

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with RADM Peter H. Beckwith  
Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Veterans Remember* Oral History project  
Interview # VRC-A-L-2009-039

Peter Hess Beckwith, Rear Admiral, Lower Half, U. S. Navy Reserve Chaplain's Corps (Retired), and current Bishop of the Springfield, Illinois Episcopal Diocese, as a Chaplain for 27 years in the U.S. Navy Reserves, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview date & location:

Date: November 19, 2009

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Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Rozanne Flatt, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Volunteer

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# Abstract

Peter H. Beckwith, *Veterans Remember*, VRC-A-L-2009-039

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Peter H. Beckwith, born on September 8, 1939 in Battle Creek, Michigan, tells of growing up during World War II in a hard-working, church-going family, moving to Worthington, Ohio for most of his schooling through high school. In 1961 he graduated from Hillsdale College in Michigan with an A.B. and interest in the ministry. Granted a Master's of Divinity in 1964 by the School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, he was immediately ordained to the Deaconate at the Cathedral of St. Paul in Detroit, and in 1965 served as a Priest as a priest and Assistant Rector of St. John's Church, Plymouth, Michigan. In that year he married Melinda Jo Foulke. He was called to be the Assistant at St. Paul's Church in Jackson, Michigan, and then to Saginaw, Michigan as Rector of St. Matthew's Church. At the time of the interview, he served as the Tenth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Springfield, Illinois.

In September, 1972, Reverend Beckwith began dual track career when he received a direct commission as a Lieutenant, Junior Grade, in the Chaplain Corps of the U. S. Navy Reserve. He found time for summer studies at Nashotah House in Wisconsin, receiving a Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree in 1974. As a Navy Reserve Chaplain he attended evening and week-end drills while serving in both ecclesiastical and administrative capacities whenever he was needed at various stations. From 1978 to 1992 he was back in Worthington, Ohio as Rector of St. John's Church, advancing in the Navy to the rating of Commander, with a variety of assignments. Beckwith was consecrated the tenth Bishop of the Springfield Diocese in 1992. While the Cold War kept the Navy busy with readiness activities, he was selected for flag rank of Rear Admiral, Lower Half, in 1995, retiring in 1999 after 27 years of reserve service. That sense of service keeps him in touch with military organizations and as Chaplain for the Illinois State Police. His academic and military honors are numerous.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** U.S. Navy Active Reserve, Chaplain Corps, during Viet Nam and the Cold War; Hillsdale College; achieved flag rank in 1995; University of the South; Cathedral of St. Paul, Detroit; St. John's Church, Plymouth MI; wife, Melinda Jo Foulke; St. Paul's Church, Jackson MI; St. Matthew's Church; Nashotah House; Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Springfield IL; Chaplain, Illinois State Police

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