

3-29-2014

## Joseph Carpentieri

Joseph Carpentieri

Charles Closmann

University of North Florida, cclosman@unf.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/oral\\_history](https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/oral_history)



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#)

---

### Suggested Citation

Carpentieri, Joseph and Closmann, Charles, "Joseph Carpentieri" (2014). *Oral History Interviews and Transcripts*. 1.

[https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/oral\\_history/1](https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/oral_history/1)

This Audio is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral Histories at UNF Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral History Interviews and Transcripts by an authorized administrator of UNF Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [Digital Projects](#).

© 3-29-2014 All Rights Reserved

## **Transcription**

### **Interview between Joseph Carpentieri (JC) and Charles Closmann (CC).**

**3:35 pm; March 29, 2014; Jacksonville Florida.**

#### **Interview Starts Here:**

JC: My name is Joseph Carpentieri. I was born in Italy, in the mountains of Naples, in the area of Benevento. I was only two years old when I came here.

CC: You were born in in 1924?

JC: 1924, 1924.

CC: Ok. Could you talk a little about how you came to the United States?

JC: Well, my Dad came to the United States. What was the year now, can you remember that Bea?

Bea: He came on the Berlin in 1912. He was 18 years old.

JC: And he got a job in New York City with Con Edison, correct. He spent all his life as a coal passer. From what I understood, he was up in a tower somewhere passing coal on a conveyor belt so they could make electricity. And he was there most of his life, till he passed on. He had four sons and three daughters.

Bea: You were the second one.

JC: I was the second one. My sister was a babe in arms when we came to the U.S. He decided to make a trip back and forth, and every time he made a trip, why naturally, there was another born, baby born. I guess he figured, "enough is enough." The trip, it was expensive going back and forth. And then, he went ahead and got the family here. We went and established in New York City, lower east side, the Bronx, across from Harlem. That is how we got in the United States. We landed in Ellis Island, at the time.

CC: Okay, so you came over as a two year old in 1926? To Ellis Island?

JC: Yes, my brother was four. My sister was six months.

Bea: Joe, one thing I think is interesting. Your dad joined the U.S. Army in World War I. That is how he got citizenship.

JC: Yes

CC: Dad fought for the US Army?

JC: That made him a citizen—Yes.

CC: Did you learn to speak Italian growing up?

JC: A little bit. My Italian, you would not want to hear, because my mother would not speak anything. We made a habit out of teasing my Mother all the time. She was our playmate. She spoke no English at all. We said words you wouldn't want to hear at all. I had a cousin that taught her all the bad words.

JC: "Kissamyass." When she was cooking especially. Ha, she had a great sense of humor. She laughed with us too sometimes. Anyhow, I think I had a good life with the whole situation basically.

CC: You lived in the Bronx?

JC: Yes, the lower east side of the Bronx, right across the river. I used to swim the Harlem River there

CC: were you concerned about it being too polluted?

JC: Nah, we didn't care at all. In fact, that is where I learned how to swim, at the third avenue bridge there. When you were kids, you used to take bets. "I bet you couldn't jump off that third avenue bridge. I said, how much you want a bet"? At that time, what do I know? I didn't know fear or what is dangerous. "I bet you five dollar I could do it." So sure enough, there is about two or three guys who put up the five, so I get up in the middle of the bridge. Naturally, I don't have any clothes on. Cause in the Harlem River you don't wear clothes. So I get up there and say, "You want me to dive or jump"? So I jumped. So I made \$5 or \$10 dollars there.

CC: Would you say you were a little bit of a risk taker when you were a kid?

JC: Oh, did I ever, are you kidding. Now I am 90 years old, on 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2014, so I said to myself, "What did I do this for? How am I surviving here? I don't know. Something up there is helping me along."

Bea: The funny thing is, now Joe worries about Maria's little girl. If she walks out here, "be careful don't let her walk out here." And it is like, they have to do a few things. It's kind of ironic. He was so careless in his youth, but I guess we all were.

JC: My other family was my aunt and my uncle. They lived in a painted five story building. He was a fantastic painter. He painted St. George and the Dragon on the wall. He was on a horse.

My cousin joined the army in World War II. It didn't work out, he didn't make it. But he was a fantastic guy.

Bea: Joe and his family, they were—the super of the building that they rented.

JC: That is how we survived. My father was making a big salary of like. We made like \$15 a week. We did all the dirty work.

CC: You did all the dirty work? In the building?

JC: My mother and the three kids, we helped my mother wash the stairs. I would go down in the basement, when I was like 8 or 10. And shovel coal in the furnace there.

