



U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interview of **PAT LATORRA**

Conducted by **DR. WILLIAM THIESEN, LANTAREA HISTORIAN**

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INTERVIEWER: Okay. We are here today at Harrah's, Atlantic City, on Monday, September 10th, 2007. My name is William Thiesen. I am the Atlantic Area Historian for the U.S. Coast Guard.

And, if you would, sir, state your name and where you are from.

LATORRA: My name is Pat Latorra, and I am from Huntington Mills, Pennsylvania.

INTERVIEWER: Now, if you could just tell us a little bit about your background before you went into the Coast Guard?

LATORRA: Okay. I was born in Montclair, New Jersey. I went to school in Somerville and Bomberg High Schools in New Jersey, graduated in 1940, and it wasn't too much longer after that, that World War II broke out.

I was working in a machine shop, an aircraft machine shop in Middlesex, New Jersey, and went right from there to Coast Guard enlistment.

INTERVIEWER: What was your family's background? What sort of work did your father do, for example?

LATORRA: My dad and mother were immigrants, and dad -- mom was a home person, and dad was a laborer.

INTERVIEWER: What did they think about your going into the Coast Guard? Was that right after Pearl Harbor that you decided to enlist, or before?

LATORRA: No, afterwards. Pearl Harbor was in December of '41. I enlisted in November of '42. So there was some time in there. My dad had been in the service in Italy and served there and was wounded but really raised no objection when I decided to go into the service.

Originally, I had planned to go into the Navy, and I went to New York. This is a true story. There was a line trying to enlist, not drafted but enlist into the Navy, two blocks long. In order to even get into the building, you had to have a birth certificate. A pharmacist came along and checked your teeth, and if you had any teeth missing, you were out, and if you didn't have your birth certificate, you were out. So I didn't have my birth certificate. So I ended up back home, and shortly after that, I went into the Coast Guard and had my birth certificate with me.

INTERVIEWER: Do you regret at all not getting into the Navy?

LATORRA: No, no, no. I personally think that the Coast Guard was the best service I could have got into. I appreciated it. It taught me an awful lot, especially with some of the duty we had. Even to today, I will tell anyone that it's one of the better services.

INTERVIEWER: Were you at Manhattan Beach for basic training?

LATORRA: Yeah. My basic training was at Manhattan Beach. Now, I wasn't there very long because they needed people right away, and I went from Manhattan Beach to Boston and then almost immediately, within two days, onto the Algonquin.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

LATORRA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So how much time did you spend at Manhattan Beach? Because usually that's about six weeks?

LATORRA: I keep saying 28 days, but it may have been maybe 30 but not more than that. It was quick. It was very quick, and we got it in the cold winter, in December, and it was cold.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of things would they typically run you through at Manhattan Beach when you were going through training?

LATORRA: Thinking back, we had Morse code. We had lifeboat drills, military etiquette and marching, semaphore. I don't think we had gunnery. I'm pretty sure we didn't have gunnery in boot camp, but just the basics. Mostly we stood watch. There's telephone watch.

But it was cold. We had 32 men in the barracks, and they had a little wood burning stove, a coal burning stove in there, and the stove when out when I got there, and we had no heat for about a month.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

LATORRA: But the training wasn't bad. We marched. We marched maybe two hours a day.

INTERVIEWER: Was Jack Dempsey there at that point?

LATORRA: Yes. Yes, he was.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever get a chance to see or meet him?

LATORRA: Yeah, we got to see him. We used to have physical training, and we boxed. Jack Dempsey was referee on some of the fights, just as a token thing, but, yeah, he was there. Celebrities, there were -- you know, a lot of people came in at that time. There were a lot of [famous] people enlisting.

There was a fellow that I roomed with in Boston. They had four bunks in there and receiving station just before I got shipped out to the *Algonquin*. His name was Ernie Vigh. He was the second-rated middleweight in the world. But people were going in. There were celebrities. It wasn't just the average guy. It was just everybody was enlisting. There was a lot of patriotism then. There really was, a lot different than it might be today.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: When I went in, my pay was \$50 a month. That's true. And when I got aboard the *Algonquin*, they gave us an extra \$5 a month for hazardous duty. That was 10-percent hazardous duty pay. The ships I served on were the *Algonquin* first, and then I went on later to the *Active*. In between -- we will go back to Greenland.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

LATORRA: On the *Algonquin*, we did escort duty mostly between Argentina, Greenland, St. John's, a lot of St. John's and Greenland. There are just an awful lot of stories that happened that, you know, you can -- for example, we crossed the Arctic Circle, and we sent to the government for certificates, and they sent us Equator Certificates.

So one of the fellows on board drew up a -- I have it in here. A fellow on board drew up a certificate which served the purpose. The traditions were --

INTERVIEWER: You said you spent two days in Boston before you actually got on -- was it two days before you got on board the *Algonquin*?

LATORRA: Yeah, two days. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any say in where you were going?

LATORRA: No.

INTERVIEWER: They just decided for you?

LATORRA: Yeah, absolutely. No, absolutely not. We got to Boston from boot camp at 2:30 in the morning. We marched from -- I can't forget this -- the two stations, the train station, marched us to the Brunswick Hotel in Boston.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: They threw our sea bags on the deck there, and we just laid down on our sea bags. Each morning, they would call out a number of people that go to different assignments.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: And on the second day, they called -- I think it was 14 of us and put us on a truck and took us to the dock and that's where the *Algonquin* was. That was like a temporary duty, but it lasted a while.

INTERVIEWER: She was a 165-footer?

LATORRA: 165-footer, originally an icebreaker, as I understand, had a reinforced bow, and we did break some ice in Greenland, not as an ice breaker, but in order to get through some of the fjords, we broke ice. It's a noisy proposition.

INTERVIEWER: Did any of the people from basic training get on board the *Algonquin* with you?

LATORRA: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So you actually knew some of those people before you got on board?

LATORRA: Yes, I did. Not many. I don't have it in here but not many. It couldn't have been more than three or four, maybe two, three.

One of the fellows in boot camp, a really good, good friend of mine, we had formed a nice relationship in boot camp and were loading ammunition. He came on board with me from boot camp, and just as we were loading ammunition, a hatch came down and broke all of his fingers, and so they took him off. I never saw him again. Never did see him again. That's about the Greenland Patrol.

There really were three things that you'd have to really consider. One was the danger, the submarine danger. There was a lot, a lot of submarines out there. The weather was really abominable and the food was absolutely -- on a scale of zero to 10, I'd say a 2. This is not because -- I've said this many times since. It's not because they didn't want to give us better food, but we had precious little, hardly any refrigeration. We had no ovens to bake in, and, at that time, dehydrated foods were in its infancy. So everything we had was either canned or dehydrated. There was absolutely no fresh food at all. There was no milk. There was no bread. There was no butter. None of that. None of the basics. We had none of that.

Water was scarce because we had one evaporator. We made water out of seawater. We had no hot water. There was no hot water. In order to shave or shower even with salt water, you'd have a steam line, and you would put water in a bowl and then put a steam line in it. That's the way they made coffee. They put a steam line in it, and that would heat the water up. But there was no hot water. I go aboard some ships today and look, and it's a lot different.

INTERVIEWER: So, as a result of that, did a lot of people grow beards?

LATORRA: Yes. Yeah, a lot of people grew beards.

INTERVIEWER: Just to keep warm.

LATORRA: Yeah. As a matter of fact, when I first went on board the *Algonquin*, they had come back from patrol. I don't know how long they'd been out, but everybody on board, except the skipper, had a beard and I said, "My God, what am I getting into here?" You know, I never had a beard in my life, but I did grow a beard later. But, yeah, they did. A lot of them had beards.

There was always talk about they didn't want you to have a beard because it'd get in the way of your gas mask. We all carried a gas mask. But, out to sea, there was really not much danger of a gas attack, but it was a rule I guess in the service, the services that were on the ground. But, no, it didn't interfere. If you wanted to have a beard, you could have a beard.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think there truly was an ever-present danger of U-boat attack?

LATORRA: Oh, yeah, yeah. No question about that. No question about it. I've read books after that. Really and truly, I would say this. Even as much as we thought we had danger, we never knew how much danger there actually was. You talked about the troop ship.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. *Dorchester*.

LATORRA: *Dorchester*. We lost the *Escanaba*. I was with them when we lost the *Escanaba*, whether that was torpedoed or hit by a mine, it disappeared very quickly.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: So, yeah, there was an awful lot of danger out there, and the sea was just awful. Sometimes the sea was just terrible. I wouldn't recommend that kind of duty to anyone really. It was pretty bad duty.

INTERVIEWER: So you'd say it was pretty bad. There's nothing good about it necessarily.

