FINAL DRAFT

Interview with ALLAN ROHAN CRITE
Illustrator, Design Dept., 1941-74
Interviewed April 27, 1984 in
Mr. Crite's home/studio in
South End of Boston

Francy: When did you first come to the Navy Yard for a job?

Mr: Oh, that's a little difficult to remember. I think it was around 1940.

Francy: And why did you come to the Yard for a job?

Mr: I was transferred there. See, I worked for the Coast and Geodetic Survey for about a year or so, and then, what they did, they transferred the office to Washington, and closed the Boston office, so I was transferred to the Navy Yard.

Francy: And how old were you when you started working at the yard, approximately?

Mr: I was in my thirties.

Francy: Had other members of your family worked at the Navy Yard at any time?

Mr: (chuckles) No, as a matter of fact, my father was dead by then, and he never worked for the Navy Yard. I have no brothers or sisters or any relatives, so I'm the only one.

Francy: What did your father do?

Mr: He was an engineer. But he died in 1937. He was considerably older than my mother. He was born around 1877 or something like that, and he died in 1937.

Francy: Did you live in Boston all your life?

Mr: Well, practically. I came up when I was less than a year old, in 1910. So I guess for all practical purposes, you might say I lived in Boston practically all my life. That's almost, what, three-quarters of a century. See, I'm 74.

Francy: What was your job at the Coastal Geodetic...

Mr: We did maps. And it was more or less, kind of sensitive material, because the war was quite active at the time, and so we were doing pictures, maps of the theatre in North Africa.

Francy: And this was in the late '30s?

Mr: Well, I'd say around 1940, thereabouts, give or take.

Francy: Okay. Where did you receive your training for your job?

Mr: Well, it's kind of funny. I didn't. See, I'm an artist. And so what happened, I went to the... I had been training as an artist for years; I mean through high school, high school vocational art classes, and I went to the Museum of Fine Arts, and I got a scholarship into the Museum School,

Mr: and so I had my training there. And so the work that I did in the Coast and Geodetic Survey was working with maps. They gave us a crash course in map reading and stuff like that, up at Babson Institute, and so that's what I did.

Francy: How did you get started over there? I mean, how did you find out about that job?

Mr: (chuckles) It was so long ago, I can't remember exactly. We went to Babson Institute because I think it was possibly doing some war work or something like that, as I dimly recall.

Francy: What did you mother think about you working at the Navy Yard? Did she have any thoughts about that?

Mr: Well, at first we thought we were going to Washington, because the Coast and Geodetic Survey said we could transfer there. And then just on the last day, they found they could transfer me to Boston. So that's what happened. Mother wasn't too enthusiastic one way or the other.

Francy: Was it your choice to go to Boston rather than Washington?

Mr: Well, I didn't like Washington. You see, my experience in Washington... I went to Washington a long, long time ago, about 1929. And the experience I had done there was very, was not a pleasant one. You see, Washington of 1929 was something like Selma, Alabama. And to a person like myself, being black, and not being used to legal segregation or anything like that, it was a traumatic experience. And that was the thing which I remembered. And it was a very, very disagreeable experience, putting it mildly! And

Mr: so I wasn't particularly happy about going down to Washington to that kind of a situation. But of course, it was a job. But... So, being transferred back to Boston, or being transferred to another governmental facility, was better than going down there. The only trouble was, she packed everything (chuckles) and so forth, and so we didn't unpack anything for quite a long while, because at that particular age, I was eligible for the draft. And we had a draft board that apparently didn't have anything else to do, every now and then, and so, "Oh, Crite? Oh yeah! We'll change his draft classification!" And I'd have to go up to the board and say, "What in the world is gong on, etc. etc?"

Francy: Were you in a different classification because of the nature of the work you were doing?

Mr: Yes and no. Part of it was because I was the sole support of my mother... But it varied. And the work wasn't important enough to keep me out of the Armed Forces, per se. But they sort of kept it going, bouncing back and forth. Towards the end of the war, they did send me up, and then they found I wasn't quite suitable enough for the Armed Forces, so they gave me a 4-F, or something like that. They could have done that in the beginning and saved me a whole lot of worrying!

Francy: Did they actually draft you into the Service and put you somewhere?

Mr: No. They brought me up for the examination and things like that. And so they found as the result of the examination that about three things were wrong with me. No one of them would have kept me out, but all three together did. Something about my eyes, and other conditions. And they figured I might as well stay where I was. I didn't exactly quarrel with

Mr: the idea!

Francy: So what was your first job at the Navy Yard?

Mr: Draftsman.

Francy: And what did you do in that job?

Mr: Oh, just made drawings of pipes, pipe systems and compulsion systems, and things like that. But they found out pretty soon that I could draw. And so they had me started doing perspective drawings and things like that. So I turned into an illustrator, technical equipment. But it took a long time for the title to catch up to what I was doing. I was the only one in the yard who did that kind of work.

Francy: And exactly what would you draw?

Mr: Well, the engineers would get a bright idea, and they would come to me with about two or three sketches or something like that, and they would say, "We have this idea for a certain kind of propeller or something like that, or a propulsion system. See what you can do with it." And so what I would have to do is, have to know something about propellers and stuff like that. And I'd make up a perspective drawing that the engineers could talk about. And these drawings were used for the ship's conferences and things on that order. I remember I did a whole drawing of a whole missile system. And so the drawings served in the place of a mock-up. And they were used throughout the whole system.

Francy: In building ships.

Mr: Yeah. And they were used in different yards and so forth, Bureau of Ships conferences and things.

Francy: Your drawings?

Mr: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Francy: When you say perspective drawings, do you mean three-dimensional?

Mr: Oh yes.

Francy: Drawn and painted to look like the actual thing?

