

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**CURTIS GARRETT**  
Electrician, Navy, Vietnam War

2007

OH  
1206

**OH**  
**1206**

**Garrett, Curtis.** Oral History Interview, 2007.

User Copy: 1 sound disc (ca. 75 min.): digital.

Master Copy: 1 sound disc (ca. 75 min.): digital.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Curt Garrett discusses his experience as an electrician in the Navy during the Cold War and before and during the Vietnam War. Garrett states he joined the Navy to avoid being drafted by the Army. He describes boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Center (Illinois) including a hazing incident where an officer made someone eat cigarettes. He discusses his duties in E division aboard USS *Intrepid*, an aircraft carrier, including standing watch on the ship's service generators and performing maintenance. Garrett reveals some sailors relieved their boredom by gambling. He tells about his wedding being delayed by the Cuban missile crisis when his ship joined the blockade of Cuba. He relates picking up astronauts Grissom and Young and their Gemini spacecraft and portrays riding through a hurricane. Garrett recalls liberty being canceled and outgoing mail being held after tensions arose with Russian submarines in the Mediterranean. He describes a sailor getting "six and a kick" for smuggling a young woman aboard in Nova Scotia, a sailor paid to jump over the side while manning the rails, and another man who carried a big ship knife into New York City and stabbed someone. He recalls being told not to break laws in any port because the Navy could not get him out of jail. He mentions visiting Jamaica, the Caribbean islands, Halifax (Canada), Cannes (France), and Naples (Italy). Garrett expresses the honor of winning the battle efficiency "E" two years in a row. He refers to the history of kamikaze attacks on *Intrepid* in World War II. He portrays helping a heat exhausted sailor after a condensate pump broke down and mentions ventilation was shut off during nuclear attack drills. Garrett describes refueling at sea and one emergency breakaway drill when oil spilled due to an open valve. He speaks of what caused his captain and some senior officers to be dismissed, relaying that after going ashore and drinking, a storm came up and they tried to get back to the ship on a Coast Guard cutter that was banged around in the storm and caused a mess. Garrett tells of a man killed by a misaimed blast deflector and remembers where he heard the news about John Kennedy's being shot. He recalls a saying that a sailor had to take pictures of home to remember what it looked like and explains his wife and family moved around to be near his ports. Garrett describes winning a race against USS *Randolph* to get a spot at the pier in Norfolk (Virginia). He explains how the escalation of the Vietnam War extended his tour; he states he did one short tour to Guantanamo Bay with USS *Independence* and stayed in the Portsmouth Navy Shipyard for three months. The interviewer reads some excerpts of letters by Garrett from 1962 explaining how electricians could get anything by threatening to pull ventilation fuses and detailing facts about the ship. Garrett discusses belonging to the American Legion.

Interviewed by Robert Garrett, 2007.

Transcribed by Robert Garrett, 2007.

Transcription edited by Katy Marty, 2008.

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2008.

**Interview Transcript:**

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Here we go. It is Monday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007, and this is Bob Garrett. I'm talking here to my father, Curt Garrett, and he's going to talk about his time in the Navy. And do you remember what month you signed up for the Navy?

CURT GARRETT: October 17, 1961.

BOB GARRETT: '61? Okay. And what made you decide to join the Navy?

CURT GARRETT: Well, I had a buddy that I joined on the buddy system with. He had an older brother that was a career Navy, and he used to come home all the time with stories and sea stories, and it just seemed like the thing to do. And back then there was a draft. If you didn't join the Navy, the Army would draft you, so you had -- every young man in those years owed his country six years of his life. There were several ways to do it, but --

BOB GARRETT: All right.

CURT GARRETT: -- there was a draft, and you had to serve, so --

BOB GARRETT: And the Navy sounded more interesting than the Army or --

CURT GARRETT: Well, like I say, this buddy of mine, his brother had come home with all these sea stories and all the places he went and so on, and, yeah, it just sounded -- it appealed.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, how did it work up? You sign up, and then where did you go to basic training, or where did they ship you off from there?

CURT GARRETT: Well, when I first signed up, I had to take a test so I could be guaranteed a school.

BOB GARRETT: Uh-huh.

CURT GARRETT: This buddy's brother told us, "Go to schools, get some training, so when you go aboard ship, they will have to put you in the job that they trained you for."

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: You won't get jobs that aren't so nice.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: And so I took the test, passed it. Then we were sworn in New York City at a Navy station there, and they loaded us on trains, on train cars, and sent us to Great Lakes Naval Training Center, and it's outside of Chicago. I don't remember the name of the town.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. So you were there, and you decided to be an electrician? Was that right?

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. And how did that work? Is that the job they assigned to you or you --

CURT GARRETT: Well, first we went -- we had to go through boot camp first before I went to school.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: And boot camp is nine weeks, I think, and they put you through the paces. No two ways about it. And one of the things that I remember about it is the first morning I got there they lined us all up before we were ready to go to breakfast to give us a little talk, and one of the things the guy said to us all, he said, "Fellows, we can't make you do anything, but we can sure make you wish you did." And I thought there's food for thought. That was my attitude adjustment right there. This guy is not kidding.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: So then nine weeks of boot camp, I didn't have much problem with it. You had to keep your mouth shut and your eyes and your ears open and do what you're told. And then I went to electrical school.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Where was boot camp? Annapolis, or did they send you --

CURT GARRETT: No. It was in Great Lakes Naval Training Center outside of Chicago.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay. So you did all of it right -- yeah.

CURT GARRETT: The boot camp was on one side of the road. The training school was over on the other side of the road.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, you said that was an eye-opener. I remember we watched *Full Metal Jacket* one time.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Was there a lot of that going on, hazing people?

CURT GARRETT: Oh, yeah. They get right in your face. Oh, yeah, yeah. Navy boot camp wasn't as tough as the Marines. We didn't have the -- so much of the physical because we were going to go on a ship.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: We weren't going to land on beaches. So it wasn't as physical as the Marine Corps, but they were tough on you. They put you through the paces.

BOB GARRETT: Did you ever get into trouble?

CURT GARRETT: No, not in boot camp.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: Not in boot camp, no.

BOB GARRETT: Just wondering.

CURT GARRETT: There was one guy that -- you weren't allowed to carry cigarettes in your breast pocket, and there was no sense in carrying them around anyway because they wouldn't let you smoke them unless you were in the barracks anyhow, so -- and this guy had to go to chow early to stand a watch, and he had cigarettes in his breast pocket. And he had to ask permission from his chief petty officer to get in the chow line, and he saw the cigarettes, and he fed them to him one at a time. He ate them.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, jeez.

CURT GARRETT: And they took him over to the -- took him over to the hospital and pumped his stomach out. He didn't carry any cigarettes in his pocket

anymore.

BOB GARRETT: Well, that would be -- that would work.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: That worked.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. Wow. Okay. Well, I was just thinking out here. When I was doing some searching on the web, I found this. This is electrician's mate. It's a job description.

CURT GARRETT: Um-hmm.

BOB GARRETT: This is current, you know.

CURT GARRETT: Um-hmm.

BOB GARRETT: I couldn't find one from 1960s, but I thought it would be interesting to read it, and you can tell me how much it has changed just in the last forty years. I mean that's something here. It just said, "General info. Electricians' mates are responsible for the operation of a ship's electrical power generation systems" --

CURT GARRETT: That's what I did.

BOB GARRETT: -- yeah -- "lighting systems, electrical equipment and electrical appliances. Duties include installation, operation, adjustment, routine maintenance, inspection, test and repair of electrical equipment."

CURT GARRETT: Yep.

BOB GARRETT: "EMs also perform maintenance and repair of related electrical equipment."

CURT GARRETT: Yep.

BOB GARRETT: It just says what they do, "Duties include installing power and lightning circuits -- lighting circuits, repairing distribution circuits, running wiring for lights and other equipment, maintaining operating

efficiency of distribution panels, switches, switchboards, controllers, voltage regulators, current transformers and voltage transformers, maintaining operating efficiency of electric motors, repairing electrical equipment, apply" -- well, I guess I don't have to read the whole thing. You get the idea, but I --

CURT GARRETT: Well, there were different departments in E Division on the ship, and I was in what they call distribution. I stood my watches on the ship's service generators. We were the power company.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: My civilian-related job would be working in a power -- electrical power plant.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. And you were -- but on a ship; right?

