

Interview with
THOMAS W. STETTLER

April 23, 2019
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ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
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THOMAS W. STETTLER

Content Warning: Contains words that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful.

Thomas W. Stettler was interviewed on April 23rd and May 7th, 2019 by Randall J. Bunn at the Southern Utah Veterans Home in Ivins, Washington County, Utah. He related his military experiences in the U.S. Navy.

RB: Alright, today is April 23rd 2019. I'm Randy Bunn and I'm with—

TS: Thomas W. Stettler.

RB: Thomas W. Stettler.

TS: S-T-E-T-T-L-E-R.

RB: Great. Can I call you Tom?

TS: Sure can.

RB: Okay, Tom. So, I want to ask you a little bit about your background. Where were you born?

TS: Eastern Pennsylvania.

RB: Eastern Pennsylvania. What town?

TS: Outside of Allentown. I was a farm kid.

RB: Okay. Who were your parents? What were their names?

TS: Walter F. Stettler.

RB: Right.

TS: And they had a post office at one time. In the old days, a Stettler— a Stettler the post office.

RB: Right.

TS: That was on a place called Huckleberry Lane.

RB: Oh. That's nice.

TS: Believe that or not. And so, it was Alice Margaret (Hensinger) Stettler.

RB: That was your mother?

TS: Yes.

RB: Okay.

TS: Pennsylvania German.

RB: Ah, right, very good. So you go back generations with the —

TS: All the way.

RB: All the way 'cause the Germans start comin' in the early 1700s.

TS: [William] Penn settled Germans.

RB: Yes.

TS: With Germans.

RB: Yes, Germantown and Philadelphia.

TS: It was no accident that during the Revolutionary War that George Washington stopped in Germantown.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: A lot of people don't realize this, but the best spy that he had was the baker general. And he would go over and speak and he had to get a hold of, who was the Prussian guy? [Christopher Ludwick [or Ludwig, Ludowick, Ludwigg] (October 17, 1720 (Germany)– June 17, 1801 (US) was a German immigrant to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania who served as baker general for the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War.]

RB: Von Steuben?

TS: Brought him over because he spoke German.

RB: Yeah.

TS: He had to train the troops. The troops would come in and he couldn't [train them]. He couldn't get 'em.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: As long as he was up in— a lot of people think of Washington’s Army. Washington’s Army was where he was.

RB: True.

TS: He was in New England, they were New Englanders.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: Bunker Hill. If he was in New Jersey, he was in New Jersey.

RB: Correct.

TS: If he was in Pennsylvania, he was in Pennsylvania.

RB; Right.

TSL So he had to accommodate whatever it was. That was his army. And I was an Eagle Scout [Boy Scout of America] and I did a, well, they had a National Jamboree at Valley Forge.

RB: Oh, yes. Right.

TS: And we were down there and one of the interesting things they told us, that we all laughed about —

RB: Right.

TS: — because, and it was so terrible that his army was in rags and it was so cold there.

RB: Right, right.

TS: Yes, and it was no accident that he settled near Germantown and there is a thing called the Rathskeller. Oh, my goodness, these guys “wouldn’t desert.” They went home.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: They were charged and would bring them back because the people, Penn and the boys, down in Philadelphia—

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: And they weren’t even walking in mud.

RB: Yeah.

TS: You see, and they wouldn't give him any money.

RB: Right [laughter].

TS: Wouldn't give him any money. So to feed the army—

RB: Right.

TS: — the people would say that they would be with.

RB: Right.

TS: Anyway, they would come back with “grum beeren” meaning: “ground berries” [translated from German]—

RB: Oh.

TS: — which were potatoes. [Grum Beeren, derived from Grand Beeren, is a word in common use in southwestern Germany for Kartoffeln (potatoes).]

RB: Oh, yes.

TS: Potatoes and all sorts of stuff.

RB: So you were born near Allentown, you say?

TS: Yeah, I [was born in] South Whitehall Township is the —

RB: Oh, South Whitehall Township.

TS: It was abutment to the city of Allentown's—

RB: Alright.

TS: — lines. But in those days, the old days, the '30s and so forth, when I was born, if you put one foot over into the city —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — you were a hick from the “shticks.”

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: Because you didn't speak— you spoke with an accent.

RB: Right. How funny.

TS: See, I got my Ws and my Vs [turned around] .

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: When I went into the service you can imagine what I faced.

RB: Yeah.

TS: But anyway, they, and so everybody was in the city, they were supposedly a cut above [everyone else].

RB: Oh, okay. When was your birthday?

TS: 11-2-34.

RB: November 2, 1934. So you said that you had some memories from [The Great] Depression period as a young boy?

TS: Oh, yeah.

RB: What was it like growing up in Whitehall, or South Whitehall?

TS: South Whitehall.

RB: In the 1930s? What did your dad do for a living?

TS: There was nothing out there except farms.

RB: Okay. So he —

TS: We were nothing but hired hands.

RB: Okay.

TS: That's what we did.

RB: Right. And so —

TS: And then after the [laughter] hired hands, then they started to bring Puerto Ricans over from the territory.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: See that replaced them and so forth and so on.

RB: Yes, yes.

TS: Right now, if you go back there, the Puerto Ricans are pretty well integrated into everything.

RB: Sure.

TS: And they hate the Mexicans.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: See, everybody hates somebody else.

RB: Yeah, it's always been that way, I guess. So how many brothers and sisters did you have?

TS: Three.

RB: Three.

TS: We're all four years apart, five years apart.

RB: Okay, who was number one?

TS: My sister, she is eighty-eight today.

RB: What's her name?

TS: Her name is Gloria, Gloria Alice.

RB: Gloria Alice Stettler. Did she marry?

TS: Yes.

RB: What was her married name?

TS: Reinhard.

RB: Reinhard. [Gloria Alice (Stettler) Reinhard] Number two? Who was that?

TS: That was me.

RB: Oh, okay. So she was born in 1930?

TS: Yes.

RB: You were born in 1934. And you said —

TS: My other, my middle brother, was born in 1938, I guess.

RB: Okay. And what was his name?

TS: His was Herschel.

RB: Herschel. Herschel Stettler?

TS: Yes.

RB: Good German name. And the last one? Also a boy?

TS: Was a boy and his name was Walter.

RB: Walter.

TS: Junior. Walter Frederick Stettler, Jr. He was five years [younger than Herschel].

RB: 1943, then?

TS: 1944.

RB: Okay. So you're number two in the family and the oldest boy. And so, do you remember having to start doing chores at some point around the house to help the family?

TS: I can't remember when I didn't.

RB: Yeah? Oh. What did you have to do? What was it like growing up with the family and surviving?

TS: Well, see back there, you don't realize it. Are you from the west out here?

RB: I grew up in California, yes.

TS: Well, you don't realize it, but through corn fields, and so forth, —

RB: Yes.

TS: — of Eastern Pennsylvania, they have these, like Mr. Rogers, he talks to the trolley.

RB: Yeah.

TS: They had these one car things, the railroads were like one car, the mainline really.

RB: Streetcars?

TS: Yes, sorta like a streetcar.

RB: Okay.

TS: Put two or three of them together, and they would go, and the main gauge would come right through the corn fields.

RB: Ah.

TS: So you had corn on one side and corn on the other side and a choo-choo train comin' through.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: Never thought about that.

RB: No.

TS: Well, I didn't think about that until I got [around other parts of the country].

RB: No, it doesn't happen out in the west.

TS: So, that's the way that worked.

RB: Alright.

TS: So, what they did was, I was like a, they hired me out.

RB: Okay.

TS: It was not— it was not their cash system.

RB: Right.

TS: It was like a barter system.

RB: Alright, so you got hired out.

TS: So, I got worked out. I plowed, I was a big kid.

RB: Okay.

TS: So I plowed with two Belgian work horses.

RB: Okay, right.

TS: And I plowed and we hayed and we did everything because there was a farm about a half a mile away. These farms were all 160 acres.

RB: Sure.

TS: That Penn [William Penn] goes back to the 1600s that survived with Penn. What he did was, he had slave labor. What he did was he made indentured servants.

RB: Right. If you want to get over [across the Atlantic] you have to work.

TS: If you put your, if you put, if you proved your land —

RB: Right.

TS: — after a certain amount, you could sustain it, could do it, then you got 160 acres.

RB: Oh, okay. I see.

TS: That's how, and so of course, what was the Oklahoma land rush?

RB: Right.

TS: It's the same thing. 160 acres.

RB: Yeah, that's how they divided up the —

TS: Well, it was all the English system, everything.

RB: Yeah. Well, because it was 640 acres was in, I guess, like a township.

TS: I don't know.

RB: Like a square, so you divide it up four ways and it's 160. So, the way the system would work then, you would get worked out, farmed out, you would perform tasks and then in return they would give you products?

TS: All these farms like this had, maybe, ten, twelve cows.

RB: Okay.

TS: I had to— I'd get up early and go down and milk cows.

RB: Oh, gosh, yes.

TS: Swamped [washed] the thing.

RB: Yep, oh, yeah.

TS: We had, well, it used to be a community-type thing if you slaughtered a pig.

RB: Oh, sure.

TS: They didn't have the big things. But anyway, the good Guernsey milk.

RB: Oh, yeah.

TS: That much cream [gesturing with his fingers as to about 3-4 inches]. You'd have about half of it. You'd make the cream.

RB: That's nice. So, I'm trying to figure out then, how would you or your family get compensated. How did that work?

TS: Well, I took some home.

RB: So you would— ?

TS: All the milk, all the eggs, and so on and so on —

RB: Ah.

TS: — that I could haul home.

RB: Okay, that's great.

TS: You made sort of friends, and you became—

RB: Yeah.

TS: It became part of the group around you.

RB: Oh, sure.

TS: So we had an orchard, Chaunce's orchard. And Chaunce was the big land owner that had [owned] all these orchards around.

RB: Okay.

TS: They had a big packing house. I worked for packing houses. When it was pears, I picked pears. When it was apples, I picked apples. When it was this, I picked that. Whatever it was, I'd be out there doin' it.

RB: Did you like that?

TS: No. They would let the schools out. It was a part of the culture at that time. You see, they would let the schools out.

RB: 'Cause pears and apples were in the fall?

TS: Yes.

RB: Yes. So instead of school, there was some time, because they had to harvest those—

TS: Well, not that so much, because it was the potato harvest.

RB: Oh, when was that? Also in the fall?

TS: It was before Simplot invented running the potato fields. [J. R. John Richard Simplot Company]

RB: [Laughter] Right!

TS: Okay, so yeah, but yeah, so you get down on your hands and knees and you are taking an eight-inch sheer and run the horses down and turn it over.

RB: Right.

TS: And then they would have four or five of us lined up down there picking up potatoes.

RB: Picking up potatoes. [Laughter.]

TS: Now, we got \$.25 for a bushel. And if we, if they found at the other end when they started putting them in the baskets from the bags, if they found one stone, you forfeited your \$.25.

RB: Oh, no way, really?

TS: Oh, yes.

RB: No rocks, all potatoes, or [laughter]—

TS: It was a— the other part that most people don't realize is that until oil came in, anthracite fueled the nation. It heated the nation.

RB: Yeah, hard coal?

TS: Yeah, hard coal.

RB: From Pennsylvania.

TS: Anthracite, yeah, from Pennsylvania. So everybody was a miner.

RB: Oh, yep.

TS: So, you did, we called it underground farming.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: So, if you were an underground farmer, you were a miner.

RB: So did you do some mining?

TS: Well, I was seventeen and they did my, they had to wait, I think it was sixteen or seventeen, but anyway I got my working papers.

RB: Okay.

TS: And about that time that I made— they wanted to put me down there, this is about the time I turned, had my birthday.

RB: Yeah, so let me see, that would have been '44 and seven, about fall of 1951, seventeen?

TS: Yeah.

RB: Okay.

TS: Yeah, yeah. And so they said, “Well, it’s time.” So they lined me up. So I got on one of these things, I went up fifteen or twenty miles up in the coal regions.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Up what they call the coal regions.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And I went down a mine.

RB: Oh.

TS: So these guys, have you ever seen pictures with white [goggles] on their eyes [gesturing with hands, his thumb and index finger making a circle over his eyes]?

RB: Yeah.

TS: They're comin' up and they're sittin' there and said, "Kid, you're looking at dead men."

RB: Yeah.

TS: And now, the Korean War is going, see.

RB: Yeah.

TS: So they said, "Don't do this." "Don't do this."

RB: Yeah.

TS: So I went down about three times and they finally convinced me. I said, "Well, they won't sign for me." "Well, if they won't sign for you, run away. Get, just get out of here. We're dead."

RB: Yeah.

TSL See, black lung was really taking at that time.

RB: Oh, okay. So they knew that health-wise your career, your future was no good.

TS: We were down there, I mean the dust down there, there was no dust control.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: A few blowers and fans about that size [gesturing about two feet apart with his hands] sucked the air out.

RB: You were just breathin' that coal dust. Were there unions?

TS: They made me pick. I wasn't actually up in the face where they were cutting.

RB: Okay.

TS: So I was just picking [the coal].

RB: So were these workers involved in the unions then?

TS: I would imagine. There was nobody that went down the mines that wasn't part of the union.

RB: That was all part of the life.

TS: At '48, I think, there was a three-year strike.

RB: I was gonna say, because a —

TS: Henry Wallace was the guy, the big man.

RB: Yeah, yeah. The big strike and that really affected both steel and coal, from what I understand. And I was talking to —

TS: Forced them to go to oil. Yes.

RB: Ah, okay.

TS: That strike forced them to go to oil. They cut their own throats.

RB: Yeah. Interesting.

TS: But they were working for nothin' anyway.

RB: So, you graduated from high school, or no?

TS: No.

RB: You never did. So tell me about your schooling experience growing up. What do you remember from elementary school or high school? How many years did you put in?

TS: I did, I got eleven in, I think.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Before I went.

RB: Okay.

TS: And then when I got back out, they said go take [laughter], what's that thing, the equivalency test? GED? [General Education Development]

RB: GED.

TS: "Oh, yes, that'll get you anywhere." I got out of the [military] service the first time around and said, "Oh, I'll go get my GED."

RB: Yeah.

TS: No, no, no, no, not in Pennsylvania. You had to get the credits that you needed [to graduate] —

RB: Oh, no.

TS: — or we won't give you a high school. My cousin, was, which ended up as one of the largest consolidated school districts in the United States —

RB: [Yes.]

TS: — was there at Parkland High School, it became Parkland. He was principal for forty-some years—

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: — before he retired. And he said, “Well, there is nothing I can do about it. A rule's a rule a rule.”

RB: Oh, man.

TS: I said, “What the hell!”

RB: Yeah.

TS: What's a cousin for?

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: I didn't really know 'im, you know.

RB: I know, but—

TS: But there I was. I came back after I got out. I said, “What am I getting my degree?” I had enough credits.

RB: Right.

TS: So then I, by that time I was out, well, I retired. I finally was out, so they said, “Why don't you try the state of Maryland?”

RB: Ah.

TS: 'Cause I was going to the Community College in Rockville, [Maryland].

RB: Right.

TS: About a year and a half of community college in Rockville, Maryland. So, anyway, the Montgomery County Community College].

RB: Yeah, Montgomery County, [yes].

TS: I can't remember what it was anymore.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: Anyway, so somebody told me, one of the instructors, "Just take your transcripts." So, I go back up to Pennsylvania.

RB: Yeah.

TS: I asked for my transcripts.

RB: Yeah.

TS: They want to charge me for 'em.

RB: Ah! Yeah.

TS: Unbelievable! I had— "Are you kidding me?"

RB: Yeah.

TS: And so, but I did it.

RB: Alright, so you get your transcripts of what you took.

TS: Ah, my transcripts. And so, I take it down, I send it off to, I think, so a graduate of Maryland and I have a high school diploma.

RB: Oh, you have your high school diploma from Maryland.

TS: Maryland. Maryland says, "Fine." They sent me my high school diploma.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: I said, "Yeah, I have a high school diploma."

RB: There you go. Interesting. Well, did you play any sports growing up?

TS: Oh, no. I worked.

RB: You worked. That was not part of your life as a young man.

TS: No. I would go down the cellar. The coal would come down the cellar.

RB: That is where you got your exercise.

TS: The ground cellars of the coal [mine] in the ground cellars. And I would go down the railroad tracks and pick up the coal that fell off the tracks.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And stuff like that through the corn fields and so forth.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And I would do all these things. And I would pick the clinkers out of the coal.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: You see, there was still usable coal.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: And the ashes, I would have to do that.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: I would have to make sure the ashes came — It was like you do this, you do that, you do the other thing. You didn't argue.

RB: Yeah. Wow!

TS: If you did, if you ever did, that's sassy.

RB: Oh! So, thinking back of your childhood, would you call it, was it a good time? A hard time?

TS: Looking back, this far back, it wasn't [laughter]—

RB: Yeah.

TS: — it wasn't bad.

RB: Sounds like you worked from a very young age. You had, you worked a lot, but did you have fun in the process? Did you and your buddies, you know?

TS: There was no buddies.

RB: No, buddies?

TS: I was a loner.

RB: Is that right? Interesting.

TS: Oh, yeah.

RB: So there weren't other guys your age that you would work with in the fields or anything?

TS: If they were, they were over there.

RB: So you really didn't really do a lot with them.

TS: And the farms were so small they didn't have too many people working. They had their family and then they had a helper.

RB: How was your relationship with your brothers and your sister?

TS: Once again, we were four years apart.

RB: Yeah, I know, that's true.

TS: You tell me. My sister used to abuse me and lie about me, oh, terribly! And now we're the best of friends.

RB: Really?

TS: Oh, yes.

RB: Where does she—?

TS: We feel privileged.

RB: Yeah.

TS: We feel privileged to have all four siblings that have had good lives.

