

California Maritime Academy Library

# Interview with Carl Shipley

Oral History Project

Interviewee: Carl Shipley  
Interviewer: Kevin Cisneros  
Date: October 9, 2010

Place: Cal Maritime Library  
Transcriber: Rev.com

## Preface

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Carl Shipley conducted by Kevin Cisneros on October 9, 2010. 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.

Carl Shipley is a graduate of the class of 1955, Engine

## Abbreviation

**CS:** Carl Shipley  
**KC:** Kevin Cisneros

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## Interview Outline

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- 01:22 How does today's state university structure compare to when you attended?
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- 51:42 What's the significance behind the guitar-playing cartoon on your Hawsepape yearbook page?

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## Interview

[00:32]

**KC:** All right, good morning. Today is October 9th 2010, my name is Kevin Cisneros, and I'm a cadet at the California Maritime Academy. I am interviewing Carl Shipley, who was born on 3/12/35. This is an interview being conducted at the California Maritime Academy library. All right, so when did you first start at the Academy?

**CS:** August the 9th 1952.

**KC:** Okay, any particular reason you decided to come to the Academy, any maritime interest?

**CS:** At the time, I was primarily interest in getting the naval commission.

**KC:** Okay.

**CS:** And this was my last opportunity. I had some physical problems that kept me out of the naval academy and so I came here as a backup.

**KC:** Okay, and I was looking through your yearbooks and things like, said you were an engineer?

**CS:** Mm-hmm, yes.

**KC:** They spoke highly of you, said you were naturally adept.

**CS:** I enjoyed it.

[01:22]

**KC:** Good, good. All right, so as you can see, today's Academy is very similar to modern state university. How does this compare to when you attended?

**CS:** This was like modern state when we went here, this was a military academy and we lived as such and we were here, we went to school around the year, we spent half a day in a classroom and half a day on the ship every day and we were here six days out of the week. You could leave on noon, Saturday and come back midnight on Sunday.

**KC:** That was your liberty?

**CS:** That was it.

**KC:** All right. How were things like the dorms or barracks as you say?

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**CS:** We lived, two companies of us, three companies lived on the ship. I lived on the ship for two years and then three companies lived in old World War II wooden barracks. Went right along the main street out here.

**KC:** Oh wow.

**CS:** Right inside the gate.

[02:31]

**KC:** And since you were looking to go into the military, what did you think about the uniforms and inspections and things like that?

**CS:** When I first got here, it was a real change of life coming. And after a while, it doesn't bother you, I think. The first thing they did to us was cut our hair all off, and we became one. I think uniforms lend to a feeling of self and camaraderie as I think it contributed to our group being very close together, just because of the uniform.

**KC:** Absolutely.

**CS:** When we were third classmen it was kind of hard to get along with, you know for two years we had to wear neckties tucked in our shirts. Underclassmen couldn't wear a necktie outside of their cap or their shirt.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** Yeah and third classmen couldn't carry cigarettes with them, you know, in your shirt pocket. You had to keep them in your pants pocket. And then there were all sorts of things like that. The first two or three weeks your here, you said, "Well that's kinda silly." But you know, when you get to be upperclassmen then it makes a lot of sense then cause you get to do it to the other people. But, no I think uniforms and the regimentalization we had lent to the education, I really do.

[03:53]

**KC:** Yeah it seems like looking at the code that was, that the school followed, you had sort of a daily schedule.

**CS:** Mm-hmm, very march to the numbers so to speak. A bell would ring and you woke up and a bell would ring and it was breakfast time and a bell would ring and you'd go to class. And it was the same five days a week, it never varied. You ate breakfast at the same time, you ate lunch at the same time, and you went to class at the same time. And it was very regimented. We marched everywhere, back and forth so and from where I lived on the ship, we marched to breakfast and all that. And when you got to be an

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upperclassman, you didn't have to do that so much but there was a rule that underclassmen, every time you made a trip from up here to the ship, you had to pick up a cigarette butt or a piece of paper and have it with you when you got at your destination. And it kept campus clean.

**KC:** Yeah, that's definitely good. A lot of these rules that you're talking about seem like they're very familiar to the rules I was reading in this chronicle, "The Swab Rules".

**CS:** Yeah, that's what we lived by. Particularly when you were a third classman, you were called the swab, we had all sorts of rules like if you met an upperclassman in the hallway or a passageway, you got out of his way and you had a thing that was called slap the bulkhead. If you didn't make noise, he might stop and have reporters with you. But third classmen, they did things with us that would put you in jail today.

**KC:** Yeah, I've heard a little bit. And so, you sort of were saying, liberty was on Saturday?

**CS:** Saturday noon until Sunday midnight.

**KC:** So, did they allow you to wear civilian clothes during liberty or was it?

**CS:** Yeah, no you could wear civilian clothes, but you had to dress off-site. You couldn't keep any civilian clothes on.

