

## Interview with Johnny Talbot 3/31/82

BPW This is Bowen Weisheit speaking and I'm in Des Moines, Iowa. This is March the 31st, 1982. I am starting the interview with Johnny Talbot. Record our, I hope, probably this thing. I think it's running now. I usually mess it up a little bit...

That book was written by the skipper of the Dewey and the Taber, do you remember a guy by the name of Taber? Anyhow, he was a, he was one of the SBD fellows and he was, went missing at Guadalcanal.

**JT Taber?**

BPW Taber, yeah. And they named a DE after him and it was, and this was in '44, or the storm was. Much later and she picked up the vast majority of the survivors of those three, uh three, those three destroyers that were sunk. Excuse me, I'll close this door over here. They seem to be doing excavating or something. Take your coat off.

**JT Does seem to be a little noisy.**

BPW Here, here let me hang it up.

**JT No that's all right. That's fine. It's....**

BPW All right?

**JT That's fine.**

BPW I'll be glad to hang it up.

**JT No it's laid in the back seat coming up so....**

BPW Okay. All right. So anyhow, I thought you might enjoy reading, looking through those and reading those. I have two pamphlets.... This is my card. I have two pamphlets that show you a little bit about our foundation and the history of it. You remember Mark and he was, his father was a very successful, uh, a businessman and had an automobile agency, a Buick agency.

**JT Yes, I know that. Uh-huh.**

BPW And so when he died he left this fund to commemorate Mark's memory and we have, and with guidelines we have disbursed a considerable amount of money each year in the local area to, under our guidelines, promoting essentially all kinds of local enterprises that we felt should be supported, primarily schools. We've given gymnasiums and football fields and small stadiums and things like that. We disburse about two hundred thousand dollars a year, now. So, well, there's another old gaffer, like myself, who are directors of the foundation and I have a young son who is now an attorney and he's sort of standing in the wings but as I saw it, this was going to be about the last possible chance there might be to get some first hand information and this just, sort of like that, tells a little bit more about it. So that's the essential reason why I've started out on this quest. I have, and my primary interest is not, I'm not going to write a book or anything like that. We, it's for the foundation files and nothing else. So, without, certainly without any permission, nothing would be disclosed and it's not our purpose to do that. So... and I'm primarily concerned with the flight on which Mark was lost and which you, fortunately, managed to live through. I have interviewed, as you no doubt know, Kelly and Hill were lost and not, not rescued. All of the eight others, though, you were rescued. I have talked to Mitchell, who was the, your CO in the squadron and Gray, and one of the dive bombing pilots. (inaud)

**JT Well, there was only eight fighter planes in the flight.**

BPW Eight? There were only eight. Well, all right. Now I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Talbot, with your permission and so on. I don't want you to, I want you to feel as relaxed as possible. I know I'm a total stranger who just descends on you, kind of crazy. But I want you, if you can, to, I think what would help most would be if you can sort of project yourself back to the time. What I'm really interested in is, sort of the information that began, we'll say, in the ready room. What, and if you could just sort of project the story from the time, from your observations about anything at all. When you went to the ready room, what did you find? What did you....

**JT Well, to me, the Battle of Midway backed up beyond there.**

BPW All right, fine. Start any place you care to, sir.

**JT We, coming in out of the South Pacific, the Coral Sea and then there's a period of time that the Hornet and Enterprise's, I'm running on probing and scouting missions between the Battle of the Coral Sea and Midway in which we lost several pilots. This was a period when we were sent on a lot of single plane searches. 250 to 300 miles into what was primarily hostile territory.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT The rest of this was done by the bombers and the fighters and usually it was single planes. You were by yourself. Our squadrons, uh, bombing squadrons and our fighter squadrons, we lost people on those hops. It was strictly radio silence. In some situations never knew what happened to them. Later in service, I ran into one of the bomber pilots that spent 34 days on a life raft because....**

BPW Yeah, Uh-huh.

**JT We came into Pearl Harbor and we were there for a frantic 36-48 hours or something like this.**

BPW Did you stay aboard?

**JT No.**

BPW Were you at Ewa?

**JT We flew to Ewa Field.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT At that time, Fighting Squadron 8 was listed or on the records as a 27 plane fighting squadron. When we went into Pearl Harbor, I think we had 13 flyable aircraft. There were a lot of planes, or some planes, new planes there in Honolulu Airfield. They wouldn't issue them to us. I was with a group that we stole, I think it was six airplanes.**

BPW I see.

**JT And flew them out to the carrier.**

BPW Uh-huh. Were you... did you leave San Francisco on the Hornet, originally?

**JT I was on the Hornet, yes.**

BPW All the way.

**JT All the way.**

BPW Were you back at Norfolk, too?

**JT Yeah.**

BPW Yeah. Uh, I notice that on April the 18th, was the day that Doolittle's planes flew off.

**JT** Yes, yes.

BPW And that Mark's.... This is a copy of Mark's log book. I, don't ask me where we got it, but it shows up in our records. And I, I see that on the 18th, he flew CAP, seemingly and I was wondering if, perhaps.... Do you remember when the planes took... you certainly must remember....

**JT** I was the second fighter plane to leave the deck after the, the.....

BPW You also flew CAP, right?

**JT** We escorted them in from 200, 150 ....

BPW Oh, is that so? Uh-huh.

**JT** We followed Doolittle's planes.

BPW Uh-huh. That's what Gray said and Mitchell said that he had, too.

**JT** And we sank, I think there was two escort ships....

BPW Escort ships out there, yeah. I want, I was....

**JT** And Mark Kelly was..... You see, Mark Kelly was one of the, what we called in the squadron, the first provision, which was eight aircraft.

BPW I see. I see. I wanted to ask you if 3.7 hours, it appears his time on the 18th, and that bears out what you say. That's about as long, a log a CAP flight, I think, as you'd ever find. Isn't that probably about right?

**JT** Well some of our planes run out of gas, takes another gear ...

BPW Yeah, I'll bet. Gosh...

**JT** And when we took off....

BPW Well where were you....

**JT** ... and landing, both, I mean, there was green water on the flight deck. The seas were rough, but....

BPW Yeah. Ben Tappan, do you remember a guy by the name of Ben Tappan? He was an SBD pilot. He said that he was one of the forward gun positions as the deck was going up and down like that and he was, his eyes were almost level with it but it would fall out from under him and then he couldn't see the plane taking off. Now where were you when they took off? The PBJ's, do you remember watching them take off?

**JT** The B-25s?

BPW Yeah, B-25s.

**JT** Well....

BPW The Marine Corps called them PBJs, Mr. Talbot.

**JT** Uh, I observed some of the take-offs and, of course, we were in the flight, in the ready room.

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT** And....

BPW Well because you knew you were going to take off.

**JT** We were scheduled to take off as soon as they cleared the deck.

BPW Who took off first, Mitchell?

**JT** Of who?

BPW Of the fighters.

**JT** No.

BPW No? Who was ahead of you? You said you were second.

**JT** I don't know.

BPW You don't know?

**JT I don't know.**

BPW Right.

**JT In other words, in other words at that time, we normally flew the aircraft assigned to us and like, Mitchell was flying one and I'd fly, I think I flew two.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT And whichever way it was spotted on the deck.**

BPW I see.

**JT And normally the flight, or that flight leader did not always, necessarily be the first man to take off.**

BPW Yeah, I see.

**JT In fact, very infrequently was.**

BPW I see. How were the assignments made? By the exec. or something? The flight assignments.

**JT Well, Ruehlow was the flight officer.**

BPW Ruehlow, yeah.

**JT Ruehlow was his, his.....**

BPW That was his, one of his duties?

**JT His duties within the squadron. The structure was captain. Then you had your executive officer and then you went to flight engineering and gunnery and so forth.**

BPW Yeah, right. Let me ask you this, Mr. Talbot. Maybe, I uh, can you.....

**JT I was assistant gunnery officer at that time.**

BPW I see. I see. On this log, the character of the flights, do you remember those designations? What they mean? I can't quite figure what the heck. Z apparently would be, uh, would that be CAP or not? N, T, N.... what were those.... do you remember those letters, what the heck.....

**JT No, I don't.**

BPW All right. Join the club. That certainly... You all, of course, didn't mark, put those things in there. So I guess there wasn't any real reason why you should.

**JT The thing that makes everything so confusing in history and in records is there was no records kept. There was no, I mean later in the war, in other words, squadrons had historians...**

BPW Oh, yes.

**JT ... and people, this is primarily what they did and a lot of photography and things of this nature and at that time, as far as I know, I know of no official structuring of debriefing, briefing or records of any sort. And there was no records filed on the flights. The log books were kept by some yeoman in the office.**

BPW Right.

**JT And I'm not even sure that those letter designations were uniform from squadron to squadron.**

BPW Is that right?

**JT Or from man to man keeping the log book.**

BPW Oh for heaven's sake. I see.

**JT So, I don't really think they can tell you anything. They can't tell me anything.**

BPW I see. I see. Well they....

**JT I notice one place there that there was a Y and some other letter and he had XBS field carrier landing practice.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT Which would have to be stationed on some situation where they were not stationed on a carrier.**

BPW I guess they did that at Norfolk to begin with, I suppose. Did you or did you not? Jacksonville, maybe?

**JT At that time, all the carrier landing training was done after assignment to a squadron.**

BPW Oh, I see.

**JT There was none done prior to assignment to this point.**

BPW So you're first would have been at Norfolk, probably.

**JT This is right. This would have been Kelly's first carrier landing.**

BPW Yeah, yeah, right.

**JT And we had a grass field.**

BPW Did you go out when they took those two B-25s and flew them off in the bay?

Uh, do you remember that in February of '42? They took those two B25s out of Norfolk and flew them off. They took it, went out on the bay.

**JT Went out on the Hornet.**

BPW Yeah, on the Hornet.

**JT Uh-huh. I don't think so.**

BPW They took two B25s and just went out into the bay and flew them off the, off the Hornet and I suppose if they wanted to....

**JT No, I .....**

BPW Don't remember that?

**JT ... don't remember. No, I question that.**

BPW Well, I don't know that it was an army kind of a show on that, of course.

**JT And the man that worked with the army on that, I don't recall his name at this time but all our training was done in Alabama or some place.**

BPW Yeah, yeah, right.

**JT In fact, I don't think that the two planes even took off the Hornet. I think it was another ship that they mentioned that.**

BPW I, my information was that it was Hornet but that might, maybe not. I don't know.

**JT Well, I don't know either but it would have.....**

BPW It seemed logical that they would have tried it on the Hornet because they had to pickup Doolittle's planes.

**JT Doolittle's planes were picked up at Alameda.**

BPW Yeah, right, right. On the way out. Right. Well, all right, now.

**JT But getting back to...**

BPW To get back to the situation, if, I think if you can take me from the morning.... All the history books, Morison, Lord and all of the rest of them. I guess you've seen most of those, have you or....

**JT No, no.**

BPW Well I hope not. If you haven't, that's great.

**JT No, I've been so disgusted in reading some of the...**

BPW Well, I can understand.

**JT .... books and as I said, it's.. they have been fictionalized.**

BPW Right. They want to sell the books or something, I suppose. I don't know.

**JT In most cases they have been directed or leaned by some person feeding information to some writer that this person had some advantage in, for doing so and....**

BPW You're exactly right.

**JT Out of this has come unbelievable situations of misinformation as far as my memory goes.**

BPW Right. Well, honestly, in all honesty that's why I'm here, Mr. Talbot. I want to have your version of that day and that's one hundred percent of why I'm here and what I would like to do is, if we could, have you just kind of take me through it slowly and give me any information about anything. About your airspeed. About your YE-ZB equipment or about anything at all. About, uh, did you like to navigate? Did you, were you good on navigating or did you like radio better or did you just like to fly better? You know, any information will be helpful. So don't hesitate to just sort of.... Is that all right? Is that a practical way of going about it?

**JT Well, it's been a long time ago.**

BPW I can ask you questions, Mr. Talbot and lead you through it but I'd kind of like to save that until after you go over it. I'll do it either way that would be helpful to you. It's necessary, I think, for you to kind of mentally, if you can, project yourself back to that morning. It was late morning when you were ready to take off. On Zone Time 10 it was 10:00 in the morning or 9:00 in the morning is when they first started taking off. Do you, in the ready room, do you.... What did you do down there? Did you make note of the course and direction or did you..... What did you do?

**JT Well, first off, we had been, the day before, the two days before, briefed on the situation, pending situation.**

BPW Right.

**JT All we knew is when we left Pearl Harbor and went back aboard the ships, which would have been about the first of the month. It was only about four days before Battle of Midway.**

BPW Right.

**JT There was some impending action and it was not until we were aboard ship and as you might say, out of reach of land, that the briefings started and, uh, they were terribly disorganized and confused as to what the exact situation was. They were still going on the premises there were two heavy forces at sea and one could strike in the Aleutians and one someplace that they thought might be Midway. Some contact reports started coming in that indicated more and more that it would be at Midway and also that there was a greater number of ships involved in this than they first thought was involved. This is the information that was fed to us.**

BPW Right, right.

**JT There was a lot of confusion. There was a lot of changing plans. I was trying to come up with some kind of a plan to what at that time everybody spoke of, slowing them down or trying to wreck as much havoc as possible. I think it was evidently, it was felt in the junior officers that the senior officers felt that there**

**was no chance to stop them.**

BPW It was kind of an apprehensive time to say the least, huh?

**JT And most people involved in it had that feeling that...**

BPW Yes.

**JT ... that the odds that we were going against were unbelievable.**

BPW As indeed they were, as a matter of truth.

**JT I, my memory is not clear but I think it was in the afternoon of the day before Midway that some of the assignments were finally finalized, particularly in this area because I told you, we were not up to compliment, with full compliment of aircraft and after stealing aircraft from...**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT ... from Fort Island, we still only had 17 aircraft.**

BPW Still only had 17, total.

**JT Fighting squadron.**

BPW I see. I see.

**JT And some of these were, three of these were new aircraft.**

BPW F-4-F-4s?

**JT Well, but I mean they had not been flown or we had no service record or fuel consumption record on it or anything of the sort. The plane that I had was one of these and....**

BPW Did you fly the same plane pretty much every time?

**JT Well...**

BPW Or not?

**JT Not....**

BPW Not really...

**JT ... normally, not normally, no.**

BPW I see.

**JT In other words, if four planes took off for combat air patrol, they took the first four planes spotted on the deck because....**

BPW Right.

**JT ... this is the way you don't move planes around just to get your airplane.**

BPW Okay.

**JT And for this reason, nobody was allowed to personalize these aircraft in any way. Even one assigned to them. Nothing could be put in any aircraft that was not in all aircraft.**

BPW I see.

**JT For this same reason. I mean on takeoff and so forth, people didn't want to come across strange gadgets....**

BPW Sure....

**JT .... in the cockpit.**

BPW Right, right.

**JT The decision was made because of the experience at the Coral Sea. At the Coral Sea the fighters escorted the torpedo planes and the Japanese fighters came in high and they did not come in low and this was the reason given for making the decision that the fighter planes would escort the dive bombers and not the torpedo planes and Torpedo 8 was to proceed without fighter escort. We did not have**

**enough planes to escort both crews.**

BPW I see.

**JT There was only eight planes in the fighter escort on the Hornet. There was Mitchell and myself.**

BPW All right.

**JT And there was...**

BPW Ruehlow and Gray.

**JT Ruehlow....**

BPW and Gray.

**JT Now they were both section leaders.**

BPW All right.

**JT Gray was the man you mentioned that was, the other man that was missing, not Kelly.**

BPW Hill.

**JT Hill. And...**

BPW Gray and Hill were together? Was he wing?

**JT Gray and Hill and it was Ruehlow, no. Gray, I'm not sure whether Gray and Hill or Ruehlow and Kelly.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT And Jennings and Magda.**

BPW Jennings and Magda, all right.

**JT That's eight, isn't it?**

BPW Uh, was anybody flying wing with Mitchell?

**JT I was the, I was the wing.**

BPW You were with Mitchell.

**JT I was with Mitchell. My assignment in the squadron at that time had been for some time as a commanding officer's wingman was I was primarily in charge of radio and navigation.**

BPW All right.

**JT I tracked all navigation and was primarily involved with the radiomen.**

BPW All right. Okay. All right, now take me from your take off. Which one of the fighters took off first?

**JT I don't know.**

BPW Don't know?

**JT I was last.**

BPW You were last.

**JT Because the plane that I was assigned to was on the hanger deck and it was brought up the rear elevator and I was pretty sure the last plane to take off.**

BPW Yeah. Did the SBDs, had they already taken off?

**JT Yes.**

BPW Right. They were off first.

**JT We had launched both torpedo planes and the SBDs before the fighters.**

BPW Is that so? The fighters were last taking off.

**JT Because, and this was pure and simple. The fuel situation.**

BPW Oh sure, right.

**JT Going into the ready room, everybody was up pretty early, flight quarters**



were not sounded and my memory is that it was around 8:00 when we took off.  
**What time was it?**

BPW Well, it should have been about ....

**JT The time that I was using was on my watch. Now I don't know....**

BPW Yeah, okay, all right, okay.

**JT And we were using what the squad was...**

BPW I see. All right. Well never mind the times. I have the times.

**JT I was in the air over, something over four hours and my wristwatch stopped, I think, at around 12:30.**

BPW Is that so? I see. All right, okay. Going back to the ready room again now for a moment, let me ask you about... you say that you were involved with radio and communications. How about, did you, well, I won't ask you a question. Take me along a little further. Okay, now you're the last one off. So that you were the very last one of all the attacking airplanes off of the Hornet, weren't you?

**JT As I remember.**

BPW As you recall.

**JT Yes.**

BPW All right, listen Mr. Talbot. This is 40 years ago. Have no, have no apologies about anything whether you recall or don't recall it. It's incredible to me that you can recall anything I guess but, so, now, when you took off, then the other airplanes, had they started down the road, so to speak? They had already started I presume. And so the question of your catching up a bit. Is that right?

**JT Well, at that time the dive bombers, which we were escorting, I mean and they were loaded quite heavily were much slower....**

BPW Yes.

**JT ... climbing out...**

BPW Right.

**JT ... than we were, so as I say, it didn't take us long to catch up.**

BPW I see. You caught up with the dive bombers very quickly then and the torpedo bombers were not your responsibility so you weren't really looking for them.