RB: Yeah. Where does your sister live now?

TS: She lives in Allentown, [Pennsylvania]. She is at this wonderful nursing home.

RB: Oh.

TS: And it's like forty-five minutes away by the traffic in Allentown to Lehigh, Lehigh Medical Center. This medical center is so progressive that they are probably one of the best in the United States right now.

RB: Oh.

TS: And they are really somethin'. They even have a proton [therapy center for cancer therapy], proton place there.

RB: Well, good for her. So she's close to some good health care.

TS: Oh, yeah and she is a single, single and has her own, a room of her own.

RB: Right.

TS: Single, it's redone. It is the old, in Allentown, it was the old county home.

RB: Oh.

TS: Which was a horror place.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And they've redone the whole thing and expanded it. They've got about 2,000 inmates there.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: And they've got this wonderful, wonderful, she describes it to me, they have shows and everything. The shows, they have a showroom down there.

RB: Wow! Good for her.

TS: And they bring in these beautiful bands and [inaudible] and everything else. And they go on trips. She's sent me pictures where they— We have Cedar Creek comes down there. This little spring that has always been through there.

RB: Right, right.

TS: It's called Cedar Creek and it feeds the— Anyway, she showed me a twelve-inch trout, brown trout. The guys'd come down and bait her hook and everything else.

RB: Oh, that's nice. That's great

TS: She's down there.

RB: How about your brothers? Are they both alive?

TS: Yes. My second brother, I have not been in contact with, but my younger brother —

RB: Yep.

TS: — he moved out to, he's in Colorado now, but he did live out in this area —

RB: Okay. Oh, he did?

TS: — with me.

RB: Nice.

TS: I've included him, 'cause we have some time-share up at Avon, Colorado.

RB: Oh, very good.

TS: I set it up years ago, and so forth, and they would come up and would do their thing with us.

RB: Okay.

TS: And that kinda thing.

RB: Well, let me ask you, how did you get into the [United States] Navy? How did that work?

TS: Well, it was like after everybody finished work—

RB: Yeah.

TS: — they would always have, they would always go to the bar, play shuffleboard, they'd play this, that and the other. Just a social time. This wasn't, well they had, maybe they'd have a few drunks.

RB: Sure.

TS: But everybody who you worked with and everything else. So my dad was there one time. Of course, I had a newspaper route.

RB: Oh, you did?

TS: Right on the edge of town.

RB: Okay.

TS: I would have to go in and do the newspapers and stuff.

RB: Yeah.

TS: I'd come in, they'd always know that I always get my root beer and I could spend a little time there.

RB: Yep.

TS: And he'd either send me home or he'd come home with me.

RB: Okay.

TS: And so, so, so, one night he had maybe a, and boiler maker is a shot glass, not a shot in the beer.

RB: Oh.

TS: Then you back off [with the handle]. It's done slowly. It's not done like—

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: — these kids I seen around.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Anyway, he was, he had, he'd been there too long.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: So when they had told me that, he said, "I'm telling you, mother won't sign for me."

RB: No.

TS: "Absolutely."

RB: Alright.

TS: He said, 'I know. I won't sign for you either. But if you were gonna go in, what would you go in?' I said, "The [United States] Marine Corps."

RB: Yeah.

TS: [Laughter.]

RB: Why the Marine Corps? Why was that?

TS: Well, you know, of course they had all the— World War II, with all the propaganda movies, John Wayne, and —

RB: Sure!

TS: — *The Battle of Iwo Jima* and everything else, really wonderful.

RB: Sure, okay.

TS: Everybody. The good guys always won.

RB: Yeah. [Laughter] Okay.

TS: So, I told him, “Well, I’m going in.” He said, “What will you go?” I said, “The Marine Corps.” So he said, “Well, we’ll talk about it later.”

RB: Yeah, okay.

TS: So, come a little bit later, he said, “I won’t do that.” He said, “I won’t do the Marine Corps.”

RB: Alright.

TS: He said, “But maybe somethin’ else. What about the [United States] Coast Guard?”

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: No, no, no.

RB: What did you think of the Coast Guard?

TS: No. No. “What about the [United States] Army?” I said, “The Army? No way.”

RB: Yeah.

TS: “Okay.” He said, “Well, what about, what about the [United States] Navy?”

RB: Yeah.

TS: I said, “I want to go to the Marine Corps.”

RB: Right, you had your mind made up.

TS: Yep. I had my mind made up.

RB: Yep.

TS: He said, "I'll tell you what." So we went about two weeks. I brought the papers in for him to sign again.

RB: And you're seventeen, right?

TS: Yes.

RB: Okay.

TS: And he says, "Okay. I'll sign them, but it's for the Navy."

RB: Right. Okay.

TS: So he put on the paper: for Navy.

RB: For the Navy. [Laughter.] Alright.

TS: So he, because all recruiting papers were the same at that time. I don't know, I don't remember that close, but anyway it was—

RB: Okay, so you took your application back to the, I don't know, was it —

TS: The Navy recruiting office.

RB: — the Navy recruiting office. Okay.

TS: They told me I took it to the Navy recruiting officer and I picked up a thing, so that's when you had to sign.

RB: You took it back there.

TS: Yeah.

RB: Alright. And what happened?

TS: So then I went to the Navy recruiting office, "Oh, you're great! This is wonderful! You can leave tomorrow. Pack your bag. You're goin'."

RB: Right.

TS: So they shipped me down to “Phillfydelaphia.”

RB: Oh, yeah.

TS: On a Liberty Bell Limited. That was one trolley.

RB: Okay.

TS: Those things could go sixty miles an hour. On those tracks you could be swinging and swaying [inaudible].

RB: A speed train [laughter].

TS: Oh, yeah.

RB: [Laughter] Okay.

TS: From downtown Allentown. Anyway, so I got my bag packed and everything else. I go down there. They put me on a bus and I go to this place called Bainbridge, Maryland. I have no idea what it is. It was a base during World War II. They shut it down and they opened it up during the Korean War and it was sixteen weeks.

RB: Okay, basic training for you?

TS: Yeah.

RB: Alright. How was that? What do you remember about basic training?

TS: I remember going around a grinder with a Springfield rifle.

RB: Oh, yeah?

TS: And I remember —

RB: You say going around a grinder? What does that mean?

TS: The place where they do all the calisthenics out there.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: Out in the open.

RB: Alright, okay.

TS: And they had a race track —

RB: Okay.

TS: — around it.

RB: The drill field? Okay.

TS: Yeah, that is where they drilled. That was the grinder.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: And so. I haven't thought of that in years.

RB: How'd you do with the physical training and that aspect of it?

TS: Well, I was a big kid, a farm kid, don't forget.

RB: You said you were a big kid, how tall were you?

TS: I was about six-foot-one.

RB: Wow! Okay.

TS: But there was one thing, I was fair skinned.

RB: Yeah. Were there others who weren't fair skinned?

TS: Well, they had done, the Navy wanted people, this was the Korean War [Conflict] They wanted to say, you could come in with the buddy system.

RB: Okay.

TS: So what these, what these people from New York, Queens.

RB: Yeah. I don't know anything about Queens.

TS: Well, just figure it's New York.

RB: Okay. New York, alright.

TS: In those days.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Everything was done by communities.

RB: Okay. Queens is on Long Island [New York]?

TS: No, no, no. Queens is not on Long Island.

RB: No?

TS: It's near Shea Stadium.

RB: Okay, alright.

TS: And anyway, it was Italiano.

RB: Oh, okay. Alright.

TS: And off the same block. Gangs.

RB: Okay.

TS: So the whole gang came in.

RB: Alright. Like *West Side Story* or something? All those [New York gangs]?

TS: Well, yeah. It was a lot like that. After I saw that, it was like that. Anyway, it was all the gang.

RB: Okay.

TS: And the sixteen weeks were hell.

RB: Yeah?

TS: Because they'd mess up. I'd put my stuff down for inspection and they'd come walking past and they would take a stick and mess it up.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: They'd do all [kinds of things.] Big farm kid —

RB: Yeah, right, right.

TS: — from Pennsylvania.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And they messed with me, just, they made my bunks, they did everything and would say, "It was him."

RB: Oh.

TS: They'd do this, they'd do that and say, "It was him." So I got the idea, that's when I became a loner. I was not much of a loner before, but I became a loner then.

RB: I see. Just trying to look out for yourself and survive?

TS: Yeah. I'd sit down at the chow hall, go to chow line. Two or three of 'em would sit down by me.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Then they'd take my food.

RB: Oh, forget that.

TS: Yeah, it was, it was, it was then. This was, I,— you don't go back that far. It was a pretty, pretty rank order.

RB: Yeah, I can imagine.

TS: It wasn't fun.

RB: So you made it through sixteen weeks and did they send you someplace else for some advanced training?

TS: Made it through. Yes, they did because I was such a good student,—

RB: Oh, yeah?

TS: — had such a good mind, they decided they would make me aviation.

RB: Ah.

TS: That made different stripes here, half-chevron.

RB: Okay.

TS: They were green.

RB: Okay.

TS: The regular navy-blue ones were for service someplace. I don't know what's happening. I have no idea what's happening.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: They were going to send me to aviation familiarization school.

RB: Where was that?

TS: Outside the camps at Norman, Oklahoma.

RB: Oh, okay. Had you ever been out West, that far West before in your life?

TS: [Laughter] Are you kidding?

RB: Oklahoma? Where's that?

TS: Where in the hell is that?

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: So now, when— and I had never been exposed to, I had never been exposed to the Mason-Dixon Line.

RB: Oh, right.

TS: So, we get on, we get on a bus, no, we get on a train. We stop —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — and all the Blacks go to the back.

RB: Oh.

TS: We sit there, and [wonder] what the hell is going on.

RB: Oh, really? Yeah.

TS: There was no sin in using the “N” word then.

RB: No, no.

TS: Niggers, they had to get in the back.

RB: Was this the way of life at that time, in the '50s?

TS: Oh, yeah.

RB: Okay. And that's because you had gone from the North, South of the Mason-Dixon Line and the rules in Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, whatever —

TS: But don't forget, this is my, this is my group from the barracks.

RB: Right. Yeah.

TS: From the Queens, all the time.

RB: Yeah, oh.

TS: That's where I learned the word.

RB: Okay.

TS: So, it didn't have to be south. Someone is different than you are.

RB: Yeah, I see.

TS: It's just anything different.

RB: Of course.

TS: Anyway, so the train takes us up, we transfer, the train comes off two or three cars, whatever the hell it is from Bainbridge, and they split 'em up. Different places going different places with these fellas. I got the one to Chicago [Illinois].

RB: Ah.

TS: We got up to Chicago, we got to cross the Mason-Dixon Line again. The Blacks could come up and —

RB: Oh, yeah.

TS: — we're going to Chicago. Chicago, we sit there for almost two days.

RB: Hmm.

TS: In the cars.

RB: Really?

TS: They brought us some box lunches, or some sandwiches. That's all we had to eat.

RB: Wow! Okay.

TS: “Don’t worry. You will get something to eat as soon as you get there.”

RB: [Laughter] Thanks!

TS: So another day and a half on the train, the train we got —

RB: Right, right.

TS: — to get off to Oklahoma —

RB: Okay.

TS: — stopped here, stopped there. And where in the hell is this place? What is going on?

RB: [Yes.]

TS: We had eight weeks. When we got there it is just, the sun is just going down. It is 112°F.

RB: Wow! Okay.

TS: Okay.

RB: ’Cause by this time, when you enlisted, was that in ’52?

TS: Yeah, the beginning of ’52.

RB: The beginning of ’52. You spent four months and you’re already into the spring of, late spring, and then you’re off— So, by the time you get to Oklahoma, yeah, it’s startin’ to warm up.

TS: Yeah. And we get to this gate —

RB: [Yes.]

TS: — and it’s got a chain on it and it looks like an anchor chain. It’s got things like that [gesturing]—

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: — goin’ around it. So we have these cattle cars, they’ve got tractor-trailer, they haul us again —

RB: Okay.

TS: — from the train over there. And nobody knows. The college is ignoring us, 'cause they don't know nothin', you know.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: So we're trying, we tried a couple of hacksaws that they had and everything else to get through.

RB: No way.

TS: No way.

RB: Not that way [laughter].

TS: No way. We must have messed around. It was almost dark.

RB: Wow.

TS: When somebody from the college felt sorry for us, come over and said, "What's the, what's happening?"

RB: Right.

TS: "We can't get in. We're supposed to get in here." Think, a whole bunch of us, 'cause they picked up some along the way.

RB: Oh, gosh.

TS: And we were the first group in there.

RB: And you're —

TS: They had closed this down during World War II.

RB: Oh?

TS: In other words, they must have had four, five, six thousand bases around the United States.

RB: Yeah. Sure.

TS: And World War II, when it ended, it ended.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And they shipped everybody home.

RB: Yes. So, there's no one there to greet you [laughter].

TS: There's no one, no.

RB: Wow [laughter]!

TS: So now we go in, we can't even get in the house. They're hackin' the padlocks off and everything else to get us in. They said, "Well, there it is." So we had springs. We had nothing else to sleep on, but, you know, I was learnin'.

RB: Oh man! What did I get into?

TS: Yeah. So they said— and then, and then what we did for my eight weeks there —

RB: Right.

TS: — guess what? Clean the barracks! Get ready for somebody else to come in.

RB: Well, great!

TS: Clean, clean, clean. Get the galley going.

RB: Yes.

TS: Mess cookin', mess cookin' meaning taking care of cleaning and everything else.

RB: Yes.

TS: Peel spuds and do whatever. And so that was eight weeks shot, gone.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: It was gone. And so anyway, they didn't have any green boards, they had chalkboards. You know how that is.

RB: Oh, yeah.

TS: I remember that, yeah. They had no erasers.

RB: Oh, no.

TS: Everybody was, "Well, if we can write on that, how are we going to get it off of there?"

RB: Yeah.

TS: So then we sit down there and some idiot instructor yelled, “This is the wing.”

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: I used to build aircraft, model airplanes during World War II.

RB: Okay, so you knew a thing or two.

TS: I had worked with the little ribs and sticks and everything else, built them from scratch and made them fly.

RB: Oh, man, sure.

TS: Anyway, they did that. Finally, I got a set of orders.

RB: Okay, get out of here.

TS: What the hell is this? BP22?

RB: BP22.

TS: Barbers Point, Hawaii. Where in the hell is that? So before that I, no, I didn’t get a set of orders for that. I got [them] to Treasure Island [California].

RB: Oh.

TS: Treasure Island, San Francisco in California.

RB: Right, right.

TS: Huh? Really? So they have these squares, about a 100 of ’em out there.

RB: Right.

TS: And they used to stand us out there with our sea bags.

RB: Okay.

TS: And they would, they would make us bend over and strip naked and —

RB: Oh, gosh! Yeah

TS: — it wasn’t fun, it wasn’t, there was no women.

RB: No, no. Right. Everybody, you’re all the same. What’s the deal?

TS: No, we weren't all the same.

RB: No?

TS: No, because this was the first time I been around and seen anybody's genitals other than my own.

RB: Oh, my gosh, really, yeah, I guess that makes sense if you weren't involved in sports and stuff. Oh, so what'd you think of that? That must have been kinda different.

TS: Well, I used to blush.

RB: Oh, yeah [laughter]?

TS: That was one of the other things back in Bainbridge they used to do to get me.

RB: Oh. Oh.

TS: "Let's make the kid blush."

RB: Oh, come one.

TS: I had white hair, blond, blond hair.

RB: Oh, man, you were a target.

TS: The bigger I was, maybe if I wasn't so big I wouldn't have been as big a target.

RB: Right, right. And so I don't understand, so why did they have you guys strip naked? 'Cause that was at Treasure Island?

TS: Yes. They were checking on us for physicality.

RB: That was part of your physical exam?

TS: Yeah. Before boot camp I lost four teeth when I went down to boot camp. I lost all of my wisdom teeth.

RB: Oh? They pulled them out?

TS: Downg, downg. downg, downg. [gesturing with hands showing teeth getting pulled out]. Just like that. You remember these old stainless-steel bowls from the war sitting around?

RB: Yeah.

TS: They'd throw [the teeth] in, "katang, katang, katang" [gesturing].

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: They gave me, "You can go back to the barracks for six hours now."

RB: Oh, man.

TS: My mouth is full of cotton.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: It was like, I lost, I was down to twenty-eight teeth before I ever, ever got out of boot camp.

RB: [Laughter] Oh, gosh!

TS: It was, it was rough.

RB: Yeah.

TS: It was rough and then I got over there and hell, I didn't know— what was I doing. I come into Pearl Harbor, so they put me on this APA. [Haskell-class attack transports (APA) were amphibious assault ships of the United States Navy created in 1944. They were designed to transport 1,500 troops and their combat equipment, and land them on hostile shores with the ships' integral landing craft.]. But I'm getting smart now.

RB: APA? What's that?

TS: That's a troop transport.

RB: Okay, so an APA. So you left Treasure Island?

TS: I went down to the Presidio [of San Francisco, California] and they loaded us aboard. There was all services aboard.

RB: Right. And you headed off to —

TS: Headed to Korea, but they stopped along in Hawaii and dropped people off.

RB: At Pearl Harbor.

TS: At Pearl Harbor and at Guam. They dropped people off at Guam.

RB: I see.

TS: They would do that. Then on the way back they would pick up people, take them back.

RB: But your destination was Hawaii?

TS: Hawaii.

RB: Oh, okay. And what would you call it, Barbers Point?

TS: [Naval Air Station] Barbers Point. And they used to burn the cane fields.

RB: Ah, okay. Right. Sugar cane in Hawaii.

TS: Are you familiar with Hawaii?

RB: [Yes,] been there.

TS: Okay. Well, you know where Waipio is?

