



Fredericksburg, Texas

## *Center for Pacific War Studies*

Interview with

**Mr. Cy Heinrich**

**USS Independence CVLG 41  
VF-41 Night fighter Squadron**

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

1 Bob Phelps: This is Bob Phelps. Today is the December 27th, 2006. I'm interviewing Cy  
2 Heinrich. This interview is taking place in Cibolo, Texas. The interview is in support of the  
3 Center for Pacific War Studies, Archives of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Texas  
4 Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. If you'd  
5 just give us your name and address, then we're going to turn it off and make sure we've got the  
6 volume up.

7  
8 CH: My name is Cy Heinrich.

9  
10 BP: Ok, we'll just turn this off and see how the gadget's working, how's that. Alright. Well, I  
11 appreciate your taking the time today. What we are trying to do, and the National Museum of the  
12 Pacific War in Fredericksburg does this on a regular basis, is gather information using oral  
13 interviews. Then, what we will do is transcribe it, type it up and send it back to you to improve,  
14 check our facts, make sure we heard you right--all that kind of stuff--and then we will make a  
15 couple of copies: one for you to keep here and one we will put in the archives at the Library so  
16 that the folks who are doing research at the Nimitz Museum will have access to that.

17 At the Squadron Reunion in Jackson in June we interviewed about twelve of the folks back at the  
18 reunion. Marie-Page transcribed them over the summer, so we've got their oral interviews and  
19 we sent most of them back out to the fellows to take a look at to correct so we are in the process  
20 of building up a library about the Squadron and its activities out in the Pacific War. What I  
21 would like to do today—we will just be here for about an hour or so—is just have you describe  
22 some areas of your experiences out there that might be of interest to folks. Just start with how'd  
23 you get into the Navy?

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

24

25 CH: How did I get in the Navy?

26

27 BP: Yes sir.

28

29 CH: Let's back up a little, Bob.

30

31 BP: OK.

32

33 CH: I don't know if you're aware that your father was probably my very best friend.

34

35 BP: I did not know that.

36

37 CH: We were all aware that he was being treated on an experimental basis. I woke up one  
38 morning. I told Pansy to get up and get dressed, that we were going to Fredericksburg. That we  
39 would stop for breakfast somewhere along the way. We were aware that Hospice was looking  
40 after him and they were reluctant to let me see him. However, he heard a voice and he asked who  
41 it was. They told him and then he said to send me in. I was sent in to visit with Bill for a few  
42 minutes, and we went on back home. And the next morning Bill passed away.

43 I am trying to think about that.

44

45 Lisa Heinrich: You were older than the rest of them. Were you already a pilot?

46

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

47 CH: What:

48

49 LH: You were older than the rest of the people in the group, in the Navy.

50

51 CH: Yes, we were all pilots.

52

53 LH: You were a pilot before?

54

55 CH: Yes.

56

57 CH: Bob, I don't know quite how to carry on with this.

58

59 LH: You can do it. Tell them about some of those things we were looking at yesterday. What  
60 about Archer saying that you had saved his life. Well, talk about the night flights.

61

62 BP: How would a mission be carried out? The planes have been launched. You are not part of  
63 the launch system, but you, as soon as they start returning to the carrier, your crew scrambles and  
64 you stand up on your...

65

66 CH: Right. Of course, getting back to the night operations--Night carrier operations were a  
67 segment of emergency use and planes were brought aboard with a Signal Officer holding a wand  
68 that had flashlight bulbs in it. There was no, it was almost impossible to bring a plane safely  
69 aboard as the pilot had no reference to the horizontal or vertical and as the night operations

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

70 actually became [ ] after which the “*Independence*” was torpedoed, the Air Group was sent  
71 back to the Islands and the “*Independence*” went on to San Francisco and put into dry dock for  
72 repairs. I had been detached from the ship and was on temporary duty with the Air Group in the  
73 Islands. When I arrived back in the States, I was sent to San Diego and attached to Captain  
74 [Cromlin’s] staff who was the chief operating officer or commander Fleet Air/West Coast. He  
75 was aware what my home situation and so forth, which was in Whittier, so he sent me up to Las  
76 Alamedas to work with CASU-33. CASU stood for Carrier Aircraft Service Unit. Another Signal  
77 Officer had come into Captain [Cromlin’s] command. A Whitey Moot. And Whitey and I  
78 became very close. And, actually, got to the point where we thought alike.

