

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK FATALE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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VINCENTOWN, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Ryan Davies: This begins an interview with Frank Fatale on March 3, 2008, in Vincentown, New Jersey, conducted by Ryan Davis ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: ... and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Thank you so much, Mr. and Mrs. Fatale, for having us here.

Frank Fatale: You're welcome. ...

SH: To begin the interview, just for the record, can you tell me where and when you were born?

FF: I was born May 23, 1926, Brooklyn, New York.

RD: Can you tell us a little bit about your family and growing up?

FF: My father came from Naples when he was sixteen years old, and I don't know how he went from Naples to Marseilles, but, according to the computer in Ellis Island, he came to the United States from Marseilles. I have no idea how he got there. He arrived here when he was sixteen. He was fortunate that he was slightly educated. He could read and write Italian. Of course, the only jobs he could get were manual labor, digging subways, working on the railroad; strong back, that's it. He went to night school. He went to PS 17 in Williamsburg, [a section of Brooklyn], learned to read and write English, and he plodded along, and then, finally went into business for himself and became very successful. He had a big contracting business, employed a lot of men, and, like everybody else, come the Depression, he lost everything. He had quite a bit of real estate, which he lost. The only thing he didn't lose was a house in Greenpoint, or Williamsburg, at 42 Richardson Street, where we moved. It's the only house in that area, at that time, that had box rooms and not railroad rooms. We had an interior, three-fixture bath. We had central heat, but all the other buildings in that area were eight-family, coldwater flats and the only toilet was ... at the foot of the stairs on each floor, between the two families, and they used that toilet in the hall. My mother had a nervous breakdown, because she was from farm country in Italy and Flatlands, [New York], and we moved to Greenpoint, where it was an absolute zoo, not because of traffic, but a lot of people. Then, we moved back to Flatlands. My mother was born in Brooklyn and, as a small child, she was brought to Italy and she grew up in Italy. When she came back, I have no idea. We have no idea. Nobody knows when she came back and, somehow or other, my mother and father [met]. My mother had been married, my father had been married. Somehow, ... they got together, got married, and me, my brother and sister were the result, [laughter] and we lived in Flatlands.

SH: Can you talk about Flatlands, describe it for us?

FF: Flatlands was an extremely rural [area], and I mean rural, there were farms and there was a dairy and some commercial farms. We had lots and lots of vacant land, which was extremely unusual for Brooklyn, because all the other areas were built up, but Flatlands and Flatbush had a lot of vacant land. ... I didn't speak English until I went out and played with the kids, because my mother never spoke English. She's strictly Italian, but, anyway, we had a lot of kids around, we had a lot of vacant land, tremendous vacant lots, on which we played football and baseball. You name it, we had it, and we could romp all day long and, if we went where I eventually lived,

Bergen Beach, you could spend the whole day there and, if anything happened to you, they'd never find you again. It was all a bunch of these tall reeds you find by the water and it was dense. You had to push your way through them and, as a child, ... growing up in that area, and knowing what other kids went through, later on, I was extremely fortunate, extremely fortunate. ... We used to hitch the trolley car, [laughter] to the end of the line, and then, get off there, and there was water there and there was a beach, called Boyns, B-O-Y-N-S, Beach, and we used to go swimming there. There was a sunken barge, half sunk, and we used to go crabbing there. We used to go fishing there and we could spend the whole day there. ... If you left that area, all you had was; there were streets there, but the sidewalks were overgrown with these reeds that you see down by the water, and we used to spend a lot of time down there in the summer, really, really nice.

RD: Was it mostly Italians in that neighborhood or was it more diverse?

FF: I lived on East 53rd Street. I was born and raised on East 53rd Street, which was the League of Nations. You know, next-door, we had a Greek, across the street, we had a Jew, we had a German, we had Puerto Rican, we had Spanish, we had English, we had Norwegian, we had Irish, Italian and Russian, all on one block. That's incredible, for that time. No, ... the area was primarily Italian and Irish. That was the primary two nationalities, but, on our block, we had the League of Nations.

SH: This is the block in Flatlands.

FF: ... Yes. That's where I was born and raised.

SH: Where do you fit in with your brother and sister? Are you older or younger?

FF: I'm the number one. My brother passed away. He was born four years after me and my sister; what's Margie, seventy-five?

Catherine Fatale: No, Margie's seventy-one.

FF: Seventy-one, and I'm eighty-two, so, I was eleven years old [when she was born].

SH: What kind of supervision did you have when you were going fishing and crabbing?

FF: None, none whatsoever.

SH: What did your father do for a living after the Depression and after he lost everything?

FF: He was back in the contracting business, but never on the scale that he had been, you know, a driveway, a backyard, a garage, the cement block work, but he never ...

SH: Did he build the house that you lived in?

FF: He built the one I was born in, at 1598 East 53rd, and, when we moved back from Greenpoint, we had no house, we rented an apartment down the block, and then, he built the house next-door, which was a vacant lot, and he built a house there, at 1600 East 53rd. ... That was the extent of it, but, when we went out, ... when we, the kids, went out, we were gone. [laughter] That's it. ...

SH: Since your mother only spoke Italian, were you children her interpreter or were there enough Italians that she had plenty of social interaction?

FF: ... In the old days, everybody went to a ghetto. If you were Polish, you went to Greenpoint, if you were Jews, you went to East New York, if you were Italian, you went to Greenpoint, but they were all there and, no matter where you went, you didn't have to speak English. All the stores, all the storekeepers, everybody, spoke your particular language. On Saturday morning, my mother used to get on the trolley car, from one end to the other end of the line, it's about an hour ride, with two shopping bags and she used to go do her shopping. ... She had friends down there, she'd have lunch, whatever, and then, she'd come home in the afternoon with her two shopping bags, but, even in those days, every neighborhood had a lot of stores. See, we went around the block, just around the corner from us, and there was whatever you needed, a butcher shop. The beginning of the A&P, the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, was across the street. It was a little store, corner store. On the other corner, we had a so-called (Daniel Reeves?), which was a chain, and then, Bohack came in, ... but a short block away and anything you needed, drugstore, dry cleaner, bakery. You had a fish store, you had a greengrocer. Right around the corner was Charlie "the Butcher." That's what he's known as, Charlie "the Butcher."

SH: Did any of your mother or father's family then come from Italy to the United States?

FF: My father sent his brothers and sisters money to come over. He had a brother, Pasquale, who settled in Camden and he had a sister who settled in Greenpoint. She got married and settled in Greenpoint, and I think a brother went to Venezuela, and that was the extent of the family. I don't know anything about my mother's family, absolutely nothing. My father was the oldest of fourteen children, but I don't know if my mother had any brothers, [if] she had any sisters; I have no idea at all.

SH: What were some of your earliest memories of the holidays?

FF: Well, Christmas was always a big holiday and I particularly remember Christmas Eve as a child. My father [belonged to a group], and I call it a burial society; it was a group of men who used to meet once a month and they used to play cards and play bocce, and my father, believe it or not, my father used to read their mail to them, if they got mail, because none of them were educated. He would read their mail and write letters for them, but, on Christmas Eve, this man, and I think he lived on Withers Street or Skillman [Avenue], wherever he lived, he used to have a big, big crèche and he had everything, and all the men used to go there. I don't know what happened to the women, but they used to go there and they used to sing Christmas carols, and there's a big, big Nativity scene. He had all kinds of things, and Easter was Easter. ...

SH: Did they have feast days, where they marched?

FF: Oh, yes, all the neighborhoods had them. The big one was Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Williamsburg. We always went to that one. ... Where I lived, there was nothing. As I say, we were Italian, Irish, but there was no ghetto as such, where it was all Italian, but we used to go to the feasts, yes. I didn't go to San Gennaro ... on Mulberry Street until I was working, [laughter] but we used to go every year, oh, absolutely. That was a big, big part of life. It's a carryover from the old country, that's what they used to do, and it was a big occasion. The feast days or the saints' days were big, big holidays, and that was it. They were interesting and, what I remember, they used to call it a *giglio*; it was a big, tremendous tower, with the saint on top, all decorated, and a whole band, a whole band, used to sit on the base and, if you were lucky, you were chosen to help carry it, on your shoulders and walk it. I don't know how many; well, to have a band, you had to have at least a couple of tons in weight, and it had all poles across the bottom and these guys have a towel for padding on their shoulders and walk it, and then, they used to march the saint, the banner of the saint, and everybody pinned money [to it], interesting.

SH: Which church did you go to as a young man?

FF: ... When I was born, I was baptized in St. Thomas, which was a big church about a mile or two from the house. Then, Flatlands got a few people in it and they built a church, ... Mary Queen of Heaven, and ... my father was one of the original contributors to that church and they only built the basement area and they finished that off and, in the future, they were going to build above it. Come the Depression and, today, Mary Queen of Heaven is still just the basement. You go down the steps to it.

SH: However, it is a functioning church.

FF: Oh, absolutely. Then, they built a school, and I don't even know if the school is still operating today. That whole area is all black now, the entire area. ... Somebody said, on East 53rd Street, and this is years ago, they said there were only two whites left.

SH: Where did you go to grammar school?

FF: PS 203, a block-and-a-half away, cut through the lot and you were right there. Everything was lots. We had shortcuts. ... Every block had lots on it, just go through the lot.

SH: Before you got to high school and more organized activities, what did a kid do after school or on a weekend? Did you have a job?

FF: Kids? We had stickball, we had all the kids' games, Johnny-on-a-Pony, stoopball, stickball, football, baseball.

SH: What is Johnny-on-a-Pony?

FF: Johnny-on-a-Pony, okay; you choose up sides and you get, there's a pole, you have to have something, and all the fellows lined up, and I don't know if we put our heads underneath, and you have a line, three or four, five guys, and the other guys, the other team, would jump up.

You'd run and jump, and then, the [kids asked], "Buck, buck, how many fingers are up?" and, if you guessed right, then, they got down and you did the jumping.

SH: This is great. I will bet you there are not too many people who know that game now.
[laughter]

FF: Yes, "Buck, buck."

RD: You said you did not have a job growing up. When the Depression hit, were you forced to get a job to help out the family?

FF: No, I was born in '26, the Depression started about '32, so, I was, you know, six, seven years old.

RD: What about your mother? Was she forced to get a job?

FF: No. Women didn't work in those days. They stayed home, and the men, whatever they could get.

SH: Did you have chores? As the older son, did you have chores around the house that were yours? [Editor's Note: Mr. Fatale mistook the word "chores" for "toys."]

FF: I had a set of trains, but other toys, I don't recall whether there were other [toys], because we were never in the house. When you got up in the morning, ... during the summer, you had something to eat and you went out, and maybe you came back for lunch, maybe. If you were down in Bergen Beach, you didn't come back for lunch, but you came back for supper. After supper, you went out again and you'd come back when it was dark.

SH: Did you have an allowance?

FF: No. There was no money; allowance? [laughter] I don't even think there was such a word in those days, I really don't, because I don't know anybody who had an allowance. ...

SH: Did you have to go to Catechism class?

FF: Oh, yes.

SH: You were confirmed and did all that.

FF: Yes, but that's right; I don't think I ever heard the word "allowance," honestly. ...

SH: That is what we are trying to find out.

FF: Yes, I don't believe I ever heard that word.

SH: Did you go to the movies?

FF: When you got older, yes. It used to cost ten cents. You got two movies, the newsreel, three or four cartoons. They used to have serials, they used to call them chapters, every Saturday, like Ken Maynard, [an actor in early Westerns]. It was continued every week, you know. ... Well, you were good for about four hours, for ten cents, if you could get a dime somewhere; [laughter] don't laugh.

SH: I understand. I have heard many of these stories and I appreciate that. However, everybody in your neighborhood was basically the same as you.

FF: Pretty much, pretty much. There were very, very few that had, you know, what you would call a steady job. (Franca?); oh, I forgot, we had a Portuguese family, too, (Franca?). (Franca?) used to design monograms for towels. That was his job. Ferri worked in a factory where they made gas meters, he had a steady job; not too many had a regular job. He went from day-to-day, my father, when [he] had a job, he'd do it, but, then, later on, in the late '30s, ... WPA, [Works Progress Administration], but he didn't do manual labor, he had a truck. So, they used to bid, every month, how much you wanted per hour to rent your truck, and a driver, to the city or the government, whoever. Believe it or not, it [paid] almost a little over a dollar an hour, and you had to go to the job, wherever the job was, and that's how you got paid.

SH: This was part of the WPA project.

FF: Yes, it's all part of the Works Project, yes.

SH: I have not heard this before.

FF: Oh?

SH: I mean, I have heard of the WPA, but I never knew that there was this way to participate. What about the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps? Did you know anyone who went to the camps?

FF: Later on in life. At the time, I didn't know anybody that went to CCC, but it seemed, later on, talking to people, a lot of them went. Yes, I was too young.

SH: Being born in 1926, I would think so, yes.

FF: Yes.

SH: Did you think you would go to high school?

FF: Yes. I left high school when I was sixteen, and I got a GED ... when I was in the service, yes.

RD: Did you have a favorite subject in school, like a favorite topic of learning, either history or math?

