

Maynard L. Farren
Veteran

Mike Russert and Wayne Clark
Interviewers

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New York State Military Museum, Saratoga Springs

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

A: My name is Maynard L. Farren. I was born in Wilton, Maine on February 18, 1926.

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

A: I graduated from Edward Little High School in Auburn, Maine in 1943. Then I entered Maine Maritime Academy that fall and graduated in June 1945.

Q: Do you recall where you were and your reaction when you heard about pearl harbor?

A: Yes, I was quite young. I can remember it was Sunday and I heard about it and couldn't believe it. One my next door neighbors, Avenair (1:16?), shortly left for the army.

Q: You mentioned that you went to the Maine Maritime Academy. What was that? Was that a government facility or private?

A: It was a state of Maine academy. I graduated in either the second or third graduating class. It was brand new. It started up as a result of the war.

Q: What were some of the classes you had there?

A: I was a deck officer trainee (1:55?). We had navigation, ship handling, cargo management and those kinds of things.

Q: Where was it located?

A: Castine, Maine. Way up on the coast of Maine.

Q: Those that were your instructors, were they with the maritime service?

A: They were all Navy personal. We had an admiral, Dismuse ? was the superintendent. He happened to be a retired admiral. Very nice fellow. He happened to live on the campus with all the others, with the possibly active other officers, from lieutenant and commanders.

Q: When you graduated, where you assigned to a ship?

A: Yes, upon graduation we were commissioned into (2:57?) the navy and I... (3:01?) maritime service with a second mates licenses. Upon graduation, you could choose to go into the navy or go into the maritime service. Since went to Maritime Academy, I thought it was appropriate to go into the Maritime service. There were others who went into the Navy. I can remember the first assignment I had was a tanker and overum (3:24?). Some place close to Rhode Island, we left for South America and Texas and back and forth with oil cargos.

Q: Did you go on a single ship?

A: It was a single ship. I can remember when I graduated from the academy I was only 19. I was too young to get commissioned. So they had to get a special waiver to get commissioned. I was very young. I can remember that on the first ship when we sailed from Rhode Island, we dropped a Pilar (4:01?) off and it happened to be my time of watch. The captain says "Oh, Mr. Farren you have the Con" (Com? 4:07) and he went below. Here I am with command of the ship for the first time of my life and only 19 years old. We happened to be going down a small river to get to the ocean. The river was full of sailboats going all over the place. The rules of the road said that the sail boats had the right of way. I said "Oh my, what am I going to do?" I was beside myself. I finally decided I'm bigger than they are, they will have to watch out for me and I sail on (4:45?).

Q: How long where you on that tanker?

A: I was probably on the tanker for a year. Then I came back and took a vacation and got re-assigned.

Q: What was your assignment?

A: My wife came across this diary and I will read a couple days. It was on a ship headed to Naples, Italy.

Q: What kind of ship was it?

A: I believe it was a Liberty ship. This was in 1946 and I only kept a few days in the journal.

Q: Were you involved with brining troops back?

A: No. Actually we were going to bring a bunch of Something (5:47?) back. I didn't terminate that before we sailed and I went to another ship. On February 16, 1946 we were crossing the Atlantic on the way to Naples, Italy. "It had been overcast all day but tonight it is trying to clear up. The sea is pretty rough. We are shipping a lot of water over the bow. We got a radio message from a ship who was a few miles ahead of us saying some of their men were washed overboard and to keep look out for them. With this weather and this cold, I imagine they never survived." The next day, February 17, I said "It is still overcast today. I guess it is never going to clear up. The sea is very rough. Got another message from another ship saying they had lost a man over the side. This

one was too far in front of us so we didn't even bother to look." That was the kind of weather we had. Pretty desperate. Then on March 30th, "It had been overcast all day with rain squalls, tonight it is raining hard and the wind is blowing a gale. The sea is very rough. This whole ship is getting tossed around plenty. We are rolling as high as 43 degrees. I'm hanging on with one hand and trying to write with the other."

Q: Usually when someone went overboard were they lost?

A: This is in the late winter and there was no chance. The water was extremely cold. You'd probably only last for a few seconds. At nighttime and with heavy seas it's impossible to see a little head bobbing up.

Q: Did the men usually wear life vests? Jackets or anything?

