

ROMAN: I am very happy. I have been remarkably blessed with family, three kids, a lovely wife and good friends. I had a wonderful array of men and shipyards workers still keep in touch me after 55 years. And that is the thing I think I am blessed for because they still recognize the fact that I was their superior but I treated them all as one member of the family. I did that all through my course at the shipyard. At one time I was asked how come I was made Chief Hull Inspector. I was elected to be the Chief by the All Inspectors when they decided they need a head of the operation so they elected me Chief. In that course of time two men that were Inspectors prior to me getting into the Inspection Department quit immediately because they were looking forward to that position.

LINDA: Why do you think they gave it to you. ?

ROMAN: I don't know. I wasn't very intelligent. I was a high school dropout. Probably I don't know it was my interest in the workers. You see we had 19,500 employees at one time. I would say in the course of the building of the ships we had over 200,000 employees that came through the shipyard from time to time. But primarily we had this amount of employees and to control them you had to be nice. Well you had to be one of the gang in other words. And that is what I tried to be. I had fellas in my department that advanced. I never held back a requisition when they wanted to be advanced like going to be a superintendent, possibly a dock superintendent. I encouraged them, helped them get the job and a lot of those fellas advanced in position ahead of me which was great. That is what I wanted to see. I was very concerned about the goodwill and all those young guys coming in here. I met most of them when I could. Why not. I was the Chief of Inspectors and that didn't impress me at all but now as I look back at the fact of the responsibility that I had over all of the employees and it was Ritz there, Ritz that. You know my last name is Ritzer they abbreviated it to Ritz. It was easier for them to say Ritz. Ritz see how your ship's welds held. That was our purpose to build a good ship and whenever a Navy man knocked down some of my welding I was on the job to find out why he knocked it down. In 534, that rings a bell, LST 534, the day she was to be launched I would not allow her or sell her to the Navy to be launched. My Chief came down to get me. Now to walk the length of the shipyard which was about 2 1/2 miles from my office which is in the shops building, at the far east end of the shipyard to the west end was a 2 1/2 mile walk. But when I stopped the launching of 534 my Chief came down to see me to explain to me that Commander Healy wanted to see me. Johnny Coon, the Production Manager,

wanted to see me. Frank Kirsten the General Manager, they were all in the meeting. I was to explain to them why I would not okay that ship to be launched.

LINDA: What day was this?

ROMAN: It would have been December 4, probably on a Saturday. I think that was the original launching was to be December the 4th on Saturday and we held back the launching until December 8th. By the way we, the superintendent of that particular ship went along with all my demands and corrected all the errors. Walking up, getting a little ahead of myself, walking up to the Administration Building to explain why I didn't okay the launching of this ship on the 4th. The Chief says to me "Ritz, right or wrong by God I hope you are right because right or wrong I will always stand by you. My friend that is Navy, my Chief George C. Martin. I loved that guy. Loved him dearly. He picked me out of a class of 100's of employees and made me Chief Hull Inspector and he depended on me. What I wanted to do was build a home away from home coming to the shipyards to take their ship out. One guy in particular after he was aboard our ship LST 157 the Navy found out that he had enlisted at the age of 14 and said he was 16. He was busted but he was a big looking guy. But when he was over in Africa on 157 they found out his age. They were going to discharge him and send him back to the States. Not too long ago I called him chick because he was little and the other sailors referred to him as chicken. I said Chick how come they didn't send you back? I said I was under the impression that after you left the ship here and went to Africa on the invasion you hauled donkeys and troops in Africa, that is when they found out about your age but I was told they would send you back to this country. Discharge you. He said you know Ritz what I did. I shined the Captain's shoes, I took care of his special needs in his cabin. They kept me on until I became of age and he said I am so happy they did that. That was my . That was one encounter of the many seamen that took these ships out. The best thing I guess is when a Navy man comes up to me now or writes me a Christmas note which I get quite a few of. You wouldn't think so after 55 years. But they will say Ritz see how well your welds held. We built 167 LSTs. 21 of the LSTs that we build were destroyed by actual combat by torpedo and kamikaze hits and bombs but we never that first ship from structural defects. And it was known fact that in rough seas broke apart, the welding didn't hold. So I said it is a good feeling to have them tell you now Ritz see how well your welding held. Now I am bragging but I had nothing to do with that. Only like the 534 if that ship was ready to be

launched, if that hull was not 85% complete I would not okay it. Now the Waif Superintendent worked very nicely with me. He in turn would do his inspection and then he would call my inspector in to see if he missed anything. Now when I say inspector they had to inspect the ship fitting, the quality of ship fitting, the welding of the ships sections. If the transfer spoke heads were not in share with the main decks or deck fighting because if they were, if the main bulk head was in shear then the plate was like this, it would shear off in a close hit. Those are the things we had to check for to find out if all the foundations, the machinery foundations and there was lots of them aboard ship.

LINDA: How old were you?

ROMAN: I was 39 believe it or not. I was an old man. I knew how to weld and that is what got me the job. When I applied for a job, I wanted to get into the Navy. I wanted to join it at 39. I still had the ambition to join the service, not particularly the Navy. But the shipyard of course was under the planning stage and my steel, Steel Construction I learned welding on my own. We built our own welders and believe it or not we would cut strips of hay bale wire, if you ever saw metal a hay bale wire you would know what I am talking about. We would cut them in 12 foot lengths and use soap stone for a flox and we taught ourselves how to weld. When I went for an application at the shipyard that was one of the first questions they asked me if I could weld. Oh yeah I was the best welder in town, I knew all about it. I said yes. I learned from experience the hard way. And the rest of the time as history will be, if you check it I was responsible for the welding schools, and primarily the women welders. I don't know why I guess I just liked the girls. No that wasn't the reason. The reason was the draft board was taking all of our experienced welders that we had taught to weld. You see welding chips was something entirely new. Prior to that they were placed and put together riveted. It was entirely new and the design agent had designed this ship to be flexible and through welding it could be. But you can manage welding up a bunch of steel over 380 feet long the length of this ship that you are bound to build up stress in there and that is the thing we had to learn by trial and error. How to eliminate that stress in ships. But when the draft board was taking all our experienced welders, welders that we taught, we both my Boss the Chief George C. Morton, the one I mentioned previously, mentioned to me one day came up to the office and he says Ritz what do you think of the idea of teaching women to weld. He says the General Manager is opposed to it. Production, Johnny Coons is opposed to it. He said there will be too much

