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

U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interview of Jack Sutherlin, Aviation Radioman 2/c, USCGR

U. S. Coast Guard World War II veteran

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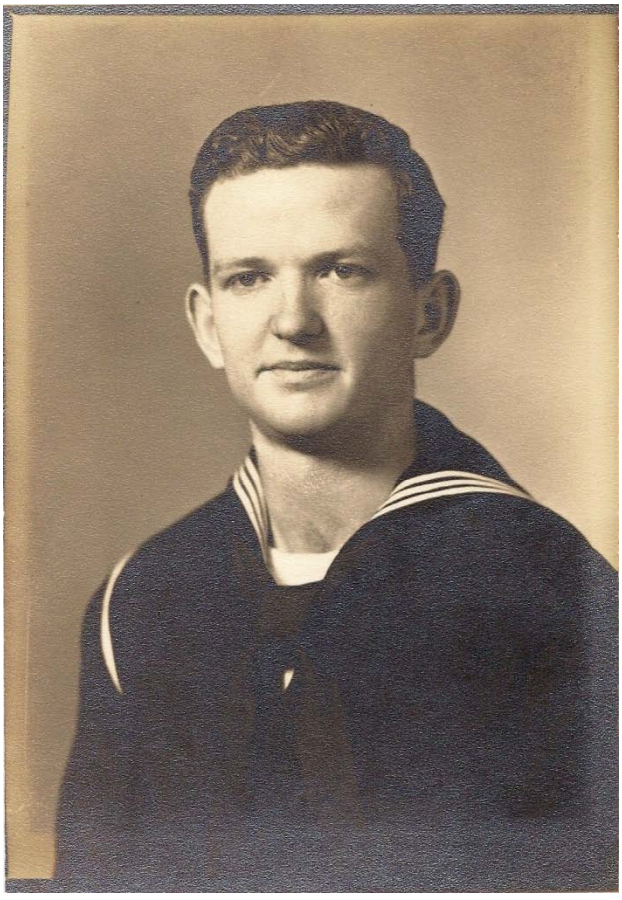
23 November 2012
Santa Maria, CA



ARM2 Jack Sutherlin, USCGR

Born in Grand Rapids, Michigan on 27 June 1923, Jack R. Sutherlin moved to Venice, California with his family at the age of 8. After graduating from high school in Venice he briefly worked for the Douglas Aircraft Company before enlisting in the Coast Guard in October of 1942. After completing recruit

training at Alameda, California he attended the Coast Guard Radio Engineering School in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Nationally famous boxer Jack Dempsey was the athletic director at the school while Sutherlin was a student. He then attended Aviation Radioman School at Coast Guard Air Station San Diego. The rest of his time in the Coast Guard would be spent at that air station He married his high school sweetheart, Merle Verret, in Venice on 12 July 1943. While at San Diego he would be involved in both search and rescue and anti-submarine missions. He served with and flew with LCDR Chester R. Bender, a future commandant of the Coast Guard, and legendary seaplane pilot CDR Donald MacDiarmid. His initial commanding officer was CDR Watson Burton and his final commanding officer was CDR Donald MacDiarmid. He was discharged from the Coast Guard in November 1945 as an Aviation Radioman 2nd (ARM2). He served briefly in the U.S. Naval Reserve as an ARM2 and had a long and successful career with the Douglas Aircraft Company, retiring in 1978 after more than 33 years. He now lives in retirement with his wife, Merle, in Santa Maria, California. In May 2011 he was formally recognized by the Coast Guard with the presentation of the Commandant's Letter of Commendation and by the U.S. Congress for valiant efforts to sink an enemy submarine on 25 December 1943.

Interviewer Doug Kroll (left) and ARM2 Jack Sutherlin (right)

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell me your full name?

SUTHERLIN: Jack R. Sutherlin.

INTERVIEWER: When and where were you born?

SUTHERLIN: June 27, 1923 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me briefly about your childhood and how you came to join the Coast Guard in WWII?

