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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

WORLD WAR II VETERANS

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NO. 311

FRANK SOUZA

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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INTERVIEWEE: FRANK SOUZA

INTERVIEWER: DR. EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: WORLD WAR II VETERANS

DATE: JANUARY 21, 2004

EMC: This is an oral history with Frank Souza of 45 Linda Terrace in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. The interview is being conducted by Evelyn Cherpak. I'm the curator of the Naval Historical Collection at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Today's date is January 21, 2004. I'm going to interview Mr. Souza on his 20-year active duty career in the U.S. Navy, including World War II. Then he spent ten years in the Naval Reserves.

Mr. Souza, I'm very pleased today that you could give us some time to tell us about your experiences in the U.S. Navy during your long 20-year career. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you where you were born and when you were born.

FS: I was born in Newport, Rhode Island, October 24, 1917.

EMC: What did your father do for a living there?

FS: My father worked as a gardener and caretaker for a wealthy family in Newport.

EMC: Oh, yes, there were many estates there.

FS: It was at the Malbone home right in the city of Newport.

EMC: Right, the old Malbone Estate. Did your mother work?

FS: My mother worked when I was a kid, but then she decided to go into her own business. She worked at a laundry down in Newport. So she started her own laundry business and catered mostly to military personnel.

EMC: Oh, how interesting!

FS: Officers from Goat Island where the Torpedo Station was, the officers that were assigned to the Torpedo Station there. She took care of their laundry work and so forth.

EMC: Very enterprising of her to do that.

FS: Oh, yes, she was a very enterprising woman.

EMC: For that day and age.

FS: Yes. She didn't have any education, but she was smart, a very smart woman.

EMC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

FS: I had one brother who was two years older than I am. He is deceased.

EMC: I assume you stayed in Newport, you were brought up in Newport. Did you go to Newport schools?

FS: Yes, I went to Newport schools, including Rogers High School. I worked in Newport in the laundry down on Halsey Street, White's Laundry. I worked there until I got my notice to be drafted.

EMC: Can I ask you when you graduated from high school, what year?

FS: Actually, I got an equivalency because in my fourth year of high school, I dropped out, which was the first big mistake I made. I went two days, and then it happened to be that I get a teacher that I'd had when I was in my junior year; I had her again for my senior year. When I found that out, I just decided I wouldn't finish. She was discriminatory, favored the Irish and military officer's children. So I went back to my job that I had for summertime and worked until I decided to go in the Navy.

EMC: Did you decide to go into the Navy or were you drafted?

FS: Well, I got a draft notice in 1940.

EMC: This is before the war.

FS: Well, yes. They had a one-year draft at that time. Everybody, all males, it was a one-year draft, and I got my notice in the springtime. I don't remember the exact month. I didn't care for the service at all because I was born and raised in Newport with the Army and Navy there, and I said that wasn't for me.

EMC: Why didn't you care for the service?

FS: I guess I wasn't that dedicated at that time. What forced me into the service was the draft. In fact, my brother tried to get me to join the Naval Reserve because he was in the Naval Reserve for several years, and I wouldn't go.

EMC: Do you think you objected to the discipline?

FS: No, no. Because my mother and father were very disciplined people. We didn't get away with much at all, so it wasn't that. I guess the thing that got me was how much they were away from their families.

EMC: Oh, you didn't like the separation.

FS: No. But what turned me on was the fact that I got my notice, and that's where the big decision came in. I went to check to find out about enlisting in the Navy, but at that time the enlistment was for six years. Now I am juggling

one year draft and six years in the Navy. That was my choice. Either one of the two: either accept my draft notice and go into the Army for a year and come back out. But then I saw the situation in Europe. I said it'll be just our luck we'll get sucked into the war over in Europe before my one year is up, and I can't see crawling in that mud, foxholes in the Army. That's what decided me to go into the Navy.

EMC: Oh, great!

FS: Because I said at least in the Navy I'll be aboard clean ships all the time.

EMC: Yes, you won't be in foxholes.

FS: No. So that's what I decided. But it was a big decision: one year against six. Because the minimum was six years at that time. It used to be four; enlistments used to be four years. But at that time it was six. So I had that judgment. The theory about the war in Europe, I guess, is what really convinced me that we would be in the war very shortly.

EMC: And we were.

FS: So I went in for the six years.

EMC: How did your parents feel about this?

FS: Oh, they didn't care, my mother and father, because I was 23 years old when I went in the service.

EMC: Oh, okay, you were 23.

FS: In fact, I did my boot camp--I was two days in boot camp when I had my 23rd birthday. So I enlisted on the 22nd of October, and my birthday was the 24th.

EMC: Oh, okay. So they were supportive. They had no objections.

FS: Oh, no. No way. That was no problem. What they used to do was, if you lived on the East Coast, you'd get your basic training on the East Coast, either up in Great Lakes or Newport Training Station. Fortunately, I went to Newport Training Station.

EMC: Right at home.

FS: Because it took me about 20 minutes to walk from my house to the training station.

EMC: What section of Newport did you live in?

FS: I lived on Garfield Street.

EMC: I don't know where that is.

FS: Well, I'm trying to see what's the best way to put it.

EMC: Is it Fifth Ward?

FS: Oh, no, no. Fifth Ward is in the opposite part of Newport. That's way down on the other.... I was in the northern part where Tonomy Hill is. You know where Tonomy Hill is?

EMC: Yes, yes.

FS: Well, I was about a couple of blocks away from there, the street where I was born.

EMC: Okay. That's interesting.

FS: So I went in the Navy.

EMC: Now, you went to boot camp in Newport, the Newport Training Station.

FS: Yes.

EMC: I want to ask you about that. Do you remember how long the boot camp

training was?

FS: At that time it wasn't too long. I think it was eight weeks.

EMC: Oh, that's long enough, two months.

FS: I think it was eight weeks training.

EMC: And what kind of drills and education or training did they offer to you?

FS: Well, the training basically was to discipline you to the Navy way of life. A lot of drills, you know, marching and so forth. And if somebody did anything wrong and didn't own up to it, the whole platoon would get punished.

EMC: Did anybody do anything wrong?

FS: Well, just little things. Not anything serious. For instance, somebody probably messed up somebody's bunk or something like that, you know, and no one would own up to it. The discipline would be sometimes marching about two hours, things like that. It wasn't anything real serious. To teach you that you have to own up to whatever you do, or whatever you did, or something like that.

EMC: Did they have white-glove inspections?

FS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. White glove all right.

EMC: What were the requirements for that?

FS: Well, it was the area that you lived in, your quarters that you lived in, which was just a long building with hammocks.

EMC: Oh, you had hammocks. Was it the old Sims Hall?

FS: Oh, no, no. I don't know if you'll remember where they used to have the jail at the base there?

EMC: Yes, I do.

FS: Well, it was right near that area.

EMC: Oh, I see.

FS: Where we lived.

EMC: Where you had the brig, yes.

FS: They used to have there two big tanks, open tanks, with fuel in them where we used to have to fight fires. You'd go there to learn to fight fires aboard ship.

EMC: Oh, you had to practice that?

FS: Oh, yes. We had to practice fighting fires aboard ships and so forth. And, of course, the marching training; that was for discipline.

EMC: Did you go at all on a training ship? Were there any training ships there?

FS: No.

EMC: Okay. So it was training on land.

FS: It was training on land. You weren't being trained for ships, except for fire-fighting because of so much fuel aboard ship.

EMC: Well, is there anything else about training that struck you, or stuck out in your mind besides white-glove inspections, the marching and drills? Did you go to classes at all? You must have gone to classes.

FS: Well, yes. We had classes but not like they have today. It was more like seamanship.

EMC: Oh, okay. That's it.

