

This interview is being conducted on Tuesday, October 31, 2023 at the home of Alfred Jack Persin. My name is Fran Prokop and I am speaking with Jack who served in the United State Navy and is a veteran of the Viet Nam era. Jack 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:

Jack, when and where were you born?

Born in Bedford, Ohio, July 8, 1947; my parents were Al and Ellie Persin.

How many sisters and brothers do you have?

I have two sisters, Pat the eldest, is living in Dallas, Texas. Debbie, the younger, is living in Cody, Wyoming.

What were your parents' occupations?

My father served in the U.S. Army during World War II; came out of the Army, he was in the hardware business for a period of ten years; he owned his own store. He sold that and then became a Postman for the U.S. Post Office. My mother was a homemaker; took care of the kids.

Did you have any other relatives serving in the military?

We did. In our family my Uncle Joe was in the Marine Corps, World War II; received a Purple Heart in the Battle of Iwo Jima. My Uncle Al was in the U.S. Navy, he was a Seabee in World War II. My Uncle Bill was U.S. Navy --also served in World War II. My Uncle Jim served in the U.S. Navy; he served during the Korean War. My Uncle Bud was in the U.S. Army; he served during WW II. My cousin Bill served in the Air Force during Viet Nam. My cousin Bob served in the Air Force during Viet Nam.

Wow – you have a whole family of veterans!

My Uncle Ed was attached to the U.S. Navy Department in San Francisco.

You've had quite a group of individuals. I've never heard that many; that's the first time I've heard that many.

They all served, and very proudly too.

So you had a lot of inspiration from your relatives –

Absolutely.

That's one of the questions – why did you choose that specific branch of service?

Well, I chose it – I chose the Navy – I was actually in college and dropped a class and became a part-time student. Six days later I was drafted into the United States Army. I had a friend who

was at the University of Miami and he likewise was struggling in college. He had a conversation with me and said – interested in joining the Navy. So we both joined the Navy on a six-month deferment. We went out to California –

What is the six-month deferment?

Six-month deferment is – you sign, you enlist in that branch of the service and you don't have to report to duty for six months.

Oh, I see.

So, we were living in Bedford, Ohio and we both did the six-month deferment and we went out to California to live with my Uncle Jim for four months and then we came back and enlisted, and both did duty – training at Great Lakes Naval Station.

So you actually enlisted.

Enlisted, right.

And when was that? When did you enlist?

Being that I joined in '67, I enlisted in September of 1966 –

And then you had that deferment.

I had the deferment, yes.

How was your departure for training camp?

It was good. I took a train from Cleveland, Ohio to Chicago and then a bus took us up to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station.

So you enlisted in Ohio, your home state –

Yes.

How were your early days of training – could you describe a typical day in boot camp?

Boot camp – that took the boy out of me and made me a man – from rifle training to doing your laundry in February and hanging clothes outside to freeze and bringing them into a hot room. I was appreciative of the training and the respect our Officers expected from us to give to them. So it was very good.

How long did that training last?

It was 120 days.

Did that include classroom training?

Some classroom training – a lot of physical exercise training –

And Rifle and gunnery and things like that.

Right.

Did you have any specialized training at that time?

Not at that time, no.

So you just completed your – 120 days is four months.

Right, then I got Orders.

Did you get a leave to go back home before –

A two week leave –

After you completed basic training.

Yes.

So what were your Orders?

I was assigned to the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi, Texas.

And how did you get there?

By plane; I flew to Corpus Christi, Texas directly from – in a military airplane.

M A T S? Military Air Transport Service?

Yes.

How did you adapt to the military lifestyle – the physical regimen, the barracks, the food – the social life –

Very interesting. The first 60 days of my assignment – I was assigned to Squadron 29 VT – it was training pilots and copilots to navigate in the air.

Probably before basic training you took all kinds of aptitude tests.

Correct.

What did yours preclude you to –

It led me to work detail and actually the opportunity to become an Air Crewman.

So did you go into any specialized training for that?

Well, my first training out of boot camp at Corpus Christi was they put me in the kitchen for 60 days –

Ha, ha – were you actually cooking or was it K P?

