

Interview of **LTJG Herbert R, Harris, USCG**

World War II veteran

Cadet, U.S. Coast Guard Academy

USS *San Pedro* (PF-37)

USS *Pocatello* (PF-9)



Coast Guard World War II Veteran Herbert "Herb" Harris in 2015.

Conducted by C. Douglas Kroll, Ph. D., U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

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Biographical Summary

Born in New York City (Manhattan) on 29 June 1923, Herbert R. Harris grew up in the Flushing neighborhood of nearby Queens and graduated from Bayside High School in 1940. Too young to apply to the Coast Guard Academy, he attended the City College of New York for one year and then applied and was appointed a cadet at the Academy, entering with the Class of 1945 in July of 1941. Harris, a cadet when Pearl Harbor was attacked, graduated in June 1944 with the rest of his class when the Academy curriculum was shortened to three years. His first assignment was the USS *San Pedro* (PF-37) where as a component of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, the ship participated in the battle of Leyte Gulf. He detached in June 1945 in Cold Bay, Alaska just before the *San Pedro* was turned over to the Soviet Navy. He was then assigned to USS *Pocatello* (PF-9) for weather patrol in the North Pacific.



On the *Pocatello* he served with LT Buddy Ebsen, a famous Hollywood actor. He sailed with *Pocatello* to Charleston, South Carolina for its decommissioning. In the fall of 1946 he reported to USCGC *Ingham* (WPG-35) in the engineering department, serving on weather station duty in the North Atlantic. He resigned his commission in June 1947, holding the rank of Lieutenant, Junior Grade (LTJG). His marriage to Lucille Urdang in 1948 gave them two children, Michele who became Michele Harris-Padron and Rich who became Dr. Richard B. Harris, Ph.D. and later three grandchildren. The marriage ended in divorce in 1968.

He pursued an engineering career after leaving the Coast Guard. He began in power plant design with Consolidated Edison. He then worked for a sugar refinery. During the mid-1950s he earned a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering specializing in materials handling and earned a professional engineer's license in New York State. He began working for the IBM Corporation in 1956 in the area of warehouse automation. Later he became a product planner and market analyst in the IBM labs, working on prototypes for the supermarket checkout scanner. He also managed the development of CAD language and software for designers and draftsmen, then switched to sales for his final fifteen years. He retired in 1981, in Santa Barbara, California after twenty-five years with IBM. A few years after the divorce from his first wife, Lucille, he married Renee Harris, who survived for twenty-three years. He later married Marilyn who died a few years ago. 1996 he started his residence in Leisure World, the retirement village in Laguna Woods, California, where he became very active in community affairs and continues there today.

INTERVIEWER: When and where were you born?

HARRIS: In New York City, in Manhattan, on June 29, 1923. I was the third generation born on that island.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me about your childhood? Did you have any siblings? What part of Manhattan did you grow up in?

HARRIS: We moved from the Washington Heights area of Manhattan when my sister Elaine was born. I was about five years old and we moved to a suburb. I grew up in Flushing, Long Island. But when it came time to go to high school there was another high school nearby, called Bayside High School where I started when I was thirteen.

INTERVIEWER: What year did you graduate from Bayside High School?

HARRIS: Graduating in 1940, I learned about the Coast Guard Academy [CGA] and made attempts to be an applicant. Since I was too young to apply for the class entering in 1940 by one year, I applied and was accepted at the City College of New York. After one year I applied, was accepted and then entered the Academy of July of 1941.

INTERVIEWER: How did you first learn about the Academy?

HARRIS: I cannot recall how I first learned about CGA, but at the time, one of my main goals was to go to school away from home, (laughs) and to have that kind of experience. Here I was with a family and grandmother all those years so that was the main thing I had in mind. I also got involved in boating a little bit. One of my teachers at the high school had a power boat and he invited me out and I had some boating trips in his power boat.

INTERVIEWER: When you got to the Academy, what was your initial reaction when you arrived in New London and became a first year cadet?

