

Interview Subject: Captain Alfred A. Smith
Producer: Jessica Williams
Date of Interview: 1.16.14
Location: Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum Complex
Transcriber: Elizabeth C. Gorski
Date of Completion of Transcript: May 27, 2014
Project Number: OHP028

(00:14 – 00:39) Jessica Williams: Whenever we are all ready, the first thing that I will ask you, we usually like to have people state their name and their role on Intrepid and the years that they served. And then from there we will probably start with some early questions about your early life, when you joined the Navy, blah, blah, blah. Probably we'll focus more on your time on Intrepid, but if there are some of the other interesting things to bring up, we'll get to that, get around to that.

(00:40 – 00:45) Alfred A. Smith: I'll take my cue from what you, how you want to time it. (Jessica Williams says "Yeah") You're going to cut it anyway, so . . .

(00:46 – 01:02) Jessica Williams: We gather as much as we can now and then, as we decide in the future, how we use things. And if at any point, if you need a pause to take a drink, that's cool. (Alfred A. Smith, "Can I just give you a little . . . [makes face]?) Yeah, or just say, pause for a moment, it's fine. Because it's not, we're not . . .

(01:03 – 01:17) Alfred A. Smith: I guess if we want to recap something, we can stop and go back and ask the question and recast the answer? (Eric says "And ignore me. We can start whenever you'd like.")

(01:18 – 01:40) Jessica Williams: Yeah, are you good. All right. Let's do it. Okay, so today is January 16, 2014. We are at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum. My name is Jessica Williams. I'm the Curator of History here at the Museum and I am speaking to Alfred Smith, who goes by "Pete." So Pete, would you mind telling us your name and the role that you served on Intrepid, and the years that you served on Intrepid?

(01:41 – 02:12) Alfred A. Smith: Right, and as you mentioned, my name is Alfred, but I go by "Pete." I'm a retired captain in the Navy. I served on Intrepid from 1970 to 1972. I was the Operations Officer in that tour, and that sort of was the heart throb of the operations on the ship, as the name implies. We put together the daily schedules, commanding officer signed it

out. And that's what drove the ship every day, as to what they were, you know, trying to accomplish at sea, and so on. So that's what I did.

(02:13 – 02:22) Jessica Williams: I'm looking forward to getting into more detail about how all of that worked. But I'd love to know just a little bit about you. Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood and where you grew up?

(02:23 – 07:01) Alfred A. Smith: Right, I joined the Navy at an early age, at 17. In 1947, I was in high school and joined the Reserves because they said they got a uniform and a gun. And I thought that was really important, so I became an enlisted reservist and sailed on ships. And then I came to Washington and joined a submarine division and sailed on submarines out of New London [Connecticut]. And from there, I went on to the Naval Academy, where I spent four years as a midshipman and graduated in 1953. And then I started into the aviation world. I went to flight training right after a tour on a carrier out of Norfolk, from graduation. And I went to flight training in '53 and got my wings in November of '54. My first squadron was in Trinidad, flying seaplanes. We flew the World War II PBMs and then I shifted over to another squadron and flew the post-World War II P5M, which was a more advanced seaplane. And that terminated my association with the VP, we called it – the patrol plane world. Went back to Pensacola and I was a test pilot in an overhaul facility where we would overhaul the airplanes and then put them back in the fleet, or put them back in the training command. And we had to test them at the end of their, of their rework – so I did that for a while. And then I joined the VS, we called it the VS community which was the anti-submarine carrier part of the ASW world. And that was the first squadron that I joined, in Norfolk – VS 27. And sailed on the Atlantic fleet ships to the Med, North Atlantic. And when I finished that tour, I got ordered to the Naval War College for a brief stint. Got my master's degree there while I was at the War College. And then came back, and stayed with the ASW community. I came back to a job in what they called HUKFORLANT. It was a carrier division, but it was one of the subsets of the carrier staff that did developmental work, and I was the air operations officer. What we did there was try to develop new tactics and new equipment suits for the airplanes and the ships. It was both the ships and the airplanes. It was a rather dedicated group of people, in another historical context because it was part of a, of a group called Task Group Alpha, which was formed by an admiral Jimmy Thach after World War II, when the submarine threat really emerged for the U.S. Navy. And so, it was felt that we really needed to devote some significant attention to improving our capabilities against, at that time in the '60s and '70s – the Soviet nuclear threat, which was really significant. And so I worked with them and brought into the fleet some really significant equipment, both on the ships and in the airplanes. It was a really enlightening tour. And then I was fortunate enough to get sent down to another VS squadron in Key West, where we had a Replacement Squadron that trained incoming, new aviators and people returning to fleet

squadrons, to refresh them in the S-2 aircraft. And I ultimately wound up the commanding officer of that squadron. And then, after that tour of duty I came to the Intrepid, and so I spent '70 to '72 on the Intrepid which resulted in 12 straight years – I've told a lot of my friends that I really am unique in the sense that I had 12 straight years associated with the VS or the carrier community. Which is rather unique for our community cause people, as you'd imagine, got the shore duty in different places and so on. So it was a, it was a very, very interesting and a very informative period of time in my life, obviously. And then I left the operating fleet and went to shore commands. I became head of the CNO briefers in the Pentagon, where we put together the morning brief for both the Secretary of the Navy and his staff and the Chief of Naval Operations. And when I finished that I went then to my shipboard command world. I had command of an attack cargo ship in San Diego, LKA-116, the St. Louis. And then the Tripoli, a helicopter carrier, both back to back. And then I came back from that and wound up in the Pentagon again, as the executive assistant to the Navy's Director of Command and Control, where we had, you know, the entire Navy command and control structure. And from there I retired. And so, it was a very long and rewarding career. And I look back on it with fond memories, obviously.

(07:02 – 07:21) Jessica Williams: It's a whole, there are so many stories embedded in your long career. And so, we probably won't get to all of them, but thank you for outlining all of that. One thing that comes to mind in hearing your story: when you were a 17-year-old kid looking to have a uniform and a gun in the Navy (Alfred Smith laughs), did you ever imagine that the Navy would be your career?

(07:22 – 08:24) Alfred A. Smith: No. Absolutely not. No, in fact I left high school and went to Maryland University, and it was, not a sad thing, but my father had passed away and I was a burden to my mother, financially, to go to college. And when I found out that, as a reservist, I could compete on a national level with the fleet sailors for an appointment to the Naval Academy, I took it. And I passed the, you know, the competitive exam and went into the Navy through that route. But it was more an exigency than it was a dedication but, you know, my whole life now is centered around the Navy. I left the Navy and went to work for a firm called TRW doing Navy support work as a project manager putting amphibious fleet ships into the system. And so I had another 16 years working with the Navy, sort of in a similar capacity. So to answer your question, absolutely not. That was probably the furthest thing from my mind at that point in time, I mean, I was thinking of girls, and I was a lifeguard at Jones Beach, that was much more important.

(8:25 – 8:26) Jessica Williams: So you're from the New York area, then?

(8:27 – 8:37) Alfred A. Smith: Born and raised in Hempstead, Long Island. And then as I said migrated to Washington and went to Maryland and then started my naval career from there, so.

(8:38 – 08:57) Jessica Williams: One of the things I think we'll probably talk about a lot in different ways is – the anti-submarine warfare function of the Navy during the time that you were serving and, of course, all of your specific roles related to that. So I'm wondering, for somebody who has no idea what ASW is and why it's important to the Navy, if you could just give the layman's explanation for what that function was?

(08:58 – 10:47) Alfred A. Smith: Yeah, well, I think everybody's aware, even at this day in our time that the submarine threat really emerged during World War II when the Germans almost won the war in the Atlantic submarine world. I mean, they just decimated our fleets. They decimated the merchant ship supply routes. And so, the Navy realized way back then that we needed to have a capable deterrent for the submarine threat. And then, of course, we migrated into the Soviet nuclear threat because they were the predominant threat in the '60s and '70s. And so, the Navy for the longest time, had the patrol planes on land; they had the sea planes, as I mentioned, and then we had a pretty dedicated carrier group. At one time, we had as many ASW-dedicated carriers as we had in the Navy. They were really brought into the, into the scene to counter this threat. And so, that's where I spent my formative years, in the ASW world. But anti-submarine warfare is basically countering the threat that the submarine posed to our carrier battle groups and our supply lines, obviously, as well. And so we had ships, we had ships during World War II. And we had some capability in the aircraft world on carriers during World War II. But we really grew, as I mentioned, the development group with Admiral Thach – we really grew that capacity into a formidable capability. Did we ever achieve full deterrence? Practically speaking – no. It was and still is a big threat to the seagoing Navy and the merchant ships. The submarine's a formidable weapons system. There's just no doubt about it.

(10:48 – 10:50) Jessica Williams: What makes that deterrence so difficult with submarines?

