

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
#291**

**JOSEPH EDWARD HONISH
NAVAL HOSPITAL, PEARL HARBOR, SURVIVOR**

**INTERVIEWED ON
DECEMBER 7, 1998
BY JEFF PAPPAS**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

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**USS ARIZONA MEMORIAL
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

Jeff Pappas (JP): The following oral history interview was conducted by Jeff Pappas for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial, at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada on December 7, 1998 at eleven a.m. The person being interviewed is Joseph Honish who was aboard or at the U.S. Naval Hospital on December 7, 1941. Joseph, for the record, would you please state your full name, the place and date of birth?

Joseph Honish (JH): Joseph Edward Honish, born in Los Angeles, California, September 2, 1920.

JP: So you're born in Los Angeles in 1920. Did your family stay in Los Angeles through your childhood?

JH: My mother was from Los Angeles, my father was from Kansas. We were out—they got married in Los Angeles. We stayed out there until the depression came and my dad had three meat markets and he lost 'em all in Los Angeles. So we had to move back to Kansas and when I got back to Kansas, I was a sophomore in high school.

JP: Okay, so you spent most of your, or all of your elementary schooling, grammar schooling in Los Angeles.

JH: In Los Angeles, yes.

JP: Do you remember which schools you attended?

JH: Yes, I attended St. Bridget's Catholic School up 'til the eighth grade and then we didn't have enough money to go into a Catholic high school, so I went to Audubon Junior High School, in Los Angeles. And then after that, that's when I went back to Kansas.

JP: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your mother and father, their full names and how they met.

JH: Well, my father's name was the same as mine. When I was in the navy, why, before he died, I used to have "Junior" behind my name. Hence the name Joseph Edward Honish. And my mother's name was Edith LA-GAS-SIK.

JP: How did they meet, your dad being from Kansas and your mom being from Los Angeles?

JH: Well, my dad moved out there, went out there, had some friends out there and so he wanted to see what was going on in the rest of the world from this little town in Kansas, so he went out there. And they met somewhere, I don't know how they met, but I know they got married in Reno. (Chuckles)

JP: Oh, they did.

JH: Yeah.

JP: So you went back to Kansas as a sophomore. What part of Kansas did you eventually settle in?

JH: Right in the center of Kansas, it's called Hoisington. Hoisington, Kansas, population was 3001. Last September I went back for my sixtieth high school reunion and they only had 4000 then too, so it didn't grow much.

JP: That must've been quite a change for you from Los Angeles.

JH: Yes, it really was. Yes, it was.

JP: Well, Los Angeles though, Los Angeles in the 1920's, of course, wasn't like it is today.

JH: No, well, it was 1930.

JP: Nineteen thirty.

JH: You know, '32 when I think we moved back there.

JP: Well, how did you adjust? Did you adjust well to the change?

JH: Oh yes because I had some cousins there. My grandmother was there. I had some aunts and yeah, I fit in pretty well. In fact, one of the good things about it was that it was a small high school so I was able to be the fastest

quarter-miler in the school, so I got my, you know, got my Hoisington thing because I lettered in track. Yeah.

JP: So this was roughly 1935, 1936?

JH: That's right.

JP: You were attending high school...

JH: That's right, yeah.

JP: ...in Kansas.

JH: I graduated in '38.

JP: Do you remember your quarter-mile time back then?

JH: Oh, my quarter-mile time. I forget now. It was less than a minute, though. I know that. Yeah, less than a, yeah. Quarter-mile, yeah. Less than a minute.

JP: That's pretty fast in 1937, '38.

JH: Yeah, well, I was the fastest man in school.

JP: Had you followed Jesse Owens at...

JH: (Laughs) No. Who was the—oh, in the quarter-mile, yeah. I was thinking about the mile too. The man who was the fastest miler then was from Kansas University and he couldn't make it over a minute, no a mile, four minutes I think it was. Yeah, four minutes.

JP: Oh, there's so many wonderful runners that came out of Kansas.

JH: Yeah, but we had our track team, we had four quarter men and so we ran the relay and we could beat him in the relay, see, by himself. We did that one time.

