Port Chicago
Interviews
(With Corrections)

163/44

Interviews (Transcribed)

Port Chicago Summer Interviews

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205 288-0775

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SIDE ONE

015 was drafted from Greenville, Alabama. High school student, 12th grade.

058 Camp Robert Small, Great Malkes NTC, circa Aug, 1943 8 weeks.

075 Train to Port Chicago in the Fall, 1943. Didn't know was going to load ammo. "We knew we were seamen" expected to go to sea.

118 Lt. Tobin in his forties.
Thinks Tobin sent to P.C. as punishment.

135 Went to Oakland, SF, Stockton on liberty. P.C. very Small town, jim crowed. Some Filipinos there, and Mexicans.

175 WORK: Stevedoring, hard labor loading ammo. Description of the work.

195 CONCERN ABT POSSIBLE EXPLOSION
"It wasn't a fearful thing, because we alwasy said that if a ship ever blew up we'd be the first out the hold. But this is just what we thought."

203 NO SAFETY PROCEDURES
They said the bombs couldn't blow up without a fuse. Mentions rough handling. Says would roll block busters out of boxcars and sometimes they would hit each other.

215 DESCRIPTION OF WINCH (CRANE) OPERATION. Mentions loads banging into the bottom of the hold. "After awhile you paid it no attention; nobody was really concerned." But said men used to joke about danger in hold: "Hey, you better handle that thing carefully cause you'll be the last one out from down here."

Concern abt danger

238 Use of shoulders to signal to crane operator.

250 PACE OF WORK: "There was always a tonnagd thing." Divisions had to compete against each other. "You always knew what the division ahead of you had done; and you were expected to put on more." Said men worked faster when they felt in good spirits.

280 Penalties threatened.

290 NO MEMORY OF OFFICERS BETTING.

296 Banter between divisions when they changed duty.

305 RELATIONS WITH OFFICERS. "We accepted segregation and white officers." but says he was also sensitive.

320 RECITED PATRIOTIC HIGH SCHOOL ORATION, which calls for giving the black man a change to pick up a gun and avenge Pearl Harbor. That the black man was capable.

335 WHITE CARPENTERS

350 LT TOBIN "USED PSYCHOLOGY" ON THE MEN

365 Says men knew things shouldn't be just that way (segregation) but it appeared out of reach.

380 BLACK PETTY OFFICERS AS "SLAVE DRIVERS"

383 GRIEVANCES: Men wanted higher ratings for increased pay. Ratings done on the basis of tonnage and behavior. 405 However, there was a limit on the number of higher ratings which effectively blocked promotions

430 MORE ON TOBIN: He put pressure on us because it was put on him.

441 OFFICERS MOVED ABOUT THE PIER

445 Grievances went to petty officers. 465 Petty Officers as buffers, manipulated by the officers. Says petty officers didn't have same grievances as men, more satisfied being bosses.

493 CRITTENDEN TRANSFERRED TO NEW DIVISION: Saw this as punishment. Crittenden didn't want to work with boots, refused to accept transfer. New division was killed in explosion.

SIDE TWO

001 Story of Phillips who was also transferred to new division but somehow was missing at time of exp. and survivied.

035 Noticed ship came in unusually late evening of the explosion.

065 Says he begged Tobin that evening to transfer him back to old division (and this why he not at work) Thinks he was transferred because he spoke out of line. Had got himself xferred back to old division and didn't have to go to work. (085).

117 Would take experienced guys to work with and train new guys. Also would xfer loudmouths as punishment

140 Was to go on Guard duty that night. Went over to headquarters and was there when explosion went off. (just before taps)

175 Men blinded by flying glass. Man ran into mountains. All lights off for a while. Can't see any dock or ships, went down with some men in a truck. (Only got slight scratch on arm)

200 Went to dock next morning: Shoe with foot in it, arms, heads floating in water, ships totally destroyed.

223 Other men were also transferred and killed.

240 Next morning sent over to Mare Island.

265 NO LEAVE FOR THE SURVIVORS

275 TOBIN TRIED TO GET C. TO GO BACK TO WORK: C said he was afraid, asked for xfer. Said he thought: I got a chance over there with the enemy, but I ain't got no change here."

314 Each Division officer talked to his men collectively and individually.

325 Admiral Wright mtg. Threatened to have men shot. ~~Somebody~~ Crittenden said: "This

guy can't have nobody shot; we ain't fighting no war here. They'd have to have an act of Congress to shoot us." Man replied: "Well, he said it."

345 Wright separated men into two groups. Marines came in with machine guns to take refusers to barge.

360 BARGE: Men fearful, Crittenden reflecting on the Constitution.

368 MEETING: We were led to believe that we wouldn't get hurt, but results would be to get something done. "If we just stuck together, some changes were gonna be made."

383 Fleece and Crittenden went AWOL but got caught. By saying they were going back to work and getting off barge.

402 TEAM OF TWO WHITE MARINES WHO ABUSED MEN AT TREASURE ISLAND. Drunken marines threatened to shoot men. Guards were vets from Pacific war.

437 TRIAL: No conferences with defense lawyers before trial.

454 SHOEMAKER INTERROGATION BY LT. TOBIN. (who pretended to be friend, and wanted to know what happened on the barge.

471 BENNON DEES (stutterer, country boy) who would say "yes, sir" to anything. Crittenden tried to "help Dees out". Didn't this happen; yes, sir This didn't happen, did

490 Crittenden wrote letters for some of the men. it; no, sir.
(Collins)

500 Tobin said "Dees told me..." in attempt to get C. to cooperate.

505 "P" on prison garb.

SIDE THREE

012 C didn't cooperate with Tobin, feared being beaten up by Marine.

024 Barge mtg, men decided to stick together. Officers were looking for evidence of mutiny. C refused to sign a statement. Get another man to tryo to get statemtn from C. C. claimed he didn't know what happend on barge. Asked him abt "having Navy by the balls statement".

105 TRIAL RECORD brought home, but now lost.

145 Had to carry gear and trial record. while handcuffed.

167 THURGOOD MARSHALL: Met and talked with him at San Pedro.

190 Doesnt't remember white women reporter

213 Met with Marshall at trial, too.

233 Get out of San Pedro before some of others. (alphabetically)

240 Got sea duty after release, enjoyed it. (with Dixon)
Became friends with white guy. 1 yr on probation. Later went to college.

Coded 7/22/80 ✓

Jack Crittendon
December 13, 1977

RA: Tell me how did you get into the Navy? What were you doing beforehand, your home, things of that sort.

JC: I was born in Greenville Alabama and was a high school student and I was inducted into the service. RA: Drafted JC: Drafted. yea. And then I had a choice between the navy and the marine corps. The reason I selected the Navy at that point is because the marine corps say "hey we could take how skinny and tall you are, we'll take you and fatten you up and make you a fine marine, and remember the marines are the first to land , they'll make history right away." I said, "first to land?" They said, yea. I said "well, where's the Navy?" I joined the navy. And that's how I came by the Navy. And then too the navy man was telling me about the three meals that you get and the cleanliness and all this kind of thing. And I felt safe with the navy at that point.

RA: Did you finish high school before you went into the Service?

JC: No, finished after. I was drafted. See I was 18years old ϕ in the 12th grade and I was drafted out of the 12th grade into the navy. At some point they were letting some guys, I don't know what it was, but some persons I'll say it that way, some persons at 19 or 18 depending on their birthday, then again I'm assuming this, that they were able to stay and finish. And me, I wasn't able to stay and finish. I don't know cause I was a small-town, ~~boy~~ local boy and that might have been that situation. Then I left Greenville and went to Jackson Miss. I was inducted and sworn into the navy there in Jackson Miss shipped into Great Lakes.

RA: So you went to Camp Robert Small then?

JC: Right, Company 1166.

RA: What month add year was that?

JC: This was August 1943.

RA: So you were there--the training period there is six weeks?

JC: six - eight weeks. I don't know. Well it was a boot period. From there came home for a ——— 21 days ——— and from there back to Chicago and by train

to California, Port Chicago.

RA: Did you know you were going to Port Chicago before you actually arrived there?

JC: I don't know. Maybe I did. remember saying we were going to California, Port Chicago was there. But the word California meant ~~it~~ more than a little city or town that we were going to and the purpose of going, we didn't know. We knew that we were seamen at that point. I think we were right around ~~1st~~ between 1st and 5th company, graduating from Great Lakes that was Seamans.

RA: Did you expect to go to sea?

JC: Well, that's the basis of my boot training--while we were in boot training, this is the basis of what we were trained for.

RA: To go to sea? JC: Yea RA: So, you arrived in PC that would have been..

JC: Latter part of, let's see August, September or October, latter part of 43.

RA: So you were there almost nine months before the..

JC: Well PC when I arrived there I think my first company was something like a 2, either company 2, division 2. So there was Division 1, Division 2, Division 3 and the like.

RA: That was Lt. Tobin.

JC. Oh, gosh, yea. He was my company commander. How did you know--oh, someone else told you?

RA: From the court transcripts.

JC: Oh Yea. Lt. Tobin. That's right.

RA: Was he a young guy himself.

JC: He should have been at that point maybe 45. He was not 21--he was not what they refer to as a 90-day wonder.

RA: There was alot of them around then.

JC: Thinking about Lt. Tobin, you would think that he was sent there for something he had done. Say like, we're gonna get rid of you and send you to PC. That's the way it appearred because..

RA: Like punishment

JC. Yea. Really. Because Port Chicago was a deserted place, the township of PC 500,

1,000, 2,000 at the most. I've gone into the little community. IT's in a valley surrounded by mountains and things of that sort. Very small town. We usually would go to Oakland or San Francisco and Stockton on liberty. Never did we spend any time in PC.

RA: Was there Jim Crow there?

JC: Yes. But they were not-- they were ~~xxxxx~~ foreigners in a sense, blackheads and things of that sort.

RA: Blackheads, what are?

JC: Well I mean like Filipinos, peoples that got black..

RA: In the community? The community was pretty much ~~xxxx~~ white wasn't it, or was it?

JC: No, not all white. They were mexicans. They were all mixed up. They talked with an accent and all, as I vaguely remember.

RA: But they discriminated against black men?

JC: Well, we didn't go to PC, -- we didn't go to Oakland, San Francisco because of that, we went to Oakland San Francisco because of the larger city and black people were in that city. There were no that I can remember black ~~peopix~~ family living in PC, cause we went to Stockton because they had blacks in that community. We had to catch a train to go there, but we'd ~~xx~~ always ride the bus over to SF-Oakland. I was there for a good little bit seem like forever, really, but I was there long enough to be qualified for a leave--didn't get it however because I needed 3 more months to make a year, but some guy couldn't go, didn't have the money at that point, I could substitute and go on leave, which was back here in Alabama.

RA: But actually you had never had a chance to come home then? No.

RA:

~~JC~~: What was the actual work like yourself. You worked on loading, or the wrench

JC: Regular stevedore, hard labor, loading ammunition. It's hard to get you to understand. You would have had to had that kind of experience really to.. -- and I'll give it to you best I can. We were loading ammunition anywhere from the size of a hand grenade, which was boxed, to a block-buster. You would have to know what this is all about in order to understand what I'm saying. Big blockbusting bomb that I imagine an airplane would have ~~less~~ two on each wing or more than that . And all ships come in

was empty. Then we would have to go up a gangplank to get aboard. When they left we could ~~stay up~~ stay off the ship on the dock. That's the capacity of what we were doing as far as loading ~~3~~ was concerned. We really loaded. It wasn't a fearful thing. Because we always said that if the ship ever blew up we'd ~~the~~ be the first out the hold. You've got to Imagine coming out of a hold, down at the bottom of the ship and coming out. It was ——— just what we thought, we'd be the first out. We didn't think about the thing too much.

RA: Did they have any kind of safety precaution. or safety procedure there?

JC: No safety procedure. Because they.. not really and truly they said that they wasn't going to blow up cause they didn't have a fusilage in em, didn't have a something in ~~em~~ them, and all. And it was almost impossible. Cause they'd ~~have em~~ handle them pretty rough.

RA: Rough?

JC: I say that -- they see you roll those things off the train, those blockbusters, roll those off the train, they would hit each other, and then we'd stack em out on the docks and then the crane would come over and we'd hook them up like two on there and they go down in the hold and when they get down there sometimes the guy -- you know you had one guy who was -- well, let's see, operate the crane, another guy was acting as his eyes. He would be looking over the hold and this other guy, the operator, couldn't see. Me, I was the crane operator but another fellow -- I was watching him to tell me when to go and when to stop and sometime that ~~guy~~ didn't ~~look~~ feel too good, he'd look off and The dang thing hit the bottom of the ship. Well, after a while you paid ~~more~~ it no attention. Nobody was really ~~consuming~~. concerned.

RA: The men didn't believe that it would actually explode.

JC: No, they really... well, you had to feel that way because we ~~did~~ would kid each other about "well you better handle that thing with care cause you'll be the last one out from down here" and so this was an indication that we didn't have any idea that it was gonna blow, cause she did blow.

RA: You operated one of those cranes?

JC: No, no, I was one of the crane, let's see what was the title, I don't think I had a title. But it wasn't nothing that I did everynight. If this week I maybe ~~the~~ an

Clittendon was
hatch tender

assistant to the crane operator. That mean he would be operating, he and I be standing over a hold and I'd use my shoulder sometime tell him when to stop and when to go. This thing had two levers, one on the right and one on the left. He'd watch me. If I shook my right shoulder that mean he would let it down a little further then I'd hold em up he would stop. Then I'd do the right, that kind of thing. I was supposed to really use my hands. But it get chilly out there at night and we worked around the clock, we worked ~~all 72 hrs, we worked 7-8~~ Round the clock, it was a shift working. This shift would go off and another one come on. Right around the clock.

RA: What was the pace of the work like? at your own pace or.. fast pace..

JC: You kind of set your own pace, but there was always a tonnage thing. Like the 1st division put on x number of pounds and 2nd division would have to compete with those pounds involved.

RA: Would have to compete?

JC: Well not necessarily have to compete but it was a kind of understanding thing. You would allways know what the division did in front of you. If they put on x number then that meant you had to do more--well, didn't have to, but you did more.

RA: What, the officers would tell you that?

JC: Right. It was based on that kind of thing. And I imagine his satisfaction, not personal satisfaction, but his supervisor was satisfied at that point. So we didn't have like I must work at this speed. It wasn't that kind of thing. If we all felt well and felt good and in good spirit, then we just load the doggone thing up. And if some guys didn't feel too well, like if we'd been on leave or liberty or something, then we're kind of pooped a little bit. But ordinary, after about four days we'd...it was two days you worked from 8 to 5; two days from 5 to 12, whatever it was, two days from 12 til the next morning. And then 72 hours. And around that 4th day you were have a little slack as far as what you did was concerned.

RA: If you didn't do the tonnage that the officer expected you to do, did he take away liberties or some kind of privileges?

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JC. Well, it wasn't taken away. But it was a threat used in a sense. And not say, "hey you don't do this kind of thing, or that kind of thing." But you really knew that you had to come up to the other one, In order to get your liberty. I don't know of a case where they didn't get it--but I do know--well, didn't have to because they always came up to number of lbs or weight or whatever -- tonnage I think it was.

RA: Did you ever hear anything about the officers betting amongst themselves as to which division would load the most?

JC: I don't remember that. But I do know that we competed. Whether it or not it was a bet per se, I can ~~vagaly~~ vaguely rembmber that -- We would pass each other some form or fashion either when we was going on ship, they was coming off. We'd have this little thing between us, Division 1, Division 2, we had this little thing and I'm certain that it could have been possible men per se didn't do that kind of thing, but I'm certain that officers, not certain either, but stand to reason, cause it was there, that kind of thing. (Rivalry between divisions)?

RA: How did the officer and the men get along generally considering that it was a Jim Crow ~~xikakuxan~~ situation -- all the men loading the ammunition were black and the officers white, there weren't black officers. What kind of situation was that?

JC: That was 1943. It really was the kind of thing that we accepted. We accepted segregation and all-white officers -- we accepted that. We knew, because I remember from my oration, when I was in high school, I was of the sensitive situation, Like I said about ~~racial law,~~ my oration, but it had some affect on me. It had some affect on my results what it was. ~~Remember Pearl Harbor.~~ Let's see how this thing (oration) went → (over)

~~Pick up the Gun fought for this country. Proved~~

~~If blackman~~ capable, he can handle it, give ~~him a chance (sounds like saying a bunch of slogans)~~

Now, If I had that in High School, you know when I see a white officer and no black officers if I, if this was a year ~~pass~~ed, I kind of sort of thought, why not, we should and the man is capable, this ~~xork~~ kind of thing. Cause really truly the only whites there were people -- ok the

"acceptance, but..."

(6A)

Crittenden's high school ovation:

"Remember Pearl Harbor. It was Dorie Miller who was not trained to fight but picked up a gun and fought for his country. He proved himself capable. And when more black men are given the opportunity to serve their country they will prove themselves capable (worthy?) of the trust placed in them. It's a black man's capability now. Give him a chance. Let previous condition of servitude be no hold back. A man is still a man. All our men are facing the same enemy under the same flag. America owes it to them to see that they come back to the same opportunity."

only non white officers was a chief petty officer, he was a carpenter and he's the one that did the construction as far as when you loading ammunition you had to have braces and things to hold this ammunition. He was one who did this kind of thing. He had the skill for it. and non-skilled, tht's what I'm trying to say. The non-skilled worker was black seamans. Skilled work was more than white. And each division had these carpenters. They were petty officers and they were like.. they didn't live in our dorms now, in our barracks.

RA: But they lived on the base?

JC: Yea. You know I can't remember where in the hell they lived, come to think about it, and I don't even remember where the officers lived.

RA: What kind of guy was Lt. Tobin?

JC: Well, now I look back on the situation and see that he was something like a psychologist. He used all this buddy-buddy stuff and friendship stuff. No rank. Didn't make you no petty officer, so you would make more money ~~or make no money~~ and all that kind of thing but he was the kir make you work, that's what it amounted to. Make you feel really good toward him you think this and the other. And toward what you were doing but you're like I just told him about my ovation

He make you work, that's what it amounted to. Make you feel really good toward him and toward what you were doing, but you're .. like I just told him about my ovation

~~racial~~, that's always in back ofyour mind. Now, we're talking about individuals. Like Jack Crittendon and Small and Fleece, we all didn't come from the same background, but we all black. And we were all young black at that point. We were all sensitive blacks and we knew that the situation just shouldn't have been that way but it appeared that it was out of reach. So the strangest thing though was that, you went to inspection, line up and each company the commanding officer, inspect their company, and all this kind of thing. You wouldn't see nothing but black folk in a sense other than -- frankly I don't remember these carpenters. I remeber here your'e standing in rank and if this guy came down , he'd work with you like he was come down that night on your ~~shift~~ ship, I have to say your ship, but when you was out in inspection, he wasn't there as an officer standing out front. We had black officers. We had black non-commissioned officers. We had petty officers. Who were the slave

POs as "slave drivers"

drivers by the way. They wouldn't select anybody who was not a slave driver.

JC: yeah, they had those.

RA: Did the men have any grievances about ratings, transfers or..? Was there any attempt to do anything about it or to register a complaint or.. I don't know what could have been done, but what was the situation like with regards to that?

JC: Actually to try to answer the question I'm saying it in this vein and having to reflect on present knowledge and feelings past and all this kind of thing. Most persons like me, I wanted another rank because of money. Not because of prestige or anything in it I wanted to make Seaman 1st because this meant make more money. I wanted to make Petty Officer 3rd, this meant more money for me, not responsibilities or chest stuck out and this kind of thing. It wasn't that. And we worked with that thing in mind. You worked hard at everything so that you would make a rank--and that was always what you were reaching for. That 1st class rating, rank, so you could make more money. This was done on the basis of tonnage and harder you worked and this kind of thing, less problems you had created. Just the good ol Joe. If you was a good ol Joe yoou could make first class seaman. But it was the kind of thing that I didn't realize then and know now, that it was gonna be x number of seaman 2nd, x number of seaman 1st, x number of Petty Officer 3rd, x number of Petty Officer 2nd, and no others. No matter how hard you worked, see what I'm talking about? It wasn't going to be. Because each company consist of x number of officers, and their rank was x like Lt. and Captain and this and the other. Then you had a Chief Petty Officer, 1st class P Officer which was black, 2nd class petty officer, and then a 3rd class. number of seaman 2nd, number of seaman 1st. And you didn't get beyond that. No matter how hard that seaman 1st tried to get PO 3rd, as far as his work and his skill is concerned, he couldn't get because it just wasn't in the market, it wasn't there ~~mark--it was there from the git~~ to get. There was going to be two POs--this is just an example, 2 - 3rd class PO, and no matter how hard the 1st class PO worked, there was only going to be 2.

(structural limitation)

RA: So you were locked into the situation, unless you got a transfer.

JC: That's the reason I said in the outset about Tobin, he was Lt. Tobin, and last I remember was Lt. Tobin. I'm certain that he probably retired or died no more than

C ptain Tobin. I felt that it was some kind of thing that he was there. The reason he came there as Lt Tobin last I remember was still Lt. He was a psychologist -- I ~~bebber~~ ~~ixmxnexxganna~~ say it that way. His duties to his superior lead you to believe that I cause the things he used on us I'm certain he used on us because they were being used on him, and they were being pressured that way.

RA: But he wasn't a brutal type of guy?

JC: No. RA: Psychologist. JC: Yea. He was on the case. RA: The indirect approach, right? JC: Yea. and then the results was -- you got the work done. It wasn't necessary you had to get it done, because really and truly those guys really wasn't afraid down there on the bottom of the ship but it was hard work and it was cold at times.

RA: Were the officers out there on the pier with you when you were working or..?

JC: See ~~most~~ you had various holds, I'm talking about in loading. They were moving about ~~because people were~~... and would every over in the hold to see how you was doing.

RA: They would be present, though?

JC: Yea. If I can remember correctly. I don't think they carried us down there, and left. Not that kind of thing.

RA: Amongs the enlisted men themselves were there guys who were formal leaders or spokesmen or something like that?

JC: No more than.. you're talking about grievances and things of that sort?

RA: Yea, would somebody speak up for the group?

JC: No. It was strictly military. This guy who was my petty officer, he stayed in the same barrack. You know, you could grieve all you want with him. That kind of thing. It was left to him to get it to Tobin. And there are times when you'd see the Lt out there in the morning, but golly you was a enlisted man, you just didn't hey Lt Tobin, what about such and such a thing, you didn't do that kind of thing because you was military and you had certain restrictions and you geared a certain way and that kind of thing.

RA: And you expected the Petty officer to

JC: Yea. And then too it was the kind of thing that you talk to this man thinking that he can help you do something & other things. If I wanted to get a leave or

Stevens, D.A. "Lefty"

something, I didn't go to Lt Tobin. He was supposed to see ~~these~~ This kind of thing being done and all. You know how they do, they'll take--well you don't know how they do, not saying that you did, well anyway they would--out of the company--they would some kind of way, I don't know how it all worked out, but they would always select a person and make him petty officer, who in turn was the kind of guy -- he was ~~the~~ a man who this man (officer) ~~could~~ can handle.

RA: Uncle Tom?

JC: Yea, Well, that kind of person. It's just the situation where, Im it seems that that kind of man existed for that kind of thing.

RA: So they were buffers between you and the officers? so your grievances stopped there.

JC: Yea. Cause his grievances wasn't yours. See, like this man is a petty officer, he's making way more money that I am. I'm 2nd Class Seaman and he's 1st Class Petty Officer. He possibly, in more instances than one, ~~thanx~~ had less knowledge than I did. And he was really pleased to be 1st Class PO knowing full well that he had say 3 or 4 guys out there who had good education in a sense at that point. But He was ~~his~~ boss. And he was satisfied with that. Not necessarily pay is concerned.

RA: Being over somebody.

JC: Yes. ~~K K~~ This is a poor example, but kind of like a mice standing up telling a cat what to do.

RA: So they were like the drivers. They had the whip. At the same time, you were supposed to go through them if you didn't like what was being done.

JC: It was just programmed that way and there was nothing you could do about it. No matter what grievances we had, sooner or later -- well one thing about it -- I say this much, when another division came in, ok the same night that we had the explosion I was transferred from my division, well where do would do most of them this way--but they would transfer, in other words I say it like this. If Jack Crittendon was kind of guy that say wrong things to the wrong person, and a new division would come in, this ~~parkes~~ place

was growing, When we went there, when I got there, we was division 2. I don't think it was no more than division 1 ~~then~~ There at that point. And then it got to be like 9, 10 down the line. Well, I was transferred, new division came in that day, and I was transferred from ~~xxxxx~~ my division to the ~~other~~ new division. I Couldn't understand what the hell they transferred me. I didn't want to get with them boots, ~~as a sense you know~~. I wasn't going with a bunch of boots, ~~I was no more than Seaman 1st class~~ Wasn't I. So consequently I didn't want to be there with them. Really and truly--tht division got blowed up, that night.

RA: That was the division that worked.

JC: Yea. And some kind of way, man I messed around there -- and I often think about that. And it was another fellow named Phillips -- we got to be pretty good friends, now this boy (end of tape)

His father had something to do with one of these papers, either Chicago Defender, Pittsburg Courier, or something. This boy from Philadelphia. When they transferred him to this division, this guy went over the hill. Cause after the explosion he was missing. But he was not down on the ship. And I saw him later and I say "hey man, ~~I said~~ stay missing." Because he was supposed to been down with that division that went down that night. But the ironic thing about this whole thing, and I don't know if you experience through interviewing some others, made mention of this thing, and this is the thing that stuck with me for a long time and that is, okay, we just loaded ~~up~~ the last ship, and it left, at 3:30, between 1 and 3. it took off. My division is supposed to go to work at 5:00. So we watched the bay. And if a ship didn't come in that meant that we didn't have to go to work that night. And we knew full well that after 4:00 no ship was coming in -- you follow me. But the night of the explosion, and this is where I say there had to be some crap -- because the night of the explosion, we all settled ~~xx~~, "we ain't got to go to work." And This ship came in. We all looked. Said Golly. Cause it was supposed to been something like, the situation that happened that usually if at 4:00 we see the ship out there, we ain't got to worry, Sure as you won't make it _____/ tonight ~~or the day~~. He stayed out there. Wherever this was, it was like a locked bridge or

a locked gap or something. He stayed there til the next morning. Then this would open up you could come in. But this particular night that we had the explosion, and I don't know if this came out but I know it stuck with me because I was so involved in it because I had to get myself transferred between the time that that division ~~#~~ go to work and not go to work, follow me? And I begged Tobin to please transfer me back.

RA: Why did ~~#~~ they transfer you, did you ever find out?

JC: Well like I said, maybe I said some things I shouldn't have said, or spoke up somewhere I shouldn't have. ~~Say~~ Said something about the PO, said he was this or the other. That kind of thing. Little young nincompoop like me at that point. Might have said some things. I'm not certain. But anyway I got myself transferred back to my original company and ~~then got~~ didn't have to go to work, follow me. I know I had to go on guard duty that night cause that's where I was at the time of the explosion, I was over reporting for duty. But this ship came in at an unuusual point in time. ~~This is~~ Out of my period there and watching all the ships come in, None had come in like this.

RA: That must have been the Quinalt Victory I think. There were the two ships that were loading, one was almost completely loaded the Brian. And this new one came in. It was a brand new ship ship, too. This was going to be the maiden voyage. It had just come out of the shipyard. It never hauled any cargo before, this was going to be the maiden voyage, when it pulled in there.

JC: Now this thing that pulled in there empty, no matter what it was, name and all, maybe you've found this out, but the one pulled in there empty came in at a time when no other ship had come in. Because it was past 4:00 when that ship came in. And usually ...

RA: Well that wasn't in the records. All I saw was that it was a new ship and the name and so forth. It didn't say anything about the time.

JC: ~~Ma~~, The reason it stuck with me so much is because, well I'm certain tht some of the other guys, specially those who got blown to pieces down there, was concerned because... (confusing myself a little bit now) But they would take, well might have not been there. Might have not transferred me over there simply because I was running

my mouth. They might could have transferred me over there gonna make a PO out of me. I don't know. But they would take know guys--guys that know how put with the new division. Now you could know how and still be a loud mouth, classifying myself in that vein. But they would take some guys who knew how and put with the new guys to teach them how. But After you had been with the guys and you knw what their work like and how they work and you knew what you were doing, you didn't have to worry about showing somebody and doing over half the work, so you didn't want to go with a to the new division. That's the situation at that point. But this ship came in at this bad time. And this had never happened. And I just want to say that over and over again. Because this is the case. I'm not saying that that was the case but the reason of the explosion I'm not certain, but I do know no other ship came in at that time. Okay, those guys who didn't go to work that night, They had a little shing-shang and then they bedded down to go to bed. Well the guy came and told me, this same PO somebody in my division 2 said: "Jack, you're gonna have to go on guard duty tonight." This is guard duty right around your own little barracks. Not the kind of thing where you're walking the fense and all. So I had to go over to, what is considered headquarters, to get my name down there and all. This is when it all happened. This is about 10:30, 11:00 something like that. It was just before taps, just before the lights out, And I'm over there with PO, sitting there in the windown, telling em my name and all that. Man this damn thing happened. This was when the lights, They light traveling faster than sound talk about sound travel, light .. this was a proven fact, the light travel fast because well, the first thing was this great big flash, and I knocked myself somewhere but I don't know where, but I found myself outside of that building and I don't remember going out of no window or I don't know when climing out of it. But I was outside the window and only one little scar on my arm here. You're talking about torn up. Everybody felt at that point that it was another Pearl Harbor at PC -- not that the ships had blew up, because you didn't think about that at that point, because of the building that you were in and the barracks and all that, cave in, windows busted out, blown out and all that kind of thing. People running and hollering, some of the guys lost their

sight. Just cut all to pieces. You know that was a bunch of guys sleeping. The building was a lot of windows, lower and upper deck. Whole side was windows. And they were blown to pieces. We didn't have no lights, everybody running wild, just going like wild fire. Guys just cleared the fences. Them barbed wire fences, guys cleared that, went up in them mountains. Just running. Finally they got the emrgency lights together. Let's go down and see what happened down at the dock. Well then some guys come ~~down~~ by in the truck and we all go down there, come down there don't see no dock, no ship, no nothing, you can imagine, what this is. Just left ~~from~~ from down there at 4:00, left the ship loaded.

RA: You went down with them when they went down there?

JC: Well yea./ RA: That night you went down there? But we couldn't see nothing. RA: Just the water I guess. JC. Yea. Cause the docks wasn't there or nothing. And there was no light down there.

RA: So you were still there the next morning, you didn't get transferred out, cause some guys got~~xxxx~~ moved out that night.

JC: Well those that got moved out that night got hurt.

RA: But you were still around the next morning?

JC: Yea. I only got a little scratch right here on my arm. When I got to PC Mare. I'll say it like that. I was There The next morning. cause we went back to the dock next morning. Man it was ~~xxxxx~~ awful; that was a sight. You see a shoe with a foot in it, and then you would remember, how you'd said you're gonna be the first one out of the hold. And you see a head floating across on the ~~xxxx~~ water--just the head, arm. Bodies just.. awful. And no ships still and no dock. If you visit Port Chicago and I believe that base is still there, part of that ship like a side maybe about the size of this table --went into the concrete. It was there when I left Port Chicago, on one of those streets there. I think where the officers live. That Son of gun came over there and came into that and you couldn't move it. Now I saw this before leaving. I don't know if I was there two days or one day after the explosion. But I was there enough to see that. But that was quite an experience the next day. That thing just kept you from sleeping at night--going down to that dock watching--I mean looking, and then you had buddies of

yours who left that ship, left your company that was transferred to that company that went down that night. ~ out of your division Then again this is just one of those tragedies of war. I'm saying that now. But it wasn't that way -- it was awful. And you just had madfolk at that point. Guys just lost their minds—plus so many guys lost their sight couldn't see. Cause I remember leading some of em on the bus. They had little ambulances all around running, they come falling from Oakland Sf. They heard it 45 miles away.

RA: That's right. Windows were blown out -- way - way out. People heard it for 40-50 miles. The next morning then, what happened? you got sent up to another base or what?

JC: Well I don't know like I say, I don't know if it was the next day, I don't think I spend another night there. This ~~was~~ had to be after taps. How soon after taps I don't know, I was going on my guard duty at 12:00, or at 10:00. But it was after taps.-- lights out. So we had all this running and ripping and getting folks to the hospital and all until the next morning. And this is where I was, doing what I could to help until the next morning Then the next morning they carried us over to the next naval base over there I forgot..

RA: Mare Island?

JC: Mare Island yea. This is where we stayed for a day or so, a week or more, a period. But shortly after that they regrouped all divisions. Cuase some ~~h~~--half the guys gone over the hill, they finally came back. This is when each commanding officer would get his division -- I guess his division officer at that point -- get his division and he would have a muster, and get the names and see who's missing and who's not missing. But nobody got a leave now. Nobody got a leave to go home or this kind of thing. They didn't think to say "hey let's get these guys away from here, give em 30 days leave." I don't know how long this period was at Mare Island before, this was a submarine base really-- that's what it was. I don't know how long we were there before they regrouped and started this "let's go back to work." And this is where it all happened, this mutiny business. They tried to trick us. I mean those people were just awful. At that point. Like Lt. Tobin told me he said "Jack, now you're a fine young person and no use getting yourself involved, he say, now come on ~~sign~~ sign his saying say you're going back to work." I said "Lt. Tobin, I'm afraid. I said what about transferring me to the CB's. Transfer me to the submarine.

work stop

Transfer me to oversea duty. Just transfer me. I'm through with this ship business. Man ain't got no fight. I said — I don't know how many guys will tell you this. Man I got a chance over there with the enemy. But I ain't got no chance in that hole, know what I'm tqlking about. Man they wasn't hearing this. Then this thing went on until you provoked him. It got to the point where you either gonna sign here and go to work or you ain't gonna sign. "Are you going to sign?" I said Lt. well, it wasn't that you refused just--hey I'm afraid. "When you say you're afraid that means you refuse." "No, when I say I'm afraid that mean I'm afraid." ~~Re~~ I reflect on that thing. I don't know what ~~guy~~ kind of person he thought he was dealing with at that point.

RA: So he didn't order you to go back to work?

JC? Yea. Yea. well it got down to that.

RA: Did he talk to you individually, or did he have all the men mustered and then he gave an order and...

JC: Well, he talked to us as a division or a company. He's standing there talking to us. And then that didn't work. Then he got down to Jack Crittendon, and I'm standing right there. And then I had to answer the question. And I steadfastly told him that I was afraid. No matter what he said. If he referred to going back to loading ammunition, I was afraid. That mean that you ain't going back -- that mean that you're refusing an order, and all that. No, that mean I'm afraid. And I stayed there. Well that provoked him to a point where he ~~could~~ put down ~~out~~ what he wanted to put down ~~out~~. And this is the way it all kind of wind up. And then they finally took this list of ~~men~~ names, we'll say it like, that that was supposed to have indicated that they refused to go to work. And they put those' g uys on a ship.

work stuff

RA: Out on the barge?

JC: Well, before they did that, ~~they~~ each company officer had his division, and he would talk to his ——— men, you know, talk to em as a group, and couldn't get nothing going there then he'd talk to them as an individual. Still couldn't get nothing going to t heir satisfaction, then they had the commondant or some ~~kind~~ guy who was over that California district or over that area.

RA: Oh yea, Admiral Wright.

JC: Yea. Well he came in he got us all into -- well there's about 3 - 4 division -- and he put us into this little horseshoe like form. And he got in the center. And this is where the order came, "If you don't go back to work, I'll have you all shot." So this kind of frightened these guys who had families and all. I told them guys, "man this guy can't have nobody shot. I say, we ain't fighting no war here. They can't do this, They'd have to have an act of Congress to shoot somebody in the United States. He just can't say 'shoot me' and shoot me." He said it." I said, well man that man can't get you shot, man. ~~I say,~~ Hell, he just can't order someone to shoot you. I say, he has to have a act of congress or somebody bigger than he is to say shoot me. And it can't be no secretary of navy." That's what I was telling this guy right here. Well anyway I'm saying -- you know you get to mumbling among yourself, when you say, the man say, "i'm gonna have you all shot." And then he said "all those who are going back to work, come over here and put your name down, those who ain't going back to work, go on down there on that barge." Boy by that time, after you got the guys who.. well, "I've got a wife and kids," he go on over there and put his name down. And then you had that bunch that didn't go over there and put their name down, and after about 30 seconds I imagine after that they felt this was the total number that was going to put their name down, Man they had them ~~arranged~~ Marines in ~~their~~ there I imagine 500 of ~~us~~ them, they came in there ~~with~~ with Thompson machine guns, and all sorts of stuff that scared you to death. You thought sure you're gonna be shot at this point. And that's when they put us on the barge.

RA: The marines were all white, right?

JC: Yea.

RA: So they put you on the barge and they kept you there for a while. What happened on the barge?

JC: Well, at the barge, where you got a ~~guys~~ bunch of guys on the barge, and we're all scared, and we don't know what's going on. They got us down there. Can't get off. We don't know whether the guys are gonna kill us or not. Down there Almost in a panic, in a sense. So we got to~~d~~ get together try to talk to thse guys and tell them, hey, hey, like I was telling this guy, standing next to me: "Man them guys can't shoot you, like dogs." Well

a little history reflects you on it a little bit. If you know something about the constitution of the United States, there is some governing something, and you reflect on that at this point. And this is what I was doing, I was reflecting on that at that point.

RA: Were you talking to some of the guys who..?

JC: Yea. Sure, I talked to them. Then we had a little meeting down there on that barge.

RA: There was a meeting where Small spoke and some other guys spoke?

JC: Yea. I don't remember names in a sense.

RA: Give me a general sense of what happened there.

JC: Well, at the meeting we were led to believe or feel that nobody was gonna get hurt. That the results of this was gonna be something done. That we wasn't going to leave here the same as we came. We just stick together and some changes is gonna be made. This is what we did at that point. But on the contrary, we had all these guys on the barge. This was more than the 50. But this thing narrowed itself down to 50. I don't know how in the hell it got to be 50.

RA: More and more guys went back to work?

JC: Yea. But actually you know what it did. Remember me telling you a minute ago about this boy Wm. Fleece. There was really 48 guys. Wm. Fleece and I went over the hill. And they caught us over the hill. When I say over the hill, we went AWOL.

RA: From the barge?

JC: I believe there was some at the barge and I might have been in that group, at the last minute I think Bill and I said hey man let's get off that barge. The best way to get off the barge is to say we back going to work. And I think this is what we did. We decided that we were going to put our name on -- we were going back to work. We went over the hill. Well a bunch of them did this. But then there was about 48 who said I ain't going nowhere. But then when they caught me and Wm, they said you're going to work, we said no we ain't going to work, we're afraid. That's when they put us with the other 48 to make it 50. This is when it came to the trial and all this kind of crap. That trial -- look, that experience was worse than the shot(?) (this?), waiting for the trial.

selected as 50

RA: What was it like?

JC: We were being guarded by marines--they were all white. And I remember some of the names, Trayham, and Wadsworth. Boy they were awful white people from down Louisiana. But anyway, we were all put into ..

RA: Was this at Treasure Island?

JC: Treasure Island. Boy, you talking about scared, man, I've had.. You know, you get this work detail, you wasn't doing that much. Man they'd get you out of there--like Trayham and Wadsworth, whenever they.. We was in this big open stockade room like. These marines was outside, waiting for ~~like~~ each marine get 6 guys or 8 guys. And when say, Art Trayham, we was all in line. Boy when they call Trayham's name, no line. Everybody ran. or Wadsworth, everybody ran. Because see what happened, Wadsworth when he got his number whatever it was 8-6, he'd run you all day. He'd get you out there and he'd just double-time you back and forth, back and forth. I mean all around Treasure Island. Some guys -- you know -- all of em wasn't that cruel. ~~Ixd~~ The others. I'd seen some guys who was tight between leg--just blistered between there--from running. But I remember this ~~da~~ goddamn Trayham one day. And I couldn't get out of getting in his group. And he carried us down to the beach. We were pulling logs out of the water and putting them on the beach. He was standing there. And they're down there drinking liquor and all this and was in charge of us. But they really was haters because they had gone to Corregidor and Saipan and all these places. They had survived that beach-head. And they shipped them back and put them in charge of stockade. And they were just cruel. Well anyway, I think it was ~~eight~~ either 6 or 8 whatever the number, but anyway he would be half drunk he'd be counting and couldn't count us, and he's saying one's missing, and he's gonna shoot the rest of em. Take his 45 and put one in the chamber and make us all stand up there and aim at us and then we just like little mices trembling telling him, we're all here. Here's 1 - 2 - 3 - 4, we's counting for him. And we'd go through that day in and day out. This is before the trial. Then the trial lasted 33 days. The trial was just procedure, it was going through this.. we knew before the trial end what it was going to be like. We knew we was going to be guilty. No matter what we said. Because we were told that we can't say certain things. Or it has been covered (and you knew full well it wasn't covered.

tonsized by sands

trial

RA: Did you get to meet the defense lawyer before the trial?

JC: I don't remember that.

RA: Did you have a chance to have a conference with him before the trial?

JC: We were just told that we was going to have... It seem to me more than one lawyer. Look like to me we had 5 or 6.

RA: Yea. But he was the chief. There was 3 or 4 others who worked with him. But what I was wondering is whether you had any conferences ~~tax~~ with him to work out a defense or you were just told that you're going to have this lawyer and...

JC: Let me reflect a little bit. Before we became general court martial prisoners, they transferred us, when we left the barge, we were sent someplace else.

RA: Shumaker.

JC: Yea. And this is where the trickery started, to get you court martialed. Because I remember Lt. Tobin showing up and Interviewed me. Wanted to know what went on on the barge and he was my friend and all this kind of thing. He said, "Jack come on in, glad to see you." I said, "hey Lt. Tobin. How are you doing?" I think it was Lt. Tobin. It was an officer that knew me from Port Chicago. Might have been one of the subordinates. But anyway it seem to me it should have been Tobin. He said, "Jack I'm here to help you. You're in trouble and I'm here to help you." I said "Yea, it look like I'm in trouble, I got a big P on me." He said, "tell me what happened down on the barge?" I siad, Lt. I ~~knew~~ don't know what ~~happened~~ went on the barge, I was a scared jack rabbit on the barge." He said, "now Jack you know what went on on that barge." Well we had another fellow, that was -- had problems speaking named Bennin Bees ~~(er)~~. Bennin's up in Huntsville _____. Bees rural, country, unintelligent boy. You call his name, his serial #, he getting ready to say his name and he couldn't get it out. B-B-B-B-B-B-B- he'd try to say Bennin, you know. Then I would say it for him. I'd say Bennin Bees. Then he'd say Bennin Bees, he'd bring it out then. But anyway, Bennin Bees had seen Tobin before I did. And BB was like I say , in person, if you told him, "hey I'm your friend I'm here to help you and whatever you wanted, if he had it, he'd give it to you. No matter what it was. If it was information or if you'd say: ~~give me this half of~~ "Didn't this happen?" yessum, ~~that kind of thing.~~ He "Sir" on: This didn't happen, did it?" "No, sir! That kind of thing

was just trying to satisfy the man, no matter what the man said. Cause the man had led him to believe that he was there to help him. And I knew this about Rees because Rees and I was in boot camp together. Rees and I was in Port Chicago together. Rees and I went to prison together. And I would always keep Rees close to me cause I could help him out. And another fellow like that name John S. Collins. Cause I did all the writing of his letters for him. When I got out of the service I had all his letters and his pictures. He wouldn't know his name if it was in neon lights. But he was a hell of a gambler. Got to count money. He could cheat in cards. But he couldn't read or write. I took care of all his correspondence.

But anyway BB went into Tobin before, going back to that now, he went into Tobin to Talk. BB went out I went in. So he told me, he said "Jack, you ain't very cooperative". What you mean? He said, "Rees told me you spoke at the meeting, and you were one of the guards. I said, "Me?" I said, "Not me!" I said Jack Crittendon was too scared to move. I thought certain every minute the marines was gonna call me out and shoot me, but I wasn't that afriad." But I'm just telling Tobin this because I know damn well Tobin wasn't my friend. Tobin had a uniform on he was a Lt. in the Navy. Jack Crittendon got a P on and he's a prisoner. He wasn't there to help me and I know full well that wasn't.. If he was, it was the wrong time to help me. I wasn't the smartest thing there nor was I the dumbest thing there. Just like 1 and 1 make 2. Sometime 1 and 1 doesn't make 2 and I'm well aware of the fact that it doesn't make 2 here. (end side 2) But I wasn't cooperative. I didn't say the things that he wanted to hear. So when I came out of there man I thought that marine was going to beat me up. Man he snatched me and jumped me around there.

RA: What was the thing about the barge though. How come he wanted to know what happened on the barge?

JC: This was the time when these 50 guys decided that they was gonna stay right together, stick together. And whatever happened to cause these 48 guys to stick together, they were concerned about that. And then not only that, they were being charged with mutiny and they wanted to make certain, that mutiny had taken place. See, this is why they were concerned about what

happened on the barge. But then after Tobin didn't get the kind of information that he thought he deserved or should have gotten from me, I don't have no statement when you get to court, "did'nt you say such and such a thing?" Here is your signature and all. So I ~~didnxxxh~~ don't have no statement, they got to have 50 statements signed by these guys. So I don't have no statement to go to court with me. Next 2 or 3 days, call me back up there, I was down there in the stockade. They put handcuffs on me and carry me up to where it's not a stockade, this is where I'm being interviewed, and outside is a marine. And if you ain't very cooperative, they tell marine, "come in here." That marine come in there with that billy club, talking about .. and he's standing there gritting his teeth and all. Put some fear in you. Then you supposed to ~~Usually you~~ say, "yessir that's right. yessir." But this didn't take place so consequently, Lt. Tobin told me well Jack ~~can't be~~ you ain't being very helpful. "Take him out of here." That same man who said he was there to help me. Fianlly, they still had no statement on me and ~~xx~~ 1 or 2 of us or 3 or 4 of us, I don't know the total number altogether. The officer can't handle it. So they get a yeoman, some regular ol sailor. "Come on in Jack how you doing today. Jack here is the situation. All I intend to do is to write down whatever you say. And I just want you to sign it. Okay now. Jack what happened on the barge?" I said, "I don't know what happened on the barge I told you before what happened on the barge that was I was scared as hell on the barge I didn't know what was happening. I was thinking more about my life than anything else." "Wasn't there a meeting on the barge?" I said "yea, I met with 3 or 4 guys sitting down next to me. I said we all met. I said, we was talking we was scared." "I'm talking about wasn't there a meeting of the whole group?" I said, "I don't know nothing about a meeting as a whole group." "Didn't ~~Did~~ such and such a person speak? Did he say we had the navy by the balls?" "I don't know. If it was said I don't know anything about it." Anyway this guy he said "well I'm gonna write this down," just like... ~~You~~ when he got down there, he said "now you read that." I started to reading and I said, "I didn't say this." He say, "well you didn't say it that way, you were ~~saying~~ using poor grammar and I just changed it around." "Well I said, if ~~mig~~ Jack is going to sign it, you're going to write it just like Jack said, poor grammar or no poor grammar because this changes my thought. This changes my statement."

No it don/t! Well he get mad. Finally I didn't have a statement. The trial came up and I didn't have a statement. Well they kept this, but I didn't sign it. I'm reflecting a little bit. I guess I was a mother back there. It didn't appear that way. I guess to them I was. If I remember correctly I went up there about 4 or 5 times. Get you to sign this or get you to say this. ~~to me~~. But then the trial came. This is where I haven't read my proceedings, boy I sure would like to get my hands on those things.

RA: Do you have a copy of it still?

JC: No. It was about that thick.

RA: It's like this. I got a copy ϕ made of the whole thing. It's 2,000 pages.

JC: I know it's 33 days. And I remember bringing that. I tell you what I had to serve a year's probabion in the Phillipines and I kept that thing from that period, I brought it home. But when I got home, I don't know what happened. Looked like to me it was in sections. RA: They had in volumes. JC: Yea. it was in volumes. I remember I had that son∉ of a gun and I nourished that rascal with all my life for the whole period because that thing. See I remember they said: "tried by general court martial, one specification tried and found guilty ~~as Spec of~~ of mutiny, sentenced for a period of 15 years. Your name Jack Crittendon," He'd hand that thing to you, man snapped them handcuffs on you, put you on that train and you were gone. And I wasn't about to let that kind of thing just be nothing in my life. Man, I was just thinking "15 years, here I ain't but 19 years old. How old am I going to be. Where's my momma and poppa." And this thing. I started thinking about what's going to happen and all. And I came from supposed to been a good old christian southern Alabama home. Born and reared in the Methodist church. Knew the bible from Genesis to revelation. It wasn't the kind of thing wherein they.. that I wasn't a god fearing person. It was just that you look something square in the eye, it wasn't just what you really saw . It wasn't supposed to be. Tell you one thing and then you look at something else.

RA: Do you recall at the trial when they marched you off to the train to go to San Pedro, did they make you carry your duffle bag and this big transcript?

Somebody else described that to me, I said, Man that's like a ball and chain. JC: yeah

JC: It was.

RA: Your transcript is your ball and chain.

JC: Carried that ~~home~~ LON with you. And the thing that's so frightening was the way you were being handled. They were handling you boy like you ~~were~~.. had killed the whole supreme court of the United States. You had done something that was just immoral--just unforgiveable. They treated you that way. At least these marines did. They put fear in your from the word say Go. My handcuffs on me was so tight, I'd ask him to loosen it just a little bit. ^ It was awful. ^ I said you should have thought abt this six months ago.

RA: Does anything stand out in your mind particularly about the trial itself?

JC: If I remember correctly, well, frankly. Thurgood Marshall when he came.

RA: You knew him when he ~~xxxxx~~ showed up?

JC: Yea. I knew him and I want to see him again one day. And I proposed to and I proposed to just sit down and visit with him. Really like to talk to him.

RA: Did you get a chance to meet him and talk to him?

JC: Yea. He came to San Pedro California just to visit, see how we were being treated. I got a chance to.. he didn't know me no more than he did anybody else. My name didn't stand out in any apecific. I mean Jack Crittendon was just one of the 50 ~~men.~~ mutineers

RA: But he came to San Pedro.

JC: Yea. And to assure us that he was doing all he could. ^ and said to Hang in there ^ ~~Hey man,~~ don't give up hope. He did that. He sent us some magazines, books and all that kind of stuff. Pamphlets to read, show what peoples was doing. That's why I've been a supporter of that NAACP ~~xxxx~~ for hell and eternity.

