



U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interview of **JOSEPH ETIENNE**

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

September 18, 2006
Charlevoix, Michigan

INTERVIEWER: Let me at first say where we are and who we are, just so that everybody that gets it -- that when they hear a copy of this, they know where exactly it took place. I'm William Thiesen, and I am the LANTAREA historian. Today is Monday, September 18th, and it is 2 o'clock, and we're in Charlevoix, Michigan with Joseph Etienne -- is that how you pronounce it?

ETIENNE: Etienne.

INTERVIEWER: Could you spell that for us?

ETIENNE: E-t-i-e-n-n-e.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: It's a French name, and it means "Steven" in English.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And Mr. Etienne was a 29-year veteran in the Coast Guard.

And you were beginning to talk about your origins there, and I was wondering if you could kind of return to that. And when you discuss some of these matters, if you could indicate maybe what the date was or the location where it took place. You participated in events in the Coast Guard since 1932 leading up to 1960. So there's an almost 30-year span there. It makes it easier to understand when they took place, if you can remember that. So, if you would, please go ahead.

ETIENNE: Well, I came from Europe with my family. My parents, they -- there was five children; I was the youngest of the five. I was six and a half years

of age, and we had settled in Wilmette, Illinois, and that's where I stayed until I was 17 years of age.

I used to go down to the Coast Guard station there in Wilmette, and I used to watch them in their drills and what they did, and I thought I would like to do that too. So, when I got in the service, I got transferred to the boot camp in New London, Connecticut, and at that time, that was at the casemates at the Fort Trumbull.

INTERVIEWER: What was the date when you went into the service; do you remember?

ETIENNE: That was February of 1932.

And I served three months there in the training, and from there, I went on board the four-stacker destroyer, the USS *Abel Upshur*, for transportation to New York.

INTERVIEWER: You were 18 at that time, 17?

ETIENNE: I was 17 years of age. And when I got on board the destroyer, I looked at everybody, and a lot of them had -- about two-thirds of the crew or more had beards, mustaches, and real old salts that were in the Coast Guard a long time.

And we went out, we didn't hit the sound; we went out around on the outside, and it was really rough. And I got so sick, I swore that when I got onshore, I would never come back.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you out at sea on that -- you were just a week or so or a few days?

ETIENNE: Well, overnight. The next day, well, we got into New York, and by that time, of course, I had overcome my sickness. And when we got to the pier, I was told that the ship I was to go on was across the dock, and I would get aboard there, so I did.

And before I went up the gangway, the quartermaster came down, and he said to me, "Are your shoes clean?" And I said, "Well, I just come off of that destroyer there." And I said, "You know" -- I said, "The decks are pretty clean, but," I said, "sometimes they get a little messy too." "Well," he said, "I suggest you take them off for safety because, when you get up on deck here," he said, "you will find it so clean, you can eat off of it." "Oh, boy," I said."

And I carried up my seabag and put it over my shoulder and went up on deck and saluted the OD and everyone else around. And I said, "Permission to

come aboard, sir?" And I gave him my name and my transfer orders, and the messenger took me down below.

And when I got down below, I looked around, and I seen some of the old salts. "Oh, boy," I said, "aren't there any young fellows in the service here?" [Laughter.]

And anyhow, I was shown my bunk, and I had a locker, and they told me all my clothes had to be rolled and stenciled and properly to be identified, and my blankets and everything had to be all stenciled. So, anyhow, I had a little work to do, and I finished up okay, and from there on, why, I start working. And they put me up on deck.

INTERVIEWER: Were you a boatswain at that point, or were you a seaman at that point? What was your rate?

ETIENNE: I was an apprentice seaman.

INTERVIEWER: And this is still 1932?

ETIENNE: Yeah. And I went up to seaman second class on the *Liggett* -- I mean, on the *Champlain*, and about five months later, we got a letter from Washington that we had to take a reduction in rank and a 15-percent pay cut. And, "Oh, boy," I said, "Well, they can't take too much from me." I says, "I'm making -- I'm only making \$36 a month." So anyhow --

INTERVIEWER: Is that still '32, or was that --

ETIENNE: Yeah, it's still 1932. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So the *Champlain* was the vessel that you transferred to from the *Upshur*?

ETIENNE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: The four-stacker, the destroyer. Well, anyhow, I stayed on that ship until we got an assignment to go to Greenland. And so --

INTERVIEWER: When was that? Was that --

ETIENNE: That was in about March, April, somewhere in there.

INTERVIEWER: '32?

ETIENNE: Yeah, in 1932.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And, well, we encountered some heavy seas, and then we encountered some good weather. And I was up in the lookout tower, and I seen something come out of the water and go back in again, and I wondered what that was.

So I hollered down to the bridge, and I said, "I see an object out here." I says, "It comes up and makes a hump and goes back down again; I don't know what it is."

And the OD hollered back up. He said, "That's a whale." Ha, ooh, I said, "Wow." I said, "Things are getting pretty big up here, the fish." [Laughter.]

So, we went into Ivgtut, and there is the first time I seen the Eskimos.

INTERVIEWER: Now, which vessel was this, again, that you were on board when you were up in Greenland?

ETIENNE: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: Which vessel, again, was it that you were on board? Which ship were you on?

ETIENNE: I was on the *Champlain*.

INTERVIEWER: That was still the *Champlain*?

ETIENNE: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And who was the commanding officer, do you remember? Was it Smith -- "Iceberg" Smith or somebody else?

ETIENNE: No. Hmm, Commander -- hmm.

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't Smith, though, was it? It wasn't "Iceberg" Smith; it was somebody else?

ETIENNE: Yeah, it was another commander.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: I don't recall -- I don't recall anybody being an admiral, them days.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, okay.

ETIENNE: The highest rank, I think most of them were only commanders.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, sure.

ETIENNE: I hardly -- I don't think I seen a captain --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I think you're right.

ETIENNE: -- them days. No

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So --

ETIENNE: But anyway, we went to another port from Ivigtut; we went to Julianehåb, and we stayed there for a while. And then on the way back, we had Ruth Bryan Owen on. She was the Ambassador to Denmark aboard, and we had to bring her back to New York.

So, anyhow, at that time, you know, there was -- the air traffic wasn't like it is today. [Laughter.] I don't remember seeing an airplane flying in the Atlantic at any time from 1932 to 1935 except the blimps that they had, the large blimps the Navy had. Those were the ones, and some of them went down in the Atlantic Ocean.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: But, anyway, we were on quite a few missions --

INTERVIEWER: When you were in Greenland --

ETIENNE: -- when I was on the *Champlain*.

INTERVIEWER: -- were you taking oceanographic information on the *Champlain*, or what was your mission?

ETIENNE: When I was on the *Champlain*, why, I was helping oceanographers. We were taking samples of the ocean bottom. Well, we went down and took samples at the -- close to 3,000 feet deep, so we had quite a winch of were around the deck. And just -- the testing rod was a rod made of solid lead, with the -- well, it had a -- it was hollow on the bottom, about -- oh, about two and a half, three inches. And that would drop to the bottom, and then we would haul the test up, and the scientists would check what they found on the bottom there.

And then we did all kinds of tests there. We'd send up balloons for the weather and charted icebergs coming down from Greenland. And while I wasn't helping them, I was holystoning the deck, and that was a lot of hard work too. Of course, we had to keep that stone going all the time because those decks were just about as clean as you would ever want to see. [Laughter.]

And whatever little bit of rust better not be showing anyplace because we were told to make sure that there would be no rust, and we had to keep chipping here and chipping there and red-leading and then paint, just to keep that rust from getting a hold. And anyhow, that's where I learned to do all my painting and keeping the ship. And the brass work had to be shined every day. And oh, boy -- and that saltwater was really, really hard on that brass work, I'll tell you, and that made that much more work for us. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any ice while you were there, or was it too warm for ice on the ship?

ETIENNE: Oh. No, we did some ice breaking. We went up to Maine and went in there and went into the harbors there and broke some of the ice out, and that was before the icebreakers were even known to be in existence.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: But, as time went on, of course, the icebreakers came into the Coast Guard and other countries, and we started building them over here.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what the seas were like when you were up in Greenland? Were they fairly calm, or were they --

ETIENNE: Oh, no, not at all. I seen waves 40, 50 feet high out in the Atlantic, the North Atlantic. We used to make quite a few trips up into Newfoundland and Nova Scotia and pulled into Halifax. And St. John's, Newfoundland, is where we fueled.

And then we went off -- we traveled all over the Atlantic, and we did 20 days out and 10 days in. And we were always on water hours when we were -- got at sea. We got a bucket of water a day, a half a bucket in the morning and a half a bucket in the evening and -- of fresh water.

INTERVIEWER: For washing, you mean, or for drinking or --

ETIENNE: No, no, that's for keeping you clean.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And we washed our clothes in saltwater, with saltwater soap, and we took our showers that way too. It was pretty itchy when you got through taking them showers with saltwater, and so, finally -- finally, they -- we got used to everything on-board ship. I spent three years on the *Champlain*.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Then I left the *Champlain*, and I got out of the service for a few months, and I reenlisted in the Surf Branch, which I was accustomed to see as a young boy.

INTERVIEWER: That was the --

ETIENNE: And I spent there some time -- some years in there. And I got up to Boatswain's Mate 1st Class, and then from there, I was assigned in 1940 to go on board the USS *Hunter Liggett*.

INTERVIEWER: When you were in the Atlantic with the *Champlain*, did you do any prohibition interdiction with rumrunners and that sort of --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

ETIENNE: Yeah, we had Prohibition there.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

ETIENNE: I think it was -- yeah, that was in the -- all that time we had to keep watch on them because once they got within the 12-mile limit, why, we could take them then, but they would stay out of the 12-mile limit until the fog, and then they would sneak into port with their contraband and get unloaded there on the beaches.

INTERVIEWER: Did you catch any of them?

ETIENNE: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever catch anyone?

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. We fired on some of them to stop them. And yeah, we went aboard.

And we went aboard one ship in New York Harbor. That was a pretty big ship, and she was loaded down with all kinds of booze. And it was quite fancy too. Some were in straw, and bottles were all encased around in straw, to keep

them from banging into one another. And they had to keep an eye on us, too, so we didn't snitch a drink once in a while. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Oh, boy. Oh.

ETIENNE: That was during the rumrunner days.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Do you remember any particular vessels that you captured?

ETIENNE: No, I don't.

INTERVIEWER: No?

ETIENNE: No, that wasn't my job to keep track of the names. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: My job was work.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. But that was three years you were onboard the *Champlain*; is that right?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: Was there -- and that was -- so that would be '32 to '36 maybe, around in there, '32 to '35, 1932 to '35 or so you were on board the *Champlain*?

ETIENNE: Yes, from 1932 to 1935.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any thought at that point that the United States might wind up going to war at some point, any thoughts of preparation --

ETIENNE: No, not at that time, there -- no, no.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Everything was quiet there then.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you said you left the service after the *Champlain*. Was there a reason for that? Did you want to -- you knew you wanted to --

ETIENNE: I wanted a change.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you came back home?

ETIENNE: I wanted a change. I wanted to learn more about the Coast Guard work, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: And I knew that the Lifeboat Station was also Coast Guard. So I decided that I'd want to go into that too.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you just changed to surfman, basically.

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And what was --

ETIENNE: But then I went back to sea again after --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And I never did go back to surfman again.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. And your rate when you went -- changed over to surfman, you were a boatswain?

ETIENNE: Boatswain's mate first.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. All right. So where was your --

ETIENNE: Oh, you mean when I left the *Champlain*?

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: I was a third class coxswain.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really? Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

ETIENNE: And I made boatswain's mate, and then boatswain's mate first at the Surf Branch.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you have to go to any special school or training when you switched over to surfman, or they sent you to the --

ETIENNE: Well, yes, as a surfman, you had to do a test.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

ETIENNE: You had to swim so far, and you had to dive down and pick up a ten-pound weight from eight feet of water. And I forget now how far we had to swim, but I was a good swimmer anyhow. So that didn't -- I went through that like butter.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Where did that training take place? Was that in Cape May?

