

Mark Test

Interviewed by Jacob Munson

October 2, 2022

Interview conducted in person

Transcribed by Jacob Munson

[Jacob Munson]: Do I have your permission to record?

[Senior chief Mark Test]: Yes, you have my permission.

[Munson]: This is Jacob Munson tape one, October 2, 2022. At Corpus Christi I am interviewing retired senior chief Mark Test. Senior chief where were you born?

[Test]: Ok well good afternoon, Jacob I was born in a little place, little town about the size of Corpus Christi up in Illinois, Peoria Illinois. That's where I was born and raised, went through K-8 at Bellevue grade school then to Limestone high school at that point.

[Munson]: How was your family life? Any siblings?

[Test]: Yes, it was just myself and a younger two years younger than me, father, mother typical suburban family. Small modest house grew up in and stayed in Bellevue which is a suburb of Peoria think we moved there when i was about age five or six and then stayed all the way through grade school through middle school through high school all in Bellevue Illinois in the same house.

[Munson]: Do you get along with your family members?

[Test]: Yep, we did that goes to says a lot I think so hopefully yeah. Family relations are good makes it easier for the children I think easier to succeed and to be successful.

[Munson]: What elementary school did you attend?

[Test]: Bellevue that handled kindergarten through it was basically the same school kind of split in half, so it handled K through six I want to say and then that was elementary and middle school was 7th and 8th grade. Same building just like different side if that makes sense.

[Munson]: What did you did for fun while in elementary?

[Test]: Oh, in elementary you got me I mean what we're talking about fifth grade and below. We did a lot of times we have a lot of woods around so a lot of outdoorsy stuff so me and a couple friends would always uh brother tagging along we would always go, there were creeks nearby, woods we target practice with bb guns and then latter on grew up to .22s and shotguns as we got older. So different times back then nobody freaked out when kids went into the woods with

shotguns. so, you know that's now when I'm getting into seventh and eighth grade when we definitely would do hunting and fishing on our own up in the nearby woods.

[Munson]: How often did you hunt?

[Test]: Pretty consistent from about age ten cause in the state of Illinois there you had to get a hunting license and you have to be ten. But I like the way Illinois did it. I'm not sure about Texas. But you had to go through a conservation course so I do remember that and basically, they taught you firearms safety along with what conservation is taking care of the environment, why there are quotas on how many deer you can take, how many rabbit, how many fish out of the streams et cetera. So, it was very enlightening and educational, so I did enjoy that. how many times from age ten to about age thirteen or fourteen and then after that I started to lose interest in it. And yeah, that's pretty accurate then just stuck to fishing after that.

[Munson]: In middle school or JV did you develop any other hobbies or past times?

[Test]: On the sports side the athletics I was decent at baseball around that time so now we're talking about seventh to eighth grade. I was a member of the local baseball team, some other baseball teams that played in the summer like minors, super minors leagues and basketball for a little while organized in school right.

[Munson]: Were you part of the school teams?

[test]: Yes, yes wasn't a starter role the bench most of the time on both. I did better at baseball if memory serves me right and I really enjoyed playing catcher in baseball right so I did like that. But in basketball I was okay at nothing to write home about, so I was a decent second stringer.

[Munson]: Did you watch sports on TV during that time?

[Test]: Pretty much started around eighth grade getting interested because of course now I'm thinking back you want to learn the game and what better way than to watch the pros play it. So I would say around eighth grade if a baseball game was on or something I would probably stick around and watch it. But honestly I wouldn't go out of my way and say okay the Cardinals are playing so I'm going to stop everything I'm doing on Saturday and watch them. So that was my team my baseball team still is the Saint Louis Cardinals.

[Munson]: After middle school or JV what high school did you attend?

[Test]: I did yep it was very independent back then so, what I mean by that, and I wish they never took it away from this generation, but I was on my own I had to order the number of papers I needed I had to recruit subscribers every weekend I had to go around door to door knock on the doors and collect the subscription fee seventy-five cents or a dollar fifty whatever it was learned how to count back change learned how to protect money and earn money more importantly so you pretty much like a small little businessman business of your own. So, I did enjoy that I really did and making a couple of hundred bucks every week was nice too you know I was a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old.

[Munson]: Did you develop any interests in high school or ideas what to do after high school?

[Test]: Well, believe it or not- oh big thing on the hobbies yeah around the high school age now because probably starting my sophomore year in high school I did get an interest in art of all things so that's probably attributed to the great art teachers that we had there in Limestone. So, I would say definitely art drawing and painting and a little bit of scripture too. So, these things were all offered back then too so I did take them so um yeah. Because that didn't interfere too much with my work schedule cause now as I got into my sophomore-junior years I actually worked downtown Peoria at the Peoria public library. So, I was working twenty-five twenty, twenty-five hours a week while going to high school to. So that one thing yeah art didn't get in the way of that. So, I think I was pretty decent, but I did develop an interest in that in art for sure around my junior year.

[Munson]: After graduating high school what did you planned to do after high school?

[Test]: Same thing you guys probably heard this story a million times but it's true back then. So, we're now talking about 1984 and like everybody before me in my family everyone plan back then was graduate high school and go to work for Caterpillar Tractor. Peoria Illinois at the time was the world headquarters for Caterpillar Tractor and lots of plants we're talking in this area it would be the equivalent of Kiewit maybe or maybe a large refinery so we're talking probably 75,000 jobs so it was just expected if you were in good shape good health you could go get hired by Caterpillar Tractor. But of course, if we go back to American history what was happening right there was a major recession, so they weren't hiring. So, then it was like well I got a job at the library do I want to do this \$3.50 an hour job \$3.50 I think I made then or do something else. So, I definitely want to get out on my own I did do a semester in a community college took a couple art classes a psych class I think I took like maybe nine credit hours and college wasn't my thing either here I am setting in a classroom paying for this, so I just want to get out and do stuff so. The plan was to go to Caterpillar and work like everyone else my dad my uncle and make \$40-50 dollars an hour so but that fell through and that led into talking to an Army recruiter first of all things.

[Munson]: So, when Caterpillar wasn't doing as well did it hit the community hard?

[Test]: Oh, it did, it did, yeah, it did, they started shutting down plants and all that. That's probably the begging of some of the offshore work and stuff like that started happing in the eighty's I'm not sure on that but it did strike the community pretty hard restaurants leisure things like movies theaters and stuff yeah for sure.

[Munson]: The library job you did what was your job in it?

[Test]: I don't know if they still call it what it is but my title when I started was a page, so the page is just the young man and young woman that gets the books as they're returned, we organize them and sort them and then we go put them back on the shelves in the right place, so I was a page and then I worked my way up to being like maybe an assistant librarian if you will up in the art department checking out video movies VHS tapes back then DVDs albums too we

could check out music from the library albums and tapes so I did that before looking at the military as a career.

[Munson]: What made you choose to talk to an Army recruiter first?

