

Fort Hunt Oral History
P.O. Box 1142
Interview with Timothy Sullivan
by Vincent Santucci, Brandon Bies and Dan Gross
January 28, 2010

VINCENT SANTUCCI: -- for your willingness to interview you. This is part of a project called the Fort Hunt Oral History Project. It's in relationship to research that the National Park Service is undertaking relative to one of our sites that was active during the Second World War and known as Post Office Box 1142. My understanding is that you are a retired U.S. Marine who served during World War II. Your name is Tim Sullivan.

TIMOTHY SULLIVAN: Well, yeah, they call me Tim, but really, if you want the full length of it, it's Timothy, middle initial J., Sullivan.

VS: Okay, very good.

TS: Everybody calls me Tim.

VS: Really appreciate it. So today is Thursday, January 28, 2010, and that today I'm joined at the George Washington Memorial Parkway Headquarters by myself, Chief Ranger Vince Santucci, Cultural Resource [01:00] Specialist Brandon Bies of the George Washington Parkway, and our research volunteer, Dan Gross. We're doing this interview by telephone with Mr. Sullivan, who is duty stationed at Bear Mountain State Park in Bear Mountain, New York. We're also interested in learning about how you're continuing to work in this profession, because you must be somewhere in your 80s. So to begin, we'd just like a little bit of background. We normally ask these questions to all of our participants in the oral history project, and that is when and where you were born.

TS: Well, I was born in the village of Goshen, New York, in 1924.

VS: Okay. You grew up there, spent --

TS: I went to school there. Went to high school, graduated from high school there and various jobs, you know, as a teenager, working in a garage, gas station. Did things of that

nature prior to my enlisting in the Marine Corps.

VS: And your family [02:00] resided in that area for a long period of time?

TS: Oh, yes, both mother and father. The family there owned dairy farms in the county. It was Orange County in New York State. They owned various dairy farms because that's what it was, was primarily a farming country there.

VS: And your family heritage, your ancestry, they go back -- European ancestry?

TS: Well, of course, my father -- all of my ancestors born in the United States, of course, all of Irish descent, you know, and primarily from Upstate New York.

VS: Okay, excellent. Sure appreciate that. So as we approach the early onset of World War II, do you recall the bombing of Pearl Harbor [02:45] and do you have any recollections of when you learned about that?

TS: Well, the funny part about it is that when I first enlisted in the Marine Corps in December, the latter part of December in 1941, I don't think anybody even knew there was going to be anything to do with Pearl Harbor [03:00]. Actually, when I went down to Church Street, I think it was, in New York City to enlist, there was only about four or five of us there to enlist, and at that time, I enlisted in the -- they said to me, "Which do you want, the regular Marine Corps or the Reserve?" Well, being 17 years old, how the hell do I know, so I said, "Well, what's the difference?" He said, "Well, if you want to go for the regular Marine Corps, you're on the train and en route to Parris Island now, and if you want to go to the Reserves, you go home and then we'll call you." I said, "Well, I'll take the Reserve," because, you know, I had no clothes other than what I had on. So I went back home. Well, little did I know that Pearl Harbor [03:36] was going to occur, so on January seventh of '42, I was called back to New York City and walked into

the same recruiting office, and there must have been four or 500 people there. I said, "Holy geez, what's going on now?" Everybody realized that the bombing of Pearl Harbor [03:52] had occurred, you know, and, of course, everybody wanted to enlist.

VS: So your [04:00] interest in the Marine Corps, was it tied to family members that were involved in the Marines, or what drew you to the Marine Corps?

TS: No, none of my family, as near as I can recollect, had ever been in the military service, but over the period of time, you know, you see various posters, you know. Most of the posters I ever saw were for the Marine Corps. I don't think I ever saw anything in relation to the Army, the Air Force, or something like that, possibly the Navy, but primarily the Marine Corps, which drew my attention to do that. Then, of course, at that time, I had told my mother that I was going to enlist in the Marine Corps. I don't think she was too happy about it, but at any rate, I went to New York City and enlisted.

VS: And you had graduated from high school by this time.

TS: Yes.

VS: Okay. All right, very good. So when you enlisted, can you give a brief chronology in terms of your basic training, and then any schooling that you had gone through before you actually had an assignment [05:00]?

TS: You mean after I went into the Marine Corps?

VS: Correct.

TS: All right. Well, actually, sure, just like everything else, you always go to Parris Island, South Carolina [05:07], for boot training. In a normal situation there, you know, it's boot training, of course. Actually, at that time we were living in Quonset huts because they didn't have the permanent structures involved at that time. I was in actually what was

called Platoon 59 Recruit Depot in Parris Island [05:29], and at that time, just like any other Marine, you know, at that time, all kinds of various activities taking place. You know, you're given your 782 equipment and a water pail full of goodies, and you're assigned to your Quonset hut. During that time, you know, we had two DIs. There was a sergeant -- let's see. Sergeant Giles [spelled phonetically] and a Corporal McCaffrey [spelled phonetically] were our two DIs at Platoon 59. And just like anything else, you go through boot [06:00] training. Then after boot training was completed, we all went to New River, North Carolina, [06:07] for reassignment. Now New River, North Carolina at that time was a tent city. The main base was under construction at that time, so actually at that time I was assigned to the 1st Tank Battalion [06:24], 1st Marine Division, and assigned to a scout car company. We thought, well, this is great because now we're going to ride no matter where we go. Well, that didn't happen. But during that time, we left main base at New River [06:40] and were assigned to what is called tent city at the tank base, so there we stayed with the tanks and trained with the tanks at that time. We'd be on maneuvers at Onslow Beach, overnight maneuvers off the beach there, and then different maneuvers in the boondocks, where we'd be chasing tanks, sirens blowing. They'd be chasing us [07:00]. I remember one time one of our scout cars flipped over on the side, and I remember that a Corporal Combust [spelled phonetically] shot out the top out in the shrubbery. Then, of course, the scout car was put back on its wheels and everything, and we took off again. At nighttime, there was nighttime driving, where a metal steel shield was put down over the windshield and you couldn't see anything. You had to look out through a sort of a peephole and keep your eye on the tailgates of the vehicle ahead of you so that you didn't run into it. Then, of course, we

had cross-country, navigational map and compass work. Then, of course, going to the rifle range and all that sort of stuff. So actually, we were trained on scouting and patrolling at that time.

VS: Because we had now entered World War II [07:48], was there any sort of regular discussion? Did the atmosphere or mood really reflect the fact that we were preparing for war [08:00]?

TS: Not that I can recall. All we knew was that all of a sudden we were told to pack up, get the scout cars loaded. Of course, it was a nice rainy day, so of course, the canvas roofs had to be put on top of the scout cars with all our duffel bags and all our equipment inside, and we convoyed in rain to Norfolk, Virginia. I will not tell you what the acronym for Norfolk was at that time, but there we were to board a ship to go overseas. At that time, nobody knew where we actually were headed for. The ship that we went on board was the old liner Manhattan [08:40]. We went on board, and at that time our company, we were assigned to the grand ballroom, up on the stage of the grand ballroom. When we left Norfolk, we were supposed to be convoyed, but somewhere along the line the convoy did not meet us. Actually, we went from there to the Panama Canal [09:00].

VS: Could I interrupt you just for a second?

TS: Sure.

VS: We'll come back to that. This is very important. I just want to make sure that Brandon or Dan has any questions up to this point.

BRANDON BIES: Not at this point.

VS: Okay. They're good. Okay, so you're on your way to the Panama Canal in the ballroom.

TS: Right, yeah. During that time, we had a very severe storm, so I was standing up topside.

