

Video Recording Log
Veteran Alexander Samaras

1. Name and address of collector of interviewer.

Name of Donor/Interviewer: H.F. Williamson
Address: 300 N. Goodwin Ave.
City: Urbana
State: IL
Zip: 61801
Telephone: 217-333-7300
Email: billw@illinois.edu
Partner organization affiliation (if any): WILL AM-FM-TV

2. Name and birth date of the veteran or civilian being interviewed at is appears on the Biographical Data Form:

Name of Veteran/Civilian: Alexander Samaras
Birth Date: 06/29/1921

3. Recording format

VIDEO type: Mini DVD

4. Estimated length of recording (in minutes): 62 minutes **Date of recording:** 11/07/2007

5. Location of recording: WILL AM-FM-TV, 300 N. Goodwin Ave, Urbana, IL 61801

6. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence.

00:00 Introduction

00:31 Before war—Illinois State Normal University—two years at University of Illinois, then transferred—junior in 1941

01:00 After Pearl Harbor, thought about finishing college before service—Navy had V7 program—allowed you to finish degree and then go to active duty

01:35 Enlisted July, 1943—junior, working on degree—V-12 program for enlisted men—daily exercises

02:20 Graduated in August, in September reported to Tower Hall, Chicago for mid-shipman's school

02:30 90-day-wonders

02:45 Apprentice seaman after one month, midshipman after 2 months

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- 03:00 Commissioned Enson, U.S. Reserve
- 03:10 Tower Hall—busy schedule
- 03:45 Married wife, leave until end of January
- 04:00 Went to Solomon Island, Maryland—training for LCTs
- 04:15 Before graduation, everyone asked what duty they preferred—he asked for submarine duty—no one got what they wanted—getting ready for invasion
- 05:00 Maryland, LCT 509—crew, training
- 05:30 February, went to New Orleans to pick up ship 709—not delivered—assigned LST 510—ship that carried LCT on top of it
- 06:50 LST, LCT—cranes
- 07:25 No training on LCT in Gulf
- 07:47 Went to New York in LST—loaded with ammunition
- 08:49 Went from New York to Halifax—convoy of about 30 LSTs, several destroyers—North Atlantic—treacherous body of water, bad storms
- 10:30 Attacks by German submarines—2 ships lost, hit by torpedoes—no way to rescue anyone because the water was so cold—no effort to pick up survivors
- 11:18 Junior officer on convoy—his boat hit in port stern—didn't explode because it was a dud
- 12:25 Under siege from Germans
- 12:57 First destination was North Ireland—then Wales, Plymouth, England
- 13:25 22nd April, LCT 709 launched—take ship and list it, cut lines and drop it into water—tow it to wharf, he took command
- 14:20 Crew—16 men
- 14:50 50-caliber machine guns—taking in supplies
- 15:29 22nd May—radio set on secret frequency
- 15:37 Had about a month to train crew—simple to operate, no practice landing

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- 16:09 Only one landing before D-Day
- 16:21 Secret frequencies—2 Army officers from 50th Signal Battalion came to inspect ship
- 16:50 Aware they would be part of the invasion force once they arrived in England
- 17:25 30th May—top secret meeting to receive package of information—pictures of invasion beach, obstacles on beach, time tables of tides—Operation Overlord
- 18:35 50th Signal Battalion would be on his ship and on the 710—important—had to make the beach, had to deliver these people so they could set up communication center for Omaha and Utah Beach—extremely important to study and succeed
- 19:38 22nd May: radio set to secret frequency—31st May: ship sealed—June 2nd: loaded 50th Signal Battalion
- 20:20 Last thing to come on deck—communications center—could listen to New York on the radio—amphibious—if nothing else made it, the duck would—important
- 21:10 Log book [reads]—June 3rd 1944
- 21:28 Last briefing at Maypole—advised there would be possibility of Germans using poison gas
- 21:45 Issued impregnated coveralls and gas masks—uniform, coveralls, side arm, life jacket, helmet, gear, gas mask—very heavy and cumbersome
- 22:45 Left Dartmouth, England June 3rd—bad rains and wind, could not see, soaking wet
- 23:45 0600 hours—6 knots maximum speed—could only make 3 knots—June 4th, ordered to go back to Weymouth, England—D-Day delayed 24 hours
- 24:22 Arrived at Weymouth, England—tied up at 1800, slept
- 24:30 0500 next day underway to France—light rain, heavy seas—going 6 knots—poor visibility
- 25:05 Reached transport rendezvous off of Utah Beach at 2200 hours on June 5th—dropped anchor, stood 2nd watch until 0200 on June 6th
- 25:25 Dawn, sky cleared—sight was awesome, never forget it—planes overhead at 0200, loud like a freight train, continuous, blinking V for Victory signs

