

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Nimitz Education and Research Center*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Charles Peter Herlin**

Date of Interview: February 15, 2016

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## **Fredericksburg, Texas**

### **Interview with Mr. Charles Peter Herlin**

Interview in progress.

Mike Zambrano: This is February the 15th, 2016, and I'm sitting here with Mr. Charles Peter Herlin at his home in Austin, Texas. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. And good morning, sir!

Mr. Herlin: Good morning!

Mike Zambrano: Well, I will start with where and when you were born?

Mr. Herlin: El Paso, Texas.

Mike Zambrano: El Paso! Okay.

Mr. Herlin: November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1924.

Mike Zambrano: 1924. Uhm, can...can you tell me what your parents' names were?

Mr. Herlin: Uh, George Washington Herlin, and...and Annette Montblanc (sp?).

Mike Zambrano: Oh, a French name!

Mr. Herlin: Well, it's part Belgian and French German; more German than...than French.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: And my father was Swedish.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, okay.

Mr. Herlin: They...they... you know, his fath...his father was...came over from Stockholm with his wife and my father was born in Chicago.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, what...what did your father do for a living?

Mr. Herlin: He was an Engineer in El Paso, and he sold heating and design; he designed heating systems and ventilation systems for...for buildings, hotels, schools...all over New Mexico, Arizona and west Texas.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay, and I assume your mother was a...was a home...uh, housekeeper or...?

Mr. Herlin: Yes, (unintelligible), we had...they had three children.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. And where you in that; are you in middle...?

Mr. Herlin: I'm the...youngest.

Mike Zambrano: Youngest?

Mr. Herlin: My...my brother was thirteen years older and my sister was nine years older; they're both dead.

Mike Zambrano: Oh really?! Well, that's kind of a big gap between...

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, very...I was unexpected (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: Oh, (chuckles). Uhm, since you lived during the Depression, how does that affect your family?

Mr. Herlin: Well, really...I...it didn't affect me at all. My father worked for the CCC and my mother run his business for him while he was working. And I...we always had a meal. We lived just about where we normally

lived...everything and...it was pretty good. I had no problems with it.

Yeah, I didn't even know it was a depression to be perfectly frank.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. And your father...worked through it?

Mr. Herlin: No, he...he was a...an officer in the CCC; he...in construction and design work and he...he was a graduate architect...from Illinois. Oh, I forgot what...(unintelligible) Institute I think it was. And...and he found out he could make money being an architect, so he found out he could sell equipment, and design equipment and sell it...and...to the architects...they specified for him and they'd buy it and that's the way he made a living.

Mike Zambrano: Interesting.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, let's see, uh...

Mr. Herlin: He was a registered Engineer, Professional Engineer and my brother was a registered Professional Engineer, too.

Mike Zambrano: You become an Engineer later you told me, right?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, I was...a...one...a Professional also.

Mike Zambrano: What about your...your other sibling?

Mr. Herlin: She...she married an Account in Austin; he ended up President of Capitol National Bank.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Herlin: But...did quite well.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, do you recall where you were when World War II broke out?

Mr. Herlin: I sure do! I was in El Paso up on a park sanding sandlot football, and I heard about it.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember what the general reaction of some folks were? I mean...

Mr. Herlin: We all wanted to know where Pearl Harbor was.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Herlin: (Chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: That one always comes up (laughter).

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, we didn't react too much to it; that was in '41.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, you would have been about seventeen, I guess?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, I...I just turned seventeen...in...in November.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Herlin: And I graduated from college, uh, high school in February of '42.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. And when did you think about going into the service?

Mr. Herlin: Well, I went to college for a semester in the summer of '42, and I worked one summer (unintelligible) and I just got...so...restless. I tried to go back to school, and I couldn't do it. I was flunking because I...the war was bothering me and I wanted to get in it, so I enlisted.

Mike Zambrano: I'm curious, but...did you already know what your major was going to be in college?

Mr. Herlin: No, I knew it was going to be engineering; I didn't know what kind.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: But...that's all I knew.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, what...what college did you go to?

Mr. Herlin: New Mexico A&M; it's New Mexico State now.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, and you...you returned to that later...

Mr. Herlin: On the GI Bill, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...to get your degree?

Mr. Herlin: Originally, I went to the College of Mines in El Paso...my first semester.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Herlin: Its' now...it's now UTEP.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, it's UTEP now?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, it used to be College of Mines.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay! That's, I guess, why their symbol is that little...that pick.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Alright, now I get it. Alright, so...uhm, so you decided to enlist and you chose the Navy?

Mr. Herlin: Right.

Mike Zambrano: Why the Navy?

Mr. Herlin: Because I didn't...I've been around the desert so much and it...I didn't like...the idea of sleeping in a tent on the ground in a desert or in the mud; I wanted to have a bunk and I wanted to be more comfortable. And...and I liked the water better than I did the...desert.

Mike Zambrano: And...I'm curious, but you ever had a chance to go to the beach or any place where there was a huge body of water?

Mr. Herlin: No, no. No, I worked on a lake, the LPV (sp?) Dam, in the summer of '41 and I really enjoyed that. I'd handle boats and...and worked with people in the boating area.

Mike Zambrano: So, where did you go to enlist?

