



U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interview of **CAPT Donald M. Taub, USCG, Retired**

LORAN Station Cape Atholl, Greenland
Vietnam Veteran
Marine Inspection Career

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Captain Donald M. Taub, USCG (Ret.), July, 2015

Biographical Summary

Growing up in Lorain, Ohio with three older brothers, Donald Taub served briefly in the U.S. Air Force before entering the Academy in August of 1952. As a cadet he made his presence felt in the field of photography, contributing greatly to the 1956 TIDE RIPS yearbook. He was also probably the only cadet to ever own a house, complete with car in the garage before he was commissioned. He graduated with the Class of 1956 and was commissioned an Ensign. His first three tours were on cutters homeported in Boston, BIBB (WPG 31), DUANE (WPG 33) and CASTLE ROCK (WAVP 383). He then took command the LORAN A Station Cape Atholl, Greenland, the northernmost Coast Guard-manned LORAN station. After that he entered the Coast Guard's Marine Inspection field, serving first in San Francisco Marine Inspection Office, and next in the Pacific Area Technical Office. He next participated in Marine Industry training where he spent a year with the Grace Line in New York City. At Grace Line his mentor was Andy Gibson, the Vice President for Operations, who later became the Maritime Administrator and eventually the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Maritime Activities. Upon completion of that training he was assigned to the Marine Inspection Office in New York. In 1968 he reported to SPENCER (WHEC-36) as the Engineering Officer. He would be in SPENCER during its deployment to Squadron Three in 1969 in Vietnam where it would serve as a "mother ship" to Navy Swift Boats near the Cambodian border. One of Swift Boat skippers was LTJG John Kerry, who later became the U.S. Secretary of State. After returning from Vietnam, Taub went back to the Marine Inspection Office in New York. At the time, the New York office was responsible for the inspection of all U.S. flag vessels being built or repaired in the New York Zone which included Europe and Taub became in charge of that program. In the early March 1973 he went to Europe and played a key role in establishing a permanent Coast Guard Marine Inspection Office in Europe, first in Toulon, France and eventually in Rotterdam. He then was sent to Long Beach, California to merge the Marine Inspection Office with the Captain of the Port office to form a Marine Safety Office. After two years as Captain of the Port of Los Angeles/Long Beach he served four years on the Eleventh District Staff as the chief of the "M" Division, retiring on 30 October 1982. Since then he has lived in Huntington Beach with his wife, Jean.

INTERVIEWER: Where and when were you born?

TAUB: I was born in Lorain, Ohio on February 1, 1932, the day before Ground Hog's Day. Lorain, Ohio is about 25 miles west of Cleveland. There a large steel mill there and a shipyard, which built frigates during World War II.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood and what high school you graduated from and what year?

TAUB: I was born during bad economic years, the Depression years. Fortunately my father was always employed, which was very unusual. He made 14 cents an hour working in a lumber mill. There was a Coast Guard lifeboat station at the mouth of the river which was sort of a showplace. It was like a little park. That is where I had my first introduction to the Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: What high school did you graduate from?

TAUB: Lorain High School.

INTERVIEWER: In what year?

TAUB: We had mixed classes. I was in the class of 1950 "A". Due to our age not everybody started in September. Some started in September and some started in January. I was in the "A" class which meant I finished in December 1949. After the Christmas/New Years' holiday we went back to school and graduated. The "B" class would graduate in June. It was also the home town of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, the supreme commander of the Navy during World War II and one of his brothers was the principal of my elementary school. When I got out of high school I got a job at a machine shop where the engineer was another one of Admiral King's brothers who wrote my recommendation for the Coast Guard Academy.

INTERVIEWER: How soon did you apply for the Coast Guard Academy?

TAUB: Not right away. My family was in aviation. The forerunner of NASA was NACA, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. It did most of the aeronautical research in the United States. My three older brothers are ten years older. My oldest brother is 11 years older and was an award winning airplane model builder. He was recruited by NACA in 1941 and also my other older brothers, who were twins were also recruited by NACA, located in Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. About a year after I graduated from high school they got me a job there. Back in those days they trained their own people. I got into their engineering program and got engineering credits from nearby University of Virginia extension at Hampton, Virginia. My parents had split up and the only way I was going to get an education was to get a free education. That's why I went with NACA, but the Korean War was on and I realized I was probably going to end up in the military. My stepfather was a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force, a World War II type, and my three brothers were all in aviation. I had the idea that I wanted to be an aviator. I took the

test for ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps]. I passed the test but not high enough. I also took the test for the Coast Guard Academy and West Point. I enlisted in the Air Force and took the test for air cadet. It normally took two years of college to get into air cadets and I only had one year of college. But being enlisted and having one year of college gave me access. I was accepted and entered the air cadets. About three months later I received my appointment to the Coast Guard Academy and that took precedence. That's how I got to the Coast Guard Academy. My interest at that time was aviation.

INTERVIEWER: Can you remember your initial reaction after you became a cadet?

TAUB: I was older than most. Not by much, maybe a year or two. Because I was in the Air Force I didn't get to the Academy until a week before the summer cruise. I totally missed Swab Summer. I thought it was a bunch of kid's stuff. Every morning they used to row across the river to Groton and I would go in the closet and they would never miss me. I thought many of the Second Classmen I dealt with were a bunch of jerks. I was older than a lot of them.