[Test]: Because I came from a family of Army, so my father was Army my uncle, so the male members of the family were Army my uncle was Army my father was Army and grandfather my dad's father was Army as well he was Army Air Corps though I found out later. So just made sense they were Army so I would be Army. But that changed so the reason it changed my dad found out that I was talking to the sergeant and this Army recruiter, and I said well you were in the Army, and he said exactly that's why I don't want you in the Army his words and I said o wow. So anyway, he invited the sergeant over and then I found out why cause my dad knew what questions to ask the recruiter for instance what I learned which to me today blows me away was there's no guaranteed school there's no guaranteed MOS at least back then. The Army would not guarantee a MOS a job failed so and that's what I wanted a guaranteed trade, and his reasoning was everyone in the Army this is 1984-85 goes into infantry school first everybody for two years so as a young man I'm scratching my head wait it takes two years to train somebody how to march and carry ammo and shoot a rifle and the sergeant said yes and I'm like no it doesn't back in my dad was like see. No of course it doesn't take that long to train someone to do that it takes maybe two weeks, so I didn't want any part of that so then it was off to the Navy cause that where my dad said he suggested Navy or Air Force.

[Munson]: Did your family served in any major wars or conflicts?

[Test]: Very good question right both my grandparents both my grandfathers I should say on my mom's side was on the *USS Salt Lake City* that was an attack cruiser in World War II, primarily engaged in the Aleutian conflict in the Pacific, so he saw a lot of stuff a lot of action kamikazes and such not and what not and then my grandfather on my dad's side served in the pacific theater as well Army Air Corps so he was island hopping with the marines I would speculate. And then both my uncle and father served at least one tour I think they just did one tour each in Vietnam.

[Munson]: So how did you get in contact with the Navy recruiter and how did it went?

[Test]: It went very good actually he was a chief I can't remember his name many years ago really great outgoing personality and what I picked up on is that he seemed to be legit telling the truth and latter I found out he was he just told it like it was. But my Navy experience was walking into the- I'm basically a recruiter's dream okay I already had my high school diploma walk in and said I want to enlist in the Navy and they said when and I said now I thought that how this works and they said woah slow down and there's a little thing called an ASVAB I said okay so they busted out the ASVAB o no I had to go to the recruit center the next weekend scored very high on the ASVAB and then all kinds of doors opened so and they like me even more so I wanted to go in now you know I could put in my two weeks' notice from the library I said I need two weeks to quit my job properly and they were fine with that and once my ASVAB score came in they liked it even more and started negotiating for a rate and all that yeah and the rest is pretty much history after that. So, I would say once I took that ASVAB I was on the bus to Great Lakes Illinois within a month after that it was very fast process.

[Munson]: When you got to the Great Lakes Illinois how did the Navy bootcamp went?

[Test]: I was prepared for it of course I did talk to some Navy veterans because Army and I mean bootcamps are the same so what my family have told me about basic training their versions of it from the Army even though it was to deferent generations it was the same pretty much experience is the same it was probably um you hear stories of drill instructors beating up on people and things like that and I didn't see any of that back in the eighties when I went through and they had strict rules on that so there's was no violence or anything like that like you might see in some of the movies from Vietnam era and earlier it was pretty much what I expected or what I had been trained for based on my dad said the advice that I took was that when you get there keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut and only answer when spoken to and that's what I did for eight weeks and I got through with no problems.

[Munson]: After Navy bootcamp what MOS did you pick, or did they assign you one?

[Test]: Right well I had a guaranteed one and that's what I liked about the Navy it was guaranteed back at that recruiter station based on my ASVAB scores which if your listeners don't know ASVAB it's the aptitude service vocational- oh armed services I'm sorry armed services vocational aptitude battery that's what ASVAB stands for and very accurate I think it's been in use since 1916 the Army started it but based on what you scored on the ASVAB it puts you in a career field a vocational field so my aptitude were strong in like science a little bit of electronics in there. So, anyway by the time I had gone to Great Lakes as long as I successfully upheld my end of the contract as everyone signs a contract for four years of enlisted service so long as I did what I was told and made the grades I would become an ocean system technician so that was my NEC Navy enlisted code so a little bit different than the other services Navy uses NECs so that was my NEC which we just remember them as rates it's a four digit number just like the Army and Air Force, but I just remember we go by our rates in the Navy so an OT basically an ocean systems technician.

[Munson]: And how was training for the ocean system technician like?

[Test]: Right so after graduating from boot camp which was step one of my agreement to Uncle Sam to the Navy graduate basic training on time to keep my school, I was shipped off to—got on a plane from Chicago and flew to Virginia, Norfolk, Virginia, specifically and that's where my A school where they going to train me to be an ocean systems tech and that was a two-month school if I remember right about eight weeks long. So again, that's this is my bias now towards the Army I don't know why the Army needs to take years and years to train somebody to do a skill one skill only in my case learning how to examine underwater signals and a screen and then look at classifying where those noise sources are, are they a troller are they a merchant ship or are they a surface combatant or a submarine. In eight weeks, they did a pretty good job with us they got us in and out pretty quick so. But really enjoyed Norfolk never went back to Norfolk though but Norfolk was okay yeah. Lot of admirals there it's close to Washington D.C too so lot of politics yeah.

[Munson]: Was it nervous being around a lot of admirals?

[Test] Well not so much nervous it just, um, that's just a saying in the Navy the further away you get from Norfolk the less uptight your leadership is let's put it that way. Cause of course you know Norfolk your right by D.C you got a lot of high-ranking people around that are just five minutes away. So, those commanding officers obviously really, really don't want to screw anything up to get the attention of an admiral. So, the further away you are you know Japan, Adak Alaska, Guam all these places I been its a little bit easier going. I mean you still want to make sure you're doing your job right and everything of course safety is always number one concern and you will still get the attention of Norfolk it just seemed more laxed the further away you are from Norfolk. So, I always remembered that tried to take duty stations east and west coast but not Norfolk very crowded too Norfolk is the largest naval base in the world okay some think Murmansk is, its Norfolk and so its crowded too very crowded place. Virginia a great state, don't get me wrong, just wasn't for me.

[Munson]: What did you rate job entail?

[Test]: While now we can talk about it back then we actually had cover stories. I'll try not to bore your listeners too bad but what a cover story is, is when you are asked what does an OT do even by other Navy personal, we had to say that well in order for the Navy to effectively operate in the ocean you know in the ocean on the ocean above the ocean we need to understand it basically oceanography so we were told to tell them that's what we do we're oceanographers we used electronical devices to monitor deferent things ocean eddies currents salinity blah blah blah all this physics of underwater sound stuff. That was our cover story I can say it now because it's been reversed back in the nineties, we were allowed to say what we actually did. Which we monitored the worldwide it was truly worldwide underwater listening sources. Any Tom Clancy fans he talked about it in the *Hunt for Red October*, *Red Storm Rising*, it was known as the SOSUS network [Sound Surveillance System] so all across the world underwater we had these arrays which are hydrophones linked together that could pick up sounds of surface ships as well as submarines and our main concern was finding the submarines cause what your listeners may not realize back in the Cold War the eighties it was getting towards the height of it this arms buildup was crazy seventy-eighty thousand nuclear weapons on either side four hundred submarines on their side on our side four hundred folks okay the fleets were massive back then so it was a big deal to make sure their submarines didn't get into position to hurt our carrier strike groups and we did that pretty effectively or their missile boats their Yankees their Deltas the typhons never had a shot at coming to periscope depth and launching their SLBMs which each one missile would be able to take out ten US cities and these guys carried twenty, twenty four missiles at a time so it was kind of a big deal. So that was kind of exciting too a lot of our data did go right to the NSA a lot of times our data was briefed directly to the president in the White House. So, it was pretty cool but early on it was tough cause like you can't say anything, can't say anything about you know you watch something on tv and go yeah, I was there I helped you know catch that boat but weren't allowed to say anything but now we can and now it moved on to what is called the IUSS system integrated underwater [actually undersea] surveillance system so who knows what they're doing now because I been out now for at least ten years so technology the way it's moving hopefully they're still doing good stuff out there tracking any submarines that want to try threaten America and our interests.

