

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

#410

MILTON TOM HURST

USS *ARIZONA*, SURVIVOR

INTERVIEWED ON

DECEMBER 6, 2001

BY COMMANDER BILL SCULLION & JACK GREEN

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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USS *ARIZONA* MEMORIAL

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Milton Hurst (MH): Ready, action?

(Conversation off-mike)

MH: Okay.

Bill Scullion (BS): Oral history number 410. The following oral history interview was conducted by Commander Bill Scullion and Jack Green for the Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C. and for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial at the Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii on December 6, 2001 at 12:46 p.m. The person being interviewed is Milton T. Hurst, who was an airman machinist mate third class on the USS *Arizona* on December 7, 1941. Is that correct, Mr. Hurst?

MH: Almost. You said airman. Aircraft machinist mate.

BS: At that time it was aircraft. For the record please, state your full name, place of birth and date of birth.

MH: Okay, Milton Thomas Hurst. And I was born in North East, Pennsylvania, September 10, 1920.

BS: Where in Pennsylvania? Was it called North East?

MH: North East, name, two words.

BS: Okay.

MH: It's east of Erie and west of Buffalo. It's right almost on the keystone. It's in the keystone of Pennsylvania.

BS: So it's North East.

MH: Yes.

BS: What did you consider to be your hometown in 1941?

MH: Sherman, New York. It's about ten miles from North East in New York.

(Chuckles)

BS: What were your parents' names?

MH: My father's name was Arthur Hurst. My mother's name was Florence Waterman Hurst.

BS: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

MH: I have four brothers and three sisters.

BS: And where did you go to high school?

MH: Sherman, New York.

BS: Where and why did you enlist?

MH: (Laughs) You want the short version or the real truth?

BS: The real truth!

(Laughter)

MH: I was down visiting my dad in Olean, New York. He was, worked in a big machine shop there. And I was just out of high school. I think I was eighteen or nineteen, I guess, maybe. And I was just walking around trying to find a job. And remember the old poster, “I want you,”—in the post office in Olean and that’s where I walked up and he said, “I think you’ll make it!”

(Chuckles) And so I did. And so he took the basic information and I guess about three or four weeks later, called me and said “Come on down, you’re going to Buffalo to be enlisted.”

BS: In the navy, I assume.

MH: Pardon?

BS: In the navy, I assume.

MH: I didn't hear you.

BS: In the navy?

MH: Yes, in the navy. Mm-hmm. Enlisted in the navy, I went to Newport, Rhode Island. I enlisted on the thirteenth of December, 1939 and went to Rhode Island and was there for six weeks. It was kind of a short training. It was right then. And then shipped out to San Diego and from San Diego, finally got my final orders to the *Arizona*, which was in the Long Beach harbor, up in Long Beach, California.

BS: So when did you report to the *Arizona*?

MH: First of March 1940.

BS: What division were you assigned to?

MH: I was assigned to the Second Division, to begin with, fo'c'sle division on the port side. I was there, I don't know how long I was there, but not too long. But then I, they put out a call on the plan of the day for applications to go to V Division and I put in for that and luckily, Paul Pace, who was our division boatswain, was on vacation and when he came back, _____ aviation division. And he said, "Hurst! I was going to make you the best boatswain mate in the navy!"

And I said, "I'm glad I'm in aviation!"

BS: Why did you want aviation? Well, I know why you wanted out of deck, but why did you want aviation?

MH: I didn't have much aptitude for holystoning the deck! But I thought I had some aptitude as a mechanic.

BS: Okay.

MH: And not only that, I was a future farmer in high school and Ensign Blaisdell, that interviewed me, was a future farmer out of Iowa, so that's how I got in!
(Laughs) So we sat there talking about farming instead of aviation and that's how I got in.

BS: How many people were in the division at that time?

MH: Oh, golly. Maybe twenty.

BS: How many aircraft were you working with?

MH: We had three. We had three SOCs at that time.

(Conversation off-mike)

BS: I'm going to take you to December 6, 1941. What were you doing the day before?

MH: We'd been—can we go back just a little bit?

BS: Sure.

MH: Earlier than that?

BS: Yeah.

