turned out to be the daughter of the dean of the University of Tasmania.

KS: Oh my god!

LS: And they introduced me to Sicily. I think the captain had such a good, if we coulda scuttled the ship right alongside the dock, he woulda stayed there forever. Yeah, we took that load back up to the Philippines, and then back from there we went down to, on the way home went back to Noumea, in New Caledonia, and got diverted over to, back over to Australia to pick up a load of bulk coal, which was a change from.

KS: Right.

LS: And so, we hauled bulk coal back over to Noumea, unloaded it there, and then went in ballast, from Noumea, to Antofagasta, Chile.

KS: Oh!

LS: 34 days in a Liberty ship, light.

KS: No cargo!

LS: Well one ship, no land and one ship in 34 days.

KS: Oh my gosh!

LS: And we flooded the number two and number five holes, and put in about three foot of water, just to get the screw into the water. So that was a loader's haul. We loaded bulk nitrate and took them in Pedro.

KS: Okay.

LS: That was the first trip, and the second one was another Liberty ship, and older one. 'Cause the first one was a brand-new ship, the other one had been in the European theater, and it just come across, it had been used for troop transport previously. That one wounded up with, again, the kind of experiences you have. The first captain we had on that was an old Norwegian who'd been brought back, and the poor man, he didn't have very good eyesight. He didn't have very good hearing. It was really a challenge, with him. He was at logger hands with the chief engineer, the whole time.

KS: The whole time!

LS: And we took, a load of military, really. Well the most interesting thing was, it was the usual general cargo, with a lot of gasoline and that sort of thing, but we had about 14,000 cases of beer. It was the last thing that was loaded. Which made a lot of PX supplies? We took that and we wound up in the invasion in the Philippines, we went into Lingayen Gulf.

KS: Okay.

LS: And we were one of two ships that were loaded this way. Everything was being unloaded onto docks, while we had the beer, we were very, very popular.

KS: I bet!

LS: We had docks, you know Company C was supposed to be moving this stuff but, the other outfits heard about it in a hurry, they'd come alongside, 50 cases of beer per sling load, two sling loads per deck, and off went 100 cases of beer. And I was told they were lucky to have gotten 6,000 cases of that to the rest of, distributed to a good cause. But that was one of even my more exciting, on the way back from, and that was convoy work. All the way from Lae in New Guinea, into Leyte Gulf, and from Leyte Gulf, around to Lingayen Gulf. That was where these seven ship convoys were. Interesting enough, you maintained position, and you know as a bridge officer, you had to either slow down or speed up, and you did this by taking a couple revolutions off or adding two, down three. And the poor engineer down there, those Liberty ships didn't even have tachometer on them, the only way could, you know it's a triple experience.

KS: Yeah.

LS: They had to time it with a stopwatch. And they adjusted speed by steam pressure.

KS: Right

LS: You know, type of thing. And I think my record on a watch was like, only two speed changes. But most of the time, you were lucky to get away with a dozen. You were either catching up, or falling back, or whatever. And that was where the skipper came in, also had to a problem, with the daytime, if they were gonna make course changes with convoys and that sort of thing, during the daytime, they would do it with flag hoist, and you would change.

KS: Right.

LS: But at nighttime, they had what you called a Christmas tree, with the three red lights, and three green lights, and then you could put different combinations, red, green, or whatever.

KS: And telling the course.

LS: And what they would do to the convoy commodore, would run across the front of the convoy at high speed, and he'd turn on those lights for 20 seconds, and when the lights went out, that was execute!

KS: Okay.

LS: Well, that skipper, you know was no way, so we wound up doing, every one of us, we would execute, and then go tell him.

KS: Right, what happened!

LS: What happened, on a thing. You'd go to these convoy conferences, and you either misunderstood or didn't hear, and he'd come back with the weirdest ideas, you know.

KS: Are you sure that's what he said?

LS: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, he was sure that there was an FBI, somebody on board, keeping a little red book on him. I mean the man was really, no I guess the final thing that I can relate according to that, on the way back from that first time in the Lingayen Gulf operation, we convoyed back to Leyte, and then back down to Hollandia, and from there we were sent down to pick up, we were going back to Australia, to pick up, turned out we went to Sydney and Melbourne to pick up rations, but anyway. Leaving Milne Bay, off the east end of New Guinea, you get out and then you go through, it's called Loisaida Archipelago.

KS: Okay.

LS: Which is just a bunch of reef barrier islands, before you are free into the Coral Sea. And I had morning watch, and we had a permanent fix on an island about 9 o'clock in the morning, when I came on, and we were heading, I remember to this day, the Jomard Passage, which was about 30 miles ahead of us. You cleared that, and you're into the Coral Sea. Well, just before noon we got close to it, there was a little marker, but this captain, he was sure that wasn't it, and he chickened out on going through, and so he decided he'd turn east, into what we were operating off of, was the ancient charts, which were full of, you know this was reported to be so many miles.