RA: Do you remember a white woman reporter at the trial? She might have come to San Pedro, too, but she wrote some very sympathetic articles. In fact she was the only reporter that printed all of Thurgood Marshall's statements.

JC: I don't remember. There might have been. Like I don't remember the lawyers name.

RA: You didn't actually meet him at the trial though? JC: Who? RA: Marshall.

JC: Yea. No-not to talk. At (the end of the trial,) the end of the session, we were togeth

together the 50 of us and Marshall, and I don't know if this lawyer was there or not. I don't think he was. Seems to me if I reflect a little bit he just kind of stepped out--something. But we were in a room, just us--this is why he made the statement why didn't we contact the NAACP, why ~~did~~ we didn't let them know, can't we see that we're being railroaded, can't we see that we're being made examples of and all this kind of thing. We didn't know that we could do this. We didn't know that we could contact anybody. We didn't--just kind of like put you some place and you don't know what you can do. We were in prison. We didn't know to contact ~~Wxxx~~ Marshall, no other Marshall to be frank. But he was there. He came to the trial and stayed long enough to find out what was going on. He stayed long enough to know that we were going to be found guilty and that was about the first, I don't know how many days but the trial last 15 - 16 days after he'd gone. After he left.

RA: Yea. he came in the middle of it.

JC: And stayed 3 or 4 days.

RA: So then after the trial, when you were found guilty and your sentences, you were sent down to San Pedro and you were there for about what--a year?

JC: No. My name was Crittendon and I came out--they let ø us out alphabetically. That was one time fortunate that my last name was C, I didn't have to stay as long as the W's and the S's T's and Z's you know. Like Small, I'll say. He was the last bunch to get out.

RA: Yea. Sheppard was in there, 22 months he said.

JC: Yea. Right. And they had to find places to send ~~us~~ them so they wouldn't be anywhere near the other 3 or the other ~~15~~ 50.

RA: And they shipped you out overseas immediately then? You went to the Phillipines?

JC: I went to the Phillipines aboard ~~the~~ a landing craft ~~tender~~ tanker the most enjoable part of the Navy was when I was there. At that point I began doing seaman duty really. I couldn't make a rank though. I was Seaman Deuce. I came out Seaman Deuce. This is a point ~~where~~ in my ~~late~~ Navy experience, where if I hadn't had that kind of record I could have end up anything. I could have been a chief petty officer, because this commanding officer

he had all the confidence--he told me I was the best whatever it was at that point handling the ship. I could do it better than anybody else. I remember distinctly I could handle radio like calling in and reporting this and the other. A lot of confidence in me in handling that kind of thing. This was a landing craft tank. You know it was no big ship. Let's see Dixon was on that ship with me.

RA: Julius Dixon?

JC: No.

RA: That's right. There was another Dixon.

JC: From New York. One was Dixon and the other was d-i-x-so-n.

RA: D-i-x-s-o-n is the guy in Charleston.

JC: D-i-x-o-n he was with me. Aboard ship. Because there was just two of us. And he teamed up with some guy from, I mean like a friend, we were. We were of the same--we came out of the same shell like we both was black, we both had been to Port Chicago and we both had been to prison and all this kind of thing. But when we got aboard ship he drifted over to a white boy, and I drifted over to another white boy. I drifted over to Fred Phillips from Chicago. We became buddies. I used to cut his hair and he'd cut mine. I did a better job on his than he did on mine. But anyway he took up with a guy seem to me oughta been from Minnesota or Wisconsin or somewhere in that area. But they became buddies. I've never seen Dixon anymore. I don't know what happened to him. I know his home is New York.

RA: I haven't been able to find him yet. But you know a couple of the fellows told me what you just said. Which is that you had to go through this whole experience to finally get to sea or to do the job that you thought you were going to be doing in the Navy. And it was also at that point that you were treated with respect. And the whole Port Chicago experience was like just incredible, horrible nightmare.

JC: It was. No doubt about it.

RA: But finally when you get overseas that's when ...

JC: The results of--well, I'll say this much that I had an enjoyable year on probation. I didn't have no reason to tear my probation. I was aboard a small ship. a small crew.

I was not a cook on the ship. I was a seaman. I did seaman duty. And as far as my commanding officer was concerned he led me to believe that I was the best seaman aboard ship. And if it was anyway I remember him distinctly telling me that's all he could do. He even recommended me. for Seaman 1st. And was hopeful that I could get it, but I was turned down at the flagship. because the man looked at my record and saw I'd been this and the other. As a result of that experience, that was the only thing that I could say that was enjoyable as far as the navy was concerned. and then my GI bill. suffer. It was scary. hardships...

RA: When you got out then you came here to Montgomery or..?

JC: No. went back home, finished high school, went to college.

RA: Where did you go to college.

JC: Right here.

RA: You've been here ever since..? And you haven't had any contact with any of the other guys except...

JC: No. no.more than... that was the only one.

RA: What about Bennin Bees.

JC: Yea. I've been in contact with Bees. I found Bees, I found him...

RA: Is he still there?

JC: Yea. He should be right there. But Bees isn't the kind of person that.. well, I'm not taking anything away from Dees now, His name is/ RA: Bennon Dees. JC: No. Benton. Dees. He had a twin brother. He was the oldest of the twin. They was going to draft one of them. And he decided he would come. Dees is the kind of person right now even though years and years, I guess Dees is still living. I have a brother who lives in Huntsville and when I went to Huntsville I found Dees at A&M College working there as a janitor or something. A&M College in Huntsville. I got a chance to talk to him, he was working there and seem to me at the bus station.

RA: Well I won't be able to do it this trip. Butnext time I come.. In fact it's 9:30 how far are we from the airport. JC: Right here. RA: I have 10:00 flight.

I wish I had more time ..

JC: I hope I've helped you.

~~XEX~~ RA: Yes. greatly.

JC: Others had the same kind... some of the other guys you talked with.

RA: Well yea. You all went through the same thing. Each one sees it a little bit different perspective because you weren't all in the same divisions, you weren't all there at the same time for example Sheppard arrived only a month before the explosion. Whereas you and Small were there almost a year before hand. So you have a lot more in depth understanding of what was going on there.

JC: Dixon was too. Should have been there a good little bit. Julius. Names like ~~Nocks~~ Knox. from Nashville Tenn. He's not living any longer because he was about 35 at that point. I started to say I guess I'm the only person, I don't think I am the only person, cause the other day I got a call and I thought it was... I got a call from a guy ~~f~~ in NY. his name is Willie Gay.

RA: Gay! He was one of the men. Yea.

JC: And I asked him. He called me. I came home and my wife said some guy called you from NY said his name is Willie Gay. I said Jay. I don't know no Willie Jay. She said well this man said he know you. So I called him. And she said he'd gone through the red cross or someway to get in touch with you. I said well if this man want to get in touch with me that bad, I better call and see who in the hell it is. I returned the call and paid for it. And I said, he answered the phone--couldn't get his voice. But this was a case where this guy liked me. He was at Port Chicago. My sister at the time was in College at A&M and I had.. you know kind of sending her money trying to take a load off my daddy. We didn't have much money but I sent her a little bit. And Gay fell in love with my sister through me and was sending ~~the~~ her stamps, you know what I'm talking about. So I didn;t remember. But.. I don't know if Gay went to prison or not.

RA: Yea. he did.

JC: Well anyway he called me. I mean this week Gay called me and when I came here he said this is Willie Gay. I said how do you spell your last name. He said G-a-y. I

said heck my wife got Jay down here. I said Willie Gay. But I've seen him since then. I saw him in Birmingham football game. I think he and his wife ~~~~~. But anyway he told me he said Jack I was just thinking about you and I've been thinking about you for x number of days If just got the red cross to get in touch and see if they can find out where you are. I said hey man this is beautiful. May I really appreciate that.

RA: The red cross. I've got to keep that in mind.

JC: Tha't s how he found out where I was. Phone # and all.

RA: Do you still have the #. JC: Yea. RA: I'd appreciate it if I could get it cause I'd like to...

JC: Let's see phone # is(212)647-2483. His name is Willie Gay Jr. 645 Belmont Ave. Brooklyn NY 11207. Talking with that guy, I said I asked him "hey anybody contact you from Port Chicago, give you a call." He said "no". He said "I've been thinking about you Jack. How ~~the hell are you~~ Annie Lewis?" Man I said my sister got 4 ~~kinds~~ kids, 3 boys, went on and told him about them. He sure did.

RA: This address is not familiar. I don't think I've sent him anything at that address. But Sheppard is in NY and Sheppard says that he has occasionally run into some of the guys, even though he doesn't have the addresses. But he said he didn't talk to anybody.

~~RA~~: JC: But who remembered my name?

~~RQ~~: Small remembers your name. I think Waldron too. Course I didn't talk to Dixon. Sheppard, I didn't ask him.

JC: You didn't talk to Dixon? RA: Julius Dixon-no. Well I talked to him on the phone and I was going to make the appointment. But then--I never got to talk to him.

(end of tape)

Coded 7/27/80

Interview with Percy Robinson, May 20, 1978

RA: Why don't we just start right at the beginning--could you tell how you came to get into the service?

PR: Well, I got drafted. I was in ~~gh~~ high school, going to Dusable High School in Chicago and I was in the last year, senior. I was 18. My 18th birthday was in December, so I got drafted in June, went in in July.

RA: What year was that?

PR: '43. This was where I first ran into discrimination that.. well.. I've run into discrimination before but you didn't really call it discrimination. You just call it "I wasn't supposed to go there," one of those kind of deals. But when I went to Camp Berry, Great Lakes. When we went there.. well, obviously all the blacks were together, all the whites were together. This is normal cause you associate high school and stuff like this with the grouping. When we went to eat, they had a big whitehouse out there we went to eat for lunch, there was two lines. Obviously you stood in this line because all your ~~fix~~ friends was in this line. So you look around there, there's another line over there that's all white. They were going upstairs to eat on the main floor. All the black were going downstairs. This was the first time... It dawned on me now that ~~they was~~ these people were discriminating against me. after all, you know 18 years old. My mother's from the South, well she told me how prejudiced people are and they have race riots in Chicago stuff like this. But once you stay in the black belt, see, you never had to go out of the black belt in Chicago, you're not affected by it as much of it. That was my first experience of racial prejudice at the Navy. On the other hand, this was the first time that the navy let (black) seaman in the Navy see. This ~~is~~ kind of balanced things out a little bit so it didn't bother you too much./

RA: So you were in training then, ~~this~~ you joined 1943. You went to Boot Camp at..?

PR: CAMp Robert Small. RA: How long was that?

PR: Well, it's supposed to be for three months, we gotout in September I think. July-August-September. After we got out of boot training, we went home for a week. Then We go back. We went back to another camp I think. One kind of camp you go there you wait

to get shipped out. That's when we went to Port Chicago from there.

RA: So you went directly to.. Did you have a leave after..?

PR: We had a leave after boot camp. Then we ~~camp~~ come back and we went to another one of those camps up there. They had 4-5 campus up there. Camp Rober Small was one of them. But we went to another camp, I forget the name of it. That was just waiting to be shipped out, receiving station they call it.

RA: What was the training like at Camp Small?

PR: Oh the training was nice, ~~xx~~ oh, well, nice in the sense that they taught you how to march, how to keep clean. That was one thing that got to me, was cleanliness. You could eat off the floors. If your clothes ~~are~~ were dirty, if you didn't change your clothes everyday, or twice a day, underwear and suits, you got penalized for it. They was really clean, they taught you cleanliness. ~~Well~~ You ate three squares a day, which we never did before, At least I never did--most of us never did ~~in life~~. A lot of exercising, a lot of drilling. A lot of sports. Work details -- in a sense that they mostly penalizing. Work details around the barracks where you kept clean, swept the floors, waxed the floors, washed the clothes. You learned to wash your own clothes by hand. Keep your ~~berth~~ bed clean, yourself clean, shave. Most of us didn't know how to shave. You learned to shave there, because you have to shave every day whether you need it or not. You got bumps and stuff like this but.. And then a lot of time was .. well, they taught you how to swim--if you didn't know how to swim, you ~~have~~ had to learn how to swim. Learn how to row boats. A lot of sports, football, baseball basketball. That was.. wasn't no football, but a lot of marching.

RA: Was there any kind of specialize training of any sort with equipment or weapons, or..?

PR Well ~~it wasn't~~ nothing special, we were like I said, we had 8 hours on the rifle range with a 22. That's the extent of the rifle range. Yea, boot training ~~in all the~~ there were no special skills, the only thing was mostly marching, close drill marching, it was competition, competitive with ~~mostly~~ everything else. Competiton in marching, competion in keeping your barracks clean. What outfit was the cleanest. Whoever obeyed the orders more? Disobeyed orders, like we didn't get up on time, or go to bed on time, things you didn't

do. Like if you.. well a lot of guys would talk back and they ~~get~~ got punished for that and if you fight, ~~xx~~ obviously you ~~get~~ got punished for it.

RA: What rating di you have when you finished?

PR: Well in the Navy, you start off as apprentice seaman. And when you finished your when you finish boot 3rd class seaman, That's like private 1st class in the Armny.

RA: So then, from there you got shipped out to Port Chicago. Which would have been about September 1943 now. What was it like in Port Chicago, when you arrived?

PR: Oh we got there in Port Chicago I think it was only the three companies there. Our group made they call it at base the ~~Ace~~ company, something like that. No Division 4. There was 3 divisions there before. There were only three buildings in the whole place. 3 barracks and a chow hall and an administration building. No there was 2 barracks because there was 4 divisions. There was division 1st floor, 2nd floor, chow hall and administration building. Big open place, and a dock, and some ammunition storage bins down there. That's about all that was there.

RA: What was the work itself like?

PR: Work was it was 8 hours or 10--it was 8 hours a day. What it was, whenever a ship was to be loaded, you come into the dock and then they had crews go around and tie ~~the top~~ up ~~of~~ the ship. Then you make the ship ready to be loaded. Take off the hatch covers, unlatch the wenches, and get them in working conditions. Most of the time the ship was already clean.. well a lot of times they had to have carpenter .. some people were carpenter mates. They would go around a lay frames in the bottom of the ship so that you could load the ammunition on it. You couldn't load it just against the bare walls you 'd have to have a framework to load it in. And Once you got it loaded, the ~~end~~ or framed, sealed it up with the wood, so that it wouldn't move. That's the carpenter's mate job.

RA: Well black guys carpenters mates?

PR: Yea. RA: There were whites on the base, right. There were the officers and were there other whites on the base?

PR: The only other whites ~~xx~~ that... there might have been some chiefs.. yea, all the

officers, like the chief petty officers, were all white. Lt. and stuff like this. The other officers down below like ~~xxxxx~~ bosun's mates 1st class and stuff like that they were black. You also had a Marine detachment there for guards. They didn't stay with us, they weren't in the same area. They stayed someplace.. I don't know where they stayed at.. but they stayed someplace else. Thse men, they ~~were~~ weren't integrated.

RA: Yea, the marines were white, right?

PR: Marines, was white. All the officers from chief up were white. Then they had, they had some white petty officers which worked in the administration building. Work in Re dispensary something like that, medics and stuff like this. But when you got down on the ship there, we only had lts., jr grade lts. and up working over groups down there. Each hold, seem like most ships have four holds in em. So divide division up into groups and we worked on these holds and the groups were called 1-2-3-4. Then they had a group that worked in the hold, ~~a~~ half the group worked out the hold on the docks. So this was Group 1. Cause the guys in group 1 would send the material from the dock to the guys in the hold in the ship. This ~~go~~ went all the way down the ship line.

RA: What kind of training di you have for the work? once you got there?

PR: None. Hell. They showed us how to work into it. You went down there to work. with ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ crews that were already there. Like I said whenever we got down there, there were 3 other dividions there and you worked along side them they showed you how to do it. It was just hard common labor. Well wasn't any.. well the only skill part ~~a~~ of the job was Wench operators. They had to train theirs. But when you worked in the hold you had to be able to lift 98 lbs. There was a ~~projector~~ projectile, I'll never forget that, 3 inch 56 ; 3 inch diamond they called it. And it weighed 98 lbs. I think that was the lightest thing you had to lift. So you had to be able to lift 100 lbs to ~~you can~~ work in there. That was one of the requirements -- if they found out you couldn't lift 100 pounds then they took ~~take~~ you out. Because guys coming down with Hernia or you'd drop it on somebody. That's what they're worried about it. You can drop it on the ground, it wouldn't hurt it none, you know, within reason. But they didn't want ~~xx~~ you to drop the stuff on other~~s~~

Training

people. Because you drop 100 pounds on somebody else.. well like they had chains, like they drop the ammunition in the middle, somebody pick it up and give it to guy in chains. pass it down. If One guy couldn't hold it, obviously, the chain wouldn't work see, So he couldn't you could work in the hold.

RA: What kind of safety precautions did they have there?

PR: No smoking. Well there wasn't anything fancy. ~~Just like~~ The work comes first. Now the if the winch driver was putting a load in the hold first, you couldn't go down, You couldn't descend the ladders. And if you would descend the ladder, the winch driver couldn't put the material in the hold. That's the way it was supposed to be. Most of the time it worked like that. unless The guy was half way down, oh you jumped off a ladder and started to come up, one said he couldn't stop.. things like that. But basically that was the extent of the safety. They would shore up the ammunition as soon as they got one area packed. Another thing about detonators, they never put detonators below the deck of the ship, they always put them above with the mast of the ship. That was for the ship's safety I guess.

RA: So the ~~bomb~~ bombs themselves didn't have detonators in them?

PR: No, they wasn't loaded. If you had detonators you'd stack them up between the masts of the ship--well, they'll be up above board. RA: The idea was then you start at the bottom of the hold and then with the wooden frmes you ~~just~~ just build up from the bottom all the way up, loading the ammunition on and..

PR: That's right. And after the first couple of days, you be working on top of ammunition. Then.. like some of the holes were.. like some ships were 3-4 stories deep. So you go way down ~~in~~ to the bottom ~~of the stuff~~ and start coming up.

RA: Incrdible. How long would it take to load the ship?

PR: Well, a lot of ships we well look at here.. Now this is.. ~~I think~~ well like sometime like a week maybe on three hour shifts. Now you work 3-hr shift, you and it had the ammunition ~~and~~ when you need it, it was already there. It would take about a week on an average ship. Do I have the ins and outs..? No, I guess I don't. See, like this is about a week.. between ships. And at that time we only had facility to

load two ships. And I only worked on one at a time. So this means if I worked on this one about a week. yea. Then sometimes if they were waiting for certain type of ammunition that didn't show up then you just sit there.. But usually a week. But what's so fascinating about it when they came.. when the ship came into the dock well for us city people, standing out there looking at the ship way out there about three stories up. When it left you could stand at the dock and look down at the ship. You could spit over the ship see, it was so loaded with that garbage.

RA: What was the pace of the work?

PR: Oh, it was as fast as you can go. It was challenge. RA: Challenge?

PR: Yea, what happens is that I don't know, it was a psychological situation where.. nobody really had anything to gain by working hard, see, cause the leader you had was a 3rd class bosman's mate. So that's like a sargeant, like a buck sgt. So that was only two grades between you and him. Cause see I was Seaman 2nd class, only two more to go to get to his grade. So there wasn't any incentive to work hard there. But there was some kind way they got rivalry between the groups and the divisions. For some reason each group wanted to be the toploading group see. All of a sudden here we are, you know, we're working down here and I'm rivalring against group #2 to load more ammunition than em. Never think about why-- why the hell am I here rivalring against you for? For what reason. I guess the patriotic thing. Delucci, the Lt., he kind of built up a patriotic feeling some kind of way that the boys needed this, they couldn't exist without it y/know. It was important you got the ship out on time. The only way to get the ship out on time is that ammunition got to be loaded. Nobody's going to load it but us. We are the only ones. It gave you kind of an important type deal. But when you look in the paper you find that there must have been a thousand of em ammunition loaders around. For a while you felt like you were the only one loading the ship for the seas. But anyway they got you psyched up. Like a coach get a football team psyched up. Like you've lost 9 games you've got to beat a team, see. What the hell I'd got to beat this team for..? but you're doing it y/know.

RA: The officers would do this then? How would they do it, do you remember?

anything off hand?

PR: Well, like I told you , they would say that.. we are going to make an invasion or our country's going to make this invasion someplace, we need this ammunition for this type of battle Wagon. for this invasion or for something like this, for some purpose. They give you a purpose.. Everything was top secret so you couldn't pin it down. To speak of an invasion, what the hell, invasions coming off everyday. So it was one of those things. Anyway, they would talk to you. Let me see if I could be specific. about how they did it. I don't know, it was.. it got down to where it was a personal thing ~~with treating~~ between the groups. We used to brag about how many box cars we load against the next group. I think they used to post it.. posting it on a board, if I remember right. I'm not sure. Which group loaded the most tonnage. Yea. that was an important thing the word tonnage. We used to use this. Each boxcar ~~x~~carried so ~~many~~ much tonnage. And most ~~guards~~ guys, ~~were~~ the guys that loaded 16 inch ~~projectiles~~ projectiles ~~with~~ were the one's that used to WIN all the time because obviously, 2,000, that's 1 ton see. Thing about it it was easier to handle one ton than it was to handle those little bitty things. It was less ~~That's~~ work. Because one ton I can drop one down at a time. Take a two men to roll it over to the wall, see. Whereas if you took a box, which came in~~x~~ 9 I think it was 9 or 12 ~~inch~~ 3inch 56's in a box, well one guy could lift up 12 of those things out and ~~put them in~~ they were worked with a chain, see. ~~The other~~ It took a lot longer load, the little ones, than the big ones. And everybody used to think that wasn't fair. So we used to switch holds because of that effect. What'd we used to get for that? Oh, we used to get flags. Oh yea, I remember now. They had a.. whoever was the best at loading ~~with~~ would carry a flag on their barracks. I think that's what it was, I'm not sure but I think I remember that. Because the flag used to pass from one barracks to the other--whoever loaded that week the most tonnage. That there was a contest between em. That's what it was.

RA: What happened if a group or division, didn't come up to par as far as what they ~~would~~ were expected ~~it~~ to load?

PR. Well, if I remember right, there was always somebody weak in the group, they'd move ~~em~~ him out of the hold and put him on thedock. The dock was .. ~~cruising~~ the crews on the dock

for some reason seemed .. well, see that was something else, a stigmatism. The guys who worked in the hold seemed to have a better status than the guys who were working for the dock. I don't know why. Well, the ones in the hold got rated quicker than the ones on the dock for some reason.

RA: They gotrated quicker?

PR: Yea, you got your promotion quicker. Least the promoted the guys faster in the hold than they did on the dock. This got to be a stigmatism between the people inside the group too.

RA: Was there any threat of penalties, if they didn't do it, or slow it down?

PR: To be honest with you, I just can't remember that. I don't think so. I think the only time we got penalized was when we got, you know, you break the basic rules like awol. you fight, gamble. You got penalized for those things. You disobeyed orders obviously you got penalized. Bread and water was a popular punishment. I didn't remember, right now I don't, they might have been.

RA: Was there any time when guys division or group would deliberately slow down, if there was a problem or grievance or something like that?

PR: Oh, yea, I think we had some.. yea, we gotinto it about promotions I think. There was a slow down at one time forsome reason. I think it was about promotions. I think they promoted one group--well, everybody felt they should promote one in each hold at a time. They picked one group, they promoted 2-3 guys in that group. If the group was a good working group--that was the group I was in. Yea, somebody.. the rest of the guys got pissed off about it and I think they slowed down. Yea, we had a guy in our group named Meryl Wiley from Ohio State Univ, he was acollege man, football player. That dude could work. He was a ladies man, good looking dude you know. Big guy. He and I got promoted same time. We were in the same group. We had a real good group though see. Another guy from Ohio too. Doug Williams and Bill Smith and all those guys. We had some pretty big guys in our group, see. I wasn't too big but I used to be an ~~ex-football~~ weight lifter & prize fighter before I got in the service and while I was in the service, so I had muscles, I could work. We were a really good group, really good... that's why we

got the promotions and the other groups .. This was within the division now. About the other divisions, I don't know. This was in the 4th division. For some reason you just didn't associate with the other groups. Cause one reason because ~~in town~~ we might, ~~but~~ see they had three ships. You never did see them. The ~~xxxxx~~ only time you hear from them islike ~~xx~~ if you came in off of a ship or shift like we did, obviously we.. like if our ship left early, 3:00 in the morning. We start working the graveyard shifts and so on. We get ~~on~~ 4:00. These guys who worked all night long, all day long, they're sleeping now, making all this damn noise, you catch hell from them. If for example, we were on the 1st floor, we are on the 2nd floor, they are on the 1st floor, we cam in ~~&~~ we had walked through their barracks to go upstairs and all night long, we are taking showers stuff and.. that's when the feud start, see. Because they are on a different shift and they were still sleeping. They had to get up in the morning and go down and load that ship. We'd be waking them up. Yea, that was some of thethings that you had. Other than that, the rivalry was mostly in athletics.

RA: How did the guys feel about the danger of the work itself?

PR: Well, they really didn't believe it was any danger to it. You had a sense but you didn't. ~~& we never~~ ~~when they~~ was on the artillery range, none of us, until just before tht happened, they used to send us to gunnery school because... why'd they send us to gunnery school. I don't know, but they did it. But until that time you never saw a shell explode. It's like working with gas ~~on~~ a gas stove. Be dangerous but you think what the hell, it don't blow up... But we had some funny experiences that we had learned about things .. like 16 inch projectile, that's one the battleship shoots. Well each battleship has different color dye in the nose of the projectile, this is so that ~~xx~~ if two or three battleships shoot at a target and one of them is off, they can tell by the color of the explosion, which one is off. Well this dye is under pressurized down at the tip of the projectile--it is pressurized. Well, if you bust the nose against a piece of.. if you break the seal on it, it squirts out. And if you see a bomb sitting there psssst, you see like in the movies, that's like a fuse. Looks like ~~it~~ could explode. Now that happened to us one time. This is

what they should have told us about that. We should have went to school or something to learn ~~xxx~~ about something like this. The first time it happened, 3 - 4 guys broke their leg trying to get out the damn holes. If you've ever been down in a ship ~~of a~~ in the hole they've got a ladder about this big. It's wet because it's dewy. We were down in the hole working and they dropped one of these things down there. You spin them around to get them in hole and sometime lose control because they are wet, and the thing hit against the bulkhead, said pphhhhht. Red stuff start coming out. Well, hell, you had 10-12 guys trying to get out of the hole at the same time. Well, you can't do it. It's funny now, but it wasn't then. A couple of guys broke their legs trying to get out of that hole. And then people laughed at us because we weren't familiar with the situation. And then ~~that~~ evidently it had happened before, see. It was kind of a funny joke to some people.

RA: When you went to work there you really had no idea about ~~xxxx~~ the structure of the bombs or..?

PR: We didn't even know what it looked like. You pick up the projectile see, and you say well hell, where's the fuse at. Obviously the fuse ain't in it. But you never ~~worked in these~~ went to any school, ammunition school. Now lately they started ~~there~~ That. Now, I think when they started getting more people on the base, the base started getting bigger they ~~hax~~ did have ordinance schools they called it, to teach people

RA: This was before the explosion?

PR: Yea, well, see, before the explosion, They were getting more people. They built more barracks. The thing was growing. When we first got there, the first few months we were there, They didn't have that kind of thing. But they did have some kind of ordinance school. Then they used to send the guys to gunnery school to learn how to shoot guns on the ships, 3 inch guns on the ship, machine guns also.

RA: How did the guys feel about just general conditions there? and so on. Was there many grievances or the guys seem to find it ok? What was the general attitude?

PR: The General attitude from what I ~~gather~~ got.. It was great. Cause you know most of us

were 18 and just out of high school. Most of us .. well no, they came from every place but you know, come out of ~~the~~ area, you didn't have any thing to start with, most of the guys didn't, ~~and then~~ Now you've got a bed, you've got a locker. Got a place to keep your clothes. You have 3 squares a day, which never ate 3 squares a day mostly anyway. And you worked. And then you had a ball. After you had liberty you went to town. ~~A~~ temporary thing, you know. When we first got there we didn't have no problems. No, I couldn't remember any gripes. No more than.. well let's see what did we have gripes about--must have had gripes about something. No because they built this good recreation hall. ~~They organized some of the guys thinking~~.. well I know we had a bowling alley, two lanes.

RA: That was the recreation hall right? That wasn't built til fairly late though right?

PR: Yea, that was late. This was the end.

RA: In fact I think in the records I found it said something about the recreation hall was built like June 44.

PR: Just before the blow up. No I think most of our troubles were with the City of Oakland, Frisco, Because ~~they are~~ prejudice. Little town of Port Chicago wasn't prejudiced. We go down eat and drink anyplace down there we want to. Cause they only had a few places ~~you can go~~. Port Chicago pretty nice place.

RA: Oh, yea. It was okay. So guys can go there and be served.

PR: Yea, that was the first place I'd ever drank an ale. In fact I didn't even know ale existed til I got down there. ~~Like I was~~. One arm bandits, you know they had them down there. The poker tables that you see in the Western, poker table with the green lamp over it, the green table round table, this one dude sitting there with those things on his arm, they had them down there. Just like the old western days. That's about the extent of that little town.

RA: Were these places open to the black guys or was it certain areas...?

PR: You mean that little town? RA: In port Chicago. PR: Yea, you can go there. Yea, we went there. Now you wans't going to poker with the people cause you get

wiped out. But we used to play the one-arm bandits. We just went all the time I was there. The otherplaces.. one place I know we couldn't go was.. Well that was in Pittsburg Calif. Pittsburg was restricted. Well, not restricted, just that you didn't go downtown. They didn't want you downtown. You stayed on Black Diamon Street in Pittsburg. Oakland, Frisco was a bad place. Well, I guess Chicago was the same way same same but we never went downtown in Chicago, cept going to the movies. We never went to the nightclubs down there or taverns.. well I guess we did too. Chicago was prejudice in a sense.. well if you went to north side. Well I don't know. But I know downtown the big hotels, they didn't want you down there in Chicago. But we went to some nightclubs down there because .. yea, they had a couple in Chicago you could go to downtown. We check the black artists down there. In oakland, you had certain areas you go to. What was really bad about the Sweet's in Oakland was bad, because Count Basie be playing at Sweet's on a Sunday, but you couldn't go on a Sunday, you had to go on a Monday. Cause on a Sunday the white people were there. No kidding, it was a big joke. Like the Oakland auditorium, they had dances there but they used to on monday boogie night. Same band now, they play Sunday night. This is stuff your mother used to tell you about Mississippi I guess it was cool. Now frisco was a little different. Frisco was... You could go to some of the real expensive places in Frisco.

RA: What was the relations like between the enlisted men and the white officers?

PR: Well, tell you what, pretty good. Well, I wonm't say that. I'll take that back. My personal point of view. I had one guy stand up for me as godfather, the executive officer, Lt. Elwood. That's why I become a Catholic down there. I'd been associated with the Catholic Church all my life. I used to box with the Catholic Church in Chicago but never really was a Catholic. So when I went to the base there, I took lessons to become a Catholic. Then when you got baptized, somebody would stand up for you, that was a Catholic, So Lt. Elwood stood up for me. I got baptized on Christmas eve the 1st year I was there in Martinez California. There was achurch up there. Delucci was our officer for the 4th division. I didn't like him too well. None of the guys really liked

him too well. But they respected the guy.

RA: What was he like?

PR: He was scared. He was always blaming the laws or the navy for the conditions We say "How come we have to do this?" He say "that's the rules." He would back up behind the rules, never make a decision without the.. I guess he was only a Lt., couldn't do much.

RA: Was he a young guy himself?

PR: No, he looked like he's old guy. Like he was in his 30's. It wasn't no love between us. You didn't really like the guys, but you didn't hate them either. Because they were the bosses, they were the ones that made you work so hard. But it just seemed like once you got there, You got on liberty when you wanted too, well when you were supposed to. If you made some bad mistakes, you really didn't get wiped out too bad. But there was no love between the.. there was none. Like Elwood, now see Elwood would have got me out of this court martial if I had said yea. "You want to stay here. Let's go. Get your bags you can go, we can leave right now." Not hell, you didn't have any comrade Even Though slip with this guy. He thought he was my godfather but you just weren't going to leave.. you know, you're young, you say "what the hell," or "this is where I'm supposed to be." So you stayed. Now some of the guys backed out that way, got out that way. Some of the guys give em a break, say let's go.

Thought Tattoo to back to work

RA: Let's go where?

you say "I want to leave."

PR: Back to work. You know, you're in prison. The man say, "you want to leave." He'd say "Well, pick your bags up, let's go." Just like that. That was kind of tempting because it was no fun being in stockade. With those egotistical guards.. no fun at all being in stockade.

RA: What happened the night of the explosion?

PR: The night of the explosion, well, let's see. That day, that week I'd been taken off my regular Crew see. I was.. see since my godfather was the executive officer of the base, they were trying to find a decent spot for me. They said now, "Seem like you've got enough education, you'll be able to do something besides work on the docks." Well, yea I can maybe paint some signs" -- I was artist type. Can you drive a truck. They

kried to get me a job driving a van--that drove people down there. I failed that test I couldn't drive the van but well... I didn't drive it well enough and couldn't use the air brakes. So he said: We'll put you on, make a winch driver outcha. I was going to winch driving school then. On the day.. on the ship that exploded I worked on that ship that morning loading the.. running the wenches on that ship. But I was down there on trial.. you know/ I was learning, trying to teach me to operate the wenches on the ship.

RA: So you hadn't been trained before on the wench? You were learning on the job?

PR: No. Before I worked in the hold. I got off work at 4:00 that day from the ship--that ship was loaded too, jack, it was way down, it was about ready to leave--it was full. You come home and shower and you go down to the rec hall and play some pool or something. But I didn't go the movie that night. They usually have a movie every night. But I came back, my bed was fight in front of the window. Top bunk, one of those big modern barracks, the whole wall was glass from 4 ft up. As soon as lights out--taps they call it, all the lights go out, jumpt up in the bed, jack, and sit there and all of a sudden everything lights up, just like that, it was about 10 : 20, lights go out 10:00 I think. About 10:20, 10:15 this thing went off. I was sitting in the bed see the whole window thing comes right through, while you're sitting right there in your underwear. We were on the first floow too. Then you hear stuff falling on top see, obviously you're going to fall out of the bunk onto the floor and crawl under the bed, see, keep the stuff from falling on you. The guy next to me he didn't make it. Well, he didn't get out of the bed, something must have held him in there. well anyway the beam hit him in the shoulder, busted his arm off. He was the only guy that got really hurt in the area where I was. What's amazing after the thing was over, you jumped up, get your flashlight, run around, dude's saying "man, where is Joe at." Cat said "Joe over in the corner with Percy, corner man, he got wiped out." The guy looking at me, he don't know who I am. I got hit in the face. My face got really messed up. This is the only hole I got left. They did a pretty good job on my face, and my left arm, got holes in it, big holes in my left arm.

RA: That was from the glass? PR: yeah, glass + wood + plaster.

PR: What's amazing though everything was just cut, skin laying back, it was full of blood. We had These flashlights, trying to look around, trying to find people. You Look in a person's ~~place~~ face but you couldn't tell who they were.

RA: After the explosion, you were taken to the hospital or..?

PR: Yea. I think it was Camp Stoneman. It was an army camp. North. Just before you get to Pittsburg. Camp Stoneman. What happened, we had some ambulances there see. So all the people that needed medical treatment, take them to the area and then take them up to the hospital. Some officer told us to do that see. That was.. one ambulance. Took trucks, we had some trucks, there too taking people up For some reason, why, I guess the explosion messed up the highways. Traffic was heavy. I guess what happened it blew down all the trees and stuff because that whole little town got almost wiped out. The concussion went out, there's a hill up here, like this is a hill and Port Chicago is just down like this, well the ~~compression~~ concussion went over the house, ~~hill~~ hit the hill and came back down the hill so that a lot of houses were laying toward the explosion. Yea, all the houses were laying.. it had pushed them over, laying ~~tha~~ like the concussion came back this way instead of ~~to~~ from the ~~lake~~ bay side.

RA: The barracks themselves were they pretty I guess they were pretty wiped out too?

PR: Yea, but they stood. They didn't fall down. It just went right through the barracks. The rec hall fell down, though. The theatre it just collapsed. But it was closed, nobody was there.

RA: What did you, or the guys feel was the cause of the explosion?

PR: The guys felt that, well, from ~~the~~ discussion, they felt that it was an accident because the crew that was brung on when we left were.. they were on the night shift so they were beginners, see. They were new group. And a New group of people usualy have ~~to~~ ~~do~~ new winch operators. It's funny though, you should have older winch operators but they usually ~~used~~ ~~to~~ have new winch operators. You can get an accident down there. We've had some accidents already down there before but we were lucky You know like you start up on one side your winch freezes, see, and it ~~they~~ shouldn't but it does. Like you have old ~~most~~ steam

wenches and you had two separate steam engines, one on each side see. You've got two cables ~~one on each end~~ ON ONE WINCH you've got ~~a~~ a motor that drives each cable. You've got to control each one. Now if ~~Like~~ one of em freeze, you're running the other one. Obviously like having a stiff arm, you pull on the other one, it's not going to come up, it's going to run into the side of the ship ~~of~~ with the ammunition. Or whatever you're carrying. If you're carrying detonators, you've got a problem, see, Cause they are going to blow up. If you're loading detonators, at the time ~~to do~~ it does this. Now you can.. the rest of that garbage ~~now~~ you can run through the side of the ship and it probably won't blow up. Usually when the ships loaded, the last thing you load is detonators. That's ~~a~~ the last thing you put on the ship. These ships, both of them I think. Well one of them is almost loaded and the other one was ready ~~to do it~~ go I guess. That's ~~why~~ what they were loading that ship. That's what we would think. The Detonators that they were loading just ~~mess~~ messed them up. Well, nobody ever said it was sabotage. But man the docks sure was messy when you went down there to clean it up. Some of the guys went back down there, and they saw said, bones and stuff stuck in these woods. I didn't go back because I stayed in the hospital all the time.

RA: So you were at Stoneman?

PR: Well, at stoneman for that one night. And then the next day, they took us to Mare Island. That was the naval hospital.

RA: So when did you get back with the division, then?

PR: Well, we went back to the divi~~sion~~sion, I guess, maybe a week after that. Because the rest of the guys had moved over to Mare Island, The ones that weren't hurt. So after I got out the hospital, you know, I was always able to walk. But got my faced all worked over. I still had bandages on, when I went back to work, ~~shit~~. A lot of us still had bandages when we went back to work.

RA:: What was it like, then in the time between the explosion and the time between.. well August 9 when you were ordered back to work? You said the guys were talking amongs themselves, what was..?

PR: No it wasn't. See everybody was thinking about going home. That's the main thing. When we got back together before we had to go back to work, I think the talk

Men nervous, upset after acc.

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was going home--we're all talking about going home. Everybody was scared, too. Cause you drop a box, dudes be running around... If somebody slam a door, People be jumping around like crazy. See everybody was still nervous, you know. Just scared I guess. The noise and stuff like that. And everybody was thinking about going home. First time they ordered us to go back to work, y/know we had little jobs, tie up a ship. A ship coming in, you tie lines down and go up and open hatches up. That was about 2 -3 hours work. That's how they ~~got us~~ conned us into getting back to work. See, well we've got... just to keep you guys busy, keep you from getting bored. We've got a little a job for you. So we go out and do little job first. Next couple of days, we weren't doing nothing . Go back and do another little job (end of side 1) Well, so finally they got us back on regular duty. ~~Un~~loading ~~on~~ regular ships. ~~So~~ cats say, "oh man, you know, we were supposed to go home ~~and kept~~ _____ ~~guys~~, no there ain't gonna be leaves. Can;t go home. Then everybody got kind of unhappy with it. Cause nobody objected to going down doing the little bitty jobs, a couple of hours tie up, make a ship ready, or either close it up after the leaves. Like the ship is all loaded, you've got to put the hatch covers back on, seal them up you've got to close up the wenches and stuff like this. This was, you know, easy job, ~~not a whole lot of~~ wasn't no hard work. You could do it with ~~xxx~~ bandages, one hand not working, see. ~~Ifxy~~ Well, if you had one hand they'd make you _____ or hatch tender. You sit there tell ~~them which job~~ the winch driver what to do. It was a Big joke cause you stand there with one hand. It was stupid because _____ all the people there. Cause Mare Island Naval Shipyard was the place that they used to load ships before we got there. They got had boys ~~workin~~ there working there before, we got there. But it was.. I don't know why they did it. Anyhow, I guess they did it to antagonize us or something like that. You know cause we kept asking to go home. Well, we kept asking our petty officers about going home. So one day when we got down there, Delucci said forward March you're going to ~~un~~load ~~xx~~ this ship. "Oh no we ain't" we're not gonna go" He said I'll give you 15 mins to think about it. We didn't go in 15 minutes, so they called the SP's out. We still didn't go. So we just went on back to the barracks. That's when the thing started.

RA: Had guys considered what they were going to do? When they were ordered back to

loading?

PR: Yea, we said. We just decided when they wouldn't let us go home, we wans't going to work. ~~So~~ Say we're entitled to go home, and somebody quoted something from the ~~books~~ books that said you go home if you get wounded ~~go off and get wounded~~.

RA: ~~Chapter in~~ Checked it the book you said?

PR: Yea, somebody quoted it from the book, some page. RA: Blue Jacket's Manual?

PR: Yea, Blue Jacket's ~~volume~~ manual or something. But nobody really checked it. I know I ~~xxxii~~ didn't check it. I assumed it. If anybody ask me today, if you get wounded what happens after that? You go home. You go to the hospital and you go home. But whether that's true or not, I guess a lot of guys went to the hospital and went back out there and fight again. That's something you didn't know about it. We felt like if we'd gone overseas & got hurt we go home. ~~we got hurt too~~. That's a joke though. ~~You'd~~ you could wake up in the morning, walk out in the morning, excuse the expression, with your shoes on your hands, gloves on your feet, and say, ~~you~~ I want to eat some pussy, and you go back to the states just like that, dude. No kidding. Guys will do that. They'll be back at Pearl Harbor.writting a letter, we'll still laughing at them. ~~Other~~ And the guys, when they want to go home.. You just walk out there one day and we had a, our CO, he just could not stand no queers. If you pat him/on the rear, he might shoot you, dude. I mean, you could ~~kix~~ get away by .. you could hit him with your fist ~~ix~~ and your hand .. but don't pat him on the rear end. Them guys would ~~going~~ home. I don't know, I guess the navy had a thing against homosexuals, queers. and just like that (snap) you're out. That's one way you can get out. I dont' care what else you did, you could shoot em people and you wouldn't get out of jail... out of the navy.

RA: Before you were ordered back to loading ammunition, had you heard anything about what was happening with any of the other divisions, like whether they had been ordered back to loading or what had happened or anything like that?

PR: No because, in our case.. see the other dividions was ~~that~~ the... well, for some reason, our dividion got moved to Mare Island. A lot of them didn't. Some stayed at Port Chicago. I don't know.

RA: How many were there in all at that time?

Robinson mentions "strike" first

PR: I'll be darn if I know, cause there's so many new peoples. Some of them stayed there Port Chicago, to do clean up work and stuff like that. No, I can't remember if there was a tie between ours and theirs. I just don't remember. I don't know whether they went on strike first over there and we followed or we went first and they followed or whether they went on strike at all.

RA: Did the guys think of it as a strike?

PR: Well, yea. It was defiance. Well, if ~~you~~ they don't let us go home, we aint gonna work. It was one of those kind of deals.

RA: This is what the guys said amongst themselves.

PR: Yes, that's what we all decided. Said hell, okay, that's what we're going to do. They won't let us go home, no sense in working.

RA: What did you think was going to happen?

PR: ~~We felt~~ we thought they were going to let us go home. No, we had agreed that there was too many of us for them to put us in jail. Geez, that's right ~~let's strike~~. It was kind of stupid but you know it was that age, we were thinking that way. ~~he was~~ we were thinking, ~~yea, we said~~ what the hell, we don't want to go to work, we get mad, they 'll let us go home. The put us in a brig, hut we didn't think we'd get shot though. We didn't think you could shoot people for this kind of stuff. We go to brig.. that's better than going down there on that damn ship. What they gonna do with you in the brig? We had been to the brig before. So hell, forget it. I guess all your little grievances that come out, that built up long before it. A lot of things you didn't like before, you just didn't do anything about em. But now they're all piled up now. I guess you put em all together. just sit back there thinking, "Remember the time we worked so damn hard man on a special ship all night cause sometimes there be some rain. out there working on ships when it's raining, you'd slip and hurt yourself and get busted up No special compensation or nothing. Just another piece of hunk of meat. You know all this stuff builds up. Like a lot of people used to get strained, get hernias. Hernias ~~are~~ were common. I got mine in my ears. Rather than get hernias I got a ~~strange~~ strain that comes up through your ears and what happens is that your eardrums go off for some reason, don't work no more. You Wake up one morning you can't hear. You're locked up off. Because you strain yourself see, you can strain.. I went to the other bit see.. I wished I had a hernia instead of that.

You incur a hernia just cut it out and it goes away. But everybody had bits of argument, little things.. little dissatisfaction. I guess this one way this come to a point. So we didn't think.. we ~~felt~~ thought the worst they could do is put us in the brig. and we'd get transferred to some ~~of our~~ other duties. That's usually what you do. When you do something bad, they put you in the brig and they transfer you someplace else.

RA: So that's what you expected, either you'd be able to get the leave and go home or get transferred?

PR: Yea, go to the brig, do 3-4 months, then ~~they~~ get transfer ~~us~~ ed someplace else. At least you get away from the ammunition. I mean you can't quit, you know. You have no choice This is one way of getting away from it. You just got tired of it.

RA: I guess I'm still not clear though on how it is the whole group was able to.. because there were different.. there was the 4th division and the 8th division and the 2nd division. That all refused to go back.

PR: Oh you mean the tie in between the two. RA: Yea. how was it?

PR: There must have been some kind of communication between the two some kind of way. But damn if I can remember you know. Because when I got out of the hospital and got back --got back to the group-- yea, that's the first thing that happened when I got back ~~home~~ when I got back from the hospital, everybody's talking about going home see. Then we didn't ~~go . . . so~~ home, so we didn't go to work, so immediately there were some charges. They just moved us from Mare Island to some .. They put us on some barges, some floating barracks someplace.

RA: This was after..?

PR: Refused to work, yea. RA: okay, put you on a barge. PR: Yea it was a floating barracks someplace they put us. And I think that was when the put all the divisions ~~who~~ that didn't go back to work together. If I remember right. But there was no.. well from my point of view, my level in the group, I wasn't a groupie or anything to squad leader. There was no communication between 4th division ~~there was~~ and the other two divisions. There might have been some else along the lines, but I wasn't aware of it. If I was aware of it, I just can't remember. I just don't know.. I just can't..

RA: What happened on that barge?

PR. That was with.. well we were guarded see, once you were put on that barge you ~~dould~~ couldn't off see. They had wash rooms on there and everything else, bunks where you could sleep at but you douldn't get out because they had guards. So you was confined. Some type of confinement.

RA: Was that barge big enough for the whole.. there was 250 some odd men?

PR: Yea, ~~th~~about there was more than one barge though. There was 3-4 of them. A lot of them down there. For some reason... but I really can't picture it good that's ~~th~~about the only ~~base~~ place I've been that I can't visualize in detail what it was. But it was barges because there was only one guard. You couldn't get out the other side, because it was water out there.

RA: So ~~you~~ it was strung together. PR: Yea, strung together yea. Like there were more than a dock. Each barge had a guard.

RA: Okay, so you're on the barge and then ~~xxxxx~~ were you there for a couple ~~of~~ or 3 days or so. What happens during that period on the barge?

~~XXX~~ RA: What did the guys think was going to happen or what was..?

PR: Well, they were getting kind of concerned about getting the short end ~~xfxxxh~~ of the stick, because the tone had changed from going home or going to the brig. Well, we had one more hope when we saw.. this happened before we had this admiral come out and talk to us. We didn't know we could get shot you know. But anyway everybody was getting conerned about, ~~we~~ I'm trying to figure out ~~what~~ how what happened. Because I remember barges. I remember the meeting we had on grinder with the admiral. After that ..

RA: Was there a meeting on the barge?

PR: No, it was too small to have a meeting there.

RA: Yea, cause in the testimony there was reference at the court martial of the 50 guys, there was reference to a meeting on the barge.

PR: Oh, you mean among the people. RA: Amongst the guys, yea.

PR: Well, if you want to call it a meeting. ~~I~~ It was a discussion, ~~it~~ you was constantly sitting there all day long. Well, I guess, it could have been. We discussed it in groups. I guess.. yea.. it wasn't anything official. It wasn't a call~~ed~~ a meeting that I can remember. Well, maybe not/-it depends on how you define meeting. maybe there was some meetings there

We sit around in groups and discussed it, yea.

RA: What was the general feeling.

PR: General feeling was that we were going to get the short end of the stick. We wouldn't get to go home. And if we wasn't going to go home, ~~until~~ we wasn't going to go to work. And I guess like in all meetings, there are some people more outspoken than others. I guess they were picked out as leaders or something, ~~or directors of leaders~~ or directors of the mtg. Maybe they were ~~the~~ the leaders. of the mtg. But to me, leaders ~~didn't~~ didn't mean that. I came out of a gang oriented situation in Chicago. That didn't mean ~~leaders~~ leaders to me. What the white man call it is something else. Maybe it was leaders, but to me that wasn't a leader.

RA: Was the general feeling amongs the guy to stick it out.

PR: Yea, we were stubborn. We were stuck you know. We made a commitment. There was a few guys, a very few, wanted to change their minds but most of the people were clear. "This is the way they are going to act, hell with them then." I guess we really didn't realize what ~~the ordeal or anything~~ jail or a penitentiary was like. Well we've been to the brig couple of times but you figure.. well, I don't know what we were figuring, but .. you just mad. Just ~~pist~~ pissed off. Hell with em they can't shove us around like this. So you take what you get. You know figure well, you don't care what they're going to give you. At Least you didn't think you were going to get shot.

RA: What about the mutiny charge? Did anybody expect that there would be a mutiny charge?

PR: Well, we didn't even know what mutiny meant. Well we thought mutiny was something like when you kill people and take over something. That's as far as the word mutiny meant to us. But we didn't know you could define that as being a mutiny--disobeying orders.

