



WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies, other reproductions, and reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.” If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction in excess of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

- Brooklyn Historical Society is not responsible for either determining the copyright status of the material or for securing copyright permission.
- Possession of a reproduction does not constitute permission to use it.
- Permission to use copies other than for private study, scholarship, or research requires the permission of both Brooklyn Historical Society and the copyright holder. For assistance, contact Brooklyn Historical Society at library@brooklynhistory.org.
- Read more about the Brooklyn Historical Society's Reproduction Rights Policy online: http://brooklynhistory.org/library/reproduction.html#Brooklyn_Historical_Society_Reproduction.

GUIDELINES FOR USE

This transcript is hereby made available for research purposes only. These oral history interviews are intimate conversations between two people, both of whom have generously agreed to share these recordings with the Brooklyn Historical Society archives and with researchers. Please listen in the spirit with which these were shared. Researchers will understand that:

1. The Brooklyn Historical Society abides by the General Principles & Best Practices for Oral History as agreed upon by the Oral History Association (2009) and expects that use of this material will be done with respect for these professional ethics.

2. (version a) This transcript is a nearly verbatim copy of the recorded interview. As such, it may contain the natural false starts, verbal stumbles, misspeaks, and repetitions that are common in conversation. This decision was made because BHS gives primacy to the audible voice and also because some researchers do find useful information in these verbal patterns.

(version b) Transcripts created prior to 2008 serve as a guide to the interview and are not considered verbatim. The audio recording should be considered the primary source for each interview. It may contain natural false starts, verbal stumbles, misspeaks, repetitions that are common in conversation, and other passages and phrases omitted from the transcript. This decision was made because BHS gives primacy to the audible voice and also because some researchers do find useful information in these verbal patterns.

3. Every oral history relies on the memories, views and opinions of the narrator. Because of the personal nature of oral history, researchers may find some viewpoints or language of the recorded participants to be objectionable. In keeping with its mission of preservation and unfettered access whenever possible, BHS presents these views as recorded.
4. Unless these verbal patterns are germane to your scholarly work, when quoting from this material researchers are encouraged to correct the grammar and make other modifications maintaining the flavor of the narrator's speech while editing the material for the standards of print.
5. All citations must be attributed to the Brooklyn Historical Society:
 - Hammond, Robert, Oral history interview with Sady Sullivan, September 9, 2010, Brooklyn Navy Yard Oral History Collection, 2010.003.032; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Oral History Interview with Robert Hammond
Brooklyn Navy Yard Oral History Collection, 2010.003.032
Interview conducted by Sady Sullivan on September 9, 2010
at narrator's home in Laurel, Maryland

ROBERT HAMMOND: The planet flag, it could be the flag of England, the flag of France, or the flag of Spain, and they named the land for whatever monarchy's in charge of their country.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And they called the people here heathens, heathens, Native Americans, heathens. And, it all came through religion, in a way, the Christian religion, the people were told – you go to the hinder lands, and you Christianize the people there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And if you can't Christianize the people, then you kill them, and you take their lands away. And that's exactly what happened.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And all of this started through, that's when the Europeans came, people had been in North and South America long before Columbus, people came from all parts of the world.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Okay, could you just leave the story, can we turn the air conditioning off?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah. It's feedback noise syndrome.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Yeah, then I'm ready when you guys are, you have to be careful with your hands.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, okay um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Will you record [inaudible]?

SADY SULLIVAN: I'm just starting to record now.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh, okay. Good.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah, and I don't think we haven't started.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Okay, then I don't have to.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Shall we check this video?

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, wow thanks.

ROBERT HAMMOND: See, I've got to try to put this all together.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Okay, it should be off in a minute.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Where, if I started.

SADY SULLIVAN: Well, stay, I think if you stay, if you start – and start with your personal experiences and then we can, as that links into --

ROBERT HAMMOND: All this is connected to that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, I know, I know. But we'll start with you and then get to how that relates back to --

ROBERT HAMMOND: Okay, maybe we could interweave that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yep, I think that that's, that's a good way.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Where do you want me to start?

SADY SULLIVAN: Well, when we have to wait for the camera now. [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh, okay, yeah but that's all what I was saying.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah, I hear you.

ROBERT HAMMOND: It's all the hypocrisy.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh yeah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Of what went on here.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: The Constitution of the United States.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Thomas Jefferson.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: He wrote that. And he said all men are created equal, but that's not.

[Interview interrupted.]

ROBERT HAMMOND: They can't do that when they had slaves.

SADY SULLIVAN: Meanwhile he had enslaved folks, yeah. Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: See that's ah, that's the hypocrisy; you know it all back-fired on him.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And freedom of religion, that's, that's a farce because they wouldn't let other people practice their religions, same thing's going on today.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm. Yeah, the Muslim Center in New York, have you heard of that, the controversy there?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, why, why?

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I don't understand that, I understand it. And that minister, he wants to burn the Koran.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh yeah. We're, we were in the car really crazy, yeah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: If it's, it's crazy. They need put him in jail.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: He left Germany with ah, he was preaching in a church in Germany and he left with serious financial irregularities from the last church.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I figured that, he's not good, he's no good, he should have drowned [inaudible] [laughter]

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Okay we're ready when you guys are.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Okay.

SADY SULLIVAN: Okay, so are you, you're rolling?

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: I am now, yes.

SADY SULLIVAN: Okay, so I will just state the interview for the archive. Today is Thursday, September 9th, 2010, and we are here in Laurel, Maryland. I'm Sady Sullivan with the Brooklyn Historical Society and this interview is for the Brooklyn Navy Yard. And, now if you would introduce yourself to the --

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: But, before you do that, I'm sorry, your thumb, you're little twitching there, you have to stop that because my microphone picks that up. You can

hold your hands together, but you can't, you can't twitch. You can put your hands together, that's fine, okay, off you go.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, well, that's just nerves - that's my nerves --

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah, yeah [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: I've got to stop that.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: Okay.

SADY SULLIVAN: I will try to also. Um, so if you would introduce yourself to the recording, however you would like.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Okay. My name is Robert Stanley Hammond; I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My parents was, was Winston Purcell Hammond, and Edith Randall Hayes. My father was from West Virginia and my mother was from the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina. Both of the, both members of my family were interracially mixed, they were a mixed race. And, I guess that makes me [laughter] of mixed race too, of Native American, African American, Caucasian American and anyone else that got into the family. So, that makes me 100 percent true American, born here.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Worked here, maybe I'll die here, I don't know? But, in 1943 the world was at war with Adolph Hitler and the Imperial emperor of Japan decided he was gonna blow up Pearl Harbor, so we went to war against him. The Japanese in the Pacific, actually, at that time the armed forces were totally segregated and minority people, when it came to service in the Navy and Marine Corps, they were stewards and cooks, and that was about the end of it. The Army at the time did have regiments of minority people in their service, so I don't want to get into that. Marine Corps - zero minorities, United States Navy - very, very few, except as servants. In 1943, I believe, '43 or '44, Franklin Delano Roosevelt made an executive order stating that the armed forces must be integrated. And, that meant the Navy and Marine Corps had to do that. At that time, the sailors and Marines at the Navy Yard and at the

Hospital were all Caucasian people. There were no Black people there; there were no Native Americans there, no Orientals, no Hispanics at those places in Brooklyn. In December 1943, I was seventeen years old, and everyone was going into the service. Everyone was wanted to get into some form of organization to serve America. At that time, I felt that I'm gonna do my share after being an air raid warden, I was an air raid warden at the time. And, when black-outs came we went around making certain that people put their lights out. And, that was one of the things that really was on my mind at that time. I had a cousin who was a musician in New York, his name was Lucky Millinder and he wrote a song, "When the lights come on all over the world." And, that was on my mind also. Another person on my mind was Joe Louis knocking out Max Schmeling. And the, the, ah, baseball players, we didn't have Jackie Robinson then, but we have Satchel Paige, he was there. And ah, of course, he and Dizzy Dean were always at each other's throats because Dizzy Dean was a bigot and Satchel Paige wouldn't take it, and he threw a faster ball than Dizzy Dean. So those were some of our idols on the National scene at the time. Also, the musicians, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Billie Holliday, all of these people were, just had some good music, which we liked. And, in my mind, I just wanted to do what I could for the country, so I joined the Navy. And on December 13, 1943, was when I took the oath, oath of allegiance to protect and serve the United States of America, in Philadelphia at the Reserve, at the Navy Reserve Headquarters. And from there we were sent to Great Lakes, Illinois, to the Navy base there. At that time, the Navy had segregated camps. On the way to Great Lakes, the train, we got on the train there at 30th Street Station in Philadelphia and, of course, at the time I knew very little about prejudice, and segregation and all of this, I knew very little, or almost nothing about it. Except some experiences that I had when my father passed away and I had to go live with an aunt in Charleston, South Carolina. And, that's the first time I saw signs on water fountains, couldn't go in certain restaurants, there were signs at the railroad station - White, Colored. And those things kind of amazed me, I went into a store once and the sign said "Colors," and the other one said "Whites," so I went drank