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- 26:10 In every direction all you could see was ships—LCTs, LSTs, Destroyers, Cruisers, Battle Ships—5,000 ships total
- 26:48 Overhead the sky was almost black with planes—B-17's, fighters
- 27:18 Craft was designated on-call, had to wait for beach to clear—50th Battalion would tell them when it was safe to take them in to beach
- 27:45 On the way into the beach hit a sand bar—sand bar was not listed on list of possible obstacles for invasion
- 27:55 Craft was probably 50 yards off beach, standing in a few feet of water—duck had no problem, but lost about 3 jeeps, trucks made it okay
- 28:45 At 1245 hours unloaded, 777 and LCT sunk on port side—bodies floating in water in life jackets—obstacles, mines on beach—artillery fire—German 88's
- 29:29 As craft was about to retract, another LCT came in too close and cable got wound around port screw
- 29:44 Cable was about 200 yards and made of steel—meant to help pull off of beach when leaving
- 30:20 Spent a couple of hours with the coxswain using a hacksaw underwater to cut through cable
- 30:35 Only had two engines to run on—German 88's exploding all around
- 30:58 Went to repair ship to get new anchor and cables
- 31:20 Second day—strafed on beach by two fighter planes—last two German planes in area
- 31:56 Worked all five beaches—Juno, Gold, Sword, Omaha—unloaded supplies, troops, food, water, ammunition, vehicles—British using American ships, too
- 32:52 Carried prisoners to ships—most glad to be out of war
- 33:12 Taking injured to hospital ships
- 33:15 Worked 24 hours a day—whenever called had to go right away—took turns leading with executive officer, 12-hour shifts

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- 33:44 Sometimes would not get a call for 6-8 hours and could relax—sometimes could get on beach for a couple of days
- 34:17 Beach after invasion
- 34:40 2-3 storms—could not stay on Channel, had to go up river until it passed
- 35:10 Back to England at Christmastime
- 35:15 Repaired engines, new engines, diesel engines—repair ships, repaired right in water
- 35:55 British battleship Rodney—having trouble with German U-boats—asked 6 LCTs to protect it by mooring alongside—if torpedo hit, would hit them first—did this for two nights—if torpedo hit, would go under them and hit ship anyway—offended at request
- 37:50 Back to England, leave time—helped with Christmas programs for kids, played piano—3 months in England before back to the States
- 39:20 Stayed in ship, moored, last one on ship—brought back a lot of secret material—packed up sea chest, was told 50% chance he would get inspected
- 40:43 LCT gradually torn apart—years later was put back together in another country— assembled in sections to start so easy to take apart
- 41:36 Went home, 30 days leave—promoted Lieutenant J.G. April, 1945
- 41:55 25 April, went to California then to Okinawa via Hawaii, then Guam, Saipan
- 42:00 Commanding Officer of United States Navy, Lieutenant--Executive Officer on LCSL 81—had rockets—looked like small destroyer—was ocean-going
- 43:05 Radar picket duty—all ships circled island of Okinawa—there to protect from kamikaze and from people on mainland coming to blow up ships—“skunk patrol”
- 43:47 Invasion over, still cleaning up
- 44:00 Japanese having rough time, started using kamikazes—radar patrol duty—constant
- 44:30 Nothing more frightening than kamikaze—seeing man in the cockpit
- 44:53 Never hit by kamikaze—near misses—shot down 5 kamikaze planes—nervous duty
- 45:15 There was very little warning, then they kept coming—see them diving everywhere—shoot ones coming at you—flying from mainland Japan

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- 46:25 Picket duty until end of August—then to the Leyte Gulf and Philippines
- 46:55 Getting ready for planned invasion of Japan—next big order was going to be for invasion
- 47:20 Atomic bomb dropped—predicted American casualties—still on 81
- 48:15 Typhoon—rough weather
- 48:55 Navy in occupation—patrolled islands
- 49:35 Went on land in Japan, saw temples, got a samurai sword
- 50:27 First week in Japan, had to wear sidearms—was rough—trains crowded
- 51:15 December, 1945—accumulated enough points to go home—took 25 days to get home by troop ship—arrived in Los Angeles, CA January 20th—honorably discharged from Great Lakes, IL on February 4th
- 52:10 Glad for the experience—relished it, though worried
- 52:45 Not well trained—time was the problem—90-day-wonders
- 54:02 90-day school—ridicule—studying 6am to 10pm—navigation books
- 55:55 When they went to Tokyo, he had to set the course, charted the whole way there, even during the typhoon
- 56:45 Some servicemen bitter—he liked it
- 57:10 Used to keep in touch with LCT crew—best friend died in 1976
- 58:20 Reflecting on experiences
- 59:00 Talks about wife, married 46 years—her life on home front—she did not hear from him until August after the invasion—she thought he was dead—war was rough on people at home—rations, war factories, victory gardens
- 01:01:30 Wrap-up
- 01:01:45 Video of model ship