



United States Coast Guard
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U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interview of **Gunner's Mate 2/c Charlie Bulanti, USCGR**
USS Arthur Middleton (APA-25)

Landings at Saipan, Leyte, Luzon and Okinawa (WWII)

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Gunner's Mate 3/c Charlie Bulanti, USCGR

Biographical Summary

Born in Talamona, Italy on 19 March, 1923, Charlie Bulanti immigrated to the United States at the age of five and grew up in Salinas, California where his father worked in the construction business. His father was an architect and builder. After graduating from Salinas High School he attended Salinas Junior College for a year until the summer of 1942. Enlisting the U.S. Coast Guard on 11 August 1942 he attended recruit training at Government Island (today Coast Guard Island), in Alameda, California. Transferred to the Hawaiian Islands he became a gunner's mate and joined the crew of the USS *Arthur Middleton* (APA-25). Assigned to the 20mm guns on the flying bridge he participated in four landings: Saipan, Leyte, Mindora Island (Luzon) and later Okinawa. After Okinawa the *Arthur Middleton* was undergoing repairs in Wilmington/San Pedro when the war ended. Charlie Bulanti was discharged as a Gunner's Mate 2/c (GM2) at San Francisco on 15 December 1945.

After the war, Bulanti attended the University of San Francisco, the College of San Mateo and Canada College. He opened a furniture store in San Francisco, and later, started a travel agency, Bulanti Worldwide Travel, with his brother.

He currently lives in San Carlos, California with his wife Frances. They have three children, Gary, Michael, and Lori, as well as six grandchildren.

INTERVIEWER: When and where were you born?

BULANTI: I was born in Talamona, Italy on March 19, 1923.

INTERVIEWER: Can you spell Talamona for me?

BULANTI: T-A-L-A-M-O-N-A.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Thank you. Can you tell me briefly about your childhood and how you came, like when you immigrated to the United States and how you came to join the Coast Guard in World War II?

BULANTI: I came to the United States at the age of 5. My father had come three years earlier and he made enough money to bring my mother, myself, my sister and my brother. I was attending junior college at Salina Junior College. It is now Hartnell College. The war broke out and I decided to join the Coast Guard because I had met a gentleman who was in the Coast Guard and he told that there was a flight program available. All you had to do was join the Coast Guard and tell you wanted to go to the flight program and they would give you the proper tests and so forth. That, however, was not true. I spent eight weeks at Alameda [CA] Coast Guard Station.

INTERVIEWER: That was for recruit training?

BULANTI: Yes. I attending training for eight weeks and then I was put in the "pineapple draft." The "pineapple draft" meant that you would go overseas to Hawaii. October the 16th, I believe, I arrived in Honolulu.

INTERVIEWER: Got there by ship?

BULANTI: Yes. A troop carrier. About 5,000 people on that ship.

INTERVIEWER: What happened when you got to Hawaii?

BULANTI: Got to Hawaii and they took some of us and sent us to Pier 11 where they had Coast Guard training and another station called Wailupe. That was a training station just a little bit north or south from Kaimuke and there I met Art Bardune, who was a very fine piano player, and I still play with him today, and Jack Maier and they wanted to start a band.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of training did they do at those training centers in Hawaii?

BULANTI: They did mostly training in small arms. We went on hikes, pseudo invasions, that sort of thing.

INTERVIEWER: Had you decided to become a gunner's mate or was that later?

BULANTI: It was at that time that I decided to become a gunner's mate. I had some knowledge of guns because I was a hunter and a fisherman all my life and decided I would like to find out about guns. When I achieved my third class gunner's mate rating, I decided I wanted to learn more about the guns. There was an opening at Pearl Harbor, teaching 20mm aircraft guns, so I went to that. I think it was about a one week course. After I learned about the 20mm I decided I wanted to see action. So I left the band, also I was a star on the Coast Guard basketball team.

INTERVIEWER: There in Hawaii?

BULANTI: We won the Hawaii A.A.U. championship. They had a nice team. Gene Smelzer was the coach, who later became a coach at Oklahoma State University and had offered me a scholarship to go there. So then I got aboard the *Arthur Middleton* [APA-25].