(10:51 – 14:19) Alfred A. Smith: Well, two things. One – the design of the submarine itself changed dramatically from the submarine that couldn't do anything but go on the surface and then dive to a battery capacity limited time frame. And then they developed a snorkel which allowed them to do charging of the batteries, if you will, with a snorkel exposed to the elements. And then, of course, the nuclear power world, and that became a really significant threat because they could stay under for long periods of time, they were fast, and they got more and more quiet. And to this day, the ability to detect submarines is really very much sound-dependent. In other words, we either had a need to have active sonar on a shipboard platform, or we had sonobuoys which we dropped from the airplanes to literally listen to the

submarines' noises. And one of the things we did on this ship – and we can talk about it later on – is we put together a facility called the ASCAC – Anti-Submarine Classification and Analysis Center. And what we did – and I was very much involved in that as I mentioned earlier in the, in the HUKFORLANT and development world. But what we did was, we took some of the analysis equipment that the Navy had installed on shore base facilities, that long, literally mile-long hydrophone arrays out into the Atlantic from Bermuda up north in Iceland, and listened to Soviet submarines. And so, we took some of that very sophisticated analysis equipment, which wouldn't fit in the airplanes at the time, and we took what is now the Ready Room opposite Combat – and dedicated that to an ASCAC. And we allowed then, the airplanes to send signals back, noise signals on their sonobuoys. The corollary to that was a program called the Multichannel Jezebel Relay. In the airplane, we really didn't have any ability to do anything but analyze these sonobuoys inside the plane, but we developed a system whereby we could take multiple buoys and combine them in a transmitted way through a receiver in a ship and a transmitter on the airplane, and send all of these sonobuoy signals back to this anti-submarine center. That gave us a very, very sophisticated upgrade of detection of the submarines. And that really changed dramatically this ship's capability, as well as the other carriers that we put it on. And so, that, that's kind of the historical context of where we are in the ASW world, but it hasn't gone away. The Soviets still have theirs. The Chinese are building submarines and we have a number of nations around the world that still have very credible submarines, and it's really ironic – one of the interesting things that we're dealing with is, although the nuclear submarine was a very credible platform, some of the quiet diesel submarines that the Germans built and, and other countries, are harder to detect. And so, we have a real anomaly. The modern submarine is easier to detect, in some cases, than the older ones. And there's even talk of the U.S. Navy – because of the cost of building new platforms, and particularly nuclear submarines – of going back to some of the more sophisticated nuclear, I mean, the diesel designs that have been available, and making that an, you know, an add-on to our fleet of submarines, so, rather interesting.

(14:20 – 14:39) Jessica Williams: It is interesting you mentioned that because this conversation about the diesel-electric technology versus nuclear technology comes up a little bit with our former crew members of Growler, the submarine that we have (Alfred A. Smith, "Sure") displayed here, which is a diesel-electric submarine. So from some of them lately, I've been hearing, or they've been sending me similar kinds of articles or comments about that, about that topic that you just mentioned.

(14:40 – 15:22) Alfred A. Smith: I've been on Growler and it was very familiar. I mean, that's an old submarine. Those were not great living conditions, I can tell you, having gone underneath the water in those things. It's kind of cramped. We had, because I was a reservist, we were not part of the ship's company. And we would do what they would call – "hot bunking". And the,

the crewmen didn't really appreciate our coming aboard because we took their beds, and so on. But we would literally sleep on watch, I mean sleep in the bed, go on a watch, and then somebody else would come and take that bunk to sleep in. I mean, you didn't have a dedicated bunk to sleep in the entire time you were there. So, they called it – hot bunking. Kind of bizarre for some people to accept now, but that was what we did in those days.

(15:23 – 15:46) Jessica Williams: Let's see – something that you mentioned that I just wanted to go back to a little bit, to talk about anti-submarine warfare. And that during the time you were in service, the adversary was the Soviet Union. So I'm wondering – you, serving in the Navy during the Cold War, what were your thoughts about the Soviet Union as far as the Cold War, everybody's role in the Cold War. Did you think about them as an enemy?

(15:47 – 16:48) Alfred A. Smith: Well, we were very, very serious, frankly, about our role in deterring the Soviet Union. I mean, you could recognize it, not only did we have that as an issue but we were in the Space Age now where we were competing with the Soviets in so many areas where we felt we were running behind, for example. Space, in particular. And so, the submarine threat was one that we in the ASW community took very, very seriously. **And I'd have to say, probably on this ship, my two years on the Intrepid were probably the hardest I've ever worked in my entire life.** I mean, two hours' sleep at any one time was a luxury. And so I, but I think we all did it, really proud of the contribution we were making because we felt so strongly about the national need to stay strong and to stay able to deter the threat that we figured that was so significant, so.

(16:49 – 16:56) Jessica Williams: You mentioned Intrepid, so we'll get to that a little bit I think now. What exactly was Intrepid's mission during the period that you were on board?

(16:57 – 19:33) Alfred A. Smith: Solely ASW. I mean, we had some excursions where we picked up astronauts that had been in a space flight or something like that, but, you know, like all of the Navy ships in the Navy – we'd (need to?) show the flag when we went to the Mediterranean, North Atlantic and so on. But it was all centered around operations either with our own naval forces or foreign navies. We did a lot with the English, a lot with the French, a lot with the Spanish in the Mediterranean area and North Atlantic. We devoted a lot of attention to the North Atlantic because of the Soviet threat. And in fact, one of the really indelible experiences was trying to fly off this ship and all the other carriers in really bad weather up in the North Atlantic. And it was just terrible operating conditions. And although we never, we never had any really serious accidents associated with it, it was probably the scariest flying, I think, many of us had ever done. Because the weather was just such a factor. In fact, jokingly we used to say – the first thought out of your mind after the cat shot was the landing five hours later because you just knew you had to come back and do that and it wasn't one that really you anticipated. It was really a hairy experience, so that, but ASW, to answer your question, ASW

was really the predominant role that we played. And by that I mean, not just exercises with our own Navy and so on, but we really countered the Soviet submarines. I mean we took a cruise up to the North Atlantic and we would routinely get passage of Soviet submarines coming, now what we call the GIUK Gap – Greenland, Iceland gap. And we would track them as long as we could. We would track them until we were convinced that they didn't want to either encouraged (maybe incurs) any further, or they would surface or whatever, but we, we did a lot of tracking of, actual tracking of Soviet submarines. In fact, it was interesting – it was one of a few, when we look back on it, it was one of the few operations in a peacetime Navy where you could do exactly what you would do in a wartime condition. I mean, we did exactly the same thing countering the Soviet submarine threat without dropping a torpedo on them, as we would in a wartime situation. So it was a very faithful period of time in terms of our training, because we did exactly, and they did, of course, the Soviet submarine skipper would do exactly what he would do in trying to evade us. So it was a very, very, as I say, realistic period of time in the training of the ships and the airplanes, and so on.

(19:34 – 19:39) Jessica Williams: Onboard Intrepid, what technology did you use to track Soviet submarines?

(19:40 – 20:50) Alfred A. Smith: Well, the primary capability of course rested in the airplanes. We had a sonar aboard but, unlike a destroyer, we never sent the, it was more a defensive capability, we never sent the carrier off to track a submarine. Whereas, we would do that with sonar-equipped destroyers, but but the main battle arm of the ship was, of course, the VS anti-submarine warfare planes. We had dipping sonar capable on the helos, the H-3 helos. And then we had an early-warning aircraft which, at times, one could argue was a capability against a snorkeling or an exposed submarine. But on balance, we tracked them under water, of course. And so, we had the VS squadron, the helo dipping sonar, and then the coordination capability of the E-2, which was the ability to coordinate the planes. And then we had four, later on in life, they put four, A-4 aircraft on the ships to help in overflights. And actually, a realistic self-defense capability is a, you know, an airborne fighter capability.

(20:51 – 21:05) Jessica Williams: So, on Intrepid, you were the head of the Operations Department, which is really coordinating a lot of this information gathering, so I wonder if you can tell me a little bit about your role specifically, as head of the department, and what the department did overall?

(21:06 – 26:56) Alfred A. Smith: Yeah. The Operations Department, as the name implies, was the group that really put together the daily operations schedule on the ship. And I was in charge of such things as the CIC – the Combat Information Center, the CATCC [Note: CATCC is carrier air traffic control], the air traffic control, we, we had a very reputable capability to control airplanes, much like a civilian airport or a civilian aircraft control capability. We, we,

