

**Louis Drapalski
Veteran**

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New York State Military Museum
Interviewers**

**Latham Headquarters
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Q: We're interviewing Mr. Louis C. Drapalski at Latham Headquarters. It's August 8th, 2001. Michael Aikey interviewer. Wayne Clarke videographer. Mr. Drapalski, where were you born sir?

LD: Cohoes, New York

Q: Cohoes. You went to school in Cohoes?

LD: Yes. High School.

Q: High School. How were things in Cohoes back then?

LD: A little different from what they are now. There's no doubt about that.

Q: Really?

LD: More stores were open then. The whole atmosphere was different. Right now, Cohoes is dead.

Q: You graduated from high school what year?

LD: '39. 1939.

Q: '39. What did you do when you got out of high school?

LD: I joined the GE as an apprentice tool maker. I worked with the GE until I got in the Navy.

Q: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

LD: In school. We had to go to night school. We were on the apprentice course. I can remember throwing my books out the window figuring I don't need these anymore. Then, of course...

Q: So, you thought you were going to go into the service pretty quick.

LD: Oh yes.

Q: When did....you volunteered?

LD: Yes, because I got an exemption with GE The fact that we were a war producing facility. I was only an apprentice. I got an exemption. I had the exemption for maybe a

year or so. What shamed me into going in was my younger cousin joined the Coast Guard and started kidding me about it, so I just volunteered in the Navy.

Q: OK. Why did you pick the Navy?

LD: I had a cousin, Ted Drapers, from Herkimer, who was at Pearl Harbor at the time it was bombed. He came home on leave and visited my folks. He said if you ever have to go in, go in the Navy. You'll have a dry bunk and good food and won't be in the muck and the mire that the Army and the Marines were in. So, I did.

Q: Where did you do your basic training?

LD: Sampson.

Q: Sampson. Tell me about Sampson.

LD: Sampson was in the uh....

Q: Finger Lakes. Yes.

LD: Not the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes. It was cold. We were there in the winter. The only thing I remember about Sampson was that it was cold, and we always had red cabbage for one meal or another.

Q: You were in what? Wooden barracks?

LD: Wooden Barracks. Yes.

Q: What was...did you get out on Seneca Lake at all?

LD: Only once on a drill with the big boats. As I said, it was cold and wet and everything else. We didn't spend too much time on the lake.

Q: You weren't thrilled with Sampson?

LD: Thrilled (laughs)? I don't know. I heard it was better than the Great Lakes as far as a boot camp was.

Q: Did you get into Geneva at all?

LD: Once.

Q: Once. What was that like?

LD: Well, to tell you the truth, we won a championship basketball tournament and we got a one-night liberty in Geneva, but we had to wear our boots and our puttees. Of course, they wouldn't serve us in the gin mill with those things on.

Q: Really.

LD: I was elected to sit outside with a big pile of those boots while the rest of the guys, the team that I was on with the rest of the guys went inside and had beer.

Q: Why wouldn't they serve you with those on?

LD: For some reason it was not an underage type thing it was just a...

Q: A local thing?

LD: A local ordinance. I wasn't quite sure why. All I can remember was sitting out there with five or six pairs of boots. You know these leather (unclear)

Q: After basic where did you go?

LD: The fact that I had kind of a machinist's background they shipped me up to Boston and we went to Wentworth Institute which is a small college right there at Ebbets Field not Ebbets Field...where do the Boston Red ball players play?

Q: That's not Fenway is it?

LD: Fenway Park. In fact, it was right off of Fenway Park. We had to cut through Fenway Park to get to Wentworth Institute. That's where I spent the next sixteen weeks.

Q: What were you studying there?

LD: Well, we had different subjects. Most of it was machine shop stuff which I already knew since I was an apprentice. It was kind of easy going. We did have a chance to work at the Watertown Arsenal for a few weeks at night. They used to ship us up and ship us back there for a matter of four hours. That was the big machine shop there because we had to get machine shop experience. So, that's how I spent that.

