

## Interview with LCDR S.G. Mitchell, 1981

BPW All right, lets refer to this list. Again, the ones with the arrows were the ones.

**SGM Arrows, right.**

BPW How about Jennings?

**SGM Jennings?**

BPW How about Jennings?

**SGM Jennings wasn't lost then, was he?**

BPW Yep.

**SGM Yep.**

BPW This guy Groves was lost. He took, he apparently was lost the next day in that civil air patrol, uh, I mean combat air patrol when the Yorktown was attacked. He, they were released. The Hornet's combat air patrol was released at the last second apparently and they went over there and Groves was lost, shot down, apparently or they don't know. I don't know about it but he was lost then, he's listed as missing now but the one's with the arrows were with you and, and, and there's Kelly, Magda

**SGM No, they uh..... Hill was lost.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM Kelly was lost.**

BPW And Kelly was lost. That's right. Now all the rest of them were rescued. Not with you, I don't mean that...

**SGM No, they were, they were picked up.**

BPW They were picked up.

**SGM But weren't they flying...**

BPW Talbot was picked up at first...

**SGM Weren't they flying around the ship?**

BPW No, no. No, no, they were with you. There were 10 people with you. Now Talbot was picked up on the 8th and you were picked up on the 9th and he was very close to you. Talbot was very close to you and I have no record of those other fellows. When they were picked up. Haven't been able to find when they were picked up.

**SGM Oh, I wouldn't know.**

BPW Well let's try to get back to remember. Now, you had fallen back and you saw Hill go first. Who went next? Which section? Were they flying all bunched together, then? You were all grouped together then or were you straggled out a little?

**SGM Well I just.... Hill? I thought Hill was with, uh, was with Ruehlow. What it ended up with, it ended up with, this is three section leaders. See, they don't do as much maneuvering...**

BPW I see.

**SGM ... as the other planes.**

BPW Right.

**SGM It ended up with the three, uh, me, and Ruehlow...**

BPW ... and Tallman

**SGM ... and Tallman, uh, no, and Gray, Gray.**

BPW Gray.

**SGM Gray. Gray.**

BPW Okay.

**SGM Gray, Ruehlow and myself.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM We were the last three flying and uh...**

BPW You were the three section leaders.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW All right, now who was in your section?

**SGM Uh...**

BPW Would that have been determined ahead of time before you took off or was it determined in the air?

**SGM No, it was, it was uh....**

BPW Now if there were three, one of you had four planes in it. Which section had four planes?

**SGM Gee, I don't know. No section had four planes.**

BPW I'm cross examining you now. There were ten planes. There were three sections. One section had to have four planes in it. How about... Who were the.... Think again, who were in your section? Do you remember who that would have been?

Or would the three section leaders have stayed together?

**SGM Gee, I don't know. That should be a matter of record somewhere.**

BPW Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm, I may run across that. What I'm trying to do is to, is to try to jog your memory with respect to identification. I want you to be able to identify how they went down if it was possible. See, and that might be a means of identification if you could say well, this guy was in my section and I remember him going down.

**SGM I'd have to go to the old records somewhere to be able to tell you that one.**

BPW All right. Well can you remember, can you remember any other, any other sequences, then, as they're going down?

**SGM Just, uh, just, uh, Mayday, but then you don't identify yourself, who you are. You just say Mayday, Mayday.**

BPW Right. Uh, You saw, Did you, You must have seen all of the planes go down then. Is that right?

**SGM No, I was leading. They'd be behind me.**

BPW Oh, I see. But I thought that you fell back after you turned.

**SGM I fell back, fell back behind Ruehlow.**

BPW Oh, I see. Behind Ruehlow.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Not behind the whole group.

**SGM No.**

BPW Oh, I see. I see. I see. I see. And they would not have identified themselves when they gave the Mayday, would they....

**SGM No.**

BPW necessarily? Did you see any of the others go down besides Gray and Ruehlow?

**SGM No, that's about the two I saw.**

BPW That's about it?

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW How do you feel? How do you, do you have, do you think that you know that Hill went down first. Do you remember why you feel that?

**SGM I just...**

BPW Do you remember something, anything about it?

**SGM I thought, I believe Hill was flying with...**

BPW Ruehlow.

**SGM ... as a wingman on Ruehlow.**

BPW I see. Right, right. Mmm-hmm. But you have no recollection, for instance, of when Kelly would have gone down?

**SGM No I can't see. You can't place them by...**

BPW They simply dropped out.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW That was that. That was it. It was that simple, uh? Yeah. But you had not, had not seen any other airplanes other than the one's that you were, the dive bombers, dive bombers.

**SGM Mmm-hmm, Mmm-hmm. And I...**

BPW You had, you had, at that point, you had flown about, uh, well, apparently about two and a half hours.

**SGM I think it was, we were in the air over, little over three hours.**

BPW Little over three?

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW Mmm-hmm. Well it said you went down about 10:30. That could mean anything. Boy, you would have just been able, just barely been able to make it anyhow.

**SGM You mean to get back to the ship?**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM Well the ship didn't actually, the carrier....**

BPW She didn't make good her course.

**SGM She didn't make good her course.**

BPW No.

**SGM No.**

BPW No, none of them did and apparently subsequently that system was modified a little bit.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW But it just seemed such an unusual circumstance to me in reading the accounts is that no other airplanes were seen and yet everybody in McClusky's group, he had 35 people, and nothing, nothing. They never saw a damn thing. Nothing at all.

McClusky lives right up beside, near me and, uh, for until he died and his widow's still alive. A very nice lady. But Tallman, uh, I mean, I mean Tappan, now he was in Scouting 8, okay? He said he never even saw.... I asked him and he said he never even saw his own fighters. I said, "What the hell were you doing, blind?"

**SGM You concentrate on your leader.**

BPW But of course, of course that's exactly, he said, he said, "Look, I wasn't leading anything. I was just flying along, a raw ensign and I didn't know what in the heck I was doing or anything else." So, so, but he said that his recollection was that he had heard Waldron open up and either call Ring or, and, and tell him that he had found, you know, that he had found and he was attacking.

**SGM Mmm.**

BPW I guess that's what it was.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And, uh, but there's no indication that, that Ring ever heard, heard it.

**SGM Ring, see, had a radioman, too.**

BPW Yeah. Oh, he did?

**SGM Oh, yes.**

BPW Oh, yes. Of course he did, sure, sure. Uh, but there was no indication that anything, that he ever received it, apparently.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW But that was a really strange set of circumstances. But, but by the time that you had caught, in, in effect, you, you had passed Waldron, I would have thought.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Not over top of him but...

**SGM No.**

BPW ...in a different direction.

**SGM Down, further to the south.**

BPW Down to the south. But I, I'm, surely you would have caught him. And that would have thrown you in a lot of plane traffic.

**SGM Seems we had some cloud cover out there, too.**

BPW Must have been. And if you were at eighteen thousand feet, that would, that's enough to do it, right there. I know that boy, you don't see any (inaud) airplanes at eighteen thousand, thousand feet.

**SGM See, when we were flying after we, we came down and...**

BPW When you turned, when you turned to go back to the carrier, what did you do altitude wise?

**SGM I got down below the oxygen level.**

BPW You did?

**SGM Yeah, sure.**

BPW Came down to ten thousand.

**SGM Eight thousand feet.**

BPW Eight thousand feet.

**SGM (inaud)**

BPW Mmm-hmm. Mmm-hmm. Did you just glide gradually down?

**SGM Oh, yeah.**

BPW Yeah, uh-huh. And then held onto that as long as you could.

**SGM Mmm-hmm. And then, then, then we were, we were flying closer to the surface our last, I'd say our last 30, 40 miles.**

BPW I see. In other words, you was gradually letting down.

**SGM Mmm-hmm. Oh, yes.**

BPW You finally never, couldn't let any more. I mean, the next thing would be swimming.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Well do you know any of these, do you know if any of these fellows are still around?

**SGM Well, that's, that's.... Ruehlow died.**

BPW Ruehlow died?

**SGM I don't know about Gray. I'd seen, I saw Jennings some years ago but...**

BPW You know where, where he lives or anything?

**SGM No.**

BPW What those fellows did after you turned, they did just the same as Tappan did. They just played follow the leader.

**SGM That's right. Sure.**

BPW That's all.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW And, uh, and they had...

**SGM I pointed to Ruehlow, I mean and said, "you (inaud)**

BPW Yeah, yeah. He had to, he had to (Inaud) Well, was anybody, were you three, then you three were leading the way. Is that, so to speak ...

**SGM Mmm-hmm, Mmm-hmm.**

BPW ... and the others were just following along behind. Were they changing position or anything like that any more?

**SGM No, no they, they'd had dropped out.**

BPW Just one by one.

**SGM One by one, yes.**

BPW Right, uh-huh. Who, uh... Do you know who was in either one of the other sections? Do you know? Do you recall?

**SGM So long ago.**

BPW I know. I know. I don't mean to, don't mind me. I'm just digging for information. I think you, you, it's fantastic what you have recalled as a matter of truth, it's really remarkable. The, uh... When Waldron got down there where he sighted, where he sighted the carriers or the fleet, he didn't sight the carriers, he sighted the fleet first really and he started his running and he was still 10 miles out...

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW ...at 9:20 and, and 20 minutes later it was all over. Now at that time, 9:20, you all should have been just about turning south or turning...

**SGM southwest.**

BPW ... southwest toward Kure.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Just about that time which meant that you, you had flown through any traffic at all...

**SGM Yeah, mmm-hmm.**

BPW ... from Midway and so that I can see after that, you were not on the line from Midway to the Jap fleet any more.

**SGM No.**

BPW You were past it, to the west of it.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And that would have occasioned your missing any, any of the traffic, too.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW I'm trying to help to explain that. But they were all over Waldron. Man, right now. I mean, oh, God.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW They, he, he didn't hardly have a snowball's chance in hell...

**SGM No.**

BPW ...because they had, they had kept half of all of their fighters on four carriers back and they had done a big job shooting down our planes, of course. Even up to the time that Waldron arrived. And he arrived and they had, they had 50 some airplanes and zeros, just ready to climb all over him which they did. But the, the plane, the Japanese plane, attacking planes that were returning from Midway would have, would have, uh, would have been landing while he was making that attack. Just about, if the log's right, just about a few minutes one way or the other which meant that you must have literally just almost criss-crossed. Those planes, a hundred planes coming back from Midway.

**SGM No I think maybe...**

BPW They were a little ahead of you.

**SGM I think they, they had already...**

BPW gone by.

**SGM ...gone by.**

BPW Yes. Most of them had. There might have been a few because there was, there were a couple that, that, well it was 7:01 or something like that when the last attack was made at Midway which would have put them right back. So they wouldn't, so actually your paths, if they'd crossed at all, there wouldn't have been many planes, there would have only been the stragglers. A few stragglers at most and there were a couple of B-26s going back and then there were a couple of, very few, of the Midway, Midway planes survived. They would have been going back then also. But very quickly, the intercept would have been very quick because you kept right on flying on through. Does that, do you follow what I'm saying?

**SGM Yes, that's all.**

BPW It makes sense? Correct me if I'm wrong.

**SGM No I think that's...**

BPW I'm just trying...

**SGM ...logical.**

BPW ... trying to understand what, what the picture was and by the time that you got, turned right and got down here, you were in sight of Kure. Kure was gone. You were pretty well down the road then.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Why, Lord conjectures about why you had decided not to go to Midway.

**SGM Oh, I, uh, saw the smoke come out. You know, everything on Midway and I, I assumed it was pretty...**

BPW under attack?

**SGM ... pretty well under attack.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM And besides, I knew that, it's always the fact that you didn't, you felt like that we were in good shape. All these ships gone but you always want to get, uh, get your ship back to your...**

BPW Oh, yeah.

**SGM ...get back to your own ship.**

BPW Oh, yeah.

**SGM I've regretted in, in after thinking, about...**

BPW That you didn't go in there.

**SGM .... sure.**

BPW Well, you never can tell. They were so trigger happy on Midway you could have lost a couple of planes..

**SGM Lost some planes... small, you know, the rest of them just dropping in, dropping in...**

BPW Well, that's right but only two guys were lost, actually, in the airplanes, oh hell, but you could have lost two going into Midway, too.