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. All of it on a ship. Okay. How -- I mean what would a typical day in doing something like that would be? You would have certain duties every day or --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Well, we did routine maintenance, preventative maintenance, and you stood a watch every day for four hours on a ship's service generator and switchgear.

BOB GARRETT: No weekends off, I imagine.

CURT GARRETT: Not at sea, but I got weekends when we were in port. Oh, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: Sure. But at sea, no. You're just gone. That's all.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. All right. I suppose it would be different duties depending on when you're at sea or whether you're at port and --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Well, it's a lot different today. These guys on these aircraft carriers today, they've got video games and e-mail and all this stuff. We had nothing. We had one ship's movie a day. That was it for any kind of recreation. Time off, you just were off. That's all.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: There wasn't much to do.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. How did you relieve boredom when you were at sea for a long time?

CURT GARRETT: Stand around and gab.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Did you play card games or anything?

CURT GARRETT: Some did. Well, on payday -- we got paid in cash every two weeks, and when you're out to sea, there's no place to go to spend it, so the card games and the dice, which were strictly illegal, would start.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: And I never got in them because I was never any good at gambling, and I wanted to have a few bucks for the next port we hit so I could go ashore and see something and do -- you know, do some stuff.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: So I never got into the gambling part of it, but it was there.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. Okay. A lot of it was -- well; I think maybe at this point -- mom got this photo album out. Let me get out of this. Only have a few in the beginning. Go over that. Oh, this looks like -- is this your wedding?

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: I met your mother when I was going to electrical school. She was working -- living and working in Milwaukee. She had a roommate. I was going to school with a guy who had a girlfriend, who had a roommate, and he asked me to go along one weekend, and I did. And we will be married forty-five years this December.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, that -- so then when -- you met her when you were --

CURT GARRETT: Going to electrical school.



BOB GARRETT: -- going to electrical school, so that was in late '61, early --

CURT GARRETT: Early '62.

BOB GARRETT: Early '62?

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Wow, that's -- and you were just outside of Chicago, and she was in Milwaukee then.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, yeah. It was a short trip. They had a train, a commuter train, that used to run to Milwaukee and back every weekend.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: Well, I don't know how often the train went. It ran on the weekends. That's how we used to get there and come back.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, that's -- that worked out pretty well.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, I guess so.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. But then I see that we have the wedding. You were married in New Jersey, though; right?

CURT GARRETT: Um-hmm, yep.

BOB GARRETT: So then --

CURT GARRETT: Your mother got on a bus and went all the way out to New Jersey because I couldn't get enough leave to get out here and then -- well, the Cuban missile crisis broke out, and I was gone. We were going to get married in October of '62, and when the Cuban missile crisis broke out; they shipped us down to Cuba. And it wasn't just thirteen days. We had to stay down there for that barricade, and so they -- till they got those missiles out of there, and I got back sometime in December.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. And I remember you said you were on the *Independence* for a cruise or something like that first or for one --

CURT GARRETT: Well, I was due to get out of the Navy in October of 1965, and that's

when they escalated the Vietnam War, so all of us were all extended four months.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: On a four-year active duty enlistment, we were all extended for four months. And the *Intrepid* was going to Vietnam, but I didn't have enough time left, even with the four-month extension, to go, and I wasn't the only one. There was a whole bunch of us.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: So they transferred us all to the *Independence*, and we made one short cruise. And then they put it in the Portsmouth Navy Shipyard.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: So we just sat there for three months waiting to get out.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. I guess I thought you were on the *Independence* first.

CURT GARRETT: No.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: No. I was on the *Intrepid* most of the time. The *Independence* was just a little short time before I got out, and your mother and I were going to go upstate to New York to Niagara Falls when I was supposed to get out in October of '65 for the honeymoon. We never got the fall leaves. Northern New York State is very pretty. I've been up there. It's very pretty up there. But when you get out -- don't get out till February of '66, who wants to go to Buffalo, New York?

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. That's for sure.

CURT GARRETT: So we came home.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, I found a timetable on here, and this is just a -- Wikipedia is the name of the site. It's just like a -- but what it says here, it just mentions '62 summer. Well, it says '62 autumn, thorough overhaul at Norfolk --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- so I don't --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. We were in -- well, that couldn't have been in the fall. It had to be after. We were in the Portsmouth Navy Shipyard for a major overhaul, but it wasn't in the autumn of '62. I can't --

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, that could be very well be inaccurate.

CURT GARRETT: We trained midshipmen in the summertime. Those Annapolis midshipmen, they don't get the summer off like college kids do. They go for on-the-job training on ships. They go to sea, and we had them --

BOB GARRETT: All right.

CURT GARRETT: -- periodically.

BOB GARRETT: Well, I can't remember -- when exactly -- when did you first go on board the *Intrepid*?

CURT GARRETT: Late May or June of '62 --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- I think.

BOB GARRETT: This one here is -- this is from the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*. It's off a site maintained by the U.S. Navy --

CURT GARRETT: Um-hmm.

BOB GARRETT: -- Navy Historical Center and I just found this. On December 8th, 1961, *Intrepid* reclassified to an anti-submarine warfare support carrier. (Interruption)

BOB GARRETT: Okay. We're off. Okay. I was just going to say, looking on this -- I'm sorry. You said you -- when did you go on board the *Intrepid* again?

CURT GARRETT: In either late May or early June of '62.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. It says here after training exercises, the *Intrepid* was selected as the principal ship in the recovery team for Astronaut Scott Carpenter and his Mercury project. That was 24 May, 1962. Were you on there for that one?

CURT GARRETT: No.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: They just came back for that one. I was on it when they picked up Grissom and Young on --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- another Gemini shot.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. That's in here, too, but --

CURT GARRETT: Okay.

BOB GARRETT: -- that was later on, but I see -- I just see they have that one. And it just says after training midshipmen at sea in the summer and a thorough overhaul at Norfolk in the fall, the carrier departed Hampton Roads 23 January, 1963. Okay. But that's later. But you were in the -- you said you were in the blockade for Cuba.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah, in October.

CURT GARRETT: Yes. We definitely were.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. Do you remember -- what was -- was that fairly tense on ship when that was going on?

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. You don't know what those Russians are going to do. You don't know what's going to happen. Nobody talked about it much, but you could feel, yeah, things were tense, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And you didn't know how long you were going to be down there, and so, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. Well, you said you and mom were going to get married in October or September.

CURT GARRETT: In October.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And we couldn't because I was down there in Cuba, and we got married in December when we got back.

BOB GARRETT: And you didn't know how long that was going to be put off, and --

CURT GARRETT: No. We got married on a weekend because I had to go back to sea.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, I kind of remember you telling a story, too, about when you got married and your car broke down.

CURT GARRETT: Oh, yeah. My mother's car broke down. We had to take her dad's to go away for the weekend, yeah. I remember that now that you mention it.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. I was just thinking. Do you have any -- what do you remember about the blockade in Cuba and the Cuban missile crisis?

CURT GARRETT: Well, just that we had to supervise -- well, in the first place, they wouldn't let any Russian ships into Cuba, and then we had to supervise and make sure the ones that went out had missiles on them. They were taking them out, and --

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: -- there's no better way to do that than from the air.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: So that's why the carriers were there. The *Intrepid* wasn't the only one. I don't remember who the others were.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: But they could do all the surveillance from the air, so --

BOB GARRETT: So then a lot of times when you were on the ship, you didn't always know what was going on?

CURT GARRETT: Exactly, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: We didn't know just what they were doing. I mean I was just an electrician. The captain and the senior officers knew what was going on, but --

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: -- just the ordinary crewmen, they don't tell you much about that.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. Well, I remember we were watching that movie *13 Days* last night and they have all the general quarters and everybody scrambling there.

CURT GARRETT: Oh, yeah. I went to general quarters lots of times.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Well, yeah. And then there were Russian submarines. We went on a Mediterranean cruise. I don't remember what year, the chronological order of this stuff. I don't remember what year it was.

BOB GARRETT: I think '64.

CURT GARRETT: Okay.