when the weather was bad, we had to vector the pilots back in, in their system, in their landing approach to the ship. And they were just say, like any other, in fact, they were qualified air controllers. They went through the same training as an FAA air controller. So we had the aircraft control capability. We had the responsibility for really keeping the captain of the ship, and if we had an embarked admiral – keeping them informed of the entire picture of where we were, from an either surface contact point of view, surface ships and/or aircraft if they were coming in, as I mentioned, Soviet submarines, I mean Soviet aircraft were rather routine because they liked to fly against us and see what we did, and we did the same. And so, the, the primary role was that of just coordinating the operations of the ship from an aircraft and shipboard, but we had, in addition to that, we had an Aerology Department, we had a full weather station, if you will, aboard the ship. And we had electronics repair capability. We had a number of departments within, I mean operations within the ship. The intelligence was a really significant adjunct to the CIC world because that's where we, in the real world, got the information on who our adversaries were. They would get it through land-based radio communications, if you will. And message systems. And we would be advised if there was a submarine or an aircraft coming because they would be able to detect it further, obviously, than we could. And so we had, I mean even to the degree we had cryptologists on the ship who would, and it was one of the most fascinating things I ever did was to sit in the room and listen to the Soviets, Soviet pilots conversing among themselves in a flight of aircraft, and having our cryptologists interpreting those and recording the conversations, very demanding work and very sophisticated. But we had that capability, obviously, to be able to listen in on their aircraft frequencies. And then, as I said, we had the more routine intelligence work which was to brief the pilots. One of the things we did on this ship – just a diversion – the NTDS, Naval Tactical Data System – was a program the Navy built into ships in the later '60s to computerize the command and control structure on our ships. It started with the carrier battle groups and we had one experimental group with an ASW group, the Wasp and the (inaudible 24:13), two destroyers and a carrier – were outfitted, retrofitted, if you will, with the NTDS version of an ASW command and control system. It was never developed for the rest of the ships and so, Intrepid was never destined to be an NTDS-capable platform. So when I came aboard, we were in the throes of trying to improve how we could do the command and control function internally in this ship, and we agreed that a closed-circuit television system would be really a very useful tool, and so we did install it. We put it in Combat, we put a camera in the ASCAC, as I mentioned, put it above the plotting table so you could take a picture of the plot that was being generated from the aircraft out on scene. And they could be maybe hundreds of miles away. And then we routed all of that down into the ready rooms. And so, whereas before, if a plane, group of planes went out on a launch, we would have to prepare a brief about an hour and a half before launch time to get all the material together, get all of the briefing sheets put together, we would hand out at the ready rooms. And then, send the AI, air intelligence

officers, down to the ready rooms to brief. And so, by the time the pilots manned aircraft to go out and relieve another group on what we call the datum or (inaudible 25:31) on scene, their information as to what was actually there was probably an hour-and-a-half to two hours old. Well, when we put the cameras above the plotting table, they could look at the TV in their ready room and see exactly what the composition of the datum was where the track of the submarine was, how it related to the buoy fields that had been laid. And so, they had roughly an hour-and-a-half to two-hour improvement in the intelligence dead time, which was significant. It truly was significant. So that was a combination of things that, I mentioned the equipment in the air plane, the ASCAC and the closed circuit. When the Intrepid was decommissioned in the time she was doing her ASW role, she was the most sophisticated non-NTDS platform we had. And I tell the story – there was an admiral named Carl Seiberlich, who had an ASW group on the West Coast, and came to visit this ship. He was so impressed with what he saw, he got all the plans and took them back to the West Coast and implemented on his flagship, the Yorktown, which is now in Charleston and has the ASCAC – I understand, has the ASCAC still installed on the ship. It was removed here, either before de-commissioning. I don't know when it was removed, actually. But it no longer exists. But again, it was a very significant period of time in this ship, in terms of upgrading the internal command and control capability.

(26:57 – 27:08) Jessica Williams: It's good that you mentioned Yorktown because, by coincidence, I happen to be going to visit them in a couple of weeks – a few weeks, actually. And so, I will go ask to visit that space and see what it's like.

(27:09 – 27:36) Alfred A. Smith: Oh, yeah. Please do, because I'd like a verification that it's actually there. And I don't know, we can never do it here but maybe it wouldn't be out of line to maybe see if there was some way to take pictures or have that capability, if it's still resident there, you know, shown to people to show that that was really a very significant node in the command and control structure on this ship during the height of its ASW days. Yeah, that would be great.

(27:37 – 27:38) Jessica Williams: Yes, I'll look into it and report back later in February.

(27:39) Alfred A. Smith: Good.

(27:40 – 27:58) Jessica Williams: So you mentioned – just again, a little clarification for people who might not know – you mentioned this plotting table as being very significant as far as tracking what's around the ship and also informing aviators about their missions. Can you describe a little more specifically about the function of that and where it was located?

(27:59 – 31:11) Alfred A. Smith: Well, there's a plotting table as you, when I came aboard I, my preliminary training before I came to this ship was, because I was prospective operations I

would go visit commands that had destroyers and so on, it was sort of an upgrade of my background. And the destroyer community had an anti-submarine capability in their sonar with what they called an NC2 plotting table. And it hooked the sonar operator to a bug on the table which, very short range, because they only had thousands of yards of detection capability on a shipboard sonar, but it would drive a bug on the plotting table so they could plot exactly where the sonar operator said the submarine was. And so, the system was built by a firm called Hartman Systems, on Long Island. And I asked them, I said – would it be possible to change the capacity of this plotting table, the NC2 plotting table, to give it a longer range so we could take a shipboard radar and track targets, you know, miles and miles away, rather than thousands of yards? And they looked into it and said – yes, they could change the gear train, and so they built it and put it aboard this ship. The only one. And so, we had it and you had, a long time ago, asked me about a plotting table in flag plot. And so, they came to be about a year or so later and said – would I like to have a plotting table where we could do what they call “CPA” – closest point of approach – calculations? If your ship is travelling along and you see a target out on the horizon, and you don’t know, if they stay on their present course and you stay on yours, whether you’ll intersect or not? And the maneuvering board solution was what we traditionally did in the Navy, before computers and all that. So they put this capability into this plotting table and we have it now on the bridge. I don’t think there was ever one other than this one, on this ship. But the other side of that story is – we moved the surface plot, which was really tracking of all the surface ships from our own ship’s radar and so on, up to the flag bridge because the flag bridge was not as crowded. And we got agreement from the staff to allow us to do that. They didn’t, the radar didn’t know where it was, it was just a repeater, and the plotting table could be any place cause it served the information for the flag bridge, our bridge, and so on. So that’s why it resides up there in, in the flag plot, rather than down in our Combat Information Center. But it was originally there, so that, the plotting table was an integral part of what we did to keep track of our ship and surface ships that, and they could be a threat, of course, I mean it wasn’t, we weren’t as, so concerned about a surface threat as we were the submarine threat. But we had a lot of occasions where, in particular, the Soviets would try to embarrass our ships. And so, we really needed to know where they were, that they were gonna to try to intercept us or, and occasionally would literally try to ram you. They become international incidents in many cases where they tried to do this. But they were aggressive and so the surface plot is an integral part of any ship’s capability to, you know, keep track of the surface threat.

(31:12 – 31:40) Jessica Williams: When, so the, this, thank you for explaining that plotting table. As you know, from our previous discussion, this was a mysterious object up there that, we didn’t know what it was because it had no serial number or anything on it. (Alfred A. Smith says “Right”) So thanks for explaining. I was going to ask you about that, so I’m happy you mentioned it. So, knowing that that is surface plot and we’ve talked around this a little bit. Can

you just explain what surface plot was and what other functions were happening up in that area?

(31:41 – 32:21) Alfred A. Smith: Well, it was pretty simple. I mean we had a radar that would generate a contact on the radar and we would identify it and give it some nomenclature. And then we would constantly track it in relation to our own ship to see whether it was going to, you know, traverse close to our track, or intersect our track and so on. And so, it was very straightforward. It was just identification of surface ships in our area, as far as we could see them with our radar, and keeping track of them and designate them, and if we had to take any evasive action or do anything untoward, we would be able to do that, but it was very simple, it was just, and that probably hadn't changed since World War II, so.

(32:22 – 32:28) Jessica Williams: Do you recall what the range was for Intrepid's radar for surface searching?

(32:29 – 32:50) Alfred A. Smith: No. (laughing) We're talking, you know, horizon, 15, 20 miles. And I don't want to be quoted on that. I really can't, I should know that answer but you can edit this out at a later date, but I can't give you a really good answer. I wish I could. We'll fill in that blank later.

(32:51 – 33:21) Jessica Williams: Yeah, that's quite all right, and there are so many functions and things that you were in charge of. Remembering one detail, it's quite all right and we can look that up elsewhere, I'm sure. So in, before when you were going through the functions of the Operations Department, there was a great overview. And a lot of the functions that you mentioned are things that are currently, in some form or another, on view to the public, so I'm gonna ask you about some of these spaces that you mentioned, again, to summarize their significance and how they operated. (Alfred A. Smith says "Sure") So we'll start with CIC, which you have been referring to as Combat, for short.

(33:22 – 37:04) Alfred A. Smith: Combat Information Center. CIC. It was, as I said, the main node of how we controlled the ship. And by that I mean, informing the commanding officer and the admiral if he had a staff, of the status of the ship. Where we were and the status of any contacts, be it airborne or surface ship contacts. And then we had ancillary things such as, there's an ECM module next to the Combat where we had capability, not only to either see something on a radar or detect something like a submarine, but we were constantly trying to determine, you know, whether there were platforms out there emitting radars and (types) against us. So we had a very respectable ECM – Electronics Counter Measure – capability. And that was one of the adjunct capabilities. I mentioned the air traffic control. That was functional during launch, during recovery, didn't have much functionality other than during those times and certainly very significant during inclement weather. The Combat also had a capability, to

help, we had 3-inch 50 guns and 5-inch guns on the ship. And so, were we to be called upon to engage in say, shore bombardment, we had a direction capability where we would energize a team that would be served by a radar group that would allow us to make contact with the, you know, the shore bombardment capability. And we would help spot where they were landing and how, if it was surface target, for example – we would, obviously surface would be, coordinated between the surface watch, and surface plot and the gunfire control people, for coordination and direction. And beyond that, the normal staff communication – we had an area right behind Combat where you saw, there's a curtain over it now, with a flag plot, I mean a flag, where we had representatives from the admiral's staff who really functioned as a backup CIC community, but they, they were the liaison, if you will, with Combat. And although everything routinely came through a common system of plotting boards and so on, the Flag had their own discreet communications capability where we'd keep them informed. And the Flag watch officer, in a similar fashion to a ship's CIC watch officer was there to help in the coordination of the decision making because that, I guess if I could characterize Combat – it was the decision-making node, more than anything on the ship. I mean, we didn't make the decisions. The commanding officer made the decisions, but the input to make an intelligent decision process work was in Combat, and so, recommendations. And it was not all unusual to, to have the admiral come down to Combat and, in many ship structures, they did change the way CIC functioned. And the commanding officer, under battle conditions, actually left the bridge of a ship and came down and manned a position within Combat Information Center. Not all ships did that and we certainly didn't do it here, but we did have a flag watch officer. And as I said, there were numerous occasions when the admiral, who was very interested in what was going on, obviously, found he could see everything quicker and better, you know, standing there in Combat. And so, the Combat was, as I said, was not just the eyes and ears. It was also a major part of the decision-making process in the ship.