RA: Was it even discussed though?

PR: Well, ~~the guys~~ I think Delucci said we're going to be charged with mutiny. I think it came up with them. RA: Who said that? PR: Delucci. RA: Oh, Delucci. PR: Said you're going to be charged with mutiny. Say, ~~it's~~ we that's a joke, cause ~~xxxx~~ stupid. "I think we're kind of Mutiny can only happen on a ship. All this Kind of smart ass talk. We didn't know what we were talking ~~to~~ about but.. it was serious and we just thought that.. we didn't believe the guy. We thought the guy was full of bullshit.

Can't charge mutiny. Nobody took over a ship you know. That's because we didn't know what mutiny meant. It didn't mean anything to us. We didn't think.. The only time it got to a point, when that man said you can be shot for committing mutiny during time of war, see, when the country's at war. Then we said, well we'll go back and check this. So we checked around say how many been shot for mutiny. We didn't have any information. Couldn't find one or two dudes been shot. "Hell, They can't shoot us!" Some guys would say that anyway. you know to boost up you're ego, whether you believe it or not is something else. But that was the sense that they couldn't shoot us.

RA: Okay, so the guys want to go home or want to get transferred, how are you going to let the officers know this?

PR: Well we talked to the Petty Officers. RA: Petty officer, these are black petty officers? PR: You know, Boyer. I think Small--one of the guys that stayed. Because they stayed associated with us even though they didn't go along with the strike, at least Boyer didn't.

RA: Boyer didn't -- Small did.

PR: Small did, yea. So we went through Small to Boyer. And Boyer would be talking to Delucci. Because Delucci say I don't want .. Well delucci well, chain of command was Delucci never talked to us. Well, if he talked to us he talked to us with the botsun mate there. And it was always a pep talk for everybody. But any kind of direct communication came down the lines.

RA: Was there any kind of talk of like a petition or something like that? It seems like I remember somewhere somebody mention a petiton or was in the mention of the trial or something like that. That a petition was circulated or something like that?

PR: If they did, I didn't have anything to do with that. I don't remember signing anything. or anything anybody else signing anything if there was a petition to be signed. I don't remember that.

R: So you're on this barge--you got off the barge to go to chow hall, but otherwise you're on the barge the whole time. PR: Yea, the whole time. RA: Did the officers come on the barge or interrogate men or were you basically just..

PR: We're just there. We're just held there. When we got interrogated I think we were taken someplace else.

RA: That would have been after the admiral..

PR: Yea, that was after the admiral talked to us.

RA: So, you're on the barge then they call you off on the _____ wherever it was.

PR: Oh we were in Shumaker when we got interrogated by each individual officer.

RA: Yea, that's right, that was at Shumaker. So after the time on the barge, then you're called off and assembled, that's when the admiral comes down, what does he say?

PR: Well he was explaining, he gave us one last chance to go back to work. Then he went on to explain how important our job was. Give us a con job first. And then he says we're giving you one more chance to go back to work. He said everybody that want to go back to work step forward. I think there was maybe, if I remember right, there was 8 maybe 10, out of the whole bunch that stepped out. He said okay you guys walk over this way. So they walked off. Then he got down to business. He started telling us what could happen to us if we don't change our mind. He second time he gave us a chance to change. Then he walked over and said well we can shoot all of you son of a guns. He used legal language but he said we'll shoot all you sons of guns, because.. put you before the firing squad. And then he went through, and he threatened. Since all the short people were in front line, I was in the front line, so you could smell his breath, as he's walking down the line. He kind of frightens you--what can you do. It's like a gun point a gun at you and say I'm going to shoot you and then you're in the reaching range of him, you can't run so you got to stand still, and take it. You Feel like you want to do something but what you going to do. So you stand still and you take it the stuff. See your're scared. So there must be something there. He Can't be telling the truth. Not like ... you know you look at a white man anyway from my point and you say you lying. He got a damned good reason to lie. I don't know why he's lying but so he must be lying. _____. When we were going to prison see I believe no dude would hit me with no billy club, stick either . Shit, man better no hit me with no stick, shit, because I didn't believe it. But I found out different _____. Because I'd be believing you know. But hell, I didn't believe that...

but after he gave us a talk, nobody else went back see. So I THink that's when we got our gear and we're shipped to the stockade at Shumaker. That was a bad experience there. Them marines up there boy -- real -- out of this world.

RA: Afterthis admiral talks he says give you one last chance, ten guys step out, so they were willing to go back to work, then he runs this whole thing about threatening to shoot and so on -- then what happens -- how did the separation occur between the 44 the 50 or whatever and the rest of the group. How did that happen at that point?

PR: You mean those ten that went back to work?

RA: No, I mean the 1

PR: The ones they picked as leaders? RA: Yea PR: Oh that was a process. After that we went to Shumaker. There was a stockade. I think at that point. Okay, yea. We went there and at that point we were interrogated. That's when we received our papers for being on trial. We were interrogated before we got those papers. I think we went in, they'd take 4 - 5 at a time, or whatever, a group at a time. I think after that we were held until there.. I can't remember exactly../I think we got interrogated, If I remember right now I think was in Shumaker when we got to the stockade up there. And then everybody was supposed to be charged with general, they told us, and then after..

RA: They told you this during the interrogation?

PR: Yea, everybody would get a general court martial, a bad conduct discharge, after you go have to go to prison.

RA: So this is when you're called up individually. This is what they tell you.

PR: Yea, to explain what happened. And we could get talk to who was the leaders. Obviously you could say.. I remember this as good too cause I remember they say who was the leader? I Say there was no leader. Then five minutes later they say, well who'd you talk to. I Say I talked to this guy. So Who told you about the other divisions? I Say I heard it from this.. then I'd say Well, I'm gone but these guys on you got conned into, well I don't about getting conned but there was.. well, it was the way you thought, but if you were trying to defend against an action which you didn't believe existed, then you did a poor job of it. If I believed that there were leaders then obviously you wouldn't give their names. They

(interrogator)

wouldn't want ~~the~~ names of the leaders anyway because ~~they~~ you wanted to protect them. _____. They separated them from the rest of us. I can't remember whether they were in the stockade with us or whether this happened before or not. Because I can't remember, but one of the guys that was convicted leaders--I remeber one cause he was from Chicago.

RA: Who's that.

PR: I went to school with the dude too, I can't remember his name.

RA: Tell you what, I got the list here maybe we can look at the list..

PR: I saw him when I got back to Chicago. That's about the only one I knew who was in that group.

RA: This is a list of guys who were convicted on generals and the ~~kwa~~ towns too. Chicago--Birage, David, Ellis.

PR: Grimes -- Grimes -- wait a minute. I know.. Harry Grimes -- but he ain't from Chicago. No. RA: No. RA: Some more on the other page -- Miller . PR - I can't pick this guy. RA: It wasn't Grady though huh. Cause he signed in your book there, Charles Gray. He's from Chicago. PR: I can't tie him with that name, it might be, well I'm not sure yet.

RA: He's one of the guys in the 50, that you knew then.

PR: One of em's from Chicago, cause.. yea, I knew. I saw him in Chicago after he got out. Okay, so there ain't but 2 or 3 of em in there. One of them must have been him. Cause yea, I went to school with the guy. I know him. I say I know him but I don't remember his name. I just can't remember. Show you how bad my memory is. There is a blank area there between the transition between there and ...

RA: Yea, see, cause in the trial testimony when the admiral talks he makes his threats and so on and then the division leaders Delucci, the Lts. order the guys to fall out in two groups, those who are going back, those who are not. There's an indication there it's at that point that they began to make.. PR: The 50, huh? RA: Well it wasn't 50, it was only 44. But then some other guys get throwned in later on. So It was at that point.. anyhow the 44 or the 50 get separated out. They are not with the rest of guys when you all wind up at Shumaker.

PR: Now that mention it I'm trying to remember If I ever really go back to work or not. No, I can't remember. Maybe I did. But I'm not sure I did. Just you mention seem like it's familiar. They did give us a 2nd chance to go back to work. Be honest with you I don't know whether I did or not. Well I know, I didn't get a general. I got a summary but I didn't get a general.

RA: Actually they didn't put it in terms of going back to work either. If I remember right what they said was all men willing to obey all orders fall out over here, all men not willing to obey all orders fall out over there. It wasn't even in terms of actually going back to ~~Ø~~ work. It waskind of hidden.

PR: I think going back to work was a stigmatism for us. You be Chicken if you went back to work. Okay, maybe..

RA: I don't think they even said going back to work, I think they said after that.. Well, the admiral did maybe, but the Lts. when they..

PR: ~~g~~ got down to it. Now that you mention it, I kind of remember some kind of situation like that. I kind of go along with that. There's so much I've forgotton or so much I just shut out. Because if you bring it back I can agree with it ~~xx~~ I can concur that something like that did happen. But exactly what they said I don't remember.

RA: Buy in any case everybody winds up at Shumaker? But at the time it's separated.

PR: It's separated. RA: I'm To the guys who are going to be eventually charged with the general and the guys who are going to be given the summary. But I guest everybody was threatened with the general. PR: The general to start with. RA: To start with right. Because they were trying to get the evidence or whatever.

PR: I remember when they interrogated you..

RA: Cause another one of the guys who I talked to who was not in the 50 said, he said the thing you were saying, which is that when they interrogated you, they threatened you with the general. The way he put it he says when they brought me in to talk to me, he said you're facing 7 - 15 years. That was the standard opening of that. That was the way they started it.

PR: Yea, stuff like that if I remember...

RA: And then they started asking about who were the leaders and who.. this happen and that

happen.

PR: Yea I remember cause I went thru this bit at home about when you get busted with the police, who's the leader? They got 15 people, they don't want to put everybody in jail, just want a couple of them. So I figure this is the same situation. So I say if we don't ~~ain't~~ nobody, we all go home. That's the way it used to be. Aint no leaders -- wasn't going to put everybody in jail.. But this system is a little different here.

RA: What happened at Shumaker, you were going to tell me a little bit about it. After you got put in prison up there? Some of the stuff that went down.

PR: Yea, when we first got there the first day, they make you stand out well open field -- they call it spinden. ~~The~~ You stand there in front of your bag, your arms folded see. Get there about 12:00. Standing around until 7 at night, no bathroom, no nothing. Then they search every bag before you go in there -- all your belongings. They take all your belongings, got a seabag man. Well if you've been in there a year, you've got all this garbage in there. Your clothes and stuff. souvenirs. They search every bag before you go in there. I had ammunition in my bag Holy Christ, the Sgt--that dude beat my head, boy. Yea, he slapped me upside the head. because.. Well, he told me, he said I ought to take these bullets and ram ~~them~~ em up your rear. I said, well you better start dude cause I don't know what you gonna do. I got smart with the dude. He slapped me upside the head. He was pretty much cause I was sarcastic but I had no business with the ammunition I guess. But at that point you don't care. See these dudes going to put me in jail, they're going to put me in there anyways so what you gonna do. Talk to you, beat your ass anyway so what the hell. You got to get even one day. Figure if you can make it so you got something to get even for. Anyway that's the only physical treatment I ever had in the service from that. It embarrasses you cause he kicks ~~it keeps~~ you out of the damn place and you ~~get~~ fall down in Record and all this shit. If you jump up and hit the dude they're going to shoot you. They got their guns there, you know.. it's like hitting the police officer in jail. Out in the street you might get away with it but at the jail, something else. But you figure -- well, I'll get my chance. That's the only embarrassment I've ever had. I guess if I kept my mouth shut, I wouldn't

have got that. But that's about the only one. When you got there we went to stockade, and it was like any other prison that you go to. You've got trustees, which is as bad as prison guards. Then you've got mostly wounded marines which, you know, off duty. And they were all white. Our duties were to make cargo nets and go on Working parties, working parties are like you go out and work in cold storage area, or you might work in the dispensary or something. I worked mostly in cold storage area, that's loading boxes and stuff. And that was nice. That was the best duty I had in the navy, man. There was a chief petty officer in charge of the cold storage locker -- where the stored food at. Used to take ten of us over there. And all of us would work. Cause we had been ~~Crewman~~ working on loading those ships, you know. They never saw anybody that could unload the trucks like we could. And you could run, like we could run all day long. We go there 6 in the morning and work til 5 in the afternoon. We could ~~can~~ run with trucks all day. That's the kind of shape we were in. You could take a truck off the a dock and they put 400 lbs on it, _____ but you could run with it. Run - Run - Run. Negroes could work and they work so hard . The harder they worked the happier they got. Man, this is a fact. I mean, we used to fight when we laid around and ___A___ didn't do no work. I guess a lot of people do that. You get bored you get short tempered. But we worked, when some work to do, we could work. And if we had to work against some people, like they had white prisoners out there working too, and Finally he had no white prisoners at all up there at cold storage — it is all blacks. Because we can do an 8-hr work working, they way he tell us, we have 4 trucks to unload. If you have 4 trucks unloaded by 10:00, you can sit here the rest of the day and eat fruit and ice cream. That's what the chief petty officer tell us. That's how we run. We get in ~~that~~ Roy, jack, _____ unloading them trucks. I enjoyed that. We're setting in the ~~shade~~ shade. Now it's hot. It was hot out there, jack. But they had covered the channels in the hallway now between the cold storage locker and they were all like basically ~~where~~ where you store meat at. It was freezers and stuff like that. You could sit on the floor there. You get on the corridor, you sit down on the corridor so that ~~the~~ the guard one of the corridor and the guard on the other. Now the ~~chases~~ chasers, ~~th~~ chases chasers were SP's. Now, they take 20 guys out there and they had one guard to every 10 chases. So there's only two guys.. trying to keep up with these 20 guys. running back and forth with trucks like a mad man. After a while they just figure, they couldn't do it. So they just stood on

perimeter. And the guys would'nt try to escape. That was good duty there. The chief was nice cause he'd give us ice cream, we'd eat fruit. If we did the ~~8 hrs day~~ job, we sit there at 10:00 -- we stay there the rest of the day, don't go back. That was one of the nice things about being there. Once you got back to that prison, it was something else. Stockade and barb wires and stuff.

RA: So how long were you there then in Shumaker?

PR: Let's see it seemed like a long time but I guess it wasn't. Maybe a month-- at the most I guess.

RA: Then you were shipped out overseas?

PR: Yea. RA: Where did you wind up overseas?

PR: Well, we went to New Caledonia.

RA: Did you all go together. Or how did they ship you out?

PR: Yea we all went to New Caledonia together. But then we got separated.

RA: Everybody who's at Shumaker went to?

PR: Same ship, same time. Shipped us all out at the same time. Then when we got to New Caledonia, that was a receiving station, so they divided us up into base companies. then there was a base company that had reputation of rioting and badness. They'd bust them all and send them back to prison. ~~One guy is in prison~~. That was Base Company 19 they called it. It must have been a bad outfit over there. Cause when they put us in there, there wasn't nobody left but a few guys. Anyway.. yea, base company 19 I think it was -- 20 -- must have been 20. It's in here someplace. That's the guy I told you that we had a real meek officer from connecticut someplace. He would shoot you if you put him on the rear. He. was alright I guess, he was fair enough. Then a lot of guys got shipped ~~that~~ to different islands ~~didnt last~~. Some guys went to Guam. They had the riot up there? Some of those guys were from our outfit that went to Guam I think.

RA: Is that so?

PR: I think--I'm sure they were. Because some went to Guam. Some.. I don't know where.. We, it was only, that's when we got ~~fix~~ mixed up with some other people. Mixed in with something else. But anyway, they shipped em all over the pacific. We used to write to

each other. Some of us ~~sat down and~~ went to Saipan. Yea, we all just went and got put in different outfits, different places. Yea, some went to New Hebrides, too. We had letters from people in New Hebrides. Yea, all the islands down on the Solomons and all those areas.

RA: So that was about another year then. A year duty oversea, the back stateside.

PR: Back to state side. yea. But once we got into this outfit the stigmatism was gone, it was covered up until the time it came for a promotion. Then you get them do gooders. I mean.. well -- I wouldn't use that word. Guys that want to give you ~~suggest they~~ do. I work for a guy by the name of Dave ———. Since I met him out here, he's in Burbank out here in California. He wants to come over. They say well since you've been there so long you're entitled to become a petty officer now providing you haven't been in the brig... ~~they say what kind did you have? Say look~~ guys. It wasn't really ~~about the~~ stigmatism. Met some pretty nice guys, after I left from New Caledonia. That was a nice place too.

RA: Well looking back on it all, these many years later, how do you feel about it now?

PR: Well, I look at the good things I've learned from it. Well one thing about it, it allowed me to go back to school. GI Bill you know. I thought it was pretty lousy because well at the time I figured I was entitled to a better job than I got. I figure I wanted to go to radio school. I had a lot of experience in electronics, and electricity and radio before I went in see. I had a good educational background. For some reason, I guess, they ~~didn't want admit this~~--the guys who couldn't read and write, which were quite a few in my outfit, they sent those guys to school, the guys who could read and write, the smarter you were, the worse your job got. And then the most illiterate you got.. the most.. cause like the guys who went to quartermaster school.. Now that's a pretty intelligent school to go to. You've got to know something about math, you've got to know how to read. These guys hadn't even finished grade school. They were ~~18~~, something like. They sent them to quartermaster school. That's steering ships and shooting ~~subs~~, ~~something~~ like this. Well, I couldn't complain cause like ———, two years college experience, and he was down there working on the docks. He was a football star. He's from Ohio State. He wasn't the only guy... because what happened when they allowed..

they start letting the ~~nuy~~ guys take .. black people take the officers candidate examination test. There was some kind of restriction where you couldn't take this I guess. No -- if you had passed it you had to stay in four more years. You'd become regular something.. So ~~you~~ he wouldn't take it. I felt I learned a lot from it. But I thought we got a short deal out of it.

RA: What about the strike itself, the resistance.. looking back on that?

PR: ~~I~~ I think I ~~was~~ wouldn't change that. The experience was great. I think it was worth the effort--the effort showing that whatever you believe in, you at least tried to back what you believed in the best you know how. We just didn't know how to do it, that's all. You're out there by yourself, 18.. well, everybody wasn't 18 years old, there's some older guys there. But we just didn't have the intelligence to handle the situation. If we had more intelligence we'd done a lot better job. But the thing about it, I feel kind of bad about it because it's like fighting a dude with a stick, a big gun, and you ain't got nothing but a twig. You think you gonna fight the guy because you believe that he did you wrong, but then that's a hopeless cause because you didn't use the right method. I talked to a guy at work the other day for the same thing. Another guy in my group that's almost 7 foot, a white guy. Now he's a giant, no fat on him at all. A guy in my group who's 5'6" (end of side 2)

Coded 7/26/80

Robert ~~Roth~~ Routh
May 21, 1978

RA: What I wanted to ask about was your experiences at Fort Chicago. How did you come to get into the Navy in the first place?

Enlistment

RR: Well, it was kind of an unusual thing for me, Mr. Allen, inasmuch as that I had decided that I was going to volunteer for the Army. I had grown up on the farm until I was about 12-13 years old and knew a lot about animals, especially horses. So therefore I wanted to volunteer ~~in~~ and get in the army calvary. And on the day that I went down to volunteer the army recruiting office was closed, I guess, they closed at 5:00 and we got there shortly after 5, my father and I. I peered around the corner and the navy was standing wide open and I put the question to the young man at a desk, "will the army open up any more today?" I guess I was about 30 ~~xxxx~~ yards away from him when I shouted out the question. He waved to me and said "come down here." (laughter)

RA: What city was that?

RR: This was in Memphis Tennessee.

RA: Were you born and raised in memphis.

RR: I was born on a farm in Macon Tn. By the way the farm is still in the ~~farm~~ family now. It's Two adjacent farms, my aunt lives on one and my uncle, who died in 1954, owned the other farm, bu t his wife ~~has a life and stake in~~ is alive and stayed on the place and I have two first cousins that will inherit if they should survive this aunt of mine. The farm is still there and going strong. A lot changes--you know, with electric and the toilet inside the house now. And so when I put the question to the sailor, "will the army open up any more today?" He asked me what did I want. I said well I was trying to volunteer for the army. So he called my father and I and set us down and told us about the merits of the navy and when I walked out I walked with the paperwork to get notorized to sign up for the navy.

Enlisting in Navy

RA: What year was that again.

RR: That was July of 1942. I was the 552nd negro to volunteer for the navy, serving at Camp Morrow which later became Camp Robert Small at Great Lakes, named for I guess some WWI army officer.

RA: He was a blac k hero during the civil war I believe. The story is he captured a confederate vessel and took it up to the union lines. It's quite a story. So you went to Camp Small then for boot training? What was that?

RR: That was July 9, 1942. We Graduated in September. So I took my boot, took my 9 day leave and went home and then was shipped to Mare Island, to an ammunition depot. We served there for probably 3 months before barracks were completed over on Vallejo side. We took the ferry every morning to work on the ammunition dump there and that was also shipping and receiving ammunition. We Did similar type work there that they did at PC. But mainly the civilians stevedores handled much of the work at Mare Island.

RA: Is that so? Had they given you any training or prepartion for the ammunition handling.

RR: No. The ammunition handled were basically ammunition shipped from the factory to be stored in magazines and then awaiting shipment overseas. Now some of the ammunition was actually made right there at Mare Is and we did have some of the force who worked in some of those production of the shells. But basically we unloaded boxcars or loaded boxcars, we shipped out a lot of stuff from there to be sent down to Frisco and Oakland to be shipped out of there.

RA: Had you expected that that was where you would be? What had been your interest in going into the service to the Navy?

RR: Well the advertisement was "Join the Navy, and see the World" The Sailor that was on recuriting duty by the way was a black gentlemen and talked about the merits of the navy and that basically most of naval personnel could be taught trades and these were then things you could do once you returned to civilian life. And so that's what I thought. That I would be able to do, was to learn a trade, but, at Great Lakes they took just so many men -- I guess those who got the highest grades on their aptitude tests, or some of those who got the highest grades were sent to various schools--cooks and bakers. At that time they were not using too many of us for the better ratings, such as electricians, carpenters and this kind of thing. So I wasn't one of those, so they shipped us out here to the West Coast on a huge troop train, probably a 28-30 cars. We had three destinations,

Port ~~Wynimee~~ Hueneme(?) and and Mare Island and Port Chicago. And I had never heard of any of those places.

RA: How did you feel about it onces you were at Mare Is and you realized what you would be doing?

RR: Well, that really made me somewhat unhappy at the beginning because there was the story of -- the picture of Dor[ie] Miller (?) and what he had done at Pearl Harbor, so we really thought that we would be serving in some capacity aboard ships. And to be reduced to stevedors, there was a lot of complaints, but we were powerless to do anything about this, so the complaints were just verbal and nothing else. However, you might have in your research ran across stories of a riot that was held at Vallejo in 1942, Christmas time.

RA: I heard mention of it but I haven't met anyone who knows anything about it. Do you have any familiarity with what happened there?

RR: Well it appeared that the thing that precipitated the riot was a sailor who I got, supposedly, a little inebriated and got involved with a civilian police officer. And in the little area where we were isolated up there or segregated, the word was quickly spreaded that a police officer was beating up a black sailor, and then that particular night, several cars were overturned and plate glass windows broken out of some of the stores. And the word quickly spreaded back to the base that there was a riot going on in town so it quickly then entered the base, they broke out more windows --they were beating up any whites that they could find and the marines were brought out from Mare Is to try to help to bring peace again. The next day or so the thing flared up again, so what they did, they restricted all of us to the base and prevented other blacks, like men were up at Camp Stoneman, a lot of blacks were up there, they prevented them from coming in ———. It was quite awful. I don't think anybody was killed in the riot, there was a lot of damage, and at that time, there was no really recreation facilities there. They had built a rec hall but a pool table is about the only thing, but they brought in basketballs and boxing gloves and they quickly changed the method of rating personnel and got people reorganized and brought about other activities and brought in

girls for the first time for dances and so forth. So all of this -- because we were all young blacks, I guess the average age probably 21-22. To have this many men with not very much to do recreation wise, leaving us to our own devices in a segregated town --so. For example, to make the base more military on off hour duties they had us practicing drills and things like this. And Got a band organized. And then inspections were held every Friday, and flag raising ceremonies and really kind of made the base much more military than it had been up to that point. And here again, if they shipped out the so-called leaders, nobody was court martialed out of that. It was rather bad. For 4 or 5 days there there was no work going on on the base except for those who were assigned to the mess hall and at that time I was assigned to the mess hall in the scullery division. This is where the navy cleans its dishes.

RA: Do you recall that at Mare Is before they built the barracks there, that the men were -- the black enlisted men were put on some kind of barge or ship.

RR: Yes. I was one of those. This was an old river boat of the paddle wheel type with the propeller -- rotary type propeller. We ~~dug~~ dubbed the vessell the USS Neversail. And we had two decks of bunks built. So it was really just used as a residence for us really. I guess they probably could accomodate about 300 - 400 enlisted men and officers, and that's where we were. This was in September. We were housed there until after Thanksgiving. The first week in November a couple of weeks or so before the riot, we were all in the barracks on ~~land side of~~ the land.

RA: How did the men feel about the conditions at Mare Is and later at Port Chicago, where there many grievances or complaints?

RR: Well, the work conditions at Mare Is quickly improved, as I said, after the riots. They gave us more ranks, 3rd class, 2nd class ranks, and elevated more people quickly, From 2nd class seaman, to 1st class seaman, Which gave you a little bit more money and additional ranks, and additional authority on the part of blacks, and they got rid of some of the worst officers. They shipped those out. The work conditions wasn't bad, they were better at Mare Is than they were at Port Chicago inasmuch as Port Chicago was even worse from the standpoint that we were out there in ~~that~~ an area that was more

isolated than Mare Is and nothing to do. They did put in some recreation facilities there, bowling alleys, swimming, this kind of thing. Which was a brand new building by the time I got there. And they instituted a practice of taking busloads for liberty parties into Oakland/Berkeley and SF at no charge to the men. But it was an awful place to get out of from the standpoint of transportation even. It was just a work area.

RA:: What was that little town of PC like--did you ever go in there?

RR: It was just a one street place, a few beer taverns and things like that. So they didn't want blacks there at all. The townspeople didn't care for blacks. And nobody hardly went in there anyway. As I said, it was no other black civilians there, not even black civilians working on the base.itself. All the civilian force that was working there were white and then you found a few blacks in Pittsburg, which you had Camp Stoneman there and black soldiers there. But really to have more contact with blacks you have to go into places like Vallejo, Oakland, Berkeley, SF or Sacramento. But to try to get to those places from where we were, well, there were few buses, see. So really wasn't very much for you to do. Idle time on your hands and so forth sort of leads to legitimate complaints. We had no blacks above the rank of 1st class on the base. No Chief PO that were black at all. Not even in the mess department (?)

RA: You went to Port Chicago then in April 1944? RR: Yes. RA:: What was the relations like between the black enlisted men and officers?

RR: Well, it was civil. There was no real hostility from one to the other. We had to work. As I said, one of the things that led to high production was no ship meant no work, so the faster we got a ship out of there, the fact you were doing nothing again.

RA: In the loading work itself, was there any rivalry or competition?

RR: No. Because the method of arranging the work detail was around the clock when the ship was there. So my division would be assigned for a week to work the 4 - 12 watch. Then we would be relieved by the 12 - 8 watch, etc. So there wasn't no need for any rivalry thing at all. The ship wouldn't stay in very long because the productivity went along very rapidly--with young men, as you know, it's fairly easy to stimulate

them to work. It was kind of play. A lot of banter from dock side to ship side and specially from the--I was a wench operator with the "heads up in the hold down there you logheads" (wife interruption)

After the explosion of 44 for the protection of everybody the best thing to do is to buy it up and move out the civilians and erect military housing and so forth in the town, which they did.

RA: That would have been in 67 then. Would you say there was a lot of complaining about that?

RR: Oh yes. People didn't want to move. They didn't want to sell their properties and stuff like that.

RA: Did you know any of the people that lived in Port Chicago or what became of them?

RR: No, I met only about 3 fellows and I haven't had any contact with any of them except Mr. Robinson, here. It was just an accident that one day we were talking about it, knowing that he was there. But I've tried to locate several people haven't been able to. I guess people die out. One of the fellows that I continue to have contact with when I lost my sight lived in Philadelphia and I visited him up until he died in about 1959-60. I tried to locate his wife I was in Philadelphia in 1976 and she had moved and didn't leave a forwarding address. Now I did get a card from her this past Christmas. We reestablished contact.

RA: What was his name?

RR: His name was Jesse Jones. Now Jess was a very fortunate individual in this sense he had in a fight--he was from Pittsburgh PA --and in a fight several years before he went into the navy, he was stabbed in his right eye. Well he lost that eye to the point where that eye was inucleated. But he had perfect vision in the other eye. So he remained in the navy until the war was over. As I said I visited with him several times after -- I got of the service I went to Tennessee -- home, and then in 46 I moved to Massachusetts. So Pennsylvania was just a few hours ride on the train and I would go down to -- it was quite comfortable to be around people that you had served with.

RA: You said that you were a wench operator at Port Chicago, what kind of training did you get for that--how did you come to be a wench operator?

RR: Well, I told a lie. I told you at Vallejo we had established military drills. Well, I've always been kind of a devil so I learned to call cadence, so we're out there drilling and I was calling cadence and our senior officer came out and wanted to talk to us, so they were taking the names of all who could do storekeeper, carpentry, and operate wenches. So when they got to wenches, so I stuck up my hand on an impulse. Little did I know that some of those personnel would be shipped to PC and this was in Feb of 1944. So when I found out what had happened I went to the Chaplain, to the commander of the base, everything trying to get out of this shipment, with no success, of course. So, when I got up to PC I was fortunate enough to be assigned to a division that had no personnel practically on. So there was this wench school up there and I went over and talked with the gentlemen that was teaching the classes over there and after a class or two ahead of me, I put the question and told him about this big lie, and could he help me or would he help me. And of course he did. I had about two weeks there where waiting for personnel to be shipped in and so then the during this interim period I was at the school everyday, so when the division was fully complemented with its personnel I was assigned to hold #4. I stepped over to those controls like a veteran.

RA: But they had not actually verified whether you were a wench operator or not then before you got there.

RR: No. And this wasn't done with any of the other personnel. They sent 70 of us up there to increase the base up there as I said, there were carpenters, wench operators and storekeepers. The storekeeper was the individual who would keep record of the tonnage that was going over--going in each hold and amounts and so forth. Of course carpenters had to prepare the vessel to receive the ammunition as well as then to secure it. As you might know a ship can really go up to 4 maybe 45 degrees roll and still right itself, so you don't want any of this cargo to move about, so we would be

_____ shall we say shipping 16 inch projectiles which is a huge thing, it's in excess of 6 feet tall and huge depths, so when you get this stuff down in there and it was a pleasure to see these young men, man, be able to secure that stuff down in those holds, see. An iron ship but there it sits and they get down there with this lumber and power equipment, saws and so forth and it was a lot of play and pleasure too. I guess one of the reasons why you indicated that there was such a movement afoot to get these court martials reduced or lifted completely was the Navy had decorated the base several times for its productivity up there. It was quite high. So the officers, in spite of ~~the~~ this desolate place we were in, had managed to keep the personnell, the morale, fairly high.

RA: How did the men feel about the danger of the work itself?

RR: I don't think that anybody really took this serious. They knew that this was explosive stuff. But nobody had never seen any of it go off. So therefore, they never really felt that it was really that dangerous. Because from time to time you would have accidents. For example once I saw the noses on 2 16" projectiles bent, which was just a cap. That cap would be removed before that shell would be fired and the fuse then would be attached. So then ~~xxx~~ naturally when you see something like that, and nothing happens, maybe it shakes you up momentarily but or you would have say a net of 5" projectiles that drop and fall all the way down and of course/nothing again happens. So really, ~~xx~~ there wasn't that apprehension among the crews. And those of us that I had contact with after the explosion really felt that it was sabotage as opposed to that it was an accident that brought this explosion about. Have you learned what did actually happen?

RA: Well, the navy itself never found out. They had a court of inquiry that investigated the explosion. They considered sabotage, but the conclusion they came to was that it was either a defect in one of the bombs that caused it to go off or that it was rough handling by the work crews and that there was some kind of accident.

RR: Well, the crew down there was an experienced crew that was doing the work. And one of the reasons why they (interruption)

RA: In the car you were talking about the work of being a wench operator, how that was set up. You had had ~~a~~ training on the steam wenches.

RR: As I started to tell you before we were interrupted that I was fortunate enough to be in ~~the~~ a division that was just being formed and so taking my problem that I couldn't operator a wench over to the instructor who graduated a couple of days ahead of ~~mine~~ mine, I literally put the question, "hey I've lied to get up here now I don't know how to operate a wench, will you help me?" The gentlemen acquiesed. In about ten days before the division that I was assigned to was formed, after practicing 5- 6 hours a day, they didn't have ~~many~~ students in, so he was glad to have a student and I was glad that the school was there. So that then was how I became a wench operator. By the way that 70 of us that was sent to PC, we all were supposed to have been experts in our fields. And we were promised after 90 days to be promoted to 3rd class and they were awarding wench operators with the rank of motor machinist. So I got hurt on the 17th of July and my rank was coming up the first of August.

RA: What was it like on the 17th of July?

RR: The 17th of July was a beautiful day. It was a hot day. The thing that made PC such a bad place to live, there were very few trees around the place, so to com e up with nothing else around the place and see these forsaken barracks just standing out here in the wilderness with a fench around it, the dock ~~size~~ side was well over a mile away from the barracks themselves. It was kind of a strange place to be. and to see. So this was a Monday, very hot (end of Side 1) On this particular day, I had liberty, but I decided I would wash my clothes and catch up with some letter writing, and along about 1:00 or so in the afternoon, I felt very depressed and I don't know why, it was just a feeling of ennui that just seemed to permeate my whole spirit. And I walked into the head and I must have reflected this in my face because one of my shipmates, a lad from NY, took a look at my face as I came in, he was the only one in the head, and said, "what's the matter, man?" And I couldn't answer him. And he said, "why don't you just ~~a~~ take a cry?" When he said that the tears just gushed forth. So

after this cry, I felt a heck of a lot better, but little did I know some ten hours later that I was to be in ~~just~~ such a holocaust. When taps was sounding that evening I put my writing gear away, and went to wash up and put on my noxzema, being a teen ager I had some of those blemishes on my face. I came back. I was lying on my bunk. It would uusually take about 20 minutes to quiet the troops down after ~~the~~ lights out. And shortly after probably 10:20 p.m., navy time would be 2200, this tremendous explosive sound. And I was looking to my right, I had my head pillowed on my arm, looking away from the explosion, as I quickly jumped to look to see what was going on a second explosion, and all this tremedous beautiful flashes in the sky. That's when the flying glass hit my face and ~~entered~~ my eyes. It did it in such a strange way, inasmuch as I never felt any pain from it. It lacerated the left eye so badly that ~~that~~ was taken out that night and the right one had laceration, just one laceration in the eye itself that traveled across part of the pupil and cornea allowing the vitreous fluid to drain, which left me with split vision in that eye. They were able to put a suture in there. And of course, sutures leave permanent scar tissue and from the scar tissue eventually caused the sight to leave me completely. It was a strange thing inasmuch as we only had three enlisted men who had eye injuries. And I was the only one that lost both eyes.

RA: In your division.. or?

RR: In the whole camp. One of the things that caused the casualities to be as few as they were, the barracks that received the brunt were prefab barracks and the men dockside who were killed were housed in those barracks. The barracks that ~~was~~ were put up prior to WWII met the earthquake standards and they just stood there, they rocked but the stood. But the casualties might have been much greater, of course ~~because~~ we certainly would not want to see them any larger than what they were. I guess we had about 120 killed. You probably been able to verify this by now from reading the casualty list.

RA: Well yea, there were 323 killed in all. About 230 enlisted men I think another 390 were injured. There was military and civilian casualties.

RR: What I was getting at though, we didn't have an awful lot of us that had to be

hospitalized, they were treated with first aid. Of this number that was injured I think it was only half dozen or so that was hospitalized.

RA: So what happened then? You had the split vision in the right eye?

RR: In the right eye. Anything beyond 3 feet was double for me. I was sent to Philadelphia Naval Hospital for rehabilitation. Nobody knew the meaning of the word back there. So the eye doctor in charge experimented with me with contact lenses, and instead of trying to carry the experiment on after I was fitted for this unit to see how it was going to last and so forth, I got the fitted unit, custome made unit one day and was released from service the next. As long as I could wear the unit, I could see 20-20 from that eye. But in those days the contact lens was a plastic unit that fitted inside the full contour of the eye with a solution and this act as a buffer between the cornea and the unit itself. This solution prevented irritation and so forth. But at that time nobody had every worn one of the things over 8 or 9 hours a day. But you had to train yourself ~~with which~~ to wear the thing. So an hour or two a day, when I used it, the vision was so blurred after I took it out that I got to the place where I just stopped using it altogether. But for all practical purposes when I come out of the service well it just left me handicapped to the point where I could have been considered legally blind then.

RA: So your vision continued to deteriorate then?

RR: Well the vision deteriorated and the thing that hastened the thing I was ~~awrought~~ robbed one night and in resisting the robbery, I was wearing some glasses that I had purchased which helped the vision. They broke the glass in my eye and that then hastened the vision. So this added additional problems. There's a veterans administration in Murfreesboro, Tenn where the VA office was housed at that time, placed me in the lowest category that they could legally put me in by way of compensation. They paid me actually ~~40~~ $40 for the injury and $41 for what was referred to as the statutory loss of the left eye. Since the left eye was anucleated the night I was injured. ~~Since~~ So $41 was paid for what was referred to as a statuotry loss. And I got no compensation for the right eye because these people down there knew I was black and

they looked upon the contact lens as having the eye completely restored. And therefore gave me no compensation for this eye. Since when I was wounded with this attempted robbery, I gave the Lt. Colonel, the doctor that oprated on me that night, such a bad time that before I was released from the hospital he shook his finger in my face, I could still feel it now, an angry finger being pointed at me, by the way he was from your (Georgia) state, indicating that the loss of this right eye was strictly misconduct on my part and he would see to it that I would not receive any veterans benefit compensation. But this also led to what I was telling you earlier that since I had had just an 8th grade education that then I was determined to find a way for the veterans administration to sponsor my stay outside of the south until this wrong was righted. I prayed about this every night and I believed it was just a question of time before the veterans administration would see that they had wronged me. I wrote a letter to then General Bradley who was the administrator of the VA. He sent my letter back to Murfreesboro, where they turned me down again. And of course when I went to Boston, I was in Boston from September to December before I got some of this wrong righted.

RA: What year was that?

RR: 1946. And the VA there boosted me from $97.20 to $124.80. And at that time the minimum 100% was $138, so I didn't feel too badly. But the little bit I know that I deserved a much higher spot and the way the real wrong was finally redressed, I had found a home away from the school in Roxbury Mass. I would go up there on weekends and on this particular Sunday night I was going back by cab as I generally went if the people that I rented from couldn't take me back. And just a chance question on the part of the driver who introduced himself as Charlie asked me about my ~~blindness~~ blindness and asked me if I was willing to talk about it and I told him yes. And so he asked me if I was satisfied with the VA. I told him No. So He asked then after hearing my story when could I get out of school, I said anytime I like. He said well I'm off on Wednesdays and if I would meet him downtown Boston at Boylston and Fremont he would take me to see a man that would assist me. I often think, supposed I had been a black militant and hated whitey, since the driver was a white man

now he was asking me to meet him and I had never seen him before. But sure enough he took me to a member of DAV, a Mr. Paul Sullivan, who heard my story and got very very angry. A big Irishman and said that he was going to fix it that day goddamn it." But after an hour he came back and said that it was going to be more difficult than he thought but I could back and be assured that he would not rest until he got me much more money. Now this was April of 47, After getting that rebuttal from the rating board he then set out to get evidence that ~~ɛ~~ he eventually took to the appeals board in Washington DC. And he did a very thorough job inasmuch as took my diagnosis to a board of opthomologists. And these men independently -- the 3 of them -- independent of each other indicated that the scar tissue certainly would have had its toll and would eventually put the eye out. It was just a question of time. They were naturally able to ~~forget~~ predict how long I would have had some vision but on the strength of this evidence on August 29 the appeals board Washington DC granted them that made it full 100% ~~about~~ for the loss of vision. Now to illustrate what this meant and I really didn't know until many years later until I guess 1972 ~~that~~ but the lowest 100% that we have in the VA -- and the VA ratings are indicated alphabetically A-B-C- and the first 100% is paragraph J. This gentlemen was able to get me in paragraph N. At that time this meant $318 a month. As I got married and got a family this thru minimum increases when my last child was born this was raised to the magnificent sum of $475 by 1962. So you can see at that time that this was a little greater than subsistence level. But beginning with 1965 the VA for the first time gave a meaningful increase in compensation. For example I went from $514 a month to $607. From 67-68-69 each increase for people in the category that I'm in has been $100 a year or better. Today I'm getting $1319 a month. So I feel sorry for the many, many of us who succumbed during this interim period, who had to exist on this level. But congress today now really looks after the more serious handicapped in the manner that they should have at the close of WWII.

RA: Could you tell me a little bit about your process to get an education after PC?

RR: Well as I told you I had to find a way to get out of Tennessee and ~~xx~~ I'm just glad that I had the many problems that I had because had I not had these problems I probably would have stayed in Tennessee. There were my parents and my friends and other relatives did not want to see me go so far from home again, and so choosing a vocational thing that led me to Massachusetts where I went to Perkins Institute for the Blind and really I didn't want to go back to Tennessee again and so I got vocational training and some typing skills and some braille while at Perkins. I was there for 27 months and in the Fall of 49 the VA by this time had opened a rehabilitation center at Heinze ILL where they could accomodate 8 students, which was at this point headed by a blinded veteran who had been a former school teacher and who organized a skill of mobility that was using the long cane. When I got out of there after 16 weeks of training I knew then I didn't have to go back to Tenn because with the knowledge and skill of the use of the cane, it gives a blind person mobility and mobility gives you then freedom of choice. This meant then that I learned how to ride public transportation and this kind of thing. So I quickly made my plans to come to Los Anglees all by myself. And I've been living here with the exception of four years ever since then. But a gentlemen from the VA ~~xx~~ called me in Sept 1950. I moved out here March 1950, got married July 1950. But my wife had gone back to Mass to go to school, to complete her education.

RA:: You had met in Mass?

RR: (affirm) So, I was sitting in my room and got this phone call from the VA adn the gentlemen welcomed me to Calif and asked me if I was interested in working. And I quickly said yes. And he made arrangements to then get me this job out at Price Vistas Brass Mfg Co in San Fernando Valley and after the Korean war got started I lost my job ~~xxx~~ by way of lay off in Aug 51 and so another blinded veteran came to my aid and persuaded me to go to college. I told him I would laugh in his face cause he knew that I ~~xxix~~ had only completed the 8th grade. But this gentlemen quickly cast

my decision aside and said that he was going to Occidental College. He only had an 8th grade education, I appeared to be as bright as he was. And he would help me get the general education development test and if I passed that he would then get me into LA CC. City College And after a battle with the VA he was able to do this. And I ~~ended~~ entered LA CC in Sept 52 undertaking a course of study in real estate and insurance. But having this big gap of not going to high school, my counselor urged that when and where I could substitute an academic subject for a business course, to do so. So I completed LA CC with 72 units which this then gave me the confidence that I badly needed and the education that I had never had before. So this really was a godsend. But the thing that led me to take this particular course, the VA indicated that they would not permit me to take any course that I couldn't finish within two years or four semesters. So I had to choose something that I thought that I could do and I did. But the thing that really was a blessing in disguse was the following the counselor to in taking these academic courses. For by 1971 when the VA had a vocational rehabilitation program for all of the people who had never been fully rehabilitated from WWII, Korea and the Viet Nam era, here then was the real blessing for when I went to Pepperdine Univ they accepted 64 of the 72 units as an undergraduate credits. And I undertook then a course of sociology. This is how I got the undergraduate degree and I've never been to high school. But I was a good student now. I finished 72 units at LA CC with a 3.07 average, which really surprised everybody including me.

RA: When did you go to join the VA staff?

RR: A little flavor here. With the problems that the VA were having with the bottle necks and the checks in 72, 73 it was finally decided that VA would hire some veterans benefit counselors, or vet reps, and put them on the campuses to try to iron out some of the difficulties that they were having and speed up the educational allotment checks. And the blinded veterans association, which is an organization that was founded in 1945 strictly just to assist blinded veterans, its operated by blinded veterans for blinded veterans, requested that the VA consider hiring some blinded veterans to act in the capacity of veterans benefit counselors. This was 1974 and the VA said yes. And

here again that I was a lucky individual. I put my request in after our president had told us that WWII individuals were far too old or they couldn't pass physicals, I was able to pass the physical and got hired after being accepted by the local VA here. The national office also then said yes. So I completed the master's academic requirement in Dec 74 and was hired actually on Dec 6 of 74 in order to report on Jan 6 75 as a veterans benefit counselor on a temporary (~~$~~700 hour) appointment. ~~Worked~~ Where I've been there ever since.

RA: After the explosion did you have any contact with any of the other men in PC? Or wereyou immediately separated from that entire group?

RR: No. Only one of the men that was wounded with me that I continued some contact with and this was the gentlemen by the name of Jesse Jones who is now deceased. But from 46 up until he passed in 1959-60, I continued contact, both visits and phone calls and letters to this gentlemen. I'm sorry that I haven't been able to find others. It was kind of a pleasure to accidentally be talking one night in a men's group and to learn that Mr. Robinson was one of the gentlement that had been stationed up there. I didn't know him up there.

RA: But you and he have been members of the same parish for a number of years?

RR: Several years, with neither of us knowing. The men's group meets once a month every Wed night and that's hosted on a round robin basis. And one night over a glass of sherry just got to talking and a chance remark on my part, led him to reveal that he was one of the 150 or so who received the summary court martials up there.

RA: Did you hear of that at the time it happened that some of the men refused to go back to work?

RR: Yes. yes. At that time several of the fellows visited me in the hospital. See we were taken from PC over to Mare Is Naval Hospital. I might have had a little more of my vision maybe, it took two hours to check the draw bridge between Crockett CA and Vallejo before they would permit any traffic across the bridge. And here again this may have been a godsend because during that two hour interim the hospital staff was alerted and brought in because they didn't know how great the casualties were and how

many people would naturally be hospitalized so that people were rounded up and brought in, they were on standby when we arrived in the buses from port chicago by police escort. I guess half a dozen of my colleagues visited me up until I was sent from Mare Is Naval Hospital to Phila Naval Hospital, which lasted from July 17 until 1st week or so in Sept. of 44.

RA: So you were still there then at the time of the work stoppage.

RR: Yes. And the contact was there.

RA: Were you surprised by that? Or what was your reaction?

RR: Not really, because I'm sure had I'been there I would have accepted the same type of attitude that was adopted by the personnel inasmuch as that 99% of the personnel there was people who volunteered for the Navy. Not until Fall of 43 did the Navy ever draft. It had always been a branch of the service that got its full complement of needed personnel. by way of volunteers. And these people had to be of good character and be able to pass physicals that was stringent inasmuch as color blindness was a thing that would cause the navy to turn you down. So you had to have recommendations. And this is the thing that the navy still does today. That you must get recommendations; And they check these recommendations out. It isn't just a question of putting some names down. They actually want letters from these people. They follow through on them. So with us feeling this way, we felt that what we were doing was far beneath navy personnel, inasmuch as they didn't have white personnel doing this work, unless they were doing in some skilled capacity other than the actual stevedor type labor at the lowest level. So we felt that this kind of thing that they had placed--the position they had places us in was strictly a way of letting blacks into the navy and getting optimum service at the cheapest dollar.

RA: So you were not at all surprised then or dismayed when you learned that the men had refused to go back there?

RR: On the contrary I was thrilled. I said, "go on brothers." And I needed something to lift my morale at that point and little did I know at that point that I was going

to be as bad off as I was because. I was fortunate to have a full captain in the navy to operate on me. And a captain in the navy goes from Captain to Admiral so you can see that this is at a very high level of skill. So my docotor was one of those people who was the best and who came to see me every morning and he too then brought some of this news. It was the talk of the coast. Because when the base was destroyed. They brought in the CBs and the CBs worked around the clock to get the base ready to continue its badly needed work. And of course here is one of the things that was (end of side 2) As I started to relate that I felt it was short sightedness on the part of the naval authorities never to ever attempt either at Mare Is or PC and, as far as I'm concerned, ever to assemble the personnel and address them from the standpoint of how important what we were doing really was. From time to time they send official out to Washington and give us the Navy E for Excellent production, bu t these people seeing us blacks would make these little cursory speeches and zap off they would go again. But hardly any ripple from the press. So I feel had the attempt to edify us as to what we were really doing and how important it was, then some of the complaints would never really have been voiced.

lack of motivation

RA: Do you recall in 1943 a group of men in PC naval barracks drafted a petition which they then, well I found in NAACP files in NY, it was a petition setting forth some of the grievances that the men had about working conditions, and the racial conditions at PC, and indicating that they hoped that there would be a change in navy policy. That I was in PC in 1943 and you was still in Mare Is then, was there any similar kind of thing that occurred or did you ever hear of any effort to get the men to bring their complaints about the working conditions and racial conditions before either the naval authorities or outside civilian authorities.

RR: No. I'm sorry that I didn't hear about this. In fact, this is the first time that I've heard about this now. But the men up there were--this doesn't surprise me--cause the men up there were of this caliber. And there was some nice fine young men up there who were dedicated to do what we did, but also were thinkers. And any number of us were educated. I don't include myself in this particular bunch, but

there were some college grads there and was glad to serve but these were the people who were revolutionary in their thoughts and so forth. Or if they hadn't been, they wouldn't have been Navy volunteers. To illustrate the point, that after the Joe Louis-Conn fight -- the first Joe Louis-Conn Fight in June 1942 I believe it was, that you can see then how quickly the navy opened its enlistment branch to seaman volunteers for the 1st time. And to show you how quickly this was filled by July the 9th ~~there~~ Done was 552, so you can see that we were really coming. When I left Great Lakes in Sept 42 there were 3 black Camps there, who were, here again, we were always segregated with the exception of powers to be which were white. There were a few black chiefs at Camp Robert Small then, for these were men who had come up out of the so called black gangs when the vessels shipped over from sail to steam that blacks were used to shovel coal and shoveling coal they ~~xxx~~ learned to be firetenders and firemen rather and water tenders and machinists and so they assembled these men and brought them up ~~to PChicago I mean~~ to Great Lakes ILL in capacities that had to be filled there because here again, we had to have hot water and so forth, laundry service and all the other things and naturally firemen had to fill these positions. So it was ~~a~~ pleasure to see some black chiefs.