Mr. Herlin: Well, you had to sign up in El Paso; I mean, you...you enlisted in El Paso, but you couldn't get sworn in until you went to Santa Fe; why I don't know. But we had to go...my folks drove me up to Santa Fe, and I was sworn in and then I caught a train to San Diego.

Mike Zambrano: How was that train ride?

Mr. Herlin: I don't remember.

Mike Zambrano: So, when you get to San Diego, what do you do there?

Mr. Herlin: Well, I went to a barracks and they put to bed, but the next morning they woke us up at four in the morning and we went out and had breakfast and exercised for a little bit and then...essentially took...a test. We were taking a test for, oh, a couple of hours and then we did more exercises and got our uniform and shots and that was about it.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm! Uh, is it safe to say this is the beginning of your basic training? Or were they just assessing you pretty much?

Mr. Herlin: Well, they did...they assessed us because I was only in boot camp...about two weeks.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, they sent me up to Balboa for a week or so and then they assigned me to Radio School. And I went to this...North Island in San Diego.

Mike Zambrano: You said Balboa?

Mr. Herlin: Uh, Balboa Hos...uh, up at the park; that's where the...and I remember it was on a boat; I never had an oar (unintelligible); never had a fight; never had a weapon; I never had any of that. They just...I don't know what they did. I don't remember much of anything except I went...end up in San...at the Radio School at the North Island.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, Radio School in North Island. (Pause)

Mr. Herlin: They needed Radiomen...

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Herlin: ...Aviation Radiomen badly. They were losing them pretty bad in the Pacific. Uh, President Bush was flying the same plane; he lost his crew.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, was that the Avenger?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah!

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: I'm sorry, when you say Balboa Park, is this...is this...up in...at North Island?

Mr. Herlin: No, it's off the island; it's a big park, and there a hospital there, and, oh, that's about all I remember.

Mike Zambrano: You just...around the San Diego area?

Mr. Herlin: Oh yeah, I was flying in San Diego.

Mike Zambrano: And what...was it that you did there again?

Mr. Herlin: I don't remember.



Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: I didn't do much of anything.

Mike Zambrano: Hum! Okay, so...you go to Radio School at North Island, and...and what exactly did they teach you at Radio School?

Mr. Herlin: Uh, I sat in front of a typewriter with a code, earphones and...learned code, CW code; learned Semaphore; learned Blinker; spent eight hours a day doing that. Uh, and then...oh, we...had...lived in a barracks and the Marines flew at night and the Navy flew in the day time right over our...barracks and it was noisy. And uh, oh, that was about it.

Mike Zambrano: And how long were you at the Radio School?

Mr. Herlin: Well, that's interesting; I started in Radio School on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, so in about...middle of November I got a stomach ache and I went to the sick bay and they sent me to the hospital and I had my appendix taken out. And I went to the Balboa Hospital where I was in there for nineteen days. When you come out of the hospital for anything, you have to be able to run an obstacle course, so that's why I was in there for nineteen days. And then when I got out, I was very fortunate in that the class I was in...had already graduated and they went to the Pacific and had a very high mortality rate. And I was delayed to another class and they moved that class to Norman, Oklahoma, uh, Norman, Tennessee just out of Memphis and that was when they just...streets weren't even paved; it was mud. And we went to finish our Radio School in Mem...near Memphis...Norman; I think it was Norman.

Mike Zambrano: Norman, Oklahoma?

Mr. Herlin: No, it was...no, in...in...near Memphis; right next to Memphis, City of Memphis. And we'd go on liberty in...Memphis for liberty.

Mike Zambrano: So...

Mr. Herlin: It's a suburb of Memphis now, I guess.

Mike Zambrano: But it's in...it's in Tennessee?

Mr. Herlin: No...yeah, it's Memphis, Tennessee.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: And then, oh, for some reason I'd gotten a "first alternate appointment" to Annapolis and I had to take a test. Well, I'd been out of high school for a year, year and a half and...they wouldn't let me have any time off to study, so I had to study at night...trying to figure it out, and obviously I flunked the test. And...the guy who won it was in the Air Force and they sent him off to school and he went to college preparing for it, and he won it, of course. Anyway, I didn't get it. And then...then...after Radio School, we went to Hollywood, Florida for gunnery and I learned to shoot a fifty caliber in a turret and a thirty caliber...and skeet shot; we shot skeet. And then from there we went to Fort Lauderdale for Operational Training where we flew with a...a...making runs, torpedo runs, and bombing runs and things like in a...in the Avenger.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, so at Fort Lauderdale...

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...is that your first experience in the Avenger?

Mr. Herlin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: Is that your first experience in the Avenger?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, yeah well, we...I think we flew about thirty or forty hours there, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: And...and Avengers have what...three crew members in them, right?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, there was...what they called a Gunner; he had a turret and a Radioman had...quite a bit of room, and then the Pilot...that was all, three people.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Just to back up a little bit, where did you take Gunnery School at?

Mr. Herlin: At Hollywood, Florida.

Mike Zambrano: Hollywood, Florida; okay.

Mr. Herlin: And we stayed in a little boy's school. And then in Fort Lauderdale, I don't know where we stayed, but the air...the airfield was what...was the...what now is a big airport in Fort Lauderdale.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, you know, a lot of those airfields either become...like medium-size airfields or small airfields.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it's interesting; I guess since they're already built, I mean...they didn't want them going to waste...

