

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

Alexander Moscato

Conducted by Martin W. Thomas

December 9, 2004

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Part 1: Introduction

This interview is being conducted on December 9, 2004, at the Indian Prairie Public Library in Darien, IL. My name is Martin Thomas. I am speaking with Mr. Alexander L. Moscato. Mr. Moscato was born on August 2nd, 1925, in Chicago, Illinois, and now lives in Downers Grove, Illinois. Mr. Moscato and I are fellow members of the Indian Boundary YMCA in Downers Grove, and he has kindly consented to be interviewed for the Veterans History Project. Here is his story.

Part 2: Entering the Military

Mr. Moscato how would you prefer to be addressed during this interview?

Al or Alex, makes no difference.

Thank you. Al, when did you first enter the service?

July 7th, 1943.

1943?

Yes.

So you entered on July 7th, 1943. Where were you living at that time before you went in?

You want the address or just Chicago?

Chicago. And what were you doing there?

I worked for a bread company, Kroeger, Kroeger Bakery.

Kroeger, the same as the super market/grocery store?

Yes.

Well, you were not quite 18 when you went in. You were a month shy, right?

Well, that was the reason for it when you get to the enlisting part.

Well, let me ask you, were you drafted or did you enlist?

No, I did it to beat the draft because my brother was a soldier and he more or less told us not to get into the Army, so I joined the Coast Guard.

So you joined the Coast Guard because you wanted to follow your brother's advice?

Yeah, I had to be in Boot Camp before my 18th birthday otherwise I'm subjected to the draft. That was what they told me, I didn't have time. I enlisted to go through the procedure of becoming a Coastguardsman. We left within a week or so. Everybody knows when they went in they usually get a month.

So this was your older brother who was already in the Army?

Yes.

Where was he located at that time?

At that time he was in Florida waiting to go overseas because he was actually in the fighting area.

So that's why he gave his younger brother that advice?

Yes.

How did your parents feel about you enlisting in the Coast Guard?

Well, they felt the same way. They listened to my brother and said that they kind of let you know what it is when you're in the field, you're mud up to your you know what, and you're in hot areas in general. So, I went by his decision, because I knew I was going to get drafted.

So that's why you picked the Coast Guard?

Yeah.

Where were you inducted?

Chicago, downtown Chicago.

So what were your first days like? You're not quite 18 and now you're in the Coast Guard.

Well, kind of lonesome. I went through the battle, I think that everyone has that leaves home.

Was this your first time away from home for an extended period?

Yeah.

Part 3: Training

The Coast Guard Boot Camp, was that separate from the Navy?

Yes.

Where was your boot camp?

Manhattan Beach, New York.

How long was boot camp?

I think 6 weeks, I'm pretty sure it was 6 weeks...

What was it like for you?

Well, it's the training that you go through: firing guns, marching, taking orders and doing sentry duty. These were all part of your learning procedure.

When you say firing guns, are you talking about small arms?

Rifles.

Rifles.

But the trouble with servicemen in the Navy or Coast Guard, they very seldom use a rifle. That's part of a soldier's gear. He lives with a rifle on his back. We don't. Some got training. In fact, to tell you the truth, I don't think I was trained for that, but we knew it was part of that (the learning process). But they never worried about the fact that we had to shoot somebody, with a rifle, that is.

But they had some familiarization firing rifles?

Yes. We didn't break down the rifles like the soldiers do. They have to break it down and put it back together. We didn't have to do that.

The drills and so forth. What were your NCO's, your drill instructors, like?

Some were a little tough, but most of them knew we were all boots, they call them boots (new recruits). And you know you gotta follow orders, if you don't, you're going to get in trouble.

So boot camp lasted about 6 weeks, where did you go after that?

I went aboard the (looking at pictures), these are the three ships I was on. I went on the cutter Cobb first.

Did you have any advanced training before you went on the cutter Cobb?

Yes. I want to say that part of the training, you shoot a 5 inch, 20 millimeter, ash cans or they called them depth charges. We were taught how to, when they give you a reading to go down so far, you have a key, and you set it for the depth they want and they roll off [as a pattern]. They figure they're over a submarine in most cases.

Now, where did you get this training? Was that still in boot camp or after?

No. They took us away and put us on a ship. Firing the guns was at Long Island, I think it's Long Island. They had probably twenty-five 20 millimeters and they had two 5 inch 38's which are part of – all the ships had them. That was set on a platform that rocked. They could make it rock and roll and then it had sleeves going over, an airplane pulling a sleeve. When you're given the command to fire, we'd fire on it; we didn't hit one.
(Laugh)

This was part of your advanced training?

Yes.

At what point did they tell you what your rating was going to be, what type of work you were going to be doing?

Well, I was a deck hand. That was about the farthest up I got; I never took any advanced training.

So what was the rating you had?

Seaman First.

Seaman First. To be a Seaman First, in your case, you had to be able to fire these various weapons, handle depth charges?

See, you only handled the gunnery that's going to be on the ship, so that's why we didn't have to be trained with rifles.

The cutter Cobb, where did that take you?

That just stayed off the coast of New York...

Was the mission patrolling?

[Yes, and learning seamanship.] While I was learning to be a seaman, you're taught the [operation of the deck.]

Oh, this was sort of a training ship?

Yes. That's exactly what it was.

Al, how long did that training last, from what month to what month, roughly?

It was probably a week or two. I'm sorry, we were on the ship for...[two to three months].

On the Cobb?

Yes, then we got transferred to the General M.C. Meigs.

So you would have been on the Cobb roughly, somewhere about August of '44 then is when you left the Cobb.

Yes, I would say that. The dates like that, I can't, I just can't help you.

Was there anything that you did between the time you were on the cutter Cobb and the time you went on this ship? For the record, I'm looking at a card of Alex's.

No, that all started when I got on the We never went over or went into foreign waters with the Cobb. In fact, it was an old ferry boat.

That's what the Cobb was?

Yeah.

It was a converted ferry?

We looked at it and we couldn't understand what the Coast Guard was doing with this ship. It had a back end that was made to fit into a dock to unload and load, and then the front was a bow.

Did the cutter Cobb have armament on it then?

Yeah.

So, it was an armed ferry?

Yes. Well, they didn't call it a ferry. It was part of the training. You never told a Navy man you were on a ferry boat. It was bad enough that you were in the Coast Guard, and then they'd work you over for that, you know. There's always that little bit of ... like the Marines and the

Inter-service rivalry?

Rivalry, yes. Like, I say, we were taught to fire guns on that, but that will lead into another ship just before I went on the Meigs.

For the record, Alex has a card, a hand printed postcard, actually, that lists all the locations he was on on his next two ships. We'll be going through those one at a time. And the first one here is the General M.C. Meigs. And that was the Atlantic Theater. So before we get to your duty aboard the General Meigs, was there anything else you did between when you were on the Cobb and the time you went to the Meigs.

Yeah, we were on the USS Clinton for other training out to sea. It was a pre-commissioning cruise...where we were taught out to sea with a ship that had the same armament which we would probably get [on our ship]. Not that we weren't trained on it, but we were in the rough waters and learning how to fire, fire the guns in rough seas because you didn't have much time. I mean when the ship is rolling and rocking to fire at a plane or a surface water, submarine or anything, it would be pretty hard.