[Munson]: Is the job overwhelmingly or taxing at times?

[Test]: Oh, it could have been yes it was at times yeah. That's like anything you guys see on the movies any of your listeners if you watch that especially one of my favorites wasn't around for World War II but *Das Boot* I think that's an excellent movie probably a better book, but lots of periods of downtime we were just bored, just bored just cleaning stuff fixing stuff painting stuff and then really, really quick things change and now it's a lot of excitement there's a lot of work a lot of submarines rushing around your area of responsibility and stuff like that. So, you had the gold drums that would last for months maybe cause the enemy the enemy never know what they're going to do even though it's peace time we still practice the way we thought a war between NATO and the Soviet Union would go down and the Soviets were practicing stresses they would throw lots of contacts our way from submarines, aircraft and surface action groups are what we called them so a lot of destroyers and frigates and stuff would come out with a lot of submarines and that would go on for two or three weeks really, really busy and then six seven months with hardly a contact at all. So, that was really the pace although my experience of the Cold War.

[Munson]: When there was downtime, and all of your tasks were done is there any popular past times in the Navy?

[Test]: Yes, let me see my first duty station was cause we were primarily shore based as an ocean systems tech was Adak, Alaska, so we had some arrays in that neck of the woods and we work two, two, two and eighty so that meant we worked two eight hours shifts, I'll say at the start of the day, it was a day watch yeah, two days so let's say you worked Monday and Tuesday regular seven to three o'clock day now the second day you got off at three you had to go back in at midnight or eleven o'clock at night and then get off in the morning and then you had another mid watch and then the mid eve was always a tough swing we called these swing backs you would get off at the mid watch and be off in seven in the morning be back into work at three, three p.m. but then you got eighty hours off so that's three days off and those three days off while we were young sailors being there was Adak I did do the outdoors stuff so from fishing some guys would go caribou hunting there were caribou on Adak, Alaska, small little island in the Aleutians. Mountain climbing, there was a mountain I believe it was Mount Baker, if I remember right, Mount Sica was on a different island, but learned how to mountain climb, cross country ski, so do things like that and of course you try not to get in the rut of just drinking because back then if you were in the service, you were at least eighteen years old and everyone would serve you so alcohol and alcohol problems could be a problem if you went down that. So, I realized that early on but not saying I was an angel but yeah, we did drink a lot, but I did try it but as time went on, I was like well this is stupid so there's so much to do here so good MWR morale welfare and recreation facilities on there so you could rent skis, we did fencing, I forgot about that we actually tried fencing the whole suits and the masks so instead of just drinking your life away while were there and it helped made the time pass so going outdoors and doing stuff there in Adak which was very, very rural and Alaska is a beautiful state. So, that was pretty much the life there and then of course you get older, and you meet people all around the world and just any advice to anyone going into the service I'll throw this out here to your younger viewers that are thinking about military service stay out of the bars just get out there so if your overseas you're in Tokyo maybe go have a drink or two at a club and experience that of course and dancing and

nightlife but get with those MWR services and get out there and do stuff during the day you know go out there and learn about the culture and everything. So, and I did, and I ended up doing that route and I'm glad I did.

[Munson]: After your first duty station in Alaska what was your next duty station?

[Test]: From Adak I went to a place called Brawdy, Wales, there's no such thing as Brawdy, Brawdy was just the name of the royal air station. So, now I'm with the British working with the UK and another listening outpost in the eastern Atlantic and we were actually stationed in a little town in Wales called Haverfordwest, so I took a train from London all the way to Haverfordwest, which if you know your geography of the UK, London is kind of south central and Haverfordwest was like all the way to the western side of Wales southwestern corner, if I remember right. Ended up renting a house and this is the first thing that blew me away the house that I lived in, and a couple of roommates was built in either the 1400s or 1500s so right off the back I understood that Europe was around a lot longer than America so here I'm living in a house that was five hundred years old and still standing so it was amazing so a little farmhouse in a place called Solva a little small village and that where I ended up meeting my wife she was a petty officer in the Navy our paths crossed there at Wales and we got married in Wales got a Welsh wedding certificate so I think that's pretty cool it's all in Welsh its interesting language.

[Munson]: How did you meet your wife while there?

[Test]: At work, that was one of the selling points for going the OT route. Back at a place called MEPS that's the job I qualified for so my recruiter can't—back up a little bit, so way back in 1985, my recruiter can't guarantee the job that's what called MEPS, so you do that, and they still do MEPS so that was in Chicago as well I went to Chicago it was part of boot camp that is where they assign your job, so they got to make sure that you're not crazy and that you are physically fit to serve so that's what MEPS is it's a day of different tests psych and physical tests, and then when you pass those you set down at a computer with another sailor behind the computer monitor and they plug in your scores and OT came up and they weren't happy these guys were some submariners on the other side they knew exactly what OT did and they were upset that I got a very—it's a unicorn type job very rare that this job pops up. So, the reason they were just not upset at me they just were blown away that I got lucky I get the lottery basically and the reason being as an OT I forgot to say this earlier on the selling point for me selling point for all of us was its shore based it was it was shore-based duty. Shore base duty and 80 percent female maybe 90 percent so that's how I meet my wife. it was probably at that time nine to ten nine women for every one man. So, at work in the Navy is how I meet my wife on watch and as long as you don't do any hanky panky at work obviously it was fine and your allowed to fall in love and marry and all that.

[Munson]: How long did you knew her before dating?

[Test]: Ah, okay, well we, uh, knew her before dating about maybe a few weeks possibly but I think we did it the right way. That is when we started dating, I had space you know when roommates were okay with it too and so we actually lived together for well over a year we didn't drive each other crazy and all that kind of stuff. Now at this time to the Navy realize that we

were a couple, so they split us up. That's, correct I think that policy should still be there, and you do that by you go to the command and say hey we're dating and then they split us up so that we're not there's not a conflict there me showing favoritism towards her cause I was senior I was about a year more than her, so I think she was a seaman, and I was at least a third class maybe a second class petty officer which is a E-5. So that way there's no way of showing any type of favoritism so she went to a different watch team, and we still dated and lived together for about a year and then decided to tie the knot and get married. Some people might say that living in sin, but I don't know, I would recommend it to my kids to do that first and it work been married for since 1990 so what, that thirty years now Jacob, I think.

