United States Coast Guard
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interviewee: Marvin J. Perrett, USCGR

World War II U. S. Coast Guard Veteran

Interviewer: Scott Price, Deputy Historian
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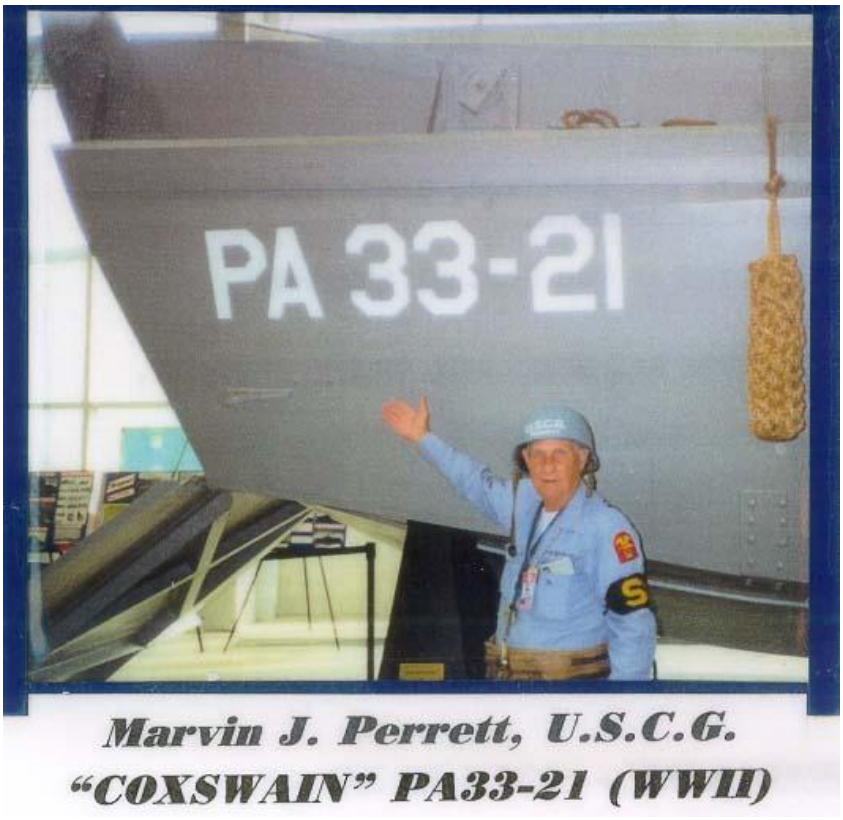
Marvin Perrett joined the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II and served aboard the Coast Guard-manned attack transport USS *Bayfield* (APA-33) as a coxswain of one of the *Bayfield's* landing craft. He was a veteran of the invasions of Normandy, Southern France, Iwo Jima and Okinawa and he even survived the "Exercise Tiger" debacle prior to the Normandy invasion. Although each of these events has received extensive coverage, his story, and the story of the thousands of young men who manned the boats that landed troops on enemy beaches, is little-known. It seems that the men who transported the troops to the beach were often been overlooked by historians, writers, and film producers. Yet, as Mr. Perret points out, without them, how would any invasion have happened?



Mr. Perrett's oral history is comprehensive. He describes his decision to join the Coast Guard and he then delves into the extensive training he received and how he was picked to be the sailor in charge of a landing craft. He also describes, in detail, this craft he sailed through enemy fire during the invasions he took part in. The boat he commanded was the ubiquitous LCVP, or "Landing Craft, Vehicle / Personnel. It was made primarily of wood by the famous company Higgins Industries in New Orleans. What was it like to operate one of these for twelve miles over open ocean in the dark, heading towards Utah Beach with 36 fully-loaded combat troops under your care? How did you navigate the small, 36-foot flat-bottomed craft through the currents at night to an exact point on a beach you've never seen? How did you steer? How did you lower the ramp? Mr. Perret describes these mundane yet critical details, giving the reader a real feel for what happened that morning off the coast of Nazi-occupied France. He also fills the reader in about the human side of war, the fear, the joy, and the boredom, not to mention the sea sickness that most veterans experienced. What was it like to witness a kamikaze attack? To survive an attack by German E-boats at night? Read on and find out.

Overall, this is a wonderful interview and worthy of wide dissemination to Coast Guardsmen of the current generation and to scholars of amphibious combat operations in particular and World War II. We owe a debt of gratitude to you, Mr. Perrett. Thank you for your service to your country and for taking the time to preserve your history for future generations.

Q: I'm interviewing Mr. Marvin Perrett, a World War II Coast Guard veteran and we're pleased to get his thoughts and remembrances of his time in the U. S. Coast Guard.

I'd like to begin by asking you to tell us a little bit about yourself; where you were born, when you were born, where'd you grow up, and maybe put in a little background about your parents and their jobs, and if you had any relatives in the U.S. military?

Perrett: Okay, I am Marvin Perrett, a native of New Orleans Louisiana. I did in fact attend high school there; Warren Easton High School by name, where I was recently inducted into their Hall of Fame of which I'm quite proud.

I had a brother and a sister younger than myself. My father was a World War I Army veteran who had been wounded in France; Brest, France to be exact, and received a Purple Heart, and my mother; Alice Perrett, was his sweetheart from way back when.

For the most part we had a very comfortable family environment. In the Perrett household my father was an accountant by profession and there came a time approaching World War II when I was inspired or motivated to join the service at age 17, which one could do at that time with the parent's written permission to do so. However my father would not sign for me for the simple reason that having been wounded in World War I, knowing what war was all about, he made me wait until I turned 18.

Q: And that would have been when?

Perrett: Let's see, I was born September the 17th, 1925. That makes me 77 years of age today in 2003. But as I say, I was really wishing to join the service at age17 but my father wouldn't sign for me and as a result he made me wait until I turned 18. And the fact is I did in fact show up to join the Coast Guard, actually to join Navy I must say, the day before I turned 18 knowing that the next day I would be eligible for the draft. I had already signed in the year before but at that point when you hung around until the draft got a hold of you they could place you in any branch of the service where you were needed. In my case I had gone down and attempted to join the Navy at the Custom House in New Orleans and the recruiter at that point in time had pointed out that they had filled their quota the day before, whatever that meant, and suggested I go check with the Coast Guard. But by this time the Coast Guard had been conscripted out of the Treasury Department and made a part of the Navy and so I really didn't know what I was getting into by going down to the Coast Guard recruiting office right there in New Orleans. What little bit I knew about that branch of the service back then was that they were heavy into seeking out would be saboteurs along the Atlantic and Pacific and the southern coastlines of the United States.

Q: So it was really the U.S. Navy recruiter's suggestion that you go down to the Coast Guard office that got you down into the Coast Guard?

Perrett: I think his objective was to maybe give the Coast Guard -a smaller agency - some warm bodies, and being right then 18 years of age with no attachments - I was not married during that period of time - and as a matter of fact they processed me that morning at nine o'clock in the morning and at five o'clock that evening they swore me in as the latest member of the United States Coast Guard.

Q: So you walked into the Coast Guard recruiter's office. Did you get an old chief; a crusty old guy, a salty dog, or just a young guy, or do you remember? Did he have to sell you on joining the Coast Guard or did you just say, "Let's do it"?

Perrett: Oh no, I didn't want to be in the Army and down in the trenches or the Marine Corp doing whatever they do, and as a matter of fact the reason why I was seeking out the Navy is because while I was ready willing and able to go and do my part I had every hope that I would be able to return someday because I had no intentions of being left behind in any way, shape, or form, if you get my drift.

Q: Well that's Patton's [General George S. Patton, Jr.] famous line; "We'll make the other poor dumb bastard die for his country."

Perrett: Well he got the statement from me [chuckle]. No, I'm just teasing. But actually what happened, I had realized as a kid, "Wherever I go I want to go where they've got guns, plenty of them; the more the better, the larger the better", and the only thing I could think of at that time

was a battle wagon or a cruiser. My dumb luck I wound up driving the biggest landing craft upon the beaches of wherever.

Q: Okay, so you got to the recruiter, he signed you in, you took the oath and you were inducted at five o'clock in the evening.

Perrett: And at ten o'clock that night I was on a train pulling out of New Orleans bound for St. Augustine, Florida at the Ponce De Leon Hotel, which was the boot camp in that area at that moment in time. We're talking September of 1943.

Q: What a tough place to have to go through boot camp! What was that like? How many kids were in your class? How long was the class? What was it like?

Perrett: Well we pulled in there and it was almost like moving into a hotel environment except that all the Mohavian and brass . . . well the brass was left behind but all the other paintings of the place were like battleship gray so they had really converted it to a military configuration.

We were there for a period of six weeks and I don't know what the numbers of persons were but I would have to estimate probably it was eight hundred, maybe a thousand recruits being processed there, and it was rigorous training in many areas, all of which is probably responsible for me being here today and it all stems from the training that we received right there. We were only there for six weeks oddly enough but in that six weeks we did everything. I mean they even took us out in the bay and we were rowing surf boats and the like and so forth. But anyway, we were there for six weeks and there were rumors around the reservation that "Man, whatever you do don't mess up" and we were like, "What do you mean?" "Well if you do something out of order or you don't pay attention they may send you to Landing Barge School." Of course a lot of the kids didn't really know what that was but having been born and reared in New Orleans I had seen Mr. [Andrew Jackson] Higgins' crew building these landing craft, and also a lot of people are not aware of it but he built about 200 or so PT boats as well.

Q: Right!

Perrett: So I had seen these young sailors and Army guys training right there on the shores of Lake Ponchartrain and I knew darn well what those things were all about, so I was really a step ahead of the guys like myself. They took about 150 of us - we didn't know it at the time - but they had plans of us destined to be boat crew personnel, pure and simply stated, and believe it or not they sent us to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Q: When it comes to finishing boot camp did they give you a choice of what you wanted to go for "A" School for or did they basically tell you, "We need you in this area and that's what you're going to do"?

Perrett: They put us in like an 18-wheeler type vehicle that I think at one time had been used to haul cattle, and they loaded us into this vehicle and transported us to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. And arriving there – of course it's an amphibious training base there and as it still is to this day - and arriving there they brought us down to the water's edge, which they called the Boondocks, and there was a bevy of the New Orleans-made Higgins boats standing by awaiting our arrival.

Q: Now these were LCVP's ?

Perrett: LCVP's

Q: With the droppable front ramp? Because I know he made so many different models -- the earlier ones didn't have a ramp. You'd jump off either gunwale or right over the bow and . . .

Perrett: That's right. They had a wooden block; a nose block. You've got it well stated. And that's what caused Mr. Higgins to change that configuration to a ramp because in the early days the troops would have to jump over the sides and before they'd ever hit the beach they were soaking wet from the waist down and he wanted it . . . well actually I'm told that he had seen a photograph of a Japanese watercraft that had a ramp and that's what he notified his people back home to change, was that configuration.

Q: When you showed up for this training, I know the boot camp was Coast Guard training. Now for this specific landing barge training, what was that, coxswain training?

Perrett: Well no. They took the 150 of us and they would split us up and put us maybe 10 or 15 to a boat and we would be in that thing from, I'd say, from sunup to sunset.

Q: Were they Navy guys that were training you at this point or Coast Guard?

Perrett: No, these are Coast Guard persons.

Q: Still Coast Guard guys.

Perrett: But we got dual training with the Marines. What would happen is we would leave the dock that morning and then go into a, I guess, a river or something that went out and you ventured out into the Atlantic. But we'd pull off in one of the side slips there and as we emerged there was the head configuration, like the side of a ship, and it was a mock up is what it was. And so we'd put a rope debarkation net down the side of this structure and what would happen is the Marines would arrive there a little bit ahead of us coming up with the boats and they would go up maybe 60 feet up in the air on a deck up there and then they would come down this debarkation net as we'd pull alongside, and thereby got dual training. From there we would take them out into the, I think, just around the coast there – probably in the Atlantic as best as I recall - and we'd turn right around and hit the beach. They would then leave the boat and they'd go marching through the swamps or whatever carrying on their training. But from that moment on we'd back the boat off the beach and these instructors were observing us keen-eyed - we didn't realize what was going on - but as each man took the helm they were making notes of their own as to, "Well he's going to do this. He's going to do that", and then they would maybe ask questions about if any of us 150 guys were into mechanics in any way or form, and what it meant was they would kind of like separate them to eventually be "Motor Macs" as we called them in my time.

Q: Motor Machinist Mates.

Perrett: Yes, and then we were a crew of four. You had your coxswain, your Motor Mac and two seamen. And I guess what they were doing; the guys that looked maybe more efficient at landing and departing the boat to and from the beach, I guess they were like; "He's going to be this. He's going to be a coxswain. He's going to be a seaman or whatever." I don't know how they figured that.

Just to back-track, back in boot camp they didn't really tell us where we were going or whatever. They just loaded us in a bus and we left.

Q: So you finish boot camp. You get on a bus because they tell you to and you don't have any idea what's going on.