FF: Oh, I'm glad you said learning, because I was going to say lunch. [laughter] I liked history, I liked geography, too, which they don't teach anymore. That was a good subject. ... In math, I was pretty quick, you know, because, when you went to elementary school, you were drilled, on times tables, addition, subtraction, multiplication, fractions, but I was pretty quick. Even to this day, going to the store, I can figure out what it's going to cost me to get something, but, other than that, no. I was good at the contract, because I used to go with my father on the job. I could lay bricks on the blocks. [laughter]

SH: How old were you when he started taking you to work with him?

FF: Five. [laughter]

SH: It was not all playing in the reeds.

FF: No. Occasionally, I would go on a job with him, when I was [younger], and I wanted to go. I used to scream if he wouldn't take me, but I was that young, yes.

SH: Who was the disciplinarian in your family?

FF: I think my mother.

SH: Really?

FF: Yes. My father was very soft.

SH: Was he really?

FF: Yes.

SH: Did your mother have a special weapon, should we say, or was it her hand?

FF: I think the hand was the best one.

SH: Because some people have talked about the wooden spoon.

FF: Oh, well, that's the wooden spoon kid. ...

RD: Were you the main troublemaker in your family, growing up?

FF: Probably. I was the oldest, so, it'd have to be me.

RD: Did you have anything you wanted to do when you were growing up? Did you have any fantasy of what your future profession might be?

FF: Not that I'm aware of, not that I'm aware of. In those days, it was a day-to-day operation.
...

SH: Do you remember when your father brought his brothers and sisters from Italy?

FF: No.

SH: He did that before you were born.

FF: Yes.

SH: Did anybody ever talk about Mussolini around the dinner table?

FF: Not around the dinner table. When my father's burial society got together, they used to talk about, you know, the old country.

SH: Did they?

FF: Yes, but, around the dinner table, no.

SH: Were you aware of what was going on in Europe as a very young man?

FF: I don't think until I was in my [later years], almost wartime. News was very sparse in those days, you know. Today, you turn on a television, you get twenty-four hours of news, but the most we had was a radio and, when we went to the movies, we had the Pathe News, yes.

SH: Can you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

FF: Yes, absolutely.

SH: Can you tell us that story?

FF: I had a cousin, my uncle's [son], Pasquale. His son was in the Coast Guard and he was over the house, at East 53rd Street, when we heard that the war had broken out. That was it.

SH: Did you hear it on the news?

FF: Radio. ...

SH: What was his reaction, being already in the military?

FF: I don't recall, I don't recall.

SH: What did you do when you heard that?

FF: It had no reaction, you know. ... What was I, fifteen years old? ... I mean, now, I'd have a big reaction, but, then, at fifteen years old, it never dawned [on me] what it would bring.

SH: I wondered if you went out and talked to your friends.

FF: No, not really, no.

SH: How soon did you start thinking about going in the military, because you go in a year later? Is that correct?

FF: Yes, I went in in '43. I don't recall when I started thinking about it. I had to be seventeen, so, when I was seventeen, I went.

SH: You enlisted. You did not wait to be drafted.

FF: Yes. No, I enlisted.

SH: Why did you enlist, rather than wait for the draft to pick you up?

FF: I have no idea.

SH: [laughter] Really?

FF: Yes. ... They used to call it a "kiddie cruise." When you went in at seventeen, ... you were regular Navy, but you signed up until you were twenty-one, and then, at twenty-one, you got your discharge, and they used to call it a "kiddie cruise." Where it came from, I don't know.

SH: Did your family support this decision to go in so young?

FF: I don't think it had any effect on them. ...

SH: They had to give you permission.

FF: He signed; my father signed.

SH: He was not reticent at all.

FF: No, but, you know, everybody was going in those days. It wasn't an uncommon thing. You know, today, if you signed up to go to war, they'd think you're nuts, but, then, everybody was [going].

RD: Why did you pick the Navy? Why not the Army?

FF: I have no idea. I have no idea. I can't give you an honest answer.

SH: Did the cousin being in the Coast Guard have any influence on that?

FF: I don't think so. I don't think so.

SH: What about the other kids in the block that you had been playing with? Did they also go in at the same time you did?

FF: Joe Sciortino went in a week later. The Ferri boys were drafted. Ralph Chiarmonite, I don't know. I think most of them were drafted.

SH: The young man who went in a week later, did he go in the Army?

FF: No, he went into the Navy. He did twenty [years].

SH: Of the young men that you played with and hung around with, did most of them go in the Army or did they opt for the Navy?

FF: I think we had a mixed bag. We had some that went in the Marines, most of the ones that were drafted were Army, and we had several go into the Navy.

SH: Can you talk about the first week of your enlistment, where you went and how that came to be?

FF: They put us on a train and we went to Great Lakes [Naval Station]. ... Well, it was during the summer then, so, Great Lakes was beautiful and we had a whole train full. ... It was overnight. We went up and through Canada and came down. I don't know why, but that's the way the train went. ...

SH: Had you ever traveled before?

FF: No, no. We went [to] Upstate New York with my father one time. A friend of his, his son had a heart problem and he had bought a farm up around Oneonta and that's where we went, but that's all I remember, as far as traveling goes.

SH: Do you have any memories of that train trip, any incidents to recall?

FF: No. ... I don't even think we had a sleeper. We slept in the seats, but, no, I have no recollections of that. It was not an eventful occasion.

SH: When you went in in 1943, in the summer, was it July or June?

FF: August.

SH: August of 1943, okay. You talked about getting all your news from either the radio or the Pathe Newsreels. Had you been keeping up with what was going on? Did the newsreels focus on Europe or did they focus on what was going on in the Pacific Theater?

FF: I don't know. I really don't know. I'm sure that it was both.

SH: Had you seen how the war effort was progressing in that year, from the time Pearl Harbor happened, as far as your family's dealing with rationing and that kind of thing?

FF: No, no. I know my father went to work, ... in the shipyard, for Ira Bushey. He had to sign up for the draft. I've still got a copy of his draft card, or a photo of his draft card.

SH: Your father?

FF: Yes, and Italians, at that time, were very suspect. Some of them ended up in the concentration camps, along with the Japs. How they did it, why they did it, who they did it to, I have no idea.

SH: Do you think your father had to go through extra security clearances?

FF: I have no idea. He worked there all through the whole war.

SH: What did he do at the shipyard? Do you know?

FF: Yes. He was a shipfitter, whatever they did. [laughter]

SH: Did he go to work for the shipyard before you left for the Navy?

FF: I think so, yes, Ira S. Bushey.

SH: What about your younger brother?

FF: He was in high school. He got drafted for Korea. ...

SH: Can you talk to us a little bit about your boot camp at Great Lakes?

FF: I was in Company 1164 and we had a song, "Eleven, eleven, 1164, we're the best company you ever saw. The Admiral thought that we were dumb, but, now, he's taking orders from, eleven, eleven, 1164." [laughter]

SH: Fantastic memory.

FF: And that used to go on and on.

SH: Really?

FF: Oh, yes. That's how we used to march.

SH: That was just the first verse.

FF: That was just the first; that's how we used to march.

SH: What did you think of boot camp, being this kid from New York?

FF: What I really remember about boot camp [is], we used to have to go to calisthenics every day and we used to [do it] in a tremendous drill hall and we always tried to be near the door and we'd run out. ... One day, ... the shore patrol chased us. We were [going] over rooftops, in and out of [buildings]; [laughter] they never caught us.

SH: Did you get any liberties while you were in boot camp?

FF: No, no, no, there was no liberty. I think it was sixteen weeks or eight weeks. ...

SH: When you were in boot camp, you were also being tested, were you not?

FF: Oh, yes, you took tests, oh, yes. That's why they made me a torpedoman. They found out I had a weak mind and a strong back and they said, "You're a torpedoman."

SH: Were you assigned to a submarine or did you have to volunteer?

FF: No, no, you have to volunteer. They ask you and I said, "Yes," and, when I graduated from torpedo school, they sent me to New London.

SH: How did they talk you into going into the submarines?

FF: They didn't.

SH: You wanted this.

FF: Yes.

SH: What did you know about a submarine prior to that?

FF: Nothing. It went underwater. [laughter] ... No, seriously, other than that, I had no idea how they operated.

SH: You volunteered while you were in boot camp.

FF: I don't know whether it's boot camp or torpedo school. I have no idea.

SH: After you finished at Great Lakes, where was the torpedo school?

FF: Great Lakes.

SH: You stayed right there.

FF: Spent a miserable, miserable winter, right on Lake Michigan, and the wind used to howl, snow, cold, miserable.

SH: Did you ever regret making that decision to go into submarines?

FF: Oh, no, no.

SH: I meant before you actually got to serve on one.

FF: No. It's the greatest bunch in the whole world.

SH: Did you see or tour a submarine prior to being assigned to a boat?

FF: No; up at school, but, other than that, no.

SH: Actually, in the torpedo school, they started ...

FF: No, no, they never even mentioned submarines. You either went to a submarine if you were [in torpedo school] or a destroyer. They're the only ones that carried torpedo tubes.

SH: Had you been on any kind of craft? Up at Great Lakes, did you go on any kind of ship or boat?

FF: No. Eight hours of school every day and that was it.

SH: What kind of liberty do you get when you are in school during wartime?

FF: I know we got a couple of weekends. ... Well, first of all, you didn't have that much money, but we used to go to Milwaukee.

SH: Did you go down to Chicago and up to Milwaukee?

FF: I think you went directly to Milwaukee. I never went to Chicago.

SH: Went on the ferry across.

FF: No train.

SH: Were there any shore patrol in Milwaukee?

FF: I'm sure there were, I'm sure there were. You know what I remember? and not that that's a super thing to remember, but they had all the Big Bands in those days and one Sunday morning, bright and early, we went to the movies and Charlie Barnet was there. [laughter] Don't ask me why I remember that, but he was there.

SH: This was when you were in torpedo school.

FF: Yes.

SH: Actually at the base.

FF: No, at the movie house ... in Milwaukee.

SH: Okay. In other words, you were on liberty in Milwaukee and you got up on a Sunday morning; interesting time.

FF: ... Yes. Well, they used to play seven or eight gigs a day. They used to go from morning until late night. Yes, what was his song, *Cherokee*?

CF: I think so.

FF: Yes.

SH: Were you a good dancer?

FF: No.

SH: You just liked the music.

FF: Yes. It was something to do. [laughter]

SH: When you volunteered for the submarines, how many out of your class in torpedo school did that?

FF: I don't know.

SH: Was there any financial reward for going into submarines, rather than a destroyer?

FF: When you're assigned to a boat, you get submarine pay, which is fifty percent of your base pay extra, and then, you get; of course, I think sea pay was twenty percent.

SH: Were you aware of that before you volunteered for submarines?

FF: I don't think so. I don't think so. That's what I wanted.

SH: From torpedo school, where did you go?

FF: New London, from Great Lakes to New London, ... to submarine school.

SH: Was there a leave, where you could get back to Brooklyn, between Great Lakes and New London?

FF: Well, you had every two out of three weekends off, so, you could get home.

SH: I meant en route.

FF: Oh, I don't remember.

SH: Again by train, the northern route then, into Connecticut?

FF: Yes, no planes in those days. Everything was train.

SH: You are going now to submarine school and you are traveling by train. Had anything changed from your original [plans]? You had gone there in August and, now, it has got to be almost January of 1944.

FF: February, I think it was. ... It was cold in New London, too. No, I don't recall any, you know, anything. New London was; there was a chief torpedoman there, Charlie Spritz, and, in the order of [importance], there was God, there was the commanding officer of the base, and then, Charlie Spritz. That was the order; he came just under God. He ruled with an iron hand and anybody you talk to that was in New London ... during the war years, you will hear about "Spritz's Navy."

SH: Was he fair?

FF: Didn't matter what [he was]; if he said it, that was it, and he used to reprimand officers, too. That's right.

SH: He was literally training everyone to be able to work a boat.

FF: He was in charge of everything on the base. ... He was the administrator, I guess, ... but, as I say, anybody you talk to and you [mention] Charlie Spritz, "Spritz's Navy." He was a legend. He's a legend.

SH: Talk about your submarine training; what was submarine school like?

FF: You know, I remember very little. You went to class every day, and I think it was eight weeks, and you learned different things about the submarine, the forward torpedo room, the after battery, control room, the engine rooms, but that was it. It was a general course on a submarine.
!@#\$%

SH: Were you physically on a boat, learning?

FF: No, no.

SH: This was classroom only.

FF: You went out either once or twice while you were in the submarine school, and they had what they called (O boats?), from World War I, and that's where you went out on the boat. I think you went out twice while you were in school.

SH: Did anything make you think you should have changed your mind?

FF: You know, this is gospel truth, when we dove, I didn't even know the boat submerged and we were under water. [laughter] ... No, I never looked back, the best years of my life, ... a fabulous bunch of guys, and especially during the war years. ... It was family. We were like a family.

SH: At this stage, in 1944, the losses in the submarines, everyone knows that it is high.

FF: "Overdue and presumed lost," yes.

SH: Did that affect anything that you were told?

FF: No, no.

SH: Do you know if any of the training was changed because of what was happening?

FF: Not that I'm aware of. As I say, it was a basic school, you know, like if you go to a mechanic's school; you learn the basics of the engine and the hydraulic systems and that's it.