JP: Did you challenge this miler?

JH: Yeah.

JP: Interesting. So then in 1938, you graduated from high school. You had made the adjustment from Los Angeles to life on the prairies.

JH: Yes.

JP: What did your father do then for a living in Kansas?

JH: Well, he was meat-marketing business again, yeah. And then...

JP: So he stayed...

JH: Huh?

JP: He stayed in the same business.

JH: Yeah, oh yeah. And then after, well, after I joined the navy, then I went out to Pearl, like that, why they moved back to California again.

JP: Did you have any brothers or sisters growing up?

JH: Yes. I had, well, one sister, my older sister died. She was three years younger than I. She died from diphtheria. But then I have three sisters still alive now and they're all younger than I am. I was ten years older than the oldest one.

JP: So you were the oldest? You were the oldest child.

JH: I was the only man and I had the three sisters, yeah.

JP: Very good. So 1938, you had graduated from high school.

JH: Uh-huh.

JP: Had you been thinking at that time about joining the service, enlisting, or was that something that just came later?

JH: Oh, I wanted to join the navy years ago, before that. Yes, I did.

JP: Why was that?

JH: Well, my, in Los Angeles, my aunt lived in Long Beach and during the summer I got to spend a month with her on the beach there, in Long Beach, southern California. And there in Long Beach, at that time, they had Battleship Row and all these big battleships were there. And my uncle worked on the gambling ship three miles out, that's where they could legally, three miles out on the gambling ship and he ran the food service out there. He was the maitre d'.

JP: Now, the gambling ship, that obviously was a private concession.

JH: Yes, yes, yes. Well they had two of 'em, they had the SS *Rex* and the SS *Johanna Smith*. One of them burned down.

JP: Do you happen to remember the name of the concession that operated these gambling boats?

JH: No, I don't. I was pretty young then. But anyway, once a week, why, my aunt would take me out there and we'd go out and have dinner out on the gambling ship. And on the way out we would go by these battleships and some of the sailors, instead of waiting for their liberty boats to come back and forth, why they'd get on the water taxi with us, you know, and they'd tie up alongside there. And I'd look at that, oh, I want to join the navy.

JP: So it impressed you?

JH: Yes, it did!

JP: The battleships, the sailors.

JH: I always wanted to join the navy. In fact, when I graduated from St. Bridget's there, we had to write an essay about what we wanted to do and I

said I wanted to join the navy. And the principal or sister, I forget what her name was, she says, “Joseph, you are crazy. You don’t want to join the navy.”

I said, “Yes, I do, Sister.” And that’s it, I did. I wanted to join the navy.

JP: So as early as almost 1931, 1932?

JH: Well, yeah, probably 1932, yeah, ’32.

JP: So 1938, now you graduated from high school.

JH: Yeah.

JP: You had already thought about joining the navy. You enlisted at that time?

JH: Yes, I did. Well, in ’38, no, I tried to join the navy in ’38 and it was very difficult to get in and I went down to recruiting and they looked at me and checked me and they said, “Uh-uh, you can’t join because you have a quarter-inch overbite.”

Honest to gosh, quarter-inch overbite and they would not let me join when I got out of high school in 1938.

JP: Did they provide an explanation for you why an overbite was essential to navy service?

JH: No, they were just trying to pick things—you had to be perfect to get in in those days.

JP: Well, I had heard that it was very, very difficult.

JH: Yeah, very difficult to get in. But the following year, they came around again. One of the recruiters says, “Hey, Honish, we’ve loosened it up,” and so I was able to join the navy then, 1939, December.

JP: Where did you first try to enlist? Was this in Wichita or another city?

JH: I first tried to enlist, go down to Wichita, yeah. And that's when I was told, no, I couldn't get in then. So then when they came around the next time, they said, "No, you can't re-enlist in Wichita. You have to go to Kansas City."

JP: Now that's quite a shock.

JH: So I went to Kansas City, yeah.

JP: That's quite a shock to you, though. As early as 1931, 1932, you had been thinking about joining...

