

## **Donahue, John USN**

[00:00:13.45] MARK FRANKLIN: So let's start with when and where you were born.

[00:00:16.06] JOHN DONAHUE: Hancock, Michigan. Upper Peninsula of Michigan, January 25, 1941.

[00:00:20.68] MARK FRANKLIN: 1941. So before Pearl Harbor.

[00:00:24.10] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes, about almost a year before. My dad was career Navy too. He did 35 years in the Navy. He went in during World War II and he was an ordnance engineering duty officer. And my mother's family was from Hancock, Michigan as well. And he was an architect-- her dad was an architect, and she was one of 10 children.

[00:00:52.18] Now, she married my dad in Hancock and they had 35 years of Navy traveling all over like we did. My wife's father was in the Air Force, flew B-24s is out of England over Germany during World War II and retired as a major here in California.

[00:01:17.92] MARK FRANKLIN: What would you call your hometown?

[00:01:19.90] JOHN DONAHUE: The United States.

[00:01:20.80] MARK FRANKLIN: You were all over.

[00:01:22.03] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah, with my-- moving around with my parents and then moving around on my own in my own tours of duty. JOHN DONAHUE: I went to three different high schools. The first one was in Las Vegas, Nevada. My dad was stationed at Lake Mead Base. I used to tease folks and say that they floated in ships to Lake Mead so he could work on them there, but that's not true.

[00:01:52.13] It was a special weapons base back then and now it's a prison for the state of Nevada. And my second one was in Carmel. Old dad went to the Naval Postgraduate School and I went to Carmel High School. And the third one was Annandale, Virginia, right outside of Washington DC, while he was stationed in Washington DC. So I graduated from high school in Annandale, Virginia.

[00:02:16.87] MARK FRANKLIN: And what year was it?

[00:02:17.98] JOHN DONAHUE: 1959. I joined the Naval Reserve at that time too.

[00:02:22.49] MARK FRANKLIN: So after high school or during high school?

[00:02:24.94] JOHN DONAHUE: Towards the end of high school.

[00:02:26.35] MARK FRANKLIN: You joined the Naval Reserve?

[00:02:27.49] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah, because I wanted to be in the Navy. I always wanted to go to the Naval Academy, and so being in the Reserve was a step in that direction.

[00:02:38.30] MARK FRANKLIN: So what did you do after high school?

[00:02:40.75] JOHN DONAHUE: Well, I went to-- I had to go to prep school because I played around a lot in high school and chased girls and stuff like that. And I was a lifeguard during the summer and all that and had a good time. JOHN DONAHUE: Oh, I didn't go to the Academy but I did go to prep school in Washington DC. And that helped me and I took the SAT several times and get done. And it improved my education and stuff like that.

[00:03:13.19] But I went to the California Maritime Academy instead and that stands for CMA, which stands for Can't Make Annapolis. I graduated from the Maritime Academy in 1963. California Maritime Academy at that time was basically a trade school for Merchant Marine officers.

[00:03:30.90] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh, on the West Coast.

[00:03:32.86] JOHN DONAHUE: On the West Coast. Actually, there are five Maritime academies. And so as part of it, I got a BS in marine engineering from the Maritime Academy, but it's only accredited by the state of California, not by the federal agencies or the college boards or stuff.

[00:03:50.99] It was during the start up of Vietnam, and because I was in the Reserve already and had a Reserve-- was commissioned a Merchant Marine officer, so I just came right on active duty.

[00:04:04.00] MARK FRANKLIN: Straight to the Navy?

[00:04:04.87] JOHN DONAHUE: In the Navy. They had Naval Reserve courses at the Maritime Academy too. You had to take NROTC at the Maritime Academy. So when I graduated, I activated my commission as a Reserve officer. And 30 years later, I retired.

[00:04:28.85] JOHN DONAHUE: After graduation, I had about a month between then and getting commissioned. So we got married and we moved back to Alameda. And our first home was a half of a Quonset hut-- had a bathroom like this, you know, because of the curved walls.

[00:04:54.74] And we stayed in a motel for a little bit but I ran out of money. So my wife was going to nursing school in Oakland, the Kaiser Foundation School of Nursing. And so she moved back to the nursing and I stayed at the YMCA till my commission came in. And then we got this half a Quonset hut to live in.

[00:05:13.88] MARK FRANKLIN: And then when did you get orders to go to Vietnam?

[00:05:16.91] JOHN DONAHUE: Three months later, we left.

[00:05:19.60] MARK FRANKLIN: --out of--

[00:05:20.93] JOHN DONAHUE: On the *Zelima*. We did the workup and then went. The ship was homeported in Alameda, California, which used to be a Naval Air Station. And it was a three month deployment and followed by three months back and another three month deployment.

[00:05:38.45] MARK FRANKLIN: So three months deployment. Does that include your journey, your sailing over to--

[00:05:43.10] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. Transit time. Yeah

[00:05:45.71] MARK FRANKLIN: Transit time.

[00:05:46.94] JOHN DONAHUE: You go to Sasebo and you go to Yokosuka and you go to Vietnam. And I was in Port Da Nang and we UNREPEd the ships over there too. JOHN DONAHUE: My first ship was an AF, auxiliary freeze. It was a converted merchant ship and they carried fresh frozen and parts overseas.

