

**This interview is being conducted on Monday, December 31, 2018, at the home of Theodore K. Reynolds. My name is Fran Prokop and I am speaking with Mr. Reynolds who served in the United States Navy and is a veteran of the Viet Nam Conflict. Ted learned of the Veterans' History project through me and he has kindly consented to participate in the National Archives Veterans' History Project. Here is his story:**

**Ted, when and where were you born?**

November 24, 1938, in Hinsdale, Illinois.

**What were your parents' occupations?**

My father – my adopted father, I found out – worked at Western Electric. My mother was a homemaker.

**How many sisters and brothers do you have?**

I have one brother and one sister.

**Did any of your relatives serve in the military?**

My brother was in the Navy – my younger brother.

**What did you do before entering the service?**

I was in Junior College.

**Did you enlist or were you drafted?**

I enlisted.

**What college was that?**

It was LaGrange Township Junior College.

**Really?**

Now it's all combined into C O D – College of DuPage.

**So you had other family members serving in the military –**

After I got out my younger brother was in –

**Oh, but not prior to that –**

No, I'm the oldest.

**But I mean like uncles in the Second World War?**

Oh, yeah, I had my mother's two brothers were in the Second World War. In fact they met in Paris after they were both in the Normandy Invasion.

**Oh, really! You were familiar with them – they were your uncles.**

Yeah, 'cuz my father was in the War – he was a radioman down in Texas.

**So you have a history of relatives being in the service.**

Yeah. And his father was in – enlisted with Teddy Roosevelt.

**Your grandfather –**

He got as far as Florida –

**Really! Do you have any – does your Dad have any memorabilia from that time?**

No.

**Oh, that's too bad. You say you enlisted – what prompted you to enlist? Did you enlist with a buddy or anything?**

Couple of us went down and talked to the Air Force recruiter – and, uh, okay, my Dad was in the Army Air Force. My uncle – my mother's sister's husband was in the South Pacific, in the Navy, and that's what kind of interested me.

**Did you talk to him about it?**

Well, not before I went in, but he had worked on a repair ship in the South Pacific. And I went and talked to the Navy recruiter and he said – well, I said I don't want to go to Great

Lakes. I joined the service to get away from LaGrange, and so he put a thing in for me to go to San Diego – and I had enough where I could go into electrical.

**One of these questions is why did you choose that specific branch of service – so you obviously did because of your uncle who was in the South Pacific.**

Right, right.

**So you said you went to San Diego – how did you get to San Diego?**

Well, I had an overcoat and a sports coat, because I left in January – went to the train station, got the train downtown. Went to the recruiting center and got sworn in, took us south to Midway, flew us to – there wasn't O'Hare at the time – took us – we stopped in Phoenix and then went to San Diego.

**Ted has just brought out a copy of his DD-214 and it states here that he went in on January 26, '58 and then you were in the Reserves too –**

Right, 'cuz I got extended for the Berlin Crisis, for five months.

**Okay, so you stayed till January of 1964 – I see that – involuntary extension of five months.**

Yep.

**Can you tell me about training camp after you got to San Diego – what was the name of that station?**

It was the Naval Recruiting Center, San Diego.

**How were your early days of training? What did it involve – can you describe like a typical day of boot camp?**

Well, you get up – they ended up making me Squad Leader 4 –

**What did that involve?**

Well, you have 7 or 8 guys behind you; you're kind of the leader.

**You weren't older when you went in, were you? How old were you actually?**

19.

**19 years old, okay. Why did they make you the leader?**

I don't know; maybe because I looked smart.

**Ha, ha, ha. Did you have classroom teaching in basic training?**

Uh, no.

**You just had --**

Like drills, exercises, marching, they called it "the grinder" and then cleaning.

**You lived in the barracks?**

Yes, yes.

**Well, how did you adapt to military life in general – the physical regimen, the barracks, the food, social life?**

That's no big deal because I was very active in school in track and cross-country and running so there was no physical problems for me at all.

**How about the food?**

The food was fine.

**And living in the barracks?**

Good, didn't bother me at all.

**Okay, good. So now, did you receive any specialized training while you were in boot camp?**

No.

**So it was just regular, ordinary training.**

You go through some tests – and I was qualified –

**Aptitude tests?**

Yes, so I went to Electrician's Mate School, which was in San Diego right after boot camp.

