

Leonard Bock
Narrator

Wayne Clarke
New York State Military Museum
Interviewer

Interviewed on August 26th, 2010
Beverwyck Terrace, Room 210
Slingerlands, New York

Leonard Bock LB
Wayne Clarke WC

WC: My name is Wayne Clarke; I'm with the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center in Saratoga Springs New York. Sir, for the record, would you please state your full name and date and place of birth.

LB: Leonard Bock, July 30th, 1927 in Manhattan New York.

WC: Did you attend school in Manhattan?

LB: No, in Brooklyn.

WC: And you graduated from high school in Brooklyn?

LB: Yes, I did. Eastern District High School.¹

WC: And you graduated – I think you said – in 1944?

LB: Yes.

WC: At that point you went on to college?

LB: I went into the Coast Guard.

WC: Okay, you went into the Coast Guard right after high school?

LB: Yes.

¹ Located at 227 Marcy Ave Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York. Opened in 1894 and closed in 1995.

WC: Did you enlist, or were you drafted?

LB: I enlisted.

WC: Why did you pick the Coast Guard?

LB: There were a number of young men on the block where I lived in Williamsburg, Brooklyn that were already in the Coast Guard. They would come in on weekends and what not and I thought that would be great, to be able to come home on weekends. Unfortunately, they sent me to the Philippines [Both Laugh].

WC: For your initial training², where did they send you?

LB: It was in Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn.

WC: Were you able to go home at all during that period, or did they keep you right there?

LB: They kept me right there until the end of it. Then I was able to go home on a short leave, and then they sent me overseas.

WC: How long did your training last, do you recall?

LB: I don't recall. It was probably about seven to ten weeks, something like that.

WC: Was it in the summertime that you went in?

LB: I don't think so. I think it was getting towards the winter.

WC: Once you completed your basic training, where did they send you next?

LB: [Pauses] I would like to say it was the Philippines. There may have been some stops in between.

WC: Let me just go back a little bit. You were still a student when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?

LB: Well, I was in high school.

² Basic training takes place over 10 weeks. Recruits are taught to work as a team, learn the core values, and learn what it takes to be a soldier.

WC: I know most people say they were either at a movie, or at a game, or listening to the radio...

LB: Yes [Smiles]. I can't recall.

WC: Did your life change after that point? Did you experience shortages?

LB: Oh yes, all of the civilian stuff.

WC: And rationing?

LB: Yes.

WC: Did you participate in any scrap drives³ for the war effort at all? While you were in school?

LB: I don't recall.

WC: So you went into the Coast Guard, you went through your basic training, and then you were shipped to the Philippines?

LB: No, first I was shipped to Connecticut to the Coast Guard Academy. Not to attend the Academy, but to attend the Radio School.

WC: Oh, you went to Radio School!

LB: Yes, and I became a radio technician. Not an operator, but a technician.

WC: So you repaired radios?

LB: Yes, and radar.

WC: How long did you go to that school?

LB: It was quite a while.

WC: Probably a few months?

LB: Yes.

WC: Once you completed that training you went to the Philippines?

³ Americans were encouraged to save any scrap metal and donate it to build tanks, ships, and other equipment for the war effort.

LB: Yes.

WC: Where were you stationed in the Philippines?

LB: In Tacloban, and also near Manila.⁴

WC: Did you live aboard a ship?

LB: Yes, I did! It was an eighty-three footer; the 83331.

WC: What type of ship was that?

LB: It was a kind of patrol boat. We had some machine guns on the ship, a 20 mm cannon, and depth charges.

WC: Aboard ship, your job was to keep the radios in repair?

LB: I was a striker at that point.

WC: What does that mean?

LB: That means you were training for the position of radio technician.

WC: Okay. During that period, in the Philippines, did you have any encounters with the enemy?

LB: No.

WC: Did you spend any time on shore at all?

LB: Yes! Yes I did, in Manila.

WC: Was there a Naval installation that you stayed at?

LB: Yes.

WC: When you went aboard the ship, how long were you gone for? Or did you just do local patrols?

LB: No I think we were out for a period of time. Not a long period of time though.

⁴ Tacloban is a city located on the island of Leyte. It is about 360 miles southeast of Manila, which is the capital of the Philippines.

WC: What was life like aboard ship?

LB: Well it was a small ship, only eighty-three feet long as I said before. We patrolled between the islands. But the war was over at that point.

