



Douglas County History Research Center Oral Histories

Oral History Interview with
H. Douglas Barker
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Veterans History Project

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SUMMARY: In this interview, Doug Barker talks about his Cold War naval experiences. He attended the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, attended submarine school and then became an instructor there. He tells many stories about life in the cold war and on submarines. Many of the stories are related to family life and communications with the ships. He served in the Human Resource Management Center in Washington, DC, and then Dunoon, Scotland. Mr. Barker was a Commander, but was passed over for Captain (twice), which led to his retirement in 1980. He ended his career as an the Executive Officer in the Naval Officers Training Corps and Associate Professor in Naval Science at Iowa State University.

Note: The transcript of this oral history reflects minor editing to improve readability.

remember, and then, my Dad left the Army, and went on the North Dakota National Guard state staff. And, that's where I graduated from high school, in Bismarck, North Dakota, in 1951. I wanted to be a military guy, I liked it. I liked the military life, I liked what it was about. I wanted to go into the Army and I wanted to go West Point. But, in North Dakota, everyone knows, in those days, anyhow, everyone knows what West Point was about, but nobody knew what Annapolis was about. So, when my Dad approached the Senator, Senator Langer from North Dakota about an appointment, he said, "Well, I can make your son the third alternate to West Point, or the principal to Annapolis." And, so my Dad called me. At the time, it was the summer of 1952, and I was a guide on the canoe trails in northern Minnesota and Canada. When I came and had to call him, he said, "The senator wants to know right away, do you want to be a principal or a third alternate?" I said, "I'll be the principal." That means you're the number one guy, and you don't have to hope three or four others decide not to go. And, my Dad said, "I'm so glad you decided that." And so I asked him why, because he was an Army man. Now I'm going to the Naval Academy. And he said, "When I was at Guadalcanal, I used to look at the ships anchored out there, and think all those guys are going to sleep in sheets tonight. And, I'm in a fox hole." He said, I think you made a good choice." So, that's how I got my Dad's endorsement for going on to the Naval Academy.

BELT: How did you receive, that you were accepted? I mean, did you start taking your entrance exams? How did that work?

BARKER: Well you had to submit a whole pile of paper. And, I had gone to a year of junior college, so with my high school record academics, and that one year of junior college, that was sufficient that I really didn't have to take the entrance exam. I took more of a placement exam, 'cause my grades were sufficient to get in with them. So, on June, the twenty... whatever I told you there, the twenty, anyhow, I, yeah, June the 23d, 1953, I entered the Naval Academy, and then, that started 27 years of active service in the Navy. And it ended on August 31, of 1980.

BELT: Tell me about the Naval Academy. I mean, what was it like to go on your first day?

BARKER: I've forgotten that on purpose, I think. Because it was amazing. A good many of the plebes, the new class that came in, left the Naval Academy within a couple of weeks. The pressure was quite great. We weren't used to being hounded and it's like boot camp and people yelling at you and telling you what to do, and when to get

up, and when to go to bed, and what to wear, what not to wear, and all that kind of thing. But, that's what I wanted to be.

BELT: So, you had not regrets? It was the right decision?

BARKER: No, none whatsoever for me. Parenthetically, there's a young man I know today, who wants he thinks, to go to the Air Force Academy down in Colorado Springs. And, so I sent him a letter, or e-mail, actually, and just said, "Hey, what is your reason for wanting to go?" 'Cause if it's to be an Air Force officer, even for a 4 or 5 year period of time, that's... you don't have to make a career, that's fine. But, if it's to go to get a free education, don't go, because, you won't make it through this stuff I'm talking about here. There's a lot of stuff you look back on and say, that was so much nonsense. But, really, it was causing you to take orders, and obey orders, and be, and not just be your own person, because, then as you become more senior, yourself, now you're giving the orders, and you expect obedience from the people under you. So, it was a very good thing, a very good thing. But, very difficult. I would not want to go through that first year, again. And, then, of course, I had the opportunity in the three years at the Naval Academy, you go on ships, go on a cruise for a month or a little bit more. And, you got to visit various foreign ports and find out what it is like to be on ship. And, the first year, we did it, you're like an enlisted man. You're doing the manual sort of thing.

BELT: The first year, you're actually going on ships?

BARKER: It's in the summer. You go to school from June until June. Then, in June, we went on a cruise for about a month and a half. And, I was on the battleship New Jersey, and we did all of these kinds of things, that an enlisted men would do. We had to stand watches and do the, right alongside the regular ships company.

BELT: So, it got you into the...

BARKER: What it's like...

BELT: Right away?

BARKER: What it's like, what it's like to be an enlisted man on a ship. Then, my senior year, before my senior year, then you go on, and now you are like a junior officer, and now you are overseeing the midshipmen, the newer ones, and so now you get a taste of what it is like to be an officer. So, now you see both ends of that.

BELT: So, you're an officer in your second year?

BARKER: Yeah, yes, that's right. Your second year there. You're an upperclassmen, and each year, you're more senior and more senior, and so on. You get to be a First Classmen, and then you graduate. And, I was a Company Commander my senior year. And, for the 19th Company. And, it was great fun to be in charge of those guys. And, we had to do certain things as a company. And, to this day, we are very close. The guys in the company that are still living. A few have been killed in Vietnam. We're all too old now to be in the current situation over in Iraq. But, it was, ah...

BELT: Are there any stories in your life in Annapolis that you remember fondly or not fondly?

BARKER: *[Both laugh.]* Well, the one that people want, have heard and want me to tell, it's not a bad story, but it's just so typical. In the spring of the year, approaching June, and June is the month of graduation, at least it was then. And they have what they call "June Week" and that's all the activities and the festivities and stuff leading up to the graduation and all this. And so, there are a lot of parades and, of course, in the spring there's a lot of pollen in the air, and it gets kicked up when you march onto this grassy field. And, so people would start sneezing, and you know, just because of just the stuff in the air. And, this, as a plebe, and the first year it happened to me, this is when it happened. We were marching on the field, and the last row in the company is First Classmen, 'cause they don't have to carry rifles, and that makes them, sort of, they don't have to worry about that. And, then, you go by height, and so, I was a short person, so, I'm toward the back of the company. And, then all the First Classmen are behind. Well, a friend of mine, a classmate, was next to me, and we were going on the field, and he started to sneeze like crazy. And, the sun was in a place, you could just see this cloud of vapor, every time he sneezed. And the First Classman, or the senior behind him, was telling him to knock it off, and stuff and all this stuff. Well, he just couldn't stop, and pretty soon he went, "Ah, ah" and he gave this great big "Achoo!", and this great thing came out of his nose, and just hung there. *[Laugh]*

BELT: Thank you for sharing that. *[Both laugh.]*

BARKER: Well, it's not over yet. So, it's hanging there, and this First Classman say, "OK, plebe, what are you gonna do with that?" And he goes, "Sclooop", and he took it all in. And the guy said, "I'm gonna be sick." So, and he swallowed it and that was the

end of that. As a plebe, you do not move or you do not do anything unless you are told. So, that's the fun part of being at the Naval Academy.

BELT: That was fun. [*Laughs*]

BARKER: Yeah, that was fun. And they used to, but, there are a lot of other things. But, I think the, ah, one of the athletics, I was never a varsity athlete, but the required participation in athletics was a lot of fun, playing soccer, and those kind of things, that I never. In North Dakota, they didn't even know what soccer was. And, so, it was good for me and I, ah...

BELT: What was your bad moment?

BARKER: I think the, I guess being away from home and from people I knew. I got to know my classmates and all, but, still, it's a long way back to North Dakota and ah...

BELT: So, homesickness?

