

**Charles Richard Carson
Veteran**

**Michael Russert and Wayne Clarke
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on September 26, 2007
New Scotland, NY**

Q: Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth please?

CC: My name is Charles Richard Carson. I was born June 12th, 1923 in Oneida, New York.

Q: What was your educational background prior to entering service?

CC: I graduated high school, went to two years of college, and three years of law school.

Q: That was before you went into service?

CC: No, prior to service I only graduated high school.

Q: Where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

CC: I was at my grandma and grandpa's Sunday Dinner.

Q: Do you remember you or your family's reaction?

CC: They were rather shocked, they couldn't believe it.

Q: Did you enlist or did you get drafted?

CC: I went to enlist but they wouldn't let me without my draft card, so I got my draft card and went back the next day; and they put me in the Navy.

Q: Did you select the Navy?

CC: Yes.

Q: Why did you enlist?

CC: There was three of us, they sent us to Albany for our physical exams.

Q: Why did you pick the Navy?

CC: My older brother was in the army and he told me about his training in Alabama. I didn't want to go through that. Thought the Navy would be much better.

Q: When were you inducted?

CC: (pauses) January 14th 1943

Q: You went to Sampson?

CC: Yes.

Q: When you arrived was it in full operation or was it still under construction?

CC: I believe it was in full operation.

Q: What was it like at Sampson? How long were you there?

CC: Boot camp was cold, January 1943 it was cold. One of the things I remember most was after mopping the wooden decks and the barracks we would run and slide across the floor because it would freeze over.

Q: What kind of heat did you have?

CC: I do not recall any if there was, that's why it was always cold.

Q: What else do you remember about training?

CC: Going in had two weeks of "mess cooking" they would call it, which comprised of cleaning the tables and mopping the floors. After training was completed we were given two weeks of vacation then we had another two weeks of mess cooking.

Q: Where did you go after Sampson?

CC: I went to Torpedo School in Rhode Island.

Q: Did you volunteer for the submarine division or were you assigned?

CC: I volunteered.

Q: Why did you decide to do that?

CC: (pauses) After Torpedo School we had people come in from Submarine School explaining everything and they gave us interviews with psychiatrists and we decided to accept. So we went to Submarine School.

Q: Where was that?

CC: Connecticut.

Q: How long was Torpedo School?

CC: It was 8 weeks.

Q: How about Submarine School?

CC: I'm not sure.

Q: What did you do in Submarine School?

CC: In the morning we would take the submarines out and practice going up and down.

Q: Were these WW1 era submarines?

CC: Yes. I went from there to the Port of New Hampshire where I signed with the Red Fish, SS395. I was part of the first crew.

Q: Didn't they call people that were part of the first crew plankholders?

CC: Yes. From there we would practice going up and down, try to avoid ships looking for us.

Q: How was it compared to the ships you trained on?

CC: It was much nicer and much better.

Q: Did these ships have the snorkels?

CC: No it was too early for the snorkels, after the World War.

Q: What was your specific job on the submarine?

CC: I was a torpedoman. Well I was a seaman, but somewhere along the line they decided my sight was good for night vision. We had to help perform routine things on the torpedoes.

Q: What were the routines?

CC: First they were run on alcohol but later on they were battery operated we had to check the engine, the fuel, just make sure everything was how it was supposed to be.

Q: Did you ever have trouble with them?

CC: Not to start with but after the first one we picked up electric battery powered torpedoes, we fired a bunch toward the coast of Japan and never hit anything!

Q: So you found the alcohol ones were better?

CC: Yes, or at least we thought so.

Q: What was the living conditions like on the sub?

CC: Everyone had a bunk, some slept in the torpedo room and some slept near the loading hatch.

Q: Describe the process of loading a torpedo.

CC: Well there was a pulley with a rope and the torpedo had a hole where you would put the rope and the bullet and you would pull the rope until it's in the chamber.

Q: How long did it take to load a tube?

CC: Not long, that's what all the practice was for. Maybe 30 seconds.

Q: After your shakedown crew where did you go?

CC: Straight to the Pacific.

Q: What specific date did you leave for the Pacific?

CC: I'm not sure, I'd have to look it up.

Q: Did you do most your combat missions off Japan?

CC: Philippians, East China Sea, South China Sea.

Q: When was the first ship you sunk?

CC: I don't remember, is it in there? (Michael laughs)

Q: Your biggest kill was on December 19th in Mindinho, can you tell us about that?

