

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Transcript of National Archives History Office
Oral History Interview
Subject: Bob Beebe
Interviewer: Erik Moshe
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MR. MOSHE: Hi Mr. Beebe. Would you be able to please give me a quick introduction and announcement what service you were in and what your rank was at the time that you discharged?

MR. BEEBE: I served in the United States Navy from 1986 to 1992. I separated as electrician's mate second class, qualified in submarines.

MR. MOSHE: Where were you living at the time that you enlisted?

MR. BEEBE: I had just graduated from high school and had grown up in a small town called Mitchell, Nebraska.

MR. MOSHE: Why did you decide to join?

MR. BEEBE: Largely because it seemed easier than going to college at that time.

MR. MOSHE: Did it turn out to be as easy as expected?

MR. BEEBE: Yes, I know that I just wasn't motivated for college at the point that I got out of high school and seemed like something better to do than just sticking around in a small town. So it was worthwhile. It was a lot of work but it was worthwhile.

MR. MOSHE: Why did you pick the service branch that you joined?

MR. BEEBE: Largely to get out. I'd had a friend that had joined the Naval Interior Power Program, which is what I went into, a few years before and it seemed kind of interesting and submarines certainly seemed pretty interesting. So that's primarily why I went that way.

MR. BEEBE: Did you know a lot about submarines prior to joining?

MR. BEEBE: A little, but nothing like I learned later.

MR. MOSHE: What surprised you the most about submarine culture, the environment?

MR. BEEBE: Probably the quality of the people there. You worked with a group. In my case it was about 125 to 130 officers and enlisted men, and across the board I've never worked with a higher level of ability than I did when I was on board the ship. Just from the guys that were cooking the meals to the captain. They all just were super sharp and knew what they needed to do, and we all depended on each other to come back every time.

MR. MOSHE: Do you think being underwater had some role in that?

MR. BEEBE: Yeah, I mean, serving in the submarine service was unique. The one thing we learned when we got on board was a common mantra that said, anywhere you were inside the ship, you could reach out at arm's

length and you could touch something that had the potential to kill you. And that was very true, there was always at least high-voltage electricity within arm's reach of where you were. When you were sleeping, you had high-voltage electricity running, sometimes right above your bunk. It was just everywhere. And so, with that knowledge, and then knowing that unlike a surface ship, if you had a problem you were already on the surface and you could abandon ship into lifeboats. And for us, first, we had to get to the surface for us to even contemplate something like that, and depending upon the casualty you might not make it to the surface. So everybody had to stay on that game and make sure that you recognized any potential problem that might arise no matter what you were doing.

MR. MOSHE: Do you remember your first days in service?

MR. BEEBE: Yeah, so I left western Nebraska. I went to basic training in Great Lakes Naval Station in North Chicago. And got there, it would have been late on January 3rd. Got a few moments of sleep and the next thing I knew I was being woke up by metal trashcan being thrown, kicked, and tossed through the room as they woke all of us up to start out our first full day of basic training.

MR. MOSHE: What did it feel like to be in the service finally?

MR. BEEBE: It was interesting. Now the first week or so it all became kind of a blur as you got your haircut, got rid of all your civilian clothes, got your uniforms you were going to be wearing. And all the differences that you saw initially, when you first woke up that first morning, by the end of the first day they were pretty much all gone, as everybody then was baldheaded and wore the same clothes. And part of that, of course, is the whole idea that it starts to build that unit. Take away the individuality and start to build a unit-mindedness where you would work as a group instead of by yourself. It's been worked on for hundreds of years now, and it works pretty well.

MR. MOSHE: Was your boot camp/training experience different because you were in the Navy?

MR. BEEBE: Well, I'm sure it was different than the others. Chicago has its own, being North Chicago, it's rather cold so I know one of the things the Navy typically does is they would do a fire drill or fire where you'd go through a chamber and they would have smoke and whatnot. You'd have basically a respirator on and they would then pull that off just before you left. Because it was so cold they didn't have us do that because our clothes would have reeked of the gas and whatnot that they had in the chamber. So I missed out on some of those things but North Chicago was an interesting place. I suppose to me it was going from being a kid in a town of about 1,800 people where everybody knew me. My dad was a grade school teacher so I mean everybody in town pretty much knew who I was. On the north side of Chicago, it was just such a different world for me. I hadn't traveled a lot before I joined the service. I had been to Denver a couple of times and, like, to Lincoln, Nebraska, and that was about the extent of big cities to me. I had never been to anything like Chicago, so it was just such different world from what I was used to.

