

Basic Detail Report



Stephen A. Bonelli Oral History

Date

November 18, 2020

Primary Maker

Stephen Bonelli

Medium

WAV, PDF

Description

Stephen Bonelli served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid (CVS-11) as a photographer's mate second class

(PH2) with Anti-Submarine Squadron 27 (VS-27) from 1970 to 1971. The Intrepid Museum recorded his oral history interview on November 18, 2020. See transcript for complete interview. Below is a summary: Bonelli began his interview by discussing where he was raised and why he joined the Navy. He then described boot camp, explained how he became a photographer's mate, and stated that he was assigned to VS-27. He described his experiences aboard USS Randolph (CVS-15) and USS Yorktown (CVS-10), the two carriers he served aboard prior to Intrepid. The interview then shifted back to Bonelli's life prior to joining the Navy, and he recalled how he became interested in photography and how his parents felt about him joining the Navy. As the interview continued, Bonelli explained the role of Intrepid's photo lab, stating that the photo lab documented every event that occurred during a cruise, from visits involving Admiral Steele's VIP guests to flight operations and visits to ports of call. He also discussed the photography for the cruise book and the photographer's mates' work photographing Russian ships, submarines and Bear bombers. Bonelli then stated that he was sent to the destroyer USS Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. (DD-850) for two weeks in order to provide photographic equipment support. He explained that Kennedy sailed off the Russian coast in order to photograph Soviet submarines. He described how this was performed, what cameras were used, what they were to do if caught, and how he felt about this mission. Bonelli also noted that his work aboard Kennedy earned him a certificate of appreciation from the commander and the admiral. The interview then backtracked to the topic of photographing Soviet aircraft from Intrepid. Bonelli stated that these photos were taken from the island, using specific cameras. He also explained that this job was not a watch, as any available photographer's mate in the photo lab would have to take these photos. This proved to be a good example of why everyone in the photo lab had to know how to perform every job. Bonelli was then shown cruise book photos relating to the photo lab, which prompted discussions on photo lab personnel and equipment. Bonelli explained the photo lab's layout and recalled the below deck reefers (refrigerators) where they stored chemicals and supplies, before describing, in detail, the entire process for developing film. As the interview continued, Bonelli recounted some of the other jobs that photographer's mates performed. He addressed the photographer's mates who were attached to squadrons, explaining how and why they photographed ships, ship formations and submarines.

He also discussed cruise book photography and explained how the photo lab stored and filed photos. As the interview came to an end, Bonelli recalled the time he was on leave in Italy and was able to locate, and briefly stay with, his grandfather. He also recounted some other memories, which ranged from getting frostbite and going to sick bay to bartering with other departments. Stephen Bonelli then ended his interview by recalling visits to various ports of call in Europe, noting the places he had been and the sites he had seen. Extent: 1 media file, 30 page transcript

Dimensions

109 minutes