

**Video Recording Log  
Veteran Robert Hamm**

**1. Name and address of collector of interviewer.**

Name of Donor/Interviewer: Kathleen Ricker  
Address: Campbell Hall for Public Telecommunication, 300 N. Goodwin  
City: Urbana  
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Partner organization affiliation (if any): WILL AM-FM-TV

**2. Name and birth date of the veteran or civilian being interviewed at is appears on the Biographical Data Form:**

Name of Veteran/Civilian: Robert Hamm  
Birth Date: 07/17/1923

**3. Recording format**

VIDEO type: Mini DVD

**4. Estimated length of recording (in minutes):** 93 minutes    **Date of recording:** 08/23/2007

**5. Location of recording:** WILL AM-FM-TV, 300 N. Goodwin Ave, Urbana, IL 61801

**6. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence.**

00:00:00	Introduction
00:00:44	Draft notice when he was 19, signed up for Navy to avoid Army
00:01:20	Worked in Engineering Plant
00:01:38	Recruits wanted him but he had to wait
00:02:15	6 months later Army looking for him, inducted into Navy
00:02:50	Recruiters asked him if he wanted to be Navy or Reserves, he chose Reserves because the duration was said to be 6 months
00:03:15	Great Lakes boot camp
00:03:30	Sent to Norfolk, VA, on battleship from WWI—used for convoys to Africa
00:04:10	Transferred to U.S.S. Franklin, pre-commissioning school, plank owner, original crew
00:04:45	Shakedown trip to Trinidad, then back to Norfolk, VA, then to the Panama Canal and to San Diego to pick up planes and air group, then to Pearl Harbor, 1942
00:05:30	Pearl Harbor, brand new carrier, loaded ship with supplies and munitions—unloaded, got planes on ship—tied up next to U.S.S. Arizona, could see gun turrets
00:06:45	Pilots on board—there several weeks—gunnery practice

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- 00:07:00 Went to sea, Captain said there would be a Fourth of July party—bombed Iwo Jima, first mission
- 00:07:30 Engaged in battles in Saipan, Tinian, Guam, Iwo Jima—President Bush Sr. shot down—“Ha Ha Chi Chi and Iwo Jima”
- 00:08:35 Sailed to Marianas—there for “softening up” of island after invasion
- 00:08:52 The problem of being in Engineering—never know what is going on or where you’re going when you are below deck
- 00:09:14 Men on “smokewatch”—look down at stacks on ship and report if they started blowing grey smoke—also watch for submarines and torpedoes
- 00:10:40 Torpedo scares happened frequently—sometimes got orders for hard rudder to turn ship—never hit by torpedo
- 00:11:10 Sailed from Marianas to Philippine Sea—Najwa and Leite
- 00:11:25 Sent to Palua Islands—softening up for invasion—later told cousin was killed there in first wave of Marine invasion
- 00:13:00 Sailed South of the Equator—got shellback cards
- 00:13:25 Got word Japanese had turned Marines back and driven them off of the island—Army came in and reoccupied
- 00:14:20 Battle of Phillipine Sea—Japanese fleet hiding there—“Mariana Turkey Shoot”
- 00:15:00 Close miss during battle killed several and injured some—damage to deck edge elevator
- 00:15:45 Later hit by kamikaze plane—tore into hangar deck
- 00:16:05 Sailed to Ulithe Island—ship was inspected and taken to Pearl Harbor for repairs
- 00:16:35 Sailed to Washington, Puget Sound—there over Christmas
- 00:17:00 Leave—train from Seattle to Chicago—antique cattle train with pot-bellied stove—20 day leave—back to Washington
- 00:17:50 Ship finished in a couple of months—sailed to San Francisco and San Diego to get new air crew, new missiles, Tiny Tims
- 00:18:26 Sailed out, did not know where they were going—later found out going to bomb Japan
- 00:18:48 First carrier planes to bomb mainland Japan since Jimmy Doolittle—1945
- 00:19:55 50 miles off of coast of Japan—planes all loaded with bombs, gas, Tiny Tims—hangar deck and flight deck all loaded
- 00:20:25 Japanese bomber dropped 2 bombs—planes and pilots blown away—about 800 killed, 400-500 wounded
- 00:21:08 Santa Fe Cruiser came along and took off wounded
- 00:21:30 Burying men
- 00:21:50 Stopped at Ulithe—argument about Captain—part of repair party
- 00:22:38 Started looking for bodies—took a long time, finding pieces
- 00:23:00 Sailed to Pearl Harbor—[decides to withhold story about Captain] “let sleeping dogs lie,” “it wasn’t good”
- 00:23:28 Back through Canal—up through Gulf—rumors of German submarine in the Gulf—Captain decided to follow coast to beach ship in case of attack
- 00:24:10 Back to New York—dance put on by Lady Astor