water from both fountains. And the water looked the same to me. So, a man came over and he said, “hey, you drink over there the next time, we can’t drink it over there, why did you drink over there?” I just wanted to see what color the water was, that’s all. [laughter] He ran me out of the store. But anyway, that’s as far as that sort of thing, my experiences with that. But, anyway, on the train to Great Lakes we’re all mixed, I was mixed with my Italian and Jewish classmates, most of them were of Italian heritage, some of my good friends were from Italy, their parents were anyway. But all these are my classmates, we got on the train and we were having a good time until the train got to Washington. And then somebody came through the train and told us we had to leave. And the guy says “Oh, no [laughter], we’re not leaving us, those are friends.” Leave for what? And the guy said, this train is going down South and we have segregated trains, cars, you gotta go. But anyway all the guys jumped up to our aid, because there’s only about five of us on the whole train. And they surrounded us and we didn’t move we just stayed there. The train got into, when it left Washington and went into, I think Virginia, North Carolina, and then it got over into Ohio and that’s where everything stopped. But when it got at Great Lakes, it was cold, it was the winter up there and I had a, two sweaters and a heavy overcoat, when we got to Great Lakes we were put in trucks and taken over to the base. And we had to stand in line out there, and all of the White guys went to a different camp, we went to another camp called Camp Lawrence, segregated. And I’m kind of amazed, what did I get myself into? I said “gee, this – going to war and have to endure this sort of thing.” And, what happened was, a guy next to me was shivering and freezing, and I took off a sweater and I gave it to him, he was from the Deep South. ‘Cause we had to stand in that line for about forty-five minutes. And then after that, we went into the chow hall and they us some hot soup and sandwiches, ‘cause we arrived there at night. And then, they took us over to our barracks and told us it was late, we had to go to sleep. So, the next morning when we got up, we had to take off all of our clothes, and we were examined by a doctor and so forth and so on. And then we put all of our clothes in a big paper bag and had it shipped home, that’s what they did, then they gave us

the Navy uniforms. And then we went to camp, and I was in the company of sailors boot camp, and we had to go through that for six weeks. And, it was sort of fun to be with the guys, you'd listen to music, that's when I first started smoking, I coughed my head off, but I started smoking, because the guys smoked cigarettes then. We couldn't go off base, we had a pair of -- of leggings that were brown, we had to scrub those every single day. They were partially canvas, made out of a canvas material. And they call those boots, new boots, that's what we were called. And after a week or two of going through training, that was sort of fun, marching and making up beds, and hammocks at the time, and going through the general routine that service men go through. That was okay. Then, one day I was, me and a group of guys were singing, and an officer came over and he said, "you guys sound pretty good, we're gonna put you in the Great Lakes choir." So, I wound up in the Great Lakes choir and I was very pleased with that because, being in boot camp, I got away from some real strict duties, because of choir rehearsal. So, that was kind of fun to get in, in, into with the musicians, and the music. Later on, guys got sick, had to go to, in the Navy, guys got sick had to go to the dispensaries and then to the hospital. And at that time, the white nurses, they didn't want to touch a minority person, an African American or, and, wouldn't put their hands on us. And the choir men, they would give a mixture of cod liver oil and, I guess a brown, called a browns mixtures with some cascara in it. And it was a laxative, and they gave you that for everything, even a broken leg, or a broken finger. And that, that was just awful. And it was through one of the officers who directed the choir, he came over to twenty of us and asked us did we want to go to Corps school. I said, "Yeah, we'll go." So, we were given a test, they gave us a test to take, I'd gone through 11th grade, hadn't finished high school yet. And, I made good marks on that test, out of the nineteen, only one person failed; the rest of us passed it. And then we went to the Navy Corps School. And was there, we got into, we learned Gray's Anatomy, we learned patient care, first aid, surgical duties, responsibilities, also, emergency situations, how to set broken legs or broken arms, how to take out metal from people, things like that. And, once Corps school was over, we went, I think

we went about five or six weeks of that, when Corps school was over, I was sent with eight other men, and we went to the Brooklyn Naval Hospital. The other ten, they were split up, some went to Norfolk, Virginia, to a hospital there, and others went to naval hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. And at, when we got to the Brooklyn Naval Hospital, the nine of us, and I'll never forget that first visit at the Naval Hospital. The entry way was on Sands Street, and you go through this entry way, and then you had to walk down a path to get to the hospital, and up a small flight of stairs to get inside the hospital. When we got in there, we were met by a chief petty officer. And he's standing up there with his arms folded in, looking at us, we all had crosses on our sleeves. And he said, "Oh, we got some new stewards mates here." But we weren't steward mates, we were Corpsmen. And, he put us to work in the kitchen washing dishes and serving food, stuff like that, cleaning floors, and taking food up to the wards, that's what our job was. We did that for maybe three or four days until one Saturday we had a commissary inspection, and we're all dress up in our white uniforms, and had on these, had red crosses on those, and this officer, this White officer came in, he was a lieutenant commander, and he said to us, he said, "You guys are looking pretty good." He says, "You're Corpsmen, aren't you?" And we said, "Yes sir." And then said, "Well, why are you here in the kitchen?" [laughter] We said, "We don't know." And what could we know at the time, we didn't know that it was a policy of the Navy to segregate us, we knew something about it, but we didn't know all about it. But anyway, he said, "Who's responsible for this, how long have you been here?" And we said, "Almost two weeks." He said, "You belong up on the wards, just where you're going." So, he got the chief petty officer and he asked, he said, "What are these men doing down here in the kitchen, they're not stewards mates, they're Corps and they belong up on the wards." And then he said, "Well, sir, you can't send them up there with the White nurses, they'd interact with them, and also they just wouldn't know what to do if they got up there." And that officer told him, "You get those men up on the wards, NOW, and if I come back down here and see one of them in this commissary, I'm going to bust you all the way down to a seaman second

class." He'd get the hell out of here. So, we were sent up to the wards, and when we got up on the wards, and we went to work, the nine of us, we went to work up there, we did -- the nurses up there didn't know how to assign us. But what we did, we went up on those wards, the wards weren't too clean, and maybe it was because of the White Corpsmen not doing their jobs. But we, the first thing we did was clean the floor after working in the commissary down there, we knew how to clean floors well. So, we went and got that floor cleaned up in the ward, and then we looked at the beds, we told one nurse, said, "Those beds are dirty." We changed all the linen, put Navy folds on all the sheets and everything, and there are patients up there. And we start talking to the patients, and we, we really, um, we just didn't give back rubs and turn them over, and change their dressings and all that, but while we were giving them some good nursing care, we would talk to them. A lot of these guys were scared, they wanted to go home, they didn't know what was happening, well we were in the same boat. And, we talked to them and became, made friends, we made good friends with these guys. Until, after a couple of weeks on the ward, we were sent over to surgery, and we worked, we learned, um, surgical duties over there. And this is when I found out that the Navy segregated blood. One x on a pint of blood was for White two x's was for Black, three x's was for Native American Hispanics, four x's was for Oriental. Now blood is divided into A, B, AB, and all blood. And that's a blood type everybody has one of those types, it's not segregated by racial distinction. And one day, I'm in surgery with a doctor, and they needed some A blood. They sent me down to get a bottle of A blood. He was operating on a White patient, I went down and brought back a pint of blood, A blood, that had two x's on it, I didn't know about those x's then, and I gave it to the nurse. And she looked at it and dropped it on the floor, it broke. And the doctor told her, "What did you drop for." She said, "You can't give that man a Black man's blood." So, the doctor said, "Go down there and get me another bottle of A blood, and make sure it's got one x on it, we can't afford to break blood around here." So, I went down and brought it back up. And then it kind of, I was curious about this, and after working in there I started reading the papers more and more,

