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Sidney K. Broussard, Lieutenant Commander, United States Coast Guard retired. My residence is in Miami, Florida. I'm making this tape to give you what you asked for concerning the loss of the Escanaba, June 1943. I was commanding officer of the Coast Guard Cutter Raritan, an icebreaking harbor tug, 110 foot, twin engine, single screw diesel. The Escanaba was a 165 foot, steam turbine and her duty at the time of her sinking was as an escort vessel for convoys between Boston, as I remember, and Greenland, Narsarsuaq, Greenland southwest coast of Greenland. The commanding officer of the Escanaba was Lieutenant Commander, then as I recall, Carl Uno Peterson, I think, an academy graduate, he was in his 30's, I believe. The Executive Officer was Robert Prause, a Lieutenant and he was an academy man. They were both fine officers. The Escanaba had experienced engine trouble earlier in the year and had to remain in Narsarsuaq across the dock from where the Raritan moored. And we had come to know the officers and crew pretty well and visited back and forth. My crew were primarily New Englanders, some of them had grown up by the water and had gone to sea on Boston fishing trawlers prior to enlisting in the Coast Guard. All of the crew were volunteers. The oldest man in the crew was a very unusual man, he was an author, he had written a number of books before he enlisted at the age of 53 in the Coast Guard. He insisted that he wanted to go to sea and that he wanted to be assigned to a vessel that was station in Greenland. And he wanted to be on the Raritan. So, after overcoming the objections of his superiors, he was assigned to the Raritan and Canny(?) was a small man, he was about 5'6" and ringing wet he wouldn't weigh 135 pounds. But, after the loss of the Escanaba, he wrote a short article that was included in a book of Coast Guard stories. And he was assigned to headquarters and worked in the, I think they called it, public affairs section in those days. In any event, our primary mission in Greenland, that is to say the Raritan, was ice breaking and she was quite efficient at that, as long as the ice wasn't over two foot thick, which it usually wasn't. And logistics re-supply for outlying stations, the mission of which back in those days was top secret, but it was monitoring German radio traffic originating in Germany or originating from German submarines operating off the coast of Greenland, Iceland, wherever. I said we came to know the officers and crew. One reason was that the Raritan was not exactly a regulation type ship. The commanding officer that took her up there and I served under him as executive officer until he was transferred to command of an LST landing ship tank division that ultimately wound up in the Indian Ocean. His name was Lewis Isaiah Riley. Remarkable man, in his 40's, a veteran of Army service and then the lighthouse service and when the lighthouse service was absorbed by the Coast Guard, or merged into the Coast Guard he became a Coast Guard officer. He was the finest seaman I've ever known. And held licenses unlimited master/sailor steam, either one. We missed him. But he taught us an awful lot. And that saved us on many occasions what he taught us. Okay.

There came a time when the regular convoy, very small, that routinely made the trip from Greenland to the east coast of the United States, usually Boston, was getting ready to leave and Escanaba was going to be one of the escorts. I don't remember I think Comanche was one of the escorts and there was one of the elderly prohibition era cutters,