Mr: Yeah, they were drawn and shaded and so forth. We didn't go into any painting or anything like that. And so that kept me busy for practically the whole time I was there. This was something which more or less developed. And so in a certain sense, it helped out a great deal, as far as I was concerned. Because to do straight drafting would drive me out of my mind! (chuckles)

Francy: Why is that? Is it too...

Mr: Well, I mean it's mechanical. And things like that.

Francy: Not as creative?

Mr: Yeah. Very non-creative! (chuckles) I could do it, but the authorities figured it would be a waste of time to have me doing that when I could do something else that would be far more useful for their particular purpose.

Francy: So did you start doing this perspective drawing during the war?

Mr: Oh yeah.

Francy: How were you... Were you promoted?

Mr: Oh yes, I was promoted right along. I didn't get to a supervisory position, but... I think I ended up with a GS-7 or something like that.

Francy: Was it your choice not to be a supervisor?

Mr: No, it wasn't my choice. But it would have been additional responsibility. But then again, it was rather difficult in one sense, because of the nature of the work which I was doing. I mean, supervise others to do it. By the time I would get through telling somebody how to do something, I might as well do it myself. (chuckles)

Francy: Now, you said that when you started out doing this, you were the only one in the Yard doing that kind of work.

Mr: Yeah.

Francy: As time went on, did others...

Mr: No.

Francy: So you were the only one that ever did it...

Mr: Yeah.

Francy: Now you were in the Design Division?

Mr: Yes.

Francy: Who was your supervisor?

Mr: (chuckles) Oh boy! Mmmm...

Francy: If you can't remember the name, just what his job was.

Mr: Well, he was a GS-12, and he supervised the Design Division. (chuckles) Isn't that funny? I can't remember any names! I do have some. There's a Mr. Barnes, for example; there was a Mr. Avery, and Cahill...

Francy: Did you work closely with others in the Design Division in your work? Who for instance, would you work with? You mentioned the engineers...

Mr: Well, I mean, I would be working with GS-9s and GS-11s and GS-12s. Oh, Justin Francis, he was the head of the department. And all of these guys in there, they get some ideas or something like that, and then they'd give me a briefing as to what was wanted. And then I proceeded to make my drawings accordingly. Sometimes I'd go on board ships to get the idea of the locale and things like that. And so I worked on destroyers and guided missiles for destroyers, and cruisers. It was interesting work. Paid bills...

Francy: Okay. Did you work with other shops? Did you go into other shops?

Mr: Yeah, I had to go into other shops to see about procedure and things like

Mr: that. In other words, so I would sort of know what I was doing. And so I would visit different shops, and see how things were made, things like that. That would help me in working out my drawings.

Francy: Which shops? Do you remember any in particular?

Mr: Just the machine shops.

Francy: What about the pattern shop, for instance?

Mr: Yeah. I probably would go there. I just can't remember off hand. But I do remember the machine shops. I remember I went to the Ropewalk to do something. I remember that.

Francy: What sort of thing did you do there?

Mr: Some kind of a design for... (chuckles) It's kind of surprising, how quickly you can forget things.

Francy: Well, that's okay.

Mr: I would go into other shops, look into the boiler works and things like that. And I remember I made a drawing for a Foster- boiler, showing the different burners and things like that. Unfortunately, I don't have any of the drawings with me. See, 'cause when I left the yard, I had to leave them. The material was sort of, kind of classified, in a sense. But not quite that much. I think I do have one drawing of a boiler which I do have.

Francy: Oh! I would like to see it if...

Mr: If I can find it, yeah. (chuckles)

Francy: Did you do most of your drawing in Building 39 itself?

Mr: Yes.

Francy: Were you ever out on the piers or in drydocks...

Mr: Oh, occasionally I would go out. Of course, I would have to visit shops and so forth; sometimes I'd go aboard ship. So I wandered around a bit. But the bulk of my work was done in 39.

Francy: When you were going to different places, were you required to wear safety clothing or equipment?

Mr: Safety hats. And glasses.

Francy: Shoes, steel-toed shoes?

Mr: No. See, I wasn't there that long. See, I mean, if I go on board ship, it would be just to look at the different compartments and things like that. But I didn't stay.

Francy: Were you working on... When you would go on ships, would it be ships that were being repaired...

Mr: Yeah.

Francy: Did you ever work on new construction?

Mr: Occasionally. See, some of the drawings would be practically new construction. So I had to go on board ships to see what the locale was like, and that kind of business. But I didn't do any... I might make one or two quick sketches on board or something like that. Nothing more than that.

Francy: Can you describe the working conditions at the yard? I imagine it was noisy, dirty, dangerous...

Mr: No... Well, the office was like any other drafting office. (chuckles) So it wasn't any more noisy there than you get at any other office.

Francy: But I mean when you went in other shops or on ships...

Mr: Well, it was kind of noisy in some of the places and things... But as far as dirt was concerned, eh, it wasn't very much. (chuckles) I mean, any more than what you expect in any indistrial place, I guess. But we didn't exactly go through pools of oil and slime and stuff (chuckles) if that's what you mean!

Francy: Okay. (chuckles) Now, during World War II, when you first came on, in the early '40s, you probably saw the yard build up...

Mr: Oh yes!

Francy: What was it like when you first came on? And how did it grow and develop?

Mr: Well, you see, when I came on it was quite a large force there already. So what I saw was a decline rather than anything else. See, because at the end of the war, of course, there was a rapid reduction in force.

Mr: So I mean I saw a reduction and a loss of people. But even then, I was still conscious of lots and lots of people there. It's only towards the end of the period, when the yard was being phased out, that they got a reduction in the numbers of people.

Francy: In the late '60s, early '70s?

Mr: Yeah.

Francy: In your department, the Design Division, were there other black people when you first came on?

Mr: Oh yeah. Not an overwhelming number. There never was. But I mean, there were a number of blacks. Some were in supervisory positions.

Francy: What about women? Were there any when you came on?