SH: Had anyone doing the training there already been ...

FF: Oh, yes, oh, they were all veterans of the war patrols.

SH: World War II patrols?

FF: Yes, oh, yes, oh, absolutely.

SH: Were there things that they told you that you felt might be from their own personal experience?

FF: No. In other words, if you went [down to the] torpedo tubes, you had a chief torpedoman, he had made runs, and that was it. ... It was odd, that his name was (Laricella?) and he's Larry; he was from the neighborhood, on East 57th Street, and he was one of the teachers. [laughter] ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

RD: Did you ever do anything to cross Spritz, anything to get on his bad side?

FF: No, no, no. [laughter] You didn't have to do anything. Maybe he didn't like the way you wore your hat or something, "You're on report."

SH: Did you ever pull KP duty?

FF: No. It's funny, even when I went on the boat, I never [did]. I think, maybe in submarine school, I may have had it, but, on the boat, when you went aboard, ... (you were called?) what was a mess cook. ... Even there, I didn't do it. Mess cooks used to ... wash the dishes, prepare the salad, peel the potatoes, set the tables and whatever had to be done to help the cook.

RD: What was a typical day like on a submarine?

FF: Out at sea?

RD: Yes, out at sea.

FF: Well, you had three watches sections. You had from eight in the morning to four in the afternoon, four in the afternoon to midnight, and from midnight to eight. ... You had three watches sections, but you stood four on and eight off during that time, and, when you stood your watch, like, if you were lookout, you were up on the periscope shears for a half-hour. Then, you came down to the conning tower and you spent a half-hour on the wheel, and then, you came down to the control room and you were a half-hour on the radar. Then, you went to messenger. You just hung around the control room, and then, you repeated it and you went to different [stations]. You may have been the port lookout and you went to starboard lookout; it was a rotation up there, too.

RD: Was it ever crowded? Did you ever feel like there was not enough space for everybody, because the submarines are so tight?

FF: Well, there was a lot of "hot bunking," what they used to call "hot bunking." Not everybody had a bunk. So, when you didn't have a bunk, you found a bunk that was empty, you slept in it, until you got thrown out. [laughter] I was fortunate that, being a torpedoman, I was up in the forward torpedo room and we had four bunks, about six inches off the deck, that used to fold up, and I had one of those bunks. I always had a bunk on the boat.

SH: Out of submarine school, were you assigned to a boat right there?

FF: No. I was put in Relief Crew #3 and we went to the Mare Island Navy Yard, [in California], a five-day cross-country trip on a train, and we were assigned duty every morning at the shipyard. In other words, if a boat came in, the relief crew took over the boat and you had all different rates. ... Of course, the navy yard did all the work, but all the other work that had to be done was done by the relief crew. The crew was [on leave] and you had a barge that was assigned to the boat and the duty section slept on the barge.

SH: Do you remember anything about the five-day cross-country trip?

FF: Long. You sat in a chair all day, and then, at night, they were Pullmans. [Editor's Note: In Pullman train cars, passengers could sleep in berths.] Three times a day, you went back and ate,

and then, at night, they made up your bunk. The Pullman [porter] converted the bunks. I remember, I had an upper bunk and that was it.

SH: Was this Army and Navy traveling together?

FF: No, no, it was just submarine personnel.

SH: Was it?

FF: Yes.

SH: Who was in charge of you when you traveled across country like that?

FF: I have no idea.

SH: Was it a chief?

FF: I'm sure there was a chief somewhere.

SH: Did you know, at that point, that you were the relief crew? Were you traveling as a crew?

FF: Oh, yes, yes, ... our orders read, "Relief Crew #3."

RD: How different was the West Coast, as opposed to Brooklyn and the East Coast?

FF: Well, we were, I guess, about forty miles from Frisco, so, when you had liberty, you could go to Frisco. [Editor's Note: Mare Island Naval Shipyard is approximately twenty-five miles northeast of San Francisco.] I went to Napa, went to Vallejo. Well, the navy yard was in Vallejo, but it was entirely different, as far as Brooklyn goes. ... California had a lot of rural areas at that time. You left Vallejo and ... we used to hitchhike all over the place.

SH: Did you?

FF: Oh, yes, and so, you were on country roads. That took a lot of guts, because it was in the middle of the night, you're out in the middle of nowhere, waiting for a car to come by to give you a lift.

SH: How did they treat people in the service?

FF: Very good.

SH: On the East and West Coast?

FF: Very good. I had no experiences where, you know, somebody gave [me] a hard time. In fact, if a car came by, they always stopped. ...

RD: Did you ever feel any discrimination because you were Italian, whether in the service or on the streets, just because we were at war with the Italians?

FF: No. You've got to realize that half the population was foreigners. I mean, you were a *dago*, you're a *WOP*, you're a *polack*, you were a *kike*, you were a whatever, but that was common, a *mick*, that was very common. In those days, they didn't consider it discrimination. Today, they'd put you in jail.

SH: How long did you stay as part of this relief crew?

FF: About seven months.

SH: Do you remember what month you went out to Mare Island, to the West Coast?

FF: No, no, I don't. I know I went aboard the [USS] *Muskallunge* [(SS-262)] in March of '45. That, I remember.

SH: Why did you get assigned off of the relief crew and onto the *Muskallunge*?

FF: I don't know whether I asked the chief of the boat whether he needed somebody or they assigned [me]. I don't remember.

SH: Was this one of the boats that you were providing relief crew to?

FF: That's right. They were in for overhaul.

SH: What condition were the boats coming into Mare Island in, when they came in?

FF: Well, most of them were in good condition. They'd come in [because] maybe there was a new piece of gear that they could install or overhaul the engines or do something. I don't recall ever seeing a boat come in that was battered, all right. I don't recall that, no.

SH: Did anyone talk about their experiences?

FF: Oh, yes, that's all they used to do. We still do. [laughter] Yes, the only boat I remember that [was damaged] was the [USS] *Salmon* [(SS-182)]. (The *Salmon* was severely damaged). They took a beating and I think they came into Mare Island, but, other than that, the only one I remember was the [USS] *Franklin* [(CV-13)], the aircraft carrier. Oh, that thing had; I think they lost eight hundred men. ... That was at Pearl Harbor [when I saw it]. That was really, really battered. ... [Editor's Note: The USS *Franklin* was severely damaged by a Japanese dive-bomber on March 19, 1945, near Honshu. The *Franklin* suffered 724 men killed-in-action and 265 wounded.]

SH: They were actually towing some of the ships back from Pearl.

FF: I don't recall that, no. Mare Island was strictly submarines.

SH: That is what I thought.

FF: No, they were strictly submarines. There were no destroyers or [other ships]. The only thing I remember about Mare Island, as far as surface craft, the [USS] *Howard W. Gilmore* [(AS-16)], the tender, submarine tender, was built there and, I remember, ... it was on the river and it would slide down the ways and they had all kinds of cables attached to the front, so [that] it wouldn't go across the river and into the mud.

SH: Did you have a tender that you worked on? At Mare Island, can you describe what was there? Is it the dry docks? You talked about the barge.

FF: Well, you had dry docks, yes. I don't know; I don't recall a marine railway. They're the ones that slide into the water and the boats go in. I don't recall any of those there, but, if they had to take large machinery, they removed a "soft patch," that they could take off a pressure hull and take equipment out, and then, put the soft patch back, but all kinds of work was done. You may have gotten all new engines, you may [get] a new radar, new periscopes, whatever, because, at that time, they were coming out with a lot of new equipment and, every time a boat came in, they got it.

SH: One of the things that submarine crews are famous for is, they got the first choice of the food, the supplies that came in. Did that also apply to Mare Island and the relief crews?

FF: Oh, no, no, no. That was ... when you left. You know, if there were fresh strawberries around, you got fresh strawberries onboard; if there were apples, you got apples. When you come back from patrol, right on the dock was any fresh fruit that was on the island, or wherever you were, milk, butter, whatever. ...

SH: Eggs. [laughter]

FF: The eggs used to go bad and the butter rancid. We used to crack one of the eggs, they used to stink, sulfur. God, they were terrible. Yes, ... but, when you left for sea, if there was anything on the island, or wherever you left [from], if you left from Saipan, Midway, if there was anything there, ... you got it, and the same thing when you came in. Right on the dock was all the fresh fruit, the milk, ice cream, whatever. We used to make ice cream, but that was there.

SH: In March of 1945, you want to get off the relief crew and actually get on a boat. Can you talk about the process that you go through and where you went?

FF: Well, you go aboard and you sign in with the deck watch. You know, you've got your orders. You go down below and you see the yeoman and ... he takes your records and everything and he also logs you in, and then, see the chief of the boat and you're ready to go to sea. You get a bunk and you get your duty station, what your duties are going to be. ...

SH: Between talking to the chief of the boat about making the switch and actually going aboard as an active crewmember, how much time elapsed?

FF: I don't remember. I have no idea.

SH: Some guys talk about it just being a matter of hours.

FF: No. Well, sometimes, if a boat was going out and somebody got sick, they may need a radioman; you may have had fifteen minutes to get your gear aboard and out you went.

SH: However, that did not happen to you.

FF: No, no, no. It was an orderly transition. In fact, we had trials. We used to go out for trials and make sure everything was operating, and then, we left.

SH: This boat had been in for a refit.

FF: Yes. What I remember, really, when you went under the Golden Gate Bridge, this side was very nice and very calm. Once you went under that bridge, it was rough and, I remember, I just barely grabbed a lifeline. I was topside.

SH: Really?

FF: Yes. It was very rough on the other [side]. I don't know why, I have no idea, and then, I was assigned to the forward torpedo room. I had a bunk, and I went on.

SH: How long did the sea trials last before you left on patrol?

FF: I would say, on the average, about two weeks. We used to bring out yard workers, if they thought there'd be a problem with the engines or whatever. They'd come out to find out what it was; about two weeks, I would say.

SH: Being assigned as a torpedoman, did you see any change in the torpedoes in the time that you were in?

FF: Well, the Mark 14 was *the* torpedo. That was *the* torpedo. Toward the end of the war, they came out with a Mark 18, which is a battery-operated, electrical torpedo. I don't even know if we carried any. ...

SH: You did not have the Mark 18.

FF: ... I don't think. I don't know. I couldn't swear to it, ... but the Mark 14 was *the* torpedo. Even after the war, we carried those.

SH: Do you remember the date of your first patrol?

FF: ... From Mare Island, we went to Hawaii, and Roosevelt had just about died, I think just before we got in, April, he died, of '45, and it was a short while later. We went out. We did some more sea trials, and then, we left for Formosa.

SH: Formosa, nice, quiet territory.

FF: Well, we assigned to "lifeguard duty." A lot of the boats did lifeguard duty.

SH: Explain to Ryan what lifeguard duty is, please.

FF: They were doing a lot of bombing of Japan at that time and, of course, a lot of planes got hit and they would ditch and you would find [the crews]. George [H. W.] Bush was one of them. You would find a little rubber dinghy and a pilot sitting in there and you would rescue him, but we used to go from Formosa to China, back and forth. We never found any. ... I hope nobody got shot down, but we never found any pilots, and that was lifeguard duty.

RD: How long did you do that for?

FF: Probably a month. ... We went from Hawaii to Midway, we topped off with fuel, then, we went on station. ... I think we were there about a month, and then, we either stopped at Guam or Saipan and got more fuel, and then, went back [to] Midway for rest and recreation.

SH: What was on Midway?

FF: Nothing, a marine railway and gooney birds.

SH: Basically, you just got to get off of the boat, is what the recreation was.

FF: Yes, yes.

SH: Were you well fed and taken care of there?

FF: All I know is they had saltwater showers, so, we never got a freshwater shower.

SH: Can you explain a little bit about the facilities on the boat, for things like making ice cream, fresh water?

FF: ... We had an ice cream machine and we made ice cream. Fresh water, when you left, I think the tanks held either fifty-four hundred or fifty-six hundred gallons of water. When you left, they were full and you had to reserve one-third of that water for batteries, because we had ... 512 battery cells that had to be watered. Water was rationed. We used to be able to use four hundred gallons of water a day, and that's for ninety people, cooking, coffee, brushing your teeth, washing your face, and that was it. ... If you went over four hundred, they announced it the next day, but four hundred, now, stop to think of it, how much water you use a day. We had two distillers that made water, but, again, it was not to be wasted. Batteries came first, and then, you know, cooking and things of that nature. The best one was a bath. Once a week, you got a

bucket and you went behind number one engine; the condensating water from the air conditioning. You got a bucket of water, you went in the shower, you washed your hair, you showered with this, [laughter] you rinsed yourself, and that was your weekly bath. Did we stink? Yes; between cigarette smoke, diesel fuel and body odor, we stunk.

SH: How much time did you spend on the surface, as opposed to under water?

