

Interview with Humphrey L. Tallman
April 4, 1982

BPW It's on Monday, the, I guess it is the fourth of April, 1982. This is the first tape in that interview. This recorder, I hope that it's functioning. This is a, these pamphlets tell a little bit about the foundation and what we do. This is, we make some awards and things in lacrosse as you can see here and it tells a little bit about the foundation. This pamphlet has to do with our distribution of the funds that we have made since it was founded. It was essentially, Mark's father was a successful businessman. He had a Buick agency.

HLT Buick agency.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Is he still living?

BPW No, no he died some years ago but he left about three million dollars to fund this foundation that was just to commemorate the memory of Mark's efforts. It's been reasonably successful on a local, you know, just a small thing. We disburse about \$200,000.00 a year in the local scene. In other words, all of our income goes out. We do it that way but, and we have used it to primarily, well, you'll be able to see, there are a whole lot of ways in which it has been used but much of it has been devoted to schooling efforts of one kind or another. We've built gymnasiums and football fields and all that kind of thing and it's been, the foundation's activities have been very well received on a, particularly on a local basis. We have, we started a Lacrosse Hall of Fame. We funded that initially and so we give awards and all that, goalie awards. So that, it, as I say, a nice little local institution and that's really all it is. I knew Kelly. He was a contemporary, of course, and I knew Kelly in Baltimore a while so it was appropriate, I think, that I end up on the board. Actually there's another old gapper on the board besides myself who is a contemporary of mine. He was in my father's law office but he became a lawyer. A very nice guy but what we're, I'm seeing, is trying to look down the road because the foundation looks like it's going to survive in a reasonable fashion and we want to sort of try to anticipate things and my, I have a son who's now an attorney in Baltimore and our family is in a bad rut. He's about the fifth generation and so.... He is sort of standing in the wings on this foundation but in thinking along these lines, the thought occurred to me that history seemed to give us a sort of a short shift, VF-8, I thought and I began to wonder a little if I knew the whole story about it. The more I wondered, the more certain I was that I didn't know the whole story about it and then a thought occurred to me, of course, that it's now getting to be quite a little bit later, you know. Anyway, forty years later and time was running out to get, really, first hand information. So I decided to try to see if I could get a little bit more of the story of the flight and, of course, in so doing, I started with kind of digesting the Battle of Midway as a big entity, reading and learning about that. And then began to narrow myself down and I isolated the people that were alive that I could reach and I talked to Mitchell. He's still alive and lives down at Virginia Beach and, but he's pushing 80. He was always a good guy.

HLT Oh, yeah.

BPW And I talked to Gray and I talked to Ben Tappan, who was an SBD pilot and he

lives down near us in the Baltimore area and then I, I was at a loss to where to find you and Talbot and McNerny and Jennings. They were the only four possibilities left and one day I happened to be looking in Kelly's things, there, at the office and I saw his, the yearbook at Pensacola. Opened it up and sure enough, there you were, big as life. Said you were at the same college and favored home town (inaud) and so I, I, Talbot was in there, too. So I just dialed the telephone operator and sure enough, that's how I found you. The Navy wouldn't be very helpful. Weren't very helpful about it and I don't know, as I've gotten, well.... Let me tell you a little bit further, Mr. Tallman. I used to teach for old man Weems down in Annapolis before the war, right before the war. So, you know, I know about navigation and plotting and things like that and I have worked in the Marine Corp with (inaud) through the war. Flew in the Pacific and all around down there and so, you know, I know how to, I can talk to you one on one, sort of, if you understand what I mean. I have almost got a thousand hours flight instruction so, but what I did was this. So I started to try to get first hand information and that's what I'm still doing. Now curious things have developed, of course, as it was going along. I have the impression that the people that stayed in the Navy, such as Mitchell and Gray and Tappan...

HLT and me

BPW ... and you. Didn't you spend...

HLT Twenty-five years.

BPW Twenty-five years. Well, I have the impression that they don't want to rock the boat. There is a... There is a... Lord and Morison and, well, Fujita and the rest of them have all come out with their, their versions of Midway and they are very good, indeed, to say the least. But I have the impression that they would, they're perfectly happy to talk to me but they're very limited in what they want to add.

HLT Excuse me.

BPW Yes, sir.

Mrs. T Good Morning.

BPW Good Morning. Mrs. Tallman, nice to see you. Bowen Weisheit. I hope I'm not imposing.

Mrs. T Oh, no indeed.

BPW On your good graces here.

Mrs. T You picked a wintry day.

BPW Well, I did pick a cool day. I was very surprised when I drove up in a snow storm.

Mrs. T I guess so.

BPW But I never quite know what to expect. I expected that out in Iowa last week but out there it was 66 degrees. But they were expecting a little of it, too.

Mrs. T I understand that tomorrow is going to be snow in Washington.

BPW Oh, is that right.

Mrs. T Baltimore, too.

BPW That's terrible.

Mrs. T I'm going to go and

BPW But, so, I don't know just how successful I've been yet and with my quest. I haven't gotten the same story from everybody.

HLT Yeah.

BPW I think that some, well, I want to go back and tell you this, though. That I have promised everybody and I'll tell you that I'm not writing a book. Nothing is going to be published and that's not my main intent and purpose at all. All I want for our foundation files is to know all I can find out about (inaud) the only way that I would release anything at all (inaud) satisfactory with you (inaud) understand and please believe that that is my approach. That is why I'm here and no other. I'm not selling a book. I don't and for that reason, I would be very concerned and I don't want any dramatization of the thing at all and I don't, I'm not looking for anything like that. All I'm looking for is very cut and dried facts to the best of your ability and what you remember on the thing and that sort of thing and the fewer embellishments, believe me, the better I will like it because all they do is to make me have to try to think the thing through and what really.... and I now have such a grasp on the thing that, and a picture of it. So much and so in-depth that inaccuracy or mistakes or even misstatements or anything are very quickly evident. I have such a grasp of the time schedule, everything about the whole damn thing. It's very quickly evident that a statement, there's something wrong about it and when that happens with these other fellows, that when I pick that up and then try to diplomatically get around to correcting it, you know, depending upon how effective it is, sometimes I do it and sometimes I don't and the thing, it can even be defensive (inaud).... I'm telling you all of this, Mr. Tallman because I tell you something. I'm getting down to the bottom of the line and I'm, I'm honestly and sincerely hoping for some straight talk from you and I don't know whether... Only one more left and that's McNerny and I don't know whether I'm going to catch up with him or not.

HLT Is he located?

BPW It didn't work on the telephone. I tried Wooster but it didn't work. He went to Holy Cross and I'm about to try Holy Cross Alumni Association or whatever and that's, you know, the thing. Now, here was the list. You see, I worked off this list which was the official Navy roster and I'm down to the ten that were on the flight. These ones with arrows, Mitchell, Ruehlow, Ruehlow's dead. Mitchell (inaud) Gray lives in Philadelphia, I went to see him. Jennings is the one that I don't think I'm going to catch up with at all.

HLT I'm sure he was killed after the war.

BPW Afterwards?

HLT Mmm-hmm. In an aircraft accident...

BPW Did he stay in the Navy?

HLT Uh, well, yes.

BPW For a while? He must have come up, he was ahead of you guys. He was older.

HLT Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. He was my section leader.

BPW Oh, yes, yes, yes.

HLT And he was killed in the '40s, after the war (inaud) in Rhode Island, I'm pretty sure.

BPW Uh-huh. Jennings, was, yeah. Okay, well, there you go.

HLT I wouldn't swear to it but that's my recollection.

BPW It will probably come out that way, all right. Okay, now then....

HLT Somewhere, you know, 1948 or....

BPW Yeah.

HLT somewhere or other. I can't remember..... hearing about it.

BPW Was that, is Charleston the name of it? Quonset Point?

HLT No, it was an outlying field of Quonset, I guess. There were Navy fields all over the place...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... in those days.

BPW Late 1940's, killed... aircraft.

HLT (inaud) I remember just like I'd been hearing it because you know, I thought I was close to him. VF-8...

BPW Uh-huh. Okay, all right, now. Groves, well he was a CAP. He was lost on combat air patrol...

HLT Right.

BPW at the time. So that was that.

HLT He wasn't in the flight.

BPW No, he was not in the flight. Hill was and he was lost and Kelly was and he was lost. Those were the only two lost in the actual flight. Magda was killed. He became a Blue Angel and killed in Korea. McInerny is the, I haven't, I can't, I'm going after him and he's the last one. Talbot and you are down here. I've got Talbot and uh, McInerny's the last one. So that closes out the ten.

HLT Well, I was trying to think. Trying to remember who the ten were and there were two that I missed and I didn't, I can't really remember that McInerny was on that flight.

BPW That's strange. You know that Talbot had the impression that there were only eight on it?

HLT No, well I knew that there were ten because I was number ten on the flight.

BPW I see.

HLT I was the tail-end charlie.

BPW I see. Well, those are the ones.

HLT I was trying to recall who the ten were... Mac is the one I needed...

BPW Yeah. Well he's the only one left that I haven't any line on or anything. I'm glad to find out about Jennings because I'd have been beating myself to death probably trying to find him. I'm going to, is Charleston still operating?

HLT No.

BPW No.

HLT No.

BPW And that was in the late '40s, you heard.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Well I'm sure that you.... Let me suggest this, Mr. Tallman. Let me ask you how to do it. What happens, these are the whole roster of the, all the other people too.

HLT Right, yeah.

BPW You can refer to it. You may have occasion to refer to it.

HLT Some of these people weren't even with the squadron yet. They had orders to the squadron but VF8 was broken up, disbanded before a lot, some of these people even reported.