Mr: Yeah, there were women.

Francy: What sort of things did they do?

Mr: Well, secretarial work. We did have women engineers, draftsmen and so forth. You might almost call them an endangered species, but they were there. (chuckles)

Francy: Did most of them leave when the war was over?

Mr: Well, yeeesss... The reason I hesitate in that is because quite a number of people left when the war was over. But they left more or less in pro-

Mr: portion. I mean, there were still women there, even when I left, in the drafting department. There weren't too many, never was that much, but I guess there may have been around three or four. I think I remember one was Mary Fennety; another women's name was Phelan, if I remember right. There may have been a few others. I do have a photograph of one of the retirements, so it can give you some idea of the personnel that were there.

Francy: Good! Yes! Now, when you came on, how many people would you estimate were in your department?

Mr: (chuckles) Gee...

Francy: More than fifty?

Mr: Oh yeah.

Francy: More than a hundred?

Mr: Something like that.

Francy: Did it decrease later?

Mr: No, that was fairly constant. The Design Department didn't fluctuate that much. I mean, of course, during the war, it was quite a large number of people that were there. But at the end of the war, it did drop down, and then it stayed that way. So after the war, the figures remained fairly constant. So you didn't get too much fluctuation up or down. It's different than the shops. See, the shops, there would be quite a decline. But the Design Department stayed pretty much together. As a matter of

Mr: fact, I mean, a good portion of them went over to South Boston when things did finally shut down. So I guess there is a pretty sizable force still left. But after I left the yard, I never went back. I haven't even visited the facility over in South Boston!

Francy: Why did you decide not to go back?

Mr: I just didn't!

Francy: Just had no reason to?

Mr: No. And I think if I were offered a chance to go back to drafting today, or the Design Department, I wouldn't take it.

Francy: Really? Why is that?

Mr: Well, I'm retired. And I'm an artist, of course. And I have chance to do my own work, control my own time. And I'm kind of busy! I'm over at Harvard University as a librarian, and I have a part-time job over there. And then of course it gives me a chance to do my own work on an educational project and things like that. So...

Francy: Which library do you work at?

Mr: Grossman Library. It's the Extension library. That's the library for the Extension School. See, over at Harvard, you have three general libraries. There's Widener and Houghton and Lamont. Those are the general libraries. Then each of the schools, like Design, has a separate library; the law school has one, and so forth. And so for the Extension School, we have a

Mr: library. The Extension School over at Harvard is quite extensive. I think they have around 12- or 13,000 in that particular program. Of course, we don't have very many people in the degree program, because about half the people who are in the program already have degrees. So we probably might have a graduating class including everybody from the associates and bachelors and masters degrees, you might have about as many as about 150 in the graduating business. But the other people, of course, would be people taking course work for enrichment or other kinds of reasons. But anyhow, it's a very, very important part of the work at the University. Of course, the adult education program does expand the college experience to a large number of people. And I think today about forty per cent of the college experience is in that category. And maybe by the turn of the century, maybe seventy-five per cent of the college experience will be through the adult education thing! So it's a very, very important thing. What they call continuing ed and so forth.

Francy: Yeah!

Mr: And then of course, is the degree program, as I mentioned before; like Harvard has it. So that's how I got my degree. And so I have a bachelor's of arts in the extension studies from Harvard. Class of '68.

Francy: While you were still working at the Yard?

Mr: Oh yeah. And the people at the Yard were very, very much impressed. And they gave me a big reception and so forth, and they also gave me a Harvard chair! (chuckles) I think the chair I'm sitting on might be that chair. Of course, I bought a few other Harvard chairs so people would get the idea that I went to Harvard University!

Francy: (chuckles)

Mr.: But I am a graduate of Harvard University, also a graduate of the Museum Schoo School of Fine Arts. And I have a couple of doctorates, one from Suffolk University and the other I got just last year from Emmanuel College, sitting up there. (indicates his mantle.)

Francy: That's wonderful! What are those in?

Mr: Well, one is for a doctor of humanities at Suffolk, and the other one is Doctor of Fine Arts.

Fr acy: That's wonderful, great@ I should call you Doctor Crite!

Mr: Yes, I mean, I would appreciate that! (chuckles)

Francy: Okay, Doctor!

Mr: (chuckles) Yeah! I also have a certificate from MIT as a community fellow. I have a few other little trophies scattered around here and there. In back of me is a citation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. And then I was part of the 350 thing from Boston. I recently got a citation from the City Council over there (mantle) on the business of my contribution to the co community in my field of art, and so forth and so on. So I have a few trophies hanging around here and there!

Francy: You certainly manage to keep busy!

Mr: Oh yeah. Well, they say idle hands is the devil's workshop. (chuckles)

Mr: But usually people in the arts, they usually keep going. It's a little bit different than some of the other fields. Which is something to think about, in a way, because you see, a lot of our jobs and things, people get hung up in each particular job, and the jobs become an end in themselves. So that means when a person retires, all of the sudden, that person finds himself or herself with nothing to do. And if that person hasn't made some kind of preparation during his or her life, you might say almost in a way, it's a form of suicide. And I've noticed that even at the Yard, when some of these guys, engineers and so forth, that was their whole life. And then when they left, they had this tremendous void, and they didn't last very long. In my particular situation, it was probably a little different in one sense, because I looked at the work in the yard as a means towards an end, with myself as an artist. And of course, there wasn't that much difference between the work I was doing in the Yard and the work I was doing outside. Because it was related. And so even while I was in the Yard, I was still doing my own work on the outside. Still drawing and painting, having exhibitions and so forth. I would get a leave of absence every now and then and so go off and do some projects. And they were quite good about that.

Francy: How long would your leaves be for?

Mr: Oh, about a week or two weeks. I remember one time I had a two weeks' leave of absence that gave me a chance to do a mural out in Detroit.

Francy: An outdoor mural, or...