CC: Did you learn how to do mechanical things around the building?

JC: Yeah, I fixed anything that you give me

Bea: It was interesting with Joe's life, before he was 8 or 10, he'd had three or four jobs. He was shining shoes. He worked on a vegetable cart. The man had a horse and buggy. Joe would stand out and help with that. The funny thing, there was one place where the man would go inside and visit the lady. I think it was a girlfriend. Joe didn't know and didn't care. When he was 12, he worked with a Chinese laundry. He would ride around and throw the dirty clothes on the truck. And then Joe would come home and then go to school, but he had, I mean, it's hard to imagine kids working so early, but he was working shining shoes for the money, but he was shining shoes at a bar where they would feed you. People would bring Joe sandwiches.

CC: Did your family have rough time during the Depression, during the 1930s?

JC: I don't remember that much. I just took it with a grain of salt basically.

Bea: You know, they had so little to begin with.

JC: We never went hungry. Like I said, I took any kind of a job to get some money. This is a story, but you might not be interested. I trusted one man, we called him Stretch. He had a shoe about the size of a 12 or 15. That time it was only a nickel a shine. That is what I charged him. "Stretch, why don't you just pay me Saturday." Okay I can do that. Then one day, I didn't see Stretch any more. So I went to the bar. No Stretch. I went into the bar, "Is Stretch sick?" He says, "No Joe, he's gone." He was mob, the mob got him.

CC: Why did they get him?

JC: He was part of the mob. He was in the numbers. Not drugs or prostitution.

CC: Numbers racket?

JC: I was so ticked off. He owes me money. The poor guy at the bar says, “No Joe, you are out of luck.” But that’s 35 cents he owes me. One of these days, after I die, I am going to see him. No more tabs

Bea: Oh I forgot one. You delivered papers.

JC: Yes.

Bea: But then Joe had to pay the papers first, but then some people wouldn’t pay, so he quit that.

JC: I learned the hard way.

CC: You take all the risks.

JC: That’s right. I learned the hard way. That is part of my life.

CC: You had some real interesting experiences growing up.

JC: Oh, you better believe it.

CC: And, um, did you go back to Italy at all?

JC: I went with the Navy. We took a trip there. We were on a different kind of run. We went to Naples. I called a cab. And I had a couple of other fellas with me. So I said you want to go up to Naples in the mountains? So I went up there to see where I was born. Oh yeah, so we went up there. I met a cousin of mine that I didn’t know (he was a thief).

Bea: Was it part of your mother’s family?

JC: Yes

CC: Was this during the war, or after?

JC: It was after the war—on active duty reserves.

CC: Okay, why don’t we talk a little about the Navy, when you joined the Navy?

JC: Well the reason why I joined the Navy, my cousin upstairs, he joined the Navy also. He had a lot of tattoos, but I never got a tattoo. I was chicken. I didn’t like all those needless sticking me.

CC: This was 1942?

JC: 1942. He was in the Navy, and then when I joined . . . I went up to. Ah. What the heck is it now? It was on the East coast, the north part of the east coast, the boot camp up there. It wasn't the great lakes, it was. It was a boot camp up there. When I graduated boot camp, I went to Middleton Mississippi. Well, first of all they gave me a choice of what schools I wanted to go. There were three schools. They had aviation ordinance, aviation mechanic, and I volunteered for submarine warfare. Thank goodness to this day I am glad I didn't make it. The glory of it all!

CC: That is why you wanted to do submarines?

JC: Yeah, so a big shot, Yeah, I am a submariner. Anyhow, I didn't get in, but I did go to aviation ordinance school. Well I graduated there in the third class. From there, we went to Norfolk. And I ended up on the Belleau Wood. It was a carrier, but it was a cruiser. During the war, we didn't have big float ships like they have now, big carriers

CC: So it was a cruiser that was adapted as a carrier?

JC: That's correct. They tore the top off and put a wooden deck on that and planes flew on that.

CC: Did most of the kids you knew growing up, did they join the military or get drafted?

JC: Well, not that I know of. They were drafted. That is why I joined. I did not want to get drafted.

CC: Did not want to get drafted?

JC: No, I wanted a choice. Well, when I was on the carrier, I was a spotter. Anyhow, they gave me jobs. I am third class petty officer. So I went to the after station, and watched the water being churned up as it was going. Well that one evening, I did not do that anymore. I was so sea sick. I was about to jump over. That was some experience.

CC: So you went to boot camp, went through training. Got sent to Norfolk, Virginia, got shipped overseas.