SUTHERLIN: First of all, as I told you, I was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I lived there until I was 8 years old and then my family moved to California. I spent my ninth birthday out here. We lived in a blue-collar area. Our next door neighbor owned a commercial fishing boat and when I was in my early teens he invited me to be an extra crewmember and told me that he was going to show me the ocean. I rode on his boat and several times we were stopped by the Coast Guard for a vessel inspection. I admired the young Coast Guard men. They all looked well fed, well clothed, and happy. I liked the engine room so I would show them the engine room on the ship and they would point out that we needed another fire extinguisher here or there. They were quite knowledgeable. So I thought, I have no intention of joining the service, but if I ever did I would give the Coast Guard serious consideration. So along came World War II and I did. I joined the Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you living in California?

SUTHERLIN: In Venice.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do after graduating from high school?

SUTHERLIN: Temporarily took a job at the old Douglas Aircraft Company. One of my teachers in school told me they were really looking for people. But when World War II began I knew they were going to draft us sooner or later. By the time I was 16 or 17 years old I felt very comfortable running 50- to 60-foot boats. I thought I could do more good for my country, since I can run small boats, so I will join the Coast Guard. I never dreamed that I would wind up in aviation, but I did. The military, wherever they need you, that's where you go. I went to boot camp in Alameda.

INTERVIEWER: Where was the recruiting office that you went to enlist in the Coast Guard?

SUTHERLIN: In downtown Los Angeles.

INTERVIEWER: What day did you join the Coast Guard?

SUTHERLIN: In October of 1942, but they didn't have enough room at Alameda at the time, so I had about a three month standby. But I actually signed papers in October of 1942.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any distinct memories of boot camp at Alameda? What was your training like, the food, the people?

SUTHERLIN: We had drills and marching. There was competition among the different groups. The one I was with had a fairly wealthy individual, he was Armenian. The award for winning the drill competition was a weekend of liberty. This individual said to the 120 of us that if we won it he would buy everybody a dinner or buy you one of the Coast Guard rings, your choice. We worked really hard and won the competition. We all chose the dinner.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get your rating? Did you choose it, or was it assigned?

SUTHERLIN: I had been doing a little ham radio before I joined. I knew the [Morse] code when I went in. When I graduated I was offered a school. It was radio engineering school, six months back on the east coast.

INTERVIEWER: Where on the East Coast?

SUTHERLIN: In Atlantic City, New Jersey. We lived in a hotel. It was a civilian hotel. The course was put together by Capital Radio Engineering. It was everything you would get in a bachelors [degree] except the social studies. We went into trig, calculus, and the whole thing. By the time we got out of there we could design a radio. It was very interesting because I had a little bit of an advantage over the others because I knew the [Morse] code. We had to copy so many words a minute to graduate.

INTERVIEWER: Was the Radio Engineering School in Atlantic City operated by the Coast Guard or the Navy?

SUTHERLIN: It was operated by the Coast Guard. They had some civilian instructors, some of them were chief petty officers in the Coast Guard, but the whole school was put together by Capital Radio Engineering.

Jack Dempsey was our athletic officer. He used to spar with people. He was very serious about boxing. He would teach you the rudiments of boxing and then you could spar with him. He would tell you where you were making mistakes. He was a very intense person. Boxing was his life. We all thought a lot of Jack Dempsey, in fact, we had a case of measles and we were quarantined and the guys were getting upset that they couldn't leave. Jack Dempsey took us out on the boardwalk in snow in January or February, and we marched on the boardwalk with the American flag and the yellow quarantine flag, and Jack Dempsey leading us.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get to Air Station San Diego from there?

SUTHERLIN: They offered the top 15 people aviation. Out of a group of 120, I graduated number six. It was voluntary, but everybody took it, because the others were going on landing barges. We all went to San Diego and were class number one at the Coast Guard air station there--Aviation Radioman School. The officer-in-charge of that school was LCDR Chester R. Bender, who later became commandant of the Coast Guard. He was a great man. LCDR Bender was also a pilot. I flew with him and got to know him quite well. I liked flying, enjoyed it quite a bit.

We went to radar school at North Island as part of the training. We also went into radio navigation using direction finders. They taught us meteorology. In those days the aviation radioman was responsible for checking the weather, and for doing radio navigation. In those small planes there was usually just a pilot and co-pilot. Usually there was a pilot and an aviation radioman. That radioman would do most of the navigation, check weather and so forth.