INTERVIEWER: Because they needed a gunner's mate with that training?

BULANTI: Well, what happened was that the third class gunner's mate from the *Arthur Middleton* wanted to change. So he came to Wailupe looking for someone who would replace him, and they could switch. And so he came to me and I thought it would be a good idea. And that's when I went aboard the *Arthur Middleton*. It was just before the invasion of Saipan. Maybe a month or two before the invasion of Saipan.

INTERVIEWER: So you boarded it in Hawaii and then you're sailing on the Pacific at that point and the first action you saw was the invasion of Saipan? What was that like? Were there any aircraft attacks there?

BULANTI: No. We made the landing. We landed the 4th Marines on Saipan. My first action was watching these wounded people come back because we had several surgeons aboard our ship and we would take these wounded personnel aboard and they would take care of them. I remember the first casualty I saw, it was a big black fellow and he had a head wound.

INTERVIEWER: This a wounded Marine that came back?

BULANTI: Yes, a Marine. He had a head wound and was in pretty bad shape.

INTERVIEWER: For general quarters [GQ] you were assigned to the 20mm up on the top of the ship?

BULANTI: Yes, I was above, on the flying bridge.

INTERVIEWER: So you could see everything.

BULANTI: I was in charge of all of 20mms. But I had my own gun that I stayed with. But we had four and if they had trouble with any one of them, I would run over and see what I could do.

INTERVIEWER: When you weren't at general quarters what was your routine like on a regular day sailing across the Pacific? What did you do as a gunner's mate? Did you stand a watch?

BULANTI: Yes. I had a watch, four on and eight off on the forward 40mm. That was my watch station.

INTERVIEWER: So that gun was manned all the time?

BULANTI: Yes. So were the other guns. But the 40mm was kind of an interesting gun because I didn't know too much about it. Later on, when we got to some island in the South Pacific, Guadalcanal, they had training for the 40mm, and I went to that. That was a powerful weapon.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do with your free time on the *Middleton*? When you were off watch?

BULANTI: My free time was spent working. When I wasn't on watch I spent my time cleaning guns and doing whatever maintenance they needed. It was very interesting and I hated the idea that I had the watch, four on and eight off, and then still had to do work, but I couldn't get rid of it. Nobody else wanted it.

INTERVIEWER: You started a band on the *Middleton*. How long were you aboard the *Middleton* before you managed to get a little band together?

BULANTI: Immediately, as soon as I got on board. I met Pete Beelia, who lives in Redwood City, by the way. His first invasion was Tarawa and [there] he really saw [a] blood fest. He played the accordion. Then we had a fellow by the name of Bill Wycoff, who was a studio musician from Hollywood and he played the electric guitar. So the three of us got together. And then there was a drummer, by the name of Poushay, and we bought drums for him. So we had a group and called ourselves "The Hooligans."

INTERVIEWER: Did you practice then, on the ship, whenever you got a chance?

BULANTI: Yes, but that would be very rarely.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever perform for the crew?

BULANTI: Yes, and we performed for the invasion group, the Marines and the Army contingent. We put on skits, we did all kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER: After Saipan, where did the *Middleton* do next?

BULANTI: After Saipan we got ready to do Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. Leyte Gulf was an interesting invasion. We off-loaded our troops and were sitting in the bay. The cruiser *Honolulu* [CL-48] was on my port, maybe a couple hundred of yards. I'm up on the flying bridge cleaning a 20mm and I see this Japanese plane come over what was called Sugarloaf Mountain I believe, come over the mountain, drop down and drop a fish [torpedo] into the *Honolulu*. Of course we couldn't deflect our guns that low to even get to the plane because that plane flew right over the water and away it went. We took some of the casualties from the *Honolulu* into our sickbay. Matter of fact, the chief gunners' mate from the *Honolulu* died aboard our ship. That was Leyte.

INTERVIEWER: Was that the only aircraft attack at Leyte? Were there any kamikaze attacks?