MR. MOSHE: Do you remember your instructors?

MR. BEEBE: I remember the one that I disliked the most. Ironically his last name was Floyd. I forget what the other one's name was. They were very good friends. The last day I remember they were rotating out of basic training after our company had graduated, and they had worked together numerous times over the years, were very good friends, and they were an interesting lot. The one was very sharp intellectually and had actually started out in a nuclear power program and then ended up not finishing it. The other one was a boson's mate,

and the boson's mate and I did not get along. He was not my favorite, but they were there to get you through. And you might not have realized it at first, but in the end they had a lot of respect for you if you managed to make it through. And I think our respect grew for them as the weeks went by.

MR. MOSHE: What were your strategies for getting through?

MR. BEEBE: I always figured I could do anything if I tried hard enough, and I managed through a variety of things. In fact, at one point I ended up with basically pneumonia and still managed to go through. I spent the better part of a week just completely miserable. I went to a sick hall at night one night, and they asked if I had thrown up and I said no. And they said well come back tomorrow morning then. The guy that had walked there with me, they asked him the same question. I knew he had, and he was like, "yeah, I threw up" and they called him back in to talk to him. But a few weeks later they did tuberculosis screening on my lungs and they said, "yeah, you need to go to sick call." I'm like "okay." So they sent me over and they're like "yeah, you had pneumonia" or "you've got pneumonia." And I'm like "I don't feel bad." I felt really horrible a couple of weeks ago. And they said, well, "yeah, you had pneumonia." And that was some of that team-building kind of thing.

I remember prior to lights out you weren't allowed to lay down in bed. And we had a spare bunk for the backend of the barracks room. And I was so sick, and everybody knew it, even our chiefs knew it, basic training. They knew I was sick. And basically they said just put him on one of those spare bunks so his own bunk doesn't get messed up. I wanted to sleep. Just keep somebody nearby so that if a roving person comes through, you can get him out of bed and have him stand up. It was one of those things where you just learned to cover for each other. And it was an interesting experience, having all the way up to the guys that were ostensibly getting us through, getting us through this, and you might've thought, oh, you're too sick. You need to do something, and they're like no, we'll keep him with us. Let's just cover for him and I did everything else I needed to do. It's just I needed more sleep than everybody else. So they managed to get that for me. I graduated with my class that I came in with. And largely because they all pitched in to help me get through that point, because if, not I would've had to been rolled back, because I don't know if they just sent me to the hospital for that, but I was quite sick at the one point.

MR. MOSHE: Where exactly did you go when you finished training?

MR. BEEBE: After basic training, the nuclear power program at that point, you had three different schools that you did. First you'd get, in the Navy, you got your A school training which for me was electrician's mate, and I stayed there in Great Lakes Naval Station for that. Then I went to Orlando, Florida, for Naval Nuclear Power School. Did about six months there, then I went to—from there you had a couple of choices—when I was in, you could go to upstate New York, where there were a couple of nuclear power plants, and then there was also some out in Idaho. I went out to Idaho Falls, where we worked on live nuclear reactors. Once you did that, then I was assigned to the USS *Omaha*, which is a fast attack submarine stationed in Pearl Harbor. And I got there just a little under two years after I joined the service.

MR. MOSHE: Do you remember arriving at all these locations and what it was like?

MR. BEEBE: Some of them more than others. At Orlando, you flew into the airport there, of course which is huge vacation destination and you're going there but you're going off to the naval base. And that was very much a school. I mean we trained for hours in classrooms for probably six to eight hours a day plus another three to four, five hours of homework every night. Then you did that for six months, nothing overly remarkable there. Idaho was a different thing because you went out and there was no naval base there. There was a reactor out in

the middle of the desert, and we all had to get apartments in one or two of the cities near the reactors. That was about a 45-minute bus ride out to the reactors. And so that was kind of different because you'd gather up with two or three guys when you were in Orlando and say "hey, let's find a place to rent when we get out there," and so you'd rent a house and live for about six months. Getting to the boat was a different thing, certainly the most memorable. I remember it was Thanksgiving Day of 1987 when I arrived in Hawaii and was met by a couple of crew members and taken down to the boat, shown around a little bit. So that was basically the start of all those places.