FS: They taught you all these various types of knots that you had to know. They taught you how to clean and maintain your rifles and pistols. You had to take them apart and clean them, then put them back together again. Then get to a point where you had to do it blindfolded.

EMC: Yes, automatic response.

FS: Take your rifle apart automatically and put it back together again so that you made sure you knew how to do it under any kind of circumstances.

EMC: Right, under any stress.

FS: But your training is mostly for discipline and to obey orders, not to question. Don't question anything.

EMC: Oh, okay. Did you have a tough drill sergeant?

FS: No, I was very lucky. He wasn't happy because he was called back in from retirement, and he was from Middletown. He didn't like that because he had a business, a carpenter business, of his own, and he had to give that all up when they called him back in. At that time you could retire with 16 years of service.

EMC: That's not much.

FS: So he took advantage of that when he was in the service. He made a career of it, and he retired at 16 years. But he wasn't happy to be called back in.

EMC: But he wasn't too brutal on you, I guess.

FS: Oh, no, no, no, no. He didn't take his frustration out on us. But I've seen other drill sergeants and drill chiefs that they had that were very bitter, and they just took it out on anybody.

EMC: How large was your platoon? How many in the platoon?

FS: Oh, I'm trying to think.

EMC: Thirty, 60?

FS: I think we had probably close to 50.

EMC: How did they compose the platoons? It was alphabetically by last name?

FS: They usually line you up, either alphabetically, or short men first, and tall men last. What they were doing there then was teaching seamanship and teaching you discipline. Of course, the main thing was you don't question any order. Regardless whether you think it's a stupid order or not, you don't question one bit. Because if you do, you're going to be disciplined.

EMC: Right.

FS: It was one of these things that you keep your mouth shut. That's the main thing. You don't question anything.

EMC: Obedience.

FS: That's anybody that's above you in authority.

EMC: How did the other fellows who were with you in training react? Were there any who got themselves in trouble that you knew about or got removed from the service at this point?

FS: Well, we had one fellow that was--he was very--I wouldn't say disappointed; I don't think he wanted to be in there in the first place, and I don't know whether it was his family that might have talked him into joining the Navy. But he was very disappointed, and he really brooded on it. In fact, it got so bad that they finally discharged him. They just felt that he wasn't--wouldn't be able to fill in any kind of a position whatsoever.

EMC: Oh, that's interesting. Did you make any friends at this point in time?

FS: Oh, yes. We had quite a few people who were from upper Massachusetts and some from New Hampshire and Vermont. They were from all over the East Coast, various places. Of course, when they found out I was from Newport, we used to

go on liberty, not very much liberty, but towards the end we did. So I had my own automobile.

EMC: Oh, you did!

FS: I couldn't have it there. It was at my mother's, where I lived in Newport. I had a 1934 Chevrolet convertible.

EMC: Wow!

FS: At that time. It was four years old when I bought it in 1938.

EMC: But that's pretty snazzy.

FS: So when the training was over and we got our leave period, before we'd get our assignments to where we were going to go from there, three of them lived up around Woburn, Massachusetts, in that area. So I drove them up in my car.

EMC: Oh, how nice.

FS: Dropped them off at their homes, and I picked them back up again and brought them back to Newport to the training station.

EMC: Oh, that's nice.

FS: But then the Navy has a funny way of doing it, once you get through training. They ship you to the opposite coast. So I was shipped to Long Beach, California.

EMC: Oh, so that was your first assignment.

FS: My first assignment.

EMC: This is when? Can you give me kind of a time frame? Is it '41 yet?

FS: Let's see. No, this was in 1940.

EMC: Okay, right, still 1940.

FS: I think it was around December of 1940, when the basic training was over.

EMC: When the eight weeks training. Because I thought you said you went in in October for training. Okay. So late December.

FS: Yes, it was very late December. I was assigned to a battleship, the USS COLORADO.

EMC: Oh! What were you going to be? What was your rate there?

FS: Went in as apprentice seaman. Then four months later I became seaman second. I still was an apprentice seaman when I went to the Colorado. They shipped a whole bunch of us to that ship.

EMC: Well, how did you get there?

FS: They put you on a train.

EMC: Okay. You went on a train. Was it a troop train, or was it just a regular train?

FS: No, it was a troop train.

EMC: So it was all Navy on the train.

FS: Yes.

EMC: Where did you leave from?

FS: We left from Newport.

EMC: Was there a train in Newport?

FS: Oh, yes. There was a railroad.

EMC: Where did it go?

FS: It used to run through Fall River, up through that way.

EMC: Oh, really! How wonderful! A train from Newport. Where was the station?

FS: The station was down-- Wait a minute. I'm trying to think.

EMC: There could have been a trestle over the Sakonnet River.

FS: Oh, yes. There's track right now. That's what that dinner train uses. It went up here through Fall River and all that way up through Providence. What they did, there were several companies that graduated at the same time that I did. They lined us up, and they said this bunch here is going to the COLORADO, which at that time was in Long Beach, California. This bunch here will go to another battleship. I forget which one they went to. We went to the COLORADO. When we got aboard there....

EMC: Oh, so you took the train all the way across the country.

FS: All the way across the country to Long Beach.

EMC: How was the train trip?

FS: Oh, it was fine. I think it was a five-day trip.

EMC: Was this before Christmas? You said December.

FS: No, I think it was after Christmas. Because I think we got down there in January, the early part of January.

EMC: How did you feel about leaving Newport?

FS: Well, I didn't feel bad at all because I was single at the time.

EMC: Looking for adventure?

FS: Looking for adventure, and to see what the West Coast was like. Only thing was I was only in port for just a short period of time, I think two weeks, before we went to Pearl Harbor for about a six- or eight-month exercise.

EMC: Right. So you were based in Pearl Harbor.

FS: Yes. Pearl Harbor aboard ship.

EMC: Who was the captain of the COLORADO, do you remember?

FS: Well, let's see if I can find it.

EMC: I was just asking who the captain of the COLORADO was when you went aboard her. Let's see if we can find who the captain was. Was it a large ship?

FS: Yes, it was 625 feet long from bow to stern.

EMC: How many men on it, about, do you remember?

FS: At that time we had 1500.

EMC: It's huge!

FS: But during the war we had 3300.

EMC: That's enormous! An enormous ship! Where were you bunked in the ship?

FS: Mine was in the fifth division. I was assigned to the fifth division when I came aboard the ship.

EMC: What did that division do?

FS: That division was a deck force.

EMC: What does that mean?

FS: We took care of the outside of the ship as far as working goes. Our

working station was the upkeep of the outside of the ship and our living quarters which I think went down as far as the second deck. So we had all that part to take care of.

EMC: Did you have to clean it?

FS: Oh, yes, everyday we cleaned it.

EMC: How did you clean it?

FS: Scrubbed it down.

EMC: Scrubbed the floors, swabbed the decks?

FS: Well, yes, swabbed the decks and the outside deck was wood. Once a week we used to have to holystone the wooden decks, which was a red brick with a small hole in the top, an indentation. Then you had what you would call a tall stick that looked something like a broomstick, a broom handle with no broom on it, and you put that in, and you went back and forth like this in unison, the whole deck crew in unison.

EMC: What was that supposed to do?

FS: That kept the wood-- The decks were not painted at that time. They were just pure wood. And that's to keep that wood looking clean at all times.

EMC: Wow! That must have been a job.

FS: So you had to do that once a week.

EMC: Did you have to paint the outside of the ship when it was in port?

FS: Oh, yes. Sometimes in port and sometimes, of course, we did it when it was underway.

EMC: Oh, really?

FS: Oh, yes.

EMC: Hanging over the side?

FS: Yes, and boatswain's chairs.

EMC: What is a boatswain's chair?

