

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

James Russell interview

Conducted by James Newberry

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Transcribed by Rebecca Jackson

Born in West Virginia in 1925, James Russell joined the Navy during World War II and served on the USS John D. Henley, or *Lucky John D*, in the Pacific. The ship provided offshore support during six major battles: Saipan, Guam, Tinian, the Philippines, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. After the war Russell started working for a telephone company and settled in Georgia. He recorded his oral history interview at Kennesaw State University in May 2016.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: So, this is James Newberry and I'm here with James Russell on Wednesday, May 25th, 2016 at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. And Mr. Russell, do you agree to this interview?

James Russell: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. Well, we'll start at the beginning. If you could please state your full name for me.

James Russell: James Paul Russell.

Interviewer: And when and where were you born?

James Russell: I was born in Triadelphia, West Virginia, August the 12th, 1925. I'm 90 years old and approaching 91. And I'm amazed at my mind is still with me. So many of my friends have dementia and other mental ailments, and of course I've outlived most of my friends, I made a trip back to West Virginia, one time to visit with some of the friends that I played baseball with, and football, and so forth. I found one still living, some had moved away and they didn't know where they were, but many on the passed on, so my trip was kind of uneventful.

Interviewer: Well, Mr. Russell, could you tell me a little bit about your family?

James Russell: My father and mother were of course married, mother worked in the post office and my father was a world war one veteran and served in the army for over nine years. And he was in France, in the trenches in World War I and the Germans, gas steam--gassed all the troops with mustard gas, and he was sent home and discharged from the army and given a pension, and knows they didn't have mailman. So he went to the post office and met my

mother who was working at the post office, and they saw that they had a joint interest and they got married.

Interviewer: What were their names?

James Russell: My father was James MacPherson Russell, and my mother was Wynona Long Russell.

Interviewer: And did you have siblings?

James Russell: I had two sisters, my sister Mary, who is deceased, my sister Sarah, who is deceased. Now she graduated from West Virginia--Liberty University and Education, and she taught for 30 years at a rural school in West Virginia. She finally gave it up because when she started out, it was farm children and mostly white. Then it became Black and Spanish, and of course the Spanish didn't speak English and she was having to teach them to write and speak English and it just kind of wore her out. And she decided that she'd retire, but my brother-in-law my youngest sister, Sara's husband is still living and he's in an assisted living place. And I hear from my niece, Carol, who by the way is an FBI agent.

James Russell: She tells me about her dad, and my sister, and her husband raised four of the smartest kids you ever saw in the world. Besides the FBI agent, one of the boys worked for insurance companies in Columbus, Ohio, and wrote all their programs way, way back in the days when computers were sort of starting. And he was probably the smartest of the three. John who has a PhD in electrical engineering works for the electric company in West Virginia and George, the youngest son, nephew has a doctorate and teaches computers at Marshall University. So you name it. I've got now my oldest daughter, she married and divorced and married again, and she was always tough for her mother to control and deal with. And so she didn't like West Virginia. So she left and moved to Washington DC and worked for the government.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, tell me about the home you grew up in.

James Russell: Okay. I grew up in a very, very poor family. And the first house that we lived in was a four room house with no running water and no indoor plumbing. And we had a cistern and a pump in the kitchen where we pump water into the kitchen for our normal washing. And then mother would use the water from the cistern for our washing and boiling clothes and all that sort of thing. So I had to carry water from the next door house. Next door to us, had a coal mine, and they closed it up. But they had a--found that they had a problem with water in the mine. So that's the reason they closed, but they put, a steel pipe underground from the mine out to the street and they put a what they call the watering trough there.

James Russell: It was a place for people to water their horses in those days. And the water ran continuous 24 hours a day. So when we needed drinking water, we got it there. Had to carry it, of course in buckets and what have you. So after that, my dad's family had some property on what is known as a national road, which is Route 40. That goes from the East coast, West coast. And it was the main highway to the West in its early days. So they bought the property from their, his brothers and sisters, and ended up starting a service station and grocery store, and Dad ran the service station and grocery store and Mother kept books. And in those days you didn't get an accounting degree or anything else. She had to learn it the hard way, keep the taxes paid and determine whether we were making any money or not and what have you.

James Russell: But my mother was a very, very frugal person and she ruled everybody in the household, and she had rules like whatever you put on your plate you better eat it because I'm not throwing anything away. So you took servings and suits what your appetite was because you didn't dare leave anything to go. She didn't get on your... Like, I don't know what, but as I said, she ruled the roost and smartest woman you ever saw.

James Russell: I'll give you an example, how smart she was when I came home from the Navy, I bought a car and they had the station; Dad didn't drive; Mother didn't drive. So everywhere the car went, why they went with it. And of course I was playing baseball. And so they'd go to the baseball games with me and, so when I got married and took the car away, mother decided she needed a car. So what she do, she goes and buys one and drives it home without a learner's permit or a driver's license. Yeah, it's amazing what she would do. She went and took her driver's test passed and they traveled all over the United States. She had a couple of cousins in Iowa, in Ames, Iowa, and she would go visit them driving. Dad would be the copilot and he'd go to Washington, D.C. to see my sister there. It didn't bother her. No, she was a piece of work.

Interviewer: Well, tell me where you attended high school.

James Russell: A little place, Trophy was the name of the town, but they had a charter high school. And I started there after I completed a grade school and junior high. I went there and they got along fine. My freshman year, my sophomore year, I lost a lower interest in school and I flunked sophomore English. So my junior year I was taking sophomore English. You didn't, they get a GED in those days, you had to go to school and earn. So I am studying sophomore English and junior English and I just got fed up with it and I quit. My mother said, "Well, you're not going to lay around here, you're going to go to work. And you're going to bring me home the pay, and I'm going to charge you room and board." And that's what I did. I got a job. Fortunately, the man paid in cash and I was a landscaper. Worked

for a landscaping company. And so I brought my money home. She took out room and board and I got what was left. Oh. And then I became eligible for the draft going there.

Interviewer: Well, tell me, what are your memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

James Russell: Well, it's kind of vague. I wasn't there, of course. And it upset the whole United States and we declared war on Japan and Germany, both fighting two wars at the same time.

Interviewer: So you were living at home for a period of time until you became eligible. And in that time that you were living at home, how did you keep up with news of the war?

James Russell: Radio or newspaper, that's it.

Interviewer: Do you remember President Roosevelt giving any speeches at that time? That stuck out?

James Russell: On the radio, yes.

Interviewer: Did your family get a ration book?

James Russell: Well, we had a ration book, and of course dad had the service station. So he had to accept the ration coupons in exchange for groceries for people, there was a little bit under the table, shall we say, type deal. People would need some cash and then they bring their ration coupons in and sell them to him and he'd sell them back to somebody and of course there was a little trade situation going on. They're not legal, but they made it work.