BULANTI: No, we didn't see any kamikazes until Okinawa.

INTERVIEWER: Then where do you go?

BULANTI: After that I think we went to Macon Island, or some other island to prepare for the landing at the Philippines, Lingayen Gulf.

INTERVIEWER: You landed troops at Lingayen. What was that like?

BULANTI: That was very mild. We say no enemy aircraft and no problems at all.

INTERVIEWER: What do you go next?

BULANTI: Our next invasion was going to be Okinawa, so we started routine practices to hit Okinawa. But I have to tell you something interesting that happened in, I've forgotten exactly where we were. We were in a very large group of transports and a couple of carriers, a lot of ships. And I had the duty in the smoke boat. Each gunner's mate took time in the smoke boat. And the signal to make smoke was either "QUEEN" by semaphore or blinker. So we had this ensign who was a paymaster and didn't have any experience in the service whatsoever. He was the officer on our boat. I was the gunner's mate. We had a coxswain. We put 50 smoke pots in the boat. That was routine. So when this ensign came aboard he had this little bag for lunch, and it was a brown paper bag just as the ones we had, no difference. So he put his bag over there with ours. Every day I ate his lunch! Every day. Finally on the last day, he happened to ask the coxswain, "What do you have for lunch?" "Oh, every day we have peanut butter and jam, every day". The Ensign then asked, "What are you having, Bulanti?" I said "I don't know, it's pretty good, I just eat whatever they gave me." Well, it was his lunch (laughing). So while we are out there it's about 106 degrees and everybody is relaxing and all of a sudden this ensign wakes me up and says "Bulanti, Bulanti, make smoke" and I said "Wait a minute, what are you talking about?" "First of all we drifted out of the way, we can't even cover our area, but I don't care, I saw the signal." "Did you see QUEEN?" "Absolutely, make smoke. Make smoke or I'll court martial you." So I popped 50 smoke pots. The smoke covered the flag, my God, what a horrible thing. Commander McKay, was a wonderful man, about six foot six or seven. He jumped up on the rail and told us to come in. So we went over, we had our nets down. He said, "Get up here Bulanti and Ensign what's his name. Why did you make smoke?" I said, "He told me to." He then asked the ensign, "Did you tell him to make smoke?" "Yes sir, I did." "Why?" "I saw QUEEN!" (laughing). I'll never forget that as long as I live. We used to have a lot of fun.

INTERVIEWER: So you really weren't supposed to make smoke?

BULANTI: No. We covered the flagship and that smoke is oily. Oh, my God, I popped 50 cans. On another occasion we go to GQ and we go up to our battle stations, mine on the flying bridge. We had a loading shack there, where they loaded the 20mm. I was first one up there and ran over and I got the Captain's helmet and I gave it to Shorty Long. His name was Al Long, they called him Shorty Long because he was about five foot five. He puts the helmet on and the Captain comes up as asks "Where's my hat". I said, "Just a moment and we'll find it for you sir." Well I knew that I had given it to Shorty, so I found him a helmet and said "Use this until we find it sir." He put it on. After he left, and Shorty to this day will tell you this happened, I saw him at a reunion and he said "You S.O.B." I said to Shorty, "What the hell are you doing wearing the Captain's helmet?" It's dark in there, he took it off (laughing) and I put it back. I thought that (laughing) was funny, but he's never forgotten that. We've had several reunions and every time I saw him, Shorty, says "You son of a gun, you almost got me in trouble."

INTERVIEWER: So this is all in preparation of Okinawa. Did you gather at Ulithi Athol before you went to Okinawa, or where did you assemble everybody?

BULANTI: Yes, absolutely. Everybody assembled. On the way to Okinawa we had a CVE. You know what a CVE is?

INTERVIEWER: A small carrier.

BULANTI: It carries about 25 planes, a very limited number of aircraft. Those planes took off and I watched the Japanese and the Americans fighting an air battle. I was wishing that I had some type of camera that I could record this. This was kind of late in the afternoon, and all those flyers, they had to land in the dark. They all got some kind of a commendation.

