

Richard Carson

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Question: The first thing is get your name, first and last, so I have that on tape.

Answer: Okay. I'm Richard Carson, known as Dick, mostly. And where I'm from or what?

Question: Now how did you get in the Service? Which -- which branch of the Service?

Answer: Oh, okay. I spent 24 years in the Navy on active duty and then the Reserve. And then I got out and I ended up by a fluke in the Air National Guard, Washington International Guard, and became their first recruiter and ended up being put on active duty with the Air Force and assigned back to the Guard, so I spent 14 years active duty with the Air Force, before I retired when I was 60. Figured I couldn't beat it with a stick, you know, just kept coming back.

Question: So when did you go into the Navy then?

Answer: 1942. April 1st, 1942. And I went in the Navy before I graduated from high school. I wasn't with my graduating class, they graduated in June, I believe. But that was right after, you know, few months after Pearl Harbor, which was on December 7th of 1941. And I remember coming home with my dad that Sunday and Mother was listening to the little old radio we had and Roosevelt was declaring war on the Japanese, and this had happened over there. And so we were just expected to go. I mean, everybody felt that way. There was no feeling about, well, no, it's not our involvement or anything else.

Question: So it wasn't even a question then.

Answer: No.

Question: It was just a --

Answer: No, everybody -- I found out later, out of our graduating class of about, I think there were about 500 in it, I don't recall, but a third of them were killed in World War II and a third of them became farmers and ranchers in the Montana area, and the -- out of the other third, there were a lot of wounded and things that had changed their thing -- that they went different directions, but we lost a good part of that graduating class. And I suspect there were other graduating classes in that time that the same thing happened. Because we were -- suddenly got involved in two different fronts and places that we never even studied when I was a kid taking civics and stuff in high school. We never even talked about these countries. Most of the teachers, I don't suspect even knew where they were. When you start talking about the Micronesian Islands and this little island and that little island, you talk about the Philippines. We'd been involved in the Philippines from way back in the 1800 -- late '80 -- but hadn't been anybody -- people there. I met one guy later on that -- that had been in one of the expeditionary forces in the Army over there. But that was very unusual, but -- cause we didn't have the newspaper coverage in those days, and the radio was just -- fairly new. They didn't have people out interviewing -- just what they got over the teletype that came in, that's the way they got the news in those days. And as a result, things had happened and people weren't bisecting and dissecting the news and everything that happened and something happened and somebody got on a radio station that was smart enough to say, well, maybe we should get somebody up there and talk to this guy. When the dam broke up in the upper -- and flooded a lot of ranch land and those things, that was a big thing because agriculture was the thing that paid all the bills in that country over there.

Question: So news was slow in coming.

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Answer: Slow in coming.

Question: So then you didn't go through your graduation then?

Answer: No, I never -- I graduated but they graduated us, all us kids that went in, but I didn't go through high school graduation, no.

Question: Boy, I didn't even think about that aspect of it, that must have been pretty heart moving for parents and stuff to go to your graduation ceremony and the kids aren't there.

Answer: Yeah, I imagine it was. I don't remember what my mother said or stuff. But they went, because somehow I got my graduation certificate, in a little -- it's in a little folder-like, a little thing that they made. So they must have gone to graduation, but by that time, when they -- I was over in Farragut. I was one of the first classes that went through Farragut, boot training. Over in Farragut. They were still building buildings all over the place and everything else when I went through over there. So, yeah, there was just -- there weren't very many people at graduation.

Question: Were you 17, 18?

Answer: I was 17. I enlisted for -- what they -- was called minority enlistment. I -- until the day -- I got out the day before I was 21. So I spent four year enlistment. And I'd always wanted to fly and so I -- when they -- when you went through, they sent me over to -- on a train, to Seattle, to I think it was Pier 91 over there where we took flight physical and I thought I had it made. And I was going out the door and the doc called me back and he says, no, I can't pass you. He says you're nose is just too broken up to -- to pass. I had had it broken playing football in high school. And in those days, unless you really needed a doctor, you -- people didn't go to the doctors. I mean, Dad probably moved it around or did something, you know, and straightened it out. I don't quite remember. And I didn't pass the physical. So I came back and enlisted in the Navy and went off for basic. And then I began to find out there's ways you can do all these things. I was always one to find out about -- cause I wanted to do lots of things. And I've done that in my life. I -- if something looked really interesting, let's check it out. Maybe that would be interesting to do. And so I had a lot of neat experience and met some wonderful people all over the world by doing that.

Question: So at this point it's an exciting adventure for you?

Answer: Yes. And it's something -- I've always tried to look back and figure out, but everybody just figured, all my friends, everybody -- it was something to do -- we had to do it. And as soon as they announced that we were going to go to war, I remember the recruiting stations were just loaded with people. And they had all kinds of people that were in their oh, 34, 35, 36 stuff, that they turned down at first, but they had more of those than they had young kids at the time. I suspect one of the reasons was that we were just coming out of the Depression, and for people nowadays, they have no idea what it's like to live through a depression. And even my thinking nowadays is tempered by what I went through because I tend to save things. I tend to set stuff so if this is going to need fixing sometime, I've got this board saved or that thing. I've got all kinds of stuff saved. My parents were that way, all the old timers were that way, everybody did -- they saved stuff. We didn't have all the things to eat that we have now days. It was pretty tough. I think that, as I said, my dad and his friend, they each put up 300 bucks they'd saved and saved and saved to go into business, and they managed -- both those guys managed -- there were five kids in my family and he had

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two or three, as I remember. And they raised a family on it and did things. They belonged to -- they went to church, they did -- they were involved in things that happened in the community because they were in business, but they were just interested. Everybody was interested in people because -- think of the time and the place, they just worked together. You could rely on people. It always amazed me, looking back, that if I became a miscreant, so to speak, when I was a kid, if you were in the neighbor's yard, they took care of it. You got your butt licked by the neighbor, or three blocks up the street, they'd take care of you because if you messed around, and your parents never heard of it. You never told them. You just -- watched your P's and -- you can't do that nowadays. And it's too bloody bad. Because of the fact that those people, as they talked, it takes to make up a village and so forth. The people made up the town. And it wasn't a big town, then, but we -- everybody worked together and knew each other up and down the street.