Q: Did you like living in Boston?

LD: We were right there on Commonwealth Avenue right in the heart of Boston. From the hotel you could hear Fenway Park where the ballplayers were playing. So, it was nice.

Q: A pretty good deal for a young guy from Cohoes.

LD: Especially from a guy who'd never been out of Cohoes. The old Howard was there on Mass Avenue that was as strip joint. You know, it was different for a...

Q: Part of your education.

LD: For a rookie.

Q: After that assignment, where did you go?

LD: What had happened at the assignment, I got a case of...what the hell was it...whatever it was, I was restricted and had to go into the hospital for a week. Not yellow fever. What the heck...Scarlet Fever. That was it and I missed my graduating class. I went back to finish my tour of duty at Boston they wanted volunteers for submarine duty. Not even knowing what it was, I looked it up on a map and I said that's quite close to Albany because in Boston we used to go home every weekend for liberty. I figured New London was fairly close so I joined.

Q: So, that was your reason.

LD: That was the only reason. It was close to home and gave me another sixteen weeks of getting home on leave.

Q: You really didn't think about being on a submarine?

LD: I didn't know what it was all about until we first went aboard one.

Q: What was that experience like?

LD: Very unusual. The first thing they handed me was bucket of tapered wooden pegs and a mallet and I didn't even know what to say what's that for. I went aboard. We took our training on old R-boats, submarines and they were riveted and if we dove, sometimes the rivets would pop out and my job was to stick one of those dowels in the hole and pound it in with the mallet. That was it.

Q: Was that a little disconcerting?

LD: It was a lot different from what I expected. It was a lot better than poking the packing of the drive shafts with this great big iron hook to keep that from sinking the boat.

Q: What was training like for a submarine? Pretty rigorous?

LD: It was but not until I really got into the big boats where it got rigorous and I had to qualify for my dolphins but there, in fact the kids still laugh at me, we used to get a dollar for every dive we made. Sometimes, we made five dives a day so that was five extra dollars I'd get paid. You always smelled diesel fuel and everything else. The engines were a lot smaller than one of those fleet boats were.

We got through that. The funny part of it, the boat that I was on was being made in port at the same time. They never shipped me from New London to the *Pintado* at Portsmouth. They shipped me across country then they shipped me on a Dutch freighter across to Hawaii. Then, when the *Pintado* came around, that's when I joined.

Q: So, that wouldn't qualify you as a plank owner would it?

LD: No plank owner. I missed it. I made every one of the runs the *Pintado* had but not a plank owner.

Q: So, the R-Boats what were they, World War I?

LD: I imagine they were because S-Boats were still being used in World War II, so they were considered a little more modern than the R-Boats.

Q: Diesel?

LD: Diesel.

Q: You are out in Hawaii and you meet up with your new ship.

LD: Yes.

Q: What was it like going aboard for the first time?

LD: I didn't like...a couple of days I was in a relief crew aboard a tender. I didn't like that at all so when I got the word I was picked – they needed a fireman at the time – I really appreciated it. That's why I remember one of my shipmates Pappy Eccles. He took me under his wing and showed me a different way. The most important thing, he showed me how to use the head.

Q: Now why is that?

LD: Because if you don't do it right you get a face full of whatever is in the dog gone septic tank.

Q: Interesting.

LD: Very interesting. In six months, I never got caught but it was quite a thing.

Q: Now you were a fireman?

LD: A fireman.

Q: What were the duties?

LD: Just an oiler. I used to stand watches with a motor mac with a higher rating. I'd read gauges and get down in and do whatever the petty officers didn't want to do. Let's face it.

Q: Who was the skipper?

LD: Bernard Clarey. Captain Clarey. Eventually he made Admiral and he was the Admiral of the whole Pacific Fleet at one time. Bernard Clarey. I don't know if you ever remember him or not.

Q: Was he a good skipper?

LD: Very good. The fact that he took us out and got us back made him very good.