INTERVIEWER: Who was your favorite instructor at the Academy?

TAUB: There was "Daddy" [CAPT J.B.] Hoag, the science teacher. We had all good instructors. CAPT [Carl G.] Bowman was the seamanship instructor and skipper of the EAGLE. He was quite a character. His son was a cadet who got "bounced." The other character was "Froggy" [LT G.] Buron. He was our literature professor and the coach of the Academy's earlier soccer team. In earlier years cadets had to take a foreign language and he taught French. Everybody failed his tests. But one his favorite sayings was "You flunk, but you flunk high." Your final grade might even be an "A".

INTERVIEWER: How was your first assignment decided?

TAUB: They sent us a list of available assignments and I decided I wanted a 255-foot cutter in Florida. When we got to assignment night, we had a class meeting. Some guys were very unhappy with where they were going. One of them challenged me. He wanted to go to Florida. We had to draw cards and he won. Boston had the most cutters of any place, and not many people wanted to go there. In Boston was the number one bad ship that no one wanted, and that is what I got.

INTERVIEWER: Was that the BIBB (WPG 31)?

TAUB: How did you know that?

INTERVIEWER: I did some research before I came here.

TAUB: The BIBB had a bar on it. I took me to my third ship before I found out that “booze” was illegal on Coast Guard vessels. On both of my first two ships we had a bar in the chief’s quarters.

INTERVIEWER: What was your duty on the BIBB?

TAUB: I was the first lieutenant and it was right at the end of the Korean War and sad to say a lot a guys who went to the Academy did so to escape the war. When the war was over they bailed out like flies. The Coast Guard had a lot of ships on ocean weather stations. I spent four years in the North Atlantic. When I went aboard the junior officers were standing port and starboard. There were only two junior deck officers. We had a “four-striper” for a captain, a “three-striper” for an executive officer, a lieutenant for engineer and one “j.g.” [Lieutenant, junior grade -- LTJG]. My classmate remained at the Academy to train new cadets. Within a year we had six ensigns aboard and I was the senior ensign.

TAUB: When I arrived in Boston the BIBB was out on ocean station, so they assigned me to a 311-foot cutter there. I was standing in port OOD [Officer of the Deck] watches and lived aboard ship. It moored at the lumber yard in South Boston where the ice breakers moored, rather than at the main base. The BIBB came in three days early. I went to the executive officer and asked him if I could be relieved as in port OOD so that I could meet my ship. He didn’t want to let me go to the BIBB, which had a bad reputation. I had to stay aboard and eat lunch in the wardroom before I was allowed to leave and go to the BIBB. I had to get across town and find my way over there. By the time I got there nobody was on the BIBB. They had all gone home except the duty section. I reported aboard. The next morning the executive officer came down the ladder to the wardroom. Before he reached the bottom step I snapped to attention and introduced myself. His first words, I can still quote him. “Where the hell have you been? I expect my officers to meet the ship at the dock!” I was restricted on the spot for a month. This was the first of three times that I was restricted. I could tell you more stories from the BIBB but they are not fit for print.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you aboard BIBB?

TAUB: Just one year. After that I switched across the dock to the DUANE (WPG 33). The officers on that ship were probably the finest officers I ever had the privilege of serving with. I went from one extreme to the other.

INTERVIEWER: Were you the first lieutenant on the DUANE?

TAUB: No, I was a student engineer. Back in those days all Academy graduates went on board ship, one year on deck and then everybody went to student engineer, either three months or a whole year. The guys that weren't going to be engineers were student engineers for only three months.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you assigned to the DUANE?

TAUB: One year. Then I switched over to the CASTLE ROCK (WAVP 383) as assistant engineer. It was a new thing for cutters to go to GITMO [Guantanamo Bay, Cuba]. Everything I was associated with got an "E" at GITMO on my first two ships. One of the reasons I think I was transferred to the other ship was because of my experience at GITMO. I would go to GITMO my third time in CASTLE ROCK. While I was in GITMO I received orders to Greenland. I had just gotten married a few months before.

INTERVIEWER: You got married while assigned to the CASTLE ROCK?

TAUB: Yes. On September 20, 1958.

INTERVIEWER: What was your wife's maiden name?

TAUB: Jean Tierney, just like the Hollywood actress. I got the orders while I was in Cuba on CASTLE ROCK. I went to LORAN school, a two-week course, at Groton, Connecticut. Since most LORAN stations were in the tropics mostly what they taught us was about tropical illnesses, sanitation, rats and mosquitos.....nobody knew anything about the Arctic stations. Furthermore I didn't have to worry about what they were teaching us about a LORAN transmitter because my station was scheduled to get brand new transmitter that was still being designed. I remember mostly what I didn't learn. I didn't learn how my station was going to be supported. It actually turned out to be the best duty assignment I had in my Coast Guard career. I even asked to be extended for a second year, but they wouldn't let me. I'd only had three weeks with my wife after LORAN school before I reported to the station.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get to your LORAN station in Greenland?