I was cooking – basically I made salad – we made all our own salad dressings – and then we cooked and we served for 60 days. Upon completion of that I went to the squadron.

Wait – does everybody get that treatment?

I don't know. I never asked if everybody got it, but –

I never heard of that –

I got it and I ate well during that period, which was good and I lived in the barracks.

How did that work out?

It was fine. I didn't bring any personal clothes with me so everything I had was military.

And then as I grew comfortable with the environment, I started buying some regular – civilian clothes.

But you lived on the base.

I lived on the base in the barracks for about six months.

And during that six months is when you were taking training?

Our squadron – we sent planes out every morning – sent usually a dozen planes out with Officers going through training to be navigators. My job early on was to fuel the planes; go through a checklist of engine and structural – and then sign off that the plane was acceptable to fly.

So you were like a plane mechanic.

I was a plane mechanic. I did that for 120 days and the Commander assigned me to my own plane so I had my own plane and I maintained that plane and that also gave me the honor to become an Air Crewman. So every time that plane flew, I sat between the pilot and copilot and I operationally was responsible for inflight questions and answers from the navigators. I was responsible for the maintenance of that plane before it took off and after. And I flew just under 700 hours in active flight time over the Gulf of Mexico generally.

In that capacity as an air crewman; that was your title.

Air Crewman. So at that point, interesting enough, if there was hurricanes coming into the Gulf of Mexico, they would fly us to -- out to the east – Bermuda, to Las Vegas – we would go on 5 or 6 day excursions, just to get out of Corpus Christi and out of harm's way. So all of the flights flew out of the hangar and that was very nice. I got flight pay, I got regular pay and I also got a per diem to live off base. So I then moved into an apartment with three other gentlemen in that apartment with me. We stayed together for 14 months before I got Orders.

Wow – so you lived in a 4-bedroom apartment.

It was a 3-bedroom apartment but I doubled up with another gentleman who was in the Navy with me.

Off the base.

Yes.

So that all took place while you were in Corpus Christi.

That's correct. And all four of us became friends with the owner of a radio station; he also owned a nightclub – and our schedule for flying – we had different schedules than most of the sailors that were there. We flew – then we had the next three days off – so we were all bartenders at this local place – and that's how I met my wife. First on Padre Island and then she happened to walk into the club that I was working at and talked to me.

And you are married to that same girl today!

Going on 54 years this November 29.

And her name is Diane – I know.

Jack and Diane – right.

Did you make lifelong friends with these three guys that you roomed with?

We were very close all that time during Corpus Christi – Stanley Czarniecki – he actually lived in Bolingbrook –

Wow!

So we've reconnected. We didn't connect for 50 years, however, he met my son and he said "You look just like Jack Persin" and he said, "That's my Dad".

Really!! Does your son live in the area?

He lives in Naperville and he was a golf professional in Bolingbrook and Stan was getting a lesson.

He said you look just like a guy I was in the Navy with –

Isn't that amazing!!

So I stayed in contact with him. One of my best friends during that period was Gary Frye; he passed away in Florida in 2005.

So you're still friends with Stanley"?

Yeah, we have connected a few times. We actually have – on Facebook there is a Facebook page just dedicated to our Squadron, VT 29 – that's how I stay in touch. That's our squadron emblem.

So after the 14 months in Corpus Christi what did you get Orders for?

I got Orders for the USS Iwo Jima.

What kind of ship is that?

It's an LPH 2 – it is a helicopter carrier. So I stayed on the air side – aviation side of the Navy. They were off the coast of Viet Nam. I had a two-week leave and upon my discharge from Corpus Christi my then girlfriend, Diane and I were driving to Cleveland, Ohio to meet my parents – and our car broke down just outside of Houston around 3 o'clock in the morning.

Oh!!