**JT No, no.**

BPW Mitchell sort of bears that out. He said that he went up to, now again now, Mr. Mitchell's considerably older, you know, then you and he's almost 80. But he said that he went up to see Mitscher, the ship's captain, before they left and he said, "why don't fighters escort the torpedo bombers?" He said, "seems like they should need it more than the dive bombers." So Mitscher said, "No, don't make any changes now. Your job is to protect Ring and the torpedo, I mean the dive bombers" and that's your recollection. You immediately hooked up with the dive bombers. Is that right?

**JT Well, I have no recollection of Mitchell leaving the ready room.**

BPW Okay, fine. All right, all right. Were there any special instructions given to you in the ready room?

**JT My chair was, in the ready room, was right beside him.**

BPW Right beside him. Okay, all right, okay. Well, be that as it may...

**JT Well as I said, we were in and out.**

BPW Were there any special instructions? How about the sections? Were the sections

designated in there?

**JT We were in and out of the ready room that morning from maybe 5:30 or 6:00 all until takeoff time.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT Communication machine, whatever they call it.**

BPW Yeah, clicking machine.

**JT Well, with the screen was constantly feeding in sighting reports and in some situations erasing them and it evidently was a considerable amount of error and speculation in their sighting reports and locations on at least three times, I did my navigation on the last projected sight of the enemy, or his position. These would change. Stars position was changing in the final situation, the final analysis, we had an approximate location of the Japanese force. They had assigned a YE-ZB chart for tracking back. The final communication in regard to navigation that came on the screen was that when it came time to update the Hornet's course and speed, there was never any data filled in to this position. We did not know when we left the ship what her course was really going to be and the direction in which she was going to go.**

BPW What did they send you out on? What was your heading out? Do you recall that?

**JT I don't know.**

BPW Don't know. All right, okay. Go ahead.

**JT In those places where we would have got this final information in all other flight situations there was a message from the captain that said, "Good luck and God be with you"...**

BPW I see. Instead of courses and directions, huh? Ahh, well. All right. When you took off....

**JT About an hour out, they changed the grid on the YE-ZB.**

BPW About an hour out they changed it? How did they change it?

**JT Well they put another grid on.**

BPW Did they radio that information...

**JT No.**

BPW ...to you? No. How do you know they did.

**JT Well I was just monitoring.**

BPW Huh? Oh, I see.

**JT I was tracking and monitoring.**

BPW You know what your signal out was? What was that?

**JT I don't remember but all of a sudden I got something I hadn't changed course or anything, I got something that, in my grid was about 60 degrees off and I knew immediately that they'd changed...**

BPW Was it a dit-dit-dah?

**JT I don't, I don't remember.**

BPW Can't remember.

**JT Coded letters giving you a section, a coded section that you're in and all of sudden in going to the, going to the grid, it had been changed and without changing course, I was 60 degrees off my grid.**

BPW Is that right?

**JT That's right.**

BPW They had changed the signal while, after you had left the ship.

**JT I don't know the name of the officer at this time, but he was in communications and he was in communications, an air officer and I can't even think of his name, came in and said change the grid and they almost got into a fist fight over it.**

BPW No doubt. No doubt. And here you were on radio silence. Oh, boy. Well, that is a rather remarkable thing. And you say you think that it is your recollection that it was about an hour after you left?

**JT Yeah, something like that.**

BPW Now, do you remember that time of your contemplated intercept? But before we get to that, let me ask you this, sir. How long did you climb? How high did you go? Did you go on oxygen, or not quite?

**JT If my memory is correct, the plans called for us to go, proceed at 22,000 feet.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT And, uh, we went to 22,000 feet and overtaking the dive bombers and they started chatting on the radio and they said that they couldn't get up there.**

BPW You recall that?

**JT Yes.**

BPW You recall? Was Ring talking to....

**JT Ring turned back.**

BPW Wait a minute now.

**JT 45 or 50 minutes out on the flight.**

BPW Ring turned back?

**JT He did a complete....**

BPW 45 or 50 minutes out on the flight.

**JT Something like that.**

BPW about that?

**JT Less than an hour.**

BPW Less than an hour. How do you know that?

**JT Because he did.**

BPW I see. All right.

**JT He turned his command over and said he was having engine troubles or something....**

BPW This was Ring?

**JT This was Ring.**

BPW Well! Did you hear that?

**JT I know that. Yeah.**

BPW I mean did you hear it on the radio?

**JT Yes, yes.**

BPW Was there a discussion about it?

**JT Something about he was turning the comm. over to, I can't think of the man's name, but senior man and head of the bombing and the scouting.**

BPW I see. Do you recall, well.... Now Tappan was flying right in the middle of the dive bombing group. He was scouting, he was scouting eight and he was just following along. That's all. He had a plane behind him, a plane in front of him, he was just following along. He said, he verified the fact that Ring turned around. That

they turned around immediately after Ring's conversation with Waldron. Do you recall ever hearing an exchange between those two?

**JT No.**

BPW No. Do you ever hear... Did you ever hear Waldron at all, saying that he was going north? Do you recall that?

**JT I don't.**

BPW Don't recall that? All right. Now you were accompanying Ring and the dive bombers, right? You had them in sight.

**JT Well, we were on a point. We were ahead of them. Above and ahead of them somewhere most of the time.**

BPW I see. And they turned around, you think, 45 or 50 minutes after leaving the ship.

**JT No. Ring did.**

BPW Ring but not the dive bombers?

**JT No, no.**

BPW Not the dive bombers?

**JT No, no.**

BPW I see. They continued on. All right.

**JT Ring, and I talked to his radioman after that that was in the plane with him. I mean he substantiated that. I mean there was something wrong with the engine or something and he turned back.**

BPW Right. I see. I see. All right, now. Their point of intercept was theoretically between, in about an hour and a half after you left. You were supposed to be....

**JT No, no.**

BPW ... down by the Jap fleet.

**JT The last, the last contact that we had when we left the ship, it was going to take us three hours.**

BPW Three hours? I see. How long did you fly on that one heading? Do you remember?

**JT I don't know.**

BPW Don't know. All right. Now do you remember, did the fighters turn around before the dive bombers did?

**JT Not that I know of, no.**

BPW Not that you know of? So you, uh, how did you become separated from the dive bombers? When? Let me tell you what actually happened, Mr. Talbot. It might refresh your memory a little. Scouting Eight and one section of Bombing Eight turned around and went back to the Hornet. The other 11 or 12 planes of Bombing Eight turned and went to Midway. That's what actually happened, okay? Now, Fighting Eight started off accompanying both elements. They were together, Bombing and Scouting Eight were both together. Certainly should have been for an hour and a half, at least. All right? Now, the question is when did Scouting Eight turn around and leave Bombing Eight and when did the fighters leave their escort duty, as it were? Do you recall anything about that? All right. Let me ask you this. Did you ever change headings on the flight out?

**JT Well...**

BPW Of any consequence, I mean of any consequence?

**JT As I remember it, of course we, as the fighters, were constantly changing**

**headings because we were flying at a faster speed than the dive bombers.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT And in somewhat of a weaving pattern.**

BPW I see, I see.

**JT And...**

BPW Well let's get back to...

**JT ... but our first contact, enemy planes passed us something, maybe we were out 35 minutes, under us.**

BPW They passed under you?

**JT Yeah.**

BPW You saw them?

**JT Yes.**

BPW All right. But you think that could have been an hour?

**JT I don't know.**

BPW Don't know for sure about that. All right. Okay. Let me get back to the composition of your arrangement in the flight, okay? You and Mitchell were, you were flying wing on Mitchell, were you?

**JT That's right.**

BPW Mitchell said that Hill was flying wing on Ruehlow. Could that have been?

**JT Yeah, that's probably...**

BPW Probably right? And maybe Kelly with Gray, or not?

**JT Yeah, like I said, I might have had those two mixed up but that could be right. That's....**

BPW Might have been something like that.

**JT ... bring back a memory. This is probably more true...**

BPW So that we have an arrangement of two and two rather than three section, three plane section.

**JT At that time we were structured on a two plane....**

BPW Two plane structure.

**JT Right.**

BPW In fact, I understood had some kind of arrangement for a weave....

**JT Well it was a thatched weave and a thatched....**

BPW Yeah, I see. I see. And that was basically a two plane arrangement.

**JT Yes, two plane on the line. We had got... discarded the three plane echelon some time prior to that and it was two planes that flew from the ground it would be hard to say who was the leader because in flying this way, both can look over the other plane's tail.**

BPW Tape on that. All right, I guess.... We'll say that's a Jap fleet.

**(TAPE 1/SIDE 2)**

Inaudible

**TAPE 2/SIDE 1**

BPW ...but from some distance. Now Kure is pretty low, you know. There is a field

there now. There's a strip there now.

**JT But the thing that the spot shows up from that distance in the air is the water.**

BPW Yeah, that's right. That's right. No question about it.

**JT The color of the water and you can see the breakers going up against it. No, an island alone, no but I mean you can see....**

BPW The water changes, the color of the water tremendously changes, right?

**JT And another thing too, a picture in my mind, is the cloud formations are always different.**

BPW Uh-huh, yeah.

**JT It's not that big.**

BPW There isn't, you're convinced that you saw it.

**JT And it's to the limits, to the limits of visibility at that time and I'm estimating 60 miles.**

BPW Well, theoretically, from 20,000 feet you can see, you know, a whole lot farther than that but not practically speaking, I don't think. And certainly not breaking an atoll. I don't think you could see more than 60 miles. My experience is...

**JT From long experience....**

BPW ... less than that.

**JT ...and flying and so forth, put a (inaud) map.... 60 miles.**

BPW Yeah, well that makes... but you did not go toward it. You had to have gone the other way when you turned around, right? You had to have because the Jap fleet was way to the north.

**JT I told you.....**

BPW Yep, yep. Mitchell said that, well as I say, he said that the fighters turned around before the dive bombers. He says that when he turned around, he didn't know which way was up so...

**JT Well, but I'm going to...**

BPW he turned the lead, he said, over to Ruehlow. Now get this picture. Let me tell you a little more. This is crazy. Gray said, Ruehlow's dead, okay? Gray says that Ruehlow came over and looked at him and he said, "Which way?" Gray has said his YE-ZB was functioning loud and clear. Dit-dit-da. Dit-dit-da. No question, okay? Knew. And he said, "Okay, that way", you know, all right, so then, but that's really all that Gray could contribute. Gray had a, has a, has lost it.

**JT But, and I made this statement can you confirm or deny that they changed it? I know goddamn good and well that they changed it.**

BPW That's a very, very good observation.

**JT I know they did.**

BPW And I'll tell you this.

**JT I know they changed it.**

BPW Tappan, he thinks so, too.

**JT I know they did.**

BPW And Gray himself says they did.

**JT Which Gray?**

BPW Your Gray. Yeah. He says he heard the dit-dit-da but he didn't know where the hell it was because they had changed it, see.

**JT That's right.**

BPW So, okay, now.

**JT And I wish I could think of this guy's name. He was an ensign and a big fellow and he was pretty friendly with the pilots and he was in air plot and he was good and they damn near court marshaled him over that incident.**

BPW Yeah, they, they, they did. There was a lot of discussion about it subsequently.

**JT And this was because the officer changed the grid. Ordered him to change the grid.**

BPW Okay.

**JT And also they changed the course from the last course that they had given the pilots. As I said, I didn't have a course on the ship, myself.**

BPW You didn't have any point option business.

**JT I saw him. This man that got into the trouble and this was.... Pearl, after, they put him off of the ship.**

BPW Put him off the ship. Huh! Well. This bears out some information, too.

**JT Changed a bit.**

BPW This bears out some information and my difficulty in obtaining it. It's with Washington. Now, I'm going about it in a little bit different way. There was another carrier there that was operating, you know. And that other carrier sure as hell had to have the same grid, namely the Enterprise, didn't it? How could they.... They were right there together.

**JT No.**

BPW Pretty much.

**JT Huh-huh. Well, we weren't on the same frequency.**

BPW Not on the same frequency.

**JT I mean for some damn reason.**

BPW Do you remember your frequency?

**JT No, I don't. But see, we operated a lot of times on the Enterprise and after that, actually, which as I said, gave us all new grids, evidently they were set up at that time for the different carrier.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT Now, later on as it progressed, they would designate a ship, of course, with their own crew.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT Communications just, in every task force or group, it was always a plotting ship, or a signal ship and only one that did it.**

BPW Right.

**JT But that was not true at that time.**

BPW Let me ask you this.

**JT And the radar was so unpredictable at that time.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT It was damn unpredictable.**

BPW How was that information given to you? The alignment of the grid, the YE-ZB grid? In other words, what were....

**JT Well if I remember....**

BPW Were they 15 degree segments or 30?

**JT I think they were narrower than that.**

BPW Huh?

**JT They were narrower than that.**

BPW Narrower than 15? How was that information given to you so you would know?

**JT Well, we had a grid on our compass board.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT Circles.**

BPW Right.

**JT And you had your letters around it.**

BPW Okay.

**JT And you changed north when you...**

BPW I see.

**JT I mean, today, north, in other words on the plotting board, the simple way to do it was, say "A" is at 30 degrees.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT Okay. It might be north today and "B" is over here at 270 and it might be north tomorrow.**

BPW So when you changed one thing, you changed them all.

**JT Well all you had to remember was .....**

BPW Which letter was north?

**JT Yeah.**

BPW Right, right. Which letter was north and that told you the whole thing. I see. Do you remember which letter was north when you took off?

**JT No. No, I don't... I could have then. I could have told you and I could have told you that in this situation here you have the fleet plotted here and a course, which I know had to be in this direction, because I still say probably, the ditch had to be in this area here.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT That I was crossing, I was crossing sectors, I know.**

BPW Right. I'm sure you were. You were near the, back to the fleet so that you would have been crossing them pretty fast as a matter of fact.

**JT As I said this, at that time I was in the lead and was trying to get a zero on the ship. I mean on communications. I was....**

BPW Is that so?

**JT ... in that last 15 or 20 minutes I changed course....**

BPW Several times....

**JT I mean not, not proceeding in a general direction, changing course.**

BPW Right, well, every time you began to overlap, you'd cut back a little. Is that usual? Right, okay. And your signal was picking up all the time. Is that right?

In strength? And you were still on manual, right? Okay. Well, that, that, that figures then. I think that, that probably bears it out. I think that the, that is, that is a lot more clearer in my mind and in my data gathering now than the situation down near the fleet. That's where I have the most trouble and it's just been troublesome all the way through.

**JT I, I've got, you know, I said this is supposition and I don't know how they pinpointed that.**



BPW Oh, the Jap fleet?

**JT Came from their record?**

BPW Oh, well, yes. They have very good...these, this diagram right here is, is I, there's no, I think.... I'm positive about that.

**JT Answer me then, then, how were we getting such wide conflicting reports on the position. This two or three hours ahead of launch from our own patrol planes.**

BPW Right, right....

**JT I mean, I'm telling you that once, there'd be 150 miles from where they were on the last contact....**

BPW Right, yeah. Well what happened was that, well, I can only tell you what's in the history book. I can't tell you anything more.

**JT You see, I have a feeling, I have a feeling and I'd like to have that contact report that we were lost through intercept.**

BPW All right, okay.

**JT And I have a feeling that history is modified a lot of that shit.**

BPW Well, uh, I have a section of the Hornet's log here. Let me see, is it this where you were, I'm not sure I have the one... okay, all right.

**JT But all of those contact reports come out of air plot and that's where the trouble was.**

BPW At 8:00, 8:07 you went to general quarters, okay? Formation change, so on, so on, so on. At 8:55...

**JT Wait a minute. Wait a minute.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT That's the general quarters on that one?**

BPW Yes, sir. That's what it says.

**JT There are not many general quarters (inaud).**

BPW Well, all right, I don't know. The Hornet Minneapolis (inaud) destroyers left formation at 8:55, turned into the wind launch aircraft. Steadied at 158 true, launch combat air patrol, launch attack group of 34 scout bombers, 15 torpedo bombers and 10 escorting fighters.

**JT What time?**

BPW Uh, this was at, it started at 8:55. Uh, at 8:55, 9:54 recovered 8 F-17, deferred forced landing and that was Groves in, on the CAP.

**JT Huh?**

BPW That was Groves coming back on the CAP. He went out again later. Groves, he got in hot water. 8 F-17.

**JT And what time did they recover....**

BPW 9:54, he came back. He just landed. The engine was missing or something. Now then, 10:06 Hornet task force turned to 240 true. 240 true was the point option course and that was the course that was given to you all presumably to fly to the enemy. Okay, keep in sight of the Enterprise. Okay, at 10:35, received signal to form disposition of 11V which is an attacking position, defensive position. Before we could form, the Yorktown was attacked by enemy aircraft and the next hour, Enterprise fighter director directed the combat air patrol on various contacts. Our radar screen picked up many contacts. All enemy planes concentrated on the Yorktown which was sending up dense smoke.

**JT At what time, now?**

BPW At about, that was beginning at 10:35, Hornet's time. At about 11:30, an hour later, the radar screen was clear of enemy planes. We relieved air, at 11:30 relieved combat air patrol. Okay. Now then, 12:41, recovered some fighters which were low on gas. This was, this was, well there was several things that happened. An Enterprise fighter, one of the fighters off of the Enterprise, had been in combat and gotten wounded and he landed on the Hornet and he forgot to throw his gun switch.

**JT Several planes did that.**

BPW Well, this guy was wounded and didn't throw the thing and it hit the Ingersoll's son and killed him and a lot of other guys. Okay. At 1300, now this is 1300, Hornet time, or 1100 their time, uh, picked up a large group of planes bearing 260, two hundred and sixty degrees true, 56 miles. That was Scouting 8. At 1312, twelve minutes later, sighted the planes in that group returning from the morning flight. That was it. They were doing 120 knots. Coming right along.

**JT And what time did they recover?**

BPW They recovered them at, well, this was, they sighted them at, they were 32 miles out at, well, by 2:00 or 1400, they had recovered all of them. All the planes that they were recovering, they had recovered by then, of the dive bombers. So that's how, you know, that was the basis of that drawing on here showing indeed, that they had somehow gotten, you know, 30 miles north of the base course and yet, if they, it just, I can't understand how they missed the Jap fleet. I can't understand how they missed the Jap fleet. Why they didn't dive on the Jap fleet. They were back here at 11:00 at 10:30 when McClusky and the rest of them dove on the Jap....

**JT Well what time did you launch, what time did they say they were launched?**

BPW Originally from the....

**JT Yeah, I mean on this.**

BPW On here?

**JT Back in your log.**

BPW Oh, in the log?