FF: Well, toward the end of the war, Japan was a defeated nation, so, we ran on the surface. The only time we dove, and, like, when we were on lifeguard duty, we never dove, [unless] if radar or a lookout picked up a plane, regardless [of whether it was] American, Japanese, German. We didn't care what it was, if it got seven-and-a-half miles, you dove, emergency dive, because there was that old saying, "Sighted sub, sank same." We didn't want to be one. So, we dove, but, other than that, we were back and forth, always on the surface, and I used to tell her, [I saw] the most gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous sunrises and sunsets you ever saw in your whole life, absolutely. I was lucky. I had the four to eight watch, ... four in the morning until eight AM and four to eight PM. So, we used to see the sunset and sunrise. ... She'll tell you, we were in Las Vegas, the OD, [officer of the deck], we hadn't seen each other in forty years, he says, "You remember the sunrises and sunsets?" [laughter] ... Other than diving from planes, we rode the surface all the time. In the beginning of the war, they used to stay submerged all day and come up at night to charge batteries.

SH: By the time you were there, though, in March of 1945, you spent most of your time on the surface.

FF: All the time. As I say, we dove a lot from planes.

SH: Did you ever fire your torpedoes, other than in training?

FF: Once.

SH: Can you talk about that?

FF: ... Later on, we were up in the Kurile Islands and August, up there, is always fog, very thick fog, and we ran into, we didn't run into, radar picked up, what they called sea trucks, and people say, "What's a sea truck?" The Kurile Islands is a chain of islands with no bridges, so, the only inter-island activity was by boat and they used to call them sea trucks, but they were big. ... Radar picked them up on August 8th. The reason I remember it is, we lost a shipmate up there then, and we fired at them and they shot back and we shot them and, well, anyway, we had one guy killed, Charlie Whitman.

SH: How was he killed?

FF: We were firing guns at each other. ...

SH: You were using the deck guns.

FF: Yes. We had machine guns, we had twenty-millimeter, we had forty-millimeter, we had fifty-caliber, the whole one side, and they got us. I don't know if we hit any of them or we fired a torpedo at them. Whether we hit them, I have no idea. [Editor's Note: The *Muskallunge*'s guns damaged two of the Japanese vessels.]

SH: There was more than one of the sea trucks there then.

FF: I think so. I think there was three, and that's the only time we fired a torpedo.

SH: What do you do when someone's injured like that?

FF: He was dead.

SH: Killed right there.

FF: ... When they carried him below, he was dead and we buried him up there.

SH: Buried him at sea.

FF: That was another thing not many people did; I was part of a burial detail.

SH: Can you explain to us what that is?

FF: We had no refrigeration. In other words, when somebody died, you couldn't bring him back. There was no way to keep him. So, we used to bury them, wrap them in canvas or whatever you had, with weights, and you had a ceremony topside, then, you picked up one end of whatever it was, a board or whatever, and they went overboard. That was it. ...

SH: What had been his duty station? What was his rate?

FF: He was an electrician's mate, third class, Charles Whitman, but, when you have gun actions, everybody comes, you know, because you only need [so many men at their regular stations]. Like, an electrician, all you needed were two in ... the maneuvering room, so, the rest of them were all at gun action. I was on the five-inch gun. I was a pointer on the five-inch gun.

SH: Was the torpedo fired while you were on the surface?

FF: Oh, yes.

SH: Were you on a gun or were you firing the torpedo?

FF: No, I was topside. I was on the five-inch gun, five-inch twenty-five, [the five-inch twenty-five-caliber (MK40) cannon].

SH: Is that the only time that you were engaged like that?

FF: Yes.

RD: Was that on the *Muskallunge*?

FF: *Muskallunge*, yes.

RD: Did you ever switch off that submarine to another one?

FF: During the war? No, the war ended August 14th.

RD: Were you involved in occupation duty with it?

FF: Yes. We were on station ... on August 14th; I'm going to give you something. The word came out that the war had ended, and then, we got word, the same morning, to cease all hostilities, but remain on station. Then, we got word that we were going to go to Tokyo Bay at such-and-such, then, that was postponed a day or so, but, on September 1st, ... we rendezvoused with eleven other boats outside Tokyo Bay and we went into Tokyo Bay. I've got pictures of that.

SH: You were actually there for the surrender?

FF: Yes, and, as you went in, both sides of ... the channel, or whatever it was, [was] all lined with Allied ships. They had everything there, and I counted, on the computer, I think there were two hundred ships. Submarines were the only ones that were allowed in Tokyo Bay. We went all the way in and, sitting on the capstan, I could see the [USS] *Missouri* [(BB-63)]. We were anchored there.

SH: They were just like this, out from the *Missouri*.

FF: We were tied up to a tender.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: The USS *Proteus* (AS-19) was the tender that everybody was tied up to.

FF: Right, yes.

SH: What were you told to do? Did you have to put on your dress uniform? What was the standard?

FF: One thing unique about submarines [was, we] never wore dress uniforms onboard, never.

SH: Did you have them?

FF: No. [laughter] I didn't, anyway. No, no matter where we went, we always went in in dungarees, and I think it used to kill the surface ships, because they all used to come in and they

would be lined up against the [rail] and we always went in and we were in our dungarees, and that was it.

SH: And smelling good.

FF: [laughter] No, really stinky, and they signed on the 2nd [of September 1945] and we left on the 3rd. We all left on the 3rd.

SH: Where did you head?

FF: We headed for Hawaii.

SH: Was there any kind of a celebration?

FF: No, no. We didn't even have any ceremony or celebration and didn't even have a strawberry shortcake. No, it was just an ordinary day. ...

SH: Was there any sort of a celebration on the boat when you got the order to cease all hostilities?

FF: No. If I recall, and I don't know whether this is a fact or not, I think we had just started a run. We had gone to four engines and we were going to go in and bomb an oil tank, if I recall correctly, and, oh, we got the word and made a big "uey" [U-turn] and went the opposite way, and then, we were told to stay on station.

SH: Was there any reaction when you heard that Franklin Delano Roosevelt had died?

FF: No.

SH: The men did not react at all.

FF: No.

SH: How often would you get mail from home, when you would go into Guam or Saipan?

FF: It depended, it depended. It could take six months, if it caught up to you.

SH: When you were on station, did you have a sister ship that was also patrolling in the next sector?

FF: ... You were always alone. It was rare that [you would not be alone]. Even when you say, "wolf pack," now, you think of a wolf pack, you think of a whole bunch of boats going out together. When they got on station, they all separated. I don't know. I watch these nature shows on the wolves. You notice, the wolves, when they're after prey, they all [cooperate]. This guy chases the animal so far, there's a guy waiting here, he takes over, and they exhaust them. It was the same thing with the wolf pack. Some boat spotted something; [if] they couldn't get to it,

they'd tell another, "Hey, guy's heading your way," and he'd be waiting for him. ... That was a wolf pack, but, primarily, [we] always operated alone, you know, unlike the surface craft. They went out in armadas. They'd have a carrier, three battleships, destroyers, the aircraft carrier; when you're out alone, we were all by our lonesome.

SH: Were the men that were on the boat with you from all over?

FF: All over ... the country.

SH: Really?

FF: Yes. The cook was a man by the name of (Hoak?). He was a sheepherder from Utah. One of the bakers was from Minneapolis. We had them from all over, all over the country, Oklahoma, we had a guy, "Brownie." His name was Brown, so, he was Brownie. He was from Oklahoma. He was funny. [laughter] He was a fireman, I was [a torpedoman], and we had to stand wheel watches. ... The OD yelled down to him, one day, he says, "Brown," he says, "You're a 180," ... something like 180 degrees, "off course." He said, "No, sir, I'm only 135." [laughter]

SH: Did you have to be qualified to operate all sectors of the boat?

FF: Well, you had to earn your "dolphins."

SH: Can you tell Ryan what that means, to earn your dolphins, please?

[TAPE PAUSED]

FF: ... When you go aboard, you have to, what they say, "qualify." Now, let's say you're an electrician; you have to go up to the torpedo room and learn how to fire a torpedo; you have to go in the control room and know how to operate the bow planes, the stern planes, the equipment in there; how to start an engine; you have to learn all the different compartments. ... When you qualified, they gave you these, [the Submarine Qualification Insignia, colloquially known as "dolphins" after its design]; you're allowed to wear these. Now, we didn't have these when I was in. We used to wear a patch on your arm here, ... but that's what you used to do. You were allowed to wear the "dolphins" then, ... and that was "qualified." ... After the war, they came out with these, [insignia pins], because the officers used to wear those. ... [Editor's Note: Mr. Fatale begins describing photographs of a submarine.] Now, this is the diving station on the submarine, right here. You had to know how to (valve?). This is the auxiliary steering. Right above it, in the conning tower, is the same thing, but, if the conning tower got blown off and the hatch was closed, ... you could steer from down here. This is ... where the bow planes and the stern planes [were]. This guy had the depth and the guy next to him operated ... the bubble, the angle. So, you've got two wheels here, one, two, yes; this controlled the angle and this guy controlled the depth. That's the way that worked.

SH: Those are great photographs.

FF: Yes, yes, and you got one of these when you qualified. ... [Referring to a photograph], see where we wore the "dolphins?" That's when I was young and tender. [laughter]

SH: I see you did have a set of whites.

FF: Oh, that was in Panama, yes. ...

SH: Why were you in Panama? Were you on the way home?

FF: No. ... I was in Panama and I went to Panama in March of '46, ... March or February of '46. ... I rode the [USS] *Burrfish* [(SS-312)] down, and then, I went to the [USS] *Cutlass* [(SS-478)]. ... This is the thing I wrote for the local newspaper here, the (Leisuretown?) newspaper, about V-J Day, because, [for] reasons unknown, again, getting back to history, I was so aggravated, on the sixtieth anniversary of V-J Day, *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, all the television stations, nobody, like it never happened, like it never happened. You don't have any idea how this infuriated [me]. I read the *New York Times* from cover to cover to cover, not a word, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the same, Channel 6 Action News, not a word. I tell you, I was fit to be tied, and you can have that, if you want to read it later on.

SH: Great, thank you.

FF: But, anyway, here's what you were allowed to wear when you qualified.

RD: That was a patch you would sew onto your arm.

FF: Yes. That was a patch. Then, some time after the war, ... we were allowed to wear the "dolphins." ... [Editor's Note: Mr. Fatale continues to look through his files.] This is a peacetime submarine newspaper. During the war, we had the same thing. ... This is onionskin, [what] they used to call onionskin. A radioman, you'd get the news and he'd put out a newspaper and you had one for the forward torpedo room, one for the officers' quarters, one for the after torpedo room and the control room, and I think this is, where did I steal this one from? the forward torpedo room, forward room, and it gave the baseball scores.

SH: How often did you print this out?

FF: Every day you're out at sea.

SH: Really?

FF: Yes, and the schedule of the game, and we had a chief radioman, (Wahoo?), who was really, really a good writer, and, every day, he'd print a story about one of the men and, here, we have, "The Biography of (Lippie Coopie?):" "Around the year 1922, in the suburbs of New York City, in a small community known as Brooklyn, a bouncing boy was added to the (Coopie?) Family. After much thought and consideration, his parents decided to keep it, [laughter] even though he was very strange and murmured strange sounds," but, anyway ...

SH: There was somebody else from Brooklyn on the boat.

FF: Oh, yes, (Coopie?). He was a legend, too, but, anyway, ... I don't know if you're familiar with the submarine at all. This is what they called the fleet-type boat. If you go to USS *Pampanito* [(SS-383), now a museum ship docked at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco], on the computer, you'll get it, ... but this is what the interior looked like, all right. You had the forward torpedo room.

SH: That was where your bunk was.

FF: Yes, I had a deck bunk there, until I graduated. Then, they had the forward battery, which was the officers' quarters. Then, you had the control room, and then, you had the conning tower and just beyond the control room was the crew's mess and behind that was a compartment where thirty-six people slept. ... What they used to say was, "Seventy-two stinking feet and thirty-six assholes," [laughter] stinking assholes or whatever. Then, you had the forward engine room, the after engine room. Now, once the engines were started, they had nothing to do with running the boat or controlling speed or anything. They turned it over to the maneuvering room, where the electricians took over, and we used to have what you called diesel electric. The engines turned over motors and the motors were what ran the boat, and the electricians in the maneuvering room are the ones that took that, and then, you had the after torpedo room. Now, in the forward torpedo room, that was a sleeping compartment, too, believe it or not. We had ... sixteen bunks, and then, you had the after battery compartment, which was thirty-six bunks, and then, you had sleepers in the after torpedo room, but that's what the interior [was]. I got this when I was in San Francisco, on the *Pampanito*.

SH: Since you guys were all on watches, did you have a standard three meals a day?

FF: Oh, absolutely, absolutely, yes. We used to stand four hours watch and eight hours off, all right. When you were off, if you weren't overhauling torpedoes or taking care of them, you were off, all right. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: You had breakfast.

FF: ... Yes, and the people that were on watch during breakfast hours; well, breakfast, they went on at eight o'clock, so, they ate breakfast before they went on watch, and then, you went from eight to twelve o'clock. Now, the people that had the twelve to four watch ate before going on watch. People on four to eight PM watch were relieved to have supper, but there was always a pot of soup on. ... She gets a big charge out of it; Wednesday, don't ask me how it started, where it started, who started it, ... we used to have cornbread with pork and beans for breakfast. I have no idea who started it, but, anyway, there was always pork and beans left over and they were left on the table in a pan. ... You were going through and you saw the pork and beans, you grabbed two slices of bread and make a pork and beans sandwich, and that kills her. [laughter]

SH: After the surrender, you came back to Hawaii on the *Muskallunge*. What happened then?

