

Today is Tuesday, September 22, 2015. My name is Fran Prokop and I am at the home of Steve Kozar. Steve is a veteran of the United States Navy, serving in peacetime between the Korean Conflict and the Viet Nam War. Steve is a friend of mine. We went to high school together -- and he heard of the Veterans History Project through me. Steve has kindly consented to participate in the National Archives Veterans History Project. Here is his story:

Steve, when and where were you born?

Born in Chicago, Illinois; October 20, 1934.

What were your parents' occupations?

My mother was a housewife; my father was a brew meister.

How many sisters and brothers did you have?

I had two sisters and two brothers.

Were any of your siblings in the service?

One brother was in the Army –

During the same period you were in?

During the Second World War.

He was your older brother.

He was one of my older brothers.

Was he on active duty?

Yes.

Did he survive the war?

Yes, he did.

Is he the one you were telling me drove for Patton?

Yeah. Well, he drove in back of Patton. He was a telephone talker. Sergeant in the Army.

What was his name?

Leonard Kozar.

He was a sergeant and he was very close to Patton.

Yes.

What did you do before entering the service?

I worked for Automatic Electric.

Was that the one on Ashland Avenue, on the north side?

I think so; they had about 11 buildings.

Oh, did they?

Yes, it was a big operation; they developed the dial system.

Oh, really. What was your job there?

I did documentation for foreign shipments. **(inaudible)** Dominical Republic --

How did you enter the service – were you drafted or did you enlist?

I was drafted.

Tell us the story –

I was drafted into the Army and decided I would like to have gone into the Marine Corps.

However, they didn't accept people with glasses. So the only option was the Navy.

So was there a Navy recruiter right there also – how did it come about?

We went to the recruiter's office.

In Chicago.

Randolph Street, used to be – Recruiting Office but not really; it was a drill hall.

A drill hall?

Yeah.

Was it the Armory or something.

For the National Guard. Actually we joined the National Guard.

Oh, okay.

And what happened is they asked if we wanted to go into full-time service – why not?

Let's get it over with.

And who did you go into the service with?

A guy by the name of Donard Pintozzi – on a buddy basis.

That's right. Don and Steve were both classmates of mine in high school. I lost contact with them once we graduated, but Don and Steve kept in touch so they both went into the service together. But that was about as far as you got, right?

You didn't stay together in the service.

No, because I ended up in the hospital for dental work; in those days the dentists were training, I think.

Yes, they were; I'm sure.

So I spent about 11 days in the hospital.

You mean you actually were enlisted, you took the oath and everything else and then you went to the dentist?

Yes. I was supposed to be at Great Lakes Training – but they pulled my name out of the lineup and they said you got dental problems – okay.

Wow – that bad, huh?

The dentists over there needed somebody to work on, and I think they did.

So you spent 11 days having dental work before you ever went to Great Lakes for basic training.

And my buddy, I told him to go ahead and get his training.

Don went ahead. So, after your dental work, how did you get to Great Lakes?

By bus? By train?

I think we met and they took us by train.

So you actually did choose the Navy – you wanted the Navy – any particular reason why you chose the Navy?

I just didn't want the service – the Army. I just wanted to go – at that time I was a young whipper-snapper and I wanted to go where everything – where the action was and the action was either in the Marines or the Navy – I didn't know about that.

How were your early days of training – how did you adapt to training – describe a typical day during basic training.

Well, training in the Navy was more for educational purposes; know how the Navy operates in all kinds of conditions.

So what you're saying is they didn't really emphasize physical basic training, they did more or less classroom education?

Physical – everything in the Military Code as far as the Navy was concerned; yeah, you had to learn how to swim, you had to qualify for swimming, and calisthenics – quite a bit – marching a lot; then you went into firefighting.

How about guns –

Yes, we fired on the range – rifles – antiquated. Then we went into regular firing guns.

Did you have to learn to take the gun apart and put it back together?

No – yeah, you had to clean it, yes; you had to learn how to do that. You had to learn how to load it too; depends on the type of weapon.

So how long were you at Great Lakes?