[Munson]: I think thirty-two.

[Test]: Yeah, thirty-two years if my math is right. So, it worked for me but because it worked for me doesn't mean it work for anybody else. But that's the story of where we meet and how we meet and all that. It was in the Navy.

[Munson]: How big was the ceremony did any family members came?

[Test]: Uh, no, we were overseas like that, so it was just, um, justice of the peace type wedding, we did have a church wedding the day after. So, the Welsh magistrate married us down in Haverford West at the courthouse and then that following Sunday, the immediate Sunday, we rented out basically or reserved the base chapel. But we did have probably it was probably a good forty to fifty friends of ours they were friends none of the family made it. We planned on going back to each one of our families my family in Illinois hers in Kansas once we had our leave when we transferred from England and that's what we did. So, we had about forty fifty guests at the church there on the chapel I should say the chapel on the Royal Airforce side of the base so that was nice. And then of course we went home and caught up exchange gifts and all that meet all the family she got to meet my family and I get to meet her family while we did two to three weeks on leave. Yep, that how that work so you can see sailor's military we still have lives we still live lives normal like anybody else.

[Munson]: How was it at Wales, the people and culture, what was it like to be there?

[Test]: If I could go back there, I'll go back in a heartbeat, awesome people, awesome culture, course that's where you know we as Americans come from you know we fought our independence from the English as the Welsh would say. The Welsh don't like to be mixed in nor do the Scots with the English. They reminded me there that you weren't fighting the Welsh you were fighting the English we're part of the United Kingdom now but back then. So, I learned that Arthur Pendragon you know the myth or whatever of King Arthur was Welsh. Got to see King Henry VIII castle go through that and that was in Cardiff, Wales, which I think is their capital of the country I mean a lot of great history it's just amazing you go overseas see the old world the old country I mean King Henry VIII sat in the throne I was six feet away from it all that history and stuff is there just amazing. And then get to see Europe well we were there got to go through Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, and that's something if you're in England you can get in a car go across the channel, we had to get on a ferry back then now you got the Chunnel drive under the channel pop up in France you can have a nice French dinner and then still get back the

following mourning for work. Or take a couple days and you could go all the way down to Italy and have a real good Italian pasta dinner and stuff and legit. Austria was there it was just amazing being there that Europe and realizing how large America is Europe is very, very small I think if you put Europe, the European, western Europe on a map of America it might cover New England the New England size. So, that's what I learned about the people were great actually people everywhere I been from the Middle East to the far east to Europe were all the same and I think any veteran will tell you that. What do I mean by were all the same, we all just want to live our lives and take care of our kids that's pretty much what every man woman and child that I ever encounter all across the globe that's all they want. Our government is kind of getting in the way of that right? That's—I'm not going down that hole, that's a whole different politics, let's keep out of that.

[Munson]: Did you and your wife had any pastime activities while there?

[Test]: Pastime. Other than sightseeing yeah, I would say sightseeing right our honeymoon actually was a two week what they called a coach trip so coach over in England is a bus, so it was a bus trip and two weeks so that's where we got to see all Western Europe now, we couldn't go to places like Poland or Czechoslovakia which were right there next to us once you cross the channel because it was still a cold war and the Berlin Wall was still up and east vs west and yeah American active duty could not go to eastern Europe because they were communist. But that was probably the big thing as we both like to travel and see the sights went to Lochness quite a few times camped out over there in England a few times and things like that. So being outdoors traveling seeing the country like I said not seating at a bar all day drinking your life away get out see the people meet the people see the countryside and she was into that as well so that was one of our common interests, we both had.

[Munson]: After being stationed in the UK where was your next station?

[Test]: Then from the UK I went on to Keflavik Iceland, so we had another listening post up there so Iceland. Again, Iceland phenomenal that was a short tour I think two years which goes by pretty fast but lived on base housing there just amazing then that the volcanos you saw a volcano day in Iceland going off lots of earthquakes too and busy it was busy up there where Iceland was at. And now were getting closer to the Norwegian Sea. The Norwegian Sea if you don't know goes into Murmansk so that's the head submarine and surface fleets of the Russian Navy and that was during transition while I was in Keflavik now were talking early nineties that's when the wall fell down and now, we were all really bored because those four hundred ships those four hundred submarines that the Soviets were putting to sea, they were broke they no longer had any money to pay for them, and now we're looking at what are we going to do the writing was on the wall there's no need for all this OTs anymore and that segways into, they merge us at that point they gave us a choice we could go to aviation warfare specialist and do sonobuoy monitoring with the P3 aircraft which is now the P8 Poseidon I don't know don't quote me on that. But it's the P8 aircraft we have now. Basically, long range reconnaissance aircraft that use all kind of sensors to keep an eye on folks including under water hydrophones which is my specialty. So, they offered us that path line that pathway or we can basically straight convert us a stroke of the pen so one day I was an ocean systems technician the next day I became a sonar technician just like that. And it crossover just fine but that open up now STs

instead of being like I came from a rate that was shore intensive 80 percent of my job would be at shore now I went to where 80 percent of my job would be at sea aboard a ship, and I love sea duty, so it was a blast once I got underway and got to ships. Yeah, I liked it, so it worked out and I figured I owed the Navy some sea time anyway cause my first ten years was all shore duty it was all overseas you know but it was Adak overseas duty Iceland, Britain, Hawaii even counts as overseas duty I did a little bit of time at Hawaii so went ST and then started going to sea doing the same job just at sea though.

[Munson]: Was there any difficulties at your first time at sea?

[Test]: That's a very good question that's the downside definitely for sailors is the separation cause up till this point me and the wife both active duty and we had Brandon our firstborn we had our son in 91 as the wall fell down and now, we have to now chose who going to stay the shore base side whose going go to sea and we decided both of us that it should be me and then is the separation so especially now you got children to take care of so it's tough that's the challenge and it was but you adapt to it as a family. Will say this the Navy wives they got it figured stuff out if the husband or vice versa if it's the dad that stays behind and the female sailor goes to sea cause we're talking deployment six to eight months nine months you know you get a leaking faucet your car breaks down that spouse that left behind has to figure all that out and know how to do that so by themselves plus take care of the kids. So, it's a tough job too so shootout there to the Navy spouses that hold the home front down cause that's no joke cause honestly, it's kind of a break for us the dads we get a six-month vacation if you will mean every three days, we're pulling into a different city you know Tokyo on Monday and then maybe its Brisbane Australia the following Monday so we're seeing the world out there plus doing our job protecting America of course we're not dealing with stuff like leaky faucets and broken cars and that kind of stuff crying babies sick children and all that so it's kind of a break for them we're just doing our job at sea that's all. so, big shootout for the Navy spouses that do that.

[Munson]: What's the difference from a sonar technician and your previous task?