FF: ... We went through the Panama Canal. We stopped in Panama.

SH: You were still on the same boat.

FF: From Panama, we went to Staten Island, arriving November 3. We went to Norfolk for Navy Day, November 11. We went to New London from Norfolk, and then, we went to Philadelphia for decommissioning, and it was cold, I mean, it was cold, and somebody said, "They need a torpedoman on the *Burrfish*. It's going to Panama."

SH: You volunteered.

FF: I said, "That's me," and I went on the *Burrfish* and we were down there just a very short while, extremely short while, and they said the *Burrfish* was going back to the States for decommissioning.

SH: What were you doing in Panama?

FF: ... They had five submarines and five surface craft down there. They didn't know what to do with the ships and we used to play hunter-killer. We used to go out to Las Perlas Islands. It's about fifty miles off the coast of Balboa, and we used to operate. We used to dive and they'd have to find us. ... They had a big anchorage there. We were there two nights, and then, the third day, we came back into Panama, and I don't know why, but ... they said, "The *Burrfish* is going back to the States for decommissioning," and they said, "Who wants to stay?"

SH: Volunteered again. [laughter]

FF: And I stayed in Panama and I got transferred to the *Cutlass*, and that was in March of '46. ... This is what the *Cutlass* looked like.

SH: Is this the same type of boat?

FF: They're all fleet-type. ... Once you got below, the compartmentation was exactly the same, different equipment in different places, but, basically, well, you couldn't get lost. You either went forward or you went aft, back and forth. [laughter] There was no in-between.

SH: Did you have to re-qualify on each boat?

FF: No, no. They were all the same. You never re-qualify, and I went to the *Cutlass* for two years, and that was it.

SH: Before the war was over, can you talk about the most memorable place or incident that you remember?

FF: Well, Tokyo Bay, without a question, being a part of the occupation force. That was really, really something, because it was a long run up the channel. I don't know how long it was, but we

were two boats in a row and all the ships anchored on either side, and then, going in and seeing the *Missouri* there and all the boats tying up there. ... We were twelve boats, really, really, ... you know, it's something you can't forget.

SH: Did you have a good skipper, a good XO, [executive officer]?

FF: On the *Muskallunge*, we started out, ... when we left the States, we had a skipper by the name of Lejaune and he was having a problem. I don't know whether he cracked up or what, but, one night, off the coast of Nagasaki, there was another boat there we rendezvoused with and they had what they called a prospective commanding officer. He was training to be a commanding officer. If he had finished the patrol, he would have been back to the States to pick up a boat. ... Well, anyway, with a little rubber boat, we switched. Lejaune went to there, and then, we got the man by the name of (Lawrence?) and, really, during the war, you really don't know too much about him. ... Then, I went to Panama and probably the most brilliant man I ever met in my whole life was our skipper down there.

SH: On which boat?

FF: The *Cutlass*, absolutely fabulous, fabulous man.

SH: Who was that?

FF: His name was (Frank Lynch?).

SH: Why was he so impressive?

FF: First of all, he was a brilliant man, ... but he was a people person. He knew everybody on the boat. He knew whether you were married, you were single, you had children, you didn't have children. If he was with the Admiral and he spotted you, he'd come over and talk to you. He knew Catherine, ... he knew everybody, and his wife was just as nice. In fact, this man that wrote this book, [*Silent Running: My Years on a World War II Attack Submarine*], [Vice] Admiral [James F.] Calvert, I ran into him and we were talking about (Lynch?) and he said, "If he hadn't had the [accident] in Ceylon, he would have been Chief of Naval Operations." He was regimental commander at the Academy ... and he was a true, true gentleman. We went to visit him up at his home in Stonington. ... I stopped over, and he was working in the yard. ... He says, "Come on in." I said, "No, I've got people in the car." He said, "Well, that don't make any [difference]." He went over and got Catherine and my friend and brought us in. We had coffee and he was really, really a fabulous individual, but the two years on the *Cutlass* was very, very happy ones. ...

SH: It sounds like a lot of happens between Tokyo Bay and the *Cutlass*.

FF: Well, ... we started to put the *Muskallunge* out of commission.

SH: In Philadelphia.

FF: That was in December, we went in December, beginning of December.

SH: Of 1945.

FF: '45. Cold, just can't believe how cold it was, and we were decommissioning the boat, doing work, and, when they wanted somebody in Panama, I went on the *Burrfish*.

SH: When was the first time you got back to Brooklyn after the war ended? Was it when you brought the *Muskallunge* back? At the shipyard there?

FF: It wasn't a shipyard, it was just piers, and we went in there.

SH: Waiting your turn to get down for the decommissioning.

FF: They didn't know what to do with them. They had to figure out what they were going to do with all these boats. You know, there was no rhyme or reason, but they had to figure [it] out. First of all, you had about three hundred boats you had to take care of and, "What are we going to do with them? Which ones are going out and which ones are staying in?" Later on, they put them all back in commission and gave them to Turkey, Chile, Spain, Italy; they spread them all over the world.

SH: After the war ends, in your crew, did anybody have enough points to get off and get out?

FF: Yes, we got a couple that got out, and I had to finish my "kiddie cruise," which was not over until '47.

SH: You had to wait until you were twenty-one.

FF: I had to wait until I was twenty-one.

SH: When did you get back home for the first time; when you came into Staten Island?

FF: I don't know what I had to do; probably, the next day. I don't recall. I may have had the duty when we got in.

SH: When did you meet Mrs. Fatale?

FF: That was a long time ago. [laughter]

CF: We're married sixty years.

SH: Congratulations.

FF: And that was the story of *Muskallunge*. Then, we had the *Burrfish*. There was a crazy bunch of guys on these boats. They're really serious. I could tell you stories. ...

SH: That is what we are hoping you will do.

FF: ... When we used to anchor in Las Perlas Islands, one of the surface ships used to send a boat over and we'd go have swimming parties on the islands. ...

SH: What is a swimming party?

FF: Well, people that weren't on watch that want to go for a swim, they'd go over to the beach there, and the boat broke down that was supposed to bring them back. So, three of the men, you won't believe it, built a raft. They got a couple of sticks and they started paddling back to the boat and they weren't making too much progress, and then, it started getting dark and the only thing they had was the lights [on the ship to guide them]. When you anchor, you have a light on the front and a light in the back and the current got the best of them, so, they were drifting out into the Pacific. They were in the Pacific, but they were drifting. Well, anyway, ... we were topside, we'd just started a movie when they announced, "Station the maneuvering watch, station the [maneuvering watch]." About ten ships got underway, without any permission, because they'd gotten word that these guys never came back. When the boat got fixed and they came back, they said, "So-and-So? No." So, we got underway and, as I say, it was an anchorage, so, of course, there were buoys. ... They were going past a buoy and the three of them jumped off the raft and started for the buoy and two of them made it and the other guy got back to the raft. ... As the ships were going out, these guys had their shirt offs and ... they're sending signals on the buoy light and they were picked up, and then, going further out to sea, this guy, the gods were with him, they found him, sitting on a raft, drifting out in the Pacific. The Skipper was a great, great guy. He called the three of them to his stateroom the next day. He says, "Any time you want to ride on a raft, let me know. We'll build a raft, we'll tie a line on it and I'll pull you." [laughter] We used to have one guy, Louie (Spilchel?); when he went out to sea, during patrols, he never left the after torpedo room, never left the after torpedo room, because there was a toilet back there and they used to bring food back to him. He spent the whole patrol back there. He was a nut job and, one day, in the middle of winter, we're in Philadelphia and they found him in Baltimore, with no shoes, in a snowstorm. [laughter]

SH: Submarine crews have the reputation for being slightly unruly when they get into port. Did this hold true for the boats that you were on?

FF: Well, we'd go out and drink and take it from there. You know, some of them got belligerent, others were lovers, and so, it depended on the individuals, but there were some good fights, yes.

SH: Against other boat crews or Marines?

FF: Well, anybody.

SH: Did you have any Marines on your boat?

FF: No, no. ... I think the [USS] *Nautilus* [(SS-168)] and the [USS] *Barracuda* [(SS-163)], Carlson's Raiders, ... they had them.

SH: Did you have a corpsman?

FF: Oh, yes. ... Somewhere down there, there's a picture of him. In the after battery, which was the crew's [area], he came here, this was a passageway, went all the way back, and then, there were two bunks together and there was another little aisle here. He had a little locker back there and that was ... the medical set-up.

SH: He was a corpsman.

FF: Yes, yes. We had a guy, George Bittner, "Doc" Bittner, a nut job if ever God created one; smart, but you never knew what the hell George was going to do. ... I ran into George in Panama after the war, at church. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm on the *Cutlass*," blah, blah, blah. He says, "Come on over the house for supper." I said, "Okay." So, I go there. In Panama, everything was built on stilts. ... I go there and he's got a boa constrictor hanging. He killed it and it's hanging there. He's telling me stories. When he first went down, he was the corpsman at the naval ammunition depot and these were Quonset huts in the jungle, where they kept that [ammunition]. ... They had roads and he had a jeep and he used to go out, he says, especially after a rain. He said, "The condensation, the heat of evaporation, whatever," he says, "all the animals come out," and he used to have a gun, he said, but, then, he couldn't hunt with guns any more, so, he went out and bought a bow and arrow. ... He used to go out in the jungle, all by himself, and he says, "Come on, I'll take you for a ride." So, we go up in the jungle. ... I'm a Brooklyn boy, I don't want to know the [jungle], and we get out of the jeep, park on the road. He says, "Follow me," and he's got a machete and he's cutting through the jungle and ... we come out on another road. He says, "Stay here." He says, "I'll go get the jeep." So, I said, "If I stay here," I said, "I'm keeping the machete." "Oh," he said, "all right, here." He went back. He says, "Let's go have a drink at the club." So, we're going down, "Whoosh." He swerves with the jeep. "George, what the hell are you doing?" "Didn't you see the snake?" I said, "No." I said, "I don't want to see it." "Oh," he said, "I'm going to get it." He got out of the jeep and he beheaded it. He found it and he cut its head off and threw it in the back of the jeep. So, I said to him, "George, was that a poisonous snake?" He said, "I forgot to look." He goes back and he finds the head and he looked. He said, "No." [laughter]

SH: He was in charge of your good health while you were on the boats.

FF: The funny thing, he said, when we get to ... whatever club it was, he takes the snake out of the back and puts it on his seat. He says, "Nobody'll steal the jeep now." [laughter] ... When we were going through the Canal, coming home, him and (Harrison?), you met him ...

CF: Yes.

FF: ... They got drunk and George is carrying Harry back on his shoulder, he's got him on his shoulder, and Harry's screaming, "Put me down, you SOB. Put me down." ... He said, "You want to get off here?" He threw him off on a concrete pier. He had a lump on his head the next day; it was the size of a baseball, [laughter] but that was submarine life. ...

SH: Did anybody try to make any kind of alcohol when you were on patrol?

FF: No, no.

SH: Nothing for medicinal purposes.

FF: No. We had, one time, I'll never forget, at Pearl Harbor, a guy, he was a real alcoholic, and the torpedo alcohol will blind you. It had something in it. You could go blind and this guy comes down, he's drunk as a skunk. He's begging for some alcohol. I wouldn't give it to him, nobody would give it to him. It's liable to kill him, but, yes, there were alkie and I'm sure a lot of guys made alcohol, but, then, Panama was a fabulous place. We had a great, great time down there. We had five boats, then, we were down to three. We had the *Cutlass*, [USS] *Conger* [(SS-477)] and [USS] *Diablo* [(SS-479)], were left, and it was like family, you know. "Hey, what are you guys having for lunch?" "Okay, I'll be over," you know, back and forth, back and forth, and we used to operate together. We used to go out to Las Perlas. ... The "bum boats," we used to call them "bum boats," the natives used to come out with fruit and sell it. We used to buy it. I used to buy her avocados. In August of '47, we start our historic trip. [Editor's Note: From August 23, 1947, to October 2, 1947, the *Cutlass*, the *Conger* and the *Diablo* conducted a practice war patrol from the Canal Zone down the west coast of South America and around Cape Horn.] We went around the Horn and, of course, we had to cross the Equator and that was a big ceremony. All the "pollywogs" got ...

SH: Would you tell Ryan about that?

