

*Conversation*  
*with*  
*Ed Callao*

at  
1547 Harbor Oaks Road  
Jacksonville, Florida  
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Recorded and Transcribed  
by  
Lyn Corley



TAPE 1 SIDE A

LYN-Today is August 30, 2017 and I have today with me for an interview Ed Callao and I've been anxious to interview Ed for this project. He has quite a varied background from some of the interviews that we have had. I think it is going to be very eye-opening, his background and how he progressed through this Navy career. Welcome Ed. We are at my home on Harbor Oaks Road in Jacksonville, Florida. He is going to tell us where he was born and a little of his childhood and we are going to progress through his Navy career.

ED-Well, I'm Ed Callao, born and raised in Philippines on September 16 of 1951, the third of the youngest of nine. Six boys and two girls. My father is a military man and he is the one that I really looked upon for being an inspiration of what leadership is all about. Like in any military family, we moved back and forth from different stations in the Philippines which is totally different from what the U.S. armed forces offers. At any rate, grew up at the military ports and stuff like that.

LYN-Tell us your parents' names.

ED-My parents' name is Eusebio Callao and he retired as a brigadier general in the Philippine army. My mom never went to work but she raised all us nine kids and her name is Andrea Callao. Both my parents are from the northern part of the Philippines. My mom is from Baguio which is the summer capital of the Philippines and my dad is from Pangasinan.

Their dialects are two different ones because the Philippines has at least eighty-three dialects in an island of 7,100 islands. Although Filipino or Tagalog is our national language but it is, I would be remiss if I say that English has been the main dialect or language for everybody because we learn how to speak English at the second-grade school because the Filipino educational system was based on the United States educational system even though it was occupied under the Spanish colony for almost four hundred years.

So, at any rate, grew up in Manilla. Went to college at the University of the East, political science major. I was what we call the "corps commander" for our ROTC which is the biggest and largest ROTC in the Philippines. That's the one that kind of developed me and inspired me to be a leader and being in political science I say that it's a lot easier for me to talk and I guess address a group of people because that's part of the learning stage of what a political science student does.

As I went to pre-law I was really inspired and really on my way to get commissioned in the Philippine army. In fact, I was a second lieutenant provisional training because of a ROTC graduate for four years. My dad also being a general, he was trying to route me or kind of line me up for a better position because there was a lot of things going on in the southern part of the Philippines.

So, my friends that went through the ROTC program were all assigned to the southern part of the Philippines. Most of them died because of the war between the, we can call it the Muslim-Christian conflict there. Now it's almost like a political group, a private army.

So, at any rate, I waited and got my training, pursued my training in the Philippine army and during that process we saw what we called an advertisement in the Philippine newspaper about the United States Navy. There were three other guys and we all kind of picked on each other and said, "Let's see who can make it joining the U.S. Navy." So, it is very extensive and the way they, to make sure that everybody understands that the United States Navy is the only armed forces that the United States does recruit Filipino, not the Coast Guard, not the Army, not the Marines, nor any other branch of service or even the Air Force.

LYN-Do you know how that began?

ED-It began as part of, I think, because of the days of the naval bases there. We have Clark Air Force Base which is, you know it was the United States Air Forces at that time because they were looking for what we call the "stewards" which was the only specialty or job that was being offered to Filipinos at that time. Stewards are to serve the officers. That's all it is, to clean up their state room.

So, there was those years until 1969 or '70 that the stewards continued on. But anyway, my processing in the navy, the United States Navy was not really as easy as like everybody else. The key thing there is to pass what we call your entrance examination. Once you pass that then you go through an extensive interview. You get asked a lot of questions then you go to a psychological examination that includes your medical.

For me when I, the way they do it in the U.S. Navy is under the quota system and because of the opportunity in the Navy and the hardship of life in the Philippines people would take anything at that time just to leave the country to find a better life.

For me it was not that. To be honest with everybody because again, my dad was a general and we're doing well. We've got our own house, we've got two cars, three cars, things like that and we are driven to school. So, at any rate, it was all this fun. I didn't realize that the three other guys did not complete their entrance examination so here I am because of the competition, I'm a competitive guy, so I'm trying to show them that I'll make it just to prove who's tough. Then when everything was said and done I was the only one who make it because they pulled their papers.

LYN-Did you have any thoughts about patriotism to one nation or the other. Was it like not being unpatriotic to your nation?

