RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALVIN S. BOGART

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on February 24th, 2011 with Alvin S. Bogart, Sandra Stewart Holyoak, and Dan Kessler in Wayne, New Jersey. We thank you so much for having us here today. Where and when were you born?

Alvin Bogart: I was born in Paterson, New Jersey on July 7th, 1921.

SH: I would like to begin talking a bit about your family history. Could you tell us about your father and his side of the family?

AB: My father's name was Abe. He was brought to this country as a little boy from Russia with other members of his family and they came to Paterson directly. … That's where he grew up.

SH: Were there other members of the family already here in the United States?

AB: There were one or two of his much older brothers who were here and apparently they helped the rest of the family, including his mother and father, come here.

SH: How old was your father when he came to the United States?

AB: He was probably about five or six, something like that.

SH: He came to the United States before the turn of the century?

AB: Right around the turn of the century, right. There was a massive immigration … from Eastern Europe at that time, particularly among Jews because a lot of the men were conscripted into the service and in many cases were never heard of again. So, the way to avoid that was to get out of the country.

SH: How many brothers and sisters did your father have?

AB: He was probably one of maybe ten or eleven siblings, more or less equally divided.

SH: What part of Russia was he from?

AB: Near Kiev, near Odessa, the southern part of Russia.

SH: Did he ever talk about his memories from that time?

AB: Almost nothing--whether they were suppressed, or he was that young, I don't know.

SH: Did he talk at all about his immigration to the United States? Did he remember the trip?

AB: Not really, no.

SH: How many members of the family eventually wound up in the United States?

AB: … His parents and all of his siblings--none remained in Russia.

SH: Did his father have a trade when he came?

AB: I don't know. That grandfather of mine died when I was about two years old, so I have no memory of him whatsoever.

SH: Let us talk about your mother's family history.

AB: My mother also came over with her family. She came from Poland, she lived in a town … called Lodz, and she came over maybe a couple of years later. Now, my mother was the oldest of six, total of six siblings in that family. … I think … maybe the one or two youngest ones were born in this country. … She also came over as a young child, five or six years old, something like that.

SH: The whole family traveled together.

AB: Yes, yes.

SH: Do you know of any family members on her side that were already in the United States?

AB: Oh, yes, … on that side, I knew all my aunts and uncles.

SH: They were already here.

AB: Yes, eventually a lot of my aunts and uncles on my dad's side moved to other parts of the country. Some were in California, some were in Michigan, you know, they were all over. I knew a few of them who were in this area, but not that many, but in my mother's case I knew them all.

SH: Was there anything particularly of interest for them to come to the Paterson area? Was it industry?

AB: … It had something to do with industry. … Paterson was known as "the silk city" and apparently a lot of these people either knew something about weaving or knew that there were job opportunities. So, the economics probably pushed it. They went where the work was.

SH: How did your father and mother meet?

AB: I don't know. I have no knowledge of that at all. I know they were married in June of 1920 because I was born about, I think, thirteen months later. I remember celebrating their anniversary with them for years, but I don't know how they met. By the way, even though my parents came over from Europe they both spoke perfect English. … Neither one of them had any trace of an accent whatsoever.

SH: They had gone to school here?

AB: Yes, although their schooling was very limited. My mother graduated from grammar school and then went to work. My father went through about the sixth or seventh grade in grammar school and went to work, which was common in those days. … He didn't even graduate from grammar school.

SH: Did your family keep a kosher home?

AB: My father's family was quite orthodox, I don't know whether they were really orthodox or ultraconservative, but they kept kosher homes. My mother bought her meats from a kosher butcher, but she would not hesitate to have something dairy on the table. She did not serve pork in the house. She didn't cook bacon or ham, no pork products and as far as I know, no shellfish, no shrimp, which are prohibited, but she didn't keep a kosher home in a sense that she would not be concerned about having dairy with a meat meal or something of that nature, but she had the habit of buying all her meat and poultry from a kosher butcher. So, it was sort of a modified system, but there was no pretext of keeping a kosher home.

SH: Are you the oldest of the siblings?

AB: Yes.

SH: How many siblings do you have?

AB: I have one sister.

SH: As a young child growing up in Paterson, was education very important in your family?

AB: I'll tell you how important it was. When I was very young, we lived on 22nd Street right near Broadway and I went to a local school there, School 13. I developed a whooping cough, and in those days that was a serious illness, and I was out of school for about four months. I must have been in the first grade or something like that. So, my mother went to school and said to the teacher, "Tell me what you're going to cover, and we'll try to do it at home with my son," and the teacher gave her a book on arithmetic and a book on English, … spelling, and failed to tell my mother that this was for the whole year. So, I finally recovered and got back to school. … They decided because I had missed four months, it was a whole semester, so they put me back a semester. Well, within a week or so they decided that I shouldn't be put back, so they put me back with my regular class. Another week, … they advanced me a whole year because my parents were gung-ho. … They thought this is what I had to accomplish, and this was for way into the future. So, I ended up … not only making up the half year I missed, but skipping a whole year. … My birthday is in July, I graduated grammar school at age twelve and high school at age … sixteen, or just before my seventeenth birthday. So, I was young for my class. … My father was an expert mathematician in spite of the fact that he left school at an early age. … He could do in his head what, to this day, I marvel at, with all my training. He had that … "native intelligence." I don't know what he had, but he had it. … It's just a crime that neither one of them went further in school because they certainly had the ability.

SH: What did your father do? What was his occupation?

AB: My father was an owner with a partner, with an uncle who was his brother-in-law, of a shirt factory. … They made fine men's shirts, and their primary customers were high-styled firms in New York, stores in New York. I don't think they're even in existence any more. … They had a small factory. …

SH: This factory was in Paterson.

AB: In Paterson, and they made very fine highly-tailored men's shirts.

SH: Was this brother-in-law your mother's brother?

AB: No, he was married to … my father's younger sister. My father was the second youngest and she was the last child born, and I think she was born in this country. It was her husband who was my father's partner.

SH: Can you describe the area that you lived in growing up?

AB: The area we lived in, … the Eastside of Paterson, was full of what we called two-family homes. These were homes where one family lived on the ground floor, and another family lived on the second floor. … In fact, we had coal-fired furnaces, and I remember there were two different coal bins, so when the coal trucks would come to make the delivery, they'd have these chutes, and they would put the chute through a window. They had to make sure they got the coal into the right bin, so that you weren't paying for your neighbor's coal. … Somebody had to go down and put coal in the furnace periodically to make sure … the flame didn't die out. That's how we got heat and hot water. I remember this very vividly.

SH: I assume that must have been one of your jobs at some point?

AB: When I was old enough, yes. I remember having a radio where you had regular batteries just like a car battery today, and eventually the water would evaporate. … My biggest thrill was to be allowed to go to the drugstore and to buy a jug of distilled water so my father would pour it in to keep the battery going. I remember vividly having to pour … distilled water into the battery so your radio would work.

SH: What shows did you listen to on the radio? What were your favorites?

AB: *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Buck Rodgers* on the radio. I'm trying to think. Well, when I was a kid, that was pretty much it, *Buck Rodgers* and *Amos 'n' Andy*. *Amos 'n' Andy* were on in the evening, and it was considered very funny and *Buck Rodgers*, of course, was futuristic. We smile at it now.

SH: Did your mother work outside of the home?

AB: My mother worked, before she was married, as a bookkeeper. … I don't know how she learned it, but she learned it, and she worked as a bookkeeper. … After their marriage, she stopped working, and she was a homemaker from then on. …

SH: Was there a lot of interaction between the families of your parents? Would you interact with your cousins?

AB: The cousins that lived in the area I was--and am--still very close to. … My cousin, whose father was my father's partner, we were only two years apart in age. He has since moved, he lived in California for many years, but we have remained very close over the years. We were the closest geographically, and in age, and we liked each other. … We're almost like brothers. So, we maintained a very close relationship.

SH: You talked about living in a two-family house. Were you friends with the other people in the house?

AB: We were on the upper floor. … The one that we lived in for many years when I was growing up was, she was a widow, and she had two daughters that were older, even the youngest one was older than I was. So, of course, they weren't interested in a boy a couple of years younger than them. … There was a casual friendship, but I mean it wasn't like cooking in each other's pots, just normally friendly people. I guess my folks obviously paid the rent on time. … There were no problems.

SH: Did you have jobs or chores?

AB: Well, yes, there was one. We had ice boxes in those days, there were no refrigerators, so there was always a constant delivery of ice blocks, and you had to have a pan underneath to catch the melt. Well, I got darn tired of … my job to empty the melt, and if you waited too long and it got too full, then you spilt it all over while you were pulling it out. … I got very tired of that. So, I don't know how old I was, but I got a drill--oh in this case we lived on the ground floor. I got a drill, and I drilled a hole in the floor, and it led to the washtubs in the basement. … I had the thing dripping right through into the washtub in the basement. … I put a hose in there. I was relieved of the job of emptying the drip pan. [laughter]

SH: Did your folks know that you had done this?

AB: I told them after a while. [laughter] … They were worried that the landlord, the owner, would object. I said, "It's a saver of labor."

SH: It was an improvement.

AB: … I drilled a hole in the floor.

SH: What were the social activities that you remember your parents being involved in?

AB: Oh, I can tell you that. They were avid bridge players, and they would play with a group of people. They would rotate, one week in this one's home, and next week another one's home, and I was maybe eight or nine or ten years old, something like that, and sometimes, some of the people wouldn't come. … My parents would be there, and one other person, they would need a fourth, so before that happened, I would stand behind my mother and my father and I would watch them play. … My father always said to me, "Not a word until the hand is over." … Then I would say to him, "Dad, why did you bid that," or "why did you play that card?" So, I learned to play bridge by watching them play over a period of years, and then, once in a while if they were missing a fourth, till somebody came for the evening, they would let me sit down and fill in. … I learned to play bridge at a very early age, and I still play on occasion. I joined various groups, and I play. My skills aren't … what they used to be, but I enjoy it. I learned it by standing behind my parents and listening and watching how they bid and how they played.

SH: Your sister is nine years younger than you. You must have remembered having a new sibling.

AB: Oh, sure.

SH: Was that exciting?

AB: No, to a nine year old boy? In other words, I was independent enough that her presence didn't really change my life, not really. So, that it was just, you know, she was there, that's all. [laughter]

SH: Where did you want to go to grade school?

AB: Well, it's not a question of where you wanted to go. In Paterson, you went to the one that was nearest to where you lived. Now, we moved after I was in about the second or third grade, and we moved to the east side of Paterson. I went to what's called PS 20. … I stayed there for the entire grade school years. … It was a good school, no problems. … There were so many students that there … were two fifth grade classes right on through the eighth grade.

SH: What was your neighborhood like as a young boy?

AB: Well, there were a lot of kids around, and we all had roller skates, the ones that you clip on, not the ones today where the skates are … built into the shoe. … You had a key that tightened the clips so they would stay on your shoes. So after school we would roller skate, we'd play baseball in the street. We'd go on a bicycle, although my parents never let me have a bicycle. I never owned a bicycle, they were deathly afraid, but my cousin had one, so obviously I learned to ride a two-wheeler. … I would borrow his once in a while because they didn't live far from us, but my parents were deathly afraid of having me ride a bike.

SH: Do you know why?

AB: Yes, because every once in a while some kid would get killed, but we would play in the street. We'd play baseball, we'd go roller skating. We would make bows and cut and make

arrows and shoot at targets. We'd find a piece of wood that we could bend and put a string on it and actually make a bow. So we did all those things.

SH: Were you allowed to go exploring in your neighborhood or did you have to stay within a block or two of your home?

AB: Well, usually the rule was, be home in time for supper. In those days, there weren't the fears that we have today about letting kids out of your sight, about knowing where they are every minute of the day. There just was not that type of fear at all--whether foolishly so or not, I don't know. … I remember maybe at the age of twelve or thirteen, with friends, getting on … a trolley that went to the river, and going across the river, and going to Yankee Stadium, just a group of kids … riding the subway and going to Yankee Stadium watching a ball game by ourselves. I remember this, and nobody gave it a second thought.

SH: Were you involved in any extracurricular activities, like the Boy Scouts?

AB: Yes, I was a Boy Scout and, of course, I had to go to Hebrew School two afternoons a week which didn't please me at all. … It was two days that I couldn't do the things that I wanted to do, but I had two grandmas who were religious women, and my dad said to me, "You're going to be Bar Mitzvah'd, period, no ifs ands or buts." I said, "Okay," I made a deal with my dad and he stuck to it. I said, "Okay, I'll do the whole thing, and I will not embarrass you, but when that's done, don't ask me anything else about religion." He said, "Done." Well, I was Bar Mitzvah'd in June just before I was thirteen, and the next fall when the High Holy Days came, they always went to the temple, my mother and dad. … He had to buy seats. I said, "Don't buy a seat for me." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I'm not going." He said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm going to stay home and listen to the World Series," and he stuck to his agreement.

SH: Did he really?

AB: Absolutely. He said, "You did your part, I'll do mine." He never argued with me. Oh, the day after my Bar Mitzvah--do you know what tefillin are? He gave me the set of tefillin, he said, "I'm going to show you how to do this." I said, "Don't bother." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I'm not doing this." He said, "Why?" I said, "Because I don't believe in it, I'm not going to do it." "Okay, put them away." It was the morning after my Bar Mitzvah, he was going to teach me how to pray with it, and I said, "No way," and that was it. … He was a man of high principle, he made a deal, he stuck to it. He didn't pull this, "I'm your father, you do as I say," nothing like that at all, ever.

SH: No guilt trips or anything.

AB: I mean, he did it for his mother, and for his mother-in-law. My grandmothers were alive and I said, "I'll do my part," and he stuck to his.

SH: That is interesting.

[TAPE PAUSED]

Dan Kessler: How was father's shirt manufacturing business affected by the Great Depression?

AB: They suffered. Obviously, business turned down rather dramatically, and I can remember my mother and dad discussing how to cut back. … Sometimes I'm amazed at what I think is how bright my father and mother were, because my father said, "There's one thing we're not going to change, you're going to keep buying all the food that you've been buying in the same places and you're not going to look for bargains, because we'll cut down on everything else, but not food. Food is what you put in your body, and it's got to be the right food and … properly prepared, not tainted. No bargains." So, he said, "Your food bills will be the same, we'll cut down on everything else," and I thought, what an intelligent way to handle a depressed time, and we got through it. I mean I never went hungry. … You would say we were middle class, and that covers a broad range, of course, but we were certainly middle class. I never went hungry. I never went without anything that I needed.

SH: Was the rest of the family as fortunate as you?

AB: Pretty much so, some maybe a little more, some a little less. … Nobody was starving and nobody, … to my knowledge, needed extra help. Now, one of my father's older brothers was a doctor in Flint, Michigan. He happened to be a neurosurgeon, and he was here in this country before the rest of the family came, although he was not a doctor then, and I know he helped support his mother, who lived with my father's partner. … The youngest daughter took her mother in, and grandma lived with them until she died, but I think that my Uncle Leon--who was the doctor--I think he helped contribute to her support. In fact, my father did too. … A lot of the siblings contributed to their mother's support which was common in those days. A young daughter would take the parent in, and the older siblings would help pay the freight.

SH: Did the family ever go on vacations?

AB: My family, every summer, they would rent a place in Belmar, New Jersey at the shore, and I would come back black, I mean I was out there. I love the ocean and … I learned to swim and I love the beach, and I did all the things a kid does. So, we went to the shore every summer. … My father would come down on weekends. He was working during the week, but … he'd come down on Friday night, and go back early Monday morning.

SH: Did he come by train?

AB: No, by car. …

SH: Did you ever go to work with him?

AB: Once in a while, yes. Once in a while I would go in. … During school days I couldn't, but if it was a holiday from school when the factory was open, I would very often go in with him. … I was one of the best dressed boys in school … because he would custom make shirts for me.

No, really, I mean super, they fit properly, colorful but not gaudy. He had a very fine sense of taste. … He had a great sense of taste, so that I was really well-dressed.

SH: What about your mother? Was he able to make clothing for her?

AB: No, I'll get to that later when we get to a later time, but no. She shopped in Paterson, Meyer Brothers was … probably her favorite store in Paterson. … She did her shopping in downtown Paterson. … My mother did not drive, she would take the bus, and sometimes I would go with her. She would shop in the department stores and if the packages were small, she'd take them herself, and if not, they all had trucks, and they would deliver them the next day. … In those days, ladies didn't carry big packages, and my mother was a lady. So, if it was something very small, she would take it, but other than that, it would be delivered the next day.

SH: You talked about going into New York to baseball games, but did you go into New York for anything else?