Perrett: Well not really. Well we know we're going to Landing Barge School.

Q: So there was probably a selection process going on during boot camp where you showed a certain aptitude and they'd fit you into where they really needed you.

Mr. Perrett: That is true, where they wanted you. Because like I say, it wasn't a question of, "I'm striking for a cutter" or "I'm striking for a fireboat or whatever". You know, kids off the street, you didn't ask too many questions. You just said, "Aye aye Sir", whatever.

But anyway, the training that we received there went on for a period of six weeks and the nice thing about this is that every one of these guys trained at being the coxswain although some of them never made it as coxswain.

Q: Is "coxswain" a rating or is that a specialty of a boatswain's mate rating?

Mr. Perrett: It was a rating. Well it's kind of peculiar how that came about.

Q: It was its own separate rating with a separate . . .

Mr. Perrett: It was one chevron. Let me put it this way. When we were first exposed to it we just came out of boot camp as Seamen 2nd Class and by the time we got there we were Seamen 1st Class, so we were being trained to be coxswains - operators of the boat - and we were called coxswains eventually and yet we were just Seamen 1st Class.

Q: So it was a specialty . . .

Mr. Perrett: Yes. I don't know how best to explain it except that that was the term given to one that pilots a small type vessel. Now eventually utopia would be - and that didn't come until about a year later after doing two invasions - we Seamen 1st Class coxswains did in fact receive the one chevron of Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class designation.

Q: Okay.

Mr. Perrett: But we did two invasions before that came to pass.

Q: So these Higgins boats; you were an LCVP specialist?

Mr. Perrett: LCVP, yes.

Q: With the ramp and you had a crew of four.

Mr. Perrett: A crew of four.

Q: And somebody, in doing the aptitudes; one of the officers watching, thought that you had that aptitude to be a boat driver.

Mr. Perrett: Be the coxswain.

Q: Be a coxswain. Then would you describe the other three members of your boat's crew? You have the Motor Machinist Mate. He would make sure that the engine was running fine and the two seamen were handlers that would drop the ramp or handle the . . .

Mr. Perrett: That's correct. They would undog or dog the ramp, which was one of their main things when we were underway. The Motor Mac had a very important job; primarily to keep that engine running at all times. But more importantly he was right next to the engine back aft. There was a current day-boat trailer-type winch and his job was to raise and lower that ramp, very critical.

Q: By hand?

Mr. Perrett: By hand, just as you would . . . well what was interesting about it . . . what would happen is when we'd hit the beach, from first day training, you hit the beach full throttle and what would happen is when the boat would stick in the sand there were no words exchanged. That was his cue to let go. He'd ride the break in you see. The Seamen would have removed the dogs but that Motor Mac is riding that break and we go maybe a couple hundred yards or whatever from hitting the sand in the beach. When it stuck in the sand that was his cue to let go of the break and slam dunk the ramp. There's a hunk of iron that went down immediately, posthaste, but coming up was a different situation because he would have to wind it just like you'd do in a modern day boat winch type operation. It's a slow process.

Q: Sure.

Mr. Perrett: And of course bringing a boat up 18/20 foot or something like that with its weight and everything would have been very similar to the weight of that ramp. Now the genius of Mr. Higgins in the construction of this landing craft; up in the bow section under the ramp, the bottom section of the boat was such that it came down to a degree where you had probably about, oh, 15 inches of leeway from the hinge at the lower part of the ramp so that when I backed off the beach, and now I'm turning maybe to starboard as it were and heading back like out to sea; going back to the ship or whatever to pick up more troops, what would happen is, as I'm underway and charging back out to sea that ramp is maybe only halfway up, and I know of no other boat in the world . . .

Q: But it's still seaworthy.

Mr. Perrett: It's seaworthy.

Q: Yes.

Mr. Perrett: That's the key. Now you could maybe do this in four-foot seas or something like that and you probably would get the wash and have a little trouble, but basically the construction and the configuration of that boat at the bottom part of the ramp was such that I could actually back off that beach and head on back out to sea to get another load of whatever while he's still winding up the ramp. Now once he got it up then the seamen would step forward promptly and they would dog the ramp on both sides to make it watertight.

Q: What kind of an engine did they have?

Mr. Perrett: A 671-Gray Marine diesel.

Q: Was it a good engine, was it reliable?

Mr. Perrett: Oh, it was reliable! I used it for four invasions. Well two invasions because I'm getting ahead of my story. The boat that I was assigned to was *PA33-21*.

Q: The 21st boat of the *Bayfield's* . . .

Mr. Perrett: Of the 28 to 30 that she had on her deck and her four huge davits, and my boat happened to be number 21. Those are my numbers; *PA33-21.*

Q: What kind of instrumentation did the LCVP have?

Mr. Perrett: Okay, we had a magnetic compass and what would happen is when we would leave the ship someone up on the bridge would tell us to steer 190 [degrees] to get us to the spot at the beach where they would want us to land, and of course we'd put the pair of hairs on 190.

Q: So somebody else already made the calculations about current and . . . ?

Mr. Perrett: From the bridge, yes.

Q: And so they basically set your course? You didn't have to do any of that?

Mr. Perrett: No, because see, we were like 12 miles out at sea so they've got maybe ten different beach heads there; red, blue, green, Sword, you know, all that kind of stuff as you go along, and so to make sure we're not lost sheep out there they would preset my course maybe like from the OOD [Officer of the Deck].

Q: But all you had was a magnetic compass?

Mr. Perrett: A magnetic compass, and of course it had a pair of hairs that you could move manually so it took no genius to do this. All you did was just reverse the hairs coming back to the ship.

Q: How accurate were your touchdowns; your landings?

Mr. Perrett: Well no problem. Of course as you got in closer you had . . . we were given charts and I hate to tell you this. Some of them were marked Secret and Top Secret and I still have them to this day.

Q: Well good for you.

Mr. Perrett: I was supposed to turn them back in but they're in my possession. I'll have them for demonstration here for this trip that's over.

Q: Okay.

Mr. Perrett: But basically we had no problem because the charts that we had had – and of course they don't have the genius today, you know the surveillance and all that kind of stuff, but yet they would have aerial photographs of the landmarks and so forth so you knew if there was a water tower here, of course by now it may have only been half as tall as it was originally by the fact that we maybe knocked some of it down. But we relied heavily on landmarks. So if I left the ship at 12 miles and they set a course and they wanted me to land to the right of a building structure, even though it might have been pretty much leveled or whatever, there would be enough there for me to determine, "Well yes, that's where that whatever building was", and I would know where to put it. And of course sometimes the problem would be that when you'd go back to the ship, the convoy, for whatever reason, might have moved around a bit and now you're looking out there at a mass of gray trying to find your ship because pretty much these self troop transports, their configurations looked very similar to the APAs; Auxiliary Personal Attack, where we carried more troops than cargo. In fact we carried like 1,500 assault troops. The AKAs from the exterior, they looked identical. They had the landing craft on booms, the whole nine yards. It

was what was going on in the belly of the beast that made the difference. For the AKA; Auxiliary Cargo Attack, they had less troops and their subsequent decks were loaded to the brim with tanks and jeeps and bulldozers and everything else necessary to establish a beachhead.

But arriving on location we augmented each other's presence. In other words the planners and everything knew that that APA had a shipload of troops whereas the AKA had the tanks and the jeeps and stuff like that that they needed.

Q: Alright, what do you think about the controls and the sea handling capability of the LCVP? How many troops could she carry? Did you have any armament? Who handled the armament? I mean you had these things pretty far out; 12 miles out, so what were they like? In an open boat like that I'd be a little nervous, especially loaded with troops. . .

Mr. Perrett: That is true. Well actually the boat was 36 feet in length by 10 feet in width, and on the rear stern sheet you would have two 30-caliber machine gun turrets. So that option was at the rear stern sheet. Now you're moving into the well of the boat and now you're coming up on the configuration of the engine and then you've got a firewall. So now the configuration of the well of the boat is kind of narrowing down when it comes to hauling troops and yet with what was left from the firewall, just beyond the engine out to the ramp area, we could still take 36 assault troops.

Q: Fully equipped assault troops?

Mr. Perrett: That's right. Now what would happen is, even to this day if you were to view this area and you see 36 persons there you'd say, "Well that's no big deal, they can sit down" or whatever. No way, because every one of these soldiers or Marines - as was the case in the Pacific - every one of these fellows had backpacks on with like 80 or 90 pounds of gear. Everything they owned was on their person because they didn't know whether it would be the next day or a month from now, and consequently when these guys are standing in this same area; restricted area, they're in there now packed like sardines. They can't move around. They are actually frozen in space and in time. They can't move. They can't even sit down in their own spot, so it was a tight assemblage of personnel.

Well to give you an idea, the ship dropped anchor 12 miles offshore at Normandy and at 2:30 in the morning in total darkness and in three-foot seas they put us over the side and we would then move out off the bow, amidships and astern, down both sides in configuration of about 12 boats to the circle. Or more specifically we'd travel in what they might call "waves". Where you might have a flight of airplanes we'd travel with these landing craft as a wave of boats, usually ten or twelve boats in the wave. And what would happen is the boats, once being put over the side, they would go out there and immediately start a slow moving circle and it was clockwise, and one by one we'd be hailed alongside the ship at certain debarkation stations and there these 36 troops would come down the debarkation net -- like a cargo net -- into the bouncing boat. Then once [you loaded] those troops then you'd go back to your circle and you'd commence to . . . and it took time to fill that circle of 12 boats. So consequently these troops are in my boat now at 2:30 in the morning and H-hour for everybody; first wave is going to be 6:30 am. As it developed I probably didn't bring my troops ashore until maybe seven o'clock in the morning. So these guys are - all of us; Navy and Coast Guard personnel alike, in these slow moving circles. Every time you got to the top of the circle you're eating your own diesel fumes and as a result many of these fellows were a little worse for the wear before they ever hit the beach.

Q: But overall you'd say that the LCVP was definitely worth its weight in gold?

Mr. Perrett: Oh, that's why I'm here today. I mean it's the genius of Mr. Higgins in the construction of watercraft. The man was ahead of his time as a marine builder. What happened .

. . I'd like to go back in one little point in hitting the beach because an historian once made a statement on television, which I wanted to throw a brick through the TV because not knowing – and just by hearing stories here and there - he had pointed out that when these coxswains - talking about Navy and Coast Guard -- he didn't make a distinction there – but he was pointing out that when these young coxswains -- and they were just kids, which was true -- when they'd hit the beach they would drop the ramp in four and five feet of water and like order the troops out and then they'd get the heck out of there. I've got to tell you that never happened because you must understand that from the very first, as I pointed out earlier, when we hit that beach we hit it full throttle. That didn't really mean much because when you've got 36 troops in there and the weight, you never could get on a plane. Someone once asked me, "What was that boat like to drive?" I said, "It was like driving a bulldozer in the water", and you only went maybe, what, eight or ten miles an hour at full throttle. But the key to this little dissertation is simply this; that when we went in there and that boat stuck in the sand, that's when the Motor Mac let go of that break. And of course I've got to tell you the troops probably did step out maybe in knee-deep water, okay, but no four or five, nothing like that. That never happened. And what the historian did not take into consideration is one little thing -- sandbars.

Q: Yes.

Mr. Perrett: For you see, with that load . . . in training what we did, we'd back up and then go ahead but you can't do that in the heat of battle. You've got to get in and get out. You run the risk of what you call "broaching" or whatever and you cause gridlock all the way back to sea. So I must tell you because you are an historian and I would want you to know that we were scared. Oh yes, we were scared to death. But I'll tell you what; as a coxswain I could never show my fear to my three colleagues there. Moreover I wasn't about to show fear to those 36 troops, whether it be Army or Marine, because they were as frightened as I was but I wasn't about to show it because I would have had to go back to the ship and face my shipmates for the rest of the tour of duty and my own three men would say, "Man, he dumped them off . . . "

Q: And you had three witnesses onboard, yes.

Mr. Perrett: I would have been court-martialed. So you must know that that never happened. Now admittedly, once those guys . . . because you see what happens is when you look at the old newsreels you see these guys walking in water almost up to their chin and they're holding their rifle above, and to that particular person or anyone observing that would maybe very well say, "Man, look, that's a shame the way they . . . Man, those guys . . . they slaughtered those guys putting them off in the water." That wasn't the case. When you would step out, just like going swimming at a beach, you know, when you got out of my boat in knee-deep water and you walked maybe five feet or ten feet in front of my boat, you might have stepped off in a 30 foot hole of water because, see, we bombed the heck out of that beach for months before we got there but I couldn't see that. You see, we landed on a low tide and consequently the . . . in other words I'm like a city block from dry land on the beach and there's a lot of stuff going on under the water that I can't see.

Q: Well you just drove it in until it stopped and then you lowered the ramp.