TAUB: I flew up to Thule [Air Force Base--AFB], Greenland. I relieved Chuck [Charles B.] Glass from the Academy class before me. One of the interesting things about the station was that it was like a ship. It was a show place. It was immaculately maintained. We had about a five day overlap. They replaced the crew in three stages. Two stages for the crew. Half the crew would go out when a new half would come in. Then about two weeks later the other half would go out when that new half would come in. The existing C.O. [Commanding Officer] would break them all in. Then about a few weeks later the new C.O. would come in.

INTERVIEWER: How many people were in the crew there?

TAUB: A total of nineteen.

INTERVIEWER: Was it LORAN A or LORAN C?

TAUB: LORAN A, but it was not just LORAN. It also had TACAN, a tactical control for aircraft. We also had a radio beacon. Thule AFB was located north of the LORAN station, which faced due south. We were exactly on the same longitude as Cape Cod. We also submitted a daily weather reports to Thule.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get from Thule down to your LORAN station?

TAUB: The LORAN station was accessible by 4-wheel drive vehicles for about three months of the year via an overland route. There was a 17 mile long rocky trail from the station that connected to a gravel road between Thule AF Base and the U.S. Army's Camp Tuto to the edge of the Ice Cap. The total distance was about 35 miles. Access was generally by helicopter, except during the dark season. Otherwise, our only access was by our own dogsled over the coastal sea ice, which was intact from about late October to the end of June.

Thule Air Base and the LORAN station were separated by the Cape Atholl Peninsula, which was barren and generally about 1,000 feet high or more. Thule was in a very large, wide valley on the north side of the peninsula. The LORAN station was in a small valley on its south side which faced south and west, called Qarautit, and was code named DOPE ONE. The ice cap was a few mile inland, and reached the sea about two miles south of the LORAN station with a huge active glacier, named Petowick Glacier, that calved off a large number of icebergs into the sea. It was an arctic oasis of sorts. Seals were on the sea ice in spring. In early summer the cliff on one side of the station was a rookery with thousands of sea birds, with a random arctic fox. Our creeks runoff attracted Beluga whales and Narwhals. Our garbage dump attracted polar bears,

even the garbage cans at our kitchen door. In the summer time flowers would bloom beneath the snow. They were little flowers, not much bigger than my finger nail. Mostly they were yellow, some were blue, and some were red. Plus we had what we called Arctic Cotton. They were like dandelions with puff balls. There were white rabbits running all over the place. They seemed tame. You could walk almost right up to them.

I was trying to learn the local language and developed friendships with the local Eskimos (**photo, right**). I was blessed with a fantastic crew. The only thing station did not need was me. That gave me the opportunity to get to know the local people. I visited the nearby Eskimo villages. During my tour the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was involved with



Project Century to build a city under the ice 134 miles inland on the ice cap that would be nuclear powered. I got friendly with them and my LORAN station became like a tourist destination for high ranking officers and officials. The Army was only there in the summer and lived like Boy Scouts. They had Atwell huts which had wooden frames covered with canvas. For running water they had steel drums up on wooden frames. But they did have helicopters and fixed wing planes.

The Coast Guard LORAN station was like a tourist resort because all contact with the native people was forbidden by the status of forces agreement—except for the LORAN station which was outside of the Thule Airbase “Defense Zone”, between the two main villages. We had spare, extra rooms. Every crew member had his own private room. At Thule you had to be at least at lieutenant colonel to have a private room. Thule personnel had to use the yacht style pumper toilets. Our LORAN station was said to have the only flushing toilets in northern Greenland. The LORAN station was built two years after Thule and everything was an improvement.

This was during the Cold War. Thule was about midway between New York City and Moscow. Air tankers based at Thule refueled U.S. Air Force bombers laden with nuclear bombs that patrolled across the top of North America 24/7. There were B-47s when I was there during 1959-60. One January 21, 1968, a B-52 carrying four hydrogen bombs crashed on the sea ice between the airbase and the LORAN station.

Construction of the airbase began in 1951, and continued. The huge Ballistic Missile Early Warning Station (BMEWS) was also built during 1959-60, with its four huge antennas aimed at the USSR; and is still in operation today. There were about 4,000 men on the base. The LORAN station was built during 1953-54.

The Inuit village of Thule was the district's capital, with its Danish administrators, trading post, church, clinic and school. This had been Commander Robert E. Peary's center during his seven expeditions in his quest for the North Pole for 18 years during 1891 to 1909, and three of his expedition members fathered at least four sons there, three of whom were guests at my LORAN station in 1959-60. The Polar Eskimo tribe then numbered 315 to 325. The Thule Airbase's "defense zone" was near the middle of the Eskimo's district. They lived mainly as hunters who followed the wildlife seasonal locations along the coast. Many had permanent homes at Thule. In 1953 the Inuit were relocated to a newly built village farther north at Qaanaaq, spelled Kanak then, and compensated with little insulated prefab one-room houses mainly at Qaanaaq and some on nearby Herbert Island. Contact between the Inuit and the U.S. military at Thule Airbase was prohibited to protect the traditional culture and their health versus outside illnesses. The LORAN station became their good neighbor, perhaps from the beginning, onward. They were welcome at the LORAN station, which offered its hospitality, including emergency medical aid, use of its shop, movies, etc., including indoor lodging for travelers in storm conditions, and we did a lot of dogsled travels together.

