

ROBERT KEN HOLT

Interview 186 A

November 19, 2009, at the Holt home, Diboll, Texas

Rebecca Donahoe, Interviewer

Rebecca Donahoe, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with Rebecca Donahoe, Robert Ken Holt reminisces about his time in the U.S. Navy following World War II, where he was stationed on several different submarines. Mr. Holt trained as an electrician and worked on captured German submarines and on newly designed American submarines. After the Navy, Mr. Holt married Vivian in Boston and worked in several states as an electrician, finally moving to Diboll in 1969 to work as the chief electrician at the Particle Board plant.

Rebecca Donahoe (hereafter RD): Today's date is November the 19th, 2009 and I am interviewing Robert Ken Holt, or Kenneth Holt at his home, and we are going to be talking about his experiences right after World War II in the Navy. But first, Mr. Holt, I wanted to ask you about where you were born. Just give us a little background of what you did.

Ken Holt (hereafter KH): We lived in a place called Bristow, Oklahoma. It was about three miles out of Bristow, five thousand population. It is forty miles south of Tulsa on old Highway 66. And lived there for about...from the time I was six until I was eleven. And my dad worked for the Ohio Oil Company as a welder. He learned welding with electric that was used originally to cut and he learned... was experimenting with welding and everything. Then they closed down the Ohio Oil Company in 1939 and he was transferred to Fort Worth. So we moved in 1939 and that was two blocks outside the city limits of Fort Worth, which is now if you opened up a map of Fort Worth, it is the very center of the map. (Both laugh) But that is a long time ago and so then from the time I was eleven until I was eighteen, I was in Fort Worth and went to high school there.

RD: But your dad had employment all through the Depression. So you were lucky.

KH: Yeah, and we had a thirty-seven acre truck farm outside of Bristow, so we were able to have all kinds of food and things. I come here to Diboll and I said, oh boy, I was rich compared to what you people were here. Because we had all ... we could have food to eat that was meat. We had pigs and cows and so on. And then we had like a truck farm, which is strawberries and corn, and everything that you would grow on a truck farm. And so it was real nice. But we had just got it about fixed up just the way we wanted it, when Dad had to come to Fort Worth. And the people, who took it over then, did not take care of it, so... It is now a junk place.

RD: That's too bad.

KH: Yeah.

RD: That's too bad. So you graduated high school in ...

KH: I graduated from a special high school. It was one that was city-wide called Technical High School. I went there in 9th grade and took machine shop. They had eight different vocational courses and your vocational courses were three hours a day, which is different from any other one in the state of Texas. And so I was there for three years taking machine shop and that was the same thing as an apprenticeship in a machine shop. And graduated in 1946. So in 1946, war was still going on. Draftees were eighteen year olds, and I was eighteen in February, so they automatically gave me a deferment until I graduated. And then because there was so much going on, all over the world, Congress decided not to draft eighteen year olds for two months. They put a two month deferment on. So after I graduated from high school, I just enjoyed myself because getting out of school, you know, until July the 2nd. And on July the 2nd I knew I was going to get the draft notice in the mail. I didn't want to go in the Army, so I joined the Navy.

RD: Okay. And then where did you get sent?

KH: Well, first of all, I went to Dallas to sign up for the Navy and at that location, I took an ET Course, which is a test, which is for electronic technician and passed it. And those papers were supposed to have gone with me to San Diego. We went by train to San Diego. When I got there and was going to boot camp, they said that I would have to take the test again. I think that they just wanted us to make sure that we were doing right. So I took the test again and passed it. When I got out of boot camp, why then they gave me an automatic third class petty officer rating because you could not go to electronics school unless you were third class petty officer. So right out of boot camp very unusual you get a third class petty officer rating. And then they sent us up to San Francisco to the Treasure Island which is that Yerba Buena location in the middle of the bay where they had a truck go over the bridge the other day. Crashed down on the Island. Oh boy. Of course, he didn't survive that drop. And that bridge I'm told is seventy years old. So they have got another one of those things that is falling apart across our country.

