

Smith Interview Part II

ENNIS BARBERY: This is Part II with our interview with Richard, known as Smitty on Chincoteague, Smith, up in Salisbury. Today is March 4, 2015. I'm Ennis Barbery. I'm the interviewer today. Linda Ladas is here helping with the interview. So we're following up on the last interview we did with Smitty. You were just about to tell us what your wife, when you got married.

RICHARD SMITH: We got married. My wife wanted to be married on New Year's Eve because her older sister, the one that she worked with in the Busy Bee was married on New Year's Eve, so being the younger sister; she decided she wanted to be married on New Year's Eve. We had everything set up and of course I was from Ohio and when my parents were told, when I told them we were going to married New Year's Eve why they wanted to be sure and come down for the wedding. My mother and father and my sister drove down from Ohio in their car. They had enough ration stamps to get down here, but they didn't have—for gasoline—but they didn't have enough ration stamps to get back. Fortunately Nettie's father was an oysterman and a waterman and they had beaucoup gas stamps. In order for them, for them to get back—and Nettie and I were going back with them because I had a ten-day leave and we were going; she had never been up to Ohio, and so we were going up there for our honeymoon. Then we started think about; well how are we going to get up there with the gas being rationed? So Nettie's father came up with the idea, he said, "Look" he said, "I get all the gas I want." He had an 'R' stamp which is an unlimited amount of gas because he had two boats and so forth. So he said, "I can get all the gas I want. If we can get a couple of, three five gallon tanks we can fill them up and put them in the trunk of your car and then when you get a little bit low you can stop." We rounded up the three five gallon tanks. But then we wanted to be careful where they bought the gas. It so happened that Nettie's cousin owned a grocery store Up the Neck. Howard Merritt, he's quite a famous Chincoteaguer too. He owned a grocery store Up the Neck, so he also had a gas pump there. He very willingly gave us the 15 gallons of gas that we were going to need to get back up to Ohio. It so humorous really because we couldn't stop on the highway and put the gas in the tank because, you know, if the police where to come along they would wonder where we got the gas and someone would want see the ration stamps and all that. When we got down low enough, of course there was no turnpike or anything like that. It was all just highways going up there. When

we needed to put gas in the car we would pull in at a little side road somewhere and stop. And the my dad and I would get the funnel and put the gasoline in the car. [laughs] We did that about four times on our way from Chincoteague to Ohio. I drove the car. So when my leave was up I drove the car back. My dad had a friend up there that could get us the gas to refuel the gas tank to get back to Chincoteague. [laughs] That were some of the hardships that people had to suffer with gasoline during the WWII.

ENNIS BARBERY: Yes. How did that work? When you gave a ration stamp to somebody for gas, did you have to have your ID or your book that went with it or could you just...

RICHARD SMITH: Just the book. You weren't supposed to tear the coupons out yourself. You were supposed to give the book to whoever you were buying some off and then they would take the stamps.

ENNIS BARBERY: I see. So they didn't want you to share them like that.

RICHARD SMITH: No, in fact is was against the law to share them. It was against the law.

ENNIS BARBERY: That's very interesting though. Do you want to hold up one of these books that you got and put it on the interview to show what they looked like?

LINDA LADAS: This one's for Nettie. Looks like you had for different...

RICHARD SMITH: That's our son. She got those when he was born. You'll see the date on those were like; he was born in October. Those are dated January '44. Some of them November '43.

ENNIS BARBERY: Oh I see. As soon as you were born you started to get rations.

RICHARD SMITH: Yes. Everybody had to have them

ENNIS BARBERY: That's really interesting. Any other stories you remember about rationing like that, things you had to do to get around it?

RICHARD SMITH: Well yes. There were a lot of things you did to get around it. Of course cigarettes. Tobacco was also rationed. It was scarce for some reason I think probably because of a lot of it may have been imported from Mexico or down in South America. Tobacco was rationed. Cigarettes were sometimes at a premium. Being in the military you could buy cigarettes at the Post Exchange for five cents a pack. So every time any one of the guys went home on liberty he skipped on taking clothes home and he filled his bag up with cigarettes so his dad or whoever in the family smoked cigarettes would have a supply of cigarettes for a while. Because they were only a nickel a pack too. And there were so many things that were rationed. Silk stockings. That was before the nylon; all the lady's hose were silk. They were scarce as they

could be too. A lady's store would advertise they had silk stockings for sale. And it would be just a mad rush on the store that day because they were so hard to find. Many items like that were. I think it was probably to keep people aware that we were at war. They were going to have to suffer a little bit the way the guys that were over there fighting had to suffer. I think that was some of it, especially with the ration books. Because I never knew anybody that couldn't buy what food they needed or clothing or anything like that. I think it was more a psychological thing that kept people very much aware we were at war. Taxes went up of course and that was a good excuse to back up the fact that they put taxes up. During WWII it was a different time. And it happened all at once, you see. First, you know, it was the 7th of December when we got into the war. We had been supplying Britain with a lot of materiel, war materiel for some time. With the Japanese thing, that came so sudden that nobody was really, you know, aware of it. At the initial outset of the war, even those the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, the most of combat in the early days after December the 7th were still done over in Europe. Then it started maybe weeks and months after Pearl Harbor the Japanese had invaded a lot of small islands over there and set up military camps. At the outset of the war in the Pacific that was the job of the Marine Corps to go to all these little atolls, what they were—Ta'u [?], Enewetak. They were just small. Some of them were inhabited by natives. Some were just there. The Japanese went to all of these islands and set up a military base. Of course in order for us to get the advantage over there, those had to be eliminated. That was the majority of the outset of the war in the Pacific was the small atolls that the Japanese had countermanded. They had to be neutralized before there could be any major progress made in WWII down in the South Pacific. Of course the American navy was so superior to the Japanese navy that it was just amazing what the navy could do and how quickly to all intents and purposes, I read a book that was written by Harry Truman about the war in the Pacific and the fear was that it was going to take years and years and years to overcome the Japanese in the South Pacific. Fortunately this country being a very big country and so much natural resources here to manufacture what ever was needed it really cut the time down. According to Harry Truman's book when the Japanese invaded Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941, it was estimated that it was going to take 10 to 12 years to eliminate all the problems and recoup everything that the Japanese had taken over. Some of the islands that they took over were U.S. possessions. And those were the ones that were the hardest to take over, like Guam was a U.S. possession. It was really two different wars. It really was.

