



Douglas County History Research Center Oral Histories

Oral History Interview with

Henry F. Bohne

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SUMMARY: In this interview, Henry Bohne relates his experiences in the U. S. Navy. Bohne is a Korean War-era veteran who served from 1950 to 1954, and was a Petty Officer First Class when his enlistment ended. After three months in boot camp, Bohne was posted to San Diego, CA where he served aboard the U.S.S. Goss, DE-444, as a general duty deckhand before becoming a Sonarman Striker working in the Sonar Shack. He describes shipboard life on both the U.S.S. Goss and the U.S.S. Cassin Young, where he was transferred in 1951. The U.S.S. Cassin Young operated out of Newport, RI, as part of Destroyers, Atlantic. Although the ship traveled to many ports, it spent a lot time in the Caribbean. Bohne describes some of the anti-submarine exercises the

school two years earlier. I had attended a trade school and was working in a factory. I had a deferment based on working in the agricultural industry, and I was pretty sure I was going to lose that deferment and get drafted. As a matter of fact, I wanted to enlist in the Coast Guard. I went to the Coast Guard Station and talked to the recruiter. And there was a six-month waiting list between the enlistment and actually getting called to duty. And the rule was that if you got your draft notice any time during that waiting period, you had to respond to the draft. So I went over to talk to the Navy people, and they said that they could get me into the service in about ten days. As part of my processing in, I had to get a statement from the Sheriff's Office, that I didn't have any kind of a record. So I went to the County Courthouse, got the document signed. And as I was walking back through the Courthouse, I glanced into an office; it was the Selective Service office. And one of our neighbors, who was a member of the Draft Board, was sitting there. So I kind of looked back in at him and said, "Nyah, nyah, nyah, you can't get me," and waved my Navy papers. So, he called me and we talked for a bit and he asked me what I was doing and when I was going into the service. And I told him about ten days. And he said, he pulled a box over to him, and it had a whole bunch of envelopes in it. He went through the envelopes and he pulled one out, and he says, "If you're not gone in ten days, I'm going to personally deliver this to you." It was my draft notice. So I beat the draft by ten days.

I took care of all the various sundry businesses, one piece of which was, and I miserably failed on this, was calming down my mother, who was really upset about the idea of me going into the service. I was the first person in our family to go into the service. My father missed World War I. My older brother missed World War II; he was just a little bit too young. If the war had gone on a little bit longer he probably would've gone into the service. So I was the first one in the family to go into the service. And this dates way, way back. There were no others in the direct family that had been in the service, since a great-great-great-grandfather in Prussia.

Why did I join? As I said, because I didn't want to go into the Army. I wanted to go into the Coast Guard, but that failed. So, I wound up with the Navy. I had been an apprentice electrician, so I wanted to go into the Navy and get into the construction battalion, the Seabees.

What was the first days like? I remember riding a steam-powered passenger train to Chicago, to get down to the Navy recruiting facility, the in-processing, and get sworn in. And at the end of that same day, I went out to Great Lakes and was put in a barracks. I don't know why, I just looked like the kind of guy that gets picked on, so I

got tapped to stand fire watch the very first night that I was there. Which maybe wasn't too bad. I don't know if I could've gone off to sleep right away, anyway. It was kind of exciting, kind of different.

We went through the processing and started into boot camp. At that point, boot camp--. When we arrived there, we were told that boot camp would be, I believe it was 24 weeks, which is almost a half year, almost 6 months. About the first week in boot camp, they came in and said, "Well, we're gonna' have you out of probably about Christmas time." And I started early September, so that six [6] months had shrunk to four [4] months. In actuality, we left boot camp the day after Thanksgiving, which made it only about three [3] months of boot camp training.

Belt: What year do you think this was, Henry?

Bohne: This was 1950. The Korean War started in the spring of 1950, in June. And this was September. I was in boot camp September, October, until the end of November. Oh, about boot camp. Do I remember my instructors? Well, it's not quite as bad as the images people have of Drill Instructors, the D.I. But, it was kind of intimidating. When I look back at some of the things that they had us do, it was really ridiculous. We had to wash our own clothes. And then we had to hang them on the wash lines. We didn't have clothespins, we had something called a "clothes stop," I believe was the name. It was a little piece of yarn and we had to tie, let's say it was your skivvie shirt, your undershirt. You had to tie one at the, each end of the lower hem. And you had to use a square knot. And then you tied it to the wash line, and the tail you had to wrap around and then bring back around and then tie very carefully with another square knot. And if you didn't do this correctly, when you got back at the end of the day of training, your clothes were laying down on the ground, your "clothes stops" had been slashed with a big sharp knife, and probably the clothes on the ground had been walked on. And I look back and I say, "What in the world was that teaching us?" I don't know except, probably what it was teaching us is "Obey orders."

How did I get through boot camp? Well, I was one of the shorter guys in the company, so therefore I wound up at the back of the ranks. And it wasn't too long I discovered that the further back you were in the ranks, the less attention you drew from the Company Commander. By the way, there's kind of an interesting little sidelight. The Company Commander was a First Class Petty Officer, I believe a Boatswain. I don't even remember for sure. In 1954, I was in the Commissary Store in Boston. I was a First Class Petty Officer by that point. I ran into my Company Commander from boot camp,

still a First Class Petty Officer. I took some tests while I was in boot camp. I was rated eligible to go to virtually any Navy school, except electronics. I started out wanting to go to Construction Battalion but, after the people saw my test scores, they decided I'd be wasted in Construction Battalion, and I needed to go someplace else. So they designated me for Fire Control Technical School. I thought, "This would be really great," because it was about a, maybe an 18-month school in the Washington, D.C. area. When the orders came out, I did not go to Washington, D.C. I did not go to Fire Control Tech School. I went to sea as a general duty deckhand. And anybody who's been in the Navy knows what that means. "General duty," you do anything, usually dirty, that needs to be done.