RB: Yeah, is that across from Oahu? Where the marine —?

TS: No, Oahu is out, going, going to, when you get out into Camp Wahiawa.

RB: Okay.

TS: To the end, there's one stop light and you take a right goes up to, what's the name of the Army base up there?

RB: Oh, Schofield Barracks?

TS: Scofield.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: Goes up to Scofield. We went left. It's where they take all the buses for the luaus now.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: Okay, that was, that was the plantation, that was where they processed the sugar cane.

RB: Now what was it called again?

TS: Barbers Point.

RB: Barbers Point?

TS: Yes. And we, they moved it over from, what was the base across from the way?

RB: There is a little town, Kapolei. And then there's Kapolei Airport now. Oh, I see Waipahu?

TS: Waipahu.

RB: Which is right by Pearl City, and then further down.

TS: Home of the monkeys. Everybody stopped there and had a beer and watched the monkeys fornicate. Go ahead.

RB: Okay [laughter]!

TS: There wasn't much to entertain us —

RB: I guess [laughter]!

TS: — in my day.

RB: Okay, so you ended up at, or past Waipahu and went to Barbers Point.

TS: You see it there?

RB: Yeah.

TS: Barbers Point was a Naval Air Station.

RB: Right.

TS: And for, across the [inaudible], on the other side of the island, Kaneohe.

RB: Oh yes, Kaneohe.

TS: They moved the Kaneohe Naval Air Station over to Barbers Point when they opened it up.

RB: Okay, I see.

TS: Okay? And since it's shut down, it's one of the thousands of bases they BRAC-ed. [Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is a process by a United States federal government commission to increase United States Department of Defense efficiency by planning the end of the Cold War realignment and closure of military installations.]

RB: Yeah.

TS: Okay, since they shut it down, they had given that land, and so there was no more cane no more.

RB: Okay, right.

TS: They grow pineapples now.

RB: Right.

TS: And they aren't half as bad.

RB: Right.

TS: But out there, just there by the, where they used to, what do you do with the cane? You process it?

RB: Process it, make sugar. Right.

TS: Right there, they have all these trees out there. They're palm trees and this is where they take these hundreds of tourists out there.

RB: Oh.

TS: And a little kid goes up the tree. They have a luau and they have a pig, and they do this.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: Then they put you on a bus. I know in '87, I went back.

RB: Oh, you did?

TS: I said okay to my wife, I said, 'cause I wasn't married at the time I was doing all this.

RB: Sure, sure.

TS: So I says, "Well, I'll show you what a luau is."

RB: [Yes.]

TS: I should've stayed at, what's the name of the rest-stay? Can't think of it. It is right down by Waikiki Beach there, down there.

RB: Oh, right.

TS: They have a real nice one now. It was just wood when I was there.

RB: [Laughter] A military hotel?

TS: Yeah, military. Retirees are eligible to stay there.

RB: Right there. I forget what it is. I have been there, too.

TS: Anyway, they used to do luaus down there and they ran fantastic luaus.

RB: Right.

TS: The same way with the beach. Their beach is better than Waikiki could ever be.

RB: Yeah. I went there in 1988.

TS: That was one year after we went over there.

RB: Near Kaneohe there is an Air Force beach [Bellows Air Force Station].

TS: Oh yeah, yeah, the beach with the things, the cabins? I used to want to go, I used to want to go with and do some Space-A [Space Available] travel.

RB: Yeah,

TS: And that was one of the places to go.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: Over on the big island they had the Army up on the hill, up the hill there in Hilo. The Army, I forget what they called that place. I can't come up with them anymore.

RB: Yeah, okay. Well, so tell me, you got to Barbers Point, what was your job going to be there?

TS: I didn't know. I went to school. There was a school I went to.

RB: Okay.

TS: I went to aviation electronics school. So I became a aviation electronics man. NEC [NAVY Enlistment Classification], your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty], —

RB: Right.

TS: — was my baseline, what I was in the Navy. But in the Navy, what I found out was that you did everything, that they were called collateral duties.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: So I had all these different NECs behind me, here I was with my main, my main thing was aviation electronics.

RB: Okay.

TS: But the minute I got out there they want to fly me. They were short of air crews.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: So they had a program called aviation combat aircrewman.

RB: Okay.

TS: So I don't know. An extra \$50.00 a month. Hazardous duty pay, right?

RB: And they sent you for training on that?

TS: Well, it was, there was no training.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: The syllabus was that each squadron or each type [of] aircraft had this thing which the squadron had to make up a syllabus to do it.

RB: Okay.

TS: I had twin 50s, twin 20s, and so forth, and I had to fly 'em. They would take a jig tow and there would be a B-26, and take a target behind it. I had to get, I got two tries. I had to get the both of them.

RB: Okay.

TS: We had two turrets on the tail. We had—

RB: What kind of aircraft was it?

TS: P-2.

RB: P-2, okay.

TS: RB-69 for you Air Force folks.

RB: Okay [laughter].

TS: They had one sitting right outside a static display, like they have down at, like Nellis [Air Force Base, Las Vegas, Nevada].

RB: [Yes.]

TS: Or Hill [Air Force Base, Ogden, Weber County, Utah]. You have static displays of the Air Force aircraft.

RB: Right.

TS: Well, this old thing is sitting right out there all by itself. At a, put RB-69 in there.

RB: Okay.

TS: Most people in the Air Force don't even realize that they ever had one.

RB: So, I'm looking up a P-2, a Lockheed P-2 Neptune?

TS: Yes.

RB: Yeah.

TS: The early ones was a P-2, became two, three, four and so on, until they got to seven.

RB: So this is kind of a picture I came up with.

TS: Oh, yeah.

RB: Does that look like it? [showing TS a picture from RB's phone of the aircraft.]

TS: Yes, except the seat. When I got in it, I came back to the— that's the anti-ASW.

RB: Right, right.

TS: This is, see, this is a dome there. That's the observation dome.

RB: Right, right.

TS: This is a magnetometer.

RB: Yeah, okay.

TS: See this is, so when you're flying over the ocean, you have a chance to do that, have a bird on the tail, have a magnetic anomaly.

RB: Right, right.

TS: Of course, you could have a whale, but you could have a submarine. For submarines, we had to have this because they would snorkel.

RB: Right, oh, okay.

TS: That part of it became obsolete, was when they went to nukes.

RB: Right.

TS: There was no way to do anything.

RB: Right.

TS: They didn't snorkel.

RB: Yeah, and they could stay in the water for a long, long time. Well, so, you did aviation electronics and so they would take you up and they'd show you what you need to do on-the-job-training on the P-2?

TS: I had, well, they had a syllabus. I had complete, complete, complete, complete, complete.

RB: Yes.

TS: Including navigation, including navigation. I can still do a sextant. I can still do this. Served me well later on.

RB: Yep.

TS: So.

RB: As this collateral duty, you end up learning aviation electronics on the P-2?

TS: P-2. But I ended up the first tech.

RB: Okay.

TS: As I progressed through, I was the first tech.

RB: Okay.

TS: Which means I had four or five other techs underneath me.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: See, because we had the radars.

RB: Right.

TS: You had the comm [communications] equipment.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: You're not familiar with any of this.

RB: No.

TS: You think—

RB: It's okay. I thought I would—

TS: You have all those different types of things.

RB: Yeah.

TS: The Air Force after World War II, and they got away from the Army, they decided that the best thing to do would go union. So they made specialists.

RB: Oh, yeah?

TS: And they weren't responsible for anything else. Well, this combat or crew thing, that I was supposed to do everything.

RB: You had to know how to do everything.

TS: I could change a tire or I could do this, I could do — No, I'm serious.

RB: I find that very impressive. Which is good because you knew a lot about a lot of things.

TS: Well, yes, a lot of things —

RB: Yeah. Okay. So this is in—

TS: Not only that, did we maintain it, we had to operate it.

RB: Okay, yeah.

TS: See, we didn't have maintainers. So, that meant, if we were getting briefed to go out, when we got up to Alaska, Kodiak —

RB: Okay.

TS: — and we would go out, we would go down the Aleutian Chain, we had a two hour, two hours getting ready to get out of the ready room.

RB: Okay.

TS: Out of the hangar to go out to the aircraft. Well, somebody had to go around and make sure that the aircraft was pre-flighted.

RB: Okay, sure.

TS: And it wasn't kick tires.

RB: No.

TS: No, not for us.

RB: Did you have a checklist of things you had to go through?

TS: Oh, we had a—

RB: Checklist for everything.

TS: — checklist for everything.

RB: [Laughter] Of course!

TS: And people saying, "Did you do this, did you do that?" Well, that was my first outfit, but I got my wings out of that.

RB: Okay.

TS: These wings, by the way, they have done away with them about 1960.

RB: Oh.

TS: Now the Marine Corps still uses 'em. They were Marine Corps, they claim they were Marine Corps wings, but they're not, because —

RB: Right.

TS: — because mine, I think the Marine Corps bought— I have my original pair of wings.

RB: Do you still have them?

TS: Yeah, they are over in the Mesquite [Nevada] —

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

TS: — Veterans Center.

RB: Oh.

TS: I have a half of a mannequin.

RB: No kidding?

TS: I have my full flight jacket with all its patches on it.

RB: Yeah?

TS: And I have, of course I've got my wings on.

RB: Okay. This is the Veterans Center in Mesquite?

TS: Yeah.

RB: Okay.

TS: Yeah.

RB: Good.

TS: Are you familiar with Mesquite?

RB: No, I haven't been there. I know Mesquite a little bit, but I've never been there. Well, so you were in at Barbers Point for how long?

TS: Almost four years.

RB: Four years, okay. And Korea ended summer of '53, more or less, and so you were in Hawaii when all that took place, I guess.

TS: Yeah.

RB: And —

TS: Well, we had one shot down, 'cause we went to Naha, [Okinawa, Japan]. We deployed to Naha.

RB: Right, on Okinawa?

TS: Okinawa, yes.

RB: Yeah, okay.

TS: The Air Force was up living in bucker huts [Quonset?] and we were down in, you know the M.A.S.H. tents?

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: That's where we were living in.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: [Laughter] The Navy went first class all the way.

RB: Oh, yeah!

TS: So when we'd take off, we'd fly, every, every, we had one aircraft. That was Number 7.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: And it would fly up, it would fly up, each crew took a turn.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Crew, we had twelve crews—

RB: Okay.

TS: — take a turn, flying.

RB: Right.

TS: And we'd go right to the Yangtze River [China] and fly up at 5,000 feet.

RB: Oh, alright.

TS: And fly out. The bomb bay doors were taken off and they had this humongous camera.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: And the two photographers, there were two photographers aboard. There was fourteen aboard.

RB: Right.

TS: If there wasn't any, then there was twelve.

RB: Okay. And the purpose was to get intelligence?

TS: It's like flying up, yeah, flyin' up a mountain, —

RB: To see what was going on.

TS: — flyin' up and down the Mississippi River, seeing where all the traffic is going.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: They've been doin' it for years.

RB: Okay, so you were on—

TS: Until they got their first fire patrol gunnery in 1953.

RB: Yeah, and what —

TS: Then they shot one down.

RB: Oh, okay, yeah.

TS: So it went into the drink.

RB: Oops. Did it kill anyone?

TS: I'll tell you what. If you want to know what I did, when I did it, —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — you go, go to the library—

RB: Right.

TS: — and get a [book by a] guy by the name of Barrows, there are several Barrows, but this is the one Barrows and he wrote a book about reconnaissance. [*By Any Means Necessary: America's Secret Air War in the Cold War*, by William E. Burrows, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2001)] And it tells, it tells all the people that were lost, all the Air Force people that were lost in reconnaissance, that were never there.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: See, at once this all stopped, this all stopped, when Gary Powers was shot down. [Francis Gary Powers, pilot of CIA U-2 spy plane was shot down in Soviet Union airspace, May 1, 1960.]

RB: Right, it was '61, I guess.

TS: Yeah, but you can —

RB: Okay. He wrote about that in the 1950s? 1950s era?

TS: No.

RB: No?

TS: That was a, I think it was the '60s.

RB: Okay.

TS: When in the hell was it? Might have been in the '70s.

RB: Okay, well, I'll see if I can find it.

TS: Because I went to the last reunion, [it] was here in Las Vegas. My wife passed away, was 2002 and he was pushing his book at that reunion.

RB: Okay.

TS: It was 2002, yeah, 2003, somewhere in there.

RB: Alright.

TS: But he did the research. See, his research was predicated upon the fifty year, the fifty-year deal of the release of information of being able to use the information.

RB: Right, right.

TS: Remember the fifty-year deal?

RB: Yes.

TS: See, that's where all of us, or most of us, were sworn, we all had tops.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Top, top clearances and so, so we could not speak of this or anything else. And like today, everything's done digitally, but they had people going around from the Navy, and the CID [Criminal Investigation Command], and the NCIS people, people walking and following us around.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: Make sure we weren't giving up [information] with our drinking habits or what habits, and so forth.

RB: Okay. So you finished up at —

TS: RB-69.

RB: Okay.

TS: Got a picture of the main gate at Wright Patterson Air Force Base [Dayton, Ohio].

RB: Alright. So it is RB-69?

TS: Yeah.

RB: I was stationed at Wright Patterson, by the way. RB-69. Lockheed RB-69 Neptune. [Laughter] Bomber aircraft.

TS: [Laughter] I used to kid my Air Force buddy, "Well, you know what soixante neuf means [laughter] in French, don't you?" [Laughter]

RB: Yeah.

TS: "Well, Yeah." It's a sexual connotation.

RB: Oh, I don't know. What does it mean?

TS: What?

RB: Say it again.

TS: Soixante neuf.

RB: Soixante neuf?

TS: Yeah. And that means sixty-nine.

RB: Ah, okay.

TS: So therefore sixty-nine means —

RB: Yeah, right, right, right, I got it! So Lockheed RB-69 was the aircraft version of, "Designation RB-69, it was applied to seven Neptune twin engine land-based patrol planes acquired by the Air Force with special electronic intelligence gathering missions."

TS: Yay!

RB: “They were fitted with side-looking airborne radar — ”

TS: Radar.

RB: “— on the starboard side of the aft fuselage and were used for intelligence gathering around the Soviet and Chinese periphery.”

TS: Gee! I think so. And what do you think the Navy was doing with them? Oh?

RB: [Laughter] You were just sightseeing [laughter]!

TS: Yes, well, and see, my first tour was done in Alaska.

RB: Says, “The origin and history of these planes is sort of mysterious.” [Laughter] “It’s not [clear] whether the planes were transferred from the Navy to the Air Force, or the other way around. Rene Francillon’s book [*Lockheed Aircraft Since 1913*, 1987] on Lockheed aircraft has five of them from the Air Force being built by Lockheed directly for the Air Force, whereas two were modified from unspecified U.S. Navy airplanes.”

TS: [Laughter] Right.

RB: Okay, interesting. So you were involved with those aircraft.

TS: No. I know of them.

RB: Know of them? Okay.

TS: The thing of it was, why were you— why are you using Navy aircraft? I talked with somebody from the Air Force. “I never heard of it.” I said, “Well, the Air Force has some knowledge of it.”

RB: Right.

TS: “No you don’t.”

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: “Yes, you do.”

RB: Right, right, okay.

TS: But it was only recently, in the last years , that I found out that they had that static display outside of Wright Patterson [laughter].

RB: Wright Patterson, interesting, yeah.

TS: Yeah.

RB: So where did you go after Barbers Point?

TS: I got out.

RB: Oh, you did? So this was just a four-year turn?

TS: Four-year turn. Now, get this: I decided that, well, I could go over to the east coast and get a billet over there on the east coast where I could go home and get to know my folks all over again.

RB: Yep, right, right.

TS: 'Cause my mother had shunned me. She just wouldn't even talk to me.

RB: Oh, because you got in the Navy?

TS: I say— in those days it took — Yeah.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: And it took almost, if not a whole month's pay for what I was getting at the time—

RB: Yeah, I see.

TS: — to call her on the telephone. You had to stand in line —

RB: Sure.

TS: — get quarters —

RB: Right.

TS: — stand in line, you had to go down to Barbers Point from out in the cane fields where I was at, and stand in line to call her on Mother's Day.

RB: Oh, gosh, okay.

TS: And she wouldn't come to the phone.

RB: Oh man, is that true? That's tough. How'd that make you feel?

TS: I sent her, well, I sent her, in those days you didn't wire flowers. The flowers were actually sent from Hawaii to there.

RB: Oh, my gosh.

TS: And I sent her an orchid from there.

RB: Right.

TS: They guaranteed it was gonna stay. They told me that she wouldn't look at it.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: Yeah, it was, it was pretty, pretty iffy.

RB: Bad stuff. So that you wanted to get back to the east coast and —

TS: Well, if nothing else—

RB: — re-establish relationships with your family.

TS: I was still single.

RB: Sure.

TS: So I got out. I went to work for the PB&[N]E Railroad.

RB: The what?

TS: The PB&[N]E.

RB: The P-B and E. What was that? What does that stand for? The Baltimore?

TS: Philadelphia, Bethlehem, and New England Railroads.

RB: Oh, okay. Alright.

TS: They had a 157-mile track inside the Bethlehem Steel.

RB: Okay

TS: It was an official railroad and when we made drags, we'd put drags together and take them out for the main lines of Pennsylvania. The Lehigh Railroads would pick 'em up —

RB: Okay.

TS: — and take 'em where they were going to go.

RB: Alright. What was your job?

TS: I was a brakeman.

RB: Okay.

TS: I—

RB: Hey, good. So this is about 1956 or so?

TS: Yeah.

RB: Alright. And did you move back to Allentown?

TS: The guy who was the conductor on the job was eighty-three years old.

RB: Oh, wow!

TS: And the reason they hired me was because I spoke some Pennsylvania German.

RB: Ah, no kidding.