RA: So there were some old timers around then?

RR: Yes. You could see the hash marks on their uniform, 16 - 20 years service.

RA: What about Mare Is, Port Chicago, where there any of the old time guys around there? Black -- well there were no chiefs

RR: No. at Port Chicago nor at Mare Island. None of these places had any blacks. At the time of the explosion in 44 they had no blacks that held a rank higher than 1st class. And most of these that held the rank of 1st class were 1st class gunners. Now we didn't know anything about gunners but since we ~~re~~ were assigned to naval ~~ordinance~~ ordinance it was fitting that these were the ranks that they chose. Now there were other, of necessity, ranks such as cooks and yeoman and here again you can see 2nd and 1st class personnel holding these ranks and storekeepers. But other than these areas, ~~then~~ we didn't have any 2nd class electricians, didn't have no 1st class

electricians. We did have one man who was 2nd, but when they appointed him 1st class they switched his rank from 2nd class electrician, because SINCE he was not really doing the work over the 1st glass gunnery.

RA: You would have still been there the time of the mutiny trial began, that was in Sept 44.

RR: Yes. most decisedly so. Most definitely.

RA: Did you get any reports of the trial itself?

RR: No not really until after the thing ~~had actual feat complete~~ was a fait accompli. Naturally the stuff hit the papers and so forth. One of the main reasons I supposed that the harshness was meted out to the degree it was, that the base was commanded by a ~~white~~ rank of captain. And after the explosion the admiral of the 12th naval district come out and tried to literally to persuade the men to go because PC was as far as importance went was the only naval port of this kind, that was dispatching badly needed ammunition to the pacific, and we shipped everything up there from M1 munition to ~~500~~ 100 1b bomb to 2000 1b bockbusters ~~(2)~~ to 16" projectiles, warheads for torpedoes and even depth charges for submarines. we ran the gamut in as far as the type of munitions that were utilized in the pacific. We had it all. So the base was really #1 in importance.

RA: You were shipping ammunition for all of the services was that right? It was just for the Navy?

RR: That's right. Yes indeedy. These materials would naturally go from PC to Pearl Harbor to other points that were retaken by the US and used out there.

RA: How did you find the morale of the men at PC during the time you were there?

RR: Surprisingly the morale at such a desolate place was good. Blacks ~~are~~ find ways and means to entertain themselves. We played some ball and did some boxing and things like this that made us happy and so forth, but in light of what you said, with them ~~happ~~having the ~~function~~ gumption to actually write a petition, and I'm glad to see that. We did have some high morale there.

Here again after the riot down at Vallejo CA in 42, PC also adopted a policy of trying to keep the military attitude prevalent inasmuch as drills were held and flagraising ceremonies took place daily. As far as the bands getting out and playing the Stars Spangled Banner this kind of thing, was actually done. One of the men that conducted the band there I had been stationed with him when I was assigned to mess hall when I first got down to the USS Neversail was a gentlemen who was a 1st class musician, gray hair on his chest even. But he had been shipped up to PC and given the rank of Chief. They made him Chief of boats, but with his musical skills he had the band in tip top shape and they did it every morning. It was a pleasure. When the flag ceremony took place wherever you were you ~~place~~ faced the flag pole at attention and actually saluted as the flag was being raised to the top of the staff. This really looked good to all who viewed it. Same thing would occur in the evening when the flag was lowered. It wasn't done by the band then but just the bugle. So once that bugle sounded you faced The flag, ~~stand~~ stood at attention and saluted again. That gave a beautiful picture cause even from the outside of the base as you would leave the base, you ~~are~~ were walking, to see these blacks in their uniforms doing it, it was really a picturesque thing to see.

RA: You mentioned earlier that you had volunteered for the service in ~~June 42~~, July 42 after you graduated from the 8th grade in June, you were at the age of 17? Was that a general thing amongst the guys in the area where you were of interested in the service or coming to .. going into the service?

RR: I supposed so. The first of my friends to go went into the service in Feb 42, and at that time the only blakks that were allowed in the service were coming in then by way of the stewards ~~made~~ mates d ivision. And he volunteered in Feb and then little by little the other guys either went the navy or the armed services. So..

RA: Was there an active recuriting thing by the services or was this simply at the initiative of the young black men ~~of the south~~ themselves?

RR: As far as I'm concerned, I don't kthink there was any attempt on the part of any of the service to actually go to high schools and other places to make an attempt to get blacks. I know they were doing this with whites but I never heard of it with

any of the blacks. It was just a thing on the part of us that went I guess to get in there and help to prosecute the war. My father really tried to dissuade me not to go and where I got the spirit to really go, I don't really rightly know. But my rebuttal to him was that I felt that if he ~~xxxx~~ permitted me to go then I ~~can~~ could have some hand in making this a better place for blacks to live in this country. I went so far as to say well that blacks were last to be hired during good times and the first to be fired. in bad times and if you permitted me to go I can go and put in my 20 years and retire and at least I would always have an income. So my father only finished about the 5th grade ~~and 7th~~ himself. This kind of proposition was no match to him and his wit and so he reluctantly gave me permission. to go.

RA: So when you went in then it was both, your feeling at that time was to make a career of it?

RR: Oh, most assuredly. Since I was going and interrupting my education, well, then I believed this gentlemen when he told me well that when you left the navy you could have something that you could do in civilian life, ~~and~~ but not until I told this ~~xxxxx~~ big prevarication about being able to operate a wench did I really acquire some skill that I could have carried on with when I got out of service.

RA: There was actually no real skills training at Great Lakes? What was the nature of the training there?

RR: Well, as we were leaving Great Lakes they were at that point opening some schools there, electronic school, which really was not electronics per say. Radio, cooks and bakers and later on they opened additional classes for blacks. ~~xxx~~ But that was virtually all they had at that particular point. But before I graduated they ~~xxx~~ actually had no schools existing at ~~xxxx~~ that point. They were just beginning as I said -- those people out of my division that went to cooks and baker or radio were -- you know, stayed right there. But by and large 80%, say 95% of all that graduated at that time were shipped out to Mare Is Vallejo, not Vallejo but PC or Port ~~Wynimee~~ Hueneme(?).

RR: Port ~~Wynimee~~ Hueneme that's where the CBs were located so that would have been guys going in to the construction batallion.

RR: Well the forces that we were sending there were just on loan to the CBs and the navy still has that policy now. But they weren't really using too many of US even in those days for this kind of thing.

RA: Did the CBs who came up to rebuild PC, were these black CBs?

RR: No. They were all white. Because keep in mind that the construction batallion, which CB stand for, this had to have expert personnel to get in there and do it. When I arrived at PC in Apr 42, they were in the process of building two new docks. And this was a very slow process, they had only civilians doing it. Driving the piles down into the bottom of the bay. It was a slow process. Well in a month's time, when those CBs came in, many they had the base ready... Because look we had to have a base. So the order of the president was that let nothing--stop everything and get that base opened. Cause as I said even today its the largest port for shipping ~~for~~ ammunition in the country.

RA: That's right. Yes. Do you know anything about PC today? what it's like there?

RR: I've been threatening to go up there, but in 1967 when the -- during the Viet Nam era war the navy department decided thru its powers of eminent domain to buy up the whole town I think in excess of 21 million dollars, you might want to verify the cost there, but I was listening to KFI, local radio station here, when one of the commentators did a brief ~~phone~~ thumbnail sketch as to why the navy did this because of the 1944 incident. So they felt it was a greater protection then to the civilians living there if they made the whole area a naval base. Rather than ~~for~~ permit the civilians to live there. So I've been meaning to go up there and see it, and just never have gotten around to it.

RA: Did you ever go into the town of PC while you were stationed there?

RR: No. There was really no need, because the 10th division was on the 2nd floor of the type of barracks we were housed in. And all the barracks were double deckers. And standing out on the quarter deck from up there you could see from one end of the ~~town~~ town to the next. And it was nothing. It was a strange thing to look at all this vast space. And very few trees, coming from a farm area, and trees and wild ~~life~~ life. This

was really hard on me, to see so little foliage and all this dry stuff. Really it was a sad place to look at. Esthetically speaking that is.

RA: Still very much that way. I've been up there a couple of times.

RR: Just take this back then 30 years ago.

RA: The City of Concord has expanded. In fact the town of PC doesn't exist any more that's all called Concord now. In fact PC itself, the base, is no longer called PC but it's called the Concord Naval Weapon station. In my visits up there I can imagine what it must have been like back in that period. Just looking at the terrain around, that hill that went up behind the town, you recall. But it is still a desolate area.

RR: Well as I said, fit that in the back drop then of the explosion had been really.. then you can see then why those people who refused them. Well "they said, ship us any where. We came to fight. Let us fight." This then was a privilege that was denied. And I'm sorry to be able to report this kind of dogmatic attitude on those people in charge. I hope that there is some contrition on those who, acting under orders, had to give the order. As I'm ashamed myself to as I said be able to report that these were the kind of conditions that our contribution was made, as far as WWII was concerned. Maybe this was a vital part and the part that we had to play, but nevertheless I feel that it would have been much more pleasant if I had to tell you what a heroic thing I'd done.

RA: This was part of the struggle too, I think. Was there -- as far as the quality of the officers there is concerned, I've gotten the impression that at least some of the officers there were sent there as reprimands, or perhaps they had had a run in with their superiors at some point along the way and punishment was to be sent out to PC or similar bases. Did you ever pick up any impression of that sort while you were there?

RR: No not really. Maybe I'm not or wasn't skilled enough at that point or wise enough or sagacious enough to see that. But this wasn't a thing that I could detect even at Mare Is either. I'm sure that many of the officers privately voiced the same kind of complaint that we did as enlisted men, that we were interested in fighting the war and

certainly we didn't feel that what we were doing really was getting that job done. The reason why I couch it in these terms on the part of the officers, since I indicated to you that from the captain down, or Admiral down, was it ever a time that these people didn't come up and try to dissipate some of this unrest by indicating why we were doing what we were doing. So therefore they themselves, I supposed, were not happy at doing what they were doing, but they weren't necessarily ready to have this dessimanated in the part of rank and file. Otherwise they too would have joined the mutiny.

RA: Do you recall who was Lt in charge of division 10?

RR: No. I really don't. I'm really sorry because he was a very handsome young man and seemingly happy at doing what he was doing. A Very pleasant fellow to look at. A big fellow, about 6'2" or 3" from Indiana. And he certainly didn't seem to have any animosity toward blacks. But if you do find out let me know as I would certainly like to look him up. The division leader was a guy by the name of Russo. I don't remember what his 1st name was, but Russo was a black from Louisiana, a big fellow and a very serious young man. Very handsome gentlemen, to see, especially in his dress uniform. So if you ever run across him, I'd like to look him up again. But he was the 1st fellow that I met when I was sent up there, to this place, under him. we took turns, I told you, at the flag raising ceremony, we took turns, and this was done with dress blues. We'd stand out there in our dress blues, and it really was nice to participate in. And to See Russo -- he stood well above most of us he too was a dude about 6'2 or 3. But as you can see Mr. Robinson and I don't represent anything near that much height. But we were feisty. And could have made better sailors had the kind of attitude existed today. We quickly would have rose in rank because this is indicative of what we're doing now. We certainly had to have some kind of base to operate from, otherwise we would be just also DONS, and I don't think by any stretch of the imagination that you would make that kind of an assessment of what we do now.

RA: I think that pretty much covers the general questions I have. I s there anything else that I haven't mentioned that you would like to bring up?

RR: Not really. I'm just so thrilled to find that you're doing it. As soon as I found your item. As I said, I came home that day and looked in the phone directory to try to find an Allen. Cause I would have called you that night. I got the local SF operator information, we tried to find you. And the one # that I did find that I thought might have been yours, I got no answer, so I wrote you a letter that night.

RA: Well, I'm sure glad you did..

RR: I've been so thrilled to see that the story now can be documented and put in some kind of perspective for posterity for people to see and so forth. Like I said I am ashamed that these kind of conditions existed and I'm glad that I have lived long enough now to see that the ~~part~~ path of the nation now has changed to the degree that they have. But to find that.. and I lost dear friends up there, b/ that were transferred from Vallejo up there with me. These were the kind of young blacks that made the conditions tolerable because of their attitude and ready to joke and make you glad to be alive and now to know that 3-4 seconds their lives were just ~~snucked~~ snuffed out. And then to have their memory ~~dispersed~~ besmirched with -- how dare you to refuse -- there was nothing said about this, The tragic loss of life. Where was the reporters there then, writing about that. These people must have, Also being skilled as they were, had to have some concern -- not only about the destruction of the base -- but the large (end of side 3) The night was one of those unbelievable things inasmuch as it was a full moon and the moon was as bright as it could be. And it was one of the things that when the explosion occurred I was trying to think of something comical derisive to say to the boys on the PA system. "Now hear this, quiet about the deck." And The explosion was the answer. When the explosion occurred I, too, felt like running, in fact I leaped off of my top bunk down to do just that, when the thought hit me, that we were told if you were ever in a bombing raid to crawl under something. So I then crawled under the bunk below me which was this ~~guix~~ gentlemen that I just told you, David Moss, was my good buddy and we were stationed at Mare Is together. I crawled under his side. When I felt it was safe to come out I come out calling to him. And somebody shouted to me, as I hollered "Moss, Moss,

come and get me, man, I can't see." And somebody said that damn Bob Rough over there he's always playing. And then the enormity of what I was saying struck me full and I started crying. "No, No, I'm not joking. Come and get me, I can't see." And people couldn't believe because in a sense the full moon being as bright as day, and up there with this empty waste land ~~in~~ PC as it looks today, it was just incrdible. Though the lights were out, you could still literally see and I couldn't. "I'm not playing this time. Come and get me take me to the sick bay." Somebody say, well the sick bay is blown ~~out of~~ zone Lord. "get me anyway, they must be evacuating the injured to some hospital." It was that kind of thing. Moss came to visit me, we got to talking about this and then he ~~rendered~~ to describe that the shells and this is the reason why I believe that this had to be sabotage. For example, now there was, and you may be able to verify this, I'm told that some of the ammunition was found six miles away. Now to get that kind of trajectory you've got to have some height. And this stuff did not explode then when it hit the ground. Why in the hell did it explode then, if it fell from ship top side down below deck? That's my deciscion. As I said, ~~I know~~ I'm no expert in explosives, ~~but~~ what was being loaded let's take a look at that. You had 5" shells, and 100 lb bombs on a ship that was almost ready to go out. So now if that stuff now gets that kind of trajectory to be found that far away, Moss said this stuff was falling all around him. But hell, then we had to have some other kind of thing to ignite that explosion. The ship ~~that~~ that came in that night was due in in the afternoon. The personnel that would have been working on that was in the movie. Some of the personnel that had to go down and tie up the ship and get it ready for loading had to be called out of the movie. So when a ship comes in to be loaded, it takes a good 8 hours just to get the ship ready, hatchways ~~must~~ must be opened, and ~~booms~~ booms set, and dunnage put down in the holds, and the carpenters got to go to work before you can start putting ammunition down on an iron vessel. You've got to have some wood down there. All this certainly would have taken time. But as we indicated earlier that this is an isolated ~~day~~ base. Bus transportation was very, very minimal. Now the captain and part of his crew had already come in after 8:00 in the evening and they ~~was~~ had

gone. I believe that that would be a place to look for a possible connection to some kind of point of sabotage. To wit, most captains stayed aboard their vessels until loading actually got under way. Cause they were interested in seeing how things were going and so forth. But I'm told that that captain was long since gone. Now I haven't been able to verify that but this was one of the things I talked about with those who came to visit me from bedside. Obviously we were interested in what happened, how it happened.

RA: I'll tell you one thing, one of the fellows , Waldrup in Washington DC, I forget what work division he was in--it wasn't 10-- but he also thought it was sabotage. He told me was that the security at the base at PC was very bad in this sense. He says that whites could come on to that base without proper security clearance. They could come on and drive around and he said in fact the very day of the explosion he had observed a sedan full of white civilians, come on to the base and were driving around up there. And he didn't know what they were doing, but several other men noticed it and were struck by the fact that here were these white civilians driving around on the base. So he said, in his opinion, the security was a very serious problem. Simply because of the racial situation. That is if you're black you couldn't come on the base without proper clearance, but whites could. And he thought also that this was evidence again that something was amiss and that it might have been sabatage.

RR: I have never been able to account for this depression that hit me, but let's dwell on this a little bit, by way of ammunition and how it was responds. The base was laid out in this way and I don't know whether the other interviewees made this discussion about the you talked about, topography of the base. To disguise the base from air, magazines were located underground. Railroad tracks ran through the base along in front of these magazines. And the magazines were built facing each other with the railroad tracks running in between with earth pulled up over them, with air ducts going down in and that was all you could tell, away from the area, that there was a magazine, and they were concrete platforms, steel doors, closed them in. So now with the kind of thing that

I described to you earlier everything from M-1 rifle shells to 2000 lb block busters. With as much force as .. and windows were broken out 50 miles away, the thing was heard 150 miles away, obviously this was a tremendous explosion. But why is it then that none of these magazines -- one magazine would have really destroyed the whole area. When I say area I meant for miles around inasmuch as the stuff that was there with magazines facing each other, it would have gone off like sitting ducks. One right down theline. A chain reaction. So that's what I'm saying then that we had to have some foreign force timed with which to do it. I will believe that until somebody in there show me otherwise. No accidents are in my view. Personnel down there was experienced. As I said, inspite of what took place when we refused to go back to work and so forth, we also took pride in what we did. We were good personnel. There was no play down there. It was -- the incredible thing is to find this youthful personnel being able to do what we did. In checking -- see/the navy said that what we were doing up there, by way of what we did. They weren't passing out those ~~accommodation~~ commendations for naught. What peeves me is that they treated us in the manner in which they did. And that's the thing that ~~hurts~~ irks and crawls into my craw and makes me want me to regurgitate. (end of tape)

Cr'ed 7/24/80 ✓

Interview with MR. Cyril Sheppherd.
Oct 20, 1977

RA: Actually maybe we could start a little bit earlier than that if you just tell me a little about -- this is your home NY, right? You came up here and went to school here and all. Well tell me a little bit about your background before you went into the Navy and how it is you came to go into the Navy.

CS: Well, I was drafted. I didn't have any choice. I wanted to go in the army. I think it was about 13 of us that went down to the induction center at the same time and all of us was running right behind one another--we all trying to stay close so we could be together. No two went the same place. And then when they got to me they just sent me over to the Navy office there and next thing I know I'm in the Navy. I didn't want to be in it.

RLA: So this was the.. when did they actually institute the draft? Because some of the guys that went there were enlistees. right.?

CS: some of 'em I know that I was drafted.

RLA: So you had .. had you finished school then? Or waht..?

CS: Finished high school.

RLA: What high school did you go to?

CS: Dewitt Clinton Finished high school in 1941 and then they took me in there 1943. I was in the Navy.

RLA: So you went directly up to Great lakes then?

CS - No, I went to Virginia. They put me as a ~~mess attendant~~. Because now they change it around and give you a new name. They call it the steward's Branch. And I was on board a mine sweeper.

RLA: What was the name of the vessell.

CS: YMS 165 Yard mine sweeper 165.

RLA: Where was it based--do you remember?

CS; First, it was new ORLEANS. And then they came north, we used to operate out of Bostonharbor there. When ~~they would leave~~ over ____ they would have general quarters,

my station was on the A 20 milimeter gun. So the captain liked the way I shoot the gun. So, I TOLd him one day, I said, listen. I see where they got black men at Great Lakes ILL in the seaman's branch. I wanted to go there. See, when I come to fight, I don't want to come fighting with pots and pans. And so they had me transferred to Great Lakes. Then I went to gunnery school -- 4 to 6 months.

RLA: So that would have been in ~~44~~ ?

CS: Yes, 44 -- I never heard of this place port Chicago but they sent me there.

RLA: Now, what ~~t~~ did they tell you in Great Lakes in terms of what -- you wanted to go into combat duty or...?

CS: I wanted to get on board a ship , yea. I was on a ship but then I wanted to get back on a ship. I liked it out there.

RLA: At Great Lakes did they tell you that was going to happen?

CS: No, they don't tell you anything. They just send you thru training, then they ship you out. Ship everybody out to different places. Well, they had mine picked out for me.

RLA: How long was the training at Great Lakes/

CS: Maybe about six months there.

RLA: And that was gunnery school and what else?

CS: Boot training and gunnery school.

RLA: So after six months there then, Now, Great Lakes that was the main training base there for the Navy for black and ~~wix~~white right? But it was ~~segregaki~~ segregated.

CS: Yes, it was segregated.

RLA: They had a name for the black component -- Robert Small camp.

CS Yes, they had three camps. Camp Munford, Camp Robert Smalls and another camp I forget it now. We left there, all the guys shipped out to different places. And they sent me--I was in charge of the drafts, see I was.. I had the highest mark. I come out of this shcool and made gunnersmate 3rd class. But I never did wear the stripe. So nobody

really knew what I was. All they knew was that I was just another sailor. So when we get to Great Lakes It just goest by the luck of the name. My name being sheppard. The guy says ~~sheppard~~, Martin, Ross, was two guys named Martin two martins and a Ross and then you step forward and they put them in the 3rd division. They were upstairs By my name being Sheppard, Smalls and some other guy, put us in the 4th division ~~from the~~ downstairs, See on this ship you go around the clock. See, it's just like they built a railroad and the railroad .. see like this was the railroad here and ~~once you're~~ one ship would be over here and another ship be over here. We load this ship first. I didn't think no ship was that deep./ This is at Port Chicaco or.. ?? CS: right? We're loading them things right on up to the brim. Right to the top. And I TELL YOU THIS. Them guys didnt have anything-- they didn't have the training. They didn't know what they were doing. And I'm standing up there boy, and they got them big bombs, bombs, you can't even get your arms around them. Great big ones You hook the winch on there and bring it out, yank it off--bam! Hit ~~the~~ that steel railroad car. He just yank it off -- both sides, ~~and~~ bam! bam! bam! I said "man goddam ~~you~~ cant you do better than that?" HE SAYS "Oh, many don't worry about that. I felt the same way when I first come. But these things ain't got no fuse in them." I say "I don't care about the fuse. They got TNT in them." Now nobody really knows what ahppened, How it happened. Cause they had an investigation. They had nothing to go by. It wasnt even splinters left out of that thing. No flesh. It was ~~x22~~322 guys lost their lives there. And they was all friends of mine. It wasn't nothing enough to send home to bury.

Discounting 'S ship sank

RLA: Had you worked on those two ships?

CS: Yea. RLA: It was the Quincy Victory and the EA Byron.

CS: I never did know the name of the ships.

RLA: I thinks that's was it was. The Brian was the one that they'd almost finished loading. Quincy Victory was the one that just come in. You worked on the day shift then?

CS: Yea, I'd gotten off at 8:00 that night. You worked from 12 til 8. The same truck that bring them to work would take us back to the base. I know it was 8:00. I got out there 8:00. The ship blew up about 10:15.

RA: You were in the --which division -- CS: 4th RA: So that was LT. Delucci and CS: Yea, that's the guy. Lt. Delucci. He was a no-good son-of-a-bitch. He was-- I think he was an ex-professional wrestler. He just spent half the day wanting to knock somebody down. He was like the.. I guess he could beat up everybody. He was a Big professional wrestler. I ~~know of a number of times~~ He was always challenging different guys. "If you Think you're big enough, come on out here, step forward." and all that kind of stuff.

RA: Was there generally a lot of racial friction there, in terms of the of the officers towards the men?

CS: Yea, it had to be. This was an all black base. I have been in the Navy a couple of years--almost. I'd never, that's the first time I'd ever seen a base like that. I didn't think that they existed.

RA: What do you mean??

RA:CS: All Black! The only whites ones there was the officers. They didn't have the white men doing that stevedore work. And I resented it, too, because I went to school for gunnery. I didn't come to do stevedore work.

RA: What was the feeling of the other men there?

CS: Well, they didn't have much feeling. They knew what it was, they could see what it was. Nobody had much -- on that base -- nobody had ~~that~~ much schooling. They Just got all these guys together and dumped them all over there, to do this kind of work.

RA: You went there--how long were you there before the explosion?

CS: I was there a couple of months, I think.

RA: Did you get to know--who was the petty officer there, the black petty officer--Joe Small.

CS: Joe Small, me and Joe were really tight, yea, we were together all the time. See, they tried to build a case around likehe was the ring leader or something. And they tried to build it up on me too, saying I gave advice, telling different guys what to do. Make it seem like we forming a mutiny. IT was nothing like that. I told them guys that--I don't care what nobody does. Whether we go back to work or don't, it don't matter to me, cause

I ain't going. So they use these things--they use that kind of stuff, as if I'm going around--me and Joe Small going around trying to influence other guys. I never even went nowhere.--they all came right to the bunk. And they--"what you gonna do?" Hell--I don't care...I know what I'm gonna do. I ain't going.

RA: This was after the explosion?

CS: This was after the explosion.

RA: Was that Port Chicago or _____

CS: Port Chicago.

RA: But they moved you up to Shumaker?

CS: Yea, they moved us to Shumaker. ~~up~~ Then we went to Mare Island. They kept us -- they kept everybody there, while they're rebuilding the base. While they went and rebuild the railroad and brought in some new ships. I say what they hell they can't find nobody else to do this kind of work?" I told ~~myself~~ Them ... I ~~don't~~ want to be on a ship anyway. PUT me on a ship and let me fight out there. Take my chances there. see lose your life on somebody else's negligence. Them guys yanking them bombs back and forth, back and forth like that. And they're smoking cigarettes. Big Sign "NO SMOKING" ~~and they're smoking cigaretts~~. Guys standing up there smoking.

Discussing no smoking policy

RA: Well, who was responsible for enforcing the safety regulations, like the NO Smoking, or like the training? Did anybody have training for this kind of work?

CS: Oh, nobody had training for that. Those white officers--cause they're only officers there--was white--half dozen of them, They would bring you ~~it~~ down and then you don't see them no more. They bring you ~~it~~ down, then time we start to working boy, they -- gone; they're making it. Yess sir.

officers enforced

RA: That was the division officers? What about people like the ~~Holdman~~ Holmon, the loading officer -- there was a couple or three white officers who are supposed to be working down there

CS: Yea, but we never seem them. RA: They weren't around either?

CS: No, man. Like when those two ships blew up. I don't know if there's any white officers lost their lives.

RA: Well, I think there was one white lt. And of course, the only other whites were the merchant seamen that were on the ships. And the coast guard--they had a fire barge down there, I think there was white guys on there. Let me ask about this-- In the trial testimony, I THINk it was Olive Green--at the trial stood up and said they forced us to race against each other. Was that going on?

Competition

CS: Yea, ~~hell~~, yea. That was going on too.

RA: How'd they do that. How could they .. What was the reason?

CS: I think they were tonnage minded. Some many.. I don't know, the officers there must have been trying to get credit to their name or something like that by loading so much tonnage.

RA: Did they talk about that--the officers? Did they say..?

CS: Well, they didn't talk to us much. But they used to ~~.. yea~~ come on out once in a while on the line, ~~y'know~~ and make you go faster. I used to always try to be the last one to get down on that ladder. See, they had a ladder as tall as this building. See how high up in the air we are? You look down there, get on top of that deck and look down. Jesus Christ! And them guys used to come down there like monkeys. They would slide down their hands on the outside of the ladder. Like the firemen, ~~you know~~ in the station house. I would come down like this . Them guys stepping all over my hand. They are in such a hurry to get started.

Description

RA: Well, why would the guys be in a hurry to get started?

CS: Well, I guess they... I don't know.

RA: I mean why would they go along with it, say if there was competition what was the reason for them.."

CS: They didn't have too much smarts up there. ~~As a~~ on the whole base and nobody got a rating. ~~Sman~~ Seaman 2nd class, every body. I remember the guy that was in charge of the place, came over to me he said, hey, they made a mistake with your rating. They got you down as Seaman 1st class. So I looked at him I says, "yea, they do have me.. they have made a mistake. Because my rating is gunnersmate 3rd class. I say ~~See~~ all them other guys that came with me, them other five guys, they are seaman 1st class. When

you come out of school they give you a rating. You should have seen the look on this man's face. Hes in charge.

RA: This was Captain Kinna

CS: No, he wasn't no captain. This was another seamn 2nd class. See, what they had they wouldn't give the blacks any rates and the Seamn 2nd class guys running the whole barracks. He's in charge. So he come over to me says, they made a mistake down here. I says yea, they did make a mistake. I'm not seamna 1st class--them other guys are seaman 1st class. I'm gunnersmate 3rd. This man act like he want to grab me by the throat. Can't understand how this could happen. But they just wasn't giving away any.. You know, they just saving money, man. Didn't give nobody no ranks.

RA: Was there much compalints about that amongst the men?

CS: I didn't see many people complaining.

RA: One of the things that Joe Small said at the trial, he said before the explosion the men got together, he didn't say how many times or where or how, but there were a couple of times to talk about the blue jacket manual .. Well he didn't really say much beyond that. CS: Blue Jacket manual? RA: Yea, that was that manual of regulations and so on. Did you know anything about any of that?

CS: No. See Joe was there before me, before I got there.

RA: Cause I was wonder was if the men were considering that they didn't get ratings and a lot of them like yourself didn't want to be there in the first place, you couldn't get transferred (CS: No they got you there. You stayed there.

RA: So I was wondering if the men were getting together to I don't know maybe get a petiton or something like that.

CS; That's what we got together. Decide to excercise the American Way. getting a petition together.

RA: When was that?

CS: This was after the explosion. And we felt we couldn/t... we got the peition together and everybody signed it and then the Navy Department.. see they brought

in those investigators. they would bring this in. See, first of all, it was 735 men. that initially refused to go to work. See when they called us up and then they would have us in front of the barracks, and we know, when you march down here if you make a left turn, you're heading towards the docks. See but the docks hadn't been built up yet, so we never went that way, we always make a right turn and they drill us for a while. So when we got down there when that guy--when that officer gave the column left, boy there was confusion right then and there. Everything was all jumbled up and together. Guys bumping up on each other. And a lot of them was crying. They didn't want to go down there. Thenthey brought the chaplain over. He started talking, come on fellas I'll, go with you and all that kind of stuff. We know that he ain't going to stay there. All them officers, man, they get you down there and then as soon as you get down there and start working, they're gone. So, each time when they would bring a high ranking officer to talk, more and more of the fellas would leave. I said there was 735 and every time like the chaplin get finished talking then they'd have about 720 left, then the commaniding officer maybe another 100 or something like that would leave. So them when it got down to Shumaker Calspan where they had the whole bunch of us was makeshift stockade .

RA: Was that at the Rio barracks in Vallejo?

CS: No, not there. This was RA: Oh yea, that was after. CS: Yes, see we were in Vallejo before the mutiny. We just quartered there. We would go to Rio barracks RM We would go out on liberty every night. But I think it was Shumaker, yea, because it was a big wide open space, and they had this y/know mutiny going on. What they call a mutiny. It was just guys refused to go. So then they brought this Admiral over. I never seen an Admiral before in my life. I still only see it once. And he was a These crackers, come out there, he they say-- tallk, lanky guy. Admiral Wright. He said: "And just in case you'all --you want to know who I am, My name is Admiral Wright, I am the commandant for the Third Naval District. And he says, " they tell me that some of you'all want to go to sea. He says I believe that's a goddamn lie. He

say I don't believe none of you got enough guts to go to sea. He had us right around like this. And he must have had about six machine guns on jeeps, pointing right dead at us. He told..this admiral told the officer, He says alright you count to ten and whoever is standing up there when you get to ten, I'm going to let you all know that I personally will recommend mutiny and death will be the penalty because this is during war. So then he started counting. Like I said 735 guys, only when they got finished only 50 was left. ~~When~~ If it wans't so important then it would be funny. Because.. when he started get to 8.. 9.. man, them guys, I looked around them jokers were leaving, knocking you down to get the git. When that man said 10, they had a wave of men--knocked the officers down by mistake. They Couldn't see .. water all in their eyes. Finally was only 50 left. So they got us then they gave the other guys the Like I said 735 minus 50 alright, they gave the 685 kind of court martial...

RA: summary CS: Summary, they got summaries and they used them to testify against us. They give us the general and use them .. The Navy Department..~~fix~~ they ~~were~~ would bring~~ing~~ guys in one at a time and then they were building a case against Joe Small andmyself. Like we.. ~~were the~~ ring leaders of this mutiny. And they would investigate these fellas there, make them change their stories. And say, now didn't he have a list? y/know all kindsof shit about the list. We were only just trying to do things the way that we were taught to do.

RA: That's the petition, you're talking about?

CS: Yea. RA: Well, how was the petition circulated? and what did it say?

CS: I can't remember what it said. I guess it would say something like, we the undersigned, refuse to go back to work.. or some thing like that.. I can't remember. Cause it wasn't that important to us in the 1st place. But the y make it like.. they built it up like it was a big thing.

Petition Re Navy

RA: Yea, well in the trial they said that was the refusal--the work refusal list. They never called it a petition. They never... Who got that together though?

CS: I can't rembember.

RA: Do you think it was Joe.

Small CS: I don't think so. I can rembmer him walking around like that, talking to different

guys and all that kind of stuff. But they.. it wasn't ~~like~~ nothing like what they tried to make it. I remember they used to ~~xx~~ come and bring you in ~~the~~ to question you. I wrote out a statement and give it to the officer. And a week later he calls me back in. He's typing and evrything. "WEll now, hey uh.. Sheppard, you can sign this here." I said "I already signed it." I ALREADY make my statement and signed it." He siad, "well this is essentially the same as the one you have already signed-- this is essentially the same-- so you just sign this one." I say, "now wait a minute. If this is essentially the same as that one , why don't you just let mine go ~~any way~~ in the way it is. I said I anin't signing nothing. I ~~didn't want to~~ already sign that one that I made up. I jsut made the statement.. I signed it. And they want you to come back.. they want to chnge it around for you. They ain't trying to do you no favors. you can gurantee you that.

RA: But you did ~~wix~~ write out a statement? But that was not the statement that was brought to the trial when..

CS: They had to bring that one to the trial, because I wouldn't sign any other one.

RA: The records that I've seen, they said that it wasn't the whole 735 who refused ~~the~~ at first. ----------I think they said 258 or something likethat. CS: no!! RA: they tried to say not everybody refused.

CS: It was 735 guys refused.

RA: So after that then, that's when ~~th~~ you were put on that barge. ~~Xxx~~

CS: Yea, we was on a barge.

RA: Tht was for 2-3 days on the barge. What happened there, anything that was..? Wasn't there one meeting of some sort on the barge?

CS: I cn't remember, nah-- I GUESS ~~WE'D~~ I had enough of them meetings. We never did have a real meeting in the first place. They make it sound like sinister meetings and all that kind of stuff. ~~I just said:~~ No, I ain't going back on that damn thing. Why don't they Get them some whiteys and put them down in there. I said, hell, I'm a gunneryman. They teach mehow to fire guns, I'm supposed to be on a ship. Now they got me I'm a stevedore. Only thing I'm not getting stevedore pay.

RA: What was in like there in general. Aside from what happened. What was a typical day like in Port Chicago.

CS: You get up in the morning , we would start 8:00 we would start. 8;00 on that ship. start to working. Nobody stops either. No breaks here. This was solid work. Go down in that ship and you build yourself all the way up. Just packing. til you find yourself way up on top. that's the way they do.

RA: What can you do on your liberty time?

CS: Liberty--we would go out -- go recreation-- go to SF. Well, we play a little basketball. Liberty--go to SF.

RA: You could get over to SF? What they had a bus or something? OR you just had to get there, the best way you could?

CS: The best way you could.

RA: What was SF like in those days. What was there to do there .

CS: I guess it's mostly like what it is now I guess.

RA: Was there any kind of black community there or.. places where you could go and that sort of thing?

CS: Yea, yea, what they called the Fillmore District. Yea, we'd go on out there and go to bars and that kin d of stuff, girls, you know.

RA: Did you get any leave time. Beside from just the liberty.

CS: No, I didn't see nobody get leaves. This was a workhorse base. Nobody get no leaves there. Something else. We had a guy there name Glenny, see if you don't tow the line, you don't get down on them ships.. I think Glenny, Glenny was there before I got there, but he never worked. Anytime you see him they're taking him to the brig. Cut your hair, you know, bald headed. HE never saw the inside of one of those ships. He wasn't going to do it. Time he come out of jail. They give him a couple of days to get straight, and when they come for him, they just pack up his bag and go on to jail. He's in NY I see him once in a while. He sell vegetables on a wagon, push cart.

RA: Do you know his last name, was he in the 4th division or..

CS: Yea, he was in the 4th division. Glen. His last name was--we called him Glenn. He was out here in Harlem on 141st somewhere around that way. I met him down during the summer time, we talked about an hour and a half on the corner here. He told me I never did get on one of them ships... I said, you never got one? I never been on either. Never in my life had I been down to that docked. I started thinking, I said, I never should have the first day either. I don't know what I was going in for. All I know is, there wasn't no guns there. But for me to be working on ... and I just come out of school and that's what they're going to dump me off on. Now, let me tell you something about that explosion, like I said, I got back at the base maybe about 8:15-8:30 I was sitting on the toilet--I was reading a letter from home. See, there was two explosions. The first one knocked me clean off, I found myself flying toward the wall. I just threw my hands up like this, then I hit the wall. Then the next one come right behind that, phooom! knocked me back on the other side of the wall. The cats was screaming man and lights went out and glasses was flying all over the place. I got out to the door, everybody was... that thing had.. the whole building was turned around--caving in, we're a Mile and a half away from the ships. And so, the first thing that came to my mind I said JESUS Christ, the japs have hit. Cause see we was fighting the japs. I could have sworn they were out there pounding us with the warships or bombing us or something. But .. one of the officers was shouting "it's the ships, it's the ships!" So we jumped in one of the trucks and we said let's go on down there--see if we can help. The man got halfway down on the truck and stopped. The guy was shouting at him from back of the truck go on down, what the hell you're staying up here!" there. The guy says, can't go no further. See, there wasn't no more docks. Wasn't no railroad. Wasn't no ships. And the water just came right on up to the.. all the way back. The guy couldn't go no further. Just as calm and peaceful. I didn't even see any smoke.

RA: Were you injured in the explosion?

CS: No. Couple of the guys.. well one guy there that guy Olie Green. I was hoping

6/1/e Green

that they wouldn't ask him. But I know they were going to ask him. We got up on that stand there and he had an arm in a cast at that time. And I was hoping that they wouldn't ask him how he got his hand hurt. So finally the man says, anybody want to ask him any more questions. One of the guys say yea How did you injure your hand? This guy was 38 yrs old and he was the first guy on the chow line all the time. And he say, I was running to the chow hall and I slipped on the stairs. Everybody ø in the courtroom broke out laughing. I said, ~~Well~~, you sonofabitch you make a real clown out of us. I caught that guy in jail and I whipped the hell out of him in jail, too. I was thinking about that the other day, I say, hell ~~every~~ only fight I had that I couldn/t hit the guy in the face, because everybody would know that you were fighting, couldn't hit him in the face, and we couldn't make any noise. 50 guys there just fighting. 48 was watching and no noise. See, the guard sit at the desk there, he's got a long cell block and it's a _____ like. Desk here you know. then he's got the cells here, and cells here. But then it goes down here. Where this is out of view. The man sitting here. So once we get back here this man can't see anything was happening here. So we had to get back there and we fighting. Fighting in silence. Can't hit each other in the face. Cause I wouldn't swing at his face anyway. But I know they had to wrap him up. He told the doctor that he slipped on the stairs again. I know I had him walking sideways for a long time. They wrapped him up, cracked his rib.

RA: So they had all of you there together. Separate cells or how did they have it?

CS: Well, cells. Some of em was in bunks.

RA: How many were you?

CS: 3 tiers. The bunks were 3 tiers. But the cells, two men in a cell.

RA: That was at...? CS: This was at the Naval disciplinary barracks. RA: Mare Island?

CS: No. This was San Pedro, Calif. After they had..

RA: Oh, this was after the..

CS: Trial, after they've found us guilty. This was ~~were~~ where we did our time. That's another thing, see, they put us in one of those forced marches. I never did like the idea. They

took us.. they got us handcuffed. Now each one of us is carrying that damn, that big .. the record of the trial. That alone is heavy. Plus our gear. They wouldn't let us ride. They marched us. Cats was ~~following~~ falling down. I know them whitey's was laughing, having a good time. ~~They~~ We walking behind the truck.

RA: This was when you were going to San Pedro?

CS: Yea. right. Themmarines there, you know marine guards. See marines handle all the prisoners. in the navy. They call us niggers all over the PA system. Bust you upside the head in a minute. ~~How~~

RA: How did you feel about the defense that Lt. Feldman and the other guys...?

CS: I forget his name, what was it--Feldman, I think. RA: Feldman or something like that. He was the chief defense lawyer. There was another... What did you think of..?

CS: I thought that he.. well there are certain areas where he.. where he couldn't go but so far. ~~That's my first~~ That's when I first saw Thurgood Marshall. This was an open court. Maybe 4-5 newspaper men come in and sit down. But then I noticed this colored fellow coming in everyday. And he's the only one there that wasn't takin g notes. Seem like he must have known what was going to be the conclusion. He didn't even bother taking notes. He just sit around there.. And after about 4-5 days of that I noticed that he spoke with the .. our head chief counsel. They closed the court room with him in it. And them Marines, the guards, they looked around, our officer told ~~him~~ them to step outside. They didn't want to go. He says "our prisoners' here." He says I said for you to step outside. Almost had an argument right there. Because they want to hear everything that was being said in the courtroom. Especially with this black man coming up there. ~~He~~ He didn't know ~~in~~ who the hell this guy is. We didn't know him. ~~Course~~ Course, I'd read some of the work that he'd done already. He was Chief speciall counself for the NAACP. And some different cases throughout the country. Cause I used to get Pittsburgh Courier, and Baltimore Afro-American,wherever I went, I always get it. I always see something in there about Thurgood Marshall. So I did know.. I didn't know who he was when I saw him, but then he came in and he told us, "well I.. I'm Thurgood Marshall, I'm the Chief Special Counsel for NAACP. And we have taken an interest in this case, and we're watching this..I'd like

r

to take over the case. He was going to take it over right then and there. So then they had a meeting, you know, a vote and so most of them guys say it looks like this Lt. here is doing a good job. So they let him stay on. So then Thurgood Marshall say ok I'll stay around here for another couples of days we'll see what happen. And when we were found Guilty then he took over the filing the brief, filing the appeal and everything.

RA: In the defense, did this navy Lt who handled the defense did he come around and interview each man individually. Or, what was the strategy of him putting the defense together? HOw was that figured out?

CS: Well, I really don't know. Can't remember that. I know that I guess he would start off with the statement that you'd made. RA: He had a copy of the statement.

CS: Yea, and he worked around that. Looked like nobody did have a valid reason not to go except that guy Olie Green, because he did have his hand in a cast.

RA: So, it was decided then that the strategy of the defense would be ...

CS: Well, first of all, they are trying to prove that what we did, we did it for trying to exercise our rights as citizens and all that kind of stuff. But those jokers gave us 15 years/Did 22 months.

RA: That was at San Pedro ? CS: yea. RA: What happened when you got out?

CS: When I got out, see by my name being Sheppard, they was starting from the A's -- they would let out 5-6 at a time. So when they got to me me and Joe Small, we're together all the time, when we got to the base, we were riding for about an hour in the truck. Where in the hell are they taking us? 5-6 men together. Where in the hell are we going? We got on the Navy uniform and everything--could still see the base. Read the base, it said, some kind of what in the hell you call it, you know a bases where they send guys back and forth, you know, out. Send them home and send them different ships and all that kind of stuff.

Release

RA: Like the discharge or for processing.

CS: Yea, so I see all these guys, taking showers and getting all cleaned up. I ask some questions of the guys. He says oh yea, we go out every night. I say yea. We aint

been out in almost two years. So I waited and waited and waited. I was in charge of the draft I says to one of the bosun's mate I say we've been here for about an hour hour and a half, sitting over there in the corner, or sitting on top of our bags. Where is our bunks? See all the other guys have bunks, where is our bunk. He say, well you ain't got no bunk/ We've got a ship for you . I said you've got a ship already? ~~ain't got no bunk~~ I said guys been here 8 or 9 months waiting for a ship. He said yea well they already found one for you. Yea, ~~the Revelry~~ a regular Shangai/You know So then finally when they put us in the wherry, I forget the name of the ~~____~~ Wherry. Going-going getting dark. And we're going underneath the Golden Gate Bridge. I said where the hull is ~~look at~~ this ship this guy talking about. And sure enough I could see an aircraft carrier ~~way~~ the hell out there. You climb aboard, rope ladder, climb up there and as the last of the five or six men I had with me, as the last man got on top of that ship I can hear them winch bringing up the anchor.

RA: What carrier was that?

CS: IT was not one of those big ones that you can remember. IT was one of those ships that they made into a carrier. Auxiliary carrier. Shot us overseas.

RA: So that would have been 1946?

CS: Let's see, now when'd we come out? We must have come out of there, let's see the war was over in 1945. So it was a few months after that.

RA: So you went right overseas?

CS: Right on overseas. RA: Where idd you ship out to?

CS: Well, there was a little confusion there too. We was supposed to go to New Caledonia. And after we was out, we out to sea for damn near 30 days, this Captain called me upstairs and says you're supposed to go there, we were going there, but we've had our orders changed. We're going now, we're going to Okinawa. So when you get to Okinawa you have to take these orders to the office and then you will have to go there. When I looked at the map, in hi s offices, it looked like, it seemed like this was Okinawa, we had started from SF over here in a line like this, and this took 30 days.

He showed me where I had to go. This is where you are now, you've go to go here. I said, you mean to tell me it took us 30 days from here to here and now you're gonna send me here. I said well do you have a ship going from there to here? He say, No. You just have to get one going that direction. That's the way they did us. Every time we looked around I used to tell the guys, all you do is use one outfit, dungarees, just use one. That night you're gonna wash it, then get up in the morning put them back on. But keep everything tied up ready to go. Cause you never know when the hell they're gonna come. So we went to about 3 or 4 different islands like that, trying to get here.

RA: Now this was Okinawa you were trying... CS: No RA: You were at Okinawa

CS: We're at Okinawa, in order to get to ~~New~~ New Caledonia. When we got over here, Guam, ~~the~~ a guy come running in there said "Goddamn you guys sure is lucky." I look at him I say "we lucky?" I look at hime and say yea we sure is lucky. So he say you cats ain't been here but 3 days and your're on the draft going to the States already. I say I thought he was kidding you know. ~~states~~. So I got down there and looked at the names, holy mackerel, I run out and get them other guys. They've made a mistake, see we're supposed to spend one year overseas. That's ~~the~~. like...

RA: Like probaby CS: Probation, yes. We got to spend that overseas. We just left SF and we're coming right back to SF. Yea, we come in there, they ~~find~~ found out they send other guys away, I don't know where they went. They wen t to Alaska, Iceland all that kind of stuff. So I was the last one. I was determined not to go. I say damn I aint going to. Put my name up on the wall and I was working in the cleaners. They found out I ~~got~~ they called my name and if you don't be there miss that draft, your name is on there and you ain't there, they call you. And then they come get you. So everytime they call my name out, Id be out there w-w-h-i-s-h zoom. -- all the steam Nobody could every hear my name being called. So when they came to get me, the officer say "look what do you mean yea we had him about four times this man was up on the draft to go out there and he never went. I say well we never heard nothing like that ..... I say that's right. I didn't see my name up there, working in here all the time. So

so took me upstairs , he say alright you come up there and so I went up there and there was a young kid, just come in the Navy. So he says, a white guy, you know, he's making out these papers When he come to my record, you know every body's records look like this you know, my look like about this high. With all that stuff. So the guy said: "this is your service records?" I said u-hum. "Goddamn," he turned another page, he said "a general court martial?" Now, they've never seen nobody with a general court martial, got a summary court martial. but you don't get no general one. And then he said, "mutiny?" Oh god have mercy. Look at this." Then he called everybody in the office. Hey look a Joe, Jack. Well one of them felt sorry for me and sent me on home. So the y~~ou~~ so then I'm going to NY me up. RA: To NY huh? CS: Yea, they trying to send me to Iceland, I wind up in New York. You know my discharge, when we got to the Naval base at St. Albans. The officer got enough nerve to ask me would I like to re-enlist. I said oh lord have mercy! You don't know what you're talking about. ~~They run up to me~~ Then right up to the very last minute, I had my fingers crossed. Cause I figgered something gonna go wrong. The very last minute, when they call 'em. See they got you seated alphabetically. So they call your name and you shake ~~the~~ hands with the Chaplain and he hands you your discharge. So when they come to me, like my name is Sheppard, he say something like Williams--Williams?? Now everything was in order and ~~ain't~~ when he got to my name, they call ~~me~~ by the wrong name. I say, no that's not me. I knew something else was going to happen. So then they said oh--- ~~my~~ mine was the only one they had underneath the desk. Mine discharge doesn't say, like the dischrage says "Honorable Discharge" from the United States Navy, that's the way it's suppose to go. But mine just say Discharged from the US Navy. Then a real small line says, "under honorable conditions". So that was the one they had underneath the desk. That was mine. RA: But it is an honorable discharge? CS: Yea.. I folded it up just like it is a newspaper. I folded it up like that, put it in my pocket. I think I still may have it.

RA: That would have been .. what year was that then?

CS: 46. I come home the summer of 46. August.

RA: Did you ever meet or talk directly with Marshall.

CS: No. You know he didn't realize it but everytim e he came over. See this guy was so nonchalant, he was.. he walked right in there, And he stuck up a conversation with one of the reporters--a woman, nice looking borad y/know. It looked like everyday he's riding.. she's got a convertible car. I think he must have taken a plane out there. They would come to the courtroom in the morning, ~~including~~ and got to lunch, and then come back and finish up the end of the day. Then he would ride with her again you know go out there.. Every single time he got in the car with her.. The marines soon as they took off, as soon as they go out there, ~~he's just got his leg cross~~ the marine would say detail "Tention!" I say here we go.. Double time. Then he'd run us like horses. Up down, just idling. It didn't bother us because we know that they had to run too. You know the guards. They be running boy with them rednecks with the water running all down their back. Man.. they kept us in good shape.