[00:06:13.15] And that was my first tour in Vietnam. And I was the main propulsion assistant. I stood my watches up on the bridge as a junior officer, deck, then officer of the deck, independent steaming.

[00:06:28.06] MARK FRANKLIN: What was the name of that ship?

[00:06:29.47] JOHN DONAHUE: *Zelima*, USS *Zelima*, AF 49. AF stands for auxiliary freeze. It was a storage ship.

[00:06:38.42] MARK FRANKLIN: And you were the propulsion--

[00:06:39.64] JOHN DONAHUE: Main propulsion assistant, which is the number two engineer on the ship. I had five divisions that worked for me, boiler, machinery, auxiliary, refrigeration electrical.

[00:06:51.61] MARK FRANKLIN: Did your training at the Maritime Academy prepare you for that?

[00:06:52.91] JOHN DONAHUE: Oh, yeah, Absolutely. And again, it was a converted merchant ship, so piece of cake.

[00:06:58.15] MARK FRANKLIN: So was your mission to replenish ships?

[00:06:59.74] JOHN DONAHUE: Replenish ships. Yes. Replenish ships and we even replenished the aircraft carriers. The aircraft carriers were usually on water hours because their boilers use so much water. And we had tons of storage capacity for water. And we would transfer water to the aircraft carriers and they were on water hours all the time.

[00:07:21.88] We were also the movie ship. So we'd have a ship on each side of us, a destroyer one one side and a oiler on the other side, or a cruiser, or destroyer. And UNREPIing we would stack 100 tons of chow and stores and stuff on the pallets and on the deck and transfer all that stuff to the ships in an hour.

[00:07:43.03] As the movie ship, they would pass movies. We had the movies there and we'd get the movies on the ship and transfer them new movies. Of course, we kept the good ones for ourselves and passed the junk to the other ones or the lesser ones, the other ones. And it was a good time. It had five cargo holds in it.

[00:08:04.06] MARK FRANKLIN: Five cargo holds.

[00:08:06.89] JOHN DONAHUE: One chill, one freeze, and dry provisions, and spare parts, and we transferred mail. We got mail in Subic and brought it over to the ships in Vietnam.

[00:08:19.69] MARK FRANKLIN: It was a pretty big ship.

[00:08:20.74] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. It's about 500 feet long. And I don't remember the exact dimensions it was.

[00:08:25.78] MARK FRANKLIN: How large was the crew?

[00:08:27.91] JOHN DONAHUE: About 300. A lot a lot of deckies, division people to handle all the stores and supplies and the UNREP rigs. I was in charge of number one hold. So during the UNREPs and it was-- watch standing was four on and eight off.

[00:08:47.11] MARK FRANKLIN: So describe an UNREP.

[00:08:48.85] JOHN DONAHUE: Underway replenishment.

[00:08:50.21] MARK FRANKLIN: So how did that work?

[00:08:51.49] JOHN DONAHUE: So the replenishing ship is the guide in the middle or the guide, and the ship being replenished has to keep station on the guide. And you're about 100 feet apart. And you're at these rigs. You're tied to the ships alongside with steel cables. And they pick up these big cargo nets and transfer them across, put them down on their deck, and they come back over and get another one back and forth, back and forth. They're doing about 11, 12 knots.

[00:09:25.06] MARK FRANKLIN: So you're moving through the water and doing this replenishment, this resupply?

[00:09:28.39] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah, with ships on both sides.

[00:09:30.65] MARK FRANKLIN: So you're doing it to both ships simultaneously?

[00:09:32.62] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes. And quite often, again, for the aircraft carriers, we'd transfer water to them. So we had a two-and-a-half inch fire hose that we were pumping fresh water through the--

[00:09:41.83] MARK FRANKLIN: Pumping water across the--

[00:09:42.76] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah.

[00:09:43.60] MARK FRANKLIN: So what were the big differences between, say, an aircraft carrier and a destroyer or an aircraft carrier and another ship?

[00:09:49.78] JOHN DONAHUE: 100,000 tons versus 8,000 tons.

[00:09:54.67] MARK FRANKLIN: Of supply?

[00:09:56.08] JOHN DONAHUE: Oh. 300 tons of supplies we'd transfer, but in an hour.

[00:10:01.16] MARK FRANKLIN: But in terms of actually doing it, is it any difference between the two ships and the small-- ?

[00:10:06.16] JOHN DONAHUE: Just the amount that they're transferring. They could order what they wanted. They knew what we had.

[00:10:11.15] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh, OK.

[00:10:11.98] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. I mean, they didn't just come over and go shopping through Walmart or Costco or anything like that.

[00:10:16.99] MARK FRANKLIN: So they knew what they had and they told you what they needed.

[00:10:18.91] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah.

[00:10:19.96] MARK FRANKLIN: So where'd you get your supply from?

[00:10:22.15] JOHN DONAHUE: Subic, mostly. Commercial merchant ships would bring stuff to Subic or to Yokosuka and we pick it up and fill ourselves up and resupply our stores on the ship. I was the welfare and recreation officer too.

[00:10:39.43] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh. So talk about that. What were you responsible for?

[00:10:42.97] JOHN DONAHUE: Making sure the Sailors had something to do when we got to port and setting up tours and things like that. And that was fun, and helpful to them.

