

**Samuel F. Reynolds Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 4/05/2005**  
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**Biographical Note**

Samuel F. Reynolds was a crew member on PT 160, an educational specialist for Bureau of Naval Personnel, and Lt. Commander and Assistant Director of Training of Potomac River Naval Command. This interview focuses on Reynolds' time stationed in the Solomon Islands during World War II, his acquaintance with John F. Kennedy, and the sinking of PT boat 109, among other topics.

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Oral History Interview

with

SAMUEL F. REYNOLDS

April 5, 2005  
Fairhope, Alabama

By Vicki Daitch

For the John F. Kennedy Library

DAITCH: Okay. Now I'm going to set up the tapes again by saying that I'm Vicki Daitch, and I'm talking with Sam Reynolds who was in the Solomon Islands on PT boats at the same time that John F. Kennedy was. And so actually I would just like to start by asking you a little bit about how you ended up there in the Solomon Islands. Because, you know, everybody has a different path. And your path, I'm sure, was different from Kennedy's. But your training would have been the same as his. What you made you decide to go into the Navy? Let's start with that.

REYNOLDS: I had an uncle who was a fireman years ago in the Navy. And I think I sort of always wanted the Navy rather than the Army. So that's the reason I joined. But anyhow, I went through--I also had a degree. And I had gone back with this friend of mine who was an attorney in Greenwood, South Carolina. He and I went down about October to the University of South Carolina and talked to the recruiting officer, who recruited officer candidates. And he said, "You fellows do not have enough math to get in." Anyhow that was about October. We went down December the 8<sup>th</sup> and met him. We walked in jokingly and said, "Bet you'll take us today." He said, "Sign on the dotted line."

I've forgotten where Pat [Graham Patton] went. But I was assigned to midshipmen school as an apprentice seaman, at Notre Dame. I went there April 15<sup>th</sup> for one month, as a seaman. And, of course, if we'd flunked out there we would have gone to sea as a seaman, but we passed. And then we went to Northwestern University as midshipmen, for three

months. I think it was on August the 3<sup>rd</sup> that I was commissioned. We each had a short leave. And while there, Kelly [Robert B. Kelly] and one other officer, I believe Bulkeley [John Duncan Bulkeley], were interviewing for PT guys. Red Reilly[?]from Charleston, South Carolina, and I and others, too, of course, really wanted to be selected.

So we volunteered and were interviewed. And I don't know whether this is trivia or not. But the little guy in front of me, I heard Kelly interviewing him, and Kelly said, "You know I took 108 guys out there and brought 12 back." And the little guy said, "I'm ready to die for my country." Kelly says, "Get out of here." So I overheard that, and I walked in. And I told Kelly I didn't think the Japs had made a bullet to get me. Anyhow, I was selected, however, the list came out, started with the A's, and went down through Red Reilly, my good friend from Charleston, R-E-I-L-L-Y. I was disgusted for about three days thinking I wasn't selected. Later, the second list came out and I headed the list: R-E-Y-N-O-L-D-S. So after finishing there, we reported to Melville, Rhode Island, for our PT training. From Melville we went to New York for boats.

DAITCH: Well, tell me about the training.

REYNOLDS: There were two squadrons from our class. Bulkeley and Kelly had come back from their famous *They Were Expendable* troubles, and they took squadrons 8 and 9. Bulkeley took 8. Red Reilly, my friend, got assigned to 8. I was assigned to 9 under Robert B. Kelly.

DAITCH: Now tell me, before you guys leave Melville, tell me what the training was like there because Kennedy would have had to go through the same training you had to go....

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes, he did the same thing. In fact, as I told you, they kept him a while, and he was instructing in navigation there.

DAITCH: Oh, when you went he was an instructor there.

REYNOLDS: Yes, I'd say he was, although I didn't know him at the time, and he did not instruct me.

DAITCH: Okay.

REYNOLDS: But anyhow, he was teaching navigation and later was assigned to Melville as were we. Oh, we got there in the middle of a class, all of us officers who were assigned to the PT boats to torpedo school for just one month, and that was a lot of fun. We had old retired chiefs who had been called back, and they were the nicest old gentlemen who really taught us; not as much as a torpedo man would have learned, but for one month we really studied those torpedoes.

DAITCH: Uh huh. Yes.

REYNOLDS: And they were really fine men.

DAITCH: Where was that?

REYNOLDS: That was at Newport, Rhode Island. We were living in Newport in apartment houses.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: And I palled around with John McElroy [John V. McElroy] a lot. He and I bought a car together, for instance. And then we got orders and had to give it to someone else. But as far as the training, we trained for three months. Hope it wasn't four. Think it was three. [Laughter]

DAITCH: At Melville?

REYNOLDS: At Melville, right. And at the end of this training we were assigned to our squadrons. We went to New York and fitted out the squadron. But you wanted to ask me something about the training. We usually went out to sea maybe two times a week or maybe more. But we had a lot of other training going on at the same time. We had to learn flag signals and Morse Code and similar things, to a certain extent. Not as much as a signalman or a radioman would have learned it, but pretty good, you know, for an officer. Then we took a little training in the engines so we'd know something about that. And of course we'd already been taught navigation, seamanship and ordnance back at Northwestern University, in Chicago.

DAITCH: So you had to sort of know a little bit about everything having to do with the boat.

REYNOLDS: Exactly, exactly. And as I said, it was intensive training with long hours, and it was cold. At first we didn't even have rain gear for all of us. You'd go out and sail down the river, getting out to sea, and you'd get wet and you'd stay out for 24 hours and freeze to death. And being a durned Southerner, you know it got to me. But sometimes you'd have a rain jacket, or you'd have the coveralls, the overalls rather. But you wouldn't have both, not at first.

DAITCH: So was there anything that the officers had to know? Well, I mean obviously the officers had to know everything beyond each little piece.

REYNOLDS: Well, of course we had to know a lot of boat handling.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: And a lot of night navigation and dead reckoning, we called it. Because we didn't shoot the stars at night. And you were bouncing around on the PT boat so good that you couldn't navigate it very well anyhow. But you had to shoot islands, you know, and plot courses between them. And we also had training on the guns, and we fired torpedoes day and night several times. And we dropped ash cans or depth charges over the side. And that was a lot of fun, in daytime or nighttime. It was interesting to drop those things down. You'd have fish and sharks floating to the top.

DAITCH: Ooohhh....

REYNOLDS: It looked to me about 50 yards in diameter around the fleet boats, you know. And so it was a lot of fun and a lot of hard work, though. We had ten minutes between class, and we'd run to our tents and get a Coca-Cola or something and run back. It was that strict

DAITCH: Now what kind of.... You said it was cold and that was when?

REYNOLDS: This was September, October, November, and December...

DAITCH: Oh, okay.

REYNOLDS: ...and it was cold. Yes, it was cold. But usually you were okay. And some of the guys would get sick. And I hate to tell you this, but one time we were out, and I think the whole crew but a few of us were very sick. And I didn't get sick and never have.

DAITCH: Oh, lucky you.

REYNOLDS: There's two kinds of seasickness in my estimation. One of them is when you're on a big ship and you're just lolling along, you know. And the other's when you're on a little boat bouncing like that. And some people would be sick in one situation and not in the other. But I wasn't sick on either one.

DAITCH: Oh, lucky you.

REYNOLDS: I was watching these guys very sick one night.

DAITCH: Oh.... Oh, boy.

REYNOLDS: Of course a lot of times it was calm, and you just had a lot of fun.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: We went out one time, and we were to hunt another boat which was supposed to be an enemy, you know. And we couldn't find him all night and discovered that the rascal had pulled alongside an island, picked up some lobster pots, and they were having a ball. [Laughter] That's the reason we couldn't find them. I might get in trouble telling you stories like that.

DAITCH: [Laughter] Yes.

REYNOLDS: But it was intensive, but good training. And we had our week.... I guess we were free on Sunday. I believe we worked on Saturday. And at midshipmen school, of course, back in Chicago, we only got from seven o'clock Saturday night until.... No, from noon Saturday 'til seven-thirty on Sunday. We had to be back in, so we couldn't go out two nights. You only went out one night.

DAITCH: Wow.

REYNOLDS: And that was intensive studying, too, because I wasn't too good in math, and I caught the dickens in navigation. But passed, you know.

DAITCH: Yes. Did you find navigation difficult?

REYNOLDS: I did. But it was my fault more than anything else. As I said, I never have cared for math too much. Incidentally, back when we were chosen, and I told you about applying for the PT boats back in Chicago, and I didn't get on the first list. Orders came through for me to go to engineering school at the University of California-Berkeley. Where I would have had a lot of math and engineering, too. But luckily the second list of PT volunteers came out, and of course it superseded this other. And so I went to PT school rather than out there. Whew!

DAITCH: Yes. I wonder if some people were more.... I mean, I think about people like Kennedy who had some sailing experience; I wonder if that made any difference or if that wasn't really relevant to....

REYNOLDS: Yes, it made a difference at first.

DAITCH: It did?

REYNOLDS: Yes, it did. And we all were green, but we learned together. And after about six months out there in the war zone, we were equally.... I think one was equally as good as another really. Even in the boat handling. We'd gotten used to it, of course.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Okay. Well, you were at the point where Kelly and Bulkeley had come and taken, sort of split the two squadrons up and you were in Kelly's squadron.

REYNOLDS: Yes, and we went to New York, and we were getting two boats a week. And we'd of course have to take them up to [Inaudible] shipyard and have certain guns or something put on them. And we trained up there somewhat. But mainly it was just getting the two boats and trying to get some liberty because we knew we were going out. And we sailed out, I've forgotten the name of the ship, but we would put five boats aboard some of the tankers. And the ship that I was on sailed out and collided with another. And so we came back in, and I had an extra 30 days.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

REYNOLDS: Roughly 30 days in New York, and that was nice of course.