Mr. Perrett: When it stuck in the mud I stopped and once they got out of the boat in knee-deep water, that's probably . . . and I'll give him that, they probably stepped out in knee-deep water, and depending on where you landed . . . but beyond that I don't know what happened to them because I don't know what was under the water between the sandbars.

Q: But you've done your job to that point?

Mr. Perrett: Sure we did, we all did.

Q: Alright, let's go on to the *Bayfield*. You finished your training as a coxswain and when did you find out about getting your assignment to the *Bayfield* and what did you think about her?

Mr. Perrett: Okay, well what happened was, when we get our six weeks of training at Camp Lejeune, they sent us to Little Creek, Virginia, and what happened was, as Mr. Higgins would build these boats in New Orleans he'd place them on rail road flat cars and they would be delivered by rail to Little Creek, which was the distribution point, and it would be there where we would walk in 150 strong and take possession of 28 to 30 of the New Orleans-made Higgins landing craft. We would have two of them in particular that were the old original LCL types with the wooden nose block and the spoon bill bar configuration. Bt those Higgins boats had cabins to them and one of them turned out to be, as it turned out, to be the captains gig and other one turned out identical, but the other one turned out to be the admirals barge, okay, and so a couple of guys were designated to pilot those. I, for whatever the reason, I was given the LCVP type. But we also picked up while we were there, we picked up four of the Higgins made tank lighters. Now those boats were constructed by Mr. Higgins at the request of the Marine Corps because they wanted something suitable to take tanks ashore for that purpose. So Mr. Higgins took the LCVP configuration . . .

Q: Is that an LCM?

Mr. Perrett: That's right, it was from the LCVP. He blew it up like to 60 feet in length and a bit wider but it was made of iron and steel to accommodate the weight of the tank. Now on that one, that one would have a structure back aft with two 671 Gray Marine diesels below an iron configuration structure to protect them and so forth, so it was like an engine room really. And they had the coxswain oddly enough standing, instead of being down in the well like I was in my boat; my type boat, he stood on the stern sheet - back there where we had the 30-caliber machine guns - in a little iron cubical with a couple little slits to see out from, you know, and it was kind of awkward. That boat would come to be known as an LCM; Landing Craft Mechanized, and then in time some other boat builder took that boat – and Higgins did not do this – but they took that configuration and made it even larger and on that one, I guess maybe it might have been, what, 100 feet or something like that and it could handle maybe four or five tanks, I don't know, and it became to be known as an LCT; Landing Craft Tank. But Mr. Higgins never built one of those. Mr. Higgins has been thought to have built the famous LSTs as well. He did not.

Q: So he basically built the smaller landing craft that took the troops right onto the beaches under fire.

Mr. Perrett: Yes, and also the PT boats. He did build about 250 of those.

Q: Okay, so how about the *Bayfield*? How did you find out about getting transferred there?

Mr. Perrett: Okay, well what happened after picking up these 28 to 30 landing craft, the *Bayfield* had come down from New York and while up in that area the Navy of course had the vessel as all of them were at one point in time, but it was turned over to the Coast Guard and I forget which was in either New York . . . I think it might have even been Boston, I'm not sure. But anyway, the Coast Guard walked aboard and it was commissioned Coast Guard from that day forward for the duration of the war; the time that we were on it, and so she became Coast Guard. She came down from New York with a, I guess, half-green and a half-seasoned crew, etc. They were as green as we were; many of them. And so they came down from New York and they pulled into Norfolk out into the harbor, and on a rainy dreary day we; 28 to 30 of these landing craft, pulled up to her and at that moment we were hoisted aboard and by nightfall we were part of the ship's crew.

Q: What did you think about her when you first saw her?

Mr. Perrett: Well it was interesting because these guys up on deck, for the most part they had boarded the vessel being up from the northern states whereas most of us in these boat crews were more or less from the southern states; Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, etc., and so there was kind of a little language scenario that took place because these fellows up on deck, as I say, except for the boatswains mates that were overseeing the use and manning of the booms and the davits and everything, they would call down to us . . . these guys up on deck would call down to us and kind of chastise a little bit for our southern drawls and all that kind of stuff.

Q: So most of the landing craft operators were southern?

Mr. Perrett: In this configuration, yes Sir they were.

Q: When you went to the specific landing craft training at Camp Lejeune was most of your training . . . I mean I'm just wondering because if you went to a southern boot camp, which was closer to Camp Lejeune, maybe they just pulled most of the landing craft drivers out of there whereas the northern boot camps like up in Manhattan, some of those guys came down too?

Mr. Perrett: They showed up there, oh yes.

Q: So if you looked like you had an aptitude, no matter where you were from, to drive one of these landing barges . . .

Mr. Perrett: Yes, that's true.

Q: Okay, good.

Mr. Perrett: And also if you had a mechanical background and you were in Manhattan Beach [Recruit] Training Center, some of them wound up down there and of course they were melded with us.

Q: Okay, so anyway, you got onboard the *Bayfield*. She was a big transport. You were happy to get on a ship that large instead of a small one that's going to toss you around all over the ocean?

Mr. Perrett: Oh sure, that's right.

Q: Okay.

Mr. Perrett: Well what happened going aboard, we would find that the *Bayfield*, in time, would have something like a 400 to 500-man ship's crew and of course we would be placing davits or configurations on deck, maybe with piggyback; one on top of another, but for the most part coming aboard now as part of the ship's crew and ships personnel from that day forward. Our job primarily was to maintain the upkeep of those boats, pure and simple, but we would also be called upon from time to time maybe from like the boatswain's mate or the chief boatswain's mate in the ship's personnel, they would come to my boatswain's mates saying, "We need some guys to chip paint on the deck", you know, of the ship itself. So we were called to turn-to to sweep the deck and . . .

Q: They kept you busy.

Mr. Perrett: They kept us busy day and night.

Q: What was your battle station?

Mr. Perrett: My battle station happened to be . . . I had a couple of them during the entire tour of duty. My battle station was amidships and it was to man a fire position; man a fire hose or what have you.

Q: What were the relations like between the various enlisted folks; the old salts and the new green kids? Did they take you under their wing and help you out?

Mr. Perrett: Yes, they sure did because everybody young and old alike, experienced and greenhorns or whatever, we realized we were in this thing together and from that day forward we pretty much banded together.

Q: What about relations with the officers?

Mr. Perrett: The officers; you maybe had one or two that, you know, "I don't particularly care for him but I like this one". In our boat crew I'm still, to this day, in contact with my immediate lieutenant; a lieutenant (jg), right here in Hobbs Creek, Virginia. He was the one that was responsible for me becoming promoted to, well eventually to boatswain's mate 2nd class and of course coxswain before that.

Q: Was your boat crew specifically assigned to your boat along with you? I mean you had the 21.

Mr. Perrett: Yes.

Q: And your three other crewmen, were they assigned originally to you and there was not a lot of moving around between the different boat crews?

Mr. Perrett: No, sometimes maybe one fellow would ask, you know because he'd be friendly with another guy on liberty and stuff like that, "Do you mind if we switch?" So amongst us in the boat crew we didn't really care but for the most part once the assignments were made we pretty much melded.

Q: And then you got to know each other well and it's like a small fire team or a squad in the infantry in the Army, which would be the same kind of thing, where you know each other; a band of brothers.

Mr. Perrett: We were a band of brothers and to this day, those of us that are still left, we still meet. In fact I established a reunion of my shipmates, oh, about 10 or 15 years ago and we still meet to this day.

Q: Good. Did you ever meet [the commanding officer of the *Bayfield*] Captain Lyndon Spencer?

Mr. Perrett: No, because what happened, he did [the invasions of] Normandy and Southern France as a skipper and when we came back to the states I think that's when he came ashore, and I guess from then – and I kind of lost contact with him - but I think he . . . well I know eventually he was here at Headquarters. In fact I think you all have his photograph.

Q: Oh, we've got a biography on him.

Mr. Perrett: And from captain he went on to become rear admiral and he also received commendations for our activities at D-Day, Normandy, not the least of which he was presented with a Croix de Guerre as presented to him by way of General Charles de Gaulle.

Q: Okay.

Mr. Perrett: So anyway, we would board the vessel and we'd be assigned living quarters, etc., and then from there we moved on to New York. Now we're talking like around Christmas-time and I think it was around in February we put out to sea, and our first foreign port was Glasgow, Scotland.

Q: What was the trip over like?

Mr. Perrett: Oh, it was rough as heck.

Q: It was your first sea voyage, wasn't it?

Mr. Perrett: It was my first, yes. On these little landing craft, I don't know what or why, I never got seasick. But we'd pull out of New York and we purposely left in a storm because we didn't know about all this . . .

Q: In a convoy or were you by yourself?

Mr. Perrett: Well we were in a small convoy with not much protection and it took us 15 days to get to Glasgow, Scotland, but we did a lot of zigzagging because of the German submarine activity, which was pretty fierce in those days. And not having escorts we purposely left, from what I understand, we left in a storm to make us less of a target making the crossing.

An interesting thing; we, of course, became part of the Navy as you well know and everything about the Navy and the Coast Guard at that point in time was identical in every respect except for one minor thing. On our right sleeve was a simple shield designating us as Coast Guard personnel and what had happened, when we left New York, Glasgow, Scotland was to be our first foreign port. We couldn't wait to go ashore to meet the little ladies in Glasgow because we had understood they were very friendly and we were a rather friendly lot ourselves.

Q: Of course.

Mr. Perrett: And so anyway, what happened, the guys all go . . . because we had then what they called "Section Liberty." We had two types of liberty. In a friendly port we would have port and starboard liberty; half the ship and . . . but when we were in a port where we could be attacked or whatever we would have then sections, which meant once every four days you got to go ashore, and that's what happened going into Glasgow . In any event, what happened, when the kids came back off of liberty, man their faces were down to their chest. Come to find out our good Navy brothers had gone and told all those young ladies that would listen, "Don't fool with those guys with the shield on their sleeve because it means they've got some sort of a social disease and you sure don't want to get involved with that." Well I've got to tell you after a few bar room fights we straightened that mess out.

Q: Well that's good. So you had a little seasickness on the way over getting your sea legs?

Mr. Perrett: Oh, plenty of seasickness. As a matter of fact I've got to tell you. Here I am a coxswain in a foreign invasion but at that point in time I really thought that maybe they might have to put me off the ship because I was bordering on what might be termed as a "Chronic Seasick Person", which of course could get you into another area of duty. But what happened, for seven straight days, man, I was throwing up green because I had nothing in my stomach. And what happened eventually, of course I was relieved of doing duties and everything, but we had elastic bonding straps to gear our boat down for inspection and so forth, and it was so bad that at one point in time I told my shipmate, "Man, strap me in the bunk here", you know, and that was a mistake because getting in there and I had to go regurgitate and I couldn't get the dang straps

undone. So that was a mess. You had to be there for that, which gives rise to the early sailors of yesteryear having been assigned hammocks. Of course the reason for the hammock is that when you put the hammock on the poles, fore and aft of the bunk itself in the sleeping position or whatever, the ship rolled around you and you were supposedly on the level. So that was the purpose of the hammocks of the early sailors and some of these guys that came onboard were sailors of that period, you know, of winding down, and they actually came aboard with gear that we were not assigned in boot camp. They had hammocks; some of those fellows brought their hammocks.

Q: Well once you got your sea legs what was the chow like?

Mr. Perrett: Well what happened, I've got to tell you. I was so sick that I went down to the sick bay. We had a super sick bay aboard. In fact we functioned as an all auxiliary hospital vessel with the medical force that we had onboard; some of the surgeons and everything. Anyway, one of the doc's said, "Look Perrett, you go down to the galley and tell them to give you a couple of pockets full of soda crackers", and he said, "Go on up on the bow and just hang around up there and inhale and exhale vigorously."

Q: So fresh air and saltines.

Mr. Perrett: "And keep stuffing yourself with those so you'll have something in your system because you're going to lose it", he said. But eventually that's what cured me and from that day forward I was never seasick again. But for seven days I was in bad shape.

Q: You were miserable.

Mr. Perrett: Yes, and I wasn't the only one.

Q: So did they feed you pretty well once you got over your seasickness?

Mr. Perrett: Oh yes. For a troop transport we were fed well and they fed us three meals a day, and the galley staff was so efficient in their duties and everything that when we had the 1,500 troops onboard they even received three meals a day. But they'd start feeding breakfast maybe at three o'clock in the morning and no sooner was breakfast over then they were preparing for lunch.

The interesting thing was the easiest thing to serve us was a lot frankfurters; wieners, okay. So what would happen, when we would go down - without the troops onboard - down in the galley they had seating arrangements for us and then they had a table on two poles; two stanchions, pipes that you could raise it up and down, put a pin in, and if you were in friendly waters or whatever and no troops aboard, you could sit down and eat a meal like that. But when the troops came onboard they'd raise the table to where you had to stand chest high and eat standing because they had to keep you moving, you see. And what would happen is – we soon learned from experience – that when the ship would roll one way or the other those trays out there would go sliding down the table, and what happened, you could have all the food you want; seconds or whatever, but at the end of your meal you'd have to go back to the end of the line and there might be 300 guys in line, so if you wanted seconds you had to go back to the end of the line just to get another tray of hot dogs or whatever. And with me; with my talents and skill, I would position myself in such a way that these soldiers would be standing eating next to me or whatever and I knew sooner or later one of their trays would go sliding by and hit the floor and that's it, see. So I'd stab his wiener with my fork, you know, and bon appetite [laughter]. I'm eating his frankfurter and if he wanted seconds he had to go all the way around.

