

Interview with
MELVYN CONWAY MORRIS

January 23, 2019

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MELVYN CONWAY MORRIS

Melvyn Conway Morris was interviewed by Randall J. Bunn on January 23, 2019 at the Southern Utah Veterans Home in Ivins, Washington County, Utah. He related his military experiences. Brady Fronk also participated.

RB: [We] are here today with Melvyn Conway Morris. He goes by Conway. We are to hear a little bit about his life, particularly his military service, also before and after that period. Where were you born?

MM: [In] Salt Lake City [Salt Lake County] Utah.

RB: In 1929?

MM: Yes, on June 19, 1929.

RB: That was in June and the crash occurred about four months later. [Laughter] You grew up in the [Great] Depression?

MM: Yes, I was a Depression baby.

RB: Tell about growing up in Salt Lake [City]. You were named after your father, Melvyn Conway Morris [born July 13, 1891; died June 4, 1969]. Your mother was Lydia (Reeder) Morris [born July 31, 1899; died April 30, 1998]. What do you remember about growing up in Salt Lake [City]?

MM: They were quieter times than we experience now. It was a Mormon community, so friends and neighbors were members of the Mormon Church [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints].

RB: What neighborhood did you grow up in?

MM: Salt Lake City near South High School.

RB: Where about is South High School?

MM: It's about a mile and a half or two miles from downtown Salt Lake City.

RB: You were living in the 1930s in, pretty much, central Salt Lake City from what it is now. You were one mile, or so, away from Temple Square.

MM: Yes.

RB: What is the earliest memory that you have? Anything come to mind?

MM: I had a dog when I was about eight or nine [years old]. It bit me and my folks wouldn't let me keep it.

RB: [Laughter] Oh, no! It bit you? Was it a big dog?

MM: No, it was a small dog.

RB: [Laughter] That is sad. [Laughter]

MM: I guess I had a normal growing up [life] in a middle class family.

RB: Yes. What did your dad do for a living?

MM: He was a clerk at the U. S. [United States] Post Office.

RB: [Did] your mom stay-at-home most all of the time?

MM: Most all of the time. She had a job cleaning at a motel some of the time.

RB: To help put food on the table?

MM: She was a great mom.

RB: Tell about your mom. What do you remember about her? What kind of a person was she?

MM: She was — I can't think of the right phrase — directive. She was in charge. She was sweet, loving and always had food on the table. My dad got up early to go to work about 4:00 or 5:00 o'clock in the morning. She would fix breakfast and cater to the needs of the family.

RB: You had two older sisters [Adrienne (Morris) Gates, born January 7, 1926, died January 11, 2016 and Ramona (Morris) King, born March 23, 1927]. Were you close to them?

MM: Yes, very close.

RB: So you had pretty close —.

MM: I was the little brother. They were supportive and [inaudible].

RB: I think I know what you mean.

MM: They were helpful.

RB: [Did] they keep an eye on you?

MM: Yes.

RB: [Laughter] Did you have neighborhood friends that you played with?

MM: Yes.

RB: [Do] you remember what kind of [activities] you did growing up?

MM: We set up a bamboo pole [for] high jumping. We played several kinds of sports. [We] played softball.

RB: Did you play any basketball?

MM: I played a little church basketball — wasn't very good.

RB: [Laughter] Were you a small [youngster]?

MM: Yes.

RB: How about in school — did you play any sports in school?

MM: No. I was in the Army ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] as a cadet.

RB: Cadet? Is that what they call them?

MM: A cadet.

RB: What caused you to get involved in the Army ROTC?

MM: The war was on [World War II].

RB: So you graduated from high school in 1946. Was it a four-year high school?

MM: It was two years.

RB: At the tailend of the war you were in high school — 1944, 1945, 1946?

MM: I had two years of junior high school, two years of high school and grammar school.

RB: What do you remember about ROTC? Was that an enjoyable experience?

MM: Yes. I had a lot of good friends. Some that I lost contact with over the years, but I considered them friends. They wore the uniform proudly. The war was on and we

didn't think about joining [military] service or not. We just assumed that was [what we would do] — our lot in life.

RB: If you were born in 1929, Pearl Harbor was bombed [December 7], 1941, so you were about twelve years old. Do you remember when that happened?

MM: Yes.

RB: What do you recall about the announcement that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

MM: Family entertainment in those days was sitting around a radio program.

RB: What kind of programs do you remember listening to?

MM: Whatever my mother wanted.

RB: [Laughter] Well, there you go!

MM: *One Man's Family*.

RB: *One Man's Family* was a show?

MM: Yes. No others come to mind right now. But it seems to me that we were sitting around the radio. Then word came through that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor [Hawaii].

RB: What did you think when you heard that?

MM: I don't remember having any crystal thoughts to recall.

RB: Was it scary? Or did you think: oh, man, the world is just really crazy?

MM: Well, I thought the Japanese were evil people. That's a good expression of it.

RB: They caused a lot of death and heartache to those families and sailors.

MM: Do you want me to digress at all?

RB: Yes, go ahead. Whatever you want.

MM: The United States government fostered a line of propaganda releases after Pearl Harbor. I grew up with impressions that they were evil, conniving people.

RB: Did that ever change for you? Those impressions?

MM: That is what I wanted to divert for.

RB: Please.

MM: When I first went to Japan, I went to the park that has a big statue [of Buddha].

RB: A shrine?

MM: I think so.

RB: In Tokyo?

MM: No, it was out of Tokyo.

BF: Near Yokosuka? Where the Navy base is? [Possibly Kotokuin in Kamakura Prefecture.]

MM: Yes, I am not clear in my mind.