In 1959 the new Danish military liaison officer at the airbase informed me of our violations of the no contacts rules. I went to the Danish civilian administrators at Qaanaaq, and the USCG LORAN station was officially exempted from those rules, and thanked for our relations with the Eskimos. In 1994, I was invited to return for a personal reunion at Qaanaaq as the house guests of RADM Peary's Inuit family. The Air Force gave me air travel from the U.S. to Thule, and I flew in the local aero clubs little Cessna to Qaanaaq where I spent days visiting old Eskimo friends, house to house, and retelling old stories. The Coast Guard was remembered for a lot of good deeds there. USCGC NOGAK had established the World War II weather station W-6 there in 1943. USCG icebreakers provided all sorts of assistance including medical aid, and the transplants of seed herds of caribou and musk oxen. The Narwhal is their district's logo symbol,

and I was presented with a four-foot long Narwhal tusk as a thank you to the Coast Guard. It is now at the Coast Guard Museum at the Coast Guard Academy.

INTERVIEWER: You were only there one year. Where did you go from Greenland? What was your next assignment?

TAUB: The first thing, like all isolated duty, you had an extra month's leave in addition to your regular annual leave. My wife and I went to Europe for a month and a half. Bought a car over there and toured Europe. I had asked for marine inspection since the engineer on the DUANE had been in marine inspector in Wilmington, North Carolina. I had given up my idea of being an aviator.

INTERVIEWER: Where was your first assignment in marine inspection?

TAUB: First I went to school for three months at Yorktown, Virginia. Then I went to San Francisco and that is a story, too, about the Coast Guard changing Marine Inspection. San Francisco was the largest office on the west coast. I was the only Academy type there. At one point we had nine captains in the office. There was a resistance to Academy officers there. During World War II it was like a civilian organization, the BMIN, Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation. They were civilian-like jobs and they never got transferred. They were all now commanders and captains. The west coast technical office was also there. The head of it had been there 26 years. He finally transferred and became the OCMI, which was the first time he was a marine inspector. They all were retiring fairly soon, so I moved up fairly fast in the system. I was very inquisitive about things and trying to learn all I could. We were located at 630 Samson Street in San Francisco, which was also the 12th District Headquarters in San Francisco and for the Area Technical Office. There were two naval architects, two electrical engineers, and two marine engineers, plus the boss. One of the naval architect slots became open. I was not a naval architect, but during this time I was taking classes at (University of California) Berkeley at night and taking all sorts of classes in naval architecture, so I got the naval architecture slot. It was a very busy time. I did almost all the stability tests for shipbuilding in the Pacific Area. I condemned the Alaska ferries; actually they didn't pass the stability test. It was the first time they were building semi-submersible rigs. I was getting a lot of good experience.

As the BMIN guys retired the Coast Guard hired a lot of what we called "219-ers", merchant marine officers that came in mostly as LTJGs. They could be very different. I served with a lot of them. They were good people to work with, and good at the job.

Around then was about the time for applying to graduate school. But I thought about it and thought “What is the point to going to graduate school for naval architecture when I’m already doing the job and already have taken every class I could in four years of night school at Berkeley.” I applied instead for Marine Industry training, which was a sabbatical year with a shipping company. That set me on the course for all kinds of things. I went with Grace Line in New York. Grace Line in San Francisco had the worst reputation of any of them. But there was a stark contrast between the way marine inspection was done on the west coast and the way it was done on the east coast. When I was in the Technical Office in San Francisco I visited all the Marine Inspection Offices up and down the Pacific Coast.

It just so happened that when I got to Grace Line in New York I was assigned to the Vice President for Operations as my mentor. His name was Andy Gibson. He was a real politician, in and out of Washington, doing lobbying. He became the Maritime Administrator and later the first Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Maritime Activities. He was known as “the father of the subsidy act” for tankers. I could tell you stuff but I don’t want it recorded.

I was under his wing for most of the year. I went through every aspect of the company: labor relations, chartering, personnel, management and shipbuilding. They were building new automated ships. I knew the owner, W. R. Grace, who happened to like the Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: After you finished your year with the Grace Line, where did the Coast Guard assign you?

TAUB: I was assigned to the Marine Inspection Office in New York. The OCMI was later VADM Bill Rea. He had also been in industry training so we got along well. I had an attitude about me that was different from most marine inspectors. I often “bucked” the system for positive change. I got involved with re-writing the national welding code, for example. I also got involved with writing the regulations for liquefied natural gas carriers, because there weren’t any.

Later, after the explosion of the 810-foot super tanker SANSINENA in San Pedro, California on December 17, 1976, based upon my authority as the Captain of the Port of Los Angeles/Long Beach, I initiated the Foreign Tanker Inspection Program, which was soon adopted throughout the United States. Later I assisted the congressional staff in writing the Port and Tanker Safety Act.

