

Robert Maroney

May 2, 2017

Interviewed by Thomas Webb

Transcribed by Olivia Palid

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WEBB: My name is Thomas Webb and on behalf of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, today I'm here with Robert Maroney -- am I saying that correct? Robert Maroney. And today is May 2nd, 2017 and we're here to talk about your military experience because it was military experience. You were in the Merchant Marines, part of the Coast Guard.

MARONEY: Can I interrupt?

WEBB: Oh yeah!

MARONEY: Well, in peace time the Coast Guard is controlled by -- they run the Merchant Marines because it's coast-wise.

WEBB: Uh-huh.

MARONEY: But in wartime the Navy takes over the Coast Guard --

WEBB: Mmkay.

MARONEY: -- and then they take over us.

WEBB: Yeah, that was actually a question that I was going to get to because it -- in doing the research it can get a little confusing as to [laughing] who's in charge at what moment.

MARONEY: Right.

WEBB: The first question that we ask and the kind of the background that we like to get is just when and where were you born?

MARONEY: Chicago, Illinois...1919, October the 27th.

WEBB: [Quietly] Okay.

MARONEY: At Garfield Park Hospital at Washington Boulevard and Hamlin Avenue in Chicago, Illinois.

WEBB: Hmm. And did you stay in Chicago growing up?

MARONEY: Yes, yes. I spent a lot of time in Highland Park, Illinois but [papers rustling] more or less that was my home for thirty-five years, in Chicago.

WEBB: And what was life like growing up?

MARONEY: Like any other kid's. It was a bad time, we were -- the Depression was on, and we did everything we could to...make ends meet.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: Helping people in the neighborhood -- that -- in those days, you helped each other! It wasn't a dog-eat-dog. And we all knew the neighbors and the neighbors knew us and our problems and their problems, too. So...it was a kind of a family affair, a neighborhood family affair. And everybody was happy with everybody. Helped each other...when it was a wake or a funeral, my mother and other mothers got together and built -- made things for it. There was no big restaurants to go to at the end of the services. So we all got -- it wasn't the best that we're living now, but it was wonderful.

WEBB: Hmm. A better sense of community maybe, than what we have now.

MARONEY: Well it's camaraderie in a big bubble.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: That we all knew each other's problems and we all helped each other!

WEBB: [Deep breath] Did you have a history of military service in your family?

MARONEY: No.

WEBB: Not at all?

MARONEY: No. My brother -- see when in 1941 the draft started, and he wanted to go, you had to get one year in and then you were discharged. My own opinion was that that's how...somebody knew that we were going to get into a conflict. We didn't know who or what but they knew it was coming. So he was gonna get his year in

and he became a sergeant in the anti-tank destroyers, and when the war broke out in '42 he was ripe so he made the invasion of North Africa, not in North Africa, Normandy, and was killed in Saint-Lô, which was about two days in from the Normandy invasion.

WEBB: [Softly] Yeah.

MARONEY: I never saw him after that time he was in Chicago.

WEBB: Hmm...Where were you when Pearl Harbor happened?

MARONEY: I was...I was out that night at a bowling affair. And I went home and got up late the next day and my brother, Jerry, told me that Japan attacked at Pearl Harbor. Well, that was in December of '41 and I was bowling all the time and one night...a friend of mine at the bowling alley said, "Why don't you join the Merchant Marines?" I said, "What's that?" So he told me there was an ad in New York -- in the Chicago Times then. So I went down and took my exam that I was taking for the Marine Corps. We had to take that same exam. And ironically I was standing behind a guy that was about 6 foot 4. Big as a house. And I was looking under his - through his arms, 'cause I only weighed 128 pounds! And he had a book like you got there, and he was opening it up and there was numbers there! And the doctor was saying, "What's this?" And he was saying, "Six." So I knew it was a nine. And he got 4F! I said: "You're taking -- not taking him, 4F, and he looks as big as a house!" And here I am 128 pounds and you said you can take me! So I went to St. Petersburg, Florida for the training.

WEBB: How'd you get there?

MARONEY: On the train.

WEBB: On the train? Okay.

MARONEY: There was thirteen of us from Chicago that went down on that train. We arrived two days later and we were supposed to be there... 'til July of '42...to go through training and everything. But they needed so many people...they were so short and they were shooting, sinking these ships, because even the draft board when they had to get approval from the draft board and the draft board says, "Are you crazy? They can't even go on the beaches down in Jersey because the oil is coming in from the tankers!" That's where they were shipping - sinking all those

tankers. See, you went down from New Jersey to Texas - Texarcana, picked up a load of gas or oil, and came back up the coast again.

WEBB: Hm. Well let's back up for just a minute. You said a friend was the one that recommended the Merchant Marines. What was sort of your first impression after enlisting with them? Did you ever have, maybe, thoughts of joining a different branch or was it always strictly...

MARONEY: Only strictly Merchant Marines because we weren't as regimented, as the navy or the army, you know, you had to salute this guy and salute this guy, this guy, and take orders from somebody that you knew was as not as bright as you, and I just said to myself, "Well, this is where I'm gonna go!"

WEBB: Mmkay.

MARONEY: Because if they tell me to go through that wall, I gotta go through that wall. I wanna go around the wall! Use a little common sense! You didn't have that common sense in the Army and the Navy. You did what they told you to do. And I figured I could do more for myself, selfishly, and for the good of what I was going to join by going to the Merchant Marines! And it wasn't a cakewalk either. I got in worse than I was thinking of.

WEBB: [Laughs] Well, what kind of -- do they make you do an initial physical, I mean you talked about being in line and seeing the numbers test, what other kinds of things did they require that you do before they let you in?

MARONEY: That was it!

WEBB: That was it?

MARONEY: Then I went on to St. Pete and learned how to -- and we went on a training ship. We saw the Queen Mary in the Gulf of Mexico, the first contingency of American soldiers that were going to Ireland.

WEBB: Mmhmm!

MARONEY: And we had to give 'em water since it was a training ship. It was evaporators that we brought -- made water -- down to - in Key West.

WEBB: [Deep breath] Well, you're a Chicago guy. We got a giant lake here but what was your experience with being on the water prior to all of this training that you find yourself in?

