

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
CHARLES IMBRUGLIA
Musician and seaman, Navy, World War II

2001

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Imbruglia, Charles C., (1921-2004). Oral History Interview, 2001.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 40 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Charles Imbruglia, a Providence, Rhode Island native, discusses his World War II service with the Navy as a musician aboard the USS Maryland and the USS New Mexico; he focuses his account on his experience during the Pearl Harbor attack. Imbruglia comments on enlisting in the Navy without parental approval, volunteering for active duty aboard destroyers, and transporting officers from the USS Yarnell to the officer's club in San Diego. After getting into trouble, he mentions going to music school and, in 1941, transferring to the USS Maryland, based in Pearl Harbor (Hawaii). He touches on playing trombone and baritone in the ship's band, entertaining at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel on the weekends, and regular duty doing damage control. He provides a detailed account of the Pearl Harbor attack including hearing Japanese planes flying overhead, feeling his ship get hit by bombs, and spending several days helping to rescue sailors from the USS Oklahoma. He relates a couple Marines being pulled out through the hull of a capsized ship after spending three days inside. He comments on the effects of Pearl Harbor including his interest in religion and a stronger commitment to job duties by sailors. Imbruglia touches upon the ship getting refitted, participation in the Battle of Coral Sea and other Atlantic campaigns, transfer to the USS New Mexico, and assisting in the Marine landing of the Aleutian Islands. He speaks of returning to the United States and reassignment to a band at Great Lakes Naval Training Center (Illinois). Imbruglia talks about meeting his wife, traveling with a USO Bond tour, playing at the Naval Air Station at Olathe (Kansas), and settling in Milwaukee (Wisconsin) after the war. He mentions joining the American Legion and serving as the chaplain of the Cedarburg (Wisconsin) American Legion Post 288.

Biographical Sketch:

Imbruglia (1921-2004) served in the Navy during World War II. Involved in many of the Pacific Island campaigns, he was also at Pearl Harbor for the attack. After the war, he worked as a bricklayer in Milwaukee and eventually settled in Jackson, Wisconsin.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2001.

Transcribed by Telise Johnsen, 2009.

Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Interview Transcript:

- James: Make sure this is on, on. Good. We better get you hooked up to the house ground.
- Mrs. I.: [unintelligible] those, Charlie. It's really nice.
- Charles: Thank you. This, uh, we're here about five years, and for a condominium we like it. Being on the end unit like this, we got a little, we're not squeezed in between, uh. Now they built this here, oh, two years ago behind us. You can't keep progress, you know, from going ahead, but we could have—see that looks towards the lake, and then we could see the sunrise in the morning. I miss that.
- Mrs. I.: Ooooh, sure.
- Charles: That sun coming up in the morning is just beautiful. Yeah. We don't get to see it till it gets pretty high now. [Laughs]
- James: Okay, off and running here, Charlie. [Dog barks]
- Charlie: Somebody stop petting you? [Laughs]
- James: Here we go. Okay Charles Imbruglia [im-BROOL-yah]?
- Charles: Very good! Very good.
- James: Not—near the end--
- Charles: You pronounce it as close as an Italian would or could.
- James: Good.
- Charles: But the Italians, the “g-l-i-a” is “yah,” Imbruglia.
- James: Like a “y,” oh, I know that, yeah.
- Charles: [Laughs] Yeah.
- James: Imbruglia, right.
- Charles: Very good.
- James: Now, when were you born?
- Charles: 1921.

James: And where was that?

Charles: In Providence, Rhode Island.

James: Oh, I see. When did you get to Wisconsin?

Charles: Oh, well, I got here while I was still in the service. I got put here at Great Lakes. And I was told when I first came ashore--I guess it was on a Sunday, and of course I was wearing all my ribbons--and when I checked in they says, "Go ashore. Go to Chicago. Have a good time. Come back Monday—Monday or Tuesday—whenever you feel like it."