I think it was 14 weeks – I'm not sure.

Just roughly, 14 weeks.

During the – it was hot.

Summer time – you went in in June of '56, right?

Yeah.

And how old were you then?

I think I was 20 or 21.

So you were there for the Summer. How did you adapt to military life – like the physical regimen, the barracks, the food?

Well, the food was selective; it was okay. I was never a fussy eater – the food was par for the course; typical military-type food.

So you had no real trouble adapting?

No, no.

Of course you were still at your home base.

Yeah.

You never got any liberty while you were in basic training, right?

Just one weekend, I think we were allowed. One time, to go home and say hello and come back – a weekend.

So after 14 weeks, did you have any further specialized training?

Well, after that they assign you to your job duty in the Navy. Well, normally what happens to a recruit, like I was, I would be assigned to the kitchen –

K.P. Right.

Either K.P. or serving – assisting the cooks – commissary people.

So what did you do?

I served pies – 100 some odd pies.

Oh, really?

Cut up – when you went through the line you got this slice and that was it.

Okay.

I hate to tell you what the baker was like. He smoked while he was baking pies.

Oh my God! Ha, ha, they allowed that?

But that was typical days in the Navy – there were more crude ways. Today it's different, obviously.

Did you ever get any further specialized training?

No, since my age was – I was 21; I qualified for a government license, so I had to take a government test to drive on the base – on the Great Lakes base.. And then they needed – the Captain needed a driver – the Captain was in charge; the Rear Admiral was Forestall at the time controlling the Great Lakes Naval Base.

Okay.

And the Captain was his back-up, of course, and I drove him around – took him and his wife to places that they had to attend, and also a few times I went with the Admiral.

How long did you continue doing that?

I did it for several months and then I got orders – got assignment to a destroyer.

And where was that at?

San Diego – had to pick it up in San Diego.

What was the name of that ship?

U.S.S. Frank Knox, DDR 742.

How did you get to San Diego – did you fly there?

Yeah; they gave me government transport – ticket – whatever you call it.

MATS

Yeah, and I got that – went to San Diego and met the ship.

What was the name of the base you were at?

San Diego.

Coronado –

Coronado is – I don't remember – it was San Diego Naval Base.

What were your duties there?

Well, my first duty was to chip paint and then somebody noticed in my records that I had clerical information – background. They needed a typist and somebody to type the reports that had to be issued to Bu Pers –

What's Bu Pers?

Bureau of Personnel – that's the abbreviation – Bu Pers – and what's the other one I used to send – Ammunition Reports.

Okay, so you worked in the office.

And I was assigned to -- under a Navy Lieutenant – I think his name was Vettel V-E-T-T-E-L.

Okay, so you were working in the office; were you still driving at all?

Well, before that I drove – no, I got my orders and I went to meet the ship – That's where I started to get my assignments.

So did you work on board the ship – in your office

Yes, I had an office aboard the ship – right next door to the barber shop.

Okay, what significance was that?

Well, I got my haircut done every day. – Yeah, seriously – the guy that was the barber, he'd say Hey Steve you got some long strands. Come over – I had the perfect hair. I still got it, I think.

Ha, ha – the Frank Knox, did it stay in port or did it leave?

No, it was assigned with two other destroyers to meet a carrier in the Pacific Ocean.

Pacific –

We were guarding the carrier –

Like an escort –

We were a destroyer / escort in case of – if there was a war, we would have to take the torpedo.

Oh, wow!

The carrier had a lot more personnel; it had planes –

Which carrier was that – do you remember?

Yeah, I think it was the U.S.S. Ticonderoga.

Really – you laugh – I don't know is it decommissioned now?

I guess it is; it's one of the older carriers now; it was a pretty large carrier.

Nuclear carrier –

No it wasn't the nuclear type, no. I also went on top – I went on the U.S.S. Boxer – one of the smallest carriers.

So what did you do – sail up and down in the Pacific –

We did patrolling all over the Russian Sea –

Where was your patrol at?

I don't know how to explain the parameters of that because we had – what happened is the Russians had a bad habit of putting their submarines and chasing, you know, going underneath our ship to see whether –

Spying?

