RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH NEAL PIKE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Sarah Rice: This begins an interview with Mr. Neal Pike on March 3, 2005, in Bethesda, Maryland, with Sarah Rice …

Stephanie Darrell: Stephanie Darrell.

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: … and Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

SR: Can you tell us where and when you were born?

Neal Pike: I was born in Meridian, Idaho, which has now become a suburb of Boise. It was about … eight miles away then, in 1922.

SR: What was it like to grow up there?

NP: … Boise was a very small town back in the '20s and '30s. … Well, we lived in what's the inner city of Boise today. It was the outer city limits when I was growing up [laughter] and I grew up in South Boise … in the '20s, when I was very small, and then, we moved up on Whitney Bench, [an area near South Boise], on Vista Avenue, and we lived there until the mid '30s.

SR: That would have been in the Depression years.

NP: Yes. The '20s were pretty good, but I was a little kid, so, it didn't affect me. [In] the '30s, we knew there was a Depression on. [laughter] My father worked through the whole Depression, … either worked or he had a business. … He ran a dairy and we delivered milk. My sister is four years older than I, four-and-a-half years older than I am. So, she drove the milk truck and I (hopped?) bottles, [laughter] ran the milk to the doorsteps and brought the bottles back. … My father worked in a lumber mill [for] most of his life, but there were a few years in the early '30s that he was out of work, so, that's when he ran the dairy. … We had about twenty cows. My brother and I milked those cows morning and night, along with my father. So, we ran a dairy and my mother ran the milk house, where you cooled the milk and bottled it and so forth. So, it was a family business.

SR: Can you tell us a little bit about your father, where he grew up?

NP: My father grew up in Kansas, … and then, when he became a young man, he moved to Salida, Colorado, and that's where he met my mother. My mother was born and raised there, … and then, he moved to Idaho, after they got married, and they were … a young couple when they came to [Oregon]. They went to Oregon, first. My sister was born there, and then, they moved to Idaho and I was born in Meridian, right next door to Boise.

SR: How did he get involved in the lumber business?

NP: My father? I guess that was the most available work that was available back in the early … twentieth century. … So, he worked … up in the forest, cutting down trees and hewing railroad ties with an axe, … cut the trees down, cut them up and hewed railroad ties for a while. … My

mother cooked for the whole crew that was working up there, and then, they moved down to … Meridian, first. This was in the mountains, up about one hundred, one hundred-and-fifty miles north of Boise where they came [from], and then, they migrated down to Meridian, first, and then, into Boise proper.

SR: Was he involved in the lumber business in each of those places?

NP: Yes, all his life, except when he was out of work in the early '30s and he ran the dairy.

SR: Would they cut the ties in the woods or would they haul them out with teams of animals?

NP: … They'd haul them out. They cut them in the woods, and then, they hauled them out with teams of horses. … There weren't too many automobiles around back then. [laughter] …

SD: Your mother grew up in Colorado.

NP: In Colorado, Salida, Colorado. … Her parents, my grandparents, died when she was a toddler, and so, she was raised by her grandparents, my great-grandparents. So, I never knew my grandparents on her side of the family. …

SR: How did your parents meet? Is there a story behind how they met?

NP: None, except that my father's family moved to Salida, Colorado, and that's where my mother was born and raised. So, they met each other there and they got married, and then, they came … out West, to Oregon, first, and then, to Idaho.

SR: They were both Methodists.

NP: Well, my mother and my grandmother, my father's mother, were Methodists. … Last summer, I wrote to the Methodist church in Meridian to get my birth records. I needed it. I was a convert of the Catholic Church about ten, eleven years [ago]; no, it wasn't last summer, it was ten, eleven years ago, and I became a convert, so, I needed to know whether I was baptized or not. So, I wrote to the church and I got a record of my grandmother's and my mother's, when they joined the church, but they had no record of my baptism. … I had a piece of paper, signed by my mother, that I had been baptized. So, the Catholic Church gave me a conditional baptism, in case I hadn't been baptized. I am now baptized. [laughter]

SD: What was growing up in Idaho during the Depression like?

NP: We didn't really feel it too much. I guess my parents probably did. … My father got out of work for that short period. During the '20s, he worked steadily and there wasn't any problem, but, in the early '30s, he lost his job, … because of the Depression, and he went into the milk business and we lived all right. … We never starved or anything, like some people did. So, he made a living. The whole family … worked in the business.

SH: Had your father ever considered homesteading or trying to buy property? The West was still fairly open back then.

NP: I don't think so, because he rented all my life, until the Second World War. They bought a house in Emmett and, up until that time, we rented all the time. … In the mid '30s, … he gave up the dairy business and we moved to Grand View, Idaho. It's a little village down on the Snake River, about ninety miles south of Boise, and we farmed there. We had eighty to one hundred-acre farms down there. … I was in the eighth grade and the first and second year of high school; I went in Grand View.

SH: Did you have any extended family in the area?

NP: Well, when we lived on Whitney Bench in Boise, my dad's brother and his family lived about two blocks from us. So, for two or three years, yes, we had that family there.

SR: Was your family politically minded?

NP: Well, my father liked politics. … He didn't practice it. He was just interested in [it] and read about it and listened to it on the radio, and so, we had to have his radio. So, he was interested in that and he talked politics, a very good Democrat.

SR: How did he feel about the New Deal?

NP: Oh, he was in favor of that, most of the things.

SD: Was he ever involved in any of the WPA or CCC programs?

NP: No. He would have jumped off a bridge before he'd [have] done that. He was too proud. [laughter]

SH: You were Democrats in Idaho. Is that not a traditionally Republican state?

NP: Yes, it is, which I have now embraced. [laughter]

SH: Did your father serve in World War I?

NP: No, he didn't. His brother did. My uncle served in World War I. … I should have asked a lot of questions when I was a kid, but I didn't. I don't know why he never served. I really don't.

SH: How much older is your sister than you? Is she your only sibling?

NP: She's four-and-a-half years older than I am. She'll be eighty-eight this summer. … I had a brother. He died four years ago and he was two years younger than I.

SH: You were right in the middle.

NP: Right in the middle, yes, got squeezed from both sides. [laughter]

SH: What was your education like? Did you attend fairly large schools or one-room schoolhouses?

NP: Well, in Boise, it was in big brick buildings. … It was only grammar school. I never went to high school in Boise. We went … down the Snake River, Grand View, in my last year of grade school, eighth grade. Then, I went to finish my eighth grade there and I started high school. … Down there, it's just a little wide space in the river, [the] Snake River, and there was a one-room schoolhouse that housed all the grades and had several grades in one room. So, I did my first year of high school and started the second, and then, we moved. My father went to Mountain Home, first, and worked there for about six or eight months. … We moved over and stayed there. So, I left Grand View High School and I went to school in Mountain Home until we left there in the spring. … We went there in the fall and we left in the spring, so, I didn't finish anything in Mountain Home. Then, from there, we went to Emmett, Idaho, … about thirty miles east of Boise. … The reason we went there [was], there's a sawmill there. My father worked there and I never went to anymore high schools after that.

SH: Really?

NP: Until I got back from the service.

SH: What did you do?

NP: I worked in the sawmill.

SH: You went to work. Did your brother also go to work?

NP: No, my brother continued school. … I don't think he was in high school when we went to Emmett. I think he spent the eighth grade and [the] first, second year of high school [in Grand View], and then, I think he quit. He got married. [laughter]

SH: Did your sister continue through high school?

NP: Yes, she finished high school.

SH: Did your mother continue to cook for the logging crew?

NP: No, it was just while they were up in the mountains, in the timberland.

SH: Did she have any kind of cottage industry in the house?

NP: Well, she ran the dairy. [laughter] Yes, she was out in that milk house for eight, ten hours a day, bottling the milk, cooling the milk. So, she was a good part of our business.

SH: When the draft was instituted in 1940, did you sign up for that?

NP: Yes, you had to.

SH: However, your number never came up.

NP: Well, it was breathing down my neck in 1942, when I was working [in] the sawmill. So, in August, I decided to join the Navy, beat the draft, because I didn't want to be out in those jungles as a soldier in the South Pacific. I wanted to be in the Navy, on a ship. So, I quit and joined the Navy. … When I went to work in the sawmill, … [for some] strange reason I wanted to [do this], but I took a correspondence course in electronics, which was mainly radio and radar and underwater sound in those days, state of the art stuff. [From] 1939 until I joined the Navy, I worked with a correspondence course. … The reason I wanted to take electronics was, I worked in the sawmill. I pulled lumber on a dry chain. After it came out of the drying kilns, they ran it down the dry chain. Then, they pulled the lumber off it and put it into various loads, the different grades of lumber, and these were big buildings with a roof, and then, there was an open space, and then, a short wall, so [that] it was an open space. So, in [the] winter, it was very cold in there and I wanted to do something that I could do inside. [laughter] So, I decided to move into electronics, and so, I studied that for about three years, until I went in the Navy. … When I went in the Navy, I had the opportunity to go into electronics school. So, they sent me to eighteen months [of] electronics school. I went to boot camp in Bremerton, Washington, rained every day I was there. … Before I started boot camp, the first week, they had one of the battleships there that they were refurbishing that got hit in Pearl Harbor and they were refurbishing it, and then, they assigned me to duty [there] one day. … They have a double hull on those things now, about three or four feet wide, and … so, there's spaces, like cubicles, as you go down in the hull and they had paint built up about six or eight inches deep. So, we were down there with jackhammers. … If you're claustrophobic, you don't want to do that, [laughter] [go] down in there, knocking this paint off with the jackhammers. So, I did that one day and I decided that I wasn't going to do that anymore. … I didn't want to get in trouble, so, … the next morning, I got up early, as you do in the Navy, and I smoked four cigarettes, as fast as I could smoke them, and they made me deathly sick. [laughter] So, I went to sick bay. They kept me for a couple of days. I never went back in that battleship. [laughter]

SH: You beat the system. Do you know which ship it was?

NP: No, I don't know.

SH: Where were you when you first heard about Pearl Harbor? How did the news impact you?

NP: I was in Emmett, Idaho, working in the saw mill, and that was December [1941]. … Then, I joined the Navy in August of '42. So, I kept working in the saw mill until [I went in].

SH: How did people in Emmett react when the news came? Was it on the radio or in the newspapers?

NP: It was on the radio, yes, newspapers, and President Roosevelt, of course, "This event will live in infamy," and we listened to his broadcast on the radio.

SD: How did you feel about it?

NP: Oh, we were … distressed about it. … We had avoided the war in Europe up until that time, and then, the Japanese hit us, and so, we weren't too happy about the Japanese. So, I was kind of willing to go fight those guys for what they did to us.

SH: Prior to Pearl Harbor, had you been aware of Hitler's rise to power and the war in Europe?