TS: It seems like the Pennsylvania Germans have got an “in” on this railroad.

RB: Okay.

TS: And they have a lock on the board.

RB: Right.

TS: Unless you were Pennsylvania German and somebody died, you didn't even get on. I didn't know this.

RB: Wow! Was this guy eighty-three, he's holding up the —

TS: Oh, yes, he's not gonna retire and —

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: So, they had one that got in through the war.

RB: Yeah.

TS: He was a Pollock [Polish].

RB: Okay.

TS: So we, now these don't mean nothin' to you, because you're from California.

RB: Right.

TS: In those days it was, it was just that.

RB: Okay, sure.

TS: And so I, I got in there and so he, I got talkin' to him. I said, "How long have you been on here?" I'd been complaining about getting on the "extra board." I like to know what I'm in to and how long it's gonna take, and so forth and so on.

RB: Right.

TS: I said, "Well, how come you couldn't become— instead of a apprentice brakeman?"

RB: Right.

TS: "Well," he said, "Well, I got in during the war."

RB: Oh.

TS: I said, "Well, how long is it?" He said somethin' like eleven or twelve years [laughter] or whatever it was.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: He said, "I'm not going anywhere. They tried to get me out of this place for years and they'll never do it."

RB: Right.

TS: "Try to find somethin' wrong with me. Or Whatever."

RB: So how long did you work for the railroad?

TS: Two months.

RB: Two months, okay.

TS: Then I went in. I was an E-5 [Enlisted Grade 5, Navy Petty Officer Second Class].

RB: Right.

TS: With my wings.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And then I went back over to the recruiting station in Allentown. I said, "Well, I'll go back in." So I think maybe an aviation electronics technician.

RB: Right, right.

TS: So take me back in. That's one of them that they would take me back in.

RB: Right.

TS: They said, "No, we can't take you back in."

RB: We don't need that.

TS: We don't need it. I said, "Well, what seems to be the holdup?" "Well, we don't need any E-5s."

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: "Oh, what do you need?" I saw it comin'.

RB: Oh.

TS: "Well, how about an E-3 [Enlisted Grade 3, Navy Seaman]?"

RB: Oh, man.

TS: I said, "Huh?"

RB: "I put four years in!" [Laughter.]

TS: He said, "Oh, well, yeah, we could do it. We could do that."

RB: Oh.

TS: And I don't even have to have anybody sign for me.

RB: So they gave you an E-5 again?

TS: No.

RB: Oh, E-3?

TS: E-3.

RB: E-3, that's it.

TS: Here I am. You know what a hash mark is?

RB: Yeah.

TS: That's four, it represents four years. Can you imagine three piddly ass little half chevrons and a hash mark for anybody in the naval community?

RB: Oh, man.

TS: Well, boy, that Airdale [sailors assigned to the air wing] must be a real screw-up [laughter]!

RB: Yeah, no, that's true.

TS: So I go down, I go down to Philadelphia.

RB: Right.

TS: They sent me down to Philadelphia. Oh, they paid for my other trip down to the Liberty Bell Center.

RB: Yeah? Right, right.

TS: Go down there. I check in. And in my day, I still got hammocks.

RB: Okay.

TS: And the only place I have ever had to try to get a hammock, to use a hammock, was in the receiving station in "Phillydelaphia", on Market Street.

RB: [Laughter] Okay, ahh.

TS: So, I rig it up and I say, you know. And I try to get in it, shhh, and you're supposed to— what you do is you go to the, they have a straw locker and you're issued a fart sack, which is a big sack, like a bed cover.

RB: Okay, right.

TS: Okay. And you fill that up with straw. And that's what you're supposed to sleep on.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: Now this, you'd think by this time it wouldn't be that archaic.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: But it was.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: And I couldn't get in my hammock.

RB: Oh, no!

TS: So take the thing down and I put it down on the deck. And I take the fart sack and I, that's where— I was tired.

RB: Oh, yeah.

TS: I learned to sleep most any place, you know.

RB: Yeah.

TS: But up in the Alaska thing, we used to go out there and, with just archaic stuff.

RB: Well, so you came in, back in as an E-3 and what was your job gonna be?

TS: Oh, I was in Navy aviation electronics tech. You are going to do what you were.

RB: Oh.

TS: Oh, don't you worry, don't worry about that. They weren't gonna take that away.

RB: But you, they had already trained you, they just weren't gonna give you the status of an E-5 anymore.

TS: That's correct.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: Now, if I went to the Air Force, they were going to give me an E-6.

RB: What?

TS: But ol', ol' true blue and —

RB: Yeah, I can't turn my back on the Navy, huh?

TS: — I can't turn my back on my Navy. They have got me!

RB: [Laughter.] Alright, so you started back in at, it was kind of like goin' backwards to E-3, cut in pay and all that stuff.

TS: Yeah.

RB: And where did you go then?

TS: I went down to Market Street [Philadelphia].

RB: Okay.

TS: And they cut me a set of orders.

RB: Alright and where were you headed?

TS: I had no money, I had a \$20.00 bill in my pocket.

RB: Yeah.

TS: They would not, they would do cash, they disbursed cash.

RB: Right.

TS: But they wouldn't give me advance pay.

RB: Right.

TS: Okay, because, because I really hadn't been back in that long.

RB: Right.

TS: But they give me a set of orders. I said, "Well, how am I supposed to get there with no money?"

RB: Yeah.

TS: "Well, we did you a favor, effectively, in taking you back in."

RB: Oh, that's great.

TS: "You figure it out."

RB: And where were you supposed to go?

TS: Pier 91, Seattle [Naval Depot, Washington].

RB: Ha! So you had to get to Seattle on your own dime? How did you do that? What did you do, hitchhike?

TS: Well, that was it.

RB: Oh, my gosh, really?

TS: Oh, yeah. I had my sea bag. I had a little handbag.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: I'd stand on the side of the road [doing a hitchhiking gesture with thumb].

RB: Oh, man.

TS: And I'd do that. And in my little handbag, I got some baloney, some mustard, loaf of bread. Somebody would pick me up, "Would you like a sandwich?"

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: That was a nice icebreaker. I don't know. And I talked.

RB: How long did it take you to get to Seattle?

TS: Not long.

RB: Really? You got some good rides?

TS: Oh, I had good rides. Rides were not that— One time they let me out at I-70 before I-70 was really through.

RB: Yeah.

TS: What was actually US-6.

RB: Oh, okay, yeah.

TS: Old US-6. And I could look down and I could see this light—

RB: Yeah.

TS: — down there at Coors.

RB: Oh.

TS: And I'm standing out and it's getting shoes, full uniform, —

RB: Yeah, correct.

TS: — pea coat.

RB: Right.

TS: Flat hat.

RB: Right.

TS: Standing there. Finally this guy comes along.

RB: Yeah.

TS: I'm about to have frostbite.

RB: Yeah.

TS: If I didn't have frostbite.

RB: Right.

TS: But I did have frostbite one time in my feet and my hands.

RB: Oh, man, yeah.

TS: And I'm gonna get it again, because you know I had it up in Alaska.

RB: Right.

TS: And so, I said, wow. He says, "Where you going?" I said, "Pier 91 Seattle ."

RB: Yep.

TS: "Oh," he says, "Good." He says, "If I can get this Cadillac to Salt Lake City [Salt Lake County, Utah] —

RB: Yeah.

TS: "— by tomorrow —"

RB: Right.

TS: — he said, “I can make \$1,000.00.”

RB: Oh.

TS: And he had sandbags in the back seat. And he had sandbags, moves them over, moved me in, “You stay in the back seat.” He had chains on all four wheels.

RB: Wow!

TS: And we went through Rabbit Ears Pass [North Central Colorado] and we got underneath, going up there from Georgetown, we went up that way.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Going up the mountain and there was, no, we couldn’t even stop for a cup of coffee because nothing was going.

RB: Right.

TS: We were the only ones on the road. We had a, it’s morning time now. We get down, get down about four miles down the other side.

RB: Right.

TS: Sun came out.

RB: Oh, nice.

TS: Dry road. He stopped. He pulled over. He pulled all those chains off the car, took all the sandbags, threw them off to the side of the road.

RB: Didn’t need these any more [laughter].

TS: He said, “Come up and sit with me.”

RB: Oh, good.

TS: He said, “Leave your sea bag in the back.”

RB: Okay.

TS: We hit State Street in Salt Lake [City] —

RB: Oh, great!

TS: — and wherever the hell that began at that time, but I know that it was at the sulphur factory, the steel, the smoke [was there and I thought] what in the hell was that. I feel like I'm back in Pennsylvania.

RB: Yeah, really [laughter].

TS: They used bituminous [coal] down there.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Anyway, so that, he said, "I'll take you out here to 80 [Highway 80]."

RB: Okay.

TS: And he almost took me out to Bonneville.

RB: Almost to Wendover [Nevada].

TS: Wendover is where it was.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And he took me out there. He did that for me.

RB: Okay.

TS: And I was out there. I hitchhiked there. I hitchhiked all the way across. I got old Route 30, whatever the hell that was.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: I was goin' back, and the next thing I know I'm coming into Seattle.

RB: Whoa!

TS: He took a turn and went back up that way [gesturing], and he told me what way to go.

RB: Right, right.

TS: Boy, there were some times that I waited two, three, four hours for a lift.

RB: Oh, man, sure.

TS: I'm not gonna make it, and I've got these orders.

RB: Yeah. And you will report by a certain date.

TS: Yeah, report by a certain date. Oh, and they didn't give me an ID card.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: So I'm saying, well, I've got \$12.00 left.

RB: Yeah.

TS: I can afford to go to the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] and cop a shower and everything else.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: Before I find Pier 31.

RB: And made it in time. Okay.

TS: Yeah, Pier 91, Seattle.

RB: This is great.

TS: So. I'm walkin' down the street, sea bag thrown over my back, with this hat on.

RB: Okay.

TS: [Makes a siren sound] Shore Patrol.

RB: Oh, oh.

TS: I don't realize it, but I've got a flat hat on and I'm lookin' around and there is not one sailor around that had a flat hat on. They had white hats.

RB: When you say flat hat, like a wheel hat?

TS: It is like a, we used to call it Donald Duck hats. Ever see the ones that were flat and blue?

RB: Okay.

TS: Flat, says U.S. Navy across the front.

RB: Oh, okay, yeah.

TS: The formal hat. That was the space-A uniform on the east coast.

RB: Oh.

TS: On the west coast it was white hats.

RB: So you got picked up because you were out of uniform?

TS: Yes.

RB: [Laughter] Oh, man!

TS: And these two guys got out of there and they took one look at that, those three half-chevrons and [they must have thought], “Oh, shit, —

RB: Yeah, oh.

TS: — a trouble maker.” They said, “Where are you going?” I’m going to do an over-nighter. “Let’s see, where’s your ID card?” “I don’t have one. But I do have a piece of paper here that says, here’s this set of orders.”

RB: Yeah.

TS: “Where from?” “Phil-Philadelphia?” This was when they had trains stuck in the mountains. I had tippy-toed across the country. That’s how I knew there was a God.

RB: Yeah. [Laughter] Yeah.

TS: For sure. I knew it all along. I was sent to Sunday school. I was sent to the whole thing, confirmation. Anyway —

RB: So the hat is somethin’ like that?

TS: Yes.

RB: Oh, my gosh! You’re wearing that hat? And you show up to Seattle and they’re thinking, “Who is this guy?”

TS: Who is that guy? That’s an older version.

RB: Yeah, here [in the picture from the phone] it’s like 1920. 1918.

TS: World War One.

RB: Okay, yes, sure.

TS: But anyway, [laughter] so, I think— And he said, “Get in.” And they open the back, “Get in.”

RB: Alright.

TS: What am I gonna do? They're Shore Patrol.

RB: Yeah, you get in, right?

TS: They said, "Get in." I was just glad to get off the street.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: I said, I'm beat. They're up front. I hear one of them laughing like hell.

RB: Oh, gosh.

TS: "Where you taking me? You're not gonna take me to the brig." I said, "I get some sort of Captain's Mast, wherever the hell I'm going."

RB: Right.

TS: So my orders said to Bremerton, Washington, see.

RB: Right.

TS: So this Pier 91 Seattle.

RB: Okay.

TS: And then I got Bremerton. But anyway, they take me right down to Pier 91. They said, "Get out." And they laughed. They said, "Lots o' luck!" [Laughter.]

RB: Oh, really.

TS: They laughed. I had white hats in my sea bag. I'll pull one out. I'll get it on.

RB: Right.

TS: One of them told me, "I think you'd better get a good white one out or you're out of uniform."

RB: Oh, good.

TS: I said, "Okay." So anyway, then I get over to Bremerton and that becomes another part, which I did four years lacking two months aboard the good ship Essex [USS Essex (LHD-2)]. It was sittin' there just like that.

RB: Alright.

TS: It had got a new candid deck on it.

RB: Okay.

TS: It was a straight deck carrier, the first one, Number 9. It's the first ship in action when World War II broke out.

RB: Oh.

TS: 'Cause they had just finished it off. So.

RB: So the USS —

TS: Essex, E-S-S-E-X.

RB: Yeah, alright.

TS: And so I went on board and my division officer, I went to the B-6 Division, meaning Aviation division—

RB: Oh, okay, right.

TS: — six. So because I was a combat aircrewman, they didn't have to have a JG [Junior Grade officer] or a first lieutenant come aboard —

RB: Right, right.

TS: — and fly co-pilot. 'Cause I took care of radios and everything else. They got this, so they didn't need that. All they need is a pilot. So the pilot for the one shift aircraft —

RB: Right.

TS: — that was aboard there for going and carrying stores and carrying this and parts and transportin' people aboard.

RB: Right.

TS: That was my division officer. He flew it. And guess what? When we went ashore, and he would fly it and we would land someplace. And guess what? I had to fuel it and I had to make sure it was alright.

RB: Yeah.

TS: I had to do this. I had to do that. I had to do all the other stuff. He took care of business. And that was it. And then anybody else with wings aboard, that didn't have an aircraft assigned to them, like, see, the squadrons would come aboard in those days.

RB: Okay.

TS: Like an air-wing [above a division]. The air-wing would be up at, oh, what's the Marine Corps base up behind San Diego [California] they shut down?

RB: Coronado?

TS: No, up on the hill.

RB: Oh, I forget.

TS: It was a Navy base at one time and then they shut it down.

RB: Yeah. I don't know.

TS: And then they gave it to the Marines. Then, now it is shut down for good.

RB: Right, okay.

TS: But nevertheless, anyway, it was that one.

RB: Okay. So, you spent four years, you said almost, on that ship, the USS Essex?

TS: Yes.

RB: CV-9?

TS: Well, CV— That's the way it started [as CV-9]. Then they came, after World War II, they became, they put these candid decks on them.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: And they notated them as CVA for attack.

RB: Okay.

TS: So we had different kinds of squadrons come aboard.

RB: "These commissions after the end of the war then modernized and re-commissioned in the early 50s as an attack carrier — "

TS: That was when I came aboard.

RB: “— eventually becoming an anti-submarine aircraft carrier.”

TS: That was after we went from San Diego, our home port was San Diego, we went around the Horn [Cape Horn at the far south end of South America] and came up the other side.

RB: “In her second career she served mainly in the Atlantic, playing a role in the Cuban Missile Crisis.”

TS: CVS [anti-submarine warfare support aircraft carrier].

RB: Is that after you had moved on?

TS: Well, no, no, I was at Gitmo [Guantanamo Bay Naval Base]. See, I was always flying.

RB: Oh, okay. I see. Alright, so you spent— So this was, I guess in ’57 when you went to Seattle? ’Cause you got out in ’56. And then you spent a couple months —

TS: Oh, no, I went there in ’56.

RB: Oh, it is still ’56? So you just took, like a long furlough in Pennsylvania and then came back.

TS: Two months!

RB: Two months.

TS: Two months.

RB: Two months and two ranks reduction.

TS: Oh, what the thing was, was I was home for a couple of days. I didn’t walk through the door. The first words my mother say, “You’ll have to pay rent.”

RB: Oh, she’s still mad at you.

TS: Yep. “You’ll have to pay rent.”

RB: Yeah.

TS: I said, “Well, how much?”

RB: Yeah.

TS: And I forget what the number was.

RB: Yeah.

TS: I said, "I could rent a room for that."

RB: I don't need to be here.

TS: Yeah. "I don't need to be here." I said, "If this is gonna be the attitude." Well, by this time I'm pretty independent. I've been through a lot.

RB: Well, of course. You were about twenty-two, then, or so?

TS: I was twenty-one, I think.

RB: Okay, twenty-one. Yeah, of course, and you had been living on your own for four years. She's treatin' you like a little kid.

TS: I've been half-way around the world.

RB: Yeah.

TS: For crying out loud!

RB: Did you ever make up with your mother?

TS: Yeah, eventually.

RB: Eventually, it got better.

TS: But it was way, way, way later.

RB: Okay.

TS: It was tolerable, I guess.

RB: Sure.

TS: I don't think she ever forgave me.

RB: Wow! Okay.

TS: But that's the way, that's the way we were.

RB: Yeah.

TS: That's the way we were.

RB: Sure, no, I understand.

TS: If I hadn't gotten out and about and had my experiences in the world— There's one thing I never got away from, was, was, I never got away from Jesus.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: See that makes sort of a difference.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And she would read the [*Holy*] *Bible* every day, sitting on her lap.

RB: What was her, what was your religious affiliation growing up?

TS: Christian.

RB: Christian? And so what kind of a church did you go to?

TS: Lutheran.

RB: A Lutheran Church, okay. And you stayed with that. She stayed with that.

TS: Oh, yeah.

RB: Your life course. Well, that's good.