ETIENNE: At Wilmette Harbor.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so you came --

ETIENNE: Wilmette, Illinois.

INTERVIEWER: You came back to Wilmette, then?

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: I see, okay.

ETIENNE: I came back to Wilmette.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So when did you start that assignment? When did you start working in the Life Saving Service? Was that during --

ETIENNE: 1936, I think it was.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah, 1936.

INTERVIEWER: And where was your first assignment with Life Saving? Was it --

ETIENNE: At Wilmette Harbor.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, so you -- oh, okay.

ETIENNE: Oh, yes, at Wilmette Harbor.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

ETIENNE: They had an opening, so --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- that's where I went, but I got transferred to various stations. After I served there a while, I -- it was hard making a living. I got married while I was a surfman there, and it was hard making a living at that time. So I got transferred up in northern -- up in Wisconsin area.

INTERVIEWER: What part?

ETIENNE: Yeah, Sturgeon Bay.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were in Sturgeon Bay? Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So, shortly after you were assigned to Wilmette, you were transferred up to Sturgeon Bay and served there?

ETIENNE: Yeah, in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And then from there, I was assigned to Thumb Island Lifeboat Station there.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any specific shipwrecks or other events that took place when you were in that branch of the service?

ETIENNE: Well, I went out in a hurricane in 1940, and that was a terrible storm that -- we went out with a lifeboat. We had to go over the first two waves, and we were all right, but getting over the first two was our main job. And the lifeboat I was in stood right straight up in the air, and we didn't know which way it was going to fall. Luckily, it fell sort of a little bit sideways and down.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So, when that happens, do you have to kind of stand upright or something?

ETIENNE: Oh, this was in the winter.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: And the water -- the second wave swallowed us up, came out over the top of the boat and filled the back end of the lifeboat, and the motor sputtered a few times, but it kept going, and we prayed that it would.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

ETIENNE: Yeah. And we went over the second one, and after that, why, we were okay. But oh, it started to ice down.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Everything started to ice up at that point?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And we had to take hammers and everything else to -- whatever we could find to knock some of the ice off.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So was this a particular shipwreck that you were trying to get to or --

ETIENNE: No. There was a tanker out there that was in trouble, and she was getting a lot of weight down with the ice and developed a list. And they did everything to keep her afloat, so --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Well, we went out there, and we asked the captain if the crew wanted to come off, we'd take them off. But he said no, they could hold their own for the time.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And, if needed, why, they just -- they asked us to stand by, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Sure. Was that at Thumb Island that --

ETIENNE: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: That took place at Thumb Island or Sturgeon Bay?

ETIENNE: No. At Sturgeon Bay.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the date? It was 1940, but do you remember what day it was? It was -- that was a bad storm.

ETIENNE: It was a real bad storm, yeah. Some of the ore tillers went down on the east side of Lake Michigan.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I think I remember that.

ETIENNE: In fact, there was a couple of ships that went down there. And, well, the wind shifted, and, of course, that was unexpectedly, and that's what caught -- they got caught.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, I see.

ETIENNE: So --

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any of the people that you worked with or the conditions that you worked under when you were in the Life Saving Service? Did you enjoy it or --

ETIENNE: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: -- did you like working on ships?

ETIENNE: I enjoyed every moment of it, yeah. All the rescue missions that we made, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Our rescue missions were mainly with the sailboats and --

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: -- other fishing boats.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So there were still a number of schooners that were sailing the Great Lakes at that point; you helped out with some of those? Were they schooners, or some of the sailing vessels were typically --

ETIENNE: No, mostly motor vessels and --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: -- cargo.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah. Now, like the -- when I was the group commander here in Charlevoix, why, we had the *Carl D. Bradley* got in trouble.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: They were in a terrible blow. And somehow or another, she cracked open, and when that happened, why, it didn't take very long for the vessel to go down. We happened to get the Mayday message. There was only one. And we answered back, but there was no --

INTERVIEWER: Response?

ETIENNE: There was no response.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Okay.

ETIENNE: But I immediately alerted the men and got the boat ready to leave, and we had the Coast Guard cutter *Sundew* here, and I told the officer of the day to contact the captain, who happened to be home for supper. And, in the meantime, they had the motor, the engines running, and when he got on board ship, they were ready to go.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So it sounds like that experience you had back in the late '30s --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- really came in handy, and --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- you enjoyed that work, but then --

ETIENNE: Oh, yes, I enjoyed all the rescue work. Sometimes we had to be out all night in a heavy storm, and, oh, and it blowing and lightning and rain and thundering, and you never know where the lightning was going to strike next.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Sometimes the lightning, you could see the lightning come down and strike the water.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You had some bad storms, I'm sure.

ETIENNE: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was the food like where you served in Sturgeon Bay? Was the food pretty good that they prepared there, or who --

ETIENNE: Well, there, we ate at home.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay, you ate at home?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

ETIENNE: Yeah, there, we ate at home. At Wilmette, I paid 30 -- I got paid \$60 a month. I paid \$30 out of my salary for food, and I had to buy my own clothes. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And the lifeboats you used were all motorized at that point, I assume?

ETIENNE: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: But they were old-timers.

INTERVIEWER: Really? They were diesels or gas-powered?

ETIENNE: No, no, gas, gasoline engines.

INTERVIEWER: All right. Huh.

ETIENNE: No, there was no diesels yet then. [Laughter.]

They were the four-cylinder gasoline motor, the old Wisconsin motors, they were. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember those; I've seen some anyway. So you finished up that in 1940, you finished up at Sturgeon Bay, and --

ETIENNE: I finished -- I got transferred there to the -- the Navy asked the Coast Guard for some surfmen to train Naval personnel in the surf --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: -- coming into the beach.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So when was that? That was 1940?

ETIENNE: That was 1940.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And we got transferred down to Guantanamo Bay. And from there, we went out on board ship to the islands, where we had some invasions, and there, trained Navy and Marines on the amphibious warfare.

INTERVIEWER: So you were -- you went and took a train down to Miami, say, and then got on a ship from there and went to Cuba, or how did you get there?

ETIENNE: No, I got transportation on the battleship *New York* --

INTERVIEWER: Really?

ETIENNE: -- that was going to Guantanamo Bay. And my first month down there was in the brig. [Laughter.] That was the only bunk available.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

ETIENNE: So I slept in the brig -- in the brig. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Wow. And where did she steam out of, out of New York or --

ETIENNE: No, picked her up out of Norfolk.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So were the other surfmen that came with you in the brig as well, or you were the only one that was --

ETIENNE: I was the only one in the brig. And the rest of them found -- well, they -- oh, some of them wouldn't go into the brig; they slept on deck someplace else. They was afraid the door would get locked. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Oh, man.

ETIENNE: There was a hatch there next to the brig, and they were dropping hams and bacon. At the time I laid down to go to sleep, it was about 9 o'clock at night, and I woke up in the morning, they was still dropping hams and bacon.

INTERVIEWER: All night long?

ETIENNE: All night long. [Laughter.] That battleship had nothing but hams and bacon. [Laughter.] Oh, man. Well, they had -- there must have been -- there must have been 4- or 500 people on board that ship --

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

ETIENNE: -- for the crews out there.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. There might have been more than that, sure. And they all ate ham, it sounded like, yeah, or bacon.

ETIENNE: Well --

INTERVIEWER: And that was -- was that in the warmer months? Was that in the spring or summer? Was it hot on board, or do you recall?

ETIENNE: No, that was toward summer.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: 1940?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: All right. Huh.

ETIENNE: [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: So -- and what was your rate at that point? What was your rate in the Coast Guard?

ETIENNE: I was -- at that time, I think I was boatswain's mate second.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah, I was boatswain's mate second.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And, of course, we had uniforms like chiefs. And the Navy people says, "Look at the chiefs coming aboard." [Laughter.] I was a boatswain's mate second class and looked like a chief. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: You got a lot of salutes, huh?

ETIENNE: We had hats like a chief petty officer. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. It certainly sounds like you had a good time, I guess you'd say. You know, you --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- the people you -- did you enjoy the people you worked with, and --

ETIENNE: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: -- it was a satisfying experience, I guess --

ETIENNE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: -- as far as your work was concerned?

ETIENNE: Right. I did a lot of -- I did a lot of midnight learning. I took up courses in the service to get a higher education, because I knew someday that I would have to use that. And I worked in the boatswain hole for two years on-board ship, and I learned a lot about making grips and Jacob ladders and making -- splicing rope and hazzers [ph] and cable. And anyhow, I learned everything I could about seamanship. And I learned how to handle boats from a young age on, and I kept at it throughout all my service career.

INTERVIEWER: Was that common for people to do that sort of thing, or was that something that you --

ETIENNE: Well, I figured that someday that, you know, when I -- I hoped someday that I would be of higher ranks, you know --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: -- my studies and so on, and it did come about.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Well, when you were riding the New York down to Guantanamo Bay in the brig --

ETIENNE: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: -- where was your family at that point? Were they in --

ETIENNE: They --

INTERVIEWER: -- in Sturgeon Bay?

ETIENNE: I left them at Sturgeon Bay.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So they stayed there --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- for the time being them?

ETIENNE: They stayed up there.

INTERVIEWER: Did the Navy want to practice amphibious landings because, at that point, they figured that war was --

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: -- was going to happen, and --

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: -- that they wanted to be prepared?

ETIENNE: They wanted to be prepared.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

ETIENNE: Yes, they did. And we were surprised that Pearl Harbor got hit in 1941, although we were told that -- a year before that, that there could be a war with Japan.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So there was some thought it would probably be with Japan --

ETIENNE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: -- but maybe not with Europe, huh?

ETIENNE: Absolutely, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So how long did it take to take this cruise down to Guantanamo on the New York, just a few days or --

ETIENNE: Oh, hmm. I'd say a good day, day and a half, two days.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: It depends on how fast they'd go, you know, what kind of sea they'd had going down, but --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: -- you know, those battleships, they plowed through it, you know. They don't ride over the top.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, they go through it, huh?

ETIENNE: They go through it. They're so heavy, they go right through the wave.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Uh-huh. Wow. How many of you were there in your group that went down to Guantanamo?

ETIENNE: I would say it was about 30 of us --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, okay.

ETIENNE: -- that I recall, somewhere in there, the surf people.

INTERVIEWER: So you went down to --

ETIENNE: With different stations, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you know any of the people that you were with before they brought you together, or had you -- that was the first time you'd met them?

ETIENNE: Some of them, I knew. Those that -- we gathered together on the rifle ranges, and that's how come you get to know other people at other stations, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, I see. So describe what it was like when you were down in Guantanamo, what you did and what the living conditions were like when you were down in Cuba.

ETIENNE: Well, we had these Higgins boats, and they were just new. And of course, we had to learn a few things about how they handled, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And what other equipment was needed for handling them in every sea --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: -- and especially coming into the surf. And you had to get the show of water, so that when you dropped the ramp, it could get off and hit the beach without drowning.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So you were kind of learning for the first time yourselves, and then you were going to kind of instruct others?

ETIENNE: Well, no, we practiced at the Lifeboat Station how to handle boats in the surf, because we used to ship the oars and roll the boat upside down and right side up and get back in it and go in the surf.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. I understand, just to change the subject a minute, that some people say that the surfmen were so good at it sometimes, they could actually roll the thing over without getting wet --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- because they would just walk up the side.

ETIENNE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: That's amazing.

ETIENNE: The man who handled the sweep oar, he could walk around the stern end.

INTERVIEWER: That's amazing. Wow.

ETIENNE: [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: It's a real art, that's for sure.

ETIENNE: Yeah. So I --

INTERVIEWER: Go ahead.