ED-It was not an easy decision. One is because my dad being a flag officer or a general, it would be an easy life for me and plus I already went to the training and something that I would not do is to wear a uniform. That's what my dad wants me to do. Even though we had seven boys, brothers of siblings, he was looking for somebody to follow in his footsteps and I was the only one left, OK. So, when he found out I joined the Navy he never spoke with me for about, I could call it thirty to sixty days, two months because I kept it a secret to my parents that I joined the Navy but because there is a piece of paper that they must sign which is the affidavit of support telling them that they were, that they were not going to be a burden to the U.S. government once I joined the Navy. So, I had to show them the paper. He didn't sign it.

LYN-How old were you?

ED-Well, I was already twenty years old. Because we started, there is no K-12 or nothing. We have to work two years early to complete college. So, the point there is he knows I had a good career in the military in the Philippines or even probably a politician back home ahead of me.

So, at any rate I had to, I mean he didn't talk to me for two months. So, when martial law was going to be declared, this is in September 22 by President Marcos. Again, as a loyal person they had a meeting among them because as a commanding general it is part of the decision making. So, he pulled all the family together and said, "Especially Ed. I want him here so he can hear what I am going to be telling everybody." So, he said, "By midnight tonight the president will declare martial law. We all just have to be ready because it's not going to be the same because there's a lot of the communist party in the Philippines and all this other thing. There's some uprising. There's been some explosions being taken place." This was during the Aquino. Aquino was trying to run for president at that time.

To make the story short, he said, "It will be martial law by midnight so what do you want to do?" He asked me after he spoke with the rest of the family. I said, "Dad, I still belong, I still want to go and join the United States Navy. I said, "I feel like I want to do something different and I can prove you only one thing" I said. "I know you want somebody to follow in your footsteps but one day I promise you this that I will be commissioned as an officer in the United States Navy." That's something I loved him to know and my mom was crying. I said, "I will not go unless you give me your blessing and I don't want to see Mom crying." So, he went and told my mom, "Stop crying." (LAUGH) When she stopped I said, "I'm ready to go."

LYN-So you had no model for that. You didn't know anybody who was commissioned in the U.S. Navy. You just saw an ad. Your buddies aren't going with you so it was some brave step.

ED-It was. I didn't know what to expect. Again, being we are being paid only about three hundred, four hundred dollars at that time. In fact, the only money I brought out, I brought with me when I left the Philippines was eight dollars which is fifty peso equivalent. Nothing else. We were told not to bring money beyond. Our clothes were going to be left behind at Subic Bay. That's where we were kept for about a week. So, it was tough so eight dollars to fly out of there. We went to San Francisco.

LYN-How many people were with you? You said, "We flew out".

ED-We flew out, like I said, there is a quota system. Out of five hundred that applied there is only thirteen of us. That goes every other month or every month that the people apply. There is so many applicants but it is selective. So, I'm proud to say that yes, they are getting the best cream of the Filipino people you know to join the Navy and in fact we were told that never before my contract they were told that you will not put your education, college education background because you only put high school. If not, you will be disqualified. But then under Admiral Zumwalt when he took over, which I owe dearly to that guy, to that admiral who opened up the door to us. He said, "Go ahead and put your education on, background, and your

degree and all this other which I did. I was political science so I was able to bring my transcript and my diploma and everything.



Admiral Elmo Russell Zumwalt, Jr.  
Chief of Naval Operations  
1970-1974

So, anyway to make this story short the career started. We flew out of Subic Bay, we went to Treasure Island, that's in California across the bay from San Francisco. We stayed there for I think about only three days, that's a long week-end because I remember it was Columbus Day before we report to San Diego where I did my recruit training.

So, after eight weeks of training the decision has to be made whether I want to become a black shoe, being a seaman, or an airman. So, I chose to be an airman which means aviation Navy. That's the only time that I did realize that so many difference of what the Navy is all about. So, from San Diego I reported to Cecil Field. That was after boot camp. In fact, I spent my first Christmas at NAS Cecil Field.

LYN-How did you get to Cecil?

ED-I had no idea, it was just one of those things like.

LYN-Well, did you fly to Cecil?

ED-I flew a little bit. I flew in because my other friends in boot camp they decide to stay there and they wanted to explore the United States. I did not. I said I would rather see what Cecil Field is all about.

LYN-You didn't know anything about Jacksonville or Cecil.

ED-No Florida or nothing. Even though you have four-year college degree you still are not familiar with what the United States is all about and what to expect. So, when I arrived here it was one of those being away from home to start with, nobody to talk, letter was not good the way it used to be. So, I was by myself in my room especially Christmas eve and stuff like that. So, it was lonely, lonely first day or first month because the squadron was onboard the Saratoga and they were deployed.