JC: To be shipped overseas. When I went on the carrier itself, we got off at Natal, Brazil. We got off there and went on the transport ship, because the carrier could not dock there. But we got there, and went to the base at Natal, Brazil. That is where I stayed for three years.

CC: So from 1942 to the end of the war, you are were down in the Brazil, on the Belleau Wood?

JC: Well, not the Belleau Wood. It left. That is another story. Well we were right there. They got us off the ship. We went to a transport first to get to shore. The Belleau Wood went to the

Pacific, and we never heard anything more for about two, three years. I think it was about 2 and half years later. The Chief of the outfit, he says, Joe, what did you do before you got here. I said, "What you talking about?" He says, "You are up for a Captain's mast." He says, "You deserted the Navy, they couldn't find you, you and five other sailors." I says, "Chief we have been here all the while." Sure enough we had to go the Captain's mast. I told em, from the Belleau Wood, from the transport ship, and here we are. The reason why they are doing this is that the Belleau Wood was sunk, all hands. God or something is looking after me. I take so many chances and I survive it. I don't understand.

CC: When was the Belleau Wood sunk? 1945? By a Japanese submarine?

JC: Well it was Japan. Must have been a Japanese submarine. I am not sure. But the main thing was the carrier, it had a starboard list. . . .which was always going that way, never straight. I don't know why. Never straight. You had to walk on the one leg like that. But we had of course been on the Belleau Wood. But we got off at Natal, Brazil. But then we joined a crew there. And we flew, when you go in the office, you will see the plane I flew in. It was a PV-1. It was a long time ago. It was a prop.

CC: This would have been after they dropped you off at Natal Brazil, in anti-submarine warfare?

JC: That is correct

CC: And you were a gunner?

JC: No, ordinance. We would load the bombs and torpedoes. I made Chief while I was there. Which, a lot of people, when I told them that I made Chief in three year, they say, that's impossible you can't do that. But I did it.

CC: How do you think you did it so quickly?

JC: Well, I took every doggone test I could possibly get, and I didn't care if I passed it or not. . . . And then they wanted me to go for warrant officer. And I refused it at the time.

CC: Why did you refuse?

JC: Well, because as aviation ordinance, I could fly with the planes. And it was extra money, and the money was more important to me than the warrant officer. So I said no, I don't want that. I needed the money to send on to my family.

CC: Do you still think that was the right decision?

JC: Yes, I think so. I really do.

CC: The family still lived back in New York?

JC: The same place, third avenue, 136<sup>th</sup> street, third avenue. Yeah, I think it was right, because the money was more important than warrant officer.

CC: And tell me a little more about some of your duties there in Brazil. What your daily routine was like.

JC: The daily routine was like, you get the guns all oiled up and repaired. And you get them loaded up with 50 cal. machine gun, we would uh, fill up the magazine and get the gun ready. Check them out. That is what the ordinance people do. Test fire. They shoot, they work. We'd load up the planes with bombs.

CC: And these are planes looking for German submarines in the South Atlantic?

JC: In the South Atlantic. At that time, I think, yeah, I did that for about two years, and then they sent me back to the states for schooling.

CC: And did you find a lot of German subs in the Atlantic?

JC: I think we landed, uh, sank about six. The reason for that, I don't know if you are familiar, the Atlantic Ocean right in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. They call it the Ascension Islands. We would do a patrol from Natal, Brazil to the Ascension Islands, and the only way you could get in there was straight in, and that is it. You had to go all the way. It was owned by the British. There was one family there. I made about 15 trips back and forth. The subs would be waiting there at Natal, Brazil and follow us. You get the convoys. After we got there, we eliminated them. No more German subs out there.

CC: You sank six German submarines. Did you take any prisoners?

JC: Oh Yes, Oh yes, they sent me to school. I went to a turret school, I was a turret technical. My rate was AOCT. I had another rate. Then I came back to Natal, Brazil. I got off the plane, and I saw this uh, there was like a big wire fence, in the middle of Natal on the naval base. They got this one sub, they didn't catch em. They just came up and surrendered. What was on there? Babies! I looked at them and said, "My god, babies." They were 13 years old, 14 years old, blond headed boys, before the end of the war.

CC: Maybe they just realized it was all over, to give it up.

JC: I just saw them walking inside. They were scared to death. And after that in 45, they started discharging a lot to go back home. That is when I got in here, I went to Miami Beach, and from there I came to North Florida.



CC: Let's back up just a second. Where were you when the war ended?

JC: I was in Natal, Brazil. They went, time wise, to discharge me there.

CC: Okay, so right after the war ended, you were let go.

JC: Yes, they discharged us. Then I joined the reserves.

CC: That was here in Florida.

JC: Yes, that was here in Florida. Down in Miami, it was in Miami, we had a naval station there. That is where we flew out of.

CC: Um, in Brazil, you flew on the planes, you loaded the planes. So tell me about some of your experiences flying on the plane.

JC: Okay, so a PV-1, you are familiar? There is one up there.

CC: Yes, I saw one.

JC: These had plastic domes in the nose. The only way we could find them is by surveillance, you go in the plane. We loaded the plane up. They didn't think about it at the time. We get ready for a flight out. They had different ordinance, for night. Well anyhow, I was on this flight for the Ascension Islands. So we know the convoy was going out there and the subs were out there, so. . . . we told the pilot that a sub was out there. I had to lay down in the nose, look for subs. Then way out there; must have been about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way, I saw this light way out there, it was blinking going up and down. The first thing I had to do was let the pilot know. Cause he is busy up there in the cockpit. Everybody had watches. So I told him. Directly in front of us, sure enough the first thing he did was open the bomb bay and drop bombs. I was scared to death, it was all clear. I could see the whole thing. We dove down on that thing. That was the first time I was scared in my life. Come to find out, it was a fishing boat. We just blew that poor little boat all over. That was my experience of diving down on an enemy. Oh gosh, I'll never forget it. Oh well I don't know if we sank it. By that time, we took off. Like I said, we got about six of them.

CC: Any other interesting experiences there in Brazil? You were there for three years.

JC: Ah, that is all we did, was patrol work, sixteen hours back there.

CC: How many hours would it take to fly there?

JC: Oh, I would say about four or five, it was right in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, between Dakar Africa; now that's another place where we flew, to Dakar Africa. . because of the hump,

the Africa, the hump, because it's less water, that is where we landed. That is where we landed, the base

CC: You landed in Africa. How did the local folks in Brazil react to you?

JC: Oh, they loved us, loved us. . They looked at us like we belonged there.

CC: Why do you think that was?

JC: Well, they knew what the Germans were doing. Lot of convoys, were supplies from South America. And, they figured well, Germany was the enemy.

CC: Did you make any Brazilian friends while you were there?

JC: Yeah, oh yeah, but I lost track when I got out of there. They were friendly very, very friendly.

CC: Ok, lets' take a break, just to make sure everything is working properly, if that is okay with you.

JC: sure

CC: Okay, we are continuing. This is Charles Closmann, interviewing Joseph Carpentieri. He has just been discharged from the Navy. He is going to take the story from there.

JC: Okay, after that, I was discharged, and I landed in Miami. From there I went to New York. I had to get a job because I didn't have any work. Anyhow, I got a job in downtown New York, I was working on antique lamps and stuff of that nature, wiring and fixing them and all that. I spent one year in New York. From there I met a decorator from New York City. And she was well known in New York, a wonderful person and she approached me to go down to Miami Beach to open up a shop down in Miami because there was no one doing that kind of work. I accepted because I didn't care for what I was doing. And I opened up a little shop to start off.

CC: What kind of shop was it?

JC: Repairing lamps, by putting in the socket or wiring, or drilling a vase, as specialty job.

CC: This was in Miami Beach?

JC: Miami Beach, right, that is right. Well here is some of the work that I did (shows CC some figurines). These figurines here; this very interesting here. See now, I would take the vase and make a base. This is of wood. I got another little story which is very interesting. And I had a wooden lathe, and I would spin this out the shape of it. And I had a wood carver that carved it, and I made a lamp out of it.

CC: That is nice, what is this made of?

JC: Ah, that is porcelain.

CC: Nice!

JC: I did a lot of work for antique dealers. I had one job that I did. You'd laugh. I would take a chance on anything that would make a difference for me, cause I needed money.

CC: Continue.

JC: Okay, Where was I? Well anyhow, the carver that I had, I had on 5<sup>th</sup> street in Miami Beach on the MacArthur Causeway, I had a man, his name was Carl Stutz, and his wife, he came in from Germany, when he was on his way to the gas chamber. A German soldier on the side, saw he was carving some kind of a figurine or something, and one of the German officers pulled him out of the line, "can you carve something for my children"? Carl says, "Yes it will take time." And he says, "well that is okay, we have time." But he says, "I have to stay with my wife." He says, "No problem, pull your wife out of the line." Sure enough that saves his life. I got the chills when he was telling me that. He was down on 1<sup>st</sup> Street, I was on 5<sup>th</sup> street. And he carved. It was a tree with a trunk about that high, and he carved a Christ on the stump itself. I looked at it and I said, "It was fantastic."

CC: So he was back in Germany and he was on the way to the concentration camp?