Mr: No, it was indoor. It was for a chapel, a Roman Catholic chapel. The Oblate Order of Sisters of Providence. It was an order founded by the Suplician

Mr: Fathers out in the Dominican Republic. And the work of these sisters in those days was amongst blacks and Indians. And they had a house out in Detroit. This was back in about 1940 or maybe not until 1950, I guess. Yeah, I guess 1950. And it was an interesting experience, because I went out to this particular convent, and they said the offices in English. And that was my first contact that way. I'm an Episcopalian, so I'm familiar, you might say, with the liturgy and so forth, because the services of the Episcopal, i.e., Anglican, church, you might say is a kind of translation of, or rearrangement of, the Latin Mass and Latin services.and things. So this particular order, as I said before, they said their offices in English. So my job there was to make the, do the Fourteenth Station of the Cross and five Sanctuary paintings, and do it on a case, on a plaster wall and so forth. I did my homework prior to going out, so I had become familiar with the medium. And then took a plane and went out there, and I did the job within about a week or so. It was something like a retreat. I would go to Mass in the morning, around the corner, and then go to the convent, be practically locked in the convent all day. And had my meals there and stuff like that. It was a nice retreat.

Francy: Who paid for your airfare and...

Mr: I did. See, the job there, I got through the Rambush Decorating Company in New York. And then for about a year, about four months, I was on a Reduction-in-force thing. So I got a job down in New York, and I worked with Rambush Decorating Company there. And then as soon as that job ran out, they were calling people back to the Yard, so I went back to the Yard. But even while I was there, I would go off on conferences and things like that. So that meant when I got through, I still had my own work. I'm still busy.

Francy: That's nice. What were the feelings of the other workers in the Yard toward you as a black person? Was there any problem on that issue?

Mr: Well, I didn't notice any. I won't say that there wasn't; I just simply, I didn't have any problems. I was highly respected, I think. And it was kind of funny, in one sense, because they knew my religious work, so they had quite a respect for that. And there were a lot of, some Roman Catholics around, and maybe one or two orthodox, and of course, quite a number of Jews. And because I had to study the liturgy and so forth, the Jewish people would say that (chuckles) that I acted more Jewish than they were, because I would tell them things about the particular liturgy and stuff like that. So there was quite a rapport. And I have a certain attitude. You see, I have lived in the South End practically all my life. And the South End is a mixed neighborhood. So that means that I come in contact with all kinds of people. So I just have a habit of seeing people as people. That's one of the things I feel good about an integrated neighborhood. I hate to use the term, but it does help people to see other people as people, rather than, as you might say, sort of kind of a two-dimensional or ethnic-identity thing. So that probably had some influence on my attitude. Since I have that particular attitude, I mean, I just looked upon people as people, and that was it. And as far as they were concerned, they sort of regarded me as just being somebody around who just happened to be black, and that's about all. So I didn't have any problems.

Francy: Did you... Well, it sounds like you made friends. Have you kept up with any of the people that you knew at the Yard?

Mr: Well, one or two. Of course, in a certain sense, from you might say, a social point of view, I mean, hardly anybody came here. But then of course,

Mr: that's a matter of geography, because so many people came there from Hingham, or Milton, or something like that, so forth, so the minute we left the Yard, we went to our respective homes and things. So there wasn't very much contact that way. Which I imagine would be true with practically any office, unless you came from the same neighborhood or something like that. that chances are of you maintaining contact after you leave the office, would be rather minimum.

Francy: Did you belong to any clubs, social clubs or labor groups or employee groups...

Mr: Well, I was a member of the union...

Francy: Which union was this?

Mr: Federation of Engineers or something like that. (chuckles) I can't remember the exact name of it. It was a governmental union.

Francy: Did you ever attend meetings or anything like that?

Mr: Well, they had a few meetings there in the Yard itself, but... Then every once in a while, they might have some dinners and so forth, so I'd go to that. But I didn't go to too much of it. I mean, we still have dinners today, but I haven't been to one of those meetings for a long time. I do get a union letter every once in a while, which is kind of a little discouraging (chuckles) in one sense. It's kind of sobering, because that's the only thing I have which gives me some idea of the passage of time. You see, I work with young people a whole lot. So I have very little contact with my peers, people my own age. So I don't have that sense that loss,

Mr: I won't say lots of people; I don't have that sense that other people might have who have worked with their own peers, and then find, as time goes on, so-and-so passed away, and so-and-so passed away, things like that. See, I don't quite get that, because of the nature of the work. But this letter that I get from the union every now and then, I look through it and I look at the obit column, you know. "Such-and-such a person has passed away, we regret to say." And so forth. So I get a feeling that if I got to these dinners, I will be running (chuckles) into something like that! Of course, a person might accuse me of running away from reality, and so forth... Maybe I am, I don't know. But I'm not much for that, in a way. But I keep kind of busy! See, in one sense, I have been in school practically all my life. I went to Harvard, went to the Extension School, and I was there in that particular program about fourteen years or so. And then of course, they put me on the library, so I have been in academia practically all my life. So I'm faced with that. And then of course, I work with a whole lot of younger artists around here, because we have a very active artistic community, as far as the black community is concerned, and I guess it is true otherwise, too. But there is a very active group. So I'm busy with that. And I'm sort of like a senior advisor, or patriarch to a group of about seven of us. We call ourselves "The Boston Collective." The average age of this particular group is about in their thirties. And the six artists are very, very prominent, and very promising people. And all of them have traveled, and all of them have exhibited throughout the whole country. And some have been abroad and so forth. About three of us were with that group of twelve people in other disciplines who went over to China. To give you some idea, this group of artists: all of them have been down to Cuba and some of the islands, and so forth. And they are, all have exhibited thoughout the country, and represent different kinds of disciplines. One is a photo-anthropologist who is a professor at Simmons College; another

Mr: one, the only woman, has a studio here with me, and she's been down to Cuba, and she's exhibited up and down the Eastern seaboard and she's been to China, and her folks have been to Africa. So that's the caliber of people with whom I work. And then of course, several of us are tied up with Roxbury Community College, working on the artistic program there, and others have been connected with Northeastern University. They have a program there; it's called "Afro-American Artists in Residence" program, department of the university. So that's the nature and the caliber of the people with whom I'm working with. And then of course, there's the National Center of Afro-American Artists, which is commonly known as the Elma Lewis School, and that has quite a program. And there's a museum program there, which is affiliated with the Museum of Fine Arts. So that's the group I travel around with.