INTERVIEWER: What was your rating?

SUTHERLIN: In those days it was an aviation radioman, an "ARM".

INTERVIEWER: After you graduated from Aviation Radioman School, where did you go?

SUTHERLIN: They asked me to stay at the school as an assistant. I graduated number two, but the number one man lived in New York and he wanted to go to Floyd Bennett Field Coast Guard Air Station. He requested that. LCDR Bender brought us both in and said, "Sutherlin you're number two, but you're only a percentage point or two behind, Tamburo, whose family is in New York and he wants to go back there, so would you like to stay?" I replied, "yes sir." He said, "I could either have two satisfied members of the crew or two dissatisfied. O.K, fine. Tamburro go to personnel and they will arrange your transportation back to Floyd Bennett. Sutherlin report to Anderson, Radioman First." That was it. I did some in-flight training with new radiomen. I taught meteorology, and radio navigation. In World War II, once you're out of a school, you're an expert. (laughing). And then in the meantime, too, my wife and I were married, on July the 12th, 1943, just before reporting to the air station.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you married?

SUTHERLIN: Venice, California.

INTERVIEWER: How did you meet each other?

SUTHERLIN: We went to the same grammar school and high school.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do after being an instructor?

SUTHERLIN: I went from training and transferred in to search and rescue at the air station and participated in several missions.

INTERVIEWER: What was the San Diego Air Station like?

SUTHERLIN: It was nice. I enjoyed the Coast Guard in San Diego. The officers were great. We had what you called an Air-Sea Rescue task unit. That task unit was to provide search and rescue coverage for the different services, the Navy, the Marine Corps and the old Army Air Corps. They were operating aircraft carriers off of San Diego and once in a while an aircraft would have to ditch in the sea. There was a siren on the hanger. The siren would go off and the PA would say "Off-shore crash. Ready crews report on the double." When I first went there we had some older airplanes. An airplane called the "Hall Boat" [Hall Aluminum PH-3], which was a biplane with two engines between the wings. We had one Douglas RD-4 Dolphin and we had four Widgeons, Grumman J4F-1. Two airplanes called a Grumman Goose [JR2F-5]. Then one day we got our first [Consolidated] PBY [Catalina]. The number was 2485. That was the first one the Navy gave us. And we did, in succession get several more PBYs. Then we did away with the Hall Boat and the Dolphins, but the Widgeons and Grumman Goose remained there.

INTERVIEWER: Were most of the landings and takeoff done at Lindberg Field or the water in the Bay near the Air Station?

SUTHERLIN: Both. The [Martin] PBM [Mariner] was not on wheels. The PBY-5A had retractable landing gear to land on water or land. We also put JATO [Jet Assisted Take Off] on PBMs and PBYs. We tested both the liquid propulsion system and solid propulsion system for JATO. We opted for the solid. It was a little more reliable.

INTERVIEWER: Were you involved in anything besides search and rescue?

SUTHERLIN: I was involved in anti-submarine warfare twice. The first time was on Christmas Day in 1943. It was our responsibility to check the board in operations and it would tell you if you were on a flight crew. They had a thing they called a ready airplane and that was for search and rescue or anti-submarine warfare. I wanted to spend the first Christmas Day with my wife. However, I looked at the bulletin board in operations and here I am on the ready airplane, the Widgeon, with a pilot by the name of Glenn Ferrin. During World War II they had a thing the Marines called the "Flying Sergeants" and the Coast Guard and Navy called them aviation pilots or APs [NAPs: enlisted Naval Aviation Pilots]. Glenn was an AP. By that time I was an Aviation Radioman 2nd. Both of our names were on the ready airplane. We thought it would be a quiet day The Navy said they were not going to have any aircraft carriers operating off-shore. It was Christmas Day and they were not going to be flying. They didn't