DAITCH: Did you ever run into Kennedy at that time like here and there?

REYNOLDS: Unfortunately, I didn't know him until we got overseas. And of course he turned out to be a fine person. And he was so modest that we didn't even know the family name other than his dad was ambassador to England. That's all we knew. Never thought a thing about it, that he'd inherited some money or anything, you know. It didn't make any difference anyhow.

DAITCH: Right. At the time that you were at Melville and in all this other training, did you--is that when you met some of the other officers that we had talked about? Like Liebenow [William Frederick "Bud" Liebenow] or Stan Marshall [Stanmore B. Marshall].

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes. We were assigned to these two squadrons, as I said, and we were very close there. Once you were assigned to your individual squadron, then went to New York and started fitting out the boats and getting the boats and getting ready to go on time and go to the South Pacific. We were really close then. And you were close to your men, too. It was no.... As you've seen in these movies like *PT-109*, there wasn't a whole lot of officer-enlisted saluting and stuff. It was mainly like a bunch of guys out doing a job, you know. And of course you had the discipline when you needed it. But basically it was through friendship. You'd give an order, and the guy would do it just because he knew it was the right thing to do.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: We had no discipline problems that I remember and no refusal to do something. I remember, I believe it was Vanderbilt, who when we were shaking down--we went to Panama and shook down for 40 days and 40 nights, you know. And I remember hearing a story about one of his men. He asked him to handle a line because they'd been refueling or something and coming back in. And half the crew's asleep. And this guy said, I'm a so-and-so. I'm not a line handler. And he told him, "First you're a PT man. Grab that line." But we didn't have any problems like that at all. Lost

a lot of sleep.

DAITCH: It sounds like there was just a lot of camaraderie.

REYNOLDS: Very much so, very much. And a lot of respect for one another. Because every man knew his job, and he knew a little bit about the other jobs. And the officers, as I said, knew a little bit about each enlisted man's job. We could probably change a gun barrel or do something like that. Or maybe do a little something to the engine. But it was most.... There was a lot of camaraderie and close feeling, you know. We enjoyed that part of it very much.

DAITCH: Yes. So you were in Panama doing your.... Or somewhere around Panama, right?

REYNOLDS: Yes, we were.... Gosh, I've forgotten, a little island off Panama in the Pacific [Taboga]. But we'd come into Panama. Another thing Kelly did, you know, we've talked about him before and like Stan Marshall, what Stan had to say about him. Other squadrons we're going in every day, every night, to Panama City. And the exec would stay aboard one night and the skipper the next night, you know. And we got in twice. I had one afternoon liberty out of 40 days.

DAITCH: You're kidding!

REYNOLDS: And one night liberty and vice versa with John Lowery [John R. Lowery]. The day I stayed aboard in the afternoon, he went out in the afternoon; the day I stayed aboard at night, he went out at night.

DAITCH: And that's all you had? Aaawww. He was a tough...

REYNOLDS: He was tough.

DAITCH: ...commanding officer.

REYNOLDS: He certainly was.

DAITCH: Yes. Oh, my goodness.

REYNOLDS: Psychologically funny, too. If you saw action at night, he would sleep. If you didn't see action, he usually wouldn't. He would find something to blame the officers for right in front of the enlisted men. I never will forget that. But I shouldn't go into that. However, every officer in the squadron said that if we had to do it over, especially under fire, we would choose Kelly.

DAITCH: Mr. Marshall had said the same thing. It's just a funny kind of--his criticalness of the young officers.

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes, he did. It was awful. One time, after he talked 'til he lost his voice, from about four a.m. to seven a.m. or something, he told me, he said, "Reynolds, that forward 20mm wouldn't fire." And after he left the boat, I hollered, "Brown! Come up here." He was my gunner's mate, you know. Brown came up and said, "I wish he'd stood in front of me and you'd asked me to pull the trigger."  
[Laughter] Delete that, will you?

DAITCH: We'll send you a copy and you can delete whatever you want. [Laughter] But, oh, my goodness. Well, so you didn't have as much fun in Panama as everybody else did.

REYNOLDS: That's the case. You said it. You said it. But I did have a cousin down there. He was an engineer down there building the docks on the dam. So I did get to visit my second cousin, I think it was.

DAITCH: Yes. Oh, that's nice.

REYNOLDS: And his wife.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. And his wife was down there, too?

REYNOLDS: Mmmm hmmm. Yes, she was.

DAITCH: So in Panama, I don't actually know, and you may know....

REYNOLDS: That was Taboga Island. It was Taboga Island....

DAITCH: Taboga Island off the coast.

REYNOLDS: And it was a place of recreation where the stars would come from Hollywood, years ago.

DAITCH: Did you get to see anybody interesting?

REYNOLDS: No, we didn't. They weren't down there. But there was a beautiful lagoon. They had a Chinese restaurant, several little things like that. Not much to do, of course.

DAITCH: Yes. Right. I don't know whether Kennedy--what did you call it, a shakedown?

REYNOLDS: Yes, a shakedown. And I don't know when he did that. I really don't.

DAITCH: I don't know if it was in the same place or not. But what do you do on a shakedown?

REYNOLDS: Just more training. More training.

DAITCH: Yes. Now these are the boats that you're going to be permanently assigned to.

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes, we were assigned to the boats. We were with our regular boat crews then. And they were the boats that you were going to take out there fighting. It was just 40 days more training really.

DAITCH: Yes, okay.

REYNOLDS: We were unloaded. We went through the canal, of course, and were unloaded on the Pacific side. And that's where Taboga is. About 30 miles out, as I recall. And so we did the 40 days shakedown, and then we were loaded back aboard the tankers--three or four, five to the tanker. I think it was five, we had two on the bow, three on the stern. But I'm not sure exactly. We had a lot of fun going over. We crossed the International Date Line. We crossed the equator, and of course we were hazed pretty nicely, you know, by the crew. A few of our PT men had been there before; most of them hadn't.

DAITCH: So it's a big deal to cross the Dateline and the equator.

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes. Uh huh. I've got that around here somewhere, my little Neptune of the Sea or something like that, you know. But it was fun. We enjoyed going out there. And then we unloaded in Espiritu Santo and Nouméa, New Caledonia. And it was from there that we went in a few days, under our own power, up to Guadalcanal, having stopped and fueled from 55-gallon drums, on a little island called Star Harbor. The Navy'd discharged some gasoline there, 100-octane gasoline. And we hoisted them aboard, 55-gallons, and poured them in our tanks. It took a long time because we carried about 2,000 gallons, you know. And that's a lot of 55-gallon drums.

DAITCH: Oh, yes.

REYNOLDS: And we'd punch holes in them with a fire axe and throw them over the side.

DAITCH: Oh, gee! What a mess! That must have taken forever. And plus a lot of just back-breaking work. You must have had winches or something?

REYNOLDS: We had, we just put ropes under the thing and just hauled it up by pulling the ropes. It would come up aboard, you know. They were very low to the water, a PT boat was.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Tell me about the boats.

REYNOLDS: It was so far that one boat ran out of gas as we approached Guadalcanal. And Tulaghi was the PT base right across from Guadalcanal. And we had to go to Tulaghi, and we had to put several of the boats under tow to get us there; that's how closely they'd figured the gasoline. And you went on cruising speed, you didn't go full speed. You would really use a lot of gasoline at full speed. But we usually cruised at 1500 RPM, as I recall, which was about two thirds power. And that was where the boat was most efficient as to gasoline.

DAITCH: Well, tell me about the boats. I heard somewhere that they beat you to death, that it was a very rough ride.

REYNOLDS: There were only two nights that we turned back that I remember. The waves were so high, you'd be trying to follow the PT boat ahead of you on your left or right echelon, you know, and meet every once in a while. You'd be going down and you'd see him in the trough. Then you'd see him up top. But usually we'd have to slow down. Yes, if the sea was heavy, you were not too accurate. But luckily we didn't have to fire the torpedoes under those conditions. It was usually calm when we went out.

DAITCH: It was?

REYNOLDS: Uh huh. Yes. And we had to watch out for floating coconut logs.

DAITCH: Really!

REYNOLDS: Uh huh. A lot of copra being harvested out there, you know, and those hurricanes would come and blow coconut trees down, and they'd be floating in the water. We always had to keep a lookout on the bow when you were underway to dodge coconuts. Sometimes a whole tree would be floating in the water.

DAITCH: Wow! Did you ever have any boats get damaged by running into them?

REYNOLDS: I don't recall any, I really don't recall any having been damaged that way. That was another interesting thing that happened out there. And I don't remember where we were. But we saw some white water one night. It was pretty rough that night. And we went down and looked at the chart, and it said, "Reefs noted here in 1890," or something like that. Hadn't been seen since, they said. But we saw them one night. [Laughter]

DAITCH: Really! How interesting!

REYNOLDS: We were sort of close to an island, you know. We were maybe three or four miles from an island, you'd see white breakers, and you knew there was something there, of course.

DAITCH: Yes. Wow! So sometimes it just depends on the tide or the water conditions?

REYNOLDS: Yes, I guess so. Uh huh. But usually it was pretty calm and pretty warm, thank goodness. But you'd get wet quite often with spray, and you'd be chilly. We slept topside. We'd never go below and try to sleep at night. You'd sleep topside.

DAITCH: Yes. There wasn't a lot of below, was there, a large space below?

REYNOLDS: Yes, you'd be surprised, and I hope you get up there and see them sometime there. There were crew's quarters up forward that had about 12 bunks.

DAITCH: Oh, really, 12 bunks!

REYNOLDS: And then the officers had two little rooms with a head between them. And it was very small, of course. They had a seat with a pump, and, you know, you'd pump seawater. And a little aluminum lavatory just about this big. But it was enough to wash, brush your teeth, so forth. We carried 200 gallons of water or 250, something like that, 2,000 gallons of gasoline, you know.