**KC:** In order to leave campus.

**CS:** Yeah, so there was a place up at the top of the hill had lockers in it.

[06:11]

**KC:** Oh, okay, okay. All right let's talk a little bit about the core cadets. How were divisions structured? I know they're very different than how they are today.

**CS:** There were, when I was here, there were four companies. About 50 or 60 people at present. Each company had a company commander and a sub-commander and an adjutant. So, you had three officers and then it was pretty well split each of the companies had the same number of first class, second class, third class, so we were pretty well-balanced population-wise. Then there was a battalion commander, sub-commander, and adjutant.

**KC:** Okay.

**CS:** And so that's how we were organized, and in the companies, there were no differentiation between deck and engineer people, we were all mixed up together.

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**KC:** Oh, yeah, I see.

**CS:** That was it, the only separated in the classroom.

**KC:** Okay, and since there was this very close sort of leadership role, the first class, how did this play in the training experience?

**CS:** I think as underclassmen, you really relied, particularly in practical subjects, for the upperclassman was your instructor and your mentor. And I think when you worked with a first-class engineer, you really got an education from him because it was hands on and personal.

**KC:** Yeah.

**CS:** And you lived with him. And I know I had an upperclassman that mentored me for two years. And I probably would not have made it through the school without that mentoring. Because coming here and going into marine engineering was totally foreign to me, I was a farmer.

**KC:** Okay.

**CS:** And so, when I came here, I was learning something that I didn't know anything about. And I think upperclassmen interfacing, was very essential to our education, you know, it really was.

[08:20]

**KC:** Okay, so it was a very almost militaristic. So how was the social life at the Academy?

**CS:** There wasn't any. It was, you know, what we made of it. You know, we played intramural type sports. We didn't compete off-campus in anything except basketball and water polo and so everything we did sport-wise and stuff was picked up in games and things like that. And the rest of the time, when you were doing four years in three, you spent a lot of time turning and burning because we went to school year-round, so you kept busy that way. And the day was so structured, that you didn't have much time for social. You know, and when we went to the barracks at 10 o'clock, the lights went out. And if you had late study or something if you had to wait until the CDO had done his night check and the you got back up and turned your flashlight on to study.

**KC:** Oh wow.

**CS:** Yeah, if you turned the lights on in the room, there'd be somebody around wanting to know what you were doing.

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**KC:** Okay, what would you and your friends do for fun, or just to get away from just things on campus.

**CS:** When you went off campus, most people would, the first thing they did, there used to be a pub right at the top of the pub up here and the first thing they did was stop and have a beer cause he never asked you for ID card.

**KC:** Yeah.

**CS:** And then people just sort of scattered to the wind on those weekends, you had little cliques of people that spent their time together and did various things. But like for myself, I was from southern California and I didn't know anybody up here. So I used to spend a lot of time riding a bus to San Francisco and spend a weekend in San Francisco. Maybe two or three of us would go to San Francisco and just bum around, you know, you found out you could eat for free at the rescue mission so we'd go have breakfast at the rescue mission and make your dollar go further that way. And we would stay in the Ambassador Hotel and would guy would rent a room and then six or seven would climb through the window. That's, I paid for what we did, yeah.

**KC:** Save all the money you can.

**CS:** Yeah.

**KC:** All right. So, you're saying there's sports and then what other social events did they have at the Academy or out of the Academy?

**CS:** I think there was only one thing, and that was the Ring Dance.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** I think that was the only scheduled social event that I would go. We didn't have any open houses or anything like that. It was, I think that was the only thing, was the annual Ring Dance.

**KC:** Okay.

**CS:** And that usually was quite a formal affair held in a big hotel down in Berkeley or someplace like that and you brought your girlfriend to the senior prom, so to speak.

**KC:** Okay.

**CS:** And, as I recall, that was about it.

**KC:** Let's see. What do you remember most about your time here at the Academy?



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**CS:** What's that?

[11:33]

**KC:** What do you remember most about, good memory or significant event?

**CS:** Oh, you know, I still have so many memories of the three years. The three years I was here were probably as good a three years as I've ever spent in my life. Outside of that swab year, the first semester primarily, when they put you through hell, I enjoyed every minute I was here, I really did. We're up here having our 55th reunion today, friends for life, type thing.

**KC:** Seems like you're very close.

**CS:** Yeah, and we had, last night it was like we hadn't been apart, you know. The camaraderie amongst the core, was just one big, you know. There were only 44 of us in our class, deck and engineers and we were very close. We got along well, and we still communicate with one another 55 years later, you know, you've made friendship for life and when I went on three great cruises, that I enjoyed cruises. And we went to three great ones. We used to be gone for three months when we went on the cruise. And I enjoyed, even the afternoons, we had what was called turn to in the afternoons where we did classrooms in the morning and we worked on the ship in the afternoon. So, every afternoon you were down, and you were assigned to do something, you know, for while you were in electrical and while you were in refrigeration. And so, all of those were enjoyable experiences because we spent an awful lot of hands-on time. We did all the maintenance on the ship and we did all of the overhaul of equipment. Everything that was done, that didn't have to be done in the shipyard, we did. And so, it was a good hands-on type education. That's what we were doing, and I loved every minute of it.

