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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NSA-OH-25-80

CTC1 Paddy Rhodes

13 June 1980

Interview held in M62 Area, Sab 2, NSA, Ft. Meade

Interviewers: Mr. Henry Millington

Mr. Bob Farley

Today is the 13th of June 1980. Our interviewee: CTC1 Paddy Rhodes, better known as "Dusty" Rhodes, who served aboard the Liberty when the ship was attacked by Israeli military forces in June 1967. The interview is being held in the M62 area, SAB 2, NSA, at Fort Meade. The interviewers, Mr. Henry Millington and Bob Farley. Dusty will recount his experiences while aboard the Liberty when it was attacked by Israeli military forces. Classification of this tape is SECRET HVCCO at the request of Dusty Rhodes.

Question:

Dusty, we want to thank you much for coming over this morning and contributing what you can toward the story on the Libety and Israeli problem. Henry is tasked with coming up with the SIGINT history of what happened.

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So whatever you say, if you remember anything just say it. We are going to classify this TOP SECRET CODEWORD and if you want to go beyond that, we'll do that.

~~QUESTION:~~ What was your position about the time of the incident in June of 1967?

RHODES: You mean my job?

QUESTION: What job did you have?

RHODES: Well, I was a Basic R Brancher, but I was breaking in on the P&R problem, processing and reporting. That was my position, my job then.

QUESTION: You were aboard the Liberty?

RHODES: Oh yeah, sure.

QUESTION: Were you aboard the Liberty during the Ivory Coast?

RHODES: Yeah, that was supposedly my last cruise. I was waiting orders to get off it. I had made three or four cruises before that.

QUESTION: So were you on the board, you were aboard the Liberty for?

RHODES: Sometime yeah.

QUESTION: Sometime. As long as Clyde ~~Wade?~~ Way? or longer?

RHODES: I don't know when Clyde came aboard, I can't remember. I believe I was on there longer than he was.

QUESTION: Okay, good, that will give us something to talk about later. Are you aware of any of the intelligence requirements

which might have caused the deployment of the Liberty to the Mediterranean when it was pulled off the Ivory Coast run?

RHODES: The only thing that I had heard, just hearsay, was that the Valdez who supposedly was covering that end of the world, had developed some kind of problem and had to leave station. We were called to go take her place. That's all I heard about it.

QUESTION: So you were sort of the back-up for the Valdez?

RHODES: At that, yeah. They were leaving and I guess they didn't want to leave that area of the world totally without coverage so they sent us over.

QUESTION: That's good, that's really the first we had heard on that. We've heard other explanations but that makes sense. Would you be aware of who made the decision to deploy the Liberty?

RHODES: No, at that time I wasn't. After reading Ennes' book, I guess it was some of the higher paid help.

QUESTION: All right, let's get right into who was aboard the Liberty, and that would be question number 5. Could you describe the complement aboard? Did they have any special skills? Special equipments, etc.?

RHODES: Okay, the full complement was approximately three hundred men, half of that being deck force engineering, bosun

mates, things like that. The other half was, at that time, communications technicians. There were R branchers, T branchers, O branchers, M, I branchers.

QUESTION: Can you give us an expansion on what R and S and M are?

RHODES: All right, R is collection, M is maintenance, O is your communications, I is linquists, T branchers, other than morse signals.

QUESTION: Intercept type?

RHODES: Oh yeah, they're intercept. The only ones that aren't intercept are O branchers and M branchers, the rest are intercept.

QUESTION: Okay, how about linguists? What type did you have aboard?

RHODES: I can't remember. On the Ivory Coast we used to, I think the "lingies" came from NSA on "Dets" (Detachments). We'd pull in, they'd all bag up their stuff and leave, and then before the next cruise started they'd all appear again.

QUESTION: And these were Navy people?

RHODES: I believe, yeah, they were Navy people. I think from ACNSG or somewhere around here.

QUESTION: Do you remember the qualifications the linguists had? Were they Arabic linguists?

RHODES: We picked up, I don't know if there were any Arabs, but we had some "Hebe" linguists that we picked up in Rota on the way in.

QUESTION: There were some?

RHODES: They were Marines.

QUESTION: Any idea how many?

RHODES: I think there were three.

QUESTION: Any idea how qualified they were in Hebrew?

RHODES: No.

QUESTION: But they were Hebrew linguists?

RHODES: I can't say for certain, but I knew we were there picking up some "Hebe" "lingies".

QUESTION: And you think they were three Marines?

RHODES: Yeah, well we took three Marines aboard and they sat back in the RT area. So they had to be linguists.

QUESTION: Did any of the linguists who were aboard during the Ivory Coast get off the ship at Rota or did they stay on?

RHODES: As far as I know everybody stayed on. I don't remember anybody leaving.

QUESTION: So those that you picked up in Rota were in addition?

RHODES: In addition to our regular complement.

QUESTION: Did you know the three civilian linguists who got aboard at Rota?

RHODES: No. I didn't know them. I didn't know any of them personally at all. I knew we picked up some people. My job, what it was, at that time, I was a third class, just made third, and I was more of a ~~"gopher"~~ "gofer" than anything

else. So I didn't get involved with too much of the real activity. You know, I was "get this, get that."

QUESTION: Were you associated with them later on during the cruise?

RHODES: Talked with them briefly after and during the attack, you know, and that was it.

QUESTION: What was the mission, as you understand, of the Liberty when it departed Rota?

RHODES: What we were told to tell everybody? We were to aid in the evacuation of US Embassy personnel, which is a little ridiculous. Those boats out there with antennaes draping in the water. Any fool can know what they are for...It is obvious.

QUESTION: What was the, I don't know what the expression is? The Army used to call them "latrine rumors." What does the Navy call them?

RHODES: Scuttlebutt.

QUESTION: What was the scuttlebutt?

RHODES: Well, just going over to listen in on what was going on over there, try to keep a hand in, I guess. I don't think there was that much ever accomplished. We got there and we got nailed. It just seemed to happen that fast, you know, to me.

QUESTION: But you were told that you were on a rescue mission?

RHODES: Well, to aid, you know, if any of the embassy personnel

had to get out of there. We didn't have any...We had a Captain's gig and another gig, that I guess, they could have gone over to the beach to pick some up, but I don't know where they would have put them.

QUESTION: Would you remember what type of documentation that you had on the Ivory Coast run, what you got rid of in Rota, what you picked up in Rota?

RHODES: We had everything under the sun on there to handle our mission on the Ivory Coast. As far as I know it was still on there and we just added to it, on the problem going in. We didn't dump any off that I know of. I know that we had tons of the stuff.

QUESTIONS: There were analysts' aids and dictionaries?

RHODES: Oh, working aids, pubs, and at that time TECHINS, and now USSIDs, and stuff like that. Yeah.

QUESTION: So you had an abundance?

RHODES: Yeah, it's a "mini NSA", there were tonnages of the stuff.

QUESTION: Did you get any special, again you've alluded to this, special briefings or orientations that were given by anybody?

RHODES: I don't recall any special briefings. You know that it seemed to me that aboard a ship you're just part of the crew and you do what you're told to do. I don't recall any special briefings just saying why we were going in.

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You know, the word was out that that was our cover story. I think that that was given at a meeting on the mess decks.

QUESTION: Would you remember what the collection tasking was?

RHODES: I sure don't, no, at all.

QUESTION: Would you know whether the SIGINT group was tasked with intercepting the Israeli communication?

RHODES: I would expect so. We had Hebrew linguists, why else would they be there. In that relatively close land RT positions, that's what you want them for.

COMMENT: Okay Henry do you have anything so far?

COMMENT: No, not so far.

QUESTION: We've departed Rota, we're enroute to your station in the Mediterranean...Can you recall any incidents that happened when you were enroute to your station?

RHODES: No, it was just a normal cruise as far as I was concerned.

QUESTION: Any surveillance flights by any unidentified aircraft?