BARKER: Yeah, in those days, plane flights, there were obviously, they were very expensive and there weren't many of them. So, more times than not, I'd have to take the train from North Dakota to Annapolis, Maryland, in order to, after the, go home, in the summer and back at the end of August, to start the next school year. But...but I thoroughly enjoyed my time. It was ah...

BELT: So, it sounds like you really didn't have any bad experiences.

BARKER: No, no, no. No, I was a good guy. As I tell people, I was a good guy, even in high school and that, and, but, I'm sure I missed out on a lot of stuff, because I was never initially willing to take risks. I soon learned better at that.

BELT: How often did your parents come to see you?

BARKER: While I was at the Naval Academy, they never did. My dad came a couple times. He was still with the North Dakota National Guard, and he had to come to D.C., Washington, D.C., on business, and then he would come out and see me. So, I think it was two or three times. My mother never did, except June Week, when I graduated, that's the first time she'd seen the Naval Academy. And, in those days, you just didn't travel that much. Whether, we couldn't or didn't, I don't know. But, we just, ah...it

was strange. Today, people, you know, fly all over everywhere.

BELT: So, how often do you think you got home?

BARKER: I got home every summer, for one month. And, I got home at Christmas time for two weeks. That was it. Each year.

BELT: And, what about girls during this period?

BARKER: Well, your plebe year, at least in those days, you couldn't date. Couldn't leave the grounds, the campus. And, then in your sophomore through senior year, yes, you could date, and there were dances. In fact, we had to take dancing, as one of our courses, to try and get us to be gentlemen and scholars, as they say. You know, by an act of Congress. And, uh, so, we ah. But most of the, well all the girls that I dated, were friends of one of my classmates, who was from that area. You know, the east coast or something. Then he'd, his girlfriend would say, "Hey, I've got a friend, you got somebody who would like to take her to the hop", they called them, the dances. "Sure, I'll go." And, that girl, my picture I showed you was from my Ring Dance, that was at the end of my junior year, I couldn't tell you what her name is today. But, she was a nice gal, we had a grand time, she was just a friend. Cause, I didn't have a, my girlfriend, I might say that, too, her name was Donna Green, whom I'd met just before I went to the Naval Academy. And, she, we broke off, shortly after I got to Naval Academy, 'cause she wasn't sure she wanted to be part of the military; and the other thing is she was a Christian, and I wasn't. And she realized that, hey, that Scripture says, I shouldn't marry a non-believer. So, therefore, we better stop while we're ahead in this game.

BELT: Tell me about the Ring Dance, that picture that you're submitting for the library.

BARKER: They do it at the Air Force Academy, now. They do it at all the academies. This is at the end of your junior year, and this is when you get your Academy ring, which is a big deal. And, so they make that mock ring that you can walk through. And the girl puts it on your hand.

BELT: Puts the ring on your finger?

BARKER: Yeah. And it's dipped in water that supposedly came from several of the seas around the world. I'm sure it's right out of the faucet, but that's what they told us,

you know. But, ah, so, it was a lot of fun. But, I didn't have a girlfriend, back home, until Donna and I got together again, just before my senior year. And, then we were married right after I graduated and been married for 47 years, now. So, that worked nicely.

BELT: So, when you're leaving the Naval Academy, what's your thoughts? What are you thinking when it's getting close to graduation?

BARKER: Getting married. *[Barker Laughs]* That was big. We had two months of vacation, right after graduation. So, that made for a nice honeymoon. And, I was going to my first duty station, which was an old surface ship out of Long Beach, California. And, of course, it was all going to be new, in terms of being a commissioned officer and all this. And so, the excitement of the wedding and the honeymoon, and all that. And, then we ended up in August, out in Long Beach and ah...

BELT: So, that's your first ship.

BARKER: That's my first ship. That's my first ship, the U.S.S. Cavalier, APA 37, and I was on there from August of '57 until December of '58.

BELT: What kind of a ship was it?

BARKER: It's an attack transport. It's the kind that carry the Marines, and they put them in the little boats that land on the shore. And, we went to the Pacific. We were over, the cruise on that was an 8 month cruise, and when I left, I found out after I left, that my wife was pregnant. And so my son was born within about a month of my coming back. I missed all of that in between.

BELT: Is that right. And, that was your first official duty?

BARKER: As a commissioned officer.

BELT: OK. What do you think of your job, leaving your wife and doing this? What are your thoughts now?

BARKER: You say, what are your thoughts now.

BELT: Or, then (Belt laughs.)

BARKER: I've been asked, when I retired in 1980, people would ask me, well, what do you miss most about the Navy, after all those years. And, I said, the thing I miss most is going to sea, with a group of guys, and doing the tasks that we're assigned to do. Whether it was on that surface ship, or mainly in submarines. And I really miss that. And, they would say, well, what do you not miss about the Navy. And I said, going to sea. And, being away from my family. So, you can't have one without the other.

BELT: Yeah, so it was pretty hard for you.

BARKER: Yes, it was. One year, I was gone 11 out of 12 months. And, that one month I was home was like, 2 days here, and 1 week there. It was never more than a week, and so, it was a long time.

BELT: What was your official job on that ship?

BARKER: The first ship? I was the, I started out as the A Division officer, which was the auxiliary division, which has to do with all the small boats, all the engines on them, and all of the auxiliary equipment on the ship: the air compressors, the emergency generators, and all that stuff. And, then I ended up, because the engineer of the ship, his wife contracted terminal cancer, back in Long Beach, and so they flew him home. And I became the engineer, I served as engineer on it until I finished and so for...

BELT: Was your degree in engineering?

BARKER: Well, I was a Naval Academy graduate. In those days, you, you, you it was a Naval Science is what our degree was. Yes, we'd engineering courses. And, we had electrical courses, and those kinds of things.

BELT: So, you could handle the position?

BARKER: Oh, yeah. And, so we earned the Engineering 'E' for Excellence while we were in the Pacific. It had nothing to do with me, because I, half the time I didn't know what I was doing. But, I had some great chiefs and warrant officers and enlisted men that worked for me. And, they were great guys. And, they worked hard and they knew what they were doing. And, so the result of their expertise, we won the 'E', and I had to go up on the stack, and paint this great big red 'E' up there. So, it really was kind of a fun thing.

BELT: On the stack of the ship?

BARKER: On the ship.

BELT: So, that was...

BARKER: Oh, it's a very high honor to have an engineering "E". So, then in, I applied for submarine school.

BELT: What made you do that?

BARKER: Well, I read about Nautilus going to the North Pole, and I thought that sounds like a lot of fun. I knew that to have command of a submarine, you got them earlier in your career than you would a surface ship. So, that was my goal, was to have command of a ship. So, I thought, well, let's try submarines and see what that's all about. So, it's quite, it took some to get selected, but, I did. So, in 1958, January...

BELT: What does your wife think of you wanting to do this?

BARKER: She thought that was great. That was great. She was excited about going. See she had no military background at all. Her father was never in WWII. His physical condition didn't allow it. So, for her to come into the Navy, as a Navy wife, everything was totally new to her, and she did just magnificently.

BELT: She didn't try to talk you out of it?

BARKER: At no point did she try to talk me out of it. So, she, um...

BELT: What kind of, do you have to take a certain exam to go into this program?

BARKER: No.

BELT: I mean...

BARKER: To be selected for sub school, you had to be on a surface ship a certain length of time, so that you were qualified as the officer of the deck under way, meaning that you were in charge of the ship.

BELT: Which you were.