[00:10:53.05] MARK FRANKLIN: What kind of recreational activities did you plan on the ship for the Sailors while you were at sea? Was there a time for anything?

[00:10:59.08] JOHN DONAHUE: Bingo and-- they'd go down to the mess decks and-- bingo, and they had the talent parties and people could sing and perform and-- boxing matches, a smoker. Two Sailors were pissed off at each other, and you'd put them in a ring and then let them box under controlled conditions.

[00:11:22.91] MARK FRANKLIN: You had boxing gloves on ship?

[00:11:24.35] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah.

[00:11:25.82] MARK FRANKLIN: Do you have any memories of the popular culture back in the States?

[00:11:29.66] JOHN DONAHUE: Jitterbug.

[00:11:31.23] MARK FRANKLIN: OK.

[00:11:32.21] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. In Subic, they have an island out there called Grande Island. And they used to have-- go over there and have parties and first ships company and stuff like that. And we also would-- I'd buy 300 to 500 cases of San Miguel beer in Subic. And we'd bring that aboard and the carriers were allowed to have a beer party because they stayed out on station so long. And they'd have it on the aircraft elevator like you've seen here. They'd have a beer party out there and let them have three beers apiece.

[00:12:06.59] MARK FRANKLIN: Three?

[00:12:07.04] JOHN DONAHUE: Three. Yeah.

[00:12:09.65] MARK FRANKLIN: How about on the *Zelima*? Were you allowed to have alcohol on-- ?

[00:12:12.59] JOHN DONAHUE: No.

[00:12:14.42] MARK FRANKLIN: Just the aircraft carriers?

[00:12:15.62] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. Well, just-- that was just the beer.

[00:12:18.11] MARK FRANKLIN: OK.

[00:12:18.83] JOHN DONAHUE: We did an exchange with the aircraft carriers. Our officers went over to their-- five of our officers went over to their ship and we stayed with the squadron and how they did that. And they sent some of their officers over to our ship. And that happened both on the *Zelima* and the guided missile destroyer that I was on.

[00:12:40.85] And when I went over in a chair-- you're UNREPing again. You got a chair-- and they transfer you in a boatswain's chair over to the other ship, across the water. And you're on a cable, but you're being pulled over and back on-- with Manila line.

[00:13:02.09] MARK FRANKLIN: So it's a manual pull.

[00:13:03.41] JOHN DONAHUE: It's a manual pull.

[00:13:04.28] MARK FRANKLIN: There's someone there pulling the cable.

[00:13:05.93] JOHN DONAHUE: Right. They keep the cable tension, but you go over and-- back and forth. So I got over to this aircraft carrier and I had to tell them, these pilots-- I was staying with these pilots in one of the ready rooms, and-- it's a dry Navy. And they didn't understand that because in the ready room area-- all the squadrons had their own areas on the ship-- and in the squadron area, they had an icebox that was full of beer. And the hard stuff was in their safe in their room.

[00:13:37.67] MARK FRANKLIN: So they had hard liquor too.

[00:13:39.29] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah, hard liquor too. Yeah.

[00:13:42.56] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you ever get a chance to get on any port calls in Vietnam and get off the ship in Vietnam?

[00:13:47.81] JOHN DONAHUE: No. In Da Nang, it was just in Da Nang harbor. And we UNREPed the-- provided stuff to the Marines and Army guys, I guess, there-- limited stores and things like that.

[00:14:01.74] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you have any other collateral duties?

[00:14:03.68] JOHN DONAHUE: Standing watch four hours on and then eight hours off when--

[00:14:07.85] MARK FRANKLIN: So you had to be officer of the deck?

[00:14:09.74] JOHN DONAHUE: Independent steaming on this ship, on the *Zelima*.

[00:14:15.38] MARK FRANKLIN: OK. And that was three months?

[00:14:17.57] JOHN DONAHUE: Those are three month deployment because they had to come back and really fill up the stores again too. So we made port calls in Hong Kong and Yokosuka and Sasebo.

[00:14:27.56] MARK FRANKLIN: So what did you do during the eight off?

[00:14:29.57] JOHN DONAHUE: Sleep, eat, and carry out division officer duties. Your department had duties. You've got all these people. You've got to write evaluations for them and make sure they're getting their training and they're working their way up their career path. And as an officer on a fairly large merchant type ship, even as a junior officer, I had a stateroom to myself.

[00:14:54.47] MARK FRANKLIN: You had your own stateroom?

[00:14:55.34] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. But the only disadvantage of that, it was on the outside corner of the ship. And the first deployment was during the wintertime. And it was colder than hell in the stateroom.

[00:15:05.57] MARK FRANKLIN: Really?

[00:15:05.96] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. So I wrote my wife and said, it's cold. I need an electric blanket. So she mailed me one and I got it and in Subic three months later where it's 100 degrees. [LAUGHS].

[00:15:24.56] MARK FRANKLIN: Where were you assigned after the *Zelima*?

[00:15:26.87] JOHN DONAHUE: *Hoel*, H-O-E-L.

[00:15:28.41] MARK FRANKLIN: *Hoel*?

[00:15:29.40] JOHN DONAHUE: USS *Hoel*, DDG-13. He was a Civil War lieutenant commander.

[00:15:35.81] MARK FRANKLIN: So that was a destroyer, a guided missile-- ?

