



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interviewee: BM3 Thomas V. Mullings, USCG (Ret.)

World War II Coast Guard veteran and survivor of the sinking of the U.S.S. *Alexander Hamilton*, C.G., on 30 January 1942.

Date of Interview: 26 January 1985

Place:

Ms. Seamond Roberts transcribed the taped interview for the U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office and we are grateful for her efforts.

NARRATOR: I'd like to begin the interview with you by asking you to indicate where you born, date you were born, and how it was that you came about joining the Coast Guard. We will deal with some of your family background and its relationship with the Coast Guard prior to going into basic training and then after we discuss basic training and what your life was like as and then your transfer to the ship and then we will deal with the topic of the ship sinking, as a separate element.

BM3 MULLINGS: Well, I was born in Washington, D.C. on September 16, 1924. Up until the time I went into the Coast Guard, I basically lived there all my life with excursions into the suburbs I guess at various times. My family background is that I came from a busted family, so to speak, and I had two older brothers . . .

NARRATOR: Two older brothers?

MULLINGS: . . . and the oldest one had served in the Coast Guard previous to the war.

NARRATOR: Previous to the Second World War?

MULLINGS: The Second World War, yes.

NARRATOR: What was his name and his rank at that time when he served?

MULLINGS: Well, he was a Seaman First Class. His name was Marshall Mullings. He was on the cutter *Chelan* . . .



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NARRATOR: C-h-e-l-a-n, right?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And, he was also stationed at the Coast Guard Academy in New London.

NARRATOR: Is that where the homeport of the *Chelan* was, or was he . . . ?

MULLINGS: No, I don't believe so, but he was part of the crew at the Academy.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Grounds, maintenance, probably, and did he deal with the instruction side at all?

MULLINGS: No, no.

NARRATOR: Just strictly . . .

MULLINGS: Strictly maintenance I imagine. He was hoping to get into the Coast Guard Band . . .

NARRATOR: The Coast Guard Band!

MULLINGS: At one time, but . . .

NARRATOR: What years are we talking about – 1923, 1924?

MULLINGS: No, no, we are speaking probably of '38.

NARRATOR: 1938?

MULLINGS: Something like that.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: He was in the Coast Guard later on during the war also.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. At this time, what was your brother's age in 1938?

MULLINGS: I have to do a little figuring now . . . he was six years older than I . . .

NARRATOR: So, he was approximately - 1930.

MULLINGS: No, he was born in 1918.



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NARRATOR: (Laugh) Oh, six years. O.K.

MULLINGS: So, he was born in 1918. So, he would have been roughly 18-20 years old then.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And I think I got the idea in the back of my head to join the Coast Guard through him, although that wasn't my first choice when the time came that I felt that I could go into the service.

NARRATOR: What can you recall were his experiences aboard the *Chelan*? What size vessel do you recall that to be?

MULLINGS: It was one of the larger cutters I believe. I'm not certain, but I think it was around 250 feet long.

NARRATOR: All right.

MULLINGS: 250 feet long or something in that nature. He never really related too many of his experiences on the cutter. I do recall that he was in New London during the time of the hurricane.

NARRATOR: Oh yes, that famous hurricane that wiped out . . .

MULLINGS: Yes, in '38 I believe that it was. They had quite a bit of duty during that time assisting in the clean-up of the hurricane.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Did he, was it your opinion at the time that he more or less enjoyed his duty aboard the *Chelan*? Was it very arduous type of work?

MULLINGS: I don't know. I never got from him just how arduous it was, but I think he enjoyed his work.

NARRATOR: Oh good. So, you got the seed for joining the Coast Guard planted in your mind from your relationship with your older brother.

MULLINGS: Yes, I think – although when I turned 16, I tried to get into the Navy.

NARRATOR: Ah!

MULLINGS: And I was turned down.

NARRATOR: And this was what year? 1942?

MULLINGS: That would have been 1940 when I would have been 16.



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NARRATOR: Oh, prior to Pearl Harbor and . . .

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Did you have the feeling that we were going to war and that this was one way of defending your country? What can you recall were your motivations perhaps other than just a job?

MULLINGS: No, at that time, I wasn't particularly aware of the war. I knew there was fighting going on in Europe, but I never really connected the U.S. with the fighting - or any thoughts of the U.S. getting into the fight.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. O.K. So, at 16 and all . . .

MULLINGS: I think it was more or less an attempt to get away from home. But, when they rejected me and I had a couple of bad teeth and they rejected me on that, then because I didn't have the money to get my teeth fixed, so that ended my trying to get into the Navy.

NARRATOR: And you tried to get into the Navy through the Navy recruiting command here in Washington, D.C.?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: O.K., and how long did the turn of events take place wherein you then got into the Coast Guard Recruiting Office?

MULLINGS: Well, it was probably just about a year later when the . . .

NARRATOR: You were 17 at this time?

MULLINGS: Yes. Pearl Harbor occurred on the December 7, 1941, and on that day a group of the young fellows that we all ran around together down in northwest Washington decided that we would all meet the next morning and go down. We all suddenly got very patriotic and then we decided that we would all meet and all go down and enlist in the service.

NARRATOR: How large of a group was it?

MULLINGS: Oh, there was about ten.

NARRATOR: Ten of you. And, were you all familiar to one another through high school or through your neighborhood?

MULLINGS: Through the neighborhood. I never had a high school education. As it was, the next morning, two of us showed up.



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NARRATOR: Two of you.

(Laughter)

NARRATOR: Out of the ten!

MULLINGS: No matter which house we went to, the fellow that was supposed to be there wasn't there, so . . .

NARRATOR: So, they chickened out.

MULLINGS: So, this other fellow and I went down to the Coast Guard Headquarters, which was not Headquarters but the recruiting station which was in the District Building in Washington.

NARRATOR: The District Building in Washington?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: Is that where the present District Building is located?

MULLINGS: It was down on Pennsylvania Avenue.

NARRATOR: The District of Columbia Building?

MULLINGS: Yes. I'm not sure whether it has been moved. I know they were talking of moving building the one on U Street, but this one was down on Pennsylvania Avenue, I believe it was between 13th and 14th. That's where the Coast Guard Recruiter was.

NARRATOR: Ground floor or?

MULLINGS: Yes, I think it was, and this other fellow that went down with me was quite short. I was probably 5'11" and he was about 5'2".

NARRATOR: 5'2"?

MULLINGS: Yeah, and we walked into the recruiting station and the chief asked us what we wanted . . .

NARRATOR: Do you remember the chief's name?

MULLINGS: No, I don't recall. I have his name I am sure. I have records.

NARRATOR: Just curious.



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MULLINGS: We told him what we wanted . . .

NARRATOR: What did you tell him you wanted?

MULLINGS: I told him we wanted to join the Coast Guard and he didn't ask why or anything . . .

NARRATOR: Did he tell you that you were one of 50 and you have a long line ahead of you before you can make it?

MULLINGS: No. No, there was nothing of that at all. He did ask our age and as I was 17, he told me that I'd have to have either my father's or my mother's consent, and I said that well that was fine with me, and he looked at this other young fellow with me and he said, "What do you want?" And Carl – this fellow's name was Carl Packard – and he told him that he wanted to join the Coast Guard too and he says, "Well, son, I'm sorry. Your bottom is too close to the deck, you'll get splinters as you walk along," and he wouldn't even give him an application.

(Laughter)

NARRATOR: Oh, he was pretty depressed I would imagine.

MULLINGS: Yeah, but it wound up that I was the only one of them to get in. I did collect the papers and I hadn't consulted either of my parents. My father and mother were separated, so I put down my father's name and they told me that they would get back to me. They sent me around to a doctor who give me a quick once-over. He just . . .

NARRATOR: Wanted to look at your . . .

MULLINGS: He looked at my eyes and my teeth and used his stethoscope on my heart and lungs and that was about it.

NARRATOR: In the morning or was it in the afternoon?

MULLINGS: This was in the morning on the 8th of December, 1941.

NARRATOR: Was there a lot of other people in the same room where you were at? Were you one of ten that morning?

MULLINGS: At the physical, you are speaking of?

NARRATOR: Yes. Or, at the recruiting office.

MULLINGS: At the recruiting office as I recall, we were the only two in there.



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NARRATOR: The only two in there on the day after Pearl Harbor.

MULLINGS: Yes, and this was of course. We were there about 8 o'clock in the morning.

NARRATOR: And at the same location you were for the other two hours.

MULLINGS: No, we were sent to a doctor over in Virginia – a doctor's office in Virginia – for the physical examination.

NARRATOR: So, you left the recruiting office probably after an hour or so.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: And when you left, was there other people coming in? Or was it still empty as you were leaving?

MULLINGS: At the recruiting office, it was still empty. I don't think the full impact of the Japanese attack had really hit our neighborhood, but it did quickly.

NARRATOR: So, now when you were in the doctor's office, was this doctor responsible for giving armed forces physicals for not only the Coast Guard, but other branches of the service as well?

MULLINGS: I really couldn't say.

NARRATOR: Was it a crowded office?

MULLINGS: No, we were the only two in the office.

(Laughter)

MULLINGS: At that time, business wasn't too good.

NARRATOR: It was a weekday obviously because December 7th was on a Sunday morning, so December 8th was Monday morning. And after you had your physical and he checked you over, he gave you a clean bill of health and said 'you are now eligible for enlistment' or what were his words to that effect?

MULLINGS: Well, he just told me I passed the physical. That was all.

NARRATOR: Passed the physical. And here's the paper –

MULLINGS: And I took it back to the recruiting station.



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NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And he told me that they would get back to me. They would have to try and contact my father and I wanted to take the paper myself and get it signed, but they wouldn't let me have it. They said they would have to mail it.

NARRATOR: So, they were very scrupulous of whether or not the papers were being signed correctly or not.

MULLINGS: I think so. And probably at my age too. Of course, the mail service in those days was a lot different than it is in these days.

NARRATOR: Certainly.

MULLINGS: They mailed the letter out and of course in my anxiety to see that my father got to my . . . I'd go around to his house every day just about the time the mail man came and watch for the mail and I forget how long it was – probably within four days – the letter did come from the Coast Guard and I intercepted it at the mailbox and didn't go in where his lady friend was waiting for him. I just met him on the way home and I asked him about I wanted to join the Coast Guard if he would sign for me to go in. And along the way, he was thinking about it and he said, "Well, if you want to go in, if you can keep your nose clean," he says, "I'll sign for you."

NARRATOR: Hmm. That was good.

MULLINGS: So, he signed it right there. I pulled it out of my pocket and presented it to him and surprised him a little bit, and he signed it and I made sure it got into the mail.

NARRATOR: What was his full name?

MULLINGS: His full name was Marshall McCuen Mullings. He was later drafted into the Army during the war.

NARRATOR: Oh, so, he, too experienced the same World War II events that occurred.

MULLINGS: My two brothers, myself, and my father were all in the service during World War II. When I sent the letter back to the Coast Guard, it was . . . I applied on the 8th and on they told me to report on the 17th to be sworn in.

NARRATOR: The 17th of . . .

MULLINGS: December, which was a period of nine days from the time I went down.

NARRATOR: A lot of anxiety.



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MULLINGS: It was pretty fast considering that things had to go through the mail and back and forth.

NARRATOR: And then the swearing in took place. The officer-in-charge of the recruiting office probably administered the oath.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: What sizeable group did you have at that point? Were there a dozen, half a dozen?

MULLINGS: No, I believe there were two of us.

(Laughter)

MULLINGS: There was another Washingtonian that joined at the same time I did. His name was Perry Bradley.

NARRATOR: B-r-a-d-l-e-y?

MULLINGS: Yes. Uh-huh. And we were both sworn in at 8 o'clock in the morning at the District Building in Washington, D.C.

NARRATOR: Between 13th and 14th Street.

MULLINGS: Yes, by a lieutenant, I think he was a full lieutenant.

NARRATOR: What would you judge his age to be? In the 40s? 30s?

MULLINGS: Back then, it seemed to me like he was probably in his 40s. I think the officer corps was older in age back then than they were during the war and since the war, but they issued us travel orders and gave us . . .

NARRATOR: The travel orders consisted of one piece of paper with meal tickets or ?

MULLINGS: Yeah. With meal tickets to . . . We was to report to Norfolk, Virginia.

NARRATOR: Norfolk. For basic training?

MULLINGS: That's what we thought.

NARRATOR: O.K. And this was Berkeley.

MULLINGS: Well, Norfolk, and then we had to report to the District Office in Norfolk.



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NARRATOR: The Coast Guard District office?

MULLINGS: Yes, and we thought we would be going to boot camp from there. As it was, we got down there . . . We took a train and the train didn't leave until late on the day that we were sworn in . . . and . . .

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And we arrived down there on the 18th of December 1941, and we were immediately given papers (orders) to report to the U.S.S. *Carrabasset* [WAT-55].

NARRATOR: *Carrabasset*, can you spell the ship's name?

MULLINGS: (Spelling) C-a-r-r-a-b-a-s-s-e-t. It was a seagoing tug which at that time was probably 30-years-old, I guess, and it was doing patrol duty off Cape Hatteras.

NARRATOR: It was a Coast Guard-manned vessel?

MULLINGS: Yes. And it surprised us a little bit when these orders said U.S.S. *Carrabasset*!

NARRATOR: You thought it was going to be basic training?

MULLINGS: We thought we were going to some kind of boot camp and we were (laughing) delivered to the *Carrabasset* and reported aboard on the 18th, and we weren't on board very long before they picked up and went to sea, and we, Perry Bradley and myself, were going out to Cape Hatteras in our civvies. We didn't even have a uniform to wear!

NARRATOR: Oh, so you reported aboard ship in civilian clothes –

MULLINGS: Oh yes!

NARRATOR: - with orders for duty –

MULLINGS: Right!

NARRATOR: And what was the size of the crew when you reported onboard? Were you one of 20, one of 30? Do you recall the size at all?

MULLINGS: You mean the size of the crew of the ship?

NARRATOR: When you went aboard, you reported to the berthing area to find a bunk, right?

MULLINGS: Well, I would venture to say that there were . . . there was probably a crew of 30 or 40. I'm just guessing now.



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NARRATOR: Well, just your reminiscence.

MULLINGS: Yes. Uh-huh, and they . . . Of course, we were well indoctrinated in being seasick. You can understand that. I had never seen a ship before, much less . . .

NARRATOR: Going from Washington, D.C. to . . .

MULLINGS: . . . much less been on one and the things were happening pretty fast. I'll say this much for the Coast Guard. They tried to make somewhat of a sailor out of us before we got back because an hour each day an old boatswain's mate – I don't recall his name – used to take Perry Bradley and myself back on the fantail and sit us down and he would tie a knot and he would say, "Now, this is a square knot."

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And "This is a bowline." And, he would try to familiarize us with some of the navy lingo that was used on the ship, and . . .

NARRATOR: And all the while now you were still in civilian clothes?

MULLINGS: Yes, we had civilian clothes. And, it was ten days when we got back in and then they took us – I don't recall where it was – but they took us to a ship's store and outfitted us with our partial seabag and our uniforms and all the things that are supposedly issued at boot camp. We never really had an entire seabag because this particular ship's store didn't have everything and I recall that shortly after Christmas we were given a 48-hour liberty and we were told not to leave the city and this Perry Bradley and I. Of course, we were old salts by then.

(Laughter)

MULLINGS: We had been outside the gate, and so we hitchhiked home, which surprisingly got us rides real quick. We must have looked awful funny in those uniforms because neither one of them fit us.

(Laughter)

MULLINGS: But, we got home for a weekend.

NARRATOR: Did they have the shield on the uniforms?

MULLINGS: Yes, yes, it was on them. And so then when we came back which was the 30th – I am sure it was the 30th of December, as we approached the gangway, this quartermaster wanted to know our names and we told him and he said, "You two have just been transferred," and "You have been transferred to the *Alexander Hamilton* [WPG-34]."



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NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And of course, on the way, when we were returning from liberty, we were walking by this big ship on the right hand side of the dock as we passed it, and Bradley and I both looked at each other and said, "My God, I'd hate to be on that big thing. We'd get lost on there!"

NARRATOR: From the *Carrabasset* – yeah –

MULLINGS: As it turned out, that was the *Hamilton* that we were discussing.

NARRATOR: Things have a way of working out.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: When you were aboard the *Carrabasset*, do you recall some of the routine events that occurred aboard ship such as what type of hammock did you have? Did you have a mattress. Was it a spring mattress? What type of living conditions did you have aboard that ship?

MULLINGS: Aboard the *Carrabasset* we were issued a hammock.

NARRATOR: Stretched canvas?

MULLINGS: Stretched canvas.

NARRATOR: How many high? Three or four high?

MULLINGS: No, no. You mean between?

NARRATOR: Yeah, one on top of another?

MULLINGS: No, no, we were given hooks in the mess deck I believe and it was just one high as far as anybody sleeping below you.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: It wasn't like in a bunk. You just grabbed your hooks and hung your hammock up there. Of course, nobody ever told me how to sleep in a hammock, or how to get into one, and we didn't get that kind of training, but we managed to get up in them and then our lack of training came to the fore and I laid there just watching the overhead and when you get out in Cape Hatteras, it's kind of rough.

NARRATOR: All of a sudden a list.



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MULLINGS: At all times, and . . .

NARRATOR: Especially in the December period when they have cold weather.

MULLINGS: Yes, and of course I think from the time I hit that hammock until we tied up again I was seasick.

NARRATOR: All the entire period!

MULLINGS: Oh yes.

NARRATOR: So, you didn't really stand a watch?

MULLINGS: Oh yes, I did.

NARRATOR: You did? Despite seasickness.

MULLINGS: Oh yes, that didn't get you out of your watch.

NARRATOR: What do you remember about your watchstanding aboard the *Carrabasset*? What were you supposed to do? Since you were a seaman apprentice at the time?

MULLINGS: I was a seaman apprentice and mine was a lookout.

NARRATOR: For submarines I understand.

MULLINGS: Yes, or any other identified vessels, anything that was out of the ordinary and it was usually up on the open flying bridge. They didn't have too many watches on there, but I think that primarily that was what my duty was there and of course when you weren't on watch, you were expected to work about the decks and do whatever duties the boatswain's mate gave you.

NARRATOR: He was sort of like a father figure aboard that ship to you, the boatswain's mate?

MULLINGS: This particular one, yes, he was. Yes. I'll never forget him. I mean I wouldn't know his face or his name right now, but I'll never forget the way he treated us. It was contrary to everything that you might have seen in the movies or heard about these rough tough old boatswain's mates. This one was . . . he had a real rough looking face, but he had a tender voice and a tender heart for a couple of young kids that were probably scared to death and didn't know what was going on.

NARRATOR: How old would you say he was.

MULLINGS: I would say that he was probably close to 50.



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NARRATOR: Uh-huh, and was he a first class boatswain's mate or was he . . .

MULLINGS: Yes, he was first class – three big stripes.

NARRATOR: And he had been probably aboard the ship for quite awhile.

MULLINGS: I have no way of knowing that.

NARRATOR: Do you remember the commanding officer's name aboard that ship?

MULLINGS: I don't remember. Wait a minute. I think he was a chief warrant officer.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Coast Guard warrant officer?

MULLINGS: Yes, that's about all I remember of that. Of course, the faces don't mean anything to me, but . . .

NARRATOR: That's fine. The routine then was to go off for a couple of days and primarily look out for submarines I would imagine or any problems to be encountered in that area. Did you know at that time that there was a submarine traffic out there? Was the crew talking about when we go out now, we have to be careful because we might get hit by a torpedo. Was there a degree of anxiety amongst the crew for this?

MULLINGS: Well, there was a little bit of anxiety, but it wasn't necessarily that.

NARRATOR: How would you characterize it?

MULLINGS: The anxiety that I could see was with being one of the members that had been on there longer than us and they would say, "Well, if anything ever happened, we couldn't do anything. We've only got a four-pounder on here – and it doesn't work."

NARRATOR: It doesn't work!

MULLINGS: "We've got one .50 caliber that is jammed all the time," is what they said, you know, so it never really concerned me too much. It didn't seem to be any anxieties, but there was always that thought that if something does come up, what are we going to do.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: But of course at that time too, you know, the war broke out kind of suddenly and they were just throwing everything they had at it. They would just kind of detect . . .

NARRATOR: How big the things were . . . So, then you were piped ashore and now you were transferred to the *Hamilton*.



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MULLINGS: There was six of us – five or six of us transferred at the same time – all apprentice seamen that were to go to the *Hamilton* and it surprised me that when we came down the gangway with our seabags and all, the *Hamilton* was gone from her berth, and I couldn't figure out we could be transferred to a ship that wasn't there. But then, they put us in a truck and they took us over to a place called Little Creek, Virginia, which I guess was a naval or a Coast Guard depot, and they put us on a 75-footer Coast Guard boat.

NARRATOR: Do you recall the name?

MULLINGS: No, no I don't. And they took us out to the middle of Hampton Roads and the *Hamilton* was anchored, at anchor, in Hampton Roads and that was where they took us. As we went up the Jacob's ladder, there was a boatswain's mate up there that grabbed us and he told us to get down below and get into dungarees, and later on that day – this was in the morning – this was about 10 o'clock in the morning that we went aboard her – and later on in the day, I'm not sure just what time, maybe around 12 o'clock or so, they had call to get underway. Well, I never will forget the boatswain's mate name. His name was Johnnie Walker. He grabbed me . . .

NARRATOR: Johnnie Walker huh?

MULLINGS: Yeah. He grabbed me and said, "You go with this fella here and go down the chain locker."

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: Well, you know being an old salt, I had no idea what the chain locker was.

(Laughter)

NARRATOR: Being a young salt . . .

MULLINGS: Yeah, I really had no – no idea whatsoever – so I followed this fella down and he opens this little hatch and we got down near the keel of the ship, right up in the bow, and I looked and here is this chain flaked back and forth inside this little cubicle.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And he crawls up on in there and he gets a hook and he gives me one and we had to crawl up into this little locker and then as they started bringing the chain aboard, we had to flake the chain back, and of course, they were washing the chain off as they brought it up and we would get all the water, we'd get all the mud, and we'd get all the chain.

NARRATOR: Did it seem to you at the time that this was pretty dangerous or was it slowly moving back and forth – the chain?



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MULLINGS: It did at the time. It kind of scared me.

NARRATOR: I would image when you are talking about the chains like that.

MULLINGS: Yes, it was . . . it was a large chain and it just – Well, the thought struck me. Suppose this chain starts going out! Where are we going to go? But, then you were kept so busy that it was just an incident that you forgot about the danger involved.

NARRATOR: The danger involved?

MULLINGS: The danger involved in it, yes.

NARRATOR: I forgot to ask you what you recall about the type of food that you had aboard the other vessel that you were on.

MULLINGS: I don't think I ate very much.

NARRATOR: Because you were still sick with seasickness.

MULLINGS: Sick most of the time.

NARRATOR: Do you recall any of the remarks that the crewmembers might have made with regard to the chow or living conditions? Did they seem to be content with their standard of living at the time.

MULLINGS: Those that I – what little bit I did talk to – seemed to have the idea that they had good chow aboard the *Carrabasset* and I didn't really hear of any deep-seated gripes about what they had to do or how they had to do it. It seemed to me that they were a pretty content bunch of guys. I think probably they were happy that all the apprentice seamen got transferred because when the . . . A strange thing. The quartermaster told Perry Bradley and I – he said – "You two have been transferred to the *Alexander Hamilton*," and we said, "Golly, where's it going?" He says, "Well, it's going North and it isn't coming back."

NARRATOR: Oh. Do you remember the quartermaster's name?

MULLINGS: No. I said, "How do you know it's going North?" and he said, "Well, just the other day, they were loading foul weather gear on there and big fur coats and all, " and he said, "When she goes North, she won't be back." Well, I never took that as being an omen or anything, but I did in later years, I got to thinking it was awful strange. I suspected that maybe I should have listened to that guy.

NARRATOR: And he was observant as a quartermaster of what was being loaded aboard. Were there any other remarks that you recall from crewmembers from the *Carrabasset* when you guys were being transferred?



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MULLINGS: No, no. I can't recall. I was on there such a short time. We actually had a 48-hour liberty thrown in there also.

NARRATOR: And this was down there at Hatteras. Group Hatteras?

MULLINGS: Well, that was Norfolk.

NARRATOR: Norfolk was the liberty port.

MULLINGS: Yes, yes.

NARRATOR: Did you have a liberty pass, a card? ID?

MULLINGS: Yes. I think they issued us a paper ID.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. A wallet sized type of document or?

MULLINGS: Yes, more or less I believe it was.

NARRATOR: When you went on liberty, then you hitchhiked to Washington. There was no knowledge of the time then of USO activity in the immediate area or other places that you could go.

MULLINGS: Well, there was. We weren't interested. We were homesick.

NARRATOR: I see, yeah.

MULLINGS: Neither one of us had ever been away from home and at 17 years old, you know –

NARRATOR: Yeah. That's pretty young. So, now, getting back to the *Alexander Hamilton*, you went aboard in the morning and by noontime you were in the chain locker and between those periods, you had opportunity to go down to berthing and take your seabag down there?

MULLINGS: Yes, they had someone – I guess it was the master-at-arms – take us down and show us where our berthing compartment would be.

NARRATOR: What type of berthing compartments did you have – Did you have a pick of empty bunk or did they specifically have all SAs segregated into one area.

MULLINGS: Well, I don't recall how they had them, but I know that the five of us that went aboard, we were told that when the movie was over at night, if there were any hooks left on the mess deck, we could throw our hammocks up there. If not, we slept on the deck.

NARRATOR: Ooooh.



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MULLINGS: So, there were many a nights when if we weren't fast enough or we were on watch and you come down and you throw your hammock and your mattress down on the deck and you tie it to a stanchion . . .

NARRATOR: Outside now?

MULLINGS: No, this was –

NARRATOR: Inside, but in the passageway.

MULLINGS: On the mess deck. So right in the mess deck where the tables and all were set up, and you would tie your hammock to something so that when the ship rolls, you more or less stayed stationary. But, this was only after the movie at night and the movie was usually over by 10 o'clock, so this is where my particular berthing compartment was on the *Hamilton*. Of course, our seabags were stored in a different place. We had access to them.

NARRATOR: Were they in a locker or?

MULLINGS: Yeah, but just where it was I don't recall right now, but we had access to it. I believe they did issue us a locker – just a small locker.

NARRATOR: About a foot by a foot?

MULLINGS: Yes, I would say something in that neighborhood.

NARRATOR: To put your extra shoes in there and underwear and that sort of thing?

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: Did you get the feeling when you were going aboard with (was it) the other eight men?

MULLINGS: About five.

NARRATOR: And these were all the SAs?

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: And when you went onboard, did you get the feeling that there was a full complement of crew? That there was a lot of cramping, limited space?

MULLINGS: Oh yes, down below. Down below, there was . . . You knew that there were a lot of people aboard.



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NARRATOR: After the chain locker experience was over, and you were underway, did you know where you were going? Did the crew more or less talking that, "Hey, we are going to go to Africa," or "We're going to go to Canada next." Do you sort of remember what they were saying?

MULLINGS: Well, I know we asked where we were going. There were lots of rumors.

NARRATOR: Who did you ask? The master-at-arms?