BARKER: Uh, when it's at sea, doing whatever it does at sea. And, I got that. And, then as soon as I got that, then I was, my academic, what I did at the Naval Academy, that was in my favor, and those kind of things. And, uh, so they said, OK, young man, you can come and do that. So, we went, and it was a 6 month course. Very intense, very demanding. I'm not a student, so I have to work like crazy for anything I got and get, but I was able to get through it. And, then the day came that we were going to select the submarine that we would go to, and my class had 157 of us that graduated. Then, we went to the theater in Groton, Connecticut at the submarine base, where the school was located, and on the stage they had easels - like there was Pearl Harbor and there was San Diego and there was Charleston and there was Key West. And then on the easel was the name of a submarine and then it would have a place where they could take one officer or two officers. And, so what you did was you would go up and say, OK, I want to go to that one. Well, to do that, they said all those in top half of the class will go up in academic order. And those in the bottom half of the class will go up in academic order and pick a number out of the fish bowl. A literal fish bowl, with little numbers rolled up in there. And then they will select by that. Well, I was in the bottom of the class, but not too far down. So, it came my time to go up and get my number out of the fish bowl. I reached in the fish bowl, pull it out, took one look at it, handed it to the officer that was doing all this stuff, and walked to the back on the theater, dialed my wife on the telephone, and I said "Guess what? I'm the only man in our class that doesn't get a choice, because I got the last number. So, mine will be the only slot that hasn't been filled yet." I mention that because I was not promoted to Captain at the end of my career, I made it to Commander, but I was not selected for Captain, and it was a grave disappointment when that didn't occur. It's kind of jumping ahead here, for a moment. But, my wife asked me, "When do you suppose it started?" And I said, 'Right then, that day that I got 157, because I got a submarine school boat, one that takes the students out to find out what it's like to be in a submarine and do the basic submarining stuff. I became an excellent ship handler. I knew submarines inside and out. But, I wasn't doing the kind of special operations and the dangerous things and the spooky things and those kinds of operations. Which those who were promoted, later, well, I was promoted up to Commander, but didn't make Captain, they were on those kind of submarines. So, that kind of set, but, I didn't know it at the time, and every ship I was on I enjoyed completely.

BELT: When all those easels are up on stage, and you are looking at all this, what are

you, I mean, what are you thinking about?

BARKER: Well, you see, that's interesting. Because, Donna and I talked. "Well, do we want to go to San Diego?" "No." "Well, well how about..." "No." And then we said, one place we don't want to stay is Connecticut, it's just too cold there. Man, you go out to sea in the winter, and it's awful. And, we ended up right there in Connecticut. And, as I say, we didn't have a choice. I didn't have to say, well, there's 5 places, which one am I gonna, or 5 slots, which one am I going to take. I just waited, and finally somebody said, "Hey, who's the last one? What's your name?"

BELT: Well, have you been on a submarine prior to this? I mean, have you actually did it?

BARKER: No, well, just going out on a submarine school.

BELT: Oh, so you were taking little . .

BARKER: Go out for a couple of days.

BELT: Oh, I was thinking you were in a classroom all this time.

BARKER: You're in a classroom most of the time, but then they take you out to sea, and you find out what it's like to be in a submarine.

BELT: OK, tell me your first day in a submarine. Do you remember that?

BARKER: Oh, sure, that's exciting as all get out. Because, you're actually doing it, you're submerging, you're going down, and you're surfacing and you're doing...

BELT: How old are you?

BARKER: I was 25 at the time. And, it is exciting stuff. And, and most of the guys, 'cause you've gone through a psychiatric exam, so you're not going to be claustrophobic once you get in there.

BELT: How do they test you for that?

BARKER: Just by the exam they take you through, I'm sure there are some that became

claustrophobic, but I never heard of any. But, ah, you know, being inside and closed in and water all around you.

BELT: So, a written exam, they can tell from that?

BARKER: Yeah, and verbal, just talking with you, and asking you, what are your fears and what do you. And you take a bunch of, I can't even remember the names of the exams, but they were written, but they evaluate them as to what your stability is and all this stuff. Are you prone to anger? and...

BELT: So, you have to be a really calm person?

BARKER: Yeah, that right. And get along well in close quarters, because it's like living in an elevator. And everyone is kind of crammed in there.

BELT: So the first time you went down...

BARKER: Oh, it was just fun.

BELT: No scary thoughts?

BARKER: Heart beating a thousand miles an hour because this is what it's about. To go down, and then looking through the periscope, and doing all these things that ultimately became just a routine part of my life. But, that first couple of days we went out, and sleeping in a, because what they added to the crew, the crew's on the ship, and then a bunch of officers come down to go out to do their schooling. You have to hot bunk, meaning one guy gets up and another crawls in because there's just not that many bunks in a submarine. So, you learn what it's like to be very close to one another.

BELT: So, you don't change the sheets?

BARKER: No. Well, you don't even get out of your clothes, as a matter of fact, on something like that. You just leave them on because it's just for 2 days, and once you're on the ship and you're gone...

BELT: So as a student, and the first time you're going out, how long are you under the water?

BARKER: Oh, not very long. Cause, you are practicing going up and going down and going up and going down. That's the, and various fire drills and those kinds of things. Practicing what you do if there's a fire here or a battery problem there.

BELT: So, they have like a student model submarine for you?

BARKER: Yeah, exactly. And that's what I got when I finished. And I went out on one of those. I took other guys out on one of those. So, that's why I became a very excellent ship handler, and all that, because I was doing it so much. And people on the other kinds of submarines that did the spooky operations, they would submerge and stay submerged for weeks on end. I mean they bring in air from outside through the snorkel. But they weren't going in and out of ports and all this, because that is what their job called for. So, in the promotion of things, they are the ones that, rightfully, because they were doing the more, I don't know if it was important, because you've got to train people, so that's important, obviously. But, the more crucial maybe, to the defense of our country. And, this was during the Cold War, so a lot of interesting - what's going on in the Soviet Union and Soviet submarines and all that sort of thing. So, then I went to the U.S.S. Sarda, SS 488.

BELT: Slow down a little bit. OK, you're finished, you're in a submarine school, you graduated from that, you're going where, now?

BARKER: The U.S.S. Sarda, SS 488, and it was, as I say, a submarine school boat. That's where I qualified in submarines, so I earned my dolphins, which like pilots or flying people have their wings, well, submariners have their dolphins. Very, very prestigious thing to be a submariner, because the community is not all that large. So it's very...

BELT: So, when you walk down the street, people...

BARKER: Oh, yes, very proud. Big deal. And I am very glad I was in the Sarda. But as a submarine school boat, as I say, we get a lot of the...

BELT: Now, this is the Sarda?

BARKER: Um huh, the Sarda. I was on there, I can't remember, I can look at my notes, here. But, I was on Sarda until, uh. I don't even have it listed down here, but I think I was on there for a year and a half, or two years, perhaps, and then I went to the USS Sea

Robin, SS 407, and there we went through a shipyard overhaul in Philadelphia. And there I was the weapons officer, the supply officer, the operations officer.

BELT: Ship overhaul, what are you talking about?

BARKER: You take the ship in to a shipyard.

BELT: So, you're taking the submarine now? We're talking submarines, here?

BARKER: You take the submarine into a Philadelphia shipyard, and they put on new electronic equipment, they repair valves, and we were in the, I think, for 7 months. And, it's quite a long period of time, as they repair things that need...

BELT: Are you still involved with the submarine during this time?

BARKER: You live ashore, at this time, because the ship is ripped apart. But, you are down there making sure that the shipyard people are doing it right. And, there are repairs and stuff that the ship's company, the crew does, because then they don't have to pay the shipyard to do it. So, it keeps the cost of the overhaul down. And, that's a consideration, because the taxpayer pays for that. So, yeah, we're there, and so then when the ship is done...