lost time and aboard ship if we had women welders. I says, my answer was, I said Chief we are going to have to have them. Just take this in mind. My wife was a good seamstress and she could stitch a seam perfectly, hand stitch. So upon that theory I decided if a woman could stitch a nice seam she could lie down a good bead or a good weld on that ship and she would be far more superior than a lot of our men welders. Because by golly that is the way it really turned out. I was for women welders and we had a lot of them. Our first woman welder was a first free position welder. Now I can't welder free positions. I can weld flatly and down and I might weld vertically a little but overhead no, that would be out. But we taught this lady she became our first free position welder. As a matter of fact she got so good that she never got on production. She got into training and she even taught her husband how to weld and he in time went on board ship as a production welder. So that is my story about welding. I guess I could talk for hours about welding. I learned a lot. We all learned. I had members in my organization that work the graveyard shift for three years that I never saw. Only knew their names by the personnel list that I had. Can you imagine that I had a tank tester inspector under my supervision that I never saw for three years that tank tested the ships. The reason for that was they came on at midnight and they did their testing in the morning hours we call the graveyard shift. When I came to work in the morning at 7:30 they were already home own in bed sleeping. We had this one young man, was a high school at that time, a senior, Preston High School. Worked in my department. He was very good. After 54 years I knew that man from my personnel list only. After 54 years he came to me like you came to my back door and brought a member of the Indiana Chapter of the LST Association. So he made himself acquainted with me that he was one of my tank tester inspectors 54 years ago. I couldn't believe it. He later became Principal of Highland High School and was Principal for 23 years. After he joined the Navy upon gradation from high school. Joined the Navy served aboard an LST that we built here in Evansville. LST numbers.....

He later on wrote the book The Shipyard Workforce which I think you are familiar with. The book is a book of pictures of all various stages of employment throughout the shipyard. It is a nice book. It needed a little additional editing and in time will be a good book? It is not as good say as the Cornfield Shipyard. Andy Clark did an exceptionally good job on that book. But he should never have named it the Cornfield Shipyard because there was only one cornfield shipyard and that was a shipyard in Seneca on the Chicago River. It was dug out on the banks of a cornfield and it was properly named the Cornfield Shipyard. I knew Mirim MacCallister real well because after the

war he was going to set up a memorial for the LSTs that were built not only they ones they built but possibly the one we had built and of course before he could get an LST here from Taiwan he passed away so that stopped that. As you know, the great governor is giving us one. Has offered to give us one. We have a crew over there waiting to sail that ship back as a living memorial to the LST. Do you realize over the 1,051 LSTs that were built for World War II, that were built mostly by inland shipyards, that there was only two available and only one of those was given to the Greek Government. We can have that ship. The great governor has given it to us but our Secretary of the State will not allow us to bring that ship as a memorial at New York when we have our next reunion or convention there. Oh yes Mr. Maggie the ahead of the State Department tells me personally you fellows are welcome to bring your ship over for a memorial but first you have to take engines apart, I showed you a picture of one of those engines, 900 post part diesel engine. We have to remove those two engines. We have to cut the shaft in two. We have to drill holes in the props so that it cannot be used. I guess they thought we were going to make a love boat out of that ship, no we wanted it for historical preservation and our State Department says you can have it provided you do like a lot of these tanks that are on display in the Veterans of War parking lot sit there rusting out. We don't want that. We are proud of the LSTs because we built one hell of a good ship and I want you to know they floated. Like the crew said on 157 one time Ritz, they were in several scraps, battles too, and there were some lives lost, yes, which we won't bring up at this time but those crews are still praising the LST 157 about being a good ship. It was their home away from home. The dedicated workers here in Evansville and the vicinity of Evansville I would say within a 100 miles of everything through Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee. They came here for employment. They learned how to build ships. Why I wouldn't even know how to build a row boat but the fact that I told them that I knew how to weld. Well I learned and I learned fast. Let me tell you I learned fast. Not only did I learn fast but everybody that worked on, we had a desire. As you know, when the Navy would come up and ask us for 11 ships we would give them 12. That was extra effort that the workers had to do to get those extra two ships. They always managed to get preset quote. Buy one and sometimes two. We had two launchings in one day. Boy you think we weren't busy. Yes we were busy. The Museum has a photo of the first women welders and I hope you can see that photo. At one time I had a copy of those women welders and they looked so cute in their leathers and their bonnets and their welding rods and there is quite a few of them and as I have mentioned previously they became very proficient welders. We never had any

welds that would go bad with those women welders. They were the best. They were just the best.

LINDA: How many shipyards were there during that time.

ROMAN: There were 4 inland shipyards. Now the reason the Bethlehem Steel Cow? Ships and well known ship building facilities only built one or maybe two like in the beginning. The reason they were contributing to inland shipyards was for protection in case the government would come in and find where were were building these ships and get destroyed by a bomb. And they could do that easily. That is the whole reason the location of these inland shipyards were a secret and hush hush for a long time. That is one of the reasons on your announcement of each christening. There is no number, no yard number, no LST number because they were always fearful that that might leak to the government. You know we had Tokyo Rose. You have heard of Tokyo Rose? One crew member told me when time when their ship set sail from Tunisia we didn't know where were going until we got on the radio that evening with Tokyo Rose and if we wanted information of where the Admiralty was sending us Tokyo Rose would always give it to us. Tokyo Rose was born in this country a full fledged Japanese woman. She was a spy for the Japanese government and she did a real good job trying to convince the boys aboard ship. She would come on like - I had a chance one time of heard some of those records - While you boys are out here serving the country do you know what your wife is doing at home? She is probably socializing with some of those four Fs that didn't have to go into service. That was a favorite speech of hers. As you know after the war, Tokyo Rose was apprehended. She was sent to prison for treason and she was treason according to the United States because she was a United States citizen. And our President, Gerald Ford, pardoned her. She has since passed away. I didn't much like the idea that Gerald Ford pardoned her for a sin that she had committed like betraying her countrymen. The men just like our beautiful flag here how could anyone ever betray that flag. That is country and that is your country. My country. Is there anything I am supposed to tell you? You want to ask me some questions?

I want to tell you something off the record now. LST 808 is having their 15th reunion on the 18th of May, that is the 18th of this month and they I guess oh back in December asked me if I would go to their meeting. They want to kind of specialize giving me the honor of being the special honorary member. I am a member of LST 808 but it is an honorary degree.

And it is not too far Covington, Kentucky. They held their first reunion here in 88. If you recall I said to you, our Mayor has never been hepped on what we accomplished here during World War II. He refused admission when the Captain of 808 who has since passed on, admission to his office. And that hurt me deeply to think here that young man sacrificed his life came back here and the Mayor of our City would not see him and that is what prompts me to say that you will never get in to see the Mayor. You recall your remark - You want to bet. I would like to bet. I'll bet you dinner.