ENNIS BARBERY: Do you remember where you were when you first heard about Pearl Harbor or how you first heard about it?

RICHARD SMITH: I was an analytical chemist in the steel mill in my home town. I worked three different shifts. One week I worked seven in the morning to three in the afternoon. The next week was three in the afternoon to midnight. Then the third week was midnight till eight in the morning. On Saturday, December the 6th I had worked from midnight till eight in the morning. So I came home and I went to bed. The next thing I knew my dad woke me up. I guess it was probably maybe eleven, twelve o'clock. I can't really remember, but I know it was long before I would wake up. He came and woke me and he said—he called my Dick—he said, "Dick you got to get up right away. The Japs had just bombed Pearl Harbor." I can remember, we sat in the living room by the radio all afternoon listening to all the reports that were coming through that day. There was a lot of confusion, a lot of fear in the community. Not so much but the military but just with the populace because nobody had ever attacked the United States before since the British did it in 1776. A lot of people were really concerned about, you know, how were we going to handle this because Japan was on the other side of the world. I think the way the war was won certainly is a tribute to the military people that planned all this and also to the defense plants that manufactured all the materiel that was needed to do what the military did. There was never any shortage of bomber planes. There was never any shortage of guns. There was never any shortage of tanks. There was always plenty of things that was needed by the military and it was just amazing how quick it happened. Henry Ford, for instance made automobiles. In a very short period of time he stopped making automobiles and was making bomber planes. He was turning out 50 bombers a day. That had to be—well they just didn't have enough people to fly them. They trained; they opened up bigger training facilities too to train people to fly the bombers. I had a lot of friends who wanted to join the Air Force because it was such a—was supposed to be the, you know, the cream of the crop, you know. The preferred branch. They did have a rough time over in Europe. They really did. I had a very close friend of mine was a fighter pilot over in the South Pacific. He and I were very close; played golf together. We were very close friends. He let me know right off the bat when we first got acquainted that it was only one thing taboo with him and that was talking about the war. He just—he and I never mentioned it. I can relate to that because it's not a very pleasant for me to do it too. Primarily not so much because of the blood and gore, but I had so many friends that I lost. You know,

friendships that you made during a time like WWII were very, very deep and very, very good, very tender. Life long friends of mine, me and my high school buddies that I played football with in high school. We went to dances together and things like that. Some of them would, you know, be killed in action. To me that was the most difficult part of it was to have so many of my friends that I lost. Also seeing what I had to see being a medical corpsman was not the most pleasant thing I ever did either. In fact I still have nightmares at times about it. I've been diagnosed with PTSD. I don't really think that's what it is; it's just that I got a good memory. [laughs]

ENNIS BARBERY: We were talking about that last time, Linda and I. You shared some of those really powerful but really emotional stories about being in Guam. What it was like to be a medic there. The really terrible experiences you had to have. We just wanted to make sure that it's okay that we share those.

RICHARD SMITH: Oh, sure. It doesn't matter to me. You probably didn't notice it, but it was very difficult for me to talk about it because it's still so close to me.

ENNIS BARBERY: I felt really lucky that you wanted to share it with us.

RICHARD SMITH: I never will forget it. Just the horrible things. It wasn't just the fact that, you know, you were seeing people losing their lives. It was the horrible manner in which they did lose their life. That's what stuck with me. It's sad. The statistics, they don't bother me. My personal experiences bother me. I'm sure—well I've been told by shrinks that's going to be the way it is.

[break in interview to discuss how the video recorder should be adjusted]

ENNIS BARBERY: If you have more WWII memories we can talk more about that, but I think we are going to focus on once you got discharged and what it was like coming back after that. Is that what you were thinking too?

RICHARD SMITH: I've got a book full of material that I have things in my head that I could use [?]

ENNIS BARBERY: Let's talk a little more about the infirmary.

RICHARD SMITH: We sort of got off of that and got into my personal life yesterday.

ENNIS BARBERY: So we can talk more about the infirmary. That would be great.

LINDA LADAS: I think we figured out that where the infirmary was. You said it was in a campground.

RICHARD SMITH: It was a camp—the building is still—they rebuilt the building.

ENNIS BARBERY: Yeah we figured it out.

RICHARD SMITH: And it's still there but its right down on the waterfront as you go by the campground is on the left down that road. And when you get down to the end of the road, there's that building there and that what the infirmary was. It was bigger than it is now because they didn't rebuild it back the way it was, you know, before it burned.

LINDA LADAS: I think its a metal building there, something...

RICHARD SMITH: I have not idea. I've driven down there a couple of times just for curiosity.

ENNIS BARBERY: Oh yeah. Something else that we were going to ask you too if you wanted us to. If you want to ask about when he comes down for the...

LINDA LADAS: I called the Coast Guard because I would like to try and find a picture of the infirmary. So far we haven't found one. But I got the idea that when you come down for Heritage Weekend, if you want I could ask the Coast Guard if you would like to take a tour of their present facility on Chincoteague.

RICHARD SMITH: Sure, because I would like that because I've already contacted the Coast Guard in Virginia Beach and they're going to handle my funeral.

LINDA LADAS: So will you be buried then in Arlington?