So, you had training?

Yes.

Now, you told me before about firing at the sleeves being towed by planes. How did they simulate another ship? What did you fire at?

Well, the only thing we had was a submarine, made out of, it was a platform with a coning tower made out lath work. That was being towed by a tug and they'd say, "Make sure, don't shoot at the tug." (laughter) But that's what we shot at. And that was a surface, and the other was an aerial. You got so much time when the airplane went over first then there was a long, long rope, or whatever they used, and the sleeve was red and it was probably, maybe 20 feet long. That's what we fired at, with a bursting shell. This wasn't one that would hit and then explode. These went up so high and then they would burst. Some of the shrapnel would put a hole in it, but we weren't that lucky to make a hit.

Now, the USS Clinton, that certainly preceded our President Clinton by 50 years. Who was that ship named after?

I don't remember the first part of it, but it was Navy manned and then, of course, being in the Coast Guard, we weren't treated very well because there was that rivalry as I said before. We stayed on there, I can't remember if it was a week or so, then we'd come back, and we were assigned different ships. See, when you're in the Coast Guard, when you're all done, you don't go on one ship. It's ships that need crew members and they sent so many here, so many there. They picked me for the Cobb.

So, the Cobb, then the Clinton, and then before you were assigned to the General Meigs, did you get any shore leave? Were you able to go back home and visit family?

No. I only made one trip back, and that was later, just before I ... I can't remember the date on that, but I came home once out of just short of three years.

Part 4: Assigned to Duty in the Atlantic

When were you assigned to the Meigs?

When we were done practicing. Then we would come back and they assigned us from our cutter to ships and we were glad to get off it. It was an old tug; it'll only do about [13 or 14] knots an hour, and that's at full steam. Then we got assigned to the General M.C. Meigs. I don't remember what the complement was when we went on. Roughly, I think there was probably [400 – 600 officers and seamen, etc.]...

What size ship was that?

It was an AP which is Army Personnel and the number was, I don't remember the number. Every ship had a number and it was an Army Personnel. Transport, that's what it was. [It could be the 116].

So, it was like a troop ship?

Yes.

This wasn't for escort. This was actually for hauling troops.

Yeah. We...had 5,000 troops that we carried...We went through drills, and when there was a drill, they had to leave the deck and get back down in the holds, seal all the doors and stay there. They're wondering what's going on top side. But it was just a drill, and they notified them that it was a drill. Remember the things we had to do when we get on board our own ship. Oh, this is on the Meigs.

Al, on the Meigs, roughly how long were you assigned to that ship?

I would say approximately a year.

About a year. You have a postcard here. It looks like you wrote all these down back at the time judging from the kind of ink and all. You have written down all the ports that you visited. First of all, what was your mission; what was the ship's mission? Transferring troops?

Troop transfer. We never ran in a convoy, because this ship was brand new, and it could do almost 22 knots. So we did a zigzag course across the (Atlantic.) In all those crossings, there was only one there was submarine packs that lay on the bottom when you go through The Straits of Gibraltar. We got in a convoy of about 70 ships, and then you're put in the middle because they want to protect you, plus the fact that you're going about 8 miles an hour. Talk about a boring time, our deal with the convoy wasn't too happy, because we were used to a ship that traveled at the speed we did. We never got hit, but that's how we did it.

Were there ever any submarines sighted?

No. We had destroyers on the front and on the side and on the rear. They represented, going forward the two had all their sonars going for motors underneath the water, you know for submarine motors. The ones on the side were the same thing. They said if you fell in the water, you would likely not be picked up because when you're traveling in a convoy, the worst thing you can do is shut down. They could pick you off just like that, a man with a rifle.

So if you fell overboard, you're on your own?

The only thing you could hope is that the destroyers in the rear spot you. You can't use a radio, they had radio silence. So if you fell in, you would hope, you would hope that they would pick you up, but they would have to see you.

To your knowledge, did anyone fall over?

No.

You have a number of ports that you stopped at. I see, even including Brazil. Would you explain some of those stops?

Do you want me to do it from top to bottom, or just go right to Brazil?

In chronological order. Where did you first go?

Made a trip to Naples with a full amount of soldiers which was up to 5,000 soldiers.

Was that straight across the Atlantic?

Yes, straight across.

Where did you depart from?

New York.

New York and went straight to Naples, which was in Allied hands by then.

I'm thinking it wasn't New York; it was Norfolk, Virginia. It could have been Norfolk or New York, that's the only thing I can tell you, Marty. But we left most of the time, pretty sure it was Norfolk.

But Naples was secured by the Allies by the time you sailed.

The only thing they had was barrage balloons at different levels with chains hanging down them for strafing, so if they came in low, they had a good chance running into you before they dropped their bombs. But Naples was secure. There were a lot of ships under water. But that was my deal with Naples, just to drop off 5,000 troops. Then we stayed there maybe a liberty of half of the crew at one time, 'cause you never could leave the ship without a crew in case there's a raid or bombing attack.

When was this when you were in Naples?

The very beginning when I got on the ship in, it would be '44, I think. We made 5 trips to carry 5,000 each time.

Now, your first time, did you get a liberty in Naples?

[Yes]. We got a day. Getting back to what I said, half of the crew had to be on board, so you went on half, and then you maybe left around 8, 9 o'clock in the morning, you had to be back by 2. So, when you come back, other crew members were able to have liberty...

So you did go into Naples?

Yes.

What did you see?

You saw a town where, being of Italian extraction myself, everybody said, “Well, you’ll make out.” I never could speak that much [Italian]. But we saw the people, what they were going through, they were selling their bodies for food. They would take anything, clothing. Some of the sailors took their shirts off and gave it to them. That’s how bad off they were. But chocolate and candy was the big thing. You could, well you could, more or less, get taken care of for a couple of chocolate candy bars. I felt so sorry for them. Especially the kids that would come up to you; they wanted to take you to their house for the sex part of it, that’s about it. I don’t like to talk about it too much.

The buildings were?

Yeah, they were pretty shot. You see Naples, I don’t think really got hit that much. I don’t remember or recall whether it was bombed or strafed or anything. Of course, the people didn’t have hardly anything; they were just shut off of everything. So that’s the reason why they were doing anything and everything to get some food and survive.

You said after that trip to Naples, you made a total of 5 trips to Naples?

I made [four to five] trips.

Were they all to Naples or to these various other places?

No. Do you want me to continue on?

Yes, you went to Naples first.

Then we went to Oran, North Africa. And that was strictly, we pulled in, tied off, what we let off the ship and what we took on, I don’t know. They just tied up and had to put rat guards to prevent rats coming up the hawsers on the line. In fact, we didn’t stay a day; we left that day. We include it as part of where our ship went.

But you say on that particular voyage, you weren’t carrying troops?

To tell you the truth, Marty, I can’t even tell you that. And then we went to Beserte, North Africa. I think I spelled that right.

Would you spell it for the transcriber?

B-E-S-E-R-T-E

And that was North Africa?

That was another port in North Africa.

And what were you carrying that time?

There again, Marty, I don't know. We pulled in there for reasons that when you're just a Seaman, you just do what you're told and that's it.

Did you have liberty in either of those two ports?

