



Interview of Ensign Arthur William “Bill” Rouzie, USCG

World War II Cadet  
Coast Guard Academy

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### **Biographical Summary**

Born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida, Bill Rouzie entered the Academy in the summer of 1943. He quickly acquired the nickname “Gator.” As a cadet he distinguished himself as a talented artist. Since it was during World War II his class of 1947 graduated in three years, in June 1946. He married Joan Meaneir shortly after graduation. They had three children, Linda, Rebecca and Ben. The marriage ended in divorce. First assigned to the CGC SAGEBRUSH (WAGL-399) in Puerto Rico, he later served in CITRUS (WAGL-300) and HEMLOCK (WAGL-217). His final assignment was back in Puerto Rico where he resigned his commission in 1949 and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree in June 1954. He then pursued a

distinguish career as an architect, working first in Chicago and then transferring with his firm to Portland, Oregon in 1957. He joined the Portland Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1965. He married Julie Northrup in 1968 and gained a step-daughter, Susan. He retired around 1980 and continued living in Portland. At the time of the oral history interview he had recently moved to the Memory Care Center at the Regency Park in Portland with the beginning stages of memory loss.



Doug Kroll, USCGAUX & Bill Rouzie

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**INTERVIEWER:** Where and when were you born?

**ROUZIE:** On September 2, 1924 at Jacksonville, Florida.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you grow up with any brothers or sisters?

**ROUZIE:** I have two brothers, one older and one younger and no sisters.

**INTERVIEWER:** Anything significant you remember from your childhood?

**ROUZIE:** No, it was just a typical childhood.

**INTERVIEWER:** What high school did you graduate from?

**ROUZIE:** Landon High School in Jacksonville, Florida.

**INTERVIEWER:** While you were in high school Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese. How did you learn about it, and what was your reaction?

**ROUZIE:** I don't remember how I first heard, but I was pretty shocked at the news.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you remember the year you graduated from high school?

**ROUZIE:** (Laughs) I can't tell you exactly.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you go straight into the Academy?

**ROUZIE:** I think I went to University of Florida for year before I entered the Academy.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did you find out about the Coast Guard Academy?

**ROUZIE:** That's a toughie. I don't know. My dad was in the military. He was in the Army. We didn't have much money, so I took a series of competitive exams for all the academies. I scored high enough that I was able to get into either West Point or Annapolis, or the Coast Guard Academy. I had pretty good marks on all of them, but to get into West Point or Annapolis, you had to have a senator in your pocket, or whatever you say, and I didn't have any senators or big politicians pulling for me. Since you didn't need a politician to appoint you to the Coast Guard Academy, I went there.

**INTERVIEWER:** So since you didn't need a congressional appointment you decided to go to the Coast Guard Academy?

**ROUZIE:** Yes and it worked out fine. I enjoyed it.

**INTERVIEWER:** If you had influence with a politician would you have gone to one of the other ones?

**ROUZIE:** Yes, I probably would have gone to one of the others since my dad was military. He was in the Army but I think I might have gone to Annapolis.

**INTERVIEWER:** You got to the Academy in the summer of 1943. How did you find the Academy? Was it what you expected? Was it harder? Was it easier?

**ROUZIE:** I expected it to be really tough and it was easier than I thought it would be.

**INTERVIEWER:** What did you do that first summer that you were at the Academy?

**ROUZIE:** We got into the classrooms pretty quick, as I remember.

**INTERVIEWER:** When you were admitted into the Academy as a member of the Class of 1947, it was World War II and it was a three year program. Today the first year is fourth class, the second is third class, third is second class and the final year is first class. Do you remember what you were called the first year?

**ROUZIE:** Swabs.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you have academic classes on Saturday or more practical, military activities?

**ROUZIE:** More practical like marching and other things.

**INTERVIEWER:** What did you do your second summer at the Academy?

**ROUZIE:** We sailed on the DANMARK.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were there Danish officers still on it?

**ROUZIE:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** They all spoke English, so you could understand them?

**ROUZIE:** Yes and they were kind of fun people as I remember.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you enjoy climbing in the rigging?