AB: Not alone as a kid, no.

SH: As a family?

AB: Yes, … we would go to Radio City sometimes. My mother's younger sister took me to see my first play when I was a youngster, it was called *Brother Rat*. It was about the cadets at VMI, and they called them the "plebes," you know, rats. So, it was called *Brother Rat* and that was my introduction to the Broadway theatre.

SH: Did your family listen to music?

AB: They loved music, and they had a Victrola which, of course, you had to crank, and Victor Red Seal records. My father, as a young man growing up, would buy standing room tickets to the Metropolitan Opera. He loved the opera. … As a matter-of-fact, I have today on CDs, I have a CD set of everything that [Enrico] Caruso ever sang in one box set. … They had modern music also, whatever was being written at the time, but they were musically inclined. My mother used to tell the story when I was a little kid growing up, she would give me a lid from a pot, a large pot, and a large wooden spoon and she'd put on march music, and I would march around the house banging on the lid. I got the message. I've taught my children and grandchildren to do this with their kids and they say it works. … Apparently little kids have a sense of rhythm and when you play, particularly march music, which has a steady rhythm, and you give them something to bang on, which they love, and they're making music. So, it's a family tradition, passed down. [Editor's Note: Enrico Caruso (1873-1921) was a popular Italian opera singer who released many commercial recordings to audiences across the world.]

SH: You mentioned that you had moved in the second grade.

AB: Something like that, yes.

SH: What was your favorite subject in school? Who was your favorite teacher?

AB: … I enjoyed learning, but I don't think there was any favorite. I enjoyed history, I enjoyed math, I enjoyed language and spelling, writing. … I'm not bragging, but I was a good all-around student. … I didn't gravitate toward one area in particular.

SH: Was your family aware of current events?

AB: Very much so. You'll get a kick out of this. Years ago, after I was grown up and married and living at home, the kids--we had a few kids in the house--and we would watch something like [the quiz show] *Jeopardy!*, and, of course, I would blurt out the answers. … One day one of my kids, my daughter said to me, "Why don't you apply?" So, anyway, I applied, and I went to New York and I took the test, and the gal who graded the test said to me, "You scored in the 99th percentile in all but one category, and we can't use you." I said, "What's the category?" … She said, "Comic strips." My family bought the *New York Times*--there's no comic strips--so I was completely ignorant about comics, and they wouldn't take you unless [you had] what they felt was a well-grounded [all-around knowledge]. She said, "You're in the 99th percentile in everything else, but you're almost zero in comic strips." I said, "I never had a paper with a comic strip."

SH: That is a great story.

AB: So I didn't get on *Jeopardy!*. [laughter]

DK: There was a textile workers' strike in 1934. Did that affect his factory at all?

AB: I don't remember it at all. Well, first of all, I was, you know, twelve years old, thirteen years old, and I don't know that it affected him. I don't remember anything in any conversation about the problems with the strike, nothing that I remember. … I don't even know if it was a long strike. … These were rough times. … I have no knowledge of it at all.

SH: Maybe his factory was so small that no union was needed.

AB: Well, the odds are he was unionized. I mean, when I say small, he probably at that time had maybe sixty or seventy people working for him. So, it wasn't like a two-man shop. … I'm sure he was unionized. I'm sure of it.

SH: Do you know what his political feelings were?

AB: It's interesting. You're touching on a subject which we're going to cover in a little while. As most of his compatriots were, they tended to be Democrats, but in Passaic County in that period of time, there was a Congressman by the name of Seger who was a Republican, but you would probably today call a fairly liberal Republican. … Believe it or not he had the backing of the unions which were very strong in Passaic County because of all the workers. So, I'm sure my father voted for Seger. I'm sure he did, because he was as I say, … a liberal Republican, and he had a lot of union support. … Politics was not a big thing in our house. They weren't rabid about it.

DK: Your mother's family was from Poland. What were their reactions to the German invasion in 1939? [Editor's Note: Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.]

AB: Well, we'll get to that later when we get to the war. …

SH: Do you remember Charles Lindberg and his flight in 1927? [Editor's Note: Aviator Charles A. Lindbergh made the first non-stop flight from Roosevelt Field, New York, to Paris' Le Bourget Airport from May 20-21, 1927.]

AB: Oh, okay, I think the flight was 1927. My father had an office, his firm had a little office on Fifth Avenue in New York. I saw Lindberg's welcome home parade. … He was like on the second floor facing Fifth Avenue, and I was sitting on a ledge, he was holding on to me, and I was sitting on a ledge with an open window when the parade went by. … I saw Lindberg on his homecoming parade from a ledge on the second floor on Fifth Avenue of a building. My father knew that was an important day.

SH: Were there other events like that that you remember?

AB: Not that I can recall from my childhood. That was a big thing and, of course, today it looms even larger. … I remember it vividly. … I saw that parade.

SH: What did your father listen to on the radio? Did he listen to President Roosevelt's speeches?

AB: They were Roosevelt Democrats, both my mother and father, yes, and they would listen to the news, you know, on the radio with Lowell Thomas. I just remembered, Lowell Thomas, that was a favorite every night, yes, and they would listen to the news. … They read the paper, both of them. … They were abreast of what was going on.

SH: Did they ever talk about the New Deal programs that President Roosevelt initiated? [Editor's Note: In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt set into motion a combination of programs that were collectively called the New Deal, with the goal of providing economic relief, reform and recovery for the country.]

AB: Well, I think they felt it was basically beneficial to us and to the country. I think they were in general agreement.

SH: Did you see any evidence of the WPA programs in Paterson? [Editor's Note: WPA stands for Works Progress Administration, renamed the Work Projects Administration in 1939, active from 1935 to 1943.]

AB: Oh, sure. You'd see people clearing streets, or doing constructive work on roads and whatnot. That was part of the WPA, absolutely. Yes, it was all over.

SH: Did you visit Paterson Falls and Lambert Castle as a child growing up in Paterson?

AB: Yes, we got there, I don't remember how, but I remember being at the Falls any number of times and being at Lambert's Castle a few times, just probably driven there maybe had a picnic on a Sunday afternoon or something. … In nice weather, obviously, yes. It wasn't a big thing, but I saw them all.

SH: Were there parades in Paterson when you were growing up?

AB: Yes, almost always. … The big thing then was the World War I veterans. Well, in the 1930s, you know, the war was over in '18. …

SH: Where did you go for junior high?

AB: There was no junior high. In those days, you went kindergarten through eighth grade, grade school, and high school nine through twelve. … As far as I know, in Paterson, during my school years, there was no such thing as junior high.

SH: When you went into high school, you went into the classics program.

AB: … I went to what was and is still called Eastside High, that's the school they made that movie [*Lean on Me* (1989)] about, where the principal locked the doors to keep the drug dealers out, I mean it was almost like a reformatory. When I went there, it was a real high school, it was extremely academically oriented, and I had … two teachers who had PhDs in high school, I mean unreal when I think of it now. They had as I recall several different tracks you can run on in high school. They had what they called a classical track, which you'd call pre-college. They had the general, they had the commercial, I think they had … an occupational thing, and I took the classical because I hoped to go to college and, there, they gave you your fill of English and math and foreign language and science, chemistry, physics, whatever, biology, and you had to meet the requirements. …

SH: What foreign language did you take?

AB: I took French.

SH: What foreign languages did your family speak?

AB: … My grandparents spoke Yiddish. My parents also spoke Yiddish fluently.

SH: Did they?

AB: If they wanted to talk over my head they would talk in Yiddish, which I never learned … unhappily. I wish I had, because they didn't speak it that often. It wasn't the common language in the house. If they were talking to each other in Yiddish, I knew it was something they didn't want me to … have knowledge about. So, I mean I quickly learned words like *schlemiel*. … My grandparents spoke very little English, neither one of them spoke much English. So, communication with them was kind of hard. I didn't see that much of them, but it was difficult.

Usually, there would be somebody around to translate. … My dad's mother had a very keen wit. I can give you two stories that she used to tell that take just a second. One story was, "If all the little children are so smart where do all the big fools come from?" [laughter] … The other one was, "If you send a horse to college and it graduates, it's still a horse." [laughter] Apparently, it sounds better in Yiddish, but she made her point. … I love the one about where do all the big fools come from.

SH: What activities were you involved in when you went to high school?

AB: You name it, I was involved. … I was on the debating team, and I was in the Scholarship Society, and in the French Club. … It kept me busy.

SH: Were you involved in sports?

AB: In those days, I must have been about 5'3" and about a hundred and twenty pounds. … The only sport that I could even dream of playing would be soccer, but I just didn't like it that much. I mean basketball was out of the question, football was out of the question, baseball I couldn't hit a curve ball if my life depended on it. … Tennis I really didn't take up until sometime later. … The only thing that was really available was soccer and I just wasn't that good, you know.

SH: Did you play an instrument?

AB: I took violin lessons as a very young boy, and I played for a few years, and then it sort of just petered out. I wasn't that good, and I wasn't that thrilled with it. I mean I was exposed to it, and I was able to play, but it never gave me the satisfaction … maybe I had hoped [for]. So, it just petered out.

SH: Was there any one subject that you felt you really had a passion for, or a teacher who you considered a mentor?

AB: Well, I had a lot of good teachers in high school. … I know it's common to make fun of them and deride them and tell all the things you don't like about teachers. I had a number of excellent teachers who not only knew their subject, but they knew how to teach, and in retrospect, years later, now that I'm a teacher, and have been for years, I can appreciate how good some of them really were. I enjoyed most of them. … I liked the math and the physical sciences, chemistry and physics. I never took biology. The math came fairly easily to me.

SH: Were there any African-Americans in your classes?

AB: In grade school I think we had one African-American in my grade. There were very few who lived in that part of Paterson, and in high school, there were a few, not a lot. … In other words, it wasn't like there were none, and to the best of my knowledge they were treated the same as everybody else. I never heard or observed or knew of any discrimination against any of them ever. I don't think it ever occurred to anybody to discriminate, you know.

SH: Was any anti-Semitism ever directed towards you?

AB: At that stage, I never in any way, shape, or form felt that any was practiced against me, either overtly or covertly, certainly not overtly, and I never felt it covertly. … I wasn't walking around with a chip on my shoulder, but neither did I feel that anybody had it in for me, you know. I never had to fight my way past a bunch of Irish boys who were out to get me, none of that that you read about, never.

SH: What were your goals for college?

AB: … I was in high school from '34 through '38, this was really the depths of the Depression. So, the only way I was going to get to college would be on some kind of a scholarship. Of course, I worked my tail off in high school, and I didn't graduate number one in my class, but I must have been maybe two or three. … In the fall of my senior year in high school, which was the fall of '37, we had a vice principal in that school who loved the sound of my voice. He said I had a mellifluous voice. So, they had these notices to be read out every morning, so he asked me to come down to the office and they had a loudspeaker system in every room. … I'd have a microphone, and I would have a printed set of things to read, and every morning, when everybody was in their homeroom, I would read these then go to my homeroom. … I did this every morning because he liked my voice. So, it's like the fall of '37, and we're having dinner one night, and my mother says to me, "I was doing the laundry today and you left this in your shirt pocket," and she pulls out the slip. "Oh," I said, "That's the slip from the stuff I read in the morning." She said, "Yes, but there's something on here that looks interesting." I said, "What?" She says to me, "Read it so your dad hears it," and it was a notice … that the local Congressman, Mr. Seger, was going to hold competitive exams, because he had three vacancies at the Naval Academy for the next year, and he was going to have the civil service hold competitive exams for anybody who wanted to try. So, my dad looked at me and said, "You think you're so smart, why don't you take the damn exams." He said, "First of all, it would be good practice for you, because to get a scholarship at Rutgers," and I was also interested in Drew University, they also wanted exams. He said, "This would be good practice for you." … So, I said, "Okay." So, I did whatever I had to do. The exams were held on the day after Thanksgiving in what was then the Clifton High School on [US Route] 46, I think it's a junior high now, but in those days it was the Clifton High School, it's right on Route 46. So, my dad drove me there, I didn't have a driver's license yet, I was sixteen years old. … I found out what time it would be over, and he said he'll pick me up, and took the exams. I don't know, sometime later, maybe a month or so later, I get a letter from the Congressman's office telling me I placed number six on the exams, congratulating me. So, he said, … the ones who placed one, two and three, will be the three principals, and number four will be the first alternate, to the three, and number five would be the second alternate, and you're the third alternate. So, my chances were as they say like a snowflake in hell. … I proceeded to pursue the scholarships. In the meantime, … I graduated, and I'm proceeding with hope to get a scholarship at Rutgers. … The spring of '38, I'm sorry and I, my dad had to drive me to Rutgers, and he had to drive me to Drew, to Madison. … We met the dean there, and the dean assured my dad it was a seminary in those days, also. He assured him that they're not going to try to proselytize and convert me. … I got the two scholarships. So, I'm debating what to do. Middle of the summer, I get a notice that said, "Report to the Naval Academy for a physical exam." Two of the principals passed, and got in, third principal failed the physical--you had to go to the Academy to take your physical. Third principal failed the

physical, first alternate failed the physical, second alternate failed the physical, they had reached the bottom of the barrel, I'm it, third alternate. I go down, times were so tight then, and I'm not kidding you. … If you were accepted, you had to deposit a hundred dollars, that was the one and only fee ever paid, total.

SH: Wow.

AB: So, my dad gave me a hundred dollars in cash, and he bought me a one-way ticket to the Academy, you know, to Annapolis, and he said, "If you fail the physical, you'll use part of the hundred dollars to buy your return ticket," that's how tight things were. Well, I passed the physical. So, I think in my class, which was 760 odd men, I think there were eight or nine of us who were third alternates. That's what the odds were of the third alternate getting in, and it all happened because I left that slip of paper in my shirt pocket, my mother found it when she was doing the laundry, and she said, "Read it," and my dad said, "You're so smart, prove it."

SH: That is an amazing story.

AB: That's how I … got into the Naval Academy.

DK: Was the physical a medical examination or a fitness test?

AB: No, no, it was a physical exam.

DK: Today, sometimes a physical consists of a fitness test.

AB: Yes, in those days it was just the actual physical, but I'll tell you it was a monstrous physical--it took about six hours. You went from one department to another. … In fact, one dentist was going to exclude me, he said, "You have malocclusion." I said, "I've been wearing braces most of my life how can I have … malocclusion?" … I conned him out of it, but no, in those days, it was a very rigorous physical. …

SH: Had you ever been to Annapolis before?

AB: Never, never.

SH: You are only sixteen years old.

AB: Never. My only memory was a couple of years earlier, I was listening to an Army-Navy game on the radio, and I'll never forget the guy's name, his name was Slade Cutter, he was a tackle, and he kicked a field goal with about ten seconds left in the game to win the game for Navy. … In those days, you know, you played both sides. You didn't play offense and defense, you played the whole game, and until you were carried off unconscious. You played if you're on the first team. There was no such thing as offensive, defensive specialties. So here was a tackle who kicked a field goal to win the game. So that was my only connection with the Navy. [Editor's Note: Slade Cutter (1911-2005) was an All-American football player and career naval

officer. During World War II, Cutter was awarded four Navy Crosses for his submarine actions against Japanese ships in the Pacific.]

SH: Amazing. So you just started at the Academy after passing the physical?

AB: Yes, I was there, I never came home. I was there, sworn in the next day. … I think it was eight or nine of us, the others were already sworn in. We were like the last group. …

SH: Really?

AB: Yes, so, I missed part of what they call "plebe summer." … I missed some of the stuff that goes on during this plebe summer.

SH: Amazing.

AB: Yes.

SH: What did they teach in Annapolis?