actually tell us the truth. There was one. The USS WAKE ISLAND [CVE-65] was doing carrier qualification take-off and landings. An escort carrier is what they called a jeep carrier. That's what this was and they were operating and that morning they lost an airplane. It came back, made a bad landing and went over the side and lost two of the three crewmen. The pilot had reported fumes in the cockpit and was soon overcome and that led to the bad landing. About noon I talked to Glenn and suggested we have dinner so that if anything happened we would be together. He said, "Fine." We had a nice tray of food and sat down and all of a sudden general quarters sounded. It's very distinctive. It sounded like clang, clang, clang and the PA came on and said, "General Quarters. This is not a drill." Glenn and I looked at each other and ran to Hanger One. We went there and the operations officer was standing at the door with a piece of paper in his hand. "Sub contact, 7 miles off Point Loma. Here's the heading from Point Loma. There are two escort carriers, two patrol craft, and a destroyer. I think there is a blimp out there, too." We used to use blimps for anti-submarine warfare. Glenn and I took off. To show you how inexperienced we were, I'll tell you how the conversation went in the cockpit. After we had both engines started and gave a thumbs up, they pulled the chocks, we called the tower and said, "Lindberg, Coast Guard 204". The tower came back, "Coast Guard 204 you are cleared to cross Harbor Drive." At Harbor Drive there was a sliding gate, and the airplane had to go across Harbor Drive. There was an automobile gate guard that would stop the traffic. The tower came back and said, "Coast Guard 204, you are cleared to cross Harbor Drive and cleared to Runway 28, cleared for takeoff at your discretion." The operations officer must have called them. Glenn looked over at me and said, "Have you ever flown with a depth charge?" I said, "Never." He said, "I haven't either." Here's two completely inexperienced guys going out on an anti-submarine warfare mission. Glenn said, "I'm thinking about using quarter flaps." I said, "Good. That will lower your stall speed and get us up faster." He said, "Fine. Give me quarter flaps and take-off power." I remember these things because these things were so vivid and traumatic. I just yelled, "Lindbergh. 204 is on a roll." The tower said "204 you are cleared for takeoff." Then I remember the tower coming back, "All aircraft in the vicinity of Lindbergh Field, remain clear of the traffic pattern until further advised. We have an emergency military takeoff." Then the tower said, "Good luck, guys." Glenn made kind of a wild turn out of the pattern. The depth charge is out on the right side, the starboard side, between the fuselage and the engine. I could reach out and touch it. It was that close. We got up to Point Loma. Not hard to find this group. We looked out and could see the group of Navy vessels. As we got closer I saw depth charges going off. It is really a sight from the air. You see what looks like a big light bulb go off and then a geyser comes up. They were dropping them off the stern. We had some lectures and schooling on anti-submarine warfare. The thing is, the submarine captains like a silhouette. You'd think they would like to come up with the sun behind them so they couldn't be seen, but they wanted a silhouette. When Glenn and I came up we saw the two carriers zig-zaging--numerous course changes. Sailing in tandem and zig-zagging. Glenn said let's stay on the starboard side, the sun is setting and it's getting later in the day. We figured if a submarine was going to be there, it would be on the starboard side. We watched those PCs [patrol craft] dropping depth charges and then they were firing what was called "mousetraps" off the bow. It's like a rocket-propelled grenade, four or five of them at a time. We watched those going off. I'd never seen anything like this before.