ETIENNE: I seen that only -- I seen that only one time where we did that; the second time, he went and he got wet. Not if you do it right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: If you do it right, you're okay, but you have to really be sharp.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Just one question about when you were working as a surfman in the Life Saving Service, when you got wet, like when you were out in a real heavy seas like that, weren't you really cold, or do you just kind of grin and bear it --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- or was there any way you'd try to keep -- I guess you'd be working --

ETIENNE: Oh, actually --

INTERVIEWER: -- and you probably --

ETIENNE: Your hands, your hands sometimes -- I had my hands just froze inside.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: The glove in -- they would freeze solid, but my hands inside would be a little warm because of the ice covering the mit.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, sure.

ETIENNE: And of course, we had a woolen pair --

INTERVIEWER: Inside the leather?

ETIENNE: -- inside, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Good woolen pairs of socks.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: Just like the socks too.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, okay.

ETIENNE: But we had the oilskins over on -- during heavy weather, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And we had our life jacket on, too, when during the heavy weather.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Wow. Well, so, anyway, back in Cuba -- I hate to keep switching here -- but you were there for -- how long were you there in Cuba?

ETIENNE: Oh, I think we were there about three months, something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So how -- you trained --

ETIENNE: Then we got transferred back to the Coast Guard. And I went home for a brief stay, and then I got orders to go to New York.

INTERVIEWER: When you were in Cuba, you were training Navy coxwains on how to use Higgins boats?

ETIENNE: Yes, right, Navy seamen.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. How many were there that you trained, the 30 of you?

ETIENNE: Oh, well, there was quite a few, quite a few Naval personnel on each of the ships, you know. They had so many surfmen on different ships that were making the shore landings.

INTERVIEWER: So there were hundreds of them or perhaps thousands of them that you were training at any given time?

ETIENNE: Oh, quite a few hundred.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Quite a few hundred people, yeah. And then, of course, they trained others.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. How did those Higgins boats perform? I mean, were they pretty awkward, or were they pretty maneuverable or --

ETIENNE: No. You had to do it right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: You'd come in on the surf, and you got to know when to drop your stern anchor. And you got to have a good man on the winch --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- to play out, and then you got to have a good man to fetch up on it.

INTERVIEWER: So it was a three-man crew or a two-man crew?

ETIENNE: Three.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you had somebody in front --

ETIENNE: The coxswain, you know, and then the engine man, and then the man on the stern handling the winch.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So they'd throw out an anchor?

ETIENNE: Sometimes. Sometimes when the personnel was short, two men, two men would do it. The engineer would go back to the winch and handle that.

INTERVIEWER: And then they'd throw out an anchor before you get to the shoreline? You had to kind of time it just right --

ETIENNE: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- so you threw it out at the right time.

ETIENNE: You had to watch the sea, and you had to figure out the depth, depth of the water. The man up in the bow, you know, would alert the man on the stern.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. And so that was basically to keep the Higgins boat straight --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- or perpendicular?

ETIENNE: He would know pretty much about the depth, you know, coming in there, see.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

ETIENNE: And then you'd give the signal for him to drop the anchor, and you got to have so much play to get to where you're going to drop the ramp.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: It all had to be done right, just to avoid any accidents, you know, that --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: You come in where the water's too steep -- too deep there, why, somebody could get hurt.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So you had to get the timing down, you had to know the depth of the water, and it sounds like it took a good deal of --

ETIENNE: You got to get your timing right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Huh. How many infantry could one of those Higgins boats hold, do you know; how many personnel?

ETIENNE: About 25.

INTERVIEWER: Twenty-five men?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And they were made out of plywood too, weren't they?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: They were made out of wood?

ETIENNE: The first ones, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm, okay. So you were there for three months, basically, through part of the summer of --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- 1940 --

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: -- in Guantanamo?

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. How'd you like being in Cuba? Was that nice, compared to Sturgeon Bay or --

ETIENNE: [Laughter.] That was an experience, you know, like anywheres else. Any old port in the storm.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Were there things to do or -- I mean, compared to Sturgeon --

ETIENNE: Well, you had your liberty.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And you could go to Panama City and enjoy it, or you'd go to Bucaram and enjoy there. And you'd go to different places, you know.

INTERVIEWER: So you traveled a certain amount when you were there?

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You went and saw some of those places, Panama City?

ETIENNE: Well, you'd hear about the different places from the guys that were here and there, you know, where to go and what to do and --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- where you can see a movie and where you couldn't. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you do much fishing? Were you --

ETIENNE: No. Well, hardly any fishing.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: We didn't get no chance to go fishing. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really? Or just swimming or anything of that nature or --

ETIENNE: No.

INTERVIEWER: You were too busy or --

ETIENNE: Well, you'd be pretty tired at the end of the day, you know, coming into the surf and --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- working all day long on that, you know. You --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- you'd be -- you'll be glad, you'll want to hit the sack.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Did you do -- were you still trying to study different things about seamanship while you were working on these different assignments? You were --

ETIENNE: Well, handling boats, you know, that's quite an experience.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: You'll never learn it all.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: No, it -- there's so much of it that you have to study.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: Every wave is different. It's just like the snowflake, you know. You'll find no two flakes alike.

INTERVIEWER: Huh. So you just got to kind of watch it and get a feel for it, and it's kind of --

ETIENNE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: -- kind of sixth sense or something --

ETIENNE: Those waves, the waves here around the lakes is altogether different than the waves on the oceans.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

ETIENNE: Are altogether different.

INTERVIEWER: Why? They're higher or more compressed or something?

ETIENNE: Well, I would say the height of a wave pertains to the strength of the wind.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: You take the wind blowing 60 miles an hour, let's say --

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: -- you'll get perhaps a 38-, 40-foot wave. And when it blows 80 miles an hour, you're going to get higher waves.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: In the Pacific, I seen a wave 75 feet high.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

ETIENNE: I seen the top of a mast on a destroyer disappear between two waves.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm, that's huge.

ETIENNE: And I thought that destroyer was a goner, until all of a sudden, a little while later, I seen that mast coming up. Then, all of a sudden, the ship came up over the top, and go down on the next one.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm. That's amazing. Well, what were the waves like in Cuba? Were they pretty large --

ETIENNE: Well, no.

INTERVIEWER: -- or were they just kind of moderate?

ETIENNE: We did our practicing during the kind of weather that was pretty safe, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, I see.

ETIENNE: When they were pretty high, we didn't go out.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

ETIENNE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: What's the use of going there and lose a boat and lose some men?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, right.

ETIENNE: No. Well, we had to play it safe, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So you finished up there sometime in the summer of 1940?

ETIENNE: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: You finished up in Cuba sometime in the summer of 1940?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right, right. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: July or August, something like that?

ETIENNE: Yeah, somewhere in there. And I went -- got home for a short stay, and then here come transfer orders to New York. And my wife, she was just horrified that I got so many transfers, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. And -- go ahead.

ETIENNE: And being a married man on a -- I just said, "Well" --

INTERVIEWER: So they stayed in Sturgeon Bay --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- again, while you were transferred to New York?

ETIENNE: Well, like I say, after the war was over with, I got paid \$9,000 for my unused leave.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, sure.

ETIENNE: So there was a lot of time that I didn't get to go home.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, yeah, absolutely. So was the *Hunter Liggett* the next assignment that you had in New York City? Or where did you go --

ETIENNE: No, she was being fitted out for war.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Was she a new ship, or was she --

ETIENNE: No, no. She was a passenger liner before, and the Army had taken over the ship, and they used it for I don't know how long. And then they'd quit using it. Then the Navy happened to get a hold of it, and they -- the ship was being torn apart, all the wood taken out of it. All the electricals had to be redone.

INTERVIEWER: So that was at New York Navy Yard in Brooklyn --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- where they doing that?

ETIENNE: The Brooklyn Navy Yard.

INTERVIEWER: So you were kind of helping out with fitting her --

ETIENNE: And then from there, we went to Norfolk, and we went to the shipyard there, because there's a certain amount of work that one shipyard can do, and then you have to go to the other one to finish up.

INTERVIEWER: So you were down at the Naval shipyard in Norfolk there or Portsmouth --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- for a while too?

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you spend there trying to get her ready for sea? A few months or --

ETIENNE: Well, no, I spent a long time down there.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Oh, yes. A year, I would say.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were out -- really?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Busy fitting her out for --

ETIENNE: A year at different places, you know. And then Pearl Harbor, I was in Norfolk, yeah, there, when Pearl Harbor hit. And it wasn't very long after Pearl Harbor that we got underway to go to the -- down to the Panama Canal and into the Pacific. And I was down there all of 1942, until June of 1943.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So you started -- you were on the *Hunter Liggett* for quite a while.

ETIENNE: Three years.

INTERVIEWER: You were on board when she was being fitted out.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And you were on board for a couple years while she was in operation too?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right, right, right.

INTERVIEWER: Huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What was your rate when you started out? What was your --

ETIENNE: Boatswain's mate first.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: When I got aboard --

INTERVIEWER: I see.

ETIENNE: -- the *Liggett*.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And I made chief, and I made warrant officer, and -- on that ship. And later on, I got my commission, ensign.

INTERVIEWER: And that was on board the *Liggett* as well?

ETIENNE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So when did you proceed down to the Panama Canal? That was in '41 or '42?

ETIENNE: No, that was in '42.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, early '42 perhaps?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah, early '42.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of work did you do on board when she was fitting out? Were you doing a lot of construction work or --

ETIENNE: Well, the yard workers were working on it, and I was more or less helping the yard workers and watching them. And I got to know all about their kind of work --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- and splicing. And prepared any gear for sweeping for mines.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: -- all that equipment come aboard. I didn't know much about that, but I'd start studying that stuff -- and I got to know about how to set it up and use it and put it back, and that was a big plus --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's -- okay.

ETIENNE: -- because, you know. And I was working with them. So I got to know a lot more than what anybody else thought, because I was working with them from 8 o'clock in the morning right on through till 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm. So you worked side by side with the crews there and --

ETIENNE: Right. And all -- well, no, not with my crew, because they weren't -- they didn't have their assignments yet --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, I see.

ETIENNE: -- when I was doing that. And then, later on, I'd start getting men to come up into the division. I got the division organized, and then I got men.

INTERVIEWER: So you were kind of there early on and kind of organized the crews --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- that came on board?

ETIENNE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: From the ground up. Yeah, I got to know -- now, whatever supplies that they needed, that had to be all requisitioned.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So you took care of some of the paperwork too? Were you involved in some --

ETIENNE: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: -- of the logistics?

ETIENNE: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: No, we had yeomen to do the paperwork. We submitted the information and all that.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And then they took it out of the catalogs, you know, whatever they --

INTERVIEWER: When you were in New York and then you were in Norfolk with the Hunter Liggett, what was your life like that there? Did you enjoy living in those towns, or were they just too big, or what was it like living --

ETIENNE: Well, living conditions on the Liggett was horrible.

INTERVIEWER: So you lived on board the vessel during the time she was fitted --

ETIENNE: All the time, right. It was horrible.

INTERVIEWER: So no piece of cake there?

ETIENNE: No, no, no, no. Welders down below, welders up above, hammering over here, things going on over there. Oh, you'd get used to it, but a long time.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been hard to get any sleep with -- all that racket.

ETIENNE: It was horrible.

INTERVIEWER: So your quarters, were they up above in the super structure or --

ETIENNE: All different sections. Wherever they were working, you know, you had to get out. You had to take your seabag and whatever clothes you had and move over to another part of the ship.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

ETIENNE: Because all that probably tore out, got out of there, you know, you know, and they had to work and redone everything.

INTERVIEWER: It's amazing that they did that much work on it.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like they could have built a new ship, based on

--

ETIENNE: It was a passenger ship before, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: They with all staterooms, you know, and all that stuff had to go.

INTERVIEWER: Huh.

ETIENNE: [Laughter.] Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So she was, what, 700 feet long or so, or 5- to or 600?

ETIENNE: No, she was a little over 500.

INTERVIEWER: Five hundred?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Still a very good size though.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Huh. Was that her name before she was in the service? What was her name before, do you remember?

ETIENNE: Hmm, let's see. She was a transport ship.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Well, that's all right. I could probably find out.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that's fine.

ETIENNE: Uh-huh. I got the ship's name.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

[Break.]