No. All we did was we tied up at these ports. We didn't have any liberty because they had a plague going with the rats. When we put our lines out, they had seamen out there to make sure the rat guards were put on, because they didn't want any disease. Because you get a disease on a big ship like that, you're carrying 5,000 troops, they can't quarantine. When you pull into a port, they won't let you discharge anyone.

So this was a rat borne plague, like the Bubonic?

Yes, that's what it was. But I don't know if they were trying to scare us or how true it was, but we listened. I didn't want to go on the dock or in the area with that going on. O.K., then the next one is South Hampton, England. We stopped there, and then we went across to LeHavre, because LeHavre is right under it. I don't know if we dropped off soldiers or not but anyway, we went to LeHavre and did something there. Again, I don't remember what it is. So there are two places. The fact that we were in the English Channel, which was a hell of a place for ships to go through, because they had submarines all through the channel, and they were knocking off a lot of English ships. We were really a prize. You know, when you're on a, say, munitions ship, carrier, not the big guys, they only wanted to sink material or personnel. That was why our ship was heavily guarded. We had put guards on the dock when we were only there for, what'd I say, 5, 6, 7 hours to make sure no one climbed aboard.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, we went empty. We picked up 5,000 Brazilians. We were the first ship to bring Brazilian troops into World War II. They were taken to Naples, and they were dropped off there and they were assigned, naturally, with their ... And our soldiers went down to Brazil to teach them all about war, because most of them were coconut picker uppers. They'd climb trees for coconuts. They didn't even know ... I don't know if you've ever seen an army shoe with that big leather top, right above the lacings?

Oh, yeah, the high tops.

Yeah, they only went up about that far. They had to be taught everything. And when they were wearing them, they had to take them off. When they were aboard the ship, they had these little wooden clogs. They'd take them off and leave their shoes there when they went on deck ...

Because they just didn't feel comfortable wearing shoes?

No. I mean, they were natives. I'm not saying they were; they were people who never knew what war was. So their commander, their big generals or president, President Vargas was his name; the president of Brazil at that time. He came aboard our ship and presented us with a silver plate with his signature donated to the General Meigs.

So what did they do with that plate? Did they mount it on a bulk head?

No. It's put in the officers' quarter. It would be like this, to have a room like this (gestures indicating the interview room) with their own mess ...

Their own wardroom?

And that's where they had ... their letters were not censored; ours were all censored. But that was the deal; they had it, probably in an area where the officers met for lunch, supper and all that.

Were you allowed to go ashore in Rio de Janeiro?

Yeah, I had liberty there. I can honestly say I did have some fun. Being in Rio, they didn't know what war was. I mean, the streets and the taverns and all these areas were dancing all night while we were all there. So we stayed there. We didn't have an overnight. We never had an overnight when we were in most of these places. You usually ended at a certain time, then you had to be in. The ones that come in or came in later, they got written up and they got court, no not court-martialed, they didn't use that expression.

Captain's Mast?

Yes.

In Rio, do you remember what month you were there?

I have no idea.

I was wondering if Carnival was about to start?

No, I didn't even know the word then. I don't know if it used back in the 40's in the middle of the 40's. I don't know.

So you got off in the town of Rio. Are there any sights that you saw that you want to share?

I wanted to bring home everyone a souvenir. So I brought my mother a table which was all butterfly wings... It would be like the size of a table you'd put next to your chair. It

disassembled, and it all fit in one another, so the top part would turn over, then the biggest part, it was in three sections, they'd screwed it; everything was screwed. I couldn't believe how they did this with this wood. I think it was teak or something. And each one had knots in it all the way around. They had a light inside, too. The light would go on, and you'd see, it would glow and the knots were darker. The table was disassembled into three pieces. The smallest part goes on the back part and then builds up. It's cone shaped. And then the next one comes off of there, and the bottom one turned over, and that's how I tied it up, covered it with canvassing. Then I brought a tray, a religious tray for one of my aunts. She was very religious, and I wanted to bring her home something, so I brought this.

This was also from Brazil?

Yeah. The Last Supper. I brought my brother a cigarette case. It was made like this, and it was made out of pewter. It had a dragon on it. It would fit in your breast (pocket). I think it held 20 cigarettes. But anyway, I gave him that. I had an uncle. I brought him back an alligator skin wallet. I brought my mother a purse that was made out of alligator. I'm adding it all up; I couldn't believe it. Then I had three of these trays that had handles on them, they all fit into each other. The last one was about this big. The other one was a tray for serving food. I stacked them all in there. I don't know how in the hell I brought this all home.

So you were able to?

Yes, I brought everything that I wanted to give to my family, so to speak.

So you knew then that you'd be going home for leave, or were you going to ship it to them?

When we got into New York, we came into New York that time, and they had on the docks all the things you wanted to ship home. You just [had to] know how to package it and put it down there and fill out one of these cards, and they shipped it for you.

Free of charge?

I don't remember paying for it, so I think the government paid for it.

(Laughter)

That's nice.

So that's my Rio de Janeiro experience. There's a lot more to it, but I think that's enough. I'll be here all day if I tell you everything about it.

O.K. Are there any other interesting ports that you visited?

We did get liberty in Le Havre. I remember going to a park.

That was all secured then?

Oh, yes. I don't think they [bombed it] that I remember. Ships could land there. They took us there and there, again, Marty, I don't know what for.

So your ship's mission on the Meigs was transporting troops and material.

Yes.

What was your specific job or jobs?

I was seaman first class.

What kind of things did they have you do?

We did chipping. Steel plates have a tendency to rust. What we did was chip. They gave us some paint to put on it. Redlin they called it. Then the gray was put on after. Our ship was all gray. Of course, it wasn't made camouflaged. I think that was done, too, because of the fact that we travelled so fast. Submarines, underwater, could only go about, I don't know, 12, 14 knots an hour, and when they came up, they weren't much faster.

You said your job was chipping and painting. Are you talking about the hull on the outside?

No, when you're out to sea, you don't hang over the side.

That's what I was going to ask you, if you were on scaffolds while the ship was moving.

Well, as soon as we came to port, if it was bad on the side, then they'd send us down on a Jacobs Ladder. We didn't have platforms. They had Jacobs Ladder, you put it on and you were lowered. Of course it wasn't released like they have now. They can come down a mountain or go up.

Like rapelling.

Yes, rapelling. When we got into port then, of course, we'd have to put sentries out at every port.

I know what a Jacobs Ladder is, but for the interview, would you explain what it looked like and how you would climb up and down a Jacobs Ladder to paint and chip?

The Jacobs Ladder is what they used to bring someone up. A Jacobs Ladder is a ladder that goes all the way down to the water. If we took on a pilot, the pilot's boat comes up to it. In fact, in almost every port that we went to, we had to have a pilot. The captain was not allowed to bring a ship in, because the pilots know what the terrain is under the water, where the high spots are, and where the low spots are. The Jacobs Ladder, I can't remember what the seat was called. Oh, a bosun seat, b-o-s-u-n, bosun. That was used if you were on the stack. The only way you could rapel down was if someone would release you. They would bring you up and lower you. They had to have people on the deck to lower you over the side. We painted the stack as we traveled, too.

The bosun seat, I really don't know what that looks like. Is that just two ropes with a board?

Yes, a board across it.

What keeps you from falling over backwards on it?

You make sure that you've one hand holding while you're painting. It was big enough that you could sit on it without tipping or anything.

