

Interviewee: Richard “Dick” Baumann

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date of interview: 17 December 2001

Location: living room of the Baumann home in White Bear Lake, MN

Transcribed by: Shannon Smith, July 2002

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, August 2002

Richard Baumann was born 26 June 1923 in St. Paul Park, Minnesota. He spent his youth there and graduated from St. Paul Park High School in June 1941. One year later, in September 1942, Richard enlisted in the US Navy; following Basic Training he volunteered for the Submarine Service.

Trained as an Electrician, in 1943 Richard joined *USS Greenling* (SS-213), then in the Pacific. He remained on *Greenling* until the end of the war in August 1945 as a crew member on several war patrols throughout the Pacific. The *Greenling's* twelfth war patrol was also her last—on 24 January 1945, in the Nansei Shoto Islands, *Greenling* was attacked by Japanese escort vessels and damaged during a four-hour depth charge attack. The submarine steamed to Saipan for repairs, then to the US mainland. After overhaul at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the submarine was decommissioned in 1946.

Richard Baumann was finally rotated back to the United States and discharged in January 1946 with the rate of Electrician 1st Class. As a member of the Naval Reserve, he was recalled to active duty and during 1950-51 served in Korea.

Following World War II military service, Richard returned to Minnesota, attended school for electronics, and then worked several jobs in the Twin Cities area before moving to Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M Company) in 1955. He worked for the St. Paul-based company in various capacities until his retirement in 1982.

In 1948 Richard married Donna (Stahl) Baumann; the couple moved to White Bear Lake, MN, in 1953, where they raised their five children. Richard was long active in the US Submarine Veterans of World War II. [<http://www.ussvi.org/>] He died in January 2006, aged 82.

Interview key:

TS = Thomas Saylor

RB = Richard Baumann

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

TS: Today's the 17th of December 2001, and this is the interview with Mr. Richard Baumann. First, Mr. Baumann, I want to thank you very much for taking time out this evening to sit and have a conversation with me. Thank you very much.

RB: My pleasure.

TS: First, when and where were you born?

RB: I was born in 1923 in St. Paul Park, Minnesota.

TS: So you've lived in Minnesota most of your life?

RB: Yes.

TS: Where did you go to high school?

RB: I went to St. Paul Park High School. Grade school and high school.

TS: How many schools were there in St. Paul Park in those days?

RB: Just one. One elementary, and the high school had the upper floor. One building for everything.

TS: How big was your high school graduating class?

RB: Mine was thirty people.

TS: Now how did you field sports teams with just thirty students? *(laughs)* Did you have a football team?

RB: We had a football team, but the heaviest man was probably about 140 pounds, very slim. We had a good basketball team—St. Paul Park always had a good basketball team. We were competitive with Mahtomedi, Rosemount, Hastings, and South St. Paul, local towns.

TS: So even though you didn't have many people in the school, you managed to put competitive basketball teams out there? You finished high school in June of 1941.

RB: That's correct—1941.

TS: Then you went to work—could you tell me what kind of work you had?

RB: I went to work for a company called Ideal Brass Company. They manufactured door locks, storm door locks, window operators. I was running a punch press and also taking a course in tool and die making. I enjoyed that more than just running a punch press every day.

TS: Were you working at Ideal Brass when the United States entered the war in December of 1941?

RB: Yes, I was working there.

TS: What were you doing when you first heard the news about December 7th, 1941?

RB: I had just returned from church and turned the radio on and I heard the announcement about Pearl Harbor. I had asked my father where Pearl Harbor was—I had never heard of it. My father hadn't either, but he looked it up and from then on followed all the information that came out of the radio for the day. It was quite a day to remember.

TS: How did your folks react to the news on the radio?

RB: I don't think they really thought much about it—they were from a small town, and my parents had never really traveled much. But they saw a need for going into the military, and I enlisted as soon as I was able to get my thoughts together. Another good friend of mine who I went to school with, we enlisted together.

TS: And you picked the Navy, right?

RB: We picked the Navy, yes.

TS: Why the Navy?

RB: One reason was that I knew Admiral [Charles Bowers] Momsen, who was very active in the submarine service. He lived just a few blocks from our house, and I used to deliver papers to his parents' home. I talked about the Navy all the time. After I went into boot camp at Great Lakes, I signed up for submarine service. But apparently I must have made a pretty good grade in electrical work. So they sent me to electrical school at Purdue University, where I spent five months going through engineering school.

TS: Was that the end of 1942?

RB: Yes. From there I again volunteered for submarine service. This time I got it, and I was transferred to New London, Connecticut, where I attended submarine school. When I graduated from there, after about six weeks, I went to (***) [gyro] school up in the Brooklyn Navy Yard for two more weeks. I specialized in intercommunications, and went to (***) [gyro] school. From there I went to Midway Island—do you want me to keep on this?

TS: Did you pick up your sub at the Brooklyn Navy Yard or in Connecticut?

RB: No, I picked it up at Midway Island.

TS: So you went by train across the States?

RB: Crossed the States to California, boarded a ship there and went to Hawaii. There I boarded another ship and went to Midway Island and served in a relief crew for about four months. There I picked up the submarine.

TS: That was 1943?

RB: Yes.

TS: Before you joined the Navy, did you get encouragement from your folks to join the service?

RB: No, I don't think I got any encouragement, but my father did think that Navy would probably be a lot better to go into than the Army. So I'd say he gave me a little push in that direction.

TS: Did you share with him or your mom early on your desire to join the service?

RB: Oh, yes—we talked about it a lot. Well, everybody was doing it, so it was just a common thing to do. Everyone was joining, and if you didn't join there was something wrong with you.

TS: Were you aware of the sentiment that this was something that one *needed* to do as a young man?

RB: Well, it was the thing to do. Everyone talked about it—when they could go in. All my friend were volunteering or getting drafted. I thought I'd volunteer in the Navy rather than be drafted.

TS: Would you say there was social pressure to join the military by 1942 for a young man?

RB: I wouldn't say it was a pressure from society—it's just that we all wanted to get in and do our bit for this country.

TS: Where did you go for your Basic Training?

RB: I went to Camp Green Bay in Great Lakes Naval Training Center.

TS: Was that a new part of the country?