But I was on Treasure Island for a year. And this was a different kind of school than any of the others that the Navy had ever had. Training for electronics. When I graduated from that school, I had a choice of going to the Navy Air Corps or in submarines. And then when I graduated, the Navy Air Corp part was full up and they had closed it temporarily. So I said, "Okay, I'll go to the submarines." Didn't make any difference. And they gave me thirty days leave, five days traveling time to get clear across the country. Cause that is in...

RD: All by train?

KH: Or however you want to get...

RD: There. (Laugh) I guess they had bus too.

KH: I hitchhiked. In those days in 1947, why that was in the fall of '47, the... if you had a uniform on, they loved you, you know. Later on, why they hated you. So travel across country very easy. It took me two days to get home into Fort Worth, which is the center part of the country. And then three days from there whenever I left from there to go to New London, Connecticut. But I stayed home for a little while to see what was going on.

They sent me to New London, Connecticut, to the submarine school. At submarine school, they have a one hundred foot water tower that you get tested in. They have a pressure tank on the ground that they test you in. If you have any claustrophobia, you don't make it. (Laugh)

RD: I could understand that.

KH: What they do, they deliberately increase the pressure pretty fast to make you have to swallow through your...to equalize your ear pressure, and all things like that. And... but you go through a full physical there. When I was going through the physical, an electronic tech had this black box. Well, like you go to the driver's license thing, you have a black box to look into. And the things that were going on in that black box was completely foreign. And the technician was going, "What's going on here". So he got a hold of the ophthalmologist and they took me into his office, checked me with his equipment. He said, "You're not even supposed to be in the Navy." Divergent Strabismus is what I have. My eyes are independent of each other.

RD: Oh, no.

KH: They do not have a cross point. One eye goes with one half of the brain and the other eye goes with the other half of the brain, like most people do, but most people have a cross point. Communication. I don't have. So where I am looking is where the eyes are looking and then the two brains put it together as a view point. And he said, "You are not supposed to be in the Navy with Divergent Strabismus. They are not supposed to have let you in." He said, "Do you want to be in submarines?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "No problem, it won't bother you." (Laughter)

RD: So they just didn't check you well enough whenever you first went in.

KH: That's right. That's one of those things that they just messed up on. They did check for color blindness and things like that and all.

RD: Whenever you ...at the end of the war like that, and you volunteered basically.

KH: This is with wartime...time period because they had not officially declared it over. They had not signed a peace treaty in Japan or like that. But they did have ...well a year later, they had a submarine that I went on. But they were still going through that process,

so I was entered in as under wartime. And I had a three year enlistment instead of six, which is what the Navy normally has. And they only had it that one period of time. But I spent half of my time, a year and a half in school of various types during that time. So a year and a half in school and a year and a half out on a submarine. But anyway...

RD: I'm sure that they got their money's worth still out of you, Mr. Holt. I know that they did.

KH: They didn't want to lose the electronic experience. That's the main thing right there. Any time that you have that, why then they want you no matter where it is. So I went from New London, Connecticut, to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and this was in the winter. And it was...it was in January, the last part of January of 1948, January 1948. I went up to New Hampshire and there the snow and ice had been around so long, that they had paths cut through and your ice would be about five, six feet above your head. (Laugh) All around. So we lived in a submarine barracks there and the boat was being overhauled. They were doing some work on it. And it was a German U-boat that was there. It was called the USS EX U3008. The 3008 and the Denmark area where it was being built was tied alongside the dock when the war ended. The 2513, the sister ship that was down in Key West with us was out on a breaking cruise. None of the two hundred that were being built got in the war. If they had of, we would have been slaughtered, because these were brand new ...new type construction, different type of things worked...the submarine wouldn't have to surface any more. All the submarines during World War II had to surface to charge batteries, and things like that. But these would not. So I was on that submarine, traveled down off Cape Hatteras on the way to Key West. And we had a storm and that submarine being designed for underwater, never had any anti-roll fins like they do on a regular submarine. When we were off Cape Hatteras, it was rolling forty-five degrees each way. And I had a hand cranked J T Radar that they had put on it and all it could do was look at the water or look at the sky and yet they wanted me to be operating that radar. But I got seasick on that and never got seasick again because that...that is quite a stormy area off Cape Hatteras 'cause two different fronts come together there.

RD: Well, tell me a little about what it was like to be on a German sub. Was there anybody there who had ever...who had helped design it, or...

KH: No.

RD: No, it was just...