JC: Yes. He was Jewish.

CC: So he was a skilled woodcarver, and the German officer saw him and decided, "Yeah, I could use your skills, so that's what saved his wife's life also."

JC: Yeah, so it saved his wife. So he wouldn't do it without her. After a fashion. Oh God, about ten years, working around there. Actually, I made a reputation for myself, because there was nobody down there that did this kind of work. You take a vase, a crystal vase, and you drill a hole in it, in the glass. . .You're not responsible if it breaks. That is one thing that we got clear.

CC: Very risky.

JC: Very risky. But anyhow, I found a way of doing it. I lost just one vase. This gentleman comes in the door, and I'm telling you, he was so big. He was about the size of the door. His name was Pat Cannon, he was a judge in Miami, other side of the Beach. He was downtown I think it was. He brought a vase down in there. It was made by a Frenchman, it was about that big, and it had five different colors of glass. . . on the vase. They would take one vase and put the color on it. I guess that is the way they made it. Well anyhow, he says, "Yeah, this is an antique. . . I paid \$200 for it." He says, "Can you make a lamp out of it"? I said, "Pat, yeah, I can

make a lamp out of it. But remember, if I drill it and it breaks, I'm not responsible." He says, "Yeah, I'm familiar with that." But little did he know that I did so much work there, that I had a way to do it without breaking. Because, I made a special drill. I said, why don't I just get a tube, piece of pipe, it was of brass. The hole would be just big enough to take it. So I did that. I said well, it's perfectly round, I say, well, let me try this. I put a cut across the bottom, and I got some diamond dust that I bought from the Angelo brothers in New York City, powder, it was by the pound. So I made a little dam out of it, I put water in there, put the dust in there, drill in that way. I didn't lose one vase at all.

CC: How long would it take you do to this?

JC: Well, it depends upon the thickness of the glass. Now, remember this had five layers of glass. Okay, that is important. Because the regular glass, I had no problem at all. So I was in the front taking care of a customer and then I heard this ring, "piiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiinnngggg." It filled up the whole shop. The shop was about this big. I say, Oh crap, so I want back there, sure enough, I took it off the drill and looked at it. And sure enough, the layer inside the glass itself had a crack in it. But it was still there, and it was held together. Ah, I got so good that I was getting bold you know, so I say, you know what, I can go ahead and make an insurance policy. And tell em, approach em and say, if they want, I will insure their glass for whatever price they want to put on it. Sure enough, Pat was the only one that I, you know I had a couple that went okay, but Pat was the only one that did, when he came in that day, I told him about it. I said I can insure the glass for you. "I pay you exactly the price that you paid for it if it breaks." He said, "Oh, that's great, that's good." I don't know if that is legal or not, I had no idea. I called him up and said, "Pat, I am sorry to tell you, your vase, it's not broken. There is a crack on the inside of it." I was honest with him. He says, "Joe, no problem, when I come in we'll take care of it." When he came it, I gave him \$200. I said, "I'm sorry Pat," and he says, "I can understand that. Nobody insures that anyhow." So I went ahead, and so I said, "Will you now let me take a chance"? So I went ahead and made a lamp out of it. I got \$400 for that lamp.

CC: Wow, that's pretty good. So it turned out good.

JC: Yeah, because it was a French designer. Whoever he was, but it was Beautiful glass, you can see with Beautiful colors and what not.

CC: So how long were you in the business in Miami?

JC: Oh my gosh, Jesus, I would say about 25 years, because after that, after that, what I did was I went for the wholesale chandelier work, I was a foreman and designer, making chandeliers for south Miami because the high rises were going up there like crazy. And I went ahead and uh, I had to stop making the chandeliers.

CC: This would have been back in the 1960s, I guess?

JC: Yeah, it would have been back at that time, yeah. Because that is when Miami Beach took off.

CC: You saw the real change take off in Miami. There weren't that many people there when the war ended and then thousands of people moved down there.

JC: Yeah, because, like I say, they went down in there. And they didn't have anybody to take chandeliers down when there was a hurricane. Now the Fountainbleau, they called. I was down there for many years. Everybody started knowing me, and I was the only one doing it. That's not good. You can't do all that kind of work. You gotta have somebody beside yourself. You have to have some help, yeah.

CC: Especially if there is a big hurricane coming.

JC: That's right, yeah.

CC: Did you have employees while you were doing this?

JC: I did have one employee. He was Jimmy White. He was a colored fella. He only had one problem. He loved his gin. But he did odd jobs, like picking up, and all that stuff, but I did the rest.

CC: How long did he work for you?