and when I'd go out on liberty I'd talk to people, talk to doctors I knew. And they said - well that's just a sign of the times, the Navy does that, the Armed Forces does that. And later on, Dr. Charles Drew, who, the inventor of blood plasma, was using it in England, they wouldn't let him use plasma in America because they, it was all crystalline blood. And the British laughed at the Navy for doing that, and brought it up with, I think with Secretary Knox, or one of them at the time, and Knox said, "Nope, you can't use Dr. Drew's blood." And he died later on and Forrestal came along and he said, "Well we need blood, use it." So, Dr. Drew came back to America with his plasma and that's -- started using it there. The British and French laughed at the Americans for that. That's the hypocrisy, it backfired on them. Then, after, after the training at the Naval hospital, things were happening at Montford Point in North Carolina, the Black Marines. And they had, it started out there with 2,000 Black Marines, and those men came from the Black colleges. Most of them had college educations, some had degrees, some had PhD's, and so forth. They were more educated than the non-commission officers, the sergeants and lieutenants, and the captains in the Marine Corps. And what happened was, was that whenever a command was directed to them that they didn't like, they, they just would not carry it out. And they tried to court-martial these guys, but we had people like A. Philip Randolph and Walter White, and WACP, Mrs. Roosevelt, Mary McLeod Bethune, they all came to the aid of the Marine's down there, they objected to what was going on. And that particular thing, when it came to Black Marines, the 2,000 Marines were shipped out of there, they were sent to the Army, and later on they got 20,000 more Black Marines there. This time, they made sure that they did not have the majority of them, did not have more than a seventh grade education. The schools in the South were highly segregated, and most of the Black men did not have high school educations, so they went through Montford Point. Maybe about 5,000 of those men had, you know, graduated from high school, and so forth, and some from college. But, the majority of them had say seventh, sixth-seventh grade education. The medical care at Montford Point was poor. Again, the browns mixture - the cod liver oil and

casacara was given to the guys. Examinations were all cursory, they listened to the heart, and if it was beating seventy-two beats a minute, they were okay. A lot of these men from the South had no medical care, because in the states down there, just was no, no health services, the boards of health wouldn't service them. But anyway, we were sent there to Montford Point, assigned there, from the Brooklyn Naval Hospital. And, one of my duties there was to make some evaluations on the men, we held clinics. The men came in and we examined them. Those men were sick, a lot of them were sick, they had things like hook worms, you know went barefooted and the worms went, traveled through their feet and got in their stomachs. The casacara helped them, though.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: A lot of 'em had sores, lot of em had, they were never vaccinated for smallpox, so we took a record of those who did not have the vaccination. Tetanus shots, they didn't have that, um, a lot of these men had, at the time, we took blood samples, had sickle cells, and all sorts of things were wrong with those men. They smelled bad, their personal hygiene was poor, they, some of their teeth were bad. And, we got a record on each one of those men at Montford Point. And once that was done, then a dispensary, they enlarged the dispensary, and they put some beds in there, twenty beds in there. They didn't send them over to Hatnet [phonetic] Point where the small hospital was, they couldn't go over there. And, they sent a Jewish doctor over, and they had no Black nurses, none, they sent two nurses over, and the rest of us Corp, and man we worked with these guys, and brought them around, in terms of their health. The dentist they were sent to, they had to go to Hatnet [phonetic] Point for dental care. And after a while I was assigned to duties that involved things like malaria control, dengue control, and encephalitis control with mosquitoes, and also we had to inspect the commissary where the food was, a lot of bad things were going on in there. Cross contaminations and just throwing food at people, not refrigerating it, and a lot of food poisoning there, salmonella, e-coli, and so forth. We put a stop to that. Um, we made sure that the guys, the, we told them to

stop using some plastic things that they had, looked like plastic, wasn't plastic, cardboard and something else, for food trays, and after I ate out of those things, I threw them away. So, we got the metal trays in there and dishwashing machines, we got those in there for them. And then, they put in better steam tables and more refrigeration for them, and food services improved. We got, we had some good cooks over there. Um, this whole thing at Montford Point in terms of illnesses amongst the Montford Point Marines, improved, we drained the swamps, inspected the, got rid of the tents, and so forth, the wooden places where the guys slept. They put in metal quonset huts with beds and new mattresses, and sheets. We told them they had to change those sheets once a week. Blankets, they had to clean, make sure their clothes were clean. A Corpsman always came down for inspection of their clothes, and so forth, and them too, we had short arms inspections, we did those, and made sure that the guys, very little VD, a lot of them had it, but they were cured of it. And, the things about this at Montford Point, all of that was, I could say was the, based upon what we learned at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital, and at Corps School. And, going into other situations there at Montford Point with the Marines, we had some liberal officers, White officers, like Bobby Troup, are you familiar with him?

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-um.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Route 66 man? Get your kicks on Route 66, he married Julie London, used to be on television.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: You probably remember him, huh? Yeah, he passed away, but he was a lieutenant there, he set up, he abhorred the segregation in the city of Jacksonville. So, we didn't go to Jacksonville after, he put in shows on base, put a theatre there, the musicians came in, we had good music there. We had a small night club, it was part on base, part off base, we didn't go into Jacksonville for anything. And that made people mad in Jacksonville, on the count of the money. They tried to stop us, but see when we didn't go there, they found out they're losing money at certain places, so, theatres and things. We had our own movie theatre. Bobby Troup

was responsible for boxing at a boxing ring there. One of the guys became the light heavy weight champion in the Marine Corps. And all of this, all of this thing, these things happened there. Plus, some other good things, the men, they marched better, they looked better, they dressed better. As a matter of fact, they dressed much better than their counterparts, the White counter parts, on parade, and all of that. They looked much better. And, I remember things like, statements made by the generals, Holcome [phonetic] of the Marine Corps said, "They got dogs in the Marine Corps, they got women in the Marine Corps." He said, "Now we got you people in the Marine Corps, I know there's a war." He, and we didn't like that, that was a bad statement for him to make, he said that to us. Another time an officer said, "I would take 5,000 White Marines for 20,000 Black Marines, I'd take the 5,000, 'cause they can't fight." Well, all of these sorts of things we had to go through, I had to learn all of this, racism and bigotry that was going on there. It was bad. And, one time I was on liberty in New York, at a cousin's house, had a girlfriend of mine there, and I got sick. And I went to the naval hospital and they found out I had appendicitis, so I was operated on there by Dr. Knockles [phonetic], he gave me a new type of incision and called the Burney [phonetic] incision and he said, "You're going to be the second person to get that incision for appendicitis." So, I got back, put in a ward, and then they put a curtain around me. And, my mother came up to see me, now they didn't know what she was, she was White, came up to see me. "Oh," one nurse said, "Robert Hammond could not be your son, that's an impossibility." She says, "Well, yes he is, where is he." So, she looked around that ward, she said, "You got my son behind that curtain?" So, she went down there and tore that curtain down, [laughter] and came back, "Don't you ever do that." She says, "You might have hell to pay if you're going to discriminate against my son up here." She says, "You're going to have a lot of people come in here and get on you from the President of the United States on down." Because, she was an influential person then. Well, the curtain went down, the two Black Corpsmen who were at Great Lakes, I mean not Great Lakes, it's Brooklyn Naval Hospital, they came over and they cared for me, changed my dressings, bathed

me, all of that kind of stuff. A couple of guys in next, White guys, who on either side of me, they talked to me and, you know, they were very friendly. One guy, who was behind me, wasn't too friendly, "I want that curtain back." The other guy said, "Shut up." And, you know, were using profanities. But, anyway, one day in recuperating, Fredric March and Florence Eldridge came there, they were movie stars. And Fredric March came over to my bed and he saw me and said, "How are you son, were you, are you a casualty from the South Pacific?" I said, "No, I was operated on for appendicitis." [laughter] So, both of them sat down and talked to me, um, he was saying, he says, "Well, geez, nobody else like you in here." So, they, he was telling me experience, his kind of his experiences in becoming a movie star, and he says, "That's why he's in Pennsylvania and not Hollywood." [laughter] And, he was, his wife, she, they were very nice people, gave me encouragement and told me to stick it out, complimented me for being there, and mentioned that - you're going to be a credit to America one day, "I'm proud, I'm very proud of you." And he, and they spent almost a half an hour with me, and they went around to the rest of the wards. And the guy behind me says, "Who do you think you are, movie star, Fredric March comes by and talks to you, wouldn't say nothing to me." I said, "Well," I said, "Your attitude's poor, you send those." I said, "People can pick that up from you, you're no damn good." [laughter] He threw something at me.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, anyway, that was a good experience. Later on, Helen Keller came there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Wow.