**SGM Sure**

BPW Two men...

**SGM That's true.**

BPW I mean the Bombing 8 got fired on. They didn't lose anybody but they got fired on.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW So, and further more, two of their planes, one landed in the lagoon and one landed short. So, I don't know, you might not of even had enough gas to get there in all truth. See what I mean? So I don't...

**SGM As I remember I got....**

BPW I think your guess was as, about as good as it could have been made.

**SGM I think when we were picked up, we were about 67 or 70 miles northeast of Midway, somewhere in there.**

BPW Right, and it looked like you have, you would have drifted east after you had been, in the five days that you... Uh, tell me a little something about being in the life raft.

**SGM Well, it's uh, you mean, you mean hitch hikers... See, there were only, there were only two rafts for three people.**

BPW I see.

**SGM And we did swap over.**

BPW You did.

**SGM Dick, Dick Gray was a long, lanky, about 6 feet 1 and uh, Ruehlow was about my size.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**SGM And, uh...**

BPW How... What did you do about....

**SGM We even had a shark attack, too, one night.**

BPW You did?

**SGM Uh-huh.**

BPW Did you have any provisions?

**SGM Uh, what we had, one set, one set of emergency rations.**

BPW Uh-huh. Uh, did you have any water? Was there a can of water in the raft? Did those early rafts have any...

**SGM Yes.**

BPW any water, can of water?

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And, uh, I remember ours did. A little gray container.

**SGM There's one can, one thing of water. Just a canteen about like that.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM And we would take one sip a day. And then I think we watched each other take this drink too.**

BPW Like this. No slugging it down.

**SGM No. And on one of the days, Gray, there were a lot of little fish would come under the raft...**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM ... you know.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**SGM And Dick Gray just put his hands out and grabbed one like that.**

BPW He did?

**SGM It was about this long.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM And he ate it raw.**

BPW Is that right?

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW God!

**SGM Now we were all sunburned. I had even blisters in my scalp from all that exposure.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM And with your feet in the water part of the time I got, in salt water, I got what they call immersion feet and my ankles were all swollen up.**

BPW Yeah. Well that was, uh..... you were in there five, five days.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW No doubt about that

**SGM Six nights I think it was.**

BPW Yeah. Well uh, did you see....

**SGM We saw some planes. We saw some planes when they were searching for us.**

BPW The PBYS?

**SGM PBYS. The day before we were picked up and on the day we were picked up.**

BPW Talbot was picked up the day before by the same darned airplane that picked you up and he was, and it was very near.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW So you must have been, you know, just within a few miles of Talbot and never even, and never even knew it.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW So he must have been one of the last ones down. I suppose that the, I suppose that... Who would have been bringing up the rear? Do you have any idea who might have been?

**SGM No, I don't. Those three, I, I...**

BPW Let's see. McInerny, Mac, uh what's his name?

**SGM McInerny, the Irishman?**

BPW McInerny, now...

**SGM He's a blond as I remember.**

BPW Now he was a JG. No, that's Jennings.

**SGM That's Jennings.**



BPW Jennings.

**SGM That's Jennings, yeah.**

BPW Jennings. All the rest of them were ensigns.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Now Jennings was a JG. Where would he have been flying? He would have been, which section was he in? Was he, would he have had any particular station as a result of him having a higher rank than the others?

**SGM No, he was JG. Same as, uh, same as Dick Gray.**

BPW But he was not a section leader.

**SGM No, I don't think so.**

BPW He might have been the fourth man in one of that section. The sections were in the form of a leader and two wingman, generally speaking. Was that the idea?

**SGM Well we had gone to two man sections.**

BPW I see. I see. Mmm-hmm. I see. I see.

**SGM Fighters were.**

BPW Yeah, I see.

**SGM We were developing what the, thatch weave that you may have heard about.**

BPW Oh, yeah. I heard about that.

**SGM That, thatch (inaud) naval academy.**

BPW Yeah, but he was on the Enterprise.

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW Yes, Lord gave an account only, they, they were, they only sent off six fighters from their gang. But they sent off more dive bombers.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW McClusky had more of them, I think, than Ring had of.... Uh, but, Thatch and his six fighters, they got down there but they just couldn't do a damn thing. They were just, got overwhelmed. I mean, by the time... What happened was that there were just dozens, dozens of those zeros down there by that time and were doing, apparently, a very competent job.

**SGM Oh yeah. That first string was a pretty good outfit.**

BPW Oh, Christ, they must have been a good outfit. That damn airplane must have been a pretty good airplane, too. I never, uh, I saw them but wrecks are the only ones I saw but um, they must have been a good plane. No doubt about that. That we fly around in our F4Fs, uh, apparently, but not the F6s. Did you ever get into the F6s?

**SGM Uh, only getting in the flight time.**

BPW I see. Yeah. They were apparently pretty nice airplanes.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And F4Us, marines had F4Us.

**SGM Yeah, gull wings.**

BPW Yeah, gull wings. Well now, let's see. I want to keep track of my time. Oh, it's twelve twenty-three. How about some lunch?

**SGM Well with the proviso that I take you to lunch.**

BPW That's not the proviso.

**SGM Let's forget it and don't argue.....**

BPW Okay, I see by this short-snorter bill that... boy, wind 32 knots. That must have been a little gusty out there.

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW When you were packed up, did they put down in that kind of water? Wow!

**SGM He broke his, uh, he broke his bomber's window on take off it was....**

BPW Is that right?

**SGM It was cracked and water was leaking in.**

BPW Water, yeah.

**SGM When we landed, when we landed at Pearl he just landed close to the ramp and come right up on the ramp.**

BPW Good night! Is that right? Well that must have been really.... 32 knots, you had some water there. My God, I don't know how you could ever keep those life rafts...

**SGM Well, we...**

BPW right side up...

**SGM On the...**

BPW Did you hang onto them on, outside of them or did you stay inside of them.

**SGM Inside. Oh, of course, I, when two men were in a one man raft, one of them had to sit this way and the other had to sit this way.**

BPW I see, yeah.

**SGM Swapped off and take the cramp out of your legs. And...**

BPW What an ordeal!

**SGM ... the, uh, second or third night, as I say, the sharks got to messing around and punching the side of the raft Ruehlow and I were in and he swam... We were holding....**

BPW So that was half....

**SGM That was only half inflated so I just rode it like I was on a barrel for a while.**

BPW Could you get it past...

**SGM During the night and then the next morning when the sun came out and it was a little quieter, uh, we pulled it up. I got in the water and just held on and they patched it and...**

BPW Had a patch?

**SGM .. and let me sleep, uh, rest all day.**

BPW Yes, I see.

**SGM And we swapped back and forth at night.**

BPW I see. Well, uh, boy, that was a trying, trying episode, I'm sure.

**SGM Well, the will to live is awfully strong, you know.**

BPW I guess you'd figure that they were looking for you.

**SGM Well I knew they would be.**

BPW Yeah, yeah.

**SGM I didn't know when though. We, we heard the sounds of planes some days and never could see them. And then we saw, the day before we were picked up they went by and didn't see us.**

BPW Well that, that damn airplane, it, the day before, see, was when Talbot was picked up. And that's what you must have heard or seen or whatever. And then they, see you and they got Talbot.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW But it's strange I have yet to find any account of these other people being picked up. Yet they were rescued because the casualty list, the ultimate casualty list only

has Kelly and Hill.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW So they had to have been picked up.

**SGM Two of the nicest boys in the squadron, too.**

BPW Kelly and Hill?

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW They were nice boys.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Kelly, I always liked Kelly. He was kind of a hell for leather guy, but he was a nice guy. He was an all-American lacrosse player at Maryland, uh, right before...

**SGM He never bragged, never talked about it.**

BPW Oh he was a hell of a player. He was a wonderful player. He went to McDonough. He graduated from McDonough and did very, very well. Which was a local preparatory school in ... but, he was a very, he was a gun-hoe guy. He was. Well, now, I wanted to... Let me review this just a minute. Oh, you remember you asked about Groves?

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And indeed Groves was lost on the same day out of the squadron. He was the only other one that was but he apparently was in seventeen. They all had numbers and he was in, apparently, seventeen and was flying patrol at the time that Yorktown was attacked and he had, had a funny kind of a thing. He took off at almost the same time you all did. But he returned at 9:45 with something called a deferred forced landing, whatever that is.

**SGM He just stayed up a little while.**

BPW Oh, well he must have waited until all of the planes that were going to attack the carriers left and then he landed. And then he took off again and was, must have been shot down or something. Was lost in the attack on the Yorktown which was sometime later. Well, it was within a couple of hours. So that's how Groves, that's what happened to Groves. But he must have taken off. Do you remember anything about that?

**SGM No.**

BPW Do you remember who, what fighters were in the fly? Were fighter planes used in, for the, for the combat air patrol?

**SGM Sure. Fighters.**

BPW Or was it dive bombers?

**SGM Fighters were coming right off the ship... Fighters.**

BPW Not SBDs.

**SGM No, no. They might turn out, send out SBDs for scouting...**

BPW Scouting, right.

**SGM ... but not combat air patrol.**

BPW I see.

**SGM Only the fighters.**

BPW I see, right. Do you remember the number of your airplane?

**SGM One.**

BPW One? Uh-huh. That's logical. I mean the one that was....

**SGM You mean the, the bureau, the bureau number?**

BPW No, I don't mean the bureau number. No, I don't mean that. I mean...

**SGM 8F1.**

BPW Yeah, that's right. 8F1, that's the number I meant. Do you know what Kelly's number was?

**SGM Off hand, no.**

BPW Hill or any other ones at all?

**SGM No. The reason all of us...**

BPW Didn't fly the same plane, obviously.

**SGM No.**

BPW The, maybe we could tell from this. Oh, now the number of the machine is put down here. F116. Now that, apparently, I think is, excuse me, is the first time that he flew that plane.

**SGM Got to get my glasses.**

BPW F112, F112 was, more than any other..... that's, that's the bureau number, I guess, isn't it?

**SGM (inaud)**

BPW When did you... Do you know when you got back to Midway from, in April, from the attack. Now the attack was launched on the 18th. Now look here. Here are on the 25th, 28th and 29th, there are one, two, three, four entries here that were not carrier landings.

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW Had you gotten back.... now, how in the hell can that be?

**SGM That's 26th and 27th....**

BPW And this is one, that two-tenths of an hour one is one... there's one that I figured...

**SGM This in April....**

BPW ... when he went swimming.

**SGM Yeah, that may be, may....**

BPW But and that would account for that but what about this one? Why wasn't that a carrier landing? Uh, that's a K flight. What is a K? What is a K?

**SGM Uh, that's what I don't know. I don't remember. Gee, God, I can't remember. I always thought that they'd, they would have these notations of these landings. Thought they would but they don't.**

BPW I tried to find.... but I don't understand why that wasn't a carrier landing unless you'd gotten back....

**SGM Oh, we'd got back...**

BPW to Pearl Harbor.

**SGM Oh, we did get back.**

BPW Well, that was a thousand miles or so. That was more than a thousand miles. So that took a little while. Well, you would have been back by the end of April, though. There's no doubt about that.

**SGM No, we uh.....we got back to Pearl.**

BPW Let me ask you this. Did anybody fly off the ships and land at Pearl? Ahead of the ships in other words.

**SGM Oh, yeah.**

BPW Any of your fighters?

**SGM All coming back and then we'd fly out of the airfields, like uh, the adjoining**

**airfields.**

BPW Yeah, Kaneohe, Ford?

**SGM No,...We were, were on Ford Island and Barber's Point. Barber's Point was just being uh, made then.**

BPW Let's see. When you left Pearl Harbor, Oh, oh, you left immediately for the Coral Sea, the Pacific, didn't you? You, as soon as you got back there then you pulled right out again.

**SGM That's right. We pulled out again. We came in from the South Pacific...**

BPW And then turned around and ....

**SGM Turned around and came back.**

BPW Yeah. Well that's what must have happened. That's what must have happened. That flight right there was when he went in to Ford Island or some place on the, on April the 25th. That's what that must have been, I guess.

**SGM See, that was '47. Carrier landing. It was...**

BPW Now that was the end, end of April.