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00:24:30 While in New York war in Europe ended—Time Square—also in Time Square when war in Japan was over

00:24:55 Signed up with friends to bring troops back from Europe

00:25:15 German luxury liner being converted to troop transport—school to learn German because everything on ship was in German

00:26:05 Transferred to another carrier—U.S.S. Lake Champlain—just like U.S.S. Franklin—put in #3 fire room just like on the Franklin

00:26:35 Sailed to South Hampton, England to pick up troops, returned to Stanton Island

00:27:00 Second trip, appendicitis—Captain operated on him, 3-4 days out of New York—light duty for a few weeks

00:27:45 Leave—had no money—borrowed from Salvation Army—went home

00:28:56 Discharged in Chicago

00:29:15 Went back to Engineering Company—making 40 cents an hour

00:29:35 Friend told him to join Santa Fe Railroad Company—got on steam locomotives in rail yard—dangerous, fatalities

00:30:35 Married, 3 sons, moved to Urbana, IL

00:30:50 Working at University of Illinois

00:31:00 Father-in-law got him into carpenters union in Chicago, IL, apprentice there

00:31:30 Applied as carpenter at University—had to get a physical—doctor said he was unfit for the job because he might get a hernia

00:33:28 Worked as a janitor—applied to work at a power house—told he was too old

00:34:15 Carpentry—had his own company—built houses—contracts for University buildings

00:34:38 Moved to Oakland—built kiln to make wood finishing

00:35:55 Moved back to Urbana, IL

00:36:10 Oakwood for 30 years, Urbana, IL again for 5 years

00:36:30 Navy reunions—1<sup>st</sup> was in New York—son was born—1948-49?—reunions started 6-8 years apart, hard to find everyone

00:38:15 When ship was hit, Captain ordered all non-essential men to leave on Santa Fe—crew down to 704 from 3200, “704 club”

00:39:10 “Better not get into that”—about people that left the ship [possibly related to previous self-censorship about Captain]

00:39:25 No one that left the ship could come back—friend on flight deck was blown off ship, picked up by destroyer and taken to Pearl Harbor—snuck him back on ship—picked shrapnel out of his back for two weeks

00:41:40 After war his friend wanted nothing to do with other men from the ship or reunions—said guys at Pearl Harbor were spitting on him because he was an engineer and left his ship—being punished even though it was Captain’s decision—hard feelings

00:42:45 At Ulithe—Captain sent for some of the officers to come back on ship who had been ordered to leave previously

00:43:50 Friend never got over it—did not want to see any friends from the ship back in civilian life—became chief engineer at Corning West

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00:44:40 Reunions occurring every year

00:45:00 Reunion at Bar Harbor, ME—had a stroke—no public hospital—taken to private hospital across the street from Bush and Kennedy estates

00:48:00 President Bush supposed to speak at reunion—too busy, but did a fly-over

00:49:04 U.S.S. Franklin day to day—big ship, about 800 feet long—had bombers, fighters, torpedo bombers—could carry bombs up to 2,000 pounds heavy