[13:57]

**KC:** Oh, that's awesome, all right. Let's see, a little bit more about the student life here. Since it was very almost militaristic at the Academy, was very little social events or anything like that, did you ever have a relationship in Cali, and how did that affect it if you did?

**CS:** Well I was married, and I wasn't supposed to be. Back then, you were not supposed to be married.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** And I got married when I was second class. I think in the whole core, there were about three of us or four of us who were married. But you were not supposed to be married at all.

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**KC:** Really?

**CS:** And I would suspect that if it had become public knowledge, they probably would've thrown me out the gate.

**KC:** Wow.

**CS:** They were very strict about it. If they found about it, you were very uncomfortable.

**KC:** What was the reasoning behind that?

**CS:** I don't know, I think it was sort of a follow on from the military academies. They want midshipmen and cadets who aren't married, and I think it probably just carried over.

**KC:** I see.

**CS:** Because most of us were reserve midshipmen here, and I would suspect the Navy had similar form. So, we're just part of the commissioning thing. Since our midshipmen, an atlas can't be married, the midshipmen at Cal Maritime can't be married.

**KC:** I see, only fair.

- Yeah.

[15:15]

**KC:** All right, let's talk a little bit about the classes and training you had while you were here. So, which course was the most influential, or which did you learn the most from?

**CS:** Probably the thing that I learnt the most from because I knew the least about, was big diesel engines. Because I had never seen a marine diesel engine in my life until I got here. Probably that, and I loved boilers and turbines. I still think steam powers should be the only way to go.

**KC:** That's really nice.

**CS:** I enjoyed boilers, turbines, and diesel engines more than anything. I detested rules and regulations. Doing coast guard rules and regulations is driving me right up the wall. I did not enjoy that a bit.

**KC:** Formalities.

**CS:** Yeah, and I don't recall anything that we did that I did not enjoy except rules and regulations. I hated rules and regulations. Piles and piles of rules, you know, and it made

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a big portion of your search exam, was a good portion was rules and regulations, so you had to study them.

**KC:** It's liabilities, yeah.

**CS:** Oh, it was terrible. Everything else, I really enjoyed because like I said, I come from a farm and everything was fascinating to me. And I became interested in it cause I had, when I was a senior in high school, I was in the Sea Scouts. And we rode the ship, the Golden Bear from San Diego to Long Beach, they had a day cruise for us.

**KC:** Oh, wow.

**CS:** And on that cruise, I went in the engine room, and I fell in love with steam, and that's when I made up my mind that's what I was gonna do.

**KC:** Oh, right there you go.

**CS:** Yeah, and it was because of that day cruise I took. And I just fell in love with, you know, the steam ships.

**KC:** That's awesome, that one little.

**CS:** Yeah, one little trip, yeah. And then I knew that that's what I wanted to do.

[17:37]

**KC:** No, that's perfect. All right, so did you have any favorite staff or professors or unusuals you felt unusually close to?

**CS:** First Assistant Engineer Wes Averill was absolutely one of the finest people I ever met in my life. He was like a mentor to everybody. It was like you were the only guy he was working with at the time. He was a unique individual, and I've never met anybody like him since then. And then, the guy that taught us diesel engines was Art Behm, and I thought he was, he was about that far behind Wes Averill. Both of those guys made you feel like you were the only one in the classroom.

**KC:** That's really good.

**CS:** And on the ship, Wes was just, everything he knew, he wanted you to know and he always wanted to share it and spend time with you. He was just... I don't think I've ever met a guy that influenced me as much as Wes Averill did. And he had selective hearing, I'll never forget that. He had hearing problems, but he was very selective.

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**KC:** Oh, I see. Well that's definitely good. Really special when you find somebody like that to help you out.

**CS:** Oh yeah, he was a great guy. And then we had another fella, that taught machine shop. And his name was Frank LaBombard, and he was another one of those people that absolutely shared everything. Everything he ever knew in life, he was willing to pass on to you. And he taught the machine shop, and he had been an ex-warrant machinist in the Navy and he was just, was a super guy, you know. Those three guys really influenced me. And I think to a little bit, I've tried to model my career after them.

**KC:** That's good.

**CS:** Because they were that influential. When I think of the good way to do things, I think of those three people.

**KC:** It's good to have role models and things like that.

**CS:** Yeah, and I still remember those three guys to this day.

**KC:** All right, let's see. And we talked about the upper-class training. Really close bond between you.

**CS:** Yes, yes, very, very. And, you know, particularly those of us who lived on a ship for most of our time here, you were in pretty close proximity, 24 hours a day, you know, the number two hold on a ship was all berthing compartments, now we all slept two high in there. And, you know, you had the heads in the showers were all community and those were the days when even the heads didn't have partitions in them or anything, you know, the head was just all one big trough and when everybody's sitting down reading the newspaper, you know, you get to be pretty good friends.