**SGM That was the end of April. The 30th of April.**

BPW 30th of April.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW So what happened is then..... well I don't know. I'm going to go back and look at that book of, of Smokey Stover's and see just what that date was. You don't have any recollection of it? It was along in there somewhere but my, my recollection in the book that it was sort of, when they, when you had left Pearl for Midway, going to Midway. That would have been in May. Toward the end of May.

**SGM Toward the end of May, 28th of May.**

BPW But there aren't any little short, short flights. They were all....

**SGM 2.3,**

BPW There's nothing to indicate that he went into the drink.

**End of Tape 1/Side 1**

**Tape 1/Side 2**

BPW All right. Maybe it would be better if you did sit over here, though. Is that all right? Beside it so that there is a for instance in the log book that... Were you on the Hornet when she left San Francisco with Doolittle planes?

**SGM Yes.**

BPW In, in, wait a minute...

**SGM See, I signed the log book.**

BPW Yeah, right. I see that. I see. So that meant you had to be, of course. Uh, Stover. Do you remember Smokey Stover?

**SGM Smokey Stover, yes, I remember.**

BPW Well Smokey Stover had a book written about him. He was lost at Truck, or subsequently after another tour or so. But in Smokey's book, he mentioned that uh, Kelly, right, uh, apparently, after you had started back for Pearl Harbor or else shortly after that, Kelly went over the side once and he, Smokey, happened to be standing up on the deck. He described how he looked over the side, and very apprehensive until he finally saw this head bob, frantically swimming to get the hell away from the ship. And I observed in the log book, on April the 29th, he had two-tenths of an hour recorded in the log book. I was wondering if that reflected that instance by any chance. Is that possible?

**SGM '46?**

BPW Two-tenths of an hour. That would just about give him time to....

**SGM Well, he's got two of them.**

BPW Dump it over, well, that was the same day. Couldn't have been. I think that's a duplication or something, something of that sort.

**SGM Character part was T, too.**

BPW What does that mean? I wanted to ask you about them, sir. What is the, what does that mean, these numbers? What's Z? Do you remember K and N? It doesn't have any indication of that. I couldn't tell. I looked through that rascal and couldn't see.... The last entry in there is on June the 4th which was the flight...

**SGM That's right.**

BPW That was the combat flight.

**SGM That was the combat flight.**

BPW That's the only one in there with a combat. When it was air patrol, okay? How about, what was that? Do you remember what the designation was?

**SGM You know, I've forgotten these designations.**

BPW Oh, well, that's all right. I don't blame you a darned bit.

**SGM I'm going toward my 78th year.**

BPW I'll trade places with you now. You'd better watch out. Well, okay. I didn't want to....

**SGM No, these things, these Y and Z, I was, I'd have to refer, as far as actively flying, I'd have to refer to keep these all straight.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM That character in flight...**

BPW Yeah. This took up when he apparently joined at Norfolk. See, here he was. He just about that time....

**SGM** Field carrier landings, that's CL. It's field carrier landings.

BPW That's CL. So that meant that he was practicing landing here on the shore...

**SGM** Yes, that's on back, yes, that's back in November. We practiced a lot on the shore, field carrier landings.

BPW Right.

**SGM** That's where they lay out the deck and practice.

BPW And CL therefore would mean carrier landing.

**SGM** Yes. CL is really, see, he started, that was his fourth landing aboard...

BPW Oh, I see, right.

**SGM** Number four and number five.

BPW Right, I see.

**SGM** He got up to about fifty-something landings.

BPW He had about five (inaud)

**SGM** Fifty-one.

BPW Fifty-one. But you don't recall the time that he went over the side.

**SGM** No, I don't. I don't. I wouldn't know.

BPW And another man went over the same day, it was on the same day. Two guys a day and they were both picked up by a destroyer and...

**SGM** Destroyer brought back aboard.

BPW And brought back aboard by a ....

**SGM** (inaud) buoy. No, that's, that's, I can't think of the other person either. Do you know the other one?

BPW It's in Smokey's book. I didn't bring his book with me. I should have but I don't, he wasn't in the same, wasn't in the squadron. I think he was a Scouting 8.

**SGM** We had Scouting, Bombing 8...

BPW Bombing 8 and Scouting 8.

**SGM** (inaud) and Torpedo 8.

BPW Right. Well these, I have a... I have a roster of, wait a minute, before we do that, here's a copy, what is that? Do you recall what that is? Is that just a certification?

Was on pilots status solo on the date indicated below. You said he was on pilot status. I see. This is just a physical fitness exam?

**SGM** Yes.

BPW Certificate of physical fitness?

**SGM** Mmm-hmm.

BPW I just happened to pick that up with the orders. It was laying on top and I saw your signature on it so I just grabbed it. But there, now, on that list, I've indicated by the arrows like this, the people....

**SGM** Ruehlow, Dick Gray.

BPW Right. Now you were picked up with Ruehlow and Gray.

**SGM** Ruehlow, yes. We...

BPW I want to show you the.... show you this copy of the short-snorter bill. This is the, this is the two sides of it. See, this is where it talks about where you, where you were.

**SGM** Mmm-hmm.

BPW You were rescued with Mitchell, Ruehlow and Gray. You all stayed together.

**SGM** Yes.

BPW And did you have two boats?

**SGM** No, uh, yes. Well, just better let me tell it just a little bit.

**BPW** Yeah, fine. That's great. All right, I just did this to jog your memory.

**SGM** Okay.

**BPW** That's all, sir. And if I may, I'll just take notes and you just talk right along. That will be fine.

**SGM** Well, it was the morning of the fourth of June.

**BPW** Shall I just let you talk and then, if I may, I'll ask you a little questions a little later on?

**SGM** Sure, sure.

**BPW** That's great.

**SGM** And....

**BPW** Just walk us all the way through it if you would recall.

**SGM** And my squadron was divided into two sections and then the planes were, one group was protecting the ship and I was ordered to go out with two other sections and protect the group commander who went out with the scouting squadron, bombing squadron and torpedo group. Torpedo group went off, stayed down low and we went up high. And I was a combat air patrol. Not to protect all of the rest of the guys, the bombers and the torpedo planes and all because they had tail gunners and if they ran into any trouble, why they could just fairly well protect themselves.

**BPW** But you were the SBD's cover, so to speak.

**SGM** We were cover for the ....

**BPW** dive bombers.

**SGM** ...to stay with, actually to protect the group commander.

**BPW** Uh-huh, I see.

**SGM** Whose name was Commander Stanhope...

**BPW** Ring.

**SGM** Ring. And we...

**BPW** What altitude? When did you take, when did you take off? Do you remember the time?

**SGM** No, I can't remember that.

**BPW** All right. Do you remember who was off first? What group of planes went off first? Did you go off first or did the dive bombers go off first or the torpedo squadron?

**SGM** Well, we, they had a section of, a section of fighter planes that went off and just stayed at combat air patrol of the ships.

**BPW** Right, okay.

**SGM** And...

**BPW** You think they went off first?

**SGM** Yes. They were usually spotted right away.

**BPW** Right, okay.

**SGM** And then see, we didn't have the extra belly tanks.

**BPW** I see.

**SGM** They had arrived just the day we had, before we were ordered out and they were starting to be fitted to the planes.

**BPW** But your planes didn't have any.



**SGM No, we had no belly tanks.**

BPW Do you remember what your cruising indicated speed was.

**SGM Oh, we cruised around a hundred and thirty, something like that, 120.**

BPW Indicated, 130.

**SGM That's, just we were, we had to....**

BPW That was a long flight.

**SGM Well it was a long flight and we had to gear your, had to stay with the other planes that can't go as fast.**

BPW Right, right.

**SGM I would... We would have to weave back and forth a little bit around on top of them.**

BPW When you took off, did you just circle until everybody was ready?

**SGM That's right.**

BPW Mmm-hmm. Do you remember the time, I'm sure you don't but, do you remember...

**SGM Times, I mean that's awful. I don't remember times ..... I was fairly keen in those days.**

BPW Okay. Well do you remember the relative positions? Lord makes, in his book, makes a point that the Enterprise people, they had the McClusky and the SBD's leading and the others, the fighters and the torpedo planes were sort of trying to catch up to them whereas the group from the Hornet, he had arranged that Waldron had, was leading..

**SGM Waldron went in low all the time.**

BPW Oh, he stayed low and you all were high. And he indicated really high, like 20,000 feet.

**SGM 18...**

BPW or 18,000 feet,

**SGM Often, yes.**

BPW ...yes. So, so, but actually Waldron was ahead of you. Do you have any impression of that? Do you remember where he could have been?

**SGM Well we didn't keep in sight of Waldron long.**

BPW No, no apparently didn't....

**SGM The bombers were, I mean when you get up and they had cloud cover, you can't keep it. Can't keep just the torpedo squad there.**

BPW Right.

**SGM I went up on the bridge before we took off and recommended to the, uh, Captain Mitscher that we go in with protection for the torpedo planes alone. I recommended that but it's no record of it any more.**

BPW Yeah...

**SGM I went up on the bridge and told...**

BPW ...you did, uh-huh.

**SGM I thought we'd be, we'd had the experience of other attacks and where a lot of people were wrong.**

BPW You recommended that the fighter planes should protect the...

**SGM protect the torpedo planes...**

BPW But nothing, no....

**SGM No, he said to go out and...**

BPW No change.

**SGM ....go out and stay up with the bombers...**

BPW It was pretty well set then. Uh-huh, all right, okay. TBDs, they were.

**SGM TBDs, TBDs.**

BPW Yeah, okay. Well so in essence, you, your job was to look after the scouting and bombing details...

**SGM That's right.**

BPW ... sections, and Waldron was pretty well on his own. Although, apparently the fighters from the Enterprise kept him in sight until he was ready to attack. They picked up him instead of their own, apparently, the torpedo planes and... They were overwhelmed...

**SGM They never got in...**

BPW No.

**SGM to, to...**

BPW ... didn't do any good at all.

**SGM ... get any torpedoes.**

BPW No. Gay was the only one of that group that did and he was the last one bringing up the rear. I guess he might have been very lucky at that.

**SGM I think he was very fortunate.**

BPW Yes, he came out of it alive. He had to be damn fortunate. No doubt about that. Well, okay but that's interesting that you, that you should have gone to, and made a point of that need for protection because it was certainly obvious that they needed it far more than the dive bombers did.

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW Now Waldron got down there and he started attacking about 9:20 in the morning. Now that meant that, by that time, you would have certainly, even if he'd gone off ahead of you which Lord says he somehow did....

**SGM Yes, he did. He, they went off, they, they stayed low all the time.**

BPW Yes, but were they, they weren't the first ones off the ship, were they? They couldn't have been. Do you remember the sequence of going off? Combat air patrol went off first, okay?

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Now, who, do you have any idea who went next? Was it you? Because, or would it have been the uh, would it have been Waldron or would it have been the dive bombers?

**SGM Well we had the shortest range of all the planes.**

BPW So I would have thought you would have gone last.

**SGM That's right, mmm-hmm.**

BPW Right, I understand. Well, all right.

**SGM Because later on, I don't know, earlier, in the Battle of the.... when we, in April before that...**

BPW We were down to the Pacific?

**SGM No.**

BPW Oh, in April, no.

**SGM In April.**

BPW In April you went to Japan.

**SGM To Japan. That's when we were the, I was the first, the Doolittle raid went off first.**

BPW Right.

**SGM And I was parked on the hanger deck, was brought up the after elevator and I was the first....**

BPW One off that?

**SGM ... plane off, after Doolittle.**

BPW That's interesting because in the log book, Kelly went off, too.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW He went off on the 18th, so it must have been your squadron that flew combat air patrol that day.

**SGM That's right. We did.**

BPW That's very interesting. Uh-huh. And you would have been, as the leader of the squadron, you'd have been the first one off.

**SGM I was the first one off. That's at the Doolittle raid.**

BPW Yeah, uh-huh. I flew a B-25 in the Marine Corp. and I was with SCAT for a while, those old DC3s but I never ceased to be utterly astounded at Doolittle had over 467 feet to pull that, pull that B25 off that carrier deck. My God, when I read that, I couldn't believe it. Fully loaded and everything like that. Boy, we said, we had a time there at Cherry Point and seemed like we had a hard time getting off at twice that. They must have really cranked those planes up something awful. Did you watch them take off, by any chance?

