

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

#414

ROBERT HENRY EHM

USS *WEST VIRGINIA*, SURVIVOR

INTERVIEWED ON

DECEMBER 6, 2001

**BY COMMANDER JAMES ANTONELLIS
AND COMMANDER BILL SCULLION**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

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USS *ARIZONA* MEMORIAL

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

(Conversation off-mike)

James Antonellis (JA): This is oral history number 414. The following oral history interview was conducted by Commander James Antonellis and Commander Bill Scullion, for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial, at the Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii, on December 6, 2001 at approximately 2:30 p.m. The person being interviewed is Mr. Robert H. Ehm, who was a machinist's mate first class on the USS *West Virginia*, on December 7, 1941. For the record, please state your full name, your place of birth and your birth date.

Robert Ehm (RE): My name is Robert H., for Henry, Ehm, E-H-M. I was born in Brooklyn, New York, July the third, 1914.

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

RE: Wilmington, Delaware.

JA: What were your parents' names?

RE: My parents' names was Charles A. Ehm, Sr., and my mother's name was Seline, S-E-L-I-N-E, S. Ehm.

JA: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

RE: I had two brothers and two sisters. I was the number two son.

JA: Where did you go to high school?

RE: I went to high school, I'm a graduate of Wilmington Delaware High, Wilmington, Delaware.

JA: And where and why did you enlist in the navy?

RE: I enlisted in the navy during the depression, 1936, to get a job and once I got in the navy I decided to make it a career because that was a great outfit!

JA: Well, I'm glad you think it's a good outfit, or a great outfit, as it is. Obviously this is the sixtieth anniversary, sir, where were you on the morning of December 7[, 1941]?

RE: I was in the machine shop on the *West Virginia*. We, eight different, eight men from the machine shop slept in amongst our machines in those days. And they had called me to go on watch by mistake because I was going on leave later that morning. And so actually I went up to the _____ room, complained about it and when I settled down, I realized that I would, I told them I would stand the watch and let the guy sleep 'cause it was Sunday morning and that I would stand the watch but be sure to relieve me when my orders came through. And I was fully dressed by this time, when I assumed the watch. I had the third deck security watch. First of all, nobody could get aboard ship. Certainly couldn't get down below and everybody that went into the engine room, the after engine room was cold iron and the forward engine room was steaming. And everybody had to pass me and I had a forty-five and my messenger had a nightstick. He was also from the machine shop. And we were there on watch when they passed the word, "Away fire and rescue party."

Our battle, our fire and rescue party was in the machine shop. So what we did, we turned the lights on. I kicked the bunks as I went forward and told them, “Fire and rescue.”

And they said, “Okay! Tell ‘em I’m here!”

So I reported the machine shop manned and ready for the fire and rescue party. But this plane coming low over the water did not crash into the water as the topside expected, it flew up over the ship and then they saw the rising sun on his wings. And then they changed the word to battle stations. And everybody down in the machine shop, I’m on watch, waking everything. They said, “Hey, what’s going on?”

And about that time the first torpedo hit. And when the—first time I ever heard a torpedo and there was a concussion, no noise. It was a concussion and a rush of air throughout the ship. And why the big guns were firing in port on a Sunday morning, I couldn’t figure out.

And we had our worktable in the center of the shop. And the ship would, with each succeeding torpedo, it would lift the ship about one degree and drop it down two degrees. And work began to slide off of the table onto the deck. And we're picking this work up, putting it back on the table. And finally somebody says, "What the hell are we doing this for?"

And about that time, the machine shop began to flood. The hatch going at the after end of the machine shop led to the post office. And the letters that were coming down in this wall of water, so I hollered to my messenger to give me a hand, we'll close the ports. And we fought our way up through this cascade of water coming down and I tried to close the porthole. It was a stream of water this big and it was beginning to get dark in the compartment already because the ship was sinking.