HARRIS: How am I going to manage it? It was so much. The other cadets were mostly older and more experienced. I looked up to the teachers, the officers, the facilities were fantastic. I didn't work as hard as I should have, but it was a difficult job to live up to what I was getting exposed to.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember where you were at that Academy when you learned about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

HARRIS: Yes. It was a Sunday afternoon and we had liberty. Another cadet and I went to a movie and when we came out of the theater ran into some other cadets and they told us about it. We rushed back to the Academy. That was Sunday afternoon. Let me tell you a little story, and I hope it is accurate. On

Monday morning December eighth they issued rifle ammunition to the cadets. As swabs we had never been to rifle range but they issued us ammunition for our rifles. Then an hour or two later they took it [ammunition] back. I hope I remember that accurately. There was a rumor that we might be invaded and we presumed that with the excitement of the situation the local commander had to use his own head as to what to try to do.

INTERVIEWER: How did things change at the Academy after the Pearl Harbor attack?

HARRIS: The 30 first classmen graduated two weeks after Pearl Harbor and the academy course was accelerated; we went on a shortened winter leave. We got back around the first and second of January and found out that we were going to have more classes and that we would graduate in three years. That probably put a little pressure on us, in terms of all the class-work we had to do. The interesting thing is that we did not learn a lot about what was happening in the war. The upperclassmen had a radio in their recreation room, but we were not allowed to have radios in swab rooms and we didn't hear anything regularly about the news. Once in a while we would hear something. The main thing was to get through all these courses and the practical work in the summer and graduate.

INTERVIEWER: So you still had practical training in the summer? Was it more accelerated there too? Did the academic year get longer and the summer shorter?

HARRIS: I think the summer program was shortened. The summer of 1942 we cruised two weeks on the *Danmark* [WIX 283; a Danish training ship, a small full-rigger] and two weeks on the schooner *Atlantic* [WIX 271; a 185' three-masted schooner]. I can't remember if we did anything else in the summer of 1942. In the summer of 1943 the big thing was that we were sent to Camp Lejeune, the Marine Corps Camp, to learn about landing craft handling. We actually learned to operate landing craft. And then we went into the jungle trek through a swamp and we went to the rifle range. We got a lot of training at Camp Lejeune in the summer of 1943.

INTERVIEWER: During the academic year did they still have general studies classes like English and history or just engineering and professional courses?

HARRIS: They had to keep them going because of the requirement for the BS [Bachelor of Science] degree. And we just barely met, I presume, the requirements to get a degree. We had language, I took Spanish and we had English. I don't remember any history courses. Of course there were a lot of technical courses, thermodynamics and math. And we had courses in navigation, ship line drawing and gunnery. We did not actually shoot any guns but we had instructors and we had to learn about the guns that could be on the ships.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that right after Pearl Harbor was attacked they issued ammunition to the cadets briefly. What kind of rifles did you have in your cadet rooms?

HARRIS: They were the standard army 1903, bolt action [Springfield], which we use for parading.

INTERVIEWER: You still had those during the war?

HARRIS: We had all sorts of formations and marching on the parade ground.

INTERVIEWER: While you were a cadet there was also reserve officers going through Officer Candidate School at the Academy. Did you have any interaction or contact with them?

HARRIS: Absolutely none. First of all, they didn't come until we were upperclassmen of some sort, probably in 1943. They were in separate barracks. However, when the SPAR [Coast Guard Women's Reserve] officers came they walled off a part of the cadet barracks, Chase Hall, and SPAR officers were in there. The only contact I had was a social contact. I invited one of the SPAR officers to be my partner for one of the academy dances once. That was the only contact I had with any of them.

INTERVIEWER: Were there chapel services being held at the Academy while you were there?

HARRIS: Yes, regularly—on Sunday—as one of the buglers during swab year I learned the special “chapel service” [church call] bugle call when I was on duty on Sunday mornings.

INTERVIEWER: Where were they held, because the chapel had not been built yet?

HARRIS: They were held in the McAllister Hall lecture hall/auditorium. Chapel services were required, you had to attend. I learned about some other religions (laughs). I am Jewish and I had to learn how to take communion.

HARRIS: That reminds me of what I just was telling you about taking a SPAR to a formal dance. We were told that there would be formal dances and attendance for cadets was mandatory. The officers couldn't tell you that you had to have a date, but the upperclassmen could. The biggest threat was not being able to have a date for a formal dance. I was not having luck, and since they let us go to a synagogue in New London, for Jewish high holy day services, so I got up the nerve to invite a girl I met at the synagogue at the high holy day services to be my date at the first formal dance.