Question: And the war unified this even more.

Answer: And the war unified this even more. As the war came on. Because we -- the Depression was over back East but it takes awhile for it to kind of roll through the West. It seems like we're always two years behind everybody else when things happen. And so when it came about in 1941, it had never really affected anybody in the West. And the price of wheat, they were still having droughts around, and they didn't have the moisture that they wanted in the Plains States. We were -- throughout Montana, Dakotas, always winter wheat are

Answer: And they relied on snow and stuff in the wintertime to get the moisture they needed to grow the crops. And if they didn't have it, like this year, they had a terrible year. They just didn't -- and so people relied on each other. And you could trust people. If somebody said they were going to do something, it was -- that's the way it was. If you -- they didn't keep many accounts. I know when my dad started, people just -- they knew that people owed them and people would pay them, when they had the opportunity, they'd pay. The --

Question: So for a 17-year-old kid then, coming out of the Depression and going into the Navy, do you remember what you made, paycheck wise? It must have seemed like big money.

Answer: I think I started off at \$21 a month, something like that. Yeah, and certain part of it had to be sent home, cause we went in, you had to make an allotment when I -- I remember when I came back from Seattle and went down to Butte and enlisted, and then they sent me over to Farragut there, and one of the first things to do is make out an allotment to go home. Everybody did that, to my knowledge. It was just something --

Question: To your parents or --

Answer: To your parents, or to the home -- or -- or if they were married they had to make an allotment out. That was just expected of you, because, again, people took care of people. The -- there weren't a lot of government programs at that time. So you were just expected to -- if you had old people in your family, you were expected to take care of them. So as a kid, then, it's -- you just grew up with these things.

Question: Now were you an only -- only child?

Answer: No, there was five of us. I have two brothers that are still alive and a sister that lives up north here and she's a retired teacher, and she's -- and my youngest sister is dead.

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Question: So everybody's young -- are you the oldest?

Answer: I'm the oldest.

Question: So you were the representative of the family --

Answer: Yes, I was the one that got met at the door and switched with the switch if the kids got out of line because I was (laughs)

Question: -- to blame for --

Answer: I was to blame, leadership went down hill.

Question: Did -- so you finally -- at first they told you you couldn't pass the physical to become a pilot, but you finally found a way to --

Answer: Well, yeah, after I got in, then I went into aviation and I got -- I went to aviation -- AMM, Aviation Machinist Mate School down in Norman, Oklahoma, they sent me down there. And that was a real eye opener for me because University of Oklahoma was a big school at that time, there were lots of people around. And they were just starting the south base and I recall taking some classes. They bussed us up to one building at the university and we took some of the classes up at the University there before they had -- where we went through. And then there was so many people came through there, I met people who were in the entertainment business because they came through and did shows -- and then they were starting the, oh dear, what do you call it -- where they've got the artists together and they'd do overseas shows and they'd do--

Question: USO tours?

Answer: USO tours, thank you, yeah.

Question: Oh, really, so they -- you actually some of those?

Answer: Oh, yes, oh, yes. And, in fact I took part in some of them, later on, over in -- around Pearl Harbor, or in, yeah, in Barbers Point. So then you begin to meet people and so I found out that they were crying for people -- they were crying for gunners, they were crying for people to fly, cause they just -- see, when we went in, they just -- they didn't have any such thing. It was all being built from the ground up. They were trying to manufacture airplanes, and they're trying to find -- manufactured tanks, and they're trying to do ships and all this stuff. And get people, because people just weren't trained. They didn't have the schooling and the training then that they have now. So as a result, going to fly, I'll just go to gunnery school. So when I put in the thing, then I found out that there was ways to go flying. And then I had met a guy down there that was stationed at what they called the north base in Norman, Oklahoma

Answer: And they flew out of there, and they had ran training program, flight training and stuff. And --you're going to cut this tape, I hope.

Question: Yeah.

Question: All right. Well, I -- because Oklahoma was a dry state. They would fly to Texas to get liquor. And so whatever airplane was available, we'd get in it. I'd go with these guys

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cause I wanted to fly and I'd go riding. And so on the weekends and stuff, I'd go up to the -- make arrangements to go up to north end, fly down to Texas with these guys, bring back a couple cases of liquor, you know. And I got flight training this way, and then that. And so then I got to go through training at the north base as an enlisted guy, before I got show -- so I got -- they had TIMs down there. Little old low-wing airplane, it was a monocoque wood fuselage, and I remember you had to land them so carefully because the fuselage would split in the middle and you could see the ground through the -- through this fuselage, if you landed too hard, you know. And the wings break. And went from here to N3N bi-plane, and then I got to -- got to do other things. So went back to -- was sent back to a (Casju?) outfit in -- in Virginia at -- oh, dear, big Navy - - Norfolk, Virginia

Answer: We were at a place north -- outside of the little town outside -- they had a railroad station. And that was kind of neat cause they had -- they were just bringing in the SB2C's then, and they were flying this and so we got to do -- fly some of these, got time in those. And then I met a couple of guys that were flying dirigibles out of Cape May, New Jersey, and so they wanted to fly airplanes and they had been assigned to dirigibles, so we'd swap and so on the weekend, I'd go up to Cape May and fly in dirigibles, cause that was really neat because they were doing coastal work, and they were, you know, hells bells, 30 miles an hour, 35 miles an hour at the max. But they fly up the beaches and so we'd sit there with binoculars, and watch all the gals swimming on the beaches, you know, from about hundred and fifty foot up and about 400 yards off the beach out there. That was the big thing, you know, that was a come-on for the guys. And so we worked back and forth.