Francy: Sounds fascinating!

Mr: Yeah. Gee, I wonder if this thing is recording!

Francy: Well, I think it might be a good idea to turn it over about now.

Side Two begins...

Francy: Now, what shift did you work? Well, first let me ask you a different question. Could you describe your daily routine?

Mr: (chuckles) Daily routine? Oh, it was a very exciting one! I got up in the morning, have my breakfast, go on down there, show up around 8:15, and work from 8:15 until around 4:00. Then I go home. (chuckles)

Francy: Okay, how did you get to the Yard? Take public transportation?

Mr: No. I let the public transportation take me!

Francy: Oh, there you go again!

Mr: I know, smarty! Well, I took the MBTA, and it was pretty convenient, because see, one time I lived on Dilworth Street. 'Course, that's simply a name to you. On the corner of Dilworth and Northampton Street. So I walked down to the end of Northampton Street to the elevated station, and then took it right on straight out to City Square. And then I could walk up from there.

Francy: Did you always work the day shift?

Mr: Yes. They didn't have any night shifts in the Design Department.

Francy: Even during World War II?

Mr: No.

Francy: Oh! Did you have staff meetings, weekly meetings, or regular staff meetings?

Mr: No, at least I didn't attend any. (chuckles) See, if there were any staff meetings, that would be for the design supervisors. See, I never was a supervisor, so I didn't go to any staff, anything like that.

Francy: Okay. How would you get your assignment?

Mr: Through the supervisor. And of course, mine was a little bit special, because... But it still came through the supervisors. As I said before, they got some ideas on some kind of a propulsion system or something like that. Something might come up from Washington, and then they'd give us an assignment, and then they'd pass the thing over to me. Once or twice we went down to Washington to see about something. So I got one or two trips that way. But it would only be for one day or so. Take a plane down in the morning, and take another plane back at night. But that was about it.

Francy: Were those better experiences than your first time in Washington?

Mr: Oh yeah. Well, things had improved by then. As a matter of fact, my first experience in Washington was 1929. But I did have another experience in Washington later. I was a member of the National Council of Churches. I was a delegate there from the Episcopal Church. And so we had a general board meeting in Washington. And so I went down for that, and I was put up at the Willard Hotel, which unfortunately, I think has been demolished. And so my experience was totally different. For one thing, I was in a hotel, and I couldn't ask for better treatment! I would go down, and the waitresses would suggest something to me. "Why don't you try this?" And so forth. So complete hospitality and everything like that. So it was about as different as day and night. See, when I first went down in 1929, I was a nineteen-year-old boy. But then again, they had legal segregation in the city. And the experience was rather difficult to describe. It's something which you probably wouldn't know what the feeling would be like. It would be like for example, if you were in some country and you would find signs saying "black trade only." And that you would know that if you walked into a particular store, a particular restaurant, you wouldn't be served or anything like that. And so when I went down to Washington in 1929,

Mr: there wasn't a single place where I could get anything to eat. And of course, I wasn't used to anything like that, because I lived around here. So the experience was poisonous.

Francy: Sounds terrible!

Mr: It was! I mean, it came as a great shock, you see, because you find yourself walking aroud in the capitol of your own country as a stranger! And you might say as a foreigner, and not a welcome one, either! And so when I went down this time to Washington, as a member of the National Council of Churches, stocked up in a very fine old hotel, a very historic hotel as a matter of fact, and I couldn't ask for better treatment!

Francy: That's good. When was that?

Mr: That was about in the 1950s. Thereabouts. See, I was on the board for about, I think my tour of duty was for about a year or so, something like that. It may have been about three years. Had these meetings in different parts of the country. And then there would usually be a general assembly, and then of course, you might be reassigned and so forth. And as I said before, I was assigned from the Episcopal church. I don't know if you know anything about the churches or not...

Francy: Not very much...

Mr: Well, the Episcopal church functions pretty much like the Roman Catholic c hurch. Like for example, we have a bishop, and there is the diocese of Massachusetts. And then of course, the country is divided into different diocese, and the head of the Episcopal church in this country would be the

Mr: presiding bishop. And then of course, we have the Episcopal, or Anglican, Church in different parts of the world, and the head of the entire Anglican church or Episcopal church, is the Archbishop of Canterbury. So he holds a position somewhat similar to the Pope in Rome, as far as the Catholic church is concerned. And the thing of course, however, is that the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury isn't the same as the papal authority, because the pope in Rome, for example, he appoints the bishops for the different parts of the church. The Episcopal church functions a little bit differently. The bishops are elected and are consecrated, so you have to have at least three bishops to consecrate another bishop and so forth. So that's done, you might say, independently of the Archbishop of Canterbury. But every so often, every ten years, they have what is called a Lambeth Quadrilateral. That's when you have the Anglican bishops of the whole world meet at Lambeth Palace in England. And then they might discuss the matters which affect the world-wide church. And so on. That's how it functions. Now, the National Council of Churches, that's made up of the different orthodox and Protestant and Anglican churches in the country. And that's sort of an ecumenical thing, and so what we try to do is to deal in matters which affect, you might say the non-Roman churches, throughout the country. But there is, of course, a relationship between the National Council and the Roman Catholic church. Of course today, there is a greater sense of communication between the Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic church, which wasn't quite true, you might say, back in the '30s and so forth. Because nowadays, Catholics can attend non-Catholic services without committing an act of sin, which back in the '30s was almost unheard of. And Canterbury and Rome are talking to each other now. (chuckles) And so forth.