And couldn't do it, either the dogs got caught up or I couldn't force it against the water. So I ducked under that cascade of water, tried the next one and the next thing, I'm in broad daylight. Apparently a torpedo had hit nearby and it blew me clear and I instinctively knew which way to go or what. And anyhow I was topside by then, 'cause I couldn't get back down

any more because that was completely flooded. And about that time the *Arizona* astern of us, we were downwind, she blew up. And among other things, a roll of toilet paper was in the sky and it snakes its way down into the water. And by this time, the Japanese are strafing, but I'm so fascinated by this toilet paper, I just stood there and watched it!

So by this time, I'm topside and there wasn't anything I could do there. But there were wounded around there and we got life jackets, we could, in case the ship sank and, our turn turtle like the *Oklahoma* up ahead of us. And we put life jackets on as many as we could and moved them forward, because the *Arizona*, the oil on the water and the fire was moving forward, downwind. And finally we got up to the bow and there was no place else to go, so these people, we threw them overboard, because at least they had a chance in the water and they didn't aboard the ship! We threw them overboard and about that time, up until then I never saw any of our officers. I never heard, with exception of general quarters, I never heard any, "Abandon ship," or do this or do that.

And so I walked, I jumped down on the armor belt, sixteen-inch belt, and I walked aft hoping to, where the belts met, and go up on the *Tennessee*, 'cause our belts were touching. She was inboard of us. And I jumped down on the belt and I fell overboard. So...

JA: So you fell between the *West Virginia* and the *Tennessee*?

RE: The *West Virginia* and *Tennessee*, yes. It was pretty far forward and there was a lot of room there. I mean it was all twenty feet to the ship. I couldn't get back on the belt because of the list of the ship and I swam down—I'm a very poor swimmer—swam down to the anchor chain and there were about ten—for some reason or another, the anchor was out and there were about ten guys hanging on the anchor and about ten guys hanging onto them. So I hung on there too, wondered what to do next. And the oil kept getting closer and closer and hot, and somebody says, "Hey, if we stay here, we're going to burn up. Let's strike for shore!"

So we did. And I found a piece of life raft, a shattered life raft, piece of cork about ten inches in diameter and it was about two feet long and another kid,

a young fellow, a kid, he and I got on this piece of life raft and I had a piece of stick and he had a swab handle or something. We're paddling for shore like mad. And we can't get any closer to shore for some reason or another. The oil getting hotter and hotter. And I said, "Hey, I'm going to swim for it. I can't stay here any longer."

So I jumped over off the raft and the water was belt deep. We had grabbed at the damn thing! And to this day, I don't know what happened to him, if he jumped off in to deep water and I just never looked back and I got off of the, got ashore. And there's no automobile, I dove for it, boy I'm safe from the strafing. And I looked up about this close from the gas tank, I said, "Hey, this is not for me!"

So I started across the flying field, the airstrip at Ford Island, being careful that the taking off planes wouldn't run over me, but of course they weren't taking off that morning! So I got as far as I could to the far end of the island to get away from the burning ships. And later in the morning, a truck came along, picking up survivors. "Hey you, get in the truck!"

That's what it was. They took us to the Bloch Arena and it was concrete. And one of the things we did in those days, there was no recreation in Honolulu or anywhere. We used to grow a mustache and mine was a cavalry type. And half of it caught on fire that morning. And I wanted to get a pair of scissors, so I went to the dressing station and when I could get a word in edgewise, there were wounded people there. I asked a corpsman for a pair of scissors and he gave me a pair of bandage scissors. And I'm trying to cut the remains of the mustache off and another sailor says, "Hey fellow, I'll help you."

And he cut my mustache off. That was the end of the cavalry type mustache from then on!

The next night, they were calling for volunteers. The *San Francisco's* going out and she needs two machinist mates and four water tenders. All volunteers report someplace. And when they said the following named men, that's when I volunteered. And I went to the USS *Ward*, the chief engineer happened to be the officer of the deck. We challenged several time. Of course, at that time, everybody was shooting at everybody else that moved.