BELT: Is there high security around?

BARKER: Oh, yeah. All the time. And when you are finished with the overhaul, then you have to go out and have sea trials, and make sure nothing leaks, or it doesn't leak too bad that you can't fix it. And, then you're ready to go for another, probably, another 4 to 5 years before there will be another overhaul.

BELT: Oh, it is a long time.

BARKER: It is a long time in between. But, while I was on Sea Robin, out of Connecticut, yet, then I was given orders to become an assistant operations officer on, I command the Submarine Squadron II staff.

BELT: So, this is a promotion?

BARKER: It's a promotion, and it's now my first shore duty, as such. I've now, I've

left the ship. Except when I was in submarine school, I've been on ships all the time. And it was while then that the Cuban Missile crisis took place, while I was on this staff. And I vividly remember when we...

BELT: You're on the Sea Robin?

BARKER: No, I'm on the squadron staff, ashore.

BELT: Oh, OK.

BARKER: And I vividly remember hearing President Kennedy talking about the blockade of Cuba to keep the missiles from coming in. And the orders came out to send the submarines out to areas in the Atlantic, to be prepared, should the Soviets send their submarines out, and should this thing escalate to war. Well, we all know it didn't. But, at the time, we didn't know if it was or wasn't. And, it was a very interesting thing, and I can't help but think about it, a lot, as I watch what is going on in Iraq today. Because...

BELT: How old are you now?

BARKER: I'm 28. And I was at my desk, and I was the assistant ops officer, and that morning, the morning after President Kennedy talked about this, and the word got out the submarines are preparing to go out to the, be on station, out in the Atlantic, I had dozens of sailors standing in line, by my desk, with their seabags. And, this is a great big bag that they put their uniforms and their shoes and their underwear, and all this stuff in it. And, they were from the submarine school staff, and they were standing, and they would say, "I'm so-and-so, from the submarine school, and I'm a torpedo man. Do you need any torpedo men?" And, the next guy might be a cook, and the next guy might be an engine man. And, what, they hadn't even talked to the submarine school. They just said, "Hey, if you have the need for a torpedo man, I'm your man. Put me on some submarine, and I'll go out and do my job." They wanted to be involved in what was going on. So, we were assigning people, because, OK, this submarine could use an extra torpedo man, and, hey, another cook wouldn't hurt them. I never did learn how the submarine school did when they found out a good many of their faculty had just left and gone to sea. They were only gone, about, I think it was 10 or 12 days. Because, the thing then, Mr. Khrushchev, and all, had passed by, and they brought them home.

BELT: Were they activating the submarines? Did you know of some that were actually

activated?

BARKER: Well, yeah, they were sent. We saw them going out to sea. One after the other after the other. Sent them right out.

BELT: How many submarines did you...

BARKER: I don't remember how many at the time, but, a lot went out to, they took all the exercise torpedoes off, and put all...

BELT: So, they really were going for war?

BARKER: They were going for war. And, these guys wanted to be part of it. It's just like, you know, after 9/11, people wanted to get into the military. And, I think, you read about these, you see it on television nowadays, people going to Iraq. They've been called up. They're in the National Guard or something and what do they say? "Hey, that's what I agreed to do." There is no argument, and in fact...

BELT: It's their job.

BARKER: It's their job. In fact, some of them seem almost excited about it. Hey, I am going to be able to put into practice all this I've learned, you know, over the years. It's not that they like killing people or anything, it's just that they're dedicated.

BELT: So, this Navy yard. How many submarines, if I'm visualizing this right, how many submarines are coming in?

BARKER: Oh, there may be two or three. But, then there's surface ships in there being overhauled. Aircraft carriers could be there.

BELT: So, it's constantly changing?

BARKER: In and out, all the time.

BELT: So, at the most, 3 or 4?

BARKER: Overhauled, at any one time.

BELT: OK, this is at Connecticut?

BARKER: No, this was in Philadelphia.

BELT: Is that still there, that base?

BARKER: Uh huh.

BELT: Have you ever seen it?

BARKER: I've haven't been to it, since then. It hasn't been closed down. The one I went to, on another submarine, up in New Hampshire, that has been shut down. That's no longer running. But, you know, on the base closings they did a few years ago, that was one of those that was closed. So, after my time, while I was on the staff in Groton, out of the Submarine Squadron II staff, then I, because of this Cuban Missile crisis, and the situation was that Khrushchev agreed to take the missiles out of Cuba, then Kennedy said, "OK, we'll take our missiles out of Turkey". They were old, land kind of missiles, over there. And, then what did they decide to do, unknown to anybody, they sent missile submarines into the Mediterranean. So, from missile submarines in the Mediterranean, they could cover the same things that the missiles in Turkey had covered, in the Soviet Union. So, then I was transferred, quickly, to the staff of Submarine Squadron 16, and flown over to Naples, Italy. My family went with me, and we were stationed in Naples for two years. And, I was on Squadron 16 staff, as the assistant operations officer. And, we controlled the missile submarines operating in the Mediterranean. And, it was so secret, when we first got there, that we couldn't wear our dolphins on our uniform. When we were paid, we were paid separately, they came to our office to pay us, rather than getting in, because submariners get more money than other people get. And, people would say, "How come these people get paid that much more?" Because it was very secret, that the missile submarines being in the Mediterranean. So, it was kind of a fun thing to be a part of.

BELT: So, you had two paychecks, basically?

BARKER: Um hum. And, so you, we...

BELT: You weren't allowed to talk about what you did?

BARKER: Then it became known, then after about several months, it became known,

because one of the missile submarines went into Ankara, Turkey. Just to show that we were there. They surfaced, and went into port. There's a system and in those days, the submarine would have to file a thing they call an 'arrival report'. That tells the officials back in America, hey, we're here, we've arrived in port, we're safe and sound kind of thing.

BELT: How long can you stay under the water? At this time?

BARKER: I was on a missile submarine. Not too long after I was on the staff, and the longest we were submerged was 57 days. Today they are underneath just about 80 days.

BELT: 80 days.

BARKER: But, the ship had gone into Ankara, and we didn't know if it was there or not. So, we called the embassy, we knew the Naval Attaché, at the embassy there, we knew his home phone number. So, we called his home phone number, and his wife answered. And we said, "Do you have any idea if an American submarine has come into port?" She said, "Oh, yeah, I can see it from here. My husband's down there right now." And, we said, "Thank you very much." And then we sent the message back to the States saying that they are safe and sound. They're there. But, interesting things...

BELT: You would have to have more communication than that. (laughs)

BARKER: Oh, yeah, it was safer than that. But, while I was on this staff, I used to go to Holy Loch, Scotland. That's where I ended up, later on, as commanding officer of the shore facility up there. In Holy Loch, Scotland, this is where submarines would come out, and come all the ways down, go thru the Straits of Gibraltar, into the Mediterranean.

BELT: Why are you going to Scotland?

BARKER: Because that's where the submarine was. And, I would go up there and brief them on what they were supposed to do, when they were in the Mediterranean.

BELT: Oh, I see. OK

BARKER: I'd have all the top secret stuff with me. And, we'd sit down, the captain

and his officers, and we'd go through all the things they were supposed to do. Then, at the end after they'd done it, and gone back up to Holy Loch, Scotland, then I would fly up to Holy Loch and say, "OK, how did it go? What happened? Did you do this?" You know, I debriefed them, so we could get an idea. And we had ships going of Rota, Spain, also.

BELT: So, you're not in the submarine?

BARKER: No, I'm on shore, I'm on the staff. And, so I'm doing all this land stuff.

BELT: Are you happy with that?

BARKER: Oh, yeah. 'Cause, now it's not just one ship, it's a whole bunch of ships.