**ROUZIE:** Yes, my sail station was the port side of the fore topgallant tip out haul.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were you the last person on yard tip?

**ROUZIE:** I was right next to [Casmir] Rojeski, who was the only person outboard of me. It was all alphabetical. I was just inboard of him and when we got up there he asked me if I would swap with him and take the very tip. So we switched and I had the very tip.

**INTERVIEWER:** Wasn't the man rope shorter at the tip?

**ROUZIE:** It didn't bother me. We just had to be careful on the out haul.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you also make a cruise on the ATLANTIC, a large schooner?

**ROUZIE:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where did you cruise to?

**ROUZIE:** I think the war had a lot to do with it, so we cruised mostly down the eastern seaboard and around into the Gulf and on one occasion we moored in New Orleans. Then we headed out and back up the coast to New London.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about your third summer, the final summer before you graduated?

**ROUZIE:** We might have done cruises that summer, also. But that summer I do remember we went to Camp Lejuene to fire rifles and other weapons training.

**INTERVIEWER:** While you were a cadet, did you have a favorite instructor?

**ROUZIE:** I had a whole bunch of favorites. No one in particular stands out. There were some nice people that I really respected.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were you involved in any extra-curricular activities, and clubs, any sports while you were a cadet?

**ROUZIE:** I wasn't that athletic but I might have been on the sailing team.

**INTERVIEWER:** On the summer cruises on the DANMARK, anything stand out?

**ROUZIE:** There were a lot of funny things that happened.

**INTERVIEWER:** When you got to the Academy they were already training reserve officers and SPARS [Coast Guard Women's Reserve]. Did you have any contact with them?

**ROUZIE:** Little or none.

**INTERVIEWER:** While you were a cadet where were chapel services held, since there wasn't a chapel there yet?

**ROUZIE:** I don't remember. I'm not very religious.

**INTERVIEWER:** But you were required to attend, correct?

**ROUZIE:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you get liberty then on Sunday afternoons?

**ROUZIE:** Yes, we got liberty. As you got into the higher classes you got more liberty.

**INTERVIEWER:** What did you and other cadets do on liberty?

**ROUZIE:** A lot of the guys had girl friends and I had a girlfriend that went to Connecticut College. It was across the street and up the hill.

**INTERVIEWER:** How was the food as a cadet?

**ROUZIE:** It was just straight forward food. You were hungry so you just ate. (laugh)

**INTERVIEWER:** The whole time you were a cadet RADM James Pine was the Superintendent. Do you have any memories of him? I'm sure you might have seen him occasionally.

**ROUZIE:** Once in a while, but he was on top of the stack so he doesn't really mingle very much. He wasn't in any of the mingling groups.

**INTERVIEWER:** Was he respected by the Cadets?

**ROUZIE:** He was there. He was the big man. We didn't have any rubbing elbow times, but he was respected.

**INTERVIEWER:** While you were a cadet, World War II ended in May in Europe and in August in the Pacific. Do you remember how you or your classmates reacted to the news that Japan had surrendered and the war was over?

**ROUZIE:** I was on a cruise when that happened. I was out hiking on some beach or something, quite a ways from the ship, when heard some whistles blowing and a lot of racket. I realized something had happened or was going on. I think the ship was in Puerto Rico at the time. We had sailed there. I

hiked back to the ship and found out the war was over. (laughter)

**INTERVIEWER:** You were happy about that?

**ROUZIE:** Sure. Any time you win a war it's a happy time.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did it later sink in that with the war over the Coast Guard would not be growing any more, in fact they would be cutting back personnel, and some of your classmates might have had a drop in morale because the Coast Guard would be getting smaller and promotions would slow down?

**ROUZIE:** Not that I was aware off. We were just happy that the war was over.

**INTERVIEWER:** With the war over the DANMARK would return to Denmark. Do you remember if they had any kind of a ceremony when it left the Academy?

**ROUZIE:** They might had had something, but I don't remember it.

**INTERVIEWER:** In your three years at a cadet at the Academy what is the one thing that stands out in your memory?

**ROUZIE:** That's a tough question. Of all the things I probably remember most being out on the yardarm on the DANMARK. It was just that experience. And swapping with old Rojeski my second classman who was a year ahead of me [Class of '46]. Being up there in the rigging was always memorable.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you remember the graduation ceremony?

