

# Robert McLeod

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Interviewed by Aaron Pylinski

Transcribed by Unknown

Edited by Leah Cohen

Web biography by Unknown and Leah Cohen

Pylinski: My name is Aaron Pylinski. I'm with the Pritzker Military Library. We're doing Stories of Service for Mr. Robert McLeod. Today is September the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013. I'm on the phone with Mr. McLeod. Sir, how are you doing today?

McLeod: I'm alive and kicking.

Pylinski: That's good, that's good. I just want to start off the, some of the interview questions with, when and where were you born?

McLeod: I was born in Arlington, Virginia.

Pylinski: And what's your birthday?

McLeod: I was born on the 15th of September, of 1960.

Pylinski: Did you grow up in Arlington or was that just your place of birth?

McLeod: That was just the place of birth. My family kind of moved around for the first couple years, then settled here in Illinois.

Pylinski: So predominantly then you grew up in Illinois?

McLeod: Yes, sir.

Pylinski: Was that around here, in Chicago?

McLeod: Yep. South suburbs.

Pylinski: South suburbs, okay. So what was it like growing up in the south suburbs?

McLeod: It was good, it was good. I couldn't complain. I did bounce around the schools; I went to the schools the whole time I was growing up. That was expected about everybody and, you know, normal childhood.

Pylinski: All right. Did you have any brothers and sisters growing up?

McLeod: No, only child.

Pylinski: Only child, okay. So you didn't have to split time with your parents, with any bros or sises?

McLeod: [Laughs] No.

Pylinski: So, what did your parents do growing up?

McLeod: My dad worked for the railroad and my mother was a stay-at-home mom, which was very common back then, so I couldn't get away with anything.

Pylinski: [Both laugh] Always had Ma watching over you.

McLeod: Yeah, and then that famous words: "Wait till your father gets home." [Laughs].

Pylinski: Yeah, I know that one. So which railroad then did your dad work for?

McLeod: He worked for the C&EI [Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railroad], then he worked for MOPAC [Missouri-Pacific Railroad], which then turned into Union Pacific.

Pylinski: And that was pretty interesting, I mean growing up, did you know a lot about what your dad was doing so far as his work was concerned?

McLeod: No. No, not really because he worked long hours and he, you know, made sure that there's a roof over our head, the bills were paid, I did what I was supposed to do. He didn't talk about work much.

Pylinski: All right... Were you ever involved in any sports or school politics or anything like that, as a kid growing up?

McLeod: I never got into politics. No, I wrestled and played football when I was in high school. That was my interest. I did a little band, but I wasn't too talented there.

Pylinski: What instrument did you play?

McLeod: Coronet and Baritone for a while.

Pylinski: Okay. Right on. What year did you graduate high school then?

McLeod: 1979.

Pylinski: So growing up as a kid, I mean obviously, you were born in '60, and I know Vietnam was starting to get hot and heavy around '68, '69, so you were still pretty young. Were you aware at all of what was going on so far as the Vietnam War was concerned, as a kid growing up?

McLeod: I knew that Vietnam was going up, but by the time I went into high school was the time that they pulled everybody out of Vietnam.

Pylinski: Okay, yeah, early 70's. Okay good deal. Growing up, graduated high school in '79, did you have any inkling to join the military or were you going to college or thinking about going to college?

McLeod: I always had the desire to go into the Navy growing up. When I got it, I don't know. It was there to go into the Navy because they asked us at high school, "What are you going to do?" And I said, "Graduate and join the Navy." And that's exactly, you know, pretty much what I did.

Pylinski: I see that your enlistment date was November of 1979.

McLeod: Yep.

Pylinski: Did you have any friends growing up that were interested in the military as well?

McLeod: The atmosphere of the town that I grew up was very white collar. So a lot didn't go towards the military. College was preferred so that you could go into business after you got done.

Pylinski: Where did you live at, specifically? Which suburb were you in?

McLeod: Park Forest.

Pylinski: Okay, so it's something that you just thought about and said, "The Navy is the place I want to be."

McLeod: Well the thing about it was, was growing up, you were in one town. You didn't do a whole lot of traveling. When you were the only kid in the family and when you looked around, everybody else had brothers and sisters. It turned into an itchy travel-foot.

Pylinski: Oh yeah, I gotcha. When I went to high school, I went to high school in Georgia, and my father was a career military man, so I moved around a lot, too. And that was the first thing after I graduated high school, I said, "I am leaving and I'm never coming back." I held to that definitely, true, and true. I think there was, like, four months in between when I graduated high school and when I joined the military. Not even that, I think I was gone the next month. Yeah, two months.

McLeod: Actually what I did when I graduated, there was a lot of discussion of what I was going to do with my life. My dad wanted me to go to college, and back then, I was, I attempted to go to college, but I wasn't ready.

Pylinski: What were you thinking about studying, and what school were you thinking about going to?

McLeod: Well, I went to an off campus of Purdue that was right over across the border in Indiana. I was going to study Engineering. But I just the- I got tired of the books; I got tired of the studying because I wasn't the normal kid in high school. I didn't

go out and party, I didn't go out and do wild things. I was, you know, went to class, did my sports, went home, did my homework, rested, went up and did it again. So, by the time I graduated, it was like, "Enough."

Pylinski: So you were pretty much, "business, business," when it came to school?

McLeod: Yeah.

Pylinski: So then, you only had a few months in between graduation and your enlistment. What did you do during that time? Did you go out and let your hair down?

McLeod: [Laughs] That's when some of it started, not all of it but my dad got me a summer job with the railroad for the summertime, to make a few bucks, put them in my pocket. When September rolled around, I did go to Purdue for a couple months and it just didn't work out. Again, me and my parents had the discussion, and it was, the decision was made that I would go into the Navy after the holidays. Well, things didn't work out, and as you can see, I went in November.

Pylinski: Yeah, right before all the big holidays, the big winter holidays. Was your father expecting you, then, to take a job in the railroad or did he get you that summer job just to get you that spending money?

McLeod: He was just getting me spending money.

Pylinski: So how did your family take the whole, wanting to join the military? Were they pretty supportive or were they trying to talk you out of it?

McLeod: It wasn't good. It wasn't good.

Pylinski: It was a good decision on your part, they think?

McLeod: Well... how it went about was not good. Like I said, it was something I wanted to do. They really didn't want me to do it. But to be honest with you, it was, it

boiled down, it was my decision because, 'Hey, when you graduate, it's your life.'  
So...

Pylinski: That's understandable. Did your pop have any parting words or advice for you before joining the service?