BPW ... joined it? Yeah. Well, it must have been broken up promptly because Stover

was reassigned practically immediately. He was not with the Hornet when she went down in October at all. He had been reassigned to the Saratoga, I believe and went to Guadalcanal and was off flown at Guadalcanal. He spent quite a little time, about a month at Guadalcanal.

HLT Yeah. In fact, there are only two of us that were still on the Hornet when it went down. That's McInerny and myself.

BPW Oh, is that so?

HLT Yeah.

BPW Oh, no, Mitchell was. Mitchell....

HLT He was on the staff. Yeah, that's right. He was on the

BPW Uh-huh. And Tappan was.

HLT Old Ben Tappan.

BPW Ben Tappan was.

HLT I was just referring to this group.

BPW Yeah, right, right. Uh-huh.

HLT We were, McInerny and I were, were then in Torpedo Squadron 6.

BPW Oh, I see. Uh-huh. Well that, yes, Mitchell told me that he almost went swimming again. He said that I think that you off-loaded there into the destroyer...

HLT I never got back aboard so I don't know.

BPW You know, while I talk about that, I brought that book along because it's a brand new book and it is written by the captain, the skipper of the Dewey and it is a fascinating kind of a story. I think you'll really enjoy it. I flew over that damn storm in December of '44. I'm telling you, I had an old bucket of bolts. My God, an old DC-3 that had about 4,000 hours on the damn thing. It was just, I mean it was wild and I said, My God, we recorded at 26 degrees, the highest that I could ever believe and was going down to, we were heading for Augaur Island and the bottom of Palau, you know?

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW We came right out on the, I cranked the thing, scared, scared to death because if we missed it, hell, there was nothing. I mean it was just zero from there on and it came right out, see. So I know I was right. Some day somebody's going to write a book about that storm.

HLT It was a terrifying storm, all right.

BPW Oh my God, it was just out of this world. Well, let me ask you this, Mr. Tallman. Now as I say, I don't want, I don't want to make any mistakes and I want to do, I want to get things as right as I possibly can. I'm a total rank amateur with this business of interviewing. I don't know anything about it

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW but what happens is that I've gathered a little bit, kind of an insight into the thing and my impression is that if you tell me the story, okay, we go that route. You just tell me the story of how it.... then I want more details than you give me, so I go back and when I go back is when we get into trouble, see? The other way of doing it is for me to just lead you down the road with questions and I can do that but unfortunately that's what it does. It leads you and I don't want to, so I'm kind of caught between the fires. You see what I mean? But what I like to have is really starting from the initial, when you're in the ready room, ready to take off, ready, getting the information and about anything that was given to you. And then talk

about the take off. Where were you when you took off? What you did then. How
you..... just sort of take it on down the road from there. Which would you, which
would be better?

HLT Well....

BPW I don't want to get into the box of having you tell me something and then say,
show you that it's not right....

HLT That's all right.

BPW And then, but I don't, if I do that, I'm perfectly happy to do that. Some guys it's
very different than others. You understand everybody's not the same. I don't want
you to feel that I'm criticizing you, questioning you or doubting your veracity or any
of that damn nonsense. If you don't become defensive about it, there's no, we're
home. Man, we're in great shape.

HLT Well, I won't be defensive. I mean, we're talking about a long time ago.

BPW Hell, yes. There's no question. Anything you say, for God's sake.....

HLT By this time, you may know more, more about it than I can remember.

BPW Right. That's exactly right. I don't.... That's the whole thing. I would rather do
it. I would rather have you kind of tell me the story, see. And then let me go back
and pick it, you for more knowledge. Whatever I can find. That's how I would rather
do it because that way I get your first, you know, I get what you think is the real,
what happened to you. That's what I want to know. I don't want any
embellishments. I don't want you to say anything that didn't happen. Just make it
as clean and as clear as you can remember it, that's all. Start at the....

**HLT The only time that it was really clear to me was after we got, landed in the
water and got in the raft and I spent several hours with a pencil writing the whole
thing on my raft.**

BPW You did?

HLT You know how the yellow raft, when you put a pencil on it...

BPW Yeah, sure.

**HLT The whole raft with every detail I could remember, not having much else
to do. Of course the raft was never....**

BPW You left it there.

**HLT And when we, you know, when we were picked up by the, the, uh, left the
raft in the water. Shot it so it would sink. That was the whole picture from my
point of view....**

BPW Well maybe...

HLT ... was on that raft.

BPW ... we could recall that.... God, isn't that something? Isn't that something?

HLT Well, I don't know...

BPW What was the guy's name that picked you up, the PBY, the skipper?

**HLT I don't know and I've always felt sort of guilty about that. I don't remember
the name, the squadron or anything else.**

BPW Well, I'm going to tell you a funny things. I'm going to tell you some funny
things.

HLT Here's, here's the guys, plane that saved my life.

BPW Don't know who it was.

HLT Don't know who it was. Never had an opportunity to thank him.

BPW Well, he did his job. He did his job. Tell you what. How about doing this. Let's go back. Take me back and take yourself back and think back to the ready room.

On the morning that you were ready to take off. Now it was kind of late in the morning. When you got your information off the machine, what information, did you write something down on your plotting board?

HLT Oh yeah.

BPW Uh-huh, all right. Now, do you remember what you wrote down?

HLT No, but I remember we had, we had the estimated enemy position. The speed and course.

BPW The enemy position, speed and course, right. Okay, fine. And it was left up to you to compute where your point of intercept would be?

HLT Well I think we all did that as a matter of course.

BPW Right. Okay.

HLT Well all had our own plotting boards and we all got the information and we all plotted it and we didn't sit back and let somebody else do it.

BPW But you were not given course to (inaud)to plot.

HLT That I couldn't say. I don't recall.

BPW You know what Talbot said? Talbot said he was waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting for it.

HLT No.

BPW Finally it came up and the captain wishes you, right where it should have been, the captain wishes you good hunting and good luck and God speed, or something like that.

HLT I don't remember that.

BPW He said it was never given. But anyhow...

HLT It was, it was, as I recall, it was an estimated, you know, position...

BPW Oh yeah, oh yeah.

HLT ... that they had received...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... the scouts.

BPW Oh, yes, yes. Well, when you went to your plane, where was your plane that you were going to fly? Now you keep talking. You just go on and talk and tell me the story. Tell me where you were when you took off. Who you took off behind and how far was it, you know, whether.... Just go kind of slow with it.

HLT I haven't the vaguest recollection where, where on the deck. We were all on the deck.

BPW You were all on the deck. You weren't in the hanger, then?

HLT I don't think so.

BPW Okay.

HLT I wouldn't swear to that either.

BPW All right.

HLT (inaud) sometimes you did land your planes on the hanging deck but this particular morning, I don't remember. I don't remember. Seems to me it was around nine o'clock in the morning we took, finally took off after...

BPW Well the Hornet log says that at 8:55 she headed into the wind and that's when she started to launch. That was 9:00.

End Tape 1/Side 1

Tape 1/Side 2

BPW Uh, that was 9:00.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Now, the TBFs, I mean the TBDs, not TBFs, TBDs and the SBDs, where were they?

HLT There again, I don't know. I would assume they took off before we did.

BPW Correct, that's right. They did.

HLT but... I assume that only because as I recall, that was normal procedure since we had less (inaud), what not, they all went off. Then we went off last because we could catch up with them.

BPW Right. When you took off, and you were one of the last ones taking off, yourself I mean..

HLT Probably.

BPW The fighters, probably?

HLT Probably. I don't...

BPW Uh-huh. You don't recall the sequence, really?

HLT I don't.

BPW Okay, when you did get off, did you, you started climbing, presumably, immediately. Did you circle at all or did you go right on down the road? You were presumably chasing after the SBDs and others.

HLT Yeah. I don't recall any circling around the ship before we left.

BPW You just took off....

HLT We just formed up, we just formed up and caught up with the rest of the air group.

BPW Uh-huh. How high did you go? Do you remember?

HLT It seems to me we were around 20,000 feet

BPW Right, sounds good.

HLT That, that's about my recollection. That was, well, this was pretty much climbing continually right from the start.

BPW Do you remember your rate of climb with the F4Fs?

HLT No, I don't.

BPW Was there ever any problems with oxygen? Have plenty of oxygen?

HLT Yep. No problem there.

BPW What was the first, what was the first... Well, you go ahead. You tell me what happened. You go along.

HLT Well....

BPW Now you had taken off. You're climbing and you're at 20,000, okay?

HLT And, and I recall that we headed off in the general direction of, you know, I had it plotted, where we should go. Then, I sort of recall, we started to wander. We were following the (inaud) commander, bomber squadron, the scouts (inaud), we could see them all. It was a nice day. I mean there were a lot of clouds but, you know, it was...

BPW Basically...

HLT ... generally when you could see through the clouds, you could see forever.

BPW Yeah.

HLT But, you know, after, I don't know how long, an hour, two hours, in my opinion, we were sort of wandering aimlessly. I'm trying to remember, I don't know.

BPW Did you stay together all the time, the fighters stay together all the time?

HLT The ten fighters were all the time all together.

BPW All right, fine.

HLT And I was tail-end charlie. Concentrated more on keeping up, keeping up with my, keeping up with my wingman, because, you know...

BPW Sure.

HLT Supposed to be with them, keeping an eye on all that. Since this was our first, actually our first combat flight for all of us...

BPW Yes, yes.

HLT ... green kids...

BPW Yep, yep...