NP: We were aware of it. …

SH: Were there any discussions in your community in Idaho or your school when he invaded Poland and attacked Britain?

NP: I don't remember. I don't remember anything in my school, no.

SH: Where did these discussions take place?

NP: … The news was full of it all the time, on the radio and [in] the newspapers. …

SH: Did people approve of the Lend-Lease Act? Did they want the United States to stay out of the war all together? Were people pushing to get involved in the war in Europe prior to Pearl Harbor?

NP: We would rather [that] we stayed out and we did, but … our ships kept getting hit by German submarines … out in the Atlantic, and so, that was distressing everybody. … We all knew there was a war coming. We didn't think we were going to be able to stay out of it.

SH: Had anyone been taken by the draft prior to Pearl Harbor?

NP: Oh, yes, yes. They had a draft for, now, a couple of years. When I was working in the saw mill, lumber mill, that was a vital industry, so that they didn't take me until it was late '42, when they were breathing down my neck.

SH: After you heard about Pearl Harbor, did any of your friends sign up right away?

NP: Not my friends, no. No, I didn't know anybody that did that.

SR: Did your parents support your enlisting?

NP: They didn't like it too well, but they agreed that either I was going to join on my own or [I] was going to get drafted, probably before the year was out, and that was in August. So, they acquiesced.

SR: Did your brother join up as well?

NP: Well, he joined … probably in '43, some time. … I was busy in the Navy, so, I wasn't that aware of when he was drafted, but he was married. He got a girl pregnant and he had to marry her. …

SH: They still drafted him, even though he was a father.

NP: Yes. They had a set of twins, right off the bat. So, he was married and they weren't taking married men until later in the war, so, I would say in '43 some time. … I was busy in the Navy, so, I don't know just when he did go.

SH: Did they send you from Boise to Bremerton by train?

NP: Yes, yes, everything was by train then.

SH: Was boot camp anything like you expected it would be?

NP: Well, I didn't know what to expect, but, yes, it was. [laughter] They wake you up at five o'clock in the morning and you do calisthenics for a couple of hours, and then, you go to breakfast and you come back and you march and do whatever. [laughter]

SH: You must have been in fairly good condition from working in the saw mill.

NP: Yes, on that dry chain, that gets you in good condition.

SH: I would think so.

NP: [laughter] You know, you're pulling out lumber, and it's heavy, off of the chain, throwing lumber around, eight hours a day, and it kind of builds up some muscles.

SH: After your stay in sick bay, how did your career progress?

NP: Well, I went into the classes, the boot camp classes, you know. You do calisthenics in the morning and do some marching, so [that] you learn how to march and that business, and then, you go to class and they teach you the basics of the Navy and how to stay out of trouble and salute officers. [laughter]

SH: Were you also taking aptitude tests?

NP: No, no. Before I joined, they signed me up for electronics school. They gave me … the opportunity to do that, that's what I wanted to do, … because I'd been studying electronics. So, they scheduled me for electronics school. … I only was in boot camp [for] about three weeks, when, normally, you'd get six or eight, and they shipped me back to Chicago, the Chicago Armory, to a pre-radio school. The Armory sits right on the lake. It goes out on a platform, … right on the lake, and I was there for six weeks and that was more boot camp and electronics, elementary math and electronics, vacuum tubes and teaching you the rudiments of electronics. Six weeks there, and then, they shipped me down to the University of Houston for three months

and I got some good courses down there for three months. … Then, they sent me out to electronics school in Treasure Island, California, which was *the* electronics school in the Navy in the Second World War, and I spent six months there and I graduated in the top ten percent of my class, even though I didn't have a high school education. [laughter] … So, I got my choice of service. … All my buddies were going to submarines, so, I volunteered for submarines. I'd never seen a submarine. [laughter] So, the moment I did that, they shipped me back to New London, Connecticut, the sub base at Groton, Connecticut, and I had about six weeks of radar and radio and underwater sound, submarine electronics, equipment that they used in submarines. … After six weeks there, in the middle of that, that was 1943, the latter part of '43, … I took a trip down to New London one evening; I think it was a Wednesday night, during the week. I think I went to a movie and I took the bus back to the sub base. … We were always crowded, so, I was hanging on a strap in the front of the bus and there was a girl hanging on the strap right in front of me and she was with her girlfriend and I heard them talking that they were going to a dance at the sub base on Saturday night. So, I resolved to go … to that dance, [laughter] and so, [here] came the weekend and wouldn't you know it, I drew the [duty assignment]. I had the duty, … but I didn't have a watch, so, I was confined to the barracks. So, I put on my dress blues and I snuck out, [laughter] down to the dance, and I walked in the dance and here are these two girls standing in the middle of the dance floor and there were about twenty sailors around, surrounded. I barged through that group, I grabbed her and I didn't let her up for air the rest of the night. That's my wife. [laughter]

SH: I assume you got back in the barracks without getting caught.

NP: Yes, I didn't get caught. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to date her and I dated her two or three times a week for the rest of the time I was there.

SD: Was she there as a nurse?

NP: Yes, she was in nurse's training. … The Norwich State Hospital, a hospital for the insane, it was about a mile up the road from the sub base, … she was affiliating there and … all nurses had to go through that training. She was there while I was there. That's how we met.

SR: You mentioned that you trained in Texas and California. Was the culture there vastly different from that in Idaho? How did you feel there?

NP: Well, it was strongly Navy, you know. … You'd go on leave to San Francisco and you were just surrounded by sailors, and a lot of girls. Where you found one, you found the other. [laughter]

SH: Before you went for training in Chicago, you had never been there before. You had never really traveled before.

NP: No, no.

SH: What was it like, for a young kid from the West?

NP: It was completely brand-new. I love Chicago. … Man, that was a sailor's paradise there. [laughter] … We didn't get much leave, just on Saturday night, but you'd go over to, what the heck do they call these places, where the girls [were]?

SH: The USO?

NP: The USO, yes.

SH: Red Cross?

NP: Red Cross, USO, and the first time I went over to the USO [was] in Chicago. The first time I got leave, because that was just an extension of boot camp there, though, we had technical training, instead of the other [kind of training], I went over to the USO. … It was in a big building and you had to walk up a bunch of stairs, you know, a big, long [set of] concrete stairs out in the front of the building, and I walked up to the top of the stairs. … Just as I got there, there must have been six thousand girls [that] came out of one part of the building and went into the USO. [laughter] I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. I said, "Chicago, I love you." So, I met a girl from Idaho that night. [laughter]

SH: Did you?

NP: Yes, and I went with her until I left Chicago, about six weeks.

SH: Was she there to work in the war industries?

NP: Yes, yes. I don't remember what she was doing, but she was working there.

SH: Where were you in Texas?

NP: … The University of Houston.

SH: Were you part of a special program at the university?

NP: This was more electronics school. You went to the naval armory in Chicago, first, for the elementary stuff and, in the University of Houston, you got sort of college-level math and electronics. …

SH: However, this was set up for the Navy. You were not part of the regular college classes.

NP: … It was a Navy program, yes.

SH: There were no undergraduates in the program.

NP: No. There were other undergraduates there, but, no, they weren't in that program. It was a Navy program.

SH: Were you housed at the University of Houston?

NP: Yes, yes.

SH: Did you have to wear uniforms to and from class?

NP: Yes, yes.

SH: Did you still have to stand duty or watch?

NP: Yes. Everywhere in the Navy, [laughter] you have to have time for watches.

SH: When you went to Treasure Island in California, did you notice any difference in your training? Was it getting more intense?

NP: It was, you know, moving higher up the ladder all the time. … Out there, we concentrated on the actual equipment, the radar. Radar was state of the art then, you know. It was new stuff. Underwater sound was fairly new, and then, radio.

SH: Were there any security checks or security measures because of what you were getting involved with?

NP: Oh, yes. … That was secret. When I'd be transferred from one place to another, you couldn't take your books and notes with you. They were sent *via* secret [courier]. …

SH: Such as from Texas to Treasure Island?

NP: Yes, yes. They were kept protected as secret material. So, that was all secret stuff.

SH: Were there any background checks conducted on yourself?

NP: I guess there was. I filled out enough papers there. [laughter] So, I'm sure they did, though, I wasn't aware that they did it.

SH: You mentioned being claustrophobic between the double walls of the battleship.

NP: No, I said, "If you're claustrophobic, you couldn't stay in there," because … you're in about a four-by-six cubicle, which was about that wide, down in the bowels, and you have to crawl down through these things to get down there. … So, if you're [claustrophobic]; I wasn't. I am now, but [was not then]. …

SH: I could not figure out why you would volunteer for submarines if you were claustrophobic.

NP: [laughter] No, I'm not. I wasn't claustrophobic.

SH: Good.

NP: I developed that later. [laughter]

SH: In New London, were you there only for school or were you attached to a boat refit?

NP: No, I was there just for school and I was just studying the specific radar, underwater sound and radio that … were used on submarines. … When I left there, I got assigned to the *Spadefish*. … It was a new boat. It hadn't been launched when I went with it. When I got through with that school, I could look at the screen on that radar equipment and tell you which tube was bad, if a tube went out. They were all vacuum tubes then, but I could just look at the screen and go plug in the tube that was bad. So, that's what they did. They just took us inch-by-inch through all that equipment and how it worked and how to fix it and what the symptoms were.

SH: Was there any training on what to expect once you were on a boat?

NP: No.

SH: There was nothing on escaping or maneuvers.

NP: … No. I went aboard … just before it was launched. It was in Mare Island [Naval Shipyard], California. … That's where it was built and it was launched there just after I was assigned to it.

SH: You were there for the actual launching.

NP: I was there for the launching and I was there for … putting all the equipment on it, and so, I became familiar with where everything was and we were all purloining all the vacuum tubes we could get our hands on, stuffing them away on the ship, because we knew we were going to need them when you get out to sea. So, we had a lot of spare parts when we went to sea. [laughter]

SH: Did you take any shakedown cruises?

NP: … Not too much. We went out for about three weeks, out off the coast of San Francisco, and we went through the exercises of, you know, tracking ships and firing torpedoes. We didn't actually fire the torpedoes. We'd go through the motions, so [that] the crew would … know how to work together. … After three weeks, we went down to San Diego, because the scientists down there had invented a frequency modulated underwater sound equipment. … See, the echo ranging sound equipment, you know, it sends out a pulse of energy and it bounces back and you see a target, but the Submarine Signal Company had sold the same equipment to the Japanese, right up until the war started. So, they had the exact same equipment on their ships as we had. So, these scientists down in San Diego had developed this frequency modulated equipment. The regular echo ranging gears operated on a single frequency, just one frequency, and this frequency modulated equipment swept through a band of frequency and the theory was, it will sweep through that frequency so fast, they won't hear it. So, they installed it on our boat and we went out on a trial run off of San Diego and we turned the stuff on, turned our equipment on, at the same time we had our other echo ranging equipment on. … I put the headphones on [and it]

sounded like a chamber of horrors, squeals and howls and screams. … A couple of the scientists that had built it were on the boat with us. They were out there teaching me and my other technician how to use it and they were taken aback by all the noise it made, because … that was the purpose of it; it was supposed to be silent, so [that] you wouldn't hear it on the other equipment, but, [when] you got on the other equipment, it sounded like a chamber of horrors. … Shortly, I don't know, two or three weeks after that, we went to Pearl Harbor, and then, on out to the war zone.

