

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Alan Hall Interview

Conducted by James Newberry

March 21, 2016

Transcribed by Harrison Clark

Born in Cincinnati in 1926, Al Hall begged his mother to sign his enlistment papers when he was only 17. A signalman in the Navy, Hall served in a secret mission to Le Havre, France, during the D-Day Invasion. He was part of a unit that erected a flashing light to signal Liberty ships approaching the coast with supplies. After the war Hall was transferred to Atlanta in his sales job.

Full Transcript

Film crew: Alright, I'm rolling.

Interviewer: Okay so are you ready to go?

Hall: Ready to go.

Interviewer: Okay wonderful. This is James Newberry and I am here with Al Hall on Monday March 21, 2016 at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. Mr. Hall do you agree to this interview?

Hall: Yes.

Interviewer: So, let's start at the beginning. Please state your full name.

Hall: Alan Ray Hall

Interviewer: Mr. Hall, when and where were you born?

Hall: Cincinnati, Ohio. November 30th, 1926

Interviewer: So, tell me a bit about your childhood. What were your parents' names?

Hall: Their name? My mother's name was Helen and my dad's name was Vernon.

Interviewer: What did they do for a living?

Hall: Well my dad, he was an engineer in air conditioning and heating and my mom just worked as a nutrition in a hospital and worked in a beauty shop. Things like that. My dad worked until he was about 42 years old in heating and air conditioning. And he said, "Why am I working for somebody? I work for myself. They are the same thing." So, he went to college - University of Cincinnati and got his engineering degree. Then he left the company that he was with to start his own business. He became successful. What he would do, wherever, like Florida where they had the hurricanes down there; he would go down and bid on the heating and air conditioning in the motel where they were building. So that's what he did until he was about 74. He retired. He was in assisted living and a home up in Cincinnati and he passed away at the age 93.

Interviewer: Wow. Well, tell me a little about your childhood in Cincinnati.

Hall: [laughs] My childhood in Cincinnati. That was during the Depression. We moved from many times. We didn't have any money. Any really to speak of. My Dad left, when I was young, and looking for work as a lot of men did in those days. Back in the 30s and the 20s. So, as I say we would move. I had a sister. My mother, my sister and I if we weren't staying with one of our relatives, one of her sisters, we would move with what little bit of money that they would give us. We would pay the rent and if we couldn't pay the rent, we would move someplace else. Kind of a really tough life, you know that. So, I joined the cub scouts. My sister and I just wandered around. We lived in; it was a suburb. Well actually it was almost like a downtown area. So, I was walking around and I saw this church and I went into this church. This was the early evening, and I saw these kids. Not like me. Seven-eight years old. With these uniforms on. These cub scouts' uniforms. So, I said, "What is this?" The scoutmaster came over and says, "Are you a member here of the church." And I said, "No." I said, "I just came in here." I said, "You know these guys got these clothes on." I didn't know to call them uniforms. They said, "Yeah we are cub scouts." He told me what they do and so on and so forth. He says, "Would you like to join the cub scouts?" I said, "I don't know. I have to ask my mom." So, he says, "Well, you ask your mother and this where we meet. When you come back you will have to get a uniform." And I told all this to my mom, and she says, "You have to get a uniform. I'll see what we can do about that." So, we couldn't afford a uniform, but I went back there anyway and I said, "Do I have to have a uniform?" He said, "Yeah" I said, "Well I don't have any money." He said, "Don't worry about it. We will get you a uniform." So, I joined the cub scouts. Then we moved from there and that was the end of the cub scouts for me. [laughs] Then, I don't know, I guess that was when I was about 8 years old, 7 or 8 years old, my mom didn't have a job. We didn't have

any money as I said. So, you get to be what they call “ward of the court,” my sister and I. Sent her to one home. It is like an orphanage you know. Me, of course to another one. We had all male. She was at a home with female catholic. Boarding school I guess you want to call it. So, we had a regular school there and I wasn’t catholic. Of course. So, when the kids found that out, we’d fight. Sports, like any other kids out on the school yard that raised us and all that. When we played football, they would make sure that we got smeared. [laughs] They would call us names because we weren’t Catholic. We had meals. We had like a long picnic, wooden table with benches where we ate, and they played keep away. The meals were set up in bowls, so they’d pass that down and when it got down. They always made sure that we sat at the end. Not the Nuns but the kids, they would all scramble and made sure we had the end of the pass and they would keep it away from us. You would have to get up and grab’em away. [motions elbowing] One of these guys we called him Pinky. We got to talking one day and I said, “You know, I am tired of this place. I don’t like it here.” And he said, “I don’t either.” He was a protestant. [indecipherable] We decided we were going to run away. So, one night when the nuns were sleeping, we went through their dormitory. That’s where they had the clothes chute for the dirty clothes. We went down that chute and went out the door downstairs in the basement and started hitchhiking. As the cars, well we didn’t hitchhike right away because we didn’t want to be seen by the cars that night. We ducked down the covert along the road and then when it got close enough to day then we started hitchhiking. Nobody picked us up. One Model-A Ford came along—Model-A cars in them days. He said, “Get in boys, where are you going?” And we got in his Ford Coupe. “Where are you going?” And we said, “Cincinnati: He said, “Okay,” He turned that Ford around. “Hey Mister, Cincinnati is that way.” He says, “I know and the school you came from is that way.” I am the custodian. So, he took us back to the school. We had to go before the head nun, the Sister, you know. And she says. One at time she brought us into the office. She says, “Alan why do you want to run away.” I said, “I don’t like it here, Sister. These kids are no fun.” She said, “Well you gotta stay here you know—until your mother gets a job.” So, I said, “Okay.” I don’t know how much longer we stayed there. But it wasn’t too much longer. One day she says, “Alan, I have good news for you. Your mother’s got a job.” That’s with the beauty shop. So, she said, “You’re going to be able to go home.” So, my Uncle came and got me. Picked up my sister. We got to go home. And it wasn’t long after that I went to go live with my Aunt and Uncle in Kokomo, Indiana on a farm. So, lived there for, I don’t know how long. That wasn’t too pleasant, but my cousin Jimmy. I guess I was a little older, not yet in the eighth grade. Guess around the fourth and fifth grade. Whatever. Came home from there. Then what happened. [thinking pause] I guess I grew up and we moved up to a suburb called Hydepark.

Interviewer: And that's a suburb of Cincinnati?

Hall: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, where were you attending high school?

Hall: In Cincinnati at Withrow. The name of the high school was Withrow.

Interviewer: Now, what are your memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor? In December of '41.

