

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**ROBERT ADAMS**  
Draftsman, US Navy, Cold War

2015

OH  
2052

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2052**

Adams, Robert. (b. 1934). Oral History Interview, 2015.  
Approximate length: 1 hour 59 minutes  
*Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.*

**Abstract:**

In this oral history interview, Rio, Wisconsin native Robert ‘Bob’ Adams recounts his service as a draftsman in the United States Navy from March 1954 to January 1958. Adams recalls his excitement on receiving his draft papers and describes his experiences during boot camp at the Naval Station Great Lakes (Illinois) and drafting school at Port Heuneme (California). Adams covers his posting to Naval Air Station North Island (California) as part of the Fleet Airborne Electronics Training Unit and later his assignment to Amphibious Group 1, United States Pacific Fleet. There Adams served on the admiral’s staff on the command ships USS *Estes* and USS *Mount McKinley* and took part in practice ambiguous landings augmented with stand-in atomic bombs on Okinawa, Japan.

Adams then describes his shore leave in both Yokosuka, Japan and Hong Kong, crossing the international dateline, and his duties and food aboard the ship. He then narrates his voyage home, his brief stop in Hawaii to drop off observers for the Enewetak Atoll hydrogen bomb tests, and his eventual transferal back to Naval Station Great Lakes where he was discharged in January 1958. Adams worked as a draftsman after the service and holds a particular fascination with the war in the Pacific during World War II. Lastly, Adams conveys his gratitude for his experiences as part of a recent Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Adams (b. 1934) served as a draftsman for the US Navy from March 1954 to January 1958 including one overseas tour as part of Amphibious Group 1, United States Pacific Fleet. He was discharged in January 1958.

**Archivists’ Note:**

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2015.  
Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, 2017.  
Reviewed by Tristan Krause, 2017.  
Abstract written by Tristan Krause, 2017.

## Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of OH2052.Adams\_user]

Adams: They have fun, right?

Isensee: Today is December 21, 2015. This is an interview with Robert Adams, who served with the United States Navy from March 1954 to January 1958. This interview is being conducted at Mr. Adams's home. The interviewer is Natalie Isensee, and this interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program. Can you tell me where and when you were born?

Adams: I was born in this house—well, actually, in Portage, but my parents built this house in 1932, or '31, and I was born in '34. So I lived here through my younger years, all the way through the grades, high school, and up until I was twenty years old. When I was twenty, I was drafted into the Navy. On my twentieth birthday, I got my orders to go down to Milwaukee and have my physical done, and my pre-questions. Then I actually went in on March 11. I left for Chicago, to enter the Navy.

Isensee: Was that in 1954?

Adams: Fifty-four, yes. So I went into the Navy and took all my exams, tons of them, and then I went into boot camp at Great Lakes. I graduated from boot camp with a fourteen-day leave, and that was May 29 of 1954. May 29.

Isensee: Can I ask you, how did you feel about being drafted? Was that a surprise for you?

Adams: No, it wasn't a surprise, and I was looking forward to it, because I wanted to go into the Navy. I was just looking forward to it so much when I got the draft papers. It was the first time that I had been away from home.

Isensee: How did your family feel about it?

Adams: You'd have to ask them, but they aren't around anymore. But I think they were happy for me, because my father was in the Navy, and I kind of followed in his footsteps. I was sticking around home too much, and I think that was a reason for me getting away from the family and on my own. I was getting old enough to be on my own. So it was good for them, and it was good for me.

Isensee: Can you tell me a little bit about your family life growing up, before you entered the service?

Adams: I graduated up here in Rio High School in 1951, out of a class of twenty. We had twenty in my class. It's all small.

Isensee: Small class.

Adams: It was right up at the end of the street here, and I used to walk back and forth all the

time, for twelve years. After high school, I enrolled in the Madison Area Technical College, and then I commuted every day from here to Madison, back and forth.

Isensee: What were you going to school to study?

Adams: I studied radio. At that time of my life, TV was just coming around, and I wanted to be a TV cameraman. I wanted to be there and shoot all these pictures and action things. That was something of the future, so I wanted to get into it. So I went down there, and they said, "Well, before you take TV, you've got to take radio." So I did. The first year down there, I took radio, which was strictly radio repair. You get one of these little boxes, and tubes in it, and transistors and resistors. Then I'd build my own kits right from scratch. But they said I'd have to take radio before I could get into TV. At the end of that year, I said, "Well, now, for the second year—[telephone rings]—for the second year, I'm going to take TV, so I can run a camera." "Oh, you can't do that." "Well, that's what I went to school for." "Well, if you want to be a TV cameraman, you have to go to a different school."

[00:05:43]

Isensee: They didn't offer it at MATC?

Adams: No. I took radio four periods in the morning, and then I took drafting two periods in the afternoon, and I loved that drafting. So the second year, I went in and took drafting full-time. I did all my drafting pre-requisites that year. That was in 1953, '52 and '53. I got out of there, and then I went and worked for Gisholt Machine Company as a draftsman, and I went to work for a couple of other companies. But yeah, right there, it was Gisholt.

Isensee: Gisholt?

Adams: Gisholt. I was an electrical draftsman there. I did electrical schematics. I really liked that. That was in 1953, from the time I got out of school, until the end of the year, until March, when I was drafted.

Isensee: You were working at Gisholt when you got drafted?

Adams: Right.

Isensee: Now, did you choose the Navy, or did the Navy choose you?

Adams: I chose the Navy. They asked me when I went down—[telephone rings]. I can't talk now. That goes on all the time. I was real pleased to go into the Navy, because my dad was in the Navy. That was a real experience for me. That was really my first time away from home.

Isensee: What was your basic training like? Anything memorable during that time?

Adams: I met a lot of good people. I enjoyed it. It was pretty strict, but that's what I needed. When I got out of boot camp, then I got out on May 29 of 1954, and then I had a

fourteen-day leave. Then, after the fourteen-day leave, I left Chicago at ten o'clock on the Rock River Railroad—Rock Island, I'm sorry—Rock Island Railroad—for Los Angeles, because when they assigned billets at the end of my boot camp, they said that I was going to go to draftsman school.

Isensee: Was that based on your education, because you had a background in that?

Adams: Yup. So they were going to send me nine weeks in drafting school.

Isensee: That was in California?

Adams: That was at Port Hueneme, California, outside of Oxnard. I left boot camp after my fourteen-day leave, and it was two days to get out there. I got out there at 12:30 in the morning at Port Hueneme, and that's when I started.

Isensee: Did you go to school with some of your friends, your buddies, from boot camp? Were you by yourself?

Adams: By myself. Yeah, I was the only one that was picked for drafting school. That was a twelve-week school, and that was a tough school. I thought I knew how to do drafting. But they would take points on—if you have a directional arrow, that arrow had to be three times as long as the top of the point, where it comes out, and they'd measure that, practically.

**[00:10:14]**

Isensee: They wanted it to be perfect?

Adams: Perfect. I mean, that's what they based grades on. They had to grade everybody. Then I had a lot of trouble with my printing. I wasn't the best printer. Everything had to be printed. We would print our letters home just to practice.

Isensee: To practice the handwriting?

Adams: Yeah, that's it. On September 24 of 1954, I completed my twelve-week school in drafting. Twelve weeks.

Isensee: What rank were you at that time, do you recall?

Adams: I was a seaman apprentice. But after I got moved, I had to take—when I went to my first billet, they call it—job, billet—then I took classes, correspondence courses, to be a seaman. That's three white stripes. I passed that, and I got my seaman.

Isensee: Where was your first billet at? Where was your first duty station?

Adams: They sent me to San Diego, on North Island, and that was called FAETUPAC, F-A-E-T-U-P-A-C-K. That stands for Fleet Airborne Electronics Training Unit. Now, that—

Isensee: What type of work did you do for them?

Adams: I did drafting. This was a school for officers, ensigns. Learned about sonobuoys. Do you know what that is? Where they go out with a helicopter. They put a buoy down in the water, and they can tell if there's any submarines down in there.

Isensee: Oh, interesting.

Adams: I did a lot of their drafting. That was just on one side of the Navy base.

Isensee: At North Island?