[Test]: The difference not much, not much cause those STs rolled right into our shore base facilities we still have a few of those left. Course a lot of them closed down with all the submarines going away there's no longer a need for that wide range of converge. So, um but the STs were easily able to go right in and do what I did. Basically, it's just um how would your listeners under— you're listening for underwater sounds but on different type of gear different type maybe an analog vs digital. So just some minor nuances you'll had to pick up different display's different frequencies ranges it was a big thing. So yeah, once you gotten your eyes and ears adjusted to what's going on where you're at it was easy. so, it was fairly easy for me, and I think for most of my OTs going to ST where the ships had a towed array. So, my array was a fixed array on the seabed now I just had to understand this array that I'm looking at now is moving through the ocean at say ten knots twelve knots whatever. And so now you got target motion analysis [TMA] which is I didn't much TMA where I was at but know I had to do more math once you go to a ship and do it. That was the only difference but once you figured it out it doesn't take long. Sorry Army they didn't send me for two years to learn TMA you learn it in one midwatch (laughs) you do we had cheat sheets and stuff and checklist you use too makes sure you're doing it right and of course now you have the computer, but I like the way I learned

it I learned it on paper first how to compute it in my head and then check the computer cause then your just double checking the computer to make sure it all adds up.

[Munson]: What was the first ship you were deployed on?

[Test]: The first ship I was deployed on. It was actually a USNS [United States Naval Ship which is used from civilian maned ships part of the Navy sealift command] and I don't know which one there were so many I was on about five or six of them, but I want to say I don't know which one was the first I should, I should cause it was a big deal I'm leaning toward the research vessel *Cory Chouest* um but it might have been the USNS *Assertive* all of these were basically the hydrophone systems that we had fixed under the old SOSUS network those same listening devices we we're able to put on surface ships and tow them through the water meaning they were mobile they could pick up transit to a different spot in the water put the array in the water and have this really, really good acoustic listening device anywhere in the world. So yeah, it was USNS ships so let's just say it was the *Cory Chouest* I going to say that's probably the first one. And that was an interesting gig I liked it the Navy would fly what they called a detachment so myself and maybe twelve other sailors we get on a plane fly to maybe Guam, fly to Tokyo and catch the ship there which was a permeant civilian manned crew the merchant marines military sealift command and us sailors will get on board, and we would operate all the gear and those guys would maintained the gear, so if we broke something they would fix it so it was a pretty good working relationship. So those were my first ships that I went on the USNSs and there's at least half a dozen and there all blurring in my head, the *Assertive*, the *Victorious*, the *Effective*, the *Impeccable*, the R/V *Cory Chouest*, and probably a couple others. Yeah, good times though those were good times.

[Munson]: Was the job more demanding was there any free time while onboard a ship?

[Test]: Yeah, a lot of free time even in today's fleet when you move to an actual warship these, we're not warships by any means had no armaments we're completely unarmed so there you, just you were a worker like in any other civilian you were at work you put on the uniform normally Navy coveralls underway, and we stood twelve-hour watches so twelve on twelve off but our watches were seating at a sonar console and ever couple hours you would rotate to a different console so you're not getting bored falling asleep cause you do want to keep your alertness up monitor all the systems we have. So yeah, sonar shack would have six to seven guys in it you know a watch chief and yeah, sometimes it can be a busy watch go by real fast other times you're seating there just talking about knowledge and always learning stuff and practicing stuff. But it was very interesting from there and then going to a Navy warship where the pace is a lot different. So, a lot of free time on the USNSs to answer your question yeah PlayStation play a lot of cards because you got twelve hours off, you're not going to sleep for twelve hours I mean you don't so a lot of free time.

[Munson]: What's the big difference between a USNS and a US warship in terms of its like to work there?

[Test]: Everyone stands watch on a warship. I went to my first combatant was USS *Pelican* an MHC so a mine hunter coastal here in Ingleside Texas. And a lot of work I just say a lot so I'm a

sonar tech but now I'm on a mine hunting sonar, so which was easy to pick up the SQQ-32 active sonar it's an active sonar [active sonar is sending soundwaves through the water and picking up the sound bouncing back think of the pings in movies passive is hydrophones hearing the sea no ping] 24/7 and here the TMA was reversed a mine a bottom mine is not moving the ship is the target not vice tracking a submarine your moving and he's moving in this case it was a lot easier cause now I'm the only one moving he's not. So, working on the mine hunting sonar set the squeaky thirty-two as we called it. So, I would stand typical six hours in sonar/ combat and then four hours on the bridge learning how to drive the ship and be an officer of the deck underway running fire drills running combat systems training team, damage control training team so busy running drills navigation training team cause by now I'm a chief petty officer when I got to *Pelican* so um so I'm in a leadership position so a lot of training a lot of real word ops and what I learned on the surface warfare side of the Navy you work six hours on let's say you got six hours off you don't get to go to your pit and go to sleep you have to go fix what you broke so that was a deference we don't have those civilians on a warship to fix our gear so if anything brakes while we're there we had to go fix it so you might get two. On a mine sweep I don't know what it is now but a few years back on a mine sweep two to three hours of sleep a day it was rough it was rough you would spend a week out it felt like an month that's what they the MMC chief Lucius told me enginemen I'm sorry his an enginemen ENC he said, "Yeah, Mark, it feels like a month under way you know when we're just a week out," and he was right and then I look back two to three hours of rest every day and that's from the officers to the enlisted guys so it was tough duty but it was enjoyable it was rewarding that's the word rewarding to have survived something like that for three years that you went through all of that and made it without losing your mind. So, there's the difference, and everyone is a firefighter on a warship okay those USNS I'm pretty sure well I know for a fact my general quarters station for shipboard fire was lifeboat. Lifeboat one or lifeboat two okay we didn't fight fires on USNSs you push the automated system if it put out the fire great if it didn't you abandon ship. Okay that was a big difference whereas on a warship everybody fights fires so being on a fire party as well was a wakeup call. So, yeah, very enjoyable I look back at and the reason its enjoyable I realize now all these years is I just had great people around me and that makes any job career that you're in is just being surrounded by great folks makes it worth doing.

[Munson]: What responsibilities did you have as a senior enlisted?

[Test]: Very good senior enlisted I took up the role as command chief, so I was dealing with the wives of the sailors all the sailors with any issues will come to me first and then I would take those to the captain directly as an senior enlisted advisor you know in that role yeah, I directly report to the CO themselves which is a lieutenant commander possibly a commander at the time depending which ships I was on. So yeah, that was interesting times tough jobs being an command chief worked with the XO [executive officer second in command under the commanding officer CO] a lot with the captain cause captain busy with stuff but basically just making sure every enlisted guy. You're their voice to the captain how's morale? "Hey chief what could we be doing better to make these guys lives a little bit easier?" things like that. And make recommendations and sometimes captain would agree sometimes not because it always develop everything revolves around the ship schedule what the ship has to do orders are orders and you're going have to do those things. So that was one of my duty's and then it was a combat systems chief that's where my specialty at that time was, so I learned things about Harpoon,

Aegis, the VLS systems on various warships. So even though I was on a mine sweep that's still valuable knowledge to have once we start working with destroyers and cruisers which we did quite a bit especially over in Bahrain in the 5th fleet AOR [area of responsibility]. So yeah, combat systems chief modern warfare specialist learned to be an OD under way [officer of the day] special evolutions of OD for replenishments at sea and all that kind of stuff standing up and driving the ship during those times. A lot of hats a lot of duties and that's one thing you know I like about the Navy for me was if you're willing to learn the job whether it be working on an engine or working on a sonar most captains are going to be okay with that it's called on the job training and there's even qualifications you can do to get certified without going to a school so I liked that yeah I think most guys do to cause that how you get ahead contrary to what some people say I heard on the news that they say the US military is a socialist outfit we're not we're called a meritocracy. So, for your listeners there that meritocracy is merit what are you worth the more you're worth the more you get. The Navy definitely allows you to learn as many jobs and skills as possible it makes you more valuable and even in the civilian sector it makes sense you know the more valuable you are to your boss the more perks; you're probably going to get, "But sir that's not fair," no its not, it's not unfair at all.

