EAST CAROLINA MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #24.051

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USS NORTH CAROLINA BATTLESHIP MEMORIAL

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Interview #1

Interviewer is Donald R. Lennon

[Tell me a little bit about where you came from and your background before you went into the Navy, just as kind of an introduction.]

Well, I lived up on a farm in New York state. I went to a one-room country schoolhouse when we first started. Six grades in one room. Later on after a certain age, they bused us to another town seven miles away. That was the high school. At high school, I couldn't live with my dad one day. He said, "Men join the Navy." So I got tired of pulling that cross cut saw and I joined the Navy.

[When was this?]

This was in 1941. April of 1941. And I started out.

[You were eighteen at that time.]

Early eighteen, yes. Right after my eighteenth birthday. I went in on a minority cruise. That was just eighteen to twenty-one. Then I couldn't get out anyway, I had to ship over because the war was on and there was nothing I could do about it. I stayed aboard the battleship a little over three years, three and a half years.

[Was the NORTH CAROLINA your initial appointment?]

Yes. We came right from receiving ship right to Brooklyn Navy Yard and right aboard the ship.

[You came aboard at the time it was being outfitted then?]

Yes. It went in commission and we came aboard a couple of days after. Right in the Brooklyn Navy Yard back in 1941.

[What was your assignment initially?]

Well, everybody that come out of training at a naval training station, everyone was apprentice seaman. Apprentice seaman, most of them stayed either on deck. In those days, they would say, "You ten guys over here. You are going to the engine room or the fire room." I was one of the ten going to the fire room. We went right down below decks to the fire room.

[Were you in the fire room throughout all of your three years?]

Well, most of the time. Then later on an opening came up in the boiler maker gang. I went into the boiler maker gang. We had to maintain all of the boilers on the ship. Then you worked your way up and prayed(?). Well, it went from apprentice seaman, then there was fireman third, one of the lower ratings, then you work up to fireman second and fireman first. Then you work second class and first class.

[In a situation, in the fire room or in part of the boiler maker gang, either one, your duty station and your battle station were probably the same, was it not?]

At one time, yes. I was in the fire room. Later, they put me in what they called main control. They had four engine rooms and four fire rooms. Two boilers in each fire room and throttles in each engine room. Their number three was like the heartbeat of the

engineering department, because everything had to go through main control. Prior to that, when you first come aboard ship, you would have to trace lines out. One is a steam line. One in a water line. One is an exhaust line. One is a hydraulic line, an electric line. They are all color coded. You would find out which line went where and where to shut it off when it changes. In the event that we got hit or something, you would be able to shut one off if you were able and transfer to another place. This is what we done, mainly the main control. From a bridge would come down the speeds and everything else and we would give them the speeds that they wanted or required when they were maneuvering and all. In battle or something like that. That was pretty interesting, you know. Quite demanding. You sit there all the time GQ is on. General quarters, and we sat there for four hours to ten hours. What we were doing at the time.

[Well now, you were by coming on being a plank owner in effect, you were on board when they went out for their shakedown off New York and had the celebrated firing of the guns that caused it to be known as the "Showboat."]

Yes. Well that plus we had the broadcast from the fantail. There are Phil Spitalny's All Girl Orchestra. That was part of that. Then our main thing was we fired one of the biggest broadsides in naval history aboard the ship, those nine sixteen-inch guns and ten five inch thirty eights going off simultaneously.

[Kind of shook.]

Little bit. Everybody kind of had visions of going backwards and all, but it was really quite an impact.

[You were down in the fire room when that happened.]

Yes. That was something different. We survived it pretty good and we had quite a

write-up on it. They guys were pretty proud of it. The ship is like it is today. You can't help but feel kind of a lump in the throat when you go by and see it. Fifty-two years since we went aboard the ship. It still means a lot to a lot of us in a way. It's our home, per se. It has been my home for a little over three years.

[After having been on it as long as you were. During most of those times were periods with lots of action. A lot was going on.]

