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I blackmailed my dad to let me go into the Navy when I was seventeen. He wasn't going to let me go that young, but I said, "You know, if you were seventeen years old and your country was in trouble, you wouldn't let a little thing like your dad stop you, and I'm not going to let it stop me." That was probably the Thursday or Friday after December 7, and my dad went down with me on Monday to talk with a recruiter. I'd already had it set up that he was going to sign, and they said, "When do you want to go, Wednesday or Friday or next week?" So I said, "How about Wednesday?"

In boot camp they gave us a sheet to fill out to request what type of service you want to do. I made up my mind that I didn't want to get all shot to hell in this war. And, by golly, I figured I'd just take submarine service. They gave you three choices, and I put down "submarine sea duty" for all three of them. And I got submarine sea duty. But they start you out on a relief crew, and you get to go over the side and scrape the hulls and the sanitary tanks and all that before you actually get on a crew.

When you get done with those duties, then you are qualified for a submarine crew. Being on a submarine crew, a real asset was that when you went overseas you

got 20 percent sea pay, and being on a submarine gives you 50 percent more, so I got 70 percent more pay than other seamen.

The *Yorktown* was in San Francisco, and they loaded us aboard for its shakedown cruise, and they transported us to Hawaii. This would have been September 1943. They put me on a relief crew on a submarine tender called the Griffin. I was having girl trouble there, so I put my name down for the first submarine that was leaving Hawaii. Another guy put his name down, too, and they took him and left me. He shipped [346] **out on the Gudgeon, which went down on the next trip, and it took him with it. So I figured, how lucky can you get?**

So about a month later they sent us to Brisbane, and then around the southern part of Australia to Fremantle, and I was still on the Griffin. We were on the relief crew tending the submarines. They'd come in, and we'd refit them and send them back out. All of a sudden I find myself assigned to the USS *Aspero*, No. 309, and by then it was 1944. We had a little shakedown cruise and stopped at Darwin there in northern Australian to top off our fresh vegetables. We had a very successful patrol. We fired all twenty-four of our torpedoes, and we sunk about five or six ships. After we fired them all, there wasn't anything to stay out there for, so we came back and dropped off all the fuel we didn't use at Darwin. Then we went back down to Fremantle.

My job on the sub was a gunners mate striker, but when we were submerged I was assigned to the after torpedo room. When we were trying to sink a ship, it was the most boring thing you can imagine as you wait down there to get in position to fire your torpedo. They don't know you're there yet, but you know they're there. We also had torpedoes that operated on sound, and they were electric torpedoes that didn't make a wake. They'd home

in on sound. They'd take forever to get there, but when they got there they'd be effective.

We had a person in each compartment with headphones on, and anything that goes out over that circuit we pick it up, so we know when we are ready to fire our torpedoes. They got six tubes in the forward torpedo room and four tubes aft. We always had the torpedo tubes loaded, but you'd pull the torpedoes out on a regular basis and reservice them and put them back in.

When we were tracking a target, we'd wait until they'd fire the forward torpedoes, and then we'd get instruction to fire the aft torpedoes. They have to have enough men to do the main job, and there isn't anything to keep them all busy during other times, so all you can do is sit and wait, and it's boring as hell.

We had block and tackle to load the torpedoes into the tubes. The only thing that's done in the torpedo room is that when they say, "Fire one," you hit the hand-powered fire knob with the heel of your hand and the torpedo would fire out of the tube with compressed air. It would all start with the forward torpedo room. And you'd hear the instruction, "Make ready the forward tubes." And then, "This is going to be a firing run." So when they get to where they have it figured out they are going to fire and the angle on the bow and so forth, that all comes over the intercom, and then you hear, "Fire one." You can feel the whole sub lunge. After they fire all that they are going to fire, you get a report, and I still make use of that today. Somebody will ask, "How are you doing?" And I say, "Hot, straight, and normal," which is the report the sonar guys give the conning tower, that the torpedoes were running hot, straight, and normal.