And the local Sheriff picked us up on the side of the road, and said, "Everybody here in Texas -- it's Sunday morning -- is gonna be in church till 10 o'clock – or 11 o'clock. I'll take you to the diner and after church I'll have the tow truck guy come out and get you and take you out to your car." We were fine with that. So he came out, the tow truck driver happened to be a Sheriff and he picked us up; he towed the car into town and said I'll drop it at the mechanic – which he also was the mechanic. He charged us \$25 for the towing of the car; he said the car had a blown cylinder and he'd give us \$50 for it –

For the car!!

Yeah, for the car. So we were pretty much stranded. We had a lot of personal effects in the car – decided to -- we had three choices – hitch hike, take the train or take a Greyhound Bus to Cleveland. She did not want to take a train; it appeared she couldn't run and catch on to it. I didn't want to take a bus, so we hitch hiked – we got 26 rides from just north of Houston to Cleveland, Ohio.

Unbelievable!!

Later I actually have penned a book – "26 Rides with Jack and Diane" –

Oh, how nice!

I have not had it published; it's in the proof-reading status at this time.

Wonderful!

And all the personal effects we had, which was TV, sewing machine, tools, clothing – we left with the Sheriff at his home. He said "When you're done – when you get out of the military – come back. I'll have it all here for you". Well, 14 months later, we did go back to Houston and sure enough he had everything there with a tarp over it except for the television, which he was watching. We gave him the TV – took all of our other items and continued to drive to California, San Diego.

Wait a minute – when did you get married in this whole thing?

You went into Cleveland as a not married couple.

No. I went to the USS Iwo Jima – I served there –

Wait a minute. You didn't say, which I know personally that Diane is from Downers Grove, IL –

She came and went back to live with her Mom and Dad, and we corresponded while I was in the – aboard the USS Iwo Jima –

Okay.

And we had some radio patch phone calls, which I didn't realize when I was calling her at 9 o'clock my time, it was like 4 o'clock in the morning in Illinois – didn't make her father happy but he did put up with it. So we planned to get married January 9, 1970 – however President Nixon did an early troop withdrawal and he notified our ship in August that we were going to be bringing back to San Diego 2,000 Marines.

Okay.

So upon getting those orders I told Diane I'm coming back actually in November, so I want to change the wedding date from January 9 to get married over Thanksgiving weekend, so we got married November 29, 1969.

So your anniversary is one month away – 54 years Wow – congratulations!

Part of the duty – upon coming back, we got married –

Wait, wait – before – I want you to tell me more about the 14 months – the time you spent on the Iwo Jima. What did you do? What did you encounter? Did you travel through violent weather – anything like that?

Well, we had weather; we went through a typhoon. We were based – it took me three flights to get to Viet Nam. My first trip was to San Francisco – a military base. I waited for a plane going to Okinawa. I took a helicopter to a ship – don't remember the name – it was a freighter type Navy ship; then from there I took another helicopter ride to the USS Iwo Jima.

So you went right to the ship.

Right.

What were your duties on the ship?

So my initial duties on the USS Iwo Jima were crash and salvage. I was aboard the flight deck; prepared the helicopters to take off and then did the maintenance on the return home – as far as fueling and everything else.

So you learned with planes, but you were working with helicopters also.

WE were with helicopters. Upon – some of the interesting things we did – we had Republic of Korea, they're called ROK Marines – they did the details in Viet Nam; we flew them into the jungle and they would basically go where the US Marines did not want to go, like in the caves to flush out the enemy. We also had a detail of Marines that we sent in on – usually at midnight, 3 o'clock in the morning would be the latest – into the jungle, and we would fly out the wounded and bring those that had been killed in action back. Our ship had a full hospital on it. It also had a morgue on it.

You said you brought back the wounded –

Brought back the wounded and those killed in action. And then we came back into San Diego with them.

You had a morgue, so you had a refrigerator –

Yes, early on, one early, early morning I was on the flight deck and I remember a doctor telling me – ‘ cuz we were trying to get them off helicopters – the ones that are screaming and yelling, don’t need the care that those that can’t talk. He said if you got somebody – the corpsmen were grouping them – but he said, “the ones that can make sounds and that, they’re a little better off than those that can’t do anything.” And that kinda stuck with me my whole life. So when I see, in an emergency room or something – I see the same thing. So we came back to San Diego –

Wait – this is what you did – those were basically your duties back and forth the whole time you were on the Iwo Jima.