RB: I wouldn't say it was a new part of the country. I had been in Chicago and Detroit with my parents as a little boy. But it was a new experience being mixed in with thousands and thousands of other young men, mostly my age, eighteen or nineteen.

TS: What was it like being away from home for a long time?

RB: Well, that was the first time I'd been away for that long, but we were kept so busy that we didn't get a chance to think about being lonely or all that. They kept us going from daybreak in the morning until lights out at night. I only spent two weeks in boot camp. They really rushed us through.

TS: Two weeks? Wow. So there was obviously a need to get guys moved on to something.

RB: To get on and get them educated so they would be worth something to the Navy Department.

TS: From Great Lakes your next step was where?

RB: New London, Connecticut.

TS: Because you volunteered for sub service right away then?

RB: No, that's wrong. I volunteered for submarine service right out of boot camp, but because I had made a fairly good grade in the test they gave us, they sent me to electrical school to get further education in electricity.

TS: So by that time you weren't going into the sub service yet?

RB: No, no.

TS: Is it clear to say that you had to volunteer twice to get into submarine service?

RB: I volunteered after I got out of electrical school for submarine service, and this time I was accepted.

TS: What were the criteria to be accepted to sub service?

RB: Well, you had to have a good set of teeth so you could use the Momsen Lung for escape. You couldn't have an overbite, because the Momsen Lung dictated that you had to hold this mouthpiece in your mouth when you were escaping from a sunken submarine. Plus you had to have a pretty good, even disposition. They had psychiatrists who would give you a lot of questions. Depending on how you answered, you were either rejected or selected, allowed to go into submarine service.

TS: What kind of questions did they ask you?

RB: Some of them I would not want to put on tape right now (*laughs*). But they were things about your personal life, your parents, very (*pauses three seconds*) pointed questions to see how you react, and how your temper would hold up under certain conditions.

TS: So they would in sense try to *bait* you to see if you would get riled up?

RB: Right, right—to see how you accept insults, so to speak.

TS: Those are the questions you didn't want to mention on tape?

RB: Yes.

TS: So if they could rile you up and get you angry...?

RB: You would have to go to sea for two or three months, and if you got this riled up in a short time, why, what would you be like in two months, or three months?

TS: Very interesting. And you obviously made it through that question and answer session?

RB: Apparently, yes.

TS: Your next training after Great Lakes was at Purdue, right, for electrical, and then to New London, Connecticut?

RB: Purdue, right, and then New London, Connecticut. And there we went to classes on submarines, and their workings. Then we actually went out on test dives after we had read about submarines from the books, the various diagrams. And we had to make drawings of the submarines and all their various compartments before they would let us go to sea with a trained crew. Then we'd observe their activities, and every once in a while they would let us do a certain job.

TS: Almost like an apprenticeship?

RB: Yes, right.

TS: How long did that training at New London last?

RB: I think it was about six weeks. That included several trips to sea, and a lot of classroom work—a lot of drawings.

TS: Was it tough?

RB: Yes. Very tough. We had a master of arms—Chief Spritz. We referred to it as “Spritz’s Navy.” He had been a chief for a hundred years I think. He was a mean son-of-a-gun, but very fair. He would separate people that he didn’t think would work out on a submarine in a very short time.

TS: So that first question and answer session was one barrier, but here was another one. He could group people out that didn’t seem fit, and they would what, be sent back to the regular Navy?

RB: Yes, you would be ushered out of submarine service right now, and back to serve on a ship.

TS: And there were no ifs, ands, or buts, you were just out?

RB: Oh no—he was the top boy. That’s why they referred to “Spritz’s Navy.” If they said “Spritz,” they know who you’re talking about.

TS: From your perspective, how many guys didn’t cut it who started? How many didn’t make it through this training, percentage-wise?

RB: Percentage-wise I’m not certain, but you would get thrown out for many reasons. You had to be able to take a fifty-pounds per square inch pressure test in a tank, even before you had to try a free ascent through the tank with the Momsen Lung. A lot of people, their ears would not allow them to take the pressure test. Their eardrums would break, and they would be ushered out of submarine service.

TS: And you obviously did okay with that test. Do you remember it?

RB: Yes. Oh, yes.

TS: What was it like?

RB: Well, they’d explain very thoroughly what was happening. Then they’d start building up the pressure, and every five or ten pounds they’d look at everybody and ask how you were doing. As the pressure rose, up to thirty, forty, fifty pounds, your voice would change. You’d go to say something, and it would just come out like a squeal, because of the extreme pressure.

TS: Did it make you feel light-headed?

RB: As long as you could balance the pressure on either side of your eardrums, you were fine. But if you couldn't clear your ears, then the pressure would actually break your eardrums. I saw several guys with their eardrums broken. Very painful.

TS: Does it cause unconsciousness?

RB: No, but the ears would bleed.

TS: It must heal itself, but that was it for them for the sub Navy?

RB: Yes, yes. They'd shut the pressure down, and bring the pressure back down to atmospheric pressure, and then release those that couldn't pass it, and then try again.

TS: And if you can do it once, you can do it again?

RB: Oh, yes.

TS: And the only way to test that is to do it?

RB: Actually put you under pressure, yes.

TS: You picked up your first boat on Midway Island. Now, did you know what boat you were going to when you went out to Midway?

RB: No, we had no idea. It just depended on the needs of the crew at that time. A lot of the time the men would be transferred to new construction. They had made three or four patrol runs and would be sent back to the United States and pick up a new submarine that was just being built. Therefore they had to be replaced by additional crew members, a relief crew. And I was part of a relief crew. A relief crew's job: when a submarine comes in off of a patrol run, the crew leaves the ship, or the boat, for two weeks, and the relief crew comes aboard and repairs all the various equipment that isn't working up to one hundred percent of its possibilities.

TS: And then some or all of those relief crew members join the crew on the next patrol?

RB: No. Maybe one or two, depending on the needs of the crew. If they need a torpedo man, or an engineman, or an electrician, they would pick them out of the relief crew.

TS: I see: "We'll take this guy, that guy, and that guy." The rest of the relief crew stays...

RB: Yes, they stay there and work on the next boat coming in.

TS: So you may be part of a relief crew for one day, or six weeks?

RB: Or six years.

TS: How long were you there at Midway?