(37:06 – 37:14) Jessica Williams: You're mentioning the flag staff. Could you describe or perhaps differentiate the role of an admiral on board a ship like Intrepid, and the role of the commanding officer?

(37:15 – 39:09) Alfred A. Smith: Sure. The, we keep talking about the Intrepid, but when we deployed, we usually brought anywhere from four to five or six destroyers. When I was in Task Group Alpha, we had a dedicated submarine that was attached because then we could do our independent analysis, not having to call upon another submarine community. So we did, you know, exercises and work up things with our own dedicated submarine. But on balance, a task group is deployed on a cruise would be comprised of the carrier and then, a number of destroyers that were assigned for that particular deployment. The admiral, therefore, was in charge of not just the Intrepid as a flagship, but he was also the commander, if you will, of the Task Force which included the destroyers. So a good part of what we did in Combat and on the

ship's bridge and so on, was to assist the admiral's staff who had a separate bridge. They have their bridge, the ship's company had their bridge, but we would coordinate between the two and the admiral would rely upon the ship's capabilities, obviously, both from a communications point of view, (I mean?), flaghoists, cause we did a lot of training close in, where we would use flags, believe it or not. The fleet would train one another. So the admiral was really the overall commander for the group, the task group if you will when they deployed. So he was not just one who gave the ship's commanding officer, but he gave all the other ships' commanding officers direction as to . . . and they put out their own operations order. And when I was on the CARDIV staff– Carrier Division Staff – that was the role I was playing there was helping put together the operations orders that we used when we would go to sea with the Task Group. And it was really directed more toward the rest of the group and the destroyers, as much as it was the flagship at the time.

(39:10 – 39:24) Jessica Williams: Thanks for going through all of that. Back to the Combat Information Center – can you talk a little bit about who was typically working in that space? If you remember how many people and what jobs were happening in CIC?

(39:25 – 40:31) Alfred A. Smith: Well, it really had a CIC officer on watch. You had an assistant CIC watch officer. And then you had the surface plot, air plot officers. And then you had the radar operators who actually drove the sightings, if you will, and drove the locational input which were used on plotting boards – or in the case of the plotting table, we would keep track of surface plot. But then we had, as I say, an ECM capability. We had an ECM officer. We had a Gunfire Control Officer, if it was going to be activated to use the guns on the ship. And as I said, basically it was – surface plot, air plot and electronics were the primary roles that we played. The aerologists, for example, had their own spaces. They functioned more as an arm, they were very important in bad weather, of course. But they were the ones who briefed the ship, briefed the admiral, you know, what the upcoming weather was going to be for an operation, and so on. So, but CIC was pretty much dedicated to air and surface, you know, control and decision-making.

(40:32 – 40:40) Jessica Williams: You rattled off a lot of different roles in there. It sounds like a lot for a space that seems small today. Would you describe it as being crowded in CIC?

(40:41 – 41:49) Alfred A. Smith: Oh, it was. And that's why I said, we got permission from the staff to move the flag plot, I mean – the surface plot – out of the Combat cause it was used primarily, as you could imagine, if you were transiting in and out of port, for example, where we'd have, the CIC would help the Navigation Department in controlling our track of the ship in narrow channels and navigating, and so on. And so, it was very noise-intensive when you have people calling out ranges and bearings and plotting them. And so, anything we could do to minimize the noise and confusion was a goal, and so that was a unique thing. I don't know of

any ship where they moved – a flagship, I mean – where they moved the surface plot out of Combat up to the flag bridge, but it did help a lot in terms of the noise abatement in Combat. And so, that was really the goal behind it. But yes, it was crowded and it was noisy. As I said, because in those years we didn't have a lot to talk about, you know, in communicating. We used sound-powered phones, as you know, and a lot of it, but some of it was just plain talk.

(41:50 – 42:09) Jessica Williams: I was going to ask about noise in that space, so you beat me to that, as well. But I'm wondering, you know today, of course CIC is part of the Museum, so we don't get all of the sense of activity in there. I'm wondering if you could describe what it looked like, what the lighting was like. Maybe the positions of people in that space?

(42:10 – 42:55) Alfred A. Smith: Well, the lighting, of course we, all throughout the ship we kept the lighting, we kept people at night-adapted – if we called it that, where you'd, red lights were a major capability to keep people from going from a situation where they were blinded, literally, stepping into a bright light with no night vision capability. So we kept the lights dimmed, and red lights were a major, but we tried to keep it as organized and managed as we could. But the numbers of people, as I say, were those, were the watch officers, the radar operators and the plotters, were the major constituents of the team that manned the Combat. And that's it.

(42:56 – 43:17) Jessica Williams: You mentioned before that CIC was not the place where decisions were made but was the place where information was gathered so that other people – like the commanding officer or the admiral – could make decisions, so I'm wondering if you can describe the process of communication between information gathered in CIC, and how that gets to the people who need it elsewhere on the ship?

(43:18 – 45:03) Alfred A. Smith: Yeah, well I guess I made it clear, the information flow from Combat really centered around a couple of things. It was really the surface plot and the air plot to keep the captain of the ship and the, and the admiral informed of our environment, if you will, where we were transiting or we were open, actively involved in a datum, you know, contacting a submarine, but the air group was, even though the primary role was to help inform the people when they were leaving the, the flight deck, to go (inaudible 43:54), we kept the air group informed as well, on a continuing basis because they were our main battery. I mean, the guns were there, but the primary role of the ship was to employ the airplanes and the helicopters. So we had a strong involvement, primarily, as I described with the ASCAC because it was the link between the on-scene aviators, in terms of either the S-2's the VS community or the helos and the ship. And as I say we, it culminated in a turnover, if you will, we called it a turnover – when we'd (relieve?) on a hot datum where you'd take one group of airplanes, go out, and then, track behind another who'd been maintaining contact, for example, with a submarine threat. And so, we really did devote a lot of our energy to coordinating, not

just the launch of upcoming airplanes but keeping the pilots informed of what was going on in the datum area and the upcoming (inaudible 44:57). So every squadron had their own representatives, you know, who were involved in that communications link.

(45:04 – 45:08) Jessica Williams: Do you remember who was the commanding officer when you were on board?

(45:09 – 47:23) Alfred A. Smith: I do. It was Chuck Williams was the skipper, primarily. He was the one that allowed me to tear up Combat and change a lot of this stuff around. A sea story – I sent radar operators over to the Davisville CB [Note: Davisville Construction Battalion Center in Rhode Island] to get qualified as welders so we could cut radar repeaters loose in Combat and reposition them until they made more sense to us. (Laughing) And he came down before deployment and he said to me, “Pete, are we really gonna get this back together again?” (Laughing) And I said “Captain, not to worry. We’re going to have this all put back together.” And so, he was a really neat guy, I mean I, he was a personal friend, and Linder, the (???) 45:56 that I reported to initially – a submarine-qualified VS pilot, but, I mean nuclear-qualified, been trained in nuclear power plants for surface ships, but was an ASW guy and a VS guy, and probably the brightest man I ever ran across. He, such intolerance for stupidity. (Laughing) Sometimes I’d have to ask him – “I don’t understand the question, sir.” But he was a really wonderful man to work for, but very, very bright and very as I say, very demanding, but those are the two skippers I had – Sam Linder and Chuck Williams. I had the privilege of calling Williams, he was a captain, of course, when he left the ship. I went on from here, as I say, to the Navy Command Center where I was head of the briefers, and I, right in the middle of the Navy Command Center I had a classmate who was the executive assistant to the Secretary of the Navy, and I got an early cut at the admiral’s list. And so, his name was on there, and he was a Deputy at the Naval War College, and I picked up the phone and called him, and I got Williams on the phone and I said – “Hello, is this Chuck Williams?” He says “Yes it is.” “Well I want to congratulate you, admiral.” He says: “Are you kidding me?” I said, “Do you think, knowing me all the years you have, that I would have the guts to call you up and tell you you made admiral, and be kidding you? Are you kidding me?” (laughing) So, I thought that was really a unique situation to be able to tell a guy he made admiral, and I adored him as a person, so it was a, it was a joy to do that, I assure you.

(47:24 – 47:27) Jessica Williams: That’s funny, and yeah, I’m sure his heart stopped for a moment, wondering . . .