McLeod: In several discussions that we had, he said, "Keep your new uniform neat and shine your boots." That's all he told me. [Laughs]

Pylinski: That's just kind of like the sheer basics of it all, really. If you look out of part or out of place, they're definitely going to pick you out. That's good advice for you. I know my pop, when I joined, he just told me, "Don't volunteer for anything." I just kind of threw that advice right out the window. I volunteered for the service, then I volunteered for Airborne School, then I volunteered for the 82nd Airborne Division. I just couldn't seem to stop volunteering. It just seemed like the right thing to do; I don't know. It worked out good for me, though. So then, you went in the service, where did you do your basic training at?

McLeod: Back then, I had my choice of either going to Orlando, staying up here in Great Lakes, or heading out to California.

Pylinski: And what did you choose?

McLeod: I went to California.

Pylinski: Excellent, where out in California were you at?

McLeod: San Diego.

Pylinski: What was that like, being at Boot Camp in San Diego?

McLeod: Well, for the first time in my life, I was away from home, by myself. So, you can imagine that kind of, being in basic [training]. All of a sudden, you get thrown in a room with X number of guys and the next thing you know, you wake up to somebody in your face. [Laughter].

Pylinski: The drill sergeants or the, what did you guys have? Drill instructors, right?

McLeod: No, they were called company commanders, same thing. [Laughter].

Pylinski: So, your other boot camp mates, were they all from all over the U.S. as well? Or were they Midwesterners, or what?

McLeod: Pretty much, a lot of the West Coast guys were there, but there was some out of the Midwest area.

Pylinski: Did you know what job you were going to get when you signed up? Or did you have to wait until you were in boot camp?

McLeod: It was kinda weird because when I was going to come into the Navy after the holidays, I had a guaranteed schooling for an Electronics Mate. Well, when I went in early, that went out the window and I was a basic, and I went into the Airman field, the aviation side of the Navy.

Pylinski: Were you all right with that?

McLeod: That was fine.

Pylinski: Well, you ended up making a career out of it so I guess it couldn't have been too bad, right?

McLeod: No, it wasn't too bad.

Pylinski: So, your occupational specialty was Aviation Boatswain's Mate, right? ABH1?

McLeod: Well, that's what I was when I retired. When I started, I was just a plain old airman, okay, just like, you know, basic, private first class. No no nothing, got nothing on the sleeve, no specialty, no nothing.

Pylinski: Just a buck private, more or less.

McLeod: There you go. "We'll plug you in over here."

Pylinski: Yeah exactly, "You'll learn as you go kid." What were, did you have any experiences in boot camp that stuck out to you?

McLeod: There's a lot of things that happened during basic training that I remember, and it's basically the people.

Pylinski: Okay. Well, what about the people do you remember the most?

McLeod: Oh, it was just some of the things that we did and kind of joked around and when we went from here to there, and then when times got a little tough for our unit, that we, towards the end there, we started pulling together, and we didn't listen to our company commanders because it was like, "Hell or high water, we're all making it." [Both laugh]

Pylinski: Stick together right... team work...

McLeod: Well, and I think that's what they were trying to do.

Pylinski: That's good. That's good that you guys kinda fell into that too, though. Did you have some good friends from basic training? Anybody that you...

McLeod: You know, this is the strange thing about it is that when we got done with basic, those that had a guaranteed school, off they went. Those of us that didn't have any school, we went to apprenticeship training for a couple weeks, then we got orders to go wherever. I did not see or hear anybody from basic until about three years later when I came across one of the guys in Norfolk. And it was just basically like, "Hi, how you doing?" and, what was he doing?

Pylinski: Interesting.

McLeod: Well it's... you know, you're only talking a couple months back then for us.

Pylinski: Right and then a few years in between, yeah, you know as far as service is concerned, it's like worlds apart.



McLeod: Well and the thing about it is that, back then normally, a lot of individuals that came in did their enlistment and then got out.

Pylinski: Yeah, okay... So how many years did you sign up for when you first joined in?

McLeod: It was four.

Pylinski: Four years okay, and were you planning on doing just four and getting out?

McLeod: Actually, no.

Pylinski: Did you think you were going to make a career out of it?

McLeod: Yeah.

Pylinski: Okay well, that's interesting.

McLeod: I actually went in, and I was going to do twenty years, if not more. I already had that in my head when I went in.

Pylinski: That's a pretty solid goal to have, I mean especially when it comes to military service.

McLeod: Yeah. Well, if you really take a look at it, and if you take a look at the companies out here, where can you go and do twenty years and when you retire, you get half the money that you are making at the time you retire?

Pylinski: Yeah, the retirement benefits are nothing to be sad about so far as military service is concerned.

McLeod: No. I mean, and then everything that you get while you're in, and everything else that was going on. "Okay yeah, I'll put up with the discipline. Not a problem." [Laughter]

Pylinski: Right yeah, it's kind of a simple tradeoff I guess you could say. All right, so after your boot camp then you already had a job more or less, so far you had an MOS more or less that you knew you were going into?

McLeod: No, not really.

Pylinski: No? As an electrician's mate?

McLeod: No, that deal fell through.

Pylinski: That's right because you went to the aviation side of the house, that's right.

McLeod: Right. So after basic, I went to apprenticeship training.

Pylinski: Where was that at?

McLeod: San Diego.

Pylinski: Okay so you stayed there in San Diego.

McLeod: Right and it was just the basics of the aviation side of the house. Just the very basics, so that's all the knowledge you had, and then we went home for our two weeks, and we had our orders for wherever we were going to go, and off we went.

Pylinski: So after you did your training, you were going home. Did you know where you were going after that, I am assuming?

McLeod: Yeah, when I left San Diego, I had orders to the East Coast to my first ship.

Pylinski: Which was in Norfolk, right?

McLeod: Mmhmm.

Pylinski: Okay, and what did you do on those two weeks when you went home?

McLeod: I just kind of hang around and kind of enjoyed things, being home, and being in uniform for the first time, being home so. You know, at that point in time it was like, okay, my parents like, "Okay, this is what he's doing and that's the end of the story."

Pylinski: And everyone seemed to be all right? What was the reaction of your friends and all your neighborhood, coming home after boot camp?

McLeod: They were like, "Okay, you did exactly what you said you were going to do."  
[Laughter]

Pylinski: Way to stick to your guns, Man.

McLeod: Well, and the thing is too, most of those that I went through schooling with, were, like, in college already.

Pylinski: Right, they were probably started right in their winter semester.

McLeod: Right they were, like, in college and, you know we're talking February time frame by the time I got home. I'd just kind of walk around and spend a couple weeks at home, and then off I went.

Pylinski: Awesome. So when you signed into Norfolk then, this was in 1980, right?

McLeod: Mmhmm.

Pylinski: So let's say March 1980, you think or...?

McLeod: I'd say either late February or early March.

Pylinski: Okay. And did you know what ship you were going to be assigned to and what your duties were going to be yet?