Adams: Yeah. At North Island—that was a big Navy airbase. Also, that's where all the big ships come in and docked.

Isensee: Still is busy. Still is a big area.

Adams: Yup. I'd love to go back and see it.

Isensee: What did you do during your free time while you were stationed there?

Adams: Go to movies, all the time.

Isensee: On base or in town?

Adams: Both. I'd go to three movies a day.

Isensee: [laughs] Where did you live, in barracks?

Adams: Yeah, in barracks. There was probably thirty—

Isensee: Did you have your own room, or a roommate, or a big, open squad bay?

Adams: Big—well, they were as big as the house here. This whole house would be the barracks, and everybody slept in that one room, three high.

Isensee: Oh. Not just two high for bunkbeds? That's a lot of people in one area.

Adams: No, that was one high there, because I remember once when they took my blankets, and didn't have any blankets. There were cut-ups in there, too. I didn't like it. So I checked into FAETUPAC. That was October 11 of 1954.

Isensee: Did you do different types of work while you were at that unit, or you were a draftsman the whole time?

Adams: I was a draftsman all the time.

Isensee: Did you do any field training or go out to any ships during that time?

Adams: No, not while I was assigned to that. I was assigned to that outfit at FAETUPAC for ten months, until August 11, 1955. Then I was transferred from FAETUPAC North Island to the Amphib Base on North Island, Coronado. The Amphib Base is just a little slot of land. The highway goes along out to the—around.

[00:15:42]

Isensee: And it's right next to North Island, or part of North Island?

Adams: It's part of North Island. That was all the Navy base, and we were a small part of that, FAETUPAC. That was—I should remember what those names—what those figures—Pacific. Uh. Anyway, there was an admiral that was in charge of the outfit that I was sent to, and he wanted a draftsman on his staff. I was assigned to Commander Amphibious Group 1, United States Pacific Fleet, under the command of Irving T. Duke, D-U-K-E, Rear Admiral. Commander Amphibious Group 1.

Isensee: Do you know what made him so interested in having a draftsman on his staff?

Adams: Sure. That's coming up in my big story.

Isensee: Very good. While you were stationed there, are there any stories of friends you want to share? Any memorable experiences? I know you've got more to share later also.

Adams: I had some good friends there, yes. We took a lot of tours up to Los Angeles and Hollywood and other places. We took one trip way up to the Redwoods in Central California. Three of us just took off one day on the bus, took the weekend off and went up there. When we got up there on the Greyhound—it's close to the Redwood forests—they let us off, but there was no way to go from the highway into the forest. They didn't have any tours that went in there. [Both laugh] We had to turn around and come back. It's quite a ways up there.

Isensee: That's a long drive to not be able to see it. Did you often have weekends off?

Adams: Oh, sure. Most weekends—well, there was a lot to do in San Diego. They had auto races that you could go to. They had events in Tijuana.

Isensee: Were you able to go to Tijuana?

Adams: Yeah. My cousin was stationed right there on the Amphib Base where I was, and so we got acquainted again, and he was living off base with his wife. Once in a while, they would invite me to go down to Tijuana and go to the—oh, they had—what do you call those?

Isensee: Markets, or restaurants?

Adams: A lot of those. Those bull—they weren't races, but—

Isensee: Oh, are you talking about bull fights, maybe?

Adams: Yeah, the bull fights. Then guys would go out there—

Isensee: Oh, chasing of the bulls, or running of the bulls?

Adams: Yeah.

Isensee: I think when the bulls chase the people, right?

Adams: Yeah. They'd get out there with their swords and come right up, and then the bulls would chase them. It was a bloody thing. You had to have a strong stomach to watch that stuff.

Isensee: Sounds dangerous.

Adams: They don't have that stuff in the United States, I know that.

**[00:20:00]**

Isensee: That must have been interesting to have your cousin there, too.

Adams: Yeah. He had me up for dinner sometimes. We had a lot of good times together.

Isensee: Did you have any family visit you while you were there?

Adams: No. Nope, none of my family ever came out there. While I was there on North Island, the Amphib Base assigned to the admiral, we went aboard a ship. It was called the *USS Estes*, AGC-12, and onboard the *Estes*, we trained with the Marines. We took aboard Marines from the Marine base, north of—

Isensee: From Camp Pendleton, maybe?

Adams: Yup, Camp Pendleton. Thank you for this. Yup, Camp Pendleton. We'd take a weekend. It may be four or five days. We'd go up there, and they would have Marines onboard, and then they would practice getting off the ship and getting on land, as if it was war.

Isensee: Because they're leaving an amphibious ship?

Adams: Mm-hm.

Isensee: How did they get to the shore? On boats, landing craft?

Adams: They would have a whole fleet in there. But our ship was the headquarters for the whole fleet.

Isensee: OK, so there were a lot of other ships right with you, then, too?



Adams: Oh, sure. Yup. We would go out for two to four days. I was on the following ships: the *USS Estes*, AGC-12—you got that—and the *USS Mount McKinley*, AGC-7, and the *USS El Dorado*, AGC-11.

Isensee: How long were you on each of these ships? Did you move quite often? Or maybe you were on one ship for a couple months, or was it just a week?

Adams: No, not months. A weekend, maybe four days at the most.

Isensee: Oh, OK, and then you got back off the ship and went back to your barracks, and then kind of did it again the next time?

Adams: Mm-hm. But it was really getting my feet wet for the long journey. At the end of '55, we took a tour—I mean, this is our own group. Not the Navy, but our own group on our time off. They had buses that went up at Los Angeles, and we saw the big parade they have on New Year's.

Isensee: Oh, the Rose Bowl Parade? Rose Parade?

Adams: Yup, Rose Bowl Parade. We saw that. Then we went to another big place up there. Something like Disneyland.

Isensee: You went to Disneyland?

Adams: Well, it was one of those. It wasn't Disneyland, but—I didn't write that one down.

Isensee: That's OK. I know Knott's Berry Farm is in the neighborhood, too.

Adams: Knott's—that's it. See? There you go again. [Isensee laughs] Knott's Berry Farm. That's where we went. It had just opened up.

Isensee: Oh, how interesting.

Adams: We were one of the first ones to get into Knott's Berry Farm. That was an experience.

Isensee: Did you go in uniform when you went to these places, or in civilian clothes? Or maybe you don't remember, and that's OK. That's a very specific question.

Adams: I think we went in uniform. Yeah, we went in uniform. That was at the end of December of '55. We went on other tours. I know one tour we did on Hollywood, watching them make movies. I've got pictures of all this stuff, all through there. Anyway, we left San Diego. We packed up everything we had, and we left San Diego, California for Japan, on January 2, 1956.

**[00:25:14]**

Isensee: When you went to Japan, did you know how long you were going to be gone?

Adams: Mm-hm, three months. Three months. We crossed the longitude 180 degrees, which is called the International Date Line. We crossed that on January 14, 1956. Then we docked in Yokosuka, Japan, Y-O-K-O-S-U-K-A. Yokosuka.

Isensee: What was the travel like?

Adams: The travel was very, very bad. On the way over there, I did drafting, but we were planning on practicing an invasion, an atomic bomb invasion, of Iwo Jima. So all the way over there, I being on the admiral's staff, he played out his plans, and this was going to be a fleet of a hundred ships, from Canada and different countries, United States, and we were all going to be there. We left Japan on February 28 for that—oh. [Whispers to self] Docked at Yokosuka. February 17, we had that. It was the first Iwo Jima attack. The original one was in 1945. This was in '56. So it was eleven years later, after the original one, the real one.

Isensee: So you were going to use this as a training exercise?

Adams: Yes. What they were going to do, instead of just doing the same thing all over, they wanted to add an atomic bomb, like Russia would come over and drop an atomic bomb on the troops, and how they would react, training in that circumstance. Well, on the way over from San Diego to Japan, I was doing drafting. We had a hundred ships from all these places. I had to make maps of where they were going to get off of what ship, and what beach. I had to make maps of Iwo Jima and show all of the airfields on it, landing—what group was going to go to what beach. I had to show all of that stuff. That was all included in the attack. I was doing that on those rough seas. That ship would just go like this.

Isensee: I'm imagining it kind of tilting in the water back and forth.

Adams: It would go this way, and then it would go down, whoosh. Way out. Way over.

Isensee: And you're drawing during all this?

Adams: Right. This is a steel deck in my drafting room. Then they have little wells in between the plates. Do you know what I mean? It raised up about so far, each well between plates.

Isensee: Yes.

Adams: I hooked my stool on one of those so it wouldn't slide across the floor.

Isensee: So it kind of kept it anchored a little bit?

Adams: Right. One time, we had such a big wave. It really went up, and it let go. It went over that, and I shot across the room.

Isensee: Oh, no.

Adams: Wham. [Laughs]

Isensee: Were you injured?

[00:30:00]

Adams: No. I could have been. But that's just one of those things that I really remembered.

Isensee: Did you get seasick during this trip?

Adams: No. Nope. After the training off of the Marine bases, I was seasick one time, and that time, I'll never forget. They had me training on one of these plot boards. A plot board is where somebody is standing in back of a plastic board. It's got circles around it.

Isensee: And you can see through it?

Adams: You can see through, and then you can plot where different ships are on that, or if a plane is coming in, you plot all that on a plot board, and you do that in the back of the board. The officers are sitting out here, watching what you're plotting.

Isensee: But you're doing it backwards?

Adams: Yeah, and that's what I was training to do. Well, when I was doing that, I got seasick. I mean, oh my goodness. Oh my goodness, that was the worst sickness. I couldn't stand it. I had to get up. I went to the railing, and I heaved, and I heaved, but nothing comes up. It's all dry heaves, and it's the worst sickness you can imagine. You're—ugh. Once was enough. But then they say once you do it, you get your sea legs. That's how—

Isensee: That's what that means.

Adams: That's what that means. You get your sea legs. Once you get seasick—[both laugh] oh. There are people who get seasick a lot, but I was lucky.

Isensee: How was the food on the ship?

Adams: The food was very good. Once we were out probably the first three or four days, it was good, because we had whole milk. Once the whole milk dried up, we didn't have milk. We had to have dry milk. I would not touch that stuff. It was terrible. Just terrible.

Isensee: And you're from Wisconsin, too.

Adams: Yes. That's what I missed the most on the ship, was real milk. Gosh, I missed that. You don't know how fortunate you are to have good milk. [Laughs]

Isensee: Did you work shifts, or did you work one day on, one day off, or only during the day? How did that work?

Adams: We worked every day, five days a week, and had our weekends off, just like a civilian

job. Had certain hours. We had bunks on the ship, three or four high. I want to say four high. It was right up to the ceiling. There was one on the floor, that high. One there, one there, and one up there.

Isensee: Are these the type of bunks that fold up, or they look like cots, or were they hard with mattresses?

Adams: They were canvas, with a little pad on it. Then each of us had a drawer to put our stuff in, on a big panel. I had a bottom pad, and do you know why that was bad? No, you don't.

Isensee: No, I don't know.

Adams: Because everybody takes their shoes off and puts them under my bed, and stink. Oh my God.

Isensee: You're right next to all the shoes. [Laughs]

Adams: I'll never forget that. Yeah.

Isensee: When you got close to Iwo Jima, can you tell me about that training exercise?

Adams: When we got there—now, by the time I got to Japan, my drawings were all done. They were putting all of the drawings and specifications together, and it turned out to be a book two inches thick. They had a lot of them to assemble. Each book was top-secret.

Isensee: And each book was different.

Adams: No, each book was the same. Then they would be distributed among the officers of all the other ships.

Isensee: Sure. So they all had the same plans, then.

Adams: Right. That was the plan for the attack.

**[00:34:56]**

Isensee: Did you help put all those together?

Adams: Yup. I stood in line, and they'd come along, and you'd put your page or two in there, and pass it on. I could have had one, but I wouldn't have wanted to be found out about it.

Isensee: Right, because it's classified.

Adams: Classified, top-secret. All my drawings were in there.

Isensee: That was all your work.

Adams: Yup. After a while, I'll show you, in my book, me at that drafting board, where the admiral wanted a picture of Vietnam, a map of Vietnam. Only he wanted a big map of Vietnam. Now, this is before Vietnam started, and all I had to go on was a little map—you'll see it in the picture—like this. I had to blow that whole thing up into a huge map, showing all the boundaries of all these countries. That was one thing I did on that ship. Pretty—a lot of experience.

Isensee: Did he tell you why he was interested in that?

Adams: No.

Isensee: Or it didn't matter?

Adams: Didn't matter. It was just part of the job.

Isensee: In your interview request form, you mentioned having information or a picture about Governor Kohler of Wisconsin?

Adams: Yup.

Isensee: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Adams: That's coming up.

Isensee: OK, very good.

Adams: Coming up. Now, you asked me another question about—was it rough, or what did I do—oh, what did I do when I was at Iwo Jima. I did nothing. We were there about four days, out in the bay, watching all this. They had—

Isensee: Did people go onto the beach?

Adams: Sure. We had a lot of Marines come onboard when we were in Japan. They came on our ship. They were filling up a lot of other ships from different ports. When we got down there, they had these boats that carried soldiers from the ship to shore. I had nothing to do, so I could watch all this go on.

Isensee: All your work was done by then.

Adams: Yup. Off in the distance, not too far—I took a picture of Iwo Jima, with Mount Suribachi over here, and the long island here, but I couldn't get it all in the lens, so I had to go click, click, click, click, click.

Isensee: To make one big panoramic picture?

Adams: Right. I've got that. For years, I've had it in my closet, in my bedroom, and then I thought, a couple years ago—I put it somewhere else. Then I did find it once, but now

the last two days, I've scrambled this house from top to bottom, and I don't know where I hid it. It's here.

Isensee: It's here someplace.

Adams: I wanted to show that to you. That was my most valuable picture. Anyway, while the attack was going on, they lit off an atomic bomb, mock atomic bomb. There was a lot of fire and smoke that went way up into the clouds, and that was our atomic bomb. I remember looking at that. Those were the days when they were just developing atomic bombs. Hydrogen bomb hadn't quite been there yet.

Isensee: Could you see this mock bomb from a long distance away?

Adams: Mm-hm.

Isensee: So everybody on the beach would know that that's what that was?

Adams: Oh, yeah. On the beach and on the ships. It was quite a show. So anyway, when we finished that, we went back up to Yokosuka, Japan, and then we left—we loaded—we had soldiers on our—Marines. We had Marines on our ship after the exercise at Iwo Jima. We took them back up to Japan then. Then we left Japan for Okinawa on February 28. February 28. We went to Okinawa to offload Marine troops that were with us, that were stationed on Okinawa.

**[00:40:28]**

Isensee: Now that the training exercise is done, they were ready to go back to Okinawa?

Adams: Yup. We were only in Okinawa for six hours. The ship's company didn't even get off the ship. We just stopped there, the Marines got off, and we went on our way. The rest of the way home was all a free ride. We had nothing to do, but—just like tourists. That's what we were, is tourists.

Isensee: Did you do a lot of PT [physical training]? Did you work out a lot? Or play any games with your friends, or cards?

Adams: [Laughs] I suppose we did.

Isensee: [Laughs] I'm just guessing.

Adams: I don't know what we did. So we left there, and it was in our plan to stop at Hong Kong. We arrived in Hong Kong on March the fifth, at six o'clock in the morning, in Hong Kong. They docked out there in the bay. Then we stayed there, only for the purpose of everybody getting off the ship and touring Hong Kong. They had little boats that went up there, and then you could do whatever.

Isensee: Did you go shipping, or walk around?

Adams: Oh, man. That's like going to Disneyland. What a place. Everybody should go to Hong Kong. You could buy suits there for ten dollars, where back in the States they'd be fifty or sixty. Everything is so cheap there. A lot of people bought clothing there, civilian clothing, and they would just send it back to the States from there. They could do anything they want. I've got a lot of pictures in there about Hong Kong. I've got a whole section of just Hong Kong pictures.

Isensee: Did you get to go out to eat while you were there?

Adams: Oh, yeah. We'd get back on—take the little boat back to the ship in the evening and wait for the next morning to come. That was just a vacation. That's all that was. [Laughs] A vacation.

Isensee: That sounds nice.

Adams: Then we left there March 7 or 8. We were there either two or three days. I'm not quite sure. Maybe it had been three days. While I was in Japan, I took a lot of big tours. A lot of big tours. I've got pictures of all the tours I took.

Isensee: Bus tours? Tourist things?

Adams: Bus tours. Yeah.

Isensee: That's a good opportunity.

Adams: Yup. They had bus tours. We went from Yokosuka to Tokyo on one of them. We went to see the big castle. We saw school kids. Every kid was dressed exactly alike. I've got pictures of the little kids sitting on a fence, drawing pictures, like artists. I mean, little kids. I've got the pictures there that you can see, right in that book. That's why I'm wondering how long you can be here. [Both laugh] I want to show you this stuff.

Isensee: You got to see the world.

Adams: Yeah. So we left Hong Kong for Hawaii, and that was March 7 or 8. March 21, we pulled into Hawaii.

Isensee: That was your first time going to Hawaii, right?

Adams: No, I had been there before.

Isensee: Oh, OK.

**[00:44:43]**

Adams: Yeah, I had been there once before that, I think. Yeah. Is it three times I've been there now? I think I've been to Hawaii three times. It gets better every time. Then what we call the flag—now, the flag is called that because we are under the auspices of the admiral. The admiral staff is another name for it. The admiral staff got off the ship,

because the ship that I was on was going to go and watch the H-bomb tests in Enewetak, in the Pacific.

Isensee: Is that an island?

Adams: Yup. It's a group of islands, I think. Enewetak. When we got off the ship, we did so because the staff there on—or the ship people—was assigned to go and take important people to Enewetak for the exercise. They'd have ships all over the place, and then they would drop this real bomb, and then they would find out how much damage it would do to this area, this area, this area, and—

Isensee: Depending how far away you were?

Adams: Mm-hm.

Isensee: Interesting. Did you ever see any of that?

Adams: No, I didn't.

Isensee: What did you do while you were in Hawaii?

Adams: We transferred to what they call the flag. They transferred us to the *USS Telfair*, PA-210. That's just a troop ship, what I call a troop ship. Then the *McKinley* went to Enewetak, and then it took probably a week to get back home to San Diego. We didn't do anything except just transfer.

Isensee: Oh, OK. You didn't stay very long?

Adams: No.

Isensee: Was that Pearl Harbor?

Adams: Yup, that was Pearl Harbor. Mm-hm.

Isensee: Did you get to walk around there at all, or did you get to see much?

Adams: I didn't see much that time as when I was a tourist over there. I went over there twice as a tourist. Then we came back, got all our stuff off the ship, and I was back in our country, in San Diego, back at our regular barracks again. That was a three-month tour.

Isensee: A lot happened in three months. What did you do when you were back in San Diego?

Adams: Went back to my regular drawing stuff. I was transferred—I thought I had all that on this paper, too. I was there until the first of the year. This was all in 1956. At the beginning of '57—'54, '55, '56—the beginning of '57—that would be the beginning of my fourth year—they transferred me out of there, now, for a new assignment. There were two openings. One was overseas someplace—Japan. Japan. They could have transferred me to Japan for duty for a year, or Great Lakes.



Isensee: Which one did you choose?

Adams: I didn't choose. They chose.

Isensee: Oh, they chose.

Adams: They chose Great Lakes. Here I am, right back at home again, after three years. Couldn't get away from home. [Both laugh]

Isensee: Joined the Navy to see the world, and went to Illinois.

Adams: Yeah. Isn't that something?

**[00:50:00]**

Isensee: What did you do while you were back at Great Lakes?

Adams: I was there from roughly the first of January, then, and I was assigned to a training station, where they made training aids for all of these schools, all around. They have reserves in training.

Isensee: Was that specific to your work in drafting, or was that all kinds of specific drafting?

Adams: Drafting is drafting, as far as I'm concerned. I got my—where did I get my—you were asking me about my rates. I got seaman, and then I took classes, through the mail, for a third-class petty officer, and then I got that. Then I did it again for second-class, and I got that. When I got out, I was a second-class petty officer.

Isensee: What was it like being stationed at Great Lakes? Since you weren't going to boot camp at the time.

Adams: That was just like a regular job in the outside. We'd go to the chow hound, chow area, meal. We had a bunk, a place to stay.

Isensee: Did you make it to Chicago at all to visit?

Adams: I'd come up here weekends, all summer. Every weekend, my dad sold this station, which you see there. He leased that out, and he built a gas station up here on the corner, and an A&W Root Beer stand. My mother and my dad owned the A&W stand, and they ran it. My sister worked up there as a car hop. A lot of my friends were car hops and worked up there. I would come home on Friday night. I had my own car then, and I'd drive from Great Lakes up here and work at the A&W stand, and stay upstairs, right up there.

Isensee: So you came home every weekend?

Adams: Yup, almost. All the time that it was open there. I made a lot of root beer and hamburgers and that kind of stuff. That's what I did on the weekends.

Isensee: [Laughs] While you were in the Navy.

Adams: I never went out and had fun, you know. I'm always working.

Isensee: [Laughs] Any stories that you want to share about your time at Great Lakes? Any fun with friends, or interesting supervisors or leaders?

Adams: Well, they were all good to work with. The last month that I was in the Navy, that was in about November. I had a pilonidal cyst, and so did a lot of the other guys. There were probably four or five, six—maybe six people that I knew had a pilonidal cyst. That meant I couldn't work anymore. I usually just stayed in bed. You know what a pilonidal cyst is? It's a cyst right at the end of the tailbone.

Isensee: I've never heard of that.

Adams: It's an open sore that big, and they dig out the cyst, but it doesn't heal up. Just about that deep.

Isensee: That sounds painful.

Adams: Somebody's got to go in there and pull all the foreign stuff that gets in there and make sure it's clean, with something like a toothpick. They pick stuff out. The guys that had these pilonidal cysts down there, we each did it on the other guy.

Isensee: Oh.

Adams: Yup.

Isensee: Were you hospitalized for that?

Adams: That's where we were, in the hospital.

Isensee: Wow.

Adams: For that last month. Then I said, "I want to go to school," when I got out. I wanted to go to Whitewater College on the GI Bill.

Isensee: So how did you get discharged from the Navy? Was your contract up, your obligation ended?

**[00:55:04]**

Adams: It didn't. My obligation wasn't done until March. The semester started in January, so they gave me an early discharge, so that I could start with the rest of the class on the second semester. The same week I got out of the Navy, I was in college.

Isensee: At UW Whitewater?

Adams: Yeah.

Isensee: What were you studying?

Adams: [Laughs] Just liberal arts. Liberal arts. By this time, I had been out of high school for seven years. I didn't know how to study. The only thing I really knew how to study—and that was math. I liked my math. But geography and English and speech, and all these things, I flunked right out of it. I couldn't do it, no matter what. I had no interest in it. Well, then the first semester, got done, and then I was put on probation. I went back the next semester. I got halfway through that. I said, no way. So I stopped. Then I went back to MATC and took the advanced course in drafting. Why? I don't know. Because the teacher said, "You know more than any of these students here. What are you doing in here?"

Isensee: You could have been the teacher.

Adams: Yeah. [Laughs] So I finished that second semester out there. Then I got a job—well, that's the end of the story as far as that goes.

Isensee: Sure. Do you want to talk about what you did after you left the service, or do you want to show me some of the pictures and I can kind of describe them? What would you like to do?

Adams: I'd like to go a little farther now with my drafting career. I'm into drafting. That summer, after I got out of MATC, I had a choice of going with the State Highway Commission as a draftsman, or I could work for a private engineering firm. I went with the private engineering firm. At that time, they were building the interstate. I was making drawings of the interstate construction.

Isensee: Just Wisconsin, or across the country?

Adams: No, for Wisconsin. At that time, they just started building it down in Beloit and Janesville. They had me go down there and do surveying on one of the interchanges down there. I remember going back and forth every day down to one of the interchanges at Janesville and surveying, and even some of the places between there and up here. I know there was another stretch in there I was surveying. But then they also—this company had a contract to build a new airfield down by Burlington, and the name doesn't come to me now. It's the name of a flier. But I don't remember. But anyway, they decided not to build the airfield, and that meant that they had to let go of all their people. Then I went to the state, and they hired me right away. That was probably in the fall. I was with the state, up there on the square, in the Tenney Building, on the fifth floor. I was up there for about four years. Then I was—

Isensee: What type of projects did you work on with them? Is that still roads, or buildings?

[00:59:58]

Adams: Yeah, it's all having to do with the highways. Details of the safety barrier, where they have a calvert [??], and then they have a barrier along. They have to be at a certain spec, a certain design. This is a long time ago.

Isensee: You have a good memory. Were there any other veterans benefits that you took advantage of?

Adams: No.

Isensee: You mentioned the GI Bill. Nothing else?

Adams: No.

Isensee: Did you stay in contact with your friends from in the Navy?

Adams: No. Never heard from them.

Isensee: Really?

Adams: I didn't see any of them. I always wished that I hadn't gotten out of the Navy.

Isensee: Why is that?

Adams: Because when I got out of the Navy, where do you suppose I went back to live?

Isensee: Came back home.

Adams: Should never have done that. It's too close to my parents and the village, I guess. I'm still very close to this village. I do a lot for it. But that's neither here nor there.

Isensee: Did you get involved in any veterans organizations?

Adams: Yeah, I belong to the American Legion Post down here, and I meet with them. I have a lot to do with them.

Isensee: What type of things do you do?

Adams: I think next month, I'm going to be painting the inside of the post of the building where we meet. That's going to be a big job. I do a lot of funerals, carry the flag at all the funerals.

Isensee: That's very nice of you.

Adams: I do the lawn mowing every summer.

Isensee: Did you mention that you went on a Badger Honor Flight?

Adams: Yes.

Isensee: How was that?

Adams: Well, we've got another hour. I'm going to get into all that. Oh, boy, am I ever. Do you want to get into it now?

Isensee: Sure. Do you want to take a break, or are you OK?

Adams: I'm OK, unless you want something to drink or something.

Isensee: I'm good.

Adams: All right.

Isensee: Well, we could do this a couple ways. Do you want to bring—should I go over there and look at the pictures? Do you want to bring some over here? We can kind of describe them.

Adams: No, I'll bring it over here.

Isensee: That will be the trick, is describing them for the audio tape.

Adams: You don't want to see these pictures of—do you want to scan through this stuff at all?

Isensee: Sure.

Adams: [inaudible].

Isensee: You've got these all organized.

Adams: Yeah, right from the beginning, from the first day. This is the local board.

Isensee: Oh, the order to report for a physical examination.

Adams: Yeah. Seventeenth of December, 1953 was the date of mailing.

Isensee: So is that how you knew that you got drafted?

Adams: Mm-hm. That's the company commander, and that's me. And—

Isensee: Some photos, letters home.

Adams: This is boot camp—me in boot camp at our barracks. What we had to eat. The menus. Samples. That's samples of the boys.

Isensee: Looks like this picture is of laundry day.

Adams: Yup.

Isensee: It looks like there's some letters here that went to your parents.

Adams: They all did. They kept every one of them.

**[01:05:00]**

Isensee: Not from you, from somebody else.

Adams: No. Oh, from—

Isensee: From the command, maybe?

Adams: From the command, maybe, yeah.

Isensee: Where did that one go? Oh, here. It says, "Dear Mr. Adams, you'll be pleased to know that your son will soon complete his period of recruit training." Your parents saved all the letters you wrote? Wow.

Adams: Yes, they did. These letters, and pictures that were taken in boot camp. All the stuff that tells [??] "This Friday, we didn't have school this afternoon, because we had captain's inspection. We had to be in our whites, and they had to be spic-and-span. Also, we had to have our haircuts by today." And it goes—the plan of the day, what the plan was for that particular day [inaudible] drafting. This is our company in boot camp, and there I am, somewhere in there. I am in there. No, I guess I skipped that day. There I am. Right there.

Isensee: Oh, very nice. Draftsman school in Port Hueneme, California.

Adams: Yup. This is—I don't know what that is. Yeah, that's draftsman school. Uh-huh, all these guys were in the drafting school, that's right. That's our class, Port Hueneme,

Isensee: Did any of those folks go with you to the next duty stations, or was that when you said you went by yourself?

Adams: That's when I went by myself. Completion—twelve weeks.

Isensee: Certification of completion from Class A Draftsman School.

Adams: Yup, September 24, '54. That's all the names of all the people.

Isensee: Oh, very good, the names of all the people in your class?

Adams: Mm-hm. That's *Track of the Cat*. I went to watch that being filmed.

Isensee: Oh, a movie?

Adams: Mm-hm. Here's when we went to Visalia, California, telling about that—going up—

Isensee: When you made the trips to try to see the Redwoods?

Adams: Gateway to Sequoia National Park. Here it tells the billets of where the draftsmen were sent, and how many. One to Brooklyn, one to Philadelphia, one to Glenview, Illinois, and on down. One to the *USS El Dorado*. I was on that ship once. Two to San Diego and Norfolk, *USS Ajax*. Four to Pearl Harbor, on sea duty.

Isensee: Interesting. Where all your friends went.

Adams: That's the Rose Bowl I told you we went to. Pictures of all—

Isensee: Oh, the movie schedule at the Naval Air Station in San Diego.

Adams: Do you know how much they charged?

Isensee: No, how much?

Adams: Ten cents.

Isensee: That sounds like a good price.

Adams: [Laughs] It would be today, wouldn't it? That's the plane that I came home on.

Isensee: Oh. North American Airlines.

Adams: One trip I took back, I flew backward. Every seat was backward. [Isensee laughs] Going out from Madison to Los Angeles, we rode backward.

Isensee: That sounds very strange.

Adams: It was strange.

Isensee: A map of San Diego?

Adams: Mm-hm.

Isensee: A visitor's map.

Adams: It's a good map, and it kind of explains—this is all San Diego, all this. This is North Island. That's all Navy base, from here to here.

Isensee: That's where you were when you first got to San Diego?

**[01:09:53]**

Adams: Right. Mm-hm. I was stationed right there. That's where FAETUPAC was, right there. This is all—they had an airfield in here, and all the ships were in here. Then here's

Coronado. I was transferred from here—this is all city, and this is where we went a second time, and from here to all of that.

Isensee: Sure, the southern end.

Adams: So I didn't have to go very far. This is a picture of our barracks.

Isensee: Oh, sure.

Adams: Pictures of ships, and pictures and pictures.

Isensee: A lot of ships in San Diego.

Adams: The zoo.

Isensee: Oh, did you make it to the San Diego Zoo?

Adams: Yeah, a few times.

Isensee: Is this you? You look very young.

Adams: Well, I was only twenty. [Both laugh]

Isensee: I suppose so.

Adams: This is our theater, our church. That's a big—that's this. That's our barracks. Two floors.

Isensee: Oh, an aerial view of the Naval air station.

Adams: I had duty one time—this is an airfield where the planes would come in. They would actually come in like this. I had the wheels down watch once. I don't know how I got stuck with that one.

Isensee: What does that mean?

Adams: I had to have this fancy uniform on. It had a stripe down here, and stripes across my arm, so that the planes could see me signal them at the end of this runway when they came in. If I had the flags up like this, that meant that everything was OK, the wheels were down. I'd have to look at it when it was way up there. Yeah, I can see the wheels, so it's safe to come down. So I'd signal them that it's safe to come down. Or if the flags are out here, you better go around again and find out what's wrong.

Isensee: Because your wheels aren't down.

Adams: Right.

Isensee: Wow.



Adams: Yeah, I did that, right here. It was the airfield, see?

Isensee: Did you need special training for that, or was that the training you got?

Adams: Five minutes of training. That's all I needed. [Both laugh] "Just watch the planes. Here's your binoculars." Tells all kinds of stuff that I was doing, day to day.

Isensee: Lots of letters home. This is wonderful.

Adams: Yup.

Isensee: It looks like an opportunity to buy tickets for all these activities out in town.

Adams: Seventy-two dollars' worth of tickets for only four dollars. We got them at bargain price. All these activities we could take advantage of.

Isensee: Movies, bowling, fishing, golfing, dancing.

Adams: Tells how much we had to pay for it.

Isensee: Got some good prices there. This must have been from buying it on base.

Adams: Yeah. Do you know who that is?

Isensee: No, I don't.

Adams: Donald O'Connor. I saw him in person. He was in a movie. "Bobby Adams, who was stationed with the Navy at San Diego, is spending a ten-day leave with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. [inaudible] Adams," and that was June 16 of '55.

Isensee: You made the newspaper.

Adams: Oh, I did several times. But nothing better than that. That's the *Estes*. That's the ship I was on. One of them. There's a lot—

Isensee: You got access to a typewriter at some point.

Adams: Yeah. I did. A lot of information in here. This is the *Mount McKinley*. That's the one I went over to Japan on.

**[01:15:00]**

Isensee: Very good. Did you take those photos?

Adams: No.

Isensee: Is that a postcard?

Adams: Yeah. That's the *Mount McKinley*.

Isensee: Information about the ship.

Adams: Side view. Our bunk house was up here. Crew right in here. That's where we had our bunks, in that area. The people stationed down here all the time, they were back here.

Isensee: In a different area of the ship?

Adams: Mm-hm, their own area. Then where I did all my drafting in the drafting room, it was right in here. It was a printing shop, a photo lab, and a drafting room, and—

Isensee: Kind of right in the middle.

Adams: This would be on the outside. Yeah, in the middle of the ship. You're right. It had these high towers on the top of the ship, which made it top-heavy, and—

Isensee: Were those radio towers?

Adams: Yeah, radio towers. Going across the Pacific in those winds is top-heavy. The thing was top-heavy here, and they just go like this. It will go down, and then it would come back up, and when it did, it went this way, and then it would go this way, and then it would go back down, and then way up again, way across the Pacific.

Isensee: [Laughs] That's a long way to travel with the ship moving all that.

Adams: Good experience. This is all the people—that's the admiral. This is the group that the admiral had to work with him. When we got off one ship in Hawaii and got on the other ship, these are all the people that transferred.

Isensee: Oh, very good. It says, "Rear Admiral Irving J. Duke."

Adams: Yup, Irving Duke. I'm in there someplace, but I'm not going to spend twenty minutes finding me now. I know I'm in, but I can't remember. There's just a sample of a menu for Thanksgiving.

Isensee: Thanksgiving 1955.

Adams: That's our station area. Thirteen of December of '55.

Isensee: So did you spend Christmas, then, on the ship?

Adams: I guess so. This is one drawing I made here.

Isensee: You made that drawing?

Adams: Yeah, I did. That's San Diego Bay. These are all the buoys, and the numbers of each buoy. This is where the ships travel, up through there, right there where the arrows go. It

shows how deep it is. How long it is, how deep.

Isensee: That's impressive work.

Adams: Shallow water [inaudible]. I'm not in that picture, but I think it came out on a calendar.

Isensee: There's a lot of information in that binder.

Adams: I know. It's really something. This is—

Isensee: Book number two.

Adams: Book number two. That's my second class—that's draftsman, second class. That's the [inaudible] Roses Parade, what pictures I took of that. We took a bus. I think we started out at three in the morning, and they took us right down there. We got off the bus right on the parade route.

**[01:20:00]**

Isensee: Wow, that's a huge crowd watching that parade.

Adams: These are pictures of going across the Pacific. That's the way it looked. The waves. What the front of the boat looked like when it would go down. It would go, whoosh.

Isensee: Some big waves. Seventy—

Adams: Seventy-plus mile an hour winds on the way to Japan. That was a wave going way across. There's more pictures of the waves we hit. How would you like to be on that cruise?

Isensee: I don't know that I want to be on that cruise. [Laughs]

Adams: Think of the experience you'd have. This, what we all got going across the International Date Line.

Isensee: You have a certificate. Very nice.

Adams: This is in Japan. I took that picture—I think I did, yeah. That's a Shinto shrine, I think they call it.

Isensee: When you were out taking some of the tours?

Adams: Mm-hm.

Isensee: Picture of an art gallery in Japan.

Adams: This is the Meiji Art Gallery, yup. This is at some party or other that they had at one of the—

Isensee: Some type of show?

Adams: Yeah. The Great Buddha in Kamakura. That's really something to see. Who took that one? Then this is the entrance to the palace in Japan, the emperor's palace. Nobody could go across. There was a bridge. That's what the Japanese taxis looked like. This is the parliament building in Tokyo.

Isensee: Interesting. You saw quite a bit.

Adams: Here's the picture I wanted to show you. This one.

Isensee: Oh, school children painting watercolor pictures of palace. They're taking it very seriously.

Adams: They're all dressed the same.

Isensee: Working hard.

Adams: It was so artistic. You still want information about my trip to Washington, don't you?

Isensee: I'm curious in whatever you're interested in sharing.

Adams: That's all the school kids going across the grounds.

Isensee: So they must have been on a field trip, too.

Adams: Probably. [inaudible] Typical street scene in Tokyo. [inaudible] Hong Kong—no, this way. That's the Buddha shrine in Tokyo. Buddha shrine. Typical storefront in Tokyo.

Isensee: How long were you there for again? A couple days?

Adams: More than that. Three weeks.

Isensee: Oh. So you had time to see a lot.

Adams: Mm-hm. That's our ship. That's Kamakura. That's a city between where we were and Tokyo. Now, here's the one I wanted to show you specifically. Remember you told me—this is my drafting room on the ship. That's the picture that the admiral gave to his officer to give to me, with instructions to blow it up, because he wanted a big picture of that. That's all Vietnam. Here's North Vietnam, and South Vietnam down here, and Thailand and all that.

**[01:25:20]**

Isensee: So you were able to figure out how to take that map, that's smaller than a regular-sized piece of paper, and blow it up gigantic?

Adams: That's exactly right. That's me.

Isensee: Very impressive. Oh, and a newspaper article about the exercise of the atomic bomb?

Adams: Yup. "Fleet back at Yokosuka from atomic exercise." It tells all about this exercise. "The atomic weapons were also used by the defenders. Several simulated atomic bombs were dropped over the task force while it was underway." This is at Yokosuka, at Iwo Jima. This is all about our attack on Iwo Jima.

Isensee: Very good. Oh, looks like a couple other newspaper clippings from your hometown paper.

Adams: Yeah. It says, "He has left California for a cruise to Hawaii, the Philippines, and Japan." But some of these sailors, they're on the high seas all the time. This is all about—

Isensee: Hong Kong?

Adams: A lot of Hong Kong stuff here. This is Hong Kong. "We're in Hong Kong. Boy, there's so much to tell you. It would take a dozen letters to tell you all I want to say. We left Japan on the 28<sup>th</sup>. We had a little rough weather, but not too bad. When we were in between Yokosuka and Okinawa, word came through that the ship was due in Hawaii on the 16<sup>th</sup>. So word was passed that we would spend the three days in Okinawa, and then head straight for Hawaii. Then after that, the admiral arranged for us to go to Hong Kong. So we had liberty in Okinawa for about"—well, yeah, Okinawa—"for about six hours. We didn't even get off the ship. Then we pulled out and got here at Hong Kong. We don't fly home after all. The flag gets off at Pearl"—the flag is our group—"at Pearl, and takes another ship to Diego [??]. We'll probably get in to spend"—and on and on. Tiger Balm Garden. That was a big thing to see in Hong Kong, Tiger Balm Gardens. I always liked that. Here's a little kid with a littler kid on his back.

Isensee: In Hong Kong?

Adams: Yeah. Just think of how much it's worth just to see all of this kind of stuff.

Isensee: What an experience. What an experience. More pictures of kids, and some shoeshine boys in Hong Kong.

Adams: Yes. Everything is so cheap over there. Buy a new tailor-made suit. They're going to measure you up, and you get the material you want, come back the next day and it's all made.

Isensee: Have it all ready for you.

Adams: About twenty dollars or less. Then Hawaii. That's the car we rented. Car we rented in Honolulu. Well, I guess we did take a little car tour, then. Hawaii. Here's where we were taking things off of our ship and putting it on this other—

Isensee: Oh, because you were transferring ships?

Adams: Yup.

Isensee: Some work associated with that.

Adams: Mm-hm. That's the ship we transferred to, that ship, from Hawaii to San Diego, the *Telfair*. We had nothing to do on that ship. OK, here is Kohler, Governor Kohler, who is here. He flew from Madison—he was Wisconsin Governor Kohler. He flew out of here and went to Hawaii to get on our ship. We got off. Kohler and all the spectators for the H-bomb test got on. Then this is showing and telling about their experience on the *Estes*. No, what's that? Command ship. *USS Mount McKinley*. Enewetak.

[01:30:43]

Isensee: He was an official observer of the 1956 atomic and hydrogen tests. Now, did you see him?

Adams: That's going home on the train, on the train. That's when I got moved to draftsman second-class. That's my certificate. We're about done with Navy stuff now. There is the admiral, and there I am.

Isensee: Right next to the admiral. A menu, Thanksgiving 1956. Going back to Great Lakes. Again with the local newspaper clippings. I think you're famous.

Adams: [Laughs] All the servicemen were. That's the high-level train we were on. Just that was an experience. That's one of my Navy buddies. He was a draftsman also, but he did all that by hand.

Isensee: He did this artwork?

Adams: Yeah.

Isensee: He's very talented.

Adams: Very talented.

Isensee: Oh, and a photo saying that you were discharged from the Navy at Great Lakes.

Adams: Yup, and that's the end of it. Valentine's Day—oh, that's Valentine's Day last year.

Isensee: Veterans Day in 2014?

Adams: Yeah.

Isensee: It says Associated Bank.

Adams: Up here in the bank. I brought out a lot of this stuff, and uniforms and all that kind of stuff. I displayed it. Then I stood up there with my—that's my legion outfit on—that's

my legion outfit.

Isensee: And people were able to come ask you questions and talk about your service?

Adams: Mm-hm. So now what do you want to look at? Whatever I got, huh?

Isensee: Well, whatever you want to share.

Adams: Oh, you want to see the trip to Washington. My trip to Washington.

Isensee: Tell me more about that.

Adams: OK. How are we doing for the time?

Isensee: I think we're OK on time.

Adams: Oh, I was going to show you one picture in here. You asked—somebody asked me on the phone, why did I go into the Navy instead of—what persuaded me to go into the Navy, well, because—come on, now.

Isensee: I know you said your father was in the Navy.

Adams: Look at this picture. Here, I'm that old, during the war, Second World War. He was in for the last year of the Second World War. I always wore a sailor suit, a whole suit, and whites, and this sailor hat. I always wore that. But he was in the Navy, and I always wanted to follow him. That's how come I went in the Navy.

**[01:35:02]**

Isensee: That's a very good reason.

Adams: Now I'll go onto some—you don't want anything to drink or anything?

Isensee: No, I'm good.

Adams: All right. Why don't you come in here and look at this? I'm trying to show you something. This is my bedroom now, and in this corner, this is my sailor suit, sailor hat, and that's my dad's sailor hat. This is my ditty bag that I had all through the four years.

Isensee: It's got your name, and is that your—

Adams: That's my serial number. A lot of my stuff is still in there. That's my flat hat—no, that's my dad's flat hat. We didn't have flat hats. This is what I wore to Washington, DC.

Isensee: For the Honor Flight?

Adams: Yup. That's a bigger picture of that ship. These are the ribbons I had. That is—my dad was in a choir in the Navy, in 1944 and '45. That's his choir.

Isensee: Oh, very nice.

Adams: He played a lot of checkers. He played the tuba in a band.

Isensee: While he was in the Navy?

Adams: Yup. That was his occupation. He played in the band. [Laughs]

Isensee: That sounds like a good job. It's an important job.

Adams: This is a sign I got from my granddaughter.

Isensee: When you came home to the airport after the Honor Flight?

Adams: Mm-hm. Yeah. This is a write-up in the *Rio Journal* of all veterans. They've got one write-up—I guess that's in the book already. But I got a whole write-up of my experiences, which you already know.

Isensee: You've got some good stories.

Adams: Let's see now. Over there—oh, here. Now, on the way back from Washington, DC to Madison, we got halfway back. It was about nine o'clock at night. And, "Mail call, mail call," the guy says when he comes down the aisle. "Where's"—whatever his name was. He was sitting right next to me, across the aisle. He got a big pile of mail, like that.

Isensee: [Laughs] That's a lot of mail.

Adams: Where did he get all that mail? OK, now, next one, "Where's Bob Adams?" "I'm right here." This big pile of mail.

Isensee: Who sent you all the mail?

Adams: Well, this is one letter that I got, that I want you to read. I want you to take time and read that letter.

Isensee: "September 4, 2015, Friday. Dear Veteran, hello, my name is Michelle. I am ten years. I live in Waupun, Wisconsin."

Adams: Waupun.

Isensee: Waupun. "The sports I play are bowling, softball, and tennis. My hobby is dance. I am in fifth grade, and I'm a female. I like cats and dogs, and I go to Rock River Intermediate School. What part of the Army do you fight for? We, anyways, thank you for serving our country and for risking your life for ours. Thank you for keeping us safe from bad people. Thank you. Sincerely, Michelle."

Adams: That broke my heart. That really did it in for me, that this little girl, ten years old, would



take time out of her day to write to me. I had to find her.

Isensee: Did you find her?

Adams: Yes, I did. I went up to Waupun. It was a week ago, and I went to this intermediate school up in Waupun, and I got in there, into the school, and I showed them this. I said, “Do you know this Michelle in the fifth grade?” “Well, it doesn’t give her last name, but I think we do.” So they called her teacher. The teacher says, “Yeah, bring him back here to the classroom.” So I went back in the classroom, and I said, “Where is—where’s this Michelle?” And up went a hand. Here’s this girl that wrote me a letter, and I read it when I was on the way back from Washington. I thanked her from the bottom of my heart that she would take time out, and she would think enough of me to write that. It’s not so much what it says, but the thought. So then the teacher got—this is Michelle.

**[01:40:43]**

Isensee: She got a picture of you standing next to Michelle.

Adams: Yeah. This is a week ago. He had a little picture camera in his classroom, and he took that picture. I really talked to the whole class. The teacher had me talk to the whole class. If they had any questions about what I did in the Navy, and how long I was in there, and any questions they had.

Isensee: What an opportunity for the students to talk with you. That’s awesome.

Adams: Yeah. Anyway, on my way out, I told the staff that I was leaving. They said, “Just a minute. We’ve got a picture here.” That little camera they had in the room went up to the office, and they had it, just like that, already.

Isensee: Had it printed and ready for you.

Adams: Yeah. A miracle. Another one. [Both laugh]

Isensee: Very nice. Very nice.

Adams: Isn’t that something? They had one for her and one for me.

Isensee: I bet you made her day.

Adams: I did, I guess. [Laughs] I hope I did. Well, that was part of the Honor Flight.

Isensee: Well, that is wonderful. I’m looking at my questions here. I’m wondering, why is it important for you to share your history, to share your stories? Or why did you agree to do it?

Adams: Well, I do it with a lot of people. I’ve got a column in the paper that has everything I told you about, my time in the Navy. They do that with all of the veterans down here.

Isensee: As a showcase?

Adams: Yeah, mm-hm. So I had an interview there. I'm very proud of the fact that I was in the Navy. You can see that by the way I keep my room, and even my dad's stuff. I've got tons of his stuff.

Isensee: From his time in the Navy?

Adams: He was over in the Philippines during the Second World War, in the fall of the Second World War. He played in the band over there, in Band 100, I think it was. He has pieces—I think I've got it over there. I was going to show you. It's about a Filipino girl. This was at the time, and they interviewed this little girl, and this little girl told about how the Japanese soldiers would stab her—how many times? Just for the sake of stabbing her. Just a couple nights ago, I was reading a paper from the Philippine newspaper, and it was telling about a trial that they had there, and it told about this one person out of hundreds that was just brutalized, and how a human being can do that to another human being is unreal. The Japanese soldiers didn't have feelings, I don't think. You just can't imagine that kind of stuff. I've got a lot of stories about Iwo Jima. I've seen all the movies about Iwo Jima. I know what went on there. I read this stuff.

**[01:45:14]**

Isensee: It's an important part of history.

Adams: Here's *The Pacific War Day by Day*. It's kind of a hobby with me. I'll read this, rather than pick up any other kind of book, because this is interesting to me, the Second World War.

Isensee: Yes, especially with your family connection.

Adams: Yup, and I lived at the time, during it. Here. Here, just read that article. That's the original paper from the time.

Isensee: It's a newspaper article. The headline is "Child at trial shows scars," written in Manila. Part of a trial.

Adams: "'My mother is no more,' she sobbed. 'She was bayoneted to death beside me.' Rosalinda showed her horribly scarred arms, saying, 'The Japanese jabbed me ten times in the arm.' Then she pulled up her dress and showed long bayonet scars in her abdomen and chest. Yamashita did not look at the witnesses. He was toying with a pencil."

Isensee: Terrible.

Adams: Here's another one, *Pacific War Diary*. *Pacific War Diary*. Iwo Jima. Here's another one about Iwo Here's another one about Iwo.

Isensee: You've got a lot of interest in it.

Adams: Yeah, I do. This is my dad's original scrapbook from all of his time in the Navy.

Isensee: You have that, too.

Adams: Just like I've got it.

Isensee: Very nice. All the newspaper clippings.

Adams: Yeah, all that stuff. That's why I'm interested. That's why I live it, [laughs] I guess. You've seen all that. You've seen that. I think there was one picture here.

Isensee: Were there any other stories or experiences that you wanted to talk about today?

Adams: No. I covered pretty much of it.

Isensee: Were there any questions that you wished I had asked?

Adams: I think, as time goes on, a lot of these details that we've gone over kind of slip my mind now. I can't remember them so much in detail as I used to. Just like I want to find that one picture; I can't find it. I wanted to show it to you.

Isensee: Between all the records you have and your memory, you've got a lot of information. A lot of stories. I'm glad you shared them.

Adams: I mean, all these books, they aren't going to waste. When I die, I don't know what's going to happen to all these books. My kids aren't going to—they don't care what I did. Might as well been a—worked in coal field [laughs] here. I don't think. They never bring it up.

Isensee: But maybe they do care, and they just don't bring it up. I bet they'll appreciate them.

Adams: How much do you know about that flight to Washington, D.C.?

Isensee: The Honor Flight?

Adams: Yeah.

Isensee: I know a little bit. I've met some people that went on it and talked to some people that helped organize it. I think it's a wonderful program.

**[01:50:00]**

Adams: You would never believe the number of people that contribute their time and their money for that thing. It's mind-boggling.

Isensee: It is. It's a big enterprise. They do it because they want to.

Adams: It's four times a year, and that's just one. They're going out. They're back and forth

from all over the United States.

Isensee: All across the country. All for our veterans.

Adams: That's a good way to thank the veterans, I tell you. They appreciate it, every one of them.

Isensee: It's a meaningful trip for you?

Adams: Yup, it was.

Isensee: Good.

Adams: All the things that have led up to it. Now, I don't leave [??] the trip itself, but day to day, now, even, I think about it, and I think of how many people contributed to that thing. The bus drivers, the patrol cars that led us around in DC, the tour guides. Well, I—

Isensee: The medical staff that goes along, and the guardians that go.

Adams: Yeah.

Isensee: But again, people doing it because they want to.

Adams: Yeah. I don't know how to thank them. But boy, oh, boy. I think that's—

Isensee: Going to the school and talking with the girl who wrote your letter, she'll remember that. Very impressive.

Adams: I wish I could do more of that. When we got back from that trip, my great-grandson was there to meet me, and he was only three weeks or four weeks old.

Isensee: Brand-new baby coming to see you.

Adams: Yup. And all my family. My daughter that lives here, she wouldn't think of going down. But all the rest of my family were down there. Then when we got done, 11:00, 11:30, we got on the bus. Well, the bus is over here. You've got to come over. "We'll take you back on the bus." OK, so we did. The guy that runs the meat market down here, he ran the bus. I don't know if he rented it or if they gave it to him for that day, to cart us around, or at least bring us back.

Isensee: From the Dane County Airport?

Adams: From there, yeah. Then we got on the bus, and we traveled back. The pastor of our church was on that bus. There's two out of the three of us from Rio that were on the bus. We got back here about twelve o'clock. Really late.

Isensee: That's a long day.

Adams: He brought us down the highway over here. Then we turned right up toward the fire station, and just as he made the turn, I looked up there. Man, all these lights were flashing up there. I thought, “Oh, there’s a big fire somewhere.” [Isensee laughs] They’re all pulling out. Right when we were pulling in, they were pulling out. Wow. Well, we better not disturb them. So he slowed the bus down and let them go out, and we went up the street down there, up the main street. Then they turned right. Then I realized, “Well, I don’t hear any sirens. Hmm. And there’s so many of them. That must be one huge fire.” Right then, one of the guys said, “Well, Bob, there is no fire. This is all for you.” Then I bawled. For the first time all day, I cried. Then they all pulled up, the whole string of them, [Isensee laughs] from Doylestown over here. Doylestown came over here to do this. They pulled up in a line on that street there, all six, eight, ten—I don’t know how many there were. There must have been ten. Then all the drivers got out, and they formed a line along the sidewalk, right over there. So I had to go up at the head of the line, and I shook every hand, all the way down, and they all congratulated me and thanked me for my service, and they all knew me by my name.

[01:55:33]

Isensee: Famous.

Adams: I got to the end, and then the pastor came over to me and she said, “Well, that about does your day now.” She said, “I’m going to walk you home.” I said, “No, you’re not.” I said, “I’m going to walk you home. It’s not right for a lady to walk a guy home, you know. It’s not ethical.” [Both laugh] She said, “This time, I’m walking you home.” She walked me across the grass right there, to my back door.

Isensee: Very nice.

Adams: She said, “That’s your day.” That was my day.

Isensee: Very impressive.

Adams: But then, the next day, Dale, who lives next door, he went, and he was showing me some pictures. I said, “How come I haven’t got that picture?” “Yeah, you’ve got it. It’s right in your bag.” “Well, I haven’t seen it.” So I came home, and I couldn’t find my bag. Where did my bag go? There’s Dale now. He’s just coming home. He says, “Maybe you left it on the bus.” I said, “I don’t think it’s on the bus.” I checked the next day. He said, “I checked the bus all over before I dropped it off, and I didn’t see anything in there, but I’ll check again the next day.” Well, sure enough, here he dropped my big bag full of stuff. It was all on there. But my mind wasn’t on the bag, it was on all this other excitement. That was a day.

Isensee: I thank you very much for sharing your stories today. I appreciate it.

Adams: I hope you got enough.

Isensee: Absolutely.

Adams: For generations to come?

Isensee: Generations to come. Researchers and family members, and anybody who's interested in hearing more about your life and what it was like to be in the Navy.

Adams: It's a good life. I've never been sorry for it. I wish I had more. If I had a chance to be twenty again, I'd do it all over. Only this time, I'd stay a lot longer. But when you're in the Navy, and you're counting the months and the years, if you've got four years ahead, that's a long time.

Isensee: It seems like a long time, doesn't it?

Adams: Then it finally gets down to three. "Oh, I can't wait to get out." Two years. One year. Then you're a short-timer. "I can't wait to get out and live a civilian life, get a job or get an education somewhere." But then, as the time goes by farther, then it reverses. I wish I would have stayed in the Navy. There's so much I missed because I wasn't in the Navy. I had it so good in there. All the experiences and things I saw for nothing. Travel. I love to travel. All that's for free. It's not a bad life. I wasn't in during wartime. That might have been a different story.

Isensee: Maybe. Well, on that note, we'll end the interview. Thank you very much.

Adams: Mm-hm. You're quite welcome. I'm so happy to think that you came over to listen.

Isensee: Happy to do it.

Adams: That made my day today.

Isensee: Happy to do it.

**[End of OH2052.Adams\_user][End of interview]**