Interviewer: How much would they pay for a ration book?

James Russell: I wouldn't have an idea now, it's too long and memory bank's blank.

Interviewer: So, when people came along to fuel their cars, how many, fuel ration cards did they hand in? How did that work?

James Russell: Well, it was based on the number of gallons he was going to get and you got a coupon for every gallon. So, if you want five gallons, while you had to give up five coupons, and we had gravity flow pumps, meaning you had a globe on top that showed the gasoline and the measuring device that was implanted inside the globe and would indicate the number of gallons you were dispensing, and you could get five gallons for a dollar. And then you had to hand pump that thing back full again, you hoped to God you didn't get 10 gallon because you're going to be there a while.

Interviewer: Did you help out around the service station?

James Russell: When I was eight years old, my dad used to get the flu because he'd been gassed in the war. And his lungs was susceptible to that sort of thing, so he'd be sick, maybe two weeks with the flu. So at eight years old, I was running the store and the service station, checking people's oil and cleaning their windshields. And that was put air in my tires and whatever they requested. That's what we did now. We didn't change oil, we didn't have a lift or a pit, but we'd sell you the oil. And our question was, "what do you normally pay for a quart of oil?" And if they said a [inaudible] that's what we sold it to him for. The next person said 75 cents. That's what we sold them to him for. We were agreeable at any price.

James Russell: We could have sold it for 50 cents, but we had had any cans and we had it in jars, quart jars with a nozzle on the top of it that you can pour it in the car. And so we had what we called bulk oil, which we filled the jugs up with. So we'd selling oil for any price you want, we even had people bring in their oil when they changed the oil and we had a filter system that we put in through the filter, and it would fill the filter out most of the residue. And then we'd sell you used oil if you'll want it, maybe five cents a quart.

Interviewer: So how did your family fare in the depression then?

James Russell: Bad, because I was born in 1925, depression was 29. And one period of time, Mother said she didn't know what she was going to feed us for the week, but she had a lady friend who was married to a florist and they had no children. And the lady brought groceries enough for us to exist for a week. Now, I don't know how Mother communicated with this lady, it was before telephones and all that, maybe the lady came to visit and saw what was going on and she brought groceries back then. And we lived on those groceries, but we got commodities when consistent of a government dole out of cheese, lard, and buttermilk. Oh, I grew up on buttermilk and by the dessert at night would be old, stale bread, crumbled up and in a bowl and a dash of buttermilk was put on top of it, no ice cream, no cake, no pies, that was your dessert for the night.

Interviewer: Well, tell me about reaching eligibility age and enlisting in the military.

James Russell: Well, it was the time whenever we're drafting people and I was going to turn 18 on August the 12th and Dad who had been in the army for over nine years said, I don't want you to go into the army. I don't want you to go into the Marines and don't know much about the air force, but if you want to go, I'll sign you up for the Navy, said fine. So I went and signed up for the Navy and left on my 18th birthday. Okay.

Interviewer: Where did you go to sign up?

James Russell: In Wheeling, in West Virginia to a recruiting depot or recruiting place. Signed up. I left on my 18th birthday and went to Huntington, West Virginia, for a physical pastor, physical and went to a great lakes, The Naval Training Station, the station for eight weeks, so I'd find out how dumb I was, because every day it was march to breakfast, march to class, march to movies, march to health, back march to lunch and it went on day after, day after day, you did very little Navy-type work. They were interested in your health and they showed you some raunchy movies about ailments that sailors had gotten. I mean, they were down right bare naked, showing you every ugly thing that they could think of because they didn't want you to get in that sort of a problem, excuse me. But I think I need a sip of water. You're that dry, but that's the beginning of learning how dumb I was. I thought I was smart and knew everything, but I didn't know crap, I didn't have any knowledge of the world really, but I soon learned from the Navy.

Interviewer: So what do you remember some of the names of those films they show?

James Russell: I don't remember the names of them, but I would rather not describe them because they're not involved but they border on and on something near that.

Interviewer: Assuming they were sort of introducing that, venereal disease and these sorts of things were.

James Russell: Absolutely were.

Interviewer: Get when you went into the service and overseas, things like that.

James Russell: Absolutely were, and they laid it on you just as nasty as they could lay it on you because they want to make an impression on us, young green guys about--they didn't want that happening.

Interviewer: Right.

James Russell: And we took notice.

Interviewer: So tell me about some of your physical training at bootcamp.

James Russell: Well, it was mainly marching and swimming, and in those days the Navy was looking for underwater game relation teams. These were personnel that would go out in rubber boats, bail out of the rubber boots and plant explosions on anything in the Japanese would have, to guard the beach to keep raining, to keep boats from getting to it. And these UDT guys would plant all their explosive and there'll be several of them. And then they bailed back on the boats and hightail it out of there and we weren't, in Iwo

Jima when we were up close to the beach and we were laying down fire to protect these people, and when they blew up, they blew up on a string and threw up fountains of water.

Interviewer: But how would you be assigned to these underwater demolition teams?

James Russell: Well, you had to pass a physical test in a bootcamp and I tried. First thing, you had to jump off of a 30 foot tower into the water and be able to swim, well in those days I swam the sidestroke. I didn't swim a crawl or anything like that. So I didn't make it because I didn't swim and I had no experience swimming in the ocean. So they were looking for people who had been to the beach, swam on the waves, and that sort of thing. And, so I didn't pass, but guess what? The Navy seals swim the sidestroke and I was gung-ho in those days. And I would have probably tried for the Navy seals, and I've seen their training films and all that. And boy it's gruesome.

Interviewer: So what do you mean you were gung-ho in those days?

James Russell: Anything that they put up in front of me, I was going to volunteer for, I was going to have some of it, but it wasn't in the cards.

Interviewer: And you didn't make it onto this underwater demolition team?

James Russell: Oh no.

Interviewer: What did you do instead?

James Russell: After I finished bootcamp, I didn't realize that they had tested your hearing, eyesight and all that stuff. I didn't realize how good a test I had made on hearing, but they did. And they sent me from Great Lakes to Key West, Florida to sonar school. Now that's, a practice of sending out sound signals into the water and detecting a submarine, which we were looking for and it echo back and it would have a tone differential that you had to recognize. So I went through five weeks of nothing but hearing tones and they graded you seriously on whether it was a higher pitch, lower pitch, a low level, high level, and all the varieties. It's amazing how many varieties of that sound that you would hear underwater. There's one where they have a thermal barrier where there's a water temperature difference in the water. You send out the sound, he hits the thermal and bounces back. It makes a particular sound. If it had hit a whale that sends out a different sound, if it hit something metal, then that's the one you want.