ROBERT HAMMOND: She was blind, she couldn't see, I don't think she could hear either. And, her, I forget her assistant's name. They came and stopped at my bed and talked to me and, she's a very brilliant person, talked to me through her, ah, understudy, I guess, I forget that lady's name, she was really nice. But, being in that hospital, that appendicitis brought to me two famous, three famous people, so I was kind of proud of that experience, and really enjoyed that experience with them. And when my

mother came up to see me, I told her about it, and she said, "Well," she says, "You know, out of darkness comes the light." [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: She said, "That's what happens, gonna happen to you." She said, "Now you persevere, you'll get through this, you persevere, just stick it out and don't be so radical." Because I was always radical when it came to that. When I got better, they sent me to Asbury Park to the convalescence hospital there, in Asbury Park. When I got there, I was, let's see it was only two minority people there, me and another guy, and we were recuperating. Now there were sailors and Marines there from the Pacific theatre of war and we were -- I was put in charge of twenty of them, the other guy twenty, about forty there. And one day we went out on liberty at Asbury Park, took the guys out, took about those that could get in a wheelchair and could walk. Corpsmen had to be with them. So, we went in this bar, and went in this bar and the bartender told the guy, said, "We can serve you, but we can't serve him," pointing at me. And, "What do you mean you can't serve him?" So, [inaudible] said, "Corpsman what are you drinking?" I said, "I'll have a beer." So, the guys bought a beer, gave me the beer. When I got through the guy took the glass and broke it. And those guys tore that bar up - they wrecked it, and we went back to Asbury Park. The next morning a chief petty officer came out, "Which one of you guys went down to, went down to that bar and wrecked it?" So, forty guys said, "We did." [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: Said, "We did." [laughter] So he just turned around and walked away, he didn't do anything to us. A couple days later, I'm on a train going out west, train left Asbury Park, New York, Chicago went out west. Stopped in Ogden, Utah, and there some ladies came over to the train and sold me a ticket for a radio they were raffling off, a radio for a dollar, so I bought a ticket. I got the ticket, put it in my pocket, they put my numbers; you know service numbers on it, and so forth. And, that was the end of that. And then we went to Berkeley, California, and from there we went to, we got on a ship, went to Kanaga [phonetic] something like that, in the Aleutians,

plus we had cold weather gear. We got to the Aleutians, we had to leave that gear there, we got on another ship, went to Saipan, then we went to Guam. And I was stationed, that's when I got back with the Marines, the Montford Point Marines there, and I was at the Naval base, hospital, not hospital, dispensary. There were two dispensaries, one there, Camp Ys [phonetic], and the other one at Barracuda Village that was the Marine Corps's dispensary. There was a sign there, they had two Black doctors there, I was glad to see them. One was a lieutenant and the other one was lieutenant JG. And, um, they um, they had some other different kinds of experiences with them. White guys didn't want to salute them, White guys wouldn't salute them, and all that. But they were all Navy, they made them. I said, "If you can't salute me, you salute the uniform." One guy took his hat and put it up on a post and said, "You don't salute me, you salute that hat." But, that's the way that went with those Navy doctors. And, we cared for those Marines, the Japanese blew up an ammo dump, 'cause we had all the supplies, the Black Marines were in charge of any aircraft battalions and all supplies, and ammo, and food. And, they used the anti-aircraft guns as our artillery pieces to shoot at the caves that the Japanese were in at the time. But, they, um, this was near toward the end of the War, the War was over in August of 1945 there, I think that's about it. And, the camps were still segregated. Japanese used to come down and watch the movies, they'd camp wise over at our camp, and over at Barracuda Village, they'd sit there and watch a movie and go back up, and they'd come in and steal clothes if we hung clothes up, they'd steal them off the line, and, steal food. Some of the cooks left food out there for them. But, right before that, again, was the music. That radio that I had bought a ticket for, I won it, and it was a Hallicrafters shortwave radio, and when that thing came out to me, boy, I was happy to get that, because I could listen to stations all over the world at the time, and we played music. We picked up a Filipino station with Tokyo Rose, she played all the good music, Duke Ellington, [inaudible], Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, all that good music - she played it. And she says, "I'm sending these, sending this music out to the, out to our friends, the Black Marines, we're going to make you happy." She says, "You

come on over on our side.” [laughter] That’s what she used to say, “Come on over on our side, we never called you names, we didn’t spit on you.” [laughter] Yup, but we persevered through that, my mother said, “Just stick it out, persevere.” But other things happened, I lost a rank, I had a rating, third class pharmacist mate, being too radical. Because, there was a riot on Guam, and all hell broke out there. And what we did was some of the Black officers, we had Chaplain Parem [phonetic] he came, he was a Black officer. And, I believe another Chaplain was Thomas McFadder [phonetic], he came there. And we got half trucks, they put machine guns on them and we went over into the White camp because they were going to come over and shoot us up. So, we met them. Not one shot was fired [laughter], those officers went out and talked to the White officers, the Black officers, and the hostility stopped. Then, the island commander put the whole island under martial law. And, at the time, we didn’t have an ambulance, that brand new ambulance is when it got over to that white camp. So, I went over there and took one and brought it back to camp. And, I got busted for that. We kept the ambulance, but I – I lost the rank, I didn’t care. Money was, didn’t need money over there, a pack of cigarettes was a nickel and they, you got it for free, beer was a nickel a can, and you really didn’t need money. But, it was fun in a way, and then to get through all of the bigotry and prejudice that was on that island, the girls, the native girls, they told the native girls we had tails, and all of that kind of stuff. And the girls would come over to us and say, “We want to see your tails.” Things like that, we fed those people, we gave them blankets, we gave them food, we gave them medical care too, they come into our dispensary. This one lady came in there, she was -- we birthed a baby for, and they couldn’t get all that treatment over at the White dispensary, they wouldn’t touch them.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, after when the War was over, then things changed. And, towards, let’s see 1946, I’d say, after Christmas, you see that ride was Christmas, after that, then Roosevelt was dead, and Harry Truman was in there. And, Harry Truman said that he wanted the armed forces totally integrated. And that’s when the fun

stopped. Because, at our dispensary, let's see, half our guys went over to the White bases, and the other half were replaced by White guys. And these guys, some of them were good; some of them were not so good. The barracks where we stayed was integrated, everything began to be integrated. And we had to get used to them, and they had to get used to us. I had, there was a safe in the dispensary, and I had a wallet in there with some pictures, I had a little tiny camera, a girlfriend gave it to me, little small camera, and I had pictures, I took pictures of the guys and things, you weren't supposed to have cameras, it was a court-martial offense to have one, but I kept mine. I took quite a few pictures. And, some of those pictures were in that safe, and they were all taken out. Plus, my wallet, I had about fifty bucks in there, and that was a lot of money then, I was saving it, didn't need it, but. Anyway, that got stolen. Shortly after the integration was, I had enough points to go, to get discharged, and I was happy about that. We got on a ship, went from Guam, we went around, we went down to, oh, New Caledonia, places like that in the New Hebrides, pick up more people, went around and then the ship went through the Panama Canal into the Atlantic and went up to New York. We got off in New York, trucks picked us up and took us to Fort Scarborough, New York and that's where I was discharged. They wanted me to stay, and I said, "No, I'm not staying in here." So, I left, and went home. And, at the time, when I went home, I had two bags, I had my sea bag and the ditty bag, called that ditty - all your personal small things went in there. A lot of letters that people sent, my mother sent, and I saved all those things, plus my pictures. And, in moving from Philadelphia to Brooklyn, and then I lived on Chauncey Street there, right off of Utica, right across from the Catholic church in Bedford Stuyvesant, and I think that was St. Michael's over there, or St. Christopher. And, Lena Horne's mother lived right across from Chauncey Park, a neighbor, and her uncle had a bar over there on, I think that was Fulton Street. And, we'd go over there and have beer, and have drinks over at his bar. And that's where I met Lena Horne, had her sitting in my lap. [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: I almost passed out. [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: That was fun. But, anyway, latter on in New York, I've always saved money, and me and my cousin, Carter, we went into business, opened a restaurant there, right there, where the Charlie car turns around on the corner, Bob's Luncheonette. And, then I bought an apartment house, three story apartment house on Marion Street, 84 Marion Street. Had a house in the back, I lived in that house in the back. And went in there with some cousins, and we cut that three unit house and made six units in there. And, we furnished them, went to Salvation Army and furnished them, and we rented out furnished apartments. The people on the top floor of that place came from Mississippi, and they didn't want to move. I told them they had to move. They weren't paying rent, when they found out I had it, they refused to pay rent. So, I got all the guys from the bar [laughter] and had a party one Saturday over at that apartment house. That place had three bathrooms, one on each level, and I said, "Don't use the toilets, use the bathtub and the sink." [laughter] That's what they did. The next day those people were gone.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: And the guys, they cleaned up and, let's say, we had food, the rest I fed them, got beer, some booze up there, we had a weekend party up there. And, the guys said, "Anytime you get an apartment house and you have people like that, be sure to call us." [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: But that was fun. But, anyway, from there, um I used to go by the Brooklyn Naval Hospital. Dr. Jones had an office there, in New York; I'd go by and see him. And, he had never been to the Brooklyn Naval Hospital, he was out of Norfolk. And Dr. Lawrence was out of Chicago at the time. But, anyway, what we did, what I did was to further my education, I only like the 11th grade, so I'm went to Boys High in Brooklyn.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, of course I looked much younger then what I was, twenty-one at the time, going to high school and no one new, except my teacher and the principal knew I was a veteran. And, I just got along with the rest of the guys, and got through high school okay, and blended right in with them, and from there, my mother said, came up, she said, "Robert, what are you going to do after high school?" I said, "Well, I don't know, 'cause at that time me and my cousin bought a bar, the Silver Rail Bar, down on, it was on Fulton Street, near Nostrand Avenue, do you know where that is?"