RA: Did 22 months, then ~~went~~ out for a few months. floating out there around in the Pacific.

CS: See, my whole Naval career was a little different from everybody else's. Because I went to two boot camps. See, when I first went in 1943, they sent me to Viriginia, where you go through about a one month boot camp. Then they send you out. So when I got the ship in New Orleans and then I was on the ship for about six months before I got transferred back to boot camp again. Right away I started in Great Lakes all these new guys, and I'd already been in the Navy about 8-9 months already when I went to this boot camp. My dungarees was a little different from theirs because it's been worn. And aboard ship you just tie them on a rope and throw them over. It bleaches it cleans them. So everybody got these brand new dungarees on and I stook out like a sore thumb (end side 2) They wasn't about to give me any more dungarees. And I wasn't about to buy none cause I didn't need none. There were good, but it just that faded because of the salt. I had a twisted naval career all the way.

RA: Waht have you done.. when you got out and came back here to NY

CS: Yea, I worked in the subway, took the civil service exam. Then I left there , went to Albany, was there about six-seven years. I drove a bus for the city. But when my mother

was sick, Iknew she was dying so I came back.

RA: Are you working here?

CS: Rightnow , I'm not working.

RA: When you look back on this whole thing thathappend out there in Port Chicago? How do you feel about it?

CS: I don't even think about it. This story here that i"m telling you, you know, I've never told this to anybody. ~~I mean you know~~ men talk about ~~the~~ Rear stories in the army and navy.. I don't say nothing. I never even told my son.

RA: You've never seen or had any contact with the other guys except for..

CS: Once in while you bump into the guys you know. Like little Willie Banks. I heard he went to Chicago and K.C. Dixon that was my budy. He worked with me all the time. They tell me that he got an arm cut off.. But I would have liked to seen Joe Small. But I never seen him....

RA: Was he the same ~~xx~~ age, was he older..?

C:S: Yea, about the same age.

RA: I'm trying to locate him. Well, I'm trying to locate all the guys.

CS: Joe from New Brunswick.

RA: New Brunswick, yea.. that's where he was from orginally, ~~now he died~~.

CS: He was.. I think he said he worked on a farm. His father ~~~~ had a farm. He was a hell of a guy. The guy could fix things you know. When they put us to work out there, he used to , he was always fixing things. They should have sent him to school to learn something. That guy could be out there working in that San Pedro place there, he'd go out there, our work is outdoors, and Joe used to, in no time at all, ~~xhxd~~ he'd have a washing machine, ~~xxx~~ washingmachine that's been discarded, can't work He makes it work. Joe was good with his hands. He should have been anything but what they had him doing. They just disregarded black people. "Put themniggers down there at that ammunition place." That's what they do.

RA: During that 22 months at San Pedro, did you all have knowledge there of the campaign that NAACP was organizing?

CS: See, that white woman, I never did know her name, RA: The reporter.

CS: Yea, she would come up and visit us sometime. She'd come from San Francisco and I guess she took the train. But she'd come out there cause this is in San Pedro, this is southern California. And every once in a while she would come out and give us "haveheart" Marshall doing so and so and he asked me to come by and say so and so..

RA: Is tht so? ~~CSx~~ That's interesting. I bet I know who she is because in looking at thenewspaper accounts Inoticed that there was a whole series of em written by this woman reporter. CS: Yea, it must be her. RA: And that her articles are the only ones, that quoted Thurgood Marsahll. The other reporters, you know you would never have know that Thurgood Marshall was there.

CS: That was ~~it~~ her.. Nice looking ~~girl~~ broad.

RA: Was she very young or how old was she?

CS: Oh, I'd say she was about his age at that time he was about 30.

RA: Maybe I can find here ~~xhexex~~ then. She worked on a SF paper.

CS: That's right. She come from SF.

RA: I was very impressed with her reports becuase ~~it~~ they seem very fair, and they were the only ones where you got someidea of ... She would reprinted his statement. I guess he must have had a press conference.. and she reprinted his..

CS: Yea, I tell you she was driving him around. So You know they be rapping.

RA: Do you have any of your papers, photographs, things of that sort from that ime?

CS: No.

RA: What do you think has been the main effect of this on your life, looking back on it?

CS: I don't know, I just threw it out of my mind. Like it didn't happen. I know ~~that~~ what ~~it was~~ Those marines ~~what~~ they did to us, crack guys upside the head for nothing. All kinds of punishment....for nothing.

RA: At Port Chicago you're talking about or this is at Sa Pedro.

CS: No while we got the... at San Pedro they didn't bother you much. That was a big base. It must have had about 3,000 men up there. Them smaller brigs were where they used

to take advantage of ~~them~~ you.

RA: During the trial you mean?

CS? During the trial. During the trial they did a lot of things to us.

RA: Would you have handled the trial differently looking back on it now?

CS: I wish that we would have let him handle it -- Thurgood Marshall. But I don't think he could have won it anyhow. They wans't going to let him win it.

They don't care what--how good the defense lawyer was. Them guys sitting up there, they disregard every damn.. everything according to law. They just disregard it and do what they... One time, one or two times, ~~the other~~ our lawyer would get carried away and ~~we would~~ get one of the officers up there and be mailing it to him I see the guy stopp and look at ~~you~~ him and then he'd have to back off. They did what they felt like doing.

RA: Did Delucci lie on the stand?

CS: Oh sure, sure he lied on the stand. a lot of times he lied. I remember him saying that he heard the guys, he heard the men saying "let's dont work for the white mother fucker." I didn't hear that. And "we've got em by the balls." Yea, but when he get on the witness stand and they ask Lt Delucci, which one said that? He can't say that. Maybe it wans't one of the 50 there. IT COULD HAVE BEEN one of the 735.

RA: In fact he admitted that he was facing the other way, when he supposedly heard this statt. CS: Yea. I wonder is he still alive? RA: How old is he then?

CS: I say he must have been about 26 at that time. ~~16~~ 26 - 28 something like that.

RA: Well is there anything else you can think of that you can say about this?

CS: No, I can't think of anything. I know I had a hell of a feeling when they came into the brig and had us all lined up there and they had machine guns all around us. And telling you that you 've been found guilty by general court martial been sentenced for 15 years. Well, my knees almost hit the ground. I started counting, I said "damn, 15 years." I just had my daughter, just born too. You see.. all that... I never got paid, the 22 months, I didn't get paid, plus my wife wans't getting any money either, because they done ~~go~~ cut the allotment.

RA: And that would have been true for all themen?

CS: Sure,all of us, all of us. yea. Whoever had dependents they cut it.

RA: Do you know if the men who were killed in the explosion, if their dependents got insurance money.

CS: I don't see why not.

RA: I would have thought they would. But so far I haven't found any evidence. I 'm wondering if in fact they got the insurance money?

CS: I couldn't tell you about that.

RA: Well i think i've asked all the questions i had. If I think of somemore say over the next month or so it's possible I'll be coming be this way to work on this if I can stop in again CS: Yea.. you got my phone #. RA: Because as I work on it and think more about I may .. Also, I should tell you you're the first of the fellas there that I've been able to talk to about this.

CS: What you couldn't contact nobody else?

RA: I'm trying to. You got the letter I sent out. The way that worked by the waay was ~~RA~~ the when I went down to the Navy Dept I said I wan t to talk to.. They said, well we can't give you the addresses. But finally they said what we'll we do is if you ~~will~~ won't write a letter. We ~~will~~ give you the address, but we will send the letter out the the last address we had.

CS: I imagine lot of the fellas, they've moved. RA: That's what I'm worried about.

RA: Your's is the only one that came back so far. There maybe when I get back some more.. But your's is the only one who came back.

CS: I wish you could get a hold of K.C. Dixon, put down, Kenneth Carlton Dixon. That was my best friend out there. I've tried to find out where he lives... I can't find him. I sure would like to see old Joe Small too.

RA: I tell you well if I find them, I'll let you know. I sure will. I'm going to really try. What I'm doing is the first step is this mailing I did through the Navy. If that doesn't work I'm just going to start going through the telephone directory. Cause I know everybody in the trial transcript they have alist of where everybody

was born or what was their home town at the time they entered the Navy. So I'm just going to start with the relephone directory in the home town and start looking and hope I can either find the fellas that were there or either their children, their kinfolks or something like that. Locate them that way.

CS: I guess a lot of em not alive any longer.

RA: Well, most of them ~~are~~ were like you kind of young fellas. I mean there were a few older guys like Ollie Green..

CS Ollie Green, yea. Smith. a guy name Smith. Smith, he was the only one that.. he was ~~RAxxxSmithx~~ about 30 at the time and he was the only one that refused to talk. When they had these investigators, they got us quartered but you know, and then they would call you

RA: THis was up a Shumaker?

CS: Like Shumaker, yea. Every time they call ~~xx~~ him in, he say he ain't got nothing to say. He didn't even make a statement. He say I don't want to make no statement. He didn't want to talk, didn't want to do nothing. They didn't like that. They made sure that they gave him 15 years. See, mine is 15, but they cut it to 12. Gave him 15--made sure he got 15. Cause he didn't talk. He didn't try to cooperate, in other words. I would tell him, what I tell you. It wasn't what they wanted to hear. See they try to get you to talk about somebody else. They trying to build up a case against somebody else. That's what they wanted to hear, well what about so and so. Look I don't know nothing about so and so. All I knows about what I did. I didn't give a damn what theydid to me I wasn't going back --I wasn't going ~~that's it~~. I don't care what they hell they did. I can remember those guys that died, Martin, Ross, laughing all the time. There wasn't enough of them left to stick cigar butts. Then they got enough nerve to ~~xx~~ tell you, come on, and do it all over again.

RA: The 4th division, did you--after the explosion you all stayed there to clean up?

CS: No, we didn't do no work at all. /You moved right out to.. CS: Yea, Mare Island.

RA: Because some of themen they kept there to actually clean up. after the explosion.

CS: Yea that place was all twisted around. I keep thinking I looked at sort of once in the Daylight cause at night time you can't see too well. Looked at the building done turned completely around. They never will find out what happened. Sabotage or what..

RA: What they found in that investigation they couldnt didn't know what caused it. The burden of what they said though was that they said it was -- well, they try to blame the men, carelessness not being concerned about safety things like that because see, Captain Captain Culch Goss who was the Cammander for all the Mare Island, and the Captain who was head of P.C. Captain Kinne, when they had the investigation, they were up there, they called them interested parties but it meant like they could have been defendants. they could have been charged with negligence. When I Read that report, the only people who testified in that was the white officers. Andthey had the white marine guards come and testify. They had people who were witnesses of variousxkinds. types. I think that in that whole investigation of the explosion, they only had three black men.. One of them was a driver for one of the white officers. Who was basically, I guess they had driven up on the pier or something, that afternoon or that evening before the explosion _____ and he just testified that he hadn't seen anything. Then they had the guy who taught.. who had the winch school, the Jolly Roger winch School, where they taught the guys how to run the winch.

CS: Did they have a school?

RA: That's what he said. He said that he came in and testified as to how they train them and so on.

CS: I tell you, That guy lashing on to the bomb. Bringing it out to the door. bam! bam! Jesus Christ, man. Don't you know how to work this thing? /That happen all the time?

RA

CS: Sure, that happen all the time. Them guys on the winch they have the net down there and you hang on them bombs and them little boxes and everything. But you see how them guys do. See you've got to take it off the peir bring it up on the side of the ship, and then bring it down, you know. all the way down. Guys be down on the bottom loading them up on starboard. Guys used to say b-b-b-ba-a-a- that's the way they used to do it. Start off speeding from there up in the air, he didn't get _____ evenly to Get there and steadily _____. Then get this far from your head, It's a nightmare man.

Safety

and stop it.

RA: Well they didn't call any of the enlisted men to testify. Nobody from any... they said only three men. I don't think they called anybody like from the 4th division, the division you were in. The men who actually did the loading. They didn't call them.

CS: Hey you want a drink or something?
RA: Well, That'd be mighty nice

RA: Some additional notes:

Cyril Sheppard is a light-skinned rather pawnchy guy who reminds me of Jackie Gleason of about 10-15 years ago except his eyes certainly have a haunted look or perhaps that's just my imagination. One thing he said after we stopped taping. He was talking about being at San Pedro when the news came that the war had ended and that they were (the prisoners) sitting up in the stands up on the sports field while the Marine guards were out marching around and the word came in so that the prisoners learned it before the guards did that the war was over and he (SHeppard) upon hearing the news shouted out the guards, "hey, guys we did it again" which infuriated the guards. He 's got a daughter who is 34 years old, who's born just at the time that he learned of the sentences, when the sentences were handed down, shortly before or after. He's got a son who is 25, whom he's never told about Port Chicago and what happened there at all. Another thing, at the conclusion of the interview Sheppard asked me about publishing the book and financial remuneration. Although he didn't use that term, I indicated that if the book is published and I get an advance, I would be willing to share the proceeds with the informants who helped me.

###

CYRIL SHEPPARD interview 10/27/77 ANNOTATED INDEX TO TAPE
158 West 132 St.
NYC 10027
212 AU6-3518

copy 1

SIDE 1

017 LACK OF CHOICE
Was drafted into Navy, "had no choice." Wanted to go into Army
(Said some men at P.C. enlistees)

038 EDUCATION
Finshed DeWitt Clinton H.S. 1941, drafted 1943. (home town: NYC)

050 FIRST NAVY EXP. & GREAT LAKES
Sent to Virginia to serve as mess attnedant aboard mine sweeper (YMS 165)
Operated out of New Orleans, later Boston. Had exp. with 20mm gun
Requested xfer to Great Lakes, wanted training for Seaman's Branch.
Went to Gunnery School for 4 mos. in 1944 (maybe 6 mos., check) (108)

88 ARRIVAL AT P.C. (WANTED TO GO TO SEA)
No previous knowledge of; wanted "to get on a ship."

107 GREAT LAKES (DESCRIPTION) (GRIEVANCE ABT RATING)
126 Had highest mark; rated Gunner's mate 3rd class, but never got a stripe.
143 FOURTH DIVISION
Placed in divisions by last name; in with Small (Joe)

155 LACK OF TRAINING FOR AMMO LOADING (among men) Verify
Desc. of rough handling by winchman
166 DISCOUNTING OF DANGER (by winchman)
("these things ain't got no fuses in them" Don't worry, I felt the same way (f.e. fear) when I first dame here", said winchman.

172 CAUSE OF EXPLOSION UNKNOWN

177 KNEW AS FRIENDS MANY OF DEAD

182 HAD WORKED ON SHIPS
Came off duty at 8 p.m.

201
CONFLICT WITH OFFICER
201 DELUCCHI "a no good son of a bitch." Ex-professional ~~boxer~~ wrestler "He just spent half the day wanting to knock somebody down; he was always cha llenging different guys, "If you think you're big enough step out here," all that sort of stuff.

215 RACIAL FRICTION -- RESENTED STEVEDORING WORK
It had to be. Discusses segregated structure of ranks and officers; hadn't seen this before. "They didn't have white men doing stevedoring work; and I resented it too, because I ~~didn't~~ went to school for gunnery, I didn't come here to do stevedoring work."

226 LACK OF SCHOOLING AMONG MEN

240 ACCUSED AS RING LEADER
He and Joe Small were "tight." Accused of advising the men. Said he told men he didn't care what they did, but he wasn't going (back to work). Said men did come up and ask what was he going to do. Criticized prosecution ~~xx~~ for using this to make it seem he was advocating/agitating men not to work.

Verify

also 445

CY SHEPPARD 2/2/2

260 Stationed at Shoemaker while base repaired.

263 ANTICIPATION OF RETURN TO LOADING (AFTER EXP)
Notes new ships being brought in. "What the hell, they can't find nobody else to do this kind of work?" I wanted to be on a ship. "Put me on a ship and let me fight out there; take my chances out there. Don't want to lose my life due to somebody else's negligence.

271 SAFETY WARNINGS NOT OBSERVED.
Said some men smoked despite No Smoking sign

277 OFFICERS LEFT PIER
They would bring you down and then we wouldn't see them no more. Sez also didn't see loading officer.

297 COMPETITION (RACING) IN LOADING
"They were tonnage minded." Officers wanted to get credit by loading so much tonnage.

317 Described how men used to slide down ladder rapidly
WHY? Answered men "didn't have too much smarts."

325 COMPLAINS ABT LACK OF RATINGS (SENSITIVE ISSUE)
(S. seems especially sensitive abt not having rating he thought he deserved) told anecdote abt this. (Makes point of distinguishing self from other men, although expresses that lack of ratings was
337 a general problem. NOTE: I should watch for tensions among men due to sensitivity abt ratings and education differences -- perhaps also regional and rural-urban.)

345 Sed other men didn't complain. "I didn't see people complain." (Then how did he come to know how they felt, if he did?)

352 NO KNOWLEDGE OF PRIOR MTGS

364 LIST WAS PETITION (I used term first)
Said men were exercising their rights in signing a petition after the explosion

375 Describes what happened when "column left" order given, confusion
INITIAL REFUSAL PROCESS at least partly becasue always went right before since dock wasnt built up. Says some men were crying, they didn't want to go down there. Chaplain brought over; other high ranking officers. Men began leaving ranks of refusers. (Claims there were 735 refusers initially but this seems more like the total # of men there before exp.)

WORK STOPPAGE 400 Describes this as "guys refusing to go (work)" rather than mutiny

409 Admiral Wright speaks. Quotes Wright's "you guys have no guts" speech. Describes jeeps with machine guns. Wright had officer count to ten and
WRIGHT'S SPEECH said men who continued to refuse would be charged with mutiny and death sentence recommeneded by him. Describes how most men hastily left refusers' ranks.

435 MEN USED AGAINST EACH OTHER (PETITION/LIST)
Some of men who left refusers' ranks and were given summary court martials were later called to testify against "mutineers"
Says they made to change their stories; describe petition as a "list"
Describe wording of petition: We, the undersigned, refuse to go back to work..." or something like that. It wasn't that important to us, but they built it up into a big thing"

463 STATEMENT
He wrote out a statement; another statement was given to him to sign (He refused). Indicated his original statement was brought to trial

CY SHEPPARD 2/2/2 3

490 REMEMBERS NO BARGE MTG (RACIAL SEG; RESENTMENT OF)
Says men never had a real meeting. "I just didn't want to work on that damned ship; let them get some whities and put them down there." Besides I'm a gunner; but here they have me a stevedore but I'm not even getting stevedore pay.

UNDERPAID

SIDE 2

005 DESCRIPTION OF TYPICAL DAY (WORK ROUTINE)

023 LIBERTY/LEAVE
Played basketball, went to San Francisco (get there best way you could, no bus) wnet to bars in Fillmore looking for girls.

S.P. controlled access to women

055 STORY OF GUY WHO NEVER WORKED ON SHIP
Glenny always refused to work on the ships, was constantly in jail (and with shaved head). Says Glenny now in NY, sells vegetables from a wagon. Says he was in 4th Div. last name Glenn(?) (Not one of the accused.)

095 EXPLOSION AND AFTERMATH
Was dazed, bldg damaged, thought was Jap. attack. Officer shouted "Men, it's the ships, the ships!" Jumped on truck with other men
140 and drove toward pier, which was destroyed, could see nothing but water -- no ships, not even smoke. He not injured.

145 OLLIE GREEN ANECDOTE
Injured hand running to chow line. When he testified to this in court everyone broke out laughing. S. thought: "You son of a bitch, you're gonna make real clowns out of us." Later S. caught Green in jail and "whipped hell out of him" while other 48 men watched this (silent) gfight. (NOTE: It was Green who shouted out in court that men were being forced to race in loading.)

verify

195 IMPRISONMENT AT SAN PEDRO
Describes forced march with each man compelled to carry gear and heavy record of trial while walking behind truck.

verify

230 OPINION OF DEFENSE
Certain areas where he couldn't go but so far.

235 THURGOOD MARSHALL
First noticed him at trial, because he didn't take notes.
S. had read of Marhsall; he used to get Pittsburgh Courier and
275 Baltimore Afro-Am. Marshall offered to take over case but men voted to continue with Veltmann. (Now wishes had let Marshall take case: Side 3, 180

290 STATEMTNTS/DEFENSE STRATEGY
Said Veltmann had copy of statements made by men

307 RELEASE FROM SAN PEDRO, descrpition of.
363 Was supposed to be shipped to New Caledonia; but instead wound up in Okinawa, then Guam, and through lucky break got shipped back to SF. (Sed was supposed to spend one year overseas, 400)
(One year probation).
415 Describes how ducked drafts; then sympathetic young officer shipped him out to NY.
440 Discharged "under honorable conditions" from Navy

With whom?

Picked up at S.F. by aircraft carrier

CY SHEPPARD 4/4/4/4

465 MARSHALL
M. rode to trial with white woman reporter (NOTE: Could this be Mary Lindsay of the Peoples Daily World?) This incensed marine guards who forced men to double-tiem to the xxxxxxx cells. (NOTE: Mary Lindsay articles mentioned on p. 15 of research log.) (She reported Marchall's statements.) This didn't bother us because we knew they (the guards) had to run too.

verify

490 STRESSED DIFF. IN HIS CARREER: WENT TO TWO BOOT CAMPS

SIDE 3

015 LATER LIFE
Worked in subway in NYC; then moved to Albany for 6-7 years and drove a bus for the city. Came back to NYC when mother became fatally ill; not working now.

040 WHAT MAKE OF IT ALL NOW? AFTEREFFECTS
I don't even think abt i t. I never told this story to anybody. When guys who were in the service get together to talk, I don't say nothing. I never even told my son (who is 25).

055 CONTACT WITH OTHER GUYS
Once in awhile you bump into someone. Like little Willie Banks, I heard he went to Chicago.

075 JOE SMALL
Says he worked on a farm; was a fixit man. (Fixed washing machine at San Pedro

100 KNOWLEDGE OF NAACP CAMPAIGN
White woman reporter brought news to San Pedro of what Marshall wa s doing.

150 MIAN EFFECT? (REPRESSION)
I don't know; I just threw it out my mind, like it didn't happen.
160 Complained abt mistreatment by marien guards during trial, beatings.

180 MARSHALL
Now wishes they had let M. handle case, but doesn't think he could have won it.

200 SAYS DELUCCHI LIED abt hearing obsenities. He thinks D. was in mid-20s.

230 Described near-collapse when he hear sentence, 15 years. Thought of daughter who was just born.
240 NO PAY WHILE IMPRISONED AND NO BENEFITS FOR WIFE, for 22 mos.
(Allotment)

2 88 Says Kenneth C. Dixon was his best friend at FC. Wants to see him again.

305 Says Smith was only one who refused to talk(Was also abt 30.) to investigators.

330 Says he wasn't going back to the ship, I don't care what they did.
385 Says rough handling by winch happened all the time.
408 SOME OBSERVATIONS OF SHEPPARD's APPEARANCE, and reaction at San Pedro when war ended. 442 END

Sheppard interview -- Properties to vary in theoretical sampling

Born and raised in northern city

High school education

Draftee

Refused to lead, and persisted (i.e. "mutineer")

Accused as "ringleader"

Grievances --

- Not given full rating
- Dangerous working condx
- Racial segregation

EDWARD L. WALDROP
4531 Dix, N.E.
Washington, DC
202 398-2840

Interviewed 12/9/77

~~115~~

025 REFUSAL: "We didn't refuse to work; we ~~refused~~ wouldn't work on that base." Describes racial set-up at PCNAD; carpenters, officers white

045 LACK OF SECURITY AT PC: "Whites could come on and off that base anyway they want to; and if you were black you had to show your ID (also 100, 442) blks were base guards (at main gate)

073 TRIED TO TELL INVESTIGATOR ABT THIS (didn't know was talking to prosecutor) (110 "He talked to me as though he was my lawyer") Called in one at a time; "evertime mentioned abt these cars coming on the base, this would be squashed." Said "You can't use that"

135 BLACK CAR incident; Saw black coupe when leaving work shift morning of explosion, no markings. Whites in it (~~134~~) (343) (358)

200 Description of refusal (vague) "We said we would work anyplace except that base." 255 Said he would go to Mare Island and load ammo.

275 Coakley (?) an older ~~guy~~ greying man.

285 Men discussed what Coakley had asked them in interviews: "Man what kind of questions did he ask you?) etc

286 TRIED TO GET WALDROP TO FINGER SMALL
Sheppard and Small considered leaders, had some education. (H.S.)
302 Some guys had worked on construction jobs, knew abt STRIKES
314 Interview with Coakley: "You were born in S.C., weren't you?" "No I was raised in S.C. but I was born in Georgia". "You went to school in S.C., didn't you?" "Yeah I went to sch there." "Well, these guys, they don't mena you no good. Why don't you take a summary court martial?" "Well, why don't you just send me overseas... etc. (discussion of black car) 383 What did he want in return? "He wanted me to say Small was the leader." Waldrop refused: "Nobody's making me do nothing." ~~"Well"~~ "Somebody has to be the leader." "Well, you don't need a leader to know what's going on on the base."

415 ARRIVED AT PC 1944, 6-7 mos before explosion; previously assigened to Mare Island.

424 COULDN'T GET RATINGS AT PCNAD

451 COULN'T GET TRANSFERS

460 RECREATION (not so bad) Went to SF, Oakland on liberty. (Pittsburgh was Army town, got into fights if went there.)

485 PRoblems between officers and men -- no blk officers, even chief petty officer

505 Was DRAFTED. They needed stevedores in the Navy and the Army needed foot soldiers. Marines didn't want any blacks.

SIDE TWO

013 9 weeks at Camp Robert Small, then to Mare Island to load ammo., then xferred to PCNAD.

WALDROP INTERVIEW 2/2/2/2

SIDE TWO

063 Complain abt lack of security? "Who you gone complain to? All the dirty work (inc. punishment) was done by Blacks." Main gate gaurds were black. Never saw white marine guards.

093 PC WAS SABOTAGED, Waldrop thinks. Thinks Navy also knows, but "can't let that get out, that they made a mistake (re security)" "Would look bad."

131 Description of work on pier. Says ships could be loaded in 1½-2 days

157 PACE OF WORK: They expected you to do so much in 8 hrs.

195 ~~200~~ MEN WOULD SLOW PACE OF WORK (as form of protest). "You couldn't strike; you couldn't quit, you'd just slow down." (Also slowed to regulate pace of work.) (or to protest food cutbacks?)

240 OFFICERS ENCOURAGED MEN TO RACE (reward was liberty)

283 WORK SCHEDULE: week 1: 12 - 8; week 2: 8 - 4 pm; week 3: 4 - 12 (swing)

305 NO MTGS BEFORE EXP.

315 PETITION (turned in to Section leaders — 2 upstairs in barracks, 2 down) Before explosion, requesting exams for ratings. Got lost in the shuffle (nothing was done abt it)

340 They had to put mutiny on us, we had bucked the biggest branch of the service. Here you got 50 black men bucking the biggest, richest branch of the service in the world.... Naw, man you know they can't have that. You wouldn't go for that yourself.

354 In Barracks during exp. His Division was scheduled to go on duty at midnight. (2nd Div. Lt. Tobin). Had just come off swing shift the week before. (This means 4th Div. was working 8-4pm shift). After exp. men were gotten together by section ldrs, officers came over, roll call. Then shipped out to Shoemaker. Men in top bunks were frequently hurt, Waldrop was in bottom bunk.

410 got man with arm in sling and asked him to work.(Gill?) (Men went by last names, usually)(or nicknames)

418 Used to see Ollie Green, 15 yrs ago.

435 No discussion before work stoppage. Men thought: Well now we can at least get away from that place. But they hadn't even finished building the pier back before they talking about we coming back to work. The cat was getting out the bag about that car stuff. Complained abt whites coming on base and using cameras, enlisted men not even allowed to have cameras on base. Two or three guys cameras they taken at the gate. They had a sqawk abt that once or twice

470 Recalls list being circulated but doesn't remember details.

480 MISTREATMENT (when they found out we not going back to work): They started to treat us like a bunch of cattle. (Put on barge designed for 75) Couple of fights ("Scrapples") (between men and guards?)

Waldr op 3/3/3/3

495 FIGHTS: There's someone on the outside who's goona push and there's someone ~~on the inside~~ who ain't gonna take that push.
in the crowd

500 Had To ORGANIZE OWN FOOD PREPARATION/SERVICE (Smalls organized this)
Cooks, servers, cleaners

SIDE THREE

025 Gave men lighter court martial to turn against Small.

050 Men organized selves: We had it set up so anything they wanted us to do we could, so they couldn't go back and say we wouldm't do it

085 Burned his copy of trail xscript: "I got tired of having it around here."
Navy

100 Defense lawyer got material from us and used what he wanted to. We didn't know who our lawyer was going to be until we got in court. Not mtgs with defense beforehand.

165 BARGE MTG: Sez Small told men(186) if we stick together can get xferred, get out of this mess, get onto some kinda decent base. If we stuck together they couldn't kill all of us. They ain't gone jump up and kill a few hundred men. (due to public opinion/world opinion)

210 Didn't expect mutingy charge; thought they would break up the divisions and xfer the men

250 Didn't know would be charged with mutiny until after the 50 singled out.

263 No mtg with Thurgood Marshall or anyone from NAACP

272 Reference to white woman reporter covering trial at Treasure Island (and other rptrs). This fact that rpters were there "got out" and that's how Marshall came to trial.

300 Not allowed to talk to outsiders during trial.

310 Imprisoned on Treasure Island during trial. Sentences delivered in prison,

340 Served one year at San Pedro then shipped out to Okinawa, along with Small, Sheppard, Green (and guy from Baltimore)

370 Said story is like Custer.

429 Got in fight with Ollie Green: I asked him for a cigarette. He said something abt my mother and I popped him. (This at San Pedro)

More problems

455 Was pretty good grp of guys, we stuck together. We didn't fight too much among ourselves, we kind of looked out for each other. Guards would make it hard for all if one messed up. Didn't socialize much with other prisoners.

482 Spies (plants, white and colored) placed among them at Treasure Island. So didn't trust anyone outside of the group.

500 Description of life at San Pedro. Generally worked together

Waldrop 4/4/4/4

SIDE FOUR

020 That bunch of men stuck together better than any group of black men I've ever seen.

050 Govt. unable to prove mutiny

083 That base was worser than some place in Mississippi.

120 Town of PC jim crowed "worse than mississippi;" severla black sailors involved in fights there.

coded 7/25/80

Interview with Edward Waldrop - 12/9/77

EW: At that time the Navy was prejudiced, it's still prejudiced. You know that. The thing about it is we didn't refuse to work, what we did say, we wouldn't work on that base.

RA: On that base? or on the ammunition loading?

EW: No we wouldn't ~~xx~~ work on that base.

RA: Why was that.

EW: Well the set up was like a this here. You had nothing on land on this base ~~for~~ but negroes except the carpenters?

RA: They were white, white carpenters right?

EW: Yea. Officers. The rest of us were black. Usually you had quite -- so you could see whites ~~xxx~~ coming in and off that base anyway they wanted to, but the blacks you had to show your identification and all that. ~~xxxxx~~ But you can't prove that. But when we got before the guy that prosecuted us, see he called us in one at a time. I don't know what he said to the rest of them, but when I tried to tell him what I had seen about a week before this explosion, he told me.

~~XXXX

talking as ~~those~~ though he's my lawyer. When we get's back to where we're staying I think it's Shumaker. Each time he would call us--~~each~~ one of us in and ask us ~~if~~ these questions all over again. But everytime we bring up about these cards..

RA: Cards? to come in on the base.

EW: ~~To come~~ coming in on the base. This would be squashed. He'd say, can't use that. Yet whites could come in on base on Sunday week-ends. Coloreds couldn't come in there see. You had colored guards at the gate. White wouldn't stand guards so ~~xx~~ the coloreds stood guard. White people just walk in there, I guess. You had a lot of southern~~ess~~ boys in there, They ~~it wasn't up to~~ wouldn't question~~ing~~ a white man too much. And specially officers, there wasn't no questioning them. And I tell you what we got off the ship, we had just finished our shift, in other words the explosion happened about 10:00 that night I think it was.

RA: Yes, close to 10:30.

EW: So we had the 12 to 8 shift. When we come from work that morning from the dock that morning we see a car come in there, a black coupe, at that time they made them old coupe cars. Black with no mark or nothing. So that's why everybody, ~~xxxx~~ the whole ship, I think I was with the 3rd section--no 2nd section.

RA: 2nd Division.

EW: Right. So the whole division ~~had~~ seen this, see. But I ~~believe~~ after they threatened us, they brought some admiral, I don't know who this guy was but they brought him in there. He say well I hope they take everyone of you out there & kill you.

RA: That's what he said to all the men when they were assembled.

EW: Yess Well see at that time we had left and went back over there. What's this little place across from Mare Island.

RA: Vallejo?

EW: I believe it is Vallejo. And we was down on this little flat down there, where the navy had a part of it, see on the other side of mare island. We was down, but we're further down on the base than the island.

RA: You were down there on what they called Ridge St. Barracks

EW: Well see after the come up there and they couldn't talk us out of that, so it was a hundred and something of us, in other words the whole division. on the 1st floor, cause we were on the 1st. And after they couldn't talk us out of that, so and that's when they moved us over to ... They brought in this admiral. So we tried to explain it to him. They got it down to around 60 men. All but 60 wouldn't go back to work. So then they moved us out in the barge--~~went~~ put us out in the water. We stayed out there for ~~about~~ awhile, all jammed up. So we still wouldn't go. So then they moved us from there to Shumaker. Now we never refused to work. They even brought Lt. Tobin in , they brought the other Lt. -- can't think of his name, something like Shaw.

RA: Delucci?

EW: I believe that was his name. Lt. Delucci, and another guy. Each one come in there , ~~talk to~~ ask us individually, would we work? We said "yes, we would work." But not on that base." We would work any where except that ~~place~~ base there.

So when he come in there and speak to each one of us individually would we work, we never refused that. He asked us would we go overseas. We said yes. Would we go over to Mare Island and load ammunition. We Told him yes. Another place they had ~~these~~ an ammunition dump. Would we go there? We Told em yes. Would we go to Norfolk? Told em yea. But we wouldn't go back down to Port Chicago. And everytime the reason come up and we give it to him, what we had seen on that base, that would be squashed. They'd debate that answer. When we left there went to Shumaker, that's when I seen this commander who I was telling you about was prosecuting...

RA: Cokely? Was that his name?

EW: Not sure. He was kind of ~~reddish~~ greyish looking man.

RA: He was an older guy?

EW: ~~uhh~~ yes. He might be dead by now. Well anyway. See, now he never did explain it to us. He never did say well I'm the prosecutor. He never did tell us that. At least he never did tell me, cause everytime we went over to be interviewed, we went separately. So what we could do, ~~we tried~~ to ~~prepare~~ compare notes ~~from~~ with each other. Like when I come back I say man what kind of questions did he want from you, then you tell me.

RA: Did he try to get you to turn against the others, or anything like that?

EW: Yes. See what they want to do, see Small was supposed to be the ring leader. What they wanted to do they wanted to hang numbers on ~~xx~~ Small. Small.. shep..

RA: Sheppard was considered a leader?

EW: Yea. Now see these guys ~~d~~ had a little education. Small had a pretty good education. Sheppard had a pretty good education. Boy from Tennessee, I think McGee, ~~and~~ he had a pretty good education. Boy from Detroit. All these guys had a pretty good education. They had finished around the 12th grade. Some of em even put in a year in college. A couple of them had been around working on construction jobs--they know about strikes and things like that see. He had all that junk before him. So that's what they were trying to do, was pin it ~~[illegible]~~. There was 6-7, 8 of us I think 8 or 10 got 8 yrs. The rest of them guys see was old. ~~So [illegible] he said~~ like at that time I was 18½, about 19. So he said "you was born in So Carolina?" I said "No I wasn't born there. I put that down, but I was raised in So Carolina. I was born in Philadelphia." He said, "you went to school in So Carolina?" I said "yea, I went to school in So Carolina." He said, "Well these guys here they don't mean you no good. Them guys they've been working on jobs all their lives. That's all they know how to do, work on a job + that kind of stuff. He said why don't you go on back and take a ~~general court martial, a~~ summary court martial. He say and that way you won't have no bad discharge when you get out. I say "well look why can't you just do this here, "why can't you just send me overseas then if you're gonna give me summary court martial why can't you just send me overseas instead of sending me back to Port Chicago. Why do you want me to go back to Port Chicago first and then leave? get a transfer? Cause once I get back over ~~[illegible]~~ there you're gonna do me just like you'all did me before, I tried to ask for a transfer before, and you wouldn't give it to me." Everytime I would bring up about this car we had seen and how these people could come on that base whenever they wanted to, right away he would evade that.

RA: Were these civilians in this ~~[illegible]~~ car--these are whites?

EW: They are white.

RA: But they were not military, were they civilians or what, could you tell?

EW: Once we seen a civilian come in there. But he made like he was inspecting. Well see we had ammunition dumps, too. You brought ammunition in on the train and then you had ammunition dumps, too. ~~We~~ He come in there, was one or two come in there, they make like they'~~re~~ had to inspect the ammunition dumps. See how low the ammunition was so they could come fill them back up. But most of our ammunition come in there by train. We unload it straight from the car.

RA: And the cars you saw, that black coupe, that was on the day of the explosion?

EW: We seen that that morning. See, we got off 8:00 that morning. We worked from 12 - 8.

RA: What did it do? It came up to the peir or what?

EW: No. It came down. See there was a road -- see this is the main highway coming from Pittsburg. Here's the barracks. Here's the pier down here coming back around like ~~dere~~ that. Now here's the ammunition dumps all back up in here. These here are ammunition ~~fields.~~ dumps, other words where you store ammunition all back in here. Now this road comes through here -- ~~it's~~ here's an ammunition dump. Now he comes down here to the pier, almost to the pier fore you get to the ~~pier~~ pier he turns and goes back like he gonna inspect the ammunition dump. Well after I explained it to ~~them~~ him and I told ~~them~~ him I said, well you ain't gonna send me back. If you're gonna give me not a general court martial but a smaller court martial, I said, why don't you just let me go overseas to some other place.

RA: There was the general court martial and the summary court martial. And he was saying he could give you the summary which is the lighter one, what did he want you to do though? Did he want something from you in order to..

EW: Yea, he wanted me to say Small was the leader.

RA: How did he want you to do that?

EW: Well, after I refused, well he didn't go in all the detail.

RA: Well, what did ~~y~~ he do. what Small the/leader. or what?

EW: So I told him No. I said Nobody making me do nothing. He said well somebody got to be the leader. He said Everybody need the leader. He said every him, he ~~_____~~ need a leader. I said we don't need a leader if ~~we~~ you know what's going on on the base. ~~I Ain't~~ Don't nobody need no leader

there. So that's why I say that we never did refuse to work. We never did. Even when they threatened us with killing all of us. We never did refuse to work. But we did refuse to go back on that base because everytime we brought up this conversation about these cars That we ~~we've~~ seen on that base, they would squash it. They wouldn't bring it up any more. Only time a car was mentioned, either peoples on the base, I'd got to bring it up myself. He wouldn't bring that up.

RA: You say everytime you brought that up and it was squashed/during this was the questioning you ...

EW: for the trial.

RA: Was there any other reasons why you wouldn't want to work at Port Chicago? When did you go to Port Chicago?

EW: last of 44 I think.

RA: In other words you were there just a few months before the explosion down there?

EW: I was there about 6-7 months.

RA: Before that you had been at great lakes? EW: Mare Island. I left ~~Great Lakes~~ went to Mare Island, left Mare Island went over there. See another thing, The reason I didn't like it, you couldn't get no ~~raises~~ ratings. Guys had been there 3-4 years and they still couldn't get no ~~raise~~ rating. There were Guys doing carpentry work ~~they couldn't~~--you know blacks doing carpentry work--~~they~~ with whites stand up over them wearing 2nd class and 3rd class, telling the blacks what to do. The Blacks running the ~~train~~ crane, they couldn't get no ~~raises~~ rating. The Ones loading they can't get no ~~raises~~ rating. We had no forms to taking no test or none of that kind of stuff. So I didn't like Port Chicago. And then after all this here. The white could just walk in on your bases. Well, you know at that time they had taught us to check everybody out who come on your base. You were even supposed to check the admiral out if he come on there. Even if he come on there everyday, you're supposed to check him out. And I've come in there plenty of time at night, you know come off my leave, at night, whites pull up in the car do like that. ~~You know~~ Hell some of them I didn't know who they was, was in the car. I ~~meant~~ admit that. ~~I used to have to tell them~~

Lack of security

RA: They just kind of wave their hand.

EW: But when we come in the base we have to show all kinds of identification. ID card, ~~ma~~ pass. So I just didn't like it, period.

RA: What about transfers? You couldn't get ratings, but what about transfers?

EW: Couldn't get em. How you're gonna get a transfer, man? Hell that's worse than trying to get a ~~raise~~ rating. You Might ~~as well~~ get a ~~raise~~ rating if you stay there 4-5-6 years, but you wasn't gonna get no transfer. Not there. See cause they didn't have nothing but the blacks. Let me see there was about 5 divisions. About 9 barracks, top and bottom.

RA: So almost 1,000 men. What was the conditions like on the base itself, the physical conditions, the living conditions, the recreation -- what was that like?

EW: Well, recreation, That wasn't too bad. You didn't have all that good of materials but that wasn't/... the bad part. or the food it wasn't up to par, but service food don't be up to par no way. If you understand the service. Liberty -- that was set up shabby but -- under war time you couldn't expect no better. I think you got something like 42 hours every two weeks.

RA: Where did you go on your liberty when you had a couple of days? any places ~~EWx~~ around you could go?

EW: Frisco. Oakland.

RA: Frisco, Oakland - 7th Street in Oakland? Was there anything in ~~Exixxxx~~ Pittsburg.

EW: Not that much there. Soldiers were there. Hell, everytime you go there you ~~get~~ have to fight. See it was a soldiers' town, Pittsburg was. ~~Exixx~~ Because there's a big army camp there, and one right out of Shumaker too, a Big army camp. ~~You~~ You had to fight ~~everytime you're~~ your way out from up there. Best place if you want to be safe, if a sailor want to be safe, ~~you~~ you have to go to Oakland or Frisco.

RA: What about the relations between the officers and the men on the bases, how did people get along, was there problems or.. what was that like?

EW: Well I guess when you live with a bunch of men you ~~can~~ gonna always have some problems. Specially when you've got a bunch of blacks with just whites over you. See we had no colored officers there. I doubt where -- we might have had -- I don't believe that we did. We didn't have but 15-20-~~30~~ 3rd class. We didn't even have a chief petty

officer appear. Not a black chief petty officer. If it was, I never did see him. Not even machining, not even crane operators. Only thing we had, I think we had one or two chef cooks. Even our yeoman I believe he was 2nd class. Mostly what was there was stevedores, for the blacks.

RA: How did you happen to go into the Navy anyhow? Did they give you a choice of which ~~brand~~ branch of the service or.. EW: Well, I got drafted.

EW: Well, at that time, we didn't have too much of a choice. They asked you which branch of the service, which ever one you say and the one need you the most what they give you. You say the Army, they put you in the Navy. Wasn't ~~about~~ but two branches of the service that the Negro could really get in without too much trouble, and that was the Navy and the Army. Because, see, they needed stevedores in the Navy, and the army needed foot soldiers. Marines -- they never wanted no blacks in there no way. Air Force -- they was taking a few but very few. You really didn't have but two choices. You either went in the army or went in the navy. I asked for the Navy, that's what I got. (end of side 1)

RA: Then you went to Camp Robert Small, at Great Lkes. 6 weeks something like that? And then out to Mare Island. EW: 9 weeks

EW: Mare Island. I stayed in Mare Island about a month.

RA: What did you do at Mare Island?

EW: Load ammunition.

RA: Then you transferred to Port Chicago.

EW: They transferred me.

RA: Did Port Chicago have a reputation even before you got transferred, had you heard anything about it?

EW: Now I don't know. Somebody said it got burnt down in World War I. You might have looked that up in the record I don't know.

RA: Oh no. It only got set up during WWII. They set it up 1942.

EW: Oh, they didn't set it up in WWI.

RA: No they didn't. Something was there in WWI, but it wasn't a big base.

EW: Well, no I never heard nothing about it. It was the way the system worked, see. If you had any kind of common sense at all, you know, people just don't walk in and out--that's your house. A base is a house, that's a house to you, or a ship. Usually everybody just don't walk in and out. Specially if you've got damn near enough ammunition there to blow half NY city away. Have enough ammunition there to blow NY city away.

RA: Did anybody complain about the lack of security or try to do anything about it?

EW: Who you're going to complain to? All the dirty work, the blacks had to do there. Like giving you hell, punishing you.

RA: That was done by black..?

EW: That had to be handed out by black. Only thing white did was give you bread and water for 5 days or so many hours -- 2 or 3 days over here or ..

RA: And the guards at the gate were black?

EW: Yea.

RA: They had some white marine guards around there, too, didn't they? What did they do?

EW: I never seen them.

RA: Cause they called some to testify at the trial -- the white marine guards. I wasn't sure what they...

EW: Look, they used them guys for a front. See that's why I say, that thing is a hot potato because I know it and damn near all 50 of us know it, that base was sabotaged. They know it. The government know it. The Navy know it. But the Navy can't let that get out. It would still look bad on them. Just like they went over there and messed up in Viet Nam. You think they're gonna tell ... can't help from telling the people about it now. But do you think they want that to get out, That? They made a mistake over there in Viet Nam? So when we said "sabotage," hell do you think they were gonna let us, a bunch of blacks, coma talking about sabotage? ~~You wouldn't go for that yourself.~~ That would look bad, It was looking bad enough because we said we wasn't going to work on that base no more. That looked bad.

RA: What was it like, the actual loading of ammunition--could you describe that a little bit?

EW: Stevedore. ~~Load some in~~ . Well say, for instance, two ships come in at 12:00 today. We go down there, one shift at 4:00 that evening, next shift would go in at 12, the next shift would come back in at 8:00. We load them two ships within about a day and a half, two days.

RA: That fast?

EW: Yea, we're loading.

RA: What was the pace of the work like? very fast or worked at your own pace or how did they have it set up?

EW: Well, you produce so much a night. Every 8 hrs, you produced so much.

RA: They expect you to produce..?

EW: Produce so much in 8 hrs. Say you might have a car come in there with ~~around~~ 1,000 or ~~1500~~ 500 lb bombs. We might get three of them with just that. Then you might get one car with nothing but 500 lb bombs. ~~Get one car come in there, 3 of them~~ . Then you would get one car come in there with the regular ammunition for guns on planes ~~set up~~. So you're unloading maybe three a night, maybe four. The average ship ~~them tanker~~ carry about 7, 8 cars of ammunition.

RA: What would happen if you didn't load as much as they thought you should load?

EW: Somebody would catch H.E.L.L. ~~say, "the hell with it."~~

RA: Ever had that happen in your division?

EW: Oh, yeah, quite a few times. You know guys get stubborn. Maybe the chow wasn't what we wanted. People would slow down. You Couldn't strike, Couldn't quit, But you just slowed down.

RA: And then there was instances when the men did that--protest about the chow or something?

EW: Yea. About your liberty. Say for instance ship would come in there, maybe have two ships in there at one time, couldn't get but two in there, but have two setting out there at the bay, maybe have three out there waiting. They Might cut your liberty.

But there was
Say your liberty coming up next week. Five ships -- two at the docks, three setting out there in the bay. So they Cut your liberty.

RA: So the men would then slow down

EW: We'd squawk or maybe slow down on the work. Food Or either sometime you go in there and some of the guys get sloppy with the food, half ~~mix~~ 6x it. Guys get mad about that. You take --we had ole damn, trying to think of this guys name, he was the supply officer. He might would tell the guys to cut down on the food. Say wasting food. Well, you've got a man doing 8 hours of work, handling 5-600 lbs, I don't think he can waste too much food when he come in ~~for~~ after four hours, in other words he work 4 hours come in and eat and go back and work four more hours. He ain't gonna waste too much food after he put in four hours of steady going. You didn't mess around too much.

RA: Did you ever hear that the officers try to get the different sections to compete against each other or race against each other. Competition

EW: Yea, they did. Take them out ~~like~~ to other camps, recreation to other camps.

RA: That was the reward for working the fastest?

EW: Yes.

RA: Did you ever hear anything about the officers betting amongst themselves?

EW: No. I don't know too much about that. ~~I imagine, you know. Cause~~ I heard the Lt. say to another guy... ~~and I've heard Lt. told me~~

RA: another white guy? EW: White. See had Lt. Tobin he was the leader. Then you had this other Lt. I was telling you about, he was section leader. Then you had a JG/ he was sort of like -- Lt. Tobin, he was over everything, of our section, he was over the whole section. This other Lt. he was--most of his job was to check the ammunition going in the hold, see that it was put in there right. Then you had the other one. Lt Tobin I believe was Lt. JG. I'm not sure.

RA: But you heard him and the other guy talking?

EW: ~~Yea~~. Like our section come in. In other words come in around 8:00. This week we're from 12 - 8. Next week we work from 8 - 4. The Next week we work from 4 - 12. In other words, swing shift. Never did work , it was always swing shift. I heard

Petition first mentioned by Waldrop

them tell other guy "how many did you unload?" "We did such and such a thing."

RA: He'd ask how much you unloaded?

EW: Yea, how much tonnage. Say "we did such and such a thing." "Damn, ~~Say~~ I didn't do quite that good." He say, "I know, I saw the report." You know something like that. But as far as betting, I didn't see that.

RA: They were conscious about it--tonnage. They were concerned about it. Well, before the explosion since the men did have grievances about the conditions there did anybody ever try to do anything about it, like .. I don't know what you could have done but.. was there any means or any kind of protest other than just slowing down the work?

EW: No. See, that was another thing they couldn't put against us, because, other words like ratings, well the men just squawk about the ratings, go before the captain, we'd sign a petition, but like holding meetings, where you're trying to do something against them, they couldn't bring that into court. They didn't have it. See, they ~~xxx guess~~ asked us all them kind of questions. Did we ever hold a meeting?

Emily Matthai

RA: What was this petition you mentioned?

EW: Yea, well you know, we ~~xxx~~ turn it in to the section leader. We had four section leaders, two upstairs, two downstairs, colored folks. They were 2nd class. We turn it into them.

RA: This is before the explosion? What did they say?