200 and something foot. The escort commander was riding on that ship, his name was Kerrins, I forget his first name. He was a commander. We couldn't get out through the pack off of Canubliofic Fjord. The fjord changes names on the way in from the sea to the base at Narsarsuaq. Incidentally, Leif Ericsson, as I recall, or his father, Eric, know as Eric the Red had established a colony a very short distance from our base at Narsarsuaq, right around the corner that ultimately all of the people either perished or they were killed by the Inuit. I supposed you'd call them Eskimos, probably for good reason. In any event, we managed to wiggle along outside with the convoy and I can only definitely recall that in the convoy there was a transport, she was a sister ship to the Dorchester that had been sunk earlier that year, maybe late in '42, I don't remember, it's been too long. Escanaba and Comanche both had been in the escort of the Dorchester and it made a lasting impression on the officers and crew. All that loss of life and colder than what, I only ran into one survivor of the Dorchester, he had been on a life raft with some 12 or 13 other survivors and they all froze to death and he survived and came to the base and ultimately wound up in the bachelor officers quarters. I heard later that he committed suicide, I don't know, a traumatic experience. But in any event, as I said, I knew Carl Uno Peterson and I knew Bob Prause, because we had visited back and forth quite a bit. In fact, we went up to Ivittuut to wait for the wind to change and the ice to open up a little bit and while we were up there we went mountain climbing together. And the captain of the Storis. Walter B. Millington was; we were all together scrambling around. There came a time when the PBI's that flew over the ice, actually they were looking for submarines, but while they were up there they mapped the ice and reported on it. And they said, yes you could get out of Ivittuut now. So we departed Ivittuut and wiggled our way through the ice. The wind brings it in, you know; if you got a west wind it brings it in on the shore and packs it up. But if the wind shifts and the tied loosens it up some and you can get out through it. So, we departed Ivittuut and wiggled our way through lanes in the pack ice and came a time when I went down to get some sleep and the chief bos'n mate, a man named Forest and a fine seaman and a damn good man had watch and next thing I knew the general alarm bell went off in the cabin where I was sleeping and somebody came to the head of the ladder, you'd call it a stairs, I guess, and hollered down, something like, come on captain the Escanaba is gone. So, I bailed out, you sleep with your cloths on and went up the ladder and took a look where the Escanaba ought to be and there was nothing over there but oh like a cloud of water vapor or steam or smoke or something. Went up to the bridge and we were clear of the ice, so you know, you could get around. There was nothing in your way. And headed over for the explosion area and Storis was over there and she was not too far from where the Escanaba had gone down. Quite a bit of debris in the water, a lot of paper, papers, you know; documents or something. And she had the black pennant heisted; the black pennant meant that this would be flown by an escort. It meant that I have underwater sound contact with a submarine, stand clear of my sonar range, the range of my sound gear. So, I obeyed what the pennant said and I stopped and then a little bit, Storis blinks over and says, go on in and pick up survivors. So I went on in and it was, well anything like this is weird, I started to say it was kind of weird. All this stuff in the water. [phone, he stops] That was our nurse's aide calling from the hospital. My wife is terminal, Alzheimer's plus complications and she is not expected to live. In fact, I'm surprised she is still alive, more than another 24 hours or so, so I'm going to get this thing done and get it over with and get on with my personal

considerations. Wherever I was, she said go on in and I went on in and through all the litter, I looked over to port and there was a strong back, it is a spar, wooden spar, that holds the boat out, whatever boat it is, you know, whether it is a motor launch or monomoy surf boat or whatever they are using, I guess you'd call it a lifeboat. And hanging on to this thing appeared to be two men covered with oil, no lifejackets, just barely hanging on. To the starboard, over to the right was an officer in full uniform, kakis, cotton kakis with his shoulder boards, the whole thing, he had everything but his medals on. And he still had his cap on, lifejacket, floating good, Bob Prause, good friend of mine. I was told afterwards that there were seven men in the water when the Storis first arrived on the scene, but then she got sound contact, then of course the doctrine was that an escort with sound contact doesn't stop in an explosion area, they go find out what the contact is, you know. Submarine, go ahead and attack. So, the two fellows that were just, well one of them was hanging on and holding the other man up. I put her right alongside the spar and stopped the ship and at first the crew threw a couple lines over, but these men were so cold, they were in such trauma, one from the explosion of the torpedo on a small ship like that, you know, is quite a shock, comes right up your feet to your brain. And I understand one of them was below decks when it happened and the other one was up in the wheelhouse, bridge they liked to call it in the Navy and the Coast Guard. It might have been on the helm, I don't know. But the other one I was told 50 something years ago, that he was below decks. So, I didn't have to stop and read a book or anything, instinctively I and I'm defensive about this because Bob Prause was a good friend of mine, but in a situation like this, I don't care what you are doing, you help the guy that needs help the most. And that is exactly what I did. So, as I said, the boys threw a couple of heaving lines over and these two men, well the one guy appeared to be unconscious. They were so traumatized by the cold and the explosion itself, that they couldn't reach over and get a line or if they'd reached over and gotten it, they wouldn't be able to hang on to it while you pull them in. So, some of my men went in to the water and they no more than hit the water and started trying to work on these people when the shock of the cold hit them and just about knocked them out. And I've seen people freeze to death in water like that more than once. It doesn't take long. So, some of the other of our crewmembers first tried to reach down and grab and then some of them got in the water and the same thing happened and these were young men. And all hands, except for the chief engineer, he was down below in the engines were involved, including the cook. And it took everybody in our crew, not only to get these two Escanaba survivors up, but our own men that had gone down and gotten into the water. But they grabbed on and pulled and heaved and everything else and, of course, the Escanaba was an oil burner and that bunker oil is very thick, especially when the water is that cold and slippery and it is just a bloody mess. But they heaved and pulled and yanked and they kind of come up like in a bunch, in a bundle or something onto the deck. And they were young, thank goodness for that. Then I wiggled her over alongside of Bob Prause and when I had come over, he recognized the ship, he recognized me and he waived at me. And I'm certain that he knew what I was going to do. I mean, I didn't ignore Bob by any means. My reaction and it would be the reaction of anyone. I don't care what you are doing whether it is a car wreck or something like this, as I said, you help the people that need help the most. And these two people were just a hair's breath removed from death. So, and it took all this time, you know, I mean it must have taken pert near five minutes, maybe more to get