LINDA: Well this particular documentary is on the 534.

ROMAN: I understand that and here I haven't even got on the 534.

LINDA: I know that but if we decided to come back and do a documentary on the shipyard of Evansville and looking at that book that Pat Keller and Jim, the book that Pat and Jim have done gives me a little more incentive to talk to them about maybe taking that and combining it with video and the documentary and then we will get into the Mayor.

ROMAN: Forget him now.

LINDA: You think I can do that?

ROMAN: Yes. Well as you know there is a memorial marker in the parking lot of Bristol Myers parking lot. And I unveiled that marker and dedicated that marker in 1991. We had our first reunion, LST had our first reunion there but Bristol Myers Squibb required our commander or our members of LST 157 to post a one million dollar security guaranteed that if anyone got hurt that Bristol Myers would not be responsible. That day event - we paid that insurance premium that one time but that is all we could afford because those sailors don't have that kind of money to put up a protection for a big company like Bristol-Myers Squibb. After that we always kept a stand in front of the monument with flowers. I was down there one time to change the flowers after a reunion and I was order off the parking lot because I didn't get permission from the guard to visit that marker. What good is that marker down there. It is off limits. Jim mentioned that in his book. And those are the things I am glad to see someone being informed about a memorial marker at Bristol Myers parking lot. You can't see it, it is down off the road and it is not accessible. I can take you down there and show right where we launched these ships. I can show you the indentures in the

concrete where the rails were for the gentries that traveled on those five gentry ways in building those ships. They are all visible again but you can't get permission. If you get permission you have to get it from the officer at the guard shack and if she is I guess she will give you permission.

LINDA: Andrew is going to take us there tomorrow. We are going to go there tomorrow and we got a camera pass through Bristol-Myers for him to take us on a tour through that area. So I hope the water is down and we can see those trappings.

ROMAN: I don't think the water is up over the parking lot. But all over the dock peers, the peers of the docks at low tide they are visible because you see there were walkways leading from the bank out to each ship. See there were four outfitting docks and sometimes four ships to a dock. We couldn't, well it was the supplies too. Getting the supplies in. I should tell you about a little girl. Her husband is a very good friend of mine. Her name is Vera Flaton and you remind me so much of her. Of course I would say at the time she worked at the shipyard she was small and tender weighs less than 90 pounds. Her job was to receive. Because she worked in the receiving department. She was so small that she would have to stand on a concrete block to get in the cab to direct the driver of this particularly truck to the area that he was supposed to deliver material. Maybe dock 2, or maybe dock 4 or maybe some skid area. She was apt to the point that she could tell him where to go and direct the driver how to go. She is still living. Now her husband is quite active in the LST Association. He is our Chaplain of 157. Mr. Gurley remarked to me one time - Well he never fought on LST 157 but how he happen to be over in the same area he was on a liberty ship so he had a lot of experience. His name is Raymond Clayton. And he is married to Vera. And they come here quite frequently to see me and we keep in touch and she is a little _____. You'd just love her if you see her. Now she is, imagine at her age today add 55 years to it. Well you can see how much older she looks. She has some alzheimers. Though most of these people have that. I am awfully afraid. I am getting so forgetful.

LINDA: At 94 1/2 you are entitled to forget one or two things.

MATT: It doesn't sound like you have forgotten anything.

LINDA: Tell me about the 534.

ROMAN: Well by the time. The 534 she was our 59th yard number and after we had built 59 we were doing a little better job on construction of that ship and our first ships we were building them from scratch. Raw material that had been stored in the National Steel and Fuel Company, George L. Meister. And these various steel plates

LINDA TOLD HIM TO STOP BECAUSE OF NOISE

ROMAN: In 1941 the government was preparing for this war with Japan unknowingly to me or any of the citizens in Evansville. International Steel was stockpiling steel for the construction of a ship, not knowing what kind of ship it would be or anything in regards to them. Actually how we got into being in on the know lets say. Walter Cook, he was a salesman for International Steel and Iron Company. He is the one that was responsible for getting the government to build the shipyard here at Evansville. He and his group explained to the Navy Department that it would be a good location. International Steel had previously been building that Bailey Bridge. You know the Baily Bridge. You heard of the Baily Bridge. Everyone has. It was a conveyance to land troops and personnel off of a ship. They used the Baily Bridge. That is how come Warren Cook had his ins in Washington and he convinced the State Department to come and check on the location here in Evansville. Unknowingly to Walter, you notice I mention Walter as I know them, yes I bought steel from International Steel and Iron Company and I was acquainted with the architects, the draftsmen and in general the fellas that owned and operated International Steel and Iron Company. Consequently I knew that Walter was up to something and when I applied for the job I quit one heck of a good job to go to work for the shipyard and Walter Cook had come out with a small item in the paper designating, telling the fact that there would be a group Naval officials that would be coming to Evansville to view the location for they didn't no what. Primarily to build a shipyard. Only Cook was in the know then. We just got an inkling of that. We never got the full details until one day when we found out that this Navy crew that was sent in there and by the way those papers I gave you, that Navy crew I think I have mentioned that in that article I wrote for the Waterways? Journal. It seems they called Walter. He was having supper that night it was a Sunday evening stating that the Navy was coming in to view the area that he had suggested in Washington to build a shipyard. LST wasn't mentioned. So that is how we got started back in 41 stockpiling steel for the building of the LST. That is what prompted me to say we built these ships from scratch. We _____ burn the steel, the beams the plating and everything. My first job

wasn't at the shipyard it was at International Steel and Iron Company. Believe it or not I inspected tons and tons of steel plates that had been previously stored since 1941 at the International Steel and Iron Company. I was checking for carbon content. The flexibility, the proper the steel, the weight, the thickness and I didn't know what to do. I'll be frank with you, I learned. I was there naturally because they had the first prints from Gibbs and Cox to building this LST. Not only did I inspect steel plates that went into this first keel section, I inspected the layout and the welding and the ship fitting on that first field section. But very few people know that the first keel that was built by International Steel and Iron Company was not LST 157 actually it was so distorted, so warped, with the stress build up plates buckled. That it could not have been put in the ship as part of the keel section. It was generally set aside and our second ship I inspected both of those, it was permissible. It was a little better. The workmen we were getting to the fact well start this weld here and this field plate. You didn't just anywhere, you started at a certain given point. So many meters, so many feet back and all that. You learned how to heat treat that field. To work the stress out of the ship as it went along being built. We learned how to do that on the second one. That is the one that was late and that was LST 157. So the first ship we built from scratch was not laid down as 157.