INTERVIEWER: So there was a dog-fight in the air that you watched from the flying bridge?

BULANTI: Oh, yea. That was exciting.

INTERVIEWER: Did the *Middleton* ride fairly well when it was at sea?

BULANTI: Once you got used to it, it was fine. We got into a typhoon before Okinawa, on the way there. God, it was the most horrendous experience I've ever had in my life. I think the records show that we lost two or three destroyers because of that. Anyway, that was interesting.

INTERVIEWER: I'm sure there must have been some damage on your ship. So you finally get to Okinawa?

BULANTI: We assemble and the landing craft started moving out and going in. Just after we landed, kamikazes started coming over. And this one kamikaze was up there quite a ways, 5,000 feet and I watching this airplane, and the airplane decides to come down. And it looks like he's coming for us. As a matter of fact he lands between our ship and the ship adjacent, which I think was the *Callaway* [APA-35]. The *Callaway* was hit. But this one comes down and I watch and I'm telling you it was not any further than maybe 50 feet from the flying bridge. So I can see it and I saw that pilot's head and he had the stick forward and he was just looking down. The plane went in the water, never exploded, just kept going.

INTERVIEWER: And you were firing at him the whole time?

BULANTI: No. We never fired a shot. The reason we didn't is because we were too close to other ships. Matter of fact, we were hit at that time, we were hit with 20mm in the bow and in the stern, both places, and we had, I don't know how many wounded in the gun crew.

INTERVIEWER: Was this before, during or after the troops were unloaded?

BULANTI: After. They were already on the island. I guess there must have been twenty or thirty kamikazes that came over, and they did a lot of damage. They crippled the *Callaway*, I know that.

INTERVIEWER: Were you ever able to fire at them if they were up high enough?

BULANTI: No. The 40mm might have fired. I don't recall. We were too close with the 20s -- too many ships around us. As a consequence we got hit forward and aft by friendly fire. The *Callaway* got hit in the flying bridge.

INTERVIEWER: You probably had the best view of anybody on the ship.

BULANTI: It was marvelous. I liked it when I was up there working with the guns because you are on top of everything. You see everything. Matter of fact we had a guy come on board, a full commander, Oscar Wev, W-E-V. He comes aboard, after Okinawa, and he is the meanest guy that you ever want to meet. I'm on the flying bridge looking down and they're working on the tank lighter, we had two tank lighters. Here come Wev and goes under the bow of the tank lighter. At the moment the bow comes down and hits him on the head. The only thing that saved his life was the fact that it stopped at the gunwale. He interviewed everybody aboard that ship to see if somebody was trying to kill him (laughter). I don't think you should print that. It's interesting, it actually happened. He was in sick bay for a month or so recovering.

INTERVIEWER: Was that on your way to Saipan or from Saipan on your way to Hawaii?

BULANTI: This is after Okinawa.

INTERVIEWER: After Okinawa where did you go?

BULANTI: After Okinawa we went to Pearl Harbor.

INTERVIEWER: Are you taking wounded with you?

BULANTI: Yea, we took wounded personnel, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever have any Japanese prisoners-of-war that you transported on the *Middleton*?

BULANTI: Yes, we did. We had about 30 or 40 Japanese prisoners and think they were from a Japanese sub that had been sunk. They were the crew from the sub. Part of my duty was to post guards. We had guards up above and they were down in the hold. I used to go down and mingle with the Japanese. Several of them spoke English.

INTERVIEWER: Friendly conversation, more or less?

BULANTI: Oh, yea. I mean, you know, chatting. This one Japanese officer had a watch and I want to buy it and he wouldn't sell it to me.

INTERVIEWER: Did you let them off when you got to Pearl Harbor?

BULANTI: Yes. We dropped them off at Pearl.

INTERVIEWER: And then from Pearl Harbor, what did you do on the *Middleton*?

BULANTI: Then we went back to the States. I think we went back to Wilmington [Todd Shipyards, Wilmington, California].

INTERVIEWER: You were in the yards there for repairs?