Question: And you were supposed to be watching for --

Answer: Submarines. Submarine patrol. They had a civil air patrol airplanes that flew out there. They had a lot -- there were a number of women that would fly out -- the little old Cessnas and the Cubs that they had and stuff. We were essentially watching for submarines, but --

Question: All you saw was torpedos -- (laughs)

Answer: (laughs)

Question: (laughs) so to speak.

Answer: Yeah, girls. They'd make the pass down the Coast, where they -- and then they'd come back and the wind was usually coming in off shore so it would blow, so instead of flying -- they'd just drift up, you know, and then they'd make a beach watch then. There's a lot of things -- that was one of the things that was interesting in the Service. And you can't really do it nowadays, although I still think the Service is an excellent way for kids to go and learn discipline and respect and some of that thing and how to live with other people. But there were so many things they were learning at the time, and there were so many activities going on, that you could do a lot of things. You could trade time, like flying in a blimp and stuff. When we had the -- in 1974, had the World's Fair here, I was -- made arrangements, cause I was working with the Guard out here, with the people, because I'd had some blimp experience, so I called and that's -- helped make arrangements to get the blimp that come up here that flew around the World's Fair site. And so I flew a number of times in it out there, we had a Geiger field, they had the mooring tower set up out there, and met two or three of the pilots and the people come in flew several nights and stuff. That was quite a -- quite a thing, that blimp here, it was here for most of the fair. It was interesting, it took them -- you get me going on all these stories. They were bringing it up from California, and so if the wind blew

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more than 30 miles an hour, they couldn't fly that day. And so they got hung up down at the Tri-Cities trying to get up here. They were -- they had wanted a certain date here and there was three days down there before the wind died enough so they could come up, fly up to Spokane.

Question: When you -- when you flew the blimps along the beach, was it -- just a -- like two person crew?

Answer: Oh, no, no, no. They had one, two, three, four. They had four crew, cause they had a pilot and they had another -- kind of a second pilot, I guess that relieved, and then they had two crew. Cause they had an engine -- somebody that was a mechanic with them cause of the two engines on the thing. And they had another guy and then they always had space for a couple of people to ride. Because they were -- they were on -- oh, Lordy, they would be gone 18, 19 hours, to, you know, on a patrol area, and you're -- they were looking through glasses all the time to check for -- and there were submarines around. We heard -- we heard them, but they -- I never was with them when they saw one of them. But they would come in closer to the Coast and go out -- they patrolled up and down there. But it was -- oh, interesting.

There was lots of stuff going on. At (Casju?), that's where we were practicing our dive bombing and a -- and a -- squadron work and so forth. I remember a story that always sticks with me. I was -- I had the duty that day. So that means I had to -- I and the guy had to score the bomb drops. They had these targets put on the beach, and they were, painted, or put out so that the center was, I don't know, it seemed like it was 20 or 25 feet. Then there was another ring and then there was another ring out about a hundred feet. And so while the squadron was climbing, getting to altitude, getting up to 12,000 or 25,000, it depended on what the thing was to come in to dive bomb the target, then we'd mess around. Fly around and just look at things and do people, and we had some hairy experiences. Young kids doing dumb things. You'd get down and buzz over the tree tops and over the tree tops, sit it down, here's a house right here. A big house. And they were re sitting down to Sunday dinner. And I remember looking in this big window -- window seemed as big as that wall there. And here's all these people around -- and here comes this airplane. I can just see them. Well now, here comes this airplane, over the tree -- whoops, what's a house doing there. And we're starting to -- and people are bailing out of that dining room and going every which way. (laughs) Oh, dear.

Question: So which beach is it that you put your target on? Was that off of Norfolk or --

Answer: Out of Norfolk, up on -- there were not near the houses on it then. There was all kinds of desolate areas along the beaches. And there were a few houses out there. We had a bomb hang up one time and -- on the fork. Comes down and it's in there and so this 500 pound bomb will clear the prop. And it's safety-wired. Well, one of the safety wires -- they're both supposed to pull loose when the bomb drops and the -- and the little cone in the front spins to arm the thing. And so one wire hung up. So the bomb's hanging there, we couldn't get rid of it. And we were -- they didn't have that much explosive in them but they did have about, oh I don't know, 25 pounds of explosive or something. Enough to mark, you know. All right. So what to do. And they said -- we called in -- go out, fly out, go up to 5000 feet and fly out and you'll bail and then we'll have somebody there to pick you up and all this thing. So okay, we come back and I was flying very carefully and -- it was kind of bouncy that day, and we were at about, oh I was about a thousand, 1100 feet when -- or 1500 feet, whatever, didn't go -- and so I was turning. And so out we go, we're going to go out and I turned and then all of a sudden, the airplane jumped in the air like somebody's (inaudible) the bomb fell loose. And the kid that's riding in the back seat looked back and he said, man, that's going to hit -- oh, my God. And hit a cabin, a house down there, and just blew it all to

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pieces. And -- and I looked back quickly, I could just still see boards, looked like they were coming up the height of the airplane, you know. And so we had to report the thing, and we were very -- we didn't know what the hell, cause, you know, we were trying to do what we were told, but things happen. And I don't know whatever happened. I remember that that -- the last I heard, that old shack had become very expensive to the Navy. (laughs)

Question: Friendly fire.