INTERVIEWER: So they did allow you to go to the synagogue for the high holy days, but at other times you were required to attend the services at the Academy?

HARRIS: I think so. They let us go for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, those two times, and that gave me access to females.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember how many Jewish cadets there were at the time?

HARRIS: In my class I think there were maybe six or seven. One or two “bilged out” (resigned) but at least three of us graduated and served.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find it any more difficult because you were Jewish?

HARRIS: No. I never experienced anything anti-Semitic. I could say that I met classmates who didn't understand what it was like to be Jewish, but I had that happen earlier in my life many times. But I personally had no problem and felt well accepted, even had the feeling that some cadets were learning that being Jewish did not make us different as cadets.

INTERVIEWER: Is there any experience that you had as a cadet that stands out in your memory?

HARRIS: I am going to tell you a story. Maybe you have heard this one. This was in the summer of 1942 on the *Danmark*. I am pretty sure that we were under power at the time. We were taking a long sea voyage from New London to New Haven. The officer in charge wanted to see if the cadets were really on the ball, so he threw a life ring over the side. The lookout called "man overboard". They stopped the ship. The crew that had been assembled got to the lifeboat, got in the lifeboat and put it in the water, got the life ring and brought it back and got hooked on. The lifeboat got hauled up. That last step is to reach out and grab what I think is called the gripes and pull the lifeboat in and the cadet that was doing that went over the side and into the water! The lookout cried out "Man overboard, no shit!" (laughs) They had to lower the boat again but this time for real. That's real training. I told that story to [Rear] Admiral [Sandra] Stosz, the Superintendent when I went back there this past fall for my class's 70th reunion. She wanted to talk to each of the ten of us that were there. She asked me, like you just did, any memories we had. I told the story I just told you. She really enjoyed being with us at our banquet and didn't want to leave us.

INTERVIEWER: That is a good story. You graduated in May or June of 1944.

HARRIS: It was June. I think it was second or third day after the invasion of France, D-Day [6 June].

INTERVIEWER: Where was graduation held?

HARRIS: I'm pretty sure it was outdoors. I can't remember exactly where.

INTERVIEWER: How was it determined where you would go after you graduated?

HARRIS: In the spring of 1944 they gave us the opportunity to put in a request for what we would like to have for a first assignment. I heard that they had ships in the South Pacific. Now maybe because of the movie "South Pacific" or something like that I put a request for assignment to the South Pacific, and that is what I got. I got my assignment, probably in June. After graduation they kept us for about two weeks of postgraduate training. They sent us to a gunnery place where we could actually fire three-inch guns—a Navy facility. Then we were on our own to transport ourselves to San Francisco. Then to get across the sea to get to New Guinea to meet our ship. All I knew was the ship was somewhere out there in that region. I didn't really know where I was going until they put me on a transport ship to New Guinea. That

who process took over two months before I actually got to the ship current base, Hollandia, New Guinea. Of course when I finally got there I had to wait there for the *San Pedro* (PF-37) to come back from a patrol. There was another classmate assigned to the ship, Paul Perez, and the two of us got aboard around the end of September 1944.



INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the name of the transport that took you to New Guinea?

HARRIS: Yes, it was a Navy transport that was taken over from the French called the *Rochambeau* (AP-63). It was a French ship of some kind that they had made a troop ship and it carried both Coast Guard and Navy officers and others that were being sent overseas. It took about a two and a half weeks transit from San Francisco. It did not stop in Hawaii. It dropped me at a place called Milne Bay on the island of New Guinea. At Milne Bay I was disembarked and I asked "What was next?" I was told that I had to get to Hollandia and they didn't know right then how they are going to get me there. With another officer seeking travel, we went out to the airfield with our bags hoping that maybe we could find an airplane going there, but that didn't happen. We found out the Coast Guard was manning some vessels for the U.S. Army called FS or Freight Ships and we found the captain of one of those ships who told us he would take us to Hollandia. So in fact, I hitch hiked from Milne Bay to Hollandia. So when I got to my ship in Hollandia, they said I had a gap in my orders. So I finally got on the *San Pedro* in late September 1944.