JH: Mm-hm.

JP: ...the navy. You had been impressed by the armory down in Long Beach. And then they reject you. What was your first impression after that?

JH: Well, I was working. I was working for Safeway. I was a meat cutter for Safeway. I wasn't doing badly. I was eighteen years old making twenty-two fifty a week and single, so I just kept working. But I still wanted to go in the navy.

JP: Of course, Safeway being the food chain?

JH: Yeah, of the meat market, meat cutter there in Safeway.

JP: Was your dad working for them as well or did he have a private or a separate...

JH: No, he was working for another group but they needed a younger guy like me to work for them. I was the second butcher in it, so they let me go 'cause I worked in my dad's meat market since I was about thirteen or so. When I went to high school, every morning before high school, I'd go down to the meat market in Kansas and I'd fix up the meats all like that, you know. And then after high school, why, then after school, then I'd go down and work 'til seven o'clock at night. That's why I couldn't play baseball or football. The only thing I could do was work on track, you know. After seven o'clock, I could run back and forth. Okay.

JP: Oh, so after, so 1938, that was still in the midst of the depression.

JH: Yes.

JP: Of course the Midwest had been hit hard...

JH: Yeah.

JP: ...by some of the ecological disasters that took place during the Dust Bowl years. Were you affected at all by any of those Dust Bowl problems that occurred during the mid-1930's in the Midwest?

JH: No, not especially. Uh-uh. No, most of the Dust Bowl was already finished by the time I got there in 1935, yeah. That wasn't too bad.

JP: So you weren't tremendously disappointed then that they hadn't chosen you to join, to serve in the navy in 1938?

JH: Well, I was disappointed but I had a good job, yeah. So I knew, that's what the good lord wanted me to do, that's what I wanted to do.

JP: So eventually though you did enlist. They did...

JH: Oh, I did, certainly.

JP: So tell me then.

JH: As soon as I got, went up to St.—Salina, Kansas and there were twelve of us and they put us on a train and they sent us to Kansas City for a big doctor's physical exam there. And only four of us passed the exam.

JP: Out of how many were there?

JH: Twelve, twelve. And then they shipped us to Great Lakes to boot camp.

JP: Now, this is Kansas City, Kansas or Kansas City, Missouri.

JH: Kansas City, Missouri, yeah.

JP: Okay.

JH: We had to crisscross the river. You can't tell one from the other as you go across the river, but it was Kansas City, Missouri.

JP: Okay. So you enlisted. At that time, were you thinking about any specific vocation that you wanted to do in the navy?

JH: Oh, I had wanted to be a, steer the ship is what I wanted to do. But I guess I should've—it wasn't with the quartermaster, you know. But no, I just wanted to steer the ship, but I didn't end up that way.

JP: What did you end up? How did you end up in the navy?

JH: Hospital corpsman.

JP: All right. Tell me about that, how that happened.

JH: Well, oh, I don't know. They wanted, see, they didn't have a butcher's rank, like—you either had to be a cook or a baker and I didn't like to cook, I didn't like to bake. But I liked to work in the meat market and somebody said, "Well, you know, you,"—we used to slaughter cattle out in the field and all like that too when I was there. So they said, "You know, blood wouldn't hurt you. You're not scared of blood, are you?"

I said, "No."

"Well, how about becoming a hospital corpsman?"

"Oh, gee, you know, I don't know," but I finally decided, well, might as well, 'cause they weren't going to let me be a meat cutter. And there wasn't any way until I found out, you know, that I couldn't steer the ship. I'd have to be a quartermaster to do that. So that's why I went to hospital corps school.

JP: Very good. Tell me about training to become a corpsman in the navy at that time.

JH: Well, we had a four-months school there at the naval hospital in San Diego, hospital corps school, and I went through that. Everything we had to do as corpsmen and...

JP: Well, tell me about that...

JH: Graduated pretty well on the class.

JP: Well, four months of training as a corps person, the curriculum, it must've been a diligent, disciplined curriculum.