**Female8:55.**

BPW Uh, the Hornet was 8:55, right. They changed the course to 240 true, 8:55 they started them off. Steadied on 158 and it took them an hour to launch everything.

**JT But you say on down there, it's around 2:00 when they launched them, recovered them.**

BPW Recovered them, right, yes.

**JT And you got them at that position at what time, 11:00?**

BPW 11:00. Well, no, now. That's 1:00, 11, 12, 1. This is 11:00 Zone 12 time, see. I've translated everything into Zone 12 time because in order, Midway was on one time, the Japs were on one time and we were on one time. So in order to use a universal time we took the farthest one and the historians did it and the only, that's the only reason I did it. But it's just two hours difference. In other words this....

**JT Midway was on Zone 12 time?**

BPW 11. Midway was on Zone 11 time. The Japs were on Zone 12 time. Hornet was on Zone 10 time. Crazy but that's what it was. So this was really 1:00 or 1300, instead of 1100 Hornet time.

**JT There has to be some reason why I had the time I did on here and is this, did**

**our air department set this time up different than the ship's time because of the contact reports.**

BPW Well, I'm not sure.

**JT The PBVs are coming in with the contacts would be reporting the proper time, wouldn't it?**

BPW They would be reporting, again, now, they were reporting Midway time, which was not the same as yours and not the same as the Jap time.

**JT The contact reports from the PBVs.**

BPW Yeah, they were, but all this has been translated.

**JT I understand that but was somebody attempting at the time to untangle the time difference.**

BPW I see. I see what your question....

**JT .... in our air department and made the decision to go to 12 time, even though the ship in their log was not on that time, is what I'm saying.**

BPW I don't think anybody on, I think that your time on your watch and I think that the time on the ship was Zone 10 time, Zone 10 time. I think, I can't understand it but it's impossible, its inconceivable to me that you would have been any, unless you hadn't changed your watch since you left Pearl. I mean, you know. Now, that....

**JT Could have been the other way.**

BPW Huh? Oh, yeah, that would have been even worse.

**Female: What's the 11 time?**

**JT Huh?**

**Female: Is that an hour in between?**

BPW Mmm-hmm.

**Female: Okay. That's what it is. That's what it sounds like to me.**

**JT No, no. Pearl would have been the other way.**

BPW Pearl would have been the other way, see.

**JT There would have been two hours...**

**Female: Yeah, but you said all this fit together. One was on 10, one was on 11 and one was on 12.**

BPW Yeah, but....

**Female: And those guys were sending in their report and was trying to give it ....**

**JT My time, uh, my time recollections go to the 12 zone. He says the ship was on 10.**

BPW That's right. I can't understand it but, but if you went swimming at 12:30....

**JT And been in the air over 4 hours.**

BPW And been in the air over 4 hours...

**JT By that watch I was wearing....**

BPW You damn well took off at 8:00.

**JT Well, on that watch.**

BPW And, and that's when Zone 12 says you took off. Well they said you took off between 7 and 8. Zone 12 time was between 7 and 8 and on a take off. Well, all right. That's another, that's a....

**JT Well, no. All I'm saying is, you know, I haven't got myself on the same time schedule that you have....**

BPW Right.

**JT ....that the ship has.**

BPW All right, look. Let's go back to one more thing here. You tell me when you're ready to go to lunch, will you?

**JT Yeah.**

BPW All right, sir. Okay. Let's go back to the matter of going down. Do you remember, now, you were flying wing with Mitchell at that time. Hill, Mitchell thinks, was with Ruehlow. Do you think that's true?

**JT Yeah, I'm sure. Now in recollection it is because that's where they set me up, set meridian.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT Set in the ready room.**

BPW All right, now. Was Kelly with Gray?

**JT Yeah.**

BPW Kelly was with Gray. Tallman and McNerny were together?

**JT Yeah.**

BPW Magda and Jennings were together, right?

**JT Yeah.**

BPW You were up front. They were in the back. Do you think Jennings and Magda were all the way back? Last ones back?

**JT Mmm, well, as I said, you brought in Tallman and McNerny...**

BPW McNerny.

**JT They, by seniority, they'd have been at the back. As they called the sea had already went down the hill, ass-end Charlie was the low man on the totem pole. This is ...**

BPW I see.

**JT ...the way it was at that time anyway in their flying instructions.**

BPW I see.

**JT So that would have put Tallman and ....**

BPW McNerny, oh Tallman and, yeah, Jennings was a JG. Jennings was a JG. So you think, well, all right. You don't, you didn't see when they went down. Is that correct?

**JT No.**

BPW You had no idea when they went down. Did you hear any Maydays?

**JT I sent one.**

BPW You sent one.

**JT And I, later I learned that, well, here was the procedure at that time.**

BPW Right.

**JT They had gone off radio silence because there was a lot of squabble on the air.**

BPW Right.

**JT And when I knew that it was imminent that we were going into the water, we had to authenticate a message. Send a message and authenticate it.**

BPW How did you do that?

**JT Well at that time, I forget the procedure. Like we used our name, or we used a code number or something in this see and this was spelled out in our squadron radio procedure.**

BPW I see.

**JT It was supposed to be spelled out on the ship you see.**

BPW Was it to the ship.

**JT It was to the ship.**

BPW And what did you say?

**JT I sent, and then I sent an open message...**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT .... giving approximate position and saying that there was some of the planes that made a ditch.**

BPW I see.

**JT You know this message...**

BPW Did you do that on your own or did Mitchell tell you to.

**JT I did that on my own.**

BPW You did it on your own.

**JT Later I heard that Pearl picked it up and they couldn't understand to authenticate. See, to authenticate, the code numbers gave your ship and who you were, really...**

BPW I see.

**JT ... and then the squad.**

BPW I see.

**JT And I forget what that was but I authenticated my message and somebody called and asked for a repeat.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT And I repeated it.**

BPW I see. Did Midway pick you up?

**JT No I think it was Pearl.**

BPW Pearl.

**JT I sent it on a current frequency and then I sent it on 3105.**

BPW Uh-huh. What was your frequency for normal operations?

**JT I don't remember.**

BPW Don't remember?

**JT Really don't. Thousands....**

BPW Did they change it frequently or ever?

**JT Well, up to Midway...**

BPW Yeah.

**JT ... we weren't allowed to use the radios for any practical purposes.**

BPW Really?

**JT Oh, hell, I've flown thousands of miles and there was a time that they wired the transmitter down. They drilled a hole in the switch, put a little piece of wire and solder on it, I mean to see who was breaking radio silence. You could not break radio silence on a single plane search if you was going to ditch or something like that. You couldn't break it unless you saw at least two (inaud) ships and a ship like this.**

BPW Oh, is that so?

**JT That's right.**

BPW Wow.

**JT** You could have your receiver on and then they'd start coming out with IFF and at Midway...

**BPW** Did you have that? Did you have that at Midway?

**JT** My plane had that.

**BPW** Your plane had it on it.

**JT** And the skipper's plane. They didn't have enough. They just put some....

**BPW** Is that right?

**JT** This is right and I had my IFF on.

**BPW** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

**JT** I mean after, when it was imminent that we were going to make a ditch...

**BPW** Yeah.

**JT** I turned my F on and I sent, I sent a message to the ship...

**BPW** Well that would indicate that you were friendly and that was that, I suppose.

**JT** Yeah.

**BPW** Yeah. Now, did the...

**JT** And, and, and, just, but there was a splash and giving an approximate position and, uh,

**BPW** Did the dive bombers have them? Had they gotten any of them, the IF, the IFF sets, too?

**JT** They must, they had, some of the new planes.

**BPW** Some did, yeah.

**JT** Yeah, you know, that they were new and had to have them.

**BPW** Yeah, yeah. Well, but yours definitely did. One time ours malfunctioned and we damn near got shot down because of it.

**JT** But as I said, I heard later that Pearl picked the message up and....

**BPW** And you simply, you simply mayday'd and gave your position and identification..

**JT** ... and authenticated. All I did was authenticate my message which should have told them where it was from.

**BPW** Yeah. Uh-huh.

**JT** The authentication should have given that it was a fighter plane and it was from the Hornet and that....

**BPW** Sure, sure.

**JT** ... and that, but and Pearl said they couldn't understand it. They couldn't understand it so they didn't, they had not bothered to tell Pearl that, uh, code messages.

**BPW** I see.

**JT** But I do believe that it probably, that message probably somewhat gave them some areas to search in.

**BPW** I would have thought.

**JT** I think when I was picked up at Midway or something they told me there that they'd got one message or a message Pearl had relayed out to them about some planes that, uh, ...

**BPW** Mmm-hmm. Let me ask you this.

**JT** And I gave what I thought my position was.

**BPW** When you, when you, what altitude were you when you ran out of gas totally?

**JT** Was staying high.

BPW Still high.

**JT You had to stay high on your YE-ZB. You had to stay high because...**

BPW Line of sight projection.

**JT Yeah, that's right.**

BPW Right, okay.

**JT And I'm going to say that my engine quit at oh, 14, about 14,000 feet...**

BPW Started sputtering at, when you were still high.

**JT Just did.**

BPW So you just glided on down from there and you think you were second one down there?

**JT At least one plane went down before I did. Now it could have been....**

BPW Could it have been two?

**JT It could have been.**

BPW Could have been two.

**JT Yes.**

BPW Mitchell said that Hill went down first.

**JT I guess it could be Hill.**

BPW Uh-huh. Well....

**JT This plane landed down wind and this plane, there was another plane following.....**

BPW Did he get out?

**JT No.**

BPW Didn't get out at all?

**JT Not that I seen, no.**

BPW Never saw him.

**JT He wouldn't have survived that wind.**

BPW Was it that, it was windy?

**JT Well it was rough,**

BPW Fairly?

**JT it was fairly rough...**

BPW Well it wasn't too much wind, I guess but landing down wind ain't no way to land.

**JT Well, I'd say, I'd say it was 10 or 12, 15 knots at that time.**

BPW It was, yeah.

**JT There was white caps....**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT ... at that time. Now that morning it was calm, fairly calm.**

BPW Go back to the, go back to the time of your period around the fleet, around the Jap fleet, I mean. Did Magda or did Jennings ever say anything about any contact? Did they have any contact, dog fighting or anything of that nature? Did they ever indicate anything?

**JT Not that I know.**

BPW Not that you know, yeah, yeah. But it's possible.

**JT Always, yeah. Anything's possible....**

BPW Yeah, there were a lot of airplanes down there. That's for damn sure. And the Japs had a whole lot, no question about it. Did you see any, uh, ... The question in

my mind is when you were there at the Jap fleet, who in the devil was attacking them? It must have been the torpedo bombers. You didn't see any dive bombers, did you? Did you see McClusky's crowd or the ones off the Yorktown? Did you see any dive bombers or was it all the action just going on down low.

**JT Well there was action at all levels. I said there was planes up high, too, but when we got in they started shooting at us and there wasn't anybody around but us.**

BPW Wasn't anybody around but you.

**JT When they started shooting.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT And they were shooting at us.**

BPW Now you mean anti-aircraft fire.

**JT Anti-aircraft fire.**

BPW I see, oh.

**JT And as I said, I thought all the time it was, that the bombers were with us, some of them were.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT And then, and they went over, as I said.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT They started, of course it was attacks at that time, the dive bombers start running in, you know....but there was a lot of damaged and sinking ships in the water and I still say there was four carriers.**

BPW Oh, there were four carriers. There were sure as hell four carriers there all right. There's no doubt about that and I think you had them spaced right, too. But the time is a little bit rough. They weren't hit, they weren't truly hit until 10:20 or 12:20, 36, between there were six minutes between 12:26 and 12:32 on your time. That's when the Jap carriers were hit and that was all.

**JT Only thing I can say in places later, some time....**

BPW You didn't have, and you were in the water at 12:30. So that would have put you maybe 12 to 12:15 over the fleet. Now that's when they were catching royal hell from the torpedo bombers, the Jap fleet. And they were tearing around in all directions and having one hell of a time....

**JT There was a lot of smoke. There was a lot of smoke.**

BPW Tremendous smoke. Had to have been tremendous amount of smoke and black so they looked like, you know, you couldn't from 20,000 feet you couldn't hardly tell whether the damn thing was on fire or whether it was....

**JT My God, when they're laying like this...**

BPW Oh well, that's something else again.

**JT and then like this and then we'd been hit now. Hit goddamn bad, and as I said, when it comes right down to it, in talking with pilots from the Enterprise and things like this, subject to this thing and so forth... it's been a thing that nobody can ever sit down and put a hell of a lot of, make a hell of a lot of sense out of it, put it together. And I just don't know. I keep coming back to one thing and I think I'm right, that the Midway planes did more damage than we ever gave them credit for.**

BPW Well....



**JT I don't know.**

BPW I think they're, the Army planes, they...

**JT They didn't do...**

BPW ... really were kicked when they found, according to the Jap records, that they never made a hit of any kind and, well, Midway planes, not any of them, according to the Jap records. The Jap, the farthest that they, they turned at, on Hornet time, it would have been 11:17. 11:17 when they turned back to the north, to the Northeast. They altered their course. They were no longer going toward Midway and they turned to go to the northeast. At 11:17, that was the farthest southern most penetration that they made. At 11:28, Waldron made the first attack on them. And that was the first attack of any planes from the carriers. All of the Midway planes had attacked and retired or whatever at that time, by that time, by 11:17, by uh, 11:17, Midway planes were all over and gone, see. Midway was hit at Hornet time, it would have been hit at 8:00 and uh, that's one of the very inconsistent things. The Japs closed Midway when they took off to attack Midway they flew at 150 knots. They really hummed down the road. They really did. When they turned around and they reordered, and might have lost a little time doing that but apparently they returned at only 100 knots. Now the question is, why in the devil are they so long in getting back to their own carriers? What happened is when they went in, the Midway planes were coming out and there were some dog fights and that sort of thing, but most of the Midway planes, not the F4-F's, there were a few of them. They didn't, they, they, that was that as far as they were concerned but most of the Midway planes went on past the Jap planes. They just passed each other and went on... They went up and attacked the fleet and the Jap planes went and attacked Midway. So when they turned around, okay, everybody turned around, here we go again, see. Now it took them a long time to get back. The question in my mind is, why did it take them so damn long? I don't think they would have changed their air speed by 50 knots. It doesn't sound right to me. The only other explanation is they had to have combat, okay? They wasted time in combat....

**JT They shot down Torpedo 8.**

BPW They shot down, well, now Torpedo 8, no, Torpedo 8 was mostly taken care of. Not by the planes returning from Midway but by the planes that they had held in reserve. They held, they held 50% of all planes in reserve, the Jap fleets did. All of them. So that's why they had so many Zeros just waiting for Torpedo 8. They had between 35 and 50 planes.

**JT How far were they from the, from the fleet when they .....**

BPW 20 miles. That's all. They were right there.

**JT What about the group from Midway?**

BPW Now, that's the question....

**JT Nobody knows.....**

BPW I think maybe you guys could have.... I think if you saw planes, I think you saw, maybe, you saw stragglers of Jap planes coming back from Midway. It's possible.

**JT They were headed back in the direction from which they'd come.**

BPW I, it just, boy, these are some of the unanswered, I mean these are really unanswered questions. But there's no question but what the last Jap plane was recovered on a basis of 100 knots from Midway, time wise. And he took that long

to get back. It took them that long to get back from Midway so that guy had to have run in to trouble somewhere, somehow, I think. It just, and, and he got back at the theoretical same time that you got to the point of intercept. You and the dive bombers and Waldron, okay? Now you apparently, you saw Kure. You would have been south, too far south, probably. I don't think that you could see a hundred miles. I don't think that you could see it a hundred miles away. Even at 20,000 feet. Your distance that you, is 1.32 times the square root of your height. You could have seen over a hundred miles, all right. No question about that but, I mean, theoretically, but practically, very, very tough. I don't believe it. I mean that would be hard to believe. See what I mean? 50 - 60 miles I could buy. I can buy 50 or 60 miles. I think that you saw.... Gray swears you did. Gray says hell, you even circled it. Now that, that's, that, I can't buy that. But he swears you flew over the Jap fleet. He swears you did. Now Ruehlow said as he was going in, he looked over to the north and saw smoke, okay. Whatever.

**JT A fleet.....**

BPW That was his story. He didn't say you flew over it. He said he looked off as he was going in and saw it. Mitchell verifies that. Gray says, "Hell, no, you flew over (inaud)"... Now in looking at the end as you were ditching, it looks like you were in rather good position to see the Yorktown burning. You could have seen the Yorktown from where you were. I wondered whether, indeed, Ruehlow was talking about, you know, our own fleet.

**JT Well, I don't know how much longer Ruehlow and Mitchell and Gray flew after I went down.**

BPW Well...

**JT I'm guessing they had at least 20 minutes more gas.**

BPW I think at least that. I think at least that.

**JT I would say in keeping logs on fuel consumption and so forth, generally speaking, I mean, a lot of times in subsequent periods of time and so forth, we changed leads for this reason.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT To conserve fuel.**

BPW Oh, I see. I see.

**JT In other words, I don't care what it is, you can set one up and set the throttle and everything but you, it takes a little more gas flying on somebody.**

BPW If your following along, it takes more to stay there, that's right.

**JT A lot was learned about this as time went on, too. In other words in setting them up, I mean, I always told my people what settings I was going to use.**

BPW What were those settings, do you remember?

**JT Uh, usually....**

BPW Where'd you go....

**JT ... high, high, high, you know, high manifold pressures and, and, low RPMs saved fuel.**

BPW Right.

**JT But as I said, this, I don't know, but getting back to this, I don't know. As I said, the few times we sat down and tried to come up with some of the people there...**

***End of Tape2, Side 1.***

*Tape 2 Side 2*

**JT I don't believe that.**

BPW Huh?

**JT I, that....**

BPW The time of Waldron's attack? Oh, that's set.

**JT Well, but I mean the Hornet's log then.**

BPW Well....

**JT I don't, I mean I just uh,**

BPW You think that you took off at 8:00?

**JT Around eight o'clock.**

BPW Yeah. Well, it was 8:00 presumably that you took off but it was 8:00, Zone 12 time. That's the trouble which would have made it damn near 10:00, Zone 10 time. But you think it was 8. Go ahead.

**JT Coming back again on this time, the more, and I haven't thought about this for years and years but I know that this time I logged more in my watch said that it was around 8:00.**

BPW All right.

