

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** It's amazing nowadays how much has changed.

**Answer:** I guess I'm moving around too much here.

**Question:** No, you're fine, you're fine. I have a monitor so every so often you see me acting kind of funny, I'm sliding it back and forth and do all that. So you -- the plane that you lost was because of a malfunction?

**Answer:** Yeah, that -- it had been hit with some anti-aircraft fire, didn't know it at the time. And so we lost an elevator. So anyhow we got -- so we were on the -- picked up by this destroyer. Cause the carrier operator had two destroyers out in front and two in the back. So far back that they were -- they were the guards for submarines and stuff and then one of them was assigned, if we lost -- because we were -- you'd lose airplanes when they were taking off of the bow. They'd lose power or something, it would go into the water and crash, or they couldn't make the fan tail because of -- they were injured or shot and they were just barely making it. So they'd set it in the water and so they'd be picked up. But I found out exactly what I'm worth in this life and that though. I'm worth 50 gallons of ice cream. That's what they -- that's what the destroyer charged the carrier to put me back aboard. Because the carrier's the only ones that had gedunk stands? That had ice cream and candy and stuff. You could go down there and have a -- have a Coke or -- in those days, they -- the other ships didn't have it. So they depended a lot on these -- on the supply ships or the carriers. And so the carrier could make ice cream and so they'd -- it was ransom, if they got ahold of a crewman, it was ransom. And that's what you're worth.

**Question:** How did they transfer you.

**Answer:** On a breeches buoy, and if you'd been kind of snotty when you're on board, they always managed to dip your butt in the water as they pulled you to the -- otherwise the two ships had to -- especially the little ship, when they had the lines strung, had to maintain tension on those lines. So that they could haul you up. And you sat in a -- in a seat -- and it was a pulley, it was called at breeches buoy, and they wheeled you up and took you in up there and there was somebody running the line. But they could always manage -- the skipper of the D -- could sink you just enough to dip you in the water. And they loved to do that if they caught -- oh, especially lieutenants or lieutenant commanders or somebody -- dip their butt in the water when they sent them back aboard. (laughs)

**Question:** Instead of pulling you out of the water, did they -- was it where they dragged a net and you'd grab on the net to --

**Answer:** No, we were in a little life raft and they just pulled us up alongside and took us up.

**Question:** So when you were going down you knew you were taking your plane down --

**Answer:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. The kid in the back seat, he already had the raft loose. The raft was in the back, and he sat here, the twin 30's were behind him, and the life raft was up here and they had some other stuff over here and then they had a handle on it they could pull. And the clamps, you know, opened up and the raft came out. And took the -- as I went, I blew a tire taking off and we went over the side into the thing and I was trying to figure out what was going on and this -- the kid was -- my gunner was beating me on the head. Here was the raft floating on -- he was trying to get me out. And I guess I'd hit my head and so forth and I was -- because we went off and then down in the water.

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** Yeah, I see what happens.

**Answer:** Oh, yeah, bingo, I mean, you know. 'Cause they put you on a catapult, and they -- and the ship is going about 30 knots to get (inaudible) (gestures) and that way they can fire you and get you up to about 90 miles an hour by the time, and so that plus the -- the speed of the ship just puts you over the hundred mile, the take off thing. And of course you're going out loaded, full tank, and so there is some sink as you come out. And if you don't have full power, then you don't want to make it. I forget what -- it was about 80 feet to the water from the flight deck. And they went off and you had various ways to do things-- depending on how you were briefed, and what -- you took off and flew around then you formed up in your fore group and then flew by the carrier and went off and formed up.

**Question:** What were your -- when you were up flying, usually, what was your duty? What -- were you guys out looking at other ships or islands or --

**Answer:** No, it depended on what you were sent out to do. If you were sent out to look for ships because there were ships out there, freighters or supply ships or whatever you're looking for. Junks, they had lots of small boats that they were using to ferry stuff around. And they didn't realize this was going on for awhile and so they let those go by. And pretty soon they realized that they were going to have to -- have to go off after the small stuff on the water. And you had -- then you may have gone out on -- most of the time you went out on a search pattern. And you were just -- you were looking for whatever was down there. So you flew at a certain altitude and a certain speed, and went so far. Did a turn and went so far and did a turn, it was all timed, so you covered a search area. And you had to -- the airplanes were searching all the quadrants around the carrier. You'd be out there, there might be some -- you might be out a hundred miles, some of them, 300 miles out. Doing -- doing search for -- looking for -- because they may have had reports from a submarine or from another boat or from -- the Aussies had a lot of coast watchers on those islands. And they would report activities. And that would go through the thing and get back. And so they'd -- they didn't have the intelligence system that they have nowadays. They relied on what people saw, mostly. And just -- just bloody amazes you that the -- to look back, after what's happened in the last 50 years. I envy these kids that are in pre-kindergarten almost, that can run computers and so forth. They -- they can do that better than they can write.