DAITCH: Yes, right. You know what's important.

REYNOLDS: But they were nice little state rooms; one officer would have a lower bunk, and no upper bunk.

DAITCH: Yes. One of the things that I thought was interesting in some of the models that I've seen, it's just like a flat surface on top, and there's not a railing or anything.

REYNOLDS: No railing. It's amazing.

DAITCH: How come you didn't fall out of those?

REYNOLDS: I don't know, but we didn't.

DAITCH: Apparently nobody did.

REYNOLDS: No. I remember one storm where I understand we lost a person. It wasn't connected with me or my squadron. I think we just overheard it, you know. But some guy was lost one night.

DAITCH: Yes, to me it just looks scary. I mean if you had really choppy water, it would be not so easy to keep your balance.

REYNOLDS: What next? What would you like to ask?

DAITCH: Well, let's talk about.... When you were first stationed in Tulaghi, is that where you met Kennedy?

REYNOLDS: No. No, I didn't meet him until we.... We left Tulaghi and went to the Russell Islands for a while and patrolled out of there. But gosh, it was a short time.

And then it came time for the Rendova invasion. We sailed up there one night and arrived the next morning. And so did the Army. The Army was discharging troops from transports. One interesting thing about Rendova is that it was seen in *PT-109*. Earlier we lost Todd on my boat due to some action I told you about earlier and I'll mention again now. A float plane dropped a bomb causing damage to our boat and killing Todd. The boys cut the bottoms out of 55-gallon drums, about this big around, and painted them black with white letters; wrote: "Todd Island" and strung them between two trees, even though the island was Rendova. And I know in *PT-109*, it showed two officers coming in from sea, and one of them said, "Why is that called Todd Island?" And said it was the first PT man killed out here.

DAITCH: Oh, yes.

REYNOLDS: And I don't know whether it was the first.... It was the first in that action. Of course I'm sure guys were lost around Guadalcanal, that happened before we got there. But it was Todd from *PT-162*. First PT man killed on the Rendova invasion. He was a good first-class gunner's mate.

DAITCH: Yes. Can you describe how he was killed?

REYNOLDS: This is a night that we sighted the *U.S.S. McCawley*. And I don't know whether I should talk about this or not. But really, and truly, it happened. We were told to go northwest of Rendova, up around where Kennedy was later hit. And we were going to, of course, look for enemy up there. And about dusk one night, as we were starting the engines on the boat, we were just about to leave the harbor, a little LVP with a Lieutenant, junior grade, came out from Intelligence and gave us orders to go back where we'd come from, roughly 40 or 50 miles down southeast, and see what we might see down there. We thought it was funny, but we carried out orders. And we went down in that area, and that's when we spotted this ship. And I had a little mess cook who didn't have binoculars in the cockpit with John Lowery and me, standing on the edge of the cockpit. He was just looking without binoculars and he says, "Good God! I see a submarine." And we put the glasses on it, and of course it was this troop transport.

And as I told you, we got in column to fire. Commander Kelly went in first, fired two fish [torpedoes], turned left. The second boat was Bob Snyder's [Robert Snyder] boat, as I recall. He fired two fish, steamed out of there real fast, like we were taught to do. And we were about to fire two fish, and there was nothing to fire at. The darned ship went up instead of down. It blew up. Of course Kelly's torpedo hit amid-ship and one had missed, as I remember. And Bob Snyder had fired two fish and luckily hit the stern and the bow. So three torpedoes destroyed the ship. But when it sank or blew up, or whatever it did, here sat a little ship. And it was a seagoing tug, a brand new one. And this officer aboard thought--he said,

he was interviewed later. And he said he thought that we were a fleet of Jap submarines. And he said his little tug would make 27 knots, and said, "That's just what we were making," getting out of there. But it was so funny really to see the big ship blow up, and then here's such a little one.

DAITCH: Behind it.

REYNOLDS: But he was outboard of us. And, as I say, the towline--he had that ship under tow. The towline had broken. And he was on the outboard side of us where we couldn't see anything. I understand he was putting grappling hooks over to send a man aboard to tie it up again and pull it out of the area. But why we were ordered to go back down in that territory, none of us ever knew.

DAITCH: Who was this lieutenant...? Was it a lieutenant you said told you to do that? I mean who was he?

REYNOLDS: An intelligence officer. I don't remember who really he was.

DAITCH: You don't know anything about him.

REYNOLDS: But he came up in a little LVP, which is one of these little landing boats that were used, you know, to land troops. And he rode up in that. He hollered out and asked, "Where is the skippers?" And we said, "Commander Kelly's boat is right over there." Or something. And he went over there and gave him a new set of orders.

DAITCH: Where did he come from with that little boat?

REYNOLDS: He came from... I don't know. But somewhere maybe from a headquarters ship which had come up that same day. I don't know. But he was somewhere in the vicinity, of course.

DAITCH: Right.

REYNOLDS: He got in this little boat and ran over there to give us the word. But anyhow, this happened, and I'm guessing, about nine or ten o'clock or eleven or something. And about two o'clock, as I said, the other boats had gone. And we were cruising alone.

DAITCH: Literally alone? Was there any other boat?

REYNOLDS: No. But we'd do anything to keep from breaking radio silence out there. I mean we were taught to keep radio silence anyhow. So a Jap.... As I told you, we were doing 12 knots, three engines ahead, at idle speed. And there was phosphorescent water [created by the wake] and a moonlight night. And this float plane, "Japanese Charlie" we called him, who was really there just to harass troops and keep them

awake. But he flew up the wake and could see this boat. I'm sure it was like an arrow pointing to us. And he dropped a bomb, and it hit off the port quarter maybe 50, 60, or 70 feet or something. And it splashed paint all over us, and it wounded three guys, and it mortally wounded Todd. Todd was a horticulturist from Ventura, California.

As we lay to, Hank Covington, who lives close by now, was a motor machinist's mate, and we told him not to go down in the engine room because of carbon monoxide, caused by the exhaust stacks having holes in them from the shrapnel. Three men were wounded, as I said; we patched them up. Gave morphine to Todd. And then we were just floating along. In fact one boat came by, we didn't even break radio silence. We were unable to steer it. And Hank Covington, who now lives here, a Pennsylvania boy, slipped down, and lit off one engine. And I heard tack, tack, tack. And boy, back to the base we went creeping on one engine.

DAITCH: Wow!

REYNOLDS: But we were taught from that experience, when you were just out cruising alongside an island or looking for something, never to have three engines ahead again, but to cruise on one engine, which was four knots, so as not to create a phosphorescent wake. That leads up to Kennedy not having maneuverability to dodge the destroyer.

DAITCH: Right. So that doesn't leave a big phosphorescent wake.

REYNOLDS: No, we couldn't see the destroyers.

DAITCH: Yes. I'm going to stop these just for a second.

REYNOLDS: Okay. [Pause]

DAITCH: Get that cranked back up okay?

REYNOLDS: This is interesting. After World War II and after I was working in South Carolina, and my brother was, too, we both worked for Abney Mills. And anyhow, the president of Abney Mills asked us if we'd like to go up to stay at the Park Lane on Park Avenue and have a week's vacation with our wives.

DAITCH: Wow!

REYNOLDS: So we took that right quickly. But we went up there, and he told us, "Now, when you get there and check into the hotel, go to our selling agent..." And this was the big old building of people who handled all the cotton mills in the South, you know, and sold their product. And the president of one of those companies was one fine gentleman, and I've forgotten his name, doggone it. And he said, "He'll not only take you to lunch, but he'll also get you some tickets to plays." So we met him, and he called me, I guess because I was bigger than my brother, over to his desk. And my wife and my

brother and his wife sat back. While I'm sitting there talking to him I look and there's a picture of a PT boat this big on this desk. I said, "What are you doing with that?" He said, "My son was on that boat." And I looked more closely, *I62*. And there were holes. I said, "You see...." You could hardly see them. "But you see that little thing there? Those were holes above the waterline. And we were so proud of them, we didn't bother to fix them."

DAITCH: No way!

REYNOLDS: But his son came out as a young enlisted man and was assigned to my boat after I had gone.

DAITCH: Is that right! How interesting!

REYNOLDS: But can you imagine going to New York and meeting a fine gentleman living out on Long Island.... Even back then, he told me, it took him I think an hour and a half's commute each way.

DAITCH: Wow!

REYNOLDS: I said, My goodness me.

DAITCH: What are the odds of that? Wow, that's interesting. I wish you hadn't just told that other story off the tape. That was a good story. About going into the caves.

REYNOLDS: Oh, really?

DAITCH: I liked that. Could you tell that again?

REYNOLDS: Okay. I was assigned to the *U.S.S. Verona*, which was a PT-10, an old, converted LST and slow as Christmas. We were in Subic Bay and we were tending one or two squadrons of PT boats. And of course they announced that they were going to invade Corregidor and maybe Bataan, too, I'm not sure. And so I asked the skipper to let me ride down with him to see what was going on. And as we got down there, our mission, the PT boats' mission, was to pick up any parachutists that dropped in the water. And none dropped in the water. So we went aboard, we pulled up alongside a cruiser where the admiral was aboard, and asked him what to do, the skipper did. And he said, "Nose into some of the little caves on Corregidor." Because we'd heard that there were Japanese PT boats up in there, little two-man boats. And anyhow, we were nosing into one of them and got in the crossfire from the mountain. And we had to spin around in our own water before we could speed out. And several slugs hit the boat, but nobody was hurt. That's the end of that story. But we got out of there, and we didn't bother to look into them anymore, I don't think.

DAITCH: If you can picture that! I think that is just so scary. I mean it sounds funny now. But it's something like you would see in a movie.

REYNOLDS: I'm full of them, I guess. Another time in a PT boat.... We were talking about Mr. Evans [Arthur Reginald Evans], Lieutenant Evans, you know, the coast watcher.

DAITCH: Right.