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Those names are familiar. And, we bought that from a German lady, she was really nice, 'cause I got her dog, she gave me her dog, a German Shepherd dog. And, my mother came up there, she said, I used to be MC in that, in that bar, had a lot of fun. I was in photography too, I had a Burke and James camera, I had, I had the hatchchecks concessions, and going and photographic concessions, I was MC there, had a lot of fun in that bar. Lucky Millinder he had died, but his understudy came over and played and the Don Redmond and the Red Caps played there.

SADY SULLIVAN: And there was a, wasn't there, um, a lot of music on Fulton.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Three, three minutes of tape left.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, a lot of music there, a lot of music there. Cause I always, I liked to listen to music, and dance, and have a lot of fun. And my mother came up there and wanted to know, "Are you going to college?" I was trying to get into college; the White colleges wouldn't take me. So, I went to a Black college, my sister was going to Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. And, so I enrolled in there. I finished my freshman year at Shaw, NYU calls me.

[Interview interrupted.]

ROBERT HAMMOND: University of Michigan, the other ten went to John Hopkins, I went to University of Michigan and got my Masters in Public Health, and from there one of my instructors came from Los Angeles there, and taught housing, Charlie

Senn [phonetic], and he, when I got through with that I made an A, as a matter of fact, he put me together with a man from Atlanta, Georgia, he started out as a bigot, but he wasn't really when he got through, because both of us made A's. And Charlie says, "That's the only solution to the whole problem to get you two together and become friends." And that's exactly what happened.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, Charlie said, "Robert, when you finish school, you come and work for me in Los Angeles in the health department there. So that's where I went. Cause, I had experience, I had the education, and I worked there, that's another story in my public health career, and that's another pretty good story, but I guess that's it.

SADY SULLIVAN: Well we should, I have some questions, but we should pause and change if we're. Okay.

ROBERT HAMMOND: How did I do?

SADY SULLIVAN: Wonderfully. [laughter]

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: I don't think he said one um.

[laughter]

[Interview interrupted.]

SADY SULLIVAN: Is your, is your mom from one of the South Carolina islands where it's um, um tribal owned island?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Um-hmm.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Olentangy island.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh cool, yeah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: That's where she was born over there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah, yeah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But she went to school in Charleston.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I like that, I'd look to go over there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: The island too, is nice. That's where I learned to swim.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And that's where I learned to read. I read early. I could read at six.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Six years. I read *Gone with the Wind*.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

CINDY: This one's yours.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh great.

CINDY: This one's yours, and this --

SADY SULLIVAN: Thank you so much.

ROBERT HAMMOND: You can tell them where the necessary room is.

[Interview interrupted.]

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Okay Sady?

SADY SULLIVAN: I'm good.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Okay, we are rolling.

SADY SULLIVAN: Okay, so just to state again, Thursday, September 9th, 2010, and this is part two. So, I had a couple of, of just follow up questions. One for the archive, we didn't get your date of birth.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh, I was born at 5820 Vine Street in Philadelphia, [date redacted for privacy] 1926, in the front room of that house.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh. [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: And you were, you were speaking earlier, and tell us about your siblings?

ROBERT HAMMOND: I was one, I was a middle child, one of seven. I was the middle child.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm. And how did your parents end up in Philadelphia?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh wow. Well, my mother, when she finished high school in Charleston, she went to a school there called Avery Institute, and she learned dress

making there, and also art. When she graduated from there, at that time, it was customary for people from Philadelphia and New York, to send to that school for seamstress. Wealthy people had seamstresses to come and make their clothes for them. So, my mother got one of those jobs in Philadelphia. And, it wasn't for one of the, it was very wealthy person, but this person ran a house of ill repute [laughter] in Philadelphia on city line. And she went there and made dresses for all of the ladies there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Wow, that must have been an interesting job.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Huh?

SADY SULLIVAN: That must have been an interesting job.

ROBERT HAMMOND: She said it was, she said it was.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, my mother was a very attractive lady, she's prettier than Halle Berry, very attractive person. And, they wanted to turn her into one. [laughter]
She says, "Oh no." [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: She wouldn't do it. And, she decided she was going to continue to make clothes. She made good money there. And, my father, he worked for the post office, he was from Martinsville, Virginia. And, he went to, um, when he finished school he went to Hampton Institute, and then he, from there he went to Philadelphia, and went to work in the post office. And, that's, he was delivering some packages, or something, out to that place, and he met my mother. And, they got together there, and later on, she married him. And, I'm one of the results of that marriage. So, that's a, that's a different kind of a story about those two.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Uh-ha. Because, they used to take us out in the part, and my mother made all of our clothes, linen, and silk, and all that kind of stuff. And people would want to end up, "Where'd you get those children?" [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, she'd look at them and say, "None of your business."

[laughter] And, that's just the way it went. But, she could tell, tell some stories about herself, I could tell you some stories about her, too. Um, she was amazing person, very amazing lady. What happened? Something blow out?

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: I think we lost a lightbulb.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think maybe your mother was worried you were gonna tell some really good stories.

[laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh, she was --

[laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: -- she was, she could, she could tell some stories. Because her experiences were, gosh, that lady had some experiences. Cindy did the lights go out?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, this one did.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: For the filming.

ROBERT HAMMOND: A bulb?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yup, my mom, she was something else.

[Interview interrupted.]

ROBERT HAMMOND: She was five feet tall, and she didn't take, you couldn't tell her no, couldn't tell her a lie either. She knew people like Edgar Cayce, um.

CINDY: That Cuban lady? June somebody?

ROBERT HAMMOND: June, yup, June Dixon, was it June Dixon. She was psychic, my mother was psychic too. Because she had her, she had her degree in psychic psychology from Pennsylvania University.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, she was good at that. Um-hmm.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Was she always reading your mind after?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Huh?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's why she was reading your mind after you came back, after the service?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Well, yeah, she did, she did.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: This is continue, you want to cool down for about five minutes or so before I can even touch it.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh it --

CINDY: You need, um, a thing?

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Ah, glove?

CINDY: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Yeah if you have, that would be great.

CINDY: [inaudible] laughs. How many do you want?

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: Cindy got it.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: One for each hand.

[laughter]

CINDY: Okay.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Cindy got everything. [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: But that's, that's just some cursory history about my family, they.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah, so I'm interested, for -- for other interests, but also it relates to when we're talking about segregation in the military and in the hospitals. Being of mixed heritage, how was that, how did people talk about that at that time? How would you say, here's segregated, White and Colored, and we're everything? You know? [laughter] How did?

ROBERT HAMMOND: How would I answer that? You know, I wasn't at home, I wasn't taught that. And, growing up, we grew up in a, in a neighborhood, basically Italian.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Cause we all went to the same church, Catholic church there, in Philadelphia. Now, when I went to live with my aunt in Charleston, was when I met with segregated schools.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, the thing of, the first encounter with the school was.

CINDY: Which one would you want?

ROBERT HAMMOND: The, at that time, it was in the '30s.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Was the brand new school was built in Charleston for the Black students. And, when that school was built it was so pretty, and big, that the White people wanted it.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: So, they came up, they said, "Well, the first 100 students can go there." Sent 100 students there, they make a C, then you can have the school. I was one of those 100, but we didn't make C's, we made A's. I think out of those 100 was ninety-five A's and five B's.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: That school is still there, it's a historical school there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, that was an encounter. And, that's when I liked the neighborhoods, neighborhoods in Charleston were, weren't segregated, not where we lived. And, we played, we played with all the White kids, the girls, everything. But, when we went to school we walked on opposite sides of the street. And, like in the morning, the White people were on this side, and we were on this side of the street.

SADY SULLIVAN: Were the schools across from each other?

ROBERT HAMMOND: The schools were, on the way, like, the street went -- was on the way to school, but this was a curb, and this was a curb.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, in the morning, this was the sunny side of the street.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: [laughter] And, in the evening, this was the sunny side of the street, but coming home, we had to walk in the shade. I think that's where they got that song.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: I think that's where they got that song.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: "On the Sunny Side of the Street". [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: Ah. [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: From Charleston. Um-hmm.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I believe that's where, I, I've got take another look at those words, "On the Sunny Side of the Street." [laughter] That was, you see, things happen. I don't know who wrote that song, who wrote that song Cindy, "On the Sunny Side of the Street?" Was that, um?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That was ah --

CINDY: I wouldn't know.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Wasn't that --

ROBERT HAMMOND: The man that blew the horn? He died, though. You know who I'm talking about? The trumpet player, I got a mental block on him.