James: Laughs. [Dog barks]

Charles: And, of course, that's where I had the good fortune of meeting my wife down there. I went to a ball game. I went to see the Cubs, which I always wanted to see. After that I was late waiting for a bus—streetcar--a bus to get back to my hotel.

I was standing in front of a nightclub there, and I could see women going in and out, and I could smell that brandy, or what have you. I had whites on. It was September, kinda cool. I told myself, "I'm gonna go in and have a drink for medicinal purposes."

So when I got in there, of course, I sat down with a table of four women. One of them was my wife. She was down there waiting for [a recital?]. [Laughs] So that was a lucky day for me.

James: It certainly was. What were you doing when Pearl Harbor happened?

Charles: Well, I was aboard ship on the Maryland.

James: Okay.

Charles: And it was topside there we played for setting-up exercises. I was anxious see some of the fellows on the Oklahoma, musicians who I had been to music school with. We were getting ready to play for colors, and as I was looking over to find those friends of mine we saw these planes, quite a few planes flying around.

And we thought, "Well, what in the world are they doing on Sunday morning, uh, flying around?" And the first thing you know, why, just as if a signal had gone off, they all started dropping bombs at the same time. And of course, I—we--started to run for our battle stations. And I says, at that time I wasn't a religious boy—

James: Typical sailor.

Charles: Typical sailor. But I knew there was a God, and I says, "Lord, you get me out of this, I'm yours!"

James" [Laughs]

Charles: And I, you know, you heard that saying, "There's no atheists in foxholes." Well, I was in a foxhole [laughs]. And, of course, oh about seven-eight days after we cleaned up the mess in the harbor, with the bodies and so forth, we had an announcement on the loudspeaker saying, "There will be Bible class at 1500 hours." And so, "I better go and see what that's about."

James: They got religious [services?].

Charles: Yeah! There was, at that time there was a group called The Navigators. They started out, that's why they called themselves navigators, because they were aboard ship. That's where they started these classes. And I went there, and by going to classes that's where I really got to meet the Lord, and uh, praise Him. He's been guiding me ever since.

James: Okay. Now, let's go back a little bit. How did you get into the service, and when?

Charles: Well, I didn't like the work I was doing. [Laughs] I had been a roofer, and I'd gotten burned a couple of times with that hot tar, and I was disgusted with that.

And, uh, I had a couple of friends who were in the Navy, and told me about the 'little trips' they were making and so forth. And I said, "Gee, that'd be great." And so I went in and signed up. My folks wouldn't sign for me. They didn't want me to go in the Navy.

So I heard about the Reserves, and so I went and I got into the Reserves. My folks signed for that because I told them, "You only have to go two weeks out of the year." So as soon as I got in, I signed up for one year active duty. By the time that was over, I signed up for another year, and the first thing you know, I was down in Pearl Harbor. [Laughs]

James: When you signed, when you first started, did you go to sea right away, or did you have a ship right away, when you were in the Reserves?

Charles: Yeah, I went aboard a destroyer called the USS Yarnell old [unintelligible].

James: That was your first ship?

Charles: Yeah, that was my first ship, was the Yarnell. I think I went after on the marine transport. It was a converted destroyer into a transport.

James: You're on the Atlantic now.

Charles: Yes. Yes, it is in the Atlantic.

James: How did you get over to the other side of the United States?

Charles: Well, it's kind of a long story. I was a kind of a bad boy at the time. I got to be the captain of the captain's [team?]*—drive him wherever he wanted. We were in San Diego at the time. Well, we used to take the officers over to the Officers' Club in Coronado. They'd be there till 2-3 o'clock in the morning, sometimes 7 o'clock in the morning. We had to wait for them guys.*

So this was, being a Saturday night, I said, "These guys ain't coming back till seven in the morning." I told my mate on the launch there, I says, "Let's go ashore and go night clubbing, and we'll have some fun." So, we went there and, first thing you know, why, I was telling the girls about this new motor launch we had. They wanted to go for a ride. So we took 'em out for a ride on the motor launch.