**Question:** So you had -- I mean you had eye witness accounts, and you guys kind of had to put these --

**Answer:** They always debriefed you afterwards. You went in and you were debriefed and asked what you saw and what you did, time and this type of thing. And then they took all these reports and the debrief, put them together, and then they made a report up for the air op -- the person that was in charge of intelligence who then reported to the admiral in charge of the -- whatever group you were in. And then this stuff was fed together, and they decided -- he decided then where ships were going to go, what they're going to do with us. Or if it was other kind of intelligence, then that went on to somebody else via radio or something, so that they could -- particularly if you're over islands and stuff and you'd see -- you kept your eyes open for various kinds of cars and trucks and stuff. To see what they were. This is particularly true in Korea. We'd run the Peter-Peter planes and the photographic planes and then they went in with the -- at the start, they had no armor or anything. They just had cameras. And we'd send them in to take pictures, cause we were interested in what was on the roads. You could see -- the photos would come back and there'd be -- you'd look at them through stereoscopic equipment so you could see whether that way what kind of an

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

ox cart that was or what kind of a truck that was. And you could measure them and then certain measurements was a certain kind of truck or something was something else.

**Question:** Wow.

**Answer:** And then you're looking for tracks, going down the road, going off just into the -- when they ended in the woods, why you know that there was a truck trying -- so then you were looking for camouflage then there and this kind of thing. To see where the Chicoms were, or the North Koreans.

**Question:** So when you flew out off the carrier then a lot of times, even in World War II, you weren't out to destroy --

**Answer:** No --

**Question:** -- you were out to --

**Answer:** Look. Mostly look. You're always looking to see what's going on, where the enemy was. Many, many hours of just flying around out there and nothing happening. And if something did, it was usually unusual.

**Question:** How long of a -- how long was a mission that you would --

**Answer:** Oh, probably two and a half hours, at the most.

**Question:** So that's got to be -- that seems like the first time you launch off one of those --

**Answer:** Well, you practice --

**Question:** -- must be a --

**Answer:** Yeah, but you practice on the shore. They have regular places, that, and you learned to land. They had landing fields with cables strung out, you learned to land there and you learned to take off. They didn't have any catapults until I went aboard -- the first thing was I was catapulted on a carrier. Now, then, afterwards, then they learned, they -- they had catapults on the ground so you could learn this and you could get catapulted and stuff. And they had all kinds of ways of doing things. But they had to teach people in a hurry. Take these kids out of -- teach them to fly, and then teach them to be sailors.

**Question:** Now did you have one time that -- when you left your carrier and you couldn't get back to it? Did I hear right on that?

**Answer:** Well, yeah, they -- you landed at -- we were doing work in (laughs). When I was at (Casju?) outfit, we were on the East Coast at -- we were working with a jeep carrier and then (inaudible) and so forth. And it got sunk. And they -- we -- British helped us out so we could get refueled and come back and stuff. And it was -- they had submarines out in the North Atlantic. They -- but that was another thing they had to develop was that the -- all these jeep carriers, because they -- they didn't have enough big aircraft carriers and that was the only way they could get across the water was with aircraft 'cause they didn't have any airfields to go to at that time like they do now. And so they developed these old freighters,

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

put decks on them and that's where Henry Kaiser made his fortune and stuff. He developed -- he built them from the ground up -- jeep carriers, and then they -- they used them. They couldn't use them with regular airplanes, they had the little fighters, the F-3 Wildcats and then they had some torpedo -- they had torpedo bombers, TBFs. And then they developed those and they became just places -- carriers that hauled airplanes all over and this type of thing. As they got along, 'cause they were inventing all this stuff as they went along. They just had no idea that. So it was fascinating for me, especially looking back for that kind of an education. 'Cause then I came back and realized that if I wanted to do things, I had to get -- just go do it. Go to school and do it, you know.

**Question:** Get trained in something.

**Answer:** Keep -- keep track of people because people were -- were a real asset to you because you'd meet them all over, and, the result of being in the Service, have an opportunity to be all kinds of places in the world and go places.

**Question:** Is there a lot of it you want to forget? Or do you forget? I mean do --

**Answer:** Yeah, you -- you -- yeah, there's things that you -- you don't remember. Like I've said some things here today that I -- I did recall things but I'm just not real excited about talking about it. Particularly if you were really involved with somebody, like a really good friend. And you liked to go on liberty with them or do this or that, you know, 'cause I can understand then how some of these people -- when they have these drive-by shootings and stuff -- people get killed that are not involved and somebody's taken from you and that's just not the way it should be.