KH: The ones who worked with designing it...I saw the man and his two sons, and he was the snorkel designer. He was from Holland and he was in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the construction area. I saw them there in 1949 and...but those were the only ones I knew about. But since they had two hundred of these submarines, we got two, England got three, Russia got 195. So Russia started their new after World War II submarine fleet from these submarines that they got.

But we traveled on down to Key West, did maneuvers down there, both at 2513 and 3008, because this was new technology. We wanted to learn as much as we could about it. We were in between an old type technology and the new atomic submarine technology. So it was in between. We had to learn all this to advance our technology in submarine. Submarines are always about ten years ahead of surface craft design. That means that if you design something to find a submarine, they design something to get away from it and stay out. So therefore, you very seldom will a surface craft be able to find a submarine very easily. World War II, that was a little different. But from then on, technology has always been so much advanced.

We were...we cataloged leaks on this submarine while we...when we'd submerge. And some of them were near where your batteries were. You know what salt water does to battery acid. It forms sulfuric acid and some other things that will kill you. So anyway, we learned where those leaks were and they decided to send us to Charleston, South Carolina, and see if they could fix them. Well, some parts of that hull was an inch and a half thick, and ... because it is an oval hull. It was different. Our submarines have round hulls. It was an oval hull, and so there were certain parts of it that were thicker than others and they took to finding where those leaks were, they chiseled out the weld, or cut it out, find that slag was in between the two welds, inside and outside. And what had happened, was slave labor in being used to build them, they would take and put slag in where ever they could. Sabotage it. But they had to do a good weld on the outside to cover it up.

RD: Oh, my. But then they wouldn't hold when you got down deep.

KH: Yeah, that's when it started showing up. But even at that, we had been running it for quite a while. We had run it for probably about a year and a half whenever I was put on it. And...but then we went out to sea. We submerged. We were down one time and they found a bunch more leaks, because it puts stress on the various places. And so some more leaks started showing up. They put it on the surface, don't submerge anymore and come back to Key West and get rid of half your crew. And that's what they did. Half the crew was transferred to other submarines, and the other half took it to New London... took it to New Hampshire.... Portsmouth, New Hampshire, because we had a treaty with Germany that we would get rid of the two submarines when we were through with them by taking them offshore and sinking them. And so we... the last time I saw that submarine was up in Portsmouth and it was high out of the water. What we had done, we had put new batteries on it, different from what they had, and so whenever you take the batteries off, that's a lot of weight. And so I knew that after I left there that it would be sunk. But anyway, that was an experimental on that.

RD: Do you know what part of Germany that was...it was...

KH: This was in the northern part where, up in Norway area where they were building these. But I imagine they had them in several different places where they were building

them, 'cause there were two hundred of them. That's a lot. I never did learn about all that, but I knew that these two that we got were up around Norway I think. So...

RD: What about the radar on it. Was that superior to ours?

KH: The radar, we put another JT...

RD: I guess it was sonar, rather.

KH: On the sonar was superior. Around the bow there was a horseshoe shaped with forty-eight different sonar heads on there. In other words there are all independent heads. And when you rotated your thing, then it would rotate each one of those heads and you had an individual head to bring signal in. So it was superior. The radio that was on it, transmitter was only a foot wide and about a foot and a half deep and about three and half or four foot high. The equivalent radio transmitter that we had was four foot wide, four foot deep and six foot high. So you can see the difference. And it was an equivalent transmitter. But...so they were still using the German radio. Anyway, it had... when we took it over, they had beer bottles, or some sort of liquor bottles with liverwurst or meat preserved inside the bottle. And some of the guys would find these hidden at various places.. (laugh) It was one of the peculiar things.

RD: So some sailor brought it from home and stuck it...

KH: That is the way the Germans did anyway. They had a lot of their stuff would be hidden in various places for them when they were going to go out to sea. And since this was getting ready to go out to sea, that's what they had done, see, so.

RD: Well, I just can't...you know...you are looking at a control panel and it's all in German. Did you have people who knew German well enough to know what was going on? Or?

KH: They had taken putting English on what we had to on it. On the things, so...

RD: Oh, translation on it.