HLT ..why, tried to remember everything at the time. But you know, fair along, quite well along into the flight, why, I was wondering why we weren't heading in the direction I assumed, of course, (inaud) because there was nothing ever heard on the radio. Never heard a word. We were, all was radio silence, which was again pilot training. And then I can remember seeing the torpedo squadron taking off. Off to our port in the direction that I had the enemy plotted.

BPW Well that was at the starboard.

HLT No, not the time we were... Not the time I saw them. Well I'm pretty sure I saw them going out...

BPW Went off to the left?

HLT Yeah.

BPW The torpedo squadron?

HLT Yeah. That's, that's my recollection...

BPW Okay, hang with it.

HLT I can see them going.

BPW All right.

HLT And, and they were heading off in a... Don't remember the course...

BPW That was Waldron?

HLT Yeah. That was the... That was the course that I would have gone.

BPW Right.

HLT I remember thinking...

BPW All right.

HLT ...they are headed for the enemy but where are we going?

BPW Right.

HLT The air group commander is still way, way up there. Started wandering around, the rest of us are following.

BPW All right.

HLT And sometime after that, we're still wandering and I think....

BPW You definitely did not fly a straight, you know, course. Okay, okay, all right. You think what?

HLT And I, may be, may be my imagination, or what not, but I think sometime

after the torpedo squadron had left, that I saw ships off to our starboard because we were 20,000 feet.

BPW Now wait a minute. Off to your starboard, now?

HLT No, port. Port, port, port. Because we're at 20,000 feet...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... and as I say, you could see forever when you could see, which was most of the time.

BPW 1.32 times the square root of your height. That gives you a hundred, more, way over a hundred miles of seeing, theoretically. So you could see forever, right.

HLT So I, I'm sure I saw a ship's..

BPW You saw a ship...

HLT ...wakes.

BPW Off to your left?

HLT Off to the left.

BPW South of you?

HLT Well, there again, I don't know...

BPW All right.

HLT ... I can't recall what direction we were going.

BPW Don't you dare let me talk you out of anything. Okay, that's fine.

HLT Seems to me we were more or less on a northerly course but I don't really remember.

BPW All right.

HLT But we get going and nothing was said.

BPW You never heard Ring and Waldron get into it?

HLT Never heard a word.

BPW All right, great, okay. After a while you saw what you thought were the Jap fleet then.

HLT Yeah, I mean I assumed it was.

BPW Yeah. All right.

HLT And so we continued on...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ...and

BPW ...passed them.

HLT Oh, yeah.

BPW All right.

HLT And then I saw Mark, we were all getting lower.

BPW Now wait. Had you, had you turned around at that point to come back to the ship, uh, to the Hornet?

HLT No.

BPW No.

HLT I don't recall that we ever changed our course to chase the ship.

BPW Is that so?

HLT Not while I was still airborne.

BPW Okay.

HLT So the next thing I...

BPW Now how long was it after you saw the ship off to your left that you began to run

out... Guess...

HLT A guess would be, be 20, 30 minutes at the most.

BPW At the most.

HLT I would say.

BPW All right. Okay.

HLT And then the next thing I, that happened to my recollection, is I saw Mark apparently run out of fuel. He was the first one.

BPW He was the first one?

HLT Yeah, and I saw him go. I was, you know, crushed. I don't know what the proper term is, but I was really concerned.

BPW No doubt.

HLT There he is all by himself going down. Well I knew, to me, if you're going to go down anyhow, which at this time it looked like we all were, you'd go together. I mean at least you and your wingman.

BPW Yeah.

HLT So there he went all by himself (inaud) it was, he was still way, way off...

BPW Mile off, yeah. All right.

HLT So I mean he just went out of sight.

BPW Yeah.

HLT And....

BPW All right. Who was next?

HLT As far as I know it was Frank Jennings and myself. I don't recall seeing any others go.

BPW Is that so?

HLT I don't recall.

BPW All right. Let's get the, let's get the basic pattern for the moment. Let me, let me... Let's go back to the setup of your flight. Mitchell's wingman was who?

HLT I don't know.

BPW Talbot.

HLT Talbot?

BPW Yeah. Ruehlow's wingman, Hill.

HLT Hill.

BPW Kelly was...

HLT Gray.

BPW ... Gray. All right.

HLT That's all I know for sure. My wingman and Mark's.

BPW Okay. You and Jennings were together so that left only Magda and McInerny. Were they ahead of you.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Uh-huh.

HLT Jennings and I, Jennings and I were on the, we were the last section.

BPW Yeah, I see.

HLT Everybody else was ahead of us.

BPW I see. All right. You saw only.... How tight were you?

HLT Oh, as a squadron, not particularly tight. I mean we (inaud) but I mean not, we weren't really...

BPW Did anybody ever stray out of sight of anybody else? Did you always have them in sight?

HLT Yeah, we all stayed, pretty much stayed bunched together. And I don't recall seeing anybody else. And then Jennings, then he ran out of gas.

BPW Uh-huh.

HLT I don't know how much I still had but I was still going...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... but I just stuck right with him.

BPW You went on down.

HLT Yep. Which probably saved his life. (inaud) his raft.

BPW Oh, is that so? How long, how long were you... when were you picked up?

HLT I'm pretty sure it was the ninth.

BPW The ninth?

HLT Yeah.

BPW Is that right?

HLT I think it was, I've always thought I said five days. I think it was more, more like four and a half.

BPW Well, let me show you something interesting. I have a copy here of a short-snorter bill.

HLT Oh, yeah? Gee, I haven't heard that term for...

BPW Not in a long time. These are both sides of it. So that plane picked them up. The same plane picked up Talbot on the 8th and Ruehlow, Mitchell and Gray on the 9th. And that's, it's a ten dollar bill.

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW So I asked Mitchell if was his. I offered to give him ten dollars and Gray, but they both, they both, they both disclaimed, uh, must have been Ruehlow. Ruehlow must have hauled that ten dollar bill out of his pocket and given it to them. And how we ever got it, I have no idea. I have no idea but it showed up. Maybe (inaud) but that's an interesting question. You see it pegs the pickup point pretty nicely and the fact that it said 32 knots there. My God, I said to Mitchell, "32 knots" (inaud). "What were you doing in that life raft"? I said it was probably gusting.

HLT That's a pretty steep wind.

BPW Yeah, very, very, steep indeed. (inaud) And I questioned that and he said, "Well, you know, gusting to 32 knots". He said it was a very, very rough day.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And he said that when he took off, he made the (inaud) busted it.

HLT Oh, yeah?

BPW Busted it. And they cracked the hull. When they landed they had to go taxi up on the ramp or the plane would have sunk. So it was, it was blowing pretty good. There's no doubt about it but I think the 32 knots is a little bit....

HLT Well, when we got picked up it was, it was rough.

BPW It was rough, too?

HLT It wasn't, I didn't think it was 32 knots, probably, but it was, it was a rough, fairly rough day.

BPW Let me ask you, did you have trouble with the raft? Did it turn over or whatever? Did you and Jennings tie your rafts together?

HLT Yeah.

BPW Uh-huh. And did you turn over or were you able to keep them upright?

HLT Uh, no, we didn't turn over.

BPW Those, those rafts had a great deal of stability, sort of. They'd just pop up to the top. They remind me of Boston Whalers a lot. I have a little Whaler down.... and for all the world out in the ocean, just like one of those damn life rafts, just pops up to the top of the, top of the waves. But now, uh, was...

HLT Was Johnny Talbot out by himself?

BPW Talbot has a family and his oldest son's named Marcum.

HLT Oh, yeah? My question was, when we was picked up...

BPW Oh, he was by himself.

HLT By himself?

BPW He said that he went down with Kelly.

HLT Oh?

BPW Mmm-hmm, and...

HLT That's strange.

BPW ...landed close by but... I think, again, he, he, I have to rethink his story.

HLT Yeah. I'm not saying it's wrong but I was, sort of, I was almost sure that...

BPW He went by himself.

HLT I saw Mark go by himself.

BPW Well you were the last man back and so help me, John, you saw anything that went on and, you know, that's, that's how it was.

HLT There was Johnny. Who was he flying on?

BPW He was flying on ...

HLT On Mitchell?

BPW ... on Mitchell. That's what he said. He said he was responsible for navigating and all this, that, and the other thing. He said he was working the hell out of the YE-ZB and let me ask you, real quick, about that YE-ZB. Were you tuned in on anything?

HLT Not that I can recall.

BPW That's a story within itself. That's a story within itself.

HLT I don't know how much longer Mitchell...

BPW Not long.

HLT ... Ruehlow and Gray...

BPW Not long.

HLT ... were airborne.

BPW Do you recall the time? Do you have any idea, time wise, when you went in?

HLT No.

BPW No?

HLT No. I assumed it must have been between three and four hours after we took off. I don't really remember.

BPW Mmm-hmm.

HLT I probably had it all logged on my raft.

BPW Yeah. Oh, that's a good one. Damn, I'd give anything for that raft.

HLT Yeah, well, I think probably I did it in anger.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Right. I was bitter about the whole damn thing.

BPW Right.

HLT I think that's probably why...

BPW Uh, when did you.... How... When did you leave the dive bombers?

HLT Uh...

BPW Time wise, what kind of a time frame was there?

HLT You mean...

BPW When did VF-8 leave the dive bombers?

HLT I really don't recall leaving them. As I say, I don't remember visibly Waldron kicking out...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ...at that time.

BPW And Waldron took off to your left.

HLT I'm pretty sure it was.

BPW All right but how far, how, how.... that wasn't too far down the road, was it? I mean, what, an hour?

HLT Oh, it, it was... Oh, it must have been a lot longer than that. It was after we had been milling around, wandering for a long time.