BOB GARRETT: Well, I just see here June 1964, left Norfolk carrying midshipmen --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- to the Mediterranean --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- for a hunter-killer at sea training with the 6th Fleet, but --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- I don't -- yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And somehow they found out that some Russian submarines had come down from the Black Sea and into the Mediterranean, and the Pentagon wanted to know how many of them are there and what are they doing there, so you talk about a tense time. They were harassing them. No two ways about it. And they caught one. They showed pictures to us. They posted them around the ship of one of them that had surfaced, and they were trying to paint a new number on it --

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: -- to, I guess, think there was more of them than what they had, but they caught them at it because every ship in every navy in the world has a number on it.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: So they were trying to paint over this number and paint a new one --

BOB GARRETT: Oh, so they couldn't --

CURT GARRETT: -- and they caught them from the air, took pictures of it, and so the captain had copies made and posted around the ship to -- but we didn't dare -- we were in Palma, Mallorca, which is an island off the coast of Spain, belongs to Spain, and -- for liberty, and they just canceled liberty, pulled up the anchor and -- well, if we went -- we didn't know what was going on. The worst part of it was that they cut off our outgoing mail. We could get mail in. This was all hush-hush, you know.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: This didn't get to newspapers. And I kept getting letters from your mother, "Where are you? Are you all right? I'm not getting any mail from you." And that was tough.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: That was tough, but they kept -- I guess they got them -- oh, I know. The subs, I guess, went back up in the Black Sea, so then we went back to the regular mission we were over there for.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: And, yeah, that was kind of tense because we didn't know whether one of those -- we were harassing them and one of -- if one of those Russian sub commanders would get mad and take a shot at us --

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: -- because we were harassing them. There's no two ways about it, so --

BOB GARRETT: And then they did take a shot at you?

CURT GARRETT: No. No, they didn't.

BOB GARRETT: No.

CURT GARRETT: No, no.

BOB GARRETT: But the possibility was certainly there.

CURT GARRETT: The possibility was certainly there.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: You betcha it was, so -- and then we went back. And when we came back from the Mediterranean, we hit a hurricane, and that's a ride I'll never forget. Boy, you talk about getting pitched around. They told us to pass everything down, and we said, aah, it ain't going to -- this big ship like this, that ain't going to -- well, it sure did, boy, I'll tell you. It pitched us around something else. And I don't remember how long it took us to get out of it. What I do remember is the destroyers that were with us -- I don't know how they stayed afloat. The water was just going right over the top of them. They're small ships compared to --

BOB GARRETT: Right, compared to the aircraft --

CURT GARRETT: That's why they call them a tin can. And the water was just going right over the top of them, some of those waves. I don't know how they -- but they did.



BOB GARRETT: Well, you know, I know the *Intrepid* is a museum now, and I remember the first time I saw it even, I mean I knew they were big, but I wasn't –

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- prepared for how big it was.

CURT GARRETT: Well, the new ones today are bigger, so --

BOB GARRETT: Yeah, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: They're huge. An aircraft carrier is the largest mobile structure ever built by mankind, "mobile" being the key word. I mean there are --

BOB GARRETT: Right; right.

CURT GARRETT: -- bigger structures, but one that moves, that is the largest.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And they also are the largest most high-tech war machine that mankind has ever built.

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm. Okay. Actually, I found this. This was something I was looking at. I don't remember you talking about this, and I just wondered. It says late February 1963 *Intrepid* interrupted operations to join a sea hunt for this Venezuelan freighter, *Anzoátegui*.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- whose mutinous second mate had led a group of pro-Castro terrorists in hijacking the vessel.

CURT GARRETT: Boy, I don't remember that, but we obviously did.

BOB GARRETT: Apparently.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, because --

BOB GARRETT: As it said, Communist pirates surrendered at Rio de Janeiro.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Boy, now I'm shaking the cobwebs out. Yeah. I think I do

remember something about that. They beat it and went to Rio de Janeiro, I guess, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Did you get to see any of South –

CURT GARRETT: No. I didn't see any.

BOB GARRETT: -- America when you were --

CURT GARRETT: No, no. Nova Scotia. They talk about us going from -- operating from Nova Scotia to the Caribbean. Yes. We always did that. I was in the Caribbean a lot, saw more islands than I can count, some of them a lot of times, but one thing that happened in Nova Scotia, we were in there for a few days for liberty, and we left. And we were I think it was four days out to sea, and we were rewinding an armature for a submarine that was running with us because we could rewind motors. They couldn't. And they needed some insulation paper, and we had it stored in what's called a fan room. These ventilation motors on a ship that size are huge, and they have a space all themselves.

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: And we stored stuff in there.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: Well, we sent a guy up there. This was two in the morning, something like that. Sent a guy up there to get some of this insulation paper, and he opened the hatch, and there was a nineteen-year-old red-headed freckly faced young lady in there that some guy in my division smuggled aboard. How he did, I don't know. She wanted to go to the states, and he neglected to tell her that we weren't going right back home. She'd be in there awhile. And he was smuggling her food, I guess, and, oh, that was -- he said, "You better come with me," and he took her down to the electrical power shop, and they called the electrical officer. And, boy, that's when it hit the fan. Boy, there was officers and brass all over the place, and they took her up to sick bay, checked her out, put her on a plane, sent her back to Nova Scotia.

BOB GARRETT: Nova Scotia.

CURT GARRETT: But that was -- you get the immigration all involved and that, and it was a big to-do. The guy that -- this kind of sounds like a fairy tale or story, but it's true. The guy that smuggled her aboard, his name was Gonzales. He was in the electrical division. And after this all got over, the captain came on the microphone and told us about the whole situation, told the whole crew, and one thing he said when he finished up, he said, "Speedy isn't with us anymore." This guy's name was Gonzales, and he called him Speedy. From what we heard, he got six months -- it was called six and a kick. He got six months in a Navy brig and a dishonorable discharge. They threw him out.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: That was the view that -- the brass has no sense of humor about that kind of stunts.

BOB GARRETT: Well, especially you're involving immigration and all the other --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, yeah. Oh, that is --

BOB GARRETT: And you got to be careful when you're going with other countries.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Even though it was Canada, it's -- it was a mess. And we were going into New York City -- I can't remember what year this was either -- for liberty, and they let the public aboard. And when you go into any port, they do what they call man the rails. You see things on the news with sailors all lined up around the rail of the ship. And there was a guy up on the rail, and he says to the guy next to him, "Give me eighty bucks, and I'll jump over the side." And the guy on the other side of him said, "I'll make it five bucks more; you do a back flip." And he did.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, God.

CURT GARRETT: I don't know how he survived because the flight deck on that carrier is sixty feet above the water line. That's a long way down.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, that's going to hurt like hell when you hit the water, right?

CURT GARRETT: He survived. There was a destroyer coming in behind us, and they picked him up. And we never, ever heard -- he never came back. I'll tell you that. We never heard of what they did to him, what happened to him.

BOB GARRETT: Well, maybe he got six and a kick, too, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: I would guess, but we never did hear. Nobody ever knew what happened to him, but he did survive.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: So, yeah, that was --

BOB GARRETT: I seem to remember you telling a story about somebody who got into a knife fight in Brooklyn, too.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. We were in the Brooklyn Navy Shipyard for overhaul. We were the last major ship they overhauled before McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, shut it down. And there was a -- the boatswains mates carried these big knives to cut -- well, there's no ropes there -- hawsers or lines, but they didn't take them ashore. I mean that was part of their work, you know. Well, this one guy did, and he ran into some punks that were -- you got to watch out in New York City where you go because some sections are not good.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And he ran into some punks, and they started harassing him. And I think that the guy that was -- after harassing him, had a knife, so he just took it out, and he stabbed him. And he didn't -- I don't think he killed him, and I don't remember what happened to him either, but there definitely had to be some disciplinary action there because you don't carry those knives ashore. I mean that's --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: You just don't do it and then stab people. I mean something like that is a civilian offense, so the Navy can't do anything about it. You do what the courts -- then when you come back, then the Navy talks to you, so you'll get --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: -- you know, could get in a lot of trouble for something like that.

BOB GARRETT: Well, yeah. I just remember my friend, Wes, was in the Navy, too, and he would talk about what a big problem it would be because I think he got threw -- actually got thrown in jail one night in San Diego.