**How many weeks of boot camp was that?**

I want to say 6 or 8.

**So after those 8 weeks –**

Well, I went home for a week for leave; then I came back.

**And then you went to the Electrician's Mate school/**

Yes, EM school.

**That was classroom teaching?**

Right.

**That was considered specialized training?**

Right.

**How long was that school?**

I started – I'm trying to think – 'cuz I got out in August – out of EM school. I think it's nine weeks, so it would have been March that I got out of boot camp and in a couple of weeks I went to EM school and I got out in August and I was home for a week. And then I flew to San Francisco and that's where I picked up my ship, in Alameda.

**What was the name of the ship?**

USS Ranger – CVA-61. – largest in the world at that time.

**And that was an aircraft carrier?**

Yes, ma-am.

**What happened after you got to your ship?**

Well, we sat in the hangar bay all day until we were assigned – I was assigned to the electrical power shop and they gave us berthing assignments. That was on the second deck – slept above after steering. The electrical power shop was about midship on the third deck. And I did that for two years.

**On the same ship?**

Yep.

**So describe your duties – you're on the Ranger, could you describe your day-to-day duties?**

Well, basically I started out in ventilation, which is air – what do they call it – like repairing coffee pots and grills –

**Okay, repairs –**

Yeah – rewinding motors, elevators –

**So general repairs as needed.**

Yeah.

**And did you have regular hours, like 9 to 5?**

Well, there were no hours -- it wasn't 9 to 5, but at sea it's all the same.

**Well, tell me about – where did the ship go?**

The ship went to Hawaii – that's where we took on special weapons..

**What kind of special weapons?**

Nuclear weapons – guided missiles –

**Did you have to deliver them some place?**

No, we just had them on the ship.

**You rode around with them?**

Went to Japan.

**Probably not activated –**

No, I didn't do anything with them – armory – but they used them for the squadrons that would come aboard.

**Okay, like exercises or something?**

Yeah.

**So where did the ship go from Hawaii?**

Japan.

**Did you stay any length of time in these ports?**

Well, Hawaii was off and on. Japan was our home – Akuska was our home port – when we were deployed because it was a nine-month cruise. Y-O-K-O-S-U-K-A, Japan.

**Yokosuka, Japan. Ted has brought his USS Ranger Western Pacific 1959 Cruise Book – very interesting – many photos of the crew and officers – shows an itinerary of ports visited. I'm sure it was large, 5,000 man crew –**

Largest in the world at the time –(reviewing photos in the book).

**How was the cruise – did you run into any rough seas or storms?**

Not that particular one but a couple of others – because I went on three cruises with them and we had emergency pullout in Hong Kong.

**What does that mean?**

That means you had to pull out because there was a typhoon coming.

**And where did you go?**

Out to sea.

**So you just stayed out to sea –**

About 100 miles off the eye – so you had waves breaking over the flight deck

**Wow! That was really something –**

A little rough.

**How about the guys – were they sick –**

Some were – some ended up – because they were on liberty that day they got stuck on shore –

**But when you were in the heart of the storm, did you get sick?**

No.

**I'm sure some people did.**

Yep.

**But that was in Hong Kong – we're still in Yokosuka, Japan – what did you do in Japan? Did you stay there any length of time?**

Well, that was our home port so we were there about a month. And then we went to Buckner Bay?

**What is Buckner Bay?**

You got me, I don't remember.

**But what were you doing on the ship while sailing around?**

Still the same duties you had at sea.

**Were you repairing?**

Yes.

**Doing repairs as needed?**

Right. They give you a job each day.

**How did you like sailing on the ship?**



Fine, yeah. In fact when we were in Yokosuka, I went to the EM Club and bought a camera. Then I would go on tours – they had tours – and I'd take pictures – I think I've got three great brown things full of slides –

**Oh –**

My mother swears I didn't take them – I took one –

**So you really got around and saw everything. That's what you joined the Navy for**

Right.

**To see the world, right?**

Yeah.

**So you were never in any combat at all.**

No, I wasn't.

**What's the highest rank you ever achieved?**

E 5 – which is Second Class Electrician.

**How about any medals or honors that you received?**

Just Good Conduct Medal.

