

**Nevada Test Site Oral History Project**  
**University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

**Interview with**  
**Jay Marshall**

**April 21, 2005**  
**Las Vegas, Nevada**

Interview Conducted By  
Suzanne Becker

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Produced by:

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## Interview with Jay Marshall

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## Interview with Jay Marshall

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[00:00:00] Begin Track 2, Disc 1.

**Jay Marshall:** My name is Jay Marshall. I was a sergeant, United States Marine Corps. I went in on January 1, 1952 and was discharged 1960, January 1. Started my boot camp in San Diego, California, January 1, 1952. Graduated about March 15 out of boot camp and then was assigned to Sea School.

*What is that?*

Sea School is training Marines for sea duty and embassy duty—we started our Sea School, and it's about a six-week course. You learn all about ship routines and most of the Sea Marines are assigned to battleships, carriers, cruisers, heavy cruisers. But this outfit, they needed men for a top-secret test, and that was the extent of our knowledge.

*That's all they told you.*

We were interviewed by an officer in the United States Marine Corps, and then we were interviewed by two, I guess Treasury or Secret Service or somebody—

*Oh, so they came—*

They came and they interviewed everybody. It was background. They wanted to know all about your background, if you'd ever been in any problems. Then they did a background check on all of us that they thought would qualify. And we were held over after graduation, after Sea School, at the Sea Marine barracks there at San Diego. We started in what little knowledge that we had of what we were going to do. They didn't tell us anything, but it was top secret and we weren't supposed to know—anything that went on, we weren't supposed to let anybody know, that it was supposed to stay there. That went on for, oh, probably a month. By that time all the background

checks had come back and the people that had clean records were chosen, but the ones that had any questions marks, they were out.

*Can I ask what you were thinking during this time?*

Well, otherwise than it was top secret, and we had no idea. They kept us in the dark. We did have some classes on the atomic bomb that they dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the tests that they done at Bikini in 1948.

*What kind of classes were those?*

We had a guy that would explain a few things to us about radiation. So we had an idea that it had something to do with the atomic bomb. But that was as far as we knew. None of us knew anything about it.

Finally then, we were told that we were going to go aboard the USS *Curtiss* [AV-4]. It was a seaplane tender that was assigned to the Atomic Energy Commission [AEC]. The *Curtiss* was tied up at North Island at the Naval Air Station there in San Diego, and so we all went aboard the *Curtiss*. There was about, oh, probably eighty of us officers and enlisted men. We were all PFCs [private first class]. We were assigned duties on board the *Curtiss* as guards. We had guard watches, and assigned to man the anti-aircraft guns [00:05:00] aboard the ship. We got our own compartment where we stayed.

The ship was stationed there at San Diego for probably a month after we went aboard. We had a couple of false starts. We had left the harbor—thought we were leaving—and came back and tied up again.

*You were living on the ship this whole time?*

Yes, we were aboard ship. We were allowed liberty, but we were aboard ship. My wife was with me there at that time. She'd come out. So I told her that I was going to be aboard a ship and I had

no idea when we were going to leave or anything, I thought that she'd better go back home because—

*And home is where?*

Kansas City, Missouri.

*Is that where you're from?*

Yes. And so she left and went back home. Finally the ship left, for good, and we sailed. We didn't know where we were going. A couple of days later, we went under the Golden Gate Bridge. We were in San Francisco. And so we tied up at Alameda Naval Air Station there in Oakland, California. Still had no idea what we were going to do. We were tied up there probably a week or so at Alameda, then we were informed that we were heading out again, and everybody thought, well, this is it. We're on our way. We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way. So we sailed that night and went up to Port Chicago, which is now Pittsburg, California. It's a big arsenal. That was where the ammunition was stored, where all the ships picked up their ammunition. Well, that's where we got the bomb.

*So you actually sailed out there with it.*

Yes, we'd picked up the bomb. We didn't know it. It was all top secret. When we got up there, all the guys that had top clearance, that's the Q-clearance, the highest you can get. They were assigned to form, from the ship clear up to where the bomb was in Port Chicago at the arsenal, guards—armed guards. They were armed. And the rest of us were stationed aboard the ship. Everybody was armed. Everybody had rifles or .45s. And so they kept loading these crates. They brought the crates down from Port Chicago and loaded them on the fantail, or the stern of the ship. Big cartons. We didn't know what it was.

*How big? How big is that?*

A big carton, like big containers. They took up the whole fantail; back there was loaded down. Everybody was assigned guards, then. We had guards posted twenty-four hours a day on the fantail back there, guarding. You were armed and it was guarded around the clock. Nobody was allowed back there except the security guards.

So we left Port Chicago and got out underneath the Golden Gate and headed out. We picked up four destroyers, two on each side, right after we left the bay at San Francisco.

*And still, you guys had no idea what you're doing, where you're heading?*

We had no idea where we were going. Still top secret. Everybody was on guard and you were staying in four hours on, twelve hours off, four hours on, twelve hour[s off]. And we zigzagged all the way. Still had no idea where we were going, two destroyers on one side, two on the other, and they escorted us. Got to Pearl Harbor [Hawaii] and the destroyers left us and we [00:10:00] picked up four more out of Pearl Harbor.

*Did you have a sense that this was something that was pretty big at that point?*

Especially when we were zigzagging all the way, and we thought, well, these destroyers on either side, these things must really be important, under wartime conditions.

So about sixteen days later, we finally arrived at Enewetak in the South Pacific in the Marshall Islands. We steamed past a number of little islands and we finally got into the lagoon where we dropped anchor. It was the lagoon in Enewetak. It was an extinct volcano, is what it was, and you were surround by a bunch of little islands. Some of them didn't amount to anything. Some of them were pretty good size. But they had done some bomb tests there. You could see where they blew holes in the—

*So there[are] craters.*

Yes, craters. So we thought, well, it's probably going to be another A-bomb test or something like that. We were tied up in the lagoon and everybody was on watch. You stood four hours, twelve off, four on, twelve off, around the clock.

*Right. Still on watch.*

Still on watch. Then on the ship we were assigned these compartments. They were just a steel door, one way in and one way out. That's where we stood our watches. We had a list that was posted on the outside of the hatch going in, who was allowed in there, and maybe it had ten names. And the names on the list, they had to match the name on the badge, their photo ID. If they didn't match, you didn't get in that compartment. That was our job, to check that. We were armed with .45 pistols, loaded, and we were told that nobody was allowed in those compartments unless they were on the list and their ID matched the list. And it meant nobody. If you weren't on the list, you didn't get in the compartment.