RB: I was there about three months, before I caught my first. One of the boats I was going to be assigned to, a friend of mine caught it, and he went down on it. So I was very fortunate. I could have been on that same submarine.

TS: What does it do to a guy when you hear a story like that, when you realize you were a step away from getting on that boat?

RB: I think about it every time I look at his books. I have several books that he gave me to keep for him. I still have them in my basement down here, with his name in them. Every once in a while I look at those books and I think, "Hey, I was pretty lucky."

TS: How much of a role does luck or chance play for a guy in a situation like this?

RB: Well, if you read a number of the stories I've read in various books and *Polaris* magazines—this last issue of *Polaris*, they have two men that survived. One had to go to a hospital for a week and his boat went out without him, and that one went down. There were circumstances like that all throughout my Navy life, where it was just chance that you just stayed on shore for some reason and the boat went down, or...

TS: Is it hard to deal with that every day, or do you just have to put that out of your mind?

RB: I guess when you're twenty-one or twenty-two years old, you don't think too much about it. But I look back now and think that I was pretty lucky sometimes.

TS: Your first boat was the *Greenling*. You joined the *Greenling* in mid-1943?

RB: Yes.

TS: Do you remember your first patrol on *Greenling*?

RB: The *Greenling* made a total of twelve runs. I made the last four on it. (*pauses five seconds*) Truthfully I don't remember the first run to speak of. I remember the twelfth run very vividly because we got knocked out of the water. On the eleventh run, we took all the invasion pictures of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, and we were not allowed to fire a torpedo. Our skipper was very upset with an assignment like that.

He liked to sink ships, not take pictures. *(laughs)* We had Navy photographers aboard ship, and we would come in close to shore about noon, and then shoot pictures of the perimeter of the island.

TS: Were you surfaced or submerged?

RB: No, through the periscope. All the pictures were taken through the periscope. And we weren't allowed to fire—they didn't want us to give our position away by showing ourselves. So we took all the pictures, and then we blew them up—we developed them right aboard ship. Then we brought them back to Pearl, and the Marines took them. When they invaded Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, they used our pictures to look and see their gun placements and just what they had as far as armaments.

TS: How long was a typical war patrol?

RB: It depended—if you fired all your torpedoes in the first week or two on station... Otherwise you were out there between fifty and seventy-five days.

TS: What was your job on board the boat?

RB: I was electrician, and our job was to keep all the various electrical equipment running, and maintain it. In the case of breakdown, we would repair it. I also stood watch on the main propulsion plant. It was a four-hour watch.

TS: In addition to your regular shift?

RB: Yes.

TS: How would you describe everyday life on the submarine?

RB: Everyday life on a submarine was actually boring sometimes, because until you got to your station—which was a designated area out in the ocean maybe two miles square—it was very boring. The same thing night after night, day after day. But then if you got into hostilities things moved quite rapidly. The everyday life was not too interesting until you got right on... You're moving to and from station, which took probably a week or ten days, depending what station you were assigned.

TS: Almost two opposite ends of the spectrum: either too slow and monotonous, or too much excitement?

RB: Yes, yes. There was no happy medium, I don't think.

TS: How do you pass the time during the day on a sub? There's a lot of time to kill and not much space to do it in.

RB: You would do a lot of reading, and play a lot of cards. On the other hand, you had four hours of work, you'd stand a watch, and then eight hours off. A lot of times those eight hours off they'd turn all the lights on back in the sleeping compartments, and you would clean the ship. You'd clean it, and make it presentable for an inspection, even under way, to the captain and the officers. Just to keep it clean. Various things you could do while the submarine was running, you would do them. Electrical work maintenance, preventive maintenance. But a lot of the equipment would be in action, being used, and you couldn't shut it down then.

TS: So the larger repairs had to wait until you were back at the base?

RB: Yes, that's what the relief crew's job was.

TS: How about mealtime on a submarine?

RB: Mealtime was very interesting, because they gave you the main meal if you surfaced at night. Breakfast and lunch were pretty fast, because you were usually submerged at that time, so there wasn't a lot of activity. But if it was at night when you surfaced, you had your full meal. Then you got to see a lot of people you hadn't seen for a week sometimes, or a couple days.

TS: Why's that?

RB: Because if people in the after torpedo room didn't like what was on the menu, they had stored their own food in the after torpedo room, and they'd eat their own food out of cans.

TS: So that was a perk?

RB: A perk, yes.

TS: Was the food generally good on board?

RB: On submarines it was *exceptionally* good, yes. We were actually allowed per man per day more than the average sailor on a surface ship. I think it was like ninety cents more per day. We ate very good on submarines. And you had an open mess hall where you could go and make a sandwich at any hour of the day, or get a roll or a doughnut that the cook was baking.

TS: And the surface Navy was not like that?

RB: No, no.

TS: Did you have a cook for the officers or the men?

RB: No—we had three mess cooks, but they cooked both for the enlisted personnel

and the officers. The food the officers ate came out of the same kitchen that we ate out of.

TS: Really? They didn't have a separate kitchen. Did they have separate staff for the officers?

RB: Oh yes, they their own mess boys for the officers. They would come down to our galley and get the food and then carry it forward to the officers' quarters. Then they would eat there in their own dining room, so to speak.

TS: How many officers did you have on board *Greenling*?

RB: Well, there was the captain, the engineering officer, then they had the engineer, gunnery officer... Probably about five, six officers.

TS: And the crew was how many?

RB: It varied—anywhere from 65 to 70 men, up to 85.

TS: The mess boys for the officers, were they white or black?

RB: Black, mostly.

TS: And how many of them were there?

RB: Two. Or Filipino too, they could be Filipino too.

TS: They changed sometimes when the sub came back in?

RB: Oh yes, if they'd want to go to a different boat, why they could put in for a new relief crew, or if they wanted to stay on shore for a couple runs.

TS: Were they enlisted men too?

RB: Yes, all enlisted men.

TS: How were the relations between the blacks, the Filipinos, and the whites onboard?

RB: We had no problems. Of course, those days, during the war, no black could hold a regular rate. He'd either be a mess cook, or an officers' mess.

TS: Were they also volunteers?

RB: Yes.

TS: So everyone on the boat was a volunteer, officers and men?

RB: Yes, right.

TS: You remembered the eleventh patrol with the photography. The twelfth, you mentioned, was also memorable. Why was that?