79

80 LH: What’s his last name?

81

82 CH: Moot.

83 I am trying to think how to say this.

84 The motion picture “Queen of the Flattops” was filmed--a very great part of it--at the Las  
85 Alamedas air station and they had donated to the Naval Relief Fund a total of somewhere over  
86 five thousand dollars and we just took small amounts we were allowed to keep in the Naval  
87 Relief Fund. So, we had to spend that money and we had **won out** tickets to various shows. We  
88 were attending the Ice Follies and during their program, they turned off the lights and turned on  
89 black lights and the skaters appeared lit up with black light and, as I said, Whitey and I were  
90 pretty close. We had worked together a lot. And Whitey reached over and touched me and he  
91 said, “Do you see what I see?” and I said “I think so Whitey.” And they had turned off all the  
92 lighting and turned on the ultraviolet lights and here the skaters in their costumes came to life

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

93 with the ultraviolet light. We went back. The next day..Commander **Barker** was in command of  
94 CASU33 at Las Alamedes. We told him what we had seen.

95

96 BP: So the Navy picked up the idea with the black light and implemented it.

97

98 CH: I am trying to get to that.

99

100 LH: Mother sewed something up, didn't she?

101

102 CH: We had arranged for one of the squadrons we had been working with to have some night  
103 carrier practice. We did not tell them what we had planned or anything. And in the meantime,  
104 Pansy had taken an old flight suit and sewed strips of the reflective material down the legs, from  
105 the shoulder down on each side and inside of the arms--where the Signal Officer held his  
106 paddles. And as I say, we did not tell the squadron what we had in mind. After dark, when they  
107 came out for their practice landings, they were amazed that it was just like a daylight landing in  
108 reference to the Signal Officer. And we had not told Capt. **Cromlin** ahead of time what we had  
109 planned. And, by the way, as a sideline, Capt. **Cromlin**, his chief of staff, Turner Caldwell, and  
110 Bill Henry all flew with the same dive bomber group out of Guadalcanal.

111

112 BP: Terry Barker did, too, didn't he?

113

114 CH: What?

115

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

116 BP: Didn't Captain Barker, Terry Barker, wasn't he part of that group, also?

117

118 CH: He comes in there somewhere, but I've forgotten just where. As I say, this air group was  
119 amazed that their approach and landing was considered almost like a daylight landing.

120

121 BP: When was this in the war? Was this in 1943?

122

123 CH: 1942.

124

125 BP: 1942. So, it is really early in the war.

126 .

127 CH: This was after the "*Independence*" was torpedoed. We had taken a torpedo off of the island  
128 of Tarawa.

129

130 BP: So, you were deployed to the "*Independence*", that was your first carrier?

131

132 CH: Yes.

133

134 BP: In 1941, 1942?

135

136 CH: Actually, it was my only carrier.\

137

CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006  
Cy Heinrich

138 BP: Well, that's all right. Some of these guys had theirs shot out from under them, so you did  
139 better.

140  
141 CH: That is another story—an amazing story. When the "*Independence*" came out of the yard  
142 after repair at **Mare** Island in San Francisco, they had no signal officer assigned to the ship. And,  
143 **COMPER**/West Coast, Commander **Cromlin**, who would proceed with training said, "I have  
144 two signal officers available and you can have one of them." And he told Whitey Moot, Lt.  
145 Moot, and I had just made Lieutenant, and he said, "Lt. Heinrich," He said, "Well, I'll take  
146 Heinrich, because I know him. I've had him aboard ship before." That's how I wound up back to  
147 the "*Independence*".,

148  
149 BP: But in the meantime, you had developed the night black-light suit?

150  
151 LH: There were no regular lights because they did not want the ship to be seen, right? So that is  
152 why you used that bar of lights before that.