James: Did the girls enjoy that?

Charles: They girls, yeah. And so I saw a big what I thought was a flock of mud hens, you know. I says, "I'm going to go into those things, and they'll fly all over the place, and scare the wits out of these girls." So I gave it the gun, and the thing goes into that flock of mud hens, and it turned out to be a bunch of logs.

James: Oh, boy!

Charles: So, the propeller got stuck, the blade got stuck in one of those logs. So we had to signal for help. Well, as you might know, the next morning the captain was holding mass up on deck first thing in the morning. There went my rating. Now what am I gonna do?

James: What was your rating then, by the way?

Charles: I was a coxswain. And I thought, well, now what am I gonna do?

Now, I had played music grasshopper on up, and there was a music school at the destroyer base there, and I could see this band every morning

marching. I said, "I'll get into music." So I went over there, took the examination and went to music school. From there I transferred to the Maryland, which was in Pearl Harbor. And that's how I got to Pearl Harbor. [Laughs]

James: Now when did you get to Pearl Harbor? Was it six months or a year before the attack, or--?

Charles: About six months before the attack.

James: So, the summer of '41, then.

Charles: Right, yeah, yeah.

James: So, that's quite a big ship all of a sudden.

Charles: Oh, yeah, compared to—we used to have 300, maybe 400 at the most—

James: I know.

Charles: --on the destroyer, and we had, like, 2,100--

James: Right, the Maryland.

Charles: --on the Maryland, yeah.

James: How did you enjoy your duty on a big battleship?

Charles: Well, it was good duty, because we did a lot of rehearsing. And, of course, we also, besides the Concert Band, we had dance music, which I used to enjoy playing, too.

James: What instrument did you play, Charles?

Charles: I played trombone in the dance band and baritone in the classic band there. So I enjoyed that. Well, of course, it was like living on a big city. But you stood with your nuclear, small group, whereas on the destroyer of 300 men, you knew everybody. Over here was—

James: Now, you just know the band.

Charles: That's right; that was about it.

James: How big was the band?

Charles: We had about 26 men in the band.

- James: Did you give concerts ashore, or no?
- Charles: Yes, uh, well we also played for the sports—basketball and stuff like that, football games.
- James: Against other ships.
- Charles: Against other ships, right. And then of course we played dances. When we were in Pearl Harbor, we were playing over at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel just about every weekend.
- James: Did other ships have bands like yours?
- Charles: All the battleships—
- James: Had a band.
- Charles: All the battleships and the carriers had bands.
- James: Now, what was your duty station, your battle station, that's what I mean?
- Charles: Aboard the Maryland I was in damage control. That's really the center, the eye, of what's going on throughout the whole ship. You're down there, and you've got all the schematics of all the different decks and so forth. And you get all the reports of any damage.
- And, of course, you always have water-tight integrity, and you've got a record of all the hatches that are open or closed, or give permission to open a hatch, and so forth. And all that information is relayed up to the captain, which is probably usually up on [deck?].
- James: You're on phones, on earphones, to relay messages?
- Charles: Yes, we were on phones.
- And, of course, besides that I had training for first aid. So if there wasn't quite enough help, some of us were called out to go and help out with that.
- James: Right. Now it's [unintelligible] a sudden attack, and the planes are coming over. Do you head for your battle stations?
- Charles: Soon as the bombs stopped falling down, we realized what was happening, because it definitely was a complete surprise to us. In spite of--which I didn't find out till later—we had sunk a submarine, oh, probably two hours previous to that.

James: But you didn't know that then.

Charles: No, I didn't know that at all.

James: What were you thinking here? This is something big, or is this an incident, or--

Charles: We didn't know, we didn't know what to think.

James: --together anyway.

Charles: We knew that they were discussing things like that in Washington, DC, that they were having important meetings and all that there. But we just didn't think it would progress that fast. We just didn't know what to think, and, uh--

James: Well, when the bombs started falling how did you--, did you get to a torpedo or a--anything hit the Maryland?

