

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
WILLIAM C. FROHMADER
Airman Striker, Navy, Korean War
2007

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Frohman, William C., (b. 1930). Oral History Interview, 2007.

User Copy : 1 sound cassette (ca. 60 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy : 1 sound cassette (ca. 60 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Frohman, a Mauston, Wisconsin native, discusses his Navy service as an airman striker on Privateer airplanes before and during the Korean War. He tells of his enlistment into the Navy at age seventeen, basic training at Great Lakes Naval Station (Illinois) in 1948, transfer to Alameda (California), and assignment first at Kaneohe Bay and then at Barbers Point (Hawaii) with the VP25 flight crew. He explains the features of the squadron airplane, the Privateer (PB4Y2), which was a late model of the B24 with a longer range. He served on the crew as a mechanic, an "airman striker," and he tells an anecdote of being asked to clean the side mounts, landing gear, and not knowing what they were. He explains that they did a lot of flying, patrolling, search and rescue, and antisubmarine warfare training. He explains the protocol for extra pay, called "flight pay," where the beginners only got "half a set." Frohman discusses night navigation where he would sit in turrets or up in the bow and serve as lookout for the pilot while they relied strictly on instruments, flight patterns, and radio beacons. With the Korean War starting up, Frohman was assigned to VP22 at the Philippines and Okinawa; he discusses the condition of Okinawa several years following World War II. Not able to put in much flying time, he worked on a cleaning detail at the White Hat Club and fixed up some World War II Quonset huts as a sickbay. He details his further assignments that involved a stint back in Hawaii and California with antisubmarine training as Cold War fears included rumors that Russian submarines were in the Pacific Ocean. This involved flights from Hawaii, eventually ending up at an Australian airbase in Japan. There were also flights from Japan over Korea, and up the coast to Vladivostok (Russia) and Frohman mentions watching them shell in Wonsan (Korea). Stationed in Iwakuni (Japan), Frohman tells of detachments sent to Wonson, Seoul, Kansong, and the Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War. Explaining that their work involved patrolling, looking for convoys that the North Koreans were using, and dropping long-burning flares; Frohman details how they stayed there until the Marine fighter planes came in underneath and would strafe and drop napalm on what the flares revealed. He says that his time was up in 1952 and that he hated to leave because he felt that he was a contributing part of the war effort. Frohman comments on his homecoming and discharge from Treasure Island and his long-term work at Volk Field as part of the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, 2007.

Transcribed by John P. Danish, 2008.

Interview Transcript:

- John: Okay, this is John Driscoll and today is August 13, 2007. And this is an oral history interview with Bill Frohmader. Bill is a veteran of the Korean War with the United States Navy. “And Bill, Thanks for coming down from Camp Douglas this morning and agreeing to sit in on the interview.”
- Frohmader: You’re welcome.
- John: Why don’t we start at the very beginning? When, and where, were you born?
- Frohmader: Mauston, Wisconsin.
- John: Mauston. Okay, when?
- Frohmader: 1930, October 28th.
- John: 1930. Okay. Family, brothers sisters?
- Frohmader: I have, ah, three brothers and one sister.
- John: Okay. Okay.
- Frohmader: and, ah, one of the—My twin brother is dead.
- John: Okay—How about growing up, what did your dad do?
- Frohmader: My dad had a general merchandise store in Camp Douglas (Wisconsin).
- John: Okay, okay.
- Frohmader: ‘til ah—my grandfather had it originally. And then, he turned it over to my dad, and, ah. My dad went out of business in 1940, ’42, I think, it may have been ’44. But I think it was ’42. Um, ah, my dad, oh gee, he worked as a—he went on tours during the war to Juneau, Alaska.
- John: Oh, wow.
- Frohmader: for a tour of duty—and then he went to, ah, Adak in the Aleutians.
- John: Okay, yeah.
- Frohmader: For another six—he was a year at Juneau and six months on Adak.
- John: Wow. Oh man, comfortable place—terrible.

Frohman: Yeah, I'll bet.

John: How about school?

Frohman: School for me?

John: Yes.

Frohman: Ah, high school. I went one summer to school at the University of Wisconsin, here in Madison at one time. But I didn't get very far with that.

John: Okay.

Frohman: One summer is all I did do that. And then, I worked at, ah, what was Camp Williams at the time—it turned into Volk Field (in Madison, Wisconsin). And I worked there from, ah, April 1953 'til, June or July 1961.

John: Oh, okay, okay.

Frohman: And this was after you got out of the Navy, of course.

John: Okay, yeah.

Frohman: But, ah, but I took a job with the Union Center Cooperative Association, District number two, at Union Center at that time the creameries, small creameries, were going out of business.

John: Oh.

Frohman: And I took a job as an office manager at Union Center. I worked there a couple of years.

John: Yeah. Okay.

Frohman: and, ah, then I left and took a job with a CPA (certified public accountant) firm out of Marshfield, Alfred B. Hill and Company and I—a couple years of that and I got tired of working out of a suitcase.

John: Yeah. Yes.

Frohmaster: So auditing is what we did. We ordinarily specialized in cooperatives. Then, ah, then quit that and I went to work for three of the cooperatives on a part time basis, and, worked at that for thirteen—twelve or thirteen years and then, I didn't do much for, ah, seasonal work for Castle Rock in Juneau County.

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: I worked for the Forestry and Parks in Juneau County.

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: for ten years, part time.

John: How did you, um, how did you get into the United States Navy?