So chief engineer asked me my rate and I told him and he says, “You’ve got the port throttle taking her out in the morning, on the four to eight.”

No shoes, just a pair of trousers and a shirt. And somebody gave me a pair of shoes. Of course they were a lot—steaming shoes—a lot too big and everything but at least the hot floor plates, it was better than nothing. And I had, I was on the *Ward* and then they transferred me to the *Hull*, DD-350. And then I went to the *Whitney*, AD-12, I think it was [*Whitney* was AD-4]. And destroyer tender. And then I was called back to the *West Virginia* as, in the salvage crew.

JA: When did that happen?

RE: About May. About May, I don’t recall when it was. And so I went back in the salvage crew and I asked a couple of shipmates, “Hey, what do you guys do?”

“Oh, we’re divers.”

And I don't know whether they told the master diver or not, but anyhow I became a tender. I learned. And in those days, the telephone were terrible. Mostly hand signals. And so then I became a tender and one of the two divers that we had got in trouble. He was laying on his belly and air leaked in his back and he ends up in the wreckage of the engine room pipes and all that kind of stuff out there. And so they pulled him down, got him right side up and took him up, got him topside and the master diver says, "Hey, that's the last dive you'll ever make for me!"

The kid says, "Fine, that's fine with me, chief."

So then he said, sent me over to the sub base to take pressure in the submarine rescue chamber there. When I went back for the ship, they started putting a suit on me and I was a diver!

JA: How many people were in the diving detachment? 'Cause actually the *West Virginia*, didn't she have her own normal diving?

RE: No.

JA: No.

RE: No, the *West Virginia* did not have any divers or if there were any qualified divers, I didn't know about it. Of course I was a machinist mate and in those days, the only people that were divers were boatswain mates.

JA: How many people were on this salvage crew then?

RE: Oh, it started about 100 and it ended up with about 600 because we got, when the *Yorktown* got sunk at Midway, we got their survivors and here these guys...

JA: But that's a little bit later on. How many were right there with you in Pearl Harbor?

RE: Two divers and about two tenders and we called him a master diver but he might have been a first or second class and he was a chief. But the diving crew was about six, eight maximum.

JA: Where did you set up the diving station?

RE: Around a hatch leading down into the machine shop and eventually the engine room, right at the—and we were careful not to step too close to that open hatch because if you fell overboard and you're half-dressed, *sayonara*.

JA: Right. And what type of rig were you diving?

RE: What type of what?

JA: Of diving rig were you diving? Were you diving the Mark-5, with the big brass...

RE: I have no idea, but it was a hard hat and...

JA: That is the Mark, that's the old Mark-5.

RE: And it's, there was a stand, as I recall, there were three sizes of suits and the cuffs were about six inches wide and as small as I am and we had, if you just pulled the cuff of 'em, then water leaked down there and this rotten, stinking water. And so we had like an inner tube and we called 'em snappers and we put these snappers on and if you got 'em too loose, water leaked in anyhow, and if you got 'em too tight, your hands got numb, which was much more serious, 'cause when you're down and...

JA: About when did the diving on the *West Virginia* begin? What month?

RE: I would say from May until June of the following year, about one year.

JA: In doing the dives, what was the usual visibility that you had?

RE: Absolutely nothing. That's one of the reasons I became a diver, because I had been aboard the ship for six years and I knew my way around a lot of

places in the darkness and absolutely no visibility at all. Once you got your head underwater, *sayonara*.

JA: What was the usual depth of the dives?

RE: Oh, we were sunk in about sixty feet of water, so I would say about fifty feet was the maximum.

JA: And I think before you told me sometimes you dove solo and sometimes you dove with a diving buddy and communications was _____ signal.

RE: Yes, yes. To go down in the machine shop, that's all the forward engine room was approximately 100 feet forward. The other, the after engine room was another 100 or 200 feet. So on the deep dive, what we called deep dives, one diver would go down halfway, send a second diver down. They would shake hands and then the first diver would keep on going down to do his work, then when he came back up, they shook hands again and then either one—well, we had a routine. I forget whether the tender went up first or the diver. I don't recall that.