*Who was [on] this list? What type of people?*

These were the scientists that were working on it. What they were doing, as we found out—we were never allowed in these compartments, or we had to stand on the outsides. We were never allowed inside, but we'd open the door and let them [in]. They'd be in there for five hours, ten hours before they'd ever come back out. We found out later what they were doing, they were putting this thing together. And then after about a week—we had a landing craft and the Marines that were top clearance, they went with the scientists. We had what they called a shot island, which was about two miles off the starboard side of the ship. They would go over with the scientists in the morning and they would take what they had been working on aboard the landing craft and take it over to the shot island. I was never allowed on the shot island because I wasn't that type of clearance. So the guys that did not have top clearance, they stayed and did all the



guard duty on the ship. The Marines that were top clearance that went over with the scientists, they stayed over there all day long, and then they'd come back when the scientists came back. We could see what they had. It looked like an oil derrick; it looked like a tower, kind of the TV end [of] the tower, and then they had a string of [what] looked like a cattle chute where they'd run cattle down. It went all the way up the island, because they had connected a bunch of islands together and made this shot island. What we found out from the Marines that had went over on the shot island was, the tower was where they were putting the bomb, and this is where they were going to detonate it.

**[00:15:00]** *Now, did you realize at this point what it was?*

We thought it was an atomic bomb. We had no idea it was a thermonuclear. This was the first thermonuclear device that they'd shot. [Ivy-Mike, 10/31/1952—experimental thermonuclear device, 104 megatons, per DOE/NV—209-Rev 15 December 2000.]

*Yeah, it was a big one.*

So they'd worked on the bomb for probably a month, day and night. You stood watches day and night. And the landing craft would take these scientists over and they would be over there all day and then they'd come back in the evening. So we had a lot of the compartments—not a lot of them but probably four or five compartments were top secret. You had to have the top clearance to stand those watches. And I guess that was where the main component for the bomb—we still didn't know what was going on. But finally, they said that they were finished with their work and that we were going to move the ship out of the lagoon and we were going to be about thirty-five to fifty miles away when they detonated the bomb. Well, we still had no idea—

*That's pretty significant. That's a good distance.*

Yeah, it was. So we sailed that night and got into position, and the next morning everybody that wasn't on duty fell out on the fantail and on the port side of the ship. They said to stand and line the railings and where they were going to detonate the bomb, we could see it. So we all fell out. Luckily, I was off duty. I'd become familiar with one of the scientists aboard ship and he had a pair of goggles. He wanted to know if I wanted to wear the goggles and see the blast with the goggles. I said sure. So I was lucky enough that I got to wear a pair of goggles. The rest of them, if you didn't have goggles, you couldn't face the blast. You had to turn and cover up your eyes. So even with goggles, I couldn't see anything.

But we had the countdown and, like I say, it was thirty-five to fifty miles away. All at once the whole sky [was] just like the sun had come up all at once; a brilliant flash. I mean *brilliant*. Even with the goggles on, I had to turn my head because it hurt my eyes. And the tremendous flash. No noise, but the flash. Pretty soon, then, you heard the rumble, the ship moved, the wind, the heat. It was tremendous—the most spectacular thing I've ever seen in my life. You just couldn't believe, the whole sky, the whole horizon lit up. We just all stood there, our mouths open, and couldn't believe what we had just witnessed. Still we didn't know what it was. We knew it wasn't an atomic bomb. It was much, much bigger than an atomic bomb.

*Yes. And you guys were fifty miles out?*

At least thirty-five to fifty away. And so then all at once, then they announced over the loudspeakers, everybody down below. You had to go down below the ship. Batten down all the hatches. Everybody down below. *Everybody*. And then they—they had assembled sprinklers all over the ship.

[00:19:17] End Track 2, Disc 1.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 3, Disc 1.

*OK.*

So anyway, the sprinklers had went off—

*On the ship.*

On the ship. Otherwise, they were washing her down. Then we were down below, and nobody's allowed topside.

*Because it was hot?*

No, they were taking precautions from fallout. We found out that you have all this fallout coming down. And so we were down below for about three days.

*Really!*

Down below. They had guys that they'd send them up and they would test for radiation aboard ship. And if they tested any radiation, you still had to stay down below. These guys all had safety gear on. They were running the Geiger counters. Naturally you didn't have any ventilation to speak of, and it was getting very uncomfortable down below. No food other than sandwiches and stuff like that. They couldn't cook anything.

*Were they prepared for this? Were you expecting that you were going to go down below the ship?*

No.

*Did you guys have provisions with you or clothes or anything to last you three days?*

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

*Well, all your stuff was there, I guess.*

Yes, all our stuff was down there, and so we had—

*But you didn't know that this was going to happen?*

We had no idea that this stuff—we thought, well, you're going to shoot off the bomb and that will be it. Finally they gave us the all clear and then it was safe to come back aboard, or back topside again. [We] assumed our watches again. So then we sailed and left Enewetak. Went back to Kwajalein, a big island south of Enewetak, about a hundred miles south, and tied up there at Kwajalein. And we were waiting. They told us that they were sending reconnaissance planes over the shot island to take photographs and see what the devastation was and what they'd done. Kwajalein was a big—the big Japanese airfield there. The Japanese had built a big airfield on Kwajalein, and that's why Kwajalein was so important during the war that they had to take it; they needed that air base. So they were flying reconnaissance planes off of Kwajalein. We were tied up there at Kwaj for, oh, probably a couple of weeks, and kept waiting so we could go back to the United States. The word never did come down. All we heard [was] that they were running recon there. Well, come to find out what they had done, and they did tell us, they had sent a bomber back up there and he had dropped another bomb. It wasn't an H-bomb. It was a smaller bomb. But they had dropped another bomb, another test [King].

*After the one that you saw.*

Yes, after the thermonuclear, then they had another air drop.

*And this is [Operation] Ivy?*

This was Ivy. Ivy-Mike is what they called it. But we never did know about the second bomb. We just thought they were running reconnaissance, and that's why we were held there. Because all the scientists were still aboard our ship.