[00:15:37.64] JOHN DONAHUE: Guided missile-- DDG, guided missile destroyer, it was homeported here in San Diego.

[00:15:42.11] MARK FRANKLIN: What was your mission? What was your duty? What were your duties on that ship?

[00:15:44.84] JOHN DONAHUE: Well, I did fairly well on the *Zelima* so I got-- again, I was the MPA, but it was a 1,200 pound steamship. Four boilers and two engine rooms and two fire rooms and it was a step up. It was a move in the right direction.

[00:16:01.91] MARK FRANKLIN: When you say two boilers, two fire rooms, describe what that means for folks like me.

[00:16:07.01] JOHN DONAHUE: OK. Speed, power.

[00:16:10.17] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh, OK.

[00:16:11.18] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. Usually, we got along with just-- you could do two boilers for most things. But full power, if you wanted to go 35 knots for almost 40 miles an hour, you'd need four boilers. And so the engineering department was like 100 people.

[00:16:28.91] MARK FRANKLIN: Wow.

[00:16:29.45] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah, in just the engineering department.

[00:16:31.56] MARK FRANKLIN: So what was the mission of the *Hoel*?

[00:16:35.90] JOHN DONAHUE: Gunfire support, plane-- gunfire support along the coast of North Vietnam. Shooting targets for the Marines and the Army. And we were fairly good at that. Sometimes you'd get a gunfire report back, killed two chickens, two cows. But 5 inch bullets. It had three five-inch guns on it and Tartar guided missiles. They had a range of about 13 miles. We didn't use any missiles.

[00:17:08.81] MARK FRANKLIN: You didn't use the missiles?

[00:17:09.93] JOHN DONAHUE: No. They were antiaircraft more or less.

[00:17:13.10] MARK FRANKLIN: Describe a typical gunship-- or fire support mission.

[00:17:16.28] JOHN DONAHUE: Oh, there's beach guys telling the bridge where the targets were and the coordinates. And then we'd fire the guns. The five-inch guns had a range of about 11, 12 miles. So we were off the coast and shelling as they directed us to.

[00:17:36.74] MARK FRANKLIN: Any of the enemy fire back at you?

[00:17:38.57] JOHN DONAHUE: No.

[00:17:39.41] MARK FRANKLIN: Too far away?

[00:17:40.22] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes. And they didn't have anything too. What did they have? PT boats? or--

[00:17:45.20] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah. So describe the living conditions on the *Hoel*.

[00:17:51.41] JOHN DONAHUE: My stateroom was a two-man stateroom on there, and two officers in there. And in the after part of the ship, and I was right above the after fire room and it was very hot because of the heat from the fire room, especially during the summertime or the warmer months in Vietnam.

[00:18:13.52] And I stood watches on the bridge there as well. Before we left on that deployment, my wife got pregnant with our first child. And as we said in the Navy, you have to be there to lay the keel, but you don't have to be there for the launching. So our first child, a daughter, was Kathleen. She was six months old before I saw her.

[00:18:34.98] And when we came back, I was the officer of the deck on the bridge and coming into 32nd Street over here the naval station. And I left her barefoot and pregnant like I was supposed to do. And I got back and there's this blonde floozy pushing the kid down the pier. And she said my daughter Kathleen is saying, Daddy, Daddy, to every Sailor that walks by.

[00:19:02.88] So she came aboard the ship and we were in the ward room. And I said-- I said to my wife Pat, is she as pretty as I think she is? There's just-- because she's ours. Six months.

[00:19:25.42] MARK FRANKLIN: That was pretty special.

[00:19:26.87] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes.

[00:19:28.40] MARK FRANKLIN: That's great. How long were you in port that time?

[00:19:32.51] JOHN DONAHUE: Well, we'd come back and do maintenance periods. And then you go out and do a couple of local exercises. And then go back and do some more. Went back again.

[00:19:45.66] MARK FRANKLIN: How long were you on the *Hoel*?

[00:19:46.91] JOHN DONAHUE: Another two years.

[00:19:47.82] MARK FRANKLIN: Another two years.

[00:19:48.32] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah.

[00:19:48.65] MARK FRANKLIN: And then what happened? What did you do after that?

[00:19:51.29] JOHN DONAHUE: I went to-- I wanted to be an engineering duty officer in the Navy and I wanted to go to the Naval Postgraduate School to get a recognized degree. So I went to the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC, which is commanded by a captain engineering duty officer. And I took night courses at George Washington University in order to boost my academic qualifications and I did get selected.

[00:20:22.53] So the Maritime Academy, again, it was wonderful but it was basically a trade school for Merchant Marine officers. And so while I was at post graduate school, I got a BS in business and a master's in management. And it set me up for the rest of my career. And I became an engineering duty officer too.

[00:20:41.57] MARK FRANKLIN: So what does an engineering duty officer do?

[00:20:45.35] JOHN DONAHUE: Well, we talked about some more of this stuff. I've come to the conclusion way back then that I'd rather build them and fix them than drive them. So that's pretty much what I did with the rest of my career. And after postgraduate school, excuse me, it's a long career. I was sent to the USS *Farragut*, DLG-6.

[00:21:14.14] MARK FRANKLIN: What year was that?

