Index to Robert LeBaron Interview

Abstract of Interview: This interview contains discussion of the Valdez accident in Alaska that resulted in ocean contamination. Mr. LeBaron briefly discusses his return trip to the United States after his last patrol. The majority of this interview focuses on events that occurred during his service in the United States Navy aboard both the *USS Thomas Jefferson* and *USS Casimir Pulaski.*

Biographical Note: Robert LeBaron was a member of the US Navy Submarine Service between 1964 and 1972. He was a machinist's mate in the nuclear engine room aboard the *USS Henry Clay* then the *USS Thomas Jefferson* stationed in Holy Lock, Scotland, and Rota, Spain. After his enlistment, LeBaron found employment at Alabama Power Company's Farley Nuclear Plant in Houston County, Alabama.

Interviewer: Dr. Martin Olliff

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Date of Interview: June 23, 2003 Tape 2 of 3 (No recording on side B)

Place of Interview: Robert LeBaron's Home on Buie Road, Columbia, Alabama

Name of Indexer: D. Jordan

Date of Index: June 13, 2007

Topical Index to Interview

Initials	Side	Counter	Topic/Response
RL	A	001	Renewal of Introduction: Introduction of Dr. Martin Olliff as interviewer and Mr. Robert LeBaron as narrator.
RL	A	004	Valdez[1] wreck: Valdez wreck in Alaska that caused an oil spill into the ocean and discussion about the ocean's ability to cleanse itself. Mr. LeBaron states that the ocean cleans itself better that the environmentalist are able to do. He believes that it is necessary for humans to be involved in oil spill clean-ups especially in harbor areas where land is affected or in cases where animals are being harmed.
RL	A	026	Ocean chemistry: He discusses the health benefits of ocean water that he has heard about from friends and doctors, due to the mineral content of ocean water.

RL	A	061	Slide numbers 51, 52, and 55: He identifies pictures of himself and a fellow crewmate named John DeReeves. Mr. LeBaron and Mr. DeReeves were seniors of the engine room. These pictures are part of a group taken prior to going home.
RL	A	069	Trip home: He waited in La Roda, Spain prior to being bused to an airport and flown to Quonset Point, Rhode Island. From Rhode Island he was bused to New London. This is where the families and friends of returning soldiers would wait and greet those coming home. This was after his last patrol.
RL	A	081	Time required for trip home: He had a six hour flight from Spain to the United States and a two hour drive from Quonset Point, Rhode Island, to the base in New London.
RL	A	089	Position of the submarine at disembarkation: He explains that the submarine was tied to the dock, which is less preferred than being tied to the tender. The reason it was less preferred was because stores needed to be put on with the inboard tied to the tender.
RL	A	133	Taking on stores: Mr. LeBaron explains that it was necessary to go on maneuvering watch. Crewmen would go onto the ship tied ahead of them in order to release it from the tender allowing it to leave for patrol. This would free the space for the next ship to be stocked with stores.
RL	A	150	Insulation of the reactor: The maneuvering watch was necessary to reduce the number of men on top of the ship because the reactor was not insulated below the water line. The forward and after end were insulated. The after end contained the fuel for the diesel. He states that the isolation kept the radiation level normal.
RL	A	179	Radiation levels: Mr. LeBaron says that it was necessary to monitor the amount of radiation the engineering crewmen were receiving. The radiation exposure levels were measured by dosimeter badges[2].
RL	A	199	His radiation exposure level: He received a total of two rems[3] in his six years of service. He is unaware of anyone receiving above the allotted exposure level.
RL	A	204	Hot spot in the reactor compartment: This event accounted for his greatest amount of exposure. Mr. LeBaron explains that some radioactive materials had accumulated in a pipe in the reactor compartment. This created an area of elevated radiation levels or a hot spot that gave a reading of 100 R [Roentgen][4].