TS: But it was hard core stuff.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: I mean it was, it was the way it was.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: No, I was confirmed. I was the whole thing. I did the whole thing. But I have convictions there's only, either, either you're Christian —

RB: Right.

TS: — or you're something else.

RB: Right.

TS: But if, and why as Christians can't we all find what's in common with us.

RB: Right.

TS: Not the dogma of the particular structure of the church —

RB: Right.

TS: — as we know it.

RB: Yes, of course.

TS: And, come on, folks —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — the way the world is right now? Us Christians better get together.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: You know what I'm saying?

RB: Yeah, yeah, right.

TS: I mean, that's just the way I see things.

RB: Sure.

TS: It's just, it's, it's a shame. It's an absolute shame. I mean, love thy brother and neighbor, what is so hard about that?

RB: Yeah.

TS: What is so hard about that?

RB: Well, take me back. So, you're, you spent four years on the Essex. Where all did you travel during that period on the ship?

TS: Oh, well, we, the Essex, we got to San Diego, we immediately, four weeks later, we took on stores and we went for nine months to the Far East.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: Sasebo [Japan].

RB: Right, Japan. Did you stop at Okinawa?

TS: Japan, Okinawa, Guam, Hong Kong.

RB: Okay.

TS: They didn't call it— they called it Formosa, they didn't call it Taiwan.

RB: Right, that's right.

TS: That was the Formosa Straits, in my days.

RB: Yeah [laughter]. So, —

TS: The Subic Bay in The Philippines.

RB: Of course, yeah. Right. And your job on that ship then, was aviation electronics technician?

TS: I was, the job on my ship was, my primary job —

RB: Right.

TS: — was to make sure all the test equipment and the avionics and the bomb directory shop —

RB: Right.

TS: — was up for the squadrons. The planes and the squadrons went off.

RB: Okay. Right.

TS: When they came aboard that stuff had already be up to go and make sure that they, that that stuff was up and up and operating.

RB: Right, right.

TS: That was another, we called, what the Navy called collateral duties.

RB: Yes, okay.

TS: That means everything.

RB: Yeah, other duties as assigned.

TS: So, but then when I hear that “dat, dat, dat, dat,” I had to go down wherever my plane was.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: One plane the ship had, 'cause it was like a hangar queen. It had to get out of the way of the other aircraft that were going to be re-spotted on the deck and then take off.

RB: Sure, sure.

TS: Or when they're coming in, the same way. I had to get— I had to ride brakes, tie it down, move it, anything to move it. They move me down. I go down the elevator. I am going down. Then up and they gave me this.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: And anyway.

RB: Okay.

TS: So it was my bird.

RB: Yeah.

TS: So, but —

RB: What kind of a plane was it?

TS: It was TF [Grumman C-1 Trader is a carrier onboard delivery (COD) variant of the Grumman S-2 Tracker. It was replaced by a similar version of the Northrop Grumman E-2 Hawkeye, the Grumman C-2 Greyhound].

RB: TF, okay.

TS: It was, now they have, they have the counter rotating props. They have two-plane, I forget, the Greyhound is what they call them now.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Call 'em Greyhounds, but they've had that for quite a few years.

RB: So you did that for about four years. [Knock on door.] Must have been about 1960, then?

[To person at door] Hello.

UV: Hello.

[INTERRUPTION. END OF RECORDING TWO.]

TS: So you have quite a lot of film. [Laughter.]

RB: It lasts about, what have I got? About six or seven hours [laughter].

TS: Well, anyway, then I said the only way, the one way I got off the ship, I said, "Well, I'll just get out." And, 'cause they were gonna keep me.

RB: Yeah.

TS: 'Cause, you know I was one of a kind.

RB: Yeah.

TS: So I said, "Okay." And that's how I got off two months early.

RB: Oh, I see. Where'd you go?

TS: My divisional officer's still there. Was still there. Was quite a cog.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: I went to, I said, "I want some shore duty."

RB: Right.

TS: So they shipped me down to Headquarters Pacific Missile Range, Point Mugu, California.

RB: Port Mugu, yeah.

TS: We were in the process of transitioning from jets, I mean from props to jets.

RB: Props to jets, okay.

TS: So I ended up with the A-3s, which was a twin-jet. [The Douglas A-3 Skywarrior is a jet-powered strategic bomber that was developed and produced by the Douglas Aircraft Company. It was designed by Douglas on behalf of the United States Navy, which sought a carrier-capable strategic bomber.]

RB: Okay.

TS: Twin-jets job. It's an RB-66 in the Marine, [no], the Air Force. Douglas built the aircraft.

RB: Right.

TS: So anyway, while I was there, my shore duty consisted of, again, going home every night. By this time, '60, I got married.

RB: Oh, you did.

TS: Yeah.

RB: And who did you marry?

TS: Luvinia Bell Crews [born on 8 Oct 1934 at Hoboken, Georgia and died on 19 Apr 2002 at Las Vegas, Nevada.]

RB: Okay. How did you meet her?

TS: I met her down in, well, when the Essex went around the [Cape] Horn, we were the first ship on port at the new base at Mayport, Florida [Naval Station Mayport, Florida, Jacksonville, Florida].

RB: Okay.

TS: And they had a little entertainment situation there, like a Coney Island [New York] thing there at Jax Beach.

RB: Okay.

TS: So we were down at Mayport and we would go into Jax Beach. That was our liberty.

RB: Okay.

TS: And I met her down there. She was —

RB: And what part of Florida is that?

TS: That's northern Florida, Jacksonville.

RB: Jacksonville, okay. So you met her there at the beach.

TS: Jax Beach which was about twenty miles from Jacksonville.

RB: Got it, okay.

TS: Anyway, she was down there with some girlfriends and stuff. They came down from Georgia.

RB: Okay.

TS: And she was my Georgia peach!

RB: [Yes] [laughter].

TS: I am going to sneeze [gesturing to sneeze].

RB: Okay.

TS: So anyway, she lived in a place called Hoboken, Georgia.

RB: Okay.

TS: It's right outside the swamp, there.

RB: Right.

TS: Okay.

RB: Oh, gosh, okay.

TS: They had one little caution light up there. It was on the Brunswick Highway. Are you, you're not familiar with any of this.

RB: No.

TS: Anyway, we're— You're fact-checking as I go, aren't you?

RB: I am. Is that alright?

TS: What kind of, what kind of a mark am I getting?

RB: Well, it has nothing to do with you. It helps me to visualize where you are.

TS: What kind of a mark are you going to give me?

RB: Oh, you're doing pretty good. I couldn't remember where Point Mugu was; it's near Camarillo, California.

TS: "Camarilla"?

RB: Camarillo or Ventura [California].

TS: Okay, Ventura, Camarillo. It's near Oxnard [California].

RB: Oxnard, yeah. So it's in that area. So, it has nothing to do with you, it has to do with me. It's like, where were you?

TS: Port Hueneme. [Port Hueneme is a small beach city in Ventura County, California surrounded by the city of Oxnard and the Santa Barbara Channel. The name derives from the Spanish spelling of the Ventureño phrase “Wene Me”, meaning “Resting Place”.]

RB: Port Hueneme?

TS: Port Hueneme. I know, I know, I know.

RB: I worked for a Navy captain in my last job and he was a pilot. Let’s see, Jax Beach, Florida. That’s what you call it?

TS: Yeah.

RB: So that’s what I’m tryin’ to figure out. Where in [Florida it is.]

TS: It’s really Jacksonville Beach, but Jax Beach’ll get it.

RB: Jacksonville, okay. I know where that is.

TS: It’s on the south side of St. John’s River.

RB: Alright.

TS: You could look up Bayport, Florida, you’d, they have a little runway there now and I guess they, they didn’t shut it down. They BRAC-ed it, but they didn’t shut it down totally. They still got ships that go in there, I guess, for appearances.

RB: Okay. So Jacksonville Beach, Atlantic Beach—

TS: Neptune Beach.

RB: North of it, yeah.

TS: Neptune Beach and then—

RB: Fernandina Beach to the north. Nocatee and St. Augustine to the south?

TS: St. Augustine.

RB: Okay, got it. So you’re there, you meet your wife and how long before you guys ended up gettin’ married?

TS: Well now, I’m getting transferred to off the ship. I’m getting transferred across back to California.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: Okay.

RB: And she's from Georgia [laughter].

TS: Georgia, so we start —

RB: What part of Georgia is she from? From the big city?

TS: No, no. A caution light, a place called Hoboken, Georgia.

RB: Oh yeah, Hoboken, you said that [laughter].

TS: Brunswick Highway.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Waycross is the town of any sequence [consequence].

RB: Okay, right.

TS: So, anyway, she, we're communicating. We're back and forth with letters, and so forth and so on.

RB: Yeah, okay.

TS: So finally I tell her that, "If you want, we could save up our money," 'cause air flying was not an option.

RB: Yeah.

TS: But the, comin' across country on a bus or a train, or anything, man, that's hard.

RB: Yeah, that's hard.

TS: So I told her, I said, "We'll fly. We'll save up our money and we'll fly out. You'll get enough and I get enough, I'll send you mine and you get a ticket."

RB: Okay.

TS: And or visa-versa. I could probably get it out.

RB: What grade are you after four years on the Essex by this point?

TS: I'm first class by that time.

RB: Which is what? E-6.

TS: E-6.

RB: Okay.

TS: Well, you make a little more money, but not a whole lot.

RB: Yeah. Okay.

TS: I said, "Well, I'll tell you what. You get free and you decide you're gonna come out here."

RB: Yep.

TS: "And you tell me and we'll get the money together — "

RB: Okay.

TS: "— and you'll — " Well, her family's putting tremendous pressure on her. "No, no, no, not marrying a sailor. Not goin' to California. He's gonna abuse you, and this and that and the other thing."

RB: Oh dear.

TS: So anyway, it's gonna leave me high and dry.

RB: Sure.

TS: And so she come out. She took a chance and she came out, and just that's what it is. After she got out there we had our first child in Oxnard, St. John's Hospital.

RB: Okay.

TS: So, right across the street was a— she was Baptist, or Missionary Baptist, or something or other.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Right across the street was this little chapel that was a Lutheran chapel.

RB: Oh.

TS: We didn't know it. Somebody said, "Well— " This was long before the baby was born, of course. I mean there was nothin'—

RB: Right, right.

TS: Oh, by the way, I go into the base and I said, “Well, I got this, my fiancé is coming out here. And I was wondering,” I said, “I am Lutheran.”

RB: Right.

TS: And he said, he didn’t say anything. I said, “I’m Lutheran.” He said, “Well, where’re you from?” I said, “Allentown, Pennsylvania.” See, most of Allentown, they didn’t have any LCA [The Lutheran Church in America (LCA) was an American and Canadian Lutheran church body that existed from 1962 to 1987. It was headquartered in New York City and its publishing house was Fortress Press.] and all the other crap going at the time [with Lutheran denominational politics].

RB: Okay.

TS: So he says, “Well.” He says, “Well, she’ll have to go to school or the Lutheran faith, ’cause we want to get her confirmed before she gets married.”

RB: They were still doing that, huh?

TS: Oh, [yes]. I had, to get married, I had to sign —

RB: Oh, gosh!

TS: — then I had to get my skipper’s permission —

RB: Oh, my gosh! Yeah.

TS: — and bring it back to the chaplain and then he gave me the okay. I never heard of [such a thing].

RB: Wow! Okay.

TS: And so, I said to myself, “Are you kidding me?”

RB: Right.

TS: So, I never bothered.

RB: Yeah.

TS: So he’d see me around the base and just give me little glares.

RB: Yeah, whatever.

TS: Whatever.

RB: And so, you, where did you get married? At that little —

TS: Yeah.

RB: — church across the street? [Married on November 26, 1960, Ventura, California.]

TS: Yeah, they were ALC [The ALC was a founding member of the "Lutheran Council in the United States of America", which began on January 1, 1967] or something else.

RB: Yeah.

TS: I don't know what they were, but it was a husband and wife, and just, "Sure. Get somebody to stand up for you?" "Yeah, come bring a — " The guy was working at the base and he was a first-class also.

RB: Right.

TS: Him and his wife and they're Catholics.

RB: Yeah.

TS: They came down and this is the way we did it in those days.

RB: Yeah, why not?

TS: Why not?

RB: Well, I'll tell you what, I don't want you to miss your dinner. It's 5:06 [p.m.]; why don't we stop here and do you want to continue next week? Are you enjoying this?

TS: I am! I don't know if I am enjoying it so much.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: 'Cause you're liable to catch me in an embellishment and I don't want to do that.

RB: [Laughter] No, it doesn't matter, whatever you [want to share with me.]

[END OF RECORDING THREE.]

RB: Alright. This is Randy Bunn and I am with Thomas Stettler and today is May 7th, 2019 and we're picking up where we left off in learning about his military experience.

So when we last talked Tom, you were in California and your sweetheart from Georgia came out, as I recall, and you —

TS: With the baby.

RB: With the baby. And who's the baby, again?

TS: That was Greg.

RB: So, for the recording, "Greg" and his last name was —

TS: Mavrikous.

RB: — Mavrikous. M-A-V-R-I-K-O-U-S.

TS: Yes.

RB: And you are in Oxnard and you decided to get married.

TS: Oh, we decided way back when to get married.

RB: Way back when. But now you were gonna execute the mission here [laughter].

TS: Well, yeah, because it was a lot of things we had to take care of first.

RB: Right.

TS: One was a divorce papers. And one was for her to leave. And we had to get money and save our money —

RB: Right.

TS: — so she could come out. She was, this was early flying, civilian flying.

RB: Yeah, so.

TS: And we had to get a load of money in those days to get her and the baby, well, the baby went for free.

RB: Yeah, sure. But this is in 1960?

TS: Yes.

RB: Right, okay. And so you get married at the little Lutheran church?

TS: Yes, across from the hospital.

RB: Across from the hospital. And so after you got married, where did you live? Did you rent an apartment or something?

TS: No, we had, we had, yeah, we lived at Hueneme Road.

RB: Oh, okay. On the base or off?

TS: No, off the base.

RB: Alright. So, tell me about your job there in, well, it wasn't Oxnard, what was the installation? Was it Port Hueneme?

TS: No.

RB: No. What was the installation?

TS: It was Headquarters Pacific Missile Range, Point Mugu, California.

RB: Ah, Point Mugu. Okay. And what was your job?

TS: I was an enlisted flyer, if you will.

RB: And so, on an average day there at Point Mugu, what kind of work were you doing?

TS: I was assigned, I was assigned to a, we did a lot of tests and evaluations.

RB: Okay.

TS: I flew, I flew different kinds of aircraft. The Navy, at the time, I was also a plane captain. The plane, the Navy, in those days, the plane was your plane.

RB: Sure, you were assigned to that plane.

TS: I was assigned to that plane.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: That's what it was.

RB: And you better not lose it [laughter]!

TS: Yes.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: And see that plane on my cap?

RB: Yes.

TS: That's an A-3D Skywarrior; that was the Navy nuclear deterrent.

RB: And we sent —

TS: They're using that in those kinds of aircraft.

RB: Yep.

TS: Which, at Point Mugu, we're using them in test and evaluation—

RB: Right.

TS: — for— it was the early stages, I can tell you. It has been over fifty years now. I can tell you.

RB: [Laughter] Yeah, it is no longer classified.

TS: For IR.

RB: Right. Tell me what IR is.

TS: Infrared.

RB: Infrared. Okay.

TS: Which is taken for granted now.

RB: Of course, in 1960 —

TS: Satellites have it, everybody has it. You know, IR.

RB: Well, in 1960, that was about, let me see, 1958, '57 or '58, Sputnik was shot up by the Soviets. And we were kind of —

TS: That '58, wasn't it?

RB: Fifty-eight, October of '58. Two years later, or so, we're kind of scrambling to feel like we're gettin' behind, or something.

TS: We had a lot of test evaluations going.

RB: Okay.

TS: There was a aircraft —

RB: [Yes.]

TS: Aircraft, so forth and so on, systems and whatever.

RB: Right.

TS: The thing that I was involved in, on the front end of that nose of that aircraft there —

RB: Right.

TS: — they used to, I used to have civilian people trying their equipment —

RB: Right.

TS: — out in my aircraft. So we had to go up to, say, 40,000 feet.

RB: Right.

TS: We'd go up to, up the road where they had the Atlas and Titan missiles.

RB: Yes.

TS: And when they'd fire one, we'd see if we could get a signature with the IR. We were collecting—

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: — signatures and background information because we needed that information.

RB: Right.

TS: Because if we could ever fire, shoot down missiles, —

RB: Right.

TS: — shoot one down, it shouldn't be one of ours.

RB: Right [laughter]. And so, we say up the road, at Vandenberg [Air Force Base, Lompoc, California]?

TS: Yes.

RB: Yes. That was the missile site for the Air Force. And then, so, this A-3 would fly and —

TS: In the nose they'd have different contractors with IR equipment that were vying with their idea.

RB: Right.

TS: It was test and evaluation [of] their equipment.

RB: Right.

TS: So like, it was Hughes [Aircraft Company, Culver City, California], and it was Douglas [Aircraft, Santa Monica, California], and it was the different kind —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — of outfits that were doing this.

RB: But the purpose of —

TS: Raytheon was another one.

RB: Raytheon, of course. Well, the purpose of this plane, operationally, would be to detect or to actually shoot down?

TS: Well, the purpose of this plane was to test and evaluate.

RB: Test and evaluate, what then?

TS: IR.

RB: The IR, okay. So the systems that the contractors were developing and the IR, the infrared, —

TS: Then the Navy'd say, "Okay, we'll take this one. We'll evaluate what you, how good you are. And how good you are, is it consistent —

RB: Right.

TS: — with the information I got?" It was information, it was archaic information gathering, if you will.

RB: Yeah. And so, the contractors who were developing these IR systems, the systems, what were they designed to do? The systems, the IR?