JH: Well, yes, but see, it's not like we're going to be a nurse or anything. We're just helping the nurses, you know. We're just going to do things like carrying bedpans, you know, and taking blood pressures and things like that, yeah, to start with, see. Now every time, after when you got of the hospital corps school, all you were was a Hospital Apprentice Second Class. That's just like being a second-class seaman. And you had to work your way up. And you had to get smarter every time you took an exam for the next rate.

JP: Okay.

JH: More studying.

JP: So you went to training and now this is what, late, mid-1939, late 1939?

JH: Yeah, December of '39.

JP: December of '39. So after the four month training then you went off...

JH: You went to the hospital out in Pearl Harbor.

JP: Okay, tell me about that. Tell me about your first impression of Hawaii, coming from Kansas and from Los Angeles. What did you think of Hawaii itself?

JH: Well, I thought it was a pretty nice place. I liked it, yeah. Not only that, see, in, well, cute, little joke, you know. In California there, you couldn't go into the bar until you were twenty-one and get a drink or something like that. I was twenty. I got out to Hawaii and you could go in when you were twenty. So you go in and get a beer in twenty and they wouldn't throw you out. That's one of the good things. And I loved the beach. I used to go down in Waikiki Beach you know. And even when I had night duty. I had night duty at the hospital, I'd get off during the day and I'd go down there and spend a lot of time on the beach, just laying in the sun or riding the surf, yeah.

JP: Now, by this time, by early 1940, mid-1940, as you were stationed at the naval hospital, of course the North Atlantic, the war in the North Atlantic had been heating up now for quite some time. Had you heard of any rumors, was there any anxieties in Hawaii in regards to potential conflict with Japan?

JH: No. Not that I know of. At that time, I didn't know. Uh-uh.

JP: Nothing.

JH: There was no, didn't know anything. Not only that, there was a lot of Japanese people in Hawaii at that time too, you know. So you know, they were part of a—that's United States, family of ours, you know. We didn't feel any animosity against them or anything like that. In fact I dated a little Japanese gal out there one time before the war, when I was single.

JP: Mm-hm, okay. So through—so you, you're stationed at Pearl between early 1940...

JH: June or July, June of 1940.

JP: June, that's when you started your service at Pearl.

JH: Yeah.

JP: Okay. And you went through. We're looking at almost a year and a half...

JH: Right.

JP: ...before the attack.

JH: Right.

JP: Tell me, during that time, give me a picture on what an average life was like for you, between those fourteen, sixteen months.

JH: Oh well, it was just like a bunch of guys. We had fun together. We'd go play basketball, play handball, go out and have a few drinks at the bar, go swimming together and maybe date a gal here or there. And it was, you know, I don't think anything was different, you know. Sort of like maybe going to college or something, you know.

JP: Okay. Well then let's go right up to the attack then. So too a couple of weeks before December 1941. At that time, see, any—had you heard anything yet? I know that the Japanese had been negotiating in Washington D.C. in regards to the situation that was happening in the South Pacific. Were you all aware of what was going on?

JH: No, not. I don't think so.

JP: Okay.

JH: Let's see. I was a third class pharmacist's mate then and no, we wasn't. We know that the war was going on, the bad war was going on over in Europe and we knew that Roosevelt was sending some of our ships out there to help supply Great Britain and all like that, you know. But I wanted to get to Europe at that time. I wanted to, oh, tin cans, destroyers. But, no, I was out there in Pearl Harbor. So we really didn't know anything that was going to go on in that respect.

JP: Now let's go over to the morning then, December 7, 7:55 a.m. What were you doing?

JH: I was down at the fleet landing. My buddy and I was at the fleet landing.

JP: Which is located where on the island?

JH: Which is located right down there in the center of the Pearl Harbor, right in the harbor there. And all the battleships were right out from there. And this is where the landing crafts and the liberty boats would tie up at the fleet landing there. And we were, my buddy and I, we went to fleet landing, 'cause they did not have a chapel on the base there. They had this Bloch Recreation Center [*Arena*], right at the fleet landing, and they were going to have eight o'clock mass there. And we were on our way to eight o'clock mass that morning, which we never had. And it was right there. And that is when the planes came right over us and did some strafing. A couple of guys behind us were killed.