Before I'd left, my wife and I had a code, and quite a few of the guys had done the same thing, I think, that when we were heading back home, I told her, "I'll see you in my dreams." That was our code. Because they were censoring our mail.

*Really! They were censoring your mail.*

Oh, yeah.

*To make sure that you weren't writing anything—*

Yes, making sure that nothing was going back of what we had done out there.

*Did they tell you they were going to do that?*

No.

*You just found out. How did you find that out?*

Well, a lot of the letters that my wife had gotten, a lot of the stuff was deleted.

*Really!*

Yes. If you put anything in there. Well, we were warned not to do anything like that, and most of the guys never [did]—because we were scared. They had [00:05:00] drilled us that this was top secret and any information that was leaked out to the public was—you were going to be in serious trouble. So I did not, and a lot of the guys, we knew better. In the Marine Corps, you're told not to do something, you better not do it. But information did leak out. One of the officers, a naval officer, had leaked out what happened out there, and my wife knew because it was in the papers. She knew what was going on before I knew what was going on. And he'd leaked this information out, which he wasn't supposed to. They were warned, too. Everybody was warned.

Well anyway, they'd say, we're going to sail.

*And so you thought you were leaving.*

And then they would postpone it. They'd say, something came up, the ship has something wrong with it. They had some excuse, so we didn't sail. Finally we got underway, but up to that time, I'd [written] "I'll see you in my dreams" about three or four times, and so she was certainly confused.

Anyway, we finally set sail again, with our destroyers. This was, oh, about the first week in November that we were heading back. We thought we were going to go into Pearl Harbor on our way back, but we got almost to Pearl—we had Thanksgiving aboard the ship—and we got to Pearl, and our destroyers left us. We thought, well, we're heading in. Come to find out, four more destroyers come out of Pearl, and no stop. Non-stop.

So we went back into San Francisco again. And I left the ship there in San Francisco. We had three liberties going, and the first one was as soon as we got to San Francisco. Then us guys [would] come back off the first liberty, or first leave, and then the ship went back down to San Diego. That's why I picked the ship back up in San Diego. And then the second group went home.

So we tied up in San Diego and we were there for probably all of December and into January. Then they said, We want to take you guys off the ship, but we want to keep you together because we're going to have another test. It'll (the ship) go back again, and we want the same crew. So they assigned us all to different duties on the Marine Base in San Diego. I was assigned as a junior drill instructor, and then one of my shipmates, he was an instructor, too. Quite a few of us were scattered around the base to the different battalions as drill instructors. Some of them guard duty, some of them orderlies. The whole group was assigned to some duty on the base there. After we got off the ship and got assigned to the base, I got promoted to corporal. A bunch of us got promoted to corporals. And so I was a drill instructor for, oh, for three or four months, and then the Navy needed three corporals to the Sea School again. We were going to make a movie, a training film. So the three of us, the three corporals, were assigned duty up there to make this movie, which was excellent duty. After the movie was made and I went back as a drill instructor. I was getting out then; my time was up. So they were getting ready to go back overseas again on [Operation] Castle, which

was the third operation. By that time, I was a buck sergeant, and they wanted us to go back [00:10:00] as NCOs [noncommissioned officers]. I was married and I said, No, I'm going to get out. I want to get out. And so they said, well, it's up to you, whatever you want to do. If you want to get out, we can't stop you. So I went ahead and I got out. There was about eight of us that got out.

*Everybody else went back?*

Everybody else went back with Castle. And Castle was the first hydrogen bomb. That was the big one. That was the one that *really* devastated a lot of things, and matter of fact, that bomb, the guys were too close and they got dusted. The ship got dusted bad. Some of the Marines now, off Castle, have had problems. And finally the government is getting around to recognizing what took place.

*Anything that stemmed from that.*

A lot of guys have developed cancer, and some birth defects, and we've lost a few guys. It's hard to prove. This has been fifty years ago. But, you know, the government is—it never bothered me and my two children, but some of the guys, their children have been affected.

*That were out there with you.*

Well, they were on Castle. Most of the guys, it was Castle. Because they got dusted. There was a Japanese fishing boat that got in too close and it got dusted and they didn't know it, and took that tuna back to Japan. The Japanese were very, very unhappy over that because a lot of people got radiation from that [Bravo shot]. And the ship really got, it was really a—

*It was right there.*

Yeah. And it was a mistake. They had no idea this thing was that powerful. And the wind shifted on them. It was just a bunch of errors that took place that the wind shifted on them and blew the

radiation cloud over. It was really something that they didn't predict, just a freak of nature, I guess.

But it was an experience I'll never forget. The older I get and the more I—I'm a big pro fan of the bomb. I think it prevented World War III. And not only me, but there's a lot of people that were on these tests; we're proud of what we did. We know it [prevented] World War III. The Russians knew about it, a lot of people knew about this bomb, what devastation these things can do. And nobody ever wants to have an atomic war because it would wipe out civilization. I think if the people realized what they accomplished, not only the hydrogen bomb but the A-bombs, all this testing, it did save our country. It saved the world, really. And so I'm a firm believer that whatever took place saved mankind.

So that's my story.

*That's quite a story.*

Well, I hope it does some good.

*It is interesting. And it brings up a couple of questions that I have. I was wondering what it was like when you were just out on Enewetak. How did you guys live? What were you thinking about the whole thing?*

Well, this was 1952, so it was still pretty devastated from World War II. There were a lot of sunken ships and a lot of damage.

*What was a typical day for you guys like out there?*

**[00:15:00]** Hot. And boring. Want to get out of there. Want to get home. But the guys, we were close knit. We'd been through a lot, and so we were all in it together, and we had a job to do.

That's what we were taught to do, and the Marines teach you that. That's your duty, that's what you're trained for, and you do your job. You can complain, but you do your job. And there's no



ifs, ands, or buts; you get an order, you do it. That's the Marine Corps way. It wasn't pleasant duty. The food was horrible, and also the conditions were down below. There's no air conditioning on that ship, and steel decks, and you were sleeping with about a hundred guys in the compartment that was no bigger than this house, and three beds high. So it wasn't the best conditions. You took showers together. You did everything together. We had a little island that you could go over once in a while and swim and they would give you beer or pop and you'd take it along with you. So they tried to make it as easy as possible, but you still had your watches. Like I say, not very pleasant because you stood all that time. You were allowed to walk five paces either way, but you stood on a steel deck, four hours, and a lot of those, especially twelve midnight to four o'clock in the morning shift, it was [unpleasant]. Then when you got off your shift, when you got off your duty, like your twelve-to-four, you could sleep from four o'clock till reveille. Then you had to get up because they put all the bunks back up.