[00:21:16.15] JOHN DONAHUE: '73. The *Farragut* was a bigger guided missile destroyer and it was in pretty bad-- it was built as the DL, destroyer leader class and then they put the *Tartar*

missile on it-- or the Terrier missile on it, which is a more long range missile. But the ship had been beaten up over the years and was in pretty bad shape.

[00:21:41.08] And so they came up with-- and it was 1,200 pounds steam, had four boilers and two fire rooms, two engine rooms, like the DDG. But it was in pretty bad shape. And so they came out with this 1,200 PSI improvement plant-- steam plant improvement program.

[00:21:57.58] And they sent it to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard to be overhauled and upgraded and modernized. And I was the chief engineer on this ship during that overhaul. And it was a rough tour. I mean, it was really sad shape, the ship. And I was the junior department head on a ship.

[00:22:23.74] The skipper was a nuclear power engineer who knew it all. He'd never been an XO, executive officer. And all of the other department heads were regular line officers or surface warfare officers, and I was the newest department head on that ship. So the rip out phase of an overhaul, which is just the beginning of the overhaul, so I get pretty well beat up during the fitness report period. Yeah.

[00:22:55.09] But in the end, we came through it. And they started back then too, because of all the problems of Navy ships were having, they came out with a propulsion examining board, PEB, to make sure that the ships were safe to operate, and the engineers knew how to operate it, and knew how to handle things. And so we had to go through that and we were one of the first exam-- called to face the examining board exam and we finally got through that.

[00:23:25.37] MARK FRANKLIN: So you brought the Farragut up to standard?

[00:23:27.34] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes, during that overhaul. Yes.

[00:23:30.19] MARK FRANKLIN: How long did that overhaul take?

[00:23:31.66] JOHN DONAHUE: It was three years, '73 to '75.

[00:23:35.86] MARK FRANKLIN: And did it deploy after that or-- ?

[00:23:37.60] JOHN DONAHUE: Oh, yeah.

[00:23:38.32] MARK FRANKLIN: Where'd she go?

[00:23:39.70] JOHN DONAHUE: She went to her new home port in Norfolk, Virginia. And about that time, since the ship was overhauled in the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, that was a good opportunity to just-- we were living there already so they just dumped me in the naval shipyard there and we lived over in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. And it was a good fit at that time.

[00:24:10.87] MARK FRANKLIN: Well, I'm going to back up and take you back again to the *Hoel*. What were the living conditions like on that ship?

[00:24:17.87] JOHN DONAHUE: Well, I mentioned I was in a two-man stateroom. My stateroom was right over the after fire room on the ship and it was hotter than hell. And I stood my watches on the bridge and I became qualified as a fleet OOD-F. And I was also the general quarters officer of the deck even though I was an engineering duty officer by this time. I've proven myself and growing up and handling more. JOHN DONAHUE: There were good guys. Enjoyed that. Some of them are still friends today.

[00:24:58.57] MARK FRANKLIN: So you stay in touch with them?

[00:24:59.71] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah.

[00:25:00.66] MARK FRANKLIN: Any civil rights kind of social turmoil, racial issues, tensions?

[00:25:05.80] JOHN DONAHUE: The racial issues were there, but not overtly. I mean, it was going on in the background. But it wasn't a major consideration.

[00:25:22.71] MARK FRANKLIN: Describe the leadership, both on the *Zelima* and on the *Hoel*. Compare the two, the leadership of the ship.

[00:25:31.17] JOHN DONAHUE: If you want to be the skipper of an aircraft carrier, you have to be an aviator, a nuclear power engineer, and have commanded a deep draft ship before you can be assigned to an aircraft carrier. So one of the skippers on the *Zelima*, his name was Red Carmody. And he made admiral.

[00:25:55.62] And he became skipper of the *Kitty Hawk*, USS *Kitty Hawk*, which is one of the ships out there, on the board out there. The first skipper was an old mustang before-- and those were my two skippers on-- a mustang is an enlisted guy all the way up to-- he was a mustang captain.

[00:26:21.27] MARK FRANKLIN: How would you describe your leadership, the quality of the leadership?

[00:26:24.60] JOHN DONAHUE: Good.

[00:26:25.71] MARK FRANKLIN: This is on the *Zelima*?

[00:26:27.19] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah, *Zelima*.

[00:26:28.83] MARK FRANKLIN: How about on the *Hoel*?

[00:26:30.33] JOHN DONAHUE: On the *Hoel*, I mentioned before that the first skipper I had on there was Jack Shaw. Oh, the first skipper was-- I don't remember his name right now, but he was a commander. He was convinced he was a shoo-in for making captain. And he convinced the people at Newport, Rhode Island, at the War College, he was going to make captain. So he

got moved into captain's quarters on the-- in Newport at the War College. And then he got passed over for captain.

[00:27:00.54] So that disappeared. The second one was Jack Shaw, who was the nuke that I talked about. And he would have done better if he had an XO tour before he had command of the ship. The third skipper I got along with much better. His name was Mike Boorda. And he was the "Seaman to Admiral" guy. And he was the CNO, became the CNO. And I was his very fair-haired boy.

[00:27:30.69] MARK FRANKLIN: And this is on the *Hoel*?

[00:27:32.96] JOHN DONAHUE: No, this is *Farragut*.

[00:27:34.65] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh, on the *Farragut*.

[00:27:36.06] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah.

[00:27:38.19] MARK FRANKLIN: So he helped bring the *Farragut* back up to standard?