CURT GARRETT: Um-hmm, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: And he said the big worry there is if you get arrested and thrown in jail, if it's longer than your leave when you have to report to the ship --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: And he said what the Navy will do to you is far worse than what the --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. They always told us anytime we went into -- well, any port, foreign port, whatever you do, don't break their laws because we cannot help you. They're going to throw you in jail. We can't get you out.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: So don't break their laws. So that was -- that there was food for thought, something you --

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: -- paid attention to.

BOB GARRETT: Did you have a story on that where something like that went wrong on --

CURT GARRETT: No, no, no. I never got into any -- I didn't ever break any laws or anything, no.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. And I just wondered, some of the countries -- you had mentioned being in Jamaica before a few times.

CURT GARRETT: Oh, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Italy, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: I was in Jamaica so many times, Kingston, Jamaica. That's quite a dirty -- well, I guess -- I don't know if they let you go in there anymore. The crime, I guess, is so bad, the State Department doesn't want civilians -- you can go to Jamaica on these big resorts that are fenced in.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: And you stay on the resort.

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: But we never had any trouble being robbed or anything or mugged, but it was dirty, and there was open-air markets that would stink and just -- it wasn't pretty. It wasn't what you --

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: -- see on the TV ads and --

BOB GARRETT: No.

CURT GARRETT: It was a -- it was a dirty hole, and I was there -- I don't know how many times.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Do you have any -- were there any countries you really enjoyed the best of all the ones you saw?

CURT GARRETT: Well, those Caribbean islands are all pretty much the same. Halifax, those people were really nice to us. We were in there on the 4th of July, and that being Canada, that's nothing to them.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: And they threw us a big block party for --

BOB GARRETT: Oh, wow.

CURT GARRETT: -- anybody who could come, and they were really -- actually, we

went to Quebec twice, too. That's as far down the Saint Lawrence as we could get the ship. And the Canadian sailors were really great to us. We had fun with them.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, wow.

CURT GARRETT: We had a good time with them. The most -- well, the one Caribbean port we were in that's kind of high class, and they didn't really want us in there, was Bermuda. We were in Bermuda.

BOB GARRETT: They did or they didn't want you?

CURT GARRETT: They didn't want us. It's high-class resorts and stuff, and they -- and it's expensive.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: And we were in Cannes, France, too, and that's -- they didn't dislike us or anything, but everything was high priced. It was, you know, a big resort town, and it was kind of high priced for just sailors, you know. We didn't make a lot of money, so -- so that was quite a place, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: I can remember you talking about Italy once.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: You said you went through there, and it looked like World War II was yesterday.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Naples, Italy, yeah. That was a tough town, too. That was -- it was -- buildings all old and -- I don't know about falling down, but, you know, it should have been bulldozed down and rebuilt. That's what they --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: -- should have done with it, but, yeah, that was kind of a dumpy town, too, but Naples, Italy, is the largest -- one of the largest U.S. Naval bases in the world. It's not as big as San Diego or Norfolk, Virginia, but it's big. It's big operations.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. You were talking about submarine warfare. I just found this

on the web. It was just like a -- it's just like the cover of a report or something that was scanned, but it just says -- you were talking about submarine warfare.

CURT GARRETT: They used to switch us back and forth. They made us a CVS officially, but there were some cruises we'd go on as a CVA and some as a CVS.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. What --

CURT GARRETT: It was different missions.

BOB GARRETT: What's the difference in the designations? Carrier --

CURT GARRETT: CVS is anti-submarine, carrier vessel submarine, and CVA is carrier vessel attack.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: And like I said, I don't know what determined what mission -- what type of a mission we went on or not. I wasn't -- but they used to switch us back and forth.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. I just saw this because it says here, "Welcome aboard the anti-submarine warfare support aircraft carrier."

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: And I know there's something on there, and there was something in here about the *Intrepid* won the battle efficiency "E" for anti-submarine warfare.

CURT GARRETT: Two years in a row.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: Two years in a row we had -- still on my old uniform there's a -- on the right-hand sleeve there's an "E" with a hash mark under it, and we thought we were pretty hot stuff. And two years in a row was what really made us feel like -- you know, I don't know if that's ever been done. I didn't know of any. They didn't say anything.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, yeah.



CURT GARRETT: And we were -- the *Intrepid* only had two catapults to launch planes. The newer ships -- at that time, the Forrestal class carriers had four catapults.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: We were launching more planes faster than the newer ships with four catapults.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. How many --

CURT GARRETT: And the captains of those newer carriers that we were beating had to be just livid because the competition is just fierce between those commanding officers for that "E".

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: So, yeah, we won it two years in a row. That was quite something. We thought we were pretty tough stuff. Little stagger in the hip and in the walk there.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. That "E" with the hash mark under it, that was important. Yeah. They used to take us down to Guantanamo Bay often, what they call shakedown crews. That's where they really put you through the paces, and you learn how to operate that ship under fire and, you know, how to fix it if it gets hit and -- oh, yeah. We did that a lot. Well, that's how you win that "E." You're graded.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: There's inspectors there grading you on how well you did your job and faced the situation that he presented to you.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: So --

BOB GARRETT: How many catapults were on the *Intrepid*?

CURT GARRETT: Two.

BOB GARRETT: Two? Okay.

CURT GARRETT: And there was four on the -- two off the forward bow.

BOB GARRETT: All right.

CURT GARRETT: And you can see -- well, it's hard to see from this angle. That angle deck there where that --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: So they had -- they built the angle deck on the *Intrepid*. The *Intrepid* was World War II, and it's a straight deck carrier. You had to have an angle deck to fly jets.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: So, when they built the newer carriers, they built two catapults off that angle deck.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: But the *Intrepid* only had two.

BOB GARRETT: The *Intrepid* was Essex class.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. It was an Essex class carrier. It was built in -- well, it was commissioned in 1943, saw a lot of action in the Pacific. It held the record for kamikaze attacks. It got hit by five, two of them --

BOB GARRETT: Oh, wow, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: -- two of them at the same time.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, that's incredible. Those kamikazes did a --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Killed a lot of --

BOB GARRETT: -- lot of damage from what I've been --

CURT GARRETT: Killed a lot of men, a lot of men.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: I don't know whether that would be -- holding the record for having the most kamikaze hits in the Second World War is bad luck or poor gunner's mates. They couldn't shoot them down. I don't know.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: But they were hard to shoot down, I guess, from what I've read about it.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. It's kind of hard to do anything when you got somebody who's --

CURT GARRETT: Because they were -- you see the documentaries on them. They were really slinging the lead at them, but some of them got through, of course. We all know that. And carriers were their biggest target. They wanted to sink the carriers, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Well, yeah, because then you got the air support with the carriers --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- and that's where you got the -- yeah. That makes a lot -- well, that makes sense. Well, did you -- you were just talking about stories on there. I seem to remember you had something about somebody who collapsed on the ship once that you had to save.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Well, I didn't save -- we were at general quarters down in the -- and I was on number four generator, which was in number four fire room. That's a boiler room, and it can -- I've seen it get 150 degrees down there. And the generator went off the line. The generators were powered by a steam turbine. The boilers put out steam called super heated steam. They make steam. Then they'd reheat it to 850 degrees, and it was in the steam line at 600 pounds per square inch. That's a lot of pressure.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And when the steam goes through the turbine, which would spin the generator, the steam goes into what they call a condensate tank, which condenses back to water, and then they pump it back to the boiler.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: Well, the condensate pump broke down. And these generators are two stories high, and the condensate --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: -- pump was a deck below me. So the machinist mate went down there to see what was the matter, and he didn't come back, and he didn't come back. So I went down there to look, see what was going on, and he was sitting on the deck with his feet in the bilges by the pump. And I said, "What's the matter, White?" And he looked back at me, and his eyes rolled back, and over he went. So I called sick bay. I got a sound-powered telephone headset. And I got him up one deck -- two decks, yeah, from there to where the generator was and then up the next level, and the corpsmen came down and got him. I think they said his body temperature was 104 degrees when they got him to sick bay.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, God, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: They put him in cold water and cooled him down, and he was all right. Yeah. That was -- oh, I remember what they did. When you go through a nuclear attack drill, they shut the -- as hot as it was down there, they shut the ventilation off so you don't get radioactive air in there, down in there.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: And you can't hardly breathe. They usually don't leave it off too long, which I don't know what they'd do if they had to because I don't know when the guys would pass out.