RICHARD SMITH: No I'm going to be buried here but the Coast Guard is going to be in charge of my funeral.

LINDA LADAS: I will call and ask them—see if I can set up a time for you to go and meet some of them and have a...

RICHARD SMITH: Sure.

LINDA LADAS: I've never been to their facility. I donate blood ever once in a while. So you go in a side door. That's all I've ever seen. We could stop by before or after your panel and see. The other thing I wanted to ask you about that I contacted the Coast Guard, is to see if I can get a picture of the troop transport ship you said was the USS Randall?

RICHARD SMITH: I have a picture of that.

ENNIS BARBERY: That would be great.

LINDA LADAS: I found two different ships. One was USS Admiral George Randall and the other one was just USS Randall, so I wanted to make sure I had the right...

RICHARD SMITH: My ship was AP 115 was the number.

LINDA LADAS: Because the other one was 24242. Yours must have been the USS Admiral George Randall

RICHARD SMITH: General.

LINDA LADAS: General.

RICHARD SMITH: General George M. Randall. That's the full name of it. Everybody just called it; the rusty [?], that's what we called it.

ENNIS BARBERY: On other question while we're on this. Oh the other one question Linda came up when we were looking at your other interview was Ebe Jones. How do you spell that?

RICHARD SMITH: EBE.

ENNIS BARBERY: EBE, okay.

RICHARD SMITH: I'm surprised you haven't got information about him.

ENNIS BARBERY: I think we do have it. I just wanted to make sure about the spelling.

RICHARD SMITH: Quite a prominent figure in the birth of Chincoteague, especially during the war.

ENNIS BARBERY: In the fire company. Yeah, no he is prominent. I just wanted to make sure it's the same. Sometimes you hear and you just don't know...

LINDA LADAS: Was he a relative of Nettie's?

RICHARD SMITH: He was Nettie's uncle. He was Nettie's mother's brother. They were a family of Coast Guardsmen because Ebe was in the Coast Guard and he had a younger brother Burl [?] He was captain of the Indian River Coast Guard Station. He was commander of that. Then they had another brother John who was in Ocean City in the Coast Guard. I don't know if he was in command of it but that's where he was stationed. That was before it was called the Coast Guard. That's when it was still the Lifeboat Service.

ENNIS BARBERY: Right. I think I've heard something called the Lifesaving Service. Boat or Lifesaving?

RICHARD SMITH: I always; I think it's the Lifeboat Service because that had to launch these lifeboats in the surf. It took a lot of training to teach them how to do that.[the United States Life Saving Service (USLSS) was established in 1848. This was a United States government agency

that grew out of private and local humanitarian efforts to save the lives of shipwrecked mariners and passengers. In 1915 the USLSS merged with the Revenue Cutter Service to form the United States Coast Guard]

ENNIS BARBERY: Did you ever see that happen? You saw them launching in the surf?

RICHARD SMITH: Oh yes.

ENNIS BARBERY: Oh, let's hear you talk about that. You're going to be off from the infirmary again, but that's what I want to know about.

ENNIS BARBERY: So you were saying with the Lifeboat Service or the Life Saving Service, they would launch those in the surf.

RICHARD SMITH: Right. They didn't have a motor in them or an engine. They were propelled by oars. Of course if it was light surf it was no problem, but if it was, you know, like a storm—that's the most average time that they would be in use—when there was a storm at sea and driving the ocean, driving the tides up in the waves. It took skill to launch those life boats out of the surf because you had to get away from the surf to get where ever somebody was in distress. They just had a knack of it. They all worked together. I don't remember how many were on a crew. I expect there were probably maybe eight or ten maybe on a crew. Don't hold me to that because—this is all from hearsay because the Lifeboat Service was pretty well defunct before I was even a gleam in my mother's eye. [laughter]

ENNIS BARBERY: So a minute ago we were going to talk more about the infirmary and stories you have about that.

RICHARD SMITH: Alright, well, we just eluded to the where there was the position of the infirmary. There was also a sub-station of Camp Fletcher right across the road from where we were. I don't even remember much intermingling with the Army or the Navy. Of course the Navy was over at the air base. But they seemed to go to the mainland for their fun more that Chincoteague. Of course, you know, during that time, during the war the Coast Guard really expanded along the beach because what they expanded for was had there been some instances, well two in particular up in New Jersey where a German submarine had brought a couple of German technicians over and landed them on the shore of New Jersey to be espionage agents. Fortunately because of the Coast Guard they were captured and detained. So, right away the Coast Guard said, well we've got all these lifeboat stations up and down the Atlantic coast. We're

going to have to give them the means to do what they did in New Jersey. So instead of have the guys in the Lifeboat Service that lived at home and went out when they were on duty. The Coast Guard was—the military built the building out on the beach that were at Assateague and Wallops and all and they created these stations all the way up the beach. That was the main purpose of the stations, was to be sure that there was no infiltration of Germans coming ashore for that. It worked very well. Part of the duties of the people at the infirmary; every spring we had to start down at Cape Charles and visit every Coast Guard station all the way up to Indian River Inlet and check and make sure, you know, check their health and keep their shots permanent. We weren't very popular for that reason, because nobody like to have shots. That was probably if you want to go back to the beginning of the infirmary, the infirmary wasn't built until after—well it was built but it was a gun club. After the war started then the government decided they needed really close personnel to the beach because of the instance that happened in New Jersey and also happened down in Norfolk. So they needed these more people. I think the average personnel at that time was—especially I know about Assateague because it was a biggest one. I think there were probably maybe 115 men stationed at Assateague and the same amount of people at Pope's Island. Wallops was a little smaller. But Ocean City was probably the biggest. So there were, I would say, from Cape Charles up to Indian River Inlet, there were probably, I'd say probably a couple thousand Coast Guardsmen.