RB: There is a big statue of a Buddha right near the water?

MM: We [went on] liberty there, walked around and had a great time. We saw the sites and climbed up in the Buddha. I was very impressed with all the Japanese families that were there. It was a big turnout. It was a family vacation kind of place. I thought: they are just like us; they aren't evil and terrible. There was a young couple with [children] running around. I realized that they were good people. That was the impression that I had, because we all had such hatred from the propaganda releases. I am not saying the propaganda releases were not accurate, but it was kind of a revelation that people the world over are similar to us.

RB: They have [children] and they are just trying to find happiness in their family's lives.

MM: Yes. They were just having a weekend out with the [children].

RB: That is interesting that you had that change to your previous impression of what you had thought about the Japanese.

MM: Yes.

BF: What do you remember specifically about the war; like the rationing and all the sacrifices?

MM: [Inaudible]

RB: What kind of things did you have to deal with growing up in the 1940s?

MM: My father, being a federal employee, didn't make big money, but he made enough to feed the family. I told people in the past that we didn't live on the other side of the tracks. But we were close enough that we could hear the whistle blow.

BF: [Laughter]

MM: So it was an ordinary kind of a place [with] ordinary people just getting along. I don't remember stress on our family because of the [Great] Depression. We weren't well off, but we had enough to survive.

RB: It sounds like you were not starving or wondering where you were going to get your next meal.

BF: Did you have to participate in metal drives, rubber drives, or whatever during the war?

MM: Yes.

BF: How frequently would those occur? Or do you remember?

MM: It seemed like there was always something going on like that.

RB: Did your mother grow a garden?

MM: As a deacon in the [LDS] church we had to gather scrap metal. We had a big pile of scrap metal. That was for the war effort. There were a lot of war effort things we did.

RB: They used to grow Victory Gardens. Did your mother have a garden at your home anyway?

MM: No. The church had one, pretty good sized tomato farm. I participated in all the events. I learned to ride a tractor too and prepare the soil. I was in the Boy Scouts [of America] program for twelve to fourteen year olds. I was active in that, in all of its aspects. I did hiking and bicycle riding. I have a distinct impression that life was a lot easier, in a sense, in those days.

RB: Yes, maybe more simple, [but] probably similar [activities] that [youngsters] still do, just different.

MM: A little more free.

RB: Yes. In what sense was it freer?

MM: I can give you one example. The Boy Scouts of America have had their share of lawsuits in recent years.

RB: That is true.

MM: I don't know when they had the policy of having two-deep leadership at all times because of these challenges from a legal standpoint. None of that existed in my day. In my day, we used to have active groups of children. We were all close or within easy walking distance in the neighborhood. We would decide to go on an outing on Saturday. So we would get our bicycles and ride to the Great Salt Lake or we would ride up the canyons and go fishing. So we did quite a few activities like that. I don't have any memory of two-deep leadership or anything like that. We didn't worry about the Scoutmaster would do or not. The kids would go on an outing, and they would come up with the idea. I think we had to ride 5 miles to get our Boy Scout cycling merit badge. We would just get together and go do it, take care of each other, and have a lot of fun.

RB: [Laughter]

MM: We did quite a bit of camping.

RB: When you graduated from high school, what did you do?

MM: I went to college.

RB: At the University of Utah [Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah]?

MM: Yes.

RB: When were you in the [United States] Navy?

MM: When I started college, I was a mid-shipman in the naval science program at the University of Utah.

RB: Was that part of the ROTC at the University?

MM: No, government service military. It was just like you grew up with the idea of being in the military. When I graduated from high school, I wanted to go to college. I had a lot of brochures from recruiters. I determined that the best deal for me was the [United States] Army. I think it was eighteen months of obligated service for G. I. Bill credits. [The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, a government issued Bill for veteran's education after World War II. The original Bill expired in 1956 but the term is still used to refer to programs that assist military veterans.] So I never thought about it. There used to be a phrase in common parlance that "he worked his way through college." I think it's a lot different now.

RB: [When] you went to college you said you were in the mid-shipman's program?

MM: Yes, Navy ROTC, a federal education program. It was part of the U. S. Navy. It was the Holloway Plan that the Navy had. [The Holloway Plan was a federal program to train officers for naval service. It was enacted in 1946.] They had side programs during World War II where the military sent students to college then they owed them some service.

RB: [Did] you go through all four years of college?

MM: Yes.

RB: Would you [graduate] as an officer?

MM: Yes, with obligated service. The obligated service was about thirteen months, if I remember right. I was on active duty about ten days before the Korean [Conflict] broke out. So everything changed.

RB: So you spent four years at the University of Utah?

MM: Yes.

RB: You said your major was law?

MM: No, that was later on. My major was political science with a naval science background with a bachelor of arts [degree] because I had a language.

RB: What language?

MM: French.

RB: Very good.

MM: I don't know that I was very vocal about it. I understood it at that time.
[Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] You graduated and then lo and behold the Korean [Conflict] broke out. What happened to you after college? Did you have to go to your obligated service at that time?

MM: Yes. I graduated on June 13, 1946. Because of the war, there was a shortage of paper. They didn't print a yearbook when I graduated from high school. Then in the summer, they got enough paper. The yearbook was published [and we got it when we went to a back-to-school night] I went to the back-to-school [night] and saw an old buddy from the Army ROTC. We had been close friends going through high school.

RB: What was his name?

MM: Glade S. Bligler. I had decided before the back-to-school night that I was going to join the Army. Glade said why don't you join the Navy ROTC. So I looked into it. I went to the University of Utah to find out about it. They welcomed me and I had good grades. I joined the Navy ROTC and we were sworn in as midshipmen. It is a rank between ensign and the highest enlisted officer. It is in between enlisted and officer. It was kind of interesting.