BELT: Oh, I see.

BARKER: See, you're dealing with a bunch of ships, rather than just one. And one of the ships, out of Rota, Spain, while they were out, we got word that an enlisted man's daughter had been killed, been run over by a car. An accident. And, so now, what do you do with that? Because that submarine cannot leave station, it cannot surface. And, so we sent the message out to the captain, in what the call a 'COs Eyes Only', so he's the only one that sees this message. No one else on the ship sees it. They take it to him, and then he's able to break it down and read what it says.

BELT: So, it's going by code?

BARKER: Yeah, um hum. And, so he...

BELT: Even though we're not at war?

BARKER: Nope, well, it's a cold war. It's just as if we're at war. It's very close to being a war. Except, you're just not shooting things.

BELT: Oh, all right, yeah, that's true.

BARKER: So, after that ship came into port, I was there to meet it, when it came in, because my...

BELT: Did the ship come in earlier?

BARKER: No, it came in right on time. So, I went down, and I got with the captain, and I said, "OK, what did you do with that?" Because, my boss, back in Naples, wanted to know what this guy, just to know, how did he handle that. And he said, "Well, the way I did it, I sat there, and I read that thing, and I read that thing, and we still had over a month to go, before we were going to be done." So, he decided "I'm not going to tell him. Until, the night before we pulled into Spain." In the meantime, of course, the funeral's taken place, it's all over, back in the States. And, we had a plane lined up to take this guy back to the United States, as soon as the ship pulled in. He was taken off the ship and put in this airplane, and sent back, so he could get back to his wife, and I think he had one other child. But, the captain said, "I want to tell you, it's the hardest thing I've ever done, because every time I walked through the submarine, and there would be that guy over there, laughing, and carrying on and doing his job, and I'd just think, damn, this is awful." But he said "I didn't want him sitting there for a month."

BELT: So, the submarine wouldn't turn around and take him home?

BARKER: They couldn't. It was not allowed. So, that's how they, now, there were times when somebody in the submarine got injured severely. And, what we would do there...

BELT: Did this actually happen?

BARKER: We would arrange for a destroyer, or another surface ship, to meet, to be at a spot in the ocean. And we'd tell the submarine go over to that spot, it was fairly close to where the submarine was anyhow, and then the submarine would surface, long enough for a small boat to come off the destroyer, get over to the submarine, put the injured guy in it, and take him back to the destroyer. They'd be on the surface maybe half an hour. And then down they would go, and go about their business. In the meantime, this guy would be taken, either off by helicopter off to the hospital, or the ship would go into port someplace. So, if there was an injury on the ship, we did lift off I think it was 3 or 4 over my 2 years there.

BELT: An injury meaning sickness or ?

BARKER: No, mainly injury. Each submarine...

BELT: You could get hurt on the submarine?

BARKER: Oh, yeah. Each submarine had a doctor on it, so for sicknesses they were covered. But, if you got a thumb cut off, or some other, you know something, acid in the eyes, or something like that, well then they would take the guy off. Because, he wasn't any good to them anyhow. So, in terms of doing his job, and, we wanted to get him back where he could get some treatment for whatever his injury was. But, in those days, see, a submarine out there, it can receive messages all the time. But, it can't send anything. It's not allowed. In those days, it was not allowed to transmit anything, because a transmission can be detected. You know there's a submarine down there. So, we were always receiving messages. I can tell you one that we got. The messages that our dependants, our wives or our girlfriends, or both, some guys have both. They could send three messages while we were out there. And, each of them could only be 15 words in length. And the first word was Barker, and the last word was Donna – so, you really had only 13 words. Now, what are you gonna say in 13 words? And, they send these things out, whenever the transmissions are usually on weekends and stuff, but you couldn't put anything, like "Mary fell down and broke her arm." You couldn't say that. It was basically to say nice things. Because what's a guy out there gonna do, he can't do anything about a broken arm, so why disturb him about a broken arm. And, if the washing machine fails, don't put that in there, either. Just kinda, you know, we're doing fine, we saw Grandma and Grandpa, all the kids are in school. You know, that kind of thing. Well, this message, 5 officers' wives got together, and they sent a message out to the ship. One message, and it had 5 officers' names, last names, and it had 5 signatures. You know, Betty, Helen and all that. So that leaves 5 words in the middle. And, what the 5 words said is "One of us is pregnant."

BELT: *[Laughs]*

BARKER: And, it was weeks before this started coming in, 'Hey, it's not me, it's Mary', or something, ya know. But, for those weeks, these guys were all accusing the other, it's not me, I'm sure it has to be you. But, I thought that was pretty clever of those wives to get together and figure out how to pull our chain, that far out at sea.

BELT: So, you're only allowed, always, I mean...

BARKER: Well, during that time. I'm sure it's different today.

BELT: Even when you're close to home? I mean, when you're not in enemy territory?

BARKER: Yeah, as long as you're on that missile submarine, you can't do that. Now, on a diesel submarine, or a fast attack they vary, but on a missile submarine. Because they are out there just waiting to release missiles, and they don't want anybody to know where they are. But, they do allow, and, as I say, those messages to come out. So there's some, and the radioman would receive it, and before we went to sea, they'd get Western Union forms, from Western Union. And, they'd fix it all up, like "Here's your telegram." And so they'd wander through the ship and find the guy, and hand deliver it over to him. So, they had something to open and all this. It was very good, you know, in terms of, people would say, "Hey, I heard from my wife." Some point of conversation. Another interesting thing on a missile submarine, when we were gone for those 50 some days, when we first left...

END TAPE 1 SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 1 SIDE 2

BARKER: When we were at sea for those 50 some days, any time day or night, in the ward room, you could find a card game going on, various kinds of cards. And, about a third of the way through it, no one wanted to play cards with each other. So, they all were playing solitaire. I learned more solitaire games than I knew even existed. And, to think about this, they just didn't need to socialize anymore. There wasn't that need. They'd just sit and play their own little game. And, then towards the last part, then we started socializing again, 'cause we knew the end was in sight. And it's nothing we planned, it's just how it was. "You wanna play cards?" "No, here. Here, play solitaire." And, I think we just wanted to be quiet. On one of those trips I made, we had a big fire on Christmas day, on the ship, and the turkeys burned up.

BELT: A fire aboard the submarine?

BARKER: While we were submerged.

BELT: Where are you at? I mean, what ocean are you in?

BARKER: We're out in the Atlantic. And, so we had the turkeys cooking for Christmas lunch, and through a series of events, the grease and stuff that was on the turkeys ignited. So they had to use Purple K, they call it. It was a fire extinguishing compound.

They sprayed it all over, and, of course, it ruined the turkeys. They had to push them out through the garbage disposal. But, it broke the pall. I was only gone one Christmas in my whole career, and that was rather unusual. But, it was very quiet, you could hear, as they say, a pin drop, because guy's minds were back home, and this was Christmas Day, and they wonder what the kids are doing, and this kind of thing. And, so I was on, I had the con, and I asked the Captain if I could go up and pick up some navigation information. And he said, well it's rough up there, check with the cooks. And, so I called the cooks, and said, "Hey, I'm gonna go up, unless you guys object."

BELT: What do you mean up?

BARKER: Up to periscope depth. And, so they said, "Naw, it's fine. We haven't set the tables or anything." 'Cause, the ship, it rolls a lot when it's that rough. And, so we got up, and I got the information. But then when we came down, we had a lot of extra water we had taken into the ship that we had to pump out. And that takes awhile, so we have a big up angle. So, we're going through the water with this big up angle. And then, soon it comes off, and you're back to normal. And it's in that process that this fire started. And, the men performed magnificently. And, then after the fire was out, I went back up to periscope depth, and put the snorkel mast up, so we could get fresh air in the ship, cause we had a lot of smoke in there.