**JT My watch had to be with the ship's.**

BPW Right. Right. All right, that's, you're right. You're the definitive man here. The buck stops with you, Mr. Talbot.

**JT I guess I just know that it has to be.**

BPW Okay, all right. All right. This is a very interesting kind of a thing. See, my, I was flying in the Marine Corp., in transports, and we flew, we flew Mitchell. Matter of fact, not the plane, my plane didn't but we, some, one of the planes in the squadron flew him on out after he had recovered. Went back to the Hornet, matter of fact and he was on her when she went down in October. But I was just saying that I was with SCAT, uh, for a while there...

**JT SCAT.**

BPW ... and one of our planes flew Mitchell back down and he got back on the Hornet. He was on her when she went down in October when she was sunk. And he went swimming again I believe. Although, no, I think that time they just off loaded them on destroyers. Muncie. But Gray, let me throw out a little something to you. Now Gray says with respect to, the timing thing is, is very, very hard to put together but probably because with these overlapping of the zone thing, but Gray says that, that he, they went, you went off, you and the fighters, he went all the way to Kure. All the way to Kure. Right there to it. Now that's not your recollection, is that right? No, okay, but on the other hand, you were in contact with the Jap fleet sometime after 9:30. You couldn't have been there before that because I think Waldron got there 9, you know 9:20, 9, he got there at 9:20. There's no question about that. So you all might have been a little bit ahead of him. Is that possibly true? You were a little faster. Huh?

**JT Then who?**

BPW Waldron.

**JT Couldn't have been.**

BPW Couldn't have been? You wouldn't have, you were a little faster, weren't you?

But you started behind him, of course and you had a lot of climbing to do so you should have been down there at about the same time. Now the Jap fleet at that time....

**JT Well if Waldron, you said, you said there was an hour's... took an hour to launch the planes and they left first....**

BPW No. Now, now this is what the sequence looked like. Let me, let me, now, let me tell you something and see how it jibes, you understand? You've been telling me your thing, now let me tell you the past reports that I have. You, according to the logs of the Enterprise and the Hornet, you started launching at 7:00, Zone 12 time or 9:00, Zone 10 time.

**JT The Enterprise did. The Enterprise launched before we did.**

BPW Okay.

**JT The Enterprise was right over here off of us. The Enterprise had launched before....**

BPW All right. But at 10:04, the order was given. Mitscher gave the order for all of the planes off of the Hornet to attack and they were all airborne at 10:04 or 8:04 their zone time. So if you were the last off, you left shortly after 10:00. That's what it says. I don't know. Okay. An hour and a half later, Waldron attacked the Jap fleet so that would have made it at 11:30 approximately, very close. He was the first carrier plane to attack the Jap fleet. Waldron was. Very, in very quick order Waldron, then the torpedo bombers off of the Enterprise and the torpedo bombers off of the Yorktown all consecutive, followed each other with the attack so that by about, shortly after 10, 10:00 or shortly after 12:00 your time, all of the torpedo bombers were gone and wiped out essentially, say 12:15. At 26 minutes after 12, your time, McClusky shows up and also the dive bombers off of the Yorktown showed up and they sank three Jap carriers. Three. They hit three carriers. At that time only three and they were, let's see, they, they, the Kaga and the Akagi the flag ship, were struck by the ones off of the Enterprise till the Yorktown hit the destroyer okay. Now they were close to each other but that happened between 10:26 and 10:32 or 12:36 and 12:32, the Hornet time, all right? Now the question is, where were you at that time? If that's so, I think your time table must be a little wrong as far as your, you said that you were in the water....

**JT My watch stopped at 12:30.**

BPW Stopped at 12:30?

**JT And yes, it stopped as soon as the water hit it.**

BPW All right. Now they were not hit. The Jap carriers were not hit until 12:26. Now that does not mean that they were not having a hell of a time because they were. Lots of black smoke and whatever coming out. Many, many airplanes all over the place. Heavy attack going on so that there, the attack and the, the smoke and everything was so heavy at times when they were being attacked that you couldn't even see the carriers. You couldn't even see the carriers. The carriers, the Jap, the Jap report, we have a real good accounting from the Jap side of the air officer on the Kaga saying that they could not even see their sister ship over here because of the smoke and the involved whatever, uh, and they were, they saw the near misses and all this, that and the other thing so that if you saw the fleet from a distance, you could have seen a lot of....

**JT I was right over them, then.**

BPW Right over them. Okay.

**JT Over them and out around and this, this other carrier that was damaged was off....**

BPW To the North.

**JT ...off away from the rest of....**

BPW Right, right.

**JT ...went around. And as I said, now I don't know on the time and my watch on timing, I said could be off and maybe, I don't know.**

BPW It wasn't long after that, though. You did say that it wasn't long after you went over the fleet that you were down. Is that correct?

**JT This is right. Within 30 minutes.**

BPW Within 30 minutes.

**JT And as I said, this place is, and we had been in the air when I went down, a little over four hours.**

BPW A little over four hours.

**JT This is about as far as you could stretch an F4F to maybe 4 and three quarter hours and, or something like this here but I said this looks... Anyway, I'd been in the air over 4 hours.**

BPW All right and you're, okay. So and your watch said again when it stopped.

**JT Yeah, when I threw it away. As I said, it finally all swelled up and I threw it out of the lifeboat it was 12:30 or 12:35.**

BPW 12:35, all right. That's fine, and you had been in the air four- plus hours.

**JT I'd say four hours, at least four hours and 15 minutes.**

BPW For at least that much.

**JT Maybe 5 minutes more.**

BPW 15 to 20 minutes, uh-huh. All right, so that meant that that bears out your 8:15 start, doesn't it? That would have been, that would have been right. Bears out your 8:15 start all right.

**JT Yeah and I said I don't know whose time my watch was on.**

BPW Well, I can't quite, I don't know that either but....

**JT It was a normal routine to....**

BPW Well you would have be on the ship's time.

**JT ... plotting board, I mean, to keep updating the time, time so and so....**

BPW Sure.

**JT And as I said, I don't know.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT And the sun. The sun, the sun would have proven me up because it was at midday. I mean shortly after that, I mean when I was, got in the lifeboat.**

BPW All right.

**JT And I was in the hospital with Ensign Gay who survived.**

BPW Yeah, right.

**JT Torpedo 8. The section that took off from the Hornet.**

BPW Oh, yeah.

**JT Okay. I was also in the hospital with this, he was from Burlington, Iowa. I don't think of his name now. He was with the people that flew the TBFs off of Midway.**

BPW Yes, yes.

**JT All of them was shot down.**

BPW Yeah, there were two or three of those survived. That's all.

**JT Two or three people in the same plane. It was his crew.**

BPW Oh, is that right? I see. I see.

**JT It was his crew.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT And there's been a lot of confusion about Torpedo 8 on the attack, which group it was. They, my God, just come to me and I forgot it. There was a lieutenant, it's a, it's a, it's a Swedish name, Norwegian, Larsen.**

BPW Larsen, right. That's right. That's right.

**JT Commander of that plane.**

BPW That's right. That's correct. That's right. He stayed back in Norfolk and trained with those TBFs and brought them on out.

**JT They flew to Midway and they, they flew from Midway out to attack the fleet.**

BPW Yeah. But they were there earlier. Their attack was substantially earlier.

**JT They got (inaud)**

BPW Well they didn't really.

**JT I don't know. I just know Ensign Gay said he never saw a ship. This is when he was in the hospital in Pearl Harbor.**

BPW He said he never saw a ship, huh.

**JT This is right.**

BPW For God's sake. Well....

**JT And this is what, he was in the hospital, this was....**

BPW He was the last guy shot down, apparently.

**JT 10th of June.**

BPW Yeah. Waldron.....

**JT Later after the reporters got a hold of him they sank the whole goddamn fleet.**

BPW Yeah, uh-huh, I ..... The story got, gets turned around a little bit.

**JT But this is what he said at that time.**

BPW Yeah, uh-huh. Well, I, this....

**JT And I never found, as I said, in the, this Battle of Midway it just, I've never found any three people that were there that could come close to the same goddamn story. I don't know. I don't know. I just...**

BPW Well, it does, it does look a little bit, a little bit..... well, it's difficult, I suppose and it's so old and all that but I'm impressed by your conviction as to where you were with respect to the Jap fleet. Were you still in formation, so to speak? Were all the rest of the fighters there too?

**JT Gee, as far as I know.**

BPW Far as you know.

**JT And we were...**

BPW Were you still with Mitchell up at front.

**JT This is right and there was a time when we were separated but in this last 15 minutes, 10 to 15 minutes before I (inaud) full flight was in formation.**

BPW Was the.... the full flight was in formation in that last 15 minutes?

**JT I say.....**

BPW You said....

**JT I don't, I said 10 or 15 minutes or.....**

BPW Yeah, right. I see. Had anybody...

**JT And I....**

BPW Had anybody broken off do you think and engaged in any dog fighting or anything? Did you ever talk to Magda about that or any of these other guys, Jennings or.... No?

**JT As I said, I've talked to Jennings about it. Jennings was sitting there with me and when we both told Halsey what we'd seen in these damaged ships.**

BPW Did Halsey come see you? Oh, Halsey was in the hospital then, wasn't he?

**JT Well, I think it was Halsey. As I remember it, sitting at his desk right down there....**

BPW Oh, hell, you'd know Halsey. I met Halsey. There's no missing that guy. A little whip of a guy.

**JT The concept and the feeling was at that time nobody knew how many ships had been damaged.**

BPW Right.

**JT And they were scared shitless.**

BPW Right, right.

**JT And I don't say scared shitless. There was no way to know and, and it just like in so many situations and, as I said, so many people were lost at that place and there was never complete stories and they didn't have any way to get this stuff together and for 30 days they, they ran.**

BPW Well let me ask you...

**JT If they had known what the situation was, they would have followed up and sent the rest of them.**

BPW Well, of course there has been a lot of, a lot of questioning of, Spruance's turn around but ....

**JT I mean, don't misunderstand me, I'm not making that statement in a derogatory since.**

BPW No, no.

**JT Because I said, but it was because he didn't know.**

BPW Yeah, that's right. That's exactly right. Of course. On the other hand, you see, Yamamoto, if they had followed, if Spruance had not turned around, okay, and had pushed forward, he would have run right smack into one hell of a pile of battleships and everything....

**JT Okay, but he should never have of got, he, he, the planes, I mean, would have....**

BPW He would of had to put off, put out night patrol planes too, and, which, you know, it would have been a pretty touchy thing. I think in retrospect.....

**JT Well, I'm not saying.....**

BPW It might have.....

**JT They didn't know.**

BPW It's too bad that we didn't get them. That is so right.

**JT They didn't know.**

BPW There's no, there's no question about that. Well, let me, let's see....

**JT But I say, you know, getting back again, I don't know how this, you know, affects Mark Kelly, but I mean there was one hell of a nice guy. I mean he was a good friend of mine as I say.**

BPW He was a good egg. I knew Kelly in Baltimore.

**JT Oh, he came, as you pointed out, came from a wealthy family. I didn't come from a wealthy family. We were good friends. There were a group of us there.**

BPW Oh, you'd never....

**JT Kelly was a very modest person, I mean, and a good person.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT But there's a hell of a lot of them that way that didn't make it.**

BPW It's curious to the, some of the things that seem to be, well, Tappan, for instance, says that he never saw an airplane. Here he was right in the middle of the Scout, Scouting 8 and they never saw an airplane. Gray says they flew over the fleet. You flew over the Jap fleet. He says the same thing you said. Now what the status of the fleet was at that time, I don't know. You say that that was at approximately 12, 12 to 12:15....

**JT On the time that I was on, it was around 12 o'clock, yes.**

BPW 12, 12 o'clock. At that time what was happening was that the, that the torpedo bombers were giving it holy Moses. They were right in the middle of it.

**JT There were ships, as I said, dead in the water. There was cruisers circling carriers taking off people.**

BPW How high were you then?

**JT 18, 19 thousand.**

BPW Still way up there.

**JT Yes at that particular time, where, when we were over the Jap fleet at that particular time was very little cloud cover.**

BPW Yeah. Did you see anything of the dive bombers?

**JT There were planes attacking her as we were coming up to.....**

BPW Oh, yeah, well, but they were the torpedo planes. They couldn't have been the dive bombers, see. Because the dive bombers from the Yorktown flew directly down to them. Right straight and they didn't get there until 10, until 12:26 and McClusky didn't get there.....

**JT On my time schedule, ships were dead in the water at 12:26, before then.**

BPW Well I don't....

**JT I'll tell you another confusing thing. I'd been invited to a ship christening.**

BPW Uh-huh.

**JT And Stephen M. Groves.**

BPW Oh, yes Groves was lost on, on CAP at the same time. But he was flying CAP and lost when he went over to.....

**JT Well, no just hear me.**

BPW All right. Go ahead.

**JT Somebody sent me a little notice of a commendation where they give the Navy Cross or something like this here.**

BPW Uh-huh.



**JT** And they're talking about at 4:00 or something like that he was shot down on June 4th.

BPW All right.

**JT** And 4:00 the Japanese didn't have any planes in the air.

BPW No, wasn't anywhere near 4:00.

**JT** So now you talk about times.

BPW Well....

**JT** The Japanese attacked....

BPW The last attack....

**JT** .... and got the, and got the Yorktown, I guess, at about what, 12:00?

BPW Uh, no, no. It was 12, Zone 12 time which would have made it 2, Zone 10 time, about 2:00.

**JT** Well, it said 12:00 on the time I was on.

BPW No, well I could always tell you....

**JT** I don't know. I can't understand why my watch was on that time and as I go back to the time, I mean, we're talking to Jennings and the other people on the flight and so forth and we all had the same time.

BPW Oh, well, your time. There isn't any question about it. I think you're correct.

**JT** We all had the same wrist watch time. That's what I'm...

BPW Yeah, yeah. Well, I, uh, when I'm, the thing that I tell you, you know, comes from Morison or from Lord or from the Navy department, uh, logs, stuff like that.

I don't know. You know, I, what the heck do I know. I know nothing. So I'm not questioning you, I'm, this is, I have far more credence in anything you tell me than anything I'm going to read or anything else.

**JT** As I said, those log times and so forth, well what do they say about the course, uh, the Hornet took after launching airplanes?

BPW Now, Mr. Talbot, there's one more thing I want to tell you. I used to teach navigation under old man Weems down in Annapolis. So I know about navigation, you know. All right, and I know how to plot things. Believe me, I do.

**JT** Well, shit!

BPW Here is, let me ask you this. Are you ready for lunch yet or anything like that? I want you to be my guest today, sir. Let's not have any..... you helped me now. See this heavy line up here.

**JT** Yeah.

BPW Okay. That is our carriers and this is all translated in Zone 12 time, okay? Now down here, CV-8-1, Zone 10 time so that your watch should have been on Zone 10 time. Two hours difference, all right? Now, these times are all Zone 12 times. That's the carrier. Here's where you took off and the wind was 4 knots coming this way and the Enterprise and Hornet flew right down there and 8:04, whatever it was, the order was to, for all the planes to attack. McClusky had left 15 minutes earlier. (Long pause) Here, don't want to leave you out.

*Female Oh, it doesn't mean anything to me. I'm even looking at it upside down.*

**JT** Well, this would support my YE-ZB that I had pointed to my right and at the time, as I said, I don't remember what it was when I ran out of gas but I would say I was on a northeasterly course.

BPW You see the....

**JT**     **Northeasterly course. I mean in this direction.**

**BPW**   See, here is where you, well, you had to have been somewhere near here.

**JT**     **No, in the time we were picked up, now.**

**BPW**   All right.

**JT**     **The time that I was picked up, in other words, from the first day, well, I'll tell you one Jap plane made a pass at me on the water in the first day.**

**BPW**   It did?

**JT**     **A float plane, yeah.**

**BPW**   Uh-huh. And you thought you were going to be rescued. Instead of that....

**JT**     **I knew what in the hell he was doing. He was shooting.**

**BPW**   Yeah.

**JT**     **Okay, but, in, by the sun and plotting my direction, I drifted in a south and southeasterly direction, the wind.**

**BPW**   Uh-huh. All right.

**JT**     **I knew that I was getting close to Midway because in the evening before I was picked up the next day, I could see the planes coming out on searches.**

**BPW**   I see.

**JT**     **And it was sitting here and I could see that they were converging.**

**BPW**   I see.

**JT**     **So this had to put me close to Midway.**

**BPW**   Uh-huh.

**JT**     **In other words, I saw the goddamn patrol planes and one would come this one evening, three B-17s went right directly over.**

**BPW**   Uh-huh.

**JT**     **And what I'm saying by their returning and outgoing search planes, I laid there that day and could see them and they'd come out and one, they'd go right or left.**

**BPW**   Uh-huh.

**JT**     **And it was on a converging so I had to drift someplace down within 25 or 30 miles of Midway and man, if my calculations were right, the wind shifted to the southwest and I was going away and I would have been picked up in, up, up in here. I don't know what it is but it, I think, around 100, 110 miles...**

**BPW**   ... from Midway

**JT**     **...is what they said the pickup spot was.**

**BPW**   Yeah, well that's, that's about it.

**JT**     **And so, so the ditch places me over in here.**

**BPW**   Mmm-hmm. Well, that's right and.... The question in my mind, you know .....

**JT**     **Now everybody that was in the water had to be following somewhat the same drift pattern.**

**BPW**   Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

**JT**     **And they said the wind was up and I don't know about currents, but I mean, they do.... because I was trying to estimate, I figured the times that I was drifting at least 4 knots an hour because I would throw something in the water and count the feet and estimate the time and so forth. In other words you would drift quite a bit.**

**BPW**   Oh yes, those, the life rafts just sitting right on top, the wind has a great effect on

them. There's no question about it. The, I have the, I don't, haven't worked it out yet, but I have all of the current and wind averages that the Navy publishes. In our life raft charts, we had real neat, they were kind of silk-like, and they, they had all of the current....

**JT Well, your, you people learned from what.....**

BPW Right.

**JT ....the pioneers went through with that.**

BPW Well, those charts show that there is a very substantial current and wind effect on you. I have, but you see this pickup position reflects nothing but the short-snorter bill but those fellows must have been pretty good navigators.

**JT I would.....**

BPW On those PBYs.

**JT ... yeah.**

BPW I think that they, they must have been, indeed. So I have a pretty high regard for that and when I project back and apply the current and wind to this position to try to, you know, estimate a ditch.....

**JT Did you ever talk to T. T. Guillory.**

BPW No, that name didn't come up.

