

BOB BARBER

S: Today is Easter Sunday, the fifteenth of April, 1990, and I'm visiting with Bob Barber at his home in Plantation, Florida. It's a nice sunny day, kind of humid, and I think I've said enough, Bob- you tell your story.

B: This is a pleasure to have a chance to tell some old sea going stories with Sammy Guill, whom I haven't seen in many years. Sammy was four years ahead of me at the Coast Guard Academy, graduating in '36 and I was the class of '40. I happened to be a native boy from New London so my first year at the Academy was devoted to trying to find dates for my classmates for the proms.

Starting in 1940 when most of us went to work for real, my first assignment was the Coast Guard cutter *Kiuga* based in Boston, shipmates Art Engel, Charlie Laising, Paul Krimball for awhile, and a few other old timers who had best remain unnamed. We had been on a couple of weather patrols with the *Kiuga*. when we got sent on a special mission up to Greenland, this was in April of 1941, with quite a large survey party looking for airfield sights in Greenland where the US could build airfields for relaying bombers to Britain to help with the British war effort. There were about ten people in this special survey party, army, navy, army air corps, weather bureau, Canadian armed force and so on. Our contingent when we got up to Greenland left the *Kiuga* on a small Danish vessel which could navigate the fjords and ice in Greenland more easily. Just about the time they had left our ship, we suddenly got a message to return as quickly as possible to Boston to be given to the British. Most of you probably have read about when the US turned over the ten lake class cutters, the 250' cutters, to England under lend lease, England being very hard pressed at that time and needing any type of anti submarine vessel they could get ahold of. So the *Kiuga* steamed rapidly back to Boston, then Philadelphia and Norfolk, got a coat of gray paint overnight and the British crew who were going to take the ship, it was going to be called the HMS Totland, came aboard in the Brooklyn

navy yard. Two days later we sailed up Long Island Sound to the New London area and back to Brooklyn and one week after they came aboard they took over the ship, which impressed me that the British could do things that quickly, and as I understand it, they ran the ship pretty well.

The day that they took over and commissioned the ship as a British man of war it became eligible to have liquor aboard, so the new British captain's boy, or assistant, was sent over to the British battleship *Malaya*, which was lying in the Brooklyn Navy Yard with some gunshot holes in the side of it being repaired, and came back with a couple of satchels of British rum. The outgoing Coast Guard crew was invited to attend a party in the captain's cabin, which was quite large, and the British only knew one way to drink this rum which was to pour it into a tumbler and hand it to you. I dimly recall leaving the ship a couple of hours later, en route to our next stations, but I haven't forgotten the decommissioning day of the *Kiuga*, the new HMS Totland.

There has been correspondence in the last two or three months with a retired British naval officer who is compiling a history of the ten coast guard cutters. He did serve in the HMS Totland. This announcement was in the retiree newsletter a few months ago.

I have a few notes I've jotted down: I don't want to make this talk too long; sometimes we get tired of the sound of our own voices.

After leaving the *Kiuga* and a short stint on the *Douane* making a weather patrol while we were still so-called neutral in status, we did sight a U-boat on one of our patrols on the *Douane* and we did pick up the entire crew of a British freighter named the *Trysilium* out about five hundred miles north of the Azores. The *Trysilium* had been sunk, the crew was saved in two life boats and the *Douane* picked them up and took them into St. John New Foundland. That case came out happily for everyone involved and we had a few hours there.

Soon after that, in early summer of 1941, I was assigned to the *Northland*, one of the Coast Guard's oldest and smallest powered icebreakers that has ever been built, I think. She was 1000 shaft horsepower diesel electric drive and she couldn't break her way out of a paper bag, but she was all we had at the time. This was before any of the wing class ice breakers were even on the drawing boards. And seeing as the coast guard had been assigned the duty of protecting Greenland, the

navy having plenty else to do in other places, it was essential that the Coast Guard have some ice breaking Coast Guard Greenland patrol as such were emerging, and the senior officer at that time was Captain Iceberg Eddie Smith. The commanding officer of the *Northland* was Captain Carl Christian VonPaulson, a classmate of Iceberg Eddie Smith, and this led to a few little problems. The commander of the New Greenland Patrol, Captain Ed Smith was riding on board the *Northland* and sharing a cabin with Captain VonPaulson and I have a fairly clear recollection of a few arguments about who was running the ship. I think captain Von Paulson finally made the point that he was the CO.

