

**Veteran:** DREYER, Jr., Joe  
**Service Branch:** NAVY  
**Interviewer:** Ibarra-Chapa, Belinda  
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Interviewer: My name is Belinda Ibarra-Chapa. Your name is Joe Dreyer, Jr., a Korean War veteran. Today is December 1, 2001, and we are the Sterling Library in Baytown, Texas, in Study Room 6.

You are aware that our conversation will be recorded, and a tape and transcription will be placed in the Lee College Library. Do I have your permission to do this?

Veteran: Yes ma'am.

Interviewer: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

Veteran: I enlisted.

Interviewer: Where were you living at the time, and why did you join?

Veteran: I am a native of Baytown. I joined because I was probably going to be drafted, so I didn't want to take any chances.

Interviewer: And so you picked the Navy as your branch. Do you recall your first years of service?

Veteran: Do I ever? It was quite an experience. I was 20 when I enlisted. Had never been out of Texas, and had only ridden a train for a short distance before. I went to San Diego on a train, and of course flying later. You did what you were told.

Interviewer: What were your experiences at boot camp and in training like?

Veteran: I went in the Navy and I didn't have any idea there would be that much marching, but there was a lot of marching in boot camp. You had a class in one part of the area; they would march you to the other part of the area, and it seemed like it was

on the other end of the field or the camp. We got a lot of military marching and a lot of classes to attend.

Interviewer: And so you did attend classes?

Veteran: Yes—military justice.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of your instructors?

Veteran: No.

Interviewer: Do you remember about arriving at these locations, which I think you said was in California and Japan? What did you do in Japan and California when you were there?

Veteran: Like I said, I'd never been out of Texas, and TV was just coming in in 1950. My first recollection of California was seeing all the TV antennas and the orange trees. Back then they had one place up here on Texas Avenue that you could buy a TV, but not a whole lot of people could afford them. We'd always go down to Kovar's, and we'd go watch TV on the sidewalk. Took a train to California—it was long and tiring. I don't remember it being a sleeper, but it might have been. We were always shuttled aside to let the regular traffic go by, so I don't remember how long it took.

Interviewer: How did you stay in touch with your family?

Veteran: Writing.

Interviewer: What were the living conditions like in California?

Veteran: You had certain rules and routines you had to go through every day. Ate chow at a certain time, and given so much time to take care ...

{TAPE MALFUNCTIONS FOR ABOUT 5 SECONDS...SPEEDS UP, THEN DOWN—  
INTERVIEW NOW RESUMES}

Interviewer: Did you feel any pressure, or were you stressed?

Veteran: Yes. When it's something you're not used to. You've got discipline and you're living with a bunch of guys. It was stressful being away from home for the first time.

Interviewer: What kind of entertainment did you have?

Veteran: I think boot camp was either ten or twelve weeks long at that time, and up until the latter part of that period you weren't allowed to have any kind of cokes or ice cream or regular food. That was part of the discipline. Up until the latter part of boot camp, you weren't allowed to go to town, so we were pretty well confined to right there on base. I don't remember any entertainment. You didn't have any time for any entertainment. You were doing what you were told to do, and they might take you out at midnight and give you marching practice. They called the field where you marched "The Grinder," and they ground {laughter}.

Interviewer: After boot camp was up, what kind of training did you get?

Veteran: I didn't go to any school after boot camp. Before I had gone in I was going to Lee College. I was working at the printing shop, and prior to boot camp they gave you different kind of tests to see what you might be qualified to do. According to them I wasn't qualified to be anything, so I was attached to a naval air squadron, and my field was aviation machinist. How they came up with that I don't know. I was assigned to a mack fighter group, and you had to have pretty good vision to get into that. Evidently my night vision was pretty good. I didn't go to school for aviation machinist, but back then the aviation machinists starting out took care of the airplanes, made sure it was cleaned, oiled, gassed.

Interviewer: Did you have to do repairs and stuff like that, too?

Veteran: No. As you advanced in the mechanics, we called them, you would work on their planes, and later on for a short while there I worked in the air mechanics squad, but most of it was plane capturing, they called it. You had to have the plane ready for the pilot when he came out, and you helped him get into his safety harness—parachute and all that.

Interviewer: Like my dad did.

Veteran: When was he in?

Interviewer: He was in WWII and Vietnam, and he stayed in the Navy for 27½ years.

Did ya'll ever have leave, and if you did what did you do while you were on leave?

Veteran: After San Diego I was transferred to Moffett Field, California, and attached to a mack fighter unit. You had regular hours there, and when you didn't have duty like standing watch or stuff like that you could get into town and go to a movie or whatever you wanted to do.

Interviewer: Do you recall any unusual events during your leaves?

Veteran: No. Back then there wasn't a lot of public transportation where our base was. Sometimes we had to hitchhike. I was close to San Francisco and we would go there, and of course I met some friends, and one friend in particular. He had a brother in Bakersfield, and we would hitchhike down there. We would hitchhike into San Jose, and it was the next biggest town to our base.

Interviewer: Did you ever keep a personal diary while you were in the service?

Veteran: No.

Interviewer: Do you recall the day your service ended? Where were you?

Veteran: Treasure Island—right out of San Francisco—July 5. They sent you there for about two weeks before you were discharged, and there was a mustering out procedure you had to follow. They were trying to convince you to reenlist—what all the advantages were.

Interviewer: Did you make any close friendships while you were in the service, and did you continue those close friendships, and how long?

Veteran: No. A couple of years ago I contacted the Veterans Administration and tracked down the fellow I told you I went to Bakersfield with a few times, and since then

I have gone back to California and visited with him, but as far as any close relationships, I didn't have any.

Interviewer: Did your military experience change your opinion about war or the military in general?

Veteran: Yes. I grew much stronger. Every now and then we would take a detachment and fly down to San Diego. You'd go on an aircraft carrier and take care of the planes, and the pilots would practice carrier landings. At times we would go to Air Central, California—that's between Yuma and San Diego—and the pilots would go down there for bombing practice, and we'd go down there to take care of the planes. And there were times when we'd go gunnery practice, and they'd fly us over to take care of the planes there. I wanted to get married eventually, and that wasn't anyplace, as far as I was concerned, to be and be married because the sailors would be shipping out every now and then for sea duty, and I didn't want to be around that.

Interviewer: What do you think about the Afghanistan situation now?

Veteran: I think we should be there. I think Osama Bin Laden has been pinpointed, and eventually we'll get him.

Interviewer: The Korean War is often called the "Forgotten War." Why is that?

Veteran: Because it was more of a political thing, as far as I'm concerned. In Japan—it was a group of 20, that's six pilots, that went over to Japan and were stationed there. Our group of fighter airplanes were equipped to carry the A-bomb. They never equipped it with the A-bomb, but they had a dummy that they practiced carrying underneath those airplanes. It was only about a fifty or sixty minute hop for those jets to go to Korea, so if they decided to use the A-bomb, they were there to supply that.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

Veteran: I've got some good memories and then I've got some bad ones. I wouldn't want to do it again, but I'm thankful for the chance.

Interviewer: You've answered quite a lot that I didn't have to ask. I'd like for you to read this agreement that we talked about, and I need your signature here.

{END OF INTERVIEW}