**JT He was in scouting and bombing. Out of this fracas, he was a close personal friend of mine. I don't know whether he made it to Midway. Of course they had about two hours more of gas than we did.**

BPW Was he in Scouting 8 or Bombing 8?

**JT Scouting or bombing, I don't know which one.**

BPW Well now Scouting 8, none of them went to Midway. Three planes of Bombing 8 went back to the ship also but ....

**JT Anyway....**

BPW Yeah.

**JT .... they put him on a B-17. The Army was out there, got out there as a navigator because they were spending more time looking for Army planes than anything else and were lost all the time and somebody should talk to him.**

BPW What was that name?

**JT T. T. Guillory.**

BPW Guillory. All right. Now what was his.... Guillory, Ensign, there it is. Bombing 8. Here's the, here's the roster of all of them. He's in the middle right at the top. What happened to him? Was he.... What did you say happened to him?

**JT I don't know whether he made it to Midway or just hit the water outside but anyway they put him on a B-17 as a navigator.**

BPW Is that right?

**JT And there were other Navy pilots. They were putting them on these Army planes as navigators because....**

BPW When was that, later?

**JT Well, this would of had to been after Midway when they were going out and searching and so forth.**

BPW I see.

**JT And stuff like this.**

BPW The next couple of days, you mean.

JT Yes.

BPW Yeah, I see, I see, I see. Uh-huh. Well, yeah, I'll try to find him, yeah, yeah. You talked to him at Midway or Pearl?

**JT Well, I talked to him after that. I mean, what I'm saying...**

BPW Oh, I see. Do you know where he lives?

**JT He used to live in Louisiana or Alabama, someplace like that. He was in 158 P OC, if you've got that flight.**

BPW Yeah, right, okay, right.

**JT Someplace down South....**

BPW Yeah, yeah. All right. (long pause) So curious. (long pause) Let me get your impression of this, Mr. Talbot. Look at this. See this notation back here. That was where Scouting 8 was at 11, well that would be 1:00. And by 2:00 they had all been recovered, back on the Hornet. 11:00 would be 1:00 Hornet time. See they had turned around and started back. According to Tappan, Scouting 8 got down there at Hornet time, 11:30 or 9:30 Zone 12 time and they didn't spend any time at all. They turned around and Waldron and Ring seemed to have had an argument. Now you say Ring came back earlier. But Tappan said he heard Waldron arguing with somebody. He wasn't sure whether it was Ring or not but he heard him arguing with somebody and he told him to go fly a kite and he was going to turn north, and he did. And then Tappan says the dive bombers turned around within 5 minutes after that conversation. It's a curious....

**JT Ring turned back less than an hour out from the flight.**

BPW Okay. And you all had, hadn't done nothing at that point except follow them or....

**JT Well, it had been an hour, as I said, an hour after takeoff at that time. In essence we were just about completing the rendezvous.**

BPW Oh, yes, right, right, okay.

**JT After I took off.**

BPW You had just caught up with them in other words.

**JT I mean after I'd taken.....**

BPW Right, an hour later everybody...

**JT Within that hour, as I said and I suppose at that time our position out from our carriers couldn't have been very far.**

BPW 100 miles or less. Less than 100.

**JT I'd say less than 100.**

BPW Less than 100.

**JT With Stanhope Ring on that one, we had to have a lot of gas.**

BPW Yeah, apparently. You know.....

**JT All I'm saying is later, you know, my God you made the hop anytime you took him to rendezvous.**

BPW I tell you. It begins to look more and more as if, well, as if, I don't know, something was wrong with the compass on his airplane or it had never been swung or something. I can't, I cannot understand that. That, that thing is crazy. It just doesn't, it just doesn't work out. Time wise, I've got it nailed beautifully several different ways. They were making 120 knots. That's what they were making, 120 knots.

**JT Who Waldron?**

BPW No, not Waldron. Uh, Scouting 8 and, and so you all must have been doing that or better. A little bit of time anyhow. At 20,000 feet, you would have, you're true air speed would have been picked up a little bit better than that, yeah. So, but the question is, where in the sam hill you went. In other words, if you could, if you were within 60 miles of Kure, you were pretty far south of your intercept, supposed intercept. You were 60 miles south of your supposed intercept.

**JT Yeah, I've heard 60 miles.**

BPW See, here's Kure down here. That's about, that's about 120 miles....

**JT Half way....**

BPW Yeah, half way, see. Now that would have taken you, if you'd come out, if you had had an error.... Ring, we'll say or the people that you were following or escorting had an error of 10 degrees, that's where you would have gone. That's where you would have gone. How far you held on past is this line, direct line, is something I can't guess but it's very hard to make it jive with this position, the 1:00 position with the dive bombers and that's positive. That's sure.

**JT How did they pinpoint....**

BPW Several ways. The Hornet and the Enterprise.... uh, two ways. The Hornet and Enterprise radar plots both picked them up 59 miles out at 11, uh, 1:00 and then they were in sight, in sight just 13 minutes later after they'd gone 27 miles. Which again verified, you know, very close to the time, uh the speed. So it just, you know, it's hard to get around that but how they got up there. Now, if they did what you did... If they had gone down here then come back and flown over the Jap fleet, too, then this made more sense. That makes, begins to make more sense but in order to do that, you would have had to come on pretty far past and they said, Tappan says they turned around within 5 to 10 minutes after the intercept failed, see. So that's why I was trying to key you with their turnaround in any possible way and.....

**JT I can't figure where the time was. I mean, this is, this time, I think is something that is not at all....**

BPW Well it's confusing, I'm sure.

**JT Because they had to be about out of gas.**

BPW Uh, yes. They, the bombers, I mean the section, well, three quarters of the whole squadron went to Midway and two of them splashed. One of them some miles out and one of them in the lagoon. Uh, so they were about out of gas, you know. I don't think you guys could have made Midway. I don't think you could have. Maybe. I don't think so.

**JT I know we couldn't.**

BPW You could not.

**JT I know we couldn't.**

BPW Yeah, that's right. And Mitchell, Mitchell said, "Gee, maybe I should be criticized for not going to Midway." I said, "You couldn't have made Midway no way." "You wouldn't have had a snowball's chance, I don't think of making Midway." Because two of the damn dive bombers never even made it so, you know....

***End of Tape 2 / Side B***

***Tape 3 / Side A***

**JT** Well, after release from the hospital, I mean, we went out to the Royal Hawaiian hotel and was out there and then I was over at Maui for a week to ten days and (inaud) squadron teaching army pilots how to be gunneries.

BPW I see.

**JT** And then headed south and ended up at the old Bunker, Bunker Hill.

BPW Oh, did you?

**JT** Mmm-hmm, but uh....

BPW Well, uh.... I was going to say something about...

**JT** But the point, this thing here is going back again...

BPW Yeah.

**JT** ...at 7:00, where were the Jap fleet?

BPW Where was the Jap fleet at 7:00? Hornet time, all right? Jap fleet at Hornet time...

**JT** Or the contact report....

BPW Well, they were right straight up the road on a heading of 315 from Midway at, well, here, this was, here's where they were at 9:00, okay? Now then, two hours from that, they would have been, say, 50 miles further up. Right about here, on the very same heading, right about there. Here is where they were at 7:00, uh, Zone 12 time, right here. So it had been two, up there a couple of hours earlier. They came right straight down the line. Now here's a zig zag right here and a zig zag right there and that's where they were attacked by the planes from Midway. At that time, in those positions right there. Yes sir, that was the Midway attack. This is their southernmost advance, at 9:17 or at 11:17, Hornet's time, okay? So they, so they turned around and at 9:28 or 11:28 Hornet's time, Waldron hit them.

**JT** Where was the support force?

BPW The support force was all right around with them. They were...

**JT** .. attack force...

BPW Oh, oh, oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Support force 500 miles over here to the north and west. Just about northwest and they, after their carriers were hit then Yamamoto really started boiling hard to get to try to have, and he called his heavy cruisers up from the south that were part of the, they were half way between the support force and the invasion force, those heavy cruiser bunch and a destroyer squadron, too. To get them to make a night attack, try to get carriers in a night attack and that's the reason why Spruance indeed has not been criticized too heavily because as it turned out, he probably did the right damn thing by turning around and running the other way during the night. Now he turned around at dawn and came, started back and indeed the dive bombers and some fighter pilots got in the act, too, in attacking those two crippled heavy cruisers. One of which was sunk and Ben got a DFC, Tappan got a DFC out of it. He dropped a bomb on it. So... But there were a number that did and she was very, they were both very heavily hit. Very heavily hit. One got away, but the, but the other one was sunk and, and the only other hit was really one of the very first ones, the very first hit that was made of all was by a PBY who had the torpedo slung under it on the invasion fleet back here they, they caught a, one of the....

**JT** Well where was the invasion fleet?

BPW ... transports. The invasion fleet was way, way, 700 miles when they were picked

up, they were picked up 700 miles straight west and they were coming right straight across and the PBV at the end of our search limits picked it up and so they came back and, my God, they loaded, put the, they sent out about 5 PBVs with torpedoes on them, slung under their wings and one of them actually hit. Killed 13 men on one of the invasion boats. It didn't slow her up but it, he hit it in the bow. He hit right at the very bow and that's what happened. Would you like some lunch now? Come on, now, let's have a little lunch. All right? I, uh, would you like to have this. I have, well, let's come back a little bit later and..... That is Morison's version. In other words, the official Navy version of what happened. And as you see, this, these VF8s and the dive bombers to the point where they turned south. (long pause)

**JT They don't show the ships on the same course as this....**

BPW Pretty much, this. Pretty much. Not quite. I think it was revised a little bit by the time Lord... See, that was an early version. That was the first version. Now when Lord came along in, in probably 15 years after that, they had collected things, changed things a little bit. But and this reflects a little more detailed account. Now the Yorktown is not on there except spotted when she was hit on my graph....

**JT But they were side by side.**

BPW But they were right, right close there. Hornet says the Yorktown was hull down on the horizon. So they weren't too far away but they were about what I would say shows on my thing, here and not too far off the other one. She was hit by planes from the Hiryu, which was the fourth carrier, which was much farther to the north than the other three. When they were attacked by the Midway planes, the Hiryu was the farthest north and she scattered to the north and east and got away. She wasn't hardly attacked by the Midway planes.

**JT She was hit though, wasn't she?**

BPW Nope. No. Oh, no, uh-huh. One, there was one group of the Midway planes that attacked her with machine guns.

**JT She was on fire.**

BPW No, not the Hiryu.

**JT Smoking, smoking.**

BPW Smoking, oh yes. She was one of the worst offenders smoke-wise. She must have, I don't know what the hell kind of propulsion there was in those vessels, but they really must have had, when they put on forced draft, they really threw out some black smoke. They really threw it out. That was one of the Akagi's weaknesses because although it was a sentimental favorite with the fleet for many years, the crew quarters were horrible because the funnels, the, apparently the exhaust from the funnels blew back down the ship and in the crew's quarters and seeped into the quarters and they hated it. But I don't know when... I don't know why there was that much smoke. Maybe they were, I don't know, maybe they were cold fired. I can't imagine it but.... I don't know, I don't understand why there was all of that black smoke unless they did it deliberately. Maybe that was possible, too. This is another interesting kind of an observation. That is out of Fuschida's book, who was the air officer. He was the counter-part of Ring. Fuschida was, and on the Pearl Harbor strike, he lead it, the whole thing. At Midway he would have also led the whole thing except one day out he came down with appendicitis and they operated

on him right then on the way to Midway. So he was a, he had a, he had a sick tummy at the time of the thing. He was rescued off the Akagi, had him rescued but he had a very tough time of it. He broke both ankles because he had to drop down ten feet and they broke his legs. And as it happened, when they got back to Japan, they did everything in their power to keep the public from becoming informed about what the true picture was, the loss. Japanese accounts explained in gory detail about the Aleutian, how successful the Aleutian campaign was against Dutch Harbor. (inaud) You see, there was at least these early accounts. Midway was supposed to be 53 miles south of that (inaud) This chart that I made up is the latest charts that we have now that are all the Lords and all the rest of the... here are what they, what they really were, were taken from. These were the charts that are used to navigation, navigation out there now and they have those, those navigation systems that use .... But my, our charts, mine are based on the exact, you know, locations. (inaud)

**JT What's this spot here?**

BPW They're very curious little spots all around there. They didn't come out of the ocean but they're British Islands, but their peaks come all the way up. They're in close proximity to surface in many cases. That whole chain, that whole chain....

**JT (inaud)**

BPW Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Huh?

**JT (inaud)**

BPW Well, listen.

**JT I don't know.**

BPW I'm, I'm, I'll tell you. It... If you didn't see water breaking, you only went by color alone, it could be misleading. It could be misleading. There are a lot of, there are a lot of shallow spots out there that have been picked up with these subsequent oceanography surveys that they have picked up in the charts. I have all kinds of nautical charts, ship charts and everything. I have all kinds of things that show all those islands out there and there are none that break the surface, uh, north of Kure, between Kure and the Jap fleet. There are none, there are spots where the water, the color of the water would have changed, that's true. I don't know. So the question is...

**JT Well I was never on Kure Island. There wasn't....**

BPW Hell, you couldn't have landed there. There was no way in at that time, now.

**JT No, but as I said our charts at that time didn't show anything....**

BPW No, no. No, no.

**JT ... but those shallow spots, now, would show up from the air as, as discoloration of water.**

BPW Oh, yes.

**JT Or can be interpreted as an island.**

BPW Uh, I suppose that's true. Yes, sir. Because when you go to, you know, 6,000 fathoms to....

**JT And in the place where, what your figures were, the fleet was and where I said it was, that spot makes more sense to me than the Kure Island.**

BPW Okay, okay. I, I don't think that you were as far south as you thought you were. Huh? I really don't.

**JT Well....**

BPW But I haven't reached any conclusions and I'm not going to reach any conclusion



and before.... Let me tell you what I'm going to do with your permission, Mr. Talbot. I'm going to reach a conclusion. I'm going to reach a conclusion and I'm going to send it to you. I'm going to collect all of this data and all the conclusions and try to sift out what everybody has said and what everybody has told me. This is what the, why the hell I'm doing it and I'm going to come up with, with a conclusion. I'm going to get back to everybody and send it to them and say, look, this is what it looks like, this is why it is and this is how it is and so on. And then I'll ask you for one more go at it. You look at everything. Think back again if you can and then that's going to be the best that I can do.

**JT Well, as I say, memory does strange things to you.**

BPW No question.

**JT Silly things that you don't think about for a long time.**

BPW That's right and you'll think about things from.... If you think about this from here all the way....

**JT Saw something in the water which I interpreted to be that (inaud) island...**

BPW Sure.

**JT There was...**

BPW Particularly since there's been so damn much talk about it since.

**JT And what I'm saying is, since then in flying, and here's another thing, I learned about flying in water and these shallow spots may be quite prominent under one light condition and another almost invisible.**

BPW No question. Absolutely true, absolutely. The sun was behind you going out and sort of overhead and sort of, of coming back as, it were. That alone makes, you know, big difference. Big difference. You should have been able to see the... The thing.... One of the things that has kind of puzzled me.... One of the biggest puzzles to me is this. It's all very well and good to say, well, you guys, my God, you flew right down the road there. Where in the heck... Why weren't you... Why weren't your eyes opened.... You went with, if you went down the 240 for 155 miles, you passed within 25 miles of the Jap fleet. Where in the world were your eyes? That's very easy to say, isn't it? Well let me tell you something. It was not only you. Don't forget Mr. McClusky and his whole gang and all of those guys. They did the identical damn thing. So it was, you know, there were 70 airplanes that missed the Jap fleet if you want to look at it that way.

**JT Well, yeah, but let me back up again on this.**

BPW All right.

**JT I'm trying to phrase how I want to put something and not make it sound too ridiculous.**

BPW Well you just say whatever you want to say, Mr. Talbot and you will not be held to it. I'll promise you that.

**JT Well, I don't care if I'm held to it. The Hornet was supposed to have been a new ship with a lot of late navigation devices on it.**

BPW Right.

**JT Frequently we found ourselves 60, 80 miles and hearing ward room talk over where they thought they were from the navigators taking good shots. I don't know the man's name and wouldn't recognize it if you'd tell me who was navigating the Hornet was. But this had come up in a lot of situations that we, I, we**

didn't know where in the hell we were. In situations trying to use this automatic recording system, navigation didn't work out. We, some of the, when we were on search flights and the islands didn't, where they weren't supposed to be because we were thinking we were going from an (inaud) but they had been off some, too.

BPW Yeah. No question about it. You know what they did? Let me tell you how they did this. Now the, what they did was this. After the war, after (inaud) they got all of those logs together. They got the Enterprise and they got some of the stuff off of the Yorktown, too and they had the, and they had some stuff left off the Hornet, too. And what happens is that the Navy put this together. I never put this together. Lord never put it together. Nobody put it together except the Navy and the Navy and Morison was fed this information and he printed the book. Now just on the very face of it alone, on their, on the Morison chart, it shows Midway, MIDWAY 40 miles from where it actually is today. 40 miles!

**JT That's inexcusable.**

BPW And this was the Navy's thing. Here are some, there are some other little things. Between thee and me and the gatepost, okay, I, my nosing around this way, I'm beginning to get a funny kind of a feedback like, hey, what in the hell's this guy doing, you know? And on that, there's a guy by the name of Dean Allard, who's in Washington and he's the head of, uh, I don't know what, the Navy historical section of records and museum... Eller, Admiral Eller who's a very nice guy, lives in Annapolis and he's helping and he, uh, gave me Allard's name and also Clark Reynolds, the fellow that wrote that book with Mr. Stover, Smokey's father. Also said, "Look, you want to be in contact with this guy, Dean Allard." Okay, fine. I was looking for your address, you know, to have it. I couldn't these three guys, four guys that I couldn't find. So he said, "Okay, you know, you can write." So I got a hold of a Allard on the telephone and I told him what the problem was, I said I'd just like to find these three guys. Just to talk to them. Well, all right, he said, "Well, you write to so-and-so and uh, ask them if they'll help." He says, "because of the privacy of information act, they're not going to give you any names and addresses but if you address a letter to Mr. Talbot, to this section in Washington, what they'll do is to re-address that letter to Mr. Talbot and he can answer you if he wants to." Well, you know, that leaves you up in the air. I don't know, you know, if you were like Gray, Gray told me, he said he'd received some letters like that...