RB: Like a warrant officer?

MM: It ranks with a warrant officer. We were in school. We had to take naval science every semester along with other classes and military drill.

RB: Were you actually on active duty? Not active duty, but you were in the military.

MM: It was like the G.I. Bill in reverse. It paid for our schooling, \$50.00 a month, all of your tuition and books. That was enough to cover the cost of college.

RB: Then "we expect you to come and serve" as opposed to you serve and then we will pay for your college.

MM: We had obligated service. They had us in USN [United States Navy] programs and U.S. Reserve programs. I was in the USN.

RB: After you finished [course work] at the University of Utah, where did you go? What happened?

MM: Within a week or ten days, I got in a car with this friend of mine, and his mother who [drove] us to San Francisco [California] to report for active duty.

RB: Where did you go? Treasure Island?

MM: Yes, went to Treasure Island and got in the system and flew to Hawaii. I was ordered to report to the *USS Orleck* DD – 886. [It was a gearing-class destroyer in service from 1945 to 1982].

RB: What was [the ship]?

MM: *USS Orleck*.

RB: O-R-L-E-C-K. That was in Oahu [Hawaii]?

MM: Along with graduating from college, I was appointed as an ensign in the U. S. Navy.

RB: An ensign is O-1 [Officer Grade] or O-2?

MM: It is an O-1.

RB: So you were at the lowest officer grade.

MM: Yes, the new kid.

RB: Right, starting out. Did you report to the *USS Orleck*?

MM: No, we drove to San Francisco and reported on Treasure Island. I was recently reviewing a bunch of old memorabilia, records and correspondence; it reinforced my forgetfulness of some parts. But it was on Treasure Island.

RB: [Laughter] Okay.

MM: I got in the system and they arranged air transportation to Hawaii. The reason for going to Hawaii was to report aboard [the ship] was because the *Orleck* had a minor incident, and got stranded in Hawaii and they had some ship repairs that were necessary and they had just finished temporary repairs. So I was transported to catch my ship.

RB: Instead of the ship coming to you, you went to the ship. What was your job going to be? [Did] you know?

MM: I didn't know at the time, but I just reported in to do my duty. They "siphoned" me around and "chased" the ship [got him oriented] when I reported in the ship was at sea, off of Diamondhead [Hawaii] on sea trials to see if they had fixed enough [of the damage]. They commandeered a whaleboat on the base. Took me out five or ten miles.

RB: [Laughter]

MM: I was at sea and I climbed aboard on the rope ladder.

BF: Did you? [Laughter]

MM: Climbed over the railing. That was my first assignment.

BF: What was being on a destroyer like? Was it cramped in the quarters, in the hold?

MM: Destroyers are only so big. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

MM: There were two officers to a room. I forgot to mention that when I went to be interviewed to see about joining ROTC, my dad went with me and said, “It is a lot better to be an officer than an enlisted man.”

RB: Yes.

MM: He was in artillery man in World War I. Everything about the program made more sense about going in the Navy than the Army. We were at danger of being drafted is we didn’t join the ROTC. The military gets you in one way or the other.

RB: Yes, that’s true. Right. In retrospect, do you think that was a good choice that you made?

MM: It was an excellent choice.

RB: I think so.

MM: In ROTC, it was touted as being the most beneficial college scholarship you could get.

RB: That made sense.

MM: It didn’t seem a lot to get \$50.00 a month and have books and tuition paid, but it was an easy way to get through college. I am grateful for the all the connections that I have had in the military.

RB: Yes. Tell about your active duty experience [after] you [boarded] the [USS] *Orleck*. Did you head off from there?

MM: No, we had a few months, three or four, of land duty and the ship was in dry dock. They finished patching up the holes. They kept me busy.

RB: What kind of things did they have you do at first?

MM: They assigned me to sonar school in San Diego [California] for two months. Then it was a matter of reporting aboard and heading out to sea.

RB: Where did you go?

MM: The ship repairs was at Mare Island [San Francisco, California].

RB: Near San Francisco?

MM: Yes. They immediately assigned me to all kinds of training and assignment programs. I had about four or five different assignments — mail officer, security

officer. They taught you how to decipher code and to register publications and communications.

RB: All kinds of things!

MM: [The new officers had] a whole pile of duties. They expect you to perform those and then fit in the rotation to man the ship. Usually at sea, it was four hours of duty on and eight hours off, around the clock. You do your miscellaneous duties in your off time and sleep. The imperative was after eight hours you would do a four hours watch. We went on the bridge and got trained in navigation. It was fun.

RB: Did you like being out at sea?

MM: Yes.

RB: Did you have any problems with seasickness?

MM: Only occasionally. I can remember, for some reason, that we were in and out underneath the Golden Gate Bridge several times. It seemed to me they had an uncanny ability to schedule greasy pork chops.

RB: What? Greasy pork chops?

MM: It was the first meal out of port.

BF: [Laughter]

MM: It was the roughest.

RB: Man, that wasn't smart!

MM: I never had any serious seasickness.

RB: Good for you.

MM: You eat crackers and get by for a few hours.

RB: Did you end up going to Korea? Were you a part of the Conflict? What was your mission?

MM: Yes. We were artillery support for ground troops in the North Korean area. We provided artillery support for the ground troops. The weapons could travel four or five miles at sea. We were a rescue for pilots that were shot [down] in North Korea.

RB: In war?

MM: They would fly out to sea to the carriers and we were support for the carriers too. The destroyers provided a screen for the carriers.