When the torpedoes hit, you could hear them. But then the lap destroyers would come over and try to get you.

Then we would seek out a layer of water where there would be a big temperature contrast with rl1e surface; you get enough of that between you and the destroyer, and they can't pinpoint you. The guy on the sonar can hear the screws of the destroyers going over you. When they started depth-charging, you could tell how close they were because it would go, "Click...whoom!" The click was the detonator, a higher pitched sound that travels faster than the "whoom." And when it gets down to where you can't hear that click, they have you zeroed in. And then they're just beating the hell out of you. On that first war patrol I don't think they ever got close enough that we couldn't hear the click of the detonators. Nobody ever got all shook up, because you could hear the detonators, and you knew they weren't close.

That first war patrol was pretty good indoctrination for me. We got depth-charged, but they were never that close, and I felt safe. We could go down deep, 40O or 600 feet, and they can't get us, and the more water you get between you and them the safer you are. Sometimes we'd be able to get in a layer of water where the laps would think we were deeper, and they'd set the depth charges deep. Then we could hear them hit the deck and roll off along the side, but they didn't explode. They were set to go off too deep. But when you heard one of those hit the deck, you had time to say your Hail Marys!

On the surface our flank speed would be about twenty-two or twenty-three knots. Submerged we'd usually go only about three knots. You could go faster than that, but your batteries wouldn't last long. In the sequence of a day, we'd ride underwater in the daytime, and when it got dark we surfaced and recharged our batteries. But when the sun came up, we'd dive again.

On that second war patrol we were in the China Sea pretty close to Lingayen Gulf, and we picked up a

convoy. We'd sunk some of their ships, and they got us nailed in; they drove us down in shallow water in that bay. And as we proceeded in there we went after this one ship, but it was empty. I don't know why the skipper went out on a limb to sink an empty ship, but he did. I guess because it was there. And it looked like it was going to be duck soup, but it didn't turn out that way. We had a hell of a time getting away from them. At one point we were down long enough that when you wanted to strike a match to light a cigarette, the match wouldn't bum. We were that short on air. They kept us down all day, and then they had us on their sound gear and that kept us down all night, and then all the next day. We were hard up, getting depth-charged that whole time. We had some powder you could shake out on a sheet, and it would take the carbon monoxide out of the air and enrich the oxygen. That helped a little bit. But they were right on top of us, pounding us into the mud. It got to the point that if we surfaced they were going to shoot the hell out of us, but they were going to kill us if we didn't, because sooner or later they were going to get a depth charge on us.

So we tried to maneuver and turn around so we could get back out of that bay. We hit a reef and our bow came up a little bit. So we went "all back two thirds" on the engines to get off of that reef. And all of a sudden we got our stern in another reef behind us. We couldn't go ahead and we couldn't go back, so we had to go up. We pumped our auxiliaries to sea; we put a bubble in bow buoyancy, and that didn't work. Nothing worked. So we blew all main ballast, safety and negative, the whole thing, and we were still hung up. So then the captain turned the screws over, shook it back and forth, and finally we came up like a cork. And then we had to flood all those tanks to get back down. As we were doing it, we were trying to turn around, and when we got up to the surface we found out that we couldn't open the main induction intake to fire up the diesels. Behind the

conning tower you have a main induction air intake about four feet by six feet to suck the air in for the diesel engines. We'd had so many depth charges that they bent the stem on the valve that opened the main induction, and they couldn't get it open. We were in dire need to get power out of the diesel engines to get the hell out of there. So the captain said, "Dog all watertight doors open between the conning tower and the engine room, and we'll take a suction through the conning tower hatch." And if you tried to walk through that door with four of those engines going flank speed, pulling in all that air, it would just pull you right over on your face.

So, in the process, we got turned around in this bay and aimed in the right direction to come out. I got called up to the conning tower with my binoculars in case they wanted me to go up on lookout. The captain told the quartermaster, "You go up and take the aft lookout, I'll take the forward lookout." The quartermaster started up through the hatch, and he yelled back down, "Captain, there's an airplane out there." So the captain said, "Let me know when he starts to dive." So the quartermaster went up there, and right then he said the lap plane was diving. So the captain said, "Clear the bridge, dive, dive." He pulled the hatch shut, and just as he did that plane dropped two bombs on us, one on the port side and one on the starboard side, and it just shook the hell out of us. I mean, he didn't probably miss us ten feet on either side. But it knocked out the main bus tie to the motors, and we didn't have any power, so the lights went out. Everybody grabbed battle lanterns, and they went and reset the bus ties, and we got power back on. But we didn't get hit directly, and we got out of that bay. They had destroyers and destroyer escorts chasing us all the way out to sea, but we made it out. That's the only time the captain broke out the booze. The captain said everybody could have a drink!

When we got out of there, we went up the coast and waited for that transport ship, and we got that sucker when he came out of that bay. We never messed with destroyers. It just wasn't worthwhile. They were so maneuverable, they'd see your torpedoes coming and could get the hell out of the way.

When you finally get in position to fire at a target, the first order is, "Open the outer doors." That just takes the cover off the outside, and then you're ready to fire. All you have to do is put the information through the computer up in the conning tower. Then you wait for the order to fire. The computer sets the course and direction of the torpedo. It will take whatever bearing you have set in it. You can fire in almost any direction that way, no matter which direction the sub is facing. The detonator on a steam torpedo is the same as on an electric torpedo, and it was an impact detonator.

I ran into a guy once who was a pow captured on Bataan, and the Japs used him to man their ships. One time we had just one torpedo left, and we wanted to spend it right. There was a whole convoy, so we went down and we stayed down until that convoy got right over us, and we surfaced smack in the middle of it, so they couldn't shoot at us or they'd hit each other. Our skipper decided he was going to ram one of the Jap ships and the bullnose went into the side of the Jap ship and bounced off. And this guy I met, he told me, "I saw an American submarine, and those submarines were our worst enemies. I watched a submarine trying to ram our ship, and I could have jumped from the ship I was on down to the bow of the submarine, and I'd have been home free." So I said, "Why in the hell didn't you? " And he said, III' d have caught it from both ends!" And I asked him when and where, and he said in the China Sea in October 1944, and he told me about where it was. I said, "Hell, that was us! " After that our skipper picked out one of the ships

and fired our last torpedo at it, and then we went down and let the convoy go by and then went home.

We weren't supposed to go down deeper than 600 feet, but we got blown down farther than that. If they start hammering on you, you just keep going down. With the momentum of something as heavy as a sub- marine, sometimes you' d run by forty or fifty feet before you could get going another direction. You put a bubble in bow buoyancy to get your bow up, and then you put your screws to work pushing her up. You blow the water out of the bow buoyancy tank, and that gives you positive lift on the bow.

I went out on two war patrols, and each was about sixty or seventy days.

When I got back to Pearl Harbor, it was time to change out crews, and I got changed out. When I went to the sub base in Pearl Harbor, I went down and found somebody on the Gilmore who didn't want to go to sea any more, and I didn't want to stay on shore, so we swapped. And he happened to be in the Tenth Division in Ships Service, so I took his job and I was making ice cream and selling it to the crews. The Gilmore went to Brisbane and then up to the Philippines, and that's where we were when the war was over, in Subic Bay.

You might say that a kid of seventeen is a long ways from being mature. I grew up in the Navy. I thank God for it, because I never would have survived if I hadn't had some kind of structure put in me, and, boy, in submarines they give you structure! It probably affected decisions that I made in one area or another that I didn't consciously know where it came from, but it's all part of it. It's given me a sense of self-sufficiency...and when to lie and when not to!