My office at International Steel was out in the plant. It was in a loft. An open loft where I had a panorama view of the entire works of International Steel and Iron Company the gentries. The assembling of this steel section. When I didn't go down and inspect I could see from my loft. It was cold, it was damp, and smokey. My god the smoke from those welding torches. They impregnated the air and you couldn't hardly breath at times. And was I happy after the three months when I was told our office had been completed in the Shops Building and my office then was moved apt to the shipyard. This is when I became Chief of Inspectors. Kinda going into background aren't I?

LINDA: Now 89 ships later the 534

ROMAN: I don't understand to this day why Mrs. Clarence Jones was not designated or picked to christen or sponsor a ship at a year earlier yard number because he was so efficient, Clarence Jones was a very efficient engineer. There was a lot of design changes. Each day we would get a new change about some feature of the ship because that ship was growing. We were growing. We were incorporating those new ideas as the workers presented them to the ship builders. But let me tell you one thing, we could

not make that change here locally. We had to get a approval by the bureau of ships and by Gibbs and Cox in New York City, the design agent of the LST before we could proceed. Then an order would come down to Clarence Jones, then we would get it the next morning on my desk at the ship yard. That is when I would call my inspectors in and we would peer over the blueprints to detect any changes so that when my inspector went aboard a particular ship 534 in general or any of those others that came later, that he knew what he was doing. The Navy gave us a lot of trouble. The Navy Inspectors. I don't know why. Maybe I shouldn't say this but it started from the beginning. Lt. Commander Redgrave who was commander of the district supervising the ship building in this district. His wife, of course as you know, was designated to launch our first ship. She chose as a matron of honor her college girl chum who happened to be the wife of the Naval inspector. Henry Goodman. Henry Goodman was a thorn in my side from the beginning until her was finally promoted as a Petty Officer and left the shipyard. Because he had authority, it shouldn't have been that way. We didn't have a war production committee at that time. We had no one to complain to because Hank Goodman was the man and the General Superintendent of Transfer Waves. On 534 they would not permit the okaying of that ship for any special. She wasn't ready. The pickup welding had not been completed. When I say pickup welding, it was welding that the Superintendent himself or his foreman had inspected a ship before they called in my inspector. I would be the next inspector to be called in. I was at a desk in the shops building. I didn't go aboard that ship but I got that complaint. And then the particular inspector on that ship would make his inspection. If he found something that the Superintendent missed then he marked it with yellow crayon. And then we would call in through the Naval Inspection. Because the Navy had to inspect it before it would accept that ship. The 534 was turned down by the Navy not particularly my inspector. Now what he probably turned it down for was probably something insignificant. Oh well it doesn't look good. We didn't have x-ray of welding those days. We should have x-rays so we could have welded them, they looked rough. It was a matter of opinion. And we depended upon the ability of that particular inspector to know that well. I was in a position to get a lot of feedback and a lot of just plain hell. As you know, the records will show who our Navy Men were aboard the 534. We had 4 Navy Inspectors that took that ship downtown to the Navy Yard. I don't just which one now but in that record that I have there it will tell you who the representative was of the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company Inspection Department. Jim Mullick, the favorite Santa Claus of Santa Claus Indiana was an engineer and inspector for diesel engines. He was the one that went

down on LST 160. When they came back from that trip he came to my office he had the chief, George C. Morton with him. And he was a normal Navy man, this Jim Mullick was. He was a retired enlistee, I guess you would call him. He bellowed out in the office. We had a big open space office. Other various inspectors had their desks around. He would bellow out RICHARD GET YOUR E OVER HERE and oh I knew that meant trouble. There was a standup desk where Jim was standing and that is the inspector that rode the ship down, 160, wasn't 534, he had a set of blueprints. He explained to the Chief what I had missed and I missed it because I am sitting up there at my desk with 250 inspections under my direct supervision. Yeah I was aboard every ship that was inspected. I couldn't make it. But as a big department head I got blamed for that. They found a leak in the fuel oil tank I think it was 64B and the Chief said well what did you do Jim. Well he said we had to drain the oil, the diesel fuel oil, and we had to dump the entire tank. I got a welder out on the dock and had the welds taken care of. There was a leak about three inches deep down from the top deck seam. Well one of my tank test inspectors missed that because in testing a complete tank they were tested with air pressure. 30 pounds to the square inch. That is a lot of air. After the air was cut off these fellas that I had mentioned previously with their little tomato can of soapy water and a paint brush would check all the seams for bubbles. Well they should have caught that. They didn't. I think it was in one of those notes that I gave you. You might enjoy reading it later on. The one I wrote for the Waterways Journal. I was very happy that the dumping of the oil wasn't charged to me. At least I didn't have to pay for that but I caught hell because I missed that well. That was one of my jobs. I am really telling you that to let you know it just wasn't easy. There were many a night that I came home dead tired. Get up at midnight and go back to the shipyard to check on something. I was very fortunate. I had passes, I had badges that would allow me to go through or anywhere in the shipyard. I even inspected when the _____ was installed in the main deck house. I was stopped from going in there for an outfitting inspection. Well they saw my badge and they said oh well come on in. You are okay. I could go anywhere, anytime at night or day but let me tell you one thing I punched a clock just like any other employee and every department head did the same as I did. We were checked in and check out at a regular working period time. I had no extra privilege only if I wanted to go back in the shipyard at two in the morning or a holiday to check to see if any of my workman were up there in the office maybe taking a short nap. I had permission. I had guard passes. I could move anywhere in that shipyard at any time. And that was a privilege and I always honored that privilege. Now 534. It was a good ship. But my

disappointment now is that I met this sailor's daughter and I can't tell her really why I didn't spend more time with the 534. I spent a lot of time on a lot of ships.

LINDA: You knew Mrs. Clarence Jones. Were you there the day she broke the champagne bottle over the 534?

ROMAN: Oh yes.

LINDA: Tell me about that please.

ROMAN: Well you know if they didn't break the bottle on the first swing that was a bad omen for the ship. If they had to take a second swing and that happened quite a few times but personally she broke the bottle and I should have known Mrs. Jones. The fact of the matter is right next door was my neighbor Doctor J. F. Wind. That is a women's dormitory now of the elite. Rented Mr. & Mrs. Jones a house that he owned on Kentucky Avenue and being a pillar carpenter I would go over and do little odds and ends and I met Mrs. Jones but rarely did I know, I surmised that she didn't attend social affairs. I don't know why she was, no picture of her, why she was looked over. When my son asked my many years ago, Dad how come mother never launched a ship or christened a ship, I can't tell you....