RHODES: Yeah, the day we got hit. Israelis overflew us, were taking pictures. One time that I know of and two times that I was told about.

QUESTION: Did you see any Soviet ships or any submarines or any periscopes or any other thing?

RHODES: The Soviet ships were around us regularly. I mean wherever we went there was always a Russian trawler. Before, during and....

QUESTION: Were they following you from the time you departed Rota?

RHODES: Ivory Coast, too. They tagged us. They were a trawler like we were some rescue mission. They had antennas hanging all over them. They were intelligence gatherers.

QUESTION: Did you ever hear of a Contact X?

RHODES: No, I never have.

COMMENT: There was probably something in the book that mentioned it.

RHODES: Yeah, there's a few things in that book that I kind of have to shake my head on. I guess it sells, though. He had to put something in there to make it sell.

COMMENT: Dramatize it a little bit, I guess, though I would hope not.

QUESTION: After leaving Rota, until you got on station, do you know what traffic was targeted, if any?

RHODES: The enroute mission?

QUESTION: You then, you were transiting the Moroccan, Algerian Coast. Was there any targeting along that track?

RHODES: Like I say, I was just breaking in on the P&R, and I don't recall much of anything being done, either on the way or when we got there. I think they wasted a whole hell of a lot of money, because I don't recall that much of any intercept, intelligence, anything being gathered.

QUESTION: So you don't know what type reporting was done at any time?

RHODES: Well, you have your reporting criteria. I mean, you're tasked with any type reports, EGRAM, Spots, you know, any number of reports. But I don't recall as any were sent out, because I don't think anything was gathered. If they did gather anything it was the run of the mill intercept that you pick up all the time.

QUESTION: In some of these post mortem reports and books they mention an Army Warrant Officer being aboard. Is that true?

RHODES: I don't recall an Army Warrant Officer at all.

QUESTION: And supposedly he boarded at Rota with the rest of them, but we haven't been able to pin that down.

RHODES: I know we picked up a couple of civilians and three marines at Rota. I didn't know about an Army Warrant Officer. But going where we were going, it would make sense to have one. At least for the military portion of the problem.

QUESTION: Were you aware of any material or data or information that might have been forwarded in raw form back to NSA?

RHODES: I, up and down the Ivory Coast, one of my functions was bundling stuff for ARFCOS (courier). Now where they shuttle their stuff off at, I expect Embassies when we were in port. I assumed it was coming back here.

QUESTION: What type material was it?

RHODES: Raw traffic, messages were sent back here regularly.

QUESTION: Do you remember the intercept target? Was it Africa?

RHODES: Ivory Coast? Oh, it was shipping, it was Embassy type, a lot of diplomatic, and stuff like that.

QUESTION: Did you have an effort against the Soviet Navy at all?

RHODES: No, not that I recall. If the Soviet Navy was targeted, it wasn't at the R branch level. It may have been the T branch or something like that.

QUESTION: When the vessel moved into the Med was there any noticeable tension among the Liberty crew and SIGINT personnel regarding the "warming up" of the Middle East situation? The "hotting up" of the Middle East situation?

RHODES: No, one thing that we were told, if anything were to happen we were within ten minutes of air strike and help. None of us were very worried. You know we were just going to go there and do a job and if something did happen we had help right there if we needed it, which proved to be a "crock of crap."

QUESTION: So there was concern that they, or not much concern that the vessel was out there on its own, without escort?

RHODES: We were always on our own without escort, so that was nothing new. But we, you know, like I say, informed if we needed help it was readily at hand, so hell there wasn't any sense in worrying about it.

QUESTION: How were the people aboard kept informed about the Israeli/Arab situation?

RHODES: Scuttlebutt. They didn't put much word out, you know.

QUESTION: Any commercial radio aboard that you could hear any newscasts?

RHODES: No.

QUESTION: So you were not too well informed. What was the relationship between the SIGINT group and the ship's crew?

RHODES: Oh we had a good relationship. We worked well together and partied better together. The CTs were assigned half the ship for deck work. Chipping paint, line handling, the same thing that the "deck apes" did. They got with us and taught us a lot of the stuff. We were a bunch of dummies. We didn't know anything about ship's work and so they helped us out and taught us. We had a good working relationship with them, we got along real well with them.

QUESTION: So you had to pull some of the duty on the ship?

RHODES: Certainly, most assuredly.

QUESTION: So you weren't an exclusive group?

RHODES: Oh, no, no. You have line handling, deck work, shifting ship's stores, loading supplies.

QUESTION: Sweeping "fore and aft"?

RHODES: Oh sure, in port you had quarter deck watches.

COMMENT: That's something we didn't know either.

RHODES: As far as I know all of them ships were the same. You had your military duty as well as your job duty. Same here, we have military duty the same as...We're not exclusive, excluded from any military function.

QUESTION: Any of the SIGINT troopers trained on the 50 calibers?

RHODES: We would go up every so often and pop off a few rounds, then every so often we'd pull arms: 45 caliber Thompsons, riot guns, Mls, 45s, and have practice off the fantail. We were assigned "repel boarder" positions, and given guns to do that. You know, assigned weapons.

QUESTION: Was the ship's crew or personnel aware of the mission of the SIGINT people?

RHODES: I think some of them knew, you have to know, unless you're a complete idiot. The construction configuration of the ship will tell you what it is really for. A lot of them really had no idea because we had them really convinced, we had bowling alleys in our spaces and archery ranges and stuff. We'd carry bowling bags across the mess decks and convince them of that.

QUESTION: Was the Captain...did he have regular access to the research area?

RHODES: Sure, he's been in our research, he was in, had been on different occasions in the research center.

QUESTION: So he was, would you say then, that he was continually apprised of what the?...

RHODES: I assumed with their officers' calls and his meetings with our department heads, he had to know what was going on. I mean, I'm sure they don't send a CO of a ship with that type of mission with no clearances where he can't be informed on what the hell the crew is doing.

QUESTION: What did the...What was the sort of general opinion of the crew of the Captain?

RHODES: He was a straight-laced man, he was pretty staunch Navy.

QUESTION: Would you say he was well-respected by the crew?

RHODES: Sure, oh yeah, everybody liked him. With him you knew where you were. If you did a job well, he'd let you know and if you stepped on your toes he'd let you know about that too. And so you knew where you stood with him and the men respected him for it.

QUESTION: You can't answer this question but I'll ask it again. What type intercept was being collected when the Israeli launched their attack against the Arab forces? Would you know that?

RHODES: I, no, I wouldn't know it.

QUESTION: Okay maybe you can tell us the approximate location of the Liberty when you learned that the Israeli-Arab war had started? Were you five miles?...

RHODES: I think we were twelve or fourteen miles off the Coast of Gaza Strip there.

QUESTION: Could you see El Arish?

RHODES: We could see, I believe that morning or the night before, early, we could see flashes on the land. There was something definitely going on. Somebody was shooting somebody. And we could see the impact of the flashes.

QUESTION: Were there any other ships in the area that could have been shelling the Israeli Coast?

RHODES: No, I didn't see anything else out there except us.

COMMENT: It seems to be something...For some reason the Israelis felt that there was shelling and that was one of the reasons....

RHODES: I don't know what from.

QUESTION: Was there any communication channel, direct communication channel from NSA to the Liberty or from the Liberty to NSA?

RHODES: I, just like a field site I have to say certainly there has to be. We have comms with NSA when we are at a field site. That was nothing more than a floating field site, surely there was comms between NSA here or there.

QUESTION: Would you be aware that there might be a third party that would have to relay?

RHODES: All depends on where you are. Sure there's relays.

QUESTION: Okay, but your feeling is that there was direct?

RHODES: Oh, yeah.

QUESTION: Do you know what support NSA might have been providing to the Liberty?

RHODES: By technical data?

RHODES: Yeah, they provided, as far as I knew, all of our technical data. All of our pubs, working aids, instructions, reporting guidance, everything was supplied by this Agency that I know of.