A: Usually not, because you don't expect to be washed over the side. A day or two later after I was telling you about during the night the life boats would was away and we had a lot of oil drums tied down to the deck, they were washed away. It was extremely bad weather and very cold. In fact, the all-weather coat I donated to the museum was what came in handy because it was warm and waterproof.

Q: When you went to Naples, did you have things you were dropping off?

A: We were taking at that time the United Nations relief cargo and we were taking a lot of medicine and food supplies to the Italian people of Naples.

Q: Now you mentioned when we were talking earlier about seeing mines in the water, when was that?

A: The was about the same time. A little later. We ran into the Mediterranean passing by the rock of something (9:14?)

Q: So in 1946 there were mines floating around?

A: There were still mines floating around.

Q: What did you do when you encountered a mine? Steered clear or tried to shoot it?

A: I'll tell you the first time saw one I didn't know what it was because it was quite a ways away. (? 9:32-9:34). I figured it might be whatever. So we decide to investigate. Of course after we got close enough we identified it as a mine and then we stood clear, very clear.

Q: Now did ships like the tanker or liberty ship have any armaments on?

A: We did but at that point in time the war was winding down so we didn't have any navy crews or gun crews.

Q: How about the tanker for example, what kind of armaments would a tanker have carried?

A: Well I think they would probably carry .50 caliber machine guns and 20mm cannons.

Q: Now you had a navy crew on board?

A: Not at that time. We were just a merchant crew. We used to go down to Venezuela and get oil. The oil tank was gravity feed. The oil was high on the mountain and the tank was much lower at sea level. So, You'd be in for a couple days. Then you'd fill up these huge tanks because the oil flowed in so fast. You had to balance your ship with oil coming in. they were called (11:00?) holes and peer down with a flashlight and have another sailor on a valve. You would tell them to close down on the valve and then you would run to the other side of the ship and close down a little bit there and you would move around the ship to these various tanks so that you wouldn't over fill the ship on either side. You had to balance perfectly.

Q: In your time with the maritime service did you wear a navy uniform? Or did you have one similar to the navy?

A: It was very similar to the navy. I was a lieutenant. I had the stripes and the jacket and the Navy blue uniform. The emblem on the hat was a little different compared to the navy but basically it was the same thing.

Q: Were you awarded medals like the navy would have been?

A: Yes, I received the Atlantic Warzone medal.

Q: Do you have any other incidences or experiences you wanted to relate?

A: No that's pretty much the highlights.

Q: When were you discharged?

A: I think it was three years so 1948 or 1949.

Q: When you were discharged did you make any use of the G.I. bill?

A: At that time the maritime service wasn't considered a veteran. So we didn't get any of the 5220. So that wasn't available.

Q: Did you get paid by the government or by the company.

A: We were paid by the shipping company we were working at. The maritime service wasn't considered a veteran until the Regan administration. Now I'm a full time veteran but at the time I wasn't.

Q: You weren't able to join veteran organizations until?

A: Not until Regan entered office.

Q: Have you joined any veteran organizations?

A: No I have not.

Q: Do you have reunions or did you keep in contact with anyone you served with?

A: Yes, I still see one of my roommates frequently. He still lives in Maine. We have been gone to reunions at the academy.

Q: Is the academy still in existence?

A: Yes, now it is a four-year college. It has a master's degree program.

Q: Is the name still the same?

A: Yes, it is still the Maine maritime academy. Actually we were up there four or five years ago and it is really expanded. The town is very beautiful. It is a little seaport town in Maine and I don't think that will ever change. It is still lovely and picturesque.

Q: How do you think your time in the service effected your life or had an effect on your life?

A: I think that it gave me a sense of responsibility early in life and an experience that I will always cherish. Sometimes I wish I had gone into the navy directly from the maritime academy. Sometimes I'm happy I did what I did because I saw quite a lot of the world, South America, Europe and Africa. Those were very exciting and memorable experiences.

Q: Could you hold up these photographs and tell us about each one of them.

A: This picture is my graduation picture from Maine maritime academy.? (15:32)

Q: What year was that?

A: This was June 1945. This picture is when I was at Maine maritime academy. We used to have three small sailing ships we used to go out on frequently, this is one of me one of them. This was one of the ships I sailed on, I'm not sure if this is the one I talked to you guys about the rough seas or not but it appears to be. If this is it was called the USS Alexander Sheppard.

Q: Do you know what ever happened to the ship?

A: I have no idea.

Q: Thank you for your interview.

A: Thank you very much for having me.