ENNIS BARBERY: Wow. You all were the only infirmary serving them.

RICHARD SMITH: That's what I was getting to is because of all the influx of personnel coming in, the War Department decided these people needed health protections. So they purchased the gun club from whoever owned it, I have no idea. They spent, I'm sure they spent a couple hundred thousand dollars turning it into an infirmary. We had an inpatient facility and we had an outpatient facility. The inpatient facility was just like any hospital. We had a hospital bed. We had oxygen there. It was just like a hospital. It was called the infirmary but it was really a small hospital because we had an OR there. We had a dental clinic. We had a lab there to analyze blood samples. And it was busy. We were very fortunate we didn't have a lot of inpatients but as I eluded to earlier, there was no medical attention to speak of to the civilian population on Chincoteague. Just out of humanity's sake we never; when I was in the infirmary, we never turned anybody down. We delivered babies. We did tonsillectomies. We did appendectomies. We pulled teeth. We filled teeth. We did, you know, whatever was needed. The people of

Chincoteague really depended on that infirmary for their health issues because their next closest facility was all the way down in Nassawadox. I'm not trying to put any negativity in the Nassawadox because I can remember on two occasions we had some cases—one of them was a child birth and we didn't have the facility because it was a breach child birth. We didn't have the means or facilities there to handle it. So we took the lady down to the Nassawadox hospital in our ambulance. The case I was involved in we got about halfway down there—and I was driving the ambulance. The doctor was in the back with the lady. Doctor Hosfield was a hell of a nice guy. And he tapped me on the shoulder and he says—he called me Richard—he said, "Richard, if you find a wide place in the road you're going to have to pull over there because this damn woman is having this baby." And so we just happened to be passing a filling station and it was closed. So I shoot into that filling station and he says, "Now excuse my language here but." He says, "Richard, you get your ass right back here and hold this light for me so I can see what I'm doing." [laughs] So we delivered that baby in the back to the ambulance. That was something that stuck with me all ever since. I didn't know what I was doing. I'm glad the doc was there because I sure didn't know what to do.

ENNIS BARBERY: What was his name, doctor...

RICHARD SMITH: Doctor Hosfield.

ENNIS BARBERY: How do you spell that, do you know?

RICHARD SMITH: HOSFIELD. I don't know what his first name was. But he was a nice guy and he was a good doctor too. See the doctors for the Coast Guard were not Navy. They were Public Health Service. Doctors could volunteer for the Public Health Service in WWII. And there was a Public Health Service in Norfolk. There was a big hospital. Probably a two hundred bed hospital. I imagine it had 15 or 20 physicians. The nurses also were Public Health nurses. There were not Navy nurses or Army nurses. They were Public Health nurses. That's who was the medical facility for the US Coast Guard was the Public Health Service. Not the Navy or the Army.

ENNIS BARBERY: That's really interesting. I didn't realize that.

RICHARD SMITH: The dentist's name was Doctor Bass.

ENNIS BARBERY: BASS?

RICHARD SMITH: Yes. He was—I'm going to tell you something off the record. I don't want this on the record.

ENNIS BARBERY: I got to turn this off.

RICHARD SMITH: Yeah, turn this off.

[start of second audio recording]

LINDA LADAS: I was curious what kind of shots you gave to the men at the Coast Guard Stations?

RICHARD SMITH: You had to renew your shots every year. Not every shot, but we visited each station and maybe six guys had to have their tetanus shot renewed and the rest of them didn't. Or maybe eight guys had to have their typhus shot renewed and the rest of them didn't. Because they all didn't come there at the same time. They came from—some of them had been there for a year, some of them been there for a month. We had to keep track of their shots to make sure that everything was current. We were furnished a health record of everybody that was stationed on the beach from Cape Charles up to Indian River. So when we went to the big ones; the big place was Ocean City because they had more personnel there. And they had a bigger turnover of personnel for some reason. So it seemed to me that we always spent more time and I guess it was because it was Ocean City. I don't know. But we spent more time. And actually we did more shots there than we did anywhere else because it was probably the biggest Coast Guard station by two at that time. Assateague wasn't all that big at that time. It was probably the next biggest station. And the rest of them where—all I can remember they used German shepherd dogs at most of the stations for patrols. There was a station down south of Chincoteague called Paramour Beach and they used horses to patrol the beach. That was an unusual thing because I don't know anywhere else that the Coast Guard was used in that category that they used horses instead of dogs. Most of the places that, you know, that we were acquainted with they had—most of there again, mostly German shepherd dogs. And they were meaner than hell. I mean, they were not trained to be nice. They were trained to tear your butt up if they had a chance. The only guy that could get along with them was the guy that handled them. The handler and the dog were friends, but the dog and people were not friends. We had one instance where one of the dogs got out of its cage and one of the guy stationed there evidently didn't think—he was stationed there, he thought maybe the dog and him would get along but he tried to get a hold of the dog and the dog tore up his arm. That was of course, we had that to take care of. It became a fact; we didn't know

when the dog's rabies shots were. We had a time finding out the last time it had rabies shots. You had to know that. You never really found out so we wound up giving the guy the treatment for rabies just to be on the safe side.

ENNIS BARBERY: So you had to deal with dog bites?

RICHARD SMITH: Not very often, no.

ENNIS BARBERY: What other kind of things besides—what kinds of diseases were there? What kinds of health problems did people from Chincoteague come in with?