MARONEY: When I got to Saint Pete, in March, somebody came on board: "Anybody want to go to New York to get on a ship?" And I put my hand up. When I got to New York, they had us in a big school. It was a school down in the Lower Battery. And a guy came in to the...whatever you wanna call it, assembly room and some -- "All right, who wants to go on the ship?" And I volunteered right away 'cause I wanted to get some action, you know. I didn't know what the hell I was getting into. So we went out on a tug boat and it was in February or in March, and if you were ever in New York there's...and from New York to Staten Island and then to Brooklyn there's, the world, water goes like that because there's currents coming in to different directions, and he says, "That ship over there is where you're going on." It was a tanker. I says, "Okay." So we got out by the ship and they threw a line down -- a ladder, rope ladder -- and he says, "Go up!" They sent a line down for my grip. Up I went. I said, "You mean I gotta climb up that thing?" He says, "Yeah! That's the only way you're gonna get up there... 'cause I gotta get back to New York." So anyway I climbed up there and we were on that ship for about 4 days. Then we finally get in, they were putting guns on the ship then! There was a big -- 20 millimeter guns -- and there was a big magazine about that round and [buzzing sound] it's gone. So...I paid off on that ship because they were... putting guns on it. Then I went back to Chicago, and then I went back to New York, then I went to New Jersey, to get on a ship and it was a tanker and we went down to Texarkana, all down the coast -- no guard, all alone, no destroyer, nothing -- and loaded up with gas, came up to New York -- New Jersey, unloaded, and got off of that ship, and got on at -- a liberty ship. They were building liberty ships in 21 days, them days.

WEBB: [Quietly] Jeez.

MARONEY: So I just kept staying in New York as a shipping point.

WEBB: [Breathing] Did you have any problems with seasickness or?

MARONEY: You know that's a funny thing. I was with a captain one time, and he got sick every time the ship went out of the harbor. I never got sick in all the time I was on it. Because I had something to do. You see, the average person gets sick because he's up on the deck and he's watching the water going up, the ship going down, and his stomach's going up, and his stomach's going down, and he gets sick, because he's got nothing to do. But I had something to do. I was working all the time, taking the ship in, taking the ship out.

WEBB: So what was your occupation, what was the --?

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Fireman-Water Tender.

WEBB: And what is that?

MARONEY: That takes care of the superheated steam of two boilers. To give steam, now superheated steam is -- you've seen steam on a teakettle. Steam, you can't see. That's vapor that you see. We took that steam or vapor and condensed it into high pressures which expanded more and made the pistons go down faster. We got more out of that little bit of steam making it do more work than what it's supposed to do.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: And these engines were up and down, reciprocal engines. Then I was on diesel engines too, turbines.

WEBB: But how do you get that job? Does it just a random assignment or did they think that --?

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Well I was trained in this training ship.

WEBB: Uh-huh.

MARONEY: But then I took -- studied on this -- You see, then you had to take another test to become an oiler. And then you had to have so much sea time to become an engineer. And then you 'came a first - third assistant, second assistant, and each one of those engineers had -- the third assistant was in charge of the electricity; the second assistant engineer was in charge of the water and the fuel; the first assistant engineer was in charge of the engine, itself. And we had the chief was in charge of all those three engineers. He didn't stand a watch. We stood a watch from 4 to 8, 8 to 4, and 4 to 12.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: At -- alongside of the -- when you were on the shore, you had eight hours aboard ship. When you were underway, when you were on the water, you only had four hours, off 8, 4 on, 4 off. [Mr. Maroney's subsequent clarification -- "In port: work 8 hours / off 16; At sea: work 4 hours / off 8."]

WEBB: What kind of - I mean you're sitting their trying to observe what's going on, did you have any kind of binoculars or, what tools did you have --?

MARONEY: [Interrupting] You could do anything you wanted!

WEBB: Oh okay.

MARONEY: If you had a...see, we weren't allowed to have a camera! You couldn't have a camera from going from New York to Staten Island! During war time.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: You weren't allowed to have a radio! And the reason those pictures were taken is because the Navy gun crew guy that was in charge of the gun crew, he had a camera!

WEBB: [Chuckles] Were you allowed to carry a sidearm?

MARONEY: Oh no.

WEBB: No?

MARONEY: No. No, we -- my -- When we had watches, what we call watches, we helped -- When we had -- we helped the navy gun crew, my job was to give them the magazine with the ammunition in it. Then we had somebody in our crew to give it to me! To give it to him, because it wasn't around the corner, it was up on another deck.

WEBB: Yeah. That was a question I was gonna ask. It seems like, you know, you were specifically trained down in the engine room, but I assume that because of the small crew that you were also trained in a myriad of other jobs as well.

MARONEY: Well, sure because if somebody got hurt you'd have to kind of fill in for his job. Now if I didn't want to be down in the engine room, I figured that after war time, maybe, this could've been to some benefit. I could've been in the deckhands! Started out at as an ordinary seaman, then a seaman, and then a third mate, second mate, first mate, then you could become captain. You could never become captain if you were in the engine room. You could become chief, but never captain.

WEBB: Why is that, do you know?

MARONEY: Well that's years and years ago, before steam, before - it was all sailing ships them days.

WEBB: Hm.

MARONEY: It's a carry-on from traditions.

WEBB: Well, that brings up an interesting point. As you're kind of getting into this Merchant Marine life, were there any traditions, any kind of hazing [laughs] rituals that these guys did or because of your wartime focus, did some of that stuff go on the wayside?

MARONEY: Oh that's a hard question to answer. Once you received your time, in others words, when you -- let's say you're on a 4 to 8 watch: after 8 o'clock, you could do anything you wanted! And I read a lot 'cause I was studying to get to be an oiler, because it was more money -- a few dollars more -- but it was a step up to become an engineer! And as it progressed and more trips that I made, I didn't wanna become an engineer.

WEBB: For what reason?