McLeod: I knew what ship I was going to be assigned to. I didn't know what duties I was going to get.

Pylinski: So what ship did you end up going to?

McLeod: I went to the USS Iwo Jima, (LPH-2).

Pylinski: Okay.

McLeod: And believe me, my first night on that was very interesting.

Pylinski: How was that? [Laughter] Do you want to tell us about your first night?

McLeod: Well, the thing was is that when I went to Norfolk to report, the ship was coming back from deployment. So I spent time in what they called Nimitz Hall, and if any Sailor knows Norfolk and knows about Nimitz Hall, knows that's the worst place you can go. [Laughter]

Pylinski: And why's that?

McLeod: It's the transit barracks.

Pylinski: Okay, so yeah it's probably...

McLeod: Yeah, it's not a good place to be because...

Pylinski: A personnel depot more or less?

McLeod: Right so, but when my ship finally came in, they tied up, everybody got off, we checked onboard, they gave us our racks, and said, "See you later." You know, because everybody else was going home. You know, "You guys are awesome." So there was like, me and a couple other guys that checked onboard at the same time. We're like, "You know what, let's go grab a beer or something," you know. There was nothing else to do so we went out, had a beer or two. We came back to the ship to, you know, "Okay, we're onboard. We're on our ship, okay." We come back onboard and here was this huge first class, old grizzly looking guy, screaming at us.

Pylinski: For leaving ship?

McLeod: Well unbeknownst to us, we got assigned a watch, because there was not enough people in the duty section to cover the watches.

Pylinski: Right so the new guys are going to be picking those ones up.

McLeod: Well, nobody told us. So like we said, here's this big, grizzly guy just all over us when we walked onboard. [Grizzly sounds] And we just kind of looked at him and said, "Nobody told us."

Pylinski: What did he do after that? Who was your first line supervisor? Did you even have one yet?

McLeod: He'd already gone home.

Pylinski: Oh geez! [Laughter]

McLeod: So, we explained to him, we had just checked onboard. That day, just a few hours beforehand, we had just checked onboard. And he says, "How much ya'll been drinking?" "Eh, (so much)." Well you know, he said, "Go climb in your dungarees, you all come back up here." And the other guy that was supposed to stand watch with us was a guy that was on restriction. And he said, "Don't worry about him. He's just been having a bad day." [Laughter]

Pylinski: I bet he had to wrangle all you new recruits. He probably wasn't too happy about that.

McLeod: Well, the whole thing was, you know, it wasn't there- We weren't there for watch, nobody told us, you know. It was not good.

Pylinski: Did you end up getting in any trouble, or they just let ya....?

McLeod: No, because I mean, what are you going to ...You're going to take three new recruits up to the captain and tell him, "Okay, they missed their watch, punish them?" "Excuse us, we haven't even really, you know, we turned over our orders and all that when we checked onboard, but we haven't really been ... [an]

induction to the ship yet.” It wouldn’t have reached the captain; he already knew that.

Pylinski: So why don’t you tell me a little bit about the Iwo Jima?

McLeod: Well, that there, that was the first amphibious ship built from the keel up for amphibious operations. So, it’s got a bit of history. But as my time went onboard, you got to- There wasn’t many of us as far as a crew went, so it’s kind of like, the guys on the flight deck knew only knew the guys on the flight deck. The guys down in the boilers only knew the guys in the boilers. No. On there, when you were off duty, you got to know everybody.

Pylinski: It was an aircraft carrier, right? But for helicopters?

McLeod: Right. But this ship, there was less than 1,000 guys that was ship’s company, so you got to know people.

Pylinski: Right, and that doesn’t include aviators?

McLeod: No, it doesn’t, it does not include the Marines, it does not include the pilots.

Pylinski: Got you. All right, so you were on the Iwo Jima, which was like a helicopter landing pad aircraft carrier, more or less. When was the first time that you went to sea on that ship?

McLeod: It was about a year later because the ship had problems. [Laughs]. But it was, you know, you went out for workups, you did this. You start learning your jobs that you had to do. I was assigned to the flight deck to start off with.

Pylinski: What were your duties on the flight deck?

McLeod: Back then it was, you know like you said buck private, you got all the dirty details. So that was me. And basically, what it was, is when we were out on the sea doing flight operations, we, the low guys, did all the chalking and chaining. And what that is, is when one of the helos [i.e. helicopters] lands onboard the

ship, you chalk the wheels and you put chains on the helo, so it doesn't roll around the ship. So that's what I did. And then as you learned, you know, as you learned your craft, you learn the next step, and the next step, and the next step.

Pylinski: So that was pretty much your first year, was learning how to do all that stuff, and then you went out to sea?

McLeod: Yeah. We went out to sea, finally, and did some work ups, and this, that, and the other thing.

Pylinski: How long were you out at sea for your first trip?

McLeod: Just a couple of weeks.

Pylinski: Did you guys go anyplace exciting?

McLeod: No, it was just off the coast of Virginia. But we finally went to a North Atlantic cruise, which was fun.

Pylinski: What time frame was this?

McLeod: I'd say about early '81.

Pylinski: So you were sitting in kind of the middle of the Cold War, more or less, not necessarily in the middle of it, but it was Cold War time frame, so you guys were working your exercises around that kind of stuff?

McLeod: Yeah, because we did what they called NATO exercises up there in the north Atlantic. And that's where, you know, we did joint operations with foreign navies. And it got interesting because one of the things that I remember being out to sea up there was we see like a German destroyer out there. And the seas were so bad at this particular time that we'd look out there and you'd see the German destroyer. And then the sea would move, then, the next thing you

would see would be the top of the mast of the German destroyer. Then, you'd see the German destroyer, then you'd see the top of the mast.

Pylinski: Wow. Yeah, I can imagine the seas are pretty rough up there in the North Atlantic. Nice and cold too.

McLeod: Yeah. Like I said, it was interesting. Then, we came back home for a little while, then we went on what they call a Med cruise.

Pylinski: What was that all about?

McLeod: We went down to Morehead City. We picked up the Marine helo unit squadrons.

Pylinski: Okay. And that's down in North Carolina right? Morehead?

McLeod: Right. And then we picked up the Marines out of there too, loaded them all up. And then we went straight to the Mediterranean.

Pylinski: Excellent. How was the Mediterranean?

McLeod: For the first few months, it was pretty good. And then, this is back during the time of the... I think it was...there was some problems going off over there in the area of the IO back then. Indian Ocean. We were scheduled to go through the Suez Canal, and then come into the Indian Ocean to finish up our deployment there before we headed back to the East Coast. Well, before we got to the opening of the Suez Canal to go through, the ship received orders. We turned around and went back off the coast of Beirut, Lebanon, and that's where we sat until it was time to go back home.