MULLINGS: I believe I asked everybody I came across, but no one seemed to have a clear handle on anything.

NARRATOR: What were some of the guesses?

MULLINGS: Some of them would say, "Well, we're going South," some would say, "We're going North," and some of them would say, "Well, we're going that way to pick up a convoy," but we never really could tell until eventually we found out the next day we came into Portland, Maine.

NARRATOR: Staging area for a convoy.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: So, you went into Portland, Maine, and we are now into the month of December

—

MULLINGS: Well, this was the last day of December.

NARRATOR: And this was into pretty cold weather and now you probably got to use those foul weather jackets that were being stored away.

MULLINGS: Oh yes.

NARRATOR: So, all the crew was fully equipped with appropriate issue.

MULLINGS: Yeah, we were issued fur-lined jackets and trousers, bed-type trousers, and galoshes and gloves and of course a hat with a hood on the jacket. I don't believe the hood was on the jacket — it was a hat.

NARRATOR: Ear protection probably.

MULLINGS: Yes, yes. And I believe they had goggles — I was going to say they had goggles for night, but I don't guess they did. They came later on during the war.



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NARRATOR: For protection against the wind?

MULLINGS: No, to get your eyes acclimated down below before you walked out to the dark.

NARRATOR: Oh, I see.

MULLINGS: But we were issued the regular foul weather gear that was needed for cold weather and I think that was probably a pretty good indication of where they were going, but not necessarily. It didn't mean too much to me because I wasn't too familiar. I just figured maybe well, we if you are going out here and it's cold, they are going to give you this stuff to wear.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Now, we are in Portland. How long was the ship in Portland?

MULLINGS: I don't recall.

NARRATOR: Did it seem like a couple of days?

MULLINGS: It seemed like it was just two to three days I imagine.

NARRATOR: No liberty at that time?

MULLINGS: Oh yes, we were given liberty. We were also cautioned not to tell anyone the name of our ship. Don't tell anyone how many people are on the ship. Don't tell them where it came from, where it's going. In other words, just in general, don't discuss anything concerning military or what we have seen or heard.

NARRATOR: Speaking of the name of the vessel, were you aware that when the vessel was commissioned, it was called the *Alexander Hamilton*?

MULLINGS: Well, I knew – yes, I knew that.

NARRATOR: And then in about the mid-37, the name was changed from *Alexander Hamilton* to *Hamilton*?

MULLINGS: Well, I didn't know that.

NARRATOR: And in December of 1941, it was changed to *Alexander Hamilton*. I guess it was because the Navy had a ship . . .

MULLINGS: The Navy had a *Hamilton*, a destroyer I think.



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NARRATOR: That's probably why they did it. The crew apparently didn't realize name changes or anything like that.

MULLINGS: I doubt it.

NARRATOR: Any scuttlebutt about the . . .

MULLINGS: No, I doubt it. Like I say, I really didn't have too much time on the ship with the fellas before things got kind of hot, so . . .

NARRATOR: The ship was known to the crew as the *Alexander Hamilton* when you went aboard and from there on out, there was no confusion as to the name?

MULLINGS: No, no.

NARRATOR: Now, the liberty party that was ashore. Did all of them come back?

MULLINGS: Oh yes.

NARRATOR: No problems with desertion at that time or people on extensive liberty jaunts?

MULLINGS: I don't think so. We were at anchor and the Navy had a . . . well, it was a Navy anchorage I guess and the Navy had a liberty boat that went around from ship to ship, picking up liberty parties.

NARRATOR: How many vessels were in the area that the Navy gig was transporting?

MULLINGS: I don't know, but . . .

NARRATOR: Half a dozen?

MULLINGS: Oh, at least half a dozen, more than that probably because I can recall being in the liberty launch and having to stop at 5 or 6 ships before they got to my ship and there was still people on the liberty launch when we got off it.

NARRATOR: Everybody in the launch that was coming back, did they have to get back at a certain time?

MULLINGS: Yes, yes.

NARRATOR: Do you remember what the time was?

MULLINGS: I believe with us, I believe that our liberty expired at midnight.



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NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: It was very, bitterly cold, bitterly cold. Some of them with just the peacoats on and their flat hats . . .

NARRATOR: Pretty cold around the neck I would imagine.

MULLINGS: Yeah. Those peacoats were a warm coat and they would bundle them up.

NARRATOR: And this was the white cap?

MULLINGS: No, no. The white caps – we were not allowed to wear them at that time. It was the flat hat.

NARRATOR: The dark blue flat hat?

MULLINGS: Blue serge.

NARRATOR: With U.S. Coast Guard written across it.

MULLINGS: Yes, it always said "Coast Guard." It didn't say ship. It didn't say which ship. At one time, they had the names of the ship on their hats.

NARRATOR: *Hamilton*?

MULLINGS: I believe so. But I know the Navy at one time had the name of the ship on the hats.

NARRATOR: But to your knowledge, the members of the crew didn't have "*Hamilton*" on there before you showed up. It wasn't, in other words, a war time measure to take off the name of the ship from your headband and here with a replacement of "U.S. Coast Guard," on it.

MULLINGS: Well, I believe it was.

NARRATOR: Really?

MULLINGS: I believe at one time the Coast Guard also had the name of the vessel on the hat, but when I went in, they just issued, "U.S. Coast Guard." And of course at the time I went in, I didn't realize it fully at that time that we were actually under the Navy, part of the Navy.

NARRATOR: You didn't realize that at the time?

MULLINGS: I didn't realize that at the time.



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NARRATOR: Do you think that the others were under that same impression that we are in the Coast Guard that we are not part of the Navy?

MULLINGS: Some may have been. I never really gave it a thought.

NARRATOR: No general discussion of "what's going on here – these are all Navy ships and we're in the Coast Guard – what are we doing here?" Was there any confusion as to that?

MULLINGS: Well, not that early I don't think. I think later on, I came to realize that the Navy was controlling every thing.

NARRATOR: But at that point, you were in a situation where you probably felt part of the war effort rather than part of the Navy or part of any other element within that?

MULLINGS: Yes, I had a real sense of doing something important, which was something I had never done before in my life at 17 years old, and I felt that I was really part of something that was accomplishing something.

NARRATOR: When you were at your liberty port in Portland, did you feel restricted in any way because of your age? Did the older fellows that were on liberty do certain things that you younger guys did differently? For example, were there liquor laws that prohibited you from going into certain bars, or was there sort of a laxity in regards to these controls because of the war effort – as everybody knew that you guys were going on those ships and that you might not come back and so therefore we are not going to worry too much about asking ID's here.

MULLINGS: Well, at that time, I didn't know. I didn't drink at that time, so I never had too much contact with it, but when I did start drinking (which wasn't too much long after that), I guess . . .

NARRATOR: Well, when it got cold aboard ship, they used to pass out rounds of rum I guess.

MULLINGS: But, I never ran into the problem of anyone ever asking for my ID card. All during the war. Until the day I was 21.

NARRATOR: Did you look young as a 17-year-old?

MULLINGS: Oh, I think so. Yes. I only weighed about 125-130 pounds. Just a stringbean.

NARRATOR: The liberty port in Portland, did you get the feeling that the town was full of armed forces personnel? Was it very evident to you, or did the city more or less absorb everybody – there wasn't an obvious armed presence there?



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MULLINGS: At that time, I didn't particularly notice an overabundance of military. That's not to say that it wasn't there, but maybe my interest wasn't in that. I don't know, but I didn't notice it.

NARRATOR: So, you had a 48-hour liberty or 24-hour liberty?

MULLINGS: No, we'd usually get off at 4 or 4:30 and then liberty would be up at midnight.

NARRATOR: Probably would take you a half-hour to get to the liberty launch and then 30 minutes probably to get into town, so you only had maybe 3-4 hours.

MULLINGS: Well, I think the liberty launch I believe took us right into town. There was no problem there. It was all in what you wanted to do or you know if you had anything to see.

NARRATOR: Well, Portland is a small city.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: When liberty was over and you got back to ship by midnight and what happened at that point? After midnight, you went to bed of course on the mess deck and then how much longer did the ship stay in Portland before it went out?

MULLINGS: Well, like I said . . .

NARRATOR: Did you have any crew training for example at this point?

MULLINGS: Every day, we would have – from the day I went on – in fact, the first day I went on the *Hamilton* we would have drills. We would have general quarters drill every day and we would have abandon ship drills. We would have fire drills. We would have man overboard drills.

NARRATOR: And you would put on these life jackets.

MULLINGS: Well, that was in the standing orders from the time I went aboard her that at sea, you always had your life jacket with you.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh, since leaving Norfolk.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: These were made of cork, were they not?

MULLINGS: No, these were kapok.

NARRATOR: Kapok?



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MULLINGS: Kapok, yes.

NARRATOR: And so you had guys that had these on in the engine room too.

MULLINGS: I don't know whether they wore them in the engine room, but they were certainly within reach in the engine room.

NARRATOR: Did you notice everyone moving about the ship with these on? Was anybody having problems getting through the hatches at all?

MULLINGS: No, no, I didn't notice that.

NARRATOR: Did anybody say, "Well if I had this thing on and I'm down below, I'm going to have a hard time going up that hatch?"

MULLINGS: I don't think you actually had to wear it, but supposedly the order was that you had to have your life jacket with you.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. So, if you were in the gun tub, you would have it there. If you were up in the bridge area, you would have to have it stowed away someplace so that you could grab it quickly.

MULLINGS: Right, right.

NARRATOR: I see, o.k. So, they didn't have it on physically all the time.

MULLINGS: No, but most of them did - or were very religious about it. I know I was very religious, because I couldn't swim.

NARRATOR: Oh. The swim test then given at the recruiting office.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Nope, no swim test.

NARRATOR: What of the other crewmembers? Did you notice some others that didn't swim either?

MULLINGS: I wasn't aware of any at the time. There may have been. I believe - I can't be certain - but I believe very strongly that I was the youngest man on the ship, and I was certainly the most junior man in length of time of being in the service.



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NARRATOR: What did you recall as a result of being junior that you were given certainly responsibilities? Obviously, the senior person got privileges and the junior guy had to earn them probably?

MULLINGS: Well, I don't think there was any . . .

NARRATOR: Mess cook duty, that sort of thing.

MULLINGS: No, I went through my whole time in the Coast Guard and never got mess duty.

NARRATOR: Pretty lucky.

MULLINGS: Yes!

NARRATOR: When you were now leaving port, and you had the majority of the crew back from liberty – that would indicate that they didn't feel a life-threatening situation ahead of them – and the full crew now set sail. You are in a convoy. What were the typical drills that were being conducted at that point? Or, what was the ship's routine?

MULLINGS: Well, the emphasis on the drills was certainly on fire drill, collision drills, general quarters – they were the main ones.

NARRATOR: Once a day, or once every other day or when?

MULLINGS: Every day we had drills.

NARRATOR: Every day!

MULLINGS: We may not have the same drills every day, but I think we – I think every day we had general quarters drill.

NARRATOR: Considering air attack and submarine attack.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: Did you perceive, or did the crew perceive, that the greatest threat was submarine or aircraft or ?

MULLINGS: I think, well, in my case, I think it was submarine, and I think I probably arrived at that by hearing the fellows talk or talking amongst themselves.

NARRATOR: What do you recall hearing them say?



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MULLINGS: Well, at the time the U.S.S. *Ruben James* [DD-245] had been torpedoed and sunk around Iceland, not too long before. The destroyer.

NARRATOR: (Spelling) R-u-b-e-n J-a-m-e-s. The Navy destroyer?

MULLINGS: Yes, it was a destroyer. Yes, and there were others also that had been torpedoed and there was talk on the ship about these things you know.

NARRATOR: As a result of the liberty port experience in Portland talk?

MULLINGS: Well, it could have been. They could have been talking to Navy men and something of this nature, I couldn't really say.

NARRATOR: Would they say, "Where are we going and all this?"

MULLINGS: Yeah, everybody was wondering where we were going and when we got into the convoy, we were running as the convoy escort. We would run the perimeter of the convoy on a zig-zag course and we would continue to be looking out for submarines and aircraft and for the other ships and at that time some of the pocket battleships were still running from Germany, were still plying the seas. All these things have to enter . . . a seaman's mind, if you were out there.

NARRATOR: So, you were now a seaman aboard the *Hamilton* when you were in Portland. So, you went from SA to SN?

MULLINGS: No, I was just still an apprentice seaman.

NARRATOR: Still an apprentice, o.k.

MULLINGS: Yeah. All these things and all these possible dangers would come to mind, you know. All of us would read the newspapers or had read the newspapers, you know, and before you even got into the war, you would read these exploits of ships at sea and having them in battles and I know, I, myself, before the war, when the war started in England, I started keeping a scrapbook. I had a scrapbook full of war stories at one time that I left it at home when I went into the service. But, you read those things and you are bound to come up with some . . .

NARRATOR: Hypotheses?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: The general feeling amongst the crew was a little bit of fear of where you are going and obviously you are in a convoy, so your major goal is to protect the other ships.



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MULLINGS: Well, I don't know whether it was the fear so much as that of apprehension. We more or less were – the word got around that we were heading for Scotland with the convoy.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Scotland.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Was it the quartermaster who was passing the word, or?

MULLINGS: Well, you know how scuttlebutt – just gets around you know – and all of a sudden it starts drifting and nobody knows where it came from.

Coffee break.

NARRATOR: These are porcelain cups. Aboard ship, I guess they had to have metal or stainless steel. So coffee was made and put on the mess deck in these little pitchers of stainless steel?

MULLINGS: No, I'm trying to recall. They made it in the big urns.

NARRATOR: Up against the side of the bulkhead?

MULLINGS: But after it was put out, it was put out in stainless steel pitchers.

NARRATOR: The general breakfast consisted of bacon and eggs, or what would you – what do you recall in the terms of vittles that you were provided?

MULLINGS: Well, you have to remember that I was still seasick!

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Well, I think you ought to get your sea legs. Did you have some of the older fellows take you under their wings and show you how to kick the seasick habit/problem?

MULLINGS: Oh yeah, I think it was a good bunch of fellows on the ship. You know, some of them would try to needle you and others would try to help you, but I don't think any of them had malice in their hearts, it was just a big joke to them.

NARRATOR: That you had seasickness.

MULLINGS: Oh yes.

NARRATOR: Were you alone in this?



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MULLINGS: No, I don't think so.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: I had plenty of company.

NARRATOR: In the head, huh?

MULLINGS: You can bet on that.

NARRATOR: The people that were seasick, were they members of the deck force more than the engine room or ?

MULLINGS: Yeah, I think so. I think most of the newer fellows were on deck. I don't think they had too many that were down below in the black gang so to speak. I think generally at that time, a fellow went in as an apprentice seaman and then after he was in awhile, then he became either a fireman or stayed on deck.

NARRATOR: So, you realized you had a choice that you could go to the engine room if you wanted to, or did you have to put in for it?

MULLINGS: Yeah, I think I was aware of this.

NARRATOR: But, you wanted to stay on deck?

MULLINGS: Yeah, I liked the fresh air.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: So, you kind of figured that well if you got a torpedo in there, you'd be closer to the topside, huh?

MULLINGS: Well, you know, I guess really when you are looking back, I probably wasn't too concerned about either one. Just being there, I felt, was my duty – now whether I was in the black gang or the deck force, it never entered my mind.

NARRATOR: To ask for the differences, yeah. Now, you were seasick for the first couple of days at least or did it take you a week or so to get used to it?

MULLINGS: Oh yes, it took me, I guess probably – I know for a month probably. Every morning, you would get – at different times I would get woozy, but I always made it a point to get up on topside and get some fresh air.

NARRATOR: Now, we are in January, so the fresh air is pretty cold.



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MULLINGS: Yes, yes.

NARRATOR: So, you are all bundled up in your foul weather gear?

MULLINGS: I would bundle up and I would get up and maybe stand by the stack where there would be some heat and if I didn't have a watch or if I didn't have any duties to perform, I would get up there and stand by the heat with my back to the stack and let the fresh air blow in my face. If they had boiled eggs for breakfast or something, I'd vanish to get a couple of them and stick them in my pocket or crackers and put some crackers in my pocket and I'd go up there and I could eat it.

NARRATOR: I see, topside, yeah.

MULLINGS: Up in the air and they seemed to settle my stomach, but to sit down at the mess deck with the ship rolling and pitching, it didn't work too well.

NARRATOR: So, you have a method of solving your seasickness?

MULLINGS: Yeah, I think one of the older fellows on the *Hamilton* in particular was a first class boiler tender. I believe his name was Bettencourt.

NARRATOR: Bettencourt, ah!

MULLINGS: And he was quite a bit older. He must have been 50 or so, and he sort of took a liking to the younger fellows on the ship and he would tell us, "Well, now if you're getting seasick, you grab yourself some crackers and you get some air and you keep eating these crackers, and if you upchuck, get some more crackers right away," and he tried to make, you know sort of took us under his wing, and he was a real rough looking old fellow. He used to tell us he had been at sea all his life.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. In the Coast Guard!

MULLINGS: Yes, and so he was a big help in me overcoming my seasickness.

NARRATOR: When you were standing up on deck behind the stack, did you notice them having gunnery exercises at all aboard the ship?

MULLINGS: No, when they had gunnery exercises, everybody was involved. They didn't have just this one – they had gun watches now.

NARRATOR: Gun watches?

MULLINGS: You had men stationed on anti-aircraft guns. You had men stationed on 3-inch 50s or 5-inch 50s. You had a gun crew standing watches, actually manning the guns at that time.



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NARRATOR: Right after you left port?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: So, continually . . .

MULLINGS: These were wartime regulations for the ships. Our guns were always manned – not all the guns, but certain guns would be manned around-the-clock so that instantaneously they could be put into action.

NARRATOR: I see, so by having them prepared let's say for an eventuality, that would mean that you would have a loader there, you would have an aimer, and you would probably have a ---

MULLINGS: Yes, yes. As an example, we would have a 3-inch 50. Well, there would be a gun captain. You would have the trainer.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: You would have the pointer. You would have the loader, and you would have . . . There would be another man, I can't recall, but it was his job when the shell was ejected at the back end of the thing, it was his job to knock it down on the deck. He would hit it and slam it to the deck.

NARRATOR: So, it wouldn't . . .

MULLINGS: So, it wouldn't go behind, you know, just keep on going by walking on down the deck . . .

NARRATOR: I see. O.K.

MULLINGS: But this was the general . . .

NARRATOR: So, these were the 3-inch 50s?

MULLINGS: Yeah, yeah. Well, the same with each – the 5-inch 50s.

NARRATOR: These are some shots of the *Hamilton* with the forward guns visible.

MULLINGS: Yep. And you see the silhouette of this ship with this armament on it, you know from a distance, would look bigger, would give the appearance of being bigger than a destroyer.

NARRATOR: This is the picture of the forward port and starboard 3-inch 50s on the sides. That's what you were referring to and they were manning those on a 24-hour basis in the eventuality of needing them for quick action.



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MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: O.K., and how frequently did they exercise these guns?

MULLINGS: Oh, every day.

NARRATOR: Every day they would fire a round or what?

MULLINGS: No, no. I don't recall us ever firing any rounds when I was on her, but they would actually get up there and train the guns, move the guns around, make sure that everything was in working order.

NARRATOR: So, there was confidence that they would work if they needed to.

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. Yes!

NARRATOR: These particular shots were taken December 27th in Norfolk.

MULLINGS: That was three days before I went aboard her.

NARRATOR: So, some of the members of the crew here who are pictured might be familiar to you – that are standing around here. This was three days before you went aboard, so you would undoubtedly not be photographed in these.

MULLINGS: No, no I wouldn't. These are tremendous pictures.

NARRATOR: Well, we will see if we can get you copies.

MULLINGS: Oh, I would appreciate it very much.

NARRATOR: As you can tell, from the photograph at least, the ship was painted a camouflage color which was normal at that time. I believe it was Atlantic gray.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: Did the ship maintain that same color scheme throughout the period when you were there? Did you notice any attempts at changing the colors?

MULLINGS: No.

NARRATOR: That maybe the crew was out there touching up a little bit? Did you notice any last minute changes at all?

MULLINGS: No, no, nothing like that.



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NARRATOR: There's a shot of the starboard side.

MULLINGS: And now that the two lower ones were there with the semi-turrets, I believe, are the 5-inch 50s in the bow and you go up one just in front of the bridge, there is a 3-inch 50, I believe, and then of course those two in the stern I think were 3-inch 50's – not the stern, just forward of the stern are the 3-inch 50s I believe, and there is a 5-inch 50 on the quarterdeck also.

NARRATOR: They manned a port and starboard 3-inch 50s on the 24-hour period?

MULLINGS: Well, they would – I don't know whether they manned both of them, but they would always have one of them manned, and there was as I recall, there was someone at each one of the guns – whether it was a full crew or just one person – even the gun crews had to act as lookouts while we were on the watch.

NARRATOR: Even the gun crews were acting as lookouts?

MULLINGS: Oh yes.

NARRATOR: So, there was pretty good coverage of the horizon and in both port and starboard areas of the boat.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: They had one Y-gun on the *Hamilton*.

MULLINGS: Yes, that was for depth charges.

NARRATOR: And they had a rack of six depth charges or twelve?

MULLINGS: I believe it was more than six.

NARRATOR: In the picture, it is six. Did they add any in Portland or take out extra cans?

MULLINGS: No, I believe it was just as . . . Well, they may have taken on extra cans, but well, it looks to me that they have got about five or six – a rack of five or six with the K-gun here, but the depth charge racks running off the stern, I believe they had something like 10-12 cans in the rack themselves, ready to be unloaded.

NARRATOR: They never practiced dropping those?

MULLINGS: No, not while I was aboard her, no.



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NARRATOR: You were aboard her from start to finish, I guess, as the saying goes. The drills clearly were part of the daily routine, the general quarters and the man overboard drill and fire drills. That would be normal in that regard.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: Then they had monitored the armament on a 24-hour basis by having someone in the different parts of the vessel next to the guns so that they could put them in action whenever they needed them?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: And when you had general quarters at that point, everyone had their assigned station. What was your assigned station? Were you a loader or?

MULLINGS: No, at general quarters I was a telephone talker on the bridge.

NARRATOR: On the bridge . . .

MULLINGS: I relayed the information from the guns to the captain, from the captain to the guns.

NARRATOR: Over the sound-powered telephone?

MULLINGS: Yes. They were just headphones. It wasn't a PA system.

NARRATOR: No, but you had a little manual device. Did you blow into a tube? Was that the way?

MULLINGS: No, no. Well, wait a minute.

NARRATOR: When you were relaying the information, and you were communicating to the bridge?

MULLINGS: No, it was a set of headphones with the mouthpiece more or less rested on your chest.

NARRATOR: I see, and then you pushed down and talked into it?

MULLINGS: Right. Yes.

NARRATOR: So, you were the phone talker between the captain and all of the gun mounts?

MULLINGS: I believe it was, yes.



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NARRATOR: Now, the captain when he was . . . Do you remember his name at all?

MULLINGS: Yes. It was Commander Arthur G. Hall. He later became an admiral.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. How about the other members of the bridge? You were talking earlier about the quartermaster and who were the others that you can recall on the bridge, because you were there and probably saw them.

MULLINGS: I believe there was a quartermaster named Sorrells. Hmm. I can picture some of their faces today, but I can't . . .

NARRATOR: Smiling or ?

MULLINGS: I can't come up with their names. I know names – some of the names of the other crewmembers, but not in particular those up on the bridge, I can't . . .

NARRATOR: So, your assignment during all of these drills was the same – as a phone talker.

Between the captain and the various gun tubs and sections?

MULLINGS: Yes, yes.

NARRATOR: Did you recall, as you were obviously connected with the ASW side of the house too, so you would drop . . .

MULLINGS: ASW?

NARRATOR: The anti-submarine warfare side, so that would be the Y-gun and the depth charges.

MULLINGS: Well, they would have somebody manning them during the general quarters and drills, certainly yes.

NARRATOR: And how long did it take for the general quarters drill to be fully exercised? By the time they sounded the alarms, did you generally do it in 5 minutes, 7 minutes, 10 minutes?

MULLINGS: Well, it varied at different times. Now, whether there were other things going on at the time, I don't know. Sometimes we would be at general quarters for maybe two to three minutes; other times, we might be there for 10-15 minutes or 20 minutes.

NARRATOR: How long did it take to get to general quarters? Two to three minutes preparation time?

MULLINGS: No, I don't . . .



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NARRATOR: Everybody exit the racks . . . or if they were having general quarters drill if they were eating, take about a minute to get onto their stations?

MULLINGS: I don't think it would take that long.

NARRATOR: Everyone pretty excited there, huh?

MULLINGS: You could really move fast, because most of the time they . . . With general quarters, they didn't necessarily always preface it with "This is a drill," and so you didn't know whether it was the real thing or not, and so you always made every effort to get there just as fast as you could.

NARRATOR: That was the fear factor for sure. The training now that you were talking about, the different drills that were going on, was there an abandon ship drill as well?

MULLINGS: Oh, yes.

NARRATOR: What type of drill do you recall was the abandon ship drill – prior to the sinking, of course.

MULLINGS: Well, they when you went aboard, they always gave you a list of billets.

NARRATOR: Watch, quarter and station bill?

MULLINGS: Right watch, quarter and station bill, and they told you what your particular station was and if you were to provide anything, such as a canteen and such things of this nature.

NARRATOR: What was yours?

MULLINGS: My particular one was a life raft on the starboard stern.

NARRATOR: Starboard stern.

MULLINGS: And I was to provide canteens of water.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And of course other people – the gunner's mates they were usually to provide an automatic rifle or something of this nature – and other people had other things to provide. So, not everyone provided the same thing.

NARRATOR: So, when you had the abandon ship drill, you would stand by the raft with the canteens and the gunners mate would stand by with his automatic, say?



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MULLINGS: No, not necessarily. These things were all stored naturally and they would – with the drills other than general quarters, they would usually preface it with "Do not provide." They would say, "There will be an abandon ship drill. Do not provide."

NARRATOR: And that would be the loudspeaker announcement?

MULLINGS: Yes, so therefore you wouldn't provide what you normally would if you were really abandoning ship.

NARRATOR: Did they ever during the process of these drills say, "Provide!?" Just as an exercise?

MULLINGS: No, not that I can recall.

NARRATOR: So, they never went that far in the drill, so that you could actually see that the canteens were full of water or not?

MULLINGS: Well, you knew that they were because you knew where they were.

NARRATOR: And they were full of water?

MULLINGS: Oh yes.

NARRATOR: You had them stopped up?

MULLINGS: Well, yes. When these watch, station billets were shown to me –

NARRATOR: On your first day aboard ship?

MULLINGS: I made it an effort to go around and see where these different things were, because everything everyday was alien to me. These were new things to me – everyday of my life that I had never heard of, never seen, and I was kind of curious to know just what they were. I would hate to go running down with an empty pot if I was supposed to be bringing canteens.

NARRATOR: The raft now that you were assigned to with the canteens. Were there six or seven other people to that same assigned raft?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: There were eight? Ten? Do you remember?

MULLINGS: As I recall, I believe there were close to 10 of us.

NARRATOR: Ten of you for that one raft!



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MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: And so when you had the drill, you would stand up around that raft.

MULLINGS: Well, the raft would be secured on deck. We would congregate at that particular point.