MARONEY: Well...I thought I did a better job being an oiler or a fireman water tender because I was active all the time. 'Cause you had four burners here on this boiler and you had four burners on this boiler, and you had to change those what they called tips which flowed oil that was ignited to make the heat. And then you had to be sure that the oil was filtered properly because when the oil that they used aboard ship was -- it's a bunker D and its hair and its crap in it that you never would imagine. But that would clog up every - all your orifices, so you had to be sure that your filters were clean, and they had to be cleaned every watch! And the tips had to be cleaned, every watch. The tips were little holes in the center of the arm that went in to -- that burnt the oil. And if you got where you had to have a lot of steam, you had to change those tips so more oil that would go through to ignite it better, to bring its steam up faster. And when you were underway sometimes -- see, these liberty ships would, if they would go to the ten knots downhill; that was a lot of speed, so, sometimes, in convoys we had to catch up. We had a Chinese crew, a Chinese mess hall, second cook and a chief cook, and the chief cook died. So we had to drop out of the convoy -- they were quite a ways ahead of us -- so we had to change all those tips down there to make more steam to get up and catch up to the convoy, because they weren't gonna wait for us, we had to catch them.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: And if we didn't catch 'em we'd be just sitting out there and the Germans wouldn't just waste a torpedo; they'd just take a shell and shoot us and sink us that way, which they did many times in New Jersey.

WEBB: How big was the crew?

MARONEY: Well, I'll tell ya. We had the captain, 1st mate, 2nd mate, 3rd mate, purser; then we go to the steward's department: the steward, chief cook, 2nd cook, 3rd cook; then we had three-two-three mess cooks; and then in the engine room, we had the chief mate, chief engineer, 1st 2nd and 3rd, and 3 oilers, 3 firemen-water tenders. I would say roughly around 40 some people plus -- twenty navy gun crew.

WEBB: And were they on the ship starting from the very beginning?

MARONEY: Oh yeah. When we left New York or New Jersey or wherever we left, that was the crew.

WEBB: Mmkay. [Quieter] Okay. Backing up just a little bit were you able to communicate home? I mean how did --

MARONEY: [Simultaneously] No.

WEBB: -- home feel about you joining the Merchant Marines?

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Well, they didn't like it because there was no post office or -- as handy as the army, you know.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: We were aboard ship! We didn't have no - the convenience that a guy in the service had! We could probably write a letter but we were -- sometimes we were at sea for three months!

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: Months at a time, six weeks at a time, we never hit land!

WEBB: Can you describe the convoy?

MARONEY: Oh. The convoy was run by what they call a commodore. He was in charge of the whole convoy. Sometimes, there might be 200 ships in it, you couldn't see the front or you couldn't see the rear. Now the captain and the radio operator went aboard, went ashore before the convoy was formed to find out -- they didn't know where we were going at that time when they went, they knew that we were going to form -- I never went to one of these meetings -- it was the captain and the radio operator. The radio operator never touched a thing. Only in emergency. And they, eventually, the captain knew where we were going, when we got out to sea for about two days, three days, four days, maybe a week, he'd

open up some papers and his orders were to form -- he was given a number: we were 21 and 21, had a slot that that's where he stayed in that convoy. You could see some of 'em but some of 'em you couldn't see the bow, you couldn't see the stern!

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: And then some would go drop off here, some would drop off here, some would keep dropping off until we all got to our destinations. Then we unloaded our cargo, wherever we were or wherever they needed it, because it was changed a lot because the war. One day they needed gasoline, next day they needed tanks, next day they needed a locomotive! And we had some of that on our deck -- a locomotive, railroad cars -- and that all had to be built to run on the England tracks, they're more narrower than ours.

WEBB: Were there actual naval vessels in the convoy --

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Oh yes, yes.

WEBB: [Simultaneously] -- as kind of an escort?

MARONEY: They had what they call destroyers, and they were in and out, dropping depth charges when they heard some-- we didn't know what the hell they were doing. But they were, they might've heard some-- maybe there was a submarine! See, when we got torpedoed, it was in the Mediterranean. And they came up in the middle of the convoy and just shot everything that they had 'cause they knew that the war was almost over, was on its way out. And they had to hit something. And that's why they only hit the bow. If they hit it mid ship -- poof! We'd've went right down in the Mediterranean. And we wouldn't've be here - I wouldn't be here today.

WEBB: [Breathes in] Well we're thankful that didn't -- [Laughs].

MARONEY: That was in February the 22nd, 1943.

WEBB: So let's talk about the difference between the first time you do a watch and maybe after several months. Is there a way to keep yourself focused on that what I assume is a pretty mundane kind of job?

MARONEY: Well, it was and it wasn't. Maybe I was just fortunate to know that this had to be done easier!

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: So I was always figuring a way out how to clean the tips and make my job easier and more proficient. Because I just couldn't see you sit there watching the water, I said "I have to do something else!"

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: So I did something else!

WEBB: Okay!

MARONEY: To make the four hours a little more comfortable.

WEBB: Hmm...[Breathes, quietly] Okay. Uniforms.

MARONEY: Civilian clothes.

WEBB: Civilian clothes.

MARONEY: We wore a uniform down in St. Petersburg Florida but that was it.

WEBB: What kind of uniform was that?

MARONEY: Like a navy, just like a navy. And when we went ashore there we could put civilian clothes on too.

WEBB: Huh. Did you have any problems when you interacted with Navy, or Army or -

MARONEY: [Interrupting] There was some jealousy --

WEBB: [Simultaneously] -- any of the other branches?

MARONEY: -there was some jealousy, because we didn't have to salute like they did, see, and I think possibly that's one of the reasons why we weren't accepted in the -- after the war was over. They didn't have -- "They weren't in the Armed Forces," you know, they said, they did - 'cause there was a lot of jealousy there 'cause we ate like kings. Believe me, we had a waiter to wait on us, and they didn't, you know. That's one of the reasons why I stayed in too. We had a hell of a lot more freedom. And once we got off the ship, once we made the -- let's say we went to England and I came back two months later. I went ashore, just like I am sitting here now! I didn't have no -- to report to no draft; but if I wasn't back on a ship within thirty days the War Shipping Administration would've notified my draft board, and the draft board would've been looking for me. Because we were more or less...let's put it this way: I had a war job, like I -- like somebody who was making bullets in a factory.

WEBB: Yeah. Mmkay! In that time period, though, communication is not what it is now. How would've they known -- I mean what was the process for making sure that you had reported after thirty days?

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Oh you had to. I did it very religiously because once we got off a ship, we went to -- I went to the union hall --

WEBB: 'Kay.

