Fort Smith Historical Society Oral History Center
World War II Project
Interview with Carter Hunt

JW: Tell us your name, please.

CH: Carter Hunt, no middle name except once I was in the Navy, my middle name was "None".

JW: All right. And when were you born?

CH: (DELETED CONTENT)

JW: And where were you born?

CH: In San Pedro, Los Angeles County, California.

JW: And what was your parents' names.

CH: My mother's maiden name was Anita Barretto. And I had the name changed in my life, but my father was James Roy Ames; but somewhere along the way, my mother decided that we ought to change our names. I should add that when I was born, my mother had been widowed for two months. My father passed away two months before I was born.

JW: And so she married Mr. Ames? Mr. Hunt? Okay. Somewhere you got a name change?

CH: Not as a result of a marriage.

JW: Oh, I see, I see.

CH: Don't ask me why because I was a little guy, I was about six- years-old.

JW: Well, things happen. Did you grow up in San Pedro?

CH: Well, in Los Angeles area. Lived there except for three years in New York, grew up in Southern California, lived in Los Angeles and Pasadena. Went to high school and college there and I graduated from college in 1942.

JW: And I think that sporty red car out in the parking lot with the Cal Tech sticker must belong to you?

CH: That's right.

JW: I wondered about that.

CH: Yeah, that's where I went to college.

JW: I see. Did you have brothers and sisters?

CH: No, I'm an only child.

JW: Only child. How was the family supported when you were growing up?

CH: My mother did a variety of things. She was a dancer and she did support work for some organizations and individuals along the coast. And quite a bit of the time, I was farmed out to somebody because my mother was away working. Eventually, months later, my mother did remarry, so I did have a stepfather.

JW: Did she have like a professional stage name?

CH: Anita Barretto. 2

JW: Anita Barretto. That's interesting.

CH: She was American born, of course, but of Spanish extraction.

JW: I see. I would have guessed Italian, but you say Spanish. Well, I assume you were a city boy growing up?

CH: Pretty much, yeah. Los Angeles area and New York for three years. From when I was six until I was nine, I lived in New York; and again, Mother was working. I was in a boarding school.

JW: Well, how did you entertain yourself when you were a boy?

CH: I guess, first of all, part of the time I was in boarding school, but what boys do, when we lived in Los Angeles, we had a bunch of kids in the neighborhood and we played out in the street. And we had an area in Los Angeles where we lived, had a whole lot of vacant lots at the time because it was still a subdivision that was developing. And we played in vacant lots that were overgrown in wild oats and we played in new houses under construction weekends when the builders weren't there.

JW: So you didn't have to work or anything like that?

CH: No. Times were a little tough, but it was the Depression.

JW: Right.

CH: But I never had a paper route or anything like that. By the time I was in high school, I did have a job, didn't pay very much, ran around getting names for a city directory. But one of the things was that I was younger, too young for a lot of jobs. I was only fifteen when I graduated from high school, and twenty when I graduated from college. I was almost sixteen when I graduated high school.

JW: I was going to ask you, what high school did you graduate from?

CH: University High School.

JW: And what year was that?

CH: 1938.

JW: Okay. What year did you say you graduated from college?

CH: 1942.

JW: 1942. So you were in college when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor?

CH: Yeah, I was on our Christmas break when it happened on that Sunday. I was driving around with a friend who had a convertible and we heard it on the radio that morning.

JW: Did you figure, the minute you heard, that you were gonna wind up in a uniform fighting a war pretty quick?

CH: No, I didn't know that. But as soon as we returned to school, I was a senior at Cal Tech, and the day we came back from Christmas break, there was a lieutenant commander from the Naval Reserve Center down in Los Angeles. This is in Pasadena, nearby L.A., and he was telling us that we could be commissioned in the Naval Reserves and 3 finish college and then be put on active duty. So that all sounded like a pretty good idea. And I had some job offers, we all had some job offers. And one was with a rubber company and another another was with an explosives company.

JW: What was your major?

CH: Chemical engineering.

JW: Okay.