BELT: Any panic?

BARKER: Just as calm as could be. Total calm. And the men performed far above any drill we had ever had. It was after that that the Captain said, "Hey, if you can perform that well, we don't have to have fire drills the rest of this cruise. You guys know what you are doing."

BELT: How many fire drills would they normally have?

BARKER: Two or three a week.

BELT: Keep you on your toes.

BARKER: And, there's other kinds of drills. Various kinds. Some of them I can't talk about, that were dealing with the missiles and dealing with the torpedoes, and all kinds of things. And, so then after, we then had steak for Christmas dinner, and it was late in the day, because we had to clean up everything. And, then I was Protestant lay leader

on the ship, so I put the word out, hey we are going to sing Christmas carols in the crew's dinette area – it's the largest single space in there. If anybody wants to come and join. We had Jews, we had, we had everything. The only people that didn't come were those on watch. It was more fun. We had guys playing their guitars, and we had an organ onboard, electronic organ, and, so, the guy was playing the organ, and sang Christmas carols after the Christmas fire aboard the Francis Scott Key. But, that's kind of jumped ahead. Because, that's after I was at the squadron staff in Italy. Then I went to the Francis Scott Key. That was to build that ship. It was new construction. So we saw that thing built from the keel, up. And the launch...

BELT: Where are they building this?

BARKER: In Groton, CT, at the Electric Boat Company.

BELT: How long does it take to build a submarine?

BARKER: I think it's three years to build it. We were on it for the last year and a half. Or two years. We were on it two years before we went out to sea. I made two patrols, and then I left there, and went, with patrols, I've explained most of that. But, you get so used to night being day, and day being night.

BELT: Well, that's right.

BARKER: You don't mind it. And . .

BELT: And, the food is normally pretty good.

BARKER: It's very, it's the best in the Navy. And, that is one of the appeals of submarines. They are given a higher food allowance than any other part of the Navy, because it's kind of a reward for living in that environment.

BELT: How do you exercise?

BARKER: In those days, there was not a lot, not a lot of exercising took place. I can tell you today on these missile submarines, they have rowing machines, and bicycles, you know, those stationery bicycles, and they have a lot of that stuff. In my day, back in the 60s and 70s, that wasn't a big thing. I bet there weren't five rec centers in the whole United States, in those days. And, now you've got them every 3rd block. You know,

society's just changed. There's a lot of emphasis...

BELT: You weren't stretching...?

BARKER: Oh, yeah, you would do things. But, mainly, it was not a sedentary life. But you had to go up, you were going up and down ladders all the time, going from deck to deck to deck. A lot of stress, but we, in those days, smoking was the 'in' thing. Today, on missile submarines, there's only two places you can smoke on the submarine. There you could smoke...

BELT: Oh, they did allow you to smoke?

BARKER: Oh, yeah. And there's equipment on there, that, if they ever had a crew that nobody smoked, there's a compartment. It's a small compartment, but it had air purifiers and they could take it all off. Because it was there, mainly to get rid of the residue of smoking, pump it overboard.

BELT: You mentioned one time, when you go on the submarine, you said there is water coming in. Tell me more about that. Is water actually coming into the sub?

BARKER: No.

BELT: When you said that, I didn't quite understand.

BARKER: What holds the submarine on the surface is air. You have, there's a double hull. The inner hull is the pressure hull, very thick, and that's what keeps you alive. And then outside is a hull that, it has valves and stuff. But it's either got water in it or it's got air in it. So, when you submerge, they vent the air out the top, water comes rushing in the bottom...

BELT: So, you are not physically in the water, then?

BARKER: Yeah, you're down, there is water all around you. Then, when you get ready to surface, you shut those vents on top, and put high-pressure air, and that pushes the water out the bottom, and the ship comes to the surface.

BELT: Oh, OK, so no water is actually coming into the cabin.

BARKER: No, no. There's water always coming in, but it's through piping, and all that, cooling water, and stuff that they bring in from outside.

BELT: When you go up, I mean, no water, you don't get any water inside? With the periscope going up and down?

BARKER: No, you'll get dribbling from that. You know, when you get on the surface and you open the hatch and it's raining out there, it comes in.

BELT: Who is permitted to look in the periscope?

BARKER: Well, the only person that does it regularly is the conning officer, the officer that has the con. Or the captain, of course. But, on our ship, our boat, and I think on most, the standing rule was, that if you'd like to look outside, 'cause they know that you're going to periscope depth, they can feel you going up. And, if it was rough up there, we'd say, hey, we'd get on the announcement system and say "Hey, we're going to periscope depth. If there's anything loose lying around, put it away." Because it may get bounced around. And, if you wanted to look out, you could come up and just stand there. The guy, and if it was daylight, and he looked out and he didn't see anything, then he would say, "Do you want to look at anything?" Now, if there was another ship out there, then he wouldn't let you look, 'cause we'd just go right back down again, 'cause we couldn't risk at being detected. So you say "You wanna look?" "Sure." So you get on. What are you looking at? Just water.

BELT: So, two people, you would let someone casually look? But really, just two people were in control of...?

BARKER: Yeah, and of course, the conning officer changed every 6 hours. It was a different conning officer.

BELT: Oh, I see.

BARKER: And, then the captain could look anytime he wants. But, it's amazing how few cared about looking out. Because all they're gonna do is look at water.

BELT: What depth are you?

BARKER: At periscope depth, you're at about 60, 65 ft. And, then of course, you go

down, I can't say how far you go down, but, it's, but, the guys were not interested. And, you knew it was night, because they would turn certain lights on, like in the berthing compartments and in the control room. They would turn the lights to red, so you would have better night adaptation, in case you had to see something outside. And, in the berthing areas, they'd turn the lights to red so it would just be darker in there. You could still see your way around, but you could sleep at night. And, in the daytime, they would turn on the lights, and so that's how we knew it was night or day outside. Look at your watch and say, "Three, I wonder if it is three in the afternoon, or three in the morning? Well, you stick your head in one of those compartments. Oh, it's at night. Or it must be in the afternoon.

BELT: You loose all track of time.

BARKER: Yeah, it's easy to do that. You're standing your watches, you're doing your job, and you're always wondering if there is somebody out there, following you.

BELT: How do you learn to fire missiles and things? I mean, how do they teach you that? Do want to talk about that?

BARKER: Just like these guys in the rack today, they are very highly, highly trained. They go through schooling. The missile people go through schooling. I was the navigator, and so, I went through schooling. And, all the guys that worked for me went through even more intense schooling than I had, because they were the ones that were going to make the computers do their thing. And, the inertial navigation system, and all that. And, so, it's just the level of training that America affords the service member, that enables them to do what they do, with such proficiency, as we read about and hear about even today. Like, I didn't know how to do anything with the missile, I wasn't the missile officer. I was the navigation officer.

BELT: So, someone else, who is...

BARKER: The other guy is the missile officer, and then he's got his 'missile people'. And, I had the navigation, and they had the engineers back with the reactor, and all these other kinds of things. So they are all specialists, but they are very, very specialist in doing what they do. So everybody does their piece and then you've got the whole.

BELT: Ok. Tell me all the pieces that would be in a crew.

BARKER: Of course, you have cooks.

BELT: And, that's all they do is cook?

BARKER: That's all they do is cook. And, like on a cruise, or on a patrol, they called them, one day a week, for evening meal, some other division on the ship, would do the cooking, so the cooks could have a meal off. They'd write the menu, it's all made out, so my guys, they'd go down on Sunday and do the evening meal and prepare it. And of course, some of it was good and some it wasn't so good. The cooks were better.