**KC:** Yeah, that's one way of bonding.

**CS:** Yeah and you know, and you just lived so close together all the time. And you moved as a body. Everything you did, you moved as a group. And I think that carries over.

[21:15]

**KC:** Yeah, definitely. All right let's talk a little bit about your cruise. Let's see, how would you describe cruises aboard the Golden Bear?

**CS:** They were great times. The engineers, the ship was twin-screwed and had a two-engine room where it was turbine-electric, and you cross-connect the plants. And so, from one port to another port, forward engine room was steam, and the after-engine room guys went class. And then, next port they would shift. After engine room would steam, and

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forward engine room got it then, we would go to class. And you had the same routine at sea. You went to classrooms in the morning, and you did practical work in the afternoon every day. Even when you were at sea, you were still going to school. And then when you got in port, we went to some great liberty ports, you know, we're looking at Acapulco every year and we went to Callao, Peru, we went to Santiago, Chile, we went to Tahiti, we went to Hawaii a couple of times. And then we made a couple of day cruises, we'd go up and down the coast a couple times on PR trips. But they were great times at sea, and we weren't setting any speed records cause when you go to a single waterway, I think we could make 11 knots or something like that. So, you just spend a lot of time at sea and, you know, the deck people stay very busy, cause did the same thing, you know, their practical experience was chipping and painting and navigating. But they were great experiences and we went to some great ports and had good fun every time we went.

[23:02]

**KC:** All right, let's see, what were the engine rooms like? Cause you said there were two engine rooms.

**CS:** Yeah, there were two engine rooms, and there was a single boiler in each one. And then each one of them had a 400-kW ship service generator in them, turbine. And the ship was turbine electric. The engine rooms basically were copies of the T2 tankers.

**KC:** Okay.

**CS:** And they were 6000 horsepower AC motor. And then you could cross-connect the plants and drive both motors off of one generator. And so, when we were at sea, that's what we did. And then in-between the two engine rooms was the auxiliary space, and there were two triple-effect silver shell evaporators down in there and so and then the number three cargo hold had a diesel engine and a donkey boiler. And that's where we did our diesel training was in the number three hold, was where they had a diesel engine. I hooked up to a water break in there.

**KC:** Okay.

**CS:** And the tool room was there, and a machine shop. And basically, you know, we were just, you'd have to do like one trip, you'd have to be in the tool room at 10, you know, so you might stand a mid-watch in the tool room being very bored cause nobody had written any on . But as underclassmen, we all had to work in the scullery, dish washing, and on mass deck and working as a head and working in the laundry, and you rotated around on all of those things, everybody got their turn to do everything, from scrubbing heads to working in the laundry. And the laundry in that ship was in the stern and it wrapped around the stern. And oh God, it was hot, you know. But you have to press all the people's khakis and patch those and wash them. I'd look back at the water to wonder what

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skin has came out. You know, cause making all your own water, you didn't waste too much water.

**KC:** Exactly.

**CS:** But it was a good experience because everybody did everything. By the time you got out of your swab year, you had got to do a lot of dirty jobs. And I think that makes you appreciate more the guy that does the dirty job today.

**KC:** It really does.

**CS:** Because you can really say, "I walked a mile in his shoes." And I appreciate shoving dishes through a dish washing machine when the water's 170 degrees and it's hot in there. And you appreciate the guy that does that today, you really do.

**KC:** Really helps with respect.

**CS:** Mm-hmm, yeah.

**KC:** Definitely. So how was watch aboard the ship?

**CS:** We stood normal watches, four on and eight off. And when you were at sea, you did a normal four and eight rotation and then when your engine room wasn't steaming, then you spin a six to ten type day. And a half hour in classrooms. Below the berthing space, were four classrooms. Below, in the number two cargo hold, there were four classrooms down there and so you went to school down there. And at 10 o'clock, the lights were out. There was a, I think our recreation consisted of a shortwave radio, that was in the number three hold on the main deck, there was a shortwave radio, a piano and a ping-pong table. That was it, yeah. Yeah, yeah, that was it.

**KC:** Seems like you have the day is pretty much structured where it was classes, some practical training, and then some day work.

**CS:** Yeah, yeah, that's what you did every day. The only difference was you did it Saturdays a week where you are on cruise, where you only did it five and a half days when you're in here, so.

**KC:** I'm very similar to that, ours is now on cruise. So, it still gets very carried over. Let's see, what was your favorite port?

**CS:** Pape'ete, Tahiti.

**KC:** Really?

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**CS:** Yeah.

**KC:** You have any good stories?

**CS:** None for your record.

**KC:** That's okay, yeah.

**CS:** If you brought anybody in here and asked what their favorite port is, they'd have a story not for publication. You know, we were young 18, 19, 20-year-olds and we were having fun.