Oh, yeah, they did spy work, and we caught one and we started chasing it; in fact we had orders to -- if it didn't float away to fire on it.

Hmm. Wow! That never happened though, did it?

No, no, That was kinds of scary too.

I'll bet.

You didn't know if it was gonna turn around a shoot a torpedo at us.

Right, right.

But anyway we did that, and sometimes we -- occasionally we'd take some Navy people from other countries and train them on the ship.

Train foreign seamen?

Yeah, not a lot, mostly military officers. They had to learn how the Navy operated -- the U.S. Navy.

What country were they from?

I think -- I want to say British, but I don't think it was British -- not French. I can't remember that.

Did they speak English, these officers?

I rarely talked to them.

You didn't have contact with them.

I didn't have anything to do with that; no, all I did was --

You just knew they were there.

Yeah, I think there were more officers than anything. WE also did -- if a pilot -- Air force pilot would down his plane in the water, we were out there to find him. Two did. I recall one of them we picked up the pilot; the other one, we don't know what happened; they were both good pilots. From my understanding they were veteran pilots; their planes just went kaput on them --

Didn't make it back to their own ship.

No and they had to dump the plane.

Can you recall what years these were -- how long had you been in the service when you were doing this after San Diego? After a couple of years?

Yeah, I would say so.

So it would have to be '58, '59?

Yeah, something like that.

And how long did you continue doing this?

All until I was – they got a report on who was qualified for replacement. I was thinking about going to Viet Nam.

The Viet Nam war was jump ramping up?

It was starting to get heated up pretty good, because I had a buddy that went there and he – he got shrapnel in the back on liberty and I don't know if he survived that. I saw him one time when I was part of that service and he had the shakes. He married one of the girlfriends I used to date.

Well, we won't go into that. Ha, ha.

Yeah.

Well you were telling me before we began this interview about the Yellow Sea – so I'm reminding you about it – was that a part of this?

The Yellow Sea was our requirement – what do you call that – we went through the Yellow Sea because we had to make sure there was no enemy – Navy things going on and at the time the water was very, very rough – typhoon type weather and I am amazed that I made it through that. But once – there's an old saying a ship doesn't sink if all the lockers are closed – otherwise the ship will sink. It's not buoyant.

So describe that – you went through this typhoon on the destroyer –

Water was splashing on the clothes; everybody had a problem with their clothes floating around, shoes floating around –

The Waves were over-topping the ship –

Oh, yeah, and the ship –

Was it like a cork bobbing back and forth?

Well, you know, a 45 degree angle would almost flip you over –

Right.

But since they had ballast on there – the tanks were balanced so that if it goes that way it would right itself.

So the other ships that you were with went through the same thing and came out okay.

We had a sister ship – I'm aware of one sister ship, a destroyer, that had something like \$50,000 worth of damage.

Wow!

Actually the sea put a dent in the bulkhead – steel bulkhead – dented like this (indicating)

All caved in –

Yeah. I could swear that both we and them, especially that ship, went under. But went under and came up right away.

Well, it's possible –

Oh, yeah, oh yeah, and I think we did too, but, you know, you're locked in the ship now

Right, nobody's allowed out –

You can't – there's no windows or port holes or – not too much.

Wow –how large is a destroyer – I'm not really familiar with it.

Destroyer is a small ship compared to --

Well, compared to a carrier –

Or a cruiser; it's even smaller than a cruiser.

Well, how many –

250 complement of personnel.

250 men served on it.

versus a carrier – has thousands.

Well, that's still pretty big. I was just talking to another sailor who was on a submarine – a submarine has a 65-70-man crew. So you're saying 250 men – it's pretty big –

Yeah, it's all male, at the time. Everybody had their assignment. I was assigned – we had to go through gunnery action against anything I was a loader on a C 3/50 mount – it's a caliber. We had bigger guns in the front than that.

So if you were called to duty that was your station.

Oh, yeah, when you'd hear the siren go off, that was –

Did you ever have to do that?

Oh, yeah, couple of times.

For real – not just for practice?

