Calvin Gould

United States Navy

Quartermaster

European Theater

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Rick: All right we're happy to have you with us today Cal. [Calvin Gould, Navy Quarter Master, served as a navigator aboard an aircraft carrier with a naval group assigned to find submarines.]
Tell us briefly about your early life up to Pearl Harbor.

Cal: Well I was born and raised in a small town up in Idaho – St. Anthony its on the road to West Yellowstone- and I spent all my years there until I graduated high school. I was a junior in high school on December 7th 1941 but I remember very clearly being out unloading some hay for our family cow when I heard about Pearl Harbor and of course I really had no inkling at the time what affect it would have on my life but I recognized that it was a serious event. [The United States was drawn into World War II when the Japanese Imperial Navy attacked Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaii on December 7, 1941.]
I finished my junior year and started into my senior year and things were getting a little tight with the draft and at the beginning of January 1943 they had made a rule that once you became 18 and had to sign up with the selective service system you could no longer choose your branch of service – up until that time you had been able to choose. My birthday was April 18th (I would be becoming 18 on the 18th of April of 1943) and I desperately wanted to go into the Navy. I did not want to be a foot soldier and I started working on my dad to sign me into the Navy before I turned 18. He finally agreed and I arranged to complete my high school credits and was signed into the Navy on the 13th of April, incidentally, of 1943 – this is an anniversary of that day.

Rick: You were 17 at the time so you had to get parental consent.

Cal: Um hum. They shipped me up to Farogot Naval training station in the panhandle of Idaho. I went through boot training there, got all my shots and all that sort of thing. It was pretty much a practice at that time that once you completed boot training you got orders to report to another station but you got *'leave delay and route'* and I was ordered to report to Bremerton Washington. But I did get to go home in the meantime. I went to Bremerton and we were just idle there for several weeks because the Navy had really

more people on their hands than they could have ships and things for at that time. But there was an industrialist called Henry J. Kaiser, I don't know if you've ever heard of him or not, who had undertaken to build aircraft carriers for the navy at Vancouver Washington and the aircraft carriers were called *'carrier vessel escorts'*, no armament on them and their fly deck was shorter than the major carriers were and he was delivering an aircraft carrier to the Navy down at Astoria Oregon every Monday morning. He had set up a system and he had a contract for 50 of them.

Rick: So he brought a new one in every Monday morning – one a week.

Cal: Right. The numbers of his contracts started at 55 and went to 104 and we were CVE 60 so we were the 5th in his line. We were named the *'Guadal Canal'* and we commissioned at Astoria Oregon after our crew had been assembled there. They sent us down from Bremerton first to Tacoma, assembled the crews at Tacoma and then by troop train went down to Astoria Oregon and took over the ship there. We outfitted there with a number of things that the Navy had to outfit because the builder did not have the either the ability or the rights to do so but we put all of our equipment on board. I had determined that I wanted to be in the navigation end of the Navy and so the enlisted roll for that is called *'quartermaster'* which is a navigation assistant but you have many other responsibilities besides. From the commissioning we then were sent up to Bremerton again to the navy yard for a few modifications and that's where everybody got sick. Everybody was seasick.

Rick: Going over that Columbia bar?

Cal: Yeah and there was a chief signalman on board. Our division was the *'N division'* but the signalman that were in the *'C division'* were in the same department as the *'N division'* and as a matter of fact at that time quartermasters had to cross train as signalmen and signalmen had to cross train as quartermasters even though on a ship I was on we were of such a size that you didn't ever have to really make the change. But if you

were assigned to a small vessel then you had to perform both functions and that's why you had to cross train.

Rick: Had you done a shakedown cruise?

Cal: No, no that was part of the trip up to Bremerton. There was a chief signalman on board who gave me the best advice I ever had and that advice was *"Gould get yourself a bucket, stay out of those compartments, stay up here and work and you'll be a lot better off"* and he was really right about that because all the other guys were hanging out in the passageways, laid out on the passageways, laid out on the decks just terribly seasick you know. But if you're up in the fresh air and could tolerate a little bit of that nausea you were a lot better off.

Rick: I believe that's some of the roughest water anywhere in the world.

