Russell A. Zapel
U.S Navy -World War II
Atlantic, Caribbean, SE Pacific
Unit:VP-VPB-74 FAW 3 + 5
Rank: AOM 2class

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Veterans History Project Transcript

Interview conducted
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Veteran: **Russell A. Zapel** **Rank: AOM 2 class**

Branch of Service: United States Navy **Theater: World War II – Atlantic, Caribbean, SE Pacific**

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Interview Date: 5/30/2006, 2-3:30 p.m. **Place**: Large Meeting Room B

Equipment: Panasonic Standard Cassette Transcriber **Interviewer: Neil O'Shea**

This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted on Tuesday, May the 30th, in the year 2006 in the Large Meeting Room B of the Niles Public Library in Niles, Illinois. My name is Neil O'Shea, and I'm speaking with Mr. Russell Zapel. And Mr. Zapel was born on March the 21st, 1925. And he has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. And, I'm wondering, yesterday was Memorial Day.

Right.

So maybe a lot of memories are a little bit more current than they might otherwise might be, but, anyway, Mr. Zapel, let me begin by asking you when did you enter the Service?

I entered the Service in May, May 14th of 1943.

010 – choice of service branch

And what were you-- where were you living at that time?

I was living in Chicago - Chicago, Illinois. And after I graduated from high school in February of 1943, well, I worked a short time for Simpson Electric, but then, when I reached my eighteenth birthday in March, I went over to the draft board rather than wait to be drafted. I volunteered as a selective volunteer and-- because I was told that if you were a selective volunteer, you could quote unquote pick your service, which wasn't quite true. But it worked out. My father had helped, being a World War I veteran, had told me, "Do not go in the Army. Do not go in the Marines. Go in the Navy. You've always got a clean sheet and a pillow to sleep on." So, I followed his advice.

Now, sometimes, the vets who choose the Navy, or they don't choose the Navy, it seems to be related to whether they can swim or not, is that--

No. That didn't bother me.

That didn't bother you.

I swam, so it wouldn't have made any difference anyway.

So what area of Chicago did you live in?

I lived in Austin.

Oh, yeah, west side.

Austin area.

And did you go to Austin High School or

I went to Austin High School.

The Tigers, right?

The Tigers.

Yeah.

Oh, you know it.

A little bit, yeah.

Okay. And graduated in the February class, so--

Does that mean, in effect, you graduated in three and a half years, or?

No.

It's still four.

In those days, you had two graduating classes, one in February and one in June, depending on when you started. You had the full four years.

021 – young thoughts about war

Wow. Now you and your friends at the school, you must have been aware that there was a war going on?

Yes. We were all very much aware of it.

Yeah.

And we all went in about the same time, because we were all that age.

So, did any of your friends choose your strategy of trying to volunteer as selective?

No, they went in as draftees, but one of them ended up in the Navy, the other ended up in the 9th Division in the Army over in Europe, which wasn't too good. But he survived.

Yeah the—it's just amazing to think of being sixteen or seventeen years of age and knowing that, you know, you're going to get your diploma in a short time. And then you're going overseas.

Well, that was on every young person's mind from the day the war broke out. I don't think any of us believed it was going to be over by Christmas. We knew it was going to last a long time. And my father, all of our fathers, were veterans of World War I. We were involved with the Melin Roemer Legion Post because they sponsored a Boy Scout troop which had a drum and bugle corps and a drill team. And we were very much involved with--

Where, if I may ask, where was that VFW--

No. American Legion.

American Legion. Where was that located? Where was that at?

On Division and Laramie Avenue in Austin. It was a very-- it was-- the Boy Scout troop was so large that they had to make two troops with one scoutmaster. It was-- and everybody came to it. Just, it was incredible!

We were all well aware of what was happening, you know, because we were surrounded by World War I veterans. When you figure those days, they were-- it was 20 years after they got out.

Yeah.

You know, they were still very young.

Did – so, I don't know, like at the holidays that year in December, and the New Year, did it affect one's ability to enjoy the holidays knowing that--

That didn't--

Or, you're just young, and you don't even think of it, or?

When the war broke out in `41?

Yeah.

No, I was still a little bit too young.

Too young.

You knew you had a couple of years to go yet.

Yeah.

It didn't seem to affect anything.

And that last holiday in the winter of `42, or whatever, that you were still able to enjoy it?

No, because I was looking forward to graduation next.

You were looking to get--

Next month and a half down the road.

055 – "choosing" the Navy downtown

Oh, right, okay. So, you handled it okay. So, you chose the Navy then, is that right?

I chose-- I asked for the Navy.

You asked for the Navy.

Because they said you could pick your branch of Service, but, as I said earlier, that wasn't quite true, because when you got down there it was all those in the Navy stand in this line, the Marines stand in that line, the Army stand in that line, which was a big lie! It was a lucky break that I got in the line for the Navy.

Wow. Almost one in three, or something, huh?

Yeah, it was.

That was downtown somewhere?

It was downtown on Plymouth Court in Van Buren.

Oh, yeah.

Where the induction center was, yeah.

So, there wasn't any like a test or an interview? It was where you stood.

Right. It all depended on where you stood. And you had to-- you had to kind of keep your eyes and ears open to see what was happening to these guys and hope that you picked the right line.

Yeah.

And I did.

Yeah, so then from that day until they-- did you go up to Great Lakes then?

Yes, I did.

So how long of a gap or space there, did you have between there, going downtown?

About three days.

Three days to get your affairs in order, or whatever?

Right.

And then did you have any other brothers or sisters that were affected in the war, or?

No, I had two sisters younger than me.

Yeah, younger than you. And your dad, he had been in World War I, and he had been in the Army, was he?

No, he was in the Navy.

He was in the Navy in World War I.

He was in the North Sea Mine Force.

North Sea Mine Force.

That's where I got my good advice.

Then was there some kind of a World War II song: "The Army gets the gravy, but the Navy gets the beans," or something, some song.

Well, I suppose. Or the girls!

Yeah. Yeah!

075 – boot camp at Great Lakes

So, you have three days, and then you're up at the Great Lakes then?

That's right, sent to Great Lakes on the old North Shore Railroad.

And how long were you up there?

We were up there until the first part of July for boot camp. And then we were sent home on a short leave. And then we were-- had to go back to Great Lakes. Then we were put aboard, then we were sent back downtown again, and put aboard a train, and we didn't know where we were going. And I ended up in Norfolk, Virginia--

You went east.

at the Naval Operating Base.

Yeah. Were there any interesting experiences at Great Lakes? Did you have to learn how to sleep in a bunk or something, or?