153  
154 BP: The squadron, Dad's squadron, was formed up by Caldwell in 1943 and 1944. They were  
155 given the British radar to develop night tactics. You were not involved in that because you were  
156 back on the West Coast in training, so you did not meet these guys until they were assigned to  
157 the "*Independence*"?

158  
159 CH: Until they were assigned to the "*Independence*." They were operating off...



**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

160 At that time, there were two carriers available to be assigned, one to be assigned, into the Fleet  
161 for night operations. One was the "*Independence*". The other one was the – I've forgotten the  
162 name of it, but it was one of the so-called jeep carriers that were built on...

163

164 BP: The "*Essex*" carriers?

165

166 CH: As I say, it was a jeep carrier. We were... The "*Independence*". We were back with  
167 Captain Johnson, and he said he would take me instead of Moot, because he knew me.

168

169 BP: So, the commander of the "*Independence*" was Captain Jones?

170

171 CH: Captain Johnson.

172

173 BP: Johnson, ok, because Ewen was on later on, wasn't he?

174

175 CH: Right.

176

177 CH: Anyhow, we were assigned a mission to take new aircraft out into the Pacific. We were to  
178 fly them ashore. And – I can't think of the name of the base now.

179

180 BP: In San Diego?

181

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

182 CH: No. Honolulu. Anyhow, the "*Independence*" was back, ready to join the Fleet. We were  
183 taking aboard new aircraft over at Alameda Naval Air Station. And we were to get under way—  
184 I'm trying to think--sometime early in the morning. My wife had joined me while the ship was in  
185 the yard being repaired. And we were to get away early in the morning and she was staying at the  
186 – I've forgotten the name of the hotel—but she looked out the window and there the  
187 "*Independence*" was, high and dry--been run aground due to the load and everything. Navy  
188 tradition was and is that when a Captain runs his ship aground, he is automatically relieved of his  
189 command. And there we sat, and she said there were tugboats from every direction descending  
190 on us. I've forgotten what they tried to do to refloat us and get us back in the channel versus how  
191 it was. But, they waited until high tide and automatically the ship was refloated.

192

193 BP: Was Captain Johnson relieved?

194

195 CH: Not at that point. That's when Captain Ewen... Captain Johnson took us back on the way to  
196 Honolulu. And Captain Ewen was assigned commander of the "*Independence*", but there was a  
197 conflict that he had to be relieved of a command somewhere else before he could take over. So,  
198 Captain Johnson took us back to the Islands.

199

200 BP: Could you describe how you worked during the course of landing the aircraft? If this is the  
201 aircraft carrier and that is the tower and this is the stern, was your post on this corner? [pointing  
202 to the stern, port side]

203

204 CH: Right off the flight deck, over the catwalk

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

205

206 BP: So that is what this thing is right over the catwalk?

207

208 CH: Yes.

209

210 BP: So when the pilots are coming in, they are doing a four-three-two-one to bring themselves in

211 alignment with the axis of the carrier?

212

213 CH: Yes.

214

215 BP: And then when would you take control of their activity? Within so many feet of the carrier?

216

217 CH: Well, when they turned 'final,' coming in to **align** the carrier.

218

219 BP: So, when they turned final, their eyes go to you on this corner.

220

221 CH: That's right.

222

223 BP: And you are in control and let them know by using your paddles where their wings are.

224

225 CH: They no longer—how do I want to say it—flew a pattern, they flew—were taken over and

226 flew to the Landing Officer's signals.

227

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

228 BP. So, once they are in the final, they are under your control--the Landing Signal Officer's  
229 control.

230

231 CH: That's right.

232

233 BP And you are going to control how level they are and their speed.

234

235 CH: Their speed. And how level they are.

236

237 BP: So how would you communicate each of those? How would you communicate level? With  
238 paddles – left and right? So by looking at how you were holding the two paddles, they knew  
239 what their level was and they would adjust?

240

241 CH: **[motions-extends both arms, moves them up and down in vertical plane; then crosses**  
242 **hands over head; then crosses hands at waist]**

243

244 BP: So, just to describe that again, if you showed your hands above your head, they knew that  
245 they were too high.

246

247 CH: They were too high.

248

249 BP: If you showed your hands below your waist, they knew that they were too low.

250

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

251 CH: Too low.

252

253 BP: And then, by moving your left or right arm, up or down, they knew whether they were level.

254

255 CH: Right.

256

257 BP: Ok, so that's on level. How did you communicate speed? ...Just show it and I will try to  
258 describe it.

259

260 CH: There was a light in the leading edge of the wing of the approaching plane. If that **glow**  
261 showed red, they were too fast. If it showed amber, they were too low. If it showed green, speed  
262 was what it should be.

263

264 BP: So, the Landing Signal Officer was looking at the light of the leading edge of the aircraft and  
265 by the color of that light, you could signal back to them.

266

267 CH: Right.

268

269 BP: Ok, so you're visual and they're visual--you are looking at the light on their airplane and  
270 they are looking at you for the relative speed and how level they were relative to the deck.

271

272 CH: Right.

273

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

274 BP: And they were in the control of you and your signals as they got closer--as they got on their  
275 final. So, until the hook caught, they were looking at your paddles.

276

277 CH: Right.

278

279 LH: How did you tell them to slow down if they were going too fast?

280

281 CH: I did.

282

283 LH: How?

284

285 BP: What was the signal on speed?

286

287 LH: Stop! Don't hit me? How did you tell them if they were too fast or too slow, or did they just  
288 use the lights?

289

290 CH: If they were too slow, to increase their speed [**motions, waving arms in vertical plane, up**  
291 **and down**]

292

293 LH: It looks like you are swimming a backstroke.

294

295 CH: If they were too fast... Darn it, I'm not thinking.

296

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

297 LH: That's ok.

298

299 BP: How would you wave them off? Would you just do an X and cross the paddles in front of  
300 you, and they would know to get out of the pattern and let the next guy come into final and be  
301 under control?

302

303 CH: Right.

304

305 BP: The pilots were aiming for those five wires. You were bringing the pilots down to the deck  
306 so that they could get close enough so that they could hook on the five wires that were laterally  
307 across the deck?

308

309 CH: Right.

310

311 BP: And in front of that was a wire barrier to keep the plane from running into the parked planes.

312

313 CH: Right.

314

315 BP: What was a normal sequence or interval between the aircraft coming in? I'm sure you would  
316 like a lot of time between aircraft.

317

318 CH: About a minute.

319

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

320 BP: So you would land the aircraft. The guy's hook would catch, and then the deck, the crew  
321 would scramble over and get that airplane out of the way, because a minute later another one's  
322 coming down on them?

323

324 CH: They would **fly into** the barrier.

325

326 BP: So, they would have to drop the barrier to go through it.

327

328 CH: And then **they'd park it**.

329

330 BP: And put the barrier up again. So there is an awful lot of ballet going on on the deck in that  
331 minute between aircraft.

332

333 CH: Definitely.

334

335 BP: The "*Independence*" was the night carrier, so the men did a lot of combat air patrols over the  
336 Task Force as they moved around. And then they did long missions, where the Task Force would  
337 zig and zag while the men were off on their mission and then they would have to come back.  
338 How were you in communication with the pilots? Did the Captain alert the Landing Signal  
339 Officer to go down to his post? Or were you down there listening to their radio broadcasts? Were  
340 you on duty the whole time they were flying?

341

342 CH: Anytime they were in a return mode.



**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

343

344 BP: Return mode. So, once they were heading back toward the carriers, your group went on  
345 station and monitored. Were you in radio communication with the pilots, could you hear the  
346 radio transmissions of the pilots?

347

348 CH: No.

349

350 BP: So all you saw was that little light?

351

352 CH: [Nods]

353

354 BP: How many people were with you spotting? Cause one guy is looking at the airplane and you  
355 have got the other fellows in line. How many people were on your station?

356

357 CH: There are just two of us.

358

359 BP: Two of you?

360

361 CH: I had a spotter. He told me if their wheels were down.

362

363 BP: Your spotter is behind?

364

365 CH: Right.

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006  
Cy Heinrich**

366

367 BP: So, you are the fellow with the paddles and there is a spotter behind you.

368

369 CH: Right.

370

371 BP: Yelling in your ear all the time.

372

373 CH: He advises the Landing Signal Officer on **matters when** down here on the catwalk, and he  
374 would tell me if they had their wheels down, flaps down, hook down.

375

376 BP: So one fellow is looking at the aircraft itself and you are in charge of level and speed and all  
377 **three** of you guys are communicating as each plane comes in.

378

379 CH: Right.

380

381 LH: So he would say literally, "Wheels down?" and what else?

382

383 BP: He would check off the things the..

384

385 LH: Would he say that? Is that what he would say?

386

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

387 CH: Right. He would tell me, normally, “Wheels down; flaps down” – flaps in the part of the  
388 airplane wing that slow him down. And of course, the hook was what he would catch a wire and  
389 stop them.

390  
391 BP: If the spotter reported any of those things malfunctioning, would you wave them off.

392  
393 CH: You would give them a wave off.

394  
395 LH: One of your friends said that you never gave him a wave off. Where was that? Bob  
396 Campaigne said “ I have **made time** in recent days and nights flying from the *USS*  
397 *Independence*. I always had a good feeling of security when I would turn Final and you would be  
398 standing on the port side of the deck, all lit up. I knew I would have a good landing.” There was  
399 another one who said you never gave him a wave off. Was that Reuben? This is Reuben. “I will  
400 always be grateful for your dependable, professional and **concern to** guide us boys back safely  
401 aboard the carrier so many years ago.” I’m not finding the one I want.

402  
403 BP: One of the things that one of the pilots described is, I guess it was Captain Barker, is that  
404 because the propeller was in front of the aircraft, if they were in weather—like rain or  
405 moisture—the plane of the propeller would impede their vision, so it made it harder for them to  
406 actually land. So, how could you communicate with them when they had this wafer in front of  
407 them? What was the technique for that?

408

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

409 BP: That's ok. I was just curious about what these guys would run into--night after night—  
410 sometimes they bad weather. Did they have to fly differently-- if it was good weather they could  
411 see your paddles.

412

413 BP: So you stayed on the "*Independence*" the whole time. You were out there when this  
414 squadron showed up in 1944. You went through Leyte Gulf and the Philippine Sea. You went  
415 through the typhoons on the way back.

416

417 CH: We went up to ..

418

419 BP: The Philippines? Formosa?

420

421 CH: The island where they raised the flag.

422

423 BP: Iwo Jima? In February?

424

425 CH: Iwo Jima. We went up there and took pictures, and we dropped those pictures on the  
426 destroyer that the commanding officer on the landing group was travelling.

427

428 BP: This was before the invasion. So the "*Independence*" took aerial photos?

429

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

430 CH: We took the last pictures that were taken over Iwo Jima and delivered those pictures to the  
431 commanding officer of the invasion force. And we turned around and headed back to Honolulu,  
432 and our part in the war at that stage was over.

433

434 BP: Do you have any memories of the Leyte Gulf episode, since there were some long missions  
435 flown off the "*Independence*"?

436

437 CH: The Admiral split the fleet.

438

439 BP: At Leyte Gulf the Japanese sent a decoy fleet of aircraft carriers and Halsey went off to the  
440 North after them.

441

442 CH: Right. He went after them.

443 Bill was with the group that went looking for the group coming out of Leyte Gulf. Bill was in  
444 the air -- I've forgotten how many hours-- and he had been carrying a torpedo. And he had  
445 dropped the torpedo. And the ship was long gone from the course that they had been on when he  
446 took off. And he found the ship on his radar unit in his aircraft. When he came in over the ship,  
447 or around the ship, rather than make a normal circling of the ship, we decided to bring him in on  
448 a straight-in approach. I knew that he was light. He was practically out of fuel and he'd dropped  
449 his bomb load--his torpedo. When he came in on his approach, like I say, I knew he was light  
450 and I cut him what I thought was early enough, and he just floated and floated and floated and  
451 floated over the deck, and he caught the propeller or something on one of the parked aircraft and

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

452 just disappeared over the side of the ship. And we were all amazed when he came on the air and  
453 said, “I believe I have enough fuel to do one more approach.”

454

455 BP: Wasn't there a signal on the aircraft carrier when an aircraft went over, that they blew a  
456 whistle. Was there a signal on the aircraft carrier when an aircraft was about to ditch?

457 So he misses his first approach, drops over the side and then has enough fuel to come back for a  
458 second one?

459

460 CH: He said he thought he had enough fuel for a try for one more approach.

461

462 LH: And did he?

463

464 CH: And he did. When he made his landing, and went to the Ready Room, everybody reported  
465 that ... **That we...**How do I want to say it?

466

467 LH: Don't worry about the specific words so much, just say it. Say it anyway. Just say whatever..

468

469 BP: Were you briefed on the missions at the same time the pilots were? So you went into the  
470 Ready Room and went through the briefings, so you had an idea about what they had gone  
471 through. You and your spotter and your assistant had a full idea of what the mission was going to  
472 be and what they would run into.

473

474 CH: Right.

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

475

476 BP: So you spent a lot of time in the Ready Room with the pilots.

477

478 CH: My station was in the Ready Room until they started their return to the ship. Then I took  
479 station on the Signal Officer platform.

480

481 BP: Besides the black light and suit innovation, can you think of anything else that you folks  
482 contributed to night operations? Because radar was pretty new and the combination of radar and  
483 carrier-based aircraft was pretty new. So you fellows were pioneers in a lot of things.

484 Well, you have been talking for about an hour. We do not need... We can hang around as long as  
485 you want to talk. Do you have anything else that you want to add? We can come back some  
486 other time.

487

488 LH: Did you get that story that I sent?

489

490 BP: If it was in the last few days, I don't think so.

491

492 LH: I sent it before I left on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. On email. About how they decided to use the  
493 "*Independence*" for the air group carrier. He wrote it up.

494

495 CH: You've heard that story, I'm sure.

496

497 BP: You can tell us. I don't know how the "*Independence*" was picked for the first night..

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

498

499 CH: Oh, you don't. Well, at the time the Fleet was,..when they were deciding what ship would  
500 become the night operating carrier, there were two ships in Pearl Harbor at the time that were  
501 available. One was the "*Independence*". The other was one of the jeep carriers that were built up  
502 at Seattle. They had a name for them but I've forgotten what they called them.

503

504 BP: CVEs? The escort carriers?

505

506 CH: Yes. They were built on..

507

508 BP: Cruiser hulls? Weren't they built on cruiser hulls? The "*Independence*" was built on a  
509 cruiser hull, wasn't it?

510

511 CH: Yes. The "*Independence*" was on a cruiser hull.

512

513 BP: But these were smaller.

514

515 CH: They were not particularly smaller. They were lighter and had a wider deck. **about \_\_\_-**  
516 **eight** feet, something like that. And larger elevators. And it could take a TBM or F6F down to  
517 the hanger deck without folding the wings. To get back to the story, I was **awake**, but I forgot  
518 what I was doing at the time, but all of a sudden, there is a call "Lt. Heinrich, report to the Duty  
519 Officer on the double." I thought, "Good Lord, what kind of trouble am I in now?" When I got to  
520 the Duty Officer's station.. Anyhow, Captain...



**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

521

522 LH: You said there was more brass than you had ever seen.

523

524 CH: That's right. But, that when I got \_\_\_, they wondered where I had been, because they had  
525 been waiting for me. The Captain said the gig was standing by. We got on it with Turner, the  
526 Captain and myself, and we joined this group that supposedly were making the decision as to  
527 what carrier would join the Fleet as the night operating carrier. There were arguments back and  
528 forth that the jeep carrier had a wider deck and larger elevators. And, I don't know, the argument  
529 went back and forth and back and forth, and it appeared that they were trying to sell the jeep  
530 carrier as the night operating carrier. The argument had been going back and forth and back and  
531 forth. And, all of a sudden, the Admiral in charge stopped the talk and he said, "They tell me that  
532 the young man sitting in the far corner is the Landing Signal Officer on the *"Independence"*.  
533 And I would, and I am sure the rest of you would, be interested in hearing what his observations  
534 might be." I was shaking at the knees. Here I am, in this group of officers. I doubt that there was  
535 anyone there that was lower than the rank of a Captain. As I say, my knees were shaking. I stood  
536 up to address the group, and my observation was that the *"Independence"* with a flank speed of  
537 thirty-two knots could – versus the flank speed of a jeep carrier of approximately twelve knots –  
538 could under a no-wind wind condition at sea, the *"Independence"* could provide a thirty knot  
539 wind a\_\_\_\_\_ down the deck, and in my estimation that offset any advantage of using a wider  
540 deck and larger elevators, and the moderator stopped the conversation there. And he said, "Is  
541 there any doubt in any of your minds but what the *"Independence"* will be the night-operating  
542 carrier to join the Fleet?" There was no other response. That's how the *"Independence"* came  
543 about becoming the night operating carrier.

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006  
Cy Heinrich**

544

545 LH: Did you meet his dad on the "*Independence*"? Or did you know him before that?

546

547 CH: No, I knew him before that.

548

549 LH: Really? How?

550

551 CH: I thought that I had explained that we know that Bill was being treated on an experimental  
552 basis.

553

554 LH: How did you first meet him, though? In the Navy?

555

556 CH: Yes.

557

558 BP: When the squadron was assigned to the "*Independence*"? Is that the first time you met?

559 We'll just stop. We do not want to wear you out. So, we can just wrap it up, unless there are any  
560 stories you want to tell.

561

562 LH: He gets worn out pretty easily. Here is a picture of the squadron with the names. Your Dad  
563 is a handsome devil, right.

564 These are some articles...Saturday Evening Post.

565

566 BP: Here's your suit. Is that a handsome devil. So we have the Ice Follies to thank for that.

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006  
Cy Heinrich**

567

568 LH: “Indispensible Man,” you’ve seen that one.

569

570 CH: Turn back a bit. Do you have a copy of that [referring to the Wings article on Bill Phelps.]

571

572 BP: Mother had that framed, so we have a copy in his den.

573

574 CH: OK, I wanted to be sure you had a copy.

575

576 BPL Yes, And the grandkids. See, Marie-Page did not know Dad. He died about a month before

577 she was born, but our son, who is two years older, got acquainted with his Grandfather—played

578 around with him a little bit.. So we have that article on the wall, so they can learn about him..

579 Plus, Marie-Page has been listening to the histories of the other fellows in the squadron.

580

581 LH: So, you are getting to be an expert. Are you going to be a history major?

582

583 Marie-Page Phelps: I..maybe, but I think I will be an anthro major.

584

585 LH: Here is a recent reunion with a bunch of pictures in it. When was it? 1992?

586

587 CH: When we were carrying twenty four fighters and twelve torpedo planes, Bill was the leader

588 of the torpedo planes.

589

**CVLG (N) 41 Oral Histories – December 2006**  
**Cy Heinrich**

590 LH: I'm going to read you a couple more. This is from Polly Archer. "Polly is dictating this to  
591 me and, needless to say, I am not going fast enough. This incident has never gone from our  
592 thoughts and you have never been forgotten for saving his life. It was the night of October 20,  
593 1944. They had said they weren't going to fly – the weather was too bad. And they spotted a  
594 plane, so they were to send Red Taylor out, but his plane would not start. So they catapulted  
595 Polly and **Jowellson** and **CurJay** off. They flew right to the plane and found it was a PBV.  
596 They came back to the carrier and they said that waves were **forty-two (?)** feet high – this is  
597 what Dad translated that as. He made several passes and could not land. They had a new signal  
598 officer. They told him they were going to turn the ship around and he could land in the water. Cy  
599 was in sick bay, and Polly told them to bring him up and he could bring him in. As it turned out,  
600 his tail was gone so he hit his starboard rudder and turned into the bulkhead. But Cy brought him  
601 in safely. Polly celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> in October."

602 And then I was talking about the one where he said he had never waved me off. That was Bob  
603 Fergraus: "To a great LSO who never gave me a wave off."

604

605 BP: We are going to shut her down unless you have got something else to say. Is that all right?

606

607 CH: I appreciate your coming by here.

608

609 BP: Thank you for taking the time. We do not want to wear anybody out.