



United States Coast Guard
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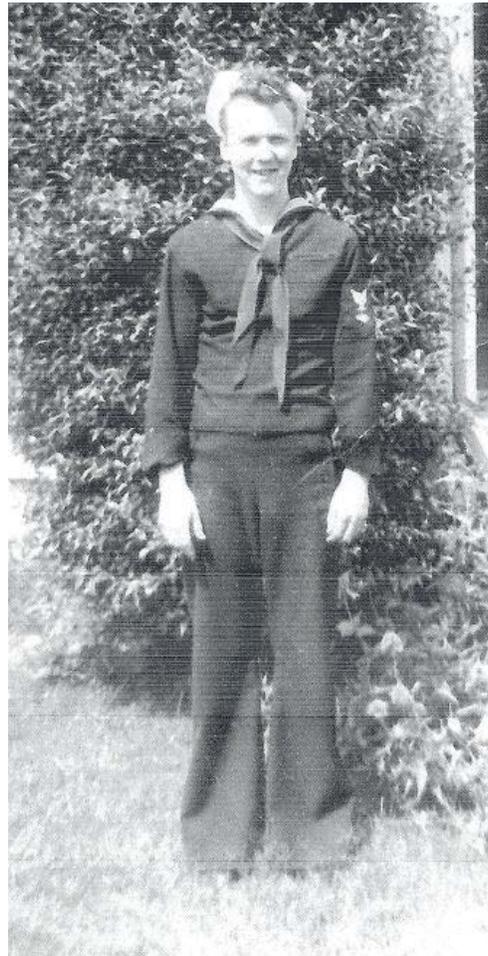
U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interview of Armond “Bud” Lisle, Radioman 2/c, USCGR

U. S. Coast Guard World War II veteran

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

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Indian Wells, CA



RM2/c Armond Lisle, USCG

Biographical Summary

Armond "Bud" Lisle was born in Los Angeles in 1927 and went to West L.A. Schools until the third grade when his family moved to Beverly Hills, where they were the owners/operators of a restaurant. He attended Beverly Hills schools from then on. His father died just after "Bud" turned fourteen and his mother died the following year, when he was fifteen. His older sister, ten years older, became his legal guardian. Dropping out of high school, he enlisted in the Coast Guard on 23 October 1944 at the age of seventeen, with his older sister's permission, in Los Angeles and attended recruit training at Government Island, Alameda, California. He selected and was sent to Radioman's school in Atlantic City and upon graduation was assigned to the Fourteenth Coast Guard District in Honolulu, Hawaii, for further transfer. He would be assigned to the LORAN Monitoring Station (Unit 94) on Canton Island in the Phoenix Islands LORAN chain (2L4 & 2L5) in September of 1945. The commanding officer when he arrived was LT Edmund P. Jauch, USCGR, who was followed by LT Edward S. Stanley, USCGR, and his final commanding officer was LT James W. Christman, USCG. He served as a radio operator there until the station ceased operations in May of 1946. He was discharged from the Coast Guard on 12 June 1946.

Returning to civilian life he attended L.A. City College before transferring to the University of Southern California. He attended there for three years but never graduated. While a student there he met his wife at a fraternity exchange party in Brentwood. He married Kathryn F. Brown, the daughter of the famous entertainer Joe E. Brown, on Valentine's Day of 1953. They had two sons, James, born in January of 1954 and Robert, born in September of 1955. Mr. Lisle worked his entire career as a defense contractor in southern California, working for Litton Industries and subsidiaries of Douglas Aircraft. He retired in 1990 and now lives in Indian Wells, California.



Armond Lisle and the interviewer, Auxiliarist Doug Kroll

INTERVIEWER: Where were you born and can you tell me a little about your childhood and how you came to join the Coast Guard during World War II?