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...the government. Uhm, and just to be clear...at Memphis, Tennessee that's where you completed your Radio School?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Alright so, you're...you get your Operational Training there at Fort Lauderdale?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Where do you go from there?

Mr. Herlin: Well, we were assigned squadrons. Uh, and I was assigned to one on the east coast and a friend of mine was assigned to one on the west coast, and I wanted to go to the Pacific badly and he wanted to go to the Atlantic, so we switched. And I went to Seattle and he went to the east coast somewhere. And I went to Seattle, and...and it was in a...what they call a composite squadron.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay; I've heard of those.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, and that's where it was just a fighter and a...and a...Avenger; there was twenty-one planes; it was an escort-carrier. And from...from there, we went down to California and we...learned more glide bombing on the Salton Sea. And then we got our ship, the [USS] Kadashan Bay, and we sailed down to...to Panama.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember about what year this is; I figure it's '43?

Mr. Herlin: '43.

Mike Zambrano: You're not a plank owner of the ship, right?

Mr. Herlin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: You're not a plank owner of the ship, are you?

Mr. Herlin: No, I...don't think so, no.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: No.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, '43...

Mr. Herlin: Now I think that was...uh, at the end of '42 or the beginning of '43...

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: ...'cause I think I went in the squadron in the first part of '43.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember what the squadron number was?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, VC-12.

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible),...squadron...VC-12.

Mr. Herlin: It's...VC is...composite squadron.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Uhm, so you get aboard this carrier and how...what's it like taking off and landing? I mean, it's...it's not land, you know, it's some narrow straight.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, it's...it's a surprise; they launch you on a catapult. Yeah, is...you...you go the ninety feet, ninety miles an hour in about ninety feet and you're really pushed back. And when we...where we were sitting, we were on a bench...just like...it was just a bench and we had a...a desk...sort of a counter in front and we'd hold on, and you'd...you'd never know...when it was going to go...because you...you had to...you never knew and you...you hold and hold and then...you relax, and the moment you relax...*Bang!*...you go! And it throws you back.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, and the landing was...just the reverse. As you came in...uh, you hit the deck and you hit the arresting gear, and it...stopped you essentially right there. And so you were thrown backwards.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! I...I'm curious, but let's say that...your plane ran into enemy planes, what...what would you do if the...if the shooting started?

Mr. Herlin: Well, if...if you were in Atl...in the Pacific, we had a little thirty-caliber machine gun at the bottom, and as the plane made a...a...anyone coming behind and trying to attack the plane and from under...we...we had a gun to shoot them down.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Herlin: On the...on the Atlantic side...since we were after submarines, we had a camera there so that if we made a...a bombing run on a...a submarine, the camera would show the effect of the bomb.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Herlin: So, we did...I never had any...any weapon...uh, it's...anyway, going down to Panama a...an interesting part here...uh, we made a...a mock attack on a...on the Panama Canal.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Herlin: And...and we landed at the Army air base and we took off again and went back to the ship, and my Pilot...uh, those...I don't know what

happened to him, but he took nine wave-offs before he could get down.  
He...approached that ship nine times before he could land.

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Herlin: And when we got off the plane, he said, "I quit," and he quit flying.

Mike Zambrano: Nine times is a lot.

Mr. Herlin: And...that's a lot.

Mike Zambrano: I guess he just didn't feel he could do it?

Mr. Herlin: (Laughter), it wasn't...he just could...he just was...was froze; he had frozen. And anyway, I got a new Pilot, an Ensign, and he was a darned good Pilot, and I flew with him the whole time and he ended up as a Captain in the Navy. Uh, maybe he was...ready...he died about two years ago, three years ago.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember his name?

Mr. Herlin: Uh, Lawr...uh, Larry Baumgardel...B-a-u-m-g-a-r-d-e-l, I think it is.

Mike Zambrano: Buaumgard...?

Mr. Herlin: Baumgardel....Baumgardel.

Mike Zambrano: Baum...gar...del. Uhm, now you weren't on the Kadashan Bay very long?

Mr. Herlin: No, then we went up to...uh, Norfolk, and that was off...that...that...we...didn't make really any patrols on the Kadashan Bay; we were still pretty dumb all of us. The Pilot that...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Herlin: ...the Skipper and the...crewmen, they were (unintelligible); we were just learning. We flew but we didn't really have any...effort to...hit any submarines.

Mike Zambrano: Right, it was just a lot of practice and repetition and getting used to take-offs and landings?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, and we stayed in Puerto Rico a day or so and...and went up to Norfolk.

Mike Zambrano: Puerto Rico.