Pylinski: Yeah, I saw that one of your actions that you had served in, twice it says you were in Beirut. What was that-what was your first experience off the coast of Beirut like?

McLeod: Doing doughnuts.



Pylinski: Just going sailing around in circles?

McLeod: Yeah, that's all we did. We just did doughnuts.

McLeod: We just went around in circles all

Pylinski: Did you guys launch aircraft in support of ground operations or what?

McLeod: Well, we didn't deploy the troops, but we sat off the coast in case something did happen. That's what we were there for. So, that was our first taste of it. And then we got relieved, we came back home. And the ship went into overhaul, then it came back out. We did workups, and then, let's see here, about April/May time frame of '83 is when the ship went back down to Moorhead City, picked up the helo squadron and the Marines. And here's the strange thing about it, a lot of these guys were with us two years earlier.

Pylinski: Same crews?

McLeod: Most of them. Right. And we already knew exactly where we were going. We got over there- We got back off the coast after about two and a half weeks, sailing straight over there. Every Marine, every Marine off, out of the BLT went ashore.

Pylinski: What's, what was the acronym again?

McLeod: Battalion Landing Taskforce. I know it's Battalion Landing and I think it's Team. That was like the whole unit. They all went ashore. Now the entire Marine unit that was with us was in the MEU, the Marine Expeditionary Unit. So, as they got ashore and relieved the Marines that were already there, we got into our daily routine.

Pylinski: What was your daily routine for the most part?

McLeod: Doing circles, flying helos in and out.

Pylinski: This was after the Marine Corps barracks was attacked?

McLeod: No, this was before. Like I said, we left in the April time frame to get over there. September is when things started getting hairy.

Pylinski: And you guys were still there during that time?

McLeod: Right, we were still there. Now our problem was that Sundays became, it became routine on Sundays to hear about a medevac [i.e., medical evacuation] coming in. This was, you know, and it was just for, you know, one Marine that got sniper fire shot at him, that got hit. And we were getting used to that. And there'd be nights that we'd sit off the coast and, you know, once flight operations got done for the day, we'd just sit on the flight deck and look at the coast of Beirut, and you could see the firing.

Pylinski: Beirut used to be something of a vacation spot, and it pretty much turned into a nasty warzone.

McLeod: It wasn't a vacation spot when I was there.

Pylinski: No, I can imagine. It was probably like hell on earth. [Laughs]

McLeod: Yeah. Now actually, now the ship that I was on, we didn't- See, normally what they liked to do is when you're deployed for so long is that you need to get off the ship and then get away from military lifestyle for a while. So, what they tried to do for us sailors, because, see, for the Marines that were in Beirut, some of them would fly to the ships and get a little time on the ships, and for them, that was a big relief.

Pylinski: Right, right, because they're not on the ground.

McLeod: They're not on the ground. They had a chance to take warm showers. A good night-

Pylinski: Eat some regular food...

McLeod: Right. It was--They can clean up, relax, chill out for a little bit, everything else. But for us though, it was a constant. So, what they decided to do was they started taking some of the ships and okay, sending a couple of guys out of each division off to one of the ships, and then that ship would go off and hit a liberty port. Well, the two never got a chance to leave.

Pylinski: So you guys were on non-stop operations, more or less?

McLeod: That's right. It was, we had several dignitaries flying on and off. It got to be, yeah, we weren't going nowhere.

Pylinski: So how long were you out there before you came back?

McLeod: We were deployed for the six-month period. Back then, that was the only thing really going on so there was no holding task force or ships on station to complete their jobs because the needs were spread thin.

Pylinski: So you came back to Norfolk then after six months?

McLeod: Well, we also had to go through the bombing of the barracks, too.

Pylinski: Right. And what was that experience like for your ship?

McLeod: Crazy.

Pylinski: Was it? Did you guys receive a lot of medevacs then?

McLeod: We did that constantly for the first twelve hours. We should have realized the way the guy announced it.

Pylinski: How did that go?

McLeod: Normally you just hear, you know, "Flight course, flight course, medevac coming in." The guy heard what happened and he was, you could hear the unsettlingness in his voice. But we didn't catch on.

Pylinski: Did reality sink in though when the casualties started coming on deck?

McLeod: The reality started sinking in when we started bringing them onboard, taking them down to the hanger bay, and medical personnel were doing the operations right there.

Pylinski: Wow. There was triage everywhere then, huh?

McLeod: There was triage everywhere. The ones that were more seriously had a chance to go up to the operating room. Here's the amazing thing about it: Nobody turned around, nobody went to hide in the corner, everybody came out to do what they had to do.

Pylinski: Well, that's good. All hands on deck and everybody did their job, right?

McLeod: I mean, if you maybe sat there with a Marine after he had been taken care of, just to hold his hand to let him know he was okay, was, sometimes that was the best thing you could do.

Pylinski: That thing was a total shock to a lot of people. That was 100% unexpected, right?

McLeod: [Laughter] Well, to some.

Pylinski: And you were pretty busy, right? Your job was to handle helicopters as they went in and went out correct?

McLeod: Well, at first it started off with that first helo came in and landed, and I actually had to take one of the first casualties off the helo.

Pylinski: What was that like for you?

McLeod: [Chuckles] Looking down into the Marine's face, I didn't know if he was dead or alive.

Pylinski: That's incredible. But you stayed on course right? You did your job. You got that Marine off the helicopter?

McLeod: I didn't have time. He didn't have time. He kind of moved his eyes, and then I was like, "Okay, he's alive, he's kicking. Let's get him down."

Pylinski: Let's get him fixed up.

McLeod: Right. But the sad part about it was that some of them didn't quite make it. And then we had to bring their bodies back up and send them back into, back into land.

Pylinski: So you were ferrying the bodies of dead Marines back onto the dry land? What was the sole purpose for that, I wonder?

McLeod: The reason for that was because a lot of the dead bodies were already there, and they were, they got put into the coffins, flags draped, and they were sent to Germany before they got sent over to Dover.

Pylinski: Gotcha. Okay, well that makes sense then. Sucks to have to do it, but it does make sense.

McLeod: That's what happens.

Pylinski: So you guys worked through the attacks on Beirut and then headed home to Norfolk, correct?

McLeod: Well actually, I left a few weeks after that. I had reenlisted onboard, and I had orders to go to Texas.

Pylinski: To, which one was that? To Belleville?

McLeod: Beeville. Yes.

Pylinski: Okay, and what was in Beeville, Texas?

McLeod: A training base for pilots. So it was going from one extreme to another extreme, which I don't think I was ready for.

Pylinski: No? Why's that?

McLeod: Well, when you go from being on front lines, you're at a first pace, and then when you go to a training command, it's very laid back.