LATORRA: No, there really wasn't anything good about it. If the food had been better, it might have been more acceptable, but the food was really, really bad. That's not to say that when we came into a port, regardless of where it was, whether it was in Boston or whether it was in Argentina, they would back trucks up, pie and ice cream and cake and bread, and we would carry bread out with us. But it wouldn't last long. It would last maybe four, five, six days and then it would get moldy.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: As a matter of fact -- and this is a true story -- many times, or a couple of times, we would run aboard Army troop ships. We would be transporting troops over to Iceland or someplace. When they would stop at a port, we would jump on a troop ship and eat on that because the food was a lot -- and the Army guys thought it was terrible, but we thought it was pretty good. That's the truth. That's the truth.

INTERVIEWER: So you began service on the Greenland Patrol probably January of '43?

LATORRA: Yes, exactly.

INTERVIEWER: January of '43.

LATORRA: I have a lot of dates that seem to coincide. Looking back, 60 years, I think I enlisted on the 12th, I was called to active duty on the 12th. I went

aboard the *Algonquin* on the 12th, and I was discharged on the 12th. Different months.

INTERVIEWER: When you went on the *Algonquin*, were you striking for a certain rate?

LATORRA: Yeah, I was striking for gunner's mate. I always had an interest in it, and it just seemed, at the time, that there was nothing else aboard ship that really interested me enough to work hard at it. And it paid off because when I got off the *Algonquin*, I went to gunnery school down in Florida and then right back up to Boston and back out on the *Active* doing the same type duty.

You ask here the mood of the crew. Even as bad as things were, we had a very good crew. We stuck together. There was humor, as much as could be. The Chiefs were all great people. The officers, you really couldn't beat the officers we had. They were great. As I got on the *Active*, the officers were younger, even younger, and they were great. I've never had a doubt or heard anyone say that they didn't trust the officers, do they know what they're doing or where are they taking us. You had complete faith in them, you really did. At least I did, and I'm sure the other guys did too.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the names of the CO and the XO on the *Algonquin*?

LATORRA: Yeah, I do have it here. That's a young sailor.

INTERVIEWER: That's a picture of you. Good shot.

LATORRA: That's a young sailor.

Anyhow, I think his name was -- if I'm not mistaken, it was Lieutenant Commander Miller. There was a different skipper when I went on board, but, before we sailed, they changed skippers, and I think the skipper's name was Miller when we actually left on our first trip.

INTERVIEWER: You said you were striking for gunner's mate. Did you actually operate the weapons on board at all?

LATORRA: Yeah, yeah. As time would permit, the gunners' mates -- I think, I don't know, I can't remember now how many we had, maybe had two, three, three maybe -- they would all take a little bit of time and teach you stuff so that you start learning at the bottom. By the time I got off and went to gunnery school, gunnery school was kind of easy for me because I had really learned a lot. Plus, you're staying on your watch as you're doing other things besides striking. You have other duties. But whatever time you had, you tried to apply

yourself, and I did learn a lot from them. I really did. And they were very happy to teach. It wasn't as though they were trying to--

INTERVIEWER: Like the battle stations, where was your particular station?

LATORRA: My first battle station on the *Algonquin* was on a K-gun out on the port side. Do you know what a K-gun is?

INTERVIEWER: It was in the rear, in the stern?

LATORRA: The stern, on the port side. We had one on the port, one on the starboard, and what it did was just fire out a depth charge, arc it over on the side. As you're dropping cans from the stern, these things are going out from the sides.

Did we see combat? Yeah, if you call dropping cans and scurrying around chasing after submarines. Yeah, we did.

INTERVIEWER: And then later, your battle station changed to another location?

LATORRA: Not on the *Algonquin*, but, after I got my gunner's mate rating, I was gun captain on the number-one gun on the *Active*. So, yeah, it changed afterwards.

INTERVIEWER: The first major event that you participated in, was that on the *Dorchester*? Because that was February.

LATORRA: No, I wasn't on with the *Dorchester*. What was the date of the *Dorchester*?

INTERVIEWER: I thought it was February of '43.

LATORRA: We were in -- I can't remember. Yeah, you're right. We were in Argentinia headed to Greenland or something because we heard about it. But, no, we were not actually at that when it was sunk. No, we were not there on the *Algonquin*.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall what the first time was you went to general quarters?

LATORRA: Oh, no. General quarters was -- in the movies, they call general quarters "battle station drill."

The first time I had general quarters was about an hour after we were at Boston, on my first trip. General quarters could last anywhere from an hour to days. It depended on what the contact was. As a matter of fact, we had 12 general quarters once in a 24-hour period. So you're always, when you get through with your watch and you're wet and you're soaked and you're cold. You get in your bunk, and the thing goes off, and you're back up on your station again. It really wasn't -- it wasn't great duty.

There were guys in the service doing more than we were. There were guys in the invasions and stuff like that. So you really can't cry about it. It was a job that had to be done. We had to protect these ships that were going over there.

I remember reading somewhere where after the war was over, they asked Winston Churchill what his biggest fear was in the whole of the war. Immediately, he said the Battle of the North Atlantic because it meant they could survive. If we didn't get the stuff over to the -- and not just armament. We're talking about food and supplies and fuel and stuff. People had to live, and they were being bombed. When you think about what you did, you say it's pretty bad, but other people had it pretty bad, too, and maybe worse.

INTERVIEWER: Was that kind of a general consensus aboard ship?

LATORRA: I thought so. I thought so, yeah. I thought so.

INTERVIEWER: There was a time, I guess, where some people were rescued by the Algonquin. Isn't that correct?

LATORRA: Oh yeah, yeah. I have that in here. I can read the whole thing to you. Truthfully, it may have been -- it may very well have been one of the largest rescues ever done by the Coast Guard. Do you have the story on the *Svend Foyn*?

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

LATORRA: I write about it in here just as it happened because I was on that.

Do you have the story about the PBV that went down in Greenland?

INTERVIEWER: I'm not sure about that one.

LATORRA: And I have that in here.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: How was the pay? The pay wasn't much.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. You said it was 50 and then 5 additional for hazardous duty, I guess.

LATORRA: Right, right, right.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you serve on board the *Algonquin*? You said you switched to the *Active* after you went to gunner's mate school.

LATORRA: I went to gunner's mate school, I believe, at the end of '43. So I was only on there about a year. I went to gunnery school. I was in Florida. I think I came out of Florida in March of '44 and then went right onto the *Active*.

I thought I was going to get different duty when I got on. The way it happened was after service on the *Active*, we ended up down in Panama, in the Caribbean, and I got transferred off the *Active* in New Orleans. The skipper called me up the second morning I was there. He called me up with two other fellows from the *Active* and said that our names were on an LST list out at -- what's the base in California?

INTERVIEWER: In San Francisco or --

LATORRA: No, Alameda.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, Alameda, yeah.

LATORRA: Our name was on an LST. You go out to the Pacific shortly after the war ended. So we never did get out to the Pacific. In fact, I've never seen the Pacific Ocean.

INTERVIEWER: What was your training like in Florida, the gunnery school?

LATORRA: Gunnery? Very, very good. Very good. Our class was perhaps, I'm guessing, 30 people. We had a chief gun -- no, he was a warrant -- warrant officer, gunner, and he was assisted by a second class gunner, a gunner's mate. Very, very good.

We started. This was a three-month course. We started with a .38 Smith & Wesson which at that time the police carried, right up to the 5-inch guns we carried on the ships. You learned every gun there was. Some we don't have today but a lot of them.

You have to understand that when this all started for the United States, we had very little. We didn't have armament. As a matter of fact, when I went aboard I think it was the *Algonquin*, we had Lewis machine guns, which were

from World War I, you know, mounted on the decks. That changed quickly but, I mean, you know, we started out with just basically nothing.

If you'd like, I can -- oh, there's more here. Oh, here's one that you -- of course, there were always rivalries between all of the services, not necessarily between just us and other services, but, mostly, we got along with everyone. We did.

We ran a lot with Canadian sailors, with British sailors, and we all got along very well. Sometimes you'd get to a port like St. John's, and the place was just loaded with sailors. I mean British, Canadian, but we all seemed to get along.

INTERVIEWER: Never any fights or anything.

LATORRA: Oh, there were fights, plenty of fights, but it was just, you know, drunken people having, you know -- no, I think we all knew what we were doing, and we were all kids there. Everybody was young. We got along well, I thought. We got along well. We had Polish sailors and --

INTERVIEWER: So the ports you sailed out of when you were on the Greenland Patrol were Argentia and Halifax?

LATORRA: Halifax, Argentia, and mostly St. John's, mostly St. John's. It was nice to see those ports when you're coming this way, and then rarely, you'd get -- you know, if you had to go for availability or something, you go to Boston or something.

INTERVIEWER: You were talking about the weather conditions. Can you talk a little bit about what that was like with not only the ice but the potential for hazards with ice on the ship itself?

LATORRA: Oh, yeah. The best thing for me to do is show you a picture.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

LATORRA: Sometimes a ship would ice up if the weather were kind of foul and it was cold. At one point -- oh, here's our -- this is our certificate that the fellow drew up. We had sent it down. They said, you know, it was -- they sent us back something for the equator. I put this picture in.

INTERVIEWER: Did he draw that himself for going over the Arctic?

LATORRA: Yeah. Yeah.

This is a picture that my sister sent me, thought it was me. It was somebody in the Pacific, Coast Guardsman. I took this picture out of -- you notice this is from --

INTERVIEWER: "Saving Private Ryan."

LATORRA: "Saving Private Ryan." The reason I took it out was to show the lifebelts that we wore. We wore Kapok lifejackets, but we also had this.

INTERVIEWER: Those belts.

LATORRA: Do you see the cylinders?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: Then you'd squeeze and you'd turn that, and the thing was full of gas, you know, and it would -- yeah. Let me just show you the picture. There it is. But, you know, when you say that you iced up, this is what it would look like.

INTERVIEWER: So you'd be completely covered.

LATORRA: Yeah. And the danger was that you'd become top heavy, and the thing could roll over. So we would use anything that was available to just break the ice and throw it overboard. I don't know whether you ever saw these. These are copies, instrument of surrender from the Japanese internments.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

LATORRA: You may have seen those before.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I think I've seen those. Absolutely. So was there ever any time where you were concerned that the *Algonquin* might capsize?

LATORRA: No. I was never afraid we were going to sink due to that.

INTERVIEWER: How about heavy seas?

LATORRA: Yeah. Sometimes, you would get such really heavy seas that you'd wonder but I don't think any of us -- I mean when you're that young, I don't think you can -- I was never actually afraid of sinking because of the weather, but sometimes the weather, the sea -- we had a recording up at Sondrestrom Fjord. I believe that's the name of it. That's where the Arctic Circle is. We were up there for a while in the fjord, and the quartermaster called me one morning, and he said, "Come on up to the bridge." I went up there, and the thermometer was 72 below zero.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

LATORRA: You stood watch 20 below zero, 25 below zero, spray coming over. Our watches were -- you had a four-hour watch. It was four hours on, eight hours off, and it just continued until you got to a new port, and then they would switch. They called the dog to watch. You just advance it the next four hours.

So you would have -- on a standard watch, you would have -- this is seaman watch or -- unless you were rated and you didn't stand those watches, you'd have an hour and 20 minutes on one bridge, an hour and 20 minutes on the wheel, and then an hour and 20 minutes on the other bridge.

INTERVIEWER: That was outside?

LATORRA: Yeah. Oh, yes, it was outside. You know, I could tell you what we wore. That might be interesting for somebody that didn't know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: And we rarely, rarely took our clothes off. Out to sea, you just didn't take your -- you might take your lifejacket off maybe sometimes.

We wore Coast Guard-issued wool underwear, double plaid in the front and back on the shirt, long johns. Over that, we had -- they called them "dungarees" in those days. Over that, we had a shirt, a regular chambray shirt; over that, a sweater; over that, a jacket; over that, a parka with a hood. We had goggles sometimes, and at times, a felt mask over your face, and, of course, your Kapok lifejacket and your helmet. So you were --

INTERVIEWER: You must have had, what, 10 or 15 pounds of clothing on, at least?

LATORRA: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Sure. Without the lifejacket, if you fell overboard, you were gone.

INTERVIEWER: I bet. Yeah. You'd sink like a rock.

LATORRA: Yeah, like a rock. Yeah, yeah. And we had socks. The idea was not to get your feet wet if you could help it because it would be cold.

INTERVIEWER: So you kept your clothing on all the time then.

LATORRA: Most of the time, yeah. Most of the time.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't take showers or anything?

LATORRA: No. You didn't take showers. In fact, I was reading a book last week about a POW, a German POW from one of our Army guys, and they were allowed to take showers once every two months. Well, water was precious, unless you wanted to wash in salt water. We had salt water soap you could use, but you left yourself sticky.

INTERVIEWER: Did anybody ever suffer from frostbite?

LATORRA: Yeah. I had a fellow from -- in fact, he died just last year or the year before -- lived in Hawaii. In fact, I wrote a letter to the VA about him. They wouldn't give him any money because -- but he had frostbite on his feet. After I wrote the letter, he called me up and he said, "You know, they finally started giving me something." I forgot what they were giving him, but he died within six months of that. So all these years, he -- But yeah, he had frostbite on his feet. He didn't lose any toes.

INTERVIEWER: He just didn't treat his feet well enough, I guess.

LATORRA: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: He didn't whatever, do whatever --

LATORRA: But if you got your feet wet, it was pretty bad because there was not much chance they're going to dry. Your clothes just remained wet all the time. When you went outside, the spray would come over, and you'd get wet, and your clothes would be wet, and you'd go back down. It was unpleasant duty but, like I said, the other people had bad stuff too.

INTERVIEWER: Well, did you make some pretty strong friendships on board the *Algonquin*?

LATORRA: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You kept up with any of those folks?

LATORRA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Any reunions or anything?

LATORRA: Oh, no. Never had a reunion from the *Algonquin*, except right after the war or something. They had one up in Boston. Boston was our home port. I had contacts with them for -- more contacts for me were with people on the *Active* because that's the ship I was on last.

But I got a computer about six years ago, and you'd be surprised at how many people I could contact from that. That's how I got a hold of the guy in Hawaii. I didn't know he was out there, and finally --

INTERVIEWER: Well, did you all ever sight any U-boats or see any devastation caused by their torpedoes or anything of that nature?

LATORRA: Yeah. I think most of the time, most of the stuff I saw was in St. John's. If a ship could make it back to St. John's, it would, and you would see hulks of ships lying on the entranceway to St. John's with holes big enough to put a house in, and torpedoes. We towed -- I forgot. It was a long time ago, but we towed somebody that was torpedoed.

It was dangerous. You'd have this friend or foe recognition. You'd see an aircraft come over, and you had no idea who it was. It might have been German. We were well protected for a good bit of the way. We had blimps over us for a while. We had Canadian planes over us for a while. But after you got out a ways, these planes couldn't linger too long.

I think the thing turned in our favor really when they started putting out -- we had the USS *Card* with us -- I think that's the name of it -- small aircraft carrier. When they put planes in the air, things settled down a lot. They'd help us quite a bit.

INTERVIEWER: So was that when you were on board the *Algonquin*, they started putting an escort carrier along with you?

LATORRA: Yeah, I think it was. I think we saw the *Card* while I was on the *Algonquin*.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't know that. Well, if you were to have fought a surfaced submarine, you were pretty confident that you could have sunk it?

LATORRA: Oh, yes. Absolutely. No question about it. No question about it. We had two- and three-inch guns. We had plenty of -- we had 20 millimeters. Yeah, we could have handled any of that, I think. I think we could have, yeah. They had larger guns. We carried three-inch 50s, but they had larger. We had five-inch guns on some of the other ships, the larger ships.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: Yeah, I think we could have, if you had to -- if we rammed them, I know we would have got them because we had plenty of -- somebody said they had concrete in the bow of the *Algonquin*. I don't know about that, but it was a sturdy ship. You'd hear a creak once in a while, but it was a good ship.

INTERVIEWER: Where was she originally? She wasn't originally stationed out there. She came from the Great Lakes perhaps or something?

LATORRA: She may have done ice breaking someplace. I have a history on her. I got it from the computer.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. Did you get much liberty during the war?

LATORRA: Not that awful much, not that awful much.

Well, you know, we were away, and liberty, if you're up in the Greenland area, there was not much liberty. There's not much liberty, but, no, I don't think we did get too much liberty. And if you got leave, it was when you got to Boston, and then you had maybe 10 days or something like that. Not too, too often, though. It was almost like a seven-day job, everyday type of job.

INTERVIEWER: So did you get back home to see your folks much?

LATORRA: I got home -- I got home in the time I was on the *Algonquin*, I think twice. Twice.

There were some fellows who lived out in the Midwest or something who couldn't make it home. So they'd stay around Boston or something. For people that lived in Boston, that's pretty good. They didn't --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Yeah. Did you get on land in Greenland very much, the bases there at all?

LATORRA: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What was that like, and where were you? Where did you --

LATORRA: Well, we went -- I have a whole chapter here on Greenland. I wrote it all myself and how long, how it affected me, what I thought about it. Julianehab. I don't know whether we got to Godthåb. Thule West One. They used to call that base by Cape Farewell, they called that Blue West One.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LATORRA: That was a big base. That's where they had the airfield. Close to there is where we went after that PBV that crashed in the mountains.

Not much liberty, but, you know, it was like if you were in port, there was liberty portside or the starboard side. If you had duty, you'd stay on board, play

cards if you like or whatever. If you had liberty, you'd go ashore. There wasn't much to see.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any natives or anything?

LATORRA: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did they ever -- any -- did they speak English?

LATORRA: No, no English, but they all liked cigarettes. They liked candy, even the kids. And when you'd go ashore, these kids would just mob you. They'd come around you, they'd follow you. They were looking for cigarettes or something.

I got a couple of nice souvenirs from them up there, A couple of carvings. I got a miniature kayak made just like they make their own up there. It was good. I enjoyed the visits. We went into their houses, and little -- here, I can show you the pictures of little ramshackle buildings.