Frohmaster: Oh, oh well, I went with my Dad and a friend of his one time on a tour to Milwaukee and on the way we stopped in Madison and I enlisted and, ah,

John: Did you intend to? (chuckle)

Frohmaster: ah, I did, ah, and, ah, I did and didn't, because I didn't have my Dad's permission.

John: (hearty laugh)

Frohmaster: But, ah, he said okay, and so I did. I enlisted.

John: How old were ya?

Frohmaster: I was seventeen.

John: Seventeen, okay, and this was when?

Frohmaster: Oh, June or July—this was probably July of, ah, 1948.

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: and, and then, I got called to come on the enlistment in, ah, October—I entered the Navy October 19th 1948, and then, ah, I was eighteen the 28th of October.

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: So I just barely.

- John: Where did you go in?
- Frohmaster: in Chicago, and then it was out to Great Lakes (Illinois)
- John: Great Lakes, okay, that was basic at Great Lakes.
- Frohmaster: Pardon?
- John: that was basic at Great Lakes?
- Frohmaster: Yes.
- John: Boot camp at Great Lakes, okay, and then where?
- Frohmaster: And then, ah, I went to Alameda, California, as a receiving station, instead of Treasure Island (in California). I don't know why. But at the time, ah, we stayed at the receiving station at Alameda. And they assigned me to transportation. I was to go to Hawaii, which, a wow, terrific, now, and so I went aboard the General (unintelligible) at San Francisco and went five days to Hawaii.
- John: Yeah.
- Frohmaster: to Pearl Harbor, actually. And then we were transported by bus over to Kaneohe Bay (Hawaii). And Kaneohe Bay was the first station I was ever stationed at. And I was assigned to a squadron, VP25. Then, ah, ah—Kaneohe Bay was closed up shortly after I was in VP25. I worked on check stands. I was assigned to engineering department in VP25. And then they, ah, decided to—they were having budget cuts. And they decided to close down Kaneohe Bay at that time. So they shipped us over to Barbers Point (Hawaii), which was the leeward side, and Kaneohe was on the windward side. And, ah, Barbers Point was on the lee side of the island.
- John: Okay.
- Frohmaster: And, ah, shortly after being at Barbers Point, I was assigned to an air crew, drawing what they called “flight skins,” which was flight pay.
- John: Okay.
- Frohmaster: They called—you got a set of “skins” if you were on the crew. I never did understand why they called them “a set of skins”—I never did understand why they called them a set of skins. (chuckles)
- John: (laughs) Let me back up for just a second. You were in VP25?

Frohmaster: Yeah.

John: Okay. For the tape, V is squadron. P is patrol. Okay.

Frohmaster: Okay—V is heavier than air.

John: Oh. I didn't know that; okay; sure. Okay.

Frohmaster: Yeah, V was heavier than air. P was patrol.

John: Okay. Okay.

Frohmaster: So, ah, VP25 was the squadron designation.

John: Great. Okay.

Frohmaster: ah, about 300 people in a squadron.

John: And what kind of aircraft?

Frohmaster: The Privateer, the PB4Y2,

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: which was a late model of the B24.

John: Oh. Okay. Okay.

Frohmaster: The B24 was a Liberator.

John: Yup, very long range.

Frohmaster: Yeah, very—but the longer range was the PB4Y2.

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: a very dependable plane. Anyway, I sure enjoyed being a member of the crew. But I didn't know, *anything*, when I got into that crew other than I'd worked on the, ah, (inaudible) on the check stands, on the engines a little bit. But I can remember the leading chief telling me ta—not the leading chief the, ah, plane captain was a chief petty officer, in this case, last name was McClung, and that's all I remember, chief McClung. But Bill Miller was the first mechanic and, ah, the pilot—at that time, when you were assigned to a crew, you also had an airplane. And this didn't hold true later on. You took whatever plane was available later on. But, at that time, we had the designated plane BAKER, BAKER; all VP25 planes were

BAKER, BAKER on the tail section. But this was BAKER, BAKER SEVEN. And the pilot, plane captain, was Lieutenant Commander Luce. And the pilot was Lieutenant Tracy. And ah, from there we proceeded to antisubmarine warfare training; that what our whole purpose in being was to find and sink submarines.

John: Now, on the crew what was your job?

Frohmaster: I was a mechanic.

John: A mechanic. Okay.

Frohmaster: Yeah, A-D-Striker, at that time, but airman striker, A-D. Hum, ah, when I got in the crew the only thing I can remember, that I had to do, was to pull the chocks out from under the wheels.

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: Whenever we took off and I put them back after we landed. But after while I was given the privilege of having a set of ear phones.

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: And it took awhile to get used to the earphones. I wouldn't get to catch much of what they were saying. And, but, pretty soon you get used to it. And it's no problem at all. But ah, to start with I sure didn't know very much about it. The chief petty officer, that was the plane captain, told me, when I was introduced to him, to get a bucket, and some rags, and some kerosene. And go out and wash down the side mounts.

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: I didn't know what the side mounts were. (chuckles)

John: (laughs)

Frohmaster: So, I didn't want to ask. So I went and got the buckets, the kerosene, and the rags and went out and was looking the plane over. BAKER, BAKER SEVEN and ah, the side mounts must be the machine guns, ah, mounts? (chuckles)

John: Yeah. Sure. (laughs)

Frohmaster: You'd think machine guns; and I was standing there looking at it. And the chief plane captain come out and says, "What's the matter Bill?" And, I

said, I really don't know what the side mounts are. He smiled, and told me, it's the landing gear. And the landing comes in line with the exhaust out of the inboard engines.

