

Captain Charles Dorian, USCG

Interview of **Captain Charles Dorian, USCG (Ret.)**

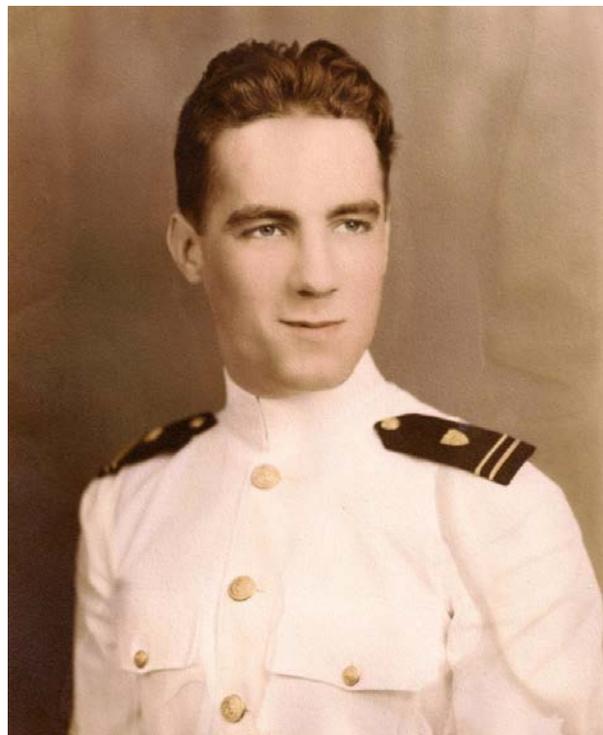
On His World War II Service

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

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Location of Interview: Issaquah, WA

Biographical Summary

Born 27 September 1921 in Quincy, Massachusetts, Charles Dorian graduated from Natick High School in 1939 and was appointed a cadet at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. With the United States entry into WWII in December 1941, his academy class of '43 was graduated a year early in 1942. His first assignment was to NORTHLAND (WPG-49) on Greenland Patrol, reporting in early July 1942. He was aboard when LT John A. Pritchard and Petty Officer Benjamin Bottoms were lost. Detaching in February 1943 he reported to the Naval Academy Post-Graduate School in Annapolis for a one-year course on applied communications. At the completion of that he reported to CALLAWAY (APA-45) in March 1944 and participated in the invasions of Saipan, Anguar, Leyte Gulf and Luzon, and Iwo Jima. At the invasion of Luzon his ship was hit by a Japanese kamikaze. He was assigned to the Communications Division at Coast Guard Headquarters when World II ended.



In 1948 he became the Executive Officer of MOCOMA (WPG-163) and its replacement, ANDROSCOGGIN (WPG-68) out of Miami, Florida. In 1950 he became the Communication's Officer of the 12th Coast Guard District and in 1951 Communications Officer for the Western Area. In 1952 he took command of McCULLOCH (WAVP-386) out of Boston. Two years later he returned to Headquarters as the Head of Operations and Landline Communications. In 1959 he became the Executive Officer of MACKINAW (WAGB-83) on the Great Lakes. In 1961 he became the Communication Officer for the Eastern Area. Three years later he became Chief of the Communications Division at Headquarters. He was awarded the Legion of Merit in 1967 "For exceptional meritorious achievement in the performance of duties from July 1966 to July 1967 in international negotiations to improve maritime radio communications safety." In 1967 when the new Department of Transportation was created 26 Coast Guard officers were sent to help out the new Department. He was selected to serve as the Deputy Director of Telecommunications. He retired in 1972 at the rank of Captain. Following his retirement from active duty he became the Director of International Relations, Communications Satellite Corporation.

Captain Dorian married Mary Miller at the Walter Reed Army Hospital Chapel in December 1945. They had six children, three sons and three daughters. One son died two months after graduating from college. His first wife died of cancer in 1990. He married Willis "Billie" Ballou Dow on 18 January 1992. He and Billie lived in retirement in Issaquah, Washington until his death on 20 June 2014.

INTERVIEWER: Where and when were you born?

DORIAN: I was born in Quincy, MA on September 27, 1921.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me briefly about your childhood, any siblings, significant experiences and how you came to be interested in amateur radio?