RB: Well, we started out, and we were out about a week and our radar was acting up very badly. It was out of commission for two or three days. The radar technicians were working on it, and it just would not work properly. We sighted a seventeen-ship convoy on the surface early in the morning just by lookouts. We just had surfaced, and we saw this smoke. We went forward and found out that it was a seventeen-ship convoy. We dove again, but unknown to us, they had us in their radar. So the minute we got ready to fire torpedoes, they started dropping depth charges. To make a long story short, we got knocked over, out of the war. They caved us in pretty badly. We surfaced that night about 9:30 or 10:00. We had four hot runs, meaning the torpedoes were running in the tubes in the after-torpedo room, due to the pounding we took.

TS: What's the danger of something like that? They could blow up in the tube?

RB: Well, fortunately they didn't. Once they're armed, yes, then a ten-pound blow will explode them. But if they're not armed—meaning they have to travel a certain distance through the water before they're armed—then they're impossible to set off.

TS: So until they're armed they're just big pieces of metal?

RB: Yes.

TS: This time when the boat came under attack from depth charges—was that the first time that had happened to you?

RB: No, we had been depth-charged several times before that. But they were a few hundred yards away from us, so you felt a little concussion, or noise. Cups would break, and the lights would break, but nothing like I had seen on that run. What saved us was that we had fired a decoy flare—

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 000.

RB: --what it does is it makes noise. We had a special gun in the after torpedo room that this thing is fired out of. It goes up about a few feet and floats into the stream of water, or current. After so many minutes, it starts popping noises, like air escaping, and various noises. So it gives the impression that the submarine has been hit. Therefore the enemy destroyers are going at the decoy, and we hopefully slip away from them.

TS: Is that what you think happened here?

RB: Yes, that's what saved our lives.

TS: What is the experience like on the boat when these depth charges are falling nearby?

RB: Very quiet. Nothing is running—you shut down every noisemaker aboard ship. You tiptoe around, you don't run around, you don't talk out loud, you whisper. You don't make any noises whatsoever. Of course you're doing a lot of praying, too.

TS: How long did this depth-charging last?

RB: It started about 8:30 in the morning, and it finished about five or six o'clock at night. All day long.

TS: Are there occasionally guys who aren't up to the stress of something like this?

RB: I saw only two occasions where men—they had switched steering from the conning tower to the control room—and one man broke down and they had to take him off, relieve him. Another man, it was about the same situation, he was on the bow planes and just couldn't handle it.

TS: When you say "couldn't handle it," what happens to that person?

RB: Well, you're taking evasive action, moving left full rudder, and right full rudder, and everything is in manual now. So you don't have the advantage of a hydraulic system where you operate the bow planes or the stern planes with a little lever, or a wheel where you turn the wheel just a little bit and the bow planes respond. Now, if the captain wants right full rudder, you have to spin that wheel just as fast as you can to starboard or port. And he may change halfway through it and want you to go the other way. You just work up an awful sweat in a hurry.

TS: Was it more of a physical or a mental breakdown, the guys you're describing?

RB: I think it was both, yes. You're just getting frustrated at left and right, starboard and port. I'm using civilian terms now (*laughs*).

TS: What do you say on board the boat?

RB: Port and starboard.

TS: Is there a sense of anger or frustration at guys who break down, or is there more of a sympathy for them?

RB: Sympathy.

TS: Why's that?

RB: As they say, I guess you're all in the same boat. I never had to run the bow planes or the stern planes. My position was on the IC switchboard, and I had to close and open switches as they so desired, for firing things. To sit and operate the bow planes and the stern planes—one minute they wanted three hundred feet, the next minute they wanted one hundred feet, and you up and down them like a porpoise.

TS: When depth charges are close to your boat, what does that actually do inside the boat?

RB: Well, the lights are all hung with rubber cords. So instead of a light bulb being screwed right in, it's hung by a rubber cord, and then a socket. So if you do get a depth charge, they won't break the light bulbs. Otherwise they'll snap them right off. Or your coffee cups—I've seen those smashed sitting on the deck, just go to pieces from the concussion.

TS: And how about to people? What do you feel physically?

RB: Well, you're watching the depth gauges. These submarines were only tested to a certain depth, and sometimes we were forced to go below that test pressure. We'd watch that gauges pretty close, make sure we get down below *that*—well, we would get caved in anyway with the extreme pressure.

TS: Was there ever a time when you yourself felt you weren't going to make it?

[1, B, 97]

RB: There was a time when it was that close. (*pauses five seconds*) Like I said, you looked around, and did a lot of praying for yourself (*pauses five seconds*). But we got out of it. Otherwise I wouldn't be here to tell you these stories (*laughs*).

TS: When was that twelfth patrol? 1945?

RB: Let me see... we left around Christmastime '44 to go out. I think we spent Christmas in Pearl, and then went out too many days—I think after seventeen days we caught it. So we headed back to Saipan, which was under our control then.

TS: Was there a submarine base there?

RB: Yes, they had set up a small submarine base there. And they sent divers over the side. Our torpedoes had got stuck in the tubes, and we could not use our after room tubes at all. Our tubes were warped. We were able to blow them out with compressed air, but the tubes were damaged beyond repair at sea. So they took

divers and went over the side and they said, “No—you’re going back to the States.” Well, we went back to Pearl and then they made the decision to send us back to the States and take us out of the war activity, because we had enough submarines for the areas that were left. We operated with the Air Force, or the Airedales as we called them, from Alameda as a school boat. We’d go out and dive, and they’d try to find us and whatnot—training stuff. So I operated out of Monterey for about three months.

TS: Very different kind of duty, wasn’t it?

RB: Yes.

TS: Here’s the extremes you talked about—suddenly you’re just...

RB: Now we’re just playing games with the Airedales (*laughs*).

TS: What’s the difference between leave and liberty?

RB: Liberty is just like, maybe overnight, or afternoon, you’d have liberty. If you take a leave, it’s like a ten-day leave, or a thirty-day leave—you’d come home. It’s a longer time.

TS: Once you went out to Midway, did you come home on leave at all?

RB: No, no. Once I got to Midway—after leaving Great Lakes, I didn’t come home again until I got a thirty-day leave after we came back to the States.

TS: From your fourth patrol? Early ’45?

RB: From the fourth patrol, yes.