CINDY: Not Louis Armstrong?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Satch -- Louis Armstrong?

CINDY: I don't know.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I think he wrote that song. [laughter] "On the Sunny Side of the Street."

CINDY: Or maybe, it wasn't Fats Waller was it? Was he black?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Um-hmm, Louis Armstrong.

CINDY: Maybe, maybe he did?

ROBERT HAMMOND: I think Fats might have done it too. Either one. But that's where they get that song.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Another reason, where I found out more about it, was, um, one day on the way to school --

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: A screwdriver as well.

[Interview interrupted.]

ROBERT HAMMOND: Actually, I have a new in Charleston, it goes like, you go down Ashley Avenue, there's a big oak tree in the middle of the street. I hope they cut that tree down. But, that tree branched way over like that, and the street went this way, went that way, at a block beyond that tree, all the White kids went that way, and we this way. We went in back of the green. We called in - in back of the green - over by the swamps, was where that school was. And over here is by Middleton Gardens, where it's very pretty, see?

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, anyway, one morning, we were going to school, and there were three bodies hanging out of that tree.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh God.

ROBERT HAMMOND: They and lynched two Black men on that tree, hanged them. And right after that song, I think it was Billie Holliday, sang that song "Strange Fruit --"

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh yeah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah.

CINDY: You all warm?

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

CINDY: I'll turn the air back on.

ROBERT HAMMOND: That's, that's where that came from.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Did I pop your -- break your light?

[laughter]

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: It did pop I'm afraid.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I hope you can fix it.

[laughter]

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Oh yeah, I've got a spare bulb there.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh, okay. But anyway, that's my encounter with it.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Another time, I was, I used to take my cousin his dinner down on King Street in Charleston, and he paid me fifty cents a week for that, that was some good money then.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, one day I'm going down there with his dinner, I had a basket, and this convertible came down the street, four White kids, and they threw a cherry bomb at me.

SADY SULLIVAN: I don't really know what a cherry bomb is?

ROBERT HAMMOND: It's a firecracker, a big one.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Like a bomb, a little bomb.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And they lit it, and they threw it at me. And I reset my hand and I caught it - and I threw it back at them.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh. [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: And it landed in the back seat of their car.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh. [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: And blew up.

SADY SULLIVAN: Wow.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And I took a --

SADY SULLIVAN: Wow!

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You didn't stick around to see the damage.

ROBERT HAMMOND: No, I didn't stick around for that. I didn't stick around for that. See, that's what I did. Another time, um, they had a theatre there called The American Theatre. And, I'll never forget, Freddy Bartholomew, was playing, I forget the name of

that movie. *Prince of Paupers*, I think that's what it was. *Prince and the Pauper*, you've heard of that?

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, I went to see that, had to go around the back. And I told the lady, "I felt, what's wrong with you, I can't come in here? I'm an American, this is an American theatre?" She went and called the police, and they come chase me away. Well, I went down there at night, got on a bicycle and went down there at night, was dark, and I threw a brick right through the window, and broke it.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And took off and went back home.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, and, stuff like that, it bothered me. And my mother said, I told my mother about it. She said, "I'm getting you out of Charleston, they're gonna hang you on that tree."

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah. That's what happened. But, ah, that's how I learned it. On the trains, they had segregated trains, now when I go down South on the train, my mother got the tickets, I'd go on a Pullman cart, and she'd insure me. Had tags around, you know travelers aid, and she didn't, oh I don't know, buy maybe 100,000 dollars worth of insurance on me. They left me alone. Now coming back, I couldn't do that. My mom couldn't do that on the way back. And that's when I learned, they changed trains in Washington.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Right here at the Union Station, they, you had to walk around the corner to the Southern Railroad. It was awful. The train was right behind the engine, and they'd use coal in there, and all that smoke would come in the car.

SADY SULLIVAN: Ah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: You know that's how boxed lunches were formed?

SADY SULLIVAN: Uh-ah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: The Black people on that, those cars, would make boxed lunches.

And, they would, in the bottom they would put dry ice.

SADY SULLIVAN: Ah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And then, fried chicken, sandwich, and potato salad.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, everybody had one of those. Somebody took that, and then the White people started wanting those boxed lunches. [laughter] They were that good.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: And that's, somebody took that, and caught onto it, and started selling boxed lunches. Wasn't a Black person, was a White person.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And that's when I learned, that's when I found out more about, if somebody called me a name, I'd throw a rock at 'em, you'd run away, I mean, being smart, I could run and hide real quick.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Or go jump in the water and swim.

SADY SULLIVAN: So that kind of stuff wasn't part of growing up in Philadelphia?

ROBERT HAMMOND: A little bit of it.

SADY SULLIVAN: A little bit?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Where we lived, yeah. But, if I, if, usually it was from Irish people.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: They'd come in the school and start a fight, come over and spit on me, and I'd hit them, then all hell broke out, cause all the Italian guys would come around. I used to fight, if it was one-on-one, they'd gang around, you in the middle of fighting.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Okay, I'm just going to have you hop up one more time.

ROBERT HAMMOND: You see, so it was a lot of that. Then, my brothers, they would come in and help. They'd pick on my sisters, see they'd pull her hair. This one, one guy set it on fire.

SADY SULLIVAN: Ah!

ROBERT HAMMOND: They pulled her down and set her hair on fire. We'd beat them up.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Set their hair on fire.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: They left us alone. Word got around, don't mess with them. They, we, um, we got along pretty well there, except the movies downtown. One of my brothers integrated the movie down there. And my mother sued them. She got some money. Then they stopped it.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Okay, ready you guys?

[Interview interrupted.]

SADY SULLIVAN: Are you rolling?

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: I'm rolling.

SADY SULLIVAN: Okay, good. So, Thursday, September 9th, 2010, I think this is part three? Okay. So, now I think I had a few more questions about the Brooklyn Naval Hospital.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Um-hmm.

SADY SULLIVAN: Can you tell us more about who, who everybody was, who were the nurses, and where were they from, and who were the patients, and -- ?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Um, the nurses that I encountered there, I don't remember their names, actually, I really don't.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, that's okay, I meant more in general, were they men and women?

ROBERT HAMMOND: No, there were no men.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: The, the, they had the Corpsmen were men, but the nurses were all women.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, I remember a time, two Black nurses came there. One of them was very dark complexion, Miss Daily, I think that was her name, and they put her to work in the linen room, and she was a full lieutenant. Another nurse, very pretty lady, I think, I remember, I think her name was Miss Wright, they put her up on the wards, and she was a lieutenant commander, she out ranked most of the White nurses.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: The nurses who were there, I would say who graduated from nursing school in New York, Pennsylvania, New England, so forth, maybe Illinois. They graduated from there. They weren't racist people.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Now if you got some nurses from the Deep South, like Alabama, Mississippi, places like that, then they brought that prejudice with them. There wasn't too many of them there, maybe four or five. And, it might have been, I don't know, I would say maybe about fifty nurses. Cause one of those southern nurses, um, she got me in trouble [inaudible] my rank, every time I got a right, they'd take it away.

SADY SULLIVAN: Hm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, I was watching this patient, I had been out on a weekend liberty over at the Savoy and Apollo Theatre and came in on Sunday night late, or Monday morning, and then I had the duty that Monday night, and I had to watch this patient, and I fell asleep. And, in the next cubicle over from me, there's a White Corpsman over there, he was asleep too. Well, they put me, she went and had me on a deck, what you call a deck court-martial, five days in jail. [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I had to go to jail for five days, on bread and water. And, I had my rank taken away, for sleeping on duty.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: The White guy, didn't, she didn't do nothing to him. So, that part, I just thought in my mind, something bad about her. A couple of days later she fell

down the steps. I told my mother about that, she says, "Nobody messes with Mrs. Hammond's son."

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: [laughter] Anyway.

SADY SULLIVAN: So the nurses, were they...

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: I'm sorry can I just get the air conditioning turned off?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, Cindy.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Cindy.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I turn it off here?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, you know how to do that?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'll figure it out.

SADY SULLIVAN: So, the nurses were they, were they, um, Navy?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, all Navy nurses.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, okay.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Every one of them.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Cindy, maybe she went out?

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh no, I heard her.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just, the system off. The Honeywell system? I said system off.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Let me see, I might -- where'd she go?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think she's on the phone. Oops.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oops.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh wait, you're hooked up, yeah. Let me grab Cindy, I'll do it.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Is she back there?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Let me get, yeah, cause you're all wired up.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Is she in there?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Cindy.

CINDY: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Would, oh gotcha. Indisposed.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Is she there?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She'll be out in a minute.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: They [inaudible] cause it takes a while, so.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Don't worry about it. Okay.

ROBERT HAMMOND: That just came, that came on.