We watched the bow of the ship go underneath the water and come back up again. All the heads on topside were all flooded, so there was water running all around the deck up on topside where we were. And then, of course, what do they do? They created latrines outside on the deck, so when you had to go to bathroom at nighttime, you had to feel your way out in the dark to go to the latrine and then come back in and hope you could find your own bunk. So that when we got in the Panama Canal, we convoyed through the Canal ourselves, just the one ship alone, and then on the other side we were supposed to be met by a convoy, which did not mature. So therefore -- the name of the ship at that time was USS [10:00] Wakefield, which was formerly the old liner Manhattan [10:04]. And from there we went to Wellington, New Zealand [10:07], across the Pacific without any escort whatsoever. There may have been something out there, but we didn't see it. But we pulled into what is called Lambton Quay in Wellington, New Zealand [10:21], and pulled up to the dock there. At that time, the ships were unloaded and we were reassigned to a camp ashore for further training.

VS: Do you have any idea of how many Marines or personnel were on the Manhattan [10:37]?

TS: Offhand, I don't. It was only a portion of the 1st Marine Division, because I understand later on certain portions of the 1st Division shipped out from San Diego, California. But on our ship, I think it was 1st, 5th, and 7th Regiments, if I'm not -- if I'm correct, on that particular ship.

VS: And you didn't stop along the way at any ports or islands [11:00]?

TS: No, we went straight through all the way to Wellington [11:02].

VS: Okay. Did you have a convoy going from Norfolk south to the Panama Canal?

TS: Nothing. No, the ship was all by itself.

VS: Okay. Was there ever discussion of concerns about German U-boats?

TS: No, nothing at all. Actually, we were, you might say, completely in the dark until we got to Wellington, New Zealand [11:24]. There, of course, we were ashore in a camp, where it was a camp that was built by the New Zealanders, the Army, and we were given mattresses. Well, believe it or not, those mattresses were burlap bags filled with straw, something new to what we been used to as a mattress.

VS: Do you have an approximate date of departure from Norfolk?

TS: No, I don't.

VS: Okay. A year?

TS: It would have to be in 1942.

VS: Forty-two. Late in the year?

TS: Well, let's see. We landed at [unintelligible] the initial landing at Guadalcanal was August 7th of '42 [12:00] and we had shipped out prior to that.

VS: Okay, very good. All right, so go on.

TS: Okay. While we were in New Zealand, of course, we had combat training and navigation again. The armored scout cars were -- once we found out we were going, and they were kept in what was called the rear echelon because it was obvious that where we were going to go, an armored scout car, which only had -- no, the Army -- no, it was actually one .50 machine gun forward, two .30 caliber water-cooled machine guns aft on a tract inside, so there was a driver, car commander, radioman, and two machine gunners as far as the crew in that particular car, but everyone in that car had to fulfill the position of everybody else. The car commander, of course, in ours was a Lieutenant Gillespie

[spelled phonetically] in our particular scout car [13:00]. So then we got to New Zealand, and, of course, at that time, we debarked from the liner Manhattan [13:07] and then went aboard the USS Bellatrix [13:11]. It was a cargo, an attack cargo ship. We called her the Batland Belle. Of course, she had several three-inch guns on board, as well as a number of antiaircraft guns, and during that time, the old .50 caliber machine guns, which you would pull up and activate it when you pulled up the handle, just like motorcycle handlebars; when you pulled them up, that activated the firing mechanism. But they took those off the ship and transferred them off and replaced them with other types of firearms for antiaircraft work. Then, of course, when we left there en route to Guadalcanal, there was a meeting aboard ship where company commander said, "We are going to land at Guadalcanal." "Well, where the hell [14:00] is that?" Because nobody had ever heard of it before. In one of the companionways there was a map of the Pacific, which showed the island of Guadalcanal on it. Of course, everybody had to rush over, look at that to find out, "Well, where is this island we're going to?" Because, actually, nobody had ever heard of this thing before. Then, of course, we sailed by convoy from Wellington [14:20] to Guadalcanal and, unfortunately, when we got there, the ship that I was on, we did not get off in the initial landing like everybody else did simply because the Navy pulled all the ships out. During that time, there was the Battle of the Slot [14:40], what was called the Slot, between Tulagi and the Canal, where the Japanese came in just above water. They were so close to the ship, you could see the pilots waving at us from in the bombers, the torpedo bombers, and strafing. Of course, at that time the [15:00] sky was filled with antiaircraft trying to shoot down just about everything they had out there. The Japanese had supremacy of that area at that time compared to what

ships we had, and I forget, it might have been Admiral Ghormley [15:17], if I'm not mistaken, he pulled the ships out. He did not believe in endangering the ships, I guess for a better word, to the Japanese superiority, so of course they pulled out. Well, when they did, that pulled out a lot of the cargo ships with all the supplies for the Canal on it, you know, guns, ammunition, food, and things of that nature, as well as some other troops. Our ship, we were very fortunate out there by ourself in the ocean. We actually were out there the night that the -- if my memory serves me correctly, the Astoria, the Vincennes, and the Canberra, which was an Australian ship, went down that night, and all we saw was sparks come up during the night [16:00]. During the daytime, we canvassed the ocean, and we did not find anything: no bodies, no ships, no nothing. Everything had gone down. Also during that night we had an American destroyer coming toward us, and all our guns were trained on it, not knowing that it was an American destroyer. We thought it was a Japanese destroyer, but it was during those periods there was no lights permitted whatsoever. When the action came, it was called Condition Red [16:28], and at that time you knew that you were being approached by Japanese at that time. So there were many air raids, ship battles at all that time. Now, during that time also we had found out that there was a Navy PBY down in the ocean with a port engine shot out, so they took our ship to meet that. We put the aircraft up on the forward hatch, and we went there to Noumea, New Caledonia [17:00], and dropped it off and then came back to the Canal. And that time, then we finally did get ashore on the Canal and go to wherever our bivouac area was at. At that time, the main air base was under construction and a fighter field was also being constructed, so a lot of the equipment at that time was the former Japanese -- you know, what do you want to call them? Steamrollers or something like

that. Various trucks were being built, and, of course, the Japanese come in, would bomb the airstrip all the time. Well, the Navy Seabees [17:33], which were there, would immediately fill in the bomb holes and lay this metal matting down so that finally when the fighters did come in and the dive bombers, they had a place to land. Of course, in the middle of the island out there was what was called the pagoda. A pagoda was actually the control tower, which was not like our control towers that we see today. It was just a building up on the top of a knob, and that was called a pagoda [18:00] and that controlled all the aircraft movement, the landings and takeoff for the Grumman Wildcats and the SPDs, the torpedo dive-bombers. Then, of course, we would go on patrol in different places because then because our scout cars were kept back in New Zealand [18:18], we became foot scouts. Now, our company had four platoons. Each platoon was then reassigned to a regiment, 1st, 5th, and 7th Regiments. The platoon that I was in was assigned to division intelligence, so therefore, our functions on the island were to go out, scout out the enemy's positions, find out where they were, how they were armed, and everything of that nature.

VS: Can I interrupt just for a second?

TS: Sure.

VS: So I'm assuming this time period is between August and November of '42.

TS: Yes.

VS: Okay, and I would say so we can [19:00] get to your experiences as they relate to the German U-boat, this is really good, and I think Brandon and myself want to talk to you outside of this regular interview about these experiences because we're very interested in what you've done.

TS: Okay. Well, I can cut that right down very shortly.

VS: Don't leave out anything of interest, I mean, but I would say try to condense it to the most -- yeah, generally, what campaigns were you in in the Pacific?

TS: Well, actually, of course, when we left the Guadalcanal, then we went down to Wellington -- to Melbourne, Australia for rest and recreation, and then left there and went to Cape Gloucester, New Britain, for our second campaign. Then, of course, we left there. We went to another island, Pabobo [spelled phonetically], for future training, and, of course, all the new troops came in. So then we were training the new troops, and we left there [20:00] and went to San Diego, California. At that time we were given liberty, or what we called leave, to go home for a while. During that period of time, you were asked where did you wish to be assigned once you were stateside. Well, of course I put in for the Navy area of Brooklyn and also Iona Island, which is where I'm located right here in Naval Ammunition Depot.

VS: Can I interrupt you just for a second?

TS: Sure.

VS: Do you know approximately month and year that you came back from the Pacific to the United States?

TS: I'd have to do some research on that, to be honest with you.

VS: Forty-four?

TS: Well, let's see. Probably, because -- let's see. I was discharged in September of '45. I spent two years at the navy yard in Portsmouth [20:49], so it had to be somewhere prior to that.

VS: Okay. Brandon -- coincidentally, Brandon's grandfather, it sounds like he traveled the

same early days of the war [21:00] that you have, and so I think that -- do you have any questions for him?

BB: No, I'd love to chat at some point, Mr. Sullivan, just because my grandfather was in the 5th Marines

TS: Okay.

BB: And he was more the second half of the war at Peleliu and Okinawa with the 5th Marines. It sounds like that's about right where you ended up being assigned stateside, though, correct?

TS: Yes, because actually, when we were at Pabobo, those were the new recruits that came in that we were to train before that.

BB: Exactly. He came in from stateside to Pabobo was his first assignment, so yep, I'm right on the page with you there.

TS: Okay.

BB: So yeah, I guess if you could then -- so once -- if you could get into, yeah, once you were back stateside, how it came about that you ended up going to Portsmouth [21:50]. I assume you did not go back to the Pacific at that time?

TS: No. At that time, of course, I was assigned to the navy yard to Portsmouth, New Hampshire [21:58], which, of course, was a submarine base [22:00], and assigned to the Marine barracks. Now, of course, also at Portsmouth is what we call the Castle [22:07]. That was a naval prison. That was a separate detail altogether. We were assigned to the Marine barracks, so that our task was to maintain security at what was called the main entrance to the navy yard and also the new bridge gate, so that during that period of time I was promoted from corporal to sergeant and was assigned as sergeant of the guard in

charge of the main entrance to the navy yard. Well, of course, when the submarine situation came about, at that time, of course, we were honor guards for both submarine launchings and christenings, as well as honor guards for various military personnel that were buried in the nearby cemeteries. But when the submarine situation came about involving the surrender, there was a Sergeant Coffey [spelled phonetically] [22:57] and his six men, myself [23:00] with also six men. We got on an oceangoing Navy tugboat about 3:00 in the morning, having no idea what was going to happen and where we were going. But anyway, we left and we came upon this submarine sitting dead in the water with her crew all on top. Alongside was a heavy Navy cruiser, and at that time, on the Atlantic Coast they had four-masted sailing ships. That way, the Germans could not pick up the noise of any of the engines or the screws in the water, so that they would patrol the coast as a sailing vessel. I was up on top of what we called the housetop on the tugboat with a Navy lieutenant and he said to me, he said, "I cannot believe that this time I'm really seeing one of those SOBs finally sitting dead in the water," and at that time, we pulled alongside. Sergeant Coffey [23:53], with his men, went on board the sub and enough people were left on the sub that would operate it [24:00]. The main sailors came on board the tugboat where I was, and I put them at what we call the fantail, which is on the very aft portion. So therefore, I was in charge of the prisoners at that time.

VS: Mr. Sullivan, can I interrupt you for a minute? You're getting to the most exciting part of this whole thing. Brandon and myself had a couple of questions as it related to Portsmouth, [24:24]

TS: Okay.

VS: And then we can jump back. In a previous conversation, you had referenced the fact that

you'd been involved with the capture of four German U-boats.

TS: That's right.

VS: That's correct, and we'll go into details about that as well.

TS: Okay.

VS: Was U-234 [24:40] the first one that you were involved with the capture?

TS: I'm not sure of the sequence of what the numbers was. The one that I have more of a vivid memory of was the 234 [24:51].

VS: Okay. We can probably reconstruct that information from the historical data that we have.

TS: Okay.

BB: Mr. Sullivan, one of the questions [25:00] was, since you spent -- you would have spent about a year and a half at Portsmouth [25:06] prior to these U-boats coming in, correct?

TS: Yes, that's correct.

BB: Now, was there anything whatsoever going on, while the war was still going on, about U-boats? You know, were there any U-boats sunk in that area and any other prisoners brought into Portsmouth [25:22]?

TS: Not that I know of, no. I know there were American submarines that went down. I know there was the old Squalus [25:30] that sunk through a problem, and, of course, the conning tower of the Squalus was established there at the navy yard as a memory to the sailors on board that particular sub.

BB: So your first involvement with enemy German prisoners of war [25:46] was with this case here at the end of the war that we're about to talk about?

TS: That's correct.

BB: Okay, great.

VS: And the naval prison you call the Castle [25:56], I assume that that was prison for American military [26:00]?

TS: That's correct, yes, American military personnel.

VS: Anything else about Portsmouth [26:06] that might be relevant to this discussion?

TS: Well, of course, the navy yard [26:11], being a sub-building base, during that time, it was also -- I think there was one Italian destroyer came into the dry dock for repairs, and, of course, those sailors were given free rein to go on liberty outside the yard. Now, of course, our duty at the main entrance to the navy yard was there for security, so that we would check all the sailors and military personnel off the yard to go ashore or to check all personnel coming on. Any civilians that came to the yard were sent to what was called a pass office. At that time, they were cleared to enter the yard, but we had to escort all those people to their destination and then escort them back out of the navy yard [26:55] until they left. They were not allowed to walk around the yard on their own at all under any circumstances [27:00]. So during that course of time, the various employees at the navy yard would come in, and they'd have a badge that they wore, which had their picture on it, and on that badge was a number. That number was their shop number, so that we would determine whether we would check every badge -- every badge or every other badge or every fourth badge. In other words, we kept them all off guard. We do know that at that time the U.S. Secret Service would come on board the bus, and we caught a couple of them, because instead of having their picture on the badge, they had a picture of a monkey. So at that time, we would escort them to the captain of the yard and turn them over to them, and then we'd go back to the gate. Of course, then we'd be

called back to the captain of the yard, escort them off the yard, due to the fact that we had caught them trying to get into the yard by other means, the same as anybody else that tried to get into the yard, but we caught them each time.

VS: You called them Secret Service [28:00]. Do you think that they were part of the OSS [28:04] or some other kind of branch of security?

TS: No, we never knew that. All we knew was they're a part of the U.S. Secret Service. What their actual position was, I have no idea.

VS: Okay. Did you have any other incidents just worth noting of security breaches or attempts at security breach?

TS: Not to my knowledge. No, it seemed that everything was going off rather smoothly. I don't know of any activity, no subversive, or anything of that nature at that time at all. I mean, everything was running along very smoothly in the yard. You know, the subs were being constructed. New subs would be assigned a sea duty. Sailors would be brought in.

VS: So there weren't any American ships that were being taken down or U-boat activity that came to your attention while you were at Portsmouth [28:55]?

TS: No, just the one Italian ship that came into dry dock and most of all the [29:00] other ships that were there mostly were submarines. They would come in for repairs and go into the dry dock for repairs and then go back out to sea duty again.

VS: Okay. Very good. What we're going to do is we're going to change the tape, turn it over, but just one last question that raised a smile. You said that these badges had a monkey on it.

TS: Yes.

VS: Any thoughts about that?