**KC:** Yeah.

**CS:** Most of us, our first time away from home, so, yeah, we had fun.

[28:13]

**KC:** Yeah, good. Let's see, so you don't have to get too in depth in this, I'm a little curious myself, what's the story behind the equator crossings?

**CS:** Well back in those days, when you crossed the equator if you had not been across the equator, it was something you sort of looked forward to but you really didn't, because 24 hours before, it really got kind of hairy. If you hadn't had been across the equator, those who had really started harassing you. And the day you crossed the equator, it was about three hours of pure hell.

**KC:** Oh, man.

**CS:** Yeah, the first time I crossed, I was third class and on the front of the ship, the ship had quite a rise in it from the forward deckhouse up, it was pretty steep. And they constructed a tunnel out of canvas and they greased the deck. And they had saved all the garbage for about a week and it was all dumped in this big tank in the deck. And they greased the deck and you had to crawl through this tunnel. And then, you get almost there, and they'd blast you back with a fire hose. After about 10 tries, they would let you come through. Then you had to go over an obstacle course and you had to get in this big swimming pool. It was full of like three weeks' worth of garbage that they'd saved up. And you'd have to go in that thing and then you'd have to kiss the baby's belly. And the guy who played the baby, was the ship's cook and he was a huge guy, he was a Samoan and he had a great big old belly. And he'd sit up on a king's throne there and he'd rub it all up with axle grease and water pump grease and then you'd have to pick a cherry out of his bellybutton. When you'd done that, you had crossed the equator. It was a fun day out. And then next year when you get there.

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**KC:** They look forward to doing it to the cadets.

**CS:** Yeah, but it was quite a thing. Some people really did like it. It was real harassment for about three hours. But you look back on it and you look at your certificate after, you kinda find, yeah, you realize it.

**KC:** In retrospect.

**CS:** Yeah. But I would suspect that we did things on equator crossings that would probably get you in trouble today.

**KC:** Yeah.

**CS:** Yeah, you'd wind up in trouble.

**KC:** It's definitely a lot more conservative.

**CS:** Oh yeah. Well throughout our third class year, hazing was what you lived by 24 hours a day, you know, and you accepted it, that was just part of the thing.

**KC:** You know your place--

**CS:** Yeah, and that's where you were, and you had things like, if an upperclassman asked you for a light for a cigarette, you better have a book of matches in it. Well then you'd have to count your matches, and if it wasn't a new book with four matches, then you had to carry two books of matches.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** Now we had a classmate that used to walk around with a paper sack full of matches because he'd get caught so many times, if you didn't get him a new book of matches, then you had to carry two books of matches. And this guy carried, you know, carried a paper bag full of matches. Or if you didn't have a cigarette butt or something in your hand when you got down to the head of the pier. You could do whatever you want, you know. We'd do things like Mayo Hall there, they would put an X on a brick out there and on your spare time, you'd have to go find that X.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** Yeah, if you didn't have your right amount of matches or something, you might have to go look for the X and I used to go out there at night looking for the X. I'd done something. Or you'd have to count the tiles on the head on the ship. And they had those little Xs on them.



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**KC:** Oh, yeah.

**CS:** And, I think there were 33,000, something like that and you'd have to count those, and they knew what the answer was. Or you would, I had, my guy, Bill Emery was my first-class mentor. And I did something that ticked him off one day and he made me measure the ship in toothpicks.

**KC:** Aw man.

**CS:** So, I had to go all round the deckhouse and measure, count the toothpicks and then calculate what it would be down through the center line.

**KC:** Oh wow.

**CS:** So that's what I had to do, that took me about a week and a half, I think. But I had to do that, or they'd do something like, there were communal heads up there, and you might have to play submarine. And that would be, you'd have to put your feet in the toilet bowl and then the guy would say fire one, flush it, it's cold saltwater put on your feet. Have to play submarine. They had some strange things for underclassmen to do. And you look back on them, and they were funny when you think about it, they really were.

**KC:** Yeah, look back on it and laugh, that's always good.

**CS:** Yeah, and some of the things they'd pull on you, like, Wes Averill, I think my second week here, we were doing turn two down there, and I never even thought about it, he said, "Shipman, go get me a gallon of vacuum." Oh, I'll go find that. Yeah and I got to the tool room and I asked the guy back there, I said, "Hey, I need a gallon of vacuum." He said, "What?" Never even thought about it. Or they'd send you off to get red oil and green lighters from the burner lamps.

**KC:** I would be guilty--

**CS:** Yeah, and when you come the farms they would, you know. You know that more better than I do.

**KC:** I've been on the receiving end and on the giving end too.

**CS:** They did some great things; they did some great things. But I had a great time, and it's really very super. I enjoyed every minute of it.

[34:48]

**KC:** Definitely. All right, so what sort have changes have you noticed? Obviously, a lot of things will be drastically different.