Do you know of anyone ever falling out of one?

No. I don't that. I never was in one. I never did anything over the side.

Did it look like a child's swing?

Yeah. I think it was made that the rope went down on the board in a position that it wouldn't tip that easy. If it was just a rope down to the board, you could see it could be tipped very easy.

How do you hold your can of paint while you're holding on?

Well, they hang them on the side. They have hooks, and they hooked them on the side and hammers. They had chipping hammers that we used to chip paint. Then we had to paint, too, right away. When you were done they would send a bucket down with red lead, and then they'd let it dry. It dried real fast. Then they'd put the gray on.

When you weren't on duty on these trips, what was there to do on board besides sleep?

Well, we got very little time. We manned four guns, which was five men. We had four guns, two in the stern and two in the bow.

What size guns were those?

5 inch 38's.

5 inch 38's?

Throws a shell about that big around. And we had to pull duty for hours, and from the bow guns, there's a crow's nest that's behind you, and you had to supply a man for there, and he had to scan the horizon. They had one in the rear going to the stern.

A man up there with binoculars?

Yeah, and he traveled 90° from left all the way to right. And if he saw anything that looked like a conning tower, he was supposed to report it to the bridge. And you're controlled by the bridge. You're hooked up with phones, you saw that. And you give reports, anything spotted. Of course, when you travel at night, I don't know how the hell you could see anything. But if it was a ship you'd see it, naturally, it was a silhouette. So anyway those were our duties. Of course, we had mess hall duties, and we had all the other stuff that goes with it, supplying the crews that do the washrooms, keeping them clean, and the rest I can't remember.

What about when you were off duty when you're onboard ship, what is there to do?

They had movies in the mess hall. Of course, no lights on deck, you couldn't have it out on deck. You couldn't even light a cigarette. So when you left the hallways, but they didn't call it that, there was a black canvass type thing that opened, and once you got in there, they would close it, then they had another one so you could go out on deck. That was to prevent any light from being seen by the enemy. Fortunately, I never was involved in any missions of.... We're going to be here a long time, because we're still in the European Theater.

When did your duty end on the Meigs?

All I know is that we made five trips, and most of them were from either Norfolk or New York. Then we would unload the troops and then go back and then load up again and go again, just like a ferry boat.

How long did a crossing generally take?

Well, since we had to go in a zig-zag course, I would say four or five days.

You said you were never under attack, but did you ever have significantly heavy weather?

Oh, yeah, that comes with crossing. You get heavy weather, and that's when you find out if you have sea legs, where you'd go through the procedure of vomiting which happened a lot. Then, of course, there were the old salts who were on the ship before we got there. They all maybe had five, six, seven years in the Navy or Coast Guard. One of these fellas came out with a knuckle, a pig's knuckle, with the fat on it and he walked out and some of the guys ran right for the railing. Fortunately, I never got sick.

So we'd pull a four hour spin on the gun, and then we'd go in, and we were free to sleep if it was during the night, like 9 to 4, we had shifts that way. Each gun had to have a four man crew. We had 20 mm and 40 mm. Ever see them put the shells in standing facing each other and you see the guns going like this? (gestures, imitating two gun barrels recoiling alternately).

Oh, yes.

That's a 40 mm. They throw a shell, roughly about 18 inches, or about that big around.

Is that called a bofer, or is that different?

No. We only used 40 mm.

While we're talking about the size of the guns, you mentioned something before, and I should have asked then. You talked about 5 inch 38's. So 5 inches is the diameter of the barrel, what does the 38 refer to?

It refers to when sized breaks down to a smaller size. Bigger than 5 inch you need to add, not inches, centimeters, to make it larger...That's all I know.

On the Meigs, are there any other interesting experiences we should talk about?

Later was the biggest thing we ever had.

When you went down to Rio?

Yes. That was [the best] part of the crossing.

Let's talk a little bit about that and the ceremonies. You told me there is a ceremony that goes along with crossing the equator.

Yeah. If you see here (shows picture), they're all dressed. Each one had a name.

King Neptune, there.

King Neptune. Then they had the queen. There are pictures here. This is our captain. We're all standing, and they came up and cut our ties off; they put prunes in our mouths that had been laying in tabasco sauce and told us to chew it up.

Oh, they told you to chew it up?

Yeah, you couldn't spit it out. They had all different things to make it rough on us. They gave a guy two coke bottles, put tape on them, and he was supposed to stand on the bow and look for submarine towers.

(End of Side A)

We just ran out of tape. I should mention that Mrs. Moscato is sitting in on the interview. She reminded Al of something he had told her about being alone at night, and that's what he spoke about while we were off tape.

Naturally, being alone, you get these feelings, not that you think anything is going to happen to you, but you look at the water, you're 60 feet up, and you're looking straight down at the water, it kind of gives you thoughts of things that you shouldn't be thinking about. But, we lived through it.

Did you tell me, after we ran out of tape, that you've had dreams about that?

Yes. The dreams were definitely about falling into the ocean.

To your knowledge, did that ever actually happen to somebody?

No. Except for a story a Chief sent around. The Chiefs and the First Class Petty Officer would treat the Seamen like they were dirt. Of course, just like in civilian life, a guy can build up a lot of hate for you and do something. They told me this is what the story was: He stepped out into one, when I told you of the passageways, ended with a cloth and you stepped into the dark, then you step out. And... two guys were supposed to be in there and they, more or less, cracked him on the head, and they threw him overboard. Naturally, you don't know if this is what some guy would tell you that he heard. So it's a ... We never found out the truth. I never...seen it or even thought about that.

First of all, are there any other experiences on the Meigs that we should talk about?

No, there's little things, little things [that happen, but would take too long to explain].

Part 5: After the War in Europe Ends

So what caused you to leave the Meigs?

To go in the ... Well, the war was over. When I left the Atlantic Theater, I went to the Pacific, the war was won in Germany. In fact, we were on our way back from wherever we were. Naples or one of the other ports, when we got the news. Of course, everybody celebrated with the fact that the war was over. So, when we got back to port, they start takin' men off of the ships that were not gonna be used as much, naturally. The Meigs wasn't going to be used delivering or, soldiers or anything for the war. So, ships in the Pacific that were, they needed ... because they were lettin' guys off with points. I don't know if you knew what the points was.

How many points did you need to go home?

You just ... Oh, I don't know. I didn't even know

How many short were you?

I wasn't I didn't even think of that because I was the last one on the totem pole.

Too far away?

The ones they took really were the old timers, the sailors. When I say old timers, they gotta, they gotta lot of sea duty and service duty, I should say. So they took crews; they took men and we travelled from New York to San Francisco on a train; it was a troop train. And we were all together, the Coastguardsmen. But the worst thing that happened to us, and they put us in the stern, right in the back of the train, in a Pullman car, and all the soldiers were in cattle cars. And we had to go through all these cattle cars to get to mess, to get to eat. Well, we weren't treated too nice. "You guys got it made, you got things to sleep in." Sheets, we had sheets and everything.

You say this was after VE day and US soldiers were being transported in the US in cattle cars?

Yes, from all the areas out in New York 'cause, naturally, they were bringing the soldiers across the ... to feed ships to take 'em over into Japan.

So you're saying that the soldiers actually had to ride cross country, across the US in cattle cars? A quick question before we get you out to your next ship. Why was the Meigs not being used to bring service men home from Europe?