**SGM Well...**

BPW I guess everybody did, sort of. Do you remember they, apparently, this version, the story is that one of them, the Japanese had an outer line of patrol...

**SGM That's right.**

BPW ... boats and one, one sighted you, and, and was sunk but they got...

**SGM Got the message off...**

BPW ... the message off still and Japan knew about it but there was no great concern because it was so far out and they didn't think that the homeland could be attacked for another day or two or whatever it was. So, well, I'm just giving you official records of the flight. But in any event, why you turned around presumably...

**SGM Immediately after the, uh, they got them up and us up and then we, as we turned, we just hauled ass....**

BPW Pearl Harbor.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Yeah, uh-huh. Okay, well now. The significance of the, of the flight, of the water in chronological sequence of events is somewhat important.

**SGM I'd like for you to meet my wife, Mr. Weisheit.**

***Mrs. M How are you. I've got a bad hand.***

BPW Oh, I'm sorry.

***Mrs. M It's all right. It's arthritis. But I apologize for that other day. That explosion. I'm in the shower. It's not easy.***

BPW I heard that all day.

***Mrs. M Damn it, I'm in the shower.***

BPW I never got such a kick out of it.

**Mrs. M** *Yeah, it came out loud and clear, didn't it?*

BPW It did.

**Mrs. M** *It's not easy, not easy aging, but I have a feeling I was aged anyway. I'm going to go out in the car. Do you need anything?*

**SGM** Well, I was going to take...

BPW Am I in the way?

**SGM** ... Mr. Weisheit, oh not at all, out to lunch but you go ahead and take the car.

BPW No, no. I'm going to take you to lunch.

**SGM** No you're not.

**Mrs. M** *Just like that, you sound like a couple of women. You know, I'm going to pay it. I'm going to pay it.*

BPW Well, we'll work it out.

**Mrs. M** *Enjoy yourselves.*

BPW Thank you.

**Mrs. M** *Do you need a cup of coffee?*

BPW Oh, I'm just fine. Thank you very much. Not a thing, not a single thing. I'm just fine. I even had some grits this morning. I went to Virginia to school and..

**SGM** University?

BPW Yes, sir.

**SGM** The University.

BPW Through college and law school so I got a full dose of it. But I did pick up an appreciation for grits that I don't get very often but I had some this morning. What I started to say was, the significance of these, this chronological sequence as well as the geographical sequence, in reading these accounts there were an awful lot of airplanes in the air between Midway and the Japanese fleet. They had, you know, actually several dozens of planes going back and forth there. The Japs had over a hundred going back and forth there and all of our carrier planes. Now and yet here we have a situation where Waldron, who had drifted a little bit further to the west and to the north, so to speak, of you all...

**SGM** Mmm-hmm.

BPW ...he flew a different course.

**SGM** That's right.

BPW He didn't fly the course that he was given.

**SGM** That's right because, see, there was....

BPW Why he did that, I don't know.

**SGM** He may have, he may have overheard other things in the air. See we were on radio silence.

BPW Yeah.

**SGM** The voice, silence when we left.

BPW You couldn't transmit, yes. Well, well what happened was that he began his attack at 9:20. Now that was just about the time, now by that time you all, the, the, your, as I would visualize it, you were flying 18,000 feet or so, had the Scouting 8 and Bombing 8 in sight, probably. They were might, maybe 14,13, 14,000 probably, something like that. You would have caught, up to Waldron if you had been on the

same course by that time, in all likelihood. Because they were the slowest.

**SGM But see, we, that day we never, uh, we never, I saw the Jap carriers. We were lead, the course we went out on, we were south and west, see. I saw those islands just west of...**

BPW Kure.

**SGM Kure, Kure Island.**

BPW Right. Well, let me, now... Did you see any airplanes in the air outside of the ones that you were guarding and protecting?

**SGM No.**

BPW None at all.

**SGM Uh-huh.**

BPW That is so strange.

**SGM What?**

BPW McClusky had a course with all his crowd. He had 35 planes off the Enterprise and he never sees anything either. He must have flew right on through and then started to box to the north.

**SGM He boxed to the north.**

BPW Instead of turning to the south and, and even so probably would have missed them if he hadn't seen that destroyer that they had left behind.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW After the Nautilus. So, but it just seems so remarkable to me that you wouldn't have seen any other planes, because...

**SGM Why? Did any other people report, reported seeing planes?**

BPW No. This is one of the things that I don't, that doesn't, that is a little bit puzzling to me. Why, with all of those airplanes, even ours, B17s, B26s and all of the, even TBF's that were supposed to come to the Hornet had gone into Midway from Pearl.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And they were supposed to be flown .... and all kinds of other planes. Lot of odds and ends planes and they had attacked the carrier. And that, in truth, was why the Jap carriers weren't where they were supposed to be because they had been fussing and fighting with all these other planes that had been attacking them, you see? They hadn't made good their pickup point so to speak. So, that may be, now the last, the last Japanese plane was a fighter plane that left Midway at about 7:01 and the last fighter plane to land and be recovered was about 9:17, about. So it was just about the time that Waldron started his run-in.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Now, if you had caught up with Waldron... If you had, and surely you would have...

**SGM Well he was down low all the time.**

BPW Oh, yes. I don't mean, I mean, you were, distance wise, you were....

**SGM Oh, we went by him, I'm sure.**

BPW Fine. All right. Now you're sure?

**SGM I'm sure of that because...**

BPW Now, all right. Now if you're sure of that...

**SGM Because we went...**

BPW ... the significance of it is all the more puzzling to me why you wouldn't have seen any other airplanes. Why wouldn't you have seen the Japs coming back? Why wouldn't you have seen the Americans coming back?

**SGM Well I just think they were all to the north of us and ....**

BPW No, they were on a direct line between Midway and the Jap fleet. Now you went past that line.

**SGM We went past it, yes.**

BPW See. You went...

**SGM Section down to the southwest...**

BPW Right. And you then slid off to the south and you ended up in sight of Kure instead of Midway, which is another....

**SGM That's right.**

BPW ...40 or 30 miles.

**SGM 40, 50 miles, right.**

BPW So, well, okay. If you didn't see them, you didn't see them.

**SGM Now coming back from there, coming back from there, trying to get back to our carrier, see, we...**

BPW Now let me ask you this. Tappan says this. He was in Scouting 8.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Scouting 8, well, let's, let's go back a moment.

**SGM Well then, let's see. One of the squadrons, one of the scouting or bombing ...**

BPW Bombing 8 went to Midway.

**SGM ... went to Midway.**

BPW And Scouting 8 went on back.

**SGM And they ducked some anti-aircraft fire getting in.**

BPW Yeah, they had a hell of a time. When they split up, now, they split up...

**SGM Scouting 8 was Walt Rodee, I think, wasn't it?**

BPW Uh, yes.

**SGM The skipper? And Bombing 8 was Red Johnson, I believe.**

BPW Yeah, that's, I think that's right. I don't know. They aren't designated. Johnson, right.

**SGM Russ Johnson.**

BPW Yeah, R. R. Johnson.

**SGM And Walt Rodee.**

BPW Yeah. Well, I have Johnson on here but I don't have the rest of these. This is my record of those, it's not, that's a different thing. But what, what I want to do is this. You flew on a given heading for a given distances that you had been given from the, from the intelligence people I suppose. And when you got there, you were on a line, in effect, from Midway to the Jap carriers. Let's suppose that you came to this line and that's where they were supposed to be and they were not there. So you flew on through it a little bit. Maybe 10 minutes or 15 minutes.

**SGM Yeah, that doesn't (inaud) because there's no belly tank.**

BPW Oh, yes. I'm sure that, I sure that things got to be ...

**SGM Had to be on radio silence.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM I didn't...**

BPW Now, what happened is this. If you can remember, were, was any order given to you on the radio to, from Ring, uh, that they was going to turn, or...

**SGM Radio silence.**

BPW All you did was follow them. Is that correct?

**SGM (inaud) A very loose formation above them.**

BPW Yeah, right. But you kept them in sight.

**SGM Yeah. When I broke off, I broke off without even, when I saw I was convinced myself that it was be foolish to go any farther and with my gas depleting all the time and having a shorter range anyway, than they had.**

BPW Sure.

**SGM I just gathered the two other groups that were flying on me.**

BPW Right. And just turned yourself.

**SGM Turned.**

BPW On your own...

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW ... on your own volition.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW No order was given to you.

**SGM Nope, no.**

BPW Did you contact the other, your planes in your, your fighter planes?

**SGM Not by voice or anything. Radio silence.**

BPW But you motioned to them or something.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW Uh-huh.. I see. So you did not...

**SGM The first thing I said over radio is, "Mayday", going into the, over into the water.**

BPW I see. Now, you, before you took that action, had Scouting 8 and Bombing 8 separated?

**SGM No.**

BPW They were still together?

**SGM Uh, yes.**

BPW And you broke off first, then, in other words.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW You broke off first. Did you break off and head directly back to where you hoped the Hornet would be?

**SGM That's right.**

BPW Just flew direct.

**SGM We were supposed to have a homing signal.**

BPW Right. Did you pick that up?

**SGM No, I couldn't pick it up because I had...**

BPW Too far away?

**SGM ... I got it a little bit, that was later on.**

BPW I see.

**SGM I couldn't get, I couldn't get mine adjusted.**

BPW Right away.

**SGM Yeah, and I turned over the lead after we were coming back away after,**

to, went up and gave his signal and pointed to him as warning, you know...

BPW I see. Because he, he had, he was the....

**SGM He was not even (inaud)**

BPW I see. And who was that? Now, let's see. Do you remember? Was it Gray?

**SGM Ruehlow.**

BPW Ruehlow? All right. Okay. So you and Gray and Ruehlow were flying along.

**SGM Well we had Mark, Mark and Hill and, let's see, we were two plane, two plane sections.**

BPW I see. And you led the first section?

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Who was leading the second section?

**SGM I don't..**

BPW Do you remember that? I'll give you these names. Uh, Jennings, Groves, no not Groves. Hill, Kelly, Magda, McInerny, Talbot and Tallman.

**SGM Tallman, mmm-hmm.**

BPW Tallman?

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW All right, okay. Now, so, so you turned over, you got hold of Ruehlow and you told him to lead it on in to the Hornet, if you could make it. But you knew damn well you weren't going to because you were more than 150 miles away.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW So, all you were doing was getting back as close as you could.

**SGM As close as we could. Now we saw, and on our way back to the north, see, we were headed back this way...**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM ... looked off there. I saw the Jap carriers stopped and on fire.**

BPW Burning, burning.

**SGM Burning, mmm-hmm. And destroyer action around like this.**

BPW Were you that close to the...

**SGM Well I could see small,**

BPW ... so you could make out...

**SGM ...smaller ships. Yes.**

BPW Is that right?

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW How close that was. How close that was. Remarkable. Well, okay.

**SGM Well, I imagine it was maybe 15 miles away.**

BPW Oh, it would have been more than that. It would have been a lot more but at 20, uh, 18,000...

**SGM 18,000 feet...**

BPW 18,000 feet you can see oh, 1.32 times the square root of your height, you know.

**SGM Oh, I'd say 40, 50, 60 miles.**

BPW You could see a long way. You could see a long, long way. There's no doubt about that and then the smoke on the horizon, and then the smoke on the horizon you could see a lot more. Well, all right. Now, now this is the, so you broke off first and then you really didn't know what happened to Bombing 8 and Scouting 8 at all...

**SGM No, no. Not then.**



BPW They just disappeared as far as you were concerned.

**SGM Right.**

BPW Did they continue straight on a little bit or do you know?

**SGM I think so.**

BPW You just cut, turned off to the left, period.

**SGM Because they broke up, too, you know.**

BPW Yeah, right.

**SGM One went one way...**

BPW One went to Midway.

**SGM Midway.**

BPW One went on back, too.

**SGM Yeah, mmm-hmm.**

BPW But, but you broke off first so they must have continued a little further on down toward Kure before they did that, I suppose. All right, now. Now, now this is a critical things. After you had turned back toward the carrier, did you then see any other airplanes?