RB: Kind of protection?

MM: Yes. It was a big circle around the carrier.

RB: Right. Were there any incidents that you recall where pilots needed to be rescued?

MM: Yes. We had one [pilot] that got rescued just before we got to him and we had one [pilot] that we rescued. He was flying a Corsair [U. S. Navy fighter aircraft] and he got shot. He came out with the nearest ship. I was just off coast. The aircraft floated long enough for us to get to him and we got him on board. We rescued an Army platoon that was trapped by the North Vietnamese soldiers. We rescued some more. We launched a whale boat [inaudible].

RB: They were on the land and you provided the boat to get them to the ship?

MM: We provided the boat and we were to go in and rescue them at a point on the land. We would meet them with the whaleboat.

RB: And get them away?

MM: They wanted volunteers. So they assigned a couple of men to man the [whale] boat. They gave us all a carbine [a long gun firearm] to go rescue those guys. They asked for volunteers, so I volunteered. We headed for the beach. Before we got there, we got a call that they [the Army platoon] escaped by another route. [Laughter] We had an ensign and a chief petty officer [who] had been shot.

RB: Oh, no.

MM: We rescued him.

RB: He was on the whaleboat?

MM: No.

RB: How did they get shot?

MM: Yes, we picked him up in the whaleboat. That wasn't the one I volunteered for. I remember when he climbed aboard. He had a big bandage on his bicep where a bullet had gone through. He was bleeding some blood. I thought this war is really huge and scary stuff.

RB: Is that right?

MM: [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Did you ever have any attacks on the destroyer from the Koreans?

MM: We had artillery support all the time. We had one pretty dramatic attack at the harbor to provide standby artillery support. And the North Vietnamese had their artillery support on tracks.

RB: The North Vietnamese?

MM: Yes.

RB: That is later in Vietnam?

MM: I misspoke. I meant the North Koreans.

RB: It was the North Koreans?

MM: North Koreans. I'm glad you're paying attention.

RB: Okay, I thought maybe we were talking about a different war. [Laughter] Just wanted to make sure. They had artillery on tracks?

MM: They ran them out and fired artillery duels. I don't know their protocol or how they did it, but they would periodically escape into the caves. We provided artillery support for the ground troops. They started firing at us and we started firing at them.

RB: Oh, man!

MM: It was a real gun battle.

RB: They were in what?

MM: They ran their artillery out of the cave so they could shoot. They started shooting and that is when we shot at them. [Inaudible] total of five-inch .38 shells. It was around 600 [shells]. And we expended all 600 in a matter of minutes firing at them with them firing at us. The North Koreans fired one shell that went over the destroyer. In artillery parlance, they tried to "straddle the target."

RB: You tried to [do] what?

MM: Straddle the target.

RB: Straddle the target?

MM: Yes, shoot one over and then one in front of the target. You set the sights. Anyway, we [were] straddled so we anticipated the next shell. And they hit us. And then they didn't hit us. They [only] splashed a little shrapnel on the fantail. One of our seaman got hit, but he wasn't hit seriously.

RB: So it wasn't a casualty?

MM: They put the seaman in for a Purple Heart medal. [Laughter] It seemed to be my impression that the Navy was over anxious to give out Purple Heart medals. He wasn't hurt that much.

RB: They put a bandage on him and he was okay, but he had been injured in combat, technically, so he qualified for a Purple Heart. Did he get a Purple Heart?

MM: As far as I know, he did. I don't know.

BF: Was it loud being in the carrier group doing artillery support for the ground troops?

MM: Yes.

BF: You probably were not the only one firing at the North Koreans in the caves. I imagine you had —.

MM: Well, there was more than one destroyer. In that particular incident, it was us against them. We were trying to blow them out. I am not sure who started it. I think they started it.

BF: [Laughter] Did you get to see aircraft taking off from the carriers or coming in for landing?

MM: We provided screen duty, which is like a big circle on a carrier. We would sail around the carrier.

BF: Do you remember any crashes or anything of note taking off or landing to that extent?

MM: Yes. The first one I saw was when I was stationed at Jacksonville.

RB: Stationed where?

MM: In Jacksonville.

RB: Jacksonville, Florida.

MM: That was our home base. We trained to go back to Korea. I put in the time after I did my training.

RB: You did?

MM: My first assignment was in a squadron in Jacksonville. Our duty was to train and get ready and deploy back to Task Force 77. [It was the aircraft carrier battle/strike force on the U.S. Seventh Fleet in the U. S. Navy.] [Inaudible]

RB: You were going to fly what kind of aircraft?

MM: We started out getting trained in a F-4U Corsair which is a prop fighter [made by Vought Aircraft Company]. I got preliminary training in the new aircraft. We got new airplanes.

RB: You did? What were they, again?

MM: They were F9F-5 Panthers.

RB: Grumman Panthers.

MM: So we trained in Panthers off shore from Jacksonville, Florida. We had plenty of things to do. We spent a couple of months in Cuba. There is a lot of open water there to get some good practice. Then when we reached the training point after a few months, we headed back to Korea. Between the time we left the States and we got there, the Korean [Conflict] ended.

RB: In 1953.

MM: I never say it was an opportunity, but I thought it was a good thing.

BF: [Laughter]

RB: Maybe you were lucky.

MM: I didn't have to fly the F-86s. Or I should say the VFA-115s.

BF: For somebody who flew both prop and jet aircraft, what did you prefer personally? Did you prefer a prop or a jet?

MM: There is no question about that. It's a prop. Strike that, it's a jet. It was faster and air conditioned.