As I look back to finishing boot camp, it was kind of a relief. But that was overshadowed by, "O.k., where do we go from here?" I was ordered to a ship that was stationed in San Diego. I knew nothing about the ship, I knew nothing about reporting aboard, having had no prior military experience in the family to relate to. It was a great big question mark. From Great Lakes, we went by train to San Diego. Arrived in, well, to Los Angeles, actually. And then transferred to another train and went down to San Diego. They met us at the station because there were quite a few of us coming in. It was a whole troop train; they had no civilians on the train at all, outside of the crew. Met us at the station with some buses and some open trucks, loaded us and took us out to the receiving station and processed us. And I wound up in a barracks ship for a few days until the ship that I was being assigned to, the U.S.S. GOSS, G-O-S-S, DE-444, was ready for us to bunk onboard. It had just taken been taken out of mothballs, so it was not livable at the time that I arrived, but about the second week after I got there we moved onboard.

Let's see. Those first months onboard the ship were really learning experience. Learning a lot of things about Navy life, how to do things in the Navy way. And that was overshadowed by the fact the Korean War had started that summer. And here we were assigned to Destroyers, Pacific Fleet. And the question was, where are we going to go? Are we going to wind up going to Korea? And we began hearing stories about some of the things that were happening. Those early months in Korea were really horrendous for our troops.

Belt: What age were you at this time, Henry?

Bohne: I was 20. I had been out of high school for two [2] years. As a matter of fact, I celebrated my 20th birthday in boot camp that fall, at the end of September. The people

that I was with were mostly like myself, young men who had enlisted in the Navy for whatever reason. Few of us had any prior experience in understanding what the Navy life would be like, kind of thing.

Belt: Are you single or married?

Bohne: I was single. A good thing. Because at the pay rate that we were getting, I don't know how anybody could've supported a wife on that. Seventy-five dollars a month, I think?

I reported on board the Destroyer Escort in San Diego, as I said, as a general duty deckhand, which meant I worked cleaning detail, painting, and scraping rust spots, whatever. Oh! An image just popped into my mind! Our berths were a pipe frame with a piece of canvas that was lashed to the pipe frame by a cord, by a piece of line. I was sent down into the living compartment and told to, "O.k., here's a piece of canvas, string it to that pipe frame." So, I got a piece of line, having no idea how much line it would take to do this job, and started stringing it. Well, I got about a third of the way around and my piece of line had come to its end. So I'm standing there trying to figure out, do I simply start over with a longer piece of line, and how long would that be? Or do I just tie another piece to this and continue, when the Boatswain arrived. And really gave me a dressing down, all the colorful language you can imagine, about not having cut enough line to do the job without having to put a second piece on. I guess I looked kind of stricken or something, and he took some pity on me. Had me unlace the piece of canvas and told me how long a piece of line I needed to do the job right. But that was the kind of thing, that, those first months were really rough, really hectic, in trying to learn what was required of being a sailor.

We got the ship out of the shipyard and we moved to Long Beach, from San Diego to Long Beach. And we started doing our sea trials. As I said, the ship had just come out of mothballs, there were a lot of things that needed to be worked on because the ship had been in mothballs since the end of World War II. And the first months in Long Beach were spent in just getting ourselves up and operational. My first battle station assignment was as a fuse setter in gun turret number one [1]. Up on the bow. Maybe I joined the Navy to avoid walking around in mud. I didn't realize I'm gonna be seasick every day I went out to sea. So I swapped seasickness for mud, I think. That was kind of interesting. Of course being a fuse setter, I was sitting down below the gun mount operating, twisting some dials to set the fuses. And not really seeing anything of what was going on. I remember the first time that 5-inch gun went off. I had the headphones

on, and I heard that we were coming down to the point of firing. But somehow or another I missed the word "shoot." And when that gun went off, I think I must have bounced several inches in the air.

Other than that, life was not too bad. We did three watches, which meant every third night, I had the watch. The other two nights, I could go into town. But at that point, being a Seaman Apprentice and getting just a little bit more than I had earned while I was a Seaman Recruit, going into Long Beach every night was out of reason. I loved to read, so I started picking up pocket books and I spent a lot of time onboard ship, reading. At one point, I had been told by the Boatswain that starting in about two [2] weeks, I was going to be on the side-cleaning detail. One of my watch duty stations when we were under way, was as a lookout on the bridge. And it took me not too long looking around, that I realized that there were some people onboard ship that seemed to be living a better life than I was. Radar Technicians, Radiomen, a few others. And there was this odd little cubbyhole just off the wing of the bridge called the Sonar Shack. And occasionally I'd peer into the Sonar Shack, and there, a couple of guys sitting there twisting knobs and looking at this green dial. But that's about all I knew about the Sonar Shack, about sonar. About the time when the Boatswain told me I was going to be on the side-cleaning detail, which was a very dirty detail, one of the sonar men that I recognized from my bridge station came up to me and said, "How'd you'd like to be a sonar man?" And I think my response was something along the lines of, "Yes, what's that?" As I said, I didn't know what sonar was. Well, they were looking for somebody, a Seaman that they could take on the sonar gang and train. So I became a Sonarman Striker and working in the Sonar Shack. That had some really great advantages. I didn't have to sit in the gun turret anymore because now my battle station was in the Sonar Shack. And in the morning, when they piped reveille and piped, " Sweepers, man your brooms, clean sweep down fore and aft, take all trash to the fantail," I would go up to the Sonar shack and, instead of grabbing a broom, I'd grab a brush. And I'd dust things off a little bit and sweep whatever might have collected on the deck, and then I was finished until the mess call came for breakfast.

Belt: Are you still on the same ship during this time?

Bohne: As a matter of fact, this is all during my first six, eight [6, 8] months onboard this ship. This ship, we found out we weren't going to go anywhere close to Korea, because we were assigned to train Reserves. So the Reserves would come down to Long Beach on Friday night, come onboard ship, we'd go underway Saturday and Sunday, and then come back, offload them on Sunday night. And then usually during

the week, we were sitting in port. Put a new meaning on the phrase U.S.S., U.S. Goss, kind of thing. We began to call ourselves, "Underway Saturday and Sunday," for the U.S.S. About six [6] months after I had reported for the Goss, I got word that I was being transferred. We had a full ship's complement which meant that when we picked up the reserves on the weekend, we had to put at least one-third of our people ashore. Which was really a burden. And because we weren't operating during the week, they didn't really didn't need a full ship's complement then, either. So, I got swept up and ordered to San Diego to go to the receiving station for reassignment. That was in the summer of 1951.