CH: And being in the Navy sounded like a pretty good idea, so I signed up. And I had my physical and I was commissioned an ensign in the Naval Reserve, probationary. So I was commissioned as

an ordnance specialist. They really wanted engineering and scientific graduates, which is why they came up and talked to us. And I think about a dozen, or maybe fifteen of the class, signed up. And as promised, we went on active duty immediately after graduation. We had nine days.

JW: I was gonna ask if they did what they said they were gonna do and waited for you to graduate?

CH: Oh, yeah, yeah.

JW: Because I know one person that they just three days later, they snatched them.

CH: Well, we graduated and then we went to active duty immediately, as I say, nine days. And the active duty was a two-month indoctrination training course at New York.

JW: This would be the equivalent of boot camp plus or something?

CH: Boot camp for officers. I was an officer.

JW: Right.

CH: An ensign, I was an ensign, which would be equal to rank of a second lieutenant in the Army or Marines. And the two months training was a familiarization with Navy procedures and regulations and some physical fitness training, as well. It was in New York City.

JW: Was it in the Brooklyn Naval Yard?

CH: No, it was up in the Bronx, in a place called Throg's Neck. And it was a merchant marine training academy and the Navy used it for indoctrination training. There was a big bunch of us, couple hundred of us. And then having finished that, I was ordered to Seattle, Washington, where I was attached to the Bremerton Navy Yard. Except that I wasn't in Bremerton, I was in an office at Seattle, and I was being trained and involved in degaussing.

JW: What is that?

CH: Degaussing, which is protecting ships from magnetic mines. I was out of the office quite a bit because they had a place up on Puget Sound where we checked the ships as they came in and out of the harbor for their magnetic signature, as we called it. They ran over a series of magnetism detectors that were in the bottom, and that would tell us whether the ship needed work on it. 4 And there was a procedure called deperming which reduced the magnetism in the ships. A ship is a big hunk of steel mostly, and it tends to concentrate the magnetic lines of force; that's how a magnetic mine works. There's a magnetic field everywhere in the earth. And a piece of iron concentrates it to some extent, and that increase in magnetism is what fires a magnetic mine off. The intent of the degaussing process is to reduce the magnetic "signature" of the ship to as low a level as possible. You can't eliminate it, just reduce it.

JW: Well, how would you reduce that?

CH: That was a process called deperming. And that basically involved wrapping a coil of very heavy copper wire, size double-ought. The cable was about an inch in diameter, rubber insulated. But we would wrap those around the ship and then we had a coil around the ship and we would put current through it. And then we have the current, start out with high current, all with direct current, incidentally, came from a big bank of batteries. And then they would turn off the current, reverse the polarity and do it again. And then they would keep doing that, and in each cycle, they would reduce the current a little bit, so the effect, to the extent possible, is demagnetizing.

JW: I see. Now I'm real dumb about this, but I've had screwdrivers before that would become magnetic on the end through use and you could pick up a screw with it.

CH: Yes.

JW: And so what you're talking about is like reversing that process?

CH: That's right.

JW: Okay.

CH: And the ships had degaussing equipment on them. Equipment amounted to a wire around the perimeter of the ship at the waterline through which a direct current could be passed to counteract

the ship's magnetism. Depending on the type of ship some of those, there were other, there were coils fore and aft and around the perimeter. And a mine-sweeper had the most complicated degaussing set-up on it because a mine-sweeper really had to be able to go over a magnetic mine and then blow it up, which they could do by trailing an electric cable.

JW: Well, when you talked earlier about, in effect, wrapping a coil around the ship, after you had completed the process, was that wire removed?

CH: Yes.

JW: Okay.

CH: You had to put the ship into some kind of a mooring or up against the dock. And I was around when we depermed the Queen Elizabeth, she was in dry dock, huge vessel. You don't realize how big those things are until you get on them. 5

JW: Well, once you did that process, did it have to be repeated six months or a year later or something like that?