Hall: Well, that was on a Sunday. I remember I was riding, I had a bicycle, an old bicycle. We used to ride the bicycle and hang on the back of streetcars in them days. They would pull us along. So, in Hydepark square I would sell newspapers. We had them of course right in front of the drugstore. It was Dowe Drugstore then. I also sold magazines. That we carried around in a bag. Colliers and some other couple magazines. Then I made myself a shoeshine box. Went around to the saloons and shined shoes. Anything to make money. Getting back to that, I heard on the radio when I went into the drugstore there, that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. What was I then? 15, I guess. I said, "Boy that's something." Went to school of course the next day. It was all the talk at school. So, us guys, "you know. Boy I wish I was old enough to join the Navy." Always like the Navy I read about a bunch of different things and pictures. In my junior year, one day I became 17 and I went down instead of going to school. I skipped school and went down to Thenowbrook and hitch hiked down there and got some papers. I had to get my mom to sign. Brought them home and I said, "Mom" She says, "Why aren't you in school?" I said, "I have these papers here. You have to sign them. Cause I want to go in the Navy." She took the papers like that and said, "Are you crazy?" She said, "Don't you know son, there is a war going on?" I said, "Yeah Mom I know but a bunch of us guys in class; that's what we want to do. Do what we can do for the country." She says, "No" We went back and forth finally she said "Okay. I will sign that under one condition." I said, "What's that Mom? She says, "When you take that paper down to the federal building and the people down there. You tell them you're not going overseas." [laughs] Isn't that funny. "You tell them that." I said, "Okay, Mom." So, what was it? Maybe six months later getting ready to make D-Day, so that was that.

Interviewer: Well, let's back up a little bit, so your 15 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. And that's about two years before you enlist. Before your 17th birthday.

So, tell me about those two years. I assume you are going to school. What are you hearing about the war? Are you joining any Homefront efforts to contribute?

Hall: Yeah, I worked. I got a job—waiting—When I joined the Navy, I ask them. My Mom, “You had tell them. First of all, Christmas is coming up. You tell them that you can’t go.” She was telling me to tell them something. Anyway, they did. They said, “Okay, you can. You don’t have to leave until January 2nd.” Or something. So, I was home for Christmas. Prior to—let’s see— I worked for a little while in a plant in Cincinnati that made submarine gauges. Then. Golly. [pause] Then when my time came. When they called, I went down there that day. They gave us lunch. Bunch of guys of course. We all went down to the airport and got on the plane and flew up to the Great Lakes. Where I did my training.

Interviewer: Well tell me about that plant that made submarine gauges.

Hall: Well it was a war plant. Still at home. I have still got my badge, where they take your picture. What I did is more or less like take parts to one place to another place or another guy. [motions with hands] Most of those guys I guess were engineers and I would take the different parts.

Interviewer: What time of day were you working there?

Hall: What time of day? Oh, let see. From in the morning, I guess. [pause] I guess 8 o'clock in the morning.

Interviewer: And then would you go to school.

Hall: Yep.

Interviewer: After?

Hall: Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me of your final Christmas at home. The Christmas of 1943. Before you left to go to the Great Lakes, Illinois.

Hall: Oh, let’s see. [long pause] What did I do? It’s hard to remember. We never had many Christmases. I mean. My sister and I, we laugh about it today. I mean come on. We never had any toys, or you know. We didn’t know. Because when you don’t have anything. [shrugs] So this one time we were playing around on the

“square”, we called it there in Hydepark. Somebody, they put this old Christmas tree at the back of the building. Like they threw stuff away. [laughs] We drug that thing home. So, we had it there in the living room. Mom says, “What are you do— What is that? What are you doing with an old tree?” We said, “Its a Christmas tree Mom.” I said, “People put up—” She said, “I know what people put up.” She says, “That things bad. It might have bugs and everything else.” So, we threw out, but getting back to— Uh that wasn’t the Christmas that uh— I really. I don’t know whether we went, um. Oh golly.

Interviewer: I believe you departed for bootcamp in January of ‘44. Where was bootcamp?

Hall: Great Lakes, Wisconsin. Green Bay.

Interviewer: Okay, so did you take the train or the bus? How did you get there?

Hall: Well we flew on the plane from Cincinnati up there. And then when you got there they buses from, you know, the Great Lakes and Navy that took you to the camp. To the Great Lakes. Which was a hoot. Because cold up there in Winter, and we had guys with short sleeves, silk shirts on from Florida that came in. You know cause there was a lot of guys. We were laughing. These guys were freezing in the chow line. Standing outside waiting to get into the mess hall. That was a hoot. That was really something. We were glad to be there. With all men, we were in the Navy.

Interviewer: What were the conditions like? How harsh was the training at boot camp?

Hall: Boot camp wasn’t bad. You know that was old close order drills and stuff. The first day, I don’t remember what exact date it was. But anyway, our master of arms in the barracks, in charge of our company. We ordered outside of the hut in front of the barracks. He said, “Men: Today we are going to separate the men from the boys.” He said, “There is track over here. We are going to run around that track.” We called it the grinder. He said, “We are going to run until the last guy drops out, and I am going to be right there with that last guy.” His name was Gerties and I never will forget that. He was a first class [indecipherable]. So we did. We ran around and of course people dropped out. The guys who were a little stouter they dropped out and so so. He was the last guy. He says, “Now you see here. We have got this guy. He is pretty strong. He almost made it the whole way blah blah blah.” He went over it. What did we do? We did some more close order drilling. They kept it busy but not with any strenuous. The only thing, we had to go to the pool. They got a 50-foot diving board and had to jump off that into the

pool. Of course, I jumped in and got along as fast you can. Some guys wouldn't jump. Gerty says, "You know what I have got all day. You want to stand up there and freeze? Okay." He says, "Are you going to jump" or am I like the old saying 'Don't make me come up there!'"

Interviewer: Was it an inside pool?

Hall: No

Interviewer: So, you weren't jumping into cold water?

Hall: Oh no no.

Interviewer: Now how long was boot camp?

Hall: I was trying to think of that the other day? Let's see. I went there in January. It was if I remember correctly, 7 or 8 weeks.

Interviewer: Then where did you go from there?

Hall: University of Chicago to communications, special Class A - Naval Signal school.

Interviewer: So, tell me what is signal school?

Hall: Well that where you learn. You pick up the old Morse code. That you learn in the scouts. You have seen those Navy lights, flashing, that's the way you communicate. We learned that and semaphore.

Interviewer: What's semaphore?

Hall: Flags. [acts out signals] How to A B C D. From there that lasted. Wasn't too long. Let's see. [pause and thinking] That lasted about till the middle of March. Then because it wasn't long. They sent us up to New York, to Long Island, to train with the Marine Corps, and that's where you really got the training.

Interviewer: Before we do that, I want you to tell me how you were selected for signal school.

Hall: Well, they give you. They ask you like an interview. "What would you like to do Alan?" I said, "Well, I would like to be on a submarine." [They said,] "As tall as you are. No. Them hatches are so low and everything, the quarters are so small.

You wouldn't like that. What's your next request?" "I would like to be a gunner on a PBY, an airplane." "No, turrets are too small for you. You would be dying. But tell you what, as tall as you are you would make a signalman. Up there on the bridge." They didn't tell you that's the first place to get shelled. [laughs] [makes noise and raises up and down]

Interviewer: So, it had to do with your height?

Hall: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Now you spoke earlier, when we talked, you spoke about the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Were you there briefly after signal school?

Hall: Very briefly, yeah.

Interviewer: What were you doing there?

Hall: Well they were gathering us together from different places. Guys coming out of school. Guys being washed out of flight school. And forming our commando units. That's when from there. We were only there, what, maybe a week if that. That's when they sent us to New York—.

Interviewer: Long Island.

Hall: Yeah.

Interviewer: You said a draft list came out while you were in Philadelphia. What was that?

Hall: A draft list is a list of people. The caption says, "These men will be sent overseas for a period not exceeding 18 months." Something like that and then it had all these names of all these guys going to these units.