Answer: Friendly fire. There was nobody in it, thank God, but it just one of those things that happened.

Question: So you actually were dropping live -- I mean they were less charge, but live bombs.

Answer: Yeah, cause we dropped -- we practiced with 25 pound bombs, small ones, cause they -- they didn't have -- the country didn't have the wherewithal at that time to let you use real big live ammunition, cause that was always having to go overseas or someplace to the -- but we practiced with the smaller stuff.

Question: Wow. That's one of the things you forget about is that -- there was --

Answer: Yeah.

Question: -- all this training going on, and which must have been, I mean if you lived in the Norfolk area, you had to --

Answer: Oh, yeah, cause it was growing like mad. And the -- and the base where the ships were was growing like mad. And they were building ships, and they had all up that river they had this kind of a base and that kind of a base for -- they were beginning to put things together to assault the beaches with you know, and train people to do that. And gosh, there was so much going on it's hard to remember.

Question: So at this time, you know, you're still a 17- 18 year-old kid, kind of having fun.

Answer: Yeah, yeah.

Question: It's pretty exciting stuff.

Answer: Well, yeah, and you were young. And I hadn't experienced all the experiences of life, you know, like the kids that lived on the Coast and stuff. They had some of these places to go to for -- with disco places, you call them nowadays. We didn't have any of that when I was a kid growing up there in Montana

Answer: They -- and so it was kind of neat. Cause when I got back to the New York area back there, got to go to Radio City Music Hall. And I saw Frank Sinatra on his very first program when he was just a young guy, come out and sing, you know. We -- and I had a good time. I got there and I called up all the Carsons in the phone book in New York -- and I don't remember. There weren't very many at that time. To see if I was related to anybody. Cause my folks had never really talked much, and my granddad and grandmother had done this and my granddad on the other side was a builder. Was a property agent for Jim Hill and he bought property all for the Great Northern, all the way from Minnesota out through Montana

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Answer: That's how we got to Montana

Answer: And so these are just family things that they'd just kind of mentioned in passing. That it would -- and so I was really interested, and by that time, getting interested in where I'd come from, because my grandmother had -- I knew she'd been -- they'd been in Appalachia and they'd been down at Arkansas and they'd come from Nova Scotia down from Scotland and some of these places. So I called up people on the phone, and I got invited to dinner. I think I was there four days and I -- I got out to dinner a number of times, five or six times, got invited to peoples' houses. And they were just as open, they were friendly, you know, find out, here was a Carson from way out in the wild West, you know, and what was Montana like and what was it like. And they had heard these stories and here I was in New York and it was a hell of a big outfit, boy.

Question: Now did you travel in uniform most of the time --

Answer: Oh, yeah, we had to travel in uniform. At that time, yeah.

Question: And I assume that the respect that you got was --

Answer: Yep, yep. They -- you got respect from the cop on the beat if you stopped to ask him questions, he was very respectful. And they didn't kick you around then, there's was lots -- all kinds of servicemen around. All kinds of foreign servicemen around. Met Englishmen and Frenchmen that were around. And so it was a real eye opener, what was going on in the rest of the world. Because you were meeting people who were just like you. Had come out -- had come from a family affair, a small business and a small town or something. And had like experience. They'd gone to school or did this and so it was kind of fun. They were having trouble learning to speak English, and we were picking up all kinds of foreign words that you don't -- didn't want to use at other play times, you know. The kind of language you learn the first and the fastest (laughs).

Question: So when did life change from being this happy-go-lucky --

Answer: Well, when we got -- when I went aboard the Ticonderoga -- that was the aircraft carrier we were assigned to. And then we went through the Canal and that was an experience, taking that great big boat through the Panama Canal. And all the things they had to take off it to do it, and then we got out and went to -- it was always amazing to me. We loaded people and other air -- Army Air Corps groups and other Navy squadrons onto the carrier, we were used as a transport from San Diego all the way to Pearl Harbor. And we -- I never forget -- they took this Army group with P-40's on board and they had -- they slung the airplanes and put them on. And these guys had all been outfitted for the South Pacific. They had on the short pants and the socks that rolled up and all this stuff. And we got to Hawaii and that's when the Japs attacked Dutch Harbor up there, and here these guys were, outfitted for the South Pacific, and they got shifted to Alaska

Answer: From there up, something picked them up. And I never did find out, really, what happened, but I always felt sorry for those guys -- they were going off to Guadalcanal and some of those places and went up there.