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Well, we're back here, and talking about the *Hunter Liggett*.

And you proceeded from Norfolk down to the Panama Canal.

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when that was, what time of year or when that took place? That was when you were all finished fitting her out, I assume?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right when we were all finished. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: It was after Pearl Harbor.

ETIENNE: Because we -- when we got into Pacific, we went to the various islands, like Pago Pago and Connatabu [ph] -- oh, so many islands that we traveled to. And then we picked up the Marines at Pago Pago. And from there, we went to the Fiji Islands, and we had some mock invasions there. And then from there, we hit Guadalcanal.

INTERVIEWER: So did you sail empty to the South Pacific from Norfolk, or did you have troops on board when you sailed?

ETIENNE: No, we didn't have troops on board there yet.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Just the ship's company.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And when you sailed from Norfolk to Panama and then on to the Pacific, did you have any escort, or were you sailing simply alone? Were there any other vessels with you at all?

ETIENNE: Most of the time we were -- yeah, we had some escort, but, you know, I didn't notice so much about that. I was so busy doing other things, you know, on-board ship -- getting this ready and getting that ready and so many things I had to do. Oh, man.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have to stand --

ETIENNE: Hardly -- when the time came, it was almost dark, you know, when I got through.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Did you have to stand watch at all, or what was the daily routine for you on the water?

ETIENNE: Yeah. We all stood watches. But when we got into the war area, then some of my men, of course, had to stand watch.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: But I didn't because I had too much other things to do.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, absolutely.

ETIENNE: Sometimes I worked all night and all day.

INTERVIEWER: Just getting the vessel prepared in some way or another?

ETIENNE: Right, right. There's so much --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: You know, before -- well, wait a minute now. We talked about -- we talked about -- we did take some people aboard, because I remember in Norfolk, we loaded up some wartime equipment, either that -- either we were loading up to take down there, or -- I don't recall any troops coming aboard, but --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: -- we did load up some equipment.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Were you involved in any of the loading?

ETIENNE: We might have transferred some Marines down onboard that time too.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: I can't -- my mind isn't that -- well, looking back that far, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, sure. Were you involved at all with loading operations -- loading and unloading?

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of work did you do, or what was your responsibility?

ETIENNE: Well, I had to supervise the loading, and where it would go and all that --

INTERVIEWER: So you --

ETIENNE: -- and how it has to come out, and I got that information from the Marines, from the loading officer.

INTERVIEWER: So you were kind of a load master type, or that was part of your responsibility was to --

ETIENNE: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: -- pack it all in there?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And --

ETIENNE: All the rigging, all the running gear and everything, I had to keep tab on all that, check it all out all the time --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. How --

ETIENNE: -- so nobody would get hurt, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, sure. How big of a crew did you supervise with all the different responsibilities?

ETIENNE: Oh, I had about 40 men altogether.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. These are all boatswains and --

ETIENNE: We had, you know, boastwain's mates, boastwain's mate second and coxswain and seamen.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: A lot of seamen.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Now, in addition to loading the vessel and the cargo, or unloading it, both of those, I assume, did you have responsibility -- were there any landing craft on board the vessel, any Higgins boats or anything like that, or were those brought on with other vessels for loading and unloading, as far as the transporting things?

ETIENNE: Oh, we had 32 landing boats.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. They were Higgins boats or --

ETIENNE: A lot of boats. Mostly Higgins boats at that time.

INTERVIEWER: I see, okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah. So you also were responsible for dropping those in the water --

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

ETIENNE: -- and all that?

INTERVIEWER: I was not in the boat division.

ETIENNE: I see.

INTERVIEWER: I had the forward end of the ship --

ETIENNE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: -- where the loading and unloading operations took place.

ETIENNE: I see.

INTERVIEWER: And of course, we had the three-inch anti-aircraft gun and some 50-caliber machine guns up there.

ETIENNE: I see.

INTERVIEWER: So they kind of split up the ship into sections? Like there was a forward section for you, and then there's an aft section --

ETIENNE: Right, right.

INTERVIEWER: -- for somebody else?

ETIENNE: Different sections, right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Responsible with some others.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So, when they went to battle stations or general quarters, whatever --

ETIENNE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: -- was your station there on the three-inch gun then or --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah. That was my position all the time I was on board.

INTERVIEWER: I see, okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah. We had a gunnery officer that, you know, he was training the people how to -- about the gun and --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, I see.

ETIENNE: -- the shell was about that long and about that big around --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: -- three-inch. They were all set at different altitudes, and they would blow, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. They were fused, I guess, so that they'd go off?

ETIENNE: Right, right.

INTERVIEWER: So all the guns you had were for anti-aircraft purposes?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah, I see.

ETIENNE: Bombers and fighters and --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And of course, the gun could be used for submarines --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: -- shooting at a submarine.

INTERVIEWER: You just had to aim it low, I guess. It had to be a certain distance, and then you could use it?

ETIENNE: Yeah. There were some torpedoes that missed the ships and went right up on the beach.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

ETIENNE: Japanese torpedoes, oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: On the --

ETIENNE: The ship behind us got a bomb right behind the smokestack.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: And I'd seen parts of the ship go up in smoke.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Did you feel lucky that the Hunter Liggett --

ETIENNE: Yeah, just --

INTERVIEWER: -- went through all that?

ETIENNE: -- lucky, right. Very lucky. They called it the lucky ship.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: The "Lucky Liggett."

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Huh. Did she survive the war?

ETIENNE: And you could see where the --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

ETIENNE: You can see where the bombs are -- left --

INTERVIEWER: There's a --

ETIENNE: A few times, I got wet.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. From the splashes?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah? This picture here shows the vessel --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: -- when it's being attacked by Japanese aircraft.

ETIENNE: Don't you think for one moment I -- that I didn't think that was going to be the end. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Oh, boy.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What was it like when you --

ETIENNE: The second night we were there, we lost four heavy cruisers.

INTERVIEWER: This is Guadalcanal?

ETIENNE: Yeah. We had over 600 survivors alone on our ship.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Did you just throw down some --

ETIENNE: We worked all night long -- picking up survivors.

INTERVIEWER: Where you'd thrown down nets and ladders, and they would just climb up?

ETIENNE: Oh, we got them out of water and --

INTERVIEWER: Got the Higgins boats down?

ETIENNE: Yeah, we had them -- most --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And then we had destroyers come up alongside, and some of them got off of the destroyer, that they -- they went up alongside of the ship, you know, that was sinking.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And they would get as many off as the ship would hold and then deliver them over to us --

INTERVIEWER: I see.

ETIENNE: -- and other ships. And we had over 600 alone on our ship.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

ETIENNE: They were laying up all over the decks, some with -- terrible wounds.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, burns and all.

ETIENNE: Yeah, arms and legs -- missing.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah, I'm sure. How many personnel could the *Hunter Liggett* carry? Do you know the total number that they could carry personnel-wise, the ship?

ETIENNE: Oh, I think a few thousand.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: I think so.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Well, when you steamed through --

ETIENNE: Throughout the whole ship and on deck and all over.

INTERVIEWER: Right, maximum capacity.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, a few thousand. So you came over to Pago Pago, and you picked up Marines.

ETIENNE: Picked up the Marines.

INTERVIEWER: And that was 1942, probably early '42?

ETIENNE: 1942.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And then you took them to -- where did you drop them off when you picked them --

ETIENNE: Well, we dropped them off at Guadalcanal for final, you know, the invasion.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: We were the lead ship going into Guadalcanal.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: [Laughter.] That -- man, it looked like the Fourth of July. [Laughter.] Shells was flying all over, bullets were going here and then, and, oh, gosh. After all, you know, they told us there was only 20,000 Japanese on the island, and come to find out, there was 40,000 on it.

INTERVIEWER: Huh.

ETIENNE: Oh, many times we thought we had the airfield secured.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: We finally got it back, and we'd have to go back in there again, land some more. They'd get back and fight like crazy, and I don't want to talk about how many -- how many dead, but I can tell you some of the stories some of the Marines told.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah. And these bombers here, some of the Japs got out of the -- out of their bombers after the plane hit the water, and we had them down in the holds and on the ship.

And I never will forget the first meal that they got down there. The cook gave them sauerkraut and wieners, and they were picking at that sauerkraut and wieners with their fingers, and they looked at it. They weren't going to eat that stuff.

And finally, just word got up to the captain that the Japanese won't eat their supper, and he said, "Why not?" And he said, "Well, the cook gave them sauerkraut and wieners, and" -- "Oh," he said, "Well, have the cook serve them some rice." The cooks prepared some rice for them, and then we watched as they lowered the food down to them. And when they got the rice, oh, boy, they really went at it, and they ate that.

INTERVIEWER: So how many prisoners were there onboard -- Japanese prisoners?

ETIENNE: Oh, we had about a dozen. We had some here and some there, up in the brig, you know, and --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- some down in the hole, and we had about a dozen flyers.

INTERVIEWER: Huh. So --

ETIENNE: They got transferred off the ship someplace else, New Zealand or somewhere or Australia or whatever, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So, typically, the *Hunter Liggett* would come into Guadalcanal and drop the troops and the equipment, I guess.

ETIENNE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: You'd drop it into LSTs?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: If you had the equipment on board, you'd drop it into an LST or a larger -- you couldn't drop it in a Higgins --

ETIENNE: The tank lighters. We carried our own tank lighters.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, okay.

ETIENNE: And they would take -- they would -- they'd be large enough to carry a tank, you know.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

ETIENNE: So, when they came back from unloading the tank, then we would load the ammunition and other guns, howitzers and so forth.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, sure.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember, did you guys talk to the Marines much at all that were --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- they were landing?

ETIENNE: Oh, sure.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get to know them pretty well or --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you develop much of a relationship with them or --

ETIENNE: While they were sharpening their bayonets and all that.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, yeah.

ETIENNE: Yeah, because they knew they would have to have some hand-to-hand fighting, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Did the two crews eat separately; the Marines ate at a different time than the ship's crew --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- or how did that work out?

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

ETIENNE: Well, where I ate all the time, it was always the ship's crew and --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And they ate at a different time, see. They eat -- they would take the same mess stack, but they would eat at a different time. The vessel tenants, you know, would clean up right away, and then reset the table.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. I understand that there were so many people on board, some of these transports, that they weren't allowed to sit down. They would actually only give them a few -- like 20 minutes, and they had to stand up while they were eating and then walk through, or how did that --

ETIENNE: A lot of times, when the seas were rough, we got sandwiches, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: No -- nothing else. Coffee and maybe -- maybe some coffee and sandwiches, that's all.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, huh. Well, when was the battle that you mentioned with the cruisers that were lost and the survivors you took on?

ETIENNE: That's Guadalcanal.

INTERVIEWER: Was that the first -- when you dropped the Marines off at Guadalcanal, was that the first night or --

ETIENNE: No, the second, the second night.

INTERVIEWER: So you were actually at anchor there for a couple days unloading troops?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right. Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And then there were the cruisers were protecting the transports and all?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right. Right.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: So every night was kind of like --

ETIENNE: We had -- we anchored, but we also had -- we had special equipment so we could hit it with a hammer and break the chain. And, naturally, the chain would -- we could -- you'd grapple for it later on, but we could get underway right away by letting the chain go, see.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Were you in charge of the anchors as well?

ETIENNE: All that, yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Did you have to let go of the anchor, or did you actually pull it up when you left Guadalcanal?

ETIENNE: Well, no, we were -- when we knew that they were coming, we didn't anchor. No, we just laid to and used the engines to keep her there, you know. And then within not too long, we would get hit, but their bombers would be coming over.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Jap bombers. Sometimes they would be way high, and sometimes they would be coming right over the mountains and low and come down on us and strafing us, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So when was it that you were heaving to with the engines? Was that the first few nights, or how was that different than when you were at anchor?

ETIENNE: No. When we first came in, I don't recall now whether we anchored or not, but I don't think -- I was so busy doing things, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: I don't recall every move we made.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, yeah.

ETIENNE: But, oh, gosh, we was on the guns most of the time.