**ROUZIE:** Only that it was a happy occasion.

**INTERVIEWER:** I found out that it was in Billard Hall.

**ROUZIE:** There was a running track around the top of that building.

**INTERVIEWER:** Before you graduated you received your first assignment as a new ensign. Did you have any input as to where you would be assigned? Were you asked for your preferences?

**ROUZIE:** No. I don't remember ever being asked. I'm trying to remember what my first assignment was. I know it was in Puerto Rico.

**INTERVIEWER:** It was probably a ship homeported there.

**ROUZIE:** I know it was a buoy tender [probably SAGEBRUSH (WAGL 399)]. I then served on the CITRUS (WAGL 300) in Ketchikan. [LCDR R.] "Stormy" Burns was the commanding officer. He wasn't as easy to get along with as [LCDR] Louis John Glatz [later commanding officer] but he was a good officer. He ran a good ship. But he wasn't the kind of guy you could "chew the fat with."

I then was transferred to the HEMLOCK (WAGL-217), also in Ketchikan. Louie John Glatz, he was a character, was the commanding officer. He was a great guy and had stories that wouldn't stop. He

had a vocabulary to go with it. (laughter) “Stormy” Burns and Louie John Glatz were both good leaders. We'd sail up and down the whole Alaskan coast on these buoy tenders. Occasionally in the summers we would get out to the Aleutian Islands chain.

**INTERVIEWER:** You checked aids to navigation even in the Aleutian Islands?

**ROUZIE:** Yes. There were two or three buoy tenders in Alaska and we covered pretty much everything there. It just depended on where each one was working. It was interesting work and I enjoyed my time in Alaska.

One of the officers I remember was Manuel Castro. He was a warrant officer on one of the buoy tenders. He was one of the best guys I ever ran into in the Coast Guard. I think he was on the HEMLOCK. He had been a full lieutenant during the war and he decided to go back to warrant officer because his retirement pay would be better. He was a warrant BOSN. He was down on the buoy deck.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you enjoy Alaska more than Puerto Rico?

**ROUZIE:** Yes, in a way I did. The weather was better in Puerto Rico, but I was used to that weather from growing up in Florida. Alaska was something different.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you finish your three years of obligated service, then in Alaska?

**ROUZIE:** No they sent me back to a buoy tender in Puerto Rico.

**INTERVIEWER:** So you were always serving buoy tenders?

**ROUZIE:** Yes and I enjoyed it. It was interesting work. Thank God I was on the bridge and not down on the buoy deck under all that equipment.

**INTERVIEWER:** You resigned your commission in Puerto Rico?

**ROUZIE:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** You were still an ensign. Did it take more than three years to make LTJG then?

**ROUZIE:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** In all of your six years in the Coast Guard, what would you say was your most memorable event?

**ROUZIE:** There was an interesting [ship] wreck where a big commercial ship ran into a mountain [island] south of Sitka, Alaska. The bow was stuck in the mountain [island] and the wave action broke the ship in half, right aft of the bridge. The bow was stuck and the rest of the ship was in 60 fathoms of water. It took a day for the buoy tender I was on to get there.

**INTERVIEWER:** So seeing that was very memorable?

**ROUZIE:** Yes. It was interesting because in order to get to the people who had gotten away from the

wreck and on to the beach—there weren't many, about four or five—and there were several bodies that washed up—it was so rough that our buoy tender had to go back in a harbor inside the inside passage and moored so that we had calm water and could get people ashore. Our people had to then go over a ridge and down the other side to get where the bodies were. We could see the bow of ship still sitting up there. Another Coast Guard cutter came in to get a lot of the other bodies. They could pick them up better from the beach so they took the survivors and bodies to Juneau.

I enjoyed my time in the Coast Guard and the work, but I realized that I wanted something a little more artistically interesting. So I left the Coast Guard and became an architect.

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you for sharing your memories.

**ROUZIE:** I'm sorry they weren't better. I have trouble remembering some things.

**END OF INTERVIEW**