**JT I'll bet.**

BPW ... and you know where they go? Right in the circular file. So what good would that have done me? So I didn't do that. Well, and I said the other thing that I want, Mr. Allard, I'd like to, Mr. Gray is very, very... one thing that he really contributed to the conversation was that he knew when they were flying, trying to get back to the Hornet. He knew that he had it loud and clear on that homing device, dit-dit-dah, U, uncle. No question that he was, that was it. So I said, now, I asked him what the heading was and sure enough, he says, "Don't know what the heading was." Well, uh, I said to Allard, "See if you can find me what the hell the grid was. What letter was North that day?" You know, that's all I have to know and then I'll be able to plot, plot what the grid, anyhow, see? Well, I got a call from him right before I came out. He, I guess it was last Thursday or Friday or something and he said, "Gee, whiz, well,

the Hornet's records...." and I said, "I'd like to have any of the other reports, you know, the navigation officer, executive officer, all these guys had to file reports". They all had to file reports about it, okay? As well as the commanding officer. And I got the commanding officer's report but it's pretty, doesn't add much. It's too general a thing and he didn't write it anyhow. It's fairly poorly written, obviously. I'm sure that he was, he was much better educated than that report made him look like. Do you understand? Somebody where he signed and that, that was it. That type of thing. Now, so, but I said, "If you can get me any of these other reports, I'll be glad to pay for them or anything. Anything at all like that". Well he called me up and he says, "Gee, whiz. Can't find out what the grid was on that." I said, he said because the Hornet, you know, she was lost a couple of months later and apparently things had kind of disappeared. You know, that type of thing. Well, I said, "Well, look I'll tell you what. It would seem logical that might have happened to the Hornet's reports. Maybe, you know, maybe they went down with her and they hadn't gotten them mailed or whatever, sent back or whatever. But I'd...." Okay, I said, "And now the Enterprise, I mean, how about the Enterprise?" "Give me the grid.." "What was the Enterprise using?" Enterprise had to be using, I would have thought, the same grid. They were right there together. They couldn't have been far apart. My God, must of, would have been the same grid. "Oh", he says. "Geez, I didn't think about that." "Gee, whiz. Wow." Well, I'll tell you what's going to happen. He's going to call up and say the Enterprise and all those reports are gone, too, I'm afraid. I don't know.

**JT Well, I don't know whether they kept any record of that. I don't know.**

BPW I do.

**JT Did they keep records?**

BPW Yes, sir. They did.

**JT When they changed them?**

BPW Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

**JT At that time?**

BPW Yes, sir. Yes, sir. They did. They're there somewhere. They're somewhere and I may find, I may catch up with them. I don't know. I don't want, I'm afraid now that, you know, that the Navy department or guys like Allard or whatever, might not, they might look at my efforts the wrong way. That's, that's what, uh, I have to be careful about. I don't, I'm not going to change the course of history and I'm not, that's not the reason for my doing this at all, and... But I can't, there's no way I can convince anybody of that. I'm not going to write a book. I'm not going to publish one damn thing and I'm not going to release any information. Uh, that's not my aim in this matter and, but it's difficult for those historians to see a guy come along that, I believe they understand that I am knowledgeable and, you know, and interviewing people that they never interviewed and...

**JT There's one other factor, too, that comes into attempting to analyze Midway. Going right into the Coral Sea and subsequent ....**

BPW Yeah...

**JT ... uh, actions of the carriers after Coral Sea and up to and including Midway is this tremendous investigation had been going on in Pearl Harbor. Although the Pearl Harbor attack which was then an overpowering... at that time.**

BPW Oh, yeah.

**JT And I'm quite sure... I know, well, I'm not quite sure, I know that the career officers, this is first most in your mind, and at this time there was talks of court marshals coming up.**

BPW Oh...

**JT It never happened but I said... and this was the talks and so forth in attempting to come up with blame and so forth and I just feel one thing that happened in that period after Pearl Harbor is that a lot of things were lost or screwed up deliberately.**

BPW There's a brand new book out this year called, *At Dawn We Slept*. It's a book about that thick. It's twice as thick as any book you've ever seen. It's like an encyclopedia. A guy has spent all of the years since that time and he is a historian. He is a, I think a college professor or something, I don't know. He spent his whole life on this thing and it is a, the most exhaustive study. All on Pearl Harbor. Everything about Pearl; every aspect of it. Everything about it from the Japanese side, from our side, everything. He interviewed hundreds of people, political as well as, you know, military and all that sort. He looked at it from a lot of different sides. It's a very interesting book. I waded through about half or three quarters of it. It's so huge and it covers such a wide range, it's not just that attack or anything like that, it's the whole picture. But it shows the degrees of study that was sometimes devoted to the things and he doesn't... it's sort of a history. It's not a, an investigation. It's not a thing to put the blame or anything like that. It's... the title says, "At Dawn We Slept." Well, that's a kind of a catchy title. I guess, obviously, he wanted to sell books but it doesn't do the book justice because he doesn't explain or anything like that. It is a good, solid history.

**JT Knowing this, knowing Pearl Harbor and you're telling two things, uh, the Coral Sea and Midway and I can look back now but I wasn't a commander or captain or, you know, years of experience. Why in the hell didn't somebody ask everybody that was in the air that day to make a report?**

BPW That was a very good... that's a very good question. Even McClusky, when he got back and tried to make a report, it got short shift. Even McClusky's - while McClusky was wounded...

**JT Crommelin, Crommelin was the name that I was trying to think of.**

BPW What was that?

**JT Crafton, Crommelin.**

BPW Crommelin, yeah.

**JT I was telling you about that the, started telling you the torpedo planes.... He had been in the Coral Sea and he was along with Thatch, were influential in developing some of the fighter tactics that we used at Midway and other situations and since were the rest of the war. Some of the basic foundations for fighter tactics.**

BPW Yeah, uh-huh.

**JT And this was the name at lunch time that I couldn't come up with.**

BPW Mmm-hmm, Mmm-hmm. Where did McInerny work?

**JT He went....**

BPW To that squadron?

**JT** He went to...

BPW I mean to that training?

**JT** ... be trained in torpedoes and this Captain Crommelin....

BPW Mmm-hmm.

**JT** On a temporary basis or something, he was heading it up at that time, you know, whether he continued with that, he subsequent to the war got into a controversy or two, hot politically, this Captain Crommelin did about telling his viewpoints on what the military should do, but he was a great tactician at that time. A very practical man and he was in his 40's or 50's and a very fine pilot. He could not only tell you what to do, he could do it in the airplane.

BPW Yeah, yeah. Well, I'm surprised. I didn't realize that Ring was as old as he was. He was well along, then, uh, at that time. Do you know who took over from Ring? Who would have been.... It would have been.... It would have been the C.O. of the, uh, of those squad... of those scouting....

**JT** Uh, after, after Midway, all of the Hornet squadrons as with were some of the other squadrons' carriers were, were decommissioned out there.

BPW Yeah.

**JT** And new groups were formed and new, the personnel was disbursed into other groups and so forth.

BPW How about Johnson? Remember a fellow by the name of Johnson? (inaud) Was, uh, Bombing 8. VB8.

**JT** Was he the...

BPW He was the commander of VB8 or, all right, now here's another name. Rodee. Would Rodee have assumed command then? Now Rodee was the, was the commanding of Scouting 8.

**JT** They decommissioned, just decommissioned the Air Group 8 is what happened. I mean, and later, such at a later time.. at one time I was actually with another 8 squadron, this is, had nothing to do with this...

BPW ... original.

**JT** Air Group 8 that was with the Hornet at that time.

BPW I see.

**JT** Now this is a policy or program that started and was carried out pretty much subsequent to this. In other words, a group was commissioned and sent into the Pacific on tour of duty. At the completion of that duty, the whole group was decommissioned. It no longer existed as a commissioned unit and...

BPW Mmm-hmm.

**JT** ... they had another unit that started up called another name. I mean personnel would be assigned...

BPW Reassigned, yeah...

**JT** ...reassigned and this was the way it was handled throughout the balance of the war in the squadrons, anyway because they figured it eliminated a lot of paperwork and you'd just start new each time.

BPW Yeah. Well, I suspect... I would have thought and I'm sure that they....

**JT** But all these people, now you're talking about they're, at above Mitchell's age.

BPW Yes, yes, that's right. An they were mostly Naval Academy people.

**JT** Yeah.

BPW Rodee was and uh, well, the ensigns weren't, obviously, or at least probably. Very few of them would have been.

**JT** I don't know....

BPW But apparently Jennings wasn't, even. Now Jennings must have come up through the ranks or something.

**JT** He's the ones that I told you about was one of these that flew with fleet for a couple of years. There's a cadet, aviation cadet, see. He went through... he started my God, he went through flight training in '37 or something.

BPW Is that so? I see. Well he was older too, then.

**JT** Well, uh....

BPW In age...

**JT** 22 at Midway and I'd say Jennings was 30, 35.

BPW Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**JT** What I'm saying is he was older than that. Older than 22 probably he started his flight....

BPW Yeah, I see, I see. I don't think I'm going to catch up with him.

**JT** I don't know...

BPW I don't know how to. That is a good question. Eller is working on that. That will be a good, interesting thing. The other... there are only four, four people, you know, left. Three I'm going to catch up with. You, Tallman I'm going to see on Monday and McNerny is right up there in Massachusetts not far from Tallman.

**JT** He used to be from...

BPW From Wooster went to Holy Cross. Now I don't know whether he's still alive or not, but I'm going to be able to get a line on him from the Alumni Association at Holy Cross or from somebody in Wooster. I have contacts there and I'm going to be able to get a line on him. Jennings, I'm at an absolute loss on. There's no, no lead to at all. So Eller, Admiral Eller was the head of the Navy museum and he's interested in all of this stuff, very much and so I'm kind of sicking him on that name and he has agreed to try to track it down. Now I'm going to be really interested to see... Now this is all pure Navy, you understand? I mean this is pure Navy deal. If he finds that man and turns that over to me then I'll feel a little better about things, honestly. Because I feel right now as if I'm the fifth wheel, or, sort of, doing this and I expected that. I, I didn't, that doesn't really describe what I would.... I would like to get those reports and I don't know how to get them. There isn't any way of getting them, I don't think without official Navy assistance on the thing. But those reports are available. They are, they are somewhere. I know they are.

**JT** I don't know. I don't know.

BPW Well, they're... I have some other indications of it, too, you know, about it.

**JT** Well, what I'm saying, I don't know. I'm just saying I never had any experience that would give me a background to say things were routinely kept or not, see.

BPW No, there's no way for you, really, to, to know about it. I just, I have, I've been in contact with other elements, other people, things like that so that, you know, I have a feel about it, a basic feel about it and I've gotten some of them. I've got the Hornet's log, for instance.

**JT     The what?**

**BPW   The log.**

**JT     From the Hornet?**

**BPW   From the Hornet. Now the log, you know....**

**JT     Who saved that?**

**BPW   I don't know who saved it but, by God, I have a copy of it. Very early in the investigation before anybody knew that I was doing an investigation, they...**

**JT     Well, now you said something here today that, don't misunderstand me, I'm not disputing it and again, it goes back to a personal experience. I can't think of his name but there was a time that carrier pilots and submarine crews were at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Honolulu for...after we came in, we had four or five days. You could go down there for a buck a day and stay in that nice hotel and sprawl on the beach...**

**BPW   Yes, indeed.**

**JT     ... and uh, after Midway, there was an officer there that said that he, on the Yorktown, that he went aboard as salvage, see, salvaged parts.**

**BPW   Oh, yeah.**

**JT     And he told us all about what had happened to her. And he said that (inaud)**

**BPW   Well...**

**JT     Now I don't know.**

**BPW   That's an interesting observation.**

**JT     I mean.... said he had no reason to tell us anything else and only on his word but I said I, the evidence was quite solid at that time. That's just exactly what it was. That he went aboard....**

**BPW   Well they put a big salvage party back aboard.**

**JT     Sixty-seven people or something like this aboard and they, he said they had her under way and had sent a tow out from Honolulu to pick her up and bring her in.**

**BPW   Hero, the Hero, that's right.**

**JT     And that uh, they got a submarine scare and then he got panicky and they was afraid they left one destroyer or something like this here...**

**BPW   Right.**

**JT     ... that the Japs might come in and sink the destroyer and capture the ship because she was in a repairable condition.**

**BPW   Right.**

**JT     And then they sank her.**

**BPW   Well...**

**JT     He said they fired torpedoes into her and then she turned over and they shot holes in the hull.**

**BPW   Lord's book has a picture of her bottom just as she's...**

**End of Tape 3/Side A**

*Tape 3/Side B*

**JT I don't, I don't know. That's all I know but I do know that he, at that time....**

BPW Let me get back to one more thing here. Now I don't mean to, you know, dwell on (inaud), its only one aspect of it but after you had turned around to get back to the ship, theoretically you were on 240 true going out, okay, 60 coming back, you were sitting on. It was six-o. Why wouldn't that really have been... and in truth, the Hornet and the Enterprise and to a less extent, the Yorktown, sort of, it's true, they were jockeying around and changing around within, I'll say, at 20 to 30 miles on, on, uh, area off of that point option course. But basically, they came on down. They came... For oh, well, for an hour and a half after you all had left the Hornet came right straight down to the port. Right straight down. So that she was closing all the time and then she got into this back and forth and they, and, and the Scouting 8 people got back at 12:00, at 12:10 her log says, "The recovery of the morning flight was completed." Now that 12, that's 14, that's 14 there, see. That's 2:00 in the afternoon. They had gotten back then. But she was then, I'd say, 80 miles, 60 minimal, closer, to close that much towards you. So that the flight back was that much shorter of course. And yet so that if you had just turned around and flown the reciprocal of whatever the devil the plane out was, you had fewer, you had 60 or, I'd say 80 miles less, shorter to fly. So that theoretically or seemingly, you had a damn good chance of making it if you had known what was going on and if you had....

**JT If I'd of had a course... If I'd of had a course, let me tell you this right now....**

BPW Yeah.

**JT If I'd of had a course of that ship and that ship had of stayed on it, I would have been on that track to that ship.**

BPW I think you would have. I'm convinced of that.

**JT I did not have a course to that ship. I mean only, and the only thing I had was YE-ZB and attempting to interpolate a grid that had been changed. And I still place myself, after looking at that map, within probably, ditched within 60 miles of it.**

BPW I'm sure of it. I'm sure of it. And Ruehlow's remark, and Ruehlow... Gray has a, I mean Lord, he interviewed Ruehlow, he and so did Morison, carefully and Ruehlow said that as he was ditching, he looked off to the north and that's the first time that he saw the Jap fleet. He said he saw the Jap fleet. Now that doesn't make any sense, honestly, to me. The only fleet that he could have seen was our fleet. He was a hundred and thirty, forty miles, fifty miles...

**JT That was Ruehlow?**

BPW Yeah, that was Ruehlow. He was... When he went into the water, he was way over 100 miles from the Jap fleet. He could not, I don't think, see them. But the Yorktown and our fleet were there. The Yorktown had been hit. She was burning. There was plenty of smoke coming up from her, I'll tell you, for a long while. So, and Mitchell verifies that. His story is the same as Ruehlow's. Now whether, you know, but he says that, you know, he looked off and he saw the Jap fleet too. He doesn't say that they flew over the Jap fleet. He, and his recollection about that is different from yours and from Grays. Now Gray said that he flew over the Jap fleet but Gray



says something that I can't buy at all. He says he went down and circled Kure. Now surely that doesn't ring a bell, does it? No, you're shaking your head, Mr. Talbot. I have, I have to get this on my tape.

***Female They can't hear you shaking your head no.***

**JT No, no, no. Not by any means, no.**

BPW But Gray also says that he turned around and flew over the Jap fleet. He sure as hell said that and there was... I could not shake that out of him. I can't, I couldn't shake it out of him. He was convinced that he saw the Jap fleet and he saw the three carriers and that is also your impression.

**JT I add one...**

BPW Huh?

**JT I add one to it.**

BPW Yes, you added one to it and you even saw the Hiryu, okay. Sure as hell, Hiryu was there. And she was smoking, oh boy. No question. She was smoking. She was smoking so bad that the skipper of the Kaga thought that she had been hit and there was no question about that. He was very worried about it. He thought she'd been hit. So she was throwing up plenty of smoke. I don't know where in the... why in the hell those carriers smoked so much.

**JT I can think, think things in my mind, the big and the thing that I, and looking at what you have there, I can't get my time included. Do I have a false picture of 12:30 in my mind, I don't know but for some reason that's about all the time....**

BPW Well it's very strong. Listen, your position is very strong. You had a wristwatch and you know when the damn thing stopped. You know, you just don't dream up 12:30 on your wristwatch, whatever.

**JT It had to be after the fleet had been hit and....**

BPW Okay, okay.

**JT ... the timing is what I'm saying...**

BPW Right, but we're down to a pretty, pretty close time. I mean it, pretty, 15 minutes, 20, a half an hour one way or the other, you know, makes, is what we're really talking about and it's really hard to pin it down. They were not hit. They were not hit. They were not. The bombs, there are a thousand different verifications of this but they were hit between 12:20, I mean, your time, okay, your time, 12:26 to 12:32 is when they were hit. In six minutes they were, those three carriers were hit. In six minutes and the Yorktown dive bombers hit the Soryu, the Akagi and he, and Kaga were hit by McClusky and Best's group of the Enterprise dive bombers. All of that took place immediately after the torpedo bombers had been repulsed. Had been wiped out, one after the other of them. All three attacked within minutes of each other. Well, within, I'll say, a half hour. Waldron was first at 9:20. At 9:35 or 9:40 he was done and then the other two squadrons of torpedo bombers were attacked immediately after that and they were wiped right out within another half an hour. That was the end of them. That took it up to your time of about 12:15. Immediately after that, at 12:26, dive bombers, McClusky hit. You went down some time very shortly after that. You were hitting the water, according to your watch, at exactly the same time as those carriers were being hit. At exactly the same time, 12:30. Now whether, I know that must be... Are you sure? How good was your watch?

**JT** I don't.... Well, this doesn't, you know, as I said, it doesn't mean anything, I guess it doesn't. The watch doesn't. It's something that sticks in my mind.

**BPW** Well you don't go around with a watch that's a half an hour wrong, do you? You didn't do that. Wasn't that bad, was it? Was it a Mickey Mouse job?

**JT** No, the watch that I had on at that time was a good watch.

**BPW** Uh-huh. It wasn't obviously a waterproof one though.

**JT** There are several possibilities...

**BPW** Let me....

**JT** There's a number of possibilities..... is, is I was wrong in that time, in looking at the watch. I was wrong in the time.