RL	A	218	Mr. LeBaron's role in removing the hot spot: He was responsible for devising a method of flushing this hot spot with water, and then the capturing and disposing of the contaminated water. He explains that he setup a system of flushing the water into some poly bottles that held 25 gallons each. The three men in the reactor compartment wore lead aprons for radiation protection.
RL	A	232	Description of the hot spot material: He describes the substances as being similar to what would be found in the bottom of a radiator.
RL	A	248	Contamination of the water: Mr. LeBaron says that the water used to flush the pipe in order to evacuate the hot spot would become radioactive. The bottle that captured the accumulation when flushed out weighed 200 pounds and had a radiation level of 75 R [Roentgen].
RL	A	258	Received commendation: He was given a commendation for devising a way to flush out the hot spot and capture the contaminated water.
RL	A	261	Removing the bottles from the ship: He describes a system of passing the full water bottles from the reactor room, through a tunnel to the machinery one room where the bottle was placed on a hook and lifted up out of the ship and placed on the tender.
RL	A	273	List of Hatches: He lists various hatches on the submarine: the engine room hatch, the machinery one room hatch, and the torpedo room hatch. The engine and torpedo room hatches could also be used as escape trunks if needed.
RL	A	283	Time required to remove the bottles from the submarine: Mr. LeBaron says that the time required from flushing until the bottles were placed on tender was about two minutes. The crewmen had practiced the process prior to the actual event.
RL	A	293	Prior event on the *USS Casimir Pulaski*: He had been responsible for devising a system to remove a broken compressor from the back of an engine room to the machinery one room so that it could be removed and a new compressor moved back to the engine room in its place.
RL	A	305	Description of the system: Mr. LeBaron rigged a set of chain falls to hook the compressor to one chain and then swing it to the next chain fall in order to advance the compressor to the machinery one room. The process required three men.
RL	A	316	Number of men required in the hot spot event: Three men were in the reactor room, while four men occupied the tunnel and machinery one areas.

RL	A	321	Number of bottles that were required when flushing the hot spot: Mr. LeBaron says that he had ten bottles ready to capture the contaminated water. Only four bottles were actually used. The third bottle had a radiation level of 75 R. The fourth bottle had low radiation readings. The hot spot was rechecked and found to be clean.
RL	A	334	The hot spot was aboard the *USS Thomas Jefferson*.
RL	A	342	*USS Casimir Pulaski's* reactor drive motor: Mr. LeBaron was involved in changing the reactor drive motor on the control rods. The crew had been told that the submarine would have to put to dry dock to change the reactor drive motor. He says that the crew changed the motor in two days without going to dry dock.
RL	A	351	Unit commendation: His unit received commendation for changing the reactor drive motor within two days without dry docking.
RL	A	357	Why it only took two days: Mr. LeBaron says that the two days were 24 hour days. He says that the young crew was able to go without sleep in order to change the drive quickly and would then catch up on sleep when the ship was on patrol.
RL	A	372	*USS Thomas Jefferson*'s reactor drive motor: He would later accomplish the same task on the *USS Thomas Jefferson*. He again was told by an engineering officer that the ship would have to be dry docked. Mr. LeBaron told the officer that he had changed a reactor drive motor on the *USS Casimir Pulaski* without dry docking. The officer allowed him to proceed and the crew was done in two days. This was at Ronda, Spain.
RL	A	387	Received commendation: Mr. LeBaron received another commendation for pushing the change of the reactor motor drive without dry docking.
RL	A	401	Slide number 63: The picture shows five inch deck guns. The picture was taken in front of one of the administration buildings on the middle base of the New London, Connecticut sub-base.
RL	A	422	Slide number 64: This is a picture of the marine barracks.
RL	A	429	Slide number 67: The picture is of the equipment on the lower base in New London. Mr. LeBaron says that there were no boats present at the time of the picture.

RL	A	439	Slide numbers 68, 69, and 70: Mr. LeBaron describes these submarines as deep submerging submarines. He says that these submarines were docked in an area that required I.D. clearance to enter.
RL	A	453	Ships positioned for availability: He says that ships were kept ready for sail during his time in the service.
RL	A	474	Purpose for deep submerging submarines: He says that it was probably to do test at different depths.

NO RECORDING ON SIDE B

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[1]On 23 March 1989, the *Exxon Valdez* oil tanker left the Valdez oil terminal in Alaska. Three hours later, poor maneuvering caused the vessel to strike the Bligh Reef resulting in 11 million gallons of crude oil spilling into Prince William Sound. Despite tremendous efforts made toward a cleanup, the spill is noted to be one of the largest manmade environmental disasters to affect the ocean's plants and wildlife.

[2]Dosimeter badges are small devices worn by people who work in radioactive environments. It is used to measure the amount of x-rays or radiation to which a person is exposed.

[3]A rem is the amount of ionizing radiation required to produce the same biological effect as one rad (or unit of energy absorbed from ionizing radiation) of high-penetration x-rays. It is an acronym for *r*oentgen *e*quivalent in *m*an. Both rem and rad (*r*adiation *a*bsorbed *d*ose) are used in monitoring the amount of exposure a person receives who has been in contact with radioactivity. It should also be noted that the words radiation and roentgen are used interchangeably.

[4]R is the abbreviation used to indicate roentgen. The roentgen equals the amount of charge released by x-ray or gamma-ray photons as they pass through a specific quantity of dry air. More simply, it is the measurement of the amount of radiation in the air.