(47:28 – 47:33) Alfred A. Smith: Well, you know, everybody wants it, not everybody gets it, but, yeah, and he was well-deserved. He was a really great skipper.

(47:34 – 47:44) Jessica Williams: Before going back to some of the other spaces on the ship, something you mentioned reminded me – in terms of your timing on coming on board Intrepid, was Intrepid in the yard at the time that you came?

(47:45 – 49:45) Alfred A. Smith: It was, as a matter of act. We were putting, we were putting the final touches on our overhaul in Boston, and in fact, we were putting the TV, see we did the initial installation and took it out on cruise, and as you would imagine it, because it was a very exhaustive system we'd drag cables all over the ship from the Combat down to the ready rooms and so on. We had sailors in the squadrons pulling cable, which was kind of unique. But we found that we had some deficiencies in the transmission quality. It's just like any TV, you know the rabbit ears don't work. And so, we put some isolation transformers into the system when we came back, and refined it, and it wound up a very faithful system. In fact, a sea story – my engineer was a classmate of mine from Annapolis – Merle Norb, just passed away just recently. And I said to Merle one day – “How would you like to have a camera up on the bridge so you could see us going alongside these oilers when we unrep so your sailors can see where we are?” He says, “Wow, that's a great idea!” So we did. We hauled a camera up there and put it in, run it down to the engineering control center, and for the first time those guys down there could see out! And you know, **it sounds so simple, but believe me, it was a major, major contribution for them to be able to see.** And practically speaking, you know, probably the most tenuous time in control of a ship is when you're alongside, coming alongside an oiler. I mean, you're very, very close (quarters?), you probably heard a lot of stories about refueling at sea in rough weather, and so on. But I mean, if you have a steering failure when you're coming alongside you're at fairly decent speed in doing so – it can be really calamitous, so, it was not only a fun thing to do but it was a practical thing to do, to let the engineers see, you know, when we were approaching, and heighten their anxiety a little bit, and, on what the risk was in terms of going alongside. So it was a very practical thing to do, as well, but it truly did make a big difference in their lives – being able to look out. It sounded simple, but a window for the engineers.

(49:46 – 50:14) Jessica Williams: It makes me think, all these stories that you're talking about – technology and upgrading the ship – that there's, it's an interesting use of, it's a creative use of existing technologies, the things that the Navy might not have thought to apply or the Navy had so many other things that they're doing, but it does make a huge difference in being more efficient and effective. And it sounds also like a bunch of these things are very specific to one ship. So, somebody has an idea on one carrier and it doesn't necessarily mean that every ship is getting changed at the same time in the same way.

(50:15 – 51:51) Alfred A. Smith: (You know?), that's a good question. I don't know that the Navy was sophisticated enough to get down to that level of organization. Yeah, I think probably

you're right, I think it probably was something, the initiative of an individual crew probably went a long way towards configuring that ship. And a lot of it, they couldn't do alone. They had shipyard requirements and so on. But on balance, I think you're right. Now, there were, there were things that were changed on a class of ship, for example, and those were major upgrades, I mean the angled deck, for example. That wasn't something that a ship's company did, but it was a significant change in the operating capability of this and other ships. And those sorts of, I would say "class-oriented" changes were done through the Navy and all their design people, and so on.

(51:52 – 52:29) Jessica Williams: Another thing to mention as far as the ship being in the yard, just as a historical point is that that's after Intrepid's last cruise, or tour of duty in Vietnam. So at the moment that you're coming on board, Intrepid had, for the past three years, been temporarily converted to an attack role. And now, you are helping to really bring it back to the ASW role it was in before. It was worth mentioning, so your changes are helping it kind of get back to where it was previously, in terms of its operations.

(52:30 – 53:12) Alfred A. Smith: Well, my role, as you know, in discussing the Intrepid and my role and time on the ship, if you look back, I mentioned it – the Navy devoted a lot of money toward the ASW carrier world. And I really have a personal goal in trying to make sure that everybody understands that Intrepid was a major contributor in that Cold War period. And we were a major deterrent in what was going on then, you know, in countering the Soviet submarine threat, in particular, so I am anxious to try to continue as a disciple of the carrier ASW world, to get the word out on what we did on Intrepid, but what the community of carriers did, and I think I mentioned to Eric that we have an organization called RAFS, R-A-F-S, sounds bizarre, but it's titled Real Aviators Flew Stoofs. And, and we have a, believe me, we have 6,000 people organized in this community over the years. Very, very active group. We have luncheons and so on, and I've been very vocal in telling them we're gonna get an S-2 back on the Intrepid, but they really have such fond memories, all of them do. And of course, that migrates up to the S-3 community, which was a follow-on, Jet Carrier for ASW, but a large measure of them were, were, you know, people of my vintage and earlier, that are still keenly interested in those years of the carrier ASW commitment, and so it's an important part of this ship's life, and it's an important part of the Navy's life that I think we should make sure we let everybody understand the significance of it.

(53:13 – 53:47) Jessica Williams: Certainly, and it's something that we're hoping to talk about more, and I think it connects, as you say, it's the role of Intrepid and it's the role of Intrepid's technology in this Cold War historical moment. So, it's very important to get all that out there. Let's see – so back to some of the spaces on the ship, before I totally lose that train. So you had mentioned, so we talked about the Combat Information Center. Maybe if other questions pop

up, I'll ask them later. You had mentioned before and talked a little bit about CATCC and that function. If you wouldn't mind just saying what that stands for, for people who . . .

(53:48 – 55:33) Alfred A. Smith: Carrier Air Traffic Control Center. And it's right adjacent, (when you tour?) it's open, you can look in and you can see, and like Combat, it has a set of radar repeaters that were used to track the airplanes. They were distinct from the radar capability in Combat because they were dedicated solely to a close-in radar control of the aircraft that were either departing or landing. And as I say, they were functioned almost identical to a control center, an FAA tower or a center, and they would hand the airplanes off coming in to CATCC, and they would, in turn, give them directions to do, you know, either an ILS [Note: Instrument Landing System] approach or whatever type of approach, they didn't have ILS on this ship, but a landing approach where they were guided down by CATCC. Just like a radar controller would do at an airport. And it was probably the most, of all of the things, I think, we did, that was probably the most tense, in the sense that I mentioned earlier. When we had truly bad weather, it would be nothing to make three, four, five attempts to land. And that got pretty enervating if you can imagine because you'd like to do that the first time and get it over with. And so, CATCC was the role that was the place where we really helped the airplanes, you know, guided them down to the landing zone where they could actually land on the airplane, on the flight deck, so a very significant group of people, and a lot of tension, let me put it that way. A lot of tension in that arena, when we were trying to land the airplanes. Not so much taking off, although that got to be an issue as well.

(55:34 – 55:39) Jessica Williams: Do you recall any specific incidents regarding a hairy landing?

(55:40 – 56:58) Alfred A. Smith: No, we had one sad occasion. It wasn't a landing. It was an instance where one of our airplanes took off. We had a life raft in the top of the S-2 airplane which was intended to deploy if the plane went down. It was activated by seawater. We had one of those hatches (loose? 56:01), and the raft came out and got tangled up in the empennage, the tail of the airplane, and the, it was not on this ship, frankly, but it was another, similar ship – the Wasp or the Essex, I can't remember which. But we had a situation where the aircraft became uncontrollable and they had to ditch around the ship, and we were up in the air bosses, you know, flight deck control, listening to all of this, and one pilot didn't make it. There were two of them in the airplane, and they ditched and there was a fatality for one person. They got the other out. But no, we were very lucky. As I say, the S-2 was a very good airplane. It's not like a high-speed jet landing, so it was a really good plane to control on a flight deck, I mean, in landings, but it just was enervating, as I say, and scary, at times, but no, I can't say that I can recall any really serious accidents that occurred around the ship, or on the ship. No, we were very lucky.

(56:59 – 57:26) Jessica Williams: That's good. That's the best answer, I think, to that question. Another space that you mentioned that fell under your world was the cryptology space. And this is just, you did the walkaround CIC earlier, so right now, all that we have of cryptology is a door with a padlock on it, that you can't see in. You mentioned a little bit about that space, but I'm wondering if you can go into more detail about what happened in there, what equipment was in there and who worked in there?

(57:27 – 59:04) Alfred A. Smith: Well that's interesting, basically it was radios. I mean, we would bring Navy-trained cryptologists. And when I say "cryptologists," linguists. I mean, that's primarily what we're talking about. And these were people who were trained in Russian, in particular; but other languages, as well. And what we would do is – when we had intelligence that told us there were Bears or Badgers, which was the primary Soviet aircraft that would come out and fly against us – many times they would fly in tandem, there would be two planes at a time. And so, we would try to ensure that we got, as best we could, onto their frequencies that were intercommunication between the two airplanes, and then we would listen to their commentary. And it was a very important ability, on our part, to understand what their intentions were. I'm not always, I'm not sure they always understood that we were listening to 'em, but if you could imagine, of all the things we did on the ship, I would think that would be considered one of the most sensitive, from a classification point of view. There weren't many people on the ship that understood that we either had nuclear weapons or we had these people, because it was a very sensitive capability that we had in the Navy. And it was a very important one, as you can imagine, I mean, that's a very important intelligence-gathering capability. So that was their primary role. I don't know that they had any other significant role, operationally, other than, than when they would have intercepts where we could listen to the adversary, in their language. They were linguists, as I say. Cryptology was the general term.