One of the things we had done onboard ship was, because we were working with the Reservists, everybody had to wear a maximum rating badge that you were eligible for. While officially I wasn't rated to be a Seaman, Sonarman Seaman, SOSN, they had me sew a little Sonarman badge on my jumper. So when I showed up in San Diego, the clerk in the receiving station said, "Are you an SOSN?" And I said "Yes." "Well, your records don't say that," and I said, "Hmm." So he made me an SOSN on the spot, which meant that basically I couldn't go back to sea as a general duty deckhand again. As a matter of fact, I was assigned to my next ship as a Sonarman Striker, SOSN. That ship was the U.S.S. Cassin Young, DD-793.

The Young was built in 1942, one of the last Fletcher-class destroyers built. Fletcher-class being the twenty-one hundred tonners [2100] with the single 5-inch gun mounts. It had been severely damaged near the end of World War II, repaired, rebuilt. And after the war, mothballed and was in the Destroyers, San Diego. But they had moved it up to Terminal Island, California, in the Long Beach, Los Angeles harbor area, and was in a civilian shipyard being cleaned up and being prepared for service. I was given the responsibility of taking a detail of officers, a detail of officers, yeah. A detail of Seaman from the receiving station to the barracks unit, the housing unit, which was across the highway from the receiving station. The reason I was chosen for that was because alphabetically, my name was the first one on the list. It was a group of about twenty [20] enlisted men. Most of us Seamen, Seamen Apprentice and Seamen. I don't recall that there was a Petty Officer. because logically the Petty Officer would have been put in charge. When I got over to the other side, the housing side, with this troop of guys following me, dragging our sea bags, I discovered that we were the first people to report onboard for the ship. So I was, by virtue of having the first name on the list, I was the first person reporting for duty onboard the Cassin Young for its recommission.

We were shortly moved from San Diego to Long Beach and put in a barracks there,

because the ship was not livable. Every morning we'd load up in some trucks and go up to the civilian shipyard and work on the ship during the day and back for the evening. The Petty Officers in charge made a mistake on me. They thought I was a native of Long Beach or something. They never put me on any evening or weekend detail, so basically I had liberty every night for those first few months that we were in Long Beach. The ship was commissioned that fall. My mom and dad came out from Wisconsin, drove out to California to be out there for the recommissioning, to visit with me. They spent about a week with me out there.

After we got the ship seaworthy, went through our sea trials and everything, we finished up that just shortly before Christmas. And again, while we were doing this during the fall we were thinking, "O.k., Korea here we come." But, we got transferred to Destroyers, Atlantic. So, my next trip after that was down the west coast, down the west coast to Mexico, through the Panama Canal, and up to Newport, Rhode Island, where that became our home port. So, being in the Destroyers, Atlantic, I didn't get to see any combat, didn't get to Korea directly. I'm a Korea war-era veteran, but I'm not technically a Korean War veteran, in that I did not serve in Korea or in the waters adjacent to Korea.

For the next three [3] years, we moved to Newport, Rhode Island, early 1952. So for the next two [2] years, we operated out of Newport. We spent a lot of time down in the Caribbean. There were times when we sort of half jokingly said San Juan, Puerto Rico was our second home port, we spent so much time in San Juan. It was really great. I got to go to Jamaica, Haiti, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands. Uh, got to go to Cuba one time! That was before Castro became the leader of Cuba. He was in the mountains on the east end of Cuba at that time with his revolutionaries, but we went into Havana and spent a few days in Havana under, I can't even remember the dictator's name from that time! But anyway, they knew that the revolutionaries were at work, but they were trying to carry on a kind of typical ignore-them experience.

Okay, other kinds of things, other duties, that we did. We did a lot of anti-submarine duty. We worked with a variety of different ships. Our destroyer squadron being the old twenty-one hundred [2100] Fletcher-Class tonners, and being only a five-ship squadron instead of the usual six [6], we got all kinds of odd assignments. I remember going out, and I have a picture, a snapshot, of this, going out and running plane guard duty with an aircraft carrier that was, did not have any airplanes on it. It had blimps! They had a winch mechanism on the deck, and a blimp every morning would come over the flight deck, drop a cable, and they'd pull the blimp down closer to the flight

deck while they were underway. The ship would be steaming at twelve [12] or fifteen [15] knots, pull the blimp down and refuel it and change the crews and then they'd release them and they'd fly submarine, anti-submarine patrol duty. That was just one of [unclear].

We went into Pensacola, Florida one time and did plane guard duty for the naval air cadets that were doing their first aircraft carrier landings. Now that was a circus! Some of the things that, that we watched were just really, really hilarious. Like the guy that came down, and this is the days of prop-driven aircraft for the training. What they called the "Yellow Peril," a very light aircraft, a prop-driven aircraft. And we were listening on the radio. He was coming in for a landing. The signal officer says, "Wave off! Wave off!" Well, the guy didn't wave off, he cut the power. And he dropped down towards the deck, and I guess it finally went through his brain that the LSO [*Landing Safety Officer*] was saying, "Wave off," so he hit the throttle. But, in the meantime, his tailhook got caught in the cable. So there he is, about fifteen [15] feet off the flight deck, not going anywhere because he's caught in the arresting cable. So he cuts the power, and makes a vertical descent, which collapsed the landing gear. And we could see the splinters flying from the prop, and from the flight deck. We had some foreign pilots learning. One day one of them, after he took off, his engine quit and he went into the drink so we picked him up. He forgot that we didn't speak his language and that he could have conversed with us in English, so he's telling us how he wound up crashing his plane, in his native language, with a lot of hand gestures.

Belt: What country was he from?

Bohne: I don't remember what country he was from. And by the old rule, if you pick up a rescued pilot, you get five [5] gallons of ice cream from the aircraft carrier. They reneged, they never gave it to us. Usually there was a helicopter there, and the helicopter would get to the downed pilots long before we did; but that day we happened to pick him up.