BPW Was?

HLT Wandering at that time, yes.

BPW Well let me tell you. It was an hour and twenty minutes.

HLT An hour and twenty minutes. All right.

BPW That Mr. Waldron turned north...

HLT Oh, yeah.

BPW and attacked the Jap fleet in 10 minutes.

HLT From the time he broke off?

BPW One hour and thirty minutes from the Hornet, okay? Now, that was from the time, not from the time that he left but from the time you left. You left the Hornet very close to quarter to ten, Hornet time.

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW Because you were the last ones off, you know, see? Launched the CAP, then Grove was, he had to come back. Then they launched the TBSs, then the SBDs and then you'd gone and you, personally, weren't the last one, I don't think. I think that Talbot was.

HLT Yeah, well...

BPW But that's immaterial.

HLT Yeah we were assigned our own planes, you know.

BPW Yeah.

HLT So wherever your plane happened to be didn't mean that's where you were in the...

BPW No.

HLT ... flight. You may take off second and still be last.

BPW Yeah, oh sure. That has nothing to do with that. Who, uh, who made the assignment of the pilots that were to make that flight?

HLT No idea, no.

BPW Uh, okay. So that with all those planes taking off ahead of you, see, and they only

started at 9:00, had to be damn near 10:00 before you really were all cleared out.

HLT Yeah.

BPW See what I mean? Now then, and Waldron, one hour and twenty minutes later, sighted the Japs and they were on his right. He turned to the right, see. So it's curious, that you tell me that he drifted off to the left.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Which would have put you on the Jap fleet side of it but...

HLT Well, of course, I don't, as I say, we, uh, we weren't going on one course. We were wandering so maybe it's the time that he took the, that he took off, that he turned out to the north. We were going northeast or something.

BPW Yeah, right. I got you.

HLT Milling around.

BPW I got you. And you, in essence, were the tail-end charlie. You had nothing, there was nothing you were going to do but to follow the guy up in the front of you.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And I had to laugh at Tappan. He was telling... he said, "I was right in the middle of all of these SBDs. Right in the dead center of them." He said, "There were guys behind, guys in front of me. All I was just doing was right there. Not looking right, left or otherwise, I was just trying to keep a place.." Uh, do you think that... Well, it seems remarkable that you missed the Jap fleet because, altitude wise, you had plenty of, whether you were south or north or any other damn place, you had plenty of ...

HLT Visibility.

BPW ... visibility to be able to see them a country mile but there's hardly room for criticism because, my God, every... Hell, all of McClusky's... had something to say. No question about it. There was something, there was some reason why you didn't.

HLT Well, visibility was only unlimited, not all around... there were numerous clouds.

BPW Sure, sure, and that's the answer to it. There's no question about it.

HLT Where there were the areas where you could see, you couldn't see very far....

BPW Yeah, right. Well, the question of, of when you left the dive bombers, when you became separated from them (inaud)

HLT I don't know.

BPW You're not sure when he turned around and headed, started heading back to the Hornet, are you?

HLT I don't think we were headed back to the Hornet at the time I went down.

BPW Really?

HLT I don't... not that I recall.

BPW All right. Did you hear anything at all on the radio at any time?

HLT Not a peep.

BPW Not a damn peep.

HLT Nothing.

BPW Okay. Did you, did you have, oh, all right. Did you have the YE-ZB business hooked up?

HLT I assume so but I don't recall. I don't recall.

BPW You don't recall dit-dit-dah?

HLT No. Not at that time but whether it was on, off or otherwise, I don't

remember.

BPW Do you know whether you had an IFF in your plane?

HLT No, not in those days I don't believe.

BPW No, okay. Do you recall seeing any other airplanes besides the SBDs?

HLT No.

BPW Never saw them?

HLT Never saw them.

BPW When you saw the, what you thought were the Jap ships, okay, did you see any airplanes then?

HLT No.

BPW No. How far away were they?

HLT Oh, long ways.

BPW Long ways. Could you see the wakes?

HLT Well that's all I actually could see. You know, you could see...

BPW Oh, I see. The plane... you were so high that the ship was really little.

HLT Well, between that and maybe the reflection, (inaud) but, you know, I could see what I believe were several wakes.

BPW Right, and they.... Did you see smoke?

HLT No, no.

BPW All right. But they were a pretty good distance away. What would you guess, 10, 20 or 50?

HLT (inaud)

End of Tape 1/Side 2

Tape 2 Side 1 4/4/82

BPW Well, thanks. This ought to hit the spot. The... Let me show you something here. This is a copy of Kelly's log book and going back to April the 18th of '42, you, no doubt, will recall that that was the day in which Doolittle took off. Do you remember that momentous occasion?

HLT Oh, yes. I was out there watching.

BPW Where were you, where you watching? What was your point of vantage?

HLT I think I was up on the signal bridge.

BPW On the signal bridge?

HLT On the signal bridge.

BPW Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

HLT It was quite a, quite an exciting event.

BPW It certainly must have been. Tappan had an amusing vantage point. He was apparently standing in one of the forward gun positions toward the bow and he said it was rough as the devil. The ship was going up and down like this and he, when it went down he lost his vantage point and he couldn't see and then when it would come up where he could see better or something, but in any event it must have been blowing pretty good that day. On, on the 18th, there was a combat air patrol launched immediately after they off-loaded. Do you recall that? Did you make that

flight that day?

HLT I don't think so.

BPW No?

HLT Uh-huh. I don't think so.

BPW Kelly did. Talbot said he did and Mitchell said he did.

HLT I don't recall. I may have.

BPW You know...

HLT I remember I had a, it was either that day or the next or somewhere right after that, it was still very rough I remember, I had a, I made a...

BPW rough landing.

HLT ... lousy landing and crashed into the (inaud)

BPW Oh, in the island. Oh, dear.

HLT Well, I, barrier, but I mean was... It was very rough.

BPW Yeah, yeah. Were you on the way back to Pearl Harbor then?

HLT Yeah. So I (inaud)

BPW Uh-huh. So that wiped it out, did it?

HLT Pretty much.

BPW Well let me ask you this, Mr. Tallman. Do you know what... I'm confused. I don't know and I haven't been able to find out, what those damn letters designated. The character of the flight. It looks like Z would probably be CAP but what the hell is N, and what's those, what's T...

HLT Well...

BPW ... would you say?

HLT Usually N was training.

BPW All right.

HLT They changed, they changed these over the years.

BPW Well different people were doing different entering, too, I suppose.

HLT Yeah, they.... Gee, I don't... Doesn't ring a bell at all.

BPW Is that right?

HLT I mean in some of my later log books, why....

BPW Yeah.

HLT ...I wrote down the... different from what they used to be....

BPW Yeah, yeah.

HLT I'd say that's probably Combat Air Patrol.

BPW Yeah.

HLT ...(inaud) I think, this N, I think, is training.

BPW Uh, let me ask you. Do you remember when you went on Combat Air Patrol, did you use the YE-ZB signal at all or did you stay in sight of the carrier?

HLT (inaud)

BPW Uh-huh.

HLT I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I think we generally didn't get too far away from the carrier. In fact, I guess the only time we ever got any, out of sight of the carrier was when we were vectored off to look at something.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Otherwise we were...

BPW Yeah, right around it.

HLT ... right around it.

BPW Do you recall down in the ready room on the day of the take off, on June the 4th, what the orientation of the grid, of the YE-ZB, what letter was north?

HLT No, no idea.

BPW Talbot was absolutely undone about it. He said that less than an hour out or something like that, they changed the orientation of that (inaud).

HLT I don't... I have no...

BPW Imagine that.

HLT ... I have no recollection of that at all.

BPW Well, you know the, the... Did you ever see or think you saw Kure? Now Kure is a little atoll to the west and the north of Midway.

HLT No.

BPW Never thought you saw anything? Did you ever see any change in the water? Where there would have been a shoal?

HLT No, no.

BPW All right. Let me.... Let me show you a kind of a chart that I made up. This is now going to be much revised but this is the track of the ships. The Enterprise and the Hornet with this black line like that. The Yorktown went from here to there but she was hit first and she was... Japan didn't (inaud) her the first time so she was not far away but a little... the Hornet, Mitcher's report says she was (inaud) when she was attacked by the dive bombers from the Hiryu report. Now the sequence of events, time wise, looked like this and I want to show you now.... you interrupt me any time you tell me anything that occurs to you or anything like that, if you will, please. This, now, these are all Zone 12 times. All the histories, Morison and Lord and all the rest of them translate all the things into Zone 12 time, all right? So in your thinking, all you have to do is to add two hours to these.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW And then it makes sense to you...(inaud) So, see, these times are Zone 12. Enterprise and Hornet were on Zone 10, so when I say that they started to launch the attack right here, the Hornet's log at (inaud) says that this was 8:55 she turned into the wind, at 8:55 and that was, and started to launch. She had completed at 8:06 and all of her, all of you guys, you guys were the last ones off, you, you had left by 8:06 and started, presumably, down this way.

HLT Yep.

BPW Now I have not been able to find a single person that could verify that this course was 240 degrees and a hundred, hundred and fifty-five miles (inaud). Lord and Morison had it so somebody told them. Somebody, you know, or whatever but nobody in your squadron has, and Talbot says that it was his job to know it. I mean, he considered it his job because, well, he looked upon himself as Mitchell's alter-ego, as it were, at, uh, you know, he was looking at the damn thing like crazy and when he came up with the heading and just as should have been the enemy, instead of that, it's a message from the captain wishing you God speed. So... All right. What happened was this, okay. Waldron's taken off. The SBDs have taken off. You're following them down here. What, do you remember what speed you indicated?