Q: The rest of the crew pretty good?

LD: What wasn't good we kind of filtered out over a period of time.

Q: I guess that if you're living in close quarters that's very important isn't it?

LD: Very important because we had a couple that we got rid of. One they got rid of before the first run and the other one got rid of after the first patrol. It's very disheartening when you're on the battle phone in the back of the engine room and hear somebody sobbing and crying when you're getting depth charged not knowing what the hell was going on there. It's as very disheartening believe me.

Q: What's it like living on a submarine? Daily life.

LD: Tight packed. A lot of times boring. A lot of times exciting. Most of the time you wanted to earn your dolphins, so you were either studying or reading when you're not on watch naturally.

There was four tables in the mess hall. One table always had a poker game on it. Twenty fours a day. You'd get off watch, sit in, you'd go watch somebody else in, but it went on twenty-four hours a day. So, consequently, we ate mess on just three tables.

You always smelled diesel engine. You never really got a chance to get a good shower. It seemed most of the time it was almost downright boring just waiting for something to happen. Of course, whenever it did you got really excited.

Q: You said one of your goals was earning your Dolphins. What did that mean?

LD: You had to know where every doggone one of the lines and the electrical cable went throughout the whole boat. Then you had to know how to load a torpedo, how to work on the engine, how to go back in the maneuvering room where they switch the electrical from diesel to battery. You had to crawl around in the bilges and everything to find out all of these things.

When I was in New London one time, I made the mistake of asking the kids what kind of boat to you qualify at. They looked at me and they laughed. They sit in an air-conditioned room on a computer with each of the compartments with the screen in front of you. With their little mouse they can trail these little lines and everything else throughout. A lot different...

Q: Than crawling through bilges.

LD: No Nothing. Each compartment has its own three-dimensional thing and you qualified that way. It's a little different from what we're used to.

Q: The initial shake down cruises went pretty well?

LD: Most of the time, yes. We had a few problems like the sea valves leaking and everything else. They put a gasket in there for repair. After we took over from a relief crew, we had to go on a shake down. That got pretty exciting. Things wouldn't always work out the way we thought they were going to.

Q: Did you like life on the submarine?

LD: To me, I treated it as an adventure because it was different for me. The farthest I went from my home town was to go down to see the Yankees play down in New York, a hundred and fifty miles. That might have been maybe half a dozen times in my lifetime. So, to me, it was an adventure. You know. I just took it.

Q: Being a submariner, do you feel that you were different from the rest of the Navy?

LD: Yes. We always had that cocky attitude. You know, a little different from the topside officers and the enlisted crew.

Q: What was your first combat cruise?

LD: It was an exciting one. In fact, I've got a writeup on that. If you want to read an exciting book read the one from our executive officer Mendenhall wrote one "The Submarine Diary".

The first patrol was in the Marianas south of Formosa. I'm reading now. We had a Captain Blair who was the Commander of the Wolf Pack that we were on. He, himself, was a character believe me.

We came across a contact of three ships and three escorts. We fired six torpedoes scoring five hits on a freighter and one on another ship and that was the first one.

Q: Do you remember that mission?

LD: Well, I'll tell you being back in the engine room, this is another difference that I find, reading that book that Mendenhall wrote, and he was the Executive Officer. He was up in the control room. We were always back in the engine room. We really didn't know what was going on except for the battle phone, except for the fact that when the torpedo left the boat we kind of felt it. Then we'd count forty seconds. Now, if we heard explosion before forty seconds we knew we got a hit. If there was no explosion after forty seconds, we knew we missed it and, of course, they were programmed to self-destruct if we missed.

So, it was a lot of things that I wasn't aware of until I read that book of Mendenhall's and I got it from his perspective. It was kind of an eye opener.

Q: You're back in the engine room doing your job. You know something's going on. How do you feel about not really knowing what's happening? Do you think about it or are you too involved in doing your job?