AB: … I have to explain to you. Seniors there are called first classmen and juniors, second class, and sophomores, third class, and the freshmen or plebes, are called fourth class. In those days, during the summer, I don't think they had chapel services. … The month of September … is the month of leave for everybody in the Naval Academy. So, usually the academic year starts right around October 1st, give or take. So, October came around, we start classes, and in those days you marched to class. See, in those days, the only choice you had was a foreign language. … They taught four languages. They taught French, Italian, Spanish and German, and they guarantee that if you didn't get your first choice you'd get your second. So, of course, I chose French, and I was lucky I got it. Sunday morning, if you were Catholic, all the Catholic midshipmen formed up in a group and marched out into town and went to a Catholic church. If not, you went to chapel, didn't matter who you were, what you were, you were either Catholic or not Catholic--that was the line of demarcation. So, like everybody else, I went to chapel because I wasn't Catholic. Sometime maybe a month later, I'm not sure of the date, maybe it was early November, I saw a notice on the bulletin board, and I kid you not, that they're forming a Jewish church party, that was the exact words, "a Jewish church party," and any Jewish midshipman who wished to [can] sign up. So, of course, I signed up, and there were maybe, out of a regiment of maybe 3500 midshipmen, I think there were about twelve of us who marched every Sunday morning, we marched out as a group, and went to the Rabbi's house, and his wife would serve us Danish and coffee, and we'd shoot the breeze for a couple of hours, and march back. There are no services on Sunday morning. Maybe a few weeks later, I'm walking through the yard, I'm a plebe. I see approaching me an officer with four stripes, and I know that's a captain, that's just under an admiral, and above it, as I get closer I see a cross. So, of course, as we approach each other I stopped and salute him, and … he says to me, "What's your name, son." I said, … "Midshipman Bogart, fourth class sir." He said, "Glad to meet you Midshipman Bogart." He said, "I'll look forward to see you in chapel on Sunday." I said, "No, sir, I'm Jewish and I go out with the Jewish church party." He says, "Good luck to you." This was in the fall of 1938. Fast forward to the fall of 1941, I hadn't seen Chaplain Thomas in three years, had no communication

with him, I'm walking through the yard, I'm now about to graduate, … we're approaching each other, I stop and salute him. He looks at me and says, "Mr. Bogart, I'm so glad to see you made it." He remembered my name, and he greeted me by name. He said, "I'm so glad to see you made it."

SH: Amazing.

AB: Same chaplain. I had not seen the man or had any communication with him … in over three years.

SH: That is an amazing story.

AB: Amazing, and you know what, we all had the same haircuts, all wear the same uniforms. … There's no distinctive feature that you can hone in on and say, well that's how he remembered me. … Anyway, I started to tell you, the only choice you had was foreign language. … In my company, in my platoon, all the plebes went to the same class at the same time, so you marched to class as a group. Today, they don't march to class because they have maybe twelve or fifteen different majors, so that you can't form a group, so they walk, but in those days you marched to class. … You'd walk in, you'd stand by a desk, by a chair, rather, and the section leader would report to whoever the instructor was, officer or civilian, so and so all present accounted for, or so and so absent sir. … The routine was very interesting. On the instructor's desk there'd be a number of slips of paper face down on the desk. You're going to love this. He'd say, "Gentlemen," there were no ladies then, no women. "Gentlemen, man the boards." You'd walk up to the desk, take a slip, and there were enough boards for all the midshipmen, and there would be some stuff on that piece of paper, some questions that were related to that day's assignment. Now, this is as you walk in, there's no lecture, there's no questioning, and you have chalk, and you write your answers on the board. The instructor has his grade book, and he's reading as you're writing, and you get a grade right then and there. When you're done, you turn around and face the room, and he reads your stuff, then he motions you to go sit down, then whenever, a certain amount of time, and when everybody sits down, then he goes over the lesson. So, you had to be prepared for the lesson in every class every day before any lecture, before any discussion, before any questioning. Now, suppose you drew a slip where you draw a blank, I mean you looked at that thing, you'd say, "My God," you can't touch it. You'd go to the instructor and say, "Sir, I'd like to change my slip." He'd say, "Permission granted." If you had a perfect board, you got fifty percent in exchange for being able to get rid of the one that you couldn't handle, the maximum grade you could get would be fifty percent. By the way at the Academy, on a scale of "4.0," "2" is not passing, "2.5" is passing, not "2.0," did you hear me, "2.5," and it's been that way ever since. So, that's the way you went to school, in other words, you had to be ready for that lesson, for that assignment before any questioning, or before any lecture, which means that you made friends with smart classmates and I was very lucky. The fellow, my friend who graduated number two in the class, lived two doors from me.

SH: At the Academy?

AB: At the Academy. Now, what I didn't know when I went to the Academy was this. In my first year there, I was not a dumb kid in high school, I was a good student. I'm struggling like

mad to keep up, I mean I'm working my tail off, half the guys in my class are sitting around looking bored to death. I found out later that almost all of my classmates had at least one or two years of college before they went to the Academy. So, the first couple of years there were almost like review for them. … Of course, most of them were one or two years older than I was, on top of which I was young anyway for my age. … I couldn't understand why I was having so much trouble until I got wise. … The first two years are like engineering school almost anywhere in the country, besides the drilling and … all the sailing and whatnot, but the academic subjects are comparable to what you'd get in any top notch engineering school. The second two years are where you get the stuff that you don't get anywhere else, ballistics, navigation, seamanship, ship design, whatever, and that's when I really began to shine, but I never understood why I didn't do as well my first two years, because the competition was just out of sight. … I had a couple of classmates who had college degrees before they went to the Academy. They were young enough that they were able to complete four years of college and still make the age limit. Yes, not too many--I think … maybe two or three actually had BAs or BSs before they went there.

SH: I did not know that getting a degree prior to the Naval Academy was possible.

AB: … You had to be between sixteen and twenty when you entered. … You could conceivably get a degree before you're twenty … and still make the deadline.

SH: When you went to Annapolis, you said there was a month's leave in September for the students. Did you come home?

AB: No, plebes don't get that month leave. … No, plebes are there. … You don't get leave until you finished your plebe year.

SH: Did you ever get the chance to go into the surrounding town?

AB: … When I was a plebe, … the Navy paid for everything, you paid nothing. In fact, you got pay, but they deducted from your pay. So, we got two dollars a month spending money--did you hear me--two dollars a month. Now, a movie out in town probably cost forty cents, something like that, forty cents or fifty cents. So, it was just about enough to go to four movies a month, and maybe an ice cream cone. So, you were allowed off the grounds Saturday. … By the way we all ate in the mess hall at the same time, this was compulsory, oh, yes, so that you were allowed off the grounds I think Saturday after lunch until you had to form up for evening meal, for supper. So, you had like five hours, from like one to six, something like that, and also on Sunday. You can go out into town, we were not allowed to drive, didn't matter whether you had a driver's license. … You were not allowed to have a car, and you were not allowed to drive. You could be in somebody else's car, you were not allowed to leave the immediate environs of Annapolis, unless you got written permission. So, the only thing to do was basically go out in town and see a movie. That was about the total enjoyment you had.

SH: Were there more formal organized social events, like dances?

AB: … We had a hop, … I won't say every week, but there were … a lot of dances. … There were very strict rules about that, I mean a lot of the girls would stay overnight. … They had all

kinds of rooming houses out in town, and they would stay overnight, and midshipmen had a curfew, and the curfew was I think forty-five minutes after the dance ended. It was just enough time to walk your girl out to where she was staying, and get your butt back in the grounds. You could barely make it because most of these rooming houses were right near the gates, you know, for the Academy. …

SH: Did you have a girl come down?

AB: Not until I was in my third year, until I was a second classman, not when I was a plebe or a youngster, fourth and third class. First of all, plebes don't go to hops.

SH: Oh, really?

AB: Oh, no, upper-class only. … Plebes are not allowed to go to the hops. …

SH: Was there any type of hazing at the Academy?

AB: Plebe year, constant, but it's interesting. First of all, when you eat you sit at a table where there are members of all four classes, you sit at the same table all the time with the same people, and there are members of all the four classes. … There's first class, second class, third class, and plebes, so that an upper-classman would say at breakfast, would ask you a question, and you had to find the answer by supper that night, you had to get the answer. If you didn't get the answer, it was the Class of '42--forty-two pushups. You'd have to get up off your seat, and in the mess hall, and do forty-two pushups, and then, get back on your seat. After the Class of '50, they didn't do more than fifty pushups, because they could have killed you. … Every plebe had what they called a first classman. This was a guy who would not haze you, that you could go to for help, like to get the answers to questions and whatnot and, of course, you got to know them pretty well, and they got to know you pretty well, but a lot of the hazing was not meaningless garbage. It was stuff that, either it was naval lore or things that were of interest that you should know about. For example, I remember being asked, "Who said, 'You may fire when ready, Gridley,' and who was Gridley, and what was the occasion," beats me. So, of course, I found out, it was Admiral Dewey who said it to the skipper of the *Olympia* which was a US cruiser at the Battle of Manila Bay in … 1898, and Gridley was the skipper of that ship, and the Admiral was giving the order, "You may fire when ready." Well, that's something of naval interest. So, a lot of the hazing was stuff to make you learn things that would be either of interest or might be important, and some of it was frivolous. The physical hazing was minimal. … Pushups were the major punishment if you failed and, of course, that was body building anyway, but I never heard of any serious physical hazing in a sense that caused damage. … You had to learn to take it because that was part of the deal, and if you resisted then you got it doubled up. If you were a wise guy, you got doubled up. … You asked about prejudice, I never had a moment's prejudice. When I signed up for the Jewish church party, it was public knowledge. My relationship with the upper classmen never changed one iota. I wasn't hazed any more or less than I had been before. I had absolutely no feelings about any prejudice whatsoever, ever. … I'll tell you about prejudice later, but not here, not at the Academy, ever.

SH: Were there any African-American students?

AB: No. … We had foreign students. … They had all kinds of exchange arrangements with certain foreign countries, and one of my very dear friends was Bob Lim--he was from Manila, he was a Filipino--and they had a couple of students … from France or Italy. I didn't know any of them, but I knew Bob quite well, he was a great guy. He had a brother that went to West Point, and he went to the Academy, and his father was I think a general in the Philippine Army, and Bob actually became vice-president of Philippine Airlines. … Of course, he served in the war. He was a great guy.

SH: Do you remember who was your first classman?

AB: Yes, his name was Felix, his last name was Felix. He was good guy, and he was knowledgeable, of course. Whenever I had a question he would know the answer. So, it was good, and when I was a first classman I was a mentor, you know, to a couple of plebes.

SH: Was it interesting to see people from all across the country in the Academy?

AB: Oh, very much so. My roommate … before the academic year was a young guy from North Carolina, and I swear to you, I couldn't understand him. His accent was so broad that I literally couldn't understand him. He left after I think a year. … I don't know whether he flunked out or he resigned, but he left after about a year. … I wasn't being cute, I had trouble understanding him. I never heard an accent that thick in my life, and it wasn't like Alabama or Mississippi, this was different. It was sort of, I don't know, mountain and Southern combined, extremely difficult, nice guy, but I couldn't understand him. … You met all kinds of people with all kinds of backgrounds, but there's a leveling that takes place there, there's a great leveling. It's the Marine Corps-type concept, shave all their heads and they all look alike. It's to build a cohesive unit as opposed to individuality, that's what they're looking for, of course. … There's an essential difference, let's say in being in an infantry battalion and being on board a ship. If an infantry battalion loses a couple of officers, they send to headquarters, and they say, "Send us a couple of replacements." When you're on board ship, and somebody gets killed, you got no replacements, so you have to divide up that person's duty, and maybe shift somebody from here to here, so you can't be a specialist who can do only "A," you got to be able to do "A," "B," "C," "D," and "E." … At sea, there are no replacements, you make do with what you've got. A friend of mine from Paterson who was a year ahead of me, Leon Grabowsky, was on a destroyer during the war, and she got pounded, and he was the highest surviving officer, he was only I think a junior lieutenant, all the senior officers were killed, and he fought the ship, and he got a Navy Cross for it. I mean he had to take charge, he was the surviving officer, he fought the ship, he was trained to do it, he did it.

SH: Were the civilian instructors at the Academy older or younger than you?

AB: When you're that age, everybody is older, you know. [laughter]

SH: This is before the war.

AB: No, some of them were older. In fact, we called one guy "Slip Stick Willy." Slip Stick was our name for a slide rule, and he lived and died by the slide rule. … He was a civilian, his nickname was Slip Stick Willy. … In certain subjects, obviously there were going to be naval officers, in things like ballistics, and in ship design, and seamanship and navigation, but in history and language, my French instructor was a civilian, and he always referred to me as *Mon Petit*. I was probably the smallest guy in the class, so he always called me *Mon Petit* and he used to kid me because I thought my French was reasonable, but he was a French-Canadian and they speak a Patois, which is different from the Parisian French that I had learned in high school. So, I sometimes had trouble understanding him, and he used to kid me. … A lot of my classmates began calling me *Mon Petit*, because the name sort of stuck. … We had excellent civilians, also the officer instructors were handpicked, but we had good civilian instructors. In the physical-ed department, we had a couple of marvelous civilian instructors. We had one guy who was a swimming coach who did something that I still laugh at today. … You had to pass all kinds of tests, of course, so he was trying to teach how important kicking, proper kicking, is. He would get in the pool, … he'd swim about halfway down the length of the pool doing the Australian crawl, and then he'd be doing the crawl, but he'd be moving backwards. He was kicking the wrong way, and he was trying to prove to us that if you don't kick properly, not only won't you go forward, you might even be opposing your arm motion. He was fantastic. I was having trouble clearing the high jump, and the gym instructor is watching me, and he said to me, "Try it from the other side." I said, "But sir, I'm right handed." He said, "You may be left-footed." I sailed over the first time I tried. He saw something about how I was running to approach the bar, you had to use that scissors thing, he says, "I think you're doing it from the wrong side." He spotted it almost instantly. The funniest of all was the rope climb, they have these ropes hanging in the gym, with a big round metal scupper up on top, and the instructor said to us, "Okay, you got to climb the rope, and when you get enough where you can hit the scupper, that's high enough. So, of course, we had a bunch of guys there, some of them big, strong guys, football players, whatnot, and the instructor said, "In the beginning, take all the time you want," and then, just as we're starting to get on there, he said, "Oh, by the way, did I mention, no feet, hand over hand." So, our big guys on the football team began to groan. It's one thing for a little guy like me to climb up hand over hand, but for a guy who weighs a couple of hundred, 250 pounds, it's another story. Your feet had to be out like this, hand over hand with your feet out. You could not use your feet to grip the [rope] and you had to keep them out, so that there was no question. That was not fun. We had to pass a whole series of physical tests each year, and each year they got tougher. You did the same test, but you had to improve each year, and I guess every class had a couple of people who would graduate, but did not get commissioned, because they couldn't pass the physical.

SH: Did they come back to be retested?

AB: No, that was it.

SH: They would still be allowed to go into the Navy?

AB: They could probably go in as a reserve officer or something, but not as an Academy officer, yes. I don't know if things are the same now, but that's what it used to be, but don't forget, things were different in those days. You didn't sign up like for a five year commitment. You went in

the Navy, you were an officer, you serve, period. You serve your twenty years or whatever it is. There's an essential difference at least then between being a midshipman at the Naval Academy and being a cadet at West Point and I'll tell you what it was. When you're a cadet at West Point in those days, you were a cadet at West Point, and if you flunked out or you resigned that was it. When you're a midshipman at the Naval Academy, … you were sworn into the Navy, and if you either flunked out or were disciplined and kicked out, you could be made to serve out your four year "enlistment" as a seaman. Now, I don't think they ever exercised that right, because they weren't short of people, but they could have. So, you were actually in the Navy, as opposed to being a cadet at the Point, where you were not in the Army. You're a cadet at the Military Academy. There's a big difference, because in other words, my naval dates from the day I was sworn in. You take the oath.

SH: Talk about how events are changing in the world while you were at the Academy.

AB: … At the end of your plebe year, the plebes who are the new sophomores coming up, and the new first classmen, used to go on a battleship cruise. They'd have a couple, three or four old battleships, and they would take you to England and France and Italy, and you spend basically July and August cruising and, of course, you worked on board ship, you learned, this was a very important part of your education. … My plebe year started in the fall of '38 and ended in basically June of '39. … Sometime around, I don't know, April, maybe, March or April of '39, we were notified that the cruise that we're going to take is not going to Europe. Now, the war in Europe did not break out until September 1st, '39. This was the early spring of '39. The Navy decided to not send those battleships with those midshipmen to Europe, this was six months before the war broke out. So instead we cruised to Canada, we cruised the North Atlantic, … we went up to St. Lawrence River, went to Quebec and Halifax. So the Navy was already worried in the spring of '39, and they changed the whole cruise. Now, when the academic year started in October '39, maybe within a month or two, sometime in the fall of '39, the war in Europe had broken out in September, we were notified. The Class of '40 was due to graduate in June of '40. The Class of '41 was notified they're going to graduate early, six months early, the Class of '42, … I knew in the fall of '39 that my class was going to graduate before June of '42. I didn't know the exact date, but we knew it was going to be about six months early. The Navy began, they knew damn well we were going to get in that war, and they began accelerating the courses right then and there. So, the Class of '41 graduated in February of '41 instead of June and my Class of '42 graduated in December '41, instead of June '42. The fact that it was a few weeks after Pearl Harbor was coincidental. That date had been picked years before.

SH: I did not realize that.