HLT No, no. Of course we were, the fighters were....

BPW I mean after you got, after you got...

HLT ... weaving around anyhow, you know.

BPW Yeah.

HLT No, I don't, I don't recall. I couldn't say. I, all I could guess is maybe 150, 160 but I don't know.

BPW Oh, it must have been much slower than that.

HLT Yeah, well could well have been. I just don't remember.

BPW Well, okay. That's pretty well laid out. Scouting 8, well, what happened then. Came down here and Waldron got right to here and that was one, that, at that point, at one hour and 20 minutes from this time here. So at 9:26 or 9:26 that he got to here, it's 36, 9:28, okay. Here he was. He picked them up and he turned and he immediately picked them up as soon as he turned. They had come down here. This is the Midway path. They had gotten to this point, that was the southern most at 9:17. Now mind you now, 9.. this is an 11:17 their time, okay?

HLT Yeah.

BPW An 11, uh, (inaud) but it was still an hour and a half after you took off, all right. Now that comes out to be about 120 knots.

HLT Yeah

BPW Well, true air speed, 120 knots.

HLT Yeah, that probably makes more sense.

BPW And, and I'll tell you what happened. Well a little bit later. We have lots of other verifications for that. You might have been, very well have been going faster but as you say, you were doing a hell of a lot more maneuvering. This is the first.... Well, I'm going to come to that. That's highly significant, this aspect of it and no one has emphasized this before. And you know... And it explains something that was a dead mystery to me. So I really buy it. I'll tell you that. I think you're 110 percent right. But anyhow, I'll tell you why in a little bit. So we come down here. Now this was what Waldron did and that sure as hell is what happened with Mr. Waldron. With what, as far as the fighters, dive bombers, what they did is, at this moment, beyond me. I, I have to, I have to make some kind of a, of a, I have a lot of information that I have to try to digest and make sense of but ultimately they turned around.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW And when they turned around, the first report that I have, the first solid thing that I have with respect to where the hell they were and what they were doing was at 11:00, they're here. 25 miles north of this, what everybody has given as the base course down here, see. And this base course was a damn good course. The right thing because they had, the only reason the Japs weren't right here was because they had been delayed...

HLT Yeah.

BPW ... right there with those Midway attacks. That's the only damn reason. Now, so whoever did that, and apparently the guys on the Enterprise, that's where I think it came from, not from the Hornet. I don't think, there's nothing that I can find of anything so far, that the Hornet people had anything other than what they had given you about the courses, the position, course and speed of the Japs when they were picked up by the PBY...

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW ... and this projection, you know. But everybody had their own projection, it

looks like.

HLT Well, of course, they gave us this. Why, we know where we are.

BPW Yeah.

HLT It's easy for us.

BPW Right, it's easy to...

HLT (inaud) ourselves.

BPW Uh, in any event, you know, this is what the, what the Morison and Lord and all the rest of them used. All right.

HLT Well, he doesn't happen to have what the winds was that day...

BPW Yeah.

HLT Direction?

BPW Oh, sure. The wind was, this was the exact direction of the wind and it was four knots at the time of take off.

HLT Oh, okay because I know when...

BPW Very mild wind...

HLT Well, when we landed it was (inaud)....

BPW All right. Now wait, let's wait until we get to that.

HLT The direction we were headed when Jennings and I went down was fairly, must have been, fairly much into the wind because when we went down, we continued on that same direction..

BPW Oh, where you glide down?

HLT Right. Where I glide down and land.

BPW Is that right?

HLT Generally the same direction. So the direction that the air group was headed..

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... was the same direction, was pretty much into the wind.

BPW Let me ask you this.

HLT Right where Jennings and I were.

BPW All right.

HLT Because we never made any big turn to get into the wind and land.

BPW I see. There was, of course...

HLT So the air group must have been heading, you know, pretty much in that direction at the time...

BPW Were you still following the air group? Did you still see those SBDs? Are you sure of that or...

HLT No.

BPW No.

HLT No, but it couldn't have been at the time Jennings and I went, I couldn't say that we still had the rest of the air group in sight but it couldn't have been...

BPW Just a few minutes.

HLT Not too much time involved.

BPW Couldn't of been half hour?

HLT I don't think so.

BPW No. All right. So, so you, now then, what happened was that, let me tell you something. What happened to the SBDs is this. The scout section and one, I mean

the scout group and one section of the bombing group came back together and eleven planes of bombing group went to Midway so they broke off. Did you ever see them break off?

HLT No, no.

BPW How often did you have reference to those, to dive bombers? Did you.... I mean, personally did you concentrate on keeping them in sight or ...

HLT No, I wouldn't say so. Of course, I mean, I'm with my squadron and going where they're going.

BPW Right, right.

HLT But, you know, I can recall seeing the, you know, the rest of the air group.

BPW Yeah, well, you saw Waldron go off.

HLT Generally, generally they were more or less ahead of us.

BPW Ahead of you. Well they were certainly at first.

HLT Oh yeah, but I mean it seems to me they were quite of bit, you know...

BPW After you, even after you caught up, you kind of stayed behind so that they would, could keep you in sight.

HLT Yeah, we were level or above... 20,000 (inaud)

BPW I'm sure you had. Well, they weren't that high, though. They were lower than that,,

HLT Yeah.

BPW ... the dive bombers. Do you recall them being below?

HLT Yeah, as I recall. Well, not specifically the dive bombers. The only vivid recollection I have is the TBDs...

BPW Right.

HLT ... they, which were below us.

BPW They were way below.

HLT Saw them going off.

BPW And they went off to the left?

HLT Yes.

BPW That's a good one. All right.

HLT So apparently...

BPW That's great.

HLT ... apparently, apparently we must have been heading northerly.

BPW You're telling, you're telling it like it is, boy, when you say something like that. I'll tell you that, Mr. Tallman and I appreciate that very much. That's how it is. Well, okay, so when you landed, you landed up wind and there is a significant thing that you'll, you'll see on here of, uh, over here. Mitchell said that he thought the first man down was Hill. Now Mitchell was flying up in the front.

HLT Yes, yes.

BPW So, so, you know, he hadn't any idea when in the hell you guys went down...

HLT No.

BPW but he said that Hill was. And I said, "Well, okay. Who was next?" and I said, "Well, how did you know it was Hill?" "Oh", he said. "Well, Hill was Ruehlows wingman and he was the first one down." Well, but he was, you know, he, I again, Mitchell, he didn't know who was in the second, he didn't know who his wingman was. He didn't, you know, he, he wasn't a biggie when it came to the assistance....

Then Tappan said, "Somebody said Kelly landed down wind". Now in order for somebody to say that Kelly landed down wind, it would be logical for somebody to have seen him.

HLT They'd have to be down there. Yeah.

BPW Now...

HLT No, I don't...

BPW The only person that you saw fall out was Kelly. How were you sure it was Kelly?

HLT Well, his plane number.

BPW You saw his plane number?

HLT Yeah, I don't recall what it was. I don't even know what my plane number was at this time but...

BPW Do you know that

HLT I knew it was Kelly.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Because we were... well, we were...

BPW Yeah.

HLT He was my best friend...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... and Steve Groves.

BPW Yeah, oh, Grove too.

HLT Yeah.

BPW God, one day. It did it, huh?

HLT Yeah. In fact there's a frigate being commissioned on the 17th of this month. Groves (inaud)

BPW I understand. Oh, that's nice, that's fine. That's fine. Well, all right, but that was the only one, the only plane that you saw fall out.

HLT Yeah. No, so, I couldn't say that Hill didn't go first but I don't recall seeing him. I don't recall seeing anybody else go down.

BPW Talbot said, Talbot said that Kelly went first.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Then Talbot said that he, he went down. He went down and landed within a mile of him so, and that Kelly never got out which, I don't know, you probably.... After you saw Kelly go down, the time interval must have been rather short before you went.

HLT Before I went down, yeah. I don't know how long it was. It wasn't but a few minutes.

BPW Yeah, let me ask you this. On this weaving and moving about business, did you change your throttle setting or did you just....

HLT Very little. Very little. In fact, that's probably part of why you move around is so you don't have to change your throttle.

BPW Uh-huh. I see. I see. Yeah, that's right.

HLT If you're going a little faster than the plane that you're following, I mean...

BPW Just take a little dippy-doodle and get....

HLT Go like this to stay behind without having to jiggle your throttle back and forth.

BPW What was the effect on altitude? Now you were at 20,000 feet practically the whole damn time. Is that correct?

HLT It seems to me.

BPW Seems to you? All right. Talbot swears you were. Mitchell, he doesn't, he wasn't sure. I don't know how much he was sure of but he's a hell of a nice guy. I really like Mitchell. We've invited Mitchell to come up to give the foundation, we have Memorial Day the 30th of May and he's coming up from... to give the, the talk. I really like him. He's a hell of a nice guy but he really didn't, I don't think, I had the impression that, he, you know, didn't know what the hell was going on to be perfectly honest about it.

HLT No.

BPW But anyhow, let me get back to, let me ask you this.

HLT Does my smoking bother you?

BPW Not a damn bit.

HLT You're sure?

BPW I've got a cigar.

HLT I don't have to smoke.

BPW Listen. It bothers me unless you're going to let me smoke this...

HLT Go right ahead.

BPW ... smoke this a little bit. Look, it won't smell this place up, will it?

HLT No, no. This place is drafty enough so it gives you...

BPW Is your wife going to get after you.

HLT No. There's enough drafts going through this house that it's pretty...

BPW I see.

HLT ... air stays fresh...

BPW Oh, gee. That's terrible.