LISLE: I was born in 1927 in Los Angeles. I went to West L.A. Schools until the third grade when my family moved to Beverly Hills. My parents were owner / operators of restaurants. We had a restaurant in Beverly Hills and another in West L.A. So I entered grammar school there in the third grade and continued there until the 10th grade in high school. At that time my mother and father had died couple of years earlier. My older sister was ten years older and was starting her family. I was pretty much on my own. I had a younger sister who was a couple of years younger, who joined our relatives in Oklahoma. I was here in Los Angeles and read an article in *Reader's Digest* about the Marine Corps. I got the urge to leave high school and get involved in this conflict [World War II]. I went down to enlist in the Marine Corps, but they were closed to enlistments, so I went around the corner and enlisted in the Coast Guard. This was in October of 1944. D-Day had just been a few months before that. I wanted to get out and see the world. High school could wait until later. I did wait. And when I look back on it, one thing the Coast Guard did for me was to open up the world to me. Some men would probably say the service made a man of them. I think I was already a man and I'd seen plenty of life by then. So it opened the world, exposed me to things. Within months I was on a train for the first time, I was on a plane for the first time, and I was on a boat for the first time. All of this was courtesy of the Coast Guard. When I look back on my Coast Guard experiences, they were part of highlights of my life.

INTERVIEWER: Because you were seventeen years old, did your older sister, who was your legal guardian, have to sign to give your permission in enlist under the age of eighteen?

LISLE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever get your high school diploma?

LISLE: Yes after the war I enrolled at LA City College and after one semester there I got my diploma from Beverly Hills High School.

INTERVIEWER: How long after the time you enlisted were you sent to boot camp? I assume they put you on a train up to Alameda.

LISLE: When I enlisted on October 23, 1944 the basic training was in Alameda. A few days later all of us from Los Angeles got on a train for Alameda. Once there we began the classic boot camp training. A lot of drilling, shots and inoculations, certain amount of time on the rifle range, including firing an automatic machine gun, I think it was called a Reising Machine Gun. We had classes in aircraft recognition, general military type classes, how to tie knots, how to talk sailor talk and things of that nature. I wasn't there very long, only about four or five weeks. I was given advice by the "old salts" to take a school, any school that was offered to me. So one day the word went out that there were slots opening up at the radio operator

school in Atlantic City, New Jersey. So together with some other fellows we went over and they gave us a Morse Code test, which we all failed. That didn't matter. The fact that we showed interest qualified us. So about the first or second week of December 1944 I left for Atlantic City. I would be there for six months taking classes in code, radio theory, and procedures. It was an intensive class for six months.

INTERVIEWER: You took a train to get to Atlantic City?

LISLE: Yes, we went through Chicago where we transferred trains at 3 o'clock in the morning. When we arrived in Atlantic City we went to the Morton Hotel, one of many hotels the military had taken over during World War II. It was on Virginia Avenue, just a half of a block off the boardwalk. We were assigned to bedrooms alphabetically. There were 50 people in every class. There may have been as many as 400 in the school. I graduated in June of 1945. We had to copy code at something like sixteen words a minute to graduate, but most of us could do twenty-two words a minute. There was one thing unique about that experience. When we graduated the assignments were listed all over the United States, the Canal Zone, Alaska, Hawaii and places like that. In order to determine which student went to which assignment we did the most fair thing I've ever seen. All of the assignments were written down on a blackboard. They put all the graduates' names in a jar and officers drew our names. The first person had first choice. My name came up about half-way through the drawing, and I saw there were thirteen openings in Honolulu for further assignment with a three-week leave enroute. I really liked that and there were some of those assignments remaining when my name was chosen. I selected that assignment. Others went to places like weather patrol out of Boston on a patrol frigate and stations all over the country. Once you selected your assignment we had day to firm it up. If somebody else wanted your choice we could trade assignments, or if you had a really valuable assignment, you might sell it to another graduate. I always thought that was an interesting thing to see. Your life was changed by chance, by a roll of the dice.

We lived in the hotel. We had weekends off. We received liberty at 1 o'clock on Saturday afternoons. We went to New York, to Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia. I was able to see all of those eastern cities while I was there. The meals were prepared in the hotel's kitchen. The dining rooms were maintained by women who were married to the staff and students of the radio school. That way they were able to see them three times a day.

For exercise we would march on the boardwalk about 4 o'clock every afternoon. We had a drum and bugle corps. I had a friend that played the bugle. You also couldn't graduate until your teeth were perfect. We had first-class dentists and all of us young men had work to be done. When we came out of there our teeth were perfect. Later on, in the islands, we had a travelling Coast Guard dentist. He looked at my dental records and excused me. I came west on the train once again. I had the three weeks leave at home.