Charles: Well we had, I don't know, four-five bombs. We had extensive damage.

James: But they didn't sink you.

Charles: No, they didn't sink us. You see, we were in board of the, uh—

James: Pennsylvania?

Charles: --uh, the Oklahoma.

James: Oklahoma, right.

Charles: And, they didn't have any room to launch any torpedoes, because we were in board, because we were within a stone's throw of Hikoepa[?], there – [Dog barks] --and that water was real shallow. But the Oklahoma took, I don't know, three-four torpedoes, and she capsized.

James: Yes.

Charles: And we rescued quite a few. Even, uh, three days later, we were still able to rescue men--

James: She just sank straight down, so she didn't pull your--

Charles: She capsized.

James: Oh, she did.

Charles: She capsized.

James: Well, then you had to detach your ropes, your lines, there--

Charles: Oh, man! Those guys were running around like nuts trying to find axes to cut those lines--

James: Oh, I'll bet.

Charles: --because she was—

James: She was dipping.

Charles: Yeah, she was pulling us over.

James: Right.

Charles: Yeah, I can remember that.

James: Yeah. I'm sure there was a panic for a time there until you got your lines cut.

Charles: Yeah, I can see those guys running around yet.

James: With axes?

Charles: With axes to cut those lines, because, you know those things are a good--

James: I know.

Charles: --three inches [laughs].

James: Yeah. And then how did it proceed from then? Then you went on--

Charles: We went to dry dock there.

James: I mean, you picked up people though first.

Charles: Oh, yeah, we picked up, I don't know, we must have saved seven hundred people at least from the--

James: From the Oklahoma?

Charles: --from the Oklahoma. I can remember--

James: Hey, not many of them stepped off onto your ship before it capsized?

Charles: They jumped in the water. Because she capsized, she went the other way.

James: Other way, yeah.

Charles: They jumped in the water, and I see those guys coming out of that water yet, where all you see was the whites of their eyes--

James: Oh, yeah.

Charles: --because they were so full of, yeah, they were--.

You know, about three days later they got, they saved a couple of Marines. They had, with the torches, burned holes so they could go in ahead of the tackle[?] with that, because that caused a lot of gas. And two Marines came out on top of that deck.

James: Boy!

Charles: It was the, it was the bottom of the ship-- I can't think of the proper term for that. And they were dressed *immaculate*. They had their buttons all shined and their shoes shined, and one of them was bouncing a basketball over the deck like that. Guy, you have to bet me, after three days he started to lose it.

James: They were entombed there for three days before they got off.

Charles: That's right. They were entombed in a real small compartment.

James: But, they came out like it was Sunday.

Charles: Yeah! Well, they kept themselves busy, I guess.

James: Upside down?

Charles: Yeah.

James: Of course.

Charles: Yeah, there was, in fact there's still pictures of, I saw that--

James: Where they went through the bottom of the ship, of the keel--

Charles: That's right.

James: --they went down into the ship to get them out.

Charles: That's right, to get them out, and they were just immaculate.

James: They weren't starving, or—

Charles: Oh, I don't know if they got anything to eat, but they sure kept themselves busy being neat [laughs].

James: I'll be darned.

Charles: Yeah.

James: So then what was your next move with that ship after you got the Oklahoma pulled away?

Charles: Well, we went, we came back to the States to get refitted with a lot more guns, and so forth.

James: Oh right.

Charles: It was ten days that we were there, and we had gotten out of drydock and if-- I was ashore. Within a stone's throw we had a recreation hall over there. And pretty soon all the whistles of the ship start going like mad throughout the whole harbor. Well, we knew that that was the—they were going to be—that's the kind of signal they give before they take off. So we all ran back to the ship, and it was a secret. Nobody knew we were taking off, so--

James: How many days after Pearl Harbor?

Charles: Ten days after.

James: Ten days.

Charles: They, uh-- So the whole fleet takes off. I don't know how many ships there were. There was--

James: A bunch.