FS: It's just a board with two holes in each end. Then you have a rope sling on it, and a tackle attached to it. The tackle is usually hooked onto a davit, and you swung over the side, and you lower and raise yourself, your ownself, and then you scrub the sides and keep moving over. Then you come up a foot and move over again. Then if you're going to do the whole thing, you would have a

staging. That staging would be moved as you went along. Let me see if I can see a picture of the ship here.

EMC: It's enormous, the COLORADO.

FS: See, there were three ships in the class. This is what the Colorado looked like.

EMC: Oh, yes, it was in camouflage there.

FS: Yes. Well, that was during the war. But before the war it wasn't. It was just gray paint.

EMC: Sure, sure. That's quite a ship! It's amazing. Well, this is probably a wartime book, isn't it?

FS: Yes.

EMC: This is the wartime book. No, it doesn't really say who the captain was.

FS: No, I have a listing of people here. These are the deceased.

EMC: Oh, I see.

FS: These are the people that were killed.

EMC: Yes, it's dedicated. Oh, there it is. Who is your captain?

FS: Well, let's see. That's what I'm trying to see. The first one was--let's make sure if that's the one--Captain G.B. Parks. No, he's the present skipper. Let's see where the dates start here.... 'Forty-three -- W. Granat came aboard September 1943. He was followed by Captain W.S. Macauley until the end of the war.

EMC: Yes. Oh, okay.

FS: I don't know who the first captain was before that.

EMC: Well, you were in this crew to keep the ship shipshape. I was going to ask you, did you sleep in hammocks, or were there bunks?

FS: Depending on what your rate was. We had both bunks and hammocks. If you were third class and below, you slept in hammocks. But once you get into second class, then we had--at that time we had cots and bunks. We had cots. You set the cot up every day, and you put it away every day, every morning. You set it up at night for sleeping because you slept right in your living quarters. That's where you ate, slept, everything.

EMC: Where you ate?

FS: Yes. Your tables were secured to the ceiling, which was the overhead of

the deck. They were put up and taken down every day for each meal.

EMC: Oh, I see. And then your bunks were there, too, put aside?

FS: Well, the bunks came later during the war when we were refitted.

EMC: The cots, I mean.

FS: The cots, yes. The cots were stored near the outside bulkhead of the ship. You just stacked them up in there, and you took your own out every night and put it back away in the morning.

EMC: Oh, so was there one big dining area for everybody on the ship?

FS: No. Each division had its own dining room.

EMC: Oh, I see. Okay.

FS: Then you had the chief petty officers; they had their own dining room, and they had their own cooks, the chief petty officers. Of course, the officers also had their own dining room, which was different from the chiefs' and so they had their own cook. But once you made chief--that was your goal. The goal was to make chief.

EMC: Better treatment. How was the food aboard the ship?

FS: Very good.

EMC: No problem. Did you have trouble getting used to that kind of confined existence?

FS: No, I didn't. I didn't have any problem with it whatsoever.

EMC: That's interesting.

FS: See, in my case, I was a little bit older than the normal--You know, normally these kids come out at 17 years old, and they're still with their families. They're mama's boys. They're with their fathers and mothers all the time who have been doing everything for them. But in my household, my mother had us taking care of our ourselves when we were about ten, eleven years old. I used to have to take care of my own clothing. We had to make our own beds when we were about ten years old and help around the house.

EMC: Well, that's good.

FS: When my father would go to work, he would lay out, especially in the summertime, what had to be done in our garden. Of course, we had a large garden. It was 100 feet by 100 feet, and we grew all kinds of vegetables there. So we had that to take care of when we'd come out of school. After school we had to take care of these chores that were assigned before my mother

and father went to work.

EMC: Oh, so you were very disciplined and very structured. So I guess the transition to the Navy wasn't that difficult for you.

FS: Oh, no. It wasn't any difficulty at all.

EMC: You had no problem with the discipline.

FS: No.

EMC: Now, were you kind of a leader among your division, would you say, because of your age and experience?

FS: No. Leadership goes according to your rate.

EMC: No, I know. But did you kind of function, I would say, informally, I should have said, as somebody a little bit older and wiser?

FS: Well, no, because at that time I had no experience aboard ship. I had boats of my own, you know, that I'd had, but they were small like 15 and 18-foot boats that I used to go out in Narragansett Bay with an outboard motor on it, and things like that. I had to depend on the petty officer. In each division you had a third-class petty officer, then you had a second-class petty officer, and you had a first-class petty officer in each division. The

first class was the one who ran the division. The second and third class, they had certain responsibilities that the first class gave them to do. That's how you learned going all the way up. Then you had, like when you made chief, a section of the ship that was under your command. That usually involved about three or four divisions under your control.

EMC: Oh, it's a very hierarchical structure. Did you enjoy your work assignment?

FS: Yes, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it up to a point. We had something to do. You did a lot of scrubbing down, keeping it clean because you had to. They had to give you something to do, plus your training. You were being trained all the time in your own rates that you were going up.

EMC: Now what rate were you going to go up?

FS: Well, see, when I first went in there, I didn't advance right away because I didn't want to. Because once you became a petty officer, you had to stay in that field. I didn't want to stay on the deck force. I had one year machinist's training in Rogers High School, and I wanted to become a machinist's mate when I was aboard ship. I had the chief machinist's mate looking out for me. But we had a pretty tough department head. He was a lieutenant commander, and he was the meanest man I ever met in the Navy. In fact, I remember one time we came back to the States, and family members were down there to meet the crew members. His wife was down there. He got off the

ship, didn't even say a word to her, and just went walking up to go to his car, and she had to trail behind him.

EMC: Isn't that strange!

FS: That was the worst boss I ever had in my time in the Navy.

EMC: Oh, so did you have a problem then becoming a machinist's mate?

FS: Well, I couldn't get it. He wouldn't allow me.

EMC: Oh, okay.

FS: See, he had to sign the transfer.

EMC: Oh, I see.

FS: He said, "Once you're on board this ship, you're not going anywhere. You're going to stay on the deck force." So that's when I made up my mind, well, I'd better start studying and try to get some of these promotions. I started studying for seaman first class. I was going to be on deck force now, so I took the exam, and I passed it, and I was promoted. Then four months later I was eligible to go up for what we called at that time--I guess it probably still is--the coxswain rate, which is a third-class petty officer. But on the deck force it's called the coxswain's rate. So then I was eligible

for that, and I was recommended to go and take the exam. I took the exam for that, and I was promoted to the coxswain rate.

Then just as I was eligible for the next rate, I started studying for that rate, which would have been the second-class boatswain's rate, I kept studying at night. After work was done and so forth and dinner, I'd get my books and go down to the third deck, sit down there by myself and study. When I was eligible, I took the exam, and got promoted right along all the time.

EMC: Oh, that's good.

FS: So I had four years in the Navy when I made chief. It usually takes you about eight years.

EMC: Oh, I would think so. You were chief boatswain's mate.

FS: Yes.

EMC: This was still on the deck crew.

FS: Oh, yes. I stuck with that. Well, once I couldn't get out of there, then I started going for that. I had to stay in the deck crew.

EMC: Yes, yes. Interesting. I want to ask you where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed and how you happened not to be there?

FS: Well, when Pearl Harbor was bombed, I was in a shipyard in Bremerton, Washington, in dry dock. We were having our first overhaul because at that time-- The ship was built in 1923, and, like I say, this was in 1941 when we went to the shipyard, late part of '41. So we had our complete overhaul that year. We were being updated with new guns that they had developed. The old wood guns we had, the old ones, the 16-inch barrels and all that, the barrels were taken off and sent to Philadelphia to be relined. The five-inch batteries, the five-inch fifty-one secondary batteries, those were off the ship in the shipyard to have new barrels put on and modernized. The anti-aircraft guns, the five-inch 25 anti-aircraft guns were also in there being completely overhauled and had new rifles put on them and so forth. We had the three-inch batteries taken off. The machine gun batteries that we had were taken off and replaced with 20-millimeter and quad-40 millimeter guns put on for anti-aircraft protection.