I had to learn how to sleep in a hammock for a few nights, because the Navy hadn't given up the hammocks yet. But then we got bunks later on.

I liked it. I was prepared for it. A lot of people didn't, but I enjoyed it. Well, as best you could (chuckle)

So, does the Navy-- do they have drill instructors like in the Army?

Oh, yeah. They were-- each company in the boot camp had chief petty officers, which was the equivalent to the drill sergeant in the Army, not as mean and nasty as you see in the movies. But they were, all of them that I knew of, were World War I veterans that went back in and took this job and were given chief ratings. It was a little looser than the Army.

How was the food at that point? Not too bad?

Great. Navy food is good.

Navy food is good, yeah? So, then you are in boot camp, and then you're shipped via train to Norfolk?

Troop train.

Yeah.

096 – off to Norfolk and VPB

To Norfolk, Virginia. The troop train consisted of converted boxcars with wooden benches in them. And you sat there for three or four days going through.

This was August or something, was it, or September?

Yeah.

It was kind of warm, I bet.

Yeah, it was.

Not air conditioned.

Well, you open the big sliding doors on the side. It was a slow trip because it was steam engines. And you had to go through those West Virginia and Maryland mountains.

We didn't know where we were going. We just knew we were going east.

Yeah. So when you get to Norfolk, what happens there? That's another big camp or Naval base?

It's a big collection center. And they decide what they're going to do with you. They put you in a fenced-in enclosure and decide what they're going to do with you. For a few days, we loaded supplies aboard a carrier that was in port. And then I was sent over, somebody was looking after me, I was sent over to the Naval Air Station at Norfolk. And I was assigned to a "headron" outfit which was headquarters squadron. And one of the squadrons in that headquarters squadron happened to be VP-74, which was what I eventually ended up with.

Does VP stand for something? VP or--

V in the Navy means heavier than aircraft, and P means patrol, and then they were changed to VPB, which means patrol bombing.

Patrol bombing.

And then it went back to VP again. And 74 was just a squadron number.

And then the FAW on your--

That was Fleet Air Wing.

Fleet Air Wing.

That covers many, many headron outfits.

So when you were chosen for this, somebody was looking out for you?

Well, they weren't looking out for me. I was just in the right place.

At the right time. Did you take any tests, or aptitude tests, or--

No. I was just--

Background, or high school courses, nothing?

No. I was sent over there and we were assigned to the headron outfit. And you did, because we were just boots, and we were second class seamen, we swept out the hangars, and washed down

the oil and exhaust smudges on the sides of the fuselages, and that kind of thing, until you worked your way up.

So those planes that you were cleaning, those were Navy planes?

Those were Navy.

Were they on training missions, or on patrol, or on reconnaissance?

No. They were on patrol. It was an operating squadron.

So they had a range of a couple hundred, three hundred, miles?

Oh, way, way out there.

126 – VPB purpose

So they were looking for German submarines or anything going on?

That and escorting. Escorting.

Convoys or?

Convoys.

Yeah.

Escorting convoys as far as their range, and then they had to, you know, come back.

So that becomes your unit for the rest of the war then, this--

Yes.

Yeah.

After a while, I managed to work myself, well, not at Norfolk--from Norfolk, the squadron was moved to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, which was right at the Virginia/North Carolina Border.

Still kind of on the ocean?

Oh, on the ocean. It was on Albemare Sound. And then we just operated there. The Navy moved their squadrons constantly, and that's where I worked my way into the squadron and into the ordnance part of it.

Ordnance, of course, is ammunition or artillery?

Ammunition, guns, and bombs.

Yeah. Yeah.

Cleaning guns mostly, when you're first starting out. I never did go to school. A lot of the guys did, because they were, from boot camp, they were sent to Aviation Ordinance School. So I just got the book, and on at my bunk at night, and passed my tests that way.

So, at this time, you're still enjoying the food, you're?

140 – helpful Boy Scout experience

Yep. I enjoyed my life.

Sleeping pretty well?

Sleeping very well.

Getting along well with your--

Very well.

The buddies, your friends, or whatever, playing cards, or whatever.

I was used to camping and being out away from home because of the Boy Scouts.

So how long were you in the Boy Scouts?

From the time I was twelve until I was drafted, and then I went back after I came home.

And that Boy Scout training was--

It was fabulous.

Prepared you well for the Army, then?

It was fabulous.

Fabulous. You're the first veteran to speak of the Scouting background. That's interesting.

It was fabulous.

Yeah.

My friends, my best friends now, are still Scouts. And we get together.

So, those were friends that you made before the war?

Yes.

In Scouts?

From the time I was twelve.

Yeah. In Austin.

And I still see them.

Yeah, cool.

154 – staying in touch

Alright, so did you have any trouble staying in touch with your family? Did you write a letter a week, or?

No. I wrote a letter every day.

Every day.

Never missed.

Never missed.

My mother wrote about every third day. My dad wrote every week.

Did you have to worry about censoring in letters, or what you could say or couldn't say, or?

Yeah. Once we got assigned to a squadron and we left the states, then the letters were-- my mother would say the letters were censored.

Yeah, so when did you--

As to where we were.

Yeah, location seems to be what they would-- so where did you, so when you leave the States, mainland, where did you go? And how did you go?

When we left Elizabeth City, we went to Coco Sola Naval Air Station in Panama. And we flew patrol out of there.

To protect the Canal or something?

The Canal and that part of the sea lanes.

So, were you up in the plane, or you served as--

Yeah.

What was that like?

I was flying by that time, yeah. I was a crew member.

So that time you're in the air, you're operating the guns, or?

Well, I was in charge of the ordnance, and your job, basically, as an ordnance man on a flight in case of enemy action, was to make sure those guns were supplied with ammunition or to take over one if needed, and to make sure the turrets worked, because they were, like all things mechanical, subject to breakdown. So, you worked constantly. That's what you did. And you loaded the depth charges and the torpedoes, and you, when you landed, you took them down unless you used them.

So, what kind of boats were those, or planes that they were flying?

PBMs.

And that stands for?

Patrol Bomber, Martin.

Patrol Bomber, Martin.

The nickname-- it was a nickname. The name of it was Mariner.

Mariner. Were they good planes?

Very good. They were very big. When they got rid of the old Wright engine and put Pratt and Whitneys on, they became very dependable. They weren't too great on open sea landings if the water was rough, because, that aluminum, it wasn't much different from flying inside of a beer can. You know, it was pretty light stuff. You didn't want them slamming into things.

Yeah, and was that a picture you had of--

Yes.

Now, dumb question, this plane only lands on water, is that right?

That's right.

Yeah. It only lands on water. And the crew of that is probably--

Thirteen, fourteen people.