KH: And the equipment I had to learn why I learned it pretty well. So it wasn't too bad. But the controls...like I never worked with any of the controls in the submarine. I only worked with the electronics in that submarine. That was different when I got on the American sub. We operated completely different because you had to learn how to handle the particular controls and so they had other people that learned that particular part and that's all they worked with. You know that on a submarine typically you only have enough beds for one-third of the crew. You know why that is?

RD: I guess everybody rotates in

KH: Rotates in beds too. (Laughter)

RD: You are hoping everybody bathes regularly.

KH: Yeah. And then of course, on battle stations everybody is up because everybody has a station to go to on battle stations. And then on regular cruising and everything, everybody has a job to do what they are supposed to do. And since I was electronics, electronics didn't have to work on the equipment when I got on the American sub. Work on the equipment all the time, only when it was broken down. So then we had seamanship type jobs that we would do when we were on duty. So that was a little different. So they transferred me to the USS Amberjack, which is number 522. This was the first guppy snorkel. A guppy meant that it had extra batteries. We had... instead of... we had twice the number of batteries that they did on a normal submarine. Of course, the cells were designed a little different. We had five hundred and four cells. That meant you had over a thousand volts available to drive your motors. And then the motors that were on this particular sub were direct drive to the propellers so you didn't have gears like they did on some of the older types submarines. So that was less noise. And then...with five hundred and four cells, why you had a lot more battery space various places. And it was three hundred and fifteen feet long, it had a double rudder topside and a bottom side rudder which normally submarines didn't only have a half rudder. But when we were submerged that rudder acted like stern planes too, so you had compensation. Like when you were....and we were designed to go at eighteen knots all ahead plank on the surface. But whenever they took and redesigned this one, it was built as a World War II submarine, but it was one of the later ones, they took a lot of the sheet metal off and redesigned it, streamlined it and changed it. But they still didn't know what would happen to it when you were underwater.... 'cause our submarines in World War II only went around eight to ten knots under water. During... and this submarine would go eighteen knots at least on underwater and on the surface. In fact it could go a little faster underwater.

RD: Oh my.

KH: Because you didn't have the wave resistance and things like that. But that is around twenty-three to twenty-five miles an hour.

RD: Thank you, because that was my next question. How does that figure?

KH: A knot is six thousand feet. A mile is five thousand two hundred and eighty. So that is your difference in speed and they use knots at sea. All ships use knots at sea. So anyway, there was a lot of different things we did with this submarine 'cause it was the first of its kind being a fully experimental submarine and the captain was given full leave to be able to do whatever he wanted to do. Of course, one day Admiral Fife overheard some of the things going on, you know. Scuttlebutt going around and everything. He said, "I want to see what this new submarine is doing."

So he came on board and said, “I don’t want you to change any of your operations or anything. I want you to show me what it does.”

So we went through all the various things, showing him what it could do underwater. One of the first things you discovered when you are going underwater, we had a long wire antennae for the radio from the conning tower to the top of the topside rudder. And it came through a pole, that was at the after battery hatch. It was six or seven foot pole, something like that. And when we did a high speed maneuver at eighteen knots, that pole broke off because anything like that suddenly has a lot of pressure against it. So we had to redesign the wire to go all the way to the tail rudder without having that pole in between. Our bow planes we found were too big. When we would go all ahead flank like that, the bow planes would start traveling by themselves. In other words, they were moving according to the way the water pressure would move it. So they found out they would have to redesign them different later on. And your stern planes are like on an airplane, make you go up and down. The rudder makes you go left and right. Well, they would counteract with each other. When you turn, the stern plane became a rudder too. So you could actually be, in one respect you could be diving with the stern planes while you are trying to stay up and just turn with the rudder. So this was before they had computer controls like they do now with one stick. We had three different stations for the bow planes, the turn planes and the rudder. The rudder was in the conning tower. But anyway, they had to learn how to compensate. If it started to do it, why one or the other of the operators had to compensate with his direction to hold your level. Otherwise you could get out of control. You don’t want to...a submarine, as big as it is, whenever it gets in a heavy hard dive, why it can go too far and your controls are not going to bring you back very easy.

RD: About how many sailors would serve on...that size?