LYN-What squadron?

ED-VA-105, the Gunslingers. The A-7 squadron. So, we waited for them. So, for the meantime while waiting for the squadron I was assigned the commissary, helping out, these are all Cecil Field. It will be a three-year tour. We waited for the squadron and when we got our notification that we were ready to follow the Saratoga in Vietnam, pack the bags and ready to go. While we were at the airport or at the terminal we were told to stand-down because the Saratoga caught fire in Vietnam and she is heading home so there is no need for us to go there and catch up with the ship.



So, we remained at Cecil and they identified a hangar where the squadron will be staying so we prepared the squadron for, we prepared the hangar for the squadron's arrival. So, that was the start of my career as I was a E-2 at the time, an airman apprentice. When the squadron came in we were part of the off-load crew of cruise boxes and lots of other gear that belonged to the squadron. Then we were asked after, well we spent our time, I spent my time with 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant which is a nine-month tour, they call it TAD, temporary addition of duty which means you maintain all the berthing, the spaces, you work for the command master chief, you make coffee, and all this other thing. (LAUGH) Nothing else but clean and make spic and span, clean up the spaces.

So, I was asked at one time, "What do you want to be in your career?" So, I said, "I want to be an aviation ordinance man which is to load bombs." I said, "Well, they found out I was not an American citizen which requires a clearance and I don't have that." So, I was disqualified.

They said, "You cannot do that." I said, "What about an AE which is aviation electrician mate? I don't mind going to OJT which is on-the-job-training." "Well," they said, "OK. We'll give you a chance to see what we can do for you," because I was under a four-year contract. In order to apply for citizenship, you have to have six years of contract. So, what they did, they extended my contract from four to six years which qualified me to apply for my citizenship.

But, before things happened I worked on-the-job-training on aircraft. I'm not an electrician. Remember my background is political science so things were totally different from my college background and experience. At any rate, I learned fast. I am a fast learner so my boss said, "You will go to AE-A school" which was still at NAS JAX.

So, I packed my bags and it was supposed to be a nine-month school TAD. Then I was supposed to go back to the squadron. So, I reported to NAS JAX, the duty driver dropped me off that morning and said, "Good luck with your school." But anyway, when I check in the yeoman look at my service record, he was looking for my security clearance. Guess what? I don't have any security clearance so I was disqualified again.



So, they threw my bag across the street. (LAUGH) Nobody, it was remember during these years there's still what you call segregation and I saw that part in being a Filipino. They almost blend in with the black people and all this other thing. There was nobody there. I didn't get picked up until almost midnight. Remember NAS JAX and Cecil is only not even twelve miles away. But nobody to get hold of or nothing. So, when I finally went back to squadron my maintenance officer, his names is Lt. Commander Mazack, and he said, "You will go back there. You will go back and be an AE and we promise you that." That was our fault.

So, in the meantime I went to TAD and all this other thing. I took the AE test. I'm allowed to do that and I passed that. But then it was held in abeyance because Filipino not advancing because of no clearance. So, another issue, clearance. So, when my enlistment came, my authorization for the two-year enlistment came back my, I have a total of six-year contract which qualified me to apply for citizenship for benefit of rank. To make the story short, I became an American citizen after a year and a half.

LYN-So how did you family feel about that?

ED-They, once the decision, my dad supported me when he gave me his blessing when I left the Philippines. It was something that he gave me a peace of mind. He kept in touch and he knows I'm gonna do well whatever I do because he saw me when I was a core commander of the university, what I can do to lead. So, that's one thing I love from him because he trusted me to that decision. I know, in fact I'm the only one of nine that left the Philippines. Everybody stayed in the Philippines and made their own career. So, at any rate, when my citizenship came back my clearance was applied. Everything was coming back. Everybody's coming together.

LYN-Tell me about the ceremony when you became a citizen.

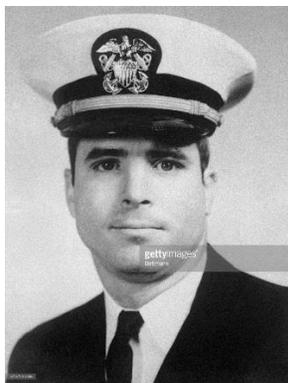
ED-It was held there downtown Jacksonville at the Court House. A bunch of other people. It felt different. You know, here I am, I'm raising my hand to pledge my allegiance to the flag of

the United States and now I cannot look back to become, even though I am a Filipino still at heart, I'm now serving the United States of America. It was a decision even to now that I have not regretted doing because this country gave me as much opportunity as I can tell you from how my career ended. So, it went so great and I told my family that I am now an American citizen. There was nothing of what you call, "Why did you do this or whatever?" They are glad that I made that decision. In fact, my dad's boss was a four-star general. He wrote me and said, "Why don't you come back? We still have your commission." I said, "General, I appreciate the concern but I think my career has already been made and that's with the United States Navy."

