

Interviewer: Danny as you like to be called. When and where were you born?

McCrary: Let's see 1933 July 13th I was born in a house in a holler and it was in Bowl Springs Tennessee.

Interviewer: Bowl Springs what is that near?

McCrary: That is near McEwen go south and there wasn't anything but a grocery store had a little post office there and they called that McEwen I mean Bowl Springs.

Interviewer: What did your daddy do?

McCrary: He was a logger and then in later years he worked for the state highway department and that's where he retired from.

Interviewer: So you told me as a younger man you served in Korea.

McCrary: Yes

Interviewer: What year did you go in?

McCrary: I went in in 1952

Interviewer: 1952 were you drafted?

McCrary: No I volunteered navy. And I liked to not have made it in because all of my life I had been hard of hearing and when we went to out Gallatin Road at the place out there where they took the people that volunteered and gave them their physicals and all of this. And so I could hear the man we were all lined up and I could hear the man and I could not understand what he was saying. I could hear him but I couldn't I could not understand what he was saying and he was behind me and I knew he was talking to this guy next to me and when he stopped he got behind me and he started saying numbers. So I went one three dud dud like that and he stepped up to the next guy. And he must have not have been listening they passed me and I did three years eleven months and twenty nine days in United States Navy. And I was aboard an aircraft carrier the USS Valley Forge and they came along one day and wanted some volunteers for shore duty. Of course there I was 18 years old green as two gores out of McEwen Tennessee. And somebody says it's back in the states and I put my hand up along with a guy that I was in boot camp with. And it was shore duty in Korea on the line. And I had a carbeam in one hand and a shovel in the other and I said if the Lord lets me get out of this right here I'll never volunteer for nothing else. And to this day I've never volunteered for anything else.

Interviewer: What happened?

McCrary: Well they wanted people to be in the CDs and we built air strips. And what we did the gravel would go on and then we'd out expanded metal down so the planes could land on that. And then put dirt and stuff over it and smoothed it down and then they rolled it rolled it packed it and that's what we did. And I was there for approximately four and half months and I got to coughing and wheezing and couldn't breathe and they sent me back to the hospital and they sent me back to Japan from Korea not to the hospital. And then they hadn't figured out what it was but after I got to the hospital in Japan in ____ Japan well then I talked the doctor into releasing me back to Valley Forge because I heard it was

coming to the east coast. And so he did and I got back aboard the same ship I went over there on. And so we come back around the east coast and we was the largest ship that ever went through the Panama Canal.

Interviewer: Really

McCrary: An air craft carrier.

Interviewer: Do you remember when you went through the canal?

McCrary: I can tell you approximately.

Interviewer: That's fine

McCrary: Approximately 1954 somewhere give or take a few months. And we came around the east coast that way we were stationed the ship was stationed in Norfolk Virginia. And we did what we called the kitty cruises that was to carry cadets from the naval academy carried them out on cruises. And we flew planes off and they'd come back on then we'd be firing you know shooting and stuff planes would be pulling it and we'd shoot him down.

Interviewer: So what was your job?

McCrary: My job was the gunnery I was in the gunnery.

Interviewer: You were gunnery

McCrary: _____ I was a _____

Interviewer: Okay

McCrary: And got back on the east coast then I came home two weekends guy lived in Erin he came home and I rode he dropped me off in McEwen he'd go on to Erin.

Interviewer: Okay so I'm a little curious you said that you volunteered and you were building that air strip there on the line.

McCrary: Yeah

Interviewer: You said you never would volunteer after that experience those four months of doing that. You must were you ever afraid of attack while you were on that line working?

McCrary: We were attacked.

Interviewer: Okay

McCrary: And there's points in there that I would rather not talk about it brings back some bad stuff for me and.

Interviewer: But four months was enough.

McCrary: It was more than enough. If you've ever been shot at and mortars dropped around you that was more than enough. I thought I thought my time had come and I learned how to dig a fox hole pretty quick with a little ole bitty shovel that was about this long with a little spade about like that. The navy issued you blades like that.

Interviewer: Did you think the Chinese Communist soldiers were effective soldiers?

McCrary: Effective soldiers?

Interviewer: Yeah you think they knew what they were doing were they good at what they were doing?

McCrary: Well I don't I can't say that they were effective soldiers as such. They were effective at what they were doing and that was getting killed.

Interviewer: Okay I've never had that experience myself so I'm not really sure what it's like and I appreciate you sharing it educating me on that.

McCrary: Nobody can tell you what the experience is like.

Interviewer: Did the conditions and supplies improve over time while you were serving in Korea? Did things get better over time while you were there?

McCrary: No

Interviewer: Not really

McCrary: No we lost a lot of men.

Interviewer: You did

McCrary: Marines took it pretty heavy there where I was at.

Interviewer: Were they talking about the Peace Talks in Panama John? Were you aware of peace talks going on in 52, 53?

McCrary: Where?

Interviewer: Panama John a city there in Korea.

McCrary: That's around the 58th parallel. There was no peace talks or anything like that going on at that time.