DORIAN: I have one younger brother---2 ½ years younger, and 1 sister, 8 years younger. My father was a bookkeeper for Swift & Co. meat-packing company and he moved in promotions within Massachusetts. After being born in Quincy we ultimately moved to Milford, Massachusetts and I was there until about nine years old,

and then we moved to a town called Norfolk Downs, which is today called North Quincy. From there we moved to a town called Natick, Massachusetts, which was about 17 miles west of Boston. It was there that I went to junior high and high school. I called it my home town. I graduated as the valedictorian in the class of 1939 from Natick High School.

INTERVIEWER: About what time and how did you get interested in amateur radio?

DORIAN: I became interested in amateur radio at about the age of 12, when one of my junior high classmates introduced me to his older brother, a couple of years older, who was playing around with radio. He demonstrated to me the crystal set he had made, and all we could hear was signals on it so I decided this sounded great and I did the same thing. I made a crystal set and used to listen to the local Boston broadcast stations. From that I kept an interest in radio. A friend of mine and I joined the local radio club in Framingham, Massachusetts. It just continued on from there. In early 1939 I went into Boston and took the Federal Communications exam to become a licensed amateur. I have been licensed ever since. I recently completed 75 years. I have done a lot of work to help the amateurs themselves in getting appropriate radio frequencies. For eight years, while I was living in Washington, D.C., I represented the large American amateur organization, The American Radio Relay League. I was also the secretary and one of the directors of the organization in 1960s, called AMSAT, the Amateur Satellite Organization, which led the world in developing satellites built by amateurs and used by amateurs. That's how I got into radio communications before I even entered the Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: How did you know about the existence of the Coast Guard Academy and what motivated you to apply for admission?

DORIAN: In my English high school class one day a poster appeared on the bulletin board advertizing the Coast Guard Academy and where to make application. At that time I was interested in going to sea. I took that interest and wrote a letter requesting information and that started me in filling out the forms for the Coast Guard. Simultaneously the state of Massachusetts has a merchant ship training program aboard the NANTUCKET [Maine Maritime Academy] so I also made application there to take the examination for admission. As it was, I was successful in my Coast Guard application and became one of 1500 that applied in 1939, to go to the Academy. I took the entrance examination and went into Boston and had an interview, a physical exam. In 1939 the war in Europe had broken out and the Coast Guard found itself wanting additional officers. They typically, prior to 1939, had a class size of 25. But in 1939 they had a double entry. They initially appointed 72 cadets and followed up a month later they appointed more making a total of 127 appointments. I was successful in being chosen and went down to the Academy in September.

INTERVIEWER: You reported in early September. What do remember about that day?

DORIAN: Because they had entered that class, the class of 1943, in two groups, roughly a month apart. For the first three months we were treated as two classes.

INTERVIEWER: Were you in the first group or the second group?

DORIAN: I was in the second group. After Christmas we were joined together as one class. They had us catch up in the fall of that year.

INTERVIEWER: With all those additional cadets, how many cadets were in a room in Chase Hall?

DORIAN: That was interesting! They really had to double up. Initially, when I arrived in September, there were just two of us in a room. By the next year there were three in a room and I stayed three in a room until I graduated in 1942.

INTERVIEWER: You were cadet when Pearl Harbor was attacked. How did you and the other cadets react when you heard that news?

DORIAN: I remember it was early, sometime between 8 and 10 o'clock that we got the news of what had occurred. Of course we were totally surprised. No one at the Academy, none of the cadets anyway, had

expected this to occur. My class was in its third year. They immediately graduated the senior class in two weeks. They made my class seniors and we graduated in about five months later. We were the first three-year class.

INTERVIEWER: Did they change your courses that final semester?

DORIAN: They added courses on Saturday mornings.

INTERVIEWER: Were those added classes on seamanship or military subjects or just regular classes?

DORIAN: They were regular classes as I recall.

INTERVIEWER: What changes took place during the time, other than classes going through in three years? Did you get additional weapons in your rooms?

DORIAN: We didn't get additional weapons.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of rifles did you have, were they wooden rifles or actual rifles for drill purposes?

DORIAN: We just drilled with actual rifles, but we never shot them. There was no scheduled target practice for everybody. If you went out for the rifle club then you got to shoot a rifle.

INTERVIEWER: The TIDE RIPS article about you said that you were a "whirlwind with boxing gloves." Did Jack Dempsey come to the Academy while you were there?