Well this story is on my mind. I like to tell you this. I think previously I had sort of told you about the draft board taking our most efficient men welders. Fortunately, I mean unfortunately, we had a young man and I had priority over the draft board in Vanderberg County. Believe it or not I received a lot of employees that didn't want to go into service that came to the shipyard and were qualified workers and I could get them exempt from the draft. In this one particular case his name was Godfrey Prudent. Young chap. He had two small children. As you know gas rationing was on and we very seldom could drive our own cars because we couldn't get enough gasoline. His parents lived down in Spottsville, Kentucky. That is down here across the river. Cross the bridge at Green River in Spottsville. Whenever I had any extra gas I would always take he, his wife and two small children down there to his folks house for a visit. He was working at the shipyard. Of course I was always anxious to go. His mother could fry the best Kentucky fried chicken you ever ate. So I was always willing to go. So his draft number came up so I got him deferred. About two weeks after I got his deferment he didn't show up for work. He came to work to see me. He had

joined the Navy. He wanted to serve his country. That was a heartbreak. I wrote the Chief, my boss, and what a long story to get to. My typist Florence Bisses, she is still alive and lives in the Newburgh area, I could never ever dictate a letter. I would write the letter

and then she would copy it and we would send it out to the various department heads. When I wrote to the Chief explaining because he had some pay coming and I mentioned to her I thought it was heart rendering, that was the word, heart rendering that he would give up a good job, and a good family life to join the service. That he was to be commended. It was heart rendering. Florence came over to the desk and she said Mr. Ritzer, she says the words is heart rending, heart rending, not heart rendering she says you render lard. Can you imagine that. That is how efficient she was but how incorrect I was in writing these letters for dictation. As I say I couldn't dictate a letter. I always admired that young man. He went through the service, he went through boot training at Bradford Naval Base and I suppose he has done alright. In time I failed to hear from him so he has moved on. That is the story I would like for you to know how everybody was dedicated to something or somehow to serving their country. When I mentioned about Hank Goodman. He put in an application for transfer. We were all happy about it. He could get a rating as Chief Petty Officer. A young buck like I was well maybe I could get a rating too. I am going to make an application card in the Navy. I was turned down. Hank Goodman got the nod. In other words he got the commission. He was Chief Petty Officer. When my Chief came down to give me the bad news that I wasn't selected for this advancement I hit the ceiling. I wanted to go right up to the top. I wanted to see Commander Healy. And here is what Commander Healy did say to me. He says that type of job we can fill that with 90 day wonders but your experience in steel construction is invaluable. We can't train anyone to take your place. That is the reason that Mr. Goodman got the nod instead of you. Well that satisfied me but those are the things that happened to me during the war. Yes they were good things. I, in my position I belonged to the Namath Club. Never attended. My wife was a whole lot like Mrs. Jones. She didn't care about socializing with dances events. She'd rather stay home with her two kids. Now it was, I must stress one thing though. At the UFO she went down every night and served the fellas that came through from the C& I Railroad Station which was a community center. And she would pop corn until closing time and then come home. And that was night after night. She did her part in serving the sailors that came through to take our ships out. So it wasn't, she wasn't active in my work, she was very active. 534. I guess that is going to be my nightmare now until I find out exactly - oh I will

find out what happened to Mrs. Jones because I have a good infinitive source and that is through Jim Keller. Jim Keller and Pat have thoroughly researched every item that I ever gave them in regard to his manuscript. I talked to the publisher recently of the various, but the other two books that had been published and a publisher told me maybe you didn't know it but every time he left here with a tape he researched you and what you told him. Very thoroughly before it was put in as print or in his manuscript. I knew that because when I first started working with Jim in regards to the history of the local shipyard. It would be primarily a book of the history of the shipyard and the ships that we built and the dedication of the workers that built those ships. It was amazing the people's attitudes. The friendly attitudes. I am only sorry that the hardships that I went through. The hardships that I probably laid on my wife, being at work most of the time. After my 8 hour stint I always went back to the shipyard. I was always called on duty. Many a time. If I wasn't in bed she knew where I was. And she was right too. I was at the shipyard. We were having trouble with welding or anything we had to get those ships right and we did. All of them. Thank god we did. We never lost that first ship and we had them where they broke in two. We had them when the wells were bad or the tanks leaked. Well I had some occasionally happen but we caught them in time.

LINDA: Your shipyard got excellence status a couple of times, right? That must have made you proud.

ROMAN: I had gone over to get you my emblem that I had received. When you told me about the encounter you had with the flag and how nice they treated you. I wanted to give you my emblem. It wasn't there. It hasn't been returned to me. That is like a lot of my memorabilia and artifacts were not returned to me from the last author that wrote this book, The Corn Field Workforce and the Shipyard. I was very disappointed. I would have liked to have given you that. I don't think you got one.

LINDA: I have never seen one.

ROMAN: He was surprised. I had taken it off of a lapel of a jacket I wore many years ago knowing that I earned it. I was right up there with that group. Yes I was proud. I was proud of that troupe standing there launching over a 100 ships. I was very proud. Not only the way I felt about it but the public in general. As you know it has been referred to as the Championship Shipyard. We were champion builders. But one important thing that I was

most happy with that we did build a good ship. The ship fitting was right. The welding was right. And I smile when I say welding. Yes. I gave Tom recently some welding things that welders in time would spin off that we weren't permitted to do. The gun tubs are the gun fences on the ship. They were stainless steel. They had to be welded with a nichol alloy rod. A very expensive rod. About 12 inches long. I think 1.40 was a wholesale price on that nichol alloy rod years ago when we were building the ships. Well these welders would steal these rods away and they would make rings? and they would make bracelets and I caught a few and rather than turn the guy in I would take his ring and put in my pocket and put it in my office. Well I had a ring and a bracelet and some welding rod that I had saved all these years. Recently I gave them to Tom Lonberg. I thought it would be a nice memento to show in his museum. What this welder did on the side even if we caught him at it he was to be fired but they gave me the trinkets that they made and I would never turn them in but you can imagine that nichol alloy was quite expensive. It was like pure silver. And the reason that we had to use that on those stainless steel gun tubs or gun fences because if we got a direct hit that weld would never shatter but ordinary steel rods would shatter. So that is one of my experiences of welding. I would never turn a man in that deliberately came to me and just hand them to me and never say anything and just go back about his work. They knew, he shouldn't have used that welding rod. So what a 1.40 the government was spending money by the billions. Just look what it cost to build that shipyard. And look how many ships we built. My gosh. 300 million dollars worth of LSTs we built it. I don't know how much 300 million is. That is a lot of money.