(59:05 – 59:13) Jessica Williams: Do you recall if they listened to any significant information that resulted in any action on Intrepid's part or on the Navy's part?

(59:14 – 1:01:41) Alfred A. Smith: You know that's a good question. No, I don't, really. I mean I can't think of any. Even humorous ones, but that was not a very humorous period in our life. We were really very serious about what we did, I can tell you that. And so, I don't think I can recall any significant input that changed what we did or gave us any better insight, for the most part, other than it was a useful tool to have available to us, to be able to, if the situation arose where they would divulge something, for example, that we needed to know, we would have the capability to do that, but I don't, I don't know that I can honestly say I look back on a particular incident where we, you know we did something dramatic based upon that. Because there wasn't much we could do about it, I mean planes would fly over the carrier. The Navy took a dim view of being "overflown" was the term, without understanding, you know, that we

knew it when it was going to occur. And on those occasions when that happened, we were always in communications, of course, with our land-based command structure. And I can remember, with the admiral, (laughing) on this one occasion when we were overflowed without having the A-4, we had the A-4s launched, and we could accompany the flight over there then that was considered successful in the sense that we were able then to take defensive action if we really had to. If we didn't do that, and we were just overflowed and didn't have any, really, demonstrable control over the fact that they were there, then the shore establishment, the Navy command structure, really took a dim view of that because what that really said is that – maybe we would have been sunk. And that's what everybody likes to avoid is any connotation that they were helpless or unprepared, if you will, for an overflight. So I had occasion when Admiral Steel, who was one of the CARDIVs that was in there when we, we did get snookered. (laughing) I mean, the Soviets flew over us and there was a lot of message traffic for weeks after that, about, you know, how did that happen? Because it was considered deficient on our part, to allow that to happen, but we sometimes didn't get the warnings. Our radar didn't pick it up. There were multiple reasons why something like that could occur, but it was certainly frowned upon, and.

(1:01:42 – 1:01:48) Jessica Williams: Were there repercussions for you on board, you being the crew or the officers, when something like this happened?

(1:01:49 – 1:02:33) Alfred A. Smith: Not really. I mean, not really because, you know, the truth of the matter is that– (inaudible 1:01:55) the buck did stop pretty high up there. And, you know, the person that took the most heat was the admiral. I mean, he was the commander of this entire aggregation, and (it wasn't known that he was??? 1:02:10) standing there, mind you, but that was his organization, and the commanding officer didn't, I think, suffer less, but it was considered a serious event. And so, I don't know, no one was relieved. It wasn't of that magnitude, but it was just an operational situation where – better not to have it happen. It just was frowned upon and so we did a lot to make sure that didn't happen. And that was our goal of course.

(1:02:36 – 1:02:53) Jessica Williams: Do you recall, in talking about these, this area of the ship and the spaces that we were just discussing, so Combat Information Center, Cryptology, any particular incidents or events or memories related to those spaces that just, stories that come up to mind?

(1:02:54 – 1:03:50) Alfred A. Smith: Hmm, not really. I'm sorry, I just, I'm trying to think of something, you know, dramatic. Before I was aboard the ship, we made a transit from Norfolk to Rhode Island, to change ports, and ran aground. That was a rather significant, the Mayor of Quonset Point was on the pier and all the dignitaries, and they were told it wouldn't be today. Come back, the Intrepid is gonna be in port the next day (laughs). . . or maybe not that long. I

don't know, but it was . . . we were pretty lucky. There were no really significant events on this ship that I can honestly say, we just, we did a very steady thing, I mean we did, and we were very successful, I mean, I think the ship had a really proud record of what we accomplished, (like I said ??) we put together some unique equipments and developed a unique capability, and I think the ship turned in a really credible performance over the years as an ASW platform. It really did.

(1:03:51 – 1:04:11) Jessica Williams: You brought up one thing I'm going to ask you about, but then I have some general questions just about you and your life on board the ship, and your role, but you mentioned the ship running aground, going into Quonset, which I think was, was that 1971? (Alfred A. Smith, nods and says "Um-hm") Somebody else asked me about this, recently, too. So I'm wondering if you could just tell what you know about that story in a little bit more detail?

(1:04:12 – 1:06:50) Alfred A. Smith: Yes. The CIC officer at that time, was my CIC officer. I didn't know him until I came aboard this ship. We became dearest of friends, still are. His wife has passed on. And he was there in Combat, and the pilot, normally when ships went in and out of ports, they would get a pilot, and more important in foreign ports than it was in place . . . but, ship transiting from Norfolk as a home port, and coming up to Quonset, we would always get a pilot, which was a trained, just as the name implies, a pilot who knew the waters of the area and literally, although the commanding officer never truly relinquished command of the ship or the OD, he would guide the ship by giving orders to the bridge watch, and turn here, turn there, and so on, and he just literally overshot a buoy in the channel and ran aground, I mean it was a very simple thing to do, ruins your whole day, and it just was something that never should have happened, and it cost the skipper, who was, having been a skipper of two ships subsequent to this tour, and having had pilots in really tough situations in foreign ports, for example, the skipper really is on tenterhooks because it's very hard to countermand a pilot, for example, if you see something, you have the role and capacity and really necessity to do that, if you see it, but you rely upon the pilots a good deal because that's why they're there, and so, it's unfortunate, as the commanding officer, to be sitting there, you know, watching your ship run aground when you've handed the control or the conn over to a pilot, but that's what happened, and it was just a judgment call on the part of the pilot and misread the buoys, and I'm sure if you went back and looked at the records on this ship, and the report, if there, probably accident report or you know incident reports, you'll probably find that he was a very qualified, that had been doing this for years and years. (laughing) And no way to fathom how he did it wrong that time, but I'm sure that was the case, but it was a pretty sad day, as they say, with all the dignitaries, and the band and everybody waiting to have this because it was an important change to the community. You can imagine, when you bring a ship of this size in with all the sailors, it means a lot to the local economy, you know, and so, it was a big deal for the

community to bring this ship in and home port it at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, and it was just a kind of a sorry start for the whole thing.

(1:06:51 – 1:07:11) Jessica Williams: We know from, in the ships, we don't have any incident reports of this event. We know from the ship's deck, deck logs, it mentions that this happened. And the ship's official history from 1971 doesn't mention it at all. It mentions that the ship was delayed, so the reason for the delay is not recorded in that particular description of the ship's history, which was interesting, (Alfred A. Smith says "Yeah.") but do you know, were there any repercussions for Captain Linder?

(1:07:13 – 1:07:33) Alfred A. Smith: He wasn't the skipper at that time, I don't believe. (Jessica Williams says "No, maybe not.") I don't believe, no, I forget, I wanna say Whitey Moore. (Jessica Williams says "Yes, I think that's right") I mean, the names escape me at this point. I think Whitey Moore was the skipper. I knew him, I mean I'm throwing names about, people, but I believe he was. I think Sam Linder came aboard after that incident.

(1:07:34 – 1:07:41) Jessica Williams: Yeah, you're right. I, yeah I misremembered. I think it was Moore. Do you know if there were any, then was he affected in his career by running aground?

(1:07:42 – 1:08:31) Alfred A. Smith: No, I don't think so, really. I mean, again, it is a delicate, I mean everybody understands it's a rather delicate position to place a commanding officer in. I mean, when he has total control of his bridge watch and so on, even though he can't ever obviate the need to do what's necessary. You place a lot of responsibility in a pilot, that's just as I say, having taken command of two ships after that and done it in really scary situations, your heart's in your mouth, I mean I had a pilot come aboard in Japan, had to get a box for him to stand up so he could look out over the bridge. Little tiny guy, and he reeked of alcohol, and I said, "What in the world am I going to do here?" I mean this is a really bad situation, (Laughing) but you just have your heart in your mouth and you press on. And so, we pressed on and ran aground.

(1:08:32 – 1:08:53) Jessica Williams: That's funny. The image of the guy standing on the box is great. So to get to some things, just more about you and your role on the ship, so you mentioned way back, earlier in our talk that it was the hardest work you ever did and that you were sleeping for two hours a night. So, if such a thing existed, could you tell me a little bit about what your typical day was like?