So, all the years I was really, really focusing on my career so I took the 3<sup>rd</sup> class test, it was held in abeyance, and then they finally said, "Look, you're going to AE-A school. We're going to try it again but this time in Memphis, Tennessee." It was approved already. So, during, two weeks after I reported to Memphis, Tennessee the result came from my rating exam was cleared and it said, "Guess what? You are now a 3<sup>rd</sup> class petty officer AE and you're going to be paid back. That's eighteen months." I think I was really so blessed. I said, "I didn't realize that they were going to pay me back that long." It seems normally they throw it away.

LYN-Somebody was pulling for you. So now you are in Millington.

ED-I know my wife who was my classmate at that time, a former high school classmate was in Memphis, in Millington because we were all in touch as friends and all these other things. She said, "Guess what, I applied with the City of Memphis Hospital and we were all accepted." There were I think about thirty Filipino nurses. So, to make the story short, I took my travel to Memphis, I reported there. After the AE-A school my wife was there and that's where I made my decision to marry her before even I received my AE diploma. I came back to the squadron and I was ready to take the 2<sup>nd</sup> class test, the E-5 exam and then I passed that and I reported to VA-174 because my tour with 105 was over so I got orders to another A-7 squadron. The VA-174 Hell Raisers. My skipper at that time was then Commander John McCain who is now Senator John McCain. I never saw the biggest and the most glamorous change of command ever even though I was still a 2<sup>nd</sup> class but I know what change of command is all about. We saw his dad and his grandpa. They were all there, four-star admiral, you know.



John McCain



Admiral  
John McCain, Jr



LYN-And they were at the change of command, both of them.

ED-Nobody, no admirals, no other flag sits down to find their spot until they shake hands with both of them and they saluted. So, it was something very, very exciting and memorable. I still remember that today.

LYN-Do you remember, can I interject this? John McCain came here straight from where? Do you know?

ED-The only thing I can think of since he is a commander, he might, I would be guessing but I know he had a tour on the Forrestal where they had the Forrestal fire and that's the only thing I know. He may be, because 174 being shore duty so I'm assuming he came from another squadron.

LYN-He was on the Forrestal but after that he was a POW so I'm not sure what happened after he returned. Did he come right to Cecil?

ED-Yeah, he came right away to Cecil. You're right. That's the part that I failed to mention. So, at any rate I saw him out there. He was in a great skipper. Like I said, I did my three-year tour there and then left and reported to VA-87, Cecil Field again, the Golden Warriors.

So, I reported there as a 2<sup>nd</sup> class and checked out as a three-year tour as a chief petty officer and got my orders to Cecil Field again. So, it's all Cecil Field through that and then as soon as I went to AIMD....

LYN-Now what is AIMD?

ED-Is Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department which is the way the Navy, they had two levels of activity, they call it organizational level and intermediate level. Intermediate means you work on equipment on a ship or avionics equipment but you work on the internal boxes. The organization you work on the aircraft and trouble shoot aircrafts, something like that. So, I was part of the organization level but when I went to AIMD and became to be the avionics officer which I was involved in organizing what we call the Navy's cable repair shop and I was a chief petty officer at that time. I put in for my package for the Limited Officer Program.

LYN-Talk to us about the Limited Officer Program.

ED-Which is the LDO. Everybody knows the LDO is a commission to become a Naval officer but you are selected based on your specialty which I applied under the avionics officer program for LDO. There were about thirty-two of us from Cecil Field that applied and I was the only one that got selected.

LYN-Congratulations.

ED-It was something that I really can look back and say that, "Can you imagine only one?" I was also the number one candidate of Cecil Field. My skipper at that time at Cecil Field was Captain Bill Benning and he was the one who told me. He said, "Chief Petty Officer Callao, Congratulations our of thirty-two you were recommended as the number one candidate for Cecil Field which is a major command." So, I was feeling very good because it's hard to go against your peers. They were all well qualified and to be nominated as the number one candidate tops it all because can you imagine they are not going to select just anybody, the number two, the number three. They selected the number one and much more in the avionics field which is really an important billet.