Mr. Herlin: And then that's when...we started training more because the Germans were very, very sharp. And...uh, what we'd do on a plane to try get them...they would counter and they'd do something else, so we'd have to go back and train, uh, to...to...offset that...what they did. So, we were one of the first squadrons, I think, to fly at night. And the first thing that we...the idea was...was to...if we stayed up all night with our radar going, the ship...submarines would...detect the submarine signal and would stay under, and if you under water the battery would run out. So, they decided we'd fly...all night; we flew for ten hours. And the Pilot is sitting there with...all he had was a stick and he was...he was all by himself up there flying for ten hours and the rest of us were...were guiding and watching over the...uh, submarine...well, radar...radar...watching for...well, we had some of the original radar, and...and then after that we learned to fly off the ship at night, so we'd fly at night. And...and then we had searchlights, big searchlights we'd



fly at night, and we would pick up a signal and just home in on it and we'd close enough...the Pilot would...turn on us...the Gunner would...would run a searchlight and turn it on and the Pilot would see this ship and be able to...he'd a visual and land on them...could drop a bomb.

Mike Zambrano: With depth charges?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, well, they...they had bombs that were not depth charges exactly; they did sink, but they...they homed in on the noise. So, they would home in on any noise. If...if the bomb went close to a submarine and a submarine was making noise, it would, you know, hit him.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, you mentioned that you...you get to the USS Card before the...this big...

Mr. Herlin: Battle.

Mike Zambrano: ...this big battle.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, they got a citation for it.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, okay, now...now I know what period of time we're in here. Yeah, it involved...they had like twelve contacts in five hours and they sunk...it was a destroyer sunk during that action, right?

Mr. Herlin: I don't know. Uh, a lot of...of planes were hit, yeah. Why, you have that written down?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I...I found...it was some...some wolfpack...orca...

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, big wolfpack...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Herlin: ...off North Africa, I think.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it sounded like a pretty big action.

Mr. Herlin: It was; very, very severe. And that ship got a citation for that. I went...I got on it after that.

Mike Zambrano: You know, uhm, let's see, what was...the first time that your...your squadron actually sinks a sub?

Mr. Herlin: We never sunk one.

Mike Zambrano: You never sunk one?

Mr. Herlin: No, we never saw any.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, after all that time?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah. Now, the...uh, of course, the carrier would be escorted by destroyer escorts, and they were able to...find one and sink it and...and got the crew off it.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Herlin: So, the destroyers got one, but we...we never found one.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, I do remember hearing about that or reading about it; they actually sink one of the subs and they get like thirty prisoners from that.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, we took them into Boston and we were unloading them and...our...we came...well, before we went on liberty they said, "Do not say anything about what we did...that...don't say anything." And the moment we went into a bar, they said, "Oh, you're off the ship that had the German prisoners!"

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Herlin: So, so I...

Mike Zambrano: So much for lose lips sinking ships (laughter!) Oh! Yeah, I'd read about that; it's always kind of strange, you know, capturing Germans out of a submarine. I guess they must have surfaced?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah; it was...you know...

Mike Zambrano: Did you see any of that when the...when the sub actually surfaces?

Mr. Herlin: Uh, I'm not sure I did or not. I been...I may be fine at the time, I don't know. So,...one interesting thing that I...I'd like to mention that my Pilot remembers very def...definitely. Like I say, we were flying at night and I'd use the radar...to find a signal, and I found a signal and so we started homing in on it making a bombing run, and...coming in very close, and turned on the searchlight, and the moment the searchlight on...the Pilot went on contact; he could see, and it was one of our destroyers; it was out of position. So, we came close to sinking a destroyer!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Herlin: Or hitting the destroyer anyway. And he remembers that. I...I wrote him a letter once...

Mike Zambrano: I...that would be a pretty big target.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, well, that's maybe the same size as a...as a submarine on a blip, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Now how many hours would you fly...a night; did you say...?

Mr. Herlin: We'd fly about three to four hours at a time.

Mike Zambrano: Three to four, okay.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Is that because...after awhile you...you know, mentally you couldn't keep all the...keep so alert or what?

Mr. Herlin: No, really the...I think...I don't know really, but...but we were limited in fuel on that ship...on a plane; I think four hours is about as long as our...and the night we flew all night, they took the bombs out. We had a big tank in the bomb bay...in the torpedo bay, and that was full of gasoline. So, we...had enough fuel to last ten hours.

Mike Zambrano: You know, I forgot to ask you...you said you were with...with VC-12; does the whole squadron end up moving over to the [USS] Card?

Mr. Herlin: Oh yeah!

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: The squadron's a group.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, so there's Pilots, and...and the crew; that was all.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember who your squadron Commander was?

Mr. Herlin: No, I...I never really saw any officers other than my Pilot and I didn't see him very often except when he got on the plane and got out of the plane. So, I...I never talked to him; he never talked to me except on the radio.

Mike Zambrano: There's no way to get from the lower part of the plane into the Pilot's seat?

Mr. Herlin: No, no way.

Mike Zambrano: There are two different entrances?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: Very small one...on...on...for us.

Mike Zambrano: Well, what about the Gunner that was on top?

Mr. Herlin: He had to come down throughway (?).

Mike Zambrano: Okay, alright. Uh, well, if you're flying three to four hours a night, what would you do other than sleep; what would you do in your spare time?

Mr. Herlin: It, uh, you mean when wasn't on the ship or when I wasn't flying?

Mike Zambrano: Oh well, yeah, when you weren't flying but you were on the ship.

Mr. Herlin: Oh, I...uh, I read...read a lot and slept. I didn't play poker, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter.)

Mr. Herlin: No, I...I read and slept.