INTERVIEWER: Was LCDR [Charles] Ashley the commanding officer when you reported aboard?

HARRIS: He had already been relieved.

INTERVIEWER: Who was the commanding officer?

HARRIS: LCDR [Harold] Sutherland. But I could tell right away how much the crew loved Captain Ashley. They thought he had been fantastic. He was so good that probably his relief had a difficult time measuring up to him. The Executive Officer was a member of the class of 1943, two years ahead of me, LT Ken Wilson. He had been on the ship since its commissioning. There were three of us Academy graduates on the *San Pedro*: Perez, the Executive Officer, and myself.

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice any difference between the Academy officers and the other officers on board?

HARRIS: No, we were all just for the ship and our assignments. Remember I was a junior officer, junior to all of them. So I had to learn from them, which I did, and I would say they handled themselves beautifully and I was just pleased to be among them.

INTERVIEWER: What was the first thing the *San Pedro* did after you were aboard?

HARRIS: They were talking about the problems they were having with one of the engines and they were hoping they would go to Australia to get it repaired. But this was just talk and nothing that was official yet. Then the Captain told us there was a very important operation coming and we want to be a part of it, so we are going to fix it ourselves. We were part of a division of six frigates in the 7th Fleet, escort division 25. The *Long Beach* [PF-34] was the leader of the division, and then we found out that we were going to be involved in getting back to the Philippines. Before we left Hollandia we went out and had gunnery practice. There was a place where they had aircraft that would tow a [target] sock, so we did have some gunnery practice. This was my first experience and the battle station I was assigned to was in the stern, as the Officer-in-Charge of the third of three main battery guns and I was also put in charge of the depth charges, if we needed them, which we did later on. We had one occasion where we used our depth charges.

INTERVIEWER: You were a deck watch officer on the ship and that was your battle station?

HARRIS: My battle station was Officer-in-Charge of gun number three. My first "watches" were in C.I.C. [Command Information Center] for a month or two and then as a standby officer on the bridge. I think it was two or three months before I can stand a deck watch by myself.

INTERVIEWER: You sailed from Hollandia. What was your first big operation?

HARRIS: We were to escort a convoy of the first relief troops for Leyte Gulf [Philippine Islands]. It was our duty to land there three days after the initial invasion. We actually came into the bay with an air attack going on. We came in at battle stations, shooting at the attacking aircraft. I don't think my ship was ever the target of the aircraft but we did a lot of AA firing---three 3-inch main batteries under "director" control, forties and twenty millimeters [cannons] firing. When we were shooting at an enemy aircraft there were probably several other ships shooting at the same aircraft. I think we got credit for at least one shoot down.

INTERVIEWER: The record credits the *San Pedro* with two planes shot down.

HARRIS: (laughs)

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember picking up survivors from a torpedoed Liberty Ship?

HARRIS: Yes, but it was not a Liberty ship, rather some kind of a supply vessel. This incident was on our second return convoy back to Leyte Gulf. On our initial trip to the gulf we were supposed to depart

immediately but to keep the AA guns available and because of the threats from these Japanese fleets proceeding to the gulf, orders were changed and we stayed on. In fact, we stayed so long that the supply officer got in our small boat and went from ship to ship to get additional food to feed us. They finally sent us back to Hollandia with another convoy. Then on a second or third trip back there [Leyte Gulf] our convoy was attacked by Japanese planes. One of the ships [Liberty ship (?) *Antoine Saugraine*] was torpedoed. We picked up half of the survivors. We must have picked up about 60 or 70 people. There was also a Navy gun crew on the ship and the gunnery officer came aboard the *San Pedro* and shared my bunk with me.

INTERVIEWER: Were involved directly in that rescue, or was the whole crew was involved in picking the people out of the water?

HARRIS: Our ship assisted picking up those in the water. Then our First Lieutenant took a boat over with a damage control party over to the torpedoed ship and made an inspection to see what was happening. He determined that the ship was not sinking right away so the convoy commander arranged for a tug which started to tow that ship. We then left but later heard the story that somehow it was torpedoed again as it was being towed and it went down. The operation was a “whole ship” operation, I had no specific duties or any personal activities at that time.

INTERVIEWER: So after you finished everything at Leyte Gulf, what did the *San Pedro* do next?