QUESTION: Do you know if they provided any by radio, when you were on station? Did you see any messages?

RHODES: I didn't. I didn't see any messages, I heard, you know, be more watchful than normal, you know upgrade your posture and things like that.

QUESTION: Any specific frequency coverage that they were directing you to?

RHODES: Like I say, I don't, I don't recall that.

QUESTION: Henry asked the same or partial question. Would the Captain have been provided any sensitive, any warning information, immediately if the SIGINT people had intercepted this type data?

RHODES: You mean that we were going to be hit?

COMMENT: Yes.

RHODES: Right now, sure it was his ship. You'd better believe they'd let him know.

QUESTION: So there was some sort of communication channel from the bridge to the?

RHODES: Oh why certainly there is. Oh yeah.

QUESTION: What type was it?

RHODES: Telephones, that I...

QUESTION: So somebody in the research area could pick up the telephone and read the translation or whatever he had?

RHODES: Well, in the confined space of a ship as small as that one was, if they didn't read it, probably if it was that important, the OPs officer would have "hot footed" right up to the CO's cabin, and it would have taken him thirty seconds to get there.

COMMENT: Henry do you have any more on that?

COMMENT: No.

QUESTION: Talking about the Liberty moving about again, how many times did it change its "on station" position?

RHODES: Well, I don't recall being anchored anywhere on a station, we were moving all the time.

QUESTION: What is the procedure if a ship wants to change position...I don't mean that! If a change of position is requested or desired or directed, what is the procedure on board?

RHODES: Well, a message would probably come in the comm center,

or if it wasn't classified, in the radio shack, they'd let the "old man" know and the "old man" would comply with it.

QUESTION: Could the SIGINT group direct a change of position?

RHODES: If "props" were bad, propagation was bad, and we had trouble getting signals or something like that, the OPs officer would probably ask the "old man" to move. We wouldn't move far, you know, just far enough to make things easier and bring up hearability.

QUESTION: Did you ever see any messages or any directives telling the Liberty to move that day, 6th of June?

RHODES: No.

QUESTION: Did you ever hear of anyone discuss it, even later?

RHODES: No.

QUESTION: None of your buddies got together ten years later?

RHODES: Well, you know, I hate to say something on just rumors. I had heard we were told to "get the hell out of there" at one time, but I don't know how true that was.

QUESTION: By?

RHODES: A message came in and said, "Look, get out of there."

QUESTION: By Navy?

RHODES: I don't know who, you know, it was just over a beer a bunch of guys shooting the breeze, and like I said, I don't know the validity can even be trusted at all on it.

QUESTION: That could have been the message that was never received, too!

RHODES: That's right.

COMMENT: Or received too late.

COMMENT: Yeah, received too late. Right!

QUESTION: I won't ask any question about the two day delay in directing the move of the ship by CINCUSNAVEUR, or the critical message that was lost and misdirected and filed away, unless you want to comment on any of those, that would be 37, 38?

RHODES: With all the red tape in our comms systems, in a calm procedure and everything laid down by NSA and other Agencies, it's small wonder that critics aren't lost every time that they are sent. There is not just one shot to get it there, I mean that it is bounced all over. I had heard that the critic that was sent out on us ended up in Philippines, for Christ's sakes. And that's not going to do us much good.

COMMENT: Well, these are the things we are trying to "shake out", and your comments will be duly noted.

RHODES: Well, I don't know. It is going to take some of the higher paid help, somewhere, to get off their tails and straighten something out. There is no reason to have a comms system so complicated that you can't get a critical

message through the system. Something like that could possibly cause a major conflict sometime.

COMMENT: That's right, probably will. Dusty, any more on that?

QUESTION: You already mentioned this, but would you recite it again? What type armament did the Liberty have?

RHODES: Four .50 caliber machine guns, Thompson 45 caliber submachine guns, Mls, a few BARs, 12 gauge riot guns and 45 caliber pistols.

QUESTION: But there was noting heavier than the .50 caliber?

RHODES: No, that was the biggest thing we had.

QUESTION: One question that we ask everyone and we always get the same answer, which is fine, but it's been controversial throughout the whole bloody investigation. Was the American flag flying aboard the Liberty?

RHODES: Damn right it was. Twice. The regular one, and then they hoisted the holiday colors, the big flag.

QUESTION: When did you put that one up?

RHODES: I don't know, I know it was up. Apparently the smaller one had been hit or the shrouding tore away. They immediately raised the holiday colors.

QUESTION: So it was up when the aircraft overflew the first time?

RHODES: Oh, sure, yeah.

QUESTION: Could it have ever been obscured by smoke, fog?

RHODES: Clearing tubes?

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QUESTION: Clearing tubes?

RHODES: No. No. The stacks were behind it.

QUESTION: Was there any time that you know of, when there was no flag flying, from the first one that may have been shot down and the second one put up?

RHODES: If there was I don't know about it, but the interval would have been very brief, and it would have been after the attack already started, so it doesn't make a damn anyhow.

QUESTION: Your answer coincides with everybody else, so that's great. Before the attack, was the ship warned in any manner by the Israelis?

RHODES: No, not that I know of, not that I saw, heard about, or anything. Like I said, they overflew us that morning taking pictures, they knew who we were, how many ships paint their...How many Navies paint their ships like we do? They knew exactly who we were.

QUESTION: Did you see them overfly?

RHODES: Yeah.

QUESTION: Could you see the markings on the aircraft?

RHODES: Israeli, that morning.

QUESTION: You could see it clearly?

RHODES: Yeah they were close enough to see them. I mean they came right on down, they were obviously photographing us.

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QUESTION: What type of aircraft was it?

RHODES: Just an airplane, you know, an old cumbersome, no jet or nothing like that. I don't know the type.

QUESTION: But it was sort of a slow moving photography craft?

RHODES: Right, well you know, I couldn't see the guys holding the camera but.

QUESTION: Single engine?

RHODES: Two

QUESTION: Two, would it have been comparable to our troop carrier?

RHODES: Probably, what is it a 130 or 131? Yeah, I think a 130. One of them is a jet a 130 or a 131. The other one is the old big-bellied cargo type plane. That's the type it was.

QUESTION: How long before the actual attack did they make this run?

RHODES: Well, that was in the morning, and they didn't hit us until, I think, 13 or 1400.

QUESTION: So this was 9 or 10 o'clock or 8 o'clock in the morning? Good.

RHODES: Yeah.

QUESTION: Well that's an interesting point. Now we're getting to the meat of it. I would like you to discuss at your leisure, say as much as you like or as little as you like, about the period immediately preceding the attack, and what you remember about the attack and immediately

after the attack?

RHODES: I think the only thing that had saved our bacon out there was that we had just finished a practice GQ. We had been to GQ station and had just come back off the GQ stations and putting gear away. I was in the berthing compartment. I was on Damage Control Team, assigned to Damage Control Team. So I was in the berthing compartment and I had just lit a cigarette and over the 1MC they announced that the deck force was going to test some motor whale boat. Right after that announcement I heard a muffled explosion. And I turned around to the guy next to me and I told him, "Them damn deck apes blew that boat up and I'm on damage control, I have to go up and fight that fire." And of course the GQ alarm went off and "this is not a drill", and I was sure that's what it was then. Well, when you're on Damage Control Team you have certain doors and hatches to dog down before you go to your spaces to pick up your damage control gear. So I hustled up topside to dog the doors that I had, down, that I was assigned, down. I could smell powder. I couldn't figure it out. I was dogging my door down and a rocket went through, oh probably three or four feet above and to the right of my head and through the bulkhead. I knew right then that it wasn't a part of the game-playing. Something was up. And from

that point on it was just continuous explosions and steel ripping, and you running everywhere, fighting fires and damage control. You're doing everything, and you don't really have a whole lot of time to stop and reflect or look around and really see what is going on. You have a job to do and you better get to it.

QUESTION: Who was giving the orders?