Well, there again, too, they were used a lot to bring the sold.... There was a lot of soldiers left in Europe. So with these crews they put on there were lesser amount because they didn't have to man guns. They did man one gun. So they had to keep usin' 'em but they wanted the guy

So it was still in service, but it didn't have as big a crew?

Yeah. And we didn't have the points, so they would take all the seamen and all the younger fellas that were enlisted that didn't, that maybe 19 years old. 'Cause I went in at 18, 19 or 20, I was 20 probably.

Mrs. Moscato: You have to tell them, too, though, that between New York and San Francisco, you stopped in Chicago.

Yeah.

I was going to ask him that because you came right by...

We stopped in Chicago, but we never had communications to say to meet us. When they say stop, you know, you could stop for who knows. You can't have people come over. We never even thought of it, Marty, to tell you the truth. We never thought of asking. Maybe the guys that had wives might've thought of it. I just had my mother.

Mrs. Moscato: But you didn't call your Dad at all, did you?

No.

Were you able to get off the train?

I think mostly right on the ...

This was at Union Station?

I don't remember which one it was. It was on the, I'm trying to think, UP and SP, Union Pacific and

Southern Pacific?

Southern Pacific. We were on the one that went through, I think both of them went through Salt Lake City, I don't know. We actually, there was one track crossing Salt Lake City.

Well, when was the last time, when you're travelling across country, when was the last time before that that you had any contact with your family, by letter?

Letters, constantly, yes.

Oh, you constantly had letters?

I wrote letters, and they wrote us letters and sent boxes. I got a box a couple of times with different food Italians eat. I don't remember what they were now. But we'd get that from home.

How would your mail and packages reach you? Did you have to wait until you got into a port?

To tell you the truth, I do not know. We always said there's a post office in the middle of the ocean they go on to fly We never knew how it got... Maybe we picked 'em up in Italy when we landed or even when we were down to Rio. They knew we were goin' there, and we were on a four days or five days to get down there. So they could forward all our mail, and we'd get mail there. Every place we went, I think they knew where we were goin' because they had it all, they had it all planned out.

Mrs. Moscato: Your mail was scrutinized, too.

Sure.

Air mail was used.

Mrs. Moscato: But I mean, if you had mentioned a city or some place you had been, it was blocked out before it ...

Yeah. They ... It was a mockery a little bit, too, because especially if you wanted to say something, you know, a loved one or a wife or something about how much I love you, these different terms they'd like to use. But they know there's gonna be guys readin' them, and they'd be laughin' at you, you know. I don't know if they did or not, but it's a thing that goes through your head.

Mrs. Mosacto: They had code words.

I had one that said, "Don't believe it, it's not on a bias."

Mrs. Moscato: Laughs.

Well, what does that mean?

When we were in China, we had material that worked in our shop that they cut. It was a bias room and where do all the cuttings on the bias. They made barrage balloon and life raft [material] there. Well, this room was cal... My father worked in the bias room, so I said that, 'cause we always said, "A woman's private part is on the bias."

Laughter

So that's how he knew where I was. I come back and he says, we knew right where you were. We didn't know the town or the city ... It was done. You couldn't send anything out. That's to prevent the ship from getting into trouble with the mail you sent out, so.

Mrs. Moscato: Weren't you working for Rapid Roller when you went in?

Yes.

Mrs. Moscato: You told him Kroeger.

In the very beginning it was Kroeger, then I got a job... I went from Kroeger's to, to Rapid Roller, Dad got me in.

Mrs. Moscato: But that, from Rapid Roller you went into the service.

Yeah.

What was Rapid Roller, then?

It was a roller company that made offset printing ...

Mrs. Moscato: They made rubber blankets for printing presses.

Oh, the rubber blankets that go on for a printing press?

Yeah. It goes on the printing, yeah.

Mrs. Moscato: Because he got his time, when he come back, he got his job back again.

Oh.

They couldn't refuse you your job when you left. And naturally, they were filled with other people, because they had to keep up the balance. So we all felt kind of bad if they had to lay anyone off which was down to seniority, strictly seniority.

Well, getting back to your trip across the country, you stopped in Chicago but weren't able to make contact with family?

No.

Then you said you went to Salt Lake City. Did any interesting events happen before you got out to the West Coast?

Well, I think the fact that I went over to Salt Lake City. Oh, we stopped in Vegas, too. We stopped, and we had a couple of hours, and we bought things with green, with regular currency, and they'd give you back silver dollars. During the war and that time of the years, dollar coins were used in lot of places like that because.... I don't know why, Vegas and most of your Western towns. They'd give you 5 or 10 dollars, you'd get 9 dollars in silver dollars. So, that's why I remember Vegas. But to tell you if I gambled or not, I don't think so. We just maybe got off the train, maybe get some where close by 'cause you were given a certain time to get back on again. And there again, too,

I imagine, at the time, Vegas was a very small town...

Yes, yeah, yeah, at that time it was real small, in 1943 or '44. But, in fact, I think they warned us that you'd be AWOL if you weren't picked up.

You don't remember if you actually saw any casinos, then?

I don't remember going in one. In fact, I was so green at it, you know you'd think you'd say you were in Vegas, well, I'd say no, I wasn't there.

Just for the record, this would have been 1945, because you said this was when they were sending you off to the West Coast.

Yeah.

So, you get to the West Coast, then what?

We were put in a holding area.

In what city was that?

San Francisco. And we were right on the Bay. We could look, see Alcatraz. It was actually a warehouse, and they put three tier bunk beds in there, and that's all the Coast Guardsmen that were coming from to fill ships, to fill men that are on ships. And you were held there, and you'd be assigned then they'd take you, er, truck again, what they, you know, cabin stops. They'd take you to the ship with your sea bag, and you were part of that ship's crew. So that's how I got on the Chase. I was actually assigned to the Cavalier. I'm trying to think of that movie star. There was a movie star that was on the ship, the Cavalier. And I seen Cavalier written out, then they crossed it and they put Chase on it.

Mrs. Moscato: Was that Cesar Romero?

Yes. Yeah, Cesar Romero, I think it was him.

Well, we just took a short break and right before we did, Al's wife, Mrs. Moscato, reminded him of a movie actor that was on the ship he didn't get on. I think this is probably a time I should introduce Mrs. Moscato. This is Shirley Moscato who's sitting here with the interview, letting Al do all the talking, but every once in a while she'll remember something, as all good wives do, that needs to be corrected.

So Al, Shirley said that you knew that Cesar Romero was going to be on the Cavalier. Do you know why he was going to be on that ship?

Well, he was assigned to the ship and everyone in our service, they always mentioned, like, Jack Dempsey.

Oh, Cesar Romero was actually in the Coast Guard?

Oh, yeah. He was a member of the crew. And my wife didn't know about it. I told her when I come home, then. I was assigned to the ship, and they crossed me off.

Oh, so then you got assigned to the Chase?

Yes, that's right.

So we will cut to the Chase. Describe for me, if you would, your experiences on the Chase and where you went.

O.K. Well, there was three other ports there that I forgot to bring in my

What was your first sailing after you were assigned to the Chase?

While I was still on the Meigs there was three other ports I forgot about.

Oh, O.K. Anything happen on any of those?