John: Oh. Okay. Sure. Yeah. Catches all the

Frohmaster: So the thing was to get this crap that accumulates from the exhaust off, off of the side mounts; so, that was my initiation, really.

John: (laughs) Well, you wouldn't forget after that.

Frohmaster: No, uh-uh. But then, what we did—we did a lot of flying, a lot of patrolling, and ah, we used to fly patrols. This was before Korea started. We flew patrols for a bunch of, ah, rich people, that had yachts. That, annually, ah, took the tour from San Francisco, the races, I guess, is what they were. They raced to, to Honolulu.

John: Oh wow.

Frohmaster: And, ah, what we did was search and rescue. We would take a sector of the ocean and go back and forth and cover it, and spend eight, nine hours doing that and those were long—and I didn't realize at the time, because I just loved it. But ah, I realized later that those were really long hops.

John: Sure. Sure.

Frohmaster: And that—we got a lot of flying time in, anyway. And you had to have four hours a month to draw on these skins. And, oh, by the way these flight skins, as they were called. We beginners only got a half a set. So whatever the flight pay was, and ah, it seems to me it was something like 20-or-30-dollars a month, flight pay. And if you got a half a set, I think it was 18-dollars or something like that. I'm not sure now, what it was. But anyway, you if got a half a set of skins—but you flew.

John: All the time?

Frohmaster: Fifty, sixty hours a month, at the least, where you only had to fly four hours. And once, ah, ah, I'm not going to go into that. But, ah, (pause, nearly a minute) While doing these, ah, patrols, we also would go out on night navigation, that were pilot training. And we would be lookouts, and sit, either sit in turrets or sit in, ah, up in the bow, that was just a plate, a plastic plate. And you could see down and out from that, and then just lay there and tell them as a look out. And tell them if you sighted anything, whatsoever, and call the pilot. And we did a lot of training for the pilots, where they would enclose the cockpit.

- John: Oh. Okay. Okay. I've seen pictures of that.
- Frohmaster: So, they had to go strictly on instruments. And we would fly radio beacons. And they would fly flight patterns. They, oh, awe, those flight patterns had a name, the Z pattern—usually a letter connected with it; we'd fly these—a lot of times right over Pearl Harbor, and Honolulu, and just over the mountains. And other planes would be flying these training things, too. You had to be pretty careful, watching. And I remember one of the first times, I was the watch up in the front, in the bow of the plane. A plane was coming at us, on a collision course.
- John: Oh. Wow! Oh. Man.
- Frohmaster: And I got excited. And I was trying to get. The pilot was talking on the phone to whatever, the tower, the control was. I forget, just how that worked but; he was talking on the phone and I couldn't get through to him on the ICS, the Inter Communication System. And, what I didn't know, at the time, was that, what I was supposed to do was to turn it over to ICS-crew. ICS-crew and ICS-all included the pilots and ICS-crew, excluded the pilots, so, I didn't know enough to do it. But I found out in a big hurry; anyway, we damn near ran into another airplane.
- John: Ooh, wow! Oh, man.
- Frohmaster: But we got through that alright, that, that. This is getting into pretty trivial stuff.
- John: This, this is real, this is real important stuff. It really is. You're not gonna read this in a book. This is real important.
- Frohmaster: Well, a lot of this also was the training with submarines.
- John: Uh-huh.
- Frohmaster: And a instead of a submarine sometimes they would have a launch, pulling what they called the towed-spar. And we would make runs on it.
- John: Okay. Okay.
- Frohmaster: We would make runs on it. And drop imitation bombs on the towed-spar. And imitation bombs were about ten pounds of lead shaped like a shotgun shell, about ten-inches long. And when you dropped them on the towed-spar you could see where it—they scored them on that.
- John: Yeah. Yeah.

- Frohmaster: But, then, when we worked with submarines. And we did work with submarines at times. At first there wasn't much to it really. Ah, but we would go out and find a submarine and try to drop these, ah, these miniature bombs on them. But later on, we started working with sonar buoys.
- John: Okay. I've heard about those.
- Frohmaster: Okay. And the sonar buoys were something that you'd drop a pattern and they would put out a, ah, radio signal. And they were color-coded; but they were different radio signals. And what we would do is go along, and find ah, ah, what did they call—with the periscopes sticking out, ah. (short pause) Oh dear. Snorkels.
- John: Okay.
- Frohmaster: They had a snorkel at that time, ah. This was in 1949, actually. And, ah, if we found a snorkel. We could see the snorkel then we'd drop a smoke light right on the snorkel. And, then, they'd disappear, usually. And then, we'd start dropping these patterns of sonar buoys; sonar buoys, okay.
- John: Okay. Yup.
- Frohmaster: They're a container probably about three feet by six, eight, inches across.
- John: Okay.
- Frohmaster: And they'd drop this little parachute. And you'd drop the pattern around where we saw the submarine. And then we could pick up the sound from these signals.
- John: Okay.
- Frohmaster: And then determine which sonar buoy the sub was going between. And then, we got to a point where we had these—instead of these imitation or miniature bombs we had the, what they called a homing mine and, at that time, it was all Top Secret.
- John: Oh, yeah. Yeah.
- Frohmaster: But we could drop the homing mine between the sonar buoys that we thought the submarine was going between. And the sonar buoy—the homing mine it was self-propelled
- John: Okay. It would chase 'em.