*So you only got about two hours of sleep?*

Yes, and if you caught that watch, that wasn't very—and the same way with four o'clock in the morning till eight o'clock in the morning, you missed chow, so you didn't eat. So, you know, it was tough duty.

*Why do you think that you were selected?*

Well, we like to say that we were the few, very proud Marines that they wanted. We thought we were cream of the crop, let's put it that way, which we were. We were all squared away. We'd all been through boot, we'd all been through Sea School, and we were a sharp bunch of Marines. It was an honor to be chosen for something like that. You knew you were special. And it was kind of good for the ego. It made you feel good that you were selected for this duty, even though we had no idea what we was getting into. But that didn't make any difference.

*[You] still knew it was a pretty big deal.*

Yeah, it was, and being a Marine, you're proud. If you're chosen you're the select few, that's the Marine Corps way. To be a Marine, you're special, and then to be assigned on a special assignment, like embassy duty, that was—and most of the Sea Marines were one step above everybody. You were aboard ship and you wore the dress blues and you were squared away. You had to be squared away.

*How old were you at the time?*

Twenty-three. I was probably one of the oldest of the group in there. I was one of the senior guys [00:20:00] because I was married. There was probably four or five of us that were married, and the rest of them were kids, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old, so we were kind of the older members of the group.

*The worldly ones.*

Yes.

*Were you at all concerned about exposure when you were out there, or is that something that didn't even cross your mind?*

Never even crossed my mind.

*Did they talk to you at all about it?*

No. Just what we'd found out about radiation, but at that time I don't think it was that big of a concern. Like when they shot the bombs off here in Nevada, they would send the Army in there, in trenches, and those guys would get dusted. I guess they just didn't think what this stuff would do. They should have because what it'd done to the Japanese at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After the bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the occupation troops went in there and walked around in

that stuff and picked up souvenirs and brought it home. Undoubtedly, they didn't realize how deadly this stuff is, what it can do.

*Right. Long term.*

And we never give it any thought. We swam at our little recreation island right there at Enewetak in the water. We had a little island there that we could roam around in where they had trenches, concrete trenches, where the observers had been for the bomb test and watching things. And I don't think anybody paid any attention. It never even crossed our minds. I never did worry about radiation. I never even thought anything about it until us guys all got together and some of the guys said they knew people that got cancer and birth defects—what this stuff can do, passed on down generation to generation. But it wouldn't have made any difference. We were chosen to do this, and it wouldn't have made any difference. Like the guys in World War II, when you left the landing craft and hit the beach, you just went and did it.

*Right. It was your job.*

That's what you were trained to do.

*Is it something that you would've thought to have done? I don't know how to phrase that. You were in the military and you were assigned to this, as opposed to other people—this was their job and they were more or less choosing to do this. Was that ever an issue? Was there ever any anger or regret about that?*

I would've been a little hesitant to be in on any of this stuff. Not what we did, there wouldn't have been any question because I was the Marine and that's what I was assigned to do, so I wouldn't have questioned that. I would have went ahead and done it. But [if] I'd have been a civilian and I knew what this stuff could do, I would have been a little hesitant to do it. I would

not have done it. I don't think I'd have done it. But being in the military, if you're told to do something, do it. That's your job and you don't question why; you go ahead and do it.

*In hindsight, any thoughts about that, or does that make you angry at all?*

Oh, no. I'm proud of what we did. I'm very proud and I want people to know what we did. I figure what we did was just as important as—not as important but right up there with what the guys did in World War II. We didn't have to dodge any bullets, but we were dodging something else. So, I'm very proud, and I want the word out. I'm very, very proud. I've told my two children and I want them to be proud, and I think that they are proud of what we did.

**[00:25:00]** *Do you feel that there hasn't been as much recognition for the veterans that have been involved in this aspect of the project?*

No, there hasn't been because it's been classified information. Now the word's out, so I think they're trying to—like the [Atomic Testing] museum over there, I think they're trying to give us some credit. But some of the guys are not even here anymore. They're gone. And so they'll never know. Us guys that are still living, we're all going to be gone here before long, too.

*That's why we're trying to get the stories.*

See, I'm seventy-seven years old. So I want the word spread. I want people to know what, not only the *Curtiss* Marines, but all the scientists and the people, the Navy guys that were there on board these ships, what they went through, too. Anybody that was at these tests should be recognized [for] what they did.

*[It's] certainly a huge part of our history.*

Right. Tremendous part of our history. I hope that the word gets out and spreads, you know, what this amounted to, what it did. At the opening of the museum, the protesters out there at the front. That hurt. That really hurt us guys. We were very, very disappointed. They have every

right to protest. That's the First Amendment. You can say whatever you want to say. That's what the guys have fought for in this country. But these people, they don't understand. They didn't get the word. They don't understand that the only reason they can stand out there, and that's what I told them when we left, I rolled down the window and I said, The only reason you're standing out here today and protesting is guys like us made it where you could protest. And it's a shame when you see people like up at the test site protesting. They don't understand. People don't understand. They're all saying what we did was kill a bunch of Japanese and it's a lot of people with radiation poisoning and stuff like that. They don't realize how many millions of lives these tests—

*So they don't see the perspective on it?*

They don't understand it. They don't understand. I think that's it. They don't understand, and they don't want to understand. And it's people like you that can maybe get the word out and how these things were necessary. They're not necessary now. I'm all for dropping it right now and letting it go, because I think the whole world knows now that they don't ever want to get into another war with these things. We have skirmishes in Iraq and places like that, but it's not going to be—

*It's not the same kind of—*

Not the same kind of war. No. I mean we're still losing lives, but—

*You mentioned the issue of secrecy a few times, and when we talked earlier, you said that you guys couldn't even have a reunion until 1997.*

Right.