TS: To [recognize] what kind of missile was going up.

RB: Okay.

TS: The signature.

RB: Right. So.

TS: We had to get the signature and background information to get a, to identify.

RB: Right.

TS: So, we were to identify.

RB: So, it was kind of information gathering through the medium of infrared technology.

TS: Yeah. We had, when they, the Navy knew what the signature was— IR.

RB: Right.

TS: The contractors had to come up and find out what they were.

RB: Okay.

TS: And if they could identify it with their equipment.

RB: Alright.

TS: In other words, could get that signature—

RB: Right. That tested their equipment to be able to identify.

TS: To give it to the Navy for all these different aircraft that would happen.

RB: Right.

TS: And of course, the signals. We did the same thing with the early Sparrows and the early, it won't come to me— the Sidewinders. [The AIM-9 Sidewinder (for *Air Intercept Missile*) is a short-range air-to-air missile which entered service with the U.S. Navy in 1956 and subsequently was adopted by the U.S. Air Force in 1964.]

RB: Oh, okay. Now the Sparrows was what, a missile?

TS: It was a missile.

RB: Okay. And then the Sidewinder was another missile.

TS: Another missile.

RB: Okay.

TS: Air-to-air missile.

RB: Yes.

TS: These are air-to-air missiles. So, the early identification of these things —

RB: Right.

TS: — was, now the heat-seeking missile was the first ones out.

RB: Right.

TS: But until they could narrow it down, like with the Air Force or anything, we shot, we shot lots of planes down.

RB: Oh, yeah.

TS: Because these things couldn't identify or get down to a spectrum for that particular aircraft.

RB: Oh, I see. Right.

TS: You see, that's a friendly.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Oh, we'll fire one now. Oh, it's looking for anything that has heat-seeking.

RB: Oh, yeah.

TS: Oh, the plane that just shot it down is a heat signature.

RB: Yeah.

TS: We'll come right around and shoot the missile that you were shooting [and] shoot yourself down.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: This happened, by the way.

RB: Yeah. Oh, man, that's tragic. And they needed to hone that system so that it would be —

TS: Absolutely.

RB: — friendly to all.

TS: We went down to Patrick Air Force Base there. We went down range to Guam, Kwajalein, and so forth.

RB: Oh you did?

TS: Where they shot from Vandenberg and from Point Mugu.

RB: Right.

TS: Okay. And I'd have to go with the plane because—

RB: Oh.

TS: — that was my plane. In other words, I might as well have been a piece of metal attached to the airplane.

RB: Yeah, right [laughter].

TS: Okay?

RB: Right.

TS: That's how the Navy worked.

RB: Yeah.

TS: So I got— there were only three in that cockpit.

RB: Okay.

TS: That's it. There were three crewmen.

RB: Right.

TS: And one was a pilot, didn't have a copilot, but in our copilot position, they had a BN operator.

RB: A what?

TS: A BN, a bombardier navigator.

RB: Oh, a bombardier navigator, yes.

TS: That was on the regular aircraft.

RB: Correct.

TS: That weren't at Point Mugu.

RB: Yeah.

TS: They were fleet already.

RB: Right.

TS: Doing their thing. They were the nuclear deterrent.

RB: Yeah.

TS: The Navy to do their toss, what they called toss bow. And the— situation is called toss bombing.

RB: Okay.

TS: But the equipment, the equipment was referred to as — nothin'.

RB: Okay.

TS: Anyway, what you would do, is you would come around this way and come in low [gesturing].

RB: Right.

TS: Very low. The Air Force dropped up here some place [raises hand].

RB: Yeah.

TS: We dropped in low [lowers hand].

RB: Okay.

TS: And we came out, up like this, open up our bomb bays —

RB: Right.

TS: — and we would drop and then pull out like that [gesturing].

RB: Oh.

TS: Toss bombing. And to do that accurately, it takes specialized equipment.

RB: Yeah, okay.

TS: That's the equipment we had. Okay, so that we'd go up, up, go over the top —

RB: Right.

TS: — turn this way and we could go the other way.

RB: Yeah.

TS: We were from anywhere from a thousand feet to do the maneuver.

RB: Right. Now—

TS: I will tell a story.

RB: Okay.

TS: SAC [Strategic Air Command] at Offutt [Air Force Base, Omaha, Nebraska]

RB: [Yes.]

TS: Once a year we had to be the bad guys.

RB: Right.

TS: So we'd come over and we would go fly out of [Port] Mugu.

RB: Yeah.

TS: There would be three of us. Three planes in a formation.

RB: Okay.

TS: And we'd take off and we were supposed to come over the base [and] check them out. And we were shot down every time.

RB: Oh, gosh!

TS: Well, they knew we were coming.

RB: Yeah, that's not fair [laughter].

TS: So, so what we did one time, [laughter] this [Navy] lieutenant that was flying with me.

RB: Right.

TS: That's a captain in your vernacular.

RB: Yes, right, O-3 [Officer Grade Three].

TS: And he says, "Tom, I'm gettin' damn tired of this." He says, "Let's do a, let's make a for-real run over 'em."

RB: Oh, yeah? Unannounced?

TS: Oh, my! Well, here's the regulations, the Air Force, you do this, you do this, and come in and such and such at such and such a place. Do this and do this, and make these turns—

RB: Oh, no.

TS: — and do all this other bullshit.

RB: He wasn't gonna do that? He was gonna do it [his way]?

TS: Oh, no.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: We came in [laughter] and formed at about 400 feet [laughter] and ran right over that base [gesturing].

RB: Oh, man!

TS: And went up in a maneuver [gesturing up with his hands].

RB: Did you hear about that afterwards?

TS: Oh —

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: — well, the general, whoever it was out there, it was a—

RB: Right.

TS: I used to know who he was. But he was a big deal.

RB: Sure.

TS: He was a big deal in the Air Force.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Well, I guess it was just the telephone lines or whatever were just burning apart. It was just fusing.

RB: Oh, no. Yeah.

TS: And so we got by. [We said], "Request permission to land." And somebody from the towers screeched at us and said, "I don't know if I'll let ya land or not."

RB: Oh, no.

TS: [Laughter] "Not at this base."

RB: Oh, my gosh [laughter].

TS: So we got in and got our ass chewed good.

RB: Oh, dear.

TS: And then everybody said, "Don't look at me. I just sit over here in the right-hand seat."

RB: What was your rank at the time?

TS: I was only an E-5 [Enlisted Grade Five].

RB: E-5 and then you had an O-3 lieutenant and then a BN also?

TS: No, I'm the BN.

RB: You're the BN?

TS: See, I'm a combat aircrewman. I can take care of radio. I can take care of this, I can take care of that. So, I'm an avionics guy so I can take care of all the stuff up in the nose.

RB: Right, right.

TS: And see that that's right.

RB: So who were the other two? One was the pilot?

TS: Most of the time it was just two of us, because we were in a test situation.

RB: The pilot and a BN.

TS: But if you were flying over, over Vietnam or someplace like that, it would be three.

RB: Okay. So how long —

TS: By the way, the Air Force got three times as many of those A-3s as the Navy did.

RB: Oh, is that right?

TS: The Navy aircraft, but the Army 66 was the big one. [Unsure, but possibly the RAH-66 Comanche helicopter. The Boeing–Sikorsky RAH-66 Comanche is an American stealth armed reconnaissance and attack helicopter designed for the United States Army.]

RB: Yeah, you mentioned that.

TS: Yeah.

RB: So okay, how long were you at Point Mugu?

TS: Two or three years.

RB: Okay. Where'd you go after that?

TS: Went to Memphis [Tennessee] for further schooling.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: And then from there, went to Maine.

RB: Right.

TS: And that's where my daughter was born and she was, is a "Maine-iac."

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: So to speak.

RB: What was the Navy installation at Maine?

TS: NAS Brunswick, Maine.

RB: NAS Brunswick, Maine. Okay. And what was your job there?

TS: I was the first tech aboard, on board P-2s. [The Lockheed P-2 Neptune (designated P2V by the United States Navy prior to September 1962) was a maritime patrol and anti-

submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft. It was developed for the U.S. Navy by Lockheed to replace the Lockheed PV-1 Ventura and PV-2 Harpoon, and was replaced in turn by the Lockheed P-3 Orion.]

RB: A P-2. What's a P-2 used for?

TS: P-2 Neptune. They use them for fighter, firefighting now. They use them up there.

RB: Oh, I see.

TS: Civilian use for them.

RB: Okay.

TS: It was a Navy aircraft that was produced and it could run [fly] a long way and had all sorts of various [purposes]. They even put [inaudible, "J-duarn"?] and took it off a carrier like Doolittle.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: So this, this was a gain. But the ones I started with, my first one, was a P-2. The first part of this I was telling you I went right to a P-2 outfit in Alaska and all the rest of it.

RB: Right, right.

TS: Those were P-2s.

RB: Okay. Yeah, I think we looked at those. Lockheed Martin makes the P-2 Neptune?

TS: Yeah. There was no Martin, it was just Lockheed.

RB: Yeah, I'm sorry. Lockheed at the time. That's true [laughter]. So, you're a crew member of the P-2s?

TS: Yes.

RB: Did you also have your own set plane? Or not?

TS: Yes, always had a set plane.

RB: Alright. And how'd you like —

TS: That was the last, that was the last of it, though.

RB: Oh, is that right?

TS: Yeah, I got into the tail end of it. It just all, it all went to the Air Force way to it.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: They went “union.”

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: This is not my job. We can’t do this. We can’t do that. We can’t do the other things, you see.

RB: Right. Okay, so you’re living in Maine and Cheryl’s [his daughter] born and what else do you remember about that? If you were —

TS: I remember a lobster at Bailey’s Lands Inn, Bailey’s Island, for a dollar.

RB: Oh, yeah? Nice!

TS: Yeah, \$1.20, no, \$1.50.

RB: Oh, gosh!

TS: You picked out your lobster. Big suckers.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And you went in, you had this rustic place, you sat down and there was a table there, and they brought you a bowl of lobster chowder that was this big [gesturing].

RB: Yeah.

TS: And you had clams, you had French fries that covered everything.

RB: [Laughter] Nice!

TS: And you sat down and they’d give you a bib. And then you went to work. And all my kids knew how to eat lobster.

RB: That’s good.

TS: How to take a lobster apart. Now, going to, I hate Red Lobster [restaurant].

RB: Oh, yeah [laughter]?

TS: I tell them, “Don’t touch my lobster.”

RB: Yeah.

TS: I say, "Put it in the pot. Cook it, take it out and bring it out to me."

RB: Yeah.

TS: "Don't crack it. Don't do anything."

RB: Right.

TS: 'Cause, it's just like you blink with your eyes and it's gone.

RB: Yeah, right [laughter].

TS: But I mean, when you put it on my plate—

RB: Right, right [laughter].

TS: But I don't do that.

RB: Well, so, your daughter was born, you said about 1963? Do you remember when [President] John F. Kennedy was assassinated? Were you in Maine at the time?

TS: No, I was in, when he was assassinated I was in —

RB: Oh, in Memphis?

TS: No, I was in, I was with VP-21 [VP-21 was a Patrol Squadron of the U.S. Navy.] and we were down in Boca Chica in Florida. [Boca Chica Key is an island in the lower Florida Keys, about a mile east of the island of Key West at its closest point. Its name is Spanish for "small mouth".]

RB: Boca Chica. Okay.

TS: And we were there, we were there and we were at Gitmo.

RB: Okay.

TS: And, and that's where we were flying out of.

RB: Right.

TS: That's when he got [shot], so that was —

RB: Okay.

TS: — even though I was on a type of shore duty, I was gone all the time.

RB: Yeah. Well, what I, what I understand is that after he was shot, someone else reported that they pretty much put all of the military on alert because they weren't sure what was goin' on. Did you experience anything like that?

TS: Oh, yeah.

RB: Yeah?

TS: Oh, yeah. And then, see, we were flying over Cuba.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: And so that was what we did. And my old ship now, the Essex, when we came around the horn — [USS *Essex* (CV/CVA/CVS-9) was an aircraft carrier and the lead ship of the 24-ship *Essex* class built for the United States Navy during World War Two.]

RB: Yeah.

TS: — okay, then my old ship became a CVS, [anti-submarine warfare support aircraft carrier; or seaplane carrier] because at that time they had enough carriers that they were all, the carriers were all CVs [aircraft carriers].

RB: Okay.

TS: That means, C is for carrier, V is for, well, it used to be H for helium. For blimps with ship decks.

RB: Yeah.

TS: For heavier than air, —

RB: Oh, okay. Got it.

TS: — that's what the V stood for.

RB: Okay.

TS: So everyone, every heavier-than-air aircraft, every fighter and everything else, stood for heavier than air.

RB: Right.

TS: So. So, anyway, we did that anyway. So then it became a CVS.

RB: Right.

TS: A carrier [that] was anti-submarine.

RB: Right, okay.

TS: Okay. So the Essex, my sister, my ship, she was out there right in the middle of the Cuban Crisis.

RB: Oh, is that right? Wow!

TS: We were in the middle of the Cuban Missile Crisis right over at Gitmo. And over Boca Chica. Then we had to [coughing] fly over and around the island [coughing].

RB: Need some water?

TS: No.

RB: Okay.

TS: For, to pick up [coughing] intel all around the island.

RB: Right, right.

TS: So that's what we were doing.

RB: And were you able to get —

TS: To keep the submarines away. Submarines, they had submarines too.

RB: Yeah. Well, and so were you able to get intel?

TS: They didn't have submarines like they've got today. They weren't nuclear submarines, they were, they were snorkeling submarines.

RB: Sure.

TS: We could catch 'em.

RB: You could catch 'em. And so, in '62, in the crisis, there were ships coming from the Soviet Union to Cuba. And then there was also activity on the bases of Cuba.

TS: There was a picture, they showed one picture.

RB: Yeah.

TS: It shows a P-2. And we would be rigging these ships and takin' pictures of what was on board. That's what we did.

RB: Right, yeah. Okay.

TS: We also went down the coastline and tried to pick up the frequencies. If they came on-line to lock on to us, or anything else, we knew where they were.

RB: Right.

TS: And we'd, [be] between two planes, we could get across—

RB: Oh, yeah, right.

TS: — we could get a positive on them.

RB: Okay. And was there any risk at that time that you might be —

TS: [Laughter.]

RB: — shot at? [Laughter.]

TS: Well, so what! That's what we did!

RB: I know! Okay. That was part of the game, though, that there was risk in either Cuba or, I don't know, the Soviets as well.

TS: Well, when we were in Alaska, it was the same way.

RB: Yeah. Well, that's true [laughter] .

TS: I told you what we used to do out at Adak. [Adak Station is a city located on Adak Island, in the Aleutians West Census Area, Alaska, United States.]

RB: Yeah.

TS: We'd go past the Komandorskis [???Komandorski Islands, Russia???] right straight for Vladivostok [Russia], seventy-five miles out.

RB: Right.

TS: And you turn on everything and watch it come.

RB: Yeah. Well, you're over sovereign territory, I guess they might not like that.

TS: Well.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: We used to do it all the time.

RB: Of course, yeah.

TS: The Air Force had one shot down near, at the Black, the Black Sea, near the Baltic, I guess.

RB: Okay.

TS: A C-130 doin' the same thing we were doing, by the way.

RB: Right.

TS: Only they, they did it at a higher altitude than we [did]. We were down lower.

RB: Do you remember when —

TS: Gary Powers was shot down?

RB: Yeah, that whole incident.

TS: That changed the whole game.

RB: How so?

TS: Up to that time we had some satellites already up there.

RB: Okay, yeah.

TS: And we were getting targeting information.

RB: Right.

TS: For the B-36s.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: And after that it became B-52s and so forth and so on.

RB: Right, right.

TS: So it was just a progression as to what it was.

RB: Sure.

TS: But that's the way it was.

RB: Okay.

TS: So yeah, we got sophisticated after a while [laughter].

RB: [Laughter] So you stayed in Maine for a while. And where'd you go after that?

TS: After Maine, let's see, went back to Memphis for some more "we-oo, we-oo" [classified reconnaissance] school again.

RB: When you say "we-oo, we-oo," what do you mean?

TS: Well, I had a top-secret clearance and a "need to know."

RB: Right.

TS: And then I was cleared for "ridiculous". So, you know, that's what I mean.

RB: [Laughter] Okay. And so the training was at Memphis for that?

TS: For a little period of time.

RB: Yeah, okay.

TS: Now we're gettin' close to, getting close to '70, I guess, it was.

RB: Alright, so when during Vietnam, say from '65 to '70, where were you? In the States or travelin' around?

TS: Vietnam started way back in 1954.

RB: Oh, of course. I understand that. But, uh—

TS: You see, I went to all—

RB: We were just advisors then [laughter].

TS: Then, then, yeah, we really advised!

RB: [Laughter] I think the first American casualty they reported was in '59, or so, and then, of course, into the '60s. But then it peaked about '67, '68 as far as troops in the country and then gradually went down. Were you ever —?

TS: We were never there.

RB: You were never there. And so during that period, that's what my question was, you were in Maine?

TS: We were never, we were never in Russia [he smiles sarcastically].

RB: Well, that's true. Yeah.

TS: We were never, we were never here. We were never there.

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: We were never— Air Force people; it was the same way.

RB: Of course.

TS: Did you get that book that I told you to get the book of?

RB: I haven't been able to find it.

TS: B-A-R-R-O-W-S.

RB: Yeah, I looked. I could not find it and so I was going to have to ask you again.

TS: Get it on your [phone], check there.

RB: Yeah. So, let's see.

TS: That will do the job. I think that'll do the job and give you a little background of what I was into most of the time.

RB: Okay, let me do this again. What I wrote down, you said, "Barrows wrote about reconnaissance in the 1960s. The book is from 2002." So, I didn't know what the name —

TS: It was 2002 because that's when I had, we had the last, my wife died and I went to the last reunion, for my first thought of the VP-22.