- Frohmaster: Then, it had the fix, the sonar fix on the submarine. And it would go to the submarine. And when it hit the sub, the sub would come up. That was the end of the exercise. But the guys that were in the sub knew they got hit, ya know.
- John: Okay, that they got hit, huh.
- Frohmaster: but this was in 1949 so—all our training really was antisubmarine. And then when Korea started up, then I was, VP25 was decommissioned. I went to VP22 and we went to Okinawa (Ryuku Islands, Japan). And (sigh) up until VP22 came back I worked in that White Hat Club.
- John: The what?
- Frohmaster: The White Hat Club.
- John: Okay.
- Frohmaster: It was a—it was a bar.
- John: Yup, yup, yup.
- Frohmaster: I don't know if you want to get into that right now?
- John: Uh, where were you stationed on Okinawa?
- Frohmaster: Ah, Naha (Okinawa).
- John: Naha. Okay, yup, the capital.
- Frohmaster: Yeah; but—there was hardly nothing left. (chuckling)
- John: know. (laughter, both laughing)
- Frohmaster: Yeah, ah, the only permanent building on the island, at that time.
- John: But you were just three or four years after the big battle.
- Frohmaster: Oh, yeah. Yeah, there was ah, ammunition, ah, machine gun belts were—whenever the tide would go out, they'd be laying all over the coral reefs. We lost a plane there at Okinawa, too, at Naha. It went into the drink on take off. And ah, we lost two men. One was a radioman his name was Carter. And the plane captain on that one was, ah, his last name was Robby. And ah, Robby didn't get into his ditching position. The plane went down on takeoff. And, we were sure that he was, just—simply was killed on impact. Then Carter, and all the rest of the crew, got out of the

plane. It was pretty rough water there. And they tried to hold each other together. And they got a life vest, Mae West, to the crews. They never wore them when in the crew unless they had to, ya know. But they should have had them on in the first place. But they hung on to each other. And Carter let go and grabbed a Mae West. And that's the last we ever saw of him. I remember Carter.

John: There's a very bad coral reef off the island, too. That planes going down on take off from Kadena (Okinawa)?

Frohman: Oh, yeah. But Kadena was twenty or thirty miles north of—you know there is a map, too, of Okinawa. If you might be curious enough to look at it, it's a hand-drawn affair.

John: Yeah. Okay. So, then, what were you doing out of Okinawa with Korea being on? Still patrolling?

Frohman: Ah, the planes—I was only in one month in a, in a crew. And that was when I got to go to Okinawa, and down to the Philippines, Clark Field, then back to Okinawa. The pilot, plane captain, was an ensign, which is pretty low-ranking for a

John: Oh. Yeah; it's like a lieutenant?

Frohman: for a guy that was really checked out on the airplane; and he was. And he was very independent. We weren't supposed to go down to the Philippines. But, he says, "I want to go down to see it." So he filed his flight plan. And, apparently, he got away with it. But, when we got back to Okinawa, he, ah, he got thirty days, no flying time. He was tied up; we lost a month's, a month's flight pay. He was a pretty wild man. (both laughing)

John: What about the White Hat Club?

Frohman: Pardon.

John: What about the White Hat Club?

Frohman: Well, I worked at the White Hat Club on a—I was assigned to a cleaning detail more than anything. We had to clean up the club in the mornings and, and have it ready for the evenings, crews that came in. Then, in the evenings, I had the duty every third night, at that time. I had to pull out a cot and sleep on the bar room floor.

John: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

- Frohmaster: But there had to be somebody there, so you know, so, but ah; the club manager was a first class boatman's mate, last name was Graves. And he was a stickler for how cleaning things had to be.
- John: Oh, heaven's yeah; oh yeah.
- Frohmaster: And I learned something from him, anyway. Gee, I didn't bring—I had a picture of him and I in Honolulu at the—Anyway, ah, I got along real good with him. And he had outstanding remarks from the base commander, who was an admiral that came through ever Friday, and inspected all the barracks, and the White Hat Club. And boatman's mate Graves always got an outstanding, and, because of what we did. I'm sure, whatever, anyway, that was kind of interesting. And then, once in a while, we'd tend bar at night. And just open the beer cans. But they had a Filipino bartender that came on every night. Rudy Jerome was the bartender. And boatman mate Graves was the manager. And we had a couple more people, at different times, that worked like I did, as a crewmember, as a cleaner.
- John: North of there at Koza (Okinawa) I—three sergeants managed the enlisted men's club.
- Frohmaster: Oh.
- John: Same thing. And we weren't allowed to make a profit. And if we did, we had to send it to division and, of course, they'd steal it.
- Frohmaster: Oh. We never saw the money; money went through this Filipino.
- John: Oh. Did it? Oh. Oh. We (chuckles) we constantly tried to spend money on stuff; and we'd spend money. We'd make more profit.
- Frohmaster: We never had contact with the money.
- John: When I first got there, we didn't have money; we had script.
- Frohmaster: yes, well, the script was in Okinawa. Yes. Yes, 10-dollar limit.
- John: Yeah. Yeah.
- Frohmaster: Yeah.
- John: Okay, but, were you still flying?
- Frohmaster: I only had that one set of skins for the six months; that I was in Okinawa. But I worked with the first lieutenants' department, which was doing

anything, cleaning up things, and, and ah, we build a—we fixed up one of the Quonset huts for, ah, for, ah, oh, what to you call it when you go to the doctor in the Navy?

John: Sickbay?

Frohman: Sickbay. Yeah. We fixed it up for a sickbay.