Yes. Then later they changed my battle station from there to what they called smoke watch. This is up on the top mass, overlooking the stacks. If a boiler was smoking or something, we would call them and say, "Your side is smoking." At the time they wouldn't want any smoke. It was a give a way, because the horizon was so far and anything beyond that. That was my other battle station, smoke watch up on the sky control. You sat up on the yard arm with a signal man, hoist their flags. I am sitting up on top of that in the center of the ship.

[During that period you could see what was going on a lot better than in the earlier days.]

A ring side seat, everybody would be hollering, "Smoke watch, what is going on now?" When we bombarded the different islands, prior to occupational, we had four or five first line battle ships right in a row. They would be going by, say the island was there, and they were going by this way, they would fire a starboard. Take twenty minutes or so and the next one would pick it up and then the next one and the next one. They would turn and come back and fire port side. Bombarding the islands. That was quite an impressive sight. Then again when you are sitting there and you don't hear the buzz buzz before the guns go off, all they do is boom.

[Where were you the first time that the NORTH CAROLINA came under enemy fire?]

Off Guadalcanal. When we started, we left Long Beach and went to SuniFuti (?) somewhere and picked up five transport load of marines, come back and we started on Guadalcanal and Tulagi. That was our first engagement.

[What kind of feeling did that give you?]

Well, you are kind of curious. You know. It was tough for the guys who had to go ashore, but you know. It seemed odd, like I say, we have to blow that place to pieces. We done it because they were firing 2700 pound projectiles. They could fire accurately, and they could fire three of them twenty miles away with accuracy. When they bombarded the islands, when we left a lot of places looked like a flat rock. Nothing there. Some of the places looked really bad.

[But you weren't getting much fire back from that.]

Nothing coming back.

[When they started firing back at the ship, that. . . ]

We were out of range see. A sixteen-inch gun we could lay off. Whatever shore battery they had, it wasn't the large caliber guns. They have five-inch, six-inch, eight-inch guns. This is what we done in Korea, too. Above the thirtieth parallel, we just go in once in harbor. They sent a destroyer in to draw fire from shore batteries. Then we had a cruiser operating with us. Well, the cruiser had eight-inch guns. They could, if there was a flash on the beach, they would knock them out. Most of the islands, we never got that.

[I am sure the poor destroyers in that case, didn't care for that duty.]

Not much. If you go in close and they fire at you, the cruiser would pick it up and

lock out the shore batteries. It was a little hairy at times.

[Well now, I am sure one question that is always asked is where were you at the time when the torpedo hit?]

I was in the compartment, starboard side when the torpedo hit. Somebody said, "Man, the WASP just got torpedoed, boom, we got torpedoed. The destroyer behind us got hit too. Just caught us ___ ___. But we were setting on the starboard side just after the A division machine shop. I had to go forward. But as a lot of guys started to go forward up the hatch, five or six compartments ahead, you would see smoke rolling through the compartment. There was these bunch of guys turned around, three guys hit a hatch at once, it got through it, it was that kind of thing.

[Was it much panic?]

I imagine there was, but at the time you didn't think about it. You were on a void to get away. A lot of guys as soon as they could close the hatches, they confirmed it that way because we had good watertight integrity on the ship. Once the hatches are closed and it is not too bad. The idea is when you are in the house, or a long haul, and the end of the house blew off, you had to go halfway up to get up the hatch going up. You run about a quarter of the way and just see smoke from the hatch this way. "Let's find another way." So we had to turn around and go back. In the meantime, some other guys closed the hatches ahead of us.

[Well now, you could still open them and get out couldn't you, when you came to a closed one.]

We were really open. Give us quite a list where the torpedo hit. I think it was abreast number two turret. It hit there and we counterbalanced the flooding to get the ship on even keel and took off. At the time, it was quite hairy because later on after we got out

of the area, we had to go up forward anyway and there was oil all over the place. Around that number two barbet(?). Everything else was a little hairy. I think we lost one guy in the head, three guys in the compartment, something like that. I think it was four or five total.

[That was very fortunate that you didn't have greater losses than that.]