DORIAN: I don't remember. Maybe it was after I graduated.

INTERVIEWER: During the war they also had Officer Candidate School on the Academy grounds. Did you have any contact with the OCS candidates?

DORIAN: No. Not really, other than occasionally meeting someone.

INTERVIEWER: While you were a cadet, where were chapel services held?

(pause)

INTERVIEWER: Would it have been McAllister Hall? Someone I interviewed earlier said that was where they were held.

DORIAN: I don't remember. But I did go to services on the Academy, I didn't go off the Academy grounds. Generally those who went off the Academy grounds were Roman Catholics. They accommodated them somehow.

INTERVIEWER: Were you involved in amateur radio as a cadet?

DORIAN: I built some radio equipment from scratch, up in the radio lab that no one ever knew about. I had a little 5-meter voice thing that I could use if I wanted. I didn't use it. But I did try it out and talked to somebody in New London and went down and visited him, another amateur. You know, amateurs are a great buddy community.

INTERVIEWER: Where was your graduation held?

DORIAN: In the big auditorium where they played basketball.

INTERVIEWER: In the gymnasium?

DORIAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How was your first assignment determined? Could you put in a preference?

DORIAN: That is easy to tell you. At that time that year they posted a list of all the cadets in order of their precedence within the class. Then they posted a list of all the ships available for assignment. They gave the number one man first choice. When it came to my turn I picked out Greenland. I did that because I saw Greenland as a site that I would probably never get back to again in my lifetime. I was interested in the unknown. There was another classmate that also did the same thing. The other fellow was Dick Fuller. We had roughly ten days vacation after graduation. I lived in Massachusetts. I reported into Boston and they put me on a train to Sydney, Nova Scotia. There I met up with a Coast Guard convoy ship that took me and me classmate to Greenland. We joined up with the NORTHLAND (WPG-49) in Greenland [Narsarsuak BW-1].

INTERVIEWER: When you reported aboard, were you introduced to the Captain?

DORIAN: Yes, F. C. Pollard.

INTERVIEWER: What was your initial impression of him?

DORIAN: The thing is, as a brand new ensign you were in awe of any officer that is senior to you, especially the commanding officer, so you made sure you said "Yes Sir" and all the right words. The story on the ship was that Pollard, at one time, was a Coast Guard representative in Hollywood. He let it be known that that was the case.

INTERVIEWER: That was true. Did he have a problem with drinking about the NORTHLAND?

DORIAN: It wasn't a problem on the ship. We knew that he drank. We used to say he drank the ship's liquor—the ship's alcohol. He kept it under control. I never saw him drunk. It never created an incident where he made a decision that was influenced because he had drunk. It wasn't apparent. It was rare. Our [NORTHLAND] mission was looking for German weather stations on the east coast of Greenland. The furthest north we were able to go in the ice was an island called Eskimonaes [Bluie East 5 or BE-5]. We got up that far. There was also there what used to be a Danish hunting station. During the course of the war it was manned about ten Army personnel as a weather station [Sledge Patrol station]. When we arrived there the Danes offered the Captain the opportunity to go hunting for musk ox. So the Captain and a couple of the other senior officers were inviting to go along on the hunt.

INTERVIEWER: Was this before or after Pritchard was lost?

DORIAN: Before, ...Pritchard went with them. They went out hunting and shot some musk ox and dressed them. They brought the meat back to the ship. They had to get from shore out to the ship. They loaded up a lifeboat with this meat and brought it out to the ship. They hooked the lifeboat up to the davits and started to haul it aboard. The weight was off-center and it turned-turtle and dumped all the meat into the water. The water was 80 feet or more deep. The Captain, Pollard, was livid about this. He ordered people to use grapnels [hooks] ---to go out there in boats and use grapnels to try to find this meat, and they did. But they didn't get a single bit of meat!

Those of us on the ship during the hunt, enlisted and junior officers, were told that there was a sight not far away where Eskimos had lived a hundred years ago. About half a dozen enlisted and officers who took the opportunity to do that. I was among the group and found an old Eskimo oil lamp, which I still have.

INTERVIEWER: Did he eat in the wardroom with the rest of the officers or did he eat in his cabin?

DORIAN: My recollection is that he ate by himself. I don't remember being in the wardroom at any time.

INTERVIEWER: Did he ever invite other officers to eat with him?