[00:27:41.22] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes.

[00:27:42.39] MARK FRANKLIN: Earlier, you mentioned that one of your missions was to pick up downed pilots.

[00:27:46.03] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes.

[00:27:46.41] MARK FRANKLIN: That had--

[00:27:47.13] JOHN DONAHUE: Punched out.

[00:27:48.09] MARK FRANKLIN: What's that?

[00:27:48.66] JOHN DONAHUE: When they punch out over--

[00:27:50.04] MARK FRANKLIN: Yes.

[00:27:50.31] JOHN DONAHUE: They try to get out over the water so they can punch out over the water and then we'd pick them up.

[00:27:54.84] MARK FRANKLIN: Describe how you went about doing that.

[00:27:56.53] JOHN DONAHUE: Well, we'd we get a call from-- over the radio from either the carrier or a message from the shore that the guy was coming out and about to punch out, bail out. And we'd get his coordinates and we'd steam over in that direction and put a motor whale boat in the water and motor over and pick him up. And bring him on board. And take care of him while he's there and then transfer them to the carrier.

[00:28:25.23] MARK FRANKLIN: What was a plane guard?

[00:28:27.33] JOHN DONAHUE: A plane guard is when the aircraft carrier is launching or recovering airplanes. There's a plane guard. And the plane guard, here's the carrier. The plane guard is off to the stern, off to the side there.

[00:28:49.80] MARK FRANKLIN: Another ship?

[00:28:51.53] JOHN DONAHUE: The DDG was the plane guard. Here's the carrier. So if there's a mishap there, we can get in there and help out or pick up the pilot or go check on whatever's in the water. And that's what a plane guard does.

[00:29:07.76] MARK FRANKLIN: Oh, OK. It's part of the escort duty for a carrier.

[00:29:10.73] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes. I mean, it's not a screen around the carrier. They don't do that anymore. But you used to have a screen of destroyers around a carrier. But in today's technology, you don't need to do that. But the plane-- they wanted a plane guard there in case there's trouble with a pilot. I put the USS *Belknap* back together in the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. And it was in a plane guard position over in the Mediterranean.

[00:29:40.16] And it got-- the officer of the deck had his own ideas how the carrier was coming around to recover aircraft. And in the carrier, the officer of the deck had his own ideas of how to come about. He was just going to stop and twist the ship in one place rather than-- you're supposed to come right and get in the wake of the carrier and follow it around.

[00:30:10.67] He decided he was just going to stop and twist the ship and be there. And it was about 8:00 at night. And the first thing the skipper knew, he was down in the wardroom, he hears, Captain to the bridge, Captain to the bridge. And he got up there and-- he got up there and recognized the situation. And he said, all back full, all back emergencies. Captain, I have the con and-- driving the ship. Took it away from the officer of the deck and he slowed the relative speed.

[00:30:41.63] But the USS *Belknap* ran into the John F Kennedy and pretty much destroyed the superstructure of the ship. Fuel oil from an external JP five line on the side of the Kennedy leaked fuel oil down into the after fire room. And there was a big explosion. They lost I think nine people. And it burned and then they had to tow it back to the United States.

[00:31:11.96] And they put it in the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. And since I was there, they made me the project manager for that. And that was one of my most enjoyable assignments. So basically I cut it off at the main deck and gave it an overhaul, a major overhaul, below the main deck. And firm fixed price the job for \$250 million. And that's a job I enjoyed the most.

[00:31:47.42] JOHN DONAHUE: Just seeing that part of the world. I think the war was worthwhile. I wish Zelenskyy the same outcome or-- in his war with Russia. Seeing that part of the world. I hadn't been over there.

[00:32:16.65] JOHN DONAHUE: It was all going on. But I think at the Naval Research Laboratory, those tours is where I saw a lot of change and advances in technology and things like that. And we went from steam to gas turbine to nuclear power in a bigger way. And Admiral Rickover for a while there had determined or had Congress pass that major ships would all be nuclear power. And that didn't come about. But we don't have enough nuclear power guys anyway to do that. And I think the education of the country has fallen off and COVID hasn't helped it either.

[00:32:52.05] MARK FRANKLIN: When you're transiting the Pacific Ocean, it's not always nice weather. Talk about what happens when you hit a storm or when there's bad weather in those ships.

[00:32:59.67] JOHN DONAHUE: You slow down on a destroyer, and you go into the sea-- head into the sea. I can remember in particular on the *Hoel* being on watch and going across the ocean in 50-foot seas, if you will.

[00:33:17.20] MARK FRANKLIN: What does that do to a ship?

[00:33:18.42] JOHN DONAHUE: Well, if you're headed straight into it, it's going up and down like this. The bow's coming out of the water, and back down. And I can remember eating in the ward room and you got a bowl of soup there. And you're rolling side the side, and you're tilting it side to side so it doesn't spill. And you just slow down or look for a fair weather spot or a place where there's less weather.

[00:33:48.51] MARK FRANKLIN: Does anyone ever get injured in seas like that when they're on a ship?

[00:33:52.56] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. Occasional falls and stuff. Out on deck, I remember refueling on the *Hoel*. And I was in charge of the after refueling station. And we were getting oil from an oiler. It's the replenishing ship so we have to keep station on it. So we're 100 feet apart with a six-inch hose going from there to us, and nobody else could get a line across.