CC: That first carrier didn't sink, and it took off, and it ended up in Nagasaki when they dropped the atom bomb there it went down and they never got to fix it. Then they won on December 19th 1944. UNRYU, we didn't know what it was at

the time and that was on its way to the Philippines to reinforce Japanese troops aircraft carrier, a lot of army troops set on them to reinforce the Japanese and the aircraft carrier. Two torpedoes sunk it in like 15-20 minutes. The first one stopped it dead in the water. I'm not sure if the first one hit their engine rooms but the second one hit their ammunition. Went down in 15-20 minutes.

Q: Could you hear the hit?

CC: Oh yes, you could hear the explosion.

Q: Each one of these is a merchant ship you sunk. Do you know where you are in this picture?

CC: I think so yes.

(Pauses to examine photo and points himself out)

CC: The flag for warships is different. I think I have one in my car, I thought I had one in this folder.

Q: You went back in February of 1945 for repairs?

CC: Yes.

Q: Why'd you need repairs for?

CC: In the sinking of the Japanese carrier we were attacked by Japanese destroyers dropping death charges and one of them hit close, at the time we didn't know how close but we knew close and submarines have large steel beams and this one hit the starboard side of the torpedo roll and it chipped us up pretty good. (Pauses) and turned out another one hit towards the aft and had leaked into half our engine and torpedo room. We were in the East China sea and we sunk all the way to the bottom and we had to wait till the destroyers left, after 3-4 hours they left and we surfaced. One of the axels on the propellers got bent so we were making a lot of noise so we tried to go off one propeller. We had to go to Midway and then they sent us to Pearl and put us in dry-dock, figured out the damage and they decided they couldn't fix it. We went to San Francisco, so we go in there they put us in dry-dock and they couldn't fix this area.

Q: How long did it take to fix the sub?

CC: At least two week.

Q: You ended up in another submarine, when was that?

CC: (Pauses) After the war was over they look over all the personal on the board and they had a point system for discharge and this guy who was a torpedoman who got married before the war had more points than me because I was single, and he didn't want to go back. I next in line and they called me in and asked me if I wanted to go and I said yes. I went through the canal went through New Orleans, went up to Rhode Island they transferred me to the Gunnel. I was on that did I was discharged, I remember that. (Laughs)

Q: In this form you sent us you called the Red Fish the greatest ship in the Navy, why?

CC: The crew on it, a bunch of good guys, a good captain, and we did a lot of damage.

Q: You mention that one person you remember most saved your life, who is it and how did he save your life?

CC: I didn't put that on there? (Leans over to see) Dom McKarthnic, he was a gunnerman we were standing look on watches and then we were in a typhoon and the lookouts are up in the air on the gunner towers. They got places for you to stand, it was getting really rough. Water was washing up over the deck, so officer of the deck calls us down to stand down there and a great, big wave comes up picks me right up and carries me back and this person reached out grabbed me by the neck and pulled me in. The office of the deck came down too and when he was closing the latch another big wave comes up and washed him down a ladder. (Laughs)

Q: Now you were discharged January 1946, did you make use of the GA Bill?

CC: Oh yes, I went to two years of college. Then to go to law school you only had to have two years of college, later on you had to do four years. I applied to Albany Law School, Boston College Law School, and Brooklyn Law School. My roommate in college was Irish. He wanted to go to Boston, so I went to Brooklyn. Albany said go back to college for two more years. (Laughs)

Q: Did you use the 52/20 Club?

CC: Yes, not very long. At the time I owed my brother a debt.

Q: Did you join any veteran's organizations?

CC: At the time I participated in the VSW, but when I moved to this area, Voorhesville, there was no VSW so I joined the Legion.

Q: Did you ever stay in contact with your old war buddies?

CC: Oh sure, yup we have an organization. We just had our 52nd, or 54th in the convention in the Billings of Montana, which none of my buddies went. Last year was out in Lawklind, next year I'm hearing it's going to be Kentucky. We had them all over Louisiana, New Orleans, Portland, and Organ.

Q: How do you think your time in service has affected your life?

CC: Developed a lot of friendships, we keep in touch with each other all the time. Like last year the national subnists convention was some place and nobody wanted to go so one of buddies from the southern of Florida and he said we come there, which is great. All the older guys and their wives went down there. He made arrangements to stay at a hotel and to his house and he made arrangements for tours for a lot of the places in Philadelphia.

Q: In retrospect after serving in a submarine do you regret or are you happy you made that choice?

CC: Very happy I made the choice.

Q: Do you know approximately when this photo was taken?

CC: No I don't.