EMC: So you were outfitted. You were then ready for war.

FS: Yes, we were. The war was there at the time. I don't know if they were contemplating that we might be getting into some war maybe in Europe or something like that. I don't know why the modernization came about.

EMC: But it did. But you were supposed to be at Pearl Harbor, weren't you, on December 7, '41?

FS: Yes, yes.

EMC: How did it happen that you ended up in Bremerton?

FS: Well, we were scheduled to leave Pearl Harbor in January 1942 to go and get overhauled up there. But instead, the admiral, who was getting a new assignment--he was going to be assigned in about a month or two--he didn't want to transfer his flag onto the COLORADO from the WEST VIRGINIA because of being a short-timer; he didn't want to have to make two moves so close together. So we took the WEST VIRGINIA assignment in the overhaul period and went to Bremerton, Washington. And we would have been where the WEST VIRGINIA was if we had stayed there, and she had taken her yard period.

EMC: And the WEST VIRGINIA was sunk.

FS: Yes, it was sunk alongside the dock.

EMC: Was the captain lost?

FS: I don't know how many people got off because she didn't tip over or anything like that, from what pictures I saw afterwards. But she did rejoin the fleet, and so did the MARYLAND.

EMC: Oh, they did join the fleet after, so it wasn't fatal damage.

FS: Yes. They both were raised, and they were repaired. The only one that

wasn't, that got damaged that wasn't taken out of there was, of course, like everybody knows, the ARIZONA.

EMC: Right.

FS: Because the ARIZONA was tied up, at that time, where we were tied up before we went to Bremerton.

EMC: Wow!

FS: At the same area there.

EMC: Wow! You would have probably....

FS: We would have been sunk, too, yes. But the only thing is, we wouldn't have been tied there because we would have been the flagship, and the flagship always goes to the pier. That's why the WEST VIRGINIA got sunk at the pier because she was the flagship of Bat Div Four.

EMC: So you felt very lucky, I guess.

FS: I did. I felt very lucky.

EMC: That was kind of an auspicious start to your naval career. Well, how did you feel about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

FS: I was surprised. I was very surprised. Of course, we were trained to fight off engagement, you know, to engage at sea. But we didn't think anything like that because there was no inkling at all that Japan was going to be hitting Pearl Harbor or anything like that. We knew they had taken certain small islands.

EMC: In the Pacific, yes. But that was a shock. Do you remember at all the national reaction to it, the newspapers and the like and the radio?

FS: Well, to me it was a very sad period, very sad. There were so many ships that we lost in Pearl Harbor. I don't know just how many, but there were many ships sunk at Pearl there.

EMC: Yes, it was a real blow to the Navy.

FS: Well, we were the only battleship afloat until the NORTH CAROLINA was built.

EMC: Oh, really!

FS: Yes.

EMC: You were the only one. Isn't that amazing!

FS: We were the only battleship afloat until the NORTH CAROLINA. I think the NORTH CAROLINA came out in January of '42, when she came into the fleet.

EMC: Isn't that something! It's amazing. Well, after you were overhauled in Bremerton, the war had begun already--it was declared on December 8th. Where were you sent?

FS: Well, after the war had begun, I stayed on the COLORADO until my enlistment was up.

EMC: Right, right. That was six years.

FS: Right.

EMC: But where were you assigned? I mean where did the COLORADO go after it was overhauled?

FS: We went back out to the Pacific, and we started-- The war was on, and our first battle from there was the Gilbert Islands, Tarawa.

EMC: Oh, Tarawa. Oh, okay.

FS: This is the map of the battles. That's my battles.

EMC: Oh, how you started. That's the map of how they went.

FS: Right.

EMC: Tarawa was November 20, '43.

FS: Yes.

EMC: So what did you do all of '42?

FS: Well, all of '42 we were operating up in the North Atlantic.

EMC: Oh, what were you doing up there?

FS: On patrol duty.

EMC: Oh, was this neutrality patrol or something?

FS: Yes, it was patrol duty. We went on a shakedown cruise first. Then we were assigned to, not the North Atlantic. I'm sorry. This is the North Pacific. We operated up around Alaska in along those places there. The battleships that we had at the time, there were three of them, were more modern ones, we had two planes aboard, scout planes. They were seaplanes, and they carried a two-man crew. They carried the pilot, and they carried a gunner. They used to go out and scout. If they ran into anything out there, they would radio us, and we'd go out and take care of it.

EMC: Was there anything out there?

FS: We didn't get into any engagements whatsoever out there. We were just out on patrol, but we were never able to get any engagement.

EMC: So you're up near Alaska, way up in that.

FS: All the way up from Seattle, all the way up and down through there.

EMC: Canada.

FS: When they started operating to take over these islands from Japan is when we came down to....

EMC: Oh, so '42 was a pretty quiet year.

FS: Yes.

EMC: A lot of '43 was pretty quiet until November.

FS: Yes.

EMC: Were you still in the North Pacific in early '43, the first six, seven months?

FS: I'm trying to think now.

EMC: You probably were.

FS: Yes. When we patrolled the West Coast, we went just up.... I believe we used to patrol around from San Francisco, out there in the ocean, making sure-
-to check and see if there were any submarines out through there.

EMC: Right. Absolutely. Well, you finally got into battle on November 20, 1943 at Tarawa. Can you tell me about that engagement, and I'll ask you specific questions about it.

FS: Well, when we got into this first engagement, the other battleships were already, I believe, repaired at that time because the MARYLAND was with us, and I think--I'm not sure, but I think the WEST VIRGINIA was with us, too, by that time. I know in Tarawa, we were on one side of the island, and the MARYLAND was on the other side of the island, and we were bombarding the island to make way for the Army and the Marines to make a landing and take over the island.

EMC: How far out were you?

FS: Well, it was a situation where we were all inexperienced as far as war goes. The officers, and not only the officers, but the admiral was

inexperienced, because we were too close to the island for our guns. What our guns were doing, we'd fire a shell, they would hit the island, and ricochet off the island into the water. We had shells from the MARYLAND falling within 20 to 30 feet of our ship.

EMC: Oh, so you had to pull back!

FS: The 16-inch. I assume our shells were doing the same thing to the MARYLAND because she was on the other side of the island in about the same position. So we finally had to shift position because the range of the 16-inch guns is 20 miles.

EMC: Wow! So you had to be 20 miles out.

FS: You had to be at least ten miles off your target, away from your target, to be successful.

EMC: Oh, so they didn't even know that? Oh, boy!

FS: Well, they knew the range of the thing.... We were all inexperienced when it came to actual fighting. I mean our officers and commanding officer didn't realize the range of our 16-inch guns was 20 miles. So that means you usually have to be around ten miles away from your target to be effective. Because all the shells had fuses on them, including the 16-inch shells, and they were timed to explode at a certain time. A lot of these places, especially in

Tarawa, had concrete bunkers in the ground that had like 12-foot thick concrete on them, and we had to penetrate those concrete walls down there. Your shell has to go up high enough to lobby and come down with a force to go through that. Then the fuse would explode in the bunker to kill the Japanese.

EMC: Wow! Do you know if you were successful?

FS: Oh, yes. We were certain. Because we had troops landed. Our casualties were very small.

EMC: That's good. That's great. Now how did you react to this first, initial encounter in battle?

FS: Well, I don't know. We just took it as, well, this is what our job is. Our battleship's job was mainly to soften up the area we were going to occupy, were going to take for the Army and the Marine Corps troops, who were going in to set up a base there, so we would minimize their casualties, get less resistance.

EMC: Right, right. That's good. [Pause] So you considered that your job, and you just performed it during battle. Did the crew react in any other way?