RICHARD SMITH: Just like anywhere else. In the winter time, you know, flu, colds, food poisoning, child birth, pregnancy. That type thing. Tooth aches. We probably picked up on maybe a couple, maybe two, that I can recall, maybe two people come in and were diagnosed with cancer. Most of it was temporary stuff, or a little injury. Guys working on the water, you know, get their finger mashed all the time; that kind of stuff. I think the people of Chincoteague really loved the infirmary because they didn't have any facility. They had no facility. They had other ones that weren't as good. They just didn't have any facilities there, or any kind of emergency. They had Nassawadox or Salisbury, one or the other. The Coast Guard was very lenient. Nobody every said anything, you know, if a woman came in there having a baby; nobody ever said, "Well we can't deliver you because your husband's not in the Coast Guard." If she come in there and she was dilated four fingers, you know, we delivered the baby. Same way with the dental office. I know how I felt. I was treated very well because I was a corpsman at the infirmary. I was treated very well by the populace, because the military has certain people that aren't very popular and they don't live there, so they don't care what the say or what they do and so forth. All of us fellows at the infirmary, we had the community's respect. It was nice to do that because we just didn't have any trouble, that's all. I've been to the Lollypop and the Pony Pines many times and never had a bit of trouble.

ENNIS BARBERY: I can't remember what you said before about where you lived before you moved in with Nettie and her family. Were there places to live there at the infirmary?

RICHARD SMITH: Oh yes. We used—this is just going to come from the top of my head—we had I think ten private rooms for inpatients, but the most inpatients we ever had was one or two, maybe three. We had four pharmacists mates. So that left four rooms for us. We still never were filled up. We had a cook there but he had living quarters above, over the kitchen so he was—but there were two maintenance people there. They were both from Chincoteague and they went

home at night. They weren't the military. They just worked for the Coast Guard. They were maintenance. Plumbing, the electricity, whatever you needed taken care of. That's what they were there for.

ENNIS BARBERY: Is there anything else about the infirmary and memories about that you want to share. If not we can move on to...

RICHARD SMITH: There's one thing I'd like to share. It's very nostalgic to me because it was such a wonderful thing. On Thanksgiving in 1943 Doctor Hosfield suggested that we have a big dinner and invite anybody from Chincoteague that wanted to come to the dinner. Of course Nettie and I were going to be married in a month and all the guys that had a girl friend, they invited their girlfriends. It was one of the most pleasant days I have ever spent in my life because it was a nice day. The weather was beautiful and the cook we had there, he was just a hell of a cook. I mean, he was great. He just went out of his way to make this Thanksgiving dinner a special thing. Everybody had such a good time and it was such a beautiful day. We just went out in front—there was a lawn out in front of the infirmary—we just went out there and congregated out there and just enjoyed each other's company. It was one of the most memorable days of my time on Chincoteague. I was the only married guy there outside of the doctors, but the other people there, they had girl friends. They all brought their girl friends so it was a real nice day. I'll never forget that.

ENNIS BARBERY: That sounds great. Do you remember what some of the different food the cook made? Do you remember any of the dishes he made?

RICHARD SMITH: I remember one thing, and I guess you can block this out if you don't want to put it, but I had been on liberty and I'd been to the Lollypop and I got a little buzzed. There was three of us. We come back to the infirmary and it was about midnight. I said, "I'm hungry. I'm going in the kitchen and look in the refrigerator and see if there is anything in there to eat." I looked in there and I didn't see anything but I saw this like a quart milk bottle and it was about two thirds full of something yellow. And I said, "My God he's got lemonade in there." I took that bottle and I took a great big gulp of it and it was clam juice. [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: You were lucky.

RICHARD SMITH: Yeah.

ENNIS BARBERY: Yeah, I was thinking it was going to be worse than that.

RICHARD SMITH: No, it wasn't urine. [laughter]

ENNIS BARBERY: Clam juice. Oh, that would be a surprise if you were expecting lemonade.

RICHARD SMITH: Oh, my, I never did like clams and I detested them after that. That was just a humorous thing. The only other thing I have left to say about the infirmary is I think it was a wonderful place for the people of Chincoteague. I think if it hadn't have been for the infirmary there would have been a lot more misery on Chincoteague during that time because we never turned anybody away. We never got chastised by the powers that be for not, you know, for taking everybody. And it also probably was one of the happiest times in my life because I met my wife at Chincoteague and we were very happy for 68 years.

ENNIS BARBERY: I think you're right. People really should have appreciated—I bet they did appreciate the infirmary.

RICHARD SMITH: Oh they did. I'm sure they did because people at the time; there were so many military people on the island, you know, people were a little bit reluctant to make friends with them, because you got to remember Chincoteague before WWII was pretty isolated. It wasn't until 1920 or 21 that they built that causeway. I've heard my father-in-law talking about some of the difficulties that they had to endure as far, you know, things they couldn't grow or make on Chincoteague had to come by boat. If it was winter weather. If the bay froze over they just sat there and waited, you know. I was just a wonderful, wonderful place to be because the people were so nice. I been stationed other places and it was just the exact opposite. Only because I had a uniform on was the only reason that I was disliked in some of the places I went. I wasn't trusted because the reputations the preceded me. That was why I enjoyed Chincoteague so much because I really related to the people and the people related to me. The people that I knew through my wife knew that I was working at the infirmary and some of them had been treated at the infirmary and they appreciated that too. It was more like a job than it was being in the military. I don't think I ever saluted Doc Hosfield. I don't think I ever saluted Doctor Bass. I know I never saluted him. [laughter] But we just never, I mean it was like a job, really. A job that you liked. That's the best description I have of being at the infirmary. I was just like a job that you really enjoyed because on Sunday's Doctor Hosfield—he lived on the island with his family. He didn't stay at the infirmary. He stayed; he rented a house. On Sunday, Saturday and Sunday he wouldn't be there unless we called him. In the winter time we had a lot of people with influenza and colds and things like that. He had enough confidence in us that he told us what to do and he would send us out on house calls for people that were, you know, had the flu or

pneumonia or whatever. As a consequence, a lot of people on Chincoteague called me doctor because I had a satchel and knocked on the door. "Doc's in." It wasn't something that I tried to encourage. I just made me feel more comfortable that people had that must confidence in me. They really did.