Interviewer: For the duration of the war?

Hall: Yeah, I think that was part of it.

Interviewer: So, your name was not on that list?

Hall: It was on that list.

Interviewer: Okay and because it was on that list—

Hall: That is why I was approved and went up to Long Island.

Interviewer: Okay, and what were you doing on Long Island?

Hall: [laughs] Well you ever—Well you wouldn't know. You do everything from climbing rope ladders to jumping over little hurdles to taking a rope and swinging over a mudhole and water. Climbing on a rope itself. Learning some Judo, they called it—self-protection. Course firing rifles. Crawling under barbed wire with you're A-1 Carbine, while they are firing over your head with these bullets. [motions with hands] Just everything that is strenuous. Running miles. Just about everything you can think of to beat you into shape.

Interviewer: So, you were in the Navy, but this was a Marine Corps School?

Hall: Well it wasn't a school; it was training school for Marines also. It was Marine Recon, if I remember they called it a Recon Unit. The Marines, they weren't training right with us. They had their own training, where they would do all the drill stuff, and they had. Another thing they had up there. One of the things that happened about a week after we were there. They called us out—they had a big grinder. On a grinder they line up and we formed like an L. And they marched the guy out there and he had a suit on, a civilian suit on. And he had two, if I remember, it was two guys with carbines and two drummers. They marched him in front of us, like this, [motions with hands] and made the turn, and there was the gate. And as they march him down, [they said] "Alright, face." And he had to look every one of us in the eye marching by. It was a guy who had deserted, and he kicked them out. That was something was very seldom. You don't see too much of that. Then later on we ask them, "What was all that about?" And one marine told us what it was. Then after that training, nothing. [mumbles]

Interviewer: Did you do mock landings?

Hall: Oh, of and that was it. So, then we went to Jones Beach, which I think is just south of Long Island. We did mock landings in Higgins boats. Then, by the way, they took all of our Navy gear away from us and stowed it, and gave us all green khaki battle fatigues, A-1 Carbines, and everything that the Marines had except, I don't think—I think the Marines carried M-1s. We didn't we carried A-1s, which is a lighter rifle than what the M-1 is. So, we had all of those fatigues and extra pair, things like that. That's when they sent us up to put us on a bus to go to Jones

Beach and make those landings—practice and practice and practice. Then we came home at night back to the barracks. Wasn't long a day or two after that we got on buses and went down to Pier 92, New York. There was a band there. Who they were I don't know, but they were playing [singing] "Goodbye Broadway, Hello France." That was funny. Red Cross gave us a cup of coffee out of those milk cans. PET milk that came in little, that was there cups. Somebody gave us a carton of cigarettes—Chelsea's. The old Chelsea's cigarettes. Then we boarded the troopship and the next. God was that afternoon. God time it runs together sometimes. Then we sailed and we went by White Island, I think it's called, yeah—White Island, where they told there is a lot of German U-Boats that hung around there. Sunk a lot of shipping. So, we made the old zigzag course with another ship. Can't remember who that was but anyway we came into Glasgow, Scotland.

Interviewer: Well how big was the ship you were on?

Hall: Oh, it was a big troopship. That was another funny thing we laughed at. When we got on, we stowed all of our gear. Because there was about three decks, personnel decks, where they had five racks in a row in an aisle just wide enough you could walk between them. Bunks, racks we called them. We used to throw our gear against the bulkhead, packs, what we didn't need. One of the MAs came down after the lights were supposed to be out. We were talking and everything. It was hot down there in that hold we called it. He said, "Lights out!" He said, "I told you turn them lights out." One of the guys calls out, "It's hot down here! Can we get some air!" He said, "Who said that?" And the guy came over. And he said—Wait [puts hand up] I won't use that language. [laughs] He looked. Between those two bunks and a bulkhead and there was like this. There was an air, oh what do you call them, you have them in your house. Anyway, we had them and he said, [quietly cursing] "Christ sake, you dumbass. Get your gear away from there no wonder it is hot down here." So that was funny. Then we had another guy. We all had access to their canteen on the deck and could buy candy and different things up there. So, we came find out this one guy. He hid a bunch of candy under his mattress and guys who found out about that, "Oh look at here. Here you want this, you want this." [Other guy says,] "Hey!" Stuff like that. Guys will do anything. Then we run into, boy that North Seas. You have got about a 40, 35, 40-degree angle tilt. So, if you are not used to that, which none of us were, your tray or couch slides down. Let alone guys— [mimics sea sickness] So you learn to take your helmet and use as a bucket.

Interviewer: Did you get seasick?

Hall: Oh yeah. Half that ship was seasick, except for the crew that manned it.

Interviewer: So, when you are sleeping, don't the racks—They are hanging?

Hall: No. They are buckled to the wall, but they do—you can put them up. You have got little clips, so they won't fall down. [demonstrates with hand] So, that's what they do in the daytime when you not in your rack. And that's another thing. Those racks are only maybe [motions about an inch above his head] about like that. The game was to, to take your lighter if you spoked and light it like this [motions to lighting it under the upper bunk's pillow] Until the guys says, "Hey!" [laughs]

Interviewer: The guy above you? I see. Was is it easy to sleep?

Hall: Oh yeah. Well you are so tired. Yeah, You just—[mumbles]

Interviewer: So, you landed in Glasgow? Did you get off the ship there or was it a brief landing?

Hall: No, we had to. If I have it remembered. I am trying to get that in mind. Whether we disembarked? Because we went from there to England. I can't remember because—. Did we have to disembark there or not? One way or the other we got England, which is right next to Scotland and then you got Wales up there.

Interviewer: Where did you go to in England?

Hall: I think the name of the little town down there was Fowey. F-O-W-E-Y Which was the home of the Queen's Ranger Commandos and they taught us all hand to hand to combat. Almost, almost a copy of what the Marines taught. So, we did that until about when? Well about the last week of May and then they called us over. We did nothing except go to the Quonset hut, where the chaplin was and —. He would pass out these little cards that looked like a wife's recipe card and it had you write you name on there, your next of kin, do you have a will, all that stuff. Then we turned those in and then we had—boarded the —.

Interviewer: But what did the chaplin say to you? Didn't he say something to the group of guys there at the Quonset hut?

Hall: Oh yeah, he told us. Well first of all one of the guys said, "Uh sir this looks like a one-way street. You want the will, you want—" [laughs] He said, "Maybe." Then

gave us a little prayer and wished us all well. So that made you feel like something was going to happen there.

Interviewer: But you didn't really know anything about the invasion at that point, right?

Hall: No.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you boarded a ship then. This is the end of May, the first of June? Tell me, go forward from there.