Yes. It was really tremendous that we didn't because it really could have been. Aboard the ship is an armor belt around the center of the ship. The direct center of it is about this big and it tapers out as it goes up. It hit up above and kind of below the armor belt at number two. It made a pretty good hole. You could drive a box car through there without stopping and it wouldn't hit the sides going through. Everybody figured, here we go back to the states. But when we got to Pearl they put a patch on us and back out again.

[You weren't worried that you were going to be going to the bottom of the ocean?]

No. I don't think I never did. The WASP, I think they sunk it later because it was too far gone. They couldn't do nothing with it. The destroyer behind us, I think it blew it right in half.

[That is the problem, they hit a magazine or something of that nature.]

There was nothing you could do with that.

[If the fire gets to the magazine.]

Yes, because the aircraft carriers are tough as they carry all high-test gas and bombs and ammunition and all. They go whew. That was one of their praying targets. In the task force we were at destroyer screens and the closer and the carriers and the metal and the metal ships. Then when the kamikazes come in we set up our window fire just like an umbrella. Some got through. It didn't hit us, but we shot a lot of their planes down but some get through, they always do. They get between us and another ship and you can't fire

at them. That's casualties of war, I guess. It was good the way they always picked up the bogeys on the screen, you know. So far away and everything else. They would recognize them and send up planes after them. In them days, we didn't have jets we had planes. The old motor driven planes, Gremlins, SBDs, and TBFs.

[The NORTH CAROLINA was one of the early ones to have radar. Some of those ships didn't even have radar to be able to pick them up as they were coming in.]

This was good because you could hear bogeys, three miles away or five miles away, unidentified aircraft here or there. Any of the send up planes or else they would come over. If they come over, we put up such a barrage of anti-aircraft fire was quite a thing. It was something. I think we kept pretty good count of ourselves on the way, but still.

[Of the officers you worked with, which ones do you have particular recollections of, either fondly or otherwise?]

Well our chief engineer Maxwell, he was quite a guy. He would come over as an immigrant kid, in the Navy and worked his way right up. I think he wound up as an admiral before he was done with his career. He was quite a remarkable man, really. The chief engineering officer was great. He was quite a guy.

[Do you remember Captain Stryker?]

No.

[Joe Stryker. He was one that was very popular for several years.]

When I went aboard we had ____ Hustvedt, was on there. Oscar C. Badger and a few others. That was something.

[Captain Hustvedt was only on that for a short time, during the shakedown and everything.]

Oscar C. Badger. It was a good ship. It still is. It is too bad that the sister ship--the WASHINGTON--they destroyed it. Them guys have nowhere to go. At least we still have this. We try to make it every year if we can. To see the old guy. It is kind of hard to look at a guy when he was seventeen and to see him now and he is pretty near seventy. Oh, man. I know there is a couple here now, they gave me a name and I have to think about it, where did he work, who is he. It is hard. Fifty years gone by. Some of them are pretty good. What gets me is somebody come up and calls you by name. You say, "Who is this guy?"

[That is always difficult.]

I've got some photo albums of things. But we couldn't take any pictures aboard ship. Not at that time. The only pictures we had were only the ones on shore. Like in Pearl or something like that. We never could get any actual pictures of anybody on the ship, unless they had group pictures. We had a ship photographer, but ____ has been trying to find him ever since or somewhere. Where did all these pictures go. We haven't tracked him down yet. He is working on it though.

[I would think that they would be in the national archives if anywhere, wouldn't they?]

Could be. There had to be a lot of action pictures of stuff. The ships photographer took, but we have no access to them at all. It would be something for the crew to have. You know, it is hard.

[Thinking in terms of the routine that you had aboard the ship, the aside from your actual duties. What did you do for relaxation?]

It wasn't much really. We played cards. We had records. We wore them right out playing them over and over again because we never had a chance to get new ones. Then we

would start picking on who played trumpet for this, who played drums for this. You would hear a tune and we had a game to try to figure out who was who and everything else. Sooner or later our records broke or we lost them. Time just ran out on us. We just never had too much. There wasn't much time for recreation.

[They showed movies frequently on board, didn't they?]

Yes. We had movies in the mess hall. They were awful hot. It is kind of confining. Yes. They had several movies.