One of the differences I noted on the east coast was that on the west coast we trusted one another, here was the opposite. There was almost a hostile attitude between the Coast Guard

and the shipping industry. One of the other things I fought a losing battle against was the Coast Guard becoming primarily a law enforcement agency in regards to the shipping industry. The foundation of marine inspection was to support the marine industry. I fought a battle my entire career trying to convince people that our job was helping the marine industry, not becoming its cops concerned with issuing violations. Having spent a year in the industry and having been in a technical office, I had a different perspective than most.

The new OCMI was Mike [William M.] Benkert, who nearly became commandant of the Coast Guard. He had been the skipper of an icebreaker. He was known as “the bull moose.” You could hear him talk a long way away. I learned a lot from him. He was quite a character. I had a lot to do with shipyards, all of which had resident inspectors rather than roaming inspectors. I had been the resident inspector at Bethlehem Shipyard in South San Francisco, and now became the resident inspector for Todd Shipyard in New York.

INTERVIEWER: How many years did you work at OCMI New York?

TAUB: I went to MIO [Marine Inspection Office] New York in 1966 and then I went on the SPENCER (WHEC-36) in 1968 and arrived in Vietnam in January 1969.

INTERVIEWER: What was your assignment on the SPENCER?

TAUB: I was the engineer. We had a hell of a good crew. The skipper, the executive officer, me, the operations officer, we were all marine inspectors. It was an old ship and we had a lot of machinery problems with the feed pumps for the boilers, the air conditioning, the gyro, the electrical switchboard and on and on. We also had a fire aboard the ship.

INTERVIEWER: Where was the SPENCER homeported?

TAUB: Governors Island, New York.

INTERVIEWER: Did you do an ocean station on SPENCER before you went to Vietnam?

TAUB: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You went to Vietnam as part of Squadron Three. Anything significant happened while you were in Vietnam?

TAUB: We ended up getting a Presidential Unit Citation early on. The policy had recently changed in Vietnam with President Nixon's election. The new policy was "Vietnamization". Most of our early operations were along the coast of the Mekong Delta, and up the coast. This was in conjunction with Boat Division 11's joint U.S. Coast Guard – U.S. Navy Command Center based at An Thoi on Phu Quoc Island near the Cambodian border, which was then under the command of Coast Guard CDR Adrian Lonsdal, who was later relieved by CDR Paul Yost, a future commandant of the Coast Guard.

Beside naval gunfire support, we also acted as a mobile mother ship for a group of Navy swift boats. The SPENCER was outfitted differently. A World War II magazine was converted to a fuel tank for the swift boats and the balloon shack became a bunk room for the swift boat crews. We also carried Cambodian mercenaries who were led by U.S. Army Special Forces personnel. They were part of the CIA's "Phoenix Program" and were often transported by the swift boats.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever service the Coast Guard 82-footers?

TAUB: Once in a while, but not very often.

INTERVIEWER: What other type of support did you give the swift boats?

Donald Taub in Vietnam



TAUB: We did maintenance on their boats. Fed them. Gave them a place to sleep. Refueled their boats. Resupplied them with ammunition. They tied up along us.

I can tell you a story about John Kerry. Every two swift boats had three crews. They rotated the crews. They also changed skippers. Kerry was skipper of two different swift boats with two different crews. He was a real "hot shot", personally it was a little difficult to like the guy because he was a bit arrogant. He was out to win the war all by himself. He was really good. He usually teamed up with three boats. Usually when they went up in these canals and if they ran into an ambush they would turn turtle and run out. Sometimes these places were too narrow to turn around. These swift boats made a lot of noise. The southern Mekong Delta was a combination of rice paddies, mountains and jungle. It has all these rivers and canals and a man-made system of waterways. The only way to get in there was by boat. After Nixon was elected President we

became very aggressive and went after them. It took a heavy toll on the Vietcong. But they started adapting and turned the tables on us. We started taking heavy casualties. Groups of swift boat patrols were out all the time---24 hours a day. If they came into ambushes they would turn around and get out. Sometimes the boats would go in and they (enemy) would block the exit and trap them and wipe out boats. Kerry had a different idea. He wanted the ambushers to become the ambushed. He took three swift boats, heavily armed with Cambodian troops, up a canal and when ambushed they fought back and devastated the enemy.

They came back and wrote up the operation. The way medals were given out in Vietnam, under [RADM Elmo] Zumwalt, who felt Navy guys should be getting medals not just the Air Force, was that Zumwalt's aide read the incoming dispatches every morning and selected the heroes for the day and wrote them up for medals. So Kerry and his crew all got medals. ADM Zumwalt personally flew down and awarded them. Later Kerry was one of 17 who got Purple Hearts.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you assigned after you returned from Vietnam on the SPENCER?

TAUB: When we came back from Vietnam I was reassigned to OCMI New York in Battery Park. A brand new shipyard was starting up, Sea Train, which took over the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Sea Train was building American's first VLCC tankers for Alaskan oil carriers. These were the largest ships ever built in the United States, 1300 feet long, longer than the height of the Empire State Building in New York and too large to transit the Panama Canal. It involved new welding techniques. I was assigned to inspect them and discovered the Coast Guard rules didn't really make sense with this type of construction. I became a part of the committee that addressed these new types of welding processes.