**SGM Not in the air, no.**

BPW And did any of the, and you don't know whether anybody else did either?

**SGM No, nobody in my group...**

BPW I mean in your conversation.

**SGM In my group, no.**

BPW Talking to anybody or anything?

**SGM No, no.**

BPW Isn't that something!

**SGM No, we uh,**

BPW Uh-huh. It's a big ocean out there, isn't it? It's a real big ocean.

**SGM And also, also a plane...**

BPW Is so tiny.

**SGM ... is so tiny.**

BPW Oh, I know. I know. I know, how well I know. I come very close to missing those, a few of those islands out there myself. Very bad. But anyhow, all right, now. You've now turned and you're heading back to the Hornet as close as you can get there.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Who was the first man that went down?

**SGM Well, it was... I think it was uh,... I believe it was, uh, Hill.**

BPW Were you still leading?

**SGM No, no I was...**

BPW Or did you go back?

**SGM I fell back, yes.**

BPW You fell back?

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW So you saw the planes as they fell out.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Is that correct?

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW And you think Hill was the first one?

**SGM I think Hill was.**

BPW All right. Now. How soon did Hill go down after you turned? Was it 10 minutes, was it a half an hour or was it an hour?

**SGM No, no. I'd say it was a matter of, we were scattered out and I would just, maybe, 10 or 15 minutes before I went down.**

BPW All right. Now, wait a minute now. Okay, but how, do you know how long it had been since you made the turn?

**SGM No.**

BPW Can't, can't guess at that?

**SGM You mean after we, after we left the others?**

BPW Yeah, after you left the others. From that moment on.

**SGM Oh, we flew, we flew a long time. I wouldn't, I wasn't jotting down anything on any tablets or anything.**

BPW I'm sure. I'm sure, yeah. Well, let me take a moment to look here. Here's the area. Now you were picked up, latitude....47, 134 miles out of Midway. So it would have been, here's Midway, it would have been up in here. Yeah, it would have been up in this block right here. Now, you must have been somewhere down here and flying back this way toward the Hornet or even closer.

**SGM We were, when we were picked up...**

BPW So you flew back northeast.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Back, roughly, northeast to, back toward the Hornet and if you were within sight of Kure again, how long had you been in sight, there, before you turned?

**SGM Oh, I don't, I remember passing it as we came back we were, when we were picked up, I think it was estimated, of course, we'd been in the water drifting for a time.**

BPW Yes.

**SGM That's, that's...**

BPW That's right. But that would not probably be, that would probably be, oh, you wouldn't have probably been more than about 50 miles from where you went down, in any event.

**SGM All depends on the current.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM Then, of course, the wind used to blow, uh, those five nights, or six, six nights we were in the water. I didn't get my raft out, you know.**

BPW You did not. Oh, how was that? Rough landing, huh?

**SGM No, the landing... I hadn't shot all my ammunition out. We had all of that 50 caliber ammunition.**

BPW Oh, boy.

**SGM And when the plane went down, then, eventually backed up this way.**

BPW I see.

**SGM And I just got myself out on the wing and was trying to pull out my, my....**

BPW Raft?

**SGM ... raft when I felt the plane going down.**

BPW Right out from under you.

**SGM Going down again and I just kicked free and I was just swimming. Kicked**

**off my shoes.**

BPW Oh, for God's sake.

**SGM And, I fortunately landed down wind from the last two boys that went in.**

BPW I see.

**SGM And Ruehlow...**

BPW So they coasted down on...

**SGM They, they sang out "Mayday" when they...**

BPW Yeah, yeah. When they were going in.

**SGM When they were going in. And my, my gas started to sputter a little bit, my lack of gas. And I was hitting the wobble wobble.... and I was still getting some...**

BPW power?

**SGM power. But when I saw where they went in, I...**

BPW Figured you might as well stay together.

**SGM ... went in, down, down wind from them and...**

BPW And you were the last ones down. You were the last one.

**SGM I was the last one in the air, yeah.**

BPW You were the last one down. All right, let's go back a moment. You say Hill, you thought, was the first one down.

**SGM I think so, yes.**

BPW And that was only about, we'll say, 15 minutes before you went down.

**SGM No, that would be...**

BPW How long after Hill went down did you go down?

**SGM I can't, I can't tell that time. I just can't do it.**

BPW Well, I don't blame you. God knows, I couldn't anyway.

**SGM I certainly wasn't looking...**

BPW Neither could anybody else.

**SGM ... I wasn't looking at a clock.**

BPW That was the last instrument you were watching, wasn't it? All right. How about, who was next after Hill? Now recall Kelly and Hill were the only two lost. All the rest were picked up.

**SGM Boy, how about, how about, was the, was Grove picked up?**

BPW Grove was not with you. What happened to Grove was he...

**End of Tape 1/Side 2**

*Tape 2/Side 1*

BPW Well, those things I, I, I there's no way of really knowing that. About why that lapse. Why, why there was a 2 1/2 hour flight here but it wasn't a carrier landing on the 26th of May. On the 26th of May, hell you must have been.....

**SGM Well, we came in, we came in and we landed at ...**

BPW Ford Island.

**SGM Ford Island.**

BPW Had to have been something like that. I don't remember the damn....

**SGM And flying off the field, we took off and landed aboard ships.**

BPW There you go. That's what happened.

**SGM That's what I think happened.**

BPW That's exactly what happened, sure. That's exactly what happened.

**SGM See, this, this was flying in to the beach.**

BPW Yeah, that's right.

**SGM And this one was landing on board.**

BPW Back, back flying back out.

**SGM Landed aboard.**

BPW That figures it. That figures it exactly right. And the "N" designation?

**SGM "N" means (inaud)**

BPW Now here's another one, see. Here's another "N". And this says...

**SGM See, he'd been aboard.**

BPW He, he must have gone into Ford then. That's the end of April. That's when you got back. That's exactly what happened.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW That's exactly what happened. He flew into Ford and they must have, they must...

**SGM (inaud)**

BPW ... yeah, they must have flown you off early when you were coming back in. Something like that. Here's a chronological sequence of events that I have made up. This is out of Morrison's account.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW The chronological sequence of events that I, this is a kind of a sort of thing that I want to try to make of the actual flight itself.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW I want to get as accurate a time. These fellows, these authors, Lord and these other people have done a good job. They've talked to a lot of people and they have, not just on the Hornet, but on all kinds of information and what I hope to be able to do is to get it all simulated sooner or later and to try to actually plot the whole thing for the, for the entire flight.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW But we could, it's a little hard to do as you see, but...

**SGM Sure. I don't know. Maybe I'm getting too senile to keep up with it.**

BPW No, sir. You're being very, very, very helpful indeed.

**SGM You go ahead. I'm going to hang your coat up here.**

BPW Oh that's all right.

**SGM Well, I don't want it to wrinkle.**

BPW Oh, leave it there. Oh my Lord, that's all right. Don't worry about that. The, all right.... Did you fly the same plane pretty much every time?

**SGM Yeah, when I was, when I was flying.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM If it was up. I mean usually we were up, but when you, when you have a 36 plane squadron, the, you've got to give flight time to the boys in training and all of that. If I didn't fly every flight, some flights like that, whoever took them up, they might be in different planes.**

BPW Sure, sure, sure. Now, going back for a moment, when you took off, do you remember, well, what we have so far, your recollection was the air patrol took off first. Is that, is that correct? Would they likely have been the ones to have taken off first or not?

**SGM You'd have, you'd have to stop....**

BPW Now remember, wait a minute. Now, look. There was one single thing that Fletcher said...

**SGM You could have your torpedo planes back.**

BPW Yes, yes.

**SGM For instance, you... Normally on the, if you weren't in actually combat...**

BPW In actual combat, yeah....

**SGM distance, within a, if the enemy was two or three hundred miles away, you'd have your scouts, your dive bombers and fighters all ahead of the torpedo planes.**

BPW I see.

**SGM Because you wouldn't be sending your torpedo planes out unless they were going to hit something.**

BPW Right. I see.

**SGM See what I mean?**

BPW Right. So in all likelihood, you and the SBDs took off first and circled, probably.

**SGM Mmm-hmm. Yeah.**

BPW Is that, is that likely?

**SGM That would be the way you'd, yes.**

BPW That would be the normal stacking up that they made on the...

**SGM That's right.**

BPW And then when, then when the torpedo bombers had gotten off then everybody would go on off.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW All right. Now Lord said that he'd bore that out pretty much. He said that McClusky took off first from the Enterprise, now.

**SGM SCAT bomber.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM Mmm-hmm. Dive bomber.**

BPW And, and eventually the torpedo bombers took off last. And they chased along after them and never did catch them. But he said that you all circled the fighters and when you were climbing to 18,000 feet, so it took you a little bit, and the dive bombers circled until Waldron and his outfit was off and they actually went out ahead

of you. They left, he seemed to indicate a little ahead of you so that you followed him, not in sight or anything like that, but in time. You were a little behind him but there was every indication that you would have caught up and passed him. The fighters from the Enterprise, and that fellow's name was, well that must have been Thatch.

**SGM (inaud) I think.**

BPW Was he on the Enterprise or Yorktown?

**SGM I think he was on the Enterprise, I think.**

BPW Well, what I'm saying is this. Another point that I want to clarify is this. Lord says that Fletcher, commanding, the overall commander and also on the Yorktown, didn't launch anything in the form of an attack toward Midway, I mean, toward the Japs for about an hour after the Hornet and the Enterprise had launched. Because he was farther to the north and to the east and he was flying combat air patrols or search for the whole, for the whole fleet so that, and apparently he had dive bombers out and everything as well. So that was why he was late getting...

**SGM Lead ship would take the....**

BPW Take turns?

**SGM ... take turns. Each ship would do that.**

BPW Oh, I see. I see. And apparently that's what the Yorktown was doing that, that morning...

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW ... on the fourth. So that Spruance, in effect, had, was running his own game at that, at that time.

**SGM Yeah, when, when, when the carriers were grouped together, one, one ship would take the, the combat air patrol and the scouting out maybe to 200 miles, whatever it was...**

BPW Yeah, yeah.

**SGM Because you'd be duplicating if you...**

BPW Yes, right. Oh, of course. Well that was a weakness. That was one of the critical things apparently, a weakness on the part of the Japs because they used those cruiser float planes and things like that for, that had poor speed and range and every other damn thing. Here is the, the Japanese, this is the Japanese version of what happened...

**SGM search...**

BPW ...with respect to our, to our being located and it points out that here was the plane that sighted us. She took off one half hour after all of the other search planes took off because catapult trouble or some damn thing. Okay, now. She reported as being, the pilot thought that he was at point "C" right here and located the American ships 240 miles from Midway on a 10 degree bearing which would have placed them at point "A", up here. Now how in the hell he ever could see that far is beyond me, but that's what he said, see. Actually the US force was at point "B" and presumably the Japanese pilot had made an error in navigation. In other words, he must have been over here, over much closer this way.

**SGM Mmm-hmm. Yeah.**

BPW He had turned on his dog leg much before he was out at the end of his thing his thing and apparently sighted us there. But this, and of course, he made gross, kid of gross errors with respect to what he reported.

**SGM What he saw.**

BPW And poor Nagumo, in reading those accounts, if you could just see, just see what his problem was here when (inaud) leader of the Japanese flight had called for another strike at Midway because, and Nagumo already knew it because he had been attacked by land based planes. There wasn't any question, you know, they'd have to have another attack. And then this, all of a sudden, here's one of these planes, clearly out of the clear blue sky which was a total surprise to him, seemingly, reported an American fleet. But he says, you know, something like five cruisers and ten destroyers or something. No mention of a carrier until something like 30 minutes later. Oh, he says, might be a carrier bringing up the rear. God! And by that time, of course, they had made, the Japanese had made other commitments. They had, they had sort of broken the spot on holding the, they kept one half of all the airplanes, all the carriers in reserve, just in case a carrier showed up, an American carrier showed up. But what happened was they began to erode very quickly. They began to erode that situation first with their fighter planes because, my God, they kept getting, being attacked. They went under six separate attacks from these various elements, the B-17s, the B-26s and all those other the TBF's, the new TBFs and the, I don't know whether the SB2U's, or 2C's or whatever those other planes were that were supposed to be better than the SBDs.