SH: Did you keep that equipment?

NP: We kept that equipment. … When we got in the war zone, we never turned it on, because the Japanese had the same equipment. It was squealing and howling on ours, squealing and howling on theirs, so, we didn't want to [lead them to the boat]. I just played with it for about three war patrols. … Admiral [Charles A.] Lockwood, [Jr.], who was Commander of Submarines, Pacific, [Commander Submarine Force Pacific Fleet or COMSUBPAC] during the war, got the idea, or somebody gave him the idea, of using that equipment for mine detectors. … They put up some equipment on another new boat, hadn't been on a war patrol, yet, out in the war zone, yet, and, sure enough, it worked. The mines came up loud and clear. So, Admiral Lockwood decided that he'd use it for mine [detecting]. He equipped nine other boats with that gear. … Meantime, we were out on war patrols around Japan and there was the Sea of Japan, between Japan and Russia and Korea, … you know, with ships running around with their running lights on in the middle of the war. … There'd never been any of our ships in there. So, he had the idea to … use all these straits that you can go through between the islands of Japan and Korea. They had those heavily mined. So, that's why he wanted mine detectors, so [that] he could get submarines into the Sea of Japan. So, he equipped nine boats and we went through our requisite of training as a wolf pack and it was June 1945 that we went into the Sea of Japan, through Tsushima Strait, which is the strait between Japan and Korea. [For] eighteen hours, one night, we went through mine fields. [laughter] … I only had about an eight-inch plan position indicator screen … and these mines would show up as … a blob about that big on an eight-inch screen, you know. They're taking up maybe forty or fifty yards on the screen [laughter] and … I'd try to get the middle of them and give a range and bearing to the officer on the plotting board in the coning tower and he was plotting them on the thing. … I could hear him telling the Captain, the Captain was … in the coning tower and controlling the ship, and I could hear him telling the Captain, "Mine, three degrees to starboard. Mine, five degrees port," and I knew I couldn't give him [accuracy] within forty yards. [laughter] So, I was sitting there, gritting my teeth and hoping we didn't hit them. So, eighteen hours, we went through [the] Tsushima Strait, got all three boats one night, and then, three the next two nights, so [that] we had nine boats in the Sea of Japan. We were the first boat in the first group in. So, we went up to northern Japan and waited for all the boats to get in before we started firing and we sunk … the first Russian ship of the Second World War, the first one we fired at. [laughter] … We had a field day. They were running around with their running lights on.

SH: Like sitting ducks.

NP: Yes, sitting ducks. We just waited and waited until dark, and then, we'd go on the surface and pick them up on the radar and fire.

SH: How many were in the pack that went in with you?

NP: Nine boats, yes; eight of us come out.

SH: You lost one.

NP: We lost one, yes. We came out through the strait between Hokkaido and Honshu, that's the northern two islands, [Tsugaru Strait], came out on the surface. … The Navy intelligence had got us; you know, when they lay those minefields, they lay a path so [that] their ships … know where they are and their ships can go through. Well, they [US Navy intelligence] got us that path, so [that] we could come out on the surface, and, sure enough, it worked, because we didn't hit any mines. … That's the first time I'd ever worn a life preserver on a submarine. [laughter] We all had life preservers on there, as we were coming out that night, because … we're passing destroyers and all kinds of warships and they'd just sit there and watch us go by.

SH: Really?

NP: Yes. They didn't get a shot [off]. Nobody even fired a shot at us and there were … eight boats, submarines, on the surface at night, going out. [laughter]

SH: Did they not see you?

NP: Maybe they didn't see us, I don't know. … By that time, the Japanese had radar. During the early part of the war, they didn't have radar, so, we had a real advantage there, but, by that time, they had good radar.

SH: That close to home, you would have thought they would have been more vigilant.

NP: Yes, yes. So, we came out with no mishaps.

SH: To return to the commissioning of the ship, how much pomp and circumstance was involved in commissioning a boat during World War II? I know that they were building them as quickly as possible. Was there a ceremony?

NP: Yes, they had a ceremony and they had an admiral and higher officers [there]. …

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

SH: Please, continue.

NP: Okay. Well, I don't know, why they came out on the surface? You know, it'd take us like an hour to come out through the strait on the surface, maybe eighteen, twenty hours submerged, and, [in regards to] the mines, … we had … the cleared path from the intelligence people. It was right, because we didn't hit any mines. They got that intelligence [quickly]. You know, they changed those routes through there probably at least once a week and our intelligence got that

information within twenty-four hours of the time we came out. So, I was amazed at those guys, that they were able to get that information and get it back to the Pentagon and back out to us in twenty-four hours. …

SH: You spent all that time shooting torpedoes and so forth. Did you have any defenses coming out or were you pretty much empty?

NP: We had deck guns, five-inch deck guns, and machine guns. We had a five-inch deck gun fore and one aft, and then, we had two big caliber, I don't … remember what the caliber was, on the coning tower, one fore and one aft, and then, there were guys up there with rifles on the coning tower. So, we were pretty well-armed.

SH: Had you fired all of your torpedoes in the Sea of Japan?

NP: Yes, we had expended our torpedoes.

SH: How long were you in Pearl Harbor before you left for the war zone?

NP: Oh, we just spent a week or so [there]. It was more training, you know. We were cruising around at battle stations and practicing shooting, firing torpedoes and whatever, just training.

SH: Did you see any of the devastation from the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor?

NP: Well, the ships, the battleships, were still there, those that were sunk, and we went right in the harbor, so, I didn't see them, because, you know, I'm not on the coning tower. [laughter] Most of the crew was down below.

SH: Did you get any leave when you were at Pearl?

NP: Not at that time, no. We just sat at the dock. [In] the time we were in the harbor, we were just sitting at the dock, loading supplies, torpedoes and supplies.

SH: What kind of security did you see at Pearl Harbor, as opposed to what you had seen in California? Was there any difference?

NP: No, no, it was pretty tight in both places.

SH: You talked about making sure to purloin as many extra vacuum tubes as you could. Were there shortages that you were aware of?

NP: No. … Submarines had top priority on everything, food, ammunition, torpedoes, fuel. We got everything we needed.

SH: When did you have the sense that being a part of a submarine crew was something special? Was that something that you knew when you volunteered or was that something that you became aware of afterward?

NP: Well, it became evident as we went on, but we had an excellent crew. I guess that's why we came back. …

SH: How experienced were your officers?

NP: My immediate officer, [the] communications officer, didn't have any more experience [than I]. He had never been on a sub, either, but our captain, of course, had made a number of runs and … all the other officers had been on the old "pig boats," we called them, and they were fairly experienced. … Well, there's a guy down in Texas, now, writing a book about *Spadefish*. He did some work … studying submarines, World War II submarines, and he determined that the *Spadefish* was, as he calls it, "The hottest submarine in the Second World War." We were only out eighteen months, but we were more active and sank more ships per unit of time than any other ship in the Navy. So, he's writing a book about *Spadefish*. So, I've had about four or five hour, two-hour long interviews on the telephone with him and he's interviewing a lot of the other crew, too, who are still here. … So, we were active. It was a "hot" ship. … Before that, everybody thought the *Tang* was the most active and hottest sub, but he says our ship was, [based] on the record. So, we were active. Captain [Commander G. W.] Underwood was our first captain. … He was on two war patrols. … It was in the Sea of Japan, the Yellow Sea, between Korea and China. Those two runs were in the South Yellow Sea and … we sunk a lot of ships.

SH: After you left Pearl, where did you go next?

NP: To Guam and got some more fuel, loaded up on fuel, and, of course, we hadn't expended any fish, … any torpedoes, so, we didn't need those, but we did need fuel. So, we pulled alongside the tender and took on fuel and we went right up, war patrol, South China Sea.

SH: On a patrol, how many boats would go out at the same time?

NP: Usually three in a wolf pack, three to five, but usually three, yes.

SH: Were they considered sister ships?

NP: Yes, yes, and they weren't always the same ships, either. No, they'd be different ships, but the most senior captain in a wolf pack was the wolf pack leader and, sometimes, it was our captain, sometimes, it was another ship. …

SH: How did they communicate between the boats?

NP: We had radio.

SH: You were not always silent.

NP: No, we had radio, with the dot-dot-dot, and Morse code, and then, we could communicate over the radar, too. Our … X-band radar had a key on it that they could [use to] send Morse

code. So, between ships, … if you've both got your radars on, you can read the code on that. I couldn't read the Morse code, so, I had to get a radioman up there to read it when they wanted to communicate. [laughter]

SH: What was a typical day like for you once you left Guam and entered the war zone?

NP: The ship or mine, myself?

SH: You.

NP: Well, I was the only radio tech aboard ship and I had been through all that school and I came out of … Treasure Island … as a first class petty officer. So, I was the only radio technician on my ship, so, I didn't stand watches. … About every five minutes, over the intercom, it was, "Pike to the coning tower." [laughter] That was twenty-four hours a day, "Pike to the coning tower." [laughter] That was my duty. … We had an awful lot of electronic equipment, about four radio transmitters, transmitter/receivers, and two radars, … three underwater sound equipments. It was a full-time job just keeping it [in operation], because, you know, when the ship is running, it vibrates, and then, when you fire the torpedoes, it [goes], "Boom," so, it kind of shakes up the electronic equipment, because they were vacuum tubes in those days. … It just kept me busy twenty-four hours a day, just fixing the equipment. … That's all I had to do, was just maintain the equipment.

SH: What did you do when you were not fixing equipment? How did you pass the time?

NP: Usually in my bunk or eating a meal, [laughter] because I was … [on call] twenty-four hours a day, "Pike to the coning tower."

SH: You had liberty to go into the mess and get food.

NP: Yes. That's one thing about a submarine, … the freezers were below deck, where they kept the food, and we could go down there and get anything you wanted to. That was the one thing you had aboard submarines and we ate better than … most of the Navy, particularly coming back from war patrol. It took probably a week or ten days to … go back to Guam or down to Majuro or someplace where we'd go back for refits and, all the way back, we had all these steaks and things that we had had leftover. So, we're eating steaks every meal [laughter] and the rest of the Navy was existing on beans.

SH: How often did you get fresh vegetables, eggs or butter?

NP: We had eggs, because we were only out for ninety days, so, it still kept. Fresh vegetables, we would have them for a week or two after we went to sea, but, after that, it was canned and frozen.

SH: How large were your quarters?

NP: … Well, the Captain had his own cabin. So, … he maybe had an eight-by-six foot cabin to himself. The other officers slept up in, … we called it the officers' quarters, and they had rather big bunks, you know, and a lot more room than the crew, but they weren't luxurious. [laughter] You know, you just don't have the space, didn't have the space on those subs. … The new nuclear subs have even less space. They have less space than we had.

SH: Really?

NP: Yes. … The crew, we bunked back in the after battery room. You know, the submarine runs on batteries when it's submerged and they have one big compartment and the batteries are down below the decks, in the bottom hold, and above the deck are bunks, with about that much space between the bunks, just racks of bunks, and that's where we bunked. … Each of us had a locker with about a couple of square feet of space to keep our personal items.

SH: Was your mail censored? Every time you came in from patrol, were there usually letters waiting for you?

NP: … Yes, yes, it was censored. Anything going out was cut up and [had] holes all through it and, every time we came into port, we'd be out for two or three months and I'd get a stack of mail that high, all from her, [his wife]. [laughter] … I was engaged to be married when I went in the Navy. I wouldn't hear from my fiancée for months at a time; from her, I got stacks of [mail]. [laughter]

SH: Your fiancée was in Idaho.

NP: Yes. … You know, these guys in the services now complain about how they don't get back in a year or so. I went in the Navy in August '42. October '45, I went home again. I never got home; … I never had a leave that long to go home. I had leave over a weekend, that sort of thing, but no extended leave. When the war was over, I went home.

SR: You mentioned that you signed up for submarines because of your friends.

NP: Yes.

SR: Were any of you assigned to the same submarine?

NP: No, no, because we were all radio technicians and there was only one per sub. So, we didn't … go with our buddies. … A number of them went back to New London. We went back to school there together, … all of us that volunteered for submarines.

SH: Did you ever meet up with any of them in Guam or anyplace else?

NP: Yes, I used to see them.

SH: Where were most of the men in your crew from? Was there a preponderance of West Coast or East Coast guys or were they from everywhere?

NP: Everywhere.

SH: How many men were on a crew?

NP: Seventy-two, nominally seventy-two, sometimes a couple more, sometimes a couple less.

SH: How often were there squabbles onboard?

NP: Not too often, really. There were squabbles, but not too often. They carefully screened people for that kind of thing and, if people had any history of that, they didn't get on the sub, because it is close quarters and you're rubbing elbows with the whole crew daily, [at] night, twenty-four hours a day.

SH: If there were squabbles, what were they over, mostly?

NP: Oh, I don't know. I never had any. [laughter]

SH: Were there Marines onboard the boat?

NP: Marines? No, except if we were just transporting them from one place to another and, once or twice, we did that. We had a few Marines aboard. … We had a Japanese aboard one time.

SH: Why?

NP: We sunk a ship and we picked up a Japanese. They interrogated him and threw him back overboard. [laughter]

SH: Really?

NP: Yes. I hated that, but you couldn't keep him aboard. He could sink our sub.

SH: Did he come off of a ship that you had sunk?

NP: Yes.

SH: Where were you at that point?

NP: We're just off the west coast of Korea, in the Yellow Sea.

SH: What had his duty been on the ship that you sunk? Did you ever find out?

NP: No. I don't think they really were successful in getting anything out of him.

SH: Did anyone speak enough Japanese to converse with him?

NP: I don't think so, not on our ship.

SH: Why would they pick him up?

NP: I don't know. [laughter]

SH: Did you ever pick up any downed flyers or other US sailors that were at sea?

NP: We never picked any up, but we stood lifeguard for them a lot of times. You know, we'd be out on patrol and they'd be coming over to bomb … Japan and we'd have to stand guard while they're going over and going back, in case they did … get into trouble. So, we did that a lot.

SH: What does that include? Do you stay on the surface?

NP: Just stay on the surface, which is dangerous enough in the daytime, … because you'd be on the surface not more than half-an-hour, an hour, and you'd have a plane on you.

SH: What is the scariest thing that you remember from your patrols, other than the mines?

NP: … Yes, those were kind of scary, that night. … Off the southern coast of Japan, we were making a daylight run on a convoy going into Japan. … We'd go in-between two escorts, right inside the escort screen, and get as close as we can to the ships, and then, fire, and then, submerge as deep as we can go and get out of there. So, we were within a ring of escorts and the Captain had ordered … the forward tube outer doors open, ready to fire, and he said, "Standby to fire." … My battle station, submerged, was up in the forward torpedo room. We had an underwater sound gear that operated in the audio range, just like putting your ear out in the water, it operated in the audio range, that I operated, submerged, during battle stations. … I was listening on this for, when they fire that tube, there's a big rush of compressed air … and it makes a lot of noise. So, I heard this tube fire, and so, … I took a bearing and I got on the intercom to the Captain, who was in the coning tower. I say, "Fish running hot, straight and normal on 090." … He came back, "What? I haven't fired, yet," and so, I stayed on this thing. He says, "Stay on it and give me bearings." … I'm sorry; let me go back. The first thing he said was, "Emergency 500." "I haven't fired, yet," [was] the second thing. That first thing he said saved our neck, because it wasn't our tube that fired. It was a submarine probably three hundred yards from us, a Japanese submarine, and so, by the time he got back to me on the intercom, we were at ninety degrees and headed toward the bottom at about forty knots an hour. … I stayed on the fish that was fired and it came around and you heard sound all around and it was just going over us, and then, I tracked it off to the other side. So, a submarine fired a fish right at us, within three hundred yards of us. … If we'd had a captain that stopped and asked questions, we wouldn't be here. I wouldn't be here today, but … the first words out of his mouth [were], "Emergency 500," and everybody went into taking the ship down. So, within forty-five seconds, we were headed for the bottom. So, that was probably the closest call we ever had.

SH: They did not pursue you.

NP: No, we got out of there. The enemy submarines, we didn't count on them. … Most of our attacks were at night, on the surface. We didn't like to go in submerged in daytime. … They had a lot of escort ships and dropped a lot of depth charges. We didn't like to take that, so, we'd go in at night. … During most of the war, we had radar and they didn't, so, we could go into a convoy. We'd go in-between two escort ships, get right inside the escort ring, fire our fish and sink the ships, go right out on the surface, between the two other escorts, and they'd never see us. We wouldn't take any fire, so, we preferred to attack that way, at night.

SH: You said that when you were on the surface in the daytime, planes would be over you before long. Did you stay up, say, for two hours and down for one?

NP: No, we'd just go down, stay until [the] night. We could stay several days submerged.

SH: Did you ever feel as though you were being tracked, that someone knew where you were?

NP: Yes, yes, particularly one night up in the Yellow Sea, between Korea and China. … We were tracking a convoy, a big convoy, and I guess it was headed for Korea. We were doing what … I just told you, going between two escorts near the rear of the convoy and go in, pick us a couple or three ships, fire a fish, and then, go out between a couple going [the] back way, but this night, we just got inside the escort ring and we were setting up to fire and they saw us. I guess they picked us up on the radar. So, they started shooting at us, destroyers. A couple of destroyers were shooting at us with … everything they had. So, we couldn't dive, because it's shallow water up there. We only had about thirty-two fathoms. With that kind of water, they'd blast you right out of the water. So, we had to run for it, so, we did. We went out between two destroyer escorts, I guess they were. They weren't destroyers and we got … just right up between two escorts and they saw us, picked us up on the radar, I gather, and they opened up with everything they had. Everything was flying around and we couldn't dive. So, the Captain was in the coning tower, of course, and I was up there on the radar. That was where I was on the surface battle station and the Captain says, "Give me the … range and bearings on the two closest targets." So, I got the range and bearings as fast as I could, gave them to the torpedo data computer, the guy on that, who was the executive officer, usually the executive officer, and the Captain took a couple of bearings with the periscope. We fired one fish at that ship, one fish at that escort and we hit them both, "Boom," right out of the water, and we got out of there. … If we hadn't hit them, then, we would have been goners. … A submarine just can't compete on the surface with a destroyer escort.

SD: When another ship is hit, can you feel the vibrations in your submarine?

NP: Yes, oh, yes. Well, I don't remember ever, you know, having a submarine hit, but, when our fish hit … the other ship, one of the ships we're shooting at, yes, you can hear that. … The blast hits the hull, it gets back to it, and, "Boom," like being in a barrel and somebody putting a stick of dynamite off.

SH: How silent could a submarine be? Were you ever at a point where you needed to be?

NP: Oh, yes, oh, yes. … When you're making an approach, a submerged approach, you're always at silent running, yes, because you're maneuvering right inside the convoy, … inside the escort ring. So, you can run fairly silent then, … if you're not going all ahead flank or something. If you're doing a reasonable speed, you're not too noisy.

SH: Is it important for the crew to be quiet within the submarine?

NP: Oh, yes. … The motor machinists can't be hammering on their engines up there. [laughter]

SH: How often were you in trouble because you did not have any more torpedoes and there were still targets that you needed to hit?

NP: Not very often, but, one night, we had gone into a convoy and expended, I think, … all our fish but one. We had one left and we'd sunk two or three ships. We sunk a carrier that night, an aircraft carrier. That was the first thing we'd shot, and then, we got some other ships after we did that, but, then, of course, we got picked up by the escorts, because we were on the surface at night and we had one fish left and … we were running for it. We were [at] all ahead flank, headed out to sea, and I guess, probably, [it was] a destroyer that night that was chasing us, because I was watching him on the radar. He's just coming up like this, you know. So, the Captain said, "Give me a range and bearing on the closest target." So, I got a range and bearing on it and he fired that one lone fish right down the nose, which is a pretty hard shot, to hit right down the bow, and he hit him, took that destroyer out of the water, and we got away and, again, we were up in the Yellow Sea with shallow water. We couldn't dive.

SR: Being on a submarine, how aware were you of outside events?

NP: Well, big events, yes, we were aware [of them], because we had … the Morse code coming in when we were on the surface. … All the time we were on the surface, Morse code is coming in, and so, we were getting Navy news and battlefield news and so forth and messages between ships and Admiral Lockwood would be sending messages. … So, we got all kinds of information like that. General news, … very little of that; when President Roosevelt died, we were out at sea and we got that right away. …

SH: What was the reaction?

NP: Oh, everybody was very sad about that.

SH: How much confidence did you have in Harry Truman?

NP: Oh, I didn't know him until now. [laughter] You know, we really hadn't heard too much about him, because Roosevelt had been President for three terms and he was on his fourth when he died. …

SR: Were the messages sent back and forth in code?

NP: Yes, Morse code.

SR: Did you ever send out fake messages to confuse the enemy?

NP: No, no. … If the enemy is around, then, we were trying to not be seen or heard. We … weren't sending messages. It was just radio silence.

SR: Did you ever intercept messages from enemy ships?

NP: Yes, but we couldn't understand it. [laughter] … We didn't have an interpreter, anybody that spoke Japanese, so, we really couldn't use that.

SR: How rigid was the relationship between officers and enlisted men on the ship?

NP: No, it was very informal. …

SR: You all worked together.

NP: Yes, yes. The Captain was probably a little aloof most of the time. He wasn't to me, because I was up in the coning tower. Every time we're at battle stations, which was probably two-thirds of the time, he was there in the coning tower with me. We were crowding each other, [laughter] trying to get space to each other's stance. So, I knew him very well. I know all the captains very well, because I spent so much time with them.

SH: You had two captains.

NP: Three, two; did we have three? … Underwood and [Commander W.J.] Germershausen. …

SH: Did you view the Japanese differently than you did the Germans, as an enemy?

NP: I don't think so. Of course, we didn't have any opportunity with the Germans.

SH: At the time that you were assigned to the *Spadefish*, was anyone being assigned to the Atlantic sub fleet or were all boats headed for the Pacific then?

NP: … No, there were boats in the Atlantic, but the new boats they were building, they were sending them to the Pacific. That was after Pearl Harbor, right after Pearl Harbor, so, we needed them out in the Pacific.

SH: Was the Pacific fleet much bigger?

NP: Oh, yes, … toward the end of the war it was, because that's where all the action was. The war in Europe was kind of winding down and … they had taken out the German fleet, so, there weren't too many German subs around toward the end of the war.

SH: Did you notice a difference in the way that you were supplied once the hostilities ended in Europe? Was there a new focus or any change for you in the Pacific Theater?

NP: No, I didn't.

SH: It was just the same as it had been prior to that.

NP: Yes.

SH: Some of the men from other services have noted that some things did change.

NP: We were aware [of] when they signed the armistice in Europe, but it really didn't affect what we were doing.

SH: When you ran out of torpedoes and other things, would you always return to Guam?

NP: No. We went to Majuro, down in the Marshall Islands, that's down near the Equator, south of Guam, once. We went to Guam three [times] and I think we went to Pearl Harbor twice.

SH: How many war patrols did you make on the *Spadefish*?

NP: Five, [in] eighteen months.

SH: Did the crew stay the same? Were there any replacements?

NP: No. … They were supposed to transfer a third of the crew [after] each war patrol, but they didn't always do that. The Captain managed to hang on to his key people. The key people never got off. I stayed on the boat the whole time and the core crew stayed, never got off the *Spadefish*. … It was the seamen, you know, the lower grade people. …

SH: Why do you think they wanted to rotate them off every patrol?

NP: Well, the theory was, it calmed their nerves. [laughter] It was kind of nerve-wracking out there.

SH: They would come off and go for R&R or something.

NP: Yes.

SH: Then, you would bring in somebody who had the experience, but had been on R&R.

NP: … Yes, they'd had their time.

SH: Do you think it worked?

NP: Yes, I think so.

SH: Did you ever wind up with someone from the original crew rotating back onboard?

NP: No, no. Like I said, the key people stayed. The chief motor machinist, the chief torpedo man, the chief technicians, the chief radioman, they never got off.

SH: Was there a chief of the boat?

NP: Yes, yes. He was a chief, too, a chief petty officer.

SH: Did you have to qualify for other positions on the boat?

NP: … Yes, so [that] everybody knows how to operate everything.

SH: Can you explain that?

NP: Yes, that's when you get your Dolphins; when you're a qualified submariner is when you qualify for submarines. That's when you're supposed to know how to operate everything on the boat.

SH: Was there a ritual involved in getting your Dolphins?

NP: No.

SH: You did not have to drink for them.

NP: No. We didn't, anyway; maybe some boats did. [laughter] …

SH: Were there times when you had alcohol onboard?

NP: Not onboard ship, no; as soon as we got off, yes. [laughter] As soon as we went to a rest camp, they broke it out. [laughter]

SH: How long would you be in a rest camp?

NP: Rest camp was normally two weeks; sometimes, we didn't stay that long, two to three weeks.

SH: What was the shortest rest that you ever had?

NP: We just came in to port, refueled, … loaded up with new fish and took off, because [on] one run, we went out and, just within two weeks, we had emptied our fish, expended all our fish, and had to go get new ones.

SH: If you expended everything, you did not have to stay out there.

NP: No, there wasn't any point, because you can't do anything.

SH: What kind of reports did you have to write?

NP: … I never wrote written reports. I reported directly to the communications officer and … I'd just go talk [to him]. He was just like another shipmate and I'd always go talk to him, every day and every night. [laughter] Then, he'd talk to the Captain. I never went and talked, reported, directly to the Captain.

SH: Did anyone ever get into any trouble on the boat?

NP: No, I don't remember any problem.

SH: While in the rest camps, did anybody have any altercations with the shore patrol?

NP: No. … Well, the only place we were in civilization was back in Pearl and we stayed at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel there. That was taken over by the Navy. So, that was choice duty, when we came back there, but on the islands, in Guam, they went over to the other side of the island. … The first time we pulled into Guam, they had just taken the island back from the Japanese about two weeks before we came back and they just got time to get a submarine tender in there and we had to come in and get a refit and they went … clear over the other side of the island. There was about five thousand Japanese still running around in the jungles … and they went clear over on the other side of the island, [which is] just thick jungle, and they carved out about a hundred yard space along the shore, so [that] we could swim, and they put up some temporary buildings and that was our rest camp. … We had a sailor with a pistol on one end, a sailor with a pistol on the other. The first afternoon we pulled into the rest camp, the Japanese killed five sailors in a banana grove right next door to the rest camp, for their shoes. They wanted their shoes. … We stayed there two weeks and we were sleeping there with all that five thousand Japanese running around and two guys with pistols. I was happy to get back to war patrol. [laughter]

SH: Being on a submarine, did you ever interact with anybody in the Army or the Air Corps?

NP: We transported some Marines to, I've forgotten what island it was now, took them to one of the islands out there, one time.

SH: Were they on a special assignment?

NP: Yes, special assignment, secret assignment. They never told us what it was.

SH: Did you ever figure it out?

NP: [laughter] No, we had too much else to worry about. … I mentioned that frequency modulated sound gear; that was the instrument [that was] to get me to some rather choice duty out there, because, I mentioned the other ships, they put it on nine other ships and, eventually, put it on eighteen boats. So, they didn't really have time to train the other technicians on the other boats that much. Maybe they'd get a week, ten days, with the San Diego people to train them and they would frequently have trouble with that equipment and they couldn't fix it. So,

Admiral Lockwood would get in his plane and he'd come up to wherever we were. He'd fly up to wherever we were, I'd get on the plane with him, and then, he'd fly me back to the submarine, because I had the first one and I'd been playing with it for over a year, and I'd go and help the guy fix the equipment. [laughter] Then, I'd get back on Admiral Lockwood's plane, with him, he always flew with the plane, and [it would] take me back to the boat, and so, I got some choice duty with the Admiral because of that equipment.

SH: How did he treat you?

NP: Oh, very nice. Of course, … he rode in the front of the plane and I rode in the back. That's Navy protocol. [laughter]

SH: What kind of plane was it?

NP: It was a fairly good sized plane. I don't remember what it was. It wasn't a war plane. It wasn't armed. … It was a Navy plane.

SH: When you say back to the boat, do you mean back to Guam or the other islands?

NP: … Wherever the *Spadefish* was.

SH: Where it was tied up.

NP: Tied up, yes, because I only went when we were ashore. He didn't come out to sea to get me. [laughter]

SH: You left California as a first class petty officer already.

NP: Yes, yes.

SH: Did your rate ever change?

NP: Yes. I think it was the second war patrol [that] I made chief and we got … a first class radio technician, in addition to me, so [that] we had two of us there, then. Life got a little easier for me. [laughter]

SH: You could actually go back to your bunk.

NP: Yes, right. His name was Joe Case.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

SR: This is tape two of an interview with Mr. Neal Pike on March 3, 2005, in Bethesda, Maryland, with Sarah Rice …

SD: … Stephanie Darrell …

SH: … and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Please, continue. You were talking about Joe Case.

NP: Joe Case. Yes, he was a first class radio technician.

SH: Where was he from?

NP: Los Angeles, I think. That's where he … has lived since the war and I think he came from California.

SR: Have you kept in contact with anyone from the *Spadefish*?

NP: Well, yes, I'm still in contact with them. … The submarine veterans of World War II formed an organization called Sub Vets of World War II. … Not so much anymore, but … each state had a chapter, and then, once a year, we'd have a national convention and people from all over the country would go to the meeting. So, through the Sub Vets, over the years, the last convention we went to was in Reno, Nevada, I think in '89 or '90, somewhere back there, but that's still in existence, and then, the *Spadefish* crew has had a newsletter ever since the Second World War and we still have it. … One of the crew members, Buck Miller, writes it, he and his wife, and it's called *The Luau* and I get it once every quarter, I think, he puts out an issue. I just got one not too long ago. So, through that, we kind of keep track of where people are and what's going on.

SH: Is there another *Spadefish*?

NP: No.

SH: There was never a *Spadefish II*.

NP: … I think there is; I think there's a nuclear sub. I think there is, yes.

SR: Did you ever come into contact with any chaplains?

NP: Chaplains, no. They were kind of scarce back in World War II. [laughter] I guess they were around, but [not where I was]. …

SH: You talked about taking advantage of the USO in Chicago and Groton.

NP: No, there wasn't [one] in Groton, San Francisco.

SH: I was thinking about the dance where you met your wife. That was not a USO event.

NP: No, that was … in the sub base in New London, Connecticut.

SH: That was an event just for the base.

NP: Yes. … That was a dance at the sub base. She was affiliating in Norwich State Hospital, and so, she and her girlfriend came over on Saturday night.

SH: Were you ever able to take advantage of any USO clubs at any of your rest camps?

NP: No. I think the only USOs I went to were the one in Chicago and the one in San Francisco.

SH: Was your family writing to you regularly?

NP: Not too regularly. My mother would write, once in a while. …

SH: Did they talk about anything that they were going through here, such as rationing?

NP: No, no.

SR: What did you write to them about in general? Did you write about the conflicts?

NP: Oh, you couldn't say a thing about what you were doing; they'd slice that right out. [laughter] So, you just had to talk about generalities and tell them you're all right and you couldn't talk about, … you know, war activities at all. So, [you] just basically let them know you're all right.

SH: Did you feel that it was important not to tell them anything that would upset them?

NP: I couldn't. It just wouldn't go through. [laughter]

SH: Did you feel that you had to protect them from what you were seeing or hearing?

NP: No, and that's one thing about submarine duty, you didn't see that much. You sink these ships and you hear the blast and I see them disappear off the radar and you know it went down, but, you know, you didn't see any carnage or bodies or dead people. …

SR: On your survey, you wrote that your boat received the Silver Star.

NP: Silver Star? No, the boat received the Presidential Unit Citation, … twice. We got two Presidential Unit Citations. The crew, the officers and crew, got the medals. … The Captain, yes, he got the highest, Medal of Honor. Underwood got the Medal of Honor; I think Germershausen did [as well], and then, the crew, of course, … I got a Silver Star and a Bronze Star, and then, the Presidential Unit Citation, we can all wear the ribbon. … The captains always got the [highest decorations] and I think an officer or two got some high medals. I don't remember exactly what they were.

SH: The Navy Cross?

NP: No, I don't think even the captains got the Navy Cross.

SH: Were there any ill feelings about the Captain receiving the Medal of Honor?

NP: No, no, because, at the same time, we got the Presidential Unit Citation and the whole crew got that, and then, some officers and key members of the crew got medals, like, I got the Silver Star and the Bronze Star and others got similar medals.

SH: Why were you decorated with the Silver Star?

NP: That was [for] going into the Sea of Japan, went in there.

SH: You deserved it. [laughter]

NP: … When we were in there, while we were patrolling in the Sea of Japan, that frequency modulated sound gear, our mine detector, … it had a big crystal head which sat up on the bow of the ship, in the water, and it's pressurized. So, it got flooded, so, the equipment didn't work. So, we had no mine detector to get out and, at that time, we didn't know we were going out on the surface. So, I volunteered and I got a couple of crew members to go up with me on the bow and take that head off and they had given me an iron plate, [so] that when you take the head off, you'd put the plate on and seal the hole, so [that] we don't flood the boat. … It weighed about five hundred pounds, heavy, that's why I needed the other guys up there, and we took it down below and it had got flooded. It was … made out of crystal and it got flooded with seawater. So, I took it down below in the forward torpedo room, took it all apart and dried it out, got it working again. … Another night, we went back up, we always went up at night, and our orders were that, "If a plane comes over, we're going down and you guys are [stuck] up there." [laughter] So, that was our orders. Well, you can't sacrifice a whole crew for a couple of guys. … So, we went back up and put the head back on and I got it working again. So, we had that working at the time we had to come out. So, that's why I got the Silver Star.

SR: Were you scared?

NP: Yes. [laughter] I was keeping a sharp lookout for planes. … We had Joe Case on the radar while we were out there, so, we had a guy that knew what he was doing. Hopefully, he could pick up the planes in time for us to get back down. [laughter]

SH: How could you see to work in the dark?

NP: We just had to feel our way, I think. You know, it's a fairly big item, about that big around and about three feet high, weighed five hundred pounds. It was a heavy thing and, you know, it had a steel casing around [it] for keeping water from going in and, of course, it couldn't be steel where the crystals were. That was some kind of a plastic.

SH: Did you have lifelines? The boat must have been moving with the surf.

NP: Yes, it's moving. Yes, we had wire ropes; they hooked on to our belt, so [that] if we got swept overboard, at least we could pull ourselves back. Nobody is going to come after you. [laughter]

SD: How long were you out there at a time?

NP: … Probably five or six hours. We had to work at night, in the dark, and then, we had to get that heavy head down the coning tower. … There's a hatch in the bow of the ship. So, we took it down the bow, with the hatch, in the forward torpedo room, and then, that's where I worked on it when I took it apart, dried it out, got the salt out of it. I got it working again.

SH: Did the crew do anything for fun on the war patrols or was it strictly duty stations?

NP: Well, the crew, you know, normally, if you weren't at battle stations every hour, and there were times we were, … you tried to get eight hours of sleep and you had eight hours off, and then, you stood an eight-hour watch, most of them. I didn't stand watches, … nor did Joe Case, but the others did. They played cards a lot in the galley, where we ate our meals, you see. If they were off watch and nothing [was] going on, you'd play cards. It's amazing how much we were at battle stations, though, when we were out at sea, and then, everybody was working then. Everybody had a battle station.

SH: Was there a lot of money exchanged during these card games?

NP: I don't know. I didn't play cards. [laughter] I didn't play cards or drink coffee. I was an unusual sailor. [laughter]

SH: Did you smoke?

NP: No, I didn't smoke.

SH: That was unusual. [laughter]

NP: Yes, back in those days, that was [unusual]. Oh, I had smoked … when I was a teenager, for about ten months, and then, I got my tonsils out, and then, they gave you, what's that gas they used to give you?

SH: Ether?

NP: No, there was another gas they gave you for an anesthetic. … It has a name. Anyway, they gave me that and it made me sick and I couldn't face a cigarette for about three weeks. So, I said, "Well, I haven't had a cigarette for three weeks. I'll just keep it that way." So, I never smoked again.

SR: Until you smoked the four to make yourself sick to get out of the paint scrapping.

NP: Yes. [laughter] If I hadn't quit smoking, I couldn't have done that.

SH: Are there any other memorable events that you would like to share with us of combat or other events when you were in the service?

NP: Well, the Battle of Okinawa, that was probably the most hectic time we had. My brother was in that battle. He was on a destroyer.

SH: Did you know that?

NP: I didn't know it at the time. I was on a submarine and my cousin, … the one that lived next to us in Boise, was in the Navy. He was a Navy medic.

SH: Did you know that at that time?

NP: No, I didn't know any of it. … He was a Navy medic and he went ashore and got shot and killed. … My brother came through it all right, but there was probably the better part of a week during that battle that we couldn't get up to charge batteries and, you know, you can only stay down about forty-eight hours without charging batteries. So, that was a wild time. There were shells and bombs and depth charges flying all over the place.

SH: Were they all from the Japanese?

NP: Well, both sides were shooting.

SH: How close to Okinawa were you?

NP: Oh, we were probably within a mile of the beach at times, because we were trying to sink Japanese ships, and so, we were hanging around the shore pretty close.

SH: What did you do? You had to come up at some point.

NP: Yes. … We'd get as far away as we could, you know, sail away from the island and come up. … We'd be up for maybe a half-an-hour, we'd get a plane on us and have to go down again. That's the way it was for over a week.

SH: During the Battle of Okinawa, where were you getting re-supplied with torpedoes?

NP: We didn't.

SH: After a week, you still had plenty of fish.

NP: Yes. … The battle was mostly on the land. … Before we got there, really, … our forces had gone ashore and the heavy fighting was on the island, but, then, you know, we're trying to keep the enemy ships … out of the area. If they came in, we'd try to sink them.

SH: You mentioned taking out a carrier in the Sea of Japan.

NP: No, [the] Yellow Sea, between Korea and China.

SH: Do you know the name of the carrier?

NP: … I have it in my war patrol. I have a copy of the war patrol reports. … So, it's in there. I can look it up, but I don't remember what the name of it was, [the *Jinyo*].

SH: When did you find out that your brother and your cousin had been in the Battle of Okinawa and that your cousin had been killed?

NP: After the war, after we all got home.

SH: That is when you learned of your cousin's death.

NP: Yes. I didn't even know they were out there, the other two. They didn't know I was there.

SH: Do you recall which ship your brother was on?

NP: Not off hand. I had it. … I got his wife to send me all … the information on him. I put it in the World War II Memorial Registry. So, I have it around someplace. …

SH: As a submarine in a battle, how did you differentiate between your own forces and the enemy?

NP: Well, we have radio communications. We had IFF, Identification Friend and Foe, and that was pretty standard equipment on all ships and planes and, visually, that's about all.

SH: Was there any danger that American aircraft would misidentify you?

NP: Yes, yes. We had a US plane drop a bomb on our [boat]. It turned out to be a dud. He dropped it right on our forward deck. Thank God it was a dud. Thank God the US made duds. [laughter]

SH: Good shot, though.

NP: Yes, he hit us right in back of the forward deck gun.

SH: Did you ever meet him?

NP: No. [laughter]

SH: How often did your torpedoes go astray or fail to detonate? We have read that there was a lot of trouble with them at the beginning of the war, especially in the Pacific.

NP: Yes, the steam torpedoes; I don't think we had much trouble with them. We didn't, anyway. It was those electric torpedoes. When they came out with them, those things were deadly. They'd circle around and come right back at you.

SH: Did your boat have trouble?

NP: Yes, we took those out. We usually had a mix of electrics and steam.

SH: Obviously, you were able to evade any problems.

NP: Yes. … I think that was due to the crew. We had an excellent crew, officers and men. … If somebody gave an order or, you know, yelled something that was wrong, nobody asked questions. They acted first, and then, they asked questions and everybody knew their job and they did it and I think that's why we got back. … We were able to get out of the scrapes we got into.

SH: Aside from the crystal piece, did you have any trouble with other pieces of equipment on the boat, the batteries, for example?

NP: Yes, particularly the engines, the diesel engines and the electric motors. The motor machinists were working on those all the time, and then, the radio gear, … I helped to fix the radio equipment, radio transmitter and receivers. We had a chief radioman and a couple of first class radiomen and third class radiomen. So, they usually took care of the radio, but, … once in a while, they'd run into a tough problem and Joe and I'd have to go give them a hand.

SH: How much fresh air did you get? Was it steamy hot? We all picture the Pacific as being hot and steamy.

NP: Yes, it is. [laughter]

SH: Was it ripe in the boat after awhile? [laughter]

NP: Well, no, the boat was air conditioned. So, when you're submerged, you're fairly comfortable. When you are on the surface, particularly out in the tropics, which Guam is tropical, well, it gets hot. … You've got to have those hatches open, because those diesels are sucking air in there. It's like a gale going through the boat all the time and, if it's hot out, you're hot in the boat.

SH: With that black hull in the sun, it has got to be warm.

NP: Yes, it is. … On the surface, you're sucking that air in, huge volumes of air going through the boat, constantly, all the time those diesels are running, and, submerged, we're air conditioned. …

SH: What about fresh water?

NP: We had water tanks. Yes, we had plenty of water to drink. The problem was the heads, the toilets. … To flush them, you blow it into a sanitary tank with high pressure water and there's a flapper valve that comes up and seals it, so [that] … everything doesn't come up. Well, once in a while, that flapper valve would be open and you'd get a face full, [laughter] … because they put

the flush right over in back of the toilet. So, you leaned over and your face is right there. [laughter]

SH: Did they have a term for that?

NP: No, nothing specific, but I think every man that ever served on those boats did that … at least once. Once was enough. Then, you learned. [laughter]

SH: When did you learn about the atomic bomb being dropped? What did you know about it? Did you understand the magnitude of it?

NP: We were in the Sea of Japan, I think. I don't remember when they dropped that, but I seem to remember hearing about it when we were in the Sea of Japan. That would have been June '45. Is that when they dropped it?

SH: I believe it was actually dropped in August.

NP: … Well, then, we would have been on our way back to Pearl. So, we would have heard about it.

SH: Did you understand that those bombs were going to actually end the war?

NP: No, we knew they dropped the bombs, but we didn't know it would end the war.

SH: When did you find out that the war was over?

NP: In September. I think it was over in August and, I think, September, we were in Pearl Harbor. We were just getting ready to go back into the Sea of Japan. There had been another wolf pack that went in right after we came out, and then, we had our R&R in Pearl Harbor and we were headed back into the Sea of Japan and the war ended then. We just stayed there in Hawaii.

SH: You stayed in Hawaii until when?

NP: Until, I guess, October, October '45, then, went back to Mare Island.

SH: Did you take the boat back?

NP: Yes. We rode the boat back, and then, we put it out of commission there.

SH: What kind of celebration took place at Pearl when the war ended?

NP: Oh, God. [laughter] We were sitting up on some bleachers, I was, and a lot of the crew was sitting up on some bleachers, watching a baseball game … in Pearl Harbor, and they announced over the loudspeakers that the war had ended. …

SH: What did they say?

NP: Everybody starts screaming and yelling, and then, in about half-an-hour, every boat in the harbor started shooting five-inch guns and all their deck guns are shooting these off, and so, I left the ballgame. Soon as they started shooting those things, I left the ballgame; I went back aboard the *Spadefish*. It had … a steel hull an inch thick between me and those shells, because I felt, "I'd come through the war, I wasn't going to get killed during the armistice," [laughter] and I stayed down there. I stayed below decks all night, in my bunk. [laughter]

SH: Do you remember the wording of the announcement?

NP: They said something about, "An armistice has been signed with the Japanese." They announced it over the loudspeaker.

SR: How did you feel?

NP: Relieved. [laughter] Yes, you know, we lived through the war, but, … about a week later, we were taking the ship back to Mare Island and, I want to tell you, that was the worst period I spent during the war, because … all of us, we had lookouts up there and they were more vigilant than they'd ever been, because we all felt that we didn't want to come through the war, and then, … [have] some stray Japanese submarine shoot us out of the water while we were going home. So, I don't think we were ever more careful than we were going back on that two-week trip back, ten days, I guess it was, … back to Mare Island. I slept all the way back. [laughter]

SR: They were not calling you to the coning tower all the time.

NP: No. It was very quiet, first time during the war I had a chance to get in my bunk and stay there for any length of time.

SH: When were you first made aware of the GI Bill? When did you begin to think about what you would do when the war was over?

NP: … I got out in October, the latter part of October. It must have been November, because I went to school in January, on the GI Bill.

SH: When did you make the decision to go back to school?

NP: When I got out, [laughter] yes, because I didn't have my … high school diploma. I'd gone about a year-and-a-half to high school, then, I went to work in the sawmill, and then, I had all that schooling in the Navy, so, I had developed an appetite for it. So, I had decided to go to school, [on the] GI Bill. So, it must have been November, December, because I had made arrangements with, I went to … the Capital Radio Engineering Institute, here in Washington. That's why I came back here and I started that in January. [I] got out in October, started school down there in January, because … I lacked two years of high school, two-and-a-half. So, I came and went to school. I went six months, and then, I got married. My wife was up in Long Island. So, we got married in July and we moved down here and she found out [that] I didn't have my

high school education and she said, "You get your tail over there to Central High and get your high school [diploma]." So, I went to night school at high school and worked full-time for three years and made up my high school [degree], and then, I went to Rutgers.

SH: When you returned to Mare Island with the boat, what did you have to do?

NP: Well, they were putting the boat out of commission, you know, taking all the equipment out of it and so forth. So, I didn't have anything to do, but I was discharged within a week.

SH: Did you go immediately back to Idaho?

NP: Yes, I went home and I stayed there until January, stayed with my parents until January, and then, I came back here to Washington, went to school.

SH: How did you find out about the school in Washington?

NP: … One of my instructors at Treasure Island had gone, was a graduate of Capital Radio and he had pushed it. So, I had heard about it from him.

SR: Had your hometown changed much while you were gone?

NP: Not really, no.

SR: What was it like to see your family again?

NP: … Oh, I was happy to see them and they were happy to see me and my brother.

SH: Did he get home at about the same time?

NP: Yes.

SH: That is when you found out that you had been at Okinawa together.

NP: Yes, yes.

SH: Had most of the young men in the town served in the military?

NP: Yes, they were all gone.

SH: Did your parents stay there?

NP: Yes, they stayed there all during the war … and they stayed there until the … early '60s. Then, they moved out to Washington State. My brother was living out there and they went out near him.

SH: Did they talk about the rationing and things like that? Did they notice it?

NP: No. I'm sure they did, yes. … Everybody seemed to accept that back then.

SH: Were there any discussions about the atomic bomb and its use or did those discussions come later?

NP: No, there wasn't any in my circle, anyway.

SH: Had you been briefed for the invasion of Japan? Before the war ended, were you preparing for that?

NP: The invasion of Japan? No, it never came to that. …

SH: Were there discussions about what was going to happen? We know it was planned. You were not aware of it.

NP: … Yes, not in our circles. It would have been in high, very secret circles if it were.

SH: Some of the GIs being transferred from Europe were being retrained or were actually on their way to staging areas.

NP: No, we didn't. We were busy taking care of our end of it.

SH: After earning your high school diploma in three years, why did you choose Rutgers? How did you make that decision?

NP: Well, … the GI Bill paid tuition; that would pay five hundred dollars a year, … back then. So, I wanted to pick a school that the GI Bill would cover the tuition and I applied at VPI, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, here in Virginia, because I was living here, and to Rutgers and to Brown. They all had tuitions that fell in that category and I got accepted to all of them, … because I made straight As. I had seen the light [laughter] and I had decided to study and I got accepted at all three, but I took Rutgers because, I don't know, … I liked Brown, but … we liked the location of Rutgers. Joan had family in New Jersey. Of course, she had family in Connecticut, too.

SH: Had you visited the campus before you made that decision?

NP: No, I don't think I did.

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about your earliest memories of campus? Where were you housed?

NP: Well, in preparation to going there, I knew I was going to college, because I was making up my high school [work] to do that. … Joan and I had lived [for] three years downtown, in 1825 New Hampshire Avenue. I just heard somebody talking about that the other day. [laughter] "That's our old home." So, we were getting ready to go to school and one of Joan's classmates,

… she went to nursing school and her husband had bought a trailer. … [I said], "Well, that's a good idea. We can live in that while we're going to school." So, sure enough, we went out and bought a trailer about a year before I went to school and we moved way down by; in Virginia, … near the Army base down there.

SH: Belvoir?

NP: Belvoir, yes, Fort Belvoir, and Joan worked at Fort Belvoir for a year before we went. … I was working for Remington Rand, downtown. He had a Navy contract. So, we lived in the trailer there for a year, and then, when I got ready to go to school, we had the trailer hauled up. We didn't have a car. We had the trailer hauled up to a park just north of New Brunswick, and so, we lived there [for] about a year, and then, we got a car, decided to buy a car, because it was kind of hard to get around Rutgers University without some kind of transportation. [laughter] So, after we bought the car, we sold the trailer and we moved up on the Heights, [the] apartments up there, and that's where we lived [for] the last three years of my school.

SH: What was the campus like? There were returning veterans such as yourself; many of them were married. Then, there were eighteen and nineteen-year-olds coming on campus. How did that work out? The engineering programs were very intense.

NP: … Well, I was one of the last World War II vets to go to college. The others had their high school [diplomas] and came out with high school [degrees]. I had to put in three years. So, there were quite a few around, though; that's, you know, guys my age.

SH: Was there any chance that you would be called up for the Korean War? Had you stayed in the Reserves?

NP: If I'd stayed in the Reserves, I would have been gone, but, no, I didn't. … I don't remember any pressure, … them recalling World War II vets.

SH: You had not stayed in the Reserves.

NP: No, I didn't stay in the Reserves. If I had, I'd probably have gone, yes

SH: How did Rutgers treat someone coming back from the war?

NP: Just like everybody else. I was head of the engineering [publication]. I had an engineering paper, a newsletter, really, kind of a thing. … I headed that up for two or three years and I graduated first in my engineering class. … There was another guy, he spent all his time drinking and partying, he was in the liberal arts college and he was first in my class. [laughter] So, I had to be second in the whole class. I was first in the engineering class, [laughter] but he was just a genius. He didn't have to study, just drinking parties and partying all the time, and he had to be in my class. [laughter]

SH: What did Joan do while you were in school?

NP: She worked … for Camp Kilmer. … I started school in 1950, September, and the Korean War broke out about that time, so, they opened Camp Kilmer, right across the river, and she went over and got a job and that's why we got a car, really, because there wasn't too good a … bus service over there and she needed to get back and forth to work. So, we went and bought a car and she worked there all the time I was in Rutgers.

SH: Who was your favorite professor?

NP: Oh, heck, their names all escape me right now. I can see his face, but I can't remember his name.

SH: Why was he your favorite professor?

NP: I guess he taught my key classes, electrical engineering classes, and he was an excellent professor, excellent teacher.

SH: Did you and Joan get a chance to attend any of the social activities on campus?

NP: We didn't. … We were so much older than most of the students. … You know, there were a handful that were my age, veterans that were late getting started, like I was, but we were kind of busy, just her working and I studied all the time.

SH: Where did you hang out? The Engineering Department was still over on the College Avenue Campus.

NP: Yes, it was down on Old Queens, then. That's where … I took most of my classes. It wasn't Old Queens; there was an engineering building. … We were closer to the river.

SR: Did you go to the dining hall?

NP: No. We had an apartment up in University Heights. So, I brought my lunch to classes and Joan took her lunch to work and we came home and cooked our dinners at night.

SH: Did your family ever come out to visit?

NP: No, no.

SH: Did you go up to Connecticut to visit your wife's family?

NP: Yes, we got up there a lot, to Deep River. … Joan had a large extended family up in Deep River. She had a couple of aunts, uncles and a bunch of cousins and a lot of friends, because she grew up there.

SH: On campus, as you said, you were one of the few older people going to school. Were there any initiations or anything that you had to take part in?

NP: Well, the fraternities, I think, had those, but there was no general [initiation] for the class, no.

SH: Did they still have chapel, where, once a week, they would have the classes come in for a convocation?

NP: I don't remember that, no.

SH: Have you been back to campus since you graduated?

NP: Oh, yes. I've been back many times. … We lived in New Jersey until '72. We lived in Upper Montclair, … and so, I was president of the Rutgers Engineering Society, the alumni society, for three times. … I chaired that and I participated in that all the time I was in New Jersey.

SH: After you graduated, you stayed in New Jersey.

NP: Stayed in New Jersey, yes.

SH: Do you know John Rosta?

NP: Yes. Is he still alive? My God, yes, he was secretary of the Rutgers Engineering Society … when I was president.

SR: You went to graduate school after you graduated from Rutgers.

NP: Yes. I applied for fellowships at Stanford, MIT, Cornell, I guess that's all the places, and I won them all. … I won the Ford Instrument Company [Fellowship]; just that year, the year I graduated, [they] established the largest first-year fellowship in the United States. It was, I think, forty-eight hundred dollars a year, something like that. It was pretty good for back then. …

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE----------

SH: You were talking about receiving the Ford Fellowship.

NP: Yes. I won the Ford Fellowship. We had to go into New York, all the contestants for that scholarship, and have all-day interviews and tests and, here I am, this old guy [laughter] and all these young geniuses are in there, applying for this, and darned if I didn't win [it]. … They interviewed us and put us through the wringer up there.

SH: Where did you go to school with the fellowship?

NP: … It was a fellowship to Cornell, so, I went to Cornell.

SH: Did you have a stipend for housing and all of that?

NP: I had forty-eight hundred dollars.

SH: That covered anything.

NP: Yes. So, it pretty well took care of [it] and Joan worked, so, we were able to do it.

SR: How did Cornell compare to Rutgers?

NP: Oh, favorably. Cornell is a good school, so is Rutgers. So, I'm not sorry that I went to either one of them.

SH: What was your focus?

NP: Well, electrical engineering at Rutgers, and then, at Cornell, they were in[to] radio propagation at Cornell; it was over-[the]-horizon, propagation over-the-horizon. Cornell was heavily into that. … That was my major and what I did my thesis in. I built a huge antenna up there, about thirty feet high, [laughter] what a monstrosity, to take tests of the propagation beyond the horizon, and so, I got my Master's there. [laughter]

SH: Did you continue on for another advanced degree?

NP: No, I didn't, then, because I had been studying and I'd just fought the war. I'd been studying for a number of years and I was tired. So, I decided to go to work. [laughter]

SH: Did you get to work inside?

NP: Finally, I got to work inside. [laughter]

SH: How did your experiences in World War II impact the man that you are today?

NP: Oh, tremendously, yes. If you want to grow up in a hurry, just go get into a firefight, you know, like these kids over in Iraq now. You'd be surprised how fast they're growing up. Two or three weeks and they're men, they're not kids anymore, men and women.

SH: Do you think that being a bit older than some of the other men on the boat helped you?

NP: Three years. …

SH: You were not much older than they were.

NP: No, I was twenty years old.

SH: However, having been in the work force, not just coming out of high school, you had the necessary life skills.

NP: No, I don't know … that it gave me any advantage over any other guys.

SH: You did not feel as though you had more maturity.

NP: No. When we put the ship in commission out in Mare Island, after it was launched, we were a bunch of kids. We were. You know, we were acting like a bunch of kids. [After] the first war patrol we made, we were men. It's amazing how fast you mature. I remember that change there, just a complete sea change in the crew. … When we went over there, they were joking, like kids do, and, [after] that first war patrol and getting shot at and depth charged, they were serious guys.

SH: How long was your first war patrol?

NP: About sixty days. … Well, [when] we went out, we carried, what? … twenty-four torpedoes and we fired all of our torpedoes, and then, we went back to Guam and loaded up and went right back out. So, our first war patrol was a double run. We had fired forty-eight torpedoes. We had to go back and … get a new load. … At the end of that war patrol, there was a tremendous change in the crew. They were men, you know. It was a crew of men instead of kids.

SH: Looking back on the GI Bill now, from the position you are in now, can you see its impact?

NP: Oh, I think that's probably the most important thing that's happened to the United States in the time of the United States, because there were so many people who were able to get college educations that would never have been able to do it. I never would have been able to do it without that. I would've still been working in the saw mill, probably. [laughter] That's what my brother did all his life.

SH: Are there any questions that we forgot to ask you? Is there anything else that you would like to put on the record?

NP: I don't know. I've been rambling along. [laughter]

SR: Have you ever watched any movies or read any books based on conflicts that you participated in? Did they depict them accurately?

NP: No, I haven't really. It was a strange thing. … Like I said, [when] I went in the Navy, I never got home until the war was over, three years, and, when I got home, I'm sure I was a completely different person when I got home. So, I don't think that, you know, it changed my life completely. I was determined to get some education; before, I was (marks next?) in education. I'd spend my life in a saw mill or something. [laughter] So, it just cemented that desire … to go get [my] education.

SH: Have you had the opportunity to go back to some of the places that you were at in the Pacific, Hawaii, Guam or Japan?

NP: I've been to Hawaii and we've been to Japan. … In 1967 and '68, Joan and I spent two years in Tokyo.

SH: Did that seem weird?

NP: [laughter] But it was amazing how we were accepted over there. You know, I didn't go around boasting about our World War II experiences, of course, [laughter] but I had a great rapport with the Japanese engineers. I was an engineer and I was working in an engineering field. … The Air Force had a contract with the Japanese to put in communications systems between all the … US bases around Tokyo and I was with Computer Sciences [Corporation] at the time and we got a contract with the Air Force to go over there and put in communications systems. So, I spent two years over there, hooking up all those bases with telephones.

SH: Even in the Navy, you worked on the cutting edge of technology. You said this was brand-new equipment.

NP: Yes.

SH: As an engineer, what has been the biggest change during your career? What have you seen that impressed you the most?

NP: Well, I think the biggest impact has been … printed circuits, you know, and computers and the chips that they, Intel and those people, make for computer systems. I think … that has had the most impact on our, well, the world. …

SH: Is there anything else that we should know about you? What are you most proud of?

NP: Oh, I guess my Rutgers degrees and Cornell degrees. … After I left Cornell, we went up to [MIT] Lincoln Labs in Boston. I spent a year-and-a-half there, and then, I came back to New Jersey and I spent three years at … Bell Laboratories in New Jersey and I think that was one of the better things I did. Lincoln Labs and the Bell Labs really added to my education, really. It was just such a fantastic place to work, both of them, that it was just like going to school, continuing my school. … Then, I left the Bell Laboratories and went to work for ITT Communication Systems in Paramus, New Jersey, and I worked for them a year and a small company down here in Virginia bought the division that I was working for at ITT and that became … Computer Sciences.

SH: CSC.

NP: … It was just a little company here in Falls Church that bought out that division of ITT and we all went with Computer Sciences and I spent eight years with them. … That's why I got the opportunity to go to Japan; I was with them with an Air Force contract.

SH: Did you do much work for the military?

NP: Yes, we did most of our work for the Air Force, … up in Boston.

SH: Have you lived in the DC area for most of the time since?

NP: We came down here in 1972. I came down here to put MCI in business. … MCI was the first one to offer telephone service; it was a monopoly. You weren't allowed to operate telephone service until Jack Goeken came along. He was … a technical man, he wasn't an engineer, but he was a technical man, out in mid-Illinois, I think, a small town out in Illinois. … He wanted to put up about a hundred-mile microwave system and carry some telephone traffic and he came down here to the FCC and they said [to him], "Oh, no, Jack, you can't do that. That's a monopoly. AT&T is the only one that can do that," and he was a guy that you can't tell him no. [laughter] He went to work and he put up a microwave system about a hundred miles … long out there in Illinois, and then, he came back here. … He had his own plane. He'd fly in to Washington and he'd go over and he would go to the FCC. … He'd go along … in the hallways and, about that time, they were having a shortage of offices in the FCC, so, there were people sitting out in the hallway and he'd go in and he'd butter up all these guys in the FCC. [laughter] One night, in a nightclub, I think, he ran into a guy called Bill McGowan. I don't know whether you've heard of him or not, but, anyway, … he was an entrepreneur. … He had a big company in New York that did janitor work and so forth, in these big buildings in New York, and he was quite wealthy. Anyway, somehow, he and Jack Goeken met in a nightclub, here in Washington. … He got interested in Jack Goeken's project, and so, he teamed up with Jack and he made a company, a corporation, and he raised about four million dollars. … That was what he did and his contribution was the money. He put that together, and so, he and Jack, that was in the late '60s, and I came down here in 1972 and I went to work for MCI. I worked for them about a year-and-a-half and they ran out of money, [laughter] so, I had to go, I and a lot of other people. So, I met a guy that … had his own consulting business. So, I went with him as a consultant and we went right back and got a big contract with MCI. [laughter] … So, I worked with a team of lawyers that MCI had, to get permission, or legal rights, for MCI to compete against AT&T and I worked for a year-and-a-half on that project. … I went through all of AT&T's tariff filings, you know. It'd be that high, a stack of books that high, and I found enough evidence that AT&T, … in the places where they had competition with MCI, they were lowering their prices. Where they didn't have competition, they were raising their prices, which is illegal. So, MCI, on the basis of what I dug out for them from … that year-and-a-half [of] work, on the basis of that, MCI won the Hi-Lo case, it's called a Hi-Lo Case, which gave them the right to compete against AT&T. They were no longer a monopoly and MCI went into business, took off. So, that was kind of exciting times, but that's … why I came back here, to Washington, to go work with MCI.

SH: Anything else?

NP: I guess that's enough for now. [laughter]

SH: Thank you very much for having us here today.

NP: Well, I appreciate you coming all the way down here.

SH: It has been grand. Thank you.

NP: Nice meeting you all.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Mr. Pike just told us how the *Spadefish*'s newsletter got its name. Could you tell us again for the record?

NP: [laughter] Okay. It's called the *Luau,* which is a Hawaiian name, *Luau,* for, "We're having a *luau,*" a party, and we had a little dog, a little Fox Terrier, aboard ship and she was called Luau. … That's what the crew named her and she had a litter of puppies on a war patrol, up in the forward torpedo room. [laughter]

SH: How do you keep a litter of puppies quiet?

NP: We didn't. [laughter]

SH: It must have confused the Japanese.

NP: … We kept one of her puppies, and so, we had two dogs for two or three runs. … We had them when the war ended. So, I don't know who took them, [laughter] but that's why they called us, "The *Luau*."

SH: How do you keep clean if you have a dog onboard?

NP: We have torpedo men assigned to that duty. [laughter] Yes, it is kind of crowded. [laughter]

SH: Was it a well-trained dog?

NP: Yes. She was a nice, old dog. …

SH: Where did you pick her up?

NP: In Hawaii, I think, yes. I don't know where they got her. A drunken sailor somewhere picked her up. [laughter]

SH: Did the Captain know that there was a dog onboard?

NP: … Yes, he couldn't help it. [laughter] Fortunately, he liked dogs.

SH: This concludes the interview with Mr. Neal Pike.

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

Reviewed by Frank Wagenblast 10/5/2005
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 10/10/2005

Reviewed by Neal Pike 10/21/05