NARRATOR: So, you would leave the bridge and take the sound-powered phones off and you would go to your station.

MULLINGS: Only if I was at general quarters and they said to abandon ship, but at other times you know, at other times I stood lookout watches.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: We had a watch program that was two-on and two-off, which was kind of rough.

NARRATOR: Like in that from the beginning of the day of the convoy?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: Two-on and two hours off. Was there any talk of , "Well, this is unfair because the last time we were on duty, it was four-on and four off."

MULLINGS: No, no.

NARRATOR: They just said two hours on and two hours off.

MULLINGS: Yes, this was it.

NARRATOR: Navy procedure or the ship's captain's procedure?

MULLINGS: I guess it was the captain's procedure. I don't know. But, unless I am sadly mistaken, we had two-on and two-off. I know I got so I could sleep any place!

Laughing.

MULLINGS: Standing up, laying down. It didn't matter.

NARRATOR: Just turn that sleep mechanism on, huh?

MULLINGS: But at times when you were at general quarters, then you didn't leave there unless they told you to abandon ship drill, but most of the time I would be . . . I would not be at my general quarters station. I would be at my sea watch station which would be as a lookout, either



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in the crow's nest or in the bow, or on the wings of the bridge, or in the stern or in one of the gun tubs – something of this nature.

NARRATOR: So, your watch standing changed – the location where you were supposed to stand your watch changed periodically?

MULLINGS: Yeah, the boatswain's mate of the watch could change you, you know. In other words, if you were supposed to be – he would call a muster and he's say, "Now, all right, Mullings, I want you to go up on the starboard wing," and next time he would say, "Now, Mullings, you take the stern lookout."

NARRATOR: Which was the worst? Which one did you hate to go to?

MULLINGS: Er . . . I don't think I really hated any of them. I enjoyed them.

NARRATOR: I was figuring the stern might have been the worst one because it would be bouncing a little bit high up there.

MULLINGS: Well, the bow bounces kind of high too and you get a lot of spray, but I think probably the worst would be up on the bridge.

NARRATOR: On the bridge?

MULLINGS: Because of . . . I was, you know, I was intimidated by the brass and – excuse me –

NARRATOR: Oh, that's all right.

MULLINGS: And to me Commander Hall, when he came around, he was – here I was a 17-year-old kid. He was a god you know. He was THE MAN. When one of the officers told me to jump, man I just asked which way should I jump, and so the bridge would have to have been the one . . .

NARRATOR: The one you dreaded the most?

MULLINGS: The one I dreaded the most, when I first went in of course. Naturally, after awhile, you get used to all . . . The crow's nest I probably wasn't too crazy about that as you had to climb up the stick.

NARRATOR: Hand over hand?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Now, the Atlantic at that time in the month of January, we are into pretty cold weather . . .



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MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: And when you are standing these watches, you had a degree of spray going on.

MULLINGS: Oh yes.

NARRATOR: It was pretty cold.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: Did anybody get frostbite? Any problems in that area?

MULLINGS: Well, I don't know whether they did or not, because I was never around the sick bay that much, but I know that there were times that you would wind up with ice on your eyelashes from the cold. It really was cold then.

NARRATOR: The chow aboard the vessel probably changed after awhile. I would imagine that they ran out of eggs at some point on the patrol.

MULLINGS: Well –

NARRATOR: Did you notice any changes in the living standards that occurred after having been off for a couple of weeks? Did you notice that the cook would say, "Hey, got no more of this, because we didn't stock up enough?"

MULLINGS: No, not that I can recall. See in my young life, I came from a poor, poor family. I lived in the poor section of Washington and strange as it may seem, life aboard the cutters was a step up.

NARRATOR: Well, that I can imagine, yes.

MULLINGS: And what food I ate was good to me. In fact, all my time in the service, I don't think I ever got bad food. I may be all alone in that, but I never noticed it. We had night rations.

NARRATOR: What would they consist of?

MULLINGS: Night rations on the *Hamilton*? I think they were sardines.

NARRATOR: Sardines?

MULLINGS: A can of sardines and crackers.

NARRATOR: You got an individual can of sardines?



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MULLINGS: Yes, yes, and some crackers.

NARRATOR: Ah, pretty good. What was a typical dinner then? If that was night rations?

MULLINGS: Oh, typical dinner would be – it could be almost anything. Anything you would have ashore. It could be hot dogs and beans or it could hamburgers or it could be beef of some sort.

NARRATOR: Frozen of course and then they would break it out.

MULLINGS: I guess so. Yeah. And breakfast was usually SOS or . . .

NARRATOR: Chipped beef right?

MULLINGS: Which is good! And then they would have some beans for breakfast at times.

NARRATOR: Beans for breakfast? Really?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Well, that's pretty heavy.

MULLINGS: And they had eggs. Now whether the eggs were powdered or what, I don't know, because I think at that time the only kind of egg I would eat would be a scrambled egg and if I saw a bit of white, I wouldn't touch it, so....

NARRATOR: Well, you were still pretty touchy with your stomach at that time, too.

MULLINGS: So, I could see nothing wrong with the food. I could see no shortages either.

NARRATOR: Generally, the crew was pretty content with their food.

MULLINGS: Yeah, I can't recall any complaints.

NARRATOR: You were mentioned the relationship between you and the bridge, did you notice the other crewmembers dreading the same watch of going up to the bridge. Did you notice a little anxiety with the officer corps up there?

MULLINGS: Well, I don't know whether it was anxiety. I know a lot of them didn't like that watch up there. They would rather go back on the fantail where they could . . .

NARRATOR: Kind of be alone and really . . .



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MULLINGS: Get down under a tarp and light a cigarette. You know, there was no smoking allowed on deck. It's at night and at sea and during the war and most of them would like to get back there where they could get under the tarp and light a cigarette and smoke and nobody would bother them. Of course, you would have some that was supposed to be watching and get down that the boatswain's mate didn't keep on them, they would be asleep. You always had that kind.

NARRATOR: Really?

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Well, I guess that's traditional too.

MULLINGS: Fortunately, they were in the minority.

NARRATOR: Speaking of the minority, did you have an all white crew or did you have any Asians aboard your vessel?

MULLINGS: Yeah, we had some Asians and we had some blacks, but at that particular time they were stewards – mostly for the officers and we had Filipino cook. I believe he was the cook for the officers and the captain and they had the colored stewards that served the officers at that time. We didn't have any on the deck force or in the black gang.

NARRATOR: Did the crew just generally get along well together, no problems with racism or anything like that at that time.

MULLINGS: Not at that time, no.

NARRATOR: We talked about Captain Hall who was the commanding officer of the vessel, do you recall any of the other officers that were there, names of those officers? I would guess that there would be a couple of warrant officers, a couple of chiefs.

MULLINGS: Yeah, there was one warrant officer that was killed. His name was Zieck, I think. And I believe that he had something to do with the design of the vessel when it was built.

NARRATOR: The warrant engineering officer?

MULLINGS: Yes. And also there was a poem written about him, I believe, and I have a copy of it some place, but I'm not sure . . . I found it in a magazine. They had a *Coast Guard Magazine* out during the war and I clipped it out of that, but it was about this warrant officer who died on the *Hamilton*. Some of the other officers . . .

NARRATOR: Was he the only officer killed?



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MULLINGS: I believe so. I just can't come up with any names now. I had a whole list a roster . . . but . . .

NARRATOR: Oh, that's o.k.

MULLINGS: But, I just can't now.

NARRATOR: But, in general, the 2 on and 2 off watch would allow you to rotate amongst the various watches on the ship, the port and starboard side, and you would be up on the bridge for awhile . . . and the other seaman apprentices would do the same.

MULLINGS: Yes, yes.

NARRATOR: Now, was there any training other than what we have been talking about where the watches other than the watches and the man overboard drill and the general quarters drill? As you mentioned early on the *Carrabassett*, the boatswain's mate would take you aside and show you the knots on the stern . . . Were there similar training exercises that you encountered when you were aboard the *Hamilton*, for example, damage control?

MULLINGS: No. Well, they would have damage control drills, but that consisted somewhat of the explanation of how to get a collision mat over the side if you have a hole in the side of your vessel.

NARRATOR: Drop it over the exterior?

MULLINGS: Yeah, things of this nature and what to do, how to shore up a bulkhead down below, and but most of that were conducted for those whose battle stations were damage control. I think it seems to me that one time one of the boatswain's mates – I asked one of them on the *Hamilton* some questions and he said, "Well, read your *Blue Jacket's Manual*," and says, "You will get a lot out of that. "

NARRATOR: Oh.

MULLINGS: So, I did read it. I read my *Blue Jacket's Manual*, because I have always been inquisitive and every time I got a line in my hand and something was around and one of the older seaman – of course, EVERYBODY was older than me anyhow, so no matter I was around, I was with older people. If they would go to tie something, I would ask. I'd say, "How do you tie this knot?" or "How do you splice this line?" or "What does this do?" and 99-9/10% of the time, I got a good decent answer. Nobody ridiculed me or anything else. If they did, I'd say, "I don't know anything – somebody's got to help me."

Laughter.



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NARRATOR: So, to your knowledge, they did have damage control exercises and just as they did the others. Did the members of the damage control team that did whatever they did with regard to that – did you have any occasion to talk to any of these guys about what do we do if we are sinking, what do we do if we get torpedoed – was there a fairly confident attitude about "Well, if we are going to get torpedoed, those guys are going to take care of the hole."

MULLINGS: Well, no, I don't think I ever got into any discussions like that.

NARRATOR: Now, the *Hamilton* had a picture of it taken around 1939, when it was up in Alaska. You will note an aircraft on the stern there. There wasn't an aircraft on board when you were on?

MULLINGS: No. In fact where the aircraft is there now – she had a 5-inch gun I believe when I was on her. And it doesn't look like the same ship. She's been reworked before I got on it. Now, there was no aircraft. You couldn't even tell where an aircraft had been.

NARRATOR: Now it was painted gray there of course. Did it have any radar do you recall when you were aboard? I don't see any radar in these photographs at least.

MULLINGS: I don't recall if they did or not. It may have, but I doubt it. If this was taken three days before, I don't believe she did have, because radar I think didn't come in until a little bit later, didn't it?

NARRATOR: Probably a little bit later on. I was thinking of that warrant officer that you were talking about. Might he be one of these? Here's a lieutenant that appears to be in the picture on the left and that fellow down there on the right, might he have been that person you were . . .

MULLINGS: It's possible, but I really couldn't say. I doubt that. I believe he has a full eagle on his cap. I don't think he would have been a warrant officer.

NARRATOR: This is another shot of an officer here. Was he . . .

MULLINGS: More than likely that would have been the gunnery office there.

NARRATOR: Do you remember who he was?

MULLINGS: No.

NARRATOR: Was there just one gunnery officer aboard the ship?

MULLINGS: As far as I know.

NARRATOR: Because the complement in 1941 was 16 officers, 5 warrants, and 200 men.



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MULLINGS: Uh-huh. That's about 327 feet long, so that's almost a man every foot!

NARRATOR: That's right.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Pretty packed, huh?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Is that what it felt like, too?

MULLINGS: You knew there were a lot of people aboard. Uh-huh. I never got the feel that I was being crushed, except that, well, at bedtime. When you went through those berthing compartments, you knew it was full! And especially in the mess deck. You would have hammocks from all the hooks and then you'd have these fellows lying on the hammocks on the deck, and so you had to step around them, step over them, and sometimes step on them to get through.

NARRATOR: Were the berthing areas lit with red lamps?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: They used the red light on the inside of a circle?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: And were you at circle zebra or what type of controls were you on with the hatches. Did you have condition yoke set or what?

MULLINGS: Condition baker or able, I'm not sure which one, anyhow we would run with all hatches battened down, down below decks. You went through one hatch, you undogged it and dogged it again when you got through on the other side.

NARRATOR: And that was a real consistent effort to do that.

MULLINGS: Oh yes, oh yes.

NARRATOR: There was no fudging on that.

MULLINGS: No, no.

NARRATOR: I mean everyone pretty much understood that if they didn't do that and if they got hit, then they'd be problems ahead.



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MULLINGS: Oh yes, yes.

NARRATOR: What about the portholes? Were the hatches similarly dogged? On the mess deck, I would imagine you would have a few open.

MULLINGS: At night, I'm sure they were always dogged. I'm not sure about daytime. It's a possibility.

NARRATOR: When you were in the berthing spaces, you were on the mess deck, did you hear any engine noise? Any problems? You said you were able to sleep under almost any circumstances. Did you notice any other people complaining: "Boy, I can't sleep because I'm right next to the engine room."

MULLINGS: No. You were always aware that the engines were turning over, because there was always a certain amount of vibration and a certain hum or a drone.

NARRATOR: You were going at about what – 19 knots, or you were cruising at about 14 I would imagine. Maximum speed was about 19 wide open and the maximum sustained speed was about 19 knots, so I would imagine that while it was an economic speed of 11 and up to 13, so you were probably somewhere in between there.

MULLINGS: Yeah, probably so. It would all depend.

NARRATOR: On sea conditions?

MULLINGS: Yes, on what we were doing, sea conditions.

NARRATOR: Did you get the feeling that there was any mechanical breakdown problems? A new ship like you would have some breaking-in to do with equipment. Did the heat always work?

MULLINGS: Oh yes, far as I know.

NARRATOR: You had a couple of days where you had no heat?

MULLINGS: Oh no, not aboard that ship.

NARRATOR: And so that seemed to be no problem. We are in the month of January and we are fast approaching the date when the *Hamilton* sunk here. The patrol was nearing Iceland as I remember.

MULLINGS: I don't know where we were. We were dispatched from the convoy and the word that we got was that since we were Coast Guard vessel and we were equipped for towing that the Navy supply ship *Yukon*, the U.S.S. *Yukon* [AF-9], was adrift in the Atlantic, unable to get any



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power up to get underway, so we were dispatched from the convoy to go to her aid and how long it took us to get to her aid, whether she was in the same convoy we were in, I don't know. I don't think so. I think she was adrift by herself, and we were dispatched to her and got over to her. It was rather heavy seas.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And we tried getting a line to her by means of a Lyle gun and that didn't succeed too well, and as I recall, the captain took the conn and put the stern – and this was really a raging sea that both ships were just going like this – and he put the stern right underneath that bow of the *Yukon* and got a line aboard and then we paid out the towing hawser and got her under tow. She was a pretty vessel. I imagine she was probably 400 feet long I guess. We started towing her to Iceland. I think it was then that we found out that we were going to Iceland. Somebody said that we were going to Iceland.

NARRATOR: That would be the radioman probably who I imagine would have leaked the information.

MULLINGS: Uh-huh, the quartermaster or somebody.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: And we towed her, I guess, for about five days – four or five days. At one point, at night we were watching the movie while we were towing her. Of course, the movies were shown on the mess deck and those that weren't on watch could watch the movie, and just about in the middle of that movie, probably 9 o'clock or so, we had a very loud thud – a thump – you could feel it – just like slock!

NARRATOR: Hit the side of the ship.

MULLINGS: Smack in the side of the ship, and even before GQ sounded everybody was on their feet. It was that loud of a noise.

NARRATOR: So, everybody had a -

MULLINGS: We were on our way to our battle stations, but we were never told what it was. Maybe nobody ever find out what it was. And this was a few days before we got torpedoed. And so we secured from general quarters and continued on our way.

NARRATOR: So, this loud thud was not the collision of the other ship that you were towing?

MULLINGS: No, no. She was hundreds of feet behind us on the other end of the line.



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NARRATOR: So, you were towing the other ship and during that evening movie you had this loud thud.

MULLINGS: But, it was the consensus of the crew – now whether they are smart enough to know or not – that a sub had actually fired a torpedo and had hit – it had bounced off the keel and had not exploded. Now, whether this is true or not . . .

NARRATOR: That was the feeling that was down below at least – on the thud.

MULLINGS: Yes, but this was the consensus of the crew before we ever knew we were going to get hit with the torpedo.

NARRATOR: Well, then you had a feeling then of having heard this thud – that it put everybody on the alert that . . . it could happen.

MULLINGS: Yeah. I think so. It made me think.

NARRATOR: Well, you were probably not alone.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Now, we are talking about the thud and it was very quick and after that you went to general quarters. How long did you stay at general quarters?

MULLINGS: Oh, it was a short time, probably 15-20 minutes.

NARRATOR: 15-20 minutes?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: And when you went to general quarters, you were on the bridge?

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: Do you recall any of the conversation between the commanding officer and the quartermaster? Did he say, "Well, let's be on the alert for that submarine." Did he suggest any activity that . . .

MULLINGS: No, I don't think so.

NARRATOR: Just kind of everybody was looking out, huh?

MULLINGS: From what I remember of Commander Hall, he was very low key. He didn't raise his voice or anything. He was very "in-control" of himself at all times I think. He wasn't the



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excitable type and as he spoke he would just speak in a normal tone of voice I can remember. I can remember at that time when he was giving the orders on the bridge when we got torpedoed how calm and normal his voice sounded.

NARRATOR: This was two days before you were torpedoed.

MULLINGS: Something like that.

NARRATOR: Then, you were steaming still towards Iceland? Actually, you were about 17 miles off Reykjavik, Iceland, when you were torpedoed and this was the 29th of January of 1942.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: The ship had been assigned to the Navy for duty from the 27th of December 1941 until this point?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: I'm sorry. On the 11th of September 1941, the ship was assigned to the Navy for duty and on the 27th of December 1941, it was assigned to this particular commander, TF-24.6.2, which is the convoy, and then on the 29th of January 1942, you were torpedoed.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: Now, what can you recall about the events surrounding that torpedoing? Was it in the morning, the torpedoing?

MULLINGS: No. No, it was at noontime.

NARRATOR: About noontime. After the meal – did you have a chance to eat?

MULLINGS: Yes, it was after the meal. We had come in sight of Iceland and this excited me. I had never been out of the country before and I was kind of looking forward to it. Someone had mentioned we were in "Torpedo Junction." They said, "This is 'Torpedo Junction.'" I never gave it a thought and . . .

NARRATOR: Where were you at the time when somebody mentioned this? Were you on the bridge?

MULLINGS: We were within sight. We still had the *Yukon* in tow.

NARRATOR: What was your position? Were you on the bridge when someone said that.



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MULLINGS: No, I believe I was on the mess deck or someplace else. At lunch time, this fellow that was sworn in with me – Perry Bradley. He and I always used to go over on the starboard passageway. There was a passageway that ran from the mess deck back to the officers' quarters and in between was where this passageway down below was the engine room and the boiler room and Perry Bradley and I and two or three others used to go over into this starboard passageway and lie down after lunch for a half hour until muster or so, whenever we didn't have the watch, and this particular day, we started through the hatch and the boatswain's mate grabbed us and he said, "You know, we gotta get up on the fantail. We're going to take our tow line in from . . . There's a tug out to take the tow over from us." So, he took us up on the fantail and we were working for I guess a half hour or so getting the line aboard. At one point, we had to stop dead in the water because our line got tangled up – or something got tangled up around the screw or something, but they managed to free it, and when we got it up aboard and got it on board, the boatswain's mate dismissed us. He said, "Go on down below, and wait for muster." We had muster every day shortly after noon or something.

NARRATOR: O.K. A morning muster and then a muster at 1 o'clock or so?

MULLINGS: So, Perry and I went down and instead of going to the starboard passageway where we normally went, we went to the little ship's store we had where they sold candy bars and things of this nature, and they put it on a tab. You didn't have to have any money there because we didn't get paid.

NARRATOR: You didn't get paid.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: They let us put in on the pad and then pay day we could pay it. So, we went in there and got a candy bar I guess and this particular place was located in a berthing compartment, just the forward of the mess deck.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And we got a couple of candy bars and there were other fellows in there. There must have been seven or eight fellows standing around and there were fellows laying in their bunks, so Perry and I walked over and we sat down on the magazine hatch which was in this particular area and the fellows were just gabbing back and forth and eating their candy bars or smoking their cigarettes and whatever it was, and all of a sudden we heard this tremendous explosion.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And with it, the ship just shuddered and immediately she heeled to the starboard side.



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NARRATOR: The force of the explosion just pushed it over . . .

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: So, you were off balance at that point. Did you feel yourself moving off balance?

MULLINGS: No, because I went up in the air, and when I came down I was on my feet.

NARRATOR: So, it lifted you up.

MULLINGS: It lifted me up and when I came down I was standing up and so . . .

NARRATOR: A foot up or half a foot up or?

MULLINGS: Oh, I really don't know how high, but I was immediately, I mean, everybody – you could hear loud voices, but you didn't – there is no recollection of what anybody was saying. I'm sure somebody said, "Let's get out of here!" because immediately the ship went pitch black. There were no lights down there. Everything was gone, so we started back and there was right in the same compartment a ladder going up on the port side to go on the first deck. It seems like there were two other fellows ahead of me and of course all these people were on this ladder, trying to get out, and they couldn't get the hatch open, and luckily there was a couple of big old salts. I think one of them was a boatswain's mate and the other was a gunner's mate or something and they screamed, "Get out of the way! Let us get up there," and they got up there and the hatch had jammed, evidently from the impact of the explosion or what it was, and they forced the hatch open the two of them with their shoulders and we went out on topside.

NARRATOR: With life jackets on? Were you wearing the life jacket when you was down there?

MULLINGS: I was sitting on mine. I got up on topside and still hadn't given it any thought and the boatswain's mate started hollering, "Go to your battle stations," so, I immediately went to my battle station and when I got up there and put my coat on, I discovered I didn't have a life jacket.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: And that immediately brought to mind that I couldn't swim.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: But, of course, things were happening pretty fast and . . .

NARRATOR: Did you notice other people at the same time when that explosion hit, did you notice other people wearing their life jackets too at that time?



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MULLINGS: Oh, yes. Yes. Some had them on and some didn't. I saw one officer in his skivvies. He didn't have a life jacket on either.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Of course, some of the wounded. They didn't have life jackets on. Help was pretty fast to get to the wounded.

NARRATOR: Do you recall what section of the ship . . . Now, you were on the bridge now because that was your station and you had your phones on. Did you have power to communicate with?

MULLINGS: No. There was no power on my phones. I reported that to the captain. They had no power and could not use signal lights to attract attention.

NARRATOR: So, there was no way that the captain could say "Fire Y-guns" or whatever.

MULLINGS: We could fire our guns.

NARRATOR: How could he give the command to fire if he didn't have . . .

MULLINGS: Oh, he had to do it verbally.

NARRATOR: Just yell down from the bridge--fire a gun, fire a gun.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: I see.

MULLINGS: He was on the bridge and the destroyer U.S.S. *Gwin* [DD-433] had come out and was running circles around us as well while we transferred our tow and then the *Gwin* started escorting our tow and the tug into port. Of course, when we got hit, we ran our American flag up on the yardarm upside down as a distress signal.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And we still got no response.

NARRATOR: Response from?

MULLINGS: From the destroyer or any other ship that was within sight of us. So, then they couldn't use the signal lights because they operated under power and there was no power. So, the captain ordered the forward 5-inch .38 gun crew to fire several shots towards the destroyer – the *Gwin*.



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NARRATOR: To attract its attention?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: I see.

MULLINGS: And when they did that, then the *Gwin* I think discovered that we were in distress and . . .

NARRATOR: Obviously, it got their attention!

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Yes, and I don't recall how long I was at my battle station. Things went so fast that at that time they were going fast and for a scared 17-year-old boy, surprisingly I didn't panic. I didn't know I was scared at the time.

NARRATOR: So, these events were occurring rather rapidly and you were . . .

MULLINGS: I remember Captain Hall asking the executive officer I guess to check on the damage.

NARRATOR: That was obviously before the gun was fired, right?

MULLINGS: Yes, yes.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And I can remember when Captain Hall told us to secure from battle stations and prepare to abandon ship.

NARRATOR: Secure from battle stations, sure . . . And do you remember what time span – an hour, two hours?

MULLINGS: The time span – we got hit shortly after 1 o'clock in the afternoon and we were taken off, I believe, somewhere around 3 o'clock.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: Of course, in the meantime, we had put four lifeboats over the side . . .

NARRATOR: Probably an hour afterwards?

MULLINGS: I don't know if it was that long. Like I say, I lost all track of time.



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NARRATOR: So, the severity of the damage was they knew they were sinking?

MULLINGS: We were going down on the side. It was listing more and more all the time.

NARRATOR: So, within 30 minutes, there was a degree of list then that concerned everyone.

MULLINGS: Yes, oh yes. Yes. And, so they – they had – all those that were assigned to boats – for abandon ship. Of course, they reported to them and others reported to the life rafts, and there was – I can't recall whether there were three or four boats lost with the explosion.

NARRATOR: Four of the?

MULLINGS: Of the lifeboats.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And, of course, we put four boats over. I think they were put over on the starboard side, and they put the wounded men in one of them. Some of the wounded – most of the wounded men in one of them.

NARRATOR: What are you talking about, maybe six people?

MULLINGS: I can't be certain. There were quite a few wounded. There were 26 killed there must have been 15 or 20 wounded. I'm not certain.

NARRATOR: That's o.k.

MULLINGS: But, at any rate, the one boat that didn't have any wounded in it capsized.

NARRATOR: The one boat that didn't have wounded in it – capsized?

MULLINGS: Capsized.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And, of course, there were fishing boats out there that just went right on by. Ignored us completely.

NARRATOR: Even ignored the capsized . . .

MULLINGS: The lifeboat, yeah. But they were eventually picked up by a fisherman, a fishing vessel. And, of course, when I discovered that I didn't have a life jacket and when he said, "Prepare to abandon ship," that's when it really struck me. I should have a life jacket!!



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Laughter.

MULLINGS: If I couldn't swim, I was going to have to learn real quick if I didn't get a life jacket. So, I started down on the – back on the port side – heading for my abandon ship station, and when I remembered that I needed the life jacket, so I looked in the boat that was still in its cradle. The lifeboat was still in its cradle and I jumped in to get a life jacket from under the thwart and my foot went through a big hole in the bottom of the boat.

NARRATOR: Oh, no!

MULLINGS: It was a good 12 inches in diameter or something. I almost went through the boat. But, after extricating myself from that, I got a life jacket and it was pretty well water soaked.

NARRATOR: Hmm. This was on deck, though, right?

MULLINGS: Yes. While it was still in its davits over the side.

NARRATOR: But, it was over the side and had a big hole in it. So, the force of the explosion had wrenched out a hole?

MULLINGS: Somehow had put a hole in the boat there. So, I got the jacket. It must have weighed 50 pounds with water in it. And, I went back to my station, and of course I had to get the canteens and I got a big box of canteens – a wooden box of canteens. They must have weighed 150 pounds, but as scared as I was, it felt like it was light. I just picked it up and threw it on my shoulders and . . .

NARRATOR: Went with it!

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Went back. I started to go back to the ladder. There used to be a ladder that went straight back off of the second deck down to the main deck, and the ladder was blown away, so I had to go to another ladder and come down, and standing back there was a cook. His name was Lucas. We were all standing around and the big gunner's mate was in charge of our raft and I said to him, I said, "Guns, do you think this jacket is going to hold me up? It's water soaked." And, he said, "It'll be all right. You'll be all right." And the cook, Lucas, looked at me and said, "What are you worried about?" He said, "Look," and he turned around his and his life jacket was split right down the middle.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Well, I didn't feel too bad after that.