00:50:07 Marine “Corse Airs”

00:50:23 Heard that some pilots from “Pepe One’s” “black sheep squadron” joined ship after he was shot down

00:50:43 Discussing movie reels—Navy guys, pictures—news reel with famous broadcaster—one with Gene Kelly, made honorary crew member

00:52:23 Photograph of U.S.S. Franklin after bombing—Bob Blanchard being given last rites by Father O’Callahan—he did not die, given name “Chicken Bob”

00:53:40 Gene Kelly—each guy gave a story

00:53:45 Lots of fires on ship—one sailor talking about getting lungs burned—had to drink out of spittoon because there was no water

00:54:50 After ship bombed—officers gone—crew raided officers’ lockers—everyone drinking in fire room

00:55:40 [Tape change]

00:55:53 [New tape starts mid-sentence] Ship photographer Ray Bailey

00:56:55 Bombing of ship—nearly everyone on hangar and flight decks killed—he was on 4<sup>th</sup> deck

00:57:45 Problem—does not want to get Captain involved—not at general quarters when hit—not supposed to happen when in battle area—hatch doors were all open—ship burning and blowing for 24 hours

00:58:50 [Does not want to get into detail about bombing]

00:59:10 People he knew on ship—only know people you work with—about 3200 people on the whole ship—knew men in fire room and engine room

01:00:50 Re-provisioning ship—bringing stuff on

01:02:15 Officers had own mess and own food—good stuff—stealing officers’ food and dropping down hatch to fire room—hiding food in bilges

01:05:30 Officers found out

01:06:17 Sheet metal shop made fire room a coffee pot out of copper with lead soldering—held about 50 cups of coffee—heated water with steam pipes in engine room from super heaters, 800 degrees—used boiler water which had boiler compound in it

01:09:00 Divisions had specialties—kept to themselves

01:09:15 People in air divisions thought very highly of themselves

01:11:00 Standing watch on deck at night—on watch 4 hours, off 8, rotated constantly

01:11:40 When not on watch had to work—maintenance or engine room

01:11:48 Did not get much sleep, especially in battle zone

01:12:08 Sonar for submarines was really sensitive—in fire room men were making rings out of quarters—making too much noise, Captain passed word they were messing up the sonar

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- 01:14:09 Going on liberty to islands on whale boat— Eniwetok, Mantis—rim of volcano
- 01:15:25 Japanese ship sunk close to beach—could swim out to it and swim into hold—got souvenirs of Japanese guns and ammunition
- 01:17:15 Islands had coconut trees which were reduced to stumps from Navy shooting at island—CEBE's made windmills for washing machines—cooling beers in gasoline tanks
- 01:18:47 Time Square when war ended—great place to be—got old after a few months
- 01:20:15 Supposed to go to Le Havre, France, but only made it to South Hampton, England—would take train to London for liberty—London was barren
- 01:21:00 Stayed at a place like YMCA—no roof or windows, army cot and blanket, bombed out building
- 01:21:35 London in bad shape
- 01:21:55 Read books about U.S.S. Franklin—4 of them
- 01:23:30 Author asked him to tell his story—there was a release form—had heard that for other books there had been lawsuits—did not want to get into trouble for talking about Captain
- 01:24:45 “I never said nothing for 62 years, so I figured, forget it. The damage is done, and it's not going to make anybody happy.”
- 01:25:05 What it's like to read books now—likes to see if people see it the same way he does
- 01:25:45 A lot of people thought the Captain was a good person—he never said anything because it would be negative to other guys on ship
- 01:26:10 Not many men from U.S.S. Franklin still alive, so reunions every year
- 01:26:45 Last newsletter—staff taking on children and grandchildren on board for reunions
- 01:28:15 A lot of the men came through Great Lakes but never got to see Chicago as a city—reunions there
- 01:29:45 Books, authors, other Illinois veterans, tapes
- 01:32:07 Wrap-up