So, when the report came it was, I was really so happy. The person I owe that very much, especially to be an aviation electrician's mate like I said was Lt. Commander Mazach at that time who became a three-star admiral which is, Vice Admiral Mazach at AIRLANT which is the head of the air land, which means the East Coast Navy on the aviation side. I saw him too. In fact, when I got commissioned some of them showed up.

LYN-So when you left Memphis you brought a wife with you.

ED-Yes.

LYN-So you married in Memphis.

ED-Yes. Shelby County.

LYN-Shelby County. I know Shelby County. So, tell us her name.

ED-Her name is Delia which is D-E-L-I-A. She goes by her nickname is "Del". She is a registered nurse and my, what do you call that, class president in high school, editor-in-chief in high school so she was very, very active.

LYN-She was an achiever too.

ED-An achiever definitely. So that was not even surprise. We have two kids and the name is Jay which is Junior, we call him "Jay" and Catherine Nichole. Jay is business administration who is now in Las Vegas who works for MGM and other, what do you call that, corporations just like Mandalay and all this other thing and Elexor. Now works for Capital One as an account specialist.

My daughter is, my daughter Nikki, is a bio chem but you know being a resident of Jacksonville there's not a whole lot for a chemist unless you want to be with the Department of Health, which she worked with the Department of Health. But she saw it was a slow profession here and she moved to pharmaceutical which is under the state. So, she is back in nursing school. She will be graduating this year as a nurse.

LYN-Where is she?

ED-She is with a private school here with, it's, I will think of it. She is graduating this May so she is looking forward. Before that we never realized that she would become a nurse because we tried to encourage her. So, at any rate she will be, she went to school at Florida Atlantic University.

LYN-Florida Atlantic. And I'm going to interject, we didn't say it on tape, that Ed's wife is at Shands at UF Health Shands at the eye center here in Jacksonville.

ED-She has been an employee for many years. In fact, Methodist was the former hospital.

LYN-Across the street was Methodist. Across 8<sup>th</sup> Street. She left Methodist and went to UF Health.

ED-Because the hospital merged.

LYN-I never knew. I just knew that Methodist went away so it was a merger.

ED-It was a merge. So, now, like I said, I went from one squadron to another as my first tour was as a commissioned officer was with the John F. Kennedy. It was what we call general maintenance where all hydraulics, airplanes, support equipment works for me and also the parachute riggers.

LYN-So, where was this?

ED-This was here in Mayport, another Jacksonville place. But I did that for two and a half years. I left there and reported to VFA-81 which is the Sunliners, the first Hornet squadron where I came to be the maintenance material control officer. And knew a guy named Scott Speicher who was our known Jacksonville, who we lost during the first night of Desert Storm. The first strike that we did. So, my tour there was three years then after that I went to HSL-42.



HSL which is a land squadron, helicopter squadron there at Mayport as assistant maintenance officer. I was already a Lt. Commander then so three years of that then they said in order for me to progress I was offered to be the CAG maintenance officer in Japan which is Atsugi. My first away tour. So, I broke the cord. (LAUGH) I was already again Lt. Commander so we did three years there.

LYN-It was accompanied with your family?

ED-The family, my wife and my son, no my daughter joined me there. So, it was a great tour because it gave us a chance to see what the other part of what the Asia, we saw Hawaii, Hong Kong, Korea, and all this other thing since most of my tour were Europe because of the ships that ported.

LYN-The Med.

ED-Yeah, the Med. So, I came back to Jacksonville to VT-30, the largest training squadron in the entire Navy because we teach not only our own pilots but also international pilots since P-3 Orions are used by the Japanese, the Australians, the Canadians and other foreign countries. So, my tour there was three years.



P-3 Orion

So, then I finished my tour there. I reported to Pensacola to the Commander of Naval Education and training as the director for training and maintenance program which is my department head. I was selected as full commander. So, I did my two and a half years there then they, my following tour was with the U.S. Strategic Command at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City.

LYN-Say the name again.

ED-Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City. My direct boss there is actually under the strategic command is a four-star, Admiral Ellis who was also my boss on the, one of the carriers. So, it's nice to see an old boss working for the same person.

So, it's a very interesting command which this type of aircraft is not what you call the attack and all. It's a 737 aircraft which provides services for executives, i.e. the President of the United States, the Chief of the Joint Chiefs, and the Secretary of Defense, and stuff like that. It's something you deployed and nobody knows. Let's just leave it to that.