INTERVIEWER: Really? Okay.

ETIENNE: You know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Ninety-five percent of the time, we were on guns, but the Japanese were shooting at us all the time while we were there.

INTERVIEWER: And you had to be on the gun all the time, or did you take shifts?

ETIENNE: Well, when the shells were flying, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And when the bombers coming or some of the fighters.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Some of them fighters, you know, they'd carry a bomb too and strafing, too. You know, they had our 50-caliber machine guns on their planes. We sold them the guns, and they used them on their planes.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

ETIENNE: Yeah. They fired them right back at us.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I've heard about that. You said also that you knew Douglas Munro fairly well?

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. We were shipmates.

INTERVIEWER: Could you talk about that a little bit, about your experiences with him?

ETIENNE: Well, Douglas Munro was a young man in the service, and he worked hard. He did good work, and he liked the boats.

And I told him. I said, "Well, you have to learn a lot more than just liking the boats." I said, "You got to learn a little bit about how to handle them and learn a little bit about the seas and the action and when to know when to drop the ramp and also when you're going in to pick somebody up." And he went in to pick up the --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so he was a coxswain on one of the Higgins boats off the *Liggett*?

ETIENNE: He was not a Coxswain. He was a volunteer man. He volunteered to go into the boat and go after the Marines.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And the officer of the day let him go.

INTERVIEWER: Were they asking for volunteers or --

ETIENNE: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: Were they asking for volunteers at the time, or he just --

ETIENNE: No, they were asking for a surfman to come and -- or a man to get into the boat because all -- a lot of the others had gone here and there with boats, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, I see.

ETIENNE: And he volunteered to take this empty boat and go in and get them. He got them aboard, all right, and he was backing her up, backing her out of the -- from shore.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Now, you said that you had worked with him personally as far as --

ETIENNE: Well, yes. I trained the seamanship, you know, with him, and I told him about the -- what he should do when he got into boats, you know, and handle them. And he would -- he handled the boat a few times, you know. He got to know pretty much about it, and when the word came up that we had to go in and get the Marines, well, he was the first one there. He said, "I volunteer to go." I said, "Okay. Go ahead."

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

ETIENNE: It was wonderful. You know, he was --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: I knew he would do it.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Oh, yes. I knew all along he would do it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Where was he --

ETIENNE: He had the inspiration.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Where was -- what did he do on board the ship? What was his duty when he was as on board Liggett?

ETIENNE: Well, he was up -- most of the time that I remember him would be up on the bridge up there, helping the quartermasters in that, and I think what he really wanted to do was to be a quartermaster.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, I see.

ETIENNE: And a lot of times, he would be down on the deck with us, but -- yeah. The quartermasters liked him too, you know, because he was interested in their work.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: Where I was, you know, you got grease on you, and you got dirty.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm, sure.

ETIENNE: Working around the steam.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. All the cranes were steam-operated?

ETIENNE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And cable.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: You had to slice cable once in a while, and you got grease down you, and your hands got black and dirty, and that's a lot of hard work.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, absolutely.

ETIENNE: And then you had to operate a winch --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- and learn about loading and unloading.

INTERVIEWER: How to balance cargos and all that.

ETIENNE: And you had to do it at nighttime.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So did you light the hold when you'd do it at night?

ETIENNE: At nighttime, we had charged gloves on. You could see my gloves.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And I'd give you a signal.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: You would know what I would -- what I want you to do. That's the way it was set up.

INTERVIEWER: So that's the only thing that somebody could see when they were lowering --

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: -- a cargo in the hole at night?

ETIENNE: Pitch darkness. There was no lights.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

ETIENNE: There was no light anywhere. Everything was dark.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

ETIENNE: But before we went out in the darkness, we charged our lights under the light bulb.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So they were fluorescent somehow or phosphorescent?

ETIENNE: They were fluorescent.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: All right. Huh. Fascinating.

ETIENNE: Then, when you put them on and you went out into the dark, you could give your signals, you know, and they -- we would unload that ship.

INTERVIEWER: So the ship would be completely blacked out at night?

ETIENNE: Right, right.

INTERVIEWER: Huh, I'll be darned. Did anybody ever get hurt in terms of loading or unloading or --

ETIENNE: Nope, not one man. Not one man got hurt.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

ETIENNE: Nope. We had -- well, I'll tell you, every move they made, it was right on the ball.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah. That was quite a lot of responsibility there.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. Absolutely.

ETIENNE: Yeah. Because you've got a heavy load coming up, and going over the side, going across decks, and then go on over the side, down into that tank lighter or other -- or a Higgins boat.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: One time there was a net full of eggs that was being taken up on this -- that was on the 3rd Division back there. I heard about it. I heard what

a stink that developed and all the eggs, and the crates and crates and crates that was all in the big net, you know, and one of the slings came off of the hook, and, luckily, the crates didn't fall on a man down there.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

ETIENNE: But they all got -- they all were away when that went up, you know. They all went back in the back end of the boat, and the whole front end of that boat was eggs all over the bottom. And it was hot down there, and I'm going to tell you, boy, it didn't take long for the smell. Woohoo, woohoo. [Laughter.] They had fire hoses going --

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

ETIENNE: -- all over that. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Oh. And that was a Higgins boat in Guadalcanal?

ETIENNE: Oh, yes. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Oh, boy.

ETIENNE: Oh, we laughed up a storm. [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Oh, boy.

ETIENNE: Yeah. "There goes some of our eggs."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah.

ETIENNE: I never will forget that.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Wow. Well, how many runs did you make to and from Guadalcanal?

ETIENNE: Oh, well, we -- I -- oh. We went back there four times, back and forth.

INTERVIEWER: From Pago Pago to Guadalcanal?

ETIENNE: Yeah. And then we went -- well, of course, we went to different places too. We went into -- we took people into Australia, Brisbane, and we went into Wellington, New Zealand, at different times.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And then back to Guadalcanal. We would take the wounded, you know, from one place, transport them to another.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And when we had to take Army personnel from the Islands back on board and take Marines and put them in there --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- it was all that different kind of work going on all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Well, it must have been hard work trying to schlep all those people and supplies with those cranes back and forth and --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- just a lot of hard work with all that.

ETIENNE: The beach master there, he had a big job too.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah. You hear -- lots of times, you'd use up all your cargo nets, and we'd go into the beach, and then they'd take the stuff out, and the cargo nets would -- they'd throw out on the beach, and then when you had to unload some more, you wouldn't have no cargo nets.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. And you had to go --

ETIENNE: Then you had to make up some.

INTERVIEWER: You had to make them out of raw line, I guess.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

ETIENNE: And that was a lot of work.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: For us, extra work, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. How long did it take to make one of those nets? Like a couple hours or --

ETIENNE: I would say a good couple hours.

INTERVIEWER: Get a couple of people together and make one?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

ETIENNE: But there was a lot of windings and twine and everything to use, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah. Huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So the --

ETIENNE: And the wind scoops, when the air conditioning went out, we had to make --

INTERVIEWER: Canvas --

ETIENNE: -- wind scoops.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: The wind scoops were about that big around --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- with big wings on. We'd hang them up over the holes and get underway so the air would go down in there.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So you were responsible for sewing those up or --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. I had to lay out the canvas and mark the canvas and sew. One time we sewed all night, so that they could have it the next morning.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, yeah

ETIENNE: Yeah. We made two of them.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. You must have had pretty strong hands.

ETIENNE: Yeah, and I taught other guys how to sew too, so I didn't have to do all the work.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, absolutely.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So you were on the Hunter Liggett through 1943?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So that was three years?

ETIENNE: Well, up till June of '43, when I came back to the states.

INTERVIEWER: Now, when you came back --

ETIENNE: I came back on the *Lurline*, and when I got aboard in *Wellington*, the captain sent a messenger down, and they -- he heard that I -- he had a Coast Guard officer aboard, you know, and he wanted to talk to me. And he was the commodore of the Matson Line Fleet, this guy.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And --

INTERVIEWER: You were an ensign at this time? Were you an ensign?

ETIENNE: I was an ensign at this time. And he called me in, in his cabin, and he said they were shorthanded, and he wanted to know if I would stand a watch. And I said, "Well, I don't have nothing else to do." I said, "I'd be happy to help you." I said, "I'm the kind of a guy that never says no."

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So this was a --

ETIENNE: "Fine," he said. "You'll have to move back up here," he says, "in officers' quarters." And he said, "You'll eat in the officers' dining room," and he said, "What watch would you want?" I says, "I'll take the tough watch, 12 to 4." "Fine," he said. And I stood 12-to-4 watches every night from New Zealand all the way to L.A.

INTERVIEWER: That was a good couple of weeks, or how long was that?

ETIENNE: Huh?

INTERVIEWER: How long did it take you to get that far?

ETIENNE: I would say a good week and a half.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah. I enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah, because I had nice -- nicer quarters, and I had better food and --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: -- I enjoyed doing what I was doing.

INTERVIEWER: And that was the *Lauralie*? Was that the name of the ship?

ETIENNE: The *Lurline*, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: The *Lurline*. Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah, that was the name of the ship.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, a passenger vessel.

ETIENNE: That was a Matson Liner.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: It sailed out of California.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So did you enjoy the captains that you tended to work with on the *Hunter Liggett* or other ones that you met, this gentleman on the Matson Line?

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any of them in particular or on this --

ETIENNE: On the *Liggett*?

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah, sure. During our reunions, I was the -- I was noted for helping the captain all the while during we had the reunion, to be with him --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: -- to take care of a --

INTERVIEWER: What was his name, do you remember?

ETIENNE: L.W. Perkins.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Was it the same captain on board throughout the time that you were on the *Hunter Liggett*?

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: The same one.

INTERVIEWER: Coast Guard --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- I assume, and all?

ETIENNE: Yeah. He recommended me also for a commission.

INTERVIEWER: And is that why you became an ensign, or did he recommend you for another rank?

ETIENNE: No. No, no. That's why I became an ensign.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Well, when I went over and did that service for the Navy, you know, and that was during when the bullets were flying.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, sure.

ETIENNE: And then I got those letters from Admiral Nimitz and Admiral Turner and Admiral Halsey.

INTERVIEWER: Those were from 1943, those letters?

ETIENNE: Yeah, those letters -- while they didn't get to know -- yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: It was during the time that I was getting all -- I was getting my promotions real fast there, you know. I got my chief, and then I got boatswain.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: And then, of course, I got my commission.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So --

ETIENNE: And all that was taken away from me.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: All that, all my commission status was taken away, and that's what hurt me.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, sure.

ETIENNE: When I came back, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

ETIENNE: 1946, after the war.

INTERVIEWER: So, when you came back on the *Lurline*, that was toward the end of 1943?

ETIENNE: June of '43.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Where did you go at that point, and you were in California, I assume?

ETIENNE: I went to L.A.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And --

ETIENNE: Then I took the train to go to -- I took the train north.

INTERVIEWER: To the Great Lakes or --

ETIENNE: Well, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: That's right. I came back from California. I came back to Chicago.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And my wife came down to Chicago to welcome me home.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. June of '43.

ETIENNE: After I was gone from 1940 to 1943.

Yeah. My kids didn't know me. They started growing up, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Sure.

ETIENNE: And then I did very well. I sailed -- I sailed the Atlantic and all of the Great Lakes, the North Atlantic and the Southwest Pacific. I had a lot of experience.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. When you came back --

ETIENNE: I would do it all over again, if I had to, though.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: I really would.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. When you came back to Chicago, was that when you were in charge of the war bomb landing?

ETIENNE: The mock invasion drill?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: That was in '43 still? Was that in '43?

ETIENNE: In '43, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Can you say a little bit about what you did there, when it took place, and who you worked with on that?

ETIENNE: Well, when I told the admiral there that I would put on the show --

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: -- I said I'd have to get some help from the Navy, give me air support and all that.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: "Fine," he said, "do that, go ahead." And I made the -- I contacted the Navy and made arrangements, and I got the boat and I got the Coast Guard personnel. And I got the Navy, Air Force, and they come down. We went out over the beach area there in Chicago, and I came in on the beach. And you seen there --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, the --

ETIENNE: -- they took a picture of me --

INTERVIEWER: -- pictures.