LD: You are kind of waiting for word because if you got a torpedo hit, he'd kind of get on the loudspeaker and everybody cheered and all that stuff. Most of the time you did that when you submerged. Most of the time, you were just in a sweat, silent running and all of that stuff. To tell you the truth, I think I was really too dumb to be afraid, really afraid. You kind of wondered what was going on but not to be afraid to the point that you couldn't do anything.

Q: Now, what happened the first time you were at the sharp end of things? The escorts came after you? Then the atmosphere must change a little bit.

LD: Depth charges. That's when there was a first-class cook was crying and the depth charges would hit, and he was sobbing. We're sitting back in there what the heck is going on. You could feel the depth charges. You didn't know how close they were, what they were hitting. So, you're kind of little fearful then. What the heck is going on again, you always have faith in your captain. One thing that he used to do, and I never realized it until I read the book, he used to follow his own torpedoes in. In other words, when the escorts saw the torpedo go, they'd kind of swing around the outer perimeter. We used to go in towards the direction of the torpedoes were and whoever was on the outboard side

of that got the depth charges. Of course, we worked with other submarines at times. They got the depth charges and we kind of got away. So, it's different.

Q: So, the Captain maintained pretty good esprit de corps in the sub?

LD: Yes. He...reading the book there was a problem between the Executive Officer and the Captain which we never were aware of. Let's face it. They were both top notch officers. We had very little contact with them. The only time we were up in the control room when we happened to be on watch on the surface and we got the signal to dive. We always had a station to go to. Mine was either in the bow or the stern planes or the water manifold either one of the three. Whatever side of the watch you were on you either had the bow planes, the stern planes or the control manifold.

There was very few times I was up in the control room with the officers except for that period of time. I didn't really realize there was animosity going on between the two guys until I read his book.

Q: But they were both professionals and kept it to themselves?

LD: They kept it going but, as I said, we didn't realize it. Of course, Mendenhall, he wrote the book. It was his (unclear) and he was the one who had some doubts about the Captain. The fact that the Captain wouldn't allow him to do his job. He always kind of interfered. Let's do it this way. Never mind the way you used to do it on the *Sculpin* or anything else which was another sub. That type of thing you know. I never was aware of that.

Q: Did you ever cross the equator?

LD: Yes, we went through it.

Q: What was that like?

LD: You know, we were in close cramped quarters. We didn't have too much. We got paddled. We had guys dress up in Neptune and the whole thing. After we went through, we got a scroll saying we went through and everything else.

Q: Still have your scroll?

LD: I think so, yes. I've got quite a bit. A lot of photographs and a lot of mementos I did lose.

Q: How many combat missions were you on?

LD: Six patrols. As I say, on our fifth patrol, we were on what they called rescue duty. We did pick up a crew from a B29 which got shot down. That itself was kind of an unusual event.

Q: Explain how that all came about.

LD: We were on patrol. We were on the surface. If you read the passage here.... just south of Honshu, the submarine was on lifeguard duty. She was sighted by a badly

damaged B29. After crossing the submarine's bow at 2000 feet, twelve parachutes blossomed out as the plane started down, turned to the right and exploded. Twenty-five minutes later, the twelve men were aboard the *Pintado*. After this, we dropped them off at Guam. That was very interesting and very nerve racking because the guys when they knew they were going to be saved, they were hard to get a hold of because they had the doggone life raft bunched between their legs. They were riding them like horses. They had the heavy flight jackets on. Half of them had the parachutes floating around. They had to cut that loose. Of course, they hung on to the parachute because if that got away from them, you were dead.

We had to reach way out, get way out on the fuel tanks. You had two guys holding on to your belt and you're reaching out trying to snag these guys and pull them aboard and they were heavy with the wet suits and everything else. They're whooping around and playing around.

Q: They're just happy to be alive!

LD: They're happy to be alive. After we got done, we went down to the engine room to get the heck out of that area. We had the guys strip down and hung their clothes over the hot engines to dry up and, of course, we gave them dry dungarees and shirts and whatever they needed.