Across the street, through a little gate, was the center, where the family people lived there, dependents center. And this one lady was coming across the street to go to mass and all of a sudden we saw her flip over like that. And we went over, my buddy and I, to check and they had torn a great big chunk out of her leg, about like that, and she was bleeding like mad. So we tore off her petticoat and made a tourniquet and put it around there. And then we commandeered a car and we took her to the naval hospital there.

JP: Well, you must've been very important property for the navy as a corpsman that morning.

JH: Yes, when I got back there.

JP: Tell me about that. Tell me about what you did, as far as responsibilities...

JH: I took care of ...

JP: ...immediately following the first attack.

JH: ...of the burn cases that were coming in like mad. Hundreds of burn cases almost. Well, about a hundred anyway, and I was putting tannic acid on them and silver nitrate. And the thing is where they were—the big problem is if they had their clothes on, they weren't, flash-burned like. But the ones that, you know, didn't have any, or if they just had short sleeves on, their arms, their legs like that. And I worked on that for, until noon.

JP: This is back, is this at the naval hospital?

JH: At the naval hospital and they were bringing in the dead bodies, bringing in the—and then it was so crowded, we couldn't put 'em on any of the wards or anything like that. We just had the bodies. We had to stack 'em up outside for that day anyway, that they were bringing 'em all in.

And then I was, I had worked in the food service and in fact I was a commissary storekeeper. I had the keys to all of the food that was there and we had all these people coming in like mad, to eat. And so I had to give up, you know—other people were coming in then to take care. We had civilian people coming in, civilian nurses, doctors, Red Cross people coming in, helping us that morning.

JP: Any civilian victims?

JH: No, we didn't have any—there was no casualties at the naval hospital. The only casualty, the only thing that happened was one of the Japanese planes was shot down and it came in over the naval hospital and across from the hospital is where we had our paymaster and the laboratory. And it clipped part of that building and went into the tennis court and it exploded like and killed the two Japanese pilots in there. And that was the only thing that came in there. No one was injured at the hospital at all.

JP: So, had the naval hospital sustained any damage as a result of the battle?

JH: No, uh-uh. The only thing that happened later on is when the *Nevada*, USS *Nevada*, was able to get underway and get out of the harbor. She started out of the harbor and thought maybe she was going to sink before she got out and that would blockade the harbor so we couldn't get any help in of our ship. So they ran it aground, right where the naval hospital was. And then the...

JP: Well, how far was the *Nevada* from the hospital?

JH: Our operating—pardon me?

JP: How far was the *Nevada* from the hospital?

JH: Oh, not very far at all. Just a, oh, I don't know. We were not too far from the passageway, the waterway. And so I would say it was not more than about, oh, I don't know, quarter mile, maybe about that. But they were firing at the planes and then our operating room was on the top floor and you know the shrapnel from our planes, from our ammunition was falling on the hospital. So no one was hurt at all but I mean it was just that, you know, this stuff would be coming down on you from our own ships. Well, our own ship, just the one there, which they ran aground, so...

JP: It must have been tremendous amounts of confusion...

JH: Oh, yes, it was. It was.

JP: Did you have any time at all to think about what had happened?

JH: No, too busy working. Like I said, we served at the noon meal. We served over 5,000 people and usually we serve about 500. And they took almost every bit of food we had, 'cause they were coming from everywhere. Their ships were sunk, they were this and that. They didn't have any place to eat, so they...

JP: How did you...

JH: And I have—well, as I told the other gentleman, I have a long list of how everything happened at the hospital.

JP: Well, tell me about...

JH: And about...

JP: ...tell me about dressing a burn wound. What's the procedure? What did you have as far as materials?

JH: Well, we just had tannic acid is what we put over the skin and we started in with little spray bottles. Pretty soon, why, we had wide jug paintbrushes and putting it on. And if they had weeping, then we'd put some silver nitrate over it and that's what we did then, in those days, see. Now that's entirely

different from what it is now, but that's what we were doing for treatment of burns, yeah.