John: Yup. Okay. Okay. Those Quonset huts were. (laughs)

Frohman: Oh man; they were—we went through a couple of typhoons on Okinawa, too. And ah, ah, another bad typhoon, when I come back from Yokohama (Japan) to San Francisco (California) for discharge. We went through a real bad typhoon.

John: We had one in 1958. And we were in tents. So, of course, we had to take the tents down and, and we had to dig shelt—ah, fox holes, would you believe?

Frohman: Oh my.

John: Oh. That was—and that went out and hit the island (laughs) decided to come back and visit us again; and turned around and came back and hit us again. And they had a lot of ships at sea, that were—I don't think we lost any but.

Frohman: forty-five they lost they lost (unintelligible) Yeah.

John: Okay.

Frohman: Those were—there was actually as ships all the way up on the beach

John: I can believe it.

Frohman: Ya know.

John: Yup. Those are storms.

Frohman: I don't know if it was still there when you were there? But it was there at Naha.

John: Was it?

Frohman: Yah. That's when all the machine guns, bullets, the belts were laid out all over the coral reef.

John: Did you do any flying toward Korea or in Korea?

Frohman: Not until later. We went back to VP22—we went back to Hawaii in April; and then, I'd been over there for twenty-four months, or thirty months, actually. But the thirty is with the rest of this, too. I'd been over there over twenty-four months and the tour of duty was twenty-four months. And then, I was supposed to be assigned back to the States, which never happened because of Korea, really.

John: Yeah.

Frohman: But ah—so, anyway, I'd been there that long. And the VP22 was going back to Okinawa in October, and so, in September, or something—just before they went back. I was assigned to another squadron, VP9. And, I'd like to tell you a little bit about VP9. VP9 had been stationed at Kodiak, Alaska, or Kodiak Island, actually, but a Naval Air Station there, anyway. And they were—they lost several airplanes. I'm not sure how many, I think three. But ah, then ah, the wheels that be, transferred them down to Barbers Point in Hawaii. And, ah, the reason they were transferred was because they weren't doing very well there in bad weather up there. So, okay, they come down to Barbers Point and I was transferred into—I, and several other fellas, were transferred into VP9. And VP9 was supposed to be going to Alameda, California for training.

John: Okay. I'll tell you what; let me flip this okay.

[End of Side one, Tape one of one]

Frohman: Well, I get carried away.

John: Oh no. No. This is wonderful. Listen; this is wonderful. This is—nobody else is telling this story.

Frohman: Anyway, when I and a buddy of mine were transferred from VP22 to VP9 and the reason was because supposedly they were going back to Alameda, California for training. Well, okay, VP22 went back to Okinawa. And we went into VP9. And they immediately—they asked us if we wanted to get into a crew; and we did.

John: Sure. Sure.

Frohman: Ya know, we did! We'd really enjoyed it, when we'd been in crews, and they were kind of glad to get somebody with a little background in it. And by that time I had a little background in it, too. And I was pulling thirty-hour checks on engines that was, ah, thirty, sixty, nineties, and a-hundred-and-twenties,

John: Okay.

Frohman: And then, to two-forties. And I thought I knew a little bit about the plane by that time. Well, we didn't know anything about this deal, about Kodiak. And we didn't find out about that until we got back to Alameda. And then we found out that the planes they'd lost. And they were having trouble getting anybody to stay in a crew.

John: Oh. (chuckles)

Frohman: So it wasn't, we were so qualified. It was that they were desperate—they were desperate for crewmembers.

John: Desperate.

Frohman: desperate for crewmembers. You got it. We did a lot of flying out of Alameda, a lot Van Nuys submarine stuff, that we ah. We were getting to a point we were—we had some people. And I had a chance to do this. And I, I just didn't push it, to go with the submarines. And some of their crews came and flew with us on these operations.

John: Okay. Sure. Sure. Yeah.

Frohman: That was, that was exciting. I should have went on those. I didn't. Anyway, I remember going down to, oh, Monterey, down to Prenis Point (??) And off of Prenis Point (??) We rendezvoused with a submarine and then through the operation, dropping the sonar buoys and the, homing mine, and we sometimes we'd just get halfway through it. And maybe we'd be out of, ah, time or, we would go, we would stop the operation and have another plane come in and take over the operation, or take over from where we'd left off. And that was interesting, too.

John: Okay.

Frohman: But, ah, actually, we went through the whole operation many times. It was always interesting to see that submarine come up, after the homing mine hit them; why, that was exciting.

John: Yeah. At that time was the Russian submarine fleet out there?

Frohman: They didn't know! They didn't know! There were rumors that one of the squadrons that was doing the patrols up and down the China Coast at that time that, ah, they had gotten pictures of a Russian submarine.

John: Okay.

Frohman: Because we still had the box cameras with the pistol grips. And we took a lot of pictures of shipping going in and out of Chinese ports. But, ah, we never saw an enemy submarine, never did. But we flew an awful lot of time right over the water at about five-hundred feet.

John: Oh, well; that's, that's low.

Frohman: Most of our flying on these patrols was right down on the water, right on the water almost. But that was exciting, too.

John: Yes, sure. Then, did you eventually get to Korea?

Frohman: Yes. Ah

John: Some of your pictures, I think

Frohman: Okay, while we were Iwakuni (Japan) which was an Australian Airbase that we went to from Alameda. We flew the plane across the Pacific went from Alameda to, ah, Barbers Point; and stayed there for three days. They'd taken the turrets out, the waist turrets out, of the plane to fly it from Alameda to Barbers Point,

John: Okay.

Frohman: just to take the weight out; so we got to Barbers Point and, they, this FASRON 117 put the turrets back in.