Pylinski: Right. The mentality, the attitude's a lot slower, a lot different, right?

McLeod: They didn't care about anything else.

Pylinski: Well they are the schoolhouse. That's always one thing I learned in the military was, you're not going to get that warrior spirit at the school house, it just isn't there.

McLeod: No, it wasn't. I did my time there and I went back to the fleet after that.

Pylinski: How long were you in Beeville?

McLeod: A good two years because that's where both my sons were born.

Pylinski: When did you get married?

McLeod: When I came back home from Beirut, I picked up my fiancé in Virginia, put all our stuff in the van, came up here, got married up here, and then I went down to Texas.

Pylinski: What was your wife's name?

McLeod: That was Ex-wife. [Laughs]

Pylinski: Ex-wife, okay. What was your ex-wife's name?

McLeod: Her name was Coleen.

Pylinski: Coleen. Okay. And so you got to Beeville, did some schoolwork. Did you learn a new job?

McLeod: No, I was working on the transit line, there in Beeville. It was a training command for pilots, and that's where the pilots went from the prop jobs to learn how to fly jets. So, it was strictly a training command. I worked at the transit line for aircraft that were not part of the base.

Pylinski: And so you had two sons born there. What were your sons' names?

McLeod: The oldest's name was Robert, and the youngest one was named James.

Pylinski: And then after Beeville, you said you headed back to the fleet?

McLeod: Yeah, we went, I got orders to go to the USS Independence. I went to the big boys.

Pylinski: That's a big aircraft carrier, am I correct?

McLeod: It was.

Pylinski: And what your job on the Independence?

McLeod: Actually, it was in dry dock when I reported.

Pylinski: And where was that at?

McLeod: Philadelphia.

Pylinski: Okay, so you went up to Phili?

McLeod: Yeah, I went to Phili. I took my family and put them in South Carolina, where there were some friends of hers there, because I was not going to take the family to Phili.

Pylinski: Yeah, no I've been to Phili, I don't blame you on that one. [Laughs] What was the time frame on this? We're looking at two years, so we're saying 1987 time frame.

McLeod: Yeah, somewhere around there. I mean that was- Those were some rough years for me personally, because having to deal with the after effects of Beirut and no one really understanding it. And no one cared either. So I was like in limbo during that whole time frame. The ship was coming out of dry dock, they were trying to put the ship back together so it could be an active part of the fleet again. So, and everything else going on so. I don't know how I got through it all, but I got through it all, but at the loss of a family...not making it too well.

Pylinski: Who was that?

McLeod: Oh no, me and the wife divorced.

Pylinski: So, she was in South Carolina, and you were in Philadelphia, and you guys got divorced?

McLeod: Right. We got divorced, and then the thing was that the ship finally got out Phili, went down to Norfolk, and then we went to San Diego. So this got to be about...the later part of the '80's.

Pylinski: Right. So, you got on the Independence and you guys sailed from Phili to San Diego?

McLeod: We spent a couple weeks down in Norfolk, and then the ship went to San Diego.

Pylinski: I'm assuming you guys went through like the Panama Canal and all that good stuff?

McLeod: Nope, Antarctic. We went around the horn.

Pylinski: What was that like?



McLeod: Cold.

Pylinski: Did you have your shellback experience?

McLeod: A few times.

Pylinski: Was this one of them I'm assuming? Because that's when you cross the equator, correct?

McLeod: Right, it is. I'm forgetting when I, first time I crossed the equator...Yeah, I think it was on the Independence. The first time I crossed the equator.

Pylinski: Yeah, I'm saying if you went around the horn then you had to have crossed the equator, twice.

McLeod: [Laughter] Well, we didn't do anything the second time, because you know, "Everyone got across. Okay, very good, they're okay. Let's go."

Pylinski: Did you guys do anything fun, exciting? Did they pelt you with like sardines and pour rotten milk over your head or make you do crabwalks around the flight deck, or anything like that?

McLeod: It was all fun and games and, you know, if you didn't buck them, they got you through fairly quickly.

Pylinski: So now you're in San Diego, now you're on the USS Independence, where were you going from there?

McLeod: Well, actually, back then I was kind of like, getting things back to normal.

Pylinski: What rank were you at that time?

McLeod: At that time, when I left the Iwo Jima, I was an E5 2nd class, and I stayed in 2nd class for quite a while.

Pylinski: Were promotions hard to come by, do you think?

McLeod: No, I just couldn't pass the goddang test.

Pylinski: I know that those tests are tough. I know in the Air force and the Navy, they really, they drill you pretty good.

McLeod: But I was like- I was trying to get myself back together again, you know, during that whole time, and then, you could say it was fate or it was something weird or what have you, but the wife and the kids actually had travelled to California, north of me. And then after I kind of went through some of my personal stuff, I was like, "Okay, I wanted my family back." So, we go back together, eventually, out there.

Pylinski: Well how about that? So were you doing the same job then on the Independence as you were on the Iwo Jima? Or were you actually handling fixed winged aircraft at this time?

McLeod: Yeah, we're actually handling fixed wing aircraft. I was working the flight deck. But we never got a chance to actually do, I never had a chance to, actually, get into the actual full fixed wing atmosphere because I had to go do some rehab while I was on the Independence. And then I got orders off of it, and then I went to go work for a three-star Admiral.

Pylinski: What was that experience like?

McLeod: It was interesting.

Pylinski: And where was this at? Were you still in San Diego then?

McLeod: Yeah, I was still in San Diego, but working on a three-star Admiral's staff is very interesting. You get to learn a whole lot of other stuff, what happens and takes place with a whole lot of other things.

Pylinski: So, what all were your duties then, working for this three star?

McLeod: I was actually in office that took care of the equipment on the flight deck. This was dealing with the arresting gear and the catapults on every carrier that was on the West Coast. And one of my main jobs was that every time something came out for the tech book on any piece of equipment, I would have to update the books that were there in the office.

Pylinski: Interesting, okay. And how long did you do that job for?

McLeod: About two years or so.

Pylinski: And where did you do from there?

McLeod: I went to the Essex, which- No wait a minute, no excuse me. I am sorry. I went to the Ranger. I'm jumping here about three years. I'm the old guy. [Laughs]

Pylinski: Well, tell me a little bit about your time on the USS Ranger?

McLeod: It was good. And the reason why I say this is because after having gone through the stuff and everything else I had gone through, the guys on the Ranger took me in, kind of brought me back into the fold of doing things, a little bit. And you know, I got my family back and, you know, I was able to carry on. And I actually advanced to first class while I was on the Ranger.

Pylinski: Well, that's good, promotions, huh?

McLeod: Yeah, and the only bad thing about being on the Ranger was that it was a good ship, but the time for its decommissioning came. So, I was part of the crew that did the last ride on it.

