Robert Tidwell: Good morning, this is Robert Tidwell interviewing Mr. Richard Crinigan who had served aboard USS Frank E. Evans during the Second World War. This is being recorded in the Vietnam interview room on September the twenty-fifth. Good morning Mr. Crinigan, how are you?

Richard Crinigan: Good morning.

RT: Tell us about where you grew up, your childhood. Where were your born and where did you spend your early childhood?

RC: I was born in Waterloo, Iowa, and I went to school. I graduated from high school at East High in 1946, June of '46.

RT: Were your grandparents from Iowa?

RC: Well, they were really from Sweden but they settled in Iowa.

RT: Oh, from Sweden. So your parents were the first generation to have been born in the US?

RC: Well, my mother was born in Sweden but my dad was born in the US. My dad was not a Swede, he was an Irishman.

RT: Okay. So you spent your whole childhood in Waterloo then?

RC: Right.

RT: What was that like?
RC: Well, it was, I don’t know, it was a typical Iowa town, I guess. It was going pretty good but it’s not going very good anymore.

RT: So what kind of community was Waterloo? Was it mostly a farming community or—?

RC: Well it was more—it was about seventy thousand people then, I think, when I was there, maybe. Between seventy thousand and hundred thousand and it was a blue collar town, had a packing company there and had a John Deere Tractor works there. Now those were two main based places where people worked when I was in high school and growing up there.

RT: Okay, so you’ve actually grew up in a decent sized city?

RC: Yeah, for Iowa it would be a pretty good-sized.

RT: So were you an only child or did you have brothers and sisters?

RC: No, I had two brothers and one sister.

RT: What kind of childhood did you have with them? Were you all fairly close or did you kind of—?

RC: Well, it was kind of two of us, me and my brother then there was a lull in there for about—and then I had a sister and another brother. So it was kind of spaced there in between, oh, maybe eight years or ten years between the two sets. Kind of two sets of kids.

RT: That must have been interesting to have that kind of space between yourself and the rest of your siblings.

RC: Yeah, well, when I went in the Navy when I come—after boot camp I was gone for about two years before I ever got home again and my little brother and sister didn’t even know me. They didn’t remember me.

RT: Oh man, that’s incredible. The brother that they never knew.

RC: Well, they know me now but I mean they didn’t then. I was a stranger to them.

RT: So what kind of things did you do then as a child? Did you live in the city proper or did you live more towards the edge of Waterloo?
RC: Well it was kind of on the edge of town then. I used to go hunting a lot, well not a lot, but quite a bit. I never did go fishing much but I did go hunting. We lived on the edge of town, it wasn’t too far and you could start hunting.

RT: What did you hunt?

RC: Pheasants and rabbits.

RT: Well, that must of help out around the house, you know, bringing some extra, a little extra food in.

RC: Well, I didn’t do that good. (Laughter)

RT: But you at least went hunting.

RC: Yes.

RT: So what kind of things did you do for—other than hunting? Was that really your main recreation or did you and your siblings do things together?

RC: Well, we didn’t do things together very much. I don’t know why we didn’t. I did, typical whatever—I went to movies in town there, I don’t know. We used to build model airplanes; these stick model airplanes.

RT: Oh yes, the balsa and tissue paper.

RC: Yeah, the balsa and tissue paper. I built some of those. Outside of that, there wasn’t very much.

RT: Did you ever fly them or did you just build and put them on a shelf?

RC: Well, we tried to fly; they didn’t fly to good. Bill and I used to hang in the bedroom from the ceiling.

RT: When you were younger did you have any kind of a part-time job or something you did after school?

RC: I had a paper route, *Waterloo Daily Courier* paper route. I had that when I was in junior high and high school; and then the war was going pretty good too, there after I turned sixteen. I worked second shift at the sewing machine place, where they made cartridge belts and, you know, things like that. And then I worked at a place that made tool boxes. I worked the second shift there when I went to high school about half the school year.

RT: That must have been interesting to balance both your work and your school.
RC: Well, my school kind of suffered then. I didn’t get the chance to do homework; probably wouldn’t have done it anyway. I didn’t do too good out of high school.

RT: What kind of family would you say that you had? Would you say you were, were you doing fairly well or would you say that your family was a little poor?

RC: I would say on the near-poor side.

RT: Okay. Was that just during the Depression or was that even—?

RC: Well, no. My dad, he worked at the packinghouse. There was a meatpacking place there, but they didn’t really pay a whole lot. But he worked all during the Depression so we were better off than a lot of them.

RT: Oh, yes. So high school was—that was as far as you went before you went to into the Navy?

RC: Yes, yes. I finished high school and then I went into the Navy.

RT: Then did you go further in your education after—?

RC: Yes. I got a couple of degrees after I got out of the Navy. I got BA in mathematics from what’s now the University of Northern Iowa, and then I got a BS in electrical engineering from Iowa State University.

RT: So math and engineering. Did you have an interest in either before you went into the Navy?

RC: Well, I know I was getting a GI Bill, I thought well maybe I will try to go to college after I got out of the Navy. And I was an electronic technician in the Navy so that’s why I went to engineering school. I did okay going to technician school so me and another friend decided to go to engineering school after we got out of the Navy.

RT: So the Navy sparked an interest in you then?

RC: Oh, yeah, and I say I’m glad I went in, probably wouldn’t of went to college if I hadn’t gone into the Navy.

RT: That and you may not have discovered that you enjoyed math and engineering.

RC: Yeah, that’s true.

RT: So what did you do after you went through college?
RC: I went to work for Western Electric. I worked in their field engineering force. Worked there for five years and went to different parts of the country. We lived out in New Jersey, we lived in El Paso, Texas, and we lived in North Carolina when I worked for them. Then we came back to the Midwest.

RT: It's good for you that you were in the Navy because at least you were prepared for moving around from place to place.

RC: Oh yeah. We moved around a little bit, my wife didn't like that too well.

RT: That must have been interesting to go from New Jersey to El Paso, Texas.

RC: Yeah, it was quite a difference.

RT: Oh yes, to go from one part of the country where the climate is cooler and damper then to go to El Paso which is neither cool nor damp.

RC: Yeah, that's right.

RT: Western Electric, aren't those the same people who used to make telephones?

RC: Yes, yes they did, but they had, they were doing military stuff, too.

RT: Oh, okay and is that the project you were involved in, was military related?

RC: Yeah, yes it was.

RT: Was it because that's just where they happened to place you or was it because you had spent time in the Navy and they decided that—?

RC: Well I think when they came out to the college recruiting they were looking for those who were going to be in the military part of the company. That's what we went to work for. And mostly the guys that they hired, at that time, were veterans that had been in the service.

RT: So how long did you work for Western Electric?

RC: I worked there about five years.

RT: Then you went to work for someone else?

RC: Yeah, we came back to Midwest, here, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

RT: And doing basically the same sort of material, that is doing the electrical engineering work?

RC: Yes, yes it was.

RT: What kind of things did you do, roughly the same sort of tasks?
RC: I worked on military projects here. I went to work with Collins Radio then, in town here and it was on military projects.

RT: So how long did you work for them?
RC: I think I worked for them for about two years then I went to work in a tools processing place. That was kind of up and down, you know, with contracts and the hiring and the layoffs.

RT: Engineering can be a tough field.
RC: Yeah, it was kind of that way.
RT: So do you still work in the electrical engineering field or are you retired?
RC: No, no I’m retired now. Well, I got a part time job but it’s not anything to with engineering.

RT: What is it that you do?
RC: Well, I work at Harriet Car Dealership. I drive cars for them and then I go to different towns, take the new car over and bring another one back. Only when they do some trades, which people come in and want a different color car or something so they go out and find another dealer and they trade cars. So I would go out and get them and bring them back.

RT: Well, that gives you an opportunity to actually drive some of the new cars that have come in.
RC: Yeah, brand new.
RT: At least you get a test drive and you can determine what kind of car you would like to buy next.
RC: Yeah, that’s true.
RT: So are you now married?
RC: Oh, yeah. I’ve been married—we’ve been married almost fifty years, forty-eight years this November.
RT: So did you get married before you went in or after you came out of Navy?
RC: After I got out, when I was going to college. After I graduated, got my first BA degree then I got married.
RT: Where did you meet?
RC: I met my wife at college, at University of Northern Iowa.
RT: So that’s when you were working on your bachelor’s?
RC: Yeah.
RT: Was she a student there as well?
RC: Yes, she was a student. She was a kindergarten primary teacher, got a two year certificate then she taught at the school for a while.
RT: So did you just happen to run into one another on campus?
RC: Yes.
RT: You saw her and you thought to yourself, “Now that’s the person that I want,” or—?
RC: Well, yeah, it was kind of that way. I thought, “Well this looks like this would be a pretty good one.”
RT: So do you have any children of your own?
RC: Yeah, we have four. We have three boys and one girl.
RT: And have any of them followed in your footsteps in either engineering or having gone into the military?
RC: Yeah, my one son is a chemical engineer and my daughter is industrial engineer. They got degrees in engineering.
RT: Well, did any of them go into the Navy as you did?
RC: No, they never did. The last one, the youngest one did. He went in the Marine Corps and he’s in the Army Reserve now.
RT: That’s interesting, going into the Marine Corps then going into the Army Reserve.
RC: Well, they don’t have a Marine Corp Reserve Center here in Cedar Rapids, so I guess that’s why he went in the Army Reserve.
RT: It’s just that you don’t often hear of that, especially as proud as Marines are of being associated with the Marine Corps.
RC: Yeah, that’s true, but some of these towns where they don’t have a Marine Corps Center you’ll find a few Marines in the Army.
RT: Well, you know when you want to stay in the Reserves you do what you have to do.
RC: Yeah.
RT: So when you were in high school, even though the war had been going on, did you previously give any thought to going into the military?