JC: Until I quit that, and went into the wholesale chandeliers. I had a factory for chandeliers and they made different things.

CC: And you had employees?

JC: Yeah.

CC: How many employees did you have?

JC: About 15 to about 30. This was in South Miami, it was on the express way going down, toward Key West, I forget what the name of it was. There was a factory there that we went into. We made chandeliers. We worked for the high rises.

CC: And how long did you do that for?

JC: It was about two years, because by that time, I went back into the Navy.

CC: What year was that?

JC: 1950.

CC: So you joined in the reserves or active duty?

JC: In the reserves, I went back as a chief. I was there at Opa Locka, the airbase there. I became a company commander for a boot camp.

CC: So you're doing that while you are running the business? So the whole time you are running these businesses you are also in the reserves?

JC: Yeah.

CC: Okay, you are running basic training over there in Opa Locka. Why did you go back in the Navy? You just missed it?

JC: Money, money.

CC: How much did they pay you?

JC: It was not very much. I think I sent home about \$50 per month when I was on active duty in WWII.

CC: You are sending this back to the family? So, tell me about when you met your wife?

JC: I met her here in Jacksonville. After I had left Miami, I came up here, like I say, all I had was a little car and a little suit case. I started working on home repairs.

CC: What year was that?

JC: Oh my gosh. Bea. What time did I come here, what year, up in Jacksonville?

Bea: Early 74.

JC: I came up here, by myself. I went to the Navy station and got that job as a painter.

CC: At NAS Jax? And so, you're still in the reserves at this time?

JC: Oh yea, I'm still in the reserves. Well, I worked in Jacksonville at the base. I was still in the reserves. In fact, I was the guy in between both of them, because everything we did in the Navy, I was doing at NAS. So if they had a problem, I was right there to solve that problem, in fact, lot of things.

CC: So you're still kind of working your business, but you are still in the reserves, and you are at NAS Jax?

JC: Right, exactly.

CC: So, how long did you remain in the reserves?

JC: 39 years.

CC: Okay.

Bea: Joe, you might want to show Charles the little plaque out here, when he has a chance.

CC: Tell me about when you met Bea.

JC: When did I meet you Missy? Did I have a choice? Did I have a choice when I met you?

CC: laughing.

JC: Oh well. Yeah, she was in the real estate at the time. And I was in Spain, at the time that we flew over to Spain. She was here. She called me in Spain, she says, "Joe, can you get \$2000"? I said, "Me"? I don't have a dime to my name? So it happened that Johnny Cook, he was a Chief also, like myself. We had about 10 different Chiefs and he was in charge of the credit union here in Jacksonville and I said, "Hey Johnny, do you think I could borrow some money from the credit union"? He said, "What do you want it for"? I said, "Bea's got a duplex."

Bea: Well I had saved \$8,000. We needed \$10,000 to buy the duplex.

JC: She trusted me? Can you believe that?

CC: Unless there is part of the story that I'm missing, you sound pretty trust worthy to me.

Bea: I think we trusted each other. It was before we got married. We got married in November.

CC: What year was that?

Bea: 1974, but it was a good deal, it was the first property we bought. It is a nice duplex. It was a good deal, on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

JC: Right off Pine Street.

CC: Yeah sure. And you were a real estate agent?

JC: A tycoon.

Bea: Right, If you're from around here, 40 years ago there were only two mortgage companies. Charter Mortgage and Stockton Watley, and I worked at Charter. I never once sold real estate,

because I liked to know what I was going to make. You know you might make 2 or \$3,000 one month (at that time it was a lot of money) and not have another sale for months. It was not until we got married, and I married this rich man, that I went into the real estate. Joe wanted me to get my broker license, and I did. I worked for this friend of mine and I saw what problems she had. I never wanted my own business.

JC: But everything so far is working out for us. How long it is going to last, I don't know.

Bea: We're day to day.

JC: This is the whole spiel, right here. Now this is the plane, PV-1. They had a plastic nose, the whole thing. While we were there, all we had was 2-50 caliber machine guns turret. And that's about it. And then the Navy decided to put 20 millimeter cannons on both sides. Then they found when we fired them, it broke the plastic. My job was to lay down in the nose there. And look out for subs.

CC: Now tell me about some of these medals up here.

JC: Well, most of them are for being in the Navy. The way I started out with third class, then second class, first class and then Chief. And Chief is as far as I went.

CC: These are service medals?

JC: Yeah, exactly, and I was the only one that they gave this plaque to when I retired.

Cc: And why was that?

JC: Because I was good. They liked me.

CC: What do you think made you so good, being in the Navy?