Q: All the way back through.

Mr. Perrett: Back through, you know, it was kind of funny.

Q: What were the relations like with the troops onboard, generally speaking?

Mr. Perrett: Oh man, I want to say we weren't in love with each other and of course that's kind of a peculiar statement to make. But we had the most admiration and respect, one for the other, because we knew that we were all there trained to do our respective obligations and duties and whatever, and we all pretty much had the attitude of doing it to the best of our ability.

Q: Was there any alcohol onboard?

Mr. Perrett: Yes there was. I was afraid you were going to ask me that.

Q: [Chuckle] I've talked to some DE [destroyer escort] guys and they mentioned that they had alcohol-fueled torpedoes on board their DEs and then suddenly they were telling me that they'd end up in European waters and the torpedoes had no fuel left in them:

Mr. Perrett: Uh hum. Well I'll tell you what. You see, coming from New Orleans with neighboring Mississippi nearby, we have an area over there - to this day its well known - and the name of the place is the "Kiln", K-I-L-N, and we had two or three guys aboard that were from the Kiln area and in those early days they would go back up in the - well I guess their fathers really - their fathers would go back up in the woods and they'd make moonshine, and of course the Revenuers would be on their case and this, that and the other, so these kids had knowledge of doing this. But what they did – and this is kind of funny - you had the bridge of the ship with the flying bridge, the whole nine yards, and as you look from up on the bridge you could look right down and you see these landing craft right under the Admiral and the Captain's nose, you know, and every boat had a wooden water breaker for purity and so on and so on. And one of the things that you needed to make moonshine . . . I didn't know this. I learned this the hard way. What they did was they went down into the galley and they got like gallon cans of a fruit cocktail configuration or raisins; gallons of raisins and so on, and then they went and got the "Black Gang", as we called it back then, in the engine room and they would get tubes of copper and they'd go around and they'd bend this copper or whatever and they'd set up this still right under the Captain's nose, and it would, drip, drip, drip and one by one they were turning out . . . we [called it] Red Buoy. Yeah, we had Buoy and it was pretty potent stuff.

Q: [Laughter].

Mr. Perrett: And what happened was . . . now I was bunked back aft. I think we were four bunks high. Amidships was a different configuration. They were like seven bunks high. And what I'm about to tell you, you're not going to believe this, and this started for me back in boot camp. My name is Marvin, M-A-R-V-I-N J. Perrett, P-E-R-R-E-T-T, and when I was in boot camp those first few days they called my name twice when they delivered the first payroll checks and a little while later they called "Marvin Perrett" again, you know, and, "Hey, I got my check", you know. And this fellow's name was Marvin B. Perrett, okay. I was in company B so I figured, "Well the Government's got a crazy way of messing up your name and everything", so I didn't know what was going on. So I've got that Marvin B. Perrett check thinking they would tell me, "You're Company "B" so finally everybody gets their check and some kid with a heavy Mississippi accent says, "Boat's, I didn't get a check." "What's your name?" "I'm Marvin Perrett." "I called your name." "No, I didn't get a check." This kid lived in Laurel, Mississippi and his name is Marvin Benjamin Perrett, I'm Marvin J. Perrett. The first and last names are spelled identical, letter for letter, two odd names, and so far as we know we . . .

Q: I noticed that on the reunion list.

Mr. Perrett: Yes, I don't know that we're related. I guess maybe we are somewhere but we don't know it. He is still living to this day.

And to get back to the moonshine. He got a hold of that stuff and he was going up to his bunk, seven high, and he fell to the iron deck and he fractured – I don't know if he fractured – but he messed up his arm bad enough that he went wandering . . . we're out there in the middle of the Atlantic, no booze allowed onboard. He winds up in sick bay with a buzz on and then of course the Captain – not captain but I guess the commander or whatever, you know the surgeon down there – he's treating this guy for a fractured arm or whatever from him falling from the bunk and of course they detected that he had booze on his breath and it was obvious he had some booze somewhere. Well of course that called for a locker inspection and some of the guys stepped forward rather then get everyone in trouble and said, "Ah, we did it. We're guilty." So I don't know. I think there was a little extra duty.

Q: Captain's Mast.

Mr. Perrett: Yes. So I must tell you, yes, we did have some booze onboard but it was not store bought.

Q: No.

Mr. Perrett: We made it.

Q: You made it, okay.

Mr. Perrett: No, they made it and it was potent.

Q: So you went over Scotland and got over seasickness and now you're prepping for Normandy. So why don't you describe what happened after Scotland and how you were training? And one of the other questions I wanted to be sure to ask you was that I know you did train and you trained with troops that were going to be in the invasion but were they the troops that you actually were going to deposit on Utah Beach; that you started training with early or were they just . . . ?

Mr. Perrett: Just different troops at random.

Q: So from Scotland you went on down . . . ?

Mr. Perrett: From Scotland . . . well this is what we did. Norfolk, of course, would be our homeport in the states. Plymouth, England would be our homeport in England, so that's where all of our activity would really take place preparatory to Normandy. And what would happen is, we would do maneuvers at many of the areas in and around like Falmouth, Weymouth, Dartmouth; all that kind of stuff, and in time as we were approaching Normandy they got us one morning and sent us around the bend from Plymouth, England and we were going on maneuvers; a training exercise. They would call this exercise "Tiger" and we would have about 20,000 or so troops to deploy in this training exercise. We would move around the bend; about 50 miles around the coast from Plymouth into an area known as Lyme Bay.

Q: L-I-M-E?

Mr. Perrett: I think it's L-Y-M-E.

Q: L-Y-M-E, alright.

Mr. Perrett: Lyme Bay. And what would happen, they had designated an area there as Slapton Sands, England, and here we're going to deposit these troops in a training mission. Unfortunately for us at about two o'clock in the morning, April 28th, 1944 - mind you I'm saying April; a couple of months before June 6th – and what happened, unbeknownst to us, nine German E-boats came out of Cherbourg, France on the prowl and they couldn't believe their good fortune because under the cover of darkness they accidentally came upon our convoy in the Lyme Bay region. They promptly slipped in with their speed and with the protection of the cover of darkness they managed to go in there and cut loose with their torpedoes and they promptly sunk two of our troop-laying LSTs and crippled a third, and in so doing they blew these young soldiers and sailors alike over the sides and they promptly made good their escape undetected but not to the degree that being a flagship with [Major] General [Raymond O.] Barton onboard and eventually – I don't know if he was on at that point in time but I'm getting a little bit ahead of my story – but also Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt was in the area with us. And by this time though, back in Plymouth, we had picked up Rear Admiral Don Pardee Moon; a Navy admiral, that caused us to be a flagship even at this early period of the game. But the point is - an interesting sideline - is these boats came in there, did their devastation and were just grasping at anything. Of course we're firing away and I think there might have been some friendly fire where we were actually firing on one other in darkness . . .

Q: Oh, confusion--darkness.

Mr. Perrett: Confusion, sure. And what we did, we had two Higgins boats come onboard with specially trained Navy personnel and these were what Mr. Higgins termed as LCS; Landing Craft Support, or Rocket Boats. They were the old original Eureka types with the wooden spoon-bill bow but for a cabin they had an armor plating configuration with the little slits to see to drive it, and on either side of that configuration there were a couple of rocket mounts on deck. So we lowered one or two of the – well I believe we had two of them onboard just for this Normandy invasion that was coming up down the pike - and they dispatched one of those boats at least to go chase those E-boats and no way were they a match because the E-boats could make 40/45 miles an hour. The little LCS could maybe do ten miles or something like that but I guess the bridge rather thought, "Well maybe you may get lucky enough with those rockets that you might pick up something that way." And I don't know if he was a part of that crew that was sent out that night or not, but however I can now tell you that Mr. Yogi Berra was a part of that Navy rocket boat crew.

Q: I'll be darned.

Mr. Perrett: Okay, so you'll have to check with him to see if he went chasing the E-boats. I don't know whether he was part of that.

Q: So you witnessed the German attack?

Mr. Perrett: Oh yes, sure, the explosion, the fire; the whole nine yards. And what happened was . . .

Q: Did you know at the time what was going on?

Mr. Perrett: Well eventually we realized . . . well we knew we were under attack but we didn't know . . .

Q: You didn't know if they had Luftwaffe coming in or the E-boats out there.

Mr. Perrett: I didn't know if it was air or what, and of course we soon got the idea it was that the darn E-boats had gotten in. I think there were nine of them that hit us like that but they left us

with a serious bloody nose because the historians down through years have reported that we lost as many as . . . 750 soldiers and sailors that night, whereas another historian has said it was more like 950, so I don't know which is correct. I would be tempted to believe it was probably more like 900 then it was 700. Now the interesting thing is that this all happened at two o'clock in the morning, total darkness, and as the time wore on and approaching like 06:00, which was going to be, I guess, the time we would be hitting the beaches, they went on with the mission of going through with the maneuvers despite the bloody nose and we did, in fact, eventually take the troops in just like we'd come there to do in the first place.

Q: So is this basically the biggest full-scale pre-invasion practice run?

Mr. Perrett: I would think it turned out to be, yes, because they had been doing these kinds of maneuvers maybe a day or two or three before we ever got there with our part, but I think ours was probably the most significant part of that training.

Q: Was that the first time *Bayfield* had an actual practice concerning the Normandy invasion that you can recall?

Mr. Perrett: Well with troops with guns?

Q: Yes, the whole thing.

Mr. Perrett: We were issued our .30-caliber machine guns, which we did not use all the time, but in a scenario like this the first time they issued us the machine guns we were assigned an Army .45 for your personal protection plus a Springfield rifle for each of the four of us, and then they gave us that. So here we're just going on maneuvers wondering, "What the heck" - we were back at Plymouth – "What's this all about", you know, "What's going on?" Well for good reason they gave them to us because they were probably aware that something like this could happen, and it did, I'm sure to their surprise, because none of us were expecting a thing like this. But we did go on later on that morning and set about to bring the troops ashore and so on and so on. But what happened was, during the night the boats were out there picking up the survivors calling for help. I guess they reached a point – I was not one of those – but I guess they reached a point where there wasn't anybody calling for help and they figured, "Well I guess we got everybody." But when daybreak broke they commenced to see a few feet sticking up out of the water and what had happened was we had been assigned a life belt - the forerunner to the ski belt as the kids know to this day - with a couple of CO2 cartridge devices that replaced the old kapok life preserver. Now it was a great piece of work. I mean I can't say enough about the importance of a kapok. In fact I slept in mine frequently. However, the life belt was another innovation that would let us do our chores in and around the vessel with less cumbersome equipment, and what would happen, you would have this belt on going about the ship and if at any time you were in a position of peril all you had to do was reach down around mid-waist and just squeeze the thing in such a way that the needles in the caps of the two areas where the CO2 cartridges were placed, when you would squeeze it like that the needles would puncture the CO2 and the two chambers of the life belt would inflate instantaneously, and if that didn't work you could turn it around and it had two rubber hoses that you could blow it up, you know, in that order. So the problem with this life belt was it worked too good and it worked to the demise of some of the fellows that said, "Be in a life belt", because what we realized was that with these fellows out there with their feet upside down and everything, we were quick to realize that with the other extraneous gear that they had in addition to that life belt, the materials that they were carrying or wearing, it flipped them over.

Q: It made them top heavy. They were top heavy.

Mr. Perrett: Sure. They could very well have survived the torpedo blast but maybe were unconscious or semi-conscious enough to where they flipped over for the configuration of the

equipment worn around their waists and they actually drowned. Now I can tell you this as a capsule on this. We did loose, I'd say, somewhere about 900 – I think it was probably about 900 - soldiers and sailors that morning on maneuvers or training exercises, more then we lost on D-Day at the beachhead of Utah Beach under enemy fire. And of course when that happened they made us seal our lips and it's only been recent years when this episode came to light and they realized that, "Well we've got to recognize this for what it was". They had managed to go over there and I believe they dredged up one of our tanks off the bottom and they now have it, as I understand it, up on the hill up there as a monument to these fallen comrades. But [what is] interesting about that Slapton Sands scenario is simply this; just to suggest to you that in time of war you can expect most anything to happen and from what I understand before we ever arrived there the British government, and well I guess the Allies for the most part, but the American and British governments went in there and overnight they just took that whole countryside. I don't know, maybe we might be talking about a couple of square miles or so, and they told these people, "Move out", and these people left their homes to go live with friends or relatives. For the most part they were told, "This is a war effort is why we're telling you to do this. You have no choice. You've got to go", and man, they went in there with Army trucks and this, that and the other. I didn't witness anything but I was told and had learned back then that they actually deserted and these people left their homes with their furniture and everything behind and all, and the military realized, "We've got to have this area". And what we didn't know at the time was the topography of Exercise Tiger, where it was held, was very similar to that of Utah Beach. As I say, we didn't know it at the time and what this all turned out to be was simply a dress rehearsal for D-Day that was yet to come.