JA: What was the type of work you were doing? Was it a lot of cutting?

RE: Very little cutting until the very last. It was, what the navy did was to put eleven pumps down on the centerline and then we drained everything we could into this common sump. Like outboard of each engine room, there were four fire rooms, two on each side. And we had one pump down in the engine room and we took the bonnets off of the main drain valves from the fire rooms and then when the pump started, that not only drained the engine room but it drained the surrounding fire rooms. And the same way at the turrets, the four turrets. We put a pump down and the common sump and then we opened up the shell rooms and the magazines. The pump went down the lower handling room and when it started coming up there was a lot of debris floating around and these pumps would clog and then we'd have to send a diver down to pull that stuff away. Pacific Bridge put a patch on the port side. They were just like wooden billboards. And at the turn of the bilge, they put fast-drying concrete in there to accommodate the turn of the bilge and the wreckage down there. And then the leaks, we navy divers stuffed rags in there, in what we could find. And then we had to get up

thirty-two feet, a draft of thirty-two feet to get over the sill of the dry dock. So eventually we got into dry dock, took everything off of the ship, cleaned it, repaired what was necessary. Mostly electric motors and that sort of thing. And the, it was the all-electric drive. They were big motor, big as this room, on each screw. We had a center motor room with two motors in it and a wing engine, wing motor rooms on either side. They rebladed the turbine to the alternator and they—General Electric—rewound the motors. And the ship's company did all the feed pumps and the condensate pumps and that sort of thing.

JA: Back when you're down below, as we say, working, what were your concerns? Were you worried about the ship shifting as she lay on the bottom? Worry about air hoses collapsing or getting ripped or crimping? Wreckage becoming loose and falling on you?

RE: No. The main concern, well, there are several main concerns, one of which is to cut and get your suit cut on the jagged steel wreckage. Not being able to see anything, you didn't know where you were going and you had to be

careful too in the wreckage, 'cause if you stepped off an abyss where torpedo damage, it's liable to rip your air hose and lifeline off.

And then, those were the main concerns. And also, when we got to starboard on the turrets, many of these rooms were shell rooms and the powder magazines were dry. And there was a test cap. In the old navy, take the test cap off and screw a fire hose on there to save the ship, flood the whatever it was.

So we were concerned, right in the beginning, I don't know why, who discovered it or who did it—maybe the master diver—but anyhow, we would take these test caps off before opening the door, because if we opened the door, the rush of water might rip your air hose off. And we'd take the test cap off, hold your hand up there and if it stuck there, then you knew it was dry. We let it flood. We went back the next day and worked on it.

JA: How did you prepare yourself mentally to deal with the bodies that you came across?

RE: There were bodies, I think a hundred and some bodies on it. We were concerned with the salvage of the ship, not the bodies. But we got tangled up in a piece of line or we pulled on it and one end would be screwed in, it would be telephone. One end would be screwed into the jack box and the other end would be some guy with it, still with the headphones on. And that was unnerving too! But you always tugged on which one, if it came easy, then you knew there was a guy there, so you pulled the other way, traced it out and screwed it out.

JA: When we were talking outside, before we came into the interview room, you had mentioned a situation with the pump room down below. I'd like you to recount.

RE: Yes, there in the freshwater pump room, I've seen this in various accounts, and I talked to the master diver about it too, the first couple days he said that he went around tapping on the hull and there was no response. Everybody's dead. But when we pumped the ship down in the pump, the pump room was dry and there were three men in there and they had marked off the calendar until the 24th of December. And one of the kids, COS-TIN or COS-TER or

something, worked for me in the machine shop. And when he found out about that, I didn't go down, I just couldn't!

But anyhow, two of them had pea coats on and they had some crackers down there. Of course, they had all the freshwater that they needed, but apparently one survived the other two and laid them out on the floor plates and then he just crumpled someplace. But that was tragic.