CH: Around in ports in the United States and in some foreign ports, we had these ranges, as we called them, where we could check the magnetism of ships as they passed over it. And generally speaking, the ship might need another degaussing, but they had this degaussing equipment on board, as well. And so these ranges would tell us whether they were, number one, I guess, if they were operating their equipment properly; and two, maybe they needed another degaussing, another deperming, as we called it. But one of the things that I recollect about the whole matter of degaussing is that it used a tremendous amount of copper, which was a strategic material involved and needed for other uses as well.

JW: I assume all that copper that you made coil out of could be reused?

CH: Yes.

JW: And reused?

CH: Oh, yeah.

JW: But still wrapping a ship?

CH: After this time in Seattle, I was ordered in December of 1942 to go to a base in Morocco. So I had to go to New York and get on a troopship and go to North Africa.

JW: Do you recall the name of the ship?

CH: It was the United States Army transport, John Erickson, but it had previously been the Swedish American liner Kungsholm. And we took about nine days to cross the Atlantic to Casablanca in what they called a fast convoy, fifteen knots; so there were no liberty ships in there, they couldn't make that speed. There were tankers and fast cargo ships, and the escort was a cruiser and a battleship and seven destroyers. So it was a huge array and we didn't have any problems. It was obvious that we were doing a little zigzagging around; normally didn't take that long to get to Casablanca, I'm sure. But I was sent over there to set up a degaussing range in a little port in North Africa in Morocco called Safi, about a hundred and thirty miles down the coast from Casablanca. And I was sent over with all this copper wire and instruments and so forth, and we got our installation made in this little port. And we had a bad storm and it wiped the whole thing out. It was set up on a breakwater in the harbor, and these heavy swells, again, would just knock the instruments and everything out of it, and that was the end of the degaussing. And supposedly they were sending some more of it, but this base was a small base and they downsized it once while I was there; it went from two hundred and fifty or so Navy people, down to about eighty. And then I was ordered to go back to New York.

JW: Well, I assume after the storm got the equipment and you were waiting on replacement equipment or something like that, that you had like days where there wasn't anything to do? 6

CH: Well, I was involved in the operation of the base, standing watches in the harbor entrance control post. And the old man said, "You're the range officer." And so I took the sailors, I just happened to know how to shoot rifles because I had some training in ROTC in high school. Well, the old man, he wasn't a Captain, he was a Commander, he said, "You're the range officer", and he wanted every sailor on the base to go through shooting. So we were shooting the Springfield, old reliable, bolt action 30.06.

JW: World War I issue or earlier?

CH: Pretty much, yeah. It was a good rifle. People still use it, they cut the stock down, but it's a great rifle, kicks like a steer. But we put every man on the base, had them shoot fifty-rounds on a two-hundred-yard range that we set up on a deserted stretch of beach down south of the base.

JW: Well, assuming you had some free time, what was there to do in that little town in Morocco?

CH: Well, we had a beach, we could swim and that was appealing to a Southern California kid that used to swim in Santa Monica. And we played poker and did a little drinking, and some of the French people were very cordial and invited us to socialize with them, which was interesting. But the base, originally, they had four ships based there and then it went down to two. And I was ordered to go back to New York, and I understand that the base, they shut it down, didn't need it anymore.

JW: Well, you were there at a difficult time and there for other reasons, but I assume you didn't find Morocco as romantic as Charles Boyer or Humphrey Bogart?

CH: It was an interesting country, was worthwhile. Casablanca, I only had only a few days in Casablanca, but it's a big city. And one trip, one recreational trip that we made, we had one car, the base had one automobile and the Skipper let us use it to drive down to Marrakesh one day, and that Marrakesh is a fascinating city. You may have heard about it.

JW: I've heard the name.

CH: It's right at the foot of a thirteen-thousand-foot peak in the Atlas Mountains. And you can see the real culture of the native people down there pretty much and it's interesting. And we had a day down there, but you know, we stood watches and so forth. And then when I went back to New York, it was an interesting trip back because they gave me air transportation on an airline called American Export Airlines that was operating from Morocco to New York, using flying boats, similar, but not as big as a Pan-American Clipper. It was a Sikorsky. And we went back, it was a three-day trip to get back. We left from a place north of Casablanca called Port Lyautey, and flew down to Bathurst in British Gambia on the coast of Africa. All night flight, we didn't want to be up there in the daytime when Germans might be able to see us, and then only sixteen passengers on this flight. 7

JW: Were they all military?