JP: And you would treat the more severe wounds the same way as you would treat somebody...

JH: Same way, yeah.

JP: ...with lesser wounds.

JH: Yeah, well, but if it was other than regular wounds, you know, shotgun wounds—I mean, not shotgun—I mean armament wounds or stuff like that, I wasn't involved with that. The ward doctors and stuff was doing that and I was just helping take care of the burn cases.

JP: Okay, so they had separated responsibilities according to the severity of the wound then.

JH: Yes.

JP: But the corps persons, the corpsmen would get the burn wounds?

JH: Oh yeah.

JP: The more severe wounds...

JH: Yeah.

JP: ...that needed, that required additional...

JH: Yeah.

JP: ...an operation, perhaps more surgical work...

JH: Something like that, yeah.

JP: ...would go to the doctors then.

JH: Doctors and then the doctors had some corpsmen that were operating room technicians and stuff like that, see, where I was not. I was a commissary technician, working in the food service. And so...

JP: Did you get to know any of the doctors during your stay there?

JH: Oh yeah, I knew some of the doctors, yeah.

JP: Okay. So you patched wounds, patched burn wounds until about noon.

JH: Until about noon, yeah.

JP: What happened then?

JH: Well then I went to work in the food service area to get all that food out and all like that, you know.

JP: And you stay there.

JH: And, yeah, and we kept open until, oh, eight o'clock and at that time then we couldn't turn any more lights on. All the lights had to go out, you know, because that would be a sign for them to come in, you know. So we'd turn off all the lights and that was it.

JP: Very good...

JH: Except I set on—the chief warrant officer that I worked for that night, why, we were just setting up, that was part of our watch. We were staying there and all of a sudden, why, they had taken in the artillery, the army artillery and had posted them around the hospital in places like that. And I think you know this, that some of our planes came in off of the *Enterprise* and did not know the password or something like that, so we shot some of our own planes down.

JP: Well, I know that there was some B-17's that were coming from California.

JH: From California too.

JP: As well too.

JH: But these were the, yeah, 'cause we had some of them, we got some of the patients that was shot down in our hospital there, the navy patients, yeah.

JP: Did you have a chance to look at Battleship Row that morning? 'Cause you had a visual from the hospital, you can see across.

JH: No. We were just across from Ford Island. There was just a hoop and a holler, you know, from Ford Island. That's where the planes came in. Air Force, I mean, the navy air station there was at Ford Island. No, we had to go further down and sort of around the bay down there to see where the Battleship Row was and where some of the ships were in dry dock too, you know. You know that one too, yeah.

JP: So you didn't really have a direct visual of Battleship Row then.

JH: No, we did not from the hospital, but we could...

JP: Now, later that day then, between noon-ish and eight o'clock, as you were working in the commissary, it must, it's still probably very, very busy and very confusing.

JH: Yes, yeah, we kept busy all the time.

JP: When did you actually sit down and think about what had happened? When did you have a chance to do that?

JH: Oh, I guess that night. This...

JP: Did you do it alone? Did you sit with some friends and talk about it?

JH: No, I was with the chief warrant officer there, who was in. I had the duty that weekend.

JP: And who was the chief?

JH: Chief warrant officer was a—he was in charge of the, the officer in charge of the food service and also the ship's store too.

JP: Do you remember his name?

JH: Oh. (Laughs) No, I don't.

JP: That's okay.

JH: I can't think of his name now.

JP: Well, what did you talk about?

JH: About what was going on.

JP: Well...

JH: About the war and all like that, yeah.

JP: What were your impressions with him? Were you angry? Sad?

JH: Just didn't understand what was happening and, yes, we were angry and I was scared. I said, "My god, what's happening," you know. "Are the troops going to invade the island or what?" You know, we didn't know.

JP: Was that a common thought that the Japanese were going to invade, ground troops on Pearl Harbor?

JH: Well, yes, I think it was. I mean, you know, I wasn't one of the top military strategists or anything like that, but we thought, yeah, it was a possibility that they'd be putting troops there, because, yeah, we didn't know. We, corpsmen, did not know what was going on in the way of the battle there.