Interviewer: So how did you go about testing to hear these sounds and what sort of a room were you working in, or were you working outside mostly? How did that work?

James Russell: Well in bootcamp, they tested your hearing extensively for sound differential, tone difference, volume difference, and so forth, and you were graded on that. Well, I didn't realize that my own, when I went to sonar school and retested down there, I ended up third highest score of all the people they tested. Number one, was a band director, and you would expect to, would be able to hear sound differential. And so I ended up number three, which I was kind of proud of it at the time.

Interviewer: What was the name of the base or the school in Key West?

James Russell: United States Naval Training Center in Key West, Florida.

Interviewer: What did it look like? How large was the [inaudible00:24:30].

James Russell: A couple of barracks and some classrooms.

Interviewer: And how long were you there?

James Russell: Five weeks.

Interviewer: Did you learn anything in addition to sonar?

James Russell: No. That was a concentration. One of the tasks, they have sonar on submarines and sonar on destroyers. And so they had a submarine there an old-timey diesel submarine. And so they took us guys out on the submarine and played war games with a service vehicle and so forth, and they were pinging back and forth. But the smell of the diesel just affected me. I didn't actually get sick and throw-up or anything like that, but, boy, I made the decision I wasn't going to go on a submarine. When they came back up, they said, "You want submarine duty?" I said, "No way, no way, no way." So they said, "Okay, you'll be assigned to a destroyer duty."

James Russell: After graduating from sonar school, I was shipped to Norfolk, to the Navy base there, where a crew was assembling for duty on a destroyer. And from there, they sent us to Mobile, Alabama. Now that, that was real experience for a Navy guy. You're in a Navy base that has no fences, and it has two barracks and a chow hall and officer's quarters. We all eat the same meals.

James Russell: But our ship wasn't ready, so every morning we had what we call a [maybe roll call] [inaudible 00:26:30]. You had to show up, and they called your name. They didn't trust you. If somebody yelled yes, they said, "Step forward to be recognized." So you had to step forward one step and be recognized as a person. They went on and took stock of the whole crew at eight o'clock in the morning. Then they said, "You're dismissed for the rest of the day. Those of you have duty in the barracks to clean up, go get

your duty, clean sweep fore and aft, clean these commodes and all that stuff." Here I am, a [inaudible 00:27:15] man, and don't get into any of that kind of jazz. But boy, that was ...

James Russell: We were in Chickasaw, Alabama, which is north of Mobile. We used to go into Mobile, and Mobile was just like my hometown Wheeling, West Virginia. It had little parks and same movie theaters and about the same size. Boy, did I get homesick. I was calling my mother on the phone, collect. She must have had a tremendous telephone bill because I was calling her every day.

Interviewer: What did you tell her on the phone?

James Russell: Just what we were doing and what we're not doing, and about the town, and missed them all, and missed the hometown. Just whatever would come to mind.

Interviewer: Do you remember some of the guys that had assembled for your crew on the destroyer?

James Russell: Oh shoot, yes. We had nine sonar men on there, and such names as [Cistero, Shearer, Schwartz, O'Connor 00:28:32]. I don't remember all of them, but they were all rated. Some of the older fellows, if you've got a sound contact, they would come and take over. They were more mature. We were younger and more energetic and so forth. So they'd relieve us and check out the sound and do whatever was necessary.

James Russell: When you go to general quarters, and I had other duties at general quarters, but one of the jobs while you were on just normal duty was, you operated for 30 minutes on the sonar equipment. Then you operated the helm and steered the ship for 30 minutes. Then you had 30 minutes of no activity. Of course, that was clean the coffee pot and make coffee, make sure the cups are clean. So the off-duty person didn't get all the niceties of not having anything to do, but it's quite an experience.

Interviewer: And you went up the Mississippi River?

James Russell: Yeah. After we left Chickasaw, Alabama, we didn't have any ammunition. So we went up to the Mississippi to Bayou La Batre, Alabama. No, that's wrong. We went to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I knew I would make us mistake like that. We went up to Baton Rouge, and we took on torpedoes and all the artillery shells, all our big gun shells and 40-millimeter and 20-millimeter, depth charges, and all that stuff. When we come out of there, why, we were ready.

James Russell: So, after that, we had orders to go up to Norfolk for training. Of course, we were all gaining knowledge of the ship at that time. It was all new to us. We had some people on there that had been on other ships, but the majority of us were first-timers on a ship and proceeded to get seasick and all they accompanying side things. Went up to Norfolk, and there we got to fire our guns and drop depth charges and do everything that you can do. They had towed aerial targets and towed sea targets.

Interviewer: What are towed aerial targets and towed sea targets?

James Russell: Well, the aerial target is towed behind a large plane with a thousand-foot tow line. It's like a huge sleeve. Air goes in it and it inflates, and then you try to shoot it and hit it. The towed target is like a sled that floats on the water. Again, it's towed by a ship, and you try to shoot it. We were the world's worst Navy firing ship. We couldn't hit nothing.

James Russell: From that rating, we got assigned to escorting fleet tankers in the Pacific. Now, you understand what they do is, they carry the oil and groceries for serving carriers and battleships and destroyers and all that, fuel the fleet with everything. So we escorted them, and we had the flag officer on our ship. He was a captain, and he was in charge of all the oilers. He told us what to do. We did that for a long time. We'd run into a group of ships, and the oilers would go about their business. They'd come out, and they would offload into one or two of the tankers, and all the other tankers would go back to Pearl Harbor to get filled up.

James Russell: We were at Guam, and we had just finished fueling a fleet. The Japanese aerial aircraft found us, and they started throwing bombs at us. They hit one of the tankers, and two bombs straddled our ship, one on each side, and didn't hit us. So, the captain in charge of the oilers told the captain of the tanker that was hit, "Put it on the beach." What he had knowledge of was, the next day is when they were going to invade Guam. So yeah, for overnight they would be kind of sitting ducks, but they beached it. The invasion was the next day, and everything turned out all right.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, we got to back up, because we got to go back to when you left. You shipped out of Norfolk, and then you headed to Pearl Harbor, right?

James Russell: We shipped out of there, went through the Panama Canal, and went to Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, what was life like aboard ship, when you're just moving towards a destination? Are you just still doing this routine of 30 minutes here, 30 minutes there?

James Russell: Still operating the sonar equipment, still looking for submarines. We still had lookouts and radar. We had a surface search radar and aerial search radar and gun control radar. The gun control radar wouldn't come into play until we engaged something, but surface search and aerial search were going all the time because we had to know what was around us. So we'd have the four hours on, four hours off.

Interviewer: What did you do for your free time?

James Russell: Slept, mostly.