CH: They were all officers. Take it back, there was one State Department courier who had a briefcase chained to his arm. And the rest of them, I was the most junior officer onboard. At that time, I was just a lieutenant junior grade, having been promoted from ensign. But that flight took three days, we flew at night, we flew down the coast of Africa, and then we stayed the day at this place. And that evening, we took off and flew across the Atlantic to Trinidad, spent the day in Trinidad. And then late afternoon, early evening, we took off from Trinidad and flew to New York, landing at LaGuardia on Long Island Sound. So I was then attached to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, again with degaussing and deperming. We had a range down on a little island along the channel, which ships came into New York Harbor. And we had a base in Bayonne, in Jersey, where we depermed ships of all sizes. And after several months there, I was then ordered to the USS FULTON in the Pacific, to be their degaussing officer. And so I had to learn a little bit about how to degauss a submarine. I had a couple of months at New London, Connecticut, which is where they built submarines, it was a big submarine base. And one of the submarines we degaussed was called the Gabilan and the commanding officer was an officer named Carl Wheland. But the interesting thing was that we had a mishap in the process of deperming this submarine for him and we burned up part of his control panel, but it was fixable. But the interesting thing is that I was ordered to the USS FULTON; and not very long after I reported on board, Commander Wheland, he reported to the FULTON as executive officer. He remembered me because of the mishap at New London.

JW: Was the FULTON a submarine tender?

CH: Yes, and seventeen-thousand-ton displacement.

JW: Big ship.

CH: Basically a repair and supply ship for submarines.

JW: You have a picture of it, don't you?

CH: Yeah.

JW: This would be a good time to see that wonderful picture.

CH: This was taken after the war was over, when we were in San Francisco Bay, November 1945. There were four submarines alongside, as you can see.

JW: That's a great picture, that's a great ship and those are great submarines.

CH: They were the regular what we called, fleet submarines were the ones we used that were almost exclusively used in the war. There were a few other older submarines, but--

JW: But that was basically America's-- our naval submarine.

CH: Yeah. 8

JW: They look sort of like toys next to that great big ship.

CH: Well, these submarines are three-hundred and twelve-feet long. The ship is five-hundred and thirty-one feet long.

JW: I'm glad you explained that.

CH: We lost fifty-two of those submarines in the war. Pretty much when you lose a submarine, you lose them all, lose all hands.

JW: Yeah.

CH: Okay.

JW: Okay, that's great. So you were put aboard the FULTON to operate their inboard degaussing equipment?

CH: Well, once again, I was sent to the FULTON full of copper wire and instruments and one electrician's mate that had had some training. Well, I reported onboard with this load of copper, the

executive officer ordered it put down in the deepest storage place on the ship and then forget about it.

JW: He didn't want that process?

CH: Well, we just never did anything. And I became a deck officer and then had another job on the ship. I was on her about two years. And during that two-year period, we spent time at Midway, Pearl Harbor, Mare Island Navy Yard, and Saipan, and Guam. And then ultimately when the war was over (we were in Guam when the war ended), we were sent to Seattle, arriving in Seattle in late September of 1945.

JW: I was afraid you were gonna say you were sent to Japan in the Occupational Forces.

CH: No. There was one submarine tender that was sent up more or less just to be there at the time of the surrender ceremony on the USS MISSOURI, but we weren't one of them. And we came back to the States, and the first thing I wanted to do was to get married, which I did.

JW: You had left a girlfriend behind, I see?

CH: I got the first leave party, and my wife set the wedding for October the 2nd. I got thirty days leave and we were married and went on our honeymoon and then we went back to Seattle. We had an apartment. I had to be on the ship pretty much. Maybe every third or fourth night I had to be on the ship overnight, but there was a whole bunch of other wives there. We all had a great time.