INTERVIEWER: Did you stay with your sister and her family?

LISLE: Yes, she had become my legal guardian. Then I went up to San Francisco and reported to a building at the corner of Bay and Powell. It was a warehouse that was a holding area for men who were going to the Pacific. It was nothing more than a cot and a shower for five or six days and then the word came out that we were being transferred to Treasure Island, which was where all embarkations took place. After a couple of days there we loaded on a truck and came back to San Francisco and boarded the U.S.S. WESTMORELAND [APA-104].

On the WESTMORELAND we went to Honolulu. We arrived there five days later. At that point we were assigned to Sand Island in Honolulu harbor, which was a major Coast Guard base. We were there for about three weeks. I was at Sand Island when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and we were confined to the quarters that afternoon. I guess they thought if we went into Honolulu we would tear the town apart, so everybody was immediately restricted to base. The men who were already in Honolulu were already having a grand old time.

The training we received there dealt with LORAN. The rumors were that we were part of a LORAN group. I think our destiny was to have Marines put us on the coast of China where we would establish a LORAN chain very quickly that could be used for the invasion follow-ups of Japan. In the meantime we were being sent to fire school and things like that. When the second bomb dropped on Nagasaki that changed everybody's plans. Instead of going off and building a new chain, we now received the role of "relievers." My assignment was to go to the LORAN Phoenix Islands chain, which was about 1800 miles south and west of Honolulu. It was just over the equator. We flew in a Marine C-47. The range on those planes was about 1200 miles. We made it to Palmyra Island and spent the night there. It was a small island with nothing but an air strip and about 25 naval personnel to maintain this stopover base. The next day we flew another four or five hours to Canton Island. That was the beginning of the LORAN assignment. Canton was the LORAN monitoring station for the Phoenix Island chain. Gardner Island, Baker Island, and Atafu Island had transmitting stations. I think Gardner Island was the master station and Baker Island and Atafu Islands were the slave [secondary] stations. I was a radio operator there. There were typically about 25 men on a LORAN station. The commanding officers usually were a lieutenant, a full lieutenant. I don't think there were any [lieutenant] jg's. He was the only officer and at Canton Island we had one BM 2/c and a number of petty officers. I got promoted to radioman 2/c while I was there. I was assigned the radioman-in-charge.

INTERVIEWER: How many radiomen were at the monitoring station?

LISLE: I think there were four. We rotated watches. Somebody had a day off every now and then. That was my chief assignment during the war.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get supplies there, by air or by ship?

LISLE: They were supplied by air and once again the Army brought the C-47s.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a landing strip on the island?

LISLE: Canton Island was just beyond the perimeter of Japanese advance in the Pacific. The Japanese had bombed Canton Island earlier in the war. When the Coast Guard first went there to create the LORAN chain, the Coast Guard set up three anti-aircraft gun emplacements to defend against any attacks. Then the Navy came in. The island had originally been a stopover for Pan American [Airways] between San Francisco and Australia. They then stopped at Fiji before reaching Australia. It was also under British government rule. There was a British major who was the governor of Canton Island.

All the islanders were British subjects. When it came time to pay the subjects of the crown, the British major would get in his launch and visit the other islands. I think this happened quarterly. As soon as he would leave one of the islands, a freighter ship would come right behind him. Islanders just had enough money to buy rice and beans and eat, and they always had a little bit extra so that maybe they could buy a scarf or a piece of jewelry or something. It was an interesting experience to see how that all worked.

INTERVIEWER: How often did the planes come with supplies for your station?

LISLE: The planes were pretty much in and out of there regularly. There was a lot of air traffic, especially coming from the islands. There was a good chance if you were coming back from the Marshall Islands or the Gilbert Islands that you would stopover at Canton Island. The Army was on the airbase side of the island where the landing strip was. There were originally fighter planes stationed there but they were quickly removed when it became apparent that they were not going to be needed. There were about 50 Army personnel. There were no repair facilities, just refueling. The fuel tankers that came there would dock in the lagoon. There were two passageways into the lagoon. The island was about 26 miles around. There was a deep water dock inside the lagoon. Everything else was flown in.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any Navy presence there?

LISLE: There was Navy, and they were south from where we were so I'm really not sure what they did.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe they took care of docking the fuel tankers.