MH: Okay. In the summer of '40, I got orders to go to aircraft instrument school. I just made third class and went to aircraft instrument school in Philadelphia and then graduated from there and went on up to Sperry Gyro School in Brooklyn. That's where I met my wife, met my girlfriend there. And then I rode the *Shawmut* back from Brooklyn. The *Shawmut*, you know about the old *Shawmut*, the old troop transporter? Yeah. Through the canal and arrived back at Pearl Harbor aboard ship on Thanksgiving Day, before the seventh.

BS: Okay.

MH: And so we made one trip at sea and came back in and the seventh happened.

BS: Okay. Do you recall what you were doing on the sixth?

MH: I see, that must have been a Saturday.

BS: It was a Saturday, yeah.

MH: Just a routine workday, I think. That's all. I know what we were going to do Sunday morning.

BS: What was that?

MH: I was going to go play tennis over at Aiea, just waiting there by the quarterdeck to go play tennis and I still don't know what happened to that tennis racquet! It's gone!

BS: So you had duty on Saturday night or did you just stay on board?

MH: Oh, stayed on board.

BS: Okay.

MH: I didn't go ashore much.

BS: So Sunday, December 7, you're getting ready to play tennis. What did you see?

MH: What'd I see?

BS: What did you see? What did you hear?

MH: Oh.

BS: Your experience on the seventh.

MH: Well, of course you're not familiar with the layout, but on, just forward of the quarterdeck, where the galley deck goes up, just inside there on the starboard side, was the aviation workshop. And also forward ships was the

Marine compartment. And over on the port side was the personnel office.

So that gives you a general _____.

I was just standing in there, waiting for colors to go so they could call away the boats to go to Aiea. Well, while I was in there, the first word I heard was they called away the fire and rescue party and I've never seen that in any report. But that was made and I've asked other people and they said, "We don't remember that," but I know that's what I heard, call away to fire and rescue for Ford Island.

And then about two or three minutes later, why, they cancelled that out but then I just walked out of the compartment and looked over the side and sure enough they needed help over at Ford Island, is the first I knew of anything, because it was smoking there and a hangar was hit or planes were hit or something over on Ford Island. So I guess I don't know what I did. I guess I walked back in there and pretty soon they passed the word for all hands on the weather deck or on the deck, get below the armor deck.

So I started down, to go down in the armor deck, which is second deck down and I was going down that ladder when the word came, “General quarters.”

Well, below the armor deck wasn't my general quarters station.

BS: Where was that?

MH: It was up in the Marine compartment. The aviation group was part of the repair party. That was our station. So there was some Marine, I don't know, some Marine officer. I don't know who it was. I'd like to know but I don't think he's with us today. Was coming down the ladder, as I was trying to sneak underneath him and he was just clubbing people down, enforcing getting underneath that armor deck. Well I snuck out underneath him and went on up to the Marine compartment and glad I did of course. And then from there, just out on to the quarterdeck area and got some fire hoses and I was trying to help people and went down below into the officers' quarters, down one hatch, but there was nothing you could do down in there. It was just black smoke and you had to get out of there just as quick as you could.

And I was between Number Three barbette and a big air uptake tube on the, would be on the port side, just slightly aft of Number Three barbette, when it blew up. Yeah. And I got thrown up against the barbette and back against the uptake. But I really wasn't hurt at all so I got up and started doing what I could. And there was people laying there and you tried to help 'em up and you grab 'em by the arm and you know, just (slurping noise), slide off and they're dead. And this type of thing, there's nothing you could do but try to fight the fires. Of course there's no capability to fight fires. We pulled out the fire hose and that, but nothing you could do because there was no pressure.

So we were just there on the deck and finally Commander Fuqua—I guess he was lieutenant commander at that time—said, “Get off.”

So went over the side and went down onto the blister and then jumped in the water and swam over to Ford Island. And people have asked me, “How about the oil?”

I said, “I don't recall ever having any trouble with oil.”

And I think the reason was, see the *Nevada* was behind us and she was pulling out. A good friend of mine got blown off in the big blast, Glen Lane. Got blown off into the water and he finally went aboard the *Nevada* and rode her out 'til she beached herself. So he and I were in the same division.

But went over to Ford Island and climbed up the bank and I didn't know it, but somebody said, "Well, get into the shelter down there."

So walked down and got into what, at that time looked like just an old ammunition dump type of shelter. What it really was was a gun emplacement that was buried underground.