HLT I can open those doors over there and suck everything right up the chimney.

BPW Yeah. Uh, did, what is the effect of... of altitude on gas consumption?

HLT Well, once you get up there, generally it's, you get better gas consumption or more miles to the gallon anyhow.

BPW Uh-huh. Well that's what I thought.

HLT Takes using up quite a lot to get up there but once you get up there, you throttle back, (inaud) out, you're probably....

BPW You're better off.

HLT Do a little better.

BPW Mmm-hmm. Uh, how long did it take you to climb up? Let's see, what the hell. The rate of climb would have been about... What would you have used?

HLT See, I don't recall. I don't know. I've flown so many different kinds of planes and whatnot...

BPW Yeah,

HLT ... since then, I...

BPW Yeah.

HLT I, now I couldn't get into an F4F now and... I wouldn't know what to do.

BPW I'll tell you why I'm so interested in this. We have a, a curious kind of a thing. Started off, Lord apparently only talked to, and Morison maybe also, looks like, to only talk to Ruehlow. I stand to be corrected on that but that's what Lord told me and I

don't know whether (inaud) is still around. But, so a lot of the official story, as far as VF-8 is concerned, the fact is, about all there is was that result, of that conversation that Morison had, apparently, with Ruehlow and Lord picked up the same thing. Uh, the question is when you actually ditched. You all ditched within a damn few minutes of each other. I'm pretty well convinced of that.

HLT Probably within, at least within a half hour.

BPW Absolutely. Absolutely.

HLT I mean actually me being tail-end charlie, I should have gone first but, of course, it's a matter of how you, how your engine's tuned and how your....

BPW No question about it. They were all so close together. I mean the planes were pretty, well, standard thing. They didn't allow you to change any damn thing to personalize them.

HLT Yeah.

BPW ... and that kind of stuff so there... there's no such thing as they're being all exactly alike, but...

HLT No, well, Jennings must, his engine quit and I, I don't know how much I still had...

BPW Jennings, Jennings for you, Jennings was number two, then. Is that right? He was the second one to run out of gas after Hill.

HLT Yeah, I'm not sure about Hill. I never saw Hill go.

BPW Yeah, and you never saw Talbot.

HLT No, I assumed I would have since we were, you know, we were the last section....

BPW You could see them all.

HLT You could see them all.

BPW Okay. Magda was still going along.

HLT Yeah.

BPW McNerny.

HLT As far as I know.

BPW And then on your right or left or...

End of Tape 2/Side 1

Tape 2/Side 2

BPW And you never saw Talbot?

HLT No. I assumed I would have since we were, you know, we were the last section....

BPW You could see them all.

HLT You could see them all.

BPW Okay. Magda was still going along. McNerny...

HLT As far as I know.

BPW And then on your right or left or, you, you just, you literally were bringing up the rear.

HLT Yeah, we were in the rear but I still, you know....

BPW You could still see every plane there.

HLT Yeah, yeah.

BPW And you could see the number on Kelly's plane, seemingly.

HLT Oh, yes.

BPW Is that right? Okay, all right.

HLT I mean, I still had power when I landed which is, by the time you get down below 20,000...

BPW Oh, you did, you still had power, your engine was still going. It wasn't a dead stick?

HLT Oh, no. I had power on landing.

BPW You know what Gray told me? Gray told me he landed with his wheels down.

HLT Well, he's lucky.

BPW I could not believe that sucker when he told me that. He said, "I landed, I put the wheels down."

HLT He was, he had to have a little luck to, you know, to come out of a, a landing on that.

BPW Damn right.

HLT It was fairly, everything swells. You land on the wrong side of a swell or whatnot, you can really....

BPW Yeah, you had plenty of water.

HLT ... you can really bang...

BPW Yeah.

HLT I know Ruehlow, if I recall, he had a big split down his face.

BPW And he did something to his hand, too.

HLT Just the way he landed.

BPW Yeah.

HLT And I always thought that maybe, I hoped, that's what happened to Mark. That he was killed on landing rather than drifting around out there.

BPW No, there was no... Well, Talbot's very sure. Talbot's sure.

HLT I don't know how he would know.

BPW I don't know how he would have known because he never, he wasn't there but that's.... Uh, where was the, where was the life raft in those planes?

HLT It was right behind the head rest.

BPW How did you get it out?

HLT You had to get out on the wing and (inaud).

BPW And pull it right out. Did it inflate itself?

HLT No, you had, you had....

BPW Had to pull another gadget...

HLT Had to inflate it.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Excuse me.

BPW Sure. You know, let me talk a little bit more about those life rafts and getting it out. The idea when you landed, presumably, was to stall in or as close as possible to him.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW Still be flying into stall in at the slowest possible speed, of course. Is that...

HLT Yeah.

BPW ... generally the idea?

HLT And preferably on the back side of the swell.

BPW Yes, indeed. Uh-huh. Did, did you see Jennings hit or were you involved with your own landing at that moment?

HLT Uh, I suppose I saw him out of the corner of my eye because I was right with him.

BPW Oh, you did.

HLT We...

BPW Right together.

HLT Well, maybe 100 feet apart.

BPW Yeah.

HLT I mean, as close as we could fly together.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Probably, probably within 100, 100 feet apart because when we both got out and got our rafts, why, we, I don't recall that we had any problem getting together.

BPW Uh-huh. You just... Was there a paddle? Did you have a paddle or not?

HLT You know...

BPW Did you paddle with your hands....

HLT Yeah, I don't know whether those rafts had a paddle. I think they.... From there I went to TBFs and I had another session in a raft with that and they had, of course, a bigger raft...

BPW They had, they had a sail thing, too, uh cover...

HLT Mmm, I don't recall.

BPW You had some rations. Did you save your rations all right?

HLT Yeah. The rations we had in the F4Fs were, they were a big improvement for me. Not too long after rations, but... They had a bottle of milk and milk tablets...

BPW Straight out of the K-rations box...

HLT (inaud)I don't know. Tasted good to me. Water was the thing and the water wasn't in the, in with your raft. The water was, you had that in a regular, you know, canteen that you carried with you in your cockpit as I recall.

BPW Did you have it belted on? Was it on a belt?

HLT I don't remember whether it was on my belt or not. It wasn't in with the raft. Jennings didn't get his water.

BPW Oh.

HLT I had my water but it was only half full.

BPW Oh, God.

HLT That was the, that was the worst part of the whole ordeal is dying of thirst.

BPW Yeah.

HLT We shared that half a canteen.

BPW Yeah, take a thimble full....

HLT I can't, I can't..... By the end of the four days, you know, your mouth is all swollen up inside and you couldn't, you know....

BPW Yeah, I'm sure that it wasn't, well, you know that Mitchell never got his out at all. He never even got his life raft out.

HLT No?

BPW Never did. He and Ruehlow and Gray shared two, two rafts. And he said that he got in with Ruehlow and Gray was so goddamn big that he filled up the whole thing...

HLT I can't imagine two of anybody in one of those.

BPW God, they're the size of this table.

HLT You just, you just fit in the damn thing. You couldn't stretch out or anything.

BPW Oh, yeah. Well, so you got then and I suppose you saw planes come over from time to time and miss you and that sort of thing or is it...

HLT Not for... The first plane we saw was, I think on the third day, an Army

BPW Oh, 17 or 22?

HLT I think it was a 24.

BPW Is that right?

HLT Could have been 17. I can't... That's a little vague. It was an Army plane, you know, and they didn't see us. They were low. They went droning on...

BPW Did you have that, I suppose you had the mirror.

HLT No, no mirror.

BPW Didn't even have a mirror?

HLT No, we had these..oh, old Very pistols.

BPW Oh, you did?

HLT Like one that looked like an old (inaud) pistol... shotgun shells....

BPW Yeah.

HLT Yeah.

BPW To shoot up a red signal about 150 feet into the air, something...

HLT That could have been it.

BPW Did you... Was there fishing gear?

HLT No.

BPW No fishing gear. That was nature in the raw.

HLT Yeah, the emergency (inaud) were very sparse in the first part of the war.

BPW They sure were. Our stuff was much better than that.

HLT They made big improvements.

BPW Yeah. Very quickly. Well, so, so then were there any other planes after that before you were picked up?

HLT No, no.

BPW The next thing that happened was that you were picked up.

HLT Next plane was the PBY.

BPW Let me ask you this. What do you think about the drift? Did you, did you drift? Was your impression that you were drifting, blowing? I don't mean drifting. I don't mean that. I mean drifting through the water. Never mind the current. The effect of the wind is what I'm...

HLT Uh, on windy days, yeah, yeah. There was either one or two days that it was almost flat and glassy.

BPW So one or two days you....

HLT The first day it was a little rough and then, you know, the day we got picked up was quite rough. I don't know whether the days in between, what percentage were rough and glassy but I remember there were various...

BPW Were there any storms?

HLT No storms.

BPW Were there any rains?

HLT No rains.

BPW No rain? You were ready to be picked up.

HLT Oh, yeah.

BPW You were quite ready to be picked up, all right, yeah. You sure were.

HLT You spend all that shivering.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Because you're all salty. Shiver all night and in the daytime you're roasting.

BPW Did you keep all of your clothes on?

HLT Yeah. Well, let's see.

BPW How about shoes?

HLT Yeah.

BPW Kept them on. Kept everything on. Did you get badly sunburned?

HLT It didn't particularly bother me but I mean, I can take the sun.

BPW Mmm-hmm.

HLT That, that didn't bother me. I know it bothered Johnny Talbot because I remember seeing him in the dispensary at, uh, he was already there.

BPW Mmm-hmm.