FS: I would say we weren't surprised because of Pearl Harbor, naturally. So we knew what our job was: We had to get into these battles because you couldn't just go to Japan right off the bat, you know. You had to get these

things taken back, taken away from Japan, and given back to the people that owned the island. So that's what our job was, to soften up the enemy to get rid of as much of the enemy opposition as we possibly could, and let the Army and the Marine Corps do their job with a minimum amount of casualties.

EMC: Absolutely. Were you ever frightened, though?

FS: Well, I won't say we weren't scared, you know. But we knew we had a job to do. Of course, at that time I wasn't a recruit. I had a little bit of responsibility also.

EMC: Now you were still on the deck crew.

FS: Oh, yes, I was on the deck crew until the ship was put out of commission.

EMC: Were many of the officers reservists, or were they regular Navy?

FS: We had a lot of reserve officers. The enlisted men were very young people. Of course, the structured Navy is you have a certain number of petty officers for a certain number of men, and the officers are the same way. The officers have a certain number of men under their command, and so that depends on the size the officer force has to be. Of course, the chiefs were the same way. You have a certain number of chiefs for a certain number of divisions that you had aboard ship.

EMC: Right. Was it Captain Parks who was your captain then? I think he was.

FS: I believe he was. In '43 I think he was.

EMC: Yes, in '43. No, he came aboard in '45 for--

FS: Yes, I don't know why they don't have that on here.

EMC: It was W. Granat, Captain Granat was September '43 to August '44. You had a couple of captains after that.

FS: Oh, yes, we had a lot of them.

EMC: Captain Parks. What would you say about the captains? Was it a happy ship under their command? Were they good?

FS: My own personal opinion, I think they were. They knew what they were doing. Like I say, that first battle of Tarawa, of course, they had, just like they have these battles at the War College, they get trained, you know, for that.

EMC: War games.

FS: But when you actually get into battle, you know, that's the thing, that's a new experience if you never have been in battle. To me that's the same way

for commanding officers, I think, as it is for the enlisted personnel.

EMC: Oh, absolutely.

FS: You've got to learn by getting in there on the real thing. You can have these mock-ups and all this stuff, you know, to give you a good general idea where you can. But you learn a lot in each battle, and you get better and better in carrying out your responsibility as you go along.

EMC: Sure. So you survived the Gilbert Islands.

FS: Yes.

EMC: But you had quite a few other battles to go through: the Marshalls.

FS: Yes, the Marshall Islands.

EMC: The Marianas.

FS: Yes.

EMC: The Philippines. You were at Leyte Gulf.

FS: But the one in the Marianas.... Let's see, -- I'll tell you a lot of things....

EMC: Tell me how things went at each encounter. That's what I'd like to know, if you remember.

FS: Well, Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands there, they just became more or less routine. We'd go there, and we'd take our assignments, and we had our scout planes, scouting the targets for us. They would see how our shells were--whether they were hitting the target. If they weren't, if they were falling short, a little short, they would tell us how much short they were falling. Through the whole firing at the target, they would tell us what the distance was and if we were over-firing the target, and get it back to us, and we would adjust our guns to it. We'd keep on re-firing until we illuminated everything. But our biggest battle, as far as we were concerned, was in the Marshall Islands.

EMC: Oh, the Marianas, you mean?

FS: The Marianas, yes. The Marianas, yes.

EMC: Saipan, Tinian, and Guam.

FS: Tinian was the place. That's where we got our biggest casualties.

EMC: Oh, really? Now how did that happen?

FS: Well, we were decoyed. The COLORADO, and a cruiser which I don't know the name, and a destroyer. We were set up as decoys. We were laying to a few miles from shore. I don't know just how many miles it was, but enough to where we could protect, and we sent in fake landing boats with just a few members of the crew in them. What we were doing is we were faking sending a landing force in. But we were laying to there.

So at Tinian their shore battery was on railroad tracks, and they could move from one end of the island all the way up to the other end. Of course, we knew that. The Army was going to invade the island on the southern part of the island. So our job was to move those guns from the southern part of the island towards the northern part of the island where we were, and we were laying to there for them.

So that's just exactly what they did. They came up with their guns there. All of a sudden they opened up on us, and we received 22 shell hits, the COLORADO itself, on one side of the ship. We had about four of our 51 batteries severely damaged; we had two 16-inch barrels that were damaged from that; and we had a big section of our upper structure quarters that was torn off the outside skin of the ship, it was torn away off it, pretty wide open. That was the division I was in, the fifth division. We had a big hole in there about 20 feet long, something like that.

EMC: How did you ever repair it?

FS: Well, we pulled into a little island and had temporary repairs made on it.

EMC: Wow! That was quite something. You had a lot of casualties of gunners, you said.

FS: We did. We had about, well, let's see. Most of our casualties were....

EMC: So the Japanese were firing from the shore obviously.

FS: Yes.

EMC: And hitting the ship. How far out was the ship?

FS: Well, we were out maybe, ten miles. But the majority of them were killed there. I lost several of my gun crew people.

EMC: Were you supervising a gun crew, or what?

FS: I had my own gun crew at that time. Most of these here, too, were under my command. But they had their own gun captain. Each gun had its own gun captain. Once they had the training, well, they were responsible for that gun. Just like I had, even though I was first class there, I had my own gun crew, too, that I had to worry about.

EMC: Now you weren't actually firing guns yourself, or were you?

FS: At that time, yes. I was a trainer in the beginning on one of the guns.

EMC: But during the action you didn't fire it, did you?

FS: Yes.

EMC: Oh, you did?

FS: Oh, yes.

EMC: Oh, okay, so you were firing.

FS: Yes. Because in the beginning there, I wasn't a petty officer during that particular battle. But I finally got up to the point where I was.

EMC: So Tinian was the big, big battle. Were you at Guam and Saipan as well?

FS: Oh, yes. Yes. We were always there. But this is the island where we took the damage.

EMC: At Tinian.

FS: Yes. And we did what our job was supposed to be: Get those guns up to the other end of the island so the Army and Marine Corps could get their landing force down there without any opposition. Of course, we had to pay a price for

it. Those shells came all at one time. So when we got hit like that, the captain turned the ship around because most of our guns on the starboard side were damaged. So he turned the ship around.

I was on a gun on the port side. I had one gun on the port side, and I had three other guns in my division that were on the port side also. Then our orders were to fire at will. We got our coordinates given to us from the sky control. We set up our guns to that, and we just fired. Just as soon as you load, you fire. We wiped out the whole island there, and they took over the island. But this was our biggest battle.

EMC: Yes, Tinian.

FS: Yes. Now as far as a big battle--

EMC: You went to Leyte Gulf, too, though, in November of '44.

FS: Oh, yes.

EMC: And that was another big one, wasn't it?

FS: Right. Yes. Well, no, this one here-- We were there in Leyte Gulf....

EMC: Oh, you were there in November after the battle.

FS: Yes.

EMC: It was October that the battle took place in Leyte Gulf.

FS: Yes. We got damaged here. In Leyte Gulf we took a suicide plane.

EMC: Oh, you did? You were hit by a kamikaze?

FS: Kamikaze, yes.

EMC: They started using them then.

FS: Oh, yes. They were using them then. They were always using them. Right in the beginning they were using them.

EMC: Where were you hit?

FS: We were hit on my side between my gun and the next gun that I had. In fact, I lost almost the whole crew of the next gun to me.

EMC: Wow! Did you know it was coming, the kamikaze?

FS: Oh, yes. Our machine guns were firing at him. What they do is when they come in onto a ship, they come in at the narrowest part of the ship. They either come in from the bow or come in from the stern. They don't come in broadside. When they come in from the stern or the bow, there are very few

guns that can reach them. So he was hidden. In fact, I think the thing was in automatic pilot control coming into the ship. Because he came in loaded with a 500-pound bomb, and he went through the deck that I was on, down to the deck down below and exploded on the deck down below, a 500-pound bomb.

