

Convoy Project — Richard G. Connelly — Tape #1 — Side A

- 001 MH intro 14/III-1990 Naples (Long Beach) CA Capt.
Richard Connelly his home.
- 010 MH How high rank during war? RC 1st was Ordinary Seaman,
was 17, became AB, one trip as bos'n, got 3rd mate's
license, then war terminated.
- 015 Talks abt. gen'l US attitude twd WW II.
- 023 Main thing abt. convoys was boredom of day to day routine
& fearful anticipation of disaster.
- 027 Convoys RC in were all in N. Atlan. '41-'45 in N. Atlan.
except for 1 voyage to E. Coast of Africa.
- 030 "Fondest" memories are cold & miserable weather. Days of
routine, then attack & 15 minutes of sheer fright. Too
young at time to realize sit'n.
- 037 Always anticipation of port & meeting girls. Much camaraderie
& rivalry btwn younger MM & A.G. Disdain btwn older
MM & A.G.
- 046 MH clarifies. Real animosities indiv'l rather than grp.
- 053 Occasionally A.G. officer wld try to get men to snub MM.
Only one RC can remember.
- 058 MH What abt. shoreside attitudes twd MM? RC talks abt.
No uniform, civilians, unwelcome at USO or Red Cross
Ctr. Tells abt. London feeding stn. & Brit. capt. letting
them ahead to get last egg of day.
- 081 Much of difference in attitude was misunderstanding. Draft
notice arrived when RC in Africa. Father had to unscrew.
- 100 Were drafting peo. off ships into Army at same time releasing
peo. from Army to go back to sea. Any animosity was
on part of "small-minded Americans."
- 104 RC's home was Boston, Dorchester.
- 109 MH Rel'n btwn depts? RC Friendly rivalry. It was good.
Young ones were pals, watchmates or engine crew, didn't
matter. No serious animosity.
- 118 MH Fools' errands? RC Not personally. Background too
good. Bucket of steam, sent one kid as delegate to capt.
to complain "officers got all white meat from duck."
Capt. (Henry Chester Sweeney) told S. Boston Irish bastards
to behave selves or face music.
- 138 MH tells Charlie Noble story, "relative bearing grease."
- 145 RC tells of convoy under Capt. Sweeney when fireman imitated
train whistle on 8-12 through ventilator when capt. on
flying bridge.
- 157 MH Recreation? RC Lot of reading, card playing, no
radios except Scott receiver (developed mid-'43), bull
sessions, no organized rec. Quarters cramped. At anchor
sometimes swam, if water warm enough.
- 183 MH Musical? RC When Scandinavians aboard, often had
"North Sea piano" = accordion. Finns & Norwegians.
Some hill boys had harmonicas.
- 200 MH Africa, X Equator? RC No, but when went E. Africa
on Robin Locksley, C 2, not convoy, 15 knot ship. Tells
abt. voyage; left heavy clothing behind; mistake; went
around Horn. Details of voyage. Didn't think wld. get
through Germ. blockade. Had 14 Brit. females. Made
safely. RC's only wartime trip w/out convoy.
- 267 Thought England, Russia only places in world where ships went.
- 270 MH Union before license? RC SIU. Got papers when 16,
went coastwise passenger ship pre-war, stayed SIU till
licensed at Ft. Trumbull.