Interviewer: Okay

McCrary: I don't remember I wasn't there when it started.

Interviewer: Okay did you get any wounds while you were over in Korea?

McCrary: Get what?

Interviewer: Wounded

McCrary: I didn't get wounded.

Interviewer: I'm glad

McCrary: Me too there were times when I thought I was gonna be though.

Interviewer: Yeah how about the civilians in South Korea did you have very much contact with them?

McCrary: In South Korea?

Interviewer: Yeah

McCrary: Yeah they was

Interviewer: What were they like?

McCrary: They were they were friendly to the GIs that was South Korea.

Interviewer: Yes sir

McCrary: They was pretty friendly to the GIs. There was always some North Koreans would be involved with them you know trying to get them to do some dead runs so to speak. Strap up some of the civilians and they'd go blow themselves up.

Interviewer: Oh man did you spend you said you were in Japan when you had that thing with your lungs. Did you have any furlough time while you were there in Japan?

McCrary: Oh yes

Interviewer: So what did you do for fun Mr. Harvill?

McCrary: Well what all the rest of the GIs were doing. No I'll tell you it was for a guy that was 19 years old maybe close to 20 I don't know how old it was drink beer and dance with the girls.

Interviewer: Are you a good dancer?

McCrary: I was then. The Japanese girls was entirely different than what you found in the states at a navy base. Of course there was some of them too but the girls in Japan was prostitutes so to speak to eat.

Interviewer: Really

McCrary: Yeah because in Japan was still under occupation military occupation while I was there. It was maybe I can't recall when the bombs were dropped.

Interviewer: Oh Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the war?

McCrary: Well after they dropped the atomic bombs I wasn't in there. But after they dropped those bombs Japan quit militarily they quit.

Interviewer: Right

McCrary: Well I'm almost positive that was but when I was aboard an aircraft carrier we had a squadron of marines that flew planes.

Interviewer: Okay

McCrary: Going into Korea bombing stuff and they was all from the south. They had the rebel flag painted on their planes they had them on their helmets and flag on their sleeve and stuff. And I think it was eight or nine of them and we lost every one of them.

Interviewer: Oh my how did that affect

McCrary: I think there was two left but they never did go back in no more.

Interviewer: Right

McCrary: But they was flying crosshairs that was a pretty famous plane back then until the jets started. And then the last time I came back to the states and went back we had jets then and in a period of about two years we came back to San Diego. And we'd get liberty there we'd be there maybe two weeks then we went back out. And when we went off the coast to Korea flying ____ we would be out for like six to eight months at a time. For whoever got shore duty and we did not have women on the ship at that time. They could have made ten fortunes if they had been on that ship.

Interviewer: Well I asked for it you were just telling the truth that's all I asked.

McCrary: And in Japan

Interviewer: Yes sir

Interviewer: This little girl they were all small wasn't any great big girls there. We would be in port a few days at a time and after the first trip back to Japan then I found this little girl that for \$40 a month would take care of me when I come back in and get the two or three days we was there. And for 40 bucks man she fixed me whatever I wanted to eat fanned me when I needed fanning and just like the girls back in the states some of them that I met and married. Patty I want you over here.

Woman in the background: You're doing fine you keep going.

McCrary: I need you over here because I want to tell them about the most wonderful life that I've had the last 15 years.

Woman in the background: Just carry on.

McCrary: No I want you over here by my side.

Interviewer: You can come over here if you want to. I won't push you but you're welcome to come over here. We're gonna make a copy of this tape for you to give to your grandchildren you'll have a copy on dvd disk so they can hear the stories and everything too.

McCrary: I just wanted

Woman in the background: You're doing fine

McCrary: I just wanted to we was in high school together and she didn't have anything to do with me maybe outside of speaking and I don't even remember that. But she was a cheerleader and I used to go to the ballgames to watch them twirl around so I could see their drawers.

Interviewer: Okay

McCrary: And I'll tell you the rest of it after you cut the film off.

Man in the background: The Paul Harvey version.

Interviewer: We'll get the Paul Harvey version later on. I believe I believe. When you look back on your time in Korea what image comes to mind? When someone says did you serve in Korea what comes to mind? If you want to tell me.

McCrary: The killing

Interviewer: Really

McCrary: That's all I can say about it.

Interviewer: Fair enough fair enough. If you wanted to tell you know my son he is a young man if you wanted him to understand what Korea was all about how would you sum it up from your experience?

McCrary: It was a war we shouldn't have been in just like most of the wars we've been in. Like the wars we've been in just recently it's just what it amounts to is a bunch of young men getting killed for nothing. I lost some good friends.

Interviewer: Were you able to take advantage of the GI bill when you came back?

McCrary: Yes

Interviewer: How did the GI bill help you?

McCrary: Well I went to work for the telephone company and the GI bill paid me while I was in training for like two years they paid me a check. And I wasn't smart enough to go to college or anything like that so I just took the money.

Interviewer: A lot of people do it that away sure enough they do what they have to do.