BELT: And, then that's all they did. I would think they would do other jobs.

BARKER: That's their job, because they are feeding almost constantly on these things.

BELT: How many cooks would you have? One, two?

BARKER: Oh, no, there would be 6 or 8 of them. And in the officer's area, we had what they called stewards. These were enlisted men, and they were there basically to serve the officers. They served our meals, they took our laundry off to be laundered. Now, the enlisted guys, they did their own. But that's the way it's done. Then, you have the navigation team. You had the sonar men, where people are listening out into the water. You have the communication group - they are the ones that receive all the messages from outside. You have the torpedo men, you have the missile men, you have the engineers, you have the reactor operators. I mean, it just goes on and on and on. Specialities, that are out there.

BELT: Now if the missile guy is riding on the submarine, and you are not at war, or, he...

BARKER: If the President, back in those days, if the President would have said, "Launch the missiles", the first missile would have left the ship within 15 minutes of him saying that. And one would have left the ship every 15 seconds, thereafter until it's empty. So, we were that ready. We're at a condition that we are ready to do that. Night and day, night and day, during those 50 some days that we're out on a trip.

BELT: What about other countries logging on to your submarine? What problem...?

BARKER: There's no indication they ever found one of our submarines, or tracked

them. Now, we have tracked theirs. But, we have no indication they have tracked one of ours. Because, ours were always more silent. And, that's where, back in the...

BELT: Better technology?

BARKER: Yeah, far better. And, we had propellers that were very, very. In fact, every time you went into a dry dock, so people could see them, they'd cover them. The propeller was secret. And, that secret was given to the Soviets by some Scandinavian country, just toward the end of the Cold War. And, then, their submarines started coming on line. But, theirs were not all that quiet, and so then you would have our people track them. And there's never been a Soviet submarine fire on an American one, nor vice versa during the Cold War. But it came pretty close a few times.

BELT: What are the different kinds of submarines? There's the missile.

BARKER: Missile submarines, then there's what they call an attack submarine. They're the smaller ones, and they're basically the anti-submarine submarines.

BELT: Are you ever involved with that?

BARKER: I was on diesel submarines, which were attack submarines, but not nuclear powered ones. They are the ones that no longer exist, because now we have nuclear everything. And, so I was on an attack submarine, but not...

BELT: Where were you when you were on...?

BARKER: OK, that's when I was on the Sea Robin, when I was on. After the Francis Scott Key, then, I went to the SS Entemedor, as the executive officer, the number two guy, and that was an attack submarine. After my tour, we made a trip to the Mediterranean, a three-month cruise to the Mediterranean and back. Then, after the Entemedor, that's when I was passed over for command of a submarine. I thought I was going to get command of a submarine, but I didn't. Because now the diesel submarines are going out of commission, or are being mothballed. Very fast. Because the nuclear submarines are becoming more and more and more. So, the number of my classmates who got command were very few. But, I wasn't among the few. So, that was my first real big disappointment. So, then the Navy said, OK, what are we going to do with this guy? So, they sent me to Monterey, CA, where we have the Navy's Postgraduate School. Now, Monterey, CA, I don't know if you've ever been there, but,

it's a lovely place to live. We were there for two years, and I got a Master's degree in management while I was out there. And, other than having, again, I'm not a student, so I had to work pretty hard. Most of the other guys, who were students, it was pretty cushy duty. Then, I was transferred back to Washington, DC, and I went into a program that no longer exists in the Navy, but at that time was called Human Resource Management. And, it was in the early '70s, '73 I think it was or '74. And, the big push was on, of course. Race relations, dealing with alcohol problems in the Navy, dealing with those kinds of people kinds of things. So, I became one of the Navy's Human Resource Management specialists. And, my job was to go to the headquarters commands of the Navy, all over the world, to deal with the admirals and the captains and those that were overseeing those folks. And to try and get them to incorporate more of a way of doing business with people, which was more concerned about the people. We tend to think of radio operators as an extension of the radio, rather than as he's a people, he's a human being. And so, to incorporate them in the decision making as best we could. And it was very good. But, it's not the way a military functions. The military functions, basically, on those who are giving orders and those who are following orders. Yes, if it's an illegal order, then you don't have to follow it.

BELT: Are you traveling a lot?

BARKER: Yeah, I traveled a lot. We were living in the DC area, at the time that I did this. And I was there for four years. And then I was transferred from there to a special projects office in Washington, where they were developing the newer missile submarine technology. And I was involved with a launcher system, and that is the system that holds the missile and shoots it out of the ship, that's known as the launcher. And yet the job I had was a nothing job, it really was. And so, after I had been there a couple of months, I went to the detailing people, and said, "When this job was formed, a number of years ago, there probably was a purpose for it. There isn't anymore. You're paying me a ton of money, as a commander in the United States Navy, to do nothing. And, I don't want to stay here. It's just not fair to the taxpayers, and it's not fair to me."

BELT: How many years military duty, now?

BARKER: I was now at my 17th year. So I, they finally said "Well, how would you like to go to Holy Loch, Scotland?" And I said "As commanding officer of the shore facility, there?" And I said, "I think I would like that. How about sending me over there, just to see what it's about?" Because, if I'm going to move my family and all that. So, they did. And so then, in January of 1977, I left for Scotland. Then in July of 1977, my wife

and two daughters came over, because they were in high school, and we didn't want to take them out of high school. So they came over and we were there for the next two years. I was there two and a half years.

BELT: And what were you doing there?

BARKER: I was the commanding officer of the shore facility, at the advanced refit site. There was a submarine tender sitting there, in the Holy Loch, it's called. And the submarines would come in, the missile submarines. They would do some repair work, load missiles on them, all the food, change crews, because another came on board, and then the submarines would go out to sea. And then they'd wait, and pretty soon some more submarines would come in. And here we have the men that lived, that worked on this tender, their families lived ashore. So I was in charge of the commissary, the exchange, the recreation center, the ball fields, the bowling alley, the clubs.

BELT: Sounds like a fun job.

BARKER: Yeah, you're running a mini-submarine base. Yeah, it was fun. The Scottish people are a delight. It was just a real high point. Well, it became the low point, because just as I was about to be transferred, in 1979, I got orders to go to San Diego, to be the commanding officer of the Submarine Training Center, in San Diego, which was just a neat, neat job. I was really looking forward to that. But then I was passed over for Captain. And once you're passed over, in the Navy, your career is basically done. And so, the list came out, and a friend of mine on the tender, where they had communication with the United States all the time, he called me up, and he said, "Doug, I hate to tell you, but neither you nor I are on the list." So that was a sad day in my life. And the next day, I got a call from the people in Washington saying, "Hey, we're canceling your orders." 'Cause, you see, this job is one that they want an 'up and comer', not a passed over guy." We're canceling your orders to San Diego, we're going to send you to a Naval ROTC unit, and here are five schools." Purdue was in there, um, Iowa State University, and three others. I don't remember what the other ones were. "Let us know in an hour, which order you want us to try and get you accepted at." So I called Donna on the phone, and said OK. Her Dad had died, her Mother was living in Missouri, my parents were still in North Dakota. So we'd never been in the Midwest, so we said "Let's try for Iowa State." Because, my career was over in the Navy, so I'll go on and do my final bit as best I can. So, we went to Iowa State. I was the Executive Officer there, of the Naval ROTC unit there. And at the end of that year, 'cause you have to serve a year, if you have orders back to the states, then I retired, in August of

1980. And it was kind of a sad day. Because I thought I would make Captain, but I didn't. And yet the day I retired, August the 31st, September the 1st, I became an associate pastor of the church. Three years later I was ordained, and I served as a pastor for the next 16 years. And started a church out in Silverdale, WA, where there's this huge Trident submarine missile base, and most of the people in my church, at that time, were submariners.