AB: … We were accelerated starting in '39 not because of Pearl Harbor. My exam week was started the day after Pearl Harbor, that was our final exams. We graduated on the 19th, Pearl Harbor was the 7th. So, we graduated less than two weeks later, but that was all predetermined.

DK: This was before the invasion of Europe happened? This was before the Germans invaded Poland in September of 1939?

AB: Oh, sure.

SH: They moved up everyone's graduation in six months.

AB: … In the fall of '39, by November of that year, a few months after. … They already invaded Poland, but whatever it was, the Navy knew that we were going to be in that war. … They didn't let our ships go to Europe that summer, and they began accelerating our courses in the fall of '39, come on, within two months after the war started in Europe we were being accelerated. Now, my transcript shows I think 140 odd credits done in three years and three months. We had enough credits to … get a BA and a BS from any Ivy League college. We had enough for a double degree, and we did it in three years. Now, we didn't miss one hour of class ever, and that's on top of all the drilling and the sailing and the rifle range and the whole bit. You worked.

SH: Was that the first time you had been on any kind of a naval ship of any type?

AB: Oh, sure. … I've been on a row boat, you know, locally on the river … or on a lake, but I had never been in a sailboat before in my life, oh, marvelous.

SH: You took to it well.

AB: Oh, loved it. … What's not to love, there's no smell, there's no vibration from the engines. The wind can be fickle, but you learn. Oh, sure, I loved it.

SH: The Navy is famous for its traditions. Were there things that you encountered that were surprising for a young kid?

AB: … The Academy is full of tradition, of course. I can tell you some stories. … There's one major dorm, it's called Bancroft Hall, and there's something called Memorial Hall there which is where they display mementoes from previous wars or whatever. Anyway, one of the things that had been hanging on that wall since forever is a royal standard [flag] taken from a British warship … from the War of 1812. As far as I know, it's the only one that's ever been captured, and it hangs prominently in there. Anyway, when I was a midshipman, Lord Mountbatten was coming to give a speech at the Academy, so the people in charge decided to take that thing out because they didn't want to embarrass him. He walked in, he said, "Where is your royal [standard]," he knew all about it. He wanted to see it. It backfired on them. He said, "It's the only one in the world held by a foreign country, I want to see it." They thought they were going to save him embarrassment. He was quite a guy, he gave a speech that was, … he was on this destroyer and he was describing how instinct takes over. The destroyer has canvas windshields around to protect you from the spray. They're being dived bombed by Stuka bombers, and he's crouching behind the canvas windshield as they're being strafed. You know, you can't help yourself, can you picture this. He was quite an interesting salty character. …

SH: Was that part of the effort by the British to obtain US material support for the war?

AB: … After my two years there, then you make what's called a destroyer cruise. … Only members of your class go on board these destroyers. … We went all over, of course, the war

was going on. So, I'm on a destroyer, it was one of what we called the old four stack destroyers, you had four stacks, I have a picture of it I'll show you. … It was eventually one of the fifty that was given to England under the Lend-Lease program. We gave them these fifty destroyers and they let us use Bermuda, in the Bahamas, as bases. [Editor's Note: Through the lend-lease program, the United States sent war material to Great Britain, the Soviet Union, China, France, and other Allied countries prior to and following its entry into World War II.] Anyway, this ship was so old, that the Captain's orders were that nobody can touch the hull of the ship except the chief boatswain's mate. In other words, if you needed repairs, they were so afraid of poking a hole in the hull that the chief boatswain's mate will use a wire brush to wire brush it, and then put red lead on, to protect it, but he was the only one allowed. Anyway, we were … steaming all over the North Atlantic, and the truth of the matter is, that most people don't realize, unofficially, we were acting, helping the British Navy. They were so short-handed that what we were doing, we were operating our sonar twenty-four hours a day. If we'd pick up a U-boat or what … we presumed to be a U-boat, we would never go near it, but we'd radio the British, and we'd keep tracking the U-boat from a safe distance until the British came on the scene. Then, we would withdraw and they'd go after it. So, we were never fired on, and we never fired anything, we never dropped a depth charge, in other words, we never took any action whatsoever, except pinging on what was suspected were U-boats.

SH: You were armed with weapons when you were doing this?

AB: Oh, of course, yes. So, we made this cruise, and after your second year and--of course, that gave you a different taste on a destroyer, a much smaller vessel, and you had much more important duties to carry out. On our first cruise, we slept in hammocks, we did everything on board ship that any sailor ever has to do, except two things. We never had to clean latrines, and we never had to prepare food. … You know what "holy stoning" is?

SH: No.

AB: These battleships had wooden decks, beautiful decks. Holy stone is a stone that's about maybe six or eight inches square with a depression in the middle, and you take what's like a broom handle, and the boatswain's mate would sprinkle … sand on the deck, and then spray some water from the ocean so you had this like pumice, and you'd have a whole line of men, each with his own stone with this broom handle, and this sort of depression in there, and you'd rub it, and the wet sand became an abrasive, and that's how you cleaned the deck. That's called holy stoning the deck, because officers have to have a clean deck to walk on, and midshipmen did that. We slept in hammocks, we fired the big guns. … We did everything except … latrine duty, and it's called the "head" in the Navy, or preparing food. We stood all the watches, we worked in the boiler rooms and the engine rooms, we did everything on board ship except those two things, because the theory was, how can you give orders if you don't know how to do it yourself, … common sense. … On a destroyer, of course, you stood watch on deck, you did all the things that you would normally have to do on board ship.

SH: Was there ever a discussion about what was going on in Europe at that point?

AB: Of course.

SH: Was it discussed in your classes?

AB: No, it was more or less informal, but I don't think any of us had many illusions about the fact that the odds … were that we were going to get into that war, one way or another.

SH: What about the Pacific?

AB: Well, I'll get to that in a minute.

SH: I do not want to discuss Pearl Harbor yet, but rather, how aware were you about the Japanese in the Pacific.

AB: Okay, what many people don't either want to know or want to talk about is what we did in the spring of 1941. The Japanese had invaded Manchuria, and we didn't like it, and we told them so, and they politely told us where to shove it. So, we put an embargo on Japan, of three things--scrap iron, rubber and oil. Now, think about that. Japan was an industrialized nation that, there was no scrap iron, rubber or oil indigenous to those islands, so we were throttling them. What did we think they were going to do, sit back and take it? Now, come on, if you're a student of history, you have to know that while we felt that their invasion of Manchuria was a provocation, what we did was possibly an even bigger provocation. There was no way they could continue to exist under those circumstances which, of course, is what we were trying to do, we were trying to force them to change their ways. So they did--they attacked us at Pearl Harbor. … I can't accept the idea. Now, the attack was a sneak attack, it was on a Sunday, and all that. We had to know that they were going to retaliate, we had to know this. We had to know it. [Editor's Note: The Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931. The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941.]

SH: Did anything give you any hint that the Japanese might retaliate, besides common sense?

AB: … We all knew that they were going to have to do something, but I mean who could pick out … where and when. … That's impossible, at least at that time it was. We later broke the Japanese code, but that's another story, but no, there was no way of predicting Pearl Harbor and you see, I can't fault Roosevelt or the powers that be, but when the war in Europe broke out, they basically emaciated the Pacific fleet and they sent them all to the Atlantic, which may of in the long run have been a good thing, because it saved … maybe more ships from being damaged or sunk, but the Pacific fleet was down to a shadow of its former self … because the war in Europe was active, and there was no war in the Pacific. So, you put your forces where you think they're going to be needed. I mean, I understand it was a tough decision, what they did, what they thought was the right thing to do, and it's easy to second guess.

SH: Being in Annapolis, were you aware of, prior to your graduation, of shipping being in danger by German submarines?

AB: Oh, of course we were.

SH: How aware were you of it?

AB: We were very aware. I mean before graduation, you had to apply for what kind of duty you wanted. I don't know whether you know this, but in those days, the top twenty-five graduates were offered commissions in the Marine Corps. … Not everyone wanted the Marine Corps, so for everyone that gave it up, it went down one more notch. So, maybe they probably filled twenty-five slots out of let's say the top fifty. So, the Marine Corps was getting, in a sense, the *crème de la crème* every year. Why? Promotions were faster, if you lived. … You could apply though for duty, and I applied for surface duty and I put down, "Battleship--East Coast." I got exactly what I put down for, I got the *New Mexico*, I picked her up in Norfolk, Hampton Roads. Of course, four days later, we're out down to the Pacific into the Canal, and out into the Pacific, but I got what I asked for, I got Battleship--East Coast. Well, I had a girlfriend living in Paterson and we were seriously thinking about getting married in the not too distant future. So I thought, well, this way any time we'll be in port I'll be able to see her.

SH: At the time, I am sure it sounded like a good theory.

AB: Of course, I got exactly what I wanted.

SH: Now that you have become an upperclassman, are you getting September off?

AB: Oh, September, yes. September you had off, yes.

SH: So you came home.

AB: Yes, I came home, stayed with my parents. …

SH: What did your parents think of your career choice?

AB: I'll tell you what happened when I went to the Academy. My dad was very active in the Paterson YMHA. He used the gym, he swam, and he was a very gregarious man, likable, friendly. … Friends of his, many of whom also came from Europe, when they heard that I was in the Academy--because this was repeated to me several times--they said, "Abe, you let your son go to the Naval Academy?" The idea of … a Jewish father allowing his boy to go to a military school was abhorrent. Many of these people escaped from Europe to avoid military service. … This was their mindset. "You allowed?" So, my father would answer, "He's his own person, that's what he wants, that's what he's going to do." It's not a question of me letting him go, he made the choice, but he was questioned about, "You let go to the Naval Academy?" They thought that this was a horrible mistake.

SH: That is interesting.

AB: Yes, because think about their background, their whole idea was [to] avoid military service because of the history of what took place in Eastern Europe for so many years, particularly in Russia. Aren't you conditioned by your experience?

SH: Of course.

AB: There it is, yes.

SH: Did your father feel that way?

AB: Oh, no, I think my parents were proud, I think so.

SH: Coming back to Paterson in your uniform, how did that go?

AB: I didn't come back in my uniform. We wore civilian clothes. …

SH: Did you?

AB: You had to wear a uniform when you're at the Academy. Even when you went out into town, you could not wear civilian clothes. … Coming back, you could wear civilian clothes, when you're on leave. In fact, you were allowed, when you went on leave after your cruise was over, and you disembark, you know, you had a day to pack up and whatnot, you could wear civilian clothes on your way out.

SH: Did you ever regret having gone to the Academy?

AB: … No, not at all. … In fact, as time went on, and particularly after the war started I was awfully glad I had gone there because my chances of survival were obviously better than being a doughboy in the Army, no question about it. At least I had training.

SH: Did the war change your family's perception of military service?

AB: No, no, I think my mother and father were aware of the fact that I'd be exposed to danger of course, but I was trained, and I had good training. We went through essentially, not quite the same, but something fairly close to the Marine Corps boot training, you know, the whole bit, not quite as bad, but not far from it, and we trained in the handling of weapons on board ship. What good is it to handle a .45 or a rifle, but we were trained to handle small arms, rifles, hand guns obviously. … Trained how to fire the big guns, of course, so being well trained hopefully we will be better, in terms of survival. …

DK: What was the general response to the Pearl Harbor attacks at the Academy?

AB: I was at a movie that Sunday, and I walked back, and I walked through the gate, and we called, the guys who got you in, we called them "Jimmy Legs." One of the Jimmy Legs said to me, "Did you hear what happened?" I said, "What?" He said, "Pearl Harbor was attacked." I said, "When?" He said, "You know, we just got the word a few minutes ago." So, as I say, this was the day before exams started, so of course we knew instantly. …

SH: I thought maybe you had been called out of the movie theater to return to the Academy.

AB: Oh, no, no. I didn't find out until I walked back through the gate. … The admiral killed on the *Arizona*, Admiral Isaac Kidd, his son was a friend of mine, a classmate of mine, and he was killed, he went down with the *Arizona*.

SH: How long did it your friend to find out what happened to his father?

AB: Oh, he knew within a day or so. …

SH: I know that communication was not as instantaneous as it is now.

AB: No, he knew. As a matter-of-fact, it was a very sad story. Years later, when they were trying to fix up the *Arizona* as a memorial, they found … his class ring embedded in a bulkhead, the Admiral's class ring, embedded in a bulkhead in his cabin.

SH: Really?

AB: Yes, every graduate of the Academy has an Academy ring. One side of the ring has the Academy seal and so they're identical for every class. … The other side is your class's particular design, you know, whatever it is. … His name was Isaac, he was junior. … His father was a rear admiral, and Ike became a four-star admiral, full admiral. … He's one of two in my class, two friends of mine became four-star admirals. It's unusual … to have a class with a four-star admiral, but to have two on one class is almost unheard of. … The other was a submariner, (Harold Shear?). … By the way, this other guy's nickname at the Academy was "Admiral." We all called him that, I mean, we were all so sure he was going to make it, that his nickname was Admiral. …

SH: After you hear about the Pearl Harbor attack, were all the students called together?

AB: No, no. The news was being disseminated so quickly on radio, we all had radios in our rooms, that we knew. … We all heard Roosevelt's speech, declaring war, telling Congress to declare war, whatever, and so we knew. We knew that our assignments, for after graduation, would be whatever they were and, of course, I knew that my battleship, which I knew was in Hampton Roads, I knew that we weren't going to be there that long. We graduated on Friday the 19th, I had I think three days leave. I reported on board, I had to report on the ship on the 23rd.

SH: This is December 1941.

AB: So, on December 23rd, I'm down in Hampton Roads, reporting on board the ship, and I think on the 26th … we pulled anchor, and sailed out heading for the Canal.

SH: Was that your shakedown or training cruise?

AB: Are you ready for this? … I was one of six classmates who reported on board the *New Mexico* and we meet the Exec, who is the number two in command under the Captain, and the Exec, you know, welcomes us aboard, blah, blah, blah, and he says, "Well, … I have to make assignments." … One of my classmates was assigned to this division, and he says to me, "You're

going to be our radar officer." I said, "Sir," I have to explain to you, radar was so hush-hush, I had never heard the word before. There was no such thing mentioned at the Academy. … He said, "You know, we have a British radar … on our foremast," it was air-search radar. It had an antenna bigger than a king-sized bed spring, with a powerful motor to make it rotate. Anyway, he said, "We have these damn British manuals telling how to operate it," he says, "your job is to translate this into American English." … In those days, the sailors were all volunteers, they had to have a high school education, but I had to translate. … I didn't know what I was reading, and I had to translate those manuals and take those paragraphs, and simplify the language so that the people could know what to do. So, of course, I had to first learn myself what to do. By the way, we had to wear, every week they gave us photographic film, had to keep some in our breast pocket, and one in each pants pocket, and they were taken from us every week and replaced. They wanted to see what radiation was escaping. They didn't know anything, they didn't know enough about radar to know how dangerous they might be if you were working around them. I don't think my mother gave a big sigh of relief until our first child was born. No, you don't know, it could sterilize you, they didn't know. … On board ship, then you get rotated. Now, during peacetime, … you must be rotated every six months. During the war they took it with a little grain of salt, but we picked up a couple of reserve officers shortly after, I think in San Francisco, who knew a hell of a lot more about it than I did.

SH: Did someone come on board to train you in the use of radar?

AB: Of course, where they had gone through some radar training school, which was just newly formed. As I say, our first radar was a British radar, we didn't have any. Anyway, so then I was shifted, then I went into a turret, I was a junior turret officer, 14-inch turret, and that's a sight to see.

SH: I would imagine.

AB: The shell is fourteen inches in diameter, it weighs about 1500 pounds. You put in three or four bags of powder behind it, and ignite the powder with a primer and that shell can travel twenty miles. It travels so far we had to have spotting planes. We had seaplanes which we'd catapult off to tell us, because sometimes you're shooting over the horizon, so you can't tell whether you're hitting the target or not. You had to have spotting planes to tell you, "Down 500, left 200," whatever, and you keep firing until you finally hit the target.

SH: Had the *New Mexico* been refitted? It had been built in World War I.

AB: It was built right at the end of World War I. It had been refitted several times, yes, but it was ready. We didn't need any more refitting. When we sailed to the Pacific we were ready. …

SH: When you went through Panama, what was your impression of the Canal Zone?

AB: Well, first of all, it was very secret. We did it in the dead of night.

SH: Were you traveling alone or were you escorted?