LINDA: Some of the shipmates off of the 534 have talked to me about how secure they felt being on a ship from Evansville. When they were going by an iceberg up by Nova Scotia and they could feel the ice scrapping the hull they knew the hull would stand

ROMAN: Quarter inch. They were quarter inch steel decking plates. The long tank deck, it was 1/2 inch steel. We had on 157 a hole torn in the side of the ship. From the Navy Yard, Algiers Navy Yard up the east coast and when she encountered a storm. She didn't sink because the ship was built to float regardless because of those tanks, deck tanks were proponents in themselves. That is the only really close contact that I had but I have had a reported tell me one time that he was aboard an LST and he wrote this article this isn't exactly but it is the best of my memory he described the boarding of an LST and how much he enjoyed the ship in general. He explained

how this LST would go to the landing area, open their bow doors, drop their ramp. Sometimes they weren't close enough to actually land. They would have to use Baily Bridges to get their equipment off but he went on to say that it was amazing. It reminded him of a Detroit assembly line. How they build a car and how that car was built piece by piece and as it moved it how he says he was standing on the river deck and by special invitation there in Sicily. HeHe said

He said he saw that ship motion bend. He said one time it would be to the left, one time it would be to the right. He said he got scared but what he didn't know at that time but what he found out later that ship was designed to give with the currents. And that is one of the reasons the LST was so successful in landing. She could land on any beach. He said when she would land you could just imagine if this ship just crept along the beach like an inch worm crawling from sea to shore moving up the beach. And she did and they were amazed at how this ship could do that and the flexibility of it. It didn't break in two. I am trying to tell you that to give you an idea that ship was designed to be flexible. Needenheimer did a good job. He was a Naval Architect. He was the best. I guess you heard of _____.

LINDA: Tell me what Churchill said.

ROMAN: What.

LINDA: What Winston Churchill said.

ROMAN: Well he was quite a cusser

LINDA: Start Again

ROMAN: Winston Churchill had made this remark. He wrote a letter to Parliament to explain to Parliament his words were "We are winning this war with some god damn ship built in the United States and we are on the course now and at the end of our ropes and we will win this war with that ship. It is the LSTs that are being built in the United States. I shouldn't have said that he said gold damn. Well I have been criticized for that. He didn't say gold damn he said god damn ship. That is not swearing. That isn't swearing. That is a matter of speech. Let's put it that way. Yes Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt were old buddies as you know. Oh by the way, Pat Kellar, Jim's wife is related to Mrs. Churchill through a cousin and she is very proud of the Churchill name.

LINDA: I would be.

ROMAN: I would to.

LINDA: Could they build a shipyard today and accomplish what you accomplished 55 years ago?

ROMAN: I would kind of like to explain it to you in this respect. About five years ago or six years ago Evansville Museum put on a symposium and it was primarily for the history students of the University of Southern Indiana. Daryl Biggum was a professor of history and he was interested in the fact that we built this ship and the students wanted to know more about it for a class project in history. One little gal and this was a question and answer series. I had mentioned in the course of telling them about the ship, that unfortunately at that time we didn't have computers. If we had had computers look what we could have done to ship building. This little girl she got up and she raised her hand. She said I want you to know you had the best computer, you had the human brain. And do you know she set me down there and I didn't have any more to complain about that. So does that answer your question. Yes we could build them today and we could build them quicker and better through computers. Because we depend a lot on computers. I am sorry I didn't continue on and learn something about computers. It would help me today. I can't even type. Look these crooked fingers. That is just old age. But I am fighting on those things. Yes, it would be so modern. Well of course instead of a ramp there is a horn now. And they found out instead of using a cable for the rear anchor which used to wind up in the props. They used to have to send a seaman down to untangle the cable to the props so they could move off the beach. Yes there is a lot of improvements. We could build an LST. _____

See the LSTs we built they were airplane carriers. They were spotters. We used a lot of them to spot them. To spot firing power, ammunition on islands. One time we had I better not mention the LST number until I check to make sure, but they were in a bay there in Okinawa. The cruisers and destroyers were way back in the bay in Iwo Jima. This LST was so close to the landing that they could see the Japanese running around on the beaches. They did that quite frequently. I never quite approved of using an LST for something like that to attract attention on that island to fire on that LST which they would have destroyed. So that our guns in the back bay would then detect that area and fire upon that artillery. That is when they

came out about using airplanes for spotters. Now we had built a metal ramp. They could take off and fly over the area where these guns were. They could report back to the gunneries of the dregnots

the location. But they had to disband their plane or move to an area other than close by so they couldn't be detected by fire power. So yes there were a lot of additional qualities but to put those men's lives in jeopardy to decoy them that is hard for me to take even today. And that happened. Can you imagine 21,000 men, Marines, being killed on Mount Sarabacki for the taking of Mount Sarabacki. Now you can cut this off of your record or you can keep it on your record. But most of the sailors I know still have that ill feeling towards Japan about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. As you know we couldn't win this war with Japan but now she is coming over here and building automobiles and she is going to win over here that we couldn't do on the battlefield. 21,000 Marines and Sailors killed on Mount Sarabacki to raise that flag. You have seen the picture of the raising of the flag. That was just our men that got lost and just last year the National Association of the LST had decided to go over there for memorial service on the 50th anniversary of the raising of that flag. Do you know that the United States Sailors going over for these memorial services was ordered off of Mount Sarabacki until the Japanese had performed their ceremonial service and that after they were permitted to have their services it was late that evening. It was too late for their plane to fly back to the United States. It was a chartered plane which members of the LST Association, now I am an inspector and I am getting that information. Why do I get it? I get it because I am still in correspondence with the men that took our ships in Okinawa. Last night I said I wasn't going to talk anymore. Get this out of my system .

LINDA: Was it a sad day the day the shipyard closed? Start out telling me the story, the day the shipyard closed, what ever day it was, tell me about that.

ROMAN: Well Linda,

LINDA: Sit back and tell me.

ROMAN: We were building our last LSTs under contract with the Navy for the _____ ships. The management wanted to try to keep the shipyard open. They knew that there was a time in the very near future when the last four LSTs were built which were then converted over to APBs as you know I recall. That's buried? ships. That there would be no employment for all those

thousands of people. So they decided that they would establish a repair base in Pearl Harbor. Well the repair base was started in Wapo Point Hawaii, Pearl Harbor, a territory of Hawaii. I was put in charge of recruiting welders, ship fitters, painters, construction workers, anybody that was qualified to build ships to go to this repair unit where they would have a job repairing these LSTs that were damaged in actual combat. My later job was Chief Hull Inspector I was referred to as a recruiter for the repair base. Frank Harrison went over, the Navy went over, Johnny Coon went over. Frank Harrison and Johnny Coon and two others that I don't recall right now they flew over. But I was sending them by train and by ship. Each morning I would recruit these fellas from the local shipyards that were at the point of being discharged for this repair unit in Hawaii. It was no trouble at all to each morning to get a crew men aboard the LND depot to go to San Diego California where they were put aboard a ship and then sent to this repair base. I had sent a crew of men over and I received a letter from the Navy cancelling the contract. The same girl Frances Breezes I asked her to type up a letter for me which she did. I still had access to the inspection office and my desk of course but I was no longer a Chief Inspector. My secretary Mr. Warho who is on the end of the view of those photos, he took over the charge of the desk and he was very capable. Should have been he was there from the very beginning. I wrote the letter to this day I didn't specifically write it to any Department Head at the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company, I addressed the letter in this respect To Whom It May Concern. That disqualified that letter as to being authoritative for any Department Head but nevertheless the reason I did that was I wanted the message to get out to the workmen that I had recruited that are just well I don't know if I can go or not. I don't know if I should go or hadn't fully made up their minds. So that is how come I addressed the letter To Whom It May concern because it immediately stopped the hiring and sending these men over there. There were a lot of these men that were aboard ship sailing over there that never even landed. They turned around and brought them back. Just a very few days after that of course the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and that ended the war. And was I saddened when the shipyard burned. I saw so much that I didn't like. At the end of the war, at the end of the contracts I saw scaffolding materials, machinery, equipment, typewriters, addressographs, any time of office equipment you might imagine that were being supposedly put in a warehouse for disposing or disbanding of the shipyard. Being a Hull Inspector I had the ability to find out that those items were never put in that warehouse. But the warehouse burned to the ground and millions of dollars was lost in equipment that belonged to the Navy of the United States

Government. Well it was lost because it was stolen. It was never put in the warehouses to start with. Yes I would say the fire was arson and I will to my dying day swear to the fact that my investigation that didn't amount to a damn was, it was arson and it was committed by department heads that supposedly put their equipment there as storage for the Navy. No records kept. There are no records of the shipyard. None available. There are no records. Pat will tell you if they want to run down something they have got to go to the source to find out. There is absolutely no records of what we accomplished here. Yes I was saddened when I heard that it burnt. I was no longer employed. I was terminated because when the ship prepared? disbanded that automatically terminated me. I will say one thing for my association with the Navy. Maybe two or three or four. When I was terminated all my memorabilia, even a hand stapler that I had on my desk, or pencils or desk features that are around my desk, pads or what have you, I never took one thing out of the shipyard but there were two Naval guards standing there at the gate that gave me this enormous box of all those plans and ship fitting and of all my accomplishments that I had made during the three years I had been there at the shipyard. I am telling you that is because I want you to know none of my memorabilia that I have was taken out of the shipyards but there is a lot that was never destroyed either because it was never put in that warehouse. Yes I was saddened because we got acquainted with a lot of nice people. A lot of young people. Yes it was great. Like Mary Jane Jacobs. She used to reminds me too much of you. She was a doll. She married Jack Richie Chief Photographer. When I am in a position I need to know something that maybe I have forgotten I call Mary Jane. I just talked to her recently. Fact of the matter is I invited her to come out today but she is so shy and she is 78 and she thinks she is too old but she is not too old. She has a good memory. She used to decorate those champagne bottles. She and Mrs. Mutnick. And they did a beautiful job. Tying the ribbons around there and oh what a glorious day I will never forget some of the times when we would launch a ship it would be cloudy and maybe in the damp rain and drizzling day and you would wonder why, but smile when Johnny Cross would sing the God Bless America. You would think the sun came out. It gave you chills up and down your spine and boy could he sing. He could really sing. Johnny Krouse. He was our tenor and he was a Machinery Inspector in our department. Fortunately, that is the sad part. Those inspectors that I worked with 3 years that I have come to know real close as family have all moved away or disappeared and a lot of them are gone and yes this saddened me and I wasn't prepared for a future job only that I would continue on in construction because that was my line. When dad was a

builder, I was a builder. The problem after war was to get materials. You couldn't get material. You could contract a job but you couldn't finish it because you couldn't get materials. 534 Funny I feel like I might have known it, I should have known it.

LINDA: He wasn't..

ROMAN: No, no. He boarded ship down at Tradewater, down in New Orleans. As you know, the story of 157 - 158 I have to tell you this story and it is the gospel truth. When they were in Sicily 157 got the call to beach or to land. 158 mistook that call and went in to land. A German dive bomber dropped a 500 pound bomb on the main deck that went down to the tank deck, now that is three tanks three decks below and exploded killing most of the crew members of 158 but you know that was saddened for me because you know those fellas took out our first ship spent weeks and weeks at the shipyard before their ship was ready to go. And I got acquainted with a lot of those guys and when you would get those stories and I would do tapes. I would be calling up and do tapes on whatever happened to the LSTs. That was nice because I knew what to look for in the damage repair. I was subject to a lot of flash burns and most welders are you know especially an inspector. I didn't have my shield and I had received a terrible trap flash burn. Now when you get a flash burn it is like I feel now. It is like somebody through a handful of sand in your eyes and you can't see as far as your vision. It is nothing that you can't overcome in time but of course I knew what had happened and I went directly to the first aid station which was first aid hospital. Of course I had a severe flash burn. The nurse laid me down on the cot. She put cold cloths over my eyes and we had a window fan she sat on the floor to cool me off because it was hot it was in August. That was around two o'clock in the afternoon. I fell asleep. Made my self so comfortable I actually fell asleep. I woke up about four o'clock and of course we leave the shipyard at 4:30 or get ready to leave at 4:30. Here at 4:30 I start ambling into my office. Well the clerks, my inspectors and stenographer - where have you been? Where have you been? We have scoured this yard. We couldn't find you anywhere, where in heck have you been. I said well I have been in first aid. She said well that is the one place I forgot to look. That was the most enjoyable restful afternoon I ever had. That was my experience of flash burns in welding.

LINDA:

ROMAN: Well I got to receive that honor, yes and the museum has the ribbon. It wasn't too big an event. I always figured it was a matter of courtesy more than anything else.

LINDA: Would you start that over and say that broom raising was not a big event.

ROMAN: Now to me it wasn't, honey. No it was a big event and a very important one as an old tradition that had to be carried even then.