[After you had been at sea for a good while, the food became fairly routine, did it not?]

Even if you lost track of days, you know if you had bean or sort, it was Saturday. Chicken or ham on Sunday. You know. It was pretty good. You have got to figure, we never had fresh milk. We had a lot of powdered stuff. With a crew that size when you feed them three times a day, you are going to run out of stuff. All in all it wasn't that bad. I don't think nobody went hungry.

[What about ports. Do you have any particular fondness for any port calls?]

No. It was not many places we went. We used to go to the place they called Shangri-La. You go over on the beach and they had swimming and probably a cookout or something. Then you get two cans of beer or two cans of soda. There was a 3.4 beer and on.

[Probably lukewarm too at that rate.]

Did bother me. I didn't drink it. At that rate it was. But it was just something.

[Just a diversion to break the routine.]

Yes. During the war, it was hard. ____ ____ ____, Caledonia, Shangri-La, I don't

know. It was a couple of islands I never knew about. It was just to go ashore.

[Just almost at holes rather than being real islands.]

There was nothing really there. Play ball or something or guys sat there and played cards. Some guys that like beer would trade me a beer for a soda. They enjoyed their beer too, but you don't get that much . . .

[When you got into Pearl for repairs and everything, you got freedom there.]

We did. It was good. A difference, at least you could go ashore and order a meal or buy different things that you have to have or stuff like that. I enjoyed Pearl. It was good, but it was war time. But like I say, if the population was say 8,000 people, we must have had 30,000 people there. It was kind of tough in a way. But it was a base that we operated on. It was good. Maybe I take a different look at things, but during the war you had to be inconvenienced somehow. As long as it was kind of minimal, it wasn't that bad, not really. A lot of guys that drank, they had their bars there, but they would run out of stateside whiskey, then they would send this imitation whiskey. They didn't let two guys out and they would let two in. That was just one of these things. I think one time, we got tied up with this Tom Collins Five Island Gin, they called it. You get one sweet, one sour, one strong, one weak. If I didn't get one to quit on that ain't bad, then they got out in that hot sun. I says, "Whew, that is enough of that."

[You weren't waiting to have a hangover.]

Oh, God. That was instantaneous. We went to the Waikiki Beach, Royal Hawaiian Hotel. At that time, there was only two on the beach. It was Ala Moana and Royal Hawaiian. Now there must be five hundred on there now. It is so commercial. It is nothing like it used to be.

[The Royal Hawaiian was a very popular one, was it not?]

A lot of the submariners went there. They had tough duty. Really, they when they would come in they went there. It was open. There were a lot of people. You could come into the bar and go into the beach. The Royal Hawaiian, yes. That was right on Waikiki Beach. The Moana is close by, but now, it has all changed.

[The question came up this morning, I have never heard any one comment on it in the past. How many Blacks were there aboard the NORTH CAROLINA?]

Not that many. At them time, they could only be mess attendants, like waiters in the wardroom and stuff like that. It was maybe, I would say, 100 of them if there was. I didn't notice many blacks on regular routine until I went to Korea.

[Yes. There was a great transition there between World War II and Korea.]

I was in charge of the forward fire room on the destroyer. A black guy came on and everybody was saying, "What the heck is this." I said, "Never mind, I will take him in my fire room." The guys, I think they resented it in a way. I say, "Hey. None of that crap. He is doing a job like you and I are, you know." Mac was . . . they used to say, "This dumb colored guy and this and that." I said, "No. Give the guy his chance." Mac wasn't. He was studying for his pilot's license and studying for a lawyer's degree. He was good. We were in Japan, I think, Acusca (?) or Sasebo, or somewhere. Mac went over on the beach and naturally he got a little lit and he come back, plugged in the coffee pot and burned it up, you know. Mac didn't say nothing. He went back ashore, bought another coffee pot. I come by and I said, "Who bought the coffee pot?" He said, "Let me tell you, I got drunk and I burned it up. I went over and bought a new one." I said, "Ah Mac. I give you credit. A lot of white guys wouldn't have done that." I told the other guys to chip in a few bucks a piece

and pay Mac for the new coffee pot and they did. It was not problem. I had him for my check man for a long time. One of the better check men we had in a long time.