**And you were in four full years?**

Four and a half –

**That's right, you were extended. How about friendships formed and camaraderie of service – did you meet guys that you stayed in contact with?**

I met the fellow that was my Best Man – he was from Opelika, Alabama.

**What was his name?**

Sonny Lunsford.

**And you kept in touch with him after you left the service?**

No, I didn't. In fact I just recently found a number for him and I called – he had since passed away but I talked to his wife.

**So he was basically the only one that you really kept any contact with?**

Right.

**Continue on – you were in Buckner Bay and then where did you go.**

After Buckner Bay we went to Sasebo, Japan.

**Why did you go to these different ports?**

I don't know why the ships went there but they did.

**Did you drop off or pick up anything other than just regular supplies?**

Yes, well, they would do that and also because of requirements you would refuel at sea – replenish stores – or groceries at sea.

**Well, this was not in wartime – so there was no –**

Yeah, it was before Viet Nam – it was fleet's action – until we really go into it, I think in '60

**So what were your off-duty or recreational pursuits – you said you bought a camera? You took photographs –**

Yeah.

**I'm talking about sports – did you have any organized sports – teams playing against each other?**

No.

**Just played cards?**

Yeah, pinochle.

**No poker?**

Cribbage.

**Cribbage? Really! How did you stay in touch with family and friends back home?**

Letters.

**Strictly letters – no phone calls?**

I wrote a letter every day to my wife.

**Oh, you were married while in the service?**

I was married in '61 – in fact I came home in '59 for the first time – December of '59 – that's when I met my wife.

**Oh, you met her in '59, but then you got married in '61?**

Well, I wanted to get married then but my father wouldn't lend me the money to get an engagement ring.

**Okay, so you had to wait till '61.**

Um-hmm.

**Okay, so you wrote strictly almost daily letters and no phone calls.**

They didn't have telephone calls.

**I know it was – they had them but it was probably very expensive.**

Very expensive –

**Right – so strictly letters. Not like today with the Internet and seeing everything –**

They have it easy.

**They do, really. Continue on – where did you go after Sasebo, Japan?**

After Sasebo we went to Manila, in the Philippines.

**Manila, so you went all around the South Pacific.**

And then Subic Bay after that.

**Did you exit the ship and went around on tours and took photographs –**

Right, right, whatever tours were available.

**Did any incidents occur that caused any problems for the ship?**

No.

**So it was a very uneventful cruise.**

Yes.

**Okay, then Manila and the Philippines –**

Subic Bay and the Philippines – and from there we went to Hong Kong.

**So what happened in Hong Kong – you started talking about that before.**

Well, I went and got a jacket, sports coat, and it was funny because the taylor had us out for lunch – so I thought we were eating scrambled eggs with toothpicks in it – but they were half-born baby chicks!

**Half born baby chicks?!!**

That's right.

**Oh, you're kidding.**

Well, I mean, if you don't know what you're eating –

**Exactly –**

It's scrambled eggs with toothpicks! Ha, ha.

**Oh, my God – that's a new one! Well, different countries, different cultures –**

You're not gonna get what you get here.

**Of course not! – And that's why you travel to begin with – I think it's very interesting.**

Right. In the – we did have a tour of Tokyo – oh, they were gonna put you up in a nice hotel and all that, but we didn't want – I didn't want that. I wanted to go into the rural area and stay in a Japanese hotel –

**And you did that?**

Yeah, and they treated us great. We slept on the floor and had a brick for a pillow.

**Really – See, that’s interesting!**

And we got up in the morning and looked out and a guy’s shining – well – our spit-shined shoes – he’s buffing them all out.

**Oh, he was cleaning them for you.**

Um-hmm. So we experienced a little Japanese life – instead of just – you know, you can go to a hotel anytime. We wanted to be authentic.

**When you were in Manila, did you interact with the native population?**

Well, other than going over and drinking with them – that’s a typical sailor.

No, I didn’t have a job with them.

**Okay. So Subic Bay and Hong Kong – Tokyo was where you stayed –**

Yeah, and we took a tour out of Yokosuka. Then we were in Kobe, Japan, which was the original capital of Japan – till they moved it to Tokyo.

**Did you take tours there too?**

Yes.

**Anything unusual occur?**

What I specifically remember was the Golden Pavilion – it’s a building that’s very famous.

**I’ve never been to Japan. I think it would be interesting to see that culture. I heard**

**it was very expensive in Japan – food ---**

It is now.

**Even then – I think, like food, compared to us – someone who was there as a tourist, for example, a McDonald’s hamburger was like triple whatever it costs here. It was very expensive.**

Oh, yeah.

**Okay, so you kept going around and you have the list here of where the ship went.**

**Is this your nine-month tour?**

Yes – we left in January and came back in July.

**So you went to all these places and then you came back to San Francisco?**

Right.

**And that was all at Alameda –**

Right across the bay from San Francisco.

**Okay, now you're back in San Francisco; what's your next step? – because that was just one trip, right?**

Yeah. I did three of those.

**Three of the same type of trips?**

Yeah.

**And did you go to the same places or did they vary?**

All the same.

**All the same? – well, did you see different things when you went on subsequent trips?**

I did – the last cruise I didn't even get off the ship.

**Oh, really – because you had already seen those places.**

Already been there, done that.

**They never went anywhere else – they just went to the same – followed the same route –**

Yeah, basic route.

**So this book could serve for all three of your cruises.**

Right, well, I had two of them but I lost one –

**Oh, so you had a book for each cruise.**

Yes. They have their own newspaper –

**Ted has pulled out a newspaper here dated July 1959 called “The Shield” – oh, the Imperial Family came on the ship – Wow! You were in the 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet –**

Yes.

**Besides 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet – what other designation –**

WESTPAC – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet – E Division. Engineering Department Electrical – E Division.

**The Shield is now a smaller edition in March 1962 – it’s much smaller – oh, Bobby and Ethel Kennedy are on this one. I see a Fox Division – so you were E – they’re showing the route taken, like a triangle, across the Pacific, up and down Japan, the Philippines, then Hawaii and back – interesting.**

In fact, coming back, we came back circle, and we were off the coast of Alaska when my son was born. I got a telegram – my oldest son.

**So you crossed the International Date Line several times.**

Yes.

**Don’t they have a ceremony for that – when you cross?**

No, that’s the equator – the Pollywog–

I never got that – we never went across the equator.

**Oh, really, so it’s only when you cross the equator and not the International Date Line – okay.**

Right, right.

**Once you finished the first trip, how long were you home the –**

Two weeks.

**Two week leave and then –**

Come back to the ship.

**And then you start all over again?**

Yep.

**Oh my God! Ha, ha – well, did your job ever change? Did you stay with general repairs?**

In the two years I was in the electrical power shop and then they transferred me to the AO Division – which was Aviation and Ordnance Division.

**What was your job there?**

Well, I started out with deck elevators, then I had a resting gear – that's what they catch the airplanes with. Then I was refueling – jet refueling –

**You were on the deck then?**

Yes. And then the last was catapult electrician.

**So you had to make sure that was in operational order?**

Yep

**And while on the deck you wear different colored shirts –**

Our shirts were basically green – no, yellow shirts. – no it wasn't – it was green.

**I believe that my son had a green shirt too; and everybody had a different job to do.**

Yep.

**So when you returned from your second cruise, same thing over again, as far as –**

Same thing.

**You got two weeks off?**

Yep.

**And went back to the same ship?**



Yep.

**They don't change. Did you want to do that? Did you ever request to do something different – go somewhere different?**

I was happy.

**You were satisfied.**

Yes.

**Okay, so it came to 1962 now, what happened?**

I got discharged in May of 1962. Came home with – McDaniels – is his last name – I don't remember his first name – drove back from San Francisco to Chicago. In fact my wife and mother-in-law were in church with my father-in-law with our son, who was only a couple of months old then. So, it was funny because I had my friend – well, we both drove. He wanted to take a shower so I said go ahead and take a shower, gave him towels, and I went to the church. And my father-in-law said, "Well, who's home there with him?" I just spent four years with him –

**Exactly!**

He's gonna be fine; he just wanted to take a shower.

**Right, ha, ha,**

So he finally calmed down.

**So what were the circumstances surrounding your extension of five and a half months?**

That was because they built the Berlin Wall,

**Well, that had to be in '62 then?**

Well, no, that was in '60 I would say, or '61. Because I would have been home earlier – yeah, it was '61.

**So they were just beginning to build the Berlin Wall.**

Right.

**And how did that affect you?**

Because I was in a critical rate. If I had been an I C electrician, I would have got out. But being an electrician's mate, I was in a critical rate so I had to stay in.

**So you stayed for five and a half months.**

Yep.

**You were not happy about that?**

Well, there's nothing you can do about it so you end up stop crying about it and move on and do your job.

**So what did you do during that five and a half months? The same thing?**

Same thing. Same job – uneventful.

**So you got out in august or September?**

Well, I got out in May and then I went to the Reserves, which at the time was in Riverside –

**Oh, I remember – they had that Riverside Reserve station – off Cermak Road.**

Yeah.

**What did you have to do in the Reserves to maintain your status?**

I went over – the Commander's wife stove wouldn't work, so – she had an electric stove – so I replaced a fuse, and that was it.

**Didn't you have to go like one weekend a month or something?**

No, because we didn't do that. We did go for two weeks –

**In the summer?**

Well, it was only one year – we went to Galveston, Texas – I was supposed to catch a ship. Well, my father-in-law missed the exit and I missed my plane, so I telegraphed ahead that I missed the plane and I would be on the next one. Well, by the time they took us out to the pier the ship had gone. So I went to the Naval Recruiting Station there – and that's where I did my – I worked on the Captain's wife's range – replaced a fuse.

**So you never did make the ship?**

I stayed on the Coast Guard Base.

**For two weeks?**

Yeah, I did see the ship when it pulled back in.

**So you had Coast Guard duty – ha, ha. So that was the extent of your Reserve duty?**

That was the extent, yes.

**And that was just one time – I thought you were in for two years.**

No, just a year.

**When you were returning from your extended five and a half months, how did you return home – oh, you said you drove.**

We drove in a truck.

**And how was your reception by family and friends?**

Very good; they were happy to see me.

**How was your readjustment to civilian life?**

No problem.

**Did you ever use the GI Bill?**

No, ma'am.

**What did you do when you came back home?**

I went with my father-in-law; he worked at Western Electric. He took me in and I took a battery of tests to find out what I would like to do. My brother-in-law worked at IBM, but – he was some kind of clerk, so I went and interviewed there and they hired me as a typewriter repairman. And I was in the first class at Lexington to work on the Selectric typewriter.

**And what did you do after that – did you stay with typewriter repair?**

From typewriter repair to – they called them MTST – which was magnetic tape selected text – and then it went to MAG CARD -- --

**Like keypunch cards?**

Well, no, not on mag cards – they were cards like this size – put them in a sheet-type instead of putting them on a roll of tape –

**I'm not familiar with that.**

But it's the same principle as the typewriter – guys who worked on the large systems had problems with their IO printer, which was a Selectric typewriter, so we would come in and fix that for them.

**How long did you stay at IBM?**

I retired in '93 with 31 years.

**So did you go on to progressive jobs from there?**

Yes.

**What did you end up being – I mean, you were always a repairman/**

Yes.

**You stayed in that division – that type of work?**

Right.

**Do you have membership in any veterans' organizations?**

I belong to – lifetime member of the American Legion.

**Is there anything else you wish to add – like storms at sea or accidents?**

No. My wife would come out and see me – she wasn't my wife, she was my girlfriend, and I'd take her on board ship – and she was awed by all of it.

**It is imposing. That covers everything – now some reflections back -- how do you think that your military experience affected your life?**

Oh, I enjoyed it because it got me away from home and I got to see the world – some of the world that I'll probably never get to see again.

**That's right; it is an advantage. Any life lessons that you learned from military service?**

Yeah, keep your mouth shut.

**Ha, ha – would you do it again?**

Yeah, yes I would; it's a very good experience. I'm very happy, very fortunate that I was able to do it. My brother – he was an aviation fire control man – and he never got aboard ship.

**Really.**

He was stationed – at a transit base in Yuma, Arizona.

**Well, you were lucky. When you went in you said you wanted to travel and you got your wish. I'm sure you were happy.**

Right, join the Navy and see the world.

**I'm sure you were not sorry; I thank you very much for this interview and for your service to our country.**

You're very welcome.

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