Cal: Yeah it was terrible going out there. We left Bremerton after that and moved down the coast. We picked up an air squadron at San Francisco at Alameda and then suddenly we're going down the coast of Central America, destined to go through the Panama Canal and into the Atlantic to do anti-submarine warfare. They had developed a system at that time of search and destroy airplanes from the aircraft carrier. They would use fighter planes to try to search out the submarines and they had equipped the TBM torpedo bomber to carry depth charges.

Rick: This was late in 1943?

Cal: We commissioned in September, I supposed we got around to Norfolk Virginia maybe in October and operated out of the naval operating base at Norfolk Virginia to do the submarine work. We operated with DE's that they would send down from Boston and the DE's were equipped to use the depth charge system for anti-submarine warfare too.

Rick: The DE, that's a destroyer?

Cal: Destroyer escort. While we were at sea they would screen for us, you know ahead of the carrier and they had the sonar ability to search for submarines and the depth charge ability to fight them.

Rick: How many men were on board that aircraft carrier?

Cal: As I recall it seems we were about 500. When we'd take on a squadron there would be more than that because the squadron had certain support personnel itself you know, besides the crew of the aircraft carrier.

Rick: Tell us about your accommodations and just general life on board that aircraft carrier.

Cal: Well we lived in what were called compartments that had folding up bunks that would fold up against the bulk heads once you got out of them in the morning. They stacked about five high and there was narrow passageways in-between them, it was quite crowded actually. We ate common mess in the mess hall and I don't know what else I could tell you about those living conditions.

Rick: How many men would be assigned to one restroom?

Cal: Oh, well there was just one forward restroom (it's called *'the head'* incidentally in Navy parlence) for the enlisted men in the forward end of the ship and then one at the stern where the crews back there were quartered.

Rick: So you had two restrooms for 500 men?

Cal: Oh yeah but they were large restrooms. Yeah, they would accommodate a number of people at one time

Rick: Did you go through the Panama Canal?

Cal: Yeah, we went through the Panama Canal which was an experience. One of the more interesting things about it was that I was not a very experienced person but the quartermaster crew was all inexperienced except for a chief that we had, and we had had to train men from the deck divisions to be helmsmen and engine order telegraph men during ordinary cruising but at times when you're coming in and out of port they set what's called a *'special sea detail'*, where the quartermasters have to take over those roles and the quartermasters had to take over those roles during battle stations and we were coming through the Panama Canal on special sea detail, and part of the transit of the canal is through the locks. For some reason the officer of the deck wasn't able to give (I had the helm duty) and he wasn't able to give me orders quickly enough to really make the transit through the locks very well and so he finally called down the voice tube he said *"open your port ahead of you"* and there was a port hole up there and we did and he said *"now – that's the buoy we need"* and so we actually went through the Panama Canal kind of that way.

Rick: A dead reckoning.

Cal: Yeah. I always thought that was kind of interesting because I don't know that's ever been done before or since in the history of the Navy but we got through the Panama Canal that way.

Rick: Aircraft carriers are pretty wide; how much room did you have on each side?

Cal: Not very much, not very much on the sides of those locks. So after we came out of the canal we did some training off of the base in Cuba – Guantonamo Bay I think it was. We drilled with an American submarine who would submerge and we would train and

seek him out. And then we went on up to Norfolk Virginia and that's where we did our regular operations from - Norfolk.

Rick: So did you see many German submarines out there in the Atlantic?

Cal: Well we sank some and we captured one.

Rick: Tell us about that.