**Question:** So do you learn a survival mode then in war? I mean it --

**Answer:** Yeah --

**Question:** -- are we amazing minds that --

**Answer:** Yeah, you develop it, yes. Because after you get some training you realize that you can take care of yourself; that somebody else is not going to take care of you. That you have to rely on yourself and other people. Particularly the -- when certain jobs come along and you're put in charge of a job and you've got other people with you, you not only have to take care of yourself, but you got to worry about these people out here, too. And if you got a new pilot on and they were assigned to your section, so you got to look out for them, and you got to look out for yourself and that makes you -- twice. But you learn to -- the old saying goes, Don't sweat the small stuff. But the small stuff is ingrained; you just learn to pick it up and do it and if this little thing isn't done, you can understand why this guy got all hot and bothered and yelled and hollered at you because this little thing was nothing -- but it was very important if that little thing is part of something else. And you learn to pay attention. You learn to pay attention. And that's the biggest thing that kids got to learn is -- yes, they have to be self-reliant, but there's a lot of things they got to know in order to be self-reliant. They just can't go out on the street and start taking care of themselves because somebody's going to take advantage of them, right off the bat, with this, that and the other thing. The -- I -- I learned that the hard way. I -- we were through some things that happened, we got assigned to the base for a week. And so this kid wanted to go ashore, so I loaned him my ID card. Never gave it a thought that -- so he went off ashore and got himself in trouble and so they hauled him in and first thing I know in the middle of the night I get a call, Get my (gesture) over to a certain place. And here's this lieutenant meets me and he

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

says what the hell you doing ashore tonight? I says I didn't go ashore. He says I got your ID card right here; you were ashore at so forth down there at Norfolk. Well, then I was in real trouble because I had loaned my identification to somebody else so he could go do something. He was a married guy and his wife was there and stuff. And I committed the worst sin than he did, you know. I think they gave him an award for out-smarting me or something, but -- that was -- that's the way things happened. But it was -- a lot of people, and I was amazed at the type of leadership we had, how the people came from another life and assumed leadership and were able to direct people and to do things. Unfortunately nowadays it's run more by politics than it is by people who understand the military. And this is just -- this bothers me, even though I spent a good part of my life in the military and so did my kids.

**Question:** What do you think that -- do you -- do you think that there's a message from World War II for generations to come that you and I might be --

**Answer:** Yeah. They haven't experienced having a need for something and having to work for that. Whatever it is, a car or something, kids understand it better. But nowadays, they don't have to work for it that hard. I'm amazed that parents can give kids a \$20 a week allowance and this type of thing. Some of the kids had to work like heck to earn -- nowadays to earn their -- to get a car to drive to school and stuff. But it was amazing -- it's amazing to me that they got parking lot problems in high schools. They never used to have that. We used to walk to school. We lived in a part of town that we walked across -- the Milwaukee Railroad run diagonally through the town and so we'd walk up the railroad track cause it was the shortest way to get over to go to the high school at Great Falls. Well, it got so many kids, and then that old freight train would come through in the morning and they'd have two or three box cars, and the kids got so they'd hang on the boxcars and stuff and the engineer was -- well, the railroad got smart and they put a flat car on there, just so the kids could get on the flat card and they'd run about 14, 18 blocks through the town, up to where we got -- and they'd slow down and let us all off and we'd walk to school. Well, they were being smart and they were saving lives. And -- 'cause the kids never thought a thing about it. I mean, that was an expedient way to solve a problem. Now the expedient way to solve problems gets people in more -- 'cause there's so many people and because they -- we just can't do the thing.

**Question:** Common sense --

**Answer:** But common sense taught you to be independent, to look out for yourself. But if you did the right things, there were always people that could help you and would help you and you could rely on. But it shows you the big wide world outside, particularly beyond the confines of your own town and your own state because then it amazes you how other people live. Because they think differently. Different schools and this stuff -- I remember the first time I went to -- overseas. The Mid-East and stuff. And people were wearing -- they didn't want the women to be seen, and they wore (gestures). And we were briefed -- we couldn't take pictures, we couldn't do this, we couldn't do that, you know, and the other stuff. And it just comes back to you that these people have -- have never seen and been to your country. You have a better opportunity than they have and you've got to respect what they believe in and what they -- how they live. They can't live you -- and too often, just like that business with the T-shirts and stuff. We try to force our way of thinking onto somebody else when they don't have any understanding of what it is; that's what the kids got to learn nowadays -- that other people have opportunity to live like they want to live or be raised that way and -- and they got to understand it. They can't force their methods on them

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

unless they are going to match or there's an agreement. Because you just -- there's so darn many people and this nowadays that you got to have more agreement than they used to have.