Let's see, some other kinds of duties that we had. We were sent on a mission, and we were not told much about this mission, especially the crew wasn't told much about it. We went up to Casco Bay, Maine. Some workers had come aboard and welded some little platforms to the wings of the bridge. [*Bohne coughs*] It turned out that these platforms were for motion picture cameras, and what we did for the next several days was to be the motion picture camera platform for an experiment with helicopter-launched anti-submarine torpedoes. That was so secret at that time, this is 19--,

probably late '52, early 1953. That was so secret at the time that we were all forbidden to talk about this with anybody who was not onboard the ship. And after we returned from the exercise, the embargo on that information stayed. That was still the days of the diesel-powered submarines. Nuclears were just coming along, but mostly it was diesel-powered submarines and we still had a chance of catching a submarine. One time when we were off of Cape Hatteras and we picked up a signal that was very strong, a submarine signal, and I was in the Sonar Shack with my gang. We said, "Yes, we've got a submarine." So our task force, our Squadron Commander checked and, well, there was no American submarine in the area. "Are you sure what you've got?" "Yes, we've got a submarine." So we sat on it, until he ran out of air and had to come up, and it turned out to be a Russki. He came up to snorkel depth and then decided to come all the way up and we got a good look at a Russian submarine.

Other times we had some really great contacts. We were coming back from the Caribbean one time, steaming northward, and we picked up a contact and the contact was, the bearing was clear, i.e. there was no ship there. But we had a very solid contact that was moving in an absolutely straight course at an absolutely steady speed. So, not having much else to do with it, it was headed very much in our direction, our skipper decided to go over and investigate. Well, what we found was, it was a huge whale, who was headed north, like I said, on a very steady speed, on a very steady course. So, sometimes you'd find echoes that you've gone, "Oh boy! Now we've got a submarine." Uh, another whale kind of thing.

Belt: So the echoes, you couldn't tell an echo from a whale from a submarine?

Bohne: No! Usually a whale would be changing depth or changing course, changing direction. But this guy, he was, he was huge. We saw him, he was just below the surface. We saw, he was a huge, huge whale. And like I said, on an absolutely steady course at a steady speed. No variation in his speed for the time that we were tracking him until we got close enough to see him.

Belt: So you thought it was a submarine.

Bohne: We thought it was a submarine! Uh huh.

Belt: How long did it take you before you determined it was not a submarine?

Bohne: Oh, about fifteen [15] minutes, probably ten [10] to fifteen [15] minutes. The

range at which we could pick up a submarine was probably six thousand [6,000] yards. On a really, really good day it might be more than that, but six thousand [6,000] yards was about the maximum for the type of equipment in those days. So it didn't take us too long to get over to where he was swimming north.

Talking a little bit about the equipment. The room in which the equipment was stored was marked, "Confidential – Authorized Personnel Only." In other words, the average sailor onboard ship was not to come into the space where this equipment was. And it was treated as pretty secret, very secretive. That was 1952 to 1954. In 1961, I was at a surplus store in Long Beach, California, and I saw the identical equipment that I had worked on approximately ten [10] years earlier. The identical equipment for sale to use on a tuna fishing boat to find schools of tuna. The technology had changed that much in the ten [10] years that, hey, it was surplus equipment. Sell it to who ever will pay the price!

Let's see, what other kinds of things. Oh, one of the things about my Navy experience is I got, I got to see things, do things, that I probably would never had done if I had stayed in my home area. I did travel a little bit with my family. We had relatives in Chicago, so it was not unusual to take a run to Chicago, the big city. But, if I'd stayed in Wisconsin, I don't think I would have done things like go to Algiers, go to Turkey, walk across the ruins of Ephesus, Egypt, Greece, go to the Acropolis in Greece, spend five [5] days in Rome touring all the different kinds of things to see, England and, like I said, all over the Caribbean area. So, in that way, the Navy was really great in that I got to see and do things that I probably would have never had any exposure to.

One of the things I found, especially when we went overseas to Europe. American Express had a good thing going. They were adding tours. They would, at a very reasonable rate, they would take you out on a day trip to wherever. And that's how I got to go to Ephesus, to the Acropolis, got to go to Rome and spend a few days in Rome, that sort of thing.

[*Bohne coughs*] Get a sip of water.

Like I said, I was the first person in my family in a long, long time to go into the military. I had a cousin who also went into the Navy about the same time I did, and he wound up as a hospital corpsman with the Marines in Korea. Later, after I got out of the service, my younger brother went into the Army, spent two years in the Army. But that was about the extent of military experience in our family until now, my son is in

the Navy. I wrote letters, frequently. One or two of them probably have survived, but most of them I think got dumped a long time ago. The family was not that much for keeping those kinds of mementos, those kinds of things. Besides, I don't think there was anything worthwhile in those letters, thinking back.

I was quite an introvert and, in many ways, I was pretty naive. Some of that naiveté got knocked out of me while I was in the service, dealing with people from all different walks of life, all different parts of life. Are we about to the end of the tape?

Belt: O.k. Would you like to stop?

Bohne: Flip it over.

[APPROXIMATELY 5 MINUTES LEFT BLANK ON SIDE 1]

END TAPE 1 SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 1 SIDE 2

[APPROXIMATELY 5 MINUTES LEFT BLANK BEFORE INTEVIEW BEGINS]

Henry Bohne: Yeah, it's rolling. Ah, let's see, what other kinds of things could we talk about. Because we were operating in the Atlantic Ocean, there wasn't the stress and pressure of going to Korea. Some of the people that I had gone through boot camp with did wind up going to Korea, and occasionally I would hear a word from one or two of them. As a matter of fact, on board the ship that I was, the Cassin Young, there were a couple people that I had been in the same company with in boot camp, and they had these family or friend contacts in Philadelphia. Some of their friends in Philadelphia had gone to Korea. So we'd get some word. But, it wasn't stressful. It was pretty easy. Probably the worst time out there was during the hurricane seasons. I don't need to go to Elitch's or a similar kind of theme park. I had my joy rides, my ups-and-down rides, in the north Atlantic or in a hurricane, that kind of thing. And, boy, that can be fierce! I've got some photographs, snapshots. I took a snapshot on board, on the main deck of the Cassin Young. If the snapshot isn't faded too much, you can see the horizon in the background level, and the deck is canted at probably over thirty [30] degrees in relation to the horizon.