TS: Did you have liberty once you got to Midway?

RB: Well, liberty in Midway, you put up with the gooney-birds—you’ve heard about those. And it was a small island, there wasn’t much to do but play ball, and swim, and drink a lot of beer. And just rest. We did play ball—they had various sporting activities to keep you halfway in shape. As far as liberty, our real relaxation was movies, of course. They had a pool hall, you could play pool.

TS: You made a stop at Saipan and Midway—anywhere else?

RB: Well, we took on fuel at Johnson Island, which is a small refueling base. But no, Midway and Saipan, Tinian. No, Guam—we did Guam and Saipan.

TS: Was liberty on all those places essentially the same? Those islands are pretty small.

RB: Well, on Saipan, the Japanese were—when we landed they were coming back after they licked us, after we got beat up pretty badly. We had a beer ballgame, but the Japanese were fighting way up in the hills yet (laughs). Still fighting, and we were playing ball. They had guards around us, though.

TS: Really? So we were keen to have that turned into a base pretty quickly?

RB: Quite right, yes. Of course, Saipan was where all the B-29s flew out of. We'd watch the B-29s fly out, and come back.

TS: By early 1945, were you of the opinion—other guys too—that the war was essentially winding down, that it was just a matter of time?

RB: Well, the areas were getting smaller, and we had more submarines out there. So there was less shipping going on. As we said, the hunting wasn't as good in '44 or '45, as it was in '42 and '43, early part of '44.

TS: Can you think of a person who had a real impact on you—someone you looked up to?

RB: Well, there's a lot of members of the crew that I looked up to. The officers were all good officers. The skippers were great. Any skipper that's going to bring you back alive was great. We still keep in touch with people that I served with, back in '43 and '44 with, '45. We see each other a couple times a year—get together at reunions. Some of my best friends were shipmates of mine.

TS: Since the end of the war, have you stayed in contact with a number of people?

RB: Yes, we have a very good—the *Greenling* crew get together once a year. We have anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five of the original crew that come out.

TS: Why is it important to you personally to stay in contact with your boat mates?

RB: Well, we made friends over the years. We know their families. Not all of them, but a good number that we associated with closely that were in the electrical crew, or torpedo crew that worked side by side. Day after day after day, you become very close friends.

TS: In close quarters, too?

RB: Yes, in close quarters. You ate your meals together, you slept in very close proximity to each other. You learned about their families, and how they married.

TS: Do you think it's the case that submarine crew members developed close bonds than other branches of the service?

RB: I would say closer than any other branch of the service.

TS: Is that mostly the space, or the experiences that you have?

RB: It's the experiences, and the space. You're living in very close proximity; you're with them day and night, for day upon day; you go to shore with them. *(pauses five seconds)* There's a lot of stories about the submarine people coming into Pearl and they're all white because of the lack of sunshine. They always stayed together, and they'd drink together, and they'd fight together.

TS: Are those stories true?

RB: Oh yes.

TS: Were there people on board the boat with whom you didn't really get along?

RB: No, I would say no. There were people that you'd prefer to be with. Let's say when you go on liberty, there were your really close friends that you went to shore with. But you'd always get together in a group, especially the first couple nights at the Royal Hawaiian, that was party night.

TS: That was only for submariners, is that correct?

RB: Yes.

TS: What kind of place was the Royal Hawaiian?

RB: Well, it had been a very exclusive hotel. That and another hotel were the only two hotels on the island at that time. I think the aviators that ferried airplanes to and from Pearl from the United States stayed there one night too. But basically it was set aside for submarines and their crews. We didn't see the officers hardly—we had our floors and they had their floors. Everybody went their own way.

TS: Pretty nice place, was it?

RB: Oh yes, very nice place. We were treated quite well. We had a lot of chances to go surfing and swimming.

TS: What was the opinion of guys in the surface Navy of guys in the submarine service, and vice-versa?

RB: Well, we didn't really have much to do with the surface, we stayed right with our own crews. We went ashore with them, we never associated with surface types really. We had our own base, and we stayed right with our own little group of men.

TS: So you didn't even come into contact with them all that often?

RB: No.

TS: Was there any kind of competition between the two branches?

RB: No, I wouldn't say competition. They frowned on us a little bit because we got better pay, we got more allotment for food per day. On the other hand, they had their facilities for getting soft drinks and ice cream and all that, which we didn't have—and exercises. Our quarters were limited as far as what we could do.

TS: How long was your boat from one end to the other?

RB: About 312 feet long.

TS: About the length of a football field. Not being able to exercise must have been a frustrating thing?

RB: There wasn't much room to exercise at all. If you're submerged, you didn't want to use up a lot of air, because what air you had was what you had to live with all day long until you surfaced at night.

TS: This makes me think that staying in touch with family and loved ones back home must have been a challenge.

RB: We just didn't. I get a kick now when I hear these—Gulf War and that—where these people have gone three-four days and they have to call home. Well, we never thought about calling home. We had our mail all censored by the officers. We wrote very few letters I think, because there wasn't much you could talk about anyway.

TS: (laughs) You look around at the four walls: they're not going to change much!

RB: Well, if you did say something then it would get edited out anyway by the officers—if you gave something that happened, or what you sunk, or whatever. You couldn't say a word—that's why we were called the "silent service" I guess.

TS: Did you get mail?

RB: Oh yes. Mail, and fresh milk. They'd bring gallons down. That was the first thing, on the dock: a mailman and then your fresh milk, and fruit and vegetables.

TS: You must have really craved some of that fresh stuff after months away.

RB: Oh yes. Our fresh food only lasted—vegetables only lasted maybe a week at the most, or ten days, and then it was all gone.

TS: And then you had only canned stuff?

RB: Canned, yes.

TS: One thing I've always wondered: When you're on a sub, is the garbage and stuff collected during the day, and dumped when you surface at night?

RB: Right. They're put in bags. This is a ritual we'd do every night, provided there's nothing up there when you surface. We'd slow down to a relatively slow speed, and the bags would all be weighted down with rocks or something that would take them to the bottom. Then they dump garbage.

TS: So bags of garbage with weights in them so you didn't leave any trace of yourself behind?

RB: Right—they'd sink right to the bottom.

TS: How many bags a day does a sub produce?

RB: Probably about, I would say anywhere from three to five.