BELT: You're kidding?

BARKER: (Laughs)

BELT: And when it started in the very beginning, when that girl walked away from you because you weren't a Christian.

BARKER: That's right. And so I say, I was passed over by design. And when I was ordained, my mother was there, and she said, "Now Doug, doesn't this make up for not making a captain?" And I said, "No." They're two different things. But I wouldn't go back for anything. I'm in a different world. And so then we were in Washington from 19-. No, we were at the ROTC unit, and I left Ames in 1987, and went out to start this church out in Washington, and then I left there in 1995 to come here. Because my son called us up one day and said, "Hey, Dad, you know I've just come to realize," he lived in Parker and he had two kids. He said "You know, I really don't know you. Because when I was in school, you were at sea, for the most part. And when finally you were senior enough that you came ashore, on staff duties, and stuff, I was off to college." He said, "Why don't you retire, again, and come live in Colorado?" He knew we like Colorado. Because I would like to get to know you, Dad, and I'd like my kids to know their Grandpa and Grandma." So we did.

BELT: So, do you think your military life has affected your life with your children?

BARKER: Oh, my yes. And we were very close.

BELT: No regrets?

BARKER: Um hum (negative). Our kids, during those active duty years, they would say, "Hey, Dad, we've been here two years, are we about to move?" They got so they liked the changes. We found that the kids got to be pretty close with each other. Because you get to a new place, they don't have any friends, so they have to kind of

hang together, until they start establishing their friends. Then all of a sudden they moved again, and now they have to hang together. Now there are others, good friends of mine that were not nearly as blessed. Their kids just rebelled at the fact of having to move around. They felt rootless. Our one daughter graduated from London Central High School, that's when we were in Scotland, she went to the American High School in London. And our other daughter was with her, but then she ended up graduating in Ames, Iowa. Both the girls got to move in their senior year of high school. Isn't that a nice thing to do? But they managed. They were cheerleaders and they were pom pom, and all this stuff that girls wanted to be. And today they're just doing wonderfully.

BELT: What do you think, when you think of a submariner, tell me what comes to your mind. Tell me what comes to mind. Describe a submariner to me. What is that person like?. To be a submariner.

BARKER: Well I think it is someone who can get along with people. And it's someone who is very good at what he does. This describes lots of other people, too. And he someone who is willing, and enjoys, as I mentioned quite some time ago, how he likes to go out on that submarine and do whatever it is they're supposed to be doing out there, and do it well. And you're all alone, when you're in a submarine. You're usually all by yourself, out there doing your task, not a lot of other ships around, so you, it's just an exciting, exciting thing to be involved in that. I'm so glad I was a submariner, as opposed to, I'm sure if I'd been on a surface ship, and been on a destroyer or an aircraft carrier, or something like that, but I liked the smallness of the submarine. They're just a neat kind of concept.

BELT: What about arguments on a submarine. How did they resolve that?

BARKER: There were people that didn't get along with each other. They would get along because they had to, for their job, but they just didn't socialize on the ship. Like there would be a couple of officers that wouldn't sit next to each other at dinner. They'd just sit a couple of chairs apart, and that's the best you can do. But there was never any backbiting, or putting down of the other person. That just wasn't acceptable. They have to be held up because they are part of the staff on the ship. So we got along pretty well.

BELT: Well, when you look back on your experiences, is there anything else that comes to mind that you would like to share?

BARKER: Well I'm glad to have spent those 27 years. Gotta be careful here. And it's interesting today, now that I've been out, it won't be long that I've been out as much as I was in. And I, I don't know if you noticed, I wore a cap that says Naval Academy on it, and I have another one that says Submarine Forces Retired. And when I go to Denver, to the mall or something, I wear one of those. And almost without exception, somebody will stop and talk to me. "Did you serve in submarines?" "Did you go to the Naval Academy?" "My uncle went there." "My brother's going to go there." Young people and old people alike, they want to talk. And this one guy, over at Costco, he was watching me, and he was an older man, and I knew he was watching me, and he finally came up and said, "How long were you in the Navy?" And I said "For 27 years." And he said "Oh, I was an enlisted guy, and I served, direct toward the end of WWII. No, excuse me, Vietnam. Anyhow, then he got out, and today he is the visitation pastor of this great big church up on the highway, going up to Denver, Grace Chapel there, on I 25. And I said, "Well, what ships did you serve on?" And he said, "Well, I was on a destroyer." He named the name. And I said "Well, have you got a hat?" And he said "Oh, yeah, I got a hat." And I said "Well, why don't you wear it?" I said "Why did you come up and talk to me?" Because you saw that, hey, this guy is somebody that I can talk to. It's fun, it is absolutely fun to have people want to come up and talk about their uncle or their aunt or themselves." So he said "You know, I think I'll start wearing my hat." And I think, today, particularly with this Iraqi thing, people are being very kind to those that are in the military or who have served in the military. So, yeah, great life. Now, my son did not choose it. He's in high tech, doing very, very well. But he thought about going to the Naval Academy, and finally he said "Dad, I just don't want the separation, I want to be with my family."

BELT: This picture you brought, with your mother and your father standing by the submarine, can you tell me about that day?

BARKER: Yeah, that is the commissioning, and they had come from North Dakota to be a part of this. As I said back at the beginning of this tape, my dad had served in Guadalcanal during WWII, and of course, by this time, he was long retired, but they remained in North Dakota. They came out to be, my wife is someplace, but she just didn't happen to be in this picture. And my kids, they were there, also. But, you can see, on the picture, that people are being allowed to go into the submarine.

BELT: Now, isn't that unusual?

BARKER: Yeah, but when it's brand new like this, they let you go down.

BELT: A brand new one you can go on?

BARKER: Yeah, this is brand new. And the navigation team, who I was in charge of, they had, of course, they worked with a lot of computers and stuff. And in those days the computers would run out tapes, punch hole tapes, and they had them all rigged, so you would go down and they would say, "OK, type your last name." And so you would type your last name, and in my case, B-A-R-K-E-R, and then the thing would put this tape out, and if you'd hold it up you could read it, and it would say "Welcome aboard to the family of the navigator. Glad to have you onboard today." Or something like that. Then if you didn't have the name of one of the nav team, then it would just be "Welcome aboard the Francis Scott Key," and they could take it home. And the people just loved it, you know, to be able to go through. They couldn't go in the reactor area, they couldn't go back there.

BELT: Oh, so there are certain parts of the sub?

BARKER: Yeah, there were parts they couldn't go. But, they could see the nav center, and the control room. Anything that was secret was covered up.

BELT: What are your parents, when they did this day?

BARKER: Oh, they were just a proud as punch, you know. Standing tall. My Dad was like me, not very tall, but he was standing tall that day, and it was very special.

BELT: It's a very nice picture.

BARKER: Yeah, it is. So that's my Navy time. I did that in a little over an hour, I guess. And I think, a whole lifetime of Navy.

BELT: Yeah. You're sure there is nothing else that you'd like to add?

BARKER: Nah, I think that's it. Except, I'll mention on the tape, my three kids – there's Paul, and Linda is the middle one, and Carolyn is the youngest one. Today they are all married. We have 6 grandchildren, three of each kind, so we keep everything in order. And they are a joy to both my wife and I.

BELT: Well, I appreciate your interview, Doug. It was very interesting, and thank you

so much

BARKER: Sure. Thank you for asking me. What a privilege.

END TAPE 1 SIDE 2