KH: We had about a hundred. We probably might have had a few more than what they have on some. We had a peculiar captain. He was the last survivor of the USS Tregor in World War II. In other words, he was pulled off the submarine as it was fixing to leave to go out on its last patrol, which it was never heard from again. So it was sunk somewhere. But he was the only survivor of it and he was our captain. And he was an author and he would dictate while we were on this submarine. And he would dictate for writing books and I have got about three or four books of his. But he had a special person on board, pharmacist mate – was the chief pharmacist mate, that could take dictation. And he was on board the submarine with us. So anyway...

RD: So he would write novels or he would write...?

KH: So he would write about submarines, but it was fictional, but it was based upon facts.

RD: So...

KH: So it...part of it was historical fictional type things. So...but...

RD: So this one was really a prototype, ya'll found all the mistakes, so they could go back... redesign it.

KH: They were figuring out what they could do...get from it to redesign their new submarines. The brand new ones that they would be building, because World War II had wore out a lot of submarines. We had lost a lot, so they were going to have to build more submarines. So this was one of the things that they wanted to learn. They didn't want to have any of the old type... World War II submarine. So we were learning what it could do. One thing that we did was submarine rescue. We went to a place that was three hundred feet deep, submerged, went to the bottom, and put... flooded in water into the negative tank which is an indoor... inside tank. All the other tanks were outside. And that would make the submarine too heavy to be able to go up. So it would be as though we had sunk. And this was three hundred feet deep. The SS Chanticleer was a submarine rescue ship on the surface and they had a diving bell on it. And on the forward torpedo room there was a bell near the exit. When you released the bell, it will float to the surface pulling cable with it. It had six hundred foot of cable on it, so you could be down six hundred foot and release it. And then they could get a hold of the cable and pull the diving bell down by following the cable down to the forward torpedo room. And it was tied to the center of the hatch and there was a smooth surface around it on the deck so that they could set it down on it and seal it. And so they tried this at three hundred foot, but they had a current there that was sweeping the divers away, and they didn't want to hurt anybody while they were practicing.

RD: I see...

KH: So they said, "Can you move to another spot." We went two hundred and fifty foot location and the current wasn't strong there. So then they let the diving bell down. When we left that morning, we had taken five of our crew members and put them on the Chanticleer. And then I was selected as one of the crew members to go on the diving bell when it came down. So when they came down and tied to the deck, and of course, it is a two stage diving bell. The bottom part has water in it. When they got down, they used air from the Chanticleer as their pumps and things. They pumped the water out of the bottom, then they came down into the ... and opened up the hatch and the guys that were up there in it, they came down and went to various jobs. And I and four other guys went up in the diving bell and they had two operators in it. And it padded on the inside because when you get up on the surface with the diving bell, the waves are going to move it around.

RD: Mmmhum.

KH: And they have a ring thing there that you can...hold on to. So I went back up and spent the rest of the day on the deck of the Chanticleer watching the goings on, it was called. But they did various things like that. It was a lot of fun working with it, but it

also serious business 'cause at two hundred and fifty foot, something happen, you are gone. (laughter) That's all there is to it.

RD: So...I'm sorry.

KH: Back to the...to the water tower in submarine school, they had had a guy to die because he didn't breathe coming up from a hundred foot. So if you were in submarine school, they made the rule that you couldn't come from a hundred foot any more. You could only come from fifty foot, eighteen foot and twelve foot...up and test for learning...using a Mumsome lung. This Mumsome lung is a device that can take air of your breathing into it, it will absorb the carbon dioxide that is in it and you take your air that you normally breathe and that is the air that you use all the way up when you are coming...like it is for escaping from the submarine. If you came up on the cable and followed it, rather than a diving bell, your lung will carry you up 'cause it has got air in it. But you are supposed to breathe 'cause you are changing pressure. As you change from one location to another it changes pressure and the ropes that you'd go up on then has a knot every one foot and it tells....so you count your knots as you are going up so that you don't go up too fast. Well, he went up too fast and didn't breathe and his lungs exploded. So they said no more from a hundred foot. But you had to come up from twelve foot or a diving bell from the surface. They took you down twelve foot, you come up learning how to use the Mumsome lung. Then you went down in an elevator to eighteen foot and come out through that learning how to use the air locks and everything and it come up from that and you did this twice in each location. This is in the winter time up in New London and there is air going through that elevator. Talk about cold.