EMC: Must have had a lot of casualties.

FS: No, not too many because there weren't too many people down there on that deck below because that's where the living quarters are, so as far as people getting killed, it was especially that one crew that I had. Most of those got killed. In fact, some of them got hit so bad--I had one of my men there, the only way I could identify him was by the shoes he wore; he wore special shoes because he had flat feet. I couldn't identify him by his face he was so badly....

But that was about, I would say--like the partition was right here. This was my gun position here. On the outside of that was another gun position. They were all the same size, oh, about maybe from the fireplace there all away around down to maybe a couple more feet in there. Just enough to get the gun in there. You had the elevator come up there and bring the ammunition up from down below decks.

EMC: Very close.

FS: But this was where we took the biggest casualties.

EMC: That's amazing. So you just did your job. I was going to ask you some other questions about war and the battles that you were in. How did the crew react to all this in general?

FS: Well, in general the crew we had on the whole ship, they had good spirit. I mean they weren't discouraged.

EMC: Complainers?

FS: Oh, no. When it came to the fighting part, they were gung ho, ready to do what they were supposed to do.

EMC: Were you at general quarters a lot of the time?

FS: Oh, yes. Most of the time we were at general quarters. Any little thing that they got on the radar or something like that, we would go to general quarters.

EMC: How long would you stay at general quarters?

FS: Sometimes 24 hours a day.

EMC: No sleep?

FS: No. Sometimes no sleep.

EMC: That's awful. Terrible. But wartime, and you had to.

FS: Yes.

EMC: Well, this is 1945, and the next battle is Okinawa. In '45, March 21st, you were at Okinawa.

FS: Right. Well, Okinawa was the longest battle. This one here was the worst battle (the Marianas).

EMC: Leyte Gulf, yes.

FS: Not the Leyte Gulf, the Marianas. This one here, that was our worst battle as far as we're concerned because of the casualties that we took. It was one of those that wasn't by mistake or anything like that. That was what our job was. Our job was to be a decoy. There was no firing or anything; we got fired upon.

EMC: Leyte and Okinawa.

FS: This one at Leyte Gulf, we were on patrol, and waiting. If they needed our help, we were there for them. But this was where we took the suicide aboard, of course. But the longest fight we had was in--

EMC: Was it Okinawa?

FS: Okinawa was the longest battle.

EMC: Yes, that was one of the last battles.

FS: That's where we had a lot of shells. It's someplace in here. It gives you the number of shells someplace in the book here that were expended. We had a lot of firing to do. Of course, we had to clear the area so that MacArthur could go in there with his troops.

EMC: Oh, so you were bombarding?

FS: Oh, yes, bombarding them. We had our scout planes out there. They would tell us where to shift our targets one place to another. When we got it pretty well neutralized for them, the Army went in, but they met no resistance.

EMC: Yes, the war was kind of winding down sort of by mid-'45. Did you have any other battles after Okinawa was over in April '45?

FS: No. This was one of our biggest battles, but then when that was over and we occupied Okinawa, we were setting up the fleet for the invasion of Japan. All our ships were getting ready, getting enough ammunition aboard. We were loading up with ammunition.

EMC: Where was that? Was that at Okinawa?

FS: Okinawa proper. We were in there. We had already taken over the island, had all control of it. We had all the ships in there. In fact, the hospital ship was there to take care of the casualties. So we were getting ready to invade Japan. Then we got the news about the two bombs being dropped there.

EMC: Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

FS: Right. We just really-- Then when we got the word Japan had surrendered....

EMC: How did you react, celebrate?

FS: Oh, in some places they were firing the guns off in the air, some of the ships.

EMC: You were on the ship then. You couldn't get off, I imagine.

FS: No, we didn't.

EMC: Did you celebrate on the ship in any way, though?

FS: Yes. I'm trying to think what we had. Of course, we had a long period of time there when we didn't get off the ship at all.

EMC: Right. Oh, yes.

FS: I mean I'm talking about--like I was on a ship one time for a whole year without getting off. The only reason for it was my own doing. Once in a while we would send a boat over on one of these empty islands. We would have beer aboard the boat, the captain carried beer aboard although it was illegal at the time. But you didn't drink aboard ship.

What we would do if we were laid-to, if there was a little island, vacant island there, we'd put our liberty boats over, put the beer in it, and have one officer in each liberty boat, go over to the island, and they would take some time, baseball games and things like that, do a little recreation, and they would have the beer. Of course the beer was controlled, how many you could have. I think it was three you could have. At that time I wasn't drinking at all.

EMC: So you never got off.

FS: No, I never got off. So I just stayed aboard ship.

EMC: You must have liked it.

FS: Oh, I didn't mind it because there was nothing on the island there. It was just sort of like sand. No trees or anything, just sand.

EMC: Oh, no trees?

FS: No trees, no. So I said, I'm not going to take it. At least I'll be aboard and not out in the sun here if I don't have to. So I stayed aboard.

EMC: No shelter.

FS: Then one time we had been for a long time out at sea, we laid-to, and we put our liberty launches over, and put the beer over. The launches were about 20 feet away from the ship, and they had a beer party aboard the launches. There was an officer in each one of them. When they got through, they'd come back in again, and another bunch would go off on the liberty boats until anybody that wanted to go out there and have a couple of beers to boost the morale up a little bit, you know. So that's what our skipper would do to try to keep the morale up.

EMC: Well, that's good. Did you have any entertainment aboard ship? Some people had a dog aboard ship.

FS: We had movies. We had movies even before the public in the United States saw them.

EMC: Oh, they sent them to your ship. Oh, that's good. Well, that was something.

FS: Yes, we had a movie screen we used to rig up to the fantail, and we'd sit anyplace, on top of the sixteen-inch guns, on all the guns there. We had entertainment. Also one thing about our ship that I liked, I don't know if you remember the old soda fountains used to be in the drugstores?

EMC: Oh, yes.

FS: Those old soda fountains. We had one of those aboard ship.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes!

FS: And we made our own ice cream. We used to make it in these--what did they call them now?--25-gallon pots like this. So we had ice cream anytime we wanted it. We'd go down there, and we'd buy it down in our canteen. We had cigarettes, and they had candy, things like that, where other ships didn't have it. Just the battleships and the heavy cruisers would have things like that.

Then every three days we used to have to fuel destroyers because once they got down to 90 percent--they were only allowed to burn about 10 percent of their fuel before they had to refuel in case we got into a battle out at sea. We always refueled them. There weren't tankers. The tankers didn't refuel them. The battleships refueled the ship escorts that we had. Of course we carried the fuel for them, and that was our job. So every time they'd come over, they'd say, "Got any ice cream?" So we'd send over ice cream for the whole crew.

EMC: Wow! You had good cooks then.

FS: So, of course, like I say, we made our own ice cream and had everything else there. If you wanted a frappe, you could have a frappe, things like that.

EMC: How was the food aboard ship? Was it good?

FS: It wasn't bad at all. We had good cooks.

EMC: How did you get your food? Because you're out in the middle of the Pacific somewhere.

FS: Well, they had supply ships come over. One time we were out, we were running out of food, and we had to go on two meals a day. We had just breakfast and dinner. This was just before Thanksgiving and Christmas. I forget--we were in here someplace, (Leyte Gulf Area).

EMC: That could be a problem.

FS: So we were running low on food because the supply ship got sunk. They were bringing our food, and they had to send another one out. So we had to wait. So our skipper put us on two meals a day, and he kept a full Thanksgiving dinner for the holidays. He made sure we had it. That wasn't used up at all. That was the last thing we were going to use. So when it came the

holiday, we had it just like being at home, having a good Thanksgiving dinner at home.

EMC: Did you get resupplied in time?