Food? We had plenty of food. Navy food is really pretty good. When I enlisted, as part of the process at the enlistment station in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, the chief had me step

on the scale and he said, "Oh, oh." "What does that mean?" He says, "Well, the minimum weight for enlisting in the Navy is a hundred and twenty [120] pounds." I said, "Yeah." He says, "You weigh only a hundred and eighteen [118]." I thought, "Uh oh, here goes my chance to enlist in the Navy." "Tell you what," he says, "eat a lot of bananas between now and the day you go over there, especially the morning you go for enlistment. And, if you're still below a hundred and twenty [120] pounds, when you get to Chicago tell them that you had a bad case of diarrhea last night."

When we went to Europe, we ran out of fresh milk and eggs. So, when we came back stateside – we got back like on a, just before the weekend – we took aboard a lot of supplies and then the next day – which was either Saturday or Sunday – we had brunch. We didn't have to get up and have breakfast, we had brunch! Brunch consisted of, you stopped by the galley and you ordered as many eggs as you want, in whatever way. And the cook would fry it up for you, and you take your tray and go down to the mess hall and get the rest. There were no limits as to how many times you could stop at the mess hall that day. It was amazing the amount of eggs that got consumed that morning.

When we were onboard, at sea, especially at sea, we had movies practically every night. Well, you can imagine, how are you going to rig a movie screen on a destroyer and where are people going to sit? In port wasn't too bad, but at sea that really became a problem. But we had a lot of movies. There was one particular movie, and I do not remember what it was, it had some kind of a love story to it. We had seen it so many times, so what – and this was not unique to our crew, it was a trick that I've heard about a lot – we just simply turned off the sound and the crew who was watching the movie, they provided their own dialogue. That was entertaining!

Barbara Belt: Do you remember the movie stars at the time?

Bohne: Oh, somewhere in my junk drawer, I have a cocktail napkin signed by Broderick, what was his first name? Oh, I can't think of it. He was the sheriff on "Highway Patrol."

Belt: Broderick Crawford?

Bohne: Broderick Crawford.

Belt: Is that him?

Bohne: I met him on Catalina Island, off the coast of California. We were sitting in a bar drinking beers, and he came in. And we had a pot of money on the bar. Anybody who came in, could pick up a drink, but they had to put money in the pot. So he threw a twenty [\$20] in the pot. So, we all had free beers on Broderick Crawford. No, that's not his name.

Belt: No?

Bohne: It's, it's--. Whatever name you just gave. But other than that, when I was in Newport, Rhode Island, not much to do there. So I spent a lot of time hanging out at the YMCA, and going to see movies. But I really don't remember particular movies or particular movie stars at that time.

In 19--, yeah. Let's see. In 1952, they decided, the ship's company, the ship's officers, decided that I needed to go to Sonar School and Sonar School was in Key West, Florida. So I was sent to Key West, Florida, and it was about a six [6] month-long school. I think I got down there in June and got out of there in November. Well, I had taken the exam and been promoted to Sonarman Third Class before going to school. So, here I arrived at school and a hundred and twenty [120] people in the class and I was the only Petty Officer. So, guess who got to march the class to and from the [unclear], the group to and from the classrooms. Me. I happen to be of the school that the shortest distance between two points is not marching out and then doing a column right or something like that. One day I was chided very severely by the head of the Sonar School operation for telling my class to say, "Class, bend left" as we went around the curve, the "D.". We did not wear our jumpers, we were just wearing our white t-shirts, so the class people, the people in my class didn't know what my rank was. We had been there for about a month. We had a Saturday morning inspection, which meant dress whites. And, of course, the rating badge was on the sleeve. So I walked out and I was lining up my class, and I was walking through, in front of the class, with my right arm, with my right shoulder toward the guys in the first rank. Got down to the end, turned around to walk back, and somebody, using an expletive, said, "The s.o.b. is a Petty Officer." [*Laughter from Bohne*] So, they realized that, not only was I in charge of the class, but I had rank on them, which also explained why I wasn't living in the student barracks. I was living in the instructor barracks. Rank has its privileges sometimes. [*Chuckle from Bohne*]

The school was great. Because I had the experience onboard ship and was a rated petty officer. Each week we had an exam of forty [40] questions, and for the first three [3]

weeks, I scored a perfect 4 - 0. On the fourth week, I took the exam and, as soon as I was finished with the exam, the instructors picked it up, which was kind of unusual, and said, "Wait here." A little bit later they came in and they got me and took me into an office and said, "All right, where's your pony?" I knew what a pony was. A pony was the answer key that somebody had picked up from previous classes. So I insisted that I didn't have a pony. So, they handed me another exam for that week, another test of forty [40] questions. Had me take it again.

Belt: So they were accusing you of cheating?

Bohne: Yes! Well, I was scoring 4.0. So, for the first four [4] weeks, I took six [6] tests and scored all 4.0. At which point they decided that, maybe, I wasn't cheating. [Laughter from Bohne] I wound up graduating first in the class of a hundred and twenty [120], with the highest cumulative score. I got back to the ship, my ship was in Boston undergoing some repairs. I got back to the ship late in the afternoon, got myself on board, got a bunk and all this kind of thing. And then went looking for my division officer, and I found him. And I showed him my diploma from the school, which said First-in-Class, [unclear]. So he took me in to the Skipper's cabin, Captain Rudden. Hey, that's a great guy. I've got to talk about him in a little bit. He took me in to Captain Rudden, and the captain looked at the diploma, congratulated me and says, "Where do you live?" I said, "Wisconsin." He said, "Oh. That's a little bit too far beyond the hundred and fifty [150] mile limit." "Yes sir". The rule was that you could have liberty if you didn't go more than a hundred and fifty [150] miles beyond your duty station. So he looked at me and he said, "Well, we've got a long weekend coming up and so on." He says, "You won't be assigned to any duty section until next week." Whatever the day was, so I had about five [5] days. But I didn't have enough money to go anywhere, so I had to live onboard the ship anyway. [Chuckle from Bohne]

Belt: Do you remember what your pay was? Do you recall that?