Right. And I had – we all had assigned – I think it was three hours of watch duty – so we sat on watch duty – and I did that.

What about storms? Did you encounter any really bad storms?

One typhoon we went through –

How did that go?

Well, we had -- at that time we had the ROK Marines onboard, and there was a lot of sickness – motion sickness – and we actually got through it. We collided with a Russian destroyer during that storm.

Wow! Didn’t hear anything about it; today you would hear everything –

Yeah; nothing was said about it. No damage to our ship – the destroyer had minimal damage – and that was during the typhoon.

How many men – how large was your ship?

We had US Navy serving on the ship about 1,100; we could carry an additional 2,300.

Hmm – I mean in length – how large was the ship.

I don’t know that answer.

Not as large as a regular air craft carrier.

No, it’s not. It’s probably 2/3 size of an air craft carrier.

Again, tell me, it was an LPH you said.

LPH-2.

How many months were you on that ship?

That took me up to my wedding – so after we came back to San Diego. We went to dry dock to basically scrape the rust and paint; we were gonna be in dry dock for six months. During that time, I lived off base – my wife and I – and basically worked from 6 a.m. to noon. And she likewise worked from 6 a.m. to noon.

What did she do?

She worked for Pacific Telephone Company as an operator.

What did you do during this time?

Just basically maintenance on the ship. I was more of a supervisor; I was an E-4, which LPH-2 or 3 Petty Officer. So I gave assignments to junior military people to work on the plane.

What was your highest rank that you achieved?

E-4.

And when did you get that rank?

I was an E-4 in Corpus Christi. I was E-4 with Air Crewman wings, which is a kind of distinction.

Is that like a Sergeant?

It could be a sergeant, in the Army.

Comparable to Sergeant. How did you adapt generally to living on the ship – you know, close quarters with other Navy men.

I had my own group of Navy men. During Viet Nam we loved listening to music – at that time I guess it was Beatles music and Dave Clark 5. I grew up Catholic so I went to church every morning. When I was a younger boy, 2nd, 3rd, 4th grade I wanted to be an altar boy but I couldn't learn Latin, so the nun would not let me be an altar boy. So during my Viet Nam era I went to 6 a.m. mass and was an altar boy for the priest.

Today you don't need Latin to be an altar boy.

No, you don't. So I did that every morning while we were in Viet Nam. Coming back – that was adapting to the friends I had. We were very close. I don't know that we lost any people serving on our ship. WE came back; we still stayed friends. My wife and I lived off base, so we drove from Cleveland -- after we got married -- to California and on our way we stopped at that Sheriff's house in Texas and picked up our personal effects. During our first probably six months in San Diego, we were contacted to be on the Newly Wed Game –

No kidding!!

So we were on the Newly Wed Game in April 1970.

That's when you were in California, Right? Wow – and who was the host on that show, do you remember? Was it Bill Cullen?

No, it wasn't Bill Cullen. It'll come to me. (Bob Eubanks). We did film in Los Angeles. I had two Aunts and Uncles living in Long Beach so they came up to the show with us. Our ship was selected Ship of the Year in 1969 by the President and he gave us a new assignment, which we left in early April. We were selected to pick up Apollo 13.

Wow!

So we set sail. We stayed in Hawaii for a couple of days waiting for Apollo 13 to take off on the mission. That happened and then we were notified that there was problems and they didn't know if we would be

picking up – they had several ships in the Pacific. They told us to sail down towards Australia – where it just happened to be that’s where Apollo 13 came into the earth’s atmosphere. So we were there for the pickup of the capsule and the Astronauts.

Wow!! That was Amazing! And that happened in 1970.

It was like April 11, 1970., they came in.

That’s really nice – that was Nixon, right?

Yeah, it was Nixon.

A lot of adventures – so did you personally see the astronauts?

I was on the flight deck and I even get choked up about this now, in that nobody knew what was going on. You didn’t have radio contact no longer with them as they were – the last hour – and I remember standing there and they said they’re coming – the big – we heard the sonic boom and in about 5 or 10 seconds later these red, white and blue parachutes opened.

