

Basic Detail Report



Basil Hathaway Struthers Oral History

Date

June 8, 2018

Primary Maker

B. Hathaway Struthers

Medium

MTS, PDF

Description

Basil Hathaway "Hap" Struthers served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid (CVS-11) as the ship's Protestant

chaplain from 1971 to 1973. The Intrepid Museum recorded his oral history interview on June 8, 2018. See transcript for complete interview. Below is a summary: Struthers began his interview by discussing childhood in Binghamton, New York, and his family. He explained his interest in the U.S. Navy and his decision first to join the reserves in 1954 and then go on active duty in 1956. He also explained his academic background and his experience as a minister prior to joining the Navy. Next, Struthers discussed his calling to minister to young men in the military and his training at chaplain school, including how to minister to sailors of other denominations and even other religions. He explained that his previous experience helped to prepare him for the counseling aspect of his job. Struthers shared examples of how he would counsel sailors trying to leave the service early. The interview shifted to Struthers's deployments before Intrepid, including service in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. He recounted the story of a pilot he counseled who survived a dangerous reconnaissance mission. Then he transitioned to his service on USS Intrepid. He discussed the schedule of religious services and his role keeping up morale by arranging tours for the crew and even for family members when Intrepid visited various ports. Struthers estimated the number of people who attended services and talked about the impact of living away from family on the sailors and their wives and children. The interview moved on to racial tension on Intrepid in the early 1970s. Struthers described the situation on Intrepid at the time, including the limited opportunities for Black and Filipino stewards and the riots on other ships. Struthers was a founding member of the ship's Human Relations Council; he explained that they met every week on their Mediterranean cruise and discussed perceived instances of discrimination on the ship. Then Struthers gave his account of the violence in January 1973. He recalled a confrontation between a Black airman and a white petty officer triggering a chain reaction of fights across the ship during the day. Struthers said he helped to deescalate a confrontation between two armed groups. He states that the violence subsided after eight Black sailors and the white petty officer were removed from the ship. Struthers concluded the interview by reflecting on how this unrest helped him to better understand the Black experience and to act with more empathy.

Extent: 7 video files, 19 page transcript

Dimensions

79 minutes