RC: Oh, yeah, at Pearl Harbor Day, I was in the eighth grade then, we went school after that Sunday, we talked about what we were going to do. A lot of my friends wanted to go into the Navy; a lot of them did go into the Navy, too. I suppose about half my high school class went into the military.

RT: What made you think about the Navy? Was it because your friends had mentioned it or did you have some kind of attraction to the Navy to begin with?

RC: Well, I thought the Navy would be a nice place to go. You know you get to see the world like the poster said and it kind of appealed to me, kind of moving around isn’t staying in one spot all the time.

RT: It’s interesting. I’ve met quite a few people who grew up far away from any kind of ocean or sea or any large body of water and they end up going into the Navy. I guess it’s because you want a change of pace.

RC: Well, I guess so. But mine was to see the world, I guess, as far as reasons for going. I thought well if the war was still going then I rather be sleeping on a ship than in a mud hole somewhere.

RT: Did you sign up just the day after you graduated from high school or did you—?

RC: I signed up before I went down—we got, seniors got out a week early out of high school before graduation. So I went down on Monday and joined the Navy and they let me come back home before the graduation. So I was in the Navy before I even graduated.

RT: Wow. So did you go to an enlistment center in Waterloo, or did you have to go to another town?

RC: No, it’s in town. They have a recruiter in Waterloo; it’s a big enough town to have the recruiters there. And then you go down to Des Moines to get a physical and they send you out to boot camp.

RT: Well how far is Des Moines from Waterloo?

RC: About a hundred miles, a little bit less, I guess.

RC: So that was a pretty good trip then?
RC: Yeah, yeah it was.

RT: So I assume, then, that the Navy put you on a bus and sent you over to Des Moines to take your physical or did you have to go there on your own?

RC: No, they put you on a bus. They gave you ticket and told you to go to Des Moines, told you where to go in Des Moines.

RT: Did you just go there for the physical or did you have any time to kind of take a look around?

RC: No, we just went there for a physical and then from the physical, if you pass—well I got to go back home and graduate, but most of them they just went on to boot camp, put you onto the train that next night.

RT: So did you have anything in mind whenever you went into the Navy, anything that you might want to do or did you discover what you wanted to do after?

RC: Well I wanted to be, I wanted to be a radio operator, you know, a C-W, because I knew the code. I could probably copy twenty words a minute. We had a class in high school, telegraphy, took that. But I didn’t get in—I took the test in boot camp; I know I passed it but they needed seamen I guess. Excuse me I’ve got kind of a cold.

RT: Oh, no problem.

RC: They were letting the reserves out so they needed to fill up the ships.

RT: So how was your boot camp experience? Where did they send you?

RC: San Diego. It was eight weeks when we started there but then they cut it to six weeks because they needed seamen out in the fleet.

RT: So what did you think of San Diego back then?

RC: Oh, I kind of liked it.

RT: Had you been very far west before going into the Navy?

RC: No, I hadn’t been very far out of Waterloo.

RT: Okay. So this was part of seeing the world as far as you were concerned then?

RC: Yeah, that’s for sure.

RT: I would imagine that San Diego was far different from Waterloo.

RC: Oh, yeah.

RT: Did you do anything for recreation when you were in San Diego?
RC: Well, we got a couple liberties, that’s about it.
RT: Oh, just two liberties?
RC: Yeah I think two or three, then we was done with boot camp.
RT: How long were those liberties?
RC: From midnight, no from noon to midnight. Half of them would go Sunday and half would go Saturday.
RT: How long were those liberties? 2
RC: From midnight, no from noon to midnight. Half of them would go Sunday and half would go Saturday.
RT: So did you actually get—between those liberties, did you get to see much of San Diego while you were there?
RC: Well, went out to Mission Beach, the ocean, got to see the ocean there, went swimming in the ocean.
RT: Which was probably the biggest body of water you had seen up to that point.
RC: Oh yeah, I had never seen that much water.
RT: Where did they send you after San Diego? Did they send you to any kind of training school afterward?
RC: No, I went right straight to the Frank E. Evans.
RT: Oh, okay. What did you do aboard the Evans?
RC: I was a seaman in the deck force; paint the ship and that kind of stuff. When I was on they’re just a skeleton crew because they’d turned most of reserves loose and we had, went out, the ships and the squadron went out in the training crew service. Once they went outside of San Francisco for training and exercise.
RT: So overall what did you think about your boot camp experience?
RC: Well, I just kept a low profile. I didn’t talk. I didn’t allow them to get to know who I was, I guess. I just didn’t want to get into any trouble.
RT: What was a typical day like in boot camp then?
RC: Oh we got up, I don’t know, about 6:00 or 6:30 and go to breakfast and then marching around to different classes. First three weeks we did a lot of marching and drills type of thing.
RT: How was the food? Was it good, bad, somewhere in between?
RC: How was what?
RT: The food.
RC: Oh, it was okay, as far as I was concerned. I thought it was all right.
RT: You didn’t have to cook it. (Laughter)

RC: Oh, yeah, yeah that’s right.

RT: What were the accommodations like? Were they wood barracks, or—?

RC: Yeah they were wood barracks, just bunks, double bunks, upper and lower bunks. Open bay barracks.

RT: What was the weather like while you were there?

RC: Oh, it was, sun was out everyday, and I don’t think it rained at all while I was there.

RT: Well this was the summer wasn’t it?

RC: Yes, it was summer.

RT: So, did you ever go to any place like Treasure Island, California?

RC: Yeah I went to ET (electronics technician) school there. When I went to ET school from the Frank E. Evans, I went to Treasure Island.

RT: What did you do there?

RC: That was electronic school.

RT: Was your average day mostly just going to a bunch of classes?

RC: Yes.

RT: What did you think of your instructors in both boot camp and in ET school?

RC: Well boot camp was a couple of chiefs we had for instructors. They were okay, you know they—you couldn’t get away with a lot of stuff, you couldn’t be wild or anything. In ET school, I thought it was pretty good instructors.

RT: Were there any kind of humorous or maybe even terrifying events that happened while you were in boot camp or while you were at ET school?

RC: No, not really. I remember when we went out, when I was on the Frank E. Evans, went out in a training cruise on one of the other ships in the squadron and I had the four-to-eight lookout watch. And about eight o’clock I was coming down, going down in the compartment, and I was walking on the main deck and slipped because the water was coming over the side and about—almost went over overboard there. Went out to the life line but I grabbed a hold of them and I was okay then. So then I got off the weather deck; I should’ve known better than to be out there on the weather deck at night.

RT: Was it particularly dark?
RC: Oh, yeah. It was dark, about a quarter to eight in October, in October we were out on that.

RT: So when you went into the Navy did you have a pretty good idea that you might end up at the Pacific or did you think that it was 50/50 that it would be Pacific or Atlantic?

RC: Well, I didn’t know, I didn’t really know since we went to boot camp out at San Diego. But some of them they went back down to the East Coast then. No, I didn’t know where we would go and I didn’t really care.

RT: So what did you think when you first heard that you were going to go to the Pacific? Did you just say, “Okay that’s my duty assignment,” or did you say, “Uh oh?”

RC: No, that was fine with me; I wanted to get overseas.

RT: When you told your family where you were going, what did they think?

RC: Well, they didn’t make any comments; it didn’t make any difference, I guess.

RT: What did they think when you first told them that you were going into the Navy?

RC: Well, my dad said I had to finish high school first, so he wouldn’t sign the papers until I finished high school. So they thought going into the Navy was a lot better than going into the Army.

RT: There are a lot of people who have said that. So you said you dad wouldn’t sign the papers until you had finished high school. Did he finish high school himself or did he not finish high school and—?

RC: Oh, he didn’t finish high school, no, my parents neither one of them finished high school.

RT: Well, at least you can see how he would want his children to finish.

RC: Oh, yeah.

RT: Have something that he didn’t have. Once you finished high school then your dad signed his name on your papers then?

RC: Yeah, he signed the papers for me then.

RT: Did you wait until graduation and then you handed the papers over to him and asked him to sign right then or what?
RC: Well, I don’t remember how it went. I remember it was when I—you had to sign something at the recruiter’s office in Waterloo, I think. I don’t remember exactly where or when he signed them, but I know he signed them. If you weren’t eighteen you had to get one parent to sign for you.