Pylinski: Were you actually on the Ranger in 1992 when they reenacted the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo?

McLeod: Mhmm.

Pylinski: What was that like?

McLeod: Very historic.

Pylinski: I bet were there a lot of T.V. cameras and all that stuff happening?

McLeod: Oh yeah, it was great to see the World War II aircraft onboard.

Pylinski: Yeah, those were the old, I think they were B-25's, weren't they?

McLeod: Right.

Pylinski: What was it like watching one of those things lumber off the deck?

McLeod: Very interesting. [Both laugh]

Pylinski: Were you guys holding your breath? Those things were not made for that, but...

McLeod: No, you know, it's just, when you work the flight deck and you're used to seeing jets get shot off and land, and some of the other things you see on these flight decks. To see a B-25 go off and then dip down and come back up, "Okay, they're good. Bye-bye, see you later."

Pylinski: Did they land back on the deck or did they land someplace-

McLeod: No, no, no, no, they landed on land. That was whole purpose. They got craned on. They didn't land on the ship.

Pylinski: Were you there when they craned them onto the aircraft carrier and everything?

McLeod: No, I don't think I was there when they craned them on. I know they were onboard. I actually took the family out there to see some of them.

Pylinski: That's pretty cool, that's awesome. And that all happened right there outside of San Diego?

McLeod: Yeah.

Pylinski: Did you meet any of the pilots, you knew the guys that flew the planes that were leaving? Or that flew off?

McLeod: No I didn't, because you got too many people doing too many things.

Pylinski: And you've still got your job to do, really.

McLeod: Yeah, I mean, it was just, "Okay. Go over here. Do this."

Pylinski: That's pretty cool, though. That was awesome that you were a part of that.

McLeod: Oh yeah. Like I said, the years on the Ranger were good years.

Pylinski: I can imagine. And then you said you were part of its decommissioning as well?

McLeod: Right. I actually took-

Pylinski: Where did that happen?

McLeod: It decommissioned in San Diego. Then they took the ship up to San Francisco for the final stages of, you know, shutting it all down, tearing everything apart, and taking out the good stuff, and sealing everything up, and all that. That was the experience.

Pylinski: What was that like for you? Like saying goodbye to an old friend?

McLeod: [Laughs] Well, what was nice was that being the last rated AB on the flight deck to leave, you had some of the guys that had worked on the ship before, they'd come up and says, "Hey man, can we go walk on the underneath the ship?" Because it was in dry dock at that time, and a whole lot of people don't get to do that.

Pylinski: No. Did you get a chance to do that though I guess, right?

McLeod: Oh God, the thing about it is, when you work a ship, when you work on a ship, you get into a routine that, "This is my area of life," and everything else, and it seems to get small after so many months. You forget how big these things are.

Pylinski: Yeah, I can imagine standing underneath that thing probably put it into perspective?

McLeod: Big time. Yeah. Me and a couple of chiefs went there and, "Okay, we're underneath the Ranger that works." [Laughs] "Later!"

Pylinski: So then after that you got assigned to the USS Essex, correct?

McLeod: Yep. I went from decommissioning, or taking one on its last ride, to one that I was taking it out for its first deployment. And not too many can say that.

Pylinski: Yeah, that's a really cool contrast, you know. Out with the old, in with the new, if you will.

McLeod: Now, if you take a look at some of the numbers of the ships that I was on, I went from a 2, to a 61, no to a 62, to a 61, back to a 2.

Pylinski: Yeah, because LDH-2 was the USS Essex, correct? That's pretty cool. So you had the same job working fixed wing on the Essex?

McLeod: No, that was helos. It was helos, but we also had a chance to bring harriers onboard for the first time. That was the first time I was dealing with harriers. And after having worked with fixed wing, working with harriers was frustrating.

Pylinski: How so?

McLeod: There's a certain sign language that we use on the flight deck to communicate with pilots. And the Marine harrier pilots were not catching on to that lingo, and when you've got your chief saying, "Get them outta there!" You're trying to tell this pilot to move, and it won't work. [Laughter] But, and those harriers are not

anything to sneer at either. I mean, they got their whole ball game of stuff they got to deal with too, so learning all that was interesting.

Pylinski: I can imagine. Because that's a vertical takeoff and landing aircraft.

McLeod: Right, and we didn't do that too often. We rather liked to do the short takeoffs with them, but they would land vertically. And that was, I think that was more dangerous than a helo.

Pylinski: How so?

McLeod: Well, because they had little jets on the end of the wings and on the tail and the nose to stabilize the aircraft as it hovered down. When one of those things died out, you lost, because then the aircraft would go either way. So that got a little bit weird.

Pylinski: Did you have any hairy situations with the harriers?

McLeod: We had a couple of them that those jets died out. A wingtip got smashed, a nose got smashed. That wasn't good.

Pylinski: No, I can imagine. And those things are loud.

McLeod: Yeah. "Here's the camera part, Chief."

Pylinski: Yeah, "And we found your wing over here, Buddy. It's all smashed to pieces." I was reading, I can't, when I was doing some research on some of the aircraft carriers that you were on back in 1995 on the USS Essex, there was a Marine H1-UH1H, or UH1N helicopter that had crashed from the deck. Were you there for that?

McLeod: Crashed from the deck?

Pylinski: Yeah, or crashed on the deck, I'm assuming?

McLeod: No, no. That was a deployment, yes.

Pylinski: It happened in 1995.

McLeod: Yeah, that was during the first deployment, and that, they crashed on land during deployment because as we walked around, we were told to leave the Huey guys alone, because they had just lost one of their aircraft.

Pylinski: That's understandable. Now, you also did support for Desert Shield and Desert Storm too, back in the early 90's correct? And that was probably while you were still on the Ranger.

McLeod: Mhmm.

Pylinski: What was that experience like for you?

McLeod: It was just... Oh, you're talking Shield and Storm? That was kind of after the fact because when Storm, when that happened, I was working for the three-star Admiral, Commander Naval Air Force Pacific Fleet. Now, when I was on the Ranger and we went overseas, that's when Somalia started.

Pylinski: Okay, because I see in your paperwork here, you said that you were in during Desert Shields, Desert Storm, so I didn't know if you-

McLeod: I was in, but I wasn't deployed. [Chuckles]

Pylinski: But you did do work in support of the Somalia incursions, twice actually, you said, right?

McLeod: Because when we were on the Ranger, that's when Somalia started, and they said, "We needed recon photos." Well, two 14's left our deck as we headed down there in fixed wing support of Somalia, so we sent two Tomcats down there to take recon photos.

Pylinski: F14's were flying recon?



McLeod: Mhmm. So then, we got relief. We came back home, and then when I was on the Essex, we went over there to Somalia to pull folks out.