Hall: Then we went to England, and what we didn't know is. See we were trained actually to make the invasion, you know, what did we used to call it. Storm the beaches. What we didn't know was they cancelled our orders for that and gave us a mission to do. Our unit, the sixth unit. Our mission we found out was to go to Le Havre of France, so when we got over there the army had taken. We didn't go into the land until five years after the army pushed in and got a foothold past those rows. Our mission was to go to Le Havre that had evidently not been taken yet. So, when we came into shore we got off the LSD, and we walked because the Army has already pushed forward and drove the Germans back. So, we walked. We never caught up to them of course because what we would do and that's another thing. We would go to these little villages on our way to Le Havre. We would at night stand sentry duty. Looking for any German snipers that were left behind and were going to pick off some of the Frenchman. Then we had more or less public relations with the people there. This one little village we saw there was about five women who had their head all shaved. The FFE did that, the French guerillas, the underground for cooperation with the Germans. And also, I was in one village and then another village. I think that was Nantes, France. They had a courtyard and they had a wall on the right end when you go in that gate. It was not a gate really. It was big wooden door, Jesus, about that thick. And they opened in and you would go into the courtyard. There was a wall down the end of it and there were all these little bullet holes where, the Fre—the SS would shoot these FFE guys, the guerillas. Just line them up and shoot them and their family sometimes. The French told us that's what they did. They would bring to us, the FFE if they had any, German guys who wanted to give themselves up, surrender, which there was a couple, three guys. And then we would have to turn them over. A Jeep would come around every once and awhile with a sergeant from headquarters, and he would take them back up to headquarters for interrogation. Then we finally got to the horror [pause] and set up our flashing light. You could only work through that during the daytime because—. First of all, I am getting ahead of my story. Our mine sweeps had to clean the mines out of the mouth. You

know this break water where the big ships come in and we brought them in these Liberty ships. They had to clean the mines, the Oyster mines out. You know what an Oyster mine is?

Interviewer: Describe it.

Hall: Well it is built so that whenever any big ship comes over it. [uses hand motions to describe it] It works by sounds and it will separate itself and boom. Because of its screws making that noise underwater. Our Navy guys, mine sweeps we called them, cleared that harbor out and all of this stuff is what we were waiting for coming through France. Anyway, we set up different watches during the daytime. We had a Frenchman out there and we had a —. Well first of all let me describe it. I am getting ahead again. Our quarters, we had two guys to a room that looked like a cell from a prison. That's all cement walls and we had one room that was maybe a quarter size of this, and we had one of them potbellied stoves they keep warm on. [indecipherable] What else can I tell you about that. Oh, the dyke itself. [indecipherable French word] the French called it. Golly, was probably I'd say almost a quarter of a mile long. It was a wall really? And a walk— It had enough room where a Jeep to come out, which they did to give us supplies. This cement thing built up here and this Jeep pathway. [uses hands to describe] When that channel turned up it would come up and wash over there and back into the channel. I think around Christmas. We would bring our Liberty ships in and signal. They would signal us, back—how was this or what about this. Where do we dock? Then we had papers where kept a log and all that stuff, that's what we did out there and play cards. We weren't on watch. Let me tell you about —Oh Christmas. Couple guys out there were out there on watch and hollered us, we were playing cards. They said, "Hey come here guys we want to show you something." And that channel was really kicking up in December. "Look at this stupid son of a bitch." He would duck down when the waves came up and you would get against that wall and wooh. [motions as the wave goes over head]

Interviewer: Went over him?

Hall: Yeah. He said, "What in the hell?" Finally, he came out. Of course, he had his fatigues on. His army fatigues and little crosses. He was a Catholic, a chaplain. He said, "Sir what are you doing." He said, "Well how many guys do you got out here." He said, "Six." "Let's see, yes hard candy. One, two—" [laughs] We appreciated that. That was his Christmas gift, our only Christmas gift we got. After we really secured the place delivery ships came in. A Jeep came out one day and gave us a frozen chicken. Which was after eating all those K-rations after

moving through that field to get—. We put that chicken—. The Germans had a little galley by the way where they could cook down there. I have that picture that I showed you. I still got it. Of the little Frenchman a little fat guy with his apron on. Louis we called him and he'd cook. He said, 'Hey, Cook for you.' We don't really got anything you can cook really. [laughs] He would come out there. So anyway, we got this chicken and we put it in one of the pots the Germans had there, and by the way. They had left behind Oleo; they had a couple cans of that stuff. We had some hard tack and it wasn't too bad. Afterwards we thought to eat that stuff and not know what the Germans, they were good for doing a lot of booby traps. Anyway, we put the chicken in one of the pans they left behind, pots. Underneath open like on a shelf. At night. We were going to eat that the next day. That night we heard this rattling around, and we grabbed our carbines and we came down and thought either one of our guys got hungry and had to be down there little galley. And sure, enough there was a gray tomcat about, that big, and it had that chicken tearing out of there to the dyke. And I know cat lovers wouldn't like that, but we had our carbines. [Imitates shooting] And the last thing we saw was that cat and that chicken going over the dyke.

Interviewer: [laughs] So, you lost the chicken?

Hall: We lost the chicken.

Interviewer: So, you were in a formerly German facility? Is what you're saying?

Hall: Where the German had occupied, yeah. That's what we were waiting for I suppose. Until the Army cleaned them out.

Interviewer: Was the dyke something built before the war?

Hall: Oh yeah. I couldn't tell you when it was, but it had to be old. Cause you could tell in some areas. We walked out there. That's another thing we did. Dumb. But we walked out there, and you could see where the water had eroded some of the wall. We went out there one day, fooling around, and we didn't have the watch. There was a lifeboat that had washed up to the beach. So, we were messing around down there. "Let's take this lifeboat down there onto the channel and take a ride with it." So, the three of us we got into the lifeboat. We were out and we all of sudden looked down and the petcock had turned where you couldn't get it back in and the water was coming in. Out in the channel there was three British Corvettes, they were like our destroyers coming in. And in those lifeboats, it was an American lifeboat, it had supplies. And of course, they always have semaphore in

them. So, I got the flags and I am sending SOS, SOS and the Corvettes stop. The first one comes over close enough. The water was almost coming up to the gun holes, where it would just sink. So, they got us out onto the Corvette and got us back into Le Havre. Of course, the word got to the commandant of Le Havre. So, he sent word to our lieutenant who was out there with us and the commandos and he said, "You guys, how stupid can you be. Didn't you look in the goddamn boat to see." We said, "We just figured it was alright." That's how us kids are. Still a kid. I was still— Christmas, I was still 17 years old.

Interviewer: So how long were you posted there? How long did you stay?

Hall: Up until. Well let's see. They sent our—. Oh, I will tell you another thing that happened before. Right after, it was in April, Yes, April. They sent our sea bags which had all of our blues and whites as you see a sailor. All of our Navy gear in our sea bag, they sent them over to us in Le Havre. General Eisenhower gave different troops R&R to London. So, we got a 7 day R&R to London or a 3 day R&R in Paris if and when we took Paris away from the Germans. We went to London for 7 days. We had our blues on, that was nice because you got to tour around in a taxicab. The only thing was the Germans were still firing V2 rockets over there. It hit—Boom! At the middle of the night. Where we stayed was a hotel, but they had cleared the dining room. They had this big dining room and they cleared that put all Army cots and you had to pay a quarter a day for an Army cot. That was funny because there was a black kid. Oh, maybe six seven cots down from me and when one V2 bomb hit. Wasn't too far away. Boom! The boy, [acts like waking up suddenly] He says, "What was that?" One guy says, "Do you know what that is?" He said, "Some kind of a something. Like a bomb." "That's exactly what it is." One of them V2 that the Germans were firing. You know they were the first ones to really get, to make stuff up like that. Missiles and that kind of stuff. We got one of them, remember their scientist? Didn't he work on the—?

Interviewer: Wernher Von Braun?