RD: Cold...

KH: We went down to fifty foot and come up from that twice. They said if you want to come up from a hundred foot after you have been out to sea and got experience, while you can come back if you want to. Nobody ever did.

RD: I don't imagine so. (Laugh)

KH: And that other tank, it was a double tank on the ground level for putting pressure in. And they have instructors in there and while they are putting the pressure in you, they are putting pressure in to make you as though you were at a hundred foot, but they do it pretty fast. And so if you accomplish keeping your pressure controlled, then you are okay, but if you are not, they take you and put you in the other compartment and decompress you with an instructor. Then you are out. You don't go on submarines. But...

RD: With that scuba diving... doing that sort of thing is not quite as

KH: I wouldn't give you that kind of experience, 'cause that is shallow work.

RD: Work, yeah.

KH: If you get to working with diving bells or diving suits and things like that, that puts you more in that kind of a thing, because then you are taking pressure and relieving pressure. You know that it is nitrogen in your bloodstream is what will kill you from too much pressure and not getting rid of it. That's why you have to come up slowly and allow that to come out. And at a hundred foot, coming up wouldn't be too bad, but if you are down at three hundred foot and coming up, you might still get some bends and stuff, you know, 'cause you still are not getting that nitrogen out fast enough.

RD: Coming up too fast. Well, after you left the navy then, after three years...

KH: There's some other parts about this National Geographic though.

RD: Oh, tell me about the National Geographic.

KH: They came on the Chanticleer with a crew, photographer crew and did some...they wanted us to do various things and they came with a crew on the submarine. Of course, we were communicating with sonar between us and the Chanticleer 'cause we were doing things underwater. And, uh, they wanted to take pictures of some of the things we had been doing, 'cause this was different any submarine had ever done before. So we came up from periscope depth at a sharp up angle along side the Chanticleer for them to take pictures. And they said, "Captain, can you make it a little steeper?"

And he said, "Sure."

Guess where I was? I was on the helm at the time in the conning tower when this was going on. So we went down to a hundred and fifty foot, all ahead flank, and then he did a sharp up angle and we came up along side the Chanticleer. We had a thirty-eight degree up angle. My feet were hanging out behind me. If you can imagine. That is not quite forty-five, but...so...you had a big wheel for the rudder, and of course, I had the rudder a mid-ship. They didn't want it having any effect. And he had already plotted his on the plotting equipment where he was coming up and at error of things, so he knew where he was. You don't want to come up underneath another ship that way 'cause that's pretty sharp. But a submarine has a round hull that is not sharp like a destroyer. So when we came up we had probably half of it showing by the time we got up all the way with thirty-eight degree up angle. And you can see in the picture water falling away from various cavities. And so then when it sets back down, you've got half the submarine still under water, resisting coming up. The other half above water is going down with a round hull, so you are not flopping or anything, just slowly setting down. So...but you have to make sure that everything is tied down (laugh) 'cause on a submarine like that when you are going with sharp angles, it is like flying in an airplane. Uh, a submarine in water at twenty-five miles an hour is the same thing as an airplane in the air at one hundred miles an hour. In other words, the solids make the difference, and so when you are going through the water, you are actually going like an airplane. That's why they took and redesigned all the controls and used it with a stick control with a computer control to

control the 'cause they had to use hydraulics to do the movements, but you use stick then and use the same little stick to go up, down, sideways, whatever...just like an airplane. So that's what they eventually designed. And then our captain was Lieutenant Commander. So that is usually about as high as you get on a submarine and uh... when he left the submarine after I had left...we went to...went to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for overhaul where I got discharged. And so I was on barracks duty then since I was going to get discharged and after I got discharged this is 1949 and he got transferred to the ... to the service and I don't know what he did for awhile, but when Eisenhower became the President, he was selected as Naval Aide to Eisenhower. And he was Naval Aide to Eisenhower for four years. And because of the experience he had had in the past, he worked with them designing atomic subs and stuff like that. And so then, he was a full captain at the time that the Triton was launched. The Triton was a little over five hundred foot long, and it had two atomic reactors for propulsion and everything on it. And so he was put on it and they took and sealed up the submarine when they submerged and didn't surface until they had gone all the way around the world. But during that time, this one guy on there had appendicitis off of Gibraltar and so they surfaced just enough to get the conning tower above the water and allowed him to be taken off the submarine by wire to a aircraft carrier that was nearby, but that way they didn't break the integrity. What they were doing, is that they took the air that they submerged with, they took and absorbed the carbon dioxide out of it and rebuilt the air constantly as they went around the world. So they used their own original air.