I know when they shot at us and stuff like that, when I first looked up there, I didn't even know that was a Japanese plane. It—the week before that, the army was having maneuvers and their, the red army was fighting the blue army. And the planes were flying back and forth like that. This was part of their maneuvers, you know. And I saw that red circle up there and I thought,

heck, I thought this maneuvers were over last week, you know, when I was first thinking until they started shooting at us. And then, gee. Then somebody said, "That's gotta be Japanese!"

JP: So you really weren't sure. Had you been trained in identifying navy symbols from other countries, like the sun.

JH: No. Uh-uh, not trained. I don't think we were. I mean, not in the hospital corps or anything like that. But somebody did recognize them. We knew they had the red circle. That was one of those common things that we knew, like the various other kind of ships and countries and stuff, yeah.

JP: We're going to stop there for now and change tapes and we're going to continue for maybe another ten minutes or so.

END OF TAPE #16

TAPE #17

JP: So now, it's early evening, seven, eight o'clock, you're finishing your work, or you're continuing your work at the commissary that night at the naval hospital.

JH: Yes.

JP: You're talking with some of your friends, some of your colleagues about what had happened.

JH: Yeah.

JP: And you said you were scared, a bit frightened.

JH: Well, yes, wondered what was going on, what, you know.

JP: Well, tell me generally what was going on at the navy hospital, naval hospital, just shortly after Pearl Harbor.

JH: Well, we were working. We worked.

JP: Did you work every day?

JH: Every day, seven days a week, yes. We were working there until we got things squared away in, oh, a couple weeks or so. You know, and then we were still working, but I mean things had gotten, never back to normal, but...

JP: Had you continued with dressing wounds, working with burn patients?

JH: No, I stayed in food service all the time. After, the only time I did that was when I was, during that morning. Yeah.

JP: Did you ever go out...

JH: Before that, you know, I had worked in the wards, before I made third class and then they put me in food service because I was running the dietary service too. And before that I worked in the surgical ward, I worked in the nurses', I mean in the medical ward as a corpsman, you know. I worked in the VD ward as a corpsman and all like that, yeah. But then I didn't treat hardly any patients after that for a while.

JP: And then of course we went to war against Japan the next day.

JH: Mm-hm.

JP: Did you happen to catch Eisenhower's—I mean, sorry—Roosevelt's announcement about going to war with Japan the next morning?

JH: Yes, they had it on the radio.

JP: You did. So everyone was aware of...

JH: Yes.

JP: ...what was going on in Washington.

JH: Yes, right.

JP: At that point, did you look at each other and say, “Well, we’re in it to keep. We’re in it to stay and that’s it.”

JH: Well, we’re in the navy. We had to—military, we had to do our fighting.

JP: Right.

JH: Hopefully we can make up for some of our buddies that were—you know, one of my buddies, he was an operating room technician, just three months before the war, he was transferred to the *Arizona*.

JP: Remember his name? (Pause) That’s okay.

JH: No, I can’t think of the name.

JP: That’s okay. That’s fine. So now you’re still at the naval hospital after Pearl.

JH: Yes.

JP: And of course we go, we fight at Midway, not shortly after that.

JH: Yes.

JP: And did you stay at Pearl Harbor?

JH: Yes, I did. Uh-huh. And we opened up a large hospital up at Aiea Heights, put it in...

JP: Could you spell that for me?

JH: A-I-E-A. Aiea Heights. It was up above Pearl Harbor there. There was a large military naval hospital. We put it in commission November 11, 1941, on Veteran’s Day. Well, at that time they called it Armistice Day then.

JP: Armistice Day. So you went to work there?

JH: Yes, then it became—I was the commissary bookkeeper. And I kept the books for both hospitals. Yeah. Large hospital up there and then the regular hospital down in the shipyard.

JP: How long did you serve at Pearl Harbor?

JH: I served there until I got transferred back to the States in June of '43, 1943.

JP: Very good. What did you do then?

JH: Well, they sent me to naval hospital in Norman, Oklahoma. I couldn't believe it was a naval hospital in Norman, Oklahoma!