SADY SULLIVAN: All right.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Okay, how is this go, like this.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yup, um-hmm. And, so what about, ah, what about the patients in the hospital, were they all, were they all Navy, or all?

ROBERT HAMMOND: All Navy and all Navy in there. All Navy, and I think a few Marines.

SADY SULLIVAN: But, so, no civilians would be?

ROBERT HAMMOND: No civilians in that hospital, it was all service.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm. And would it be foreign, like if there was a French ship, would, and they needed medical aid, would they?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Not there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I think the foreign ships went into Norfolk, or Rhode Island.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But that Naval hospital, I think that was a specialized hospital.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: For, um, surgery.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I remember the *Lexington* came into the Navy Yard, the battleship?

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Cause we had to go down there on emergency duty and bring some of the injured people off of there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: It was bombed in the Pacific.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And it came all the way from the Pacific there, it had about twenty, about twenty people who were injured on there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, the ones more seriously injured on that ship, went aboard hospital ships.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, they needed people to run that ship, you know, you say, they tried, they did save it.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, that was the only time I know some casualties from, from a battleship was there. I think some destroyers came in there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Where they might have had some wounded people.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: On board. But, most, all the patients that I knew there were all Navy and Marines.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: No civilians in that hospital. That was Naval hospital, Brooklyn Naval Hospital.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm. And so, what kind of, what kind of injuries, or what, what was the reason you were there because of appendicitis. What would bring most people in?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Well, broken legs, arms, infections, they had an infectious ward.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Um, chronic illnesses, maybe ulcers, um, stomach problems, intestinal problems, broken arms, broken legs, fractured skulls.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I remember one duty I had ambulance duty, and we went to, a guy, a sailor jumped out of a second story window and missed the fence, and he landed on one of those iron picket fences you see around New York.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh God. [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: Like, he was sitting on it.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And when we got there he was impaled on that fence, and by the time the fire department came with blow torches to cut that fence, 'cause we couldn't take him off of there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: We had to take the fence and him to the hospital.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: He was dead, he died on there, so we took him off, and he was dead.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But other than that, we had people there who were dying, some people died there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Had a morgue, everything, right there. Um-hmm. No births, all service men. We had a captain there, I'll never forget it, captain there. I watched and they gave me the duty to watch him, take care of him. He was a nice guy, he was from Massachusetts. He'd tell me stories, and things, and his wife and family, they'd always bring me, bring me little gifts, writing paper and pens, stuff like that. But they were nice.

SADY SULLIVAN: So, the family of people could come, so it wasn't, you were allowed in the hospital, even if you weren't Navy?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, families came, yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Relatives of people, and friends, could come and visit, yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: They used to have girlfriends come and visit me.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I wish it was Lena Horne. [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, they'd come and visit. It wasn't a bad, the hospital was not a bad hospital. I mean, it did good medicine, they practiced good medicine there, the patient care, nursing care was excellent. The hospital was clean, um, the doctors were well trained, I think it was more or less a teach-- maybe it was a Navy teaching hospital, too, I don't know.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But they did practice good medicine at that hospital, and they did care, they, the patients the best care they possibly could give them.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, I don't know how many people went through there. The time I was there, I wasn't there too long, maybe - let's see -- from March, March that year, to maybe September, something like that. But, that was, was a pretty good hospital. And I guess, if those walls could tell, they've got some stories. I do know that it was an old Civil War hospital.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And that they, they, um, had people there from the Navy, and maybe the Army too, at the time, you know, from the Union Army and Navy, there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, that's an old hospital, I don't know if it goes beyond, it might even go beyond the Civil War.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I don't know how far back, how far back does it go?

SADY SULLIVAN: I'm not sure.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 1838.

ROBERT HAMMOND: 1838.

UNIDENTIFIED CREW: Can somebody stop rustling the paper?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Cindy.

CINDY: Huh

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sorry.

CREW: They picked up on the microphone set [inaudible].

ROBERT HAMMOND: It goes back to 1838, that's um, Texas war.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah. That's a whole hospital.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Is it, it's probably a museum now?

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I wish had that little camera and some pictures, I don't have any pictures of, they wouldn't let us in there with a camera.

SADY SULLIVAN: Right.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Um-hmm. Cause soon as you hit the gate there, they'd ask you, guns and cameras are not allowed.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Knives, they'd let you have a knife, pocketknife, that's all. Um-hmm.

SADY SULLIVAN: Question. Oh, um, I guess sort of a general question was that, was the training that you first received in the Navy, did that inspire your public health career?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yes, it did. The training, and what we did at Montford Point, yes.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Uh huh.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, it did. It, um, that was, ah, let's see, I got out of that for a while, and directed a Charles Drew medical center in Dayton, Ohio, for one year, and I didn't like it. So, I went back to public health.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Ah huh. Yeah, public health was, that's all I did, um-hmm, was never unemployed, never from that. From 1953, up until 1993, that's a long time.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Never unemployed, always had a job. It didn't pay, I mean, I didn't become a millionaire, but I was able to manage a home, and you know, and have nice things.

SADY SULLIVAN: And that's good work, good community work.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, interesting work, it was public service, yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: A relatedly, so the Montford Point Marines who had previously poor health care, did they, were they aware that the health care, or lack of it, that they were receiving was, you know, below the standard in other parts of the country? Or?

ROBERT HAMMOND: I don't think they did.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I don't think they did, because, at the time that they were there, from 19, I guess, I wasn't there in '42, '44 I was there. The time they were there, the ones from the South, I guess racism, and bigotry, and prejudice was a way of life, and they accepted it up to a point, they couldn't do anything about it. I mean, the laws were such you couldn't go certain places, you couldn't do certain things, education was limited, health care was totally limited, and in some of those states, it was against the law for a White doctor to treat a Black person, unless they were being born, or they were dying. Any care in between there - no.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And that's what, that's what made the black colleges, a lot of them Meharry University, Shaw University, uh, Howard University, were all medical schools. Saying, that's where you got most of the Black doctors, Atlanta, Morehouse, all have doctors now, but that was the beginning of it. And, right after, I guess after maybe the Civil War, is when the Black colleges were formed. And, this is where you, you had most minority people went to college. See, it's not like today, I mean the colleges were, didn't have to depend on the kind of money that they have to depend on today. And, those colleges survived, they made doctors, they made lawyers, teachers, mechanics, engineers, ah, communication people, all sorts of, um, education was given at those colleges. And, I know at Shaw, I'm really proud that I went to that school. That's a historical Black college now.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And I was just there, they have my name and my sister's name in a brick in the founders quad.

SADY SULLIVAN: Ah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, I got picture of that. Want me to send it to you?

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: All right. At Shaw, I met the new president of that college, he was very happy that I was there. My fraternity - Omega Psi Phi Fraternity - it's there, so I started it. And the convention, National Omega Psi Phi Convention was there, I went to it, and that's how I got over to Shaw this year. I got my sixty year pin from the fraternity.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh wow.

ROBERT HAMMOND: So, um, that was, that was really an event.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, to go back over there and see how my college grew, I didn't recognize it, brand new buildings, um, Willy Geary, maybe you've heard of Willy Geary?

SADY SULLIVAN: Um.

ROBERT HAMMOND: He's an attorney in Florida; he's the richest lawyer in America.

He's one, he won those tobacco cases.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh right.

ROBERT HAMMOND: That's the lawyer. Um-hmm, he has a whole building there, he graduated from that college not law school, but undergrad.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And he had a building named after him, you know build a building there, the Willy Geary Building.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, so it's, it's a famous school now.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, most of the colleges, even Howard, they're famous now.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Um-hmm.

SADY SULLIVAN: I think, did you have other follow-ups to that, 'cause I think that I have.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just wanted to know, um, where Robert lived when he was, where were your barracks, or where were you staying?

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Oh, at the Naval hospital?

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I was thinking about that today, but there was another building over there where we stayed.

SADY SULLIVAN: In, within the Yard?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Within the Yard, yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, we stayed right there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And I think we were, back, I think we were on the second floor of that building.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: It was dormitory over there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Ah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Ah huh.

SADY SULLIVAN: With other people who worked in the hospital, or with other Navy people?

ROBERT HAMMOND: With other Navy people. If they had civilian people there, we didn't encounter them.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I don't remember any civilians there, unless they were gardeners, or something.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, I don't know, I don't remember. But, when I was there it was - go in, do your job, and get out on liberty. [laughter]

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm. [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: [laughter] Get out on, right across from the hospital, there used to be a bar over there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, on Flushing?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Sand, is it Sands?

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, on Sands Street.

ROBERT HAMMOND: On Sands Street.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, the hospital's here, here, bout here was the bar, we used to go in there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh. Do you remember the name of the bar?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Sands Street Bar, I think it was the Sands Street Bar.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: The Sands Street Bar.