Then this one PC seemed to know where he was. He made a semi-circle to the rear of the formation, dropping depth charges. Then all of a sudden he took off going at flank speed. And now he has what they called a "K-gun", port and starboard K-guns. He's only firing his starboard side K-gun and going in a straight line. He kept doing that and I wondered where he was going. Maybe he was just going up to protect the starboard side of these ships. All of a sudden the bow of a submarine came up. I couldn't believe it. I yelled at Glenn, "Glenn, there he is." Glenn said "where?" I pointed. When I saw him he came up at a pretty sharp angle, maybe 30 degrees. But then the bow went down. I said, "I know what he's doing. He's getting ready to fire." Glenn said, "Got him. Arm the depth charge and stand by to release." So I armed the depth charge. When you arm a depth charge you cut a wire and it lets the propeller spin free. It's on a threaded shaft and it completes the arming circuit. I had my hand on the release lever. We were right on the water. Glenn said "release." The submarine is coming like this (gestures with his hands). We dropped it right ahead of them. Glenn said "I want to see if it goes off." Glenn put the airplane up into a steep left bank. He's looking back and I'm trying to look over his shoulder and see if I can see it. Then I happened to look up and we're going right on the water. The left wing is almost touching the water. We were going right for one of the PCs. I said "Glenn, turn right!" He said "Oh, oh." He racked it over into now a climbing right turn. We went right off the bow of this PC. We could see the sailors waving to us. We got up to about 1,000 feet. I looked over at Glenn and said "We almost bought the farm." He said, "Tell me about it." He said, "Call base and tell them what's going on." I called Coast Guard Air and said, "This is 204, we dropped our stores and request permission to return to base." We couldn't do anything more. We had that one depth charge and that was it. By the way, all the activity stopped at that time. Once we dropped ours. That was it. No more mouse traps, no more depth charges. All of a sudden we saw a tug boat pulling the submarine net aside. They had an outer and inner submarine net. They are pulling the outer net aside and the first carrier started going through. We found out that was the USS SOLOMON [CVE-67]. He made it in. The second one, that one that had been conducting carrier qualifications off shore, didn't go in the harbor. The excitement was over, the combat was over. The problem in World War II was that the Coast Guard had their own radio frequencies, the Navy had theirs. We didn't have a common frequency. We could not communicate with those ships. I'm sure the Navy vessels were talking to each other. The WAKE ISLAND turned around and stood out to sea. We went back and landed at Lindbergh Field--taxied to the flight line. The line chief came over to our airplane after it shut down and said "Hey guys. They want you in operations, ASAP." So Glenn and I got out and walked in and the operations officer was standing there, also a Navy captain was present. Mind you, we had not dropped that depth charge more than a half hour or 45 minutes before. Already there was a Navy captain, a four-striper, and I saw a star on his sleeve which meant he was Navy, not Coast Guard. The operations officer, a LTJG, said "The Captain is going to debrief you and Glenn. They want to talk to Glenn and then you." I think they wanted to check our stories. I could hear them talking to Glenn. I was standing at the door. Glenn told him exactly what happened. The captain then said he was through and didn't need to talk to the other man. That was it. We were dismissed. We didn't know what happened. We knew we dropped a depth charge and we did a visual sighting of the submarine. We hadn't gone more than a couple of minutes. We were going up

to try to get something to eat. We hadn't had lunch. All of a sudden, over the PA we heard, "Ferrin, Sutherlin, report to operations." We went back. The JG said, "I'm sorry guys. The Navy has a man out on San Clemente Island who has appendicitis. You have to go out and pick him up. "They are afraid his appendix is going to burst, sorry." We were the only flight crew on duty. They put a litter in the Widgeon. Glenn and I got in. They serviced the airplane. Glenn was obviously upset. He looked at me and said, "You think they could have had a couple of crews on duty. We're doing all the flying today." I said, "Well, they didn't expect much." Glenn said, "So, they've got a lot." I said, "Yeah, can't argue with that." So we took off and Glenn is still upset. We're down on the water and Glenn is dipping the tail of the Widgeon on swells. I kind of glared at him. He said, "You don't like this, do you?" I said "No, I don't." He said, "Then you fly it." By this time, I could fly the airplane, fairly well, but I wasn't a qualified pilot. So he gave it a little power and went up to about 500 feet. "Your airplane, take us to San Clemente Island." He went to sleep. I hadn't had any emergency procedures, so I gave it a little more power and climbed up to 1,000 feet. I flew out there and I called the tower and requested permission for a straight in landing. We landed. They had an ambulance there.

INTERVIEWER: Did you land the plane?