*I think that's really interesting, and I'm wondering what that was like? Obviously they really emphasized that [secrecy] when you were training and on your way out to the islands, even down to censoring the mail. What was that like, seeing this huge, monumental happening—very*

*few people have seen blasts to begin with, and for forty years, basically, that's something you couldn't really talk about. What was that like?*

**[00:30:00]** Well, people were really—they didn't care. They figured when I went in that we were going to be in Korea and fight the Communists and the North Koreans over in Korea, and so they didn't really much care one way or the other about what your duties were. They just figured you were a grunt Marine and that was the extent of it. So nobody asked—

*Was that hard not to talk to your wife about it?*

Oh, she knew about it.

*She knew about it.*

Mm hmm. She probably knew more about it than I did, because there was a big spread in the newspaper of what was going on, as a matter of fact. She knew what was going on. But the guys, we were told not to say anything, and it was top secret. You didn't want to get in any problems, shooting your mouth off [about] what took place. If somebody did, you didn't know what they would do. You don't want to get on the wrong side of them.

*Right, you don't want to push your luck.*

Yeah, and so I think they put the scare act to you and really I don't think people much cared one way or the other. Because the Korean War was still going on and people weren't very happy about being over in Korea. And we were losing a lot of guys over there. So I really don't think people much cared one way or the other. They didn't really think—if you weren't fighting in Korea, you weren't doing anything.

*Interesting. So how did you come to get involved in some of the veterans' associations?*

Well, George Kelly, one of the members of the *Curtiss*, was a career Marine. After the *Curtiss*, he was in Korea, and then he went on to Vietnam and became an officer in Vietnam. Then when

George got out of the Corps, they declassified this information, so George thought, well, now, it'd be a great deal if the guys all get together. So George got on his computer and started contacting guys. Some of them had computers, some of them, wherever you could get a hold of them. I never even had a computer then. I don't know anything about it. I still don't. My wife does. And so I found out about the reunions. They had a reunion here in Las Vegas in, I think, May 1999, at the Orleans. I looked at the [*Las Vegas*] *Review-Journal* one morning and it had a picture of the bomb going off, and they had interviewed Bob [Robert] Mackenzie, which was one of the guys off Castle. And I told my wife Jo, I said, My God, this is the test I was on. This [was the] H-bomb. And I didn't even know it. Then we went back over to San Diego, and I knew Mackenzie lived in San Diego. They said, from the article, that he was a resident of San Diego. So I looked him up in the phone book and called him. And he said, You won't believe it, Jay, he said, we're having the reunion right here, right now. So my wife and I went over and joined the group. The guys were staying at the Hotel Circle out there. There was three other guys from Ivy, and all the rest of them were Castle. Most of the guys now in the reunion are from Castle. There's only about five or six of us out of Ivy left, or that made it to the reunion. I've been going to every reunion since then. [00:35:00] He's found about 150 of us, and there was about 250 guys all told. Well, quite a few of them are gone now. They're dead. And some of them they've still never found. But he found about 150 of them. And George passed away about two years ago. He died of cancer, and we think it was from Agent Orange because he was in Vietnam. But this Kari Chipman now that's taken over, that's Bob Mackenzie's daughter. She's kind of ramrodded the reunions.

*You need somebody like that there.*

Yes, she's gung ho.

*How is it to see folks again?*

Wonderful. After, oh, fifty years. Most of the guys are pretty sharp. They can still remember.

Well, I do, too. I think an experience like that, you never forget.

*It seems like it, you know.*

Next to my children being born, and my wife, being married to her for fifty-seven years, it's probably one of the most exciting experiences of my life that I'll ever see. Like you said, it's something that very few people got to see.

*Yes, very few.*

And to be in on.

*Yeah, that's something.*

So no, I've been blessed, to get to do something like that. And then it brings back a lot of fond memories when us guys all get together. We all reminisce and tell stories about what happened aboard ship. We got some good stories, you know.

*I bet.*

And they can really come up with some goodies. Our favorite is one of the Marines at Port Chicago, he was one of the guards on the land. They were armed with M-1 rifles, and he heard this noise in the brush—Port Chicago was nothing but a swamp up there—and he heard this noise in the brush. You were taught to say, "Halt! Identify yourself," three times and then if they didn't identify, shoot! And so he shot. Well, it happened to be a farmer's cow [laughing]. He killed the cow.

*No wonder he didn't identify himself. Himself.*

So that's one of the favorite stories. The guy that did this is still alive, too. I think he lives down—



*I'm sure he's never forgotten.*

No, we'll never let him forget it. We all had to take up a collection to pay the farmer for shooting his cow. But, you know, he was doing his duty. The cow didn't identify itself. But they got all kinds of stories to tell. They're a good outfit. I mean all the guys are. Even the guys that were—some of us weren't even on some of these operations, but you get around these guys and they swap stories and you tell them about Ivy or they tell you about Castle, Redwing, or all these different operations.

*So you hear about them all.*

Some of the guys were at three or four operations. The roster shows some of the guys had four operations.

*That's pretty significant.*

And like I told you, some of the guys that went into government work since they had top clearance, they become FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] agents and worked for the Treasury Department and for the Atomic Energy Commission, and some of the guys stayed in civil service.

*What did you do?*

I was a printing pressman. So when I got out, I went back to my job.

*In Missouri?*

Yeah, Kansas City, Missouri. I was a printing pressman. I worked fifty years as a printing pressman.

**[00:40:00]** *What brought you out here?*

We got tired of winters back in Kansas City and so we decided we'd just come out here and retire in Nevada. We like the weather out here.

*It's a lot different.*

And like the lifestyle. We're very happy. We've been out here nine years now. I never thought we'd move to Nevada. A lot of people say, You've got to be crazy. How can you stand the summers? I said, The same way you people stand the winters back there.

*Yeah, it takes a little adjusting, but the weather is pretty ideal.*

Perfect.

*Just going back to something that you mentioned a little bit earlier, way earlier when we first started, was the compensation that's starting to come through for some of the folks who have gotten sick. Do you feel that that's fair, that it's fair compensation?*

Yes.

*Is that something that you guys as group worked on at all?*

Yes, they have. We've had guys that have talked to senators and congressman to try to get this through. And the guys that needed this. A lot of us, like me, I have no claims at all because it's not affected me a bit. But I'm all for it. Those guys that were affected, they're entitled to it. It's like being wounded during the war, if you lose a leg or something like that.