Interviewer: What kind of bunk were you in?

James Russell: I was in the bottom bunk of a three-tier bunk arrangement. Underneath the bottom bunk was footlockers, where you'd keep your shoes and some of your stuff. Then you had a vertical locker, where you can hang up your pants and shirts and so forth. You stored your stuff according to your desires.

James Russell: One of the things we had to do was stencil all our clothes because when it went to the laundry and it came back, it'd be in one big lumped pile. You had to sort through it to find your stuff, and it'd better have your name on it, or somebody else would take it. So that's what we did. You showered and shaved every day, and--

Interviewer: Was there a store or a commissary aboard?

James Russell: And we had what we called a pogeys bait¹ store. Pogeys bait is another word for candy and chewing gum and stuff like that. We had a first class petty officer that ran the pogeys store, and it was his job, whenever he got a chance, to buy stock for that and put it in a pogeys bait store. You had to pay for that. You didn't get it given to you, you had to pay for it. So if you wanted a candy bar, why, that's the place to go.

Interviewer: How much were you making?

James Russell: Yeah, I don't recall that number. It wasn't much. I know that when I was on the ship, I didn't have any place to spend it, other than the shaving cream or shaving equipment, or occasional candy bar or something like that. So I sent money home to my mother. I was sending her a hundred dollars a month, so I had a little bit of over a hundred dollars a month.

Interviewer: Did you write letters to her?

¹ <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=pogeys%20bait>

James Russell: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: And what did you report to her in those letters?

James Russell: Very little, because you couldn't divulge your location. Every piece of mail was audited for content, and if they didn't agree with what you were saying, you got it back and you couldn't send it. So you had very little. You know, it's sunshine today, and I think it's going to rain, and I got to get my laundry together. I couldn't say I'm operating the sonar equipment looking for submarines. Nope, you can't say that. You couldn't get into actual onboard activities or engagements or anything else.

Interviewer: Do you remember the approximate date when you landed at Pearl Harbor?

James Russell: No, I don't.

Interviewer: What did you find there?

James Russell: Well, we went to a dock there, and we got to see some of the sunken ships that were still there. We got pass duty, to go into Honolulu. One of the things that Navy, Marines, Army people used to do is that the ship would go into say Pearl Harbor, and the guys on the ship would find a bar, saloon, where everybody would meet. They would pass the word among shipmates that so-and-so bar is where we're going to meet and have a drink, so we'd all meet there, if we desired, or we could go to a movie or go sightseeing, whatever moved you for the moment.

James Russell: I never went to Diamond Head because Diamond Head was a secret base at those times. So I didn't get to see Diamond Head. The Navy had taken over a hotel called the Royal Hawaiian. It was a pink hotel, and it was on the beach. So you would get weekend leave to go there and stay, and they didn't charge you anything, just go sign in, and they'd assign you to a room. You can go to Waikiki Beach and swim and get sunburned, and I did all of that. I ate outside at the hotel, on the back of the hotel where you could see the ocean and all that. Later in life, my wife and I went to Hawaii. We stayed at the Royal Hawaiian hotel. We sat outside in the back, where I had sat, and we had dinner there. There's a lot of memories about my time in Honolulu.

Interviewer: So you stayed in Hawaii, then, a fair length of time?

James Russell: It might've been a week or two weeks.

Interviewer: Okay.

James Russell: We did some more training there, towed targets and all that kind of stuff. They had an island where, instead of a towed surface target, we practiced shore bombardment on this island. My must have had enough artillery shells on it, or shells on it, to sink the darn island because everybody was shooting at it. But we did that sort of training.

Interviewer: During a shore bombardment training, what's your role onboard ship?

James Russell: Well, all sea details ... They have a name for it, and I can't recall the name at the moment, but we would all have duty stations. My duty station during those times was a telephone talker on the bridge. My duties were, if a captain said something, I repeated it to all the stations that I had on my tie-in. He would say, "Tell the gunnery officer to commence firing." So that's what I'd tell my gunnery officer up in the radar-controlled, gun control.

James Russell: One particular time that I had really some very important duties. When we invaded Iwo Jima, we were heavily involved in Iwo Jima. That was our biggest operation of the whole Pacific fleet. I mean, when the underwater demolition teams went in, we were 1500 yards from the beach, laying down fire to keep the Japanese from bothering these people.

James Russell: When the invasion took place the next day, we went up and they had some smaller what we call them LSTs, that sized vessel, along the beach in a line. We were behind them, farther out. Of course, it was designed to provide the Marines with artillery and fire to keep the Japanese occupied.

James Russell: Well, the ship right in front of us got hit, and it affected their ability to maneuver the ship. They came directly at us, and we had to move and barely got out of the road of that ship, to keep from a collision occurring. Our captain said, "Well, we've got to hold that line." So we went up there and filled it.

James Russell: Now, we're in machine gun range of the beach. I mean, you could see the Japanese running around, you could see them on Mount Suribachi, going up and down and what have you. I had a pair of binoculars, and I'm on the bridge. I had access to a pair of binoculars, and I was looking at Mount Suribachi, which is the volcano there. Down on the side of it, the Japanese had a gun track mounted that would run out and shoot point blank at our ships, and they were getting hit.

James Russell: I saw this with the binoculars, and I told the captain. Of course, being a young man, I'm really excited. He said, "Calm down, calm down, calm down." I said, "Well, they're shooting, and they're hitting our ships!" He took the binoculars, and he looked. Out come the gun and shot and hit a cruiser. We're supposed to be radio silenced. He broke radio silence and

called them and told them about that gun. The battleships obliterated the bottom of that mountain, and no more gun. I learned a little bit about myself. I can get very excited and want to make my point. The captain had to tell me to calm down.

Interviewer: Well, tell me, you said that you got a new captain at one point.

James Russell: Yes, we did.

Interviewer: Tell me how that came about.

James Russell: Well, normally when you have a captain and he gets line experience from running a ship, he gets promoted to take on a larger ship. So I don't know what happened to him, but he had gone to the Naval Academy and was a graduate of the Naval Academy. We got a replacement for him. This fellow was a graduate of MIT, and he came onboard. He was an electronic genius, but the thing that impressed everybody was he didn't trust our repair technicians or operators to be completely familiar with our equipment.

James Russell: What he did is he climbed the mast of the ship and looked at the antenna, the way it was pointing, communicated with our combat information center where they had the controls for that, and received the signals from that radar antenna. They compared bearing and so forth, so that what the guy was reading down below was the same as what the antenna was pointing above. He went over, personally, every bit of electronic gear on that ship, radios and all, personally. We were so impressed with him. Boy, I'm telling you.

