

Basic Detail Report



John W. White Oral History

Date

January 25, 2021

Primary Maker

John W. White

Medium

WAV, M4A, PDF

Description

John W. White served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid (CVS-11) as a photographer's mate second class

(PH2), from 1967 to 1969, during the second and third Vietnam deployments. The Intrepid Museum recorded his oral history interview on January 25, 2021. See transcript for complete interview. Below is a summary: White began his interview by discussing his family and upbringing in Sebring, Ohio, recalling a number of memories involving different experiences and jobs. He also discussed the important people in his life who mentored him and gave him guidance and advice, before explaining why he joined the Navy and chose to become a photographer's mate. As the interview continued, White discussed some memorable moments from boot camp. He then recalled what was taught in photographer's mate A School and noted that his class included women. White then stated that he received orders to VAW-12 and explained how the work of a photographer's mate in a squadron can differ from the work of a photographer's mate who was ship's company. The interview soon transitioned to White's time on Intrepid. White stated that he was transferred to Intrepid, and he then explained the importance of a photo lab on an aircraft carrier, describing the various jobs that photographer's mates performed. He also recalled a variety of assignments and jobs from his time on Intrepid. White discussed the time he was sent to Cubi Point to purchase small cameras for the pilots so they could photograph Russian aircraft that were operating nearby, as well as his job as the supply petty officer and his experience photographing a flight deck accident involving an aircraft that struck the LSO platform in 1968. White explained how he and another photographer's mate photographed the bodies in order to document the accident, before stating why these photographs were important and explaining that photographer's mates were prepared for this type of work, as they were told they would have to photograph difficult images. As the interview continued, White provided a variety of other details regarding photographer's mates. He explained the role of photographer's mates who were attached to reconnaissance squadrons, discussed aerial reconnaissance in Vietnam, and provided an in depth explanation of how they processed and printed film. White also recalled some of the more memorable experiences he had while taking photographs, from a mistake he made when photographing the Forrestal fire, to some of the more dangerous photos he had taken, including the time he was ordered to walk out onto the flight deck during a typhoon to photograph waves breaking over the bow and the time he was ordered to walk out onto the bridle catcher to

photograph an A-4 being launched. White then discussed the different cameras they used, before explaining how they filed, organized, and stored photos, and decided which photos would be sent back to Washington DC. This then led to an explanation of how specific photos were composed and the various schools that a photographer's mate could attend in order to receive additional, or specialized, training in the field of photography. The interview eventually transitioned to lighter topics. White provided a humorous story about one time when the photo lab accidentally flooded. He also recalled his experiences on the ship's fast pitch softball team and bowling team, before recounting the crossing the line ceremony, the sea bat, and the mail buoy watch. White then noted other memorable moments, such as when the F-4 Phantom landed on Intrepid and when he saw the battleship New Jersey fire its guns. Finally, White addressed the topic of cumshaw, explaining how the photo lab received an entire Thanksgiving Dinner. As the interview came to an end, White stated that photographer's mate was a great rate in the Navy. He also recalled some of the men he had served with. White then explained how he witnessed naval photography transition from wet labs to digital photography during his career in the Navy. Extent: 5 media files, 48 page transcript

Dimensions

156 minutes