*But it's not looked at as being wounded or as an injury, is it?*

It's service related, and anything that is service related, you're eligible for compensation. And the State of Nevada is very good with the veterans. I get all my prescriptions through the VA [Veterans Administration]. I'm not entitled to medical because I'm not retired, but we get our prescriptions through the VA. I go out to the VA, I have to take a medical examination once a year out there. And so I think there's a lot of benefits that the veterans are getting. Like with this radiation deal, I think they're pushing now more and more to recognize these guys. And like Agent Orange that guys got in Vietnam, they denied that for a long, long time, but now they're

finally recognizing that these guys got this Agent Orange, which is a very disabling, deadly thing. It's like radiation. No, I'm all for it. I think these guys, if you've got a legitimate claim, you have compensation coming. These guys, they sacrificed and exposed themselves. There's nothing wrong with me, no way would I even think about filing a claim because I don't have it coming. But I'm all for [it], that anybody that's got it.

*The folks that have gotten exposed.*

Darn right. And that's something that this organization has done. The *Curtiss* Marines have got together and we've got some guys in there that can pull some weight and put some pressure on the government. Let's help these guys out, let's give them their dues. I mean they're not asking for something they don't deserve.

*Right. Has there been anything that you guys have been able to push through since you've been involved?*

Yes, I think they've accomplished quite a bit. And I haven't been in on it, but some of the guys have got complete disability, and some of them are getting compensation for different ailments. It's awful hard to prove. It's kind of a deal that's—well, like me, nothing wrong at all.

**[00:45:00]** [But] another guy, on a different operation, he's exposed. He's got it. I don't think any of us on Ivy got any problems, but on Castle, they got a *lot* of them on Castle. So it all depends on.

*And so something definitely happened, for one thing.*

Right. Yes, these guys, it has to be. Like I say, it's hard to prove. But I think the government is recognizing now and I think they're doing a good job. I think that they've been pushed where they got to do something now. There's enough pressure being applied now. Matter of fact, they

were even talking about trying to get a unit citation for the *Curtiss* guys. That would be quite an honor if they would, if you got the citation.

*Absolutely. Is that something that they're working on right now?*

Yes. There's been talk about it. And maybe down the line—if they don't do something here pretty quick it ain't going to make any difference because none of us are going to be here anyway. All us guys now are early seventies and on up. It'll be fifty-three years in November, or October. Fifty-three years coming up. That's our reunion. Matter of fact, the first operation was Greenhouse, so that was before Ivy. That was when they started messing with these thermonuclear jobbies. And there's the H-bomb.

*Yeah, there's been a lot.*

Well, I hope this helped us.

*Yes. Absolutely. We're just about at the end of this CD. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to talk about or feel should be told?*

No. I hope that you guys, you and the people at the museum, that the word gets out about not so much what the Marines did, but how important this was to the country. That's what I'd like to see you get out, how important this was. That is something that needs to be told to especially the younger generation coming up. All they hear is the bad things about Yucca Mountain and about how deadly this stuff is. They just hear the bad things. You don't ever hear anything about anybody saying good things about this. Well, there wasn't what you'd call good things. It's like a medicine. It prevented a lot of things, let's put it that way.

*The benefits.*

Yes. Outweighs all the bad things. There was a lot of bad things about it, about the bomb, but there's a lot of good things, too. There are more good things than there is bad things. And I'm

proud of the country for following through and for those guys that made it possible. These are the guys that spent their whole lives perfecting this stuff. These are the people that need to go down in history, that [have] done a lot for this country.

*Yeah. Absolutely.*

I'm a very patriotic person. I'm here today because a lot of guys before us made it possible. So I'm a very proud person. So anytime you'd need a speaker or you want somebody to, I'd be more than glad to, and I know there's other guys that I will meet at the reunion that would be more than glad, when they're in town, to tell their side of the story, too.

**[00:50:00]** *Definitely good to know. I certainly appreciate you taking the time this morning to talk with us.*

Well, I'm glad you took your time to go through this because this means a lot. This is the first time in fifty-three years that anybody's ever taken an interest.

*I think it's an enormously interesting part of our history. I really do.*

It's something that needs to be told, and it needs to go down, to be passed on from generation to generation.

*Right. Which is what we're trying to do.*

Well, you guys are doing it.

*Preserve this and pass along this chunk of our history.* Like the museum out there, everybody that I've talked to that's went through there has been very, very impressed, and a lot of my neighbors here now—

*Have they gone?*

They want to go.

*So you been talking it up?*

Yeah. And we're going to make sure that they go. They want to see it. They want to—

*Yeah, it's a pretty unique museum.*

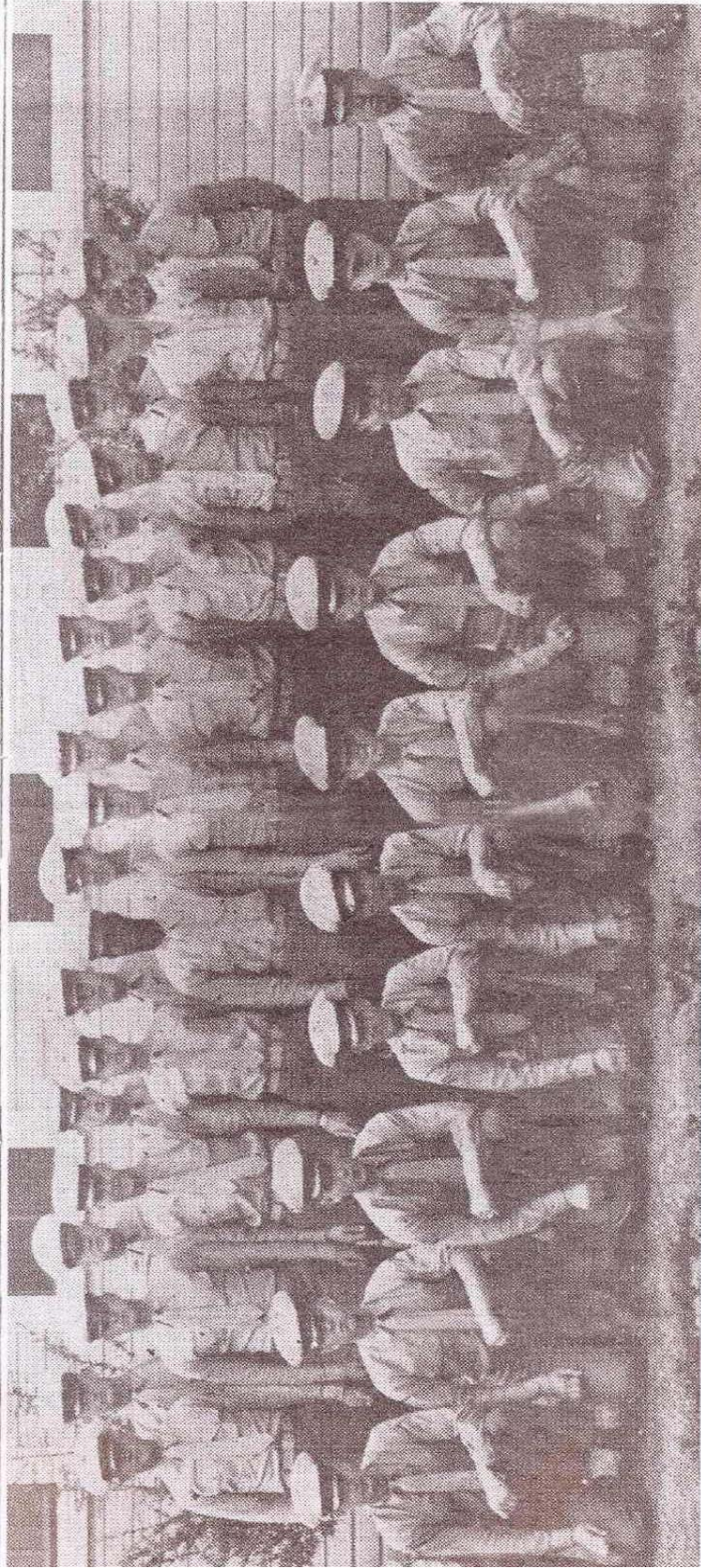
See, my son, he was here, but the museum wasn't open. He wants to go. And my daughter, she wants to go out there. She'll be here in July.