**Question:** Crowded.

**Answer:** Yeah, it's so crowded.

**Question:** What was the worst part of war for you? Or the hardest part?

**Answer:** Losing friends that were very close to you. Umm, seeing things that -- the first time you saw somebody that was badly hurt because of something, you just didn't realize that ... I've seen a lot, and you know, in car accidents and stuff, the first time you see somebody in a car accident, those arms -- they're bleeding badly, they're all banged up and so forth, it's a -- if you've never seen that before, you don't realize that it's real. And it's -- it's hard to realize that when that happens to somebody and then you're talking to them and then they're not there anymore. And you -- and it's hard to realize that they're someplace else. But they're not ever going to be with you again. Because one of the things that -- that they try to teach in the schools nowadays is this teamwork. And they have training -- and companies have spent lots of money on bringing people in to teach team work and how to work together and how to work. That's the biggest thing that we learned right off the bat in World War II is they started right from the day in basic training of forming you into a group and getting used to each other. It was the worst shock in my life to go to Farragut over there and to stand up with all those guys I had never seen before, and have to disrobe. I had never disrobed in front of anybody in my life before. I was from a good old Presbyterian family. You didn't do that. Yeah, even with five kids. And then to have this -- the ignominy of having to be checked physically, to bend over and have somebody looking at you from the rear and have somebody looking at you from the front and -- that was a real shock to me at the first. To learn to live with that group of men, guys, they were men, 17, 18, I mean, who had come from all walks of life, who were so different and talk different, they had different accents. I never realized we had an accent in the Northwest until I went in the Service and people -- boy, you've really got an accent, you know. And even afterwards, I went to the University of Indiana to a study thing some years back, and the -- the cab drivers -- three of us got off the airplane; he says boy you guys are from the Northwest, I can tell by your accents. You know. And it just -- it doesn't come home to you that they're different and you're different. You look at yourself, you're the same. And that's what happens when you're with people. You get close to them, you get to know them. And for a kid, you don't realize you get that emotionally bound up with somebody until something happens. Because you just become a friend. You talk to each other, you walk around, you go together. There's a lot of the kids -- they never had a lot of friends. Because people, although you lived in a neighborhood, and this type of thing, you weren't as close. Cause they lived up the block or down the block, you went to school with them, you messed around a little bit and stuff. But here you're living together with them. You're in this bunk and there's a guy in this bunk and right across the way there's another guy. And they had different physical things. They snore, they talk, they -- and you've never been exposed to this. So it's -- it's -- it's -- there's a lot to be gained by -- I really feel badly for the kids that are forced to live on the street, sort of -- like in our town right here and this type of thing who -- they haven't experienced life. They have no idea how to live, and that's why they're vulnerable to all kinds of scams and stuff -- cause they haven't learned the -- they haven't had the -- the mental education. And that's the thing that I saw happen in World War II and Korea after. You got the mental education -- they learned to live with people. That's the biggest thing that I think that -- one of the big things the Service got out of it is they learned how to teach people to work together and live together. It was different than when they had the Army Corps and the platoons and stuff before the war.

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

'Cause those people; they went out and recruited them, and they were looking for a certain level of society to get the people from. But when World War II came along, all of a sudden, they had all kinds of highly educated people and -- well, lots of people that had high school. But even in my day in high school, lots of kids did not finish high school. They went off to do other things. And the war came along, and I was the first thing probably that said you got to finish high school. Because you've got to have this level of education, if you want to do that. And I found that out. When I wanted to do certain things, I had to prepare myself to get education. I had to read and do. Because if you went and asked somebody for a job, like I was nuts -- I wanted to go fly -- if I was going to have to shoot guns or do this. Then somebody come along, well, do you know this? To do this? Can you do this? And I found out that I had to do that. Living close to people is -- is a real eye opener when they're -- they're more than just people; they become really good friends. And they have feelings and they have thoughts and stuff that -- that intermingle and intermix with you, and they become -- even though you and I weren't born in the same family and stuff, we become, really, family. And you -- and then -- and that's -- that's really the way it was.