Francy: Now, in doing a little research for our interview here, I was looking

Francy: through the Boston Naval Shipyard Historical Review, 1937-58. And I read inside that the cover work, cover art work, Allan R. Crite! (chuckles) Did you do many special projects like that, artwork for publications and things?

Mr: Yeah. Some. Then of course, I made some, made a whole series of cartoons for the Clean-up Campaign. That was in the Shipyard News Yeah, I forgot to mention that.

Francy: Oh. So you would do special assignments for other departments from time to time?

Mr: Mmmm, yeah.... But the thing was, what I did, I mean, I did the regular cartoons for the Clean-up campaign thing. So that would show up practically every week or every two weeks, whenever that thing came out. I have a whole set of the, a xerox of those cartoons, I think, someplace.

Francy: Oh!

Mr: I ought to dig them out sometime!

Francy: Oh, I'd like to see them, too!

Mr: Yeah. Next year, I'm planning to have a 75th anniversary, a retrospective exhibition. So I might bring out some of those things for that.

Francy: Oh yes, that would be interesting! Did you ever work on, for instance, brochures for new employees?

Mr: Yeah, we worked on one. As a matter of fact, I have the design in the other

Mr: room, of a little brochure we tried to promote the idea of the naval shipyard, trying to keep it going. 'Course, unfortunately, we had a chap down there in Washington that seemed to have a dim view of us! Had a dim view of Massachusetts, as a matter of fact. I don't know why!! (both chuckle) But anyhow, he was sort of responsible for shutting the place down. Of course, as I look at it today, in looking at these two guys, between (clears throat and shaps fingers) whatever-his-name-is (chuckles) and the actor we got running around today, between the two of them, Imean, I think the former is a little bit more digestible than the latter! But of course, that's my own biased opinion.

Francy: So you worked on a brochure to try to keep the Navy Yard open.

Mr: Well, it was a promotional thing.

Francy: I understand also, in the '50s they were thinking of closing the Navy Yard, and there was a whole campaign, with "Save Our Shipyard" buttons and all sorts of things. Do you know anything about that?

Mr: Oh yeah, there were campaigns. You see, the idea to bring work to Boston and so forth. Because we were in competition with Philadelphia, Portsmouth, and such and things. And of course, theidea was production, keeping production schedules, and the quality of work and things. And from a purely practical point of view, the thing that was sort of short-sighted in a sense, was that the physical aspects of Boston was much better you might say, than Philadelphia, or even Portsmouth. That's from a geographical point of view, see. Because, see, what you could do working in Boston, that if you had to take a ship out on a trial run or something like that, within about a couple of hours, you could be out in open water. And in Portsmouth, you had to go

Mr: through a river, and they only could take a certain draught of ship. And of course, the Philadelphia yard is up on the Schuylkill River, so that meant almost like a day or so before you got out in the Chesapeake Bay. And Boston, you're out in deep water within about an hour or so. And the facilities we had over in South Boston, we had the largest drydock on the eastern seaboard. See, that drydock was built and could accomodate the LEVIATHAN, which was the largest ship of its kind, a passenger liner. But anyhow, the drydock was big enough to take practically any of the aircraft carriers. So the facilities were here; the capability was here. We made up some drawings to try to stress that point of view. The decision was more political. I mean, Philadelphia had a bit more pull than Boston did. And then of course, there was the grudge against Massachusetts because Massachusetts didn't go along with the rest of the country. And so there were some political things going on there. So the view to close down the Yard here in Boston was rather shortsighted. A person might accuse me of having a certain amount of bias, and I suppose I might have to admit that. But then again, you can't exactly argue with physical facilities. I mean, the geography which was there. So you could see that. But anyhow, that's how it was.

Francy: I had heard that in the late '60s or thereabouts, there were all sorts of elaborate plans to enlarge the facilities and move to South Boston. Were you involved with that whole thing?

Mr: Oh yeah.

Francy: What did you do for that?

Mr: I made some drawings. As a matter of fact, I have the drawings in the other room, showing what we planned to do and so forth. And it's a plan that had

Mr: a whole lot of good sense in it. And it could have gone through, but as I said before, the decision was political rather than anything else, I think.

Francy: Did you ever work on safety posters? Anything like that?

Mr: Yeah. Well, yes and no. I mean, in the Clean-up Campaign, kind of thing, "keep your yard clean" and so forth, it did stress safety. "Keep your hats and goggles, and stuff. And keep the yard clean, 'cause that was good sense." But these were cartoons that appeared in the Shipyard News for the most part.

Francy: Now, you touched on this briefly before, but... How much of your work was considered classified or secret?

Mr: Well, some of it was. Not all of it. (chuckles) Of course, I did have clearance for secrecy and stuff like that. But the drawings which I did, they weren't totally classified. But I mean, they weren't the kind of thing for general publication, either. So it would be something like that.

Francy: What kind of precautions were taken to ensure security or secrecy?

Mr: Well, just keep my mouth shut (chuckles), and don't leave stuff scattered a around or anything like that.

Francy: Stuff would be locked up at night?

Mr: Yeah. Some things would be locked up. But that was about it. The only thing, I mean, I found out about when I left, I couldn't take anything with me.

Francy: Any of your drawings?

Mr: No. Except about one or two. There is one drawing that is sort of like a missile system and so forth, that went all over the, went throughout the whole system; was used out in Pearl Harbor, and all over the place. They said it was one of the famous drawings. I wish I had one of those prints with me now!

Francy: Would you sign your name on these things?

Mr: Oh yeah.