Charles: Quite a few.

James: You had fourteen-inch big guns?

Charles: We had sixteen-inch guns.

James: Sixteen, yeah.

Charles: So we had Christmas; so this must have been more than ten days, because we had Christmas at sea, and Pearl Harbor was on the seventh. Yeah, because I still got my, uh, I still have that menu as to what we had for Christmas. The reason I kept that menu is because I got the autographs of all my friends and the band on there.

James: Oh, I see.

Charles: So that's, that's uh— [Dog barks] -- kind of a memory to go back and look at those names and try to remember who they were and why we were friends and so forth. I still have that menu.

James: Oh, nice memory, yeah.

Charles: So we came back to the States, went to Bremerton Navy Yard--

James: Bremerton.

Charles: --and we had a lot of new forty millimeters put on, which we didn't have before. We had just one-point-ones, and they were forty millimeter guns.

James: Yeah, you needed something bigger.

Charles: Yeah. We got re-outfitted in Bremerton, of course, and I--

James: Did your duty change aboard ship after that, or did it stay the same?

Charles: No. I was still down in damage control, central station.

James: And the band was still intact, or did they forget about the band?

Charles: Well, we didn't do too much playing.

James: Busy after that.

Charles: We still did have our rehearsal. Oh, we played, uh, we played two-three times a week concerts for the men aboard ship.

James: Uh-huh.

Charles: But we all had our military stations.

James: Sure.

Charles: And the band was dispersed. Everybody had different types of duties.

James: Sure. What about the change in attitude now?

Charles: Change in attitude?

James: You know, when all of a sudden you're in a war situation now. Did people change?

Charles: Well, only thing I noticed is that the school children today don't, they don't know too much about their country and what it really stands for.

James: I know that. I'm talking about the attitude on your ship after Pearl Harbor. I mean life aboard the ship went from peace time to war time.

Charles: Well, of course we're anxious to get out there and clean those Japs up.

James: Right.

Charles: And they were anxious to finish them off.

James: That was the general attitude? They'd like to get at it?

Charles: Well, yeah, because being a surprise attack, and being so sneaky, we were pretty mad about that [laughs]. And, uh, I think everybody worked to the most of their ability to learn their jobs right, and, uh,--

James: Right, a bit more serious.

Charles: --and didn't complain about extra watches and so forth like that. We knew it was for a good reason.

James: How long did it take you to refit in Bremerton, roughly?

Charles: A good month.

James: Good month.

Charles: A good month.

James: Then where were you off to--?

Charles: Then we went off to San Francisco, and I guess we were there almost a month. Then I don't know what battle we went out to right after that. We

went out to the South Pacific, and I don't remember which came first, the—

James: Well, Midway was pretty quick, pretty early there, but you said you went to Coral Sea too.

Charles: Coral Sea, that was--

James: That was before Midway.

Charles: I don't recall which came first.

James: Well, tell me about the Coral Sea battle. What were you doing, and so forth?

Charles: Well, Coral Sea was a lot of, uh—

James: Night.

Charles: It was a lot of fighting between ships--

James: Right.

Charles: --which was more so than any other battle I was in, there, and I forget, but I know we lost a carrier there, too. We lost—

James: A lot of that was fought at night. I [unintelligible] notice that.

Charles: Quite a bit, right. Quite a bit was fought at night. But that was really the greatest sea battles that I—

James: How badly was the Nevada damaged at Pearl Harbor?

Charles: She was bad, she was damaged pretty badly. I, uh, I don't think she got put in commission as soon as the Maryland and the rest of us were. She got quite a bit. Now, I'm trying to think. I think that the Nevada had run aground trying to get out.

James: Oh yeah.

Charles: I'm pretty sure she did.

James: On purpose. What about the Maryland?