I don't know how we could've got them out of there because there were five decks of water above them, but the master diver said they got 'em out. The fortunes of war, well, too bad.

Bill Scullion (BS): Mr. Ehm, I've been listening to your story and I want to make sure that I understand. You were not a diver before December 7, were you?

RE: No, no.

BS: You were a machinist mate.

RE: No. I was a machine shop machinist mate, the furthest my further career, furthest expectation to be a diver. I had no, I did not want to be a diver.

BS: Okay.

RE: I did not want to be a diver. I was—I had never dove anywhere again in my entire naval career. I never played around with a scuba or a—never. It was, I had, I could do it, so I did it!

BS: Yeah. And again, I understand they chose, were you chosen to be a diver or did you volunteer?

RE: No. Chief said go over to the sub base and take pressure, that's what I volunteered!

BS: And I gather that's because you...

RE: I figured I could do it, wartime.

BS: Yeah.

RE: So I did it!

BS: Okay...

RE: But I got paid extra! Got ten dollars a month.

BS: Okay.

RE: For six months. And this other diver did not have twenty-twenty vision, so at the end of six months, he was disqualified. Kept on diving but he was disqualified.

BS: Okay.

RE: And I got it for another year, I got it for a total of one year.

BS: And the dives you made, you were volunteered because of your familiarity with the machine spaces?

RE: Yes. The chief engineer of the *West Virginia* survived and he became the salvage officer. And...

BS: Who was the chief engineer?

RE: Lieutenant Commander Levi J. Knight, class of—I think it was '27 or something.

BS: Were there any reserve people on board?

(Conversation off-mike)

RE: Yes, the...

BS: I'm going to come back to you...

RE: Okay.

BS: ...because they're going to change tapes on you.

END OF TAPE ONE

TAPE TWO

(Conversation off-mike)

BS: Mr. Ehm, before we had a break for tape change, we were talking about your chief engineer and apparently that's how you got volunteered for the salvage crew. And then we were touching on the subject of reserve personnel on board.

RE: The captain, the chief engineer outranked our captain but he was a reserve and the chief engineer figured he could do the salvage better than the captain, and his name was White, Willie White.

JA: The captain was?

RE: Yes. W. W. White, he was also a lieutenant commander. And then the other officers, they were CECs and they were reserves too, but they were versed in salvage or something. And the chief engineer was the only line regular academy officer I knew of.

BS: Okay now I want to, when you were talking about the officers, was that on the salvage crew or on the ship itself?

RE: Well, they, after—we lived, we enlisted men lived ashore on Ford Island, you had a house and they made two or three more bathrooms and that was it. And I don't know where the officers lived, but they were all—and not having any uniforms, we all wore tank suits and boots. I didn't, many years later, I found out Lieutenant Painter, who we thought was a sharpie, and he was a CEC officer. He wasn't—you know, he knew that kind of stuff. And of course, there was no cerebral, I mean no personnel inspections or anything like that.

BS: (Inaudible)

RE: Oh, this was just work. However, we sailed a ship to, we cleaned the ship up and in June of, May and June of 1943, we sailed her across 3,000 miles of open ocean to Bremerton. And then they started in with regular navy. And the chief engineer called us two divers up one day and he says, “Which one of you wants to go to Syracuse to G.E. Main Propelling Engine School, nucleus crew?”

And both of us says we don't want to go. And he says, “Okay, Ehm, you go.”

I said, “When?”

“Be on a transcontinental train tomorrow night.”

And I was married then and then I, instead of picking up a D.E., my orders changed and I made ensign. And I made ensign about, just like I became a

diver. Just put the suit on and I didn't, I'm a line officer, and I didn't know whether one or two points of the star pointed down to the stripes. But it didn't look right to me and I went back to the tailor and I said, "Hey, this doesn't look right!"

"Yeah, that's right."

So I looked up in *Life* magazine and he was wrong!

JA: These things happen sometimes with life's little nuances. Do you have anything else about December 7, about the *West Virginia*, that you remember, that you want to relay about the salvage operation?