Here. Here's an Eskimo kid, and here's a woman with some kayaks. Here's a couple of us on our gun up here. Here's Port Kagun [ph].

INTERVIEWER: Okay. That was your station.

LATORRA: We were not -- we were not allowed to have -- here is coming into St. John's. We were not allowed to have diaries, you know, or cameras. That was not -- whoever took these, I have no idea, but you could not --

INTERVIEWER: So you don't even know who took these photographs?

LATORRA: No. Here's a hut in Greenland. Can you imagine living in that?

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

LATORRA: Here's an Eskimo woman.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I understand that they didn't take showers very much either.

LATORRA: No, they didn't. They smelled pretty badly. They did. These people did. You'd know when you got in a group of them. You would know.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any other shots of yourself in the service?

LATORRA: Oh, Greenland, no.

Oh, yeah, I've got plenty of shots. This is the skipper from the *Active*, got married and -- here's --

INTERVIEWER: Is that a 30 caliber?

LATORRA: 30 caliber. This is on the *Active*.

INTERVIEWER: Now, is the *Active* a patrol frigate?

LATORRA: That was a 125-footer.

INTERVIEWER: It was a buck and a quarter.

LATORRA: Here it is.

INTERVIEWER: And when did you transfer from *Algonquin* to -- you went to gunnery school for three months.

LATORRA: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And was that January 12th again when you went to there?

LATORRA: No, I don't think that was the 12th. I really don't remember when I got off the *Algonquin*, but it had to be at the end of '43 because I was in St. Augustine in March of '44.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And that's when you finished up gunnery school?

LATORRA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so three months.

LATORRA: And I was sent right back up to Boston and then right onto the *Active*.

INTERVIEWER: And how many months were you on board the *Active* then?

LATORRA: I think I spent more time on the *Active* than I did on the *Algonquin*.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

LATORRA: I got off the *Active* in very late '45.

INTERVIEWER: Like November or December?

LATORRA: Yeah, I would say. I would say, because the war ended when I was in New Orleans. As a matter of fact, VJ Day happened when I was in New Orleans.

You want to see a party? Oh, my lord. I've never, never experienced anything like that in my life. Canal Street was just packed with people celebrating, people on poles climbing around. It was really something.

Here's another shot of the *Algonquin*. Peace time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

LATORRA: Peace time. She was white. I don't know if I have any pictures of the *Algonquin*.

INTERVIEWER: She must have been -- you had a lot less free board when she was loaded down with all that armament during World War II.

LATORRA: Yeah. She picked up a lot of -- we picked up a lot of -- well, if you look at the first picture, you see she had no armament at all to begin with. We put all that stuff on -- we didn't, but, I mean, they did.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: Here's my what-you-call-it to report for active duty.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, wow.

LATORRA: Saturday, the 12th of December. That was when I went on active duty. If you have time, I could read you a couple of things.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: I don't want to --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that would be great.

LATORRA: I don't want to take up your time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, no problem.

LATORRA: Okay. You might want to know. What's this about? Oh.

"I guess some of every crew that is ever put to sea has been plagued by seasickness. We surely had our share. Personally, I was seasick almost every day, many times more than once a day, for my first three months at sea. I mention this to write about two of our crew and their seasickness.

"Paul Mone [ph] was from Kansas and had never seen an ocean. Paul was a slender, tallish redhead who wouldn't hurt a fly, a very likeable guy, but he suffered badly from seasickness. He was one of our radiomen and stood his watch in an enclosed, smallish cubicle called a 'radio shack.'" I put in brackets, [Enclosed is not good for seasickness].

"I wrote about Paul because as long as he was on our ship, he stood his radio watch with a bucket tied around his neck. When I was standing wheel watch on the bridge, I could hear him throwing up in the shack behind me. To my knowledge, Paul never missed a watch. He had grit.

"The case of John Chittister [ph] was more serious. John was bedeviled by a very serious case of chronic seasickness. It was so bad that he had to be put in his bunk, strapped in and cared for as best as we could. He couldn't eat nor could he walk. He made one crossing with us and was immediately transferred ashore.

"On our crossing during general quarters, strapped in his bunk, he was left on the berth deck. The hatches were bogged down shut, and it must have seemed to him that he was in a coffin. He must really have suffered. John Chittister was transferred when we reached Greenland, and he vowed he would never return to the United States if it had to be by ship. I saw him there more than two years later, and he had not been home. I don't know how it turned out for him."

INTERVIEWER: But he was still in Greenland?

LATORRA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Two years later?

LATORRA: Two years later. He never went home. He could have flown home. I guess there the Army planes flying home.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: I don't know if you want to hear about this. This is a clearly long one.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. That's fine.

LATORRA: You got this one, the *Svend Foyn*. How do they spell that?

INTERVIEWER: *Sven Foyn*. I think it's S-v-e-n.

LATORRA: That's what I have. F-o-y-n.

INTERVIEWER: F-o-y-n. Yeah.

LATORRA: Well, yeah. I'll take you back.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

LATORRA: Oh, okay. "Later the same day, we held a surprise muster and learned that we were shoving off in an hour on a rescue mission. We had not had much rest lately, but this did sound as though it was rather important, and, in any case, we had to go."

I don't know what you have got in these. You're the historian. I know what you've got on this sinking, but this is as I saw it --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Sure.

LATORRA: -- from our -- and, you know, we -- they never told us which ships were in our vicinity. We had to talk later and find out who was there.

"The S.O.S. received by all units in our area was from" -- I thought it Norwegian freighter. Was it Norwegian?

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

LATORRA: Or Danish or whatever?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: The *Svend Foyn*.

"The ship was headed for Iceland when she struck an iceberg approximately 250 miles south of Cape Farewell in Greenland. Since Blue West One was the nearest land base, it received orders for the rescue, and since we were one of the few escort ships in port, we were ordered to the job. Figuring the weather and sea conditions, we decided it would take us approximately 24 hours to reach the disabled ship.

"Three of our ships, the *Storis*, *Murdock* and ourselves, left immediately. The weather was clear and cold when we left port and the sea was calm. We were running from full ahead to emergency full. Our course ran us past

countless icebergs and growlers, small pieces of icebergs, and there were many times we had to skirt field ice, ice extending for miles to our port or starboard.

"It was our plan to reach the stricken ship before she had to be abandoned, and with luck, we intended perhaps to tow her to port. This would be an operation requiring good seas and weather. We had neither when it counted most. We had left port at 6:30 p.m. on the 19th. By 8 p.m. on the 20th, we had all hands on watch where we should have been in the vicinity of the sinking ship.

"Our last report had been at 2:30 p.m. when the last radio message from the *Svend Foyn* stated that they were taking on water fast and would have to abandon ship soon. Just about the same time, it started to snow, and by 8 p.m., it was a full-sized Arctic blizzard. Our three ships got split up, and we had all available personnel and equipment ready for instant service.

"About midnight, the snow stopped and the sea became extremely rough. None of us had slept, and we were all very tired. It began to look as though we were not going to find the ship. Then, at exactly quarter to one in the morning, the first blinker message was flashed. It came from the Coast Guard cutter *Avik*, which had come upon the scene with two Navy destroyers. But due to the very rough seas, they could not take on survivors.

"The *Svend Foyn* sank as we arrived within 2,000 yards of her. Most of the men had abandoned ship. Others had waited until the last possible minute before leaving. To my knowledge, three men went down with the ship: a mate, a radio operator and the captain.

"The sea around us was a mess of small, red lifejacket lights. Men couldn't live in this water much more than an hour or so, if that long. Lifeboats were all around us, and the sea tossed them about like so many corks. We did the best we could trying to get lifelines to the boats in which there appeared to be more live men. Most of the boats were built for 20 men and now were jammed with 40 or so, and each was full of water and awash. The men were numb, and the lines we threw just lay there. Some had been in the water two or three hours. Others had gone in within the hour. Most of them were screaming and yelling to be saved, and it was a pathetic sight to behold.

"Operations could not continue as they were. In the blackness, we could not see for one thing, but we were in U-boat area and to turn on the spotlights would be folly. It finally fell on the escort commander to make the decision. He ordered three of our ships to tighten in a rescue circle with all of our spotlights on and the *Staurus* to circle for prowling U-boats.

"In the meantime, the *Avik* had joined the *Murdock* and ourselves in trying to haul up survivors. Men in groups of five or six were the easiest targets, along with the lifeboats, but men drifting along had to be neglected. As these men saw

they were not going to be picked up, they screamed and hollered and tried to attract our attention. There must have been 250 men in the water.

"As we successfully got a line on a boat, the sea would snap it, or as we came close enough to a lifeboat to grab a man, the waves would dash it against the side of the ship. We saw one man try to jump from the lifeboat onto the cargo netting, and miss and have the boat catch him and crush him. Another lone man floating behind our ship was crushed, but it couldn't be helped. Our skipper was doing an excellent job under very trying conditions."

It's about the surgeon.