HARRIS: To our surprise, we were back in Hollandia, we were told the ship was being transferred to the Atlantic Fleet. We were in the 7th Fleet and we were never told exactly why. We surmised that frigates were very uncomfortable. It was so hot down below that the men used to sleep on deck. I don't know if they would have used that as an excuse to send us to the Atlantic, but as far as we knew they wanted us in the Atlantic rather than the Pacific. Sometime in early December we left New Guinea and crossed the Pacific with a refueling stop in Bora Bora. We did not stop in Hawaii. We crossed the International Dateline on December 26, so we had two Christmases that year! We got to the [Panama] Canal and stayed there two days so that the crew, each side could have liberty. We proceeded north. Of course this is January and we don't have any warm clothes. I think we stopped at Charleston [S.C.], but I'm not sure. This was a division of six ships, not just us. They had all these winter clothes ready for us on the wharf. They guys bringing the boxes of clothes on to the ships were so cold that they opened the boxes and put on warm clothing before they brought the boxes aboard. We got to Boston [Massachusetts] probably at the end of January of 1945. We went into a shipyard and they were doing maintenance jobs on the ship. All of a sudden one day the maintenance workers left. About two day later they came back and they started to undo some of things that they had done. They took off the quad-40s [40 mm] and replaced them with twin-40s. They took off a device we called the Range Recorder for antisubmarine warfare. They removed that from the ship and sent me to a one-day school to learn to do that by paper

and pencil. I presumably was going to be the antisubmarine warfare officer once we sailed. We never had to use it, but that is what they did. We had no idea of what was happening or what we were being prepared for. There were other changes to the vessel that they made, and also to the stores and stuff we had aboard. We had to handle all of this without knowing what was going on. Finally we sailed. When we were out of the port and no one could communicate to the port, then they told us what was happening. We, the entire six ship division, were going to Alaska and then turn the ships over to a Soviet crew. That happened probably in the end of March 1945. I remember sailing up the west coast of America on the Pacific when we heard that [President Franklin] Roosevelt died in April 1945 and see he flag at half staff. We stopped at Los Angeles for fuel and supplies and liberty for the two sides of the crew. We then proceeded to Seattle. We stayed in Seattle, it must have been a month, making all kinds of changes, paper changes, arrangement changes. I enjoyed having a little liberty in Seattle. Then we sailed for Cold Bay [Alaska], the six ships. I think we stopped at Kodiak, and then we proceeded to Cold Bay.

Here is my personal story. We went into a dock and within an hour of docking the orderly came and told me that the Captain wanted to see me. I get to the Captain's cabin and said to me "Harris, get your bag, you're on [an] airplane immediately." No explanation. I am too junior to ask questions. So I did as ordered. They put me on an airplane and flew me to Seattle. Thirty years later at one of these reunions I brought this subject up to the Executive Officer who has at the reunion. I asked him "What was happening?" These guys are all talking about their experience training the Russians and I wasn't a part of it and I didn't know why. The Executive Officer said me, "Didn't we tell you? We trusted them [Soviets], but we didn't trust them. We figured there were a lot of Russian speakers who understood English and could listen to what he had to say and use that information. We didn't have anybody that could listen to them and understand what they were saying. So the division commander arranged to get someone who understood Russian, put a Coast Guard uniform on him, flew him up to Cold Bay and he took your bunk." I found this out thirty years after it occurred!

INTERVIEWER: What happened after you flew to Seattle?

HARRIS: I took a train from there to Alameda [California]. I got to Alameda, it must have been June of 1945 and they said I was entitled to take some leave and did I want to take any. I took some leave. I came back from my leave, actually the night before my leave ended, and signed in. The officer I signed in with asked if I would like him to look up what my future assignment would be. I replied "Oh, please do." He looked it up and said "Oh, you're going to be going to gunnery school and you are going to be trained to be the gunnery officer on some brand new Coast Guard cutters that are under the construction." I think they were the new 250's or 255's, the Lake Class. He told me I could get a place to bunk in the B.O.Q. [Bachelor Officer Quarters] and while I'm unloading my bags an orderly comes and tells me they want to see me. They told me to get my bags, I was going on an airplane, I was going to a ship is in Seattle. It happened just like that. No questions, no answers.