Francy: What kind of tools and equipment did you use in performing your job? Obviously, pencils... (chuckles)

Mr: Yeah. Drafting tools.

Francy: Was it your own set that you used?

Mr: Partly, and partly what they had there. But I had my own drafting tools.

Francy: Did you receive any sorts of certificates or awards?

Mr: Yeah, for longetivity of service they gave me some things. And they gave me a couple other things. I mean like, I think I have got some of the trophies in the other room.

Francy: You'll have to show me. Did you enjoy working there?

Mr: Well, it's all right. (chuckles) I mean, it was a job, and it was regular,

Mr: paid bills, and let me do my own work on the outside. And I'm not ungrateful, because I got a good sized pension out of it. How long it's going to last, I don't know... (chuckles) ... with my friend down there! (chuckles)

Francy: Were there disadvantages of working at the Yard?

Mr: Like what?

Francy: Well, was there anything you didn't like about it?

Mr: Well, the time I spent there! (chuckles) I mean, I wasn't all that gung ho as far as work is concerned, but I had to work someplace, so between working for myself and working for the Yard, that would be about the second best thing for me. But that would be because of the nature of the work, see, because I could almost do my own work, per se, working as an illustrator, I could call my own shots in a sense. So I had a certain amount of independence that way. Which probably may have been a little bit different than some of the other people. See, the engineers didn't know how to draw, so in one sense, they had to depend upon me to do it. So that gave me a certain amount of leeway and things like that. Which other people probably didn't have. So that meant my situation there wasn't quite as cut and dried as it could have been.

Francy: Now, when did you leave the Navy Yard? Did you leave when it closed?

Mr: Yeah. It was about, around 1970, I think. Something like that. Maybe around '74. I think so.

Francy: And then you went over to the Harvard library?

Mr: Yeah. As a matter of fact, it was kind of funny in a way. They really wanted me over at Harvard. And so when they found out that the Yard was closing and so forth, they said, "We would like you to work in the library." So I agreed. Then I found out I could stay another year at the Yard, and so what Harvard said, "Okay, we'll put somebody in your place so to hold the job for you. So when you leave the Yard, come over." Well, you see, the idea of extension library was this: Having an extension graduate as a librarian was extremely helpful, because see, I would have some understanding as what an extension student was going through and so forth. And so that was it. It was kind of funny in one sense, interesting in a way. You see, when we came to Boston in 1910, my mother attended the classes at the University Extension which had just started in 1910. And she kept attending classes, and then she got me going to the thing, and I attended up to '68, and got my degree. And I still sort of kept a relationship with it. So when they came to have me over at the library, I maintained my association. So that meant, that means that the name Crite has been associated with the University Extension for its entire existence! Which is going on 75 years. Unfortunately, I'm not married, so I don't have any children to carry on the tradition. See, if I were married and I had some children, I could say, "Okay, now you carry on the Crite tradition at the Extension!"

Francy: Yeah! (chuckles)

Mr: So now the only thing I can do is get a chair endowed with my name and so forth, keep the name Crite connected with the place. But I don't know what my chances are of that, getting a chair endowed! (chuckles) It could be done for about $100,000 in income, would be sufficient to pay a professor. But I don't have that kind of income. At least, not of the moment! As of the moment.

Francy: I just have a couple other questions. One is, I have heard about some pencil sketches of the Navy Yard, done by someone named V. Spicer in 1909. One shows the yard in 1823, and the other shows the yard in 1850. Do these ring a bell with you at all?

Mr: Not really.

Francy: Also, in 1942, a man named William Draper, who was with the Navy, did some oil paintings in the Navy Yard. Does his name ring a bell with you?

Mr: Yeah, just vaguely. There was some World War II artists, and so it's quite possible that such a person did do such-and-such a thing there. The name Draper does sound vaguely familiar; does ring a bell kind of dully in my skull somewhere.

Francy: I heard he's living in New York now.

Mr: Yeah...

Francy: But you say that there were combat artists...

Mr: Oh yeah.

Francy: At the Navy Yard?

Mr: Well, I don't know whether they were at the Navy Yard itself. But I mean, there were combat artists, and I think Dwight Shepard may have been one. And there were quite a few; I won't say quite a few; there were a few. But as to whether they were at the Yard or not, I don't think so. I mean, they'd

Mr: be out at combat duty in the Pacific or some other theatre.

Francy: Okay. Well, those are the end of my questions that I have written down. Is there, are there, any other things that you can tell me about the Navy Yard that we haven't talked about?

Mr: Weeelll... No. Except anytime anybody retired, of course, they would come to me and ask me to make up a booklet or something like that. So I did that.

Francy: Was that mainly in the Design Division?

Mr: Yeah.

Francy: What sort of things did you do?

Mr: Well, I'd make up a drawing, then a whole lot of people would sign it. As a matter of fact, it got to be a kind of like a tradition, was that you didn't retire properly until you got one of my drawings! (chuckles)

Francy: Oh, how neat! That's nice.

Mr: Of course, I received the same, too. I got that in the other room. (chuckles)

Francy: Oh, okay. I'd like to see it. Did you ever go the the Commandant's House? Were you ever in there?

Mr: Hmm. That's an interesting question. I don't think so. Though I did something about that; I can't remember off hand. I know I did some drawings for the CONSTITUTION.

Francy: You did?

Mr: Yeah. Some kind of a plaque. I sort of designed that, so you could put the names of the different commanders. And they gave me a chance to go on board the ship, and I really went through the whole thing, right down almost to the hold of the ship! And that was an experience! And I did some other drawings, trying to make a reconstruction drawing of the, for the CONSTELLATION. And that was a bit of something to do. And I'm trying to remember... Any other time, I'd remember the name of the little bit of stuff... Isn't that awful? I must be getting what they call Alzheimer's Disease! Something like that, forgetfulness!