RE: No, not really. This is about all that happened. Oh, one thing more. One of the torpedoes blew the rudder off, a fifty-ton rudder. And the diver, master diver sent me one day down to find it. By this time, the ship was afloat and it shifted a little bit, even though it had a four-point moor and the wind and the tide shifted a little bit. And the routine was to put a mushroom anchor down and a piece of line go out about six fathoms, or about one fathom, and

make a circle. And topside watch the bubbles, when you completed the circle, they'd say, "Okay, pull another one out," and then go around.

JA: Circle sessions.

RE: So I'm down there and I got a pain under my heart and I told topside, I told the master diver, I said, "Hey, I got a pain under my heart."

He says, "Aw, it's probably something you ate. Come on, get going!"

So I gave myself a shot of air, cure-all, only there wasn't any air. This, the guy on the air compressor hopped on his boat, went over to the navy yard and that's the end of his shift! And he got a diver down. And I don't know how many of my eight minutes I got left! So I'm standing there waiting and the routine was to balloon up to the surface and then tow you in. And this day, of course, I'm dead weight, no air. And they're pulling me up and they open my face plate, "You dirty..."

I says, (huffing) "No air!"

“Oh!”

The master diver told them to bring up the diver and I can just see them finishing their cigarette and finally bringing the diver up. So that was a, I thought it was a close call!

JA: Well it was, but you survived.

RE: And with that rotten, dirty water, if you scraped or any kind of a wound, it wouldn't heal for weeks and weeks. And months and months afterward, having breathed that high pressure air with that rotten air, and my pills smelled terrible.

BS: Mr. Ehm, if I could, I'd like to back you back up to the *West Virginia* on the seventh again, one more time.

RE: Okay.

BS: Before the salvage operations.

RE: All right.

BS: You're down at your watch station and you said the first thing that you heard that let you know something weird was the away the fire and rescue party.

RE: Yes, that was the beginning.

BS: And eventually you make it up to the deck.

RE: Topside, yes.

BS: Was that aft or forward?

RE: It was about midship's.

BS: What did you see when you got there?

RE: I just saw smoke and fire and airplanes that were strafing and looked like just in the movies. You can see the bullets going across it. And see, we had wooden decks, teak. And incidentally, in the tropics, those wooden decks were almost as white as this. And we engineers didn't dare wear steaming shoes up even out of the, into the compartment. And we had coke alley, we had a bunch of lockers. You put your steaming shoes in there and then put the uniform dress shoes on to walk around on the ship.

And the engineering spaces were always clean and neat. And in the machine shop, we took great pride. And many years later, I met the tool room guy and by this time he was retired, he was going to naval hospital. He had cancer and I didn't know it and he didn't say. He says, "Oh, I just go over there for check-ups," sort of thing. And he said, "You know, that was a good ship." And he said, "We tried to make our officers look good," you know, the enlisted men, "and come to think of it, we did. They were happy and made us happy."

Of course we had a couple, now and then, a couple of bad ones but yeah, we really tried. That was a happy ship. Of the thirteen ships I served on, that was the best one of all of 'em. She was a good ship.

BS: And again to drag you back, you said you were up on deck when the *Arizona* went up?

RE: Yeah.

BS: Can you describe the sensation of that?

RE: Well, that was a loud bang and I didn't know whether it was us or the *Arizona* or who, but the smoke and fire then and then after she blew up, the burning fragments set us on fire so bad. And we had an airplane on Number Three turret, and it was—a bomb landed on it and it burning gasoline and then really on fire!

BS: Was that...

RE: And there was no shouting, no panic or—people didn't, a lot of 'em didn't do anything, me included. When I got topside, there was nothing to do, so I helped the wounded whatever we could.

BS: How many people were in your division?

RE: We had sixty.

BS: Okay.

RE: But there were 400 total of the four divisions, M, main engine, E, electrical, B, boilers, and A, auxiliary.

BS: And how many friends did you lose that day?