TS: Well, see, what they were trying to do was catch us being off guard. They were going to go enter -- they were in a bus with the Navy sailors on board or Navy civilians, just like anybody else. Well, we would get on the bus and walk along the bus and look at everybody's badge on the bus the same as anyone that was walking into the yard. We would double-check them. But these guys always made a mistake, you might say, of getting on a navy yard bus along with everybody else, and then we were more -- we did the -- we were more -- let's see, how will I say it? We would check every badge, rather than every other one, you know? And during this course of time [30:00], we caught several U.S. Secret Service people on board. They had the same workmen's badge as all the other people did, but instead of a human's picture on it, they had a monkey's picture on it.

VS: Do you think they were testing how well you were doing your job?

TS: That's right. Absolutely correct.

VS: Okay.

TS: Yeah, didn't work out [laughs].

VS: Well, thank you. We'll just take a quick break here and turn the tape over, if that's okay.

TS: Sure thing.

(End of Tape 1A)

(Beginning of Tape 1B)

VS: Again we're very excited to hear about your encounters with the U-boats, but I think we have the tape going. Should we do the introduction again on each side? Okay, all right. Well, go ahead, Mr. Sullivan. We'll pick up where you left off.

TS: Okay. Well, once the subs were brought into the yard, the one that I say I have the most

vivid memory of is the U-234 [00:22]. When we brought that into the dock and tied it up, all the sailors were taken off of that and put on what was called a work barge. Now, this is nothing more than a flat-surface barge with a roof on it, and they had their bunks in there. That's what they were assigned to. Now, at that time, also I was given the task -- excuse me. I was given the task of escorting what was told to me to be the overall German commander of aircraft to the naval Castle [00:52], naval prison, so I escorted him. I have no idea what his name is now, although I have seen it in print in another submarine [01:00] periodical. I actually had to sign him into the naval prison, and I was told that he was the overall commander of German aircraft. Then, of course, then my job was security over the submarine itself to make sure nobody went on board that shouldn't be on board. But, of course, we were allowed to go on board, and we went down in the sub itself, and, of course, it was obvious that when the sub surrendered -- go ahead.

VS: Mr. Sullivan, excuse me [laughs], this is all really good. I think what we want to try to do is keep it chronologic, so I would say that when you had received orders, you had talked about you had taken a tugboat out at night.

TS: Yes.

VS: Then you had an encounter with the U-boat. I think putting all that into perspective might be helpful so that we don't miss any details in terms of things that we would want to capture.

TS: Okay, I can recap that.

VS: Thanks [02:00].

TS: At approximately 3:00 a.m. in the morning and during the darkness, of course, it was Sergeant Coffey [02:06] and six Marines, myself and six Marines went aboard the

oceangoing Navy tugboat, went out where we met one of the submarines in the water dead with their crew on top, topside. And at that time, Sergeant Coffey [02:22], with his personnel, would go aboard the sub and ride that back to shore with a crew on board that could operate it. The remaining were assigned to me on the Navy tugboat as prisoners, and at that time, I put them on the main deck, what was called the fantail, the after part of the sub, maintaining security over them until we got to the navy yard [02:44], where again here the sub was tied up. I transferred the prisoners from the tugboat to what was called a work barge, which actually was their living quarters.

BB: Mr. Sullivan, real quick. When you went out to the U-boat, were there any other [03:00] American ships already securing the area?

TS: There was only one. A big heavy Navy cruiser sat there in the water, and, of course, like I said, they're probably -- whether they were actually owned by the federal government or not, I can't say, but there were four masted sailing vessels, and it was explained to me that they patrolled the North Atlantic coast by sailing as a sailing vessel, whereas German submarines could not pick up the sound of their screws in the water. In other words, they were just a quiet ship on the water, but not, let's say, a noisy ship on the surface of water, to use it in that sense.

BB: Got you. Sure. Okay. Well, again, just wanted to ask that quick question. So then you said you escorted the folks, actually, back on -- again you came back on the tug. At this point you were not yet on the U-boat.

TS: No, the first time I got on the U-boat itself was after it was tied up at the dock and I got there and [04:00] was assigned as security, as a sergeant in charge of security on the sub itself.

BB: Okay. So prior to that, when you came back to the docks, did you get there ahead of the U-boat?

TS: I can't say whether the tug preceded the sub or the sub preceded us.

BB: But you did have several prisoners with you on the tug.

TS: Oh, yes, probably maybe 15 or 20 or something like that. I don't know what the actual head count was, but there was quite a number.

BB: Okay. Then what exactly happened to all of those prisoners at that point?

TS: All right. Once we came in with the tug, they were transferred to what I called a work barge. In the navy yard [04:47] it's called a work barge. A work barge in the navy yard is where they keep all their tools on board when they're working on the subs, so that they're not, you know, in inclement weather. It was like a flat-bottom [05:00] barge with a building on top of it, and inside of that building, so to speak, is where the sailors were confined, which was their living quarters. That's where their bunks and that's where they stayed during their stay in the navy yard [05:15].

BB: So that's where the actual German -- so they weren't taken to an actual prison, per se?

TS: No. They were kept right in there under tight security.

BB: Okay. And was that for all of them?

TS: All of them.

BB: Including the captain of the U-boat?

TS: The entire crew came there. Now, as a matter of fact, from what I was told, the actual captain of the U-234 [05:40] was a graduate of, I believe, NYU, here in this country.

BB: We'll have to look. We have his name, but we'll have to look into that.

TS: Okay. I think it was NYU, if I'm not mistaken. I know it was a college right here in

New York.

VS: Right now there's [06:00] -- we're at a point where we have lots of questions, and sometimes it's better just to let you talk and you'll probably get to some of the questions, but I don't want to forget to come back to them. When we had spoke to you originally, you had talked about some of your discussions of what you thought the destination was for the U-234 [06:24].

TS: Oh, yes.

BB: Can you go ahead and restate that information?

TS: Yeah, once the sub came into the yard, like I say, we went aboard the sub after it was docked. Apparently, when she surrendered, they were about ready to have their meal, because all their food was still on the tables. You had the dirty dishes and everything else. I remember on one wall there was a picture of Admiral Donutz [spelled phonetically], a German admiral, and a picture of him on one of the bulkheads there. But anyway, once they came ashore, then, of course, they were our responsibility. Now, we were told at that time that this [07:00] particular sub, being a cargo sub, there were 22 steel cylinders in her decks with all the documents of Germany on board. Now, at that time, we were also told that the Japanese ambassador had been on board and he committed Hari-Kari [07:18] somewhere at sea and was, you know, given a sea burial. But we were told at that time the ship was actually headed for Argentina. Also, there was I forget how much ballast. There was chemicals on board, liquid ballast [07:35], I believe, liquid chemicals that served as ballast on board the ship. I had no idea what the chemical name was, to be honest with you. But during that time, they said that in one of those steel cylinders there was a complete Messerschmitt airplane that was in one of

those cylinders. Now, those cylinders were then later removed and I have no idea where they went [08:00]. Once they were removed from the sub itself, I have no idea.

BB: Did you ever see any of the items from these cylinders or did you just hear about them?

TS: No, just heard about them. They were steel cylinders and they were not -- you know, as far as I know, we did not have any access to them whatsoever. Now, actually, when they left the yard, I have no idea. I don't remember at all.

BB: Did you actually see the soldiers themselves?

TS: No, they were still in the decks. They were not above deck at all at that time.

BB: So back to the prisoners. Do you know what ultimately happened to the prisoners? You described where they were being kept, but do you know where did they go from there?

TS: Okay. Well, once they completed wherever their incarceration was at the yard, I was assigned to transport the prisoners to the Army base at Boston. I'm not sure where in Boston. It might have been the Federal Building, but anyway, by bus [09:00]. They were loaded on a navy yard [09:02] bus with Marines back and front, and during that time, the German sailors were not allowed to sit opposite each other. They were in staggered rows, two on one side, two on the other, but the rows were staggered, and we transported them to the Army in Boston. One of the people, later I found out, rather oddly enough, who met me at the gate to the Army post to turn them over, later turned out to be a police officer here at Bear Mountain, where I worked later on, a fellow by the name of Bob Dutcher [spelled phonetically] [09:32]. He said to me one day, "I recognize you, but I can't tell you where." So then we compared notes and found out that he was the guy that actually accepted the prisoners at Boston.