And then you begin to meet people. We went to Barbers Point. I mean, we flew into there and then while the ship was loading off the stuff and -- excuse me, we didn't fly into there. We went there for some training. And so forth. Cause they unloaded airplanes off the carrier with cranes and all that, cause we were just chuck-a-block full. And then you begin to meet people that had experienced being in combat. Because of the hospitals that were there -- the big Navy hospital and the big Army hospital at Hawaii. And you'd meet people and they had

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all these ships that were under emergency repairs there and various things that had been. And that's when I began to realize that things were going to be different. They gave us briefings and they tried to tell us what the scoop was. And then it wasn't very long and we had our assignment, and off we went to do our thing. And since I was -- and I had been -- and I had become rated enlisted pilot. And at that time it was interesting to me looking back, cause I -- like kids -- a lot of them -- a lot of them did. After we came back out of the Service, then we went to college. I would never have been able to go to college if it hadn't been for the GI bill. Because, parents coming through the depression and all that, just were not able to save money and only the fortunate few were able to go to college in those days. And as a result, the government, with its program, I was able to go to college. So that -- that made it neat. And so when I went to college then, I had an opportunity to be commissioned and took tests and was commissioned. And I had had a chance while I was in the Service to -- I wanted to go to the Naval Academy. And I took all the tests and got put on the list. And so the way it was then, they had -- you had three -- one, two, three people from each Naval district were on the list. And so you worked your way up to number one, and then when they -- cause they took so many enlisted people, they still do, into the Naval Academy, and they take so many appointees by political people, and there's so many that get to go because their -- their fathers, or something like that, were award winners like, oh, the top award -- Congressional Medal of Honor winners and stuff like that. They're people that get to go to the Academy. So about a third of the class is made up of people -- people from the Service. So you get on the list, and then I get transferred Naval District. So then I go back to the bottom of the list and then I got transferred Naval District. So I never made it to the Academy but I was always on the list. (laughs)

Question: What was it like, being on the Ticonderoga

Answer:

Answer: The Ticonderoga?

Question: I mean that must have been --

Answer: It was a -- the biggest carrier -- one of the biggest carriers at the time. They were, what, 27,000 ton or something, I forget right now. It was -- she was CV-14. There were a lot of people. Their normal crew was about 3000 people but in wartime they had a lot more people on board. When she got hit we lost a lot of people on it.

Question: Oh, you were on it when it got hit?

Answer: Yeah, and the -- cause they had all kinds of people, you know. Photographers mates and they had all kinds of cooks and they had all kinds of yeoman. They had all kinds of mechanics of various type to -- to repair airplanes, and to fix this and to fix that and so forth. Because they carried -- they carried big squadrons. They had a fighter squadron, a torpedo squadron, and then a dive bomber squadron on board. And then -- and there were -- I've forgotten right now. Seemed like there were 18 fighters and there were something like 12 torpedo airplanes, and probably 18 dive bombers.

Question: So it's a city?

Answer: Oh, it's a huge, humongous city, yeah.

Question: When you -- you wouldn't even see everybody --

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Answer: No, no, you never did. Cause you stayed in your own compartment. They didn't really want you wandering around on the ship because you never knew when you had to go to General Quarters or something happened and so you -- you had your own area and you kind of stayed in it, or you -- they had a library on board you could go to. But if you weren't busy, you could stay up on -- out of the way, on the flight deck and so forth.

Question: Where was your area?

Answer: Well I was at flight quarters and then with the aircraft crews and this type thing. They had their own area on board the ship.

Question: Flight quarters is up --

Answer: Well, yeah, they -- the ready rooms are right under the flight deck. They had them -- different places on the ship. And then the pilots had their ready room and the enlisted had their ready room, like the gunners and the torpedo men and stuff. And the -- the pilots would go up and they went through their radio and they would -- they got their designation of targets and they got the information that they had to have for radio calls and all this stuff. And so did the enlisted people. They -- they've got -- cause they all had separate jobs to do. And they reminded you of safety practices and safety things in case you got hit or in case you had to do this or in case you had to do that. This type of thing. And what to look -- because the -- enlisted guys -- the rear-seater, and the -- like in the dive bomber, I'm sure he had -- he was back there with a couple of twin 30's and he was supposed to look -- but he had other things he had to do. Because he was -- had radio business and had things -- he had to observe -- because you'd never know, when you got out there, you'd see ships on the surface. And you may have gotten a briefing that said this and that and the other thing, but when you got out there, it wasn't like this, that and the other thing. There was something else. And they had to repeat.

I know later on when I was involved in intelligence, the -- after -- when Korea was on, one of the fascinating things to me was when they found out that the north -- that the Chinese were involved in Korea, is two young pilots came back from a run, and they talked about seeing these two hump camels when they were at the debriefing. And they just thought they were nuttier than heck. What do you mean, two hump camel? Well, they were hauling this stuff up over this pass and we flew over. We flew over, we flew around and went and looked and they shot at us and we got -- and that's when they -- found out -- their first physical evidence, that the Chicoms were involved in Kore

Answer:

Question: Boy, if they hadn't have reported that --

Answer: If they hadn't have reported that, they would not have -- and so this is one of the things they -- they talked about, because you got intelligence briefings. What was supposed to happen here and keep your eyes open for here.

Question: So which plane did you end up flying in?

Answer: I was in SB2C's -- dive bomber.

Question: And that's a two-person --

Answer: Yeah, yeah. It's -- was a big old pig of an airplane, oh, excuse me, I'm not supposed to say that. But we were fill-ins. When people got -- people got shot or killed or

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something, you know, and -- because the Navy believed that in order to be an officer -- in order to fly, you had to be an officer and a gentleman. See, I have a commission from the Navy that says I'm an officer and a gentleman. That goes back to Revolutionary Wars. They don't do that any more.

Question: Oh, really.