*Where does she live?*

Mountain View, California, south of San Francisco. And so she wants—I want to show you something before you leave here. [showing scrap book of Marine Corp photos, documents and newspaper clippings.]

**[00:51:38]** End of Track 3, Disc 1.

[End of interview]



—Shined up and ready for sea duty (left), Sea School. The class graduated with a final class average of 84.6. Takers in the platoon was Pfc John H. Mohn (second row, third from left) who graduated with a 92.2 average. In second and third places were Pfc Ronald R. Buddle (first row, sixth from left) with a 92 average and Pfc Donald D. Olistad (third row, second from left) with a final average of 90.8. Lt Raymond C. Paulson gave the graduating speech and the platoon's instructor was Sgt Richard A. Harris.

ing, May 16, 1952

Marine Corps Chevron—Page Three







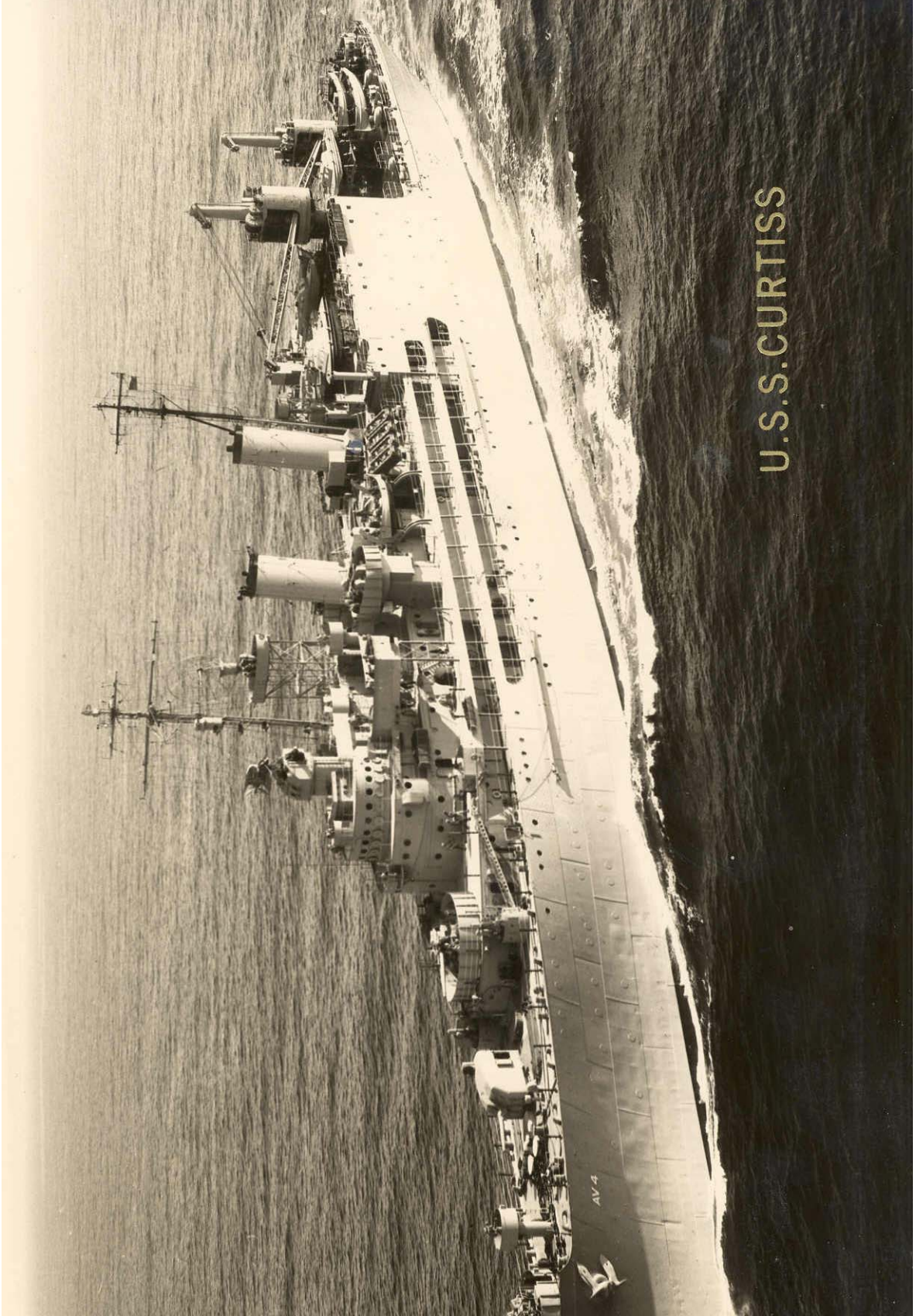


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SGT. J. L. MARSHALL

PFC. C. A. EDWARDS

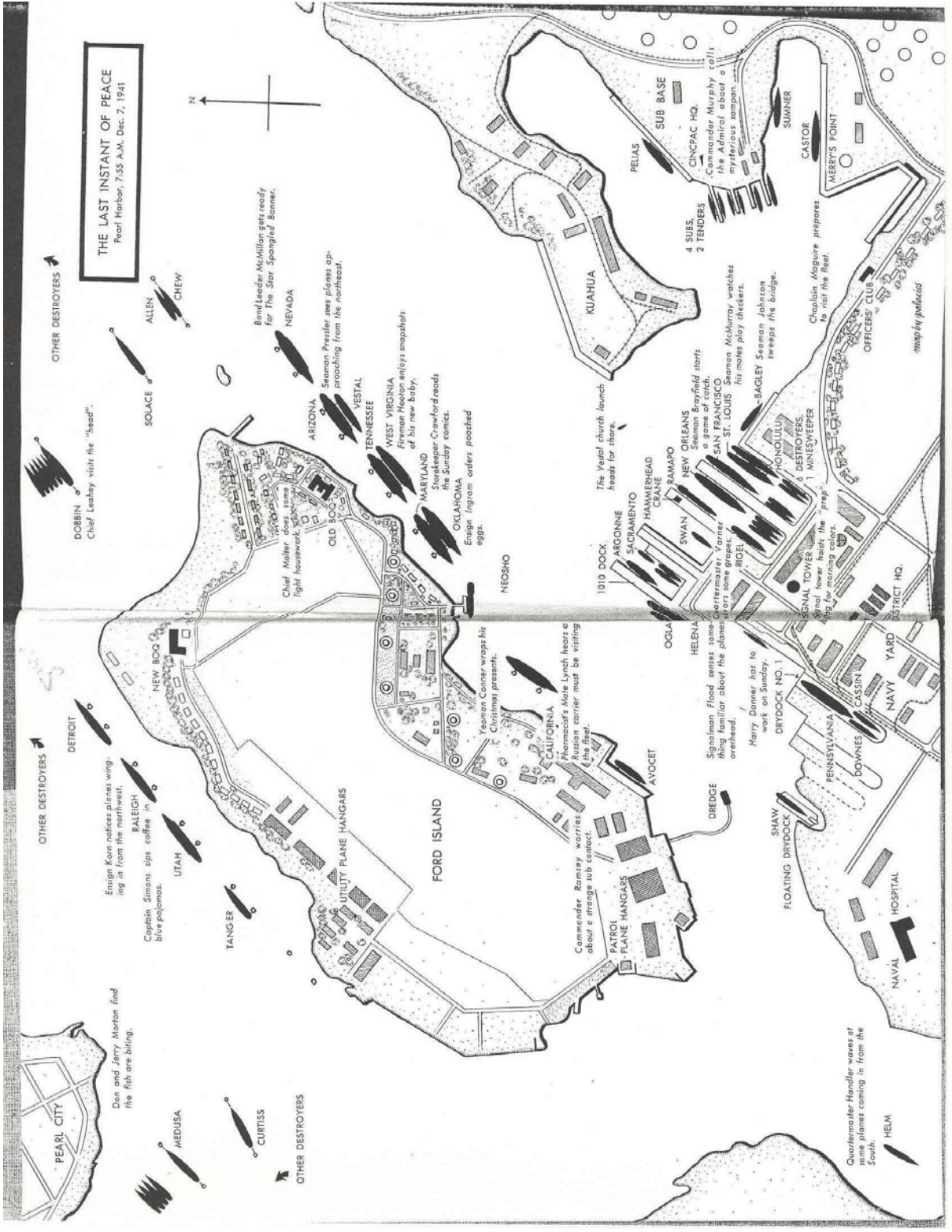
MARINE CORPS EXCHANGE PHOTO SHOP    MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT    SAN DIEGO, 40, CALIFORNIA



U.S.S. CURTISS



**THE LAST INSTANT OF PEACE**  
 Pearl Harbor, 7:55 A.M., Dec. 7, 1941



**OTHER DESTROYERS**  
 DOBBIN  
 Chief Leahy visits the "head".

ALLEN  
 CHEW

Bond Leader McMillan gets ready for the Star Spangled Banner.  
 NEVADA