**SGM SBD's, yeah.**

BPW Yeah, but whatever, they went glide bombing instead of dive bombing and, anyhow, there was a whole lot of things and what they did, the Japs did, was to dissipate their basic setup first by sending out these fighters.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And that's why Waldron had such a hell of a time because there were so damn many fighters. They sent them all out, see. All of them and, and.....

**SGM He became the sacrificial lamb.**

BPW He did. And, and, and the rest of those the rest of those TBD's that went in, sort of the same thing. I mean they didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of getting anywhere near those carriers from all accounts of these things. Well, what that did, of course, was to kind of disrupt the heck out of their, out of their status quo and their planes on board the carriers. In other words, if they had wanted to send the strike out against us at that time, it would have been without any fighters. None of the fighters could have been able to go.

**SGM Mmm-hmm, yeah.**

BPW So you know, that was another reason for them to hold up and kind of delay, which is what they did.

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW And they attribute, but everyone of the writers and all, including Fujita, the Japanese, they all say, oh hell, what that did was to, here we had, we got hit with the dive bombers with all of our planes on deck and being refueled and all the fuel lines in them, we blew ourselves up. Well, that sounds very logical because that's what happened, all right. But it was not what happened with respect to the fourth carrier at all. Not with respect to that. They had no damn airplanes left. They were out of airplanes and she sank. She did last just a little longer than the other ones but not a hell of a lot.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW So my query is, I don't think that's why they went down. I think they blew themselves up because of inherently defective design.

**SGM Could be.**

BPW Rather than because they, it was fortuitous on our part, it's true, that the that the planes and everything were there and they did blow themselves up but I don't think those Jap carriers could take anything like the punishment that the Hornet took.

**SGM No. One of my classmates who made history, Bob Dixon. Uh, scratch one of the Jap flat-tops. He died here a few months ago. He was an invalid. An invalid. He died this last year.**

BPW Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yes, well, I, there must have been a great difference in the ships. I, I have here, this is an action report about Midway from the fourth to sixth of June. Uh, now here is a Hornet's log. Here are excerpts from the Hornet's log of the various watches. Average RPM 265.5, how's that? Average speed 400, speed 280 RPM 320 knots. Base course 30 knots closing with the Enterprise... I'm looking for.... Oh, here's the list of the people that were missing in action at the time. This is Friday, June the 12th and was part of the, I don't know, I guess it was a part of the log. Now, you were missing in action at that point. See, that was the 12th, you were picked up, you had been picked up by then but they didn't know it.

**SGM I suppose.**

BPW Five, four, yeah, you were picked up on the 9th. Is that right?

**SGM Let's see. The battle was the 4th, I was picked up either the 9th or the 10th.**

BPW Yeah. And Ruehlow and Gray...

**SGM Yeah, they were...**

BPW And they, and they, you were all three missing in action.

**SGM Three of us.**

BPW Yeah, now....

**SGM And Kelly?**

BPW And Kelly and Hill are there. They are still missing in action. Now that meant that all the rest of them had been found.

**SGM I would think so.**

BPW Had to be.

**SGM Groves, what's this?**

BPW Okay, now. Groves...

**SGM See, that's 17.**

BPW AF17, was Combat Air Patrol gauging the enemy over USS Yorktown.

**SGM See, he stayed aboard ship.**

BPW Well, what he did was this. I have other things here about Groves. What he did, when he took off with you guys, but he took off and he did not go with you. He flew patrol.

**SGM Combat air patrol.**

BPW He flew combat air patrol until 9:45.

**SGM Yeah, see we, we set up...**

BPW And then he landed and it was some kind, he, he wasn't supposed to land then so they called him a deferred forced landing. And he probably didn't land because of all this other stuff that was going on, I presume... So, but then he must have taken



off again and was lost...

**SGM See, I imagine, I imagine the Hornet, since... I imagine the Hornet kept up their own... as soon as we were all off, maybe hit (inaud) combat....**

BPW Oh, she did. Uh, Smokey Stover.

**SGM Smokey.**

BPW Smokey went up. He went up and same as, with, with Groves. Now Groves was shot down apparently over the Yorktown at 1410. In other words way, was much later, so he had to have gone back up again. But he landed at 9:45 and they must have fixed the airplane and sent him back up again with Stover.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And maybe some others but he was lost on the same day and they never got him either.

**SGM Close aboard, huh?**

BPW Yeah, close aboard and, oh, here we are, here we are, look. Rescued and where, LTJG Reynard Frances Jennings.

**SGM Tallman.**

BPW Tallman, Talbot, Magda and McInerny. Rescued but whereabouts not divulged (inaud) at Midway. So there we go. That did it. They were... And this was part of the log of the Hornet. All of this stuff has been released by the way. It was all classified and everything. All that bullshit and, and so, so now it's available. I'm going to try to get the battle damage report on the Hornet. I think they'd be very interesting. They would have to be. I have a portion but I want the engineer officers and the other guys, you know, each one of them that had to make up those reports. Now, this was this was on Thursday, okay, which was the day. Which was the 4th of June was a Thursday on the 4, 12 to 4, (inaud) 13 5 knots 130 RPMs, in company with F416 previous disposition 11-B what does that mean?

**SGM It's a certain type of (inaud) a certain type of formation.**

BPW Something in Atlanta. Atlanta was an anti-aircraft cruiser.

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW New type, wasn't she?

SGM Mmm-hmm.

BPW Okay, (inaud) ....

**SGM 110 and changed speed, 15 commencing according to plan, so....**

BPW What's that? 400.... RPMs 43.8. All right, now read that one. Read that one. You see, and here is another one about this watch. Read those two things and see what you make of them.

**SGM Oh, gosh. I remember (inaud). (phone ring) It annoys me when you answer the phone and nobody doesn't answer.**

BPW Let me ask you now, these... Here is the action report from the commanding officer of the Hornet.

**SGM This is 4 June, I've read.**

BPW Yeah. And that says about... This is out of the Hornet's log itself, isn't it?

**SGM Yeah. It's the Hornet, this is the Hornet's log. Here they're talking about Ingersoll getting killed.**

BPW Oh, yes. Oh, God, there was a....

**SGM You know he was an Admiral's son, Admiral.....**

BPW Yeah, I...

**SGM He was a nice guy.**

BPW He had a gun, uh, position.

**SGM Oh, yeah, Lieutenant... Royal Ingersoll, dead, Cummings, dead, private, dead....**

BPW Well apparently a fighter off of the Enterprise landed...

**SGM F24, yeah crashed on landing and fighter's machine guns accident....**

BPW Oh man, oh man.

**SGM I was in the water by that time.**

BPW Yeah, yeah.

**SGM This was happening about 2:29 in the afternoon...**

BPW You know, on the 5th and on the 6th....

**SGM Here 8 of 17 failed to return from combat patrol. Was that....**

BPW That's Groves.

**SGM Groves.**

BPW Right. That was Groves and according to Lord, Mitcher didn't release the Hornet combat patrol until the last damn minute. They, they picked, the Yorktown picked up the attack on radar. Well, oh God, they were way out, they picked them up but and they had, there weren't very many that got in, very few got in to attack her, too. She got it but they didn't release the....

**SGM You mean they didn't get any planes from the Hornet to help them out?**

BPW They didn't get any from the Hornet to help them out until it was too late to really do anything but apparently it wasn't too late for Groves. He must have gotten over there. Now Stover made some remark about it. Made, you know, they kept edging over closer and closer, you know trying to get but they were not released until it was sort of too late but now here's a report of the action that covered through the 6th. Now that was .... Spruance...

**SGM They were chasing ....**

BPW Lagamma or Lacumma or Lagamma, those two heavy cruisers. Now and they had to turn around for a lot of reasons but not the least of which was the fact that the fuel, a couple of the destroyers was down to below twenty thousand gallons or something like that, God they started with a hundred and fifty thousand. So they, you know they were about to run out of juice but here is a report of the losses, and of what, what the enemy losses were as a result. And you can see that we were a bit, Mr. Mitcher was a little optimistic in his reporting of it. But...

**SGM Ensign Gay...**

BPW All right, now. He said Gay made a hit. Well Gay knows damn well he didn't make a hit.

**SGM Oh, you mean the Hornet, the Hornet put out this...**

BPW Yeah, this is the action report of Mitscher's.

**SGM Mitcher.**

BPW Uh-huh. It's his action report to the headquarters, to, to....

**SGM Two dive bombers shot down. Could they have been shot down around the ship?**

BPW All right, now this, remember now, this is the enemy losses. Here are our losses. This is all he puts down as our losses because that's what it was. Now these are what

the enemy losses. Now they, it doesn't say, the only, what I was worried and questioning about is they strike one destroyer straight by four fighter planes. Now where the hell would four fighter planes off the Hornet have straight destroyer. They did not send any fighter planes up at the Hiryu. That was the last carrier.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW They didn't send any fighters up there.

**SGM Well is this.....**

BPW There were two destroyers...

**SGM This is the 5th or the 6th it could have happened.**

BPW Oh yeah. It could have happened anywhere along.

**SGM Well I know that...**

BPW Obviously wasn't, I don't think the 4th.. it couldn't have been the 4th unless...

**SGM Some of these, some of these boys, I think there's one chap I know that was in my squadron who stayed around with the ship's group.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM And didn't go out with my group. He reported striking destroyers.**

BPW Well, all right now.

**SGM Now, now they were chasing some.**

BPW But they were on the 5th and 6th or on the 6th, really. They got and there were two destroyers with the cruisers and they did get straight, but the question in my mind, what the hell were fighters doing way over there? That was, you know, they were hundreds of miles from Midway by then.

**SGM Oh, yes. They wouldn't send fighters out...**

BPW I can't believe that.

**SGM I don't think they, well maybe they....**

BPW Not after two crippled destroyers, they knew that. I mean two crippled cruisers, they knew that's all there was.

**SGM And knew there's no air against them.**

BPW No air, nothing. No I can't see that. I, well, and...

**SGM Somebody more than likely got a DFC out of that...**

BPW I suppose so. My God!

**SGM To, oh, this is the name Yorktown pilots flying with Scouting 8 claimed 2 bomb hits on a carrier, a cruiser.**

BPW Oh, well all right, okay, that could be. That could be on the Mikuma that was sunk. That's possible. That's possible.

**SGM Boy they really loaded them up, didn't they?**

BPW Oh, my. That looks, that looks pretty sporty there.

**SGM Oh, recommendations, yeah. Conclusions...**

BPW Oh, yeah.

**SGM A fighter capable of coping with zero is urgently required. Fighters which accompany attack groups should have the same cruising speed.**

BPW Yeah, sure. Put those extra tanks on. But I couldn't, but I couldn't see where....

**SGM Yeah, here's us again. In fact, being a fighter I was in 20,000 back to 10, that's stupid. You're burning your gas all up...**

BPW Terrible. Well hell, that's why you, that's where you wasted a lot of your gas. Climbing up, all the way up there.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW Had to be.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Had to be. Do you remember your rate of climb in those F4Fs?

**SGM Oh, heck, you could climb, you could out climb the, the... You could out climb the scouts and all.**

BPW Oh, yeah, I'd certainly think so. When.... Was there... When, when you had climbed up over the carrier, okay, had not left yet, you were still in the air around the carrier, was any signal given or how did you know when to leave? You just followed the dive bombers?

**SGM No, I was, was protect, basically to protect the air group commander.**

BPW Right. So you watched him.

**SGM Oh, yeah.**

BPW You watched him. He didn't get out of your sight.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW And when he took off, you took off. Is that essentially...

**SGM No we didn't take off at the same time.**

BPW No I don't mean take off. I didn't mean take off.

**SGM Well when he headed out on the mission, yeah.**

BPW When he headed out on the mission, then you did.

**SGM Oh, sure.**

BPW And there was no conversation about it.

**SGM No. Radio silence.**

BPW Uh, Lord pointed out a funny kind of an episode that happened. I think the fellow's name was Gray that was in the fighter planes on Yorktown.

**SGM Yeah, there was a, there was a Gray.**

BPW Jim Gray?

**SGM Jim Gray was the older brother of Dick, Dick Gray.**

BPW Is that right?

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Well he was the leader apparently...