TS: How do the bathroom facilities work on a sub like this? Is there just one, or two?

RB: It's quite an experience to use a bathroom on a submarine, a World War II submarine. Now they're regular in-your-house toilets. There were two ways to dispose of the waste: either in the holding tank, which was relatively small, or you could lower it directly outboard. You had to look at a pressure gauge, and you had to build up pressure in this lower chamber of this toilet. You had a flapper valve on top; you'd close the flapper valve and make sure it's secure. Then you'd build up pressure in this impulse tank greater than what the seawater pressure was, so it would go out, not in and sink the submarine. Then you'd hit the switch operating the valve and it would blow it out to sea. But they didn't want to do that because then paper and stuff would float to the surface maybe, so you would put it in the sanitary tank. Then at night they would blow the sanitary tank.

TS: So surfacing at night was a chance to get fresh air, dump the garbage, and empty the toilet.

RB: Blow the sanitary tank. And pump the bilges.

TS: We watch these submarine movies, and when they come up the guys always seem to be happy for the fresh air. They don't get to the dirty stuff which is you also have to get rid of your garbage and your sewage at the same time. I know the truth now—I'll watch those movies differently next time. *(both laugh)*

RB: But now they have regular toilets on the submarines—completely different. A whole new ballgame.

[1, B, 302]

TS: Let me ask you, Mr. Baumann, where were you when you heard the news that President Roosevelt had died in April of 1945?

RB: *(pauses five seconds)* That's a very good question—I don't remember where I was. I remember hearing it. We picked it up on our local radio—that's a wire—I forgot how the military sends it out. We picked it up in code maybe. But I don't remember, I couldn't tell you that.

TS: Do you remember how you and those around you reacted to the news that the President had died?

RB: I don't think we gave a great deal of thought about it. We had more things on our mind to think about. It's hard for me to remember how we felt. No, that's a long time ago.

TS: What do you remember about V-E Day, May 8th, 1945, the day the war ended in Europe? Were you out to sea at that time?

RB: I think we were out to sea, yes. I'm not certain. I remember V-J Day. I was in San Francisco. We were in Mare Island Navy Yard for an overhaul.

TS: You were still part of *Greenling*, weren't you?

RB: Yes, still on *Greenling*. We went up to San Francisco for the weekend. Well, unbeknownst to us, why, V-J Day happened, and we had gone *(pauses three seconds)*, let's see now, I'm trying to think. The streets were so bad in San Francisco, so dangerous even to be on them. We were on 5th and Market, and we went into our hotel room about 9:30 or 10:00 at night. The people that were really acting up were these kids that had never even seen a submarine, or been out to sea. They were tearing the town apart. Civilians and military people.

So we got up in the morning and went to an early movie. We came out of the movie, and the shore patrol caught us right away and said, "What are you guys doing? Where are you from?" "Mare Island." "What are you doing way up here?" We didn't realize that they had put a limit on the distance you could travel from our base. They said, "Get back to your base as fast as you can." There'd been a, what's the word, quarantine—no, not a quarantine. A restriction—they had to do that to control the people in San Francisco.

TS: So it had gotten out of hand?

RB: Oh, yes, it was a mess. Things I can think of now I don't think I could put on tape even.

TS: Try one of them, and I'll tell you.

RB: Well, like girls swimming in the pool there on 5th and Market, a big pond and that. And tearing up these big signs for the movies, what are they called, the lights and all that. Sailors were climbing up there and throwing light bulbs off.

TS: So really destructive behavior.

RB: Destructive, yes.

TS: And something you didn't want to be part of?

RB: No.

TS: Were these younger...?

RB: They were the younger generation. We always thought, "Damn kids—acting up." We had just come back from catching hell, and we didn't appreciate all that.

TS: By now you were 21 or 22, a three-year veteran of the service. And here were these kids who had never—and they were the ones celebrating the hardest? Isn't that ironic?

RB: Yes.

TS: About the same time, the government made the decision to use atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. At the time, when you heard the news, did you feel our government was correct to use atomic weapons against the Japanese?

RB: Of course, none knew what an atomic bomb was at that time. We said, "Well, what the hell's that?" We had no idea that we had something that destructive. I still think it was a smart move.

TS: Why?

RB: Because I think it saved one heck of a lot of lives. A good friend of mine who was in the Army was all ready to go into landing: preparing, training to land in Japan. He had have been in Guadalcanal and, I don't know, about four or five other *major* landings. He said, about this time maybe he's going to get a bullet. Very good friend of mine. He's in Tucson now. Emmett was ready, training, to land on Japan.

TS: So for someone like him it was a welcome relief that the war ended.

RB: Yes, and I think it was a smart move. I don't understand people that *don't* think it's a good move by Truman to drop the bomb.

TS: From San Francisco in August, you weren't discharged until January, right?

RB: Yes—we operated as a school boat because our submarine was caved in. So we operated as a school boat for the fliers from Alameda. We'd go out and dive, and they'd try to find us. We'd send up a flare, and they'd try to find us again. But we'd lose them—it was just training for them. Then they would drop these sonar buoys in the water and then they could echo on us and find us. It was just a training session for them. Then we got our orders to go down through the Panama Canal.

TS: After V-J Day?

RB: After V-J Day. And up to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and put the submarine *Greenling* into mothballs. What they did: they didn't fix us up—they put us in mothballs just the way it was. We cleaned up the submarine and the spare parts and all that, and did various things to put it in mothballs, torpedo tubes and that. But it wasn't until years later when they took it back out of mothballs that they repaired the tubes on the *Greenling*.

TS: Whatever happened to the *Greenling*?

RB: I think it got made into razor blades (*laughs*). A lot of boats got traded to Turkey, or sold to Turkey, or given to Turkey, or some of these small countries. I have a full list of where all the submarines went. I think ours was just scrapped out—scrapped is the word.

TS: The [submarine] *Pampanito* had been just repaired in 1945, and was therefore turned over to a museum.

RB: To a museum, that's right.

TS: So you spent the months between August and your discharge mostly either going to or in Portsmouth, New Hampshire?

RB: Yes, we operated the school for about three months, and then took the boat around, and spent—what was it? Navy Day or something, up in Greenville, North Carolina.

End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins.