They were going to offer me, they were going to offer me to go to Fallon, Nevada as AIND department head but at that time I was up for captain and they were only picking two. I was already on my thirty-second, thirty-third year of the service and I said, "I think I'm moving further and further away from Jacksonville." So, I'm not going to get selected because once again there's only two out of twenty-five commanders going for captain. The slim chance is really none because we need people to represent us in D.C. so procurements at NAVAIR are the key ones to be filled and I'm not there. So even though I've taken some key jobs I feel that I was very competitive to make it for captain but because there's only two I accepted that. So, I called my detailee and said, "It's time to retire."

The retirement ceremony was going to be held at Tinker Air Force Base but I told my Commodore, I said, "I started it all in Jacksonville. I'd like to end it in Jacksonville." They approved my request. VP-30 hosted it and the squadron from Tinker Air Force Base came in. They flew in to see my retirement. It was nice to see some friends. Admiral Delaney was there, Kevin Delaney who is former CO of NAS JAX and Mayport that I know well. A very nice family attended. Two other admirals showed up there, my old skipper Admiral Howling, Chief of Naval Personnel showed up so it was a great ceremony and that's it.

So, I left my career because I saw something that this country gave me opportunity to start my second career because I like to serve the city. I want to give back something to the City of Jacksonville. I focused myself on community outreach and things like that.

LYN-Well, I have a lot of questions about that career as we went through kind of a timeline. Being Filipino at one point obviously it held you back for your "A" school when they threw your bag over the fence (LAUGH) because you didn't have your clearance. Was it a hindrance? Did you feel it was a hindrance? Do you feel it was an advantage at times? How did our Navy respond and was this kind of new for them for a Filipino to walk into the positions you were walking in?

ED-When I saw my bag thrown away, and once again that was the year that we had segregation, I saw it. It was very disappointing. I was disappointed because I thought, "This is not what the United States is all about, OK." I said. We started a little bit of that but I never saw that thing happening to me. In fact, there was a chief petty officer that told me when he found out I was going to be an AE and he said, "You aren't going to make third class or E-3, E-4." He said, "You're not going to pass it." I always remember that until now and he gave me all the challenges. It hindered me but it woke me up and said, "OK, I will prove them wrong." I studied at every Naval exam you know, rating exam that was given to me and every rating exam I passed them and I was promoted.

Now, when I put on the commission you still saw some hesitation within the squadron hierarchy even though we take jobs as maintenance material control officer which means you handle all the uniforms, the parts, the finances of the squadron which is key job because the skipper trusted you with that job to ensure that you maintain the operational readiness of the squadron which is money and fuels and all this other thing and training of the squadron.

There has always been a hindrance between some of the officers but I can see why Navy-wide on my career. In fact, until I get selected for commander I remember one word that the skipper told me. He said, "Ed, trust me, when you put on that hat of the commander look at yourself in the mirror because it will change your life forever." I asked him that, "Why skipper?" He said, "Well, here's what it is, that hat will separate you from a lot of people because it will separate you from being a junior officer to senior officer. You will notice, especially for Limited Duty Officer, that's one of the hardest things to make commander then captain because at that time when I got selected for LDO, the highest rank that a LDO can achieve is lieutenant, then it moved to Lt. commander, then moved to commander, and I saw it given a chance to be a captain. That's why there was only two when I was up for captain.

You give that credit to all the people before me, LDO's before myself, that they fought hard to open up the opportunity for us because we are our own specialty. We have our own areas of specialty. So, when I put on that hat I saw at the first change of command that I attended that I was put on the right side of all the senior officers.

LYN-So you were walking in two unique steps, one moving from enlisted and the other having joined the Navy and not even having been then a U.S. citizen. You have walked some things that very few have walked, I assume. Were you seeing other Filipinos becoming officers?

ED-Yes, finally because once again I saw one person and he was a surface, unfortunately I forgot his name but he became to be a CO but I think he was a Filipino by birth but at a young age brought to the United States and went to school here in the United States. So, to make that as a comparison it's very different because of the United States education system that they went through.

LYN-So, you probably were walking a path nobody else was walking.

ED-Yes and there were some few already. There were some doctors, there were some nurses but once again they are totally different because they get promoted or they get selected to be a Naval officer under the Medical Service Corps, the Nurse Corps compared to us that we have to go through the same basic training again in Pensacola.

LYN-I'll put on tape, I was served many times by Filipinos at Little Creek Dispensary. Do you remember Little Creek Dispensary in Virginia? I had forgotten about that but I do remember that now. So, they were in the medical field. There were Filipinos there.

You mentioned community service so tell me about what kind of community service have you found in your life?