We had a very productive six month cruise up on the northeast coast of Greenland, including capturing a German weather station in September of 1941; this was before Pearl Harbor. There were several members of the Gestapo and a chairman weather bureau man and some Danes and Norwegians, because the Germans knew that in order to survive in a building on the northeast coast of Greenland, they needed some help from people who knew that country and how to survive. All together there were a dozen or fifteen men that were captured, with no gunfire; we surprised them early in the morning and they were all asleep. Next thing they knew they were prisoners taken back to Boston and interned for the duration of what was to become our war participation.

We captured a small Norwegian vessel named the Buskoe. That was renamed something by the Coast Guard and also taken back to Boston and was used in the war effort. The Greenland Patrol gradually became larger. There was Navy participation for awhile, by some navy PBYS and their crews, and a couple of small navy trawlers but as the war effort progressed, about 1942-43, the Greenland Patrol really became entirely Coast Guard.

S: You said Navy trawlers?

B: Actually they were cable layers and tenders, but about the size of a large trawler. One of them was named the Bluebird. In order to supplement the Greenland Patrol seagoing capability, the Coast Guard commandeered about a dozen trawlers for the Boston fishing fleet. They were called beam trawlers because they worked fish rigs over the sides. As

far as I was concerned, they were all very similar, approximately 100-120' in length, most had one diesel engine, a crew of about ten when fishing, fifteen when crew had them to man a gun and some depth charge racks.

S: It was about 22 people with the Coast Guard crew.

B: A little more than I thought. As I recall, most of these trawlers could make a speed of about 10-12 knots, tops, and they had a few reported encounters with U-boats. None of them actually saw a U-boat to my knowledge. I really don't think a U-boat would have bothered to surface or tried to torpedo one of those trawlers; it wouldn't have been considered worth expending a torpedo on.

One of the trawlers was lost en route between Greenland and Bell Aisle Strait. Tom LaFarge, an artist, was the reserve skipper. I think it was the Natsek, and most of the people who really knew those waters were convinced that he iced up badly, lost his stability and probably capsized. And in 28 degree water, the crew wouldn't survive more than fifteen minutes at the most.

When I was working ashore in Greenland on the patrol staff, under now Admiral Iceberg Ed Smith in 1943, I had been serving as a port liaison officer at the northern base in Greenland. I guess Iceberg Ed thought I needed a change, so he assigned me as the staff officer at the principal southern Coast Guard base in southern Greenland. I was assigned the job of training officer for ASW, anti- submarine warfare, for the Greenland patrol cutters.

Most of the cutters that were available to me for training were the trawlers and we developed a system of going out from the base in the morning and going out on the fjord a few miles and making sonar runs and firing a depth charge from a K gun on iceberg targets. Usually the depth charge would fly through the air and miss the iceberg and shortly after the detonation, we would launch the boat to harvest a great amount of stunned fish. We had plenty of fresh fish aboard these trawlers.

On one occasion, there was a very gradual sloping shelf on one of these bergs, and the depth charge landed on it still attached to its armor. We figured we shouldn't really leave that there, so we put over a

small boat and carefully brought the depth charge in its armor back to the trawler so that some Eskimo or Greenlander wouldn't find this floating around on an iceberg at some later date.

After I left Greenland, I thought I was going to be reassigned to a crew transport in the summer of 1943, because that seemed to be where the emphasis was being placed. I really looked forward to it, but when I arrived into the Boston district office and went to the personnel office to find out where I was going, the personnel officer said I was lucky, I was going to be a steamboat inspector. My reaction was- what in the hell was that? Having been in Greenland a couple of years and not having heard a word about the president having reassigned the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation from the Department of Commerce to the Coast Guard, I didn't have the vaguest idea what he meant by a steamboat inspector.