Hall: Atomic bomb. Yeah. At the University of Chicago down in the basement. Anyway, that was the end. We came back from leave. To answer your question. That was in April. At the end of that month, in April, they put us back in the fleet on a PC boat: Patrol Craft. Which is the smallest ship to cross the ocean under its own power. You can imagine. That is all I will tell you of that story. But anyway—So, what our job was then was to cruise the coast of France up the North part and back looking for the last of the German U-Boats if there was any.

There wasn't any. They were out of diesel fuel, out of ammunition and everything else. So, on May 8th I guess it was. We were down in the galley in the PC boat. Several of us guys and we had the radio on down there and Churchill came over and said, "I am glad to report the Germans had just surrendered." Oh boy. Everybody was —. The guys on the beach were firing artillery out there and we sent the lights, "Hey we are still out here! The Navy is still out here!" [laughs]

Interviewer: Do you mean they were firing off guns in celebration?

Hall: Yeah. Yeah. So that was a beautiful, beautiful night. [phone starts ringing] That's my wife's. We came back to Cherbourg.

Film crew: Can you say that sentence again?

Interviewer: Yeah back up and start at the end of the victory celebrations.

Hall: Okay. we came back. I was just about to tell you. We came to a dock in Cherbourg, France. That was a big port also. They were tearing down the rubble or trying to. They had, the French had —. Let me think of it. Water tanks in your basement. What do you call them?

Interviewer: A cistern?

Hall: No. They are either fired by gas or electric.

Interviewer: Hot water heater?

Hall: Hot water heater! That's what the — they are only that big around. They had them on the side of them little bulldozers. They put off steam. They would move up to a wall. They would push and push and back up and push. And our CBs our Navy CBs, Construction Battalion. We had our own, they brought in our own to help them. Bulldozers. And our guys were just standing there laughing watching them little, you know—. We were watching them, where the guy had motioned and says, "Get in there and show them guys how to tear them walls down." Of course, just boom down. The Frenchmen are watching. [laughs]

Interviewer: Where were these walls? What were they part of?

Hall: Rubble. From our guys bombing the whole coast of France.

Interviewer: So, sort of cleaning the coast off of all this rubble?

Hall: Yeah, well trying, yeah. We stayed in some of them old bombed out places in the field getting up to Le Havre.

Interviewer: So, I want to go back just briefly to the point about looking for any U-boats that were still there. Did you encounter any U-boats? Did you come across any?

Hall: No.

Interviewer: So, they really were done for by then.

Hall: We had to take that for granted. We didn't see any. Now we did see a- We got a general quarter which means everybody man your battle stations. Well that is one thing. This big around [motions a large distance from his own body] One of our crew members and them hatches are so big. He could just barely get through there. With a Mae West jacket on. "We called him Lard. Lard get d— We got to get to our guns." Come up there and here is one Messerschmitt or a Stuka. Came down. Here is our ship moving. He knew exactly how to do this. [Motions an incoming plane towards the ship] Never fired a shot. As if to say, "That I want you to know that we are still around." German air force. We had a laugh. It wasn't funny when we were there. Feeling that 20mm. That was a gun station you know. You are strapped into this and you have got these twin 20mm guns. So, you can only go so far with this thing, but they are on both sides. So, you could conceivably knock him out. But he knew if he do it a certain way. The weird thing is we all thought the same thing he said, "That I am still around." [laughs]

Interviewer: So, at the place you were posted for so long in Le Havre. You said there were Liberty ships coming in. And what sort of supplies were they bringing and how were you unloading them? Who was in charge of that?

Hall: They brought in our ammunition and our chow. They also had— I also said beside Liberty ships, LSDs brought in the equipment for the Army. Jeeps and Tanks and all that kind of stuff. What they did, they got through this break water then you got a beach you know over here. Or a pier where they could come in and unload. [uses hands to describe] I saw General Patton. He came to Le Havre. Third Army, and they were the ones in charge, the Army was. He was standing up in that Jeep looking down at those LSDs and watching the Tanks come off and whatever equipment he had. [imitate General Patton looking] Had them two six shooters on you know, and his captain was sitting there, his aid, at the helm of

that little Jeep looking straight ahead. You had to laugh cause you are just trying to think what is in his head. He said, "I just want to see one of you lieutenants take one of my Jeeps." They were real popular, Jeeps were.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Hall: Well because guys would take them and go all over. After they take a place and you had a Jeep. Well and the mail carriers had Jeeps. When they come into the field, they would have mail calls out. Or into the villages you could drive down to a cafe and get a drink and they weren't careful. Somebody would carry a thing you could take out where you couldn't start the Jeep. The guys who had it you know would take it and put it into their jacket so it couldn't be stolen while they were at the cafe. If they had a Jeep they would take off and they go and take girls out in them. Different things. You know crazy stuff. So, Jeeps were very popular. Do you know that they own. Someone told me that after we left France you know to come back to the States. There was tons of new equipment that was still over in France. Jeeps that they had brought over things like that. You could buy one of those Jeeps for 50 bucks. It was easier not to bring them back than it was to burn them. They burned a hell of a lot of new uniforms and all of that stuff.

Interviewer: So, its was just an oversupply by the end of the war?

Hall: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, you were on the PC boat looking for U-Boats when you heard that Germany had surrendered on May 8th. That is Victory in Europe Day. Then you came back to Cherbourg and can we move forward from there?

Hall: Okay. What we did. We were in Cherbourg maybe— Let's see, May 8th— Because we came back exactly one year from D-Day. June the 6th. Well first of all before that night or day before we left on the 5th or 4th. The FBI came over the PA system at the pier and said, "If anybody— It is illegal to bring any souvenirs or things back to the United States, so if you have any get rid of them right now." You know take them off the ship. You heard splash, splash you know guys throwing— I had a German P38, and I wasn't about to throw that sucker in. But anyway.

Interviewer: But where did you hide it?

Hall: I just kept under my sack, under my mattress.

Interviewer: How had you gotten it?

Hall: The P38. Well we used to play cards a lot. Like I told you and I had won in a card game and I had also lost a German officer's boot knife. Had a little pearl, it wasn't real, but a ruby top on it on the hilt. I lost that in a game. [laughs] Yeah. When we got to customs in Miami. First of all, we came to the— we stopped first— Let me go all the way back to Cherbourg. There was six PC boats in our convoy. I still remember the codes cause it was on the bridge up where I had to be a signalman. It was Operation, I think, Market Basket. Anyway the head honcho, the squad dog, squadron commander, he got on the horn and told everyone of us- he said, "We are going to run into a hell of a storm beyond the channel and if you guys— we can take a vote. If you want to go back to Cherbourg now before we hit that storm tell us that or if you want keep on going through the storm to the states." Well of course we wanted to go home, and everybody I think probably because we went. And boy did we hit a storm.

Interviewer: How bad was it?