Bohne: By that time I think I was probably earning about \$130 a month or something like that. I don't really remember for sure. But in those days a buck went a lot further than it does now.

Captain Rudden was, he was a very senior skipper and he was captain, a four [4] striper. And he was about to become an admiral. He was put in charge of the division, the destroyer division, and was the skipper of the Cassin Young, so he kind of dual duties. Years after my Navy experience, I was doing graduate work at the University of

Maryland and studying management techniques, management skills. And I found out that Captain Rudden was, he could have been the poster boy for the some of the models of how to be an executive, how to be a manager. He was really, really a great guy. He got more things out of that ship's company than I've ever seen any other place. And in civilian employment, he was way, way ahead of what most managers believed was management style, the way to manage people. He was just outstanding.

Belt: You kept in contact with him?

Bohne: No, I didn't keep in contact. As a matter of fact, I didn't keep in contact with any of my shipmates. Well, I had contact for maybe about a year and a half with a guy named Gene Helt, who was part of my sonar gang. I didn't go into the Reserves. I just washed my hands of the military and I did not participate in anything like that.

I had one other experience, and this kind of ties to my cousin who was in the Marine Corps, a hospital corpsman with the Fleet Marines. And I had heard this story, and it's really convoluted in how the story got started and gotten back to me. The story was that some of my boot camp mates had heard that Bohne lost a leg in Korea. I didn't get to Korea, so obviously I didn't lose a leg there. When the story got around, we were in Long Beach at that time, and I had a real good friend named Bob Cook from Wisconsin. He and I buddied around together when we were in boot camp. And Bob told me this story. He said these guys came and said you lost your leg in Korea and he said, "Nah, I see him every once in a while on Long Beach and he hasn't lost a leg. Well, I lost contact with Bob Cook in about 1951, maybe. Yeah, 1951. In 1954, I was sitting on the steps of the Administration Building at the University of Wisconsin, filling out my registration forms to start school as a freshman. And somebody walked up in front of me and pulled up a pants leg and said, "Not that leg." He pulled up the pants leg on the other leg and said, "Well, not that leg either." I looked up and it was Bob Cook. Bob and I saw each other for the couple of years that we were together at the University of Wisconsin but, other than that, I had had no contact with any shipmates until fairly recently. I found two of them through registrations on the web, and we're communicating by email.

Belt: How do you think the rumor got started about losing your leg?

Bohne: Well, my cousin Bob was in Korea and he was wounded in Korea. He didn't lose his leg, but he was wounded in Korea. I think somebody just put a couple of tidbits together that made a reasonable sounding story. But it was kind of funny, "No,

he didn't lose his leg." [*Chuckle from Bohne*]

Let's see, what other kinds of things. [*long pause*] Let me think. You know, they say that everybody's got their double someplace. My double was onboard the ship I was on. Three hundred and seventy five [375] men and there was a guy who looked remarkably like me. And I looked remarkably like him! He was a bit taller than I, but we wore the same kind of glasses, Navy issue. Of course, there was only one style. We went into England, and it was the--. The day we arrived in England was my birthday. I had the duty that night. I was supposed to stay onboard ship, but at the last minute I got a call and they said, "You're on shore patrol." So I went off on shore patrol. Well, now, the British Navy does things a little bit different than the U.S. Navy does. So we're sitting in the British shore patrol and we had a couple of beers. Even though we were on duty, we had a couple of beers. In the wee small hours of the morning I went back to the ship, went to bed, sacked out. The next day I'm up on the main deck and one of the officers, a guy I didn't really like, but one of the officers, walked up to me and said, "Did you have a good time on shore last night?" I said--. "You know I was on shore patrol, and what do you mean, a good time?" I thought maybe he knows about sipping the beers at the shore patrol headquarters. So I gave him some kind of an answer, and he asked a couple more questions. Finally I said, "Hey, I was on shore patrol duty last night." He says, "Are you sure about that?" I said, "Well, yeah, I'm sure of it. I was there. I was on shore patrol duty." Well, a few more days went by before I found out what happened. And by the way, my name is Bohne and my twin's name, my look-alike's name, was Bonham. Well, Bonham came back and he was kind of drunk. And this officer, who had been giving me the third degree was the officer of the day. And Bonham reached up, grabbed his hat, the officer's hat, dropped it over the side and ran! And they couldn't find Bonham. So when the officer spotted me on deck, thinking, "Hey, I'm the guy that dropped the hat over the side," decided to give me the third degree. [*Laughter from Bohne*]

I started out buying a little cheap camera. Boy, I mean a little cheap camera. And I took a lot of snapshots and I upgraded my camera a couple of times in the process. I don't know if they're good pictures or not. They're all black and white, by the way. But I've got a lot of snapshots of shipboard life, probably a couple hundred, and they're stashed in a couple of photo albums.

Through this whole thing, I went back my home area, to the family, on leave a couple of times. I made a big mistake one time. I went back on thirty [30] days leave. Well, that was a boring time. The guys that I had run around with when I was a kid, well, as a

teen, before I went in the Navy, many of them were married and they were into a totally different way of life, and I had little in common with them. I got to go back to Wisconsin for my older brother's wedding, I was a member of the wedding party. But, other than that, my folks came out to California that first year that I was in the service, but other than that--.

Belt: Was there a lot of letter writing between you?

Bohne: Yeah. I tried to write letters home, maybe about every ten [10] days. And the family--. I come from a family of, I have two [2] brothers and three [3] sisters, plus Mom and Dad. Mom would write, but usually my sisters would write.

Belt: Telegrams? I mean, you didn't, phone calls?

Bohne: Oh, in those days phone calls were a very expensive rarity. I had my first aeroplane ride after I was in the Navy, and that was a flight from Los Angeles to Chicago, an overnight flight. The flight from Chicago back to Los Angeles was a real trip! It was on a tail-dragging DC-3. What did they carry, twenty-seven [27], well, I don't how many passengers, but not very many. [*Bohne coughs*] Every couple of hundred miles we had to land to refuel. We landed in Douglas, Arizona, which is down near the border, at about 7 o'clock in the morning. And the stewardess says, "Okay, everybody out of the plane, over to the terminal, and we'll have breakfast there." A very different kind of air travel from today.