But I soon learned, after a six week crammed course in New York with Charley Laising and Bill Foster and a few others we became steam boat inspectors and I was assigned, strictly by chance, back to New London, Connecticut, to help with the huge maritime training station at Port Trumbell, which used to be the Academy many years ago. They were turning out about 2-300 third mates and 2-300 third assistant engineers every other week. All of these men had to have the regular Coast Guard examination for license qualifications, so the period I was there, I estimated later I had examined 1500 third mates. As soon as these men got their licenses they were off to sea, sailing in the merchant marine during the war. That maritime training station is no longer there, it's Columbia Sound Laboratory. The old Fort Trumbell casemates are still there but it's a Coast Guard operating base and a Columbia University underwater sound laboratory, to the best of my knowledge.

The next time I went to sea, after a few years of this marine inspection work, was to be as exec on the *Mendota*. This was the new post WW II *Mendota*, 255'. She was one of the two that were built at the yard. The other eleven I believe all came out of Western Piper Steel in San Pedro California. Two of them were built at the Coast Guard yard and whether that ever made any difference, I don't know. They seemed to be well built and tremendously seaworthy ships. In fact, they were so stiff at sea that we used to carry out experiments with changing the

liquid loading to try to make them roll a little more easily. I don't think I've ever been on a ship where you had to go up and down and over bulkheads and through hatches with 18-20" stepovers. The ship was really as well divided for water tight subdivision as any Naval or Coast Guard ship that's ever been built. Nearly unsinkable. Sure could roll.

When we took the *Mendota* out on ocean station patrol and experimented with the liquid loading trying to lighten up the lowest part and move liquid as high as we could get it, we did reduce the rolling somewhat. That year I went out on the *Mendota*, she was assigned to international ice patrol, which was sort of harking back to the old days. There really hadn't been any during the war years. I think all the reconnaissance of the ice was conducted by aircraft during the war years; no ships could be spared for that. The old *Kiuga*, which had been the British ship HMS Totland and had been returned and was now the *Mocoma*, accompanied the *Mendota* and we relieved each other on ice patrol in the spring of 1947. I believe that was the first surface ice patrol since W.W.II. We had a lot of support by Coast Guard aircraft out of Argentia flying the old converted flying fortress, the B17. The bergs were pretty bad, both in '47 and '48 when the *Mendota* was on ice patrol.

I recall we were standing by one very large berg, about 100 miles south of New Foundland in a pea soup fog, sounding off our signal and putting out a radio warning message every few minutes and the Queen Mary passed us a mile or so away, doing 30 knots, in the pea soup fog. She survived and she's now lying as a floating hotel in Longbeach California, so I guess she made it.

S: You will recall that there was an argument in seamanship in getting through the fog; whether to speed up and get through the area as fast as you could or slow down and take your chances.

B: I've been involved in about 300 cases with admiralty lawyers and I strongly recommend the slow down aspect.

I just happened to think of an incident that occurred on the old *Northland*, I'd like to go back to 1941 for a few minutes. Captain VonPaulson was a great hunter and fisherman and he loved nothing better than to stop the ship and he'd go ashore with some of the rest of



the officers and crew to hunt or fish. Somehow we had brought back a muskox hide complete which hadn't been treated and was stiff as a board. I really don't know who brought it back or what they did with it.

One day when I was up as the officer on deck and the *Northland* was booming along at 10 knots with all engines running, I had a call from the engine room from H.L. Wood who was engineer. He said we had to shut down the starboard engine, we had a bad knock. I said okay, shut it down. I informed the CO and we dropped back to out seven knots on the port engine. A few minutes later, Woody called up and said we could go ahead with both engines, and we did.

This was during the morning watch and when I came down for lunch, I asked Woody what was the trouble with the starboard engine. It seems that the *Northland* had a steerage space, a warrant officer's space and one of the rooms was right over the starboard engine. We had a supply officer named Sumner Chisholm who had been at the academy when I was and he had this muskox hide, which was stiff as a board, on the deck of his room. He was using a hammer to try to knock this muskox hide into some degree of flexibility and he was using the exact rhythm of the starboard engine. So that's the story of the trouble with the starboard engine, and Hal Wood will remember that for a long time.