BB: And so that was the last that you knew of what happened to the prisoners?

TS: That's correct.

BB: And did all of the prisoners from U-234 [09:51] go there?

TS: As far as I know, yes.

BB: Including the general, the person -- the Luftwaffe [10:00] person in charge of the Air Forces?

TS: He was still at the naval prison. I don't know what time -- I have no idea. I know when I took him there. I can't tell you the date or time, but I know that he was still there when everybody else went to Boston.

BB: Can you give us some more details about your escorting him? Did you have any interaction? Was there anything of interest to note about that?

TS: No, just that I was told by our commanding officer, our executive officer from the barracks, to escort this particular individual to the Castle [10:36], and, of course, just another German sailor, as far as I was concerned. And we walked. We weren't provided transportation, but we walked from the dock up to the naval Castle itself, and he was obviously in this German uniform and everything. I know he wore the Order of the Iron Cross [10:57] on his tunic, and I [11:00] escorted him up to the Castle [11:01]. I signed for him. During that period of time in the navy yard, I used to inspect the naval hospital as a sergeant of the guard. We'd go in and inspect the various wards where marines might be incarcerated and look in to make sure everything was kosher there. He was assigned to somewhere in the Castle [11:19], but where he was particularly assigned to, I don't know.

BB: When you escorted him, you mentioned the Iron Cross [11:25]. So he was in his full uniform at that point?

TS: Yes, he was.

BB: If we sent you a photograph of him, do you think you would recognize him?

TS: I rather doubt it, to be honest with you. I mean, if you want to supply it, I'll look at it, and you know, it might jog my memory, but, you know, I really didn't pay too much attention to this individual.

BB: Sure. You don't recall anything about the person, tall --

TS: No, not outstanding. I think he was of medium height. He might have been a little on the heavy side or overweight or something like that. I don't think he was what you call svelte [12:00], if that's the right term.

BB: No sort of interaction? He was cooperative?

TS: No, he just never said anything at all and we just walked up there, and I took him in and left him there.

BB: Do you know, was there anybody else off of the U-234 [12:12] that was taken to the Castle [12:14]?

TS: Not to my recollection.

BB: Do you recall if there were any civilians on board that U-boat or if everyone was military?

TS: Far as I know, it was all military, other than the Japanese ambassador, who, as I say, committed Hari-Kari [12:32], and he was given a ceremony overseas somewhere. Other than that, you know, the officer that I escorted to the prison.

BB: When this U-boat came in, as well as the other ones, did you know anything or did you hear about any interrogations that the Navy might be conducting with these folks?

TS: No. Actually, we [13:00] were under the impression -- this was, believe it or not, a rather

secret mission to go out. We had no idea what we were going to do until we got out on the ocean, and then the naval officers on board the tug advised us what we were going out there to do. However, when we came back in the naval yard, we couldn't believe it. There were thousands of people all along the shoreline cheering and waving at us as we're bringing the sub up the river to the dock, and we thought, where the hell they all come from? I didn't think anybody knew we were out there, but there they were all along the shoreline. So somebody must have, obviously, passed the word of what was going on.

BB: Did you transport prisoners on the tugboat?

TS: Yes, on the tugboat. Yes. I forget what the numbers was. They were all lined up on the tugboat back as what's called the fantail. That's the rearmost portion of the tug. I was up on what was called the housetop, looking down upon them.

BB: Were you able to bring all of the prisoners on the tugboat [14:00], or a small portion?

TS: A small portion. In other words, when the tugboat came in under its own power, there were certain sailors on board that that would maneuver that ship to the yard, as well as Sergeant Coffey [14:13] with his six Marines on board as security on the sub.

BB: Did you ever figure out why there were thousands of people along the shoreline?

TS: Never figured it out. Have no idea.

VS: Again, back, Mr. Sullivan, to the one question I was asking in terms of naval interrogators. Do you know if the Navy was sending folks in to speak with these prisoners or were they more or less just quarantined and out on their own?

TS: If they were, you know, our job, of course, was security. Now, if anybody from naval intelligence or someone like that were to come on board or go on board, they would have

to pass through us and identify themselves. Now, I don't remember anybody coming [15:00] onboard that would indicate they were there for any kind of intelligence purposes.

VS: How long would you say that these U-boat prisoners were held at Portsmouth [15:12] prior to being transferred to Boston?

TS: I can't give you a specific time, but I know they weren't there that very long.

VS: Are we talking a couple of days or a couple of weeks?

TS: Oh, maybe a week or so, possibly. Maybe even just short of that.

BB: All right. Well, let's see if there's any other questions about the U-234. Do you have -- I was going to get on now, Mr. Sullivan. What, if anything, do you remember about the other three U-boats?

TS: My job, primarily, was with the U-234 [15:49]. I know the other subs were brought in and placed, you know, from time to time between a certain date. I have a certificate here given to me by Admiral Withers [16:00], and he states that between May 15th and the 19th is when the 805 [16:06], the 873 [16:07], the 1228 [16:08], and the 234 [16:09] actually surrendered to the naval forces off of Portsmouth [16:14].

BB: As far as you can recall, though you weren't directly involved, I take it it's safe to say that the same thing happened to those prisoners. Do you know if they were also transferred to Boston eventually?

TS: Right. Yes, it would be the same procedure, and my involvement was with the 234 [16:35] itself.

BB: So you never went on board any of the other U-boats?

TS: No.

BB: Anything else you recall about the other three U-boats? Were there special prisoners that

were taken to the Castle [16:51] or anything --

TS: I never heard of any -- no, other than that. Once my situation of hauling that particular sub was over [17:00], then my job would have been to return as sergeant of the guard of the entrance to the navy yard [17:05], and whatever happened after that, I would have no knowledge.

BB: You mentioned how you were surprised when you were coming back with the U-234 [17:14] prisoners to see thousands of people. To that end, what, if anything, were you briefed on the secrecy of all of this? Were you allowed to tell folks, "Oh, yeah, I just escorted a bunch of U-boat prisoners," or was that still considered top secret?

TS: Well, I doubt it was top secret, because once we came up the river to the yard with all these people all along the shoreline, to me, it was obvious, you know, well known and probably newsworthy. But, you know, on the way out on the tugboat, we were never told that this is supposed to be a secret mission, although nothing was ever said about keep your mouth shut, you know.

BB: Did you receive any sort of training or briefing [18:00] as it relates to sort of protocols of taking prisoners off of a ship, procedures? You know, do you secure them? Do you frisk them? How do you secure the U-boats? Were you involved in any of that? Again, was there a process or procedure?

TS: Well, of course, once the prisoners are brought onto the tug and then transferred to the work barge, then it was our job to make sure that there was no contraband on any of them. If there was, it was all removed.

BB: And how did you do that?

TS: By frisking them.

BB: Do you recall any of the sorts of things that were found that were considered contraband?

TS: No, no. I think they realized that once the proverbial nonsense hit the fan, why, they stayed on the sub. You know, it was part of their personal belongings in their quarters. They knew that it was over with, so they're not going anywhere. They can't escape, you know. There's no way of getting out of it [19:00].

BB: Did they have a tendency to be cooperative?

TS: Oh, yes. That was one of the hard parts. They were too cooperative, in some respects, and, of course, it was hard to believe that -- you know, at the age that we were at that time, not being too familiar with foreigners, it was a great excitement, you might say, to find a -- hell, these guys could speak better English than some of us.

BB: So, Mr. Sullivan, you said they were sometimes too cooperative. What do you mean by that?