NARRATOR: Did he change his life jacket after he said that?



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MULLINGS: Well, no, he kept it on. But, we were certain, well, we didn't know whether we were going to go in the water or not. Of course, the gunner's mate, he gave us instructions. He said, "We're going to drop the life raft in the water when the word comes, and then you jump in the water and swim to the raft."

NARRATOR: Un-huh.

MULLINGS: Well, it was awfully cold.

NARRATOR: Were you wearing your foul weather jacket too?

MULLINGS: Yes, yes. Oh, yes. Foul weather gear on.

NARRATOR: Underneath and then you had the kapok on top?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Gloves on too? And the hat?

MULLINGS: Yes. But, I told him, I said, "Guns, I can't swim." I said, "When that thing goes over, I'm going to jump in the middle of it." He said, "You'll break your leg." I was going to jump in the middle of it anyhow.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: But, they managed to . . . we thought we were going to have to go into the water, but as luck would have it, the word got back that the *Gwin*, the destroyer, was going to tie up alongside and take us off. When she discovered that we were in trouble, she started towards us on a diversionary run – not right towards us, but making maneuvers to get over to us to find out what our problem was.

NARRATOR: Zig-zagging or what?

MULLINGS: Yes. A torpedo was fired at her and missed her by 50 feet.

NARRATOR: How do you know that? Could you see it from your position?

MULLINGS: No, later on, I found that in records of the court-martial that they were having or an inquiry, something that they having on Captain Hall because of the loss of the ship.

NARRATOR: Sure.



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MULLINGS: But she missed a torpedo by 50 feet, and she finally maneuvered her way around and she dropped a couple of depth charges and they maneuvered their way around and pulled up, tied up alongside the starboard side.

NARRATOR: That was probably the *U-132* which sunk your ship and might have been the same submarine that fired the torpedo against the . . .

MULLINGS: Very likely, it was the same, and the *U-132* that sunk later on that year. I found that out. In fact, I've even gotten a copy of the log sheets from the *U-132*.

NARRATOR: Oh!

MULLINGS: It's in German, but I've had it translated and it doesn't name my vessel by name, but it tells of them firing a torpedo and appearing an explosion on the sound, and the *Gwin* definitely was later sunk over in the Pacific.

NARRATOR: Hmm.

MULLINGS: Also, but they came alongside and we were given instructions by the boatswain's mate and they had us all over on the fantail together.

NARRATOR: All of you who were supposed to go with them.

MULLINGS: All of us who were still aboard ship. Now, there were 80 of them that went over in boats I think, and the rest of us, there was about a 100 of us that were still aboard the ship.

NARRATOR: So, 80 of them abandoned ship with the wounded –

MULLINGS: Really.

NARRATOR: And, you had 100 left.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: And then whatever number we have left, then were killed or in bad shape.

MULLINGS: Yes. But, we were given instructions to stay back and he had us lined up on the fantail there. He had the apprentice seamen in front, seaman 2nd, seaman 1st, third class, second class, first class – this boatswain's mate did. And, this is the way he wanted us to go aboard the *Gwin* when she tied up alongside. When she tied up, of course, she just tied her lines on us and we were given the word to hit it, you know, and of course, you know she didn't want to be tied up there any longer than she had to be.

NARRATOR: Because of the hazard?



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MULLINGS: Right. And, so I reached for . . . We had to go up because our deck, we were listing quite badly and I had to jump the railing and when I did, a couple of the fellows, navy men, grabbed me and pulled me over the rail. Then, this is the way they took us all off. But, as I got up and I looked back over on the *Hamilton*, I see a couple of the crew getting off the ship and each one had a 5th of whiskey in his hand and a big grin on his face and they were just as happy as could be.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Well, were those guys at that point . . . Were these guys amidships or they were astern, too?

MULLINGS: No, they were amidships. They were older hands. They were, you know.

Laughter

NARRATOR: So, they couldn't let that golden opportunity pass on going to Neptune.

MULLINGS: I can remember watching the rest of them come aboard and after every one was aboard, Captain Hall came walking down the deck and he was helped aboard, and he was the last one to leave the vessel.

NARRATOR: So, they had the ship's log and other papers also transferred across?

MULLINGS: I don't know whether the ship's log ever got across. I don't think the ship's log ever got across. I have in the past, since the war, a few years ago, I was anxious to find out whether I could document my service time during the war by getting copies of log sheets where I was mentioned.

NARRATOR: Certainly.

MULLINGS: And I have been fairly successful and so the *Hamilton*, the only thing I could locate was the day I went aboard her, which was the last day of December 1941. So, I don't know whether the log sheets were lost with the *Hamilton* or what.

NARRATOR: I've never tried to locate the log – the ship's logs. I would imagine if they existed, they would be available.

MULLINGS: Yeah. I went to the Archives where they have quite a few.

NARRATOR: Yeah, the National Archives.

MULLINGS: Yes. He did have a satchel in his hand – now what it was he was carrying, I could not say right now.



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NARRATOR: Kind of a briefcase type of satchel or one of these type of deals or was it a burn bag?

MULLINGS: I'm not certain. It wasn't like this, no.

NARRATOR: Probably books maybe – code books maybe.

MULLINGS: May have been, but now I think one thing. It just strikes me. When one of the boats capsized, I think they had some . . . they had some documents in the boats when it capsized and I believe the log books . . .

NARRATOR: May have been in there.

MULLINGS: May have been in that boat – the logs.

NARRATOR: When that boat capsized, it had a lot of wounded in it, too?

MULLINGS: That boat? No, I don't think it had any wounded in the boat, the boat that capsized. No.

NARRATOR: And was there 20 people in that boat or 10?

MULLINGS: I really don't know how many was in it, but it was a full complement for the boat.

NARRATOR: What would you guess we are talking about, 10 people? 20 people.

MULLINGS: I would say at least 20 people, I would imagine.

NARRATOR: And, when it capsized, they just stayed in the water for awhile and they got later picked up?

MULLINGS: Well, they wanted to get out of the water. It was freezing!

NARRATOR: I can imagine what it would be like.

MULLINGS: Some of the fellows managed to get up on the keel of the boat, a wooden boat you know, and it did float, and those that got up on there tried to help the other fellows. This one colored steward got up there and I understand that one man on each side – it was so cold – that they couldn't hold on any longer, and he grabbed each one of them by the life jacket and held on to them.

NARRATOR: Courageous! Very courageous.



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MULLINGS: Yes, and of course we had one of the fellows that was in the boat that capsized was a big gunner's mate and he had an automatic rifle in the boat in each armed – well, one automatic rifle that was armed – and when he came up after his boat capsized, you know the water was rough enough that he was too far away from the boat and he couldn't fight the current to get back to the boat, and he tried to make the ship –

NARRATOR: The *Gwin*, yeah.

MULLINGS: Back to our ship, and he barely made it back to our ship. We threw a line off the stern. He was going past the stern as the current was so rough that he couldn't – and they threw a buoy with the line attached to it, and he got that and they pulled him aboard.

NARRATOR: Saved his life, huh.

MULLINGS: And he still had the rifle with him.

NARRATOR: Even going down.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: There was some courageous things done there. One fellow, named Wolf, was a seaman. He happened to be in this passageway where we – Bradley and I – usually were sleeping, and that's right where the torpedo hit, and so Bradley and I were very fortunate about that. And this Wolf, that seaman's name, he was blinded by steam but yet, he led four guys out of there and led them up topside in his blind condition!

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Did his sight recover after?

MULLINGS: I'm not sure of that, I've never heard. I know he was decorated for it. I don't know what medal he got, but he got a decoration for his actions, and there were other actions where people tried to go down below into the fire room and boiler room and in an effort to see, you know, if there was anyone down there.

NARRATOR: Was most of the damage to the vessel confined to below decks?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: And, the engine room personnel where the explosion hit?

MULLINGS: Were the heaviest casualties.

NARRATOR: Yeah, the engine room personnel.

MULLINGS: Yeah, but we did have seamen that were killed up on deck.



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NARRATOR: The force of the explosion and the splintering of. . .?

MULLINGS: Yes. Well, one fellow was standing talking to another fellow, a seaman, and the explosion ripped the hatch off of its hinges and just killed him instantly.

NARRATOR: Oh! He was on deck though. Was he thrown overboard in the force of the explosion?

MULLINGS: No, I don't think so. He was thrown on deck. We had some fellows that died in the boats on the way to sure.

NARRATOR: Burns and such?

MULLINGS: Yeah, I think so.

NARRATOR: From what I can understand from the record, one officer and 19 men were killed and six later died of burns, so you had –

MULLINGS: Yes, 26.

NARRATOR: 26! The captain then left as the last one to leave and I have some photographs that were taken by apparently personnel from the *Gwin* that was standing by. Do you recall any of these?

MULLINGS: That's when we were going aboard the *Gwin*.

NARRATOR: And this is an old port side shot.

MULLINGS: That's a starboard side shot.

NARRATOR: Starboard side shot, o.k.

MULLINGS: I could be in this picture, but I doubt it. I would be on the stern which would be further back here.

NARRATOR: Do you notice any or know any of the personnel there in the photograph at all?

MULLINGS: Nope. I can't make out any of their faces. Perry Bradley would be one of these along the side there because he was slated to go in the lifeboat, but they put wounded men in his place and he was ordered to go in the life raft.

NARRATOR: Did he resent that at all?

MULLINGS: No, I don't think so.



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NARRATOR: His chance to save himself.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: Have you seen these photographs before, sir?

MULLINGS: This one I have, but none of the others. I haven't seen the others. It really takes you back.

NARRATOR: Yes, it does. That's the purpose of showing these photographs in hopes that you might recall some more details with regard to the abandon ship procedures. I know that in the photograph here, the personnel are lined up on the rails, awaiting to go aboard the other ship, so that The *Gwin* actually came real close to your ship and you were jumping and being picked up that way.

MULLINGS: Well, she actually came alongside.

NARRATOR: Came alongside, tied up momentarily and then everyone got the order, o.k., jump, and the remaining personnel then jumped. Did you recall anyone having slipped into the water?

MULLINGS: Not that I know of, no, because she was close enough that we could – quick – now this photograph here, I believe is . . .

NARRATOR: The smaller of the two?

MULLINGS: This looks like a lifeboat here.

NARRATOR: Yes, it is.

MULLINGS: And they are going aboard the . . . Maybe this is where they are leaving the *Hamilton*. Yeah, they are leaving the *Hamilton* and they are pulling them aboard. That's what it is. I thought they were going aboard the . . . Now, this more than likely is the boat that capsized, because there are no wounded in this boat that I can see.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh, so you really only had two boats that left.

MULLINGS: As far as I know, but there must have been more boats that left, because there were 80 people I think taken off her. How many boats we had, I just can't recall.

NARRATOR: That's an interesting photograph.

MULLINGS: It is. They must have had a telephoto lens on there or something. I recall them making a pass by us before they came and tied on.



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NARRATOR: Oh, you do?

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. They made a pass along side.

NARRATOR: Now, from the photograph here, it appears as though the torpedo, the damage from the torpedo, is amidships there.

MULLINGS: Yeah, well that's part of the hole there. It could have been a little further forward or it could have been a little further aft. It's hard to say.

NARRATOR: The procedures for abandon ship were conducted in a fairly orderly fashion. You didn't notice any panic among the crew? They had gone through these exercises so frequently that they didn't appear to be green at it, as it were?

MULLINGS: Yeah. Even myself, you know, being so new and so young. There were others almost my age, but there was some loud talking, but there was no hollering, not anybody running amok. We could hear some of the injured who naturally would cry out in pain.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Were they administered morphine for their pain at the time, do you know?

MULLINGS: I'm not convinced of that, but I am sure that they must have been because they were taking them to sick bay. They had a quartermaster whose station was up on the stick I think, preparing a signal light or something. I'm not certain what it was when we got hit and he was thrown down and killed I believe. Then, there were others who – it's so hazy – (coughing) – I can recall when the boatswain's mate told us to go to battle stations, I can recall heading up the ladder and I can recall seeing fellows picking other fellows up off the deck, but faces – I don't know the faces.

NARRATOR: When these people were getting picked up off the deck, we are speaking of people that were injured or dead? In either case?

MULLINGS: Yes. In either case. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. I think most of those that were dead that the bodies were lost. Yes, yes. See, I had other duties and I wasn't around sick bay enough to see what was going on or who was . . . and even there was an hour and a half or two hours that we stayed aboard the vessel, I really don't know how long it was, you know, but there were other things and other places I had to be and I just couldn't let the time out to do – well, the time just disappeared from me.

NARRATOR: Oh, that's o.k. The abandon ship procedures were completed after these hours and everyone was now aboard the *Gwin* and the *Gwin* then opened fire to sink the . . .

MULLINGS: No, no. Not with us aboard.



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NARRATOR: What happened to the survivors now after you were on board. Did they take you to Reykjavik?

MULLINGS: Well, they took us aboard the *Gwin* and they didn't take us into port. They stayed out there and we were out on the *Gwin* all night long.

NARRATOR: Were you more or less changing into dry clothes – you guys were getting clothes of course from Navy.

MULLINGS: No, no. We kept our same clothes, but they fed us dinner, had a special chow for us, but this was dark now. I recall that it was dark when they fed us. We were all down below and shortly after eating, there was three BOOM-BOOM-BOOM! And the destroyer heeled over at the same time. She must have been thrown into a starboard turn or something and we immediately – our crew – headed for topside, and the Navy men all calmed us down. "HOLD IT! HOLD IT! There's nothing wrong. There's nothing wrong. We just dropped depth charges!" So, they had dropped depth charges, but without any warning to us.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Shot from that ship or?

MULLINGS: Well, I don't know. This could be. This certainly does not look like the stern of the *Hamilton*. It could be, but I don't . . .

NARRATOR: Doesn't . . .

MULLINGS: Doesn't appear to be. Well, it's at nighttime. We didn't see it. We were down below, but certainly it would have an effect like this. What is this? It doesn't say, does it?

NARRATOR: That's one of our mystery photos.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: It sure doesn't look like it to me.

NARRATOR: O.K., well you have a good memory. So, they dropped these depth charges, hoping to get the submarine?

MULLINGS: Well, obviously, they probably had a sounding on sonar.

NARRATOR: The *Hamilton*, of course, had sonar, but no radar.

MULLINGS: I don't believe so.

NARRATOR: Because you were on the bridge there?



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MULLINGS: Yeah, I don't recall anything being said about radar. But, of course, at the time I wouldn't have know what radar was anyhow.

NARRATOR: Sure. Well, it was a pretty big secret, you know. A lot of the ships didn't have radar installed then.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Based upon the photographs that were taken three days before you were there, there was no radar in the photographs at least.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Frequently in these World War-II photographs, they would white out or they would excise the negatives so that it would not appear at least whether they had radar or not.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: So, that being the case, your memory would be the more accurate than a photograph would be if it was touched up.

MULLINGS: Well, I can recall that when we went aboard the *Gwin* . . .

NARRATOR: What size of a vessel was this?

MULLINGS: Regular destroyer. Probably 390 feet or something like that.

NARRATOR: Probably 1940 construction.

MULLINGS: I imagine, but the crew was very good to us. The Navy crew. The Navy officers I can recall standing up on the deck by the stack, again, as it were, running around the *Hamilton* after they'd evacuated us and he asked me if I wanted a cigarette and I said, "yeah." He said, "Don't you have any?" and I said, "No," and he went down and he got a carton of cigarettes and he brought it up and gave it to me, and we were standing there on the deck, 100 or so of us, and the PA system came over and says, "We will render a right-hand salute to the *Hamilton*," and all of us saluted the *Hamilton* and then – It was fast approaching darkness at that time. And, then was when they started putting us down below and after the regular crew had eaten, they fed us and we had the little scare with the depth charges that they laid out and so we just mulled around and lay around. I know we didn't sleep. I don't think any of us slept then.

NARRATOR: You were that much in shock I would think.



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MULLINGS: Yeah. So, the next day when the *Gwin* took us in and she tied up alongside the navy supply ship U.S.S. *Vulcan* [AR-5]. The one we towed was the *Yukon* and the one that they put us aboard was the *Vulcan*.

NARRATOR: Oh, that's o.k.

MULLINGS: But we were transferred to her and I think we stayed on her for four to five days, maybe a week. If I thought the *Hamilton* was big, this was four times as big! It was a BIG supply/repair ship.

NARRATOR: So, the crew was then transferred to the big supply/repair ship and you stayed there for three or four days, awaiting transport.

MULLINGS: Captain Hall gave his assurances to that ship that if they would issue us whatever we wanted in the canteen. When the canteen was open, our crew could go up there and get whatever we wanted.

NARRATOR: Send the captain a bill!

MULLINGS: Yes, he would personally guarantee that everything would be paid. We were not issued any other clothing or anything.

NARRATOR: So, you were still in the same wet clothing that you had on???

MULLINGS: Yeah, we still had the same clothing.

NARRATOR: Everyone dried it out?

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah. You get dried out after awhile.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: They issued us some shaving gear, I guess, and washing stuff.

NARRATOR: Washing towel and probably some soap, yeah.

MULLINGS: Towel. They may have given us new dungarees or something, I really don't. You know, I really don't recall it happening. I think we had the same clothing, but . . . And we had no particular duties on there, except to keep our berthing compartment clean.

NARRATOR: So, they were racks or were they hammocks?

MULLINGS: No, they were bunks, tiers of bunks yeah.



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NARRATOR: Four to five high?

MULLINGS: Oh, yes.

NARRATOR: But, fairly roomy from the standpoint of your experience before.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: So, it was a big ship, as you were saying, four to five times larger in feeling at least.

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah, sure. So, all we did really was just to loll around and we could watch movies at night. I think once or twice we were sent off on work parties to other ships that were at anchor that had to be unloaded or loaded, what have you, and . . .

NARRATOR: Were there any submarines in the harbor at all, do you recall?

MULLINGS: There may have been submarines in the harbor, I don't recall, but there were American battleships. There were English ships, warships, ships of all nations.

NARRATOR: A dozen or so?

MULLINGS: Yeah. Then, they finally, I guess, decided to send us home on the U.S.S. *Stratford* [AP-41], which was a Navy vessel. Probably the word was that it was a flat-bottomed Great Lakes vessel at one time and they converted it into a transport and so we were transferred aboard her.

NARRATOR: The crew, en masse?

MULLINGS: Yes, our crew en masse. We weren't the only ones aboard the ship. There were other passengers too, but I'm just speaking of our crew, and it was on her that we were waiting for a convoy, I guess. We were sent out work parties on other ships and at one point, they gave us and took us up in the hills. Just took us over in the hills in small boats and let us run through there and let us get on dry land and just do nothing, just run around the hills and chase sheep or whatever.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Break up the tension of having been torpedoed I guess.

MULLINGS: But of course, while were still on the supply ship, we buried six of our crewmates – the dead crew.

NARRATOR: At Reykjavik?



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MULLINGS: At Reykjavik at one of the places up there, whether it was in Reykjavik, I think it was, and it was a very muddy day that I recall. I don't know whether it had been raining or what.

NARRATOR: Well, January, yeah.

MULLINGS: So, we had a mass burial I guess for six of them.

NARRATOR: Captain Hall and the crew.

MULLINGS: Yes, and then they gave us a liberty in Reykjavik, gave us special liberty passes.

NARRATOR: What were they?

MULLINGS: Well, because we didn't have any uniforms.

NARRATOR: Oh, yes, o.k.

MULLINGS: And so, they gave us special liberty passes to go ashore.

NARRATOR: A green piece of paper or a pink piece of paper?

MULLINGS: Yeah, a little piece of paper that said this individual has authority to go out.

NARRATOR: - Go and have fun.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: That's right. So, it was all the time – Captain Hall stayed right with us. When we came back on the *Stratford* in a convoy, it had wooden boards covering the holds and covered with canvas, the cargo holds in it. Of course, we hadn't been out very long when the sea broke over one of the holds and when it did, it gave a big loud roar and UP WE CAME AGAIN! From down below, scared the hell out of all of us.

NARRATOR: Thinking you were going to go down again.

MULLINGS: Yeah, and so we came on back and stopped at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the crew of the *Stratford* was once again very good to us. They told us – the captain told us that we could borrow uniforms and go ashore, go on liberty. The crew offered – nobody had to ask – they all offered to lend us uniforms. I wasn't going to go because I was very self-conscious. I didn't like to ask strangers for anything and this one old geezer said and asked me if I was going ashore and I said, 'no' and he wanted to know why and finally he said, "Here's a couple of bucks," and I think he gave me \$5.00, and he says, "I'll lend you a uniform and you go on shore." Well, I was only 3 months past my 17th birthday and here this – I went ashore. We had a first class water tender's uniform with ribbons from the FIRST WORLD WAR!!!



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Laughter.

MULLINGS: And I couldn't take three steps in Halifax, Nova Scotia, without shore patrol stopping me and wanted to see . . . Their first words would be, "How old are you?"

Laughter.

NARRATOR: With all those World War I ribbons.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: So, then we finally got back to Boston and we pulled into South Boston the Navy Yard or the Army Terminal there and we were transferred off the Stratford to the First Coast Guard District, I guess it was up there. Whatever it was at that time. And, so they really didn't have any place for us and Captain Hall was still with us, and finally they gathered us all up and put some on a boat and sent us out to a place called Gallups Island.

NARRATOR: (Spelling} G-a-l-l-o-p-s?

MULLINGS: G-a-l-l-u-p-s (correcting).

NARRATOR: Maine, right?

MULLINGS: No, in Boston Harbor.

NARRATOR: Gallups Island in Boston Harbor.

MULLINGS: I think they must have contracted for the use of the place. It wasn't – I don't think it was really a military reservation of any sort, but there was where we got back with some of the crew we had been separated from.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And to my great surprise and happiness, I saw old Pappy Bettencourt, the old guy who had been so nice to me when I'd first went aboard, that he had survived.

NARRATOR: The sinking.

MULLINGS: The sinking and while we were at Gallups Island, we had no duties. We had liberty all the time, but we had to appear for muster every morning. So, you would come in for muster and you would answer "here," and then you'd get on the liberty boat and go ashore and you would make sure you were back the next morning.



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NARRATOR: What about money? How did you do that?

MULLINGS: They gave us pay. This was in March and I hadn't been paid since I'd been in the service.

NARRATOR: Since December?

MULLINGS: Since December, so I think I came up with four months pay which was \$21 a month.

NARRATOR: Hmm.

MULLINGS: So, I was really loaded with "baby" dollars.

NARRATOR: For 60 cents, you could buy a steak dinner in those days.

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. Yes! It went a long way and so they kept us there for a short while – I think probably maybe two weeks or so, if that long.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Were you in barracks there?

MULLINGS: They had a place that you could sleep, but . . .

NARRATOR: Wooden barracks? Quonset huts?

MULLINGS: I don't recall. I believe they were permanent buildings. But, you had continuous liberty.

NARRATOR: About a week or so, huh?

MULLINGS: Yeah, and then we were all transferred to Newport, Rhode Island, and we were put up in the Armory in Newport, Rhode Island.

NARRATOR: Hmm, along with Captain Hall?

MULLINGS: He had departed from us at that time.

NARRATOR: After Boston?

MULLINGS: I think so, yes.

NARRATOR: He probably got a new command then.



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MULLINGS: I think we had – we had a chief boatswain's mate with us I think, a couple of those – and some of our crew had been taken away. Some of the older guys, the first class and chiefs had been transferred or detailed elsewhere. And, when we went down there, we had no duties either and the same thing, it was come and go as you wish, be there for muster. They had a boat out the back and it was getting towards spring time and we would take the boat out and enjoy ourselves – a pulling boat – and they had a motor launch that one of the boatswain's mates wanted to take us out – take the young guys in it in the motor launch. And, we'd do that. And a couple of times we went out and performed some of the duties of the Coast Guard with sailing vessels that were capsized and we would go ahead and pull them in.

NARRATOR: Save them, huh.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: And after we left there, we were transferred back to Boston.

NARRATOR: This whole group of men was?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: How large was the group now in Newport, Rhode Island.

MULLINGS: Probably roughly 100 people. Maybe a little less.

NARRATOR: So, now the group was transferred back to Boston.

MULLINGS: Right, and I think this was probably when the deck gang was separated from the black gang at this juncture, somewhere in there, and we were transferred back to Boston and we became part of the Captain of the Port Shore Patrol.

NARRATOR: Un-huh.

MULLINGS: And it was our duty then to patrol the piers and docks of Boston. We also had explosive detail where we would have to check the longshoremen coming on the piers and make sure that they didn't have any matches, didn't have any cigarettes. We would have to search them.

NARRATOR: You would really, huh?

MULLINGS: And confiscate these things because there was no smoking on the ammunition piers.

NARRATOR: On the ammunition piers. Well, these were probably Irishmen, probably.



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MULLINGS: Oh, yeah. All sort of real melting pot of people, you know, and you'd catch them. They'd try to get by with you and some of them would sometimes, but you'd have to take them in to the front office if they got by you with matches, anyway.

NARRATOR: So, you were a BM3 at this point?

MULLINGS: I was seaman 2nd class.

NARRATOR: Seaman 2nd.

MULLINGS: And, of course, I had that duty several times, but then the majority of the time when I was there, I was stationed on Constitution Wharf, down on the waterfront where they would have these Norwegian fishermen that had gotten away from the Germans with their fishing vessels you know and they were over here and they would come busting in and they would use the pier to stop themselves with, you know, and either that or they didn't have any reverse in them.

NARRATOR: So, you would have a group of these Norwegian fishermen show up with their vessels.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Going into the dock then.

MULLINGS: And, you know, it was our place to check their credentials and make sure that they had all proper papers. And, of course, the Coast Guard ships would tie up on the Constitution Wharf there at times and . . .

NARRATOR: So, this was the summer of 42?

MULLINGS: Yes, it was. And, of course, every chance I would get, I would try to talk my way into another ship. But the Johnnie Walker again, he was there and came up for transfers and I asked him if I could go to school and so he told me to put in for boatswain's mate school. So, I did that and they sent me down to Manhattan Beach.

NARRATOR: Manhattan Beach, New Jersey?

MULLINGS: No, New York, in Brooklyn. And I got down there and, of course, Captain Hall was executive officer down there when I got down there and I went through boatswain's mate school I think it was for three months or something like that.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. What was the type of classes that you having?

MULLINGS: Probably 25 different things. They had seamanship, dead reckoning . . .



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NARRATOR: Navigation, huh?

MULLINGS: Navigation, uh signaling, uh we got a little bit of it. You know to familiarize yourself with a lot of it and make you proficient in a lot more of it, you know.

NARRATOR: Were they any drills on beach apparatus?

MULLINGS: Yeah. There was. There was small boat handling, breeches buoy.

NARRATOR: Drill?

MULLINGS: Yeah. All things of this sort.

NARRATOR: Did you actually have a lot of the hands-on with it? Did you go to a lifeboat station?

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah. Well, they had everything right there. Oh, yeah. They had a sail loft there. They had boats there – small boats to take out. They had mock-ups of ships. They had almost anything we needed, they had it right there.

NARRATOR: Going back to the Captain of the Port duty when you were in Boston, you were mentioning that these Norwegian fishermen would be coming in and escaping their country's problems there. How many are we talking about? One or two vessels in a three month period?