[Well, you said that they on the NORTH CAROLINA served as waiters. Did that include cooks or just actual waiting on the tables?]

Well the wardroom had their own. The officers' quarters were forward. We never got up to the wardroom anyway. The crews' quarters were back aft. AT the time, I am pretty sure they can only be serving the wardroom as mess attendants.

[As mess attendants to the officers.]

Then when it broke open they were all through the _____.

[So they had no contact at all with the regular crew?]

Not too much. Not really. They were aboard ship and all.

[They didn't have regular battle stations?]

That I couldn't answer you. I've never seen them much. Never got up officers' country much.

[And none of them have ever participated in the reunions or anything.]

I never seen any. I have never seen one down here at all.

[I had never really through about it because I had never seen them over the years.]

Never heard of it. Never seen it. Now that you mentioned it, I have never seen a colored guy come down here. That is something. They had a marine division on there. I forgot, there could have been one or two colored guys in there. But the marines had the freedom to ship like we did. They mounted the five-inch guns.

[I don't think that they were used other than . . . ]

I don't think so. They were strictly mess attendants as far as I could say now,

because I don't really know. I never seen them anywhere else. They worked in the wardroom.

[All of you have anecdotes or particular incidents that you are fond of. Particular events and episodes, whether they are just personal little things that were involving ship mates or what have you. What are some of your favorite memories.]

You are taking me way back. Some of the kids that lived close by in Brooklyn, you know for us it was something. We would go over to the house with them. Go down to the local joint and have a few beers with everybody. Have a home cooked meal and everything else.

[This was before, when you were at Brooklyn Navy Yard.]

During the war, guys were saying about the incident in Caledonia when everybody got lit and we only had two guys sober enough to get the ship underway. I don't recall much about that. I was probably one of the guys who got lit too.

[How did the officers react to that, with only two crew members?]

Not too bad. They were fairly liberal at the time. There wasn't gung ho, but the battleships were usually tougher because they were bigger ships in the fleet. Destroyers were more laxed. I would see an officer over on a beach. He would be there for an extra day or so. He would say, "Lend me some money, I will have some money coming back." ___ ___ __a lot of money. Then they would just restrict them to the ship and think nothing of it. It was more relaxed on a smaller ship than bigger ships.

[You had so many more men to account for. Crew of a thousand or so.]

Oh, better than that. Two thousand or better on the battleships during the war. I remember up in Portland, Maine. We used to go ashore a lot in the big whale boats and all.

Coming back to the ship, a lot of guys were trying to bring back a pint or a quart or something. That guy brings back a gallon of booze or something. The O.D. would catch them and you know we would say, "What is that? What are you bringing whiskey aboard for?" The guy threw it over the side and said, "Destroy the evidence, we couldn't drink it all anyway." But it was that. Then we used to have picket duty, what they call up in Maine. So many guys from the boat would go check in the islands and around the coast and everything else. A couple of times, someone would run aground and we had to spend the day around the beach. We had quite a time with that. We had no walkie-talkies, not in them days. We had some other parties out looking for them. In Korea, I used to sink them sandbags by radar whenever you look at them, you know. They were trying to run the blockade and all. The guns were teamed up with the radar and would aim for them and blow them out of the water. They always tried to run the blockade or sandbags in Korea, but that was a different war.

[Well now, you left the NORTH CAROLINA in May of 1944.]