FS: Oh, yes, we got resupplied. In fact, we got resupplied before Thanksgiving, but he made sure we had that anyway in case we didn't.

EMC: That's very unusual, to have something like that happen. So you had movies for entertainment. Your food was fairly good. That's about it as far as activity of that sort. You never got off the ship, which is interesting. Did you receive mail regularly?

FS: Yes. Well, not too regularly. In fact, some of the mail--it would usually come by ship. In fact, I got some mail from Mary at that time. Some of it was all wet. Some of it you could read, some of it you couldn't read. All you could read was to see who it belonged to. A lot of it got lost, a lot of the mail got lost and never did reach us.

EMC: Did you write letters home?

FS: Yes, yes.

EMC: You've got some of them?

FS: I've got some here that might be interesting.

EMC: Oh, yes, yes. A description of events would be great. Oh, there's your scrapbook. People kept scrapbooks.

FS: Well, these are things that they gave us and we filled them out. These are some of the battles like Roi Island. (in the Marshall Islands) We nicknamed it Burlesque.

EMC: I should ask you: You said you were preparing at Okinawa for the invasion of Japan. Then the bombs were dropped, and VJ Day occurred. How did you happen to be in Tokyo Bay on September 2nd and 3rd?

FS: Well, we were the occupation force.

EMC: What did that mean, and what did that entail?

FS: Well, that entailed the surrender of Japan and the signing of the surrender. Then we became the occupation force. My job, the men of my crew and the boats that I had, we were cleaning up Tokyo Harbor, picking up all the trash that was in the water and all that, to clear the harbor so that ships could anchor. One vivid recollection of entering Japan was seeing all the shore batteries with their gun barrels pointing to the ground. It was an emotional sight.

EMC: Were you at the actual signing? Did you witness the actual signing from your ship?

FS: We couldn't. This is just the envelope. This was from Japan.

EMC: Right. I can see that. Yes!

FS: This was the first one mailed out.

EMC: September 2nd. That's great.

FS: I sent this one to my family who lived a little farther.

EMC: Right. Oh, that's good. Very neat. So did you witness the surrender?

FS: We could see part of it from the ship, yes, across from topside, we could see that. But there's a few things here that....

EMC: Do you remember how long you stayed in Japan after the surrender?

FS: No, but it was several weeks.

EMC: Oh, okay. It wasn't a terribly long time.

FS: No, no. Until MacArthur got in there and got things all squared away, and

they set up the government up there. When they didn't need us anymore.

EMC: Then they sent you back. You must have been thrilled to be going home.

FS: Oh, yes.

EMC: Where did the COLORADO go after Japan? Where were you headed for?

FS: We went to Pearl. We were then being used as troop ships, bringing the Army back to the States, back and forth.

EMC: Where did you run to, what islands did you go to?

FS: In Hawaii, I believe it was.

EMC: Oh, so it was basically Hawaii....

FS: Back to San Francisco.

EMC: Oh, I see. So that must have been a number of trips.

FS: Then after that we (this was in '46) went and put the ship out of commission.

EMC: Oh, you did. Where was that done?

FS: That was up in Seattle in 1946.

EMC: Why did it have to go out of commission?

FS: Because it was old, and they didn't need us anymore. They were cutting the fleet down. Then they kept the more modern battleships like the NEW JERSEY. All the old ones were scrapped. But they had it out of commission. The WEST VIRGINIA went out of commission also up there. In fact, she went out of commission before we did.

EMC: Now you had by that time had a little over five years in the Navy, and your enlistment, you said, was for six.

FS: Yes.

EMC: What persuaded you to continue on and to make the Navy a career?

FS: Well, the thing was I had reached the top of my grade, and I said to myself, I've got six years in. In 14 years I can retire from the Navy, collect 50 percent of my pay. I'll be still young enough I can get me another job. Of course, my thing was thinking how I would try to get into Civil Service so I could still be working for the government and for the Navy. I said, if I do 20 there, I'll get another pension there which would be 40 percent of my pay, and that's what I did. So I'm drawing three pensions actually.

EMC: Social Security, too?

FS: Social Security, Navy pension, and my Civil Service pension.

EMC: So you must have liked the Navy, though.

FS: I did. Oh, yes, I did. I enjoyed it.

EMC: You got used to it.

FS: Because most of the time I was in the Navy after the war was spent aboard ship.

EMC: Most of the time you were aboard ship?

FS: Yes.

EMC: Oh, you mentioned briefly that you were married in '46. When were you married in '46?

FS: November 9th.

EMC: In '46. Did you come back to Newport at that point in time?

FS: Well, I was on leave. After we put the ship out of commission in Seattle, they transferred me for a short period of time to the--(why they did it, I don't know because it was also out of commission)--the WEST VIRGINIA. She was out of commission, and I spent a few months aboard her. Then I came back. I had leave, terminal leave, to use up. I had about--I believe it was two months' leave--that I had to use up from the Navy. I couldn't use it up before. They sent me home on terminal leave. I was on terminal leave until December of 1946.

So that's when I got married, when I was on terminal leave. We got married. Then we went on our honeymoon and then came back. Then I went to ship over again. I'm trying to figure out, where did I go to ship over again? It was Washington, D.C.

EMC: This is in almost '47, right? Did you change your rating after the war?

FS: Yes.

EMC: You mentioned something to that effect.

FS: Yes, I changed it in '52, I think it was 1952. I was aboard the USS GREENWICH BAY, an AVP-41.

EMC: How did you happen to choose the rating?

FS: During the war I was assigned to aviation ships.

EMC: Oh, I see. You mean carriers?

FS: Carriers, and the GREENWICH BAY, that was now part of that. So when I was on the GREENWICH BAY, we made two trips to the Persian Gulf, two cruises to the Persian Gulf. They ended up about eight-month cruises. The wife was living in Norfolk at the time. So I'd get to see her about every ten months for a couple of years there. Then I got assigned to a squadron. So when I was on the GREENWICH BAY there, I had an officer there talked to me saying, "Well, why don't you change your rate over? You'll get a better chance of getting shore duty."

EMC: Oh, yes, because you were on a lot of ships then from '46.

FS: Yes, I had a total of actual shore duty, counting as shore duty--I think one year in 1950 and that lasted 11 months. That was at Quonset Point. I was assigned to Quonset Point Ron Two. Then I was sent back to sea and picked up the GREENWICH BAY, which was sea duty at Norfolk. I was aboard it about a month before we went to the Persian Gulf for supposedly a six-month cruise, turned out to be ten months. Then we came back to Norfolk. The ship that was supposed to relieve the ship that relieved us ran aground, so that cut our duty in the States short because we had to turn around and relieve the same ship that relieved us in the Persian Gulf. I was out there again another ten months.

EMC: Oh, heavens! That's a long time.

FS: So that's the reason they told me to change over. So I changed over to aviation with no problem at all. I did finally get some good duty after that.

EMC: Oh, and where were you stationed for the remainder of your career?

FS: Well, I was on sea duty assigned with the Hurricane Hunter Squadron in Jacksonville, Florida. That was sea duty, but I was ashore all the time--I could go home every night. So it was just like being on shore duty, but it was a sea duty assignment, though. See, aviation had a lot of sea duty assignments.

EMC: Oh, I would think so.

FS: That you were ashore most of the time.

EMC: Oh, that's good.

FS: So that was one of the best moves I made, changing over to aviation boatswain mate.

EMC: Oh, so did you go directly as a boatswain mate in aviation.

FS: Oh, yes. I kept my rate only changed the name of the rate.

EMC: How was your job different? What kind of a job did you do in the aviation rate?

FS: Well, my job was airplanes. I had to direct the taxiing of the airplanes when they landed, taxi to where they were going to be parked, direct them to do that. I had to direct them into the hangars when they had to be repaired or having work done on them. Sometimes I would drive the tractor myself to tow them into the hangar if I was shorthanded.