KS: Over here.

LS: Over here, and such and such. For four hours we went into that bramble patch, he wouldn't let me slow down, he disappeared, and most of the time, you could see the bottom going underneath, and I was going hard left, hard right! And the whole time I kept up a dead reckoning position, and he was sure we were someplace else, which we couldn't have reached if we'd been steaming for it from our morning fix, type of thing. Well, finally what saved the day, we came upon another anchored ship. 'Cause I'd wanted to anchor, so we couldn't do anything else. Well, okay, so they anchored, we anchored. No sooner got the anchor down, a little coastal steamer. Came along, you know. And so, they got the Navy signalman out there, do you know where the Jomard Passage is? Sure, we do, follow us. And so, both ships, up anchored. And the thing was just about a quarter mile, it was exactly where we'd been aiming for that morning. Well, when we got to Sydney, the chief engineer, I told you, didn't go along with him at all, he turned him in.

They wanted to get rid of him! But they made him get glasses, which he thought was the new glasses, and that was it. We loaded cargo, we went back up, convoyed into Leyte Gulf, and on the way to Lingayen Gulf again, we pulled up and we were supposed to pull in and the ship that came along was supposed to give you an anchorage spot. When you anchored, you know ships were, dozens and dozens of ships around, and they contacted you from the signal tower, wanna give a bearing, if you were in that anchorage. Well, he decided to anchor where we'd anchored before. Which was not where we--

KS: Where you're supposed to anchor!

LS: So, for eight days we sat there, and nobody paid any attention to us. So I and the gunnery officer, we put one of the motorboat, two of the motorboats over the side went into Tacloban, which was a run of about eight miles at that time, and found out where we could join the next convoy to Lingayen Gulf. Well anyway, that was enough of sea story. When we got, the final thing was, we finally got back to San Francisco on that trip, the three mates and the gunnery, the gunnery officer got really enjoy being with them, and he was gonna be reassigned to the ship, the three mates, we'd gotten along so well together, we told the front office, we would go again, if they would get rid of the captain, and they did.

KS: And they did!

LS: The next guy was just fine. So, we made it, that trip we wound up in Cebu City when the war ended. We loaded out of Stockton, which was just like our school ship. We made a run up to Stockton and loaded military cargo outta there. And it was destined for Japan, the invasion in Japan. And we got as far as, we were in Cebu City, when the war ended, then we talked. We made another trip bay down Lae, where we picked up junk that had been down there, laid around in the jungle forever, took it back to the Philippines. And the captain didn't wanna go home, he wagered a trip back down to Australia, which was, with a crew, we had almost finally discharged, and it was rotting crates and junk. The last night, when we got the order for Sydney, the merchant crew, and the Navy crew, unloaded the last couple hundred tons of cargo onto an all oakside LCT, in one great big heap, and we took off before somebody changed their minds. I think on the way south to Australia, we got the order to dump all the ammunition. And so, the Navy put all the this over the side. If you loaded a 20-millimeter magazine, you could shoot it. And so, there wasn't any seagulls safe, and the crew had a great time with the 20 millimeters. You loaded the magazine, and you could shoot it. So, from there we hauled it back up again, and then went home. And my final trip to sea was on a C-1, which was a big step up from the Liberty. And I actually sailed with Roger Swain, who was a [19]42 graduated, was the captain. I think it was his first trip to sea, and he's quoted quite a bit in that, Golden Bear Jetty?

KS: Okay.

LS: Yeah, he's one that quoted, he went on to be a couple of Panama Canal. Married a girl in my high school class.

KS: Really, that is so funny.

LS: We went to Okinawa, and we were in the Philippines in July, when they turned the Philippines over, as a country.

KS: Independence.

LS: That was my last, other than tying up, a couple laid around here, and tied a couple ships up. That was the end of it, as far as going to sea. I did sit for my chief mate's, when I quit, I did get my…

KS: You did?

LS: I did get my chief mate's license, yeah, but never sailed on it.

[44:20]

KS: After you sailed for your second's, after that, sat for your second's, did you sail for as a second mate?

LS: I was always a second.

KS: So, you were always a second mate.

LS: Always a second mate, yeah. So, I spent the whole war being a second mate. The first six months I was a third mate, sailing as a second mate.

KS: Yeah, right.

LS: Yeah, yeah.

[44:40]

KS: Do you have anything else to add?

LS: Oh no, that was, I guess that was pretty much it. I think it's a real interesting grip, what they've been doing at the academy. I support them as much as I can every year, so yeah.

KS: Thank you.

LS: Yeah.

KS: And it was a pleasure meeting you.

LS: Well thank you.

KS: Thank you so much for your time.

LS: Yeah, well you're entirely welcome. It's nice seeing the place. I guess they're gonna have a couple meetings here this morning, and I'm going to skip the dinner tonight.

KS: Right.

LS: But I'll make the cruise. Are you going out on the cruise?