They were just goin' through the, goin' through the Canal.

On the Meigs?

Yeah. The Meigs went through the canal, and then we came back.

What was the purpose of that trip?

I don't know.

Oh.

But we stayed in one port on the other side, the Pacific. But then we come back and went to San Juan and then Balboa which is in South America. I don't know where it's at. I just put down Balboa, probably... But I think we can leave it at that. It was nothing, nothing went on. Just the fact that we went through the Panama Canal and that we could add that to our itinerary. But, it was good. We learned a lot about the locks and then we, I got assigned to the Chase, Samuel L. Chase. Want me to continue?

Yes, please.

Part 6: War in the Pacific

And, we started to bring troops to take 'em into, onto Japanese fighting areas. We had uh, we had Sea Bees we brought over. It was a whole complement. Now this ship wasn't as big as the Meigs. This probably was maybe a thousand less, but still had a big group of soldiers.

Did, besides transporting the men, did you transport any of their equipment, any of the Sea Bees construction equipment?

Oh, Yeah. We had holds where they dropped, uh...picked up jeeps and, uh, they were put in there. They carried so much. We tried to fill our, our, the lower bottom of the ship, the cargo rooms, with whatever we could to bring 'em to the troops. In fact, they went down four decks below the top deck into the bowels, and they had a way of covering the hole up there and then send them down again. They had these big hatch covers. They were like planks only they were, they were steel. And they just filled up, filled up all the, so they made it level like a room area then on either side was placed the... So that was done all the way up until they got on the top side, and then the top side was covered the same way, and then they put a big canvas on it. And that's where they held our, we used to have boxing and get the crew involved with the men to give them something to do. So we had made a mat, we had brought a big mat, and then we had the ring, all the ring made up. And then, of course, we had the referees. First time I had boxing gloves on, I boxed a friend of mine.

Oh, you participated?

Yeah, he coked me a couple of times. (Laughing) And I decided that, I didn't go down, I just raised my hands, I said, that's enough. But it was a little entertainment, soldiers against the crews. And on our crew, we did have a fighter, a boxer. I don't remember his name, but uh... Yeah, we had to let him know to let the other guys win. Especially when we were in Brazil. The Brazilians were standing there goin' like this to us. (slices finger across his throat). And they all carried knives, I don't why.

You just made a gesture of drawing your finger across your throat like...

Laughing. Otherwise, we saw us looking at 'em, you know, other guys were looking at the troops, well, this guy. Well then finally, just a little guy, what he did, he let him back him in the corner. He, more or less, they wore the big 16 ounce gloves. And he put his hand, he let the guy really lay it into him. The referee says, "You won." So it made them, made them feel a little bit better, that they could win, you know. But they had boxing bouts, and that's about all I can remember they had for the troops.

So, on your trip from San Francisco with the troops headed for the South Pacific, where did you take them?

Well, we took them all the way to Japan. But on the way, we had a stop at Eniwetok. I think Eniwetok.

You say you took them all the way to Japan. Had the war ended by this time?

No, not. The Japanese...

These weren't occupation forces, these were ...

Fighting troops, yes. We landed in Okinawa, and they were still fighting on the island. They had secured it, but not totally.

Still some pockets of resistance?

So you'd hear, at night, you'd hear the firing of the guns. They got into the caves. There's a lot of caves on Okinawa. They went in, they went in there with, I imagine the torch guns.

Flame throwers?

Flame throwers. In fact there was one here not too many years ago. I think it was on Okinawa, he thought the war was still goin'. And he was a ..

It was something like 20 or 30 years after the war ended.

Oh, yeah. So anyway, we stayed down. We, um, a little incident happened, we were ... They were dive bombing all the ships, suicide planes. I think you heard about that. And uh, we were in Buckner Bay, a bay on this side and around the other side there was other, there was other ships there. Well, us bein' a troop carrier, 'cause we still were part, we have our attack ship with troops aboard. So they got us and put us out to sea, and they put in two smoke boats. You always, when you anchor, you always, your bow always faces the way the wind's blowin'. Then they put these two uh, smoke boats, we had these big canisters that we could light in case there was an attack. And we sat there, and if there was, if they knew, got a pick up of the planes coming our way, we'd light the...

But evidently they did, but they sunk, they sunk the destroyer, Callahan. I'll never forget the name. And I guess it went down, and it opened it up. It was a destroyer which they called tin cans. They were all welded; they weren't riveted. They say they take a hit and would open, open up like a sardine can. So she went down with all hands.

And was that Callahan, was that in the same bay you were in?

No. It was in bay, or it was on a bay on the other side. Okinawa's pretty big.

Oh, I see.

And we got the information that the Callahan was sunk. I don't imagine they all went down; they probably were, probably a lot of 'em were saved, you know. And uh, then we pulled out of there, and we left for Japan. But, seemed like we always went so far and stopped and go somewhere else. Then we left Panama, I mean Okinawa, and we somehow wound up in Leyte, the Philippines, Cebu, in the Philippines, Okinawa. So in that same area we, went to two or three islands, but there again, I can't tell you what the reason was for it. And then we left for Yokohama, Japan.

And you don't know what you were carrying?

No, we were carrying the 33rd, what did I say?

Seabees, the construction battalion?

Yes, that's what they were, construction battalion.

Mrs. Moscato: But you were carrying wounded back.

Oh, yeah, every trip we made, we always ... Our sick bay which we had so many beds, we'd take as many soldiers that were in pretty bad shape.

Were you making trips back and forth across the Pacific back to the U.S. or just between the islands?

Just one. We made it, dropped the troops off, and when we dropped the troops, I don't know if it was before or after the war was over. And, of course, celebrations were all ... but that's when they dropped the two bombs.

Where were you exactly when the war was over, when we had V-J day?

I was actually out to sea.

You were out to sea. And how did they pass the news to you that everything was done?

Yeah, they got, they had a P.A. system like you hear on the ...

Do you remember how they said it?

The Chaplain come on.

The Chaplain made the announcement?

Yeah, this is Father, not Father, he wasn't a Catholic priest, so and so minister. He said I have a news report that the war is over in Japan. Of course, the damn ship went crazy.

Uh, huh. (Affirmative)

But we, I don't know if we lay ..., I can't remember ... we had the troops off or not. I can't remember, I can't remember that. But anyway ... I can't pronounce the word, O-T-A-R-U.

Otaru?

Otaru, yeah. That's where we dropped the soldiers off, and they were put on land, naturally, to fight, well the war was over, so they used them as, to come in as like marshalls.

Occupation forces?

Occupation force. Of course, they didn't have to use all of them, but we couldn't take anyone back because our job was to bring them there, and we had other places to go. We went to Samoa in the Philippines, and then we came back.

What did you go to Samoa for, do you know?

I have no idea. These other names, first, a lot of them didn't have a dock or a pier. See, we were in Eniwetok or Ulithi, actually, the name of it was Ulithi. In fact, I think they dropped a bomb on that thing, an A bomb. I think they blew it out of the water.

Test bomb, yeah.

And after the war, they did a, a big, one of those mega atom bombs or whatever.

So, then, after that Samoa, then you came back to the United States?

Yeah.

Part 7: After Service

And then what happened to you?

We were dis..., not discharged, taken off the ship and sent to an area where you were set up to get discharged.