One for target practice – and the other time we had been warned – actually there was no ships out there but there were little boats. And Koreans, as well as Vietnamese, used to -- they call them sampans – they used to come and they'd have a 50 caliber gun on there. And they used old people to use as targets – to guard them from getting shot. I gotta admit one of them did get shot – I don't know how –

Did you ever see any combat action?

Yeah, in the bars – ha, ha.

I don't want to hear about that.

No, I know you don't. No, not really; close, close to it but not to the point where -- I did hear firing overhead and that was bad enough.

You mean planes?

No, it was – Koreans had planes but they weren't as good as – I mean we were at sea – at sea they weren't any trouble.

How far off the coast were from Korea?

Oh, we were pretty close to the harbor.

Like mile-wise, how close? What would you estimate?

I can't give you mileage-wise but we pulled up to a harbor and we would take stores on board. We were right next to the harbor.

So that was your duty – you patrolled the coast of Korea at one time?

We were – that was technically our assignment – all over the seas that we visited.

And did you follow the Ticonderoga – were you with it the whole time?

Most of the time we were with them. There were times when it had to go in for repair work or something. We never went with them; we also had a cruiser that was with us, but I don't remember the cruiser's name.

When did you get liberty? When did you get off the ship?

When we got into harbor.

Did you get off at Seoul, Korea?

Yeah. Seoul, and Okinawa, Guam, Japan –

Where in Japan?

Jakuska – J A K U S K A – don't ask me how to spell it – I can tell you at that time it was not a friendly country either – well, because of the atomic bomb –

Oh, right.

The older people would ignore you; they hated you. I can understand why – millions of people –

That was the late 50s – the bomb was in '45.

Yeah, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And then of course we were operating with – what happened is the Japanese Navy was pretty washed out. So we – they got three destroyers from us; they bought it, I guess. I don't know how that happened –

They didn't buy them – we gave it to them.

Yeah, and they would patrol the harbor to make sure – there was further action going on from the Second World War; they didn't even know the war was over in some of these harbors.

Right.

So you had to be careful there. Other than that we had training exercises where we – they would train us for – in case somebody tried to get aboard our ship while we were in the harbor. And if you didn't know who that person was, they didn't respond to your demand to stop and be recognized, you had to shoot them.

Did you spend the rest of your time in the Navy on that ship?

Yeah.

So you were on there for three years?

Yeah; didn't have much clothes either. I had my dress uniform, I had some – my liberty, like civilian clothes, you left them at – like mine were at – when I went on board ship I just had what I wore – I put some in a locker.

So how about friendships formed and camaraderie of service. Did you meet guys there that you stayed in touch with?

Well, one guy I thought I saw in Florida, it's funny, I was in a restaurant, and I said that guy looks familiar, and I wanted to go up to him but I didn't know if it was him for sure. And he was one of the guys that were on the artillery – gunners mate – that's what they called them. They were in charge of the guns, make sure they're cleaned and well-oiled and all that stuff. And I didn't go up to him. I said if I see that guy again – but I never saw him again.

Well, you should have; especially in the service –

Yeah, well, I was with a friend of mine – he said go up to him and find out – I said no, he might think I'm gay or something.

How did you stay in touch with family and friends back home – how were communications from home – just letters?

Well, I lost my mother when – I think I was 16 years old –

Oh, before you went in –

Oh, yeah, and then my dad decided to marry again and I decided I didn't want to be with him anymore so I moved with my sister, who I used to think she was my mother – more so. I have another sister.

So did you get letters – did you call – telephone calls –

No, mostly letters –

Packages once in a while –

Yeah, we would meet – the carriers usually brought in the reading material because they had planes; we didn't have any.

So the mail came into your aircraft carrier?

Yeah, oh yeah, and they would transport it to us in a bag – and we'd get it and the Personnel Department would take care and distribute the mail.

Say you got a letter from your sister with a date on it, it came to the carrier and you finally got it, how long of a time did it take for you to get that letter from the time she wrote it?

It depends where you're at –

Well, you were at sea – we're talking about. How long would it take?

More than a week – a month?