ED-Well, I came to be, one is we established the Filipino-American Community Council. I came to be the chairman twice which is like the president. The Filipino Community Council is an umbrella of the eighteen other organizations here in Jacksonville where we have twenty-eight thousand Filipinos.

LYN-That's a large population.

ED-Maybe more now. I remember the mayor at the time, in fact Mayor Hazouri, Tommy Hazouri who is now Councilman Hazouri which I received my first leadership pen from him when he honored us for the service we provide to the community. At any rate, the way they said, "I will not speak to eighteen Filipino leaders but I will speak to only one Filipino president." That resulted us to establish the council so we had one representation. That was one of them.

Then we start something called the Philippine-American Veterans Society which provided honor guards and services at the wall, folding of the flag.

LYN-This is Veteran's Memorial Wall.

ED-Which is retired military, Navy and Air Force and Army that we have and burial escorts that we provide for the community. I was also the chair of the Mayor's Asian Advisory Board.

LYN-Was that during Hazouri also?

ED-No, this was under Mayor Peyton, Brown. Under Mayor Peyton and Brown. I think I will have my second appointment with Mayor Curry. So, I was an advisor for the Philippine Nurses because my wife is a nurse. I provided my service and I was part also, I was a volunteer for when we had the Super Bowl. We were part of the security force that provided that.

LYN-What year was that? We've forgotten now. Who remembers what year the Super Bowl came it came to Jacksonville? [2005]

ED-Peyton because I remember.

LYN-I can't remember what year that was. It was an event.

ED-It was exciting. A lot of work on that. Then I worked for when they do the Gate River Run. We do what they call the medical service.

LYN-We are sitting within feet of where the Gate River Run just runs right by this house on our sidewalk.

ED-I always join the nurses to provide the services and water.

LYN-We have some need for that I understand.

ED-I still do that now with almost the same organization. For me I feel like I couldn't stop not knowing what we call the Night of Asia. The Night of Asia was established when there was a super typhoon that hit the country of the Philippines and all of the Asian leaders we formed this group and said what can we do to help out the Philippines. So, in twenty-three days we were able to raise forty-nine thousand dollars to help. So, I'm still part of that organization because I feel like I owe to them for helping my country of the Philippines for that.

So, there are other organizations that I am involved. That has not stopped. That's how I feel. Now we have what we call the Cecil Field POW/MIA.

LYN-What an opportunity that is. Tell me how you see, I think everybody has a different vision right now. Tell me how you're seeing this develop at Cecil Field as we honor the POW/MIA's with a national memorial.

ED-When I was approached by Sam Houston who is now the chairman of the board of Cecil Field POW/MIA I met Mike also, Mike Cassata who is the brain-child of this group and really a nice person to work with. I was really excited because I told them my background about knowing Scott Speicher because I think there was a few groups that started something to bring back the memory of Captain Scott Speicher who was again my Ad Min Officer. I was his maintenance officer. In fact, I told him my relationship with him the night of the final boarding of the air craft.

LYN-So you served with Dizzy Gillespie also.

ED-Yes, he was our sister squadron. So, I was glad that they asked me to be part of that because it brings back a lot of memories and me being part of the Cecil Field POW/MIA is, I'm really excited because twenty-six out of my thirty-three, basically of my career was spent at Cecil Field. I'd like to bring, to keep that legacy and especially honoring all those that we lost and we are still missing.

I see a great future for this project. I'm glad that the City of Jacksonville is really supporting us through the effort of our council members and also the mayor. We still have a long road ahead. Now the really hard work comes now that the bill was signed by the mayor, So, I'm glad, I look forward to seeing the progress but I think there's a bright future. I'm hoping that we see that Jacksonville appreciates that.

LYN-I'll ask the question, I'm not sure you can frame this up on short notice but I've been thinking it through. What do you see as the legacy of Cecil Field to this world? I see it as a world legacy. Do you have any words on that?

ED-Well, I see a future because when, first of all I was hurt when Cecil Field was closed and became a commercial center which is the plan. Today I was hoping for more but for me personally my expectation it didn't go the way it used to be. The formulation or with the Cecil Field POW I think it will bring up, you know it will keep Cecil Field up there especially if it becomes to be a national memorial place or national memorial park for everybody because people will think of that. Jacksonville, that's where not only especially with Cecil Field POW/MIA it will bring back what Jacksonville is all about. I think it will hopefully open up more for other businesses and commercial.

LYN-I was just thinking that through so many wars, Korean, World War II, Vietnam, Gulf War, Cecil trained men who defended this nation and I'm beginning to get an eye full of that in real life that it really had a legacy. So, tell me, you knew Scott Speicher who went down. Did you see other men go down? Did you lose others?