RT: So when did you learn that you were going to be assigned to a destroyer?
RC: After boot camp we went back to San Diego and we were in the outgoing unit for a while and then they just come up one day and said, “Your on the list to go up to Mare Island for destroyers.”

RT: And so mostly what you did aboard the Evans was deck duty?
RC: Yeah, right.

RT: So while you’re aboard Evans where did you go?
RC: You mean where did we go on—?
RT: On ship, yes.
RC: Well, we didn’t go anywhere except we went out and trained through the squadron; we just stayed around Mare Island, we were tied up there. The whole squadron was tied up at Mare Island.

RT: What year was this?
RC: 1946, and first part of ’47.
RT: So this was after the Second World War was over and done with?
RC: Yes, after the shooting was over.
RT: So you didn’t have an opportunity to see any kind of action?
RC: No, no I didn’t.
RT: As you were aboard Evans did you—did the ship have any kind of live-fire training exercises or anything of that nature?
RC: No, just the ship on the squadron that we went out on, training cruise there.

RT: So how long did you stay aboard Evans?
RC: I was on there from September of ’46 to I think it was April of ’47.
RT: Was this the first time that you were aboard a ship?
RC: Yes, it was.
RT: What was your first impression, then, when you walked along the pier and saw Evans?
RC: Well, you know, it wasn’t, I didn’t know what my first impression was. I thought, “Well this is my home for awhile,” you know, and it was kind of crowded there, a lot more crowded then what it would be in civilian life. The bunks were three high.

RT: So what did you think of the living conditions aboard ship?

RC: Well it was okay as far as I was concerned. I knew there were a lot of guys on the ship.

RT: Before you were assigned to Evans did you ever think that you would actually serve aboard ship or did you think that you might end up with shore duty?

RC: No, I figured we would be getting out on a ship.

RT: Did you ever think that you would end up in a destroyer?

RC: Well, I didn’t really think about what kind of ship I would be on. I just thought it would be just a Navy ship.

RT: Did you have any kind of preference in the back of your mind, think to yourself, “Oh I’d much rather serve on a battleship or much rather serve on a cruiser,” or anything?

RC: No, I didn’t. I wanted to be out on the ship on the line, you know, the ones that—the combat ship.

RT: Okay. Well, you can definitely say that you were assigned to a combat vessel.

RC: Oh, yeah, that was, the destroyer was.

RT: So what sort of things did you do aboard ship? I mean, what was your daily routine?

RC: Well, we had to sweep down the main deck about two or three times a day, and then painted the chipped paint and painted the ship.

RT: That’s what you did, what was an average shift was that eight hours?

RC: Yeah, right. From about eight o’clock to about four o’clock.

RT: Eight o’clock in the morning?

RC: Yes, till four in the afternoon.

RT: Gosh, sweeping the decks, I mean with a broom?

RC: Yeah, with a broom.

RT: Just to get dust and debris off of it?
RC: Right, right.

RT: Well, even on a destroyer I would think there would be quite a bit of painting and repainting to do.

RC: Oh, yeah. Somebody is doing that all the time.

RT: Was that just pretty much anywhere on the ship, I mean, did they have you hanging over the side on a platform painting the hull or was it mostly up top?

RC: No, sometimes it depends, over the side too. If paint fell off or something, yeah, we painted over the side.

RT: Where was Evans stationed at this time when you were serving aboard?

RC: It was at Mare Island, California.

RT: So you spent all of your time, pretty much in the same area then?

RC: Yeah right. That’s right.

RT: How far was that from San Diego?

RC: Oh it’s about—it’s from San Diego to San Francisco really, and it was about four-hundred miles.

RT: So you mostly cruised the western US coast or did you spend most of your time in port, or what?

RC: We spent most of our time in port except for the training cruise; we hung outside of San Francisco, we went running around out there for a while.

RT: So what sort of things did you do while you were aboard Evans, aside from your work duties, what was your off duty routine?

RC: Well, I don’t know, I just go on liberty over to Vallejo.

RT: Oh, okay. What kind of things did you do for recreation when you were off ship?

RC: I used to go to the movies, I guess, and I would go and look around. Sometimes I’d hitchhike into San Francisco and look around. I’d never seen a place that big.

RT: You hitchhiked into San Francisco?

RC: Oh, yeah.

RT: Wow!

RC: A lot of that going on then. (Laughter)
RT: I take it there weren’t many transportation opportunities.
RC: Well, there was but you could almost hitchhike faster then catch a bus, wait
for a bus, and catch a bus.
RT: That and—
RC: Right after the war everybody was giving servicemen rides, you know.
RT: Oh, okay. Well, that and you didn’t have to make a bunch of stops as you
would on a bus.
RC: Yeah, right.
RT: So you were pretty impressed with San Francisco, then, whenever you would
go into it?
RC: Oh, yeah, I liked it; I thought that was a nice place.
RT: Well, that was probably the largest city that you had seen up to that point in
your life.
RC: Oh, yeah.
RT: So did you spend much time—did you go out on dates or anything like that
when you were stationed in California?
RC: Well, not really. No I didn’t.
RT: They probably didn’t give you very many opportunities to even meet women.
RC: No, no that’s right. Some of the ones that were hanging around Vallejo
weren’t the ones you’d take home to meet your mother. (Laughter)
RT: Kind of a disreputable sort, then.
RC: Yeah.
RT: Okay. I was just curious if the base arranged for any kind of social events?
RC: Oh, no. They never did.
RT: Did you have any kind of clubs on base?
RC: I don’t think they did or not. No I don’t remember having—I think they had
hobby shops on the base but I don’t—
RT: Okay. So they didn’t have anything like officers’ and enlisted clubs, and on-
base recreation?
RC: Some bases had that, but I don’t remember at Mare Island if they had that or not. Of course I was under eighteen and in the clubs you had to be twenty-one to get into them.

RT: Oh, okay. During your time serving aboard Evans were there any kinds of moments or events that kind of ingrained themselves in your mind, or were there any kind of humorous events or interesting things that occurred while you were there?

RC: No, not really. I mean it was just kind of the same thing everyday. No, I can’t think of anything.

RT: Okay. So while you were in, did you—were you able to write or telephone to any friends or relatives?

RC: Well, I used to write home once in a while. I think the first Christmas I called home.

RT: So did you just write to your relatives or did you keep in touch with any of your friends from Waterloo?

RC: Well, just my parents, I guess.

RT: So what kind of things did you write about or did you ask them about, questions about what was going on back home? What was the typical letter like?

RC: Well, I just told them what I was doing and where I had been, like if I had been in San Francisco or some other place, I would tell them about that.

RT: Did you send any kind of postcards or photographs home?

RC: I don’t think I did. I had a camera, I took some pictures but I don’t think I sent them home, I think I just kept them and took them home when I went home.

RT: So while you were serving with the Evans did you ever have enough of a liberty to be able to travel home or were you out there the whole time?

RC: I never did go home on leave while I was on the Evans.

RT: Was most of your time in the Navy spent aboard Evans or did they send you some place else after you finished on the Evans?

RC: Well, after finished I went to ET school from the Evans. And after ET school I was decommissioned by then. So I was sent out to Great Lakes because that was close to home and then from Great Lakes I reenlisted in the Navy for another two and I went out on a heavy cruiser all the way to the Mediterranean.
RT: That must have been a different experience for you then, having served on a
destroyer before and then you go to a heavy cruiser.
RC: Right, it was quite a difference. It was a lot bigger ship.
RT: Were you able to actually serve aboard the cruiser with the knowledge that
you gained in ET school or did they have you in a different position all together?
RC: No, I was an electronic technician on the cruiser, that’s what I did.
RT: What year was that?
RC: That was ’49 and ’50.
RT: Okay. So did they send you to Korea or were you serving somewhere else?
RC: No, we were over in the Mediterranean and I got out just before—my
enlistment ran out in ’50 there, before the Korean War started. I joined the reserves and
then I got recalled.
RT: Did your friends or family—Well, actually you said you wrote to your family
more than anything, did they write very many letters in return?
RC: Oh, yeah.
RT: Did they give—what did they do, give you the information on what was the
latest news from Waterloo?
RC: Yeah, they told me what was going on with some of my friends. If
something had happened to them they told me about that. And they also sent me—oh my
mother sent me the local paper.
RT: Oh, she sent the paper to you?
RC: Yeah, she had them sent to me for about the first six months that I was in.
RT: Well, that must have been a nice bit of contact with your hometown, then.
RC: Oh, yeah, I guess, see people, it seemed like a lot of the girls out of high
school they’re all getting married, the ones that were in my class.
RT: So did anyone else aboard Evans show any kind of interest and say, “Oh, let
me look at your hometown paper.”
RC: No, I don’t think so. I don’t think so.
RT: So you spent, oh, what was it, seven months then aboard Evans?
RC: I guess that would, yeah it would be about seven months.
RT: Did you form any kind of attachment to the ship or did you just look at it as your home for that period of time?
RC: Well, yeah, that was my home for that period of time, you know. I go to some of the ship reunions. I haven’t been to one lately but I’m going, they’re going to have one in Milwaukee here pretty soon and I’m going to go to that one because it’s pretty close to where I live.
RT: So what did you think, what were your first reactions when you were told that you were leaving Evans?
RC: Well, it was okay because I knew I was going to go to ET school because I had put in for it when I found out they were looking for people to go to ET school. I just felt that it would be a good opportunity for me.
RT: So you were really anxious to go to ET school then?
RC: Yeah, I was ready to go, yeah.
RT: Your bags were packed and everything was ready.
RC: Yeah, I was ready to go. Going to be a better chance for advancement, too, I thought.
RT: Oh, absolutely. Well since you said that the Evans spent most of its time in port while you were serving aboard her, did you actually live aboard ship or did they have you living on shore then?
RC: Oh no, we lived aboard the ship, except when they went into dry dock, and then we lived in the barracks. When it went into dry dock, while I was on it, you’d scrape the bottom, you’d do that.
RT: Were you involved in that in any way?
RC: Well, I would stand fire watches, you know, when they were doing welding.
RT: Well, at least that was a change of pace for you then, you didn’t have to sweep the deck or chip any paint at that point.
RC: Yeah, yeah that’s right.
RT: So do you think that the, your time aboard Evans prepared you for serving aboard the cruiser later?
RC: Yeah, I got used to, you know, being on a ship.
RT: So what were the living conditions like then on the cruiser, were they better?
RC: Well, about the same, you know just as many people in the living compartments. Had more people on there but it was pretty much the same.