Mike Zambrano: Was it, at...at times, was it kind of boring?

Mr. Herlin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: Was it kind of boring sometimes?

Mr. Herlin: (Unintelligible), I don't think we ever thought about that. Oh, one other thing...uh, besides the...the searchlight, we ended up with what they call a sonar-buoy (?).

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay; I've heard of those, but tell me about it.

Mr. Herlin: A sonar-buoy is a tube about this big in diameter and about that long, and we'd have six of them and we'd...the Pilot would drop them in a circle. If we heard a submarine and...we'd pick...we...if we saw a submarine

submerge, uh, we'd drop these sonar-buoys in a circle around them and it would drop a microphone down in the water about forty feet, and I would pick up the sounds, and I could plot the course of the submarine...theoretically; that's the theory. They never did it, but I dropped those bomb...sonar-buoys and that was a hard job...trying to hold that darned hatch open and drop a sonar-buoy.

Mike Zambrano: The hatch?

Mr. Herlin: The...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, the hatch that you would crawl to get into your ship...

Mr. Herlin: Yeah (unintelligible words)...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible words).

Mr. Herlin: ...little door, and you'd have to hold it open and...the plane's wind would keep it closed and...you'd...that was a mess.

Mike Zambrano: Wow (laughter), and what...do you retrieve them or did you just...

Mr. Herlin: No, you...

Mike Zambrano: ...drop them?

Mr. Herlin: ...that's all, you drop...drop...

Mike Zambrano: Drop them and...whatever.

Mr. Herlin: You don't ever retrieve them.

Mike Zambrano: And how long do they last; how long do they send a signal?

Mr. Herlin: I have no idea. As long as we were looking...every...like I say, three or four hours.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. What about...when you...when you go out, you got the carrier, you got at least two destroyers...

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...is...is that the size of the group?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, maybe...maybe three of them. I don't remember how many, two or three...maybe four, I don't know. They were destroyer escorts, the small ones.

Mike Zambrano: Ah.

Mr. Herlin: They call them DEs.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, like our ship was called a CVE which is an escort carrier.

Mike Zambrano: I'm curious, but have you ever heard the term...because some people joke about the...the CVEs; they say...they use the term "Combustible, Vulnerable and Expendable."

Mr. Herlin: No.

Mike Zambrano: You've never heard of that?

Mr. Herlin: Huh uh...yeah.

Mike Zambrano: I had a veteran tell me (unintelligible). Well, I guess that tell me what they thought of the carrier.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: But what did you think of your carrier?

Mr. Herlin: Uh, it was better than the Kadashan Bay, much better. The Kadashan Bay was a liberty boat, liberty ship...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Herlin: ...and when we hit rough waters...you'd be in the hangar deck and the...joints would open up like that.

Mike Zambrano: Oh my god!

Mr. Herlin: And that [USS] Card was a converted...cargo boat.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Herlin: And it could take the North Atlantic, and so we were a lot...in lot better shape as far as ships were concerned.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, did...did the sh...ship ever lose any planes?

Mr. Herlin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, well you're...you're in the North Atlantic...does the [USS] Card ever lose any planes, anybody from the group?

Mr. Herlin: No that's a...a fallacy that people see on the movies. All these planes crashing and...and going over the water; we never had an accident on the ship while I was there. We hit the barrier once, and some other planes hit a barrier, but that's no...much...not much. We only lost...uh, I lost a friend...I lost a friend, an acquaintance, and that was on land. One was in California and one was in Virginia. These planes...crashed.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay...alright. But never any accidents at sea?

Mr. Herlin: No.

Mike Zambrano: So...

Mr. Herlin: We had...we had no problems really. We...we were very fortunate, I guess, that we...we...we had no fatalities.



Mike Zambrano: It sounds like everyone knew their job and...and did it pretty efficiently?

Mr. Herlin: Well, I don't know; we...just had luck, I guess.

Mike Zambrano: Was there ever a time when your task force gets together with a...a British group?

Mr. Herlin: No.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Obviously somebody on...on the internet is wrong (laughter). They...I saw that and I thought, "Oh, that seemed kind of interesting." Uhm, let's see, did you write home a lot on the ship?

Mr. Herlin: Did I write? I don't think so. I didn't write much.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, what about when you would have liberty? Like I saw that...like...when you go to Boston or...or Philadelphia, what would you do for liberty?

Mr. Herlin: Well, in Quonset Point I was there...we were there quite a while, and mainly I would...I went bowling. No, ice skating in Quonset Point, and Boston...I got drunk. In...uh, I don't...I either was...drinking...trying to find something to drink or...find a girl, or...or...uh, just...trying to meet someone.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, Quonset Point...where exactly is Quonset Point?

Mr. Herlin: Right out of Providence, Rhode Island.

Mike Zambrano: Providence, okay.

Mr. Herlin: That's a...big base, Navy base, there. We were there for awhile during the winter, and our ship was at sea a hundred miles out, and so we...were on land and it got pretty cold, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I did read...and something about Quonset Point that...that they were doing some kind of a pilot qualification exercises?

Mr. Herlin: May be, I don't know.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, well, when you say the ship was out a hundred miles, I might...I might think maybe that's what they were doing, but...but your group was on land while they were out?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, and...if they...if they were...a signal for a submarines, we would fly out to the ship and then start our patrols. They...they...rather than have us on the ship all that time, they kept us at Quonset Point.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum. Okay.

