

**Oral Memoirs**

**of**

**Frank V. Boffi**

An Interview Conducted by

Luis Santana Garcia

February 26, 2014

Community Veterans History Project

Lone Sailor Memorial Project

*University of Central Florida RICHES of Central Florida*

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## **Interview Histories**

Interviewer(s): Luis Santana Garcia

Cameraperson: Mark Barnes

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES of Central Florida Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

## **Project Detail**

The Community Veterans History Project, a RICHES of Central Florida Project at the University of Central Florida, includes interviews with Central Florida veterans from all branches of the United States military. Beginning in 2010, the UCF Community Veterans History Project is collecting, preserving, and making accessible to the public the experiences of Central Florida's veterans so that future generations will better understand the realities of conflict. It is a collaborative endeavor supported by multiple departments and offices at UCF. The histories, which are collected by students and faculty, are archived and made digitally available through the UCF library. The UCF Community Veterans History Project will also contribute selected veterans' histories to the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

## **Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Frank V. Boffi is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on February 26, 2014.

## **Abstract**

Oral history interview of Frank V. Boffi, who served in the United States Navy from 1942 to 1945 and again from 1948 to 1952. Boffi was born in Cranston, Rhode Island on May 18, 1922. He served during both World War II and the Korean War, and was stationed on USS *Bernadou*, USS *Hugh W. Hadley*, USS *Brownson*, and USS *Fiske*. Boffi also took part in the Allied Invasion of Sicily, the Battle of Anzio, and the Battle of Okinawa. He received a Purple Heart, among other awards, and achieved the rank of 1st Class Machinist. This interview was conducted by Luis Santana Garcia at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. Topics discussed in the oral history include Boffi's background, his enlistment, fighting in Italy, the construction of the USS *Hugh W. Hadley* and its subsequent destruction, serving in the Pacific Theater, leaving the Navy, his medals and citations, and the Lone Sailor Memorial Project.

## **Frank V. Boffi**

Oral History Memoir  
Interview Number 4

Interviewed by Luis Santana Garcia  
February 26, 2014  
Orlando, Florida

0:00:00

### **Introduction**

**Garcia** Today is February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014. I am interviewing Frank Boffi, who served in the United States Navy. He served in World War II and ended with a rank of Machinist MAT 1<sup>st</sup> class. With me is Mark...

**Barnes** Mark Barnes.

**Garcia** Mark Barnes. We are interviewing Mr. Boffi as part of the University of Central Florida Community Veterans History Project and as research for the creation of a Lone Sailor Memorial Project. We are recording this interview at UCF in Orlando, Florida. Mr. Boffi, will you please start by – start us off by telling us when and where you were born?

**Boffi** Cranston, Rhode Island, which is about nine miles north of, uh Downtown Providence[, Rhode Island]. I was born May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1922, and I'm the, uh, youngest of seven boys. We were a family of 10 children. Raised during the Great Depression which is – was hell on life – on Earth, really. So we had to get adjusted to that – not having anything.

I've been lecturing five high schools here locally about World War II and the kids don't believe that, during the Depression, we had no allowance, we had nothing, and, uh – but anyway, I survived the Depression. I survived three battles in the Pacif – the, uh, Mediterranean [Sea], and the one battle in the Pacific [Theater]. So I consider myself a survivor.

0:00:30

### **Background and family**

**Garcia** What did your parents do for a living?

**Boffi** They were, uh, country folks. My dad worked – was a laborer, because in Italy they lived out on farms, and came over here had really no skills. and, um, he worked for – under the WPA systems, which was the Works Progress Administration – back in the [19]30s, uh, one of the programs set by President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt. So he was just a, uh, shovel – a reg[?] guy. He was working on the roads and the parks and stuff that the city was rocking[?] for him. That sort of thing.

0:00:30

**Entry into service**

**Garcia**

And when did you, uh, enter the Navy?