RD: And that was the first time that had been done.

KH: Yeah. So your new atomic submarines, that's what they have now...

RD: They are self contained...they don't ever have to come up.

KH: Yep. And when they go out they usually submerge and you lose communication with them for three months at least, or as long as their cruise is.

RD: Right, now I had a cousin serve on an atomic sub and he was...you couldn't talk to him.

KH: No.

RD: It was just too bad.

KH: Rudy Rudy, what is his last name at the post office?

RD: Oh.

KH: He was on an atomic sub and the sub that he was on has been scrapped. He learned that later on after he left it. But he served I think, several years on atomic sub. And I

mentioned in there that Gary Hurley was on that aircraft carrier there in Gibraltar where this guy was transferred. So.... He learned about it pretty quick.

RD: Another little connection to Diboll.

KH: Yep.

RD: Well, what I want to know...let's see you ended up being discharged in Pennsylvania, and ...uh, were you and Mrs. Holt already married at that point or no?

KH: Nope.

RD: Okay. So what...

KH: That is an interesting thing. Well, I was going to school in New London, Connecticut, she was going to school in Boston at college. She had gone to college in 1948 and well, while I was in submarine...whenever I got transferred from the sub school to Portsmouth, she was there. And from 1948 to 1952, was her college in Boston, at the New England School of Theology. And here I was a hundred miles away. (Laugh) And then later on, my sister saw Vivian at a church camp in Chicago, just outside Chicago, and met her there and I had left from there. This was after I was out of the Navy. Carrying some youth back to Fort Worth, Texas, and uh... I left there about two or three hours before Vivian came. And so my sister met Vivian before I did.

RD: Before you did. So your high school experience and then your Navy experience, actually you have done that kind of work your whole life then... after that. So it surely stood you in good...

KH: They...since I went in during war time, they...the schooling that they gave us, the GI bill, gave me one year just for being in the service and then they gave me a day for each day I was in the service. That was three years plus one. And if you add those three years plus one, that is four years of full twelve hour... twelve month years. That gave me a little over five years of actual schooling then. So when I got out, I went to went to Lubbock, Texas to Texas Tech...at that time it was only seven thousand pupils in that school. But that was in 1950. And ... uh... went to school there for about two years and then I met four guys from a quartet from Maranatha Quartet, from New England School of Theology at our church camp at Grapevine, Texas. Met them at our church camp and they were telling me about the school and everything. And I didn't really like going to school ...what I was doing. Here I am a twenty-one year old. At eighteen years old you don't know what you are going to do. There is no way. And kids should not be going to college at eighteen. They really shouldn't. They should spend two or three years doing something else and then go to college. And that's what the Navy did for me. So then, whenever I met them and learned what they were doing, I wanted to do the same thing. So I transferred to the New England School of Theology in Boston. I came there in the fall. Vivian had graduated in the spring and she was still there. And...uh...so the upshot

of it was that by the time of her birthday, which is in February, why we were starting to go together and...so we had the whole faculty for us. In other words, they would do anything for us 'cause Vivian was there pet, you know. She had had appendicitis her first year and had her appendix out and because of being a war girl from the Philippines, the doctor took her intestines out, opened up to the air to kill any TB germs that might have been in there because of her background. And so then...when I got there, why she couldn't go upstairs because of that, so she was put in with Ms. Brown, who was a professor of Bible there. And she became like her surrogate mother. Any way Ms. Brown later on married us in California. She traveled by bus out there to marry us and then she came here to our church to marry our granddaughter. I mean, our daughter, rather, when she got married, she came here and married them before she died.

RD: Well, I wanted to ask, since this is for the History Center, how in the world did you end up in Diboll, Texas?