Mr. Herlin: But we had to fly out...on twenty-four hour notice or less...if...we had to be ready to go.

Mike Zambrano: How long would your liberties last?

Mr. Herlin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: How long would your liberties last, 'cause it seems...you...you say you had to be ready to go and then...

Mr. Herlin: Well, liberty lasts...maybe twenty...twenty-four hours. You...you get off at maybe three in the afternoon and had to be back by elev...eleven at night or twelve at night.

Mike Zambrano: What rank are you at this point?

Mr. Herlin: I was...I was First Class Petty Officer.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, First Class Petty Officer?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, that's what...that's what I ended up at.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. So, you...that's...that's obviously (unintelligible) the Aviation Radioman First Class?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: So, that's one step under Chief.

Mike Zambrano: First Class? Okay. Uhm...

Mr. Herlin: So, we were...we were off...uh, Normandy, uh off of France on D-Day; we were off the west coast...of France...waiting for submarines there during D-Day.

Mike Zambrano: Really?! And...and...

Mr. Herlin: Didn't find any.

Mike Zambrano: Nothing? Was it...I guess it was pretty un..., at least for you, was pretty uneventful?

Mr. Herlin: And we didn't know anything about it.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, you didn't know D-Day was actually happening?!

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, and we...'cause...when we...the way that I realized that is that on Thanksgiving...of that...of '44, I have a notice for our ship...that wherever they had us...a...a meal served; I think it was Thanksgiving...or 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I forgot which, but anyway, we were on the ship and I got the European Theater, so that's the only way I know I was there. Uh, I...that's the only way I would have gotten the European Theater is to be over there.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Herlin: And...and we were...I have proof we was...at sea then, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! So, there's not many people that say they were in Europe and...and June 6<sup>th</sup> was kind of uneventful.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So...and you knew nothing at all about the landings there?!

Mr. Herlin: No, we didn't know anything about it.

Mike Zambrano: Do...do you recall when...hearing that...that the Allies had landed in France?

Mr. Herlin: Do what?

Mike Zambrano: Do you recall...

Mr. Herlin: No.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm.

Mr. Herlin: They didn't tell us much about the Army.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Herlin: I...we didn't get much...we didn't get much news.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: Very little news.

Mike Zambrano: Did you make a lot of friends in your group; I mean, you were together for...(unintelligible words)?

Mr. Herlin: No, it was a very small group, and I had a...yeah, I had a...uh, the other Radiomen, there were about six or seven of them that we got them together, and...and one of them was a good...my close friend was killed.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, sorry.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, he was...we were in a little...air...air base called Fentress which is out of Norfolk.

Mike Zambrano: Fentress?

Mr. Herlin: Fentress, F-e-n-t-r-e-s-s, very small and in the middle of the swamp.

Mike Zambrano: And it was...what...what State is this?

Mr. Herlin: It's in Virginia...just out of Virginia...uh, out of Norfolk.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: About twenty miles out of Norfolk.

Mike Zambrano: And what happened?

Mr. Herlin: Uh, I don't know. They...they crashed; I don't know why. All I know is they crashed.

Mike Zambrano: I imagine it's pretty devastating, I mean, to have a...like you said, he was your friend.

Mr. Herlin: Oh yeah, he and I were good...Eddie Hahn (sp?) from Co...Denver, Colorado, I think.

Mike Zambrano: And you said there was another crash, too.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, that was interesting, too. Uh, that was in California when we were dive bombing on the Salton Sea; they Pilot was going to make a run, a flight, and I had all my time in and another guy wanted some flying time, so he said, "I'll take your place," and he did. And the Pilot crashed on a...on the...on the target and the crewmen were killed. The Pilot was found in the morning on the target, and he's the Pilot that was flying me...that took nine way-offs...later on.

Mike Zambrano: So...

Mr. Herlin: So, that's why he quit; he had...having a crash and he'd just had enough.  
He was one of the older Pilots, too.

Mike Zambrano: You said Sultan Sea before...

Mr. Herlin: Saltan Sea; it's right out of...oh, well, it's near...San Diego...is near...on  
the Mexican border.

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible), okay.

Mr. Herlin: I can't...I can't think of the name of the town that it was near; they...had  
a little airfield we had there.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: The Salton Sea is a...a sea that's under...under the sea level.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, 'cause it's lower than the sea level.

Mike Zambrano: That's kind of unusual; I've never heard of it.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, at one point I see...well, it said that the ship goes back to  
Philadelphia Naval Yard for a...for an overhaul?

Mr. Herlin: I don't know about that.

Mike Zambrano: Were you on the ship until the very end of the war?

Mr. Herlin: Well, right around...close to the time of the end of World War I, oh, of  
the war in Germany, I'd gotten an assignment to go to Pre-flight  
School...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, you mentioned that, okay.

Mr. Herlin: ...you know, as a...as a flying enlisted man. And so, I was...had to go over to...go to Pre-flight at the University of Georgia, and somewhere along the line, I was at Pre-flight at Georgia...University of Georgia. And then at the end of the Japanese war, they gave me a choice of staying in and getting my wings and...two...yeah, but I'd have to serve two more years or get out on points. And I didn't have quite enough points, but...so, I decided...I'm going to just get out, and I got...I got discharged.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, and that was before the Japanese surrender you say?