I remember we had a tool box that was upholstered. Two of the guys were sitting there and they looked very concerned. I thought maybe something was wrong with them, you know. After we go, I go over to one of them and I said what's the matter. He looked at me and he says when are we going to dive. At that time, we were down a good ten or fifteen minutes. I said we already did dive. I said when we shut the engines off, that's when we go. They kind of looked around. It was quite an experience for them.

Q: They're expecting something to happen.

LD: They were expecting something different. They were really worried about diving. About three months later, we hit Guam again. We got an invitation from that crew to have dinner with them. Then they took us up for a joy ride in three B29's to circle the base up at Guam there. That was quite a thrill.

Q: That must have been fun.

LD: They changed the name *City of Galveston*, the name of their plane, to *Pintado*. They named their new plane after our boat.

Q: That was very nice.

LD: That was something.

Q: Did you ever meet any of those guys after the war?

LD: No. I got their names finally on the internet. My son did. I never did. In fact, I asked some of the other guys I knew in the Air Force and everything if they knew them. They knew the group. They didn't know any of the guys.

Q: Now was it your ship that won the Presidential Unit Citation?

LD: Yes.

Q: That's pretty impressive.

LD: Yes. The ship did but I noticed there was individual gold stars and bronze medals that were awarded to different guys. According to the Division of Naval History section department which they sent to me, we got five battle stars and there was individual Navy Crosses, Silver Stars and Bronze Stars given to different individuals for different things.

Q: You note once that you had a rather unusual duty out in the middle of the night.

LD: Being in what they called a "black gang" which is the machine shop guys, my job was if we ran out of fuel, we had to convert the fuel tanks to ballast tanks which meant changing the flanges on top to put a vent in or whatever they did. We had to do it at night when we were surfaced. The fuel tanks were about 2/3 the way in the after part of the sub. We'd get out of the conning tower hatch and kind of crawl 2/3 the length of the boat in the dark then unscrew the wooden decking that we had there then get down on top of the fuel tanks.

There were six nuts on those flanges probably about a foot in diameter that we had to unscrew, take that flange off, put another one on, tighten the bolts up and then bring everything back including all of your tools. We had the tools strapped to our waist. In the beginning we'd be all dropping tools and everything else. So, this way two or three times doing that we got smart. We'd always get that "Remember, if we have to dive, we're going to have to leave you out there."

Q: How did you feel when you hear that?

LD: We heard it every time we went out. I don't know whether they would or not.

Q: It must have been a little unsettling.

LD: We did leave one guy up that we recovered, a bosun's mate. If you read the book, you'll find out that he was there when we did surface. He was sitting on top of the periscope (unclear) cussing like mad because....

Q: Where was he?

LD: He was topside when we dove for some reason or other, the Officer of the Deck closed the hatch and didn't count the guys going down, so he was left topside.

Q: So, you just remained just below the surface?

LD: Just awash almost on the way

Q: Enough for him to hold on.

LD: I remember. He cussed like a son of a gun.

Q: Where was he?

LD: He was top side. The officer of the deck closed the hatch and didn't count the guys going down. So, he was left topside.

Q: So, you just remained just below surface.

LD: Almost all the way.

Q: But enough for him to hold on.

LD: Yes. I remember that. He cussed like a sailor. One guy who was a bosun's mate striker was always making mistakes. We lost him. We dove and never realized that he was left topside. What happens is he just freezes when he hears the diving alarm go off. I know the feeling because the first time I froze and had to get rapped on the doggone fingers with a binocular case. It wasn't an emergency dive or anything.

Q: Was he the only casualty?

LD: The only when we surfaced, we never did find him. The suction of the boat kind of threw him way out. But he was...the only casualty but we had one other. One of the officers I guess got shot through both cheeks of the ass. He got strafed by a plane and that was, I think, the only other casualty. It was a ricochet that went through the soft part of his butt.

Q: Did he have a hard time living that down?