MR. MOSHE: What did you like about your job or dislike about your job and assignments?

MR. BEEBE: Well, the electrician on a submarine is an interesting guy. We had stuff everywhere. Like I said earlier, we had electricity that ran throughout the ship and we had the entire electrical distribution system on the ship, which was ours to maintain. We had equipment in every space on the ship that we had to go and maintain and we tended to work with everybody a little bit more. Some of the divisions would work very insular within themselves and didn't have a lot of interaction with other ones.

But even though we were primarily back in the engine room, we would go forward and work with all the other different rates up there to at least get electricity to their equipment. That was the interaction a lot of times, just getting electricity to their equipment and once it got into their equipment it was theirs. So it was nice to be able to get along with everybody. And I think probably the smallness of the submarine was kind of nice for me because getting back to a small group of people similar to my small hometown, which is somewhat common. A lot of guys in the submarines, of course, came from smaller towns.

MR. MOSHE: How small exactly was the submarine environment? Was it a big submarine?

MR. BEEBE: Well, that depends on what timeframe. The outside dimensions is just one of those things you remember as 360 feet, eight inches long, 33 feet in diameter. The inside of it was probably a little closer to 300 feet, jet ballast tanks forward and aft. So it was a fairly small tank that we all rode around in. And when you consider what we had, we'd go to sea and we'd have 120 or 140 guys onboard—that's a lot of people in a pretty small space.

MR. MOSHE: Tell me about a couple of your most memorable experiences.

MR. BEEBE: Sure, so one of them we were doing a set of drills, which is a pretty common thing in the Navy, practice various casualties. And we were getting nearly done with the set, and we thought we were done actually, and I was in what's called maneuvering, which is the control room for the engine room. And we were trying to get all of our logs sorted out and taken and getting all the paperwork done for the set of drills that we had just done.

And this is probably two and a half, three hours' worth of one thing after another that they were throwing at us, reactor scram or steam line rupture, all these different things. And we were all kind of settling in and then suddenly the engineer showed up at the side of the room where I stood, which I now was standing the throttle man watch, I was in control of the speed of the ship. So the officer of the deck would order speed change, and I was the one that made the ship go faster or slower as they wanted.

And we were going fairly fast, fairly shallow I want to say, 100, 150 feet. I don't remember exactly how fast it was but it was fairly quick. And they initiated a jam rudder drill, which kind of startled us. It's like, one, we didn't

really expect it. And then it was like jam rudder, we were used to jam dive where they would make the boat go into a dive and we'd have to stop and backup. You'd reverse the screw to slow this boat down so you wouldn't go below test depth and then you'd come back to level surface.

But the jam rudder kind of threw us. But it ends up being the same sort of drill because as fast as we were going, a submarine at high speed leans into the turn because of the sail, it sticks upright. And as it leans into that turn, the rudder, which they had stuck full to the left, all of a sudden is making the boat go down. And so we ended up through a variety of errors that are a little complex to explain, we ended up at somewhat of an uncontrolled downward event.

We exceeded by a little bit I think, depending upon whose readings you had, what would be the normal maximum angle that you would do. We could do up to 30 degrees up or down and I think we went a little above that. I don't remember for certain. And we ended up getting the boat stopped before we reached test steps, obviously. And backed up and it was one of those events that everybody onboard just kind of was like holy cow. Because the angles were so steep that we took and unexpected. There was just stuff everywhere. And the engineer, who is one of the mildest mannered people I ever knew, and he was standing next to me as I was trying to turn off all the alarms that were going off on my panel, because the angles had a number of level detectors for different water levels throughout the engine room.

And they started going off, and one of the rules is you would turn them off and you would have to say what the alarm was. And I probably had half a dozen of these alarms and the engineer said, just forget the alarms, just answer this bell, which is to reverse the shaft and get us stopped.

And at that point I was like, hmm, this is a little bit more than what they were expecting because the engineer wouldn't normally interrupt and tell you not to do this particular step. So it was one of those moments. We got it stopped and went on, and it became the fairly famous story from the boat for a number of years. That was probably one of the better events. We all survived, no one hurt. Quite a bit of cleanup to do afterwards, but that happens.

