

The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. George Allen Barrett

May 11, 2001

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Today is May 11, 2001. My Name is Floyd Cox. I am a volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. We are here as part of the Oral History Team of the Museum to interview Mr. George Allen Barrett from Carmel, Indiana, concerning his experiences during World War II. I'd like to start out George by telling you thank you very much for setting in on the interview. We certainly appreciate it, and as you know, this will go into the archives of our museum and be here from now on out.

Mr. Barrett: That is very good and I appreciate the fact that you are willing to listen.

Mr. Cox: We are definitely willing to listen. To start out with I would like to ask you a few basic questions George. When you were born, where you were born, a little bit about your schooling, and if you would just take it from there.

Mr. Barrett: I was born in Brentwood Borough, a Borough of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, January 1, 1922. I lived in Pittsburgh and was on the north, side and went to elementary school there on the north side of Pittsburgh. I was actually born in my Grandmother's house. The doctor came there for the delivery, etc. In 1931, my folks moved to San Diego, California, and it was quite a trip going across country in 1931. The roads were not anything like they are today. I finished elementary school there in San Diego and went to Memorial Junior High School there and to San Diego Senior High School. I finished the 10th grade at San Diego and I was not doing all that well and so my folks had me to go back to live with my Grandmother and I went to Brentwood High School in Pennsylvania. I got through the 11th grade there. My folks came back in the summer of '39 and we returned to San Diego, myself included. My Dad wanted

to know if I wanted to go back to school. I told him I didn't, I thought I would like to join the Navy. And so I was 17 at the time, I had to wait until I was 18 in order to be sworn in. I went down earlier than that to get my physical, paperwork, etc., and they found that I was underweight. They couldn't take me so they told me to go home, eat a bunch of bananas, drink a quart of milk and return, which I did. Apparently I was all right because they took me in on January the 5th, 1940. I went through boot camp there in San Diego and was transferred from boot camp in April of 1940, went to the Hospital Corps School at the Naval Hospital San Diego. Upon graduating from the Hospital Corps School. I received orders to the U.S. Naval Hospital, P.H.T.H.

Mr. Cox: May I stop you. Tell, for the benefit of the reader, tell us a little bit about what type of training you got in Hospital Corps School.

Mr. Barrett: OK. I had courses in anatomy, physiology, material med, therapeutics, bandaging, first aid, working with poisons. , pharmacy, nursing, etc.

Mr. Cox: Like a medical school basically except on a much smaller scale.

Mr. Barrett: Yes, and no English, no history and foreign language, etc. It was all bunched in together for medical purposes only.

Mr. Cox: Did you enjoy going through this?

Mr. Barrett: Oh yes. I had always had thoughts of working with medicine, even as a youngster, and it worked out just fine.

Mr. Cox: And after you graduated did you get a ranking then? Did they give you any

Mr. Barrett: Well I went from Seaman Second Class to Hospital Corpsman Second Class and then they asked me where I would like to go for additional training, what hospital I

would like to go to and I said I would like to go to Naval Hospital Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii. That is what I did.

Mr. Cox: And that was in 1940?

Mr. Barrett: Yes sir. I went to the U.S. Naval Hospital Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii. I got there in July of 1940. That is where additional training is. I was trained additionally there on the Medical Ward, Surgical Ward, in the OR.

Mr. Cox: So, you are saying you were in a trauma room?

Mr. Barrett: Yes I was in the Trauma Room and I also had some training in the messing department learning about diets and messing and things of that nature.

Mr. Cox: You said messing. That refers to food?

Mr. Barrett: Foods, yes. So about that time I was transferred to the USS McDonough and that was in July of 1941.

Mr. Cox: How do you spell that?

Mr. Barrett: McDonough. It was a destroyer, its number is DD-351, and we were in the First Destroyer Division. While on there as a beginner, and regardless of your rating structure it didn't make any difference, you learned everything there was to know about a destroyer. They gave you two pages of questions and you had to answer all of those questions and you went to the various department heads in order to pass their muster. You had 30 days in which to do this. You learned everything, all the different departments on a destroyer.

Mr. Cox: Now why was this? So if somebody got injured?

Mr. Barrett: If somebody was hurt you step in and take over their job. You had a rudimentary instructions and know-how to do that. That was about all there was to it. But, in

order to pass that thing you had to go to the different chiefs and they had to say yes you qualify and if they said no you didn't qualify you went back and started over again as far as that department was concerned. You had 30 days in which to do this, cover that. If you didn't do it properly within 30 days you got no liberty. You stayed right on board ship until such time as you did qualify because they don't want any dummies out there around.

Mr. Cox: This was pre-Pearl Harbor? Do you know, did they continue this after the war started?

Mr. Barrett: Not so much.

Mr. Cox: That is because of the urgency?

Mr. Barrett: Yes, yes. I was aboard ship on December the 7th 1941, and in fact, I was just finishing shaving, getting ready to take a shower and I heard the general alarm sounding and I thought well probably fire and rescue and I don't have the duty, so I don't have to worry with it. About that time the Chief Gunners Mate came by and yelled in "Hey Doc, the G.D. Japs are after us." "Oh come on Gunner, go get another drink." "No," he says, "honest, look." And, by golly I looked out the port, and sure enough there's Japanese aircraft and one of the ships was turning over. I went immediately down below to get some clothes on and then I went forward to set water-tight integrity. Water-tight integrity is you close the ports, you close and put the dogs down on all the hatches and that compartmentalized your ship so that if you did get hit in one part that part might flood but your ship wouldn't sink. You had plenty of air space to keep you going. That was my first job. The second job was to set up the after-battle dressing station which was in the after part of the ship.

Mr. Cox: So how many decks down was that?

Mr. Barrett: On a destroyer it was only one deck down except for the black gang you went down a ladder to the Engine Room.

Mr. Cox: Engine room?

Mr. Barrett: Engine room, you went down further, but the after gun station main deck or top sidewas where the after battle dressing station was set up. I set that up, then I went forward up to the Ward Room where the main battle dressing station was set up, and Chief Leslie A. Anderson was in charge of that and he and I were the only Medics on board.

Mr. Cox: Now let me ask you, setting up these dressing stations. What did that entail, setting up bandages?

Mr. Barrett: Getting your bandages, and your splints, stretchers ready, and also set up a table so that you could have somebody be brought in and lay down, take care of whatever might come about. Fortunately, or well, unfortunately, we had been in for repairs. A destroyer of that time had two fire rooms, one engine room. Both fire rooms were torn down and the engine room was torn down being repaired. We were along side a repair ship, USS Dobbin, as well as some other ships in our division. They were OK and they broke away from us. They just cut lines and took off. We had no way of getting underway, no water, no electricity, no water, no steam. We are sitting there dead in the water, but the Japanese were not really after a small ship they were after the big guys, so we only had one bomb drop aft of us, which raised our fantale up out of the water a little bit, caused one young man to cut his hand and we sewed him up.

Mr. Cox: That is all the casualties you had on your ship?

Mr. Barrett: That plus a burn. I had a dailor with a bad burn and the reason he had the bad burn we had lines formed from the magazine up to the gun mounts, and we didn't have any cover over the guns making a turret. We had mounds and so some of the powder that was up there was kind of laying out and shells were being fired and the gunners were in their positions and they were turning their handles sideways and up and down, and as the gun fired, the brass would come flying out. It was practically red hot and you had a catcher there and he had a glove on and a catcher thing in the other hand. When the bomb exploded aft of us this kid was knocked down and as the shell casing came out this kid grabbed it with his bare hands. It was hot, so he had some bad burns. They were the only two casualties that we had. I went back up to the forward dressing station to help Anderson and he didn't need any help.

Mr. Cox: Now did you go to any of the other ships, or did you just, right after the attack to help out with their wounded, or just stayed on your own ship?

Mr. Barrett: Stayed on our own ship. We did pick up some kids out of the water from ships that had been sunk and, of course, the 50 caliber machine guns that we had were water cooled and we had no water, so as the barrels got good and hot you have to replace the barrels. So again, we had kids there taking the barrel off and they had asbestos gloves, put that barrel down and screw another one in and that way you can keep firing. The kids in the Engineering Department said that as they heard these machine guns going off they were tightening nuts and bolts faster and faster and they were able to get both fire rooms and our engine put back together before sundown that day and we got a head of steam. We started steaming out of the harbor and we went past the Nevada, which was beached, they gave us

Mr. Cox: You are passing the Nevada?

Mr. Barrett: And we went past the Nevada and they gave us three cheers.

Mr. Cox: Because you were underway?

Mr. Barrett: Underway.

Mr. Cox: Great.

Mr. Barrett: After we got out to sea the sun had set and things were getting a little on the dark side and we saw a ship off in the distance. We were under the impression that Japanese had troop ships and that they were going to make a landing. That they had had other war ships out there, so here we see this ship off in a distance and one of the Quartermasters had a rifle-like signal gun and he was trying to signal them to find out who they were, and we were getting no answer. Well, on this destroyer we had eight torpedo tubes and we had five 5" 38 anti-aircraft guns and we had a 12" search light up forward, a 24" search light aft and about the time the old man decided this ship wasn't going to give us any answer he had all eight torpedo tubes turned out, 5" 38s turned out, the 12" and the 24" search light turned out and when he turned those lights on we had the ship dead center. The poor thing, it was a sea going tug.

Mr. Cox: Well, you got their attention didn't you?

Mr. Barrett: Oh boy, we got an answer from them right quick and then we went back into port the next day and got additional fuel, got food, then we went out to sea and we stayed out to sea for quite a period of time. We did go back in and we had one 5" 38 removed and we had a couple of 40mm guns put on and we had some 20mm guns put on. We had the 5" 38 training equipment removed to put these other guns on so we were in pretty good shape. We had 5" 38's, we had 40 mm, we had 20mm. Oh they took

off the machine guns because we didn't need those. They were 20mm's and then they put on some K guns. No Y guns on there. Then aft, of course, we carried our tin cans.

Mr. Cox: Now what is a Y gun and a K gun and could you describe that briefly for the record?

Mr. Barrett: OK. The K guns were put on and they fired a 300 pound depth charge off on one side. A Y gun can fire two of them if they are unencumbered. And then on the fantail, which is the aft part of the ship, we had 600 pound TNT depth charges. These were set, and the Gunnersmate is back there and he can set the various depths. You want to set them in a pattern 50 ft, 100 ft, 150 ft, 50 ft, 100 ft, 150 so they go off in a pattern. The K guns same thing you set them to go off in a pattern.

Mr. Cox: And they reach out to the side?

Mr. Barrett: Yes they go out to the sides and the 600 pounders just go off the fantail straight down. You really don't want to hit a submarine with the depth charges because what you want to do, you want that explosion to occur and that increases the pressure and submarines are pretty much set to withstand certain pressures and if you can increase that pressure enough, then you open up some of their seams and cause them to sink.

Mr. Cox: Yes.

Mr. Barrett: So that is the job of the depth charges.

Mr. Cox: Now, then you went out on patrol?

Mr. Barrett: Yes.

Mr. Cox: Did you happen to encounter any enemy submarines on any of your patrols?

Mr. Barrett: No, not really. We did on one patrol we were going across the entrance to

Experito Santos and we had patrol duty there and we got that ping on the sonar. They got excited on the bridge and instead of telling the Gunnersmate or the Torpedoman on watch on the fantail that we had this ping and to set the depth charges. We are only going 5 knots and the first depth charges, 600 pound cans, are set for 50 feet, and here we're standing at 5 knots and we let go two 600 pound depth charges set for 50 feet and that really opened up our after steering compartment, so then we're leaking there and had to, bailout. The OD up on the bridge set those off instead of notifying the gunner on watch.

Mr. Cox: That is Officer of the Day?

Mr. Barrett: Yes.

Mr. Cox: OD. OK.

Mr. Barrett: Well, when you are at sea he is Officer of the Deck.

Mr. Cox: Deck, I'm sorry.

Mr. Barrett: Because he is not on all day. But then we were out there and we under fire from Japanese planes numerous times. We made Espirto Santos. We took a group of Marines into Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and we had a Marine gunner come aboard and he was helping to direct firing into the beach. We were sitting off the beach by about a half a mile steaming back and forth and firing at various places that he would point out trying to hit ammunition and gasoline storage facilities the Japs had.

Mr. Cox: Did at any time did your ship knock down any Japanese aircraft that they were aware of?

Mr. Barrett: Not that we were aware of. We were out there with the Yorktown and the Lexington and Lexington took a couple of torpedoes and we had to then pull into the

friendly islands and do some repair on her. It opened up the blister side so they were able to shift oil and add water, etc. to make the ship list and get the blister up out of the water and then they were able to patch it up on a temporary basis.

Mr. Cox: Let me ask you this. While you were out to sea like that can you describe some of the cases you would treat as a Hospital Corpsman-- burns, cuts. Can you describe what your everyday duties would be like.

Mr. Barrett: One time one of the guys was down the magazine and he decided he was going to kind of dope off so he laid down on the deck and a 5" 38 shell bounced off of the places it was supposed to have been wired in and broke his arm. So we had to set his arm. No X-ray or anything, but through feeling and so forth we set his arm and then put a plaster cast on it and it turned out OK. Other, oh, sea-sick stuff.

Mr. Cox: A sailor get sea sick?

Mr. Barrett: Oh, many times. The first while that I was on the destroyer I would get a little sea sick, but I got over that in a storm. Man I really got sea sick and that was when this kid broke his arm and I had him in a bunk, I had a waste basket between my knees and I'm looking after him throwing up in the waste basket.

Mr. Cox: And I believe that probably wouldn't give him too much confidence in your.

Mr. Barrett: But that ended my sea sickness. I've never been sea sick since. One time we went along side the USS Colorado and they were supposed to be fueling us and they had some gun mounts, 5" 38 gun mounts, that went on beyond the side of their ship.

Mr. Cox: Extended over the side?

Mr. Barrett: Yes, and we got into a situation where we hit a wave, and they hit a wave, they went up, we went down, we came in toward them, we came up, they came down, and that

gun mount really about tore our forecastle off. So, we were in trouble there. So with our leakage in the after steering room and our banged up forecastle they decided we should go back to Pearl and get some repairs. This was February 1942, I believe. Instead of going to Pearl they sent us to Mare Island. Well at Mare Island I had made 2nd Class PO and the destroyer did not rate a 2nd Class PO with a Chief. They rated either a First Class Hospital Corpsman or a Third Class Pharmacists Mate, so I had been at sea long enough so they decided I should have a little shore duty so they transferred me to the U.S. Naval Hospital Oakland, called Oaknoll, and while there I went to radiological school and became an X-ray technician. I started feeling a little guilty. Oh in the meantime I got married. I got married there at Oakland and my wife was a Wave, and she was also an X-ray technician. While there she got pregnant, and in those days Waves could not be pregnant and stay in, so she got discharged out. I got feeling guilty, here I am on shore and my buddies are still out at sea so I think I should be out there with them doing something. So I sent a request into the Bureau of Naval Personnel requesting submarine school. Well they notified me that submarine school had been closed for one reason or another and so then I thought well I ought to be able to get something. I don't know how to ski, but I asked to be transferred to a ski troop. Well, I didn't do that either. I guess they figured as long as I was wanting subs they would give me something close to it, so they sent me to a CUB unit. A Combat Utility Battalion. This Combat Utility Battalion was bivouacked over at Tanferan Race Track and by this time I was a First Class Petty Officer.

Mr. Cox: Now you are still in California?

Mr. Barrett: Yep. San Bruno, California, right across the bay from Oakland. The First Class PO's, there were two of us to a horse's stall. Lesser than First Class there were four to a horse's stall. So two is better than four.

Mr. Cox: You are talking about living accommodations, correct?

Mr. Barrett: That is better than forty and 8, but anyway, every morning you get a bucket of water to clean your floor and you swish it down and then the water goes down between the fairly wide cracks in the floor down into the horse manure and pretty smelly.

Anyway, we were being trained to take a specific island in the Pacific. Just about the time we were through our training, General McArthur decided he wasn't going to take that island, he was going to go around it, starve them out, and so they broke us up.

Couldn't go to some other island I guess so they transferred me on a temporary basis to Naval Hospital San Diego and put me in the X-ray department there in charge of the X-ray department. That is where a young officer came out and from the Bureau of Naval Personnel and he called me into the Personnel Office and he said "Barrett, we are looking for volunteers for extra hazardous duty. Can't tell you where you are going. Can't tell you what you are going to be doing. Can't tell you what you're going to be eating, but we hope you have a cast iron gut because your are going to be eating off the land." Whatever land we were going to. So I said, "Well, when do I go?" He says "you're just the guy I'm looking for." So I got transferred then from there to Washington, D.C. That's from San Diego to Washington, D.C. Stayed in Washington, D.C. about three weeks and got some additional information. Not about where we were going, what we were going to be doing. They talked to us about judo and a few other odds and ends.

Mr. Cox: Let me ask you. When you went from California to Washington, D.C. how did you travel?

Mr. Barrett: By train.

Mr. Cox: Was that like a troop train?

Mr. Barrett: Yes.

Mr. Cox: And you were still married at this time. You left your wife in

Mr. Barrett: My wife went back to Indianapolis to have the baby. I had had one other troop train ride though. I took a group of convalescent patients from Naval Hospital Oakland to a hospital that the Navy had taken over in Colorado Springs, Colorado. No, Glenwood Springs, Glenwood Springs, Colorado, and while there I had a real nice time. I had a couple of days extra there. A bunch of snow, we're throwing snow balls at each other. We're in swimming trunks and we jump into the hot water pools. It was the first time I had ever done that. That was kind of neat.

Mr. Cox: Sure.

Mr. Barrett: Wartime in the military you don't always have rough times.

Mr. Cox: You had some fun times too.

Mr. Barrett: Yeah. And some times, even in rough times, you make your own fun.

Mr. Cox: We want to cover that later on too. Getting a little ahead, but any time you think of something you thought was funny, please bring it out because as you said, there's rough times, but there's some fun times.

Mr. Barrett: That's right.

Mr. Cox: So, you're in Washington, D.C. and you didn't know where you were going or what you were going to do?

Mr. Barrett: That's right. I spent only three weeks in Washington, D.C. and darn if they don't send me back to San Pedro and put me on an APA troop carrier and a couple of other corpsman going along with me. We were there as passengers, but they had a ship full of soldiers. You talk about sea sick kids, oh my gosh, those poor kids were throwing up all over the place just about the time they heard the anchor chain moving. They would clog up the toilets and it made a mess in the latrine.

Mr. Cox: Yes.

Mr. Barrett: Oh golly. Anyway, they asked us, the Pharmacist mates, if we would be willing to give these troops their shots. They still needed shots. So, yeah, we'll do that. So we lined up several tables similar to this one, end to end, and then had them come through on either side and we had a Pharmacist mate set up at about three different stations to give them three shots. We told them do not stop, do not ask any questions, we don't have any answers, we're going to shoot you, and you go to the next guy, he's going to shoot you, you go to the next guy and then get out of here. Well, periodically somebody would want to stop and ask a question. Boy, he got two shots. Bad news. And the kids behind didn't learn. Some of them then would come by and do the same dumb thing, but they got their shots. The Army was really not prepared to set them up and give them shots like the Navy was so that was the reason we were asked to do this. We were out at sea for about, must have been about three weeks. We pulled into Melbourne, Australia. Just stayed over night. Couldn't get off the ship, so I was in Australia once.

Mr. Cox: You saw it, anyway.

Mr. Barrett: Yes, I saw the pier there. But then they discovered that we were going to wind up

in Calcutta, India. That is the first time we knew about that. So we set sail the next day for Calcutta.

Mr. Cox: You still had the Army troops with you?

Mr. Barrett: Yes, and that is where they were getting off. We got off at Calcutta and we found out that we were going to be there for a period of time until we could catch a flight and go over the Hump, which was the Himalayas, and on into China. We were there for a couple of weeks and another funny thing that happened while I was there. I was made Shore Patrolman and I was assigned to an Army Military Policeman. So the two of us would go into downtown Calcutta and it was hotter than blue blazes. People were dying, Indian people.

Mr. Cox: From the heat?

Mr. Barrett: People would die from the heat, or lack of food, or whatever. But they would be there dead on the sidewalk, or in the street and people would walk around them. Because if you tried to help them, then you became responsible for them. So people wouldn't try to help.

Mr. Cox: Would the government end up taking care of the deceased people laying on the street?

Mr. Barrett: They were hopeful that one of their relatives would come by.

Mr. Cox: What happened if they didn't, then the local police would have to?

Mr. Barrett: The local police would have to take care of it, but I was never told what I was supposed to do as a Shore Patrolman. So I really had nothing to do, but the poor old Military Policeman, he had been told you must get so many names of people doing things that they weren't supposed to be doing or dressed in a way they were not

supposed to dress or undress, or whatever. So as soon as he did that, as soon as he got his group of names we headed for a restaurant and we said we're here to examine your kitchen. Oh, oh yes, yes come in, come in. Well then, of course, you have to try some of their food. Of course, also the restaurant was air conditioned and so that helped. And then we would go from there walking down the street a ways into an air conditioned theater and that was all there was to being a Military Policeman and a Shore Patrolman in Calcutta. But, I was then sent from Calcutta, by air, to Chabwa in ASAM. And then we waited until Army Air Corps, there was no Air Force at the time, it was Army Air Corps. And the Army Air Corps treated us really nice. The pilots and the enlisted people. The high echelon they didn't treat the Navy all that well. They were part of the Army and the Army wasn't treating the Navy all that well. Anyway, we did get a flight across the Himalayas and got into China.

Mr. Cox: Do you remember what kind of plane you flew on? C-45, C-46

Mr. Barrett: 46 I believe, and one of the pilots as we landed in one place and had to take off again.

He said "You want to crank an engine up for me?" Sure. So I was up there in the cockpit with him just kind of being a rubber-neck, you know, and so he said "there are two buttons, you push this button and when you hear it getting a good whine and its making a circle, then you push that second button and that turns the propeller."

So I hadn't known that, and that is the way you crank up a C-46 propeller. Two buttons. Anyway, we conned them into picking up additional mountain rations for us because the K-rations, you know. Have you ever had K-rations? You know what they are. They are edible and that is about all I can say. Except the chocolate. The chocolate is like wax, you chew it for a while then spit it out. Otherwise you are

constipated and that's not a good place to do that.

Mr. Cox: So mountain rations, what did this consist of?

Mr. Barrett: They were in a box and each box had three meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and they were in big wooden crates and we coned them into about a half a dozen of those big wooden crates and that made the plane a little heavier than they really wanted it to be along with other things. So as we are taking off I'm sitting there in the bucket seat, there is a port, I'm looking out the port and there is a white line on the runway and we're going down the runway lickety split and that white line is still there. The next thing I know there's no more white line and I haven't felt us go up. The pilot told me later, said "Hell I just pulled the wheels up." We were airborne, but whew, I figured that was close.

Mr. Cox: Did you know at the time what unit you were assigned to now?

Mr. Barrett: No.

Mr. Cox: You were just more or less incognito?

Mr. Barrett: Went into Kunming and then they put me on another plane with a couple of other fellows and we flew off to another airport, behind Japanese lines. I don't know what airport. It wasn't an airport, it was a little field.

Mr. Cox: Landing strip?

Mr. Barrett: Yeah. They gave us to three Chinese men. One was a driver, one was a mechanic, and another was a Lieutenant in the Chinese Army, and they had a truck. And they were going to truck us to our duty station. They spoke no english, we spoke no Chinese. We learned a few words of Chinese right quick. About different foods, you know, cow

Mr. Cox: You put your fingers on your forehead, like horn.

Mr. Barrett: But then he told us nuyuro cow.

Mr. Cox: That is Chinese for cow?

Mr. Barrett: Yeah. Either that or pig. Then the other word we learned was pork, you know for pig - juro

Mr. Cox: So you made like a big nose and they tried to make a sound like a pig?

Mr. Barrett: Well the Chinese fellow did, the Lt. He was trying to help us and he wanted to know, you know, what we wanted to eat. I forgot the word for eggs, but they could get eggs for us and they could get beef, and they could get pork, and also rabbit. They could get a rabbit occasionally. We were with them I think about three weeks, and occasionally the truck would break down. The mechanic had to go to the nearest town to get a part for whatever it was, and then he would come back and they would put the thing together and we'd go some more.

Mr. Cox: Now on this truck did you have your mountain rations? Were you still carrying those with you?

Mr. Barrett: Yes.

Mr. Cox: Plus some other supplies?

Mr. Barrett: Yeah.

Mr. Cox: Medical supplies, and other

Mr. Barrett: No. We didn't have any medical supplies.

Mr. Cox: Here you are a medic without any medical supplies.

Mr. Barrett: Right. Right. Had no patients either.

Mr. Cox: No big loss?

Mr. Barrett: So we finally get to a town called Kineo in Fukien Province, southeast China.

Mr. Cox: Got a map here. I don't know whether it shows your area on it or not.

Mr. Barrett: Well, I'll look and see if I can see Fukien, or Fuchow I mean.

Mr. Cox: Now is this area close to the coast or China?

Mr. Barrett: Fairly close.

Mr. Cox: And you are behind the Japanese lines?

Mr. Barrett: Yes. Yeah because the Japanese were in Fuchow and we were up a little bit north of there. Here is Fuchow, and we were up in here. I don't see, yes I do, here it is right here. Kienow. That is a fairly good sized printing for that.

Mr. Cox: Now what did you do there? Was that one of your duty stations or you kept moving.

Mr. Barrett: Yes. No I stopped there. I found some other corpsman there and boy one guy he was delighted to see me because he was being relieved. I was his relief.

Mr. Cox: OK, so you relieved this young man?

Mr. Barrett: I relieved him and there were about four medical officers there and several other Pharmacist mates, and what they were doing, they opened up a small hospital there and

Mr. Cox: Excuse me. Were you attached to any, did you have a title then, were you attached to

Mr. Barrett: I was attached to SACO.

Mr. Cox: OK, yeah, now you knew you were attached to

Mr. Barrett: Oh, I knew that when I got into India.

Mr. Cox: Oh, OK.

Mr. Barrett: I knew I was with SACO. Sino American Cooperative Organization. Official name: U.S. Naval Group China.

Mr. Cox: Right. This hospital you were at, did it have a designation, Camp 1, or

Mr. Barrett: No. Pac Doc Two. There was a Pac Dot, and that of course would have been Pac Doc One. We were number Two. We were supposed to be training nurses and young Chinese men to be hospital corpsmen, or pharmacist mates. The senior medical officer there was Dr. Robert Cranston and he found out that I had had some training in the operating room so I wound up becoming his scrub nurse, so any surgeries that were being done I scrubbed up. Also being a First Class, kind of a senior First Class, I wound up as the Medical Supply Officer for Southeast China and I had a big “go down” which is a warehouse and we had numerous and sundry medical items there. I also had an X-ray machine that came in three suitcases. One big one, one medium, and one small, and when they put the three together you had a small, portable X-ray unit. So I had the X-ray machine. So I was the X-ray technician. They asked me also to start making up forms for the pharmacy, for the lab, and other things that you would need in a hospital.

Mr. Cox: They kept you busy, didn't they?

Mr. Barrett: Oh yes, yeah, and then Dr. Cranston took me on a trip occasionally to other camps. Because he was senior medical officer there it was his job to check and be sure all of the medics were doing what they were supposed to be doing.

Mr. Cox: What kind of patients would you have in the field like that? Did you have any wounded? Did they bring any wounded Chinese in?

Mr. Barrett: We didn't have any during the time I was there.

Mr. Cox: Malaria?

Mr. Barrett: I got malaria. I think I really got malaria on a cross-country trip because at the end of the war I had to take all of the stuff out of the warehouse and put it in trucks and we were going to take that down to Shanghai so we were going cross country. Got into areas that hadn't seen a long nose in, oh maybe 15 years.

Mr. Cox: Long nose referring to?

Mr. Barrett: European. Instead of a flat Chinese nose we were long nose. And we get into these little towns and kids would follow us. They wanted to see how we were eating, and what we were eating and that was kind of neat.

Mr. Cox: How did you find the Chinese people? Were they a friendly people?

Mr. Barrett: Very.

Mr. Cox: Or not reserved?

Mr. Barrett: Very, very friendly. Good sense of humor. While I was in Kineo we had done some work for the Chinese, and the Mayor of Kineo or Magistrate of Kineo, gave me a citation thanking me for the good work I had done. He gave three of those. I was one of the recipients. It is about three feet long. It is on silk, and about a foot and a half wide, maybe two feet wide and white threaded characters going down either side, then gold and red characters going down the middle. I still have it.

Mr. Cox: It is written in Chinese?

Mr. Barrett: Oh yes, yes. I have had it told to me what it means and so I do have that and when I left Kineo one of the youngsters that I had hired to help me in the warehouse. There was a moon festival coming up and he needed some money so that his wife could get moon cookies made so they would have good luck the rest of the year. So he asked

me if he could borrow \$10,000.

Mr. Cox: In American money?

Mr. Barrett: No. I said “sure Houeng, be glad to.” So I gave him the equivalent of \$10. It was a thousand to one at that time. So about the time I’m ready to leave poor Houeng went around to all of his friends

Mr. Cox: What was his name again?

Mr. Barrett: Yong.

Mr. Cox: Spell it please.

Mr. Barrett: Houeng. Houeng. Not Yong.

Mr. Cox: But it sounds like a “Y”.

Mr. Barrett: Yeah, it is more like the Mexican “J”. And, poor Houeng went around to all of his friends and he came to me with a paper sack full of money and it was the \$10,000 that I had loaned him so he could have the moon cookies made, which his wife did. So then he and some of his friends and other friends of mine there had a dinner for me so I went to the dinner and I took this sack full of money along and gave him the sack full of money and he and his friends gave me three pairs of, what kind of shoes, sandal-like shoes, one a little bit larger, one medium, and one small. I was to take those home for me, my wife, and my son. He gave me a suit of pajamas for my wife, silk, all embroidered. Gave me two, well they are not quite dresses, they are like kimonos. One is all white silk with all kinds of different colored threads woven made into dragons, so forth, then the other is a dark blue dress, opens on the side. Well they are made for Chinese, who are very small. My wife was small, similar to this, but not

Mr. Cox: But not that small?

Mr. Barrett: Yes.

Mr. Cox: Well, that was quite a deal for \$10 wasn't it?

Mr. Barrett: Yes, yes. But, golly people there treated me just beautifully and they were marvelous people. I really enjoyed them. I got into Shanghai. Well, going across country is when I think I got my Malaria because I wasn't being covered at night with mosquito netting. We were several days on the road. We got to a river and there was no bridge. The bridge had been blown up and they told me it would be six months before I could get a bridge to continue my trip. Can't wait that long. Have to get to Shanghai. Well then you better hire a sand pan. So I hired a sanpan. Well they have a piece of paper about this big

Mr. Cox: About 8 by

Mr. Barrett: Or 8 by 11, something like that. Yeah, it was 8 x 11, and a contract written in Chinese on one side and on the other side a bunch of official stamps. So I had an official piece of paper to take with me down river to Hankow and then from there we went on the Hankow-Shanghai railroad on into Shanghai. That is how I wound up in Shanghai. **Mr. Cox:** Let me ask you this - this was in an area commanded by Nationalist Chinese rather than any Communist Chinese?

Mr. Barrett: Oh, I don't know. Most of the Communist Chinese were farther north. So I would assume most of anyone in control would have been Nationalists or at least have those leanings.

Mr. Cox: Allegiance to Chiang Kai-shek?

Mr. Barrett: Yes, yes. So it was later after that the communists came down into the southern part. But I got into Shanghai, reported to the Glen Line Building down on the Bund. Got rid of my materials, my men and I was told to report to the Shanghai-American School out on Peaton Road. That would be where I would be billeted. So that is what I did. I went out to Shanghai-American School. While I was out there I got a call to come into the Glen Line building. Some Navy Captain wanted to see me. So I went in to see this Navy Captain. He says "Barrett." Oh, by this time I'm a Chief Petty Officer. He said "Chief, Barrett, were you the Acting Medical Supply Officer for Southeast China?" I said "Yes sir." He said, "Where the hell are my uniforms?" "Captain, I have no idea what you are talking about." He said "I had them shipped to you." He is a Line Officer and he is shipping his uniforms to me in the Medical Department. What the heck for? So I said "Captain, I'm sorry I have no idea what in the world you are talking about. I have never seen your uniforms. They never arrived." "Well," he said, "they were sent to you and if they are lost you are responsible." "No sir." By God I couldn't afford to buy a Captain's outfit, or several. So he told me I was going to be responsible. That kind of scared the foo out of me, so I went back out to the school and I saw Commander Cranston. I said "Commander, this Captain is all over me." "What's the matter Chief?" "Well, he wants his uniforms and I don't have his uniforms. Have you ever seen his uniforms?" "Well, no I never saw his uniforms." "Well," he says, "don't worry I'll go downtown and I'll see him in a little bit." So that was the last I ever heard of that. Whew! Well, I was in Shanghai for several weeks, I guess, and one of the things that we did there at the School, we took turns waking each other up. And, the way

you woke a guy up when it was your turn, you came into a cigarette, you opened a bottle of beer, and you shook Reville. Here's your cigarette and here's your beer." After about three weeks or so in Shanghai I was ordered to was the a sea going tug. The sea going tug was on the metal one and she's towing a wooden one. started shaking, you know, with malaria. So I was on We're at sea for a while and we get to these little islands and this wooden tug came over and said "Chief, we have scabies and between our fingers and they itch terrible." Well I said, don't you have a corpsman or a Pharmacist mate on there. Yeah we got a first class Pharmacist mate. And he doesn't do anything for you? No, he doesn't do anything. So I went over. I thought maybe he didn't know what to do. So I went over and talked with him, suggested that he make up some sulfur ointment and put on these kids to kill the scabies. And I told him, I said if you don't kill them with just these few your whole ship is going to be scabies. Well, the next island we got to the kid came back and said that guy never did a thing. My gosh. So there is nothing I can do except go see his skipper. So I went to see his skipper and I told the skipper, this guy, your people have scabies and I told this Pharmacist mate what to do for them and he hasn't done it, so you are going to have to do something with him. Well, the next island we got to finally, was Kwajalein. First Class Pharmacist Mate got transferred. I got sent back to the wooden ship. That wasn't Kwajalein, that was another island before Kwajalein. So anyway, I was on the wooden ship acting as their chief Pharmacist mate. I took

care of their scabies, and we got that cleared up. But when we got to Kwajalein, boy I was so sick. I had malaria, and just really run down. So I got transferred off of there to the hospital at Kwajalein. They got me fixed up pretty well, then they sent me to an APL, which is like a hotel ship, to await transfer to a ship going back to the States. So then I got on an APA and, as a passenger, and sent back to Treasure Island, California. By the time I got back to Treasure Island, my six-year cruise was already up in January of 46. This was February of 46. So I'm there at Treasure Island and I'm not sure what I want to do. I'm thinking about getting out and going to school, and along about the same time I start seeing fellows coming back in and wanting to re-enlist because they were getting close to their 90 days of being out and if they didn't re-enlist prior to the expiration of that 90 days they'd take a reduction in rate. So they were coming flying back in. No jobs, schools were all filled up and maybe I'd just better stay in. And, if I'm going to stay in I'm going to make dam sure I stay long enough to retire. So I signed up for another six years, which would have made me 12 years active duty and I'm not about to get out with only eight to go to retire.

Mr. Cox: Right.

Mr. Barrett: So I got my leave, and I went back to Indiana and then I was transferred to U.S. Naval Hospital Paris Island. Oh I was sent back to San Diego first. I'm sorry. I was sent back from my leave I was sent back to Treasure Island. I got back there early and I went down to San Diego to talk to a Captain I knew in the Navy, who was an X-ray radiologist, and I had worked there at San Diego as his x-ray technician in charge of the department while I was on TAD. He said, boy I'd love to have you back, so he sent word up to Com Twelve to have me transferred to Com Eleven. Com Twelve

didn't like that too well, so they sent me to Paris Island, South Carolina. That is about as far away from San Diego as you can get.

Mr. Cox: Yes it is.

Mr. Barrett: And still be in the States. I was a temporary appointment Chief and that was in '46, and I was there at Paris Island for about a year, and I told my wife I'm getting afraid from down-sizing and so forth that temporary appointments are going to be done away with and I'll revert back to First Class. I need a year of sea duty to get permanent appointment. She agreed. So I wrote a letter to the Bureau requesting any destroyer Atlantic Fleet. They sent a set of orders back to me U.S. Naval Medical Center Guam.

Mr. Cox: I knew you were going to say something like that.

Mr. Barrett: So, I went to the U.S. Naval Hospital Guam, Marianas Islands, June of 97 I reported there, or I went from there. I'm sorry I got to there.

Mr. Cox: 97 or

Mr. Barrett: 47. I'm sorry. Boy, do I ever jump ahead. 47, and I stayed there until, well they didn't have any housing available there at the Medical Center at the Hospital, and a billet came open up at Headquarters Command, Commander Marianas, and I put in for that and I got it and I was able then to get housing right away. So I sent for my wife and my son and my dog and my car, and they sent all of that over to me. So then I stayed there until 1949, September 47 to May of 49. I went back to the States and I was sent to Com Nine, Chicago. In the meantime, Com Nine then sent me a set of orders to the Naval Marine Corps Reserve Training Center South Bend, Indiana. So I had about three years at South Bend training reserves, and about that time, of

course, the Korean War was on, so I got transferred from South Bend to San Diego to pick up an APA there, the USS Calvert APA-32. So in October of '52 I got on the Calvert. I went over to Korea, then we went to Japan, picked up a load of soldiers and Marines and brought them back to Korea, went in to Inchon and I happened to know the Commodore whose Flag was on the Calvert at that time and he had been the Officer-in-Charge of ROTC at Notre Dame and he was a neighbor of mine in South Bend. Two of the other Chiefs asked me if I wouldn't go up to talk to the Commodore to see if he wouldn't say it would be OK for us to go into Inchon and stay over night and then, you know, rubber neck around the war zone. Well the Commodore says, "Hell no I won't give you permission, but I won't stop you either." So anyway, the three of us Chiefs went ashore there at Inchon in Korea, we hitch-hiked a ride in a helicopter up the Han River. We get up on the Han River and the helicopter pilot let us out and he took off and went some place else, and the three of us just horsing around, all three of us looked like we were really hot-shot guys, you know, gun belt on, a 45 on our hip, good Lord, John Wayne personified. Anyway, the Communists started firing rounds in there and we decided, Hey we better get out of here. So we hitch-hiked back down to Inchon and we had to stay ashore over night and the soldiers were real nice to us. They fed us and they gave us a sleeping bag and we stayed over night. The next day we got back on the Calvert and

Mr. Cox: You didn't want to stay around there did you?

Mr. Barrett: Not while they were firing.

Mr. Cox: Not in the '50's.

Mr. Barrett: You know, what the heck, a guy could get hurt. Anyway, the Calvert then went

back to Japan and we got sent over to Hong Kong and we stayed at Hong Kong for a couple of weeks and then on the way back to Japan I received a set of orders ordering me to the USS LST-1126, no name, just a number. So I went to the 1126 with the Chief Bosan's Mate that I met and he and I started out there together.

Mr. Cox: Your duties on LST were still medical then?

Mr. Barrett: Yes, and we were at Inaweetok, Bikini (? Spelling) working with the Atomic Energy people taking stuff into wherever they needed it and bringing stuff out from wherever they wanted it out, and eventually we left Inaweetok, Bikini, sailed into Kwajalein, and then from Kwajalein we sailed back to San Diego. I got transferred off of the 1126 in September of '54 and was transferred to the U.S. Naval Hospital Great Lakes Illinois. I got there in September of '54 and they assigned me to a warehouse. Well they had a civilian out there in that warehouse and he was in charge of that warehouse. I'm a Chief Petty Officer. I'm supposed to be in charge of wherever in the heck they send me, so I'm just sitting there doing nothing. He is doing whatever I should be doing. I thought, gosh, I don't like this. So I went over to Com Nine and I went up to the Medical Officer there, Admiral, and said that I would like to be transferred to a Naval or Marine Corp Reserve Training Center within the Ninth Naval District if they had an opening. Oh yeah, we've got an opening, and we'd be delighted to send you there. Oh great, where would that be? Well, that would be at St Louis, Missouri. Gosh you can't beat a deal like that. So I went back over to the Naval Hospital and the Officer-in-Charge there calls me in and says, "Chief, what the hell did you go over there and tell them that you're not wanted here." I said, "I never told anybody I wasn't wanted here." I said I went over

there and told them I didn't feel I was needed here. There is a big difference between wanted and needed. Oh well, OK, he was a little put out thinking that I thought he didn't like me or something. I didn't care if he liked me or not, but I did get transferred to the Naval Marine Corp Reserve Training Center at St. Louis, Missouri, and I had a real good time down there training young Naval Reservists and Marine Corp Reservists. I also became associated with the Boy Scouts of America while I was there. I became a scout master, then I became associated with the sea going part of the Boy Scouts, the Sea Scouts, and I also wound up with the Air Scouts. Man I was scout happy! I stayed in St. Louis for about four years. Had a very good tour of duty there, and I was ordered to a destroyer escort in the Atlantic out of Norfolk. Well about that time my wife had a hysterectomy at Barnes Hospital, so my Commanding Officer sent a request to the Bureau requesting a delay in my transfer until my wife got out and was well enough to travel. So instead of getting a delay to my destroyer escort, they sent me a set of orders to the 2nd Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Camp Legume, North Carolina, report to the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division.

Mr. Cox: What year was this?

Mr. Barrett: 1958. So I went there, took my wife and youngster and we got housing there on the base, and another funny thing happened. My wife was fanatical about cleanliness and we were in a Quonset hut and boy she went over this Quonset hut with a fine tooth comb, scrubbing everything. The first thing I know I'm being inundated with cockroaches. So I go over and talk to the entomologist and he said, "Chief, did your wife scrub the walls down in that Quonset hut?" Yep, she sure did. I'm thinking,

God, you know she's great. Well he said, "She washed off all the residual materials that kept those cockroaches out." We did get the thing sprayed again, and she did not wash that down. I was told by the regimental surgeon that I was going to be making a 6 month's tour of duty in the eastern Mediterranean. We did that and during that period of time we made a landing in Beirut, Lebanon, because President Shimon asked President Eisenhower to send the Marines in to try to maintain control during the period of, no they were going to have an election. During an election period. He didn't want a coup and he was fearful that something like that might happen, so we went in. We took over the airport first. We stayed at the airport over night. Went down the next morning took over the port facility and we left only a few men at the airport and left only a few men at the port facility. We took to the hills because we wanted to be looking down their throats, not them looking down ours.

Mr. Cox: Right.

Mr. Barrett: So we did that. I stayed 30 days up in the hills of Beirut, Lebanon, and it was a gorgeous city. Beautiful city. The Paris of the Middle East, really. Buildings were multi-colored and oh, just beautiful, and it is a shame the way they are now. Anyway, we stayed that 30 days, then came back out on to the ship that we were making circles and we were relieved on post, went back to Camp Legume, and I had already applied to Butler University in Indianapolis to see if I could enter there. While I had been in St. Louis I took two courses of English, and one course of History at St. Louis U during the noon hour so I could compete with the kids. I got six hours of B in English, three hours of A in History, I could compete with the kids. So then I went, I submitted my letter requesting early retirement so I could enter school in September,

which I did. I got out in July of 1959, they gave me credit for 20 years service. I moved to Indianapolis, Indiana, went to Butler University. I earned a Bachelor of Science degree and had 30 hours in biological science, and my major was History and Government. History and Political Science, and I got my education license as well, so I had a minor in Education. I have a minor in Biological Science and a Master of Arts Degree in History and Political Science.

Mr. Cox: Did you teach school?

Mr. Barrett: I taught school for 20 years. So I retired from school teaching, I taught grades 7, 8, and 9. Retired from school teaching, so when they call me a “double dipper”, I say “no, I’m not, triple.” I got military, teaching, social security. That’s the end of my story.

Mr. Cox: Well George it sounds like you had a full life when you were young and I want to personally thank you for what you did for me as a youngster. When I was a youngster you were young, but you were a young man and you did your thing to protect me as a civilian and I appreciate it.

Mr. Barrett: I was really young. When I told you I made Chief Petty Officer. I was 23 years old. I had only had five years in the Navy. Today Doris and I saw a young man in the Navy, Medical Department, same as I was. He has three hash marks, which indicates he has at least 12 years in, and he was only Second Class. So, boy it is rough today.

Mr. Cox: It sure is. Well thank you again George.