EW: Telling em about we want ~~a raise~~ ratings. We'd like to have some papers to take examination to get ~~raises~~ ratings. ~~Might~~ Say for instance ~~we~~ you might want a transfer. You had to turn it into to your section leader. Couldn't carry it over there and give it to the commanding officer. Couldn't give it to Lt. Tobin. He'd tell you don't see me, see your section leader.

~~XX~~ RA: What had happened?

EW: Get lost in the shuffle. I don't know how the cards would fall after we would leave out of there. So what I say. I'd still say they never could ~~frame~~ claim... But they had to put mutiny on us, the government had to. They couldn't let it stand no other way. I could

understand it.

RA: How come...?

EW: Cause it would look bad in the eyesight of the Navy, man. ~~We're~~ We had bucked the biggest outfit, biggest ~~part~~ branch of the services, there is in the world. Here you got 50 black men bucked the biggest, richest branch of the service that there is. That go for Russia, France, and Britain. Britain had one of the ~~better~~ best navies, there's supposed to be. Hell, but we still had the money. Navy still got that money to get what they want. You've got 50 black people out there gonna ~~fuck~~ buck them. Nah, man. You know you can't. I can understand it.

RA: Where were you when the explosion occurred?

EW? In the barracks. I think some of guys were getting up, ~~fitting~~ fixing to wash up so they could get ready to go to work. I believe some of them were. But we were working from 12 - 8 that night. That explosion -- if they had waited another damn two hours, boy, they'd ~~had~~ got us. ~~But~~ Cause we sure had to go at 12:00 that night. Cause we just had come off the ship ~~that~~ The got blowed ~~xxx~~ up. ~~We just come off of that the week before~~. So that'd meant we'd got blowed of up, if they waited two more hours.

RA: What was it like?

EW: I shit ain't heard nothing like it.

RA: Did you see it? No you didn't see it because you were inside.

EW: Yep. Lit the whole place, like it was daylight out there, just like it is out there ~~to look like~~ now. Yea, cause they had two ships in there. Them ships was almost loaded. Then you had about five I imagine you had about 5 or 6 cars with ammunition in there. Hell you ~~could~~ figure out, boy, that's a whole lot of ammunition right there.

RA: Immediately after the explosion, what did you do--what did the men in the barracks do?

EW: Well they got us together, the ones that wasn't wounded.

RA: Who got you together there?

EW: The section leader.

RA: The section leader. The black section leader. Where was Tobin, was he around then?

EW: Yea, they come over and checked up on us. Had us all for roll call, find out what was what. ~~By~~ But then we went to this place... RA: Shumaker. EW: went to Shumaker.

RA: So you went out that night to Shumaker?

EW: The most of us. Specially the guys whose beds and things was all mangled up and tored up. See, most of the guys on the top bunk , see, they the ones that got hurt. I was in the bottom bunk. Boy up over me, he got mangled up pretty bad. That's why I was asking you was you going down there to see him. Boy name Gill (?) Can't think of his... He was a young boy. He ought to be living. I think he's around somewhere Aiken South Carolina. He's in South Carolina but it's around Aiken (?). He got mangled pretty bad. That's why.. now they're going to ask the man whose damn arm is all cut up, now they gets him and brings him out the hospital and put him with us and ask him is he going to work back there anymore. Now, hell I don't think that was even fair. You're gonna ask a man who's all...

RA: This is the guy in the bunk above you? Do you remember his name.

EW: Gill RA: That's his last name. EW: Yea, you never know too many guy's first name in the service, cause everybody's your last name. I mean your name, you never did use your given name, you use your name.

RA: Do you remember Green, Ollie Green.

EW: Yea. RA: He's from ~~Arkansas~~ Washington, an older guy.

EW: Yea, I used to see Ollie Green before they closed 5th St Market. I used to see him quite a lot. But after they closed the Market and he lost his wife. I don't know whether he ever got over that or not.

RA: How long ago was that?

EW: This was about 10 - 15 years ~~ago~~ since I ... RA: last time you saw him.

EW: Yea. RA: Yes, because I tried to find him too and I couldn't find him.

EW: No. He might be dead cause he lost his wife and they closed that market up and he lost his stand in there.

RA: He had a stand in the market?

EW: Yes. He was no baby himself at that time.

RA: Yea, he was in his 30's. EW: Late 30's. I imagine if he's living he's about 79.

that wasn't yesterday.

RA: So they took you up to Shumaker?

EW: Just to Shumaker. We stayed there for over two weeks.

RA: Then you went down to?

EW: This place over there, below Vallejo. RA: Close to MareIsland.

EW: That's when all that.. shit jumped out of the fire. That's where it started right there.

RA: Had the men discussed amongst themselves about how they felt about this or what they were going to do?

EW: No.

RA: There was a lot of bad feelings about Port Chicago.

EW: Yea. Well see, what we thought was now we get transferred. At least We'd ~~least~~ get away from that base -- get transferred. That was our thought. But They don't even build damn pier back, before they came and ~~some man~~ want to know whether we'll come back to work. See the cat was getting out of the bag about that car--the cars come in. That was the main thing. See that was getting out of the bag. Once it started getting out of the bag, well they had to cut ~~off~~ it off.

RA: Who else was talking about that car?

EW: There was a bunch of em, seen it. Seen em come in there. Bunch of guys -- we used to always sit up in the barracks and talk about how the whites could ride around on our base and use cameras and we didn't think it was right, and we couldn't even have a camera on the base. ~~Didn't~~ Couldn't even have one in your barracks, let alone have one on the damn base. ~~Seem like~~ At that time, you weren't allowed to have a camera in your barracks. Hell 2 -3 guys brought cameras in there and they'd take them at the gate--coloreds. So they had a squawk about that once or twice. Whites could bring their cameras on there. And we couldn't bring cameras. A boy went over there and bought a camera, was a big camera back in them days, remember the kind that you used to pull out...

RA: Like an accordion.

EW: He got one of em and brought it ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ 2nd hand shop, paid ~~$170xxx~~ $100 and some dollars for it and they confiscated it at ~~xxxx~~ the gate. They had a big stink

about it. So they squashed it. They had a squawk about that. Certain watches you couldn't wear.

RA: After the trouble developed and the 250 men whatever, the first # you said that weren't going to go back there to Port Chicago -- do you remember anything about a list being circulated then amongst the men, being asked to sign it.

EW: Yea, but... I don't know what that list was about. I really don't.

RA: You didn't see it or sign it yourself?

EW: I don't know whether I signed it -- it's been so long. The thing started getting confused and getting out of hand.

RA: Getting out of hand, what do youmean?

EW: In other words, they was .. you know, they started treating us like a bunch of cattle after they found out we wasn't going back thataway. It was just confusion. Piled up on a barge. I say barge was big enough for 75 - 80 men to be comfortable on. Hell, they put 100 and some of us on.

RA: Was there any fights between the guards and the men, or amongst the men or whatever?

EW: I think once or twice, they kind of had a couple of scrapples there. But that was before we were put ~~on~~ under, in... Other words we were sort of like ~~on a~~ under house guard then. I think they had a few scrapples, fights. You take any large institution, any large facility, and you've got the upper hands on em, somebody in there is gonna try to take advantage of it, and they're gonna push a little too damn far where you can't... somebody in that crowd ain't gonna take it. If somebody on the outside is gonna push, then somebody in the crowd ain't gonna take that ~~bullshit~~ push. See all of em ain't gonna take it. There's going to be some, but it's going to be few in there ain't gonna stand it. I think a couple of fights broke out. In chow it started. They wasn't going to feed us. So we had to organize, get the men to organize. But see ~~after~~ that's when the weight fell on Small and a bunch of them guys, see, then they started organizing. In other words, so many cook. They picked out the cook. So many of us had to serve. So many of us had to clean the kitchen up. In, The help on the base said they wasn't gonna do it, so we had to start doing it for ourselves.

RA: That was on the barge or you ate meals somewhere else?

EW: We ate meals on the base, but we had to sleep on the barge.

RA: The help on the base was that colored or white?

EW: Mixed. (end of side 2) That's ~~where~~ this leadership, Small picked up. That's why ~~XXXX~~ they picked Small. Cause Small wasn't the only one in the group did this, though, see. We was all together. But then when it comes to breaking down, some of the guys who had helped organized how we would work, they ~~went look work~~ back ~~to on the~~ work. Well then, when we got to Shumaker, they conned a lot of them and they ~~taking~~ talked a lighter court martial. So that pushed that many more. So I don't whether any of em turned against Small, put him, in or say something against him or what, but anyway that throwed the weight on him then see. Cause it was only him, Sheppard, Banks, a few of the guys who know ed how to organize ~~about~~ organizing & us.

RA: What about ~~Riley~~ Ryley & ~~Gate~~ Gay, were they leaders?

EW: I don't think so.

See, them guys kind of know how to organize people, how to get them together. How to keep from getting into trouble. In other words, what we was doing, we was avoiding trouble. See, in other words we was setting up a system where they couldn't say, heck, they don't want to do nothing. We had that kind of system set up. So anything that they wanted done, we did it. In other words like ~~they want~~ say when ~~to~~ we cleaned up the kitchen, they told us we'd have to clean up the kitchen. He'd organize and got a group together and cleaned up the kitchen when we got through. Cleaned up around the barracks. ~~But~~ We had it set up where anything that they asked us to do they couldn't go back and say, well, they won't do it. Only thing they could say is, they're not going back there, not to that base. Anywhere else they'll go. I had my things. I burned em up about 15 years ago. I burned em up.

RA: What's this you burned up?

EW: The transcripts. I burned em up. I got tired of it laying around the closet. So I just burned it. But you could look through them, and all through that, he asked the same damn question over and over. And they guy who's defending us, he didn't have no defense.

Everything he ask ~~em~~ us or want to ask ~~em~~ us, he couldn't ask because it was rejected. It was abstained. So the damn defense lawyers, he got all ~~that~~ this material

there, everything we done said and he only using what he wants to use. He ain't using what -- like if I go hire a lawyer and the lawyer come in there and demand for you you can just return that lawyer, my lawyer demand certain transcription used. They couldn't do that. We didn't even know who our lawyer ~~gonna~~ gone be until we were setting up in court.

RA: So you didn't have a meeting with your lawyer before..?

EW: Not our lawyer. With the defense lawyer with him.

RA: That's what I mean, the navy defense lawyer.

EW: Yea, for the Navy.

RA: You met with him before.

EW: Yea. Every other day he had us in his office, asking the same old questions over and over. But the ~~whole~~ only thing about it he never did tell us he was ~~gonna~~ gone prosecute us or ~~n~~ either he never did say.

RA: Oh, but that was the prosecutor. That's the guy who called you in and questioned you, taking down these statements.

EW: But our lawyer, never did..

RA: The navy defense lawyer, not the prosecutor, you never met with him/

EW: Never met him. Never did see him, til we come in court. Didn't know what it was going to be. Send this 3 little ol young dudes in there.

RA: What did you all do--did you work out some understanding amongst yourself as to what you'd say, or.. how did you handle that?

EW: It wasn't anything you could say except what I'm telling you. It's nothing else you can tell em. Just like I'm telling you "im' not going back there." I'll go any where but I'm not going back over in there. And you jump up ~~xx~~ and you say what's your reason. I jump up and tell you my reason, ~~and~~ then you squash it. Say we better not use that. But you leading me to believe you're my lawyer. Tell me you can't use that. That's what I'm thinkin'. But when I get to court, setting up there he the damn thing gonna prosecute. He's the one got my head on a silver ~~pikx~~ platter.

I don't think they let him come til after the trial got started. I think the traffic

got started and Ray seeing how the trial work or not. Then they let him in.

RA: Did you have any meeting with him?

EW: Nope.

RA: What happened to that meeting on the barge where Small Spoke, called the men together and talked to them, what was that about?

EW: He was trying to ~~get~~ give the men ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ the facts.

RA: He was ~~xxyxxxxxxxwxxx~~ trying to what?

EW: He was trying to do was give the men the facts. In other words, you had no security on that base. All the security. Now you take on Mare Island, you ~~can't~~ couldn't go on that island. No way in the hell you can get on that island. Couldn't ~~get~~ go on Treasure Island. Nobody could go on there without a pass or something. You couldn't go on there with a camera. They ~~admit~~ meant cameras for nobody. But all this here stuff we've seen it at Port Chicago, where white ~~can~~ could come in there with a camera. Whites ~~Wives~~ can come in there with their wives at night, anytime. Black couldn't do it, though. Small, all he was doing was telling them the truth. He wasn't trying to start nothing, stir up nothing.

RA: So he called the men together on the barge

EW: and tried to talk to them.

RA: To do what?

EW: So he told them, if we stick together, we can get transferred--get out of this mess. ~~one here~~. Get on to some kind of decent base. That's what we wanted.

RA: That's what you thought at the time was that if everybody stuck together, they couldn't what..?

EW: Hell, they couldn't kill all of us. They couldn't jump up kill 4 or 5, maybe 1000 men. The United States ~~it would look~~ bad. If it hadn't been so many they might have would have killed us. Hell, it was too many. I guess they say we won't let the world know we're that bad. Yea man, they threatened us. They tell us, they had one old admiral there, that son of a gun called us everything but a nigger. He almost called us that.

RA: What? the admiral. Did you have any expectation that this mutiny charge was going to come up before it actually did?

EW: No. What we thought, that they would break up up and transfer us. Send us to other ammunition dumps or either send us anywhere. That thought never crossed our minds. No, cause I mean we was altogether practically all ~~that~~ during that time. those ~~ix~~ ~~was~~ months, we was altogether. ~~Nobody never~~ Night and day.

RA: When did you find out that they were ~~gaing~~ charging you mutiny?

EW: When we went back down to this little island. This little base down in there, down from...

RA: Down at Mare Island.

EW: Mare Island. That base down below Mare Island there.

RA: So this is...

EW: This is about a month. RA: Were you on the barge?

EW: Yes. RA: How did you find out?

EW: We didn't exactly know then. We found out...Well, see what had come up, what they wanted us to settle for was a lesser court martial and go back to work. But it wasn't on our conditions--it was on their terms. In other words we'd have to go back ~~to Mare Island, back~~ to Port Chicago. And then if our officers wanted us to ~~ge~~ go, then we'd be transferred. So other words we really didn't know we was going to be charged with mutiny until when we went ~~back~~ to stockade back in Shumaker. We really didn't know then. We really knowed they were going to charge us with mutiny when they found out they couldn't get us 50 to go back to work. That's when the old man come out and told us that we are going to charge you all with mutiny.

RA: Who told you?

EW: ~~Seman~~ Some admiral.

RA: It was an admiral? So then you went to trial, the defense was handled by these navy lts. Thurgood Marshall shows up but you don't meet with him. EW: Nope. RA: Did you have any transaction with anybody from NAACP at any time.

EW: No. He was there--he was there everyday. But afterwards, I think it was about

a week. Cause I don't think they would let him come there at first. See, at first I think they was gonna bar him. But what they did see, they slipped up and let the newspaper, let this woman reporter get in there, and that leaked back out.

RA: She got in where?

EW: Into Treasure Island, where they held the court. I tell you what you do when you go back, go up to Frisco I think she works for the Frisco Tribune or something, she works. But anyway she works for a newspaper.

RA: Was it a white woman reporter?

EW: Yea. RA: Okay. She came to Treasure Island where.. EW: the trial was held. and her and a few reporters was allowed in there and that got out, and that's how Thurgood Marshall, I think, got in there.

RA: Did he come in with her or...?

EW: See, I guess by him being a lwayer and know'ing law, I guess he used his laws and his influence, got in there. They had to let him in there, Then, after they let the newspaper reporters in there.

RA: Did you have any contact with the woman reporter during or after the trial?

EW: No sir. No. WE wasn't allowed to talk to nobody. Small, you ask any of them guys, we wasn't allowed to talk to NObody. Wasn't allowed to talk to Nobody before, wasn't allowed to talk to nobody after.

RA: What happened afterwards?

EW: After the trial, we was transferred down... we stayed on Treasure Island, stayed there for about a week, we transferred to San Diego. RA: San Pedro EW: I mean San Pedro.

RA: The trial was on treasure island, and that's where you stayed during the trial.

EW. Yea. so we stayed there. We stayed there mofe than that. We stayed there until the conviction come in.

RA: Yea your sentences came later.

EW: And then we didn't even go to court. They come in there. I believe we even got that handwritten or something like that. Nah, they give us that, a handwritten statement

and they called us up. We didn't even go down there. The marine, I don't know whether he was General or what he was, on that base, he come in there and they read the charge. We were called up in a group either 5 or 8. One group got 5 years. another group got 8 years. Another group got 15 years. I think I was in the group that got 8 years. I know I got 8. I'm trying to think how many was in each group. But the ring leaders, they got 15, which they say was the ring leaders.

RA: So they shipped you down to San Pedro, how long were you actually there?

EW: Well, altogether we served a year. Then they pardoned us, in other words, let us out.

RA: And you shipped out from there to..?

EW: I went to Okinawa.

RA: with some of the other men? EW: Yea. RA: They broke you up, right.

EW: Yea, but I still stayed with Small, Sheppard and a boy from Baltimore, and I think Green.

RA: So, you all were together there.

EW: Yes, we stayed together. I stayed with Small & Sheppard. Me and Small and Sheppard and the boy from Baltimore, and a boy name McGee. We all stayed together, the whole time I was in the service until I got transferred. Then I left there after I come back from down there I went to Philippines, I left Philippines I come back into Saipan. I left Saipan to come back to California. I'm trying to think where it was. But anyway. I got transferred I went on a ship's supposed to go to Boston, but I got to New Orleans, it broke down, so I got to New Orleans. I come home. I got discharged. Maybe someday... it would make a book man but it gonna be something like Custer's. I ain't kidding. The government ain't gonna hold still for it. They ain't gonna tell you nothing.

RA: You know what I found out though when I came around the government to try to get the records and so on, is that most of the people in the service now, they're young guys, even the officers are in their 30's. They don't know what.. you say Port Chicago. They say what. where. They never heard of it. When I talk to them a little bit some of them get really interested cause they say what was going on,

they're curious themselves. The older people they're still trying to.. but the younger ones they don't know what it's all about. They don't have any stake in protecting nothing but.. It's hard to get any information cause it's...

EW: You've got them old head boys, if any of em is around that know what went down, you know daggone well they ain't gonna let nobody say some sabotage that got in that base, that that much lax was going on on that base. Just like you had that scandal going on out there about this navy hospital. Look how quick they got in there and covered that thing up. Before the guy could get through talking to, _____ get off the television they had the material in there.

RA: That's right.

EW: That show you how quick they can work if they want to. He hadn't even got off the air, see, that material was there.

RA: So you and Small and Sheppard, you'all were buddies? EW: Yea. I had all them guys name, _____, McGee.

RA
EW: Do you have any pictures, letters or anything?

NU materials

EW: No. Well I moved once or twice. See I was n't married then.

RA: Sheppard was married though. Small wasn't married. In fact Sheppard I think had a little daughter that was born around the time.. EW: Yea, around the time, sure was. Banks was married.

RA: Banks was your partner ~~took part~~ in this too, then.

EW: I think you said Banks was dead though didn't you.

RA
EW: I think he is. I'll check again. But I'm pretty sure. I sent him a letter..

EW: He was an amateur boxer you know? Wasn't too many--.. Matthews? Tried to look him up I know. New Orleans. McGee. KNOX. I'd like to know what happened to KNOX. They tell me KNOX went down there and got in more trouble. He went to New Caledonia. Say he got in trouble down there, stole a government truck.

RA: Was there some kind of fight between Ollie Green and Sheppard after the trial or around the time of the trial?

EW: That was between me and Ollie Green. I busted his head.

RA: What was that about?

That was me and Green.

EW: (long pauses & mumbles) He and Sheppard did, too, I think ~~about it~~. It was me and him. We had gone down to San Pedro then and I asked him for a cigarette, and he told me something about ~~kix~~ my mother or something... and I popped him. But I believe him he and Sheppard got into it one time about pinochle. Cause, see, we were great pinochle players, me and him and Sheppard and Small; That's what made us such good buddies see cause we played penuchle. pinochle I was pretty good back in them days. We played 500, with double deck; see. I think him and Sheppard got in. Played cutthroat, too, see. I believed he and Sheppard did get in a fight about it. But I know me and him got in~~to~~ it, and I hit ~~up~~ him up ~~all~~ there over his ears. Busted his ears. Me and him, it was ~~is~~ about a cigarette. It was a pretty good a group of guys; we kind of stuck together. We didn't haggle each other too much. Because we know~~ed~~ we had too much time to be ~~hazzing~~ hazzling and ~~razzing~~ razzling each other. We had time, we had 8 - 15 years a to face, plus a dishonorable discharge when we got out. So we didn't fight too much among ourselves. We kind of looked out for each other.

RA: Did you have much trouble with the guards at San Pedro?

EW: No, not too. Cause like I said, we had too much time. And see whatever one did, the guards would make it hard for all of us. We had found that out ~~in~~ at Treasure Island. We found that out at Shumaker. Shoemaker Whatever one of us messed up and did, it would go hard against the whole group. So other words we didn't pull against each other too much. If we squabbled it would be among that group. We didn't socialize with the other prisoners too much either. We stayed mostly to ourselves by ourselves. It wasn't the idea that we didn't socialize, we just didn't -- they'd want to ask you about it. I know, Ray claimed it wasn't done, but I had a idea they did it. Couple of other guys around there--Small, Sheppard, and they put plants on us.

RA: At San Pedro or..?

EW: At Treasure Island. Before the trial. Put plants--white and colored, planted them in there. So we got where we didn't trust nobody except just the group. That what made us conscious. See that's why we didn't associate with em. It wasn't the idea that they ~~didn't~~ wouldn't socialize with us, we just didn't socialize with them. Other

words, if we'd be setting down talking for instance me and you talking, just like that white dude walked in, we clammed up, talk about something else. When We played cards, we get our own group, and just set down and talk that way.

RA: Did the guards make much trouble at Treasure Island during and before the trial?

EW: It would be certain times that they try to get nasty with us. When we First went in there, They were nasty. Hell Harold, ~~Harold Ever~~, they guy was in charge of that base, I don't know if he was a colonel, Marine, They'd usually have Marines over us. , He had 3 or 4 there from Mississippi ~~now~~ new, they're some pretty rough dudes, boy. But they didn't treat us so bad see because, like I said, we kind of stuck together. We ~~we~~ stuck together too much and they couldn't trust us. Either they wouldn't trust us because everything, if you see one. See what they tried to do when we first went in, they tried to break us up. Then Find out they couldn't break us up. Just like, other words, you'd ~~sitting there~~ see maybe 4 or 5 of us, they be out on the group, so they didn't know how to trust us that way see, so they couldn't break us up. Put us somewhere else, in Different places. So they had to keep us in the same prison together. So they was kind of skeptical of us, they were scared of us in a way. Even when they get us out in groups to work, they wouldn't carry but two of us. Like if they had a group of 8 or 10 going out on a work detail, well they might put 1 or 2 of us in each group, and then the rest of them, say had six groups going out or maybe 8 groups to do jobs around the base, they would let maybe two of us go in this group, two in that group, two in that group, maybe three. But it never was five of us in one group at one time. The rest of us would have to stay in, in the ~~confine~~ compound. Then the next day or later, they'll let maybe you and another one.. Say if I went out today, tomorrow they might keep me in, let us all get together. (end Side #3)

RA: So during recreation you could be together but then at night They'd check you up in two different barracks.

EW: Yea. but in the daytime, working time, in San Pedro we're working time, day is working time, recreation, we all work together. In San Pedro, when we work, we mostly all work together. We stuck together. That bunch of men stuck together better than any bunch of blacks I've ever seen. Cause we was always with each other. Very seldom if one would get out of line. Cause we know one, we had talked it over, once one do something, then we all suffer. Other words we was able to keep each other in line.

RA: Anything else you'd like to add?

EW: Basic thing was they could never come direct out and prove mutiny. You could look all through the transcripts. ~~You can't find~~ . You can look all the way through there, ~~xxxxx~~ read all 50 men's statement, you will find no way in there that the government really proved that we mutinied. ~~tan~~ mutiny, man, that mean you don't work, period. But other words, so that's why I say, it was guilty, as far as the government was concerned, but as far as we're concerned either as far as a lot of people is concernedd, what they were ~~xxxxx~~ supposed to have done was broke that base up or either brought the white in. See it was a lot of people didn't know that that base was that damn Jim Crow. It was even a lot of people in the service didn't know that it was like. That base was worse than some places in Mississippi. It was rough. So they really didn't know that they had kind of goings on. So for that kind of publicity and stuff to get out, that hurt the navy too. What did get out, hurt them. The publicity that did get out, ~~xxxx~~ that hurted man. They had to call the white boys and start unloading the ammunition.

RA: Yes, that's what they did. They got whites to come.

EW: Boy, we put a hurtin on em. We shook em up. They've never been shook up like that boy.

NOTES:

Waldrop commented in a response to a question of mine that Port Chicago itself that is the town was Jim Crowed worse than Mississippi, to use his words. And that he heard that a number of the black enlisted had had trouble and been involved in fights in the town of Port Chicago. (END OF TAPE)

###

c.ed 7/25/80

Interview with Willie Gay 12/14/77

RA: How did you get into the Navy?

WG: I was drafted. I went to Fort Benning, GA. My home was Tuscaloosa, Ala. They asked me whether I wanted Army, Navy or Marines, so I said Navy. I went in the Service July 23, 1943. I went home for 14 days then I went to Columbus, Ga and from there to Great Lakes, spent 10 weeks there. I was shipped out to Port Chicago in October, 1943.

RA: What kind of rating did you have?

WG: From boot camp at that time you graduated from apprentice seaman to Seaman 2nd. I was at PC from oct. 1943 until June 1944. I was in the Fourth Division under Lt. Delucci. He was also from New York.

RA: What kind of dude was he?

WG: Oh, he was a nice cat. I had my way around the base on account of him. We got along fine. I was the only cat on the base who could wear a beard and get away with it. I was young then, I told him I saw sailors on a ship with beards and I wanted a beard. He told me to go ahead with it. At inspection I wouldn't pass, but he'd let me go into town anyway.

RA: Why did the two of you get along so well?

WG: I figured it was because he had been in the northern States all his life, he didn't have no dealings too much with Southern states. Most evrybody got along with the guy.

RA: What kind of work did you do?

WG: I worked in the hold.

RA: You became a petty officer, didn't you.

WG: Naw.

RA: Did they have black petty officers?

WG: Yeah. In the fourth division we only had three. Boyer, he was from New Jersey. Then we had Woods from over in New York (x). I can't remember the other one, but I believe he was from Jersey.

RA: What was the work like?

WG: Well, it was rough work. We were handling bombs. They said they didn't have no fuse, but somehow that night -- nobody knows what happened.

RA: Did you think there was any danger of an explosion, maybe from the way the ammunition was handled?

WG: Well, it'd be hard to say, caude I had never had no experience with ammunition before.

RA: Were there any safety precautions?

WG: Yeah, they had safety regulations. Even the Coast Guard, they used to come by and see how we was handling it. I know one time they didn't like they way we was handling the ammunition. We used to roll the 500 lb bombs when we got them down in the ship.

RA: How was the pace of the work? Was it a fast pace?

WG: Naw, it was a regular pace. Ican't say how many men you had in the hold, say ten -- four or five on each side of the ship.

RA: Did there seem to be a big emphasis on tonnage? by the officers?

WG: We had one officer that did that, Shaner(?) from Virginia. He would harass you, call you names. I had quite a bit of trouble with him. In fact, I went to the brig once behind him. He came there to the ship one day and didn't see me. He thought I was down there sleeping. Somebody told him I was up on top packing powder charges, but he put me on report. I was in the brig maybe four or five days. Delucci had gone someplace to school. When he got back he asked where I was, and he came over and let me out of the brig.

RA: How did the men and officers get along together?

WG: I can't speak for the other divisions, but my didivsion, we got along pretty good with Delucci, but Shaner, we couldn't get along with him. He was one of those Virginia crackers.

RA: How old were the officers?

WG: I would say Delucci was in his late thrities.

RA: Do you remember Ollie Green?

(Doesn't seem to remember him)

RA: Did men have any grievances?

WG: Oh, yeah, quite a bit. We had a lotta kids had never worked before . There wasn't no white sailors on that base loading ammunition. What fe w (whites) we had on the base was carpenters. They didn't handle ammunition.

RA: Transfers?

WG: Most of the time you couldn't get no transfer to another base.

(Describes work shift schedule at PC

RA: What you do on leaves?

WG: You could go to Frisco, Oakland, Richmond, Vallejo. I used to go to Oakland, Seventh and Peralta. I remember a club, Slim Jenkins, on Seventh

GAY 3/3/3/3

In Friscao I used to go to Club Alabama, Club Havana, Club Jet(?) down in the Fillmore district. Then I used to go down to Chinatown to the Showboat. In San Francisco you could have a kinda wild time.

RA: How'd you find Jack Crittenden?

WG: I wrote the Red Cross in his hometown. We went through boot camp together, and also out in California. Where we got split up was at Vallejo. The day we was supposed to go back loading ammunition we got early chow. I knowed something was gone happen when we got early chow. So we started marching down the street and the order came "left flank," to go over to Mare Island. We stopped. We didn't want no more loading ammunition because of what happened at PC. No more loading anywhere. So that started it.

work stoppage

RA: How did the men decide not to go back, was there a meeting?

WG: No, just talking among themselves, you know. We all mingled together and we had made up our minds over at Vallejo. The last ~~xkix~~ day we ~~xkxx~~ came in they took our passes, so we knowed we were in for it then. So that evening after we refused to march to work Chaplain Flowers he come out and talked with us, told us we were making a mistake. We told he was wasting his time talking to us, he should let the white boys load the ammunition.

They had a barge out there that was built like a house, two or three storeys. They taken us all out of the barracks and out us all on the barge. We had all our gear on the barge. We come off the barge to eat and then went back on the barge. They guarded us, you know. Shore patrol.

The next day the Admiral came from Treasure Island. He got out of the car and the first theing he said was, "I guess you guys know you can be shot." The he started getting back in the car. A lot of the young ~~xxxxxx~~ guys started crying, you know. Then he got out and started talking. "All y'all willing to load ammunition, line up over here. All them ain't, line up over there. Well, men and Crittenden, Being friends, I called him. We stood there talking. One crowd was over there and one over here. Delucci come up to me and said "What y'all gone do." So I teased Jack. I said, "What you gone do? You gone let them shoot you blindfolded, or you gone be looking at them?" Then they marched the bunch that was going back to work, they put them on the barge. Jack and me was still standing there. Now the other guys, I don't know where they taken them but they didn't put them on the barge, and I didn't seem them guys no more the whole time I was in the Navy.

See Crittenden pg. 20
Crittenden says he went AWOL with Tom Flores

GAY 4/4/4/4

The way we got split up, me and Crittenden, he was going to the PX to get some cigarets. I'm waiting on him at the end of the gangplank at the barge, waiting for him to come back. They grabbed him ~~xxxthxxPX~~ coming out of the PX, and I didn't see him no more until 1950. So they put him with the bunch ~~xxxx~~ what they taken down to San Pedro. They put me on the barge. These were then men that said they was going back to work. On the barge Delucci put a couple of guys in charge: myself, Small... (about what would happen) So we were there talking and I said, "Man, we going to Brooklyn Navy Yard." Another guy said, "No, we going to the Naval Supply Depot in Oakland." Guys was just teasing each other, you know. So later we were loaded on these buses and trucks with drivers who were all girls, white women. So I asked the driver on my bus, "Where you taking us?" She said, "I don't know. All I'm doing is following the leader." So when we leave Vallejo and get to a certain point I say I know we're going to Shoemaker. So that's where we wound up. They taken us all down to the brig. Then they put us all on the basketball court. And they had this lt. and a ~~xxxxxxxx~~ sergeant in a jeep with a 50-caliber machine gun riding around the basketball court. And the Marines came with M-1s and automatic shotguns....

This must be cutting

They called me ~~xx~~ up in front of this Lt. He asked me was I afraid to load ammunition. I told him, Naw I wasnt afraid to load ammunition, I just didn't intend to load anymore. So he told me I could get 7½ to 15 years. Then the Marines marched on back and brought up another group. That went on for 72 days. That's how long we stayed at Shoemaker. And we caught hell in the brig there. The sentries used to come in at night and say they heard somebody talking. Then they would tell us they gave us three minutes to get up, get our clothes on and line up outside. Then he'd say, "That took 3½ minutes. Now I'll give you 3 minutes to go back in the barracks and get back in bed." Then he'd say ~~txxt~~ that took 3½ minutes. That would go on sometime for two or three hours. There was nothing you could do about it.

Prison

RA: Do you remember that Samll called a mtg on the barge?

WG: We had quite a few mtgs on the barge. Most of the mtgs, we wanted to know what happened to the other 50 guys.

RA: What next?

WG: Well from Shoemaker, myself and several others was taken over to Treasure Island for the trial. I was over there about six weeks. 50 guys got put on trail for mutiny. The other guys, we got Shanghaied. After the trial was over they shanghied us overseas and gave us six months probation.

GAY 5 5/5/5/5

RA: Did you testify at the Trial?

WG: They called me to come up there once about the mtg they had on the barge. That news had gooten back to the officers, that we had a mtg on the barge at Vallejo. They called me up there for that. And I told them that if they had a mtg on the barge I did't know anything about it. So they said what did you do when you was on the barge. I said play cards, shoot dice, write letters. "You sho y'all didn't have no mtgs?" "Not that In know of." "Didn't Delucci put you in charge?" I said "Yeah, but he didn't tell me to go aorund an see what th boys was talking about." I can rmember one day up there there was two or three officers. One guy was supposed to be my lawyer. And they had a couple more officers, and they were both asking me questions at the same time. And I didn't say nothing. So he said, why don't you answer the questions. So I said when one guy talks at a time maybe I'll answer the question. So they come saying about what I said when the officer had questionedme earlier. He said on such and such a day I said suh and such a thing. I said yeah. He said did you say such and such a thing. I said Naw. He said that's what it says here. Isaid, Is that my handwriting. That's typed ain't it. I could have said what I said and they could have added anything they wanted.

RA: When they met with you, did they try to get you to testify against Small or any of the other guys?

WG: Yeah. They had the right names. Somebody was snitching. They had my name, Small's name and Wylie from Youngstown, Ohio. He was a young kid about 19 years old, They jammed him up pretty good. Everybody that they called up, they told them 7½ to 15 years.

After the trial was ovef at Treasure Island, they taken us to the embarkation. We stayed there one day and the next day we sailed. For 25 days I only saw that one ship. We dropped off 1500 Marines at Guadalcanal, then we went to _____ island for ~~xixxxxxxxx~~.a few weeks, then we shipped out to Guam, other guys went to different places. Summary Court martial involved 72 days in brig and six mos probation

EXPLOSION: I had just come out of the bathroom and crawled up on my bunk. I slept on the top bunk. We had come off loading at 8 that ~~xxx~~ morning. I had been up all day getting my uniform together and washing my clothes (I didn't send them to the laundry because they

wouldn't come back. I'd get somebody's clothes but they wouldn't be mine) I would wash mine and hang them out on the line and sit and wathc them until they dried. When that was over I went to early chow and from there I went to the movie. Then I come back and I slept. I'll never forget that night. I'd just got back in the bunk. Something sounded like a bomb was dropped. Now the barrakcs had glass windows all around, and it was like someone shot in the windows with a shotgun -- the pressure blowed the windows in. The glass come through the barracks. A lot of guys walking the floor got cut up pretty bad. It blowed my bunk over. I slept near the door. Somebody hollared"Don't stand up, crawl!" I crawled out the door and by that time the other ship went off and I bounced around on the ground like you'd bounce a rubber ball. I wasn't hurt but the lights was out and wires down. First thing when I got up I run over to Crittenden's barracks and called him. He was outside. I got a bunch of guys together and we got on some Army trucks that had come in and went up to Camp Stoneman to spend the night. Next morning they came and got us and taken us to Shoemaker. I didn't go back to that base after the explosion.

All the PC boys were in the barracks there at Shoemaker and we started talking(about the work) It was rough-going. You didn't see no white boys out there loading ammunition; I guess they figured that was all we were good for.

After service went to Alabama, Michigan and settled in NY

Worked in stevedoring on waterfront.

Had no experience with stevedoring before PC

Thinks explosion was caused by one of two things (1) Somebody went to sleep at the winch, or (2) sabotage.

Had Marine gaurds around base. The only way anybody could sneak in there, it would have to be by water.

Where is side three of Gay tape?

(See summary notes for this)

WILLIE GAY 645 Belmont Ave. Interviewd 12/14/77
Brooklyn, NY 11207 (212) 647-2893

1 of 2
Annotated Notes
(Summary of tape)

GAY in group of 208

SIDE ONE

018 Drafted from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, July, 1943

055 Trained at Great Lakes

060 Shipped to Port Chicago

085 In 4th Division under Delucchi (who was also from New York

095 Says Delucchi a nice guy:"I had my way around the base on account of him. We got along fine." Attributes t his to him being a northerner.

125 Worked in the hold.

130 Was not petty officer. Boyers, Wood petty officers

155 DESCRIPTION OF WORK.

165 Cause of exp. unknown.

178 SAYS THERE WERE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS, mentions Coast Guard inspections.

213 TONNAGE, says there was one "nasty officer" who threw Gay in brig when he thought he was shirking off.

260 RELATIONS W/OFFICERS, "we got along okay with Delucchi" but not with Shaner, Delucchi's second in command.

295 Remembers Green had arm in sling.

315 GRIEVANCES: Yeah, a lotta guys had never worked before; no whites laoding ammo

355 RECREATION at Slim Jenkins, Club Alabama, Club Havana in Fillmore

380 Located Jack Crittenden by writing his hometown Red Cross.

390 CRITTENDEN AND GAY WENT THROUGH BOOT CAMP TOGETHER
Got separated at Vallejo

410 Men say they want no more loading

413 No prior mtgs., each man decided for self.

430 Chaplain Flowers talks to men.

435 PLACED ON BARGE; came off for meals.

455 ADMIRAL WRIGHT MTG: He threatens men with being shot. Some men were weeping. Wright had men devidie into two grps. Gay and Crittenden get together to discuss what to do. Tease each other about possibility of being shot:"What you gone do; you gone let them shoot you blindfold or you gone be looking at them?" Men who refused taken away by marine guards. Crittenden went to PX to get some cigarettes while Gay waited at foot of barge gangplank; Crittenden never came back. They garbbed him and I didn't s ee him no more until 1950.

485 Gay went back to barge with men who said they would return to work.

495 (remembers that he and Small were put in charge on barge by Delucchi)

500 Transferred to Shoemaker., put in brig.

517 Lined up on Basketball court, surrounded by guards.

SIDE TWO

025 INTERROGATION at Shoemaker, Threatenend with 7½-15 yr sentence. Imprisoned 72 days in brig. Much abouse by guards, who would wake men at night, have them dress run outside and then come back in (this would go on several times a night).

085 MTG ON BARGE (2 or three) after 50 guys removed)

132 Brought to Treasure Island to testify at trial.

165 The other men (the 208) were "Shanghaied" and sentenced to 6 mos. probation.

175 Called to testify abt mtg on barge. Says news of it had gotten back to the officers. He denied knowing abt meeting. "Didn't Delucchi put you in charge? Yeah, but he didn't tell me to go around and find out what the boys was talking about." (laughter). He challenged written statment they presented; "I could say what I said and then they could add on anything they want to."

217 Tried to get him to testify against Small; thinks someone must have told them: "They had the right names." (after first threatening him in interrogation with 7½-15 yrs.)

285 More abt Separation from Crittenden. They put me on the barge (the marines did).

325 Shipped out overseas after the trial.

380 SUMMARY COURT MARTIAL: 72 days in brig, six mos. probation

390 EXPLOSION: Just come out of bathroom and climbed back into top bunk. Described days activities before exp.: Came off duty at 8 a.m., went to chow, washed clothes, went to 1 p.m. movie, slept. Pressure blew out windows, guys who were walking the floor got cut up pretty bad. His bunk knocked over; crawled out the barracks. Not injured. Lights all out. Ran to Crittenden's barracks to check on him. Evacuated to Camp Stoneman. Never went back to P.C. again.

460 "You didn't see no white boys out there loading ammunition; I guess they figured that was all we were good for."

477 Moved between Alabama and New York before settling in New York.

490 Does stevedoring work; had not done this before PC. Says one guy in outfit had worked crane in steel mill before.

Gay interview 3/3/3

SIDE TWO

505 Thinks Explosion caused by (1) somebody falling aslepp at the winch and dropping something, or (2) sabotage.

523 Says there were marine guards around the base.

SIDE THREE

025 Doesn't remember much abt security at main gate

055 Thinks Kinne was in forties; and had served at Pearl Harbor.

085 Condx at B.C. were improving, some recreational facilities being added.

110 P.C. town was not segregated. (He went once with Delucchi). Doesn't remember golored guys having trouble there.

208 He was on Guam when atom bomb came there.

323 Story of George Booth (from Detroit); broke open boxcars, got names of women at Hastings, Nebraska who wrote them on the dunnage. Wrote letters to them. One woman (white)asked him for a small photo of Him that she could keep in her locket so her mother wouldn't see it. He sent a large photo, package was opened by mother who was outraged. George used to tell that story around the base to get a laugh. He also was popular with the women at the Berkeley USO.

346 Women allowed on base on Sundays for dances.

355 What did he think when put with men who were supposedly going to work? "I8d a rather ~~being~~ been with those that refused."

Robert Allen and Anselm Strauss
Discuss Port Chicago
4/27/78

R.A.: What I'd like to do is tell you about some the readings, and then the kinds of thoughts sparked, and questions and ideas and where to go from there. What I did, was, in going through the stuff that was very obviously related to the theme, which is intersections of history and sociology, in an issue of, American Behavioral Scientist LAST December devoted entirely to that theme, and in several books of readings that have that as their central theme as well, umm...

A.S.: That's exactly where you'd expect that it would be, in urban and the political. I don't know what this stuff on Stanton is, but I gather that there's a lot that's been going on there, but I don't know if they've drawn much on sociology or not. Was it a good issue?

R.A.: Yeah, yeah, it has some interesting stuff in it, but in some ways I thought it was kind of thin. These are two others, these are just articles that I xeroxed. That's just a cover page on one of the articles, and then this is Hofstatter and Lipsus.

A.S.: You know a lot of people have struggled with it.

R.A.: Yeah, right. What I did was on reading that I picked up on--I told you I finally got--~~FOR~~ SALE~~AND~~ POSSESSED yesterday, and read it last night. I was very excited by that.

A.S.: That seems to be the closest, to my knowledge, of what you're doing. It's a set of events, on a single layering, close to documentation, that you could get. Or maybe not. You could get some good hints.

R.A.: Yeah, well, it definitely sparked off some ideas in me that I wanted to talk about. Well, let me sort of just lay out what happened when I was reading--

A.S.: Let me say one other thing. Fritz Schultze, a German guy, did a study on 4 different communities where communities pulled themselves together by administrative plan. There were a bunch of villages, and the villages were pulled together and formed into towns; so he talked to a lot of politicians and he's actually done a--he's actually working on--I think he's less interested in the substance than he is in the method. How you put together what these people say. In the past about an event that he doesn't remember exactly. About stuff that was very complicated by a lot of different parties and a lot of different people at the time. But it might be fun to ask him about some of the problems he had.

R.A.: Yeah? That's, that's really great 'cause one of the unique things about this study that I'm doing is that it's not a study of documents. That's a big part of it. But I also have access to at least some of the people who were there, whom I can interview now, 34 years later. But there are questions of verification, which accounts are more trustworthy? Because there are discrepancies, naturally, between what they say now, and what they said 34 years ago. And one of the big problems I'm having is in deciding which to trust, or how to balance them against each other.

A.S.: I think you should talk to him. I think his has pertinent merit because of the narrative interview. Where he's had a lot of linguistic work. So I think using some of the linguistic stuff, he could, like, tell you when

people are circumlocuting, moving to Australia and maybe start you thinking about what did she say? I don't know if some of that would be useful to you. It's just possible it might be.

R.A.: Yes, Uh huh. It just might be.

A.S.: Because he didn't have any problem with the one of memory, as such. But he had the problem of veracity. A problem of maybe, selective reception.

R.A.: Yah, I think that's going to be the problem here. Or both, the problem of memory and the problem of veracity, so I think I have a continuum of both of them. The initial impression I had as I began reading and thinking about the relation between the two was, well, first of all, I started out with the classic simple-minded, I guess, differences between history and sociology. History as the study of unique events and that the purpose of history is to eliminate those events there , the particular origins and development and the reasons for it. And to get as many "facts" about it as possible. That's sort of the stereotype of history. And now the study of sociology--both are studying human behavior, and interaction, but the sociology is, of course attempting to --arrive at general laws, principles, and so on from the study of many, many instances. And so, of course, that leadesquite naturally to the idea, well, the two are --each one can be--aids to the other. But one discipline can be seen as an isolator or an aid or somehow supportive to the work of the other; for example, the common statement that calls for social scientists to make use of history in order to get deeper insights; historical insights then becomes one of the terms that's used. You need your historical insight in social science studies. And, on the other hand, the historians: you hear people calling

For the need to look at sociological methods, particularly quantitative methods; big on quantitative methods. But, also, conceptualizations from the social sciences and to use these as aids in interpreting historical events, right? So it's sort of --I call that the aid, or ancillary approach to the relationship between the two, which doesn't really see that there's much of a realtionship superficially. Historians can make use of insights of social scientists, sociologists can make use of historical data, but then as I began reading and getting more deep into what I'm thinking about, I'm gettting to see in the writings of some people, like Lipsich in his essay; there's a fellow named Robert Brown who I think is an English fellow who's written a book on, gee--I didn't bring it either--but the title of the book is, "Explanation in Social Science," and being an Englishman he doesn't even consider this quantitative stuff. Well, I don't know exactly what school he belongs to; his whole thing is a discussion of methods of explanation. Genetic explanation, reason as an explanation, empirical evidence and so on; these, in fact, are his chapter headings. I'm about midway through that now, and I'm getting very excited because more and more I feel that there's an organic relationship between history and social sciences. It's almost like a dialectical or complimentary relationship, which I see as going something like this:

okay, history is the study of the unique events from the past, alright? and the interpretation and explanation of those events, right? In all of the historical writings that I have seen so far, that I've been reviewing more recently, it is implicit in them particularly in analysis and explanation, there is implicit the use of social science categories, and explanations.

A.S.: Usually implicit, yeah.

R.A.: Usually implicit, even such a simple minor thing as the Great Man Theory of history. That's the social sciences' theory, it's what it is, although it's generally taken as a historical theory and used as a historical explanation. But it actually is under a social science hypothesis, but which is taken adn assumed and used often uncritically, in historical studies. But actually in looking at almost every historical study, the attempted explanation almost invariably draws upon what are taken to be common sense assumptions about human behavior, but which under, in fact, or fall under or are, in fact, social science theories.

A.S.: Like human nature.

R.A.: Right. Human nature, that's what...So that explanation in history makes use unintentionally or unconsciously, more and more I think consciously now, with this discussion going on, makes use of the assumed findings of social science which are sometimes not presented as assumed findings of social science but ase simply presented as human nature. Okay, and that seems to me that that cannot be avoided; in any kind of historical study, unless you're going to limit yourself just to assembling facts. Because even as you begin assembling facts and putting them in chronological order, that's also based on a theory about human behavior, which is that cause and effect go in a certain chronological sequence. So just unless you limit yourself to assembling facts with no attempt at ordering them that's the only way a historian could avoid bringing in the premises of social science. And what sort of useful fact collecting are you doing then? And I found examples of this; if I could develop this into a paper of something I would then draw that out. Both Hopstat and Lipsich in their articles point this out. Even they press to the

heart of the matter: it's not an incidental connection. It cannot be avoided in historical explanation.

A.S.: And what happens, Bob, is that you get people who reach out very deliberately to sociological concepts, that the ones they pick are always the ones that are current at their university, and the guys they've talked to. Or maybe the books they've been influenced by, and they ** them. And I think one of the things happen, at least: one is that they take some of the concepts like the guy by the name of Cochran, Tom Cochran, he studied initiative roles among business historians, used stuff like Berlioz, and he's using those concepts to inform sociologists that they look half-assed; and two, Crute who's an historian, who may buy a lot of what he may have to say, in his original research, his explanations probably on the simplified side and inferring correctly that a guy like Coziary is restricted to current possible sociological things, concepts, not real concepts -- not the ones he maybe thought he was doing, but the ones he's happened on. Or you get a guy like the very fine historian of Russian history, his name is K Gersuguan, and I remember about 20 years ago he tried out the Parsonian solution, it just didn't work. It just didnt make any sense, so they're hooked on a very difficutl problem which is, should you than use sociological theory explicitly? Which ones do you use? It's that whole question of Salem I think part of the problem is that you buy concepts and not positions in the theories. So they buy concepts, they push right through the implicit set of premises not really their specialty which is what happened in the committee, then they find it doesn't work, when in fact, their own assumptions are different. Where they'd be more comfortable with it. Or they buy something like Roth where he has a whole set of assumptions which are pretty thin. But there is nothing specific, like in Corsky's, to hang it on to. They then tread; they can be more

OR LEss happy with it because it seems to say things; but a lot of other people aren't goikng to be happy with it because of the fact that they sense that it's a simple treatment of complexity. Okay?

R.A.: Okay, yeah.

A.S.: One other example I think is most obvious. Langer was a sociologist who explained some stuff that had to go with French history. You get the reverse of sociologists with pet theories or pet concepts who are also versed in a particular area, okay? But the enterprise is essentially the same. Just the basis is sociological. Now we've got this data and we've explained it in terms of sub-straneous notions, in her case it's class stratification, and Tilly is making a splash, has been for 10 years, he's a sociologist who's been writing about French history and he's essentially a sociologist and doing the same kind of thing. Obviously, some historians are rather informative in bringing things into perspective, bug other people say, "Shit!" You know what I mean? I can think of a couple more, but it's this kind of thing. Both sides are hit by the same dilemma. The incredible thing is that sociological concepts don't rise out of the historical data. Take the back route. I might think more deeply about it, but I think that that's what's really going on. Alright, so I think that's it about books. The coming around to dealing with stuff and just looking at it and filling it in. The emphases are different. Sometimes they're interested insociology and sometimes in history, but in both cases they're bringing these things in.