[Munson]: What is it like being a mediator from junior enlisted to officers?

[Test]: It could be tough at times you can understand it cause it kind of is an us vs them. Let's see for civilians the union vs the CEO of the company you know, and you got a steward if I remember right a union steward and that's the middleman so you're definitely the middleman and its us vs them in the fleet officer's vs the enlisted guys. Officers want to crack the whip and make the enlisted guy's work, work, work get every ounce out of them, and you got to make that balance if you keep doing that if you lead that way what you're going to get these guys tired out burned-out accidents happen that was my number one concern someone going to get hurt the ship going to get damaged equipment can get damaged, so as a chief and then later as a senior chief yeah my number one its always safety you know "if we can't do this safely captain we shouldn't be doing it at all" and nine times out of ten most of my commanding officers agreed with that philosophy too. But just finding that balance because you got to keep the guy's spirits up, you got to understand that the officers have a job to do too it's called the mission we got to do the mission and just find the balance and usually that is work hard play hard. If you want the guys to do this job and get it done right, they're going to have to put in many, many hours above their eight-hour workday so maybe reward them with a little port call at Veracruz Mexico or Key West Florida was a blast and that's kind of in my experience in the Navy that's kind of what happen, okay the officers upheld their end of the agreement you know these enlisted guys busted their butts to get the job done and we had three to four days of liberty in a fun place. That's kind of how I was able to balance that.

[Munson]: Was there any major incidents or accidents on any ship you were on?

[Test]: Some close calls I'll leave it at that some close calls but luckily, they never amounted to it luck maybe things like that for instance when I was on the *Cory Chouest* the RV *Cory Chouest* we had our towed array out many, many feet long out there plus many, many feet long of a tow cable which is solid steel strands, and it was the middle of the night off the coast of Hawaii I was on watch I was a chief then very close call. And what had happened was we had

lost control of the ship, so the ship was in like a hard left if I remember right hard left rudder and the systems went down so it was all head hard left so now, we were doing about ten knots they weren't fast ships they didn't need to be fast. And stuck in a port turn turning to left well the cable was still out in the water the array so if you guys can imagine it slid all the way over to the left side of the boat the ship and I run immediately to the fantail because that's my array I'm the OIC officer in charge and if you lose an array and some did, if you lose an array your fired even though " oh but sir it's not your fault" well there's something you could still be doing right to get this so go back there and its arcing and sparking and it like mm it doesn't look good I run up to the bridge and right away before any they said "chief we're on it we understand" so I shut up I didn't say anything about them it just was luck and within a couple more minutes they fixed the casualty and we did not lose the array that night and just minimal damage to the tow cable which we had parts and material on board to replace and we did. So that was pretty scary though you get a towed out there and then your ship just decides to go left or right all on its own so loss of steering control happens it happens on their computers fail and so computer systems will do that and then your helpless there in trying to get manual control. Yeah, that was a big one and I still remember to this day.

[Munson]: Did you ever hear of any stories in the Navy about major accidents or incidents?

[Test]: Oh, heck yeah, and how to learn from them. The Navy I hope is still doing good safety practices when a ship did do something bad, I want to say it was the USS *Radford* [most likely the USS *Arthur W. Radford*] she ran in to a merchant ship at night off the coast of Virginia and that's the one example that I— and we learned from it so it's called after action reports the whole fleet is brought up to speed on what broke down on that ship and usually its human. The human error comes into day, it was a poor watch standing in her case that allowed a ship to get too close to her and ram into her. So yeah, you just have to be alert and things like that so I would always teach my combat guys because its three in the mourning you're in the middle of the ocean there's not a whole lot going on guys off go to sleep so I would always bring up that and teach them and train them that's how exactly how ships could get you know run into, you know by the way we're on a minesweeper were pretty small so if that group three tanker out there hits us we're all dead and I don't want to die so and then keep the guy up keep talking to them pop in on them time to time talk about anything baseball football you know keep them active so that they are at least looking on the scope in this case the surface search radar and following basic watch standing procedures yeah, when those breakdown and I'm going to look at the *Fitzgerald* as an example and the *McCain* both Arleigh Burke class destroyers very sophisticated got hit off the coast of China both of them by group three merchant ships never should happen never should happen I could only speculate I won't because I wasn't there but I would guest poor watch standing led to those ships closing that close to them where they actually collided. Yeah so, we do we learn firefighting what works and what doesn't those kinds of things yeah, the Navy is still to this day I'm pretty sure still very open on that. Don't hide your mistakes learn from your mistakes you know and move forward. That's good advice guys in any field that you're in learn from our mistakes and move forward.

[Munson]: What was your favorite posting on the ship?

[Test]: Oh, that's a good question that's a good question. Other than being off watch, being off watch which probably going to be any sailor yeah being off watch where my rack I could be in my rack my bed which is your bed. I actually did enjoy once I made it up to senior chief officer of the deck under way taking a four-hour shift at night up on the bridge your there, you're the captains' eyes and ears he or she trusts you to take care of the ship while he is getting some shuteye some big responsibility and just seeing the ocean at night the milky way. Yeah, I would say standing at top side watch on a quite watch with nothing going on is good times or just being off watch and getting up in the middle of the night you know going out to the fantail having conversations with other sailors that are off watch that was the enjoyable part of surface life in the Navy. Though submariners are stuck under the water they don't get that.

[Munson]: What ship was your favorite ship you were assigned to?

[Test]: I would have to say oh my god that's a tough one they were all so good. For living accommodations any of the USNSs because that one time I had my own state room which means my own head. But typically, on USNSs the creature comforts were much nicer, large lounges yes lounges couches and that kind of stuff nice big screen TVs. Four-man stateroom, I'm sorry two-man stateroom two to a room and you share a head so four men to a head that was easy living. But I actually enjoyed the challenges on *Pelican* cause when I arrived on *Pelican*, she was a broke ship had a lot of engineering issues and me and ENC motivated the guys, and I still got a soft part in my heart there for the mighty MHC-53 warship 53 USS *Pelican* I'll had to say it's mine. That was very rewarding because it was a tough, tough three years and again because but because of surviving that and getting shipped underway day in and day out yeah, I'll have to say the *Pelican*.