RB: Do you know the guy's name? You said Barrows? [It is William E. Burrows.]

TS: B-A-R-R-O-W-S.

RB: And you don't remember the first name?

TS: I don't remember the first name.

RB: Yeah. For some reason [I can't find it].

TS: I still have the book in my library at home.

RB: Sure. Okay, so Barrows [Burrows] and do you remember what the title of the book might be, or anything?

TS: *By Any Means Necessary* [*By Any Means Necessary: America's Secret Air War in the Cold War*].

RB: Okay, let's see if I can find it. Yeah. It doesn't come up for me for some reason. Let me check on Amazon. So, no, it does not show up.

TS: Okay, well, try, try "reconnaissance."

RB: Alright; written by Barrows.

TS: Yeah.

RB: See —

TS: And the Air Force was included in this book, by the way. It wasn't just Navy. But he was selling books at that reunion, that's how I got a book.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And I bought a book. Did I get his name wrong?

RB: Could be. Nothin' of that nature is showin' up on Google.

TS: Look up "reconnaissance authors."

RB: Alright.

TS: See what you got. Maybe I got his name wrong.

RB: Reconnaissance.... No. You think it was 2002?

TS: Yeah.

RB: No, nothing's comin' up. I'm not sure what's going on. That's okay.

TS: Anyway, he tabulated everything from World War II, at the end of World War II on.

RB: Okay.

TS: And he tabulated anything. And the reason he could do this, and this research, everything was pickaninny about where he got it, the Library of Congress and this and that and the other thing.

RB: Right, right, okay, sure, sure.

TS: And he went through that book point by point, person by person, whatever he could dig through. And the reason he came out with that, was it hit the fiftieth-year mark.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: And once he did that, once it did that, he wanted to be the first on the list, I guess.

RB: Ah, well, let's get back to where you were in about 1970, then. So, —

TS: Nineteen-seventy, then I was — Where was I in 1970? Most of it had to do with nineteen—

RB: So you mentioned that after Maine, you went back to some schooling in Memphis and then where did they send you after that?

TS: They sent me to—

RB: Nothing?

TS: Nothing [laughter].

RB: When did you finally retire? Let's go that way.

TS: My retirement was 1970.

RB: Okay, oh, alright.

TS: I was medically retired then.

RB: Okay.

TS: Because I got all dinged up.

RB: So how did you get dinged up that you had to be retired from the Navy?

TS: I ended up, ended up with a hand getting severed and this, that and like this [lifting his shirt].

RB: Yeah. And so how did that happen?

TS: Well, we went on a training mission.

RB: Yeah.

TS: I was with VP-52 out of Jacks. [Patrol Squadron Sixty-Two (VP-62) is a Reserve Force unit commissioned in November 1970, to provide fully manned and equipped squadrons in the event of war or national emergency. VP-62 is located at NAS Jacksonville and has operated the SP-Neptune, P-3AJB Orion, P-3C Update III; and currently the Navy's newest and most formidable maritime patrol aircraft, the P-3C Aircraft Improvement Program (AIP).]

RB: What? Jacks?

TS: Out of Jacksonville, Florida.

RB: Okay, right.

TS: And so we had an accident [inaudible].

RB: Oh, dear.

TS: They, that's what happened, and I survived.

RB: So, the plane was shot down?

TS: Oh, no. No, no, no. This was, well, situation normal all screwed up.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: We were too low, we were training a pilot.

RB: Okay, and so —

TS: We had, we had troubles and if they'd done the engines right, why we would have —

RB: So, so you actually crashed?

TS: Yeah.

RB: Wow! And how many crew members were on the plane?

TS: There was only, well, we were a training flight so therefore— We were actually on a training flight.

RB: Right. Okay, so three of you?

TS: Yeah, there was five of us.

RB: Wow! Did all survive?

TS: Yes, we did.

RB: Okay. And so, you severed, what, tendons and —

TS: Everything [gesturing].

RB: — everything in your arm?

TS: These three fingers are wired.

RB: Oh, my gosh!

TS: That little bit I can feel on the back of that hand. This finger was severed off there.

RB: Yeah. Oh, my gosh!

TS: This finger was severed there.

RB: Wow! And then, then your stomach, your gut, was —

TS: They had to open there because I have a diaphragm that was, that was a hole in my diaphragm here and hole in my diaphragm over here.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: They put me back together.

RB: How long were you in recovery from that?

TS: They sent me to Bethesda for nine months. [The National Naval Medical Center is located in Bethesda, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C. It is one of the nation's largest and most renowned military medical centers, best known for its history of providing care to war heroes and presidents alike for the past sixty-five years.]

RB: Wow!

TS: I was there, and then they patted me on the ass and sent me out.

RB: Yeah.

TS: That's what they were doing then. And so, they— I could've and would've, when I had a billet — [*Billet* can mean a specific personnel position, assignment, or duty station which

may be filled by one person, most commonly used by the United States Navy, the United States Marine Corps, and the United States Coast Guard.]

RB: Right.

TS: — to do instructor duty—

RB: Oh, [yes.]

TS: — from BUPERS, the Bureau of Personnel, which did all the—

RB: Assignments?

TS: But they said, “No, you belong to the medical department.”

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: “You are medical, so you belong to us.”

RB: Yeah.

TS: “And we’re going to retire you.” Now, I was getting very close, very close to twenty [years].

RB: Yeah. So, I forget, when’d you enter the Navy? Fifty?

TS: 1952.

RB: Fifty-two, so ’72 would have been twenty years.

TS: Seventeen years.

RB: So, you were eighteen-plus year mark?

TS: Yeah, well, eighteen-plus. I shipped over early a couple of times. I had accrued time and I could have retired.

RB: Right. Oh, my gosh.

TS: It was sooner than that, but it was counted for twenty.

RB: Right, right.

TS: It counted for twenty. It was just one of the programs they had.

RB: So, they chose instead to medically retire you.

TS: Yeah. Do you know what that meant?

RB: Yeah. So instead of getting a regular retirement, now you got this, a —

TS: Oh, I got retirement and thank you from the president and —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — from “Tricky Dicky”, [President Richard M. Nixon] and all the rest of that stuff.

RB: Oh, that’s right, he was president then.

TS: So, but anyway that’s not, that’s not, that’s not it.

RB: Oh?

TS: The idea, who knew? I said, “Well, well, what do I do with me and my family now? Where do I, what do I do?”

RB: Yeah.

TS: “Ah, well, go see the VA [Veterans Administration].”

RB: Yeah.

TS: Okay. The minute I was rated [by the VA for disability], for every dollar I got from the VA, they took away from my retirement.

RB: That’s right.

TS: You’ve heard that story before. It is called an offset.

RB: Yes.

TS: They did it to about two-and-a-half million of us.

RB: Yeah.

TS: From the Air Force, from the Navy, from everybody else.

RB: Right.

TS: Nobody— You’re in an operational situation, you don’t know a damn thing —

RB: Right.

TS: — about medical, administrative, you're payin' attention to what the hell you're doing.

RB: Right, So—

TS: So they screwed me. I didn't draw one dollar of retirement pay.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Now, if I had gone over twenty years, I would have got both.

RB: Right. And so, 'cause of the offset, you just collected VA disability payment.

TS: Yes.

RB: Were you a hundred percent?

TS: I was, I'm eighty percent VA.

RB: Eighty percent, okay. So, there you are. What was your rank when you were injured?

TS: E-6.

RB: E-6, so now you're a retired E-6.

TS: With a family.

RB: With a family and were you able to —

TS: What the hell was I going to do?

RB: Yeah, and, and so when they cut you loose —

TS: And there was nothing, there was none of this Wounded Warrior or anything like that.

RB: Right.

TS: No, no, no.

RB: Figure it out on your own?

TS: And by the way, at Bethesda they had 'em lined up and they had about that much room between bunks [gesturing].

RB: Wow!

TS: These poor, these poor Marines, and sailors, and what the hell else.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And it was, it was just horrible.

RB: Wow!

TS: It was horrible.

RB: Well, so what did you do?

TS: Well, because of my schooling and everything else, good Lord!

RB: Right, yeah.

TS: See, there is a place called Vitro Laboratories, electronic laboratories.

RB: Okay, yeah.

TS: And it so happened that all these new missiles, Poseidon, Polaris, Target Talos, [The Bendix RIM-8 Talos was a long-range naval surface-to-air missile, and was among the earliest surface-to-air missiles (SAM) to equip United States Navy ships.], Terrier Missile Systems [The Convair RIM-2 Terrier was a two-stage medium-range naval surface-to-air missile, and was among the earliest surface-to-air missiles to equip United States Navy ships.].

RB: Yeah.

TS: And those kinds of missile systems, they were all— they had, Vitro had the hardware and they had the software.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: And they were converting to digital, via, and the newest, the newest and the most wonderful was an IBM [International Business Machines] 360.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: [Laughter] With punch cards!

RB: Yeah, right [laughter].

TS: Well, nobody told the rest of the fleet that these missiles were coming.

RB: Right.

TS: And everything on the ships were analog.

RB: Oh, no.

TS: So they had these beautiful missiles on all these ships for years.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And in the silos and in the ballistic submarines, and they couldn't fire 'em if it meant their life.

RB: Oh, boy, yeah.

TS: So, what I did was I went to work for Vitro. So, we had to take signal by signal and transpose it from analog to digital signals.

RB: Oh, man, right.

TS: So then, I would, I would take down, I would go down to, they had the old wooden buildings down there for the Naval down on Pennsylvania Avenue.

RB: Oh, okay, right.

TS: I had to take —

RB: The Naval shipyards? Where was it?

TS: No, no, Pennsylvania Avenue. Where the White House is.

RB: Right, [yes].

TS: Along there, they had wooden barracks from World War II, yet. All the Navy, that was the Navy building, Naval Aeronautics and so on and so forth, you see.

RB: Okay.

TS: All this stuff had to be proofread and so forth. And then, oh, we gotta have somebody with pistols and guards and everything else taking all this shit down there.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Well, great, when we got down there. And then I come by [the] Finance [Office] and the Bureau of— what's the name of the Bureau? Publishing? What's the Bureau?

RB: Oh, the Government Printing Office?

TS: The Government Printing Office.

RB: The GPO, yeah.

TS: Yeah. I'm taking, walking in and out of the door, here's a big van out there—

RB: Right.

TS: — and they're loadin' all this shit in the van.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Nobody has a gun on them. Nobody has anything.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: All this stuff.

RB: All this secret information, [you're thinking,] "What the heck were they doing?"

TS: The world! I was in when I knew it. I mean, it was —

RB: So you were living in the Washington, D. C. area then?

TS: Yeah, I lived in Rockville, Maryland.

RB: Oh, Maryland.

TS: Montgomery County

RB: Yeah, okay, and raising your kids then?

TS: Yeah, raising them. It was, it was bad. See, my son, he was ten months old, the adopted one.

RB: Right.

TS: He came from Florida and he had encephalitis.

RB: Oh.

TS: And he had equine encephalitis [Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) is an extremely rare but serious and often fatal infection that causes encephalitis or inflammation of the brain. It is spread by the bite of a mosquito infected with EEE virus (EEEV).]. As it turned out the CV base had a clinic.

RB: [Yes].

TS: Had a Navy clinic there and when we took him over to there, the captain that ran that clinic happened to be familiar with the thing. I mean, it was like the Lord just laid His hand.

RB: Yeah.

TS: So he was in a coma for a month.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Then when he came out, then they wanted to take him away from us and take and put him [in some place]. And they said, "You can't take care of him. You don't want to know how to take care of him."

RB: Yeah.

TS: "He's just a vegetable and he's gonna be a vegetable." But he could cry and he was sensitive to sound.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: And he ate.

RB: Okay.

TS: And so after a certain amount of time at that clinic, they couldn't keep him.

RB: Okay.

TS: Because at this time, our, his doctor wasn't through yet.

RB: Right, okay.

TS: So the admiral on the base out there at Point Mugu, says, "Well, here's what you do." He said, "You take until you get your papers —"

RB: Right.

TS: "— we will, I will sign a letter that he is dependent, and he is receiving no aid or anything."

RB: Right.

TS: Because the, the, her ex —

RB: Wasn't sending anything.

TS: — he'd never sent a penny to 'em, never ever.

RB: Right.

TS: They were separated all that time. Never sent a penny.

RB: Right, right.

TS: That's what was so nasty about it all.

RB: Right.

TS: So, the admiral signed the paper, and so they would take him, because they were saying you are going to have to get him out of here.

RB: Right.

TS: And then they stabilized him. So he stayed there. He was in there for thirty days. And then they said, "Well, there's nothin' we can do."

RB: Yep.

TS: So I said, "Well, we'll take him home and see what we can do."

RB: Yeah.

TS: And now— Oh, then he said that he'd never drive. Then they said he'd never do this.

RB: Yeah.

TS: He's worked thirty-two and a-half years, now, down in Laughlin [Nevada] and worked. He has a horse and they have about twenty-five chickens.

RB: Yeah?

TS: And he got a passel of feral cats.

RB: Yeah.

TS: He's about three miles north of Needles [California] on the Arizona side.

RB: Right.

TS: Mohave Valley.

RB: Yes.

TS: So he goes twenty-five miles into work every day. And comes home every day.

RB: Wow! That's an amazing story.

TS: Yes.

RB: Okay. But when you were livin' in Maryland in the '70s, so he was about early teenage years, I guess.

TS: Oh, no, no, no, he was a youngster. He was, maybe, seven or eight years old, I guess, or something like that.

RB: Okay.

TS: I don't know.

RB: Sure.

TS: Anyway, what happened was that they put him in, because of, they asked questions and Montgomery County was the epitome of one of the most wonderful school districts in the United States.

RB: Right, that's what they say.

TS: But they didn't have any special-ed [education].

RB: Oh.

TS: So his special-ed was they took 'im all the way over Coal Mine Road and took 'im all the way over past Anne Arundel County, [Maryland] to their special-ed over there.

RB: Right.

TS: Except for one thing. He came home with bite marks on him and everything else. He had, he had— So I went over there and I said, "We're gettin' outta here."

RB: Right.

TS: So, then I left Vitro and I went to work, I got to work with the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency].

RB: Oh.

TS: They, the EPA took and split from the Mississippi River out west —

RB: Right.

TS: — to back east.

RB: Okay.

TS: They split it up so they would have the first divisions of investigations out of Denver [Colorado].

RB: Okay.

TS: Then [in] Denver, I went to work. So, I asked them, “Well, how much travel is there gonna be?”

RB: Yeah.

TS: “Well, not much and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” And I said, “Look, I don’t want wings. I don’t want to fly.”

RB: [Laughter.]

TS: I don’t want wheels, I don’t want to float.

RB: Right.

TS: “Oh, well, you’re gonna get some.”

RB: Yeah.

TS: I’d be in Cheyenne, Wyoming, doing an impact study of the Cheyenne River —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — on a reservation, then I’d be down to Lake Charles, Louisiana.

RB: Oh, no.

TS: On a Conoco refinery with PH₄ [The hypothetical radical PH₄, analogous to ammonium, and regarded as the nucleus of certain derivatives of phosphine.], running into the bayou [laughter].

RB: Right, right.

TS: [Laughter] And stuff like this. What capped it off was gettin' near Christmas time, I thought I was comin' in for a couple of weeks.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And they called my wife and said, "Pack his bag and take it to the airport," the old Stapleton Airport in Denver.

RB: Oh, yeah, right.

TS: And sys, "Yeah, he'll have to go right away" [laughter].

RB: Oh.

TS: So, when I got back from that, I told 'em, I says, "Have my paycheck ready." "Well, it's Christmas time." "I don't care. You WILL have my paycheck."

RB: Yeah, 'cause you were quittin'.

TS: I said, "That's it. You will have my last paycheck." And so, I left it.

RB: Oh, man.

TS: In the meantime, I mean, it was just impact study after impact study.

RB: I bet.

TS: We closed out all the, up along the South Platte River [Nebraska], they used to have sugar beets. And the farmers, for years and years and years, and what they'd do, they'd just dump mud right in. There wasn't a living fish growing in [the river].

RB: Oh, man.

TS: The oxygen level, the BOD [biochemical oxygen demand], the demand on the river was so bad—

RB: Right.

TS: — even the plant life was dying.

RB: Wow!

TS: They had all these factories about every five miles, sugar cane, Great Western factories.

RB: Right.

TS: Huge companies. Well, they had ponds but those ponds were filled up, they were solid.

RB: Right.

TS: So everything else was going out. So, yeah, I got in on some of that stuff.

RB: So, where did you go after EPA, then?

TS: After EPA, then I went to, after EPA, then I went to work for— I was superintendent of water and waste water in Snowmass, Colorado.

RB: In where?

TS: Snowmass, Colorado.

RB: Snowmass, Colorado, okay.

TS: Yeah.

RB: So, you worked for the county? Or something?

TS: It was a city, city and town of—

RB: Oh, of Snowmass.

TS: — of Snowmass.

RB: I see. Okay. You worked with them?

TS: Yeah. And then I had enough background and everything else because I had a “bacte” [bacteria] lot. What they wanted me to set up— that’s what they hired me, really, was because of my background— set up a bacte lab so you could check — it was a big giardia thing that took place.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And these people, to send it back to Denver —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — to one of the labs there, because Grand Junction [Colorado] didn’t have any labs that were solid enough to do and get good results.

RB: Right.

TS: Certified results. So, I set up a lab and certified so that all the towns around there could bring it in to me, and then we'd do 'em and then we'd get back to 'em the next day or two days later.

RB: Right.

[END OF RECORDING FOUR.]

TS: Which was really good turn-around time, because when you go across the mountains to Denver, it's a week before you get the results back.