Thirteen, fourteen, and your rank here, AOM, does that stand for aviation ordnance?

Man.

Aviation Ordnance Man, Second Class. So, how long were you in the Panama region?

We were in Panama, by the time I got down to Panama, it was, boy, the dates aren't-- it was the end of `44, beginning of `45. We were there for about six months. And by that time, by the time of March of `45, the German Wolfpack problem in the Atlantic was pretty well under control, and they were thinning out squadrons, moving them around, because there was a lot of them out in the area. And we were moved over to the Galapagos Islands.

197 – Moving over to the Galapagos Islands

Oh, yeah?

Guarding the other side of the Canal against the Japanese submarines. I don't think there was a Japanese submarine anywhere near it. But that was what we were there for.

And were you-- you were happy with that assignment?

Yes, and how! It was better than Europe and it was better than South Pacific.

So you were-- so you would sleep on the Galapagos Islands then.

We would stay there.

Stay there. That's an interesting area, I think.

On Baltra.

Bal--.

A particular island which had an air field. The Army was on one side with B-24s and we were on the other side with the seaplane ramps. It was called Baltra.

Baltra. So what would be the range of one of those seaplanes?

The actual range—well, many times we were in the air for fourteen hours.

Wow.

Just cruising back and forth watching. Looking for radar contact. And radar was pretty primitive in those days.

Was it boring?

Yeah. Yeah. But they had bunks on them, and they had a galley on them. You could eat. And it was pretty boring, especially at night. If you were up at night, it was.

Yeah. So, did you go out on patrol every day, then?

No. About every other day.

Every other day. And that could be for fourteen hours.

It could be. It could be as short as six to eight. It could be fourteen.

Did you find the time was slow to pass? Was it hard to pass the time, or it gets boring, the routine, and you--

No. You could-- you had a job, it sounds corny, but you had a job to do. You had a watch station. And you could move around. You didn't fly that high that you had to wear anything special. You flew maybe 8000 feet, something like that.

And if it was cloudy, you came down below them. And you stood in the waste hatches, or the bow of the airplane opened up like a fan and there was a big window there, and you could lay there and look out that. Or you could lay in the tunnel by the tail turret and look out there. There was a lot of things to do. Or you could walk up to the flight deck if you weren't on watch, and

Did you ever--

watch the pilot.

226 – sub sightings and their surfacing for battery recharging

Did you ever have to go into like an "Oh, oh! Something's happening!"

Oh, yes.

"Take your battle stations!" Or whatever they say.

A lot of contacts. The particular time I flew, the flights I was on, we sighted some subs. We never dropped a charge on them, because they were too far submerged by the time we got to them, you know. You'd sight them. You'd get the first indication about fifteen miles out with the radar. And by the time you headed for it and started to make a run, he already knew you were coming, unless you were above the clouds. And he was diving then. If he was too deep, you'd just bother wasting your charges.

How shallow would the sub have to be for your depth charge to take him out?

They were set at 25 and 50 feet in the string that you dropped, and you had to be deeper than that, of course, you had to be a lot deeper than that, because the concussion would damage them. You'd very seldom-- you wouldn't want to hit them with a depth charge particularly. It was the concussion that destroyed them.

Oh, and then how would he know that you were coming, through a periscope, or?

He would see you.

Or through radar?

Or if he was-- Quite often, they would surface. They were recharging batteries those days. They had to be on the surface more than they were under.

Why did they have to be on the surface?

To recharge the batteries.

Why?

Because the batteries go dead if you're under water too long. You're run by battery.

So you come up.

You had to come up.

And then what do you do? Turn a crank or something?

And then they had to turn the diesels on.

Oh. And then the engine--?

And then the engine recharged the batteries. And they had to dive fast, and they got away quite often, but if you caught one in the surface, as I say, I was never involved in anything like this, I was involved on an assist where they had already been depth charged to the surface. They were disabled, so you flew a patrol around them until the surface craft could get there and take them and then sink the sub, but--

Was that a German sub?

A German sub.

Yeah.

The Wolfpacks were very heavy up until the first part of `45. And we did a lot of rescue of torpedoed merchant ships, a lot of rescue of aircraft that were down.

257 – rescue operations at sea

Would you ever land in the water out in the ocean?

Yes. Very, very nail-biting.

Yeah, I was going to-- I'm just guessing that's kind of--

Very

tricky or--

The pilot's got to be good.

The waves and all that stuff.

The waves, well, yeah, he could land it, but whether the airplane was going to hold together was another thing. As I say, there was no armor plating you were flying around in. It was very tricky.

So would he come down in the water to rescue a single person then, or--?

Yes. Oh, definitely.

269 – squadron's performance

Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. And I, well, I have some statistics here on just our squadron. The squadron sighted, in the course of 1941 when they were formed until the end of the war in `45, they sighted twenty-nine subs. They managed to attack sixteen of them. They destroyed five. They damaged two. They rescued two hundred and twenty airmen and mariners via open sea landings. And they directed surface craft and dropped supplies to survivors of other merchant disasters of torpedoed freighters, and troop ships, and things like that.

Did you ever lose a plane?

To landings?

Yeah.

Oh, Yes. And to spot a life raft in the ocean is nearly impossible. We used to go out on drills and drop-- put one of the crew members in a one-man raft and then go up and circle around and try to

find him. Never did find him. The pilot knew where he was at, but we could never spot him with his flares and his flashing mirror. You can't spot him if the waves-- if you've got waves.

Yeah.

It was very, very difficult.

So, the Atlantic and the Pacific were equally treacherous?

Yes.

Or difficult, yeah.

We had one crew that went down because of engine trouble when we were on the Galapagos, between the Galapagos Islands and Ecuador. They were going over there for supplies to Ecuador. There was a big base over there, and that's only about 400 miles. They spent three days on a raft before they found them. They didn't know where they were. They had another bunch up around off of Newfoundland that spent a week in a raft. Darn near froze to death before they were spotted, and they knew roughly where they were.

So you're entitled to rest, R &R, a little rest and recreation when you're in Service?

I only had a leave when I was stationed in Elizabeth City.

So you had leave there?

The only time I came home.

Only time you came home. And, then, in the Canal Zone, you didn't?

No. That was-- you were basically in a war zone. You weren't-- you didn't come home.

And then in Galapagos, you--

Was another war zone.

That's more remote.

Oh, very remote.

Yeah. But you still considered that a good posting?

Oh, you can't beat it. There's only some places better, like Bermuda, but where people are, but the Galapagos are completely deserted. There's just us. I mean, people spend fortunes nowadays to go to the Galapagos.

Yeah.

My wife and I have been back once. Nothing has changed. Everything is the same.