MARONEY: -- and I put my union card in and I had to be on a ship. We got one day off for one month - for one week, one - I think it was one day for one month, one day off for one month, one day leave for one month of service aboard ship.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: So if I was gone three days - three months - I'd have three days. And the union hall would report me to the draft board, too. So it was a check on a check. But there was probably a lot of fellas that just said, "The hell with it I'm gonna stay on the beach, you know." But I didn't do it. I figured I was lucky to be where I was and I did it very religiously.

WEBB: Hm. Well that leads me to my next question which you went down to St. Petersburg with thirteen other Chicago guys --

MARONEY: Which I never saw.

WEBB: You never saw again?

MARONEY: Never saw again.

WEBB: Okay. Were there people that you - I don't wanna say attached yourself to, but people that you would regularly work with in - I mean you talked about the captain that said, "If I [laughing] see you again, you know, I'm gonna kick you off."

MARONEY: [Chuckles]

WEBB: But were there crew members that you --

MARONEY: [Interrupting] No.

WEBB: -- routinely worked?

MARONEY: 'Cause I was on thirteen ships and thirteen ships - the ship I was torpedoed on, I made another trip - I made two trips on that ship, and we had the same crew on deck, we didn't have the same crew in the engine room though. We couldn't get -- They were probably aboard another ship, maybe in the Pacific, I don't know.

WEBB: Does that make it harder to do your job, if you don't know --

MARONEY: No, because you always made new friends! There was one fella that I came to be kinda close with. He was from Valencia, Spain. He, in 1936 you know the Franco War -- he could never go back to Spain because he was fighting against Franco. And he landed in New York about two years before the war and he was like a...refugee, if you wanna call it that.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: And he landed and became a citizen and with his experience in sailing ships and his knowledge of the Merchant Marines he got a job right away! Got his papers right away. And the reason I became friends with him is because we were on the ship for about ten months, so you got to know the fella pretty well then. And he was a nice guy.

WEBB: [Quietly] Hm. The gentleman you said was standing on the hull when you got torpedoed, that blew him back, was he also foreign?

MARONEY: Yes, yes. I think he was from Puerto Rico.

WEBB: Okay.

MARONEY: Which, are American citizens!

WEBB: Sure. Was that fairly common in the Merchant Marines -

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Yes -

WEBB: -- to have these --?

MARONEY: -- yes. They were more or less an -- very few in the engine room...but they were mostly on deck.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: Or mess hall.

WEBB: So you said that you were on thirteen different ships.

MARONEY: I have thirteen discharges.

WEBB: [Laughs] What was the first one?

MARONEY: First ship?

WEBB: Mmhmm.

MARONEY: We went to San Juan, Mayagüez and Ponce – Puerto Rico – to bring food and we got in an accident. I was in four accidents too, bad ones. And...a lot of our food was spoiled. And they blamed the crew -- and the captain for not feeding 'em. Well, we couldn't help having an accident.

WEBB: What kind of accident was it?

MARONEY: Another ship rammed us.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: Forming a convoy see. Sometimes it was so foggy you couldn't see a foot in front of you. It was very dangerous 'cause the guide in front of ya or the side of ya or the back of ya mighta had ammunition on it, high-test gas -- boom! The little spark, and when that goes -- All your buckets were rubber, your flashlights were -- had rubber coating on it, 'case you dropped it on the deck it wouldn't cause a flash.

WEBB: Hmm...Four accidents all of 'em were ships bumping in to each other?

MARONEY: No, no. Three of 'em were that way. When we were coming out of Bremerhaven, Germany, the pilot -- You know what a pilot is. He takes the ship out of continental waters. Then we're out to sea, they drop the pilot off and he's back taking another ship out 'cause he knows the channels. He was drunk. And he gave us full astern when it should've said full ahead. That's the signal from the engine -- from the deck to the engine room, that's that thing that you see like that?

WEBB: Right.

MARONEY: And naturally we accepted the signal from the bridge saying full astern so we went full astern. Our propellers -- and these big buoys that you see in the middle of the channels, the base of it is a big concrete block, oh baby, about 6 feet by 6 feet. It's got a big chain on it. We wrapped around that chain, with our propeller. And it twisted our driving shaft and we had to go into Bremerhaven to get it

fixed. And they did such a wonderful job, when we come back to New York they were inspecting it -- and he asked me, he says, "Who did this?" I said, "They did it in Germany." And I said, "It took 'em about four weeks." And I says, "We could've built two ships in four weeks!" So - they did good work, but.

WEBB: Was that the Germans that were doing that?

MARONEY: [Simultaneously] Yeah, fixed it. The Germans fixed it. The war was over then.

WEBB: Oh okay. I see.

MARONEY: Or just dwindling down.

WEBB: Yeah...Did you ever have any issues with language barriers?

MARONEY: No.

WEBB: I mean near --

MARONEY: I never spoke any languages, but everybody speaks in English...You can make yourself known, you know what I mean, "Give me that hat."

WEBB: [Laughs]

MARONEY: Like Indian sign [both laughing] language.

WEBB: Okay. So going back to that first ship do you remember what the name of the ship was?

MARONEY: No I don't. It was a liberty ship; we took it in from Galveston, Texas and we went all alone, no escort, no guns, nothing, and that's when they were shipping the sinks [sic] in the Caribbean.

WEBB: So what is your -

MARONEY: I was scared to death, if you wanna know the truth!

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: You're damn right I was. Because when the captain come over the loudspeakers and says, "Everyone --" there would be a blackout; that means you don't smoke a cigarette, you don't -- have your portholes locked, and at night we stopped, just kept our engines running low. And I says, "What the hell am I doing here? I'm not mad at anybody!" But I was there.

WEBB: What's the difference, in your opinion -- or if there is any -- between the worth of a liberty ship and the worth of a ship that's maybe been around, did you have experiences sailing on ships that --

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Yes.

WEBB: -- had been kind of recommissioned?