RHODES: Well, they have damage control team captains, or, on something like that it is like any crisis situation. I don't recall hardly anybody giving any orders. Everybody knew what had to be done, and so they just did it. That's all that was.

QUESTION: You were on top deck most of the time?

RHODES: Yeah, all of the time.

QUESTION: And the rockets were from the first pass of the aircraft?

RHODES: Yeah, yeah. Well, they made I think two or three passes. They hit the antennas right away. It was...I don't know who trained them pilots but they're damned good. They snapped our antennas with the first pass, I think most all of them. And then they...Then of course they beat the hell out of the bridge. You want to destroy a chain of command, that's where you're going to go for, and they did do a number on it.

QUESTION: Did the flag go down at that time, the first flag?

RHODES: I don't believe so. Like I say, I didn't...Wasn't looking for a flag, I was....

COMMENT: You had other things...

RHODES: Yeah, right.

QUESTION: How about the firing other than the rockets from the aircraft? Did they sweep the deck?

RHODES: There was a lot of...I don't know if they hit us with 20mm cannon from the planes. I don't know what type of gun that is, machine gun or what have you! The boats also were using three-inch cannon and hitting us from the sides.

QUESTION: Did you get down in the SIGINT area?

RHODES: Not at all, like I say, I was on damage control team. Before that cruise they sent me in Norfolk for some damage control training. And I remember it made me mad because my station at GQ had always been right at my desk. And, you know, I would just sit there and wait for the mess to get over with. The drill would end and then I would go back up topside and I'm sure as hell glad I was on damage control team, because I wouldn't have made it out of there, because that torpedo came in right next to my desk in the comm spaces, and I was on the other side of the fake wall in the P&R spaces.

QUESTION: What do you remember about the rescue operations, I mean, taking care of the wounded?

RHODES: What rescue?

QUESTION: I mean rescuing the people who were down below, being sealed off.

RHODES: It was "holler down in the hole," most everybody got out. I think everybody got out. When they started hollering, the hatch had been closed. The scuttle in the center hatch had been opened and they were hollering down in the hole. I went by once and I saw them hollering in the hole, "Anybody else coming out, anybody else coming out?" At that time the water was getting dangerously close to the top of that scuttle. They had to shut it down. As it turned out, when we got in dry dock in Malta and started retrieving the bodies, only one guy possibly drowned, the rest were killed outright. He was holding on to some pipes with his elbow and his feet were trapped between some heavy safes that fell over, so he couldn't get out.

COMMENT: Henry, do you have any questions?

COMMENT: No.

COMMENT: Let's see, what else?

QUESTION: So you didn't get a chance to check the SIGINT area at all until the entire thing was over?

RHODES: Right. Really.

COMMENT: I don't want to prolong this because....

RHODES: Oh you're not bothering me.

COMMENT: No, O'Connor and Clyde and Wilson, I guess it was, did a pretty good briefing on what happened. As I say I don't want to pursue it anymore.

QUESTION: Was there? I will ask this...Was there or what warning were you given that there was to, that there was going to be an MT boat attack?

RHODES: None.

QUESTION: None, nothing from the bridge at all?

RHODES: No.

QUESTION: The aircraft came over first?

RHODES: Right, and they were followed up by the boats. It was a well-planned and executed attack.

QUESTION: But no warning from the bridge that you might prepare for a torpedo attack?

RHODES: Oh, yeah there was...that was by word of mouth, "prepare for torpedo." All the 1 MC announcement systems on the ship had been knocked out right away. And there was a whole lot of rumors flying down from the bridge. At one point there was a rumor for "abandon ship." Yeah, there was a warning "stand by for torpedo attack." And from what I understand from it, they missed with two and hit with one.

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QUESTION: Would you recall whether there were any distress signals transmitted from the Liberty either visual or?

RHODES: They were trying to, I know they were trying to get them out. But, like I say, things that I picked up it was running by an open door or going in to put a fire out in a different compartment or something like that. And there was a lot of word that we were jammed. We were being jammed, which would go right along with an attack like that, you'd want to do that.

COMMENT: That's something new too, we didn't hear anything on the jamming.

RHODES: Yeah.

QUESTION: So the entire capability, the intercept capability was wiped out?

RHODES: Oh sure. There was one space...The research spaces had really three decks. The lowest deck we had a training room and a fan room. The next deck was the R branch spaces, the O branch spaces, P&R. The one above it was, more T branch spaces and that was above the hatch level, on the same deck as the hatch that was closed. So no water got up there. But there was no intercept operations going on from that point on. It was all shut off. Everything was dead.

QUESTION: Could there have been any other intercept equipment available on the ship where you could have heard?

RHODES: Radio shack had R390s. I supposed that if somebody had been listening they might have heard something.

QUESTION: Everybody was out fighting the fires or?

RHODES: Well now, people were doing a lot of things. Those that were stationed at those, like in the Radio shack, I think most of them stayed at their stations which is good because the passageways get jammed with people. The rest of the damage control team was doing what they were supposed to be doing. Most everybody else seemed to congregate on the mess decks after the torpedo hit, that's where all the wounded were, and people that didn't have an assignment and wouldn't help...were not helping somebody, or asked to help somebody, were there.

QUESTION: I know this was probably a secondary concern, but did anybody worry about burning cryptographic documents or destroying the equipments?

RHODES: Yeah, later like that day, afternoon or night, after it was over with, talking with some of the people that were down in the spaces, they'd tried to do emergency destruction of sorts, little bonfires here on the floor and there. Those ships, just like the shore stations, they have thermite devices, and they are kept locked up in, all

that shit should be rigged on the gear, twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year and have a master switch. If you have to pull a pin and burn the whole place right to the ground right now. No waiting.

COMMENT: Good suggestion!

QUESTION: So you couldn't get into the space to get the thermite equipment?

RHODES: Well, I think most of the thermite equipment was kept down, like in the fan room, and it was, when the torpedo hit, it was all under water.

COMMENT: Do you want to pursue that Henry?

COMMENT: No.

RHODES: Of that emergency destruction at our field sites, and aboard ships, may as well be nonexistent. I've seen it in both places. It's a joke.

QUESTION: Following the attack, was there any attempt made to assist or raid the vessel and it's wounded by the attackers?

RHODES: Yeah, one that I know of. I was on the focsle area. This chopper, Israeli chopper, flew over, doors slide back and I believe somebody on the bridge was trying to wave him off, because at that time we realized it was Israel that was tearing us up. This guy, I don't know who he was, threw something out of the chopper. Well immediately everybody jumped for something to get behind,

because we didn't know what he was throwing, hand grenades or what. It turned out to be a lunch sack. I opened up the lunch sack, and there was an orange in there and a little note, "Have you any casualties?" And I read it out loud, and the guys there on the focsle there with me and I, we all joined in on a universal gesture, flipping him "the bird" telling him to "get the hell away from us." You know, they had just blown us up and now he comes up with that kind of crap. A little ridiculous.

QUESTION: Ennes mentioned that a Commander Castle, US Navy, was aboard that helicopter and threw this calling card, down, was that true?

RHODES: Yeah, that's what they said. That was apparently the lunch sack.

QUESTION: Calling card in quotes. I thought it was a calling card saying Commander US Navy.

COMMENT: It was, but the orange was there to weight it.

RHODES: Yeah, all I read was "Have you any casualties" and it ticked me off right away.

QUESTION: Do you remember what Captain McGonagle might have said to the Captain of the Israeli PT boat that came up "offering assistance?"

RHODES: Yeah, I didn't hear him. I heard that he told him to, you know, he can take it in the air.

QUESTION: Did you see the torpedo boats?

RHODES: Did I see them at any time?

COMMENT: Yeah.

RHODES: Sure. Yeah.

QUESTION: Was the Israeli flag clearly visible to you?

RHODES: I saw boats out there, I wasn't looking for flags. But I know there were boats out there and I knew they were firing at us with cannon, at that time.

QUESTION: But you yourself didn't see any insignia on them?