Mr. Herlin: No, it was after that.

Mike Zambrano: After, okay.

Mr. Herlin: That was in '45. Uh, I don't know sometime in...May or June or something like in '45; August...I don't know.

Mike Zambrano: And...what did you do when you got out?

Mr. Herlin: Went home; drank a lot; went to...went to...tried to find a college. And I wanted to go to Purdue, but they said I have to take...start over with no...no credit, and I went up to New Mexico A&M and they said, "We'll give you as much credit as we can, and we'll welcome you." And I went up there, and it was only forty miles from El Paso.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Herlin: And...and it was a...I had a great time up there.

Mike Zambrano: And you finished your degree in Engineering?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: What kind of Engineering?

Mr. Herlin: Mech...Mechanical.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Herlin: And I met my wife up there, and she was teaching Physics and working in a laboratory, White Sands Proving Ground.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Herlin: And...and she and I got married in '47.

Mike Zambrano: And she *taught* Physics?

Mr. Herlin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: You said she was taking it or she was teaching Physics?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, teaching Physics.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Herlin: She graduated with a degree in Physics...from Howland's in Virginia.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, she sounds like she's very intelligent.

Mr. Herlin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: She sounds like she was very intelligent.

Mr. Herlin: Oh, she was; she's...right now she's up on the second floor. She's completely immobile; has to be fed. She's a...a complete invalid.

Mike Zambrano: I'm sorry. What's her name?

Mr. Herlin: Betty, or Elizabeth. Uh, we call...her name was Betty though.

Mike Zambrano: And she worked at where again, White Sands?

Mr. Herlin: White Sands Proving Ground which is right across the mountains from the college. She would work with a...they were shooting the V-2 rockets



and other rockets, and she was...doing the plotting of the rockets; taken with pictures, plotting them on a scale. She's a pretty smart gal.

Mike Zambrano: Well, Physics that's...yeah, it's a pretty tough subject to tackle!

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, let's see, somewhere I saw that you had...gone back in the serve in '52?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, I...I...when I was...discharged as...as a Radioman, I didn't want to lose my rating because I'd worked too hard for it, so I stayed in the reserves.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Herlin: And...when I got out of...graduated with a degree, they offered me a commission, and I had a choice between the line (?) or Civil Engineer Corps, and I went...Civil Engineer Corps which is the Seabees in the Navy. And then I...graduated and worked for a couple of years in El Paso and didn't like what I was doing so I started working for Texaco as an Engineer and I got a recall from the Navy saying I had to go back in...as a reservist. And they allowed me to stay with Texaco for a year. Then I went in the Navy as a...Ensign...uh, as JG, no, Ensign, I guess, I don't know which, and they assigned me to Guantanamo Bay, and I helped maintain the base there.

Mike Zambrano: And this was in '52?

Mr. Herlin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: This was in 1952?

Mr. Herlin: '52, yeah; then I got out in '54. Eighteen months I was in there...eighteen; between the end of '50...'52 and the beginning of '54, eighteen months.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. And...and what rank were you when you finally left the service?

Mr. Herlin: When I got out, I was a Full Lieutenant.

Mike Zambrano: And you didn't go back in or (unintelligible words)?

Mr. Herlin: No, no; they offered...they wanted me to...stay in the regular and I said, "No way," I had a good job, so I went back to Texaco.

Mike Zambrano: And...no more reserves?

Mr. Herlin: No, I got out of it. I...I was in...in the Navy in reserves total of about ten years; five years active and five years in reserve; then that was it. But...but my oldest son was a Commander in the Navy as a Doctor...

Mike Zambrano: Hmm!

Mr. Herlin: ...and he was in...Operation...of what the hell, in Arabia, and he was with a M.A.S.H. unit with the Marines. And my middle boy went to the Naval Academy and ended up as a Lieutenant Commander as...in diving and salvage work and he was murdered.

Mike Zambrano: He was murdered?!

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, in California.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, I'm sorry; that's horrible!

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, we never got over that. But that's the story of my life!

Mike Zambrano: So, you...you said...just had the two sons, you and your wife?

Mr. Herlin: No, I have three sons.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Herlin: The third son was...younger and didn't have any time; there was no war going on. That was after Vietnam and there was no...soc...call up or anything; he wouldn't have been a good...uh, military man anyway.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm. Is there anything you remember about your...your time in the military I might not have asked you? Any experiences, any...any...they always say...funny stories; anything that you recall?

Mr. Herlin: Not really; I told you...about the...the stories that I had and that's it. The air bombing of the...of a destroyer...

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles), okay.

Mr. Herlin: ...and...and the...loss of as friend, and that...other than that, I...I learned a lot; matured a lot; learned how to get along with people, and that was the best three years...I...it was much more enriching than...going to college or anything like that. And if...if I'd off gone to Annapolis, I'd of been a complete ass.

Mike Zambrano: Why do you say that?

Mr. Herlin: Uh, because...they think they're god, and they go...and they don't understand...the enlisted people. They...it takes them a long time to do that; they have to work with them and a lot of them just don't want to work with them.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, so you never had any regrets about getting after '54, I guess?