James Russell: After that, he asked for a refire, so shore bombardment, towed targets. Well, after we finished that, we never got to shoot first or second or third. We had to wait until everybody else that shot at the aerial targets or the towed targets or whatever, and then they would tow it and give us permission to fire. A lot of times we'd shoot down the aerial target, or we'd hit the towed target and tear it all pieces. So he had a big effect on the ship.

Interviewer: So the record of the ship improved?

James Russell: Oh, we got nasty duty from then on. I mean, we went a hundred days going, "Go here, go there." Not stopping. We got down to, it was meal for breakfast, lunch and dinner, rice, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We were running out of rice. A hundred days we hadn't been resupplied. We'd been refueled, but. Every nasty job that came along,

Interviewer: What was that captain's name?

James Russell: I don't recall, at the present time. I wish I had brought my reference material with me. I could have told you.

Interviewer: Okay. So you said you got every dirty job.

James Russell: For example, we were at Guam, and somebody reported that there was a submarine supplying an island in the Marianas chain called Rota. So we got the word, "Go investigate." We went up, circled Rota, which was a small island, volcanic rock island, no beach, nothing like that. We couldn't find a submarine. Well, we came around to the one side of the island, and the Japanese lit us up with a searchlight. The captain said, "Put it out." Boom, one shot, and it was gone. No more light. I relayed that to the gunnery officer, and he put it out. Yeah, I was an intermediary.

James Russell: Yeah, I was an intermediary.

Interviewer: Was that searchlight coming from a ship or on shore?

James Russell: No, it was on Rota, on the island. They had us lit up, boy. We were right in the beam.

Interviewer: Tell me more about Iwo Jima. You said there was some nighttime fighting there.

James Russell: Yeah. We became the artillery for the Marines. After they landed, they couldn't get their stuff up. The volcanic ash, their artillery pieces and their tanks and all that stuff. So they put two radios on the ship and gave us a call sign. Our call sign was *Thoroughbred*, and it was my job to monitor those two radios. If they said something, I repeated it.

James Russell: In fact, they would call for fire at a certain coordinate. We had maps of Iwo Jima that were broken down into coordinates, by number and so forth. They'd call a number, and I'd get the number and I'd repeat it. Well, the gunnery officer had the same information, and he would direct the fire to that area.

James Russell: The Japanese were bad about attacking at night. They had kamikaze raids at night, which is, you're going to get killed. They'd say about it, "You go out and try to kill Americans." Well, the Marines would holler the number of the place where they wanted our guns to shoot, and we would shoot them there. Then at night, we would provide a star shell coverage which is a shell that bursts in the air and which lights up. It's on a parachute, it sinks slowly and down so the Marines could see what's going on around them. One of the Marines called and said, "Don't let the light go out." I remember that distinctly. I relayed that to the gunnery officer: "Don't let the light go out." He kept a star shell up there.

Interviewer: Why did they need the light to stay on?

James Russell: Well, the Japanese were attacking, and they needed to see where they were. The Japanese had tunnels and places in this whole island. They had a kitchen, they had mess halls, they had living areas, and it was all heated from the heat of the volcano. They had perfectly living conditions, as far as that was concerned, and they all lived underground. There wasn't a building above ground.

Interviewer: How far offshore was your ship?

James Russell: Probably 2,000 yards.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you ever sustain any attacks from kamikazes?

James Russell: No, never had one. We lucked out in Okinawa, and we were in the harbor at Okinawa. Most of the destroyers were going out on what they called radar picket duty around the Island and up towards Japan. They would pick up these planes coming in, and they would tell everybody to duck and cover because here they come.

James Russell: Well, for some strange reason, and I say it's strange, very strange, our radar went out. Our repairman couldn't get it fixed, so we didn't get radar picket duty. We were in the Harbor, and we're awfully, awfully glad. It's kind of suspicious to me. I had no evidence, but I think our techs may have found a bad tube in one of the units so it wouldn't work. It had worked perfectly up 'til then.

Interviewer: What do you think they were trying to do?

James Russell: They didn't want to go out there on radar picket duty and have those planes smash into our ship. One of our sister ships, a destroyer, was leveled to the water [inaudible 00:55:04]. It's still floating, but they lost about everybody on that ship.

Interviewer: And that was off of Okinawa?

James Russell: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did your ship play a part in other major battles? Did you go to other islands?

James Russell: Well, we were in Guam, Tinian and Saipan, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, the Philippines. We had six major battles, and we got battle stars on our ribbons for six major battles.

Interviewer: And in each of these battles, your ship was playing sort of a similar role?

James Russell: Exactly.

Interviewer: Okay. Which one sort of sticks out to you? You've talked about Iwo Jima. Are there other moments, from other battles, that stick out to you?

James Russell: Not particularly. It's overwhelming, the part that we played in Iwo Jima. Each one had its moments, but Iwo Jima was our big operation of all the Pacific. Yeah, we provided shore bombardment for the Marines and Army in Okinawa and the Philippines and so forth, but not to the extent that we were involved with Iwo Jima.

Interviewer: So you said there was a period where you were going hard for a hundred straight days. When you finally did get a break, where would you go to refuel or resupply?

James Russell: We went to an atoll called Ulithi, which had a large basin. It was surrounded by little islands all around, and you could go in there and anchor. They had supply ships there, and we'd resupply ammunition and groceries and fuel. Maybe we'd get a liberty on the beach, and they'd send you over with some beer, warm beer. No refrigeration. Yuck. Believe me, it wasn't ...

James Russell: In the Philippines, we were over this island and we had a big fence up between the area where we were going to be and the Filipinos. Filipinos would come up to the fence, and they liked to barter. They had Japanese money. It was worthless, and they give you some of that for a pack of cigarettes or maybe a warm beer, whatever you could bargain with them on. I still got some Japanese money at home.

Interviewer: Did you get any entertainment?

James Russell: Never saw the USO. Never in all my Navy career were we involved in any of those so-called shows that went around. They entertained the army, the air force, and the Marines. But of course we were on a ship. We're out at sea. We didn't have access to all that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: How was your mood throughout this time? You're going through these sort of constant attacks, preparing for them. How were you holding up?

James Russell: Well, I surprised myself in the fact that I didn't worry about it. Our ship was called the *Lucky John D*, and everybody believed in it because we were in areas where there were floating mines. We could have hit one of them and blow us up. So close that they were shooting them, blowing them up with rifles. That's our people. We'd get a rifle, hit that thing and

blow it up. One of them was kind of close to the ship, and the shrapnel bounced off the side of the ship. The captain jumped on the loud speaker system and said, "Don't touch that piece of metal. It'll be red-hot."

Interviewer: What type of ship was it?