RHODES: No, I didn't see any insignias on anything, until it was, like over with, and a chopper came up. And then as soon as I saw that, you know, I'm sure glad that they're here. At least somebody is going to help us, obvious our Navy is going to leave us out here to dry. You know, I was glad to see some help. At that time I didn't know it was the Israelis that did it, but apparently the people on the bridge did.

QUESTION: After the attack did you ever see any U.S. aid aircraft?

RHODES: No. I didn't see any U.S. help at all until the next day when two destroyers came up, the Davis and I forget the name of the other one.

QUESTION: Was that in the morning?

RHODES: Yeah.

QUESTION: And you, were you, had you known beforehand during the night that the word passed to be that those destroyers were on their way?

RHODES: Yeah, I remember that word being passed, but it was, it didn't make much of a difference at that point.

QUESTION: What...When they did arrive what assistance did they provide?

RHODES: I think they brought over some sandwiches or something to eat. I know down in front hold, where on the other side from where the torpedo was in a compartment behind was flooded, the bulkhead there was giving, moving back and forth.

PART 2

RHODES: That front hold, that bulkhead had to be shored up. It would have given way and I think we would have really been in trouble. I believe that the Davis people, I know I don't recall seeing any of them in the hold and somebody said they refuse to go down in the hold. We had to go down in the hold and they hung monkey fist lines down there and said well if that bulkhead gives away, grab the monkey fist lines and we'll pull you up. Well, that was a joke, if that bulkhead gives way you're not going nowhere. You'd smash against the other wall, that's it!

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But they wouldn't go down in the hold and help us. We did the damage control on it.

QUESTION: Were there any medical personnel on deck?

RHODES: Yeah, yeah, I believe there was. They came over, down in our mess deck. They were helping the doc. I think we had one corpsman and one doctor.

COMMENT: To do all that work.

RHODES: Well, there was a lot of guys that were doing first aid and helping them. Cause there is no way they could handle that many wounded by themselves. At least taking care of the smaller....

COMMENT: Minor wounds.

QUESTION: Did you, or do you have any comment on the report that JCS and Secretary of Defense McNamara directed the Commander of the Sixth Fleet to cancel and recall an urgent air strike when the U.S. Government allegedly received an apology from the Israelis?

RHODES: It just goes along with the rest of us, they send a boat out there and something happens they leave you out there to die. They don't give a damn about you. They should have been there immediately with aid. If it meant going in and wiping the whole Israeli outfit out they should have done it. Maybe we wouldn't have things like Iran going on today. But they did just, as far as I am

concerned, from the President on down completely farted us right off, and left us out there to die. That was it. They kind of just said well, if we keep shut about this and say we don't know nothing about it, maybe it will go away like a bad headache. It sure dropped the opinion that I have of the Navy, and that a lot of other troops have of the Navy. And then they backed it up with the Pueblo. The same stunt, just leave them go.

COMMENT: They didn't learn anything.

RHODES: I think it is that we don't have anybody with any guts in power that would back up their own men. They expect their men to back them up but they don't want to return it. They don't want to get in there and help them.

COMMENT: Pretty much one sided...

QUESTION: Did you ever hear about a submarine in the area and possibly the submarine recording the attack on the ship?

RHODES: I didn't see it, hear about it, or nothing till right there, in there ((Ennes' book)). If there was one and it was ours, if it was ours, it's a dirty shame that they stayed under water and didn't come up to give us any aid at all. If they were there even after the attack was over they should have come up that night to help us. But nobody came up.

QUESTION: When you were in Rota did you ever see a submarine by the name of the Andrew Jackson tied up alongside you or in the area?

RHODES: No. Well we were in, I believe the fueling area. Now Rota was a sub base. The Canopis was there, sub tender, and there is usually subs there all the time. And there was subs in the area, but I didn't know we were connected with any of them.

COMMENT: Well, we are just trying to refute or confirm the reports in the book, which is difficult.

RHODES: Well, now with him ((Ennes) being a full fleet "enswine" at the time, he was privy to a whole lot more information then the common seaman or third class or first class, for that matter, was able to get a hold of. He was up in the ward room with the "old man," the XO and other people, and I'm sure they knew a whole lot more about what was going on than we did.

QUESTION: Did he get down in the research spaces at all?

RHODES: I don't believe he had clearance. I don't believe he could come in.

QUESTION: Is he a pretty honorable guy, reliable, straight forward?

RHODES: I didn't know the guy personally at all. There was only two officers I did, well I knew quite a few of the officers and there's only a few of them that I really knew. And

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it was Commander Lewis, Lieutenant Maurice Bennett and I think, at that time, Ensign Painter, Lloyd Painter.

QUESTION: Who was the operations officer?

RHODES: It was Lewis, or Harold Stockton, I don't know which one. They seem both to be the OPS boss.

QUESTION: Did you know Lieutenant O'Connor?

RHODES: Not personally, no. And again I don't believe O'Connor, if he worked in the spaces...it was up above us, and I believe what they call "Co-ord"--coordination center, that's where the higher paid help stayed.

QUESTION: Would you remember when NSA became aware of the attack?

RHODES: No, I don't know when they became aware of it. "A day late and a dollar short," that's for damn sure.

COMMENT: Okay let me just show you, if I can find it, a picture of O'Connor, in here.

RHODES: That's O'Connor laying down.

COMMENT: Oh, you saw it.

QUESTION: Did you get over to the America or did you stay aboard the Liberty?

RHODES: No, I was aboard the ship start-to-finish. I rode her back to Malta.

QUESTION: Did anybody from ONI come aboard the Liberty and say, "Forget about what you saw, don't talk or don't repeat this story?"

RHODES: I don't know if he was from ONI. We were told to keep our mouth shut, that's for sure. Don't talk to reporters, in Malta and when we pulled back into Norfolk. They went through the scam of pulling films and pictures, you know.

QUESTION: After the Davis, and I think it was the Massey, arrived, was there also...Did there also appear on the scene that day, the 9th, a fleet tug?

RHODES: Topapago, Topapago was the fleet tug we followed back to the States. I didn't see it out there. I didn't see it until Malta, and we followed her back to the States. If she was out there I didn't know about it.

COMMENT: She was supposedly six miles to stern.

RHODES: That could have been.

QUESTION: Was there any concern on the way to Malta about the loss of the compromising material washing out, and also the possibility of losing bodies through the torpedo hole?

RHODES: Sure, sure there was. There was talk about putting a net over it or a tarp over it, but the hole was too big. We couldn't do it. So we just trucked along and I'm sure a lot of stuff came out of there.

QUESTION: So you were concerned and also concerned that maybe some Soviet ships could have tailed you?

RHODES: Well, if there was any Soviet ships in the area I am sure they got information out of that hole. They wouldn't

pass up a chance like that any more than we would.

QUESTION: After the attack, again on the way back to Malta, did any brass from the Fleet board the Liberty?

RHODES: In Malta?

QUESTION: No, on the way back. That is coming over by helicopter or perhaps from the America?

RHODES: There was a lot of brass on there. Some of the...Admiral Kidd came aboard in Malta. He may have come aboard sooner and I didn't know it, but I know he came aboard in Malta.

QUESTION: Now, we've read in a number of reports but we've obviously had no personal confirmation of the fact that there were a number, as you said, of people who did board the ship prior to her docking in Malta, either, as I said, from the America, or by the way of the America or by a launch from another, even a third destroyer.

RHODES: Yeah, well at that time we were busy loading up wounded and trying to get them to the America and I wasn't looking for anybody, I was busy, and most everybody else was busy. We had things to do and didn't have time to look.

QUESTION: When the Liberty was docked at Malta, could you recall how extensive the reviews were of the ship and the personnel by NAVSECGRU people and NSA people?

RHODES: Nobody ever asked me a thing from NSA or NAVSECGRU for that matter.

QUESTION: No one ever asked you anything?

RHODES: No. This is the first time anybody has ever asked me anything about it, other than people I know, you know.