[00:34:22.20] There's two fueling stations that could have fueled up forward and back aft where I was. And back aft it was more stable and steady. So we got the hose across and were able to get fuel on the ship. But you got-- you're wearing life jackets and safety belts and stuff like that too.

[00:34:47.50] JOHN DONAHUE: When the boiler was having a problem. Had a casualty report, cas rep, And had to do major repairs to it or go alongside a tender or ship repair facility to get things fixed. On the *Hoel*, we had to clean fire sides every 1,000 hours. The fuel oil at that time would corrode or crust up the outside of the boiler tubes.

[00:35:18.10] And you had to go in there with steam lances and clean them out. And the captain, to his credit, knew that the snipes needed a break-- the snipes are engineers-- needed a break too. So he allowed us, we were up in North Star--

[00:35:34.06] and I didn't mention that before, but North Star is up at the top of the Tonkin Gulf, in the plane guard position up there. North Star is a two mile box at the top of the Tonkin Gulf. And we're going around-- just driving around this box. And the captain allowed us to go down to one boiler so the snipes could clean the boiler in the other fire room. It's a pretty hard, dirty job. And so that when we got to port, that the snipes could have some time off too.

[00:36:08.92] So one boiler, you lose that boiler, you're dead in the water. So it takes a while to bring up the other one. There's diesel generators on there to provide emergency power. On that North Star station, if a pilot got shot up-- if a pilot got shot up and he tried to make it out over the water and-- before he bailed out-- and we did-- picked up Air Force guys and Navy pilots as well. And then we'd ransom them back to the aircraft carrier for ice cream and movies.

[00:36:41.20] MARK FRANKLIN: You mentioned a steam lance. Describe what that is.

[00:36:43.81] JOHN DONAHUE: It's steam and water and a pipe that you just-- under high pressure-- and you're just blasting the outside of the tubes after the boiler is cold to get all the carbon and soot off of the tubes so you have better heat transfer when you're operating.

[00:37:03.46] The water is inside of the boiler drum and the steam drum, mud drum. And the tubes run between it. And the tubes are full of water too. And they crowed up after a while. If you don't do it after too long, these accumulations will catch fire and burn and cause the boiler to explode or develop leaks.

[00:37:36.40] JOHN DONAHUE: The Australians bought three of our DDGs. And we had an Australian officer on board the ship, on the board to *Hoel*, which we-- we went and visited him a few years ago in Australia. And he was going to be the main propulsion assistant on one of their DDGs. Those Australian guys are good folks. He more or less slept on our couch for three months while he was on the *Hoel* and back here in the States. And those guys can drink beer every day, all day long and never get drunk.

[00:38:16.57] But he was a good guy and his wife's a good person. And we visited him when we flew to Australia a few years ago. And I've got a good impression of the Japanese too. They're super hard working, industrious folks. And very, very conscientious and very clean. And in Hong Kong, the Chinese are very hardworking and industrious, not as clean. And you get to the Philippines, everything's diminished. Yes.

[00:38:50.65] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you have any contact with the Vietnamese Navy?

[00:38:53.67] JOHN DONAHUE: No.

[00:38:53.99] MARK FRANKLIN: Or the Vietnamese at all?

[00:38:54.76] JOHN DONAHUE: No. JOHN DONAHUE: As I said, our daughter was born two weeks after we deployed. And the first time I called-- we were in the Philippines a few days later, and I went over to wherever you can make phone calls from and paid a dollar a minute to call her from Subic. And I asked my wife to pinch her to make her cry so I know-- She did.

[00:39:28.00] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah.

[00:39:29.20] JOHN DONAHUE: Other than that, there were letters. We used to-- you got mail irregularly. So every time I wrote a letter, she did. She put a number on it so you'd know which sequence to read them in. That's what we pretty much did. And then we did tapes, cassette tapes, and sent those back and forth too.

[00:39:51.28] My wife recalls a story of one of the cassette tapes. I'm recording it down in the room and we're doing gunfire support. And she could hear the five-inch guns going off and in the tape as well. So that's how we communicated.

[00:40:05.68] MARK FRANKLIN: Did that have any effect on her?

[00:40:07.90] JOHN DONAHUE: No.

[00:40:09.32] MARK FRANKLIN: OK. So--

[00:40:10.00] JOHN DONAHUE: She was worried about me of course. JOHN DONAHUE: Back in the *Zelima*, the first-- on the way home, we stopped in Pearl. And my wife met the ship over there. And we stayed at Fort Derussy. And that was kind of nice. I flew home from there. So we were there for a week in Fort Derussy.

[00:40:39.77] MARK FRANKLIN: You talked about coming home, and how did you feel about some of the antiwar protests?

[00:40:44.06] JOHN DONAHUE: I didn't like them. I wasn't happy that the country felt that way. I'm not happy with the politics in the country today and what's going on. But you can only control so much and do the best you can with what you got. My wife couldn't tell that she was married-- or her husband was in the Navy.

[00:41:05.96] And she was a nurse, working as a nurse here in San Diego. And there was a lot of hate and discontent. And so we just kept quiet about being in the service. And the same thing was-- happened while I was at post graduate school. We wore civilian clothes to classes in Monterey because of the Vietnam War protests.

[00:41:30.26] MARK FRANKLIN: You stayed in the Navy?