(1:08:54 – 1:12:11) Alfred A. Smith: Well, the typical day started the night before. And, you know we put the operations plan together, like the plan of the day, it was the operations plan. The ship had their own plan of the day, which I'm sure you have copies of, signed by the Executive Officer, and the skipper signed the operations plan. And it was really a daily accounting for what was going to be accomplished on that day's activities. If we were cruising

maybe we would have internal exercises on the ship. We were doin' drills. We would have exercises on UNREP [Note: Underway Replenishment], something like that. Any planned activity was put into an operations plan and the commanding officer would sign it. I would, and the the commanding officer would sign it and that became, just as the name implies, the operations order for the following day. And so we would then, you know and that was by the way usually taken from an overall op order that the flag would put out, you know for an entire cruise, which would have, you know the major significant dates of things, but the daily operation was done, just as the name implies, on a daily basis. And so, if in particular, if you took the situation where we weren't just doing training. Let's suppose we were actually engaged in a contact with an adversary like a Soviet submarine. We would stay on that contact as long as we could, and it would run days, for example. So it would not be unusual, in those occasions, to spend most of my time either in Combat or ASCAC, looking at the situation, keeping everybody informed of what were decision recommendations, and so on. And it just, it required a constant oversight, if you will. Not that he wouldn't have done it without you, but you know, you're there responsible for it, i mean I didn't make the decisions that the captain made, but I certainly was there to ensure that we had a good communications flow. And so I would just spend hours upon hours, mostly in Combat, but then I would participate in the briefings, where we would put the brief, coordination between the staff and their watch team, and our watch team as well. So it really, it boiled down to more, partly what type of activity we were engaged in? Whether it was purely a training role, where we could program everything, you know, down to an hour or so. Or whether we had to forego all of that, and really engage in a, certainly a wartime situation where we were engaged in a true contact with a submarine or whatever. So it just a, just a very demanding, putting it all together, monitoring it as it went along. And then there were always things that were untoward. I mean, when something would show up like a contact coming up, airplane contact, we would all gather, those of us who were involved would gather in Combat and oversee the situation and make sure the bridge is informed and properly kept abreast of everything, so it was just a constant involvement in an oversight role, if you will, and I just didn't sleep very much.

(1:12:12 – 1:12:16) Jessica Williams: And it sounds like you were moving around quite a lot. Did you have an office somewhere?

(1:12:17 – 1:12:50) Alfred A. Smith: I did. It's on this level and I keep looking to see if I can get back there. There are two places I would love to see is my wardroom, I mean, my stateroom which was right down by the wardroom. And the ops officers, back aft someplace here, I don't know if we can ever get back there again. I would love to see it, but it was on this level, and yes I had an office, and a small group of yeoman and people, and it was near the communications spaces, if you know where those are are the ship. They are all on this same level, back aft. It was a small desk.

(1:12:51 – 1:13:06) Jessica Williams: Yeah this, things have changed a lot on third deck, so I don't know if the office . . . (Alfred A. Smith says, "Yeah, I don't know where it is now.") space is still, still survived because of the Museum Café and other shops and things that are down in this area, but you said your stateroom was close to the wardroom?

(1:13:07 – 1:14:01) Alfred A. Smith: Yeah, if you went down the ladder, right at the bottom of the ladder, going into the wardroom area was the, was my stateroom, and it was a dedicated stateroom, I mean when I came aboard, that had been the Operations Officer's stateroom. Not only the Operations Officer, was not always rank-wise, but normally the third in command in the ship, many cases he was third in command rank-wise. Sometimes the navigator, in my case, the navigator on the ship was Lee Levenson, who was the last commanding officer, was a friend of mine who was the navigator on this ship at the time I was the Ops Officer, And he was slightly senior to me, but the Ops Officer's stateroom had always been designated as the Ops Officer's stateroom, and so I, other than when I took command of a ship, that was the best living conditions I'd had so far. It was a very nice stateroom, by anybody's standards in those years.

(1:14:02) Jessica Williams: Could you describe it a little bit, what was in your room?

(1:14:03 – 1:14:28) Alfred A. Smith: Well, sure, because I had a little office adjacent to a bunking area, but I had my own head and shower, which is a luxury that many people didn't have (at that day???), but it was large enough to accommodate a desk, and an, I mean a good-size desk and office area, as well as a bunk. It was three times the size of anything I had lived in before on these ships.

(1:14:29 – 1:14:43) Jessica Williams: Nice, we'll have to, if we have time later, we can take a look at the ship's old damage control plans and we can probably find it on the plans. (Alfred A. Smith says "Oh, I'd love that, oh, I'd love that.") Yeah. So tell me a little bit about, you mentioned the wardrooms, so this is where you ate. Can you describe what the meal situation was like for you on Intrepid?

(1:14:44 – 1:15:47) Alfred A. Smith: Yeah, actually, that was one of the better exposures on this ship. We did have a good wardroom. We had a good group of people, and the wardroom of course is comprised of the ship's company officers, as well as the squadrons and so on. So there's a mood, there's a camaraderie that develops in the wardroom. I think it goes back to the British days, I mean it, it's a very significant part of your life on the ship. I mean, after the evening meal in particular, you know they normally would show a movie. If, when you finished the meal, many people would wait around and play cribbage or something until the movie started and so on, but it was a very big part of our lives, in terms of you know life on a ship. The food was great. And, and of course we used it for a lot of purposes also because we'd seat so

many people, i mean we used it for training, occasionally where we would bring large groups of people in, when we'd do exercises, we had foreign navies, (is it we'd or is it who would???) use the wardroom to a larger degree as sort of a briefing area, if you will. So it was very good.

(1:15:48 – 1:15:54) Jessica Williams: What was your relationship like with the junior officers who worked for you?

(1:15:55 – 1:17:52) Alfred A. Smith: Well, I . . . I, that's an interesting question. I, I think it was good. Did I have 100 percent support? Probably not. But I think the overall accomplishments, I think, were an indication of how well we worked together. We really, I didn't have any specific issues with the people that worked for me. I was fortunate enough, and I mentioned to you some of the names of the people I'm working on this anthology, but I called some of the people that I had aboard the ship, that were, the ASCAC officer was very involved in what we were doing, in redesigning how we functioned, and the CIC officer, as I told you passed away, his assistant is alive in Charleston. I, just to talk to him, he's not doing all that well physically, but I talked to him, but there's a gent named Russ Gill who I, when I was skipper of VS-30, he was a tremendous officer, and when I had an opening on this ship, I called him and said, "I'd really love you to come." And I talked to him the other day, and he did, by the way. And he said he thought back on his days on Intrepid as the most rewarding in his naval career. And I thought, you know, that's a really, really neat testimonial because he had a long career, as I did, and I probably share that in large measure myself. I think probably the most productive years of my naval career, and not the most fun, but the most productive years are right here on Intrepid. I really do think I feel that way, in retrospect, I mean I had much more responsibility in other commands, and so on, but we did some really good things, and we had a really dedicated, as I said dedicated group of people who took it all very seriously. And I think turned in some really superlative performances on what we did, so I was very proud of those years.

(1:17:53 – 1:18:01) Jessica Williams: Related to relations with people, did you have much contact with the enlisted people who worked in the Operations Department?

(1:18:02 – 1:19:01) Alfred A. Smith: Not really. No, I didn't. I mean, some of them I, I knew just because they were so unique. We had one radar operator who was a first class and his name escapes me, I'm sorry, but he was really good. And when we had those really tense situations where we'd have the Bears or the Badgers overflying the ship, we wanted him on the scope, cause you could only last so many hours, so he would sleep (laughing) by the radar repeater, and we'd kick him awake to get up on the scope so he could help us identify these planes coming in, and that was really one of the more indelible, and we used to joke about it, you know, kick so-and-so to get him up to man the scope, but that was, on balance I didn't have, you know a lot of personal relationships with 'em, and most of the people who worked for me

in the office, that sort of thing, but we had a little layered structure there, of course, but I knew 'em all.

(1:19:02 – 1:19:14) Jessica Williams: That's a great story because in a way, it's either you trusted him, or the officers trusted this guy to read the scope in a tense situation, but it doesn't sound like much of a reward to be sleeping on the floor next to your scope.

(1:19:15 – 1:20:28) Alfred A. Smith: Well, you know, I've repeatedly said, I, and this is an overall comment. The American public has no idea how many ergs they get out of these sailors on these ships. I mean, the flight deck, I mean sleeping, flight deck crew would sleep on the flight deck, they'd sleep in the hatchways. I mean, and they'd just, one launch to the other, I mean we had an interesting thing because a lot of people don't realize the ASW carriers, unlike the big deck carriers, we flew all night. A lot of the big decks only fly daylight launches or whatever. So, they didn't have 24-hour operations which we did routinely on these ships. And when you go on a long transit, we would fly weeks and weeks, around the clock. And that's a very, very demanding environment. And so, you know these sailors would, and you know the average sailor to this day in the Navy you're talkin' about manning a carrier with 17 and 18-year-old sailors. That's the average age of these complements, I mean it's hard to believe that we don't do worse things than what happens, but I mean that's what the traditional composite age groups have been – 17- and 18-year-olds, from the CO on down, so it's a, you get a lot out of them.

(1:20:29 – 1:20:38) Jessica Williams: That's true. And they're entrusted with so much responsibility, (Alfred A. Smith says, "Oh, absolutely") and they've been trained to do things that they were never doing before in their lives, so it's, it is pretty amazing.

(1:20:39 – 1:21:21) Alfred A. Smith: It is. I was always amazed at how well these kids adapted, and in the years that I was here, of course, we had a draft. And in many instances, and these were sailors, they'd come in and say, well they're leaving the ship, their, you know, commitment's up, and they'd say you know, "Commander, I didn't want to do this, I didn't volunteer to do this, but these were the best two years, three years of my life or whatever." And I watched people just mature before your eyes, I mean they learned responsibility, they learned respect, they learned, you know, dedication, they learned how to put themselves in a situation where if somebody else was helping to, you know, guide their life, and it was very formative years for many of them, truly was.

(1:21:22 – 1:21:38) Jessica Williams: This brings to mind another group of enlisted people on the ship that you would have had some contact with, as an officer, which are the steward's mates who worked in the ward room and were also responsible for cleaning state rooms and things like that. Do you recall any of them, or your interactions with that group?