The land stories, we would go a number of different places. I did two west PACS, which is where you go over to the western Pacific for six months and run around, and we got to a number of different places. We stopped in Japan, Korea, South Korea, Philippines, Guam, and Okinawa. I always had a history interest. I would always try to find something when we were trying to divvy up who was going where.

It was like I always gravitated towards the people going to someplace kind of historic. I've been to a beach where the Marines landed in Guam, and you could walk up into the hills and look down on the beach from where the Japanese had been. And just see the sheer . . . what those guys would've been up against. We actually went snorkeling there, and you're snorkel along and you'd be in six or eight feet of water, and then all of a sudden it would open up in kind of a dish-shaped area that would be another 10 feet deep, and you'd realize "oh, this is actually a bomb crater where something went off." And that was one of those things that always stuck with me, was realizing that hey, we're out here in this place where a lot of history took place. And a lot of guys weren't so fortunate to come back from it.

MR. MOSHE: How about Pearl Harbor?

MR. BEEBE: Pearl Harbor, it was a fun, big place. I was obviously stationed at the submarine base, plenty of history there in its own right. To give you an idea, we did our small-arms training in an old air-raid shelter right

there, probably 100 feet from the pier. We would fairly often—if any family came over, anybody new came to the boat. We'd end up taking them over to the *Arizona* to see it. There's this old World War II submarine there that we would take them through. It's very interesting being in a place that's as historic as Pearl Harbor and just being there to work. I don't know that it dawned on me as much as it should've being that I left there, I was not quite 24, I guess I was a little over 24 when I left.

And it's like I don't know that it dawned on me exactly where I was some of the days, but a lot of times I was just too tired to care. But it was a beautiful place. I mean I did enjoy my time there and tried to take advantage as much as possible. But the four year that I was stationed on the ship we probably spent two and a half years at sea, or sometimes it would be on like, because a full year of it was on a west PAC, two six-month deployments there.

And so, at best had a year and a half in Pearl Harbor out of the four years that I was stationed there. Most of that time I was still working quite a lot. I didn't have as much time there to do what I wanted to as a tourist might think.

ERIC: Did you see any combat while you were deployed?

MR. BEEBE: No, I was in during Desert Storm. We used to kind of jokingly say how we fired I forget how many torpedoes during Desert Storm but they were all exercise torpedoes, so it didn't really count. I know there was a Pacific Fleet submarine that ended up over in the Gulf area during that time, but basically we just weren't in. I think we had just come back from a fairly long deployment so we weren't in a rotation to go on anything like that, but it was interesting to watch Pearl Harbor and Oahu gear up for it because there were a number of Marine units on the island that were deployed there. And to see all of their vehicles going from the green paint to the desert brown as they got ready to ship them out and whatnot. And I had a friend from high school that was submarined, ended up going over to Desert Storm. I didn't really know he was out there at the time because we had lost track of each other, but I learned later that he was there in one of the units that got shipped out over there.

MR. MOSHE: Were there many casualties that you knew of?

MR. BEEBE: No. Now the closest I ever got to, and I'd have to think back which boat it was. When I was in Idaho, one of the guys I was in school with, his brother was on, I believe, it was the USS *Stark* that was hit by a missile in the area between Iran and Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. And it was basically mistakenly hit by, and I don't remember which side shot the missile, but it went in and it killed I think 27 guys, if I remember right, his brother was one of the sailors on there. And that was certainly the closest that I came, would be a guy that I knew fairly well.

He was like another electrician in training, so I knew him fairly well. And that was one of those wake-up moments when you realize that it's a little more real. His brother was the kid in the family that was sure he was going to go to college. He had joined just as a very basic thing to get a GI Bill, and now I think he had planned either a two or maybe four years and then was going to get out and go to college and ended up on, I don't remember what the *Stark* was, but ended up over there and ended up getting killed before he had the chance to go, which made it a little more real.

MR. MOSHE: Were you awarded any medals or citations?

MR. BEEBE: A few, regular good conduct, expeditionary medal. We would do patrols to the northern Pacific once or twice a year. And occasionally, depending upon what we were doing, we'd get an expeditionary medal. There was a meritorious unit commendation, which I think that's just a ribbon if I remember right. But I did not get anything particularly high but did my job.

MR. MOSHE: How did you stay in touch with your family?