LD: Well, he did but the one that had a hard time living there had to be in the head. At the time we were getting depth charged. In the head we had a box of flashlights, emergency flashlights that we hooked over a screw inside of the bulkhead. With the jarring of the depth charges, the box fell off and hit his little toe. Of course, he reported it to the pharmacist's mate. The pharmacist's mate recorded it and come to find out he got hurt during action, so he got the Purple Heart. What ticked us off was we had to stand at attention while he got the Purple Heart. So, he was really goofing off in the head in my estimation. So, that was the only casualty that I can remember.

Q: So, the ship did pretty well.

LD: Yes. We got banged up quite a bit. We had to come back twice for repairs. Once we had a very noisy screw which kept us from going out. The ship did pretty well.

Q: How did the ship get banged up?

LD: Depth Charges.

Q: Depth charges. So, you had six combat missions, cruises. Total tonnage, total ships sunk was do you remember how many?

LD: It was well over 100,000. I think that was the reasons why we got the unit citation.

Q: Your experiences were pretty positive aboard the *Pintado*?

LD: Oh yes. Mine was because, as I said, everything to me was different. To me, it was an adventure. Let's face it. It was something a kid from Cohoes sitting out there doing something in the Pacific Ocean, the South China Sea, the Yellow Sea. We were at Subic Bay there when the Japanese fleet came through. You know (unclear) not the first time when the bombed Pearl Harbor. The second time, we were going to engage them in a naval battle.

Q: Between patrols where were you generally based?

LD: Normally you'd go on two weeks or a month rest period depending on where you were. We hit Pearl Harbor twice, stayed at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel which was very exclusive. That, to me, was a big thrill. I can remember when I was younger, they had the Charlie Chan books and they had that setting.

Q: You actually got to stay there.

LD: I got to stay there and I got to see Diamond Head and all the other parts. Yes, I was quite excited

Q: You had some pretty good liberties?

LD: Yes. We had two liberties in Australia. One on one side of the coast and one on the other side. One in Freemantle and we had one in New Zealand. The one I remember...we stayed away from being in a big town because there was no fun. This one time we up in this gin mill and the Chief of the Boat came over and said how would you like to take a trip? Of course, we were on a two-week rest period. Things were not that great in the big towns.

What has happened is that he had met a woman in a bar who owned a horse ranch in the (unclear) which is the mountains up there in Australia. He rounded about six of us up to spend eight to ten days up at her ranch. He picked the six guys that he thought would do her a lot of good – a radio man to fix her radio because they didn't have electricity up there. I worked on the diesel engine which produced the electricity on the ranch. Then we had the (unclear) who was, what you call it, a florist from Maine and he dug the fence posts and everything. So, he picked us. Of course, he was from Wyoming or Montana. He broke horses for her. All and all, we had an enjoyable eight to ten days. Believe me.

Q: You got some work done.

LD: She got some work done and we enjoyed it. I was there for two days before I realized (unclear)

Q: We're going to change tapes.

LD: No

Q: Oh, the woman.

LD: She had a regular ranch up there, a working ranch up there in the mountains. We slept in the bunkhouse. (unclear) Baily, the Chief, slept in the big house I guess with her. Talk about innocent kids. I didn't realize anything was going on. But that was one of the ones that I remember. That was a real rest period that I remember. Well, I remember the one at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in the beer garden and all that other stuff. (unclear) mediocre gin mill stuff and trying to pick up girls and stuff like that.

Q: Were the Australians pretty friendly people?

LD: Very friendly. They hated the limeys, the English. They hated everything about the limeys. They never did get along together but with us they loved. They loved our cigarettes. The girls loved our cashmere bouquet soap. The soap they had was unbelievable. We were warned that once we hit Australia to take a supply of toilet paper and soap. Their toilet paper was atrocious I'm telling you. It was like sandpaper and the soap was no more than, I think, lye. I can remember getting a case of cashmere bouquet soap and we never had any shortages of women, I'll tell you.

Q: A bar of soap will go a long way in Australia.

