

James R. Bourke, Pensacola, Florida. I had 15 years at a navy den. I was a senior first class. My time was up, my enlistment was up. When I was checking out, a career counselor on the base, I had to check out with him, he said, "Bourke, what's the problem? Why are you getting out?" So I explained it to him. He said, "go on back to the office. I'll give you a call at 1 o'clock, 1300." So I went back and he called me, said, "I've got some orders for you if you want them. Sigonella, Sicily, Hawaii," there was two or three others and then he said Gitmo. I said, "ohh, buddy. Can you really get me Gitmo?" He said, "Yes, you're going to have to reenlist at Keffle (?) but you can stay there for three more months." Well, I reenlisted and stayed there for three more months and I got transferred to Gitmo.

It was a great place for a family. The weather was perfect every day. I had a really good job with a lot of responsibility. I had Haitian contract workers, Jamaican contract workers, I had Cuban exiles, and Cubans that still went back and forth to Guantanamo City every night. They would let them come and go but they had to be special people and I had active duty navy people working for me. Most of them, none of them had their family there. They were all young single people. Of course when you get isolated in a place like that, there is no Walmart to go to. There is no Ace Hardware store to go to. Everything has to be shipped in there. Just things that no one would ever think about. A lumber yard. There is no lumber yard in Gitmo. There is a auto parts where it is nothing but auto parts for all the vehicles that are down there. Navy vehicles... another store. Just like a whole community down there. And they put me in charge of they call five different retail stores: lumber, paint, auto parts, Serve-Mart, and electronic repair parts. I had a clothing store too but I liked it. I wanted to stay there... they let me extend my tour by two years and I tried to extend again and they would not let me. They said somebody else has got to get some of this sunshine. As a family or even as a single person, there were just so many activities on the base, which is perfect to me