Getting back to days on the *Mendota* ice patrol, one day when there was nothing going on, we noticed a quite large Portuguese four masted schooner on station, fishing on the Grand Banks. Portugal is heavily dependent on fish from wherever they can get it. The men are in the dories all day long and hopefully they all get picked up at night and the fish get back aboard the schooner. This was the *Argo*. We put over a boat and exchanged some fresh apples for some pineapples from the Azores and visited with the Portuguese.

About 25 years later in Miami one day, I was working with Exxon as agent for the Exxon tankers and I noticed this four masted schooner being brought into Miami by Mike Burke, who runs a shipping line called Windjammer Cruises, where the sailing vessels take people for hire and they help with work on ship. This four masted schooner looked pretty familiar and you could make out *Argo* on the stern. A footnote to this story is, Mike Burke told me later that it took him almost a year to get the smell of fish completely out of the vessel.

The years between my seagoing were mostly spent in marine inspection in Washington at headquarters, in Cleveland for Great Lakes work, some on the rivers, St. Louis and New Orleans, four years in Miami as the officer in charge, but I think the most interesting part is seagoing.

When I was working at headquarters in 1957 I learned that I was about to be reassigned because I had been there four years and the detailing officer showed me a little peek at his prospective list that showed me going to the *Winebago*, which was a similar class to the *Mendota*. I thought that that was not really progress, because I had been in command of the *Mendota* for several months. I asked him if he would consider shifting me to a 311, one of the former Navy seaplane tenders, the AVPs, and since he was a member of my car pool, he managed to do that. I ended up with orders to the *Behring Strait* in Honolulu rather than the *Winnebago*.

The *Behring Strait* was a vessel with four diesel engines in it and almost unlimited range. Fuel conservation was almost forgotten about on that type of ship. You could cruise around the world and have plenty of fuel capacity, whereas with the steam cutters, like the *Mendota* or the *Winnebago*, you started worrying about the fuel as soon as you left the dock.

A couple of incidents back on the old *Northland* back in '41 and '42 have come to mind. One of them is sort of funny and the other is sort of sad. The first happened during the summer of '41 when we were instructed to establish a Greenland Sledge Patrol- sledge being a sled pulled behind dogs- to guard against incursion by Germans or enemies on the east coast of Greenland. At this time, as you recall, Norway and Denmark had been occupied and we had good reason to believe that the Germans would like to establish weather observing stations in Greenland, since the weather moved across Greenland into Europe. So the way that the Greenland patrol tried to forestall this, or at least be prepared, was to establish three or four principle hunting stations where buildings already existed to be manned by the Danish people in Greenland with dog sled and radio capability. To do this, the *Northland* was rounding up all of the coal that we could from various trapping stations. This coal was Greenland mined coal in bags and the bags were deteriorating. In



bringing several hundred bags of coal aboard the *Northland* and stowing them on the deck, obviously a great percentage got loose.

Then Captain Von Paulson decided it would be a good idea to catch a walrus so that the meat could be stored at the principal stations where the sledge patrol was being established. So we had hunting of walrus out on the ice. They're very stupid and you can walk right up to them and they don't get alarmed, so that wasn't very exciting, but getting the walrus back using the airplane provided a little more excitement. The heads were always cut off so that the natives could retain the walrus skulls and tusks.

We had quite an accumulation of cut up walrus carcasses, blood and powdery black coal all over the main deck of the *Northland*. Then we started loading sledge dogs aboard. These dogs were tied so each dog could not quite reach the next one, either with his teeth or any other part of his physiognomy. Some of the dogs got loose and very soon there was a trail of walrus blood and meat, dog droppings and coal all over the *Northland*. Some of it would run down the waterways on both sides of the ship and hopefully drain over the side.

One of the drains got plugged up and the blood, goo and whatever starting backing up, so someone was told to clear the scupper. I wasn't right there, but as I understand it, he cleared it with a few good blows from a hammer and the stuff that was backed up ran freely down but not overboard. It seems that a hole had been punched into an l-shaped scupper and the stuff was draining into one of the officer's rooms behind a piece of furniture where it wasn't noticed at first. Soon thereafter, it began to be noticed and there was quite a cleanup campaign carried out on the *Northland*.