MULLINGS: Oh, no. Well, they had escaped before we ever got there. They weren't just coming in there from that escaping time. But, they were in this country by virtue of having escaped from the Germans when the Germans had overrun their countries.

NARRATOR: And they escaped with their fishing vessels?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: And what are we talking about? Ten boats?

MULLINGS: Oh, well, in that particular area, I think there were probably 15 or 20 of them.

NARRATOR: A large group, yes!

MULLINGS: Probably that. The boats were probably 150-foot long or something like that. They weren't very big.

NARRATOR: Big enough to get across the Atlantic!



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MULLINGS: Oh, yes. Yes. But, surely some of them were probable involved in clandestine trips back you know. You know, getting back into their country and it's hard to say what was going on.

NARRATOR: Trying to rescue other people?

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: Did you have occasion to meet some temporary reserves when you were up in Boston?

MULLINGS: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. There were temporary reserves in the Shore Patrol then. They had come into the Shore Patrol.

NARRATOR: And they were dressed just like you guys were?

MULLINGS: Yeah, yeah. In fact, they had a one-armed man come in.

NARRATOR: A one-armed man??

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: Is that so?

MULLINGS: A man with one eye. If they had a particular skill that the Coast Guard wanted, you know, they could come in.

NARRATOR: At that point, they had a Corsair fleet up there. Do you remember any talk about that at all?

MULLINGS: Uh. I remember I think U.S.S. *Sea Cloud* [WPG-248; IX-99], the sailing vessel.

NARRATOR: That's right.

MULLINGS: That's the only one I can recall.

NARRATOR: The *Sea Cloud* was manned out of Boston?

MULLINGS: I think so. Well, at least it was in Boston there at one time when I was there.

NARRATOR: And it was pretty well rigged out for –

MULLINGS: It was a wartime vessel, I mean, you know, what they had on it, I don't know. I never went aboard.



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NARRATOR: Did you feel that the Coast Guard presence at the time in the Captain of the Port facility was adequate. Did it look pretty much like they were doing what they were supposed to, pretty normal activities? Nothing unusual took place?

MULLINGS: Oh, no.

NARRATOR: Any fires on the wharf? And explosions or anything like that.

MULLINGS: Oh well, we had a fire up in a vessel that was a Coast Guard vessel that was tied up at the wharf there one time. Of course, that was probably nothing out of the ordinary, just an accidental fire you know. Of course, we always had people nosing around that should not be nosing around the piers. And, we would have to chase them off.

NARRATOR: These were saboteurs or?

MULLINGS: Who knows? If you didn't catch them – I chased one fellow up the streets, but I never caught him and I don't know what he was. I don't know why he was running.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: But, I guess he saw me with a gun on my side and he thought the best thing to do was to leave.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Yeah, to get out of there.

MULLINGS: I chased him for about a block and then gave up, because, you know, I didn't know what he was running for.

NARRATOR: Was the area secured with barbed wire?

MULLINGS: No, but well, there was a chain link fence to keep them from going down the pier. The only entrance to the pier was through the gatehouse that we manned and then there was two of us on the pier. One remained at the gatehouse all the time and the other one would patrol the pier itself to check for any boats that might be coming in.

NARRATOR: Then, at Manhattan Beach, you went through your three months of boatswain's mate training? Do you recall any part of that boatswain's mate school that stuck out in your mind?

MULLINGS: Well, all of it really.

NARRATOR: Your training.



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MULLINGS: I had never gotten to high school and so, I think subconsciously, I was eager to learn and I was eager to get ahead. I wanted to get ahead.

NARRATOR: How large was this BM class? 30 people?

MULLINGS: Oh, no, no it was much more than that. There were probably 30 people in my company, but there was more than one company there.

NARRATOR: Big class, huh?

MULLINGS: Yeah. Your company would all be in one class, but there would be all these other classes that had to come at the same time, so I really couldn't venture a guess.

NARRATOR: Well, it was a big operation.

MULLINGS: Yeah. Oh yes. And that wasn't the only school there. They had other schools there, too.

NARRATOR: What other schools do you remember? Sonarman school probably? Radioman?

MULLINGS: Well, I know they had signalman school, quartermaster school, cooks and bakers I think – what others I can't remember.

NARRATOR: So, you had liberty every weekend from that school or?

MULLINGS: We had liberty four weekends. That was the only time we had liberty at the school.

NARRATOR: Saturday probably in the morning and then Sunday come back, so that you had one overnight.

MULLINGS: And it wasn't every weekend, because you still stood watches there. In fact, you stood watches there during the week, too. But sometimes you would get the watch on the weekends, so you missed out on that liberty that time.

NARRATOR: O.K., the class graduated, your group, what did you get assigned to then?

MULLINGS: Well, I had hopes of going to sea and I had hopes of being promoted to coxswain. I was recommended for coxswain, but I never got it when I got out school.

NARRATOR: And why was that?

MULLINGS: Well, the class before us was made coxswains when they graduated.



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NARRATOR: Uh-huh. The entire class?

MULLINGS: But, then they stopped that and then you had to go to your next duty stations and you had to finagle your promotion there.

NARRATOR: Oh, I see, so the class before when they graduated, they made them coxswain.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: Was there any pay difference?

MULLINGS: Oh sure. Yes, from seaman 1st to coxswain, there was probably \$20 a month or something like that.

NARRATOR: Pretty good incentive.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: So, everybody felt cheated then, huh.

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. There was a little, you know, a little bad feelings there, but we handled it, so I was transferred back to Boston from whence I came and I was still hoping to go to sea and they sent me down to Point Allerton Lifeboat Station.

NARRATOR: Point Allerton? (spelling) A-L-L-E-R-T-O-N?

MULLINGS: Yeah, that's right. It's in Hull, Massachusetts.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And this was now wintertime, and if there is any place you don't want to be in the wintertime, it's at Point Allerton Lifeboat Station!

NARRATOR: So, we had the winter of '42 and '43?

MULLINGS: It was a normal lifeboat station with the exception that during the war we had beach patrols. And we didn't have dogs and we didn't have horses up there, but ours was all conducted on foot.

NARRATOR: Foot patrols.

MULLINGS: Foot patrols, and it was bitterly cold and we would have to walk a section of the beach. They would take us over to the particular patrol in the truck and let us out and we had to carry a – when I first went there, it was a rifle, a 30-caliber rifle, a time clock, telephone.



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NARRATOR: The telephone would be a walkie-talkie type of thing?

MULLINGS: No, no. This was a plug-in telephone.

NARRATOR: O.K., so sections of the beach were wired with telephones.

MULLINGS: Yeah, you had head jacks to plug them in and call the station, and we had I believe it was a two-mile stretch of beach to walk with instructions to report any vessels within sight at night or day time, anyone on the beach, arrest anyone on the beach who violated the orders to remove themselves from the beach.

NARRATOR: There was that much of a fear of . . .

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

NARRATOR: So, nobody could go down to the beach? It was an off-limits?

MULLINGS: Not at night, no. And, of course, our patrols were 24 hours.

NARRATOR: So, in the daytime, they could go to the beach if they wanted to.

MULLINGS: And we had seven days on and one day off, and we'd get a 48-hour liberty once a month. So, that wasn't much time. It wasn't much time off, because down there, you had to go to Boston to have any kind of leisure fun and one day wasn't just enough time. You'd get up there and it'd be time to come back because you had to hitchhike or take the ferry, but we would patrol the beaches. I think our watch was four-on and eight-off, something like that.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: Now, when we weren't on watch, we had to work.

NARRATOR: Maintenance type work/

MULLINGS: Maintenance type work, yes.

NARRATOR: How large was the crew there? 20 people, 30, 50, 100?

MULLINGS: No, I don't think there was that many. Probably around 50 people I guess.

NARRATOR: And you were all barracked in this facility?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: Lighthouse?



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MULLINGS: It wasn't a lighthouse, it looked like it had been a private residence at one time, converted into, you know, a barracks type affair.

NARRATOR: One of those big old homes on the beach.

MULLINGS: Yeah, and they had a boathouse in a different location. Each boathouse was in a different location, but within riding distance in the truck fairly quickly, and they had a tower out in front that they manned at all times to watch out over the harbor. It was – for me, it was a very low point in my service time. I really didn't appreciate being there. I didn't want to be there. That was the only place I didn't want to be in my whole time and so I was always anxious. Every day I was up asking for a transfer to a seagoing vessel.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: I suppose you are familiar with this article that was done of you?

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Yeah (more laughter).

NARRATOR: What do you recall about the circumstances surround this? You were interviewed at the USO or what?

MULLINGS: I used to deliver this newspaper, the *Washington Times*, before the Second World War, and the manager of the station, when I went by to see him after I got home on survivor's leave.

NARRATOR: Survivor's leave, huh?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: What was survivor's leave?

MULLINGS: They gave us, ten days I think it was.

NARRATOR: It was only for the survivors?

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Yeah, and he called me up is what it was and he said, "I've got something I want to show you. You will have to come down." So, I went down in the Times-Herald Building and took me up and there was this reporter sitting up there, and he surprised me, and so this reporter wanted to interview me. So, I'd been told – you know, I didn't know what I could say and what I



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couldn't say – so he had to call the Navy censors. And, he got on three-way hook-up with this Navy censor--

NARRATOR: Sort of a party call?

MULLINGS: And, he would ask me a question and I'd have to wait for the Navy officer to tell me whether I could answer it or not.

NARRATOR: Oh, I see.

MULLINGS: And so I probably answered about four questions and he wrote all that out of it.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: But, it was quite an experience.

NARRATOR: Have you ever gone to the newspaper to get a copy of that photograph that might be in their archives? The one that was taken of you? This was the April 7th of 1942 *Washington Times*.

MULLINGS: No, but I didn't know – see, well they are no longer in existence.

NARRATOR: Well, I would imagine that the archives of those . . . would be some place.

MULLINGS: That's an idea, too.

NARRATOR: I hadn't realized that, but most newspapers have their archives photographs and they maintain them and after the newspaper is bought up by another newspaper, they don't destroy the photographs, but merely turn them over to another depository.

MULLINGS: Yeah, well, I've always been interested in the service – the war time service – and that picture shows me reading the newspaper and it says, "Coast Guard Cutter Torpedoed!" which was about the *Hamilton*.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: Somehow, I never got a copy of the paper, but I've never been able to locate a copy of the paper either.

NARRATOR: The period now where you were at that lifeboat station doing beach patrol, it was all foot patrol at that point? Did you hear of any – like you have this group of men now, about 50 or so – did they mention that they had caught any saboteurs or that they had spotted submarines surfacing? Or any type of scuttlebutt with regard to that?



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MULLINGS: Not them personally. Not them at that particular station. I think it was about that time that the Coast Guardsman came up on the German saboteurs in New Jersey on the beach – somewhere around there around that time. As far as anything happening in that particular station, there were several times when I would call in and report small boats offshore with no running lights on. Now, whether anything became of them or not, I don't know. I did have occasion to arrest one fellow on the beach. We called it arrest, but it was really detaining. I ran him off the beach right at sundown and about two hours later I caught him – they had these cottages along the beach front which the beach ran right up to the cottages and as I was walking back down the beach, I just caught this shadow up in the niche, up in the corner of the porch, and I trained my light on him and here it was the same one I had run off before.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. And, he had a flashlight in his hand!

MULLINGS: No, he didn't have anything in his hand. Of course, I trained my gun on him. I wasn't taking any chances and he couldn't satisfy me as to why he was down there, and so I held him and called the station.

NARRATOR: Wise decision, yeah.

MULLINGS: And the Naval Intelligence came down and picked him up. And I never saw him. And the same thing happened in Boston when I was on Shore Patrol there. On one of the piers, this young fellow came down and tried to get on the pier. He had a Navy uniform on with brown shoes.

NARRATOR: Oh.

MULLINGS: So, I held him and Naval Intelligence came down and took him and we never saw him again.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: So, that's the extent of it. I don't know whatever happened to them. Probably just a couple of nuts that didn't have any better sense, but you never know. During war, you know. So, there was no fun walking that beach.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. What was the temperature? This was in wintertime – December, January or so?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: 20 below zero?

MULLINGS: Well, I don't know whether it was that cold, but you had that – always had that stiff cold breeze coming in off the ocean.



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NARRATOR: That's right. In any case, the January time frame is not the time to be on the beach anyway.

MULLINGS: No.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: But, they had – of course, they had their other duties too. You know, in the summertime, people were allowed to use the beach and the Coast Guard naturally had to be prepared to run out and rescue them. Or if any boats foundered or anything. They had to do that.

NARRATOR: Were you there through the spring of that same, 1943?

MULLINGS: No, I think I left there just before the start of spring or right at the start of spring. I finally got my wish and was transferred to a seagoing station.

NARRATOR: Which station did you get transferred to?

MULLINGS: Well, I was transferred to the U.S.S. *Alacrity* [PG-87], which was a . . .

NARRATOR: (spelling) A-l-a-c-r-i-t-y?

MULLINGS: Right. This was a patrol gunboat classification. It was 210-feet long, I think.

NARRATOR: Was this Coast Guard manned?

MULLINGS: Yes. It was Canadian-built and Coast Guard-manned and I think the Coast Guard had four or five of them that they had gotten along with some frigates from Canada. And it was being outfitted in the Boston Navy Yard when I was transferred aboard her. Its primary duty was to escort convoys.

NARRATOR: Convoy escort?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: When you were in Boston and the ship was being outfitted, do you recall what armament the vessel had on it? Anything come to mind?

MULLINGS: Yeah, we had 3" 50s.

NARRATOR: 3" 50s. Depth charge racks?

MULLINGS: I believe we had two 3" 50s, and we had 20-mm and 40-mm, I believe. We had depth charge racks and we had not Y-guns, but we had K-guns.



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NARRATOR: On the sides?

MULLINGS: On each side, yes. We had hedgehogs and I think that's – and, of course, we had radar and it had sonar both.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. It had radar.

MULLINGS: Yes. But it wasn't a very sturdy riding ship. It was constantly rolling, even in smooth weather.

NARRATOR: So, you were aboard that ship in April or May was it of '43?

MULLINGS: Yes, that's right. I think so, somewhere in that neighborhood, yeah, and it was a very – seemed like an unstable ship, but owing to the fact that in calm seas you would still get a rocking motion out of it. There was very little watertight stability in it, or integrity.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Wrong ballasting?

MULLINGS: Well, down below. There were no hatches. Not too much hatches between compartments to separate the compartments. When we would get into rough seas, we would have water come over the stern or it would come over the bow and –

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Throughout the whole ship.

MULLINGS: Yeah, it was a real thing. We would run mostly from New York to – I'm sorry, we would run from Boston to Cuba.

NARRATOR: Boston to Cuba on a convoy.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: And what were you escorting mainly?

MULLINGS: Merchant vessels, but what they contained – some of them were tankers.

NARRATOR: Tankers versus merchant vessels, yeah.

MULLINGS: Oh, we had tankers and merchant vessels. Some of them we could see the planes that were stacked up or stored up on deck or Army tanks or things of this nature that they were transporting.



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NARRATOR: So, they would go down to Cuba and then they would be going across to Africa?

MULLINGS: Where they went, I don't know after that.

NARRATOR: So, Boston to Cuba was the escort route for you all?

MULLINGS: I think we left Boston and then we made our homeport in New York after a couple of trips or so, and it was fairly good duty, and wasn't any malcontents in the crew or anything.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: They all cussed the ship, but not the service.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: It's hard to explain those things. They could take the sea, the rough sea, but they gave the sailors a rough ride doing it.

NARRATOR: What size of a crew are we talking about on that *Alacrity*?

MULLINGS: Probably 125 –130 or something like that.

NARRATOR: If you were comparing the *Hamilton* with the *Alacrity*, what did you do on the *Alacrity* that you didn't do on the *Hamilton*? Or vice versa. With all this more training with regards to more general quarters being done?

MULLINGS: No, no more.

NARRATOR: About the same?

MULLINGS: About the same I think, but I think there was more maintenance on the deck than there was on the *Hamilton*. But, then we probably weren't in as dangerous a situation with the corvette as we were with the *Hamilton*, in respect to sub raidings and things of this nature, although we did have I think we sighted a couple of submarines on the surface, but when we made the run on them, they would just shot out of sight and be out of mind, you know. Except, one time, we started to make a run on one and our engines broke down.

NARRATOR: Oh!

MULLINGS: And the submarine went down and out of sight and we stayed there for about a half-hour trying to get the engine going.

NARRATOR: Dead in the water, huh.



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MULLINGS: Everybody on pins and needles, whispering!

Laughter.

NARRATOR: And you were at battle stations all the while?

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah!

NARRATOR: Did that happen frequently with that old corvette? Did you break down?

MULLINGS: No, we broke down a couple of times, but it wasn't an old corvette. It was a fairly new vessel, I think when we got it. I don't think it was standard to our country's vessels, but it was just built as a fast – built real fast with no regard to watertight integrity and things of this nature.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh, just to get the . . .

MULLINGS: To get it down on the seas.

NARRATOR: In other words, the *Hamilton* had the watertight bulkheads and the capacity to absorb some degree of enemy action.

MULLINGS: Right. Well, the corvette wouldn't have survived.

NARRATOR: Torpedoing?

MULLINGS: Would not have survived a mine even!

NARRATOR: That was "comforting," wasn't it?

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Believe me, it was always in the back of my mind.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: I never got it out of my mind once it happened.

NARRATOR: What was the extent of your trip as a typical run from Boston to Cuba – would it be about a month, two weeks?

MULLINGS: No, I think it was probably two weeks.



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NARRATOR: Two weeks. And, when you got to Cuba, you would have a couple of days liberty and then you would . . .

MULLINGS: Yeah, you might have a liberty. Well, in Cuba, we didn't have too much liberty. We always pulled into Guantanamo Bay, which was Naval, and that was where you would go get liberty. You would go into the canteen and you'd drink some beer and then you would go back to your ship.

NARRATOR: Unwind a little bit, yeah.

MULLINGS: That was about the extent of liberty as far as Cuba went.

NARRATOR: Do you remember any conversations that occurred when you were in the canteen there with regards to other sailors talking about what life was like for them? Did they seem to all pretty much – was there anything unusual do you recall?

MULLINGS: No, they were just cheerful, bantering back and forth about, "here comes the Hooligans," and you know.

NARRATOR: The Coast Guard.

MULLINGS: Yeah, and then one of our guys would say, "Well, when the sea gets too rough for the Navy, that's when the Coast Guard goes out," and so forth. It was nothing, but as far as what life was like down there, they never talked about that in the canteen. Never too busy to put anyone down.

NARRATOR: So, this was now in the summer of '43?

MULLINGS: Uh-huh.

NARRATOR: And, how many runs did you make back and forth on that ship? Always, the same destination, Cuba to Boston?

MULLINGS: Yeah. I was on it, I don't know how many trips we made, but I did – there was a couple of things that happened. I think it was in March of '44, I made coxswain and it was then in March that we were on our way back from Cuba with a convoy. Of course, these convoys were really slow and you would figure 6 or 8 knots and it seemed like we were racing, because we were always zig-zagging. Of course, when we first put that in, we went on a shakedown cruise when we first went aboard her and left the Navy yard and we were running shakedown with DE's, down around Bermuda, and, of course, they were compensating their compass, I think going around in a big circle, and the DE's moved out in a wider circle and our ensign decided to follow along and he knocked the sound dome off the bottom of – he ran aground!

Laughter.



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MULLINGS: Because he didn't realize that we were heavier than the DEs!

NARRATOR: Oh.

MULLINGS: And that was one instance that happened. But as we were coming back from Cuba, after I had made 3rd class, I woke up one morning with excruciating pains and could not – I was lying under a gun tub topside and I was supposed to relieve the boatswain's mate of the watch.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And, I heard them calling my name and I couldn't answer them. I would see them walking past the gun tub and hollering for me. They had just about decided that I had fallen over the side when they discovered me laying under the gun tub and they took me to sick bay and all's we had aboard was a 2nd class pharmacist's mate by the name of Hammond and he wasn't sure what was wrong with me, so he . . . They contacted the doctor who was in the other Coast Guard corvette, the U.S.S. *Haste* [PG-92].

NARRATOR: (spelling) H-a-s-t-e?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS : And between the two of them, they decided I probably had appendicitis.

NARRATOR: Oh.

MULLINGS: So, the doctor wanted to examine me himself and so this went from morning to about 2 o'clock in the afternoon or 3 o'clock and they put me in a stretcher and put me in a pulling boat and put it over the side, and, of course, the pulling boat was so small that the stretcher had to sit up on gunnels.

NARRATOR: Oh, that was comfortable.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Cross wise! But they had mercy on me. I still couldn't swim, so they tied all these life jackets on the stretcher.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: And, they pulled me over to the *Haste* and took me aboard and the doctor examined me and he determined that I had to be operated on right away. There was just a very



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short time and I couldn't wait too long. So, evidently, somehow, I guess they broke radio silence and called for a plane to come from Florida and a Coast Guard seaplane did come.

NARRATOR: A PBY?

MULLINGS: I guess it was and I could remember laying on deck in a stretcher and watching this plane and hoping they couldn't land.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Because I didn't want to get in any plane, but he made a couple of passes and the water proved too rough and he couldn't land, so, the doctor had to figure out another way and he couldn't operate on me on the *Haste* because it was such a small ship, it didn't have the facilities to operate, but in the convoy there was a New Zealand transport called the S.S. *Rimutaka*, and they had that transport drop out of the convoy and the *Haste* and the *Alacrity* stayed with it and when it dropped back far enough, they transferred me and the doctor from the *Haste* to the New Zealand transport and the doctor's name was Hofstra from the U.S. Public Health Service.

NARRATOR: (SPELLING) H-o-f-s-t-r-a?

MULLINGS: Yes. And, as I was leaving the *Haste*, I had a couple of friends on there who took their five cartons of cigarettes and stuffed them down in the stretcher alongside me, so that I had some smokes, and covered them up with the blanket, and then they picked me up and put me on this New Zealand transport and took me to the operating room. I asked the doctor if I could smoke and he said, "Sure, go ahead." Well he comes out and I went to reach and there wasn't any cigarettes. They had been stolen from the time they got me on there to they got me to the operating room.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: But, they had an old doctor there on the ship. They were transporting some civilians some place and this old man must have been 80-years old and he's the one that administered the ether to me.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And, Dr. Hofstra operated and then I guess about ten days later, we got to New York, and they transferred me to the U.S. Marine Hospital in Brighton. And, I figured something was wrong when they had to put me in a collapsible bag-like stretcher to get me off of this New Zealand ship and I would have pains when they drove around the corner and when they got to the hospital, they found out that I was really bad off, and so I spent the next three months in the hospital.



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NARRATOR: Was it because of the operation? That they hadn't done something right?

MULLINGS: Yes. Well, I never thought that foreign ships were clean as ours anyhow.

NARRATOR: Hmm. It might have been an infection.

MULLINGS: It was an infection. It was three kinds of infection, which pretty nearly did me in. I went down to about 90 pounds or so I guess.

NARRATOR: Well, you were a strong survivor.

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: You're still here.

MULLINGS: I guess I had good doctors that helped me get back, but it was quite an experience and I didn't find out until here about four to five years ago, I started trying to document my war time service, that I started looking through the log sheets of the *Rimutaka* to see if I was mentioned in it, and the New Zealand Navy sent me back notice that they couldn't find the log sheets, but they found a page in a book where I had been mentioned in this particular transaction of being transferred and being operated on aboard their ship, which was quite surprising to find.

NARRATOR: Ah-ha. Their log or probably their war diary I would think.

MULLINGS: No, this was a book that they wrote about the steamship company that owned the ship and it was a history of that particular ship that I was mentioned in connection with, but that's another project, trying to locate one of those books.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Well, your time will be rewarded, I am sure.

MULLINGS: But, there again, the Coast Guard, the officers and the men on the ship of my ship were excellent to me. The pharmacist mate came to see me in the hospital and he says, "You're going to be transferred," and I told him, I said, "I don't want to be transferred. I want to stay on the ship," and so he went back and told the captain and the captain kept me on the roster until I got back out of the hospital and returned to the ship. Of course, had he taken me off, I would have lost my 20% sea duty pay.

NARRATOR: Oh, so you had a good reason to stay on there.

MULLINGS: So, he kept me on there and that saved my pay for me.

NARRATOR: Oh, the skipper of the *Alacrity*. So, he kept you on the roster.



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MULLINGS: Yes, that's right.

NARRATOR: So, all the while you were in the hospital.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: Well, we can continue with what happened after you left the hospital next Friday if that's o.k.

MULLINGS: I don't recall whether I mentioned it when I was with Captain of the Port that we were stationed in the Brunswick Hotel.

NARRATOR: No, I don't believe so.

MULLINGS: That was on the corner of Boylston and Clarendon Street.

NARRATOR: Boylston and Clarendon Streets?

MULLINGS: Yes, in Boston, and I believe was also the Receiving Station as well as the facility for the Captain of the Port.

NARRATOR: What was the size of the manpower that were assigned there? Are we talking about 50 people?

MULLINGS: Oh, you mean for the Captain of the Port?

NARRATOR: Yes.

MULLINGS: Oh, no, it was much larger than that. It entailed so much I imagine that it had to be upward of a couple of hundred at least, because we had pier duty on just about all the piers in Boston, plus we had several what you called the ammunition details where we had to send men out to also.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. The ammunition details consisted of what:

MULLINGS: The loading of the vessels was carried on by stevedores and our primary duty was to police the area. We would have men stationed at the gate before they went on to the explosive pier to search the individuals as they came aboard.

NARRATOR: Primarily for flammables?

MULLINGS: Flammables, cigarettes and matches, pipes, and things of this nature.



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NARRATOR: And the degree of cheating on -- I guess they all knew the requirements that were tight.

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. They knew. They were all full aware of it, but they, you know, if they got down there and got in a niche, they wanted to sneak a smoke, which I don't know if it's human nature or not, but it didn't set too well with those of us who had to do the guard duty. Then, we had some fellows that had to patrol the area where they were loading the explosives.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. The perimeter areas?

MULLINGS: Well, right down on the piers with the stevedores themselves.

NARRATOR: Do you remember what types of ships were being loaded? Were they attack transports? Were they primarily freighters?

MULLINGS: In the few times that I had that duty, it was primarily freighters carrying full loads of explosives to the war.

NARRATOR: Do you remember what type of explosives they were primarily loading? Were they large shells or were they more machine gun ammo?

MULLINGS: Well, there was quite a bit of what I guess you'd call cartridge ammunition in cartons and all, and there were some shells and things of this nature, and being so long ago, I really can't give you a definite answer for it.

NARRATOR: Since we talked before about the *Alexander Hamilton's* sinking, I recall the vessel that you had in tow as being an area that we hadn't quite established what happened to that vessel after it had been -- after the two had been dropped and your ship had gotten torpedoed.

MULLINGS: I may have given you the wrong name also. It was the *Yukon*. The *Vulcan* was the supply ship that we went aboard after the *Gwin* took us into the harbor.

NARRATOR: So, the *Yukon* was the vessel that had engine trouble that you were towing?

MULLINGS: Right. It was a Navy supply ship, a repair ship, or what have you, but we towed it. We had been towing her for five days.