JW: That's a great deal compared to being out in the middle of the Pacific.

CH: Yeah. Well, we were seventeen months out there before we got back to the States. It was interesting. I reported to the FULTON in Pearl Harbor; and almost as soon as I was onboard, we took off and went back to the States for an overhaul. So I picked a good time, but after the overhaul, it was seventeen months.

JW: That's a long time, especially when you're a young man. That's 9 forever.

CH: Yeah.

JW: That's forever. Well, was the FULTON ever attacked or in danger?

CH: No. When we were in Saipan, the Japs were bombing Saipan. But what they were bombing was the airfield where the B-29s were based that were flying up there and bombing their homeland. So, some shrapnel dropped on our ship from anti-aircraft fire and that was mean looking stuff. I had a problem with men in my division not wearing their helmets when we'd go to general quarters whenever there was an air raid. And one morning at quarters, I took a bucket of this shrapnel out and showed them. I said this is just falling on the ship. After that, they wore their helmets.

JW: Wouldn't want that sticking in the top of your head.

CH: These men of mine were manning guns, forty-millimeters and twenty-millimeters and five-inch, big five-inch guns. And the ones on the five-inch guns had a covering, but the other guys were out in the open and they'd wear their helmets after that.

JW: Right. Well, I worked on a construction site and the boss was always having to holler at someone because they didn't want to wear a hard hat.

CH: Yeah.

JW: It's a bother unless something drops on your head, then it's not.

CH: It's important. The chances of something falling on you aren't very great; but when they do, there's a consequence.

JW: Right, right; and all it takes is one sometimes. So, you were still in the Navy for a certain amount of time?

CH: Yeah. The ship, after being in Seattle, we went to San Francisco which is where my wife lived. And then we went to San Diego, we'd run down the coast. But we spent about a month, about six

weeks in Seattle and a month in San Francisco and then a couple of months in San Diego and that's when I was able to get released to inactive duty.

JW: I see. Well, I was gonna say you probably got a different story than a lot that I've heard because you signed up in the Naval Reserve as an officer so you didn't have the same length of tour as somebody who was drafted or something like that. You signed up for probably, what, three, four, six years?

CH: I signed up for whatever they wanted.

JW: I see.

CH: But then when the war was over, they had a points system. And you know they didn't need everybody anymore and I was able to get off the ship in February, I guess it was.

JW: Of '46?

CH: '46. And I still had two months worth of terminal leave coming to 10 me, so I was still on the payroll and billing the Navy until April 12th, I think it was, something like that. So I actually had an active duty of three years, ten months and two weeks or something like that. I always said four years, but it was short of four years; I was released to inactive duty and remained in the Reserve.

JW: That's what I was gonna ask next.

CH: I remained in the Reserve until 1956.

JW: I see. And Korea didn't get you?

CH: I was sweating it out because I had friends that were called, I was subject to call. However, by the time the Korean War rolled around, we had three children, although that didn't seem to bother another guy that I knew. He had four, and they called him back, but that was an Army guy, but they didn't call me. But as I said, I was kind of sweating it out for a while.

JW: Right, right. I've heard that story. The people that were still in the Reserves or a lot of Army guys got talked into joining the Reserves after they came back from World War II.

CH: Well, a good friend of mine was in the Marines. And he got called back, but they didn't send him to Korea, they put him on duty escorting the remains of Marines lost in combat.

JW: Which would only be slightly better than going to Korea, but I'm sure it was better than going to Korea, from what I've been told. Did you ever have, from April of 1946 to 1957, did you ever have to do anything? Did you have to go to the summer camp?

CH: I was in inactive. If I had stayed in the Active Reserve, I could have gotten a pension out of it after twenty years or so, but I didn't do that. So actually, they told me I had to resign, because I wasn't doing anything, in '56. They sent me a form says "sign here." It was my letter to them resigning my commission.

JW: Well, let's see, you got married in--

CH: October of '45.

JW: Right. And then you got totally out in April of '46?

CH: Yeah.