I get up to the ship in Seattle, the USS *Pocatello*, PF-9, and meet the Captain. He says to me “You are no gunnery officer. But we don’t need one, so we’ll keep you anyway.” He apparently had put in for a gunnery officer, and they looked up some records and said “This guy is going to go to gunnery school, so we will send him.” My career made a big detour without my knowledge of anything having to do with it. I am now a junior officer on the *Pocatello*, and the only Academy officer aboard. LCDR Horrocks was his name.

We were one of two ships doing weather station a thousand miles due west [Station Able]. The *Haida* [WPG-45] was the other cutter. The two ships took turns and it took about three days travel to get out there. So we would get out there, bringing their mail and give it to them and they would come back. We got out to the weather station probably the last days of July or the maybe the first days of August. We are on the weather station about a week when he find out about the [atomic] bomb dropped on Japan and the ending of the war. We got back to Seattle sometime in mid-to-late August. We came back to peace. The first that happened was that all these officers and enlisted men are putting in to get out of the service.

When I got aboard the *Pocatello* the Captain said to me, “O.K., you can be the assistant First Lieutenant.” The First Lieutenant is a man named Buddy Ebsen! The actor Buddy Ebsen. He was a Lieutenant and the First Lieutenant. I was his assistant for two months. He was out of the Coast Guard probably by November [16 October]. The Captain was out by then, the Executive Officer had become the Commanding Officer. A lot of the chief petty officers were gone. So we had, the rest of time I was on the *Pocatello*, a little bit shortened crew. I had to be the officer in charge for anchoring and lowering the boat and things like that. We didn’t have a petty officer who had more experience than me. I grew up fast on the *Pocatello*.

INTERVIEWER: What are your memories of working with Buddy Ebsen?

HARRIS: Social. We were getting to know the SPARS in the office in Seattle. He [Ebsen] married one of them and I was at his wedding. There were only about a dozen people there. I was dating one the SPAR officers. He was very much liked on the *Pocatello*. Because of his contacts with the movie industry he had plenty of good films to show down below every night, and that’s what kept the crew happy because being on weather station you don’t have that much to do. You don’t need a gunnery officer. You are completely by yourself for three weeks or a month.

INTERVIEWER: When did you leave the *Pocatello*?

HARRIS: With the reduced crew we left sometime early in 1946. They shut down the weather station and I think we were sent to Charleston [S.C.] for decommissioning. [Arrived in Charleston on 6 April.] We were so manpower reduced that when we had one of the seaman in the local “hoosegow” the Captain sent me to talk to the judge to talk him into releasing him because we needed him pretty badly. We made the transit through the [Panama] Canal with reduced crew. The new Captain was John Winn, a very nice

reserve officer, a lieutenant. When we got there we knew we were going to be decommissioning the ship, it came time for me to think about my future. I decided I would like to be an engineer. So I put in for an engineering opportunity with the local people there. An officer there said to me, "Since you are Academy you'll never get out of this place. I'm signing your release paper now. Put them in your pocket. If I ever give you this kind of wave, leave!" And that happened. There were so few people to run the decommissioning, because the reserves were getting out, they would keep a regular forever. All of a sudden I left, I think it was Charleston, and got on a train and went to my home in Flushing, New York. I then went up to Boston. I spent about two months on temporary duty assignments in Boston waiting to be assigned to my next permanent assignment.

INTERVIEWER: What was your next permanent assignment?

HARRIS: My next assignment was with the engineering department on the *Ingham* [WPC-35]. The *Ingham* was all Academy officers. The reserves were all gone by then. The Coast Guard Reserve had been disbanded. Some reservists maybe stayed, but they were all regular officers. There were four of my classmates with me on the *Ingham*—Ted Rapalus, [Parker] Chapman, and (OH OH) memory failure--- from the same class and Frank Tubeck from '46. I served on the *Ingham* in the engine room. I started probably in September of 1946. Sometime in the spring of 1947 I got a dumb idea. It was my mistake, but there were personal things happening in my life and in my parent's life, so I put in my resignation and it was accepted. I was actually relieved from duties, whatever my terminal leave allowance was, I think about three or four weeks before it became effective. I got off the *Ingham* and went home and then I reported in to the Coast Guard office in New York City on the anniversary of my third year since graduation. Those were all wonderful experiences but I made a lot of big mistakes. I shouldn't have left the Coast Guard. If I had known that within a year they were going to let my class apply for flight training, I would have stayed in because I would have like to have been in flight training.