BOB GARRETT: You're talking about an attack of a nuclear submarine?

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, or a nuclear bomb went off, weapon went off somewhere near the ship.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: You got radioactivity in the air.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, that makes sense, but then when -- yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And you don't want to pump that air down into the -- inside the ship.

BOB GARRETT: But then you got a bigger problem if you leave it -- or you got another problem if you leave it too long.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. You can't take that heat.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: 150 degrees is hot.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. Well, yeah. Sounds like that other guy got heat exhaustion pretty quick.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Well, that's what it was, sure, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: He was trying to fix that pump in that heat, and --

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, these were from the farm, but I saw --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- some from the Navy -- from the ship in there.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. There's some others in the Navy in there, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: That's the Portsmouth Navy Shipyard, I believe, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: See the big crane that they --

BOB GARRETT: Oh, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: -- load things onto the ship and --

BOB GARRETT: These photos are dated December '63. It's nice that --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- these are dated.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, yeah. Portsmouth Museum.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Okay. That was the --

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: That's the shipyard there. This was a museum, I guess, a Naval museum, yeah. Those anchors --

BOB GARRETT: This is a big anchor.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. The anchors --

BOB GARRETT: Looks like -- yeah.

CURT GARRETT: The *Intrepid* had two anchors. Each one weighed 30,000 pounds or fifteen tons each.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Yeah. It looks like your Christmas here. Is this in New Jersey or Norfolk or --

CURT GARRETT: No. That's Norfolk, I believe, yeah. That's Virginia, I think. Yeah, I'm pretty sure.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. The other one --

CURT GARRETT: That's just pictures of our place in Virginia. There's the Navy --

BOB GARRETT: Here's some of the Navy ones.

CURT GARRETT: This is refueling at sea. They would bring a tanker alongside, and we'd run hoses. They'd shoot a line over to them and then pull the hoses across and hook them up into the valves on the side of the ship, and they would pump us full of black oil and JP5, which is jet fuel, and AVGAS, which is propeller-driven planes' fuel. We had both. And then this is at sea moving along.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: You don't stop. And on the other side of the tanker -- well, you can't see one here -- they would -- the destroyers would pull in one at a time while they -- because it took -- they could refuel lots of destroyers in the time it took them to refuel us.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: So -- and speaking of refueling at sea --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- we were going into Boston for a weekend, and we -- us and our escorts, and we were going to do a refueling drill -- or they were refueling at sea, and they were going to do what they call an emergency breakaway drill. If somebody spots a submarine or something, you got to stop refueling. You break those hoses, and you each go your own way. Well, when they broke the hoses, somebody forgot to shut the valve, and the black oil was just spewed all over the side of the ship.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, God.

CURT GARRETT: So they went into Cape Cod Bay and anchored out, let the side cleaners over the side to clean up the side of the ship. You can't take it into, you know --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: -- for the public to see with a mess like that, so no liberty. They just were going to clean up the ship. Well, the captain and some senior officers decided they were going to go ashore, and let me see here. What they did was they got in a hotel over there, and fifteen high-ranking officers, yeah, went off to the Bonnie Dune Restaurant to begin their happy hour. The same time on the other side of the wharf local fisherman and boat owners began to worry about the darkening sky. Although Provincetown Harbor is protected by a long circling finger, the wind was starting to blow up. The wind was -- the wind was going up to sixty knots, and they -- so they decided they had to get back to the ship. Let me see if I can find -- yeah. The admiral's barge and the captain's gig were leaping wildly up and down. The storm was getting bad, so they got a Coast Guard cutter -- an officer of a Coast Guard cutter told them he was going to take them out -- back out to the ship. And what did he do? He tried to get going. Some appeared to be drinking. It was too rough for their own barge and gig to take them out there, so what did he do? Oh, if I can get to it here -- let me see. Well, anyway, I can't find it here, but the Coast Guard cutter banged into a couple of piers, banged into a couple of fishing boats, got its propeller caught in some of the chains -- anchor chains, and it was a real mess. They just -- and when they were in that restaurant, they got drunk and got crazy and wrecked the place and trashed it and --

BOB GARRETT: These were the officers?

CURT GARRETT: These were senior officers. And so we -- when the storm quieted down, we got out of there. What they ever did to that poor Coast Guard officer -- well, when you get an admiral and a captain of a Navy ship telling you, "You're going to take us out there" -- I mean the commanding officer of that Coast Guard cutter is just a junior officer. They're just small boats.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: So you go. And the storm was so bad that even the Coast Guard cutter couldn't handle it. It banged them into different -- those fishing boats and into the pier, and it caught the propeller and anchor --

BOB GARRETT: Oh, jeez.

CURT GARRETT: -- chains, and it was a mess. And as I remember it, we got out to



sea. And when you have a change of commanding officer, you get a new captain, it's a real big festival, big show deal. Everybody gets --

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: -- up there, and they give speeches and all this stuff. We got out to sea. They flew the new commanding officer aboard. They read their -- they each read their orders, and they flew the old one out, and he was gone just that quick. He was relieved.

BOB GARRETT: After that, oh, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Oh, sure, sure. But I can't -- I'm having trouble finding the details in here, but basically they went into that place ashore -- I think it was a hotel, too -- and got drunk and trashed the place and then decided it was time to go back to the ship, and that poor Coast Guard cutter officer, I'm sure he paid for that because they -- oh, he wrecked all sorts of stuff out in that --

BOB GARRETT: Oh, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: -- harbor trying to get back to the ship, and all just -

BOB GARRETT: I'm sure he probably did his best. He just didn't -- yeah.

CURT GARRETT: -- all just because we were refueling, and when they tried to do this emergency breakaway drill, somebody didn't turn off the pump, and I don't know who. But that's dangerous business, refueling at sea like that, because both ships are going along. They do it in fair weather or foul. When we need fuel, we need fuel.

BOB GARRETT: Well, today I imagine if you spill a lot of oil in there, you're going to have --

CURT GARRETT: Well, yeah, but back then --

BOB GARRETT: -- all the environmentalists, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Back then garbage all went over the side in what they call the fan tail, the back of the ship. I don't think -- I saw a documentary about these new carriers. They compact it all, and they don't throw it over the side anymore at sea, but we used to. We wouldn't throw it -- we wouldn't throw it over the side when we were in a port somewheres

because of the harbor water. They'd pile it all up back in the fan tail. Then when we got out -- I don't know how far out they figured they had to be, and over the side it would go, so -- and I guess they figured as times progressed you got more and more plastic. And if those fish get plastic in them, they're dead. It just won't, you know, digest or --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: So -- and this -- yeah. It's the Rock of Gibraltar, I believe, when we went in the Mediterranean, yeah. That's from the other side.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, all right.

CURT GARRETT: That's not the side you see on the Prudential advertisement, but that's what it is.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. That's another picture of the *Intrepid*. I don't know how much more --

BOB GARRETT: This looks like Williamsburg.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. That's what it is. Yeah. That's refueling at sea. I had a picture somewheres. When we were in the Mediterranean, we pulled up -- I don't know where we were, but the whole 6th Fleet gathered, which I was surprised to see because usually they don't -- because of Pearl Harbor, they don't want all those ships that close.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, sure.

CURT GARRETT: But I had some pictures somewheres -- oh, there's the space capsule we picked up.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, there you go. Gemini. You said it was --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Was it --

CURT GARRETT: Two-man, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Gus Grissom and --

CURT GARRETT: And John Young.

BOB GARRETT: -- John Young. Okay.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: And that was in '65, I gather.

CURT GARRETT: I guess so, yeah. I think so.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. They have it in here somewhere.

CURT GARRETT: But I had some pictures somewheres -- it's probably in another album, and it's really not the best because it's just a little snapshot camera, but you could see ships, boy, as far as you -- all the way to the horizon there was ships all gathered in there and anchored out. Some big conference, I'm sure, with the big shots, I'm sure. I don't know what it was for.

BOB GARRETT: On the Gemini time or --

CURT GARRETT: No. This was in the Mediterranean.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: The 6th Fleet.

BOB GARRETT: This was another -- okay.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Here's the helicopter carrying the astronauts coming down, and I -- where is it? There was a picture here somewheres. I couldn't get real close. There. That's as close as I could get. I was standing behind this guy because they were just -- oh, all the flight deck crew and everything, we all just mobbed them, you know. They were --

BOB GARRETT: Oh, everybody wanted to get --

CURT GARRETT: -- big celebrities, sure.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah, sure.