JC: Being my self is what it was. I didn't have any special education or what not. So I just went along with the people. I was one of them, that is what it was.

CC: When you got a job, you just got stuff done.

JC: And when I was company commander of my boot camp, guess who got the only gift when they graduated?

CC: You did?

JC: I did. And one of the people who started this boot camp, his son was in my outfit.

CC: That must have been a little bit of a challenge.



JC: He said, "Joe, what the heck do you do with these kids"? Hey, "I just treat em like a dad."

Bea: Here it is. That might have been about that time when you were a company commander.

CC: You look like a movie star.

Bea: Sort of like Clark Gable.

CC: Like Montgomery Clift, or something.

Bea: One of them, he was kneeling by the proverbial palm. You know how the sailors were in front of that palm.

JC: Pat Davis was another ordinance man, we flew together. You know what the P3s are? Well he and I flew together. And being ordinance, we were also cooks. We started cooking and everything else. Before we flew out, we would see how many would fly out. We would go to the commissary and pick up steaks.

Bea: Excuse me a second Joe. This is when he did the thing for the ejection seat. And this is when he got a couple of awards for money.

CC: This is back when you were at NAS Jax with the ejection seats. What was your suggestion with the ejection seats?

JC: Well, the Navy, God bless them. Because they didn't know what the hell they were doing, period. We were getting new ejections seats. Okay, they didn't think of buying parts, no, they disregarded that. Buying parts for the ejection seats, and if you don't have the part to repair that, the plane is down, they cannot fly. So, before that, what happened was, I was in the ordinance shop at that time. I did my work so well and so quick that I had nothing to do most of the time. So I went next door and helped the guy that worked on the ejections seats. And I helped him for a long while and one day over the weekend I get a call from my supervisor. "Joe, I hate to tell you but Sam, he dropped dead." I said, "Oh my God." He said, "Not only that, but guess what." "You're the new seat mechanic." I said, "Wait a minute. "Wait a minute, all I did was help him along." But I took it over.

CC: Where do you think you got such good mechanical skills? Was it growing up working as a supervisor, and all that?

JC: My dad did everything there at home, painting the place; I went ahead and did it. I didn't know how. If there was a better way to do it, I just turned it around. But that's all.

CC: Interesting.

JC: But these seats now. This one here, this is a new seat. But these seats, they have to have a cradle to work on. The Navy was too cheap to buy em. So we had to work on. So I said, "What the hell is this rack we are working on"? I could work on it different. The bottom of the seat is where the main rocket goes. And it's about that big, about that big around. That's the one that shoots you and the pilot through the canopy, and I did that, you know. I could have one of these things done for maybe \$20. Or something like that, maybe a little bit more. So I went ahead and made the bottom of it and mounted it on to the seat. So I went ahead and called one of the engineers and I said, "James, come down here. I want to tell you what I did." And he looked at me and he says, "You mean you thought about that"? I said "yeah, well here's the sample right here." And he says, "God, you know how much money we save, because the racks, they are 10, 20 thousand dollars." And not only that, in the back here, they have what they call a height actuator. It makes it go up and down. The planes went down. Why? Because the height actuator was not working. We don't have any parts. I said, "For God's sake, what the hell is the matter with you people"? Because we didn't have any parts. He says, "We cannot buy them, because and so forth." I said, "You mean you cannot redo them, you can't repair them"? I said, "If it is manufactured, it can be repaired." I was on night duty one night, so, I had a height actuator there. They said, "You can't take it apart." I took it apart. So the next day I called the engineer. He was the engineer in the shop, and was a jerk, because whatever you save around that was what you get paid for, but I think my wife said about 6, 7 thousand dollars. Hell, I made it. And that was the time they gave it to me. He says, "God you thought of that." Well, the height actuator wasn't that much, because they fixed it. I had to send it to the parts department they had to redo the parts, and I built it back perfectly. The engineer, he approved it, but he didn't approve with the full price, but with a very low price. So I didn't get the benefit.

CC: Interesting.

JC: Yeah, it really was. So much there, I 'm telling you.

CC: Where is this? Is this Brazil?

JC: No, this is in Miami, and then, a wonderful Navy, they went ahead and repaired the hangars, with air condition, the works, and then when it was working, they closed it down. They flew us from Miami to NAS Jax. I'm telling you, it was something else.

CC: That must have been right when you went in, the Navy then. That must have been up in Rhode Island.

JC: That's right, Rhode Island. Well, another suggestion I did. Are you familiar with the B-24?

CC: Yeah sure.