Cal: Well I was just looking up on the internet the other day about our sinkings and they gave us credit for three besides the capture but I'm certain in my own mind that we sank more than three; it seems to me like it was more than about five, besides the capture. But our captain who was a man named *'Dan Gallory'* had the ability to kind of put himself in the mind of a submarine captain and when he would get a report of a sighting of a submarine he would kind of figure to himself *'well now what would a submarine captain do?'* and as a result of that he was able to put himself in good positions generally to find out where these submarines were and the main way of fighting them was through the aircraft, you know. We would put aircraft up and try to search them out that way. But on the 4th of June of '44, which was two days before D-day incidentally, we were steaming after we had launched our patrols, with the DE's screening for us just waiting you know for the patrols to finish their time and come back and the Pillsbury who was the commander of the escort division (first of all our captain was the commander of the *'task group'* but he didn't bother himself with the details of setting the screen of the DE's and you always had to move one DE to a plane guard position whenever you were taking on planes or launching planes and that would be a position on our quarter to pick up a pilot if anything went wrong during the landing) but when we were not in that position of launching or recovering we were just staying with the DE's screening for us and Pillsbury, who was on our starboard bow, passed right over this submarine. It was a U-505. Chadeline which was on his starboard and a little bit behind him could differentiate the screw noises they got the sound on the submarine and of course the communication at that time within a group like that was called *'the TBS system'*, which was *'telephone*

between ships' it was a telephone signal that would not go beyond the horizon. So if you could see a ship you could talk to it. And he crackled over the TBS that he had a contact and of course our captain's job then is to get out of his way because he's gonna have to use depth charges. So we got out of the way and the Chadeline moved in and laid a pattern of depth charges and was successful and it damaged the submarine to the point that he had to choose to either sink or swim and he chose to swim. And so he came to the surface and at that time the captain of the Pillsbury – kind of interesting – had realized he'd made a mistake, he's going to be the first one to put a boarding party on that submarine and they had all trained for boarding parties and he moves in and the submarine at this point has it's rudder jammed and he's running in a circle and the Pillsbury moved in and punches a hole in it's side.

Rick: So the submarine punched a hole in the side of the Pillsbury?

Cal: Of the Pillsbury, yeah. But we did get boarding parties aboard and they had open sea cocks and things but we managed to get them closed and we got code books and things off and defused the booby traps that they had put on and took the submarine in tow.

Rick: Did they wave the white flag as they surfaced?

Cal: Oh no he came up with machine guns. They went to their gun mounts but we had in the meantime put another fighter in the air and the fighter was able to keep them from using their gun by strafing and so they finally just decided to jump.

Rick: So they were ready to fight when they surfaced?

Cal: Yeah they were, but we recovered that crew except for two of them and brought them onboard as prisoners of war. I think they were in a sense kind of happy to be out of the war at that point. But we took the submarine in tow and the Navy apparently didn't know what to do with us for some time because they kept us steaming around out there

and didn't know where to send us. They wanted to keep this top-secret you know. And we finally were getting low on fuel so they had to dispatch a fleet oiler named *'Kennebeck'* out to refuel us and that's quite an operation. You put these two massive ships side by side steaming down wind usually and you put all these fuel lines over and you start pumping as fast as you can.

Rick: Regarding the prisoners, who was designated to board the sub and formally take control?

Cal The captures weren't made on board; they took the men out of the water actually.

Rick: Oh they all jumped overboard?

Cal: Yep they jumped overboard.

Rick: I see.

Cal: Each of the ships in the task group had trained boarding parties for just such an event because our captain sort of knew that he would encounter this kind of a situation. In fact my battle station at the time was the Quarter Master of the watch and I had to hang right by the captain and he picked up that TBS and our 5 inch gun commander was asking for permission to commence firing and the captain said *"denied, denied – I'm going to capture that bastard if I can"* that was the word he used.

Rick: How did they get these guys out of the water?

Cal: I can't remember how. But it probably was those kind of nets that you use to scale the side of a vessel.

Rick: Well that was a gutty move on the part of your captain.

Cal: Oh yeah, yeah. But I'm absolutely convinced that he had made up his mind early on that he was going to get such a situation and he was going to take advantage of it.

Rick: So how many men did you take on board?

Cal: 52 I think was the number that we brought on board, but two of them did perish, I remember that.

Rick: And did any of them speak English? Did you have any contact yourself with any of these prisoners?

Cal: I didn't really ever have any contact with them. That submarine, incidentally, is in the museum in Chicago and they just made a new home for it. They originally had it there – its stern was sticking out into the weather and they have made a new home for it. They're having another ceremony there on the 4th of June which is the anniversary of the capture.

Rick: So, you'd started towing the submarine. What happened with the refueling?