**Question:** 'Cause I assume you ended up living a lot of experiences and sharing. I mean, from home -- from homesickness to girlfriends or wives back home to family back home to whatever they're facing. They're seasick, they're not what -- and now you're this big, huge family, all with this terrible --

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** -- terrible thing, World War II going on, with this common thing, but yet there's still this average, every-day --

**Answer:** Right, right, right. ... And I guess that's the various experiences that you had were what really helped you grow up. Although you were protected, you were on the training bases, you were here, you were there, you were went to the training classes together, you did certain things together. And -- and that's how you learned the thing. It was amazing to me. I'd been a Boy Scout and I'd learned -- and I went to -- when I was in boot camp over there, I knew signals, semaphore signaling, and I knew Morse Code. Well, right off the bat, I was selected to teach that to the guys. That was a real experience for me because I had a skill that was really needed. The same way with learning to run a compass. I'd run compass courses and stuff, so I was out there to teach it to people. And it was amazing to me that there were other kids that never had had that experience. That's why --

**Question:** It sounds like age becomes irrelevant at that point, too.

**Answer:** Yeah, it really does.

**Question:** 'Cause I assume you were teaching some guys that were older --

**Answer:** Oh, there were 35 years old. And yeah, we were all mixed up. And every other thing. So it became a matter of you listened to experience. And you listened to experience because they had experienced it. I mean, you know, I remember we were going through identification class. They were showing us little models of airplanes that were made - - it was a big cottage industry. The people -- kids -- were making these little airplanes, giving them to the Navy or the Air Force. And so they'd hold them up for certain, saying you had to guess, at first because you got to know, just looking at them. Same way with ships. Certain ships, certain thing. You had to -- you had to know that fast and you had to learn it. And they didn't have time for you if you didn't pick that stuff up. Because they shipped you from -

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

- they assumed everybody could do this, when they start out. And then if you weren't right up to snuff on this thing, then you went to a different thing, and a different thing. So you may end up cooking someplace or being a compartment cleaner or something. But a lot of the kids were not ex -- had not grown up with the idea that they could achieve more than -- than what -- where they were, what they could do. And so these opportunities were always presented out there. So you just -- say, boy, I can do that, I want to learn to do that, how do I learn to do that? And that was my first experience of using outside experience when I was a kid to -- when I was in the Service.

**Question:** Which you thought was every day --

**Answer:** That's right.

**Question:** -- everybody must know these things.

**Answer:** That's right.

**Question:** It's interesting when I talk to a lot of veterans because you know, your life is this much and World War II was --

**Answer:** That much -- hm-hmm.

**Question:** -- this much of it. But yet, what it did. Whether --

**Answer:** Well the impact it made because it took you out of a closed compartment where you were living over here, and put you in a whole wide thing where you had to learn how to navigate yourself through it in a hurry and to do these things. And you had to -- learn to do things that you never even knew about before. And you learned that you could do these things, you could rely on yourself, that you could pick up this information. And you learned to keep your eyes open because you were seeing things. And that -- that put it up here. (gestures) I remember I fought -- I just -- we learned the old Palmer method of writing in school. You had to know all these big circles and "L's and all this thing. And the first thing I got in the Service, found out that you were somebody if you could write plainly. That made a big difference -- and that separated the men from the boys, so to speak. If they could read your writing and you could do things. And that began to make an impression on me. It was the little things that counted -- that they expected you to be able to do. It's -- it's a real eye opener. And I don't know whether -- I fault a lot of the things -- the parents and stuff. The kids -- kids don't have that experience, to -- to pick up all the little things. Like, I'm a real advocate of scouting. I've been involved in it for years and we had a -- a post that did this and we've hiked the Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to Canada and we've done a lot of -- 'cause it gives the kids an experience. I'm involved with the kids over at Gonzaga University in a Circle K program where -- it's a Kiwanis-sponsored service thing. That gives kids from all over an opportunity to work together, same thing and do something for somebody else and for the community. And it changes the way you think. And it makes you a different person. Instead of being so me oriented and going right down the line, you've got to -- and that's what the Service did. It really -- all this stuff is out here on your peripheral vision, and you've got to be able to assimilate it 'cause you've got to use it sometime. To help yourself. And that's -- that's what's -- I -- a lot of the kids are missing nowadays. Especially the ones that come from the bigger towns. I'm really impressed with the kids that come from the smaller towns - - Willamette University to Gonzaga, because they have a whole different outlook on life than the kids that were raised here and these high schools that have got 1200, 2500 in them versus --



## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** They're still a community --

**Answer:** They're still a community, that's right.

**Question:** Now you -- growing up, cause that's kind of -- cause you grew up -- I mean, World War II dramatically changed your life.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** I mean, if -- if you know, you look at the what-ifs and --

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** What if World War II hadn't, you know --