Answer: No. You're just become an officer. So I don't know when they left -- forget off being a gentleman. But I remember, back there, oh, see, this, I guess, was in '48, I got commissioned. And when I went to school, the -- at the University of Montana, things were still coming out of the war. They were still -- and we -- you got to understand that we had never been involved like this before. World War I was a different kind of a deal. And airplanes were just coming in, and they had a certain kind of people they were looking for to fly them. They didn't go with a mass recruiting thing all over the bloody country and say we want you for Uncle Sam's Navy or for this and stuff. So people were not cognizant of the -- of the -- all the problems and the things. And the military still operated from the days of the Revolutionary War, through. There was lots of things that they -- the military was run by "good old boys" -- just like people had gotten involved in the government and then you had a job and you stayed with it. And you stayed with it for -- and it's not like that anymore, and I feel sorry for some of these kids that they -- they go to school now and they may have eight or ten different jobs in their lifetime, you know. Cause they have to in order -- but in those days, people expected to go to work for a company and they were going to work for it for their entire life. The motor companies, the -- the -- all the agricultural type of companies. Farming and this type of thing. That's -- that's what you could expect. Because that's what had come through. And then World War II changed all that. One of the things, I think, because all these kids were allowed to go outside of their country, sent to foreign countries, and see how other people lived. And found out that they were a pretty select group here in the United States compared to what the Philippines were, or those people in the Micronesian Islands or down at -- New Zealand or Australia or some of those places. They just had no concept. And most of the people over here had no concept of what it was like to live outside the country. Well, even the fact, that you lived, like in Montana where you did. We had no concept of what was happening in Washington. Seattle was like a foreign country. New York was like a foreign country. People didn't travel, they didn't have the money. And a very few that did, they were kind of select people. They were -- kind of the haves, and there was 98% of the have-nots out there. But it's not like that anymore because there's all kind of opportunities out there for people.

Question: So World War II opened up --

Answer: Oh, absolutely.

Question: I mean it's interesting because there's kind of this -- I mean, there's the bad and the good and from war -- I mean there's a travesty of war --

Answer: Right, right.

Question: -- but there were all these things. I mean, you talked about the GI Bill, you talked about opening up a whole new world for you --

Answer: That's --

Question: -- geography lesson you probably had --

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Answer: Right. And sending the -- for example, my first look at a college was the University of Oklahoma at Norman. Tremendous place. What did they teach? They were in -- their big classes were in oil -- petrochemicals and so forth. I'd never heard of petrochemicals. Never met anybody who was a petrochemical engineer. And here were kids going to school. So it opened your eyes up. We stayed until I got -- until the barracks -- we were housed with civilian people down there. And I stayed with a neat family. I became so enamored with those two girls in that family -- their father was a cotton grower, worked for the Oklahoma Cotton Grower's Association. And these two gals -- one gal was Miss Oklahoma, and her sister was younger, and they were a church going family. Well, I'd come -- my family had been church going up there, but I didn't think much about it when I got in the Service. Well I got down there and they expected me to go to church with them. And this was a whole -- cause I went to a different church. I'd been born and raised in the Presbyterian Church up there, and got down there, it was a whole different thing. And it was -- it was an eye -- it was an education that gave you an opportunity to evaluate people, to see people and find out how they were. He was the neatest guy. My dad sent me down my shotgun so I could go bird hunting with him down there and it was just neat.

Question: So when did you -- when did you see your first action then? You were sent South Pacific, right?

Answer: Yeah, we went South Pacific, yeah. And we -- when we got attacked by some Japanese air -- we had a Kamikaze hit the carrier. And did some extensive damage. Went into the -- dropped the bomb, and then went into the after hanger, elevator on the thing. And they were -- we were refueling the airplanes and we had -- on the second deck down we had the bomb trailers all hung out and rockets on them and all that stuff. And so stuff went.. start setting this stuff off, and it was -- whipping down the deck, just knee high, these rockets that we had, and it caused a great deal -- and then the fire, great deal of havoc and so forth. We lost a lot of people on board that carrier.

Question: So that was your first --

Answer: Yeah, yeah.

Question: So you didn't -- cause I mean, a lot of people kind of gradually got introduced to it. I mean, you're on this fireworks thing --

Answer: Yeah, we were in a group and we were out looking for -- we'd been working over Japanese convoys. They were going down -- the Japanese had extended themselves clean down into -- into China and Borneo and they had bases and stuff all over. They'd been building up since way back in the '30's, and nobody here -- there were a few voices that tried to tell, but nobody here really realized, until we got involved, that they had all these little air bases and all these little Naval bases and stuff, strung out all down through there. And that's what made it so tough. Because they had been there and had established bases, and so they had some roots there. And we didn't have a thing. And so we were trying to go in and -- and they had this whole string of supply. So it was hard to penetrate it. So they were after our oil tankers that were refueling the fleet, and they were after supply ships and -- and we had all this stuff going out there. And so we were after convoys to -- of the supply ships and so forth.

Question: So was it daytime or night time?