RT: How long were you aboard that cruiser?

RC: I was on there from, let me see, about May of ’49 to, let’s see, February of ’50, or March of ’50, I think it was.

RT: While you were aboard the cruiser—What cruiser was that by the way?

RC: It was USS Columbus.

RT: Okay. USS Columbus.

RC: CA-74.

RT: Did you spend most of your time just cruising through the Mediterranean or did you actually, did the ship actually pull into any ports?

RC: Oh, yeah. That was the homeport was in Plymouth, England, we was in Plymouth, then we would go down to the Mediterranean. We would go to France, Athens, Greece, Tobruk, North Africa, Gibraltar, yeah we went to Spain. We got liberty; we would pull into places for a couple of days.

RT: Well, now you got to see some place other than California.

RC: Oh, yeah.

RT: So what did you think of the places that you saw in the Mediterranean?

RC: Oh, I thought it was pretty nice. I wouldn’t have been able to do that as a civilian, so I really appreciated it.

RT: So what sort of things did you do whenever you had a liberty when you pulled into these various ports? Did you behave kind of like the typical tourists, go around, and take some pictures?

RC: Yeah, we did some of that, yeah.

RT: Did you return with any souvenirs?

RC: Well, let’s see, seems like I bought some in France, bought some perfume and took home, gave to my mother. Yeah, I bought some stuff. I don’t remember what all I bought, not too much.

RT: So you said your homeport was in Plymouth, England?

RC: Yes.
RT: How much time did you spend there on average? Was it just a few days and then you went out on the—?
RC: Well, no, they may go over for a couple weeks and they’d go down the Mediterranean and then they come back.
RT: So, did you get to see much of Plymouth since it was your homeport?
RC: Oh, yeah. I got to see a lot of that. It was still bombed out; the center of the town was still bombed out. They had bulldozers pushing things around and then you’d see burned-out buildings on the way into town from the dockyard.
RT: That must have been an incredible sight. A reminder of what happened just a few years before.
RC: Yeah, that’s right. I remember we was in a pub one night and some old guy was in there, he was telling us, he said that in Plymouth there during the war at about 8:30 at night they would all walk out to the country. The Germans would come over and bomb them and about 9:30 they would go back home to see if they had a house. So I thought that was kind of interesting, talking to him.
RT: Oh, yes, especially since you didn’t have any kind of common frame of reference. You didn’t have to worry about your house being destroyed in the middle of the night.
RC: Yeah, that’s right.
RT: Oh, man. That must have been interesting.
RC: Yeah, it was.
RT: So you spent quite a bit of time exploring Plymouth then?
RC: Oh, yeah, yeah.
RT: What kinds of things did you do? As you said you had talked to this one fellow in a pub, did you spend time going to places like pubs?
RC: We went to a few pubs, I was a little bit older then so I would go into a few pubs there and sometimes just to kind of look around. We went out to—the ship pulled into Portsmouth one time, and Lord Byron’s ship was there. It was an old ship from the British Navy.
RT: Okay, so you actually had an opportunity to go visit the home of the Royal Navy?
RC: Yeah, right.

RT: So did you have much contact with any of the men of the Royal Navy?

RC: Well, they didn’t like us because we had more money than they did.

(Laughter) So it there wasn’t much fraternizing with the Royal Navy.

RT: Did anyone get into any fights with them?

RC: Oh, yeah, there would be battles going on every once in awhile.

RT: But you stayed out of those, or did you get caught up in a couple of them whether you wanted to or not?

RC: No, I never got—I was not very big, I never got involved in any battle.

RT: But you did see the aftermath of all that?

RC: Yeah, yeah saw some of that.

RT: Did anyone get tossed in the brig?

RC: I don’t remember anybody getting in the brig while I was on there.

RT: So you said you visited Gibraltar, and you went to Tobruk and a few other places. Did you go to Italy?

RC: No, we went by Italy. They didn’t stop there while I was on there.

RT: So did you actually get to go ashore and visit Egypt?

RC: In where?

RT: Well, you said that you had gone to Tobruk.

RC: Gibraltar?

RT: No, Tobruk.

RC: Oh, Tobruk. Yeah, we had to go out in the desert out there. They wouldn’t let us go into town.

RT: Oh, so you got to visit the desert?

RC: Well, there were some old German tanks that were still lying around out there. We went out there and played softball.

RT: Softball among the tanks?

RC: Yeah, kind of.

RT: So you used them as bases or do you use them to—?

RC: No, we didn’t get right up next to them. They didn’t let us go into Tobruk, they said that the Arabs there didn’t like us, I guess. They didn’t want any conflicts.
RT: That’s bizarre. So you got to play softball in the desert. That must not have lasted very long.

RC: They give us a couple cans of beer; let us have a couple cans of beer while we was playing softball.

RT: I would think that the heat alone plus all the physical activity would have been a little much.

RC: Well, it wasn’t too bad if I remember right. It was kind of a dry climate, I think that was in September, I believe.

RT: Oh, okay, when it was getting cooler. Then you said that you were able to visit Gibraltar. What did you think of it?

RC: Well, I was looking for the Prudential view of it; you got to go around the other side when you pull into it to see that view, that Prudential has of it.

RT: To actually see the rock itself?

RC: Yeah.

RT: Were you able to go ashore and take a tour?

RC: Well, I didn’t take a tour. We pulled in there one night and we just stayed there one night. I had the watch right on the beach there where they came back from liberty. So I had the duty that night, so I had shore patrol, which is “bull watch.” Make sure the sailors didn’t fall in the drink when they come back to get in the boat to go out to the ship, it was anchored out.

RT: So you were in a way assisting the Shore Patrol then?

RC: Yeah.

RT: Well did you get to have an opportunity to wear the arm band with SP (Shore Patrol) on it?

RC: Yeah, that’s what you wore.

RT: Did they give you a baton or anything like that?

RC: Yeah, they’ll give you a nightstick.

RT: Okay, so you actually got to be a cop for one night.

RC: That’s what it was; it was a cop.

RT: So how was it? Was it pretty uneventful or did you have to keep—?
RC: Yeah, it was uneventful. Since they was coming back, some of them was pretty drunked up, you had to make sure that they didn’t get hurt getting into the liberty boat.

RT: Hope that they didn’t do more harm to themselves than anyone else.

RC: Yeah.

RT: During your cruise in the Mediterranean, how many times did you cruise through there?

RC: I think two or three times we went down through the Mediterranean.

RT: So did you follow pretty much the same route or did they make different routes?

RC: Well, it was different places at different times.

RT: So you got to see a little bit of variety each time?

RC: Oh, yeah.

RT: In what part of the Mediterranean did you spend the most time, at least on shore?

RC: I guess it would be in France. They stayed there the longest. I don’t remember how long it was.

RT: So you got to see a little bit of southern France then?

RC: Yeah, yeah. It was southern part, the Riviera and Niece, France.

RT: Did you get to go ashore and visit?

RC: Oh, yeah.

RT: Did you actually get to go in town or what?

RC: Oh, yeah, I went in town.

RT: So they weren’t like the folks in Tobruk who steered ya’ll clear of the town?

RC: No, they let us go in there.

RT: So what kind of a reception did you receive?

RC: It was kind of nice. They didn’t hate us then, like they do now, but there wasn’t any problems.

RT: What kind of things did you do when you were ashore in France? Was it pretty much the same routine as some of the other places where you had been ashore?
RC: Yeah, made it to of some the pubs or whatever and then just kind of looked around.

RT: And buy perfume?

RC: Yeah, that’s right. I did that.

RT: Did you take very many photos whenever you did go ashore?

RC: Yeah, I took some pictures there. I still got some pictures.