TS: This is tape two with Mr. Baumann. Let me ask you then: you were discharged from Portsmouth in early '46?

RB: I was discharged from Portsmouth in '46, and moved back here to Minneapolis. I got discharged in Minneapolis, then.

TS: Was that in January?

RB: Yes.

TS: What was your initial reaction to being out of the military?

RB: What was I going to do? I was pretty wild for a few weeks there with this friend of mine who was on PT Boats, when he got out of the Navy. We had enlisted at the same time. We partied for a few weeks, and my father said, "Dick, don't you think you ought to get a job or go to school?" "Good idea, Father." *(laughs)* So I decided to go to school down in Chicago for two years, twelve months a year. I got out of school and came back to Minnesota in 1948. I had met my now-wife as a blind date. I was out of circulation with all the girls down there of course, living down there. Met her, and we decided to get married.

TS: When you first got out of the Navy, was there a need to blow off steam? Was it built-up tension, or how would you explain it?

RB: Yes, there was. Well, I hadn't seen Jack since we went into the Navy in '42 or '43, and we just—we were still young, and still had a lot of life in us left. We raised a little hell for a while. And all the people were getting out. I was in a drum and bugle corps prior to going into the Navy, and we restarted it up in '46. During the Winter Carnival. I played in a couple of trips in Minnesota here. Then it disbanded and everybody went back to school.

TS: Were there a number of other guys who reacted the same way to being out of the service—a release of tension?

RB: I think so. I think most of them drank for a week or maybe two weeks—if they drank—to celebrate with their buddies that they went into the Navy with. Just the idea of being out of uniform, and you could go and come when you wanted to, and nobody told you when to go to bed, or what to eat.

TS: Was drinking a problem in the Navy, in your experience?

RB: No, I don't think it was. We would go to sea for two or three months, and of course then we didn't drink. Except I didn't mention that we did get depth-charge brandy aboard ship.

TS: What is that?

RB: I have a bottle here—would you like to see it?

TS: Show me when we're done. (*author saw this bottle after the interview*)

(*both laugh*)

RB: If you got pounded pretty good—it was brandy, a hundred proof, and it was a tenth of a pint, a little miniature. They'd pass them out to those that wanted it. After a depth-charge was done. That was sanctioned by the Navy.

TS: How many times do you remember that being handed out?

RB: About twice.

TS: How many guys took their portion?

RB: Oh, I'd say a good share of them, a good percentage.

TS: I didn't know that about the Navy. This was kept under lock and key?

RB: Oh, yes, the skipper had it. Sometimes we'd pray for a good depth-charge when we wanted a drink (*both laugh*).

TS: That's a good story—I've never heard that before. Back to being out of the Navy—how was it to see your family and your loved ones again?

RB: Great. Except I was home only for about six weeks. Then I went to Chicago, and rented a room on the North Side, and went to school. I got home about every eight weeks for a long weekend. I was busy down there—I was going to school full-time and working part-time, and getting my \$64 a month.

TS: Were you happy down there in Chicago?

RB: Yes, I enjoyed it down there. I had a lot of good friends. We were mostly military people going to school on the GI Bill. I had a good friend of mine, lived in Lagrange, on the boat with me. He and I partied for a while, then he went to Notre Dame and I went. So I didn't see any more of him.

TS: What was the hardest thing for you, readjusting to being a civilian?

RB: I don't think it was difficult being a civilian again, except that before you were told. Now it was the free rein that you had without being told what to do all the time. Had to be back aboard ship at eight o'clock in the morning or whatever it was. Like I said, the restrictions and regulations on submarines are so different from surface ships, larger ships, cruisers and carriers; they're very strict. You had to wear whites and blues topside, and we would not go topside if we were in port if we had

to wear our blues and whites. All we lived in were cutoff jeans and sandals below decks.

TS: Different level of discipline on the boat, too?

RB: Yes. You had officers who were superior to *any* officer on the surface craft, as far as personality. There was no real distinction between being an officer and an enlisted man. You respected them, and you said “sir,” but other than that, they were like one of the crew.

TS: Did they have to earn your respect as opposed to the surface Navy where they could demand your respect?

RB: Yes, I would say that. We had a couple of officers who didn’t have the respect of the crew. They didn’t last long.

TS: Whose call was that?

RB: Skipper’s. He made the call.

TS: Is that the same as the surface Navy, too?

RB: I suppose. I’ve never been on a surface ship. But we had surface sailors who had been on surface ships and come aboard, and couldn’t get used to the way we operated—so free and yet we respected the officers. We’d go ashore with them—they’d take their hats off and take their bars off and go ashore with us.

TS: That sounds *much* different than what I’ve heard of the surface Navy.

RB: Oh, yes.

TS: Well then, what was the easiest thing about readjusting to civilian life?

RB: Easiest thing? (*pauses five seconds*) I don’t know, it wasn’t very easy because I was going to school and working for two full years. I didn’t have that much time off to raise heck. Then I met her, and that ended everything.

TS: In ’48?

Mrs. Baumann: We met in ’47 and got married in ’48.

TS: These are the last couple questions here. Dick, what did the war mean for you personally, at the time?

RB: Well, I guess I was very disgusted with what they did—when I went to Pearl, there were still ships laying upside down in the various harbors that they’d hit. I

saw our ships laying upside down. And all the stories that we heard—several of my friends that were World War II survivors, and the things that they told. I have several books written by prisoners-of-war, and a friend of mine who's dead now, he was sixteen years old in a prisoner-of-war camp. He wrote the book *Threshold of Hell*. He was sixteen years old in a prisoner-of-war camp. His first patrol went out, they got sunk, and taken up by the Japs.

TS: First patrol?

RB: First patrol. Read that book, then you want to... *(laughs)*

TS: Were you doing this because it was the right thing to do, or for you was it more of a personal thing against the Japanese?

RB: No, it was the right thing to do.

TS: Did you think much about the enemy, the Japanese? Was that a concept that you had in your mind, or just kind of an abstract thing?

RB: I think an abstract enemy—I had no personal vendetta.

TS: You never saw a Japanese, did you?