[Munson]: What was the last Navy ship you were stationed on?

[Test]: That would have been MCM-13 she's homeported in Bahrain off the coast of Saudi Arabia USS *Dexterous*, the *Dexterous* that was my last one and a good boat too she was a good boat good crew.

[Munson]: When did you retire from the Navy?

[Test]: That was December 31, 2009. Long time ago.

[Munson]: What made you decide to retire?

[Test]: Good question, that's another good one. What made me retire? I was no longer being surprised. By that, I mean challenged. No matter what a sailor did, no matter what op tempo there was, what OPSEC came, where we were operating in the world. I had already been there done that. So, no more challenging, it wasn't challenging anymore. So, that made up my mind to go ahead and put in the papers to get out.

[Munson]: Did your wife retire around the same time or before?

[Test]: No, my wife did nine years. So, she didn't get to retire, but she's a nine-year Navy veteran. Yeah, she just chose at that point, with me going to sea it would be best for her to stay home with Brandon, and then later on with Vanessa, when we had our daughter. So she chose to not reenlist and just finish out her nine years.

[Munson]: How was family life, or adjusting family life after retiring?

[Test]: Easy. Family life took a little while, because again I'm out of the picture most of the time. Now I'm in the picture all the time. So that maybe two-to-three-month adjustment with that, with family side of it. Civilian side was no problem whatsoever. I mean really, we used to joke about it in the eighties, you know the commercial was the Navy not just the job, an adventure. We used to always say Navy is not just a job, yeah, it's just a job, it really is. Work is work. We all got bosses, we all got dress codes, et cetera et cetera. So, the transition for me at least, I can just speak for me, was pretty standard going to civilian sector. Places I worked at civilian sector. Safety, safety, safety. Already drilled into my head, in the Navy, so that all made sense, so yeah. Couple of months transition for family, and I would just say pretty much instantaneous for civilian sector.

[Munson]: What work did you perform in the civilian sector?

[Test]: I went to my first gig after getting out and retired down here, my house is in Portland, Texas. I worked the waterfront, fixing USNS ships, oddly enough. The roll on roll off ships the pull into the port of Corpus Christi. So, I took various contractor jobs and did anything from insulation work, running cable, that kind of stuff. Again, long hours. Contract was the ships end for two weeks, meaning you're going to work for two weeks straight. No weekends off and all that. Got paid weekly, though. So, I did that and so back on the ship again, duh. Everything was the same. Just not wearing a uniform. So, I did that for a few months and then I moved on over to the USS *Lexington* and worked there for five years, being the lead coordinator on the overnight program.

[Munson]: How did you get hired by the *Lexington*?

[Test]: I spotted the opening on Craigslist. They had advertised on Craigslist, and I put in for it. Got in touch with the HR people that were actually running it for the *Lexington*. Anyway, long story short I went in, applied for the job, sent in my resume to the HR people onboard *Lex*. They liked what they saw on the resume, called me in. I interviewed well and the rest was history. I got hired probably about two to three days after the interview.

[Munson]: What jobs did you perform on the *Lexington*?

[Test]: Well, that was my technical, my official title was Overnight Coordinator, so I was the head overnight coordinator. We took care on a typical Saturday night up to 500 youth groups. Girl scouts, boy scouts, cub scouts, brownies, NJROTC, JROTC groups. So, youth groups from all over the state. Up to 500 we could board up to 500. Adults and their children onboard the ship every Saturday night. Very challenging. Plus, I had to put on a thirty minutes patriotic show there, reminding everybody about the importance of this country, the constitution, what the flag

stands for, all that good stuff to. because the youth of America should be reminded of that, yeah. All the sacrifice are for our four fathers that gave up making sure we can stay free. So that's what I did. So, I enjoyed it, yeah, I enjoyed it.

[Munson]: How large were the youth groups normally?

[Test]: You could have them all together, they would total up to 500 but you could have a scout group, particularly a cub scout group. Average size probably seventy-five. Seventy-five little eight-year old's running around, making sure they stayed safe, yeah.

[Munson]: Any particular part you liked about the job?

[Test]: The entire job. Great people on the *Lexington*, too. That again, that just made it very easy to go to work. So, enjoyed the job, the people around me were great to work with, good team. Even though it's a bunch of civilians, there were some veterans in there, there were some veterans, like myself that were working there. Some Navy veterans, but half the guys and gals there were civilians. They had never served in any branch but, it was definitely run like a crew. So, I mean, something needs to be done, if you can do the job, you raise your hand and go take care of it, and that's what shipboard life is like. You're here, why not help us out? Why not learn this skill? So, a lot of cross deck training happened on board Lex, too and I enjoyed that.

[Munson]: For tours, what type of tours did you give?

[Test]: Uh, what kind of tours? Really, that wasn't in our job title. Unofficially, and I had it on tiers that worked with me. Unofficially, we would give adults and teenage groups a midnight tour. So, after hours, the younger kids are asleep, take them around off tour and show them some of the spots. Talk about some of the paranormal, of course. I did take about three or four while I worked there. Three or four paranormal groups around and that was kind of interesting. Most of the time nothing happened, but there were a few times where yeah, I don't know how to explain it, but stuff would happen. because we prank everybody on the ship, it's a haunted ship so we go around, make noise, scare the customers, the tourist as well. So, I know all the tricks, I know what a human made sound, sounds like. There was some stuff sometimes I couldn't explain. Yeah, on a couple of these paranormal things, so there might be something to it. There might just be.

[Munson]: Was the haunted Lex around before, or was that a decision to do so after you got the job?

[Test]: Oh, you mean the haunted house that they do every year?

[Munson]: The haunted stories.

[Test]: Oh, that? No, that goes way back to, geez, that goes back to probably the nineteen, late forties. Yeah, because there was a lot of loss to life on there. You know, I think--- well, seven souls passed away when a torpedo struck her starboard stern. Two of them vaporized. One was tossed overboard. That's something to imagine guys, a 40,000-ton ship got blown out of the

water, enough to make a crewman on the flight deck to get thrown overboard. Two vaporized and then the remaining, their parts were found, body parts were found. Pulled in the Pearl, the remains and then buried at that point. because compartments were flooded, they tell me and they just isolated the water, got back to Pearl for repairs and that's when they found the remains of their sailors. So, and then the Kamikaze attacks and killed people there. Just the regular accidents underway. There was a lot of loss of life on there so those stories, I would say started seeing spirits like Charlie started back in the fifties, probably and continued through all the way up to her service until ninety-one. When she was decommed.

[Munson]: The haunted house? When did that decision happen?

[Test]: Rocco allowed that to happen. He was the museum director at the time. He allowed that to happen, let's see. I left in 2015, so around 2013. So, man almost ten years, yeah. That's nine years now, that AB's been running that. It is a good cause, some of the proceeds go to Wounded Warriors. So, definitely like supporting that.

[Munson]: Were there any new additions to the ships or exhibits that were opened up while you were there?