MR. BEEBE: Well, it was largely writing letters, occasional phone calls. When I was in Hawaii I would call somewhat often, certainly nowhere near as often as I would now. I do remember one of the times we were in the Philippines, and I wasn't even certain if my parents knew where I was, they knew I was on the west PAC. And I happened to be there when an incident or two occurred where some servicemen were killed in the Philippines, and I ended up calling my parents.

I had no idea what time it was. And just talked to them briefly and said, yeah, I was out there but nothing to worry about. And they were like, you know, we wouldn't have known to worry anyway. Because yeah, the communication was nowhere as instant, anywhere as quick. And then when we were at sea, and I never got one, there was no communication really. You couldn't send a message out. Some guys would get what we call family grams. Generally they were the guys that were married.

Where they would leave the form with their family and they would fill out a short message, and then that message would be broadcast throughout the Navy. And I don't remember the radio terminology well enough. But it would be sent in a regular broadcast. And then when the ship was out, when we were up and had a radio antenna up they would download all the important information and then they would start picking up the broadcast.

Anything that was directed to us they would download it and then distribute that family gram out to the guys. But that was about the only communication, was maybe a once a week, married guys would get a message from a family member. And then we would download very brief news, like headlines, was all. Just maybe a sentence or two for any major story that was going on, and that was all you would get for news for the entire six to eight weeks that you were out.

So you'd come back and have no idea of what had gone on really for the last six weeks. You might have the general gist of what had gone on but have no idea what was really going on in the world. So you'd have to kind of catch up and see where we were on things then.

MR. MOSHE: What was the food like?

MR. BEEBE: If were in port or if we were doing weekly runs it really wasn't too bad. I think generally we probably ate better than a lot of the guys in the service. They told us we did anyway. When we went out for a long under ways, the six to eight weeks, we had one walk-in freezer and one walk-in chill box, basically a refrigerator. But when we went on a long under way, we'd convert them both to freezers, so we didn't take really any fresh food with us at all.

And so everything was, you had powdered milk for milk, there was no real milk. Powdered eggs. So those runs, particularly breakfast, breakfast got pretty rough on those. Everything else was either frozen or canned, which wasn't horrible, it got you by. But in port wasn't too bad most of the time.

MR. MOSHE: Did you feel pressure or stress?

MR. BEEBE: It's funny, in some ways yes, I am a fairly low-stress person. I don't get too worked up about most things. But there were times where events would start rolling around you and you could start seeing some. There was a lot of pressure some days. Like I said, I'm not a very high-stress person. I try not to let things get to me too much and never have. And so I never got too stressed out about anything going on there.

A little anxious sometimes, but generally I think that was part of what they tried to get in people there was people that wouldn't get too worked up about what was going on. Because they needed you to pay attention to what you were doing. You needed to ignore whatever it was that was going on right next to you, and you needed to do what you were assigned to do. And if you didn't, and if everybody didn't do that, then you stood the chance of having a small casualty become a much larger one. You kind of learned to compartmentalize and ignore whatever was going on with the next guy needed to do.

MR. MOSHE: How did people entertain themselves?

MR. BEEBE: Under way we had a TV, actually it was a Betamax player. They did that because that way we would get new release movies fairly shortly after they were out. But they would release them to us on Betamax because they knew that there were so few of those around that the chances of theft were much less that that movie would get out because there just weren't any Betamax machines around for the most part.

And so we would have, and I forget, I think we had probably three or four hundred movies onboard. So they'd watch a movie usually in the 18 to 2400 hours, and then the 24 to 0600 hours there'd usually be a movie run during both of those times when we were at sea. I usually brought copious amounts of books and sat and read quite a lot. At that point I was reading a lot of Presidential histories and biographies, autobiographies, memoirs. Like I say, history was just one of my things. I did a lot of reading of different history books.

MR. MOSHE: Do you recall any particular humorous or unusual event that happened?

MR. BEEBE: Well, you know, submarine humor was always kind of an odd thing. Let me go at it this way. We had been at sea for a while, and I would, typically under way we would just wear tennis shoes because they were quieter and more comfortable, uniforms kind of went out the window as far as that.