BULANTI: Yes. We were in the Todd Shipyard in Wilmington and we were preparing at that time for the attack on Japan. And as a matter of fact, the gunnery officer, a wonderful man, he was an attorney from Boston. His name was Ed Callahan. He liked me.

INTERVIEWER: What rank was he?

BULANTI: He was a full lieutenant. Lieutenant senior grade and he would get a bottle of scotch in a shoe box. Anytime he got a bottle of scotch he would ask me to come up to officers' country and have a drink with him. He wanted me to go to officers' school. So he taught me things. He taught me how to navigate with a sextant. He was a wonderful officer. I can never forget on August the 12th the war was over. August the 4th there were four of us that took the test to go to the U. S. Coast Guard Academy [for officer training]. This was before the war was over. But, who the hell wants to go after the war? So anyway, four of us took the test. I never found out if I failed it or passed it. I have a hunch that I aced it. But, nevertheless, I get a call, "Gunner's Mate Bulanti report to the executive officer." Oscar Wev, he was the Exec. So I go up. He says, "Bulanti, we're going to be going to Japan and you're the only guy that knows how to mix recoil fluid for our 3-inch fifty." I said, "Yes, but anybody can learn that. I just happened to read about it." "I know that you did mix the recoil fluid. If you stay on the ship I'll make you a chief gunners' mate." I said, "I wouldn't stay on this ship if you made me admiral of the Coast Guard." He called me a son-of-a-bitch and said "I could throw you in the brig and you wouldn't see the light of day for three days until I let you out." But I said, "But you'd have my mother to deal with (laughter)." Because I had called my mother and told her I was coming home, going on leave.

INTERVIEWER: Did he know you had applied to go to officers' training?

BULANTI: Oh, yea.

INTERVIEWER: He wanted you to withdraw that and stay on the ship and then he would make you a Chief Gunner's Mate?

BULANTI: Absolutely. Well, the war was over and I really had no interest in becoming a chief gunner's mate and I had no interest in going to the Coast Guard Academy. Although, now that I think back, I should have taken the rate, stayed another six months, and gotten out as a chief. No big deal but maybe some measure of satisfaction, but I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: So the war ends. You're still in Todd Shipyard at that point.

BULANTI: Then I got transferred to the Coast Guard Base at Wilmington. I was in charge of the armory, of all the armories. I had a jeep. My job was to go around and check and make an inventory. So I had nice duty, wonderful duty. When I got to Wilmington, here was this beautiful blonde SPAR [a member of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve] playing tennis. They had a tennis court there. I used to go over there and watch her through the fence. I had nothing to do. So I got to talking to her, I told her that I had a 30-day leave when I got there, but I've never had any other leave. There was another leave you could get. "Can you do anything for me?" She said, "Let me see what I can do." So she got me another 30-day leave. When I got back she was gone. She was gorgeous. She spoke French and I had studied French in high school and college and she used to come to the armory. I'd go to the baker and get some fresh doughnuts and things and bring them in, and she and I would have coffee and doughnuts and speak in French. Then my number came up, so I took 15 guys back to San Francisco with me.

INTERVIEWER: Let me go back to Okinawa. The records indicate that Lieutenant Commander Jack Dempsey, the boxing champion was aboard the *Middleton* during the invasion of Okinawa. Did you have any contact with him?

BULANTI: Oh, yes, absolutely. And Bob Crosby!

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to ask you about him too, but let's do Jack Dempsey first.

BULANTI: Well, Jack Dempsey was aboard and he going to make the invasion of Okinawa. He was a lieutenant commander. A very nice chap. I talked with him. He was out there talking with people. A very friendly man, a big guy. Bob Crosby asked me if he could play my clarinet. "Sure" I said and let him play my clarinet.

INTERVIEWER: We was with the Marine Band?

BULANTI: No, he was not with the Marine Band. He was a second lieutenant in the Marines, going to make the landing at Okinawa.

INTERVIEWER: I thought he was a vocalist. I didn't realize he played the clarinet.