HLT Dispensary at Midway when we came in and he had been cooked because he was fair...

BPW Yeah.

HLT complexion....

BPW I think you'd probably recognized him, today although he's put on a little bit more weight.

HLT Yeah.

BPW I guess his wife must have died. He showed up with a lady that, younger lady, that apparently is now... oh, I don't know. Well, your impression is that you were picked up on the same day?

HLT As Johnny?

BPW Or a day later.

HLT Might have been a day later.

BPW Same, see, Mitchell and Ruehlow and Gray were picked up the next day after that. That was the main thing.

HLT I think I, we were picked up on the 9th.

BPW You were picked up on the 9th.

HLT I know Johnny was already in the dispensary when...

BPW ... you got back...

HLT ... when we were, got back and went to the dispensary.

BPW Did you ever see Mitchell, Ruehlow or Gray?

HLT No, I don't where they went.

BPW Well I'm not quite sure whether their plane went back to Midway or went, whether it went all the way to Pearl Harbor.

HLT Yeah, may have.

BPW Yeah. But you know...

HLT The only thing.... As I recall there was only three of us in the dispensary at Midway and... or four, Stover, Magda, Talbot and myself.

BPW Not Stover.

HLT Not Stover?

BPW Uh-huh. Stover wasn't there. Magda, Talbot, no and Jennings.

HLT Oh, and Jennings, sure.

BPW Jennings. Four of you. That's all. That's who it was. And you don't know when... Were, were Magda, were Magda and McInerny there or just Talbot when you got there?

HLT I think they were also there. I wouldn't swear to it. I think they, I think they (inaud) uh, the only reason I remember Johnny is because he was so badly sunburned.

BPW Yes, yeah. You know, I'll give you an example of funny kind of tapes. When I talked to Mitchell, he said Ruehlow and Gray, he was flying along with Ruehlow and Gray, the last three. He said that Ruehlow and Gray went down and he said, "Where the hell am I going. I'm not proving anything." So he's figured they'd better stay together. He circled around and came down and didn't get, he said that he didn't shoot off any ammunition or anything. Plane was heavy and went down like a shot.

HLT Oh, yeah.

BPW And he never even got his life raft out. He got nothing out. He was swimming right now. All right, now that was... and they came over and got him and that was that. I talked to... Well, according to Lord and Morison, Ruehlow said that he was the last one down. I talked to Gray and Gray says, I don't have to tell you, that he was the last one. Now what kind of crazy talk is that. You know, everybody can't be the last one down and who the hell cares whether they're the last one down or not.

HLT Yeah.

BPW I mean, these are the kinds of inconsistencies that seem strange.

HLT Well, I don't know. I take anything that Mitchell, Gray or Ruehlow said with a grain of salt anyhow. I never cared too much for any of them.

BPW Well I think they were, they were not as, as.... Well, they were not on quite the same terms as you ensigns were.

HLT No, I mean we were all ensigns and we were all reserves.

BPW Yeah, that's right.

HLT And they were Naval Academy and what not. But that doesn't, I mean, there were senior officers, senior to us from the academy that we thought highly of.

BPW Oh, sure. I understand. I understand.

HLT There was a lot of difference between those particular three, weren't too popular with us ensigns. Looked down their noses at us, you know?

BPW I understand that.

HLT Some of the others were...

BPW And Stover, and Stover's book is real (inaud)

HLT Well, all of us ensigns got along fine.

BPW Yeah, apparently. And Kelly was, must have been quite popular.

HLT Oh, yeah.

BPW He was a nice guy. I really liked Kelly. He was a great Lacrosse player. He was All-American...

HLT Goalie.

BPW That's right. The foundation had picked up that... but I just wanted to tell you about that because it's the kind of nonsensical things that I have to put into proper prospective somehow.

HLT Yeah.

BPW You know? In order to have... But I started to say, you know, I have a, a, gotten into the thing so much, it's (inaud) thought about it to such an extent that I have a sort of a feeling for the characters in the cast and I have, I have, before I came here I said to myself, the one guy in this whole thing that's most like myself, I was saying, is you, is Tallman. And here, I'd never met you and didn't know anything, you know and, but, I had read, you know, and gotten, I got a feeling for all of these things and I knew Kelly real well and, and it's a funny kind of a feeling that you have about personalities and you get to know it. Uh, well, the reason that I was very much interested in the business of your moving around so much is really this. Talbot said that he had a watch on and there's no question about (inaud) and when he hit that water his watch stopped. And his watch stopped at 12:35. So he said he was in the water at 12:30 (inaud) and it quit. Went in the water with his watch. He said he ultimately took it off and threw it away but he was sorry that he had. It was a source of irritation to him. But that raises quite a question because this supported, 27 different ways from Sunday, no problem, you know, the time that you took off (inaud) 10:00, a quarter of ten, (inaud) Hornet time, now.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Talking about Hornet time. He hit the water at 12:30. He was really, he, his story is unshakable on that point. That meant that those planes (inaud) two and a half, two hours and 45 minutes, three hours at the very outside; very outside.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Now that (inaud) all of them had a longer flight, straight and level flying, normal situation, they should have gone three and a half hours, anyhow.

HLT I would think so.

BPW Is there any explanation that you could think of on that?

HLT Well, probably used up quite a lot of fuel getting it up to the altitude that we were toodling around at.

BPW Yeah, but on the other hand, you should have saved a little after you were there.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Except for all this jockeying around business.

HLT Yeah. We did a lot of that.

BPW Did you ever have the impression that you were, that you'd fallen too far back of the SBDs and that you wanted to speed up a little to catch up with them, or...

HLT Well, no.

BPW Wasn't any problem?

HLT No.

BPW About how long, do we have impression or can you think of any impression that you might have had... How long did it take you before you saw Waldron?

HLT You mean initially after takeoff?

BPW After...

HLT Gee, I don't know. I don't know.

BPW Now think in terms of, with respect now, you only had a chance to see him for an hour and twenty minutes. That's all you had, it had to be less than that time. Had to be within, you know....

HLT I wouldn't dispute that. It just seems like it was longer that we were...

BPW Sure. Oh, I don't doubt it. I don't doubt it. But there's no telling, there's no way right now outside of Talbot's story on the watch that the time going into the sea is set, I'll tell you that.

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW Whether here is where Ruehlow, Gray and Mitchell were picked up...

HLT That's a hell of a long way.

BPW That's a hell of a long way. The Jap fleet, you said you saw the Jap fleet a little while before you went down. The fleet was over here... a hundred miles....

HLT Well, I didn't say I saw the Jap fleets. I saw ships, wakes.

BPW Okay. And you know what ship's wakes, you know what ship's wakes they're coming down as, don't you?

HLT Yeah. If, if this location is correct, I would think it would be more likely I saw the ship's, these ship's wakes than these.

BPW Mr. Tallman, you are, you are, that's how it's coming down. You were back...

HLT Couldn't, couldn't have drifted there.

BPW (inaud)

HLT Even with the wind maintain.....

BPW Sure.

HLT Now the wind would be going...

BPW That's right. You're right. That's right.

HLT That's right. I remember. Now I remember thinking, talking to Jennings, I said, "I wonder how many days it will take us to drift to Japan", because that's the direction we were blowing. I remember that now.

BPW I'll tell you what I'm going to do.

HLT Japan was up in this direction somewhere.

BPW There's one bit of data that I haven't gotten and I have, I'm getting it. You know this whole area very carefully, has been for years, many, many years and very complete data (inaud) have charts set up. Very accurate. Very good. And I'm going to crank all of that in with respect to your (inaud) but the wind was, you landed in this direction, you know and you drifted that way.

HLT No, we had to land in this direction.

BPW No, but the wind was (inaud) here. You would of landed this way.

HLT Oh, that's right. That's right. We had....

BPW You were landing this way but you were drifting back that way.

HLT Right.

BPW Right? Is that correct?

HLT Yep. Yep.

BPW In other words, you landed southeast and the wind was out of the southeast, so to speak, and you ask Jennings how long you thought it would take to drift to Japan.

HLT I remember that now.

BPW You would have been drifting to the north and to the west.... Okay, and it was not, it was, shall we say 10 to 12 knots? Something like that?

HLT I would say that could have been, yeah.

BPW That's what Talbot figured it was.

HLT Sure.

BPW (inaud)

HLT I don't know. That seems a little high but...

BPW Well when you took off there was only four. That's right. There's no question about that, either.

HLT Yeah, it wasn't rough, rough taking off.

BPW Yeah.

HLT There may have been twelve , but it wasn't rough.

BPW Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm.

HLT Rough, we weren't pitching.

BPW Right, right, uh-huh. Well, it begins to come down to... time wise, okay, if you, the plane is just about, the plane references is they were off to the north of you from what you saw was our ships. (inaud) There's no way that you could have seen well enough to have been (inaud)

HLT No, no.

BPW In truth, what these ships did was to turn around and go this way. Go North, come back down south, and then go west. But the next day, of course, they was back over here. Sending out, they went on and put those jet cruisers and so on and so on.... What happened here was this. At 11:00, that's 1:00, at 1:00, all of the SBDs, uh, the scout bombers and one three-plane section or three-plane group of the bombing sections, three planes out of bombing were here. That's pretty well documented.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW I'll tell you why. Documented two ways. The Hornet's log says they were picked up on radar this time at that distance right there, that's direction and that distance.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW 13 minutes later they were sighted and the time is 120 knots worth of flying, okay?