RE: Of the eight of us in the machine shop, we lost three. And one of the kids is here. He went down and said—I went up and he went down. He went down in the ice machines and he knew that there was a storeroom down there they always kept locked unless they were playing poker. I didn't know anything

about that. But anyhow, this kid goes down and that morning a door happened to be unlocked, so he could get out. Otherwise, he would've been trapped down there. So we lost three out of eight, including the other, the guy in charge of the shop. He came from M division about six months before. We were both first class. I was senior to him but the—I said, “You talk to the, do the paperwork and everything, I’ll run the shop.”

That was fine by him. And he looked like Errol Flynn. He had an Errol Flynn mustache and I had a cavalry type.

BS: What was your most vivid memory of December 7?

RE: I guess fighting my way up out of the machine shop through this wall of water coming down. I guess that was my most vivid memory.

BS: What’s your best memory of the *West Virginia*?

RE: Yeah.

BS: What's your best memory of the *West Virginia*?

RE: The best memory of the *West Virginia*? Gosh, I don't know. It's old.
Looking back on it, it was all fair weather and calm winds!

BS: Were you involved in any other teams or anything like that, like the battleships had? Band, baseball?

RE: No. No, no. I was never in a race crew or boxing or any of that. We used to have a lot of boxing for recreation. And at various times we had the battleship, commander battleship band, but I don't recall them ever playing concerts. Maybe they played back in officers' country. I don't know.

BS: What did you do for entertainment down in M division?

RE: Played acey-deucey mostly. I was—acey-deucey, I guess, on a weekend, a kid from the evaporators, another first class, he was at Midway, got shot up at Midway but lived and retired in Bremerton. And we used to play acey-

deucey and I would cheat! And he knew it. Once in a while he'd catch me, but I'd say, "Look, there's an airplane!"

That was fun! We were having fun! _____ and he cashed in his chips up in CLEE-ELL-UM a couple of years ago and I wore my uniform and went to his funeral up there.

BS: Is there anything else you'd like to add for the record?

RE: No, but I fancy myself a battleship sailor. When they put the *New Jersey* and the *Missouri* in commission, I volunteered. And the Secretary of the Navy says, "Hey, because you've been out ten years," I would've probably had thirty years by that time.

Thanks, but no thanks. And I did have an office on the *Missouri* when she was in the reserve fleet. And among other ships that were in the reserve fleet in Bremerton, the *West Virginia* was there. And we had watches but I used to go aboard these ships just for, just to double-check. I used to go aboard the *West Virginia* and that almost killed me!

I hated to but by god, I went!

BS: She's still a living ship to you, isn't she?

RE: Yeah. Now that was—oh, I loved my naval career. I'm going to wear my uniform tomorrow.

BS: Good for you.

(Inaudible)

RE: Yeah. Choker collar is still in—I mean, I'm not out of uniform, am I?

JA: No, no. I don't think so.

BS: What, can you define what a battleship sailor is?

RE: Well, it's a home. I've had destroyer sailors come aboard a battleship. See, they're squat. The _____ has steady gun platform. The destroyer sailors, "Gee, how do you guys stand this?"

It's a slow, slow roll. And I went aboard a destroyer and I never got out past Buoy Number One here in Pearl, seasick. I used to sleep on top of the tubes with a life jacket for a pillow and of course in those days, every once in a while—well, we rarely took our clothes off for the first couple weeks and months of that. And boy that was terrible after coming from a battleship. We had ice cream once in a while. On this destroyer, man, that was a rough life. But those guys, they thought it was great.

And well same like submarine sailors. Boy, they, hey, that's the way to go! And I was with shipmates with an old hand on Guam after the war and he said in a typhoon off the Philippines they rolled fifteen degrees at 200 feet. Fifteen degrees at 200 feet. That's not for me!

JA: Well, I'm sure once a battleship sailor, always a battleship sailor.

RE: Yes, sir. Sure.

JA: Thank you for your time and thank you for your service to the country.

RE: Thank you for having me.

END OF INTERVIEW