The second incident is a little sadder. When we came back from our long six month cruise in northeast Greenland, after Pearl Harbor was attacked and the country was in war, we were based in Boston for several weeks before heading back to Greenland and I managed to get a ten day leave and visited my family in Miami Florida. One morning I walked down to the Coconut Grove Miami Air Station, which at that time was all seaplanes, and I ran into John Pritchard, an aviator. He told me he was really bored with what he was doing, flying up and down the coast armed with a 45 caliber pistol looking for U boats. When I mentioned to

him how good the hunting and fishing were up in Greenland, and the weather for the most part was great for flying, he said he'd like to get that. I told him the present assistant navigator Freddy Westbrook was very unhappy with being on the *Northland*, that was not his type of life, so maybe they could arrange something. About ten days later when I got back to the *Northland* in Boston, I learned that Lieutenant John Pritchard was coming as the assistant navigator, Bill Snider was the principal, and Freddy Westbrook had been transferred to Port Angeles, Washington.

About a year later, when both of these fine navigators were dead from plane crashes, I had reason to wonder whether I should have opened my mouth. Johnny Pritchard was lost in a very heroic effort trying to rescue the crew of a downed army aircorps D17 on the icecap of Greenland. He did land belly down on the snow and ice and took off, brought back some survivors and the second attempt, he didn't make it. Freddy Westbrook was lost in a crash near Port Angeles and I don't know the details on that.

I think one of the most interesting things that happened to me was when I was assigned CO of the *Behring Strait* based in Honolulu.

S: Who did you relieve?

B: I relieved Ed Perry. I had jokingly told him two years before that I would come out and relieve him, not having the faintest idea that that was going to happen. Two years later I was relieved by an aviator who had just turned in his wings named Chester Bender, who later became Commandant.

One night the *Behring Strait* was on two hour standby in Honolulu. Dave Webb was the Exec and we lived fairly near each other in Kailui, on the island of Owahu. We got a call that a Navy plane had gone down north of Oahu, an airborne early warning plane. The *Behring Strait* was ordered to get underway as soon as possible. I immediately called Dave Web and he said he'd be over to pick me up. We arrived dockside about 45 minutes after we got the call to go, only to see the *Behring Strait* sailing away into the night, Barber and Web running for a telephone to find out what in the hell was going on.

I should have headed for a 21 footer and headed after the *Behring Strait*. I learned that the District Commander and Admiral Hadley Evans had ordered the ship out regardless of who was there to run it because some survivors had been spotted in the water. So as it turned out ensign Joseph Smith took the *Behring Strait* out and Commander Robert Barber got his name written up throughout the Coast Guard as the CO of a ship that went out without a skipper, which I enjoyed tremendously as you can well imagine.

There's more to this story than meets the eye. One week before this incident, I had a meeting of all my wardroom officers, and I told them the ship is going on two hour standby. Then I recalled an incident that had happened to me years before on the *Mendota*, when George Bowerman was skipper and I was Exec. I asked him if we couldn't find him, did we go out and his answer was- find me- which wasn't really that helpful. So I told my officers on the *Berhing Strait* years later, if it happens that you can't find me, you go, don't hold up the ship because you can't find me. Don't do what was done to me. So with that in mind, when it came up a week later, they went.

Unfortunately, the ship accomplished nothing by going out without the skipper, exec, first lieutenant, chief bosons mate, or engineering officer. They damaged the ship badly and didn't get out to the scene of the rescue more than ten minutes sooner than if they had waited.

The most interesting assignment I ever had on a ship was as the CO of the *Westwind*, from 1963-65. I relieved Ralph West and I was relieved two years later by Beef Genel, class of 43. Big guy. The icebreaker duty is so different; you're so far away from normal chains of command. There's really nobody looking over your shoulder, you just carry out your mission. To me, it was the most interesting two years.

We had two small helicopters, at that time they were bell plastic bubble helicopters. There was one Bell TH13 N, and one Bell UH 13P. One had skids and one had floats. Room for two people. Usually the commanding officer of the icebreaker had flight observer orders, because you would frequently fly as co-pilot or passenger with the pilot of these small helicopters to look for leads in the ice and how best to get where you wanted to go. You could even command you own ship by radio.

After about a year on the *Westwind*, I was talking in the Brooklyn Navy Yard where she was stationed with my classmate Ira McMullan, who was CO of Floyd Bennet Coast Guard Station. He wanted to know why we were still carrying those little tiny bell helicopters when the Coast Guard had some beautiful helicopters. I said there was no reason at all. We cooked up an exercise that we carried out off Graves End Bay on Rockaway Beach with the *Westwind* and HH 52A helicopters from Floyd Bennet Field. We had five out there and demonstrated that they could land and take off. One of our spectators was Admiral Irwin A. Stevens, district commander in New York, and he thought there was no reason the ice breakers couldn't carry these helicopters, which was the difference between a Model A Ford and a Cadillac, compared to what we used to carry. With all kinds of glowing reports to Coast Guard Headquarters, only two years later HH52As went on board the icebreakers- that was pretty fast for the Coast Guard.

When I was skipper of the *Westwind*, the Coast Guard icebreakers were still painted white. The navy icebreakers were navy gray, and the Canadian ice breakers were all red. As soon as you get ten miles away in an ice field in a helicopter, you couldn't see a white ship if it weren't for some strobe lights. So I wrote letters to headquarters asking if we could paint our ice breakers red like the Canadians. I think that took about ten years to get that change made. Another thing I discovered when the Navy icebreaker *Atka* was working with the *Westwind*, was that she was doing a better job with the ice than we were and I couldn't understand because the Navy icebreakers were not maintained as well as ours. So we had a conference one day where the skipper of the *Atka* came over and he asked if we'd had the modification to the bow of the *Westwind* that they'd had with the *Atka*. I didn't know what he was talking about. It seems the Navy had the regular ship hull for that class where the *Westwind* had the bulbous hull where the original propeller shaft came out. The *Westwind* had never had the stub of the bow shaft removed, whereas the *Atka* had the forward shaft removed and the bow completely shaped. So now I knew why the *Atka* was doing a better job, and of course wrote a letter to Coast Guard headquarters. That took about ten years to get done.

One thing that came up in Miami that might be of interest. I was the officer in charge of marine inspection for four years, 1959-63, and I was responsible for investigation of accidents, marine casualties. One day I noticed a little item in the paper that a 60 foot ketch named the Bluebell had been lost over in the Bahamas due to a fire and the mast falling down and penetrating the hull and the vessel sinking. There was only one survivor. the captain. He was due back to Miami the next day and his name was Julian Harvey

That just rang a bell because a few years before when I was at Coast Guard headquarters working in the casualty review, we had had some problems with Julian Harvey. He was an air force lieutenant colonel who owned a real old sailing vessel, built around 1905, and when he was transferred from Washington to Pensacola, he took his thirty days leave and sailed. He went down to the mouth of the Potomac River where an old sunken Spanish warship was well marked with Coast Guard buoys, sailed around it and then right through it and sank his boat. The Navy went down and tried to salvage for him and then he sued the Coast Guard for not properly marking this wreck. In spite of an able defense, he got seventeen thousand dollars out of the Coast Guard for this stupid incident and I remembered that.

So I called the owner of the Bluebell and said his skipper had to report the loss of an American vessel to our office. Julian Harvey called the next day and reported the causality. I asked him if he was the same guy who sank his vessel on the wreck of the old San Marcos, and he said- you remember that? I said yes.

He came in the next day and while he was being interviewed I had a call from my classmate Greg McMullen who at that time was in the Miami district office. He said they had a message from a freighter that had picked up a little girl on a float from the Bluebell. He knew we had Harvey in the office and wanted to talk to him. So I went into the office where he was being interviewed and told him they'd found this little girl on a lifeboat and they wanted to know what else they should look for. Harvey stood up and talked to McMullen and then he left. I said he could stay and listen to the owner being interviewed, but he said he wanted to leave and would call in the morning.



Later, the investigating officer got together with me and we decided that we smelled a rat. The little girl had been brought into Mercy Hospital by Coast Guard helicopters- a miracle that they saw her at sea. I called up the chief of police in Miami and asked if they could put a guard on her. So he did, which was very nice.

This girl was only eleven years old and had been on this little doughnut float for two days and nights all terribly blistered from sunburn, she was in terrible shape. Two days later, when she was well enough to answer some questions, the investigating officer and myself sneaked into the back door of the hospital because there were reporters trying to get the story. We interviewed her for about an hour and it was an amazing story.

The day that Harvey was supposed to call, he didn't and the chief of police called me and asked if I'd heard from him. I said no, didn't know where he was. He said don't bother to look, they'd found him in a motel room with his throat cut from ear to ear. He really did a job- I saw the pictures.

S: Self inflicted wounds?

B: Razor blade was still in his fingers. Blood all over the walls. As soon as that news got out there was a big story, so we had to sneak around and not be waylaid by the reporters.

But the little girl's story- she didn't really know all of it, but we tried to put it together from what she said. Apparently Harvey had taken this dentist from Wisconsin, his wife and three children, including the girl and he was using his wife as mate and cook on this ketch. It was a charter job, a week or two cruise around the Bahamas. We really could never find out the motive, but we think it was insurance. He had just taken out a lot of extra insurance on his wife for accidental death. There was talk that drugs might have been involved, but this was back in 1961 and drugs weren't really that big a problem. I think it was an attempt by him to get insurance money. I think he decided to do away with his wife and somehow he was seen by the dentist or his wife and then he had to do away with them all and sink the boat to try to get rid of all the evidence. The dinghy was tied up on the starboard side as the ketch was

sinking and there was a little doughnut float on the port side and this girl was the only one left alive beside Harvey. She said she saw the dinghy go adrift and Harvey jumped over and grabbed it and while he was swimming out to the dinghy, she slipped over the other side to this doughnut float and in the darkness he never found her. If he had, he probably would have killed her too.

After this story hit the newspapers all over the country, a lot of other things Harvey was involved in started coming out of the woodwork. This was his fifth wife and the other ones died mysteriously, that type of story. The Bluebell murders are still written up occasionally. That really tied us up for awhile, in our small office.

S: You then were one of the first regular officers assigned to merchant vessel inspection?

B: Yes, I think we were the second group. This was July of 1943. There was a special school set up in the Hotel Sutton in New York City in July. No air conditioning. There were two old timers from the Bureau of Marine Inspection, Hansen and another. They ran this school to familiarize Coast Guard officers with the vessel inspection regulations. It was impossible to absorb all of it, but it was a beginning.

I remember one incident that happened. The whole class consisted of about 15-20 Coast Guard officers and the two instructors went down to Todd's shipyard in Brooklyn to observe some field work and I was riding in one of the shipyard limousines from the gate to some ship and we saw some excitement going on in one of the bays. There was a British ship there and there were two Laskar seaman from India on a float right near the propeller, chipping and painting. As it turned out the chief engineer had turned the wheel over without telling them and flipped these two guys in the water and they were drowning. Didn't know how to swim. So Barber pulled off his shoes and dove into this dirty water and hung on to these two guys and a little tug boat came along and pulled them out. I think it was payday. My aunt was living in an apartment in Brooklyn and I went down there and took out all my pay and put it on a windowsill and tried to dry it out. The water was filthy but I survived. It just seemed like the thing to do at the time.

S: There was excitement, but no one else was prepared to save them?

B: I really didn't stop to think about it, just dove in.

I had an incident something like that in New London when I was a senior at Oakley High School. A neighborhood friend and I owned a little sailboat together and we were sailing off Ocean Beach, I think it was May 18, 1936. We jibed off Neptune Park and it was kind of cold, we had sweaters on. I didn't have much trouble swimming into the beach because I was pretty used to swimming, but Robert, the other boy, had a lot of trouble.

About the time I got onto the beach, which was about 150 yards, I heard him yelling for help. He was out near a rock that was awash most of the time and he was trying to climb up on it. He said he couldn't breathe and I learned later he had fallen out of tree the day before and broken his rib. I tried to push him up on the rock but he kept slipping down. Then I tried to tow him in and I was getting weaker and weaker.