TS: Well, they were very polite, you know. When we said, "Get over here, get over there," it was not a problem. You know, they didn't resist or anything like that.

BB: Was there a sense that they were relieved that things were over?

TS: I think so, yes. I mean, they were well aware that no matter what we said to them, there was no, "Please do this," or, "Please do that." It was just plain, "Get your ass over there, period," you know, if you'll pardon my French.

BB: And some of them spoke English?

TS: Yes.

BB: Did you have any conversations that you [20:00] can recall?

TS: No. I mean, basically, we had been instructed, "You do not talk to them, you do not speak to them, and the only time you do is to give orders or exactly what you wanted

them to do. Other than that, you're not interested in anything else."

BB: Were they restrained in any way?

TS: No.

BB: This is just an aside question. Was there some sort of protocol for taking the German flag off of the U-boat, or was there one?

TS: I don't remember a German flag on it. I do know the periscope was up, but I don't remember any flag on the mast or the topside on the sub at all. I mean, obviously, having come out of the water, I don't think you'd have had time to put one on it.

BB: Along those lines, Mr. Sullivan, do you remember if the gun -- if the U-boat had antiaircraft guns or any other armaments on it? And if so, were they disabled in any way or pointed towards the deck or anything like that [21:00]?

TS: Not to my knowledge. I mean, I think, if I'm not correct, there might have been one deck gun forward of the conning tower and there may have been certain other aircraft guns up on the conning tower, but whatever they were, they were dead in the water and probably in the position that they were not activated for any action.

BB: Realizing that we're jumping around a bit here, when you pulled up on the scene, was the U-boat crew still entirely on the U-boat, or had some of them been taken off by the other naval ships?

TS: No, they were strictly on topside on the sub itself.

BB: But near as you could tell, pretty much the entire crew was topside?

TS: That's correct, yes.

VS: Could you give us any sort of estimate of how many people you think were in the total crew?

TS: Well, I don't know that I actually did a head count, you know [22:00], but it would seem to me the number of people that came on board the tug with me would probably have to be 15, maybe 20 people, something like that. When you're looking at the deck, the open deck on the back of the tug, and these are guys all lined up, you know, military-wise, one, two, three, four rows or something like that, it might have been somewhere in that neighborhood.

VS: I was referring to on -- the total number from the U-boat, the entire U-boat crew and all the passengers.

TS: Well, that I can't say because, actually, when we pulled up alongside of it, this is something that even the lieutenant on top with me made the comment, "I can't really believe I'm finally seeing one of these things sitting dead in the water." And at that time, you know, the situation was, "Well, what do we do or go from here?" Of course, we were on a standby to receive German prisoners on board the tugboat. And of course, we pulled up alongside in order to get them on the tugboat, and then Sergeant Coffey [23:00] with his six people stayed on the sub itself.

VS: So you literally moored, per se, right up against the U-boat.

TS: Yes.

BB: And so was there already American military or intelligence officers on the U-boat?

TS: If there were, I did not see any. You know, this is about, you know, 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, total darkness, and just about, you know, beginning to get daylight. But if there were, I mean, to my knowledge, I couldn't say. Actually, all I saw on board what appeared to be just strictly German sailors.

BB: And so it's possible that your crew made the first contact with the U-234 [23:46].

TS: That's correct.

BB: There was no briefing to say, you know, "This ship is secured. We know that there's no booby traps or explosives." You had no briefing? You made the first contact.

TS: No, we were never told [24:00] anything of that nature at all.

BB: Who was the senior officer? Were you the senior officer on the tugboat?

TS: As far as the Marine Corps, yes. As a sergeant, I was in charge of security over the German sailors.

BB: And so your initial communication with the surrendering Germans on the U-boat, what was that interaction?

TS: Well, that was strictly naval intelligence. Whoever they were or wherever they were at that time, I have no idea, but I know --

BB: So the naval intelligence, were they already on the U-boat?

TS: I would imagine so, because, obviously, once that thing became dead in the water, whoever was on that Navy cruiser probably went on board to secure it and to make sure that the sub was actually disabled.

BB: So there's a possibility that perhaps the naval intelligence pulled some prisoners off before you arrived.

TS: That's conceivable, yes.

BB: Was Kessler [24:55] on U-234 [24:58] when you arrived?

TS: Now, what name is that [25:00]? Who is that?

BB: I'm sorry. Was the officer that you had referenced that went to the Castle [25:04], was he on U-234 [25:07]?

TS: Yes.

BB: So he was there when you arrived.

TS: That's correct.

BB: Okay. Was he on your tugboat?

TS: That I really can't say. I don't know, because at that time, you know, whatever they were, whoever they were, they all looked the same to me, you know.

BB: Okay. If you don't mind, this is just for my personal -- when you first described approaching the U-boat in the darkness and then the image of these German personnel on the U-boat, could you just describe that one more time?

TS: Yes. Actually, when we approached the truck -- yeah, the sub, we approached it from her port side, in other words, the left side, when she was dead in the water. The sailing vessel was forward to her and the Navy cruiser was on her starboard side, on the opposite side, the right side, so that as we approached the tug, she, the sub itself, was [26:00] between us and the cruiser.

BB: And this was all done via searchlights because it was dark out?

TS: It was just about getting to be daylight, so really we didn't need searchlights at that time.

BB: So the first moments that you glimpsed the U-234 [26:19], can you describe that?

TS: Yes, I mean, as we approached it, we're all, you know -- everybody is, you know, eyes forward. We were trying to look at this damn thing sitting in the water, you know, because yeah, we've seen a lot of subs at the navy yard [26:33], American subs, but this is the first time that anybody had ever seen, you know, a German submarine setting there dead in the water. As a matter of fact, that was the comment of naval lieutenant alongside of me. He said, "I can't really believe that I'm finally seeing one of those SOBs finally dead in the water, not going anywhere."

BB: And how did it compare to American U-boats, American subs?

TS: It's hard to say. You know, the superstructure, the conning tower [27:00], things like that may be somewhat different, but, you know, in that respect, you know, where the --

BB: What about in terms of its size?

TS: It probably was about equal, length and size of that nature, yes, although the 234 [27:19] was considered to be a cargo submarine, so therefore, she probably would have been a lot larger, somewhat larger than a normal.

BB: So your first glimpses when you started to see the U-boat and starting to realize that there are people standing on the U-boat, what was the reaction generally by the Marines on the tugboat?

TS: Well, you know, everybody was assigned to certain positions on the tugboat ready to board. Those who were going to board were ready at the gunnel to get on board, and those of us who were ready to accept prisoners were already pre-positioned to accept them, so that when that transition took place, everybody was in a pre-prescribed position to accept it [28:00].

BB: How many Marines got off the tugboat, went onto U-234 [28:03]?

TS: I had six people with me, and I presume that Sergeant Coffey [28:06] probably had six.

BB: On your tugboat?

TS: Yes.

VS: Okay. And so when you went on, what was your first responsibility? Was it to secure prisoners? Was it to open up communication? Was it to check the entire U-boat, make sure the U-boat was secure? Do you recall?

TS: All right, in my position, to accept prisoners was to do just that. When the prisoners

came on board the tugboat and I was up on top of the tugboat, not down on the same deck as they were, as the noncommissioned officer in charge of that detail, my job was up on top to observe that the Marines that were under my supervision were at a certain position on the main deck to accept these guys and put them in position, so that they could be transported back to the yard [29:00].

VS: All right, very good. Brandon reminded me that you actually didn't get onto the U-boat until it was back at the naval shipyard.

TS: That's right. Once it was tied up at the dock, then I was on board and I was down inside of it, also, to inspect, you know, what might have been there, what shouldn't have been there, and the conditions that obviously -- it was obvious to us, once you looked at the mess hall, that they must've -- whatever happened at that time they surrendered, they left all their plates and food still on the tables yet.