JC: Okay, now, the B-24 you had two sides. You put bombs on both sides. And you had five on one side, five on the other side. Well, you had to put a crank on the two. Well they were 450 pounds apiece and the, the bombs, the depth charges and then we had 3 people loading them up. I said, "God, you're cranking that doggone handle." No, I said, "Gotta be a better way." So I was out there one time, and I looked at the damn thing, and I said, "Well look, there's three people working on it and the nose plug is dead right now, there's no charges in there for that to blow up or anything. Take the nose plug off." I got a pipe about that big, and had a nose plug welded on to that pipe and I said, "One man gets on this side and one man gets on this side, and I'm the little one so I'll be on the tail because you have to turn it around to hook it up on the shackles. Then you go inside after that." After that, it took us about 15 minutes to load a plane. And, they couldn't believe it, but I said, "The proof is there." So they said, "You know, you're right." So that is how we loaded the bombs after that, we took that stupid long cradle that had the chain and all that, and got rid of it.

CC: And how many other bases used this? Was this a widely used technique?

JC: After that it must have been because I didn't hear any more about it.

CC: Okay.

JC: Then we had one with a long tail. That plane had turrets, my God, we had a Consolidated nose turret, we had a Martin Baker, two of them on top, and then a Consolidated tail turret, tear drops on both sides, you didn't have a blind spot on that plane.

CC: You could see everything.

JC: You could see everything. That was the latest one that they did, but it didn't last too long. For some reason, I don't know. Well, it was toward the end.

CC: Okay so we're continuing the interview between Charles Closmann and Joseph Carpentieri on March 29. It's about quarter to 5:00 pm. Uh, what big lessons did you learn about being in the Navy? Did you ever think of yourself as being brave, or the men around you as being brave?

JC: No, No, we had a job to do. We did it. Basically, that's what it was.

CC: Did your unit in there Brazil lose any men to combat or anything like that?

JC: No, no. We did lose one man, our magazine, which holds the bombs and everything else was out in the woods in Africa, going on a watch one time, the young guy who just came down didn't know they were on watch. They had their rifles. They weren't supposed to have ammunition for them. They just carried em. This one guy put a live round and he came back

from that duty, and he took his rifle and he threw it on the table, and you know what happened. It fired and hit the guy right in the groin. That was it. That's the only one I can remember that happened.

Here's something you would really be interested in. You know what a P-51 is? These, ah, what are they, these hangars. Now, these hangars were most of the time were empty. The Brazilians, they didn't belong to them. Now the pilots, they weren't officers, they were enlisted people, flying these P-51s. And what they'd do for practice, they'd fly up in there and fly right through the hangar to the other side.

CC: That is totally frightening.

JC: It is, if you get caught in that hangar. I said, are you nuts?

CC: Did they ever get in trouble for that? Anybody chew em out?

JC: Whoever was in charge said, that's the way they practice, diving and all that stuff, because they're fighters. I said okay, but I don't want any part of em. First time I see them do it. Yeah, they're going to go right through the hangar.

CC: You didn't ever want to do it, ever want to be a pilot?

JC: No, no. I'm no pilot. Brave in certain things, but no. No my son Michael, he wanted to become a helicopter pilot. He lost out, because of his age. He couldn't become a helicopter pilot because he was too old. They didn't want to take him. So he went ahead and worked at a factory and then he joined the army.

CC: What's his job in the army?

JC: Guess what, ordinance. Yeah, he's in charge of all the missile and the ammunition and stuff like that. He's more or less in control of it, because he's a Warrant 4 right now. He's working toward 5.

CC: Okay. So how much longer is he going to be in?

JC: May, middle of May I think. Because when he joined the Army, he just got married to a woman, she's a nurse. And he didn't have much time with her at all, so he left. Now, every time he calls, I say, did you call your wife? I try to tell him what he should be doing.

JC: But, he was making good money. He always got orders and that's the way he wanted it.

CC: Good.

JC: So he's going to be out of there. And he's trying to get into civilian work. Of course, you know, there are a lot of factories around all the United States, with missiles and stuff like that.

CC: Sure.

JC: And he's got the knowledge and everything else, of what to do with it.

CC: Okay. Anything else you want to add?

JC: Oh there is so much. My mind is full.

CC: Let me make a suggestion. Think about it, and I'll come back another time if you think of some other stories, or some things you really want to get into. That's what we can do.

JC: Try to think of what else can help with the airplanes. You know when you're on a ramp out there. Well, a lot of young people they cannot take the noise.

Bea: When you first started, there was no ear protection. Joe has a loss of hearing now, because of working all that time.

JC: They had helmets.

Bea: They came later.

CC: Okay.

**End of Interview**