DORIAN: If he did, they were the senior ones. He never invited any of us ensigns.

INTERVIEWER: Was LCDR [Carlton] Skinner the Executive Officer?

DORIAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were you aware of his efforts to integrate the Coast Guard?

DORIAN: No. He didn't make any efforts that were visible to me. At one time in the seven months I was one there, Pollard made Pritchard the Executive Officer. I don't know why or how it might appear in the log but there was a period of time when Pritchard was the Executive Officer.

INTERVIEWER: And LCDR Skinner was still aboard?

DORIAN: Yes! And a month or two later, Skinner became the Executive Officer again. Why I don't know. Nothing was ever said about it. Pritchard was the more competent. He knew far more. Skinner was a politician. He knew government and he knew politics.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know a steward in the wardroom named Oliver Henry? He was a black steward that LCDR Skinner helped become a Motor Machinist Mate.

DORIAN: I don't know. I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: You were there when Pritchard and Bottoms were lost. Do you remember what Pritchard was like the night before?

DORIAN: When we were told that the plane was down—the B-17, we moved into an area close to where it was lost. There was open water there. We got into that area about 10 o'clock in the morning. Pritchard took off and flew to the crash site and he ended up, on his own, deciding to land. He then ended up finding the two most injured men and brought them from the crash site to where he had his plane. He took off and came back to the ship and landed.

INTERVIEWER: One of the pictures that you took is in all the books that talk about this rescue and tragedy. Were you an amateur photographer on the ship?

DORIAN: No, I was the photography officer on the ship. I had two Navy photographers under me. He brought the men back and landed. By that time this had all happened it was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and it was dark. We couldn't do any more flying that day. So the next morning we would do it. That is exactly what happened. Pritchard took off and went to the crashed plane and landed. He was collecting someone to bring back when he was told by radio that fog was settling in where the ship was, therefore he couldn't see the water to land. He quickly made the decision and got one man, who was nearby and put him on his plane. He tried to fly back and when he got into area he couldn't land. So he turned around to ostensibly to land again on the ice and wait for the fog to lift. They had aneroid barometers for altimeters and as a result it was our feeling on the ship at the time that when the signals stopped coming from him, he had crashed at an altitude that was higher than his indicators were telling him. He really had no choice. He must have been in fog there. So at the very end he was trying to find his position and his last signals we got from him were to "send M-O's". M-O's were the standard dash, dash, and then three dash, dash, dash so you could recognize it as signal for taking a homing bearing. He had a direction finder. We did that and then we got no messages from them. I was the Communications Officer as well as the Photography Officer so I was up in the radio room while these messages were coming in.

INTERVIEWER: Why were you picked to inventory LT Pritchard's effects in his stateroom?

DORIAN: I have thought about this for seventy years. My only reasoning is that I can think of is I am an individual who is very meticulous. I still am! If I was given an assignment there was nothing that was missed. I personally checked everything. The Captain could count on me. If he gave me a job, he knew job would be done and he didn't have to worry about anything. That is just my nature.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get to know LT Pritchard on the ship?

DORIAN: Did I know him? Not very closely. We were very friendly in the wardroom and basically that was it. I didn't know him very personally.

INTERVIEWER: Besides the B-17 that crashed, were you aboard when three people were lost in a fjord?

DORIAN: The first group of three were a group of Canadians which occurred before the B-17 crash. There were three plane crashes we were involved with while I was aboard. One they called the lost squadron: two B-17s and six P-38s. That is a separate story and that occurred in July. Then the next one was a Canadian plane that went down. It so happened at that time we had just gotten over to the west coast of Greenland. Normally we stayed on the east coast. We were there 95% of the time. This particular time we had come back over to the west coast and the message came through that the Canadian plane was down. They didn't know where. What happened then was that they had some radio signals coming from them so among other things I suggested they use the U.S./Canadian direction finding network that existed on the east coast of North America, to try to take bearings to see where they went down. They did that, so they had a rough indication of where they had gone down, but nothing specific. But we were given immediate orders to get underway and go around and try to find them. Which we did.

