

Janis Kozlowski: I'm interested in finding out how you wound up in the service during World War II. Was that something that you had wanted to do, or did you enlist, or were you drafted - or how did that come about?

John Fahey: Well, I enlisted in 19... in July 1941 - after I graduated from high school. There was no jobs available for me and my mother was my sole support. And she was ... couldn't afford to send me to college. So we decided it'd be probably best if I went into the service and I decided I'd go in the Navy, because I didn't like marching.

Janis Kozlowski: [Laugh] The Navy doesn't make you march?

John Fahey: Well, they did in boot camp. But, I mean, you're not a ground pounder like the army guys.

Janis Kozlowski: Right, right. So, did you have any particular skills or interest that lead you a waterborne task like that? Or was this kind of a first time out on a ship and doing that kind of thing?

John Fahey: Well, I went through boot camp in Great Lakes, and they tested you for various things. And then they had various schools that you could go to and I wanted to go the aviation radio school. And I was lucky enough to pass enough tests to be able to go to that. And I was sent out to Seattle, Washington to a naval air station to go to a naval training center there for aviation radio. I mean, they had other schools there for aviation mechanics and so on and so forth. So that's how I ended up out in the west coast. Actually, I flunked out of radio school. So, this was in December of 40... no, in December of '41. And Pearl Harbor, and shortly after Pearl Harbor, they sent me over to Bremerton to a naval station there. And I was assigned to the St. Mihiel. So, that's how I ended up on the St. Mihiel.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, was one of the tests that the Navy gave you to figure out where you might best be placed? Do they actually test people for, like, vertigo, or sea sickness, or that kind of thing?

John Fahey: Not at that time, they certainly didn't. You were headed where they wanted you to ... if you had enough skills to go. Otherwise, they just - you were pretty much at their disposal, you went where they sent you. And I was lucky enough that they sent me to the training school in Seattle.

Janis Kozlowski: [Um-hum] So, were you trained for any particular skill for the St. Mihiel after you got out of aviation radio school? Did they send you to a different kind of training then?

John Fahey: No, I was sent to Bremerton, where they, which is kind of a pool there; where anybody was sent to there. Then, they would send people to what ships, who ever that was available, they would send them to a ship. I was sent to the St. Mihiel. I was, at the time, I was a lowly Seaman, Second Class. And, so I was put into a deck, my job was in the deck-force, you know, swabbing decks, painting, chipping paint, and so on. I worked my way up to some

watches; I'd stand wheel-watches - that was part of my job - steering the ship. And most of the time I was on deck.

But, I didn't like that deck work, so I - because I had some radio training, I ... what they call, I could strike for a job in the radio shack. So, I would go up, when I was off my regular work, I could go up there and practice my radio skills. And eventually, they let me take a test for Radioman 3rd Class. They really didn't care if I went up there or not, because they liked that I was a pretty good Helmsman, and they wanted me to stay on the Deck Force. But, eventually, the communications officer convinced them that I should become a Radioman. So I took the test for Radioman 3rd Class, and passed. And after that, I was a Radioman the rest of my career in the Navy.