**BPW** The tie is too close though.

**JT** Yeah.

**BPW** The tie is too close.

**JT** Well, all I'm really, all I'm saying is, though, that... it's just whose damn time was I on and here's what it comes down to because we had so many times being used. Evidently Midway was using a different time and our ship was and our search planes were on a different time and the Japs, and, what I'm saying is, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know whether somebody in our squadron says it's now certain and certain time. It was on, on this time. I mean before the flight took off because, because of .... but there was a, well....

**BPW** Was there a discussion of time?

**JT** There was on these, on these contact reports. They're trying...

**BPW** Yes, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

**JT** They would come in on the, come in on the teletype. That's what they called it, teletype.

**BPW** All right.

**JT** The most, the latest...

**BPW** I see.

**JT** The latest contact report is such and such.

**BPW** I see.

**JT** And the goddamn time didn't tie in with anything...

**BPW** I see.

**JT** ... that we had.

**BPW** I see.

**JT** Now I think this is why apparently everybody, now hear me out, and all your records show this....

**BPW** Sure.

**JT** ... headed south of the Jap position. They figured, they interpolated the time that they would be farther down this line...

**BPW** Right, right.

**JT** ... because of this time interpolation and they were expecting him another 50 miles from the spot where they were and this may have been all because of this time thing.

**BPW** Mmm-hmm, Mmm-hmm.

**JT** And everybody was, I'm quite sure that if you get a contact report with certain time a fleet is heading in a certain direction, you're not going to head to that

point because you're not going to be there. You're going to be someplace else.

BPW Right.

**JT And you're going to interpolate and say, well, in two hours he's going to be over here and this is the direction that I'm heading in because everybody headed south of....**

BPW Yeah. A very curious thing. You know, now it's beginning to come down like this. I can't believe it....

**JT I always tried to my plotting board (inaud)....**

BPW I had one of those old plotting boards. I'm sorry I didn't bring it along.

**JT You don't know. You don't have mine....**

BPW No, that's for damn sure.

**JT You don't have mine. I, There was a whole series of course changes and you said, well what course and then, I mean, hell, I went down the side.. I supposed for the 10 or 12 course changes had been made in this.**

BPW Yeah. Apparently, it, now, this is the picture that I got from Mitchell. Mitchell, when he went up to talk to Mitscher and had the conversation about who he was supposed to cover, Mitscher said, "No, don't be changing anything. You're to be..."

**JT This had to be the day before.**

BPW No. That morning right before take-off. Right before take-off. He was sure about it. He went to see him. He was sure about it and he wanted to change. He wanted to change the assignment. His assignment was to protect the dive bombers, okay? To cover the dive bombers. He went to see Mitscher and he said, "I think we ought to protect Waldron and the torpedo bombers" and Mitscher said, "No, there's no changing assignments. Your assignment specifically is to protect Ring." So Mitscher's attitude was well, okay, that's how it is. I'm going to go out and we're going to fly above them and we are going to cover the dive bombers. And he says that's all he did and I don't think he, he didn't have any recollection of a specific course out either. Now, therefore, it comes down that there was only one guy, and I talked to Tappan. Now Tappan was a guy, a very careful kind of a guy. He was a navigating kind of a guy, too. And he did his homework with the board and all that, see. And, but he didn't have a course out and it comes down that only one guy was given this 240 course and it sounds like Ring was the only one that knew where the hell his base course was.

**JT Well, I have to say this. They never gave you a course, okay? I never knew of a situation that a course came down. They gave you a contact position.**

BPW I see. And so you set your own course as it were.

**JT They gave you a contact position and last reported speed of your, and hell, this went on, I never had a course out there... I had a contact report. The pilot did his navigating and set his own course. You got the wind directions and speed.**

BPW Yes, but wait a minute now. You must, you were always....

**JT Who's going to give you this course?**

BPW My God!

**JT Huh?**

BPW The ship's navigation officer, I would have thought or the skipper or somebody.

**JT The skipper, the ship's navigation officer at that time had nothing to do with**

**the flight list.**

BPW Right.

**JT Nothing.**

BPW I can see it.

**JT Nothing to do...**

BPW I can see it but now there is one thing. There's one aspect of it. Now try and think about this one. You never left the carrier, I can't believe, without them indicating the pickup point. Where there were....

**JT No, they did not give it. They did not, they did not give a course and direction of the ship after you left her and I'll swear to that, by God, as long as I live.**

BPW They never gave you that point option course?

**JT Yes, that's right. If you could take, get, if you get the old records where this stuff is typed off, and by God, you look on there. It wouldn't be on there. It was earlier in the morning and then once they were going to send attack out and that was canceled.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT And the last time when it came to place, to put course and speed of ship, that's when he said, "message from the captain, good hunting....."**

BPW good luck...

**JT "... good luck and God be with you." Oh, and I'll add one thing else. too. Harass the enemy as much as possible. And this is exactly what they did.**

BPW Isn't that something? Isn't that something? Ring must have been the only one that they gave the course to. If they gave it to anybody. Maybe they didn't give it to anybody.

**JT Well, I think you're operating under the premise that was not operational.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT A flight leader forced to contact the fleet. Fixed target was going in to hit Iwojema or something like this here. They establish a point (inaud) and give you a ship's course, okay or (inaud) course. But this, this is why they didn't give us... they were trying to hid from anybody.**

BPW And the YE-ZB was the only thing that you really had to get back with then.

**JT And well, they gave you a course and speed of the ship. You had to, you had to figure, you took your contact report and estimated, if it was a moving contact report, where he would be after you traveled that many miles.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT And usually at the same time, you worked your return navigation based on the course and speed of the ship.**

BPW But you didn't do that here.

**JT Not back because I didn't have it.**

BPW I see.

**JT Only you could....**

BPW They didn't give you the speed and course of the ship when you left.

**JT And it wouldn't have concerned me if they hadn't of changed the grid.**

BPW Right. The YE-ZB...

**JT This is right.**

BPW That means.... Where in the hell did Morison get that?

**JT This course? I still say, you know, it's sent back after the fact and re-fought the battle, it's a hell of a lot easier to fight it that second time...**

BPW Oh yes, oh yes.

**JT And....**

BPW Hindsight is a little better than foresight.

**JT I just... I don't think you're ever going to talk to anybody that says we had a course out there because I don't think we did.**

BPW Funny thing about Tappan. Now Tappan is, you know, he's a savvy guy and he's with it. You know, I mean, right now, today. I mean he's waiting for me to come back. He wants to know what the hell I found out and I said, "Listen, why in the devil didn't you keep track of the course...." It surprised him. The question surprised him. You know, caught him a little bit... he, he, for him to suddenly realize that he didn't know what it was. Well, you're verifying the identical thing. The same, the same damn thing. He says, "Look, I was in the middle always but there were planes behind me, planes in front of me. I was just flying along right in the middle. I had to... My orders were to follow the guy in front of me and, you know, I'm nothing but a raw ensign. I didn't know from what and I just followed the guy." Now Mitchell said that he was following Ring, okay, with the dive bombers. Well he said that he turned around.

**JT You know, you know, only one thing came out of all of this shit.**

BPW What's that?

**JT Huh?**

BPW What's that now?

**JT They way uh, the flights were structured as the war went on.**

BPW Right, that's right. Right. Oh, obviously the short comings were in the casualties, the losses were unacceptable.

**JT Yeah. They were....**

BPW The losses, my God!

**JT They were unacceptable, unacceptable all the way through, the casualty loss.**

BPW You know, the impact on the, on the guys, and Lord and Marsh... and (inaud) was very hard, very tough, and Stover, really, they were really shaken when you guys didn't show up. You know what I mean? My God, where is all of Fighting 8? All of them gone! You know, and it was, uh, the psychological impact might have been very tough. Very, very hard. That may have been one of the, one of the, uh, primary reasons why everything got shuffled very quickly. Maybe that helped to do that.

**JT Well, as I said, the structure of a flight in the command situation of a flight had to change after Midway and after the Coral Sea and it resolved down to this. In other words, we were in a situation at Midway in which we had a hell of a lot of confident pilots and we had a lot of people that were approaching command situations in age and in rank and they wanted a tour as a squadron commander or something like this to go up the ladder.**

BPW Sure, sure.

**JT This is peace time Navy, career Navy and the same as the Army or anybody else. They were no better or worse.**

BPW Sure, sure.

**JT And it was learned and subsequently put into effect that these flights had to be led by competent leaders and experienced and they came up and they structured the whole thing. They qualified flight leaders and qualified the these field commanders and subsequently there was many a commander, squadron commander worked in the Pacific and when he crossed the 180, if he wasn't in command of a squadron.**

BPW I see.

**JT Some JG or ensign led the, or lieutenant led the flight because of experience.**

BPW I see. There seems to be a curious relationship between Ruehlow and Mitchell. Mitchell seemed to, uh, well, he said that he turned fighters around, he said before the dive bombers turned around. Now, and that he didn't know which, his YE-ZB wasn't working. So he flew up beside Ruehlow. Ruehlow. Then, this is (inaud) Gray said that Ruehlow flew over beside him and Gosh, you know, which way. Gray then said that his YE-ZB working, that he was getting a U. So I said, "What's the heading?" No heading. Nobody had a heading out and nobody had a heading back as far as I can see. It was a remarkable thing and they changed and you're telling me, and Gray also says, Gray said he thought that the YE-ZB was on....

**JT They changed it.**

BPW He said he changed it.

**JT It was about an hour out.**

BPW Now they verified... He, he verified that. He verified that. That, that's what, uh, the way I would interpret his remarks about it. He said that uh, that uh, there was a, a very, you know, he didn't know the headings because it had been changed and there was a lot of discussion about it subsequently and he, I think he was unsure about what had happened and.... Well, to get back one more time, the last time to the, to the matter of the ditching, uh, you think that you and Hill and Kelly were the first three down. Don't you agree? And you weren't far apart, is that true time wise?

**JT Well, I made the statement that at least one plane run out of gas before I did.**

BPW Right.

**JT And, uh, there could have been two but I can't be positive of it.**

BPW Yeah.

**JT And the plane that I know about that ran out of gas ahead of me, we're talking about 20 seconds, 30 seconds.....**

BPW That close.

**JT ... that close.**

BPW All right. Did you see that plane hit the water?

**JT Yes, we did.**

BPW Okay.

**JT And in following him down or (inaud) because he had lost altitude when I run out of gas...**

BPW I see.

**JT .... that I did observe him going and did holler on the radio, "You're landing down wind."**

BPW I see.

**JT And the plane landed down wind.**

BPW And the pilot didn't get out.

**JT No, right, no.**

BPW To the best of your knowledge. I mean you didn't see him out or anything.

**JT And there was no way in the place that he landed that it was possible for me to turn and come back and attempt to make a landing because to have done so would have been to do the same damn thing he did, headed down wind.**

BPW Yeah, right. But it wasn't, distance wise, it wasn't too far away, presumably. Is that right?

**JT Uh, less than a mile.**

BPW Less than a mile. But you didn't see any other planes go down? No, okay. And the guys that were behind you.... Mitchell, Ruehlw and Gray flew on.

**JT From that time, I don't know what happened. I think Magda, or somebody else, say from some of the people had more gas than that.**

BPW Did they, did you see planes that had been behind you fly on by?

**JT Yes.**

BPW Oh, you did?

**JT When I went down, I went down like this and planes went.... No....**

BPW So you really were either the first or second plane down.

**JT I wasn't the first.**

BPW Second plane down.

**JT Second, possibly...**

BPW Second...

**JT .. or third.**

BPW ... or third. Mitchell says that he thought that Hill went first but Mitchell was very uncommitted about anything else. He didn't know who was flying his wing and he didn't know where you were. He didn't know where, uh, who was flying with whom, really.

**JT And I heard later from (inaud) sources that the three of them did end up together and....**

BPW Oh, there's no doubt about that.

**JT ... and, uh, this has been supported by evidence.**

BPW Right.

**JT And evidently they did fly....**

BPW They were the last three down.

**JT For some period of time. What this time is, I don't know. They could have had as much as 20 minutes or 25....**

BPW Well he said 15.

**JT Okay.**

BPW He said about 15 minutes and that would have been about....

**JT Well, that's another 70 miles.**

BPW But on the other, but on the other, yeah, yeah, but on the other hand, Ruehlw said 11:00, which is 1:00. I'll put it in terms of your time which was 1:00. He said he went down. He hit the water. They were all in the water at 11:00, at 1:00, 1300.

**JT And I said 12:30.**

BPW You said 12:30, which bears it out.

**JT Which gives them another 30 minutes.**

BPW Which bears to 30 minutes, okay. But you know, it was all over by then. They had, they were in the water. In other words, they had run out of gas within 15 minutes, which would bear Mitchell's sequence, time sequence out pretty well. Each one of them think that he was the last guy down. That I can't understand. That's a little bit confusing but I think that....

**JT Well, I can't, I don't know what happened after that.**

BPW No.

**JT But for them to end up together like that and, and to be in such close proximity that they could make contact, they would of had to almost gone down together.**

BPW Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. There's no question. Well, the third one down, the last guy down deliberately, I don't know who in the hell it was, but he deliberately came down and Mitchell, Mitchell, I'm inclined to buy Mitchell's story on it entirely to be honest with you because he said he saw Ruehlow and Gray there go down, get out, have the raft there and he went around and he says where in the hell I think I'm going, I'm not going anywhere. So he came down and he landed right beside them and he did not get his raft out, though. He and Ruehlow, Ruehlow was smaller than Gray so Mitchell said well he and Ruehlow got in, this is a, a one man life raft that's half the size of this bed, you know, terrible small rafts and Gray was 6'2 or something like that and he took up a whole lot of that raft so Mitchell said he got in with Ruehlow and then they punctured the damn thing and, well there are other stories about it, but.... The question is a little bit more interesting. I'll be interested to see when Tallman, in the sequence of falling, when he went down. In other words, you saw planes go by you but you don't know how many there were probably or whatever. Is it possible, and I suppose it is, that maybe one of those guys that was, or more, that were behind you had gone down.

**JT Yeah, that's very...**

BPW Is that possible?

**JT That's very possible.**

BPW Did you hear any Maydays?

**JT No.**

BPW No. Well, I think that's, now, the only other aspect that, if you'll touch on just a little bit again, that might be helpful is at the time that you got down there to your, we'll call it the intercept point for want of a better term, you know, where the hell they were supposed to be, uh, and they weren't there. There had to have been a hell of a lot of airplanes in the air around there. Not only ours, but Japs and Midway's. They had not gotten back. The Japanese must have engaged in some combat. They must have. Their schedule of leaving is very well documented when they left Midway. It was very well documented when they got back to the carriers. Fully documented and it was us. How, they lost 50 knots airspeed, theoretically, in the time, you know, time wise from the time they left Midway to the time they got back to the carrier. They only flew back at 100 knots if you just divide the time and the distance. See what I mean? And that doesn't make any sense because they went down at 150 knots and that is fully documented. Fully documented, really. So, its, its, I can understand how they wanted to really barrel when they were going in all right. That's, that's easy enough to understand but why weren't they barreling to



get back too? Now the only reason that they weren't is because logically they ran into some contact, okay? So query whether, any of those fellows in your flight had any contact with anybody uh, but I would have thought that you would have, uh, known about it our heard about it or... You saw other planes, right? Is that correct?

**JT Yeah, and my statement was, and this happened in that first hour of time and in looking over your charts on this float plane...**

BPW Yeah.

**JT ... that has to be the place.**

BPW That float plane had to be there. No question. More than one. More than one had to be there.

**JT Two planes, two planes....**

BPW You're right. You're right. I'd buy that a hundred and ten percent. You're right. You are absolutely right.

**JT And another thing. And another thing...**

BPW That plane stayed there and it had orders. It had orders. I mean he wasn't about to turn around and go back. I'll tell you that. He wanted to. He turned, he radioed the Japs, see. All this is pretty well documented, too because it was so important in the decision of (inaud) whether to change the armament on those airplanes, on his plane, see. Whether to go back for another attack on Midway or whether to go after our fleet. There was a lot of indecision. He made the wrong decision as it turned out because when we finally dropped, McClusky's crowd finally dropped their bombs on it, good God, the whole ship was just loaded with planes and they had, they had taken bombs off and just rolled them aside and that kind of stuff. You know, when they were rearming with torpedoes.

**JT And the second bunch of planes that I saw had to be the planes (inaud).**

BPW That would have thrown you north of your course but you know what it would have done? I'll tell you what it did...

**JT I was in the air four hours and some time. Now I don't...**

BPW Right.

**JT .... care what you say and we covered a hell of a lot of area out there.**

BPW You're damn right.

**JT If I had my plotting board, I would know exactly... I could draw you a plan like that but I don't have my plotting board.**

BPW You know what, you know the biggest thing that substantiates your story from this and I, I think it's right. I think it's right because the air speed's right, the time's right, a lot of things are right. Tappan can't understand. He's stewing in his juice. "How in the hell did we get way up there", he says. But they were there and they were sighted on this course and they were sighted after, after they, uh, by the Hornet crew after the radar contact. So the radar contact looks real good, see. They just came right straight in. They were well.... They were 30 miles north of point option course. Now, if you had been, you know, with them or behind them a little bit or whatever, God, you sure as hell went over, you saw the Japs. There's no question about....

**JT Well, and this point, this one chart that shows this reef out there puts what I thought was Kure farther north and puts, makes this plausible too.**

BPW Yeah. Well there again, identifying that thing from that distance... Of course Gray, I'll tell you, now listen. I'm not telling stories, school, uh, stories out of school or anything. I went to see Gray. Gray is a, he's a good nature kind of a guy and pleasant, nice but this is what happened. I made an appointment to meet him at 10:30 in the morning, all right? Now, he's retired. Been retired for a long time but he was a regular old Navy. Stayed in, retired as a captain and he's in very comfortable circumstances. Very comfortable circumstances. I got there at 10:30 in the morning, okay. Go in, he invites me in and we sit down in the den and hook up the recorder and, all right, I just started recording. He says, "Well, look, uh, Geez, before we get started here...", I went through this same sort of a rig-a-ma-roll, he said, "Before we get started, going to have a little eye opener, have one?" I said, "Well, gee, I just got, I just finished my breakfast. I'll catch you on the next round." He comes back with a double shot of bourbon right there. Well, okay, we start on the story and about a half an hour, "Well, okay, let's uh, let's uh, join me this time?" I was afraid not to. So I said, "Yeah, sure, okay." So he comes back, made a nice helping, sets a bottle of Old Granddad down there and so the, the conversation, he wasn't too talkative. I have to, to ask questions and kind of lead, lead the way on the thing. See what I mean? And he was ready to, readily talkative but before long it really became obvious that he was looking for me to lead and to, and he was trying to give me the answer that he thought I wanted to hear which wasn't, which wasn't the case at all. So I had to, you know, and after a while, hell, the conversation pretty well disintegrated. He was, you know, he said, "Well, I think we'd, might have went into the water around 2:30, I think." 2:30, man, how in the hell did that F-4-F ever stay up from.... That was over five and a half hours or some damn thing. You know, but, he was sure and there was no way, and I tried to shake him about the YE-ZB. He was getting it but he couldn't, didn't know the heading. Now, uh, I don't know, he never said that he took over the lead or anything like that. He didn't do that and you're impression is that if anybody was doing any leading, when you turned around, you were probably it. Right?