**SGM No, wait, wait a minute.**

BPW Oh, no. Was he on the...

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW Was he in dive bombers or fighters?

**SGM I forget now what Jim Gray, you know, he had quite a bit of ....**

BPW Well anyhow, what happened was, with that group, uh, they had some kind of a new gadget that was a new bomb release. It wasn't a manual release. It was some kind of an electrical release and three of the dive bombers dropped their bombs while they were presumably arming them and this fighter, the leader of the fighters, he was apparently under them. Not over them as you were, under them because he was watching the torpedo planes, too. He saw these bombs come whistling down and they exploded in the water and Gray, I'm sure it was Gray, I think he must have been a dive bomber, SBD bomber, I'm not positive but whoever it was kept right on, Lindsey, Lindsey...

**SGM He lives in (inaud)**

BPW Lindsey, for God's sake. He kept right on going anyhow and he went right on and he dove. He was, even though he didn't have a bomb and they all followed him right on in. He was very successful. But that was a crazy kind of an episode because he lost his bomb right off the bat because of a failure of some kind.

**SGM Release, bomb release..**

BPW Yeah, which was crazy, but... So anyhow, were you still climbing when you left the Hornet...

**SGM Oh, yes.**

BPW ... to go on your mission? Were you still climbing or had you reached altitude, then do you think?

**SGM Oh, I, I went up to altitude and...**

BPW So you just waited then.

**SGM Waited until they took off...**

BPW I see. I see. So in other words you weren't still climbing by the time Ring took off. I mean by the time Ring left on the mission.

**SGM Started on the mission.**

BPW Yes.

**SGM No, I was....**

BPW You were at altitude.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And they think up to 18,000 feet or something like that?

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW Uh-huh. But you don't know at that moment.... At that moment you don't know where Waldron was.

**SGM No.**

BPW You're sure.

**SGM Oh I mean he was down. He went in, well he never did climb up to...**

BPW He never got above 1500 feet apparently or something like that.

**SGM Because he was going to attack from the surface, see. Stupid for him to climb up and climb back.**

BPW Did you ever hear anything on the radio?

**SGM Oh, I heard just some, some transmission but it didn't make any sense.**

BPW Garbled?

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW Because I think that Tappan said he heard Waldron saying that he had sighted...

***END OF TAPE 2/Side 1***

*Tape 2/Side 2*

BPW As a result of any of this... anything that I get, uh, write down, anything like that I will submit to you.

**SGM Okay.**

BPW You understand? Before I even keep a record of it.

**SGM Okay.**

BPW I promise you. I mean, I, I don't want to impose on you and I want to have everything clear one hundred percent so that you would think that I have it right, have it wrong or whatever.

**SGM To the extent of my limited, limited ability.**

BPW Well...

**SGM Forty years.... forty years...**

BPW You've done totally, incredibly well. I can't imagine. If you would like to have anything here that you see or that we talk about that you would like to have, I will be happy to give you copies of anything and everything. I'm going to.... including even the log book. I'm going to reproduce the log book and, uh, but, so you just tell me anything here. If you'd like those lists, anything like that, I'll be very happy to provide you with them and when I, as I say, when I get the thing sort of put together, I hope to have a chronological sequence of things that happened and also all shown clearly platted out on a large scale, but...

**SGM Uh-huh.**

BPW I'll check it with you before I even put it in my own file. So I want to just give you that reassurance, sir. Your kindness is very much appreciated. Okay, so now Tappan spoke when he said after you saw Kure, he spoke of being released. And, what did, uh, meant to him was that they were on their own and I didn't get into that really with him.

**SGM I didn't open up any...**

BPW Not you. No, he wasn't speaking of you. He was speaking of Scouting 8 and Bombing 8.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And apparently I would say that they must have had a conversation. Must have been a conversation between those two. Ring and the other section leader, whoever it was.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And that must have been well after they had left, you had left them, apparently. You left first...

**SGM We did?**

BPW (inaud) and they must have flown on and then they must have split up. Well they did split up. Bombing 8 went to Midway and Scouting 8 went on back and they got back. They got all the way back to the, to the....

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW So they had substantially longer range than you did, the F4Fs.

**SGM Oh, yeah.**

BPW Much, much more.

**SGM Oh, the, the F4Fs without belly tank, yeah.**

BPW What was the belly tank, what, how much...

**SGM just a type of bomb...**

BPW Yeah, but what was, how much a gallon were those?

**SGM Oh, I forget.**

BPW Fifty gallons?

**SGM Something like that.**

BPW Fifty. Something like that.

**SGM Mmm-hmm. I can't remember.**

BPW I remember talking about that. On these anti-submarine patrols where we flew out of Cherry Point, we'd go out from Hatteras, we'd go south or go north about fifty miles off the coast, seventy five miles, all the way up there to the, well (inaud) and they took, they put something like four depth charges in one of the bomb bays and they stuffed a thousand gallon tank in the other bomb bay. Can you imagine that?

**SGM Mmm.**

BPW God, and we struggled off the decks with those things and that was one of the things that is just so amazing because they must have had both bomb bays fully loaded with bombs.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW Doolittle must have had everything they could stack on the damn airplane. They must have had that plane shackled down to the deck and revved them both up and then just let everything go at once. But I suppose, it talks about 30 knot, 30 knot....

**SGM When they launched?**

BPW Yeah, when they launched.

**SGM Yeah, there was 26, 28, 30....**

BPW That would have given them a big help, all right. Wow!

**SGM And we had a clear deck, too.**

BPW Oh, yeah. But it was just terribly short. Terribly short. Did you, did you watch him take off?

**SGM No, I had....**

BPW Were you on duty or ....?

**SGM No, I was down in the hanger deck in my plane.**

BPW I see. Oh, you were ready to go on patrol, that's right.

**SGM Combat air patrol.**

BPW Right, right. You and Kelly both went on combat air patrol.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW As soon as those planes were launched.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW I see.

**SGM That was back in April.**

BPW Yes, that's right. On the 18th of April. Oh, by the way, in this Action Report it says in accordance with uh, sink pack operation plan so-and-so, the Hornet got underway from Pearl Harbor at 11:30, May the 28th, recovering the air group at sea.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW Just as we figured right from the damn log book. That's exactly what happened.

**SGM That's right.**

BPW That's an interesting kind of deduction that we made. It was right, though. So

you never actually saw Bombing 8 and Scouting 8 split up at all.

**SGM No, I left them. They was still going in a southwesterly direction. They hadn't turned to come back or anything and I saw....**

BPW But by then you...

**SGM It was after, see, after I left them on my way back, uh..**

BPW Off to the left.

**SGM Off to my left coming back, I saw the Jap fleet. The carrier stopped and...**

BPW Yes, and that's the first time that you knew where in the hell they were.

**SGM I knew where they were and I knew that they, that there was no danger of attacking Pearl or anything like that again.**

BPW Oh, when you saw them burning, yeah. I'll be damned. Well, they must have made some bonfire, all right. You could have seen that smoke from the United States all most. That must have been towering....

**SGM But then, and I couldn't understand this, was why, I don't think, did the bombers, so one of them went into Midway, one group.**

BPW Yes.

**SGM Bombing 8.**

BPW Bombing 8 went to Midway.

**SGM But Scouting 8 came on back...**

BPW Went all the way back.

**SGM But why the couldn't see and didn't see the Jap fleet.**

BPW They never saw it. No report of them ever seeing anything.

**SGM Well, gosh. I saw them.**

BPW Bombing 8, now get this one, Bombing 8 landed at Midway, got refueled and were given orders to go back and attack the Japs and they flew back to the Hornet. They did not go back.

**SGM They didn't?**

BPW They did not. They did not. Now whether they, whether that order was countermanded in the air or whatever...

**SGM That's something I didn't know.**

BPW I don't know. But that's, that's part of this report that there was a curious kind of a thing to me. Why in the hell, they, you know, they knew where the Japs were and they knew all about it then, by that time. Oh, God, Midway had the hot poop on them because they had picked them up very, very early with those two PBYs.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And they knew where they were all the time and so, so, so they, and Bombing 8 was instructed, they were all refueled, instructed to get, get back out there. They got back out but they went right to the Hornet.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW So I don't know what ever happened about that. Let me ask you this. They talk about these horrendous fires. Okay, now the planes, I think, on a, on the bomb drop in the midst of loading planes there on Kage, for instance, you can just imagine the hell...

**SGM Imagine.**

BPW Terrible holocaust. Now aluminum burns like crazy after it gets hot enough.

**SGM Mmm.**



BPW But, what about the steel? That doesn't burn, does it or doesn't it?

**SGM No, not steel itself.**

BPW Was steel part of the ship?

**SGM No steel part...**

BPW That didn't burn.

**SGM No.**

BPW Couldn't burn, could it?

**SGM Uh-huh.**

BPW Wouldn't be hot enough for that, I wouldn't think. I suppose it would melt. Parts of it would melt all right, but, and that, and now that teak decking, I believe that the Japs also had teak, teak decking. That wouldn't, three and a half inches of teak wouldn't go puff either. I'll tell you that would take a little time burning.

**SGM Well, uh..**

BPW But it would blast. It wouldn't have much resistance to blast. Do you remember when the planes, when the bombs landed on the Hornet, okay, now you were, you saw everything, uh, apparently the first couple went all the way through the deck.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW And then there was the planes landed and they had one explode right on contact, or pretty much on contact on the deck. Do you have any recollection? What was, what was your recollection of that episode?

**SGM You mean of the Jap, uh...**

BPW The Jap attack at Santa Cruz.

**SGM At Santa Cruz?**

BPW Right. You were up in the air.

**SGM I was up in air control.**

BPW In air control, right.

**SGM I was about, about one deck under the, the uh...**

BPW bridge?

**SGM ... navigating bridge.**

BPW Navigating bridge, right. All right, did you see the planes, the Jap planes coming in to attack?

**SGM Oh, sure, sure, sure. We...**

BPW Do you recall the first hit?

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW Where was it?

**SGM It was on the, it was on the...**

BPW Was it a bomb? It was a bomb first, wasn't it?

**SGM Yeah, bomb first, mmm-hmm.**

BPW Was it aft, forward or...?

**SGM No, it was... We had one hit aft. Actually when the attack, when the actual attack came, we were ordered to take cover inside the...**

BPW I see. I see.

**SGM ... the little bit of an armored section in the island.**

BPW I see. So you wouldn't have seen the actual bomb hit.

**SGM No I didn't see the actual bomb hit. You could feel them....**

BPW I'll bet you felt them play all right. Right.

**SGM (inaud) officer and myself and ....**

BPW So you had a sheltered area there.

**SGM There was a shelter area but I mean, if a bomb hit directly on us, it would have taken care of us.**

BPW Yeah. Talk about that Ingersoll episode, apparently that 50 caliber bullet went right straight through the armor and everything.

**SGM Yeah, yeah, well they're terrific. That's such a caliber....**

BPW It really nifty. Now do you remember seeing the, the planes that crashed into the ship at all, or before they hit her or were you still...

**SGM No, we were inside then.**

BPW You were still inside. And the, and I believe the torpedoes, were they, I think they were last apparently. How long was it? The account, I believe, said that they had to, the fire under control in pretty, pretty quick....

**SGM Very quick.**

BPW That was another thing that was just astounding because the Japs never, never got the fires, even any semblance of control.

**SGM Control.**

BPW None, none at all.

**SGM I think we had much better compartmentation.**

BPW Had to have.

**SGM Survival and all like that. Damage control and all that.**

BPW Must have been. Just must have been.

**SGM Mmm-hmm. Light's bad for you.**

BPW No I'm all right. That's all right, sir. That's all right. And you did not... When you got back to Pearl Harbor to the hospital, there weren't any other of those fellows, those survivors there. Is that right? In the same hospital, you would have known for sure.

**SGM No, people came from the ship to see me.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM But, uh, Capt. Mitscher and a Exec. Henderson and Ring.**

BPW Was Ring...

**SGM I made, I made or forced Ring, the Group Commander that I was supposed to protect....**

BPW Yes.

**SGM I made, I made him acknowledge in front of the Captain and the Exec. that I couldn't have got back to the ship with the amount of gas that I had.**

BPW Oh, yeah. Oh, that wasn't even close. It wasn't even close.