- Charles: Well, she had five or six bombs, and, uh, but we were fortunate that even though we had a lot of structural damage, I think we only lost maybe four-five men, and I know two of those were officers. They were up on the—
- James: Superstructure somewhere.
- Charles: Superstructure, right, yeah.
- James: But your ship was intact and could sail right away, and so forth?
- Charles: Right. It was, well—
- James: [unintelligible]
- Charles: It really couldn't sail, because one of those bombs hit the forecastle, and went down about three decks, and then we had, maybe, a ten-foot hole on the bulkhead.
- James: Well, you got over to Bremerton, Washington, though, in pretty good style.
- Charles: Well, that's when we—that's why we went into drydock and they uh—
- James: Patched [unintelligible].
- Charles: They patched that there up, yeah, and, uh, we had such stormy weather coming back to the States, that some of the rivets came out of that patch and we were taking on water, quite a bit of water. But being able to--that was in the forecastle, forward part of the ship—being able to close off with watertight hatches and so forth. We were able to close that compartment off, and pumps were able to keep the water out of there enough so that we could still sail and keep up with the rest of the fleet.
- James: So at Coral Sea, were you hit at the Coral Sea battle?
- Charles: I think we did get a couple of bombs. I forget. I think we lost about forty men in that battle there, Coral Sea. We had some structural damage.
- James: Right, so—
- Charles: My memory is so bad, now, that everything kind of comes together. I don't remember one battle from the other [laughs].
- James: And you're listed here the Midway battle. What did the Maryland do in the Midway battle?

- Charles: Well, for one thing, I think we did an awful lot of, uh, shelling and preparing, prepare—I don't know how many days that we shelled ashore preparing the beach so that the landing forces could have a safer place to land.
- James: Well that wouldn't be at Midway, because we didn't land at Midway. But it could have been, you had, uh, shelled at Perua[?]-
- Charles: Perua?
- James: There was a lot of pre-preparations at Perua[?] that didn't do much good. There was a lot of shelling there. Perhaps that was what you were--
- Charles: Yeah. I think we lost quite a few men there, too.
- James: Yes, a lot of men.
- Charles: Like I say, my memory is, especially in the last couple of years, is getting pretty bad [laughs].
- James: All these landings, none of them stood out in your mind after Perua[?]? I think the duty is about the same.
- Charles: Duty is about the same. You know, there's one thing I don't mention there. One of the last--wasn't too much of a conflict--when we were in Alaska just before I got shore duty, and we did have some landing parties from the ships that went along on there. Japanese didn't have too many soldiers there as I recall.
- James: That was in Kiska[?].
- Charles: At Kiska[?] in act two[?]. They had like, about, I don't know, the Japanese only had, like, about three thousand troops.
- James: Yeah, they had a big invasion force, and then the Japs had pulled out, so--
- Charles: Yeah, there wasn't much there. But I can remember fellows coming—I wasn't on that landing trip—but fellows from our ship that were on, that they come back and told us some of the incidents that happened there.
- Well one thing while were there I can remember. All at once one morning the whole fleet is firing like mad. You know, the sky was lit up. It was dark yet, because that was when we had like twenty-four hours, practically, darkness. "What in the world is this?" you know. "They must have spotted a bunch of ships or something," we thought. And when it finally did get light, it got light for about maybe a half hour, an hour at

best [dusk?], we saw what we were all firing at. We're knocked the tops of the mountains off. And, gee, you know, that's funny. And I thought, you know, radar, they must've picked something up. Well, they weren't that bad.

And now, after all of them years, about three months later I'm reading in the paper where they found, I don't know if it was a B25 bomber from the World War II era that they picked, that they found up in the mountains. And I wouldn't be a bit surprised that that was probably not involved during that time that we were doing all that firing [laughs].

James: [unintelligible]

Charles: And it probably wasn't the only plane that was in, that these radars picked up.

James: Okay. So, how long did you, how long were you on the Maryland?

Charles: [LONG PAUSE]

James: Do you not--

Charles: Only about a year, because I got transferred to the New Mexico.

James: What prompted that, Charlie? There weren't any girls to ride around in your [boat]?

Charles: You know, I can't figure that out, because, uh, you know, musicians are musicians [unintelligible]. And I was trained and was mostly first aid and that type of thing. So I can't understand that, unless they needed some more musicians--the band was fairly small when I got there--and to bring it up to par. As I recall, they didn't have a trombone player there.

James: [Laughs]

Charles: And that's probably one reason why I got transferred there. They needed a trombone player.

James: That's about it. Yeah.

Charles: On the New Mexico, yeah.

James: Was that about the same size ship, wasn't it?

Charles: Pretty much the same. It was a little smaller and probably a little older.

James: Yeah.

Charles: Oh, there's the, uh—

James: This duty was about the same?

Charles: About the same duty, yeah.

James: Was the food any better?

Charles: About the same.

James: [Laughs]

Charles: About the same. Battleship food was battleship food, nothing like on a destroyer. Destroyer always had good food--a smaller group of men.

James: All right, then. Where did the New Mexico take you?

Charles: Oh, she was in the South Pacific too. And, of course, uh, we, uh--that's when we went to Alaska, on the New Mexico.

James: Oh, I see. Okay.

Charles: And, uh--

James: And you were on her how long, a year or more?

Charles: A good year—a little more—maybe a couple of years. That's, you know, I mentioned that we had so much—

[End of side A]

Charles: That's when we went to Alaska on the New Mexico.

James: Oh, I see. Okay.

Charles: And, uh—

James: And you were on her how long, a year or more?

Charles: A good year—a little more—maybe a couple of years. That's, you know, I mentioned that we had so much, we did so much firing in, uh, I think that was Kiska, that we fired the rifling out of the fourteen-inch guns, and we had to come back to the States to get the guns all re-rifled. And that's when I got shore duty, while I was back in the States.

James: So you were off the ship entirely then.

Charles: I was off the ship entirely.

James: So you had two ships, and now you're back on land.

Charles: Yeah.

James: And then what did they ask you to do?

Charles: Well, uh, at Great Lakes I got in a regular band there. But then, uh, I don't know, I was there maybe six months or so, and they formed what they called a Bond Tour Band. And uh, we would go around, and they had a group of entertainers, well-known entertainers from the movie industry and so forth, and they'd put shows on and we would sell bonds.

James: You were the back-up band.

Charles: We were the band for that--

James: Sure.

Charles: --back-up band for that entertaining group, which was good duty.

James: You traveled around the country?

Charles: Yeah. From there, I, uh, I got transferred then--our base was Oliffa?/Oletha?, Kansas, and, uh, you know though that was a base—

James: I was gonna say, that doesn't sound like a Navy base.

Charles: Yeah, it was a naval air base there. Yeah, a nice, a good base, and from there we used to broadcast. I think it was Kansas City, Kansas, we used to broadcast weekly on, uh—

James: On the radio?

Charles: On the radio.

James: Oh, that was different.

Charles: It was also selling, promoting to sell bonds there. So that was, that was a real easy duty.

James: Yeah.

- Charles: I had, at that time, I had gotten married just previous to that, and I brought my wife along. So I had to be a good boy then.
- James: [Laughs.] So then that finished your career?
- Charles: Yeah, I got, when the war came to the end I was the, uh, I was the first to get discharged off the base. As soon as the war ended, after that Hiroshima bombing and so forth, I knew the war was ended, and I was in that office every day, and I guess in order to get rid of me—
- James: [Laughs.]
- Charles: I made a pest of myself and I was the first one to get discharged.
- James: [Laughs.] So, when you got back, where'd you go then when you were discharged? You went back to Connecticut or Rhode Island?
- Charles: No, because I was married and I came back to Milwaukee, because that's where my wife was from and she was an only child, and I thought she'd be happier with her family. So I came back to Milwaukee and I took up an apprenticeship in bricklaying--and, uh, worked at that for forty years.
- James: Oh, my!
- Charles: Well, when I was well enough to work because, being a little guy, I was always trying to prove that I was strong as everybody else, and so I had a lot of back problems, spent a lot of time—
- James: [unintelligible] those bricks.
- Charles: Blocks, yeah, heavy blocks and so forth.
- James: Did you work in Milwaukee?
- Charles: Milwaukee, and I did traveling with one of the, uh--. I was in Chicago and Indiana and so forth, uh, after so many years of not working most of the winter because of weather and so forth, I realized that I should do something about it, and I got into firebrick work.
- James: Oh.
- Charles: And there we worked indoors winter and summer. It made no difference. So I finally was able to get some money at the trade.
- James: Okay. Did you join any veterans' organizations?

Charles: Not for many years. I was pretty busy with the kids and busy in church work, and about fifteen years ago I finally joined the American Legion. I guess I was there about a year, and I took the job as, uh,--pastor or what you call that—a chaplain.

James: Oh, I see.

Charles: And, uh, but I've been blessed with uh—I just love the job. It gives me opportunity to do a lot of visiting—

James: Sure.

Charles: --uh, with the sick, and uh, for me that's—

James: That's a good way to retire.

Charles: Right, right. I really love the work, and uh—

James: Are you still doing that?

Charles: Yes. I'm doing quite a bit of that, uh—

James: You, you look for veterans who are ill and visit them in hospitals?

Charles: Especially those that are in our, uh, group. We've got like 350 members.

James: Is this the Milwaukee area?

Charles: Uh, the Legion I belong to is in Cedarburg.

James: Ah.

Charles: And but, uh, I have the opportunity not only to visit them. When I hear of anybody else within a county or so, I take the opportunity to visit them if they're in a hospital. Otherwise, I like to visit them in the home, and also gives me an opportunity to do some witnessing when I do get to visit these fellows, which is my main objective, I guess.

James: Your main objective is what?

Charles: Is to witness, to bring them the gospel.

James: What religion is this?

Charles: Well, I belong to a nondenomination.

James: Oh, I see.

Charles: I'm Christian, but I, uh, don't belong to any particular denomination.

James: Ah. You don't work out of a church?

Charles: No, not out of a church. I, uh, I am on a mission board committee at my own particular church, but I don't do any visiting in the congregation, because what time I do have I use that time to visit veterans. And we've got a big enough committee in our church that handles--

James: Sure.

Charles: --that situation, so I don't have to.

James: You don't have any cards or any things to hand these fellows?

Charles: No, but--

James: --from the Legion, or [unintelligible] or anything that's--?

Charles: No, no, no. I, uh, occasionally get a bunch of tracts, and leave those there. Leave the tracts there.

James: I didn't know whether the Legion supplied you with anything.

Charles: No. [Clock chimes one].

James: Well, I think it was a pretty good story. Is there anything else you forgot to tell me?

Charles: Well, of course, I always thank the Lord for bringing me in this situation. I think that was His reason for setting me in Pearl Harbor so I could get to meet Him. It's because of that that I got to meet Him, and He's given me the opportunity to be able to serve Him, and, uh--

James: Have you kept track of your shipmates?

Charles: Not as well as I should have. Uh, most of them have died off. Uh, I'm, uh, looking forward now to see if I can find some of them.

James: There isn't an association from the New Mexico, or the, uh, Maryland?

Charles: No. I used to belong to what they call the USS Battleship Association, and I used to go to conventions. I haven't done that for, oh, maybe fifteen years.

James: Have both those ships been [unintelligible] torn down?

Charles: I don't know, but I'm pretty sure that, I think the Maryland is still--

James: Afloat?

Charles: --afloat and being used—

James: As a museum somewhere?

Charles: --as a museum.

James: Uh huh. All right! You did it.

Charles: I hope I was able to supply you what you're looking for.

James: Yes, you did. Thank you. I appreciate that. You did a good job. Now I'm going to unhook you there.

Charles: Now Jim, may I ask—

James: Sure.

Charles: When were you in the service?

James: Well—

[End of Interview]