NARRATOR: Did it repair its engines right after you got torpedoed?

MULLINGS: No. A tug took over the tow before we got torpedoed.

NARRATOR: O.K.



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MULLINGS: We had released our tow and a tug had taken it over. I believe it was – I'm not certain – It seems to me like it was the U.S.S. *Redwing* [AM-48] that took over.

NARRATOR: Oh, the *Redwing*, yes. It was up there in that area.

MULLINGS: No, I believe. It had some connection with all of this – the sinking or something. I don't know if it was one of those that towed, that towed our ship, or whether it was one that towed the *Yukon*, but the *Yukon* when we got hit was under tow by a tug, and she was being escorted by the destroyer *Gwin*.

NARRATOR: Did you recall any other events since last week that relate to the rescue efforts at all? To your knowledge, were the classified materials and code books and that sort of thing – were they destroyed, or do you recall them having some problems verifying that?

MULLINGS: The only thing I have is word that was passed around at that time and that was that one of the officers had – it was his duty to carry the decoder I guess.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: The valise with the secret papers or what have you and he happened to be in the boat that was capsized.

NARRATOR: Oh, o.k.

MULLINGS: So, therefore, those things were lost. Now, this is the word that drifted down through the ranks at that time and I have no reason to disbelieve it.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Do you remember any other conversations that took place at that time with regard to the sinking?

MULLINGS: Not really. The only thing were the instructions that I was given by the various petty officers and officers in charge and what little bit of conversation that I could hear from the captain up on the bridge.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: Because I heard him give the order to fire a couple of shells toward the *Gwin* to get the recognition.

NARRATOR: That you were in trouble, huh?



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MULLINGS: Yes. And, I also heard him ask one of the officers – I assume it was the executive officer – to go check on the damage, and, of course, I heard him secure from general quarters, with the exception of one or two guns I think he kept manned, and then, of course, I heard him give the order to prepare to abandon ship. As for any other orders, I can't recall. I'm sure I heard a lot of orders being given at that time, but . . .

NARRATOR: Do you remember? You had a sea bag apparently aboard ship that you lost?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: What was your typical sea bag? What did it contain, do you remember.

MULLINGS: Well, I don't know whether my sea bag was typical or not. Because I had only been in for a month, just a month, and I didn't have a full sea bag, but what I had in my sea bag, I guess I had just the normal uniforms, the skivvies, and I had undress blues.

NARRATOR: Undress blues. One pair? Two pair?

MULLINGS: Probably two pair and a set of dress blues.

NARRATOR: Right.

MULLINGS: I don't believe I was issued any whites. No white uniforms. Of course, I had white hats and I had a flat hat, which was the black felt hat.

NARRATOR: With U.S. Coast Guard on it?

MULLINGS: Yes. And, of course, we had the watch cap.

NARRATOR: The knit type? O.K.

MULLINGS: Yes. And toilet articles and things of this nature and I think I still had my civilian clothes in there and I had my brother's camera in there. Of course, I had the *Bluejacket's Manual* which is one of the first things they hand you.

NARRATOR: Right.

MULLINGS: So, that would just about cover what my sea bag really had. I wasn't issued a hammock until I went aboard there. I was given a mattress before when I was on the *Carrabasset* and of course that was mine.

NARRATOR: When you were transferred from one ship to the other, the mattress?

MULLINGS: Yes, the mattress was to take with you at that time.



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NARRATOR: Hmm, very good. I didn't realize that.

MULLINGS: But, that just about covers what I had in my sea bag. Now, how close to being the normal sea bag, I really couldn't say.

NARRATOR: You lost whatever pictures you might have had taken of the *Carrabasset* or the ship that you had.

MULLINGS: Well, I had never used the camera.

NARRATOR: Oh.

MULLINGS: At that time, they told us that there would be no pictures taken and, of course, being the new man in the service, I was scared to death to take a pictures, but then again, I was too seasick most of the time to even care.

NARRATOR: To even tow the camera around I imagine.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: To even want to take a picture, so anything that I had in my sea bag was gone, but they later made good of course but any personal effects that I might have had were lost and went down with the ship.

NARRATOR: Do you recall what your pay was at the time on a monthly basis?

MULLINGS: My pay was \$21.00 a month.

NARRATOR: \$21.00 a month!

MULLINGS: For an apprentice seaman, yes.

NARRATOR: And, did you get an appropriation for sea pay in it?

MULLINGS: Yes, I believe it was 20%.

NARRATOR: 20%, so the total check you got –

MULLINGS: Would be \$26.00, roughly – if you got it. Of course, I didn't get my first pay check until I believe was March when we got into Boston which was the first paycheck that I received after going in the service. So, I got a big sum of \$80 or so, which in those days was pretty big bucks. It was not bad when you had your room and board supplied.

NARRATOR: That's money for savings.



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MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: The experiences we talked about last time, I believe we ended up with your having been taken off the transport ship, the Australian transport ship, was it?

MULLINGS: New Zealand transport ship. Yes.

NARRATOR: And you were having an appendix problem.

MULLINGS: Yes, yes.

NARRATOR: Could you continue along those lines in terms of what happened to you after that?

MULLINGS: Yes. Well, I was in the hospital for roughly about three months and I came out of the hospital and they gave me 21 days sick leave which was leave that was not chargeable to your . . .

NARRATOR: I wonder how they arrived at 21 days. Was this just typical?

MULLINGS: Well, it was typical for I guess what the doctors would give you and if you came back and they thought that you needed more leave, then they would issue you more, recuperation time. But, at the time, that was all that they would issue. Of course, when I was in the hospital, I met one of my former shipmates from the *Hamilton* who had lost an arm in a DE and at that time he was a chief boatswain's mate.

NARRATOR: Was he on active duty at that time? Even with the loss of the arm?

MULLINGS: He was in the hospital.

NARRATOR: As a result?

MULLINGS: As a result of the loss of the arm.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And then he saw me. Of course, I couldn't drink anything. I was laying there with my stomach open and he comes walking down the hall and he saw me and he came into the room and we exchanged greetings and he says, "How about a drink?" and he reached down where his arm used to be in the sleeve and he pulled out these miniatures!

Laughter.



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MULLINGS: I laughed and said, "I don't think I can drink anything," but he said, "Well, they can't do anything to me for drinking it." But at that time, he was trying to stay on active duty. So, whether he was successful or not, I never had the chance to talk to him about it. And, after leaving the hospital and going on my sick leave – Of course, the doctors told me not to get married – I don't know why, but they told me not to get married. So, I got married! Anyhow!

NARRATOR: Don't get married, o.k.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Did they figure you had a lot of money or back pay owed to you and did they figure you were going to lose it?

Laughter.

MULLINGS: No, no. While I was in the hospital, the pharmacist mate always came over every payday from the ship when they were in port and brought me my paycheck.

NARRATOR: Oh, pretty good.

MULLINGS: But, if they weren't in port, when they did come in, he would bring me my check and would see that I got it.

NARRATOR: That's pretty good.

MULLINGS: It was very thoughtful of them I think. And, so when I came back, when I reported back to the ship, the captain called me up to his quarters and he told me, he said, "You're petty officer third class. There is no reason for you to have to do anything, just take it easy for awhile." He said, "I don't want to catch you reaching down, picking a line!" He said, "You've got seaman for that. So, you take care of yourself and get back in shape" which I thought was real nice again.

NARRATOR: Yeah.

MULLINGS: And I was aboard her for about a month then. I think we made another trip to Cuba.

NARRATOR: Escorting?

MULLINGS: Yes. Convoy escort.

NARRATOR: Do you remember how big the convoy was, what type of ships were in it?



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MULLINGS: Oh, well, I imagine some of the convoys were 30-40 ships and of various type ships, mostly freighters. We would have oftentimes oilers, tankers in there, and transports.

NARRATOR: Was the threat of submarine activity still pretty strong?

MULLINGS: Yes, yes. It was still prevalent at that time.

NARRATOR: So, there were no running lights on the ship, no –

MULLINGS: No, everything was strictly quiet about the deck while on topside at night.

NARRATOR: That was standing orders?

MULLINGS: Right. And lights – no lights to be shown on topside.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And that pretty much covers it. Strictly wartime watches.

NARRATOR: Meaning 4 on and 4 off?

MULLINGS: Yes, yes. They were usually 4 on and 4 off at that time and we had a few experiences with the corvette.

NARRATOR: For example?

MULLINGS: Well, we had –

NARRATOR: This is the corvette you were assigned to?

MULLINGS: Yes. The *Alacrity*. We got a call to general quarters one night and I happened to have boatswain-mate-of-the-watch at the time and we walked around the deck and when general quarters sounded, I immediately went to my gun. I was the gun captain on the 3-inch .50 and I opened the breech and I let the breech shut – which was a no-no! I was trying to get the gun prepared for the crew, because not knowing whether it was a real –

NARRATOR: Drill –

MULLINGS: A real threat or not, so, as the men came to their stations I had to caution each one of them not to touch the trigger. "DON'T TOUCH!" and as a result we started going through – we got these reports. We could hear the reports of "unidentified ship" on the starboard bow and as we looked up – well, of course, our gun was on the bow of the ship and we saw the stern of this big ship going off to our starboard with an airplane on the back of it and, man, just about that time star shells started flying overhead.



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NARRATOR: Really!

MULLINGS: And we really thought we were in trouble or something, but seems to me that one of the officers – the officer of the deck was an ensign and he got up there and he got confused with his zig-zag. And he started going through the middle of our convoy instead of alongside of it. Which I'm sure that the ensign got read out pretty well, because it got everybody scared.

NARRATOR: I can imagine.

MULLINGS: It gave the convoy a scare and us a scare and . . .

NARRATOR: Sure, unidentified ship!

MULLINGS: Yes. So, that was one of the more, I guess you could say serious-comical things that happened.

NARRATOR: What was your job as a gun captain? What would you do? When they sounded general quarters you would go to the gun and what was the routine?

MULLINGS: Well, my routine was to make sure that all the positions on the gun were manned.

NARRATOR: How many positions do we have?

MULLINGS: Now, I'm digging. Let's see. We had the pointer. We had the trainer. We had the loader. We had the shell man. We had the gun captain. I may have missed out on one, but it had to do with the unloading or the loading of the gun – well, we had a #1 loader and a #2 loader is what.

NARRATOR: One guy or what?

MULLINGS: No, no. For the one gun. We would have a #1 loader and a #2 loader. You would have the first man throw the shell in and step back and then the other man would throw his shell in after it was fired, so that it was continuing.

NARRATOR: Seamen?

MULLINGS: It was a continuous thing.

NARRATOR: The shell man was responsible for pushing the shell down to the deck.

MULLINGS: Yes. As they came out, they would come out with quite a force. They would come out fast. They would be ejected from the stern of the gun.

NARRATOR: Right.



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MULLINGS: But, they would come out fast, but not so fast that you couldn't. He wore an asbestos gloves and as they came out, he would hit the shell to knock it down on the . . . and the gun tub usually had a hole in it or a couple of holes in it where the shells would – as the ship would roll, they would roll out through these holes to get from underfoot.

NARRATOR: I see, o.k. So, it was rather dangerous to walk on the deck area around the turret.

MULLINGS: With shells rolling around, yes, it was.

NARRATOR: Now, if you had the pointer and the trainer?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: What were their functions?

MULLINGS: Well, I may get this backwards and I may not. But, the pointer had the elevation I believe of the gun –

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: - he controlled the elevation and the triggers. He would have a foot trigger and a hand trigger.

NARRATOR: Hmm. Why were there be two triggers?

MULLINGS: In case one failed.

NARRATOR: Oh. A back-up system.

MULLINGS: That's right. The trainer controlled the lateral movement of the gun.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: His was easiest job of the two, because it's much harder to –

NARRATOR: When the ship is rolling, huh.

MULLINGS : When the ship rolls and then to get the gun to focus on a target because they both had cross hairs that they would look through to sight in on the target.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Was the team work pretty good? Did you notice one guy having more problems with the other?



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MULLINGS: You didn't have it too long. He was changed if he had more problems than – If you felt he couldn't do it –

NARRATOR: As you were the gun captain now, so –

MULLINGS: Well, it wouldn't be up to me to change it, but I would speak to the gunnery officer. We had a gunnery officer on each turret and I could speak to him and have him changed, if we thought that he couldn't do it. Then, we could change his billet around.

NARRATOR: Did you have that happen?

MULLINGS: I believe once – one time.

NARRATOR: Was that because the person was too slow or what?

MULLINGS: He just couldn't seem to keep up.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Was that because of the manual rotation of wheels and things?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: He couldn't turn his wheels fast enough?

MULLINGS: That's right.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Well, when you've got a submarine out there, I guess you'd want to turn that as fast as you could.

MULLINGS: Yes. Yes, there's a certain amount of apprehension.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Out there and during the war, through the whole war, it seemed like there were two worlds. Like once we came in through the submarine nets, into the harbor –

NARRATOR: Right.

MULLINGS: There was a relief. There was a happy-go-lucky feeling. But, then when you were going to sea – once you went back out there, the apprehension came back. You could smile, you could talk, you could joke, but you still had that apprehension all the time. It was just like it was



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another world. You weren't sad. You weren't frightened really, you weren't scared, but you were apprehensive. You knew that there was something out there that might possibly get to you. But, once you got inside the gates – the nets – there was that more peaceful attitude.

NARRATOR: Getting into the nets, the convoy had to enter one by one or?

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. Yes.

NARRATOR: Going in through the submarine nets?

MULLINGS: In fact, all your convoys were usually formed outside the harbor or the ports and they all didn't come from the same port.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: You may have a convoy forming to go to England in Boston and you may have ships coming up from Norfolk to get in with that convoy and coming down from Maine and from New York to meet outside the Boston harbor to form up this convoy or maybe meet them somewhere at sea and go across as a unit.

NARRATOR: So, there was a good chance of getting shot with the torpedo if you were coming all by yourself to form up for the convoy or actually get into a convoy?

MULLINGS: Well, sometimes. A lot of them would have to travel alone. Sometimes, they would have escorts with them if there happened to be an escort vessel coming a certain way and there were 2-3 ships heading that same direction. We would often see them heading into the convoy staging area.

NARRATOR: There was probably a number of vessels that were faster than the convoys speed, for example, I guess the S.S. *United States*, the *United States* used to go all by itself across?

MULLINGS: Right. You would have some of those big transports that would travel alone until they got to a certain area. Now, I think like if they were traveling to England, escorts would probably meet them maybe 100 miles or 200 miles out, something of this nature, because that particular area was saturated with submarines and always a threat of German airplanes coming over.

NARRATOR: What about the American or the RAF planes coming over and hunting the submarines? Did you notice any of that at all when you went over to England?

MULLINGS: No. I never went to England on the corvette. I went to England on later ships, but at that time we would see planes flying over us; they would fly over and challenge and when they were satisfied, they would take off.



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NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: Certainly, probably they may have had a message for the skipper of our ship or something of this nature and then they would relay that message and he would get orders that way, I would assume.

NARRATOR: Oh, I see.

MULLINGS: There were no radio contacts, hardly at all. It was all by signal lights mostly.

NARRATOR: Bridge-to-bridge communications?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: What was your typical layout on the bridge for that. You had your signal flags. You had your typical area where you were at.

MULLINGS: Well, I never really had – the only thing I had to do with the bridge actually was lookout and reporting as boatswain-mate-of-the-watch later on. From what I could see, they had – of course, they had the signal flags in their locker up there. It was usually on the flying bridge, usually, I believe, and they would have . . . The wings of the bridge were usually kept pretty clear of anything. I don't know about my ship, but I imagine some ships had racks to hold the .50-caliber machine gun or something of this nature, but as for the particular layout, you know, on any other of them, you know, I really couldn't say too much about it.

NARRATOR: We are talking about the gun that you were the captain on and the particular situation being inside there. Did you ever have any accidents with the gun? Any particular casualties that occurred with that guy? Everything seemed to go smoothly whenever you used it?

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. Yes, but they had a heck of a time when I put the shell in the chamber and closed the breech. At that time, it took quite a bit to unload it after it had been armed like that.

NARRATOR: Oh, really?

MULLINGS: I don't know why, but I recall shuddering to hear anybody hearing anybody talking about they are still working on that gun up on deck!

Laughter.

MULLINGS: So, it took them quite awhile to disarm it and I guess it was a problem in opening the breech after it had been . . .

NARRATOR: Because it was a live shell!



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MULLINGS: Right. A live shell, and I guess in order to open the breech, they had to eject that live shell.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. And once you ejected it, it could explode I guess.

MULLINGS: Right. So, thankfully we had a good chief gunner's mate on there and he probably cussed me up one side and down the other, but he got it out!

Laughter.

MULLINGS: That was just one of those things that happened during the war and all.

NARRATOR: Well, on the *Alacrity*, you stayed primarily for the convoys that were going from the northern coast?

MULLINGS: Coastwise, yes. Uh-huh.

NARRATOR: And, then when you got to Cuba and the submarine nets opened up and you got in, you were down there for what, a week or what?

MULLINGS: No, no. I don't think we would be down there for more than two or three days.

NARRATOR: Two or three days. You'd have liberty in port.

MULLINGS: Not in Cuba. We'd have liberty in Guantanamo Bay, which was strictly Navy.

NARRATOR: Oh, strictly Navy then.

MULLINGS: So, you'd go ashore and have a couple of beers and come back. That was your liberty.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Pretty restricted.

MULLINGS: Yeah. It was good duty and there was good morale on the ship. Of course, like everything and every place you'd go, you'd have some deadbeats and those that didn't want to carry their share and when you did, they were taken care of.

NARRATOR: The typical brig routine or?

MULLINGS: Well, if need be. We didn't have a brig on the corvette, but . . .

NARRATOR: Oh, you didn't?



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MULLINGS: No, but we had the captain and our officers that wouldn't stand for anybody that didn't want to carry their weight. He looked after us. He gave us good liberties. Whenever possible, he gave us liberty and he wanted the ship kept clean and neat. So, it worked out pretty well. I can't recall of any specifics where fellows got into trouble. Well, we did have one officer that was a millionaire – a millionaire's son. They were into racehorses.

NARRATOR: Really! You remember his name?

MULLINGS: Yes. Helis.

NARRATOR: (spelling) H-e-l-i-s?

MULLINGS: Yes. He was an ensign at the time and the word was that he was paying a boatswain's mate \$10 to wash a pair of skivvies for him.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Once a week or something like that. He wouldn't wash his own skivvies.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: So, that word went around for as long as I was on the ship anyhow. Any, of course, Mr. Helis never denied it or confirmed it. He was always a happy-go-lucky sort of a guy. I don't think he was too much of a sailor, but he was a pretty good officer.

NARRATOR: And, you had, what did you have? Six officers on that ship then?

MULLINGS: At least six officers I guess.

NARRATOR: Do you remember any of the others? Besides the millionaire?

MULLINGS: No, the captain – I can't remember his name – but he was a mustang and he was I believe he was a full lieutenant. He had about 35 years in the service I guess, so he was – he leaned towards looking out for his enlisted men. I think he sort of insisted that the officers do the same. You know, give them a break when you can and things of this nature. So, I really can't recall too much about any of the others. At that time, I had to take a test to make boatswain's mate. Third class after going through school and being recommended for it, they had a . . .

NARRATOR: A proficiency exam, huh?

MULLINGS: They had an academy ensign, fresh out of the academy, who happened to be our deck officer or our division officer.

NARRATOR: Do you remember his name?



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MULLINGS: No, I was just trying to think on that. I really don't remember. Anyway, he made us take the test for boatswain's mate third and he was pretty rough with that test.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: And I think two of us made it. There was about six that took it and two of us made it and I'm not so sure we just didn't make it just by the skin of our teeth, because he really threw the book at us.

NARRATOR: This test was already a written test?

MULLINGS: Well, I don't know whether it was a system, but it may have been his system. We had to give him written answers.

NARRATOR: Oh, no kidding. So, then the test, the questions were in written form and you had to write down the answers to them?

MULLINGS: Yes. Right.

NARRATOR: And then you had to – on the mess deck or wherever you were testing – all six of you went down there and took your test?

MULLINGS: Right. I don't know whether this was standard procedure throughout the Coast Guard during the war or not. I know there were those above us who went up all the way through first class and never took the test.

NARRATOR: Interesting.

MULLINGS: But, it was a lot of comradeship in those days and when it came time to be . . . They got word that they had to transfer a third class and they had three of us.

NARRATOR: Three of you?

MULLINGS: Coxswains and there were three of us aboard ship and they liked us all so much they couldn't decide which of us . . .

NARRATOR: Was going to go.

MULLINGS: The officer couldn't decide which one was going to go, so he said, "We'll flip a coin!"

Laughter.

MULLINGS: I lost and I was transferred to Ellis Island.



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NARRATOR: Ellis Island!

MULLINGS: Ellis Island in New York, which was then the Coast Guard Receiving Station.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. What were you making aboard ship as a BM3 in the way of salary at the time? As a seaman, you were making about \$26 and now . . .

MULLINGS: Well, now, a couple of years later they had gotten some raises. I was probably making, let's see, seaman first – I was probably making \$65-70 a month I guess as a third class. Because I remember distinctly, as seaman first I was making about \$56 a month.

NARRATOR: Aboard ship, you mentioned that some of the privileges that you had were brought about by the fact that you were now third class and not a seaman anymore. The captain said, "you can take it easy now, that's what we have seamen for."

MULLINGS: Uh-huh.

NARRATOR: Did you have a specific list of other things that now you were eligible for that you weren't when you were a seaman?

MULLINGS: Well, your watch station would change. You'd become the coxswain of the watch or boatswain's mate of the watch, whatever the particular outfit wanted to call it, and then therefore you rather than stand watch in one particular station, you'd patrolled all the stations and you relieved a man if he had to be relieved for a few minutes. You'd take his place. It was up to you to see that the men got up for their watches and were present at muster and you had more freedom. You were exempt from a lot of the physical labor.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: Although you weren't told not to join in, you weren't told that you had to join in either! So, if you didn't feel like grabbing a handle or a hammer or something and . . .

NARRATOR: Scraping –

MULLINGS: . . . scraping, you didn't have to do it. You had to see that your men were doing it.

NARRATOR: O.K. And your men – you had a crew, six or seven people that you were then . . .

MULLINGS: Yeah, at that time I think each section had a petty officer. The deck section I'm speaking of, had a petty officer in charge. There would probably be 10 men or so, something of that nature.

NARRATOR: For the size of that ship?



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MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: And did you have a leading seaman?

MULLINGS: At that time, no. No. Well, there may have been leading seamen in the service at that time, but . . .

NARRATOR: You didn't call them that? Or, you didn't have a striker for a third class program or anything like that?

MULLINGS: Not in the boatswain's mate program.

NARRATOR: Well, then you primarily had your deck division, engineering and your . . .

MULLINGS: Right. Uh-huh, and then you had signalmen and things of that nature. But, your responsibilities changed when you made third class and there were certain privileges that you got. You got out of a lot of watches that you ordinarily would have had. It was easier to get a watch changed, say if you had boatswain's mate of the watch, there was sort of a comradeship between the boatswain's mates from chief down to third class that once you made the third class, the others seemed to . . . er, welcome you, you know, into their – well, not a clique, but into their little balliwick of power I guess you might say and so if you wanted to change watch with another boatswain's mate, you could work it around much easier than--

NARRATOR: Being at the other end?

MULLINGS: Right. Uh-huh. So, it was a step up in prestige and work parties – When you went on a work party, you very seldom had to do any of the lifting. You'd just have to take your men and see that they did the work and that was really no problem either. During the war, I think everybody – at least 99% of them – realized that no matter where they were or what they were doing, they had to do it.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And, so there was very few of them that would give you any problems. In my case, it was, I guess ego flattering or something, because I was usually younger than most of my men because I had gone in so young and at that time I wouldn't have been drafted for another three years or so and the fellows that were in there were usually of draft age at least and were in to escape going into the Army or something of this nature, so as a result I was usually two or three years younger than most of the fellows I had command of.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. These other fellows more or less gravitated towards the Coast Guard because they didn't want to go into the Marines or didn't want to go in the Army. So, there was a



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feeling amongst these guys that they more or less picked the Coast Guard because it was the least threatening option shall we say?

MULLINGS: Yeah. I think so. A lot of them got fooled, too!

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Did you have any drafted people?

MULLINGS: I believe we did, later in the war.

NARRATOR: But at the beginning?

MULLINGS: At the beginning, no.

NARRATOR: What about people that were regulars versus reserves? Of course, the reserve program came in in December of '42 and that was a little bit after everything started to get underway. Did you notice any people aboard ship that had – that "he's a reserve, he doesn't know anything," or anything like that?

MULLINGS: The only thing that I can say is I heard some good-natured kidding, with nothing that showed any animosity or tried to make a guy feel small, or anything like that.

NARRATOR: But, they generally found out that this guy is a reserve and?

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah. You know, a guy would come on and say, "You're in the Coast Guard. You're in the Reserve," and the man would say, "I'm in the Reserve." It didn't bother anybody and once you got on that ship, if you did your duty . . .

NARRATOR: No big deal, huh.

MULLINGS: As long as they had a body there and he was doing his job, that was great.

NARRATOR: Was there any relative numbers that was reserve versus regular on your ship that were proportional to say like 25% reserves or 75% were reserves?

MULLINGS: Well, I think, when I first went in, on my first ships, now they were overwhelmingly regular.

NARRATOR: So, we are talking from the first week after Pearl Harbor up to what point?

MULLINGS: Up to probably about fall of '42 or something. From when I came in, they were predominantly regular.



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NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: Then, it seemed to change sort of drastically to where they - where you were getting more and more reserves in. I know when I went to Captain of the Port, I'd say probably 75% of them were reserves.

NARRATOR: Temporary reserves or?

MULLINGS: Probably both. At that time, I don't know what the difference was between temporary reserves and reserves and they, when you went in, you went in and you didn't have a three year enlistment. You went in for the duration of the war.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: Whether it lasted six months or six years, you were in.

NARRATOR: Or ten years!

MULLINGS: That's right, yes.

NARRATOR: So, you understood that when you went in.

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. Yes! And you never gave it a thought as to when your enlistment was going to run out. Never once did I ever think of . . .

NARRATOR: Next week I'm out!

MULLINGS: Yeah. But, I guess after about the latter part of '42, you had predominantly reserves in with us. They would make up for the most – including officers and enlisted men.

NARRATOR: Were they more or less together? Were they less squared away? Or, did you get any impressions that since these guys were reserves now, they just came on board and identified themselves as reserves and that was kind of how you knew they were reserves or?

MULLINGS: Well, you could almost pick them out.

NARRATOR: How would you "pick them" out?

MULLINGS: Well, because a lot of them came in with ratings, like when I was in Captain of the Port – Shore Patrol. A good many of those in there were policemen who had come into the service from their police jobs. And, so they didn't go through any training – boot camp training that I know of. They just went in and some of them came in as first class, second class . . . very seldom a policeman came in with anything less than a third class.



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NARRATOR: I see. So, you have a guy here that is third class or second class, who doesn't quite behave like a second class petty officer.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: Does not have as much experience.

MULLINGS: Not that he was a rowdy or anything like that, but he had a sailor's uniform on, but you knew he wasn't a sailor.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: In fact, in my time, when I was at the Shore Patrol at Captain of the Port, I think there were four of us in a room and I was the only non-policeman in the room. The other three were policemen. They all were rated and I was just a lowly seaman first class.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: But, you had your sea legs and you were more in the Coast Guard than these guys were?