And typically in your bunk you'd just toss your shoes at the end of your bed and go to sleep. So I kept getting up and my shoes wouldn't be there. I'm like what the heck? And I'd run into the bathroom, take care of things, come back and my shoes would be back. And this went on for like a week while we were under way. I'm like, I don't know what's going on. And finally one time when I come back and my shoes aren't there. I'm like, wait a second. So then I have to dig out my regular Navy boon dockers that I would wear when we were in port. Wear those back on the watch and I get back there and in the maneuvering room, which there were four of us in that room, the guys set next to me, they were actor/operators just start to chuckle.

They were like what's up with the shoes? And I'm like, somebody's messing with me and stealing my shoes. I don't know why. And he's like, well, that'll teach you to mess with my shoes. And I'm like, what? And it turns out that some number of weeks before when he was doing, I think he was waxing some floors, which we did by hand with sponges and what not, but he had taken his shoes off and set them somewhere and somebody to mess with him had hidden his shoes and then they blamed it on me.

And so for like a week and a half he was like torturing me hiding my shoes and what not. And then finally it comes out I'm like, I didn't even do that. You learn to take a good joke because that was one of the worst things was to let people realize that something bothered you, because that was like carte blanche for people to keep doing it to you.

MR. MOSHE: When did you decide to leave the service?

MR. BEEBE: Oh, probably not too long after I got to the boat. It was interesting, but the work was a lot more than I care to do in a lot of ways. I was working, if we were in port, we would work 70 to 80 hours a week minimum. At sea we stood watch, we did six hours on, 12 hours off so we were actually on a weird 18 hour cycle instead of 24 hour cycle.

So it's like I can't do this another 14, from the time I got on it would've been like 18 years. I would've had some shore duty if I had stayed in. But it's like nah, I don't have desire to keep doing this that long. And I always had some idea of doing some. It was in that group timeframe where it's like oh, you kind of need to go to college. So I opted to get out shortly, but I had six years to do. So it was shortly after I got to the ship. So about a couple of years after I was in and I decided that it wasn't for me.

MR. MOSHE: Do you remember the day that your service ended?

MR. BEEBE: So I left Hawaii actually on December 13. I didn't separate until January 2 of 1992. I left in December of 1991. Yeah, it was kind of a fun day. I mean I had done all my paperwork to leave the island and basically go on what's called terminal leave where you spent the last, my last 21 days of leave and then I just never had to check in again. And had done all that and sat around with the guys that were, the engineering department at that point was actually on shift work for a major evolution that was going on the ship.

And so I was sitting around with the day crew or the crew that would have been on at night, and we were just sitting around shooting the breeze, having a good time for a few hours. I think my flight was probably like 4:00 or 5:00 out of the Honolulu International. And so one or two of the guys who had taken me down there to get me off. So it was just kind of nice chance to sit around and shoot the breeze with half the crew or so, or half the engineering crew anyway.

MR. MOSHE: Did you go back to school when you got out?

MR. BEEBE: Yes, I did, like a year and a half at a small state school in eastern Nebraska called Peru State College. And then I transferred to the University of Kansas probably as much to get married as for the education, and finished my bachelor's and then also got a master's in historical administration and museum studies from University of Kansas.

MR. MOSHE: Was it difficult to make that transition from submarine electrician to historical museum?

MR. BEEBE: No, I mean it was a slow transition in some ways. I spent time at a couple of different historical places before I ended up at National Archives working in the Federal Records Center and stayed there for, well, I worked here at the FRC for like 11 years before I transferred to Research Services and still continue to work here with the archival records.

MR. MOSHE: Was your education supported by the GI Bill or was that before that?

MR. BEEBE: Yeah, it was supported by it. Yep, they helped out.

MR. MOSHE: Did you make any close friendships while you were in the service? And do you continue any of those friendships today or the relationships today?

MR. BEEBE: Yeah, there's two or three in particular. Actually, one of the officer that I served with is still a really good friend. He runs a business out in San Francisco Bay Area. Then an electrician that I spent pretty much the entire four years that I was onboard the ship, we arrived the same day, and he left a month before I did. And he's down in the Tampa Bay area, and I still chat with those two in particular fairly often. And then there's a group for the boat on Facebook that I chat with on occasion.

MR. MOSHE: Have you ever tried accessing your military records?

MR. BEEBE: No, I haven't. I've thought about it but I don't really have any particular need to get to them. Yeah, I have helped a person or two here in Lenexa that was needing some help from the people in St. Louis, and I've helped them get some access to their records, but I haven't needed to for myself.