McCrary: But I wasn't I didn't know the stuff then that I know now.

Interviewer: I think that's true of all of us.

McCrary: About the GI bill and all that stuff.

Interviewer: Right

McCrary: I've done pretty well so I can't complain. The most wonderful part of my life has been the last 15 years when I married Ms. Patty.

Interviewer: Aw you started to tell that she was a cheerleader then you got to a spot and stopped.

McCrary: You stopped me

Interviewer: I didn't stop you. Well we know you appreciate Ms. Patty she's a wonderful lady.

McCrary: But if it wasn't for her I would have been dead ten years ago that's a fact ain't no two ways about it. And I knew now well I knew if I knew then what I know now I would probably be a hit man.

Interviewer: A hit man

McCrary: A hit man

Interviewer: I just can't I'm sorry Mr. Harvill I just can't picture that. Why would you say you would be a hit man?

McCrary: Because I loved killing. It gets where it's just like being on a rabbit hunt. And after the first one the rest of them come easy. And I imagine most GIs that's been in the war in combat will tell you basically the same thing. I don't know that but I've probably talked already too much.

Interviewer: Well when we do these interviews all we ask is that people express how they feel and why maybe what brought them to that point.

McCrary: That's how I feel.

Interviewer: Okay

McCrary: But you know I can't say a whole lot because if I did they would be after me I said I was gonna be a hit man and who I'm gonna hit then they'd be after me. And I don't want them after me because I would have to call the ambulance for them. If nothing else just get me in a chair over there where I can get around with my gun.

Interviewer: You have anything else you want to add?

McCrary: Not on camera.

Interviewer: Okay well we can talk more later if you want to because I think we're gonna talk

McCrary: If that's all you need.

Interviewer: I so much appreciate you taking your time and telling me how you feel and what it was really like.

McCrary: Well you didn't get what it was really like.

Interviewer: As much as your comfortable telling me.

McCrary: As much as I'm willing to talk.

Interviewer: And that's perfectly fine because you can read it in a book that's one way but that's not always the people who lived it experienced it.

McCrary: I ran into my brother in Norfolk Virginia and he was on he was in Japan when they was when they was hunting these aircraft carriers in Japan and all that war on the sea is what it is now. And he talked to me about it and he was aboard I believe it was the Coral Sea I'm not positive about that right now. And he talked about the komokozies coming in on them and stuff like that but I never knew him talking to anybody else about it.

Interviewer: Right

McCrary: But he was talking to be about how lucky I was to be on the east coast. And of course my oldest brother was on ship in the east coast and he was on the light cruiser that hunted submarines the destroyers. Because he was radar in the radar and when they find them the destroyers they would go where Japan had the submarines and drop them depth chargers and that's all she wrote.

Interviewer: Uh huh when you left the army what was your highest rank? What was your rank when you left?

McCrary: I was seaman when I went in and I was seaman when I got out. And I made \$72 a month the whole time I was in the navy and I sent 50 of it home to my mother and daddy to kindly help them. And I drew \$22 a month the whole time after I got out of boot camp. You could party big time and a friend of mine you may not want this.

Interviewer: That's all right.

McCrary: But this friend of mine was in the payroll part and we knew we'd be going to sea for six to nine months. He would jack the pay up and of course when we was going to sea hell we didn't have nowhere to spend it or nothing so they just took it back my \$22 a month. And when I hit beach I may have saved \$50, \$60 something like that.

Interviewer: Uh huh

McCrary: Big money but that was just something else.

Interviewer: I meant to ask you where did you do your boot camp?

McCrary: In San Diego California.

Interviewer: Okay

McCrary: It's what it's now it's marine it was then but it's just navy training there. And man I tell you that was rough that boot camp was rough but it paid off it paid off.

Interviewer: So you felt prepared when went? Did you feel prepared that you were well trained by the time you went?

McCrary: Yes

Interviewer: Yeah okay

McCrary: Of course I knew how to shoot I knew how to shoot squirrel out of a tree without blowing it half in two.

Interviewer: Uh huh

McCrary: So it was pretty easy the rest of the way.

Interviewer: I see so you had training before you had your training.

McCrary: Oh I had training before I had my training. That Sears and Roebuck 22.

Interviewer: Yeah

McCrary: But they don't make them like that anymore. Single shot strictly single shot. If you had three squirrels in a tree you had to load it three times to get them. And if daddy give you five shells and you just killed three squirrels you better have them other two shells.

Interviewer: Uh huh

McCrary: Because everything cost you could get probably 5 for a nickel or 5 for 3 cents. We never did have you had a box a little box of 50 we never did have we bought a hardware stores. Daddy would buy four or five shells and that was our staple meat when I was a kid it was our staple. Patty remembers those times.

Interviewer: You eat what you killed right?

McCrary: That's right and it was good it was good.

Interviewer: Mr. Harvill I so much appreciate you doing this and getting your story on tape.

McCrary: I know you probably won't be able to use it because it's not exciting or a lot to hear.

Interviewer: But it's real and that's and that's what matters.

Tape ended