**Answer:** I never would have been probably where I am now 'cause I would never have had the opportunity to go to school when I did if I wanted to go to school, I'd had to go out and work and work and work to earn money. I wasn't excited about getting married -- I'd met a gal, I was in a play with her at the high school play, I was a junior, it was a senior play and they needed somebody and so she -- this gal who I didn't know very well conned me into doing it. Well she became a very dear friend, I eventually married her. And it was a -- a whole thing that -- that you were in this little community and you knew -- even though we were -- that was a big school at that time -- 500 -- we knew most of the kids in the class 'cause we -- we did a lot of things together. We played ball together and we did -- played basketball and did a lot -- and in those day and age, all, everybody over there, we did a lot of hunting. We went bird hunting, we went deer hunting, went fishing. God, we were great fishermen. And you talk to kids and stuff now, they -- most of these kids never been fishing in their life. They've never been hunting. They've got this gun thing out here that they're scared to death of it. But everything is tied up now. Places we used to hunt as a kid are all -- are all signs, no trespassing, and this type -- unless you know -- know the landowner. Cause people step out of line to ease their own ego or something. And create a hellhole for everybody else. You can't do these things, because they don't realize they got to learn to live together.

**Question:** Did -- 'cause you come from -- what did you say, Presbyterian background?

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** Did -- was war ever a moral dilemma for you?

**Answer:** No.

**Question:** Or was that even an issue?

**Answer:** It wasn't even an issue. Wasn't even an issue. I don't think it was an issue for a lot of people because this was something that the country was involved in. And everybody was involved in the country. There was -- I think there was a really good feeling because of what Roosevelt had done with the NRA and the CCCs and all this other thing to bring the country out of its doldrums that it had been in since the '29 crash. And things were

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

happening. They were fixing the streets and they were grading them, they oiled them, they sanded and oiled. And there were people working for -- on the WPA

**Answer:** And so people could see that the government was trying to help them or do something. And so maybe they were in favor then of helping the government when they needed -- when this happened. We weren't very worldly wise in those days like they are now. I mean, the kid can go home and hear news of South Africa and China and Great Britain and Antarctica, it wasn't that way in those days 'cause they -- they just didn't have the (gestures). So it's a matter off being -- wanting to learn and wanting to do these things. And then to find out how to do them. You just can't -- nobody's going to give them to you. They will if you ask and you want them to mentor and they realize that you -- you really want their services and they'll feel good about helping you and training you and teaching you and this type of thing. But you just can't sit back and say well they owe it to me. 'Cause they don't. 'Cause you've got to -- 'cause that was the thing -- just to learn to be self-reliant. Every one of these old boys that I -- around now -- they were all self-reliant, they learned it. They did all kinds of things on their own, and they had to go out and -- and do things to -- in order to go to school. Like today, I'm amazed at how many scholarships are available to kids if they want them. Go out and -- this group and that group and the other group. And there's 200 here and 300 there and I've known kids going to University of -- over at Gonzaga there, come in with \$30,000, \$40,000 worth of scholarships, all built up from little \$200, and \$300 and they -- and as they went through school they kept track of things and where to go to get scholarships, you know.

**Question:** Yeah.

**Answer:** So you can still do it and it's out there and there's help. But you just can't sit back and expect it to happen. You got to -- you got to participate in life.

**Question:** What's -- this is a question I haven't even thought about before for other vets -- what's Memorial Day mean to you? Or Veteran's Day.

**Answer:** It brings back memories. Specially when certain music is played or certain things. I have not been a great one to participate in -- at the graveyard on Veteran's Day and stuff. It bothers me. But the -- Memorial Day. It's -- it's -- I like it because it's a day where, well I hate to say it this way, but nowadays, people are forced to remember that something happened in their history that they shouldn't forget. Veteran's Day is a recognition of -- of something that -- that happened that people dedicated themselves to that they don't do much. Nowadays it's the bottom line, it's the almighty buck, how much money can I make or what can I do? It's not -- or now it's got to the point -- not what can I do for my country, but what can my country do for me. I mean, give me this and give me that. And I was amazed when I was in the Guard out there, finding out there were -- talking to kids -- they were fourth generation "me-too'ers". I mean they'd been on -- their great grandfather had been on help and food stamps and their dad -- their grandfather and their dad, and they were. And they had no idea there was any other way to live, really, than to get this stuff.