"As we got a survivor aboard, we would rush him below to the mess deck where the surgeon and his first aid men were at work. They did a wonderful job down below there that night. Our whiskey supply, which had numbered 48 bottles, had been broken out, and as we came down the ladder from the top deck, the doc would give us a straight glassful. Then one of the cooks came up with mugs of black, hot coffee. They took good care of us.

"At 2:30 a.m., our worst fears were realized, and there had been a submarine contact where we were not involved."

Icing events.

"Just about this time, our executive officer, Lieutenant Hutchins, asked for permission to go over the side to make a lifeline secure on one of the lifeboats. Hutchins was a good man, a good athlete. Our ship was pitching and rolling, and yet, with his lifejacket on, he did make the jump, and the executive officer got his hands on it. His body was caught between the ship and the boat. He just did manage to get up in the lifeboat in time. He made a line secure and stayed with the boat until all 18 of the men were aboard the ship. His action encouraged others to try to ask to try it, but because the skipper did not want to lose personnel, he stopped the practice almost as soon as Mr. Hutchins had come back aboard.

"By 4:30, we had picked up what men we could. Those left in the water were dead. Of that, there was no doubt. One man we hauled up had on only a belt, only a belt. We had somehow hooked a rope around his ankle, and we hauled him in that way, feet up, head down. He was dead and had turned a dark blue. What a hell of a way to die.

"Another was a large Dutchman who was a mate aboard the *Svend Foyn*. He had guided seven of his men to safety, and only by his leadership did we rescue them. I happened to be the one who pulled him up our cargo netting, and as extremely cold as we was, he gave me a great, big grin and put his arms around me. I led him below where I took his frozen clothes from him. I asked

him for his life light, which he was glad to give me. I still have it as a souvenir. I believe he was one of the coolest men I have ever seen in any emergency.

"Most of the men we picked up were Indians, British subjects, all black, together with the oil, which was in the water. They were a mess. The doctor and his aides had gotten all the blankets they could find to wrap them in, our blankets, and the blankets were never the same afterwards.

"Five men died as we got them aboard, and we carried them, the dead ones, to the head and laid them down. As the ship rolled and tossed, they would move, and it appeared they weren't dead at all. Also in the head, we threw all of the clothes the men had been wearing. The whole second deck was fouled up something awful.

"So at 5 o'clock in the morning in the freezing cold, we were almost out of the immediate rescue area, headed back to port with the *Murdock*. I believe that was the longest watch I ever stood. They had brought the dead men to the our number-two gun platform, and that is where we stood our watch. The dead men lay there between us, some of their eyes wide open. It wasn't pretty.

"At 3 p.m. on the same day, since the sea had calmed, we came alongside the *Murdock* to see any survivors. Altogether, after the count, we had a total of 38 survivors. The *Murdock* had picked up 58, and they gave us two dead. Final count as I knew it for the whole rescue, all ships, we counted 124 survivors, and a total of 18 who had died after the rescue. The rest of the afternoon was spent sewing up the bodies in canvas and placing what identification we could find.

"Months later, Lieutenant Hutchins was awarded the Navy-Marine Corps Medal for his part in the rescue. Eight members of our crew who had distinguished themselves received commendation letters. I didn't even catch cold."

Here's something you might be interested in, very brief.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah. Okay. Please do.

LATORRA: I'm talking, in this part, a little bit about Greenland and --

"As to the stories that we heard about a six-month period of light and six months of darkness, I can vouch that in the Arctic, it is true. We showed a movie in port one night at midnight, and afterwards, you can go out on deck and read a book."

This is during the light season.

"The most wonderful sight any of us remember, however, are the Northern Lights. The heavens were always afire with the rays of light and the throbbing flashes which made the sight so spectacular. There had been times when folks in the States have been able to see the Aurora Borealis at work, but what is seen in the States is but a small part of the huge display. It is something very wonderful to see."

That's a nature study, a nature study.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Do you have any information about the PBY rescue too?

LATORRA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: I'm going to have to find that. I want you to see this as well.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: This is an original carbon copy of -- well, let's see if I've got a copy of it. No, I don't.

Anyhow, the radioman would copy news at midnight, and they would make three copies of it. One copy would go to the skipper, one would go to the ward room, and the other would go into the crews' quarters. This is a copy of the newscast on 13 July '43 while at sea.

INTERVIEWER: So you would get all the latest news about what was happening on the warfront.

LATORRA: Yeah. This is -- this is -- this is exactly --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. One of the carbon copies. Yeah.

LATORRA: This is the original. I want to read you something else that might be interesting for the Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Please do. Yeah, that would be great.

LATORRA: "On the eighth day out of Halifax, we were approximately 100 miles due south of Cape Farewell in Greenland. We continued east. This was to be a rather sorry day for us. At about 9 a.m., we had general quarters. Two unidentified planes had been picked up on radar approaching from ahead of the convoy. I remember this one well because I had taken off my boots and stepped

into water on the berth deck. When general quarters sounded, I pulled my boots on and quickly my feet felt as though they were freezing.

"The two planes appeared shortly afterwards and identified themselves. They were British, and they circled over the convey for some 15 minutes and then headed back to port. Just as secure from general quarters had sounded, the flying bridge lookout sang out that he had spotted two mines off our portside. The skipper called over TBS to the escort commander and advised that we would delay, destroy the mines and then get back to our position.

"The skipper gave orders for the port bridge 20 millimeter to commence fire on the mines. The port bridge 20 was manned by John Sajak [ph], a gunner. John opened fire and exploded one of the mines in short order. At this point, we were down to one-third speed and circling the remaining mine. As John opened up on the last mine, something happened. Either the ship rolled or pitched or whatever, but the muzzle of the 20 millimeter came down below the edge of the ship's gull, which is probably a half-inch-thick steel, and the deck of the number-one gun.

"The gun crew on the number-one gun were still at their post following general quarters, and every one of them was struck down. Miraculously, none of the eight men were hit directly by projectiles but all were hit by flying metal. I was on the stern and portside of the ship, and I heard the report from the bridge that we had an emergency on the number-one gun. I looked up the side of the ship and could see four of the number-one gun crew lying there.

"Most of the wounded received rather serious wounds in the legs, but Charlie Varner and Ed Rober [ph] received more serious wounds. Varner, who had taken off his helmet after general quarters, received numerous pieces of metal in his skull. Rober was hit from the front by a larger chunk of metal. We had no hospital facilities, but our surgeon, working on our mess table, took care of all the men as best he could, assisted by our two pharmacist's mates.

"I don't know if there was any anesthesia. I know we had morphine. Rober appeared to be the most seriously injured. They worked on him for over two hours. I remember holding Varner's hand as the surgeon was finishing up taking the metal fragments from his head. While this was going on, John Sajak, who was still on the port 20 millimeter, exploded the other mine. So we broke off and went back to Blue West One.

"Something good did come of this. Because of the accident, all Coast Guard ships would have installed under each 20-millimeter cannon, a steel rail pipe limit guard that would limit the depression of the muzzle to where it could not fire on board. I don't know if the Navy adopted this, but I'm sure it should have."

That's the end of that story. I want to read you the one about the plane, if I can find that one.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, yeah. Absolutely.

LATORRA: I had it here. That was an interesting -- it wasn't a rescue where it went after bodies. Boot camp. Oh, boy.

We're an hour into this.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Yeah. That's fine.

LATORRA: I don't want to keep you. I know you've got stuff.

INTERVIEWER: No, that's fine. Yeah, I was kind of planning on it.

LATORRA: We had -- well, they call "African Americans" today. We called them "blacks" in those days.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

LATORRA: We had seven of them, I think, on there. They were all stewards. They all had general quarters stations.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: And they issued passes and stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Were they just a regular part of the crew? I mean, everybody got along okay?

LATORRA: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Oh, absolutely. They had their own businesses. They would press clothes for you if you want, press your uniform for you, wash it for you.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah?

LATORRA: They all hustled. One of them was a barber. One of them was an artist. He's the guy that drew the -- happy-go-lucky people.

INTERVIEWER: Which one was an artist?

LATORRA: The guy that drew the certificate. I think his name was Bell. That's it. We're getting there. There it is. It should be here. Okay. This started out, I guess, in Julianehab.

"We arrived at Julianehab in early afternoon. The wreck" -- and we talked about the PBY that crashed.

INTERVIEWER: It was a VP6 PBY that crashed.

LATORRA: Yeah. A Navy --

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what date that was? That was in '42 still or '43, I mean.

LATORRA: It had to be '43, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: "A Navy PBY5 had crashed in the high mountains, and our ship was directed, since we were the closest force, to the scene to take out the remains. The Eskimos had discovered the wreckage and there were no survivors.

"We arrived at Julianehab in early afternoon. The wreck was about four hours climb and height from our place of anchorage. This is when I first saw my first full-fledged Eskimo. They knew no English, but we made ourselves understood. Cigarettes and chewing gum were tops on their list. These were a happy, smiling bunch of people. Later, we went on to visit their village.