BULANTI: I didn't either. I don't think there is a record of him even playing clarinet. But he asked if he could play it and I said "sure."

INTERVIEWER: And he sat in with your little band on the *Middleton*?

BULANTI: Yea, a wonderful guy. Very soft spoken.

INTERVIEWER: That's Bing Crosby's younger brother?

BULANTI: Yea, I think he only had one brother.

INTERVIEWER: What was the food like on the *Middleton*?

BULANTI: Horrible! The worst food I've ever had in my life. I existed on candy bars and Pet milk and bread that had the bread flies in it. Terrible.

INTERVIEWER: And every time they made a lunch for you, as when you were in a small boat, they gave you peanut butter and jelly sandwiches?

BULANTI: That was the best thing in the world. At least the bread was pretty good. The food was absolutely horrible. I lost twenty pounds at least. It was not good. But, every invasion they had steaks.

INTERVIEWER: Everybody on the ship, even the embarked troops?

BULANTI: Yea, absolutely. The Marines and the soldiers and the crew had steak every invasion. And then they would have turkey. But generally speaking the food was just marginal. We carried rations for the embarked Marines and soldiers. There were two types of rations, one of officers and another for enlisted. The K-ration was nothing but dry stuff, but the C-ration for the officers had meat or cheese or something. Several of us would go down and rob the C-rations and eat that rather than the food on the ship.

INTERVIEWER: You had liberty in Hawaii I assume?

BULANTI: Yes, of course.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have liberty anywhere else?

BULANTI: Never. We used to go have liberty on an island, maybe a remote island and we'd get two beers, that was it.

INTERVIEWER: So you would just go ashore and have your two beers?

BULANTI: Two beers and maybe play a little baseball.

INTERVIEWER: While you were on liberty in Hawaii, what was the relationship between the Coast Guard and other armed forces personnel? Did you all get along or was there animosity or rivalry?

BULANTI: There was never a rivalry. The Marines got along well with the Coast Guard. The Navy did. The Army did. Everybody did. It was a problem when I went for my first liberty after my training, after the eight weeks. We got one night in San Francisco. I had met a guy by the name of Alphin and he was a former football player from the University of Arkansas. He was a big guy, powerful kid. Since his name was Alphin and mine was Bulanti we were in the same barracks. You get to know people, so he said "Do you want to go on liberty?" We had one night liberty and got paid \$21.00. I said "Fine" so we went to the Pink Rat, I'll never forget this.

INTERVIEWER: This is in San Francisco?

BULANTI: Yes. The Pink Rat was upstairs on the corner of Montgomery and something. Anyway, you had to go upstairs, so we went upstairs, sat at the bar and ordered some drinks. This British officer sat next to me and asked me a question. He asked me who I was with and I told him the Coast Guard. "The Coast Guard, what the hell, are you kidding? That's the cheapest" and he started taking off on me. I said, "Just a minute". And Alphin was listening to all this. And he [British officer] shoves me off the bar stool. Shoves me right off the bar stool. "Gee, sir, don't do that, that's not nice. You're a gentleman, you're not supposed to do that." So I sat down again. Well the second time he did, I'd had a few drinks, and so did Alphin. And I says, "Come on. Let's go outside, I want to teach you some manners." So Alphin and I go outside and we're waiting for this guy to come out. Now there are swinging doors on this establishment. I'm waiting for this guy to come out. I'm ready to go. Alphin is standing here. The officer comes through the door and Alphin hits him, a left to the stomach, a right to the mouth, and hits him again, about four times. The guy is bloody and he just drops. Well the bartender had apparently called the Shore Patrol, said "There's going to be a fight out there." Up runs these two guys, "Listen, did you see what happened here?" "Yea, I saw these two guys beat the hell out of this guy." "Which way did they go?" "They went up that way." So they ran that way. Alphin and I ran the other way. (laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Smart thinking.

BULANTI: You're not kidding.

INTERVIEWER: You spoke about some of the officers on the *Middleton*. How did the chiefs and the petty officers get along on the *Middleton*?