Q: So this was in late April of 1944?

Mr. Perrett: April 28th.

Q: How many other practice runs did you have before you were sealed onboard?

Mr. Perrett: Let's see. I guess we . . . I'm sure because . . . and also it looked like the captain would send us to General Quarters and have us do these maneuver exercises, maybe not necessarily taking the troops out but just have the boats go land, turn around and come back and be picked up just so that we were used to the davits and the booms and this, that and the other, and invariably it looked like Captain Spencer would wait until an unruly day; an untenable day, to do it. And suddenly we figured, "Man, the Old Man's loosing it", but to our good fortune it was part of our training and he was a lot wiser then we realized him to be at that time.

Q: So let's go on right now. When did you get sealed onboard? When did you finally know that this might be it?

Mr. Perrett: Right. Well okay, April 28th we were doing a wrap up and we know we're going to land somewhere in France but we don't know when or where. The rumor is it's going to be somewhere down near around Calais or Dover, for it's about 24 miles across. That was the logical place to go. Never dreaming that, "No, we might be more pulling out around Portsmouth, England, then going down into the Normandy region because it's about like 80 mile there, so we kind of like guessed, "No, I don't think we'd do that."

Q: Lots of scuttlebutt.

Mr. Perrett: A lot of scuttlebutt. So, so much so, as you well know, Hitler and his entourage were figuring that, "They've got to come Calais and Dover. I mean it's only 24 miles. Nobody in their right mind would go anywhere else." And yet [Field Marshal Erwin] Rommel seemed to be a pretty sharp cookie and I have a lot of respect for General Rommel because months before we

ever wound up in Normandy he was out there planting underwater obstacles for the express purpose of repelling our attack in the Normandy region.

Q: Did you get intelligence briefings on the obstacles you might be brought against?

Mr. Perrett: We certainly did.

Q: So you knew that there would be these . . .

Mr. Perrett: We knew there was garbage out there to meet us.

Q: "Rommel's asparagus" I think was the nickname that the troops that had to actually make these things and plant them in the surf called them.

Mr. Perrett: That's right, and what he did, wisely so, he put this stuff out along the beachhead on a low tide realizing, or probably figuring, that any general or any admiral worth his salt is going to land his troops on a high tide so they can step off on dry land, okay. And with that thought in mind he had all these obstacles placed out there so that when we came in, whenever that would be, we'd be coming in on a high tide and we'd be running into all this garbage. And the different configurations that he had to demolish the boats and capsize the boats, if that didn't get us, many of the poles that he had pointed out to sea would. He had teller mines sitting on top of them. So like I say, in many respects he was a lot wiser then probably some of the guys were back there in Berlin. But what happened, as you now know, we did in fact land on a low tide having had the reconnaissance - and nothing like it is today - but we did have pictures of this stuff out there so we realized, "Well we can't go in on a high tide as much as we would like to. We're going to have to land these troops on a low tide with all that stuff visible." But the early troops hitting the beach would be poised to go in there; demolition crews as such, to go in there and start demolishing that stuff. If nothing else they cut us a clear path in the landing areas, and even earlier in the morning than that we had vessels out there; minesweepers that were sweeping mines in what would eventually be our channel going in at these various locations. Now of course naturally they didn't get all of them and I think one or two of those minesweepers did in fact get hit.

Q: Yes, they did.

Mr. Perrett: And we used Coast Guard sub-chasers as what we called "Primary" and "Secondary Control Vessels". They would be brought in close to the beach and one of them might be maybe a thousand yards off the beach and the other one's position would maybe be about 1,500 yards off the beach. And as we left the mother ship 12 miles out at sea we'd come into that first vessel and would resume our circles there waiting to be deployed to the next control vessel, which was at the next jump-off spot. What would happen, they would have us circling out there in like a holding pattern like the commercial airplanes at a busy airport and they would be standing by getting orders like from walkie-talkies from the guys on the beach; the beach master, the beach parties, which would consist of Army personnel, Coast Guard personnel and Navy personnel. They were manning these vital points to direct the flow of incoming traffic and they would get the orders on the Morris like, then, the front line from the generals; the officers moving on ahead. "I need troops. I need ammunition. I need water." We had boats out there loaded with drinking water. So they would have us in this holding pattern and what was needed at the moment, they would signal us and say, "Okay, let's go for it", and we would be hailed to that second vessel at sea and they were usually Coast Guard, what we called back then, "sub chasers", but they were made of wood and the reason for that would be to repel the magnetic mines, and even at that I think maybe at least one of those struck a mine.

Q: Yes, they were formed into what was called "Rescue Flotilla One."

Mr. Perrett: There you go.

Q: I've interviewed a bunch of those veterans.

Mr. Perrett: So like I said, the Coast Guard was there to help us get in. And the interesting thing I guess, going back to Plymouth, England where it all started from, while there a Rear Admiral Don Partee Moon came aboard making us, from that day forward, to be a flagship leading up to D-Day.

Q: How'd things change onboard *Bayfield* when you suddenly had the Admiral onboard? Did you notice a change?

Mr. Perrett: No, there was no change. In fact when the Admiral came onboard he came on with an elite crew of his own of about 100 Navy personnel, but they were like communications people, maybe intelligence people, and we melded together with no problems whatsoever. And even amongst the officers and everything they realized, "We are all out here for one purpose."

Q: So you got back. You're sealed onboard, then they brought on Admiral Moon and then you're eventually . . .

Mr. Perrett: Then they bring on Major General R. O. Barton, the commanding general of the 4th [Infantry Division] and then they brought on his second in command; Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt Jr., okay, and during this time the other generals would come by for briefings or whatever, like General [Omar] Bradley and fellows like that but they'd just come on maybe for the day. I think General [Dwight] Eisenhower had come down in our area when we were back at that Exercise Tiger scenario but he didn't come onboard. He was out on land.

But anyway, to move on with this, by having Admiral Moon onboard, that changed our posture overnight because from that day forward, being a flagship, we would find ourselves pulling out on the morning of the 5th now destined, not for Calais or Dover or anything like that, but rather for the shores of Normandy; the beachheads at Normandy, and so we would move out in a flagship posture and it was kind of interesting because see, all these Navy ships that we trained with from Day One and all this training and everything, all of a sudden now they were taking orders from the *Bayfield*. And of course out ahead of all of us they had the Navy cruiser [USS] *Augusta* [CA-31], which of course was the flagship down at Omaha Beachhead.

But the interesting thing, as we pulled out of Plymouth, England that morning on the 5th at 9 a.m. - I do these talks all across the country at high schools and particularly the ones that have ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps], I really enjoy doing them - but the interesting thing, as we pull out that morning – I love telling the students – that as we travel along the English coastline about 140 miles or so from Plymouth, England down to Portsmouth, England where we would eventually make a right turn; decided right turn, then head down for the Normandy shoreline, in this 145 mile movement, as we pulled out into the English Channel we would move along at just about eight knots, just enough to keep headway and maintain a position, and out of all these English coastal ports the ships would come out of all sizes and descriptions to join the big parade, and a big parade it turned out to be. For by the time we'd reach Plymouth, England and make that turn we had accumulated some 5,000 plus ships of all sizes and all descriptions. And I tell the kids this at the school . . . even to this day when I tell the kids of this situation they would kind of like look at each other and shake their head, you know, "Big deal, you've got how many ships." Well it kind of bothered me so I made it my business to discuss that point with a mathematics professor at Tulane University and he was quick to tell me that as far as he could determine, if you were to line up all the ships that were involved in Exercise Overlord" that morning; June 6th, 1944, and lined them up one behind the other, they would have made a configuration of vessels some 300 to 350 miles, or from New Orleans to Houston, Texas. Now when I tell these kids this

– and I tell them, “Go check a map and see what it looks like”, you know. And so that makes them go do a little geography along with some history. But that’s a fact and I use that to this day.

Now what happened upon leaving Portsmouth, England, now heading out for the shores of Normandy, when we got 12 miles offshore the convoy did two things: number one; it split in two. Twenty five hundred plus laid up off what was going to be the Utah Beachhead area and the other 2,500 plus went and laid up off what’s going to be the Omaha area. And the reason why they dropped anchor out there at two o’clock in the morning at 12 miles offshore was a sensory to be out of range of the feared German 88 [millimeter] shore batteries, because anything less than that they would be targets from shore. But that was kind of bad news for us in the landing craft.

Q: Had you ever done a trip out that far?

Mr. Perrett: No, not 12 miles.

Q: Did you feel prepared for this day until you found out it was going to be 12 miles? Do you feel you got enough training; that you practiced enough?

Mr. Perrett: Well I felt like I had enough training to do it, yes. Of course at that age you feel like you’re . . .

Q: Invincible and immortal?

Mr. Perrett: Invincible and all that kind of stuff. And so I had no problem. We had about three-foot seas and we had many days of training in three-foot seas, and a lot of it we did in darkness as well. And of course you understand when I say darkness, we had no running lights. We had running lights but you couldn’t use them. I mean even to the ships in the convoy itself, you’d get the whole convoy blown out of the sea. So we’d go around in our early travels; as we’d be going into the beach like that we were conditioned to pick up right off the guy’s stern. Like in a configuration of 12 boats you’d have the lead boat, then you’d have one to the right and one to the left like a “V”, in that formation, but you were like hugging that guy’s stern, you know, starboard and port. And believe it or not, not having any lights to go by to help you at that time of the morning and everything, the boat’s configuration with the propellers would kick up a phosphorus glow.

Q: So that’s what you used to mark each other.

Mr. Perrett: So we’d use that a lot to help us through the night.

Q: So you arrive in the area; Utah Beach, 12 miles offshore and drop anchor. What time and then when did you finally get into your LCVP and drop in the water?

Mr. Perrett: Okay, at 2:30 in the morning they lowered all boats, “Away all boats”, and we immediately set up 12 boats off the bow, 12 to the starboard, 12 amidships, 12 astern, and the same configuration on the port side, and almost immediately they’re hailing us in alongside the mother ship, one by one, to start taking on troops and then we’d go back to hold that circle.

Q: So how many LCVPs are we talking just from *Bayfield*; total?

Mr. Perrett: Oh, well we had 28 to 30.

Q: Twenty eight to thirty total and you were divided up in groups of 12?

Mr. Perrett: Yes.

Q: Okay.

Mr. Perrett: But sometimes all the ships would like lend their boats to us so they'd maybe be mixed in with us.

Q: And she was carrying how many troops that day?

Mr. Perrett: Well we were going to deploy 1,500 troops.

Q: Fifteen hundred, 4th Division.

Mr. Perrett: It might take us like 24/48 hours to do that.

Q: Did you know when you were going to hit the beach what wave you were? These are 4th Division troops?

Mr. Perrett: Yes.

Q: Okay.

Mr. Perrett: And they had given us briefings that, "You'll be in the 6th wave or the 7th wave", or whatever. To answer that question, that would be yes. The answer would be yes to that question. But what happened is, they would hold us in that . . . let's get the picture. It's 2:30 in the morning and now we've got all of the boats loaded, so you say, "Okay man, let's go. Let's hit the beach." That's not to be. We still circle. Two o'clock in the morning, maybe 4: o'clock in the morning and we're still there. We were being held there.

Q: How long could you run the engines? How much fuel did you have? What was your range? How long could you stay running without being refueled?

Mr. Perrett: Oh gee, I'd say we had a good 24-hour range.

Q: Okay, so that wasn't a concern. It was more of the fact of here you are so far out to sea with troops onboard doing a circle, breathing each other's diesel fumes.

Mr. Perrett: That is true. And we're out there and we're still circling maybe from 2:30 in the morning, 3:30, maybe, 4 o'clock. Now we're starting to head toward the beach, 12 miles. So we get in there to that first primary control vessel that we encounter and there we move off and we start circling some more. So now they hold us there for maybe another couple of hours, until finely at 6:30 a.m. certain ones that are like in the first and second and third wave and stuff like that, now they are being deployed to that other control vessel; the primary and the secondary. I forget what order they were called but anyway, when you were sent to that other control vessel there was no communication, you know, oral with radios or anything like that. Nobody had one. These fellows running around today – I laugh at this - with pagers and cellular phones and things on your hip, you know, beepers, whatever, we didn't have all that. And what would happen is, as you would move up you'd get the signal to move up to that last control vessel and you just kind of stalled your speed. You're now in a configuration of line abreast because you're going to hit the beach like that. So you're just stalling your movements just keeping that line abreast configured because see, they've got these boats all the way back to – well not all the way out to sea – but you have hundreds of boats behind you in the same configuration.