But you find in the ship's log, and [CAPT] Don Taub [USCG (Ret.)] has details. Pritchard and his plane were put in the water and flew over the area. He found the wreckage of the Canadian plane but didn't find any of the people. So we don't know where they are, but we have a rough idea where they are. We got into the area and it was a dark night. At night time we didn't operate in the ice. We normally shut down and drifted with the ice for the night until it got light the next day. So the Captain said, "Well if you don't have anything to do, keep an eye on shore. See if you can see anything." That's how it was left. I was off watch, but I went up on the bridge and I had a Chief Gunner's Mate right next to me, doing the same thing. He chose to come up and he was looking. We were side by side and he yells out to me, "I see a light, but it's gone." It was seconds. I said "Take a bearing", we had a pelorus up there and so we took a bearing on where he had seen the light. He was the only one who saw it. Nobody else had seen it. We passed the word to the bridge that we had spotted a light, but we didn't know what it was. They told the Captain and the Captain "Get the Electrician's Mate up there to turn on the searchlight." We had a 24-inch carbon arc searchlight. He came up and we gave him the bearing. He puts the searchlight on that bearing and there are the people, standing on the glacier. It was that fast. They were that fortunate. We learned later that one of the men had burned his parka to make the light. He would have frozen to death that night.

INTERVIEWER: How did you pick them up? Did you send a small boat to get them?

DORIAN: Yes. We had a boat that was powerful enough and heavily built of wood that work in the ice. The Captain got a crew together under Pritchard, not under Skinner, because Pritchard was a seaman and Skinner wasn't a seaman. He got a big enough crew together and they took ropes with them and they went in there and they just pulled right up in front of the glacier and the Canadians climbed from the glacier into the boat!

INTERVIEWER: Was there a doctor on the NORTHLAND? Did you carry a Medical Officer?

DORIAN: Yes, a Public Health Service doctor, and we had a Pharmacist Mate, either 1/c or Chief. I think his name was Hern, but I'm not sure.

I wanted to let you know about three other people and their loss. They were Coast Guardsmen. When we lost Pritchard and we came around to Tunudlierfik [Eriks] Fjord, where the big airbase was, we had a situation where a storm came up. We were at anchor and a wind came up in the fjord. We had at that time one of these heavily built ice boats that we used to rescue people. The problem was that the electric power needed to excite the winch to bring up the anchor required a lot of power. To raise this iceboat with a boom from the water and put it on the aft deck also required power. There was competition; you couldn't do both at the same time. The Captain made a decision to send the boat ashore and three men went in it and then raise the anchor and get underway in the fjord and just control the ship rather than have the anchor drag. Those three men never made it to shore. We don't to this day know what happened to them. There is an official report of this that I have never seen. The initial, simple one, held in Greenland under ADM "Iceberg" Smith, and later

on when the ship came back to Boston, they either reopened it or re-examined it. Then had another board, and asked questions. I've never seen any of that paperwork. It don't know what explanation was made for the loss of these three Coast Guardsmen. I believe one as a First Class Boatswains Mate, an Engineman, and a Seaman. Taub dug out the ship's log and got the names. [COXN Francis C. Myers; Seaman 2/c Robert W. Burke; & Fireman 1/c Thomas W. Hanson].



INTERVIEWER: Besides rescuing downed aviators on the Greenland Ice Cap did you also take supplies to the native Greenlanders?

DORIAN: Yes, that was one of our jobs.

INTERVIEWER: When you did that did you ever observe the women doing all the work?

DORIAN: I can't remember the month or year, but there was ice. It was late in the year. I think it was the NORTH STAR that had come from Boston with supplies. The supplies included a refrigerator if you want a crazy part of the story. It had the supplies but couldn't handle the potential ice problem there in Scoresby Sound. So they transferred all the goods, which included coal as well. We built coal bins on the bow of the ship---a frame structure of wood and loaded it with coal. The other goods that had been ordered were loaded. Then we left them further south, probably at Angmamssalik [Tasiilaq], which is the port we sort of worked out of on the east coast. We took the supplies up to Scoresby Sound and offloaded them. The coal had to be put into bags and then hauled ashore. The Eskimo women did all the work! They lugged the coal, put it into boats, hauled it ashore, and unloaded it. Not a single Eskimo man was involved! That was just the way they lived.

While I was on the NORTHLAND we met the first time with the NORTH STAR (WPG-53). I had a classmate on that ship. Our Captain, Pollard, would not let ship's crew visit each other. He said "You'll get a cold and I don't want any colds on my ship." So he wouldn't let any of us, when we were anchored in the same bay, go over and see classmates---see people we know.