**Boffi**

I, uh, entered – first of all, I think it’s important to hear that we<sup>1</sup> got engaged December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1941, which was the night before the Pearl Harbor attack. And, um, it’s so strange: these high schools that I’ve been lecturing – that’s the one thing those kids remember when I go back the next year after that. Yeah. I ask what they remember about World War II and they all say the same thing, “You and your wife got engaged the night before Pearl Harbor.”

We got – I got married at, uh, 20 years old – August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942. And on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1942, I went down and enlisted in the Navy, because I did not want to be drafted into the Army. I was told that the Navy, you had three square a day and clean bedding, as long as you washed it. But the Army guys had to sleep in mud and foxholes and I didn’t want that kind of stuff.

But, um, yeah. We were – I – my wife and I were married 71 years this past August 1<sup>st</sup>, and then she died October 7<sup>th</sup>, [inaudible] 2014. But, uh, it was a tough life, but we hacked it through[?]. It was just two young kids. She was 22 and I was 20, but we made it and it was a real sacrifice. We only had the one son who has – now has two children and six great, uh – six grandchildren. I have six great-grandchildren.

My son is a graduate of the University of Nebraska, where he has a master’s [degree] out of the university. Um, He started in engineering, but he changed it over to psychology. And I asked him why he changed his major[?] over the subject – his degree in, and he said one of his friends dove out of the six – I think he said it was a six-story window. And He was on LSD [lysergic acid diethylamide] and he just dove out the window. And that was when my son decided to change his career and help the kids that were – that were on drugs. He was – he wound up being an administrator of six counties in east Nebraska – in charge of the drug program. But Now he’s a – he was a regional manager for Xerox [Corporation], and they moved him to Washington, D.C. area. And now he’s, uh – has his own business – he and his wife – as general resources. Um, he’s chief operating officer for AmeriCom. It’s a company that deals with the government, and their biggest account is the Air Force. And he is in, uh, San Antonio[, Texas] about every four or five weeks, because we have bases there. What else you want?

**Garcia**

Now, uh, you said you were – got engaged the day before Pearl Harbor. What was your reaction to the attack on Pearl Harbor?

**Boffi**

It was kind of a shock, but We, uh, I think we were prepared for it. The – the way things were going, we knew that some war was going to come out of it. It was so strange: in Downtown Providence – I’m not sure if you’re familiar with it – they

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<sup>1</sup> Boffi and his wife.

had docks there. And, uh, my buddy and I—we used to go down there. we used to walk to Providence maybe two days a week, and there were all these old rust buckets loading up with all the, um, scrap iron, and we sold millions and millions of tons of scrap iron to Japan. And then—then four or five months, the war broke out, they were firing it right back at us.

**Garcia** Why did you join the Navy?

**Boffi** Like I told you, I didn't like—I didn't like being in a foxhole, and I didn't want to join the Army. I had one brother in the Army and two—the one in the Navy, he joined long after I did. But, uh, my other two brothers were [Boeing] B17 [Flying Fortress] bombers.

And, uh, I—I just liked the water. I thought I would be better off in the Navy. Might as well do something I like, than[?] rather[?]-I had to go no matter what. I didn't want to be drafted in the Army.

**Garcia** Where did you attend boot camp?

**Boffi** I, uh, went to boot camp in Newport, Rhode Island. I reported there October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1942 and got in out March 1943. And they sent me to [inaudible] Institute in Boston[, Massachusetts], which is an engineering school. And I came out of there with a, uh—with a second class machinist MAT training.

It was so strange that, in those days, uh—that—that the commander of the school posted a notice one day saying anybody in the top five percentile for academics would be allowed the privilege of applying for Officer's[sic] Candidate School. So I applied for it, and that's all it says. And I walked up, and commander Cavinar[sp] was sitting at his desk, and I came in the door about that distance away, and he kind of looked up and says, "Frank, you don't qualify." I said, "But I'm in the top three percentile academically." He said, "Yeah. Academically you can qualify, but you're married." They would not give you a rate[?] then—a commission [inaudible]. You had to be married first though—no. You—you couldn't get married until after you got your commission. that's what it was. So they refused to give me a commission.

And, uh, then later on when I worked[?] the ship got sunk, I was supposed to make chief June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1945. And we got sunk on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May of 1945. That's when I wound up in a hospital bed for the next four and a half months. So they wouldn't give me the chief's rating, because you had to be with an active unit.

Now, today even, if you lost both legs, you're still in the military, you get your rating or whatever. So, um, when they held its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, the chiefs down here at NAWC [Naval Air Warfare Center] made me an honorary, um, chief with them. So I have a [U.S.] DOD [Department of Defense] certificate stating that I'm part of the chiefs' at NAWCTSD in Orlando. They—they kind of glorified it and

they gave me the rate. I asked them about it—OCS [Officer Candidate School] now, but they wouldn't allow me [*clears throat*].

0:00:30

**First days of service**

**Garcia** What was, uh, your first days of your service like?

**Boffi** Pardon?

**Garcia** What was the first day of your service like? First days.

**Boffi** Well, the—the first couple of days were interesting, because we had some boys from the Midwest area[?] they were Arkansans. We had to sleep on hammocks. In those days, in boot camp. And the hammock was strung up to the ceiling and you had what you called the "jack stand." That's a bar, and you would jump up and grab it and you'd pull your body up. And if you knew how to do it, you would open your hammock line with one leg and then pop your butt in and then—otherwise, you would just roll off the other side. and that's what was happening to this one boy from Arkansas. He couldn't—he'd get in one side and roll out the other one. He couldn't get himself—so one night, the chief told a couple of us to "Go help that kid get in that hammock." And, Uh, We raised the sides up, but in the morning he tried to get out and he'd fall out all the time. He was a character. He never did adjust to a hammock. We kept our hammocks as part of our sea bag. And I've used it two or three times at sea out here in the Atlantic [Ocean]. When we had a hurricane or real bad weather, the ship would go rocking and rolling too much. My buddy and I would go out and string up our hammock underneath the gun tug, where it would be dry, and sleep in the hammocks. We just—like a baby rocking in a crib.

But, um, yeah. The first ship was on was a 1918—it was commissioned in 1918—a World War I destroyer. It was an old four stacker, and we called them "rust buckets." But Then [*clears throat*]—and we made the three invasions of, um, [inaudible] Sicily, Salerno, Italy, and, um—what was the last one? One of the—one—I forget the name of that one. Oh, [inaudible]. My memory is failing me, but we made the two—three invasions in Sa—Sicily, Anzio Beach, Salerno—Anzio Beach. That's what it is. Anzio Beach, Salerno, and, um, you know, Sicily.

We operated out of Oran[, Algeria], North Africa. That was kind of a[sic], uh, interesting—now that we have so much Muslim, uh, religion spreading out all over the world. There was a place in Oran that was called Medina. It was a, uh, sacred city with great big columns and you were not allowed in there unless you were a, um, Muslim religion[sic]. And my buddy and I didn't believe it, so we started in there one day, and we get about three feet through the gates, all these Arabs started getting up from sitting on the sidewalk. And, um, we were lucky. I think I—I'm alive today, because the shore patrol was right there. They drive their Jeep in about three feet into the Medina, and told us to get in and they brought us back [inaudible].

And they told us that one of my friends, uh, Bill Suey[sp], came from Cranston, Rhode Island – .he and I went through school together. He went through Medina one night and came back in just his underwear – just his skivvies. He was lucky he got his life, but they took everything he had – his uniform, cigarettes, and – and they stripped him. They didn't want us there. Basically, that's what it was. We were invading their country and – and they – they didn't realize that we were there protecting them from the Germans. I mean, they were losing their country to the Germans till we got there. And, um, so we saved them, but they're still Muslim and that scares me till today – what's happening in some of these cities. [clears throat] It's a damn shame that we have to go through stuff, but I see it happening right now.

**0:12:37** **Invading Italy as an American of Italian heritage**

**Garcia** Now, uh, as an Italian [American], how did it feel invading Italy?

**Boffi** How did I feel being in Italy?

**Garcia** Yeah.

**Boffi** It was, uh, a good feeling. Because I was – my mom and my eldest brother came over in 1904. And this was 19 – well, I didn't get there until during the war, but I stayed in the Navy and I went back in 1950 with the ship I was on. And I got to meet my, uh, dad's two brothers, and my cousins, and my mom's half-sister.

And her – this one half-sister has three – three daughters. And they came to my uncle's house and the eldest – eldest daughter was, um, just – just under 18. She was a senior in – in high school – equivalent to our schedule setup. And, um, she was so excited that I was talking to an Italian in English and all that. And she kept patting my knee, and the moms kept telling them, "Don't touch him. he's an American sailor." She said, "But he's my cousin." She said, "I don't care if he's your brother. Don't lo – don't touch him. He's an American sailor." But that was the kind of reputation we had all over the world. The – the sailors were people [coughs] [clears throat].

And I had one other cousin, who had a close friend of his who was a [Papal] Swiss Guard in the Vatican. So I got to, uh, go places in the Vatican that the general public had never been to. And we got way down deep into the catacombs,<sup>2</sup> where they used to bury all the priests and the bishops and whatever. There – it was kind of an eerie feeling being down there with all these caskets on both sides. And these guys didn't realize that they've been buried there for a hundred years or longer. That was something that the general public never saw, but I got to see it because of my cousin's – Tom's – friend was a Swiss Guard. He allowed me to go down there [clears throat].

**0:14:30** **Experience during the battles in Italy**

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<sup>2</sup> Vatican Necropolis.



**Garcia** Now what – what was...

**Boffi** [clears throat].

**Garcia** What your experience during the actual battles?

**Boffi** What was what?

**Garcia** What your experience during the actual battles themselves?

**Boffi** Well, um, uh, the, uh – at the Anzio Beach location, I was on deck and that was a, uh, a 50 millimeter – 50 caliber machine gun. And that really was the only action I've ever – I've ever seen. Because, um, normally, I would be engine room. You would not see any action. And, uh, It's so strange that now I – you know, there were three destroyers in our squadron. We were all – we were all World War I destroyers. And they, uh, used us as decoys. The American government had no, um, um, information as to where the gun emplacements were. So they – the three destroyers were supposed to go in, approach the beach with all their lights out [inaudible]. And at midnight, put on our search light. We had a great big, regular search light they use at airports. And, uh, there was total darkness. I couldn't see you guys as dark as it was. And all of a sudden, at midnight, when we put our search lights on, all hell – the beach just broke all out, and I jumped.

And I found out later that that was a trigger, because I was subject to that for a long, long time. I mean, if we walked – if I walked in this room and someone tried to put the – somebody put the light on, I would react to it. And Now I – I found out that eventually, training with the VA [Veterans Administration] and, um – my son, um, met the woman who was the CO of the Purple Heart Association.<sup>3</sup> And she sent me a book, and then I read that – *Tears of a Warrior: A Family's Story of Combat and Living with PTSD* it's called. I found out that that was only a "trigger," that they called them. And so I finally got myself to overcome that, and it doesn't bother me anymore now, but Going into this totally dark room and somebody put the light on. But – and I do it every night when I go home. It's be totally dark in the house and I flip my own light on, but I don't react to it anymore like I used to. 'Cause I suddenly realized that it was just something that was back here and I had to weed it out of my system.

But, uh, normally, I saw no action on my – the – on the [USS *Hugh W.*] *Hadley*. I didn't see any action, until we got, uh, blown out of the engine room – came topside. And to this day, I don't remember seeing any action then. And I found out from Captain [Doug] Aiken, who's retired – he was a lieutenant on the *Hadley*. I asked him how long we were – were in the water, and he said about two and a half hours before we were picked up. And I've got – if you want me to email you, I've got the picture of that, uh – the ship picking up the survivors and I've got the DVD that I can send you and incorporate it with part[?] of yours. It shows a Kamikaze hitting the water and showed the – the bomb going off –

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<sup>3</sup> Correction: Purple Heart Foundation.

something like that. I can get you a copy of those if you –if you wish. They're not copyrighted at all, so you're welcome to do with it what – whatever you want with 'em [*clears throat*].

**Garcia** And so you – you said you were – you were sent in as a decoy. Once – once, like, you complete your mission, did they figure out where the emplacements were and then did you guys leave after that?

**Boffi** Well, we didn't really leave the battle area. We went out on, uh, screening. They called it "screening." You had two or three destroyers. Well, that day, there were like 15 destroyers out there. And just – you stayed off the beach about three or four miles and tried to shoot down the planes that were coming in to attack our troops. And they were coming in to hit our supply ships [*inaudible*]. So we were on – on the screening most of the time, at the – Of course, I wasn't there, but the ship was. I was in the hospital. That was – let's see – May, June – two and a half months in the, uh, ten city hospital. We called it "ten city" in Tinian Island, which is part of the Marianas.<sup>4</sup>

And, uh, In July of '45, they sent me to a naval receiving hospital in San Francisco, California. stayed there a couple of weeks, and from there, they sent me to a psychiatric hospital up in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, because I was getting a severe – I mean, real bad headaches. It was the back of my head and they thought I was going crazy, I guess. It was just blast concussion. It finally settled down. And after about six – I think six or eight weeks in Coeur d'Alene, I was transferred on down to Sun Valley, Idaho, in which there was a naval recuperation hospital. And then, in October of '45, they transferred me to Fort Lewis, Washington. And, um, from there, to Boston to be discharged in November of 1945 [*clears throat*].

0:19:30

**USS *Hugh W. Hadley* construction, training, and the Pacific Theater**

**Garcia** Alright. And, um, what – when, uh – you said that you were on, um – what was the name of the first ship you were on?

**Boffi** The USS *Bernadou*, B-E-R-N-A-D-O-U.

**Garcia** And, um, how did you, like – and then you transferred to the *Hadley*?

**Boffi** No. They sent me to school for – the *Hadley* was so called "new construction." It was a, uh, bigger class destroyer, and it was higher pressure. We operated at 600 pounds of pressure steam on the *Hadley*, and the *Bernadou* was only 250. So I went to North Virginia to school for 12 weeks.

And then I went out to, um, San Pedro, California, and I was part of the 14 people that was the skeleton crew to watch the ship being built. That was quite interesting. And, you know, we saw them lay the keel hull in the dry dock. And

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<sup>4</sup> Northern Mariana Islands.

we – we had to be in the dry dock every morning at eight o’ clock. That’s where they held quarters. And we literally watched the ship being built. Every – every bit of welding they did, we were there. There were 14 of us: one officer, and, uh, I think two chiefs, myself, another 1<sup>st</sup> class in engineering, and there, um – some other guys from other rates I don’t know – the yeoman[?] and [inaudible]. But, um – so I was on it when it went into the water in October of 1945 – I mean ’44 – and we were sunk May of 1945. so it didn’t last very long.

**Garcia** That was...

**Boffi** [clears throat].

**Garcia** That was during the Invasion of Okinawa[, Japan]?<sup>5</sup>

**Boffi** Yes.

**Garcia** And what – what was your experience in that battle?

**Boffi** My experience? Well, I didn’t see any action, because I was down in the engine room all the time.

**Garcia** When you were in the engine room, what – like, what was your job, per se?

**Boffi** Well, to keep the ship moving. We had to keep the engines running, and, um – because if you lose your engines, then you are a dead, still target. Then they just blow you out of the water. So, uh – as a matter of fact, Marc [Ennis] is in simulation, and we had no simulators in those days. And I was – I had my pump man and my messenger blindfolded when they were on the lower level, where all the pumps are. And they had the second level was the operating deck – the control deck.

And I had them blindfolded, and the Chief Engineer comes down and he says, “Boffi, we don’t have any time for this blind man’s bluff games and stuff like that.” I said, “We’re not playing games, sir. I’m teaching these guys to know the engine room blindfolded.” That’s the first thing you lose on any situation is power. I mean, right now, if the power went off, we would be in a darkened room. So I said, “I’m trying teach them how to get out of there – this engine room.” And to this day, I think we all come[?] – [Don] Hackler, my master, was the last one to leave the engine room. We seemed to think he slipped down the ladder. he didn’t make it. Speedo, my bunkman, and myself got out. And that was the – Speedo got out first, and then I was second, and Hackler was – and he was only 17 years old. He had been in the Navy like 81 days. At the end of the war, they were taking real young kids in, with hardly any training at all. And, uh, Don Hackler – I think it was his name – and he was the only one that didn’t survive the – in that engine room. We lost, uh, everybody in the forward fire

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<sup>5</sup> Battle of Okinawa, codenamed Operation Iceberg.

room, plus there were other people on deck. I think there were about 18 casualties that – fatalities that morning of the attack [*clears throat*].

0:23:23

**Typical day and recreational activities**

**Garcia** Uh, Going back a little bit, what – what was...

**Boffi** [*coughs*].

**Garcia** Daily life like on the Navy vessel?

**Boffi** A normal day?

**Garcia** Mmhmm.

**Boffi** Normally, you get up at about five – normally, you get up about 5:30 for regular crew. But in engineering, you're – you're on four hours and off eight. So we would be getting up at like 3:15 in the morning for the four to eight watch. And, uh, for the midnight watch, you got on – you had to be up by quarter to 12, and that ran to – to quarter to four, and that ran to quarter to eight. And, um, once you got in the engine room though, there was no – I didn't do much. I just sat there, checked the other guys, and did some checking of equipment, and stuff like that. But – mostly management. I didn't really do anything. There was nothing you could do. Just be ready to – if you did take a hit, be ready, you know, do – to you could react. Do what you had to do.

**Garcia** And you told us about...

**Boffi** [*coughs*].

**Garcia** Some of the, uh, recreational things you did while you were in Italy and Africa. Were there anything in the Pacific – any areas in the Pacific that you got to experience in the Pacific?

**Boffi** No. I never got off the ship. We never had any liberty and such. So I know noth – nothing about the Pacific Ocean, other – other than being aboard a ship. We did hit Pearl Harbor[, Hawaii] before – on the way up there – that area. We had about three days in Pearl Harbor. and that was my only experience in Hawaii for a long time. But, uh, you know, you pull into a Navy base and you really have nothing to do. most of them are kind of isolated away from the normal public. We didn't have the, uh – the glory of – the liberty, so to speak. We got four hours off. Didn't have enough time to run into town, grab a couple of beers, hopefully get lucky and get a woman, and back to the ship [*laughs*].

0:25:30

**Life after service**

**Garcia** [laughs]. And, um...

**Boffi** [coughs].

**Garcia** What—What was it like when you left the Navy—like, coming home?

**Boffi** Well, I—I went to work for the power company. I—I wanted to—see, I used to work in jewelry—jewelry manufacturing, when I was in high school. After I got out of high school, and I told my wife—said, “I’m—I’m going to go into something that was going to be a career, like...” So I—I went to the power company, and after I got into trouble with that union, they run me off.

So I got an insurance job as an engineer. And I inspected elevators and boilers, held safety meetings. Then I, um—April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1970, when the OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Act] law came into being, it was signed by the President<sup>6</sup> as the—a law of the land. And I went to, uh, what is now the University of Southern Florida<sup>7</sup> and took a two day exam—two eight hour exams—for, uh, my—they call it Certi—CSP—Certified Safety Professional. And, um, I passed that, so they gave me the designation. That’s what I was when I retired—a Certified Safety Professional.

When I was, uh, working for the insurance company, I—I did the service for a lot of power utilities and inspected elevators in a lot of buildings. My territory included Puerto Rico, the [U.S.] Virgin Islands, and [the] Bahamas. It was a tough territory to—to take care of. And, Uh, Every other month, my wife would go with me and go on the beach, where we would get the hotel in San Juan[, Puerto Rico]. I’d go do my job, and then we would fly over to Saint Thomas[, U.S. Virgin Islands] and Saint Croix[, U.S. Virgin Islands]. I—I really enjoyed it. I—I—I did 50 years in the insurance industry. The, um—I retired March 1<sup>st</sup> of ’84, and then I re—they called me back. And then I retired again in—in 2001, I think it was. In 2006, they forced me to retire. They said I was too old at 84 years old to be inspecting boilers and elevators and all that kind of stuff, so I finally decided [inaudible].

0:27:50

### **Medals and citations**

**Garcia** And, Um, Were you awarded any medals or citations? [inaudible]...

**Boffi** I have a Purple Heart for my injuries, and I’ve got, uh, three battle stars for the Mediterranean, three warzones, and three battles. And I’ve got, um, one battle for the, uh, Pacific. Other than that, uh, no high rating. Um, medals or anything.

**Garcia** Um, What values or characteristics of the Navy do you believe made an impression on—on your life?

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Milhous Nixon.

<sup>7</sup> Correction: University of South Florida.

**Boffi** I think the camaraderie. There's something about the Navy that the Army and the Marines never had. Uh, Like Mark, anybody would do anything for anyone else, if they were Navy. And I'm not sure that was true in the Army or the Marine Corps. My son became a Marine. He was in, uh, six years during the Vietnam [War] era. And, uh, I didn't notice the camaraderie with them as I did in the Navy. And to this day, like I said, I go to NAWC every single day. They say I'm there more than people who get paid to be there. They don't even show up and I'm there every morning.

**Garcia** And What was the most valuable lesson that you learned during your time?

**Boffi** I'm sorry?

**Garcia** What was the most valuable lesson you learned during your time in the Navy?

**Boffi** Well, I think that you treat everybody that you would want to be treated, for one thing. The only thing that used to really bother me and still does to this day is these ethnic groups that come [inaudible] – the – immigrants – they come over here and they want us to change to be whatever they are, you know? The Hispanics or Chinese or – I mean, when you come over here, be an American. I can still hear my dad when I was a youngster, he kept saying this great...

0:29:42

#### **VIDEO SKIPS**

**Boffi** And he, uh – to this day, I have arguments with some of these people. I am not an Italian. I'm of Italian heritage, but I was born in this country and I'm an American. I fought in several wars – battles – for the Americans. And I'd – I'd do it again if I had to, if that were necessary [*clears throat*].

0:30:00

#### **Future of the Lone Sailor Memorial Project**

**Garcia** And What do you think former Navy personnel would like to see or be reminded of when they visit – revisit the site of the base<sup>8</sup> and the Lone Sailor Project Memorial?

**Boffi** What do I think of the – I think it's going to bring back a lot of memories of a lot of people. I – I just – befriended – well, I've been friends with him for about a year and a half at the Moose Club. I didn't know he was a photographer in the Army. And then, when he go out of the Army, he took all the photographs to the Navy base, where Mark graduated from, and he took all the shots over the Cape [Canaveral]. He went for the Cape. So, uh, that was kind of interesting.

He's telling – he was telling Mark and myself about, um, incidents that had happened there before. And, uh, he's going to be one of our guests at the next Navy League luncheon, I think. He can tell us some of the things that are interesting. Me[sic] and Mark were talking about those days.

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<sup>8</sup> Naval Training Center (NTC) Orlando.

I had no idea that there was a boot camp here. I lived up in, um, Miami since '66, and never had an idea that there was a boot camp in Florida. So That was kind of a shock to me that I got up here and found out there was a boot camp there. I probably would have come up every weekend and go there and visit. I—I would have befriended—I would have taken the, uh, transfer—my company travels insurance wanted transferred me up here in, uh, '69, I think it was. and I refused it. I wanted to stay around the Miami area, but, uh, if I would have known there was a boot camp up there in the Navy, um, influence, I think I would have—would have transferred.

0:31:43

**Closing remarks**

**Garcia** Is there anything else you would like to share about your Navy experience?

**Boffi** It's really helped me a lot, both psychologically and physically. I see they treat people here at NAWC. They really respect me. They show me a lot of respect. They all treat me as though I'm family. Officers, business people, and whatever. I'm just part of their big family and I enjoy it. That's why I go every day.

**Garcia** Thank you, Mr. Boffi.

**Boffi** Thank you very much, and good luck in your ventures.

*End of Interview*