They were that close; you heard the boom.

Yes. And it floated down into the Pacific Ocean; they sent a helicopter out with Navy Seals on it. They did 4 or 5 taps on the capsule and got 4 or 5 taps back.

Wow – that’s really something!!

It was.

Where did you take them when they got off?

They flew back to the ship. They were in isolation. A capsule was specifically set up for them. There was lots of media on the ship, press, news stations and they stayed on the ship. We went back to Hawaii; they went from Hawaii – they flew back to the States – I don’t know if they went to Washington or Houston – but they flew back to the States and we sailed back to San Diego. That was April. I spent another six months serving in San Diego. We never went back out and then discharged.

So when you say serving, the ship was there in San Diego; you had duties on the ship.

Just normal, wake up in the morning, go into the ship, do whatever our chores were and jump back home, so, it was like a 9 to 5 job, but it was 6 a.m.

So were any of these men with you on the ship the three who were with you in Corpus Christi in the apartment?

No, this was all a new group of friends; two were from Massachusetts.

That’s my question; did you make any permanent friendships –

Not that I continued on like I did in Corpus Christi. But I’d actually gone on to look for them and have not been able to find them.

So you searched for them but cannot find them.

Yeah.

Did you ever receive any medals, honors or awards?

I got the Viet Nam Ribbon; I was awarded Sailor of the Quarter in 1968 of Squadron VT-29. I received that; I got a Letter of Commendation from the Commander of the Base, and also got my Air Crewman Wings, which were probably the hardest thing to get.

While you were on the Iwo Jima going back and forth with the helicopter – how about your emotions relating to combat and witnessing casualties or witnessing destruction. How did you handle that?

It was a short time we were there; we didn't spend a lot of time there. A short time – it was – made me proud to see our servicemen and seeing the results they were able to accomplish. However, the loss of life and the loss of people that had given their heart and soul to the military was sad. I had lost a high school friend before I went to Viet Nam. He enlisted right out of high school and within the first six months he was killed in action. I still reflect back on that – it was – war is just not a good thing and – but yet it's a necessary evil and I served with pride; my faith was important to me so I prayed a lot while I was stationed on board the USS Iwo Jima.

After you returned back home, how was your reception by family and friends?

Very positive. Interesting – I grew up in Ohio – I was probably half hour from Kent State University where the National Guard had attacked the student body and killed some – so Viet Nam was not a real popular thing in Ohio, but my sphere of friends and family, and being that almost all – actually all of my uncles had served, it was received very favorably when I came back.

Yes.

I had a part time job while I was working at a inaudible Supply Company in Ohio – so when I got discharged, our obvious thing was just to go back to Ohio and the company rehired me and gave me my military time as seniority, so I got a little boost in my pay. I did that for about six years.

I didn't catch the name of that company –

It was called Anchor Fasteners – -- six years – and made my way from working on the shipping dock to shipping manager, production control manager. The point of my – somewhere in 1978 I had taken the test to become a policeman in Bedford, Ohio. I took the test, did the physical, everything that had to be done I did. And a salesman came in to Anchor Fasteners and I told him I was getting ready to make a career shift and he goes, "Why don't you come work for me." I said "because I didn't know I had an opportunity to do that." He doubled my salary, what I would have had as a policeman, and I went to work for Yellow Freight System as a salesman. Within 90 days of going to work for him, he made a decision to accept a position in Boulder, Colorado, and lo and behold, I was in my 20s and the average age of the salesmen there was probably 40s to 55 years old. There was five salesmen – and he made me Sales Manager.

Wow! Over the other guys.

I became sales manager and I did that for six months. The Vice President I reported to left the company; he contacted me and said I'm leaving and going to a company called Pacific Intermountain Express -- also known as P.I.E. I'd like to make you an offer to come to Chicago; I know you've got family in

Chicago. So I accepted that transfer to a new company. I was a Branch Manager of the Aurora Office and then later was promoted to City Sales Manager.

And that was at P I E.

Then as city sales manager for two years; I was promoted to Regional Sales Director for six states.