John: Just for the tape that's FASRON: Fleet Air Support Squadron, right?

Frohman: Fleet All Service Squadron 117. That's what it was: Fleet All Service Squadron 117.

John: Okay. Okay. Okay (cough) Excuse me.

Frohman: Fleet All Service Squadron 117. They did the, the, putting the plane back together and so then we left Barbers Point; then went Johnson Island and stayed there over night; and then went to Kwajalein and stayed there overnight. And then we went to Guam and stayed there overnight. And, then, went to, ah, Iwakuni, in Japan, which was an Australian airbase.

John: Okay.

- Frohmaster: And then we run patrols out of, ah, Iwakuni. We used to fly weather for the 7th Fleet, used to watch the 7th Fleet at night. And most of our flying was a night by the way, too.
- John: Was it? Okay.
- Frohmaster: A lot of it was at night, anyway. And, ah, oh, let me see, we, ah, where was I? (Huh)
- John: Flying out of Iwakuni and flying out over the 7th Fleet at night?
- Frohmaster: Yeah. And watching them shell in Wonsan (Korea).
- John: Oh, wow.
- Frohmaster: That was exciting, too, yeah. It was quite a sight to see. If you ever saw fireworks, you should 'a seen them.
- John: Oh yeah. I was a forward air controller, a forward fire controller, actually. I used to call it in.
- Frohmaster: We'd fly weather for the 7th Fleet and spend a little time around them and then we'd go up the coast to Vladivostok and this is Russia.
- John: Yeah.
- Frohmaster: And, then, back down patrolling, go back to Iwakuni. But most of those hops were seven, to eight, to ten hours.
- John: That's a long time on an aircraft.
- Frohmaster: That flight from Alameda to Barbers Point was 13.7 hours.
- John: Oh wow. That's, that's a long time.
- Frohmaster: Yeah. You bet. And then, when we were at Iwakuni, we had detachments sent up to Wonsan in Korea. And, actually, we had them up at Seoul, also. But Seoul was K14 and Kansong was K8. And ah, I got in, um, one of the tours of the—we had three airplanes up at Kansong, that were operating out there. We'd leave in the evening, just before dark, and take off. And go out to sea and then go up the coast, the southern, or western, coast, I guess it would be, of Korea. And then go back in over land—somewhere, at one time, I know, we were in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir.
- John: Oh, wow. Oh, wow; oh.

Frohmaster: And, ah, we were—you could see these roads, in Korea, that were coral, there—the gravel is crushed coral or, whatever, that, ah, they maintain the roads with coral. Ah, anyway, what we were looking for was anything that the Chinese and the Koreans were running down to the 38th parallel.

John: Yeah. Yeah.

Frohmaster: With the supplies, and if a—any vehicles that showed up, we were dropping flares over them. And, we would be at about 3000 feet dropping long-burning flares. And we had 150 of these long-burning flares carried in the bomb bays. They had flight curtains in the bomb bays above the doors. And, they had put bins in, so we got—we didn't do any antisubmarine stuff in Korea. We were up with these, ah, looking for, patrolling for, ah, convoys, that the North Koreans were using.

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: And, ah, if—we had the navigator up in the bow of the airplane. And I used to stand in the bomb bays pass the flares out to the ordinance man, who was Morley. He was a third class ordinance man. And he'd set the timers on 'em, there was timers, apparently, on them then he'd set the dials on 'em. And he'd pass them back to a guy, who was standing over a shoot in the after station. And, this guy, that was up in the bow, the navigator, he was directing the airplane. And, whenever, he'd tell them to shove a chute out, he'd drop the chute. He'd drop the flare through the chute. The flare had a parachute on it. They'd burn for, I think, ah, just guessing, probably five minutes.

John: Oh, that's a long time.

Frohmaster: Yeah, a long time. And, boy, they were bright.

John: Yes. Yeah, I know that. Yeah.

Frohmaster: They were, those—they were hot stuff; they really were. We had 150 of them in the bomb bays and I was handing them out

John: Oh, oh, yeah. You could light up North Korea with that, yeah. Wow.

Frohmaster: Well, we'd stay up there doing that until the plane—the Marine fighter planes came in underneath us, and would strafe, and drop napalm on anything that showed up. And that was, ah, one night—one night we were up there. One of the planes went up there with the napalm underneath it and, oh boy, we had a sheet of fire for quite a ways and, I'm sure—I think, there were two people in the burning fighter planes. They, they had it. They were done. But, ah, then, we called maydays in and then—that

particular time, I know, we went back to the, to Kansong, back to the base afterwards. But, ah, a lot of times we'd be up there dropping the flares. And the fighter planes would use up there fuel and get rid of their armament, ordinance, and they would, ah, go. And a couple of more would come in below us and. We'd stay for them, too. We used to get quite a bit of time on station.

John: Oh, yeah. Wow. Yeah.

Frohmaster: on station. But that, ah, that was nerve-racking, I think, that really was. But that was exciting! Boy, it sure was—you didn't go to sleep.

John: No. You wouldn't doze off on something like that.

Frohmaster: Yeah. So, that was really the extent of it. And then, my time was up. Um, Harry Truman had given me an extra year to do.

John: Oh, that was nice of him. (John laughs) Thoughtful.

Frohmaster: Yeah. (John chuckles) But I, that was one thing I really hated to leave.

John: Did ya?

Frohmaster: Because I knew that, ah, I felt, at least, that I was a part of it.

John: Yeah, sure.