COMMENT: Curious people.

QUESTION: So you can't tell us anything about the Navy Board of Inquiry that was held at Malta on 15 June?

RHODES: No, that Board...I don't think there was any enlisted men invited to it. It was probably all the officers. I don't recall any of the guys that I knew having to go to it.

QUESTION: Okay, to reiterate, you did not participate in any investigations of any type?

RHODES: No type.

QUESTION: So you couldn't have been questioned by the NSA people, or you didn't participate in the preparation of the post mortem report?

RHODES: Nope, nobody asked me a thing about nothing.

QUESTION: Would you have any comments on why there was so much confusion when the big Court of Inquiry was held? So much confusion over what actually happened on that day. There were conflicting reports from various officers as to what happened that day.

RHODES: Sure, it's called "cover your butt." You don't want to get tagged or blamed for nothing so everybody is going

to tell something a little different. Shunt it on around, keep moving it around.

QUESTION: So you think there could have been some deliberate distortions on what they remembered?

RHODES: I'm sure there was, I'm sure there was. There'd have to be. You know, somebody is going to try to lay the responsibility of what happened on somebody's shoulders. Nobody wants that. So they're going to change whatever they say a little bit to ease it off on to somebody else and away from themselves.

QUESTION: You know that the instructions given to the Court of Inquiry were not to find out who was responsible for the attack, but merely to review the let's say the "conduct" of the Liberty's crew, and its coping with the attack.

RHODES: That may have been what they said, but it is like anything else. I don't know if you were in the service, but an officer would say "Well, you can talk to me, this is off the record." When he says that, you had better watch it because you'd better bet your butt it's going to be on the record. So if they said that they weren't there to put the blame on anybody, as far as I'm concerned they were looking for it. They were looking for where the responsibility lied.

OUESTION: What is your personal opinion concerning the allegation

on the part of the Israelis that they didn't realize that the Liberty was an American vessel?

RHODES: It's crock, flat crock. They had to know who we were. Like I said, they overflew us, took pictures of us, I'm sure. How many ships paint...Navies paint their ships like we do, American flag flying? They knew exactly who we were. They knew what we were there for. They didn't want us doing it. If they could have sunk that ship and killed every person aboard it, maybe their idea was to drag the U.S. into that conflict, right then, on their side. They'd have blamed, if they had killed everybody, they'd have blamed the UAR for it.

COMMENT: Thank goodness they didn't.

QUESTION: While on station in the Med in the operational status, do you believe that the Liberty produced some "useful" intelligence?

RHODES: I doubt it. I doubt if they produced anything worthwhile. We weren't there long enough.

QUESTION: You've already covered part of this question. What lessons do you think we should have learned from the incident and what recommendations would you make to prevent another incident like the Pueblo?

RHODES: Well, they're already, apparently somebody wised up, and they're not sending, "Intelligence Gathering Ships" out

on their own. They're putting smaller dets (detachments) on bigger ships, carriers, CLG and stuff like that, something that has armament, can protect itself. I've never understood their logic for taking one totally defenseless ship and if all you've got is .50 calibers you're totally defenseless, and send it out on its own, even in peacetime. War could break out at any given minute and you got a ship stuck out there who couldn't defend itself against a bunch of pigmies in rowboats. It's stupid.

QUESTION: How about documentation? Do you think you had too much documentation and equipment aboard?

RHODES: Entirely too much, like all them ships did have. There is no way emergency construction or destruction could be carried out unless you were given like two days notice that you're going to get hit. And usually you're not given any notice.

QUESTION: Were there sets of instructions as to what would happen if the ship were to go down regarding the bagging of the cryptographic materials?

RHODES: We had weighted bags and things like that, but, there again, they are put away someplace. They're not out under your desk where you can get your hands on them. You are going to have to wait for somebody to unlock a

cabinet, a safe, a storage area, get a line, drag the stuff back up and start using it. Impractical as hell.

QUESTION: This is not exactly a point but, were you aware that while on station there that the water was shallow?

RHODES: I wasn't aware of how shallow it was...

COMMENT: Twenty fathoms!

RHODES: I was...The only thing I was worried about is, was it deep enough for me to sink to the bottom and walk ashore because I can't swim.

COMMENT: A sailor who can't swim?

RHODES: Right.

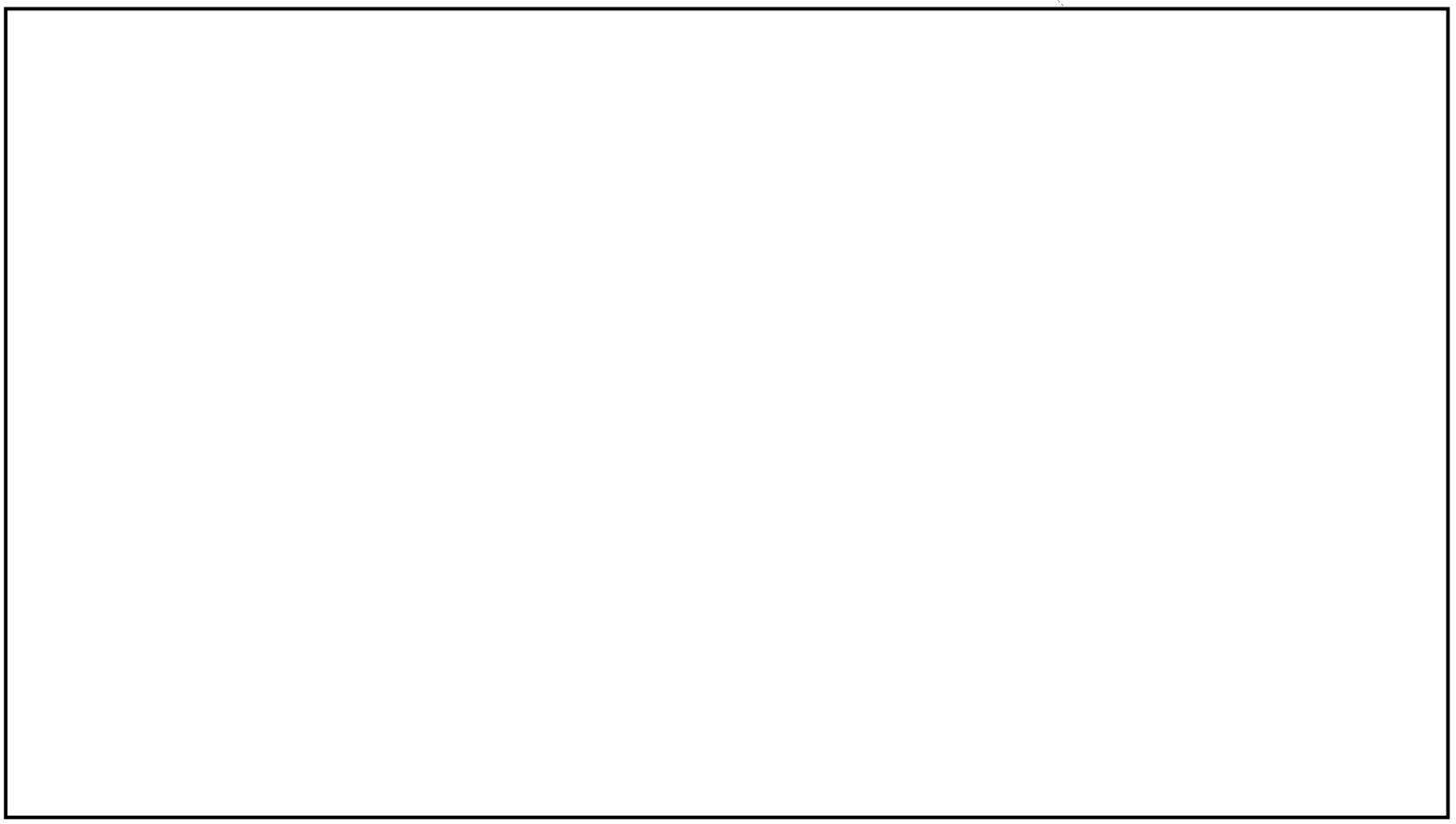
COMMENT: I can't either. It was mentioned by the Captain, who, in his testimony before the Board of Inquiry, said that after taking the torpedo hit, he wasn't sure whether the ship was going to be able to, not knowing immediately how damaging it was, he was considering the possibility that if it had to go down, he was going to try to maneuver it to the port side.