**JT I was leading.**

BPW You were leading. Right. I can buy that. I can buy that very readily.

**JT Now after, after I dropped out in the three....**

BPW And your YE-ZB was working and you thought you knew where you were going for sure, didn't you? At that point....

**JT Mmm-umm, I was...**

BPW ... except that it had been changed and you didn't know what in the hell the heading was, which is logical.

**JT I was.... As I said, I said originally my, I was starting to go through or went through in a fairly short period of time, two or three signals and I knew...**

BPW Yeah, right.

**JT I knew only one thing. I was passing it and that, what I'm saying is, I had narrowed the distance down and...**

BPW You're signal was getting stronger. Was that noticeable?

**JT Uh, I turned to the right and apparently the signal started to weaken and (inaud) so we went back to the left and it started to pick up. I had not gotten in on a (inaud).**

BPW I see. I see.

**JT I felt then probably at the time that....**

BPW Do you remember what the signal was?

**JT No.**

BPW Were you getting... When you got in to, When you got into the other, were you getting a null? I mean, did just uh, did they, did they blend together, the signals? In other words....

**JT Oh, it's been so damn long ago. Seems to me like on that particular system that we get a clear signal pretty much in the center of the track. As you go to the borders it starts to fade out and then you come into another signal, it comes into a clear signal.**

BPW Right, I got you.

**JT And, and, uh, what I'm saying is it stands to reason that if you're going away from, if this is the center...**

BPW Mmm-hmm.

**JT ... if that table's the center, you're going this way and flying and flying and your getting the same signal, you're going away from it. You're going this way.**

BPW You're going to get another signal.

**JT Well, but if you're headed right toward it, you're going to continue to get the same signal.**

BPW Right, right.

**JT But what I'm saying here, you're getting a signal and then another signal, it means that your.....**

*End of Tape3/Side B*

*Tape 4/Side A &B - Duplicate of Tape 3*

*Tape 5/Side A*

BPW McClusky had a kind of an interesting flight and the way it had come out in Morison's version and Morison is the one who put this together first, the official Navy deal, okay. Uh, he says that McClusky gets down to the point of intercept. No Japs, looks around, nothing. He kept on flying through, okay for 15 minutes, I believe, something like that, maybe more, maybe 20. Then he starts on just a plain ordinary box air search. Turns right 90 degrees.

**JT Yeah.**

BPW Turns north 90 degrees. Sees the Arashi which had stayed back because one of our submarines had, was maneuvering around to make an attack. They had intercepted the Jap fleet. (inaud) but she couldn't get close enough to fire. But the Japs had picked her up also and left a destroyer back there and all this is pretty, pretty fully documented. Well after awhile the fleet had gone off to the northeast and the destroyer decided well she was just uh, she had lost contact so she high-tails it to get back to the fleet. McClusky was on the second leg. He had turned 90 degrees again ....

**JT He was going back east.**

BPW Going back east.

**JT He turned right...**

BPW Still a little north, a little north of east. Hadn't been long. Only, you know, there were only a couple, about another 10 or 15 minutes or something they followed the destroyer, okay? Figures?

**JT Well....**

BPW And McClusky had binoculars. Oh, he was, he was really looking. I mean he was, there's no question he was really looking and (inaud) followed in okay, see and he, Best was his other section leader, I guess you'd call it, and so he split them up and he said, "Well you attack one and I'll attack the other and here we go" and all that.

And there was some confusion about which one to attack but anyhow they attacked two. The two nearest carriers. That's what that.... 10:20 or 12:26, your time, your zone time. 12:26. The Yorktown's dive bombers had taken off something like an hour later but had flown a different course and they went directly right straight to the Jap fleet and they, by the most fortuitous possible set of circumstances, arrived at exactly that same time and that time was just as their torpedo bombers were being annihilated too. Some of them, three or four of them survived but they didn't do anything. They just, you know, they couldn't get close enough. They were just hoping, but the dive bombers off the Yorktown arrived at the same time as them but they took the nearest carrier which was between the two that Best and McClusky attacked, and the Hiryu which was the one that had gotten off by itself to the north. The story is they took the middle one. Nobody hit the far north one. The far north one was attacked by torpedo planes but that was all and so she got away at the, at that moment, at that moment. She had already launched, she had already launched dive bombers to go after us. Now between 10:20, I mean 12:26, Hornet time, 12:26 and 12:32, those three Jap carriers were wiped out. And that time is, there's no question about it. That's what time it was. I'm sure of that. Meantime, the Hiryu had continued on north and had gotten closer to our fleet but she was also west and north quite a little distance. If you saw and I don't doubt it that you could have seen her because more and more this begins to look to me as if you, not only you but the scouting bombers too were closer to the Jap fleet than you thought. I can't, one of the biggest confusions now, if you accept that premise, one of the biggest questions is, why in the hell didn't you, the dive bombers in particular, not necessarily the fighters because you were too damn high, but the dive bombers, why didn't they see that fleet just as quickly or more quickly than, than Waldron, see. Waldron saw it at 9:20, exactly at 9:20.

**JT Well, as I said, a lot of things change with time.**

BPW Yes.

**JT And one answer, possible answer to your question is that with times later and (inaud) later, is in the absence of radar on the planes and the surface ships they've learned that the best place to search is low.**

BPW You'd better believe it. I'm absolutely convinced of that.

**JT And, and subsequently to, some of these things, most all of the scouting searches were made with what we called horizon search. Because if you have broken clouds you can fly by a hell of a lot of ships and never see them.**

BPW No question. That's exactly what happened.

**JT** And with the camouflage, the camouflage on the ships and so forth and the absence of smoke, or strong wakes and they're wiped out by waves pretty fast. It's hard, it's much harder to see surface ships hide.

BPW Look at this. The B-17....

**JT** But it has to be that we had to approach the Jap fleet from the south, the southeast, here and went up around them....

BPW That's what you think you did.

**JT** But it also has to be that someplace in this, in the center of my plotting board here, I know where in the hell I was, (inaud) get past the planes that went to attack the Yorktown yet and they were low, much lower.

BPW Do you think that... The problem with your being north of that point option course, the problem with that is where you were picked up.

**JT** No, I said we went probably were south of what you'd call the course. Probably went north, same as McClusky and those other people did and since they were going back....

BPW You edged north.

**JT** We were going back. In other words, after and returning, attempting to return to our ship, it's what I'm saying is that....

BPW You didn't follow a straight course.

**JT** No, no because I told you I was trying to (inaud) the YE-ZB.

BPW Right. Mmm-hmm. Mmm-hmm. And you turned right when you got your first, uh, the first time you ran into the overlap.

**JT** Yeah, and that took me away from it.

BPW That took you, that took you south.

**JT** Mmm-hmm.

BPW That follows. Now you're talking. I can buy that readily because that would have taken you back south of your point option course again.

**JT** But I said it doesn't take long. You don't fly....

BPW No, that's right....

**JT** ... if you tune your signal almost out or down to barely audible, I'm talking about you can, you can tell a fade in about 5 miles.

BPW Well, at most we're only talking about 25 miles north. That's where these birds were when they were picked up.

**JT** But with, with the drift that doesn't mean....

BPW Yeah.

**JT** If they followed....

BPW If you turned right to try to, you know, get your way back, I can see that happening there. That would have taken, that might have taken you well south of that line which would again throw you in much more in keeping with where you were picked up. That would have the explanation of that or at least a plausible explanation of that. Even if you had started, even if you had your, your homing, when you first started back, your north, even assuming that because that assumption is born out of the fact of your sighting the fleet. You had to have been up that way. How close do you think you were to the Jap fleet.

**JT** Right over it.

BPW Right over it? You're really sure of that?

**JT I know I'm sure.**

BPW Don't mind me, Mr. Talbot. Do you understand?

**JT Right down there.....**

BPW Please be sympathetic to my cause.

**JT Right down there is a carrier and a cruiser circling. I'm not talking about over there, I'm talking about right down...**

BPW Right there, okay.

**JT And here's the other one and here's, there's three of them there and then the one up here north on the....**

BPW And there was a hell of a lot going on.

**JT This is right.**

BPW And you, but you were still high, now. You were still at 20,000 feet or something.

**JT 18.**

BPW 18.

**JT (inaud)**

BPW That was one of the things Mitchell confirmed the height. He said, you know, high, 20..... Gray didn't. He hedged on me on that one. He said 14. I said, "Well were you on oxygen?" and he said, I don't know whether he knew when I was talking about, you know. So he said, "No." I said, "You were at 14,000 feet without oxygen?" He said, "We were up that high sometimes, without oxygen." So I was at a loss on that but hell, he couldn't have flown any length of time at 14,000 feet, I don't think or 20,000 feet without oxygen.

**JT You could fly an hour or so at 14,000 feet if you were accustomed to flying without too much problem. It was a general practice if you were going higher than that to start taking oxygen at about 12,000.**

BPW 12, yeah.

**JT Put your oxygen mask on and to keep it on until you got back down to about that. Now....**

BPW Did you run out of oxygen or anything?

**JT Did I?**

BPW Yeah.

**JT No, we had enough oxygen.**

BPW You had plenty of oxygen for the flight, for the duration of the flight.

**JT For a, for a four hour flight. I mean we, normally we could consume a greater portion of a bottle of oxygen on a four hour flight, even 5 hours, you burn up a hell of a lot of oxygen but the point I'm making is you were on oxygen and start taking oxygen....**

BPW Soon after you took off.

**JT Soon after take off.**

BPW You climbed right up.

**JT Yes.**

BPW All the way as you were going after....

**JT We were climbing on course, well no, there was one big sweep first. Ring trying to figure out how in the hell we get his airplane heading in the right direction.**

BPW I can buy that remark too. Well.....

**JT I flew in a lot of situations with a lot of people in World War II and there were some people, and this was brought out even later after the war, and I'd go down and I'd leave there so goddamn disgusted, go down here to Kansas City where there was a Naval base down there for flight training and we had flights in which we'd go over to the Army base there in Missouri and fire ammunition or fire rockets or something like this and you'd lead a flight. You'd take off, you'd rendezvous, you'd go over there to fire your rockets and make your four runs or something like this and it was a comfortable hour and a half, hour and fifty minutes flight, and some of those characters, it took them 45 minutes to get rendezvoused around the field and we had the same thing out there.**

BPW Lord was, Lord ended up, now Lord's approach, you understand, was, you know, he read Morison's account. He got taken with it. He got, but Lord is an author. He wants to sell books, okay? That's his business. He studied it and he went to Japan and he went all over the damn place and he talked to ten times as many people, I think, as anybody else did. But it was on the entire operation, see. Every aspect of it, you know and it.... He picked out dramatic aspects and emphasized. He didn't make any statements that were obviously incorrect or anything like that. He was very careful. He did a great job. I think he did an outstanding job but there were, he did no better and probably no worse than the naval guys, Morison's people, that tried to put together the thing in the first place. They were the ones that had the initial, all of the, all of the things that I'd like to see. The logs, the reports, the every damn thing. They had it all and they were able to put together a pretty coherent, pretty coherent thing. There's no question about that. But again, they didn't occupy themselves with working out the minute details. They were looking at the bigger picture. What the hell really happened, you know, and it was a hind-sight kind of a thing so they kind of concluded, well, we have so much indicating such-and-such and so that's how it must have been. That type of a thing. Rather than, well sort of doing what I'm doing. I'm narrowing my inquiry down to just a little aspect of it and trying to get as much conceivable detail that I can so that it, I have the benefit of what they have concluded but whether their conclusions are entirely right in these aspects, I don't, I'm beginning to have serious doubts about it. They, no historian so far has... There's Morison's picture shows, VF8s and VS8s got down to the point of intercept and turned left and went to Midway. That's the official log. That's not what you're telling me. Not by a damn sight. And that's not what Gray says. That it ain't. And Mitchell, he's, he's a little like this, he doesn't want, he, he's a little bit, he don't want to rock the boat too much so, but, you know, I'm convinced that you're talking straight and that's why I want to, I don't mean to over do it but I want to assure you that I'm not going to disclose anything to anybody. I'm not going to be rocking the boat. I'm not going to be upsetting the thing, certainly without having full contact with you on anything at all that is disclosed with this conversation. There will be nothing. No one hears these tapes. No one has any aspect to it at all. At all, and I think now that it, I want to really, you know, make assurance of that because things are coming out a little differently. Things are coming out that I wanted to hear because, hell, I'm going to a lot of trouble. You know I am and a lot of effort and everything else. And the reason I am is because I just want the straight story about this

thing and all the details so that our foundation is, knows where it stands. I think our foundation is going to survive. We are well regarded locally and we've been very conscientious, uh, Mr. Talbot, we have requests or bequests all the time, all the time as you can well imagine from a lot of different kinds of institutions and things and, but we don't, our attitudes, and Mr. Kelly was a very, he was a flamboyant kind of a guy but he was a very straight forward and a very honest....

**JT I met him.**

BPW .... man.

**JT The father.**

BPW Yeah. Well he got to be a big man and he was a politician. He was the acting Mayor of Baltimore at one time and this is the type of thing that he wanted done and was never able to do himself and as I say, there's not going to be much longer that anybody can do it and I figured was the last possible opportunity to get our records straight and so that's, that's why I'm doing it. But I want to, I'm not going to publish a book and I'm not going to publish one damn word of anything.

**JT Well, a time or two I've had inquiries, people wanting, talking about publishing a book and as I said, I've read some of the books about Midway and other situations and they're so far my wife's and the way I look at it and sometimes they quote people in them and I think probably inaccurately, completely off the point and I have just never had anything to it. I don't know what's to be gained...**

BPW Right, right, that's right.

**JT They have a motive and it is to sell a book and to make a profit and this is the first and utmost motive and, as I said, it's something I haven't got involved in. I've tried to answer your questions. I don't know what in the hell's going on...**

BPW Well, I appreciate your candor very much, sir. I can't, I can't tell you how I, I really do. And you've been very honest and very straight forward and you can see why I'm here, really, I think. Can't you? Do you understand?

**JT Yes, I understand. So I don't know but I've got another stop to make and then have to leave here pretty soon before 5:00.**

BPW Well, sir. I would, I would like to, to defray your expenses.

**JT I've got to go in here a minute.**

BPW All right, sir. (pause) It's an interesting thing. My wife says, "What in the devil are you doing? Digging up all this old business, it's 40 years ago."

***Female He doesn't like to talk to people about it. He doesn't, you know, John, you know, we talk about it and he's told me different things. But, I mean, to have someone sit down and just rehash it, it's hard for him. Even now.***

BPW I'm sure it is. I'm sure it is.

***Female He and our sons are very close. His oldest son is....***

BPW Well, I'm very...

***Female They were very close***

BPW ...proud.

***Female He doesn't like, you know, he said there's just some things in your life...***

BPW Right, right, I understand it. I'm certainly.... I, I, uh, Mr. Talbot, would you be kind enough to give me your mailing address?

**JT Uh, 600 Park Avenue**



BPW Park Avenue

**JT Centerville, Iowa**

BPW C-E-N-T-E-R-V-I-L-L-E?

**JT That's right.**

BPW Centerville, Iowa....

**JT 52544 is the zip.**

BPW 5254

***Female 4.***

BPW 4. Okay, all right. If, if, please understand I would like to send you a check to defray your expenses, sir. I have imposed upon you very much. I expressed my appreciation to you but I don't want to, to incur any financial outlay on your part so I'll, if you don't mind, I would like to send you a check.

**JT Okay, well something....**

BPW And I can't tell you how much I appreciate it and I will, I'll keep you informed.

**JT Okay.**

BPW If I may. I think you'll, would like to hear what some of the other aspects are about it and I think I'm going to be able to pull it together and when I do I'll get back to you. I think we've covered the territory about as well as we can and I'm going to draw it all together and reach some conclusion and I'll send it to you.

**JT Okay.**

BPW Before I even keep it in our department records.

**JT Okay, well, it's been nice visiting with you.**

BPW It's a great pleasure and I really appreciate it and I ...

**JT I hope you've enjoyed your visit to Iowa.**

BPW I have indeed. I think my last....

***Female You picked a beautiful day for it.***

BPW Didn't I? I think my last visit, was my grandfather's place, it might be '34.

***Female It was a long time.***

BPW It was a long time. He was a grand gentleman and I, I, I really liked him very much. He came (inaud) and he died, as a matter of fact, in....

**JT Yeah.**

BPW But he was a great fellow. Well thanks again.

**JT Well, have a good trip back.**

BPW It's a great pleasure, sir.

**JT When do you go back?**

BPW Well, I'm going to leave tomorrow morning. Would you like anything further, sir? Any of these plots or maps or anything like that? I'm going to send you some more, okay? Just for your own information or whatever.

**JT I didn't have time. I, for addresses and so forth. What I'm saying is, you know, I might have some pictures of uh, Kelly around. I don't know...**

BPW I would very much appreciate anything.

**JT I just haven't had time to look.**

BPW That's, that's all right. You take your time. Any, anything that uh, any you can think of or anything at all, that you can send me, I'd....

**JT Hopefully, .... quite a picture taker.**

BPW Yeah, apparently he was and a letter writer, geez.

**JT** Yeah, what happened was we took a lot of pictures and I've got a lot of them at home of him and some of the other people so maybe I'll recognize....I'll...

BPW All right, sir. Thank you ever so much. Nice to see you.

**JT** Bye-bye.

*Female Have a nice trip back.*

BPW Thank you.

BPW Its now 5:21 p.m. the 31st, on the 31st and this is the end of the interview with Mr. Talbot.