ENNIS BARBERY: I'm glad you mentioned about the house calls because I didn't realize that. That's great.

RICHARD SMITH: We did the house calls for him on weekends, because he wanted to spend some time with his family on the weekends. And he said, "Look, don't try to do anything you don't know how to do. If you do, just call me."

[break for video restart]

ENNIS BARBERY: Do you want to talk about when you got discharged from the military and what happened after that?

RICHARD SMITH: I was on the General Randall for—because I was not at my station when the infirmary burned down. I got transferred. And I got transferred aboard the General Randall. It was an AP ship. What AP meant was you transferred Army Personnel. That's what it was designed to do, represent. Of course that included Marine Corps too. The Army. They didn't have MPs whatever. APs for whatever. For transporting troops. We left the states for quite a while we picked some New Zealand troops up that had been in North Africa for some time. And we took them back to New Zealand. That was an experience to visit New Zealand because the people there were, they were so great. Just like family for us guys, I mean. And they realized we'd been to sea for nine weeks. They would get together and invite 50 guys to different houses for dinner like on a Sunday night or something like that. One of the highlights of my trip to New Zealand was we went over on the western side, the southern island. This gentleman sent word that he would like to invite six or seven Americans to his home for dinner. I volunteered for it and was accepted. We went out to his farm. He had a sheep farm. When we got there about noon time he said, "Have any of you fellas ever been hunting for kangaroo?" I said, "I haven't even seen a kangaroo, let alone try to hunt one." He says, "Well, if the weather stays like it is I'm going to take you boys for a kangaroo hunt after we have dinner." We had dinner and we went on this kangaroo hunt and he was so disappointed that we never saw a sign of a kangaroo. But he was

broken hearted because he was sure that he was going to give us a treat by going kangaroo hunting. That was a highlight I remember. But anyhow, that was what we did. We moved troops around. Then we came back to California. They decided that they were going to make us an invasion craft. They took the life rafts off and they put Higgins boats on to carry the troops ashore. We got hooked up with the 3rd Marine Division. We left California and went back out into the South Pacific. We had no idea, nobody had told us—we had an idea what we were going to do, but we didn't have any idea where it was going to be. We had the detachment of the 3rd Marine Division aboard. We anchored at an anchorage about six days before the invasion of Guam. This Marine colonel came aboard. He said that they were extremely short for medical corpsmen. He would like to know if anybody would like to volunteer to go ashore with the Marine Corps. Of course nobody volunteered to do that. There wasn't anybody that raised a finger when he said, "Anybody that wants to go, raise their hand." In fact he said it twice. He said, "Didn't you hear me. I asked for volunteers." Nobody registered. So there was chief pharmacists mate aboard our ship. He and I didn't get along. He knew that my wife was pregnant. This was in the first part of July and she was—my son was born in October. So this chief came to me and he said, "Smith, if you'll volunteer for this job I'll see that you get 30-days leave when you come back and you can go home and see your wife." Like a sucker I said, "Okay." So I did. And it was the most stupid thing I ever did in my life. But I volunteered. They rigged me up in combat boots and combat gear and all that stuff. I had never taken any schooling on any of that. I went ashore with the 3rd Marine Division and that's how that happened. That was one of the most dumb things I did was volunteer for that. Anyhow, I didn't get my 30 days leave. I didn't get home to see my wife. I didn't get home to see her until; well after the invasion of Okinawa. We came back to the states because we had been—we'd had a near hit from a kamikaze plane. It had done a lot of structural damage to the ship. The USS Enterprise, an aircraft carrier, was coming back to the states. We were so vulnerable that we come back with them because we were not in any condition to do anything if something happened. So we came back to the states with the Enterprise, back to California. The next thing I knew, we were back out to sea and found out we were coming over to the East Coast. We were going to go to Norfolk. So right away I called my wife up and I said, " My ships coming to Norfolk and I don't know whether I can get any leave or not, but try to find somebody." Let's see this was—he was born in October of '44 and this was in July of '45. And I said, "Maybe it's going to be too

difficult for you to bring Rick down to Norfolk. Can you get your sister or somebody to look after him while you come down and spend a week with me or 3 days, however long it's going to be?" She did. I'll never forget that. I hadn't seen her for almost a year and half. It's still very emotional to me because I saw her standing on the dock and it was just a most wonderful thing. We spent ten days together. We rented a room with another pharmacist's mate friend of mine, his wife came from Illinois. And we both rented a room at this private home in Norfolk. We spent there about ten days. And then we got word that we were going to go over to Marseilles, France. So Nettie left and went back to Chincoteague. The last night we were in port I had a liberty and I went on liberty with some guys from the ship. This was in Norfolk. I don't know if you know anything about Norfolk or not, but Grandby Street was the main street in Norfolk where all the bars and cat houses and everything else was on Grandby Street. So we were walking down Grandby Street and low and behold, I meet a guy that I went to combat medical school with. His name was Davenport. I'll never forget his name bless his heart. So we were glad to see each other, you know, and he wanted to know where I was stationed and I told him. He said, "I'm on a damned Coast Guard cutter, 103 foot Coast Guard cutter out there in Hampton Roads and I want to get overseas before the war is over." Well in the military there's a little know thing that can happen. If you can find somebody with the same rate, the same rank as you but the same experience as you, and is willing, you can swap. Swap stations. So this guy and I went to school together. He was the same rate as I was, and so I propositioned this, I said, "I'll be glad to swap with you. I had all the damned combat I wanted." And he said, "Okay." So I said, "Well you go to your CO and I'll got to the skipper on my ship." And I went. I had to get permission to see him because, you know, he's God. So I went to him and told him what the story was and I lied to him. I told him my wife was sick and I wanted to get home to see her. He said, "Well." He finally approved of it. He called up the other guy's CO and they talked. Then he called me back up to his quarters and he said, "Well, I've talked to your man's commanding officer and he's given pretty high references. I have approved of the mutual swap and his commanding officer has approved it." So the next morning a pickup truck came down to the dock. I threw all my gear on the pickup truck and it took me out to this Coast Guard station at Little Creek. He was supposed to get his sea bag and come back to the Navy Yard in Norfolk and take my place. It just so happened that my ship was leaving the next day to go to France. Anyhow, this kid got cold feet and he never showed up. My skipper was calling this other skipper and he wanted me back. Hw wanted me