RHODES: To deeper water?

COMMENT: No, because there he would run her aground. She wouldn't go that...in other words, it was that close that rather than see the ship sink, he'd just put her on the rocks out there.

RHODES: Well, from 12 to 14 miles wherever we were out, the ship

is a hard thing to sink if you have water-tight integrity. You've got time to play around in. Hell, he could have run it aground. I'm sure he had plenty of time for that.



QUESTION: While aboard the Liberty were you aware of or knowledgeable of the use or the functioning of the TRSSCOMM system?

RHODES: TRSSCOMM? That was another joke. TRSSCOMM, I don't know who paid for it or designed it or anything, but it was a waste. It never did work! The thing never did function, it was always broke down, always under repair. The only fun we ever got out of that thing or useful work I could see out of it was to tell the "deck apes" when the red light was on, not to go top side because their hair would fall out and they would become sterile. So we would keep them below decks that way.

COMMENT: So it was up and down treatment.

RHODES: Yeah, it was down more than up.

QUESTION: Was it functioning in Rota when you started your voyage?

RHODES: I don't believe so, I don't believe it was working at all. I don't recall the thing ever actually working. It was always broken down. They put it on there for looks, I guess, because it didn't do anything. The hydraulic system in it was, you know, it moved on hydraulics, and it must have been designed by Mattell because it was always leaking, and never worked, breaking hoses and lines.

COMMENT: The reason I ask is of course, Ennes refers to its weaknesses, but I've never seen anything too much in the way of significant classified documentation that would tend to support, really favorably or unfavorably, anything about the system. You've seen a lot of information as to how it was designed to work, but I've never seen anything in print.

RHODES: As to how well it works?

COMMENT: As to how well it works.

RHODES: Yeah, I don't think it works.

COMMENT: There are reasonable facts that when, when it was working, it seemed to be fine, but there were an awful lot of conditions that had to be met.

RHODES: Just right.

COMMENT: Just right and from a practical operational sense the coincidence of these conditions being exactly right seems to be rather minimal.

RHODES: Yeah, I'd...The moon had to be in the right position and everything had to be in the right position and I think when everything was in the right position that damn gear would break down so.

COMMENT: From what I can...from what I understand, that system was, you might say, was the only point-to-point direct link between the ship and NSA.

RHODES: Well, I believe the way it was designed you could point-to-point communicate with anybody in the world with the thing, if all these conditions were met, you could talk with anybody you felt like talking to, whoever you had to talk to.

COMMENT: Otherwise all of the communications had to be....

RHODES: Relayed?

COMMENT: Relayed usually through the Naval shore facility closest to the ship.

RHODES: Right, right. Or when you say a direct link to me a direct link to NSA is through all those relays is still a direct link. They're just bouncing it for you. Just like the field sites have to do. You are still talking

to NSA even though that they're just in the middle.

QUESTION: We've pretty well covered most of the information. Is there anything else that you think you would like to put on tape or comment on before we swing over to a few more questions.

RHODES: No, I just...like I said before, I find it awful hard to believe that at that time the world's supposedly most powerful nuclear navy would leave a ship out there to get the hell beat out of it and not do a thing about it, just let them go. That is totally unsat.

QUESTION: Have you? Have you?...Are you are aware of the fact that during the attack there was an air force platform in the air out of, operating out of Athens and that they have some tapes of the Israeli helicopter conversation between the 'copters and the shore patrolers?

RHODES: No, I didn't know that, but, there again, if they were up there when we got attacked why in the hell didn't they give a...why in the hell didn't they wire back...radio back for some support.

COMMENT: I don't know they knew that you were under attack.

RHODES: Well they must have been damn poor intercept operators because them chopper pilots had to be talking about the attack.

COMMENT: These were the choppers that came out after the attack.

RHODES: There again, what was wrong with somebody coming to help us, immediately not the next day?

COMMENT: No, I'm talking about the Israeli helicopters that came out after the attack.

RHODES: And the Air Force guys supposedly got information that the attack was over with or what not?

COMMENT: No, the SIGINT from the Israeli helicopters to their ground controller. They were trying to identify the ship.

RHODES: Well, at that time I doubt if it was identifible. It was shot all full of holes, on fire and burning.

COMMENT: Well they had mentioned that they had seen the fire. Of course this is kind of...late for that.

RHODES: They hit us with napalm from this point back. And that jelly gas puts up a cloud of smoke and it does burn. And the flag area would have been covered by the fire and smoke at that time.

QUESTION: Of the individuals aboard the Liberty who may be still around the local area, who else should we talk to?

RHODES: I think you have talked with everybody that I know of that is here like O'Connor. You just told me that O'Connor was here. I didn't know O'Connor was here.

COMMENT: We talked with Commander Fossett who was the NSA project officer at NSA. We talked with Bob Wilson. We talked with Dick Hickman. We talked to Clyde, Clyde Way and he recommended you.

RHODES: I don't know of anybody else in the area.

QUESTION: Did you know Blalock at all, a civilian?

RHODES: Blalock was a Naval Captain by then, no I'm thinking of another guy. Blalock rings a bell, the name rings a bell. Blalock. I can't remember. Was he a civilian at that time?

COMMENT: Yes.

RHODES: Well, then he was aboard because I remember a Blalock. Bowden, I think there is a Bowden here. Let me check the roster.

QUESTION: I don't remember that name. While you're checking that, let me ask you a question about the Ennes book. Do you think Ennes was in a position to accurately report the story? Is his version factual?

RHODES: Yeah, it's pretty, pretty factual. He dramatized a lot, a lot of the stuff, but most of the facts are there. At least the parts pertaining to the actual attack.