[00:41:31.76] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes, I did. Been a good career.

[00:41:35.24] MARK FRANKLIN: Any difficulty adjusting to life after-- ?

[00:41:38.69] JOHN DONAHUE: No.

[00:41:39.35] MARK FRANKLIN: --or right after Vietnam even though you stayed in the Navy?

[00:41:42.17] JOHN DONAHUE: No. No. No, I-- in fact, being a Merchant Marine engineer, I became a port engineer for the Military Sealift Command, which is the commercial part of the Navy, if you will. And port engineers take care of their maintenance stuff, so I did that for them for a while. And my wife and I bought a 40-foot motor home and traveled around wherever these ships were being overhauled or maintained,

[00:42:11.75] and saw most of the country. And had this map on the door of all the states. And we had to sleep in a state in order to put it on our map on the door. And we missed only four or five states, some of the smaller New England ones up north. And so we took time between it and stuff like that. And then I found the Midway. Yeah. That's why I'm wearing this. 2001, I found a Midway. I worked here for 15 years.

[00:42:41.42] MARK FRANKLIN: Doing?

[00:42:43.07] JOHN DONAHUE: Most of what you see out there is mine.

[00:42:45.17] MARK FRANKLIN: Is that right?

[00:42:47.26] JOHN DONAHUE: That entrance that has elevators, the elevator going down to the second deck--

[00:42:50.72] MARK FRANKLIN: Right.

[00:42:51.17] JOHN DONAHUE: That's mine. There's-- the Bob Hope Theater is mine, Battle of Midway Theater is mine.

[00:42:57.10] MARK FRANKLIN: You built all of that?

[00:42:58.10] JOHN DONAHUE: Yeah. The classrooms are mine. The air conditioning throughout the ship is mine. Yes, 15 years. Shore power-- there wasn't any shore power in this pier when we came here either. So that was my first project. I did that one as a volunteer. Mack McLaughlin liked what I was doing and made me a paid employee and stayed here 15 years.

[00:43:23.54] MARK FRANKLIN: When did this become a museum?

[00:43:25.31] JOHN DONAHUE: 2001.

[00:43:26.48] MARK FRANKLIN: OK. And so that's when you started to refurbish?

[00:43:30.71] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes it was here and it was just a-- I saw it before it came here. And I went and looked at it, but there wasn't anything-- you know, it was a bare ship then, and stripped down, and stuff all over the place. And I started when we came here. And there wasn't any sewer on the pier either, so we had to do that. I didn't do that project, but I did do the shore power.

[00:43:57.83] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah. Have you had much contact with your fellow Sailors, Naval officers over the years?

[00:44:03.23] JOHN DONAHUE: Yes. Still friends, in Florida, Maryland.

[00:44:08.57] MARK FRANKLIN: Maryland? Where do you get together? Do you get together or just--

[00:44:14.12] JOHN DONAHUE: Well, we're traveling less now, but we still see some of them. My classmates from the Maritime Academy, we're still-- 40 or 60 are still kicking around so we see them once in a while too. JOHN DONAHUE: I just wanted to be a career Naval officer, 30 years, '63 to '93.

[00:44:38.23] MARK FRANKLIN: Do you think that experience in Vietnam affected the way you think about troops coming home today?

[00:44:42.91] JOHN DONAHUE: No, not really. I mean, they served. I'm a little disappointed with the-- I went to the VA hospital in La Jolla for an appointment yesterday. And the VA is still hard to deal with. And there were some-- and it had all these drug-addled vets. A lot of people just aren't trying.

[00:45:12.07] And they're just-- they want a handout. More so the general population than the veterans. But I'm concerned about the direction the country is going these days, and this kill politics on both sides. And it's discouraging.

[00:45:31.78] MARK FRANKLIN: How do you think the Vietnam War is remembered today?

[00:45:36.07] JOHN DONAHUE: One of many. I mean, at least South Vietnam is productive these days and doing stuff. And I hope Ukraine can come out of this better at the end too, if we stay away from the nuke stuff. But I'm still concerned about Iraq and Afghanistan and all that stuff that's going on over there. And how all that's going to settle out in the long haul.

[00:46:06.67] MARK FRANKLIN: Did you take any lessons from your experience in Vietnam that you'd like to pass on?

[00:46:11.41] JOHN DONAHUE: Everybody's got to do their share. And there's too much-- too many people trying to avoid their share with taxes and everything else. And the drug culture is very concerning.

[00:46:31.69] JOHN DONAHUE: I was stationed in Washington DC at the time when it opened. And we went down there with some of our friends, Navy friends. And as they were-- the speeches were over. The veteran in a wheelchair went out to the V and played taps.

[00:47:03.31] MARK FRANKLIN: He had a bugle with him? Wow. What are your impressions of that Memorial?

[00:47:09.64] JOHN DONAHUE: It is what it is.

[00:47:11.96] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah.

[00:47:14.05] JOHN DONAHUE: I looked up a few names on the Wall. But that guy playing taps--

[00:47:21.36] MARK FRANKLIN: Yeah. Well, Mr. Donahue, that was great interview. You're the first engineer that we've had a chance to talk to and talk about how boats move through the water. So I appreciate your time, and appreciate your story. And thank you, sir, for your service.

[00:47:35.94] JOHN DONAHUE: My pleasure.