Mr. Herlin: No way!

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Uhm, let's...

Mr. Herlin: I was Shore Patrol for about two months.

Mike Zambrano: Oh really?!

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, in Yuma, Arizona. While waiting for points, I had to get...wait about three months to get out, and they...I went...they sent me to Yuma, Arizona as a Shore Patrol.

Mike Zambrano: And that was...when...like in '45?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, no that was...yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: How was that (chuckles)?

Mr. Herlin: Well, I was pretty dumb, because...I was supposed to make the trains, and there's...trains would stop and today's Marines and Sailors could get off and get liquor, and I'm supposed to get...get the liquor from them. Well, can you imagine a little guy like me going up to a Marine and say, "You can't have that bottle!"

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Herlin: It didn't work!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), I guess...what would they say, "Well, I don't have a bottle or...I'm not giving it to you or..." (chuckles)

Mr. Herlin: Yeah. Yeah, anyway they...that was...other than that, I was okay. I turned twenty-one in California. (Unintelligible) and I remember getting my drink at midnight.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Huh!

Mr. Herlin: In...Al...Alameda, California.

Mike Zambrano: Alameda...Alameda is right across the base from where I grew up, so...

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, is that right?!

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I grew up in San Francisco.

Mr. Herlin: Oh, is that right?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum, yeah.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, well my son was killed in...in...what the hell, not...oh, hell...Antioch.

Mike Zambrano: Antioch, okay.

Mr. Herlin: It's towards San...Sacramento from...yeah, yeah, and he was based in Concord; the Navy base in Concord.

Mike Zambrano: Concord Nav...Naval...okay; I think I know where.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, and he was living in...in Antioch.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, do you recall where you were when you heard about the atomic bomb?

Mr. Herlin: I don't remember even hearing about it.

Mike Zambrano: What about when the war came to an end?

Mr. Herlin: I remember...all I remember was...people said...well, Roosevelt died, and I remember them saying...uh, Germans surrendered, and then I remember them saying that the Japs had surrendered, but I don't remember where I was or what I was doing or anything; it was just another day.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Herlin: It didn't have any effect on me.

Mike Zambrano: Wow. Hey, did you stay with Texaco?

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, thirty-five years.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Herlin: And then when I retired, I worked for five years as a contract engineer.

Mike Zambrano: Five years as a contract engineer? I always find it so interesting that...that...you know, this period of time and you would stay a company thirty or forty years and you know where you go to work; you know what you're going to do, and...things are so different now...that people bounce around to different parts of the country and...

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, well, I liked what I did at Texaco. I...I was...very enjoyable work. Uh, I worked with the Marine Department; I worked...I...I did a lot of inspection of...of failures in...it was just...a good job. I ended up as the Manager of the Division.

Mike Zambrano: Hmm! What...what was the name of the division?

Mr. Herlin: Uh, Utilities. We had...we generated our own power – electricity, steam, water, all that. And completely independent of...outside...just had water flowing in and that was all...and we got...we ran out.

Mike Zambrano: What brought you...to Austin?

Mr. Herlin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: What brought you to Austin?

Mr. Herlin: My wife being sick; my son living here, you know. And...not being in...being in Port Arthur...being pretty isolated.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Herlin: And...they...they wanted us up here where they could be with us.

Mike Zambrano: Well, its...

Mr. Herlin: My other son lives in North Carolina now.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm. Well, uh, I think that pretty much covers everything.

Mr. Herlin: I think so, Mike.

Mike Zambrano: Well, you're very...

Mr. Herlin: You're a good listener.

Mike Zambrano: ...(unintelligible). Well, you're a good talker (laughter)!

Mr. Herlin: (Laughter), well, I...I guess you're going to find out that most older people like to...like to talk about what they did. Yeah, they get to talking and won't stop.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, yeah, some do (chuckle), but...that makes the interview all the more interesting.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah. Yeah, now one guy here that...was a glider pilot.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, that's Mr. Nix; yeah, I'm going to interview him next.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, yeah. And another one...oh, he died; it was...it was...on...Battle of...well, it was...was Pershing in the Battle of the Bulge...going up there...and...but he died just recently.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I guess that's why I'm here because I want to make sure I can...I can get, you know, everybody's story.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: You know...before.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So...

Mr. Herlin: Well, you get a lot of Yeomen, and...uh, people like that; not too many people have seen action like...someone shooting at them.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I...I find some like that, but then I...I do find others that...were trainers in the States.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Or, like you. I...I met a fellow a few weeks back; he served on five aircraft carriers...

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ...before the war was out.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: I thought that was pretty amazing (chuckle).

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, there is one guys that...here...you may talk to that was on an aircraft carrier as...(unintelligible) and ended up as a Lieutenant Commander, so...I forgot his name; I think his name's Earl.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, I've got a list; I'll...I'll look at it.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah. So, and he...has a good...int...good story.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Herlin: And your going to get Wayne.

Mike Zambrano: I'm sure he's on the list.

Mr. Herlin: Yeah, yeah. Wayne'll talk to you...till you...throw it in (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), well, let me shut off my recorder, and I've got...



(end of interview)

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