Pylinski: And that was post 1993 Battle of Mogadishu?

McLeod: I guess so. I just know that we just went over there to pull people out of Somalia, and I was not feeling good.

Pylinski: So, then back aboard the Essex, that was the last ship that you served on, or you served on one more ship correct?

McLeod: No, that was- Well, yes and no. [Laughs]

Pylinski: Tell me a little bit about that. What was it like leaving the Essex?

McLeod: It was kind of good and it was kind of bad.

Pylinski: How so?

McLeod: Well, it was kind of bad because that was what Navy life was really about, was living onboard the ship and going deployments. The bad part- And, the good part about it was okay, I'm going somewhere to finish out my career in the Navy, so now I can retire, go about my life, go do something new now.

Pylinski: So, you were pretty short then by this time, correct?

McLeod: Yeah, I was down to, about, I think about three years left.

Pylinski: You were leaving the Essex. What did you do after that?

McLeod: I got sent to the medical hospital at Balboa.

Pylinski: And where was that located at?

McLeod: San Diego.

Pylinski: You went back there to San Diego, then. Now, were you and your wife still together at the time?

McLeod: Let's see here, no, we finally divorced again. I met another lady, so now I was up to four wives.

Pylinski: Wow, busy man, huh?

McLeod: Well, you know, I did kind of lead a sailor's life. [Laughs] Yeah.

Pylinski: Through and through. Okay, so you were at Balboa. What was your main focus there so far as your work was concerned?

McLeod: Well, it was really weird because when I checked into the hospital, me and an officer almost got into a fight.

Pylinski: How so?

McLeod: Well, being a guy from the fleet going to a hospital is not a good thing.

Pylinski: Yeah, right. A totally different animal for a guy like you.

McLeod: Yeah, it, really it is. I checked in, and they said, "Okay, you've got to go over here and check in over here." And I say, "What's this?" "This is our deployment status area." And I kind of snicker and I was like, "Deployment? Take a hike. I ain't getting deployed. I just got done being deployed."

Pylinski: Yeah, no doubt. "I did my time, Buddy."

McLeod: Yeah, and so, what, you know, I get in there, I check in, the guy says, "Okay, dog tags," this, that, and "Oh, we're going to send you to a ship. You're an aviation guy. We're going to send you to a ship." And I'm taking a look at this third class, I'm going, "You are fricking nuts. I don't think so, that's not what my order stated." So finally this officer gets up, and I'm looking at him, and I'm looking at his ribbons. He's looking at me, looking at my ribbons, and he goes, "I can't help

you. I know you want to kill me, but I can't help you." What had happened there at the hospital was back during Desert Storm, the USS Comfort was staffed and supplied with personnel from Balboa, to go on this ship, this hospital ship, to go over there to take care of wounded. Well, when it came back after Storm as people transferred off, the bureau never sent anybody to replace that person. So, the next thing you know, someone went, "Oh, crud. We have nobody to take care of our little boat, and we have no one to make sure they can fight a helo fire if it crashes on the flight deck."

Pylinski: Right, and we need bodies, huh?

McLeod: Right, so as every aviaional guy came in, they got sent to it. So all of a sudden, next thing we know, we get our set of orders, and off we go for a week going up to Oakland. And about seven of us were 1st classes. We turned around, and were looking at each other and going...

Pylinski: "What the hell are we doing here?"

McLeod: Right. We're not all going to be fighting this aircraft fire. Well, finally a chief that was on the Comfort back during Storm, came down and says, "Okay, this is what's going on," gives the story. And then all of the sudden, gave us people and said, "Now, this is how we fought the fire, blah blah blah." Well, we did some nosing around and some digging around and we came to find out that, no, you're not allowed to have seven 1st classes and none of us were assigned to this billet. So this is what we're going to do for you.

Pylinski: So they sent you back to Balboa, more or less, yeah?

McLeod: No. No, because it was between a rock and hard place, and no one was moving. But we wheeled and dealed, and we told them. We said, "Look, we'll get your crew certified on the flight deck here to fight fires. After that, we're done. We'll keep them trained, but we're never coming back to the boat again. And you will

get a 1st class in here for this billet." And they kind of looked at us and went, "You've got to be kidding me."

Pylinski: It's not like you're complaining, you're offering a solution. It's not like you're just sitting there humming and hawing about it.

McLeod: Well, the other thing about it was is that the strange was that, each one of us 1st classes had our own particular niche that we were able to do within a flight deck division. One was very good at fighting fires, the other one was very good at leading, another one was very good at taking the paperwork and everything else.

Pylinski: So, you guys just had a real like just an A team full of...

McLeod: Right, so we each went to our particular field and expertise, and we did our thing, and then when we got the ship qualified and certified to take onboard helos, in case of a fire, they threw a party. And here comes down the officers saying, "Oh here, we're gonna cut your cake for you." That didn't happen.

Pylinski: What did you guys do, tie him up and throw them in a closet?

McLeod: No, the commanding officer of the ship was down there to congratulate us and then- They gave us some division officer that was like, "Dude, go stand in the corner and leave us alone." And he's acting like he's going to cut this cake, right? Well, I quietly took the knife out of his hands. I walked over to a couple rated aviation guys that worked for me, and I handed them the knife, and I said, "You guys cut it."

Pylinski: Nice, very cool. So, you were short then, right, getting ready to retire?

McLeod: Yes, I was. I was, and actually what had happened was, my main duty at the hospital was taking care of environmental issues for the hospital. And I turned around, I walked around, I checked the hospital out to make sure they were in compliance with all the military regs and rules, and all the state and everything

else. And being out in California, you had to know them inside and out, including down to the counties. So it got to be, you had to know what you were doing.

Pylinski: So when you retired, what was your, I guess November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1999, was your retirement date?

McLeod: Yeah, that was the retirement date. But I was sitting here in Illinois at the time.

Pylinski: I gotcha, you had some leave time saved up?

McLeod: You know, after so many years of being in, when you just wanted to take a day off, you took a day off, had a nice three-day weekend. And you're sitting at home, you're shore based. You really didn't need to take leave. So I had a bunch of leave built up.

Pylinski: So you had plenty of time to just kind of decompress once you got out, right?

McLeod: Well, actually, I took- The commanding officer of the hospital had put out a policy that you could only take so much terminal leave time. And I was like, "I have more than that."

Pylinski: Yeah, I think you only get up to like, sixty days or something like that.

McLeod: Well, he had thirty days.

Pylinski: Because I know guys, when we got out, there were guys that were taking like ninety days of terminal leave.

McLeod: And that's just it, some commands would allow that. So what happened was, I took two weeks and came back here. I had things set up for a job and a place to move in to.