Frohmaster: And, that I was a contributing part of it. And, I think, I was. And, let's see, I'm the only one that I know of that ever got a cigarette case, a silver cigarette case.

John: Oh.

Frohmaster: It was made in Siam, with a (unintelligible) insignia and my name inside and the crew members outside.

John: Great. Oh, that's great. That's great.

Frohmaster: So, anyway, I—they were right in the middle of this kind of operations, ya know, when I left. I feel guilty about that, somewhat, to this day. And yet, I don't think I should. But I do. I hated to leave. And, yet, boy I was—they had a party in Iwakuni, in the village, one night at the Di itchi Club. Di itchi is supposed to be number one.

John: Yeah.

- Frohmdader: And, ah, the skipper said, “Oh, I’ll make ya second class.” Oh, he says, “I’ll make sure ya get second class.” From a third class, ya know. Oh, yes, I said, “No thank you! I’m going home! I’m getting the Hell out of here.”
- John: (chuckles) Ya broke the books. (unintelligible)
- Frohmdader: I was getting to were I didn’t trust anybody. And that was time for me to get out.
- John: Yup, yup, yup. So, then, then did you come back?
- Frohmdader: I come back, ah, sometime near the end of September.
- John: Of?
- Frohmdader: Like I was—I must have been back about two weeks by the time I got out. I got out on the, I think, the third of fourth of October.
- John: What year? What year?
- Frohmdader: Oh. 1952.
- John: ’52. Okay. Where did you get out from?
- Frohmdader: Treasure Island (California).
- John: Yeah; that’s where I got out from. Yeah. Fond memories of Treasure Island; I got there and I left. I remember one day, though, the fog was so bad and we had to walk across the drill field to get to the mess hall and they told us go around on the sidewalk ah, Hell we (both laugh)
- Frohmdader: Did ya get lost?
- John: Oh. About we—and then, finally, we walked around on the sidewalk. Oh.
- Frohmdader: But you were in the Navy, too.
- John: I was in the Marine Corps. Yeah. Yeah. Um, then when—when you came back; and I assume you got released from Great Lakes or from Treasure Island, which?
- Frohmdader: Oh, I got out at Treasure Island.
- John: Treasure Island. Okay. What did you do after?
- Frohmdader: After I got out. I stayed a week in Oakland. (laughs)

John: Okay. Burn up some of that money?

Frohman: (unintelligible)

John: (both laugh) Yeah. Yeah.

Frohman: And, I really didn't know what I was gonna to do. But after a week—one night, the girl I was going with was working as a waitress—one night, I just packed it all; and got a cab; and went out to the apartment that we had; and pulled all of my stuff, went on out to the airport.

John: Yup, yup, yup.

Frohman: came home.

John: Ah, something I ask all of the vets that I talk to. You're a young guy. And um, you're just

Frohman: I was just twenty-two. I was just twenty-one, actually, when I got out.

John: When you got out. But before you went in you were just eighteen.

Frohman: Seventeen.

John: Seventeen. And you were fortunate. But, you were still in harms way. What do you feel about that: regrets, or anger, or?

Frohman: No. Oh. I wanted to fly. When I had the chance—when I went into the Navy, I wanted to *see the world* and, ah, I wanted—I asked for duty aboard ship.

John: Uh, uh-huh.

Frohman: And when I didn't get it, I got these green stripes for airman, ya know, and didn't have any idea I'd ever get in a crew or anything else, ya know, at that time—I really was disappointed, that I didn't get put aboard ship. But I—I had the cruise from San Francisco to Hawaii. And, I spent a lot of time in Hawaii, probably out of the four years I was in I, six months, ah—three months boot camp, six months in Okinawa, six months at Alameda, and the rest of the time was all at, ah, Barbers Point in Hawaii. Ideal weather conditions constantly, very few storms whatsoever.

John: You had the GI—the Korean GI Bill right?

Frohman: Yeah.

John: Did you use it?

Frohmaster: No.

John: No. Okay. Okay.

Frohmaster: I tried to. But it didn't—they did everything they could, I think, to discourage me

John: Oh; I'll be darned.

Frohmaster: from using it. And part of it was my own fault, too. I'm sure. I had been—I was drinking.

John: Yup.

Frohmaster: Sure. I really can't blame anybody for that.

John: Yeah.

Frohmaster: I had the rights, I guess, to some four years

John: Yeah.

Frohmaster: for education. And I didn't use them.

John: Yeah, for education.

Frohmaster: But I got a good job. There at Volk Field, or Camp Williams at the time, I think I was getting \$185.00 a month.

John: That's good money.

Frohmaster: You know, and I was living at home, nothing to worry about, except myself. I was drinking, whatever, but, ah, then I stayed there at Volk, when it became Volk Field and that—I was there for eight years, from '53 to '61. And then, by that time, I'd been living at home and both of my folks had died of cancer. And there was a long drawn out process. And. And, ah, and I was glad to be home and the convenience of the job I had.

John: Yeah.

Frohmaster: I got the, ah, I got into the accounting and took the Air Force courses; and I got to be a seven there, at Volk Field, and I thought that was just terrific. But, I couldn't stand my commanding officer,

John: Yeah.

Frohmaster: who was Foxy Roberts; do ya know? Well, Foxy, I guess, was a pretty good guy, all in all. But I couldn't stand him. I went to Juneau County Normal, took a book keeping courses. And, then, I got into the accounting field through SHAPEY, or (unintelligible) the Air Force, uh

John: Yeah.