I went to a school in Philadelphia. It is a boiler and turbine lab and what they do is go through the whole course and different boilers. Steam apparatuses. They fire them under different conditions. They force feed them and everything else, to see how they react out the ocean and the new ___ and the new safety features and everything else. As you graduated that school, they had a list of ships. When you graduated you could take your pick of the ship. I picked an ATR, from a 35,000-ton battleship to a wooden hull tug boat that was maybe a hundred feet long. I said, “That has got to be good because we are going to be in port a lot.” Just in the harbor and back. We went from Bellingham, Washington, where they built it to Bremerton, Seattle, Frisco, down to San Diego, San Pedro. There for

a while we were chasing torpedoes. What they had done was they would launch torpedoes on the glider and five miles away, then it would hit the water and take off. We would have to go retrieve them, the torpedoes because they put dummie heads on them, trying to experiment. One time it was funny because we had a torpedo coming right at us. I looked and I said, "Holy mackerel." I ran like hell. I ran to the fantail. I said, "Where am I going?" There is nowhere else to go. That thing went "Whewwwww." Went right in under us.

[The dummy head didn't have any explosives, but with the speed it would have gone right through the wooden hull, wouldn't it?]

Yes. It would have sunk us if it had hit us. It was deep enough where it didn't bother us. Just the idea that you run just so far and there is nowhere else to go. You couldn't jump over the side, because the screws were there. You say, "God, I ran out of ship." That torpedo is still coming. But it worked out alright. Then all of a sudden, maybe a month later, we had a tow going to Pearl. I said, "You have got to be kidding. I thought this was a harbor tug." It wasn't.

[Crossing the Pacific in a tug is a little different from towing a battleship.]

Yes, we had to tow a big barge behind it. I said, "Oh, God. I don't believe this." Yes. Then I was on that with a totally green crew. Only about seven of us had been to sea before. Everybody got sick the first day out. I used to sleep in the fire room because I couldn't go up my bunk. I would tell the kids to come down, "I am sick, I can't see and this and that." I said, "Look, you've got to be here, somebody has got to be here. I don't care what you are doing." I put a rope on my foot and I said, "Here, run the back of the boiler. If you get in trouble, pull it." I thought when I come out of there, I would have one leg longer than the other. They were all seasick. We finally got over that but it was quite a day. Then

like I said, I went in on minority cruise on the battleship and I didn't . . . you know, when you ship over you get leave. They finally caught up with me and they said, "Aye, you shipped over and you didn't have no leave." I said, "No." They said, "Good, you are going now." I was glad of that. I went back to the States, February sometimes. I had been in the Pacific for about two or three years. I said, "No." I stayed home for about a week and I said, "I've got to get out of here, it is too cold." My blood thinned out in the tropics and here I was in twenty below weather. I said, "No. Not for me." So I went back to the west coast again and then I got out of there, went to work for a while, back to the shop and then a Korean come up. The guy said, "Don't worry, you in inactive reserve, you won't go." Here I was heading across country, heading for Korea on a tin can.

[They were pulling everyone out that had experience.]

That is what they said, "If they got experience, send them back." I pulled two years in Korea and I _____. That wasn't too bad.

[So you were on one of the destroyers being sent in to draw fire?]

Yes. We were up around An San drawing fire, then we took raiding parties up from below, up above the thirty edge and dropped them off. Some of the marine raiders and stuff like that. Then we used to pick up pilots, you know, after they come in on strike and go out to sea and ditch and we would pick them up. That was a big treat.

[Did they ditch because the plane was hit?]

Planes were shot up, yes. They couldn't make it back so they would go out to sea and ditch. It was so cold if you didn't get these flyers within seven to ten minutes, they would freeze and they would sink because they were like forty some below zero. They had no other choice, they had to ditch. They would try to ditch as close to the ship as possible

and we would have to go get them. Usually if we would get them, we save some, we had lost some too, but we couldn't find them. They were gone, totally gone. But when you did, we found a destroyer wouldn't have a bakery or ice cream or nothing like that. You know, you get your reward from the big ship. Fresh bread and some ice cream and things you don't get on a destroyer because those laxed to a point, you could grow your hair long, in the battleship, you had to get a haircut every two weeks. Be neat and trim all the time.

[What destroyer were you on?]

TINGEY, DD-539. There if you wanted to be a barber, you just turned a GI can upside down and cut a guy's hair. It didn't matter what he looked like. He wasn't going nowhere. It was something. Life on a destroyer was different.

[Did yawl take any fire?]