I think a couple of weeks – I think. My sister always hollered at me; I didn't write. But I did too much writing for these other guys.

Yeah, you did a lot.

Yeah, I used to make –

You had a typewriter, you could have typed a letter, for Pete's sake.

On a manual typewriter –

Yeah, ha, ha. So what were your recreational or off-duty pursuits when you weren't working – I mean on the ship now, not on leave. Did they do anything on the ship like cards –

Played cards, smoked, drink coffee.

Did you smoke?

Oh, yeah.

Do you still smoke?

No. Quit about 30 years ago.

So there were no organized games –

No, there wasn't much room to do anything but play cards a lot, read; they had movies. We would get the movies from the carrier because they had all the –

So you really were quite dependent on the carrier for all your –

Oh, yeah, yeah –

Food, I suppose too –

We had a guy that had an appendectomy or I forget what it was and we had to transport him over to the carrier, yeah.

So you transferred things back and forth –

Oh yeah, all the time.

That was routine, I suppose.

Well, we would get signals from the carrier – we're coming in this direction – we had to meet – now you're talking about a big carrier and a little ship, and we hit her all the time –

Oh, wow!

You don't think I was scared? Wow! We rammed her on the side – well, what happens, the sea is hard to maneuver, I don't care how sophisticated you are – the water is – you get swells, like this (indicating) – it just takes you.

Right. I'm sure it could be –

We're on a smaller ship – a carrier can handle it a lot better; it wasn't a nuke carrier, oh my God, but still, you see – if you ever watch – they showed the Enterprise one time – They showed how it went (indicating – whistling)

Can you imagine landing on those decks?

That's – that's – I have a friend that lives out here – he used to do that; he was a plane mechanic on these carriers – he said try to sleep underneath them when they catapult the planes off the deck. Then –

So you were in the active Navy for four years – so if you went in in '56 you got out in '60 –

I got my DD –

Yes, I have your DD 214 and it says 1962 – but you told me that the last two years were spent in the Reserves.

Yeah, I don't understand that, the Reserves, yeah.

What did you do there?

The Reserves I did nothing because –

They gave you credit for it.

Oh yeah, oh yeah, they did. I would have to go to meetings for two weeks – and work – people couldn't stop me –

Right, exactly.

But I didn't do that. Because they had a full complement of seamen.

So you really didn't do too much?

No, I didn't, no.

So when you finally – when your four years were up with the Navy, how did you return home – how did you get back. Did you get a letter saying your term was up or how were you notified?

No, no; there was a report that goes out, that Bu Pers again – bureau of Personnel. They issue the notice to the ship, or wherever you're located. They send that office a notice, and they say hey, xyz is released from the Navy. And I was going to stay in until this Lieutenant Commander, him and I didn't see eye to eye, so I said heck with it, I'm gonna leave. So I departed in San Diego and came back home.

You came back with that same ship when it came to San Diego?

Oh yeah, yeah; it had to come in. it was having problems and we all knew that too because it was an old ship. It was old; in fact that was not the original ship that was under attack – it was the U.S.S. Frank Knox that was sunk during the Second World War.

Oh, really? So this ship was named for that ship -

Yeah, it was the replacement.

Replacement, wow!

During the Second World War now – don't ask me when that was done –

You just know about it.

Yeah. Then of course, the excitement of going into dry dock –

What do you mean, the excitement? Are you being funny?

Well, dry dock – what happens is the ship – it's hard to describe but –

It's a platform –

It's a platform and has sides and everything else and what they do is they lift it up out of the water, and then they have these big blocks of lumber and they put them on the sides of the ship – it keeps it straight up.

Right.

And they pull it up and -- I've had the opportunity to walk underneath there --

Really --

Oh, you should see it -- Wow! I figure if that goes, I'm done for -- squashed like that.

Oh, yeah, like a bug.

But I did -- out of curiosity -- I like to see what happens. Anyway --

You never thought of volunteering to be a submariner, did you?