ETIENNE: -- getting off of the boat.

INTERVIEWER: You got some Higgins boat there.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And that day, they -- the City of Chicago sold \$4 million worth of war bonds to help the war effort, and --

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: -- I gave a whoop, boy. I said, "You know, that's great." I said, "That makes everything fine." [Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: I was happy about that.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, absolutely.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Anything to help the war effort.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: I lost a lot of buddies down there, different times at different places.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Some on different ships.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Well, when --

ETIENNE: I feel sad every time I mention them, but they -- you can see by looking around here --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: There's --

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah, *Mackinaw*.

ETIENNE: The ships to *Mackinaw*.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, absolutely.

ETIENNE: And my flags there and my lighthouses and my --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: -- soldier and --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Well, when you were -- were you stationed in Chicago when you -- when you planned the mock landing in Chicago? Were you stationed there?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right. I was stationed there actually, in my --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: -- my other --

INTERVIEWER: I had heard about the war bond that you did from other veterans, actually. In fact, I think that I had talked to somebody that was involved in that.

ETIENNE: Oh?

INTERVIEWER: I was in Connecticut a few days ago, and I talked to some World War II veterans there.

ETIENNE: Oh, all right.

INTERVIEWER: And I think that they recalled that too. So that's why I was interested in talking to you about it.

ETIENNE: Oh, all right.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.

ETIENNE: Good.

INTERVIEWER: So how long did it take you to plan that? Did you -- you had to go around to all the different --

ETIENNE: Well --

INTERVIEWER: In Glenview, I suppose for --

ETIENNE: It took me a good week.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: It took me a good week to get this all together and --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: -- and to put it on, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: And it went on smooth, without a hitch.

INTERVIEWER: And you had to coordinate the --

ETIENNE: Like I said, I couldn't do enough for the Navy. I could not do enough for the Navy because the Navy was real good to me.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And I loved the Navy, and, of course, I loved the Coast Guard too, but I served under some very good sailors and --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: -- service people. And my heart and soul has been with the service.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So you were there in Chicago for the rest of 1943?

ETIENNE: And from there, I went -- I got assigned to go to Duluth and a put a ship in commission. And I was a junior grade, and I was executive officer of the 180-footer.

INTERVIEWER: Which one was it, do you recall?

ETIENNE: That was the -- gosh. I was on so many Coast Guard ships. I can't remember all the names right away.

INTERVIEWER: It was one of the *Sundew*-class, though, right?

ETIENNE: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. She was commissioned in '43 or '44?

ETIENNE: In '43.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Out of Duluth?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So you --

ETIENNE: Now -- oh, wait a minute. I went through there. I got there in the fall, and it might have been -- it might have been during the winter that we commissioned her because we broke ice up around the loading docks there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And I know I was coming in with the ship to the dock, and I had been breaking ice for the last couple hours.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And the -- I brought the annunciators to stop, and I put it in reverse to slow the ship down, and we kept right on going. And, of course, the place, the area where I docked it, it had a concrete wall ahead of it, and if I didn't stop that ship, I would -- I would hit that concrete wall.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And I hollered down to the engine room. I said, "You've got it in reverse," and he said, "Yes." And I said, "Nothing going on." He says, "I know it."

INTERVIEWER: Huh.

ETIENNE: He says, "You must have lost the prop."

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

ETIENNE: So I hollered up to the anchor crew and dropped the starboard anchor --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: -- then dropped the port anchor, and, finally, we stopped the ship, about several feet from the end.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

ETIENNE: Whew.

INTERVIEWER: Huh. So the problem --

ETIENNE: Then we didn't know what happened --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- until we got a lighter to pick up the back end, and sure enough --

INTERVIEWER: The propeller came off.

ETIENNE: -- all that was there was the hub.

INTERVIEWER: Huh.

ETIENNE: All the blade -- the last blade fell off as -- when I put the annunciators to stop and put it in reverse, the last blade fell off. We were just --

INTERVIEWER: I imagine you --

ETIENNE: -- testing the ship out, you know --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: -- for ice breaking.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Huh.

ETIENNE: And we come to find out that that propeller wasn't built strong enough for breaking ice. So they had to put a different kind of blade on, a propeller on there with different material.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, sure. I'll be darned.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So that was -- and that was probably January, February of '44, somewhere around there?

ETIENNE: Yeah, yeah, somewhere in there.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: I'd say the end of January or February.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Yeah. So we were breaking ice there all winter long, and we didn't leave there until early spring, when we went out through the canal, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So where did you take that vessel? Where did she wind up, that 180-footer that you were in charge of?

ETIENNE: We went first thing to New York, and then we went to the shipyard, and we got fitted out for guns and all, everything.

INTERVIEWER: So she was serving out of New York Harbor? Is that correct?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: We went to the Navy yard over there in --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- Brooklyn Navy Yard.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So you were her skipper while she was -- throughout that time?

ETIENNE: Oh, no, I was the exec.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were the XO?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. All right.

ETIENNE: But I did most -- I did a lot of the running and all.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, sure. How long were you on board her? Do you recall?

ETIENNE: Oh, how long was I on her? Seventeen months.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. You did a lot of aids to navigation work with her --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- buoys and that sort of that?

ETIENNE: Yeah, we did a lot of aids to navigation.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And during the -- during our spare time, we were running around the Atlantic Ocean, looking for German submarines.

INTERVIEWER: Oh. So you did some patrol duty offshore too?

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Huh, I see. Ever find any?

ETIENNE: Until the end of the war.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, until '45?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever get involved in any submarine -- hunting for any submarines?

ETIENNE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find any or --

ETIENNE: No, we never -- we never made contact with any.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. By then it was --

ETIENNE: We had depth charges, and we had what they called mousetraps. We had the bow rockets.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, yeah.

ETIENNE: We had a lot of those.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

ETIENNE: Yeah. And we had 20-caliber machine guns, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Wow, it was pretty heavily armed then.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Huh.

ETIENNE: We were fitted out for -- we had the stern, we had depth charges we dropped over the stern, and, also, we had cape guns to shoot from the side.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Depth charges.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, I see. So where was your home port then? It was -- was it right there in Brooklyn? Your home port was Brooklyn at that point -- that you were stationed at with that --

ETIENNE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: -- 180-footer?

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I see.

ETIENNE: We were stationed at Staten Island.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, Staten Island, okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: All right. You probably had gray -- Navy gray paint at that point --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- since it was still in that part --

ETIENNE: We were --

INTERVIEWER: -- of World War II?

ETIENNE: Yeah, we were at Staten Island, at Navy Pier 17.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm. How did that duty compare to some of the other assignments you had? Did you like everything you did equally in the Coast Guard, or did you like one thing better than another, as far as what you did or what your responsibilities were? Because you've had several.

ETIENNE: Well, from there, we went down to Norfolk, and we were stationed there for a while, while we were in the shipyard.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And then we went down to Norfolk, and we stayed down there, worked out of there in aids to navigation.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. How long were you stationed down in Norfolk?

ETIENNE: Oh, my, I was down there over a year. The ship was down there longer than that, but --

INTERVIEWER: And that was --

ETIENNE: I put around this 17 months altogether on it.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So she was in Norfolk after the war?

ETIENNE: The *Salvia* was the name.

INTERVIEWER: What was it?

ETIENNE: *Salvia*.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: The ship, *Salvia*.

INTERVIEWER: That was the 180-footer?

ETIENNE: And from there, I took command of the *Hydrangea*.

INTERVIEWER: And that was a 180-footer as well, wasn't it?

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: I took command of that.

INTERVIEWER: And she was on the East Coast?

ETIENNE: She was a little bit larger than 180.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Huh. That was on the East Coast as well?

ETIENNE: Yeah, she was a old lighthouse boat.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. And that was in Norfolk or --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Or out of Portsmouth actually, I suppose?

ETIENNE: Yeah, Portsmouth.

INTERVIEWER: Huh, I'll be darn, because I've heard about that lighthouse station. It's --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- just down the street from where I work right now, actually.

ETIENNE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Huh.

ETIENNE: How many years did you put in?

INTERVIEWER: Well, actually, I've just started work with -- and I'm a civilian employee of the Coast Guard, and I wasn't in the service before that.

ETIENNE: Oh, I see.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Were you always into the journalistic work?

INTERVIEWER: I was actually a curator at the Maritime Museum in Manitowoc.

ETIENNE: Oh, Manitowoc.

INTERVIEWER: Yep, Wisconsin Maritime Museum.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yep. So I learned a lot about the Great Lakes, that's for sure.

ETIENNE: Excuse me. I have to go to the rest room.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. Yeah, I'll just turn this off.

[Break.]

INTERVIEWER: Okay. It's on now. You were down in Norfolk, and that was in 1946 that you were down --

ETIENNE: No, I was in Detroit --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: -- in 1946.

INTERVIEWER: When did you finish up with the --

ETIENNE: I was commanding officer of the *Tamarack*.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And that was after --

ETIENNE: And when I got demoted, seven ranks with pay.

INTERVIEWER: And that was after the *Hydrangea*? You were on the -- you then transferred up to Detroit?

ETIENNE: No, I was the executive officer on the *Acacia*, and I left that ship to take command of the *Tamarack*.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you were in command of the *Tamarack* in Detroit in 1946?

ETIENNE: I was the commander of the *Tamarack*. I worked the aids to navigation in Detroit River and Lake St. Clair, all the way up to detour. And thenm once in a while, they sent me up to the Straits of Mackinac and then to Lake Michigan.

INTERVIEWER: And that was all on the *Acacia*?

ETIENNE: No, no. That was on the --

INTERVIEWER: On the *Tamarack*?

ETIENNE: On the *Tamarack*.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And I worked all those aids to navigation, and I was getting ready to get underway in Detroit when I was handed that letter.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

ETIENNE: And I turned around, and I told the next in line. I said, "I guess you're the captain now."

INTERVIEWER: So at that --

ETIENNE: I said, "Either I accept it, or I can ask for my discharge."

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: That's the offer that they gave me.

INTERVIEWER: So, at that point, you became XO of --

ETIENNE: I became -- at that point, that -- at that -- exactly that point in time, I was a W-1. So I went down on the deck, and I got my orders from the bridge, until I got transferred. And I got transferred as group commander at Charlevoix.

INTERVIEWER: So you had gone from a --

ETIENNE: As a W-1.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. You had been lieutenant, and then you were a W-1 at that point?

ETIENNE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Huh.

ETIENNE: They dropped me all the way back to W-1.

INTERVIEWER: And that was because of points -- or they claim because of points or lack of points? I see.

ETIENNE: I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: I don't know whether that has anything to do with it or not, but, gosh, I worked hard to get up in -- to get up there and was worth -- I felt I was worthy of it, you know, but they didn't think so. So they dropped me back.

INTERVIEWER: And you decided to stay in the service --

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- and --

ETIENNE: I had to. Otherwise, they'd have kicked me out.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So you were transferred to Charlevoix at that point?

ETIENNE: No. I didn't think they would be -- they would be that mean.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: They didn't give me much notice.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: They didn't tell me nothing until I got that letter.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So how long were you in Detroit? How long did you serve there on the *Tamarack*?

ETIENNE: Oh, I was on the *Tamarack* several months, I guess, somewhere like that, and I took over command of the Charlevoix. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What was stationed here at Charlevoix? Was the Acacia here at that point, at Charlevoix?

ETIENNE: No, there was nothing here then.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Boat station or --

ETIENNE: There was nothing here, no.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: There was one man at the Lifeboat Station.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: We had to build all that back up again to the efficiency for a Lifeboat Station.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: And I worked hard to -- well, I had all the lighthouses to take care of too, and I had civilian personnel, as well as military.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. How many people did you build it up to?

ETIENNE: I had -- pardon?

INTERVIEWER: How many people did you build it up -- or how many people did you have under you when you got it built up -- or civilian and --

ETIENNE: It's all the way. I got the largest area in the district, and I had over a hundred men scattered all over, and I -- in the lighthouses and that. They were all operating, you know. South Fox Island had three civilians and one military man, and Gray's Reef -- Gray's Reef had all civilians.

I had -- that's -- even around the lighthouses, that was civilians there and one military man.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. You had boat stations?

ETIENNE: I had to recommend them for their GSA pay and ratings. I had to examine them all and write their proficiency. I had to do all that.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And I never done that before, and I really worked hard to get familiar with their way of doing things, you know, in the lighthouse, because it was all new to me.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So --

ETIENNE: And when you are put in a responsible job like that, and you have never done it before, I'll tell you, you're doing a lot of midnight work.

INTERVIEWER: So was it primarily lighthouses, or did you have some boat stations, too, within your realm --

ETIENNE: No, I had surfboat stations, as well as the lighthouse.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And all the beacons and everything else.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And but your home base, you were based here in Charlevoix --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- throughout that period?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So how long were you here? You were here from '46 through '60 or --

ETIENNE: Oh, different times. Yeah, I come here in '47.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: 1947. And I stayed here until 1950, and I went to the district office.

INTERVIEWER: That was in Cleveland?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How long --

ETIENNE: And I was there for a year and a half, two years, I think it was.

INTERVIEWER: Now, where was your family at this time? Were they moving around with you, or did they stay in one place?

ETIENNE: No, I left them in Charlevoix.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So they moved from --

ETIENNE: And, oh, when I went to Cleveland, yeah, I moved them -- the closest place I could find was Lorain, Ohio, and I got an apartment there.

And I started getting more kids, and I wrote a letter in and asked the District -- while I was there at the District, I wrote my letter and asked them if I could come back to Charlevoix because I had health problems with my wife, and I had quite a large family. I had six kids.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So they moved from Sturgeon Bay at World War II, and then they came over to Charlevoix from Sturgeon Bay?

ETIENNE: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Then they were down in Cleveland for a little while too?

ETIENNE: I got one son -- my oldest son is 68. Is he now? I think so. Yeah, he's 68.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: That's my oldest boy.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: I lost one boy and one girl.

INTERVIEWER: So you have four kids left?

ETIENNE: I got four left.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Two of them, I put two in college. They all went through high school.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You said that when you were in Cleveland, you -- were you friends with Arnold Palmer? Did he work there in Cleveland at the district office?

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Right, yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: He was a storekeeper at the time?

ETIENNE: Yeah, he was a storekeeper. I was in operations, and I got to know him. And I start -- I played golf with him, and, of course, he beat me like nothing. And I never seen anybody that loved golf any more than he did.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. What dates was that? That was '50 --

ETIENNE: '52.

INTERVIEWER: '52 and '53, or just '52?

ETIENNE: '52 and '53.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So he'd go out, and he'd golf every day or --

ETIENNE: Well, no, he -- he worked -- if he got his work done early in the day, why, he was lucky to get off, you know, a little -- an hour or so earlier to go play.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: But I always liked to play with Arnold. He's there. I didn't see him for many years.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, I see.

ETIENNE: I went over here to Shush Mountain, where he was coming, and I handed him an envelope as he walked by. And I had written a letter to him, you know, and I knew he was coming. And he walked past me about ten feet and turned around and he said, "Is that you, Joe?" And I said, "Yeah. I didn't think you'd recognize me." He says, "Come on." He says, "Have breakfast with me."

INTERVIEWER: Great.

ETIENNE: So, I said, "Fine." I said, "I'm a little hungry." So we sat down, and we had breakfast, and --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: That's a picture of it right there, where --

INTERVIEWER: Right. He's --

ETIENNE: -- I was with him that day. I went -- I walked nine holes with him, and I got a little tired. So I quit, and he went on to play the rest of the nine.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And then after -- I waited for him all that time, until he got through playing 18, and we talked a little while, and he wanted to take me up in the jet and everything, but I said, "No, I'll let you do the flying. I'll play golf." [Laughter.] Anyhow, we kidded, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Well, that's great.

ETIENNE: He was a nice guy.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Any other recollections from him or your time in Cleveland at all?

ETIENNE: No. I feel everything that he learned to do, to play golf -- his dad was a pro, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. Where was he from? Do you recall where?

ETIENNE: Pennsylvania.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So, when you were in Cleveland, any recollections that were memorable from your years of service up in Cleveland, your year or however long you were there at district headquarters?

ETIENNE: Well, I was in -- we had to -- we had to stand watches there, and that was in -- in operations, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: We had to take care of the whole district for any emergencies that came up or anything.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: We had to handle all of that and then notify the -- our superiors what's going on.

INTERVIEWER: Right, right. So did you have a day watch or night watch, or did you stand --

ETIENNE: No, evening. From 4 o'clock in the afternoon through midnight and till the next morning.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any big crises or major events that took place at that time or --

ETIENNE: No, not too --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Nothing of any major --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: No. I handled all my major stuff here in Charlevoix with --

INTERVIEWER: You --

ETIENNE: When the *Fitzgerald* went down -- you heard about her?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, '75.

ETIENNE: Well, I was interviewed then about what I thought, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you were here when the *Carl Bradley* was --

ETIENNE: I was there when the *Carl Bradley* sank, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Now, when did that happen? What year was that?

ETIENNE: 1958.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: November.

INTERVIEWER: November? Now, what happened? Was the weather particularly ferocious that day, or she just structurally broke apart, or do you recall the events that transpired when she went down and what you -- how you responded?

ETIENNE: November the 18th, 1958. Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah. And I guess you got one Mayday call, and that was all you got?

ETIENNE: One. One Mayday.

INTERVIEWER: What -- do you remember what time it was? It was at night, I guess, in the evening?

ETIENNE: It was evening, dusk.

INTERVIEWER: And the weather was --

ETIENNE: It was right around -- right around 5 o'clock.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: Just at the bad time, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Well, why, because of the ship's --

ETIENNE: Because of darkness.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

ETIENNE: And the seas were so high.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really? So it was a bad storm?

ETIENNE: The wind was blowing more than 60 miles an hour, between 60 and 80 --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- with gusts up to 80. The plane that was flying up -- the helicopter and the other planes that were flying up, they reported winds up there, 1,000 feet at a hundred miles an hour.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

ETIENNE: They had to go back every so often to get the -- another crew aboard because they were getting beat up, hanging on and getting, you know --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So can you -- when you got the call, when did you get the Mayday call from the Bradley? Do you recall when that was, what time of the day it was?

ETIENNE: It was in the evening, around --

INTERVIEWER: It was --

ETIENNE: -- around five --

INTERVIEWER: It was 5 o'clock?

ETIENNE: Around 5 o'clock. I was -- I'd just got home here to sit down to eat.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And you got a call from the station?

ETIENNE: Yeah. And the phone rang, and they said, "You got a Mayday message." And I says, "Okay. I'm leaving right now." I dropped everything and then got in the car and drove down to my job. And I got in, and I said, "Did you acknowledge it?" And the guy said, "Yes." I said, "Was there a response?" And they said, "No."

So we think that she floundered. So I says, "Okay." So, after I organized everything here, got them going, I called the district office because I didn't want to lose no time calling the district and leaving them here. I wanted to get them moving before I made my call.

INTERVIEWER: So which --

ETIENNE: I told them. I said, "I dispatched the *Sundew* and dispatched a lifeboat," and when the *Sundew* met the lifeboat out, a few miles out in the lake, they radioed to me, and they said, "You better recall the lifeboat. They won't have enough fuel, for one thing, to go out there and come back."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And he says -- the weather is getting worse and worse all the time, and he said, "They're doing all they can right now to keep it going ahead."

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

ETIENNE: So I recalled the boat.

INTERVIEWER: Just called them on the radio --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- and called them back?

ETIENNE: Yeah, I called them on the radio and told them.

INTERVIEWER: So they dispatched some helos, too, from Traverse City?

ETIENNE: They were soaking wet anyway. They were --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: The waves came right on over the top of them.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So the *Sundew* -- did anybody else join in the response along with the *Sundew*?

ETIENNE: Well, there was a German ship out there first.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: A freighter. And I could tell that he was speaking very broken English.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And so I got on the radio, and I called him in German. I could speak German, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

ETIENNE: I could speak French too.

INTERVIEWER: From when you were growing up?

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Yeah, my parents.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, sure.

ETIENNE: And I asked him if he would stick around the area and see if he could put his search lights on and see if he could pick up some of the sailors, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: And he said he saw the ship blow, the boilers blow. The stack went. You know, when the ship was going down, the stern end was -- went down

last, and when the cold water hit the furnaces, it blew out the stack, and he seen all that. He seen the flame and everything come out.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And he told me. He said, "They didn't know how close they were to a reef there." There was a reef not too far from where the ship went down, and we were all concerned, too, at that time that perhaps that the ship might have hit the reef, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: But that wasn't so, and -- as we later found out. So they picked up three, and the third man -- the third man got off the raft and got on another ship, or the *Sundew* took him over. I don't know which happened now for sure. But, anyway, the *Sundew*, I know it took two of them, the two live ones, because the other guy lasted in only five minutes.

And the two live ones were transferred out of -- they got them on the *Sundew*. They took them off the raft.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So they came back here to Charlevoix?

ETIENNE: They came back, but they stayed out there until all the men were picked up and put on the *Sundew*. They were all brought in, and I made arrangements with the City Hall to take all the ones that perished, and we laid them all out inside the City Hall.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

ETIENNE: And they all got transferred from there to where they lived for their funerals, after we identified them all, you know --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, sure.

ETIENNE: -- and checked them all out. And they all had on those stiff life preservers, and most of them had broken necks.

INTERVIEWER: From the life preservers?

ETIENNE: The waves. The waves had hit them so hard that their neck --

INTERVIEWER: Head snapped?

ETIENNE: -- hit the stiff life preservers, and their necks were broken.

INTERVIEWER: So that may have been what caused their death was the
--

ETIENNE: But they were dead. Naturally, they were dead, you know.

INTERVIEWER: They broke their necks, and that's what killed them.

ETIENNE: A lot of them had broken necks.

INTERVIEWER: Huh. Strange.

ETIENNE: I wrote a letter on it. I told them they should get rid of their life jackets.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And get Kapok, which they did. They made them --

INTERVIEWER: Huh.

ETIENNE: -- illegal.

INTERVIEWER: Who did you write that letter to? To the Coast Guard?

ETIENNE: Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: I'll be darned.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Whenever I found it, I felt there was --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah. Right. Same thing with the lighthouses. Whatever I found that was going wrong out there like -- like the crib was falling apart or something because it needed new structure, you know --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, uh-huh.

ETIENNE: -- like White Shoals.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: I wrote letters in on that. I told them if they don't get busy pretty soon getting -- fixing up that light, we won't have any. Boy, they got busy on it.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. That's great. Did you have any other major events?

ETIENNE: Well, that station that I first came to, the men were sleeping in the attic of the station.

INTERVIEWER: Really? It was just in that bad of shape?

ETIENNE: No. It was an old station, a real old station. It was built in the 1800s.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Which one was that? Which station was it?

ETIENNE: Right here.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, here in Charlevoix?

ETIENNE: This one.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

ETIENNE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And they had emergency ropes in their bedrooms so they could throw out the window, if they could crawl through the window and crawl down on -- and slide down on the rope to the ground.

INTERVIEWER: In case when there was a response?

ETIENNE: Yeah. Well, I had -- I changed all that. I had an outside stairway going up then built.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: And you still had to -- still had them go -- those ropes, that was another way of getting out of there in case they couldn't make sure.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, sure. That was for -- in case of fire, or that was in case of responses --

ETIENNE: Yeah, in case of fire.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Sure.

ETIENNE: Yeah. The structure was all wood, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And they had a furnace down in the basement.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. What about some --

ETIENNE: The lifeboat was so heavy that they -- that the tracks and everything that were in the boathouse, I thought everything was going to go down into the cold bin one time, but they had to get reinforced, to sustain the heavy weight.