Q: How close together were you in the circle and then when you went into the line abreast, how far apart were you? Give me some idea of spatial situation.

Mr. Perrett: Well one wave behind the other. I would say maybe just a couple hundred feet.

Q: Okay.

Mr. Perrett: Because . . . well let me tell you something. As we lined up to make that last run from that control vessel, the way we knew to get that, he would have maybe a bakers flag on his mast and, "phew', when he dropped that thing post haste downward, that was your cue to go, and so now the 12 boats would charge into the beach.

Q: And how far apart were you?

Mr. Perrett: Oh, let's see, 50 feet maybe.

Q: Fifty feet between each boat and then you're line abreast charging in.

Mr. Perrett: We're line abreast charging in. We're going in and we're about 50 feet apart. We're rather be close because you want to keep these troops together because they've got to match up with their people as they get ashore. And as we're going along . . . it's interesting. The students to this day would ask me, "Well Mr. Perrett, were you shot at?" I said, "You're darn right we were shot at", and what would happen, maybe like a city block from the beach I 'd see out ahead of me the machine gun bullets hitting the water and cascading ten feet high, and this is in front of me. It's in my line of path. It's in my line of vision and anybody in their right mind you figure, "Man, lets hold up here a minute fellows and let the guy run out of ammunition", or hope he'll train the gun at another angle or whatever, but you can't do that. You can't stop. And I don't know how we did it but in their line and visually seeing the bullets hitting the water, you are compelled to keep going come what may, and I know that's a difficult thing to say or even to do, even to this day, but the problem is – and one might even say, "Well maybe we'll pull out here and go to starboard a little bit or we'll go here and go to port and try to get out of that line of what we're seeing; the fire ahead of us", but you can't do that either because seem, there were mines out there that they had not swept yet.

Q: They hadn't swept yet.

Mr. Perrett: So you had no choice. "I can't stop. I can't slow down. I've got to stay with these other 12 boats." One of the boats would be like sort of command boat as it were and a lot of times they had maybe a lieutenant or an ensign riding that boat, and we pretty much had to go with the flow. They were as expendable as we were.

Q: What time were you approaching the beach?

Mr. Perrett: Well my particular troops didn't hit the beach itself at the drop-off point until about 7 a.m., but you see there had already been boats going in there ahead of us because the first waves had hit at 6:30 a.m. up and down the beach. That was H-hour, okay. But the point is, as we're going in like this you can't stop or fault or linger, for to do so you'd cause grid-lock all the way behind you back out towards sea.

And then two: again it gets to the point . . . a macho man or whatever. You don't want to show . . . like I say, everybody in the boat is frightened to death, I'm sure, and I'm talking about the Marines and the Army and the whole nine yards, and us to boot. So you figure, "Well I can't stop. I've got to go and I can't slow down", and to do so you would have to live with the fact that

all these guys are going to consider you a coward or whatever and you wouldn't want to live with that. So we were compelled for whatever higher action was done to just go through and drive into a hail of bullets. Now in Italy some didn't make it. I was very lucky. The 36 guys I had in my boat, we all got in alright, and of course probably what happened, maybe the guy did in fact train the gun to another direction or maybe he ran out of bullets at that time and he had to reload or whatever. For me, I did four invasions and I came out without a scratch so I was one of the lucky ones. All I can say is they were very poor shots because it wasn't like they didn't get a chance to take me out.

Q: How many trips did you make that day back and forth?

Mr. Perrett: Oh boy. Well let's back up a minute because this gets interesting too. On my first trip into the beach that morning I had 36 soldiers and as we're going along I'm real busy. I mean I've got these four or five boats to my right, four or five to the left and everything, and for whatever reason these 36 guys are standing there and instead of looking out front; out the iron ramp where they're going, every one of them are in the boat staring me down eyeball-to-eyeball not saying a word to each other. They're not telling me anything and it kind of unnerved me because I didn't know what was going through their minds. And finely one of them piped up and said, "Look Cox, we landed at Sicily and Salerno a few months ago and the coxswain put us off in about three or four feet of water, and we're telling you, you better not do that today."

Q: [Chuckle].

Mr. Perrett: "Oh man, hey, you're not going to get an argument out of me." I'm no fool. That guy's standing there with a loaded Thompson sub-machine gun and I'm going to get in an argument with him. I told myself, "There's no way". So I assured him I'd give it my best shot. Well as we are going along they had an Army lieutenant standing right in front of me and he was a chaplain no less, and every once in a while in the heat of battle I'd notice his face was white as a sheet so I figured, "Boy, does he have a bad case of nerves but don't we all." But what I should have known, the poor guy was seasick and of course being jammed in there as he was he did the only thing he could do. He just stuck his head out over the side of the boat, up to the wind, and of course as you might imagine it was the windward side and I caught it all in the face, and the problem was I couldn't see how to drive the boat and I didn't want to lose my position because that could cause all kind of problems. So my trusty Motor Mac, seeing my dilemma he reached over and got a bucket of seawater and said, "Close your eyes Boats", and I said, "They're already closed. Man, hit me!" So, boy, he hits me with this bucket of seawater and he said, "Do you want another one?" I said, "Yes, that was strong medicine." So he hit me a second time and with this all these kids in the Army, they bust[ed] out laughing and it was the thing that it took in the heat of battle for them to probably dispel their fears to the thought that, "Well if the kid can take this I guess he'll get us in safely." And it came to pass that I did get them in, no problems or whatever. Now once doing that . . . and to deploy the 12 boats, what would happen, we were trained that six of them were deployed to the starboard, the other six would deploy to the port, and making room for the other . . . as quick as we got away there was another 12 boats right behind us and all the way out to sea.

So as we're going back to the ship . . . I have a confession to make. I know now I've got to go 12 miles to find the *Bayfield*. I didn't hurry. I took my time because in those few short hours I'd come to realize that as soon as I get back to the ship it's another load of whatever and it's back to the beach again, and I thought, "Man, I've done my part for the day. I don't want to push my luck anymore. Let somebody else take a shot at this." So anyway, I took my time as we were going back. It was to no avail because it was my luck when I got back to the ship they promptly hailed me to go back to the after starboard boom where arriving there they were loading an unusual vehicle – I wasn't too familiar – they were loading a vehicle down into my boat, and of course with three-foot seas it would kind of bounce around. Well I get this thing onboard and next thing you know here comes a sergeant and a corporal coming down the debarkation net to join up with that

vehicle. So when they get in the boat I kind of like turn to the sergeant and say, “Okay Sergeant, what’s the game plan”, and he said, “Well just go around over to your loading gangway and we’ll go pick up the boss.” I said, “Okay, that’s fine.” I said, “Pick up who?” “Well you’ll find out when you get there.” “Okay”, big deal. So I go around and as I approach the gangway they’ve got this little fellow, kind of short in stature. It kind of reminded me to this day of Clark Gable. He had a mustache sort of like Clark. But he’s standing there, man, and he’s jiggling around on this wooded platform from the ship’s gangway, paused to jump onboard and join up with whatever; just that vehicle, so fortunately my three-man crew did their job well because they went back there to catch him as he jumped into the bouncing boat in three-foot seas, and to catch this soldier so that he wouldn’t fall and get a bloody nose or fall over the side or whatever, and I m so glad that they did their job so well because when he bent over to jump on the boat it was then that I saw the two stars on his shoulder. He was Major General R. O. Barton, the commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division, and I’m proud to tell you that Marvin Perrett, U.S. Coast Guard, brought him ashore safely on D-Day in my New Orleans made Higgins landing craft bearing my numbers; PA-33-21.

Q: Good deal.

Mr. Perrett: I’m very proud of that.

Q: So that was your second trip in?

Mr. Perrett: That was my second trip and to my knowledge I didn’t do anymore that day because that pretty much filled up my day. But we would have other things to do aside from just bringing the troops in. For example, in those early days some British pilot had been shot down flying a British Spitfire and he came to the flagship. By the way, we were the boss at Utah Beach. Make no mistake about it and by having that posture; that position, we remained on that location for D-Day +19. All the other ships around [us] went back to England and got another load of whatever. They went back and forth but we didn't because we were in effect the control vessel for the Utah operations. And what happened, a British pilot had been shot down and came down in a parachute, and of course the guys picked him up and he said, “I want to go see the Admiral”, or whatever, you know, “the General.” So they brought him back to the *Bayfield* and he went topside, and somewhere along the way he was kind of upset because he said, “This is the second time I’ve been shot down by my own people”, and he said, “Worse yet, and that's why I'm complaining, they were shooting at me in the parachute.” So this is a bad scene. So what they did – and this is funny – so anyway, he went topside and in the old – nothing like you all have today - they went to the old style mimeograph machine and they ran off orders in effect saying, “Don't fire until the *Bayfield* gives you the word to do so”, because unfortunately they had a bunch of Navy guys that manned the Merchant Marine vessels that could not man their own weapons because of their somewhat civilian status.

Q: Naval Armed Guard on board.

Mr. Perrett: Naval Armed Guard is what they were talking about. But they were good. Oh, they were expert but they were a trigger-happy bunch, and man, they’d shoot anything flying. But anyway, what happened was this pilot came on board and of course they ran off these mimeograph orders as it were that we had to hand deliver and they gave me a big stack of them, and we had to go to every vessel in the fleet, large and small alike, and hand them a communication because you couldn't use the radio. You couldn't use the blinker to get it out to all these boats. We had to hand deliver these things just like a taxi cab driver and come up alongside these large and small vessels that had capability of firing at planes or whatever, and passing these orders, “No firing until the *Bayfield* gives you the order to do so.” But it was interesting. We were aware that the British sailors then, I guess to this day, were issued an allotment of rum; a Navy tradition from way back, and so I knew that they had rum onboard these boats, and of course our canteens were full of water. So when I’d pull up alongside one of these

British boats I'd say, "Hey mate, do you have some rum on board", and he'd say, "Yes." I said, "I have some chocolate candy bars. Do you want to swap?" "Oh yes!" They couldn't get chocolate candy and we couldn't get the rum. But I'd give them the chocolate candy and they filled my canteen with rum [chuckle]. So as an 18-and-a-half year-old kid by then I had something to get me through the day.

Q: There you go.

Mr. Perrett: And I'll say this, none of us were drunk. As a matter of fact, to digress a second . . . well I'm going to leave that until last.

Q: Well okay, so you're finishing up off Normandy. You were there until D+19, then where to?

Mr. Perrett: Okay, at that point we went back to Plymouth, England and more maneuvers here and there and so forth, a lot of meetings and everything. This is June the 19th and the next thing you know we set sail for Naples, Italy and we soon realized that from June to August we've got to go do another invasion, and as it turned out we did in fact muster there to do the invasion of southern France [Operation Dragoon] as well.

Q: Now by this point Admiral Don Moon had died?

Mr. Perrett: Yes he did.

Q: What happened?

Mr. Perrett: Well what happened was, from what I understand, Admiral Moon had been selected by the hierarchy to be the top figure aboard the *Bayfield* at Utah Beach, but I understand that there was maybe another admiral somewhere along the way that maybe resented the idea that Admiral Moon had been selected for that important position. And I don't know, there might have been some ill feelings between those two particularly. I don't even know the other gentlemen's name. But we had got the scuttlebutt that there might have been some friction between the two and I think when that had happened I think maybe this other admiral seized the opportunity to get his wrist slapped a little bit for what had happened back there, and yet we aboard the *Bayfield* never once felt that it was Admiral Moon's fault because there was a combination of several errors that made it turn out to be somewhat of a disaster. One thing, which one of our British escorts – from what we understand - had a mechanical breakdown and left the convoy without getting a replacement. On another situation we understand that there were some RAF pilots that were coming back off a bombing run from Germany and they spied those E-boats, not really maybe knowing what they were, but he reported to the ground forces communication that there's some unidentified watercraft headed in that general direction. So the communication forces ashore promptly transmitted that message to us in the fleet, except for one thing. We never got the message. They were on one channel for whatever reason and we were on another. So we didn't really feel like it was totally Admiral Moon's total responsibility for what had happened at that particular time and yet we are sure he brooded over that critically to the degree that when we were tied up in Naples, Italy, he had gone ashore that morning and there was a mass meeting of the officers that were then planning the strategy for our next move, which was going to be the invasion of southern France. He came back aboard the ship and for whatever reason later that morning, and from what I understand he committed suicide by his own hand. And so that actually happened aboard the *Bayfield* and I was present for that as well.

Q: Interesting. What about his replacement? Was it Spencer Lewis?

Mr. Perrett: That is correct, and no problems there whatsoever. In fact, as you probably know, southern France came out to be a lot less resistance then we anticipated. As a matter of fact, by

then, some of the earliest German prisoners that we had taken were reporting in almost . . . they were like glad to see us because they were concerned that . . . they had just left Normandy and they'd been sent there on R&R [rest and recreation; liberty] to fight another day and we came down there and we intercepted them there on the beach. They were surrendering by the droves. They realized the war was over for them.