VS: So it seems like that they would likely secure the ship before they would tow it into the naval yard [29:40]. So you were doing some sort of secondary --

TS: All right, now, the submarine went to the navy yard under its own power. It was not towed.

VS: Okay, so once it was in -- by the time it arrived there and then when you went on board, what length of time? Was it days or was it the same day?

TS: Once it was tied up, I think I went on board probably that afternoon or first [30:00] thing the next morning.

VS: And how many Marines went on board?

TS: Very few. I mean, I know I was alone on board it myself and the others were on topside, you know, to make sure that there was nobody else allowed on the tugboat other than us.

I mean, even navy yard personnel were not allowed on there, and if anybody came from the Navy that were security people, they had to prove who they were before they were even allowed on the tug itself. They wanted to make sure there was nobody going on there was a sightseer, so to speak.

VS: And so at this point it's possible that the cylinders were still on the U-boat.

TS: Oh, yes. We were told there were 22 steel cylinders in her decks. However, I never saw any of them lifted off the decks. They were still on there the last time I saw the vessel.

BB: Did you take, or know of anyone taking, any souvenirs from the boat?

TS: Not to my knowledge. The only thing is that I received this thing from Admiral [Thomas] Withers, [Jr.] [31:00], where -- I'll read this off to you verbatim. "U.S. Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire [31:06]." The date is 27 June 1945. "In consideration of cooperation with personnel, a naval intelligence organization of the United States Navy, the following described souvenir from one of the German U-boats, 805 [31:22], 873 [31:23], 1228 [31:24], or 234 [31:25], which surrendered to the United States naval forces off Portsmouth, New Hampshire between 15 May and 19 May 1945, has been released this day by direction of the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Intelligence to Sullivan, T.J., Sergeant. Description of souvenir: khaki shirt, and assigned by our commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Batham [spelled phonetically], Executive Officer," and then signed by T. Withers [31:54], Rear Admiral, USN, Commandant. The khaki shirt, I got rid of right away. I didn't want anything to do with it.

BB: You got rid of it [32:00]. This was a German khaki shirt?

TS: Yes.

BB: Oh, my goodness.

TS: [laughs]

BB: You know, it looks like we're out of tape, so why don't we take a short break? If you want to stretch your legs or --

TS: No, I have no problem, not a problem at all.

BB: Okay. What we'll do is we'll go ahead and put a new tape in.

(End of Tape 1B)

(Beginning of Tape 2)

VS: So are you ready, Mr. Sullivan?

TS: Yes, go ahead.

VS: Okay, again, thanks very much.

TS: Oh, you're entirely welcome.

VS: Okay. Today is January 28, 2010, Thursday, in the afternoon, and we are interviewing Mr. Tim Sullivan, a World War II veteran who had worked as a Marine and served at the Portsmouth naval yard [00:27] and was involved in the capture of the U-234 [00:31] and other U-boats. Part of the interview team at the headquarters at the George Washington Memorial Parkway is the cultural resource specialist Brandon Bies, research assistant Dan Gross, and myself, Vince Santucci, the chief ranger, and we're conducting this interview by telephone. So we were talking a little bit about, Mr. Sullivan, your going onto the U-234. Was there anything else [01:00] that you wanted to say about that?

TS: Well, you know, I had been aboard our own naval submarines here in the Navy yard during construction and also during the christenings because we were responsible of the christenings and the launchings, as well, so that here you have a vessel in the yard that is

not an American vessel, so you go aboard to see what the story is on that, to see what may have happened, what didn't happen. And it's like I said, you go down on board and all of a sudden you go in the mess hall, and here's all the plates and dishes and the food's still on them. It's like I guess whatever took place must have happened, like, "Do it now," you know? And wherever you're going to do it, just be aware that in a very short time you're going to get your butt up on deck and you're not going to be greeted too fondly, you know [02:00]?

VS: Mr. Sullivan, what were your impressions of the inside of a submarine? I mean, is it safe to say that's your one and only time ever being inside of a sub?

TS: Well, it's very tight quarters. Companionways are very tight, the quarters and, like, for a mess hall, you know, a table, and it's very much on the narrow side. I know that the battery compartment, if you go down into a battery compartment where all the batteries are, you have to be on your hands and knees. If a Condition Red [02:33] occurred and that was battened down, you didn't get out; you stayed there. So that the battery compartment I went into and crawled around in there. All the batteries, it was very narrow. You had to be on your hands and knees. It was something you couldn't stand up in. You know, you're just curious when you see these things and you walk around, and there's things in there you obviously -- you don't touch, even if it's their personal belongings, you don't touch because [03:00] if you're caught with anything that doesn't belong to you, that belongs to that submarine or its crew, and you get caught with it, you know you're going to go up to what they call a captain's mast. You're going to go before the colonel the next day, you know, and get your butt reamed out along with it.

VS: So if you saw a weapon, would you secure the weapon, or would you leave it in place?

TS: I would leave it as it is. I mean, to touch it or manhandle it, you never know. It could be booby-trapped, and you just don't touch anything until people go on board who have an expertise in that sort of -- those items.

VS: Did the U-boat appear new or very heavily used or about average? Could you tell from being in it if it was an old U-boat or not?

TS: Oh, I'd say probably about average. You know, it didn't appear to be new, you know, spot clean or something like that, but the normal submarine internally that [04:00] -- the crew apparently had taken good care of it internally, but just on the outside on the decks and everything else, just like any other submarine that had been above and below water, you know.

VS: And were there guards posted at the U-boats?

TS: In the Navy yard [04:18]?

VS: Yes.

TS: Yes. In other words, that's what I was responsible for while they were there, until I was relieved and the other personnel would take over the same job that I had, because then I resumed my duties at the main entrance to the navy yard as a sergeant of the guard there.

VS: And did you restrict access to only individuals with certain credentials on the U-boats, so, for example --

TS: That's right.

VS: -- Navy intelligence officers, did they control the access to the U-boats?

TS: Right, once the crew was taken off the sub itself and put on this work barge, they were not allowed to go back on board. The only persons allowed on board were those from the naval intelligence or [05:00] proper credentials from the captain of the yard. Of course,

we had to know his signature and his picture and everything else. This was something you had to have in your memory so that nobody could snow you under by, "Oh, this is -- I was given permission here." Even in the pass office, you had to know who the pass officer was. You had to be very familiar with all these people. You just -- you had to have all this knowledge right on top of your head every minute.

VS: Were you in charge of guarding the U-234 [05:31] prior to you taking the prisoners down to Boston long enough to see any items being taken off?

TS: Once the sub was tied up, then my responsibility as security on the sub started right away.

VS: Okay.

DANIEL GROSS: Mr. Sullivan, when you took the prisoners to Boston [06:00], you said it was a naval prison. Was that different from the Boston Jail on Charles Street?

TS: No, this was -- they were transported via a navy yard bus [06:11], standard navy yard bus with X amount of Marines on board, and we got to Boston -- it might have been the Federal Building. I could be wrong on that, but it was just a regular normal building with an Army soldier waiting for me at the door to accept these people when they were unloaded from the bus and taken inside this particular building. What that particular building was, I have not any idea.

DG: So it could have been Charles Street.

TS: That's possible. I have no idea. In other words, our job was to take them there, drop them off, and leave and return to the yard.

DG: Okay, I'll pass it back to Vince.

VS: I was going to ask you, what is Charles Street? Why are you asking about Charles Street?

DG: Well, the reason I mentioned Charles Street is that something happened there on that very day that the U-234 [07:00] came into Portsmouth, and that was the day that the skipper of the U-873 [07:07] committed suicide [07:09].

TS: Oh, you got me on that one.

DG: Yeah, so that's -- his name was [Friedrich] Steinhoff [07:12]. But you know, that's one of the interesting things about the German U-boat men. They had a lot of individual feelings, strong feelings, and --

TS: Actually where did he commit suicide at?

DG: He committed suicide [07:38] in the Boston Jail at Charles Street.

TS: Okay, all right. I've heard of Charles -- you know, the jail there, yes, but I have no, you know, really knowledge of it, be honest with you. But that's the first I've heard of that. But I do know the skipper who was on the 234 [07:55] was a young fellow and, like I said, we were told he was a graduate [08:00] of NYU here in this country, which surprised the hell out of us.

DG: We have to check into that. Had you ever heard of Fort Hunt [08:07]?

TS: No. In this issue of National Parks I have right in front of me, when I started to read the article of your operations on page 48, I'm reading down in one of the paragraphs and here it says, "When Germany accepted defeat and the U-234 [08:27] submarine surrendered at sea," I'm saying, "Whoa. Wait a minute. I knew who that sub is. I was there." And then it says, "Among the sub's cargo, an unassembled jet fighter," and, of course, we were told that was a Messerschmitt, "and a load of uranium oxide." Now, that was probably what we were told was on board as ballast [08:48].

DG: Yeah. Well, of the four submarines, you picked the right one to go on, I would say.

[laughter]

TS: When I read the article, I said, “Whoa. Wait a minute [09:00].” So that’s when I decided to make a phone call that in case you’re interested in any of this, why, I’d be glad to assist.

DG: You know there are a number of books written about the U-234.

TS: I haven’t even seen them, you know. One of our employees here was in the submarine service, and, of course, since he retired, both he and I have gone to various submarine christenings and launchings over in Rhode Island, because Portsmouth [09:26] is no longer a sub base, and he did have a book on submarines, and in that book there was a particular article about U-234 [09:34] and it gave the name of that individual that I escorted to the prison. Of course, unfortunately, I gave him the book back, which I probably shouldn’t have done.

DG: Well, I don’t think I’m revealing any secrets. I think who you’re referring to is General Ulrich Kessler [09:51]. He was head of the Luftwaffe [09:53] anti-aircraft part.

TS: Okay. That’s the title I was told anyway. Maybe -- no, not by name, but that was the title I was told [10:00].

DG: He spent a little time down at Fort Hunt [10:03] as one of our guests.

TS: Okay.

DG: I’m going to turn you back to Vince now.

TS: Sure thing.

VS: Just a couple of other very minor questions. When you transported prisoners from Portsmouth [10:18] down to Boston, was there more than one bus? Was there a convoy of buses?

TS: No, just our bus all by itself.

VS: And how many prisoners do you approximate were on that bus?

TS: Well, if you probably figure -- let's see, I'm trying to think of the -- it was a regular navy yard bus, not like an oversized one, and when you staggered the prisoners -- like it would be -- they weren't allowed to sit two on the right and two on the left opposite each other, so therefore, they had no hand communications. They were staggered so that the seat behind them would be empty and the seat behind that would be full. So they were staggered all the way back in the bus. So there might have been 15, 20 people on that bus [11:00], normal size. If you put everybody in side by side, it probably went about a 30. So in order to maintain security on the bus so these clowns wouldn't have access to each other, why, you know, it was a staggered arrangement.

VS: And so it's safe to conclude, then, that there were more prisoners that were taken off of the deck of U-234 [11:21] than were transported to Boston in your bus.

TS: At that time, yeah, there probably were. I mean, I only had this one trip.

VS: All right, okay. And Kessler [11:34] wasn't one of those people on your bus.

TS: No. When I left him at the prison, that's the last I even saw or heard of him.

VS: Okay. All right. Very good. What would be helpful is just very briefly then, after your U-234 experience, I guess your career in the Marines didn't last too much longer. Could you just go over where you were discharged and then briefly [12:00] how you wound up working for the state parks?

TS: Well, of course during that period of time, if you had 75 points, that you'd acquired 75 points militarily-wise, you were eligible for a discharge, and of course, I did have the 75 points. As a result, I turned a discharged down four times because I'd really wanted to

stay in the Marine Corps. Colonel Patchin [spelled phonetically] [12:26], who was the exec at the Marine barracks, called me in one day and he said, "Sergeant, I can no longer keep you here beyond what you've always said, and I'd love to keep you here because what you've done here, I know you're going to succeed in civilian life because you've always done everything the way I needed have done here. But," he said, "Unfortunately, I cannot keep you." Of course, on the -- was it 25th of September 1945, I was discharged and [unintelligible]. But then I tried to enlist in other reserve units, but working [13:00] where I do here at Bear Mountain, the only reserve unit was either Long Island or Poughkeepsie, and of course, working different shifts within the police, I did not have an opportunity to get to any of those reserve units.

VS: So, Mr. Sullivan, quick question. You mentioned that you easily surpassed or had 75 points. Was that just because of your various blitzes in the Pacific? Were you ever wounded in action?

TS: No, not at all. No.

VS: Okay. You amassed those points because of your rank as a sergeant, because of the two blitzes and then, of course --

TS: Well, whatever your military service, I don't know how they developed the 75 points, but apparently, whatever your military time, I guess probably from enlistment to at that period of time and your overseas time, if you had accumulated 75 points, you were eligible for discharge.

VS: So I think that anybody that listens to this interview in the future is going to ask the question that we've asked. We've been fortunate enough to find you. How is it that an ex-Marine [14:00] at 85 or more years is working in the state parks currently in New

York?

TS: Well, of course, when I came back, when I was discharged from the Marine Corps, I returned to the village of Goshen, where I was born, and started to work in the same garage that I was previously employed in when I enlisted in the Marine Corps. During that time, I had filed an application here for the park police, not knowing would I be accepted or not. And during that period of time, I found an individual coming into the garage looking at me very curiously, not knowing who it was, but, apparently, it was a Lieutenant Benham [spelled phonetically] [14:44] from here in the police department was looking at me because I filed an application. As a result, I was accepted here in -- I think it was May of '42, '43 as a temporary police officer [15:00] and then was offered a permanent job later on in September of '45. Yes, that's what it was and, of course, here I am.

VS: So have you worked in essentially the same park and same position ever since 1945?

TS: Well, if you look at what we call the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, we are comprised of about 19 different state parks in four different counties. I, as the chief ranger, am responsible for search and rescue, forest fire control, land acquisition, boundary surveys, and just about anything else they want to give you, but I'm also the manager for three undeveloped state parks. There's nothing there. I presently reside at Goose Pond Mountain State Park in Chester, New York, in a state ranger station, and I've lived there since the early 1970s, but it means you having to go around to the various state parks and see what's going on, keep track of what's going on [16:00]. It's just a typical chief ranger-type atmosphere.

VS: For the average National Park Service [16:11] chief ranger, they try to get rid of about 57

to 60 years of age, so it's amazing, your longevity in terms of your career. We congratulate you. All of us are huge fans of military veterans. Brandon is biased towards Marine veterans. We probably managed the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial as one of our sites at the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

TS: Yes. I'm a member of the Heritage Program there.

VS: That's great.

TS: And I get letters about every, what, two or three weeks for another donation, you know.

VS: Sure. And it's an honor for us and a great privilege that we've been able to meet, you know, quite a few notable Marines, Medal of Honor recipients and [17:00] others. So on behalf of the National Park Service, Dan, Brandon, and myself, thanks for your service and thanks for allowing us to interview you.

TS: Oh, the privilege has been mine, believe me. I'm very glad to be able to help out any small way that I could. The only thing I can say is that you're likely surprised that I didn't get shot or anything like that. Well, it's like when I went through boot camp. You know what they told us? "Keep your ass down." Well, I did. Pardon my French [laughs]. Hope that was not on tape.

[laughter]

[end of transcript]

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