

**Paul [last name unknown]
Veteran**

**Interviewed at
Christ The King School
Guilderland, New York
January 11, 2002**

Interviewer – Courtney ?: CK

Paul ?: PK

CK: January 11, 2002 Westmere, New York at Christ The King School and for my interview, I will be interviewing Paul. He was a Vietnam Veteran and served in the U.S. Navy..... Hi I am Courtney, January 11, 2002 at Christ The King School in Guilderland, New York and I'm interviewing Paul who is a Vietnam Veteran for the U.S. Navy. Paul what were your circumstances for enlisting.

PK: In 1968 I was attending college and was not doing well as I should be doing, obviously my educational genes did not pass on to you as much as your mother. So I had a choice either going into the army or being drafted or maybe enlisting in another service and I decided that I would enlist in the Navy.

CK: So what unit, when you were enlisted what unit or ships were you assigned too.

PK: When I first went after boot camp, I went to electronic school. After making through electronic school, I was on an aircraft carrier The USS Independence for about a year. Then I went to a squadron a reconnaissance squadron, basically spy planes. Went to Vietnam, I was in Saigon and Da Nang. When I was done with that tour I went back to the USS Independence and was honorable discharge in 1972.

CK: What were the locations when you were on the USS Independence?

PK: When I was on the Independence, the old saying was join the Navy see the world. I got a chance to see a lot of the world. I saw England, Scotland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Cuba and Puerto Rico. When I was on the ship and when I was in Vietnam, I got to see the Philippines.

CK: Now when you were in Vietnam you were on the USS Independence, what did you have to do?

PK: I was an electronic technician, I maintained and repaired a number of pipes and electronics equipment. Radios and everywhere.

CK: Now when you were in Vietnam did you have any combat service?

PK: Yes I did, just about everybody in Vietnam had combat service. I was an air crewmen, so every second or third night I would get on the air carrier with all of 18 people and we fly north of the coast of north Vietnam and do things that we do in the plane and fly back. Personally the plane was shot at a lot.

CK: Ok, well when were you first under fire?

PK: First under fire was the first night. First night we took off and we flew off the coast of north Vietnam, we always had a fighter escort because I flew AC121 which is a super consolation 4 pamphlet plane. Small and low so we always had a fighter next to us just in case something came to get us.

CK: Ok, how did you feel during combat?

PK: I didn't like be shot at but I didn't think it was anything personal because they were shooting at the plane. They weren't shooting at what came up.

CK: Now when you were in combat did you see any injuries or wounds?

PK: Some. I saw more injuries when I was on the Independence just from everyday play operations. People were hurt all the time, planes taking off and planes coming on. I don't know aircraft carrier is a dangerous situation.

CK: Where you ever captured?

PK: No, I was very lucky

CK: What was your daily life like when you weren't in combat and on the Independence

PK: When I was on the Independence, daily life was pretty much normal got up at about 6 in the morning had breakfast. You would work your morning preparing electronic gear. Check radar and radios, have lunch and do the same thing in the afternoon. About 5,6 o'clock at night your time was free you could watch TV, you could go to the movies. You could do a lot of things. You could play football on the flight deck as long as there was no planes taking off.

CK: Now, did your equipment work well when you were in combat?

PK: Pretty much, if it didn't our job was to fix it anyway that we could but whatever we had we had.

CK: How does it compare to your enemies?

PK: I don't know, I think it was more modern than our enemies but sometimes they used their equipment they used more primitive equipment their then we did at times. Overall I say we had the best that was available.

CK: Now, what was it like?

PK: What was it like?

CK: Like what was it like on the ship?

PK: On the Independence it was 5,000 guys on an aircraft carrier, it was pretty cramped quarters. We had a birthing area were up to 95 to 100 men a unit that would sleep and there would be racks. Somebody would sleep on the floor, somebody the middle and then somebody on top. In Vietnam we slept in barracks it was pretty much like a primitive hotel just with fancy lockers.

CK: How were your officers?

PK: Most of them were pretty good, some of them were great, some of them were unfair but overall I would say they were good by common knowledge

CK: Did you receive any decorations or medals?

PK: I received air crew wings, which you had to receive your air crew wings to be an crewmen to fly through consolations. I also received the air medal and Vietnam computation & service.

CK: When you were either in combat or on the USS Independence what most interesting or inspiring to you?

PK: Most interesting I think was the NATO cruise, we go up by the Atlantic circle right by the Independence and we saw the northern lights the aurora borealis it was pretty amazing to watch that at the Arctic circle. I remember one time also being in Spain and it was the first time President Nixon went to China. So I was sitting watching Spanish television and somebody speaking Spanish trying to explain what Richard Nixon was doing in China and I thought that was interesting. Living and going through Vietnam and making it back without any holes in my body.

CK: What person or people do you remember best when you were serving?

PK: There is a couple of people, Commander Dwayne Whitley he was electronic officer on the Independence. He use to just sit up at his desk with his feet up and his hat over his eyes. Everybody would be running around like chickens with their heads cut off and he would say "come on what's the problem" and I would say well that radio is down and that radar is down and he would say fix it. That how excited he would use to get, I liked him for that. There was Pete Bugelly from long island he was a good friend of mine another friend Steve Shwochack he had quite the tar together on the Independence and Don Myer who was with me on the Independence and also who I went to Vietnam with he was a funny guy and made Vietnam bearable.

CK: Was there any experiences that weren't the greatest?

PK: I think going to all the places that I got to see, one of the things that made an impression on me and wasn't a good impression it was a bad situation was short patrol. We would taken turns being the short patrol and go back and forth. His name was Arthur Liviworth and we were out to see one night and I heard a commotion up on the flight deck. When you hear a plane start they sound like how jets do normally but this sounded like someone was throwing the engine it ended up that he was too close to the intake and he is no longer with us.

CK: Did you perform any unordinary services of duty?

PK: Not the unusual, I did what we had to do. I was electronic technician, I worked electronic gear. I played guitar a lot on my off time. Nothing anything different that other people were doing.

CK: What impact did your military service have on the rest of your life?

PK: It made me realize how important school was and if I had stayed in school I wouldn't of been in the military service. No, it had an impact because I realize I could do things that I didn't think I could do and maybe realize other people could do things that they didn't think that they could do when they really need to do it. Let's say you're in combat and you're in the same situation or on a aircraft carrier. I use to work 18 hour days it gave me an appreciation for sleep and it also made me realize that the people that are fighting now are doing important things. I always appreciated the Navy, I appreciated the veterans and I appreciated the service. I look back my 4 years in the Navy and had a good time not a bad time.

CK: Thank You!

PK: You're very welcome my pleasure.