these two Escanaba survivors and our gang that were in the water, to get them all back on deck and that sort of thing. Okay, they took the two survivors and helped their shipmates that were in tough shape into the crews mess. The crews mess room, I don't know, whatever you want to call it, it is on the main deck and the two survivors, two young fellows came around pretty quick. And then they put Bob Prause, Lieutenant Prause on the mess table and started trying to give him artificial respiration. We didn't do that mouth to mouth then, it hadn't been developed. We used modified, Holga Nielson, I think was the name of it, I wouldn't want to bet on it. But you know, you put the fellow on his stomach and try to get the water out of him the best you can and then press down, lift, press down, lift and some of the other people move the arms and legs and that sort of thing. On Mr. Prause it didn't work. So, one of the people came up to the bridge and I was on the helm then and I sent the helmsman down because they needed everybody they could get to do what they were doing. And said he is not coming around at all captain. Oh they had been working on him then I'll guarantee you 15, 20 minutes. And I had cranked her up and was rejoining the convoy and I was alone up there. So I says, look at it, keep at it now. Keep at it. So, they must have worked on him and they came back a couple of times, you know. Oh, 40, 45 minutes or more and every time they'd come back I'd get angry with them, you know. And ah, finally they told me, they says well, we can't do the artificial respiration on him because his limbs are starting to get stiff, we can't move him. So, I had the chief take over the con, you know, handling the ship. And I went down and there was absolutely no doubt about it, he was dead and he probably died in the water. So I told them, you do strange things at a time like this. Okay, put him down in the cabin, my cabin was below decks, there was another bunk so they put him in the other bunk and I rejoined the convoy and I stayed up there a good part of the day. And it was starting to get rough and we'd been inside, we'd been working inland passages you know, 110 foot harbor tug is not built to go outside, except when you have to try to get back to Boston, hyboics(?), water, you don't have the free imports you should have and you take a load of water on that baby over the bow or anywhere, and it takes a while for it to run out, you get in trouble. So I finally, I could see that the crew was, the sea by then, we were, you know, getting quite a ways outside and breaking over the bow, rougher than hell, you know, the further you got away from land and my crew was incapacitated by the rough seas. They were seasick, except for the chief engineer. So, I stayed on the wheel, on the steering the vessel, I stayed on the wheel for 72 hours. Part of the time I'd stand and sometimes I'd sit on a stool try to stay awake, steer, hold her up into the sea. There came a time I went down to the cabin, I forget who took the helm, but somebody must have and I was going to rest a little bit and I looked over there at Bob Prause's feet and I said, well that doesn't hardly make sense. So, I got the chief bos'n mates and somebody else in between periods of heaving over the rail to take him and put him down in the crew's quarters. [Now I hope you don't print this] in the dry stores, it is down below the deck there. So a day or two later I'm still up there steering, the chief bos'n mate made his way up to the bridge, the wheelhouse or whatever you want to call it. And says to me, captain, with all due respect Mr. Prause is getting kind of strong and the men are all seasick anyway and it is really killing them. I said okay, get the chief engineer and bring him up on deck and let's prepare him for burial at sea. So they wrapped him up and we had, we were great scroungers and we had scrounged some radiators and stuff off of a ship that had gone on the rocks. She was a derelict in the fjord and Gardner had asked me, the

chief engineer, you know if he could go aboard and get those radiators. He was building a house and he could use them. I says sure, I don't see any reason why not to.

Tape back on.

..or anything heavy we had and we didn't carry a lot of stuff on that thing, except Gardner's radiators and things. I didn't want to use a box of ammunition, might need it on the way home. So, they lashed the radiator to Mr. Prause's feet and then Chief Forest came up and said, okay, we are ready captain. Oh I mean sheets, it was a real sea running and so I lashed the wheel and ran down on deck and I had already asked Forest if he had a bible, he says no, he says I don't think there is a bible on the ship. Now to be honest, confound or upset or something people, but ah, there wasn't any bible on the ship. So, I asked Forest, I says, we took Mr. Prause and we laid him on the gunnel all ready with the radiator and asked Forest I says, do you want to say some words? He says, no, can't think of anything to say. And I asked Gardner and he says, you want to say anything, he says no I better get down in that engine room. I says, okay. I just let him go. So, we dropped him in the water. The water was clear as glass and I will never forget looking down there and seeing my good friend, Bob Prause sinking down with that radiator tied there. And then Gardner ran back down to the engines, I ran up to the wheelhouse and that was that. So I think that same day, Hayward Canny, Mr. Canny came up with some Fig Newtons and a cup of coffee. The only thing he could find. And he was about ready to vomit again, so I thanked him and he went out on the wing on the bridge and let go. And that's what carried me those Fig Newtons for three days. I had requested permission from the escort commander, Commander Cairns, to... That guy is getting pretty close with that machine; I'm going to stop this thing and shut the windows, ok he is trimming hedges or something. Okay, he is trimming a hedge back there on the house right behind us.