Q: Well by this time you're a veteran so a little bit more confidence when you were running into the . . . when did this invasion . . .?

Mr. Perrett: I was a salty sailor by then.

Q: Okay. When did you run in that day for the invasion of southern France; what time of the day?

Mr. Perrett: You know that is kind of vague to me. But interestingly enough, somewhere in my possession, as we speak, I have my chart; my actual chart that was handed to me to get me from ship to shore, and as I do, I have the Normandy charts as well. And believe it or not, I also have my chart that was handed to me for Exercise Tiger. These are cherished items of mine.

But to answer your question, it was a lot easier invasion for us and by this time we were just taking it like a, I mean, "This is a cake walk", you know. So we went back and forth. I think we were there several days once we got there and we functioned as a flagship there as well but there was nothing to the degree as it was back there at Normandy.

Q: Well you got a new skipper after, what, Captain Spencer was relieved?

Mr. Perrett: Yes.

Q: Commander Gordon Littlefield for less than one month who was the XO [Executive Officer--the officer who was the second in command of a vessel].

Mr. Perrett: Yes, but that's an interesting area. He was related to Captain Spencer. And a little known fact that you may or may not be aware of, they were brother-in-laws. [Note: According to David Ruete, Mr. Perrett was incorrect in this instance. Ruete noted: "My great-grandmother, Lucile Littlefield-Spencer, did in fact share the same name with Commander Littlefield and the two men were family friends, but as I understand it from discussions with their daughter June Ruete (my grandmother) and her children (my aunt and father), Cmdr Gordon Littlefield was of no relation to my late great-grandfather VADM Spencer nor his late wife."]

Q: Oh no, I didn't know that.

Mr. Perrett: Now you know. And of course, then Commander Littlefield, as he was aboard with us, he went on to become captain and was eventually, or maybe soon thereafter, assigned to, I believe it was an AKA.

Q: So he just moved onto another command then and they brought in Captain W. R. Richards.

Mr. Perrett: Yes, Richards.

Q: A good guy?

Mr. Perrett: I think we had him more or less when we left Norfolk Virginia. You see, we went back to Norfolk after winding up in Southern France and we got a 15 day leave and living in New Orleans it took me almost 15 days just to get home and get back because transportation was

critical. So as I came back onboard I approached my officer – and I'd love to mention his name – his name is . . . he was then ensign and then later wound up being a lieutenant (jg) today; his retirement commission, Percy Keffer, K-E-F-F-E-R. And so I went to him and in effect asked him in a polite way, I said, "Lieutenant", I said, "Is there a chance, now that we've had this leave and everything and we've done our part in Normandy and Southern France", that was big time stuff. "Is there a chance we're going to be relieved", and he said, "No Marvin, not hardly." I said, "What do you mean Sir? He said, "You're experienced. That's what we need." I said, "Oh man, I don't want to hear this." So the next thing you know we changed some crewmembers or whatever and the next thing you know we're setting sail out into the Atlantic. We went through the Gulf of Mexico over to the Panama Canal, went through the Canal and wound up in Pearl Harbor and then we went onto Saipan and Tinian and all the Admiralty Islands; Marshall Islands and all that stuff, moving troops and equipment from one area to another, all preparatory for what turned out to be, eventually for us, the invasion of Iwo Jima, and then went onto Okinawa for our finale. But by the time we had gotten into that region; Saipan and Tinian and all those places, they had been pretty much secured. But at that point Saipan sort of became our base of operations there.

And it was interesting to me. I mean we'd see these [Super] Fortresses coming back from Japan on bombing missions or whatever and we'd be standing out on deck . . . I can remember vividly standing out on deck and looking at that beautiful site overhead, and you're looking at the beautiful wings or whatever, and particularly like in the wing area you're looking at it, "What the heck", and you can see the sky and you'd figure, "There's something wrong with that picture. Oh, flak had gotten to him and it shot a hole right through it", and then you'd see like four engines, you know. He'd come in on two engines and it was really something.

Q: So you actually witnessed, firsthand, the [B-29] Super Fortresses?

Mr. Perrett: That's right.

Q: Okay, so it was onto Iwo Jima now. I wanted to ask you if you noticed any difference between handling Marines versus handling Army troops.

Mr. Perrett: No, I would say it was pretty much an identical experience for me; no problems whatsoever. Another interesting thing preparatory for Iwo Jima, we had taken onboard, once again, Major General Clifton B. Cates; C-A-T-E-S, and like Major General Barton, he turned out to be the commanding general of the 4th Marine Division that landed at Iwo Jima. Now I did not bring General Cates ashore.

Q: So when it came to Iwo, was it more preparation or was it basically you already knew your business?

Mr. Perrett: No, by now all the preparation and everything and the training and everything was all under our belt and we pretty much had a heavy handle on knowing what our job was all about. What we didn't anticipate was the warm reception we would receive hitting Iwo Jima as opposed to Normandy. For whatever reason . . . in my case the landing at Iwo Jima was much more treacherous shall we say then what I experienced at Utah Beach.

One thing; in going into Iwo Jima the boat that I used so successfully and without incident at Normandy and southern France I lost the first day hitting the beach.

Q: Okay, we better hear about this then!

Mr. Perrett: And what happened was, first off, in going into the beach - and this is all on D-Day [19 February 1945]--we had a problem just trying to find a place to beach the boat because by then there was all sorts of debris, much of our own debris in the way of tanks and jeeps and

trucks and whatever, you name it. Some of them were like bogged down in the volcanic ash beachhead, as it were, as opposed to say like over at Normandy where it was sand like you might find on most other type beaches. But worse than that, many of these vehicles were disabled or whatever, you know, out of commission. And the point is, there was so much debris up and down the beachhead that we just had trouble getting in there as a unit. We had to pick our spots. Well I had the 36 Marines onboard and I know I had a Marine major and maybe a lieutenant or something, and for whatever reason they were both seated on the engine hatch right next to where I was piloting the boat. So these 30-odd Marines start heading out charging the beach when I finally get it in there in position, and being this volcanic ash and a different configuration - it wasn't on a low tide - I had to maintain control of the boat in movements from starboard to port to maintain a straight position so I didn't become broached, so it was a little bit of a hassle unlike the other [landings]. And what happened was the third-to-last Marine leaving the boat fell carrying an awkward .30-caliber machine gun. He fell right in front of my lowered ramp and of course with the waves hitting me quite heavily astern, they were cascading over the stern sheet and depositing the water into the belly of the boat.

Q: Did you have pumps in the boat?

Mr. Perrett: Oh, we had two super pumps; great pumps. It wasn't the pumps. Why, they were handling everything well, no problem. But the problem was, all this happened like in [a] split second you see, that when I backed off I backed off hurriedly and I had no choice because I was trying to keep from crushing the kid. That's the bottom line. That's how I lost my boat. And in backing up what happened was my Motor Mac had not gotten the ramp up. He was working feverishly trying to help me do it but the water that I had picked up over the stern, when I finally got off the beach, maybe 50 feet or something like that, well enough, when I put it in neutral the water sloshed forward that I had accumulated in the bilge that the pumps couldn't handle because it was coming in so rapidly. Well it dipped just enough. The water seeped in through the open bow down at the bottom in the hinge area of the ramp and the boat just went out from under us, post haste, and in so doing . . . and by this time I had gotten off the beach and sort of went out of the way of it, but that wasn't my worry. My worry was, "What do I do now", because by this time my seamen had grabbed a couple of the Springfield rifles because these were the front lines we're talking about. They grabbed a couple of Springfield rifles and we had made up sea bags that we called "ditty bags" and they were loaded with medical supplies. So one of the guys grabbed that and another landing craft like mine came alongside and took me in tow, and the only thing sticking out of the water was the splash plate of the gunnels and the big hunk of the upper part of the iron bow, but aside from that the boat was gone. So anyway, the Navy coxswain came alongside, took me in tow and they had a Navy ensign onboard that boat and so they took me and my three-man crew from my distressed vessel along with the major and his lieutenant aboard their watercraft. So they got me in tow and they're trying to tow me away from the beach enough to where they could put pumps in me and drain me maybe, save me for another day. But what happened, being tied fore and aft as we were, they were going in circles. They couldn't make headway. So the ensign aboard the vessel said, "Well we've got more important things to do then fool around with this." He said, "Cut him loose", and in fact they had to cut the lines because when they tied it, and the dead weight and everything, it had frozen the line in such a way that there was no way they could loosen it. So they did in fact take their K-bar knives and had to cut me free and that was the last I ever saw of my boat. Now at this point they turned around and they hit the beach because they've got to put these two Marine officers ashore to go join up with their guys that I had just dropped off, and in so doing I think the coxswain was prepared to just let my three-man crew and myself stay onboard and eventually hitch a ride with someone else because they had to stay by the beach. But the officer; the ensign in the other vessel said, "No, I'm sorry but you all are going to have to go ashore", and I'm like, 'Me'?"

Q: So you actually made it ashore on Iwo Jima on D-Day?

Mr. Perrett: You're damn right. I was onshore on D-Day and we stepped ashore, big as you please, the four of us, and we had two or three Springfield rifles ready to do battle except we left the boat in such haste that we didn't have any ammunition [laughter]. And then also, the only thing we really had to show for ourselves was a ditty bag that we had made with medical supplies, so I figured, "Well hang onto that. We may need that before it's over." And of course the unwritten rule was that if you lost your boat you must report to the beach master and his party because they were very expendable and they needed replacements constantly, okay, because as soon as they hit the beach the first thing they did, they turned their back on the enemy. Now they're the ones routing us in where they want us, so they're very expendable and they need replacements. So anyway, I step ashore and one of these fellows comes running by and he's got the markings on his uniform suggesting he's part of the beach party. So I went up to him and I said–I don't remember what he was--I think he was a sergeant--I said, "Sergeant, I lost my boat. I've got to report to the beach master. Can you tell me where I can find him?" [He replied] "I don't know man. I don't know. They've all been wiped out" and I could see the poor kid was out of his head. So I turned to my three guys and I said, "Well we tried." So then I'm walking the shoreline and what I'm looking for is one of my landing craft from the *Bayfield* because I knew I had a ride back safely. But what I didn't know was all of my boats had come, like myself, they had unloaded that stuff and went back to the ship. So now I'm confronted with, "Well what do we do now?" I wasn't about to go shoot with the Japanese. I hadn't been trained for that.

So then I started . . . I kind of liked hitched rides from one vessel to the other with my three men tagging along behind me. And so finally I get one of the landing craft to bring me out into the area where the convoy had been positioned, except for one thing; the convoy wasn't there. They had received word of an air raid imminent coming out of Japan and the whole convoy packed up and left, and so they went off because I didn't know what to do so we just lingered around out there and finally, maybe around midnight or so, the ships started working their way back into position, and so eventually I did get myself and my three men back to the *Bayfield* whereupon I went topside and reported that I had lost my boat.

And so anyway, I go down and I report to my senior officer that . . . well they were concerned because they didn't know what had happened to us. As far as they were concerned we were out on the beach somewhere. So anyway, the Lieutenant tells me, "Okay. Well Marvin, you've got to go topside and report to the skipper the loss of the boat", and this is like at midnight. So I said, "Okay, fine." So I worked my way all the way . . . and I go all the way up on the flying bridge. He's standing at the railing by himself watching the war in progress.

Q: Had you been up on the flying bridge before?

Mr. Perrett: Maybe to paint the railing or something, but never in any other fashion. In fact it was interesting. They had one of the areas of the ship which was called "Officer's Country" and you weren't permitted there unless you were on some sort of a special assignment like polishing the brass or whatever. So no, this was new to me. So it was just the Captain and myself, man-to-man. So I walk up here, and like I say, he's leaning on the rail watching the war in progress. So I walk up to him and I respectfully reported that I lost my boat and he said, "Well okay son, I'm now aware of that", and I'm expressing concern that I had lost this vital piece of equipment because I figured then and there he was going to probably tell me I'm going to spend some time in the brig to think it over, you know, what happened, or maybe, "Were you Coxswain? Okay, you're a Seamen 1st Class." I thought I was going to get busted. But in any event, to my surprise, he kind of like turned and said, "Well okay son", he said, "Don't worry about." He said, "We're going to probably lose some more of these boats before it's over." I said, "Aye aye Sir", and he said, "All I want you to do now is just go down and get some rest. Your crew is alright?" "Oh yes, we came out without a scratch." "Well okay, that's fine." He said, "All I want you to do is go down, lay below, get some rest and be prepared to relieve other crews as necessary." I said, "Aye aye Sir." "Carry on." That was it. And that was Iwo Jima. It was February the 19th; D-Day when all that happened and on April the 1st we would be involved in the invasion of Okinawa.

Q: How long were you off of Iwo then, just a month or so and then it was back to Saipan to pick up more troops?