Hall: Oh. A PC boat is the smallest boat, like I told you, is the smallest boat to cross the ocean. The bow would go down and water would come up here and you are looking up at that next wave and it's about 20ft high. And they would come up and come crashing down and they would turn this way and that way. Oh my God. We had one guy, a black guy, who was one of our steward maids. These were in World War II they were, well there were a few in combat, they were the ones who served officers their meals and other stuff. John-John was this one guy's name. Young fellow and he was in this gun turret. One of them 20mm like I told you. The turrets had shields around them so high. He was laying down in there and the water was just drenching him. I hollered down and I came from the head. I had to hold onto the cable to make sure you don't roll over the side. I said, "John-John, you better get your ass [laughs] you know, out of there." He said, "Al, I don't care if I die" [laughs] "Goodbye" You know. But we made it. Made it to the Azores Islands. Where we fueled up and from the Azores we went to Bermuda and we weren't allowed to go ashore there, the enlisted men. Only the officers are allowed to go to shore. We dropped anchor out there you know. We couldn't go into Bermuda. We couldn't but the rum boats came out.

Interviewer: What are the rum boats?

Hall: Cubans would have a little boat and they got booze they sell you. Watches you know and all that kind of stuff. Watches you had to be careful some of them didn't have insides to them. [laughs] And they had one guy that was a barber. On the back of that PC you had a— hoist thing. You could pull another smaller boat that big cable that unwinded automatic. Then for that lazarette that's a rope locker. A line locker we called it. You could go down in there. And guys did they got drunk and would go down in there. Anyway, this thing is only this high of the deck, it solid where you could sit on it like we are sitting on these chairs. And he was cutting hair and we had one guys that was. Actually, we just called him crazy, we called him "Abe" because he had a black beard, seaman, seaman second class. That is as low as you can get other than apprentice seaman. Anyway, he was drunk and he sat down and this guy started cutting his hair. And you are only like this mic here, that far from the lazarette to the side of the ship. He just grabbed him by the arm and threw him over the side of the ship. It didn't hurt him, but he threw him over there. "What did you do that for Abe?" We called him Abe because he looks like Abe Lincoln. [Speaks incoherently as if drunk] He was drunk. He went down to the line locker. Well when the skipper came back, we had to sit special sea detail to get underway. He looked around the ship and it is just a small- you know it only 65 guys total counting the officers. And he says, "Anybody who doesn't come to special seas detail can't make their station. You are going to get court martialled when we get back to the states." Told that over the speaker box. So, there was about 4 guys down there and they just couldn't. They were drunk. So anyway, we cast off. We came into Miami at night, harbor. Florida and boy, didn't it look good. To see them lights blinking on the shore. They wouldn't let us in at night, so we had to drop anchor again. There was this song that came on. We had the radio on again down in the galley and a song came on. Frank Sinatra and he sang "Dream." And he said he would like to introduce a new song you know. Boy, that was home you know. So, then the next day of course we wake up and made port. Then what happened?

Interviewer: You said you had to go through customs. Tell me about that.

Hall: Well before that as the Captain promised. The Captain was just a young guy himself. Lieutenant JG. I bet wasn't older than 25, 26 years old. He called these four guys up. You had to witness that court martial. Actually, you have got several ones a deck court martial, a summary court martial, a general court martial, and a deck court martial. [counts on fingers] And he gave this guy 30 days no liberty and he said to Abe, "You are—You get—" I think they gave him 15 days. They gave him brig time. He says on top of that "You are not going to be on my ship anymore. When you get out of the brig you are gone." So that was the

end of “Abe” Wheeler. So, then we got our gear together and we always had to take our hat. We had our whites and we had to go through customs and take that gear dump it onto these tables, and I had my gun in there. And this chief he says, “Uh-uh that don’t go.” and I said, “Yes it does go. I have had to drag that up” and I picked it back up and I said, “I will take it back to the ship.” He said, “I don’t give a damn. You can take it back to the ship, but you are not taking it there sailor.” I said, “Okay.” So, I took it back to the ship. And then the next time we didn’t have to go. If you didn’t go on Liberty you didn’t have to go. Cause you had a little thing they gave you that said you had already been through customs and that your ship was in dock. We had to go dry dock. To raise our turrets. I think that is what they were going to do. Raise those turrets on them 20mm. You know the side of the hood so wouldn’t get much flak from here. So, what then?

Interviewer: So, you went back aboard the ship?

Hall: Yeah that was your home. Until we went into dry dock a couple days later. Dry dock meaning you are out of the water and they are cleaning the barnacles and all that kind of stuff. So the skipper said “Alright you guys can have Liberty cause there is nothing you can do because we are going to have all those people in the yard there, in the dry dock yard are going to do all the work. And there is nothing you can do while they are aboard. So, we are going to be here for about a week. So, you guys have all the Liberty all you want meaning— except you all have to be 0700 in the morning for roll call.” Want to know why he did that, so that way we didn’t go home, I mean “home” so that worked out well except we had. Three of us guys got a room at one of those boarding houses you know, and we worked the Cuban banana boats coming into Miami. Pier them for a dollar an hour. Taking them from boat to the boxcars. You pass them and stocked.

Interviewer: Why were you doing that?

Hall: For money. Only a dollar but you know. I mean. What they would do when you got tired and didn’t want to do that anymore you would just wave to the straw boss we called him, and get out of line and he would take the money out and say, “Let’s see. Alright you got three hours and three bucks.” At least it was real money. [laughs]

Interviewer: So how long before you did make it back home?

Hall: Well I got out in—. We made cruises down to Key West and did some tactical work for electronics stuff I couldn’t understand. It was secret anyway. It looked to

me like they would fire this dummy torpedo. Then this thing would fire and instead of it coming here this would fire over to change, so it wouldn't hit this target. Anyway, let's see. I got out in April of '46 that was in Jacksonville, Florida. We spent three days, no showers, no mattress. They had them springs and you slept on them springs. Your whites, they were filthy. Finally, we had to go to this Quonset hut and this captain was there. Navy captain at the lectern and he had our discharges and they had them in manila envelopes. And he said, "Men we are going to have some pictures here, some film of the new reserve." and he says "If you don't want to stay and watch the film. I will look through here and get your discharge and you can go." So, my buddy, Larry, I say, "I am tired. I need a shower. Let's get the hell out of here." He said, "I am with you" So we raised our hands and he said okay what's your names, got ours out. We had to sign a little blue card and again it looked like a recipe card and we were gone. We thought. So, we got a hotel and we roomed. Got our shower and came down out of the hotel in our dungarees, didn't have our hats on or cover you called it. And what happens but two MPs and a shore patrol come up in Jeep in front of the hotel cause the walkway and they saw us coming down there. So, they just kept in the Jeep until we got there and they got out of the Jeep and they said, "Where is your cover." We said, "We don't have any cover. We don't have to have it anymore. We just got out of the Navy." They laughed and said, "Don't you know you guys still have 30 days left in the Navy?" We said, "We better go get our hats." and they said, "You better." [laughs] So we went back and got out Navy hats. And we went in the shore. I mean into the Jack's beach and not a lot of other got discharged. That was fun. These weeks we better be careful it is still in the—.

Interviewer: So, can you describe your return home and seeing your family again?

Hall: Well that was great. My mother had got remarried again. I met her new husband and my sister was there. Well of course my wife and it was a home reunion you know.

Interviewer: When had you gotten married?

Hall: Hm?

Interviewer: When did you marry?

Hall: Married in February of '51.

Interviewer: So, can you tell me about finishing high school after the war?