LINDA: You have to say the broom raising because the TV audience won't know what it is. So start over and say the broom raising and then tell me about it.

ROMAN: Okay.

LINDA: Like the broom raising ceremony

ROMAN: All right. The broom raising ceremony on each and every ship that we built is an indication, it is an old old tradition that happened many years ago when a sailing vessel was accepted after a trial run they hoisted a broom on the kaihaliard? when the ship returned to port to let them know, the workers, that their ship can pass flying colors and accepted. The owner of the Navy or whoever they were designed for had accepted their ship. That is the general purpose that has been carried on for years and it is a very important ceremony. I might feel that it wasn't too important to me because anybody could raise that broom and the seaman that stood there and tried to keep me from raising it he had been mortally wounded with shrapnel in Pearl Harbor and he wasn't too happy to be there at that broom raising and he let me know that too. But he was a typical Navy man. He had served his time and had shrapnel wounds. You know the Navy didn't just put them out on the street, they gave them jobs. They were still connected in the Navy and that is how come we had a lot of them and I had this Lt. Aroay. He has since passed on and unfortunately I just saw recently where his mother passed away. I used to keep in contact with most of those fellas. Yes, it was an honor to be chosen to raise the broom. But I was never chosen to commission, personally commission a ship and it is just as well I didn't. I don't know why. I never gave it a thought. Really never gave it a thought. _____ You would be amazed at the parking lot down there now and the location. You can still see the

indenture in the parking lot of the rails where the gantries traveled. Did I mention I thought the war production committee was biased. If I didn't tell you that I am going to tell you now.

LINDA: You didn't tell me.

ROMAN: I knew some of the, some of them I knew them all. They didn't like me and they had every reason not to like me because I was always holding down production. I figured that if who knew what has got the nod for their particular wife or friend or someone or loved one to christen the ship. I mean that is beyond your patrons like Mrs. Jones or Mrs. Tellock or Lt. Cruise or Sweet, or Commander or any of that group. That is a different angle. These were men that received that honor due to some essentially good deed or good work that they had performed in their line of duty. They got the nod. So it depended on who you wanted to pay off if your wife or whoever it was wanted to launch a ship. I believe my wife would have told me no. I think she would have said no I don't want that. She never like public. She would never go to a dance with me. I had to go to show my face to the employees whenever they held a dance. I didn't want to be classified as a snob. I wanted to get right in there with the party. I don't know why I am thinking about all the things now. My gosh just water under the bridge. It was a long long time ago.

LINDA: If you had to summarize your feelings about the shipyard what would it be?

ROMAN: Amazing. I think one word, amazing. Outstanding. How you could get that many people together to build such a good ship from a set of blueprints and raw steel. When I held up the launching of the 534 I accused the General Superintendent of wanting to put raw steel in the Ohio River and expect it to float. It wasn't quite that bad but that is how I felt about it. That ship had to be completed for the men, the young men that were going to take it out to sea. Great day. If you could bring the shipyards back today I would sign up tomorrow. My whole heart and sole was in building ships and like I said I had never even built a rowboat but I did know how to put two pieces of steel together and meld weld them. One time when one of the inspectors took one of our ships down, he came back, whenever they came back on one of those trips before they came and talked to me they always had my superior, the Chief, George Martin, to complain in front of him what I had missed aboard that particular ship and this one particular case he, the chief asked, the Navy Inspector he found some incomplete welding. The Chief

says well what did you do Jim, well he says no problem getting a licking welder. The dock is always full of them and I got a welder up there and I finished that welding. But Ritz should have caught that. Poor old Ritz he should have caught that. So he had all the plans out, see that was a stand up desk by the windows. He could look out. It was a nice desk. You could lay the plans out. He was showing the Chief the exact welds that I had missed I am sitting up at my desk half asleep and missed those damn welds, yes. A lot of times I felt dreary, I felt like taking a doze. I said well Jim this plan here is obsolete. The engineering department has sent a new approval down. When trans were first done, bulkheads do not have to have a continuous weld. I said what we are learning to do is to save on welding and time and labor. The Gibson Cox permitted the Engineering Department which was C. S. Jones to allow intermittent welding. You can imagine a steel plate sitting on our steel deck. You would weld down six inches increments on one side. Sink six inches and weld six inches on the other. It was staggered welding because it was a support bulkhead and not a tank held fluids and they were permitted to do that. Well this wonderful inspector of ours he found that he heard about those increment welds welded up down in New Orleans. I just laughed. I never said anything. Those were just every day things that you run into in the employees. When I got the nod to be the Hull Superintendent there were several employees, one quit entirely and two others transferred. See we had the plant going here in town - aviation - they were building the B47's. It was just a matter of leaving the shipyard the could go right out and get a job building B47's so employment was available anywhere you looked. So if they didn't like your job at the shipyard, it was just too heavy. That was the only reason. I never had a disagreement with anybody. I liked all my inspectors. They were all good. They were all willing learners too. And they came on from scratch. Learned from scratch. Have I answered any of your questions.

LINDA: Yes you answered all my questions and I want to thank you for the job you did. It was great. You taught me a lot.

ROMAN: You haven't heard half of it yet and I want you to talk to Tom Longberg. I think you will like Tom.

Tom said he met you. He doesn't know quite how it happened that he had the occasion to meet you but he thought perhaps there was a funeral in your family and you were at the shipyard for some information. I said yes Linda's father had passed away and he was aboard one of our ships and she

evidently was there to get information about 534. Now Tom is a very busy man. I get a lot of letters that Tom should be responsible for but I feel capable of answering, Linda, and I do that to avoid him of all the insignificant questions that are being put forward now to someone in charge of an historical event like the building of ships. It was an amazing feature what we did to _____ a set of blueprints. That was a big ship. That was a whopper and it stayed together. It held together. That goddamn ship, boy. Winston Churchill he asked, I always ducked out. I never accepted any honors. If an employee had a suggestion I always saw that that suggestion went to the proper authorities and then he got the credit. I never ever took any credit. I did take the credit, it would have to be 534 when we stopped the launching, we stopped it for 4 days and I had to explain why I stopped the launching because the welding, it wasn't the complete welding it was what we called pick up welding. It was welding that the inspectors had checked. It wasn't completed properly. Oh it was a shame that we didn't have x-ray that we could x-ray those wells rather than just to look at a weld and determine whether it was a good weld or not. You could tell by the slag in those wells. The women welders produced a better weld than the man welder, the male welders. I think it was because they were sincerer in their work. They knew that they had to do a good job. When we had difficulty.....