WC: Where were you when the war ended with the dropping of the atomic bombs? Were you in the area of Manila?

LB: No, I think I was still in the United States.

WC: I see that you were discharged in 1946. Do you recall *when* you were discharged in 1946?

LB: [Pauses] I think it was in June.

WC: You were in the Philippines during the war and then you came back to the States?

LB: Actually, I was in the Philippines at the end of the war. In fact, I think it was already over.

WC: What was the food like on board the ship?

LB: It was good! The Coast Guard had nice food.

WC: Did you have any other duties besides striking as a radio repairman aboard ship?

LB: Swabbing down the decks, and general maintenance stuff like painting.

WC: What rank were you?

LB: Seaman First Class⁵.

WC: While you were over there, did you see any USO shows⁶, or any other entertainment like that?

LB: I believe I did.

⁵ Now just called "Seaman", it is the third rank in the Navy, just under Petty Officer Third Class. This title is assigned to sailors with general deck and administrative duties.

⁶ United Service Organizations Inc. provided free entertainment and programs to US troops.

WC: Have you stayed in contact with any of the people you were in the service with?

LB: You mean after the war?

WC: Yes, after you got out.

LB: No.

WC: Did you attend any reunions?

LB: No.

WC: Do you know what eventually happened to the ship that you were on?

LB: The eighty-three footer? I don't know.

WC: How do you think that your time in the service changed or affected your life?

LB: Well, it was my first time away from home. It was kind of a growth experience in that sense.

WC: Did you meet a lot of people from different parts of the country?

LB: Yes that's right, I did. That was interesting. Being Jewish, there's always a lot of anti-Semitism that you run into also in the service. But all in all, it was an interesting experience.

WC: Where did they discharge you from?

LB: I believe it was from Connecticut.

WC: Did you make use of the G.I. Bill⁷?

LB: Yes I did. I went to RCA Institutes in New York City and studied electronics.

WC: Once you graduated from that program, what did you do?

LB: I did television repair.

WC: Did you do that for your whole working career?

⁷ The G.I. Bill is a law that provided benefits for veterans of World War II, such as paying for college, high school, or vocational school tuition.

LB: No, I did that for a while and then I went back to college. I got a job with the Burndy Corporation, a manufacturer of electrical connectors. And I was given an engineering position.

WC: Oh!

LB: There I designed electrical connectors. And learned about manufacturing them, and so on.

WC: Did you do that until you retired?

LB: Yes.

WC: How long ago did you retire?

LB: [Pauses] I don't remember [Laughs].

WC: Did you ever get married?

LB: Oh yes, I got married early on.

WC: After you got out of the service?

LB: Yes, after that. Shortly after I got out of the service.

WC: Any children or grandchildren?

LB: I have two daughters and three grandsons.

WC: How long have you lived in the Albany area?

LB: I don't recall, but it has been several years.

WC: Did you join any Veterans Organizations?

LB: I don't believe I did.

WC: And you didn't stay in contact with anyone that you were in the service with, right?

LB: No.

WC: Is there anything, in regard to your military experience, that you want to talk about or touch on? Maybe something we missed, or any experiences that you can recall? Any funny incidents?

LB: Well, when I was assigned to the eighty-three footer, I remember one of the shipmates saying, “Oh here comes the Jew boy.”

WC: That’s unfortunate. But for the most part everybody got along?

LB: Yes. [Pauses] Any dirty job that had to be done, I was usually picked for it [Laughs].

WC: Did you pull a lot of mess duty⁸?

LB: Yes, I did some of that.

WC: What about your time off? What was Manila like during those years?

LB: A bustling place.

WC: Did you get much time off?

LB: Yes, I did get some time off. [Pauses] And being young and frisky, we were always looking for women [Laughs].

WC: [Laughs] So did you visit any other Ports of Call? Spend any time in Hawaii?

LB: [Shakes head] No.

WC: You were just around the Philippine islands?

LB: Pretty much, yes. There may have been some other Port of Call, but nothing significant, you know?

WC: You didn’t get called up during the Korean War, did you?

LB: I did not. By then I was married...

WC: Anything else that you can think of?

LB: [Laughs] Fascinating history, huh?

WC: [Laughs] Well, that’s all right!

LB: I can’t really think of much else.

⁸ Working in the kitchen.

WC: All right, well, thank you for your interview.

LB: You're quite welcome.