Wow! You really climbed up – did you ever go to school after the service or did you use the GI Bill?

I did go to – while I was in Corpus Christi, Texas I went to Corpus Christi University business – Accounting Department – had classes. I did go back to work on a degree but I never finished college in Ohio.

Did you use the G.I Bill to try to do that?

I did. I did.

Lot of people don't finish college – still go very, very far even if you have 2 or 3 years of college.

I absolutely have been blessed in my life with my career. I didn't expect to end up ever in Illinois. It's just that the doors opened and I accepted it.

Right, take the opportunity when it presents itself.

Which made it good for my wife because her family is all here; my family is all in Ohio.

Ohio is not that far – only 300 miles to Ohio.

We just came back this morning.

WE sort of skipped over a couple of things; let's go back briefly only –

Sure.

When you were in Corpus Christi, after basic training, did you ever have any recreational or off-duty pursuits – mostly sports – were there any kind of organized sports teams? Did you play against each other?

No – good question. In Corpus Christ I was a member of -- The Naval Air Station had a softball team –

That's what I'm getting at.

And it was fast pitch softball; we traveled; we had men that got out of the military and became professional baseball players –

Oh, really; they were pretty good then

Yes. And -- played men's softball, fast pitch.

Did you play against other military teams?

Military teams; we played against teams in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Just civilian teams.

Yeah, Civilian teams, and we traveled – it was basically an All Star Team.

Oh, wow !

And that was great duty. So coupled with that, when I was in San Diego, we had a flag football team – then we played against different ships.

Okay – yeah, different ships. I ask this question to everybody and very few men had organized sports like that.

Actually, when I got out of the Navy, in Yellow Freight System, we had a flag football team that we played against other trucking companies and never lost a game.

Really!! Ha, ha.

And then we settled in Bedford, Ohio. I played on three men’s softball teams. So I played softball almost every night and on Sundays they would take us to the local prison and we would be bused in and play against the prisoners – which was kind of cool. Diane never liked it, but we were safe. They had armed guards watching the ball game and –

They’re interested in baseball like any other men are –

Yeah, and they had a good team. So that was a part of playing baseball –

That was at a prison in Ohio.

Yeah, yeah. I played on a team for J.C. Penney’s; we represented J.C. Penney’s; then they paid us to play, which was nice.

Nice. So, sounds like you didn’t have any difficult readjustment back to civilian life.

No, no.

You sort of transitioned right in – smooth.

We had no problems – when I was in Corpus Christi, I think once I got into living off base and the group of gentlemen – if we didn’t fly, we pretty much had open days. Corpus Christi is about 12 miles from the Gulf of Mexico – the bay – Padre Island – just about every day we would be at Padre Island around 11 o’clock in the morning, stay there till 3 or 4 in the afternoon – and do what Navy guys do – have a beer or something, watch the girls –

Hard work; hard life –

That’s how I met Diane too – she was walking down the beach. She just got in with her friend from Downers Grove and they were walking on the beach and I had said to her, “Better put some sun screen on or you’re gonna get burned in this Texas sun.”

Yes, she is so light skinned.

And she said to me, “I’ve got a father back home. I don’t need a daddy telling me what to do.”

Ha, ha.

So when she did come in that next night up to the bar I worked at – it was called the Haunted House – she came in and basically beet red, burnt, all I could say is “I told you so.”

Right, ha, ha.

So one of my friends – the next night she came back again, she was there for like a week, and she came back - the next night I wasn't working but I was at the club and I said to my friend, -- Diane is 5'2"; her friend was about 5'9" – I said "Let's ask those two girls to dance." He said okay. I said, "I'll take the short one; you take the tall one." And from that we started dating right after that – that one dance.

Wow – and that was IT!

Yeah.

Well, that's nice and it certainly has worked out well for you. Are you a member of any Veterans organizations today?

Actually, what I'm wearing today, Naperville Responds for Veterans –

What is that?

I co-founded it with the late Mayor Pradel in 2010.

Was he the Mayor of Naperville?