James Russell: I was on a destroyer, a 2100 ton Fletcher class destroyer. It had five five-inch guns and five 40-millimeters, and must have had eight or ten 20-millimeter guns. Plus our torpedoes and depth charges.

Interviewer: How many men?

James Russell: 300, give or take half a dozen or so.

Interviewer: When you're on the way to another island or another mission, what sort of preparation did you have to? You mentioned the maps, but would they always give you a map for each new place?

James Russell: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Captain would go to a meeting and learn what our job would be, and he'd come back on board with maps and so forth and pass them around, as necessary.

Interviewer: Did you have an expectation that you might face really grave danger? You said you felt lucky, but when you're going to participate--

James Russell: Well, when you have two bombs planted on either side of you and they blow up and you're not hit, then you got those floating mines and you're blowing them up. You know, we could have hit one of them and ... Shoot, we didn't get these six battle stars for nothing.

Interviewer: How long of a period were you in service, then?

James Russell: Well, let's see. 13 weeks and probably around 20 months before we went to the Pacific, and then we stayed in the Pacific until a peace was signed with the Japanese. When that was signed, we got orders because we wore out that ship, and we got orders to come back to the United States. The captain said, "Secure the sonar equipment. We're going to go as fast as this ship will go." We were up next to Japan, and we hightailed it down to Guam, stopped and refueled and took us on some food, and high-tailed it for Pearl Harbor. Stopped there and went all the way to San Francisco, and went under the Golden Gate, and went to a place called Hunters Point. Half the ship went home on leave for two weeks, and half stayed. Then when we came back, the ship was in dry dock. Some were in barracks, and the other half went home.

James Russell: I had a friend who was from West Virginia, and he lived about 12 miles from where I lived. His parents and my parents were talking a lot. Whenever they got a letter, they'd call the other and read it and so forth. Well, he didn't go in the first group. He stayed back in San Francisco. Well, he spent all his money. He found him a lady friend, and they set up an apartment. They were not married. But he ran out of money. When I came back, he borrowed \$400 from me to go back home. I had a Dickens of a time trying to get that \$400 back out of him. Taught me a lesson. Friendship goes so far, except when it involves money. It's not too friendly, then.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your reunion with your family?

James Russell: When I came home on my two-week leave, Mom and Dad were not in the greatest of health, and they weren't financially that well off. They still lived in the old house. In the meantime, Mother had put in a shower and had piped in running water. The city built a water line up through there, and she put in a septic tank and had a flushing commode, in this old, old house with a stack stone foundation. It was old.

Interviewer: Well, I want to go back for just a second and ask you, do you have any memory of President Roosevelt's death?

James Russell: Very little.

Interviewer: What about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

James Russell: I knew about it and saw pictures of it, but I just thought it was a good choice for us to get the Japanese's attention.

Interviewer: Then you were posted in Japan after the war?

James Russell: No. We went up and did radar picket duty off the islands, and what was going on is, our bigger planes were flying in there and they were bombing for a period of time. We sort of gave them directions, going and coming. We were kind of a point where they could touch base with us.

James Russell: One plane come back out of Japan that had been hit, and they said they were going to have to ditch. So the captain and the pilot agreed on a bearing, and he said, "You guys bail out, and we'll come down the line and pick you up." So they bailed out, and we went down the line and picked them all up.

Interviewer: What do you mean down the line?

James Russell: Well, if you take a bearing and you're on the same bearing, you're proceeding down the line. They jump out and we go, boom, boom, boom, boom. That's just a term, you know?

Interviewer: So you talked about returning home and seeing the improvements your mother had made to the family house. Tell me, what was your plan at that point, for the future?

James Russell: Well, at that point in time, I wanted to relax and forget about the war and forget about the Navy. One thing that occurred is that I'd made up my mind that I was going back to high school and get my high school diploma. So when I came back, I went to summer school. I had flunked two subjects, so I took two. They only allowed you to take one, but because I was a serviceman and the circumstances were a little different, I took two summer school classes. I had to pass them, of course, and then I entered my senior year.

James Russell: Now, my sister was a senior, and she was number two or three in the class. She cried when she heard that I was going back to high school because I had performed so lousy in the past. Fortunately, we didn't have a class together, so that caused no conflict.

James Russell: I took an extra subject my senior year, and I still got the report card to prove it. It's a valuable possession, because I would not have been able to get a job like I got without a high school diploma.

Interviewer: Where did you go to work, at that point?

James Russell: Well, I went back to high school, and I wasn't working, other than helping Dad at the station or Mother around the house, mowing the yard and picking the grapes and picking the strawberries and gathering vegetables out of the garden, and that sort of thing. But summer school occupied my time. My senior year occupied my time.

James Russell: Of course, I had bought a couple of used cars for that time. I had an order in for a new car, but there was always a big waiting list. Believe it or not, when the dealer calls you with a car, you got what he had or you'd pass and go to the end of the line. So I bought a '39 Oldsmobile four-door sedan that we had to push to get started when I bought it. The day I sold it, we had to push it to get it started. It was a bear. It would not start and run. Once you got it going, it was fine.

James Russell: But then a teacher had a Chevrolet Club Coupe, with a rumble seat, two passengers, and all that. I bought that. That was a pretty darn nice car. Then the dealer called and said he had a car for me, and I got rid of the Chevy Club Coupe and bought the car.

James Russell: I had that when I was dating my wife, and I decided I would teach her how to drive. Mistake number one. I had too much confidence in her ability to drive. We were in our hometown and we come up the street and had to make a right-hand turn into a side street, and she was driving. She turned the corner and there was a car parked at the curb, and she hit it head-on, kaboom, with my new car!

Interviewer: Tell me when you went to work in the coal mine.

James Russell: Well, that was in my baseball playing days, and we were playing on mine property. They had fixed up the baseball field for us. So if you played baseball, you had a job in the mines. I went to work in a mine. I lasted six months. I was hurt twice and almost hurt a third time, and I decided that my mining career was going to be cut short. Of course I was going with my future wife, and she said, "I'm not going to marry a coal miner." I quit the next day. Didn't take me long to get the message.

Interviewer: What was your wife's name?

James Russell: My wife's name was Sarah Jane Ruth Harvison Russell. She got all the leftovers. She was the youngest. She had a brother and a sister that were older than her. I used to tell her, "You got all the names left over, didn't you?" She said, "I guess so." Sarah Jane Ruth Harvison Russell.

Interviewer: Where did she work?

James Russell: She was a telephone operator, a long-distance telephone operator. Strange beginning. We got married, she was working and I wasn't. I had been told that I was going to be hired by the telephone company, so I had quit the coal mine.