RB: Yeah.

TS: So you can poison a hell of a lot of people with giardia—

RB: [Laughter] Yeah.

TS: — in that amount of time.

RB: Right, right. Okay.

TS: So.

RB: So, you stayed there for some time?

TS: Yeah, then, then, then Colorado, Colorado got so bad that my kids couldn't have a place to, no jobs.

RB: Oh, right.

TS: It was absolute terrible. They had, and then they had the oil shale.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And that fell apart.

RB: So this is during the energy period, the early '80s?

TS: Yeah, I would say so.

RB: So your kids are, you have one that was born in the '63, '62, so they are gettin' about twenty years old, or so?

TS: Then there is no— and especially my other one.

RB: Right, yeah.

TS: So coming out, coming out to I-70, going up the hill, getting into the mountains there, west, there's these signs.

RB: Yeah.

TS: I forget what we were doing going over that way.

RB: Yeah.

TS: But anyway, there were these signs. Maybe we were going to a [Denver] Bronco game, I don't know.

RB: Yeah [laughter].

TS: So, anyway, it says: "Come to Laughlin."

RB: Oh, yeah.

TS: "Need people. Opening up the Colorado Belle [Casino]."

RB: Oh.

TS: I don't know if you're familiar with Laughlin.

RB: No.

TS: Anyway, so I packed up the whole tribe.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Took them, took the whole family, took 'em to Laughlin. And that's where my son got a job.

RB: Okay.

TS: My daughter got a job.

RB: Great!

TS: My son-in-law got a job. And they've all got thirty-three years.

RB: Wow!

TS: The Colorado Belle. Well, it's two casinos together, the Colorado Belle and the Edgewater [Casino Resort].

RB: Okay. So they work for two casinos? That's what the Colorado Belle is?

TS: Yeah. It's all one company.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: All one company. I've said that a hundred times.

RB: Sure, sure. That worked out good then?

TS: Oh, yeah, they've been living, they've got a home down in [inaudible] Valley [Nevada].

RB: Okay, excellent.

TS: Yeah, so I accomplished that.

RB: Yeah, good for you! And so, did you get a job there, too?

TS: No, I really haven't been able to work with anything.

RB: Yeah. So after you left Colorado, then you've been just living off of your disability?

TS: It's always been disability. And once again, I'm not service-connected from my, from my, I've had, I've had frostbite.

RB: Oh, right, yeah, you told me.

TS: I've had this frostbite.

RB: Oh, yeah.

TS: And so it's just a health— nagging, nagging health problems all along.

RB: Did you—

TS: And then I had a, I've been, I've been to a pain clinic when I was back in Colorado.

RB: Oh, yeah?

TS: And so, I've been in chronic pain ever since.

RB: Oh, now did Luvinia work at all during this time?

TS: Yeah, she worked some.

RB: Okay.

TS: But not anything big.

RB: Sure. So, you ended up in Mesquite, when?

TS: When the kids all were settled out —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — and the other, the little baby —

RB: Yeah, was grown up.

TS: — grown up. I baby sat. I used to go over twenty-five miles.

RB: Oh, my gosh! Yeah.

TS: On around the other side, where they lived.

RB: Right.

TS: On the Bullhead City [Nevada] side and below.

RB: Yep!

TS: Every morning so these guys could go to work.

RB: Sure.

TS: You see a grandfather would do that, right?

RB: Yeah, of course.

TS: Anyway, I did go get to be with, babysat a lot.

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: Make them chow [meals] and everything else and bond with them pretty good.

RB: Yeah, that's good.

TS: And so, I showed you my granddaughter, didn't I?

RB: No, I don't think so.

TS: Here.

RB: Oh, yeah, yeah, I think you did. So, she's in the Navy?

TS: Yeah.

RB: And whose daughter is she? Is she Cheryl's or Greg's?

TS: She's Cheryl's.

RB: Cheryl's daughter, okay. Wow! And where is she stationed?

TS: She's at SOCCENT. [Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) is a sub-unified command of the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM). It is responsible for planning special operations throughout the USCENCOM area of responsibility (AOR), planning and conducting peacetime joint/combined special operations training exercises, and orchestrating command and control of peacetime and wartime special operations as directed.]

RB: SOCCENT?

TS: Do you know where SOCCENT is?

RB: I don't even know where that is. Is it, it's not in Florida, is it?

TS: Yeah.

RB: Yeah, okay.

TS: It's right outside MacDill [Air Force Base]. It's on MacDill [AFB] actually, but it's got barbed-wire around it and everything.

RB: Right.

TS: Special Operations Command Center.

RB: There you go! Okay, yeah, I have heard of it.

TS: And they take care of anything active going on around the world right now.

RB: That's right [laughter].

TS: They're the ones, they're the ones who deploy everybody.

RB: Well, good. So you left Laughlin, [Nevada] at some point, and decided to move to Mesquite, [Nevada]. Why did you do that?

TS: Well, we were gonna take advantage of our Space-A and we were gonna do some traveling. [Space Available (Space-A) travel allows authorized passengers to occupy Department of Defense (DoD) aircraft seats that are surplus after all Space Required (Space-R) passengers have been accommodated. Space-A travel costs nothing but is allowed only on a non-mission interference basis.]

RB: Right.

TS: The kids are grown, everybody's grown, everybody's [on their own], they don't need us.

RB: You finally have time.

TS: We're gonna take on off. So they'd just opened up this Fitzsimons Hospital. [Fitzsimons Army Hospital — known as Fitzsimons Army Medical Center (FAMC) from 1974 — was a U.S. Army facility located on 577 acres in Aurora, Colorado, USA. The facility opened in 1918 and closed in 1999; the grounds are currently being redeveloped for civilian use as the Anschutz Medical Campus and the Fitzsimons Innovation Community.]

RB: In Las Vegas?

TS: Yeah, and we needed, we needed a passport.

RB: Okay, right.

TS: Good thing to have if you're gonna travel the world. Right?

RB: Yeah.

TS: So we just lay around, and we would just talk with people to see who they are.

RB: Yeah.

TS: See what they are doing and be around people you liked.

RB: Right.

TS: And so they, and so that didn't work out. We went down there when they had this major that gave us our physicals.

RB: Yeah.

TS: You have to have a physical.

RB: Right.

TS: Okay. Well, she [his wife] could take care of her female stuff and I didn't have any male stuff at the time to take care of.

RB: Yep.

TS: So, I said, well, and the concern was for me, at that time. I had all this damn stuff wrong with me.

RB: Right [laughter], sure.

TS: And so, I said, "We'll do it, somehow we'll do it." I was on one or two canes at the time.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: All these "rigs". So, so she, he said [his wife's doctor], we went down the list. Anyway, to make a long story as short as I can, said, well, he tells her, "You're gonna have to have a colonoscopy."

RB: Okay.

TS: Well, colonoscopies, at that time —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — I think it was 1950, uh, 1990, or '88, I think it was. They weren't, it wasn't the thing to do. They had a real stigma about everything.

RB: Right.

TS: So on the way back, as a good Navy wife, she promptly told me, she said, "There ain't nobody gonna stick anything up my backside. Ever!"

RB: Yeah. [Laughter] Right.

TS: And so—

RB: And she's uh, let me see, she was born in, we figured, oh we didn't figure. Your wife— [Luvinia B. Crews was born in 1934.]

TS: Yes. Well, she's as old as I am. We were both twenty-six [when we got married].

RB: Oh, okay. So you were born in '34, so she was probably born in 1934.

TS: Yes.

RB: So in 1990, she's about fifty-six?

TS: 1990?

RB: Yeah.

TS: Well, 1990, but I mean—

RB: I mean, how old was she? She was in her fifties by that point, right? Mid-fifties?

TS: Yeah, oh, you mean the time we went down —

RB: When you went to Fitzsimons [Army hospital in Denver]?

TS: — to Fitzsimons? Yeah, something like that.

RB: Okay. So anyway, she said, "I'm not gonna have a colonoscopy. No way. No how."

TS: "No way. No how." So three weeks later she says, "Well," she says, "I still don't like it."

RB: Right.

TS: "But if, do you really wanna go yet?" I said, "Hell, yes."

RB: Yeah, right.

TS: So, because they didn't have any medical overseas in those days.

RB: That's right.

TS: I mean, it's just recently—

RB: Yeah.

TS: — you could get it. You go to the cruise ships, I guess they have it there. But anyway, so okay, so we go down there. Anyway, Fitzsimons didn't have it yet. I say, Fitzsimons, I meant the base down here.

RB: Oh, here in St. George?

TS: No, no, not St. George.

RB: Oh, Fitzsimons, I'm sorry. Fitzsimons is in Denver.

TS: No, it was in Aurora [Colorado], but—

RB: But really you're talking about at Nellis Air Force Base [Las Vegas, Nevada]?

TS: Nellis [AFB].

RB: I forget what the [hospital is called.] I knew you were talking Las Vegas, but I—

TS: It was Vegas.

RB: Okay.

TS: So anyway, we go down to Sunrise [Hospital, Las Vegas, Nevada].

RB: Right.

TS: Las Vegas.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And they take her in and about fifteen minutes later they come back and they say, "Here, I want to show you this."

RB: Yeah.

TS: Anyway, the next morning she loses two and a half feet of colon. She's got stage three cancer.

RB: Oh, my gosh.

TS: She thought she was constipated.

RB: No?

TS: She was always complaining about constipation. Nobody thought— we didn't know.

RB: Sure. It was really cancer?

TS: Yeah. And then she had a five-year battle with cancer.

RB: Oh, my gosh.

TS: So, she, it was uh, it was April 16, 2000, that I lost her. [Luvinia Bell Crews actually died on April 19, 2002 at Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada.]

RB: Of 2000?

TS: Yeah.

RB: So that's been almost twenty years ago. So, you guys, were married, though, for a good forty years?

TS: Forty-one years, four months, twenty-four days.

RB: Forty-one years, wow! That is still, really, a wonderful ride together!

TS: Yes.

RB: But she decided that she wasn't gonna do any Space-A [military] travel. Sorry to hear that.

TS: No. But anyway, she did agree to it after that.

RB: Yeah.

TS: And that's when they caught it. Had she not agreed to that, she, I might not have had her for another five years.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Well, that's when I learned how to become a caregiver.

RB: Yeah, right. And that's when you moved to Mesquite?

TS: Ah, no, we moved to Mesquite, we moved to Mesquite and bought a home so that we'd have a place to come home to.

RB: In your travels?

TS: In my travels.

RB: Okay, I see.

TS: In other words, it was going to be like a summer place.

RB: Oh, right.

TS: Like the snowbirds do.

RB: Exactly.

TS: We were gonna do that, only, see how it went.

RB: Right, sure.

TS: So, but, we lost everything. And I don't know about in those days, but they wanted dollars up front before they'd perform one needle in your arm.

RB: Yeah? Wow!

TS: And they didn't do ports.

RB: Right.

TS: So they had to find a vein every time.

RB: Right.

TS: And they would not even take her back until I showed up.

RB: Wow!

TS: And we showed up. And for eight months I drove her back and forth to Las Vegas.

RB: Right.

TS: Because Mesquite had nothing, still don't, for cancer.

RB: Well, did CHAMPUS cover some of that? [Civilian Health & Medical Program for Uniformed Services. It was the health care plan for military dependents and retirees operated by the DOD.]

TS: CHAMPUS wasn't worth a shit.

RB: Really.

TS: Well, CHAMPUS, no need for CHAMPUS. I had—

RB: VA [Veterans Administration] [medical care].

TS: Yeah, [laughter], we had CHAMPUS.

RB: Right.

TS: CHAMPUS wasn't worth a shit.

RB: Right.

TS: Well, the VA wasn't gonna pay anything.

RB: Because she was not covered under VA, right?

TS: Yeah.

RB: Oh, okay. Wow! So you spent all your money just tryin' to —

TS: Well, see, we were, we were outside the sixty-five [age] range —

RB: Oh, right, right.

TS: — for Medicare.

RB: Yes, right.

TS: Once we got to Medicare —

RB: Yeah.

TS: — that certainly helped.

RB: Right.

TS: But beyond that Medicare, okay, we didn't have TRICARE For Life [TRICARE For Life is Medicare-wraparound coverage for TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries who have Medicare Part A and B.]

RB: Right.

TS: We had no supplement.

RB: Right.

TS: See, it just, it just went by increments and got a little better, a little better, a little better, but by the time she passed away, I mean, I was so far in debt that, I —

RB: Yeah.

TS: But, just as it went, just wasn't, we just weren't— But I, fortunately, I'm cleared now.

RB: Right. So, you still have your place in Mesquite?

TS: Yeah.

RB: Right? And you moved here [Southern Utah Veterans Home] in January of 2019. So what did you do after 2000 until you got here? You were on your own, obviously. Were you involved in things in Mesquite?

TS: Yeah, well, I was, because we started, we created a 501(c)(3) [not-for-profit charitable organization].

RB: For what?

TS: What?

RB: What was the non-profit about?

TS: Mesquite Cancer HELP Society.

RB: Okay, right. Very good! So you were involved in that.

TS: Well, in Mesquite there was nothing. We didn't even have a nurse practitioner. We had nothing —

RB: Right.

TS: — when all this began.

RB: Right.

TS: And certainly when you get cancer, we decided we'd do it. We all, we were cancer survivors.

RB: Right.

TS: We got together under the leadership of Yoli Bell. [From the history section of the Mesquite Cancer HELP Society in 2021: "Yoli Vernon Bell was 50 years old and knew first-hand the devastating impact cancer can and does have on individuals and their family members: Yoli's mother died at the age of 51 from Hodgkin's Lymphoma; an aunt died from Leukemia; two cousins died from Breast Cancer; and her nephew survived Testicular Cancer; plus her niece is coping with the diagnosis of Stage 4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma. (her niece continues to fight her 3rd battle with Stage 4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma by engaging in clinical trials and continuing chemotherapy treatments.)] She got this idea and put it together, then we would go around and it was all heavy lifting and everything else.

RB: Sure.

TS: We'd go around and we'd do estate sales, or we would do this and that and the other.

RB: Right.

TS: And we were always in conflict with the American Cancer Society.

RB: How?

TS: Because everybody thought they were giving to us, when they were giving to the American Cancer Society. Well, when my wife got cancer, I went to the American Cancer Society and they said, “No, no, no we only do research.”

RB: Right.

TS: “You got it all wrong. We only do research.” “What do you mean? All these years, I, what do you pick [to give to charities]?” You have to give ’cause in the military, they make you give.

RB: Right, right.

TS: So, and so [inaudible].

RB: What was the name of the non-profit that you were involved in?

TS: You can look it up, [www.com](http://www.cancerhelpnv.com). [See: <http://www.cancerhelpnv.com>]

RB: Yeah.

TS: Mesquite Cancer HELP Society.

RB: Cancer HELP Society?

TS: Yes.

RB: Well, that’s great.

TS: I’m a board member and there’s only three of the originals left. We were all cancer survivors. There’s three of us left. Allen, and Yoli Bell, and myself. And she, when she came up here to see me, or they came up to see me, she told me that they were going to transfer me to honorary board member.

RB: Oh, okay.

TS: I was a board member all these years.

RB: Alright.

TS: And so we’ve helped very many people.

RB: Yeah.

TS: Like, for example, it's no small thing. If you get something with blastoma or whatever it is with the brain, and they get a \$5,000.00 pill a month. But they don't have to give a cent.

RB: No.

TS: So, what we do, we've sent people to Duke University [Durham, North Carolina], did I tell you this before?

RB: No.

TS: Duke University clinics, the big place in Houston [Texas] —

RB: Yeah.

TS: [We've] sent people down there, we've sent them all over. We had mental health, tele-mental health.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: We had a counselor up in Montana. She's had twenty-five, twenty-five counselors in a business down in Las Vegas.

RB: [Yes.]

TS: She moved to Mesquite. She was there about seven years.

RB: Right.

TS: And her husband says to her, and she was doing us a real favor, she was really close to us in the Society.

RB: Right.

TS: And then her husband says to her, "I'm moving back to Montana."

RB: Yeah.

TS: "You can come if you want."

RB: Oh, man!

TS: "If you don't want— ." What are we gonna do? We are gonna lose that resource, you know.

RB: So she does it by distance?

TS: Yeah.

RB: That's great.

TS: She sits back in Montana. We sit down in a room [in Mesquite].

RB: Yep.

TS: It's for cancer patients.

RB: Right.

TS: And clients.

RB: Right.

TS: Or, and their caregivers.

RB: Right.

TS: Because there are caregivers.

RB: Okay. That's really good.

TS: Yeah. One of the things was we had to get away from the American Cancer Society. Because it's all that. We covered Beaver Dam, Littlefield, Scenic [all in Arizona], Bunkerville, of course, Mesquite, and we do down in Moapa Valley and Overton [all in Nevada].

RB: Overton, yeah.

TS: And Moapa Valley.

RB: Yeah. Okay, great.

TS: So anybody who has a permanent address, snowbirds, we can't, we can't do those people.

RB: Sure, sure.

TS: And primarily, we're set up for people who have not enough insurance and no insurance.

RB: That's right. That's critical.

TS: We help most of the people.

RB: Okay.

TS: What do you do when you get cancer? Or a loved one gets cancer?

RB: Yeah.

TS: What do you do? I mean, I know what I did. I didn't know nothin'.

RB: Right.

TS: What's an oncologist? I need a cancer doctor. Where do I start?

RB: Right. That's amazing. That sounds like a really good organization. Well, you know what? It's after 5:00 [p.m.]. And I don't want you to miss out on whatever they have cookin' for you today.

TS: Miss out on the good chow?

RB: So, we'll go ahead and stop here. But I want to thank you very much for sharing your story with me.

[END OF RECORDING FIVE. END OF INTERVIEW.]