Cal: Yeah – and while we were refueling, one of our planes that was up had an emergency and he's on the radio having to come back in to land and we're going downwind. Well you have to be going upwind to land an airplane and our captain had a direct telephone with the captain of the Kennebeck and he said *"we're going to have to cut these fuel lines"* and the captain of the Kennebeck said *"I don't think so, I think we can turn together"* and so those two captains turned those two ships 180 degrees right side-by-side like that and didn't have to cut a single fuel line and we recovered that disabled airplane.

Rick: Well how far off the coast of America were you when you captured this submarine?

Cal: Oh we were quite close to the coast of Africa actually; they were well East in the Atlantic Ocean. In fact one of our first directives was to take the sub to Dakar and then they decided no there might be too many spies there and the information would get out so they diverted us and they eventually had us take it into Bermuda.

Rick: Well that is fascinating. Did it have an Enigma machine on board?

Cal: Oh yeah, we got all that stuff off.

Elizabeth: Was that before or after they broke the code?

Rick: The British actually captured the first Enigma and broke the code, this was after that. What a fascinating story, Cal, please continue.

Cal: Well, I don't know what more I can say about that.

Rick: You towed the sub to Bermuda…

Cal: Towed it into Bermuda and it eventually was brought to the United States and after the war our engineering officer was a fellow named Trosino – T-R-O-S-I-N-O and he was a native of Chicago and it was his idea to eventually get that submarine into that museum and he finally did. They took it up through the St. Lawrence River and down and then carted it on wheels to the museum in Chicago.

Rick: Tell us about sinking submarines.

Cal: Well those sinkings were by airplanes. We didn't ever really see much of that.

Rick: Did they have depth charges on the airplanes, or torpedoes?

Cal: Well the torpedo bomb bay was loaded with maybe as many as six or eight depth chargers in succession you know. Now the DE's that we were with of course, fired depth charges from what were called *'K-guns'*. They roll off the stern and then they'd fire a couple out of the side. Roll off the stern, fire a couple…lay a pattern that way.

Rick: Tell us a little bit more about sinking these submarines and the navigational tools that were used. What were your specific duties during these operations?

Cal: Well the carrier itself does not have any ability to search for submarines except through its aircraft. The DE's that accompanied us, they all had sonar equipment but the carrier itself did not have any such sonar equipment.

Rick: So when a submarine was spotted your job was to get out of the way maybe let the planes off and let the DE's and the planes take care of the subs.

Cal: Right.

Rick: And can you tell us a little more specifically what the quarter master does?

Cal: Well the quarter master, in his regular duties, has a number of assignments. For instance there is a place on a ship called the *'steering engine room'*; the rudder of the ship is turned by engines it's not turned by manual. You turn a wheel but that just tells the engines what to do. So there's a *'steering engine post'*, there is a place on any man-of-war called *'battle two'* which is divorced from the bridge in another location in case the bridge gets blown away you would still have some command of the vessel so when you go to general quarters the captain is at the bridge, his executive officer is at battle two and at battle two you have the same sort of compliment – you have a bosons mate of the watch and a quarter master of the watch at that location. So there's the bridge quartermaster of the watch, at battle stations there's a battle two quarter master of the watch. When you're in port you have to deal with the handling of the cars you know up and down of the flags and things like that and it was always interesting because we were

senior officer present wherever we went because of captain gallery's seniority. The Navy, when you're in port, hoists colors at sunrise and retires them at…or hoists colors at 8:00 am and retires them at sunrise. Now I understand the Army is just the reverse of that but we would be in port and we'd have to calculate sunset, so there'd be other ships around and we were senior officer – they had to always follow our lead. So they would invariably get on their blinker light and say *"you've miscalculated sunset by one minute"* and I'd say *"look at the blue flag – that's Senior Officer Present and we have calculated sunset"*.

Rick: This was all taking place in early '44?

Cal: This was June 4th – the capture of the submarine – of '44.

Rick: Supposedly they were able to pinpoint where these German subs were because of the code breaking. Did you ever get any information from outer sources that there was a submarine at this latitude and longitude or anything like that?