"Our landing party consisted of 25 men. I was lucky enough to be one of them. We made some very interesting landings later. Most of us were given four Eskimo men to work with. The way these men climbed mountains was amazing. They got a big kick out of us because we became winded so fast.

"Their dress was much like they are pictured as wearing, except that I didn't notice the fur cape over their head. Their feet were covered with the thinnest of leather, seal skin, made into boots. To aid in their climbing, they tied wooden spears about the size of a broomstick with a long, steel point extending from the end about a foot.

"We arrived at the scene of the crash after an arduous climb and found wreckage as far as 600 yards from the plane itself. There had been a snowstorm since the crash, so we had to do a lot of digging. The plane itself was a complete wreck. The bodies, 11 in all, were frozen stiff. None of the 11 were distinguishable. The thing that impressed me most was how completely preserved they were. Some of the faces and heads were crushed but in a way which would not turn one's stomach. The arms and legs had frozen and could not be moved.

"The only way we could get the bodies back to the ship was to wrap each body in canvas and fashion a crude sled out of the metal plane. We tied lines to these sleds and tried holding on while we descended the mountain. Many times along the way, however, even with the aid of the four Eskimos, the burden would be to get away and slide down the mountain until it stopped against a large boulder or a large bank of snow.

"The wreckage had not been disturbed by the Eskimos, whom we found to be very honest people. There was valuable equipment aboard including a bomb site which we destroyed with demolition charges. We found cameras which the official photographer took charge of. There were flares on the plane which was still intact, and we exploded them. The Eskimos got a kick out of that.

"They had formed a ring around us, and most of the village had turned out for the occasion. All of the Mae Wests aboard were intact also, and a few of the boys took one. The parachutes were all packed except one, which had come loose in the crash, and we took pieces of it as souvenirs. I also took a small piece used in navigating the plane. I still have it, and I still don't know what it is.

"The 11 bodies were placed on the fantail of the ship and covered with canvas after the ship's doctor had acquired all the necessary credentials and papers from the pockets. One of the victims was a Coast Guard lieutenant who had graduated in the same class from the Academy as our executive officer, Lieutenant Hutchins. The lieutenant's Academy ring was removed from his finger and given to Lieutenant Hutchins, who would later return it to the lieutenant's family."

That's the end of that story.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what that Coast Guard lieutenant's name was?

LATORRA: No. The one who died?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: No. Hutchins was the lieutenant --

INTERVIEWER: That won the medal and all.

LATORRA: He was our executive officer, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I'll be darned.

LATORRA: A lot of things happened that --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: I don't know. This is at gunner's mate school.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

LATORRA: This is at gunnery school.

INTERVIEWER: All right. Did anybody that you knew partake in that class, or were they all strangers?

LATORRA: Yeah. As a matter of fact, there's a story to that.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

LATORRA: I think I mentioned it was Commander Miller. It was Commander Miller or Lieutenant Commander Miller --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: -- that was the skipper on our ship.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

LATORRA: By the time I had reached -- now, where did it go? By the time I reached St. Augustine Gunnery School -- St. Augustine Gunnery School was also boot camp down there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: That was at the Ponce Hotel in St. Augustine. Beautiful place, beautiful hotel. Beautiful place. I mean, it wasn't like -- but --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

LATORRA: And Lieutenant Miller -- I mean Commander Miller had been transferred and was in charge of the station when I got there. So these two fellows -- this is me with the hat.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: And this is Wilkis [ph]. See, we have bars.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Yeah.

LATORRA: Wilkis was on the ship with me also. So the first night, we both got transferred from the *Algonquin* to the gunnery school.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: So the first night we were going to go ashore, they have an inspection, and Lieutenant Miller is going to inspect the group as we go -- I mean before we go ashore, and he -- it was really nice.

Walking down the line, all the guys were -- and he comes by me. He stepped forward, and Wilkis, we were standing together, stepped forward, and he said -- he patted us, and he says, "I had these two men on my ship," he says. And I was embarrassed.

INTERVIEWER: He singled you out, I guess.

[Laughter.]

LATORRA: Yeah. He was good. He was a nice guy.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: I enjoyed that. I enjoyed gunnery school. I thought it was good.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. I guess if there were larger sized weapons, they had a special school for that, too, beyond the five-inch.

LATORRA: I would imagine for, you know, bag guns and stuff like, I guess you'd have to go to a special school.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Well, tell me a little bit about being on board the *Active*. That's the one you went on board after gunnery school, and that would be March of '44. Is that right?

LATORRA: About then, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: That you went to the *Active*?

LATORRA: About then.

Well, we went back -- a smaller ship, smaller ship, a tighter -- tighter-knit group because, you know, we didn't have -- I can't even tell you the -- do you know what I got from my computer, though? I got the names of every person on the *Algonquin*, every person on this --

INTERVIEWER: Really?

LATORRA: On the *Active*.

INTERVIEWER: Crew member.

LATORRA: I found it. You know, that way I could trace some of them down, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: Smaller ship but same thing. In fact, I think the crew was closer on the *Active* than it was on the -- the *Algonquin* was larger, and there were more people, more officers, but the same thing. Food was bad. The weather was bad.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been harder on board the *Active* being 40-feet shorter --

LATORRA: Yeah, smaller.

INTERVIEWER: -- to navigate.

LATORRA: As I recall, one Thanksgiving in 1944 -- it had to be '44 -- on the *Active*, the galley range went out, the weather was so bad. The guy helping the cook was Jack-of-the-Dust. He went down in the hold, and he got two cases and brought them up on the mess deck and put them there. One of them was chicken noodle soup, and the other was pears, and that was our Thanksgiving dinner. If you wanted it, it was cold, but that was it. There was no stove. There was no food.

INTERVIEWER: It was all canned food, I guess?

LATORRA: Yeah. I remember being down in Swan Island, which is a U.S. possession in the Caribbean. We went ashore there, and they let us swim. Oh, it was a beautiful place, not like built like hotels or anything, just palm trees and coconut trees, and they were selling us coconuts for a penny apiece, and the officers -- they were eating iguanas. They were eating them, the natives. So the officers traded some of our canned goods for some iguana, fresh food, fresh meat. They offered. No, we didn't. I didn't want any of that.

INTERVIEWER: Did some of the crew eat it?

LATORRA: I guess they did, yeah. I guess they thought it was good. I don't know. I wouldn't have any of that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see much action as far as enemy action at all?

LATORRA: About the same, the same as this. I think we may have seen more action, though, on the Algonquin, I think, because we went to different places, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: We were more -- I think we saw more -- we were on the go. We just went wherever. We did a lot of convoying. We convoyed a lot of stuff. People don't really realize it.

We were with -- you know, I think back -- I can't remember everything, but I think back when we lost the *Escanaba*. We were doing something. We were convoying something.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: I think we were coming -- we were going west. What happened there was -- you heard the story of that on *Escanaba*.

INTERVIEWER: That it just blew up and --

LATORRA: Yeah, it blew up, and we thought it was torpedoed. We always did, but we did never know. But I think three people survived, then one of them died, and there were two left.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: And one of them. I corresponded with. He lives in Chicago. He's been very sick, and I think he's --

INTERVIEWER: He's passed away.

LATORRA: Passed away. The other fellow had passed away also.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

LATORRA: The one that was in Chicago, though, was the grand marshal of the -- what's the name of the place out in --

INTERVIEWER: Grand Haven Festival that they have there, the Coast Guard Festival.

LATORRA: Right. He was the grand marshal every year for some number of years. I corresponded with him for a short time. I told him that we had been with him. The Raritan [ph], I think, picked him up.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

LATORRA: And I think the Staurus was with us.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

LATORRA: But they -- everybody else had died.

INTERVIEWER: Well, where did the *Active* go? It started out in Greenland, but it didn't stay there. Right? How long did you stay in Greenland on board the *Active*?

LATORRA: It seems like that we were there awhile.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

LATORRA: But our duty changed. Our duty changed. We came back. I told you, I was transferred off in New Orleans. So we were working in the South. We actually went to Panama. We were in the Caribbean. We were doing a weather patrol out of Key West, I think. So I spent more time, I think, on the *Active*, but I spent more time in the Greenland area on the *Algonquin*. Yeah. That's what we did on the *Algonquin*. We were up there all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. So can you describe what a typical day might have been like on the Greenland Patrol, what you might have done with all your watches and food eating and --

LATORRA: Well, like I said, it was four hours on and eight hours off when you're out to sea, and you didn't work. When I say you didn't work, I mean they had no duties for you other than your watch. You had breakfast. I've had Sunday morning cold beans and ketchup. I'm telling you, the food wasn't that great.

I think one of the biggest drawbacks was the food for me, because, first of all, you're seasick, and you just don't want to see food. And then when you do see it and it's just so poor, you're just, you know -- for example, we had no butter, we had no bread, we had no milk. If they had pancakes, it was they had no syrup. They'd put a little brown pill in water and mixed it around, and that was your syrup, you know. You're talking 60 years ago.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

LATORRA: Dehydrated cabbage. You could look at it and get sick. Dehydrated potatoes, it was like heavy mortar. You know what mortar was like, when you make mortar?