MARONEY: Yes. Liberty ships were built in twenty-one days.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: Boom, boom, boom. Then we took 'em out or I took one out in Galveston on what they call a ship's shakedown.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: That's when we found out whatever had to be fixed, was...leaks here, leaks here, welds here, welds there. And then it went back into dry dock and those repairs were done. Then it was ready for sea! Then they came out with the C4 which was a turbine, beautiful ship, better quarters for the crew and so forth. Then they came out with a C8. That was better than anything because they had more time to build it and it went faster. Maybe sixteen knots. A knot, when you say, "Oh we're going ten knots", it's a mile and a 10th, in land's time. But they kept improving because they had more time to build ships! You take a ship - liberty ship that's 10,000 ton in twenty-one days! All it was...and Roosevelt said this, if it made one trip to the Atlantic and landed and dispersed its cargo, it paid for itself.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: Some of the weldings or shook or broke apart, shook, and just rattled in the North Atlantic. If you ever crossed the North Atlantic in the middle of December, you don't go nowhere. For fourteen days we didn't go anywhere. We had soup all the time because you couldn't cook nothing it was flying all over the place. It wasn't a walk in the park.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: And I said to myself many times, "Was I better off here or in the army?" [Laughing] You know. You don't know.

WEBB: Well that, again --

MARONEY: I'm here!

WEBB: Yeah. [Laughing] You're here!

MARONEY: [Simultaneously] So.

WEBB: Worked out all right for ya.

MARONEY: Right.

WEBB: I was gonna ask, did you experience any major storms?

MARONEY: Ooh, Christ, yes.

WEBB: What were those like?

MARONEY: Oh, terrible.

WEBB: It's hard for me to imagine, you know, not being -

MARONEY: Well here you're taking a ship like this, it's level, up, down; up, down, and you had to shut the steam to the engine off because that's what they call the butterfly. Because you'd blow the top of the engine off.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: Then you'd be screwed you - then you'd just you go with the waves. Oh that North Atlantic in the middle of December is terrible. Oh.

WEBB: Any typhoons or anything in the --?

MARONEY: [Interrupting] No that's in the Pacific.

WEBB: 'kay.

MARONEY: But they had to get that merchandise there! Because there was no storms in the -- on land, see. They had to get - Antwerp needed something and when you dropped, this ship was important for this area here. This ten ships might have been on cargo and the commodore knew all that, he knew, and that changed because the war changed. They needed gas here and they needed ammunition over there. So it was a constant - changing all the time because the war changed all the time.

WEBB: Yeah. Seems like you guys were probably more affected by those changes than, you know, somebody on the front lines waiting for the bullets or...

MARONEY: It's just it - our ship had ammunition on it. Well, when we got in to Naples, I could just see 'em today, "No no no", so we had to go up to Civitavecchia, unload - we had nothing but bombs on the ship - we had to unload those on a barge, and then they took 'em where they took 'em I don't know, but there's a place called Bari; it's in the Adriatic at the tip o' Italy. The Germans used mustard gas there, and they damn near flattened the port and that's why we came in right after them and they saw we had ammunition, "No, no". We were going to Naples. Well Naples is a big port.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: They thought that if we blew up we'd blow up the whole damn Naples! So they put us in the Civitavecchia and the month - the front was only fifty-five miles away, in Livorno which is Leghorn, because...it don't take much to ignite a bomb, but you do have to have a fuse in it. But you can imagine with 10,000 ton of bombs it'd make quite a spark. And that would've blew up whole Naples! So they had us go way up towards the front - then the bombs were closer to the action!

WEBB: When you say, "they," are you talking about the locals or the military that's still - ?

MARONEY: The military who was running the port, who was telling the Italians what to do.

WEBB: Okay. Yeah.

MARONEY: There's a lot of colored people unloading ships and driving trucks.

WEBB: Yeah. Seems like because of you coming in to these different ports that you have - you get to see sort of the effects of war differently than maybe some of the others, the, what is left behind kind of --

MARONEY: Yes because our area changed all the time. You take a soldier, he was maybe on the front...Naples maybe he woulda been up in the front line for six months and then back for a month and then up again! He didn't get very far but we got to - I made several trips to England, France, Germany...So we were in various places of the war rather than a fella that was permanently stationed in France, let's say.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: Or England. I know a fella that was a neighbor of mine that was in the Great Lake - was at, the - what's the airport, Navy airport, Glen, Glenview!

WEBB: Glenview.

MARONEY: Glenview Naval Air Station. All during the war! Never left Glenview -- it was home every weekend! He got the same benefits that a guy that was on the front for three years. Wasn't fair.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: But, there was a guy delivering in the post office, never saw any action either. And there was the cooks. There was some cooks in various areas, the Battle of the Bulge - they took their spoon, threw it away and gave 'em a rifle!

WEBB: Mmhmm.

MARONEY: You're an infantryman now! And they had the same privilege of doing that to us, but we weren't on the front, we were handing them ammunition to the navy gun crew who was trained to shoot that twenty millimeter gun. And they train 'em right here at Great Lakes!

WEBB: Yeah. Were you ever on a ship where the captain, somebody in the higher up decision making, said, "No, I'm not carrying that" or "That's too dangerous", Or?

MARONEY: No he could never do that.

WEBB: Never could?

MARONEY: No he would've been...

WEBB: Court martialed?

MARONEY: Well they would've, I'm not, I'm trying to use a different word. He would've been, his papers would've been revoked, and he could never been on another ship probably. Maybe he would they would class him as a deserter, I don't know, but that never happened. We had some fellas in - when we got torpedoed, the boatswain was drunk all the time. Where he got the booze I don't know, but he was sent home because, see he had to report to the chief mate every morning to find out what was to be done for the, for the crew. Paint the ship, paint this, do this, do that. The boatswain mate was that boss and he was in charge of the crew, of the seamen. He didn't have nothing to do with us and we had nothing to do with him.

WEBB: Hmm. Mokay. Those times that you were, well, you talked about being in Germany and taking four weeks or something for the boat to be repaired or just on a regular time when you're in port and things are being unloaded, are there other jobs that you have?

MARONEY: No. Once you did your watch, 4-8, let's say 4 in the morning to 8 in the morning, I could go ashore.

WEBB: Did you?

MARONEY: If - sometimes we weren't allowed to.

WEBB: Oh.

MARONEY: If we had to get a pass, if I got a pass, yeah, I wanted to see what was going on.

WEBB: What was the most interesting place that you got to see?

MARONEY: Well, we were at a place called Civitavecchia, which is fifty miles from Rome. And the Captain was a nice guy. He says anybody that wants to switch their watches - that means I watch for you; you watch for me - you can go to Rome and see, well you might not ever get another chance in your life to see Rome.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: Because Rome is not a port. Rome is inland.

WEBB: Right.