RT: Okay, so then you actually had quite a bit for a scrapbook then?

RC: Oh, yeah.

RT: Whenever you returned home did you show a bunch of these pictures to friends or family?

RC: I showed them to my family.

RT: What was your average routine, then, aboard this cruiser?

RC: Well, I was an electronic technician. I think I had to work on some fire control radar I was assigned, that was my radars to work on, made sure they worked. Then we stood watch as we tuned transmitters at, you know, for the radiomen to talk to Washington, D.C., or wherever.

RT: Now when you were in ET school, did they have a section on radar that they taught to you?

RC: Oh, yeah. Yeah, they had receivers, transmitters, radar, and sonar.

RT: Okay, so they covered wide variety of electronics topics?

RC: Yeah, you get to look at kind of a little bit of everything.

RT: And was it a combination of being in the classroom and having some hands-on experience?

RC: Yeah, we had both, they did that. We would tune the transmitters and they’d put troubles in and we would try to find the troubles in them, you know, troubleshoot the trade receivers and transmitters.

RT: And these were all working pieces of equipment. These weren’t just mock-ups?

RC: Yeah.

RT: Okay. So you received a pretty good background then when you went to ET school?
RC: Oh yeah, it was forty-two weeks of school.

RT: Forty-two weeks. Wow! How long were the classes, that is, how long were they each day and were you in class five days a week or did they have you in class—?

RC: Yeah, about five days a week. It the class, let’s see, went from about eight in the morning till about noon. Then in the afternoon, we went from one to I don’t remember how it was. It was pretty much a full day.

RT: Okay. So did you have several classes a day or did you just have—go through one section all the way through and then you start another section? Was it one class at a time or did you have several a day?

RC: One class at a time. I mean, you know, one right after another, just like it would be in college.

RT: Then you had the opportunity to take your lunch break and then go right back into it?

RC: Yeah, right. Right, we would go to lunch and come back.

RT: So did you have any kind of work or assignments that you had to do or read after the class?

RC: It seemed like, I remember, yeah, we had some homework to do and they had a test every week.

RT: So what kind of test was that? Was it a written test or was it a practical test where you had to do something—?

RC: It was a written test. I mean, it might be multiple choice, or true-false, or fill-in-the-blanks, a little bit of everything, what I remember. Like we would have sonar for two weeks, a period of two weeks, that would be you talk about sonar and then maybe two weeks maybe on transmitters, and then two weeks on different receivers, that type of thing.

RT: So when you were going through all these classes, were you still interested in working with radios themselves or did you see anything else there in all those classes that interested you more then anything else?

RC: Well, no. It’s a general; I liked working on the electronics stuff. It didn’t make any difference what it was.

RT: You just liked the electronics.
RC: Yeah, I liked to do and see the different things, too.

RT: They were still using, at least in the equipment you were working with, they were still using vacuum tubes.

RC: Yeah, it was vacuum tubes then. In fact, they discovered a transistor, I think, while we were in school.

RT: So did that news reach you at that time or—?

RC: What’s that now?

RT: So did news of the discovery or the invention of the transistor reach you in school at that time or did you learn about it sometime later?

RC: Well, some of the guys were talking about it in school, I guess, I think.

RT: Oh, having a kind of a discussion or debate about it?

RC: Yeah, they said something about a transistor, you know. We didn’t know what that was at all. But that’s when the guys at Bell Labs got awarded the Nobel Prize or whatever.

RT: Oh, yes. So I would think then with the vacuum tubes and everything it could get a little warm, at least the equipment could.

RC: Yeah, you had to be careful. Like transmitters, you had to be careful. You could get burnt pretty bad on transmitters.

RT: Did you have to wear gloves or anything?

RC: No, you had to have—whenever you worked on a transmitter you had to short everything out.

RT: Okay.

RC: Like the capacitors so you wouldn’t get shocked.

RT: Wow.

RC: And they showed you how to do that.

RT: So you had to short out the system so that—?

RC: You had to short out the capacitors.

RT: Oh, short out the capacitors, okay.

RC: To take the charge off of it.

RT: So did you have a special tool for that?
RC: Yeah you had a rod with, an insulated rod you clipped onto the ground and it would just short the capacitors out.

RT: So while you were in ET school, were your accommodations pretty much the same as they were in boot camp, were you in barracks that were identical or real similar?

RC: Yeah the barracks were similar, the same type of deal.

RT: But your daily schedule was a little bit different from boot camp, was it, in terms of the time that you woke up and then the time that you bedded down for the night? Did you wake up just as early or did you wake up later?

RC: Well, we woke up later, I guess. You had a formation about 8:00 or 7:30 out in the street and then you march off to your classes.

RT: Were your classes pretty much picked for you or did you get to determine them?

RC: Oh no, they were picked; they would schedule you. Everybody got the same thing. Every two weeks it was a new class.

RT: So then after you left the Evans and then after you left the cruiser and you had left the Navy, did you stay in the Naval Reserves or did you get out of the Navy all together?

RC: No, I joined the Naval Reserve when I got out. Then Korea came along and I got recalled.

RT: What did they ask you to do for Korea?

RC: Well, I went aboard a USS Bryce Canyon; it was destroyer tender.

RT: So it wasn’t too far away from your original experience aboard the Evans?

RC: No, it wasn’t, about four years.

RT: So were you working on electronics then as well?

RC: Yes, I worked on electronics then.

RT: What was your duty aboard the destroyer tender?

RC: Destroyers would come alongside and if they need some equipment fixed they would bring it over to our ship or we would go over there. But we had more facilities for taking care of things.

RT: So you basically had a workshop then?

RC: Yeah, right, that what it was. It was kind of a repair shop.
RT: So you had the opportunity to work on a wide variety of equipment or was it pretty much the same sort of items like radios or transmitters?

RC: Yeah, it was the same type of thing, radios, transmitters, whatever.

RT: Anything that they could easily remove from one ship and take it onto—?

RC: Well, either that or we would go over onto their ship. They were tagging alongside us.

RT: So you did all of this while you were at sea then?

RC: Well, we weren’t at sea. We were in the port.

RT: Oh, okay. So you were in the port, okay. So while you were aboard the destroyer tender were you placed, maybe not you, but the ship that is to say, was the ship placed in any close proximity to any kind of combat?

RC: Well, we’d go to different parts, go to sea every once in a while, we go from Yokosuka to Sasebo and then go into Korean waters. But we never had any problems. We got the Korean ribbon.

RT: Did you receive any kind of ribbons when you were aboard Evans?

RC: I think I earned the World War II Victory Ribbon while I was on there. You had to have six months in before the end of ’46.

RT: So what was your first reaction when you heard that you were going to serve in the Korean War?

RC: Well, it didn’t bother me. I didn’t think anything about it, really. I just figured that’s what was going on, that’s where we go.

RT: So what was your family’s reaction?

RC: Well, they didn’t think anything about it either, I guess.

RT: Well, that and you weren’t going to be in a foxhole somewhere. You were going to be on a nice ship.

RC: That’s right. Yeah.

RT: So what was it like aboard the destroyer tender? Were the accommodations pretty much the same as they had been through your time in the Navy?

RC: Yeah, it was all pretty much the same. They had more shops on there. Had big machine shops, that type of thing.

RT: So it was basically an entire repair facility at sea.
RC: Right.

RT: Well, that must have been interesting. Did you have much contact with any of the men from other sections of the ship or from other professions such as machinists or what have you?

RC: Well, yeah, you know, you kind of knew who they were, but we pretty well take care of the electronics equipment. We didn’t have to go and get any help from any other departments down there.

RT: So while you were serving in the Korean War, did you get to go into port and have liberties very often?

RC: Oh, yeah. We was based in Japan so we could go ashore there every other night, I guess it was.

RT: Wow, every other night?

RC: Yeah, I think that’s what they have, the port/starboard liberty.

RT: Wow, you got to see quite a bit of Japan, then, or at least that area.

RC: Yes.

RT: So what kind of things did you do when you were in Japan?

RC: Well, just went kind of sight seeing there, too. Went to Tokyo a couple of times.

RT: So you actually got to go to the capital?

RC: Oh yeah, we went to Nagasaki. It had a bus tour over there.

RT: How long did it take to go from your port in Japan to Nagasaki?

RC: I don’t remember that. We went on a weekend I guess.

RT: Oh, okay.

RC: It was a one day trip.

RT: So what kind of things did they do? Did they show you around the town?

RC: Yeah, they just let us—Well, they took us to the center. They have a monument there at the center of ground zero. And then we got to go into town to different places, whatever, went to some of the pubs or whatever.

RT: So what was your reaction when you saw Nagasaki?

RC: I thought that was a pretty good-sized bomb that went off. Still some of it was all tore down, you know, they hadn’t built it back up yet.
RT: Wow. So you actually got to see something that not very many people at that time were able to see.

RC: Yeah, that’s right.

RT: So what kind of things did you do in Tokyo? Did you see the really big sights like the Imperial Palace and that sort of thing?

RC: Well, I saw the parade grounds up there. We were quite a ways from the Imperial Palace, we didn’t go up there, just could see it from a distance.

RT: Did you buy any kind of souvenirs when you were in Japan?

RC: I think I did. I think I bought a doll for my little sister, not too much.

RT: So what did she—did your little sister, write a letter to you saying thank you for the doll?

RC: No, I don’t think so, I don’t imagine that. I think I kept it until I got home.

RT: Oh, okay. So how old was she then when you bought the doll?

RC: Well, she must have been about ten or twelve.

RT: Okay, so still young enough to be impressed by a doll. Then when you returned you gave her present to her?

RC: Yeah.

RT: Was she kind of impressed by the fact that you brought it all the way from Japan?

RC: I don’t remember that.

RT: So did you actually get to go ashore in Korea at any time?

RC: No, we never went ashore in Korea. We never got in there.

RT: So the most you ever saw was the coastline?

RC: Yeah.

RT: So while you were serving during the Korean War, and you said that occasionally you would be sent in the Korean waters. Were there any times where you were concerned about any kind of attacks upon you or your ship?

RC: No, I don’t think so. I remember one time we were sitting in Japan there and they had a red alert but it was a mistake, it wasn’t really true. They were copying the wrong circuit. But they said, you know, so they had a general quarters and all that.
bologna but nothing ever happened. Then they finally realized they were copying the
wrong circuit.

RT: I bet that person was really popular that afternoon.

RC: Yeah, I don’t know what ever happened on that.

RT: I’m sure that it definitely awakened you that, for those few moments that you
and others thought that you were under attack or at least threat of attack.

RC: Yeah, we couldn’t understand why a destroyer alongside had their lights on.

See they darkened ship with ours as soon as they got—said that they had general quarters.
But I thought that they should have been getting to get underway, too, to get out of there
but that didn’t happen. Then it wasn’t very long afterwards that they found out it was a
false alarm.

RT: So how long were you aboard the destroyer tender?

RC: I was on there from—we put that in commission in Charleston, that was
August of ’50. Then we left it in Japan a year, I was on there a year.

RT: Okay. You mentioned that you came on after it was commissioned so this
was a new ship?

RC: Yeah it was a—they had built it during World War II but they had never put
it in commission so they just finished it off in Charleston. Then, we went through the
canal over to San Diego and then out to Japan.

RT: So you had an opportunity to go through the Panama Canal?

RC: Yeah, we went through the Panama Canal.

RT: How long did it take to go from one side to the other?

RC: Took a whole day. We was there in the morning and then on the other side at
evening.

RT: That’s not too bad. So was that the first time that you had seen a canal like
that?

RC: Yeah, that was it.

RT: What was your first impression seeing you know the much fabled Panama
Canal?

RC: Well, I don’t know. Everybody was out on the main deck most of the time
just watching what we were doing and going through the locks.
RT: So you were up top taking a look around then?
RC: Yeah, taking some pictures.
RT: Oh, okay. Wow you must have had a pretty good scrapbook by the time that you finished your time in the Navy.
RC: Yeah, it was pretty good.
RT: Well, and you had quite a few interesting things, too.
RC: Yeah I got to see both sides of it while I was in the service.
RT: As you sailed from Charleston down to the Panama Canal Zone, did you stop off anywhere in the Caribbean?
RC: No, we didn’t. We went right straight through it, we didn’t go ashore in Panama either, we went right through the canal and up to San Diego.
RT: Back at San Diego where you were still pretty familiar with everything.
RC: Pardon?
RT: Back to San Diego where you were still pretty familiar with everything.
RC: Oh, yeah. We were around there for a while, I don’t remember how long we were there before we went out.
RT: Had there been much change from the first time that you were in San Diego up to that point?
RC: No, it was pretty much the same. It hadn’t changed too much.
RT: Okay. So then after you were finished aboard the destroyer tender, did they send you straight out or did they assign you to another ship?
RC: No, that was it. I was in the reserves then and they let us go, they just sent us back to the States and discharged us.
RT: So you were discharged in—?
RC: Yeah, in Treasure Island is where we got discharged from.
RT: Well, that’s where you went to ET school.
RC: Yeah, that’s right.
RT: So what kind of things did they have on Treasure Island? Was it just the ET school or was there more of a facility there?
RC: Well, there was a kind what they call a receiving station there, too.
RT: Okay, okay. And then after that were you out of the Navy for good or did you go back in to the reserves at any time?

RC: Well, I was still in reserves. But I finished my enlistment there then I dropped out and then I got back into reserves again later and I retired from the reserves.

RT: When did you retire from the reserves?

RC: It was August of, let’s see, 1988.

RT: Wow. You were in for quite a while.

RC: Well I went back in, in the seventies. Yeah I was out from the fifties to the seventies, and then I went back in again. So I got my twenty years in all together.

RT: Oh, okay. At what rank did you finish out?

RC: I was a chief petty officer.

RT: This was, gosh, you went back in the seventies that was well after you finished your college education.

RC: Oh, yeah. I tried to get a commission but I was too old.

RT: So did you go to college after you were finished with the destroyer tender and after the Korean War?

RC: Yes.

RT: So did you go to the college that you attended, that was University of Northern Indiana, is that what you said it was?

RC: No, Northern Iowa.

RT: I’m sorry, Northern Iowa.

RC: I was a math major there.

RT: Had you heard about the school before then or did you hear about it after you had left the Navy?

RC: Well, the school was there. It was not too far from Waterloo. In fact it was by Cedar Falls, which is about seven miles from Waterloo, so that’s why I went there.

RT: Wow, that’s very close.

RC: Then I went, after we got married, then I went to engineering school.

RT: Were you among other former Navy men when you were in college?

RC: Yeah, there were veterans there.
RT: I was just curious if you’d run into any other folks who were electronics technicians or anything of that nature?
RC: I think in engineering school, I did.
RT: So would you say that your time in the Navy prepared you for going into college?
RC: Oh, yeah, it did.
RT: Well, I would think that the discipline alone would have been very helpful.
RC: Yeah, it was.
RT: So when you got into college were there any times where you were in class and you thought to yourself, “Gosh I took this in the Navy?”
RC: Yeah. I could see—they explained a little different. In the Navy they told you where all the electrons flowed and all that and in engineering school they just wrote math equations.
RT: Then you had your degree in mathematics so that really prepared you then—
RC: Yeah, that helped, too.
RT: What made you choose mathematics? Were you interested in it when you were in high school?
RC: Well, I went to it when I was going to school there, I was going to transfer to engineering school but then I decided, “Well, I don’t know if I want to do that, I’ll just stay here and get a degree here and maybe go back in the Navy.” But I got the degree from there and then I got married and my wife didn’t want to go back in the Navy. So I said, “Well, I will go to engineering school.” So she taught school while I went to engineering school.
RT: And then you went to Iowa State.
RC: Iowa State Engineering School.
RT: For your engineering?
RC: Yeah.
RT: And that’s where you got your electrical engineering degree?
RT: By that time a lot of the electrical engineering material was kind of old hat for you then, or was it?
RC: What do you mean by that?
RT: Well, I mean since you had so much experience with electronics and—
RC: Well, the transistors were coming in and we had to know both vacuum tubes
and transistors.
RT: So there was a little bit of difference.
RC: Yeah, there was some difference there.
RT: In the 1960, I think they were starting to miniaturize circuits by that time.
RC: I think, yeah, I think they were starting to do that.
RT: Well, there were some new things for you to learn then.
RC: Yeah, there were a lot of new things to learn.
RT: Did you—again, did you run into very many veterans at that point?
RC: Oh, yeah. There were a lot of veterans going through.
RT: And in the electrical engineering department I would imagine there were a
few who were there who had the same kind of background and experience that you did.
RC: That’s right.
RT: So did ya’ll swap any stories?
RC: Oh, I guess we told sea stories once in awhile.
RT: (Laughter) Well, speaking of sea stories, do you happen to have any of your
own?
RC: Well, no not really. I mean it’s kind of boring at sea when you’re traveling,
especially when you’re crossing an ocean.
RT: Well, from your time when you were, oh gosh, well actually when you were
serving aboard the cruiser you crossed—no you didn’t cross the equator, but you did
whenver—
RC: No, I never did go across the equator.
RT: So you never had the Neptunus Rex Ceremony?
RC: No, no, never got involved in that.
RT: Did you have any kind of ceremony when you crossed the International
Dateline?
RC: No, we did get a card, you know, saying we crossed the dateline. No, there was no ceremony there. I think the navigator told us, made an announcement we were crossing the dateline.

RT: And then the rest of ya’ll thought, “Okay, so what?”

RC: That’s right. That’s about it.

RT: So when you were getting your degree in mathematics—you were commuting then from Waterloo to school?

RC: Yeah, right. Yeah, I commuted.

RT: So where you living in your house at that time or are you—?

RC: No, I wasn’t married then. I was living at home with the parents.

RT: So were any of your siblings still at home at that point?

RC: Yeah, one of them was gone; the two of them were still home.

RT: They must have been glad to see you at home, then. You know to get to know you again.

RC: Yeah, they did. Yeah.

RT: When you met your wife, where did you happen to meet her on campus? Did you go to some kind of student event and you ran into her, or how did you meet?

RC: Well, I knew her through some others; she lived in the same dorm as some other gals we knew.

RT: Did friends of yours arrange for the two of ya’ll to meet or did you—?

RC: Yeah, they kind of did. Yeah.

RT: Well, those were good friends then weren’t they?

RC: Yeah, they were.

RT: Did the two of you hit if off at the start or did it take a little while?

RC: No, it wasn’t very long. It was getting near the end of the senior year. So, yeah, it wasn’t about six weeks I guess we knew each other.

RT: Oh, it was six weeks until you proposed?

RC: Yeah, right.

RT: So you were pretty darn certain then that she was the gal for you then?

RC: Yes, I guess so; it’s been forty-eight years almost.
RT: Well, it seems like it has been working out for you, then. When she had heard that you were in the Navy did she, was she interested to see your uniform or anything like that or see the pictures that you had taken?

RC: No, not really. Well, she looked, after we got married, she looked at my scrapbook a little bit. But no, see, I told her I was planning on going back into the Navy but then after we got married she decided, well, that wouldn’t be the right thing to do so I didn’t go back. I tried to get a commission to go back.

RT: She didn’t want to have to move from place to place?

RC: Yeah, she didn’t want to do that.

RT: Then you went into the civilian world and you ended up moving from place to place anyway.

RC: Yeah, well, we were together though, in the Navy you would be separated quite a bit.

RT: That’s true. Well, you did get to see the world, that’s for sure.

RC: Yeah, I did.

RT: A good part of it.

RC: Yeah, I did, that was the best part of it, I guess.

RT: So, overall, you would have a very positive reflection and very positive memories of your time in the service?

RC: Oh yeah. That was probably the highlight of my life, really.

RT: Well, you spent less time on the *Evans* then on any of the other ships where you served.

RC: Yeah, I think so.

RT: But since it was the first ship on which you’d served, did it make any kind of lasting impression on you?

RC: Well, yeah. It was my first home in the Navy, you know, it was kind of first real home. Yeah, I liked being on there. I liked all the ships I was on, really.

RT: There are times when you hear people who had served in the Navy that there are some who say that there was a particular ship that they hated, and a particular ship that they loved, but it’s not every time that you hear someone say that they really enjoyed all of the vessels on which they served.
RC: Yeah I guess I was lucky that way. I think I was, anyway.
RT: The nice thing is in the last two ships on which you served, you were actually
doing the kind of thing that you wanted to do in the first place and work with the
electronics.
RC: Yeah, that’s right. I got into what I wanted to do.
RT: When you were serving aboard that destroyer tender what was an average
day then? What was it like for you?
RC: Well, when we were in port there we were working on ships, you know, we
were working on electronics gear and then we would go from one place to another, we
were at sea we didn’t really have to do anything then.
RT: So—
RC: Just stand a regular watch, whatever your watches were.
RT: Oh, and for you that would have been what?
RC: Well, I guess just in the repair shop. I’d be on call in case somebody called,
you know, if they needed something.
RT: So you would report in the repair shop and kind of sit there until someone
said we need you to do this, that, or the other.
RC: Yeah, yeah. That’s right.
RT: But when you were in port it was pretty steady pace then because you had
quite a bit of stuff coming in.
RC: Yeah, we had ships alongside and then we had something to do all the time,
you were repairing stuff.
RT: So when you went on the times when you actually had to board the ship to
repair things on the ship itself, I assume you had some kind of tool kit then?
RC: Yeah, we had toolboxes, yeah. Well, you know what you would have is long
nose pliers, diagonals, and whatever you needed.
RT: So you were pretty well prepared whenever you went onto that other ship?
RC: Yeah, and then they had tools on there too, if there was something that you
didn’t have well they would have it.
RT: And they let you know in advance what it was that you were repairing then?
RC: Yeah, they would send an order over to our ship and the division officer would assign people to take care of it.

RT: So did you do any kind of problem solving before you went over there, you know, kind of going through a list of symptoms for what was going wrong with the piece of equipment?

RC: No, not really. We would just go over and turn it on and see what was going on. We had instruction books, usually have to use those, those ships’ instruction books.

RT: So what was the most difficult piece of equipment that you ever had to work on in the Navy?

RC: Oh golly, I don’t know.

RT: I mean was there any type of equipment that took a little bit more time and care than any of the others?

RC: No, I can’t think of anything like that.

RT: Oh, okay.

RC: Well, some of the big stuff like if you need a crane, like if they changed an antenna or something, we couldn’t really do that very well. But some of the stuff you know, just need volt meters and that to get it repaired, well that was okay. We had a lot of the spare parts, too, for different equipment.

RT: Oh, certainly because you know you were a floating repair station.

RC: Yeah, right. So we knew what most of the destroyers had the same type of equipment.

RT: And much of it was pretty interchangeable at that point?

RC: Yeah.

RT: Okay, this is mini disk recording number two for interview on September 25th with Richard Crinigan. And as you were saying in regard to repairing some of the larger equipment aboard the destroyers you would have to bring in cranes or other equipment and you didn’t have much hands-on work to do at that point.

RC: Oh no, that’s right.

RT: But ultimately were you involved in doing things like having to disconnect leads or cables or anything like that?

RC: Oh, yeah.
RT: So you would have to do that kind of work before they could remove any of
that kind of equipment?
RC: Oh, yeah. We would just do that but they needed to take something off
sometimes, like real big stuff, we couldn’t do that.
RT: So when they did that, whenever they would do something like that, what
would they do in terms of cutting off power to that piece of equipment? Was there a
switch for that particular circuit or for that one piece of equipment?
RC: Oh, yeah. There is usually switches for the—you could cut the power and
everything. They got switches all over the place for different equipment.
RT: That’s a far cry from having to chip paint and sweep the deck.
RC: Oh, yeah. That’s for sure.
RT: Whenever they, by the way, when the Navy assigned you to that particular
task was there any kind of training ahead of time for, you know, the paint chipping and
the painting duty, I mean was—?
RC: Any training for the chipping of paint?
RT: Well, I mean did someone say, “This is the right way to do it; this is the
wrong way to do it?”
RC: Oh, not really. Just give you chip hammer and they would show you how to
do it, and you just bang it on the side of the ship. Sometimes they had air hammers, too.
RT: Air hammers?
RC: Yeah, an air hammer, you know what kind—
RT: Oh yes, to chip paint?
RC: Yeah.
RT: Wow. That’s some stubborn paint.
RC: Well, yeah some of it was stuck pretty good.
RT: Well, back then they had lead based paint.
RC: Yeah, yeah they did.
RT: And that will stick to just about anything.
RC: I don’t know if they still have it now, I don’t know what they do in the Navy,
what kind of paint they use now.
RT: So when they had you doing that kind of duty did you have to climb a mast or anything like that?
RC: Well, I did one time when I was working on electronics. On a heavy cruiser I was on we had to climb up the mast to tear up the antenna and do something up there, I remember with another guy, but I didn’t like that too well. I’m not much on heights.
RT: Oh, okay.
RC: The other guy was doing most of the work I was just kind of helping him.
RT: So did you have some kind of a built-in stepladder or something?
RC: Oh no, you just, this ladder goes up the mast, not built in or anything.
RT: Well, at least you didn’t have to try to hold onto a rope or something and climb your way up the mast.
RC: Oh, no.
RT: And then once you were on the top of the mast was there some kind of a platform where the antennas were?
RC: Yeah, there was a platform up there, on this one there was a platform up there. As you come up there, there is a switch; you throw the switch so they couldn’t turn it on.
RT: Okay. Well, I personally don’t have any problems with heights but I still would not be too terribly thrilled about standing on the top of a mast on something that is moving and pitching with the seas.
RC: Well, this was in port but there’s still a little rolling.
RT: Where was this?
RC: This was in Plymouth, England.
RT: Oh okay, so you were in the UK when you had to do that.
RC: Yeah.
RT: Okay. Well, as your kids came into the scene did any of them—as your kids grew up, did any of them, ask about your time in the Navy?
RC: No, not really. They weren’t interested in military except my youngest one went in, but the others didn’t.
RT: Did any of your siblings ask you what you had done or what it was like to be in the Navy?
RC: No, they didn’t. My two brothers, one was in the Army, the other was in the
Air Force. But they never asked me anything and I guess I never asked them about what
they did, either.
RT: Well, that’s a pretty interesting bit of diversity right there. You were in the
Navy. You had one sibling who was in the Army and another who was in the Air Force.
RC: Yeah.
RT: All you needed was one sibling to be in the Marine Corps and you would
have all the bases covered.
RC: Yeah, that’s right.
RT: So the one who went into the Army and the one who went into the Air Force,
what was the age difference between them and you?
RC: The one in the Army was two years difference, the one in the Air Force that
was twelve years, I think.
RT: Okay. So the one who was in the Army was he older than you or was he
younger?
RC: He was younger.
RT: Oh, so you were the oldest then?
RC: Yeah, I was the oldest. Right.
RT: So you were the big brother then?
RC: Yeah.
RT: So the one that went into the Army then, he obviously went in well after the
Second World War was over?
RC: Yeah, he got drafted during the Korean War. He went was stationed up in
Alaska.
RT: Wow, Alaska. That’s awfully cold.
RC: Yeah, I guess so. Anchorage, he was in Anchorage.
RT: Did he stay in or did he—?
RC: Oh, no. He got out after his time was up, after two years.
RT: And then your brother who went into the Air Force, did he go in during
Vietnam or—?
RC: Well, it was during Vietnam, but he was stationed out in Boise, Idaho. He was in for four years. I think he went in in 1960.

RT: Let’s see, Boise, Idaho, that’s not too far away, you know, in terms of other places where he could have been in the US. That’s not too far away from where your hometown is located.

RC: Well it’s a little ways.

RT: But you know, it’s not as far as if he would have been stationed in, you know, some place like California.

RC: Oh no, not that far.

RT: Then after his four years were over then did he stay in the reserves or anything?

RC: No, he got out too, he didn’t stay in.

RT: So you’re the only one then that stayed in the reserves?

RC: Yeah, right.

RT: Well, you must have really enjoyed your time in the Navy, then.

RC: Yeah, I did, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed my time in reserves, too. It was kind of nice get away for two weeks every year, especially if you live in Iowa here. Wherever we went, the Navy was warmer in the weather, especially during the wintertime.

RT: So what kind of places, where did they send you when you were in the reserves at that point?

RC: I went to California a couple of times, I went to San Diego a few times, then we went to Norfolk a couple of times and then went on different ships.

RT: Oh, okay. So you had the opportunity to continue serving on ships for at least for those two weeks?

RC: Yeah, I went on both East and West coasts.

RT: And still working with electronics?

RC: Yeah, same.

RT: What kind of things did they have you do? Where these more training oriented?

RC: Yeah, it was more observing because you see when you go out in these ships, these guys are assigned certain pieces of equipment and they’re responsible for it so
they’re not going to let somebody that hasn’t been working on it, you know everyday, mess with it. So you just kind of observe what they were doing. I mean you still can get in training learning how the new equipment worked.

RT: So in a way it was a two-way training exercise. You could give to them the benefit of your experience and then you could also see what sort of things that they were doing.

RC: Yeah, right.

RT: And then you were living aboard the ship for that time that you were there?

RC: Oh, yeah.

RT: Did you have any more opportunities to go out to sea?

RC: Oh yeah we usually went to sea on it.

RT: Oh, okay. Was it for that whole two weeks or was it for just the majority of it or what?

RC: Well, you would be on the ship the whole two weeks. Wherever it went for that two weeks you went with it. If it came in the port and stayed in there well you did the same, you stayed on it.

RT: Well, after you’d finished with the Navy and then you received your degree in electrical engineering, did you have go straight from your degree in math into the electrical engineering or did you work?

RC: I worked a little bit before. I have between the two.

RT: What kind of things did you do between the two?

RC: I taught school there for about a year or so.

RT: Oh, okay. Did you teach math?

RC: Yes.

RT: Well, that must have been interesting for the students anyway because of the kind of experience you had with mathematics anyway. I mean you had a very practical experience with it in terms of working with the electronics and other things.

RC: Yeah, well, I don’t know. The students didn’t really care too much, I don’t think.

RT: What grade level were you teaching?

RC: Oh, it was high school.
RT: I think I did ninth grade and then some tenth grade, in small schools.

RT: Was this in Waterloo where you were teaching?

RC: No, no. It was out in a small town in Iowa.

RT: And then you went back into university to get your electrical engineering degree and then you went into the private sector.

RC: Right.

RT: What kind of things—I know that you had mentioned earlier that you worked on military projects. What sort of things did they have you doing when you were working for Western Electric and some of the other companies?

RC: Well, we just got, I worked with, I worked in underwater sound with the Navy and we went and we were gathering data on these rays that they got off the coast, the sonar rays. We was working with Bell Labs and we were kind of assistants to Bell Labs.

RT: Okay. So you were kind of working with and troubleshooting new technology?

RC: Yeah, yes.

RT: Well, you were an ideal choice because you had been in the Navy in addition to having your electrical engineering degree.

RC: The guys that were working that, most of them were Navy guys too, working underwater sound.

RT: Oh, all of you spoke the same language.

RC: Yeah, right.

RT: Then after Western Electric you worked for—What was the second company again?

RC: Collins Radio.

RT: Collins Radio and were you working on underwater sound there?

RC: No, I didn’t work on that, I was working, and I think it was the Air Force.

RT: Oh, okay. So you got to work with a different set of people?

RC: Yes.

RT: Most of the people that you worked with then were active duty or retired Air Force?
RC: Well—
RT: Well, at least on that project anyway.
RC: Most of them had been in the service. Some of them hadn’t, but most of them were.
RT: So what kind of thing were you doing for the Air Force then?
RC: Oh, we were gathering some of the equipment out. I was the troubleshooter, we’re the, you know, take measurements and making kind of troubleshooting tables up for them. I tell you, if your volt is reading here and if it’s so and so, while you go and take a volt reading here and so and so, while you replace this part or that.
RT: All in all, you had quite a bit of an experience in the Navy.
RC: Oh, yeah.
RT: It’s nice that you were able to go into something that you intended to do in the first place, and that is work with the electronics.
RC: Oh, yeah. That’s right.
RT: You mentioned that you had taken code in high school. Was that pretty normal item on the curriculum at that time?
RC: Well, no. See this is during the war and the railroad, Illinois Central, had telegraph operators then. And we had, my sophomore year, we had one period, we got credit for doing it, but a retired telegraph operator came in and he taught us the code for telegraph sets and we practiced there for about that whole year, you had to get your speed up. Then, we went out and worked on the railroad that summer.
RT: Oh, you did?
RC: As telegraph operators, yes
RT: Not very many kids in high school can say that they were able to work as a telegraph operator.
RC: No, it was just one year. That one year that they had that course. They had sophomores and juniors and seniors were in the class, anybody could take it. It counted for a credit for graduation from high school but it wouldn’t count any college credit.
RT: But still that gave you some experience that you might not have otherwise had and it definitely help you going to the Navy because you had already had the code and as you said you were faster then a lot of people.
RC: Yeah. Well, I didn’t get to go to radio school. I don’t know why I didn’t get
to go on it. I think it was because they needed seamen on the fleet, that’s when I went to
the Evans.

RT: Then after you finished there instead of going to radio school, they sent you
to electronics school.

RC: Yeah, I put in for the electronics school. ALNAV (All Navy) came out on
people. So I just put in for it, I thought it would be a pretty good opportunity.

RT: And it certainly was. It led to a long career in both the Navy and in the
civilian sector.

RC: Yeah, it did.

RT: Well, do you have any kind of additional comments or anything that you
want to say at this point to either myself or anyone else who may listen to this?

RC: No, I can’t think of anything right now, except that I did like the Navy. I
think I had pretty good duty while I was in. I would do it over again if I had to.

RT: Well, you certainly did have a wide variety of experiences and—

RC: Yeah, I did.

RT: As you had said, you joined because you wanted to see the world and you
definitely did. You got to see quite a bit of it, as well as some places within the United
States that you might not have seen otherwise.

RC: That’s true.

RT: You had mentioned when you had been assigned to the cruiser—I’m sorry
not the cruiser but the destroyer tender—that you had gone to Norfolk, Virginia.

RC: Yeah.

RT: Did you get to spend any time in Norfolk? Did you get to spend any kind of
short time or were you going straight to the ship?

RC: Yeah, we could go out on liberty at Norfolk. Yeah, we went out a few times.

RT: So how long were you in Norfolk before the ship departed?

RC: Oh, I think, on the tender, I think we were there maybe a month or less, less
than a month. Went out to get the ship degaussed.

RT: How was that done?
RC: Well, they pull into the special area there and they put cables around it and then run some current through it. It changed the magnetic field of the ship, I guess, so it was supposed to be for the magnetic mines wouldn’t have much effect. I don’t know how it worked, but I know they strung cables around the ship and run some current through it. Polarized the ship, I guess.

RT: Well, as an electronics technician did you have any kind of involvement with that?

RC: No, no we didn’t have any. The shipyards did that.

RT: You got to stand and watch.

RC: Yeah, that’s right.

RT: So did they pull the ship into a dry dock or did they just pull it into a special area in—

RC: A special area, if I remember right, where they do that.

RT: Well, I thank you for your time this morning, Mr. Crinigan, and I thank you for everything that you were able to say and everything you have been able to answer. Again I thank you for contributing to the body of information on both the Frank E. Evans, as well as the Navy during the time periods in which you had served, and—

RC: I say, it’s been nice talking to you. I’ve kind of enjoyed talking to you, telling you about my experience in the Navy.

RT: Well, I enjoyed it greatly, as well, and I’m very thankful that you have the time and you took the time to go through this interview this morning. I hope you have a good morning and a good day.

RC: Okay, same to you.

RT: All right, thank you very much.