CURT GARRETT: Sure. But they brought that space capsule aboard and set it up in the hangar deck and put some scaffolding up around it so we could go up -- everybody could line up and go and look down in it --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- the buttons and the dials and the gauges and just a mass. I don't know how anybody could remember what all those buttons and switches and everything did, but it was just -- it was amazing, and that was, you know, way back in -- you know, that was primitive compared to what they're doing now.

BOB GARRETT: What they're doing now, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. That was exciting. That's the *Independence*.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: See, here's what I mean by this angle deck. You can see it better there.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, sure.

CURT GARRETT: That's where the planes recover because when they -- with the propeller-driven planes in World War II, they could stop them. So, if you had planes parked up here like this, they didn't bother, but with these jets, if they miss the cables, arresting gear cables, they couldn't stop them fast enough because they're going so much faster and they would crash into all these things here. So the British actually came up with this idea of putting -- because if he misses the cables, he can go right back up.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: That's what they do. They just go right back up.

BOB GARRETT: Do you ever remember any accidents with the planes or the pilots or --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. One hit a -- one came down too low and tore the landing gear off the wheels because he was down too low and hit --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: -- the edge of the flight deck, but he was all right. They got him out, and we -- well, we lost a guy. When they launch these planes off these catapults, there's a blast deflector that hydraulically is raised --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- up on the deck to deflect, so when they'd crank that jet up, the blast coming out of there would melt the paint a hundred yards away, you know, so that deflects the blast. Well, they didn't have the plane on the jet -- or on the catapult just right, so they went to swerve -- swivel it, you know, to -- and when they did, the blast came out from the side of the deflector, and there was a guy standing there. It blew him right over the side.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, jeez.

CURT GARRETT: And it was at night, and we never found him. They never found him. And we lost some pilots, accidents, not a lot, maybe three, just accidents. I think one was in an anti-submarine plane, and he was skimming the water. And he went to turn the plane, and he caught the wing in the water, and it went. And I think they got a couple of the crew out. The pilot and the co-pilot they didn't get out, they didn't save. It's dangerous business, dangerous, dangerous business.

BOB GARRETT: Well, there's not a lot of room to land those planes on, and --

CURT GARRETT: Well --

BOB GARRETT: -- a lot of them, they have to --

CURT GARRETT: Those planes are big. A World War II fighter plane weighed about 12,000 pounds, I think, and a Tomcat, which is what they were flying here till just recently -- they replaced that -- weighed 80,000 pounds. That's forty tons. So they're quite a bit bigger and quite a bit heavier, so on the new Nimitz class carriers, the flight deck is four-and-a-half acres, so that's --

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Now, that's --

CURT GARRETT: I don't remember how big it was on the *Intrepid*, but the *Intrepid* was about three football fields long. You can stand out on the end of

a football field and see -- well, then add two more, so that's -- the new ones are -- well, they're some longer, but they're a lot wider, too, than the *Intrepid* was.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. I was just looking at -- it looks there you're relaxing on the ship.

CURT GARRETT: Oh, yeah. That's the electrical power shop. That's the TV I watched John Kennedy -- the news on John Kennedy being shot.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, wow.

CURT GARRETT: We were in Norfolk.

BOB GARRETT: Is that what you were doing at the time when --

CURT GARRETT: No. I was pulling out -- pulling a vent motor out, and some guy stuck his head in the hatch. There was two, three of us in there working on it -- stuck his head in the hatch, and he said, "Kennedy has just been shot." And we said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah," you know. Rumors are abundant on a ship like that.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: "No, no, no. No kidding." So we got out of there, went down to the shop and had that TV going. When you got in home port, you could make a makeshift antenna, you know. At sea it didn't do any good. It didn't work. And sure enough, there was old Walter Cronkite talking about it, and we saw all the -- we didn't see -- you saw, you know, the videos on the news.

BOB GARRETT: Right; right.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. I remember exactly where I was, but that's where we used to hang out. See, there's the coffee pot.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. I can see that.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Well, you were talking before about if you were at sea for a long time and they started running out of food you had to eat a lot of --

CURT GARRETT: Oh, Spam, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: To this day, I cannot eat Spam. On long cruises -- we ate pretty good. We ate really good. But when you get on a long cruise and they start running out of fresh eggs and fresh milk and fresh potatoes, you know, that's when they started feeding you all the powdered stuff. And, yeah, then to this day -- they'd feed us that Spam. They would get it in these big loaves and cook --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- you know, and then slice it, you know. I can't --

BOB GARRETT: Spam and powdered eggs?

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Powdered eggs is the only time I've ever put ketchup on eggs. They were terrible. And that powdered milk I couldn't drink at all, and you know how I like milk.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: I think there was some more. That's our house in Virginia. That had a nice big front porch. You could sit out there and drink beer and --

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: I thought there were some more Navy -- yeah. There's the *Intrepid*. Oh, here. That's what you had to sleep on.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: See how thick that mattress is?

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And you see that fan?

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: Well, we could get the fans, but -- and hook them up, but that's a steel bulkhead that that fan is -- and you've got to have little buttons

with threads in them --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- welded to the wall, to the bulkhead --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- to mount the fan. So what you did is you got two fans, and you went and you got a ship fitter, who was a welder, and he came down and weld -- he would weld those buttons on there so you could screw that fan on the bulkhead if you gave him a fan, see.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: That works. You got him a fan, and he'd come and set yours up.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And then you go --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: Then he had a fan.

BOB GARRETT: Well, I imagine there was no air-conditioning on the ship.

CURT GARRETT: No, no. There was in places where there were electronic equipment.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: You know, you can't let --

BOB GARRETT: You have to keep them cool.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: We had, as electricians, one of the most powerful weapons on that ship, and that was a fuse puller. You could get anything if you threatened to pull somebody's ventilation fuses. I hear a bearing getting kind of rough in there. Maybe we'll have to pull that and



check that out. Yeah. What do you want? We could get paint. We could get coffee grounds, anything. And I remember one time the laundry lost the electrical officer's shirts. And he called down to the power shop, and he got a hold of -- believe it or not, this guy's name was Tom Cruise, and it was not the actor.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And he says, "Cruise, you go down to that laundry, and you pull every fuse in that place till they find my shirts." They found his shirts. You betcha they did, yeah. Fuse puller. And we had a guy that ran the galley circuit. There was a lot of electrical appliances and stuff in the galley.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: Galley is kitchen for anybody that doesn't --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: And old Kenny Wilks, Wilk we always called him, he would go ashore and get just so stinking drunk he couldn't hardly walk. And he'd come -- there was always a night cook on duty.

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: So he would go down there, "I want steak and eggs." They'd make him steak and eggs. You couldn't get nothing out of those guys, but Wilk they would -- because they knew if in the middle of the night something went wrong, they could go get him when we were out to sea, and he'd come down there and fix it. He took care of them. They took care of him.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, a lot of -- yeah.

CURT GARRETT: A lot of give and take in a lot of cases.

BOB GARRETT: Sure.

CURT GARRETT: He would get up in the middle of the night because at sea when they were flying planes, the galley was open. The mess decks were open twenty-one hours a day, something like that, because the flight crews worked in shifts --

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: -- so they had to eat, you know. They ate in shifts, so it was always open. You could always go get something to eat --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: -- whether you were on the flight crew or not, anybody, you know, so they had cooks down there, but when we were in port, they just had one duty cook down there because they weren't, you know, flying, so they didn't --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: They were just open for three meals a day. That's when he'd come back all drunked up, and he'd want steak and eggs, and, by gosh, they'd cook them for him because they knew that he'd take care of them when they needed him.

BOB GARRETT: Right. Well, that has its privileges certainly.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. That's more refueling at sea.

BOB GARRETT: What's this with the crane?

CURT GARRETT: That's an antenna. I don't know why I took that picture. Is there anything in the background or something? That's an antenna. That's the boat and airplane crane --

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- that hauled the Gemini space capsule out of the water --

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: -- and onto the number three elevator. Maybe this is those pictures I took when I came --

BOB GARRETT: So this was the Rock of Gibraltar over here.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. Those pictures I took of the 6th Fleet -- see, with this little box camera you can't, you know --

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: -- snapshot camera, it didn't come in very good and couldn't see much, but there were ships -- just ships all over the place.