Answer: It was daytime when we -- yeah. But they -- they didn't do, to my knowledge now, they didn't do a lot of night time operations, because -- not like they'd fly off the carriers and stuff. And there was no -- we had no way of landing on a carrier at night then. Because

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we depended on a landing signal officer in the back with his flags to get you on. Now they got a ball system and you can fly right down and it flies just like the Vasey lamps at airport and this type of thing. So most of it was -- we would take off -- we could be up like 3:30 in the morning, and then we'd be taking -- as soon as it was daylight maybe, 5:30, 6:00 o'clock, whatever, you could take off at daylight, do your things. And the range was, oh, 400 miles at the most, maybe 450, sometime, cause you didn't have that -- they didn't carry that much fuel in those days to go. And they were -- they were still learning. Cause Lindbergh was the one that showed them how, when he was down at Guadalcanal down there, showed the Army how to conserve and set the throttles on the engine and stuff to control fuel. But they were just learning all this stuff. Because -- you got to understand that we had never been a technological country before that. And here we were suddenly thrown in with all of these things. You had to have all kinds of engine experts, you had to have metal experts, you had to have -- they didn't know much about plastics in those days. Bakelite had just been invented somewhat before, as I recall. So we didn't have a lot of things of plastic -- they were all made of metal. All the -- pipe tobacco came in metal cans. It was not in paper products or anything like that. So the whole technology was changing and trying to keep up with this, some people, had -- at the various universities, had studied some of this, and they became experts and the military and the government used them to go out and teach all these people, all over. And they were trying to teach people -- other people this, so they could go out and clue the people in.

Our mores were really interesting. I remember when they took over some of these South Pacific islands, the natives down there all used to run right -- just had loin cloth on or something, and the women run around, they were bare breasted and stuff. This is a mark of beauty, and then that's why they did it. And we got down there and our chaplains decided that, hey, we can't have all these bare-breasted people running around out here. We issue them T-shirts. So they got to scrounge around and get all these T-shirts for people to wear. And it wasn't very long, couple of days, and the T-shirts are cut out, (gestures) and their breasts wee hanging out of them. Because that was a whole different thing. We weren't used to thinking that way. We didn't look -- we were a hide bound community up here that -- that came from the old days, the religious days and stuff. And stuff was going on around -- we had no bloody idea

Answer: And that was just one of the things that changed.

Then later on after I got put ashore at Barbers Point, one of the things that I -- the job I was given was to run the outdoor theatre and the indoor theatre. And the outdoor theatre, well the indoor theatre was used for -- because they didn't have a chapel on base, it became the chapel. So starting on Thursday night, I had a crew of four or five -- we had to set it up for this kind of Protestant service, or Jewish service, or this and do this and so all the way through Sunday, it was various services. And I met all kinds of wonderful people, from various religions and what they practice, and it was a real eye-opener for me. Then with the outdoor theatre, it had all these programs that came in. I met Bill Cosby and his band were there, and --- who was the guy who took over Bing -- not Bing --

Question: Bing Crosby --

Answer: Bing Crosby --

Question: Yeah.

Answer: The -- but no, the Glenn Miller -- the Glenn Miller Orchestra, Tex Benicke, so we had all kinds of people. And I met lots of people and had lots of friends -- and the USO shows came through there and the gals came through and we had it fixed up and it was real fun for me because these people didn't have nothing to do when the show wasn't on. So

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they'd sit around and they liked to play poker back there. And here's these Hollywood movies stars and stuff, and they're back there, and I sit in and playing penny-ante poker or playing bridge you know, and stuff. The -- cause it was really interesting. And I was fortunate in that when I got to Hawaii, my mother had an uncle that worked for the Honolulu Star Bulletin, and he had married a gal. She was one of the bishops -- the original -- from the original missionary family. And they had a really neat house on -- up on Haleahi Drive, up above Punaho school and you could look down there. And I loved to go there when I could on the weekends cause they had had -- they had a sailing boat, it was a double -- what they call a Norwegian double-ender, at both ends. It was about a 45 foot. And of course then I was a bloody hero because I had a way of getting away from Pearl Harbor on weekends and stuff. And because of my connections in the Navy we could get some fuel to run it and do this type, you know how it goes. (laughs) So we'd go out and I always had -- I had everybody from admirals all the way down, wanting to go out with me on a weekend just to get away, you know. So once in awhile we could do that. You couldn't do it all the time cause there were -- and it was neat. And they lived up there. And the thing that really came home to me was that he -- they had this Japanese couple working for them. And he -- I'd met him, I didn't know him that well but I'd seen him eight or nine, ten times. Then I went there once and -- and he was gone and she was gone. And I asked my uncle what, well the FBI had picked them up. Well what had happened, he didn't know it. This guy had been reporting since before the war, he had a little radio set up in the attic of my uncle's house and he'd go up there and he was telling -- he was reporting things to the Japanese through the radio system. And even before Pearl Harbor, they were doing this. My aunt, his wife, taught at the -- taught art and some other things at the University of Hawaii. She was really an artist and they toured the world and she did pictures. And then he had worked for a long time for the Honolulu Star Bulletin, then he was -- I believe at that time he was purchasing agent so he was working at Department of -- University of Hawaii. And they knew a lot of people. But it was really fascinating to me that I actually knew a spy. And met -- and he looked just like you and I only -- except he was Japanese. And he was smaller and so forth, you know. But -- and that's what he did. And my uncle never knew that this little radio thing was operating up in the attic of -- of his house there.

Question: The FBI came out and got them --

Answer: They found, through tracing and so forth -- how.

Question: Wow.

Answer: But that was interesting to me because there -- the governor of Hawaii lived up there. And that's when I began to get more history of what the bishops had done to Hawaii and how they had taken over and -- and usurped property and stuff in there, you know, good Protestant missionaries doing this type of thing. So it was quite an education for this little kid from Montana

Answer:

Question: So where did your tour go then? What -- what areas did you see when you were out?

Answer: Oh, we'd -- we're with the, oh, dear, I forgot the carrier that got hit -- started with a big "E". I'm drawing a mental blank right now.

Question: That's okay.