R.A.: I think one of the intriguing things about this FOR SALE AND POSSESSED book is that that is also true here, I think, in some of the discussions they

have about the nature of the factional fighting they had in the Salem village. I think underlying that is a certain set of premises about group conflict and sociological theory. So on the one hand is, even in this book, the importation of the sociological methods of explanation but, at the same time, on the other side of the coin, they also have an attempt to present whether, in fact, this is the way it happened, or not. But the explanation of who became the victims for witchcraft charges--they present that as though that really emerges out of data--

A.S.: where people live and all that sort of thing?

R.A.: Yeah, in fact, they come up with a principle which they formulate in the interlude which is that the victims were outsiders who were mobile and lacking in deference. Which is supposed to be a "sociological law." But it emerges out of their particular historical, the study of this particular historical instance, but we may well find parallel or analygous situations. By which this principle, the rhetoric, could be tested. But that also, I think, shows one of the ways in which history and sociology can be really connected, which is the use of historical instances as case studies of social laws in action. But you don't assume you know what the laws are before you start looking at the case study. You see what the laws are from the case studies. Which is different from what most approaches have been, I think. We focused mainly on historians, but I think on the behavioral science side--okay, if we accept the behavioral science attempts to formulate general laws of human behavior by collecting and examining and classifying many individual instances, whether you're talking about survey, research or qualitative research, we're looking at many individual instances, but what historians point out in their critique which is true is that we

seldom think about the history of those individual instances. In fact, they are unique historical events or individuals or situations that we're looking at, but we're attempting to collect and classify them and to look at what unifies them, that is, what's common among them as opposed to what makes each of them unique. This has sometimes, I guess, led to errors in social science research. The Wallter stuff got criticized because they apparently went in without knowing--to do a community study--without knowing anything about the history of the community., and therefore misled, by taking at face value statements that were made by the informants. If they had had more historical insight they could have avoided that mistake. But it seems to me that that is also an inherent problem in sociological research of any type, which is that although we are looking for what is common among many instances, if we neglect the unique qualities of these instances and, particularly, we never ask the question about why the unique aspects exist. Then we are very liable to make mistakes of interpretation. Simply because one set of the data, one aspect of the reality of the situation we have chosen to ignore by, on principle, Let's see if I have an example. Well, I mentioned an example of -- well, what often historians use undritically, sociological concepts, we on the other hand often tend to accept the validity of the instances that we collected without critically looking at their history, where they came from.

A.S.: Well, this particular -- two things go together. In the Waller case, let's take a couple of classic examples. In the Waller case he is studying a community. Dr. Harris is wrong, he is studying a community and he is studying it statically, as it is. There may be some assumptions about American communities otherwise you would have studied it, anyway he's studying a community. The historians come around and say, "Ah, you picked your community because of the fact that it's in a time loan."

But that's simply a criticism of the history of that kind of
16
Let's say you're making a study of 60 military leaders of Armies in 16
underdeveloped countries., and some of these are the same and some are different. Okay? and they are the same in different kinds of ways. And they are under the general theory that applies to military leaders, then you could compare this to union leaders in Westernized countries. Now this is Janfranson's book, not the best book in the world, but it is interesting. Why can't you study similarities and differences that way--our whole damn history If you could take for granted by looking at them, the surface area, that they are different although somewhat the same. Or even the entire instrument, a point that was obvious.

R.A.: Right. Okay. We look at those 16 instances and we say, "Well, some are same and some are different." But how do we explain the differences, or the similarities? We can explain them in terms of lateral comparisons among the 16 , which would be perhaps the usual technique. I think the criticism is that, not to deny the importance of the lateral comparison, but unless you also make the vertical analysis you may miss a crucial dimension of explanation and interpretation.

A.S.: Here's another example. It goes like this: there is anvery interesting book that has somehow been missed by sociologists, by a guy by the name of Black who is a well-known ~~social~~ political scientist. It's kind of a mixed up book, but there is one section of it that's fascinating.

R.A.: What's the book?

A.S.: It's something about international relations. I don't know the title any more. But it's easy to find. He's classified all the amount of a culture that he knew about, five different types and he's done it by criteria. What's interesting about this is he's built history in. For example, these are groups that were never colonialized; these were groups, in other words, that grew in all their powers. These were groups that, til very recently, we had trouble trading with them. So he's built in history, as well as all the things that go with colonialism. So these are types and shapes of governments and stuff like that you can begin to build on, relevancy to revolution. You could have a sample that was beautiful; he's never done it, but he's pointed a way to get things done. As a matter of fact he has a theory and a set of predictions--it takes tons of stuff moving forward.

R.A.: Moving forward through time. Right.

A.S.: I think that's closest to intellectual ; it's closest to what I would accept. I aggee with you, I think this stuff is extremely tricky. If five years were knocked off, you wouldn't know what.

RA.: Exactly. Yeah. The example from Black; the other examples I thought of that would have corresponded: there have been many revolutions, right? Ever since what's-his-name's book on the first military French revolution. The attempts have almost always--and one of the fascinations about revolutions is not just to recount them, but to explain how these horrible things happened, you know--all the historians have always attempted a larger explanation. But a number of books of that sort, it seems to me, also do this kind of thing.

There's one, the book is called something like, SOCIAL ORIGINS OF DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY by, I don't remember his name now. In fact, I'm not sure whether he was a historian or sociologist. He combines the two very well. What he does is to do very careful case studies of revolutions in China, Japan, Germany, Mexico and of course, Russia. The five or six--but in the kind of detail that shows sensitivity to the configurations unique to each one that you would expect from the historians. But with the questions that you would expect from the sociologists. And it's that kind of thing, you know. He has to categorize these revolutions according to certain themes that develop out of his study of each one, and in some cases he's about to arrive at, not a coherent theory, a general theory of revolutions, like what he comes up with is a -- What are the important social factors in relation to history, social classes, social conflict and so on?

A.S.: Well, let me tell you what this kind of a difference ended. This stuff started back; for instance this socio-logical nature, with the statements, was a student of Parks. I'm sure it comes from him; it was followed by by Quinn Britain, the famous Harvard graduate historian. A recent work by him in hardbound, I came across it somewhere and am looking at it. Holtgoth is a social historian with a lot of work on rebellion and violence, stuff like that. I menationed articles in The Reviewer and it's a messed up area--guys can't decide what a revolution is, what cases are, what boundaries are, where the boundaries are, okay? So they run into a lot of problems. Another area like it, in English history and these are only historians at work, with the exception of things like the role of the gentry, through time or decades, they can't decide who the gentry were, what their relationships were, couldn't decide what the boundaries were, so it's difficult to ascertain what the assumptions are. I mean I'm fairly confused what assumptions are. What I'm trying to say is this: the

nature of those relationships obviously prevents a lot of good people (from) working on bum slugs. Somebody put it aside to stew. But those kinds of issues,maybe not in the abstract sense of which these people are, but one of these relationships are bound to work. It's extremely difficult. I don't know of anybody who'd dealing with exactly the kind of issue you are. Set up with a small subject and a set of rules. Of course theye aren't that many arouhnd any more, versed in that documentation. Most of this is obviously involved in perseverence of documentation, putting it to...it's almost as though the sociologist depends on the historian for really good data. The historians, at the end, have to rely on sociologists for really good theory. The historians do better, I think, than the sociologist because at least they got the methods. And the data.

R.A.: But I think beyond that, the question in my mind is, is it not our circular situation--sociologists depend on historians for data but, in fact, what we're getting from historians are that we just take their facts and ignore their interpretation; we get data and interpretation. And interpretation is based on something. So they're something of historians and sociologists, and it works the other way around, too. If historians depend on sociologists for theory but the turned out theory is based on the work that generations of past historians --

A.S.: Yeah, there are assumptions made about major movements.

RA.: Yeah. Right.

A.S.: YOU know, it's interesting, in one of the

ACTUALLY first-rate books of the century and one I've mentioned before, Burdell, is so marvelous in the sense that it's so lively and so packed with detail and so interesting in so obviously important area of the world--here he's picked this code to handle the ~~subsequentxself~~ set-by-set assumptions subsequent self and all the rest. What readily holds true is the set-by-set assumptions of the way that human nature works and that history works. In fact, it's rather difficult set of assumptions for an American to avoid., if he thinks about it.

R.A.: I think, too, one of the interesting things about the SALEM POSSESSED book is that both things are happening at once. On the one hand, these guys in their discussion of the conflict between the groups they appropriate in sociological theory. In other words, their case study becomes an instance of the operation of larger social laws. Okay? In fact, let's take that as a paradigm of a way a historian can operate. Take an historical law, and a sociological law and apply it to this instance. How this instance illustrates the operation of that law. They do that, but they also do the other thing, which is to say, "What we find in our data suggests a certain kind of a social law. The one about the victims as being outsiders and more mobile and lacking in deference." So that they're data, then, their case study, out of it emerges a possible social law which could be tested in other instances as well. So the two are happening at once: the moving from the general to the particular in a rather uncritical way, but the moving from the particular to a possible general law in a critical way, a very sophisticated way.

A.S.: That's another thing: you take a period of history which is anywhere in time. Which is like thatOkay? And if you treat this, say, as we would treat a situation were it today, say I would be more particular in my perceptions but my sensitivities wide open and all my sociology in my head. What I come out with, let's say is wordless context or something like that. Now that thing's obviously

FITS the situation, it's really grounded, and then we could say, "Well, we could work it out," or something, because by generalizing you could do it here, you could do it here or you can write a more general theory. I think what you're saying about these guys, alright now they're in the position of extrapolating it outward; in fact, people who do it several times. The people with these educations haven't found it at all. The only way to do it is to do it in detail, to treat them in detail and then have a general theory. So they're doing what everybody else has done, that's something in the past. Now, what's sometimes done, in Milwaukee it's done, take a theory from up here today, then dietive it--they just dot an "i" across a "t". A perfect example of this: Sigmund Diamond, a guy in his 50s, wrote an article on the Jamestown community when he was up in Burlington, Columbia Dept. of allow as a historian from Cornith. He thought,that was his first, and maybe only, essay, as far as I know, in sociology , he wrote this stuff about group process and I taped it and didn't add anything.to the theory. And so some group started that he wanted to know something about some additive that he hadn't heard about, so we've got six guys from different sociology who have the opportunity to say yes or not They did something different. It's exactly what I'm suggesting, except that it was a funny business. They pulled something from up here, and then they did this. And in the end they didn't do much with that. They came out with that.

R.A.: They came out with that. Yeah. You're talking about these guys here, on SALEM REPOSSESSED.

A.S.: They could have stuck to that, but this might be archaic. Keep this in mind, how these things work. They might get around to doing more historical things to build general theory, or come up here. It doesn't make any difference how they do it. It will work either way, but after that comes an interesting

question. What happens if you study a set of events that occur in that amount of time? Or, if you don't want that amount of time, take half of it. Say, the 1850s til now. Something like that. And this is the event that you see, or set of events, which I suspect is more usual. But I see that you will still do the same things. You can take this and plot it, you can sometimes just take segments of this, but you're taking a little of something. What you're going to do is, you're going to plot it or you can run sociological theory pussively or, what sociologists do, they use this as backdrop and then this becomes the product. So I guess what I'm saying is that the trick is, how do you write about that by a classical-like route? And then maybe do this. And that's closer to what 's adopted, in a way. I did something like this. I don't know if it was very successful, but on the book on mobility I had the United States over by Spain and then I took Australia and I took Canada and transposed them like this and said that the reason this works this way, and that runs that way and that runs that way, is that this is different than that, and these are not. I never followed through with this, but I don't know if other people were really intact with this kind of issue. Maybe there may be others. The reason they don't is ~~not that~~ theories don't differ but they're studied one at a time. And then they're likely to behave implitidly. For the explicit sociology. What it would take is something else, but these scales are doing . Nobody's ever talked about this thing, nobody's picked it up. It's buried because it's only a bit of introduction to the first chapter, but it's what he did.

R.A.: Yeah. I see what you're saying.

A.S.: I'm not saying you must accept it. I'm just throwing it out as a stereo to where you are now, having already postmarked that you're disappointed in this.

R.A.: Well, where I'm at is that the particular thing that I'm doing is neither a comparison of several historical situations that for whatever reasons you want to compare, nor is it the study of the one situation as it develops over a long period of time; particularly of a community,because of the Ecye accent and this book--they're a study of communities. Whereas this situation, the Postrof Chicago was not, in any sense, a community.

A.S.: But leaving out the subject matter, it is essentially a small point in time. In the past. That's what it is.

R.A.: Right, exactly. I don't just want to do the thing of, this is the instance of--or these sociological laws--sort of thing. Right?

A.S.: That's what happens to Ecye, essentially.

R.A.: Ummhmm. Well, the other way to approach it is to say, "Well, looking at this situation in great depth, in detail the way a historian would, but asking questions about what were the conditions that existed, the conditions of interaction among the various actives, the various roles, the structure of the situation--that it's a social structure; to look at it in terms of type of actorsand then theytypes of strategies of balancing options and actions and directions. This was just some of the stuff that came out of the seminar discussion. So these are the kinds of questions that I would be raising when I look at it. For example, it occurs to me that one approach--it begins to look to me as if this were an abortive wildcat strike. If I wanted to use Guner's notions and so on, that it was an attempp to organize a work stoppage in a situation where a strike couldn't take place. Though proscribed. Because there would be a mutiny. So what I'm finding is that it seems to be there was an awareness of this on the part of the men

themselves. That if they took an overt collective action, that that would clearly be a mutiny, construed as a mutiny and therefore they would all face those charges. For example, I discovered that there were several petitions that were circulated, or at least they were rather crude petitions. One of them seems to be just of list of men who didn't want to go back to work. The other was a list of names and at the top there was a sentence saying that all men who do not wish to work go back to work, we will want to transfer to another base. And then there's the list of signers. Well, these petitions were not presented, they were apparently destroyed. And my hunch is, the reason they were destroyed is that this would have been evidence of a conspiracy, and that somebody realized that and said, "Look, we can't...nobody sign any lists or petitions 'cause it won't be interpreted that way, they'll say this is a list of mutineers." So the list was destroyed. And instead, what developed, and I'm still working on the process by which it was developed, since the men had collective grievances but collective action was disallowed, by the structure of the situation, what they tried to do was, in fact, to develop a collective response in the guise of individual refusals to go to work. Instead of saying, "We're not going back to work because we have this and this and this grievances and we are united to resist," what we're going to do is say, "We're not going back to work because I as an individual am afraid of being killed in another explosion," so their collective grievances instead of being brought out by overt collective response gets translated into a covert collective response which is presented as an aggregation of individual instances of refusal to go to work.

A.S.: Something like being insulting to whites as they walk along. In implicit ways you can't pin it down.

R.A.: In other words, what happened in a sense, collective action was disallowed yet they had a collective grievance and in fact wanted to take some kind of collective action, they were compelled to disguise the action or to present it as an aggregation of individual acts. This was, in fact, the defense in the trial and it also seems, from what I've been able to piece together about what happened before the refusal, is that this is the way it developed. So it becomes then a--boy, I'm not quite sure where to go from there. Floating back in there somewhere I had a sense that I'm groping for , what I'm asking is, what does this tell me about principles of behavior when in the situation where there's a collective grievance but no possibility of legal collective action?

A.S.: I'll do my best. One of my first questions is, just taking the data, as you gave it, all the black guys know that this is going on. I mean, do they know that they have a collective grievance? but can't express it.

R.A.: Oh, yeah, yeah. In fact, they had tried in various ways to express it. I found evidence of one petition and some other things that had taken place before.

A.S.: Did they know that they're making individual actions which then stand for collective grievance? I don't mean that they talked about it, that there was collusion, but I mean in the sense that did they all know it? Or did each one just do it separately?

RA.: Well, no, they discussed it beforehand, you see.

A.S.: Right.

A.S.: Did the whites know?

R.A.: The whites suspected.

A.S.: Then you have a case of suspicion awareness. Okay?

R.A.: Suspicion awareness, ha, ha, ha. Yeah.

A.S.: You know, it's an awareness characterized by suspicion. It's pretty funny out of context, and raises the questions; for example, did whites make an attempt to find out?

R.A.: Ah, yes. After the work stoppage there was an interrogation and investigation that lasted for a month, and statements were collected from all the men who refused. Statements which were later disavowed by the men. And those statements which were disavowed indicated that there was a collective action, that there had been a meeting, for example, that discussions of various types had taken place among various men, but later a lot of this was denied at the trial. Because by that point the men had clearly decided that their best defense was that they had acted individually. And they apparently decided this on their own, not even in consultation with their defense lawyers. They didn't even talk to the lawyers before the trial.

A.S.: Let's say for the sake of argument this is the correct line they took. There is a suspicion awareness; people suspect, that they used tactics to find out, which included artificial hearings with each guy...

R.A.: Well, an interrogation of each guy, right. And a taking of a statement. And the interrogation was in a question-and-answer form in which the questions were--

A.S.: Then the question is, how did each guy handle this? Did they know it was an attempt to break through the suspicion, and if they knew it, how did they handle it? Did they admit it, did they fight it?

R.A.: Some knew, and some didn't. Among those who didn't know--well, they just told whatever they knew. Among those who did know--some fudged, some told everything and some handled it in other ways.

A.S.: And when the interrogation started, was there then conversation among the guys as to how to handle it?

R.A.: The interrogation? Yes, there was.

A.S.: Okay, same as...Then, when they get to the court of law, did they deny all of this?

RA.: Denied all of it, right.

A.S.: Okay, so that's one way of analyzing that. Now, Sparingbird would have handled it not quite that way, you could also list the questions like, if they hadn't become suspicious.

R.A.: The officers; Well, it's very interesting. The officers claim that one of their officers saw the meeting take place, but his description of what he saw and some things that were there, there's some problems with that. The men, the enlisted men, their view, at least two of them that I've talked to now, and they volunteered this to me without my asking it, is that they had a snitch in their

OWN GROUP who told the officer what had taken place.

A.S.: So we know the suspicion was strong.

R.A.: So their suspicion--

A.S.: Okay, let's do this. That's the most obvious. Once they began to be suspicious that there was this awareness what did they do about it? In other words, they now have a suspicion and where to set these snitches. It's supposed to be closed. What did they do about it?

R.A.: I don't know yet. I know they never found out who, whether there was a snitch.

A.S.: Oh, I see. That's interesting, they didn't know who snitched.

R.A.: They didn't know who snitched, no.

A.S.: This is different than if they suspected two specific guys.

R.A.: No, no, what they suspected is that there was one of two snitches. But they don't know who. To this day they don't know who.

A.S.: And you don't know what they did about it.

R.A.: No, that's something I should ask for.

A.S.: Well, one thing you've got to do is check everything out. The other question

is, assuming that they felt they had been snitched on and what did they do?

R.A.: Oh, one thing about the snitch they may not have found out about it, their suspéciousmay not have develped about it until late in the investigation or after the investigation. 'Cause the reason they became suspect was because of the questions they were being asked in the interrogation.

A.S.: So the question, of course, as Grete would handle it, would be, When did they find out and under what conditions? And then some of the properties --did they know of exact persons, or did they just think in general? In any case, there is something specific, one set of tactics and there is another set of tactics and invariably there may be such things as why does one area start to luck out. If all of this fits into that, then if we work it backwards and say, "Okay, the whites quite often suspected that there was collusion because somebody saw it, the meeting, but didn't hear it.--

R.A.: Didn't hear it, no.

A.S.: Didn't hear it, so didn't know what to think. Now what did they do? To, in effect, turn the suspicion

R.A.: Well, in the interrogation they asked, specifically asked the men about that meeting. They asked what took place, that was their main strategy. They knew about the lists, the petititions and they knew about the meeting.

A.S.: Was there any debate among them, somehow, what to do when discovered?

RA.: When which was discovered?

A.S.: That the men were not acting collectively.

R.A.: Oh, a debate among the officers: no evidence of that so far.

A.S.: Yes, 'cause it would be different if there were a debate. Something else would have happened. Half of them would have said, "No, it's all individual stuff," and half would have said the opposite. And then other actions would have happened. The question is whether the evidence is there.

R.A.: There's no evidence of that so far. In fact, the impression I get from the evidence is that they'd become convinced very quickly that they had an air-tight case, because in the interrogations they had the evidence of collusion, of a conspiracy.

A.S.: Because of the interrogation.

R.A.: Because of the interrogation.

A.S.: The whole thing turns around, this part of the thing turns around notions of awareness, contacts and just trying to keep it closed, and so on. And also, a very fascinating one, is that you do not have any evidence that, in fact, these guys have tried to keep it closed, that anybody in their midst could learn something personally by opening it, by snitching. If you don't have evidence of it--

R.A.: Well, no, I have evidence in the sense that I now know that some particular individuals did not want to go along with the continued resistance. And in fact, when they had proposed to abandon the resistance they were threatened. So, within

the group there was an effort to maintain the unity of the group. Which meant, everybody sticking together, and opposing those who wanted to give up, and go back to work. But at the same time, there's a motive then, there are certain categories of actors that could have a motive for snitching.

A.S.: That comes into an interesting kind of microanalysis, which is that the guys were probably focused on the idea of everybody not going back to work.

R.A.: Right.

A.S.: If any of the guys focused on the possibility that somebody might snitch and therefore go into a law case that was looming up, but hadn't occurred yet...

R.A.: There's no evidence that they had anticipated that.

A.S.: Did they anticipate a law case?

R.A.: They anticipated a case. They thought that, they did not think they would be charged with mutiny, but they thought there would be a lesser charge of some sort.

A.S.: Okay. They anticiapted a case. If there was a case then snitching would be vital. And if they knew some of the guys that didn't agree with them, then you'd think that they would do something to them: at the very least, abeyance; at the very most, coercion.

R.A.: Well, there's evidence of both. There was some suspicion about some guys within the group--there were never any accusations against any particular individuals.

A.S.: What I'm trying to do, I'm trying to link your sense of data, and assuming you know this already, I'm trying to link the nature of my questions on your data with the possibility that you could write up the data not just as data, but in terms of, Will this stuff drive on? I don't hold to so brief a concept, but it's a good example of how concepts come out of Data. The only reason I used this was just because we started talking about inidividual initiative versus collective. See, so it works.

R.A.: It works.

A.S.: To that extent. Latrebaker's model. So when you're finished, it's as if you're there. I don't say that you have to use my concepts, you can make your own. If you'd work that out what you'd have is an area of explanation at every step of the way. Logically, you get Gibb in there and then you could give the explanation. Right? Or you could do Solestin and my stuff and Barney's and the theory/goes this way, and as the theory goes the explanations are imminent.

R.A.: Right. I think that that's what I'd like to do.

A.S.: That's what you want to do. Your basics are sociology but you're still using that theory; you can do this, we've done them with case studies. But that's where I think you're wrong, abiding by the concept. You see, they can't do that because, I think, of two reasons: one is that they come in with the idea already; like my saying, let's try **kit's got to fit somewhere. That's one thing; the other thing is I don't

THINK they know how to do this step-by-step.

R.A.: Well, I think that approach will work and actually, I think this will also bring in the whole theme of balancing, too. That we discussed in the seminar. There's the whole question of the options that were open at each step, along the way. But one of the problems that I had had throughout all those seminars was that, okay, well, they're balancing and this moves this way and that happens and so forth; I didn't have any sense of what it was that the actors themselves thought they were doing. And where were they trying to go. Which I think I see now, and that therefore orders the ~~xxxxxx~~ narrative, but the explanatory material--the explanation--is, comes from, the sociological insight. Given that this is what these guys are trying to do, and given the circumstances under which they are trying to do it, then, how does it develop. And why.

A.S.: See, technically, what the seminar did that time, it did very well. It tried to give you an approximate theorical code; U don't organize the whole account in termsof the balancing and rebalancing phases. See, it all came out of the data you've given me. Alright? But the specific mechanics phase by phase was lacking. Partially you didn't know who to nail. But partially you still don't understand the stuff. See, that would be subsumed and the balancing, after the balance...

R.A.: Yes, exactly.

A.S.: You get that very well now. The major theoretical code that they gave you provided it works out when you're finished, is how the whole thing would be shaped.

R.A.: This is really good, though, because if I can--and thinking about this this also tells me then, what questions. Well, I came up with a theoretical sample because this tells me now what questions must I ask those people I've found; and also, what other interviews must I find or what other documents must I find. What kinds of documents must I look for in order to answer the questions that I'll have about it now. Yeah, yeah, that'll--that's a big step.

AS.: This may wash out, but it's important at that point to take another phase and give in to the benefit--what else would happen, maybe an uncut truth with another idea that doesn't even make sense, or we get an idea to get rid of the damn thing. But you'd have to do the same sort of things. Step-by-step. You do that breaking through the usual tangle. You picked a devilish kind of thing to work.

R.A.: Yeah, that's --I have to be careful.

A.S.: If you took a course in, for the sake of argument, you took one episode in, and said, What the hell is going on? I think you'd be faced with exactly the same sort of situation. Other than giving the narrative, feedback that would come back and so on. You have to be breaking out. You want to try it, and see what happens?

R.A.: Okay, sure.

A.S.: See what happens.

R.A.: Okay. One of the big issues in the trial was these statements represented: the result of the interrogation, the investigation before the trial. And the

prosecution planned to introduce them as evidence, and that was going to win the case. The defense objected on the grounds that the statements were obtained under durress. In fact, they succeeded in having the statements blocked from being introduced as evidence. But the prosecution developed another strategy. For having them introduced. What the prosecution wanted to do was to have the statements introduced as being accepted as true statements, and therefore, legitimate evidence. That was blocked., by the defense. So then what the prosecution went for was to say, "Well, since we can't have the statements introduced what we're going to do is when each of the defendents comes up, for cross-examination, we're going to read all the questions and answers from his statement to him now, and ask him whether he said or did not say those." And, of course, most of the men denied having said those statements, but the fact of the matter is, the prosecution had now gotten all the statements before the court. They were all denied, but they were before the court, nevertheless. And that played, I think, a big part in condemning the men; but it was an attempt by the defense to sort of head this off at the pass. Not to have the statements introduced as reliable evidence. But the prosecution managed to get them introduced even though everything in most of them was denied.

A.S.: Let me just spark on this, may I? What happened to the jury?

R.A.: Okay, there was no jury.

There were severn officers of the court.

A.S.: Of the court: the people who were there. Alright, now you can't make any assumptions about where they stood on this. But they're now faced with two kinds of evidence: one is, statements and the other is, denial. So who do you believe, as one side or the other is lying, either in particular

topic, or totally.

R.A.: Every item, right.

A.S.: Every item. Do you know how many items, roughly?

R.A.: In the questions? Or in--

A.S.: First of all, in numbers of people.

R.A.: Well, there were fifty defendants, and there were forty-nine statements. One defendant had refused to make a statement. Forty-nine statements.

A.S.: So they got forty-nine statements, alright. Now, did the defendants all say, "I never made a statement."

R.A.: No, no, it varied. Most of them denied making statements that incriminated any one of the groupsas having been a leader, so that when they were -- when the prosecution asked them, "Did you not in yoursstatement of August so-and-so say that Joe Blow called a meeting and said such-and-such at the meeting?" they said, "No, I didn't say that."

A.S.: Let me just play with it. There were forty-nine guys with this statement forty-nine times. Now, did any of these guys deny making this statement?

R.A.: All together?

A.S.: All together.

R.A.: Well, no.

A.S.: So, they all agreed that they'd make statements. Now roughly, how many items would there be per statement?

R.A.: It varied. One or two statements were simply one, two sentences, and some ran on for two pages.

A.S.: So the items just went on, open. Some men could deny anywhere between one statement and statements. So the prosecutor, I suppose, had one principle thing he wanted to show, maybe two or three.

R.A.: About three, at the most, four. Four priniciple things.

A.S.: How many of these guys denied these three statements?

R.A.: Almost all of them denied those three. So let's say, fourty-five, and four admitted various aspects of the three.

A.S.: Do these all have to do with collusion?

R.A.: Collusion, umhm. The petitions, the meetings, yeah, umhm.

A.S.: So the major--here--suspicion of these things and the effort to detect of the lawyers concerning this to open, if they can turn this to open in the court they've got the guys.

R.A.: Exactly.

with those components,

A.S.: So the jury is sitting there, and the package of the guys' black lawyer just the reverse is they can take those suspicions and you're in business. Make sense? So here's the jury. What would you do if you were a jury, I don't know whether you're suspicious or not, even though the chances are they were. Let's say you're absolutely neutral. What would you do if four guys admitted it?

R.A.: Well, it wasn't just the forty-nine defendants, because the prosecution also brought in prosecution witnesses who also testified that the three statments were made. That these three items took place, alright? Another set of witnesses.

A.S.: This is governance. Okay, and it's number one. I don't know if there were other issues besides this one, this is issue number one. Okay? So, then these guys change from that evidence, do these guys have evidence?

R.A.: Which guys we talking about now?Against the witnesses? Yeah, they didn't actually play it, though. They had an argument, but it didn't come up until the appeal, and that is that many of these guys came in and testified, "Yeah, these three things here did, in fact, happen." In other words, to make that open awareness. Turns out that they were under indictment themselves, so they were suspect witnesses.

A.S.: The first step is that, and then later...In spite of all this you were getting the judge's concern that suspicion, yes, but open, no. If you were a judge and had this evidence:
what would you do?

R.A.: Well, it's not, hmmm, I don't--the evidence was they disobeyed an order. Even in the defense, they could not disprove that, that the men had refused to work.

A.S.: What was at issue then?

R.A.: What was at issue was whether there was a conspiracy to mutiny. That was the charge.

A.S.: I'm trying to get it in legal language, and translate. What did the judge have to decide? He didn't have to decide whether there was mutiny of not; had to decide whether theyguys met to decide to mutiny. The point I'm pushing is this: it doesn't make any difference personally what you as the judge would decide, it could be anybody. But you have to see what they're up against. One of those guys could be lying, all or one of the guys could be lying. Four of them said, "Yes," well, they could be lying, too. This could be a performance, okay? So it's real incomplete. You can't tell from this one way of handling it. Just on the face of it, but the issue, how do they ~~stand~~ accused so that they themselves are sheltered from suspicion?

R.A.: How do who--oh, the jury, yeah.

A.S.: In other words, they're going to be nibulousin the legal sense. Sociologically, they have to make a decision in the end that says there are ~~legal~~ sufficient ~~grounds~~ for us to be ~~suspicious~~. Then, they could also go further there: there are sufficient grounds for us to be suspicious--that's very weak. So we'll pass it along to another court Which will give six more months to both sides to dig up more evidence, or if it's still weak we'll have to dismiss it. You can't tell from this how they will actually judge the case? I think we can say in summary, though, about the legality of it. What I'm insterested in now is this, is that this very different kind of incident does now link you back with the suspicion business.

R.A.: And it even gets more fine than that, though, because the suspicion, for example, didn't evolve so much around whether or not there was a meeting; in fact, I think ~~there was~~ in the trial it was admitted that a meeting took place. But the question was, what happened at the meeting, what was the purpose of what happened. The prosecution's argument was that there was a meeting in which the idea was to get all the guys to stick together for carrying on a mutiny. The defense argument was there was a meeting for the purpose of getting all the guys to stick together to keep order. Because, in fact, the guy who called the meeting had been designated by an officer to keep the guys in order. His argument was that he called the meeting because there had been a fight and people were getting uptight, and he said, "We got to stick together and cool things out."

A.S.: Look at whether they meant it or not.

R.A.: Sure, so it revolves on the question of, even taking--there was some disagreement even about the words that were said. But even if you admit everything, to evidence, that the prosecution wanted to get into evidence, it's that there are two legitimate explanations of what went on, what the words meant.

A.S.: Bob, let me go at this from two different directions. Take the guys now, today, and you met three or four of them, and they talked about it. Do you, as a researcher, say, have the same problem? 'Cause you're trying to find out what the hell went on. But you're in the exact same position the jury is. Exactly the same position that the white officers were. You want to know what happened, for different reasons, but you want to know what happened. So you're talking with

THese guys; how do you make your judgments, just as to which guys are telling you the truth about what happened? You may have talked to three informers.

R.A.: Well, okay. Number one, it may be that one of them may have been an informer, but I doubt that all three. What I'm doing is two things. One is, they've all told me that they haven't met among themselves since it happened, and that they haven't talked in any detail with anyone about what happened since it happened. Okay? If I accept those statements at face value, then that means that they have not influenced each other since it happened, nor have they been influenced by others who have come along to talk to them about it. So that where I find, what I'm looking for in comparison, in comparing the interviews, then, is where they collaborate each other and where they disagree. And taking the points of collaboration and saying, this is probably what happened, and taking the points of disagreement and saying, well, this is something that I have to look more closely into. The other thing I'm doing is comparing what they tell me now with what they said in the trial. But recognizing there that there's an inherent problem which is that they were in a position where they were denying some things, which--

A.S.: Which would tell you the truth, and not them.

R.A.: Well.

A.S.:

What's frustrating is that, reservation aside, as a researcher you are in the same position that everybody else is who was involved in it, in that you don't know whether in fact there was a conspiracy and some guys say there was, and you

don't know whether that was an informant or not. And if the guys say they weren't, you know whether they're covering or not.

R.A.: Well, we don't even talk about conspiracy. What I ask them is, Did such-and-such a thing happen, and Under what conditions, right. But there're discrepancies: where I had--I'll have to decide, I guess, and go back and interview further to try to uncover what is the truth of the matter. But actually, let's see here.

A.S.: I think you said by that statement is that gradually you're getting to realize that it was an aggregate business and not a collective action where they had agreed to do this. That in fact you were saying there was a conspiracy, and that it was carried on in typical underdog fashion.

R.A.: That's the thing. You see, it's the language, too, that trips you up, I guess. So you say it's a conspiracy, but if it had happened in civilian life it would have been called a wildcat strike.

A.S.: Okay, okay. I only used the word for convenience, I wouldn't normally use it. What you're saying to neutralize it out, in a collective decision to do something they had to do it that way because they couldn't do it the other way.

R.A.: Thay had to present it in such a way that it would not be presented overtly as a collective decision to do something.

A.S.: So, to go back to what I'm pushing. As a researcher you had to go through the same type situation in order to get a shot at what happened. Now you have a better chance to find out what really happened than anybody, because you can

QUESTION witnesses and all the rest of it. Even with the problems of knowing whether one of these guys was an informer or whether everyone was telling exactly the same truth , and even without that the procession is still in the same position. And you were reading the cues not so very differently than a lot of other people did. I think that's marvelous because it begins to fit in. What must emerge out of these two incidents. Let's take it even further. If --I have another idea on that, let's see if I can capture it. Yeah. Now, I can go in two directions, both on the suspicion, in a way. If you take these as forty-nine guys with whatever wounds they've ever survived plus their families plus their kids, and you ask, let's say for the sake of argument, they all know the story, they all know exactly what happened. And there's an intersting questions aoubt why, now, thirty years later, isn't somebody telling that story? There is some question about why isn't anybody doing anything about it? I am going to make the assumption that at least20 people are alive who know about it, plus their kids, who are mum on it. Why are they not trying to convert what is the suspicion context--leaving out the legal aspect now--as far as the rest of the world is concerned? Which is perfectly open to everybody who's inside it, so why aren't they trying to make everybody know what happened?

R.A.: Well, actually two of them had thought of that. One of the fellows told me that, in fact, he is starting trying to write up an account of it, but had abandoned the project. And another had never tried to write anything, but he didn't give a specific reason; my impression was that he was discouraged. I got that impression rather than it was a problem with some other peoblem that might get involved. Another had also thought that something was wanting to be written about it, the way he put it, but he himself had never done anything, or taken any steps.

A.S.: I'm going to put a little comparative anaÿysis on you. Do you mind my talking so much?

R.A.: Go right ahead. No, go right ahead.

A.S.: I think it's working. The kind of analysis would be a bunch of people about something that happened and they had been in court with a judge. And they tried to tell other people that that was incorrect. These other people said no because they suspected something. And then the later generation would saÿ, "We want to set the record straight." Alright? Now, there are various conditions under which they could say that. One is, it makes a difference to men now. To this generation. That we set that record straight. Another is, it's possible to do that -- there's a note to yourself there, people believe that they can do it the right way. Another is other kinds of things, and another possibility is that it's another century til we set the record straight. Not that incident, but in essence we've done it. The third example are the Japanese. In spite of all that happened look at what resulted from the second World War. You get various possibilities. What occurs to me is that it's not going to make any difference. There are two dimensions that are in non-relation. That leads to a set of influences and questions, which is to ask people why have you never done anything aobut it? Because when you stop playing the suspicion game it's over.

R.A.: Well, one of those pèèces of data on that--why have you never done anything aoubt it--one of the fellows, when I was attempting to arrange an interview with him, read that I can't talk with you because we had some agreements about what we would say and what we wouldn't say. And so I don't want to violate any of those and that's why I don't want to talk to you. And initially he wouldn't. But I later persuaded him to talk to me. Well, I thinkI know what the agreements were. I got

THEMEELsewhere, not from him. But the thing is, he still felt bound to honor these agreements from 34 years ago. And therefore he was not going to talk.

A.S.: They should get together and say, "Look, boys, nobody cares about those agreements any more." We had a well-lkept circle, let's get it clear what we had in mind. If it's that well-kept, you gotta know there was a conspiracy.

R.A.: Yeah, yeah. My appearance on the scene now, in a way, poses the same problem for them as they had 34 years ago, which was are they going to testify against each other. By telling what really happened.

A.S.: Sure.

R.A.: Only now it's not a court of law, it's a strange social scientidt coming around wanting to talk to them. And they have to decide individually, truly, this time.

A.S.: You are exposing this closed situation which they had intended to keep closed. And you're trying to get them to open it. Right?

R.A.: Right.

A.S.: So you're suspected, you see. And the other thing, although I don't think we have to worry about how to explore it, is your very reason for wanting to study this thing. Maybe it doesn't have to do with experiencing it, but hopefully it will do with setting it straight, for that wide world. So you do have an interest in now. I'm sure, for setting the record straight.

R.A.: One of the fellows that I mentioned has not told his 25-year-old son about this incident. Even today there's still a question of deciding who should know and who should not know.

A.S.: So it looks to me like we're back to the real thing. Maybe this is simplistic, but take the moment that two career veterans , one is/the suspicion business add the other under the balance--of which--of not going over. The balance of time. There are other elements that shift out of time, too, but it's very relative. You've got an analysis of the sudden start of eventsto which the men substantially contributed over 12 years.

R.A.: And I've asked myself, thinking comparatively again, I asked myself, "What would have happened if there had been no conspiracy, they were all innocent victims?" What would have happened in terms of my appearing now to ask them about it. Or, perhaps, in terms of somebody else having presented the story earlier. The other question I asked is, "What would have happened if, in fact, there was a conspiracy that had succeeded?" Suppose they had gotten all 250 guys to stick together and in fact the Navy had finally had to transfer them or do something, but nobody would have been brought to trial. What would have happened if it had succeeded?

A.S.: Well, the first thing, of course, is that workers would have all been armed. And proved out this theory, I guess.

R.A.: Yes, but that--thinking that way led me, gave me an insight as to why the story hasn't been told before, which is that they were not just passive victims, but what they tried did not succeed. And that is the dilemma which continues until this day.

A.S.; I guess what I'm saying is that you don't have to rely on this suspicion business, because there are other kinds of thinking. I think that might help to crack the history-sociology business because you know you're working straight out of the damn instance, developing whatever kind of concepts you have. And you relate what you're seeing and hearing. If they'd had a conspiracy and then scattered it would be a different story.

R.A.: Well, in effect what happened was that they had a conspiracy, or attempted collective action, which did not succeed and which in the aftermath of it they were all scattered. See, that's another thing. I think that if they had been in touch with each other in the intervening years it's possible that somebody would have said, "Look, we ought to tell this story to a newspaper, and get the truth out." This kind of thing. But because they were separated, did not see each other afterwards, I think that contributed to the story not being told.

A.S.: Well, that's something that's legitimate. Try to carve out an explanation.

R.A.: Well, I'm going to be going back in June as a matter of fact to reinterview at least some of these I've already talked to. Plus I found two others.

A.S.: How many have you talked to?

R.A.: I talked to five. And there are two others whom I haven't interviewed

yet, but whom I will. But I want to re-interview these guys I've talked to because I realize now that I only asked very few of the questions I need to ask. Because at the time I interviewed them I did not, myself, have any idea of what was my own view of what happened there. I was just asking questions, every question I could think of that might bring in information. Now, in looking at the information, I have an idea of what I think happened. Which I want to explore in more detail. But at the same time I want to be careful not to do it in a certain way that would close out any other possible explanation. In other words, I may be wrong, so I don't want to do this in such a way that all the data will confirm my views.

A.S.: One of the things that you suspect, if there hadn't been that damn accident, is that eventually there would have been a wildcat strike.

R.A.: Ummhmm, yeah. That was in the works, and the explosion was the precipitaing incident.

A.S.: I bet they were influenced by that very easily. And saying, "Yep, we were warming up to it." One of the interesting questions to me impirically is, rather than a past incident we are still very much involved with this experience. It isn't as if they'd forgotten. They're still thinking about it. And the questionsis, "Why?" Why is it such a big deal to them?

R.A.: Yeah, I've thought about that, too. The one thing that comes to mind for me is that I feel, at least to some of them, that there's an ambivalence about what they did. On the one hand, there's a pride that they stuck together and stuck it out even though they wound up in jail at least they stuck by each

other. And showed the Navy the Navy couldn't just run over them. Even though they lost the case and went to jail. But there's another thing that I picked up from some of them which is the feeling, the question perhaps, about whether what they did in fact about refusing to go to work, they did out of cowardice. That it was not just entirely a matter of principle. But maybe it was just plain fear and cowardice. It was probably both: it was probably a matter of principle, but at the same time there had been this goddam explosion and people were scared, you know.

A.S.: I know; analytically that could fit, too, Bob, because if you say you're proud that you stuck together the washout implies something. Let's just say that here's a bunch of people who made a decision out front that nobody's gonna break it down no matter what those guys suspected, and it worked. And they were proud of that. I'm deliberately trying to get at the emotional part. You should be proud of that cause you stuck together. It's not in the question, but it was a very tough set of tactics, that the other guys used to try to crack your closed awareness. You could be very proud just on that basis. Then the other one, they kept together because in fact we were going to have a wildcat strike but we didn't want them to know that; then, at the same time, people are saying, "Get me out of it," that was a different issue" and, I "Yeah, but and we fought that for closed awareness, but now I wonder whether they really bought the issue having brought it before people who were scared. Whether you know that's true as a fact or not. You could hook in your descriptions. Again, right back to your word discovery. There may be some beneficial things going on. See, you can't explain everything, obviously. Everything doesn't fit in a scheme. The idea is to explain a maximum amount with a fair amount of power. Fair enough?

R.A.: Fair enough.

A.S.: So even the terribly emotional, terribly black in terms of the amount of risk, can still be handled in terms of that. You would begin to balance over the years and thnk that was really true. And if you were there then would you have done something different? I think what you should do is to take your other examples, apply both concepts and see how it works. If that's not enough, it's obvious that it does something, but if that's not enough see what else you can get out of those prisoners that would give you additional, good categories. That will also link with what you decide are missing. And as far as the balance, you may never know. For god knows those two sets of data cover a lot of ground.

R.A.: They do, yeah. And like I said, once I can, if I do grasp what were the intentions whether they were fully articulated by them or not: where they were trying to take this, what they were trying to do,to accomplish, then that will--I guess my personal problem in all this is that I didn't want to reduce this to a study just as a problem for a dissertation, or a degree or whatever, but to respect whatever it is that they were trying to do, and to recognize the problems that they are encountering, the way things have worked. And also to recognize my own feelings about whether they did the right thing or not. And the more I learn about it I have questions, too, about whether what they did makes sense, why didn't they turn in the petitions that they were taking, so there's a moral dimension to it here whch probably I can't get away from. To grapple with it, whatever I do with it, I want to convey what they were attempting to do, and not demean it by my analysis of it.

A.S.: Terrific, well I think an analysis, Bob, is absolutely effective. You do as well as you can, you can't always do it totally, but you do as well as you can. Otherwise, without experiencing those people, one can always read them wrong. I really think that is why this type of work is so good, it is so different from a lot of social science,work, because it does proceed on that premise. I mean, analysis can be lousy, but if you can do it right people have to admit you were there.

R.A.: That's what I'm aiming for. If you wanted to categorize this, this is a case study and from the standpoint of sociology, its main interest is whatever I can say about the forces, the conditions, the situation and the processes that were evolving there. That's good, as long as I let that emerge itself, out of the material that I'm looking at. What I think I have to guard against,and there has been a tendency to do this, to try to grab an explanation or an explanatory concept and force it.

A.S.: into a mold. I would say that even one of those white jurors, the officers must know, at least someone does recollecting it. Unless he's seen it and we could get the testimony of that certain man we'd get someplace in the final analysis. We might reach a different moral conclusion when we read it, than yours, but at least we could say, "Is that what they were up to." Get some sense of what was going on. That just never came out. That might even be worse than what they were accused of. You could take a moral position but at tleast it's something. You could say, "We're going to throw the whole thing out of court." It had nothing to do with the case. They were probably all lawyers, even if they were officers; they're not going to take it. To judge the case against their own words.

R.A.: I think the other thing about the moral dimension that I also have to guard against is the tendency to see the story in terms of heroes and villains. Or persecutors and victims, because the more I learn about it, the more that I see that, in fact, the group of fifty, let's say, there were some who behaved heroically, some who were traitors (suspected traitors, anyhow), and there were others--the whole range of possible reactions. Given the situration, given that you have fifty people, the whole possible range of reactions takes place. And a historian would simply document all those reactions, but what I want to do is to put them in context of the situational constraints given what they were trying to do. And then how at each stage in the process, how did the constraints affect the goal-directed behavior? Well, I think I've taken up your whole afternoon here.

A.S.: No, no, I told you it was a session for mutual learning. Why don't you give me that, and I'll have it transcribed on the research grant stuff.

R.A.: Great, great.

A.S.: I'd like to know because I find it very interesting. Whenever you're ready; you'd probably like to hear it again first.

R.A.: Okay, right.

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Robert Allen and Anselm Strauss
Discuss Port Chicago
4/27/78

R.A.: What I'd like to do is tell you about some the readings, and then the kinds of thoughts sparked, and questions and ideas and where to go from there. What I did, was, in going through the stuff that was very obviously related to the theme, which is intersections of history and sociology, in an issue of, American Behavioral Scientist LAST December devoted entirely to that theme, and in several books of readings that have that as their central theme as well, umm...

A.S.: That's exactly where you'd expect that it would be, in urban and the political. I don't know what this stuff on Stanton is, but I gather that there's a lot that's been going on there, but I don't know if they've drawn much on sociology or not. Was it a good issue?

R.A.: Yeah, yeah, it has some interesting stuff in it, but in some ways I thought it was kind of thin. These are two others, these are just articles that I xeroxed. That's just a cover page on one of the articles, and then this is Hofstatter and Lipsus.

A.S.: You know a lot of people have struggled with it.

R.A.: Yeah, right. What I did was on reading that I picked up on--I told you I finally got--~~FOR~~ SALE ~~AND~~ POSSESSED yesterday, and read it last night. I was very excited by that.

A.S.: That seems to be the closest, to my knowledge, of what you're doing. It's a set of events, on a single layering, close to documentation, that you could get. Or maybe not. You could get some good hints.

R.A.: Yeah, well, it definitely sparked off some ideas in me that I wanted to talk about. Well, let me sort of just lay out what happened when I was reading--

A.S.: Let me say one other thing. Fritz Schultze, a German guy, did a study on 4 different communities where communities pulled themselves together by administrative plan. There were a bunch of villages, and the villages were pulled together and formed into towns; so he talked to a lot of politicians and he's actually done a--he's actually working on--I think he's less interested in the substance than he is in the method. How you put together what these people say. In the past about an event that he doesn't remember exactly. About stuff that was very complicated by a lot of different parties and a lot of different people at the time. But it might be fun to ask him about some of the problems he had.

R.A.: Yeah? That's, that's really great 'cause one of the unique things about this study that I'm doing is that it's not a study of documents. That's a big part of it. But I also have access to at least some of the people who were there, whom I can interview now, 34 years later. But there are questions of verification, which accounts are more trustworthy? Because there are discrepancies, naturally, between what they say now, and what they said 34 years ago. And one of the big problems I'm having is in deciding which to trust, or how to balance them against each other.

A.S.: I think you should talk to him. I think his has pertinent merit because of the narrative interview. Where he's had a lot of linguistic work. So I think using some of the linguistic stuff, he could, like, tell you when

people are circumlocuting, moving to Australia and maybe start you thinking about what did she say? I don't know if some of that would be useful to you. It's just possible it might be.

R.A.: Yes, Uh huh. It just might be.

A.S.: Because he didn't have any problem with the one of memory, as such. But he had the problem of veracity. A problem of maybe, selective reception.

R.A.: Yah, I think that's going to be the problem here. Or both, the problem of memory and the problem of veracity, so I think I have a continuum of both of them. The initial impression I had as I began reading and thinking about the relation between the two was, well, first of all, I started out with the classic simple-minded, I guess, differences between history and sociology. History as the study of unique events and that the purpose of history is to eliminate those events there , the particular origins and development and the reasons for it. And to get as many "facts" about it as possible. That's sort of the stereotype of history. And now the study of sociology--both are studying human behavior, and interaction, but the sociology is, of course attempting to --arrive at general laws, principles, and so on from the study of many, many instances. And so, of course, that leads quite naturally to the idea, well, the two are --each one can be--aids to the other. But one discipline can be seen as an isolator or an aid or somehow supportive to the work of the other; for example, the common statement that calls for social scientists to make use of history in order to get deeper insights; historical insights then becomes one of the terms that's used. You need your historical insight in social science studies. And, on the other hand, the historians: you hear people calling

For the need to look at sociological methods, particularly quantitative methods; big on quantitative methods. But, also, conceptualizations from the social sciences and to use these as aids in interpreting historical events, right? So it's sort of --I call that the aid, or ancillary approach to the relationship between the two, which doesn't really see that there's much of a realtionship superficially. Historians can make use of insights of social scientists, sociologists can make use of historical data, but then as I began reading and getting more deep into what I'm thinking about, I'm gettting to see in the writings of some people, like Lipsich in his essay; there's a fellow named Robert Brown who I think is an English fellow who's written a book on, gee--I didn't bring it either--but the title of the book is, "Explanation in Social Science," and being an Englishman he doesn't even consider this quantitative stuff. Well, I don't know exactly what school he belongs to; his whole thing is a discussion of methods of explanation. Genetic explanation, reason as an explanation, empirical evidence and so on; these, in fact, are his chapter headings. I'm about midway through that now, and I'm getting very excited because more and more I feel that there's an organic relationship between history and social sciences. It's almost like a dialectical or complimentary relationship, which I see as going something like this:

okay, history is the study of the unique events from the past, alright? and the interpretation and explanation of those events, right? In all of the historical writings that I have seen so far, that I've been reviewing more recently, it is implicit in them particularly in analysis and explanation, there is implicit the use of social science categories, and explanations.