[Test]: Always. Too many to number. They're always adding exhibits and changes. So yeah, there is numerous ones and it's good to see that, with the new director is doing good stuff, too. Every time I go onboard, I make it appoint to find somebody there, manager or whatever there. Just you know, shake their hand and just say tell the crew good job. The ships look great, the exhibits are awesome. They're getting much more high tech. More technology, audio, video and stuff. Yeah, can't say enough about the *Lexington* staff. They're always good stuff, keeping the exhibits interesting and up to date.

[Munson]: Do all the staff members perform maintenance and create the exhibits?

[Test]: Interesting. You can definitely be asked to if you want overtime. Everybody wants overtime. You can come in Saturday or Sunday onboard the ship, sure and help put up signage. Maybe work on a laptop computer, yeah definitely. Yeah, that still goes on, I'm sure.

[Munson]: What made you decide to become a JROTC instructor?

[Test]: Interacting while I worked on the overnight program on Lex. Interacting with other instructors that came onboard. They approached me, knowing that I was a veteran, Navy vet. Some Marine instructors said, "Hey you'd be pretty good at this gig called ROTC instructing". A retired master chief with one of the groups said the same thing, so I finally listened to the master chief. Put in the paperwork required to be certified by the Navy to become a certified naval science instructor and that's aboard once a year. I'm sorry, twice a year now. Twice a year meets, back then it was Pensacola. Now it's in Great Lakes, Illinois. But they go over retired sailors, they go over our record, scrub them and if we're worthy they certify us, and then you just apply like another other civilian job. Look for job openings and apply for it, resume and all that. The certified letter in this case, you have to have your certified letter from the Navy saying that

you're certified to be an instructor. That's how I got the position here at Carroll, back in fifteen. The fifteen, sixteen school year.

[Munson]: Was it hard transitioning to a museum worker to a ROTC instructor?

[Test]: Well, let's see. In a way, yes because, of course one of the duties JROTC is being a coach. So I didn't have to do any coaching whatsoever on *Lexington*. So learning that, patience. How hard can teaching drill be, coaching drill? Well, apparently, it's pretty freaking hard. You were on the arm block with us, of course Jacob, so right to left you would think is pretty simple, but yeah. Frustrating at me learning patience there with the youngins. Still, the struggle is real today, too but we're getting there. That's rewarding, too. That's the rewarding part of the job. Maybe I need to do more of that, so like record the first or second practice, and then at the end of drill season show how much better drill team by then. To show, "Hey, you guys two left feet here and look and this". Now you're up there like a Flour Bluff drill team, nice and sharp and polished. That's the rewarding fact for me, of this job. Just seeing the kids develop freshman all the way to senior year and then becoming like yourself, young adults moving onto college and bigger, better things.

[Munson]: Do you get to see former cadets often?

[Test]: A few, a few. Run into them at odd places, out in town. There are various jobs and stuff like that. Cadets like yourself, return cadets come through. Couple other came and helped out with CCISD, which we hosted a drill meet, we hosted a couple of weeks ago. So, yeah. It is kind of good too, you know that you made some kind of an impact on their life. They come back and just wanna—and they're alumni, too. They just wanna check in with the unit, see if it's still doing good and you know, and we are. We are still here, doing good stuff at Carroll.

[Munson]: How was the recent drill meet?

[Test]: It went well. We had a lot of lessons learned. This is a much larger campus, we learned that. Can't just snap my fingers and you could go and take care of a problem for me because that problem might be out on the track field. Well, you know at the old campus, with the portables, track field was right there spitting distance. It ain't anymore. In my mind I'm still thinking, it's just right there, it'll just take a minute. Nah, it takes fifteen minutes now. To leave from this point, go out there and come back. So, learning the size of the campus and we might get stuff like radios next year. Bust out some radios, or something with the cadets to make it go a little bit more efficient. All kinds of options, all kinds of ideas. Make it better. But it was good, we received the input was well. From the Principal on down, to the other instructors that were here. So, we did good and that's our tradition here.

[Munson]: Do you still do community service at the Lexington with the cadets?

[Test]: Yes, constantly. At least three times a year, I would say. About three times a year, we do. We like going to *Lexington* and they love having us.

[Munson]: Out of all your jobs in the Navy and the *Lexington* and as a ROTC instructor, what would you say was your favorite?

[Test]: Oh, my favorite I would have to say, that's tough. They're all good, if I had to say favorite, I'm gonna go way back to when I was you know, nineteen, twenty years old and Adak, Alaska. Tracking a lot of soviet targets was exciting. Knowing that that data was being sent directly to the White House, President Reagan at the time. It was pretty good; it was a pretty good feeling. I mean, that was something, yeah. Cold War was real if you guys only knew. If you guys only knew how close, we came. Scary, too. Coming to nuclear annihilation.

[Munson]: As an ending question, what do you think the *Lexington* provides as a community and how can the community help the *Lexington*?

[Test]: What the *Lexington* provides for the community. Definitely the revenue, tourist revenue that it brings in. So, helping out local businesses, that being restaurants, hotels, motels of course. The shopping that's brought in. So, the tourist commerce, point of it that definitely has helped the *Lexington*. It's a living history, by that I mean you can, you're there, you're walking on a World War II aircraft carrier. Phenomenal to me, she was launched in eighteen months, maybe sixteen months. I don't know. It was less than two years, I know that. There was nothing and then there was a World War II aircraft carrier almost 40,000 tons of displacement. So, you learn that living history going on there, the sacrifice of our of that generation. The World War II vets and what they went through and how they lived onboard the ship, how they fought the ship, all that, and great exhibits as we did. So that contributes to that living history. You don't even have to read, so you can go through now and the high tech is so you can put in some earphones on your smartphone and listen to the exhibits as you walk through. A lot of great exhibits going on, a lot of audio visuals stuff to see. And for the community to help out, to make sure Lex stays here, because it costs a lot guys. I mean it's I was just on there yesterday to go through the haunted house to see what the procedures are going to be this year for the kiddos, they're going to be actors. Our cadets go there and help out by being the ghost and thus, this haunted house. In her starboard forward section, there are stars all being rusted over, so they're grinding it, putting primer on it. Going to repaint it. So, constant maintenance is upkeep. So, just go to the ship. If you're in Corpus, you know every couple of months if you can. Downtime on a Sunday, they're opened seven days a week. Go to the Lex, you know take your kids there or something, support them that way. They do charity events, onboard. So, go and do that, from dances to other events, yeah. The biggest one, I'd say just visit the Lex from time to time. Yeah, I think that sums it up, in a nutshell.

[Munson]: How was the haunted house started?

[Test]: It was started by a gentleman, I just know him has AB, because I can't pronounce his last name. My Spanish is not so good. But really good guy. He did what's called confined rescue training, so he trained guys who work on oil fields, out in the oil fields, refineries and offshore platforms, confined spaces, how to fight a fire and how to get injured people out of confined spaces. In the *Lexington* is where he would train them up on that. He got the idea, ran it by the boss out there, which was Rocco at the time. The director got approval for it, and that's how it got started back in about 2013 or so.

[Munson]: This wraps the end of the recording, anything you want to add, senior chief?

[Test]: No, I don't believe so. Think you did a good job there, Jacob.