

Basic Detail Report



Samuel Higa Oral History

Date

September 16, 2016

Primary Maker

Samuel T. Higa

Medium

MP4, PDF

Description

Samuel Higa served aboard the submarine USS Growler (SSG-577) from 1963 to 1964 as a seaman. The Intrepid

Museum recorded his oral history interview on September 16, 2016. See transcript for complete interview. Below is a summary: Samuel Higa began his interview by discussing his childhood. He was born in Heart Mountain, Wyoming, in a concentration camp for Japanese Americans during World War II. After the war, his family moved frequently before settling in Southern California to farm. Higa explained his decision to join the U.S. Navy and to volunteer for submarine service. Then he described his training, from boot camp to electronics school to submarine school to Ship's Inertial Navigation School (SINS). While in the middle of his studies for SINS, he was transferred to USS Growler. The interview returns to Higa's family and their experience in the internment camp. Higa recalled that they said very little and that he learned much about their experience later. He said he grew up in a diverse neighborhood with Mexican Americans and migrant agricultural workers ("Okies"), where his heritage was not used against him. He also explained why he left college early. Next, Higa returned to the topic of Growler. He explained how little he knew about the Regulus program because he studied Polaris submarines. He did not know initially that Growler was slated to be decommissioned. He traveled on board Growler from Pearl Harbor to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in California. He described his early role on the seaman gang, painting and working as a mess cook. Higa explained that as a non-qual (not qualified in submarines) he lived on the submarine, even at port. He didn't have the opportunity to become qualified because Growler was heading out of commission. Higa described the elements of the decommissioning process and the number of crew remaining to do the work. The interview continued with a discussion of the crew. Higa remembered that the only other Asian or Asian American crew members were the Filipino stewards. He also remembered a Mexican American chief electrician and auxiliaryman. He characterized the ethnic jokes made about Mexicans, Poles, Italians, and his own nickname as a way to show the crew you can "take it." He described other pranks played by fellow crew members. Then Higa recollected Growler's decommissioning ceremony and his next assignment on USS Permit (SSN-594). He described how the sinking of the USS Thresher (SSN-593) led to safety upgrades on Permit. He passed his qualifications on Permit but explained how he worked very little on electronics, despite his training. He recalled that he eventually made electronics technician third class. Higa then described the SINS system. Higa concluded the interview by emphasizing the strength of the friendships

he made, even in such a short time. He hoped visiting Growler would give the public a better understanding of and appreciation for submarine service. Extent: 2 video files, 22 page transcript

Dimensions

108 minutes