I don't think I would have made it. For one thing -- I was a good swimmer, but not that good and you have to -- my brother-in-law passed away -- he was a submariner. And he was showing exercises that -- they go into a tank -- up and then down --

I know -- they put the pressure on -- I just interviewed a guy.

He got qualified, they gave him his qualifications and they ended up assigning him to shore duty -- Shore Patrol. Yeah, and he had a chance to be a sergeant on the police force in Boston; he wanted it because they offered him better pay and he could have had a house there to let him live in because he qualified. And my sister said no, I want to go home. So they went home.

Well, that's how it goes.

They had a baby too, that's why.

Well, that's why too. How was your readjustment to civilian life?

Did you go back to your job, or what happened?

Yeah, my job was back; they had to give me my job back or something similar.

So did you get your exact job or something different?

Yeah, worked in the same department for a short time and I had an opportunity to go to another company --

Have you had any contact with fellow veterans over the years?

Yeah, a few, but not the same -- there was a Lieutenant Commander -- I'm surprised he didn't meet us at our beer parties. We met every two months -- a bunch of us retirees -- he was a Lieutenant Commander --

Was it like a reunion?

Yeah.

Navy reunion?

No. But he had – he made his – he did the right thing – he put in 20 years and he got some good retirement. I don't know if he's alive because he went through a serious operation.

Do you have membership in any veterans organizations?

No. I can go to a Veterans Hospital for pills and – all I qualify – they call it Status 7, I guess and I can get, if I want, but I don't do it – get pills – once a year you have to go and see the doctor at VA –

To continue that –

Yeah, but I get that if I do that. Actually my doctor told me to go for their blood test; they do a better job –

Well, probably you should go, but you probably have to wait a long time.

Yeah, that, and, I don't know how it is now – I know they've had problems with the VA.

Right. Before we get to the very end I know that you went in with our friend Don, and you did get a chance to meet Don in Hawaii because he was stationed in Hawaii –

Correct.

So, do you have anything to say about that meeting?

Of course you're still in touch with Don – we all are.

Well, we just talked about how we met and out there, when he found out that my ship came in, he said oh, I gotta call. So I got liberty and –

So you got together and had a good time in Hawaii – but you had to go back on ship.

Just one day and I had to be back – we were on call.

Why did your ship go to Hawaii?

We had problems; we had engine problems – power problems – we had to go in for repairs, but we didn't know; we were on call 24 hours, so any liberty that was given you only had one day.

Were you in Pearl Harbor actually?

Yeah; that's when I saw Pearl Harbor too – first time I'd been to Hawaii. We were heading for Australia –

Did you get there?

No, we broke down; didn't get there. They were looking forward to tar and feather me when crossing the equator –

Right, they call that something, Captain Neptune or something –

Yeah, some of the guys were after me on that. Especially the guys that already did that because it was tar and feather you – oh yeah, they couldn't wait; they were going like this (indicating). What they would do is put the piece of leather, put it in the water, salt water, and it makes it like a rock. You don't want to get hit with one of those –

No, I don't think so.

But they were teasing the heck out of me, but I made amends. I did a lot of their love letters –

Ha, ha

I did. I charged them, at the time one guy, he was – man, I was falling in love with his girlfriend –

That's right; you started to tell me before about writing letters for your shipmates.

I'm not a good writer –

Reading and writing letters for your friends in the service because—

They were not well educated. They couldn't write. They couldn't write real well. They could write their name.

Could they read?

Uh, I don't know. I never watched them read.

Oh really! Well, how about when they got letters; did they ever show you the letters that they got?

Oh, well, some –

Did you read their letters?

Well, first of all, I was the very unique person that could write and read and do the typewriter; there were a few guys that were from Michigan – in fact there was one guy – we used to call him "IRONS". You'd take him into a battle – he's the guy you would crap a bullet in the sky – he was powerful. Anyway, he was a good-lookin' guy too.

Couldn't read or write though?

No, he could read and write; he was very look looking, for that time.

But the men who were not really able to write, they had you write letters for them?

Well, they asked me to write –

And you did –

Not long letters.

They would just sort of tell you what they wanted to say – would you actually write it or type it?

No, I'd write it.