SUTHERLIN: No. I woke up Glenn by putting the gear down. The noise of gear going down woke him up. I told him "We are about 10 out and have clearance for a straight in." "O.K, Thanks Jack" and he took it over. They did have an ambulance there on the flight line. The patient was sedated, and they had a corpsman back with him to take care of him on the way home. We took off and headed back to San Diego. It was evening. There was an ambulance waiting there, from the Naval Hospital. We got him in the ambulance. Glenn and I went up to get something to eat. The place was locked up. Nobody there. Nobody. Nobody in Operations. Nobody anywhere. We went up to the mess hall and the door was locked. "Well, that's it for us" I said to Glenn. We had had a small breakfast in anticipation of a big lunch. Then what they called a roving patrol, with a side arm and everything, said, "What's going on guys?" He recognized us. "Looking for something to eat." They also had a cooks and bakers school at the San Diego Air Station. I think he was one of the strikers there. He said, "You haven't had anything to eat?" We said we had a small breakfast and that was it. "That's not right. We're going to fix everything. I have a key to the officers' meat locker." I said "Fine." He fired up the grill and got a couple of nice steaks out and made us a really fine meal. "I have keys to the rec [recreation] hall also, how about a couple of beers?" We said "Great!" Glenn and I said "It didn't turn out that bad after all." Next morning I had liberty. It was a day late and a dollar short but I could go home and see momma again. I went home and her uncle was there. He was stationed at the same base where the destroyer and the PCs, the patrol craft were stationed. He wished us Merry Christmas and all that. The next thing he asked me was "Jack, were you in the small Coast Guard plane that dropped a depth charge yesterday?" I said "Yes, how did you know?" He said "You got him. They followed him all the way to the bottom with sonar. " "You've got to be kidding" I said. "They stopped dropping depth charges because they had nothing to drop them on. It's gone. It's on the bottom."

I know how many men were on a long-range "I-Class" submarine. 90-93 men was their normal complement. I thought that I had just killed 90 men. I felt bad and sat down on the couch, stunned. Her uncle said, "Wait a minute. Do you know how many men were aboard those two aircraft carriers? Eight hundred sixty men each. What if they had got a torpedo off? What would have happened? That's war." That made me feel a little better. I was 20 years old and to kill 90 men with one pull of the release lever--it was kind of shocking. But then he made me feel a little more comfortable about it. In later years those aircraft carriers had reunions and they put out a newsletter. The USS SOLMONS association found out that I was the one who dropped the depth charge and made me an honorary member! I really did appreciate it.

INTERVIEWER: Were you on other search and rescue missions?

SUTHERLIN: The same pilot [Glenn Ferrin] I was with for the depth charging on the submarine, was also with me on a search and rescue mission off the coast of Mexico. The Navy had reported that one fighter couldn't get back to his carrier in the afternoon when a fog bank moved in. The carrier tried, but couldn't get out of the fog bank. The airplane finally ran low on fuel and before he ran out made a power-on ditching at sea. They didn't know exactly where he was because at the end he was too low for radar. They had a general area and we sent four airplanes out to search. We searched a grid to visually inspect the entire area. On about the third leg out, I thought I saw a little yellow dot in the water. They had one man life rafts in those fighters, it was part of the parachute pack. I got binoculars out and sure enough it was the downed pilot. I said to Glenn, "There he is at about 10 degrees to starboard." Glenn said, "You have it." I took control, dropped the nose and headed for the downed pilot. Glenn took the binoculars and spotted him as well. He told me to get ready to drop a smoke bomb. We had a row of little wooden smoke bombs, with a metal nose. When they hit the water they give off a big plume of smoke. You can tell which way the wind is blowing and about how much wind you have. We made a low pass over this guy. He was O.K. He waved to us. We dropped a smoke bomb. We called the [air] station and requested permission to land on the water. We had to get permission to land in those days. There had been a couple of occasions where guys landed in rough water and damaged the airplane. They had to have certain limited sea conditions. The base asked what the swells were running. Glenn said tell them five feet, when they were actually closer to ten. Base came back and said "Do not land. That is an order. We are sending a PBY. " We started circling around and the carrier found out that we had found their fighter pilot. About a half dozen of his flight buddies flew out to where we were. They were circling him also. Then this one pilot in a Corsair, F4U, came up on my side, on the right side and opened up his hatch and he was pointing down as if asking "What's wrong with you guys? Why don't you go pick him up?" With no radio communication with him I took off my headset and pointed down and then gave him a thumbs down signal. I thought maybe he would understand that we couldn't land but he shook his head, still upset with us. He pulled his hatch forward and flew above us and came down nearly on top of us. He was apparently going to force us to land and pick up the downed pilot. Glenn dove down and made a

couple of passes as if he was going to pick him up and I called the air station to tell them that the Navy fighter pilots wanted us to land and things were getting kind of dangerous. They replied that they would take care of it. In about five minutes all the Navy fighter planes backed off about a mile or so. The carrier had told them that a PBY was on its way. Glenn and I saw the PBY coming and dropped another smoke bomb near the downed pilot to show the PBY where he was. The PBY came in and landed. Base told us to remain on site until the PBY was back in the air. Then the same F4U that wanted us to land came up beside us, pulled his hatch back and gave us a salute! I waved to him and we returned to base. We had been out for five hours. We weren't sure if we had enough fuel to land at Lindbergh Field and thought we might have to land in the water. We made it back though.

We also did air-sea rescue at Los Alamitos and also had an airplane at Goleta, which is now the Santa Barbara Municipal Airport. We were also out on San Nicolas Island. We spent about a month at each of those places. It was called a circuit as we rotated to those other places.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you when a Grumman Goose crashed on 5 September 1945, killing Glenn Ferrin and AMC [Chief Aviation Mechanic] Frank Rakokvic?

SUTHERLIN: I was at the Naval Air Station in Los Alamitos. One of the Navy men came up to me and said, "Jack, you lost one of your Coast Guard airplanes yesterday. It was in the paper." I said "Let me see it." I read it and said "Oh my God. It was Glenn." They never found out what happened. He was on a test flight after the airplane had been in for major maintenance. He hit some high tension wires. Nobody knows if he was having trouble with the airplane or he just didn't see the lines. Never did find out.

INTERVIEWER: Was CDR Donald MacDiarmid the commanding officer at San Diego before you left?

SUTHERLIN: He took over as commanding officer while I was there. I've flown with him.

INTERVIEWER: What was your impression of him?

SUTHERLIN: He was different than his predecessor.

INTERVIEWER: Was LCDR Bender the commanding officer when you arrived?

SUTHERLIN: The commanding officer when I arrived was a CDR Watson Burton. CDR Burton was replaced by CDR MacDiarmid because of an incident that happened. It was very unfortunate. You used to have to get permission to land on the water. [In the spring of 1944 there] was a crash of a Curtiss Hell-Diver off of the carrier [USS] TICONDEROGA [CV-14]. They called the Coast Guard out. ENS [Raymond A.] Miller was flying the airplane. He radioed that he had the raft in sight with two men in it,

one man was bleeding pretty badly. He requested permission to land. CDR Burton said "Negative. I'm sending a crash boat out. It's too rough out there today." But the pilot in the raft kept pointing to the injured man in the raft, covered with blood. Miller disobeyed a direct order. He landed, picked the guy up and took him into Santa Barbara, because there was a Marine Corps Air Station that had a small hospital and it he was closer to Santa Barbara. It wasn't that he wanted to hide things by not going back to San Diego. The doctor there said that Miller probably saved the injured man's life. The man was bleeding to death. He had hit his head on something when the airplane banged in the water. When he came back, Miller was given a court-martial and sentenced to 30 days in the brig at North Island for disobeying a direct order. Then in comes the TICONDEROGA to San Diego Harbor. The commanding officer, who is a Captain, said he wanted to meet this young pilot who had picked up one of his men and saved his life. He said, "Where is he?" "He's in the brig, sir." "In the brig? What for?" "He disobeyed an order about landing." [The Navy Captain said,] "Well, we're going to have a hearing on this at North Island." Our commanding officer was told to report to North Island. They checked the weather reports for that day and concluded that they could have landed. So CDR Burton, unfortunately, had to make a public apology to all hands, including the Captain of the TICONDEROGA. We were in dress blues out there and CDR Burton got up and apologized to all hands for making a wrong decision. Less than 30 days after that CDR MacDiarmid showed up and CDR Burton went back to Headquarters.

CDR MacDiarmid was a more determined person than CDR Burton. He was more for getting things done, a little more hardnosed. CDR Burton was more of a fatherly type. He liked his men, he was trying to protect his men from getting into trouble off shore, that's why he had done that. MacDiarmid was a little bit more of a dare devil. He was a guy who would land out there. I really learned who CDR MacDiarmid was when I was on the ready crew for a PBM one day. They called an offshore crash. I ran to the airplane and climbed in and we found the two guys in a raft. CDR MacDiarmid was the pilot and he told me to hand him a smoke bomb. I said, "This is not on a PBY, sir. You'll throw it into the propeller. This is not a PBY." [Essentially, you could throw a smoke bomb from the PBY cockpit because the engines were overhead but the PBM engines were behind you and would catch anything thrown from the cockpit. (JS)] "Sutherlin, that's an order. Give me the smoke bomb." I gave it to him and then bingo I heard a bang out there and the airplane started to vibrate. From the cockpit I hear "Feather port. Shut down port." "Sutherlin, tell the base to send out a crash boat. We're coming back on one engine." I said, "Are you declaring an emergency, sir?" He said, "No." I told the base we were coming back on one engine. We did. We made it fine. But after that the Commander and I got along better. I didn't want him to do something wrong, but I didn't want to get on his list. Seemed like every time from there on, if he was going on a flight, if he couldn't find me he would come to the radio shop and say "Sutherlin, we're going flying." I guess maybe because I was Scottish and he was, too. Even when we were going up to the district office in a single engine airplane, he didn't need a radioman, but he would tell me "Let's go flying." He'd let me fly the airplane. We became pretty good friends.

INTERVIEWER: Did you fly with any other famous people while you were at San Diego?

SUTHERLIN: I also flew with [the crew believed was] Admiral [William F. "Bull"] Halsey's grandson at San Diego. W. [William] A. Halsey, we called him "Little Bull", was a Coast Guard pilot at Air Station San Diego during the war.

INTERVIEWER: When you were on liberty, how were you treated, especially by members of the other armed forces? Was there a rivalry, animosity or did you all get along?

SUTHERLIN: I think it was mainly friendly. The Navy would tell us that we were "6 foot sailors", because we never went in water over six feet deep. And we would say, "Well, how many decks have you swabbed today?"

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall the day you were discharged?

SUTHERLIN: They sent me to Long Beach and we went through a debriefing and they gave me my discharge papers. It was nice. They were cordial.

INTERVIEWER: What was your most memorable experience in the Coast Guard?

SUTHERLIN: The anti-submarine warfare mission on December 25th, 1943. You always feel good when you help pull somebody out of the water. But I guess I probably saved more men that one day by dropping a depth charge on the submarine.

INTERVIEWER: How do you remember your overall time in the Coast Guard during World War II?

SUTHERLIN: I enjoyed my time in the Coast Guard. I met some great people.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do after you were discharged from the Coast Guard in November of 1945?

SUTHERLIN: I wanted to go back to school. It was November of 1945. We had a son who was born in the Navy Hospital in San Diego and Sharon, our oldest daughter was coming along. I thought it was time to finish my education. I attended some classes at U.C.L.A. to upgrade my education. I also got a job working as an electronics engineer at American Airlines.

After I got out of the service I was looking for little bit of extra money. I got my ground instructors rating from the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration]. There was an individual also working at American Airlines who had been a Navy carrier pilot during the war and was now in the Naval Reserve at Los Alamitos. He told me the Navy Reserve could use a guy like me because the Coast Guard was not doing any more search and rescue for the Navy. They were now doing their own and they needed to

learn how. The Navy Reserve had a PBY in Los Alamitos but they didn't have anyone there that new anything about the radio. I joined the Navy Reserve for a couple of years and they gave me ARM2 in the Navy Reserve, flew on some search and rescue missions and also provided some training for the Navy aviation radiomen on the PBY radio equipment. I got a little extra money and it helped with two small children at home.

I later left American Airlines and returned to Douglas Aircraft. I began as a shop foreman and later was first as a commercial airline engineer and later as a missile engineer.

INTERVIEWER: How did your Coast Guard wartime service contribute to that career?

SUTHERLIN: The Coast Guard Radio Engineer School really got me started off right. The Douglas Company looked at my curriculum from the school and told me I had the same as a bachelor's degree without the social studies. They considered me one of their engineers.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW