

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Al Kiracofe

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Interview in progress.

Interviewer: This is Bob Phelps. Today is June 3, 2006. I'm interviewing Al Kiracofe.

This interview is taking place in Jackson, Mississippi at the Edison Walthall Hotel. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Study, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the Preservation of Historical Information related to this site. And I ask Al to give us his name and address and then we'll turn off the machine to see if we've got this thing all set up.

Mr. Kiracofe: I'm Alfred Kiracofe. I was Yeoman 1st Class with the Squadron and I live in Bradenton, Florida, 808 53rd Avenue East, during the winter months and the summer months I live in South Haven, Michigan at 262 N. 74th St., South Haven, Michigan.

Interviewer: Great. Okay...how'd you get in the Navy?

Mr. Kiracofe: Well...the...I got a notice during the...in 1942 to report to the Draft Board and I thought, "Well, I don't want to go to the Army; I want to go to the Navy." I was always interested in flying and in the Navy and so I got married in August and enlisted in the Navy in October 22nd, 1944...no, 1942! Let's get back there farther...yeah! And I...I was really interested in the Navy, so I didn't want to go to the Army.

Interviewer: And now in terms of training you...you pick your own or did they...?

Mr. Kiracofe: No, they...they picked (unintelligible)...they sent me to Great Lakes in Chicago. The first night I arrived there...2:30 in the morning and I had hot dogs and slept on the floor. So I...and then they assigned me to the Yeoman School in Great Lakes Naval Training Station where I spent six weeks of nothing but typing and office work. And then they assigned me to the naval air base in Quonset Point, Rhode Island for...we drove...my wife and I drove and reported to duty in January of 1943.

Interviewer: At Quonset...you...your duties included what?

Mr. Kiracofe: My duties included...Yeoman work. I helped...I was assigned to CASU-22 which is a carrier aircraft service unit. And we Yeomen worked with Skipper...which was...I was assigned to Admiral...I can't think of his name now...but anyway, I helped set up squadrons that were going to sea. And they come in...the pilots come in for training at...they learned to fly at night. Because I remember real well my first squadron that I was assigned to as a Squadron Yeoman was Air Group...Air Group-41 with Turner Carl Gawa (spelling ?) as Captain. And on January 20th, we was to report to Admiral's office and form a squadron. And the Skipper says, "Turn the hat over backwards and now we have Air Group-41. You're the only enlisted man and I'm the only officer!" So these pilots all started reporting in...pilots and enlisted men all come...start reporting in from their various assignments.

Interviewer: Was the designation...41 at that time or is it...?

Mr. Kiracofe: It was the Air Group...4...no, no Air Group-41, yeah. Consisted of fighter pilots...I mean, yeah...fighter pilots, dive bombers and torpedo bombers...and the...so many ACI officers and so many enlisted men to report for duty.

Interviewer: So you had a template for what a air group was? Was there any particular rules for the number of the different types of aircraft?

Mr. Kiracofe: No, I...I...they wouldn't...didn't tell me any listed numbers to have, but then I think we got records...it was quite a few that come in. But the Skipper says, "These guys are gonna be...new. They've never...we don't know what a night fighter squadron will be like." But he says, "I'll make a...fighters...night fighters out of them." I remember him saying that real well. "We...I'll make night fighters out of them." So...

Interviewer: When did...as you're forming up the Squadron, would the senior officer show up first or is it pretty much...?

Mr. Kiracofe: Uh, the...the pilots showed up first. I think the pilots and then the enlisted men. The senior officers were assigned, I think, from different units...each one later on. If I remember...they...they come in...the Skipper was the only one that there...on the original deal. And then these officers come in...Executive Officer was Dudley...Dudley Adams. And the Gunnery Officer was Terry Barker who's here today.

Interviewer: Now would they have come in early and you'd of...(unintelligible)?

Mr. Kiracofe: I don't remember exactly when they come...they just come in at random.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Mr. Kiracofe: Because we...and Mr. Gaines (spelling ?), Jack Gaines, was the Administrative Officer. He was the one that took the...give the people their orders. And I had to type them up and accept each one of these pilots as they come from their different places...I think some from Florida; some from Texas...and the enlisted men come in a little later. But it...in getting the Squadron organized, it took, I think, a couple of months. But then they...we...we had our training duties assigned then and my job was to stay with the Skipper all the time wherever he wanted to go. So I had a pass to go to the chow line; I didn't have to stand in chow line or anything like that...but I was allowed to live off of the base.

Interviewer: Because you had your wife?

Mr. Kiracofe: 'Cause I had my wife there and so we lived off the base in Westerly, Rhode Island.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Kiracofe: And...and then the Charleston...the two...auxiliary bases is where the boys did their training. And of course each of them...Skipper set up their training program. One of the interesting experiences I remember real well was...the pilots...one of the pilots says, "If I can fly by night, I can drive by night." So how he went that night? The first thing he did, he hit a...hit a guard rail!

Interviewer: Was he a better flyer?

Mr. Kiracofe: He...he was a good flyer later on, I think. I'm not sure which one of the guys it was, but the...they...the Skipper made the remark several times, "I'll make

night fighter pilots out of all these men!” And he did! It...it was a wonderful Squadron when he went out.

Interviewer: And how long...if you were forming up the Squadron, how long would you stick with them before a new squadron would cycle in?

Mr. Kiracofe: I would be...with them about...I'd say, if I remember right...around three months and then they would assign me to organize the next squadron which would be...I remember organizing 106, 107 and 108. And then I was assigned back as a permanent Yeoman to Air Group-41. And when we...when they first initiated radar for night flying, the Skipper come to me one day and he says, “We're going to go out tonight in our GB Beechcraft and we're going to fly out over the Atlantic and there's a squadron that's going to find us by radar.” And so, off we went! And it wasn't long till...*zoom*...underneath us, a fighter plane went...just barely hit...or missed us! And the Skipper says, “He found us alright; he found us alright!” But then another time...or...it was...I...Caldwell...some of these people didn't care about for Caldwell, but he was a good Skipper; I...I liked him. And he was very interesting to work for. But then...the...another instance...at that...(unintelligible)...trouble...was one night there was five of the guys come in from...being...partying and the Skipper held his arm out and says, “I...they won't stop me because I am a.. an Officer.” And well they went through the gate and they...Marine sentry shot and killed the driver. And Skipper says, “I...I'm sorry!” But then I had to, as a Yeoman, send a letter of regret – *Your son was killed in the line of duty*, to his mother in Idaho. And

another instance I remember from the Squadron was one pilot...named Herbert Woods, Ensign Woods, come in and says, "I don't feel like flying tonight." The Skipper says, "You've got to go." And 30 minutes later we got a call that he had crashed and killed...was killed and the Skipper put his head down on the desk and (unintelligible) cried...just sobbed a little and he said, "We better go out and see." So we had to go out there and see and where...Woods...Woods had had vertigo and he...and he was killed. And so I had to send a letter to that...his parents in Springfield, Illinois. So...I remember those instances quite well. But I lived off the base and when the Squadron got ready to go to sea, my wife was pregnant and so they reassigned me to the Headquarters. And I...wish I could remember the Admiral's name...but I worked in the Headquarter's office in...in Quonset Point for three months and then they sent me to sea. I was by myself...a loner...you know what I mean. In other words, I didn't know a soul when I reported to the Air Group-10 on the USS Intrepid in Alameda, California.

Interviewer: Were you ever permanently assigned to this...this Squadron...41?

Mr. Kiracofe: Yes, I was assigned with Yeoman Don Master (spelling ?) and myself; we were both 1st Class Yeoman. And so Don went out to sea with the group and I was reassigned through another air group. But...I say we...it was a training unit in...through the winter months in Quonset Point at Charleston, Rhode Island and Westerly, Rhode Island; they were both auxiliary training stations. And of course the pilot probably told you what their duties were in the pilot...for being pilots in the air training. But I do know they trained on

Ranger some. But I don't know whether the Ranger was stationed off of...must have been stationed off of Quonset Point.

Interviewer: That...from your memory...setting up multiple air groups...squadrons...was there anything different about setting up the first (unintelligible)...?

Mr. Kiracofe: No, they always...

Interviewer: Same equipment?

Mr. Kiracofe: Same equipment and everything, but there always be a different Skipper and different crew, but then...as a Yeoman, I served the duties as a...as a Yeoman. Each place...I mean...for every squadron like that...it must have been a half a dozen squadrons went out of there during the period of time that I was there from January '43 to September '44. And all...all my jobs were setting up squadrons.

Interviewer: Yeah. When you went to the Intrepid, you picked it up in...in Alameda and then...?

Mr. Kiracofe: Picked it up in Alameda and I...one interesting story that they written in one of their squadron books. I was going across the United States, I heard someone in the break room about me (unintelligible)...and we was on a troop train and I said to him, I says, "What's your problem?" And he says, "I've been out to sea twice and this is the third time and I won't make it." That's the exact words he said. His name is Koneig, K-o-n-e-i-g...and he was the first one killed. He was killed on March 23rd. I can remember all these dates...well he was killed on March of 23rd when the plane started to take off the carrier and it wouldn't. And the storm was so great the carrier tipped over

like this and the plane slid off and went through the screws. So that...but I reported for duty at Alameda, California on the USS Intrepid and I said, "That's a big outfit with a whole lot of hay!"

Interviewer: How many...groups were on there?

Mr. Kiracofe: 5,000 groups...5,000 men on the (unintelligible) and I didn't know a soul!

Interviewer: How many air groups?

Mr. Kiracofe: Just the one air group, but we had a hundred planes...I...remember the planes real well, because when we got hit in April...we dumped all those planes overboard...a hundred of them!

Interviewer: Wow! Any engagements that you...?

Mr. Kiracofe: Oh yeah, I went through Okinawa engagement and that was on the...Okinawa engagement was April 1, 1945 and then we went back to Ulithi which was in...in the middle of Pacific. It was special base for R&R. That...after a battle, we would...we would...carrier would go back there and you could...could...it was time to rest. And that Ulithi was secret...was supposed to be a secret base that the Japs didn't know about. But one night we were in there...a Jap marine...a Jap miniature submarine made it in and put a torpedo into the USS Randolph...so I remember that real well. But then I was in the battle of Okinawa...and they...when they...also on April the 7th, we sunk the big Jap battleship – Yamato.

Interviewer: But before Okinawa, were there...was the Intrepid...it was...?

Mr. Kiracofe: It...regular...just sea battles, but that was the only invasion at...at that time that I can recall. But then we were very much a war...aware...that we were

going to be in the Okinawa invasion. So we were the support for Oki...for that invasion.

Interviewer: Any memories on the kamikaze....?

Mr. Kiracofe: Very much so, because I was up on the flight deck and three Jap kamikazes come straight out of the sun. It was 2:30 in the afternoon and the big USS Missouri was on the right side firing at it and they got two of them. And the third one went through the deck with two 500 pound bombs! Went through the flight deck and when they hit the (unintelligible) deck...steel...that's when the bombs exploded and blew up like this; we were on fire for two days...but then they had to cut off all the electric...all the ovens...kitchen...and we had cold sandwiches. And we weren't out of our clothes for two or three days, but we headed back for Pearl Harbor to get fixed up...to repair it, but we couldn't take off any planes 'cause they put a hole in the middle of the flight deck. So when they got to Pearl Harbor...they couldn't take care of us. So they said, "We'll just send you on to Alameda, California." So when I got to Alameda, California...when we got to Alameda, the Skipper says, "Get everybody two weeks leave and report back here." And so I did that...and I wrote out the leave papers and when I come back, my orders read, "You go to the US Naval Hospital in (unintelligible), California for medical treatment. So I had no idea when...so they...they told me my nerves was beyond...something. I don't know how they reported, but then I was there six weeks and I got an auto...I got a Medical Discharge from the U.S. Navy on July 22, 1945.

Interviewer: On the...the engagement over...near Okinawa, when the kamikaze came in...and you were on fire...the Intrepid was on fire for a couple of days...

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, it was on fire for a couple of...

Interviewer: Were you participating in the firefighting?

Mr. Kiracofe: No, no each guy had his own duties...each guy had his own duty. My duty was to get back to my office which was suspended from the flight deck and type out the orders or whatever the Skipper ordered. So I don't recall now...all I can remember one particular deal that he had me type a whole three pages...see we didn't use computers. We had electric type...we had the regular typewriter and after I got through, he looked at it and says, "I decided I want to put one more word in it." So I had to do that *all over again*...adverse weather...how well I remember each one of these things. He said he told about the weather conditions, see...and the flights back. See when these pilots come back every flight they...they would come up to the Ready Room and they would report what they...their duties...I mean what they saw and what happened. And I had to type it up for records...official records.

Interviewer: So in the course of the...the record keeping of just a typical day...in just regular operations...there'd be a log for...at the ship level and there'd be a log at the air group level?

Mr. Kiracofe: Every air group level, yes.

Interviewer: And then there'd be a...a report of each individual mission?

Mr. Kiracofe: Each individual pursuit, yeah. And I... 'course I never seen them after I'd type them up; I'd hand them to the Skipper which was Commander Lawrence...I mean...yes, at that time it was J. C. Lawrence...he later became an Admiral. But then he was our Skipper at the Air Group-10.

Interviewer: Fighter pilots?

Mr. Kiracofe: Well no, he was the Air Group-10 Skipper...same as Caldwell was the Air Group-41 Skipper. See, I have trouble getting the two...keeping them straight because I never went...I went back to two reunions with Air Group-10, but I liked Air Group-41 because I was...knew the boys for two years...over...almost two years and so that's...I've been to everyone of their reunions but one. I been to 27 reunions...this group has...I've only missed one and that's because I was in transaction of buying a new home and I had to be there in Ohio when that happened.

Interviewer: The...with all that...all those reports, are you aware where...where those reports have gone? Are they part of "Classified" or "Security"...?

Mr. Kiracofe: We have a few of them and...(unintelligible) "Confidential." And they...like this War Diary here, I remember that War Diary...I just...when we commissioned our squadron...and we started keeping a...what they call a War Diary and everything was "Confidential" from there on. And how I got a hold of them after it, I don't remember, but I...when they became *decommissioned*...when I come out of Hawaii...going from Hawaii to California, I had to type up a lots of lots of reports.

Interviewer: Now would the Administrative Officer do the text of the War Diary?

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, yes. His name (unintelligible) at that time, Jack Beams (spelling ?)...(unintelligible) War Diary, oh, for 79. And see I wasn't at sea with 79; I've got to keep that straight. I was at sea with Air Group-10. And Air Group-41 consisted of VFN-9...I mean 79 and then Torpedo Bomber 79 and...the SBDs, the Dive Bombers.

Interviewer: Now when you...going back to Quonset...when you formed up the Squadron, would it have been VFN-79?

Mr. Kiracofe: It...that was the fighter deal. (unintelligible). Yeah, that's for damn for sure.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Kiracofe: And then VT was...it was Torpedo Bombers.

Interviewer: So it would have be VF...?

Mr. Kiracofe: VF and the VT and the 79 and the VB was Bombers. And...and then that consisted of Air Group-41. Now that was...I don't remember whether that was assigned as Air Group-41 in Quonset Point or was it assigned when we got to Fleet. All I know that the fleet was...we were Task Force 58-?. And Halsey was our Skipper...I mean...flag.

Interviewer: I was just looking...I think the...

Mr. Kiracofe: Once again...I...

Interviewer: Yeah, August 25th ...looks like August 25th the...the...

Mr. Kiracofe: From (unintelligible)...I was come...permission to...(unintelligible) Pacific Ocean.

Interviewer: So it looks like we were VFN-79, VTN-79, from when you formed in January of '44 until August of '44 when...

Mr. Kiracofe: When they were sent to sea, I think, they made them Air Group...different.

Interviewer: Okay. Does that sound right?

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, that sounds right. See, like I said again, I wasn't with Air Group-10 when they trained, so I really don't know where they trained. All I know was that I was to be the Senior Yeoman when...on the aircraft carrier at Alameda. When I got there my duties read, "Report as a Chief Yeoman,"...I mean as a Senior Yeoman of Air Group-4...I mean Air Group-10. And so we were sent to Hawaii and from Hawaii we was sent out (unintelligible) air carrier...groups were sent on what they call a *shakedown cruise*. That was when they brought...down below Hawaii and test their guns; test everything was tested before they went into combat. And that's when we went from Hawaii to the combat zone it usually took a week or so. But coming from the United States to Hawaii, we never went in a straight line...we always zig-zag at 22 knots so no submarine could follow us. And I never thought about submarines in those days...I never thought about it till I learned later, you know, that we were probably surrounded with Japanese submarines most all the time and didn't know it. But the carrier Intrepid was listed as the most hit carrier in the Navy.

Interviewer: Have you visited it in New York?

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, I visited it a couple of times in New York. I have a lifetime pass as a crewman on there...to visit it anytime.

Interviewer: Back to the kamikaze attack...you said it...the vessel burned for a couple of days and you had to offload...or just toss overboard all the aircraft.

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, to get up to speed, we had to toss over the...all planes off of the flight deck because they could not be flown off. So the crew that we had...we lost eight men and that...in that attack. And they had the burial at sea; I've got to witness a burial at sea which I'd heard a lot about. We buried eight men at sea. And the...like I say...the firefighting crew put them out pretty well...pretty, pretty quick, but then the smoke...and...but automatically had to turn and go...get out of the area...that's where I feel like...as I look back the Japs made a lot of mistakes by not following up when they damaged the carriers. But the...they sank one of two of our ships and they (unintelligible)...hit and burned, but I forget the date on that...'cause I wasn't (unintelligible).

Interviewer: You were following the Yeoman on the...on Group 10 on the Intrepid and the (unintelligible) airplanes...how were the pilots handled after that? Were they transferred (unintelligible)...?

Mr. Kiracofe: No, I don't know what happened. See, I wouldn't hear any of that stuff...where they was transferred because we come in...when we come into Alameda, California, the naval air station there took over the records and everything.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Kiracofe: The carrier...because the carrier...I don't know how long it was stationed there but then, like I say, when I come back...the...my orders read to report to (unintelligible) hospital.

Interviewer: But I'm just trying to figure out...did the pilots sail after the ship was damaged...the Intrepid was damaged? Everybody stayed on board?

Mr. Kiracofe: Everybody stayed on board, yeah. They couldn't fly out because they put a big hole...in mid-ship...put the big hole. And...I...then also the...there was three elevators...forward elevators...and...and the portside elevator...and the aft elevator...and they were all...knocked off...out of action. So the planes just had to stay where they...where...were. And those pilots could not do anything and...but then all I had to do then was just take...type up the records as we went back home.

Interviewer: When you were on the...board the Intrepid, did you run into the...the Independence or any (unintelligible)?

Mr. Kiracofe: You know I didn't realize...until later...now...that they were with us in that air group. 'Cause see, we didn't know who all was there...all I do know...that the Missouri was on one side and I believe it was the...the battleship New York was on the other side. And then we had so many destroyers and so many tin cans, as we called them. But we did go through two typhoons.

Interviewer: So you were out there in...in December and January?

Mr. Kiracofe: From...Jan...let's see...January, February, March and April. I reported for duty on the West Coast in January...and then we sailed out immediately and we got back in the...in April or May...let's see...because I got my Medical Discharge from the Navy in July...before the war was over. So...

Interviewer: What was that...what was the recreation in Ulithi like?

Mr. Kiracofe: That...that was nice. It was...and I like to relate the story that when I was...went ashore...the...I was walking along and then somebody hollered, "Hi Al!" And I found out it was a kid from my hometown...was stationed there...on that island. And then another thing that I recall at the island there...we had ferries to take your around to different ships you could visit. And I was afraid to get on that ferry...afraid I wouldn't find my particular ship and to come back! Because, if you weren't there...they go! They don't wait on nobody! But I do recall real well that the Randolph got hit that night in the fantail by Japanese miniature sub...torpedo. But really the recreation on...it was a nice recreation base!

Interviewer: So you...you got carried over to the beach?

Mr. Kiracofe: To the beach, yeah...but...it...at Ulithi. But it was supposed to be a secret base...and I think I got letter...see I've got all that stuff in my own log books at home that I don't...haven't turned into sc...I mean it's my own books...and I've got a map of the carrier...the cruise we went on and where it went and all that. But that was every...

Interviewer: (unintelligible)...Did you spend much time at Pearl Harbor or not?

Mr. Kiracofe: Not too much time at Pearl, because when we pulled in...when we pulled in we weren't allowed to go ashore because they said there's too many base sails...servicemen on Pearl Harbor at that time. So we had to stay on ship and then we went out on and RC...what they call a shakedown cruise. But I did find out that the end of Independence was in the Okinawa...I think in the

Okinawa invasion, so they...my Squadron...Air Group-10 would have been there...uh...Air Group-41. (unintelligible)

Interviewer: Now this is the...campaign ribbons for the Air Group? So starting in September through January...I think that's when they headed back to Pearl...so that's about right.

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah.

Interviewer: They got the same...(unintelligible) two typhoons you got?

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, uh-huh. Jack Gaines was my Lieutenant Executive Officer...my Administrative Officer was Jack Gaines. And I can tell you an interesting story on Jack Gaines. He wrote me later and said...what was it...(unintelligible) was walking up a ladder...what we called a ladder and the 5 inch guns went off...they would knock you off of it, and he wanted...this executive officer wanted me to sign a slip...and send it to the Navy that he was on a ladder and got knocked off, and I says, "I will not do that because I did not see you do that." So I never heard from him again. But I thought...if I remember right, it was Jack Gaines. But...see, too many officers to remember! But Jack Gaines...well I do know that he was...see he...I made this list up.

Interviewer: Good typing...no...no mistakes at all!

Mr. Kiracofe: No, you weren't allowed to make mistakes...they never expect you to make mistakes!

Interviewer: How many words could you type?

Mr. Kiracofe: (unintelligible)...see I...would like to find that out, but I did know I didn't have take any spelling because by the middle of the year, I had my...100% perfect in spelling and they said, "You don't need to worry about the rest of the course, because your typing deal is 100%."

Interviewer: Well, the military likes to do qualifications. What were the qualifications a Yeoman had to...had to complete in order to...?

Mr. Kiracofe: Well we had to...main thing was typing and filing. That's what we...are...possibilities...but we had to know where...when that Skipper wanted something, we got to know where it is and get it for him! And there's...when we were at sea...the file cabinets (unintelligible)...back and forth, back and forth. And...my office is suspended from the flight deck and twice during the flights...a plane would come in...see, when they would land, the landing hook would catch the cables...and twice it tipped the plane down and the cable...and the propellers kept...come through my ceiling! You see, I slept in the...in my office...and they...I didn't have a bunk downstairs at all...down...I stayed in my office 24 hours a day.

Interviewer: That was to keep you close to the Skipper?

Mr. Kiracofe: Keep me close to the Skipper, yeah. Yep, but then...one particular day...in Quonset Point I drove my car into the base and when I reported to duty the Skipper said, "We're going to Floyd Bennett Field for two weeks." I said, "Well, I'll go to find my wife." And he says, "No, you won't notify your wife, you don't notify your wife." So my car sat there for two weeks and my wife had no idea where I was at. We flew to Floyd Bennett Field in New

York for...for some kind of training deal. All I know is I had to...but every time he...he issued orders, I would type them out. And I had a very interesting experience on one of them. I just got back from leave; I had a leave of two weeks. And when I got back, a couple days later, Skipper says, "We decided the crew could have another lea...have a leave...so you write up orders for all the crew men. And I wasn't...I wasn't a crew man...no. I got home and there was a telegram says, "Report back to the base immediately. You're...consider yourself...W...AWOL." So I had to get back on the plane...head back from...to New York...report to Rhode Island. I said, "Hey, you told me to write everybody a leave." He says, "But that doesn't include you." But anyway, I've had a lot of interesting experiences. I always said that...never wanted to do it again, but I appreciate the opportunity for what I had...because I...see, I learned to fly when I was 14 years old, so that...aviation was my liking, but I did know that I did not want to go to the Army.

Interviewer: For those of us living in a modern era with computers and Xerox machines and all that stuff in our homes...how many copies of each of these items would you make on a routine basis? You use carbon paper?

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, we used carbon paper, and I tried to remember...it probably would be around three copies.

Interviewer: What...one for the unit...one for the...?

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, one for file, one for...see, a lot of this stuff had to go to Flag Office and that was Admiral Mitscher, I believe it was at that time - either Halsey or

Mitscher. But anyway, all our reports had to go through the Skipper and he would send a copy to his back office and we'd keep one in our files.

Interviewer: No copy machines?

Mr. Kiracofe: No, no copy machines! Just carbon paper. And no electric typewriters...no...(unintelligible).

Interviewer: What was the...what was the brand (unintelligible)?

Mr. Kiracofe: A...Royal. The reason I remember it real well...is about three years ago...see I'm a garage sale person. Three years ago, I run on to a U.S. Royal typewriter...just exactly like the one that I had at the...on the ship. And so I bought that...cleaned it up...to it to an antique shop...got \$25 for it! I paid a \$1 for it! But anyway, we had the antique B-S-D-K-L-;-space. I think I have a pretty good memory for an 88 year old!

Interviewer: Right!

Mr. Kiracofe: But I...when I met Barker...you know Barker told me then that he was a Yeoman when I reported to Air Group...to the Intrepid...and I didn't remember that, 'course everybody that came in and out...I never (unintelligible), but I probably typed up his orders. He said he remembers me as a Yeoman.

Interviewer: Typed up his...right there?

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, but see that was when you reported to...

Interviewer: (unintelligible)

Mr. Kiracofe: (unintelligible) squadron, yeah.

Interviewer: (unintelligible)

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, class. And I remember real well on the side of his airplane...J.T. Barker, U.S. Navy. And on the side of his plane...and I don't know why...but that's...you see these...some of those memories just stick there. I...I wanted to ask him about that when I see him.

Interviewer: What was the tail on the Intrepid? How was the tail painted?

Mr. Kiracofe: That I can't recall.

Interviewer: Wasn't there a distinctive...?

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah, each of...that was supposed to...tails were all painted different for the different squadrons. And the Signal Officers usually knew that...they R.C...uh, Signal men. But then another incident I remember real well was the Flagman. He'd always stand out there and raise a wing up this or that way there...and that was...let's see...what'd we call his name...he just turned 90 years old.

Interviewer: Sy...the one on?

Mr. Kiracofe: Sy Henrick (spelling ?)...and anyway, the Flagman...the...they always...they didn't have visual...I mean they are visual... Flagmen but they nod if they on the carriers, they all (unintelligible) by lights.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything...going back to Quonset during training...since it was mostly land based...was there a Flight Officer on the runway?

Mr. Kiracofe: The Skipper would give them instructions of what you're supposed to do and then that's what they carried out. Maybe one day they would fly to Hyannis Port, Massachusetts. Maybe one time they'd fly to Floyd Bennett or...but they...they all...each of...of course we had a lot of ice and snow in Rhode

Island during that time in the winter months. So...most all I can say is, the Skipper gave the orders and I typed them up.

Interviewer: That's a succinct job description!

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah.

Interviewer: Any comments on any of these folks as characters or...?

Mr. Kiracofe: Well, no...not...they were all good pilots...they had to be, too. As I said, Caldwell made that statement, "I'll make top pilots out of them." And I think that's why some of them today...just don't still don't dislike...still dislike (unintelligible) Caldwell, because he was, very, very strict. And he was a good Commander. And if I remember right, he set a speed records across the United States...am I right? And at 325 miles an hour. But one time from Los Angeles to Cleveland Air Races...was...I can remember, I went to that air races to see that plane come in from California...and it was Lieutenant...it was Lieutenant Caldwell. But anyway I understand he went on up to be an Admiral. So anyway my duties at Group 41 will always...remember.

Interviewer: Well, you've left some great records for us...(unintelligible).

Mr. Kiracofe: Thank you. I think as you notice...

Interviewer: No errors, right?

Mr. Kiracofe: But you notice, we had to put our name...initial up...I was wonder if there are any of them in here that...had my initials at the top. But see, at Quonset Point, we had two Yeomen. (unintelligible) for the different things...we had two Yeomen and Don Master was DM and I was AK. But then...Caldwell...but see, I remember Barker...that's where I remember was

over there and...all these guys here, I signed them in when they come in...these...these young pilots when they come in they would...Skipper says, "I'll make pilots out of them!" They were all green...oh yeah, they would make a remark about radar...they'd make a remark, "How can we fly at night?!" And also on...on...also on what we were afraid to walk in front of the radar bulb...hanging on the right wing...that's when they were testing them because we didn't know whether...what that radar bulb...sent out waves or (unintelligible).

Interviewer: Well when the pilots came in to be assigned to this new squadron, did they ask you questions about what they were supposed to be doing?

Mr. Kiracofe: No, but then...when they were sitting in the Ready room, the Skipper says, "I will tell you what you do. We're going to fly at night and you're going to land on a carrier at night...and by radar." This thing here was (unintelligible)...Barker, did you have an airplane that had a Lieutenant...Barker...J.T. Barker...U.S. Navy on the side? That's where...I don't remember where it was, but then that's the reason I remember Terry Barker and he said he reported.

Another voice: I don't recall one...it may have been, but I I don't think so.

Mr. Kiracofe: You had the...you carried J.T. Barker on the side...it was a plate...a name plate on...on...must have been Rhode Island.

Another voice: Well in all the years, I never run into another Barker in the Navy.

Interviewer: Well, yeah...any other thoughts you want to put on the tape for the Museum?

Mr. Kiracofe: No, other than this is my favorite Squadron and I've been to every one of their reunions but one and this was the 28th reunion. And I'm looking forward to going to the next one.

Interviewer: Well, we certainly thank you for taking the time. You know you have the distinction of having...being one of the few Yeomen that's checked in Captain Barker twice.

Mr. Kiracofe: Yeah.

Interviewer: Thank you!

(End of Interview; end of tape 1, side 1)

FINAL copy
CD – #1857– Al Kiracofe
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