(1:21:39 – 1:23:06) Alfred A. Smith: No, not really, but I, it changed over my years in the Navy, of course, because we had all black steward's mates, they were called. And then the Navy changed its policy. The Filipinos seemed to come in more into that role than, and it became a mixed bag, but it was very stereotyped in those years, but I think the complement on this ship, in particular, I recall as being really good. I mean we, I never recalled any incident of any kind on this ship. I mean early on (under or admiral? 1:22:20) Zumwalt, I was the head briefer for Admiral Zumwalt when I first went to the Pentagon, and he was a (very?) progressive CNO and did a lot of things to enlighten the Navy and break down barriers and so on, but the result of a lot of his policies were that there was a, there was a pendulum swing where the (inaudible 1:22:39) and discipline was tense. And there were occasions – and I know it from talking to people, just as recently as a couple of weeks ago – where we had marauding gangs on big deck carriers, you know, with chains, tie down chains, you know beating one another up on the hangar deck, and so on, And this ship never had anything, you know of that type of a, an environment. We had a really homogeneous group. And I think, it was just a different world. I think it was good.

(1:23:07 – 1:23:20) Jessica Williams: There was I think, there was some incident on Intrepid in the early '70s, where there was some sort of perhaps marauding gang-type situation which was some racial tension, but I don't recall the exact year, (Alfred A. Smith says, "Really?") so I don't know if it was in your service or not.

(1:23:21 – 1:24:20) Alfred A. Smith: Yeah, no, I don't recall, I mean it may have, but I just, frankly I don't recall it. No, I think we never really did have any, other than operational situations, I don't recall any big issues on this ship, I mean we didn't have big material failures. Some of the other ships I was on, the Essex, we lost a mast; we were in terrible sea conditions up in the North Atlantic and the ship literally lost its mast; fell down on the flight deck, and we watched that ship, I was up in the primary flight control and the ship rode up from one swell to another swell, and there was no water between the bow and the stern, and the ship just torqued. The whole frame of the ship torqued. The I-beams in the ward room, just like this one right here, just flew off; the paint flew off like shrapnel because it twisted them, and you could go up after the incident and see the hangar deck moving as the ship was going, it was really scary, really scary, but this ship never had anything like that.

(1:24:21 – 1:24:39) Jessica Williams: That is terrifying and hard to imagine because we're so stable here or we feel stable here. I'm gonna pause for a minute cause I hear somebody opening the door. We'll see if somebody is coming in. Are you holding up all right? (Alfred A. Smith says, "**Yeah, this is fun!**") Good, okay, good.

(1:24:40 – 1:24:43) Alfred A. Smith: You'll probably have to edit out 90 percent of it! (laughing)

(1:24:44 – 1:24:51) Jessica Williams: No! Of course, we want the whole thing. It's the whole story, and again we're going for, you know capturing your reminiscences.

(1:24:52 – 1:25:03) Alfred A. Smith: (laughing) The Communists used to have a technique to control people by making them confess and I'm wondering whether I'm putting myself in the position here of telling you too much? I'm only kidding. (laughing)

(1:25:04 – 1:25:20) Jessica Williams: Only if you have something to confess, right? But, let me see, so are there any other memories or recollections you have of life on board the ship, or sea stories related to life on the ship?

(1:25:21 – 1:26:07) Alfred A. Smith: Stop the camera, I, I have to think about this a little bit. No, I, because most of my time really was centered around our operations. I mean, we did show the flag and the ship, you know had a lot of good cruises, but (laughing) you know they probably don't want a lot of tales here in this environment, (laughing) but we played hard and we worked hard, and we had some good times, we joke among ourselves, you know those of us who were aboard the ship at the time, but I wish I had thought about this a little bit more. I don't think I have anything really that stands out from an operational point of view, that I could recount to tell you the truth.

(1:26:08 – 1:26:15) Jessica Williams: That's quite all right. Do you recall your time on liberty, from when you were serving on Intrepid? Visiting any points in the Mediterranean or the North Atlantic?

(1:26:16 – 1:27:25) Alfred A. Smith: Well, that's what I was alluding to. (laughing) We had a saying, "if you had a fresh bag of 20s and go hit those depressed areas." But we had, fortunately or unfortunately – unlike some of the ships – we did show the flag a lot. And so, we'd have many, many port calls, compared to many other (crews or cruises?) – particularly the WestPac people, I mean the transits were so long going out to the Pacific, and I never sailed there until I took command of my own ships out in San Diego. But we did a lot of showing the flag, and it was good, don't get me wrong, I mean it wasn't all fun and games, but showing the flag with foreign nations, and navies in particular, was an important part of what we did. And so, we did have joint exercises with them. And we certainly, you know, when we were in port, we'd socialize and so on, with them, so, but the years in the ship – like most of the other tours I've had around, you know the carrier ASW groups. We spent a lot of time in port, and it was a good experience.

(1:27:26) Jessica Williams: Did you have a favorite place you visited?

(1:27:27 – 1:27:46) Alfred A. Smith: Barcelona. I thought Barcelona – I'd never been, they're a town that stayed open all night long. It just, it was a young person's town, it really was. I

thought it was very interesting. They had good restaurants and we looked back on it, and I still think Barcelona was one of our better ports.

(1:27:48 – 1:28:07) Jessica Williams: A place I'd like to visit someday. So I think I feel like we have covered so much ground here. You have given us some great explanations of the way the ship works. And I don't know that I have other specific questions so I'm wondering if there's anything at this moment that comes to your mind, that somehow we either missed or didn't cover in enough detail?

(1:28:08 – 1:28:59) Alfred A. Smith: No, a lot you've covered a lot. I, as I say, I still, I guess would like to leave you with the impression that the chronology of the ASW period on this ship is really a very important issue for myself and a lot of people, you know, who served on the ship at that time. And so, I want to continue with my commitment to you to get something either for Carly or you, or somebody to write up in a more detailed fashion, a description of some of the things we did from the equipment point of view, and operationally because it was a legacy that this ship left that many others can't or didn't leave. So that's my closing commentary. I'd like very much to continue that, so that it's part of the history of this ship.

(1:29:00 – 1:29:13) Jessica Williams: And we're always welcome from, you know any insight from people who served on board so I know that kind of material would be valuable for us in the Exhibits Department, certainly our tour guides and Education Department, would be great so, anything you can send our way.

(1:29:14 – 1:29:23) Alfred A. Smith: Yep, well I'm in the process of going back to revitalize my effort to get something in writing, to put this all down, so I promise you I'll do that.

(1:29:24 – 1:29:56) Jessica Williams: Excellent. And I will ask Eric, our camera man, if he has any questions in sitting here, listening to this? (Eric says "No, that's great, (good information?).") Okay good, so if you're good what we usually do at the end is, take some close-ups, so in case we want to use them some day so if you don't mind, just relax and Eric is going to just . . . (Eric says, "Just relax and don't look at the camera.") Yeah, if you can look in this direction . . . (Eric says, "For about two minutes") (Alfred A. Smith asks, "Is this saying anything or just . . . ?) Nah.

(1:29:57) Eric: They call this "b roll" in the industry. (taking close-up shots)

(1:30:25 – 1:30:35) Jessica Williams: Okay, well since so this is maybe really your last question. Eric was getting some close-up shots of your jacket. I wonder if you could give us a quick description of what you're wearing and its significance to you.

(1:30:36 – 1:31:43) Alfred A. Smith: Yeah, I brought this aboard. It's a, it's a really a standard Navy flight jacket. All aviators, I believe, have them. And we made a habit of producing patches,

both for the organizations we served with and in the case of cruises we would also generate a cruise patch. So what you see on this flight jacket is a compilation of organizations that I served in, or places that I've been, or activities that transpired, such as a cruise; and we put a patch together for that. (close-up of flight jacket patches) And so, all the aviators would put those all over their flight jackets and that became their, you know their memorabilia, if you will. And so that's what I wore today because that, there's a good part of my life sewn onto this jacket, not the least of which is two patches for the Intrepid. So it's something that is my legacy to my kids someday, but I thought it would be interesting to wear it simply because it's, it's truly representative of the aviation community, and that's who this ship is – the aviators. The ship is there for aviators. So that's who we are.

(1:31:44 – 1:32:15) Jessica Williams: Excellent. This is maybe as the real last, last act – although you, I don't know if you want to turn it off in between – is we should film the Intrepid patches on the back. (Alfred A. Smith says, "They're on the back" and removes jacket) (Eric: Take it off and . . .) There's always one last thing . . . (Eric: It's an excellent piece of art work.) Yeah, it's so neat.

(1:32:16 – 1:32:30) Alfred A. Smith: Let me see, we got . . . this is the Intrepid and let's see. . . (shows patches on jacket) (Jessica Williams: Yeah, the, up in the, closest to you, that one. Yeah.) Can you see it without . . .

(1:32:31) Eric: That's beautiful.

(1:32:32 – 1:32:47) Jessica Williams: Yeah, really nice. (Panning in and out of back of jacket)

(1:32:48) Alfred A. Smith: Got it?

(1:32:49 – 1:32:50) Jessica Williams: Okay, good. So we are officially done. Eric can turn it off.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]