MULLINGS: I felt I was more in the Coast Guard. I didn't feel that I was any better than them, but I felt that at least I had been to sea, and I had seen a part of the war.

NARRATOR: These guys that were the police officers, were they doing it as a draft deferment or how would you characterize the reasons why they came in?

MULLINGS: I think they came in because they probably got the better deal this way. They would still be doing police duty of a nature which is what their life work was . . .

NARRATOR: Anyway, uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And, they were getting a rating of a first class or second class and that made the loss of pay a little bit easier.

NARRATOR: To their civilian job where they had longevity.

MULLINGS: Yeah. Yeah. So, I'm sure that a lot of them were faced with going into the Army or going into the Marines or the Navy or something of this nature and they had visions that they would be away from home whereas they could come into something this and the chances of staying close to home were probably a lot better at that time. But, as I said before, a lot of them got fooled too. I mean, you were in the Coast Guard, and I don't care what you were in the civilian life, if you stepped on somebody's toes that didn't like you, you could be gone any place.



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Laughter.

MULLINGS: As long as you had that uniform on, it didn't matter.

NARRATOR: From the standpoint of these temporary reserves, they were enrolled and disenrolled for their service and you were enlisted and discharged. Did you notice any difference from that point of view, did you hear any of them talking about any of their advantages because they were enrolled or disenrolled or any of them talking about their honorable discharges they were going to get after the end of the war?

MULLINGS: No, not at that time because this – when I was amongst them was right at the beginning of the war.

NARRATOR: No problems. They were just as motivated as the others to help out the country.

MULLINGS: Yes, I think so.

NARRATOR: Now, going to Ellis Island. You were now transferred to Ellis Island and you were at a command that had a Coast Guard Receiving Center?

MULLINGS: It was the Coast Guard Receiving Station, yes.

NARRATOR: Receiving station for troops?

MULLINGS: No, for the Coast Guard.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And, then I don't know what other facilities they had there. I believe there was one section that was still holding civilians, the Immigration Department was probably using. While there, I knew of the historical significance of the place and, of course, you had to take – the only transportation that we had there and to the mainland New York, to Manhattan, was a ferry, and of course the Coast Guard had a brig down in the basement over there.

NARRATOR: A brig, huh?

MULLINGS: A very long basement. I can remember it was just a huge basement and it seemed like it took forever to walk it and as a petty officer we were called upon to go down and stand brig watches at various times.

NARRATOR: This long passageway that you were talking about, it was chained or were there like cages on either side?

MULLINGS: Not that I recall.



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NARRATOR: Or at the end of the corridor there was a cage?

MULLINGS: As I recall, it was just open, a big open basement and it had pilings holding the various – the next floor up I'm sure, but at the end of this long walk – which was probably the width or the length of the building – I don't recall now – they had the brig.

NARRATOR: Which was a structure that had?

MULLINGS: It was a regular . . .

NARRATOR: Like a jail, huh?

MULLINGS: Just like a jail and I think we had – the most we had when I was on duty was about ten people.

NARRATOR: Ten people. And, what did they do wrong?

MULLINGS: Oh. AWOL.

NARRATOR: Oh, so there were Coasties in there too?

MULLINGS: Well, they were all Coast Guard. We only stood watch over the Coast Guard when I was there.

NARRATOR: Oh, o.k.

MULLINGS: There were no civilians that I know of. They were in another section of the buildings. And, of course, while I was there – I was sent there as they were forming a crew for the troop transport which was the AP-119, and while we were there, it was at Christmastime. And, they called upon us. I don't know, I think it was 7 or 8 of us to pull Shore Patrol in New York City.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And it was to be an eight-on, eight-off kind of deal.

NARRATOR: As opposed to what was on Ellis Island which was?

MULLINGS: Well, Ellis Island was more or less just a holding area. You may have had the duty and you may not have had the duty there.

NARRATOR: A day of duty and a day off?



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MULLINGS: Right. But, then we worked over at a police station in New York City in Manhattan and they would take us from there to various sections of the city where we would patrol.

NARRATOR: On foot or?

MULLINGS: On foot. But, we were not the primary police force. The primary police force was the Navy Shore Patrol.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And we were sent over to assist them. And, as we went out on patrol, one Navy Shore Patrol would take one Coast Guard Shore Patrol, and they would patrol and at one time I was sent out to the Queens and another time I was sent to Grand Central Station and another time was Pennsylvania Station and another time was someplace else, I forget.

NARRATOR: Just to patrol. What type of problems would you encounter? What kind of problems would the serviceman encounter that you would run into?

MULLINGS: Well, you might – drinking was the biggest problem. I can remember vividly, it didn't set too well with me. We went into Queens. I went in with this Navy Shore Patrol.

NARRATOR: The Burrough of Queens?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: To continue with your exploits of life as a Shore Patrolman . . .

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah.

NARRATOR: You were saying that one of the things that disturbed you when you were in Grad Central Station there.

MULLINGS: Oh, we went to Queens.

NARRATOR: Queens!

MULLINGS: Yes, the Navy Shore Patrolman was in charge. We were like the assistants.

NARRATOR: O.K. So, you had one Navy in charge and two Coasties?

MULLINGS: No, we paired off. We were one and one.

NARRATOR: O.K.



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MULLINGS: And, usually the Navy man was a first class and I was only third class, so naturally they would be – and it was primarily their duty anyhow.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Was this an old salt or what?

MULLINGS: Yeah. I think so. He had some time in the service, a couple of hash marks I guess. And we walked into this bar and . . .

NARRATOR: Because you were asked to or?

MULLINGS: As a patrol. And over in the corner booth, this sailor was over in this corner booth with this girl and he had her and he was just hitting her in the face with his fist.

NARRATOR: Real aggressive.

MULLINGS: Yeah, and I started over there you know, I wrapped the strap of my baton around my hand and I was going to go over and stop it, and man, the Navy SP almost had to run to catch me and he pulled me back and he said, "Come on, come on," and I couldn't figure out what was going on. He said, "We don't see that sort of thing."

NARRATOR: Well!

MULLINGS: And I couldn't believe what I was hearing, you know.

NARRATOR: He said to leave it alone, huh?

MULLINGS: Yeah, he said to leave it alone. Then, a little later on, it was a Coast Guardsman that was drunk and he wanted to raise all kind of 'cain with that Coast Guardsman.

NARRATOR: Hmm. Interesting. A little bit of double standard there. Leave the the Navy alone

—

MULLINGS: Yeah, so I raised a little 'cain myself. I told him that if he was going to lock up the Coast Guardsman we were going to have to go back and get that Navy man.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh!

MULLINGS: So, they both went free, but that sort of soured me on that Shore Patrol with them. And, then of course we were going into the police station one day and they came back. They had a riot at Pennsylvania Station. We had to get down there quick.

NARRATOR: Oh boy.



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MULLINGS: So, they carried us down there in the paddy wagon with the siren going in New York City and we get down there and we run down to the concourse and there is nobody down there and we ran someplace else down by the tracks and they were not there. Finally we go – there are six of us Coast Guard Shore Patrol – running around like crazy, you know, and finally we go around to the Shore Patrol office and here are four Navy men in there, four Navy Shore Patrolmen and they have got this Coast Guardsman. He must have been about 6' 5". They have got him spread-eagled on the floor and he's laying there and he is just raising his hands up and every time he raised his arms up, these Navy men on each arm would go up with it.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: They had sent in a riot call because they couldn't hardly hold this guy down.

NARRATOR: This one guy – this one Coastie!

MULLINGS: And all it amounted to was drinking. And there was a big old gunner's mate with me who was a Coast Guardsman from the same outfit, you know, and he told this chief in the Navy, he said, "Let me talk to him." Well, there's all these Navy guys standing around with their batons at the ready and they get off of this guy and so this gunner's mate says, "Look, we have to take you back to the station. Will you go with the coxswain and I?" He said, "We're Coast Guard, too." He said, "Yeah, I'll go with y'all. I don't want no Navy man touching me."

Laughter.

MULLINGS: We got out and walked out and put him in the wagon and took him to the police station, not a bit of trouble.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: And, then of course, you know, we would always find – we would get calls that somebody had been in a fight down by one of the train tracks or something and we would get a call that an officer had been assaulted down by the train tracks and so we would go down there and here's this officer with his hat on backwards and he was three sheets to the wind, but somebody had hit him and it supposedly was a sailor. So, when we turned his hat around, he was a merchant seaman.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: So, we had no jurisdiction over him, you know. There were sort of serious-comical things that happened. One time, my partner and I were walking, checking the phone booths, and here is one guy sitting in there and he looked like an officer. Money all over the floor and it was a merchant seaman and his wallet had his money had fallen out. He must have had \$200-\$300 there. And, he was just passed out. We had no authority. We caught hell. We took



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him back to the Shore Patrol office and stuffed his money in his pocket and we got him up in a chair to dry out and the Shore Patrol chief gave us hell for bringing him around there. He said, "You don't have any business fooling with this man," you know, but Jesus.

NARRATOR: Just let the elements take care of him.

MULLINGS: Yeah, so you run into all sorts of things like that. Of course, we could go outside Pennsylvania Station and patrol around the blocks and the Navy men, they knew all the places where you got the free food. Yeah, this one guy took me into this restaurant, a nice restaurant right across the street and we had a full course dinner.

NARRATOR: Just walk in and –

MULLINGS: Yeah, they said "no charge." So that seemed – during the whole war – there was a sort of a comradeship between the civilians at home and the servicemen. You would get into the movie houses for half price and you'd go into a bar and there was always somebody – you very seldom had to spend your own money to get drunk.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: You could get drunk without spending anything because there was always somebody wanting to buy you a beer.

NARRATOR: Glad that you were out there on that ship and not him, huh?

MULLINGS: I guess, in some instances, yeah. But, it gave you a good feeling.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. At least on the home front, there was a lot of support for the war effort.

MULLINGS: Yeah. Yeah. So, these are just side affairs that I have had while I was at Ellis Island.

NARRATOR: You were there then for about four months?

MULLINGS: No, I don't think we were there that long. I was there long enough to have about a week of Shore Patrol and probably there maybe two to two-and-a-half to three weeks. While I was there, of course, they were getting the crew together. They took all the deck petty officers and we went on a daily basis to a cargo loading school where we learned to load cargo, load trucks and things because of the troop transport that we were going to man was big enough that it had cargo holds and . . .

NARRATOR: Oh, o.k. Do you remember the location of where that training took place?

MULLINGS: It was in Manhattan some place.



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NARRATOR: Manhattan Beach?

MULLINGS: No, no. Manhattan downtown . . .

NARRATOR: Oh, Manhattan Island area.

MULLINGS: Yes. And, our ship was going to have big booms on it and so we had to learn how to cradle the booms, how to raise the booms, and switch the cables from the winch to the mast where they would be stationary.

NARRATOR: Oh, I see.

MULLINGS: And, I don't recall how long that lasted. I think it probably lasted a week.

NARRATOR: A week.

MULLINGS: And then another school was –

NARRATOR: All Coasties in attendance?

MULLINGS: These were all people who were going to be on our ship. They were Coast Guardsmen, yes. Then, we also went to an antiaircraft school. This was at South Ferry.

NARRATOR: At South Ferry. I remember South Ferry.

MULLINGS: And it was more or less like a hippodrome inside and you had guns and you would be mounted in the guns, just like 20-mm or 40-mm. For the 20-mm, you'd be strapped into the gun and these planes would fly over on the ceiling of this hippodrome affair and you would fire at these planes and when you made a hit, it would register and you would be credited with a hit.

NARRATOR: Oh.

MULLINGS: So, when you got done, you got a certificate of what your score was as a gunner. And this was all done while they were still gathering, pulling in all the personnel to man this troop transport. And, that would just about end our stay at Ellis Island, and from there we were shipped up to Newport, Rhode Island to the Naval Training Station. This was to be indoctrination for the crews to man this naval troop transport and more or less each petty officer had a Quonset hut with so many men assigned to him.

NARRATOR: O.K., men he was to supervise?



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MULLINGS: Right. Now, I believe there were five coxswains I believe – four besides myself – and each one was assigned a Quonset hut and each one had about 30 men, and I know of three other beside myself that all of our men were 17-year-old steward mates, or commissary men.

NARRATOR: Commissary men – yes, steward mates.

MULLINGS: Steward mates. They were to be servers to serve food for the officers or work in the galley. This was their job. They were 17-18 years old, something like that. Of course, with them, now I was an old man. That's the first time I was an "old man" because I was probably 19 then.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And they were 17, so that's the first time I had anything to do with people younger than me.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: But, we would have these Quonset huts and about 30 men I guess for each Quonset hut and we would have to take them from class to class. We had no specific duties for ourselves to do.

NARRATOR: Other than to watch over these men?

MULLINGS: Other than to watch over them. We would have to run them from class to class and make them fall into ranks and march them to chow lines, march them to muster, things of this nature. And it was here that really I guess that our crew was brought together more or less, you know, the nucleus of it. These youngsters were not allowed liberty, but petty officers were and so if we didn't have the watch, we had liberty in the evenings and on weekends.

NARRATOR: This wasn't South Ferry, now.

MULLINGS: No, this was Newport, Rhode Island, Naval Training Station.

NARRATOR: And, the schools that these guys were going through were schools that were directly meant for the ship they were about to go onto?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: So, you had these 30 guys in your Quonset hut and they all were going to be cooks aboard the ship or they were all going to be steward mates?

MULLINGS: Right.



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NARRATOR: And that team, for example, was your responsibility and another petty officer was responsible for say the gunner's mates or whatever/

MULLINGS: Yes, a bunch of seaman.

NARRATOR: And they would go through their school?

MULLINGS: Uh-huh.

NARRATOR: So about one week, this school was?

MULLINGS: No. I think the school was for a month.

NARRATOR: A month, o.k.

MULLINGS: And, we would – every place I guess, like all Navy installations – you had to go by rank and file. You went in formation to eat. You went in formation to church. You went here and you went there and it was our duty to see that these men got to where they were going, when they were supposed to get there and things of this nature.

NARRATOR: What did you notice about these guys, other than they were a lot younger than you were?

MULLINGS: They were scared.

NARRATOR: Did they volunteer or what?

MULLINGS: I really . . . Right now, I keep wanting to think that they were drafted, but I know there were – it seems that they were too young to be drafted. But, they may have been enlistees and talked into – somebody said come on in as steward mates and they didn't know what they were getting into.

NARRATOR: Like, "sounds good to me."

Laughter.

MULLINGS: But, at any rate, they were a scared bunch and they sort of thought that – that was another ego trip for the petty officers too, because you get 30 young guys that are scared to death and when you say "jump," you never saw guys move so fast in all your life because they thought you were a god or something, you know.

NARRATOR: Well, up to that point, now you had sustained a ship sinking and you had come out of that alive and you had gone on a number of convoys and you had gone on the *Carrabassett* and all.



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MULLINGS: Oh, yeah. I was a real salt! Laughter.

NARRATOR: Well, you had had three ships at that point.

MULLINGS: And the funny thing about it. Well, you'd get the biggest kick out of it. You'd be walking along and you might be walking along with a couple of chiefs or something, Coast Guard chiefs and the Navy guys didn't know any better, they thought they were officers. They would salute every one of our chiefs.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: That they went by!

Laughter.

NARRATOR: The Navy enlisted people.

MULLINGS: Yes. Yes. And at that time, we'd get liberty and so my . . .we would hitchhike. You weren't supposed to hitchhike and we would hitchhike from Newport, Rhode Island to Fall River, Massachusetts, because there was nothing doing in Newport, Rhode Island, and there was . . .

NARRATOR: I've got news for you. There still isn't.

MULLINGS: And, so this one time, we – my buddy and I – we were staying in town and we were hitchhiking and all of a sudden this station wagon comes by and it had a full lieutenant, gold braid, in it and we thought, "Oh man!" He stopped, had a lady in the front and we were scared. We said, "Man, we should have gotten our hands down sooner. He's going to come back and . . ."

NARRATOR: Get you.

MULLINGS: Really get us. He backed up and he asked us where we were going and we told him, and he says, "Well, hop in." So, we hopped in and he went a few more feet and he picked up two more Navy men this time and we were going along and somebody said, "You know, I believe that's Robert Montgomery – the movie actor." I don't know whether you remember him, but at the time he was one of the super stars of the film industry and so we . . .

NARRATOR: This guy that picked you up, he was a Coastie?

MULLINGS: No, he was in the Navy. And, so as we are driving along, we between the four of us, they elected me to ask him when we got out if he was Robert Montgomery, so I was trying to ascertain beforehand and I am sneaking down in the back seat, just getting down as low as I could to look and when I did, he was staring me right in the face.



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Laughter.

MULLINGS: So, when he lets us out, I opened the door and put one foot out so I could get a good running start . . . and I asked him if he was Robert Montgomery, the actor. He sort of laughed and said, "yeah." And that was it. So, that was a brush with famous people that they had. So, we finished up our classes there. Before we left Newport, Rhode Island, of course, we used to have to I think it was on Saturday mornings that they would have full dress review.

NARRATOR: Ah-ha. What was full dress review for? What occasion? Visiting people?

MULLINGS: Well, I guess for the area command or something.

NARRATOR: Was it a graduation situation?

MULLINGS: No, not necessarily, just when somebody wanted to review the troops, I think. And, of course, this was when we first saw our and met our officers that we were going to be with and we had, strangely enough, we had a Robin Hood who was a lieutenant commander.

NARRATOR: The guy's name was Robin Hood?

MULLINGS: Yes, his name was Robin Hood! He was a reservist, a lieutenant commander. And we had another full lieutenant who was going to be my division officer – I can't remember his name now. He was a banker from Virginia and he could NEVER keep in step. That man could never keep in step – for two steps, he would be out of step – and we'd be going across the . . .

NARRATOR: I hope he didn't count pennies the way he walked.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: We were going across the field, the reviewing field, to make a left flank and all march toward the reviewing stand. Well, the lieutenant he's walking in front of us and he's trying to get in step and he's hopping and any how – "LEFT FLANK MARCH!" – and we all turned left and he went right and was marching out there.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Luckily, somebody in the back row saw him and hollered to him and he turned around and he come running up from the front and you know, when I come to think of it, it seems to me at that time Admiral [Russell R.] Waesche was in the reviewing stand. Admiral Waesche at that time was the Commandant of the Coast Guard.

NARRATOR: That's right.



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MULLINGS: And he was in the reviewing stand. That was the occasion then. I'll never forget that. But, we used to all get a kick out of that and we used to kid that poor lieutenant and he took it just as good as could be.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: But, then after that, we left and went back to Ellis Island and our crews formed and it seemed to me like they had a ship's party for us. Before that, we had a work detail for the petty officers. They were all issued permits to go aboard the hull AP-119 [U.S.S. *General William Weigel*] in the Naval Yard. It wasn't quite complete yet.

NARRATOR: It wasn't commissioned?

MULLINGS: It wasn't commissioned yet. In fact, I still have the pass someplace. We were sent aboard with the plans and each officer – one of the officers took us – took so many petty officers, and he designated which valves they were to check and we went all through the vessel, checking the valves, the ones that were supposed to be on, the ones that were supposed to be off. Those – any valve that they had – whatever position they were supposed to be, that was our duty to do, and I think it took us two to three days to do that.

NARRATOR: To familiarize yourselves with it.

MULLINGS: No, this was just to make sure that the proper valves were opened and closed at the time that the ship was taken over, I believe, and so I think that took us two to three days to do.

NARRATOR: When you looked at the condition of that ship at the time, was it all painted? The exterior?

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. Yes. Uh-huh.

NARRATOR: And, so?

MULLINGS: Yes, this was the last thing to be done I think – the checking of these particular valves – all down as far down in the bottom of the bowels of the ship that we could go and on up to topside, wherever the valves were, that's where we checked them.

NARRATOR: They were numbered well?

MULLINGS: Yes. And, so it was then after that that we went on aboard her and we had the commissioning ceremonies aboard her.

NARRATOR: What did that consist of?



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MULLINGS: Well, it consisted of the whole crew being at muster. They had some naval officers - Navy brass there I think. The thing that surprised me, that I was not aware of, is that at the time when we were getting ready for this that we had a detachment of Army.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS : We had a detachment of Marines and we had a Navy chaplain and a Coast Guard crew. These were all permanent company of the ship.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: The Marines were performing the duties that they do on regular naval ships, you know.

NARRATOR: Brig watch.

MULLINGS: Brig watch, guarding the ship for when it is in port, making patrols when we were underway with carrying troops.

NARRATOR: Keeping the troops in line.

MULLINGS: Yes, and also they had the Captain's orderly, the messenger and so forth.

NARRATOR: About 20 guys, 30 guys?

MULLINGS: I guess it probably was and we had a small detachment of Army men who were Army liaison who actually traveled with us.

NARRATOR: And their job was primarily to?

MULLINGS: The rounding up of the troops at embarkation and debarkation of the troops.

NARRATOR: The procedures for doing that, to make sure that they all knew what to do?

MULLINGS: Right. And, of course, we had the Navy chaplain, so it was a well-represented crew, you know.

NARRATOR: Now, the Coast Guard being in the role of being the crew, did you have any special messing facilities that the Coast Guard people were sent to or received your meals? Did you receive your meals first and then everybody else get theirs?

MULLINGS: No. Well, we received our meals – the ship's company included those of the detachment of soldiers, the detachment of Marines and the Coast Guard. They were ship's company, so at meal times, we got to eat three times a day. The troops only ate twice and the



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troops ate standing up. We got to sit down. We had a special area where we ate, you know, and I guess when it wasn't being used for us, then it was used for the troops. But, that caused some dissent amongst the troops on the ship when we'd go on pass these guys that had been in line for a half-hour, 45- minutes, and we would go ahead being ship's company and pass right on it and go right on in and get our food and sit down and eat.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: So that created a little dissention I'm sure because they didn't know – the soldiers didn't know what was going on.

NARRATOR: Did you notice anything unusual about these guys, anything that sticks out in your mind. Were these all American troops or were these foreign troops that you were carrying over?

MULLINGS: No, these were all American troops.

NARRATOR: These guys were being unloaded for a trip to where?

MULLINGS: Well, I don't know. There were none at the commissioning ceremonies. The commission ceremonies more or less just a formal affair where the command was passed to our captain.

NARRATOR: He read his standing orders.

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: O.K., and his orders to take command.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: And, then the ship's name was given at that time?

MULLINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

NARRATOR: And the ship's name was?

MULLINGS: U.S.S. *General William Weigel* [AP-119].

NARRATOR: It was named after –

MULLINGS: A general!

NARRATOR: Who was famous for what?



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MULLINGS: I believe he was famous during the Civil War.

NARRATOR: Civil War, o.k.

MULLINGS: I think that is where most of those names came from on those troop transports. Our captain's name was T.Y. Awalt, and our executive officer was G. I. Lynch, commander.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: (spelling) L-Y-N-C-H?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: And he was – if you looked at him, he was a real dude.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: You know, he wore his hat at a cocky angle and he was regular Coast Guard. There was no doubt about it. Of course, we had a tremendously big crew on there. Just how many I don't recall. The ship itself was over 500 feet in length and I think we had a top speed of about 28 knots or something like that.

NARRATOR: Pretty fast.

MULLINGS: And we could carry, I think our capacity was supposed to be 5,000 troops.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: There was one time I know of that we carried more than 5,000 troops on her.

NARRATOR: More like double that or what?

MULLINGS: No, I think the word was that there was about 7,000 on her then. But, we made our home port in New York.

NARRATOR: At the Brooklyn Navy Yard or?

MULLINGS: Either Brooklyn Navy Yard or Staten Island, I'm not sure.

NARRATOR: They had some docks there, yeah.



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MULLINGS: Or, we may have pulled up in Manhattan on the docks up there also. But, I was trying to think. Our shake-down cruise was not one where we went on a long trip. I believe we went outside the gates and did a little running around or things of that nature and then came on back in. I don't think we had a real, what you would call a real shake-down cruise. So, everybody that was aboard her at the commissioning ceremonies that were present received a plank owners certificate.

NARRATOR: So, if ever the ship got decommissioned and they tore it up, you were able to get one piece of wood from the deck.

MULLINGS: Well, I don't know. There wasn't any wood on that ship! After the war, she turned into a passenger ship, but that would entitle you to a trip on her, but I don't think that was true. I don't think that was true!

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Did you ever find out what happened to her after the war?

MULLINGS: Yes. The Army took her over, I think, and then the Navy took it over again, and after that I'm not sure if it was sold or what happened to her. But, we made our trips to England. We didn't really – this was in 1945, so we carried some troops over there and, of course, we tied up at Southampton. That's where we went up into the Soylent, which was an anchorage area outside of Southampton, and I believe we brought some people back to New York. Then again, we left again and we went to England and while we were at anchor there, a storm came up.

NARRATOR: This was your first trip?

MULLINGS: This was the second trip, I believe. A storm came up and we lost our anchor, so it had to be quite a storm, you know, and we went from Southampton to LaHavre, France and we went from LaHavre, France around to Gibraltar. We didn't actually go ashore, but we anchored right there.

NARRATOR: This must have been after the Normandy invasion?

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. This was in '45. The early part of '45.

NARRATOR: The early part of '45. So, your ship was commissioned do you remember when?

MULLINGS: January, I think.

NARRATOR: January of '45? And then you took over 5,000 troops on your first trip. And you landed in England first?

MULLINGS: Right.



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NARRATOR: And then you made a return trip to the United States, you got more troops, and then –

MULLINGS: Then, we went to LaHavre, France.

NARRATOR: O.K., so you went directly to LaHavre, France then?

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: In the spring of '45.

MULLINGS: And then we went from there down to Gibraltar and at that time the word was going around that we weren't supposed to pull in there, that they would run us out or something and that was why we couldn't go ashore, but this was merely scuttlebutt. Nobody really knew.

NARRATOR: So, the troops were told no liberty in this port.

MULLINGS: We didn't have that many troops aboard.

NARRATOR: You didn't?

MULLINGS: No.

NARRATOR: Why were you going down there, do you know?

MULLINGS: Well, we went from there to Marseilles, France, and in Marseilles, France, they started loading troops and they were all black troops.

NARRATOR: In Marseilles?

MULLINGS: Black troops with white officers, and this is where we were told, the word got around ship that we had 7,000 troops on her.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And you could believe because it seemed overly crowded.

NARRATOR: Were these troops from Sudan or from Ethiopia or?

MULLINGS: No, these were American troops.

NARRATOR: American black troops?



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MULLINGS: American black troops and a lot of them at that time, they – If you accumulated so many points, they would send you home for rotation or something.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. So, this must have been that famous division of black troops or?

MULLINGS: Well, I don't know what division it was. I know that we left Marseilles and we were in company of another troop transport. I think it was the General Black, and these – it seems like we were told that our ship was the slowest ship of the two.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: And somebody said that the two skipper had a bet on as to which one would get to San Juan, Puerto Rico first.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. O.K.

MULLINGS: So, one night they just – the other one disappeared – and needless to say, we arrived in San Juan a good 8-10 hours before the General Black did.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: But, to back up a little bit. Now, we went to Marseilles. We also came back to England. We had some wounded people.