INTERVIEWER: So you had that all fixed or supported?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have --

ETIENNE: The lighthouse that -- the lifeboat station on Beaver Island, they wanted to close that station early for some reason or another. I don't know. And I told them I'd like to -- I'd like to have it left open until the shipping season, you know -- was over. No. They didn't listen to me. So they transferred the men off of the -- off of there, and it wasn't long afterwards that the *Bradley* went down.

INTERVIEWER: So the response would have been quicker had those men still be -- still been stationed there?

ETIENNE: Well, yeah, but I don't think it would have changed anything.

INTERVIEWER: Right, right.

ETIENNE: Because they would have had -- they would have had a long haul too, and that lifeboat was an old one.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: And I knew we needed new boats, you know. We needed more. We needed boats that were not stronger -- any stronger built but more power and --

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: -- better communications and so forth, and --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- I knew a lot of money would have to be spent to bring it up to power where I thought it would be sufficient, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: All those things were --

INTERVIEWER: So were there any other --

ETIENNE: -- my responsibility.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Any other major events that transpired, like the Bradley, during the periods you were here in Charlevoix after World War II? Any other things that come to mind that were pretty memorable, storms or shipwrecks or things of that nature?

ETIENNE: Well, we had a plane that went down halfway between Charlevoix and Beaver Island, and we got a report from the aircraft that they were in trouble.

INTERVIEWER: When was that? When did that take place? Fifty --

ETIENNE: Yeah. And --

INTERVIEWER: Mid '50s?

ETIENNE: It's either in the '50s or '60s. I forget now.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh, okay.

ETIENNE: But, anyway, this was in the summertime, and we didn't hear anymore. So we knew that the plane was down. So I sent the station from the -- I sent the crew out from Charlevoix and Beaver Island. Beaver Island got there before us, and they got -- the plane was down and gone, and there was two people that were rescued. The little boy drowned.

INTERVIEWER: Was that a small -- was that a civilian aircraft? It was a private aircraft of some kind?

ETIENNE: Yeah, it was a private civilian.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see. How did they even know where the aircraft was? Was there a --

ETIENNE: Well, the aircraft gave their position pretty much.

INTERVIEWER: I see, okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah. So they knew where --

INTERVIEWER: Where it was --

ETIENNE: -- approximately where the plane was. It didn't take them too long because they took the fast boat, you know, to get there --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- and they got them.

INTERVIEWER: Any other things that come to mind at all during the time that you were here in Charlevoix?

ETIENNE: We used to have the air patrol here. Their planes used to come to Charlevoix and fly over to Beaver Island and back and all.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

ETIENNE: And then the Coast Guard would be charged with the -- keeping track of the planes going back and forth.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

ETIENNE: So they made me air officer here, so --

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah? What about the --

ETIENNE: In early spring, the Coast Guard plane would come up here, pick me up, and I'd make a nice survey over all of the lakes, and I would chart the -- where the ice flows were.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And that was to --

ETIENNE: Report that to the district office, and the district office would notify all shipping.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So you'd just fly out once or twice and take a look and --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- and then you could report back?

ETIENNE: Once a week.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

ETIENNE: Once a week, I did that. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I supposed the ice was fairly thick back in those days, compared to what it is today.

ETIENNE: Yeah. It depends a lot, too, on the weather. Like if we had a good -- a good, hard freeze, you know --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: -- well, then I'd read out, and I'd ask for the airplane to come up then.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So they'd come up from Traverse City and --

ETIENNE: Traverse City and --

INTERVIEWER: -- and they'd pick you up in --

ETIENNE: -- pick me up here, and away I'd go.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Then they'd send the *Mackinaw* down, but I guess the *Acacia* could also break ice, too, correct, the *Acacia*?

ETIENNE: No, the *Sundew* was here, and the --

INTERVIEWER: Oh, the *Sundew* was here? Okay.

ETIENNE: Yeah. And she had a little bit more power than the rest of the 180-footers.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So she'd go all the way down the coast breaking ice, wouldn't she, the *Sundew* did?

ETIENNE: No, no, she --

INTERVIEWER: Mainly around here?

ETIENNE: Yeah. She would break up the ice all around up in here, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: But we had a lot of shipping coming in to Charlevoix then, too, you know. We had coal boats coming down to the electric light plant. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. When you think back on your career with the Coast Guard, is there something that really stands out in your mind as being, you know, your most memorable experience or something that was just -- or people that you worked with that were really exceptional or just things that you really remember very vividly?

ETIENNE: Oh, there was things that happened here from time to time, that we made some search and rescues, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah, quite a few of them.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ETIENNE: Yeah. Charlevoix used to be a busy port. We had a lot of fish boats out of here.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Fish tugs and all that?

ETIENNE: Ten -- eight, ten fish boats, sometimes more than that.

INTERVIEWER: And that's not really the case anymore. There's not so many fishing boats anymore?

ETIENNE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Except for party boats -- but not any commercial fishing boats?

ETIENNE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And ice breaking is not really as big a deal as it used to be either, right --

ETIENNE: No.

INTERVIEWER: -- because there's not such much ice as there used to be?

ETIENNE: No, it hasn't been freezing like it did years ago.

INTERVIEWER: Right. I see. And then you retired in 1960; is that correct?

ETIENNE: 1960, right.

INTERVIEWER: And you spent 29 years and so many months --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- altogether in the service?

ETIENNE: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: How did it feel when you retired? Was it kind of a relief, or was it kind of a new chapter in your life?

ETIENNE: Well, when I put my letter in and I asked to be physically checked out at the hospital and a commander came down to talk to me, he wanted to know if -- he said, "The Coast Guard is a little shorthanded now," and he asked if I would retract my letter. And I said, "No. I had made up my mind. My family wants me home. I've been gone too many times."

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And I said, "Now is the time for me to be old." I was in Norfolk, Virginia, at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Really? So that was from, what, '59 or '60 you were in Norfolk?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So you were transferred from Charlevoix in '58 or so to Norfolk?

ETIENNE: No, in '59.

INTERVIEWER: '59? Okay.

ETIENNE: The latter part of '59.

INTERVIEWER: So you were working on -- were you working on one of the buoy tenders again --

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- out there?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Out of Portsmouth?

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So your family was here in Charlevoix, and you were working out there?

ETIENNE: Yeah. There's one of the officers that knew me when I was on the *Hunter Liggett* with him.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

ETIENNE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was that -- that was a D-5 assignment? That was District 5? You were working out at District 5 at that point?

ETIENNE: Yeah, right. Norfolk, yeah. You're out of Norfolk, aren't you?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I'm -- I answer to LANTAREA, Atlantic Area, but I'm in the same building with District 5, and I work with some of the District 5 people.

ETIENNE: Oh, I see, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So I know them pretty well. In fact, I know the aids to navigation people real well.

ETIENNE: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: There's some --

ETIENNE: Who do you report to?

INTERVIEWER: Well, my boss is the head historian in Washington, D.C., whose name is Robert Browning.

ETIENNE: Oh.

INTERVIEWER: He's the head historian of the Coast Guard.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But --

ETIENNE: How did you meet Captain Hatch?

INTERVIEWER: Well, actually, I don't know Captain Hatch, but I -- the people I know at District 5, I know the chief of staff for District 5.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I know the flag --

ETIENNE: The chief is a swell guy.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So I know those people. And in fact, the chief of staff for District 5 is now becoming the chief of staff for Atlantic Area.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So I know those people pretty well; I work with them. But I know a lot of aids to navigation people, because my office was located next to theirs -- at District 5, and they know -- they probably know about you, actually, I would think. But --

ETIENNE: Oh.

INTERVIEWER: -- because a lot of them have been there a long time.

ETIENNE: Yeah, a lot of --

INTERVIEWER: -- good people. Yeah, good people.

ETIENNE: When I went up to the *Mackinaw* reunion and all the captains that used to be honored, you know, they'd be sitting around a table, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: Then, when they seen me coming --

INTERVIEWER: What happened?

ETIENNE: [Laughter.] Say, "Here he comes."

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

ETIENNE: I got to know them pretty well.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

ETIENNE: And we all worked together and as a team.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. I wish I had made the decommissioning, which was, what, last June? I think that the commandant was there. Admiral Allen was there at the *Mackinaw* decommission. I had worked side by side. My office was next to Commander Littles.

ETIENNE: Oh.

INTERVIEWER: And he's the new skipper of the new *Mackinaw* there, and I'm -- I suspect you've probably met him. Nice fellow, very energetic. Good man. So I know some of the people up here. And I know, of course, Captain Dash [ph] too.

ETIENNE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So he's a good guy. Well, I think I'm going to go ahead and shut this off, unless there's something else you want to say before I turn the tape recorder off.

ETIENNE: No.

INTERVIEWER: I think we --

ETIENNE: I just -- when I have my 90th birthday, I'd like to read that letter that's --

INTERVIEWER: Sure. You want to read that? Go ahead. Do you know which one it's in?

ETIENNE: Yeah, it's on top there. No. Turn the whole thing over.

INTERVIEWER: Like that?

ETIENNE: Yeah. It's this one.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you want to read it yourself?

ETIENNE: Yeah. I'll get my glasses.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

[Pause.]

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ETIENNE: This happened before my 90th birthday, when I was still in the service, when I the group commander at Charlevoix. I was the assistant to take care of the Navy destroyers when they got up to Sheboygan. And I'll read the -- I'll read my letter to you that says, "Joseph's sons and wife and many friends were responsible for the glorious occasion. It was from Joe's own words, 'This is the greatest day of my life.'

"Memorabilia, pictures, and commendations were exhibited, commemorating the years of service in the U.S. Coast Guard. Joseph Etienne, then the Chief Warrant Officer and Group Commander of Charlevoix Coast Guard Station, we still call him 'Skipper Joe,' now told one particular story of many in which he was involved.

"The ship, the *Lurline*, the ship that was transporting the Queen of England visiting the United States waters was being escorted by two U.S. Navy destroyers to Sheboygan, Michigan, which would be a good port for the liberty of the ship the size of a destroyer could gain entry.

"Joseph voluntarily offered himself to aid and assist if the Navy asked. The Navy never called me, so I called them, and I told them that through the days preceding the visit, I personally made a survey of Sheboygan, where the Coast Guard icebreaker *Mackinaw* was home-ported. Extensive investigation on my part took around two days on whether it could be done. Later, the harbor was dredged, and nothing could be made. Upon arrival of the ships, I met the ship out in Lake Huron and boarded one of the destroyers.

"I asked the ship captain to make entry to the harbor and grant him -- and grant me full command of the ship during entry. I then asked the captain if I could talk to the helmsman, and he said go ahead. With questions asked of the helmsman and answers received, he was ready -- I was ready to make entry.

When I was in command, there was just minimum clearance of water depth needed to turn the ship around, which -- and tie up to the dock.

"The ship was 415 feet in length, with a mean draft of 22 feet, and so I was really close to the ground in bringing that destroyer in. The task was completed with success.

"There is more to this story, and those of you who know me can fill in between the lines. Messages of appreciation were sent by the U.S. Navy to the U.S. Coast District Headquarters in Cleveland, thanking them for 'Skipper Joe's' assistance. Commendations were presented to 'Skipper Joe' for his precise engagement with the above operations from the Queen of England, the U.S. Navy, and the Coast Guard.

"This is something very few people ever saw or accomplished in their career. At this birthday celebration, 'Skipper Joe' received personal letters from President George W. Bush and wife Laura Bush and pro golfer Arnold Palmer, wishing me a very well deserved 90th birthday. There were also many cards and gifts received from family and friends. He is a very proud man of the years of his successes. As we all know, 'Skipper Joe' is a very fine gentleman.

"Born in Belgium, Joseph arrived in the U.S. at an early age. He dedicated his life to his career and to his family, who are all proud of his accomplishments." And then it says, "Let's all give Joe Etienne a great big hurrah, hurrah, hurrah."

This letter was submitted by Dick Beaulieu of Charlevoix.

Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

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