A crowd was forming on the beach and a couple of guys broke into a Red Cross hut and pulled a dinghy out and pulled us out and up on the beach. Somebody drove me home but Robert didn't make it; he was drowned. This was in the papers when I was filling out the papers to go to the Academy. Whether that helped or not, I don't know.

The one thing that struck me as being so odd: I was wearing long trousers, May in New London is not that summerish. When they pulled me out, there was a slit in the left hand pant leg and the right leg was through that slit. Don't know how that ever happened.

I had a little dog, a dog and a half long and a half a dog high, and we used to tie him in the sailboat because he jumped at seagulls. We untied him when the sailboat first jibed and swamped and whatever happened to him, I didn't know. But an hour or two after somebody drove me home, a car pulled up and put the dog out and he ran in. The dog must have swum ashore and somebody knew it was the Barber's dog and drove him home.

S: When did you retire?

B: 1970.

S: And you were here in the Miami area?

B: Yes. I retired in Saint Louis. I was chief of staff for Russ Gracey, who was district commander, and I stayed around Saint Louis for awhile. Thought I should live there because I was acquainted with the marine industry there, but it didn't work out too well, so I decided to move back to Florida where I wanted to live and got a job immediately working with Exxon Marine Department. Then I worked at Port Everglades for awhile as the Director of Operations and the acting Port Director. Port Everglades is very political, always shenanigans going on and I got tired of that, so I resigned and ran for politics myself. I ran for Port Commissioner as a Republican, it was a partisan election. Running on the Republican ticket in Browen County is tough because it's about three to two Democratic. So the first time I ran, I lost by 32 votes out of 400,000. The second time I ran, I got elected by a 30,000 majority. The third and fourth times I lost by small amounts. It was interesting. The term of office was four years. Most of the elected officials in Browen County are Democrats, and the state legislative senators are 90 %, so Republicans have a hard row to hoe in Browen County.

Port Everglades is a very progressive port and beautiful. Right now they have about 24 cruise ships based here and a lot of tankers. Port Everglades fuels all of south Florida; gasoline, diesel oil, jet fuel, all comes in through here, so it's a very busy port.

S: Aside from your venture into politics, you've remained fairly active as a retiree, what have you done?

B: I keep in good tabs with the Coast Guard locally as much as I possibly can for several reasons. I enjoy it, go to all the monthly luncheons of the officers association if I can, and Coast Guard parties and so forth.

But also in the work I'm doing as a marine expert witness, I frequently get involved with Coast Guard regulations and procedures, all of which I used to know so intimately, but I have to keep reviewing because they change. I have some good friends who are not reluctant to

bring me up to date. When I was with the *Behring Strait* in Honolulu and the *Winebago* was frequently tied up near us at Sand Island Coast Guard Base, the skipper was Bob Brody. The *Winebago* had some problems with crew morale. One night the crew cut it loose and it went adrift. One night they threw the helm overboard. One of the young engineering officers on the *Winnebago* who helped get the ship tied up again and get the helm put back on was named Martin Daniels, who is presently the District Commander in Miami, about to become Vice Commandant in the Coast Guard. He assures me he remembers *Winnebago* very well.

S: If you have any other stories you would like to add, now's the time.

B: There are so many that pop up as you go along, I really feel like I've talked enough. When I first answered your letter, I mentioned a near collision between the *Campbell* and the *Mendota*. I was thinking you were on the *Campbell*, but I think it was Hugh Chaffey. I had the *Mendota*. I was only a lieutenant and we were relieving the *Campbell* and we wanted to exchange mail by highline and buoys. We picked out the course and speed and we lined up parallel to each other. As it turned out, the wind was on the port beam on the *Campbell* and it didn't take more than thirty seconds to realize that she was coming right down on the *Mendota*. I grabbed a megaphone and said I was getting out of there. There was about 6-8 foot seas. So I kicked her full ahead with a hard right and then a hard left and we cleared, but someone took a photo of the two ships right at the closest point, the two quarter decks with maybe a foot or so between.

S: Well Bob, you've done a very fine job of reminiscing and covering a full active career, both the good and the bad. The weather here has been almost as varied as your career- it started cloudy, rained like hell, and now the sun is shining. I want to thank you for sharing your memories with us.

B: My pleasure.