Capt. Richard Connelly #1 ~~44~~ Side A

- 278 ~~44~~ Got 3rd mate's license, Ft. Trumbull, 1945. Joined MMP.
- 280 ~~44~~ MH ~~44~~ Essentially all wartime experience unlicensed. RC ~~44~~ yes. Licensed 25/IV 1945, went S/S Bienville, troop transport, & celebrated 21st birthday in convoy en route to France.
- 291 ~~44~~ In Aug. transferred to Lib. newly built Portland ME, on sea trials when A bomb dropped. No more than 3 mo. licensed during war.
- 300 ~~44~~ MH ~~44~~ Line Xing ceremony? RC ~~44~~ No. Had hoped, but didn't have. Had grp of Brit. Naval Fleet Air Arm going Nairobi. Xed Equator w/out fanfare. Perhaps because so many old timers aboard, old hat.
- 318 ~~44~~ MH ~~44~~ What vessel in PQ 17? RC ~~44~~ John Witherspoon, signer of Decla. of Ind.
- 327 ~~44~~ MH ~~44~~ "What was that like? Pretty hairy?" RC ~~44~~ It was. Fear of Tirpitz. Constant surveillance by aircraft. Knew attack inevitable. Some air attack, but not bad. Subs got. Feeling of abandonment. Not anger, sense of rejection. Capts. must have suffered most, because knew more. Wonders if men had had foreknowledge wld they have done same things?
- 384 ~~44~~ MH ~~44~~ Were you hit? RC ~~44~~ Torpedoed. Sank. Men mostly got off. Picked up 54 hrs. later. Constant daylight. Only one man lost. Might have died of heart attack. Fell in water.
- 410 ~~44~~ Picked up by Hoosier, wh. was then disabled by bomb. Dead in water. Left that; picked up by HMS Austin. Took some into Archangelsk, some into Murmansk, but 3 kept & put on Brit. destroyer & taken back to England. Perhaps because of age (youth).
- 442 ~~44~~ End recording Side A.

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- 002 — Begin recording Side B. Continuation of discussion of PQ
17. Were only in Russia few days. Never left destroyer.
Not like some who were there for months. Only trip to Russia.
- 010 — MH — Where in England? RC — Liverpool, Cardiff, Swansea,
Southend-on-the-Sea, Tilbury, south of London in the
Thames, Glasgow.
- 021 — Social climate in UK receptive to USMM. Well received. All
had girls there.
- 029 — MH asks if RC had "Capt. of Port" CG pass. RC — No, but
when Loading ballast in Barry (Bury, Barre?), RC & friend,
Jacobsen having beer. Barmaid asks wh. ship; pointed
out window; whaddya do; ABs; glad to hear some ABs on
ship, 'cause she thought all were 3rd Mates.
- 041 — RC talks abt. change from Bureau of Marine Inspection & Navigation,
Dept. of Commerce, to Coast Guard. RC & Jacobsen showed
ship's discharge papers to conductor in order to ride
train as servicemen.
- 055 — Annoyed MM that servicemen got reduced train fares, also got
preference. Small annoyance.
- 067 — MH brings up pay scales & gets full explanation. CHECK THIS!!!
Stats cld always be slanted by comparing MM officers'
wage to USN rating. Study made in Congressional Record.
Difference insignificant.
- 119 — RC disc. Roger B. Taney case. No men lost. 42 days in lifeboats
before picked up. MM wages stopped. A.G. continued.
- 137 — Wages for AB w/ 3 yrs. experience, \$100/mo. OT rate 90¢/hr.
in excess of 8 hrs. only. Dumping garbage OT job. Desc.
- 157 — Dump garbage ½ hr. after dark to keep loc. secret. More
dumping & wage details.
- 170 — MH asks if PQ 17 only time torpedoed. RC — Mar. '43 on Benjamin
Harrison. En route to Africa. Believes 11 men lost.
Only few hrs. in lifeboat.
- 190 — MH — Lucky/unlucky? RC — Not really. "One trip, one ship."
"Don't get on ship named for woman." Some areas clannish.
Gulf sailors said unlucky sail w/ Yankees. Francis Asbury
named for 1st Methodist minister. "Don't sail on ship
named for 'Jesus screamer'." Suspicions not well grounded.
- 221 — MH — Ethnic makeup of crews? RC — Basically a lot of racial
prejudice aboard, but divided by unions. NMU most democratic.
- 239 — New Englanders stuck to ships out of No. Gulf port sailors
didn't mix well w/. No blacks in SIU except in stewards.
Stewards either all white or all balck, no checkerboard.
Accepted practice at the time.
- 254 — International. Ship out of Boston basically New Englanders,
Gulf ships Mobileans. NY more of mix. Survivors of
torpedoed foreign vessels. Usually were the more skilled
ratings. More of these at start of '43, even foreign
officers w/ waivers of licenses.
- 276 — MH — Ethnic tension? RC — Not really. Some "boxheaders"
thought selves superior seamen. Younger guys fascinated
by tales more experienced foreigners told: whaling, etc.
- 289 — RC greets stepson, Richard.
- 291 — End recording Side B.