BULANTI: Very well. They were very good. They had regulations. They had respect. Everybody that was not [an] officer, respected the officers. There was no problem.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any Navy people assigned to the *Middleton*?

BULANTI: Yes, we had a think about six or eight Navy people.

INTERVIEWER: What did they do?

BULANTI: They were on the guns. I taught them how to fire a 20mm. They were fine and new -- we were all in it together.

INTERVIEWER: Any minorities in the crew, African-Americans, Hispanics or something?

BULANTI: Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: How was the interaction between those and the rest of the crew?

BULANTI: There was a black kid the played the tenor saxophone. I asked him to play in my little band, but he never did. The southern boys didn't like the blacks. We had Jews, we had Catholics, we had Baptists, we had Blacks, we had Mexicans, a lot of Mexicans. Nobody bothered anybody, but the southern boys brought their attitudes with them. But it wasn't so evident.

INTERVIEWER: How did you view the Japanese you were fighting against?

BULANTI: I hated them (laughter).

INTERVIEWER: When you got to Hawaii was there any; had they cleaned up everything from December 7th?

BULANTI: Oh, yea. Matter of fact, I got there in October 1942 and they had cleaned up a lot by then.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say, was your most memorable experience in the Coast Guard during World War II? The thing that stands out the most?

BULANTI: I guess my most memorable experience is my experience with Callahan.

INTERVIEWER: The gunnery officer?

BULANTI: Yes. He was such a fine gentleman. He taught me a lot. Here I am a kid with one year of college and not too bright (laughing). He was very nice.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall the day you were discharged? Your number comes up. Do you recall how you felt that day?

BULANTI: Yea, it was December the 15th, 1945.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember how you felt?

BULANTI: I felt great. I remember one of the officers at the discharge center, his name was Robin Hood, Lieutenant Robin Hood. He interviewed me. He said I'm going have you serving chow. "You're going to have me serving chow? I've been overseas. I was aboard ship for 17 months and overseas for 34 months, and you're going have me serving chow? Not me. I'm not going to do that." "Oh, I'm sorry. Would you mind taking care of the Chief's Mess? Just making sure the men are all there?" "Sure, I'll do that." So my job now was to track a liberty list for all the guys. There were about 8 or ten of us. Make sure the tables were set, that's what I did.

INTERVIEWER: Until you finally got discharged?

BULANTI: Yes. Liberty every night and every weekend.

INTERVIEWER: After you were taking care of the armories they moved you there?

BULANTI: Yea. This is in San Francisco.

INTERVIEWER: They sent you up to San Francisco to be discharged? Was it at Government Island?

BULANTI: No, it was at Bay and Powell. That was great duty because I made out the liberty list. I was always number one on the liberty list. I made sure that the food was served to the chiefs and they had good food, much better food than we ever had. And we got to eat the same food.

INTERVIEWER: So just did that until the day of your discharge.

BULANTI: That's all I did (laughter). You just waited to see your name on the discharge list and then you had to go upstairs to be interviewed to be discharged. They wanted to know if you had any injuries. Did you sustain any injuries while you were in the service? And if you did, they'd put that on your record so that you could claim disability maybe.

INTERVIEWER: And you attended a couple of reunions for the *Middleton*?

BULANTI: Matter of fact I organized two of them, in San Francisco, at the Marine's Memorial Club. My first reunion we had about 130 people, it was wonderful. At the second one there were about 40 or 50 people. But it was great.

INTERVIEWER: Did Ed Callahan come to any of those?

BULANTI: No. I lost track of him. I don't know whatever happened to him.

INTERVIEWER: As there anything you would like to share with future generations that I forgot to ask you about, or something I didn't cover, any area or experience you'd like to share?

BULANTI: No. I really thought the Coast Guard was a wonderful organization. I really did. The training was good. The people are good. I think it is rather an elite organization. If I were going, if I had to go back in the service, that's the one I would go into. Except that now I'm a private pilot. I've be flying for years. I'd ought to get into the Air Force.

INTERVIEWER: I think that's all my questions. Thank you for your time and sharing all of your memories.

END OF INTERVIEW