No. We bombarded several areas. Bombed An San and all. Industrial sites and stuff like that. No. We sent over one landing party and I guess the outside had taken marines up ahead, you know, and land them further up above the 38th parallel. Raiding parties and stuff like that. Outside of that and drawing fire, that is what they used to say. The married men never slept at all. Because they walked around all night wondering if they were going to get shot or what.

[I bet you felt much safer out there is a destroyer, instead of being foot soldier on the mainland?]

Oh. I tell you really. That is a time when anybody would appreciate the Navy because I was standing in the hatch in my shirt sleeves and drinking a cup of coffee and then look over on the beach and you could see artillery duels and the planes drop and the pond in that(?). It is 43 below zero. I said, "Oh, man. Not for me. You would never get me in the

Army. No way." Them poor guys out there. We used to get the raiders aboard ship and I said, "Boy you got dry socks. Open your locker and help yourself." Guys run up and take a shower. They say, "I ain't had a shower in two weeks or three weeks." I said, "Hey, help yourself. Take anything you want. I can always get more." Them guys . . . it was tough really. They didn't have anything, them guys. They lived in their clothes and you know. That was the way it was during the war. There wasn't showers or anything like that around. The guys really appreciate them. They were only with us so long. We took them way up above and sent them ashore. But just to hear a guy say, "Man, you got dry socks." Oh, God. I say, "Hey, take what you need." Them guys didn't have anything. That was something. They used to take all their clothes off and throw away everything except their outer garments, their fall weather gear. That was something.

I got paid off on our destroyer. I got discharged in San Diego. Went home and that was it. Then we started with this reunion here. It was odd here. It was good, but when you talk to a guy that you knew when you were eighteen or nineteen years old and then see a guy fifty, sixty, and seventy, you have to stop and think, you know. Even today, there are a couple of guys here today that I have seen. They said, "No, we weren't in the engine room, we were in the fire room." It was just this half of the room and that half of the room. It is tough to put a name to them.

[And have any recollection at all of any.]

Yes. Because we were sitting there and say, "God, who was on this watch? How many other guys do you know?" I had some pictures that I took in Pearl that Leo didn't see and that other guy didn't see. He said, "Who is this guy, who is this guy?" Then he had some other pictures of guys. He said, "Do you remember so and so?" Oh, God. I had to

stop and think. One kid I was talking to at the last reunion and it didn't dawn on me who he was until after I left. I couldn't put a name with a face at the time. I guess time dulls your mind a little bit.

[Having no contact over a long period of time, it would be exceptional for you to be able to remember.]

Well, I am pushing seventy now. I am slowing down a little. Not too much. I try to pretty well remember a lot of guys that I sailed with. Then sometimes a name will come up and I sailed with them on another ship or two other ships. Guys I looked up at different times, some of them passed away already and some I couldn't find at all. It is kind of awkward, but those things you live with. What are you going to do? Nothing is forever. I was telling these guys, organization is great, but it getting smaller and smaller every year. People pass away and people just don't show up or some guys just don't care at all. What are you going to do? Those that do, you know them all. I told them, "I could set home and tell you who is going to be there right off the top." A few extra come in. There are two guys that showed up today that haven't been here in forty-six years. That is something.

[I was just trying to remember his name. Several years ago, I was working with some of the officers, which a lot of them are gone now. But this one particular gentleman had been an officer on the NORTH CAROLINA for several years. He had no contact with the other officers, who were having the reunions and things. He never came to a single reunion. He lived in Winston Salem. That close. I went up there and interviewed him. He had no intention of coming to any of the reunions.]

I sailed with this one cat aboard the battleship. We came aboard boot camp together, went aboard ship together and I went to his home in Pennsylvania and he came to

mine. Then after we got out of the service, I lost track of him for a while. Later on when I had to go back to Korea, this was forty or forty-five years later, I am out there on the destroyer tied up to a tender and I wrote to his home in Pennsylvania. I said, "Where is Don now?" Seeing if he is home or something, let me know. He said, "He is on the DIXIE." The DIXIE was two ships over from me. I said, "Oh, God. No, never. It don't happen that way." I went over.

[Were you able to make contact with him?]