JP: At the site of the University of Oklahoma.

JH: That's where it is! Yes.

JP: Good football games there when you were...

JH: Yes, yes. In fact, I went there and I used to root for Kansas when they played Oklahoma!

JP: Oh, essentially you're going back home then? You're going back to the Midwest.

JH: Not too far away. Yeah.

JP: And did you spend the rest of the war in Oklahoma?

JH: Oh no. No. I was only there for five months. And then I became a chief petty officer. And then after a chief petty officer, I was just there a month and then I got my orders down to New Orleans, with the armed guard. And I was on a, had duty on a merchant marine transport, the SS *Jean Lafitte*. And we took the troops out in the Pacific and we bring the patients back.

JP: To a hospital at New Orleans?

JH: Oh, no, not Norman. No, no. We was transferred to the West Coast. We brought 'em back to a naval hospital Oakland, naval hospital San Diego, you know, and those hospitals there on the West Coast.

JP: And you served, you did that for the remainder of the war?

JH: No, I was only on that for about a year and a half. And then I—well, when I was in Norman, Oklahoma, they were having polio epidemic up around Oklahoma City. And being I was a single first class petty officer, why they sent me up to the crippled children's hospital in Norman, Oklahoma for five weeks to learn how to take care of polio patients. And then that was fortunate for me in one respect on the ship that I didn't have to make the invasion of Okinawa. I made the invasion of Saipan and Tinian on our ship, but when we came back to the States from Tinian, why we had a little part of our bow was—one of our landing craft hit it and we went back to Pearl Harbor to get it fixed and they said, "Ah, we don't want you guys here. We're taking care of fighting ships. You have to go back to San Francisco," which is really bad to have to go back to San Francisco, you know!

Then when I was there, then I got orders to a place called naval hospital in Corona, California, which was the polio center for the West Coast. So I did some polio work there and then, until they needed me in the food service again, so I took over the food service, yeah.

JP: Where were you when they signed on *Missouri* in September of '45?

JH: I was still at Oak—Corona Naval Hospital, Corona.

JP: Very good. Let's finish up here. Why don't you describe for me, tell me briefly your career in the military? You stayed in after...

JH: Yes, I stayed.

JP: ...you had a career, a military personnel.

JH: Yes, after. Yes, when the war was over and I got a set of orders to put another ship in commission, but I was on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay and then I got a set of orders to go to the Philippines, so that was in

January of 1946, so I was over there at the Fleet Hospital 114 down in Samar. And then they closed that down, so I had to go to another little shipyard. We were over there and I was running the—well, everything there. I was a chief. I was running the food service. I was running the laundry. I was running this and that. And I stayed out there until 1947.

JP: So you ultimately went on to serve in both Korea...

JH: Yeah.

JP: ...and in the Vietnam conflict?

JH: Yeah. Yeah, I was—well, I went to Camp Pendleton—there's a naval hospital in Camp Pendleton—with the Marines. And then I got orders to go to independent duty school, 'cause I was a chief. And then they sent me to, oh, working at Norfolk, Virginia there, at the hospital there in independent duty, which meant you were on a smaller, you were on a ship without a doctor. And so after I graduated from there, and that's where I took my examination for medical service school when I was there. But then I was sent to Japan and was on this ammunition ship, the *USS Paracutin [AE-18]*, and then we took ammunition from the merchant marine ships that were coming in Japan, at Sasebo, we'd take the ammunition, and we'd take it up to Korea and like that. And I did that for a while, for a year and a half, yeah.

JP: What did it feel like, going back to Japan, having served at Pearl Harbor?

JH: Well, it wasn't too bad then. It wasn't too bad. We, they were very, very nice to us. Yeah.

JP: Well, I think on that note we will stop the interview. But I'd like to thank you very much and thanks for your time.

JH: Well, I have one other I want to say.

JP: Okay.

JH: After I got my commission on the ship, and then they sent me to First Marine Division, in Korea, so I had to tours of duty in Korea. Okay?

JP: Good. Very good, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW