

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
#392**

REUBEN JOHN EICHMAN

USS *UTAH*, SURVIVOR

**INTERVIEWED ON
DECEMBER 5, 2001
BY
CAPT. MARSHALL HANSON
AND
CDR. BILL SCULLION**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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

Marshall Hanson (MH): Okay. This is oral history number 392. The following oral history interview was conducted by Captain Marshall Hanson and Commander William Scullion at the Ala Moana Hotel on December 5, 2001, at 16:04 p.m. The person being interviewed is Reuben John Eichman, who was a watertender second class on the USS *Utah* on December 7, 1941. We're going to proceed with some boilerplate questions...

Reuben John Eichman (RE): Okay.

MH: ...for you to answer and then we'll go into some more detail.

RE: Do the best I can.

MH: That's all we ask. For the record, please state your full name, place of birth and birth date.

RE: Reuben John Eichman, April 19, 1919. I was born in Windsor, Colorado.

MH: And what did you consider your hometown in 1941?

RE: Springfield, Ohio.

MH: What were your parents' names?

RE: Leah and Gottfred Eichman.

MH: How many brothers and sisters did you have and do you have now?

RE: I have a brother and a sister still alive, one dead.

MH: And where did you go to high school?

RE: Springfield South. Well, it would be Springfield High at that time, in Springfield.

MH: Okay. Where and why did you enlist in the navy?

RE: Well, I was working at a job I didn't like and I decided I wanted to see something about the world and that's the reason I joined. And there was about three of us going to go there and I'm the only guy they took. Now I [*didn't like it*] that they waved goodbye at me, but that worked out pretty good.

MH: What was the date of your enlistment?

RE: Date of what?

MH: When did you enlist?

RE: December 20, 193[7].

MH: And...

RE: I was getting paid off. They were going to send me back to the States on December 9, 1941, and [*I*] didn't make that.

MH: Oh.

RE: Close.

MH: How much longer were you in the navy after that?

RE: Oh, 'til May of 1945.

MH: Can you tell me your recollection of what you were doing on the evening of December 6?

RE: On the evening or the morning?

MH: Well, why don't you tell us what you were doing on the morning of December 6?

RE: The morning December 6...

MH: Sixth, the day before.

RE: Sixth?

MH: Most people...

RE: I was aboard, probably down watching the fireroom, Number Two Fireroom on the [USS] *Utah* [AG-16].

MH: So on Saturday you were on watch?

RE: Yes, I think I was. Now, that's a long time ago now.

MH: So that was a duty day for you?

RE: That was a duty day. I wasn't ashore like some of 'em.

MH: Now, were you standing duty days or was that a duty weekend for you?

RE: That was a duty weekend.

MH: So you...

RE: But we was getting ready to go and play ball.

MH: Okay.

RE: 'Cause I was on the *Utah* baseball team at that time.

MH: So Sunday was a day for baseball.

RE: Yeah.

MH: If everything went normal for you. Can you go into some details of what you did on December 7, just before, and then leading into the...

RE: Just before, well I was getting in the baseball uniform. I had one leg in. And that's when the first torpedo hit. And I thought it was the ammunition dump, really. So I took off my top. Took the pants off, run to topside. And

when I got up to topside (clears throat)—little hoarse, caught a cold. When I got to topside, [*when*] I seen lieutenant (jg.) [*Junior Grade*—I think he was lieutenant (jg.)—Little [*John G. Little III, Lt.(jg.)*] get killed right in front of me. They shot him with a machine gun. So I figured, well, we've trained to go to bombing quarters, so I headed down to Fireroom [*Number*] Two. And I was down there until I felt the [*deck*] plates going this way and I figured something was going on, I better get out of here because the [*ship*] is turning over.

So I run up and got stuck in the steel door for a minute and a guy helped me out of there. So all I had on was a pair of skivvies and a wristwatch. That was it. So I slid down to the first blister and jumped in and swam to Ford Island, which is about, what, approximately 300 yards, I think. That's a guess. It didn't seem that long because I swam pretty fast.

MH: I heard there was a little bit of a race that day.

RE: That was a race. And then after that I was heading—first, I was headed into a ditch, seeing a bomb land and scared me more. And I took off running and I was running right towards the *Arizona* when it blew up. I was already on the Ford Island, running towards the *Arizona* when it blew up and that turned me around and I started running back the other way. (Clears throat) And some guys in a truck hollered, “Get aboard here,” so they took me to the receiving ship there at Ford Island.

And from there, I don't know whether it was a navy nurse, civilian or what—she asked me if I was hurt. And I said, “No, I'm just scared a little bit.”

And she said, “Well, you've got some blood on your back. You must have a problem. Let's go up here,” and she washed me off with some solvent, kerosene, or whatever, I don't know, just my back.

And what it was, when I slid down, some barnacles got me, so I wasn't hurt. So after that, just a lot of 'em was, some of the battleship guys was coming in, was on the other side. And a lot of 'em was burnt and I was helping some of them take 'em out in the air. They were dying. And by that time, I thought I better get some clothes on, so I went up there and some officers

had some clothes up there. I got 'em on, I come down, they started saluting me. I figured, now this is wrong. So I run back up and found some dungarees and an old shirt and a pair of shoes and went down and found a of carton cigarettes and dealed that out. And then it starts getting skimpy after that.

It was on the—they took us over to the [*USS Argonne* *AG-31*], I think, right across the bay. And we was all standing like a bunch of sheep in there and I heard somebody holler, “Somebody got hit, Price!”

Somebody on the *California* sprayed the *Argonne* or whatever it was—I'm not sure. But it went through Price's [*Leonard Anson Price, S1/c*] arm and a guy named Brown [*Pallas F. Brown, S2/c*] was right in front of me, right there. And he just [*sat*] down. I figured, that's a heck of a place to sit down, you know. It was crowded. And then somebody hollered, “Somebody else got shot!”

So I looked down at him and as well he's shot. And I turned him over and I could see where the bullet went through, about three-quarters inch of steel, went through Price's arm and hit Brown. I don't know what Brown's rate is. I knew him. And I seen—[*there on his*] back—I seen the bullet didn't go clear through. It just kinda [*stuck*] out. But we carried him down to the sickbay, but he was dead before we got there.

So then they put me on a—we got scared again that something else was going on and we went down to the brig. Don't ask me why we was going down there, it was safe down there, on the [*Argonne*] I think. And somebody hollered at us “come on, we gotta hand load ammunition.”

So we come out of there and we unloaded the ammunition. And it begins to get a little sketchy there. I know I wanted a gun. I didn't care if it was a bb gun or a slingshot or anything, 'cause I think them Japs gonna come in. But couldn't get a gun because I couldn't find anybody who would sign the release for a gun. So I volunteered to go down in the airfield, where there's machine gun and there was a gunner's mate with me. And an officer what took us down there. And this one guy must have been and officer of the deck guy and he—[*saw*] one of the Jap planes about 35,000 feet up there and

he pulls [*his 45 caliber pistol*] out and starts shooting. And the officer says, “Jesus Christ, put that away! Who do you think you are? Buck Jones?”

Now, you guys won’t remember Buck Jones because [*it*] was a long time ago. He was a cowboy like Duke [*John Wayne*] now.

So they told us, when we got down there, if you don’t see anything, just shoot. Just shoot to keep everything up, you know. So when they seen [*some*]thing, start shooting, so we just start pulling. I just pulled the trigger and let it go as long as I had something in there. Didn’t see nothing, but I understand it was three of our own planes got knocked down. But I never seen anything. I [*was*] just shooting.

MH: Now about what time were you over at the airfield?

RE: Well, it was still light. And that’s all I know.

MH: So in the afternoon sometime.

RE: It was afternoon. So I went back there, got back to them and stayed in the barracks there, off of Ford Island, at night. So the next day I was standing in line, I figured there must be something because all I got is this shirt, pants and a pair of shoes. I figured there’s something there. The guy asked my name, rate and serial number. And I said, “What is this?”

He says, “You just volunteered for burial detail.”

So I was on that burial [*detail*] I think two days. But they said—I got off of that and I didn’t want that, didn’t like that too well. It was kinda rough job. They said there was a Japanese down in the sugar cane field and [*asked*] some volunteers to get on the truck. So I jumped on that truck ‘cause I did anything to get out of [*the burial detail*]. And I wondered why they never give us a gun or anything. They just said there was a Japanese in the sugar cane field.

So we got in the sugar cane field, went up there, and here this plane was, in the middle of the sugar cane field and the thing, the engine was about fifteen foot underground. And there was a Japanese laying there. (Coughs) No

head, no arms, no legs, about that long, and I put him in a twenty-five pound onion sack and took him back and they buried him at somewhere, I think—I think they buried him—I’m not sure. But I remember they buried most of ‘em on Red Hill. But some of ‘em are buried down in Punchbowl.

[*Note: Punchbowl was not established as a cemetery until 1948, many Pearl Harbor dead initially were buried at places like Oahu Cemetery Nuuanu Cemetery and Halawa Naval Cemetery.*]

(Coughs)

And after that, me and a fellow, the next morning, the next day, we were standing on the dock there beside the *Cassin* and the *Downes*. Well the *Cassin* fell over against the *Downes*. It was in Dry Dock [*No. One*]. That scared the heck out of us. We about jumped back in the drink. We took off and left from there and then we went in and they start asking for volunteers for different ships. And they pulled out the USS *Ward*. I figured it was a new one. It turned out to be an old four-stacker, [*its*] captain [*Lieutenant William W.*] Ouretridge. And so I was on there until I asked the executive officer—[*Lieutenant H.T.*] Doughty, I think his name was—I told him I wanted new construction. He says, “Well, I’ll see what I can do.”

I wanted to get off the [*USS*] *Ward*. And he called me up and he said, “I got the deal for you.”

And I said, “What is it? USS What?”

And he says, “Midway Island.”

[*Note: What is being referred to is Midway Island, and not to a naval vessel.*]

So we spent nine months on Midway Island and I would’ve stayed there the duration if I could. (Coughs) After that, we come back to Pearl.

MH: So you were at Midway during the...attack?

RE: We got there right after it happened. We seen in—I was in charge of the boiler room there on Midway and the guy told me, he says, “Hey, I got you fixed up,” he’s a first class, I think he was a first class watertender. He says,

“I got a still. I’ve been selling this stuff for thirty-five dollars a pint or a quart. You can have it.”

Well, it turned out most of that stuff been buried and it ended up that some guys got into some wood alcohol and killed three of ‘em. So that ended that deal. I never got anything out of that. Okay. (Coughs)

MH: Now...

RE: Anything else?

MH: Going back to the fire room on the *Utah*.

RE: Okay.

MH: Morning of the seventh.

RE: Okay.

MH: You said you...

RE: I...

MH: You left when you began to feel the ship turning [*over*].

RE: Yes. The [*deck*] plates was kind of moving, you know, and I was sitting like this and I said, “Hey, this thing is turning over.”

MH: Now, was the electrical system...

RE: It was still operating and...

MH: So the generator was online and the lights were still on?

RE: I think it was because [*Peter*] *Tomich*, who got the Medal of Honor, he was the chief, chief watertender, he was still down in one of the firerooms. I don’t know. I think he was in Number One [*Fireroom*]. But the one with me

was a guy named [*John Reeves*] Crain [*F1/c*] and he said, “What are we going to do?”

I said, “Let’s get out of here because this thing is sinking.”

I thought he was with me, he didn’t follow me. So I guess he’s still there, back there on board. Aboard [*in*] the Number Two Fireroom.

MH: Okay. And you said you had difficulty with the steel door?

RE: Yeah. You know, they’re pretty heavy and it was leaning that way and I started to get out and I didn’t have, I got caught like this and Chief Rollins, seeing my predicament and he pulled it and let me out. I was just in a position I couldn’t open the dadgum thing up, so I figured he saved my life, really, I think, because letting me out of there and he held onto it, we both held and he got out and we both went over the side at the same time.

MH: So when you got out, you were on the downhill side of the ship, for the incline?

RE: Yeah, towards Ford Island.

MH: So it made it really easy to go down that way.

RE: Wait a minute, towards Pearl City, ‘cause I was going over [*port side*] this way.

MH: Okay.

RE: I got down the first blister and jumped, jumped on top of somebody.

MH: So the deck was inclining outboard, away from Ford Island.

RE: Yeah. Right. Some of ‘em swam, some of the guys went over [*to Pearl City*]—we had timber there because we [*were moored at Berth F-*]11 and that was [*usually occupied by*] the *Enterprise*. And I think the Japs thought we was the *Enterprise* because they hit us with three torpedoes and a bomb,

I understand, but I only heard one. That was the first one. And I probably heard the others, but I didn't remember it. Kinda excited about that time.

MH: So basically you got into the water and then you swam around...

RE: And I swam towards Ford Island because now the ship went towards Pearl City, okay.

MH: Okay, it was turning.

RE: Yeah, this way, 'cause I come down the first fin and jumped in and swam towards Ford Island. And I don't know where they had them Japanese machine guns, they knock, they don't shatter like the fifty-five, I mean a fifty [*caliber machine gun*]. They just knock-knock-knock-knock. And I seen them come across a guy and I think it was Simms [*an officers mess cook,*] and he was about, hmm, I would say maybe fifteen, twenty feet, maybe thirty feet ahead of me. And I went over on top of him. I tried to find him but I couldn't find him. He must have sunk like a rock. (Clears throat)

[*Note: No one named Simms lost from the USS Utah on December 7, 1941.*]

So I swam on in. I started swimming dog fashion then, looking back, watching for anything that might be coming. And I ran into something pretty close to Ford Island. I thought I was shot. Something grabbed me like that and I looked, god I got shot. But I took a nosedive and went right into the mud. It was only about four foot there. But what it was, an old cable that I run into.

So then after I got in there, we was in a ditch and a bomb fell there again. I took running towards the *Arizona* when it went up. After that is when I took off—the truck picked me up, took me over there. We was watching—one thing that really amazed me was the women that were there that was helping, they acted like there was nothing going on. They wasn't scared. Maybe we were in shock, I don't know. But I had a lot more respect for women about that time because they did a wonderful job. And some of the men we took out, out there that was dying, strange enough, some of 'em maybe thirty years old, calling their mama. That shakes you up.

MH: And that it would.

RE: Yeah.

MH: Now, in that you were moved around and then returned to the barracks...

RE: We was in the barracks there on the main land. And we stayed there that night. And the next day is when I stood in line and got...

MH: Burial detail.

RE: ...burial detail. And after we got out of that, we got back and I volunteered for the USS *Ward*. It was about twelve of us off the *Utah* volunteered for the *Ward*.

MH: Now, between the attack and when you basically volunteered for burial detail, what did you see as the kind of general feeling among people. What was the type of things they were talking about? What were the concerns?

RE: Well, we felt sorry mainly for the guys that were on Battleship Row, because they had had a lot of fire and blood, I mean, oil over there and there was fire but we didn't have it over on the *Utah*, it was on the other side. So the conversation is who got off, who didn't get off, how many got killed and all that stuff. "Did you see this guy? Did you see that guy?"

And a guy named Midge and I, we were down there talking to each other about what happened when the *Cassin* went over against the *Downes*. So then it gets kind of sketchy after that 'til I volunteered the burial detail. So when I volunteered for the *Ward*, I couldn't eat. I just couldn't. I felt hungry, but I couldn't eat. They told the doctor, somebody told the doctor to come down and he said, "What's your problem? You don't eat?"

And I said, I told 'em that, "I'm hungry, but I can't eat. I get there and I get sick."

He said, "You got any other clothes what you got on?"

I said, “No, this is it.”

He says, “You go down and take a shower, when you come I’ll have some clothes for you.”

And when I got new clothes, I ate everything I could find for a while. I was hungry. So...

?: The same clothes you wore for burial detail ?

RE: Yes. Well, we had blood. I washed ‘em, but you can’t get that out. You can’t get it out, I don’t think. It made me sick. When the [USS] *Lexington* [CV-2]) got hit, I went down there and I smelled that dry blood again and I got sick again. Now whether I’d do that now or not, I don’t know. I might.

?: Is this your first trip back for a reunion?

RE: Fourth.

?: I got the impression it’d been a while since you’ve been here.

RE: Well, I tell you, somebody come out in a magazine that said that the *Utah*, well they had a little plaque, about [*eighteen inches by twenty-four inches*]. So I wrote a letter to Frank Morris in the state of Utah and I complained and bitched—excuse my language. And he read my letter into the congressional record and it boomeranged from then on, and [*they*] got a hundred and some thousand dollars and they built an L-shaped pier [*which contains a memorial for the USS Utah*]. And now I don’t know how they got the *Utah*. They pulled the *Utah* closer in to Ford Island. I guess how they did it, I don’t know. Except the mud...

[*Note: during salvage operation to right the USS Utah the hulk was partially righted to an angle of 37 degrees to port by turning inshore to clear the approach to an adjacent pier. At that time all salvageable machinery, gun mounts, and ordnance were removed further salvage attempts were given up.*]

(Inaudible)

RE: So they're in quite a bit. The one thing I noticed here when I was on the receiving ship there and all that was going on, was when the *Nevada* tried to get out. And she was trying to steam out there and I think every Jap up there took after her. It looked like a bunch of bees right there, just like. And somebody backed her inboard and just beached her. If it hadn't been for that, we would've been messed up in Pearl Harbor. Yeah.

MH: So outside of the Japanese focusing on the *Nevada*, do you remember anything more on that sortie as she was leaving?

RE: Well, I seen the—I don't know whether it was the USS *Dale* or the USS *Shaw* that there was one Japanese sub, two-man sub got in the harbor. And it went over there and I see 'em dropped them depth charges right in the harbor. I guess they got him, I don't know. But I think it was either the *Dale*, the USS *Dale* or USS *Shaw*. I'm not sure.

[*Note: It was the USS Monaghan (DD-354) that sunk the Japanese two-man midget submarine in Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941 during the attack.*]

MH: And whereabouts in the harbor were you seeing the depth charges dropped?

RE: I was in the receiving ship there, still in the receiving ship, where I got the uniform.

MH: So this was later in the morning?

RE: No, it wasn't too late in the morning. That was, I was on probably, took me probably what, twenty minutes to swim in...

MH: Mm-hmm.

RE: ...run towards the *Arizona* when it went up, got on the truck to that receiving ship and there's where everything happened. And I was in the receiving ship when I seen the *Nevada* down there and all that going on there.

MH: So it was between Ford Island and the [*Pearl Harbor Navy Yard*] that you were seeing the activity? Was it out towards...?

RE: It was out in the [*ship*] channel going out. And then, and it was under way. And just like I said, everything went out there after her, right now. Everybody up there went after it.

MH: Oh yeah. No, I'm referring to the depth charging.

RE: The depth charging, well I seen a lot of depth charging, he depth charged that two-man sub right in the [*harbor*], right in—oh, it wasn't more than about, oh, I don't know, quarter of a mile out when I seen that happen.

MH: So it was towards the mouth of the harbor, if you were to go beyond the seaplane [*ramps*]?

RE: Well, the receiving ship is right there mostly in the middle of Ford Island. And I looked right off to my left and I seen the *Nevada* trying to go out.

MH: Mm-hmm.

RE: And I seen a couple of planes take off from Ford Island. And one ruptured duck, if you know what I mean. They haven't got a chance to go up there with all them Japs flying around. So I don't know what happened then but I don't suppose they made it. But when on the *Ward*, I guess they was the one that fired the first shot at 6:45 in the morning, I think. A tug [*USS Keosanqua (AT-38)*] had seen this two-man sub and he reported to [*the*] Captain [*Lieutenant William W.*] Outerbridge on the *Ward*. So [*the*] Captain [*Lieutenant William W.*] Outerbridge is looking for him and he put a shot through the conning tower. So they sunk him but [*they*] couldn't find it. They never did find that thing. So it was down because he reported. [Note: *On August 28, 2002 the Japanese midget submarine that the US Ward sunk on 7 DEC 12941 was discovered by a University of Hawaii research ship off the entrance to Pearl Harbor in 1200 feet of water.*]

MH: Now, when you go back to the information center and the [*USS*] *Arizona* Memorial, what type of feelings does it elicit from you?

RE: A sickening feeling even now. You know, talking here, I'm beginning to get a little—it brings back a lot of memories you'd rather forget. I would. I

think everybody who was in it would rather forget it than remember it because you don't talk about it a heck of a lot except something like this comes up. Talking to school, school kids and something like that. And it's hard, it's hard to do.

MH: Well, we appreciate you sharing the information. Bill, any other questions that you can think of?

Bill Scullion (BS): How many friends did you lose on the *Utah*?

RE: We lost fifty-eight.

BS: No, you.

RE: No, me? Close friends, guys that played baseball, I think there was probably at least twelve. [*John Reeves*] Crain [*F1/c*], Tomich—[*Peter*] Tomich [*CWT*], he got the Medal of Honor—and some of the guys in the baseball. A guy named [*Elmer H.*] Ulrich [*F3/c*] and he was a pitcher. He had a ten-cent brain and a million-dollar arm. About knocked me down every time he threw the ball in there, 'cause I was a catcher on the *Utah*.

BS: Oh, I thought he was aiming for your ear while you were (unintelligible).

(Laughter)

RE: He was something, I'll tell you. But he got killed. So...

MH: I guess for you then the parallels between December 7 and September 11 [, *2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center Towers*] are probably even greater because you probably felt for the fire department that lost its...

RE: I think there was greater there because there was civilians and we were military people and we lost what, about, 2,500 or something like that? They lost 4,000 or 5,000? Big difference. And it was bombed on our soil. (Inaudible). Of course we were American here at that time, 'cause it's, you're part of the United States, but it was different when they hit the Mainland, so I think that was greater. You can't say too much about what the firemen and the police did at that time.

MH: No, they were true heroes there too.

RE: They sure were. Sure were.

MH: While everybody else was running away, they were running towards it.

RE: That's right and they were going up. Of course who thought them things would go down like that? If it wasn't for that gasoline, it probably wouldn't have. I think if it was just the planes without that gasoline, I don't think it did that. That must have been terrible.

BS: I'm a baseball fan; did all the battleships have baseball teams?

RE: Yeah, I think we were playing, I think we was supposed to play the *Helena* that day, I think. Yeah, either that or the *Indianapolis*. I'm not sure which. And they tried to beat us to Pearl City to get the ball field before we got in there. And I understand they got strafed. They were on the boat launch and a lot of 'em got killed. So I was told. I didn't see it. Yeah.

BS: So who was the fleet baseball champ?

RE: Who was the fleet baseball? We were. (Laughs) I don't know.

BS: But you felt like it.

RE: Oh well, felt like it. I know Blandy, Captain [*William H.P.*] Blandy—I think he was a captain at that time—he had made a bet, our first [*game*], we were going to beat whoever we were going to play. And first inning, [*they*] got fourteen [*runs*] and we lost it! And we quit in the first inning, so [*the captain*] didn't appreciate that. We just about lost our baseball team about that time. Yeah.

[*The Captain of the USS Utah from 17 DEC 1938 – 15 JUN 1940 was Commander William H.P. Blandy, USN.*]

MH: We heard a story about a crewman on the *Utah* who had lost his daughter in weeks prior to the attack and actually had the ashes of his daughter on board, planning to take 'em to sea to scatter 'em.

RE: Yeah.

MH: Do you know any details on that?

RE: Yeah, that's Mary [*Dianne Wagner*] Kreigh. She's the one that's been—we're supposed to go out there at the *Arizona* and they're going to go take us around and that's quite a deal. And it was her twin's—her twin.

(Inaudible)

RE: I don't know. He was a yeoman, that's all I know. I don't remember. Did she tell you what his name was?

[Note: Chief Yeoman Albert Thomas Dewitt Wagner had two daughters born prematurely on 29 AUG 1937 in a Catholic Hospital in Mekati in the Philippines, Nancy Lynne Wagner & Mary Dianne Wagner. Nancy died and Chief Wagner had her ashes in an urn in his locker in the chiefs quarters aboard USS Utah. He was awaiting a chaplain to be assigned to the USS Utah so a proper burial ceremony at sea could be conducted.]

(Inaudible)

RE: I forgot it.

BS: Yeomen and watertenders didn't mix?

RE: Oh yeah. They took care of our business. We took care of the fireroom!

MH: Yeomen were good people.

RE: That's right.

BS: She's here [*Mary Wagner Kreigh*].

RE: Yeah, she's the one that instigated us to go around. We're supposed to load on two white boats and go around the harbor and over there and there's supposed to be a ceremony on the sixth. So we hope it pans out. But we're

supposed to meet her. And I understand there's only twelve of the survivors of the *Utah* is going to be there. That's what she told us, so I don't know. Of course, there'll be a lot of families, so they're taking two white boats, so I don't know how many will be there.

MH: Well...

BS: Anything else you want to add?

RE: Well, after that I went to—I told you I went to Midway [*Island*].

MH: Mm-hmm.

RE: And we got out there right after the battle. And we found an old Japanese fishing boat and went down there with one of the tugs and bummed them out of a 10 horse[*power*] Johnson [*outboard motor*], so we had our little own fishing boat there and I wanted to stay on the Midway. I would've stayed there for the duration, but they—nine months, you're gone! And I guess a lot of 'em, 'cause it was underground at first, a lot of marines was there that got tuberculosis and they wouldn't let anybody stay because Mr. TROSS was our division officer, he'd go out fishing with us. And he took marine biology in college and he knew everything that was going on out there. And we had a great time. It was fun.

MH: So where did you go after Midway [*Island*]?

RE: I come back to repair base in San Diego and it's where I got discharged in May, no July there of 1945. And they tried to ask me if I was going to stay in, they give me the—"Hey, we got some time, we invited you had seven years, eight months and twenty-nine days," and they said, "well, if you'll go ahead and answer a couple of questions, we'll make a warrant officer if you'll just stay in. We'll give you warrant."

I said, "No, I'm going home. I had enough."

So I took off for home. I had a job waiting back there, so they're already—my brother worked at the water treatment plant there in Springfield and he says, "Come on home, we got the job for you waiting on."

I got home, never even had a vacation. Went right to work! Big deal.
Okay?

MH: Well, we'd like to thank you for sharing the story with us and we also like to thank you very much for serving our country.

RE: Thank you.

MH: Appreciate what you've...

RE: I appreciate it.

MH: ...done for it. And again, it's been a good interview.

RE: Thank you. Yeah, did my best.

MH: You did very well.

RE: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW