RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS C. MADDEN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH
and
LAUREN COSTELLO
and
MARK LANG

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
FEBRUARY 19, 2008

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Thomas C. Madden on February 19, 2008, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth …

Mark Lang: … Mark Lang …

Lauren Costello: … and Lauren Costello.

SI: Mr. Madden, thank you very much for coming in today.

Thomas C. Madden: You're welcome, my pleasure.

SI: Thank you also for bringing in a photo of your aircraft carrier, [the USS *Oriskany* (CV-34)]. To begin, could you tell us where and when you were born?

TM: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 4, 1932.

SI: Can you tell us your parents' names?

TM: You know, I've got to tell you, right off the bat, when I went to my first day in school, the nun asked me the same question and I panicked, because I didn't know my mother's name. [laughter] I said, "She's Mommy," and I started to cry, but, now, I know, her name is Catherine and my father was Martin.

SI: Can you tell us a little about your father and his background, where he was from and what he did for a living?

TM: My father was an immigrant. … I think he was born around 1885. He came to this country through Ellis Island. I think, let's see, I think that was around--oh, I don't remember, but it was around 1920. … Basically, he got a job in New York City, and then, he met my mother. Now, my mother was brought from Ireland over to this country in her mother's womb, and so, my mother was born here, baptized in St. Patrick's Cathedral, and then, they didn't like it here. So, they went back to Ireland, and so, she grew up in Ireland until she was, I don't know what, maybe eighteen. So, she's a dual citizen, which she held over my father's head for quite some time. [laughter] … When she returned, she became, you know, a maid in [the] Westchester area. My father was, basically, … he was a steel worker for a while, but, then, he became a stationary engineer, and that's where he spent his life, as a stationary engineer, … a quiet life.

LC: Did your father ever talk about why he immigrated to the United States?

TM: My father didn't talk too much about anything. [laughter] To answer your question, no, but I suspect it had something to do with "The Troubles," as they called it in Ireland, because my mother's brother was in the IRA [Irish Republic Army], you know, those gunmen with the trench coat, basically, a terrorist. … My father, I think, all I know is, in Brooklyn, in that area was an Irish neighborhood and strangers would show up at our door, maybe a man or a man and a woman, and they would be taken into the parlor and the doors would be shut. … There'd be mumbling going on and I'd be listening, trying to find out what was going on, and I saw a bottle

of whiskey. My father would pour a whiskey for the man and my mother would show up shortly, later, with tea for the woman. … After about a half an hour, the doors would open, everybody'd shake hands and they would leave, and the next thing I know, they were living in the neighborhood. So, I think he was some sort of a contact man, you know, for people who came in, legal or illegal, but that's a surmise on my part. I don't know. I can't explain it. Nobody else talked about it, but, anyway, I think I digress. [laughter]

SI: Were there any stories, from either your mother or your father, about life in Ireland?

TM: Just little anecdotes. My father had this, what do you call it? like an ESP [extrasensory perception] thing and he would perceive things, and my older sister picked it up. He would talk about, oh, [that] he had to go away from … where they lived, up in, they came from County Mayo, [Ireland], and he had to go somewhere else to work. … He had a dog and he returned, unannounced, home and he knew that the dog would be at the train station and the dog knew that he would be on the train. Later on, when he passed away, my older sister, who, at that time, she was married, she woke up out of bed. She was startled and … she was in a sweat. She said, "I just had a dream about my father." She said, "I saw him going up these stairs, just a stairs with the clouds around it, and he had his;" like, the old BVDs, the one-piece underwear. That's what they wore then. "He had these beautiful, clean, white BVDs and his pants and he was going up the stairs and he turned around and he waved goodbye." … About ten minutes later, the phone rang and he had passed away. So, there was something like it. That's the only story I know about them in the "old country." … They really didn't talk to me. … It was my father's second marriage, had three children from his first marriage and had three from the second. I was the last of the second bunch, so, I kind of grew up as an only child, even though I had an older brother and sister. They were, like, seven years and ten years older than me. So, I was kind of, like, leftover and I didn't get … many of the stories. I still don't know much about them.

ML: Could you tell us a little bit more about your siblings?

TM: Well, I had the stepfamily first. There was animosity between my mother and my father about his first marriage. They were all much older than me. By the time [I was born], my father's oldest boy, … he was twenty-one years older than I was. So, he was like a man, and they were basically on their own. They were married and all that. My real family, that I grew up with, was my older brother, ten years older than myself--his name was Marty--and my sister, who was seven years older--her name was Catherine (Kay). I just followed in my brother's footsteps. I just wanted to be like him and, you know, he just took over my life. … I wasn't smart enough to get into one of them Catholic diocesan high schools that was free, you know. No, I had to pay my way through a prep school in Brooklyn. Well, he paid the bill, because my mother said, "I'm not paying. You're going to public school," but he paid the bill. He took care of me. He gave me my first baseball glove. He took me to Ebbets Field, taught me all about baseball, and so, he was my man, [laughter] and my sister was the person I tormented. You know, … she wanted to go to the movies, right. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Ebbets Field was the home stadium of the Brooklyn Dodgers until their move to Los Angeles in 1957.]

LC: Like most brothers and sisters.

TM: Right.

LC: Living in the city, did you ever know any racial discrimination because you were Irish and there were so many different ethnic groups in the city?

TM: Oh, certainly, certainly.

LC: I am Irish, too, and my family. We always heard about them. My uncle researched it. He says he has a sign from the 1800s that says, "No Irish needed."

TM: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Well, even within the Irish, you know, we discriminated against ourselves, you know, "What county are you from?" you know. It just went down the line, you know. "You're blond hair, blue eyes, … and you're Irish?" [laughter] They discriminated against us, because we didn't have--well, I got the blue eyes, but I didn't have the blond hair, but, to answer your question, it was, I wouldn't use the word "ghetto," but … our neighborhood was distinctly defined, predominantly Irish Catholic. In Brooklyn, you identified yourself by what parish you lived in. You know, you didn't say you were from a certain area, you know, like here, in New Jersey, you might say, "Well, I'm from, you know, Freehold or I'm from Howell." No, in Brooklyn, you were from either Our Lady of Angels or Our Lady of Perpetual Help. … Next to us--we moved around a lot, every couple of years, and I suspect my father's business that I referred to before might have something to do with that. So, our area was bounded by, on one end, … Norwegian Protestants, oh, my God, [laughter] the other end had the Italian Catholics and a little corner was a Jewish community. … So, it was varied, and, when you left your neighborhood, you knew it, you knew it, you know. … You were--at least in my boyish perception, you know--I thought I was in danger because I was out of my area. … Was that that point you were getting at?

LC: Yes.

TM: Yes, it was very much like that.

SI: Which parish were you in?

TM: We called it OLPH, Our Lady of Perpetual Help. I've heard other versions of it, [laughter] "Our Lady of Perpetual Troubles." [laughter] …

SI: You mentioned that the Irish were broken down even by county. Was that the case in your neighborhood, that most were from County Mayo?

TM: Right, they were, and I suspect it was [even more defined], like, my aunt lived around the corner, you know, my other aunt lived around the corner, my uncle lived up in another street. We're all within walking distance of it, and all those strangers that came in were in the neighborhood. So, it was all from, not only County Mayo, that little section, but my father came from Ballinrobe, [Ireland]. It was that area, distinctly that area, I would say it's, you know, predominantly. I don't know where the others came from, you know. I knew our crowd and I went to a Catholic parochial school, sixty boys in a class. The school itself was divided right

down the middle, the girls on one side, and it had a big sign, "Girls' Entrance," "Boys' Entrance." In the middle was an auditorium, where you mingled, if you could. [laughter] There were sixty boys in our class, fifty-eight Irish Catholic and Anthony Morano, who was not, and Raymond Swiderski.

LC: Were not Irish.

TM: They were the other two. [laughter] That's how it was, yes.

SI: What effect did having all Irish in the neighborhood have on the way you grew up? Were there a lot of cultural events related to Irish heritage?

TM: Well, it was so Irish, I think we didn't even know that we were celebrating anything that was, you know, other than Irish. St. Patrick's Day, of course, and all the holidays, and Christmas, were all done in an Irish style, which means, you know, "The whiskey's on the table, boys, and we'll have the fights later." [laughter] … Would you repeat the question? because I did have a thought about it.

SI: How did being surrounded by all these Irish families and Irish pride affect the neighborhood and your upbringing?

TM: Yes. Well, first of all, it taught me to hate the British. [laughter] I was supposed to hate the British. I found out later that some members of the family had joined the Royal Navy and I said, "How'd they do that?" You know, well, they were looking for work and they went to England--they didn't have any problems--and they wound up in the Navy. They did twenty years in the Royal Navy. … So, I didn't understand that, but I knew that I was [supposed to hate the British], and I learned all the Irish songs that you're supposed to sing about, you know, how bad the British are, "And Kevin Barry's going to get hung," [referring to the pro-IRA song *Kevin Barry*], and all this foolishness. [laughter] … Of course, my Uncle Tom, the terrorist, … he was the hero of the family, strong, silent man, "the quiet man." He worked on the subways. He was straight as an arrow. [If] they had a bottle of whiskey, that lasted them a year. You know, that, we never understood. …

SI: He also immigrated to the US.

TM: Yes, yes, they all [did]. Well, he had to. [laughter] He had to. I heard a story that the British, … I don't know how true this is, that when they were looking for him, that's the [British] Government, they couldn't find him. So, the so-called "Black and Tans," they were like mercenaries, they came. [Editor's Note: "Black and Tans" were World War I veterans hired by the British Government to hunt IRA members and suppress their operations.] They … almost got him. He got out of the house and he got away, but, in their anger, … I don't know how true this is, my story might have been BS, but that they took my grandmother and grandfather and tied them to their bed and threw them in the river, just to get Tom to come out, maybe, and they could get him. So, that's what I heard. I really don't know, and I don't know where I heard that from--I just know it. I was told it somewhere along the line. So, there was a lot of hard feelings at that time, which kind of led to this idea that, early on, I was introduced to "The Troubles,"

war, and, by the time I was seven, you know, the war [World War II] was breaking out. So, my whole life, growing up, there was always something going on. I guess, like with you guys, it was always some war going on somewhere, and, of course, I bought into all the patriotism and all that stuff, you know, "Oh, boy," you know, all that kid stuff. …

SI: You were very young in the period just before Pearl Harbor, but I know there was a big conflict within the Irish community over whether to be pro-British or anti-Hitler.

TM: Right.

SI: Was that talked about, whether we should get into the war and support Britain or if we should not support Britain at all?

TM: I can't recall any conversations about that. My mother and father, they were in their fifties by the time I was [born], obviously. … My mother was older when she had me. There wasn't many [conversations]. There might have been conversations up at the bar where my father went, but there were no conversations in the house, other than that my mother did not want her oldest boy to go to war, you know. So, that was just a mother's instincts. I know there was great sympathy--I know, I read in the books, that [it] was in the history books [laughter]--there was great sympathy by the Irish, they were very pro-German. But, they were really more anti-British than they were pro-German, … but, other than that, I have no awareness that … there was anything going on in our neighborhood. I can't say that about later troubles, with, you know, I believe some people in the [neighborhood], mostly my in-laws, were supplying money and stuff, you know, to the Irish, … well, for the last twenty years.

SI: When you were growing up, was there a lot of open support for the IRA?

TM: Well, they were heroes. They were heroes. Whenever there was a funeral, all the Irishmen would show up and they'd talk about "the war." They weren't talking about World War I and they weren't talking about World War II--they were talking about "their war" and how, you know, the usual thing, when people come home from war, it was "their war," so, all the other wars pale in comparison.

ML: How was your experience in school, not only in primary school, but later on in school, too?

TM: Well, they were all different. I think there'd be enough said just saying that I went to a Catholic parochial school run by nuns and we can go through, you know, skip all those gory details. [laughter] … High school, again, was a Catholic prep school in downtown Brooklyn, led by the Franciscan Brothers. Strange people, they wore hoods. Why did they wear hoods for? … Why did they tie ropes around their [waist]? What do they do with those ropes, you know? [laughter] Again, more fear, … everything was fear based, and the training was excellent. I didn't understand why I had to learn all those things. I was not a good student; I was not. … I got good marks, but I didn't understand, "What was the need for all this geometry?" you know, "Why do I have to [learn this]?" Now, I understand, [laughter] but school was something I had to do. I was more interested in what was going on out in the streets or out in the sports than I was in [school]. The neighborhood I grew up in, you know, might was right. You know, it was

not chic … to lord your intelligence. … I was a tall, skinny kid, so, I had to, you know, … learn how to be streetwise, you know, tough kid and all that, though, but I'll say this, my first experience with a library was unforgettable. I mean, we did not go to libraries. I mean, you didn't, and I kept it a secret. … I think I was eleven. … You know, New York City has these beautiful buildings, libraries, oh, my God, and I went in there and I was just like--I thought I was in church. … I was just a ragamuffin, you know, eleven-year-old ragamuffin. I guess they thought I was in there to … either get out of the cold … or to steal something, and the woman, a matronly woman, asked, "May I help you?" I said--I forget. I don't even remember what I said. What I was looking for, I said, probably something like, "I just wanted to come in and see what's in here." Well, she introduced me to books and I would secretly go down there, because I didn't want any of the boys to know that, "Oh, my God, he's going to a library." [laughter] … So, I had this secret life, you know. I was interested in what I was interested in, but I was not interested in learning what they wanted--*they* wanted--to teach me.

SI: What were the things that you found interesting when you would go to the library?

TM: Well, I think I have an inclination to math and organization, so, really, the first thing I found [interesting] was the organization of the library--the books, they had the old catalog books, catalog, these cabinets.

SI: Card catalogs.

TM: You're familiar with them, a card catalog, and I was fascinated. I would just randomly go and open it and look, and then, I'd track that down. Whatever it was caught my eye, I would track it down. It was just an adventure, like a hardware store--I'm still that way with hardware stores. [laughter] You know, I could learn a trade by going into Home Depot.

LC: You sound like my mom. She says she could spend hours in Home Depot.

TM: Oh, yes, that's how it was. … My experience with that was enlightening, and I had a few teachers that really impressed me. … I guess you can all identify with this story. Out of all the nuns, there was one sweetheart of a nun, kind of looked like you, [interviewer Lauren Costello], you know, young, blonde, I think, quiet, and she wanted to be a teacher. … If we were good, she had this book, out of the library, you know, an adventure book, and a boys' adventure book. … If we were good, she would read a chapter to us. Wow, I think that's when I picked up the idea of reading, you know, jeez, wow. I would get so annoyed if somebody made trouble in the class and we were denied our chapter. [laughter] There was a teacher in high school--I can't jump right [to his name]--who was a good teacher. In the Navy, there was a teacher [who] taught math and he used to call the numbers "little Jaspers," and he said, "Now, we'll take this little Jasper out of here. Now, see, in this equation, this little Jasper, they're buddies." I'm thinking, "Oh, yes, yes, you know, that's sort of interesting," than rather, "You know, well, you have to learn this formula," and I know I don't want to memorize anything. Multiplication table was bad enough, "Leave me alone." [laughter] … I don't know if I answered your question, Mark.

ML: Yes.

SI: Were you involved in sports, either through school or clubs?

TM: Well, I was forced into the choir. [laughter] I joined the track team. The reason I joined the track team was … because we had to learn how to smoke. That's what we had to do in the neighborhood. So, I tried it, with all the boys, and I couldn't handle it. You know, I was faking inhaling … and it was cold under the railroad trestle and, oh, it was horrible. … I just stood up, defiantly, and said, "I'm through with this. I'm freezing under this railroad trestle. I don't want to smoke." I couldn't handle it, is what really [happened]. So, in order to save face, I get on the track team, so [that] I could say, "Hey, you know, I can't smoke, you know. I'm running, you know," but, really, I just couldn't handle it. I did not like it, and thank God for that. I tried the swimming team for a while, but that didn't work. So, mostly, it was track, long-distance and short-distance, and mostly medium-distance. On the streets, we played street ball, you know, stickball. … On the corners, you measured, you ran from sewer to sewer, next sewer, home plate was one sewer, the next sewer down was second base and halfway between the two, by the curb, was [third]. … There weren't too many cars there then, and so, that was that, and football. We played football in the street. We'd go up [to the] sandlot and play baseball, once I learned about the baseball from my brother, you know. … We never called it sandlot, we just said, "Well, let's go play baseball," right, and I actually had a glove and I was left-handed, which made me, automatically, a first baseman. I had to play first base all the time.

SI: Did the nuns try to force you to be a right-hander?

TM: I have a story with that. [laughter] You know, I'm getting sick of hearing myself. I write with my right hand, but I throw with my left hand. So, when anybody asked me, I would say, "I'm either right-handed or left-handed," and then, I started to say, "Well, I'm ambidextrous," but I really wasn't. I could write better than the averaged right-hander writing left-handed. I could do that. I finally figured it out, I'm right-handed and left-armed. … A hammer would go in this hand, a screwdriver would go in this hand. If I write, I write like that [with my right hand]. If I throw, I throw like that, but I can throw, not like a sissy, a little bit better than a sissy, with my right hand. [laughter] So, that, I don't know that they tried to control me. I imagine they did, … I just don't remember it, but imagine they did. There was some confusion there about right-handed/left-handed for me, so, there must have been. I must have started out as a lefty, then, I heard in prep school, because they teach you Latin, the Latin word for left-handed is *sinistere*--sounds like prejudice to me, anyway. [laughter]

SI: The Church was obviously a big part of your education, but, in terms of your weekly life and your family life, did you go to church often? Were you involved in many church activities?

TM: Only because we had to in grade school. We had to go to seven-thirty Mass every morning, had to, and you had to march up there and you had to march back and have breakfast, because you were supposed to receive Communion and all that, you know, and then, you had to rush back and go to school. I did not care for any of that stuff. It took me years before I learned that there was a difference between religion and spirituality, which came much, much later. Basically, I had no interest in that. It was something to be avoided, quite honestly. You know, the nuns were to be feared, the priests were to be feared and the parents were to be feared. [laughter] Yes, that was [it], and I can't say I had anything other than, you know, being pushed. I

did try to be an altar boy. I couldn't handle it physically. All that kneeling and stuff made me sick. Because I did not make altar boy, they put me in a choir. We were so bad that the priest would have to stop sometime, "Would the choir be quiet?" oh, and then, the professor would, oh, God, they were inclined to violence at the time, [using] sticks and smack you, and we knew that, and your parents wouldn't protect you … if you came home [with injuries]. … I got hit once by a nun with a ruler. She actually broke it over my hand. I had a welt this big. I came home crying. My mother asked me [about it]. I thought I'd get sympathy. I told her what happened. She said, "What did she use now?" I said, "A ruler." She said, "Oh, do we have a ruler like that?" [laughter] When I talk, I talk with her brogue. I said, "Yes, it looked just like this," and she took it out of my hand and she took my other hand and went, "Wham," and she said, "You must have been a terrible boy to force that woman to do [that], you know, to annoy that poor woman so much." "I'm not telling you anymore." [laughter] …

SI: What was growing up in the Depression like?

TM: I was born in '32, so, Depression, I had no awareness. There was … nothing like that. My father had a steady job through all those years and there was no problem. …

SI: You did not see people on the street, selling apples, or bread lines, that sort of thing.

TM: No, no. I think it was really over by the time I was, like, out on the street, you know. By "out on the street," I mean, you know, seven or eight years old, because that's what they did--they just let you out, you know. You went out. You'd go out to play. There were no cars around, you know. That would be, like, a little before the war and during the war, very few cars. … So, you could wander the neighborhood, go as far as you want. I would tell my mother, you know, "I'm going out to play," and me and the boys would go to Coney Island and be back by supper and nobody'd be the wiser. I mean, that's what we did. Nowadays, God, you'd walk off your property and they want to know. They'd want to call the cops for missing children, [laughter] and it's probably valid. …

ML: What was your impression of World War II?

TM: I was very patriotic. My older brother was in the Army Air Force, and so, I followed everything. I followed it all. Anything I could get, you know, symbols, emblems, patches, my brother would send me a patch of anything he was in. When he came home on leave, I would be waiting like a puppy at the subway station for him, you know, so [that] I would be the first one to see him. Everybody, it was a very patriotic time. There would be drives, you know, bond drives and … metal drives, you know. They'd come around with a truck and they'd have music and all that, that I would go up and try to get something, [get] my mother to give up one of her pots or pans. … So, I was really into it, followed everything that went on and, of course, … I lived in Brooklyn, on Fourth Avenue, which wasn't too far from the Army port of embarkation out of New York Harbor. … It would be nothing to see a line of thirty or forty tanks coming right down Fourth Avenue, going on to the ships, and I remember a B-25 flying over once, right over the house. He was so low, he's [just] clearing the roof. I could see he was smoking a cigar, you know, with his hat back, "Hey, Sonny." "Wow." So, you know, it was all very exciting. …

They should have gotten me in the Marines when I was fifteen--I'd have taken care of everybody, yes. [laughter]

LC: You were only nine when Pearl Harbor occurred. Do you remember your feelings then, or what your brothers thought?

TM: I don't remember that day, I really don't remember that day, and I don't know why. I know there was a lot of excitement and a lot of fear. I think the follow up was, shortly--well, not shortly, but within six months--my brother got involved. He was drafted, and then, it became, you know, a matter of interest. I can't say that I remember, I really don't remember, Pearl Harbor Day. I'm sure I was aware of it, but, yes, I think … I'd just turned nine. I have to figure that one out, yes. [laughter]

SI: Did you see changes in the neighborhood right away?

TM: Oh, yes, oh, everything changed, yes. … As you know, … if anybody in your family went in, … you hung a little flag [a service flag], it was like this big, you know, with a red border and a blue star for each son, you know. Some would have two blue stars and, of course, … if somebody died, they had a gold star. So, we had our one blue star hanging up, but everybody had blue stars, and God forbid if you were draft age and you were a civilian walking around. Everybody challenged you, "What's the matter with you, you 4-F?" you know, "You failure," and we were the worst tormentors of all, the kids. You know, "Why aren't you in the Army? Why don't you go fight for your country?" blah, blah, blah, throw rocks at him or whatever. [laughter] It was, you know, extreme patriotism, but, then, as time went on, you know, the deaths started to come up, you know, the serious stuff, you know. My friends, their older brothers, you know, they were, you know, in the Marines and they got killed or they were a pilot--not a pilot, but they were in the [Army] Air Force--they're missing. By that time, we were living in a six-family house and there were six families, three Irish, three Protestants. We were right on the border between the Norwegians and the Irish, so, we were mixed. Jensen, the Jensen boy, came home. He was in the Air Force, the Army Air Force, and he was on a bomber and they got shot down. They crash landed in France and the Partisans came. … He'd survived. He parachuted, he survived, and, because he was Norwegian, he looked German. He's blond, blue-eyed. They figured he's a spy, trying to infiltrate them and get them exposed. So, they decided to shoot him and they had him tied up and trussed up and they were ready to blow him away and somebody intervened. Somebody realized, "No, he really is an American," and they got him through and they got him back. … For some reason, he came home and he was out. He was out, he was done, but his hair had turned all white. He was just, like, twenty-one and his hair had turned completely white, from blond to white, with the fear. So, that was like a living experience, but there were other guys that just died, you know. So, there was a lot of that going on, and then, later on, guys started coming home, the wounded, you know. … It was all very, very patriotic. It was all very much a part of, not your daily life, but it was that awareness. We would play on the streets. I remember, one summer, it was something about the Pacific. So, we got this big box--something came, maybe a mattress or something, came in a box. We ripped open the box and laid it out in the middle of the corner and that was our raft. … We had just been shot down, you know, in the Pacific and, now, we were going to be on this life raft all day, and we did. We stayed on that, you know, damn thing all day. We didn't eat. My mouth would get [dry]. Oh, it

was awful, what we did to ourselves, but we played that we were, you know, shot down and we had to spend thirty days at sea. So, it was all very much a part of our routine. … The games we played, if we weren't playing sports, we were playing war, and so, … I was conditioned, by that point, you know. … Of course, as I grew up, I knew, we knew, that we were going to go, eventually, go in the service. It was a matter-of-fact, between the draft and there's some volunteering. So, we knew our turn was coming and we were kind of conditioned already for it.

SI: When somebody in the neighborhood lost a son or an older brother, was there any kind of community response or was it just a private family matter?

TM: I would say a private family matter. Yes, there was no real glory, just sadness, … that I knew of.

SI: For example, would the community come together to help whoever lost somebody?

TM: Yes, yes. … Well, the Irish always did. They collected for a wake, you know. … Well, I was never invited [laughter] to those sort of affairs. So, I really don't know whether they even brought the bodies home. They might have just, you know, been buried overseas, you know, and there might not have even been any kind of a ceremony, other than a telegram, yes.

SI: What about blackouts and Civil Defense drills?

TM: Oh, yes, I remember that, yes. They had the blackouts. The sirens would go off and everybody had to [get inside], and then, there were people, local civilians, local neighbors, who would walk the streets and [say], "Put out that light." You know, they'd holler, "Your light's shining." God forbid your light was shining, you know. You'd close the drapes, but the light would [leak through]. So, you had to turn off all the lights and do that for about twenty minutes, and then, they'd do the all clear. I thought it was all very exciting, you know, being a kid. That was fun--that was "fun." [laughter]

SI: Did that inspire any fear in you or your friends that you might actually be attacked?

TM: I don't think we ever thought about that, no. No, later on, we'll talk about that. There was only one time, really, that I faced guns, and I didn't even know it, was an airplane and I didn't even recognize it. By the time it was over, you know, I [thought], "Oh, my God." …

SI: Do any of the big events of World War II, and the reaction on the home front, stand out in your memory, like the D-Day invasion?

TM: Oh, yes, oh, certainly. I don't really remember Pearl Harbor, but I remember D-Day, was a big, big buildup to D-Day, and, of course, the end of the war, first, the Victory in Europe, which came in the summer, I think, … August, was it? I don't recall. I think I was just thirteen then and, oh, everybody went crazy. [Editor's Note: The D-Day invasion of Normandy, France, took place on June 6, 1944. V-E Day was declared on May 8, 1945, followed by V-J Day on August 14, 1945.] My sister was working in New York. … She was in the *Daily News* centerfold, everybody in the bar, celebrating, and then, there was V-J Day, the Victory in Japan. … That

went down a little bit easier, but the big one in our neighborhood was the Victory in Europe, meant the war was winding down. It was over, but it really wasn't over, you know. My brother didn't come home for about eight months later, because they had some sort of point system, and he spent his whole career in the Air Force, basically. He was sent … into a training command. He was a flight mechanic and his squadron taught navigators and bombardiers. They had these little twin-engine planes and he would sit back there to make sure the engines were running, and then, they would have a bombardier and navigator, students, and, you know, they would train them, get them lost. … From there, he evolved to other assignments and he finally wound up, like three years later, I think in 1945, he was now … the crew chief on a B-29. So, he was going to be part of that, the big invasion of Japan, but he never left the States. So, it was all buildup for that--thank God it didn't happen. It would have been a disaster. Anyhow, that was that.

SI: Did you ever go visit your brother at any of his bases around the country?

TM: No, no, we never really even left Brooklyn--I mean, for anything, I mean. He was in Louisiana. He did his basic training in Atlantic City. … They took over, the Air Force took over, the hotels, and I remember, he sent pictures of him, you know, training in Atlantic City. I thought, "Wow, that's nice," but, then, he went down to Louisiana, he finally was out West, like in, what's in Nebraska? Lincoln, Nebraska, was there. He finally wound up with the B-29s. So, no, I never … got to see him, other than when he came home, and, of course, at that time, they had to wear their uniform at all times. You know, you couldn't put on any civilian clothes. I loved that, you know, "Can I have your hat, Marty? Oh, my God, if I could have a hat." [laughter]

LC: Basically, your whole childhood and your brother having been drafted was the main reason why you enlisted as well in 1949.

TM: You've got [it]. You're amazing. [laughter] I don't know how you know that. No, I'll tell you, well, … in 1949, I was still in high school. We knew we were going to get drafted--that was a matter-of-fact--it was just when. Quite honestly, we went down, we were near an armory, … a Navy and Marine armory, and my crowd of about, I guess there was about six of us, we decided, "You know, if we join the Marine Reserve, we would get uniforms, and then, we could go up;" drinking age in Brooklyn was eighteen, they were seventeen. "We could wear the uniforms and probably get into the bars on Fourth Avenue and we could drink, and maybe we might even meet some older women or something." So, we went down. Six of us went down. Two of us were turned away, me and Jimmy Delaney, and the Sergeant said, "You boys are only sixteen." "Well, we're going to be seventeen, you know, in a couple of weeks." The rest of them were seventeen, so, they went in the Marine Reserve. They said, "Come back next month." Okay, so, we come back next month, me and Jimmy. We're going to join up and we walk into the armory and we don't see any Marines. … We're walking around, looking around, and saw a Navy chief, old--he was probably thirty. This old Navy chief came over and said, "Can I help you boys?" "Yes, sir, we're here to join the Marines." He said, "Well, why would you want to do something like that?" [laughter] and we told him whatever BS we thought he might want to hear, you know, "Oh, we want to serve our country," and blah, blah, blah. … He told us what Marines did for a living and how they lived and how they never got to see any girls and they never had any fun. They slept out in the woods and they had mosquito bites over them all the

time and bugs were in their boots, and he says, "Now, in the Navy…" [laughter] and he went on to explain the wonders of the Navy, that we always had three square meals a day, we'd have a place to sleep and, when we came in to port, everybody was waiting for us. He knew these seventeen-year-old kids, what they had on their mind--they were chasing girls and they, … you know, wanted to go be able to drink beer. We joined the Navy. [laughter] That was in, well, for me, November 1949. About seven or eight months later, the war broke in Korea. [Editor's Note: The Korean War began with the North Korean invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950.] Within, I'd probably say ninety days, the other four guys were gone. They had just activated them, put them in. Two of them did guard duty, … one down at Quantico somewhere and the other one up in Rhode Island. The other two went immediately to Korea. One came back and he was a basket case. … He wore his old Marine overcoat. The kid, he was only, what? wasn't even nineteen or eighteen. He got wounded, he was traumatic [suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder], and, "Wow." A year later, they caught up with me. They activated me because I had moved from Brooklyn to New Jersey. I finished high school, went over to New Jersey. There was some sort of mix-up. I said I wanted a transfer, you know, "I'm moving," and the officer said, "Don't worry about it." He didn't worry about it, I didn't either, but, then, they said, "You haven't been attending meetings, you know. We'll give you ninety days to get your papers in order and come down. You're going active." So, they pulled me in the Navy just like a regular Navy [enlistee] and went to regular Navy boot camp, … but I was in Reserve. I had joined, as I said, when I was seventeen and they had an enlistment thing called a "minority cruise." If you joined when you were seventeen, you got out on your twenty-first birthday. Otherwise, you went in for four years, no matter what your age was. So, I turned nineteen in boot camp and I was in various training, boot camp, and then, airmen's aviation, Navy Aviation basic, and then, aerographer's school, and then, a ship assignment.
… I'd just turned twenty … when we hit Korea.

SI: When you were in high school and nearing the end, before you decided to join the Reserves, where did you see your life going? What kind of career did you see for yourself?

TM: … By that time, I had developed this [issue]. I would say the family was having trouble and my only goal was to get out of the family. There was a lot of troubles and dysfunction, I guess we'd call it today, and I had decided that, as soon as I could, I was going to leave. … I told them, "When I finish high school, I'm leaving." Now, for me to leave, I figured, "Well, I'll just go in the Navy," and that was as far as it went. I had no guidance. I didn't ask for guidance. I thought I was self reliant--really, I was arrogant. But, I thought, "Who would have me?" that kind of thing. … College was out of the question, you know. The world I grew up in, rich people went to college and sissies went to college--no offense meant. I've learned since. [laughter] I tried, I tried later, to become a "sissy" myself, but there was no career path-ing in anybody's mind, especially in mine. It was just, "I'll probably wind up in the Navy and we'll see what happens." … You know, I wasn't very much looking forward to [a career]. I had no career plans, you know, maybe get a job with the city or some, you know, inane thing like that.

SI: How did you wind up in New Jersey before you went into the Navy?

TM: My older sister, Kay, had married and her husband was from the neighborhood and they called him "The German." I don't know why. [laughter] You know how they are--he was more

American than the so-called Irishmen that were calling him German, but they moved to New Jersey. So, I visited her a lot, just to get away from the family, and she was very sympathetic. … So, when I finished high school, I told them. They were probably my closest [relatives] then, because, by then, I had become alienated with my older brother. He developed a drinking problem, and so, he was part of the problem. … So, my focus now went over to my sister and her husband, and I told them, … "I finish school, I'm going to join the Navy," and my brother-in-law, who had been in World War II in the Air Force, said, "You know, if you're joining the Navy to get away from the house, you're making a mistake." He said, "Why don't you come live with us, you know, and settle down?" and so, I did. That's how I wound up in New Jersey. I was invited over, but I spent all my time going back to Brooklyn, didn't know too many people, got a job in New Jersey and, within that year, I was activated. That's how I wound up in New Jersey.

SI: Where in New Jersey?

TM: In Garwood, which is between Westfield and Cranford, a little industrial town. The only thing it was known for at that time was that … Alcoa had an aluminum plant there. Now, most of the people from town worked there. So, that was that. My brother-in-law had a business, a trucking business, in New York. So, he commuted, you know. I don't know why, how they wound up in Garwood, but that's how I wound up in Garwood. … Then, after the service, I naturally went back to Garwood, and then, within a year, I was married. So, then, I was implanted by then. Now, I'm a Jersey boy. I'm from Garwood and I got a job at the New Jersey Bell Telephone, so, … you know, I'm planted. [laughter]

ML: How was your training experience in the military?

TM: I liked it, I really liked it. … As I explained, you know, I was running away from the family, I was running away from Brooklyn and, now, I had a strong distaste for anybody from Brooklyn now. I had completely reversed myself--my loyalties, you know, blood brothers and, you know, all that stuff. I just turned against everything about that. So, I liked the fact that nobody knew me, that there were no connections about the family and that sort of trouble and about me. I had trouble with social problems growing up. I was always getting in fights. I don't know why, probably my mouth, but the trouble was, I was losing the fights all the time, but, anyway, in the Navy, I sort of found a home, as they say, and I enjoyed it. My friends were not from New York. My friends were from Pennsylvania, at the time, and the training was wintertime. It was very cold; tell a funny story, if we're ready for a funny story.

SI: Sure.

LC: Yes.

TM: Because most of the things that happened--oh, first of all, I've got to tell you about my chief. This is a funny story, for me, not for him. [laughter] Our chief in boot camp, his name was Spangenburg. He came from New York City--I mean the city, Manhattan. [Before] World War II, he had joined the Navy when it was part of the China Fleet and he was … in the gunboats, you know, in China. … When World War II came, he wound up, … they made him an officer and they gave him a destroyer. So, he was a captain of a destroyer, all through the

Pacific, but, when the Korean War broke out, they activated him again. Now, he's probably, I don't know, I'll guess sixty, but they restored him as a chief, not as an officer, as a chief. … They sent him down to Bainbridge to be, … you know, in charge of training. … He was a tough, tough old German. He came in one day and he was furious and he took it out on us, and he had the nerve to tell us, which I was shocked [at]. He was upset. He says, "I'm very upset and I'm taking it out on you people." [laughter] He says, "There was a little," and I'll leave out the curses, "a little *shite* of … an ensign inspecting me this morning, … me and me boys, and he made me pull up my pants to show him my socks, that I had clean socks." He says, "If he were on my ship, I'd have seen that he went overboard that night." [laughter] … He was so insulted that this little boy made him show him his socks, and we thought, "Don't laugh, don't laugh, guys, don't laugh." [laughter] The other funny story, we had, what was his name? oh, jeez, I've got to remember his name. Well, it'll come to me, a little Jewish boy, … again, from Manhattan. He was the comedian of the group, a real city kid, played the, what do you call that? [Mr. Madden imitates an instrument.]

LC: Clarinet?

ML: Yes, thank you. Well, he was our comedian--Sheldon was his name. So, ten o'clock comes and we're up on the second floor, the second deck, they called it, of this barracks in Bainbridge. The lights go out. There's a couple of guys standing awake for fire watch. We're just about five minutes gone by. People are settling down, we're falling asleep--and, oh, boy, his name almost came to me--he says, out of the dark, "Harry, you coming over tonight?" and we all start giggling, because we know, you know, there's no problem. He was doing this routine. Well, the trouble was that there was an officer just coming up the stairs and he heard, "Harry, you coming over tonight?" The officer went nuts, he went nuts. All the lights went on, everybody's up, "Everybody named Harry onto the quarter deck," and, luckily, there was more than one Harry. … So, they all show up, "We were all asleep, sir. We don't know." You know, nobody knows nothing, you know, didn't hear. "Fire watch, did you hear something?" Well, they had to say yes. "Well, yes, we…" you know, they had to confirm it, because, then, he'd really [fixate on them]. He knew he could focus on those two. Well, he was so upset, he made us all get dressed. Now, it's about ten-thirty and [we] go up on the drill field, in the middle of winter, cold, cold, cold, and do the manual of arms, you know, [Mr. Madden imitates marching], over and over and over and over again. Our feet are getting cold. My body's warm because of the exercise, but it was cold. So, we could see he was weakening. He was getting cold, you know. "We'll outlast this little guy, this officer. We're going to outlast him." Just about when we say, "Well, one more time and we're out of here, we're going back to bed," then, in the middle of it all, out in the drill field, Sheldon cries out, "Harry, I can't stand this anymore." [laughter] Oh, the officer goes--he lights up again. "Ah," he's running around, "I know it's in this group. Who are you guys? Separate. Oh," dah-dah-dah. "Sheldon, shut your mouth, shut your mouth. We're going to come after you if you do it again." [laughter] So, we did another half-hour. Finally, he let us go back and that was the end of our little adventure, misadventure. [laughter] Boot camp, that finished boot camp. Then, we were assigned. I was sent to aviation, which meant another basic training down in Jacksonville, [Florida].

SI: Boot camp was in Bainbridge.

TM: Bainbridge, right, and that's when all the assignments [were made]. So, I went down to Jacksonville for further training and picked up some new friends. Now, these guys are from the South, and so that, now, I became a Southerner. … So, I was three months down there. I loved the fine weather and the training was excellent. You know, it was interesting. I started to get an interest in, "You know, well, maybe, what will I do?" you know. … Before I went, during that year, I worked in a machine shop, so, I was interested in being a machinist, only because that's what I got a job doing. I had no real interest in anything they had to offer, you know, ordnanceman or an aviation mechanic or a photographer and any of that stuff. I started looking at, you know, "Where are the schools, the training schools?" and I saw Lakehurst [Naval Air Station, New Jersey] and I had a girlfriend by that time from Staten Island. So, I decided I wanted to be an aerographer or a parachute rigger, because those schools were in Lakehurst, and I got [into aerography] because the two other fellows that I teamed up, they wanted to get into photography. … It was a priority thing. … The higher you were, this class was three hundred-and-some-odd people in it and they went by the highest grade picked what he wanted to do and he was given it, until … those slots were full. So, you come all the way down. Now, if you came in at a certain level and you wanted to be a photographer, but the lowest billets were filled, well, then, you were put at the bottom. So, these guys were studying hard and I was their mentor, you know. I would have the book and I would be asking the questions. … So, I learned all the answers, because I was, like, helping them, you know, all school type stuff, you know, "An F4F is a fighter plane. Well, what does the 'F' and the '4' and the 'F' stand for?" that kind of stuff, you know, knowing all the designations. So, I had all the answers. I think I came in thirteenth out of three hundred-and-some-odd, because I was helping those guys. So, then, I went in and I said, "Well, I want to be an aerographer." He said, "Sure," because there's thirteen slots, you know, unless everybody ahead of me wants to be an aerographer, which I doubt. [laughter] You know, who wants to be a weatherman, you know? But, my two friends missed out. Now, I know they wound up being ordnancemen, which means they're loading the planes with ordnance. … Then, they sent me to Lakehurst. Well, that, I loved, and we had barracks. We were using the old Officer Candidate School training barracks. There was four of us in a room. That was good. My car was parked right outside the window, I was going home or to Staten Island to see my girlfriend--life was good. That class had thirty-six in it; I came in thirty-second. [laughter] I had a wonderful summer, though. … I was either up in Staten Island or I was over at Point Pleasant, (and out of uniform?), [laughter] and then, things started to get serious. We finished there. …

SI: Before we move on, what did the training consist of? What kind of things would you do?

TM: It was all about weather observation, drawing weather maps, which is, you know, I don't know that you even see them anymore. … They used to have each city, you got a code for the city, you know, an abbreviation, and then, … there was a circle and there would be little [indications]. The circle meant the sky and, … if it was reported that there was half cloud cover, you blackened half of it, the circle. If it was overcast, you blackened it completely. If it was full sun, you did nothing. … This all came in in code, so, I had to learn the code. It came all in in numbers. Then, the next code would be wind direction. Well, that's obviously a number, and then, the speed, well, it was in the Beaufort speed, so, you had to learn the Beaufort Scale. [Editor's Note: The Beaufort Scale is a measurement system for wind speeds observed mainly at sea.] … So, if it said, "The wind is from the northwest at fourteen knots," … you know, then,

you drew a little arrow out of the circle, and then, a number of flags on how fast the wind was blowing. You know, … a bar with three stripes on it, like that, she's blowing, you know, twenty, thirty miles an hour, that sort of thing. So, we were learning code, we were learning weather. Then, we had to learn how to observe the weather, because, every hour, you would have to go out and you'd take a temperature, wind direction and dew point, out of this little box we had, and then, you had to do a weather observation and fill out a log every hour. Basically, that was it; of course, learning how to fill up the helium, the balloons. We had two sizes of balloons. One was, oh, a little bit smaller than this table. The other one was as big as the room, and you had to learn how to launch them, because we'd set up the big balloon, and then, they'd tie a little, … looked like a milk carton, and there was a little light in it that you dipped in the water. It got a light, so that [you could see] if you sent it up at night. … Once we launched that, then, they had radar track it and it transmitted temperature, because we could get the wind from [its speed]. So, with that, we would get the winds aloft and we would track--well, radar would track it--and then, we would get a report on that, so that we now could make our report from wherever we were. … We did it every, I think, every six hours, you did a report, out to the world, and then, within a half an hour, you picked up all the reports that came in. … We would then sit down with this huge map and take the reports, one guy would read, he would do the decoding, you know, and the other guy would draw the map. You know, he'd tell you the location, maybe a ship, maybe an island or a city, and then, we would have that ready for the officer, the weather officer. The aerologist himself would come in and he would decide what the weather was going to be. [laughter] So, to answer your question, it was all technical. There was no more, you know, marching or no more of anything. It was Navy. There was one Coast Guard person and one Marine in that class. So, as I say, I was too busy with my own entertainment, but at least I didn't get thrown out of that school. From there, we had a choice. We could go to Norfolk for further transfer or we could go to San Diego for further transfer. Well, I thought about it--I had used up all my welcomes. You know, nobody wanted to do my laundry anymore, you know, back in Garwood, [laughter] I was kind of broke and I decided, "I've got to get out of town." So, I said, "I'll go to San Diego for further transfer," knowing full well that, really, the Pacific Fleet was at war and the Atlantic Fleet was not. … I went anyway, because I wanted to go to California, you know, simple, selfish stuff, you know. I wasn't there to get in the war. I just [said to myself], "Get out of town." …

LC: Your girlfriend was there at the time.

TM: Oh, yes, yes. I was crazy about her. I wound up marrying her when I got out, yes.

LC: You said that you moved to Lakehurst to be closer, but, then, you moved to California.

TM: Oh, yes. Well, she wasn't going to see me in Norfolk, either. [laughter] … Well, we had a deal, you know, "We'll keep in touch, but, you know, if you want to go out, then, you can go out," … but, after, when I got out, I did say I was thinking of, you know, staying in. She said, "That's fine. You can stay in all you want, but I'm not waiting anymore." I said, "Oh, I'd better think this over." [laughter] So, then, … off we were in San Diego, for further transfer. That means we were at the naval air station in San Diego, just … waiting for assignments, and an aircraft carrier come in one Sunday morning. We had a sadistic chief there who wanted to trick everybody. He did not like aerographers--he couldn't even say the word [laughter]--and so, he

would try to mislead us. He says, "They're looking for some weathermen." We knew he couldn't say aerographer, "They're looking for some weathermen," and we're thinking, "Well, there's no weathermen here," you know, as far as he was concerned. "It's right here in California, Port Hueneme. It's a lovely place. You'll be stationed in California. You don't have to worry about the war, you know." So, we smelled a rat. I said, "The only thing I know about Port Hueneme is that that's where they teach underwater demolition. Now, why would they want a weatherman there? perhaps to go in early, before an invasion, to report the sea and the wave conditions for a landing, even before the UDT guys get there to blow up the stuff that's there." [Editor's Note: Underwater Demolitions Teams (UDTs) were the predecessors to the US Navy SEALs.] I said, … "I don't think that's going to be a good idea." Then, he would say, "Oh, the Midway is in, you know. They're looking for guys on the Midway," thinking that it's an aircraft carrier. No, you're going to Midway Island, you know, and that was a fear, "Don't go to the islands." So, he was off one weekend and a request came in from somebody else. The *Oriskany* had come in. It had done a cruise from the Atlantic and … it couldn't fit through the Panama Canal, so, it went all the way around South America, did a wonderful cruise. Then, I got on after it did all that. We got on at San Diego, on a Sunday morning, without the chief, and he probably wouldn't have told us about it, but, anyway, we wound up shipping out and we were gone by Monday morning, before he even knew it. So, now, … I'm on my way to Hawaii, "Boy, oh, boy, this is fun." [laughter]

SI: In San Diego, you were just waiting around for another assignment.

TM: Right, right. We didn't even work in--well, … yes, we did get shifts, watches, they called them, watches up in the air station, at the aerology office, but they had their own crew there. They didn't really want us. If we went up there, they probably had us doing, you know, cleaning the head or something like that, or sweeping the seaway, what they call where the seaplanes come in. It's a huge, huge place and they give you a broom and said, "Sweep it, sweep from the hangar out to the water." That's going to take a long time. [laughter] … So, then, now, I'm on my ship.

LC: When you were in San Diego, you were in Task Force 77.

TM: Yes.

LC: What did that entail? Was that when you were in California?

TM: We became part of Task Force 77 when we hit Japan. Up until then, it was that the ship was in transfer from the Atlantic Fleet to the Pacific Fleet. From San Diego, we actually didn't leave San Diego to go to Hawaii. We left San Diego and went to San Francisco, to Alameda, which was a naval air station there, and we picked up the squadrons. The squadrons on an aircraft carrier are a separate entity. You have the ship's company, and then, you have the squadrons. … Of course, the captain is in charge of everybody, but there was one guy in charge of the squadrons. They only, like, sort of rent space on the ship. They have a whole unique chain of command. Now, … if you're in Navy Air and you're enlisted, if you're not a petty officer yet, … your stripes, your little stripes, are green, which means you're Air, but there are certain ship's company that wear green stripes, the weathermen and the photographers … and air

traffic control. That was the group that we were in. We were part of aviation operations. We're ship's company, we're not part of the squadron, and we're a very small, small division, really, of just that small group, like, the weathermen, they're maybe ten or twelve of us, the photographers, maybe ten or twelve, the traffic control, ten or twelve. So, it was a very small group and none of us really had anything to do with the others. So, what was the point of that?

SI: You went up to Alameda.

TM: Oh, yes, the distinction between the squadrons and the ship's company. So, we took on the squadrons, and then, we operated, you know, having them qualify, the flight deck landings and all that stuff. You know, I guess we spent maybe a couple of weeks doing that, … outside of San Francisco, and then, we went to Hawaii, and then, we all settled down and went out to Japan, where we then … replaced one of the carriers in Task Force 77.

SI: First, let us talk about the squadron. Were they green? Were they just out of flight school? Were they veterans?

TM: They hadn't been to Korea, but I don't know what their experience level was. I'm sure they had a mix of, you know, new ensigns, new pilots. Now, there were different squadrons, as you can see in the picture I provided. We had jets, a squadron of jets, jet fighters, we had a small squadron of reconnaissance jets, and then, we had conventional aircraft, prop aircraft. We had a squadron of the dive-bombers. They called them something else. They used to call them "Spads" [the Douglas A-1 Skyraider] in the Vietnam [War]. They were really heavy-duty dive-bombers, and then, we had the fighters, the gullwing fighters. They were fighter-bombers, both. They were the Corsairs. So, we had the Corsairs. The Skyraiders is what they called [the dive-bombers]. They were props, and so, we had the conventionals and the jets, two different squadrons. So, we were mixing it all up. That's how the squadrons were set up.

SI: I saw in the pictures that they were both Marine and Navy.

TM: No.

SI: No?

TM: No.

SI: I forgot that this photograph is from a different era.

TM: No, these are all …

SI: The one on the end says Marine. This one is Navy.

TM: Oh, they must have borrowed it. [laughter]

SI: However, when you were on the ship, they were all Navy fliers.

TM: Oh, yes. …

SI: What about your division and, specifically, the aerographers? Were they, like you, right out of school? Were there some World War II retreads?

TM: … I'll start with [the] top. The officer was a lieutenant commander from World War II. He had started out as an enlisted man aerographer and had worked his way up to commander, well, lieutenant commander, and that was about as far as he was going to go. He had been reactivated. So, he was the forecaster, the aerologist. Then, there was a chief. He had just six years in the Navy. He was a little, blond-haired kid, looked like he didn't have to shave, hard as nails, though--not a fighter, but hard in a, you know, very strong-willed [sense]. He was the chief. He was a good man. Then, we had a second class aerographer's mate. He probably had eight or ten years. He was a problem. … He had a drinking problem. So, whenever he left the ship, he got in trouble and he was no support whatsoever. So, that was [a problem], and no names. [laughter] He was basically useless. The chief was excellent, the second class was useless, and then, the rest of us, there were three guys who had got on the ship in New York and had gone around. So, now, they were third class petty officers, lording it over the three of us that had come onboard [in San Diego]. So, there were three airmen, and then, … two of the guys were third class petty officers, the guys that had gone around. There was two of them, then, there was the second class, then, the chief. So, there were three petty officers, and then, there were … three of us. That was the makeup of the crew, the aerographers. We were in a division called OA [AO?], Air Operations, and, like I say, that included the photographers and air controllers. We all were in the same compartment and we all knew each other. We were all friendly. You know, that's how I got the picture. We would always get [photos], ask the photographers to dupe for us. There wasn't much we could do for them, except give them balloons, you know. [laughter] … Then, there was the air traffic controllers. They were serious. You know, they were directly involved in, you know, flight operations all the time, aircraft coming in, going out. That was our unit. That's what we were composed of, and our quarters were on the starboard side, amidships, just at the waterline, so that if there was a hole outside, a window, the window would be half water and half air. … We knew that because, … one time, a plane went over the side and crashed and it had depth charges and the depth charges went off; not depth charges. I guess they were. They went off anyway, as they sank, and we got a big boom, woke us up, you know, and so, we knew we were right near the waterline. [laughter] …

SI: When did that happen?

TM: Oh, that was when we were in Korea, when they were putting, you know, real bombs on the planes and real depth charges and everything was for real at that point. Like I say, … other than the pilots--if you ever saw the movie *The Bridges of [at] Toko-Ri*, that was done on our ship, yes. … The ship, after the first cruise, it came back and I didn't have enough time to go back on the second one. So, they left me in California to be discharged and the ship went back to Korea. I kept in touch with them, but, by that time, the truce had been declared. So, there was no fighting going on, and that's when they did the movie. It was a book written by [James] Michener and it was a very good story, but it was all done onboard. … My friend, Buddy, who had gone [back], my buddy Buddy, [laughter] that we kept in touch, … he was telling me all about the adventures of, you know, them doing all the shooting. … He did say it was worse the

second time, because they didn't have a real war to go [to], so, they had to go play they were at war, drills all the time, you know, blah, blah, blah. When we first arrived with the task force, we had--I forget what they called it, sunrise, sunset, what? We went to general quarters at sunrise and at sunset, every day. We were the only ship doing that. Then, we realized, or the Captain realized, that there's nobody out here. You know, there's no submarines, there's no bombers--you're waking the guys up for nothing, you know. So, after that, … the only time we went to general quarters after that was for real. You know, they had flight operations. They'd blow the bugle for air operations, get them going, dat, dat, dat. They only called general quarters twice, for real, … but we'll get into that later, or, if you want to talk about it now, that's okay, too.

SI: We can get into that later. You picked up the squadrons at Alameda, and then, you went to Hawaii, or did you go straight across to Japan?

TM: … No, we went to Hawaii. I don't know why, I guess some more training for the pilots, get them used to maybe a little more serious stuff, and we were there about two weeks. … Then, we went to Japan, Yokosuka. That was the base where the aircraft carriers operated out of, and I don't know where the battleships went. I never saw them. They went somewhere else, but the cruisers and the destroyers went there; I mean, the cruisers and the aircraft carriers went there. The destroyers went down to Sasebo, a little further south. I don't know where the battleships went. They might have been in Yokosuka. It'd make sense, because that was the biggest, the biggest base … that the Japanese Navy had, and so, we used it. So, from there, it was the routine. We would go out for thirty days. The routine was thirty days at sea, ten days back in port. Task Force 77 had four carriers, so, there was always one in port and there was always three on station. The task force was set up like a triangle; first of all, three aircraft carriers in the center; a battleship and a battleship, the *Missouri* and the *New Jersey*, sitting off our beams; further out, beyond that, cruisers, maybe four cruisers, boom, boom, boom, boom; beyond that, maybe ten or fifteen miles from the center, was a ring of destroyers. So, this thing took up probably about a circle, from one end to the other, probably twenty, maybe thirty miles, maybe. I don't really know, but … it took up a lot of space, and we operated in the Sea of Japan, which was on … the east coast of Korea. … Korea's like a peninsula, obviously. The west coast of Korea was taken care of by the British and the Australians. That was their turf. Our turf was, the American fleet was on the east coast and we just operated up and down, up and down, maybe twenty miles offshore, every day, air operations. … Every once in a while, maybe like once every three days, one of the battleships would disappear. It'd be gone for a day or so and they'd go close in shore and they'd bombard whatever they had to bombard. … When they were doing that at night, you could see them from twenty miles away. You know, you'd see the glare of the sixteen-inch guns firing on the horizon in the west. That was the operation. It was pretty much a daily routine.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about your daily activities and what the shifts were like, what you would do during a shift?

TM: Okay. … The way the watches were set up in the weather shack, there were three watches a day of eight hours. So, you had the day watch, from eight to four, the mid watch and the night watch--eight to four in the morning, then, four to midnight, and then, midnight to eight, and you rotated. So, whatever watch you were on, you were going to the next one that was behind you,

earlier. So, I've got to get this straight. [laughter] Anyway, the way it worked out, there was a point where you were coming off, you had a day watch, eight to four, and then, you had to come back on at midnight. That's right, you had to come on at midnight. So, you've got to sleep in-between four to midnight. Well, you can't do that on a ship. I tried it for a few weeks, and then, I realized, can't do it. You know, there's too much going on. You're trying to sleep, the guys are getting off from, you know, their watches, they're watching the movies, they're doing this [or that]. So, what I wound up doing, every third day, I would stay up twenty-four hours. So, you'd get up at eight o'clock, work until four, write letters, go to movies, blah, blah, blah, get something to eat, your meals, and then, go on watch. … By the time eight o'clock came the next morning, your eyes were like sandpaper, "Ugh." [laughter] Then, you could sleep. So, that was the routine. … Well, I wouldn't call it a daily routine, but a three-day routine. That's what we did. There was always the flight operations, flight deck operations. You know, we'd call them, "the tourists," maybe the guys from the engine room, … they would come up and they'd all gather around the island [the control tower] and they would watch, you know, the excitement of the planes coming in, or maybe there'd be a crash they could see or something, something exciting. … That was, like, the fun, excitement part. The rest of it was routine, writing letters, going to a movie. That was about it, and then, the ten days in port, … you got off two days and the third day, you were on the ship. You had a watch on the ship, and then, once in the ten days, you were given a seventy-two-hour pass, which meant you'd go overnight somewhere, but you still had to be off the streets at midnight. Usually, you'd go up to Tokyo, was about an hour ride, and so, that was the routine there. Every day you got off, you got off at four, probably hit town about five--town was just right outside the gate--and then, you had to be back on the base by midnight. That was the routine. There wasn't much to do, did a lot of social drinking, you know. Every group had its own bar. I mean, you didn't dare go into a bar that was not an aviation bar. You'd better have some kind of wing on you, petty officer mark or green stripes. Otherwise, you were going to get in trouble. So, we had our little place, you know.

SI: That was just within the Navy. You would not go to a Marine or an Army bar.

TM: Oh, no, no, and we did have a company of Marines on the ship and that was another story, but [I] did touring, you know, went to Tokyo, and I would take day trips, sometimes, like, go to Kamakura by myself. Kamakura is, like, a town where they had this huge idol that had been built centuries ago, maybe a thousand years ago, [the Kotoku-in Buddsit shrine and Amida Buddha statue], and, you know, that sort of, like, touring. … I liked that, … along the lines of the library thing, you know, but that was few and far between, you know, those little adventures. Mostly, it was go up to Tokyo and try to party.

SI: I know, after World War II, an American zone was established, where servicemen did not really go beyond it. Was that still the case during the Korean War?

TM: No. … At first, when we landed, we were very fearful, you know, the new [guys], the kids. You know, … I had just turned twenty. Between Hawaii and Japan, I turned twenty. We pulled in. I knew [where] we were; you know, this is where the Japanese aircraft carriers came out, with all my childhood training. We could see the caves up on the hillside, where they went in, you know, "Oh, man, this is really [it], wow, wow. What are they going to do with you?" You know, I'm used to hitting Navy towns where, you know, it's dangerous near ports. So, I figured,

"When we go out, we've got to be careful," you know. I carried a little knife in the little watch pocket I had, you know. I don't know what I was going to do with that--scream or give it to them, you know, if they came after me, [laughter] but we went. I didn't get the first liberty. … I was gunning for that. The first liberty guys came back and they were raving about how wonderful it is, "Oh, … the people are so nice to us, the girls are so friendly, … the drinks are almost for free. Oh, it's great." I said, "Oh, good report." [laughter] So, after that, it was, like, the only incident all the time I was overseas where somebody off our ship got hurt in town--a guy got stabbed, and it turned out it was from another [sailor], a shipmate. The Japanese were very [respectful]. I mean, you could see a sailor, he'd be drunk and falling down and his wallet--you know, you carried your wallet here--his wallet would be showing. Nobody'd bother him. Japanese walk right by him. They wouldn't help him, but they wouldn't bother him, either. They were very, very gracious people. I got to really like the Japanese. Yes, it was amazing. They were good people. I made friends--I'll say friends, I literally mean friends--with one of the "B girls." … I guess this is not quite military, but she lived in Tokyo. She would commute. She says, "I can make more money in one night here, just being [a B girl], getting you guys to buy drinks and getting paid here, than I can working as a secretary up in Tokyo," and she would say, "I'm an honorable girl, you know. I'm not going to go to bed with you or anything else like that. We'll be friends. We'll dance. You just have to, you know, keep the boss happy," and I'd say, "That's no problem." The money rate was so bad there, good for us, that, I mean, I would spend as much as I could spend and still have money left over, you know, … with the Japanese currency. So, like, I befriended her and I would go see her and I said, "Look, I want to buy china. You mentioned the china." "Oh, okay, I'll go shopping with you," you know. … We would meet, you know, and we would go, and Noritake was the china that they were selling. It was good stuff. I wanted to buy a whole big case of it and send it to my girlfriend. She was really annoyed, because I didn't send it to her. I addressed it to her, but I sent it to my sister, just in case, you know, she wasn't there when I got back. [laughter] She didn't like that. So, she would do things like that, you know. She would sit in the background and they would quote me a price, you know, and I'm going, "That's no good," kind of try to get him down a little bit, and then, he'd come down a little bit. Then, she would step in, [Mr. Madden imitates their conversation in Japanese]. … I'd walk off with stuff half price and, you know, if I went, she would show me all the tourist [stuff]. So, it was, like, a friendship kind of thing, part business, because it had to be, you know, but she taught me all, you know, about her. She grew up with a boy who … became a *kamikaze* pilot, and so, I had all those little insights, you know, the Japanese side of World War II, you know. … She would tell me stories about how it was in Japan during the war, you know, and I'd say, "Oh, my God," you know. So, we were really, really good friends.

SI: You used the term "B girl." What does that stand for, "bar girl?"

TM: Yes, bar girl, yes. They dressed in a nice cocktail gown, nice gown. … Obviously, there was nobody that we knew there and the local Japanese women were not about to go into these bars with the American Navy, oh, God, no. They did have houses of ill repute all over the place, if, you know, that's what you were looking for, but, if you wanted to just drink and dance and all that stuff, you went to this bar and they were paid to be there. … When you walked in, they would come over and introduce themselves and bring you all in, say, "What would you like to drink? Would you buy me this?" and they always had watered down drinks, as you know, and I

don't know how they could keep drinking that stuff, but … it was company, you know. I'm sure a lot of--well, I'm not sure of anything [laughter]--but … that's what they did and I made friends with one, with this woman particularly, because, you know, I could see she wasn't out for the hustle or she wasn't out for that and I was really trying to be loyal to my girlfriend. So, that was my experience with them.

ML: Did you stay in contact with her?

TM: No, I didn't. I never had her address. She really didn't want anybody to know, up in Tokyo, … you know, she had a regular job down in Yokosuka. … They're very honorable people. … That really impressed me. They had, really, you know, most of the guys on the ship thinking that … they're prostitutes or whatever, and I said, "That's not what I'm seeing," you know. The men, even, there was a strange thing; in the bar that we hung out, the bartenders were all kids--by kids, I meant maybe sixteen, seventeen--or old men. There was a whole generation that I never saw. These were the guys that were old enough to be in the war. They were gone. If they weren't gone, they sure weren't hanging out in Yokosuka. That whole generation, it was like there was kids and there was all old people. There's … nothing in-between. I'm sure they were there. They were, I know they were there, but I sure didn't see them--saw them if you went to Tokyo, you know, but, usually, get used to looking at old people and young people. Nobody, really, maybe my age, you know--probably not, though, because they were the *kamikazes*, like this girl that, well, I almost remembered her name. Michiko, Michiko was her name. She was my age, twenty-ish, and so were her boyfriends at the time. … They betrothed them, you know. They said, "You're going to marry him." … Well, the one she was going to marry became a *kamikaze*, and so, he went out and did his thing.

SI: I would imagine there was still a lot of damage left over from the war.

TM: Oh, yes, yes. … I know I have a box of slides, where I did a lot of photography, because I hung around with the photographers and I was into that stuff. I would take pictures of [the damage]. There'd be a train--the only thing they didn't blow up was, like, an old train. … It could fit in this room and … you could see it'd been shot at, beat up, rusted. They did have the trains [fixed]. The trains were running. They had restored everything by that time, so that, like, they had, from '45 to '51, … six years of some recovery, but there was still some awful [effects]. I remember seeing it on the base, on the Navy base in Yokosuka, when they had these huge garbage disposals, dumpsters, down on the deck. … After every meal, guys would come out and just dump all their stuff in there and the Japanese that worked on the base, you could see them, the women would be getting up there. … There was still plenty of good food there and they would be getting bags and whatever and picking out what they could and take it home. I thought, "Wow," you know. So, I had a lot of empathy and sympathy--no, more empathy than sympathy--but for the people themselves, because I really admired the fact that, once their Emperor said, "The war's over," it's over, you know. That wouldn't have happened in old Ireland, you know. [laughter] So, that was a lesson for me.

SI: What had your view of the Japanese been before actually being in Japan?

TM: Oh, pure prejudice, yes, you know, the [view of the Japanese as] slant-eyed, sneaky, you know, sneak attack and all that stuff. Yes, I expected the worst when we went. … I'd been to Tijuana. I know what a bad town was like, and I expected the same thing here. Tijuana was much more dangerous than Yokosuka or Tokyo.

LC: I have been to Tijuana. I know what you are talking about. [laughter]

TM: Yes. You never went down there [alone], and we're men. We're boys, but we're big and strong, and we never, never went [alone], never separated, at least four guys together. …

SI: You explained the routine of the ship, but could you tell us a little more about what your duties were during your shift?

TM: … Yes. Well, I had my watch assignment, which was … the daily routine up in the aerology shack, which was, like I said, up high. We're right above the bridge. The bridge was where all the action was and we were right above it, where our unit was. During general quarters, … I don't know how it happened, most of the weathermen were sent down to the balloon shack, which was a large area in the starboard side of the ship, where they launched the balloons. For some reason or other, I was sent to flight deck repair. So, whenever they had to put on a helmet, I'd go down on the flight deck--a complete stranger. These guys had worked [together]. All the guys I was standing with were part of flight deck repair. They all knew each other. They were from the squadrons, basically, … probably the boatswains on the ship. That was my assignment. Nothing ever happened--well, things did happen. … The routine, as far as weather went, every hour, we did an observation, really routine thing. We went outside, checked the temperature and did a little spin off to get the dew point, measured the wind velocity and observed cloud cover, you know, and report, you know, "The sky is three-quarter overcast, low, medium, high clouds." … All that was coded. There were nine different types of low clouds, nine different clouds types of middle, nine different types of high. So, you picked out what it was, you know, and you reported it. What I did learn is, it changed every hour. It was amazing. You think, you know, "It's not changing," but, if you stop every hour and you look, you say, "Oh, wow, it wasn't like this last time." I can tell you a funny story about [that]. … I'm on the midnight to eight AM watch and, of course, I've been up, like, twenty hours already. We're doing our routine, you know. The ship was all blacked out. Now, by this time, we had learned in the bar that we hung out in, back in Japan, we had gotten records and we were learning how to Japanese dance and sing Japanese songs. … We'd have a little Japanese party at the bar with the girls, and so, we were all into this. We would play a little bit of American music to make us sad, you know, homesick music. We'd get rid of that, "Let's play the Japanese, real Japanese, music," that we had learned to dance to, and it was like country music, the Japanese version of what we would call country music, but we would do that just to stay awake, [plus], drink a lot of coffee. So, it's just getting close to dawn, it's still dark out, and the phone rings. Now, I was just ready to get up and the phone rings. I was just ready to get up to go out and do my next observation, which meant … the lights went out when you opened up the door. You stood out there for five or ten minutes in freezing cold to get used … to the dark, the night vision. You couldn't put on any light--do your observation, think [what] the cloud [cover might be], do whatever you can do, come in, fill out the log. I'm just about ready to go out to do my [observation], like, it's five minutes of the hour, maybe ten minutes of the hour, and the phone rings. I pick up the phone,

you know, "Aerology." "This is … Lieutenant So-and-So. Give me a weather ob. What's the weather?" I pull the log and I read what the weather was fifty minutes ago, back there, twenty miles back, and he says, "Are you on this 'F'-ing ship?" "Why, yes, sir." He says, "Well, I'm on the flight deck and I've got to launch these planes now and it's raining like an SOB on this thing. I want to know, can I launch these ships?" He says, "What's your name?" and I tell him my name. He says, "What's your rank?" and I says, "I'm a third class petty officer." He says, "Well, if you don't give me a proper weather observation and tell me when this rain is going to stop, you're going to be a goddamn seaman recruit before morning, before the sun comes up." "I'll get right back to you, sir. I'll call the officer." I dial up the officer, you know, our commander, "What?" [Mr. Madden imitates an upset voice], "He wants to know the weather. I don't know." [laughter] So, he took over and they didn't take my little stripe away from me, but that was a lesson. We had a bad reputation on the ship for forecasting--well, the whole [aerology network]. … Each carrier had this crew of aerologists, you know. We all sent up three balloons and we did all the same stuff. The problem was that the weather comes from the west. Now, the west of us is North Korea, and beyond that is China and Russia. They're giving out bum dope and we don't know. We can't make [accurate maps]. There was a big blank on our officer's map of what was going [on]. Well, there wasn't a blank--they were reporting stuff, but, like, in the middle of winter, they're reporting dust devils, you know. …

SI: Really?

TM: Useless information. So, we had to depend on pilot reports, you know, "We're over Wonsan. The weather here is," dat, dat, dat, and we would finally get that, but it'd be an hour, maybe more, late. The other problem was that the ship was here and the officer had to forecast for where the ship was going to be in the next twenty-four hours. … Sometimes, the ship would be here or maybe it would turn around and it went here, and maybe he was right, but we weren't where the weather was that he forecasted. So, we had, like, a twenty percent accuracy rate, which was [not good]. … We were called up once, woke up out of a sleep. It was, like, midnight. We're all called up, "Everybody in aerology, up to the weather shack," and we all go up there. … The officer, he had a terrible temper. He's fuming and he's raving. … "I just had my butt chewed out by the captain of this ship," and I'm thinking, "So what?" [laughter] I'm ignoring him, you know, making sure I don't have eye contact, you know--stand at attention, but don't look at him. … He said, "The Captain said that my information was useless, that we, that I and my crew, were the worst, the most useless men on this ship," and he said, "and that included the band." Well, now, he's got my attention. I know the band--they're doing drugs before drugs were known. [laughter] … All they ever did was come up when we had to, you know, do transfers of ammunition and re-supply and they'd [Mr. Madden imitates the band playing music] and entertain, you know, the guys on the destroyer, who would come up in, you know, girlie clothes and dance hulas, you know, for the entertainment of the carrier. So, I knew that we really were [not highly regarded]. I felt offended by that, but I didn't say anything to him, because, you know, but, anyway, that was where we stood with [the Captain] and it was a sad state of affairs. Nowadays, I'm sure it's different. You know, they get [information from] weather satellites. They know everything. … So, the whole thing was useless. [laughter]

SI: In these false reports that you were getting from China, Russia and North Korea, were they just broadcasting this false information or were they sending it in code?

TM: Oh, yes. No, no, … everything was coded. There's a whole process there. … Like, our information, we had a designation. So, the report would come out every six hours. … The radiomen would pick it up. … All they were getting was numbers, in five-digit, I think it was five-digit, sequences, 5-5-5-5-5, and it would be coded. That whole code would be everything that was on your map in your area, and then, … the radiomen would get it. Then, they would send it up, copy to us, and then, we would translate it and convert it into a map. Did I answer your question? …

SI: They were getting these codes from …

TM: Oh, their reports, yes, yes. It was nothing we could use, and I really don't remember the details of what it was, but I know that … we couldn't make sense of what it was. Whether they were just taking that information and garbling it, you know, we didn't know. … We figured they probably didn't know how to forecast weather anyway, but that was part of our prejudice.

SI: You spoke a little bit before the tape began about crashes and the fact that there were so many other problems, besides the enemy, that could affect the ship. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

TM: As far as I was concerned, our enemy was flight deck accidents and weather. Flight deck accidents happened on a regular basis. It's difficult, you know, [under the] weather conditions. We had the infamous one, where the plane came in and it was a dive-bomber, had a hung bomb and he was scared and he hit hard and the bomb let loose, tumbled and blew up, right on the flight deck. That was bad. It blew a hole bigger than this table right through the deck, killed three men working below on the jet engines immediately. The pilot actually survived. … He was rescued. When it blew up--that was the gullwing plane, a Corsair, blew up--it blew out that side of the wing and she tipped, like that. … Then, from the fire, or something or other, his guns started to fire and they were aiming right up at "the island" and we had all "the tourists" up there. We called them "the tourists," the guys from, you know, the rest of the ship [who had] come up to watch operations. Well, they were getting wounded from ricochets, you know, bouncing back. … I was on watch and I had been watching this guy go around. … It was interesting. "Oh, my, what's he going to do?" you know, never thinking. You know, we could tell he was nervous. … After he did the second go around, I'm thinking, "Wow." Well, I had just gone down to make a report. We did our report, then, we brought a copy over to the bridge, and just as I, you know, come over, he landed. I didn't see him link, … I saw him land, and then, the big boom, the big flash. … I'm looking and I'm watching, "Oh, wow, what's going on?" and I'm hearing, "Ping, ping, ping," and I'm just hearing it, I'm not thinking anything. … An officer came out of the bridge and he said, "Sailor, you're under fire. Take cover." I took a swan dive into, you know, the nearest hatch and didn't come out again. [laughter] That was when … one of my shipmates, the guy, Tommy, Tommy McGraw. He was the duty photographer, and I've been talking to guys since, you know, young guys that I met that have been in the Navy. They said, "Oh, yes, we see that, that film. We see that all the time now in Navy training, of the plane landing, and then, the bomb dropping and tumbling, and the last shot, she's like this." The next picture is a flash, and Tommy was in a catwalk and he had the camera right up at the flight deck, big box, you know, big Navy type camera. … The camera survived, but a little piece of shrapnel

went right over the top of the camera and caught Tommy. So, he died immediately. One of the Marines got blown right off the ship. He lost his arm. There were about eight fatalities, I think, in all. The hangar deck filled with jet fuel. Luckily, it didn't go off. They started doing all kinds of evasive actions, trying to real hard turn the ship to get that stuff [to spill out]--no smoking, no this, no that, even though there was a fire up on the deck. They got that under control pretty quick. Of course, we were out of business there. We had to pull back and go right back to port and fix the hole. Nobody's taking off after that. That was the big one. [Editor's Note: This incident took place in early March 1953.] … We did have--now, this ties in with [the Cold War]--there was a situation where … the task force was extending itself. … For some reason or other, there was a lot of stuff going on on the beach, and so, we kept going north, … north, north, for flight operations. … We wound up--a little lesson in geography. … If you're on the east coast of Korea and you're in the water and you keep going north, eventually, you're going to hit Vladivostok. Well, we got close enough, seventy-five miles from Vladivostok, with this task force that takes up twenty miles, and we scared the Russians, I guess. I don't know whether it was the Russians or the Chinese, but radar sent up that, "The whole screen up north has turned white. Enemy aircraft, got to be enemy aircraft." Well, we sent up--we, the ship, the task force--sent up their combat air patrols, which is the planes that take off and they just fly over the whole thing in case, just in case. So, they flew off. I think there was one CAP, combat air patrol. One CAP went over to meet [the enemy], and those guys kind of laid back and they sent in, like, their equivalent of a CAP, so, these two groups tangled. They had a "shoot 'em up" and I'm thinking, "What a place to be for World War III to start." [laughter] They had a big shoot 'em up. … We shot down, I believe, three of theirs. They tried to pull the pilots out, to find out, "Were they Chinese or were they Russians?" One of our planes--nothing went down, nobody got killed--but one was damaged, so much so that he lost controls. … I'm not quite sure of the details of why he had to come in, but I remember, and this, actually, they showed this in that movie, *The Bridges* [*at Toko-Ri*], a similar scene. Guy came in, he was coming back to the ship and he was damaged. … Over the loudspeaker, there's a loudspeaker up … that commands the whole flight deck, and I think it was the Captain or somebody up there, asked the flight deck officer, "What's the maximum speed you can take an aircraft coming in at?" … Whatever his answer was, I don't know, like, maybe he said, "Well, could probably bring him in at 110 [knots]," he [the Captain] said, "Well, prepare to take one coming in at 140 [knots], because he can't go any slower." Well, they set up, they put up, the barriers, you know, these big screens, nets. They put up all that stuff and, now, all the planes are up forward, in front of that, and then, right behind the nets, they put a row of, like, little carts, … really heavy vehicles, that they were going to use to block. If he went through the nets, if he didn't catch the arresting gear, he was going to hit that before he hit anything else, you know, the planes beyond. … He came in and he tore right through. He didn't catch the land gear, tore through everything and he went right on, banged up against the thing and that was that, you know. … That was an adventure. [Editor's Note: This incident took place on November 18, 1952. The US Navy shot down two MiG-15s and damaged two others.] They did have accidents where, particularly the gullwing planes, the Corsairs, when they come in, if they were going too fast, they tended not to land. They tended to float, like that, and, if they weren't quite right, they could float right over the nets. … Now, they're going to land--they're just going to flatten right on to another aircraft, and that happened once or twice. There was a few guys got killed, … really, by accident. One, a jet came in--and the jets, the guns are right up in the [front], right in the point of the plane--and he hit and he hit hard and there was one shell left. … That shell went off and it just happened to catch a kid who was going across the forward

part of the flight deck, hit him, killed him. So, that's the kind of stuff that the flight deck was looking at. For us, it was the photographers. Three of our photographers--one got killed, Tommy McGraw--the other two got hit by a broken arresting gear. The wire, the cable that holds them, it snapped and it caught this one guy, again, with the camera. Well, the arresting gear hit the camera, pushed the camera into his face. He came back about six months later from Japan--he didn't look like what he used to look like. He had all that, you know, what do you call it? surgery, plastic surgery. He just didn't look like [himself]. … We didn't recognize him, and the other guy had the same problem. Then, there was a helicopter, came in, and they didn't want to send [him away]. It was bad winds from every direction. They said we shouldn't. Usually, you put a helicopter up and, as you were going this way, the helicopter hung around here, in case anything went wrong. [If] a plane went over the side or if something went wrong, they would be there immediately to rescue the pilot or the crew of whatever happened, man overboard. We had a man overboard, too. That was another [time]. That's a weather situation. This was not on our ship; it was on one of the other carriers. The helicopter tried to come in and they have a crew of three guys standing [on the deck], you know, directing them, making a big circle, telling them, "Come on down," you know, and give directions, "This way. That way." Well, the wind caught, he flipped over and the blades hit each one of them, boom, boom, boom. … So, those kind of things were happening. The other carrier, with the helicopter, they had really bad accidents, you know, those kinds of accidents. We were pretty good, pretty safe. Weather, of course, we hit that heavy storm. We were okay. We didn't lose anybody overboard. The guy we lost overboard was [on] a perfectly calm night. It was just at dawn--don't know why. One of the jobs on the carrier, not ours, but part of the ship's company, … they call them a "fantail watch." He sits right in the back and his job is to watch the wake, in case a body goes by, a person. … Sure enough, this guy spotted a body go by, pulled it up. This is mid-winter--the guy shouldn't last five minutes. They got a helicopter, boom, up in the air--there was no flight operations going on at the time--up in the air, "Phew," dropped him in, picked him up, got him, brought him back on the ship. … Other than exposure, you know, he survived. During this heavy storm, … you know, it's amazing, I just don't remember any of the weather report that day. I can't tell you. It's like Pearl Harbor Day--I just don't remember. I guess it was what was ever going on. I don't remember what the wind was blowing. I don't remember. I remember the weather outside, but I don't remember any of the details of the report, whether it was a hurricane or a severe storm or what it was, but it lasted most of two days and our ship was taking water. Now, the flight deck, the top of that flight deck, is ninety feet above sea level and we were taking water over the bow, which meant that we were probably in … at least fifty-foot waves, where the ship was sinking and [water was] just coming over. Planes were getting washed overboard. We were okay. We didn't lose any people. We lost planes, but we didn't [lose men], and the ship was, I never learned [until later], … designed to be able to do this. In the middle, it had expansion plates.

SI: To bend in the middle.

TM: Because the bow would be going down and so would the stern. … So, it could do this. Otherwise, it would, I guess, nose dive. … Where I was, up on watch, it was, like, a room about this size. The steel plates, the walls, were going like [this], twisting like this, because we were right in that area where [the plates were]. "This is bad. This is not normal, you know. I don't really feel comfortable here." [laughter] The destroyers that we had, … maybe they were cruisers, didn't see them for two days. What I would see--like, this is the waterline--every once

in a while, I'd see, like, a mast come up, and then, disappear, a mast. One destroyer reported that the bow had cracked, and that they have the guns forward, two guns like this, and then, just forward of the guns, the bow sits. It had cracked open, right across the deck, and the stanchion underneath, every time it hit a wave, … if the wave pushed up, the bow would go up and this thing wouldn't go up with it. It started to separate, and then, when the bow came down, it would crash through it. So, it … kept getting punched and they were going to lose it. … This destroyer had already lost the weather bridge and all that stuff. So, somebody, I guess the Admiral or somebody, decided, "We've got to turn around. We can't keep going north. … Again, we're getting too close to, you know, up north," and that was a big decision. … [In] a storm like that, you always head into the wind--you don't turn parallel, because you're going to lose it. Well, they tried to turn everybody all at once, you know, three aircraft carriers, two battleships, cruisers. Now, get them all to turn, you know, that's no problem. … We do that all the time, but … they kind of said, "Just turn, and, you know, once we go the other way, we'll talk about how we're going to straighten ourselves out," or something. I wasn't privy to that information or conversation, but … the small ships, the destroyers, lost a lot of guys that way. So, that's why I talk about the weather [being a major problem]. A guy went overboard--you know, … I don't know why that was. So, for us, it was no problem. Oh, there was one incident. I'm up doing my sunning. [laughter] It was on the ship, just on the other side, not where the "34" is, but on the other side, looking this way (east). Right about where this island is, there's an entrance, that that doorway is the entrance into the weather shack, well, to the, yes, ladders, and then, our aerology is right behind there and on the other side is where we did our weather obs. Well, I had off, I was not on watch, and I went up, get coffee and I went outside. … It was cold and I had a chair and I'm sitting there and I'm getting the sun, and we're having a flight deck operation--beautiful, sunny day. Now, planes, they always come in from behind us. … Well, I'm facing this way (east) and the ships are all going that way (north). … Planes always came in from the south and they flew by, and then, they flew a big circle around, in approach, pattern, and then, they would come in and land. Now, to the east, when I'm looking, I'm not going to see anything until Alaska. There's nothing out between me and them except, you know, North America. All of a sudden, I see three planes coming from that way. "Oh, that's funny," didn't think anything of it. There was no flight operations here--of course not, because they were not friendlies. I'm watching, I'm watching, … thinking nothing of it. "Oh, they're going to fly right over the ship," and, all of a sudden, I see sparkles, you know. "What the hell?" I'm looking, I'm looking--they're firing. I could see the shells hitting the water, "Jesus Christ, they're hitting." You know, I am just watching it like I'm watching a movie. I'm not saying, you know, "General quarters," I'm not taking cover, I'm watching. Well, the guy who was lined up with me, the guy in the middle, because I was right in the line of [fire] when I was right in the middle, … the other two guys were low enough where they could actually fly right over the deck, but this guy had to pull up and get up to clear the island. So, when he did that, you know, nothing hit me, but I saw the bullets. They're streaming right up the side of the ship, boom, boom, boom, right across the flight deck, boom, boom, boom. I go, "Wow," and then, when it flew over like that, I could see the big, you know, red stars. I said, "Oh, my, [laughter] Chinese," you know, and it seemed like four hours before they blew the general quarters. You know, I knew exactly what had happened. I got up and I ran in. I said, "We're under fire." It was just a strafing run, you know. I guess the guys--the guys, the Chinese--thought they'd show us something, how brave they were or something like that. … They flew by, shot everything up that they could, and then, got out of there. They went back home. … Nobody got hurt from that, as far as I know. There was no

explosion, they didn't hit any fuel, they didn't hit me, and so, … I can say I was under fire. He wasn't shooting at me--he was shooting at what I was sitting on, you know. [laughter] I didn't take it personally. That's my story.

SI: That was the only time that the enemy directly attacked the fleet.

TM: Yes, it was a harassment thing--oh, well, other than when we got too close to Vladivostok. … That was just an air battle, remote from the task force, but it was [a misunderstanding]. … They were coming up just to [counter the American force]. We didn't belong there, you know. We'd have done the same thing if we had … an enemy, a Russian fleet, you know, seventy-five miles off of New York City. So, yes, that was the only time. Like I say, most of our problems came from, you know, friendly-fire or part of the weather, yes.

SI: You mentioned the possibility of World War III when you got too close to Vladivostok. Was that discussed among the men on the ship? Did you even know it was happening?

TM: … Oh, yes, oh, yes. We went to general quarters and we stayed there, yes, because we didn't know what was next. … I really don't remember much after that, you know, how long it lasted or anything else like that. Yes, there was concern. There was a little article, I think it was in *The* [*New York*] *Times*. My sister had cut it out, because she recognized the name, you know. It was a small, little blurb, about that big, you know, "There was an encounter between the US," and what they said was--they called it the Chinese. They didn't want to call it the Russians. We never knew, and it mentioned the *Oriskany*. I felt bad, you know, that she's probably worrying. I know everything's okay, but, you know, she doesn't. … Of course, when the ship blew up, that was bad. *The Daily News* had a centerfold, you know, big picture of the last shot of the explosion, you know, … that got in the press. They had a big picture of the ship entering New York Harbor, and then, they had a picture of Tommy McGraw. So, that was a big item, but there was no way--you know, there was no Internet--there was no way for me to communicate back. My father died when I was overseas, when I was there, and they called me down to the chaplain's office to tell me that, you know, my father had passed away. Now, normally, you get, I think, a sympathy leave or something like that. I thought, "Well, you know, I'll go home." … They said, "Normally, we would grant a sympathy leave," he said, "but, in your case, we're not." He said, "You're too far away." He said, "By the time we got you off this ship and into Japan, and then, from Japan to California, and then, from California to Brooklyn, your father would be dead and buried and it would all be a waste of time. So, you know, we're very sorry, but go back to work." I get a resentment, a little bit, but they're right. They're right, you know. I wouldn't have made it. I couldn't possibly, you know, get back in time and, you know, there was nobody there I needed to console. You know, they were all there. That just popped into my head.

SI: Do you want to take a break?

TM: Sure.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: During the break, you were telling us that the ship was pulled away from the fleet once to go to Hong Kong.

TM: Yes, yes, for R&R, rest and relaxation, or something, rehabilitation or something, and that was like a joy ride. We traveled south, go past Formosa. Somebody flew over us … when we were in the Straits of Formosa--don't know who it was, certainly wasn't an enemy. … By then, it was nice and warm. We're heading south … from the cold weather, so, a lot of the guys took their mattresses and went up and slept on the flight deck, I among them. … Suddenly, in the middle of the night, something flew over, put on big, bright lights, like to say, "Ha, ha, we got you." Now, … I'm sure the Captain and everybody else knew who they were. Otherwise, they would have blown them out of the sky, but we didn't, [laughter] but Hong Kong was different. I did not feel comfortable with the Chinese. I felt like I was sort of back in Tijuana. … They did not like us. Of course, now, you know what was interesting, maybe we'll get on to this, well, it's a different time. In World War II, our enemies were … Germany, Japan and Italy. Our allies were China and Russia. Now, it's my turn to go to war--those guys, our enemies are now our friends and our friends are now our enemy. So, it was all, "Bass ackwards." We hit China and they did not like us. We're in Hong Kong, but still China, and it was dangerous. We had to be very careful. Now, of course, … with our Japanese influence, if we drank too much, we'd be heading back to the ship and we'd be singing our Japanese songs, you know. So, you know, we brought it on ourselves, I'm sure. So, there was that. … Once, on liberty, Hong Kong is like an island and I had gone over to the mainland, which is Kowloon, and I was doing my tour, you know, my little, private tour. … I'm walking all around and I'm heading [around], enjoying things, "Ain't that pretty?" and all that stuff, and, now, I'm getting into a neighborhood and a jeep pulls up--the British. They want to know what I'm doing here. "I'm doing nothing;" Brooklyn, you know, "I'm not doing nuttin'." [laughter] They said, "Well, we think you ought to come in the jeep with us." I said, "Well, I'm all right, I can walk." They said, "Well, you're not going to walk very far. There's three guys eyeing you already. They're going to take you down." You know, that wasn't the expression at the time, but the equivalent, you know, "They're going to take you down." I said, "Oh, yes, I'll take a ride." [laughter] They got me out of there real quick. The touring was fun and the adventure of being in Hong Kong was fun. … The break was good, but everybody got their turn to go to Hong Kong, you know. We knew about it, all during the tour, … that we would be going there, and we're supposed to buy our suits for a song and that sort of silliness. There's all kind of trouble in Hong Kong. There was too many different nationalities. We're sitting in the harbor and there's a French warship there. Of course, the British Navy [Royal Navy] hated us, because we had too much money. We were ruining things for them. The Aussies were there. They loved us. … You know, the Australian Navy [Royal Australian Navy] was there. We buddied up with them. They'd come over there with their "mate" stuff and they'd say, "You know, you Yanks make a lot of money, but we know the town." He says, "We'll show you the places to go, what you want to do, but you guys do the spending, we'll do the partying. We'll show you." We said, "Okay." … "And, if you get in trouble, it won't be the first time we had to sock a British sailor or soldier." [laughter] So, that's what we did. We loved the Aussies. I remember, I came back to the ship one time, … obviously in Hong Kong, and coming back onboard, … I'm not paying attention or anything, and then, the officer puts his hand out, stops me. He says, "You're out of uniform, sailor." "What are you talking about?" "Your hat." "My hat?" I take it off--it's not my little, white cap that I used to wear. It says, "HMAS *Canberra*." "Her Majesty's Australian Ship *Canberra*?" He said,

"Where'd you get that from?" I said, "I was just going to ask you that question. Who put that on my head?" So, I guess, for, you know, ten bucks or something, I bought this hat. The thing that gave me a resentment, he confiscated it. He kept it. "Get below." "I want my hat back." You know, that was my biggest adventure in Hong Kong. A lot of danger in Hong Kong, I thought, you know, not only from the Chinese, but from everybody except the British, and … we brought a lot of it on ourselves. We made fun of them. You know, the British soldiers wore their uniforms, but they had their own shoes. They were not issued [shoes]. They were issued combat boots, you know, but part of their uniform did not include a dress pair of shoes. So, you'd see, … three guys would walk by and they'd have all different kinds of shoes on. Oh, we made great fun of that, indeed. … They didn't like us, oh, especially our chief, who was a kind of a small [guy]. He was probably only about five-[foot]-eight, maybe weighed 130 pounds, blond hair, like I said, looked like he didn't have to shave but once a week. He was a chief with one stripe, which meant he had more than four years, but less than eight. In the British Navy, you had to do two years in every department, you know, engine room, deck, bridge, … so, you had to be in at least six years before you were allowed to strike, which meant you were going for a certain [job]. Now, you could pick where you want to work. So, there were guys there that had eight or ten years and they were just like the equivalent of me, which I had, like, less than maybe eighteen months active duty and I'm already a petty officer. They did not like that, because these guys, if they were a petty officer, they were old men. I mean, they were in their thirties, but the logic was that, "When we do get in trouble on the ship, … anybody can do anything," you know, at least of, you know, the enlisted ranks. So, yes, we had a lot of trouble there, … no fights, but a lot of danger--not danger, potential, you know, Tijuana all over again, you know. …

SI: How did you get along with the officers on your ship?

TM: Famously with the pilots. They have a rapport with the enlisted, because they have to. If a pilot really did something where he really got one of the enlisted men annoyed at him, especially the aviation [men], well, they were really likely [to regret it]. There's a thing on a plane called … the pilot relief tube. If a pilot had to go to the bathroom while he was in flight, well, he had this little thing that you went to the bathroom [in] and I guess it just disappeared. Well, they would take the far end of it, safety wire it, which means tie it down, lock it up. So, if he did [anger someone], when he finally did have to go, it would just back up on his lap, and then, he would get that message, "Oh, I must have been not so nice to somebody on the flight deck." [laughter] So, they were always [nice]; they were like regular guys. The rest of them had that, really, that British Navy attitude of separation of officers. … Our commander was what they called a "mustang." He'd come out of the ranks. So, he was okay. He was strict and businesslike, but he wasn't like that, didn't have that attitude about the officers and enlisted men. … The Navy, I think, is the worst for that. The Army is a little better, I believe. There was one officer who was just an outright bully. He used that braid, the gold on his cap, to bully enlisted people. I mean, if he could find you, if you were, like, just going to chow or something and you walked by him and he saw something he didn't like, … he would stop you and just brutalize you, verbally, "Bah-bah, bah-bah." He was a slob, physically. He was a slob, the way he dressed. He was just a disgrace. This is where I got my inclination that, … "When I get out, I think I'll go to college," because I thought, "You know what? He's not a better man than I am." He was a Southerner. I said, "He's picking on me, personally," when he did pick on [me]. Once, he did it to me and, after that, I made sure that if I saw him anywhere near the area, I avoided him. I concluded that, "You know,

he's a rich kid and a bully and the only reason he's an officer is because his father sent him to college. He probably didn't even get good grades, because he doesn't know how to dress, he doesn't listen to people." I mean, all this stuff, I dreamed up in my head, just to tell myself that, "You know, … I'm a better man than he is. You know, he doesn't deserve to wear that uniform, and the only reason he got it is because he went to college." … When you go in the Navy and you've got a college degree, they're going to make you an officer. That's when I decided, "When I get out of here, I've got to go to college." … So, I'll bless him, the bully, you know, for directing me, somewhat. Now, when I did get out, I did sign up. [As a] matter-of-fact, I signed up--this is a little sidebar--toward the end of my enlistment, I started to apply to colleges. I had a good high school record, so, I [thought], "I'll apply to Notre Dame," of course, good Catholic boy, Catholic prep school, you know. … Sure enough, Notre Dame sent it back. You know, maybe because they're patriotic or something like that, at the time, they accepted me, … but I had to start in September. … I wasn't getting out until November, my birthday. So, I sent a request in, with a copy of my acceptance, I sent it in through the channels, asking to … get an early discharge. … It said, "What? Are you kidding?" [laughter] So, that was the end of that. So, when I got out, I went over to Seton Hall--never did finish, but that's another story.

SI: Did you take any correspondence courses when you were in the service?

TM: No, other than what I learned, you know, in the various training schools. No, I really wasn't interested in that. I had this--you know, I see it in my son now. … He has no goals. You know, he went to--well, I shouldn't. Well, anyway, … he's a lot like me, you know, … just no direction. I shouldn't say he doesn't have direction, but I didn't have direction and I didn't want direction. … "I'll figure this all out myself. Didn't I figure out how to get out of Brooklyn?" you know. [laughter] So, that was … my own doing. … [You] asked how I got along with officers. … The pilots were very good. They would come up, occasionally, to weather, you know, and they'd be nice, too. I remember one guy I took a liking to, because he showed up a lot, Lieutenant--I used to remember his name. I don't anymore, but he got killed. He was in one of them dive-bombers that they attacked [a bridge with], very similar situation to the book [*The Bridges at Toko-Ri*]. They were attacking a bridge and it was heavily defended and he got caught up in it, you know. They got him and they shot him down. So, there were fatalities, … aside from the flight deck, but, you know, pilots were getting shot down over Korea. They didn't have any real combat, as far as I know, Navy versus the MiGs--that was strictly Air Force--except that one time we went a little too close to Vladivostok. When we went in, as far as I know, … they never attacked us. I guess they couldn't. … You know, we were so close, by the time a plane took off from where we were, within probably fifteen minutes, they were over their target, doing what they're doing and they were back. … When they took off, they were usually back in an hour, and then, they'd be doing it again, you know, going a couple of times each day, each pilot.

SI: It was mostly antiaircraft that would take down the planes.

TM: Yes, yes, as far as I know, yes. As far as I know, there were no--well, of course, they wouldn't talk about Navy planes that got shot down. They'd talk about us shooting down MiGs. … [As a] matter-of-fact, I don't think I've ever seen in a history where they involved the Navy. [When] they're talking about Korea, they're talking about the Air Force and the MiGs. They

never talk about the Navy versus the MiGs, because, basically, it was just an incident, that one-time incident, … but it did make us feel good that, you know, we got the upper hand, that the Navy did whip [them]. They shot down three MiGs, you know, downed, and we got damaged by one. Lucky, it was a lucky hit, hit him right behind his cockpit, but between him and the engine, so [that] he was still flying, but he had lost controls. He lost the controls in the back, so, … his flying was all skidding. Later on, after I got out, when I was in my forties, I finally went down, because I wanted to learn how to fly, so, I did. So, I learned a lot about flying, from my little plane games, you know, but I understand now what he was up against. At the time, I didn't, didn't have any idea. He just couldn't control it enough to slow it down. He could slow it down, but, then, he couldn't control it. So, there was a real good chance that he would dump, and he didn't want to dump into the sea. It was too cold. So, they brought him in. …

SI: How did casualties affect the unit? Whether it was your friend, the photographer, or a pilot who did not come back, did it have a morale effect?

TM: No, I would say no. When Tommy got killed, they came down the following day--I guess it was the following day. I was there. The officer came down and they emptied his locker, take out all his personal effects and that was kind of [it], and then, they blew Taps--not for that night. You never blow Taps at sea. They just blow a whistle and say, "Lights out," you know. You know, blowing Taps is a [no-no], but, when somebody dies, they blow Taps at sea and that's kind of spooky. … When all the guys got killed, Tommy among them, they blew Taps, and then, they just said, "Lights out." So, that affected you, but it didn't [demoralize you]. It just, I guess, … strengthened your resistance, made you feel like, you know, you wanted to get even. Well, what are you going to get even with? It was an accident, you know.

LC: Did you keep in touch with anybody that was on the ship with you?

TM: Yes, my buddy Buddy. Buddy Soden was his name. Yes, we were very close. He was the only Jersey guy that I really [knew]. He was a Jersey guy, he wasn't Brooklyn. He came from Fanwood and we hooked up. … I don't think I was away, more than fifteen feet away, from Buddy for all the time I was on the ship and, off the ship, we just went out together. We drank together, went on liberty together, we were on the same watch together. So, literally, he was never more than fifteen feet away from me. He slept fifteen feet away from me, whatever. [laughter] Yes, he was the only one I kept in touch with. Even after we got out, I kept in touch with him for quite a while, but, then, he went his way and I went mine. We got tied up in, you know, life and marriage and school and all that stuff. There was another fellow from Staten Island. His name was Fred, Fred (Redline?). I guess I can mention names. We can delete them later. … I don't know, no problem with me. I think he had some Indian blood. … He had a slight Oriental look about him and he was small and he was a very lively guy. The Japanese women were crazy about him. … He was "the man" on the ship when it came to the girls on the beach, yes. [laughter] I kept in touch with him afterwards, because he lived on Staten Island and I was now going with my [girlfriend]--finally won my girlfriend back, after two years. … So, I spent a lot of time [with him]. I kept in touch with him and I kept in touch with Buddy. The rest of them, [I] didn't really know them. They were from other parts of the country and, some of them, I just plain didn't get along with anyway.

ML: How did you get back when your tour was over?

TM: That was a joyous time. On the return, we did stop back in Hawaii again. That was nice. You know, the pressure was off. Then, between Hawaii and San Fran, we pulled back into San Francisco. At that point, our … operating base was the Alameda Air Station, over by Oakland. It was a nice reception we got as we came in from sea, crossing under the Golden Gate Bridge. Well, first of all, they woke us up. They didn't play Reveille, like they usually do. They played *California, Here I Come*. [laughter] Well, that was cute, and then, we got a fly-by, you know, from the Navy, welcoming us back. … We all had to go up on the flight deck and line up, you know, three thousand guys--whoever wasn't working had to go up in their [dress uniform]. By that time, let's see, it was still winter, I guess we weren't in our whites, San Francisco. Anyway, we all had to line up facing outboard, you know the show--the ship's coming in, flying all the flags. So, there was a lot of hullabaloo about our return, you know. When we tied up, families were there, greeting everybody then. It was a big, exciting time. They put the ship in drydock for its normal maintenance and repairs. I stayed on it then. When it was ready to go back--it was going to go back for a second time--by then, the shooting had stopped. They were doing the Panmunjom negotiations and peace talks. [Editor's Note: United Nations representatives began meeting their North Korean and Chinese counterparts for peace negotiations at the border village of Panmunjom in July 1951, but were unable to effect a ceasefire until July 27, 1953.] … The fighting was over and they told me that, you know, I wasn't wanted on the ship anymore. They got a replacement, then, they put me up on the beach, what they call "on the beach," you know, ashore. … They sent me over to Treasure Island to wait for my discharge and that was that. I guess I spent three weeks there, waiting, waiting to become twenty-one, so [that] I could leave. So, that was the end of my story, as far as the Navy went. What I found when I came home, I realized that it wasn't World War II. You know, you were not the "homecoming hero." You know, you had your little row of ribbons and that kind of stuff, but there's absolutely no interest. You know, as a matter-of-fact, it was downright animosity from my brother-in-law, you know, the guy my sister [married], because, when I came home, that's where I went back, and I lived there for a year. You know, he would tell me how, "It wasn't a war--it was a police action," and I would say things like, "Well, tell Tommy McGraw that," you know, and I would counter with, "Well, you know, an AD Skyraider carries more of a bomb load than a B-17. So, don't tell me about," blah, blah, blah, you know, that kind of stuff. You know, they just [had] that "Greatest Generation" thing. They just couldn't be bothered--like everybody, you know, it was "their war." I had my war and, you know, nobody's going to talk me out of it. We developed, somewhere along the line--we as a generation--I'm sure you heard this expression, we became known as the "Silent Generation." You know, we were just overpowered by the "Greatest Generation" and we weren't yet to the "Baby Boomers." … One thing I did do, when we came back--it must have been on one of our [leaves]. I can't remember where. I know … I was in New York. I guess, when we came back from overseas, we got leave. So, we got two weeks leave. So, I flew home, and then, we had to go back, and I remember [it] being me and Fred, the guy from Staten Island, the good-looking guy. [laughter] We were going to take a Navy hop out of Delaware. … We said good-bye to our girlfriends, and then, we called Delaware and they said, "No, there's no flight today. You've got to come back tomorrow." So, I said, "Well, all right, … we're in Penn Station. Let's go get drunk or something," and in New York, right in Manhattan, which we did, and I made a fool of myself. Well, I remember, we did lord it. Well, what happened, something happened in one of the bars where they called the shore patrol. I'm not sure what happened, but

me and Fred got in trouble. I think it had something about pouring a bottle of beer in some sailor's hat or something like that. Well, when the shore patrol came in, we gave them a terrible ration, because, you know, … there was a thing about, if you were in the Navy, if you had a row [of] ribbons, that [meant] you had been to Korea, but, if you hadn't been, they kind of lorded it over you. You know, … "You guys play at it--we lived it," that kind of BS. So, we used that, you know, to get out of trouble, basically, with the shore patrol, and it worked. They let us go. You know, we kind of bullied them and shamed them into letting us go. "Hey, we're going back, you know. What the hell? You're supposed to get drunk before you go back." … In retrospect, the way I see it, the Atlantic Fleet was not at war. The whole Atlantic Coast was not at war. It was something they read in the paper. There was no patriotism. There was no interest. It was a disinterest, … because, like, nobody had an opinion, myself included. When I went to San Diego, and then, as soon as I got there, I could see guys with only two or three stripes and they had their ribbons, and these [guys were] from the destroyers. … I'm thinking, "Wow, what's going on here? These guys, … you know, they're involved." The Pacific Fleet was at war, California was at war. So, it was like two different worlds. Half the country's at war, the other isn't. It was fascinating, and that was sort of like the prelude to what was going to happen in Vietnam. This is how I saw it--World War II, patriotism like I talked about as a kid. Patriotism was booming. … [As a] matter-of-fact, there was a discrimination against people who were not, if you were 4-F. Later on, in 'Nam, you were crazy to be in the Army, "What? Are you crazy? You know, what are you doing that for?" Korea was the middle ground--it was a disinterest. Nobody cared. You were no longer a hero for being there. It wasn't even a war--it was a police action. You know, so, we're building up a little resentment, and then, the next step is, we go from disinterest, you know, to antagonism, you know. So, there was an evolution from patriotism to disinterest to downright antagonism by the time Vietnam came around--justifiably so. I mean, that went on and on and on. The interesting thing, though, there was just as many deaths in the Korean War as there was in the whole Vietnam War. If you check, you know, it was at something like fifty-three thousand deaths in Korea, in three years, fifty-three, something like that, thousand in 'Nam, over, I don't know, from what, twelve years? or something like that. [Editor's Note: There were 54,246 American casualties, in-theater and non-theater, during the Korean War and 58,220 in-theater American casualties in the Vietnam War.] So, that was a time when I started my [change in attitude]. After I got out, between Korea and 'Nam, I was still patriotic, I would still fight for my country, but there was this little background thing going on, you know. As I started to raise a family, I came up with this idea. You know, I would tell my son--you know, I didn't want to teach him to be anti-patriotic, but I kind of told him, "Look, if the IRA lands on the beaches at Belmar, you and I are going to go down and blow them back in the water." I said, "We'll fight for our country. I don't think we should fight for our government, because I don't trust them." They led us into the World War II. … My personal opinion, I suspect that Roosevelt knew Pearl Harbor was coming down and he allowed it, because, if you read--I'm a great enthusiast of Charles Lindbergh. I've read every book. I followed his career. [Editor's Note: Aviation pioneer Charles A. Lindbergh was an outspoken isolationist and member of the America First Committee in the period prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor.] He was against the war. He was a colonel in the Army and he really annoyed the hell out of Roosevelt, who wanted to get into the war, probably for justifiable reasons, but he wanted to get into the war in Europe. He didn't want to get into the war in Japan, in the Pacific. This is all my [viewpoint], you know. … So, I think he allowed it. I don't think he'd think it went as far as it did, but it happened, and, of course, then, … he walked in the next day, into Congress, and he

got, you know, a blank check to go to war. You know, everybody [said], "Well, of course we've got to go to war now," you know, but I don't know if you've read about Lindbergh. He really got punished by that guy, Roosevelt. There was great antagonism. He wouldn't give him his [commission back]. … He spoke against the war, he spoke for isolationism, very publicly, because he had been to Germany and he saw the German Air Force. He saw the *Luftwaffe*. He flew the Messerschmitt. The Germans let him--they welcomed him. He was a hero, you know, and he had a little Aryan background, you know. … I think he was from Norway or Sweden--the family, that is. So, he knew. He said, "Don't get in a war--we're not ready for it. They're going to kick our butts. They've got bombers. … They're so far ahead of us, you know. Don't go, don't go," and, of course, then, when the war started, he volunteered. He asked for his commission back. Roosevelt said, "Don't let that guy in here." So, he got a job working with General Motors, … no, Ford, Henry Ford, as a consultant, you know, getting the conversion of an automobile factory to the other thing. … He would only take a colonel's pay. They offered him, like, six figures to be [a consultant], six figures, yes, big pay. He said, "No, I'll take a colonel's pay." He wound up actually flying combat operations as a civilian with the Marines in the Pacific, if you ever heard that, his story. He taught them and he taught MacArthur. … They would come back from an operation, you know, a flight in New Guinea or something like that, and all the other pilots would be out of fuel, just about out of fuel. Lindbergh's tank, … he still had a quarter of a tank left. They said, "How'd you do that?" He said, "Well, I do this, I do that. I lean the engine," and so, he says, "Can you teach the other guys, so [that], maybe, with that, we can go further, we can catch another island?" and he did. … Then, he started doing really big things, like loading up a Corsair way beyond its maximum, reinforcing it, so [that] they could carry a heavier bomb load. He did all kinds of [things]. He shot down Japanese planes. If he ever got caught, they would have, you know, killed him on the spot as a spy. None of that ever came out, he just did all that, and so, anyway, that's my man. [laughter] … So, the story, you know, the point I was trying to get back to was that I think, in Korea, I really believe Truman stepped in to allow that to happen, because we were in a recession. Times were bad. I remember getting out of high school, long time getting a job, and then, I got a job as a clerk in an insurance place in New York. I hated that work. I lasted seven weeks. I had three days of absence in seven weeks. … So, Vietnam, I never really read up on that, but who knows why we went to war there? but, once one guy got into it, all the rest of them couldn't get out of it. By "the rest of them," I mean Johnson and, you know, they were stuck, and I think we've got the same thing today. The next guy coming in is stuck. Once you put troops on the field, you can't get them out. So, we'll see, we'll see. I digressed, didn't I? …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Shall we talk about how you came back to the States? You were on Treasure Island until you were discharged. What was your next move after that?

TM: I came back to Garwood. What did I do? Oh, well, first semester, I went immediately to Seton Hall, signed on full-time, went there for a year. I worked nights in a plant down in Elizabeth.

SI: What kind of plant?

TM: It was an ink factory place. … I worked in their labs, doing color matches and stuff--an inane job. Then, they closed that shift, so, I went on unemployment. It was happy days. I was a full-time student, went to unemployment. They had to get me a job as a laboratory assistant at night--there is no such thing at night. [laughter] So, I was smoking cigars, getting unemployment, seeing my girlfriend and going to school. Life was good. What more could you want, you know? That lasted a year. I did my year, and then, you know, I really wanted to get married--oh, and then, I got married. I was still working. Then, I had gotten a job with an electrical contractor, working as his goffer. Then, I got married, and then, shortly after that, let's see, I was twenty-two when I got married, shortly after that, I got an opportunity. I had applied to the … telephone company and took the test and they said, "Well, it's fine. We have no openings now, but we'll put your thing on file," and nothing happened with that. So, then, I got a job with the electrical contractor. Then, I saw an ad in the paper, about six months later--New Jersey Bell was looking for people. So, I called them up and I said, "Hey, you've got my name in there. You know, how come you didn't call me? I see you're looking for people." He said, "Oh, we discard those if they're over six months." He said, "Come on down. You know, we'll test you over again." So, I wound up working for the phone company and I stayed with them the rest of my career. I loved it. They put me in construction, working out on pole lines as a lineman, but the title they gave me was a helper. … I converted my GI Bill from college education to on-the-job training, so [that] I could, you know, keep things together, because the pay wasn't that good, but between that and the on-the-job training, [I survived]. [Editor's Note: The GI Bill offered support for both college education and job training programs.] Then, I got promoted to be what they call a cable splicer and that's a good job. That's a good job. I loved that job and I was good at it and, as far as career goes, after that, it was all just advancement.

SI: Do you feel your time in the service prepared you well for this kind of role in business?

TM: Well, I would say that that bully officer kind of opened my eyes, and because I was the only guy in the garage going to school, that opened that door, and then, because, you know, [of] my background in sales, that opened the door. So, doors kept opening for me, but it all goes back to me changing my attitude about education. So, I would have to say yes, you know, that made all the difference. … From there on in, it was just blending the two worlds, the world of the workers and the world of education. …

LC: Did you join any organizations after you were discharged?

TM: The VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars], so [that] I could go down on every Memorial Day and mourn the loss of Tommy McGraw and get drunk. After a while, I said, "These guys drink too much and they're all BS-ing. They're telling all their old war stories and I'm sick of it. I've heard enough of this stuff." So, I didn't go anymore. … I had no interest in that, you know. My stories, when I got home, rarely would I talk about the stuff I talked about [today]. I would talk about how life was on a flight deck in a combat zone, carrying a balloon, you know. "Hey, are you lost little boy, is it? Are you a boy?" give him the finger, you know, that sort of stuff.

SI: Do you think you had any lasting effects from the war?

TM: No trauma, no trauma--resentment, a little bit, which I kind of grew out of. I've accepted the fact that; I still have a little resentment about the "Greatest Generation." You know, "Yes, wonderful, you know, but give me a break." I just bought a car. It's an old '86 Mercury. It's got low mileage. I got it [because] Sophie died in Freehold, and I don't know who Sophie is, but they left her car at the station I go to and they said, "Tom, you're looking for a backup car for work." I still work. I'd like to have a work car, you know, so [that] I can beat it up, and it's in beautiful shape. It only had, like, sixty-eight thousand miles on it, nice.

LC: 1986?

TM: Yes.

LC: Wow. [laughter]

TM: I've only had it about four or five months. You saw it outside. … Well, first of all, on the steering wheel, it's got four little roses tacked on there, which is cute--Sophie, oh, Sophie. I still call it Sophie's car, and on each side, … stuck on the fender, is an American flag. I said, "Oh, that's so the 'Greatest Generation,'" you know, I said, "but I'm not going to take it off. It's Sophie's car," you know. So, I drive around, I'm thinking, "Well, they probably all think I'm one of the 'Greatest Generation,' but I don't care," but that loyalty, I see and I'm still very hesitant about. I'm not sure I'm answering your question, but I just don't like to see these warmongers, I'll call them, there's probably better words, driving by in a big, oversized pickup truck, flying a big flag or two, you know, "If you don't like this country, get the 'F' out," and all that stuff. I said, "You know, you don't even know what you're talking about, kid." You know, it's all that [bravado]. If you go in the military, you really have to get that way to survive, you know. It's not that bad in the Navy, but you have to develop that attitude, that you're doing the right thing and you're going to do what you've got to do. … Really, it boils down to just [that] the people that you're with are all that counts. That's all that's in the war. … You've probably heard this time and time again. … You don't know what's going on around you--all you know is that and two or three other guys are in trouble right now and you've got to get out. You've got to fight your way out. That sort of stuff, there's no glory. There's no glory in it, you know. Basically, I can't say I'm anti-war, but I think I am.

SI: How did you feel about the antiwar movement during the Vietnam War, for example?

TM: Early on, there was the patriotism still. I felt, well, for whatever reason we were there, to stop the "Red Scourge" or whatever they called, you know, "Got to stop Communism … before they take over the world," and all that stuff, I sort of favored it, but, then, as it went on and on and on. … My oldest son wasn't even a teenager yet and it looked like, if this continued, he was going to be drafted. … I said, "This is going on too long. It's going on too long. We're not winning, you know. We're not winning, we're not losing, we're just killing people, both sides. It's going on and on." … From there, I went [from] … favoring to just being quiet about it. I didn't have an opinion about it, and then, that's pretty much how I carried Vietnam. I kind of said, when it got close to my son, Tom, reaching that age where he had to register for the draft, … "Well, what are we going to do, Tom?" … He said, "I don't know what I'm going to do." I said, "Well, look, if you don't think it's right," I says, "I'm not going to tell you to go to Canada,"

I said, "I'll take you there. I'll go with you, if it gets that bad, you know, where you [want to leave]." I said, "It's no place to be." … I had a lot of people, personal, [killed]. My first experience with Korea and death was a guy named Mikey. … He quit high school and joined the Army, seventeen years old. I guess he did it, … probably, in '49, I'll guess, early '49, maybe '48, probably when he was a junior, joined the Army and they put him in the occupation army in Japan. … He'd send us letters, "Oh, this is so great. You get the girls for a chocolate bar. … Everything's wonderful, what a life." "Wow, you know, he's living. … Boy, that's something." The war broke out and we never heard from him again. He was one of the guys that they just grabbed out of Japan, with no combat experience, nothing, just put him in there just to stand up, and he just disappeared. Within thirty days or ninety days, we got word that he was missing, and he's still missing. So, he was the first guy to disappear. I had other personal friends--my cousin married a guy who was in Korea in the Army and he lost his arm. He had, you know, a mechanical arm and she wanted to marry him. She loved him, and the family was, "Oh, you're marrying him? He's got, you know, a metal arm." She said, "I want to marry him. I love him. He's a good man." She married him, and I thought the world of it, you know, "Wow, that's good." Well, he made the most of it. He got a pension for it and, when they had children, they would teeth on his arm, [laughter] … and so, he made a joke out of it. If there was a fancy, formal affair, like when he got married, he had a false prosthetic or something, a false hand, and, you know, he held it in position. … I forget which hand it was. He was in a bunker and a shell landed right on it. He said, "Boom, there's a big boom," and, when he came to, his arm was on the table and he was over in a corner--those kinds of things. … Of course, Tommy McGraw was a big loss. There was another guy named Jimmy. He joined the Army. They sent him to paratroop training. He became a paratrooper. In his training, they did a night jump. … He was only in the service less than six months. They did a night jump. His chute didn't open. He landed on another guy's chute underneath him, that guy. Then, they started going down real fast. The guy whose chute was open got scared, didn't know what was going on, pulled his chute, popped Jimmy right out of the bag. … Jimmy fell about two or three hundred feet and he came out alive, but there was something wrong with his back or something like that. … So, that was the end of him. He was seventeen or eighteen years old and he was already finished, you know, physically. … You know, it was there. You know, other than that, like, that was really personal, the general attitude was that, "You know, that's something that's going on somewhere [else]," like the book [George Orwell's] *1984*, I don't know if you ever read it, where, you know, they always had war, but it was somewhere else. … You always fed into that and you fed your people into it, but it kept the economy going, so [that] nobody home had to worry about [their lives], you know, that whole *1984* concept. I said, "Good Lord, it's not even 1984 and we're in it." So, those sort of things, you know, developed in your mind. … I have my doubts about [war]. You know, I've seen, by this point, Vietnam, I've seen--I believe that we were led into the wars because somebody up there wanted us in the war. That happened in World War II, I believe. It happened in Korea, you know, with Truman and us butting in; probably happened to Vietnam. Now, is it happening again? I can't believe that. Now, this is my, you know, conspiracy [thinking], whatever--I just have this gut feeling that, you know, maybe whoever they are knew what was coming down and let 9/11 happen, … not thinking, just like Roosevelt, … "I couldn't believe the whole thing's coming down, you know, both buildings coming down. You know, oh, my God, it went too far." Maybe they didn't--I'll give them the benefit of the doubt--they really didn't see it coming. Somebody saw it coming, whether they let it happen or didn't think it would be that bad, but that was certainly, you know, everybody was right behind Bush

the next day, "Let's go, you know, let's go." I thought, "Oh, I've been here before, you know, that 'Let's go' stuff. Yes, let's go think this over," you know, and then, we got misdirected into, you know, Iraq. "What are we doing in Iraq? We're supposed to be in Afghanistan." You know, "Oh, there's oil in Iraq," you know, "Where's the family from?" "Oh, they're oil people." "Oh, you get it," … that whole paranoia thing, and it's obviously ruined the country. You know, we're in bad straits now, the economy. When Bush came in, I have never seen such blatant, outright bad talk about a President, and I've been through a lot of them. You know, okay, Clinton embarrassed us, you know, with his "fun and games," you know, in the back room. That's not going to kill people, you know, but this was … just too much, you know, the talk, the books that are being [written]. Maybe everybody's writing about it--I'll write a book about how bad Bush is, … but, when he came in, we had a surplus. That's gone. He's spending money like he doesn't care. People are dying. The saddest thing I saw, in my opinion, *Time* Magazine, I guess it was sometime last year, maybe, front cover, young woman sitting in a chair--you might have seen it--with a gray Army shirt on, steel from her knees down. She couldn't be more than in her twenties. I thought, "Oh, my God." It's a bad war for people with uniforms on, you know. It's just like Vietnam--you didn't know. I had one of my engineers … [who] came back from 'Nam. He was a Marine. He was in an ambush squad, him and maybe five or six other guys, no officer involved, just, you know, an NCO. … Their job was to go up and just infiltrate, just be six guys hiding out in the woods, setting up, so [that] when the Vietcong came through in their Ho Chi Minh Trail, they would bushwhack them. He said, … "During the day," he said, "we could go into the village and we were okay. They'd listen to us. At night, we had to go hide, because the same people we're talking about in the daylight were going to come and get us at night," he said. So, he learned that, wherever you sleep, you don't stay there more than two or three hours. Somebody stayed up two or three hours. Everybody woke up, got up and moved maybe 150 feet from where they were. So, whoever saw them where they first went, if they went back with their weapons, they wouldn't see them there, and then, they, the Vietcong or whoever it was, knew that, "Uh-oh, they're not here. They're somewhere else. We might be surrounded," and they'd scoot. "If you stayed there," he said, "anybody who stayed in the same place didn't make it," you know. I thought, "Wow." He was a guy that, I'm embarrassed to admit this, when they gave him to me, they said--you know, he's a big, burly, not big, he's short, … big guy, big guy. He said, "You've got to be careful with him. Don't surprise him, you know, because he'll react." … When he came home, he said he went out hunting with his brother and they were going to go hunting and his brother saw, … whatever, the ducks or something, saw it first. He was looking, Charlie was looking, this way. The gun went off beside him. He dropped, he rolled and he almost shot his brother. He was just, like, "Oh, my God." He put the gun down and he walked away. He said, "I'm never picking up a weapon again," but, anyway, they told me, they said, "When you walk up to him, just get a little piece of paper and, when you're out of hand's reach, just, you know, pop him on the back of the head. He'll look around, and then, you walk up to him and you can talk." I said, "Oh, okay, I can do that." … You know, you hear about this all the time. Now, I'm sometimes embarrassed to admit that I like to play practical jokes. Now, I would test him. I would make sure. Well, we'd be sitting down on a little job, you know. We'd be talking one-on-one, close, about, "How you doing this job?" and I'd get a real sharp pencil, real sharp, and, while we were talking, if there was a lull, I would push down real hard and make that pencil snap like a twig. … [Mr. Madden imitates how he would react.] I'd say, "I'm just testing your reflexes, see if Charlie is still ready," you know. He would laugh, "You SOB," you know. So, I was a little [embarrassed]. That was nasty, but, you know, … he got wounded three

or four times. He got addicted to morphine while he was in physically being rehabilitated. He had to go through all of that stuff, kick that habit, you know, not that he used it after, but he said they had terrible withdrawals. He said, "I can't drink." He says, "If I drink, I'll want to, you know, pick up [morphine]." He says, "They had to do it at the time--the pain was awful." He said, "You wouldn't want to see me in a bathing suit." He said, "I've got holes all over me." So, you know, … that's the take-home stuff, you know, and all the glory and all the bands or something else, that's fine, you know, but there's a reality. … The sad part is, you know, we had to be in the war, World War II. We had to do something, and I don't think, how important is it that we get Osama Bin Laden? not important at all. Why is everybody upset about that? There's some other guy with some other strange name … that'll step right in and take his place. You know, what are we doing? … We're in there for the wrong reason. Now, everybody knows it, we're stuck and the economy is [bad], inflation is going--it's all bad. It's all bad news. I don't know how we're going to get out of it, but we will, we will. We'll work our way out of it. I don't know.

LC: Somehow, we always do.

TM: … That's right, that's right. We're tough guys. We really are. We'll get rid of this guy, … but, anyway, as far as, you know, my history, [it] has been a slow evolution from, as my mother used to say, "Oh, you've gone beyond the beyond." … I was beyond the patriotism, you know, way, "I'll die for my country," you know. Being a good Catholic boy, I was raised to be willing to die. I ran into this once. … Years later, I'm in the phone company and we're having a management supervisors' job evaluation training thing going on. … You know, I'm probably in my forties, maybe fifty by this time, and there's a lot of young supervisors, college kids, out. … We're going through it and they give you all these little games to play, you know, every once in a while, see how you deal with things. … They come up with this one question once and they said, "What would you be willing to die for?" Well, I could write a whole bunch of stuff about that. … "Well, I'm supposed to be willing to die for my country. Certainly, die for my religion--I'll be a martyr. I'm certainly supposed to, if somebody, like a little old lady's going to get run over by a bus, I'm supposed to run out, push her aside and take the bus. You know, I've got all kinds of things I'm supposed to die for," and then, I wrote, "Nobody ever told me what I should be willing to live for." On the other hand, not one of them youngsters--page is blank. "I'm not willing to die for anything. What are you talking about? What? Are you crazy?" … Something happened during the last fifty years, you know. … I'm not saying that's right, that I should be willing [to die]. I liked it better, … "What would I be willing to live for?" you know, because, sometimes, you're not willing to live for things. Anyway, I've changed a lot since I was a boy, a bit cynical, as you might surmise, somewhat, I wouldn't say distrustful of government, you know, but the old thing about, "Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely," you know, I believe that. Government is just a bunch of people and, if they're not really trustworthy, and, now, there's such a close marriage between the CEOs and the politicians--the guy in Congress, the President, all his boys in the oil and blah, blah, blah--that, you know, it's not the government of the people anymore, you know, it's the government of the CEOs. … You can see it's spreading more and more apart.

LC: This upcoming election [the 2008 Presidential Election] will be interesting.

TM. You know, I've thought about it. I've decided, I've been a Democrat most of my life, but, then, when I got into matters, I sort of became a Republican, sort of, but, now, I'm evolving back to what my father used to say, you know, "You're a Democrat, boy. You know, don't let anybody tell you [otherwise]. Democrats are about taking care of the people. The Republicans are about taking care of business. So, don't clutter your mind with anything else, boy-o, don't." [laughter] I don't know that it's going to make any difference. I was impressed with Hillary. I think she'd make a good President, with all her connections, even with her husband. I don't think Obama has, really, the experience. McCain probably does, I don't know, and my bottom line is, I don't think it makes any difference who we put in there. [Editor's Note: This interview took place during the 2008 Presidential Election primary season. Arizona Senator John McCain emerged as the Republican front-runner after "Super Tuesday" in February, whereas New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and Illinois Senator Barack Obama competed for the Democratic ticket into the summer.] Whoever it is has to try to change whatever's going on. I think everybody's willing, and, even if he's a Republican [and] there's a Democratic Congress, something's got to be done. I don't know how Hillary can get the troops out in sixty days. Somebody's going to get killed. A lot of people are going to get killed, you know, the famous picture in Vietnam, everybody trying to climb up the ladder, get on the helicopter, you know. You can't just walk away, you know. Well, maybe you can; I don't know if staying there is [any better], and even the military leaders now are saying, you know, "It's futile." Terrorists have always won, sad to say, in my opinion. We were terrorists when we started the American Revolution--sure we were. You know, what'd we do? We went out, dumped a bunch of tea in the harbor [Boston Harbor]. Somebody could have got shot doing that--maybe somebody did get killed. You know, it seems to me, terrorists, whatever you called them--of course, if you're one of them, like my uncle, you're not a terrorist, you know …

LC: You are a hero.

TM: You're a hero. Terrorists are hard to beat, especially what we've got going on now, where it's pseudo religious, maybe even absolutely religious. You know, it's Muslims. The Muslims are preaching religion, you know, against America. Well, America has no religion, really. You can't say that they're [Christian], you know, … they're just a hodgepodge. Ireland might be a little different. You could say the Irish, you know, "Well, they're Catholic. We can go get them," you know, but it's definitely a religious-oriented war. You know, their leaders are, you know, the equivalent of priests and spiritual leaders. We'll see what happens, but I think if they just sit tight and they let us carry on in our asinine way of throwing money at it and throwing our youth at it and bringing them all home and spend a lot of money to give them steel legs, God bless them, you know, I don't know how we're going to win. We're just going to collapse from within. You know, Osama is not spending any money--we're spending billions a day. I heard last week, a couple of weeks ago, the police cannot get ammunition. Did you know that? The local police departments can't get ammunition. People who make bullets can't make enough. I forget how many rounds a day they're shooting in overseas, but the police have a shortage of bullets because of all that, and that's kind of, like, a dumb ass thing, almost, but you've got to say, "Well, gee, … something's wrong with that." You know, we're spending all this money and we outfit--I don't know how the guys can go into combat dressed like they are, with all that gear and the helmets in the desert. You know, like your friend says, he don't ever want to go through that again.

LC: Yes.

TM: You know, and we're there for the wrong reason. Ten years ago or more, I'd say, to Tom, I said, "If the President wants us to go to war, have him somehow make it look like we're going to war to get oil, because all the boys will stand up now and say, 'I need oil for my car,' … you know, simplistic and over-BS, but that's a good reason." Nobody has said that yet, you know, but you could, somehow, a politician could weddle that around somehow to say, "Well, they attacked us and we're going in," but, really, the bottom line is, "Let's get their oil." You know, … take care of it, and then, you could convince everybody, like they convinced us in Korea that we were fighting, you know, to stop the red hordes, you know. There was no threat to our country. There's never been a threat, except for 9/11, and that was almost self-inflicted. Well, it was self-inflicted, you know; … what a genius tactic, take our own planes, with our own fuel, just commandeer it. What's it cost, you know, one or two guys? and do all that damage--wow, what an idea. That's a brain. It's genius, what a military tactic, beyond anything my uncle could've thought of, you know, with his little six shooter. "Beyond beyond," my mother would say. So, that's my philosophy, I don't know if … somebody would want to beat the hell out of me for it, but that's my experience, how I see it. …

SI: We appreciate you sharing.

TM: There's a doubt, I'll say a doubt, about it all, and I like the practical approach of Lindbergh. I'll go back to him, you know, "Don't fight a war that you're going to lose." Yes, it's as simple as that. He said, "We go to war now, we're going to lose. We're not prepared for it. We need three years." We did it, you know, because we could have, but that's the story. …

SI: Thank you very much.

TM: Okay.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add or anything we missed?

TM: I don't think so. [laughter] I haven't talked so much in [a while]. I've talked more in the last four hours than I talked in the last four years, but I appreciate your listening to me. I hate to listen to war stories. I don't know how you guys feel about it. … Like I say, my stories are all about the humor, you know.

SI: This concludes our interview; thank you very much.

TM: Okay, you're welcome, thank you.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by David Ley 2/28/11
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/31/11
Reviewed by Thomas Madden 5/20/11