I did learn from those classmates that some of them were being sent to schools, and one was being sent to diesel school. I wasn't interested in diesel school. My interest, because of my previous background in amateur radio, was in communications. So I wrote a letter, that I gave the captain that said if they were considering sending me to a school, I wanted something in communications. I was the Communications Officer on the ship. The Captain gave me a glowing report and put it in the system.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see any noticeable reaction from the captain when Pritchard and Bottoms didn't come back?

DORIAN: No, I didn't see emotional reaction at all. He was a very stoic kind of individual.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you when you departed the NORTHLAND?

DORIAN: The ship was in Boston. We had just come back from Greenland.

INTERVIEWER: You detached from the NORTHLAND and were assigned to Curtis Bay, Maryland for LST training. Then after two weeks they sent you to the Naval Academy Postgraduate School.

DORIAN: Well what happened there was after being in Boston and coming back off of leave and within a week I had a set of orders. I was to go the amphibious training command and I had to report in at Curtis Bay, Maryland. The Coast Guard had volunteered to crew LSTs. So they set up a training command in Chesapeake Bay based out of Curtis Bay. They would bring a Navy-manned ship from the Navy Amphibious Base in Norfolk, Virginia and then selected three Coast Guard crews to go on a Navy LST as crew. We would then stand eight hours on and eight hours off under the control of the Navy. They would train us. I was in the group. I ended up being First Lieutenant. They chose a Captain who was a Coast Guard Lieutenant who had been a Warrant Officer and he chose his crew. He chose me to be his First Lieutenant. I was one of the few if only Academy trained officer and he was happy as a lark to get me because I just come back from seven months of training and had all this background.

Two weeks after we started the training an officer comes aboard on a Friday night and says to me, "Here's your orders, I'm your relief." I said, "What do you mean. I just got here. This is my assignment." He said, "Oh no. You have a set of orders. You have to go back to Curtis Bay." I got on a train that night, going up the Delmarva Peninsula to Curtis and reported back in there. They said I had a set of orders to go to a school. They processed the papers and I got underway and went down to Annapolis.

I don't know what day I checked in, but I know I was there early, because that school hadn't started yet. On Monday I looked over this course. The orders were to go to a course as a Destroyer Communications Officer—six months. I looked over this course and said, "This doesn't make sense. We don't have Destroyers. We've never trained any officers in communication—just as a Communications Officer. Would you mind if I went to Washington to find out what this is all about?" I talked to the C.O. of the school and he said to me, "No, go ahead." I took a bus [to Washington] and check into Personnel at Headquarters and they said "Oh, this is a school that the people up in Communications want. You'll have to talk to them." So I went up and talked to LT Winkler who was the Personnel man in Coast Guard Communications. I asked him if this was really what he wanted. If he told me yes, then I would go to school without a problem. He told me orders were wrong, that isn't the class we asked for. We asked for the one year course called "Applied Communications", and there are three of you. They told me to go back to Annapolis and they would straighten it out and that's what they did. I went back to Annapolis and I got another set of orders, assigning me to this "Applied Communications" course. It was a pre-war two-year course that led to a Masters Degree. They had cut it short to one year and they had a mixture of officers from the U.S. Navy, three of us from the Coast Guard, and people from Costa Rica, from Chile, and from Argentina. They had South Americans in there as part of this training. Some of them were LCDRs. I was the youngest one of the group.

I was selected because of my amateur radio background and my request for this school. One of the other two was a Coast Guard officer and one was a reserve officer.

INTERVIEWER: When you finished that school were they going to send you to another ship as a Communications Officer?

DORIAN: Well, they had some idea, when we started out, that the three of us would end up on a communications ship. It was a big cargo vessel that had been filled full of communications equipment and acted as a central communications point for invasions. Somehow, a year later that hadn't materialized. None of us ended up on that kind of a ship. They just sent us to ships where they had a need.

INTERVIEWER: That's how you got sent to the CALLAWAY (APA-35) then?