KH: Ha-ha. That's an interesting one. Back in 1969, I got laid off from an electronic job that I had because of the space program being cut back. Now I was not in the space program, but it affected all of Southern California, so that they had eight and a half to nine percent unemployment in Southern California. And...uh...this was close to Christmas and I had been off from work for about a year, and had earned about one thousand dollars less that year than I had the previous years. So I think it was about thirteen thousand, and I would have normally had fourteen thousand. So...but Vivian's two brothers helped us out a lot. I worked some electronics in their plating shop. I rewired a church... don't know what all else I did. But then, near Christmas time there was a nephew of Vivian's that was living with us. His name was Phillip. He had come to live with us and he was working out there in California. And... not Phillip. Yeah, Phillip. But before he came there, he met Mr. Temple in Texas. He and his sister were here on work permits and so they met Mr. Temple. And Phillip told Mr. Temple about his family in the Philippines. Vivian's sister is eight years older than Vivian is. And when her mother died, she was four. So her sister was then at twelve years old, became the mother temporarily out on the farm up until the war came along. But anyway, Phillip told Mr. Temple about his family in the Philippines, his mother and brothers and sisters and everything. And there was a guy named Father Fled.... Fred, have you ever heard...here of him around here? He was the Catholic father from this area. He was a missionary in the Philippines when the World War came along. He was in Bataan Death March. He was around twenty years old. So he had been through all that and he loved the Philippines, so he went back to the Philippines as a missionary. So Mr. Temple was very familiar with Father Fred. He had gotten in communication with him and said, "Go check on this family. I want to learn about them."

So he did and there was a young man named uh...oh heck, senior moment...(laughter)

RD: It will come to you later. (laughter)

KH: Anyway he was seventeen years old. Uh...was living.... Father Fred learned about him and the rest of the family. Now Vivian's sister had stayed with the Embassy, American Embassy in the Philippines because she had been born to an American citizen. Vivian was born an American citizen. They were born from an American who was in the Philippines and doing work under American work.... He was Agriculture Commissioner to the mountain provinces before the war for awhile. Anyway being an American citizen, she kept in touch with the Americans and as she had her kids, why she registered them so they were born American citizens.

Well, Mr. Temple got in touch with her through Father Fred and wanted to know if he could bring...now what is his name?

Vivian Holt (Hereafter VH): Willy.

KH: Willy, she heard it. Brought Willy... had Willy brought to his house. Willy came from the Philippines to live with Mr. Temple. This was in the winter of 1969. And so Willy and Phillip decided to talk to each other at Christmas time. Or right near Christmas. And uh... they got Mr. Temple on the phone. I told him what kind of work I had been doing and that I was out of work. So Mr. Temple said, "Send your resume."

So he took and gave it to Bill Oates at the Particle Board Plant and they hired me over the phone from California.

RD: (laugh) So that is how you guys ended up...How long did Willy stay?

KH: Willy was gone from here by the time I came in February.

RD: Oh.

KH: But his sister wanted him to come on down there. And then his mother and all their family came into Houston and uh... lived there in Houston and most of their family is still around there now. Her sister has died since then, but uh... we were just down there, oh, a month and a half ago for Vivian to marry her great niece.

RD: Oh my.

KH: So...and, uh...but we keep in touch with them.

RD: Well, I know you're quite valuable to the...you worked at Particle Board plant and then most of the time?

KH: I was chief electrician there all the time that I was there. And until two years before I left and gave it over to someone else and then I was working on projects for the last two years. But I came as the second electrician while they were still building the plant. And the first electrician was a former Navy man. He had been an alcoholic. He was not drinking at the time he was working at the plant. But one day there was about five

different vendors come in all at once and it shook him up so bad that he didn't come into work for about three days, because he took a drink and of course...

RD: That was it....

KH: That was it. And uh...so then he did come back to work for a little while, but Bill Oates told him said, "You're going to be working under Ken Holt." And he finally left.

So, anyway, I was chief electrician there once when we only had three electricians and the plant was going round the clock. So that meant that we had to meet each other sort of like at the gate, swap shifts. But it only lasted about three weeks or so, until we could get somebody else hired in. But I became chief electrician there for all the time I was there, twenty years.

RD: I know we...you should...I remember you mainly at Diboll Day making sure that all of the park is wired and ready to go. So I am glad you guys moved here that's for sure. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

KH: Unless you've got some other questions.

END OF INTERVIEW