James Russell: But her dad had a project for me. I didn't know. He wanted to put cement in his basement that had a dirt floor. He had already poured a pad and had a gas furnace put in, so we wanted to dig out the floor so that he could put in a four-inch slab of concrete and match it up with the concrete that the furnace was sitting on.

James Russell: So I got the lovely job of digging that out. Hard, hard clay. You couldn't swing full. You had to take little chopping motions. I shoveled it into a wheelbarrow, and he fixed the ramp for me to wheel it out and dump it over a bank. He had a stopper down at the bottom so the dirt wouldn't roll out in the street. Remember, this was West Virginia now. Nothing flat there. Everything is either down or up. It's a wonderful place for some people to visit, but I don't want to go back. I had enough of it.

Interviewer: What did you do when you started working at the telephone company?

James Russell: I was what is known as a cable splicer's helper. I had a splicer, he was my boss. He was a little fellow, and he'd been with the telephone company for years. He really knew his business. He was given all the tough splicing jobs that the company had, and he taught me all the ins and outs of the job. He was--

James Russell: Well, I'd say he was a weekend alcoholic. When he came into work on Monday, we'd get in the truck and I'd do all the driving and we'd leave the garage and he might say, "Turn right." That's the extent of the conversation now, I didn't know where we were going. I'd drive and he'd say, "At that next light, make a left hand turn." And that's all I'd hear until we got to the job site. Then we park and he'd say, "Well, we're going up to the platform," which is a place for him to set up on the cable and he was going to cut in maybe a terminal here. And he'd go into the cable, pick up the wires that were going to be appearing in the terminal where they would connect the telephone service from a house or business or what have you.

James Russell: So it was my job to hang the platform by myself now, put up the ladder if there's no steps on the pole, put the ladder up and put the platform up. Of course, I had a pulley and I can attach the platform to the pulley and then I'd get up there and I'd have to hoist it up, grab it and hang it. Now you come back down because they had tie-down rope so I'd have to level the platform and tie it down so it wouldn't move.

James Russell: And when I get that all arranged and I'd say, "Well, I got the platform hung." "Okay, that's all we're going to do today." We're on a job site and I thought he was starting to work, no. He said, "We'll start tomorrow." And then we would leave and we would go to a local saloon and they had small glasses of beer for 10 cents and beginning of the next day we got at, he and I would drink the rest of the day.

James Russell: Needless to say, some days I wasn't fit to drive the truck but I was still the driver. And one day we went into the garage and they had a railing up on the left-hand side and they had a walkway that was above the level of the grade that you drove in on. So I drove in and I cut her a little short on the left-hand side and I hit the rear fender on that guard rail. He said, "Well, I guess I know what you're going to be doing tomorrow." Yeah, straighten the fender, sand it down, get the telephone company paying it. Yeah, that was me.

Interviewer: Well, tell me how you ended up in Georgia?

James Russell: Well, I had worked for the telephone company in West Virginia for CNP and we used to call them, cheap-in-particular. I'll tell you a little story about them and why we'd call them cheap. When I come out of the

service, I was given a hundred dollars a month because the new government knew I was going to have to go through some training. So the hundred dollars never got to me. Oh, I got it, but CNP, cheap-in-particular, subtracted a hundred dollars from my pay equal to the amount of money that I was getting from the government. True story. So we put up with that because I needed a job and so I became a cable splicer's helper.

James Russell: Then, after two years of working as a helper, they decided they needed a telephone installer and they promoted me to telephone installer and that's when my training really began. I went to school and learned how to climb poles and attach wires and run them to the house and wire the house, test the phone and all that kind of stuff. Even to doing the wiring in the office where the line was going to end up being exposed to the inside office, either an operator position or you know when you picked up a phone and they'd say, "Number please," because the light would light in front of them and they'd plug a cord in and say, "Number please," and you'd give them a number and it might say long distance and they'd switch you to a long distance operator and so forth.

James Russell: So from the installer's job, I became an installer repairman. Each step along the way, it was a little bit of a promotion, a little bit more money and a whole lot more responsibility. Well, I really had a knack for being able to repair phones and detect what the trouble was and cure it. And so they had a school and we had an entirely new switching system coming out on the market and they needed to train people to maintain that equipment.

James Russell: Now, it was automated and it came out of the Bell Telephone Laboratories and I went to school eight hours a day for a full year to learn that switching system. And we made field trips to other areas where companies already had the equipment. And sometimes we went there before it was put in service and we'd work on it and troubleshoot it and so forth. So, we learned by various methods what needed to be done.

James Russell: After the school was finished, I got promoted to be a supervisor and that's not the most healthy situation because I was given an office, a brand new office, and I had some of my classmates to supervise. And they knew when I took a nap and when I dodged the lesson, they knew all about me. Here I am, their boss; uncomfortable situation.

James Russell: Cheap-in-particular, I'll tell you how particular they were. When you become a boss, you had to wear a hat. I never wore a hat and I didn't wear just a cap or something, I had to go out and buy a regular brimmed hat of a particular color. I had to wear a suit and tie and a topcoat, none of which I had and they gave me a briefcase, whoopee. And it was a leather briefcase and it had two leather handles and it had a zipper compartment you'd carry

your so-called papers in or your lunch or whatever. But I was the boss and what a life that became.

Interviewer: So, did you come to Georgia in that position as a supervisor?

James Russell: Well, I was still with CNP and one day I was home in Charleston, West Virginia, and my boss called me up, my boss with CNP. He said, "Hey, ConTel, Continental Telephone, is in town and they would like to interview you with a possibility of you joining them in a position." And he said, "So-and-so is going to be interviewing," and I knew who he was because he'd been with CNP and he'd had joined ConTel.

James Russell: So I went to the motel and was interviewed and he said, "Well, we're going to buy your house and pay your moving expenses and we've already given you an 18% increase and we'll take care of your medical and your retirement." And they had more benefit programs than I could afford to pay for. Some of them I had to contribute, you know, like I had matching funds. You could save up to 12% of your salary and they'd actually match 50% of it. So 6%, whoopee. So this company was far ahead of anybody else that I ever heard of in employee benefits. I mean, I had all kinds of benefits you wouldn't believe and my wife couldn't believe it. She said, "Let's take it and let's move."

James Russell: So they moved me to Lynchburg, Virginia, and our division office was in Amherst, Virginia. And so, of course, we were selling our house and we had to move and so we found this new subdivision and a house that we liked, but I didn't have enough money for the down payment. So I went into the office, told my boss that I was a little short. He said, "Well, go see the division manager." I go and see the division manager, I'd never met him before, but he was from West Virginia and he had owned a telephone company in West Virginia. What I didn't know was that he also owned a bank in West Virginia. So I told him what my problem was and he said, "Well, you need \$5,000, huh?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, you got it. It will be on a 90 day renewable note and you can renew it as many times as you want and there'll be no interest charge." Yeah, you're talking about a gift in the [inaudible 01:27:05] I fell in. I'm telling you I never had such a nice deal.