**Question:** That's interesting. You said that -- 'cause also, I can start hearing the song in my -- you said that sometimes a song or something will --

**Answer:** Trigger you.

**Question:** And right away I started hearing a little Glenn Miller Orchestra or something.

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

**Answer:** Right, right.

**Question:** So does that -- I mean, 50 years later, is that the type of thing that -- that a song or somebody looks like somebody, or something will trigger something and --

**Answer:** Yep. The other night we went to the symphony where they had Five by Design down at the Opera House and these are people -- it was all '40's, '50's music. And they sang just like the -- the songs were sung in those days by the people that did, and they had a story that went along with it and the music. And I was enthralled because it took me back to an era of time that the kids nowadays wouldn't even know -- they're going to remember the songs and stuff now -- if they -- if they're worth remembering. But the songs they did then were worth remembering. That Bing Crosby sang and Glenn Miller played and Bill, and Bob Crosby played. And Tex Benicke and these people. And it was a -- much more smooth, laid-back. It was contemplative music, or something, than -- nowadays I have trouble listening 'cause there's just so much noise and they -- you don't understand the words, and then when you do, they repeat them and repeat, and I don't understand.

**Question:** When you hear the music, when you went to this thing, is it the type of thing where all of a sudden a whole movie starts --

**Answer:** Yeah, you remember a dance you went to with a particular gal or you remember a picnic you went to or you remember driving someplace and you heard this on the car radio. It was a slower period of time, you had more time to -- to think and stuff. It was -- it was neater to take a girl out in those days. With the slower music, you'd go to a dance, and you weren't (gesture). Sure there was jitterbugging, and we jitterbugged, but you really liked the slow dancing, too. To kind of cuddle up and dance. Because the two of you. And she smelled good. And it was just nice -- nice to be with them. You know, lots of cases, we were talking the other night, sitting there listening to that. My mother would take us to dances. I had a date with my -- the gal that's my wife and we -- parents would take us 'cause I -- I didn't drive. Not until I got into the Service and came back, and then I had to watch because they had gas stamps and so forth and I couldn't get out and run around.

**Question:** You couldn't even vote when you came back.

**Answer:** Lord, no, I couldn't vote until I was 21.

**Question:** Huh.

**Question:** So was it your high school sweetheart you married?

**Answer:** Yep, yep.

**Question:** So did you -- while you were overseas --

**Answer:** No, we never -- we got married when I came back and --

**Question:** I mean, did you correspond?

**Answer:** Oh, yes, off and on. I wasn't that great a correspondent. My mother gave me a camera to take pictures, I lost it someplace. I was never one to take pictures in those days. Some of these guys got all kinds of pictures, you know. And I think back, well, I did this and I don't have pictures of that or this or the other thing, you know. But it just -- it

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

wasn't important at that time to take pictures. To me, 'cause I'd not lived in an era where you had pictures to remind you. There were a few pictures, they were special pictures of Grandma and Grandpa 'cause they were professionally taken or something, but you just didn't have a camera -- the average family didn't -- to run around and take pictures with, you know. And so -- that was just -- wasn't part of my makeup. And yet there were people around, like you were talking about doing things you wanted to -- I built model airplanes and flew. And so when we got on board, we flew U-control on the carrier. Yeah. I remember we got in such a - - oh, boy, was I and some other guys in hot. We built the model of a Seagull. It's a single float airplane. Well, when -- when we -- I was a friend of the photographer's mate on board the carrier and so we saw this picture. We weren't supposed to see it, but we were looking through, well, that's neat. So we drew up plans and built one, on board the carrier. And we're out flying this thing on the fantail -- when the carrier's anchored, you know, and so -- and they also had shotguns so you could shoot skeet off the deck, and certain recreational things. Well, we were flying this thing and this admiral comes aboard and saw this airplane. Where in the hell did you get that -- oh, that's secret -- you can't -- didn't make any difference to us, we weren't telling him -- we were just building a model of this "secret" airplane and we're -- and we're flying it, you know, in a circle, the U-control, on the carrier -- cause we had a little hobby room that -- down in the carpenter's shop that they let us build and we could store stuff. And so we built all our own wood and everything else cause you didn't have any kits or anything on. And managed to get an engine shipped to whoever it was from home, a little model engine. And -- but that's things that you did to have your own entertainment and to follow your interests and so forth, you know.

**Question:** So there's a war going on, and you're building remote-control planes.

**Answer:** That's right.

**Question:** I mean, so that's -- I mean that is the surrealist, the surrealism or the -- the real -- I mean, life goes on.