JW: And you were married, so what did you do then?

CH: I got a job with Hiram Walker and Sons, in Peoria, Illinois, as a chemical engineer in their research department. And I went on their payroll a week before my Navy service ended, my terminal leave.

JW: Well, that doesn't mean that you mixed drinks all day at work?

CH: No. We were doing research with various things related to the distilled spirits business; but the particular thing that I was working on was our by-product feed residue. Residue of the grain after distillation becomes animal feed and we were working on that.

JW: I see. I doubt anybody in Fort Smith thinks about animal feed 11 when they hear the word Hiram Walker.

CH: No, but we did. All distillers make feed as part of the process. You have to do something with it, you can't dump it in the river. Used to do that in the old days, but you can't do that anymore.

JW: And you did that in Peoria for quite awhile?

CH: Well, for two years. And then for about the last six months of that two years was what they called a training program. And then they sent me to out to be the assistant superintendent of the company's plant in San Francisco, which was okay by me and my wife, that was right where we came from. And by that time, we had one child and then the other two followed pretty quickly after that. But we were there for eight years, until 1956, and then we went back to Peoria and we were there for twenty-five years and then we came down here.

JW: What year did you move to Fort Smith?

CH: 1981.

JW: And when was Hiram Walker built here?

CH: We built it starting in '79 and finished it in '81. We started operating in '81. I came down before we finished.

JW: I see. I couldn't remember when.

CH: I headed up the operation. And I was also responsible for the plant out in California. My responsibility was production of our products in the United States. The company produces products at many places around the world.

JW: Well, explain the operation here because somebody told me one time that there's no distilling going on in Fort Smith, it's a mixing operation.

CH: That's right. We're blending and mixing, compounding the product and bottling it, warehousing it, shipping it to customers. I've been retired for twenty years, Joe.

JW: Oh, have you?

CH: And there's a lot of change down there and I haven't kept up with it.

JW: Well, I had no idea that you've been retired that long. If you'd have said six or seven years, I would have thought, well, that's right.

CH: I retired at the normal sixty-five retirement age, so it's twenty years.

JW: Well, time sure gets away.

CH: Sure does. And they've made some amazing changes down at that plant. I haven't been down there for a few years. I really ought to go down and have a tour, see what's going on.

JW: Right.

CH: But the ownership of the company just changed once again, it 12 changed. After I retired, it changed, and now it's changed again. And the new owners have loaded in a lot more production here.

JW: I know a friend of mine was told if she wanted to keep her job she had to move to New York. And she's about fifty-five-years old and she decided that it was too late in her life to pick up and move.

CH: Who was that?

JW: Linda Ragans was her name. She just works in the office, some office.

CH: I guess I don't know her.

JW: But anyway, she's lived here all her life and decided that fifty-five wasn't the time to go move to New York. And so that was the only reason I knew that recent change had taken place in ownership.

CH: I understand they're opening an office down in Kentucky. I don't know what that means. The only information I get about the plant comes from Google.

JW: Well, you put in your time, it's okay.

CH: I had some some civic activities after retiring, was chairman of the Chamber of Commerce for a couple of years, and I was a city director for eight years. I've been a trustee, whatever they call it, at St. Edward's Hospital for a term. And I've been active on some other civic organizations, like the symphony and the Community Foundation, so I've kept moderately busy. My wife and I did quite a bit of traveling. And since my wife passed away now almost eleven years ago, I've made some trips by myself. And I'm beginning to creak a little bit at the age of eighty-five, so I'm not quite as active as I used to be; but I try to stay reasonably active.

JW: Well, I tell all my guys that a hundred is the new eighty.

CH: Yeah, I'm working on it.

JW: Tell me the names of your children, and do they live here?

CH: No, they don't live here. Son, Gregory, is now sixty-years-old, he's an Ashley furniture store owner in Quincy, Illinois, and he's done extremely well with his business. He owns the business, owns the building that houses it, and he's providing employment for about twenty people or so, including his son, my grandson. And my daughter, Karen, who is now fifty-eight, she lives in a little town called Ben Lomond, California, near Santa Cruz. She has two children, two sons, divorced from her first husband, the father of those children, and she remarried a few years ago. And my

daughter, Marsha, the youngest child, she's now fifty-seven or will be fifty-seven November of this year.