They've got the nice turtles, or something, right?

Big turtles.

Yeah. So the—so, would you say you spent, I suppose I should-- where did you spend the most time in your Service? Was it in the Canal Zone, or in Elizabeth City, or--

Galapagos.

Galapagos was the main. So, was it from Galapagos then that you, that was your, from there, you--

We were in Galapagos until VJ Day, until, let's see, VJ Day was in August or September. We didn't get out of there until the end of October.

322 – after VE Day

So, there were no thoughts of bringing you guys closer to Japan, or moving you to Hawaii, or something, or?

There, after VE Day, we spent VE Day on Galapagos, and then we knew things were heating up in the Pacific. And there was an awful lot of new engine work being done and overhauls being done on our aircraft, and there was rumors going around that we were going to be transported back to the Japan area for the invasion. And that was probably true. It was over before then, thank goodness.

So, in October, you were still in the Galapagos?

Mmm hmm.

But you don't—you're not released from the Army until, pardon me, the Navy, until the following March?

344 – Posting to Cuba

Well, in October, the squadron left the Galapagos and was replaced by another squadron. 210, I think. And we went back to the Canal Zone. And in the Canal Zone, we were there a month to a month and a half. And there was a three plane detachment they sent up to Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and I was on one of those planes that went up to Guantánamo, which was where I spent the rest of my Navy life until March of `46, in Guantánamo.

And was that-- that was another not unpleasant place to be?

Very. I would go back to Cuba in a minute. The people, the country, is just fabulous. I would love to go back.

It's hard now, though, isn't it with the--

My sister was there not too long ago.

politics?

It was a special deal. She went as an educator.

Through Canada, or?

No. She went through the United States but as an educator. But I would love to go back. I've always told my wife that if it ever opens up, I'd go back in a minute.

Yeah.

It was nice. The people are nice. The country's nice. The pace was nice.

Yeah. So, those were warm areas that you worked in, right?

Yes.

Pretty warm.

The Caribbean.

So you liked that?

Yeah.

So, that agrees with you, agreed with you. So, no sickness, no reaction to shots or--

I got a sore arm.

Yeah?

You know, when I first went in.

Yeah.

And I got boils om my leg from, they said, was from the die in the dungarees, but that cleared up. That's all.

Did you gain weight? Did you grow?

I went in at about 175 pounds and 6 feet. I didn't grow. And I came out at 185. And it wasn't that much of a weight gain, but it was certainly better distributed.

Yeah

by the time I got out. I'm down to 163 now.

370 – discharge and coming home

Yeah. So, March 17, 1946, then you're mustered out, whatever, released?

Yeah. I was sent back from the Galapagos. We went back to Panama for a day or two, and they tried to get us to reenlist. And we all said no. Then they put us on a plane to Miami. And we sat around in Miami for about a week. And they put us on a train back to Great Lakes, and I was discharged from Great Lakes

That was handy, yeah.

in March.

So, you come home.

I came home. I was-- we were given our discharge, and I forgot how much money.

Did you have any--

Three hundred dollars, I think, something like that.

That seemed like a lot in those days, didn't it?

Oh, it was a fortune.

Yeah.

And they put us on the North Shore and I came into the North Shore Station on Wells and Van Buren, and I took the 'L' back home to Austin. Nobody knew I was coming.

Boy, they must have been surprised when they saw you!

Yeah, they were.

But they knew you were coming out, though, right?

They knew I was getting discharged.

They just didn't know the day, yeah. So, did you have any difficulty transitioning back into civilian life?

No.

Why?

Why? Because I was glad to be home.

You were glad to be home?

I was tired of the Navy. I wanted to see my friends. They were already discharged. The government was very generous to us. You've heard of the 52-20 Club. You got 52 dollars a week for 20 weeks. So, we lived on that. Then I got a job at Simpson Electric.

That's where you'd worked before? No.

No, no, that's where I worked, yeah, that's where I'd worked before then. I got-- I went back there for a few weeks, but, in the Navy, I developed a trick knee. And I was home in June, my trick knee locked, and it locked at a 90 degree angle. And I was associated with Melin Roemer American Legion Post, and the service officer said he'd come over and get me. We'd go out to Hines Hospital. And he took me out to Hines Hospital, and they looked at me, and says, "We've got to operate," so I spent from June to August at Hines Hospital, because once you got back in the hospital, it was like being back in the Navy. They wouldn't let you out until you're a 100%.

That was in `46 then.

In `46.

That kind of delayed your getting back in the swim.

So, then I got a car, and I dilly-dallied around. Then the University of Illinois at Navy Pier opened up, and I went to school there for two years but only got a year and a half credit, because I didn't apply myself well enough. Then I came out and got a job with Automatic Electric. And I got clued in for a better job for Illinois Bell, and I worked with them for forty-one years.

Was that using the GI bill at the U. of I.?

At U. of I. down at Navy Pier.

Yeah.

Nothing real exciting.

420 – thoughts on adapting to civilian life

I don't know. A trick knee sounds a little too exciting!

Well, that was kind of a-- you asked me if I had any trouble adapting. You know, I sometimes think about it. Maybe I did. I was glad to be back at Hines. It was back to the old Service routine again.

Yes. Yes.

You had a hundred other guys around you with the same experience. You went to chow at the same time. You went to movies. The USO came.

Yeah. You didn't have much of the USO down in-- or did you have USO support down in--?

In Panama.

In Panama.

But they came-- a small troop came to the Galapagos Islands, which we weren't too happy about, because it was very casual, you didn't wear much clothing, and you had to get dressed. You had to get dressed in your dress whites when they were there. And nobody could-- you know, they were down in the bottom of the seabag and they had to be washed.

Did they-- did you get beer down in the Galapagos?

Yes, 3.2 beer.

And did you get movies down there?

Yes, we got movies-- about two movies a week, and if they didn't have what you wanted, you could walk to the other side of the island, because the Army base had movies.

So the Army and the Navy got along pretty well then?

Very well. Very well. They came over to us. We went to them.

So did you join the VFW or the American Legion then, some of the veterans' organizations?

After the war.

After the war. Are you still a member? Did you attend meetings?

Yes, I am. Both of them. Yeah, I still go parading with the VFW and the American Legion. That's in my blood from the Boy Scout troop.

Yeah.

And the ROTC.

So, you were in the ROTC in high school?

Yes. Four years of it.

And was that the Navy or the Army, the ROTC?

The ROTC in those days was just Army.

So, even though you were in Army ROTC, you still went into the Navy?

It did me well as far as military discipline went and what you had to know in the military. You know, pretty good, pretty good stuff.