AB: We had a couple of destroyers with us, but they timed it, so we went through the Canal at night and, of course, we were traveling darkened, … no light showing, and our radar, that so-called radar, was spinning around, but we had lookouts all over. … The Canal was interesting. Of course, we knew about it, obviously. We had read about it and studied it, but to be there and see it and see how the locks worked and how you change the elevation. By the way, you know, there's something interesting about the Canal. Do you know what direction you're sailing in when you go from the Caribbean to the Pacific? You know north, south, east and west--north is zero, east is ninety, south is 180, west is 270. You know what direction you're sailing when you go from the Caribbean? Most people say you're heading west.

SH: I think north.

AB: No, no, but the way the Panama [Canal] curves, you're actually heading southeast to get from the Caribbean to the Pacific because the land curves around in this cockamamie way. … You can fool almost anybody with that question. … You would normally say you're going from east to west, you know, simplistically. You're actually going southeast, because of the way the land and where they wanted to build a canal. It's a very interesting anomaly, it's one of those strange things because it curves like a snake, and that's where they wanted to actually make the cut. So you actually end up a little southeast of where you entered. Which is further west, Los Angeles or Reno, Nevada? Reno, Nevada is further west than Los Angeles. The southern coast of California curves in to the east so far that Reno is actually further west than Los Angeles. What's the western most island in the Hawaiian chain? … Most people will tell you the island of Hawaii, the big island--wrong, Midway, 800 miles away, but it's the last island of the Hawaiian chain. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Did you have any family members that remained in Poland?

AB: To the best of my knowledge there were no family members of my mother and father's that were left in Europe, but I just thought of an interesting side note. When my father's family came over, apparently some of the adults went through different customs officers' lines, so my father spells his last name Bogart, but I have some cousins whose names are spelled Bogert because of the way the customs officer happened to write down the name. Now, I understand that the name was shortened, that it had some other thing at the end … or whatever, but that the customs officers all agreed that they should shorten it to make it more Americanized and they all did, but I do have first cousins who spell their name with an "E" instead of "A."

SH: Where did you first pull in after you went through the Panama Canal?

AB: I don't remember whether we went first to Pearl Harbor, and then to San Francisco. I can't remember, but we were in San Francisco shortly thereafter. We may have gone to Pearl for some reason, and then, made the trip across, but we made so many trips back and forth that I can't possibly remember.

SH: You continued to be assigned to radar?

AB: For a couple of months, and then, I was put in as a junior turret officer. … On board ship every morning, we had a little band on board ship and we had compulsory exercises, so since I was the junior turret officer, and this was turret two--there are two turrets, one and two forward and three and four aft. I'd have to climb up on top of turret two, and lead the exercises, and the band would play and all the sailors and the other officers would do hop, skipping, jumping, whatever. There was a whole series of exercises … and they were all watching me up there leading it and, of course, the ship is rolling and pitching sometimes, so you had to be careful. … I was in the turret for a few months, and then, for some reason they transferred me again. I became the assistant navigator. … The navigator on board ship is a senior officer, … the skipper is usually a full captain, and the executive officer is usually a commander which is the next rank below, and the navigator and the heads of other departments are either commanders or lieutenant commanders. It happens that my navigator was a full commander, and I was the assistant navigator. … In those days there was no GPS, so to find your ship's position at sea you took sights on stars, and you had to plot them on a chart, or you took a sun line or a moon line, and you plotted, and you prayed a little bit that you were right. … My boss used to kid me, because he was over six feet, he was about 6'4" and we would have always have a difference in our readings on our sextants. He'd say to me, "Well, I'm a foot taller than you are." So, we used to kid about that. … I learned a great deal, because my battle station was now on the bridge. In other words, the bridge is a great big open area with nothing but windows from … port to starboard all the way across. They have marvelous visibility, but no protection, and the Captain and the gunnery officer and the navigator would all be in what you call the conning tower. This is a sealed reinforced tower several decks below the bridge, in the mast, but it's got steel like eighteen, twenty inches thick, with little tiny slots to look out of, which of course are worthless, because you can't see a damned thing, and certainly if the slot isn't where you want to look, you're stymied. So, my battle station was on, as the assistant navigator, was on the navigating bridge, so every time I went to general quarters, I was there, anyway, because I was the assistant navigator, I was up on the bridge almost all the time, but that was my battle station, because junior officers are expendable, but senior officers are not, but it gave me an opportunity to learn a great deal about handling the ship. I was very fortunate, the skipper that we had for a few months was one of the old, what we call an old "sea dog." He had us on Saturday morning, skipper's inspection, dressed in our formal whites. … It was outrageous. Anyway, we got to Pearl Harbor, and within a week he was off the ship, we had a new skipper, and it happens that … the skipper that came on board was, I had not known him personally, but he had been at the Academy, he was the head of one of the departments when I graduated, because his signature is on my diploma. Anyway, he was a fantastic skipper. He was a seaman, and we spent many watches together up there, and I learned the fundamental lesson in the Navy, keep your eyes and ears open, your mouth shut, and I absorbed everything I could from this man, and he was fantastic. He gave me an opportunity that very few young people ever had. We were coming into San Francisco, and it's a very tricky harbor--the tide goes one way, the wind is blowing another--and normally, coming into port when you get close enough, whoever has the watch, whoever has the deck, the Captain relieves him, and he takes the ship in himself. This skipper did not believe in using tugs, and we're due to tie up at The Embarcadero, which is big pier at the foot of Market Street. … We go past the Farallon Islands, and we're approaching the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Skipper is standing right next to me, and I'm waiting for him to say, "I relieve you," and he doesn't say a word. … As we go under the Golden Gate, he said, "You want

to take her in?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Do me a favor, don't put the bow up on Market Street will you?" … He let me take the ship in, I'm an ensign, he let me take the ship in, no tugs, tie her up, and he said to me, "You're now a wardroom officer." See, they had two messes. … They have a senior officer [mess], you know, and they had, for ensigns, they had junior officers' mess. He said, "You're now a qualified watch officer, move into the wardroom." I said, "Thank you." He says, "Don't thank me," he said, "you're going to get all the crummy duties of wardroom, treasurer," you get all the paper duties that somebody is waiting to get rid of. … I was an ensign, twenty-one years old, twenty years old whatever, and he let me take the ship in. … There's a very famous story I got to tell you. We're at sea, somewhere between Pearl and San Francisco, and by the way, we had a Marine contingent on board in case we needed a boarding party, so the Captain always had a marine orderly standing for him. We're at sea, and I hear over the loud speaker, "Ensign Bogart, report to the Captain's cabin immediately." I thought to myself, "What did I do," you know, very unusual to hear this. … His cabin was not far from there, and as I approach, the marine sentry salutes me, he says, "Sir, they're waiting for you." I said, "Who is they?" He said, "The skipper, the exec, the heads of all the departments, the gunnery officer, the navigator, the chief engineer." I walk in, and I reported, the Captain looks at me, he says, "Do you know what today is?" Now, they put out what they call morning orders every day, it's a little mimeographed sheet, and it says division two do this and division "F" do this, and division "N," you know, sort of like work orders. Well, we would look at them, and you'd see what you had to do, if anything, and you'd throw it away. At sea during the war, you didn't pay attention to what day of the week it was, or even what the date was. … Whatever it was, my division didn't have anything cooking that day, so I said, "Frankly, I don't, sir." He said, "Today, is July 7th, is that significant to you?" I said, "Yes, sir, it's my birthday." He said, "And how old are you?" I said, "Twenty-one." He said, "I've got to do something that I have never had to do in my entire naval career." I thought, "Oh, my God," all I could think of was the movie the *Dreyfus Affair* where they stripped him of his buttons, and they court-martial him, and send him to Devil's Island. [laughter] In those days, there was no Defense Department--there was a War Department, and a Navy Department. He said, "I got a message from the Navy Department to have you retake the Oath of Office because when you graduated, and you took the Oath last December, you were underage." … Of course, he had a twinkle in his eye. So, I said, "Sir, do I have any choice?" He said, "You want to swim home?" So, I had to retake, they gave me the federal oath again, … take it verbally, and sign it, and, of course, I had to go down the receiving line, all the officers congratulated me, they were having fun, of course. He said, "I'd never had to do this before." Can you imagine how they paid attention to detail, that they had a record of the fact that I was a minor when I took the oath.

SH: This is after you had already sailed with the *New Mexico*?

AB: Oh, yes, this was in the Pacific. We were somewhere … between Pearl and San Francisco.

SH: This was after you had taken the ship under the Golden Gate Bridge?

AB: … I think that was after. … It was so funny, of course, they had a big time with me.

SH: You talked about how they divided the junior officers on your ship.

AB: Yes. …

SH: What about the interaction with the enlisted personnel?

AB: … When I was assistant navigator, I had a chief in my department, in my unit, who was an old-timer, I mean he had hash marks halfway up his arm. … He knew everything, … he was chief quartermaster, so I sat him down one day and I said, "Listen, I'm a new ensign, I'm going to pick your brains." He says, "Okay, sir." I mean I made it very clear, that I was here to learn from him, and he taught me, and he taught me well. I mean these guys had experience, they had been through it all, they've seen it all, they've done it all, so that I learned early on, that some of the enlisted men who had been there for years were invaluable sources of information, invaluable. It worked.

SH: What was Pearl Harbor like upon your arrival?

AB: Well, a lot of it is pretty gory, I mean when we got to Pearl there were bodies still floating up.

SH: Were there?

AB: Oh, yes, sure. … I mean there was oil floating up for maybe a year. It took a long time to clean up.

SH: What did you see the first time you got to Pearl Harbor?

AB: We saw devastation, we saw the wreck of the *Arizona*, the *Oklahoma*.

SH: Was it busy?

AB: Oh, sure, yes. …

SH: In a previous interview, someone mentioned how surprised they were to see how busy Pearl Harbor was.

AB: … There was no nonsense. … If you can call anything a popular war this was a popular war. You know the day after, there were lines going around the blocks in recruiting stations, I mean come on, … the propaganda was pretty skillful, let's not kid ourselves, Roosevelt's speech was a masterful speech, there's no question about it, but the Navy was caught with their pants down so to speak. Most of the ships were in the Atlantic, which I say, may have been a blessing in disguise. The carriers were out at sea at the attack on Pearl Harbor, which was another blessing in disguise, you know, so that some things were fortuitous.

SH: How did the mission of the *New Mexico* change after you join the Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor?

AB: Our duty in the early part of '42, for maybe the first three, four, six months … was basically helping convoy ships and material and people to the more western parts of the Pacific. In other words, we had a big base in the Fijis, in Nandi Bay. … We would act basically as a convoy. It was also training, we had a lot of new people on board. So, we had to do a lot of intensive training. We practiced firing all the guns and training all these people with the anti-aircraft, we had planes towing targets, big sleeves, and hopefully we train them not to fire on the plane, but on the sleeve. … We fired at surface targets with our main batteries to give people the feel. You cannot imagine what it's like when the 14-inch gun goes off. I mean the recoil, the noise, I suffered permanent eye damage, that's why I was given a physical retirement years later.

SH: How did that affect your ears?

AB: Ears, I'm alright, but the eyes, I suffered some permanent damage.

SH: Did you have ear protection?

AB: Most of us didn't, no. … We spent the next couple of months basically convoying stuff, you know, and on occasion … we acted as bait. The ship I was on was built basically, it was built for North Atlantic duty. We were in the South Pacific, no air conditioning. We were bait sometimes because we were trying to entice the Japanese into attacking us, although we could make a pretty good accounting of ourselves, and we would usually have a small carrier force, but not with us, but close enough so that if we were being attacked we could then--as I say we were the cheese in the trap, hoping that they would come after us, and then, our carrier planes would go after them. It didn't happen too often, so we spent a good time training and ferrying stuff to the … Western Pacific. In the late, I guess it was the late summer, maybe late summer of '42, we saw our first action. You know, there's something here in North New Jersey called, … I can't think of the name, it's run by retired professors, and I attend, they have a like a series of lectures, and it's either free or it's almost free. Anyway, Institute for New Dimensions, that's what it's called. So, one of my daughters prevailed on me to go to one of them, and a couple of years ago I went to this lecture, series of lectures, five lectures, and the lectures were on the wars the US fought, given by a retired history professor, and twenty people, thirty people in the room, mostly senior citizens, and we finally got to the last one which was World War II, and I'm figuring … I'll hear what he has to say, and he said you know among other things, it was very important in this war in the sense that we were lucky that none of our territory was ever invaded, and I raised my hand. I said, "What was I doing in Attu and Kiska? They were in the Aleutian Islands," I said, "The Japanese invaded them, I was there kicking them out." He looked at me. … It's in the history books, I was there, I know. Anyway, and the same thing, he said, and also, we didn't have any American civilian casualties. I said, "Japanese submarines would come off the coast of Washington and Oregon and release these balloons that had incendiary devices on them, they were hoping that the … winds would carry them over to the mainland, and eventually they would sink, and when they would land the incendiary device would go off." I said, "To the best of my knowledge there was a school teacher and two or three children killed by a fire that was started by one of those balloons," and he looked at me, so I said to my daughter, "You know what," I said, "the amount of misinformation that's going on here is more than I'm going to put up with, I'm not coming to any more of these." I said, "The man doesn't know what he's talking about," I said, "because what I'm talking about is in the books," and he was a … retired history professor.

I hate to think of what he didn't teach his students. … It bothered me, because it's not just I have private knowledge of these things, you know, and what about Pearl Harbor? What about Guam?

SH: Yes.

AB: … Guam was I think a protectorate then. … I'm not sure whether it was a territory, I'm not sure what its official status was.

SH: Protectorate.

AB: Yes, Alaska and Hawaii were territories, but Guam, so you could argue that the Guam people were not American citizens, but the Alaskans were, and the Hawaiians were. We used American dollars in Hawaii, we used to kid recruits on the ship, "Make sure when you go ashore to change your money, go to the local bank and change your money, and have them go to the bank and ask for Hawaiian money," that was one of our little practical jokes. [laughter] They didn't realize that American money was the legal tender, of course. … I think it was in the late summer of '42, we invaded Attu and Kiska and kicked the Japs out. Now, the *New Mexico* fought a night action at Kiska in which they set a record that broke a record in the Navy. … In fact, the record was never broken since. We fired more main battery rounds in a shorter period of time than any battleship ever did, either before or after, in the Navy, and we fired so many that we wore out the liners of our main battery, and … as soon as that battle was over, … when we finally took the land over, we were sent to Bremerton Navy Yard, near Seattle, to have the guns relined. … We spent '42 basically until the spring of '43 ferrying all this material back and forth. … It was in July of '43, that we hit Attu and Kiska. We were based in Adak. I remember going into that harbor. It was a foggy day and Adak harbor has a very narrow opening and has these steep cliffs and it was foggy, and I'm the officer of the watch, I'm the assistant navigator, and by now we have what we called a surface-search radar, which shows a beautiful picture of what's going on, and the Captain is on the bridge with me, and he says, "We can make it?" I said, "Yes, sir." In fact, we were going to moor out in a mooring buoy in the middle of the anchorage, and we could actually pick up the mooring buoys on the radar. …

SH: The effectiveness of radar improved that quickly?

AB: Oh, yes, that quickly. So, the Captain was nervous, but there was enough room. The canal, the ship's beam is I think ninety-seven feet; the [Panama] Canal is 100 feet wide, you know. That was a limiting factor on building warships. The beam could not exceed the amount, so it would fit through the canal, stop and think.

SH: That is true.

AB: That was one of the deciding limiting factors on how you build a warship, make sure the beam will allow you go and leave a few inches on either side. So, we went into Adak. When the fog lifted the next day the Captain looked around, he says, "I wouldn't have had the guts to do this." … Not that he didn't trust the radar, but it was new comparatively for him also, and here there are these steep cliffs, I mean, you know, almost like a fjord, and I've been to Norway, I traveled the fjords, so I know. So that it was frightening in a way for him. … We had our guns

relined, and then, for the rest of '43 and the first half of '44, I saw three more major campaigns. … The next one was the Gilbert Islands, that was Makin and Tarawa. The next was the Marshall Islands, Eniwetok and Kwajalein and the next was the Marianas, Guam, Tinian, and Saipan. … I had four battle stars, the Aleutians, the Gilberts, the Marshalls, and the Marianas. The ship, after I left it, had two more, Iwo and … Okinawa.

SH: Could you tell us more about your experience immediately after your service in Alaska?