ED-It was from our other sister squadron from Virginia that we lost. During that year not only, the pilot when we lost Scott Speicher we lost thirty-three sailors on the Saratoga. Thirty-three of them when they were trying to come, return back to the ship. It was the same year also. It was a tough one for the Saratoga and the Navy itself because we lost that many. But, to lose one person, like I said, "We never gave up hope at the time that Scott was lost because again a person that was being part of your family and a squadron mate like I said to lose him and he was not meant to fly that evening."

LYN-Really, I didn't know that. Tell us that story.

ED-Well, Scott Speicher being a senior, was a Lt. Commander at the time, was not supposed to be part of the strike group. Our skipper, Mike Anderson, Mike Spike Anderson was the skipper's name, told him, "You will be staying back as the senior officer in charge while all of us as part of the strike group because everybody has been identified." I remember because I knew, I had a briefing with the other carriers out there already when we got the word that something was going to happen big that night.

I remember seeing and hearing Scott Speicher say, "Skipper, I didn't train to be a Naval aviator to sit here in the ready room while others, junior officers below me are out there fighting. I want to fly." So, it may be a tough one for Skipper Anderson but for some reason he said, "OK, you're flying." So, he called me and the gunner and said, "Get an aircraft ready for Scott." Then the gunner went and issued him his gun. So, we did that and got his aircraft ready. So, because of his persistence he was able to really convince the skipper that he departed then.

When the, almost midnight when the instruction or the order came to fly and do the strike, I was on the flight deck too. Scott Speicher was in aircraft 403. In fact, his aircraft was spotted where he used to be the first aircraft to move the other aircraft can go in and start taxiing. As soon as the aircraft crew were returning the plane captain got him ready, seated, and checked everything. He came down and I went up to Scott's cockpit. So, I said, "Look, safe flight, drop the bomb, deliver it, come back home." That was my last word with him.

So, when everything was a go, he taxied. Rear Admiral McGee, he came to be a three-star also, he gave the command that "It's a go. We're going to go ahead and strike." So, we listened to how the aircraft had to report it from entering I guess Bagdad and all this other thing. Everybody would check in. So, something happened then that I remember from the skipper, Spike Anderson.

During the first wave they were getting some fire from surface SAM missiles, surface-to-air missiles. Suddenly a ball of fire because I think Scott Speicher was his wingman. Something blew a ball of fire there so he knows something happened but he didn't realize that it was him. So, that was, we waited and waited and when he came back he told us that Scott, because everybody was checking in. We were hearing all the aircraft check in. But he never checked in.

LYN-Was that the only one?

ED-Yes, that was the only one that night. So, it was really a sad thing for all of us. We waited all night. We were hoping he would check in with the other carrier. In fact, there was one...

LYN-What other carrier was there?

ED-If I recall right, it may be the America. But anyway, there was an A-7 squadron, VA-72, and 46 I think the Clansmen, there was an aircraft that landed there the following morning. It was 403 so we thought it was him. It came out to be it was an A-7 so the hope was basically lost there.

I remember my wife even told me when they heard, they got the word from the ship, that they were all called at the officer's club. They were told that something happened that we might have lost, I mean Scott's plane was hit. Again, that's the last of the word we heard.

I know his status changed differently from "killed in action" to "missing in action" to "POW" because of the hearsays and stuff like that. In fact, when they finally confirmed after many years when his remains were finally confirmed I was at NAS JAX. I got the picture at home, he was being brought to the church.

LYN-So, Scott is missing in action, POW, or whatever nobody is ever going to know. It's a big mystery. There just suddenly the plane appeared and his remains appeared after, I believe it was eighteen years at least eighteen years which is very odd that it wasn't seen any earlier. So, we will never know.

ED-We will never know. We kept in touch with it, we kept tracking it, we heard so many things about sights, seeing, things like that until they showed us some remnants of the aircraft and the pilot suit, things like that. Again, it changes so much that we don't even know who and where and what until the final confirmation.

LYN-Was that plane always where it was or was it moved and where was he all that time? So, he became an icon for those lost here in Jacksonville and even to the nation it was highly recorded. So, Scott somehow became a face of those lost and we have sixteen memorials out at Cecil now and hopefully we will have some way of portraying those who are still missing. It's not done anywhere else in our nation.

Thank you for being part of this effort. Thank you for your service and perseverance that I admire so very much. I can't even imagine what you went through with that determination to serve our nation.

ED-Thank you for the opportunity.