KS: I'm not gonna go out on it, this is my first year not going out, because I have the dinner tonight, but tomorrow I have some obligations. I'm part of the crew team, so I've gotta do some work around.

LS: What crew team, are you racing?

KS: Yeah, crew shells.

LS: Shells?

KS: Shells.

LS: Oh, I don't know whether you know, Oklahoma City is now becoming what they hope to be the capital of the--

KS: Really?

LS: Shell racing. What they did, is they dammed up the river, just south, the main part of town, so they've got about a seven mile stretch of, you know flat land, they actually put several dams in the thing, and they've had several regattas now, where universities from all over the country come.

KS: Really?

LS: Some of the oil companies and that sort of thing are building real fancy boat houses, you know.

KS: Along the-

LS: Along the shore of the thing, and it's an area that even the taxpayers have kicked in all kind of money to develop. So, it's in the beginning development stages, but they've already are having.

KS: That is awesome!

LS: Races, type of thing.

KS: Yeah, last year we went out to Boston, and did the Head of the Charles, which is the largest race in the States, as of now. And we went out and did that last year. It was a really good time, but we have a few other races that we're doing, but mostly in California this year.

LS: Yeah, well, you're gonna be gone.

KS: I'm gonna be gone!

LS: You're gonna be gone, you may not ever to the Oklahoma City. When I was going to Berkeley, I was living in what they call Bowles Hall, which was right next to the stadium, over there, and we had a couple of people that were at that time, Berkeley was doing very well on the racing.

KS: Well they still are!

LS: Yeah, they still had those crossed oars, they still with one of their trophies, you know, up on the wall.

KS: They still are doing really well.

LS: Yeah, yeah.

KS: Top crew team in the country.

LS: Yeah, so. And they raced what, probably on the Oakland Estuary? Or where?

KS: They race, well they go to different regattas, but I think they actually practice out in the estuary.

LS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, so. Oklahoma City, now, they think they're gonna be the premier place in the country. It's centrally located, for one thing, for people to travel to.

KS: That's a reasonable place to travel.

LS: It has an idea, from what I just read in the paper, it has an idea of course for short races, or the long races, type of thing, so. Well, that's good. So which type shell do you?

KS: Well this is our first year of having enough women on our team to do a women's eight. And so, we raced a women's eight last weekend, and we got third. And then, but mostly we just race fours, because we have so few girls on the team.

LS: What's the split now on the men? Boys and girls?

KS: They say it bounces between 70% male, and like 75% male, any given year. So, we have about, I think our total number of females in the student body is about like, 150, 200.

LS: Well, you know, that's pretty good.

KS: I mean, it's a lot, compared to what was, zero.

LS: And what proportion of the student body now is planning on going, sits for a license?

KS: Sitting for license, well our, any given class, our non-licensed classes, are about, I would say 40? So, it's still the majority of our school is sitting for a license.

LS: Yeah.

KS: I'd say anywhere, like 75%, about, are sitting for a license. Even though we have, unlicensed engineering majors, we have unlicensed business, we have unlicensed global studies.

LS: Yeah.

KS: But most of them are sitting for a licensed engineering, or a licensed deck.

LS: Do you still have to do the signaling requirement? Is that still part of the license?

KS: Yeah, they still have to do their signaling requirements, and they do morse code on cruise. See, they have the liberty of using a sextant where there is a horizon.

LS: Yeah, yeah.

KS: Which you guys didn't, weren't able to do!

LS: Well the signally actually came in pretty handy, you know, 'cause I said, when you hurry up and wait on these things. And what you did, is you would spend the evening hours, there you'd get on the blinker and find out to adjacent ships, are any of your schoolmates aboard? Or what could we, especially if they had any troops on board, they would have a

movie. And so, whether we could attend, we would attend the movie or not, 'cause we sure didn't have all we had was a Scott radio that got you know, short wave radio type of thing. So that would be one of the, so bigger signals. And the captains used to appreciate you know where you didn't have to call. We had a couple of Navy ratings on board, that did most of the convoy work, and all that type of thing. But if you could answer a quick call, that was helpful. I had, I think it was on one Liberty ship we were actually on the second trip up into Lingayen Gulf, and there was another Liberty there that had, the chief mate had, before they had gotten there, and gotten sick, and been taken off, and the second and third mate had managed to get themselves killed in a Jeep accident. And so, the captain was left with no officers! And he had to move the ship down to Manila, which was about a two-night ride from there. And so, I got volunteered to help him, so the captain and I just stand watch on watch, we moved the ship down to Manila.

KS: And then you got relocated back to your ship?

LS: Yeah, the only way they tempted me, was they would fly me back up to San Fernando, that was the first time I'd ever been on an airplane. And so, they gave me orders, we moved the ship down there. And then I went out to Clark Field, got flown back up with a USO troop, let alone, that was heading for there at the time, although they didn't invite the merchant crews to the USO programs.

KS: Right.

LS: Yeah, yeah. Well, very good.

[End of interview]