AB: … Just before we went to the Aleutians we had a change of command. My new skipper was a man by the name of Ellis Zacharias, he had just spent whatever time it was as head of ONI, Office of Naval Intelligence. He had lived in Japan, he was a naval attaché in Japan for over ten years, he spoke Japanese fluently, he could read it and write it, and he would sit us down and give us lectures about what was likely to happen, and one of the officers said to him one day, and he was like ninety-nine percent right. He said, "Captain, how can you be so accurate?" He said, "Hell, you can't play poker with these guys for ten years and not learn how they think." … He knew almost every senior naval officer in the Japanese Navy. … He knows how they're trained, he knows how they think. So, he was able to give us something that I couldn't have gotten in any other way, because this was right out of the horse's mouth. This man was brilliant. Oh, why was he on board our ship? The Navy had a rule in those days. You could not make admiral, flag rank, unless you had at least one year in command of a major capital ship. So, he was ready to be an admiral, I mean intelligence was his forte, but he was ready to be an admiral, but he had to have command of a major ship, so the *New Mexico* got him, but we all gained from this man something beyond belief because he understood the psyche. He understood how they would slavishly follow to the last detail even when common sense said don't do it that way.

SH: Amazing.

AB: … He was on board for the last three campaigns.

SH: How well were you supplied when you were in the Pacific?

AB: Well, it all depends. If we were close enough to Pearl, we'd pull into Pearl and take on supplies. At sea, we would fuel by a tanker almost all the time, and then, we in turn would sometimes fuel our destroyers, they'd come alongside, and we would pump fuel from our tanks into their tanks. Supplies also, mail also, at sea, throw a line across and ferry it across, so sometimes we'd go three, four weeks without mail, and then get it. I made one resolution I've never disobeyed. I've resolved to never eat SPAM [canned meat] again, and I never have. … Obviously, your diet is dramatically curtailed, but we would get supplies. Now, we'd pull into certain ports, and we could pick up supplies there, that had them. We made a stop in Samoa. I'll show you later, that thing on the wall there is from Samoa, that's a tapa cloth.

SH: Oh, really?

AB: Yes, that belongs in a museum, I've been told. … It's the bark of a tree. Yes, but it's been pounded and made it what a tapa cloth is. I saw one in the Rock Resort in Hawaii on the big island. It was about this big, and they have all these artifacts on the walls, and you could buy

them, they're for sale. So, I went down to the man and I said, "How much you want for that tapa cloth?" He said, "$1500.00." I said, and it was moth eaten, I said, "$1500.00?" He said, "Yes." He said, "You know, they're quite rare." I said, "I hate to tell you I have one at home," I said, "that makes this thing look sick. It's ten times the size." He says, "You have it at home?" He says, "It belongs in a museum." He says, "There are no more being made, they're gone."

SH: They are beautiful.

AB: I had it with me all on board ship, I picked it up in Samoa. I paid the lady who finished it five dollars in one dollar bills. We were warned not to bring anything bigger than a one dollar bill. … She gave me a mat also which I have long since lost. I had it rolled up on board ship in my locker for years, brought it home, and finally took it out and had it framed. It's in perfect condition.

SH: It is amazing.

AB: But you know, life plays strange tricks on you. Sometime probably in the early summer, maybe June and July, I don't remember when, June or July of '44. … My ship's job, my final job on board ship, I stood radar--CIC, combat information center watches--where we had all the radars reporting in. We had all the people manning radars, and we had to reevaluate what we were getting. Now, I had a roommate on board ship who was a reserve officer for a few months, who was an electronic wizard, I think, and one of the things that always worried me was the limitations of so-called surface-search radar, whether it would pick up small things--particularly periscopes. So, while we were in Pearl, I had some of my men take a launch. I had them take a piece of pipe about the size of a periscope, and put it on something, out on a float. … I had them tow it in a launch, and I had my surface-search radar see if it could pick it up, and it couldn't. So, I had my roommate do some tinkering with some of the guts of the radar to increase the power, and eventually we got it so it would pick a periscope at a mile away. … We were steaming, I think it was in the Gilbert Islands campaign, I don't remember, we were in a formation with thirty, forty ships, our job was bombarding before the invasions. We were a slower vessel, we couldn't keep up with the fast carriers, we didn't have the speed. So, we would have sometimes baby carriers, these were the converted merchantmen that they put a flight deck on. Anyway, we were steaming along, and we had an admiral on board, we were the flag, … and the admiral's bridge is one bridge above our bridge and, of course, they had the radar, and they had officers and whatnot. … I'm on watch, and it's at night, and one of my radar operators said to me, "Sir, I'm picking something up [on] surface-search." He said, "A very faint echo." Now, we had the right to broadcast anything, you know, that we felt was important, so we tried it again and again and finally he said, "I think it's a periscope." So, I put out a broadcast, I get a yell from the bridge up above me, from the admiral's bridge, "We don't see it on ours." I said, "I'm sorry." I gave location, relative to our ship and whatnot, and no other ship reported it. About three or four minutes later, the *Liscome Bay*--which was a baby carrier--was torpedoed, and she sank and blew up in about ten minutes, with the loss of over 800 lives. [Editor's Note: The USS *Liscome Bay* was destroyed by a Japanese submarine on November 24, 1943.] So, when the whole thing was over, the Admiral called me up, and he said to me, "How come you," he says, "you were right" and I told him, I said, "Well, sir, to tell you the truth, we made an unauthorized change on one of the circuits." He said, "Okay, I'll take care of it." … Now, in the summer of '44, I think we were

getting ready for the invasion in the Marianas, we're in a big group, admiral on board, and he was in charge of the whole bunch. We get an air radar report, surface-search, air search, that there are planes about fifty miles away, enemy planes. How do we know they're enemy planes? We had something called IFF on our planes, it stood for … Information Foe or Friendly. … Our planes had a transmitter that if you put a radar on them, you got back a signal which told you it was a friendly plane. Enemy planes didn't, so we knew that these were enemy planes. When we picked them up only fifty miles away, we knew they were low, so the Admiral gave an order for the fleet to disperse [because] we were traveling in formation. Each ship acted independently, now, here's a ship going this way, these planes were coming, we called it the port quarter, sort of halfway between beam and the stern. So, I think almost every ship turned like about forty-five degrees to the starboard, to the right. I gave my order to the helmsman, "Hard left rudder." The admiral, there's a voice tube between the two bridges, and we also have talkers on phones, the Admiral is yelling down the voice tube, "Come to starboard, come to starboard," the helmsman looks at me, I said, "Hard left rudder." Now, my captain is a couple decks below in the conning tower, he hears everything that's going on, he's also got a talker, he doesn't say a word. So, we turn, and I computed very quickly, we had about ten minutes before the planes could reach us, because torpedo planes don't travel more than 160, 170 miles an hour, you know, whatever. As far as I know, we're the only ship that turned that way. … Of course, we're at general quarters, we see a few planes way out in the distance. We fire a few bursts, they go right past us, apparently nobody got hurt, the ships all formed up again, the Admiral sends a message down, "I want to see the captain, whoever had the deck." Captain and I walk up, and he looks at me, and he says, "I hope you got a good reason." I said, "Yes, sir I do." Admiral says to me, "You had the deck?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "You disobeyed a direct order." I said, "Sir, it's my understanding that you're a passenger on this ship," which he was, "you don't run the ship, you don't control the ship, you control the whole fleet." I said, "I'm responsible for the ship because I'm representing the Captain. … The captain didn't negate my order." He says, "Why in God's name did you turn that way?" I said, "I'm following the concept of least regret." He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, I just made the assumption we're going to get torpedoed. I would choose to be torpedoed in the bow not the stern. In the stern, you're dead meat. Your rudder or your screws go out, they finish you off at will. In the bow you can still fight the ship, you block off the flooded compartment, and you fight." He said, "They didn't teach you that at the Academy did they?" I said, "No sir." He said, "Well, where?" I said, "Well," I said, "I read about it, and I read books on decision making and I figured someday I might have to make a quick decision." He says, "I accept. Okay." The Navy Department used to put out what they call ALNAVs, it was a message to the whole Navy, and it would say something like this. "There's a new cruiser being built in Quincy, Massachusetts, and we're looking for officers from the classes of '43 through '39. If you are qualified and wish to transfer, submit an application." Well, … I had been married, my wife was living in San Francisco, going to school, she was a young woman going to school in Berkeley, University of California in Berkeley. … There was no such thing as a one year tour of duty. You went out, you served. Anyway, so whenever an ALNAV came through that I was eligible for, I would apply for it, and the head of my department would usually … write, "Not recommended," and he'd tell why, because by this time I was running the plotting room, and he would say, "there was no good replacement," blah, blah, blah. Along comes an ALNAV, three year course at MIT in meteorology. I didn't know what meteorology meant, but three years at MIT I understood. With a new wife in San Francisco, college student, so I applied for it. Yeoman comes to me and says, "The boss is really angry at

you," because he says, "he wants you to stop applying for all these things because he's going to always not recommend it, and you're simply wasting time and paper." I said, "Tell him he can write whatever negative he wants." Anyway, so he writes a negative, that I'm indispensable, he has no good replacement because of blah, blah, blah, anyway. … A month later I got orders off the ship, not to MIT-- Naval Training Station, Hollywood, Florida--to teach. Now, I know, I can't prove it, I know the Admiral had something to do with that, because when I gave him my answer about why I did what I did, he must have done something. Anyway, I go down there to teach, and I spent a year there. Among the people I had in class was the officer who did not recommend me, because this was a class of all kinds--it had enlisted men, it had officers. I had a vice-admiral in my class once, teaching. Anyway, what I didn't know apparently, I was there exactly one year to the day, and then I got orders to teach at the Naval Academy. So, that year was my trial by fire. That admiral must have decided that he wanted me teaching, but he didn't want to send me to the Academy right off the bat, he didn't know whether I had marbles in my mouth, you know, or whether I could do it. So, they sent me down there, I guess to make sure I was okay, and then I ended up teaching. So, my last [job], which is the greatest job in the Navy, teaching at the Academy, obviously.

SH: Were you on board the ship when it was first struck my Japanese kamikaze pilots?

AB: No, that was after. …

SH: That was after you got off the ship.

AB: I'd be dead if I were on board. My battle station was wiped out. The captain was killed.

SH: That's what I read.

AB: The captain was killed, a British general, who was an observer was killed, … some newspaper people were killed. Oh, sure, I would have been dead.

SH: It must have been very difficult to get the news that your ship had been struck.

AB: Of course, sure, yes. I knew all these people, yes. This was a different captain by this time, this was not the same captain. … Zacharias got off, because he became an admiral, and then, there was this guy, I think his name was … Captain Fleming, … was killed. Yes, a couple friends of mine were killed, but I had an interesting thing happen. [Editor's Note: The USS *New Mexico* was struck by a Japanese kamikaze on January 6, 1945, suffering almost 100 casualties.] We had just finished invading Guam, and we sort of owned like half the island. I get orders to be attached immediately, I and a classmate of mine who is on the ship. … They ferry us over on a launch to some little pier in Guam, and the next plane isn't going to take off until the next morning. So, some Marine takes us by the hand, … we got our luggage, he says, "You'll spend the night at the airfield." So, we come to the airfield, he puts us in a slit trench, hands us each a rifle and says, with our luggage, and we're in the slit trench, he says, "Don't stick your heads above this trench no matter what you hear all night," he said, "because the Japs infiltrate every night and they get in, and they steal ammunition," whatever. All night long, we hear gunfire, you know, next morning we see dead Japanese ten feet away, fifteen, twenty feet away. Plane

takes off, and we fly to Pearl, I have to layover a day to go to … Alameda Airport, anyway, Alameda. Next morning, there's a bunch of officers waiting to be flown into the States. So, we're all in this assembly area, and the guy in charge says, "We have two planes going this morning, one is a Pan-American clipper, and the other is a Navy bomber." He says, "So, we'll assign the seats in order of rank," and there were a number of senior officers and, of course, "Clipper, clipper, clipper," and then, he comes, he says, "I got one more seat left," and he calls my name. Now, I'm traveling with a friend of mine who is a classmate of mine, so I said, "I'll pass." … Then he calls my friend's name. He said, "I'll pass." So, somebody else got the seat, and he and I flew home on the Navy bomber. The clipper never made it, lost at sea. … There was no enemy action between Pearl and San Francisco at that time, we never found out what happened, it was lost at sea. Talk about fate, talk about making a decision. Never heard of again, that's all I ever knew. … I mean to me it was just a routine flight from Pearl to Alameda, you know, nothing to get excited about, but for some reason it didn't make it.

SH: I would like to go back to the fact that you had gotten married during your time in the Navy.

AB: Oh, yes.

SH: Was the girl you knew from Paterson?

AB: Yes, when I was home after my first two years when I was a new second classman, a cousin of mine, a different cousin who lived in the area who was in high school--younger cousin--he said to me, "There's a girl I'd like you to meet." "Oh, okay," and so he introduced me, and she was a high school kid, also, all of sixteen years old, and I was what, nineteen. … I saw her a few times during September, and she was in school, school had started, so I could see her on the weekend or something. The summer before I went to the Academy, I turned seventeen, so I got my driver's license, … and my dad would let me borrow the car. We dated a little bit, got a little serious, but nothing, and she was still a high school kid. Anyway, I had her down for a couple of hops, I was now an upperclassman, and she enjoyed it, her parents let her go, they knew where she was staying, and everything. It became a little more serious. We have something called the "ring dance," which is when the new seniors get their class rings, and she came down for that, of course, and we were talking about someday getting married. Anyway, I go off. Of course, she came to the graduation, my folks brought her down, so she saw me graduate, and we were considered a thing. … We went to the Pacific, and I was in Pearl, but I knew I was going to be in San Francisco for a couple of weeks … near the end of June. She had graduated from high school and had started college in New York, I think she was going to NYU. So, I said to her, I proposed to her by mail. I said, "Come on out, and we'll get married." So, she came out with her mother, her father was a real estate guy in Paterson, he couldn't come, so we got married the end of June, got married in city hall, and had a few classmates and their wives. … We had I think a two-room apartment with a Murphy Bed [wall bed] in the wall. You know what a Murphy bed is? We had a Murphy bed in the wall, and she transferred from NYU to University of California-Berkeley, and so she lived there, and, of course, I had an allotment. … I made a deal with her father, I said, "She's still your daughter, so you can take care of her education, which is not my job, but I'll pay for the rest," and I did. Anyway, when the Aleutian campaign was over, and we had to go to Bremerton Navy Yard to have our guns relined, she's in San Francisco, and I'm in Seattle. So, of course, we got the word to all, she lived with a number of Navy wives from the

same ship, they formed a little group, so they all came up, and we had about a week or two together, and I said to her, … "Don't go back to school here, I want you to move back home." I said, "I'm not going to be here for a long time, I don't want you living alone in San Francisco." So, she moved back home with her parents, and, of course, I was gone then for quite a while. … I knew I wasn't going to get back, because when we got back to Pearl, we thought it was like civilization, you know, compared to where we had been, so she listened, then she went back home, and she went to school in New York. When I got my orders to report to the Naval Training Station, Hollywood, Florida, her folks had just bought a home in Miami Beach, I mean like a month or two before, so my father-in-law said, "How could the Navy be so smart?" … There was rationing then. He had this great big brand new Cadillac, but I had the gas coupons, so we drove his Cadillac down to Florida, because I could get the coupons for the gas. He couldn't--he'd have to ship it by rail. I was able to drive it. So, we drove down in style, and then I went out and bought a little beat up jalopy so I could have it around, but her folks bought a home a months before I was ordered to Florida. The lived like fifteen miles away, if that, I mean Hollywood to Miami Beach, is nothing.

SH: Did you enjoy teaching?

AB: Yes. …

SH: What were you teaching?

AB: I was teaching--everything that was done in the Navy in terms of plotting how ships should maneuver and whatnot, were always done from the flagship, but if you weren't the flagship, then you always had to displace everything, but with radar on board, you're always in the center. See, in the Navy, in all formations, the flagship is at the so-called center, everything emanates from that, but when you're using a radar, which was then the thing, you're at the center, because that's where you are, and you're sweeping around. So, I among other people helped develop a whole concept of how to do what's called "relative motion," where, for example, let's say I'm steaming directly behind the flagship, and I'm two miles away, if the flagship is going at fifteen knots and I want to get closer, I have to do more than fifteen knots, so I have to do relatively. Let's say I'm doing twenty, I'm gaining five miles an hour, so if I have to only do one mile, all I need is what, one-twelfth of an hour. … It's a way of computing how you can do [it], how to turn. Suppose I have to go from dead astern to broad on the port beam, if he's going in this direction in so many knots, what course and speed should I take to get to my appointed position in a reasonable period of time, and I'd have to then jockey back and forth to do it accurately. So, we invented a system for doing this, got a Presidential Citation as a matter-of-fact for it, it's strange, not for what I did at sea, but for what I did on land, I mean, it's almost unbelievable for me to be awarded something for what I did on land in that Hollywood Training Center, was almost a joke compared to what I think I did at sea, but that's the way it works. … I was one of a group, it was not an individual citation, it's a citation for the group. So, that's what we were teaching. … We were teaching the coordination of how to take the data from a radar, and apply it to the job at hand, whether it's firing guns or changing position or whatever. The Hollywood Beach Hotel was a naval training station. The roof was full of radar antennas. When there was a hurricane warning, the whole town evacuated into the hotel. We took in everybody from town. I mean, there was urine all over the halls, the kids, you know, were running wild, there weren't enough

bathrooms. … There was a very bad hurricane warning while I was teaching there, and so they evacuated the whole town into the hotel. The Navy said, "Come on, we'll take care of everybody." Fortunately, the town didn't get much damage at all, … but it was a precautionary measure.