The ship I was on, the Cassin Young, was getting ready to go on an around-the-world cruise, and I was down to the point where I had only a few months of service left. Also, I had applied for admission to the University of Wisconsin and been accepted. So, if I wanted to stay for the around-the-world cruise, I would have to reenlist and give up the opportunity to go to the university. So I decided, "No. I'm going to get out of the service." So they sent me up to Boston, to the U.S.S. Cotton. The U.S. Cotton was being gutted and rebuilt, a really major, major shipyard overhaul. So we're living in the barracks. By this time I was a Petty Officer First Class, which meant that when reveille went, I just rolled over and went back to sleep until they called breakfast. And, if I was too broke to buy some coffee and sweet rolls, then I'd get up and go to breakfast. Otherwise, I wouldn't even bother to go to breakfast. Did like the variety because I was [unclear], the officers on board the ship and the sonar gang on board the ship knew I was a short-timer. I really didn't do very much. I kind of, odd details. One of the odd details was I got sent down to South Boston to be shore patrol. One of the kind of funny

things that happened along the way. The first night I went on shore patrol the chief was out there inspecting us and he stopped in front of me and he says, "Are you in proper uniform?" So I kind of checked myself, "Yes, Chief. I am." He says, "Where's your hash mark?" The hash mark is the diagonal strip worn on the sleeve that donates for each four [4] years of service completed. I had not completed four years of service, so I wasn't eligible for a hash mark, but I was a First Class Petty Officer. So he asked me where's my hash mark. I said, "Well, I'm not rated for one." "Well, are you a First Class Petty Officer?" "Yeah." He says, "Well, I'm going to put you on a special detail tonight." "Why?" He says, "Tomorrow I want you to get a hash mark and sew a hash mark on your sleeve." "You know Chief, I'm not rated for it." He says, "If you're going to go on shore patrol on my crew, as a First Class Petty Officer you're going to have a hash mark. You can't go off as a slick arm because somebody will beat the [pause] out of you." So, I went and got a hash mark and sewed it on my sleeve.

Belt: So you were promoted just by a word like this? I mean, [unclear].

Bohne: No, that's not a promotion.

Belt: That's not a promotion.

Bohne: That was wearing an emblem.

Belt: An emblem. I see. O.k.

Bohne: The emblem was based on completion of four [4] years of service, and I didn't have the four [4] years.

I was sent back to South Boston around the Fourth of July, so I didn't really complete four [4] years of service. I did three [3] years and something, three [3] years and ten [10] months and something, I think it was. So, I'm back in South Boston and I'm being processed out, and the chief is walking through one day and he says, "What are you doing here?" He says, "You're not on my shore patrol gang." I said, "No, I'm being out-processed. I'm being discharged." And he says, he looked at me again and he says, "I see you took the hash mark off your sleeve." I said, "Yeah, Chief. When I got back to the ship they said what are you doing with the hash mark. You're not eligible for it."
{Chuckle from Bohne}

The last days of going out, and it was right over the Fourth of July weekend, I had to

hang around because of the Fourth of July. So I got to go to the Boston Commons and hear the Boston Pops on the Fourth of July.

The last day of getting out, I really--. I got out and I got on a train to go to Detroit, Pontiac, Michigan because I had bought a new car, a new Pontiac, and I was going to pick it up at the Pontiac factory dealership in Pontiac. I don't remember very much about that last day. It was just kind of, I got out. I went into town, I got out of my uniform and changed into civvie [*civilian*] clothes, got on the train, an overnight train to go to Michigan. I remember coming up to our family farm in Wisconsin, driving my brand new car, and kind of the rush of coming home and being finished with the Navy. Being finished with something. I didn't see it at that time, but I see it now. It was a part of my life that was over and done with. I said that for many years I didn't do anything at all with veteran's organizations. And it isn't until about [*Bohne coughs*]. Oh, about ten [10] years ago that I began getting involved in veteran's organizations. And I'm sorry now that I hadn't done more of that, that I didn't do more of that. I'm a tin-can sailor, and there's an organization called Tin-Can Sailor's Association and they're having their annual convention in Portland, Oregon this August, and I'm sort of half-way making plans on going there. I belong to the Korean War Veterans Association, local chapter. I belong to the National Sonarman Association, and also I joined the American Legion Post here in Castle Rock. I had never gone back to any of the ship's reunions.

My ship, the Cassin Young, still exists. It's sixty [60] years old this year, or it was sixty [60] years old last year. It is now a National Park Museum and tied up across the dock from Old Ironsides in Boston. I would kind of like to go back and go on board the ship and look around. Especially, I would like to take Arlene, my wife, and show her that. I've talked about my Navy experience with her, with the family. I don't know how much she really knows about shipboard life and, I'll tell you, shipboard life in those days, on those old destroyers, those old tin-cans, was pretty rough and crude in many respects. Our son talked about going into the military and I told him, well if you're going to go into the military, be an officer. And he said, "Why?" And I said, "Well, you have to pay for your own meals, but the uniforms are nicer." So he is in the Navy, he's an officer in the Navy. He's got about fourteen [14] years of service in. He's been overseas. He's been even more widely traveled than I. He's doing a second tour of duty in Korea. He was a veteran of the Gulf War, things like that. So, he and I can talk about some commonalities. Sometimes, when we're talking about some of our military experiences, I glance at Arlene and I realize that she's struggling, trying to keep up with what we're talking about.

When I look back at my Navy experience, it was great for me. What's the old phrase? It was worth a lot to me, but I wouldn't go back for a million dollars. I don't know. It provided me with a look at life, it provided me with a look at different kinds of people that I had never met before yet, and probably would not have met if I had stayed in Wisconsin and gone to work in the factory. Because of the G.I. Bill, it got me my college degree, and I was the first one in my family to get a college degree. So, it provided me a lot of opportunities. And even today, it still provides me opportunities, because the world of the veterans is kind of, it's a special world. There's only one way you can get into that world, and that is to be a veteran. And that's a special experience among people.