Mm, mm. (Affirmative)

But actually, we're too far from where I lived, so naturally they have to send you to the nearest city which was St. Louis. So they took me to St. Louis.

By train?

Yeah. And then we left St. Louis and we, and a train brought us to Chicago.

Did your family know that you were discharged?

Well, n... Yeah, I think I did call them then.

Was there anyone there to meet you when you came back to the ...?

No, no, no. They came to Chicago, they came to get me.

What was that like?

Well, naturally, you walk around like with your fingers... (laugh). Naturally, you're still only what, 19 or 20, 20 probably. And it made for a lot of drinkin' which is part of the deal when you get out. Every place you went, you couldn't spend a quarter. Of course, beer was only about 25 cents a glass.

Mrs. Moscato: I just have to put one little thing in though. I was at Riverview V-J Day.

When they announced that the war was finally over, you were at the old Riverview Amusement Park?

Mrs. Moscato: Yes, yes, at Riverview. It's a day I'll never forget.

What was it like for you? How old were you at the time?

Mrs. Moscato: I was a year younger than he was, yeah, because I graduated in '44.

But she still didn't know me then.

Mrs. Moscato: No, I didn't know him then. But I knew a lot of boys that I was in High School with that had gone. Some had died. But it was, oh, such a day, oh my God.

The celebration in Chicago was really ...?

Mrs. Moscato: I was at Riverview, that was all I can remember, comin' home then, but...

I think New York was, consider where it had all the pictures in Life Magazine.

Life Magazine photos – the sailor bending the girl over backwards, giving her a kiss.

Yeah, bending the girl over – any guy see ya', a girl would see ya', naturally, would want to plant one on ya, ya know.

Al, you were discharged and you got out and you're back in Chicago. What happened next?

Well, I wanted to take about 3 weeks off before I went to work. But my father, who happened to work in the same plant I did, he come home and he said, "Al, the bosses told me, if you could come in earlier, I mean if you're thinking of taking time off, they wish you wouldn't." So I think I was home for 4 days, the weekend come, and I was working. But he told me, he says, they'll be lettin' people go if you come later. He said this way you'll be having a position, er, other jobs. So that's what happened, I got uh, I went back to work, and I worked for, I don't know how many years, from 19, I was twenty, and then I, me and her got married.

I'm going to ask you specifically about that. But just directed about your job, you worked your entire career ...?

Before, I was only working 7 months, and I went in the service, and that was enough to insure that I would have a job when I ..

Did you stay there for the rest of your career?

Yeah, after that, oh, no, I didn't stay there, I moved to different jobs after that.

But at the same company?

No.

Oh.

Just, I quit, I quit that job and went for more payin' money.

Oh, I see.

Because in them days they weren't payin' that much.

How about Shirley, how did you meet her?

Well, we went to this funeral, and I was still in uniform because I... I don't know why I was walking around in uniform. I suppose to brag about the fact that I come home.

I was gonna' guess, yeah.

And I had my, not medals, my campaign ribbons.

Uh, huh. (Affirmative)

Which I was trying to remember which one it was. I know it was the Atlantic Theater, Pacific Theater, and then one for bein' in the service. It was kind of an orange one, I don't remember what that was for.

But anyway, you're all decked out in this uniform.

Yeah, I had my few bars, and the guys come in with (laughing) this many.

And here's a single young lady and then what?

Well, we both met there, and for some reason or other, like she said before, she, her mother and this aunt, not aunt, it was an aunt of mine, they were real friendly. For some reason or other, one of the women says, "Why don't you get Al to ...," Shirley wasn't going out or didn't have a date or something, and ...

Mrs. Moscato: Well, we met one other time when you were, his aunt owned a tavern in Volo, and he and his brother were on their way up

In Volo.

Mrs. Moscato: Yeah.

In Volo, up near the Wisconsin border?

Mrs. Moscato: And he and his brother were going up there to help her out with this tavern, her husband had died, and we met.

She remembers more than I do.

Mrs. Moscato: You came, stopped at the house and that was the second time I saw him, and the next time was our first date then.

So you started dating?

I don't know how, yeah, I don't know how it really started or actually asked her. My brother was, it was comin' up to New Year's, and I didn't have date for New Year's; I didn't know she didn't. So I called her up, and I asked if she wanted, I think that's the way it was.

Mrs. Moscato: Mm, hmm. (Affirmative)

She wanted to go out for New Year's Eve, so. My brother and his wife, he was married at the time, and the four of us. She took, she took the street car from Milwaukee and Devon over to Western, Milwaukee and Western. And she came all the way, that far south, to ours to get to see me. I didn't go pick her up.

You were in your uniform.

Mrs. Moscato: He didn't drive.

I didn't drive. I didn't know how to drive, that's right.

So was it you or the uniform?

Well, she had seen me in uniform.

Mrs. Moscato: Well it was his aunt and my mother were friendly.

Uh, huh. (Affirmative)

Mrs. Moscato: So it was, that's how... And I knew I was gonna' stay overnight with his aunt, she lived upstairs of his mother and his family.

So when did you get married, what year?

Mrs. Moscato: '48, 1948.

'48, uh huh. (Affirmative)

What was the month? November. October 23rd?

Mrs. Moscato: I'm not going to tell ya'. (Laughing)

I got the date, so I come close.

And you have a family.

I have a boy and a girl.

Mrs. Moscato: The girl lives, we added an addition to our home.

Mm, hmm. (Affirmative)

She's livin', she was very concerned about my age that she didn't want me to go into a home. She said, "I want you here, and we're gonna take care of you." So, gee, how often do you hear of a child or daughter or son...

That cares that much?

That would, that would... Most of 'em say, we'll put you in ... How much money ya' got? Well, we'll put in this ... How long does it last? A year. Well from there ya' go on a ... I don't know where we go from there. So that's more or less the story of my...

Part 8: Reunions

Well, now since you've been out of the service, I mean this is, you got out in what, '45 or '46?

Mrs. Moscato: '46.

'44, I think, wasn't it?

April '46.

Oh, '46.

Always ask her. April '46. So that's uh, you know, 58 years ago. Have you had any contact with any of your ship mates since then?

Well we had a, a reunion aboard the Chase. Uh, the crew, the Chase is either mothballed or, I think it's probably dismantled. Because most of those older ships, they didn't keep them. And we went to Mystic, Connecticut, and our ship, they sent us the newsletter to tell us where it was going to be and the hotel or motel. And what they were going to do.

They were going to take us to the Coast Guard Academy. And they had made up, they had the, a reviewing of our ship, of our members, I should say.

How many of them attended of your ship?

Oh, it was, I would say maybe 35 or 40.

Out of how many? 35 or 40 out of how many?

Well a lot of 'em, a lot 'em had died, but our age wasn't that bad. How old was that?

Mrs. Moscato: It was in 1996.

So, four off of, I was eight years younger so just 70.

Have you had any other contact with of your other ship mates like Christmas cards or letters, anything like that?

No. I don't think so.

Mrs. Moscato: We get the newsletter every year.

Yeah, the newsletter. We send 'em a donation to keep, to keep it goin'.

Mrs. Moscato: If I can add this. The trouble with the reunion was when we went, it was the Chase. But most of those men were in the Chase in the Atlantic.