LD: I'll tell you. It was chocolate candy bars with the kids (unclear). Of course, they were all anxious to meet up with the American sailors and go back to the "states" as they put it.

We had a 3rd Class Cook and he would go to the ship's service and buy some cheap diamond rings – about \$10. He'd meet a girl and the first couple of days he'd become engaged you know in parenthesis. He had a companion for the two weeks we were there. Of course, I'll send for you when we hit the states and everything. He was a great one for that.

Q: It never caught up with him?

LD: It never did.

Q: Do you remember your last cruise?

LD: The last cruise. We were out in the middle of the Pacific when we heard that the war was over. That's when you had to be careful. You didn't realize if the Japs were aware that the war was over or not. Yes, I can remember cheering and everything and being out there in the middle of the Pacific and then coming back through Pearl Harbor and then coming back to the states.

Q: Where did you end up in the states?

LD: The west coast. What the heck was the name of that town? (unclear). Anyway, it was south of San Diego. Not Treasure Island. Yes. Treasure Island. That was where we came back in.

Q: Is that where you left the ship?

LD: Yes. That's where we had to put her out of commission put her in what they called "Red Lead Row". We had to spin the cocoons all over the guns. That took us another two or three months to get her what we called "Red Leaded".

Q: So, you decommissioned the ship?

LD: I decommissioned it, but I never put her into commission. As I said, I never understand why when we were within a stone's throw of one another and they sent me six thousand miles to catch.

Q: How did you feel leaving it for the last time?

LD: Kind of happy in a way that I got out with my life but what I did in order to get discharged out on the west coast you had to have a job so I went down to the San Diego oil field and told them I was an expert diesel engine operator which was neither here nor there. Anyway, I got the necessary paperwork from them after I worked a week to get my discharge on the west coast. Then I took two months to hitchhike cross country. Then it was March. I didn't feel like hitting the east coast in the winter so I kind of went down through the southern part of the country and took my time hitchhiking.

Q: That must have been an adventure.

LD: I met a guy who was a Japanese war prisoner. He was driving a '39 Buick. I can remember that. He had very poor eyesight. The Japanese, in order to torment him, would rub tobacco into his eyes. He had very bad eyes. His night driving was atrocious. I realized that as soon as I got in his car. The fact that he didn't know me too well. When I offered to drive for him, he didn't let me until he got really tired.

What he was going. He was going to Texas to visit his parents before he hit (unclear) hospital out in South Carolina. Of course, I stayed with him all of the way through. So, that was another interesting adventure. I drove him out there and stayed out there for about a week settling him down and getting rid of the car and everything else. That was another adventure I had before I got home. Then I hitchhiked up the east coast and, by that time, it was over the winter. Being down there in the tropics, your blood kind of thinned out. I didn't like the cold weather.

Q: You didn't come home to any parade or?

LD: No. Just back home to my mother and sisters and my job. They kept that open for ninety days for me.

Q: They did? You went back to work?

LD: Yes. I finished my apprentice training course. I transferred over to the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratories. We were instrumental in building reactors for future subs. That just happen to be coincidental. I was a tool maker. They didn't care one way or another. We were very instrumental in making the "sodium" reactor which went into the first Seawolf which was a very different type of reactor. That was the one that Rickover kind of, that was his baby all the way through.

Q: You were at Knolls pretty much from the beginning?

LD: Yes. At the beginning we worked at (unclear) while the Knolls were being built. (unclear) was just the holding area until the main laboratory was built so I would say yes right from the beginning.

Q: Did you get to see Rickover up there?

LD: Oh yes.

Q: What was he like?

LD: He was a little guy. He reminded us of Captain Blair who was our commandant. He was a little guy very much a pain in the ass you might say because he would come in a two o'clock in the morning and expect the greeting party and everything to be there.

I can remember I was in the machine shop one time and he came up and kiddingly said what are we supposed to do, kneel, genuflect and I didn't realize he was standing right behind me when I said it to another fellow there.