Cal: Well I don't know. I wasn't privy to that information if it did because that would have come directly from the communications officer to the captain and that. They did have a system of deploying DE's like we were way out on our beams – say ten miles on either side. So we'd hoist what was called a *'DAQ Antennae'* and I never did understand what DAQ meant [Digital Ortho Quad- used triangulation techniques to locate a target] but they would listen during the night for transmissions and then try to pinpoint them.

Rick: Did you ever see torpedos in the water coming at you?

Cal: Well we thought we did once but it turned that it wasn't I guess. It either wasn't or it missed us.

Rick: What happened after you towed the sub to Bermuda?

Cal: Well of course we just turned it over to the authorities there and we went back on patrol.

Elizabeth: So you patrolled the African coastline but not along the eastern seaboard?

Cal: Well you can't really say it was the coastline; we were probably in the Eastern 1/3 of the Atlantic Ocean most of the time. But you were not near the coastline you know, you were off shore.

Rick: Well then this was June of '44. Did you spend the duration of the war patrolling that area for subs?

Cal: Right until the war ended and then they dispatched us down to Jacksonville Florida and we used the carrier to qualify pilots that were coming off the naval air station as to aircraft carrier landings. Our captain would require his weather officer who was called and *'aerographer'* to tell him which way the wind was going to be blowing the next morning and he would position himself so that as he came into the wind he would be coming up to the mouth of the river and as soon as those pilots were qualified we'd take on board another group and go out and do the same thing the next day.

Rick: How many landings would they have to do before they'd qualified?

Cal: I think it was about six or seven.

Rick: I would guess that the stronger the wind, the easier it would be to land?

Cal: Well yeah I would think so. We only had the capability of steaming at about 18 knots at top speed and you could land airplanes with 18 knots of wind but boy you really want it more than that so you always searched for wind.

Rick: Where were you towards the end of the war, when VE day occurred?

Cal: Well I was onboard for 21 months, I had advanced at that time to petty officer Second Class and another fellow from Seattle Washington who'd made the same advancements that I had were the last two men of the *'N division'* who had commissioned who were still onboard and the policy at that time was to rotate at 18 months but we had been onboard for 21 months and hadn't rotated and our chief quarter master one day told us that he had received instruction from navy personnel to send two first class quarter masters to Cluncet Point Rhode Island and he talked with our division officer and they sent back and said *"we don't have two first class quarter masters but we have two second class quarter masters that are entitled to rotation"* and so the personnel department came back and said *"send those two but send them to Norfolk Virginia"*. So they sent us to Norfolk Virginia and the rating in the Navy of quarter master you know, there's no equivalent civilian job and so when you're on a shore they sort of make shore patrol people out of you. But the captain at the operating base at Norfolk didn't like the way the Marines who ran the brig treated particularly younger offenders so he had established what was called an *'extra training unit'* and he would send minor offenders to us and we would kind of re-boot camp those men and try to get them back in a better disciplined frame of mind and that way he didn't have to send them to the brig and I was on that duty when the war ended and then the point system started happening and pretty soon I had enough points to get out. So I got out.

Rick: Did any of those pilots that were training ever crash?

Cal: Oh yeah – a lot of them would go into the water – I don't mean a lot – but with some frequency you'd have one go into the water.

Rick: And lose the plane.

Cal: You'd lose the plane but you've got the pilot.

Rick: And did any of them crash into the ship at all?

Cal: Yeah we had one came crashing into the island one time. If they missed that arresting gear you know you've got a problem on your hands. In addition to the arresting gear there is a device called *'the barrier'* that consists of three cables that that are attached to erectable posts by the use of air pressure and so when you were in the process of recovering aircraft you would land one, he would grab the arrester gear, they'd unhook him from that, taxi him forward of the barrier, throw the barrier up and by that time the landing signal officer would be bringing another in – they'd bring him in, he'd catch the arrester. But the barrier was there to protect the planes forward in case he missed.

Rick: Weren't they supposed to throttle up before they hit that barrier in case they missed it and so they could take off again?

Cal: Oh sometimes they would a wave off…if the landing signal officer didn't have them coming in right he would wave them off and they'd have to go around again.

Rick: Didn't they throttle up just in case they missed the hook or the barrier?