While I was in the Navy I was operating the sonar equipment, the electronic equipment. And I'd see these engineers coming in from Sperry Rand and the other electric companies with their briefcase full of spare parts kind of thing. So I decided that I was going to go to college and become an electrical engineer. So, when I got out of the Navy and went to the university, I started out in the engineering school with the target to become an electrical engineer. After the first semester of algebra, and its grade, resulting grade, I decided that engineering was not for me. So I was going to drop out of college at the end of the first semester, but I went to see [*Bohne coughs*] an old friend of mine who had been the 4-H Club Agent when I was a kid in Wisconsin, in Manitowac County. And we talked about various things and I told him I was thinking about dropping out. At that point I was twenty-four [24] years old. Twenty-four [24] years old going to college in those days was an unusual thing. But he took me, literally, by the collar, and drug me down to the Assistant Dean of the College of Agriculture and said, "Hey, you've got to get this guy transferred into the College of Agriculture." So I transferred in, and I decided that I wanted to become a County Agent and that was my major area. I never did become a County Agent, but I used the skills I learned there because I became a trainer, a trainer of staff, the people of the organization. Worked for a couple of years, then went with the Federal government, spent twenty-three [23] years with the Federal government. And the last twelve [12] of those, I was responsible for the creation, the design and creation, the production of the training program that's used by the staff on a nationwide basis. I worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons. I retired in 1983 at the age of fifty-three [53] with two [2] kids in high school. I was two [2] years away from mandatory retirement. They wanted to move me from Denver to Georgia and I said "Hell no, I won't go." I remember my boss saying, "Well, what are you going to do?" I said, "I don't know what it is, but it sure as hell ain't gonna be in Georgia."

I became a consultant. I had my own business. I had had my own business on a part-time basis before that retirement. And I became a consultant and worked on that and things sort of, kind of snuck into retirement, semi-retirement. Although I still do some consulting. As a matter of fact, about three [3] months ago, I produced my most recent videotape of about two hundred [200] and, no, about four hundred and fifty [450] video programs I've done. So, I'm not--. I am seventy-two [72] years old. My kids are grown and gone so I don't have to really worry too much about them. My wife and I are busy, so now I do the kinds of things I like to do and one of the things I like to do is work with veterans.

One of the questions is, and I frequently hear this when I talk to veterans, did my military experience affect my life. Boy, I tell you, it did. And I don't know how anybody can go through a military experience and not be affected by that experience for the rest of their life. It is just a very, very different kind of a, unless somebody is a military brat, grew up on military bases because their parents were in the military. It's an experience that just is not possible in any other way except when you're in the military. It's got to affect it, affect the rest of your life.

Ah, boy. Doing this interview and talking, every once in a while a little idea [unclear] when I'm saying a sentence, a little idea that will pop into my mind and I'll say, you know. Should I talk about that? I've got to talk about that. And about ten [10] seconds later the idea is gone. There's so many things. I recently got an email from the guy who was in Key West, Florida, not at the same time I was. But he and his brother went to the same high school I did. And he called and said, "Do you have any photographs, any snapshots of Key West, the Sonar School on Key West?" And I went back to the photo album and started looking through it and all kinds of memories came up. I've been doing some things like that. I found a guy, and his name was vaguely familiar, and he had been an instructor at Key West, Florida, and I contacted him by email and he said, "No, he didn't remember me." Which is not unusual. These instructors get to see all these students in front of them, and the students remember the instructor but not the other way around. So I wrote back to him, and I told him about my story about being accused of cheating on the exams. And I said, "And then there was this other thing." We had this one instructor, right after lunch we'd be sitting in the classroom, the classrooms were folding chairs. And if somebody dropped off to sleep, what he'd do is he'd sneak around behind and kick the chair out from under the sleeper. And this one day I was looking at, or reading, but I had my eyes down, and the instructor decided I was asleep, but I wasn't asleep. But he snuck around behind me and, just as he kicked the chair out from under me, I leaned forward so there was no weight on the chair.

And I was leaning forward enough that when the chair disappeared, I didn't wind up on the deck on my butt. And he emailed back and he says, "I now remember you." [Laughter from Bohne] He was not the guy that kicked the chair, but he was in the classroom when that happened and he remembered the incident.

A number of years ago I was reading, and I cannot remember where, it was some military publication. There was a little want ad, a little classified ad. This guy in Pennsylvania had a little note that said, "I'm looking for people to write short stories about Navy life." Well, I like to write essays, little short stories, so I wrote one and sent it to him with a little note saying, "Is this what you're looking for?" And he came back at me and said, "Yeah, you go some more?" So he published a book called *White Hats of the Navy*, and it consists of about a hundred and twenty [120] short stories. And I have four [4] short stories in that book, along with some photographs.

Belt: Who was the author?

Bohne: George Sharrow, S-H-A-R-R-O-W. The book's been out, perhaps, about six [6] years or something like that. And reading the stories and looking at the photographs, they're really great. One of the stories I wrote was called "The Great Watermelon Caper." We were in port and, by this time I was probably a Sonarman Second Class. Word came that you've got to assign somebody from your sonar gang to a work detail to unload stores, get the stores off, and we were tied to a buoy in Newport, Rhode Island at the time. Get the stores off of the boat and into the storerooms. So I assigned one of my Seamen. What else, you wouldn't assign another Petty Officer or go yourself. Of course, send a Seaman. So we're working on the electronic equipment there in the shack, and the guy comes in, a little red-headed guy, and he's carrying watermelon. He says, "Quick, hide this. Don't cut it until I come back." So when the work detail ended he came back, and we closed the door and we sliced up the watermelon. About that time comes a rapping on the door. I looked out through the louvers and there were brown shoes. Brown shoes meant it was an officer. So I said something like, "Yeah, yes, who is it?" Or something. Well, it turned out to be Mr. Dye [sp?] our Division Officer. Now, Mr. Dye was one of the really good guys. He was a great officer to have.

[INTERVIEW ENDS]

(Tape 1 Side 2 ends)