You'd write it; in your handwriting?

Yeah.

Well, that's not too personal.

Well, kind of. I had this Ammunition Report, I thought I'll never finish it. It was – every bullet; every shell, everything I had to put on there were numbers. And you had to --

Wow, all had to be accounted for.

Yeah, if you fired one round, which could be 20 shells or 20 bullets, whatever, you had to account for that in your report. You gotta show it because then if ever an inspector comes in there they want to know – well, wait a minute, you showed a thousand of these and you've only got 500.

Oh, I had no idea that they watched it that closely.

Oh, yeah. We had – I was on the firing team for or against the Marines in Okinawa. That was interesting; we fired against them; there was a Lieutenant, myself and one other guy, I forget his name, and we fired .45s. those things are heavy enough, and we shot against them. I don't know how we paired out –

But you were able to shoot okay with your eye.

Yeah, I never had a problem; I played baseball. I played a lot of baseball without glasses. But what it was – it's farsighted – (turned tape)

With the Second World War – of course they lived with that dilemma all that time because even in Korea they had bayonet drills and all that. I had glasses; they figured I was going to be a nuisance. I don't know what the reason son.

They took you with glasses – I wonder if a war was on would they have taken you? If they really needed men?

I don't know.

You went in at peace time, more or less.

Well, yeah, but still as far as I know they weren't taking them. They may have taken them when Viet Nam was going on, but I don't know, because once they turned me down – it was either the Air Force or the Navy. I didn't want to go into the Army, but anyway Don and I decided we wanted to be gung-ho sailors.

So now, looking back, how do you think that your military experience affected your life?

It affected my life; it taught me a lot of things – being a better man and understand what other people are going through –

Visiting foreign countries –

Especially at work – I was more adept to people who were – I think it helped me develop – I became a manager and I had 22 people. Some people would probably say hey, he sucks – they're okay, I ran the department. My boss had an excellent boss; he understood; he knew I was an ex-serviceman. He wasn't, but he wanted to be –

Well, he appreciated your talents –

Well, he wanted me; I was competing against three other guys, and I'll never forget; we went to Atlanta – I think it was Atlanta -- to put on a presentation and I said I'll go; I got no choice; I want the money because I started having a bigger family. So I went to Georgia and did my job on the presentation – we all had a similar type presentation – and he called me while I was in Atlanta and said how are you doing – I said great. It went well, as far as I know. He said yeah, so I hear. How would you like the job? I said well, you know you got three others. How would you like the job? I said yeah. So when I came back I was here. One guy was an out-of-towner; he was from Denver, he thought he would get the job because he knew the Chairman of the Board. But the Chairman of the Board said no, the decision was made by who's in charge of that department – and it so happens it was the Vice President and General Counsel – he liked what I did.

Well, good.

And I used to handle some of those legal people's complaints.

So you think your military service helped you in business?

Yeah, I think it made a better man of me. I tried to be a better man, but, you know – my wife, she passed away.

What was the highest rank you ever achieved?

Just Seaman.

Seaman – all that time you spent on that ship.

Yeah. When you're out at sea, I had an opportunity but well, one time I messed up. But the second time – we had to go out on training, so what the heck. I missed that because they only had a certain period of time they were allowing. And I was recommended each time, because the Lieutenant I reported to, he liked the work I did. He never had to check anything. I don't know why he didn't but – I must have done a great job. And then the Captain even had to do an investigation of the ship – going through all the departments, engineering and all that, so I did the minutes, then I had to type them up and give them to the Captain. But I had clerical experience more than anybody else there, even the guys

Thank old Sister Silveria.

Ha, pow, she hit me once; she hit me.

I know. So finally, what life lessons did you learn from military service?

Learn to respect people more and help people understand that life has got to be improved -- if you're thinking of doing the wrong things – just a better person, that's about it, I think.

You have a positive outlook about going through the service in general.

Yeah.

Okay, I think that's it, Steve, so I thank you very much for this interview and I thank you for your service to our country.

Any time.

**Stephen F. Kozar
1328 Spencer Lane
Batavia, IL 60510
630-723-9020**