A.S.: Usually implicit, yeah.

R.A.: Usually implicit, even such a simple minor thing as the Great Man Theory of history. That's the social sciences' theory, it's what it is, although it's generally taken as a historical theory and used as a historical explanation. But it actually is under a social science hypothesis, but which is taken adn assumed and used often uncritically, in historical studies. But actually in looking at almost every historical study, the attempted explanation almost invariably draws upon what are taken to be common sense assumptions about human behavior, but which under, in fact, or fall under or are, in fact, social science theories.

A.S.: Like human nature.

R.A.: Right. Human nature, that's what...So that explanation in history makes use unintentionally or unconsciously, more and more I think consciously now, with this discussion going on, makes use of the assumed findings of social science which are sometimes not presented as assumed findings of social science but ase simply presented as human nature. Okay, and that seems to me that that cannot be avoided; in any kind of historical study, unless you're going to limit yourself just to assembling facts. Because even as you begin assembling facts and putting them in chronological order, that's also based on a theory about human behavior, which is that cause and effect go in a certain chronological sequence. So just unless you limit yourself to assembling facts with no attempt at ordering them that's the only way a historian could avoid bringing in the premises of social science. And what sort of useful fact collecting are you doing then? And I found examples of this; if I could develop this into a paper of something I would then draw that out. Both Hopstat and Lipsich in their articles point this out. Even they press to the

heart of the matter: it's not an incidental connection. It cannot be avoided in historical explanation.

A.S.: And what happens, Bob, is that you get people who reach out very deliberately to sociological concepts, that the ones they pick are always the ones that are current at their university, and the guys they've talked to. ** Or maybe the books they've been influenced by, and they ** them. And I think one of two things happen, at least: one is that they take some of the concepts like the guy by the name of Cochran, Tom Cochran, he studied initiative roles among business historians, used stuff like Berlioz, and he's using those concepts to inform sociologists that they look half-assed; and two, Crute who's an historian, who may buy a lot of what he may have to say, in his original research, his explanations probably on the simplified side and inferring correctly that a guy like Coziary is restricted to current things, concepts, not real possible sociological concepts -- not the ones he maybe thought he was doing, but the ones he's happened on. Or you get a guy like the very fine historian of Russian history, his name is X Gersuguan, and I remember about 20 years ago he tried out the Parsonian solution, it just didn't work. It just didnt make any sense, so they're hooked on a very difficutl problem which is, should you than use sociological theory explicitly? Which ones do you use? It's that whole question of Salem I think part of the problem is that you buy concepts and not positions in the theories. So they buy concepts, they push right through the implicit set of premises not really their specialty which is what happened in the committee, then they find it doesn't work, when in fact, their own assumptions are different. Where they'd be more comfortable with it. Or they buy something like Roth where he has a whole set of assumptions which are pretty thin. But there is nothing specific, like in Corsky's, to hang it on to. They then tread; they can be more

OR LEss happy with it because it seems to say things; but a lot of other people aren't goikng to be happy with it because of the fact that they sense that it's a simple treatment of complexity. Okay?

R.A.: Okay, yeah.

A.S.: One other example I think is most obvious. Langer was a sociologist who explained some stuff that had to go with French history. You get the reverse of sociologists with pet theories or pet concepts who are also versed in a particular area, okay? But the enterprise is essentially the same. Just the basis is sociological. Now we've got this data and we've explained it in terms of sub-straneous notions, in her case it's class stratification, and Tilly is making a splash, has been for 10 years, he's a sociologist who's been writing about French history and he's essentially a sociologist and doing the same kind of thing. Obviously, some historians are rather informative in bringing things into perspective, but other people say, "Bullshit!" You know what I mean? I can think of a couple more, but it's this kind of thing. Both sides are hit by the same dilemma. The incredible thing is that sociological concepts don't rise out of the historical data. Take the back route. I might think more deeply about it, but I think that that's what's really going on. Alright, so I think that's it about books. The coming around to dealing with stuff and just looking at it and filling it in. The emphases are different. Sometimes they're interested insociology and sometimes in history, but in both cases they're bringing these things in.

R.A.: I think one of the intriguing things about this FOR SALE AND POSSESSED book is that that is also true here, I think, in some of the discussions they

have about the nature of the factional fighting they had in the Salem village. I think underlying that is a certain set of premises about group conflict and sociological theory. So on the one hand is, even in this book, the importation of the sociological methods of explanation but, at the same time, on the other side of the coin, they also have an attempt to present whether, in fact, this is the way it happened, or not. But the explanation of who became the victims for witchcraft charges--they present that as though that really emerges out of data--

A.S.: where people live and all that sort of thing?

R.A.: Yeah, in fact, they come up with a principle which they formulate in the interlude which is that the victims were outsiders who were mobile and lacking in deference. Which is supposed to be a "sociological law." But it emerges out of their particular historical, the study of this particular historical instance, but we may well find parallel or analygous situations. By which this principle, the rhetoric, could be tested. But that also, I think, shows one of the ways in which history and sociology can be really connected, which is the use of historical instances as case studies of social laws in action. But you don't assume you know what the laws are before you start looking at the case study. You see what the laws are from the case studies. Which is different from what most approaches have been, I think. We focused mainly on historians, but I think on the behavioral science side--okay, if we accept the behavioral science attempts to formulate general laws of human behavior by collecting and examining and classifying many individual instances, whether you're talking about survey, research or qualitative research, we're looking at many individual instances, but what historians point out in their critique which is true is that we

seldom think about the history of those individual instances. In fact, they are unique historical events or individuals or situations that we're looking at, but we're attempting to collect and classify them and to look at what unifies them, that is, what's common among them as opposed to what makes each of them unique. This has sometimes, I guess, led to errors in social science research. The Wallter stuff got criticized because they apparently went in without knowing--to do a community study--without knowing anything about the history of the community., and therefore misled, by taking at face value statements that were made by the informants. If they had had more historical insight they could have avoided that mistake. But it seems to me that that is also an inherent problem in sociological research of any type, which is that although we are looking for what is common among many instances, if we neglect the unique qualities of these instances and, particularly, we never ask the question about why the unique aspects exist. Then we are very liable to make mistakes of interpretation. Simply because one set of the data, one aspect of the reality of the situation we have chosen to ignore by, on principle, Let's see if I have an example. Well, I mentioned an example of -- well, what often historians use undritically, sociological concepts, we on the other hand often tend to accept the validity of the instances that we collected without critically looking at their history, where they came from.

A.S.: Well, this particular -- two things go together. In the Waller case, let's take a couple of classic examples. In the Waller case he is studying a community. Dr. Harris is wrong, he is studying a community and he is studying it statically, as it is. There may be some assumptions about American communities otherwise you would have studied it, anyway he's studying a community. The historians come around and say, "Ah, you picked your community because of the fact that it's in a time loan."

But that's simply a criticism of the history of that kind of
16
Let's say you're making a study of 60 military leaders of Armies in 16
underdeveloped countries., and some of these are the same and some are different. Okay? and they are the same in different kinds of ways. And they are under the general theory that applies to military leaders, then you could compare this to union leaders in Westernized countries. Now this is Janfranson's book, not the best book in the world, but it is interesting. Why can't you study similarities and differences that way--our whole damn history If you could take for granted by looking at them, the surface area, that they are different although somewhat the same. Or even the entire instrument, a point that was obvious.

R.A.: Right. Okay. We look at those 16 instances and we say, "Well, some are same and some are different." But how do we explain the differences, or the similarities? We can explain them in terms of lateral comparisons among the 16 , which would be perhaps the usual technique. I think the criticism is that, not to deny the importance of the lateral comparison, but unless you also make the vertical analysis you may miss a crucial dimension of explanation and interpretation.

A.S.: Here's another example. It goes like this: there is anvery interesting book that has somehow been missed by sociologists, by a guy by the name of Black
political
who is a well-known ~~social~~ scientist. It's kind of a mixed up book, but there is one section of it that's fascinating.

R.A.: What's the book?

A.S.: It's something about interaational relations. I don't know the title any more. But it's easy to find. He's classified all the amount of a culture that he knew about, five different types and he's done it by criteria. What's interesting about this is he's built history in. For example, these are groups that were never colonialized; these were groups, in other words, that grew in all their powers. These were groups that, til very recently, we had trouble trading with them. So he's built in history, as well as all the things that go with colonialism. So these are types and shapes of governments and stuff like that you can begin to build on, relevancy to revolution. You could have a sample that was beautiful; he's never done it, but he's pointed a way to get things done. As a matter of fact he has a theory and a set of predictions--it takes tons of stuff moving forward.

R.A.: Moving forward through time. Right.

A.S.: I think that's closest to intellectual ; it's closest to what I would accept. I aggee with you, I think this stuff is extremely tricky. If five years were knocked off, you wouldn't know what.

RA.: Exactly. Yeah. The example from Black; the other examples I thought of that would have corresponded: there have been many revolutions, right? Ever since what's-his-name's book on the first military French revolution. The attempts have almost always--and one of the fascinations about revolutions is not just to recount them, but to explain how these horrible things happened, you know--all the historians have always attempted a larger explanation. But a number of books of that sort, it seems to me, also do this kind of thing.

There's one, the book is called something like, SOCIAL ORIGINS OF DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY by, I don't remember his name now. In fact, I'm not sure whether he was a historian or sociologist. He combines the two very well. What he does is to do very careful case studies of revolutions in China, Japan, Germany, Mexico and of course, Russia. The five or six--but in the kind of detail that shows sensitivity to the configurations unique to each one that you would expect from the historians. But with the questions that you would expect from the sociologists. And it's that kind of thing, you know. He has to categorize these revolutions according to certain themes that develop out of his study of each one, and in some cases he's able to arrive at, not a coherent theory, a general theory of revolutions, like what he comes up with is a -- What are the important social factors in relation to history, social classes, social conflict and so on?

A.S.: Well, let me tell you what this kind of a difference ended. This stuff started back; for instance this socio-logical nature, with the statements, was a student of Parks. I'm sure it comes from him; it was followed by by Quinn Britain, the famous Harvard graduate historian. A recent work by him in hardbound, I came across it somewhere and am looking at it. Holtgoth is a social historian with a lot of work on rebellion and violence, stuff like that. I menationed articles in The Reviewer and it's a messed up area--guys can't decide what a revolution is, what cases are, what boundaries are, where the boundaries are, okay? So they run into a lot of problems. Another area like it, in English history and these are only historians at work, with the exception of things like the role of the gentry, through time or decades, they can't decide who the gentry were, what their relationships were, couldn't decide what the boundaries were, so it's difficult to ascertain what the assumptions are. I mean I'm fairly confused what assumptions are. What I'm trying to say is this: the

nature of those relationships obviously prevents a lot of good people (from) working on bum glugs. Somebody put it aside to stew. But those kinds of issues,maybe not in the abstract sense of which these people are, but one of these relationships are bound to work. It's extremely difficult. I don't know of anybody who'd dealing with exactly the kind of issue you are. Set up with a small subject and a set of rules. Of course there aren't that many arouhnd any more, versed in that documentation. Most of this is obviously involved in perseverence of documentation, putting it to...it's almost as though the sociologist depends on the historian for really good data. The historians, at the end, have to rely on sociologists for really good theory. The historians do better, I think, than the sociologist because at least they got the methods. And the data.

R.A.: But I think beyond that, the question in my mind is, is it not our circular situation--sociologists depend on historians for data but, in fact, what we're getting from historians are that we just take their facts and ignore their interpretation; we get data and interpretation. And interpretation is based on something. So they're something of historians and sociologists, and it works the other way around, too. If historians depend on sociologists for theory but the turned out theory is based on the work that generations of past historians --

A.S.: Yeah, there are assumptions made about major movements.

RA.: Yeah. Right.

A.S.: YOU know, it's interesting, in one of the

ACTUALLY first-rate books of the century and one I've mentioned before, Burdell, is so marvelous in the sense that it's so lively and so packed with detail and so interesting in so obviously important area of the world--here he's picked this code to handle the set-by-set assumptions subsequent self and all the rest. What readily holds true is the set-by-set assumptions of the way that human nature works and that history works. In fact, it's rather difficult set of assumptions for an American to avoid., if he thinks about it.

R.A.: I think, too, one of the interesting things about the SALEM POSSESSED book is that both things are happening at once. On the one hand, these guys in their discussion of the conflict between the groups they appropriate in sociological theory. In other words, their case study becomes an instance of the operation of larger social laws. Okay? In fact, let's take that as a paradigm of a way a historian can operate. Take an historical law, and a sociological law and apply it to this instance. How this instance illustrates the operation of that law. They do that, but they also do the other thing, which is to say, "What we find in our data suggests a certain kind of a social law. The one about the victims as being outsiders and more mobile and lacking in deference." So that their data, then, their case study, out of it emerges a possible social law which could be tested in other instances as well. So the two are happening at once: the moving from the general to the particular in a rather uncritical way, but the moving from the particular to a possible general law in a critical way, a very sophisticated way.

A.S.: That's another thing: you take a period of history which is anywhere in time. Which is like thatOkay? And if you treat this, say, as we would treat a situation were it today, say I would be more particular in my perceptions but my sensitivities wide open and all my sociology in my head. What I come out with, let's say is wordless context or something like that. Now that thing's obviously

FITS the situation, it's really grounded, and then we could say, "Well, we could work it out," or something, because by generalizing you could do it here, you could do it here or you can write a more general theory. I think what you're saying about these guys, alright now they're in the position of extrapolating it outward; in fact, people who do it several times. The people with these educations haven't found it at all. The only way to do it is to do it in detail, to treat them in detail and then have a general theory. So they're doing what everybody else has done, that's something in the past. Now, what's sometimes done, in Milwaukee it's done, take a theory from up here today, then dietive it--they just dot an "i" across a "t". A perfect example of this: Sigmund Diamond, a guy in his 50s, wrote an article on the Jamestown community when he was up in Burlington, Columbia Dept. of allow as a historian from Cornith. He thought,that was his first, and maybe only, essay, as far as I know, in sociology , he wrote this stuff about group process and I taped it and it didn't add anything.to the theory. And so some group started that he wanted to know something about some additive that he hadn't heard about, so we've got six guys from different sociology who have the opportunity to say yes or not They did something different. It's exactly what I'm suggesting, except that it was a funny business. They pulled something from up here, and then they did this. And in the end they didn't do much with that. They came out with that.

R.A.: They came out with that. Yeah. You're talking about these guys here, on REPOSSESSED.

A.S.: They could have stuck to that, but this might be archaic. Keep this in mind, how these things work. They might get around to doing more historical things to build general theory, or come up here. It doesn't make any difference how they do it. It will work either way, but after that comes an interesting

question. What happens if you study a set of events that occur in that amount of time? Or, if you don't want that amount of time, take half of it. Say, the 1850s til now. Something like that. And this is the event that you see, or set of events, which I suspect is more usual. But I see that you will still do the same things. You can take this and plot it, you can sometimes just take segments of this, but you're taking a little of something. What you're going to do is, you're going to plot it or you can run sociological theory pussively or, what sociologists do, they use this as backdrop and then this becomes the product. So I guess what I'm saying is that the trick is, how do you write about that by a classical-like route? And then maybe do this. And that's closer to what 's adopted, in a way. I did something like this. I don't know if it was very successful, but on the book on mobility I had the United States over by Spain and then I took Australia and I took Canada and transposed them like this and said that the reason this works this way, and that runs that way and that runs that way, is that this is different than that, and these are not. I never followed through with this, but I don't know if other people were really intact with this kind of issue. Maybe there may be others. The reason they don't is ~~not that~~ theories don't differ but they're studied one at a time. And then they're likely to behave implicitly. For the explicit sociology. What it would take is something else, but these scales are doing . Nobody's ever talked about this thing, nobody's picked it up. It's buried because it's only a bit of introduction to the first chapter, but it's what he did.

R.A.: Yeah. I see what you're saying.

A.S.: I'm not saying you must accept it. I'm just throwing it out as a stereo to where you are now, having already postmarked that youre disappointed in thes.

R.A.: Well, where I'm at is that the particular thing that I'm doing is neither a comparison of several historical situations that for whatever reasons you want to compare, nor is it the study of the one situation as it develops over a long period of time; particularly of a community,because of the Ecye accent and this book--they're a study of communities. Whereas this situation, the Postrof Chicago was not, in any sense, a community.

A.S.: But leaving out the subject matter, it is essentially a small point in time. In the past. That's what it is.

R.A.: Right, exactly. I don't just want to do the thing of, this is the instance of--or these sociological laws--sort of thing. Right?

A.S.: That's what happens to Ecye, essentially.

R.A.: Ummhmm. Well, the other way to approach it is to say, "Well, looking at this situation in great depth, in detail the way a historian would, but asking questions about what were the conditions that existed, the conditions of interaction among the various actives, the various roles, the structure of the situation--that it's a social structure; to look at it in terms of type of actorsand then theytypes of strategies of balancing options and actions and directions. This was just some of the stuff that came out of the seminar discussion. So these are the kinds of questions that I would be raising when I look at it. For example, it occurs to me that one approach--it begins to look to me as if this were an abortive wildcat strike. If I wanted to use Guner's notions and so on, that it was an attempp to organize a work stoppage in a situation where a strike couldn't take place. Though proscribed. Because there would be a mutiny. So what I'm finding is that it seems to be there was an awareness of this on the part of the men

themselves. That if they took an overt collective action, that that would clearly be a mutiny, construed as a mutiny and therefore they would all face those charges. For example, I discovered that there were several petitions that were circulated, or at least they were rather crude petitions. One of them seems to be just of list of men who didn't want to go back to work. The other was a list of names and at the top there was a sentence saying that all men who do not wish to work go back to work, we will want to transfer to another base. And then there's the list of signers. Well, these petitions were not presented, they were apparently destroyed. And my hunch is, the reason they were destroyed is that this would have been evidence of a conspiracy, and that somebody realized that and said, "Look, we can't...nobody sign any lists or petitions 'cause it won't be interpreted that way, they'll say this is a list of mutineers." So the list was destroyed. And instead, what developed, and I'm still working on the process by which it was developed, since the men had collective grievances but collective action was disallowed, by the structure of the situation, what they tried to do was, in fact, to develop a collective response in the guise of individual refusals to go to work. Instead of saying, "We're not going back to work because we have this and this and this grievances and we are united to resist," what we're going to do is say, "We're not going back to work because I as an individual am afraid of being killed in another explosion," so their collective grievances instead of being brought out by overt collective response gets translated into a covert collective response which is presented as an aggregation of individual instances of refusal to go to work.

A.S.: Something like being insulting to whites as they walk along. In implicit ways you can't pin it down.

R.A.: In other words, what happened in a sense, collective action was disallowed yet they had a collective grievance and in fact wanted to take some kind of collective action, they were compelled to disguise the action or to present it as an aggregation of individual acts. This was, in fact, the defense in the trial and it also seems, from what I've been able to piece together about what happened before the refusal, is that this is the way it developed. So it becomes then a--boy, I'm not quite sure where to go from there. Floating back in there somewhere I had a sense that I'm groping for , what I'm asking is, what does this tell me about principles of behavior when in the situation where there's a collective grievance but no possibility of legal collective action?

A.S.: I'll do my best. One of my first questions is, just taking the data, as you gave it, all the black guys know that this is going on. I mean, do they know that they have a collective grievance? but can't express it.

R.A.: Oh, yeah, yeah. In fact, they had tried in various ways to express it. I found evidence of one petition and some other things that had taken place before.

A.S.: Did they know that they're making individual actions which then stand for collective grievance? I don't mean that they talked about it, that there was collusion, but I mean in the sense that did they all know it? Or did each one just do it separately?

RA.: Well, no, they discussed it beforehand, you see.

A.S.: Right.

A.S.: Did the whites know?

R.A.: The whites suspected.

A.S.: Then you have a case of suspecion awareness. Okay?

R.A.: Suspicion awareness, ha, ha, ha. Yeah.

A.S.: You know, it's an awareness characterized by suspicion. It's pretty funny out of context, and raises the questions; for example, did whites make an attempt to find out?

R.A.: Ah, yes. After the work stoppage there was an interrogation and investigation that lasted for a month, and statements were collected from all the men who resigned. Statements which were later disavowed by the men. And those statements which were disavowed indicated that there was a collective action, that there had been a meeting, for example, that discussions of various types had taken place among various men, but later a lot of this was denied at the trial. Because by that point the men had clearly decided that their best defense was that they had acted individually. And they apparently decided this on their own, not even in consultation with their defense lawyers. They didn't even talk to the lawyers before the trial.

A.S.: Let's say for the sake of argument this is the correct line they took. There is a suspicion awareness; people suspect, that they used tactics to find out, which included artificial hearings with each guy...

R.A.: Well, an interrogation of each guy, right. And a taking of a statement. And the interrogation was in a question-and-answer form in which the questions were--

A.S.: Then the question is, how did each guy handle this? Did they know it was an attempt to break through the suspicion, and if they knew it, how did they handle it? Did they admit it, did they fight it?

R.A.: Some knew, and some didn't. Among those who didn't know--well, they just told whatever they knew. Among those who did know--some fudged, some told everything and some handled it in other ways.

A.S.: And when the interrogation started, was there then conversation among the guys as to how to handle it?

R.A.: The interrogation? Yes, there was.

A.S.: Okay, same as...Then, when they get to the court of law, did they deny all of this?

RA.: Denied all of it, right.

A.S.: Okay, so that's one way of analyzing that. Now, Sparingbird would have handled it not quite that way, you could also list the questions like, if they hadn't become suspicious.

R.A.: The officers; Well, it's very interesting. The officers claim that one of their officers saw the meeting take place, but his description of what he saw and some things that were there, there's some problems with that. The men, the enlisted men, their view, at least two of them that I've talked to now, and they volunteered this to me without my asking it, is that they had a snitch in their

OWN GROUP who told the officer what had taken place.

A.S.: So we know the suspicion was strong.

R.A.: So their suspicion--

A.S.: Okay, let's do this. That's the most obvious. Once they began to be suspicious that there was this awareness what did they do about it? In other words, they now have a suspicion and where to set these snitches. It's supposed to be closed. What did they do about it?

R.A.: I don't know yet. I know they never found out who, whether there was a snitch.

A.S.: Oh, I see. That's interesting, they didn't know who snitched.

R.A.: They didn't know who snitched, no.

A.S.: This is different than if they suspected two specific guys.

R.A.: No, no, what they suspected is that there was one of two snitches. But they don't know who. To this day they don't know who.

A.S.: And you don't know what they did about it.

R.A.: No, that's something I should ask for.

A.S.: Well, one thing you've got to do is check everything out. The other question

is, assuming that they felt they had been snitched on and what did they do?

R.A.: Oh, one thing about the snitch they may not have found out about it, their suspéciousmay not have develped about it until late in the investigation or after the investigation. 'Cause the reason they became suspect was because of the questions they were being asked in the interrogation.

A.S.: So the question, of course, as Grete would handle it, would be, When did they find out and under what conditions? And then some of the properties --did they know of exact persons, or did they just think in general? In any case, there is something specific, one set of tactics and there is another set of tactics and invariably there may be such things as why does one area start to luck out. If all of this fits into that, then if we work it backwards and say, "Okay, the whites quite often suspected that there was collusion because somebody saw it, the meeting, but didn't hear it.--

R.A.: Didn't hear it, no.

A.S.: Didn't hear it, so didn't know what to think. Now what did they do? To, in effect, turn the suspicion

R.A.: Well, in the interrogation they asked, specifically asked the men about that meeting. They asked what took place, that was their main strategy. They knew about the lists, the petititions and they knew about the meeting.

A.S.: Was there any debate ~~about~~ among them, somehow, what to do when discovered?

RA.: When which was discovered?

A.S.: That the men were not acting collectively.

R.A.: Oh, a debate among the officers: no evidence of that so far.

A.S.: Yes, 'cause it would be different if there were a debate. Something else would have happened. Half of them would have said, "No, it's all individual stuff," and half would have said the opposite. And then other actions would have happened. The question is whether the evidence is there.

R.A.: There's no evidence of that so far. In fact, the impression I get from the evidence is that they'd become convinced very quickly that they had an air-tight case, because in the interrogations they had the evidence of collusion, of a conspiracy.

A.S.: Because of the interrogation.

R.A.: Because of the interrogation.

A.S.: The whole thing turns around, this part of the thing turns around notions of awareness, contacts and just trying to keep it closed, and so on. And also, a very fascinating one, is that you do not have any evidence that, in fact, these guys have tried to keep it closed, that anybody in their midst could learn something personally by opening it, by snitching. If you don't have evidence of it--

R.A.: Well, no, I have evidence in the sense that I now know that some particular individuals did not want to go along with the continued resistance. And in fact, when they had proposed to abandon the resistance they were threatened. So, within

the group there was an effort to maintain the unity of the group. Which meant, everybody sticking together, and opposing those who wanted to give up, and go back to work. But at the same time, there's a motive then, there are certain categories of actors that could have a motive for snitching.

A.S.: That comes into an interesting kind of microanalysis, which is that the guys were probably focused on the idea of everybody not going back to work.

R.A.: Right.

A.S.: If any of the guys focused on the possibility that somebody might snitch and therefore go into a law case that was looming up, but hadn't occurred yet...

R.A.: There's no evidence that they had anticipated that.

A.S.: Did they anticipate a law case?

R.A.: They anticipated a case. They thought that, they did not think they would be charged with mutiny, but they thought there would be a lesser charge of some sort.

A.S.: Okay. They anticiapted a case. If there was a case then snitching would be vital. And if they knew some of the guys that didn't agree with them, then you'd think that they would do something to them: at the very least, abeyance; at the very most, coercion.

R.A.: Well, there's evidence of both. There was some suspicion about some guys within the group--there were never any accusations against any particular individuals.

A.S.: What I'm trying to do, I'm trying to link your sense of data, and assuming you know this already, I'm trying to link the nature of my questions on your data with the possibility that you could write up the data not just as data, but in terms of, Will this stuff drive on? I don't hold to so brief a concept, but it's a good example of how concepts come out of Data. The only reason I used this was just because we started talking about inidividual initiative versus collective. See, so it works.

R.A.: It works.

A.S.: To that extent. Latrebaker's model. So when you're finished, it's as if you're there. I don't say that you have to use my concepts, you can make your own. If you'd work that out what you'd have is an area of explanation at every step of the way. Logically, you get Gibb in there and then you could give the explanation. Right? Or you could do Solestin and my stuff and Barney's and the [illegible] theory goes this way, and as the [illegible] theory goes the explanations are imminent.

R.A.: Right. I think that that's what I'd like to do.

A.S.: That's what you want to do. Your basics are sociology but you're still using that theory; you can do this, we've done them with case studies. But that's where I think you're wrong, abiding by the concept. You see, they can't do that because, I think, of two reasons: one is that they come in with the idea already; like my saying, let's try **kit's got to fit somewhere. That's one thing; the other thing is I don't

THINK they know how to do this step-by-step.

R.A.: Well, I think that approach will work and actually, I think this will also bring in the whole theme of balancing, too. That we discussed in the seminar. There's the whole question of the options that were open at each step, along the way. But one of the problems that I had had throughout all those seminars was that, okay, well, they're balancing and this moves this way and that happens and so forth; I didn't have any sense of what it was that the actors themselves thought they were doing. And where were they trying to go. Which I think I see now, and that therefore orders the ~~xxxxxxx~~ narrative, but the explanatory material--the explanation--is, comes from, the sociological insight. Given that this is what these guys are trying to do, and given the circumstances under which they are trying to do it, then, how does it develop. And why.

A.S.: See, technically, what the seminar did that time, it did very well. It tried to give you an approximate theorical code; U don't organize the whole account in termsof the balancing and rebalancing phases. See, it all came out of the data you've given me. Alright? But the specific mechanics phase by phase was lacking. Partially you didn't know who to nail. But partially you still don't understand the stuff. See, that would be subsumed and the balancing, after the balance...

R.A.: Yes, exactly.

A.S.: You get that very well now. The major theoretical code that they gave you provided it works out when you're finished, is how the whole thing would be shaped.

R.A.: This is really good, though, because if I can--and thinking about this this also tells me then, what questions. Well, I came up with a theoretical sample because this tells me now what questions must I ask those people I've found; and also, what other interviews must I find or what other documents must I find. What kinds of documents must I look for in order to answer the questions that I'll have about it now. Yeah, yeah, that'll--that's a big step.

AS.: This may wash out, but it's important at that point to take another phase and give in to the benefit--what else would happen, maybe an uncut truth with another idea that doesn't even make sense, or we get an idea to get rid of the damn thing. But you'd have to do the same sort of things. Step-by-step. You do that breaking through the usual tangle. You picked a devilish kind of thing to work.

R.A.: Yeah, that's --I have to be careful.

A.S.: If you took a course in, for the sake of argument, you took one episode in, and said, What the hell is going on? I think you'd be faced with exactly the same sort of situation. Other than giving the narrative, feedback that would come back and so on. You have to be breaking out. You want to try it, and see what happens?

R.A.: Okay, sure.

A.S.: See what happens.

R.A.: Okay. One of the big issues in the trial was these statements represented: the result of the interrogation, the investigation before the trial. And the

prosecution planned to introduce them as evidence, and that was going to win the case. The defense objected on the grounds that the statements were obtained under durress. In fact, they succeeded in having the statements blocked from being introduced as evidence. But the prosecution developed another strategy. For having them introduced. What the prosecution wanted to do was to have the statements introduced as being accepted as true statements, and therefore, legitimate evidence. That was blocked., by the defense. So then what the prosecution went for was to say, "Well, since we can't have the statements introduced what we're going to do is when each of the defendents comes up, for cross-examination, we're going to read all the questions and answers from his statement to him now, and ask him whether he said or did not say those." And, of course, most of the men denied having said those statements, but the fact of the matter is, the prosecution had now gotten all the statements before the court. They were all denied, but they were before the court, nevertheless. And that played, I think, a big part in condemning the men; but it was an attempt by the defense to sort of head this off at the pass. Not to have the statements introduced as reliable evidence. But the prosecution managed to get them introduced even though everything in most of them was denied.

A.S.: Let me just spark on this, may I? What happened to the jury?

R.A.: Okay, there was no jury.

There were severn officers of the court.

A.S.: Of the court: the people who were there. Alright, now you can't make any assumptions about where they stood on this. But they're now faced with two kinds of evidence: one is, statements and the other is, denial. So who do you believe, as one side or the other is lying, either in particular

topic, or totally.

R.A.: Every item, right.

A.S.: Every item. Do you know how many items, roughly?

R.A.: In the questions? Or in--

A.S.: First of all, in numbers of people.

R.A.: Well, there were fifty defendants, and there were forty-nine statements. One defendant had refused to make a statement. Forty-nine statements.

A.S.: So they got forty-nine statements, alright. Now, did the defendants all say, "I never made a statement."

R.A.: No, no, it varied. Most of them denied making statements that incriminated any one of the groupsas having been a leader, so that when they were -- when the prosecution asked them, "Did you not in yoursstatement of August so-and-so say that Joe Blow called a meeting and said such-and-such at the meeting?" they said, "No, I didn't say that."

A.S.: Let me just play with it. There were forty-nine guys with this statement forty-nine times. Now, did any of these guys deny making this statement?

R.A.: All together?

A.S.: All together.

R.A.: Well, no.

A.S.: So, they all agreed that they'd make statements. Now roughly, how many items would there be per statement?

R.A.: It varied. One or two statements were simply one, two sentences, and some ran on for two pages.

A.S.: So the items just went on, open. Some men could deny anywhere between one statement and statements. So the prosecutor, I suppose, had one principle thing he wanted to show, maybe two or three.

R.A.: About three, at the most, four. Four priniciple things.

A.S.: How many of these guys denied these three statements?

R.A.: Almost all of them denied those three. So let's say, fourty-five, and four admitted various aspects of the three.

A.S.: Do these all have to do with collusion?

R.A.: Collusion, umhm. The petitions, the meetings, yeah, umhm.

A.S.: So the major--here--suspicion of these things and the effort to detect of the lawyers concerning this to open, if they can turn this to open in the court they've got the guys.

R.A.: Exactly.

with those components,

A.S.: So the jury is sitting there, and the package of the guys' black lawyer just the reverse is they can take those suspicions and you're in business. Make sense? So here's the fury. What would you do if you were ajury, I don't know whether you're suspicious or not, even though the chances are they were. Let's say you're absolutely neutral. What would you do if four guys admitted it?

R.A.: Well, it wasn't just the forty-nine defendants, because the prosecution also brought in prosecution witnesses who also testified that the three statments were made. That these three items took place, alright? Another set of witnesses.

A.S.: This is governance. Okay, and it's number one. I don't know if there were other issues besides this one, this is issue number one. Okay? So, then these guys change from that evidence, do these guys have evidence?

R.A.: Which guys we talking about now?Against the witnesses? Yeah, they didn't actually play it, though. They had an argument, but it didn't come up until the appeal, and that is that many of these guys came in and testified, "Yeah, these three things here did, in fact, happen." In other words, to make that open awareness. Turns out that they were under indictment themselves, so they were suspect witnesses.

A.S.: The first step is that, and then later...In spite of all this you were getting the judge's concern that suspicion, yes, but open, no. If you were a judge and had this evidence:
what would you do?

R.A.: Well, it's not, hmmm, I don't--the evidence was they disobeyed an order. Even in the defense, they could not disprove that, that the men had refused to work.

A.S.: What was at issue then?

R.A.: What was at issue was whether there was a conspiracy to mutiny. That was the charge.

A.S.: I'm trying to get it in legal language, and translate. What did the judge have to decide? He didn't have to decide whether there was mutiny of not; had to decide whether theyguys met to decide to mutiny. The point I'm pushing is this: it doesn't make any difference personally what you as the judge would decide, it could be anybody. But you have to see what they're up against. One of those guys could be lying, all or one of the guys could be lying. Four of them said, "Yes," well, they could be lying, too. This could be a performance, okay? So it's real incomplete. You can't tell from this one way of handling it. Just on the face of it, but the issue, how do they ~~stand~~ accused so that they themselves are sheltered from suspicion?

R.A.: How do who--oh, the jury, yeah.

A.S.: In other words, they're going to be nibulousin the legal sense. Sociologically, they have to make a decision in the end that says there are ~~legal~~ sufficient grounds for us to be ~~suspicious~~. Then, they could also go further there: there are sufficient grounds for us to be suspicious--that's very weak. So we'll pass it along to another court Which will give six more months to both sides to dig up more evidence, or if it's still weak we'll have to dismiss it. You can't tell from this how they will actually judge the case? I think we can say in summary, though, about the legality of it. What I'm insterested in now is this, is that this very different kind of incident does now link you back with the suspicion business.

R.A.: And it even gets more fine than that, though, because the suspicion, for example, didn't evolve so much around whether or not there was a meeting; in fact, I think there was in the trial it was admitted that a meeting took place. But the question was, what happened at the meeting, what was the purpose of what happened. The prosecution's argument was that there was a meeting in which the idea was to get all the guys to stick together for carrying on a mutiny. The defense argument was there was a meeting for the purpose of getting all the guys to stick together to keep order. Because, in fact, the guy who called the meeting had been designated by an officer to keep the guys in order. His argument was that he called the meeting because there had been a fight and people were getting uptight, and he said, "We got to stick together and cool things out."

A.S.: Look at whether they meant it or not.

R.A.: Sure, so it revolves on the question of, even taking--there was some disagreement even about the words that were said. But even if you admit everything, to evidence, that the prosecution wanted to get into evidence, it's that there are two legitimate explanations of what went on, what the words meant.

A.S.: Bob, let me go at this from two different directions. Take the guys now, today, and you met three or four of them, and they talked about it. Do you, as a researcher, say, have the same problem? 'Cause you're trying to find out what the hell went on. But you're in the exact same position the jury is. Exactly the same position that the white officers were. You want to know what happened, for different reasons, but you want to know what happened. So you're talking with

THEse guys; how do you make your judgments, just as to which guys are telling y
you the truth about what happened? You may have talked to three informers.

R.A.: Well, okay. Number one, it may be that one of them may have been an informer, but I doubt that all three. What I'm doing is two things. One is, they've all told me that they haven't met among themselves since it happened, and that they haven't talked in any detail with anyone about what happened since it happened. Okay? If I accept those statements at face value, then that means that they have not influenced each other since it happened, nor have they been influenced by others who have come along to talk to them about it. So that where I find, what I'm looking for in comparison, in comparing the interviews, then, is where they collaborate each other and where they disagree. And taking the points of collaboration and saying, this is probably what happened, and taking the points of disagreement and saying, well, this is something that I have to look more closely into. The other thing I'm doing is comparing what they tell me now with what they said in the trial. But recognizing there that there's an inherent problem which is that they were in a position where they were denying some things, which--

A.S.: Which would tell you the truth, and not them.

R.A.: Well.

A.S.:

What's frustrating is that, reservation aside, as a researcher you are in the same position that everybody else is who was involved in it, in that you don't know whether in fact there was a conspiracy and some guys say there was, and you

don't know whether that was an informant or not. And if the guys say they weren't, you know whether they're covering or not.

R.A.: Well, we don't even talk about conspiracy. What I ask them is, Did such-and-such a thing happen, and Under what conditions, right. But there're discrepancies: where I had--I'll have to decide, I guess, and go back and interview further to try to uncover what is the truth of the matter. But actually, let's see here.

A.S.: I think you said by that statement is that gradually you're getting to realize that it was an aggregate business and not a collective action where they had agreed to do this. That in fact you were saying there was a conspiracy, and that it was carried on in typical underdog fashion.

R.A.: That's the thing. You see, it's the language, too, that trips you up, I guess. So you say it's a conspiracy, but if it had happened in civilian life it would have been called a wildcat strike.

A.S.: Okay, okay. I only used the word for convenience, I wouldn't normally use it. What you're saying to neutralize it out, in a collective decision to do something they had to do it that way because they couldn't do it the other way.

R.A.: They had to present it in such a way that it would not be presented overtly as a collective decision to do something.

A.S.: So, to go back to what I'm pushing. As a researcher you had to go through the same type situation in order to get a shot at what happened. Now you have a better chance to find out what really happened than anybody, because you can

QUESTION witnesses and all the rest of it. Even with the problems of knowing whether one of these guys was an informer or whether everyone was telling exactly the same truth , and even without that the procession is still in the same position. And you were reading the cues not so very differently than a lot of other people did. I think that's marvelous because it begins to fit in. What must emerge out of these two incidents. Let's take it even further. If --I have another idea on that, let's see if I can capture it. Yeah. Now, I can go in two directions, both on the suspicion, in a way. If you take these as forty-nine guys with whatever wounds they've ever survived plus their families plus their kids, and you ask, let's say for the sake of argument, they all know the story, they all know exactly what happened. And there's an intersting questions aoubt why, now, thirty years later, isn't somebody telling that story? There is some question about why isn't anybody doing anything about it? I am going to make the assumption that at least20 people are alive who know about it, plus their kids, who are mum on it. Why are they not trying to convert what is the suspicion context--leaving out the legal aspect now--as far as the rest of the world is concerned? Which is perfectly open to everybody who's inside it, so why aren't they trying to make everybody know what happened?

R.A.: Well, actually two of them had thought of that. One of the fellows told me that, in fact, he is starting trying to write up an account of it, but had abandoned the project. And another had never tried to write anything, but he didn't give a specific reason; my impression was that he was discouraged. I got that impression rather than it was a problem with some other peoblem that might get involved. Another had also thought that something was wanting to be written about it, they way he put it, but he himself had never done anything, or taken any steps.

A.S.: I'm going to put a little comparative anaÿysis on you. Do you mind my talking so much?

R.A.: Go right ahead. No, go right ahead.

A.S.: I think it's working. The kind of analysis would be a bunch of people about something that happened and they had been in court with a judge. And they tried to tell other people that that was incorrect. These other people said no because they suspected something. And then the later generation would saÿ, "We want to set the record straight." Alright? Now, there are various conditions under which they could say that. One is, it makes a difference to men now. To this generation. That we set that record straight. Another is, it's possible to do that -- there's a note to yourself there, people believe that they can do it the right way. Another is other kinds of things, and another possiblility is that it's another century til we set the record straight. Not that incident, but in essence we've done it. The third example are the Japanese. In spite of all that happened look at what resulted from the second World War. You get various possibilities. What occurs to me is that it's not going to make any difference. There are two dimensions that are in non-relation. That leads to a set of influences and questions, which is to ask people why have you never done anything aobut it? Because when you stop playing the suspicion game it's over.

R.A.: Well, one of those pëëces of data on that--why have you never done anything aoubt it--one of the fellows, when I was attempting to arrange an interview with him, read that I can't talk with you because we had some agreements about what we would say and what we wouldn't say. And so I don't want to violate any of those and that's why I don't want to talk to you. And initially he wouldn't. But I later persuaded him to talk to me. Well, I thinkI know what the agreements were. I got

THEMEELsemhere, not from him. But the thing is, he still felt bound to honor these agreements from 34 years ago. And therefore he was not going to talk.

A.S.: They should get together and say, "Look, boys, nobody cares about those agreements any more." We had a well-lkept circle, let's get it clear what we had in mind. If it's that well-kept, you gotta know there was a conspiracy.

R.A.: Yeah, yeah. My appearance on the scene now, in a way, poses the same problem for them as they had 34 years ago, which was are they going to testify against each other. By telling what really happened.

A.S.: Sure.

R.A.: Only now it's not a court of law, it's a strange social scientidt coming around wanting to talk to them. And they have to decide individually, truly, this time.

A.S.: You are exposing this closed situation which they had intended to keep closed. And you're trying to get them to open it. Right?

R.A.: Right.

A.S.: So you're suspected, you see. And the other thing, although I don't think we have to worry about how to explore it, is your very reason for wanting to study this thing. Maybe it doesn't have to do with experiencing it, but hopefully it will do with setting it straight, for that wide world. So you do have an interest in now. I'm sure, for settng the record straight.

R.A.: One of the fellows that I mentioned has not told his 25-year-old son about this incident. Even today there's still a question of deciding who should know and who should not know.

A.S.: So it looks to me like we're back to the real thing. Maybe this is simplistic, but take the moment that two career veterans, one is/the suspicion business add the other under the balance--of which--of not going over. The balance of time. There are other elements that shift out of time, too, but it's very relative. You've got an analysis of the sudden start of eventsto which the men substantially contributed over 12 years.

R.A.: And I've asked myself, thinking comparatively again, I asked myself, "What would have happened if there had been no conspiracy, they were all innocent victims?" What would have happened in terms of my appearing now to ask them about it. Or, perhaps, in terms of somebody else having presented the story earlier. The other question I asked is, "What would have happened if, in fact, there was a conspiracy that had succeeded?" Suppose they had gotten all 250 guys to stick together and in fact the Navy had finally had to transfer them or do something, but nobody would have been brought to trial. What would have happened if it had succeeded?

A.S.: Well, the first thing, of course, is that workers would have all been armed. And proved out this theory, I guess.

R.A.: Yes, but that--thinking that way led me, gave me an insight as to why the story hasn't been told before, which is that they were not just passive victims, but what they tried did not succeed. And that is the dilemma which continues until this day.

A.S.; I guess what I'm saying is that you don't have to rely on this suspicion business, because there are other kinds of thinking. I think that might help to crack the history-sociology business because you know you're working straight out of the damn instance, developing whatever kind of concepts you have. And you relate what you're seeing and hearing. If they'd had a conspiracy and then scattered it would be a different story.

R.A.: Well, in effect what happened was that they had a conspiracy, or attempted collective action, which did not succeed and which in the aftermath of it they were all scattered. See, that's another thing. I think that if they had been in touch with each other in the intervening years it's possible that somebody would have said, "Look, we ought to tell this story to a newspaper, and get the truth out." This kind of thing. But because they were separated, did not see each other afterwards, I think that contributed to the story not being told.

A.S.: Well, that's something that's legitimate. Try to carve out an explanation.

R.A.: Well, I'm going to be going back in June as a matter of fact to reinterview at least some of these I've already talked to. Plus I found two others.

A.S.: How many have you talked to?

R.A.: I talked to five. And there are two others whom I haven't interviewed

yet, but whom I will. But I want to re-interview these guys I've talked to because I realize now that I only asked very few of the questions I need to ask. Because at the time I interviewed them I did not, myself, have any idea of what was my own view of what happened there. I was just asking questions, every question I could think of that might bring in information. Now, in looking at the information, I have an idea of what I think happened. Which I want to explore in more detail. But at the same time I want to be careful not to do it in a certain way that would close out any other possible explanation. In other words, I may be wrong, so I don't want to do this in such a way that all the data will confirm my views.

A.S.: One of the things that you suspect, if there hadn't been that damn accident, is that eventually there would have been a wildcat strike.

R.A.: Ummhmm, yeah. That was in the works, and the explosion was the precipitaing incident.

A.S.: I bet they were influenced by that very easily. And saying, "Yep, we were warming up to it." One of the interesting questions to me impirically is, rather than a past incident we are still very much involved with this experience. It isn't as if they'd forgotten. They're still thinking about it. And the questionsis, "Why?" Why is it such a big deal to them?

R.A.: Yeah, I've thought about that, too. The one thing that comes to mind for me is that I feel, at least to some of them, that there's an ambivalence about what they did. On the one hand, there's a pride that they stuck together and stuck it out even though they wound up in jail at least they stuck by each

other. And showed the Navy the Navy couldn't just run over them. Even though they lost the case and went to jail. But there's another thing that I picked up from some of them which is the feeling, the question perhaps, about whether what they did in fact about refusing to go to work, they did out of cowardice. That it was not just entirely a matter of principle. But maybe it was just plain fear and cowardice. It was probably both: it was probably a matter of principle, but at the same time there had been this goddam explosion and people were scared, you know.

A.S.: I know; analytically that could fit, too, Bob, because if you say you're proud that you stuck together the washout implies something. Let's just say that here's a bunch of people who made a decision out front that nobody's gonna break it down no matter what those guys suspected, and it worked. And they were proud of that. I'm deliberately trying to get at the emotional part. You should be proud of that cause you stuck together. It's not in the question, but it was a very tough set of tactics, that the other guys used to try to crack your closed awareness. You could be very proud just on that basis. Then the other one, they kept together because in fact we were going to have a wildcat strike but we didn't want them to know that; then, at the same time, people are saying, "Get me out of it," that was a different issue" and we fought that for closed awareness, but now I wonder whether they really bought the issue having brought it before people who were scared. Whether you know that's true as a fact or not. You could hook in your descriptions. Again, right back to your word discovery. There may be some beneficial things going on. See, you can't explain everything, obviously. Everything doesn't fit in a scheme. The idea is to explain a maximum amount with a fair amount of power. Fair enough?

R.A.: Fair enough.

A.S.: So even the terribly emotional, terribly black in terms of the amount of risk, can still be handled in terms of that. You would begin to balance over the years and thnk that was really true. And if you were there then would you have done something different? I think what you should do is to take your other examples, apply both concepts and see how it works. If that's not enought it's obvious that it does something, but if that's not enough see what else you can get out of those prisoners that would give you additional, good categories. That will also link with what you decide are missing. And as far as the balance, you may never know. For god knows those two sets of data cover a lot of ground.

R.A.: They do, yeah. And like I said, once I can, if I do grasp what were the intentions whether they were fully articulated by them or not: where they were trying to take this, what they were trying to do,to accomplish, then that will--I guess my personal problem in all this is that I didn't want to reduce this to a study just as a problem for a dissertation, or a degree or whatever, but to respect whatever it is that they were trying to do, and to recognize the problems that they are encountering, the way things have worked. And also to recognize my own feelings about whether they did the right thing or not. And the more I learn about it I have questions, too, about whether what they did makes sense, why didn't they turn in the petitions that they were taking, so there's a moral dimension to it here whch probably I can't get away from. To grapple with it, whatever I do with it, I want to convey what they were attempting to do, and not demean it by my analysis of it.

A.S.: Terrific, well I think an analysis, Bob, is absolutely effective. You do as well as you can, you can't always do it totally, but you do as well as you can. Otherwise, without experiencing those people, one can always read them wrong. I really think that is why this type of work is so good, it is so different from a lot of social science,work, because it does proceed on that premise. I mean, analysis can be lousy, but if you can do it right people have to admit you were there.

R.A.: That's what I'm aiming for. If you wanted to categorize this, this is a case study and from the standpoint of sociology, its main interest is whatever I can say about the forces, the conditions, the situation and the processes that were evolving there. That's good, as long as I let that emerge itself, out of the material that I'm looking at. What I think I have to guard against,and there has been a tendency to do this, to try to grab an explanation or an explanatory concept and force it.

A.S.: into a mold. I would say that even one of those white jurors, the officers must know, at least someone does recollecting it. Unless he's seen it and we could get the testimony of that certain man we'd get someplace in the final analysis. We might reach a different moral conclusion when we read it, than yours, but at least we could say, "Is that what they were up to." Get some sense of what was going on. That just never came out! That might even be worse than what they were accused of. You could take a moral position but at tleast it's something. You could say, "We're going to throw the whole thing out of court." It had nothing to do with the case. They were probably all lawyers, even if they were officers; they're not going to take it. To judge the case against their own words.

R.A.: I think the other thing about the moral dimension that I also have to guard against is the tendency to see the story in terms of heroes and villains. Or persecutors and victims, because the more I learn about it, the more that I see that, in fact, the group of fifty, let's say, there were some who behaved heroically, some who were traitors (suspected traitors, anyhow), and there were others--the whole range of possible reactions. Given the situration, given that you have fifty people, the whole possible range of reactions takes place. And a historian would simply document all those reactions, but what I want to do is to put them in context of the situational constraints given what they were trying to do. And then how at each stage in the process, how did the constraints affect the goal-directed behavior? Well, I think I've taken up your whole afternoon here.

A.S.: No, no, I told you it was a session for mutual learning. Why don't you give me that, and I'll have it transcribed on the research grant stuff.

R.A.: Great, great.

A.S.: I'd like to know because I find it very interesting. Whenever you're ready; you'd probably like to hear it again first.

R.A.: Okay, right.

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