Cal: Well you could only do that if he was the very first airplane. Because you had to protect the planes forward. Because you didn't have time to get them down an elevator to the hangar deck you know because they'd just be coming in one after the other.

Rick: Tell us where you were when you heard of VE day. And VJ day.

Cal: Well I was still onboard at VE day but I was at Norfolk Virginia at VJ day and I just remember that everybody was jubilant.

Rick: Did they have any major celebrations or anything around the base?

Cal: Everybody tried to get to the liquor stores and of course liquor was rationed then.

Rick: But you were onboard the ship during VE day and so I guess there was celebration?

Cal: Yeah and it was after VE day that we got assigned to the pilot qualification duty.

Elizabeth: Did Americans commonly know that there were German submarines in the Atlantic? Off the coast?

Rick: They knew because in early 1943, or lets see, in 1942 they destroyed 87 ships – liberty ships and cargo ships off the Atlantic coast. 41 ships were sunk in the Gulf of Mexico in May of '42.

Elizabeth: So everybody knew?

Rick: They knew – they didn't have the material or methods to get at them – it was *'the happy times'*.

Elizabeth: So Joe-Q-Public, some guy sitting in Nebraska knew?

Rick: No – they kept it secret that these submarines were that close.

Cal: People on the coast knew though because they had to go to a dim out situation for a period of time where they had to try to get all the lights out that they could, to not silhouette shipping for the subs.

Rick: The German submarine captains called it the *'happy times'* because they could just shoot at will before we got our destroyers and our anti-submarine warfare going.

Elizabeth: You mother – do you know of her emotions? You and your brothers were all in the war right?

Cal: Well I had two brothers, one in the army in Europe and a brother in the Marine Corps in the Pacific.

Elizabeth: And was your mother just on pins-and-needles through the whole war?

Cal: Well I wasn't there to know but I suppose she had some concern.

Elizabeth: I thought maybe she'd write; did you get letters?

Cal: Well we got letters but we never wrote back. Life was too interesting to engage in correspondence.

Rick: Did you dock in Africa? Where would you take shore leave when you were in that part of the world?

Cal: Oh the only place we ever went other than Norfolk was to Casablanca – French Morocco.

Rick: I see.

Cal: And we did refuel there two or three different times.

Rick: And to your knowledge did they ever have a ship while they were taking on fuel turn 180 degrees like that other than yours?

Cal: Oh yeah and two ships crashed together. But the water was pretty calm I guess that was the reason they were able to do it.

Rick: I wonder why everyone got seasick crossing over the Columbia bar – that's a mighty big ship you were on.

Cal: Oh it still rolls – yeah.

Rick: That's amazing – I used to think that those guys had it made.

Cal: We got in a storm in the North Atlantic one time where we were without the ability to navigate with sun and stars and we were about five days unable to get any kind of a celestial site and he's going with the storm trying to ride it out and we're going in a north easterly direction and he finally thinks we may be too close to the British Islands and Ireland and he decided then to turn us around and boy when we were in the bottom of that trough turning around I tell you it was hairy – you could look out and see the water at the level of the navigation bridge.

Rick: How big were those waves?

Cal: Of course the navigation bridge, the level that we operated from, was 60 feet above the regular water line but when you're in that trough I don't know how you would ever gauge it.

Rick: So in a storm you go into the waves obviously to try to ride them out but he was trying to turn around then because he was getting too close to shore?

Cal: Well he was going with the storm at first and it was then that he tried to turn around. And actually that turned out to be the right decision because we got out of it then in about 12 hours.

Rick: And he was right that he was close to the British coast?

Cal: Well we were close but I don't know how close. Incidentally, a huge wave at that time in that storm got under the flight deck, poured under the flight deck and raised it two or three feet. We had to then get that repaired.

Rick: So the flight deck would stick out a little bit and the water came under and actually raised it?

Cal: Well the actual straight edge of the flight deck on its forward end is just about the bow – the point of the bow of the vessel so the two sides you know to the side of the bow – water came up like that.

Rick: Well that's interesting. You all had your sea legs by then so you weren't as affected by the waves?

Cal: Well then you worry about another day *'is it gonna hold together'*.

Rick: Thank you very much, Cal, for your interesting stories.