**Answer:** Right. And your interest and your hobbies and things, you know. Because they didn't have the record collections. You had records in those days. These kids never heard of 78 RPM records, you know. Big things, and you'd get collections of them. Now they went to CDs and now they're chips, so to speak. The -- so you had to do with what fit in the area that you could. And so those of us that did a lot of -- done hunting. We'd get to shoot skeet off the fan tail with the -- and it was really neat to beat some guy that was a full commander, something, thought he was a hot-shot with a shotgun from a back east club, you know, go out there and knock down 15 more birds than he did and stuff. But and -- that -- that was life and that was the growing together to realize that the people from this section of the country were just as good as the people from that section or this section. We'd been raised different but we all had the same mores and the way we feel. 'Cause there was a lot deeper feeling about the country than there is now. You get overseas now and you see the way the Americans act and it bothers me terribly. They go over there, the big it, I'm it. Shouldn't be that way but it's money and -- and our position in the world. I don't mean maybe I should be moralizing at this time, but I -- you begin to recognize these things after you've been around because these other -- and again the whole thing is that we're becoming a one world community. Yeah, it didn't use to be that way cause people never, never traveled until they started World War II, very few people were able to go anyplace or do anything. And then it became the norm. The --

**Question:** And now it's the expected.

## Richard Carson

Tape 2 of 2

**Answer:** It's the expected, it's the expected. No, the -- it's been interesting. Good Lord, I'm taking up more of your time. You call it when you want to.

**Question:** Let me just check and see what time, I lose track, yeah, it's about time. Well, thank you very much. It's always interesting to get different -- different perspective. I know there's a lot of it that, just talking to you, there's a lot of it that I can see you want to forget - it was tragedy -- and

**Answer:** I don't know why it is but it's just the kind of person I am that doesn't -- sure, I still think of some of these -- at various times, why, you'll have dreams or something, you know, and you remember them. But as you grow older, I still remember them when they were this physical thing. I've got some dear old friends that I see off and on that go way back in the military and I look, and hell, they look just like me. I mean, they're gray-haired and they're old and they're getting pudgy and they're -- stuff -- and I remember when they were young and lithe and lean and -- but, you change. Nothing you can do about it. Fact I tell my wife, I said, my big problem is I'm not growing old gracefully. Darn it.

**Question:** But at least you get a good -- you know, I didn't even think about that, and I can't even remember who I was talking to now. And it was a thing where years later, he had served with somebody we lost over there. And years later he had -- he ran into relatives or parents or something and they were talking about the person they lost. He said the hardest thing to remember was this -- because everybody else had grown up, but he still -- oh, no, it was a teacher, that was it. She still saw him as this 16-year-old kid.

**Answer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Question:** And that's who she -- he always would be to her. He never, ever grew up. And when they would talk about this soldier, she just kept saying, he was just a 16-year-old boy.

**Answer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Question:** So, yeah, everybody survives differently.

**Answer:** Yeah. It's really true. I take people out of context. My wife and I got married and I had this little old Plymouth coupe that I'd bought from the fraternity in Missoula. And a little two-door -- and we were going to go -- I had this secret honeymoon planned -- I didn't want people. Geez, I got in that and they had it salted with rice and everything else, and it ran out the door. So we got to Glacier Park and I pulled up to mini-Glacier there. And here stands this woman. Arms like this, tapping her foot at the head of the stairs. Where have you been, you're late. And I looked at -- my God, that's my English teacher from high school. Miss O'Leary. She was the summer maitre d' or whatever you want to call it there, ran the hotel. And she had seen the slip that they -- and here she was. Well, you can know, I saw her in a completely different context. She had this job from, you know. I would go to the hotel room, and pretty soon there'd be -- somebody would come by and knock on the door, one of the bell hops. Looking back, that was the most marvelous thing. And she was -- but I never saw her in that light in high school. She taught English and German. And boy, you had to -- she expected you to perform. And it was really neat to see her in that -- and talk to her. And I always see her now, I envision her standing up there to -- that's the only way I remember her. I can't really remember her in the classroom and afterwards. But you're right. And then I -- boy, at certain times, you were talking, reminds me of things, see these kids, as they were then. I have no idea where they are -- whether they were killed during the war or whether they survived, 'cause there were so many things that went on. But I get

## **Richard Carson**

Tape 2 of 2

together with all these old guys in Troy and then we start talking and they start talking and it reminds you of things. I -- I've met guys there now that I hadn't seen for 55, 60 years. That we'd get to talking and they were there and they went in and I suddenly remember well there was a kid or something back there, and that was who this guy was, you know. Just blows your mind. Just blows your mind. But I really feel that it's -- I'm glad to see that more and more of the high schools are demanding service for the kids to graduate and stuff because they've got to learn that there's not always haves and have -- there's so many have-nots, even though the haves, that they've got to help the other people. Cause that's -- that's one big thing I did was Habitat for Humanity, what Jimmy Carter's doing, and working, doing things.