

Basic Detail Report



Marshall N. Morton Oral History

Date

December 8, 2021

Primary Maker

Marshall N. Morton

Medium

MTS. PDF

Description

Marshall N. Morton served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid (CVS-11) as a hospital corpsman second class

(HM2) from 1967 to 1968, during Intrepid's second Vietnam deployment. The Museum recorded his oral history interview on December 8, 2021. See transcript for complete interview. Below is a summary: Morton began his interview by discussing his time growing up in Charlottesville, Virginia. He then stated why he decided to join the Navy. His decision to become a corpsman was based on advice he received from family friends who were in the Navy, as well as the head of his Navy Reserve unit. After finishing corpsman school, Morton was sent to Bethesda Naval Hospital, where he saw many injured veterans returning from Vietnam. He also noted that his experience at Bethesda was a good way to learn how to help people. Morton then briefly discussed corpsmen on Intrepid, stating that some corpsman, but not all, were specialists, and everyone had to pitch in on every level. This explanation led to a discussion on corpsman school and what they learned and experienced during their training. Morton then recalled what he knew about the Vietnam War at the time, as well as his memories of the Intrepid Four. The interview then shifted to Morton's time aboard Intrepid. He recalled his first day aboard ship, describing in detail how he had to suture a Marine's face. He also discussed multiple topics relating to sick bay, such as: the role of sick bay, sick bay's location, sick call, and sick bay's resources (x-rays, vision care, a pharmacy). Morton then explained how they treated patients. Life on board ship ensured you ran into your patients outside of sick bay, so you could check on them, and they could ask you questions outside of sick bay. As the interview continued, Morton stated that he thought most people were glad to be on Intrepid, and he felt there was an upbeat mood on the ship, despite Intrepid's age. He believed the crew's attitude was a reminder that the ship is just a machine, and the crew is really what makes the ship. Morton also stated that the doctors were great, as they were available for questions, and they let the corpsmen help with procedures, noting that Dr. Enlet rotated corpsmen through surgery so they could gain experience. Morton then stated that these factors led to a good attitude in sick bay. He also discussed sick call and recounted that they often treated colds, scratches, and bumps, and that the days he worked sick call were some of the most rewarding in terms of feeling that you made a difference. The interview then shifted to the Forrestal fire, and Morton recalled the role of Intrepid's medical personnel during this event. He discussed how they changed burn dressings and treated sailors from Forrestal. He compared this major event on Forrestal to

his time on Intrepid, where similar events did not occur. Morton then described some of the duties of Intrepid's corpsmen, beginning with educating the crew on health issues, or even informing the crew on how to safely move around the ship. These talks hopefully helped head off issues before they occurred. Morton then recalled elective procedures, such as tattoo removal, more serious procedures, and how Intrepid also provided medical services for the surrounding ships. He then explained how patients were transported through passageways and up and down ladders, to either battle dressing stations or sick bay, which led to a discussion on how the ward functioned. The next topic to be discussed was morale. Morton recalled visits from a Miss America troupe and a Beach Boys-kind of group, as well as movies, recreation, and great food. A connection was then made between morale and mental health, and Morton provided an example of one sailor's struggle and how this situation was addressed. The interview then shifted to the topic of liberty, as liberty was also linked to morale. Morton noted the corpsmen's role with shore patrol and recalled memorable moments in Hong Kong. He also described Intrepid's crossing the line ceremony. After discussing issues related to morale, Morton noted how the medical department acquired supplies, and he explained that their medical supplies were not disposable. All items had to be washed and sterilized before being re-used. As the interview continued, Morton discussed the crew's downtime, which involved watching movies, having Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners, and celebrating birthdays. He then recalled how he felt when he left active duty. Morton was soon asked what he carried with him from his time on Intrepid, and he responded by saying, a broader understanding of people, and understanding and valuing other people's points of view. He also said that he learned it's always worth having a goal so you can figure out how to get there. Morton then recalled that there were no real problems between the personnel in sick bay, and he stated that Chief Barkey was a wonderful man and leader, and the doctors were great and always available and open to the corpsmen, which made the corpsmen feel valued. Morton was then asked what he hopes visitors will learn from visiting sick bay, and he stated that he hopes visitors will learn how an efficiently-organized medical facility can handle everything and how these tasks are effectively performed with a small number of people. He also noted that he hopes visitors will see how sick bay is arranged and what happens in that area, because most people don't know about military medicine, which is different than going to see your family doctor. As the interview came to an end, Morton recalled an opportunity he had, through his civilian job, to spend a weekend on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. He compared Abraham Lincoln to Intrepid, and said, "The techniques, the practices, the drills, the layouts - were almost exactly like the Intrepid." "And so, for me, it says - they were doing it right back then, I'm glad they're still doing it right. And I loved seeing that opportunity, but knowing that the Intrepid formed the base of that was just terrific." Extent: 10 video files, 45 page transcript

Dimensions

110 minutes