MARONEY: And luckily, we was a Tuesday we were there, and the Pope made a public appearance to the armed forces on Tuesday. And he was from here to there away from me, they brought him in on a big thing and we toured Rome, saw as much as we could, and the most fascinating thing I ever saw in my life! Now we have -- there was guys that was captains that wouldn't allow that! Oh they were son of a bitches. But this guy was a nice guy.

WEBB: Did you have some of those SOB captains yourself?

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Oh yes! Yes. When I was in England one time, I asked a chief engineer if I could switch watches with which a guy that, say, it was an oiler like me and he was willing to let me go and then I would come back and take his watch. We were about twenty-five miles away from my brother, my oldest brother. [Coughs] "Nobody switches watches on my ship!" What are you gonna do? He's the boss. And my brother got killed.

WEBB: How did you learn about that?

MARONEY: Well, when I got back to New York I called home, I'd call home every time I got back to New York. Once I got off the ship I'd get, I'd want to know, well, if I'm

gonna stay on ship, on land for a little while, or do I have enough time to go back to Chicago or I have to get another ship in four days or five days? I called my mother, told her I was in back in New York, "Oh everybody's looking for you blah blah yeah. And Bill got killed." That's how I heard about it. Otherwise, I would've never heard about it. 'Til I got back to Chicago.

WEBB: Does that change your sense of service at all?

MARONEY: Well, we were pretty close, he was the oldest I was the second. And we played a lot of sports together. Yeah it was like losing your best friend. 'Cause he was...He was a bookkeeper and an auditor and he - they put him in the anti-tank destroyers. If you think that makes sense I don't know. But if they were to pick - "What do you do in civilian life?" "Oh I was a baker." They make you a gunner! You'd think that they would shorten your education, if you wanna call it that, to accommodate your utilities, your ambition and what. But the Army is the Army, the Navy is the Navy, and that's why I didn't think I would like that being told and do something that don't make sense. Why go through that wall when you can walk around it?

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: I'm over on the other side, the wall's still standing!

WEBB: [Laughs] You mentioned because of an accident that food got spoiled or that you weren't able to deliver the food -- on one of your trips?

MARONEY: To San Juan, Puerto Rico.

WEBB: You've also mentioned that you at some point could've been held accountable for damage to the ship had it sunk. Were you held accountable for the food not being delivered?

MARONEY: Oh no, no, no -

WEBB: No?

MARONEY: -- no no. They couldn't argue with me because they didn't even know who the hell I was, you know. They wanted the guy with the brass. Which was no fault of nobody's, it was an accident and we had perishable food on it. And we wanted to get rid of the food, too, because it was spoiling and it wasn't a very nice smell. But these people were on an island, it was wartime coming up, they couldn't go

back to New York like they used to go, you know, travel back to New York like a streetcar. But it was all ironed out.

WEBB: You've talked about [sighs] I don't know if attrition rate is the right phrase but that the Merchant Marine saw a lot of casualties. How did you get news about other ships or is that something that you didn't find out until you got to a port?

MARONEY: Well, one morning I got off watch - I was on the 4 to 8 watch - and was a beautiful day, you could see this ship had some smoke coming out of it, and my - - if you wanna call it my associate was coming out of the engine room too and I said, "Joe look at that." Ship was gone.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: [Poof noise] Big puff of smoke. Was a tanker. You could see in the center of a tanker, you see catwalks, like, and you could see 'em running and trying to get to the stern to get off. But they never got off. They're just [whooshing noise]. That's the only incident I saw. That visually I could see. I wasn't right that close but I could -- maybe couple hundred yards away, maybe 300 yards away. But it was a beautiful day and this thing made a spark - boop! It was gone. And down it went. That's how we lost so many men.

WEBB: Do you change the convoy to try to go --

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Oh yeah, we'd move and the destroyers would move in and out. See all four or five destroyers -- See, the Americans convoy to Gibraltar, and then from Gibraltar, the English took over and took us from the Mediterranean. And they were all running around. Some of these were seagoing tugs! I'll never forget that I was standing alongside of the captain when we didn't know if we were going to abandon ship, there was the captain's rowboat was gone, and this English captain on the thing, he was leaning like this, he says, [Irish accent] "Pull your boats in you're not gonna sink!"

WEBB: [Chuckles]

MARONEY: Just like it was everyday affair with - well those some of those guys were torpedoed 3 or 4 times! You know they were fighting the war since 1939! We didn't get in until '41!

WEBB: [Clears throat] Did you ever have any contact with SPARS?

MARONEY: With what?

WEBB: SPARS? That was the Women's Coast Guard Reserves.

MARONEY: No.

WEBB: Any females in the-?

MARONEY: [Interrupting, loudly] They wouldn't let us in those, we couldn't get in those places!

WEBB: Okay.

MARONEY: 'Cause we didn't have no uniform on, see?

WEBB: Huh. Can you talk about, kind of, that, you know, I don't want to skip too far ahead into the, you being done, but just that you've mentioned it, the views of, you know, "Well, you guys weren't actually in the military." And then later you weren't allowed to have your benefits, until, what nearly the '80s.

MARONEY: '88 I think, Reagan let us go into veterans. Hines

WEBB: Is that something that you were aware of at the time or not until afterwards, that, "Hey, we're not getting what we're owed"?

MARONEY: We didn't -- At the end of the war you were supposed to get G.I. Bill. My brothers, my, two of my younger brothers got college educations. We were supposed to get the twenty-one dollars a week or twenty-one dollar-- whatever that was -- I never got that either. I never got anything!

WEBB: So I was reading, as I was doing research for this that, you know, even at the time of service, that there were other branches that complained about the Merchant Marines, and, you know, you guys were making so much more money and all that. Did you ever encounter that kind of thing?

MARONEY: Yes, yes, very much so. Now here's what we got. I was a fire-- I only know myself now. I was a fireman-water tender, and an oiler. I received 110 dollars a month. When we got in to foreign waters, our pay raised a little. When we got in the Mediterranean, closer to the front, we got five dollars a day, while we were in the Mediterranean, which was good because it was just - five dollars every day, we -- I didn't spend it...And I think, personally, somebody in the Army or the Navy or whatever were very jealous of our situation. Now we didn't make any more than a person working in a defense plant.

WEBB: Right.

MARONEY: Sweeping a broom!

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: Made more than we did. And didn't go into any dangerous waters. It goes back to the time when I tried to get my dental work done at Hines Hospital. Listen to this.