Frohmaster: the Air Force institute for education, or whatever, I got—I took several courses of that, and, ah, I began to think I knew a little bit about accounting. And the gal that was teaching it at Juneau County Normal, at the time, was June Andres. And, June and I got along real well. And she talked me into going over to Union Center to the Co-op Cream Company over there.

John: Co-op. Okay.

Frohmaster: And I started working part time at night for them. And then I thought to Hell with it. So I quit the Air Guard and I went to work full time. I was there for a couple of years.

John: What about veteran's organizations: VFW, Legion; vet's organizations: VFW, Legion?

Frohmaster: Legion is the only thing I ever joined; forty-a-day (??), Veterans of Foreign Wars, and everything else; and I thought—my brother is the commander of the forty-a-day (??) up there; but I never joined. I thought, enough for the Legion.

John: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Wow (laughing). This was a remarkable story. You know, I have seen planes dropping flares. I had no idea what the Hell they were doing up there. I just found out. Yeah. Yeah. I was a radio technician I went to Great Lakes and I went to San Diego to school. And then I was with a forward air control outfit we'd call-in air strikes for gunfire.

Frohmaster: Oh, yeah.

John: I got to call-in in Cyprus on just a training mission I got to call USS Iowa on a telegraph key (laughter). Oh, indeed—they hit the targets, so I must have got all of the code right. Okay. Anything else you want to put on this?

Frohmaster: The only thing I remember was that when we were flying weather for the 7th Fleet, that the Wisconsin was there;

John: Yeah.

Frohmaster: the Missouri was there; and the sister ship, the New Jersey,

John: New Jersey.

Frohmaster: were all there.

John: The Iowa was the only one missing then from that class. Yeah.

Frohmaster: Well, there was a—there was a three or four carriers in it too. And there were a lot of destroyers. I don't know what all was in there. But

John: There was a fifth ship in that class, the Kentucky, but the war ended. And they had only had laid down like half of it, so they just stopped. And then years later

Frohmaster: Oh. They never built it, at that time?

John: No, just the front end. Years later the Wisconsin was on maneuvers somewhere and bent her bow. I don't know what it hit; and what they did, they took that off and put the front end of the Kentucky on it. And the secret is: that's actually the US Wis-tucky.

Frohmaster: (hearty laughter)

John: Okay.

Frohmaster: My brother's wife, her brother, was on the Wisconsin.

John: Yeah.

Frohmaster: And he has his license plate:

John: Oh, yeah.

Frohmaster: the USS Wisconsin or something like that, where it designates it.

John: We, we, ah, toured that a couple of years ago.

Frohmaster: He'll let you know any time you mention anything about the Wisconsin. He's right there.

- John: Okay. I'm gonna shut this down, ah, if you think of anything else—okay go ahead.
- Frohmaster: (unintelligible) our training in, ah—we used to go out and shoot the machine guns, you know, it would be air to air, or air to sea, or air to ground. We used to go over to an island. We were in Hawaii. And ah, just a little rock, that had a bunch of barrels set up on it. And there were goats all over the island. And we used to shoot at the goats. But there was nobody on the island and that was part of the air to air, air to ground at these barrels, that's what we were supposed to be shooting at. Anyway, besides that the air to air around Alameda, and just right next to the Farallon Islands, about 18-20 miles out of San Francisco. And, ah, we were firing air to air at a towed target and, ah, one of the—one side of the survival gear, that's supposed to pop out if you are ditching; ah, the—shooting the machine guns must have loosened 'em. And, they popped out. And with them is a bag that carries a radio and other survival gear: flares, and whatnot. And the bag is tied on a line to where it was fastened to the airplane. And we're flying along and this damn thing comes out and starts wind-milling behind the airplane and winding around the elevators
- John: Oh, wow.
- Frohmaster: and the rudders; and it was scarring the rudders, it's terrible, the stabilizer, whatever. And ah, we called in a Mayday and went back into Alameda. And nothing happened. But it sure could have, you know.
- John: 'cause it scared the Hell out of you.
- Frohmaster: Yeah. Sure, sure. And then, there was another deal. We came in off a hop on one of these patrols at night. And ah, usually the first thing after you park the plane, the refueler comes back—backs up to the plane. This was a job I always had was fueling the airplane filling it up with whatever was required at that time. The gasoline was 115/145 was the octane ratings on it. He backed up. And I filled up all of the wing tanks. And ah, retired to the barracks, secured the airplane, you know. Next morning, another crew got up. They piled into that airplane and they taxied out just about to the runway and all four engines quit. And they didn't know why right away. But they found out soon enough. I'd filled the tanks up with salt water.
- John: Oh. Jesus.
- Frohmaster: Our gasoline came from a tanker out at sea; that would fill up a barge; that would come in and fill up the tank wagon.
- John: Okay.

Frohmaster: And the barge was filled up with salt water and filled up the tank wagon.

John: Oh, wow. You know they were fortunate.

Frohmaster: And that's part of the reason why I wanted to get out, so I was getting scared of things like that happening.

John: And they're fortunate that they were still on the runway. Yeah. Yeah. If they'd gone up for 20 minutes, they'd of been in trouble.

Frohmaster: Well, they never got off the ground and they probably never would have, because of—it would take enough, they—before they would take off they'd get to the end of the runway and they'd line up, around, run to the end—they run the engines and do a complete check; and they'd, ah, had to use enough gas to

John: They were recalled. Okay.

Frohmaster: Salt water wouldn't have gotten to it. So we cannibalized that airplane.

John: Well, yeah, well, you couldn't have—Okay. This is great! Remarkable!

[End of interview]