Mr. Perrett: We went back to Saipan.

Q: And then you're ready for Okinawa.

Mr. Perrett: And then eventually we're ready for Okinawa.

Q: Now did you get your own boat replacement by the time of Okinawa?

Mr. Perrett: When Iwo Jima caused me to not have a boat all of a sudden, I don't know why it came, but within two or three days they had a replacement boat for me. I don't know where it came from and the next thing you know my crew and I are out there painting PA 33-21 on that vessel.

Q: So the same—an LCVP . . .

Mr. Perrett: Yes, everything like before. So I can tell you now there were in fact two PA33-21s in existence, and now I'm proud to tell you there's a third one and that one can be found at the D-Day Museum in New Orleans.

Q: I heard about that one. And the other thing, didn't you get to reenact D-Day one time and drive her actually up onto a beach?

Mr. Perrett: No, not that one.

Q: Not that one?

Mr. Perrett: Well there was another one that I had before that that I had gotten for Dr. [Stephen E.] Ambrose and I did do a reenactment. That was in 1992.

Q: Alright.

Mr. Perrett: But that one, I got that for Doc Ambrose and he eventually disposed of it for whatever reason, and in fact that boat, I understand, wound up in London, England in a military museum over there.

Q: A good place for it to go to.

Mr. Perrett: I'm proud of that. And it may bear my numbers so there might be another one out there that I don't know about bearing those numbers.

Q: Okay, let's get back to Okinawa, 1 April, 1945. Now you said the Iwo beaches were pretty hot. How were the Okinawa beaches?

Mr. Perrett: Okay, at Okinawa we drew an unusual assignment. We loaded our troops set to make an invasion, everything; all the ammunition, the guns, the whole nine yards, and what happened was, when we got about maybe a city block from the beach – the officer's plan – we got out about a city block from the beach and our boat started to make smoke, was the order, and what they did, they set off these diesel smoke [generators] and then maybe one of our planes came in and laid a cover of smoke, and in that smoke we turned around and went back to the

ship and we were hoisted aboard just like nothing ever happened. We never landed any troops. I got maybe a city block from the beach and that was the extent of it. We were a part of a diversionary tactical offense, but that doesn't mean to say that we didn't have some problems there. But anyway, we went back to the ship and everything was hauled back aboard. The troops went back aboard just like nothing ever happened, prepared to do something. I think what it was, had we met resistance, they were poised to be sent ashore and do battle so it wasn't like we had just come there for fun and games on maneuvers. But as it developed, I guess the reconnaissance was such that, "Well, we're not meeting enough at this moment to actually put them ashore", so we went back there. But to let you know that we were definitely in a war zone, a very interesting thing happened. That morning before we went in for this fake invasion, I had General Quarters amidships and I had just stepped outside on the main deck of the vessel just to get a breath of fresh air, and while standing there I heard this siren like noise overhead and it dawned on me that this is a kamikaze and a Japanese pilot getting ready to go down the stack of either that vessel or mine. So I'm standing there watching this thing and about, oh, a couple of city blocks over from us was another ship like mine positioned over there. It was another APA just like mine. And so anyway, I'm watching this fool up here in this kamikaze and so I realized, "He's either going to come down my stack or that poor fellow over there. Well as it developed he went down the stack of that other vessel and I saw it when it happened. And so, man, I went back in to tell the guys what I had just witnessed and everything. And so that's the end of that story. That's in April 1st. April, May, June, July, it's really jumping ahead but it ties in with this.

I'm back at my home now in New Orleans on leave and I walk into my parents home, and in my living room is a . . . well first off I saw a car I didn't recognize. So I go in the living room and it's my uncle who was a captain in the merchant marine and there's another fellow sitting there, who both these gentlemen . . . his name was Captain Flood . . . an odd name for a captain; Flood Beyer, also of New York, and he and my uncle, they were kind of related in some kind of way. He and my uncle had worked as captains for the United Fruit Steam Ship Company before the war and when the war came along Captain Gray stayed on as a merchant mariner, Captain Beyer was someway brought back in and was in fact a Navy captain. So these two captains are sitting there. I walk in this place, swashbuckling tailor-made blues, you know, "Buoy Badges" we used to call them back then; campaign ribbons, and Captain Beyer was able to sense that I had two battle stars in Normandy; European, and then two in the Pacific. While catching up on the Pacific, he said, "I see you were in the Pacific son." He was a much older man. He said, "Were where you?" I said, "Well for one thing I was at Iwo Jima and Okinawa." "Okay, you were in Okinawa?" "Yes Sir, I was", and he said, "I was in Okinawa also." I said, "Were you really?" He said, "I took the first kamikaze."

Q: So you watched.

Mr. Perrett: I said, "You what?" He said, "I took the first kamikaze." I said, "I'll tell you what Captain. I saw you take your hit." "What do you mean? Where were you son?" I said, I was your flagship on your starboard beam. I was the USS *Bayfield*. You were APA-125 and the name of your ship was the *Hinsdale* [USS *Hinsdale*, APA-120]." He almost fell off the chair.

Q: It's a small world, isn't it? It's like that in a lot of different ways?

Mr. Perrett: I don't remember his ship number but he was APA and, well, I just said that for the moment, but it's a small world.

But I'm going to say . . . and then, oh yes, so we went on off; we left the area, and bright and early the next morning we were right back on configuration to do the same number over again. And so instead of landing the troops there we did not do it and we did the same fake scenario that we'd done the morning before. Then we went someplace else - and I don't remember. It's vague to me now – but we did in fact eventually unload the troops but not hitting the beach at Okinawa. So we had a break there but we paid the price at Iwo, or at least I feel like I did.

Q: Yes.

Mr. Perrett: Because I was scrambling around for dear life on that beach.

Q: Well finally, what was it like . . . where were you when VJ-Day happened and what were your thoughts?

Mr. Perrett: Well by this time I think we had gone . . . oh, this is after . . . okay, now we found ourselves going back to Guam and unloading cargo because we are getting ready to go back to the states, so were leaving it in the area over there to be used by the other vessels for whatever period of time they would be in that region. Then we'd go to Saipan for a while and then we worked our way back eventually to San Francisco. And we go through the Golden Gate and, man, the guys are standing with tears running down their face. I'm choking up just thinking about it; a momentous occasion. So we wind up out there at San Francisco and we are taken off the ship at last and we were checked in at what they called Bay & Powell Streets, which was a receiving station, to be reassigned to other locations. However, back at Guam, we had a certain Chief onboard - I believe his name was Brooks - and Chief Brooks had been on since Day One with us way back over there in Norfolk, Virginia. He was a deck person maintaining the operation of these booms and so forth, and we are over there at Guam unloading all of our cargo, and here he had been at Normandy, Southern France, Iwo Jima, and just left like us, Okinawa, and he's out there directing the operations of unloading the cargo and so forth and whatever, and somewhere or another I believe a cable snapped or something kind of tripped him or whatever and he fell over . . . the hatches had about a three-foot rise from the main deck and somewhere, I believe, one of the cables snapped or something and knocked him off balance. He fell over the rise and landed, I believe, like on a crate of cabbage on the cafeteria deck below, which killed him on the spot. Here the poor fellow went through four major battles--

Q: And then dies of an accident.

Mr. Perrett: He was on his way home now and he died of an accident, so accidents do happen.

Now what I like to do, I go to schools all over the country doing talks for these students and I have a couple of things that I like to leave with them, mainly during the talk that we've just experienced here. But I like to point out to them that I was on this ship for 21 months. It was my home. And as you can imagine taking say 500 fellows and putting us in this confinement, as it were, you get to know everybody pretty much; their peculiarities and you know who to bum with and who not to bum with on liberty, and just so forth and so on. But I say, "But I've got to tell you one thing. The 21 months I was on the ship I never heard the word "dope." And I've got to tell you this. We didn't need dope because there was so much going on around us at all times we were high as a kite as it were, and the adrenaline was always flowing so we didn't need dope . And I'm saddened to hear that in some areas this has come on the scene, even in military circles, and I hate to see that because I'm going to tell you one thing. Had they had dope available for me . . . well I've got to tell you this. When I was in that boat, as coxswain of that boat, the medical staff handed me, oh, maybe a dozen or two vials of morphine for me to distribute to anyone in need along those lines, and nothing in writing. You didn't sign for it. The medical staff just said, "Okay Perrett, when all this is over turn them back in", and I've got to tell you kids, everybody turned it in. No one like secreted one or hid this or that. There were no questions asked. And like I say, we didn't feel like we had the need for dope and I'll tell you this also. Had there been dope available to me in those days, that's the last thing I'd have wanted to fool with because the only thing I could see myself going into the beach with 36/40 lives, whatever, in my control, the last thing I'd ever want to do is see myself going into the beach and maybe standing up back there at the helm where I'd be positioned, and maybe having puffed a cigarette or two and come out and maybe stand up saying, like to the Germans or the Japanese that I was getting ready for, and kind of like say "Hey baby, what's happening?" That's a good way to get your head blown off.

Q: Yes.

Mr. Perrett: So if you want to fool with that stuff, that's your bag. Don't sell it to me. And I've got to tell you this. I did a talk recently for a retired Army major in Gulfport, Mississippi, and pretty much talked along these same lines, and when I got through the students were really pleased, very respectful, and seemed to be very appreciative of what I had to tell them. And with that they were sitting there like stunned in silence of what they had just heard, and the major turned to them and said, "Mr. Perrett, do you have any words to leave with these students as you can see their reaction", and he threw me a curve. I didn't know what to say. I don't where it came from but I told them, "If freedom is worthwhile living for it's got to be worthwhile dying for."

Q: Well thank you Mr. Perrett. Now we've got this for the historical record.

END OF INTERVIEW

Marvin J. Perrett crossed the bar on 6 May 2007.

The Commandant of the Coast Guard at that time, Admiral Thad Allen, issued the following ALCOAST:

R 072330Z MAY 07 ZUI ASN-A00127000031 ZYB
FM COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC//CG-00//
TO ALCOAST
BT
UNCLAS //N05360//
ALCOAST 232/07
COMDTNOTE 5360
SUBJ: DEATH OF AN HONORED CG VETERAN
1. I ANNOUNCE WITH REGRET THE DEATH OF A NOTABLE WORLD WAR II COAST GUARD VETERAN, MARVIN J. PERRETT. HE WAS 81.
2. AS A VETERAN PROUD OF HIS SERVICE WITH THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD, MR. PERRETT HAD LONG SERVED AS AN AMBASSADOR OF OUR SERVICE. HE TRAVELLED THROUGHOUT THE NATION SPEAKING WITH PRIDE TO VETERANS GROUPS AND SCHOOL CHILDREN ABOUT THE USCGS IMPORTANT ROLE IN WORLD WAR II. PROUDLY DRESSED IN HIS WWII UNIFORM, MR. PERRETT RECOUNTED THE D-DAY INVASION AND HIS OTHER WARTIME SERVICE IN SPELL-BINDING DETAIL.
3. BORN ON SEPTEMBER 17, 1925 IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, MR. PERRETT WAS SWORN INTO THE COAST GUARD ON SEPTEMBER 18, 1943. AFTER BEING DESIGNATED A COXSWAIN FOR LANDING CRAFT, VEHICLE, PERSONNEL (LCVP), MR. PERRETT WAS ASSIGNED TO THE COAST GUARD-MANNED ATTACK TRANSPORT USS BAYFIELD. DURING THE D-DAY INVASION OF NORMANDY, FRANCE ON JUNE 6 1944, MR. PERRETT CONDUCTED TWO TRANSPORTS OF TROOPS TO UTAH BEACH WHILE UNDER HEAVY FIRE. TWO MONTHS LATER, MR. PERRETT ALSO SERVED AS A COXSWAIN DURING THE INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE IN OPERATION ANVIL. AFTER PARTICIPATING IN THE EUROPEAN THEATRE, MR. PERRETT TRANSFERRED TO THE PACIFIC THEATRE OF OPERATIONS, WHERE HE PARTICIPATED IN THE INVASION OF IWO JIMA AND THE OPERATIONS AGAINST JAPANESE-HELD OKINAWA.
4. AFTER HE LEFT THE COAST GUARD, MR. PERRETT EXHIBITED GREAT DEDICATION IN ENSURING THAT THOSE WHO BRAVED ENEMY FIRE TO LAND

TROOPS ON HOSTILE FOREIGN SHORES WOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN. HIS BRINGING THEIR HISTORIES TO LIFE BROUGHT HONOR TO THE COAST GUARD. HIS ORAL HISTORY CAN BE FOUND AT HTTP://WWW.USCG.MIL/HISTORY/WEBORALHISTORY/MARVIN_PERRETT_ORAL_HISTORY.[PDF]. HIS PASSING IS A GREAT LOSS FOR ALL OF US.
5. INTERNET RELEASE AUTHORIZED.
6. ADM THAD ALLEN, SENDS.
BT

Fair winds and following seas, Marvin.

STP