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**CS:** The regimentation is the biggest thing, you know, and you just look at the campus. Our only permanent dwellings at the time were Mayo Hall. It was here when I got here and they built the mess deck and they built the classroom building, which I think is now next to the ending building too. But I was only in that for one semester when they had finished that. Cause we went to classrooms that were in old wooden barracks buildings right along the water here right about where this building is.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** There were one big, long building and we went to classroom there. And then, when I was first class, they constructed a new classroom building which was poured concrete, I'll never forget about it and it had that wet cement smell to it.

**KC:** Oh yeah.

**CS:** And I think the only class I took in it, I did a diesel class and a refrigeration class, the only two classes I took in that new class building. But that's the biggest thing you see on the campus, it's just grown, you know, and we had the same number of acres, it just was all empty.

**KC:** They're definitely making, in view of the space they have, it's getting bigger every year.

**CS:** Yeah, and I think that's the number one thing and then of course, the curriculum has expanded so, you know, it just looked like when we came here, nobody had even invented a simulator, you know, and things like that. So, you were doing a lot more hands on stuff. Even in the classrooms, you didn't have very many working models or anything like, you know, no videos and so you did a lot of stuff that was inanimate. You were looking in a book at a diesel engine, a big diesel engine and you could look at the picture, but you didn't appreciate how big.

**KC:** How big it actually was.

**CS:** One of those big Busch-Sulzer engines is. You know, because you just see a picture of it.

**KC:** Yeah.

**CS:** And now, I mean, videos and stuff like that and it makes a big difference. I think the biggest thing I noted was that, that it's a maritime academy, but not a military academy.

**KC:** Mm-hmm, it's very much gone towards maritime.

**CS:** Yeah, and so you see that, a tremendous change in the curriculum. And I think the difference, the lack of regimentation. And I think most of us that went through back then will get it, and that's the first thing we notice is that and the size of the campus. It's sort of

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like, when we run into guys from 30s who were in this, lived on a ship the whole time. Their whole academy was on the ship.

**KC:** Yeah. All right. And of these changes, do you think some were for the better, some were for the worse?

**CS:** Oh, I think absolutely, I think that the change in technology probably is absolutely to the better. I look and think that it's a real shame that the American Merchant Navy has disappeared.

**KC:** Yeah.

**CS:** But, you know, you come in here now and what are the chances of you getting a license job at sea? You know, with still five academies putting people into the system. When we were here, this path, Carquinez Strait, was in constant motion, the blue water ships were going up and down it, you know. And you knew, if you wanted to go to sea when you graduated, you could go to sea. And I think everybody in my class that wanted to go to sea, had a job, you know, they were here recruiting, everybody was always looking for mercenary and academy graduates. And I don't think that that's the case anymore. I don't know how many American flag ships are still running but there aren't very many of them.

**KC:** No.

**CS:** And when we went, you could almost pick what company you wanted to go with. That's one of the big changes. But I think, I don't know if doing away with the regimentation is an improvement or not. The whole world has changed, you know, the world doesn't live that way anymore, you know. And even in, I spent 26 years in the Navy and the Navy is not my Navy anymore. I don't even think I would want to be in the Navy anymore because I grew up when things were different. And I think a lot of us in our era look at it and think of the good old days and say, "That's not the way it was when." You know, well maybe it wasn't all. There was guys ahead of us that saw us and said, "Well the way we used to do it", type thing. I don't think there's anything for the worse for it when you look at pluses and minus, it becomes a matter of personal opinion. Well we grew up in an age where that was how you did it. Regimentation was the way you did it and look back, say, "That was the right way." But people are doing quite well today, you know, and we live in a different world.

**KC:** Mm-hmm, times have definitely changed.

**CS:** Yeah, and I don't think they're for the worst and I don't think we did things any better. I think probably in some areas, we had a better education, but in other ways we're lacking from what is doing today. The people, you know, we didn't spend an awful lot of time doing mathematics and stuff like that. We were hands on engineers, that's what we were being trained to do. And that's not what you're being trained to do today.

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**KC:** Yeah, there's a lot more duties, a lot more all sorts of things.

**CS:** Yeah, you know, and most of people are going, if they're gonna stay in the maritime industry, they're gonna be in shore-bound jobs. They're not gonna be going to sea. And we were all here because we were going to sea.

[41:20]

**KC:** Going to sea. All right, so you said that you went into the Navy. How did being a cadet here prepare you for that?

**CS:** Oh, I think it had everything to do with my ability to, I already had three years under my belt when I got there. You know, of regimentation. But I was blessed, I spent my entire career as an engineer in the Navy. And the first couple years I was in the Navy, my education actually hurt me.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** Because I wanted to touch it, I wanted to do this. I would see people doing something, I just think, that's not what you do, you know. And it took me a couple of years to learn that naval officers are not merchant marine officers. You know, when you're the engineer on a merchant ship, you're the mechanic and when you're the engineer on a Navy ship, you're a paper pusher. And that caused me some trouble, it really did cause me some trouble. I finally learnt how to do it, but I think the fact that this place prepared me very well for, you know, there was no transition time. I was ready to go to work the day I got done and I think all of us were that way. Most of us went into the navy at least for a couple of years and I think everybody made a transition from it.