REYNOLDS: We were assigned one night to somewhere up around where Jack Kennedy got hit, somewhere out of Rendova, to pick up a coast watcher from this island. I think it was Choiseul. Anyhow, we went up. I don't remember whether it was one boat or two boats. But we went up, and we carried a young Marine officer. It looked like he wasn't shaving he was so young. And three burly Marines, enlisted men, who were tough-looking guys. And we pulled in this little harbor with our mufflers on, at slow speed, so they couldn't hear us. And we used a lantern, a searchlight-looking thing, but it was confined to a little spot, you know. We called it a Thompson gun, I believe it was called. But anyhow, we shone the light over at the beach. And pretty soon a little rubber raft rode out with this New Zealand redhead, with a beard down to his chest. And he's been up there I think he told us 18 months.

DAITCH: Oh, my gosh!

REYNOLDS: Right under the Japs' noses as a coast watcher. Anyhow, we put the three Marines, the young Marine officer and the three other Marines, in the raft. They rode back in, deflated the raft, and went ashore. And they reconnoitered the island for two weeks. We were supposed to have gone back up to pick them up. Then we heard later that a submarine had to do it. But the interesting thing about this story is that we went in, as I told you, silently. But going out, we turned the mufflers off and put speed on and got out of that place. And we heard later that the Japs had heard us and thought we were going in, and that they wedged their LCVPs or some little old boats they had, barges or something, in the entrance to try to catch us inside. Of course we....

DAITCH: You were long gone.

REYNOLDS: We had gone, right. Outrageous story, isn't it?

DAITCH: Yes. Oh, my gosh!

REYNOLDS: But so many things like that happened that are fun to talk about.

DAITCH: Well, yes.

REYNOLDS: But it's got nothing to do with Jack Kennedy.

DAITCH: No, but interesting stories all the same. That would have been after his incident?

REYNOLDS: I believe, yes. I'm going to say it was after.

DAITCH: Well, anyway, before we took a break you were telling me how you had come to the conclusion that it was better not to have a wake.

REYNOLDS: Right.

DAITCH: And so that sort of leads up to the story of...

REYNOLDS: Kennedy. It certainly does. Okay. In the first place, we set out that night, my birthday was the next morning, at midnight. And I don't remember whether there were.... I think one account says there were 15 of us boats; the other one said eight. But I do know that we ended up with eight in a certain area, two boats two miles apart, two boats, so that made four groups of two boats each, you know. But the farthest up to the west was Jack Kennedy and Jack Lowery and I. And the first thing that happened was that I had a toothache. And I mean it was terrible. And I don't know why it needed dental work, but it did. And I took two aspirin, and I told myself I was going to take two aspirin about every 30 minutes 'til the tooth stopped hurting. This was about eight-thirty or seven-thirty or something like that. And I think I took four aspirin maybe.

And about that time we ran into five destroyers off the island. And I guess that would have been Munda maybe. I've forgotten whether it was Kolombangara or it was Munda. But anyhow, they turned searchlights on us and guns at the same time, and we all turned into them and fired two fish. And then turned and got out of that place. But later on it was Kennedy's boat and Lowery's boat, the *162* and the *109* who were separated from the other boats. And we decided to stay in and patrol. And I think the other boats came on home. I'm not positive, but I believe that some of the other officers could verify that. But we stayed up in this area and patrolled. And at one o'clock, which was now August the 2<sup>nd</sup>, my birthday, one a.m., we were leading, and Jack Kennedy pulled alongside and said, "Why don't you all relax, and I'll take the lead." Which we did. He got in front of us, and we turned into a right echelon, which meant we were riding just about like that, you know.

DAITCH: How far apart would you be?

REYNOLDS: Very close, very close. Maybe, I'm guessing now, but I'd guess maybe 30 yards. And maybe we'd be almost back in his wake. But maybe our nose was a little bit aft of his stern. But that was the way we cruised.

DAITCH: Really close, okay.

REYNOLDS: And we were doing.... And so we did this until about one-thirty or one-thirty-two or something like that. But due to the action that we'd been in earlier where the float plane had hit us due to the wake, the PT tactic from that time

on was to cruise on one engine ahead, which was 4 knots rather than 12. And even though it might be a moonlit night and phosphorous water, you still wouldn't be seen. We were in that configuration at about one-thirty or one-thirty-two when out of nowhere to the starboard side we saw this destroyer. And I don't know whether he could turn his wheel or whether he just hit Kennedy anyhow. But Kennedy was the lead boat. We were a little aft and to the right starboard side, as I said.

And he hit Kennedy's boat and cut it in half, of course, on the stern side, and lost two men. And we were so close to the destroyer that I could see the guys in white running to the guns. And it was like looking up like this. It looked like they were maybe 20 yards or 40 yards maybe away. And we rode right alongside it. And when we got off the stern, he opened up with his stern gun, 5-inch gun, but by that time we were zigzagging and laying smoke. And he did this for two or three minutes as fast as they could fire. But we'd cut left and lay a puff of smoke and the smoke would rise up. But by that time we had cut right and gone a certain distance, and then cut left again, and zigzagging. And it seemed that his 5-inch shells were popping close to that smoke. But we'd be off to the right or off to the left. And he missed us. And after a certain length of time he quit firing.

And as you heard another person say, we thought they were all dead. But the decision was made not to go pick them up, but to send a message. I wrote a message to the PBY squadron, which we called Black Cats, to go up and search southwest of Blackett Strait or Kula Gulf. As I heard later, the Black Cats did go up and search, but they didn't search in that area but searched in a northeasterly direction. Why, I don't know. But that's what we heard.

DAITCH: Yes. What is the PBY squadron?

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

[No material on Side B of Tape]

[BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2]

REYNOLDS: PBYs, yes, they were called Black Cats. They were big old float planes that would land on the water or on land. Carried about six or eight men, and they were strictly for observation. They might have had a couple of bombs; I don't know. But they were used to spot submarines or ship movements. And they hoped they'd stay out of gunfire because they were slow as they could be. We used to ride with them some, and they'd ride with us. But a few things happened, and they stopped it because we got in some action one night. Do you want me to go on?

DAITCH: Yes. But before you do....

REYNOLDS: Let me.... I want to emphasize that point.

DAITICH: Okay, okay.

REYNOLDS: But you can ask me if you want to. Anyhow, the reason I made that point about going 4 knots is because contrary to some opinions, it was impossible for either one of us to fire torpedoes because we were too close, and the torpedo has to go through the water a certain distance to arm itself. And as I say, it was a black night, and he was right on us. The point that I'm trying to make is that Kennedy could not have fired his torpedoes and neither could we. We didn't because we were too close. And Kennedy was even closer, of course, and he got hit.

DAITICH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: But we were doing 4 knots, and the boat was not very maneuverable at 4 knots, you know. It's just slushing along, and you cut right or left, and you could not dodge that. If we'd had the engines going full.... If we'd had all engines in gear. There were three engines, and we had only one in gear. It takes a little time for the engineer to throw them in gear. If they'd both been in gear, all three rather, then the skipper had throttles, and you could have gotten out of there. But with one engine ahead, slushing along, it was impossible for Jack Kennedy to maneuver.

DAITICH: And it sounds like the destroyer practically appeared out of nowhere.

REYNOLDS: He did, certainly did. It was black as coal. And I want you to know, as I said, I doubted if the Jap had to even change his steering. He probably just held a straight course. I'm not sure, of course. But we were real close, and we had to look almost up to the sky to see the Japs running to the guns.

DAITICH: The thing that I think probably somebody who's never been out in those conditions and never been that close to that kind of a ship, would be that that's a huge ship. How would you not hear it coming even if you couldn't see it?

REYNOLDS: Well, an engine makes a certain amount of noise. You didn't have mufflers on them, of course. Because you wanted to be able to throw them in gear and get out of there if you had to. And of course you had a certain amount of engine noise. And a destroyer like that doesn't make too much noise, of course. It was cloudy out. I think it was cloudy. I know it was dark. There was no moon, and it might have been cloudy. But he was just right on us before anything could happen. I wanted to emphasize that point because no one could have fired torpedoes due to the closeness of the range.

DAITICH: Right.

REYNOLDS: And then he was going in one direction as fast as we were going in the other. We could not, with his speed, we could not have caught up with him, gotten in front of him, in order to fire a torpedo again. So we could never have caught him and fired, even though we had a little more speed than they did. Sometimes the boats

were a little slow because sometimes they would be waterlogged. The engines would have a good many hours on them. Or maybe you'd have some extra baseforce aboard or gear or something that would make them heavier. But in this case, of course, there was no extra baseforce aboard.

DAITCH: What you were telling me earlier is that even had you been able to signal the engineer to put the engines in gear, it takes a lot longer to go from 4 knots to 25 knots than it takes to go from 25 knots to 30.

REYNOLDS: Well, the first thing, you have to signal the engine room with a little indicator that he has in the engine room, and that he has to put the engines in gear. And then the throttles are on the bridge with the skipper and the other officer. You can push the throttles forward, and then you can get out of there. But it takes a certain small amount of time for the signal to go to the engine room, and the engineer to put them in gear, and then the officer could accelerate the throttles. That's what Kennedy did not have time to do.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: Neither did we. And we were farther away. If anybody could have possibly have fired torpedoes it would have been us.

DAITCH: Right. Yes.

REYNOLDS: But we were too close for the torpedoes to arm.

DAITCH: Let's turn this off a minute. [Pause] Yes, I like these stories.

REYNOLDS: I've got to stop with these stories.

DAITCH: No, I like that story. It's a secondhand story, but it's a good one.

REYNOLDS: You want me to repeat it?

DAITCH: If you don't mind.