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

LATORRA: Same thing. Nothing fresh. Occasionally, we would have fish, and codfish was good. We had fresh codfish, but that's about all. The milk was powdered milk.

INTERVIEWER: So, basically, you were on watch and then you'd just go to your bunk and lie down and sleep, and then you'd come --

LATORRA: Right. And you were interrupted many, many times. General quarters, general quarters, general quarters. I don't think you rested properly because you never slept soundly. You were uncomfortable from seasickness. You were uncomfortable from the weather, the cold, and your clothes are wet.

INTERVIEWER: Did most of the people overcome seasickness after a while, or you never really do that?

LATORRA: I'd say -- I would say -- like I say in here, I had it for three months, and after that, I got so that I could -- when I went aboard the *Active*, I wasn't troubled at all. The only thing I suffered from there was the first couple days was -- on the *Algonquin*, we had one screw. On the *Active*, we had two. It just seemed different to me. I couldn't get used to the revolutions.

Aboard ship, if you're lying in your bunk and you're in enemy water, even the slightest change in speed, whether you were asleep or not, you'll sense it because you hear that thing all the time. It's always going "roo-roo-roo."

And if it picks up a little or drops down, usually, if there's a general quarters, just before the general quarters buzzer goes off, he'll increase speed. And when it does that, you'll pick it up, and you're getting ready to go already. You kind of learn because you have to.

You don't get much time to get up to where you're going, where your battle station is. You don't get too much time. If you get stuck on the ladder, you won't be there long. They'll shove you up.

INTERVIEWER: I'm surprised that you could even stay alert and pick up where a mine might be floating or something like that because it sounds like you guys were so fatigued all the time.

LATORRA: It was tiring. It really was tiring. And really, as far as mines, we didn't see too many, but you had to be very fortunate because this convoy

was spread out. When the fog comes in and you've got a bow watch, an extra bow watch -- but you're not going to see anything in the fog, in the darkness. At night, it's hell out there. If you didn't have radar, there would be a lot of collisions, a lot of collisions. Radar was brand new. We didn't have, like you have today. The weather maps were China. We didn't have that.

INTERVIEWER: I remember when I would be on -- I'd been on boats where I was really rocking a lot, and I would get off the boat, and I could hardly walk.

LATORRA: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been the same for you.

LATORRA: You had to get your sea legs back.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: When you'd get to the dock, it was hard to navigate. It really is. You're used to doing this.

INTERVIEWER: Swinging back and forth, yeah.

LATORRA: You don't want to watch anything moving when you're seasick. The lamp would be going like that, that's bad business, or if you're enclosed, if you're enclosed. You've got to have air. You've got to have air.

INTERVIEWER: Fresh air and all. Did you watch the horizon or something?

LATORRA: Well, there was no -- yeah, whatever you could do to help yourself, you'd find a way.

But I think the big thing, though, Bill, was that you had no choice. You were there. Many times, sure, I don't think I ever talked about it, and I don't think anybody ever mentioned it to me, but, you know, you enlisted. You weren't drafted. You enlisted, and you asked for this.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: And you'd say to yourself, really, what am I doing out here? I'm a little kid from some small town in New Jersey, and I'm out here. What am I doing here? I wonder what's going on, you know.

I know I wrote -- I wrote in my book -- well, I can't find it, but it made sense at the time that, even though I was a rookie, I thought that what was going on out

there was insane. We were trying to kill them, and they were trying to kill us, and it just didn't make sense. But you couldn't think about it because that's why you were there. You did the best you could at what you were supposed to do.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Any other really memorable events that stand out in your mind from your days in the service from the *Algonquin* or *Active*?

LATORRA: March 12th, 1946, I was discharged in Philadelphia. That was a red-letter day, a red-letter day.

INTERVIEWER: Were you sad or happy?

LATORRA: Oh, no, I was -- I was glad to get home. I was glad to get out. You know, when the war ended, it had been -- it had been a grind for a lot of people, and it's not like it is today. Although people that are affected today, the people in Iraq, I could feel for them, but it wasn't that way then. It was every family in every city in every town on every street, that's all they talked about was World War II. It was just that big. Every person in the world was affected by it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: You didn't -- you didn't know a family that wasn't affected by it, either had a son or -- they wrote a book from our local newspaper, and I happened to be one of the people they interviewed on some stuff. And one of our people from Wilkes-Barre, a mother had six sons in the service -- six. Two of them were killed. So, you know, it was just -- it's just so big.

When I left there, when I was discharged, when I was leaving New Orleans, they offered me an upgrade in my rating if I would stay, and I told them no.

INTERVIEWER: What was the offer?

LATORRA: The offer was I could have made first class gunner in about three months, but I was in the receiving station. They had no use for a gunner's mate in a receiving station. What was I going to do there? It probably would have meant I would have got another sea job, you know, and I'd had enough of that. So I said no, I'll go home.

So they sent me to Philadelphia, and I got out there.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a point system set up? Is that how it worked?

LATORRA: Yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And you had the points to get out?

LATORRA: Yeah. Well, a lot of people had more points than I did because they had spent time in Europe and had never gotten home, a lot of Army people. So they were getting out in early '45, mid '45. I got out in very early '46. No, they were getting out in about mid '45, late '45 because there was still a war going on in Japan, and we all -- as I said before, we were striking for an LST out there in Alameda. I could very easily have ended up out there. So I was glad when the war ended, and then you just have had enough. There was enough, and you wanted to go home.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: Today, some people make a career of it. If it's peacetime, it's not that bad, but in wartime, it's -- if you had suffered at all, then you say that's enough.

And I had missed four years of my life. I played a lot of baseball. This has nothing to do with the service or anything, but I had played a lot of baseball, and I had had -- even when I was 18 years old, I had had three tryouts with Major League teams. This is the truth.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

LATORRA: Yeah, it's the truth. And I don't know where that would have gone. I enrolled in college, and I couldn't make it because I came right into the service, but be that as it may, I kind of missed the four years that I spent. But, on the other hand, you certainly learn a lot.

The thing you learned is that as well as you know everyone, your buddies, your next -- best friend is better than a brother, when something happens, you still have to face it yourself, and you have to stand on your own two feet, and you have to look at it and face it by yourself. Although anybody around you, they're with you, they're for you, they're all part of the -- you still have to go through it by yourself. I learned that. I think it's a good lesson.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So, before you were discharged, you spent a few months in the Caribbean on the *Active*, is that right, when it was decommissioned in New Orleans?

LATORRA: It wasn't decommissioned. No, I got transferred.

INTERVIEWER: You got -- oh, okay.

LATORRA: I don't know where they went after that. I have no idea where they went after that.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

LATORRA: I would say we spent a good month down there before the war ended, but I don't think the *Active* would have had any role in the Japanese adventure, but the crew would.

I'll tell you, the second morning after I got transferred off, the second morning the skipper called me up and says -- all three of us came off the *Active* together. He says, "You three fellows are going to Alameda." He says, "You've got an LST waiting for you." So he says, "Pack your bags," and two days later, VJ Day. Boy, was I happy.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

LATORRA: Not only did I miss the trip to California, I had partied in New Orleans. It worked out fine.

INTERVIEWER: That's funny.

Did you feel any animosity toward the people you were fighting in World War II or have any thoughts about that, the Japanese or the Germans or --

LATORRA: Well, you know, you're looking back. You're looking back now. It's 60 years, and I would say if I saw anybody that was on a U-boat or a U-boat commander or anything else today, I would sit down with him, have coffee with him, shake his hand. Wonderful person. But not then. No, not then, not then.

And then when you heard, you know, especially the Japanese, when you heard some of the stories, prisoners and the way they treated them, no, you couldn't have any feeling for them. That brings about the question about whether or not we should have dropped the A Bomb on Hiroshima.

And I'll tell you, without exception, I'll bet you that every serviceperson in World War II at that time said drop it, said drop it, because we -- you know, you're looking -- you're looking at least a million casualties if we invaded. Look at what we lost in the islands, the people we lost in just small islands. If you got to the homeland, they'd have thrown everything at you, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

LATORRA: So do I think we did -- yeah, I think we did the right thing, but it's hard to convince people today that you're happy that they dropped an atomic bomb. That doesn't make sense.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Absolutely.

What happened after your last day in the service? You were transferred out in New Orleans?

LATORRA: Transferred out in New Orleans, and I came up to Philadelphia, and everybody broke up. Everybody -- I forget how many of us came up by train from New Orleans to Philly. Some of us knew each other, and we just parted.

I had worn -- I had worn black shoes for every day that, I guess, I was in the service, and I went to a bar by myself in Philadelphia, and I got drunk. But before I did that, I went to a shoe store, and I bought a pair of brown shoes, without the box. I tied the shoelaces, and I put them around my neck, my shoes. I got on the train, and I went back to home, and my father met me at the train station. There was no band. There was no band, no fire trucks. There was just me. That was it.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been kind of a -- I mean, this -- I don't want to put words in your mouth or anything, but to see all these people that you'd shared --

LATORRA: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- these experiences with, and then, all of a sudden --

LATORRA: Oh, yeah. Oh.