**KC:** Yeah, seems like it. All right, were there any classes or things of that sort that you wish you had taken advantage while you were still at the Academy?

**CS:** No, because the curriculum was set, it was already done. There were no electives, you know, this is what you went, and then you went, you did these classes this year, you did those classes next year, you did those classes. And so, there were no choices to make. I look back and I think, it would've been nice to have some other things to have picked out of but you didn't have any time to do it either so, you know, if you'd have had an elective class, where was it gonna come from? Out of this four hours in the morning, or this four hours in the afternoon? Where would it have fit? So, you didn't have that kind of choice, you know, everybody took the same class at the same time. And even, all the engineers were all taking electricity at the same time, you didn't have one guy over here and one guy over there. Everything was done as a group.

[44:06]

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**KC:** All right, that's good. Let's see. You were in the Navy, so how long did you spend at sea?

**CS:** In the Navy? I spent 15 years.

**KC:** 15 years?

**CS:** Out of the 26, yeah.

**KC:** And what ship did you serve on?

**CS:** I was on a Sussex, which was an AK, I was on a Yorktown, which was a carrier, I was on a Topeka, which was a cruiser and then I wound up on the Saratoga, another carrier.

**KC:** Okay.

**CS:** And then I spent a tour as the repair superintendent at Subic Bay. And I was at the Naval Boiler and Turbine Lab for two years, in Philadelphia. I spent two years as the inspector of naval material in Buffalo, New York. And that's where I was. That did it.

**KC:** There you go. All right let's see. And, let's see. And what was your final rank as an officer in the Navy?

**CS:** Commander.

**KC:** Commander?

**CS:** Mm-hmm.

[45:23]

**KC:** Okay. Do you have any, so you have any memorable moments or memorable events, things like that happened?

**CS:** Oh, yeah, we had, you know, I probably had as many experiences in the time of the Navy. I went through two rather significant casualties, we had a main circulator expansion joint rupture when we were in Athens and flooded one of the engine rooms. That took us about three weeks to get it all done over. And then we had an engine room fire when we were in Singapore.

**KC:** Oh wow.

**CS:** And in both of those instances, the ship's force did about 95% of the restoration work. We went to sea and flew airplanes while we were still fixing our casualty.

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**KC:** Really?

**CS:** Both times. When we left Singapore, we had a boiler that had wiped out the economizer because the fire burnt off the rubber hoses that close the main stop valve and so the main stop wouldn't go closed, and the economizer went dry and it burnt that out. And my sailors changed out the economizer while we were underway and restored the entire engine room by themselves, they did all the rewiring and everything. And we stayed on the line all the time we were fixing the ship. It only took us six weeks before we got the engine running again. But we stayed on a line and ran around on three screws out there for a long time. And then on our way to Nam, we were home ported in Mayport, Florida. And so, we had to go around the world to get to Vietnam and three days out of Mayport, we lost lube oil on our main thrust bearing. It wiped out the main thrust bearing and we locked the shaft and changed that thrust bearing while we were underway. And when we got to Subic Bay, we went to measure it and we were within a thousandth of an inch of being right on the button.

**KC:** Wow.

**CS:** And they changed it at sea, and I spent some time with some great people. All the time I went to sea in the Navy I just had, it's amazing the kind of people that were making careers out of it though, you know. I just never hesitated to undertake things cause I know that people think, yeah. When I was on Yorktown, we had a bulkhead stop valve popped a hole in the casing. And we took that big stop valve out and hauled it up on a flight deck. They flew it into Long Beach, they welded up the hole and flew it back to us and I say, "Let's put it back in." And, never missed a beat. You know, you get done with a hard day like that, and you think, yeah, that was fun too.

**KC:** Yeah, definitely rewarding.

**CS:** Yeah, we had some great experiences, some great experiences. Loved every minute I was in the Navy, too. I loved every minute of it.

**KC:** Seems like the Academy worked out perfectly for you.

**CS:** Oh yeah, it just, and I was ready for it and I loved every minute of it, both places. Wouldn't hesitate to do it all over again, I really wouldn't.

**KC:** Wow, that's something you can't say about everything, that's definitely very special. Let's see, just as a small bit about first of all, if any family associated with the maritime.

**CS:** No, well my, all my dad and all of my uncles were all in the Navy.

**KC:** Oh, okay.

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**CS:** Yeah. Going back to my grandfather on my mother's, on my father's side loved the Navy. All the ones on my mother's side were all farmers.

**KC:** Okay.

**CS:** But yeah that was my only association. That's not really why I wanted to be in the Navy.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** But that day cruise that I made.

**KC:** That was the key event.

**CS:** That's what made me decide that I wanted to go to sea. Up until then, the whole thing was and the whole expectation was I was gonna be a dryland farmer in Nebraska. And my grandparents all made that assumption and everything like that and I made that cruise, that day trip and I said, "Yeah, this is my thing "and I like the smell of steam."