EMC: That's very responsible then. You really had to know what you were doing.

FS: Oh, it was a responsible job.

EMC: Did you have any training before?

FS: Oh, yes, I had to go to school in Philadelphia. They sent me to catapult and arresting gear school.

EMC: Oh, I see. Did you like that better than being aboard ship?

FS: Oh, yes. I liked the idea of being around the airplanes. When I went to the catapult and arresting gear school, that's when I was assigned to carriers. But I didn't use my training on the carriers. They put me in the

gasoline gang. I was in charge of gassing the airplanes, not the catapult and arresting gear that I went to school a couple of months for. But that's the way the Navy operates.

EMC: Yes, that is the way they operate. I was just thinking that. Isn't that something. Well, when did you decide to retire from the Navy?

FS: Well, I had always planned to do 20 years. I decided to make it a career after that six-year enlistment and to retire after 20 years. I didn't want to stay any longer than that, because then if I wanted to get a job on the outside, I'd be too old. I was 43 years old when I did my 20.

EMC: Where did you retire from? What station?

FS: Oh, I was in Jacksonville. I was in the Hurricane Hunter Squadron in Jacksonville.

EMC: So you retired out of there, and I presume you decided to come back to Newport.

FS: Oh, yes. We had always decided we'd come back home to the island, Mary and I.

EMC: Where did you get a job when you came back to Newport?

FS: Well, the first job I had when I came back to Newport, I worked for the Supply Depot. I then was in administration at the Justice School. They changed the job policy at the Justice School from a civilian job to an officer's job. So they had one of the officers who was a lawyer take over the administration duties, which that included the print shop. We'd type and print our own books as we needed, and ran them off and collated them. They gave me another job. They put me in charge of the law library. I was GS-6 before, and went to GS-5, but I retained the pay grade.

EMC: Yes, you do for a while.

FS: Yes, for a while. Then an opening came up in the fire department. They needed an inspector. So I applied for it. They asked me, well, what kind of experience have you got? I said, "Well, I've got X number of years aboard ship of training people for 16 years on fire and so forth, fighting fires aboard ship, which includes oil fires, gas fires, gasoline fires, and airplane fires." I said, "So as far as inspection, I was in charge to make sure of safety aboard ship as division chief of an enlisted men's division, running a division; also as a chief. I had a whole section of the ship. I was responsible for the fire safety and training of the crew in that part of the ship."

EMC: You got the job?

FS: They said, "Well, okay." So it was between me and another fellow from New

Hampshire. Finally the chief chose me. So I got my GS-6 back again because the position was a GS-6. So I enjoyed that inspection job.

EMC: But you also joined the Reserves, didn't you?

FS: Oh, no. What happens is you are automatically transferred to the Fleet Reserve. When you make a career of the Navy, you're going to do 30 years, but you are allowed after 20 years to put in for inactive duty. What they do is transfer you from 20 years active duty and you get your pension, which is 50 percent of your pay, and then they put you in what they call the Fleet Reserve. Not the Navy Reserve but the Fleet Reserve. You spend the rest of your time to make your 30 in the Fleet Reserve. Then you get your retirement paper from the Secretary of the Navy that you've done your 30 years of Naval duty. Your pay goes according to your active duty time. Then you're credited with 30 years of service.

EMC: That's good. Could you tell me what the significance of your Naval career was for you and your life? How significant was it?

FS: Well, in my particular case, it caused a lot of sea duty. I knew that when I got married. In fact, I told Mary, I said, "I'm making the Navy a career." That was one of the stipulations before we agreed to get married and so on. Because I knew Mary since 1936. I met her in the hospital in Fall River. My mother was in the hospital there, and she was a roommate of my mother.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes! You met your wife in Fall River in the hospital, and you told her you were going to make the Navy a career when you decided to get married.

FS: Yes. Because I wasn't getting married without saying that. I mean that wouldn't be fair. Some people don't like to be separated. Of course, she realized there were going to be separations, and there were. Two months after I was married, I was sent to Greenland.

EMC: Oh, Greenland! A nice cold place.

FS: Yes.

EMC: I was asking about the significance of your career and its importance to you for you and your life. What kind of an impact did it make on you, do you think?

FS: Not really an impact. For one thing, I enjoyed it. It was something that I didn't have to do. In other words, my choice. That's a choice I figured out my life was going to be, it was going to be in the Navy. Of course, it was the money thing; not so much the money as far as the salary goes, but the retirement pension as you get older. You've got that to fall back on, and, of course, you don't need as much money when you're retired as you do when you're working. So those things all played into it. If wanted to get into another

field, like I had the idea that I wanted to get into Civil Service and make a career of that, if I was fortunate enough.

I didn't know where I was going to go. In fact, that's why we went, when I got out of there, we went to live in Little Compton for a year; we rented a place in Little Compton for a year after we were married because I didn't know whether I was going to get a job at Newport or I was going to get a job at Quonset because I had applied at both places. They didn't have vacancies at the time. In fact, the rest of them were closed.

EMC: Oh, they were.

FS: They told me I couldn't qualify for any jobs at Newport. But I was fortunate enough that at one of my duty stations in Norfolk they had the Civil Service personnel that hired people right next door to where I was stationed. I was stationed at the overhaul and repair of aircraft in Norfolk in the security department there. I learned all about the hiring and non-hiring. When they told me here I could not get on the list, I said, "Yes, I can." I said, "I'm retired. I can open up any list you have closed that I qualify for on any job." The guy who was in charge in Newport, he was really perturbed about that.

So I said, "What kind of jobs do you have here? So I can make a list of them and find out what jobs I qualify for and apply for." Well, finally they had to give it to me. I looked for it, and there was one job in Newport. The Supply Depot came up first. I took that, and from there, any chance I had to get a promotion or something like that, I just took advantage of it.

EMC: How long were you retired before you got a job in the Civil Service?

FS: I wasn't retired too long. I was on leave at the time. Of course, I joined in '46, and I went to work there in, I believe, it was January of '61. I retired from the Navy in '60. It was '61. January of '61.

EMC: That's not too bad. What was your favorite assignment in the Navy, would you say? What assignment that you had did you like the best?

FS: What I think I liked the best was when I made chief. It was a goal that every enlisted man that makes a career of the Navy hopes to achieve. Because your living quarters are better, you have your own separate mess, you have your own separate cook, and I guess the uniform is one of the things. You get away from that sailor hat stuff and get into like a regular suit uniform, you know. I would say that could be the thing of it.

EMC: The opportunity and that achievement. Do you have any contact with the Navy since your retirement?

FS: Oh, yes. I take advantage of the things we have like the commissary, the Navy Exchange, and medical facilities that they have there.

EMC: So you still come on base.

FS: Oh, yes, we go to base at least once a week.

EMC: Oh, really!

FS: Oh, yes. Do our shopping at the base there.

EMC: Well, that's good. Excellent. Very good. Is there anything else that you wanted to add to the interview, any remarks that you have to make, anything that I missed or that was outstanding that you can think of?

FS: No, except I think the duty that I enjoyed most while I was in the Navy-- and it might be because of being on shore duty, naturally--was being with the Hurricane Hunter Squadron.

EMC: In Jacksonville.

FS: In Jacksonville. I enjoyed that because I was fascinated with it. Of course, now they don't do it the way they did it at that time. At that time they allowed pilots to fly into the hurricane at ten feet off the water in the Super Connie, (Super Constellation plane) and to fly that low into a hurricane from one end of the hurricane all the way through to the other end and follow that up the coast, and relaying the information back to shore and all that, I thought it was an interesting job. I enjoyed that very much.

EMC: Good. Well, thank you very much for your time and for your memories of

your career in the Navy.

FS: Well, thank you for having an interest in it.

EMC: Oh, you're welcome.

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