James Russell: Second day on the job they said, "Hey, we're going to fly down to Mobile, Alabama, you want to go along with us on the plane?" There's a company plane with a company pilot and associated bosses and all that and I'm flying down to Mobile, Alabama to go to Bayou La Batre, Alabama. And I go there and there's guys in t-shirts and coming out of Virginia at the time in the winter, here are these guys in t-shirts building shrimp boats.

James Russell: So I go visit the telephone company. Boy, I got a shock there and I find out really why they got me because they had bought all these mom and pop telephone companies and put them together and they didn't have a common way of keeping records. When you called to report a trouble, they didn't have a standard way of recording it. They didn't have a standard way of laying out the facilities so that you assign a facility to a customer and you made a record of it. One thing was called a line card, you had people's name and address and their telephone number and where they were served from. And if they had no poll numbers so man, they didn't have a record keeping system to go with anything.

James Russell: So I got back to Amherst, my boss said, "Well, you know what your job is?" I said, "Well, I think I have an idea." He said, "I want you to set up training for the division in keeping records." Well, I had done that in CNP so I was familiar with it. And he said, "Hire a couple people, set up a training area and train these people in how to keep records." And he said, "We'll tell the engineering department and the construction department to start numbering poles and so forth and keeping a record of that system."

James Russell: So I hired a couple people. One of them I hired was a cable splicer from West Virginia who'd been an alcoholic. And I knew that he had stopped drinking and I called him and I said, "You want a job?" He said, "Sure." So come onboard and I told him what he was going to do. The personnel department had a woman who wanted a job and she had experience in keeping these records too. So I married to two of them together and they became my trainers. And we set up classrooms and brought people in and trained them.

James Russell: The only problem was the girl wanted to be the spokesman, the detailer and she kind of tried to dominate the situation and I had a personnel problem on my hand right in the very beginning. There was an alcoholic on one side and a dominating woman on the other side. Whoopee. Now, needless to say, I cured that problem and we went on and we were very successful in what we were doing.

Interviewer: Okay, so can you tell me a little bit about your family? You have four daughters, is that right?

James Russell: Yup, I have four-

Interviewer: What's their names?

James Russell: I have Jean, she's the oldest. She has a master's degree in education. She taught for 30 years and she's now retired. Janet has a degree in physical education. She taught in Dallas and Donalsonville, Georgia, but she met her husband in Donalsonville and they got married and moved to Virginia.

He heads up a brokerage firm and she works for two vice-presidents, two, not one, two vice presidents at Roanoke Gas. And anything that they have that they want done, they give it to Janet. She's the type of person, she doesn't need a lot of instruction, she knows pretty much what to do.

James Russell: For example, they were changing out their telephone system and Janet, you're in charge. Well, she knew from having been around me that you need to do extensive testing. And she told me what she was going to do and I said, "Well, don't forget one thing; you go to every station, you test it for all features: incoming, outgoing calls, transferring calls, and so forth."

James Russell: So she had a helper, a guy, and that's what they did. And they found one problem with one telephone and she went to where it was connected and it was connected improperly. And I don't know whether you're familiar with a wire punch down system, but the wires are plastic-coated and they put them in between metal notches and they punch them down, which cuts the insulation and makes the contact. One of those was wrong.

James Russell: So she took it, punched it down properly, cured the problem herself, not with my instruction or anything else. She just knew the job and watched and learned and she had no problem, tested every station and it worked perfectly. And she got every cotton picking dirty job that those guys had.

Interviewer: And what are your youngest two daughters names?

James Russell: Well, Judy, now she's the one that I didn't think she was ever going to finish college. She got a degree in education from the University of Georgia. Didn't like student teaching, decided that she would go to Georgia State University and get a nursing degree; another four year degree. She is a nurse now, she worked 13 years for a church school while her daughter and son were going there to school, of course they got privileges. And after 13 years, they built a new house and moved away.

James Russell: And just yesterday, she told me that she now has an interview for another private school as the school nurse. And they've already told her, "You're the first person that we've ever interviewed who comes with experience in the actual thing that we're needing." So she feels very sure she's going to get that job.

Interviewer: And what's your last daughter's name?

James Russell: Jamie. Now, that's a piece of work, that gal. She has a master's degree in psychology and she works for WellStar. And as I tell her, she takes care of all WellStar's fruits and nuts. Fruity people and nutty people and fruits and nuts is a term that we used in the Navy, especially around San Francisco, we called that the land of the fruits and nuts. Not only for California's

crops, but also San Francisco, you wouldn't believe back in even war time, man, those people are nuts. Absolutely. First time I have ever been approached by a male who wanted to take me to his hotel room. Yippie.

Interviewer: Was this after you got back into San Francisco for [crosstalk 01:35:57].

James Russell: After. Yeah, I'm still in Navy. I'd been home, I'd go back and I'm on shore patrol duty and all that kind of stuff, but I run up against this guy and he wanted me to go to his room.

Interviewer: Did it surprise you?

James Russell: Oh man, yeah. But I knew the answer; nah, not interested. He wanted to take me up there and give me a drink and I said, "Nah, not interested. I've had enough for the day."

Interviewer: Well, okay. So you've lived in Kennesaw since 1985, is that right?

James Russell: Yup.

Interviewer: Okay and tell me, Mr. Russell, why do you think it's important to share your story of World War II?

James Russell: Well, I'm kind of a unique individual I think. I didn't have a high school education, went to the Navy and found out how dumb I was and couldn't wait to come back home and go back and get my high school diploma, which the benefits to me that I can't really assemble all of the benefits that I've had.

James Russell: But yeah, I've had some dangerous jobs, besides being in the Navy and being shot at and bombed and all that stuff, to working in a coal mine, being hurt in the coal mine, to working in a steel factory tending a sheet metal galvanizing tub. Huge sheets of metal are in a steel stage and they run them through this liquid that galvanizes the sheet and it comes out the other end.

James Russell: Now, you say, "What's dangerous about that job?" Well, you have to put the so-called ingots of metal in that pot and if you put one in there that has a drop of water on it, it's going to go kaboom. And you're subject to being burnt severely by the splashing hot metal. So I learned very quickly that any ingots that I was going to put in that pot, I put them up on the side and let them sit there in heat and dry.

Interviewer: And when did you work at the steel mill?

James Russell: This was after I came from the service.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, Mr. Russell, we're going to have to stop there, okay?

James Russell: Yeah.

Interviewer: So I appreciate you agreeing to do the interview.

James Russell: Yeah.

Interviewer: And we'll conclude there.