Yeah. But you never thought of making a career in the military?

No.

No.

Often thought about it.

Yeah.

But then I would not have been as happy as I am now, you know.

That's the main thing.

I met the girl I love.

How did you--did you meet her through the Service, were you--

No.

You weren't wearing a uniform at the time.

I met her on a blind date long after I got out of uniform.

460 – effect of service

So as you look back on your time in the Service, how do you think it affected your life, being in the Army or the Navy, did it--

It sure improved it.

It improved it.

I'm pretty sure.

Yeah.

The Service, you go in as a kid. You go in as a high school kid. You're right out of high school, and you have a whole different attitude on life with two or three years with, well, I was in three years, you get a whole different outlook on things at that time. I think that was true with all GIs. My wife was going to Wright College at the end of the war. And when the war ended, all the vets came, and she still talks about how much better that school got when the vets came, because there was no messing around. They were there for a reason. Without sounding too high and mighty, we all had a purpose.

Yeah.

480 –History of the PBM squadron

I can tell you a little more about the squadron. The squadron was formed in 1941. They were the first PBM squadron. PBMs were brand new and they ranged-- their range in the course of their before they were disbanded, ranged from Iceland at the very beginning to as far south as Rio De Janeiro, and everything in between.

Of course, when I was in it, we bounced all over it too, but not like Puerto Rico, Trinidad, but those were just flights for different reasons.

And the mainstay was the patrol?

Our main purpose was anti-submarine and convoy escort.

And that was the warhorse there, or the?

That's the PBM, right. (pointing to picture, see scan in Appendix)

There weren't any other? That did most of the work, or all of the work?

That did all of the work in our squadron.

In your squadron.

There was about-- there was a good eight PBM squadrons on the Atlantic Coast. There were two or three PBY squadrons, if you remember the old Catalinas.

Yes. Yes.

That was-- the Catalina came before this. The Catalina came in `36. This came in `39. The Catalina was a few of those, and then there were PB squadrons, PB-1s, PB-2s, which were land-based planes like Lockheed Electras, Lockheed Venturas, twin-tail aircraft, small, that did patrol. There was a lot of aircraft flying around all up and down the East Coast and down to South

America, because the submarine activity down around Rio De Janeiro was immense. The Argentines were even flying PMBs and sinking them. They were - German submarines, a lot of them were lost along, in the Atlantic.

Now because you volunteered as selective, did that mean you were in the Service for a longer period of time?

No. I was--

Same length.

Duration and six months. The only thing that meant was quote unquote you could select your Service, which wasn't quite true.

Yeah, and then you--

And you didn't have to wait for the draft. You knew when you were going to go.

Which meant something. The-- your Special Service awards and medals, that was—now, the American Area, that denoted your Service rendered from

The coastline.

Elizabeth City, the coastline of the United States?

Yeah, and, well, the whole American Area was North America and South America.

So that would include the Canal and ?

And the West Coast. And then the Victory--

That was the Victory Medal that everyone

Everybody got that.

Everybody got that, because it was a successful effort.

The other thing, it wasn't a award. It was Combat Aircrew Wings, but anybody that flew as a combat air crew and you got checked out, you got the wings, but otherwise you didn't get them. And everybody didn't get an aerial gunners badge. You had to go to a special school for that, to become an aerial gunner. They wouldn't put anybody on a gun on the airplane because they'd be shooting the floats off, or the tail, or the propeller, or something off.

I'm sorry. They'd be shooting the floats off?

The wing floats.

Oh, the floats.

The wing floats.

That would be a bad thing to do.

Yeah, you wouldn't want a hole in there.

So what kind of guns were you firing, machine guns?

50s.

50s.

50 calibers.

And then you had the depth charges in there?

The depth charges were in the engines, nacelles on each side. Each nacell held eight depth charges, and the torpedoes were slung in the-- in this part of the wing between the engine and the fuselage. The torpedoes hung in there.

Now, this picture that you're referencing now, on the bottom it says ? **(Please see scans of photos at back)**

That was the name of the aircraft.

Pootsie

Pootsie

Pootsie

The first Pootsie, this was Pootsie two, the first Pootsie was sunk by a submarine off of Rio De Janeiro. This is Pootsie two, and the pilot of Pootsie one, that was what his wife, that's what he called his wife, Pootsie, so that's how it got its name.

And then this?

This was just--

On, in the air, there is, it--

Two of them in the air. This was our flight of the three plane detachment that went to Cuba. The third plane is the one that is taking the picture.

And then this?

This was when we were in Guantánamo, Cuba. We got an emergency call from the USS Sargo, which was a fleet submarine that-- they had a sailor aboard with a ruptured appendix, and they had to get him out of there, because they couldn't get back to base. And he was about, oh, they were about five-hundred miles out. And we had to on, our plane went out after him, and this was an open sea landing. But you could see it was ideal conditions. The water was pretty smooth, so we had no problem. So, we landed. And they went over with a rubber raft and picked him up and flew him back to Guantánamo and into the hospital, which was a major hospital facility on Guantánamo. That was pretty exciting, because we didn't know what the sea conditions were going to be.

I think anytime that a flight must have landed at sea was pretty exciting for a landlubber

Well, then we used--

We used what they called JATO, assisted take-off, to make sure we got off. And they were big clip-on rockets that you put out on each side of the airplane back in the waste hatch. You would clip them on, and the pilot would taxi and get himself a running start, and then you hit the button on the JATO, jet assisted take-off. That airplane would go up like a fighter – chuoom. We used it there to get out.

Does the Navy still use these today?

No. The last one was-- they got rid of the last one during the early stages of the Vietnam War.

But it seems very useful to be able to land at sea.

They got rid of all their seaplanes.

Wow.

There was one-- there was one plane that came out after this — built by Martin. It was a P5M, they called it.

2nd Side

005 – value of waterborne aircraft

We are talking about the Navy's decision to discontinue all seaplanes.

Nobody there that was associated with the-- with waterborne aircraft in the Navy thought it was a good idea to get rid of them, because there's a lot more water in the world than there is land. Except that aircraft became more dependable with the jet engine.

But the Russians have been very successful with seaplanes. They built some wonderful seaplanes. The Japanese are extremely successful with flying boats. Lord knows what they are going to use them for in the future. They don't use them for passenger service, so what's left?

Handy to get to islands, I suppose.

Yes, exactly.

Yeah.

You know, there's a little seaplane outfit runs out of the Bahamas called Bahama Airways. They fly the old Grumman Gooses, which is a two-engine flying boat, but much, much smaller. Jimmy Buffet owns and flies it around. So, they're very reliable.

You wouldn't put a jet engine on one of these, would you? No?