RB: [Laughter]

MM: It's got speed. It can carry more capacity. It's the difference between night and day. But, I did fly the premier prop-jet ever made.

RB: What was that?

MM: [The] F8F Bearcat [made by Grumman]. In my initial advanced training when I finished flight school, I trained in an F8F. It is the hottest fighter ever built.

RB: Yes?

MM: It is very compact and very fast. It's a little challenging, but it's a real thrill. When I transitioned to the F8F, it was enough of a serious quantum jump in ability. I don't know a good way to say it. If you compare between an old car and a hotrod, it was the hotrod. It came on duty just as the war ended. It was never tested in battle.

MM: But the step from the SNJ, which is the trainer, to the F8F in terms of challenge —

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

MM: — and results, is a thrill flying the darn thing. It was a bigger challenge than going from that to a Panther. The Panther is smooth, different and more state of the art.

RB: When the [Conflict] ended, did you come back to the states and were relieved of duty?

MM: When the [Conflict] ended, we went on an around the world cruise.

RB: Where all did you go?

MM: Our first mission was Taiwan Straits, off Taiwan and opposite to China. There was a carrier diplomacy going on. I don't know if you know what that is.

RB: No, what is that?

MM: They used to talk about carrier diplomacy or trouble with the Russians, or any foreign power.

RB: A show of force? Or something?

MM: That's the best expression to describe it.

RB: I see.

MM: We made a show of force in the Taiwan Straits because the Chinese authorities were “rattling the cage” all the time because they wanted Taiwan back in the fold. The shelled Taiwanese and outlying islands almost every day. They made all kinds of diplomatic noises to get Taiwan back into mainland China. We were the guards.

RB: The guards and let them know the United States was not going to let that happen.

MM: I flew a few missions under that concept. We were dressed [ready] for combat. We had weapons on board the fighter. We basically patrolled to see if the Migs [jet fighter designed in the Soviet Union] came out and attacked us, we were to engage them. We didn’t go in to engage them.

RB: You were not the aggressors in that mission.

MM: Not sure how many now, two or three different carriers were part of that sequence of events. One of them got five kills with the Chinese. So that is as close as I got to fighting airborne. I dressed for it but they didn’t come.

RB: Better that than the alternative, I suppose.

MM: We went from there to Hong Kong, Singapore, Ceylon.

BF: Indonesia, I believe.

RB: What did you call it?

MM: Ceylon, C-E-Y-L-O-N.

RB: Sri Lanka?

MM: It’s off the bottom of India.

RB: I think it is Sri Lanka now. It was Ceylon. So you went through Singapore and then down to Ceylon, the Philippines —.

MM: So we cruised the South Pacific. Our goal was to be part of the deterrent force. We were tasked to go to Australia and help them celebrate Coral Seas Days.

RB: [Laughter]

MM: So we did that.

RB: Somebody had to do it.

MM: We left Sydney and went to New Zealand. I fulfilled a youthful plan, I guess.

RB: Join the Navy; see the world.

MM: Exactly!

BF: [Laughter]

RB: Good! You did that!

MM: When I formed an opinion, it was “Join the Navy and see the world.” When I was a junior in college, we had a choice. We could stay Navy, become ensigns and go to sea. Or become second lieutenants in the Marine Corps and go to Quantico [Virginia] and train eight or ten months in the swamp. I thought I didn’t want to go lay around in a swamp.

BF: [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

MM: I wanted to join the Navy and see the world! That is what I came for and I was able to do it.

RB: You did! You mentioned that you saw the Japanese near the park with the Buddha. Was that part of this tour with the Navy?

MM: Yes, it was part of this tour.

RB: So you did spend some time in Japan.

MM: Yes, I was in Japan a couple of times. I was over there, initially, on the destroyer and again when I was on a carrier.

RB: You were on active duty in the Navy from 1950 to 1953 or 1954?

MM: 1954.

RB: Four years?

MM: Yes.

RB: Did that release you from your obligation from your NROTC training?

MM: Yes. If there hadn’t been a war, we never would have gone out.

RB: Just so happened that the thirteen months, or eighteen months, turned into four years.

MM: I went through college on a program that's like the G.I. Bill in reverse. I served my time. Did my duty. I went back to college to get my law degree. I went through college on the G. I. Bill because as soon as I went on active duty, I started accruing benefits under the G.I. Bill. So they put me through on both ends.

RB: That is right. That is true. You had the undergraduate [schooling] through one program. After you did your active duty, you had benefit of the G. I. Bill for the other end of your schooling and you were able to use that to go to law school. As I recall, you [were] married in 1951 and you were on active duty. Where did you meet your wife [Shirley Alice (Owens) Morris]?

MM: In San Diego at a church dance.

RB: Well, it works, once again to bring Latter-day Saint youth together. How long did you date her?

MM: Eight days.

RB: Eight days. Did you have to go out to sea? Or [did] you know that you were going to get married?

MM: I was attracted to her —

RB: There you go!

MM: — early on.

RB: You were married in Salt Lake [City]. Did you get married at the [Salt Lake] Temple?

MM: Yes.

RB: So the two of you went back to Salt Lake [City] to [be] married.

MM: Yes. In the meantime, I had applied for flight training but had to wait almost a year. I had expressed a desire, early on, for flight training. It came through after about a year. We were in port at the time.

RB: You did what?

MM: We were in port, so I got on the telephone and asked Shirley if she still wanted to marry me and she said, "Yes." I said, "Meet me in San Francisco in three days." We started the process because we were going to go to the Salt Lake Temple. That is what we did. We were committed to each other. We got a lot of help from

my folks because we were going to go to Salt Lake to the temple. That's what we did.