REYNOLDS: Okay. I grew up in Greenwood, South Carolina, and then with a young friend, William Jennings Bryan Dorn, his dad was superintendent of education, and Bryant was quite an orator even in the fifth grade. He did the *Gettysburg Address*, and I never will forget that. But anyhow, he became, I think, the youngest representative at least from South Carolina. He went to the House of Representatives without college. And he was quite a popular young man. I spent time in Washington during the Korean War. Just before I left to come back to South Carolina, I went by to see Bryant. And he asked me, "What do you want?" "Nothing but to say 'hello' to you. I'm leaving. I've been here three years and didn't come to see you." And anyhow, I mentioned having been with

Jack Kennedy. And he told me that he and Jack, and I think I'm correct in this, saying that they were the only single guys in the House of Representatives, and he said, "We sure had a good time in Washington." [Laughter] Crazy, crazy.

DAITCH: When you were in Washington there, did you ever try to go see Jack Kennedy, in the same fashion, just to say hello?

REYNOLDS: No, no, I didn't. And I'm trying to think, during the Korean War.... Let's see, that was--I was up there '51 to '54. And he was around. What was he doing at that time? He was in the Senate?

DAITCH: He was....

REYNOLDS: He didn't make president until '60 what, '61?

DAITCH: 'Sixty. He was inaugurated in '61.

REYNOLDS: Yes. He was killed in '63, of course.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. I think he was in the House at that time.

REYNOLDS: He might well have been in the House at that time because Bryan was. I don't know where Bryan is. Bryan finally retired and came back to South Carolina. Lived in the county where my mother grew up, a little town named Callison, South Carolina, which was my grandfather's name. Enough of that. What else?

DAITCH: But you never went by to see Jack?

REYNOLDS: I'm sorry, of course, that I didn't.

DAITCH: Yes. It never crossed your mind there. Anyway, so tell me, you talked a little bit about that night. From your perspective, I'm picturing the boats in this echelon with the 109 in front, and you're off on the right, starboard side?

REYNOLDS: Yes, we led until one o'clock. And that's when he pulled up alongside and told us to relax, he'd take the lead.

DAITCH: Yes, so he's past you.

REYNOLDS: So he went up forward, and we just sort of dropped back into a right echelon.

DAITCH: And you're really close.

REYNOLDS: Mmmm hmmm, real close.

DAITCH: When the *Amagiri* comes by.

REYNOLDS: That's exactly right. Real close.

DAITCH: So did you...? I'm trying to picture this. Tthe *Amagiri* plows into *109*.... Did he come from...?

REYNOLDS: He came from the starboard side and cut through, as I recall, from starboard to port. And of course the bow floated and the stern sank because the heavy engines were in the stern. And two men went down. One of them was from Reynolds, Georgia, my name, of course. And as I think I may have mentioned this, it was the night of my birthday.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. What a memorable night for you.

REYNOLDS: Yes.

DAITCH: So what did you actually.... Do you remember? You told me you remember seeing the bulk of this ship, and that the....

REYNOLDS: Uh huh. Saw the Japs running for the guns. I sure did.

DAITCH: The Japanese were close enough that you could see them.

REYNOLDS: Uh huh. Boy, it was dark, but you could see those white uniforms up there.

DAITCH: I can't believe how close you were.

REYNOLDS: We had to be real close, of course. As a matter of fact, he could've hit us just as easily, you know.

DAITCH: Yes. It sounds like you were that close, that you could practically....

REYNOLDS: And they weren't in their guns. And even though we were in our guns, it was so sudden that we hadn't even begun firing at that time. In fact we didn't fire; we ran, of course. Which was good PT boat tactic; they taught us to, if you had to, to run.

DAITCH: Right. You were a sitting duck.

REYNOLDS: Particularly after we went and fired on something, we'd go in at medium speed and slow down, throttle back to fire a torpedo. And then as soon as that torpedo cleared the boat, we would give it the gas and get out of there.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. Because you're very vulnerable in a PT boat. What did you see? Did you physically see the *Amagiri* hit the *109*, do you remember?

REYNOLDS: Mmmm hmmm. Yes, yes.

DAITCH: And you just saw it....

REYNOLDS: Go right through it. And then immediately there was fire all over the water.

DAITCH: There was?

REYNOLDS: Little gaps here and there in the fire. We really thought all were lost, no doubt about that.

DAITCH: That must have been awful. And so at that point, immediately you said, Oh, my gosh! We have to get out of here. Because they've seen you, they've spotted you, they know you're there, they're firing on you.

REYNOLDS: Mmmm hmmm. Yes. They were.... Well, as soon as he could get those 5-inch guns, they started firing off the stern. And of course they were going in one direction, we were going in the opposite direction, and we were both flying, you know. [Laughter] But we did lay smoke, zigzag. And as I said, we didn't lay smoke in a continuous straight line because they could've probably seen that and know we were there. But we'd lay a puff of smoke as you zigged, as you zagged over here. The smoke would rise up. And we could hear them popping in the smoke. But they weren't hitting that boat, thank goodness, because a 5-inch shell would've destroyed the boat, I'm sure.

DAITCH: Oh, yes. Now when you felt like you were well away, did you just go straight back to Rendova?

REYNOLDS: Oh, no. We lay to, as I said, and sent a message. And then we went on back to Rendova.

DAITCH: Is that what they told you to do?

REYNOLDS: We had no communication. We didn't like to break radio silence for some stupid reason.

DAITCH: Oh, how did you...?

REYNOLDS: We should have, of course, I guess.

DAITCH: Well, I guess they thought you could....

REYNOLDS: You know we didn't have access to command at night except they were usually with us. Whoever was in charge was in charge. But we were isolated since the other boats.... And I'll never know why they went back. Unless they sent messages that we didn't hear. We were farther up the strait than they were. And it's possible we didn't hear a message. But they did depart the area. We had no idea that we were in harm's way up there at all. But of course it happened just as I told you.

DAITCH: Yes. And how come once you had.... Well, you didn't do it with radios. How did you get your message.... You said you had written a message...?

REYNOLDS: We sent a radio message.

DAITCH: You did send a radio message. But you didn't get anything back. It wasn't like a conversation on the radio.

REYNOLDS: No, no. Nothing back. We just sent the message: PT boat lost. Please search southwest of Kolombangara Island. Or something like that.

DAITCH: How come you didn't, the *162*, didn't go back to that area? You just figured it was too dangerous?

REYNOLDS: Well, as I told you, the decision was made to send a message, and thinking they were all burned to death anyhow.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Thinking it wouldn't make sense to go back to that site.

REYNOLDS: Right, right. Of course I had a good idea that he was gone.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. I mean apparently it was such a big fire that seemed obvious that everybody was lost.

REYNOLDS: Yes, it seemed that there was probably 40 yards of fire in any direction.

DAITCH: Really!

REYNOLDS: Something like that.

DAITCH: Wow!

REYNOLDS: And it was gappy, of course. If it hadn't of been, none of them would've been saved. That gasoline was on fire, and that 100-octane burned real good. And, of course, two guys apparently were injured, and they went down with the stern and the heavy engines. They were never heard from. And I've forgotten the names. They're recorded, of course. Every one of them was saved, and Jack was quite a hero. And as *PT-109* [the movie] depicts, he did everything they say. He swam out to sea around seven

miles or tried to, to get in the middle of the strait in order to signal us as we came through at night. When I say us, you know, we used to patrol every other night. But some boats were coming through there every night. And he had a lantern and a gun in his belt, but he never spotted us, and we didn't spot him.

So whoever was out that night did not spot him. And he'd swim back the next morning. And the movie was right accurate, to tell you the truth, on that particular part of it. And one night he sent Barney Ross out. I don't know that he sent Lenny [Leonard J. Thom] out at all. I've forgotten. But I think Jack swam out at least two nights or maybe three. And Barney Ross swam out. Maybe Lenny did, too. I don't know.

DAITCH: Yes. Do you remember, was your boat involved in picking them up?

REYNOLDS: No, Liebenow's [William F. "Bud" Liebenow] boat was.

DAITCH: Yes, Liebenow's boat.

REYNOLDS: As I told you, I saw the natives row down to our base, you know. As I recall, there was only two of them in a smaller boat. And they had the coconut shell. That night Commander Kelly sent Liebenow, Bud, and his boat up there. And they picked them up.

DAITCH: Yes. That must have been a thrill.

REYNOLDS: Oh, yes. Don't you know it was! And all of them were saved except the two that went down. They sure did.

DAITCH: Do you remember seeing what condition they were in? They must have been, you know, cut up from the coral, and burns, and bruises.

REYNOLDS: No, it wasn't too bad. Jack might've been limping a little bit. I don't know. Because he was the one had to step out on that coral. But one boy was.... I don't remember seeing very much of him, but one guy was hurt, had been burned badly. But the rest of them seemed to have gotten well pretty fast. And I don't recall whether they maybe sent them down to the hospital ship, but they probably did. I really don't know that part of it. That was quite a long time. I was about to say it wasn't long after that that I came home. But it was a good while. I later became skipper of the *160* boat and fought barges for a few months. And then finally returned home. From Star Harbor....

DAITCH: Oh, it's all right. I won't put you on the spot.

REYNOLDS: That little place Star Harbor was where we fueled coming from Nouméa, New Caledonia, up to Guadalcanal. That was called Star Harbor.

DAITCH: Right. I knew you had mentioned it earlier.

REYNOLDS: Uh huh. Right, right. And I honestly am forgetting this little place.... Green Island! Green Island, that's where it was.

DAITCH: You have an amazing memory. I don't believe it.

REYNOLDS: Gosh, I don't believe it either.

DAITCH: So tell me about--I know you actually didn't know Jack Kennedy for that long, but you knew him when you were on the island together.

REYNOLDS: Right. I'm sure we slept in tents together several times. And palled around in the daytime. Jack was a pretty quiet person, and he read a lot, as I said. We all had to sleep, you know. So we didn't do too much milling around in the daytime. Of course you had to fuel your boat after being out at night. Quite often we were out several nights in a row. But usually it was every other night. But he was well thought of, a wonderful boat handler, a good officer. And I just can't say anything ill about him at all. He was a great guy. Kind of a quiet person then.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: He was nice, good-looking, had a lot of charisma.