Also for years the Coast Guard had been thinking about sending people to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] to become nuclear engineers with the hope that the Coast Guard would get a nuclear powered ice breaker. There were only two vessels that were nuclear powered at the time in the United States that were subject to Coast Guard inspection. One was a barge owned by the Corps of Engineers and the other was the experimental ship SAVANNAH. It was built as a combination freighter/passenger ship. The company that operated it was States Marine. States Marine also participated in the industry training program of the Coast Guard. Their vice president for operations was a Coast Guard Academy graduate, Jack Dempsey '45. The annual inspection of the SAVANNAH, which was in New York, took over a month. It started having problems with its piping and valves. The first non-nuclear trained inspector was me! Mike Benkert wanted to show that you didn't need to go to MIT to be an inspector. They developed a way to repair and replace bad pipes with nuclear liquid in them. They'd do a quick

freeze, then cut real quick, put a new valve in and weld it up. Later I was suited up like an astronaut to inspect the waste tank. It had never been inspected before.

INTERVIEWER: How long was your tour of duty as Resident Inspector at the Sea-Train shipyard?

TAUB: I was at Sea-Train shipyard for about two years and then went to Europe in March of 1973. The Marine Inspection Office in New York was responsible at the time for all marine inspection in Europe. I was in charge of the ship inspection program, including shipbuilding for U.S. vessels in Europe. At the time Sea-Land was building four or six big, modern, twin screw steam-driven container ships. They were building them in three different shipyards in Europe. We had two guys in Rotterdam, two guys in Emden, Germany, and two in Bremerhaven. These were all resident inspectors.

Questions would come up from these inspectors that needed decision making and I was nominally their boss. I'm sure they are all competent and they're on the spot and I'm back in New York. There were projects coming up, shipbuilding in Spain, and in Glasgow, Scotland. More importantly, the American merchant marine was in Europe and never came home, and needed inspection every two years. These were mostly oil industry vessels and this was becoming a legal problem. There were oil rigs, tankers, crew boats all over, in the North Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Persian Gulf.

Earlier there was an under the table agreement where the American Bureau of Shipping issued them a substitute certificate for all these vessels. But it wasn't strictly legal. There was pressure on the Coast Guard to get over in Europe and do the job the law required them to do. Here I am in New York, nominally responsible for everything going on in Europe and in my eighth year on Governors Island and ready to leave. I went to my boss, CAPT Stanley L. Waitzfelder. He told me to write a letter explaining what should be done. I did and then he put an endorsement on it. It went to the District level "M" guy and he wasn't supportive but when it got to the Area Commander, VADM Benjamin Engel, who wrote on the letter, "Do it, and do it right now." So I got the job. What happened was the Andy Gibson, who was my mentor at the Grace Line for my industry training was then the Maritime Administrator and he was all for it. VADM Bill [William F., III] Rae was now in Washington at headquarters and he was in favor of it, too.

At this time they were also beginning to build liquefied natural gas [LNG] carrier vessels, which were brand new. The Coast Guard rules hadn't been written for them yet. Most of the technology for LNG carriers was in Norway and France. They were building them on the Mediterranean, at the Port of Toulon, France. These would be the most complex ships every built

for the U.S. merchant marine. Not only did they carry LNG they also had a plant that re-liquefied natural gas. They were also the first American ships automated for a one man engine room watch.

All these things were happening just as the Marine Inspection program was moving to Europe. We had to have a budget for all this. So I moved over to France and started my office right outside the shipyard in Toulon Bay with no budget. The State Department wouldn't give us more billets, either. The Sea-Land shipbuilding was winding down so we only had two resident inspectors still in Europe, one in Rotterdam and the other in Bremerhaven. I brought them to my office, plus there were two captain billets left over from the World War II Merchant Marine Detail era. They were about to retire and all they did was present AMVER certificates. They were phased out and I picked up their billets. On paper I was assigned to the embassy in Paris, which assigned me to the consulate in Marseille which I visited maybe three times in two years. The shipyard provided me with an office. I was the first Coast Guard officer sent to Europe to open a Marine Inspection Office. The resident inspectors before me had been sent for the Sea-Land project and then returned to New York. When I finally got new people there were all TAD [Temporary Duty] from MIO New York, drawing per diem every day they were there. I was the only one there on PCS [Permanent Change of Station] orders. I was on the road more than 50% of the time. I went to Norway, Scotland, Denmark, Spain, Nigeria, the Persian Gulf, India, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Egypt---all over the place, including an American drill ship that was charter by the Soviet Union doing sea floor core sampling in the Black Sea.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you assigned PCS in France?

TAUB: A bit more than two years. About halfway through the second year, the LNG ships project was winding down and this enabled me to also do other vessel inspections in Europe and elsewhere still under OCMI New York, while my assistant, a LTJG on TAD, continued the LNG project in Toulon.

The long term plan from the beginning in 1973 was to establish an MIO in Europe, and Rotterdam was the best place for it for several reasons. The bulk of its work was with the American oil industry vessels operating in the North Sea. Travel was easy from the Amsterdam airport. The Coast Guard still had two Merchant Marine Detail offices in Europe that were being eliminated. One was in the U.S. consulate in Rotterdam and its officer was retiring. The other one was in Hamburg, Germany. This would clear up two billets. Thus we had existing office space with a local secretary, and the use of an apartment upstairs, which the consulate did not use. New inspectors arrived from the U.S.