RB: At the time, in 1951, there were temples in Arizona, St. George and Salt Lake [City] but not a whole lot of temples available on the West Coast. You were from Salt Lake [City], so you both went home, or you went home. She was from San Diego. Her parents came to the wedding?

MM: Her father was deceased. He was killed in an crash in a Marine airplane just before World War II started. She was without a father. They had moved back with the grandparents. Basically, her grandparents were like a father and mother to her.

RB: When you came back and [were released] from active with the Navy, you went to law school. Were you still in the reserves? Or connected with the military?

MM: Yes. When I came home and settled in to law school to get started, I wanted to continue flying if possible. I went out to the naval facility in the Salt Lake [City] airport. They had a two-engine bomber left over from World War II. They flew a minimum number of days per month because they were in an economy purge. So they didn't have a fighter program. At that time, I was a fighter pilot.

RB: You almost were [a fighter pilot] in the Taiwan Straits! [Laughter]

MM: I found out about their program and I went down the taxiway and there were all these shiny FA86s [aircraft]. So I thought maybe they have any need for pilots. They welcomed me with open arms. They brought me aboard in to the Air National Guard.

RB: So you switched from the Navy to the Air National Guard.

MM: Right.

RB: Did you stay with the Air National Guard for some time?

MM: Until I graduated from law school. I practiced law for a couple of years in Bountiful, [Davis County], Utah].

RB: You graduated from the University of Utah Law School in 1956?

MM: I think that is right.

RB: Did you practice law in Ogden, [Weber County, Utah]?

MM: No, in Bountiful, [Salt Lake County, Utah].

RB: What kind of law did you practice?

MM: Whatever.

RB: General practice?

MM: Do you want side stories?

RB: Yes.

MM: I had part-time jobs while I was finishing law school. My moonlight job was fine with the Air National Guard. It was a fun and games kind of military assignment. Everything was looser. I don't mean in any dangerous way. It was like having an FA86 for your toy airplane.

BF: [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Your hobby.

MM: You are basically training. You also had runway alerts. I don't know if they still have runway alerts at the Salt Lake Airport or not.

RB: I don't know.

MM: We practiced scrambling [reacting quickly] for runway alerts.

RB: What did that mean — a runway alert? In case it was under attack? Or something?

MM: In case the Russians sent one of those big bombers.

RB: Got it! You would scramble to try and protect the airport.

MM: Towards the end, we had a request for pilots for a couple of months to fly the same airplane with the California Air National Guard. So I did that for a couple of months.

RB: Oh, fun!

MM: We had one that I believe was a legitimate scramble, when I was with the California Guard.

RB: Where was that?

MM: Fresno [California].

RB: Oh, in Fresno.

MM: One of the scrambles that we got was with flying Cougars [F9 Grumman aircraft], which was very much like the Panther [FA8s] aircraft. Cougars were at sea and came in to protected territory. So we went out and had a dogfight.

RB: [Laughter] Good!

MM: I thought we whipped them. I thought it unique with an FA86, which is what the [Air National] Guard had.

RB: You finished law school and practiced general law in Bountiful for a couple of years. Then did you leave Salt Lake [City]?

MM: Yes.

RB: Where did you go?

MM: [To] Washington, D. C.

RB: Your oldest son [Scott Morris] was born when you were in Jacksonville in training.

MM: Right.

RB: Your other two children, Mark and Paul, I assume were born in Salt Lake City when you were in law school.

MM: Yes.

RB: Then Ann was born in Missouri, but you went to Washington, D. C.

MM: For training.

RB: For what? What took you to Washington, D. C.? Was it training with the Air National Guard?

MM: No. It was before that.

RB: Oh, I see.

MM: When I was a teenager I had a Sunday school teacher who was employed by the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. I was favorably impressed with them. I saw several newspaper articles where they were involved. Two agents came out to see me at my house. I had been a paperboy when I was young. It was my first real job.

RB: *The Salt Lake Tribune* or *The Desert News*? Both of them?

MM: Both of them. One of the homes on my paper route was the home of a wanted fugitive. The FBI agents came out to see me to see if I had seen anything around the house. You have to live in the area to appreciate it.

RB: [Laughter] Okay.

MM: FBI agents in the public view were superstars.

RB: G-men.

MM: G-men.

RB: [Laughter]

MM: There were a lot of favorable news articles [about FBI agents] all the time. So I formed a youthful desire to join the FBI.

RB: So that is what took you to Washington, D. C., to try and get into the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]?

MM: After I practiced law for a couple of years, I thought if I am ever going to be an agent it has to be soon. So I applied. And was selected. It was a fairly rigorous screening process. One of the screening steps was to be interviewed by the special agent-in-charge. I was very impressed with him. That was the screening interview to get hired.

RB: Did you get hired?

MM: I got hired.

RB: Then you were a FBI agent.

MM: I did finally work with the FBI.

RB: That is great! In Washington, D. C.?

MM: No, the training was in Washington D. C.

RB: Where did they send you?

MM: My first field office was in Kansas City [Missouri].

RB: Therefore, Missouri.

MM: That is where my daughter was born there.

RB: Ann [Morris] was born there. What kind of work did you do? Were you a case agent?

MM: I did a little bit of everything.

RB: Sure.

MM: Played cops and robbers!

BF: [Laughter]

RB: Did you have some exciting experiences in that job?

MM: Yes. I finished my career with investigation on about every kind of case.

RB: You [had] five years with them and —.

MM: I arrested four people in five days once.

RB: Oh, really?

MM: That was considered a good job!

BF: [Laughter]

RB: Steve [Morris] was born in Houston, Texas.