BOB GARRETT: Well, there's Williamsburg actually.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: I saw something in here about, oh, 1964. Was it Yorktown for ceremonies commemorating Lord Cornwallis's surrender 183 years before? So I don't know. Maybe that's when these were taken --

CURT GARRETT: Could be.

BOB GARRETT: -- because Yorktown is close to Williamsburg.

CURT GARRETT: I don't remember that. That says the ship went to York -- where's Yorktown?

BOB GARRETT: The ship went to -- it's in Virginia. It's just right by Williamsburg.

CURT GARRETT: There was a carrier -- there was a carrier named the *Yorktown*. I don't remember that offhand, to tell you the truth.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, right here. Brief deployment, swift and efficient rescue producer saved the life of an airman who fell overboard while driving an aircraft towing tractor.

CURT GARRETT: I don't remember that either, but I might have been down below and didn't hear anything about it, but, yeah -- well, like I said, that one kid got blown over the side. They never found him.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Talking about Gus Grissom.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. John Young and Gus Grissom.

BOB GARRETT: *Molly Brown*.

CURT GARRETT: Unsinkable *Molly Brown*, fifty miles from the *Intrepid*. Yeah. There's another story for you. As I understand this, we were the primary recovery ship, but there was a Coast Guard cutter closer to that capsule.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: Now, of course, they took Navy Seals in helicopters to get the astronauts out of there, and then they put a flotation device around it so it would float till we got there.

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: And the captain of the *Intrepid*, he radioed that commander of that Coast Guard cutter, and he said, "That's ours. You leave that alone unless there's an absolute emergency."

BOB GARRETT: Well, yeah, I suppose because you see all the ceremony and -- yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Well, the captain wants that on his record that he picked that up.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, yeah, yeah, I suppose.

CURT GARRETT: Oh, yeah. That's Virginia Beach. What else have you got? Some more stuff you wanted to ask me or --

BOB GARRETT: What else we had right here --

CURT GARRETT: It looks like the water was kind of rough there when we were refueling, yeah, see.

BOB GARRETT: Looks like it had a lot of it on there, yeah. When did you get your tattoos? This mark, was that --

CURT GARRETT: Oh, when I first -- it was the first weekend we got out of school, that electrical school, we went to Milwaukee and got a motel room and got a couple of cases of beer and some booze. And we were sitting around up in the motel room partying, and one of the guys that was with us already had one, and, I don't know, the conversation got to tattoos. He got it on his -- I think he said he got it on a senior class trip when he went to Washington or something and got it when he was a kid. Well, the more beer and whiskey you poured in you, the

better it looked, and there was a place down the street.

BOB GARRETT: All right.

CURT GARRETT: So we all went down there, and we got one. And the second one, I think, was my 21st birthday, which wasn't very far after because that was May -- in May of that year, and this was in -- like I said, I don't know -- February or something like that.

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: And I decided -- I was stopped in a tavern in Milwaukee. I was on the way to see your mother, and I decided I'd try out my new ID card and my new age and everything, so --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: -- I went in this tavern, and I had a few. And then for some reason -- I don't know -- I decided -- I got one on one arm. You have to have something to match on the other arm. I don't know. Your mother wasn't impressed at all.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: It wasn't your mother yet, but --

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: We weren't married yet, but she was not impressed. Oh, here. Okay. That's how much room to stow all your -- it's hard to see how deep it is, but that was it. That was your locker. I had two. Most of us had two if you could find a spare one someplace. And, well, they was three high.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: That's the fan that I had the ship fit in. That mattress was about that thick.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: That was it. You got a sheet on the bottom, nothing but a wool blanket on the top.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Okay. Then I -- well, I guess about the only other thing -- mom had to kind of follow you around when you were in the Navy. I mean --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: How often did you get home to see her?

CURT GARRETT: We had an old saying. We used to say we had to take pictures of home to remember what it looked like. When we first got married, she stayed in New Jersey, lived in an apartment near my mother and sister. And then I would come home on weekends when we were in home port, and that wasn't a lot, and all I had was the weekend, so I decided the heck with this. You're moving to Virginia so at least I can come home most every night when we're at home -- we're in home port. So we moved to Virginia, and we lived there a couple years, I guess. And then the ship went -- like I said, went to the Brooklyn Navy Shipyard, so we moved back to New Jersey in a town where I had an aunt and uncle -- two aunts and uncles had lived and -- not far from New York. And for the first -- six months we were in the Brooklyn Navy Shipyard. The first three months I took a bus into Port Authority bus terminal in New York and then the subway to Brooklyn, and I started getting a little bit nervous. Boy, some of those punks down in those subways, boy, I'll tell you, they -- well, you guys remember Bernard Goetz.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, yeah.

CURT GARRETT: And I started getting a little nervous about it, so me and two other guys decided we'd car pool and drive in because they lived close to where I lived --

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: -- where we lived, so we drove it. I drove it every day across the George Washington Bridge, down the West Side Highway, across Canal Street and over the bridge into Brooklyn to the Brooklyn Navy Shipyard. And that -- boy, I didn't think anything of it. You wouldn't get me to drive in New York today for --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: I just couldn't do it anymore. I just -- I'm not that fast anymore. You got to -- well, you were there once. We went in there with Bob and --

BOB GARRETT: Right; right.

CURT GARRETT: And so then the ship came out of the shipyard, and that's when they -- then I went on a shakedown cruise down to Guantanamo Bay, and then they transferred -- well, they transferred a bunch of us to the *Independence*, and I thought, well, I'm going to be gone for four months. Your mother might as well go home.

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: So I brought her home, and I went back. And we made that short cruise, and they announced we're going into the Portsmouth Navy Shipyard, so -- we had a duplex. It wasn't an apartment. It was your mother and I and another couple. The other couple lived upstairs. We lived downstairs. And when we left, there was a guy on the *Intrepid* who was in a -- he was a weatherman.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: And he wanted our place. Okay. So he -- then he got -- he moved in, and then he got what they call TAD, temporary assigned duty, sent to a school somewhere for about four months. So he wanted to take his wife with him, but he didn't want to give up that apartment. I said, well, I'll watch it for you. So we got our apartment back. These apartments we were in were furnished because we moved around. You can't --

BOB GARRETT: Right.

CURT GARRETT: -- haul all that furniture. So I called your mother up and said come back. We had about three months of just -- I came home every day.

BOB GARRETT: Oh, okay.

CURT GARRETT: That house was in Portsmouth. The shipyard was in Portsmouth. You could walk. On days that it was rainy and miserable, I'd jump in a cab. There was always cabs sitting outside the gate there. But otherwise I would walk. And then we -- well, I told you the story about our honeymoon that we were going to get in October, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Well, then when we got out, we went up to see my mother in New Jersey for a little while -- I don't know; a few days -- and then came back to Wisconsin.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: But I don't know. Other than Navy stories, whatever you got --

BOB GARRETT: Well, I think that's what I have on hand. Are there any --

CURT GARRETT: Some of those things there you had listed that we did, I might be able to elaborate on them a little bit. I don't know.

BOB GARRETT: Well, you talked about the -- cutting the sub, I guess, and you talked about -- actually, maybe what we should do right now is stop for now, and if you remember something, we can do another one.

CURT GARRETT: Okay.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. Okay. Signing off.

**[CD/file number 2 - March 20, 2007]**

BOB GARRETT: Okay. We're off. March 20th, 2007. Bob Garrett again talking to my dad, Curt Garrett. My mother, Nancy Garrett, is in the background here, so I don't know. Maybe she'll jump in at some points, but we're just doing a little follow-up to yesterday's interview. And I think you had some things written down. Did you want to --

CURT GARRETT: Just a couple.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Do you want to go off on one of those?