I was delayed in Toulon to wrap-up matters there; close the office, and terminate the leases on our house and car after our three children finished their school year in the local public French school. I was still a commander. The Merchant Marine Detail officer from Hamburg was a captain, and he became the OCMI. I was frocked to captain before I detached back to the U.S. in 1976.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you transfer to from Rotterdam?

TAUB: I got the job of Captain of the Port [COTP] of Los Angeles/Long Beach [LA/LB]. I called my old boss, then RADM Benkert, now in Coast Guard headquarters and asked him why I was being assigned there. He said I was going to merge the OCMI and COTP commands there. I was going to merge them into an MSO [Marine Safety Office]. It was one of the bigger places that had not yet merged.

The combined port of Los Angeles and Long Beach was, and is, the largest commercial port in the U.S. It was a mess. The Captain of the Port Office with its boats and crew quarters was located at Pier A in Long Beach, collocated with the waterfront Pegasus Restaurant, with semi-topless waitresses. The MIO was located in the U.S. Customs Building. The Coast Guard base, which operated the SAR boats, was located about six miles away on Terminal Island, San Pedro. The MIO and COTP with its crew quarters moved into a newly renovated warehouse inland in the Port of Long Beach, while the COTP's boats were moved to the Coast Guard base on Terminal Island in the Port of Los Angeles, and also assumed the Base's SAR boats, but did not get their crews. This necessitated operating the boats on port and starboard watches for lack of sufficient personnel, and required COTP crew quarters at two different locations for the COTP's different missions. And the planners failed to anticipate that we would soon get females. It took about a decade before everything was collocated with new facilities at the Coast Guard Base, which is now reorganized as a Sector.

It was a very busy time. The LA/LB harbor ranked number one in the U.S. for the number of ship arrivals. COTP dangerous cargo personnel, together with U.S Customs boarded them upon arrival 24/7. Reported oil spills were frequent and required response 24/7. Most were minor in the numerous small boat harbors spread along the coast. We used a trailer mounted boat for these. We did have a few big ones. Our end of year statistics averaged slightly more than three spills a day; slightly more than the number of SAR cases.

COTP LA/LB also had a detachment based at Santa Barbara, about 100 miles away. This was where the big Union Oil offshore platform blew-out in 1967 and started the national anti-oil pollution. This area was plagued with anti-everything politics, and natural oil seeps into the water and ashore.

The explosion of the 810-foot supertanker SANSINENA in L.A. Harbor on December 17, 1976, evening, affected the ongoing port development projects including the need for a new supertanker oil terminal for Alaskan oil. It put an end to the proposed LNG terminal in L.A. Harbor. The explosion's shock wave rattled windows in my house about 20 miles away, and our telephone rang about one minute later: "Captain, come quick!" I was there for the next three days with very little sleep, and obtained the Union Oil Company's signed statement accepting financial responsibility.

Also during my time the order came to eliminate three Coast Guard Districts. The Eleventh District was one of those to be eliminated. I was on the committee to study this proposal. Our report on the elimination of the district had address how to eliminate everything. We managed to delay it for a number of years.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you go after putting the Marine Safety Office together?

TAUB: I went to be the "M" officer for the Eleventh District, which was in the Union Bank Building on the ninth floor in downtown Long Beach.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you at the MSO/COTP?

TAUB: Two years as the Captain of the Port and four years on the District staff.

INTERVIEWER: Did you retire from there?

TAUB: Yes I retired from there on October 30, 1982.

INTERVIEWER: Anything significant happen during your time as the district "M" officer?

TAUB: The coastal and harbor waters of the LA/LB four coastal counties were confluence of competing interests throughout my six years in the 11th District. I became the principle Coast Guard spokesperson before bodies of interest at meetings and conferences, and testifying at federal and state public hearings became routine.

The first major issue was the proposal for two LNG terminals. The site for one in L.A. Harbor had already been leased, and three other locations were being studied. This issue spanned approximately three years. Also was the proposal for a deep water terminal to receive Alaskan oil. The explosion of the supertanker SANSINENA in December 1976 put an additional spotlight on safety and environmental concerns. As series of ship collisions, the grounding of a loaded oil tanker inside of the harbor, and two unusual bulk cargo fires added to it.

Another matter were two federal outer continental shelf lease sales for oil and gas exploration and development in the two approaches to the LA/LB harbors, without regard for the internationally recognized vessel traffic separation lanes; especially the ones through the length of the Santa Barbara Channel. Numerous tracts were sold in and under the traffic lanes, drillings began, and proposals for fixed platforms soon began. I added something new. The Coast Guard has the general authority to establish 500 yard safety zones. This I established a quarter mile wide buffer zone on each side of each one mile wide traffic lane, a sort of shoulder along the road, that required any structure to be set back a minimum of 500 yards, to protect it. Coast Guard Headquarters endorsed this.