Seaman Pressler sees planes approaching from the northeast.

ARIZONA  
 Chief Moller does some light housework.

WEST VIRGINIA  
 Fireman Heaton enjoys snapshots of his new baby.

MARYLAND  
 Storkkeeper Crawford reads the Sunday comics.

OKLAHOMA  
 Ensign Ingram orders poached eggs.

NEOSHO  
 The Yeard church lunch heads for there.

NEW ORLEANS  
 Bonfield starts a game of catch.

SAN FRANCISCO  
 Seaman McKurray watches his mates play checkers.

ST. LOUIS  
 Seaman Johnson sweeps the bridge.

SIGNAL TOWER  
 Signal tower hosts the prep for morning colors.

MINISTEER  
 Chaplain Maguire prepares to visit the fleet.

OFFICERS' CLUB  
*mess by galley*

**OTHER DESTROYERS**  
 DETROIT

Ensign Korn notices planes winging in from the northwest.

RALEIGH  
 Captain Simons tips coffee in blue pajamas.

LUTAH  
 TANGER

UTILITY PLANE HANGARS

FORD ISLAND

CALIFORNIA  
 Pharmacist Mole Lynch hears a Russian carrier must be visiting about a strange sub contact.

AYOCET  
 Yeoman Conner wraps his Christmas presents.

PATROL PLANE HANGARS

AYOCET  
 Signalman Flood senses some thing familiar about the planes overhead.

DRYDOCK NO. 1  
 Harry Danner has to work on Sunday.

NAVY YARD  
 PENNSYLVANIA  
 DOWNES  
 CASSIN  
 NAVAL HOSPITAL

SHAW  
 FLOATING DRYDOCK

HELM  
 Quartermaster Handler waves at some planes coming in from the South.

DISTRICT HQ.

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