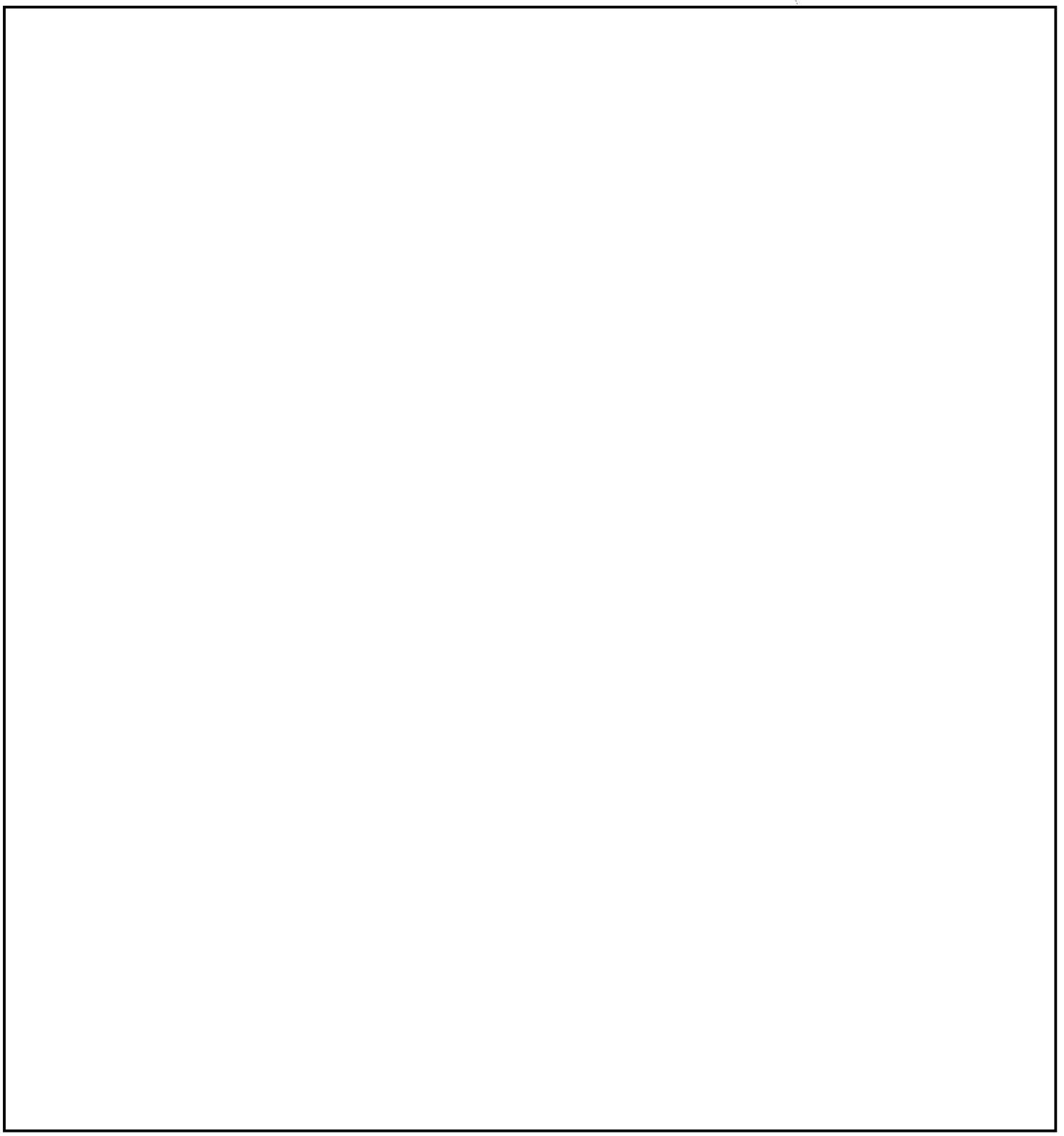
COMMENT: The basic attack, the things he reports were correct?

RHODES: Yeah.

QUESTION: Did you get a chance to read another book, by Pearson, who did a series of articles in the Penthouse magazine, and then later wrote a book on it?

RHODES: No, I would like to. I want to find it. I haven't found it yet. I've been looking but can't find it.

Non - Responsive



Non - Responsive

QUESTION: Were you asked to sign any statement or oath to restrict any discussion concerning the incident?

RHODES: No, I wasn't asked to sign anything but like I said we were told to keep our mouth shut. If any reporter or anything approached us we were supposed to immediately let one of the officers or somebody in charge of the ship know about it and not say anything to him.

QUESTION: You said you rode her back to Norfolk?

RHODES: Right.

QUESTION: After she was repaired in Malta which repair was really minimal enough to get her seaworthy.

RHODES: Well, they did a good job there in Malta. They patched, I think, all of the top side holes. They put a new side on her there.

COMMENT: Yeah, I guess what I'm saying, they made obviously no attempt to do anything about the internal spaces at all.

RHODES: Well, the internal spaces were gutted. There was nothing you could do about them. All you had to do was put a side on the ship so that it would be water-tight again. Then it could float.

QUESTION: Yeah, but I mean, there was no, no attempt to clean up those gutted spaces in terms of material that had been compromised?

RHODES: Oh, hell yeah we spent two or three weeks down there. The CTs. Trying to account for all of that, picking up little scraps of paper in the walls.

COMMENT: Okay.

RHODES: We bagged up the bodies and tried to account for everything we could. We cut open safes.

COMMENT: This we didn't know. I had, I knew that they had obviously gotten bodies out but there had been some indication that the...that the accounting for the material and all, was really not accomplished and that you got...that the area was just kind of sealed off and when she got back to Norfolk this happened.

RHODES: No, hell no. We put all of the classified material we could find and accounted for and then put it in bags, carried it up. We had something like two hundred and fifty of those great big canvas bags full of classified material.

QUESTION: And they were placed where?

RHODES: In our spaces above where the torpedo came in. It was still inside the crypto door, inside the combo locked door. After two or three weeks we worked our tail off trying to account for that stuff. Everytime somebody found any TS material or anything they hollered, somebody came down wrote it down if we could read what it was. Then bagged it up.

QUESTION: I wondered about this because, as I said, I knew it went on but I couldn't find anything in any of the documentation that we have concerning the damage assessment that indicated where, at what point this was done. (Right there in Malta.) When they got back to Norfolk there was a team sent down to, people from NAVSECGRU and there were some, a couple from NSA that I think came aboard in Norfolk to look the ship over. And I got the impression from some of the messages that came back from there that the work of bagging the material had yet to be done.

RHODES: No, that was bagged, in fact I was on the working party that took it to the incinerator and burned the stuff.

QUESTION: It was burned at Norfolk?

RHODES: Right, in a huge incinerator. We used a tractor trailer.

QUESTION: It was burned in Norfolk?

RHODES: Right. It filled up a flat bed, you know, a 40 foot trailer. We used a tractor with a plow blade to push the stuff into huge incinerators.

COMMENT: Well these are things that, as I say, you fill the gaps, Dusty. Things that....

RHODES: Yeah we, as far as I know picking up the bodies was secondary, accounting for that material was a primary function and we were the only ones that could go down there, none of the other crew had clearances. And there was only about ten or twelve of us left to go down there, the rest of them had been, they flew home. They asked for volunteers to stay with the boat. And I think there were ten or twelve of us that were single so we said, "Okay, let the married guys go on home and we'll stay with the boat." And that's when all of that started and we spent many eighteen, twenty-hour days down there in a row trying to account for that crap.

COMMENT: Henry, do you have anything else?

COMMENT: No, I have no other.

COMMENT: Before you get away, Dusty, I want to thank you very, very much for coming over and talking to us because as I just said you've filled in a lot of the gaps that we had, and you've given us information that we didn't know about.

RHODES: I'm glad I could help in some way.

COMMENT: You did and thanks again, but before you get away, Henry has some pictures and Clyde Way also has some.

RHODES: Yeah I've seen Clyde's, I've got them.

QUESTION: You have those black and whites? Okay.

RHODES: Yeah, I've got better pictures than those.

QUESTION: You do?

RHODES: Yeah.

QUESTION: Is that right. What we're doing is asking if you don't mind, not surrendering them, but loaning them so we can duplicate them.

RHODES: Sure.

COMMENT: We'll be sure that you get them back and it will supplement the report.

RHODES: Yeah, most of them, I don't have any pictures of the spaces. I have pictures of top side, immediately following the attack, really.

COMMENT: Which we don't have.

COMMENT: No, we came across...I've come across some slides.

RHODES: Well, the ones that Clyde had, they're old pictures. I

mean them pictures were taken after the repair work was 99% done. It looked like the only thing left to do was put the side on. All the holes topside had been patched. I could see the paint work where they had been patched up. So the ship was cleaned up at that point and the spaces were cleaned up, because we had cleaned them up.

QUESTION: Okay, could you select some of those pictures that you wouldn't mind loaning us so we could duplicate them?

RHODES: Sure.

COMMENT: Yes we are trying to put together an accurate report both written and photographically as we can. We are coming across, for instance, here are some pictures that I was, came across, and this is a little note that was on these, these were black and white, there is a little note....

RHODES: During the attack.

COMMENT: And I have no idea whether they were pictures of...the CO took or whether they could have been taken by a ship photographer?

RHODES: No, this is like the pictures I have.

COMMENT: Dusty before I cut this off again if you want this TOP SECRET CODEWORD we'll make it that.

RHODES: Why whatever you said it was, I've said nothing that really was over SECRET I don't think.

COMMENT: Nothing higher than that?

RHODES: No.

COMMENT: So again before I cut it off thanks once more, and we'll look at those pictures.