Yes, they did develop--

They did.

Martin developed a jet flying boat. And they made enough to outfit one squadron. And then the Navy abandoned all flying boat squadrons. It was a beautiful, beautiful flying boat.

I guess having aircraft carriers and bases around the world must be somebody's strategy.

Well, that's the strategy.

Yeah, but I like,

It's the admirals' strategy.

I like seaplanes.

It's the admirals' strategy.

Yeah.

The seagoing Service aren't particularly fond of Navy Air Corps per se, waterborne stuff. They tolerate the Navy Air Corps aboard a carrier, because that's the carrier's duty, but the regular surface Navy--

Yes.

They tolerate them as an annoying cousin, or something.

Yeah. Now, your pilots, the pilots of these boats, these flying boats, they were-- were they happy to be flying these boats?

Yes.

Or would they rather have been flying a Corsair or something?

Well, when they were younger, they'd all want to be flying a fighter. But once they got into them, they realized how lucky they were. Plus, they were-- I hate to say this, they were a step up from the other pilots. And I don't mean to detract from a carrier pilot, because that is an incredibly tricky situation. It's a controlled crash, is what it amounts to. But these guys had to be master mariners. They had to have a mariner's ticket to fly a flying boat, because they were using the seaways.

And that

They were the same as a captain of a ship, so they had a master's certificate plus their pilot certificate. They were good guys.

Well, I think you're all good guys, Well, Mr. Zapel, thanks for coming in and

My pleasure

being so generous and responsive in this interview. And I-- you're the first veteran we've interviewed from the Navy's Waterborne Flight Service. I know nothing about them. They must have been very important with the submarine...

Right, between the United States Navy, and the British Navy, and the Argentine Navy flying the same type of aircraft, they would have had a hard time getting rid of the U-boats, because surface craft can't get them that quick.

The German Navy activity, as you mentioned, south of the equator around the Argentine,

It was very strong.

Was that trying to disrupt trade between Britain

Yes.

and South America, was that the idea?

Yes.

Yeah.

Very much so. And convoys were coming out of South America hauling war goods, hauling bauxite, aluminum, which we needed, aluminum like crazy, and then the British got them from the other direction. And the French got them. The free French were flying PBMs. The British were flying some PBMs, but they didn't like them. They liked their seaplane, which was called the Sunderland Short Flying Boat, which was almost the same thing. And they were getting--

That was a good boat too?

That was a very good airplane. It was a four-engine airplane.

Did it have more lift, or something, more capacity, or not necessarily?

No. No. Martin made four-engine flying boats. They were called the Mars. Have you ever heard of the Mars?

No. No.

The Pan-American Airways flew the Martin Mars as a passenger--

Oh, I can see that picture in my mind's eye, yeah.

Aircraft. And then the big admirals and generals in the Pacific used Martin Mars to get around. You know, Halsey, Nimitz, MacArthur, you know, they got around island to island. And, yet, they dumped them. I don't understand.

Yeah.

The Mars are still flying. There are still two Mars in operation. The Canadian government's got them. Then they altered the hulls, made a water scoop down there, and in forest fires, they fly low over--

Oh.

the mountain lakes. They scoop it up, and then they fly over the forest fire, and let it go. They're still flying them - very trustworthy.

I wonder if all these-- it's a smaller and smaller world, but all these natural disasters, and earthquakes, and tsunamis, I wonder if these flying boats would be useful in those situations. Of course, you got helicopters, too, I suppose.

You got helicopters now to get in there. And the airfields get cleared the first thing, you know. They clear airfields before they clear anything else, just like they did in World War II. They had to get those airfields cleared.

They got their place, as far as I'm concerned.

Well, they're going to have a place in the Niles Veterans History Project collection, thanks to you!

071 – value of PBMs in Pacific

But you should, if you possibly can, get a hold of some of the guys, a guy that was in the South Pacific. Those guys saw a lot. I can sit here and tell you stories, because I know some of these people. The PBM was the first American aircraft to bomb Japan, because when they got as far north as Tinian, and Saipan, and those places, they had the range to go in there and bomb the naval bases along the southern shores of Japan. And I got this from a guy that was with squadrons out there. They didn't get fired back on for three days, because the Japanese didn't know what it was. The Japanese had a flying boat that looked just like it, and they thought maybe the guys were dropping bombs by mistake.

So, these-- You had a greater range than a bomber, then, was that right?

Well,

Or you could take out--

You could sneak up.

You could sneak up.

Because you could, those down in coves on islands, and when they're, most of the guys in the Pacific, or all of them in the Pacific, worked off of seaplane tenders. The seaplane tender would creep up on islands and get into a cove. And then the squadron would come back and land in the coves. And they would be serviced by the seaplane tender, fuel, ammunition; the crew was taken aboard to take a shower.

Big boat.

Food--

090 – "the Flying Fortresses of the Navy"

Yeah.

It was a big-- it was a big thing. They could lift these things right out of the water, and put them on a deck, and repair them. And the seaplane tenders were very active, and they could sneak up within a few hundred miles of Japan undetected, fly in there, and bomb the place, fly back. They—there's a great book out called *The Fighting Flying Boat.* It was just put out a couple years ago. I can't remember the name. It seems the person, to me, who wrote it was Hoffman - *The Fighting Flying Boat: a History of the Pbm Mariner* (now available in the Niles Library). They talk about a lot of this stuff. And these were classified as the flying fortress of the Navy, because they were so heavily armed. You had two guns on a turret here.

Those were machine guns?

Yes.

Uh huh.

A double fifty here, just like that.

Yeah.

You had a double fifty in the tail, so far the same as a B-17. You had a double fifty up here just after the wing on the fuselage up near the dorsal. The only thing you didn't have was the belly turret. You had a fifty in the waste hatch here. You had a fifty on the other side. And you had a fifty that could be moved out of this hatch on this side, and another fifty on the hatch on the other side, that if you had extra crewmen you could put it in the socket, and put an ammunition belt to it, this right here.

Is that a gun there? No.

No, that's a radio antenna.

Oh, on the star here.

One of the many radio antennas. They had radio antennas that ran from here to here and from here to here. And they had one that played out like a big fishline, that when you were way out there, they'd run this thing out five hundred feet in order to send signals. So they called it the, well, you can see the dorsal turret here.

Yeah.

So, those were considered the flying fortress of the Navy. The only thing, if they came up from underneath there, you were in trouble. But we weren't particularly worried about fighters. They were in the Pacific, but we weren't. But they were heavily armed, and that's how they kept the submarines under control. If they surfaced them, they'd just fly circles around them and anybody that stuck their head up.

Bing-bing.

They'd start shooting. So, they had a hard time getting to their deck guns and shooting back. Hardly anybody knows anything about a PBM.

They're great!

I tell people, they say, "What did you fly?" I said, "Flying boats, PB—." "Oh, you were in PBYs!" Because everybody knows about a Catalina.

Yeah.

Nobody knows anything about a Mariner, but there were more Mariners than Catalinas.

120 – Catalinas, Mariners, Marlins

And the Catalinas were first?

Yes.

Then there were--

1936.

Then the Mariners.

But they only had a thirty caliber machine gun in the nose.

Yeah.

And then they put two fifties in the waist hatch.

And then the Mariner was succeeded by?

A Marlin.

A Marlin. Is that--

Almost the same.

More armament or--?

No.

Bigger or different engine, or--?

Bigger radar.

Oh.

Well, there's a step here. See the step.

Yeah.

This is one hull, and then it steps up to another hull. Well, you had to, in order to take off, when you were taxiing, you were down, in order to take off, you had to get what they called up on the step. You had to break that suction, so the airplane went from maybe sixty miles an hour at the

point of getting up on the step to about one-hundred twenty to get to be able to take off as, like a big speedboat. But the Marlin, they discovered if they extended this step almost back to the tail, they could get up there quicker.

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

I don't know why it took them so long to figure that out, because they went through a lot of seaplanes before they got to that point.But you treated them like a boat, you know. As I say, the pilots were mariners.

Now when you come in for the landing at your base, how do you-- you take, does it, do you dock next to a pier? Is there a little boat, or?

139 – procedures for landing at base and taking off

No. Probably, this is the land back here, and this is the seaplane ramp. They have a big ramp, and out here, you had a big round doughnut float here, and here. And in that float, you had a line that came up with a loop in it, and they ran back under water to here. And they had what they called a mule or a tractor sitting here, and here, and you would taxi in. This is the tricky part. This was very close to this and the seawall. And then pilots had to taxi in, and they had to play with that throttle and the cutoff switch. They'd cut those engines off to try to-- and just before the propeller would stop turning, they'd hit the ignition, and it would kick in again. They hoped, because they were coming in this way--

Nose first.

Nose first.

Yeah.

And it was the ordnanceman's job, my job and any other ordnanceman, this hatch on the other side, there was a snubbing post. You'd open up that hatch and put out the anchor rig. And there was a snubbing post, and you would have to lean over with this five foot long bar with a line on it, and catch this loop, and haul this line in. The line was about that big around. And you had to hang on with your feet sometimes. And you'd haul that line in and put it over the snubbing post. And once it was on the snubbing post, the pilot could see down through a little hole by his feet, and you'd holler, I can't remember what you'd holler.

Secure or--

"You're secure, sir!" But he knew it, and, you know, because if you missed it, and you did miss them because the wind would push that off things like that, he'd have to get those engines going in order to swing that airplane around before he hit the ramp, or the seawall, and try it again. And he wasn't too happy, and he banked you, and when they aren't happy, things aren't too good!

So the tractor or the mule pulls you in?

No.

No?

Then you got a hold of this, and then a beach crew would come out. You were secured, the beach crew would come out with a line and, by that time, the tail would usually swing around. The beach crew would come out with another line which was attached to a mule or a tractor here, and you'd hook it onto the-- there was a hook back there to hook the line on it. He would start pulling you in, and this tractor--

Would swivel or?

Would-- he would keep tension on this line, so this airplane didn't go swiveling all over the place, because he would be pulling you in tail first, and this would keep your nose pointing out. And then when he got in this far and the airplane straightened out, then the other members in the beach crew would take these big floats with a double wheel on there, like a double wheel, one for each side, and one for the tail, swim them out, because this was a big flotation tank, and then part of, one of the crew members inside would open this hatch and hook this on here. And the beach crew guys would stand on the tires with their weight, would swing it under the airplane, so it would fit under like this. And the guy on top would slam the latch down and lock it in place, both same on both sides and then with the tail wheel, they'd do the same thing. They'd hook the tail wheel on where the rope was, swing it under the very end of the airplane, and lock that latch. They were then, you were, once it was locked, then they'd pull you up. Then this guy'd let the slack go, and then this guy would pull you up on the beach.

So, are you still in the plane at this point?

Everybody's in the airplane.

So, how do you get on land then, when they pull the tail in?

No, because your nose of the airplane is headed out, the wings--

Yeah.

Tail--

Yeah.

The nose of the airplane is this way, and this line is out this way. They pull you in this way, and this guy would keep your nose pointed, so it wouldn't swing around.

So, did you have to get into a little boat then, or something, or?

No. They'd pull you up on the ramp. They'd pull you up on the ramp--

The tail comes up on the ramp?

The whole airplane comes.

Yeah.

That's how they get you up, by pulling on this rope that's hooked to the tail. You come up the ramp, and this is all cement parking area, and the hangars are back here. They'd just pull you up and drag you around. Once you got up this far, then they would take a tractor and unhook this, and hook you to the nose, and start dragging you around the field like they do out at O'Hare.

So when you hit, when you land, it's probably an half hour before the plane is docked on land?

Oh, easy. Easy. If there's more than one out there, you wait.

Yeah.

Because even Norfolk, which is a major base, and, Coco Sol Panama is a major base, only had three or four ramps, now, half a dozen airplanes come in, you wait--

Now, how long, suppose a message comes in—oh, they spotted a Wolfpack, or this probably isn't a good example.

Oh, other aircraft are out.

Other aircraft are out. But you got-- it takes you a little while to get out there, too, then, right?

Oh, it goes out very easy.

Does it?

Oh, yeah.

You can take-- get out easier than you can come in?

Yeah. Because they get you up to the ramp facing this way, and get those wheels, these wheels sitting right on the edge of the water, the whole crew is aboard, and the pilot gets the engine going. He just taxis, he taxis out far enough, so the beach crew can come out, unlatch that thing, and then these lines from this thing, if it's rough water, extremely cold, the beach crew attaches lines to these, and pulls them in for you. If it's warm water, they swim them back. They let you go. The pilot just goes.

So, you get out, does it take you--

Once they release those, landing gear and the line, he just hits the throttle and you go, if the wind's the right direction. There's no messing around. You just go.

So, you could be airborne in fifteen minutes, or something, or--

Oh, yeah.

Yeah.

Real fast.

Because that's the sea-lane you take off from.

You're taking off more like a plane. You're coming in more like a boat.

Oh, yes. Unless you have to get out somewhere else. Then you cruise around like a boat.

And it's very critical around a Navy base like that, because they constantly have to have a boat in the water just cruising around, checking for floating debris, other ships aren't interfering in the lanes.

Yeah.

Warning anybody who, because you can't hit nothing.

So if you went down to Norfolk today, which maybe you have?

They're still there. I do.

They're still there.

229 - squadron reunions

They're still there. Our squadron has had reunions since 1946. The officers had it first, and then the officers, every year, the officers found out, say, guys, when we die of, pretty soon, there's going to be two or three of us left. Let's let the crew in on this. So in about 19-- somewhere in the fifties, they said, well, they let us know that we were invited. So, we all go.

You go every year.

Every year.

Do you fly, or drive down, or?

I drive, unless it's on the West Coast. Then I fly.

Oh, it's not always at Norfolk?

Oh, no.

No.

This year, it's going to be in Richmond. We've been all up and down on the West Coast. That's kind out of the question now. The guys are getting too old. Mostly it's along the East Coast - Southern East Coast: Elizabeth City, Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Richmond, Raleigh, that kind of stuff, because most of them settled there from the Atlantic squadrons. Most of the guys settled on the East Coast.

Was that because they were originally from the east primarily, or

Some of them. Some of them just liked it.

Yeah.

You know, that Virginia Tidewater country is very-- have you ever been down there?

No.

Virginia Tidewater?

No.

It's beautiful country. It really is; the only thing …

Is it too warm?

Well, it gets warm. It doesn't get warm like Florida or Mississippi.

Yeah.

I have a daughter who lives in Mississippi. It's incredibly hot. But, no, Virginia is delightful. And you get snow in the winter, light snow. You know, it's gone in a couple of hours, change of seasons. I like Virginia. North Carolina is the same way.

So you'll be going to Richmond then this year?

Richmond, this year in September.

It may be the last one. Maybe. We still have pilots alive that were pilots in the Navy in 1937 and `38. They were pilots already. And in order to be a pilot back in those days, in order even to be considered for flight school, you had to have four years in the Navy, sea duty. That was the requirement, because they didn't like Air Force. But they're still around. In fact, the one guy, the next time you look, we're getting way off the subject here, the next time you look at the Hindenburg,

260 – Hindenburg and a Pbm pilot

Yes! Yes!

Picture the Hindenburg. See those lines coming down.

Yes. Yes.

You see those sailors running.You see little figures out there running. That's the guy on the lines trying to hold it there. One of them is one of our pilots. He's still alive. He lives in Daytona Beach, Florida.

Wow.

His name is Gannon. He wrote a book.

Gannon, he was a seaman at the time. And he's got some great stories at Lakehurst. "Boy," he says, "I never ran so fast in my life!" He says-- he says the funniest part was when that thing exploded, they all tried to hang on to the bar lines until sense came to their heads. And they dropped it, and ran, and they really ran!

Yeah.

So the heat was tremendous.

It was awful.

He's still alive. Barney, they call him. His name is Bernard, and we call him Barney. Great guy. He's got two submarines to his credit. He stayed in the Navy, and he became a captain.

278 – vice-admiral Jap

And another guy, his name was Jap. He landed off the coast of Nova Scotia, not Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, in the old PBM-1s, which were the first ones build by Martin. They had retractable floats and very underpowered engines. And they had a sinking of a Norwegian freighter. It was sunk by a German submarine. We were out patrolling. Another story there, I can, it's off the record, and it's not official.

This story is official. They went up, because they were stationed in Iceland when the sinking came, and they went over and got them. And those guys were froze to death, but they got them all off of rafts very quickly. They got them aboard the plane with a full crew, full armament - they were fully armed with depth charges. And he got them aboard that airplane. And he was at one of our reunions when he talked about it. He says, with all that weight on there, that airplane just hunkered down into the water, and it was almost right up to the waste hatch where it was going to come in. And it was before JATO, those days. And he said, "The sea was a little rough." He says, "We buttoned it up tight," and he says--

"Come on, baby!"

"And I pushed those throttles against the windshield of the airplane, and I prayed to God." And he got off, and he brought them back. And he made a career out of the Navy. And he became a vice-admiral.

And what was his name?

And he died only about four or five years ago.

What was his name?

Jap.

Admiral Jap.

Admiral Jap.

304 – the "unofficial" story of Dick Schraeder's sub kill

The unofficial story was Dick Schraeder who died maybe five years ago now. He lived in Byron, Ohio, and he owned an airport there. He got out of the Navy. He owned an airport right outside of Byron. He was flying patrol out of Iceland for British convoys, and they were spotting submarines. Well, this one guy, this one submariner surfaced and shot at Dick. And it pissed him off. And he went in after him. The submariner was surfaced, and Dick got mad and went after him. Well, he thought, I'm going to get court-martialed now, and he dropped a string of depth charges at him and blew that submarine out of the water. A few of the crew members survived. They knew who they are because the German Navy kept actual records, and at the end of the war in about 60 sometime. They got a hold of him. "El Kapitan" from the German Navy and invited him to the reunion! The guy couldn't make it. He was sick, but Dick Schraeder kept in contact with him, and they became friends. But it is unofficial. The first German U-Boat sunk by the U.S. Navy was in August of 1941 – unofficial but <u>true</u>. You won't find it any books.

We got it now.

Thanks Mr. Zapel, thank you.

Interviewer's Note: Upon reading the first draft of his interview, Mr. Zapel remarked that he hadn't spoke much about the widespread sense of patriotism at the time and the willingness to serve. In his case he was quite worried that he might be turned down as "4-F" on account of his having stubbed a toe and losing a nail before his induction date!

January, 1946
A VPB-74 P.B.M.
Rescue Mission off Bahamas
Patient from U.S.S. Sargo is between two rowers on the raft

Galapagos Islands, August, 1945
UPB-74, Crew #6 of Pootsie II
BuNo59254
Back row of 4 officers:
Lt. Kelly (P.P.C.), Lt. (JG) Phelps,
LT(JG) Youngblood, Ens. Huber

First Row, left to right:
Frizzle-AOM, Howe-AMM, Meptebrio AMM, Lehman-AMM, Metrich (Plane Captain), Morvil-ARM, Dibacco-AOM, Gangwisch-AMM, McIntyre-ARM,
Second Row, left to right:
Ryan-AOM, Desson-AOM, Ohm-AMM, Healy-AMM,Wolfinberg-AMM, Spencer-ARM, Durbin-ARM, Larsen-AMM, **Zapel**-AOM, Marhalik-AOM

#6 POOTSIE II

Note: Abbreviations are: AOM for Aviation Ordnanceman; AMM for Aviation Machinist's Mate, and ARM for Aviation Radioman.

October , 1945 VPB-74 PBM
Flight to Cuba

Martin PBM-5