INTERVIEWER: When you got out of the service, what did you do?

HARRIS: Because I had this engineering experience I went to the Edison Company and I was immediately hired by them. One of the big projects was that they were building the biggest steam generator in the world. I was on the design team for that.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything you would like future generations to know about your time in the Coast Guard during World War II? About how it influenced your later life? Anything I forgot to ask you about?

HARRIS: It was a wonderful experience. We "beefed" about not getting promoted. It wasn't fair but that is how we felt about it. When we became ensigns they were promoting them in nine months. When we were in almost nine months they extended it to twelve months. When we got to twelve months, they extended it to eighteen months. When we got to eighteen months, they extended it to twenty-four months. So we finally got promoted to Lieutenant (j.g.) after twenty-four months. Also, here I am on a

ship two and a half years after the war. Being a gunnery officer didn't mean anything anymore. The war was over and there was no more shooting. Now there is a different mission and we have to learn a lot of new stuff.

I had very good learning experiences, some good, some not. On the *Ingham* we would go to a [weather] station out in the middle of the Atlantic and they we would come into Newfoundland. We would be there a few days and get fueled up and got back out on station and then go back to Boston. On our way back from station we got a call that there was a ship in trouble, in possible need of assistance. We had to go at high speed to that ship. We just stood by, we never really did anything. However, we used a lot of additional fuel to get there. So the Chief Engineer decided to transfer, pump some diesel oil for the standby diesel generator into the fuel oil tanks to augment them rather than wait and have to burn pure diesel in the boilers. We got to Newfoundland and were taking on fuel oil and diesel at the same time. I was in charge of the boilers and water tenders and we had a Chief Water Tender and he was the one that handled the valves, not me. I didn't get blamed, but here is what happened.

One evening at a dock in Newfoundland the crewman on watch in the engine room watch covering whatever auxiliaries that were going wasn't alert so the lights went out, the power went off. Immediately we proceed to start the diesel generator and we didn't have enough fuel in the day tank. So we are going to pump up some fuel from our big diesel tank into the day tank. It comes into the glass black! "Don't start the generator" someone yelled. The Chief Engineer comes down and asks "What's happening? Why isn't that generator going?" What had happened is that apparently there was some fuel oil in the diesel tank. We later determined that when taking on both fuel and diesel at the same time, the fuel oil was coming in at a little higher pressure than the diesel and there must have been a crack in the crossover valve and fuel oil got into the diesel tank. We all knew you don't start a diesel generator with its fuel possibly adulterated. Before we could start we had to get rid of all that tank full of adulterated diesel because there wasn't enough time to just burn it in the ship's boilers. We had to discharge it and then the crew had to get into the diesel tank and clean the tank and its pipes. It was a big operation and a lot of work. I was in charge of that department so I had to handle it even though I didn't get blamed. It was a big mess.

Let me finish by thanking the Coast Guard, the Academy and my classmates for helping me with such a wonderful start to my adult life and by saying how much Academy attendance, graduation and class membership has meant to me. In addition to receiving a fine education I was led to develop personally and professionally and gained some the traits and attributes that became immensely valuable over the years. My greatest regret is having resigned after only three years of duty instead of pursuing a career in the Coast Guard. The Academy and my brief active service exposed me to what I would learn to do and enjoy for a lifetime. The love of the sea and boating became my avocation and the leading source of pleasure in my life. The lessons of the *Atlantic* and *Danmark* were well remembered and used.

The Coast Guard has never left me. I never got to the early reunions but later on I got there for the thirtieth, and the thirty-fifth and the fortieth, and since. Then we had a group of academy classmates in California that would meet regularly. We had a mini-reunion in Catalina, which I participated in. So I was in contact with those classmates that were still alive in California. And I've had to say good-bye to all of them. That last reunion I went to at the Academy was October 2014. It was our 70th reunion. I don't think any other class got back for their 70th.

I feel fortunate to have had an association with the Coast Guard and all my friends know about it.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much for sharing your memories.