RB: No, I saw more Japs in—I used to call them “Japs,” I probably shouldn't do that, but they're still Japs to me. Although I worked in Japan, in Northern Japan, with the Japanese people. For nine weeks I was up there, at one of our plants in Niigata. And I got along great with them. Except one day they asked me if I'd seen Mt. Fuji. They were going to take us out one day and show us Mt. Fuji. And I said, “Oh yes, I have seen it.” They said, “When?” “During the war,” I said, “through a periscope.” “Oh.” End of conversation. There wasn't another word said about it.

TS: When you were in Japan, did anybody ask, “Were you in the war, Mr. Baumann?”

RB: No.

TS: Nobody wanted to know? Did you get the impression that it was just a taboo topic that no one wanted to talk about?

RB: I think it was. And they were all graduate engineers—real nice. I enjoyed working with them. But it was hard—one of them couldn't make a decision by himself. He had to get all his friends with him and make a decision.

TS: Different culture, huh?

RB: Yes.

TS: Was it uncomfortable for you, being in Japan?

RB: No.

TS: When was that?

RB: In '72. We had a big project going on. In fact a friend of mine stayed there—went back as an executive—Bob Dunga.

TS: In Japan?

RB: In Japan. He was an engineer at the time, and he got promoted—that's the only way you're going to go someplace in the mining is to go to these foreign parts and countries and work in these plants, come up the ladder.

TS: How do you reflect on the war now when you look back on it 55 years after the fact?

RB: Well, I think it's something that had to be done. It took an awful toll of life. Very sneaky attack. Something that had to be done. It was a job, and we did it.

TS: How do you think your war experience changed you as a person?

RB: Let's see—I think I learned to judge people, maybe sometimes too fast, by their first impression. But you get to know people, and it makes you grow up in a hurry, when you're eighteen or nineteen. Some of these kids now, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, they don't know what's going on in the world.

TS: I guess a whole generation of Americans grew up in a hurry.

RB: Yes. And you look back at what they did as far as attending college, and education of any kind, after they got out. The majority of them went back to school, or went to school. They changed college for those three or four years, they did away with fraternities and everything else. They were there for business, not hellraising.

TS: Well, you mention yourself going to school for two years, twelve months a year. I think of our students today: after two terms of fifteen weeks, they're exhausted.

RB: I'd start at eight in the morning, we'd be done at one. I'd jump on a subway or trolley down in Chicago and go to the South Side and work for Ward's until seven or eight o'clock at night.

TS: Anything else you want to add before we conclude?

RB: No, I don't know if there's too much to add. I think the submarine service is one of the better ones in the country. You've got good officers, and you don't have

women aboard ship yet. That's going to come. I was aboard the Minneapolis/St. Paul and we got talking about women on submarines. One guy said, "Oh God, I hope not." They're trying, but I don't think they'll do it, I really don't. Not in my time.

TS: Would it be good or bad if they did?

RB: Well, that's going to be very extensive to change the submarines to adapt to women. Look at the quarters—they're so tight. I can't imagine—I think the submarine Navy is different now that it was during the war. But hell, we didn't know if we were going to come back alive, so... Your attitude was different when you were ashore. I think these submarine people nowadays are well-educated, they're a select group—they're still volunteers, and if they don't meet a certain level, they don't fly, they don't go. They throw them out in a hurry.

TS: Well, at that point let me conclude. Thank you very much for your interview. I'll turn the machine off.

(pause in interview)

TS: Machine back on again. There's one incident you wanted to mention about some Japanese prisoners.

RB: Well, we had sunk a small merchant ship with our deck gun. We set it ablaze, and it sank. We picked up two Japanese people out of the water and brought them back for intelligence. Brought them on board the boat. We had them up in the forward torpedo room, handcuffed to the bunks. We'd take them to the mess hall three times a day. But as the days wore on, we gave them more and more freedom. We were coming into Saipan one time, and there's a corridor that's a certain width and certain latitude and longitude. If you stay in that corridor on the surface, then our own planes would not bomb us. Except this one didn't get the word. He came in very low—we were on the surface of course—and he opened his bomb bay doors, and the old man said, "Dive!" and we dove the boat in a hurry.

This Japanese fellow thought we were being—how do I word it?—he heard the bomb go off, and he thought we were being depth-charged. So he tried beating on the lockers of the mess hall, so he'd be heard if it was a ship up there. He didn't know we were on the surface yet. Part of our boat was under the surface and our rear end was still out of the water. Well, that didn't last long, because one of the cooks knocked him out right then and there. But that shows he was willing to die for his country yet, by giving our position away.

TS: So you had to keep him...?

RB: Oh, he went back in the forward room, chained up again. We were fortunate he didn't try to sink the boat some other way. If he was knowledgeable, he probably would have. We gave him clean clothes, and fed him good, and talked to him, and tell him a few choice words to tell the Marines when we landed them *(laughs)*.

TS: Just two of them on board? How long were they on board your boat?

RB: About 2 ½ weeks.

TS: So you got a chance to interact with them every day? Was there a sense of hostility toward them as enemy?

RB: No, no. Most of us just ignored them. In fact, I still have a calling card in my album with his name and stuff on it, the Japanese. My eye doctor's a Japanese gal, Dr. Tanabe, and I said, "What are you doing in this part of the country?" Her folks were removed from California to Rosemount, Minnesota, when they took all the Japs out of California. She said, "I was one of them." And they just stayed here.

TS: That experience with the Japanese survivors was interesting. Was there any sense that, as Japanese, you should leave them in the water there? Or were you under orders to pick them up for intelligence?

RB: Well, we shot quite a few before. It's not very nice looking back on it. And they had the guns mounted as we surfaced. Machine guns. We had twenty millimeters, and then forties. The boat sank on the bow, and the stern was in the water, and I heard somebody say something, and all of a sudden this machine gun let go, and he was just raking the whole stern with these Japanese guys on it. They'd have died anyway. They were too far away from land. And the old man says, "I didn't..." "Sorry, sir, I misunderstood you," he said.

TS: So there was a level of hostility?

RB: Oh, yes.

TS: Did you feel bad at the time about that, or not really?

RB: No. No. We'd give him a bad time about shooting those guys, but they would have died anyway.

TS: Was that a freighter or something you sank?

RB: Yes.

TS: How many ships did your boat sink?

RB: Twenty-four. You want to see our battle flag? *(shows battle flag of submarine)*

TS: At this point I will turn the machine off. Thank you very much, Mr Baumann.

END OF INTERVIEW