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Answer: But, oh we got off the Philippines. I was involved in the -- what really amazed me -- and MacArthur, all the time he was on the Philippines, before the war, they never took any pictures of the place to speak of. So here they are, they got kicked off by the Japanese and they're going to have a landing and go back and take back the Philippines, and they had no idea about the beaches there or anything else. So we got involved in photographing the beaches, fly in at certain altitude and they had cameras that took pictures and this type thing. How they -- water was running in, you know, and the wave action and stuff. It just amazed me, the things we ran into out there that nobody had given a darn about before. And so when -- when Korea came -- before Korea ever came about, they had people from the Navy over there taking pictures in Saigon and stuff, because they were developing information sheets so if a pilot got shot down, when he was briefed, here, to go see this person here was some money. You always carried -- after World War -- well, maybe even during World War II, certain places they went, they gave them things. But after that, they began to put maps in -- in the coats -- in the back of your jacket or are

Answer: They had -- if you were sent out on missions like in Korea and stuff, you'd have money so if you were shot down in there, you had some stuff.

Question: So they didn't have any of these maps --

Answer: No, no. Now they got books on board the carrier so that the briefing officer and the intelligence officer, if they're sent -- let's say for example, they may be off to the Gulf to take over and operate in the Gulf. When something happens down on the horn of Africa, and that carrier task force is diverted down there and they going to send airplanes in to do something, the carrier's got a book of that country and all the people and everything else in it. I helped develop this over later years, and in the intelligence -- but they -- they didn't know these things, then. And this is all what's come about since then. And the fields are so broad. For example, when I went to forestry school, there were five degrees in '46, '47, '48, -- what the -- they got 15 or better now. And other fields are exactly the same way. When I went to forestry school, they had no idea about recreation in the forest. Hells bells, no, that was the farthest thing from their mind. They were selling property and trying, people wanted to build cabins and they were trying to do all this stuff and everything. Now it's completely different. And they've got technical fields now that they never even thought of, and electronic, micro, macro electronics. Holy smokes.

Question: So it sounds like your view of World War II, we were kind of inventing things as we went along.

Answer: Yep, yep.

Question: We were making it up as --

Answer: We were making it up as we went. In a lot of areas. Probably the biggest thing for the kids, though, the young kids, was getting away from home, seeing that there was another world out there, that all the things that they had been taught and done when they were kids, sustained them out there if they followed their -- the precepts that their parents had talked about and so forth, that they were going to get along all right. Because most of the kids in those days and age were more self-sufficient than a lot of the kids are today, because of that family ties and the backgrounds that they had, that they went through. So you were able to take care of yourself. I don't know how -- exactly how it is now, but I know then that most of the kids went to church on Sunday in the Service. They just went because they'd been doing it when they were home.

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Question: Now are you one of those kids that left a young boy and grew up in the Service? I mean was that --

Answer: I grew up in the Service, yes. I was a young innocent flat-lander, as I call it. But you got with the others and you -- and I saw right away that you had to study when you were in there. If you wanted to do something, the opportunity was there, but you had to prepare yourself for it. Learning math to navigate. Learning to read English and but learning to understand foreign languages and when people talk to you, what they meant. By actually looking at them and seeing what they were trying to converse to you by the look on their face and their hands and -- it was a real learning experience. And I've always felt, probably the best, I look back and I think -- all my kids went through it because I believed in it. They were part of the military, they belong to -- were on active duty or belong to the Guard. Because it - - the responsibility and learning to work as a team and trust somebody else because they've got knowledge and you've got knowledge, between the two, you can accomplish this thing.

Question: When you flew, did you always fly as the same team?

Answer: Yes, yeah, generally, generally.

Question: You and another?

Answer: Yeah, yeah. On the airplane you always had the -- unless somebody was sick or something happened or they got transferred or something -- but you operate for a certain time and then you came back and then there were -- they changed off as you lost equipment or crews because of action or -- or - we lost as many people because of mechanical problems and so forth, you know, as you did of getting shot at or something.

Question: Like you said, they're just inventing a lot of this technology you're using.

Answer: Yeah. So you really learn that you were -- had to rely on yourself. So if you had to do a walk around on an airplane, you really looked for stuff. Just because somebody else was assigned to keep that airplane up and stuff, the guy that was the -- in charge of that airplane might have been really concerned because he had an engine change or he had to do something -- there were other things in the airplane that he just couldn't get to. And your job -- you walked around to make sure that you didn't have a broken bolt in the elevator or something didn't happen. And so you really learned to do that. And you had to learn to rely on yourself, but you had to learn to rely on other people. So you had to have a lot of knowledge. You just had to acquire knowledge. You just couldn't have a narrow field. And that's probably the biggest thing that I learned.

Question: And the amazing thing is that you guys are just young kids.

Answer: Well, yeah, I got out the day before I was 21. It was all -- the biggest majority of people I met were 18 years old, Seventeen, 18, 19 years old.

Question: Now did you bring all your planes back, or did you -- did you have to put one in the drink?

Answer: Yeah, we -- we lost a number in the drink, yes.

Question: I mean, ones that you were in or --

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Answer: Well, I had the unfortunate experience of having to put one in because we had some problems and we lost an elevator and got picked up by a destroyer. And I found out that I was just as happy to be a carrier man than a destroyer man because I was tall and lanky and the hatches on that dang destroyer -- the bottom of the hatch was about, oh, I don't know, 15 inches off the deck and the top was only about five -- and you had to stick your foot through and duck at the same time and it took me several days to learn to do that. I was sure banged up here and here. Yeah, I found out that --

Question: I've got to switch tapes here.