LISLE: Maybe so, something like that. There weren't very many of them, maybe 30 or 40. We in the Coast Guard had about 25, but we were the focal point of the LORAN chain, because we had the runway access. All the personnel and supplies that were required at the three LORAN transmitting stations came through us, Unit 94. Coast Guard men were coming and going regularly. Some of the fellows on the outer islands had enough points to get out or whatever it was that qualified them to be discharged. They would come back through Canton Island, get on a plane and go home.

INTERVIEWER: Did they have to come and go by boat to those other islands?

LISLE: Yes. It took boats to get to the other islands. However, Baker had an air strip. You were able to fly there, but it didn't last very long because the air strip wasn't maintained, so you had to go on landing craft, which was a disaster. The surf was usually too high and we lost one LCM [Landing Craft, Mechanized] there. You had to wait for low tide.

Since the other islands had no air service everything had to come by boat or be parachuted from an airplane. I remember the Christmas that I was there the Army parachuted a Christmas tree to Baker Island, as well as the mail. Those outer islands were really isolated.

INTERVIEWER: What was the food like on the LORAN station?

LISLE: The food was wonderful. Being in the Coast Guard and moving around a lot, you wind up in situations where you spend the night with the Army or the Marine Corps. I had an opportunity to eat with the Army, eat with the Navy and all the other services at one time or another. Without question, the Coast Guard's food was superior to any other branch. I can absolutely guarantee you that. Our food was brought in and stored in the reefers. I always looked for an explanation why we, in the Coast Guard, ate so much better. The Army was having frankfurters and sauerkraut and I'm over here with lamb chops. I figured that when the Army went in to request their budget, they want 965 billion dollars for the next year. The Navy wanted 400 billion dollars. And then here comes the Coast Guard asking for 310 million dollars. We walked out of there looking good because we were "peanuts" compared to the other services. We always received whatever we asked for.

We had great cooks. At Canton Island we had one cook and he had a seaman assisting him. The cook was extremely conscientious and wanted to satisfy all of us. He was dedicated to excellence. He'd come out during the meal and ask us how we liked it. "Did I put too much of this seasoning in?" He was from New Orleans and he had the southern cooking style. He had also gone to Cook and Bakers school. I think after the Coast Guard the Navy would be the next best. And without a doubt the Army was the bottom of the barrel. They had the frankfurters and sauerkraut menu.

INTERVIEWER: What was the relationship between the Coast Guard and the other services?

LISLE: It was all very good. It was all excellent. I never saw any indication of rivalry or bad feelings. We were all doing more or less the same thing, living in the same place. We had our own little movie theater where we showed a movie every night. When we began to run out of movies, we would start looking for the flight bringing us new ones. Sometimes we had to watch a movie two or three times, but then a plane would come in and bring the mail and new movies. It was sort of laid back. The war was over and people were anxious to get home whenever their time came. Some of the guys were enjoying themselves.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you on Canton Island?

LISLE: From September of 1945 until May of 1946, about eight or nine months.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have the same commanding officer the whole time?

LISLE: No, we had three different commanding officers.

INTERVIEWER: How were your commanding officers?

LISLE: They were fine. They were wonderful guys. They were by themselves. The only other officers on Canton Island were with the Navy or Army. Our commanding officer would fraternize with them, invite them to meals at our little mess hall. We sat at picnic tables and the officers sat at a card table near us.

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice any difference between the Academy graduates and the reserve officers?

LISLE: Absolutely. All the difference in the world from the enlisted viewpoint. The Academy graduate was typically a career man. He was more by the book. He would probably break you out of bed at 8 o'clock in the morning to stand colors, whereas the reserve officers would let you sleep in.

INTERVIEWER: Who was your first commanding officer?

LISLE: The commanding officer when I arrived was Lieutenant Edmund P. Rauch, [USCGR]. He was relieved a few months later by Lieutenant Edward S. Stanley, [USCGR]. They were both reserve officers. My final commanding officer was an Academy graduate.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember his name?

LISLE: He was thin, they called him "skinny Duggan", but his name was Lieutenant James W. Christman. He was a "by the book" guy. He wasn't going to go home, he was going to go to another assignment in the Coast Guard. The reserve officers were going to get out and go home, so their attitude was different. He commanded until the station was decommissioned in May 1946. He was there the longest during my time. I didn't have any trouble with him. I was always taking him messages. He was just fine to get along with.