Well, I was in there about ten, fifteen minutes I guess and then I went to sleep! I don't know what was going on but I was asleep! So I woke up and interesting part of it is, yesterday, you ask me what I did yesterday. I'll tell you what I did yesterday. I went aboard Ford Island with my son and we were walking around and I'm showing him all these things, where I was and how I come up and all that, and there's a bomb shelter on here that I got into

after I climbed up that bank there. And I'm going to see if I can't find it.

Well, he was lollygagging behind me and I was walking by the CNN [Cable News Network] crew that's over there on Ford Island. So I walked by them and they said, "Hi."

And walked down there and my son went down there and he squealed on me! (Laughs)

BS: You _____, I gather?

MH: So here comes CNN, cameraman and reporter, the whole business, trailing along and wanted an interview. And no, I don't give 'em any interviews. I'm looking for a bomb shelter that I went into after I swam over here from Ford Island.

BS: Did you find it?

MH: But those buggers—yeah, I'll tell you about it! (Laughs) Get me going, you aren't going to stop me! So they tagged along and they were taking pictures

and asked me questions and all this. And finally we walked around into the island and I couldn't find that bomb shelter. I could see one way off there at the end of the runway, but I didn't think it was that far away. But we were turning and coming back the other end of the island, kind of banning it and walked across a fellow's yard there, was out there with his dog. So walked over and introduced myself. I knew I was in officers' country. So walked over there and introduced myself, told him what I wanted to find out. And Captain Johnson, his name is. So he says, "Gosh, I don't know. I hear stories but let me call my wife out. She and the kids know more about what's around here than I do."

So he called his wife out. And we chatted and I related some of this stuff to 'em. And she says, "Well, I think it's underneath the admiral's house. But let me call his wife."

So she called his wife! And by golly, she came out, introduced the whole story. And what gracious people! Good gosh all fishhooks. The nicest and a beautiful woman, the admiral's wife. I don't know if you know. I don't even know his name. Do you know his name?

?: Well, I've met his wife. I forgot the admiral's name but, yes, I've been in the shelter. I know...

MH: Yeah, you know. Well, I wondered why you was going like this. So she showed me where the shelter was and sure enough, that was it. And I didn't see it because it's kind of hid by their house and all that. But we...

BS: Foundation for the admiral's house.

MH: Yeah. So we walked in there and we took a bunch of pictures and we talked then. I'd found what I wanted. I was happy!

So they carried on there in the interview for a little bit and took those pictures. And I told them then, "The only thing I want you really to take a picture of, if you ever show this, is Milty finding his bomb shelter," (laughs), "that he found on the seventh!"

BS: Well, let me back you up to the seventh for a bit. While you were waiting for the launch, did you see any aircraft coming over?

MH: Oh yes. Sure. Sure. Well, I've told this story a few times before, god, if I just had a pack of potatoes! I know I could've flung 'em and hit those airplanes! That close. Yeah, you could see 'em. They were coming across our fantail and kind of swinging. I think those are the ones probably that went over the *Utah*. But yeah, they were low-flying and look over toward the submarine base, they was coming down the channel, torpedo planes and that. I didn't see any of the high altitude bombers. I didn't see those. But yeah, it was exciting, dangerous, I guess.

But there's one thing, as I told the admiral's wife, and that was yesterday, and CNN, here you're right in the middle of a battle and nervous, didn't know what to do and gosh all this and worried a little bit. And I don't know if you've ever read Shakespeare or not but I think everybody knows that one passage, "All the world is but a stage and on the stage we are but bit players."

That passage runs through my mind, phew. I'm okay. I'm just on the stage, I'm going to get off okay. And it's funny, you know, you had no business thinking of things like that!

BS: So you didn't feel—once you felt that, you were calmed down, I gather?

MH: Yes! Calmed me right down. It was a very calming influence. So I like to tell people about that because perhaps they've had thoughts, you know, abstract, that didn't mean a thing to the situation you was in, but it has a tendency to calm you down.

BS: How many friends did you lose on that day?

MH: How many what?

BS: How many friends did you lose that day?

MH: Oh, really, they were in the aviation gang. Well, gosh, Boviall, Hank. Oh gosh, I don't—not too many, the aviation gang was kind of lucky. I can't

recall all their names now. But there was probably six or eight in the aviation gang that didn't make it. Two of 'em were second class, Boviall and Hank Landman. Our workshop was just inside the quarterdeck and there were bunks in there. And of course they wanted to sleep in. So they were roused out and told 'em, "Hey, get out of there! The Japs are bombing us!"

And Hank says, "Go away, I've been in this navy long enough to know better than that!"

Well, he didn't know better than that! And that's where they got 'em, right there. It's just those seconds, you know, that pass in your life that either you get through or you don't get through.

BS: Any seconds during that day that just really stuck out in your mind?

MH: Did it what?

BS: Any seconds that day that really stuck in your mind?

MH: I don't think so. I think the worst thing that sticks in my mind and I don't really think about it is reaching down and having flesh come off from people. That's the most horrible thing. Trying to help and then you have to make that decision, there's no use trying. And you hate to do that.

But the only other thing that bothered me was I didn't like the smell of welding for a long time, because that burning steel stayed with me for a long time. Nor did I like the sound of a whistle or a siren. But I guess that lasted a couple, three years. But I don't feel like I've got any trauma left in me or anything about it now. It doesn't bother me a bit and hasn't for years.

BS: After you woke up in the bunker, what kind of, what did you do after that?

MH: Oh, I think I walked down toward the ad building in Ford Island and I guess there was some boats down there and we went over to the receiving station. It was over there that night. And then I think it was one more day in there and by that time, they said you gotta get back to your own units. Well, what happened then, we lost an awful lot of airplanes, off the battleships and

cruisers and that, POS-2Us and the SOCs and on Ford Island. But there was enough left there to where we salvaged enough to make a little squadron still on float plane to, you know, in close submarine patrol. And that was, the squadron was VS-53-D14. (Laughs) I'll never forget it! What a designator, huh!

BS: That's quite a designator, yeah.

MH: So but, you know, we were in the fleet, always kept one of the hangars right there near the seaplane ramp. It's gone now. But, and then I guess I was, probably stayed with them maybe two, three months in that squadron. And then our division chief was an older man and he said, "Didn't you go to instrument school?"

And I said, "Yes."

He says, "Would you like to go to the instrument shop over there in A and R?"

And I said, “I sure would like to.”

So I don't know whether I was second class then or not. I may have been. Anywhere, it was right in there. So I went over to the instrument shop and I stayed there—this is in '42, yeah—'42, I think I went into the third class. I think it was July of—that can't be right. Can't be right. Anyway, I made chief right there in the shop and I was still a slick arm when I made chief!

BS: Okay, what's a slick arm?

MH: No stripes! Less than four years.

BS: Oh, okay.

MH: Yeah. Less than four years. And I took over the whole shop. I had about seventy people and stayed there and the only way you get back to the States was through a set of orders. So by that time they'd established some instrument schools in Chicago, 87th and Anthony in Chicago, Illinois. So I

got a set of orders to go back there sometime, oh, in I guess summer, fall of '43. And I was chief by then so I had made chief that early.

BS: Okay.

MH: And so I went to 87th and Anthony to school and then when I came back from there, somebody had taken my chair at Ford Island so that I took over the shop over at Barbers Point.

BS: Okay.

MH: And there.

BS: I'm going to back you up to the night of December 7. You were in the receiving station. What was the atmosphere like and what kind of things were you talking about or discussing?

MH: Oh. Yeah. Damage to our ships. And that night the searchlights were on and aircraft were flying over a little bit and it was panics-ville that night, for most people and...

BS: What kinds of things made it panics-ville? What kind of things were you seeing that made it panicky?

MH: I don't know what I was seeing. I really wasn't outside too much except that when the searchlights come on, the sirens rang, and then you go out to see what's going on. But otherwise you're pretty well beat up and tired. You want to just get some more sleep and get something to eat. And you're worried, yeah, but at the same time, _____, you get attuned to stress and you handle stress. You don't let it beat you, you know. So that's the situation that's existing out there. What am I going to do about it, you know? You're not, you don't panic. What am I supposed to do? Where am I supposed to go? Not where can but where am I supposed to. And things like that that go through my mind. Yeah.

BS: So were you involved in any of the recovery operations or did you stay with the...

MH: No, no. By that time our squadron was working and I didn't even go back up by the ships hardly at all. No. In fact, when they tore the teak deck off, I didn't even go up to get a piece of the teak deck but somebody brought me a piece and made a nameplate out of it. But I watched the *Oklahoma* as they rigged that, to roll it back up. I imagine that I walked back to the *Arizona* to see really what happened, you know, and it's, you say, "My god, how could this happen?"

When you see that, would you, and this type of thing. But that's sixty years ago. Gosh, man, you forget stuff like that!

Jack Green (JG): Okay, sir, when you heard the away the fire and rescue party and the general quarters, was that by one emcee or claxon or by bugle?

MH: It was by word of mouth over the one emcee.

JG: Okay. (Inaudible)

MH: Yeah.

JG: Sure. Now, when the war ended, were you still on Kaneohe?

MH: No. No. I didn't go to Kaneohe, I went to Barbers Point.

JG: Oh, Barbers Point. Sorry.

MH: Yeah. No, the last six months they shipped me out to Guam.

JG: Oh, okay.

MH: To take over the forward instrument shop out there because we were about out of work. Everything had moved west.

JG: Okay.

MH: So, no, the last six months, I was at Guam. And then from Guam I rode an LST for thirty-one days back to the West Coast. Saw those airplanes flying over and I couldn't get in one!

JG: So then you were discharged there? You got out of the navy on the West Coast after the war?

MH: No. No. I was an East Coast man, born and raised there. My wife was in Brooklyn there and I went to East Coast so I went back to Lido Beach, Long Island, for discharge. And my time was up. And come time for discharge, I said, "No, I don't want to get out of the navy. I want to re-enlist."

So I re-enlisted right there in the discharge station. And got my orders and where do you think I got orders to? Kaneohe Bay.

(Laughter)

JG: You and Hawaii got along!

MH: Yeah, seven and a half years out there. Yeah, yeah. Loved it.

JG: Now did you ever get a chance to fly on the Curtis SOC observation aircraft, as a mechanic? Did they ever give you a chance to fly?

MH: No. No, I didn't. I did, I guess, about three flights, because we were back in the States...

JG: Oh, okay.

MH: ...while we had a yard availability for the *Arizona*, up in Washington, we stayed in Long Beach...

JG: Okay.

MH: ...with our aircraft and I got a couple, three indoctrination flights there.

JG: Is that the first time you'd ever flown in an airplane?

MH: No.

JG: Oh?

MH: No, I flew an airplane like this, old WAH-CO airplane.

JG: So that was another motivator for you wanting to go into aviation, to get some experience.

MH: Mm-hmm.

JG: Now it sounds like that just before you went to instrument school, your training in aviation was all OJT, on-the-job training. Is that true?

MH: Yes. Yeah. I didn't make aviation...

JG: No A school?

MH: ...school. No, no. I didn't make A school. No.

JG: So it was all OJT _____...

MH: Just OJT, yeah.

JG: Okay.

(Conversation off-mike)

MH: You mean I'm too long-winded?

BS: No. We've only got half-hour tapes!

(Conversation off-mike)

END OF TAPE ONE

TAPE TWO

(Conversation off-mike)

JG: Well, sir, you mentioned that you were a, I believe the term was a slick sleeve?

MH: Slick arm.

JG: Slick arm.

MH: Slick arm chief.

JG: That's pretty interesting. It's very hard for us to make it nowadays in a short amount of time. How exactly did you make it in under four years? Was your technical rate, was that a prime motivator?

MH: It was probably part of the reason, yes. But also there were time limits there. But I think I made up through second class by time limits and passing the test and the whole nine yards. I think I got a, probably a three or four

months waiver going up to first class. But then from first class to chief, I think I got about a six-month or something like that. But let me say this, I was technically qualified and because what happened there at Ford Island, where we lived in the barracks there, there were probably six or eight of us fellows that every night we'd go out on the lawn, we had our study books, our study guides with us and each night some one of those was the leader of the discussion. And he knew the day before what he was going to have to teach or be the leader on on a subject when his turn came. So all of us sat there, from after chow 'til dark, studying. And relating experiences. And of course it was all different types of rates. So that's the way that we stayed and we all made it at the same time. No problem.

BS: A study group.

MH: Yeah, a study group. Yeah. And just something we generated ourselves!

BS: Great.

MH: Yeah. But we were all people that, I think, that liked the navy. We wanted to get ahead. I think all of us had somewhat leadership ability at that time. And one thing about the navy, you may know this or you may not know it, if you take responsibility, it will damn sure be given to you! (Laughs) And that's the truth! (Laughs)

BS: It hasn't changed!

MH: No.

JG: Now, at this time, did you consider yourself a battleship sailor or an Airedale? Or was there a distinction? Once you got to the V section, did you consider yourself an Airedale or still a battleship sailor? Was there any differentiation...

MH: I don't know as I made any differentiation. I was aboard ship but I was in aviation there. I was called an Airedale. Naturally if when I was aboard ship, but when you get aboard an air station, you're no longer an Airedale! (Laughs) You're a mech or whatever.

JG: Okay, okay. So how much total service did you have in the United States Navy?

MH: Thirty years, six months and fifteen days.

JG: So you went into the reserve after getting out?

MH: I'll shoot you if you don't stop it!

JG: All right, all right!

MH: You're talking to United States Navy!

JG: All right.

(Laughter)

MH: Retired!

JG: All right. Could you give us a capsule, summation of afterwards of what your career was?

MH: Oh boy. Yeah. After—I told you up to Kaneohe.

JG: Yes, sir. You went to Kaneohe.

MH: After Kaneohe, it was back to Anacostia.

JG: Okay.

MH: For duty there. From Anacostia, it was down Guantanamo Bay. And then from Guantanamo Bay back to Jacksonville. Oh yeah, I should tell you, I was a mech. When I graduated from the instrument school in Chicago, they changed my rate to ACMMI. That's aviation machinist mate, instrument specialist. And that stuck with me until I got to Anacostia. And by that time, lord, you should've been _____ you never made it. They changed me back to an electrician from being aviation electrician from an

instrument man because they did away with the specialty rates. And I went over to the bureau to see who was the senior aviator on the *Pennsylvania* when we were in BATDIV-1 and saw him. And golly darn, I'm a mech! I'm not an electrician!

He said, "Milty, let me show you the list here. I'm about 650% over on chief mechs. I'm only about 300% over on aviation electricians." He said, "Now, what am I going to do?"

I says, "Captain, thank you very much!"

I became an electrician! (Laughs) And so that was in Anacostia but in GTMO, I learned to play golf there. And from GTMO to Jacksonville to teach an AEB school. Well I get up on the platform—I didn't get on a platform. When I went there, I didn't know Ohm's Law. And that's the basic thing in electrical and I didn't know it. But three years later, when I left there, I had taught every class in that school. And I spent up three, four o'clock in the morning most of the weekdays. And they'd let you know if you didn't do your homework the night before. They didn't care if they

didn't do their homework, but you'd better do yours so you can be real sharp to teach 'em, you know! Try to open up that zipper! (Laughs)

But I enjoyed that tremendously.

JG: Well, after that, you...

MH: Then from there I went into an early warning squadron up in Patuxent River, the old Willy Victors squadrons?

JG: Yes. Yes.

MH: Went in those and I was chief electrician there in that shop. I think I had six or seven other chiefs working for me. Top-heavy squadron if you ever saw one. Good golly! People that was supposed to be in command of destroyers were flying aircraft, you know! Just terrible.

But from there to Alameda, to VF-52, went out West Pac-ing. Came back from there and got orders back to Jacksonville to teach school again. And

made E-8 on the West Pac cruise. And then got back to Jacksonville teaching school. Oh, and while I was in VW, put in for warrant officer. And waited and waited and waited and I gave up on it. Well, I get back to AE school, here comes warrant officer through. So I made warrant officer and I don't even know what year it was. Probably '59 or something like that. So I made warrant officer and went aboard the *Valley Forge* as a fields officer. And then from the *Valley Forge*, gee whiz. I guess back to NAS—no—yeah, back to NAS Jacksonville and I became ground support equipment officer for, in the AIMD department.

From there to the *America* and I was hangar deck officer. And then moved on up to flight deck officer, assistant flight deck officer. And (coughs) I made warrant (coughs). I made W-2, ensign and JG all in the same day.

(Laughter)

JG: Whoa!

(Laughter)

BS: I'm impressed!

(Laughter)

MH: So what it was, I had my eighteen months in as W-1. At that time, it took eighteen months...

BS: To make ensign.

MH: ...to make ensign. And I had my eighteen months in so I went from W-1 to ensign. I had to go through ensign to. Ensign to JG.

BS: It must have been an interesting pinning ceremony.

MH: Yeah, so. Interesting lot. So anyway, then I'm back to—I missed something anyway. Anyway, after the...

BS: *America*.

MH: ...yeah, I went aboard the *America*. Yeah, after the *America*, I went back to Cecil Field in Jacksonville, as support equipment officer. And I retired there as lieutenant commander in 1970, first of July 1970.

JG: (Inaudible)

MH: Yeah. Then I turned my hat around and went back to work for NAV-AIR.