FF: ... In the service, if you've never crossed the Equator, you are a "pollywog" and you are lower than the lowest slime ball you can find and, if you've crossed, you're a "shellback." So, when you cross the Equator, ... this was a big, big ceremony. It starts the day before, and I'll show you the book, some of the pictures, and you are [subject to] all kinds of harassment and demeaning things you have to do. ... Our meals, we used to eat family style on the boat, you know, the dishes were set out and knives and forks. The day before we're crossing the Equator, all the pollywogs had to eat out of a wooden trough. They made wooden troughs and all the food was dumped in there, mashed potatoes, the vegetables, the meat. It was a real mess and you had to eat out of that. No utensils. That was done. Then, you got all kinds of shaves, haircuts. You know, they go around, you'd have an "S" or this side was shaved, that side [was not]. Then, the following day, of course, we didn't drop anchor, but the engines were stopped and all the pollywogs had to strip down to their boxer shorts and you came topside. We used to have what they called a gun access hatch, we used to ship ammunition, if you had a fight, and you come out of there and you were met with a fire hose, with seawater, and that was cold, really cold. Then, you had to get on your hands and knees. ... You had a summons; I'll show you a summons somewhere in there. You had to go before the royal court and ... they used to read [charges] and, while you're going there, you're being paddled. They had these big paddles and, if you don't think it stings, on wet underwear, a cold one, [laughter] you've got to think again, and you had to go before the royal court and somebody read the charges and the stupidest thing you could say is, "Not guilty," because, then, you got paddled until you're guilty. ... We had a fellow onboard, ... used to call him "Hog-Nosed" Johnson. He was a motormac. He was the royal baby and on his stomach was all kinds of grease, shavings. They went over to the shops and got all kinds of junk

and you had to kiss his stomach and make him laugh and, if he didn't laugh, you were in trouble. Then, you went to various different places and you got more shavings, you went before the Doc and he gave you a pill that made you urinate purple and, all the while, you were paddled. Then, they had a chute, a canvas chute. It had to be maybe eight to ten feet long and all the garbage, leftover food, whatever, coffee grounds, whatever, was in there and you had to crawl through that, and then, you came out and you were a "shellback."

RD: Quite a ceremony.

FF: Oh, it was, it was. Everybody, including this little [dog], even he had to go through it. That was Bow Planes.

SH: You had your dog onboard.

FF: Oh, yes.

SH: What was his name?

FF: Bow Planes. ...

SH: Where did you pick him up?

FF: He's a Panamanian. He was a mutt.

SH: Is this the first time you had a dog onboard?

FF: Yes, on the *Cutlass*, very famous dog. He's in the library up at New London; first dog to ever go up in a rescue bell, the first dog to go ... around the Horn in a submarine, first dog to go through the Straits of Magellan in a submarine. ... He even had the Captain buffaloed. I don't know where he used to go on the weekend, but, when we tied up, he would leave, I don't know where he went, and he'd come back eight o'clock Monday morning. He had very short legs. ... One morning, he don't show up. They held the boat up a half-hour for him and he never came back. We left, but everybody knew about Planes, so, they all took care of him. When he came back, we had a regular court-martial. [laughter] That's right, he had a regular court-martial. What we used to do, we used to have captain's mast, they used to take one chair and turn another one upside down on it, so [that] the four legs were sticking up, had a piece of Plexiglas they put on that. Then, they had green cloth, like pool table cloth, put over that and that was the way you had your court-martials and he got court-martialed. He is probably the only dog that has every kind of record you could think of, same record that anybody on a boat had. ... That was Bow Planes.

SH: What I am looking at is a picture of this really cute, little, scruffy mutt dog. He has a uniform on, with his name and a set of "dolphins." It has got the collar and Bow Planes, for bow-wow. [laughter]

FF: He has the exact same service record that anybody on the boat has. He even got graded. That's right. So, you laugh ...

SH: Yes, you even held up the boat up for him. I cannot believe they held the boat up for him.

FF: Yes, yes. Well, he had a pay record. [laughter] "Next of kin: doubtful; Relationship: That is, too; Branch of service was, your best-suited [for] submarines." You know, it was funny, he's got his paw; you know, we had our fingerprints, he's got his paw. ... This is, "Leisure Time Activities: Sleeping and liberty, sports, chasing motor launches. Talent for Public Entertainment: Barking."

SH: You guys had too much time on your hands. [laughter]

FF: No, that's the ship's mascot. This is the exact, exact same record everybody [else had].

SH: I was just going to say, it looks like an entire service record.

FF: Right. "27th August, serving onboard the USS *Cutlass*," that's us, "this date, when this vessel entered the damp domain of Neptunus Rex, the Equator, and crossed the Equator at longitude," blah, blah, blah, "and he was duly inducted into the solemn mysteries of the Ancient Order of the Deep." The Executive Officer signed this, right, "Serving onboard the vessel during the first simulated war patrol of the USS," blah, blah, blah, and so on, and so forth, "and made passage from east to west through the historic Straits of Magellan, the first United States submarine to enter these waters. Bow Planes is the first dog ever to make this passage on a sub." ... You won't believe this. One of the men used to carry his liberty card. He had a liberty card and an ID card. That's right, it's in here. His picture's in here somewhere, with his ID card, and we were in Puerto Rico somewhere, we're going to play ball. We had to leave the base and the Marine said, "The dog can't go." "Hey, wait, here's his ID card and his liberty card." He says, "Go ahead." [laughter]

SH: The boat had a team, baseball team, we are talking about?

FF: We had a softball team, yes. We used to play ball. He got drunk this night.

SH: The dog got drunk.

FF: That was the ship's party.

CF: The ship's party, where they put the pitcher of beer on the floor.

FF: He got drunk. No, he's funny. He'd be laying on deck and somebody would say, "Bow Planes, let's go to beer mess," off he'd go. ...

SH: Who took care of him, when you were tied up and when you were at sea?

FF: Who cared for him? Everybody; everybody took care of him. He got his meals down below, outside. He used to take off, go wherever.

SH: Who walked the dog, so-to-speak?

FF: This is strange. When we were out at sea, he never went, never went, sometimes three days, but, when he got topside, when the weather was good and he got top[side], he never missed the stanchion. He peed on all of them. You know, it's funny, we went to a reunion with the *Cutlass* sailors and all the old guys that were long after, "Were you on the boat with Bow Planes?" "Yes, I was on the boat." [laughter] I had brought his service record along.

SH: When you first went from Mare Island to Pearl Harbor, did you see the damage? Was it still evident, what happened in December of 1941?

FF: We used to tie up at a different place. They had a submarine base. ... We didn't go to wherever the [attack took place].

SH: Down in the harbor.

FF: No. I think we used to tie up at Ford Island, I think they called it.

SH: There was no evidence at Ford Island that anything had happened.

FF: No. The Japs weren't interested in submarines. They were interested in the battleships and the submarines was their downfall. That's what killed them.

SH: I just wondered if you had seen the ships and the harbor there. Somewhere in all of this, you wind up getting married, I can tell.

FF: In '47.

SH: In 1947.

FF: Yes.

SH: Just before you get off?

FF: I was in the *Cutlass* at the time and my "kiddie cruise" was coming up and I got leave and I went home. We got married.

SH: You had known each other before.

FF: Yes, and that was '47. Then, she came down to Panama for two months. ... She came down in October and we were supposed to be there until March and something happened, they threw us out, and we came back to the States. We came back to Key West and she went back to Brooklyn. So, we had an apartment there for two months. That was in Gamboa, which is now a

very, very elite resort. We had an apartment. There were two stories, but, again, nothing on the first floor. It was built on pilings and we lived across the street from the jungle. ... When I say jungle, I mean "jungle" jungle, not a [thicket]. It was thick, fer-de-lances, boa constrictors, bushmasters, and I don't know what else, but I used to have to leave the house before [sunrise], because we're eighteen miles from the base, and I used to have to leave before the sun came up, on a big winding hill going down to the bus stop, and I used to come down the steps two at a time, lucky I didn't take the screen door off, and I never stopped running until I was sitting on [the bus stop bench]. Nobody was getting me. [laughter] You know, it's funny, yesterday, I was reading something ... and they were talking about *chivas*. I don't know if you saw that, in the travel section.

CF: No, I didn't.

FF: That's what they used to call the buses down there, *chivas*, and, when you wanted to get off, you said, "*Parada?*"

SH: Was it common to have a family down there?

FF: In Panama, yes, a lot of them, oh, yes. It was two years after the war. A lot of fellows had their wives down there.

SH: It was after that that you did the Straits of Magellan.

FF: Well, that was in August of [1947], before she came down. August 23rd, I think, we left, to go around the Horn, a very interesting trip. We had a lot of good times.

SH: Was it just the *Cutlass*?

FF: No, we were the *Cutlass*, *Conger* and *Diablo*.

SH: All three boats.

FF: The three boats that were there. (Frank Lynch?) was the senior commander. ... They go by your number, yes, and, if you're twenty-one and the other guy's twenty, he's senior. So, we carried what we called the flag and ... we carried a four-stripper called Captain John [F.] Davidson and, when you do something like that, he's commodore. He has the honorary title. ... So, we carried the flag, which was the commodore. He later became superintendent of the Naval Academy. He was a brilliant man, too, very, very, very good. ...

SH: Do you know what the purpose of the cruise was?

FF: Just [that] they called it a simulated war patrol, I think just to give us something to do, spend money; I don't know.

SH: Did you come into any ports of call?

FF: On our way back, we went through the Straits and we stopped at Puntas Arenas, which is the southernmost city, and no liberty was granted, because they said, ... "A lot of guys'll stay here," and then, we went to Chile, for their independence day. That was, I think, September 4th or 5th and that was that one. It was a nice trip. We didn't hit any [bad weather]. You know, I was really worried, because, every time you see a picture of the Horn, you see the sailing ships getting battered. On our way to Panama, I was in the *Burrfish* and we hit a storm off the coast of Florida. It was horrendous. ... We were rolling sixty degrees. Next day, we were 160 miles off course. We really took a beating.

SH: You rode it out on the surface. You did not go down.

FF: No. You never dive, because, if you go down two hundred feet, you're still going like this, with the swells. So, I was worried about Cape Horn. I said, "It's going to be a bitch down there," and we only had little white caps, about so big.

SH: Really? Six-inch white caps.

FF: September 7, 1947, we went around, and then, we went through the Straits.

SH: When you were in the Pacific, did you ever encounter any bad weather, during the war?

FF: Yes, but, when we left Japan, we hit the tail end of a typhoon and we had twenty-five soldiers aboard.

SH: Where did you get them?

FF: Japan. They were getting transportation back to the States. So, we were going to Hawaii, bringing them to Hawaii, and we had a lot of seasick people. They were puking all over the place. [laughter] That stunk a little.

SH: [laughter] I can imagine. Had these soldiers that you were bringing back been POWs?

FF: No, no. I don't know what they were; I don't know what they were.

SH: I was wondering where you collected soldiers before the surrender.

FF: You know, one thing you don't do is ask questions. If they say, "Take them back to Hawaii."

SH: You take them back.

FF: You take them back to Hawaii; that's it. ... This is the summons you got.

SH: This is from when you were one of the pollywogs.

FF: I was a pollywog. ...

SH: Okay. Were you married at this point?

FF: Yes. This is that Father (Heath?).

SH: He was on the USS *Mingo* (SS-261).

FF: As prospective commanding officer. ... We were trying to build a memorial and he was active in the group. ... He had four degrees. He graduated from Boston College with a degree in physics. Immediately, he had a commission and he [was] assigned to the Massachusetts Institute [of Technology], MIT, where he received another degree in radio engineering. Then, he went to Lehigh and got a degree in metallurgy. Then, he decided to be a priest, but he was a phenomenal speaker. He was absolutely incredible. ...

SH: We are looking at newspaper clippings and different memorabilia Mr. Fatale has collected. This says, "Some two hundred sailors, a scientist and a dog are still getting their land legs back."

FF: [laughter] Yes. ... Whenever a submarine went anywhere during the war, there was always a band. You never went out to sea without a band and you never came in without a band, always. So, this was a simulated war patrol and we had the band, okay, and this is back and down. That's the tender there.

SH: Were these bands also in places like Wake Island?

FF: Wherever, Midway, anywhere, they always [played]. [Editor's Note: Mr. Fatale begins referring to materials and photographs related to the Equator crossing ceremony.] This is eating out of the troughs, and the chief of the boat was [a sailor impersonating] Davy Jones. Again, that's me, eating out of a trough. This is [me] getting paddled going to the royal court. He's practicing his swing there. See, he had a big *shillelagh*, [an Irish club]. I'll tell you, that stings. Oh, you get a [whack on] wet underwear, and this is the baby. This is the royal baby and this is one of the ensigns, Ensign Tracey, making the baby laugh. (Bradley?), he was a very good golfer. He's practicing his golf swing there. This is Doc (Luce?). ... Here's the whole royal court, Neptune, Queen, Davy Jones, the Judge. This is [where] they're finishing up with our haircuts, and there's the dog, "What did I do?" [laughter]

SH: What was your nickname? Did you have a nickname?

FF: No. This is that trough I was telling you about, where you had to crawl in. I don't know what they did; they put shavings or something in his head. You know, there were stupid things you had to do, like, the day before, the lookouts were up in the conning tower shears, we used to call them conning tower shears, and ... they were dressed in foul-weather gear with galoshes. See, up here, they were up here, and they had big, heavy, foul-weather coats on and they had two rolls of toilet paper and they had to keep yelling, "I'm looking for the Equator. I'm looking for the Equator." [laughter]

SH: Using the toilet paper for binoculars.

FF: Yes, and that's Cape Horn.

SH: It was calm as could be.

FF: Couldn't be any calmer; look at it. It was snowing. This is the Straits of Magellan. There's the dog up there. This is another interesting [thing]; see, ... Valparaiso is over here, but there's no dock. So, you had to back in here and we tied up here, okay, and the chief of the boat, "Little Greek," he goes out; oh, the Navy, the Chilean Navy, ran boats for us, back and forth. [There was] no boat at night and the Greek comes all around the cab and he gets over here. Now, we had lines tied up. He decides, ... hand over hand, he's going to get back to the boat. He got halfway down. He's hanging in the water. He can't make it. [laughter] ... They had to rescue him, and this is the ship's crew when we got back.

SH: All dressed smartly in this one.

FF: This (Frank Lynch?) was six-[foot]-four and about 240.

SH: How did he fit?

FF: He did.

SH: There was a height restriction, even on the "boomers," [slang for ballistic missile submarines]. When you finished your "kiddie cruise" ...

FF: I extended for two years.

SH: Did you?

FF: Yes. I was on the *Cutlass*, and that was a mistake, because we went back to the navy yard.

SH: In?

FF: Philadelphia, and there was a shortage of submarine sailors. So, when one boat went in, they transferred a good part of their crew to a boat that was going out. ... I didn't look out, so, I got transferred to the [USS] *Clamagore*, [(SS-343)], the most miserable boat in the whole world.

SH: Really?

FF: Oh, it's like ... day and night, and then, I decided to get out. We had a skipper; he was a miserable individual. He wouldn't even say good morning to you, but, anyway, that's when I [left]. I got out in May of '49. My "kiddie cruise" was over.

SH: What were your plans then? You were now married.

FF: Going to school. I started college.

SH: You used your GI Bill.

FF: Yes.

SH: You had said you had gotten your GED. Did you get your GED onboard the boat?

FF: Yes.

SH: By correspondence?

FF: Yes. I got two diplomas, one from Key West High School and one from another one. They gave me two. I was that good. [laughter] Yes, I got two of them.

SH: Where did you go back to school?

FF: I went to Long Island University and I started in '49. In '51, I belonged to the Reserves.

SH: Did you stay in New Jersey?

FF: Yes. Three of us, ... we were on the boat together, we decided [to join the Reserves]. Well, anyway, we went to a meeting and they said, "You guys have nothing to worry about. They're not going to call any submarine sailors back," and that was on a Tuesday night. On a Thursday, I answered the door and the mailman gives me a registered letter; they want me.

SH: This is in 1949.

FF: No, this is in '51.

SH: You joined the Reserves after you were ...

FF: After I got out, and so, I tried to get a deferment and I went down to 90 Church Street, that was Navy Headquarters, and [there were] a bunch of guys sitting around, talking, and the guy went in before me. He came out; I said, "How'd you make out?" He says, "No good." He says, "I had two deferments," he says, "so, they got me," and I said, "Oh, that's great." I said, "I only had one." So, I went in. There was a lieutenant commander, submarine sailor, and we're talking. He says, "How many deferments you had?" I got a big smile on my face; I said, "One." "How many semesters did you get deferred?" I said, "Two." He says, "You're in." [laughter] So, that was it. I went back and I went to New London and they told me I was hard of hearing. So, I had to stay up there and, once a week, I used to go to the medical lab, used to lay on the table and they used to put two radium-tipped, whatever they were, in my nose and, after ... twelve or fifteen minutes, the bell used to ring and they would take them out. That was supposed to help, but that's all they knew at the time, and I had to stay there for [awhile]. I couldn't go to sea, I couldn't do anything. So, they had me at a torpedo shop, and I had only been out two years, so, I knew everybody in New London. All the guys from Panama, Key West, they were all up there. I knew them all. I'm walking down the street and I run into a friend of mine, (Tommy

Anastasia?), was a chief yeoman. He said, "What are you doing?" I told him. He says, "You want to work for me?" I said, "Sure." I said, "Anything to get out of torpedoes." They had what they called Submarine Development Group 2. They had two boats and anything new, equipment, was put on these boats to be tested, and we lived in a BOQ, [bachelor officers' quarters]. That's where the office was and my duties were (guard mail?) petty officer, pick up the food in the morning, I was a chauffer and, when you had the duty, you had to do the floors in the office; best duty I ever had, best duty I ever had. They got sub and sea pay. Yes, we were attached to the [USS] *Halfbeak* [(SS-352)].

SH: Really?

FF: So, I was getting sea pay, I was getting submarine pay, I was getting hazardous duty pay, not for going to sea, and then, ... I don't know, four or five months, no, four or five weeks later, ... anyway, they cut that out and I had to go to sea. So, they sent me to Philadelphia, to the [USS] *Tusk* [(SS-426)], and I went on the *Tusk*, which was good.

SH: Where did the *Tusk* patrol?

FF: New London. We went to Bermuda. ... New London was home port, and then, I got out.

SH: This was all because of the Korean War.

FF: Yes. I ran into another torpedoman, (Frank Anderson?). He had a master's degree in library science and we had an exec onboard that didn't get along with the Skipper and he used to hide from him. He used to come back to the torpedo room, and he used to sit back there and he used to nag about the skipper. Anyway, we used to keep kidding him, "You know, you ought to let us go. We're not doing any good here." He said, "Nope." He says, "You've got to do your time." So, Andy and I used to read, ... it's an all-Navy bulletin that comes out, ... and the *Tusk* was going on maneuvers up in the Artic Ocean and we read in this thing, this ALLNAV, that you had to be in the separation center seven days before your discharge. We didn't know when our discharge was. There was no discharge date. So, Andy and I are standing topside, waiting for the Exec to come and report. "Mr. (Mac?)." "What now?" "You've got to let us go." ... This was August. Andy had a job at Kansas Wesleyan University that he could start and I had wanted to start the semester at LIU, and we told him what we had read. He calls the yeoman topside. He says, "Yeo, are these guys right?" He says, "Yes." He says, "Get rid of them," and we got out.

SH: Did you stay in the Reserves?

FF: No. Well, I was still in the Reserves, but I let the time run out. I never [kept it up], and I've got a picture of him, (Joe Beatles?), I ran into him when ... I got called back. He says, "Frank, you ought to stay in." I said, "They got me once. They're not getting me again."

SH: You did not consider staying in.

FF: No, and I got out.

SH: Did you have a family when you got called back?

CF: No, just me. We didn't have any children yet.

FF: That was it, but, all-in-all, it was a fun time I had. The Submarine Service was a really, really good time. We were the first to be allowed to wear civilian clothes. When we were down in the Philadelphia Navy Yard, I don't know what boat it was, one of the boats, but right on the liberty card, it had stamped, "Civilian clothing privileges."

SH: Never heard of that.

FF: Yes, because you had to wear the uniform and we were the first boat that got it and, as I say, right on our liberty card.

SH: Was this when you were decommissioning a boat, by chance?

FF: I think it was one of the times I was in there on the *Cutlass*, I think. I don't remember, truthfully.

SH: Did you get involved in any organizations?

FF: Well, I belong to the Submarine Veterans of World War II. I belong to the International Submariners [Association]. ... That's the only two organizations. I don't belong to the [American] Legion or [Veterans of] Foreign Wars. ... Those are my only two.

SH: You talked about reunions. Are they reunions with all submarine crews or just your crew?

FF: Well, they have a regional [reunion]. Northeast region'll have a reunion or a convention. Then, annually, they have a national. Now, this year, it's in Louisville. Now, it's to the point where anybody who's got anybody that can walk and wants to do the work, they will [come], but they used to be tremendous, tremendous reunions. We attended a few of them, and then, the International has them all over the world. We've never gone.

CF: We've been to the one in Italy.

FF: Oh, the one in Italy, right. We went to the one in Italy.

SH: Were these US boats?

FF: No, this is world.

CF: All the countries, England, France.

FF: Germany, Japan; anybody that's got a submarine, they can have a reunion. ... This year, it's in Poland, next year, it's in San Diego, but we don't get around too much anymore. [laughter] It's a hardship.

RD: When you went back to school, what was your major?

FF: Accounting.

RD: What made you pick accounting?

FF: I thought I'd be an FBI agent, but I had real bad bleeding ulcers.

SH: Did you really?

FF: Yes.

SH: Do you think that was from being on the boats?

FF: Oh, I have no idea.

CF: Well, they say ulcers, now, is a bacterial [condition]. At one time, they used to say it was stress, but they found that it's not, it's a bacterial thing and they give antibiotics for it.

RD: Was it a big university? What was the average class size?

FF: In 1949, Long Island University was nothing. It was founded in 1926. The only thing LIU was noted for was their basketball teams. They had a phenomenal, phenomenal basketball team, no gym, no building, no nothing, and Clair Bee was the coach and he was really a coach. Well, anyway, LIU was part of the scandals, that everybody was shaving points in those days. LIU, City College, they were all shaving points and the scandal broke and that was the end of the big-time basketball at LIU. Now, LIU is a major, major university. They've got over twenty-six thousand students now. ... They own all of downtown Brooklyn, they have a campus in Southampton, ... they have one in ...

CF: Glen Cove?

FF: Yes, around Glen Cove. Marjorie Merriweather Post, her estate, she gave that to LIU. They have a tremendous campus there. I think they have a campus Upstate New York, but it's a big, big school now.

SH: Were there lots of GIs going to school when you went back, lots of World War II veterans?

FF: No, not really, not really. ... Four years after the war, I started. No, there were some, but not that [many]. I was an old man; I was in my twenties.

SH: You had finished your kiddie stage.

FF: Yes.

RD: Were there many women attending the university at the time, or was it mostly male?

FF: No, not that many. There were women there, there were women there, but not that many. I don't think college degrees for women was a big thing at the time.

RD: What year did you actually graduate?

FF: '54.

RD: Did you join the insurance company right after that?

FF: Right.

RD: What did you do at the insurance company?

FF: [When] I started out, I was an inspector. Then, I became what they used to call a special agent. ... You cold-canvassed and canvassed brokers for business, and then, I joined one of their subsidiaries, Montgomery and Collins, and that's when insurance was tough to get and we had what we called "excess and surplus." In other words, nobody wanted to insure a hospital, we put a program together for them. We'd buy reinsurance and we'd put the program [together] for them. It was very difficult insurance to get. ... After about five years there, I retired.

RD: Was this all in Brooklyn?

FF: No, it was Manhattan, Manhattan. Insurance Company of North America was a Philadelphia organization. They were founded in 1792, in Independence Hall, and, all the while I was with them, it was Philadelphia. Now, they're strictly accident and health and no more property or casualty insurance. ... When I went to Montgomery and Collins, that was a California [organization], part of the Insurance Company of North America, but it was a California subsidiary. That's it.

RD: When did you have your first child?

FF: First child? ...

CF: 1953.

FF: Barbara.

SH: Were you living in your old neighborhood?

FF: We were living at my mother's house. We had an apartment upstairs. Then, after the second one, my father built us a house in Bergen Beach.

SH: [laughter] You were back in the same area then.

FF: Always, always, a fantastic place, not anymore, but, then, it was. ...

SH: Did you raise your family there?

FF: Yes.

SH: It was from there that you moved to here.

FF: Twenty years ago March 28th.

RD: How many other children did you have? You had three sons, in addition to Barbara.

FF: Right, yes.

RD: Did any of them ever join the military?

FF: ... The guy over there was in the submarine force, my son.

CF: This is the picture over there, in his chief's uniform, Francis.

SH: What boats did he serve on?

FF: He started out in the [USS] *Ohio* [(SSGN-726)]. He made a couple of runs on the *Ohio*, and then, he went to put the [USS] *Albany* [(SSN-753)] in commission, and then, he went to the [USS] *Maine* [(SSBN-741)]. He retired; well, he went to shore duty then and he retired while he was on shore duty and stayed in Kingsland, Georgia.

SH: Do you think he joined the submarines and the Navy because of you?

FF: I'm sure of it. I'm sure of it.

SH: Did any of the other two ...

FF: No.

SH: I should say other children, not just boys. [laughter]

FF: No, no.

RD: How many grandchildren do you have now?

FF: We have six and one great, and another great on the way; late in life to have great-grandchildren.

SH: Are there any stories that you would like to recount that we have forgotten to ask you about?

FF: Such as?

SH: You are the man that knows.

FF: You know, it's funny, down in Panama, every day was a vacation. ... You know, there was nothing doing, nothing doing. We decided to chrome plate all the valve handles, right. [laughter] So, me and this other torpedoman used to take them off, we used to go over to the chrome plating shop and they would chrome plate them for us and we'd give them coffee, whatever, and, one day, on our way over there, there were three Russian minesweepers in Panama. They had just come down from Canada. Canada had given them to them and we went aboard and they had all kinds of Canadian Club onboard and we got stoned and we had lunch there and, that night, we took them back to the boat to have supper with us and we got in trouble. [laughter] Oh, no, we were going to church that day. That's right, it was All Saints Day. Me and (Grimaldi?), we were going to church, that's right. We never made it.

SH: You detoured to the Russian trawlers.

FF: We went past them. They were there, they were there.

SH: You went back.

FF: Yes, but we did get a lot of things chrome plated. This (Grimaldi?) was probably the most *gung ho* Navy man I ever met. He was *gung ho* and he was as loony as the day is long and he was going to do twenty. ... Of course, I got out and I lost track of him, and who do I run into in New London? (Grimaldi?). I said, "John, what the hell are you doing here?" He says, "They called me back," he said, "but I'm getting out." He'd gotten married and got out of the Navy. He hated the Navy. From *gung ho*, he hated it and, every day, he used to go to sick bay. Every morning, he went to sick bay and they finally threw him out, John Francis (Grimaldi?).