SADY SULLIVAN: And was there, so I've heard a bit about Sands Street, was it, was it sort of hopping place?

ROBERT HAMMOND: No.

SADY SULLIVAN: Just that bar? [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: Just that bar.

SADY SULLIVAN: Yeah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: A lot of sailors went over there, because you know, sailors from the Navy Yard, and all that went in there. Cause we had a big fight over, on the street over there one day. Um, we were coming out of that, we'd always go to that bar to start up, get a beer, or something.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And then go down to the end of that street where the subway was, and get the A train, and go to Harlem. We didn't stay there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh. And then what'd you do up in Harlem?

ROBERT HAMMOND: What we did in Harlem?

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Well, we were up there to have some fun.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And listen to the music, we'd go to the Savoy.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Up to the Savoy, uh, Ballroom and dance up there. That's where all the good music was.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Lionel Hampton, um, sometimes Duke Ellington played up there, Jimmy Lansford, all those old musicians were up there, Cab Calloway would come. That's where the Jitterbug started, yup.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Mickey Rooney and Fred Astaire used to come up there to learn to dance.

SADY SULLIVAN: Ah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Bojangles used to dance up there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Ah huh, at the Savoy. All jazz and Jitterbug started, started from the Charleston, the Jitterbug did. And, we'd go over to the Apollo Theatre where all the good shows were. They'd have amateur, amateur day, we'd see Pigmeat Markham, and, who was that other guy, oh, Pigmeat Markham, another guy would come out and shoot people off the stage.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: If they, if they, you know, weren't any good. And those that were good, they'd bring 'em flowers, and everybody would cheer and clap for them. It was the audience that made people at that theatre.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah.

SADY SULLIVAN: So, when you would go out on liberty, would you be wearing a uniform?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Had to.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: If you were caught out of uniform, you were, you were put in jail, they'd lock you up for that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh, wow, even if you were far, even you're up in Harlem you have to be wearing your --

ROBERT HAMMOND: You had to wear that, 'cause you belong to Uncle Sam then, you were United States government property.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: As a matter of fact, if you cut yourself shaving, they could get you for destroying government property.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter] Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, but we, we had, that was a war, you had to wear that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I got in bad trouble on Guam because I was out of uniform. I went up to a village, they, and these, these White MPs stopped me, for, they were going to shoot me, thought I was Japanese.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: You know, being short, Japanese same, caramel complexion over there, and, ah, I didn't have my dog tags, I got in trouble for that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Um-hmm. But you had to wear your uniform, that was, you couldn't be out of uniform. Some guys did, but most of the guys, if you, if you didn't live in New York, you wore a uniform. Leaving the hospital, you better wear your uniform. Yup, but we, I never forget one time we were coming out of the hospital, went to the bar, 'cause beer at the time was only a nickel a glass, we'd go over there and buy a couple of beers and leave. And, it was, it was, ah, seven of us together, and these sailors, um, White sailors, were coming into the bar, and they called us some nasty names, used the "N" word, and all that. And, we didn't take that stuff out of them, we just hauled off and got in a big fight, beat 'em up, and then they, they got out of there. Lot of that happened, that happened at least, I'd say, one, you know, a couple of times I was there, a fight started.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: When those ships come in, with, with mostly, you know Southern guys on it. "Where'd you get that uniform, boy?" And, all that. That, started, that was fighting words. I didn't take that stuff off of anybody. But it happened. The, um, officers, some of the officers weren't good. The doctors were good, they were really nice to you, and most of the nurses, yeah you had a few in there. But it was the, um, usually staff officers at that hospital, they brought, you know they, most of those men came from the South.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And they were bigoted.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: They didn't like to see us, because they didn't want us in there.

And, like being a Corpsman, you could wear a Marine Corps uniform. And, they would spit on you for that, they didn't want us in there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: The commander of the Marine Corps, he said we couldn't fight, but yet when it got to Tarawa and Saipan and Guam, the guys distinguished themselves, then they stopped it. And, Harry Tru-- towards the end of the War it stopped.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: See then, then, we became respectful there. But, I think, I could tell you some horror stories about some of the servicemen. Like, right there in Jacksonville, a Marine came out of the bus station, Greyhound Bus, he wanted change for a dollar, so he could buy a pack of cigarettes. That time you put a quarter in a machine, and you would get a dime back and a pack of cigarettes. So, he went into the White side of the station, walked up to the window and asked the lady up there, "Hey sweetheart, can you give me change for a dollar?" Well she called the police. Police came, arrested the guy, took him out and beat him up, and took him downtown Jacksonville, near a railroad tracks, and hung him, hung him upside down on a flagpole.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: In a Marine Corps uniform. Now, word got back to Montford Point that he was there, and that's when people like Bobby True, Captain Wood, I think it was Colonel Wood, Perry Fisher, these are White officers, White guys, they went and got all the Marines together and half trucks with machine guns, and went down there and got the Marine, he wasn't dead. Got him off that flag pole, and arrested the whole police department, every one of them. Put them under military arrest, and took them back to Montford Point, and put them in the brig.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, and kept 'em there until the commandant said, "Turn them loose." I say.

SADY SULLIVAN: And did he, was he okay?

ROBERT HAMMOND: Who, the guy?

SADY SULLIVAN: The Marine.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah, but he was mad as heck.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh yeah. [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: I mean, they beat him up, they didn't break any bones, but, but, he was beat up pretty bad, black eyes and swollen face. They kicked him and beat him up pretty bad.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But he was okay after that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But we, um, that thing could have, those guys could have torn Jacksonville up.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: They had all the guns and ammo on those trucks. Because, because they were supply people.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Shortly after that, the Navy had a problem, I think it was Oregon or Washington, State of Washington, Port, they called it Port Chicago. They worked the sailors up there, wouldn't give them liberty, and they just got fed up with that and one guy took a keg of ammunition and threw it down the hole of a ship and blew the whole place up.

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Look that up on the computer, Port Chicago, blew that place up. And, because of the disrespect for, for the African American service men, um-hmm. The first black officer who was a Marine. They didn't respect him. They sent him, I

think they sent him to Philadelphia and put him in charge of supply company, the uniform, the depot, the Marine Corps depot there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: For uniforms and things, uh, Lieutenant Branch that was his name. But now, today, I just came back from Montford Point Marine day at, at Camp Johnson, they renamed it Camp Johnson. And the commandant came out and gave a really a good speech and praised us, and then some of the Black generals came over and shook hands, and said, "If it wasn't for you guys, we wouldn't be here."

SADY SULLIVAN: Hm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I got pictures of that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: You want them?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

ROBERT HAMMOND: I got all that. I'll um, right now they're in my camera, but I have to, you know I want to put 'em on a disk, if I got your card, I'll send them to you.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: When I get back to LA, I can do that on my computer.

SADY SULLIVAN: That'd be great.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, and in send you things from Shaw, send you things from the Marine base, but wherever we go, we get one of the guys is here. And, I told him to come on over here later on in the day, but I guess he's always sick. But, not old as, I'm older than him, but he's older than me.

SADY SULLIVAN: [laughter]

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, anyway, um, the thing is, is now, I look like Charles Baldwin, the astronaut, a personal friend of mine, and he's the one that flew the Challenger up there and put that Hubble telescope up there.

SADY SULLIVAN: Oh.

ROBERT HAMMOND: He was a three star general in the Marine Corps. All these guys, we're proud of them, and they're proud of us too.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: General Bailey, he was, um, he was, um, made General in, um, down in San Diego, General Bailey. Change of the guard from General Salinas, a lady general, all those generals, they, they really, we go down there, they roll out the velvet carpet for us. Another Montford Point Marine and captain in the Navy, Thomas McFadder, and Jim McCargo, both of them are dead now. But we used to go down to Camp Pendleton on Black history day and talk about the role that we had in the Marine Corps --

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: -- and Navy, and, they roll out the velvet carpet for us. The commandant of the Marine Corps, he gave us a lot of good accolades, he came over, I'll show, show you them pictures in the camera for you.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But we had a good time with them. But, now it, I never used to talk about it, I mean it's only been a couple of years now, that I begin to talk about it.

SADY SULLIVAN: Hm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: And, and I never talked about it, like what I did today to anybody, really.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm, well it's important, it's important history.

ROBERT HAMMOND: Yeah. One lady, I'll have to find it, I'll have to find it for you, Lilly Ferguson [phonetic], she did something on, on the, called, "They Fought on Three Fronts."

SADY SULLIVAN: Mm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: That's on the computer, you'll find that.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: By Lilly Ferguson [phonetic].

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: She did some, had a thing on me there, and I was surprised to see that the other day.

SADY SULLIVAN: Um-hmm.

ROBERT HAMMOND: But, way before then, now, we didn't talk about it. As a matter of fact, the Navy told us not to talk about it.