Hall: Yeah. Well I was still in the Navy and I forget where we had to go. They offered us a GED. If you took GED test and passed it, you would get your diploma when you got home or whatever it was and that is what I did. When I got home, they told me I would have to go to the high school to get it. My diploma. So, I went there and Mr. Peebles he was still there, the principal. He said, "Alan, welcome home." He said, "You know," this was in April, he said, "It won't be long till graduation and I would like for you to be in our graduation class." What they did at graduation because we had our own stadium, they'd march all of the seniors around the track. After that and a couple turns, and the stadium was always full, the stadium. And then at the end the table where they give them the diplomas. I said, "Mr. Peebles sir I would rather not." He said, "Why not? You are a veteran. We want to tell them you are a veteran and that not that you are for flunking the last two—" [laughs] I said, "No, I really wouldn't want to do that." He says, "Oh that is a shame." I said, "If you just give me the diploma, I will be happy." He said, "Okay" [unintelligible] [laughs] He was a good one.

Interviewer: Why didn't you want to do it?

Hall: I am not, just like I told you. In front of all the people. I didn't feel right. I didn't want to be people— "Hall, he just come from Europe and the War blah blah blah" You know. To me I am no hero or nothing. My heroes. There are a lot of them. Still under them white crosses over there. I did what I had to do and that was it.

Interviewer: So, You tell me you were recalled for military service during the Korean War. And would you? How long did you spend overseas and what did you do during the Korean War?

Hall: I was recalled in September of '51. I am trying to sort things together. Oh, I had to go down to the reserve center. Because I was active reserve not just reserve but I found out that card I signed was active reserve. Dumbly again. So anyway. I had to go down to reserve and there was a bunch of guys there, you know, sailors. And the commander, three striper. He said, "I have got a list here and when I call your name, I want you to fall up and come up here. Stand [unintelligible] here." So called guys and guys were kind of hiding behind. He said, "No sense in hiding guys I know who you are and what—" [laughs] Then he called our names and I had to come up and stand in line. Then he told us to report back, [pause thinking], about a week, I guess to come back to the reserve. Anyway, we took the bus to the Cincinnati air station, airport, air terminal. A buddy of mine, Schmidty, he had four kids, and when he called his name at the commander at the reserve center

said, "Schmidty, you have got— you can go home. You have got four kids. You have got a family." He said, "Commander if it is the same for you then it is the same for me. I need a vacation." He said what?! You want go? He said, "Yes sir." He said, "Okay is your wife going to be okay with this." He said, "I don't know." [laughs] Anyway, he went. Of course, at the air terminal flew back to Great Lakes and to OGU that is "outgoing unit." From there we got assigned to a bus and then— Our gear though, they put the gear on boxcars. He said, "These cars are going to the East Coast and these cars are going to the West Coast." He was standing up; you know we were in a gymnasium and he was up on the balcony where the track is. He was looking down and said, "Now when I call you name remember this," and there were guys playing cards on the gym floor and other guys not paying attention, "Better here up, here it is." He would call your name and says West Coast that means your gear is on the train going to the West. Blah, blah, blah. So, we took those buses down to the airport and flew to Long Beach, California. And at Long Beach is where we took a destroyer out of mothballs. Took all the gook off and made shakedown cruises. Took off and after Christmas it was February for Japan to get ammunition and chow aboard. Then from Japan we joined Task Force 77. We had I remember two carriers; we had a boxer and—. We had six I guess. Anyway, our job on the destroyer was to escort those carriers out there so they could make dawn and evening strikes. They would go off and get into formation of four them to take over to North Korea. To drop their targets, bombs. And pick up pilots who were shot down. We had to do that. We had one, which was strange. Well he was, our skipper was the one who spotted him. Our skipper by the way was an executive officer next to a captain on a submarine in World War II. So, he knew how submarines operated. That is part of my story too. So anyway, he spotted this yellow life raft. [indecipherable] "We got one!" It was a Marine pilot shot down and he was in this raft and what he was doing was he paddling towards to the beach. The North Koreans of course were going to fire on him, and we wanted him alive. So, we lowered our small boat and I went with it being a signalman. We went out and we got him and we pulled him into the boat. When they saw we were going to get him and we had a good cox, that's what you call the guy steering the small boat. They were firing on us, but we didn't get hit. We got him to the ship and when we got him up put him on the deck and he was laying there on the deck and opens his eyes and says, "Where the hell am I?" We said, "You are on the deck of a Navy destroyer." "Navy," he said, "I have not had much use for the Navy, but you guys are angels today." [laughs]

Interviewer: Let me bring you back to the states after Korea. You said you joined the police force?

Hall: Well first of all. I joined the Pinkerton National Organization and did secret work for three years.

Interviewer: Really, how did you get into that?

Hall: Just got into it.

Interviewer: Where did that work take you?

Hall: Different states, different places. You did petty theft and pretty big stuff. You did, for example, you might go to a department store and they hire you on as a salesman and you are looking for girls putting on gloves and new gloves over top their old gloves. The guy at the door going out at night he would not notice that.

Interviewer: Watching over stuff like that?

Hall: You had to make —You don't collar them yourself. You have no authority, but you put it all in a report and eventually after you leave there they call the pull you. Because they are going to fire them people. Maybe put charges on them depending on how much stuff they took. That was one of them. Another of them was riding a bus from Cincinnati to Chicago. I will tell you that. See these buses, Greyhound, they pick up people in the country alongside the road and supposed to give them fares and all that. Sometimes these drivers were a little crooked and would keep the money. Instead of putting it in the slot. Because you are sitting there and get a seat where you can see him. That was another thing. I had my 38 in my suitcase and I put it right on top and I boarded this one bus and on the bus, you have that rack up there and I put my suitcase up there. This lady got on I don't know what little town it was, but she had one just like mine.

Interviewer: A 38?

Hall: No no the suitcase. I had mine. She put it next to mine and I am thinking, "I can't give up this seat because I am watching this guy, you know, but I will watch that suitcase." And she got off in some other city and I forgot, my mind concentrating on the driver. And she got off the bus and when I got off, I says, "That's not mine, [unintelligible] but she got you suitcase." Now there is my gun in that suitcase. I am thinking when she opens that suitcase, [laughs] there is my gun right on top. So, I called when we got into the station into Chicago. I told them at the Greyhound what happened, and she has my suitcase. They said, "Well she got on at so and so and so because she called in. She said that is not her suitcase." I said,

“Fine” They said, “Well we have it on a bus in Indianapolis and they will bring it here to Chicago.” Which she never got it open because I had it locked, and I guess she wasn’t trying to open it. She probably saw it at night when she got, “What is this? This is not mine.” It’s the Samson that would have us —.[motions to the shape of the suitcase] I will never forget that.

Interviewer: Now, did you return to Cincinnati to become a policeman?

Hall: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Okay then you started going to college at night and where was that?

Hall: At, actually, its Chase College. It was a law school and I should say pre-law really. I thought I want to be a lawyer. I want to get away from this secret work with Pinkerton because it got boring after a while. Yes, it is pre-law and I went there for a year. Then I said I don’t want to be a lawyer and then I quit and came back again for BS, Bachelors of Science, in Commerce degree which I got after 6 years of night school.

Interviewer: And what did you do with that degree?

Hall: Well when I got, I quit the police department and went with a company called Queen City Paper Company.

Interviewer: In the financial department?