WEBB: What year was this?

MARONEY: Two years ago.

WEBB: Okay.

MARONEY: And they said, "Well, we can't accept you because you're not service connected." I said, [stuttering] "What do you mean? Service connected." "Well this didn't happen for service connected." That's all I could get out of 'em. I said, "What do you have to have your head blown off before you can get service connected?" I can't understand that. "Well I haven't got time to talk to you now." They resented us too.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: Because -- and believe me -- [phone chiming] 'Scuse me.

WEBB: Mhmm.

MARONEY: This is the police department calling me every day at 12 o'clock to see if I'm alive. [Quietly] Oh it's not them. Hello? Yeah.

WEBB: You guys doing all right?

MARONEY: "Everything is fine, Honey thanks very much I'm well and happy. Okay, Honey, bye bye." They call me every day at 12 o' clock to see if I'm okay.

WEBB: Well that's great!

MARONEY: That's...

WEBB: That's service!

MARONEY: That's Village of Forest Park. That's nothing to do with the government.

WEBB: Huh.

MARONEY: And if I don't call 'em or talk to 'em now - they send two big policemen, their biggest guys I ever saw in my life, knock on the door and I said, "I didn't do nothing!"

WEBB: [Both laugh] "I was sleepin'! I missed the call." [Deep breath] But you were saying about your dental issues.

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Oh, they just wouldn't take me into...because it wasn't service connected.

WEBB: It seems like, to me, that even the home front, even the war effort on the home front, you get the Rosie the Riveter, you know, kind of icons, that they're more celebrated than the Merchant Marines.

MARONEY: I would venture to say, Thom, that right now in Congress half of 'em didn't know what we did in the Merchant Marines. Because they're too young!

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: This is seventy years ago! Now, I hope that this will enlighten them to some bit that they would say, "Well, oh I didn't know that." And maybe they'll say, "We better take a better look at it." Now we had a vote one time, we had enough votes to bring it to the floor, but Senator [Akaka] didn't bring it to the vote for a floor for a vote. Now no man, nobody should have that much power. It's wrong. His regiment got a bonus of 20,000 dollars a man. I'm not gonna say any more. [Both laugh]

WEBB: Even at the time though, you guys are almost, I wouldn't say forgotten, but put on the side. Is that just because you guys were out doing your job and not making a big stink. Or what was [laughs] it about your group that seemed to not attract the attention that everybody else had?

MARONEY: Well because we didn't have -- as I said, we didn't have to salute anybody, I never saluted a captain, I said, "Hiya Captain", you know, "Hiya Bob", it was just that way. We weren't educated to the point where that uniform you're saluting, you're not saluting the man.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: But jealousy rears its ugly head. And sometimes it's to the good and sometimes it's to the bad. And I think this was misunderstood from the beginning. We had waiters waiting on us - well they were waiters, they were mess men - waiting on

us; we ate very good, when we had food. Now we could have a good steward, that he's running out of food, he knows what's on the ship, and he's out scrounging around when convoys come in when we were alongside the dock, he'd go aboard and say, "Have you got any eggs? Have you got any bacon? Have you got any this?" And he helped us!

WEBB: Hm.

MARONEY: That wasn't his job -- he didn't have to do it. He could've sat there and starved like the rest of us! Our flour got contaminated with bugs.

WEBB: Hm.

MARONEY: So he says to himself, probably, "What are we gonna do? We can't throw this flour overboard; it still makes bread." So we got to the point where we would, when we saw them, we just picked them out and threw 'em away. We didn't care if they were there or not, 'cause we wanted the bread! They made the bread, second baker made bread all the time! While we had food we ate good.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: And it was up to the steward. Some were good, some were bad. Some were good engineers, some were bad - some were bad firemen, to water tenders, bad oilers. It was such, so huge, you just can't conceive. It took one ton of war material to keep one soldier at the front for one year. How did that get there? A lot of it didn't get there, but a lot of it did!

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: Most of it did! 'cause we had so much. And the Germans and the enemy didn't have as much as we did -- we didn't run outta gas like they did. And a tank won't go without gas.

WEBB: That's right!

MARONEY: A soldier won't fight good unless he's fed good. So we had far superior than anybody that was ever trying to attack us. And that's why I can't understand this crazy fool in North Korea.

WEBB: [Chuckles]

MARONEY: How can anybody say "I think we're gonna attack the United States tomorrow." They didn't stop and think, "What am I gonna use for guns?" Cause they don't have any guns! Or maybe they do, I don't know.

WEBB: I don't know. I don't understand that situation at all.

MARONEY: No, nobody does! That's why they do it with a -- saying, "Hey you better take another look at this situation!"

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: There's nobody to guide 'em.

WEBB: [Breathes in] So your focus as far as being aware of the enemy was purely towards the Germans. Did you ever worry about the Japanese or--?

MARONEY: [Interrupting, simultaneously] No, because that was thousands of miles away.

WEBB: Mmkay.

MARONEY: But I'll never forgive them for what they did in Pearl Harbor. I'll never forgive 'em for -- I don't care how good they are to the United States, I don't trust 'em. Anything -- anybody would do a thing like that is, in my book, I wanna keep him in front of me.

WEBB: So you've done thirteen different ships, you've been in the service for three years almost?

MARONEY: All of '42, all of '43, all of '44, all of '45, and part of '46.

WEBB: Okay.

MARONEY: Last trip I made was Yugoslavia, Splita--, [Spalato], Yugoslavia, we brought food over, grain. It shows you a country -- when you're bringing food or anything, you got birds flying all over the dock, and naturally they don't have, the way they're conveying, transporting stuff now, they put it in slings down in the hull, then they pulled it up with the winches. And they had bags broken and grain falling out; grain was all over the place. The day we left, it was as clean as this floor. There wasn't even a..., for a bird to eat. That's how they could conserve food over there. And when you go to Germany during the war, every square foot, something was growing, a flower or something that they -- edible. The reason they well lost the war? They run out of gas, and they made more mistakes then we did.

WEBB: Hmm, yep.

MARONEY: That's the way I can sum it all up.

WEBB: [Chuckles] So what was that last trip back to the States like? I assume it's much different than your first couple of trips --

MARONEY: [Interrupting, simultaneously] Oh yeah, because -

WEBB: [At the same time] -- less fear?