I served as the moderator in to U.S. Navy – U.S. shipyards industry conferences held in San Diego that sought to reform the Navy's bureaucratic and costly procedures in shipbuilding and repair. The representatives included presidents and managers of commercial shipyards and their U.S. Navy counterparts. We had the example at NASSCO Shipyard, which was building the same class of tank ships for commercial customers and the Navy with very few differences. The ships for the Navy basically cost twice as much, and took twice as long to build. Why?

All sorts of issues commonly arise that need to be dealt with. Commercial clients normally have a resident who resolves each issue promptly, on the spot. The Navy's usual procedure is to stop work and process a lot of paperwork that goes through various stages of review and decision making. The work stoppage idles the workers, and that often interferes with still other work, and this also ties up shipyard facilities. Time is money. The second conference's recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy, or Defense eventually bore fruit.

In 1981, as I recall the year, Coast Guard headquarters issues a directive to eliminate the 11th District, and to consolidate it with the 12th District in San Francisco Bay Area. A committee was established to carry it out. This committee, as I recall, consisted of 5 or 6 officers from each district, and two or three from the Pacific Area staff. I was the only "M" member. To me, this did not make sense, because the Coast Guard's principle clientele were located in southern

California, and the 12th District was a sleepy hollow by comparison. The few advantages in San Francisco were its real estate in Alameda, and the prestige of that area. The clientele in southern California included the U.S. Navy, nearly all of the many shipping companies' main offices, the shipyards, the fishing industry, the oil refineries, boating, the OCS activities, the SAR cases, the list of hot button environmental concerns, and of course the largest commercial harbor in the U.S. I produced the statistics that changed it. Needless to say, it was the 12th District that was eliminated; not the 11th. Eventually, however, the 11th District office moved to Alameda, California sometime after 1995.

In 1982 I was sent to Morocco on TAD as an advisor for their establishment of the Coast Guard, largely modeled upon the U.S. Coast Guard. When I returned from Morocco I learned that Congressman Glenn Anderson from the LA/LB area had placed a tribute to me and my career in the Coast Guard in the Federal Record of 23 July 1982, specifically mentioning my service as Federal On Scene Commander for the response to the SANSINENA explosion and my service on the District staff.

INTERVIEWER: You said you retired in 1982. Earlier you said your tour in Greenland was the best one in your career. Would that still be correct?

TAUB: It is still correct. Everyone knew their job and did it. The only problems I had were mechanical, especially our lack of an electric dishwasher. At the LORAN station everything was near perfect. It was a unique experience and adventure, especially with the Eskimos. Overall I had a lot of fun. I went from one new thing to another. I traveled all over the world, more than fifty countries, mostly thanks to the Coast Guard. It was an adventure that money can't buy!

INTERVIEWER: What have you done since retirement?

TAUB: I decided I was not going to work again. I built a house up near Running Springs [San Bernardino Mountains] on Arrowbear Lake. I designed it myself and built it all myself. My wife and I did a lot of travel, repeatedly in Europe, Hawaii, and Alaska on cruises. I have become involved in all sorts of history, especially Coast Guard World War II history in Greenland, which was often wrong or a lot got omitted by the Coast Guard's own historians. In addition to a lot of writings and articles over a long span of years, I originated four historical monuments. Two are at the Coast Guard Academy. One was for the Coast Guard's World War II Greenland Patrol. One was for the Coast Guard in Vietnam War. A duplicate of it is at the Coast Guard Training Center at Cape May, New Jersey. Another was for America's explorers in the quest for the North Pole.

As I mentioned earlier, in 1994 I was the invited guest of the Polar Eskimo family of RADM Robert E. Peary at Qaanaaq, Northwest Greenland, that recalled when the Coast Guard LORAN station was a much appreciated good neighbor, and other good deeds by Coast Guard icebreakers over a span of years, including transplants of seed herds of caribou and musk oxen.

More recently I was a member of the Coast Guard headquarters team that did the research toward the so-called duck hunt that sought to recover the remains of the three men lost in the NORTHLAND's Grumman Duck on November 29, 1942 in the coastal mountains near Comanche Bay, southeast Greenland.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for sharing your memories.

END OF INTERVIEW





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TRIBUTE TO CAPT. DONALD M.
TAUB
—

HON. GLENN M. ANDERSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 23, 1982

● Mr. ANDERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to pay tribute to a man who is retiring after having served his Nation and community for a quarter of a century. Capt. Donald M. Taub is leaving the U.S. Coast Guard after 26 years of service. On July 28 his friends will gather at the Navy Officers' Club in Long Beach, Calif., to honor his dedicated service to his country.

Captain Taub has enjoyed experience in many different posts while an officer in the Coast Guard. He attended the U.S. Coast Guard Academy where, in 1956, he received a B.S.

he also served as the Federal predesignated on scene coordinator for all coastal pollution incidents, one of which included the explosion of the tankship *Sansinena* in Los Angeles Harbor. In 1978, he was reassigned as Chief, Marine Safety Division, 11th Coast Guard District Headquarters in Long Beach, the post he has continued to hold to the present day. In this position he has been responsible for the marine inspection of vessels and personnel; the safety of port facilities, cargo, and vessel operations; and the marine environmental protection pro-