back or that other guy. And he wanted it right now because they were leaving port tomorrow morning. My skipper happened to be from Salisbury, the new skipper. Of course he knew all about Chincoteague and he knew my record. He knew that I had been in combat quite a while. And he said, "Richard there's no sense in you going back to sea." He said, "I'll tell you what you do, you stay hid, you stay in this barracks until that ship's gone off to sea and then everything will be okay." And he said, "Your skipper has called me ten times insisting that I send you back. And I told him that you're on liberty and I can't locate you." And so that's the way it—my ship left and I stayed there. I was on this 103-foot crash boat. Our station was off of North Carolina because there was a marine air base. They would fly out over the Atlantic to do their maneuvers and practice dive bomb. What our duty was was to be out there in case a plane got engine trouble and the pilot had to bail out. We were there to pick him up. This was in July. It was great duty. Every weekend I was at Chincoteague with my wife and you know, my son. Then the war ended real quick, fourteenth. We were out on patrol when the war ended on the fourteenth of August. When then started to separate everybody they froze certain rates that couldn't be discharged. One of them was pharmacists mate because everybody had to have physical before they were discharged. It was just a load of pharmacists mates needed to do that. You got hundreds of thousands of guys are getting ready to go home and they don't want to sit around and wait either. My rate was frozen from August until November. The word came down that they had lifted the freeze on pharmacists mates on November the fourth. On November the fifth I was out of there. I was on the ferry back to Chincoteague. As Forest Gump says, "And that's all I have to say about that." [laughter]

[pause for video reboot]

ENNIS BARBERY: I'm glad you went back and covered some of that to make it clear. You had mentioned parts of it last time, but I'm glad you went back and covered it. Since it's a life history interview, I guess next we just want to talk about you life after that for a little bit and see if you don't mind. So November the 5th, 1945. And you were back on the ferry to Chincoteague. What happened after that?

RICHARD SMITH: When I was transferred to sea I eluded that my car was—I had my car down there when we came back from my honeymoon. I sort of rested up for a couple of weeks. Then I

went and bought some tires and got the car ready so we could go back and go to Ohio. We left for Ohio, I think about, maybe the end of October, the first of November. I really can't remember. Up until that time I had not been able to touch my son. He was scared to death of me. We loaded my car up and had a little car seat that hooked on the back of the seat and put him in that. We were driving along and he put his head on my shoulder. That was the beginning of him and I becoming friends. It was a very momentous thing for me because I was wondering was he ever going to get used to me, you know. When we got back to Ohio—the company I worked for had given me a deferral when I enlisted in the Coast Guard. So when I went back for the job the job had been eliminated. I was an analytical chemist. During the war they had developed a spectrophotometer to do what I was doing. I was analyzing the steel chemically, with chemical analysis. And they developed this process where you could just take a sample of steel and put it in this spectrophotometer and it told you exactly how much carbon, how much chrome, everything come right off the spectrophotometer which eliminated my job.

ENNIS BARBERY: Was that a big surprise when you came—were you surprised when that happened?

RICHARD SMITH: Yes I was. Yeah, I was surprised because, you know, I was a good job and I had a future there, but it just wasn't to be. I still only 22 years old. Things like that don't worry a 22 year old guy, you know, who's got any confidence. I looked around for a while and I took a job with a bakery, driving a bakery truck. I did that, not very long, maybe six or seven months. Then there was another steel company had an opening for a lab technician, an analytic chemist was what I was, so I got that job. I stayed there I guess four or five years. Then I just wasn't happy. I missed the Eastern Shore for some reason. I just thought, man this Eastern Shore's got it all over this place. So Nettie and I talked about it. We had bought a home and had a car. Financially we were okay. We talked extensively and Nettie had a cousin here lived in Salisbury. He had a radio and TV repair shop. So he says, "You come on down to Salisbury." And he said, "You can work at Wyane Pump Company. There's a lot of places you can get a job down here." So I said, "Okay." We sold our house. Didn't have any trouble selling the house. Nettie's cousin had rented a house for us down here. So we came—moving truck came down and brought us our furniture down. I went to work at the Wayne Pump Company which is gone now. They made gasoline pumps. I worked there for one week and quit because I didn't want a job as a laborer and that's what I was, was a laborer. So I said well this is not what I'm looking for. I'm looking

for something that I can sink my teeth into. So the guy says, "Well you're not going to find it here." I said, "I know that, that's why I'm telling you I'm quit." So I quit and Nettie's cousin he taught a course in electronics at that was W [Wicomico] High and it's now W Middle School. At nighttime he taught this course in electronics. I had fiddled around a little bit with the—when I was aboard ship with the radioman. I started to take the course and I liked it. I really enjoyed it and did well with it. Then I went to work with him repairing televisions. He up and died. Thirty-seven years old and he died. So his wife came to me and she says, "Richard, why don't you take Bob's business?" And I said, "I don't have any money to buy it off of you." "She said, "No, I don't mean that. You take the business and give me, for two years, you give me ten percent of the profits and then it's yours." And I thought, that was a great deal and that's what I did. So I was in the TV business for a lot of years.