**SGM Uh-huh.**

BPW No, you, you had you had no chance at all.

**SGM But I made a basic mistake, I guess, by not just going by Midway itself. It looked to me like a devastated place, from the distance I could see.**

BPW No, sir. Midway was pretty well battered up. It, it's true that, it's true that well, I don't, you couldn't have done hardly any more than they did. You could have just barely, barely made it anyhow. You really, I don't know whether you could have made it. Remember two of the SBDs, one of them did not make it.

**SGM Mmm-hmm.**

BPW It was ten miles short. The other one just went into the lagoon. Didn't have enough, he was gliding down, didn't even have enough to even make the end of the runway. So if they couldn't have done it, I don't know how any, any F4Fs could have done it. I don't believe you could have made it. I honestly don't. See, Kure is a hell of a long way. That's quite a little distance.

**SGM Well, that's true.**

BPW It is. It really is. And when you set your, when you turned your line around and said, "Oh hell, well I'm going back to the Hornet", you started thinking, uh, in terms of how far it was to get back there.

**SGM Yeah.**

BPW But you were a lot farther west from the....

**SGM Somebody's here.**

BPW Sure.

**SGM Delivering something....**

BPW Oh, yeah.

*Pause*

BPW See, yeah. You could have made... You could have made Kure but you never would have made Midway I don't believe. Oh, my, you've got something there.

**SGM Oh, my wife ordered something from..... We usually go down to Florida the later part of January and spend two or three months.**

BPW I see you're old acey-deucey, man.

**SGM You know, I'm getting away from games like that. I'm becoming more of a reader.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM My wife loves that game but after you play two or three games....**

BPW I'm going to send you, if I may, I'm going to send you with my compliments, a copy of *The Typhoon*. I want you to read that.

**SGM Okay.**

BPW I'm sure you could appreciate it. They had 140 airplanes swept off the decks of those carriers in that storm. Can you believe that? 140 off the carriers were lost.

**SGM Then the bull never came up before a court?**

BPW Never came up before a court. Had a hearing and that was all. That was all. God! How he ever got away with that....

**SGM Didn't a destroyer or two turn over there or something?**

BPW Three destroyers, The Hull, the Spence and the Monohan and the Dewey came within a gnat's ass and so did the All Wind. Both of them just barely, barely made it. Stack, stack over the side. Can you believe that? How do you like a destroyer with no stack on it? God, I'm going to send you that book. Well listen, I really appreciate your kindness in going through this.

**SGM Well I just hope that I...**

BPW I'm going to, when I kind of get a little bit further along, I'll, if I may, I'd like to sort of get, check back with you.

**SGM All right, fine.**

BPW And, and I want to be sure, that you have every assurance that I'm not, about why I'm doing this and what I'm doing. I'm not writing a book. I'm not doing anything like that.

**SGM Oh, I understand.**

BPW And everything as far as I'm concerned, even before I make any permanent record of it, I'm going to clear everything that I keep with you, all right?

**SGM Thank you. Mmm-hmm. I appreciate it.**

BPW I'll be sure doing that and, if you want, and any, any part of it or any part of this that you may, that you'd like to have, I'll be in such good contact with you and anything else that I run across and that may be of interest to you, I'll be happy to give you a copy of it. We have a, we have a, in the late spring, I think it's, uh, what's Memorial Day?

**SGM 30 May, isn't it?**

BPW 30 May, something, yeah. We have a service that, that is conducted at, oh, we have a little kind of a commemorative monument out in the graveyard where, when Kelly Senior was buried, and to have a Memorial Day service in Mark's name, there. And we have various military and naval military and speakers and the thought occurred to me that maybe you would like to come up this year if you have a chance, if you're going to be around at that time. I'll tell you a little, send you a little bit more information about it and maybe you'd like to give us a little talk.

**SGM Thank you.**

BPW It's nothing much but we would be very honored. It's on Memorial Day and we just have a little luncheon and, you know, that's all, maybe. But this foundation has, I'm sure that Mark Kelly.... It's the last thing in the world that he would have thought would happen. You know, he's the sort of kind of a guy that he was, he was a flamboyant guy but he was a modest guy at the same time seeming to me and.... but his father was....

**SGM Mark was one of the most exemplary young officers.**

BPW Is that right?

**SGM Oh, yes.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**SGM Clean cut.**

BPW Yeah.

**SGM Nice.**

BPW Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's the, you, that's the kind, all right. And he, well, at any rate, what we do, we have certain guidelines to use. We disburse about \$200,000.00 per year and have for, oh, thirty years, whatever it's been, thirty-five, mainly to educational institutions but not of higher learning. Only high schools and that level and the Maryland Scholastic Association.

**SGM What was Mark's college, by the way?**

BPW Went to the University of Maryland.

**SGM University of Maryland.**

BPW For two years.

**SGM Two years.**

BPW And he played lacrosse. He was an All-American lacrosse player.

**SGM They had good lacrosse, too.**

BPW Oh hell, yes. They, they were champions.

**SGM They and the Navy used to fight it out.**

BPW Oh, gosh, I'll say. My brother went to Princeton and he was an All-American and

he...

**SGM** My brother had a brother in '24 in West Point. Dick, and he was on the lacrosse team up there. He's a retired colonel at San Antonio, Texas, there, retired. And I had another brother, Bill, who was Annapolis '24.

BPW Oh....

**SGM** And I was '27. My father got three sons in the service to show.

BPW For gosh sakes. Well, and you were originally from Tennessee?

**SGM** Well I was born there. My father was an Englishman, native born. Came to America as a fairly poor man. He'd been in mining as a young man and over in Cornwall and he had, became an exemplary, well known mining engineer down in that part of the county.

BPW I see.

**SGM** In zinc and lead and all. He mined as a young man out in British Columbia and Idaho and Montana.

BPW Well, I, so, well actually, you were born in....

**SGM** I was born in Copper Hill, Tennessee.

BPW But your, but how about your brothers, where were they?

**SGM** They were both born in Michigan, I think.

BPW Moved around, then. I see.

**SGM** And...

BPW Well, Mark went to, went to Maryland....

**SGM** We moved from where, when I was three, I guess, down Tennessee.

BPW Oh, uh-huh.

**SGM** We moved out to Idaho and Butte City, Montana.

BPW Most of your early life was spent in the west, then.

**SGM** Well, the first few years. Then we moved back to Tennessee when I was about six years old.

BPW I see. I see.

**SGM** And my father was in mining in east Tennessee. Zinc and lead mine and then another place in east Tennessee, somewhere. And he retired from mining there about the time I finished the Naval Academy, he retired.

BPW Well, so what I started to say was that so the, we intended.... the foundation also does some other things. For instance, we established a fund that the first fund that was put into the Lacrosse Hall of Fame and we do things like that and we give a number of awards, to the All-American goalie awards, the Lacrosse Banquet, that kind of stuff. And there's an organization that sort of overlooks the high school athletic activities in the realm of greater Baltimore area called the Maryland Scholastic Association, which is us but essentially an association of athletic directors of the high schools. And we have a lot of activities with them and beyond that, we make very substantial donations to the various Severn schools here. We've just given them \$50,000.00 for a new....

**SGM** The old Severn, right near Annapolis.

BPW Yeah, you know where Severn is. Well that's, oh, new fields and things. They're embarked on a big league program to expand and it's a good school and so this is the kind of type of things, but Gilman and McDonough and Friends and all of them. St. Pauls, they've all received very, very substantial .....

**SGM** I never, I never asked before because I just meant Mark had us, had my wife and me, just up for say one weekend just overnight and dinner. Very pleasant.

BPW He lived on Charles Street.

**SGM** Yes.

BPW You know up there near Hopkins.

**SGM** Near Hopkins, that's right. Did he have any brothers or sisters?

BPW No.

**SGM** No wonder that....

BPW No, no brothers or sisters and just no family. His mother and father. There's no family, he doesn't, I don't think there's anybody even very related to him at all.

**SGM** Well has.... No, I don't think I met his mother, did I?

BPW They were divorced.

**SGM** Uh-huh, that's right.

BPW And his mother lived, I think, in California for a long time.

**SGM** Mmm-hmm.

BPW So you would have only met his father, probably.

**SGM** I met his father and Ms. Poncell.

BPW And Ms. Poncell, is that right? Oh yeah, oh, God, Rosa Poncell.

**SGM** Rosa.

BPW Oh, gee. She just died. Do you believe it? And she was, she was, I'll tell you, man. She must have been 90 years old. Geez, but she, or something beyond that even. But she just died and she was getting right along but she was, oh she was a very active....

**SGM** Active in society.

BPW ... gal, and oh, yeah, Lord, she just played it up big and she was a good friend of a fellow that I have a lot to do with it in the real estate business, uh, he lived out near her and she lived out on (inaud) Greenspring Valley, nice place, beautiful place. But she was a sort of a local character as well as a great opera star. After she retired she used to live it up pretty good and I would, I could just see Kelly, Sr. uh, interested in her because he was always the kind of guy that uh, in contrast somewhat to Mark. He was the guy that was always, kind of, well, he was a politician. He essentially, he loved politics. And he got to, well he was president of the city council and at one point, something happened to the mayor and so he was the acting mayor.

**SGM** Mmm-hmm.

BPW But the family's gone. So there's nothing, you know, except the foundation and as I say, another old fart like myself are the only two having to do with it and my son's now coming along...

**SGM** Good.

BPW ... so that's where that's going and it has become enough of a local institution for me to want to get any untied ends....

**SGM** Wonderful.

BPW ... done up. And that's the only reason that I've come down here and bothered you.

**SGM** You haven't bothered me at all.

BPW (inaud)

**SGM** No, it's been a pleasure meeting you.

BPW Well, I think...

**SGM I wish I could be a little more lucid and remembering back little things of forty years ago.**

BPW It's very difficult to do that. Very, my Lord, there isn't an F4 or F anywhere in the world today, I don't suppose. But uh, they, they were a great machine.

**SGM I used to get my flight time in them out at, uh... When I went to the air department in the summer of '42 around Hawaii.**

BPW Sure.

**SGM I would fly from one island to the other.**

BPW Yeah, yeah. Well, well, they, they were a good airplane.

**SGM Good, sturdy airplane.**

BPW Good, solid...

**SGM Good, solid plane...**

BPW ...plane, yeah. Well, I think the zero just had too much, well....

**SGM It had maneuverability and stuff like that but you put four fifty's....**

BPW Oh, yeah.

**SGM Four fifty caliber bullets. Strange that I'm going ....**

BPW Yeah, well Smokey Stover did pretty well at the canal, I'll tell you. He did all right. But he was the kind.... Did you... Do you remember him?

**SGM Oh, I remember Smokey Stover, yeah.**

BPW Well he must have been, he kind of, you get, reading the book....

**SGM He had a lot of moxie, I guess.**

BPW Yes, but he was a cautious kind of a guy at the same time. But he got to be an ace, you know. He got five or something, whatever it was. But he had one incident that from just, if you read between the lines, it was a fascinating kind of a thing, that it must have absolutely scared him to death as well as being a very heroic..... He apparently, there was a zero, they had some floats. They had, put floats on some of them and apparently they had some down there that were flying down the slot from the upper part of Rendova or (inaud) or wherever it was. Up a little farther (inaud) and one day he ran into this floater. He saw him and the same time the float planes saw it so they start right for each other. And they keep coming right at each other. God, they fly right into each other. They bang into each other and Smokey landed with the fabric of the, or the... of the plane with a red ball on it. On the forward leading edge of his wing. Can you believe that?

**SGM What, was he flying out of where, then?**

BPW Guadalcanal.

**SGM Out of Guadalcanal.**

BPW Right out of Henderson Field. Came in and they could not believe, and he couldn't ... Well he said something funny about well he just didn't know whether to right or left, or up or down or whatever and he was scared to do anything and the other guy was doing the same thing. So....

**SGM Too close to the middle.**

BPW At the last minute they go like this and it tore the wing off the other plane but, but see, his plane was stronger. The wing was literally stronger.

**SGM Stronger.**

BPW And went right, just sliced right through the other....

**SGM** Get credit for one more plane.

BPW He got credit for the plane. Isn't that something? God, and he never wore the damn thing like .....

END