DAITCH: Why do you say he had a lot of charisma?

REYNOLDS: He just did. He exuded a lot of charisma, as he did when he was president, you know.

DAITCH: Did he really?

REYNOLDS: I thought he did. He had a lot of presence about him.

DAITCH: Really!

REYNOLDS: And he was well liked, as I said. I don't know what else I can say about him at all. And I can't say too much. I think it was 12 weeks, I'm guessing it, I verified that with John McElroy, I told you that. And I think it was around 12; it could have been less, it could have been six weeks even. But it all happened so quickly, you know. And we were all moving and going up to new ports after that, after we secured that area pretty good. And the Japanese Express quit running. Then there was a lot of barge fighting as has been brought up. Tokyo Express, not the Japanese Express. [Laughter]

DAITCH: The Tokyo Express, yes.

REYNOLDS: But it came down those islands all the way down to Guadalcanal, you know. And gosh, when I first got out to Guadalcanal, I think this was in May, the Japs tried to re-invade Guadalcanal. And we had just gotten the airport completed, which the Japs had used themselves. And it was a turkey shoot. The Japanese had these, I think, seven transports, or 11, I've forgotten which. And a pilot told me that the men were so close aboard those transports, that they couldn't drop a bomb without hitting a body, before it exploded.

DAITCH: Oh, my gosh!

REYNOLDS: And the fighting ships seemed to turn tail and left them. Three of those old ships were beached, on the beach beached, and the rest of them, I guess, sank. But these pilots, as fast as they could land and drop their bombs, and they were back in about two minutes. Got another load of bombs and went right back. Because they were, the Japs, were right there at Guadalcanal, you know. They called it Henderson Field. And boy, they were landing and taking off, and landing and taking off again. Boy, there was an awful lot of them lost. And some got ashore. Some of the Japs were able to get ashore. And the soldiers and marines had to fight them later. They didn't know what surrender was, most of them.

DAITCH: Wow! But that would have been long after Kennedy was gone?

REYNOLDS: No, this was earlier. This was done on Guadalcanal. This was....

DAITCH: Oh, that before....

REYNOLDS: This was before Rendova. Kennedy joined us at Rendova. And I guess he left us at Rendova. I don't believe he went on up to Green Island or some of those little places. Of course he later joined another boat, as you know.

DAITCH: He did, yes.

REYNOLDS: And I don't know about that at all.

DAITCH: Right. That was a pretty brief time, too.

REYNOLDS: And I don't know where he was before he joined us. But I know his squadron was sort of split up. I think that's the reason several folks from his squadron did join us. We'd sent two of our boats up to New Guinea, so we had not a full squadron also.

DAITCH: Right. Yes, apparently they were splitting up squadrons just however they needed the boats.

REYNOLDS: I think you're right, yes. And some of the boats needed repair, some of them needed to go back down the line and get torpedoes and new engines. We went down and got new engines at one time.

DAITCH: Do you remember.... You know there's all the stories about Kennedy's health was not good even then. I think that's been pretty well confirmed, and his back, you know, bothered him, and all that. Do you remember ever thinking he looks like a puny, sickly little guy?

REYNOLDS: I don't remember. No, no, he wasn't. He wasn't like that, although I did understand that he'd had maybe an injury prior to PT boats. I'd heard accounts that he hurt his back in PT boats. But I think he had that prior to PT boats. And I'm sure it bothered him some, but he didn't let it affect his activity. We were all fairly close. But, you know, there were a good many of us there. By that time there were a good many boats there, and some people would sleep aboard the boats, and some would sleep ashore. But we had officers' quarters in tents on the beach with bedding over the cots. And they were cooking out of 55-gallon drums, some of the bakers making beautiful breads and cinnamon buns and things like that. It's amazing how those guys could cook.

DAITCH: Yes, it's unreal. But you guys all still lost a lot of.... I've seen photographs, and all you fellows were thin.

REYNOLDS: We were up on the boat one day playing king of the boat, and some of us were trying to push each other over the side. And we had a rope, a line, going up to a tree. And I went arm over arm all the way up that line. And I wasn't able to do that before in my life, I don't believe, even though I thought I was in pretty good shape. And this chief petty officer of mine said, "Gosh, do you remember when you were a little stout?" I went right then and weighed, and I'd lost 50 pounds.

DAITCH: My gosh. Wow! But everyone did. I heard the food rations were terrible.

REYNOLDS: They were good at times and bad at times. But we had a lot of Australian rabbit. And we had good bread. It was baked on the beach. The rabbit came in cans, I remember that, and the bakers would bake the bread. And I remember we'd go out on patrol, and we had canned milk, or powdered milk, and we had cocoa. And on patrol we'd have buttered toast, and Australian butter was delicious. We had buttered toast and drank chocolate, hot chocolate. And sometimes eat some rabbit.

DAITCH: Yes. Oh, it sounds like it was good.

REYNOLDS: It wasn't bad. I think we lost weight due to loss of sleep probably.

DAITCH: Yes. Well, are you about ready to wind down? Can you think of anything else that you want to mention or say about...?

REYNOLDS: No, not concerning the parts that you really are interested in.

DAITCH: Anything else that you think is just important for the record? We can talk some more in the morning, or if anything comes to mind.

REYNOLDS: Well, we certainly can, if you like. I really can't think of anything that would be for the record or anything that would be vital to your report on Jack. I wish there were.

DAITCH: How about anything off the record? Any good, juicy stories?

REYNOLDS: No. [Laughter] Off the record now. I remember one time I was skipper. The guys got into some torpedo juice one night. And I didn't. And we were watching an old movie that we'd seen probably 40 times in the jungle. And you know the guys fighting in the Mediterranean and Europe, they were dating on the French and Spanish Riveria, I'm told. And we didn't see any people at all, any females. Not even black ones. The natives took their women to the hills.

DAITCH: [Laughter] Good thinking.

REYNOLDS: This was interesting to me because it was sort of funny, and sort of tragic, too. And we got orders during the middle of the movie that a Navy Black Cat had spotted and bombed a Jap submarine and was about 250 miles away, as I recall. And two of us boats were sent out, from the movie, to go out there. And we went all the way out there at high speed. Got the moon in the right place to close in. And we didn't see a darned thing. We were told that probably an airplane would be hovering over it, you know, and the wounded submarine would be on the surface, and we would torpedo it. And we didn't torpedo it; we didn't see a thing.

DAITCH: Aaawww.... So much for your fun movie.

REYNOLDS: Another time I had a friend that I'd grown up with. He was a chief petty officer. He asked to ride with me one night. And we went up to a certain area, and that was the night we saw this white water I was telling you about that hadn't been seen in a long time. It was a pretty night, and we saw something. I guess what I'm trying to tell you now is how radar sometimes can fool you. We saw a solid impression on the radar. And it looked about the size of a destroyer. So we again maneuvered around and we rode right over it, and it would appear on our stern on the radar. And I was embarrassed because here I had this friend from South Carolina visiting with me, and I'll never know.... We don't know, to this day, what it was. But we'd ride over it, and it'd appear to stern. We'd go up maybe a hundred yards, turn around and come back, and hit it from another angle. We'd ride across it this way. And it was a blip on the radar, and it was solid; it wasn't fuzzy. That's just one of the sea stories that I remembered and that had no explanation whatsoever. We saw nothing that night, and I was really glad about that.

DAITCH: Yes, because that can be scary, I guess, to see something on the radar and then there's nothing there.

REYNOLDS: I think it was a solid blip we called them back then. We could spot an airplane at maybe six or seven miles. And as it would come in, it would disappear at about a mile and a half. And we knew to start looking in the sky because it was going to be coming close over us.

DAITCH: Yes, that's pretty amazing. A brand-new technology at that time.

REYNOLDS: Yes, it certainly was.

DAITCH: Alrighty. Well, I think we should cut off and maybe think about having some.... [Pause] We're going to pick up again and just ask a couple more questions, and then we'll be done.

REYNOLDS: What other questions do you have besides that?

DAITCH: Actually just a few questions about any memories that you have in terms of, I know that you told me and some other people have told me that when you were at the, I guess it wasn't a base, but where you parked the boats....

REYNOLDS: Yes, yes, I can tell you something.

DAITCH: Most of the time you were either sleeping or you were preparing to go out the next night. But can you--I mean what other things did you do?

REYNOLDS: You're talking about the routine, huh?

DAITCH: The routine, yes. What did you do when you weren't out patrolling?

REYNOLDS: It wasn't much, I assure you. [aside conversation, voices very dim]. [Pause]

DAITCH: Okay. We were talking about what was the routine.

REYNOLDS: Oh, you asked about the routine. Well, gee, when you came in in the morning, in the first place you were sleeping. And in the second place you had to refuel the boat. And it took quite a time. You'd usually get in line, and the first ones that got there were the first served, you know. And sometimes it was out of 55-gallon drums, and sometimes you'd pull up to a tender who had the gas aboard. And then, of course, when you came back, you'd usually sleep. Now as far as fun, we didn't have too much time for that during the time that we were actually seeing a good bit of action on patrol. Of course other times we would go out and not see anything, you know. And we didn't ride every night. Theoretically we rode every other night. But sometimes you'd ride five nights in a row if you had problems, you know. So I'm really not elaborating on that for you. Some of us would sit

and write. Naturally we'd have bull sessions and talk, talking usually about business. It's like aboard ship, you know, after you've left a port, you've left your family whatever behind, pretty soon you find yourself in the Navy working or talking about work 16 hours a day or something.

DAITCH: Right.