One trouble with Florida, things grow the year around and you have to mow, cut and all that. We made it down to Argentia and like all North Atlantic storms, this one either we steamed out of it or it blew over, it did something, and the weather got better. Then there came a time when everybody came back on watch and that sort of thing. We got to Argentia and Argentia, Newfoundland, I'm sure you must know this, but Argentia was a very important naval base that President Roosevelt had negotiated for the use, well it wasn't a Naval base until the United States started really getting ready for the war with Germany and but the, I forget what they called it, but Roosevelt met with Churchill on a cruiser, as I recall, in 1941 probably. And we would have lend them 50 old mothballed, they were actually three stackers, I think, we used to call those old destroyers by the number of smokestacks they had on them. Recently, I guess, a four pipers and they modified them some and they wound up being three pipers. I had been exposed to escort duty with some of them. I always felt sorry for them. Those babies, I'll tell you they rolled. They weren't the best thing in the world to do North Atlantic convoy escort with, but anyway, we had stopped there when I was on the Alexander Hamilton and that was her last voyage. She was torpedoed something over two weeks later, I guess. In any event, I went over to the flag of our escort group and spoke to Commander Kerrins and told him what I had, well he knew I had done it, because I had asked permission to bury Mr. Prause, because I didn't figure that it would be practical without refrigeration

facilities, you know, some way of preserving the body until we finally made land. And he granted permission to do it and when I went over to see him, he congratulated us on getting that tugboat down there and he asked me, to show him on a chart, I'll never forget this. Where I had made the burial at sea, you know, they need that for the record. So, I says, well, I know that I should have written it down at the time, but I could either steer the ship and keep her from broaching, or I could try to with her hopping around the way she was doing in that seaway, trying to write it down on something and I says, I chose to steer the ship. He says, well that's alright, he says just put your finger on a spot on a chart and that will be it. And I says, well it was about right there. And so he took the latitude and longitude and that was the name of that. The two survivors were in good shape. I didn't see them during the rough weather naturally, didn't see anybody, except Gardner and Mr. Canny, Hayward. But ah, his son is a writer now, Donald Canny. He has an article in the current, either the current issue or the one before it of the Naval Institute Proceedings. But anyhow, so the Escanaba that was the end of the episode, other than occasionally over the years of the rest of the war, I would be talking with other officers. When I got back to Boston, let's see, yeah, they let me have leave finally. When I come back from the Hamilton, they didn't let me have leave or anything. I went home, yeah, down in Louisiana. And then I went to subtacer(?) training center and wound up executive officer on a destroyer escort, the Merrill between the Atlantic too and subsequently became commanding officer. Now before this old brain gets too tired, I want to mention one thing. And it is significant. One of the two survivors had been on there like say on the Alexander Hamilton, naturally before she was torpedoed. And he wasn't aboard at the time we lost the Hamilton, okay, that's him. But a number of Alexander Hamilton survivors were serving on the Escanaba when she went down and every one of them that had been torpedoed died on the Escanaba when she sank, blew up and sank. Then she blew, you know, there was nothing except scattered debris on the water, nothing, cloud or steam or smoke or whatever it was. My conviction at the time was that the submarine was not shooting at the Escanaba at all. That a 165 foot Coast Guard cutter, Great Lakes type icebreaker and rescue vessel didn't constitute a really desirable target for a submarine that had been out there for some time, I'm certain. Storis would have made a better target, but the number one target would have been the transport which was a sister ship to the Dorchester. And that would mean that they had, if they sank the transport that would have been the one remaining transport that was being used on the Boston to Greenland run. They were peace time passenger vessels. I wish I could remember the name of the one that survived. But, I figured this; either his torpedo setting was too shallow, the depth setting or maybe the torpedo didn't run like it should have. Nobody saw any bubbles, no trace of it prior to the explosion. Of course, they probably weren't looking that way. But, I'm convinced that he was firing at the Dorchester and the Escanaba on her, their sonar search pattern involved not only training the beam of the sonar manually from the whoever was on a sound stack, but the ships had a patrol pattern. You might call it zigzag, you know. But, the ships in the convoy and I can't remember, you know, the only thing I remember was the transport. They were not zigzagging. But your escort vessels always based on a patrol pattern that they all have and it runs on a stopwatch or however, it got to be quite refined and further into the war and we had a gadget we'd put on the gyro repeater that the helmsman on the D. E. used and it would click over and automatically chart him a course to steer. I mean you didn't have to stand