He was; he's deceased now. So, co-founder, I currently sit as Immediate Past President. Our organization was a spinoff from Hurricane Katrina –

Oh!

Where I sat on the Board of Directors for Hurricane Katrina.

Wait – what's the connection with Katrina?

Hurricane Katrina – after the hurricane hit the Gulf of Mexico, we felt we needed to do something -- our town of Naperville – so the Mayor along with a few attorneys and realtors, we got together and formed a fund-raising mechanism to raise money to help out along the Gulf. We found a town called Pass Christian, Mississippi; we went to Pass Christian and said we want to help. Diane I think, actually made six trips down there – giving back to community. She went right after the storm hit, with our church and we became a fund-raising mechanism; we raised \$2.1 million dollars –

Wow !

And took part in building 22 homes for low to moderate families that lost their homes. Interesting – we together made five trips. The company I worked with at that time, we actually took a group of people down the week before – I always kind of schedule it so we go the week before Mardi Gras. WE work a week and then on Sunday night we drive to New Orleans and spend three days for Mardi Gras, then fly back home. And we did that two of the years.

In 2008 we felt that was pretty much what we could do; the town was rebuilt and we kinda closed it down. Being close to the Mayor, in 2009 we had an open discussion about doing something for the veterans. WE came up with – well, let's use the name we already use, Naperville Responds, and say Naperville Responds for Veterans. Currently we have 30 projects in the process that we're working on – home repairs for veterans or veteran families that live within a 20-mile radius of Naperville. So we reach

out to Elgin, out west to Sandwich, down south through Joliet and out east at Maywood/Bellwood. WE do home repairs. We do all the funding and we hire local contractors and anything that our organization does or we approve to do, the veteran or the veteran's family pays nothing out of their pocket, not even a penny.

Um-hmm!

So we're currently doing – our major fund raiser is November 10. What we do – they reverse raffle – we'll raise somewhere in the area of \$60,000. WE just got an email this morning - not an email – a notification – the DeMoon Family Foundation just sent us a check today for \$20,000.

The De Moon Family Foundation. Wow – that's good!

So we continue to raise money. We've raised approximately \$2.5 million and helped over 300 veteran families in the area.

Very good --!

Those early years were tough getting it launched. I served as President from 2010 to 2013 – and then became immediate past president and still sit on the Board of Directors.

Very good. So you do your share for helping veterans.

Veterans are very dear to me – so it goes without saying that they're a special breed of people and we can't thank them enough.

That's for sure; that's for sure.

Now we go back to some reflections; we're almost finished. How did your military experience affect your life?

Well, it affected me in many ways – but A, I met my wife while I was in the Navy. It gave me a foundation to be humble, be proud, to be service-oriented and to respect authority.

Very good. When you look back now, what life lessons have you learned from military service?

Life lessons – uh – be true to who you are; hold God and family close to my heart, in that order and to love the world, as flawed as it can be, there's many good things in America.

That's for sure. Well spoken.

Okay, I think that covers it pretty much. If there's anything else you wish to add to the story you can let me know. If something comes to mind that you think we haven't covered – although I think we covered everything pretty well.

We covered everything. I appreciate it.

I think so. And I appreciate it too.

I've signed the release; everything is pretty much on that tape.

Fine. And as I told you, this tape will be sent to Washington – I want to thank you for this interview and certainly thank you for your great service to our country and for what you’ve done for veterans after you left the service. Thank you very much.

Very much appreciated. I’ve had the opportunity several times to travel to Washington, D.C. and see the Veterans Foundation. My Uncle Joe, my Uncle Al, My Uncle Bud, my Uncle Jim, my Uncle Bill, my Dad, and my cousin Billy are all noted in Washington, D.C. so we have family there we know. I also have pre-arranged everything to be interred at the Lincoln National Cemetery.

Abraham Lincoln.

My wife and I are both – we’ll end up there at some point of time in our lives.

Very good.

We have visited it and it’s a good place.

Yes, I’ve been there; it is very nice.

Thank you.

Okay, thank you, Jack. It certainly was a very, very interesting interview – hearing your conversation. Thank you.

Thank you for your time.

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