REYNOLDS: Maybe you'd see a two-hour movie, and we did that at night. We were seeing these old movies so many times, in black and white, you know. And some of them were pretty old. But we enjoyed that, and there was a lot of camaraderie and a lot of fellowship. But it was.... That was about it as far as fun. Sometimes we played cards. Sometimes the boys would shoot craps for money. I had two boys on my boat who every night they'd throw dice against the bulkhead for maybe \$500.

DAITCH: Wow!

REYNOLDS: And they ended up at the end of the year they probably hadn't won or lost much, you know. But they were two guys who loved to gamble, and they'd do that.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: I don't know whether they ever paid each other off or not. Enough of that. So what else?

DAITCH: Do you remember anything in particular about the period of time that Kennedy was there? Do you remember what....? Was he likely to participate in those things?

REYNOLDS: He actually, I guess, was with his crew. Even though he joined our squadron, I guess his boat sort of stuck together. I really can't.... I'd see him eating. We'd eat together sometimes, and I think we slept together some in these huts on the beach made out of canvas and wood frame, you know, and close to the mess tent, things like that. We'd have about eight or ten bunks in several tents. And sometimes I would sleep, and sometimes I wouldn't. But I did not watch him too closely. As much as I liked the man. But the times that I was with him, I realized all the nice things that I told you.

DAITCH: Yes, you found him to be.... You said once that he was a gentleman. What...?

REYNOLDS: He was just a polished gentleman, and he had a lot of charisma. I keep repeating that because he was charming. But he was quiet. He read a lot. He'd already written *Why England Slept*, I think, at the time that he was with us.

DAITCH: Oh, right. Yes, he had.

REYNOLDS: And he was a studious person.

DAITCH: Do you remember noticing that at the time? I mean thinking, oh, this is the guy that wrote *Why England Slept*?

REYNOLDS: Yes. Uh huh. Yes. I knew that he enjoyed that type of work, and he was probably a pretty good historian, I guess. Had to have been to have compiled *Profiles*, you know. And it was a pleasure being around him, it certainly was. I wish I'd been around him more. But he was only with us for a short period, probably 12 weeks. Now he'd been with other squadrons previous to this so-called Rendova Push. And then he shortly left, of course, after his accident, and I didn't see him anymore.

DAITCH: Yes. Right. Do you remember anything about his crew?

REYNOLDS: No. No, no.

DAITCH: Like Lenny.

REYNOLDS: I knew their names, and I'd know them when I--I'd recognize them. Of course some of the boys trained with us in Melville. Starkey [Ray L. Starkey] I remember for some reason and the boy from Reynolds, Georgia. Probably because my name is Reynolds. [Laughter]

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Do you remember Lenny Thom at all?

REYNOLDS: Yes. And I was with him as much as I was with Jack Kennedy. It wasn't too much, of course, as I'm telling you. But Lenny was a great guy also. And he was a Viking type, had a beard, had a ginger beard and all, you know. Just a handsome, fine person. And I remember all those guys, so many of them were good athletes as I've told you. "Whizzer" White [Byron R. "Whizzer" White] was there, you know, on some occasions he was with us as an intelligence officer. And all the guys were either athletes or had had boat experience or some experience like I had flying an airplane; I told you. They apparently chose us because they probably believed we had fast reaction times.

DAITCH: Talk a little.... We talked about that off the tape. But can you elaborate on that again a little bit more? I think it was the selection process that you were telling me about was interesting.

REYNOLDS: I think Bulkeley went to Prairie State, which was the officer training in New York. Commander Kelly came through where I was at Northwestern University. And it was quite a selection process. I don't know how many volunteers, but we had around 700 of us up there, and they chose 42. How many they interviewed, I don't know. But it was rather selective. And as I mentioned to you earlier, I think that the idea is that they wanted people, officers at least, who first had boat experience, if they could find them. Jack Kennedy would have been a typical example; he sailed, he'd

been around various types of boats and waterfronts. And then secondly they were looking for athletes. And thirdly, I think, as I say, they were looking for people with fast reaction times maybe because the only reason I knew they selected me was the fact that I had flown planes. But it was highly selective, and we were real proud to have been selected.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: Because it was extra hazardous duty. In fact at one time Commander Kelly tried to, and probably Bulkeley, too, tried to get a pay and a half as the aviators received, and it never went through.

DAITCH: Oh.

REYNOLDS: We never got pay and a half.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. It was hazardous duty, though, wasn't it? Those little boats didn't have a lot of protection.

It was a different type of duty, wasn't it? I mean because I guess it's not the same as serving in a more hierarchical kind of, like a big ship with several hundred people on it. And it's many more officers and in-betweens and lots of I guess what we would call grunts. You had a small, tight-knit crew, didn't you?

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 2]

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2]

REYNOLDS: That is very true. We were very close to the enlisted men. We trained together and we lived together. And they were highly selected, too, the enlisted men.

To answer your question, if I were a regular naval officer and finished the Naval Academy, I would have wanted to do just what you said: Probably start out in destroyers and graduate to cruisers. End up with either battleships, which they don't have now, or the aircraft carriers. And there was a hierarchy in training and service. But we knew we were in only for the duration, most of us. We didn't think we'd stay in, and most of us didn't. We came back and went to college and went into various professions and trades. So we did not care whether we were in this hierarchy of naval ships or not.

DAITCH: Yes. It's just an interesting kind of thing. Let me think if there was any.... Oh, yes, I wanted to ask you about one more person that you probably knew, and that was Barney Ross. Because he wasn't normally on Kennedy's boat is my understanding.

REYNOLDS: Barney was one of the replacements that came out. And of course they rode with us as third officers to get training until one of us was relieved, either the skipper or the exec and go home, you know. But the interesting thing about Barney is that he rode with us the night before he was with Kennedy. He rode in my boat that night. And we had an ashtray full of cigarette butts down in the radio room, a little tiny room, with the chart house and the radio. The guys would go down there to get some cigarettes. So that was where they smoked. And he was smoking when he brought it out on deck, I remember. And I said, "Look here!" And it was glowing. And of course we were always afraid of aircraft, although there was probably none around at that time. And we tossed that thing over the side. That I remember about him. And he was a likeable person.

And I as I told you yesterday, he's the one that played the part of the chief petty officer in *PT-109*, in which Jack Kennedy threw a bucket of trash or something over the side onto him in a little dinghy. He was doing something at the side of the boat. And this was fiction, you know. But it was in the movie with Barney playing the part of a chief petty officer. And I think Barney had been a Fordham University graduate and also fought on the boxing team, but I am not sure about that. We nicknamed Barney Ross for the famous boxer in the past.

DAITCH: Oh, okay. I wondered about that. So was he.... I mean did you ever talk to him after the incident with the *109*?

REYNOLDS: I don't remember, honestly. Probably not. But I know we enjoyed the few days or weeks that he was around. With Lenny Thom, you know.

DAITCH: Yes, yes.

REYNOLDS: There wasn't too much intermingling. Of course you'd go to meetings, of course, all together, you know. Usually the skippers would have a little intelligence meeting. I missed some of those because of being an executive officer. But they'd get together for about 15 minutes to learn where they were going to patrol that night. And if they expected to see anything and so forth. Whether the Tokyo Express was running or not running. An interesting little part of that, while the Tokyo Express was coming down, every so often we got a great feeling at night when we'd be preparing to go out and we'd get a message over the radio saying, "prep holiday." And that meant stay in because the big ships were coming down that night.

DAITCH: Oh, really.

REYNOLDS: We'd enjoy sitting in, you know. And sometimes you could see the firing.

DAITCH: So they didn't want you to go out if the big ships were coming through?

REYNOLDS: Well, there were times they did, of course. Sometimes they'd use us together. But basically I remember that happening several times.

DAITCH: Oh, yes. That must have been a relief.

REYNOLDS: At the Battle of Kula Gulf something interesting happened, too. And my boat was involved in this little action. I don't guess Jack Kennedy was, but I'm not sure. But we knew that they were going to be in there supplying troops. And there was a narrow entrance to Kula Gulf from the south. Might have been Blackett Strait. I'm not sure; I'd better have a look at the map. But we had orders to go in there and guard the southern entrance. They figured that we'll bottle them up because the fleet was coming in from the north. And we were told to lay to by these reefs and things. And if we saw any Japs coming out to fire torpedoes at them, of course. We were told that once the ships engaged, that probably some of them might be slipping out the southern end, you know, where it was narrow.

DAITCH: Oh, I see. Right.

REYNOLDS: And to supposedly have it bottled up. And if they were trying to escape the bigger ships they would go out of the southern end. And for us to fire torpedoes at them. So we went in there at night and lay against, as close as we could, from the reefs at this rather narrow end. And two Japanese destroyers steamed across in front of us, and we did not fire. They were going in. And it could have been one of those that later sank the *Helena*, for all I know. But this was the night the cruiser *Helena* was sunk.

DAITCH: So they were going in and not out.

REYNOLDS: They were going in. They were coming in from the south and not going out.

DAITCH: Oh, my goodness.

REYNOLDS: And we did not fire at them. And you could see them steam right across. And they didn't see us fortunately because we were rather close to the reefs. We were told not to fire at anything....

DAITCH: Unless it was coming out through the straight.

REYNOLDS: Right. But if anything was going out, then we could tell it was a Jap by the silhouette and fire torpedoes at them.

DAITCH: Right. Yes.

REYNOLDS: One of the goofs of the war, you know.

DAITCH: Oh, absolutely. I would think that war is just filled with all kinds of oddities and confusion and you just never know what's happening. Which, again, you know like what happened to the *109*. That was a fluke.

REYNOLDS: Yes. No doubt about it. But interesting things happen. And everybody did it with the best intentions. But we still followed orders, of course.

DAITCH: Let's talk again about what happened with the *109* a little bit then. We had talked before about the fact that after the *109* and there was all this fire and chaos, and you were being fired on by the *Amagiri*.

REYNOLDS: Right.