MM: I was transferred after two years [to Houston].

RB: With the FBI?

MM: Yes. By curious coincidence the special agent-in-charge of the Kansas City office was Mark Felt, who was the same person who interviewed me in Salt Lake [City]. So I worked for him.

RB: What happened with him? I am drawing a blank. He became famous later?

MM: He was Deep Throat!

RB: Oh, Deep Throat in Watergate! [The secret informant who gave information in 1972 to Bob Woodward, a reporter with *The Washington Post* regarding information about President Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal]

MM: He brought a President down [Richard M. Nixon].

RB: That is right! I couldn't remember the name and what it was associated with. So you —.

MM: He had the appearance, if you met him, of what an FBI agent should [look] like. He was a handsome guy and very personable.

BF: [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

MM: On one occasion, we had a stakeout for a criminal case. We had to set up a surveillance. I was his co-agent. He was my boss. He was in charge of the office.

RB: Sure, but the two of you were on a stakeout.

MM: I knew him pretty well.

RB: Sure, you worked together closely.

MM: Another curious coincidence happened. Every two years you have to go to in-service training for two weeks. I went to the in-service training and he was there too.

RB: So you were with him again.

MM: Yes, with him again. I was impressed with him then and I thought of him as a real hero.

RB: When did you find out that he was Deep Throat? When everybody else did?

MM: Exactly.

RB: Wow!

BF: You never suspected him? [Laughter]

RB: Did that surprise you when that came out?

MM: He became the assistant director of the FBI. The Deep Throat experience happened after that. No one found out until his daughter insisted [it be disclosed].

RB: He kept it close hold all those years.

MM: But he was a real patriot.

RB: Sounds like it. You knew him personally and had a great impression of him.

MM: Yes.

RB: You did a couple of years in Kansas City and another couple of years in Houston. Is that where you left the FBI?

MM: No. My third office was in Chicago, [Illinois]. You have to know the start to see the end. On the way to Chicago, my son, Mark, made a comment that really stuck with me.

RB: What did he say?

MM: He said, "Daddy, when we get to your office, where will we be? In Houston? Or Kansas?" We lived in Kansas. It occurred to me that we had a torn up life moving around every two, three, or four years. I had family stress from my wife's family illness. When I married into the family, there were multiple problems. She had a handicapped brother. He died a few months ago. So I had multiple reasons to leave the Bureau, or I would have stayed.

RB: You liked the work?

MM: Yes. I finished off in Chicago, which is like going to the World Series of crime. It was fun and games. I had a good partner. It was playing cops and robbers. But it was time to leave. I thought about it for a long time.

RB: For the FBI that was like the —.

BF: [Laughter]

RB: Where did you go when you left Chicago?

MM: We ended up in Orange, California.

RB: What took you there?

MM: A job.

RB: You got a job offer?

MM: Credentials as a special agent was enough to get me hired over the phone.

RB: What kind of a job? What did you do?

MM: Aerospace.

RB: What company was it?

MM: North American Aviation, Inc. was the parent company. Autonetics was the department.

RB: What?

MM: A-U-T-O-N-E-T-I-C-S.

RB: You were going to be a contract administrator?

MM: Yes. They had a security department with almost all ex-[FBI] agents. So I got retained over the phone. If you were an ex-agent, that is all they wanted to know.

RB: In fact, as a FBI agent you had some sort of a security clearance, I would imagine.

MM: Yes.

RB: So going there they needed people with security clearances at your level?

MM: Right. I had already been hired. My supervisor said, "You have a law degree. We are going to put you in contracts and pricing where we can use your skills better."

RB: [Laughter] It was a private company, not the government, so you didn't need to pass the California [law] bar, but did you take the California bar?

MM: I took the California bar while I was working there. In fact, that is why I was working from the start to support me to finish law school. I bunched things up when I was finishing my undergraduate degree.

RB: You did what?

MM: I bunched things up. I went one year to law school before I went on active duty.

RB: I wondered because from 1954 to 1956, you graduated from law school and that was only two years. But you had a year already under your belt. Now that makes sense.

MM: They had a program there [at the University of Utah] where if you fit the requirements of having all the credits [for your undergraduate degree] except for the time, I could go to law school.

RB: It kind of fit into a political science major, anyway.

MM: Yes.

RB: You took the California bar and passed it when you were living in Orange County. I think you said you were two years with North American Aeronautics.

MM: Yes, about two years.

RB: What did you do after that?

MM: I started practicing law.

RB: Did you go out on your own? Or did you work with a firm?

MM: I went on my own. No, I actually teamed up with another lawyer. I don't remember now the connection.

RB: General practice, again?

MM: General practice.

RB: How long did you practice law?

MM: Fifty years.

RB: Fifty years! [Laughter] Two of your sons, [Mark and Paul], went on to law school. Did any of the others?

MM: No. My oldest son is a CPA [Certified Public Accountant].

RB: Where is he living?

MM: He lives in Orange County, [California].

RB: How about Mark and Paul? Are they practicing law? Or retired?

MM: You could say they are practicing law, but not regularly.

RB: Not traditional law.

MM: Not traditional law with clients in and out. Mark is a prominent tax attorney.

RB: Where is that?

MM: He lives in Poway [California] and works in San Diego [California]. Paul made a contact his senior year with an attorney in California who was hired to teach at BYU [Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah County, Utah]. Paul bumped into him in the semester break. The attorney mentored him. So [Paul] became a deputy in the West Valley City, [Salt Lake County, Utah] attorney's office.

RB: Very good.

MM: He got trained while he was still in school working part-time. When he graduated from college and passed the bar, within months the city attorney left, and he became the youngest city attorney in the state.