Yes. I went over and I found him. This was like I say a Korean thing. It was forty-five years after that I didn't see him. It bothered me so that I called the town and they said, "No there is nobody here by that name." The people at the phone company called, "No, nobody here by that name." The whole family doesn't disappear cause one of his brothers was a gunner on the ARIZONA. The other brother worked his way up from a mustang to commander on the INDIANA. We were on the Pacific somewhere and I went over and saw him for a while. But I couldn't find him. I drove all the way out there to where he lived, to the town and everything. I asked the postmaster, "Do you know this family?" He said, "I have been here for 35 years and I don't remember hearing about them." Wow, a whole family just don't disappear. I said, well, I was leaving. I went to this corner gas station there in an old building. A guy come out and I said to him, "How far can you go back in this town?" He said, "How far do you want to go?" I said, "Hey wait a minute." I opened a photo book I had, I said, "You know this guy?" He said, "Yes. That is my sister." I said, "You are kidding." He said, "Wait a minute and I will call her and ask her if Don was in town." He said, "Yes, we were here two years ago for a school reunion." I said, "Give me his address now." In the meantime, he had moved to Lancaster, way at the other

side of the state. I drove out there and I found him. I said, "I wouldn't believe this had ever happened in my life." But I found him. I said, "Man. You are a tough guy to keep track of." We sat there and we looked at the picture, you know, you get out of training camp and when you go to boot camp. We were naming the different guys and everything else. I said, "Thirty-five or forty years since they have seen you." Now on the way back home I am going to swing by to see him again. It was another guy who come in from Brooklyn. _____, we used to go to his house to have a few beers. The guy lived in Brooklyn and they moved up to New Hope or something. This guy, Joe used to be a ship fitter on there. He said, "The guy you were talking about, he moved from Brooklyn. He is right in this town." We got in touch with him. He came to the reunion. I said, "Holy Mackerel." One other guy, I guess he passed away. Like I say, You win some you lose some.

[At least you have been able to maintain some of the contacts over the period.]

Yes. That is something. I guess time is man's worst enemy. I don't know.

[It does have a way of moving along.]

Oh, time waits for no man.

[Are there any other individuals or anecdotes pertaining to the NORTH CAROLINA that you . . . ]

Not right off hand. It was kind of tough. During the war, we couldn't. Just wasn't nowhere to go and nothing to do. Out in the islands, we were bombarding one island or another. We never got to shore, seen any things. Places I had never heard of. Truk, Rabaul, and Marshall and Gilberts, and all of them. Nobody went ashore. The old saying, "I will give twenty bucks just to get mud on my shoes." Never did. It was something. Not right off hand, no I don't.

[But you found the battleship much more comfortable than the tug or the destroyer when it came to living accommodations?]

That was something else. That was like the Ritz compared. It was still good. I don't have any bad memories of it. Everybody has their own scary moments and everything else. To me, all in all, I enjoyed all of it. Really. I wouldn't say I'd want to go through it again. I think the best thing was like I was telling you. When Vietnam started, I went down just for the heck of it. I said to the guy, "Hey, how about going?" The guy said, "Get out of here old man. You are too old." I said, Man was I ever glad to hear that.

[I don't think I would have gone looking for them.]

No. I think I just wanted to hear someone else say it for a change and all. Everybody else said, "Where are you going old man?" But I wouldn't mind it. I sailed merchant tankers too for a couple of years, for Saxony Vacuum. That was alright. That was after the war. It was just something to do. Then I said, "No. If I am going to quit the sea before I get to be a sea bum, I will quit." I quit and went ashore and got a land job. I stayed there about thirty-seven years and retired and I said, "That is enough." Kind of put finish on my shipping career. I give it up. I come down here whenever they have reunions and all. It's good to see different people and different guys.

[And be back on deck.]

That is the biggest thing. No matter where we go to Florida or Myrtle Beach or anything, coming by I always got to stop. At least walk around the ship for a while. It was still kind of draws you looking back, it is something. It is to me. I don't know how other people feel about it, but I love the ship. Really. It has meant something tremendous, it's good.