Blair was like that. He was a little guy who was part Indian. He used to have a very immaculate set of khaki's, the high socks and, of course, the sandals. He had a crazy hat on. I don't know what kind it was. He always smoked a cigar whether the smoking lamp was out of not. I can remember anytime he wanted to talk to you he would be one step up on a ladder. He would never be in a position where he would look up at you. He was short. He was like Rickover, a little heavier build. Rickover was kind of slim.

I can remember coming off of (unclear) dive one time. He wasn't moving fast enough. Of course, we didn't come down on the ladder. We slid down on the side. He was below me. I kind of kicked him all the way down and knocked the cigar out of his mouth but I had to get to the bow or stern plates that was my diving station. I couldn't take the time to be apologetic. It was one of those things. Like I said, it brings back memories. You feel like you're nineteen or twenty.

Q: Sure. Sure.

LD: In fact, in a couple of weeks I am going down to a reunion. The first one in fifty-five years.

Q: Good for you.

LD: For the Pintado.

Q: Where is that going to be held?

LD: St. Louis.

Q: St. Louis. That should be fun.

LD: Yes. Yes. My son was kind of responsible when I got this book from Mendenhall. He got on the computer and traced Mendenhall's address down. He wrote to him and told him that his father was on your sub and all that stuff. He, in turn, sent my name to the secretary of the *Pintado* group. It was a group that they started back in the 50's to keep the guys together and he, in turn, the secretary called me and that's how we got to the point where I knew there was a reunion going on in St. Louis.

Q: Great.

LD: It's exciting. It kind of brings you back in years believe me.

Q: Any other stories that you can think of?

LD: There was a lot of them. Everything that happened was certainly new to me. Who every dreamt that I would be pulling guys out of the Pacific Ocean and saving twelve lives? One of us not me alone but I had my hands on a couple of the guys. So, that was something. A lot of stories. A lot of what we did was just boring. We were putting in time either studying or reading or playing cards. I can't think of too much.

Q: OK. Do you have any general comments or thoughts on your military career as you look back at it?

LD: At the end, they wanted me to reenlist. I said no. I had enough then. They could have signed me over to some peace time duty. I wasn't ready for that. They asked if you had a son would you let him join the Navy. Yes. It's the same indication as this. My daughter, my grandson is twenty years old and she said after reading the book and going out to the museum in New London and coming aboard a realistic World War II sub and seeing the way we lived and slept she said I can't picture sending her son out into something like this and, to me, he's more sophisticated than I was. Computer and drive cars and everything else. We were a lot different back in the 40's believe me.

Q: Well, thank you very much sir.

LD: I appreciate it to relive the time. I felt like I was twenty again.

Q: It was a great story.

LD: If you really want to read a good book about it, read that *Submarine Diary* by Mendenhall. It will give you another insight because he was on the *Sculpin* as well as the *Pintado*. Of course, the *Sculpin* was the sister ship of the *Squalus* if you remember sinking back in '39. In fact, Danny Persico, one of the guys...

Q: Just passed away.

LD: He was a member of our chapter up there in Clifton Park.

Q: Unfortunately, we never got a chance to interview him.

LD: It was really too bad. His wife was really living in the limelight. She enjoys everything. But if you really want a copy of this for any reason, I've got an extra copy of this.

Q: We'd love to have it.

LD: It will give you more of a...it's just a copy we got from the Navy Department.

Q: (unclear)

LD: That was different. I was part of a magazine item "does anybody know this man?" There was a shipmate of mine in a California nursing home. Lost a leg due to sugar diabetes or some doggone thing or another and was kind of out of his mind in the sense that he had dementia or something. His neighbor never realized who his neighbor was until he really got to know him. Then he realized who he was. It was this Scotty Alexander who I used to stand on my (unclear) watches, a very first-class gentleman.

Q: Amazing.

LD: He himself had a fishing boat out in California. He was a very good mechanic as far as diesel engines go.