RB: Very good. That is fantastic! Good for him!

MM: He has worked for West Valley [City] for [maybe twenty years]. He is now an attorney for [an office] which is a land acquisition governmental agency that disposes of all of the excess property at Hill Air Force Base [Ogden, Weber County, Utah]. So he is in demand.

RB: He has done quite well! Good for him!

MM: I tried to send Steve to law school, but he didn't want to go.

RB: No? [Laughter]

MM: But he started clerking for me when he finished college. He had made a tremendous career.

RB: What does he do?

MM: Law office administrator.

RB: Oh, good. Is he in California?

MM: Yes, his office is in San Francisco.

RB: You said you adopted Shawn [Morris] in 1976 in Anaheim [California].

MM: Yes.

RB: How did that come about that you adopted him?

MM: It was a family that I had been an attorney for a number of years at the time. A girl friend of one of their family members got pregnant. They decided they couldn't handle [a child] financially and wanted to know about adoption. I had handled adoptions over the years. It was not a big thing to do another one. After some soul searching, my wife and I nominated us.

BF: [Laughter]

MM: So we adopted him.

RB: What is Shawn doing now?

MM: He went to the Y [BYU] and [received] a master's degree from Thunderbird [Graduate School of International Management] University in [Glendale] Arizona.

RB: International business.

MM: Yes, international business. He works as a troubleshooter advisor on a rotating basis for several companies involving the oil industry. For years he worked two weeks and then had two weeks off.

RB: [Laughter] That is a different kind of a career!

MM: So he's still engaged in that. He changed employment recently for a step up [in position]. So he has done very well.

RB: How about Ann? Where does she live?

MM: She lives in Dana Point [California].

RB: Down by San Diego?

MM: Yes. She's been a working girl.

RB: What kind of line of work is she in?

MM: She started out as a manicurist. She became an esthetician. [A person knowledgeable about the nature and appreciation of beauty].

RB: I am not sure I know what that is.

MM: Cosmetology school is close.

RB: An area dealing with cosmetology.

MM: Yes.

RB: [Laughter]

MM: It helps ladies look good.

BF: Makeup artist.

MM: Yes. She has acquired her own skills. One of them is also as a tattoo artist. Also, to put nipples on breasts that have had cancer. Things like that.

RB: Good for her. Now your wife is still alive?

MM: She died September 2, 2016.

RB: I am sorry to hear that. What brought you to St. George?

MM: I was concerned about my wife. Her health was going downhill. If something happened to me, she couldn't manage things all by herself. We looked into it and applied to this facility [Southern Utah Veterans Home].

RB: It is not easy, I understand, and it takes awhile.

MM: After a year of waiting, we went down to Chula Vista [California]. I was still practicing law. We went to check there because it was near Mark. Chula Vista has a big waiting list as well. We applied for that. We went to check on how long it would be. They told us if we wanted to go to Barstow [California] we could go right now.

RB: [Laughter] No waiting list there!

MM: So we went to Barstow. We were in Barstow for about four years. She wasn't going to get well. The whole purpose was for her to be taken care of completely. So that took care of it. They took care of everything. [She died there].

RB: So that was a veteran's home in Barstow?

MM: Yes. Then we learned about here. I have a brother who lives here. I was attracted to this location so I moved here [Ivins, Washington County, Utah].

RB: So you were married sixty-seven years?

MM: Sixty-five [years].

RB: She [your wife] died when?

MM: September 2, 2016.

RB: So 2016, that makes sense. So you were already here or she died in Barstow?

MM: She died in Barstow.

RB: So when something opened up here, you came.

MM: Well, Paul came down to St. George periodically for conferences. He stopped in [at SUVH] one day and saw it was a better deal. We took a look and it was a better deal.

RB: Yes, hands down! The desert in Barstow and the desert in St. George are light years apart.

MM: The folks [in Barstow] are fine. They did their job. We lived in the individual units for husband and wife. When she died, they had no provision for single units. All the units in Barstow are for two persons. You have to share a bathroom. We couldn't move into a unit by yourself. After she passed away, it was not going to be good because they could move a person in on you in the double units. I was not prepared for that.

RB: There was really nothing keeping you in Barstow, no family there.

MM: We went to Barstow because it was available.

RB: So after you learned about this place [SUVH] you applied to come here.

MM: We were on the list for a year or so. So that is what took me around the track.

RB: We will go ahead and finish [the interview] now, but is there anything else? You said you are eighty-nine [years old]?

MM: Yes.

RB: You will be turning ninety [years old] this year? What is the secret of living as long as you have?

MM: Keep breathing in and out.

RB: [So it's] keep breathing in and out! Have you had a good life?

MM: I have had a wonderful life! The important thing is that I haven't mentioned is that there are six children. But there are twenty-two grandchildren and forty-nine great-grandchildren. So this location [SUVH in Ivins] fits better.

RB: That is true. Do you get visitors from time to time?

MM: Yes,

RB: Good. Glad to hear it.

MM: My son, Paul, has thought about moving to St. George for a long time. His job is such that he can be anywhere. With a phone and a briefcase and you are in business.

RB: So maybe he might be here and you would have your son nearby.

MM: Yes.

RB: That is good. I hope that all works out. Thank you for taking the time to share some of your memories and experiences. You have had an interesting life. Thank you.

MM: Thank you. One thing becomes apparent when you get to be old you kind of like to tell your stories. A lot of time there is too much story telling. [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

RB: A lot of times people don't have time to listen to the stories, but I enjoy stories. I have been learning a lot. I appreciate it.

BF: It is therapy for me.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]