INTERVIEWER: -- it's just over and --

LATORRA: It was -- I had the same feeling when my mother died, not quite the same, but I mean the same kind of feeling in your body, in your gut. It was a feeling of like loneliness, a feeling of being alone. You didn't know where to pick up. You didn't know where to start. You had seen these people every day. You ate together, you drank together, and then all of a sudden, they weren't there, you know. And I think the word that I used, it's "emptiness," I think is the word that would really -- that I would use for that.

It's getting used to civilian life was not -- not tough for me, but I could imagine where it would have been tougher for some people.

I had just come from New Orleans, and I went to a -- and I was still a youngster. I got a job. I went to Union Carbide, a plastic manufacturer, a large, large place in New Jersey, and I applied for work, and they says, you know, "You're coming -- you're a veteran?" and I said, "Yeah." "Okay, you're hired." I said, "But -- but before I come to work, I have to have two weeks off." So they

gave me two weeks off, and I went back to New Orleans with a friend of mine, and we picked that up all over again.

INTERVIEWER: You mean he was a friend from the war, you mean or --

LATORRA: Yeah. Had been in the Army, but we knew each other very well from home.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: So he wanted to go with me. So we drove down, and we spent a couple weeks down there, got it out of our system, and we came back home and then went to work.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

LATORRA: But I had a good job. I worked in a laboratory, and actually, it was better than that. I played baseball.

You know, years ago, baseball was really big in Corporate America. All the big companies had beautiful parks. They had ball teams. It was -- later, golf became a big thing for the corporate stuff, but at that time in the '40s, it was baseball.

And I would go to work. This would be like three nights out of the week. I would go to work in the afternoon. I would have lunch in the cafeteria. They would supply it. They would take me in a station wagon with a bunch of other guys, a couple of cars, and we'd go to the ballpark, wherever we were playing, come back, shower, and go home. That was my job.

INTERVIEWER: You were playing baseball there?

LATORRA: I was playing baseball three nights a week. That was my job.

[Laughter.]

LATORRA: But the rest of the time, I worked as a lab technician. I had a job, but when they played baseball, I played baseball. So they would pay me to play shortstop.

INTERVIEWER: That's incredible. How long did you play ball for them?

LATORRA: Well, what happened there was that they went on strike after I was there for seven months, and they said, "This looks like a long stretch. So all of you people better go out looking," and a lot of people left. It was a huge, huge place.

And I went up and ended up at the VA up in New Jersey, and it's a good thing I did. That's where I met my wife. My wife is a nurse, and I met her there. I never went back. I never went back.

And then we -- and then I got married shortly -- no, not shortly after but about a year or so after, and baseball kind of took a back seat. I played after I got married but not very long. It wasn't in the cards.

INTERVIEWER: And then you retired to Shinnery?

LATORRA: Oh, no. I -- well, yeah, more or less. I retired in -- I was very fortunate. I've lived a long time since I retired. I retired in '86 from Colgate-Palmolive in Piscataway. You know where Rutgers University is?

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

LATORRA: Well, it's right next door. And we moved out here because one of our sons lives in the area.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

LATORRA: Our kids are kind of scattered, and one of them lives in the Shickshinny area, and we came, a beautiful place. We have a nice three and a half acres, woods, really, really pretty place. It takes a lot of work but --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Keeps you in shape, I guess.

LATORRA: Yeah. Last Friday, I was 85.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

LATORRA: Yeah. So what the hell. I'm not complaining.

INTERVIEWER: You're in great shape.

LATORRA: I'm not complaining. I'm still here, and I'm still playing the slot machines.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: That's wonderful.

Well, is there anything else?

LATORRA: No. I think we have covered a good bit of stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Any thoughts about the Coast Guard today?

LATORRA: Yeah. I think it's -- anybody came to me and asked which service they'd go in, I'd recommend Coast Guard at a drop of a hat. I certainly feel that way. I think it's one of the best services ever put out. I think they just don't get their just due. I've always felt that way. I don't know why, but I -- you know, they're not advertised. They're not in everybody's face. You see the Marines, and you see this, and you see that. And I think we do as good a job at what we do than anyone else in the service, any service. I'm serious about that.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

LATORRA: You look at -- you look at -- I get the Coast Guard letter from wherever I get it from, Laura, whatever her name is.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

LATORRA: I get that, computer

INTERVIEWER: Laura Williamson or something.

LATORRA: Laura Williams, right.

Just look at -- look at that. Look at the number of people that we save.

Katrina. That was the first time since World War II that I actually have heard something good up front said about the Coast Guard, and they deserve it. They deserve it all the time. And this is not just since I was in. This goes way back a long, long time before it. It's just a good service. It really is.

I don't know what it would be like in peacetime. I guess I would like it, but I have no regrets, except for the bad parts. Well, the bad parts were there for a lot of people, not just me or people that were with me, but --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

Great. Okay. Well, I guess that will do it for now.

LATORRA: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Very much appreciate that.

LATORRA: Okay. There's no problem. I kind of like talking about the old days, I guess. It's nice that somebody's there that's interested, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

LATORRA: Your kids are -- they don't know anything about it, and I don't care whether they do or not. It's just, you know -- it's something that happened in my life, and it's passed, and that's all, but --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

LATORRA: Well, the typical conversation between the OD on the bridge and the helmsman, working with the navigator, how our watches were run, what we did -- well, you asked that about what we did when we were off duty.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

LATORRA: Actually, there was no work except to keep the ship clean.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: Life aboard ship, what we do in port, meals.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. So you kind of go through the whole routine there.

LATORRA: Yeah, how the mail was -- you know, how we'd miss mail for three months and stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

LATORRA: We actually -- we actually at one point didn't get mail for three and a half months.

On the lighter side, a mother sent one of the guys on the *Algonquin* a roast chicken, and we got that two months later. That's the truth. That's the truth.

[Laughter.]

LATORRA: Mail, rules and restrictions that you have to follow, being put on report, how we dressed, dress blues, what we wore, military etiquette aboard ship, how our laundry was done, who did it.

INTERVIEWER: You have quite a lot of detail in there, which would be great.

LATORRA: Yeah. I thought I would just put it down because I -- you know, I had a diary, which was -- which was contraband, and a couple guys had

cameras. I didn't have a camera, but I did have a diary. But the damn thing was so small, about like so, and when I finished this, I finished my diary. I had nothing left to write. I mean, I didn't have dates and times. So I was -- you know, all I could do was from memory, but it was still very fresh at the time.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

LATORRA: But if I were to write it now, I couldn't do that.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Any idea where the -- no idea who took the photographs?

LATORRA: No, no idea who took those. I had no idea. But anyhow, that's stuff.

INTERVIEWER: If it's possible, that would be great.

LATORRA: I did have some of this stuff. It might be a good idea to -- well, I want to show you this.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

LATORRA: I want to show you this. This is a -- this is not -- this is not ours, but this is a British -- this is a British -- is your computer on?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's turned on. Yeah.

LATORRA: Off?

INTERVIEWER: It's on.

LATORRA: Oh, it's on. Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: This is a British -- I learned this from a Navy -- from a British Navy person in World War II. This is a prayer that they said. "Eternal Lord who alone spreadest out the heavens and rulest the raging of the sea, who has compassed the waters with bounds until day and night come to an end, be pleased to receive into thy almighty and gracious protection, the persons of us, thy servants, and the fleet in which we serve." That's a British prayer that I picked up.

INTERVIEWER: So that was somebody that you met when you were on the Greenland patrol?

LATORRA: Yeah. Yeah. I -- this, I got -- I think I got this in St. John's.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

LATORRA: Anyhow --

INTERVIEWER: That's some great, great material there.

LATORRA: It's a lot of stuff, lot of stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Wonderful. Well --

LATORRA: I'm glad I brought the book because it --

INTERVIEWER: I am too. It helps to bring back memories.

LATORRA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Very interesting.

LATORRA: I was in touch. These people wrote to me. That's the SS *Victory Lane*. It's one of the two. Have you heard of them?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Down in Florida?

LATORRA: This was in California at the time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

LATORRA: But they're one of two --

INTERVIEWER: Victory ships?

LATORRA: Yeah, that they redid, you know, everything has been redone.

They contacted me, and I sent them a copy of that radio thing I had, and they said that they would post it. They have actual aerial attacks on the -- they take people out, and they have a --

INTERVIEWER: Mock attack.

LATORRA: -- mock attack from German aircraft and stuff or Japanese, whatever.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: And I sent this out, and they put it up there, and they said if you read it, it appears that you are out to sea and you're going over to Europe. And this is the radio thing for that day. That was it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

LATORRA: Just a lot of, you know -- in 60 years, you do a lot of that kind of stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, sure.

END OF INTERVIEW

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