SH: In the Pacific, did you have any bad weather while aboard the ship?

AB: Oh, yes, oh, please. We went through two hurricanes. … I'm on a big heavy ship, I mean, this ship was rated, I think 32000 tons, the truth is, it's probably 40000 fully armed. …

SH: Typhoons?

AB: One near typhoon, we never really went through the center of a typhoon, thank goodness, but we went through something even more frightening called a "Willy-Waw" that's a northern hurricane. We were in the Bering Sea before the invasion of Attu and Kiska. … That's got all the attributes of a hurricane, but you're freezing your butt off at the same time, so it is not fun. When I say fifty foot waves, I'm not kidding. Some of our destroyers when they were in a trough of a wave you didn't see the ship. How they survived I don't know, but other than that, normal storms at sea, but usually they're quick. … You go through a severe rainstorm, thunder storm, but then they blow over, either you travel through it or the wind moves them away, but logged a lot of time at sea.

SH: Did you ever have to do any of the censoring of the mail?

AB: All the time. … I was in charge of what they call the "F" Division, fire control division. I had a young man, it looked like he was just starting to shave. He came to me one day. … I had to censor my division's mail. He says, "I want to tell you something," he says, and "I want to tell you now." He said, "You're going to see me sending a lot of money home, and you're going to start wondering where it's coming from, because it's far more than my pay." He said, "I used to work at a gambling house." He came from Chicago, he says, "I know how to play poker," and we had poker games going all the time. He says, "I'm going to win a lot of money," he says, "I can tell you right here and now, I will never shuffle the deck, I will never be the dealer so there can never be any question about any funny business." He said, "I want you to know now I'm going to sending a lot of money orders home, and I don't want you to question where it's coming from, I'm telling you ahead of time." He said, "They think I'm a baby face, they think I'm easy pickings." He said, "They don't know what they're up against," and he was right. He was sending thousands of dollars home every month, thousands. He was cleaning up, and he never dealt the cards, never. He was never the dealer. He says, "Otherwise, they'd accuse me of cheating." This was a baby faced kid with fuzz on his face.

SH: How did you keep the enlisted men entertained?

AB: Well, we had what we used to call "rope-yarn Sunday," Wednesday afternoons. … If you're in the war zone, and you're getting ready to bombard some place you're not doing all this stuff, but if we were in an area where it was safe, they put on little skits, when we cross the line, Equator, you know, the initiation of the Pollywogs into Shellbacks you know. When you cross

the equator, we would do that, you know, everybody would get dressed up and have a lot of fun. We would do things like that. There'd be boxing matches once in a while for guys who wanted to duke it out with each other. If we were anchored in a port, or tied up to a mooring buoy, and it was safe enough, they were swimming over the side, but you know what we did, we had pictures and books of all the tropical fish and which ones were poisonous and dangerous. We also let the men fish over the side, but they had to bring everything they caught to the medical office to have it checked against the pictures, because you could easily be eating something poisonous, or also in case, you know, poisonous to be swimming there, then we would blow the whistle and get them all out of the water, but we would allow swimming over the side, fishing over the side, but everything you brought aboard had to be checked by the doctors, because every once in a while, they'd pick up something poisonous.

SH: Really?

AB: Yes.

SH: Did you ever see any of the native troops or native inhabitants of any of the places that you went to?

AB: Yes, yes. In Fiji, I'll never forget this, I made such an ass of myself. Got to shore, you know, for a while. I'm in Nandi Bay and they have this great big Fijian--I mean fuzzy hair, the whole bit--barefoot in immaculate whites, directing traffic. … None of us have cars, of course, we're walking and I went up to him and in pidgin English I said something, and he answered me in the most perfect Oxford English you ever heard in your life. He had obviously been well-trained and he spoke better English than I did, and I'm talking to him, you know, in native, "See the cat run." [laughter] So, I learned from that lesson not to do that again. So, we would interact, you know, we'd go into a shop, or you bicker, bargaining is almost required all over the world, I found out, it's almost expected. You're looked on as an idiot if you don't bargain, so you buy things, you bargain, you know, you bought trinkets or whatnot. I bought my wife, when I knew I was coming home, I had that one night in Pearl, I figured I better bring her [something], so I went into Honolulu, and I figure, "Oh, I'll have some fun." So, I bought a grass skirt, you know, for her, a fake grass skirt, and brought it home. … When I got home, I had her put it on, and she put it, and she gets hysterical. She looked at the label inside, "Made in Brooklyn, New York." I bought it in Honolulu, but I'll tell you an interesting story, when I got to San Francisco, got on a train, which was going to Chicago, and I had my, you know, duffle bag and a suitcase, and this was basically a cattle car, there were no berths, you sat up day and night. … They brought along I think box lunches or something, or whatever. Anyway, I spent that one night in a foxhole on Guam, and got to Chicago, I wasn't feeling so great. We had to change trains, I think it was … Pennsylvania Railroad, and I didn't want to spend another night sitting up in a cattle car. So, I see … a young Navy doctor who was also coming home, and I said to him, "You want to splurge? Let's get a compartment, let's split a compartment." He said, "Great." He looks at me, he says, "You're not feeling well." I said, "No." Takes my temperature, he says, "You got a fever." He says, "Where have you been the last couple of weeks?" He says, "Take off your shirt." He says, "You've been bitten, you've got malaria." Well, he had just come from the South Pacific, he had a bag full of stuff, he says, "Here's the deal," he said, "I'll share a compartment with you." He says, "I'm going to load you up with medicine." He said, "If

tomorrow morning you still have a fever, I'm taking you to St. Albans Naval Hospital." Well, tomorrow morning, … Penn Station, New York, tomorrow morning my fever was normal. So he said to me, he says, "We beat it," he said, "I got it just in time." So, I didn't have to go to the hospital, but I picked up a case of malaria. You know what happened to me over the years? Whenever there would be a blood drive, I had two different things happen to me. I would volunteer very often, … and I would always report, you know, it said illnesses, I would tell the truth. If they see the word malaria, "Thank you, good bye," other cases, "We can take it." There were two distinctly different approaches to the fact that I had malaria in my earlier days, completely different, some wouldn't touch me with a ten foot pole. … I don't know whether in some cases they were using only the … platelets, where they didn't care, or in another case they were using the whole blood. I'm not enough of a medical person to know what's going on, but I know that I got two distinct answers. In some cases, "Yes, it's fine." Other cases, "No way." So, of course, I always told the truth, you know, I don't want to infect anybody, but apparently you carry some of those things with you for the rest of your life, I guess. I've never had another attack. I've never had anything happen, you know, that I can attribute to having had malaria.

SH: Going back to the Pacific, what would happen when you pull into the port in these islands?

AB: Yes, depending on where it was, we will give enlisted men liberty. We'd usually have some beer available and they'd play baseball, softball or something, you know, if there was a field or something they could play on. So, that would be the recreation.

SH: What about officers, what did you do for recreation?

AB: Sit and drink beer. I mean, there was nothing much. I mean, I want to keep it clean. If you turned it off, I'll tell you. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: You were in Australia once.

AB: Just for about a week, yes.

SH: Were they suffering from rationing?

AB: Oh, sure.

SH: Were there a lot of Brits there as well?

AB: Not that I know, I mean, my exposure was kind of limited, you know. We pulled into, the harbor there is called Woolloomooloo Bay, that's the harbor for Sydney. It did not have that magnificent opera house then that it has now, you know, I'm aware of it, I've seen pictures of it, but beautiful bay, marvelous bay.

SH: Would the Red Cross have facilities for you?

AB: Yes, although, I don't know, I never felt the need, you know, for anything, so that I never availed myself. I don't even know whether they had like a USO show or anything, there might have been that, … either I had forgotten about, or didn't bother even going to it.

SH: Did any of your men suffer from combat fatigue?

AB: Not that I'm aware of, not in my division, I know absolutely not. Sometimes you do things which maybe sound a little strange. For example every meal, the meal served in the wardroom or the junior officers' mess was exactly the same meal the enlisted men got, but it was cooked differently. In other words, it was cooked in a different place. Well, I found out early on that the cooking in the enlisted men's quarters was far better than what the officers were getting. So, I would arrange with one of my … chief petty officers to save a meal for me. … I'd show my face in the wardroom, and then, leave, and go down and eat with a couple of my chiefs and a couple of the senior enlisted men. It was the same food exactly, but the preparation was better, the preparation was universally better.

SH: Who were your mess stewards?

AB: African-Americans, that's all they could do in those days. We also had some boys from Guam. Can you imagine what went through them when we're … sailing off Guam, bombarding Guam? This is their homeland, of course, occupied by the Japanese, and here we are firing 14-inch shells hour after hour at their land. Can you imagine what went through their hearts and minds, what they had to take? … They also were only eligible to be like mess cooks, you know, and that sort of thing.

SH: Did they get a chance to check on their families once you docked in Guam?

AB: One or two of my fellow officers, I can't remember his name, but at least one I know had parents living in the Canal Zone, he could see their house as we were traversing it, and they couldn't know that he was there. There was no communication, of course. He could see the house that they owned. …

SH: Had had things changed on East Coast when you returned to teach?

AB: Well, obviously, rationing was, you know, there. Of course, we never experienced it until I got to Florida when I was teaching. I didn't know anything about it, I mean, I got the ration books and I found out, but I never suffered because of it. … We'd drive to see my in-laws once or twice a week. … Sometimes they would come up … because it was very close. We rented a little cottage right on the beach and the first day that we were there we unpacked, I said, "Let's go for a swim," so … she put on her suit, I put on my trunks. … The beach was empty, hotter than hell, we both ran into the water, and we both ran out. The water temperature must have been ninety-something, that's why the beach was empty. It was August in Hollywood, Florida in the summer with that hot sun [and] shallow water. What do you think the water temperature was? Only idiots go in the water. … We couldn't understand why the beach was empty. Oh, and then, you have to learn about the no-see-ums. … These are little tiny gnats that were so tiny that even if you had your windows properly screened, they could get through the holes in the screen. So,

you went to the hardware store, and they sold you this liquid, you put on with a brush, which would tend to close, it would still leave a little opening, but it would close the holes up enough so that no-see-ums couldn't get through. You learn that the hard way when you wake up one morning with bites up and down your arms and chest and shoulders, … because you don't see any mosquitoes around. They're called no-see-ums, … tiny little insects, gnats. Then, I can tell you about the land crabs. The Everglades are not far away and the land crabs migrate, I think once or twice a year to the sea, and Hollywood, Florida is right in the path of their migration so during those times the crabs covered the roads and the ground and when you're driving you cannot avoid them, and the town had no such thing as picking up dead land crabs, so they lay there and bake in the sun and smell to high heaven, day after day after day until that migration season was over, and there was nothing you could do about it. There was no such thing as the department of public works, you know, to clean. They did pick up garbage. If you wanted to pick up the dead ones to throw them in the garbage, then they'd disappear, but other than that, they'd stay there until they just ground into dust.

SH: Did your wife finish her degree by the time you had moved to Hollywood, Florida?

AB: No.

SH: Was there a naval air station nearby?

AB: No, Pensacola. … I want to talk to you about what happened in Hollywood. When I reported for duty, you report to the executive officer, you know, welcomed me aboard. He happened to be an Academy graduate of I think Class of '37, something like that, and he said to me, … like in most stations, he says, "You'll be invited, you and your wife, will be invited to dinner at the Skipper's house within a few weeks." He said, "He'll let you know." I said, "Thank you." A couple of weeks go by, no invitation. I didn't think much of it, month or two goes by, new officers coming, I know that they're being invited, I'm not invited. I say nothing. I had a student in class, these courses we taught were like two or three months depending on which course we were teaching. I had a student, a young naval officer, who was brilliant beyond belief. He was so bright that when he was getting ready to graduate, I recommended to the Skipper that he keep him on as an instructor, and the Skipper did. … He was married, and we became friends, we played bridge together, we'd go out and eat together, and he also was not invited. That is the only incident I can think of in my entire naval career of anti-Semitism. Now, my fitness reports were so glowing, that I would have been embarrassed to write it about myself. So, this skipper officially gave me the highest fitness reports anybody could ever expect or want to get, but he must have been schizophrenic, because in his personal life, … and by the way, the Exec came to me before I left, he said, "I can't apologize for the Skipper's behavior," he said, "I'm sorry that it came out." I mean he was basically telling me what I already knew and my friend stayed on there until the war ended, and he was never invited to the Skipper. He was punished for being my friend.

SH: Your friend was not Jewish.

AB: No, he was not Jewish. … When I had him as a student, he already had his doctorate in organic chemistry. He later became a doctor, and guess where he settled and practiced, in

Hollywood, Florida. … He has since died, he retired to Santa Fe … and my wife and I visited him on occasion. … He and his wife both died within the last few years, and the Exec said to me, he said, "I can't apologize for the Skipper, … but you and I both know what's going on." Yet, in his official duty, as I say, I couldn't have gotten a better fitness report.

SH: From Hollywood, you went to the Naval Academy to teach.

AB: Oh, yes.

SH: Were there any instances of anti-Semitism when you were teaching at the Naval Academy?

AB: No, the only thing that happened at the Academy when I reported for duty, I met the Exec, I was assigned to the seamanship and navigation department, because that was my forte. … Anyway, I'm wearing a brand new uniform, with brand new cap cover, you know, everything tied properly. … The Exec says to me, "Come on, we'll meet the Skipper," old time captain, head of the department. Skipper introduces himself, sits me down, he says to me, "You're out of uniform." My shoes are shined. He said to me, "Where are your service ribbons?" … I said, "I don't have any." I said, "Down in Florida," he knew where I came from, he had my records, I said, "we didn't bother with them." He says, "Here we do." He says, "You don't report for duty." He says, "You report tomorrow morning." I said, "Sir, I don't even know what I'm entitled to." He said, "I do." He said, "I have your service record here." He said, "I will give you a handwritten note telling you which ribbons, how many battle stars, in which order," and you know Annapolis is full of naval tailors, because they made uniforms. So, he said, "You will go out, you will get three sets, one for your blues, one for you whites, one for you khakis." He said, "You will never again be in uniform without those ribbons on." He says, "When you're talking to midshipmen, they have to know that you have not been in charge of a large mahogany desk, that you know what you're talking about." He said, … "They know the ribbons, and they know what the battle stars mean." He says, "That gives you authority." He says, "Never again--be in uniform, that's part of the uniform." I learned a lesson. I had two very interesting students, I didn't know then how interesting they were going to be. One's name was Stansfield Turner who was an admiral who became head of the CIA. The other was his classmate, a chap by the name of Jimmy Carter, I think you've heard of him. [Editor's Note: Admiral Stansfield Turner was director of the CIA from 1977 to 1981. President Jimmy Carter was President of the United States from 1971 to 1975.]

SH: Yes.

AB: I taught both of them seamanship and anti-submarine warfare. That was part of my duties. …

SH: Were they good students?

AB: … You teach hundreds and hundreds of students, but I taught his entire class. They were still graduating a year early. At that point, they were graduating one full year early. In fact, the Class of '43 graduated a year early. '41 and '42 graduated each six months early, but '43 there was time enough for them to condense the course down to three years. So, from '43 through

about '47 to '48 they were graduating in three years. So, Jimmy Carter was in the class, I think, of '47, who graduated in '46. So, I had him, because I taught at the Naval Academy from August of '45 through December of '46, year-and-a-half. So, I taught his whole class seamanship.

SH: What was the reaction when you heard that the war was over in Europe?

AB: Well, we knew, that now all the full force could be sent over as needed … to finish the war in the Pacific. So we knew it was just a matter of time, you know, of course. I think those of us who were paying attention knew the Nazis were being crushed. It was not a question of whether, it was a question of when, how quickly. It became pretty evident, pretty quickly, that they were being crushed. You know, some of the so called "wits" have said that the Allies' greatest ally was Hitler himself, because of his … superseding his generals. The German General Staff knew what they were doing, and the German Admiralty knew what it was doing, but Hitler knew more than they did of course, and some of the "wags" used to say that he was our greatest ally, because he stirred things up and he made mistakes that were unbelievable.