Pylinski: So you just cashed in the rest of that leave then?

McLeod: Yep, I took my thirty days and the rest of it got cashed in. And I spent a month withdrawing a civilian and a military paycheck.

Pylinski: That's pretty sweet. That's a lot of good change coming in at one time. What did you end up doing when you got out?

McLeod: I had a job here hauling, doing hazmat, and I had to learn how to be a trucker. But me and the owner of the company that I was working for had a disagreement about the meaning of a word. And then, the word happened to be "local." My understanding of "local" was I come to work, go out, do my eight hours, come back to the shop, park the truck, unload, or do whatever I had to do to the truck and go home. His idea of local was five states. Now, I got a new wife, two kids, you know, two boys that are going into school at a new location, I don't think so.

Pylinski: So did you end up leaving that job then I guess?

McLeod: Yep.

Pylinski: What did you do after that?

McLeod: I found a job at a machine place out in Manooka, I believe.

Pylinski: So, you were still here in Illinois, then?

McLeod: Yeah, I was still here, local.

Pylinski: Actually, local.

McLeod: Yeah, I mean, I went home every night. But I had, I talked to my dad, and my dad told me there were some openings out there in the railroad. So, I applied for a few jobs at the railroad, and I got one. So, I went to go work for the railroad.

Pylinski: Is that what you're currently doing now, too?

McLeod: Yep.

Pylinski: And how long do you think you'll be working for them?

McLeod: Another nine years.

Pylinski: And then, you'll be fully retired from the railroad?

McLeod: As one guy told me a long time ago, "I retired from the military, I'm going to retire from this job so I'm going to be retarded."

Pylinski: Too retired to know any good, right? To know any better. [Laughs] That's good. Twenty years in the Navy, that's a hell of a commitment. That's a commendable service for any person that's willing to stick it out, there's no doubt about that.

McLeod: I think it's tougher for an individual to try to complete twenty years in today's military, due to the fact of, and this is strictly my opinion, of the administrations that we have.

Pylinski: Right, that's understood. What would you say was the one thing that you got out of, being in the military? What was the most, what was the best part of it all, I guess you could say?

McLeod: It was the camaraderie that you got with the people that you were with. And this is something that passes out to the veterans that are out there today. Whether they were in for four years or twenty years, those veterans that went out to the front lines, there's nothing that has to be said. You just say, "Hey, I've been at this spot," and the other guy can say, "I've been at this spot." That's all that needs be said. And there's a camaraderie right there. That's the biggest thing that I got out of the twenty years that I was in, was that regardless of what you do or what happens, you have your fellow shipmates, or the Army guys, or Marines, or Air Force guys. But you have those that you're with that it's like, "Hey look, you know, you need to pull yourself up right now, Man. Come on. There's avenues here for you."

Pylinski: Good to have those people on your left and your right that you can depend on, more or less.

McLeod: Well, and the other thing, too, is when you see someone head downtown the wrong way, it's like, "Uh, Dude, what are you doing?"

Pylinski: Yeah, you can kind of like help them, like fix themselves, more or less, before they go down the wrong road.

McLeod: Like I said, you know, the funny thing about twenty years being in, I don't remember the actions. I remember the people I was with and the things that happened to us, and the stories.

Pylinski: If you had a chance to talk to young men and women these days that were thinking about joining the service, what would you tell them?

McLeod: If they were to join today, I would say, "Think about it. It's a different lifestyle. Be committed to what you do when you're in there. Learn when you can, and if you can stick it out for twenty years it'd be worth your while to do so. But if the military life does not suit you, do your time, come on back home, find what does suit for you." Because that's one of the other things that I learned while I was in, the military lifestyle is not for everybody.

Pylinski: That's true, that's very true. What do you think best exemplifies your service from your experience?

McLeod: Meaning?

Pylinski: From what you did serving your country, what do you think was the one thing you did that most exemplifies your twenty years in the Navy?

McLeod: The time on the Iwo. It's weird, you know, I served on other ships, I served with different commands, but it's the guys on that ship are the ones I remember the most, and here's the funny thing about it. About an hour before you called, I just reconnected with a buddy of mine from the Iwo on Facebook.



Pylinski: Don't you just love the social media these days? It's a lot easier to get back in touch with people I think.

McLeod: It kind of is, I just happened to catch it. I didn't have a good chance to really talk to him on there, but it gives me another avenue because there are a couple of guys from there, I'm looking for.

Pylinski: Well, it's good. Now, you know that that one communication is open.

Pylinski: Well, Mr. McLeod, is there anything else you think you want to talk about that maybe I haven't covered?

McLeod: Nothing I can think of. Just that the- I know a lot of the stories that you guys have are from individuals that do a few years within the military, within a certain time frame of our country. Like I said, this is the time I served onboard the Iwo and the things that happened while I was there are the things that cannot be forgotten.

Pylinski: Those are the things you never forget and always live with.

McLeod: Yeah, it is and the sad thing about it is, these were things that weren't lessons that were learned by fellow countrymen because we are still dealing with this, today.

Pylinski: Yeah, this is, so far as terrorism is concerned, it's something that's hard to get ahold of, if you will.

McLeod: Yeah, it's turning into a generational war, the way I see it. My oldest son is currently serving.

Pylinski: Is he?

McLeod: Yep.

Pylinski: What is he doing?

McLeod: Working aviation. [Laughs]

Pylinski: So he's following in dad's footsteps?

McLeod: No, not quite. [Laughs]

Pylinski: Is he in the Navy though, or no?

McLeod: Yeah, he's in the Navy. Yes he is, he just- He's followed my footsteps up to a certain point and then took a left turn. [Laughs]

Pylinski: So he's a pilot, then I'm assuming?

McLeod: No, he's not a pilot. He takes care of the aircraft tires. And that's nothing to sneer at, at all. That's a process all in itself, it's a huge deal. But no, I can't think of anything else to pass on.

Pylinski: Well, we definitely thank you for sharing your story with us, sir. For us here at the library and the whole purpose behind the oral history program here, one of the purposes is to have that story. Whether you're a World War II Veteran, or a Cold War Veteran, or somebody that just did four years and got out, or you're twenty-year aviator boatswain mate, you know what I mean, it's all important, no matter what. And to have this as part of our collection, it means a lot, and we thank you for sharing your stories of service.

McLeod: That's not a problem, sir. Just let me know if there's anything else you may need.

Pylinski: Absolutely. We have your number and we'll definitely be in contact once we're finished with our transcripts and stuff. You'll be, you know, you'll get a copy of it, and everything will go good from there.

McLeod: Okay. I appreciate it, sir.

Pylinski: All right. Thank you for sharing your story. I appreciate it too. Have a wonderful day.

McLeod:        You too, sir. Bye bye.