ENNIS BARBERY: What was the business called?

RICHARD SMITH: It was called Merritt TV.

ENNIS BARBERY: Merritt TV and that was related to Nettie Merritt's cousin?

RICHARD SMITH: Yeah he was Nettie's cousin. His father and Nettie's father were brothers. Then when the TV business went bad I had a degree, it wasn't a degree, but it was in electrical engineering. I went to work for a company called Duratest. It was primarily a lighting corporation that manufactured lighting stuff, industrially.

ENNIS BARBERY: About what year was that?

RICHARD SMITH: This was about 1963. I went to work as a salesman for them. I did extremely well. My territory was the Eastern Shore. My background in electronics really helped me with this job. And so I did well. I was with them about eight months and they promoted me to the sales manager. Then I worked at sales management in this division for two years and then they transferred me to Columbia, South Carolina as a regional sales manager for the south. I worked in Columbia for seven years. Bless her heart, Nettie didn't like living in the south. So I talked to my boss about getting back up this way and so he was very gracious. He said, "Well, you're in luck because we're about to let that manager go up there and it's all yours if you want it." So he transferred me back to Salisbury. That didn't last. It only lasted about a year and a half and they needed me to go to Atlanta. They shipped me to Atlanta and then we moved to Atlanta. I was there I guess three years and I retired. We came back to Salisbury and I was working as a salesman for the company to get back to Salisbury. I was 63 years old and I said, "Man, I'm to

old for this." So I just checked on my retirement and Social Security and it was more than ample for what we needed and, you know, what money we had. So I retired at 63.

ENNIS BARBERY: I think you said before, somewhere in there you had a second son. When did you have your second son?

RICHARD SMITH: We had—let me put it this way, when we were still living in Ohio, Nettie got pregnant in 1946. We had a son James who only lived about 15 minutes. We lost him. That was in '47. Then Nettie got pregnant again in '49 and that was Bob, my second son. So after that we decided we didn't want any more children, so Nettie had tubes tied. That was all the children we had. We enjoyed Salisbury. That's why we're here now because I've been retired for almost 30 years and we're still here. I think too it was because Nettie was close to home. She was a home girl. She was a Chincoteague girl. She relished the idea of being able to get in her car, drive to Chincoteague to visit her cousin and so forth whenever she wanted to. That was good too.

ENNIS BARBERY: What are some of the changes in Chincoteague that you remember seeing when you came back? You lived away a while and then come back and visit her family. Do you remember specific changes that...

RICHARD SMITH: The only changes that I can recall were so many more people like you found out what a garden it was and it was starting to be that kind of a little town, you know, a little seashore town and just a little different from what you're used to in the city. And it grew that way I think because there are two or three motels on the island now isn't there?

ENNIS BARBERY: More yeah, more than that.

RICHARD SMITH: There wasn't anything like a motel on there and primarily what Chincoteague was initially, it was oyster community as we alluded to earlier, about the oysters, you know. And that's pretty well what everybody did except the merchants that had businesses in town. Most of the other men worked on the water. My father-in-law, you know, he was an oysterman and he dredged oysters until he was 76 years old. The funny thing about it is I went and worked with him one time and he liked to kill me, you know, because you got up at three thirty in the morning and he was home by twelve thirty. I wasn't used to that. He had this, an oyster dredge off of the stern of his boat. It was a big metal frame with—on the back of it was mesh and it drugged along the bottom and drugged the oysters into that mesh. Then they'd haul it

up on the boat and dump it out and throw it back overboard and dredge more. It was hauling that damned dredge out that killed me, I mean.[laughs]

ENNIS BARBERY: We've got some of those dredges in the museum and they're heavy. I can't imagine.

ENNIS BARBERY: It looks like I have to change the battery if we're going to talk too much more. I just wanted to see. Do you think I should change it or is there a lot more that you want to share?

RICHARD SMITH: Not unless there is anything that you can think of. I think I've pretty well covered everything. I still love Chincoteague. I don't get there very often anymore. Nettie felt this way too. She sorta felt like it wasn't real because it had changed so much. She said, "I don't really feel like I'm home because, you know, her family were all gone. She had an older sister that lived there. Her dad and mom were both gone. And she said, "I just don't—it's not the Chincoteague I grew up in." She liked to go to see, you know, she was home. She always was home when she went to Chincoteague. But it was just different. I can understand that and you probably can too. When you grow up in a place and they you leave it for 20 years and go back, it's not, like the old saying, 'You can't go home again'.

ENNIS BARBERY: Are there any other questions you want to ask? [looking to Linda]

LINDA LADAS: Yeah I maybe got hung up on this, but when people would come or you went out on house calls from the infirmary and they had the flu or a cold, what did you do for them? I mean, we didn't have flu shots then.

RICHARD SMITH: No, we had penicillin though.

LINDA LADAS: You'd give then penicillin injections.

RICHARD SMITH: We had sulfa drugs too. That was probably—penicillin was just making its name back then. What had been the miracle drug before penicillin was this sulfa drug. Sulfa sisal and sulfanilamide. Those kind of drugs were—that's what I used. When I was in combat was sulfa powder to pour into wounds to prevent infection. With these people, to answer your question, it was usually a shot of penicillin if they had an infectious lung infection, a shot of penicillin would usually clear it up. If it didn't, the second one would. It depended a lot on their age and how well they took care of themselves when they were sick because some of the Chincoteaguers you're not going to stop them from working if they got pneumonia, you know. They have a wonderful work ethic too, I think people at Chincoteague do.

ENNIS BARBERY: Thank you so much for doing this interview.

RICHARD SMITH: It's probably been more of a pleasure for me than it has for you. It's so nice to reminisce. I have enjoyed it tremendously. I just sit here and it's just amazing how things have come back to me as we sat here and talked. It's been truly a pleasure for me.