NARRATOR: Were they British wounded? Or French.

MULLINGS: I don't know. Probably some British and probably some American, but we went back from Marseilles to South Hampton and we were being protected by a cruiser and two or three destroyers and there were three or four other troop transports in this particular convoy.

NARRATOR: Hmm, quite a few.

MULLINGS: And as we were coming back, there was a general quarters sounded. Supposedly, a submarine had fired a torpedo or something. Anyway, the convoy scattered and there again, we were supposed to be the slowest ship in the bunch and we beat them all back to Southampton.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: How was general quarters different on that ship than it was on the *Alacrity*? Was there newer equipment? Was it easier to do whatever you had to do?

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah. Well, it was newer equipment.



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NARRATOR: Besides the different type of ship, did you notice anything unusual about a year later or two years later, now that you have a newer ship and any procedural changes that you noticed that come to mind?

MULLINGS: Well, not really. Our general quarters would usually be sounded by bell.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And I think on the troop transport, it always came across the command, "All hands to battle stations. Clear the passageways." This was for the benefit of the troops. You would have an awful time getting through them because some of them wouldn't move, you know, and they would be right in your way and things of this nature. Different procedures. Of course, on the troop transport, we used a boatswain's pipe quite a bit. We never used it on the smaller vessels.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: We were always piping something. We had to pipe chow-down, colors, pipe the captain over the side and things of this nature, you know, it was more strict military than on the smaller ships. But, it was enjoyable. The crew got along pretty good. You had a real melting pot, but you would have dissidents, some guys that didn't want to carry their load.

NARRATOR: Didn't want to work, some of them?

MULLINGS: Right. And the procedure usually would be, "Well, I'm going to transfer him to the 2nd division," and then the 2nd division we would get him and we would say, "Well, I'm going to transfer him to the 1st division," and by the time he got to the 1st division, the 1st division officer up there would say, "Well, let's get this guy outta here," meaning the next port of call.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Transfer him off the ship, huh?

MULLINGS: They would get him off the ship, yeah.

NARRATOR: What would happen to him then? He'd just go aboard the next ship?

MULLINGS: Well, he would go some place else and cause trouble. As long as he wasn't causing trouble with us, that was good enough, you know.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And, getting back to the trip where we got into San Juan, Puerto Rico –



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NARRATOR: Er, this crew of blacks from Marseilles?

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: O.K.

MULLINGS: They were sort of uneasy then. Little things were happening –

NARRATOR: The threat of submarines?

MULLINGS: No, no, I mean within the troops themselves, you know, just uneasiness. I think a lot of them thought they were going home. Well, we thought they were going home. We didn't know.

NARRATOR: So, the crew was telling them, "You're going home," and all of a sudden, they show up in Puerto Rico.

MULLINGS: Yeah. We show up in Puerto Rico and still they, you know, that wasn't too bad. That's still on the way home from Marseilles, so when we go down and we go through the Panama Canal. Of course, when we hit the Panama Canal, there's still nobody getting off.

NARRATOR: Nobody is telling them where they are going.

MULLINGS: No, we go through the locks and all.

NARRATOR: The troops probably had a lot of points, so they figured they were going home. Be due for discharge pretty soon.

MULLINGS: Right. Yeah. So, we get on through the Canal and we come out on the Pacific side.

NARRATOR: Put your running lights on now?

MULLINGS: No, no. We kept our lights off. So, we started on our across the Pacific and we come up to these little atolls and I think we hit Ulithi Atoll.

NARRATOR: This was in May or June of when?

MULLINGS: Yeah, somewhere in there. And, these –

NARRATOR: Ulithi, can you spell that?



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MULLINGS: (spelling) U-l-i-t-h-i . And these fellows were really nasty. We had an officer, one of our commissary officers who at night was slashed across the chest with a knife. They never found out who did it.

NARRATOR: Was it while he was waiting in line?

MULLINGS: No, no. He was up on deck. Just walking on the deck and somebody jumped him.

NARRATOR: Just animosity towards this officer?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Were the Marines all white on your ship?

MULLINGS: Yes. And they were all combat veterans.

NARRATOR: They all had pretty good experience.

MULLINGS: All of them had been in the jungles in the South Pacific. And, this one was making his rounds one night and a bunch of these soldiers grabbed him and took his .45 away from him, and so when he reported that, they immediately – the captain the next morning had us herding everybody down below and let them up one at a time and searching them.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And I guess he must have gotten four to five big GI cans full of guns, knives and what have you – more than that I'm sure, but full of weapons.

NARRATOR: They were not supposed to carry weapons?

MULLINGS: These were unauthorized weapons.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. So, when they boarded the ship, they were surrendered the weapons so that when they were being transported they didn't have a gun in their bunks or whatever.

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: I see.

MULLINGS: Well, they carried their rifles – their weapons – with them.

NARRATOR: But, there was no magazine?



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MULLINGS: Well, I don't know whether there was or not, but they carried their weapons with them, but these were unauthorized weapons. The ship's .45 that they took from the Marine – and they never did find the .45, and –

NARRATOR: Well, why would you suppose that they jumped that guy? For his .45?

MULLINGS: I don't know whether they jumped him for his .45 or not. I don't know what the purpose was. Maybe somebody wanted a .45.

NARRATOR: A souvenir?

MULLINGS: Yeah.

NARRATOR: Jungle warfare – the only thing that would stop an enemy soldier was a .45?

MULLINGS: That's right.

NARRATOR: Maybe they were afraid of what was happening? When you got to that atoll, you had anchored then, right?

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

NARRATOR: Were you taking on other troops at that point?

MULLINGS: No, no. Well, we may have had a couple of guys- I know there were a couple of Coast Guardsman transferred to another vessel, but we may have gone in there to refuel – I don't recall. Or, we may have gone in there to replenish some supplies or something.

NARRATOR: Fresh water or fuel.

MULLINGS: Right. And, then there was at one time on this same trip, this electrician, he and one of the Marine sentries were pretty good friends. They were always horsing around together and joking and cutting up and kidding, and they got to horsing around and the gun got out of the fellow's holster when this Marine was on sentry duty. How it got out, whether they were horsing around with it or what, nobody knows. It fired – I guess maybe he had it in his hand or something – and it fired accidentally and hit the Coast Guardsman and then he dropped the gun in shock and it went off again and went in his ankle and came out his knee.

NARRATOR: Oh, gosh.

MULLINGS: And the Coast Guardsman died the next day.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. Do you remember his name?



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MULLINGS: No, I don't remember his name. The Marine, he was pretty well shot up, so we had a burial at sea for the Coast Guardsman.

NARRATOR: Did you all muster on the fantail and this person was wrapped in a sheet?

MULLINGS: Right. He was sewn into a canvas bag that was weighted I guess and that was to be my job, but I wasn't where I supposed to be that night and instead of being in my bunk, I was up topside laying down and so when the chief didn't find me to help sew him in the bag, he grabbed another coxswain who was down below in his sack and took him. This was just as well. I didn't have any great . . . You know, I didn't realize that he would be looking for me, but . . . But, it is a very sad ceremony to see a man dropped over the side like that.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: Luckily, that was the only one I ever had, as far as seeing a burial at sea happen.

NARRATOR: So, the ship's chaplain was present. An honor guard obviously was there.

MULLINGS: Right. A Marine honor guard fired the gun salute and the captain read something and the chaplain read something. But, it's a very, very sad occasion. You could see it in the faces of even the hardest sailor there that it was something he didn't like participating in either.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh. What happened to the Marine after that? He was pretty shot up?

MULLINGS: Yeah, his leg was pretty well shot up. He was transferred to a hospital after. I don't believe he was even given a court-martial for it.

NARRATOR: Just an unfortunate accident?

MULLINGS: I don't recall, but, yeah. So, when we pulled into Manila Harbor we had fellows up on the superstructure with automatic rifles, just to make sure everything was kept under control. It was a right testy time there because of the chain of events that had transpired, you know. You weren't sure what was going to happen.

NARRATOR: Oh, because of the people that had been knives and all and the gun being –

MULLINGS: Yes.

NARRATOR: And, you as the crew then, you were sort of –

MULLINGS: We always traveled together.

NARRATOR: After that?



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MULLINGS: After the knifing, we traveled together. Our brig was always full. We had a brig on there and I guess our brig was big enough to hold about 20 people.

NARRATOR: Why was it?

MULLINGS: And we had them shackled outside the brig.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Really?

MULLINGS: Yeah, for different offenses, you know.

NARRATOR: Well, for example, what would be an example?

MULLINGS: Fighting.

NARRATOR: Amongst themselves?

MULLINGS: Yeah. Striking an officer or . . .

NARRATOR: Did they have a lot of that though?

MULLINGS: Er . . . well, a degree of it. How much, I couldn't say. It was a pretty wild trip, because in a way, you know, some of those guys you could not blame them for being –

NARRATOR: They figured they got cheated. They were supposed to go on liberty in New York or whatever and they got . . .

MULLINGS: Still, you don't condone it in the military. They were just like everybody else. They were in it for the duration and if the duration meant that they had to stay overseas, then that's what they should accept.

NARRATOR: Now, why did you go to the Philippines?

MULLINGS: To carry these troops there.

NARRATOR: And these troops were supposed to be . . . The war was still going on in the Pacific in the Philippines?

MULLINGS: Oh, yes. Yes.

NARRATOR: And the Philippines had already been liberated?



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MULLINGS: Yes. Well, I imagine there was still some fighting in the Philippines, but primarily I think it was over, a clean-up operation. But, we unloaded them there and the, of course, for the trip back we always had wounded people to bring back, or you had some other troops going back. Very seldom they had some civilians or something like this. Of course, while we were there, it just so happened that I was coxswain of the captain's gig and we would anchor out, so when the captain wanted to go ashore, I would have to take him into the liberty landing in Manila and this one particular time that I took him and the executive officer in there, our captain's gig had a little cabin on it.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And, of course, I had a machinist's mate on the motor and a bowman and myself, and of course, the captain and the executive officer were in the cabin. So, we were heading around this point and just as went around this point, this big old torpedo boat comes out, opened full speed. He was going just as fast as he could go, throwing a rooster tail up, I know it must have been 15 feet high, and it was all that I could do to get that thing around and head the bow right into this wake coming at me and I couldn't find my bell rope. We had a bell rope. One bell was full and two bells astern to signal for the engineer in the boat and I couldn't find it, so I had to holler at him. I said, "Cut it down, please cut it down!" He must have heard the anxiety in my voice and just about the time he cut that motor, that wake hit us and that captain's gig went up almost perpendicular in the air and the captain and the executive officer came rolling out of the cabin!

Laughter.

NARRATOR: They were thinking what the hell is going on!

MULLINGS: And you never heard such hollering and cussing in all your life, and the captain came up. He came up off the deck. He's hollering, "Get his number! Get his number!."

Laughter.

MULLINGS: Because that PT boat was gone by then. It was really just lucky it didn't capsize us.

NARRATOR: Oh, yeah!

MULLINGS: And, so I got a pat on the back. The captain told me what a good job I did. He didn't know how scared I was, I tell you.

Laughter.



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MULLINGS: Then, another time we had to . . . Well, it was one of our liberty boats. One of our motor boats was tied up on the boat boom on the stern and the next morning it was gone and there was real thievery out there in those days.

NARRATOR: Really?

MULLINGS: Yeah, it was gone. So, the captain told the chief he had better have one when we left. So, the next morning when we pulled out, we had one up on deck.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: It didn't have the right number on it, but we had one, so there was a little bit of hanky-panky and thievery going on out there, you know.

NARRATOR: Well, when you pull out and you've got it on deck, who's going to stop you to take it off, huh?

MULLINGS: Right. So, that was a pretty rough trip going over there and we came back to California, I guess.

NARRATOR: With the wounded aboard. Were the wounded primarily Americans or where they of other nationalities? Were you transporting New Zealand people?

MULLINGS: I don't really know. The crew had very little to do with that. The Army would usually be the litter bearers to handle it and we came back and pulled into California.

NARRATOR: Long Beach or San Francisco?

MULLINGS: One of them. Either San Francisco or San Diego. I can't be certain at this point.

NARRATOR: So, you pulled in and you got the wounded off.

MULLINGS: Yeah. Things are mixed up in my mind. I know we had a ship's party there. Captain Awald at one time saw some dirt up on the bulkhead when we were in port, I think it was in New York, and he came back and had a few drinks in him and he roused the masters-at-arms out in the middle of the night and took a hose and started washing the walls down, made them scrub it down, and he made the comment, "On my ship, we will play hard and we will work hard," and so that was the motto. We worked hard and we played hard. He gave us liberty at every opportunity and out in California – like in New York – he gave us a ship's party. Where the money came from, I don't know, but there was a ship's party in a hotel in New York and one in California.

NARRATOR: So, the 200 members of the crew or the 50 members of the crew?



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MULLINGS: All the members of the crew that weren't – that didn't have the duty – went to the party.

NARRATOR: So, was that like 100 guys?

MULLINGS: Oh, no. Our crew – we had 400 crewmen.

NARRATOR: 400! And so at the party – you had alcohol there and you had food and all paid for.

MULLINGS: Right. Everything was paid for. I can't remember where it was in California. I do remember that on the way back from Hawaii. On one of the trips that we came back from Hawaii, a specialist third class came aboard for ship's company whose name was Gower Champion. He was later to become a movie star and a dancer with his wife.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: And he was a specialist third class. He was supposed to put skits and things for the troops and keep them amused and entertained and he was in charge of getting together this ship's party.

NARRATOR: Back in California?

MULLINGS: In California and he had Shirley Temple there when she was just a young girl and very pretty and he made her an honorary chief master at arms there and it was a real nice party and they had the telephone company girls there.

NARRATOR: Telephone company!

MULLINGS: For the guys, you know.

NARRATOR: For dancing partners?

MULLINGS: Yeah, yeah. And, same thing in New York City, we had the party and I think it was just before we went aboard her. This was a pre-commissioning party that the captain gave us – same kind of deal as the food, drinks . . .

NARRATOR: No Shirley Temple thought?

MULLINGS: No Shirley Temple, but you'd be surprised what goes on.. Some of those old salts, you know, we had a chief boatswain's mate that . . . Well, we would all jump over the subway turnstiles in New York, rather than pay the nickel, and the chief he had so much, he couldn't do it, so he got down on his hands and knees and crawls under, you know.



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Laughter.

MULLINGS: But, it was a nice crew and we made several trips into the Philippines, into the Pacific. We stopped off in Hawaii. We stopped off at Eniwetok or Kwajalein, I I just can't recall.

NARRATOR: Picking up these various peoples?

MULLINGS: Yeah, picking up the wounded and one time we were out there and I had my crew in the stern. I had them – the third division was my particular area – and I had my crew getting ready to grease the riggings, the stays on the mast, and nobody wanted to go up in the boatswain's chair, so I said, "Well, I'll show you first." I wasn't crazy about it, but I figured, I'm the petty officer. I will have to show them. So, I said, "I'll show you first," and then somebody's going to go up there. So, they pulled me up in the boatswain's chair and pulled me up to the rigging, and, of course, it had a big collar that held it to the rigging. It was pulled up on a 45-degree angle and we would take a bucket of grease and grease this cable that you are coming down on.

NARRATOR: Oh, o.k.

MULLINGS: And they no sooner got me up there, and I said, "Now, just let me down slowly." You had to holler to make them hear you because you were up quite high. All of a sudden, general quarters sounded!

NARRATOR: And they dropped the line?

MULLINGS: No, they didn't drop the line because if they dropped the line, I'd come straight down. No, they secured the line on a cleat, and ran off to general quarters and left me hanging there.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: So, finally – it was supposed to be a plane in the area, whether it was a Japanese plane or what, I don't know. But, it gave me a little concern, you know, hanging up there and I'm hollering and screaming and finally one of the gun tub officers down below saw me and he sent a man down to get me down.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: So, you seamen didn't really care too much to help you out there?

MULLINGS: Well, I think it was more or less that they didn't think really. So, there wasn't any animosity there. Things are kind of hazy. We made I think three trips through the Panama Canal. But, I don't remember where we went – I just know that we didn't come up on the East Coast of the United States again.



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NARRATOR: Probably in Texas area or Florida.

MULLINGS: No.

NARRATOR: The Caribbean?

MULLINGS: No, we came through and we went to Europe. We had to go to Europe and then we would . . .the way I figured, we went through once, came back the opposite direction to Europe, and then went through again – to the Pacific.

NARRATOR: Well, it must have been, the climate must have been quite a change going from Europe where it was probably pretty cool down to through the Panama Canal where it was pretty hot and sweaty.

MULLINGS: Well, it was a gradual change. You really didn't feel it that bad. When the troops would get off of the transport, then our crew would have a bit of cleaning up to do where the troops had been billeted.

NARRATOR: For example, did they fumigate it?

MULLINGS: Well, they would scrub it down.

NARRATOR: Hose it?

MULLINGS: Yeah, and I can recall that we had to drag a couple of the fellows out of one of the deep holds because of the heat. They were down there cleaning up and the heat got them. We were in the Pacific on the way back then.

NARRATOR: O.K. So, heat exhaustion?

MULLINGS: Yeah, uh-huh.

NARRATOR: You didn't have any stowaways on board?

MULLINGS: No. If we had any stowaways we never knew it. But, like I say, those things were all when it was getting towards near the end of the war that I had lost track of time.

NARRATOR: The general momentum.

MULLINGS: And the way the events were happening. We tied up in California and, of course, I think we went into a shipyard in California to have some work done and it was in California that I was transferred off of the U.S.S. *General William Weigel*.

NARRATOR: This was in the late summer or?



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MULLINGS: This was at the end of the war. This was in October.

NARRATOR: October, o.k.

MULLINGS: Yes, it was in October that I came off of her. I was sent to Naval Receiving Station in Alameda, California, and I don't know how long we were there – like I say, I lost track of time. I think we were there probably a week or so that we were there and then they put us on trains to send us back to our particular place nearest home to be discharged.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh, so you were then sent from the ship and given tickets or whatever, transportation chits or whatever, to get on a trail.

MULLINGS: We were sent to Alameda Training Station until they gathered a bunch of us together and my particular destination was Portsmouth, Virginia, and they put us aboard as a group, aboard the train, not as individuals, but as a group. And this train brought us back across country. I think it took us a week or something like that, because at every whistle stop we would be put on a siding and let another train go through or something and it was . . .

NARRATOR: Were you getting off every time, or you would stay on?

MULLINGS: No, we could get off if we were there for an hour or half-hour. We could get off and look around, but you had to be back on board, you know, as you were still in the service. They were old cars. They had to be World War I cars, because we'd go to bed with – they had these bunks that folded down you know. And, the seats folded over on some of them to make a bunk. The windows were down, but in the morning you'd wake up and your face and hands would be full of soot.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: The soot would just come right in from the cracks and the windows and everything, but it was terrible, and there were no shower facilities, but they had wash rooms on them and you could go in there and you could take a bird bath, you know, but invariable when you'd get in there and start to take a bird bath, they'd be pulling into one of these little stations and there was always 14 dozen clowns come in, raising the shade up and saying, "What's going on out here?" and you'd be standing there trying to take a shower.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: It was bad. So, we had a week of that coming back and, of course, me in my anxiety to get home, every time it stopped, I'd jump off and get on a phone and call my wife, long distance, so at about a week's time, I had about 30-40 phone calls to her, cost me a bundle, but then we got all the way back to Portsmouth, Virginia, and we were put into a Coast Guard



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Receiving Station there and I believe I was probably there at least a week. I know I came home on a 48-hour liberty one time.

NARRATOR: What was the routine for processing? Did they show you movies of how to get back into the civilian world? Or give you paperwork? Or, tell you about training opportunities in the outside? Did they tell you about the 52/50 club?

MULLINGS: Yeah, they tell you.

NARRATOR: Or, 52/50 I guess.

MULLINGS: The 52/50. They would tell you about your rights. Of course, they always had some handouts giving you information and they would give you a physical. They would check your pay records and your leave records and things of this nature and mostly it was just getting around to the physical and the paperwork usually didn't take any time at all, you know, just to make sure that you signed the proper forms and things of this nature, make sure that you got your discharge and your Ruptured Duck, which was a little gold pin that looked like – it was supposed to be an eagle I guess, but that denoted that you were discharged, a discharged veteran, and that you were authorized to wear your uniform until you got your civilian clothes.

NARRATOR: Oh, I see.

MULLINGS: And it was a little gold pin that you were supposed to wear over your left-hand pocket.

NARRATOR: Did it say Coast Guard, or?

MULLINGS: No, no. It didn't say anything. Just a little sort of a round shield – but not a Coast Guard shield – just a round affair with wings on it and it was called the Ruptured Duck.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: And this . . .

MULLINGS: This authorized you to wear your uniform. This is so that the Shore Patrol wouldn't stop you or hassle you about having the uniform on when you had discharge papers in your hands.

NARRATOR: Oh, I see. This meant that you would have your discharge papers in your hand while you were going home.

MULLINGS: Well, you would have them with you, not necessarily in your hand, you know, but if you . . .



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NARRATOR: So, you had this pin on and you would have your papers with you.

MULLINGS: Well, if you went out and got into a fight someplace – and the Shore Patrol would have had no authority on you.

NARRATOR: Oh, I see.

MULLINGS: You was for all intents and purposes a civilian, but you had no other clothes and this Ruptured Duck gave you the authority to wear those clothes home. That's all it amounted to. So, on October 11th, I was given my discharge, and I--

NARRATOR: October 11, 1945, right?

MULLINGS: Right.

NARRATOR: And we have the 9th of November 1945 is the day apparently where Headquarters processed your paperwork.

MULLINGS: 9th of November?

NARRATOR: Yes, apparently.

MULLINGS: Oh, oh. You mean after Portsmouth?

NARRATOR: Yes. So that must have been the date when Headquarters received your paperwork and actually processed the master file or whatever.

MULLINGS: Oh, I see. Well, they more or less than just made sure that everything was correct on it. Just a recap of what the Separation Center had done.

NARRATOR: Right, on the 11th of October.

MULLINGS: I see.

NARRATOR: And they indicated that you were a coxswain and that you were a BM3.

MULLINGS: Right. Well, at the time they didn't have BM3. They had coxswain and 2nd class boatswain's mates and 1st class boatswain's mates. I don't know when it went to BM3.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: Progress, that's the word. Have you been able to remember the convoy that the *Alexander Hamilton* was in when you were sunk? Earlier, we talked about the convoy and I asked you the number of the convoy.



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MULLINGS: No, I don't remember the convoy. I remember the ships, you know, being out there. That particular convoy is very hazy in my mind. Probably for a number of things. The weather wasn't too good. I was seasick and being new in the service, you know, but I'm fully aware of having started in this convoy. When we left the convoy to go pick up the *Yukon*, I can't remember whether the *Gwin* was with us, but I don't remember seeing the *Gwin* until after we had the *Yukon* under tow. Wait a minute, now, I'll take that back. I don't remember seeing the *Gwin* until we turned our tow loose in Iceland and she came back to assist us, but now it's very possible that – I kind of think that she may have been running with us, protecting us and the *Yukon* as we towed the *Yukon*.

NARRATOR: Sure. Because you were slowed down by virtue of the tow.

MULLINGS: Oh, yes, and it was high seas. It was very high seas. But, this is how hazy things can get.

NARRATOR: Going back to the period where you were demobilized, at the receiving center, and you had your paperwork, you had your uniform, did you notice anything after you went back to Washington, D.C. then?

MULLINGS: No.

NARRATOR: Was there a lot of other Coasties that you noticed in uniform too?

MULLINGS: Well, naturally at the separation center, there was. I don't recall really any unusual things. Of course, there was always at that particular time, they were coming home in droves, you know, from all over the world. In fact, I had two brothers that were heading home about the same time I was heading home from different parts of the country.

NARRATOR: This 52/50 club that you were now a member of – that authorized you – what was it \$50 a week for 52 weeks?

MULLINGS: Yeah. That was if you couldn't find you a job, I think or something of this nature, but my brother collected it. My middle brother and I don't blame him. He was stationed down in New Guinea for quite awhile.

NARRATOR: Oh, that was a terrible area in the war. A lot of fighting there.

MULLINGS: He was the only man in his company to kill a Japanese, so he was on guard duty, but he . . .

NARRATOR: He was in the Marines?

MULLINGS: He was in the Army.



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NARRATOR: Army, o.k.

MULLINGS: But, I never did. I came home on the 11th I guess, and I think on the 12th or the 13th, I had a job and was working. I sometimes look back and maybe sort of regret that I didn't take some time, but I guess all in all it was for the better, you know.

NARRATOR: Well, I assume being married and having to support the wife kind of motivated you in that direction.

MULLINGS: Yeah. I wasn't too crazy about getting \$50 a week for 52 weeks.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: I was just – the world was still new to me. I was so young then. I had never really had a real job. I had a job when I went in, when I was 16 years old, but I had spent from the time I was 17 to the time I was 21 in the service and I had never been out in civilian life so to speak as an adult and I guess I figured it was time that I got out there and did something.

Laughter.

NARRATOR: The fact that you were a BM3 and you were making about \$80 a month?

MULLINGS: Uh-huh.

NARRATOR: And now your 52/50 that authorized you \$50 a week or \$200 a month, so here we were going from \$80 a month to \$200 a month, was that any motive or incentive, or did the job markets on the outside – could you earn as much as your unemployment compensation or probably you could earn more I guess.

MULLINGS: Oh, yeah. I think so. I think by the time the war ended a coxswain, I was making more than 70 or 80 dollars a month. It was probably up to about \$100 or \$120 a month, something of that nature, and on the outside, you could get a job. I got a job which was that I went to work in a laundry and I think I was making about \$55 a week as a launderer, which wasn't too bad.

NARRATOR: No, not at all.

MULLINGS: But you had to hustle to do it you know. Still, it was quite a change from the days of the war. I no longer had the apprehension. You know, you no longer had that double life so to speak, which is what it seemed like to me, you know. When you'd pass through the gates and you'd have apprehension and when you were coming the other way, then it would all disappear.

NARRATOR: The gates meaning –



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MULLINGS: The submarine gates, yes. But, when the war ended, I no longer had those things and I don't know whether I really got over it.

NARRATOR: Right.

MULLINGS: I think, probably to this day, I probably miss some of that apprehension.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: It was instilled in me that it was going to be there and for four years, it was there. It was very real. But, I don't know. That's about the only way I can explain it is that I think through all these years, I miss the apprehension, and I'm probably apprehensive waiting for the apprehension.

Laughter.

MULLINGS: If that makes sense.

NARRATOR: I guess what you are describing is the adrenalin, the tension that went with the war and when the war ended, it sort of got calmed down a bit and you sort of missed that excitement.

MULLINGS: And I had the feeling that through those four years that I was doing something that was really necessary, with one slight exception there, when I was at the lifeboat station. All the time other than that, I really felt like I was accomplishing. I was needed. I was appreciated where I was. And it's hard to get a feeling like that.

NARRATOR: Uh-huh.

MULLINGS: You know, it really is. I don't think I've ever had that feeling since the war. Never had that same sense of being wanted or being needed or really being needed in what I was doing. Whether it was false or fantasy or what, it served a purpose with me, I'm sure.

END OF INTERVIEW