SH: What was the reaction on board ship when Roosevelt died in 1945? …

AB: I was already teaching at the Academy.

SH: What was the reaction among other officers in the Naval Academy?

AB: Well, we sent a company of midshipmen to march in the funeral, you know, as would be expected.

SH: Did you have full confidence in your new commander in chief?

AB: I read too much.

SH: Can you remember what your thoughts were at the time?

AB: I think we were confident that the change of command would proceed in an orderly way. I was horrified when I learned, sometime later, that Truman was not even in the loop about the atomic bomb. I mean that blew my mind, which made me think a little less of Roosevelt that he didn't trust this guy. That bothered me, bothered the hell out of me. I mean, here was a man who knew, I mean I'm talking about Roosevelt, who knew that if anything happened to him this is the guy that has to step in to fill these shoes--give him every imaginable help you can, not hindrance. … Roosevelt knew … he was not in good physical health. So, to deliberately keep him out of the loop, to me that was unconscionable, wrong as sin. I happened to applaud Harry Truman completely for what he did. … They talk about the bombing of Hiroshima, what about the firebombing of Dresden? We killed more people that night in Dresden than … were lost in Hiroshima, do you know that? … Dresden was not even a military target, it was retribution. So, you're going to start talking about morality? Which way is it better to kill somebody, is that going to be the topic of conversation? How insane can we get? [Editor's Note: Between February 13th, 1945 and February 15th, 1945, the Allies dropped nearly 4000 tons of ordnance

upon the German city of Dresden, resulting in a firestorm that destroyed miles of the city's center.]

SH: Did you know that United States had a weapon as destructive as the atomic bomb in its arsenal?

AB: No way, absolutely no way. We knew a little bit about the jet engines because the Germans had actually flown some. … We knew about jet engines, that had leaked out, you know, and it wasn't that top secret, but we knew nothing, absolutely nothing about the atomic bomb, no.

SH: When were you first aware of Hitler's treatment of Jews? Was it something that the military or the popular press talked about?

AB: … *Kristallnacht* I knew about, that was publicized, I knew about it, I knew what it was. … I mean my family were readers of the *Times* every day, I read the *Times* thoroughly from cover to cover.

SH: What about the concentration camps?

AB: We had all heard rumors about them and whatnot, but there wasn't any, what I'd guess you'd call solid evidence that you could present in a court of law to prove it. That was the problem. A lot of it was hearsay. … You know the saying I'm sure, "the victors rewrite the history books." So, while you're living through it, how do you know which is true and which is not true, very tough, unless you have on the scene observers whom you trust, who can then relay the information, and you trust them to not be warped … to presenting their side. Other than that, how do you know? So, we heard all these things, but we had no relatives, you know, that were in communication, that could tell us what was going on, or we knew nobody who had escaped from anywhere that could tell us. So, we had no way of knowing. If it wasn't in the press or on the radio, those were our sources of information and I recognized that there could be. I still remember seeing pictures--I mean talk about propaganda--I remember seeing pictures of what were published, I think even in this country, during World War I, of German soldiers bayoneting little French babies. Now, talk about propaganda, I mean can you picture this. These were used as propaganda pictures to justify going into the war, German soldiers who were bayoneting French babies, fake photography, of course. …

SH: You were in the military during World War II happened. How were the Japanese and Germans portrayed in public?

AB: … As far as the Japanese were concerned, initially there was a lot of talk, "They're going to be a cinch. They can't shoot straight, they got slanty eyes." There were people who believed this--I'm not kidding--this was such insanity. … "Don't worry about the Japanese, they can't possibly shoot straight, their eyes are slanty." … I had a cousin on my dad's side, he was my cousin, it was his sister's son who was in the Army and he was in Europe, and he was in a group that was about to be captured, and he ripped off his dog tag--Jewish--ripped off his dog tag, and took one off a dead soldier. … He was reported as being killed, and his families had shiva for him. Eventually through the Red Cross he got out the word. … They realized that he saved his

life by probably substituting … some Christian dog tag and put it on. … His family eventually found out that he was alive. Used his head, and had to do it in a hurry. Now, the Germans were guilty of all kinds of so-called … crimes against the rules of war, international conventions; the Japanese were also. You know what? So were we. My ship fired … what were called white phosphorous shells. You know, what white phosphorous is? Know what happens when it hits something? If a drop hit your hand, you know, what it will do? It will eat a hole right through you instantly. So, we would fire white phosphorous on fields to flush the Japanese out, and then when they would run to escape then we would know where they were, and then fire regular ammunition at them, against all the rules of war to use white phosphorous shells, we fired them regularly. … Is is less moral or more moral to kill somebody in a different way? I wrote a term paper when I was going to grad school, I thought my professor was going to throw me out bodily. I wrote a term paper on the use of food as a weapon of war, by embargoing. If a country has to import its food you may be able to bring them to their knees a lot faster and with less, fewer casualties, by depriving them of food until there's an uprising, than by dropping bombs on them, or napalm or whatever, and you'll lose far fewer people. He thought I was some kind of a crackpot.

DK: In my history class, we discussed that the alternative to dropping the atomic bomb was to blockade the islands.

AB: Yes, but they could grow food, and how many people would die in the interim on both sides? … Again, I think that Truman made the right choice in terms of total deaths on both sides. We would have lost a half million people--at least--invading Japan. They were arming twelve-year old kids with broomsticks, come on, I'm for real, with broomsticks. The Bushido Code, if you die fighting for the Emperor you go to heaven, or whatever their heaven is. … I think in a way it may be so-called less nasty to put embargoes on unless time is of the essence, because you don't kill as many people, and there's a chance there will be a popular uprising and get rid of the government that's in power.

SH: It is interesting that the United States' embargo partly led the Japanese to attack Pearl Harbor in the first place.

AB: Well, as I say, the embargo we put on them for three things that they needed desperately as an industrialized nation, they could not continue, and if we had the mistaken notion they were going to sit back and take that without retaliating, we were insane.

SH: Did you see the Cold War developing as you were teaching in the Naval Academy?

AB: It was after I left. The Russians were called our allies at that time, you know, the flush of victory from World War II in Europe. There was still that era of so-called good feeling between the United States and Russia, you know. They were very careful to send over people who spoke pretty good English. … Some of these guys were experts, and there was a reasonable degree of cooperation. …

SH: Were the service academies open to the Russians?

AB: No, no. … During my time there as either a student or an instructor, there were no, to my knowledge, there were no Russian exchange students. … We very carefully handpicked which countries we will have exchange students with. … They would be from Europe, of course, you know, from France, England, Italy, Spain, some of the South American countries, I said Philippines, I don't think anything from Africa. I don't even know if there's any from Canada, I'm not sure whether they even wanted it, you know, or asked for it, there obviously would have been. I think the US-Canadian relationship is something unique in this world. We have the longest unprotected border of any two countries in the world. Well, it's not completely safe, it's comparatively well-run. I know there are people who live on border towns on both countries who go back and forth every day, they live in one country and work in the other, and they go back and forth every day like it's all the same country, and the border guards don't pay any attention, they know. They know all the back roads, and they just do it. I mean look how much we have in common, you know.

SH: What did you do after you taught at the Naval Academy?

AB: Well, I had to go before what they call a survey board, you know, for physical retirement, and I was torn between a number of things. I wanted to stay in the Navy, but I wanted to stay as a line officer, but they said I couldn't pass the eye exams. They have this interesting rule. They don't care if your eyesight isn't 20/20 as long as it can be corrected to 20/20. Mine could no longer be corrected to 20/20. There apparently was some damage to the optic nerve or something. I mean I don't walk around with a cane. …

SH: Your eyesight was affected by shooting the weapons on the *New Mexico*.

AB: Flashes, gun flash. … They offered me to transfer to the supply corps. Well, having been a line officer, and when you're a staff officer in the Navy, you're assigned in a sense a compatriot in the line, and your promotions depend on that other person. I couldn't handle the idea that my promotions going up the ladder would depend on somebody else's success or failure, not my own. So, even though, if had I joined the supply corps, they probably would have sent me either to become an accountant or an attorney, and they would have paid for the schooling. I couldn't stand the idea of in a sense not being the master of my own fate, being responsible for myself. So, I turned it down. So, they offered to hire me as a civilian instructor at the Academy, about half the pay I was making as an officer. So, I turned that down. I mean the pay of an officer was not that great, I think I was making $4000 a year in those days, I mean whatever it was, but it was enough to support a wife, but I turned that down. So, I became a civilian.

SH: When you are out on the *New Mexico*, what is the difference an Academy officer and a reserve officer?

AB: In terms of duty?

SH: Status.

AB: Status? Absolutely nothing, not on my ship. … I had a guy in my division, he was an old man--he was like forty-five years old, to me he was an old man--I'm in my twenties, you know,

and he was married with children. So, I said to him one day, "What are you doing here," because he had to be a volunteer, he was beyond the age of being, you know, drafted. Well, he said, "I felt I should do something for my country." I said, "Well, why'd you pick the Navy?" "Oh," he said, "that's easy." He said, "In the Army," he said, "the general, the guys who are calling the shots are twenty miles behind the lines." He said, "Here, the guys who are responsible are on the same boat, literally, that you are." He said, "If they make a mistake," he said, "it's their ass the same as mine." He said, "That's where I want to be," and I thought to myself, "very interesting comment for a man." He was a farmer from … from Iowa. He said, "They're going to make better decisions because they're here to face the music." … I had friends on board who were reserve officers, and we used to call them … ninety-day wonders. I had to give them credit. The things that we were taught, the things that we did and did well, we had years of training. These guys had to pick it up in a hurry. They didn't have the years of training, and the practice sessions and drills, and yet they were expected to do the same things we were doing. So, I never … looked down my nose at a reserve officer, I gave them credit for being able to handle a job that was damn tough with a comparatively lack of training, absolutely. I took my hat off to these guys. Now, in many cases they didn't have the quite the same responsibilities we did, because they didn't have the ability to do it, they didn't have the actual training. Most of them couldn't handle a sextant, you know. As a matter-of-fact, the first time I handled a sextant was on board ship. At the Academy, we never trained with a sextant.

SH: Did you not?

AB: No, never. I never held it in my hand until one day I'm appointed, my boss said to me, "Come on, let's take some sun sights together." "Yes, sir," and I stood by and watched very carefully, I got the hang of it, of course, you don't have to be a genius to do it. … In some cases there were things that we had to do that they simply had no training for, so, of course, they weren't assigned to handle that thing. … I mean some of them were directing anti-aircraft crews, … that's still the same as an Academy officer. There was no problem about looking down your nose at them, not in my opinion, no, not at all. We were literally all on the same boat together.

SH: Did you go to any of the officer's clubs in the Pacific?

AB: I went to the makeshift officer's club on one of the islands in the South Pacific which had that famous sign on, "Colonels not admitted without their parents." The field promotions were coming so fast and furiously that they had a sign on there, "Colonels not admitted without their parents." …

SH: What did you think of General Douglas MacArthur?

AB: Nothing good, no. He was a brilliant strategist, but egomaniac of the "Nth" degree in my opinion. I think he had delusions of grandeur, his father, of course, was a famous man and he was a bright guy at West Point, and he was a brilliant strategist. I have never been able to find out the answer to a very simple question. Why twelve hours after Pearl Harbor--which he was made aware of--were his planes lined up in the Philippines like clay pigeons and the Japanese came in and they never even got off the field? Where was he? How could he possibly explain that one away? Navy ships pulled the hell out of the harbor when they heard about Pearl Harbor,

they vacated, wherever they were. If they could get underway they got underway and got out immediately without knowing where the next attack might come from. Where was this guy? … When he gave Truman the finger [during the Korean War], I think Truman was a hundred percent correct in cashing him out instantly. I mean, whether you like it or not, the President is the commander-in-chief, and I think it's as it should be.

SH: As a young officer, what did you think of Admiral Halsey and Admiral Nimitz?

AB: I'll tell you an interesting story about Halsey. I'm the officer of the deck. We're moored in some godforsaken place in the South Pacific in-between battles. We're moored out, and tied up at a mooring buoy. I'm the officer of the deck, I got my spy glass, I got my .45, my cap, tie, I see a launch approaching, a regular launch with an older looking guy, white-haired guy in a launch. … We're a flagship, we have an admiral on board. I put my glass on this guy because he's alone on the boat with just a coxswain running the boat, and I look and he's wearing an overseas cap, but no insignia, no rank. I look at his collar, no rank, I'm not too worried, it looks like a chief warrant officer, you know. As he approaches the gangway, it's Admiral Halsey, and I'm caught flatfooted. I don't have the sideboys on deck to pipe him aboard, I don't have the Captain on deck to greet him. He comes up, he salutes the colors, he salutes me, "Permission to come aboard?" I said, "Yes, sir, admiral." I said, "Admiral, I have to apologize to you sir," I said, "I didn't recognize you until you were too close for me to get the Captain and the Admiral to greet you." He said, "That's okay," he looks at me, he says, "You're in the department today with ties and an officer's cap?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "We'll take care of that." Anyway, I send a messenger, of course, the Captain comes down, the Admiral, and then, everything is done. The next day the uniform is changed, we can now wear overseas caps, and no ties. This was like 1943 or '44, probably. Fast forward about eight years more. I'm taking a friend of mine to the Army-Navy game and the Naval Academy Alumni Association runs a special train. It starts in Penn Station, New York, stops in Newark, and then goes right to Philly, where the Army-Navy game is usually played, and it waits there. There's a railroad yard right next to [Philadelphia] Municipal Stadium. So, you get off the train and walk a few hundred feet and you're in the stadium. So, I'm taking this friend of mine who's a doctor as my guest, and we're going to board the train in Newark at around nine o'clock in the morning. … We drive to Newark, park the car, board the train, and we're walking down an aisle, and I see Admiral Halsey sitting there with a young blonde next to him, each with a drink in their hand, and as I walk up, I stop in front of him and I say, "Good morning admiral, how are you sir?" He looks at me and he says, "I don't know your name." He says, "Weren't you the OD on one of my old battlewagons that was wearing a tie?" I said, "Yes, sir." He says, "I didn't forget." I said, "I see you didn't." He said, "How are you, son?" I said, "I'm retired, you know, physical." He said, "Good to see you." It was a year or two before he died. He didn't know my name, he never knew my name, he remembered the incident, he said, "Weren't you the OD on one of those old battlewagons that was used for bombardment." I said, "Yes, sir." He didn't remember the name of the ship either, but he remembered the incident. [Editor's Note: Admiral William "Bull" Halsey died in 1959.]

SH: Unbelievable.

AB: Yes, interesting?

SH: Very interesting.

AB: Well, I'll tell you the one that rocked me the most. … Probably in the middle 1950s, I was in the insurance business, and my home office was in New York. … I had to go to New York for some reason being the home office. I'm walking down the street, and you know how you sometimes sense that somebody is coming up behind you. I sensed somebody was coming up behind me. A young man comes up behind me and taps me on the shoulder, he said, "Excuse me," he says, "I don't know your name." He says, "Weren't you in the Twelfth Company, Class of '42, at the Academy?" I said, "Yes." He goes, "I was a plebe," he says, "I flunked out. I recognize you from the back of your head." I said, "You what?" He said, "Don't you know?" We all had the same haircut, come on. He says, "The back of the heads are very distinctive." He said, "I never knew your name," he didn't know my name. He said, "I knew you were with the Class of '42 because," he says, "I was in your company." He picks me out on the street in New York, and he says, "I recognize you from the back of your head." Give me a break.

SH: Amazing.

AB: That blew my mind. … He never knew my name, we had never probably even talked to each other. He says, "After you march behind somebody for a year," he says, "you learn to recognize people. I didn't realize that backs, you know, looking at us only from the back could be that distinctive, I never even dreamt of that. You learn something every day. That was amazing to me, but Halsey … remembering that incident, he was disturbed that the officers, that the uniform of the day was, you know, with the regular cap and tie. He says, "Come on," he says, "we're fighting a war," and he laughed when he saw the .45. He said, "Who are you going to shoot," but that as the so-called "mark of the OD," you know, to be wearing your gun belt and a .45, and it had to be loaded by the way. We had rules. You didn't put on a .45 unless it was loaded. …

SH: Great story. This concludes our session for today. Again, thank you Mr. Bogart for having us.

AB: My pleasure.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 1/13/12
Reviewed by Alvin S. Bogart 1/25/12