Atlantic. (Simultaneously)

Mrs. Moscato: He wasn't on that ship at that time.

Oh, I see, yeah.

Mrs. Moscato: And there was no one, only maybe one or two, from the Pacific. So he didn't know anybody then.

Hardly knew 'em.

Just one or two.

Mrs. Moscato: And one didn't come. And he kind of broke away from it then.

Have you joined any veterans' organizations?

No.

That was the one reunion you attended then?

Yeah, well what happens, Marty, every year they have it, and they have it at different places. Now they've been to Florida, Connecticut...

Mrs. Moscato: Texas.

Texas, California.

Mrs. Moscato: California (Simultaneously)

See each year, you know, it's quite expensive to pick up and go. I mean, if I was making the money that some of them were making, I'd probably make every one of them because it's a nice four days.

Mrs. Moscato: Most of them are out East, because most of those crew members were from the East Coast.

Were all New York. Yeah, New York supplied a lot, a lot, an awful lot of sailors.

I've asked just about all the questions I have. I'm close to wrapping up, but before I do, is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think would be good to have on the record for the project?

Yes. The Samuel Chase was in five invasions. From D Day, I don't remember, it's the Italian, you'd have to look that up Marty, I don't remember the names of the beach heads.

The Chase or the Meigs?

No, no. the Chase. The Meigs was strictly a transport.

Oh, O.K.

The Chase was an APA, it's attack.

The Chase was on the European Invasions before you joined her?

Yeah, that's right. And she was in five invasions... She wasn't hit by a bomb or anything. And with that in mind, they called her "The Lucky Chase," and their insignia is on the LCVP's which lands soldiers and maybe a small jeep or something. Their capacity is a jeep. And they have of course, the ones you see where they drop, they drop the front part and you see 'em running off.

Right.

That's what we had aboard. And uh, where was I going with this?

Mrs. Moscato: But the one thing you have to tell is the thing in Connecticut. They had a ceremony, and they threw the wreath in the river, in the Mystic River when they played ... And they had a whole reviewing parade for the men.

All the cadets and all the officers...

Mrs. Moscato: All the cadets at the academy paraded.

All the active duty?

Yes, they had their drums and band, and we sat in review. Otherwise we sat on benches, and then they passed in review and then naturally, they all saluted us. 'Cause our ship is actually written up in the Coast Guard annals, the annals of the Coast Guard for being that lucky, for being in five invasions and makin' it back. The only ones that they lost were crew members that were driving these VPs. They'd get hit would be killed that way. But as far as, as far as the ship... When they lay off about, I don't know, a mile, a mile or so off shore, they have these nets that roll down, and you see the soldiers going down these nets right into the boat, and then they're taken away when they load up. So, I can fortunately say I was on a ship that was rated very high in Groton, Connecticut, or Mystic. Where is that ...?

Mrs. Moscato: The other two. We were supposed to go aboard a ship to view it, but they were doing repairs on a ship, and we couldn't go.

Where they train, I can't think of the word, "academy."

Uh huh. (Affirmative) Coast Guard Academy?

Coast Guard Academy. They got, they got little area where they got parts of the ship [in a museum] And then, of course, the Chase is, well the most decorated ship in the Coast Guard.

Coast Guard? You served on it.

Yep. Unfortunately, and maybe fortunately, I wasn't on it when it made all the landings.

Part 9: Closing

So, you're two plus years in the Coast Guard and the experiences you've had, do you feel that they've affected your life in any way?

Not that I know of.

Mrs. Moscato: He didn't talk about it, ever! I've heard stories today that I never heard.

Laugh

I think Marty knows and understands that World War II veterans they didn't have anything to come back like the ...

Mrs. Moscato: Vietnam.

Vietnam. They were treated like, you know, crap. At least we come back to fans and people wantin' to see us. Ticker tape parades. The Vietnam, they didn't do that as far as I know.

Mrs. Moscato: It took him a long time to talk about the prison, not the prisoners but the wounded that you brought back. Some of those stories, those hurt.

I think he knows and understands that.

You actually did see the, I mean you ...

Well, they came aboard, they were brought in litters. The Army came up with their litter which is canvas on two poles. The Coast Guard had a litter made out of wire (a mold of a person), but it's all wire with, oh, around the top so you could pick it up by, they picked 'em up with the davit, they hooked up two or three. I think they put 'em on a platform; they brought 'em up that way.

Were you involved, at all, with the care of those wounded?

Yes. Our medical corpsmen...

Did you bring them meals or anything, you personally?

No, no, that was all done by... they had mess men that were attached to the, to the.... See mess men covered the officers quarters, the crew quarters and sick bay. And, of course, we filled out our ... Oh, we had one... This fella who was part of our crew found out his brother was in sick bay; he was a pilot. Well, he went in there, and both of his legs were taken off. I guess it was a sad affair. Well, the chaplain, the chaplain got 'em discharged. Well, not discharged, got 'em off the ship at the next port. And, of course, he went home with his brother. But, I guess, according to what we heard, that the brother

was in pretty good spirits, but it was when he found out right then and there that his brother had lost both legs.

He hadn't known before. I'm glad you mentioned the brother, because that reminded me of something else I wanted to ask you. Your older brother that told you to go in the Coast Guard, were you in contact with him at all during the ...

That's, I knew what you were going to say. Not really. I don't ever remember having his address. Although he was with the Air Force, but he wasn't a pilot or anything. He was attached to some Air Force unit.

But he came out of the war O.K?

Yeah, yeah. But he saw, he saw a helluva lot more than I did. So he had, he had some memories that weren't too good.

Well, I guess I'm about ready to wrap up unless you, either of you, can think of anything else that you want to talk about.

Mrs. Moscato: The one thing you used to tell me though, was when you took the troops over, they only ate twice a day, but the, but the Coast Guard boys ate three times a day.

Well, no mostly for the fact we, we did all the work aboard ship goin' over, they didn't. They sat and laid around, you'd go on deck, everyone was laying, you gotta walk around like this, because they were spread all out. Then, of course, I told you that when there was an air raid, or thought of an air raid, or a submarine attack, they had to go in their quarters. They claimed that was hell. 'Cause they're all down there, and they're below water line, these damn decks go all the way down, and they figured that if a torpedo hits them, they ain't even gonna know what hit 'em.

Right.

So, you're livin', you're stayin' down there and you, you've a lot a things goin' through your mind when you're below decks, as she can tell you when we went on our cruise. She thought we were under water, we really wasn't. And she said, "We're under water." And I'm sayin', "Yeah, we gotta be, we're in the bowels of the ship, the last deck." Ah, that's about all I got, Marty. All I can say it was nice of you to spend your time in this.

Thank you very much for participating in the Veterans History Project. We will certainly, uh. Historians somewhere down the way are going to be able to read this and know some things they hadn't heard of before.

Well, we each got our own little story, I think. Some of it's good. And I'll tell you, I'll tell you the truth, I talked to some guys we brought back., wouldn't want to see or hear what they had to say about the Germans. We had prisoners. See when we come back Marty, we brought ... See these are things I just thought of. You're not taping no more are you?

Yes.

Well, we brought German officers back to put 'em in prisons. They were treated with that Geneva Convention. They had to be treated as an officer. No one saluted them. So they were walking on this deck, you'd see 'em the deck above ya'.

(End of tape and end of the interview)