JW: You did have them in a clump, didn't you?

CH: Yeah, yeah. They were all bunched up. Wasn't uncommon, I guess.

JW: Yeah, probably not. 13

CH: And she lives in Mesa, Arizona, and she's married. She did not get married until she was about fifty-five-years old. And her husband was about the same age, first marriage for him, too, so they're happy.

JW: That's great. Well, when you retired, what kept you from going back to California?

CH: Well, we always said, for a good long time, we're going back to California when we retire. Well, we found that Fort Smith was a great place to live, cost of living is significantly lower, as you well know from being in California and many other places. And furthermore, the family was scattered around, so it wasn't a case of going back to where the family was. My wife and I are both only children. About the closest thing we have outside of what we created ourselves is some cousins. And I don't have anything, I don't even have any first cousins anymore. My wife, some of her first cousins are still around. We couldn't do any better than to stay right here in Fort Smith.

JW: I'm glad Fort Smith won out.

CH: Yeah. Well, it's a great town, we like it. And I've gotten to know a lot of great people in town. And it's not the big city, and I've lived in the big city, you know, and I like it here. It's not as hectic as living in L.A. or San Francisco or one of those big cities.

JW: We've had a lot of people that left here in the Depression and went to California and worked, and when they retired, moved back.

CH: Yeah, I've heard that.

JW: Been twenty, thirty years ago when they were that age to do that.

CH: I've met people that moved back here because they just didn't like rearing their kids out there.

JW: Uh-huh, I've heard that, too. I sure like visiting out there. I don't guess I ever thought about what it would be like to live, but visiting is fun.

CH: It's pretty hectic. Course I haven't lived out there since 1956, but I do get out at least once a year. Been out there three times this year, or twice, been to Arizona once and California twice. And I'll usually be once a year, at least, going out to see the California daughter or seeing the Arizona daughter. We had the whole bunch of us together in the last week of June at a place up near Branson, Missouri, place called Big Cedar; that was a four generation gathering.

JW: I bet that was fun.

CH: Everybody but the two grandsons in California, four generations.

JW: Well, that's great. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us or that we need to know?

CH: No. I had an interesting war, it was a great experience. I wanted to get out when the time came and get on with other things, but the experience is priceless. And I didn't have the agony of combat or 14 wounding, but it's the luck of the draw I'd say.

JW: Sure is. And you did an important job that who knows saved how many lives. And I guarantee you the average person walking around has no idea that any point since time began that somebody had to wrap wires around a great big ship to keep it from getting blown up by a magnetic mine. That's a little piece of information--

CH: It's one of those things; you don't really know how many times a ship was saved by degaussing.

JW: I guarantee there's no one in this building right now, except you, and now me, that has ever heard of such a thing.

CH: I have one friend, he is in the Noon Civic; we meet every Friday. And I talked about it once to him, and he knew about it because he had been down in Panama and they were doing some of that down there. He knew what it was.

JW: Well, it's a first for me. So there's a piece of information that we didn't know, and I think it's darn useful information, too, because I would have never thought of that in a million years.

CH: Well, just about every ship, merchant or Navy, got that degaussing. Some of them were more complicated than others, but at least one strand of wire around the perimeter, the water line, but you can put some current through it.

JW: Well, that's great. Well, I want to thank you on behalf of the Historical Society for sharing your information with us. And I'd like, for my generation, I thank you for giving up four years of your very important young life to go wrap wires around a ship and other various chores.

CH: Well, you know, the majority of the time was spent doing something else. I had the two periods of training in that, but when I was sent out, the one in the Pacific, the ship that was zilch, and over in Morocco, we did practically nothing.

JW: But it was all part of the plan that wound up working.

CH: That's how it goes.

JW: Saving the world, so thank you very much.

CH: Thank you, Joe.