**KC:** There you go.

**CS:** And I really did, I just fell in love with steam. My first ship was a diesel and it drove me crazy. I says, "Thumpy go bang, are not the way to go to war." Oh, yeah. Big old Nordberg, that took some getting used to. We had a bit of fun too. That old engine didn't have a tachometer that worked.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** So, you used to have to judge your RPM by counting the strokes on the fuel pump. You know, the timing mark on the fuel pump, and you hold your finger on there and you count the times that the timing mark came by and then they knew, whether you were on turns or not. Yeah, that's the way we ran it.

**KC:** And they do what you don't.

**CS:** Well they would start engine, and we used to have a contest to see who could get the most starts out of our tank of air. I had a second-class engineer, and he could get eight or nine starts out of a tank of air.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** Oh, he could hear it, and he'd know when to move without the air to start and he just, he had a knack at it. I could get it three or four starts out it, but he did eight or nine consistently. He was a guy that just, he had a knack for it. Had found his niche in life being the throttleman on a Nordberg diesel. All good times.

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**KC:** All good times.

**CS:** Yeah.

[51:42]

**KC:** Very good. Now, in your yearbook, I was taking a look at the [19]55, the Hawsepipe. There's a little cartoon of you plucking away at a guitar.

**CS:** Yeah.

**KC:** Any significance behind that?

**CS:** Yeah, that's what that's for right there. When I was in third class, I found an old guitar in the lucky locker.

**KC:** Really?

**CS:** I don't know who it belonged to, or if it could have any strings on it or anything. And there were two of them in there. And, my roommate was Gene Patrick, and we were both working in the electrical shop at the time. That was our practical thing at the time. And we took those two old guitars and we sand them all down and we repainted them with electrical varnish. And so, we call them our electric guitars.

**KC:** Oh, cool.

**CS:** We ordered some strings for them out of a magazine. We ordered two sets of Gibson strings out of a magazine and we had them sent to, Pat ordered them and he had them sent Tex Patrick and TMA. And we strung up those guitars and we just learnt to play those guitars. Pat gave it up, but I still play. We used to sit around and play guitar all the time. So that's where that came about. I think I was the only one in the class that played the guitar. I sort of sat around and taught myself how to play it, cause I didn't have a lot else to do.

**KC:** That's cool, that's real cool.

**CS:** And you know, that's where that thing in there. Right up, everybody called me Thistle Picker on my first go. There used to be a big argument. I listened to country music all the time and probably 80% of the people were into R&B at the time. And we used to really carry on. If we were to say publicly some of the things, we'd say back then about people that were into R&B more, you'd be in a jailhouse now. It was a battle back then, oh yeah. All the hillbillies and the R&B people were really duking it out. And back then, you know, underclassmen couldn't have a radio or anything in their rooms. Only upperclassmen could have that. You had to be in second class to get a radio and so I'd



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have to listen to the radio on the sly. But I listened to country music all the time and everybody else listened to R&B. We used to have some discussions. Some discussions. But that's where they came from.

**KC:** That's a great story. All right, well we're getting pretty close here. Is there anything else I should ask you or you'd like to tell me before we finish this up.

**CS:** No, I think you had a real well-developed thing. It sort of covered our three years here, it really did.

**KC:** Good, I'm glad, that's what I tried to do.

**CS:** And like I say, it was an absolute fabulous three years and I don't think you'll talk to anybody that was in the class of 55 that doesn't say the same thing.

**KC:** Yeah. Seems you guys were so close and being the other way.

**CS:** Yeah, we had a great class. I think we started out with 96 or 97 and only 44 of us graduated. So, we were pretty close together and still are, you know. And it's like last night, it's like you're just are coming out of a classroom with some of the people. Some of those guys have gotten a lot older than me but it's still all right. It was great, it really was. And we had some characters in the class, you know, there were quite a group of people and one of them is here. If you ever get a chance to meet him, you wanna talk to Mike Skinner.

**KC:** Mike Skinner?

**CS:** He's the guy that drew all the cartoons.

**KC:** Oh right, I'll be sure to find him.

**CS:** He's a guy with a beard, he lives in Australia now, but he came up for this get together.

**KC:** Oh wow.

**CS:** So, if you get a chance, meet Mike Skinner. But he's the guy that did this. He was our oddball.

**KC:** Oh yeah.

**CS:** Mike spent as much time in the commodores' waiting room as he did in class. And he still marches to a different drummer. He hasn't changed a bit. But if you get the chance, meet Mike Skinner.

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**KC:** I'll tell him you sent me.

**CS:** He's a great guy, okay.

**KC:** Awesome. All right let's go ahead and wrap this up, this is Carl Shipley, and this is concluding the interview. Thank you very much.

**CS:** Oh yeah, enjoyed it.

[End of interview]