MR. MOSHE: Did you join a veteran's organization?

MR. BEEBE: No, I never did.

MR. MOSHE: What did you do after the service?

MR. BEEBE: After I got my degree, I worked at an association for golf course superintendents as their archivist and records manager. I did that for a couple of years. I worked at a science museum for a few years. Then I worked at a historical farm at a stagecoach stop, and I actually drove a stagecoach for like two and a half years. And then I got the job with the Federal Records Center and then into the archives side of it here, a couple of years ago now.

MR. MOSHE: So from a golf course to the science museum to the historical farm to a stagecoach, what was your favorite pre-NARA job?

MR. BEEBE: Oh, I would have to say it was work with horses, driving a stagecoach. I mean it was a lot of fun. I have a thing with animals. I work well with animals. For the most part we got along pretty well.

MR. MOSHE: Did you learn how to play golf too?

MR. BEEBE: Not particularly, I know how to play but I'm not any good, and I usually drive the other people around me crazy if I'm golfing because I don't take it serious enough. So never really did but it was an interesting place because it was basically for the groundskeepers for the golf course is what the association was. And so, we had some old grounds-keeping equipment that came from Saint Andrews in Scotland and whatnot, and I would get to play and tinker with those things. I did both their archives and their museum equipment, so that was kind of fun.

MR. MOSHE: How did your service and experiences affect your life overall?

MR. BEEBE: Well, one, probably the biggest single way is it put things in a different perspective than I think a lot of people have. A lot of people view whatever they're doing as a job is just this incredibly important thing and they focus on it like it's the really big thing. And while it is very important and I love what I'm doing here, in the end it's nothing like the responsibility of sitting down at like 20 years old and being the senior watch stander over about a billion-dollar nuclear reactor.

There's something important here, there's two of you back there, and you're the senior one at 20 years old. It's hard to put that kind of responsibility into play. You just don't run into that level of responsibility in most places. And so it's kind of tempered that while what I do is important, it's not going to cause a major catastrophe if something doesn't get done today. The world won't end. Things will come back tomorrow just fine, and we can pick it up then. I don't know. Some people may not appreciate that as being a good thing, but to me it's like nah, tomorrow things can happen if they need to. It can wait another day if it needs to.

MR. MOSHE: What's a nuclear reactor look like?

MR. BEEBE: Well, I mean, ours was a fairly compact thing. The room itself that it was set in, I probably in the four years I was there, I probably went into the reactor room 15, 20 times total. When it was operating you couldn't go in it, or you wouldn't probably come back out shortly thereafter. It was very high radiation level. You don't really see that much.

If you're familiar with hot steam piping, it's all covered in insulation, and that's what this was. Everything was covered in insulation for the most part, painted different colors, depending upon what it was. It's not an easy thing to describe unless you've been in a power plant of some sort, and then it would be sort of the same thing except for its all compact and smushed into a 33-foot diameter tube.

So you end up with some strange positions for things and how you get to it. But yeah, it's not a super easy thing to describe. When you think about a civilian power plant it's essentially got all the space that they want. They can spread this thing out. And so, everything's going to be laid out in a logical area. For us, everything had to be, all of that had to be massaged around and put into a 33-foot diameter tube, and you had to have director system in one room, bring steam out of that into the engine room. You had four turbines that ran off of it: two for main engines and two that turned generators to make the electricity for the ship.

You would create your own water from the sea water by boiling it. It's a marvelous piece of machinery, a submarine is. I mean it's amazing that it can do as much. Because then from that pure water we could shift forward to another machine that would separate the hydrogen oxygen bond, and we keep the oxygen for our use to breathe. Then we would pump the hydrogen back overboard so you wouldn't have that explosive gas onboard.

So I mean the only thing that limited us was food primarily. I mean we could make our own water. We could do all this stuff but basically we were the limiting factor on it. If we weren't there, the thing could've just kept going.

MR. MOSHE: That is very cool that you can make your own water.

MR. BEEBE: Yep. Yeah, and we could make a lot of it. It wasn't like the old World War II boats, where the guys they would take salt water showers because they couldn't make enough pure water. We could make thousands of gallons of water a day, which was more than enough for the ship to use and for us to use too.

MR. MOSHE: Thank you for your service and thank you for the interview.

MR. BEEBE: No problem.