MARONEY: -- we had no convoys.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: We could run on our own. In other words if the captain wanted to go full steam we could go full steam. Usually -- boats run just like trains; they're on time, takes so much time to get to Germany, takes so much time to get to England, because they know how many miles it is or knots it is and they just speed up accordingly.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: They know every day what we're -- how far we've gone, where we are. You saw that 2nd Assistant takin' the sight; that told him exactly where we were in the Atlantic Ocean. He couldn't say, "Well, we're right at 35th and 8th Avenue", you know, he couldn't say something like that, but he could go back into the chart room and say, "Oop! Here's where we are, right here. Three days away from New York, three days away from Liverpool." They know every minute what - where they are. I don't know, because I'm down in the engine room.

WEBB: So what did you do when you got back to New York for that last time? Did you immediately head back towards Chicago or --?

MARONEY: No! No, I made some friends in New York, and I visited with them for about a week and then I came back to Chicago. Then, they were gonna put me in the Army! Don't shake your head to agree with 'em! [Both laugh] But anyway, I went down to take the examination, 6 o' clock in the morning, at the...175 West Jackson Insurance Exchange and I said, "These people mean this -- that I'm gonna go back in the Army, or would go in the Army. And I know I'm not going in no Army!" So I went home and packed a bag and went to New York and got on another ship. And I -- when I came back to New York, I called my mother and say, "Is anybody looking for me?" [Both laugh]

WEBB: So I guess that's --

MARONEY: They forgot about it then.

WEBB: -- the Navy, some of the other branches have a point system, that if you have enough points you can get out. You, as a Merchant Marine, because you're done with that particular trip, in is --

MARONEY: Well, if you wanna call it, yeah.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: Trip.

WEBB: You don't have another one lined up, so you think that you're kinda free to go or?

MARONEY: Yeah!

WEBB: And so the Army is then trying to draft you because of the Korean War? Is that right?

MARONEY: Well, there was no war, but they were figurin' on the Korean War then; that was just before the Korean War.

WEBB: Okay.

MARONEY: And after joining the chapter of our Merchant Marines which -- they're dying since I've joined, fifteen guys have died, and -- 'cause they're in their '80s and now they're in their '90s!

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: And couple of them went back and said, "Well I'm through with the Merchant Marines, I'm through with the war." Before they know it they were in Korea!

WEBB: And why -- why?

MARONEY: Well, they didn't know how to get out of Korea! The Army drafted them!

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: They would've done the same with me if I didn't get on that ship and go back. And then I come back they forgot all about it.

WEBB: Hmm. [deep breath] So in the '80s when you guys start fighting for your benefits...

MARONEY: Yes, it was about the '80s.

WEBB: Were you successful?

MARONEY: No, we have been fighting it ever since!

WEBB: You've been fighting it ever since. [Quieter] Mmkay.

MARONEY: And I hope that this would bring light to some of these people that can vote for it! Because if we don't deserve it, tell me why. That's all I wanna ask. Tell me why we can't get it.

WEBB: Yeah!

MARONEY: I wanted to go to college, I wanted to be a lawyer.

WEBB: What did you do?

MARONEY: I went into sales.

WEBB: [Deep breath] It's not the same. But I assume

MARONEY: [Interrupting] In a way it is.

WEBB: Yeah?

MARONEY: I'm selling myself to the judge, I'm selling myself to the jury, I'm selling myself - a lawyer is a good salesman!

WEBB: That's true.

MARONEY: You better be a good one!

WEBB: Yeah. [Laughs]

MARONEY: Or you won't be a good lawyer! [also laughs?]

WEBB: [Clears throat] Well, we've gone through most of the questions that I had, it's been a fascinating story. Were there things that you thought we would talk about today that we haven't discussed so far?

MARONEY: Well. I don't know what benefit this can do. I hope it - meets with your approval and as far as any monetary thing, I'm not interested in anything like that. I'm

interested in something we can do to the benefit - 'course when I joined the Merchant Marines chapter out in - Chicago Heights, not Chicago -- Burr Ridge, and saw so many guys die fighting for the benefits that they deserve and not getting it, I just kind of -- maybe I give up. Maybe this will help enlighten, maybe their wives will get something out of it, I don't know, but I think they deserve something.

WEBB: Yeah. I agree. And the research that I did, you know, preparing for this it was just [deep breath] flabbergasting to me that --

MARONEY: [Interrupting] Yeah.

WEBB: -- they seem to be...

MARONEY: Well, when the people came back from Vietnam they treated 'em like dirt, which, that was wrong. Was wrong to be - I don't - I'll tell you ninety - hundred percent of 'em didn't wanna be there to begin with! But they were there. It was a useless thing, but...I say to myself, "But...but it, it was, they were there."

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: And they did their duty and they'd be treated like dogs when they come back. That was wrong, very wrong.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: Very wrong.

WEBB: Have you been sailing across the ocean since...?

MARONEY: [Laughing] No.

WEBB: [Interrupting] those years?

MARONEY: No, I -

WEBB: You saw enough of that.

MARONEY: I have some very good friends that were in the Air Force, and you explain this to me - I can't understand why - they won't get on a plane anymore.

WEBB: Hmm.

MARONEY: They had their duty, they did about twenty-six tours, they were ready to go home and then the war broke out, but...why won't they get on a plane? Jesus!

That's the only way to travel today! They just endured so much and saw so much probably that they just -- maybe they're frightened to death! I don't know. But I can imagine being up in that sky, nowhere to go, and these bombs are -- flak is flying all over you and it's missin' you or it's hittin' you -- it wasn't a very nice place to be.

WEBB: No, but, being on the--

MARONEY: [Interrupting, inaudible]

WEBB: -- Open ocean [laughs].

MARONEY: Well it's not a nice place to be either. The whole damn thing was wrong! I wasn't mad at anybody I wanted to come home all the time! But -- somebody had to do it.

WEBB: Yeah.

MARONEY: And the little bit that I did I hope it was something that helped.

WEBB: Yeah, it's --

MARONEY: [Interrupting] I was just a little grain of salt on a beach.

WEBB: [Deep breath] Well, I want to thank you for your service and thank you for taking the time to tell us about it today.

MARONEY: I wanna thank Pritzker for letting me be here with my two compadres.

WEBB: Yeah -