(Laughter)

JG: As a civilian?

MH: Yeah.

JG: What, you went to all these duty assignments. Now, I'm sure as you went to each of these assignments, word went around that you were an *Arizona*

survivor. Did that affect how you were treated or what people would say to you? Did that have any, do you think that had any affect?

MH: Very few people know it.

JG: Pardon me?

MH: Very few people knew that.

JG: Oh!

MH: My family hardly knew that.

JG: Oh!

MH: They knew it, but I didn't, my son has learned more about what I did out here, this trip, than he's ever known in his life.

JG: So it really didn't affect the rest of your career?

MH: Oh no. No, I don't think so. If it affected it, it was only through somebody else's thoughts, not mine.

JG: Okay. So you never come out and say, "I'm an *Arizona* survivor."

MH: Oh, no. I never come out and let everybody know I was an *Arizona* survivor. No, no.

JG: Okay. So it would be a fluke if anybody ever found out. You were just another...

MH: Yeah.

JG: ...chief or warrant officer or officer in...

MH: Or you'd meet somebody that you knew back then, you know.

JG: Okay.

MH: And you'd shoot the breeze over old times. And that's...

JG: But aside from that, it never came up. It was never, you never felt it was a factor in your career?

MH: I don't know. I don't know.

JG: Okay.

MH: I never got any awards or anything like that until just before I got out of the navy, I got a commendation for designing an electrical distribution system for aircraft. But, which made me a lot of money later on!

(Laughter)

BS: Nothing wrong with that. That's okay.

MH: So, no, it's as I told this reporter with CNN the other day, I gave a little interview, about like you're getting here. And he was prying. And I told him, "Hey, I'll tell you just like I told you everybody else, just like I'll tell you, I have thoughts in my head and I know things but they're my thoughts. They're not your thoughts! They're not open for publication. You don't need to know about 'em and if I disclose them to you, that denigrates my thoughts. It takes away something from me and I'm not going to give it to you!"

BS: Is there anything you shared with your son that you can share with us? That you haven't shared with us?

MH: No.

BS: Okay.

MH: No. It's—why burden him?

BS: That's fine.

MH: Yeah. It's just a life. But I'll tell this young fellow right here, stay in the navy and the torch is passed. Some people say, "Oh, you're a hero."

No. I'm not a hero! You're not a hero! The only thing we ever did, you did too, you decided to join the service. And after you once join the service, you haven't got any much control over where you were assigned or what you do or what your duties are and you are only taught to respond to situations! And if you respond to that situation, you're supposed to do that. That doesn't make you a hero.

There are true heroes. There really are, well beyond. Those are the true heroes but just being in a battle. No, that doesn't make you a hero. That's what you're there for. So old "Turkey Neck" Graham. You've probably heard about "Turkey Neck," haven't you?

JG: I've heard the name.

MH: Yeah, “Turkey Neck” Graham was our leading first class on the *America*. He’s the fellow that cut the *Vestal* loose. Now, he was out there and they were shooting at him, trying to get him and he was out there with an axe, chopping the hawsers. Now there’s a guy that exposed himself unnecessarily, or because—I’m sure “Turkey” would say, “No, I had to do it. I knew it had to be done. I did it.”

And that’s all there is to it. So good luck. The torch is passed! (Laughs)

BS: Any other questions? Anything else you want to tell, any other thoughts you want to leave with us before we conclude?

MH: I don’t think so. I think you see it didn’t affect me, but it did.

(Laughter)

BS: No. No, I’ve enjoyed this a lot. And I really appreciate taking the time to talk with us and pass the torch, which I’ve kind of done myself. My son’s in boot camp now so I’m tense on passing torches down too.

MH: Oh good. Uh-huh.

BS: And it's a marvelous thing that we could get your thoughts on tape and thank you for the years of service to your country and the continued service that you're doing now.

MH: Neither one of my sons really wanted to go in.

BS: Well, he joined the Army Reserve, nothing _____.

MH: Yeah. My older son was a reserve for a while.

BS: Okay.

MH: He was in the navy intelligence as photo interpreter _____.

BS: Okay.

MH: But he's got a pretty good job today. He's Jack Nicklaus' pilot.

(Laughter)

MH: Travels all over the world.

BS: Well, I think we're going to conclude with that then.

(Laughter)

BS: Yeah, we're done.

END OF INTERVIEW