SH: Where was he from?

FF: Staten Island, yes, John Francis, but, as I say, every day, it was a new adventure. The Navy didn't know what to do with us, so, they bought an Army camp, two barracks, in the jungle, in the "jungle" jungle. They used to train jungle fighters up there. ...

SH: This is in Panama.

FF: In Panama. ... We named it "Camp Hoot and Holler." Anything but everything went up there, you know, once you went up there, and, every day, one boat had to send the food up and you used to go up to the jungle, "Camp Hoot and Holler." There were little snakes. ... I enjoyed the time I was in service. ... Except for the time in the *Clamagore*, every day was good, every day was good.

SH: Thank you very much.

FF: Oh, you're welcome.

SH: If there is something that we have forgotten ...

FF: [Call me on] the phone.

SH: Okay, that is great.

FF: That's it. I thank you for coming. That's it.

SH: This concludes our interview.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: This continues the interview with Mr. Fatale. [laughter] We have been looking at photographs.

FF: When we went to Pearl Harbor, there were a lot of boats there and nobody knew where they were going, [if] they were going to West Coast, New Orleans, New London, wherever.

SH: This is coming ...

FF: This is after we left Japan, the surrender, and we're ready to come home, closely guarded secret, where you were going.

SH: The "secret" silent service.

FF: Right. You didn't know. You didn't know where you were going until number one line was tossed off, and then, the band started playing. If they played *Dixieland*, you were going to New Orleans; *California, Here I Come*, West Coast; *Give My Regards to Broadway*, New York; and, when we started backing down, that's what they played, *Give My Regards to Broadway*.

SH: Make you pay attention.

FF: [laughter] Yes.

SH: You were talking about backing down and we were looking at a photograph here and you talked about the anchor duty. Was that the term you used?

FF: Anchor detail. ... Usually, before you got to the channel, you had to have the anchor ready for dropping, in case anything happened. So, what they used to do was, they used to pass the word, "Station the maneuvering watch, station the maneuvering watch," and that was a special detail of all good men at their trade. They were the best you had for that station, and then, they

used to say, "Anchor detail topside." So, we used to open the forward torpedo hatch and we used to come topside. There were two things we handled, and one was the brake. Now, I don't know whether we loosened the other one and put the wrench on the brake in case we had to drop the anchor in a hurry, but, anyway, it was nice, because, down in Panama, we had the nice sunshine and we used to sit on the capstan and talk. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: I will put this back on.

FF: This is the *Cutlass* coming in port. This is the anchor detail up here. One of these guys sitting on ... the cleat is me. That's Bob (Light?), the deck officer. Now, here's the lookout, up on the periscope shears, and they, evidently, opened the back hatch here, too, but that's the anchor detail up there. ...

SH: We talked briefly about how secret it was. What were your instructions? We have seen the posters that say, "Loose Lips Sink Ships," that kind of thing. Did they talk to you about that at all?

FF: We didn't know anything. Once you got out at sea, ... in the control room was a chart, a gyro. The gyroscope was in the control room and it had a top on it and it was a Plexiglas thing, so [that] you could see the gyro, but, anyway, ... they used to have a chart they used to put there and they had the Pacific all broken up into, like, they have passageways, and that was the boats going and going back and forth, and then, they had all different areas and you had an assigned area. If another boat came in there, they were fair game. That was your area. ... This is the conning tower. That's the torpedo data computer, where we used to fire torpedoes. This was the steering station. The wheel I used to stand watches on is in the library, or museum, down in Kings Bay, [Georgia].

SH: Really?

FF: Yes. ... This is the crew's mess, all right, four tables, little, tiny space, very little, tiny space.

SH: Tell me what is unique about those tables.

FF: What's unique about them? There's really not ...

SH: There is not a lip on them.

FF: Oh, yes, there's a little lip on them, right, but ... it's just a linoleum thing. You know, you've heard a tremendous amount of things about secondhand smoke. ... Some of the stories like that, they make me sick, when I read the stupidity of it, but, anyway, this was a rec room. Now, you had four tables and you'd have four guys at each table, playing cards, whatever, and then, you had the (*kibitz?*) (jokers). Everybody's smoking. In one day, we used to inhale more secondhand smoke than anybody in (*Leisuretown?*) would do in their lifetime.

SH: Did you smoke?

FF: Yes. I wasn't a smoker, though. I smoked, but I could take them, leave them. I wasn't addicted. This is the after battery, where the crew slept. ... As I say, you had thirty-six bunks back here. That was the passageway that went all the way aft. This is where they cooked for the crew, and the officers. Everybody ate out of this kitchen. You had just enough room for one man to operate in there and he cooked the meal for ninety men in there. ... Here's that gyro table. This is the gyro and that's the diving station there, ... and the charts used to be on there.

SH: That was when you would find out where you were.

FF: But, you know, you really didn't know where the hell you were. [laughter] You know, it was just a blank chart there, but that's the auxiliary steering station. At night, they used all red lights. You used to have to get dark adapted; not in the other compartments. If you were in the other compartments [and] you had to go topside, you had to wear red glasses, goggles, but, at night, they turned red lights on and ... that's the eerie glow you had.

SH: Was that so that you were aware that it was ...

FF: No, no, you had to get dark [adapted]. You have rods and cones, I don't know, millions of each, and, if you go from light to dark, you can't see. So, you had to get dark adapted, so [that] when you went topside, you were used to the dark, all right, and this is loading torpedoes. It was a manual operation. Loading torpedoes from topside down and loading them into the tubes was really a tremendous task and, on this boat, even the doors, the outer doors, are hand-operated. When you're running on the surface and you're doing eighteen, seventeen, fifteen knots and the water is against that, you'd break your back opening that outer door. It is a tremendous, tremendous task. Then, they went to hydraulic, but we used to load them with a line.

SH: Really?

FF: With rope; we're loading torpedoes there. That's why I say you had to have a weak mind and a strong back. See, this is a hand-operated [hatch]. Here's where we used to put the wrench to do that. This is the bridge of [the] *Pampanito* in San Francisco. If you ever get there, go aboard. ... This thing is absolutely clean as a whistle, but that's ... the gyro table I was telling you about. ... Over in this corner here; no, here it is, here it is, this is looking aft, there's the first aid station. Yes, this is looking aft. I thought we were going forward here, but that's going aft.

SH: We were talking earlier about why the *Cutlass* and the rest of the boats had to get out of Panama. Can you talk about that a little bit?

FF: I really don't know.

CF: Frank, they were having the student uprising. You were in Panama City

FF: ... Something political. Anyway, it was a Saturday when we went over, and we used to buy lottery tickets, and we're over buying lottery tickets, but, when we got off the bus, or the *chiva*, there were soldiers. Every line on the sidewalk was a soldier with either a machine gun, you know, the old ones, when they used the tripod, or a guy with a [rifle], and I said to her, "I think they're going to have a big parade today." [laughter]

SH: Were these Panamanian soldiers?

FF: No, US troops, and we go into (Kelly's Ritz?). That's where we used to hang out and we go in and [I was] talking to Pedro, we're having a drink, not a word. We get home, we got the Panamanian paper; the front half was Spanish, the back end was English, and we found out that ...

CF: And he was in civilian clothes; good thing he was not in uniform.

FF: And we had to get out of Panama.

SH: How much time did you have to get ready?

FF: Oh, we had time there, but she got out.

CF: Well, I left right after Christmas. ... They had all the dependents leave and I left right after Christmas.

SH: It was not something you had to do that quickly.

CF: Oh, no, no.

FF: No. We had to get rid of [things], the tender had to leave. ...

SH: Which tender did you have down in Panama?

FF: I think it was the [USS] *Orion* [(AS-18)]. ... It's funny, the flag was Captain Davidson and he was on the *Orion*, but, anyway, this guy, (Bradley?), I showed you the picture, he was a very good golfer and ... the Captain was coming over, he spotted him, "(Bradley?), wait for me, we're going to play golf." [laughter]

SH: So much for the tight discipline.

FF: Yes. It was really family down there then. It was entirely different than it is now, entirely different, still from the war years. I mean, they used to come to our house. The officers used to come to our house.

CF: Yes. One Sunday, Lieutenant Logan and his wife and dog came to the house, to see how we were doing.

FF: I was sleeping. I was taking a nap. Next thing I know, a dog is licking my face. I wake up, and who was it? ... Anyway, Lieutenant Logan ... and I had Navy bedspreads.

CF: Bedspread.

FF: He said, "You son of a bitch, no wonder I don't have a bedspread on my bed." He says, "You got it." [laughter] He says, "Come on, get dressed, we're going to lunch," but that's the way it was.

SH: The hierarchy that we hear about in the Navy was only for the surface ships. It did not apply to submarines.

FF: ... Later on it came, later on it came, but, as I say, during the war years, and, you know, it carried over after the war, we were still family. We used to have picnics. ... There'd be a ballgame on Sunday at Farfan Beach, [Panama].

CF: Yes, I forget what they called them.

FF: Yes. Well, anyway, the boats used to fry steaks, ... we used to play ballgames, twenty-five cases of beer and ten cases of Coke. We had a slush fund. We had three slot machines on the *Cutlass*, against every regulation, and we used to carry beer. Yes, we had beer and we used to go to the beach and, with the slush fund, they paid for the laundry, they paid for the beer ballgames, they paid for the picnics, they paid for everything, and they were also loan sharks. They were loan sharks and the commissary officer ran the loan sharking operation. If you borrowed five dollars, you had to pay six dollars back the next week. "Six for five," we used to call it, and we had a lot of money, used to have about fifteen hundred dollars in the slush fund, and that paid for a lot of ballgames. ... We had trapshooting on the boat. There's a sling you put on your hand and you flung out the clay pigeon. ... We used to have that. We had beer, we had soda, we had parties. I mean, we had a ships party in Philadelphia when we came back. ... They paid for the whole thing.

SH: You did not do this during the war.

FF: No, no, this was later.

SH: Very inventive.

FF: Oh, yes. No, ... we broke all the regulations, gambling, slot machines, beer onboard, all with the blessing of the Captain.

SH: Thank you again for talking to us.

FF: You're welcome. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: We were talking about integration of crews.

FF: ... They were just allowed to be servants. That's all they were, you know, in the Navy, anyway. In the forward torpedo room, the torpedo loading hatch, they had two bunks there. ... Of course, that was closed out at sea and you weren't loading torpedoes. There were two bunks up there and they used to call it the "bridal suite." That was known as the "bridal suite" and that's where the steward's mates slept.

SH: There were three onboard.

FF: One boat, we had three. On the *Muskallunge*, I think we had two.

SH: Were they African-American?

FF: They were blacks in those days, and a lot of other things, but, yes, that's all they [were].

SH: How did the crew treat them?

FF: They were one of the crew, they were one of the crew. ... You don't remember the old days down South.

SH: I do.

FF: Okay. If you were from the South, they were "niggers." They had no other name. That was it. It was an open-and-shut case. They were niggers and that was it, but, if you think segregation is gone in the service, you're a dreamer. Today, you have officer and you have enlisted. Everything, everything, is segregated. We went to visit a kid I grew up with, the guy that joined the Navy. ... He's in Virginia Beach, he retired there and he took us on the base and we were parked there. He said, "That's the beach." He says, "That's the officers' beach and that's the enlisted beach." I said, "Joe, you're shitting me." He said, "No, I'm not shitting you." He says, "That's the officers' beach and that's the enlisted beach," but housing is segregated on base. You can't even fraternize. You can't even have a beer with them.

SH: With an officer.

CF: An officer, the enlisted and [officers].

FF: I mean, the toilets are segregated, the showers are segregated, the housing is segregated, everything is segregated. That's what I don't understand when they tell me, "We're integrated." "Where are we integrated? Where are we integrated?" You've got more segregation now than you did then. Years ago, you had the colored toilets, you had the white toilets, ... and that's what these had, the sign, "Colored." Everything was either black or white, and you've got the same thing today. There's absolutely no difference.

SH: Are you saying that the blacks are segregated from the whites or the officers?

FF: ... Today, officers and enlisted. There's a line right down the middle, right down the middle.

CF: Well, there's a lot of black officers now.

FF: Oh, yes.

SH: There is no segregation as far as race within the enlisted men.

FF: Oh, no, no, no. You don't have to be a servant anymore. You can be a torpedoman. In fact, one of the officers, he was an alcoholic, he threw up. He'd come back to the boat, we went out to sea and he threw up on the [deck]. That's when we had, they were steward's mates. He threw up and he was a Southerner. I forget who it was; he says, "Call (Wiley?) up here to clean this up," and (Lynch?) was the skipper then. He says, "No, no," he says, "you clean it up." ... My son was living on the base; the officers lived down this end and the enlisted lived down this end. ... I was on a surface ship twice. Once, I went out to sea on the *Kittiwake*, which was a rescue vessel, and the other time, I was on ... either the *Orion* or the *Proteus*. I'm walking along, I see a sign, "Officers' Country: Keep Out." I thought, "Uh-oh." ...

SH: Thank you very much.

FF: You're welcome. I enjoyed talking to you.

SH: Okay.

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

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 8/12/08
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 8/14/08
Reviewed by Frank Fatale 2008