INTERVIEWER: How was the camaraderie among the enlisted crew at the LORAN monitoring station?

LISLE: Everybody got along. The morale was excellent. I don't even recall an argument.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do when you left Canton Island? Where did they send you?

LISLE: We went back to Honolulu. It was a gradual process. They sent two or three each day. The Coast Guard had a buoy tender that was hitting all of the islands at the time. It was the [CGC] BASSWOOD [WAGL-388]. When it left Canton it would be heading back to Honolulu, so it was going to take any of the fellows that hadn't left there yet, rather than have them go in an airplane. That would be seven or nine days bobbing around on the way up to Honolulu. Well, I was with two other shipmates and the word came for us to leave the next day. We were to spend the night with the Army by the landing strip, and in the morning board the C-47 and go to Honolulu. But the order was, if the BASSWOOD arrived at Canton during the night, we were to return to base and take the ship. We left for the Army station and none of us wanted to go on the BASSWOOD. We took off in the C-47 the next morning, and sure enough, as we are banking around I looked out and saw the BASSWOOD entering the lagoon. We were clear. We had followed our orders.

We arrived in Honolulu, and waited for the first available transportation back to the states. We had liberty almost every day. We're coming back one day after liberty and I was told to hurry up, grab my gear. We have to get over to Pearl Harbor. We loaded the truck and traveled to Pearl Harbor. We arrived at the dock and here is this huge Navy ship there and I'm thinking at the time that this isn't going to be a bad cruise back to the states. I notice this ship has antennas all over it and an unusual amount of sensing radars and devices. We get out of the truck, and went up the gangway, single file. We go across the deck and we come to the other side and see the Patrol Frigate that is going to take us home. The ship we had crossed over was the MT. OLYMPUS [AGC-8], which was the flagship for the Bikini Atoll hydrogen bomb tests that took place right after that. It was Admiral [William] Halsey's flagship. We boarded the patrol frigate and left Pearl Harbor on May 26, 1946. It took thirteen days to reach Seattle.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the name of that Patrol Frigate?

LISLE: It was the Coast Guard-manned EL PASO [PF-10], commanded by Lieutenant Commander J. A. Small, USCG.

We were told the frigate's engines had been damaged in the Okinawa typhoon, a few months earlier, so our orders were to maintain 7 knots due to the damage. I stood watch in the wee hours of the morning and it was clear we were going faster. I later found out that during night, while the Captain slept, the speed was increased so we could get to Seattle sooner. The next morning the Captain personally measured the sun's azimuth and discovered our position was in advance of that planned. He then ordered the speed reduced. This cat and mouse continued for about three days. Everybody but the Captain was heading for discharge, whereas the Captain was simply going to another assignment. The final result was a thirteen day voyage as planned.

We were half way across and stopped and dumped unused small arms ammunition over the fantail. The sea bottom must be covered with the stuff. It was all in wooden boxes. When we got to Seattle we were

riding about ten feet higher out of the water! The only thing we kept were the depth charges which we dropped off at a depot in Puget Sound. We then proceeded to Seattle where I was for a few days. Then I was put on a train down to Long Beach and discharged within a couple of days.

INTERVIEWER: What day did you get discharged?

LISLE: June 12, 1946.

INTERVIEWER: Anything special about that day? Where were you?

LISLE: Everybody was being interviewed and asked if they had any injuries. We also had to give blood, so we lined up behind tables with about 4 or 5 stations, mostly manned by SPARS [members of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve] who had been trained in drawing blood. Each line had between 12 and 15 guys in it. When you got to the front of the line you sat down, they took your blood and you moved on. I hear a ruckus going on in the front of my line. I here guys saying, "oh", "ow", "o my god." When I get closer I see that my line has a radarman that they had trained to draw blood. I'm about one person away from having my blood drawn by this guy when here comes a SPAR and she looks at all the blood around. She asked "What's going on here?" She told the radarman to clean it up and get out of there. She ran the guy off. She ushered in another SPAR. I was never so happy. It took about a day-and-a-half to process out.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything I didn't ask?

LISLE: Not that I can think of.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