Hall: No as a salesman. We sold fancy papers that covered boxes. They used to make women's hosiery boxes, little flat box with a quarter dozen hosiery in it, and it had real fancy foil paper and that is what we sold to these box manufacturers. That had a contract with the Hanes and Kayser Roth or wherever they made women’s hosiery. And also, other boxes like I had Saks Fifth Avenue who was an account. Just had plain white embossed. They had, we called them rigged boxes. Those are called rigged covered in paper, but what happened is like windmills after a while they made no more of those rigged boxes. Everybody was going to folding boxes. [Makes sound and throws up hand] There went that job.

Interviewer: Now tell me about your family. You said you married first in 1951 and what was your first wife’s name?

Hall: Mary

Interviewer: Mary and did you have children.

Hall: Yeah, we had four.

Interviewer: Okay, and then Mary passed away and you married your current wife? And what is her name?

Hall: Buena, B-U-E-N-A, Buena.

Interviewer: And how did you end up in Georgia?

Hall: Well I was still with Queen City Paper and my outfit there. The CEO called me one day and said "Al, I want you to meet me for lunch blah, blah, blah at some country club." I said, "Okay." He said, "How many states do you cover?" and I said, "26" "What!? How do you see all of your clients?" I said, "Well sometimes I fly over and wave at them." and he laughed and he says "well I will tell you what I am going to open two satellite offices one of them is going to be in Chicago and one of them is going to be in Atlanta. Now I am going to give you your choice and I think I know which one you will take." and I said, "That is right, it's Atlanta. I will give that snow over that sun."

Interviewer: So, you chose Atlanta? What year, do you recall the year you came down?

Hall: '69,

Interviewer: '69. And you have been here ever since?

Hall: [nods yes]

Interviewer: So how long did you continue to work for that paper company?

Hall: 'Til '78

Interviewer: And did you retire at that point?

Hall: No.

Interviewer: You went to work somewhere else?

Hall: I quit that job because [laughs under breath] They were going to open a paper warehouse. I am glad I didn't I wanted that— Warehouse in Hickory, North Carolina. Not Hickory, near Hickory. Anyway, they opened a warehouse. I got sure— Because the president of Queen City, my boss, that is what he wanted to do but in the meantime right after that we talked. The company of Queen City was sold to Leboydo [unsure of spelling] to another big corporation. That guy at the corporation had their own people. So, they got this guy of their own to have the warehouse so I thought well I don't know my old boss was a good friend, the president, he was more or less a good friend of mine. So, I said it's time to quit this job. I didn't know what I was going to do. I quit and then I thought, it was about a week, well I know the [unintelligible] artwork, some printing. I said to myself how about a small printing company. So, I went to the bank and went to the guy I was banking with when I was still with Queen City down there. Told him that I want a 50,000-dollar loan. I found a place. I wanted to buy. There was a print shop in Marietta there. So, I told this vice president at the bank there that I want to borrow 50,000 dollars, and he said I don't think that will be a problem. I said I got my own money too. I sold my motor home. I said I got my own money, but I need 50,000 dollars. He said I don't think that will be a problem. He is writing, "What kind of company is it?" I said, "A printing company." "What!" He said "Al, I have got a warehouse of printing press that we have repossessed. That is a bad business." I said, "Well I saw—" He said, "Did you see these guy's books?" and I said "Yeah" I didn't tell him that he wasn't doing too well. [laughs] He said, "Well I bet he is doing too well." I said, "Well, you know how they are." He said, "Well I can't— I was just going to give it to you. I will have to take this for more now. Otherwise I get in trouble." He would get in trouble. So, he called me and says you got it. So, I bought it and I knew what I had to do. This guy was a young fellow and he was in partners with an older woman and it was a franchise deal called Copycat. First thing I did is rearrange how the equipment was. Where the cutter was and where the presses were. He didn't have it lined up right. Because you print and then you go around and you cut and then you use whatever you need over here. Anyway, so I bought it and in three years I had paid for.

Interviewer: What was the name of the printing company?

Hall: Oh, I was going around—.

Interviewer: What was the name of the printing company?

Hall: Oh, I changed it to "Ol' Ironsides"

Interviewer: Why is that?

Hall: Oh, out of the Navy the Ol' Ironsides. So, I rented an old abandoned Dairy Queen in Marietta there. Move it to Marietta. Well I was in Marietta, we moved around only about seven blocks from where it was, and it had an upstairs to where I had my office. Then I got an idea, you know what, I am only doing printing. I can do advertising. I had made up an 8x14 sheet. I put business cards on it and went around and sold it to customers, restaurants, and that. I said I guarantee you 10,000 mailers and I went by zip code. That worked.

Interviewer: How long did you have that business?

Hall: Golly, that was from '78 to '84.

Interviewer: Okay, well you are a member of the VFW and is that in Marietta?

Hall: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay, and can I just ask you, to finish up, what is your military service, in both WWII and the Korean War, what does that mean to you today?

Hall: Well I think of it- which I am very very proud of it. That I could serve. A lot of memories and a lot that I forget. You don't really remember combat things. You remember the good things like going from Normandy to Le Harve in the field and finding a cache of Cognac. Where the Germans had thought they hid it, but it was sticking up in areas. We were messing around with nothing to do and one guy says, "Hey look at this." We got it up and I think there was 12 bottles in there of Cognac. So, our commander was a Swede, he was really American but he had that accent. Told our chief, he says, "Have the boys break out their mess kits and give them a drink." We took our mess kits, and with the little handle on it and we held them up. And the chief took the bottle and [mimics poring a single drop into the cups] [laughs] and this Commander, we are looking at our Commander and he said, "God dammit Chief give me that bottle. I said a drink." [laughs] We kept two bottle and in the next village we came in we gave them to the people.

Interviewer: So those are the type of things you remember?

Hall: Oh yeah. We carried a can of black shoe police in our pocket all the time in case we need it for night. We were staying in this old bombed out schoolhouse. And that morning we were waiting for our K-rations, a guy came around in a truck and

throw you your breakfast K-rations. We are all sitting around laughing and this one guy is laughing. He dawns on him; they are looking at me and laughing. His buddy had taken that shoe polish and [laughs] [motions the shape of glasses on his face] while he was sleeping you know. A moustache. He said to his buddy, “You son of a bitch” and took his knife. He carried these knives and went to his pack. [motions stabbing] He said, “What the hell did you do that for?” and he said, “Look at this. Look at his. Do it again.” They were always at each other's throats. One guy was really an alcoholic. He would have liked to keep all of that cognac. [laughs]

Interviewer: Well is there anything else you would like to add before we finish up?

Hall: First of all, I want to thank you for asking me for this interview. So that I can air some things that I have not thought about for a long time. Just to say that again I am very proud of the Amphibious Commandos cause I tell you there is nothing like a camaraderie. See today as I understand it the Kennedy, they tell us in ‘62 I guess it was, had to be or early ‘63, ‘64 before he was killed. He wanted an elite organization. So, he took the underwater demolition teams and our amphibious assault forces and put them together and called them—.

Interviewer: The Navy Seals?

Hall: Right.

Interviewer: So, your guys became the Navy Seals.

Hall: Mmm-hmm. I will say our training. Today the Seals are so well all our training anyway is very secretive. We were just glad to be a part of the beginning of that organization and have the camaraderie. Both of my sons by the way are both former Navy, former corpsman. Glad that we served.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much Mr. Hall, and we will end there.

Hall: Well thank you.

Interviewer: Of Course.