there with a stopwatch and a card and then tell him what to do. So, my perception was that Escanaba must have changed course and ran right over where the torpedo was aimed and intercepted it before it could get to a transport. So, her loss was not a total loss because the chances are that if the torpedo didn't hit her, it might well have hit the transport. I don't know, hard to say. But that was my perception was that this was his last torpedo that he had expended the remainder of his whatever he was carrying, you know, say 12. Let's see four and two, six and spares, might be somewhere between nine and 12 torpedoes. This was the only one he had left, I believe that from my experience in anti-submarine warfare in later years that this transport normally would be taken out by firing what they used to call a browning spread where you would fire a minimum of three torpedoes, depending on the magnitude of the target, you know. If you were firing at a battleship or something, you'd shoot everything you had and then turn around and give them the stern torpedoes. But, in this case, I think he was out of torpedoes once he fired that one that hit the Escanaba. And then he went on home. He got out of it clean. I'm certain that somewhere in the German naval submarine force records the sinking of the Escanaba certainly appears. Yes it does, no, no, the one I'm thinking about is the Alexander Hamilton, I know beyond any doubt the number of submarine, yeah. But in the case of the Escanaba, I didn't, you know, get curious and look it up or any of that stuff. I had other things to do and quite a bit of war left to fight and you don't have all that much time. So, that was that. I really mourned the loss of those good people on that ship. They were a nice bunch of people, all of them. And I'm sorry that Mr. Prause died before we could get him out of the water. But, you do what you can, you do your best and more than that, no one man can do. As to making the decision as to who to bring out first and thereby save them, I had the feeling that I was going to get all three of em alive. That if anybody died, it would be the two that I pulled out first. But, that hyperthermia is so fast, it is unbelievable that particularly if you have suffered the trauma, the shock of a torpedo with all that topex blowing up right behind you on a ship that's only 165 feet long. I mean, that wasn't a big ship at all, it was a small ship. And when one of those babies hits you and then it is my conviction that the depth charge storage down below decks and the ammunition down below were a sympathetic explosion. In other words, when a torpedo exploded everything down there blew up, including the boiler. Almost like one explosion and then, of course, that was, she just disappeared. I mean it was like turning off a light, I guess, not that I was up there looking at it, but, in fact, the chief wasn't, Chief Forest was on watch and he was looking out ahead and checking the helm and that sort of thing and then there was this flash, you know, to starboard and he looked over there and all it was, was a cloud of steam or smoke or both and a gout of water, you know, an eruption of water in the air. That's what she wrote. He couldn't believe it. So, that's that. I'm scratching around looking for a photograph of myself. I'm doing this actually under duress, I want to be with my wife in the very short time she has left, I wouldn't expect her to live another 24 hours. But I want to get it over with. I've already cut two tapes on it and they got to be too verbose. Well, it will soon be 10 years since this, wait a minute, not 10 years, 43 from 50 years, that's older than you are, Mike. And there has been a lot happen since then, worse than the Escanaba. Yeah, alright. Okay, I'm going to turn these babies off. If I think of something, I'll rig this thing up and add to it. In the meantime, I'm going to see if I can find an 8 by 10. I got so damn much

photography and boxes, bales and barrels around here, I can't find anything. I'm a photographer myself and seems like I never throw anything away. Okay, enough for now.

Well, this is a postscript, I got to thinking over the period since I cut this about when we buried Bob Prause and it hit me that I felt bad, you know, about not being able to do some praying or something. And that indeed after Chief Gardner and Chief Forest, you know, said, well they couldn't think of anything to say. I said, well alright, Bob Prause was a fine man, a good officer and a good sailor. And may God rest his soul. And then we put him in the water. And that was the last words that was said over him. Our primary concern was getting that ship back to Boston all in one piece and with all hands aboard. And burying Mr. Prause was more or less an auxiliary, you know, and acts for duty. And we had to do it as the ship rolled in such a way that when she rolled down and the sea came up, he didn't have far to fall into the water at all. But I did say those words and I was trying to say, what a fine man we will bury in there. And that's the end of that.