DORIAN: I got sent to the CALLAWAY, which was fortunate, in that I was the only one who had radar knowledge, because that was part of the course in Applied Communications. I knew all about radar. I knew how to use it, how to tune it and everything else. One of the first jobs when I reported about the CALLAWAY was to set up a CIC, a Combat Information Center. I had to figure out what was available while we were in Pearl Harbor, because that is where I joined the ship. I had to find out by talking to the people in the Navy Yard about what this was all about. They told me if I provided them with a pelorus, they would provide me with a great big drafting table and they would install it on the ship. I had the responsibility for operating the radars and doing the plotting for objects that we would spot on the radar or if we did nothing more than pull into an anchorage someplace, I would use the radars to get bearings and distances from various sights and draw the lines and say "That's where we are!"

INTERVIEWER: What other duties did you have besides Combat Information Center Officer?

DORIAN: Initially when I came aboard---I was a LTJG by then---I was assigned as one of the Deck Officers. Other than the Captain, I was the only other Academy-trained officer. The Executive Officer was a mustang and the First Lieutenant was an ex-Boatswain. Other than the Captain I was the only other officer trained in a broad range of subjects. I served as the Assistant Communications Officer. They already had a Lieutenant as the Communications Officer, who was an ex-Radioman. However, he didn't stand deck watches. He didn't know how to stand deck watches. I was one of the principle deck watch officers. Ultimately I became the Senior Deck Watch Officer after a year and a half. And after we were hit by the kamikaze off of Luzon, the Captain made me the Gunnery Officer. He wasn't happy with what his Gunnery Officer, a mustang former Gunners Mate, did or acted, he never said why. He simply said to me, "I want you to be my new Gunnery Officer." It was an order. I just said "Yes Sir" and I took over Gunnery. That was roughly the last six months I was on the ship.

INTERVIEWER: When you reported about the CALLAWAY, an APA, did it have a fairly large medical department?

DORIAN: Yes, I reported aboard in Hawaii. It had five doctors. I can't tell you the rest of the medical crew. It had plenty. They used those ships for landing troops. We carried 1,200 to 1,600 troops for the invasions on the islands. They were then also the recipients of casualties. They were like a hospital ship.

INTERVIEWER: Do remember your invasion of Saipan?

DORIAN: Yes, that was the first one.

INTERVIEWER: Was there much resistance to that invasion?

DORIAN: Oh, there was a fair amount. That was a regular battle going in from the sea. The people were still entrenched, even though they had bombed them and shelled them. There were still plenty there.

INTERVIEWER: Same thing at Anguar and the south Palau Islands?

DORIAN: Yes. Then we made the initial invasions of Leyte. And they went back later and landed more troops there. Then we made the invasion in Luzon. The day before the scheduled landing we were hit by the Japanese kamikaze planes. I was in CIC. And we also made the invasion of Iwo Jima.

INTERVIEWER: Let's get back to the kamikaze attack. You were in CIC when the kamikaze hit?

DORIAN: Yes. What happened was that we were in formation off of Luzon in which we had four lines of ships. In the initial grouping were the attack transports carrying troops and then next had cargo and then LCIs and what happened as we were off there one of the rear ships reported a Japanese plane coming up the line of ships and dropping bombs. As the plane kept coming up we kept getting a report---I was getting them in CIC and then I was telling the bridge---that this plane was coming up and I said "He's off the stern of the ship!" The next thing I knew there is a big crash. I can't see anything, I'm in a room just behind the bridge, that was the CIC room. After feeling the crash I put my hand on the bulkhead behind me. It was warm. I said "Don't open that door!" I knew there was some heat on the other side. I didn't know what had happened. Then I called out to the bridge on an intercom, not a radio, and nobody answered.

I walked out on the bridge and told my first class radarman "You take control here and you know what to do." I went out on the bridge and looked around. Everything was quiet. I looked at the Captain, sitting the captain's seat, and the Exec., and they were frozen. They were motionless as if they were in shock. They didn't say a word. I quickly asked the helmsman if he had control. I told him to rotate it and see. He had control for the rudder. Then I asked the engine order telegraph man if he had control. I told him to move them and they followed. I knew we had control. I told them to stay on course. Then I went over to the front of the bridge and yelled down to the first lieutenant on the first deck, who had responsibility for any fires/damage control, and asked him if everything was o.k. on the fire. He told me "yes". I told him to keep handling that.

In that dilemma I told the people on the bridge that I had taken control. I couldn't talk to the C.O. or Exec. and yet I didn't want them to feel that I taken away their authority. I had to slowly watch and see them recover and then say to them that everything was working so that they knew they didn't have to go through that repertoire. And that was it.