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. We were out just on a cruise. I don't know where we went, but we were coming home, and I was on watch on number four generator, which is in number four fire room. And all of a sudden these -- these boilers have forced air blowers on them that increase the pressure in the boiler and heat steam faster and hotter. And I could hear the forced draft blowers go up or increase speed. And



there was a thing on the microphone for Commander Jalbert to dial zero zero one, and that zero zero one is the captain, and Commander Jalbert was the chief engineer. And all of a sudden they lit the other boiler off in that fire room. There's two boilers in each fire room, four fire rooms, eight boilers. And the forced air blowers picked up speed again, and I went toward one of the boiler ones -- boiler men and asked him what was going on. And he said, "Well, they just ordered us to put the second boiler on the line." And a little while later there was another announcement over the loudspeaker that said, "Commander Jalbert, dial zero zero one." And pretty -- I went over to one of the boilers. I said, "What's going on?" And he says, "We've got all eight boilers lit off, and we're going" -- and you could feel the ship start to vibrate quite a bit more than it normally did. Well, come to find out that we were headed home, and in Norfolk, our home port in Norfolk, Virginia, they only had pier space for three carriers. Two were already in there. There was only one space open, one pier, and us and the U.S.S. Randolph were heading home at the same time. And apparently we were in a race to get that pier, and we won. We got in there first. The ship that didn't make it, the *Randolph*, they had to anchor out in the bay, and you don't want to do that. You want to be right at a pier. So the *Intrepid* won the race, and we got in there first. About the only other thing I can think of is I kept a coin from every foreign country that I was in, including -- I got a nickel from the bartender at the Enlisted Men's Club in Guantanamo Bay because they let Cubans work there, and so I got a nickel from him. So I've got a coin from every country that I was in, and I had it made into a charm bracelet for Nancy, which it's nice, but she can't wear it. It's too heavy. It's too many countries. So that's about all I can think of right now. We went a lot of places and did a lot of things.

BOB GARRETT: You were talking about the rivalry between captains, and you --

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- had the story about the *Independence* was the Mighty I --

CURT GARRETT: Oh, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: -- and then they were going to change that. Do you want to --

CURT GARRETT: The *Intrepid* was the Big I when it was commissioned, and when they commissioned the *Independence*, which was one of the

Forrestal class carriers, the newer -- the commanding officer and the captain of the *Independence* said to the captain of the *Intrepid*, "We're bigger than you, so now we're the Big I." And the captain of the *Intrepid* said, "Well, yeah. Okay. You're bigger than us, but you have never been into combat, so you are the Big I. We are the Fighting I." So that's how -- there's a lot of rivalry between those carrier captains.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. I saw this thing in here. This was kind of -- mom just gave me some letters. There was one here that was really funny. Oh, this one is dated August 8th, 1962. This is your letter to mom, and it says here -- this is just one part of it -- "Nothing much new going on here. Same old grind every day. Last two days the U.S. Army has been sending groups of soldiers over here to tour the ship. What the idea of that is I don't know. Some of them come down to our fire room today -- some of them came down to our fire room today, so my buddy shut off the lights and the ventilation. It got awful dark and pretty hot. Mass confusion occurred immediately. We thought it was funny, but the soldiers didn't. The ventilation system is the electrician's weapon. You see, they have these big blowers that force fresh air down into the hulls of the ship. They do it with gigantic electric fans. The fans, being electric, we are in charge of their maintenance. Well, if the cooks or airmen or anybody give us any grief, we first tell them something is wrong with the blowers, and we shut them off. And believe me, it can get pretty hot. They usually come around to our way of thinking pretty quick. It's a pretty effective weapon."

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. A fuse puller was the most dangerous weapon on that ship. You could get pretty much anything you wanted just threatening to start pulling fuses.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. I just saw that, and I thought that was pretty funny. And I just noticed this one here in July of '62. You had a couple facts about the ship here. You were talking here about being in Quebec.

CURT GARRETT: Um-hmm.

BOB GARRETT: You pulled into Quebec.

CURT GARRETT: We probably were.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. July 1962. You said, "We pulled into Quebec Friday, July

20th, and it's a pretty nice place, but it's full of tourists. The price of drinks is pretty high, but I've still managed to save some money." But there was some stuff about -- oh, some facts about the ship. This is some stuff that kind of puts it into context a little bit for me. It said, "We have about 3,000 men aboard. The ship is a little over 300 yards long. We make our own fresh water, and we use about 120,000 gallons a day. We carry enough fuel to heat the average home for 4,000 years. The gasoline we carry could drive an average American car 250 years. We can fully supply a small city with the electricity made aboard the ship. Top speed is about thirty knots or thirty-five miles an hour. Each of the four propellers are eighteen feet in diameter."

CURT GARRETT: Fifteen, I think it is. Anyway --

BOB GARRETT: You got eighteen on here.

CURT GARRETT: Okay. I'm pretty sure it's fifteen, but --

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. "From 1954 to 1962 this ship has steamed 2,217,817 miles. That's more than eighty-eight times around the world. On board we have a cobbler shop, two barber shops, a laundry, a tailor shop, five stores, a soda fountain, a fully equipped hobby shop" -- okay -- "and a modern weather station." I don't know what a hobby shop is, I guess.

NANCY GARRETT: I suppose building model airplanes and that kind of stuff.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. I don't remember that, but, yeah, it could be.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. "We have weekly and monthly newspapers, a radio and TV station, have a complete hospital and dentist department, a 3,000-volume library with fiction, nonfiction, textbooks, et cetera. Supply Department makes about 6,000 meals a day. One chicken dinner takes about 1,000 chickens plus one ton of potatoes per meal. There are 500 dial telephones. Each anchor weighs 60,000 pounds, and the ship displaces 50,000 tons of water. So, as you see, this ship is a floating city."

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, it is. That's what it was.

NANCY GARRETT: Dial telephones.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah, rotary dial.

NANCY GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Well, it was 1962.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

NANCY GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Didn't have cell phones yet. But I just -- you had your own radio and TV station in the --

CURT GARRETT: The TV we could only hook up when we were in port, and there wasn't much sense in hooking it up in foreign ports because any TV station they had was foreign language, so we used to hook it up when we came back to Norfolk. As I showed you that one picture where the -- in the power shop there where the TV was, that's the TV that I watched the news when President Kennedy was shot.

BOB GARRETT: Um-hmm.

CURT GARRETT: I remember that very well.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, I just actually did write down a couple things here.

CURT GARRETT: Okay.

BOB GARRETT: I guess we got time, so I'll throw in a couple. You made the comment about -- once about you didn't know what a buddy was until you were in the Navy, and you had a shipmate who just wanted to -- yeah.

CURT GARRETT: It's not just the Navy, any service. In the Navy they'd be shipmates, and in the Army or the Marine Corps or the Air Force they'd be buddies. And you -- when you go through what you go through for boot camp or basic training and go somewhere as a unit -- with us it was a ship -- you're, well, as the saying goes, all in the same boat. It's closeness, a camaraderie that is -- it's hard to explain how it feels. You just don't -- people that have never done that don't know, don't -- it's hard to say just how close you are to, in my case, your shipmates.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. And I guess just to sum up, is there anything you wanted to say about your service now looking back on it?

CURT GARRETT: I'm glad I did it. It was quite an experience, one that I'll never forget. If you put in four years or so in any service, it changes you for the rest of your life as to the way you think and the way you do things. It leaves a mark.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

CURT GARRETT: And I loved it, but I got out because Nancy and I were married, and I didn't marry her to leave her sit home alone, which is what -- the career guys -- the most of what they saw their families was the pictures that they had taped to the back of their locker doors, and I just didn't want to do that.

BOB GARRETT: Yeah. That would make it hard. Okay. And I know you've been very active in the O.W. Vets Club, and you're --

CURT GARRETT: And the Legion, the American Legion here in Owen.

BOB GARRETT: American Legion; right.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah.

BOB GARRETT: The American Legion. So obviously that's -- yeah.

CURT GARRETT: Yeah. It's two groups of people that have -- we all have something in common. We all served our country, and it's -- there's a camaraderie there, too. We try to take care of each other and help each other with whatever anybody needs help.

NANCY GARRETT: And charities.

CURT GARRETT: And charities, yeah.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Well, now that I have the opportunity here, I guess I'd say to you thank you very much for your service.

CURT GARRETT: You're welcome.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Mom, do you have anything you'd like to say? No?

NANCY GARRETT: No. Just not a life I'd recommend for a married couple.

BOB GARRETT: Okay.

NANCY GARRETT: It was hard.

BOB GARRETT: Okay. Okay. And here we are. I guess we're signing off.

**[End of interview]**