DAITCH: Then, you know, there was the question about why not to go back, and some people have said that Lowery was, you know, felt guilty or somehow....

REYNOLDS: He might have felt guilty later. I have no comments to make other than to say that the decision was made that we would lay to, send a message, and not go back. Because we really sincerely thought that nobody could have survived it. So we did lay to and send a message out. And I don't know whether he felt guilty or not.

DAITCH: At the time do you remember whether you agreed with that decision or it just seemed reasonable to you?

REYNOLDS: I probably agreed with it.

DAITCH: Okay. [Pause] I just wanted to turn that off for a second. We were talking about the skippers. It seems to me like the PT boat skippers were very highly thought of, by and large, amongst themselves and by the crew members of the boats. Does that seem true?

REYNOLDS: That is very true, yes. Very true, yes. We're on tape now?

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: Okay. As I said, we were all proud to be in that service. And the enlisted men were highly selected also, in most cases. A few of them were drafted probably for the boats. But in most cases they were volunteers just like we were. And there was a fine camaraderie between us. No question about that. And we felt that all of us were capable.

DAITCH: Yes, we're back on. We, just for a second, were off the tape.

REYNOLDS: Now as far as being well thought of by the hierarchy in the Navy, I don't know. Although they did interview a good many of us and asked us to stay in the regular Navy after the war. And I was called over to a ship, as were many other PT boat officers, and asked to stay in. But we, most of us, had college in mind or a profession to go back to. But I have heard that we were called "a bunch of college boy sailors" or something. As far as having served on destroyers and cruisers, and the bigger

ships, you know, we might have been looked down upon. I don't know. But certainly among us, we felt that we were highly selected, and we knew we had to do sort of a daring job.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: And there was much respect between us.

DAITCH: Yes. I'm glad you said that. And you said it nicely, very concisely. But that's the overall impression that I'm getting from the other people that I've been talking to, is that there was a lot of respect and camaraderie.

REYNOLDS: Later, I did not get on a big fighting ship, but I served on a tender for about 15 or 16 months. And then later, after coming back to the States, I thought I was going to get out for college. I extended for six months because the semester had just begun, and I missed it. So I stayed in thinking I was going to stay in Charleston. And I ended up being sent to Shanghai. And that was the best thing that ever Happened though. I got spot promoted ahead of my class to take over. There was nobody aboard who had had command experience. And so the skipper told me, since I was a lieutenant at the time, but I'd had command experience. And the other officers aboard ship hadn't, and we had an executive officer named Evans [Arthur Reginald Evans] incidentally, who had been there a long time, but he wanted to go home, of course. And so we sent a message to Washington, and we thought it would be about 30 days being answered. It came back the next day. Spot promoted me to lieutenant commander, and assigned me as Executive Officer in this diesel repair ship, which was a Liberty hull type ship. You saw the picture of it in my home.

DAITCH: Oh, neat.

REYNOLDS: And I enjoyed that duty. We came back to the states and that's how I met my first wife. I went to a party in San Francisco. Am I on tape or off tape?

DAITCH: Yes, on tape.

REYNOLDS: We brought a PT boat officer back that I hadn't seen for a long time. And we went to a nice hotel in: Did I say Los Angeles? Yes, it was Los Angeles. And they were having an Easter Sunday afternoon tea dance. And we walked in with the captain. We had rooms there. And we were going up to the room, and he said, "Let's look in here for a moment." And my friend from Texas looked across the audience and said, "That's a girl I finished the University of Texas with." And he went and brought her back out. And she became my wife.

DAITCH: Is that right? Wow!

REYNOLDS: Another sea story.

DAITCH: Yes. Oh, that is so.... I love those war romances. But you weren't there for very long probably. How did you get...?

REYNOLDS: Five days.

DAITCH: Five days? So then how did you get back together with her later?

REYNOLDS: She flew out and spent some time with me in New Orleans where we were getting the ship ready for mothballing. Anyhow, then she went back, and I was supposed to have flown out and married her on "Bride and Groom," I think they called it back then. She had connections with the producer. And I would've gotten a wonderful honeymoon and I think a bunch of money, maybe furniture and stuff. But anyhow, the captain didn't let me go back because we were just needed at the time. So I had to postpone that. Later on she flew out, and we were married in New Orleans.

DAITCH: Oh, how neat. One thing about: somebody had told me about the camaraderie that you guys had. That after they picked up.... I don't know. It must have been Welford West or Bud Liebenow that told me this because I think they were saying that after they picked up the *109* crew, the thing was that they gave them grief about losing their boat, teasing them, you know. There was no....

REYNOLDS: You mean everybody was putting up a good front of kidding of them, is that what you mean?

DAITCH: Exactly. Kidding them. It wasn't all emotional or anything. It was just giving them grief about how'd you get your boat cut in half? God dang!

REYNOLDS: There probably was some of that going on. I don't remember specifically. We tried to take things like that lightly, just as the two that went aground the night that you and I talked about.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. I think Mr. Marshall was still not happy about that.

REYNOLDS: No, he wasn't. The *158* was the boat that I had commanded a short time in New York.

DAITCH: Oh, was that one of the ones that went aground?

REYNOLDS: Yes. Uh huh. It certainly was.

DAITCH: Oh. What boat did you command after...?

REYNOLDS: The *160* boat.

DAITCH: *160*.

REYNOLDS: It was Perry Cabot's boat. And we still had a lot of barge fighting. But the big ships were not running any longer by then. But the barges were quite often.

They had, in some cases, more firepower than we did. And had a lot of armament along the sides. These old sorry barges, you know. And sometimes they would be loaded with men with rifles, and they would, as I said, they would have more firepower than we would. And sometimes we'd hope they were sunk, and sometimes they ran into the bushes.

They were used for supplying one another up and down the edges of the islands that they were on, the few that were remaining. So you'd usually run into maybe three barges, and one of them would be carrying food, another one men, and the other one ammunition or something. And it was tough fighting. And as I say, sometimes.... Usually they'd run into an inlet or something, and you really didn't know whether you'd gotten them all or not. And they were usually firing back at you as much as you were firing at them.

DAITCH: Yes.

REYNOLDS: But luckily, mighty lucky.

DAITCH: Somebody told me that the problem with those, and correct me if I'm getting this wrong, but my understanding is that the problem was partly, too, that the torpedoes didn't work very well against the barges because they were shallow draft.

REYNOLDS: That was mentioned in the movie.

DAITCH: Okay.

REYNOLDS: That is true. In fact it was said, not in the movie but in some of these tapes, that they actually took some of the torpedoes off. I don't remember that because we kept them on. We'd already gotten the torpedo racks which were much, much lighter. It made the boat faster and more maneuverable. And there was really no reason to take the torpedoes off. But some of us, I understand, and I believe the history said that Kennedy got a gunboat that had them taken off later. Nothing was running but barges trying to re-supply themselves, you know.

DAITCH: And so you had the guns that were on the deck, the various types of guns that were on the deck of the boats?

REYNOLDS: Yes. We had them. Uh huh. We had twin 50 caliber. We had at least one 20mm. And some of the boats had a 40mm put on them. My boat had a 37mm army gun put on it, which gave us more firepower and bigger shells, you know. We had to use those sometimes. And we also put a little tiny 30mm up on the bow, a little machinegun. Just to have that much more added firepower.

DAITCH: Well, I think we're about to wind down. Oh, and I'm going to ask you this again just in case I forgot on tape because I know we talked about this before off the tape. But the question about whether Kennedy or any of his crew members ever made you or the other crew members of the *162* feel bad or said anything to make you feel bad that you hadn't....

REYNOLDS: Not to me and not to any of the crew that I knew about.

DAITCH: Okay.

REYNOLDS: If there was anyone else, I have no idea.

DAITCH: You didn't.... I think that's worth having on the record just so that there's no....

REYNOLDS: In fact there was very little contact. I don't know how long they were kept there [Rendova] before probably being sent home.

DAITCH: Probably not long.

REYNOLDS: Very little time there that I recall after they were there.

DAITCH: Do you remember whether any of the *109* crew were reassigned to boats still there at the Rendova base?

REYNOLDS: I don't know. I don't know. I believe *PT-109* showed that one or two or three like Blake [Robert Blake] for instance. Do you remember that in the movie?

DAITCH: Mmmm mmmm.

REYNOLDS: You don't? It was Blake that was in trouble recently for killing his wife.

DAITCH: Oh, Robert Blake, yes.

REYNOLDS: He was one of the three sailors that volunteering to stay out there.

DAITCH: Yes, yes.

REYNOLDS: Boy, that was fake. That was *PT-109*. Some of them probably were actually.

DAITCH: Yes, I would think some of them were staying.

REYNOLDS: Usually, when a ship is sunk, you're allowed to go home.

DAITCH: Is that right?

REYNOLDS: For reassignment. Uh huh. Some of them might have volunteered to stay in there. And according to the history I think Jack did, and he probably did stay out there.

DAITCH: He did. He got another boat.

REYNOLDS: And he took over another boat, and it became sort of a gunboat.

DAITCH: Yes. I think that it was briefly because he was sick. But, yes.

REYNOLDS: He was a hero; there's no question about that. And as you and I have mentioned, he could certainly have probably been assigned to something less hazardous than PT boats, but he wanted them. Because he'd had small boat experience, you know.

DAITCH: Yes, yes.

REYNOLDS: I'm proud of him for having chosen that route, really.

DAITCH: Well, that's a good note to end on.

REYNOLDS: I think it is.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Name List

**B**

Blake, Robert, 40  
Bulkeley, John Duncan, 2, 5, 32, 33

**C**

Cabot, Perry, 39  
Covington, Hank, 14

**D**

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**R**

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Ross, George Barney, 25, 33, 34

**S**

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Starkey, Ray L., 32

**T**

Thom, Leonard J., 25, 32, 34  
Todd, Leon E., 12, 14

**W**

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