INTERVIEWER: Where did the kamikaze hit the ship?

DORIAN: On the flying bridge, just above the bridge and in that flying bridge area were 20mm guns. We had a Navy Division Flag on board. This Division that we were in, above the Coast Guard, had a Navy officer who had responsibility for all the ships in the division. His main staff consisted of signalmen on the flying bridge. The enlisted and one young Navy officer were hit and they got wiped out. They were part of the Navy Division Flag.

INTERVIEWER: The fires spread after the kamikaze hit the flying bridge?

DORIAN: No, when it hit the fuel vaporized. It was a flash-burn, it really didn't persist.

INTERVIEWER: The only thing really damaged then was the flying bridge?

DORIAN: Yes, basically.

INTERVIEWER: I understand that almost thirty people were killed.

DORIAN: Yes. They were all up there on the flying bridge.

INTERVIEWER: You told me earlier in an email that you had the bridge watch when those dead were buried at sea.

DORIAN: Yes, I happened to be the deck officer on watch at the time. What we did was to pull slightly out of line, and dump the shrouds into the sea.

INTERVIEWER: Did you slow the ship for the ceremony?

DORIAN: We didn't slow down, we were in formation.

INTERVIEWER: Since the damage wasn't that bad, you still participated in the invasion the next day?

DORIAN: Oh, yes. We made the invasion and off-loaded the troops and finished up. Interesting thing, when we got over into the area where we off-loaded the troops, there was a British cruiser that had been hit by four kamikaze planes. That's what they told us and I took the binoculars and could see the crash marks on the ship. It was still involved in proving support.

INTERVIEWER: Was the CALLAWAY the only Coast Guard-manned ship to be hit by a kamikaze?

DORIAN: To my knowledge. I never heard of another ship.

INTERVIEWER: After you were hit by the kamikaze in January 1945, then you went to Iwo Jima. What do you remember about that invasion?

DORIAN: Well, in Iwo Jima we anchored about a mile off shore. We were roughly off the middle of the island and you could look ashore with binoculars and see the battle lines on the island. We could see where the Americans were and where the Japanese were and you could see them shooting back and forth at each other and the line moving slowly. The only other thing I remember is that we had a really big B-29 in that first week that came in for a landing. It had been damaged on a flight over Japan.

INTERVIEWER: While the fighting was still going on?

DORIAN: Yes. That was the first time we ever saw one [B-29]. It was enormous.

INTERVIEWER: Did some of the wounded Marines from Iwo Jima get brought to your ship?

DORIAN: Yes, they were brought out and they were treated on the ship.

INTERVIEWER: Did you send any people ashore to get them or were they transferred from other ships?

DORIAN: Basically they were just hauled from shore. Once we took people or things into the shore, we brought the wounded back.

INTERVIEWER: Did you depart the CALLAWAY in July 1945?

DORIAN: Yes, June/July, the CALLAWAY came back to the states---came back to San Francisco.

INTERVIEWER: Is that where you departed the CALLAWAY?

DORIAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything about your World War II experiences that I didn't ask you about that you wanted to share?

DORIAN: Not that I can think of. I was single. I had no fiancée. Some of my classmates married on graduation day! I didn't get married until after the war was over.

INTERVIEWER: How did the skipper on the CALLAWAY compare to your skipper on the NORTHLAND?

DORIAN: I would say that the skipper of the CALLAWAY was D.C. McNiel, and he was more representative of what I expected a Coast Guard captain to be. He was a full Captain. Pollard was a lieutenant commander. I found him to be a distant kind of officer, not personable at all. McNiel pretty much kept to himself, too, but he was a four-striper! He was very competent and trusting. I always respected him.

INTERVIEWER: Future generations will be reading this oral history. Anything you would like to share with them, any message, anything about your time in the Coast Guard during World War II, or words of wisdom, or anything else?

DORIAN: The one thing I would like to convey is that the Coast Guard, although it is a quasi-military organization, trained as military, it performs a public service to society rescuing and that in itself can be very dangerous. When you have to rescue a ship or people, it is never in peaceful waters. It is always in rough waters. It is a dangerous life in some aspects. You have to be on your toes to be sure you don't get into trouble.

INTERVIEWER: Thanks you very much for sharing your memories.

END OF INTERVIEW