Francy: (chuckles) I doubt it very much! Was that for the Navy?

Mr: Yeah. You see, it's... Oh shucks! It's on the bowsprit of the ship.

Francy: Oh, the figurehead?

Mr: Yeah, figurehead. (chuckles) You see, the CONSTITUTION had two kinds of figureheads. There's a war kind, and another for peacetime. And one time they had Andrew Jackson was one of the figureheads on the CONSTITUTION, and there is a little story about, that some wag went and cut off the head of Andrew Jackson because he didn't like him, or something like that. But then, for the CONSTELLATION, which was a sister ship to the CONSTITUTION, that was here at one time. And they were going to reconstruct that. I think that went down to Baltimore.

Francy: I think so.

Mr: But anyway, I was supposed to make a figurehead for that. But there was no drawing of it or anything like that, so I had to do it from description. And that took a bit of doing!

Francy: You drew it, or...

Mr: Yeah, we tried to draw it.

Francy: And then someone sculpted it, or...

Mr: No, we were just making a drawing, and that's about as far as it got.

Francy: What was the figurehead? Do you remember?

Mr: No, I can't. I wish I still had those sketches around, but... It was a job, to try to figure it out. We looked at pictures of the CONSTELLATION...

... interrupted by doorbell...

Francy: You were telling me about the figurehead of the CONSTELLATION.

Mr: Yeah. So that was one of the jobs that we did. So we weren't able to find out too much about it, except written description. So anyhow, I did make some drawings for that.

Francy: Now, that was a job that was assigned to you by someone in the Navy?

Mr: Oh yeah. And so on the retirement business, of course, as I said before, for anybody that retired, this would go out to the officer who was in charge

Mr: of the Design Department. And we did one for the Commandant of the whole yard.

Francy: Which commandant, do you remember?

Mr: (chuckles) I can't remember off hand.

Francy: Was it in the '70s, '60s, or...

Mr: Probably in the late '60s, late 60s.

Francy: Was it Admiral Burk, by any chance?

Mr: No, it was prior to him, I think. One time I got a prize, there's a photograph up there (on the mantle); I got a prize for $1000 from the Franklin Mint thing, so that made quite a hit in the Yard, and so forth.

Francy: What was the prize for?

Mr: In the Franklin Mint , there was some kind of bicentennial kind of a thing. I got fourth prize.

Francy: Huh! For artwork?

Mr: Yeah.

Francy: (looking at photograph) Yeah, that's neat! So you don't remember whether you were ever at the Commandant's House or not. But you did some project for the House? Or for the Commandant?

Mr: Yeah. I remember doing some kind of a drawing about the house. Because some people thought it was a Bulfinch design or something like that, the double-bow thing and so forth. So I did do a little research, looking at... I remember one time I had kind of an interesting design. Some people were interested in the TITANIC, and so I had to do some research on that, to find out why it was the ship sank and so forth. And I went to the Boston Athenaeum to look at some of the newspapers of the account. And it was a very strange experience. See, even though the Titanic went down in 1912, you pick up the newspapers and read it, and you get that same sense of shock and so forth and so on; you can almost feel it, even though that thing took place over sixty years ago. You look at the newspaper accounts. And if anything could have gove wrong (chuckles) as far as that ship was concerned, it did! And it seemed as though all kinds of almost inexcusable mistakes were made, in how the ship was managed and so forth. And the bulkhead design... See, the way the ship was designed, it had these sort of vertical bulkheads, which run up to a certain level in the ship. So you had a lot of supporting... The ship had about eight or nine bulkheads. And so what happened, when the ship struck the iceberg, it ripped a hole in the first two or three bulkheads. Now, the ship could have probably stayed afloat much, much longer if they didn't try to back away from the iceberg, but they backed away. So that meant that when the water came in, it came into the first bulkhead, and then the water went over it, because the bulkhead didn't go all the way through the ship, into the next bulkhead. That meant that as the water came in, the ship sort of tilted up more and more and more, as the bulkheads went. And then after a while, they got such weight that the thing just plunged into the water. And the amount of lives that was lost was horrendous! But you see, they were going full speed in an iceberg area, which didn't make too much sense, but they were trying to break a record. I saw the sister ship to the TITANIC, which was called the OLYMPIC. That was a four-stacker.

Mr: And I saw that down at the New York, I wanted to say shipyard (chuckles), but the wharf. I think it is the Cunard Line. (NOTE: actually it was the White Star Line. arh)

Francy: What were you working on the TITANIC for? What kind of project was it?

Mr: Well, part of a research project. The head engineer happened to be interested in that particular project. And it was a bit of naval history, as to why a thing like that would happen. So it meant I had to do quite a bit of research. So when I saw about this movie coming out, "The Night To Be Remembered," (chuckles) something like that, I had a much different view of it. Because the amount of research which I already had done.

Francy: Was it an accurate portrayal that they did?

Mr: From what little I saw, yes. But I didn't see the whole thing. I just saw bits and pieces of it.

Francy: Did you ever work on anything for the Navy Day open house that they would have annually?

Mr: Probably did, and I can't remember off hand. I might have worked on some kind of brochure or program design or something like that.

Francy: I wanted to ask you about, you'll see from time to time, on different brochures and things, the sort of insignia for the Navy Yard: seemed to be a destroyer, and Bunker Hill Monument, and Forge Shop die-lock chain, a couple of other representative things... Were you, did you make that up?

Mr: (chuckles) It sort of seems that I did do somethings for that... But I

Mr: can't remember off hand. (chuckles) But I guess I did. It's kind of funny, you know, you forget these things.

Francy: Well, I can understand; it was a long time ago, and you have been doing so many other things... Well, I guess that's the end of my questions, unless you have something else to add.

Mr: No, I can't think of anything else off hand. I'll probably remember about half a million things after you leave! (chuckles)

Francy: No doubt! (chuckles)

... end of interview ...