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW So this, again, bears out about 120 knots, roughly. Truly air speed, 120 knots, whatever. Then they came right on in and landed and at 12:00, here, which would have been 2:00, they were all back on board. Ship was right there.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW When you went into the water, the ships would not, you know, was (inaud) not far away. You could have seen, theoretically, from 20,000 feet, seen them easily.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW Now, I'll tell you something else. Gray, this is between you and me and the gatepost. Gray, I think, is having a little trouble

End of Tape 2/Side 2, 4/14/82

Tape 1/Side 1, Fall, 1982

BPW That's all right. We'll just slide them right there. Okay. I got some interesting, interesting stuff from Grumman. Isn't that a beauty?

HLT Oh, yeah.

BPW Huh, isn't that pretty?

HLT Yeah.

BPW Okay. Grumman sent it to me and here's a whole, a whole thing on the F4F. I think that probably one of the, the funniest things that I saw in this whole book, they built, they went all the way up to F4F-7. I don't know whether you ever...

HLT No.

BPW ... knew of a 7.

HLT Never heard of it.

BPW But there was F4F-7 and the 7 was the plane, they, they kept trying to increase the, increase the range.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW And they were concerned with that, of course, after the, after the few lessons be, had to be learned, like Midway. And they built an F4F-7.

HLT Huh. No, never heard....

BPW In order to increase the, get this, in order to increase the range, they filled the wings with gasoline. They made them liquid tight. Filled the wings, they got something like 700 gallons in the airplane. All the voids were filled with gasoline. God, it was a flying bomb if I can ever imagine. So anyhow, they, they the factory tested it and they had what they, when they, on the, when they flight tested at the factory, they filled it up with gasoline and then they couldn't fly it around to get rid of the whole... after it was obvious that the thing was going to be a success, they said well, just, they, they had a valve, operative valve, and they jettisoned the whole thing and let it go out. A panel opened or something. So they decide they were going to build a hundred of them. The Navy built a hundred of these. These were just for recognizance. They didn't have any armor or anything like that. They were supposed, apparently, just for recognizance. So it came time for the Navy to accept it, so they had one down at Anacostia but so they wanted to, to, well, all the big brass assembled and they loaded all of the plane up and she struggled to get off that little short runway at Anacostia. Finally got off and into the sky and he, the pilot, circled around and around and around for a while and everything seemed to be fine. All right, and then they said, "Okay, now it's time to jettison." Well, and he flew up to, oh, pretty high, 20,000 feet or something. Well, it was in the early winter, about like now, apparently, that the test was made and it seems that they had put the regular gas tank that held 145 gallons, they had filled that up, but that's the only thing that they had filled with gasoline. All the rest they had filled with water.

HLT Oh...

BPW So when it came time to operate his jettison valve, nothing happened at all. So he had to, they had to clear out the traffic at Washington National and let the son of a gun start way down at the Potomac River and just grease her (inaud) loaded with, wings, and the wings were nothing but ice, solid ice cube. It was a flying ice cube.

HLT Yeah. Somebody forgot something.

BPW I'm sure that must have cost somebody his neck. But anyhow, you started to tell me about the difference between the air operations officer who was Foster, you say and Soucek was the air officer.

HLT Air officer, yeah. Well at that time I'm pretty sure the air operations came under the air office, air officer.

BPW Yeah, I see.

HLT Uh, later on after the war, why before they had, what they called an Operations Department..

BPW I see. I see.

HLT Yeah, and there were officers under that and CIC was under that.

BPW Oh, I see. Uh-huh.

HLT But I think back in '42, CIC and Air Op, Air Operations, was under the Air Officer.

BPW Mmm-hmm.

HLT At any rate, why Foster's memo went via Soucek so obviously he was....

BPW Had to be superior.

HLT ... he was superior.

BPW Yeah, I see. I mean, I was astounded that he would have written that. Why wouldn't it have been, the thing that surprised me, here it is, the thing that surprised me was why didn't the air officer write it.

HLT Well....

BPW I guess it was part of operations.

HLT Yeah, because see, this is where all this information was, in Air Ops.

BPW I see.

HLT CIC.

BPW I see.

HLT You know, that's where the communications of the airplanes are. Where the radar was, the fighter direction control and all that...

BPW That was all in one place.

HLT Is, is all, yeah...

BPW Really?

HLT ... all in one place and Foster was the...

BPW Who was the....

HLT ... honcho down there.

BPW What was Dodson?

HLT Communications Officer.

BPW Communications. Would he have had charge of the radar?

HLT Uh, not...

BPW Would he have had charge of the YE-ZB?

HLT Yeah, as far as maintenance and what not of it.

BPW Mmm-hmm. See here it says, "... no point option given but in lieu thereof, closing of the carrier was indicated." Which is, you know, what, what you said. Uh, the ensigns got that, all right. Off the, the teletype thing.

HLT Yeah.

BPW But there was no, there was no point options. There's no question about that and,

and Foster verified that again in a letter to me. Uh, when.... The thing that really is a puzzle... I want to make sure you have all of these things in a moment but the thing that is somewhat of a puzzle to me is who the hell was in that little meeting and what did they really say. I get it from several different sources that there was.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW Mitchell, for instance, said, "Oh, he went to see Captain Mitscher", see? And they discussed whether the fighters should... Well, that's Mitchell talking, see. That isn't exactly what happened. There were a lot of other guys at that little meeting, too. But when Mitchell was telling me the story, Mitchell was the guy who, who was, you know, went up to see the Captain about it. Well, the fact of the matter is that it looks to me, I think, Soucek must have been there or probably was there but Foster had to have been there and he thinks, and I'm, I'm, Foster said, "Listen, you've got to talk to Dodson". That's what Foster said, see. That's why I've been on, after Dodson, but I haven't been able to get him and I got off of this. I haven't been on this at all, so...

HLT Yeah.

BPW Too busy. And I'm not getting back on it at all. I'm not.

HLT Yeah.

BPW I'm satisfied now that I know what happened or at least I think I do. But there is no question but what you flew out. In my mind you flew out 260 or 265. There's no question.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW It was almost due west. Gray indicated that but he didn't seem to know but he said it was almost west and Mitchell said something like that. He said it was west.

HLT Yeah.

BPW But, but of course, I sent you the thing with Rodee. The conversation that I had with Rodee.

HLT Yeah.

BPW There was no question whatever in his mind and I couldn't even shake him off of it. I interrupted him and tried to get him...

HLT Yeah, I know, but I mean, do you have absolute faith in what Rodee said?

BPW I have absolute faith.

HLT Mmm-hmm. Because I mean....

BPW And I'll tell you why. Not because of... I don't know the personalities or anything, see?

HLT Yeah.

BPW That's uh, that's my, my, I'm short there but a lot of other stuff. There's a lot of other stuff. I'm almost convinced that Rodee is leading everything and not Ring.

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW Prange's book, that's the one thing with Prange, with a little variation, Prange said that Ring went out in the middle of the group. In other words, he was leading it from the middle.

HLT That could have been, yeah.

BPW You know what I mean?

HLT Yeah.

BPW Okay, now, it couldn't have been Johnson. It had to have been Rodee. Then Rodee was hit. That's true. Further more, Ring turned around and came back.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW No question about that. He came back and he landed with nobody, oh God, it must have been..... Well, Foster said that, you know, and he, when he came in and all these planes were missing, Ring had no knowledge of it. All... God, it was a disaster.

HLT Must have been.

BPW The psychological impact must have been traumatic, but in any event, the really interesting thing to me is why the hell did Waldron go down that 240 and everybody else do the other and furthermore...

HLT I can't understand that.

BPW No, and furthermore, you know, Mitchell gave inadvertent, gave a strong indication to me that they did take different courses...

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW ... because he was very pronounced in his talk to me about he was positively ordered to go with Ring.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Only Ring, not Waldron.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And, and not Waldron. And not Waldron.

HLT That's right, yeah, yeah.

BPW See what I mean? Ring, you're not to go with Waldron. Now if that's true, then those guys made up their mind in that little meeting who was going where.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW See what I mean?

HLT Yeah.

BPW And, and so I think there's more there, if anybody ever wanted to really, you know, pursue it, but not that there's anything to be gained, really, but to my mind I think they left the ship knowing that they weren't going to go together. I'm almost convinced of that.

HLT Yeah, I would say so. I read a pretty interesting book. And that's by George Gay. *Sole Survivor*, have you read that?

BPW No, I didn't.

HLT Well, last Spring, George Gay, I happened to read some little notice in the back of the paper about George Gay was going to have a lecture over here in Far River at the Battleship (inaud).

BPW Oh.

HLT So I went and saw George for the first time since Midway.

BPW Uh-huh.

HLT And, uh, So we had quite a nice reunion. He remembered me and gave a very interesting talk and he had his, his book that he wrote...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... in 1980. I guess that's when it was published. It was for sale which I bought a copy of and read it with great interest and, of course, he's got an advantage over any other pilot in the whole Air Group 8 because due to

circumstances, he's been talking and writing about that every since he got picked up 30 hours after he went into the drink.

BPW Right.

HLT So he's got a wealth of information that he put down. Not only that, he kept, he was one of these guys like Smokey Stover that kept a diary up to that time of all kinds of little things, you know.

BPW Yeah, yeah.

HLT So, and he was the Squadron Navigation Officer and he mentions that he saw, when Waldron came down from seeing the Captain with the rest of the squadron commanders, he saw, he and...

BPW Gay.

HLT ...talked to, Waldron talked to Gay because he was Navigation Officer and he points out that they weren't going to get any fighter (inaud) and...

BPW So they knew that.

HLT There's only a, course I guess Waldron had been, you know, trying to... he even went to the point of just, "...give us a spare F4F-4 and I'll have one of our pilots fly it." And they, they really wanted, you know, some protection but I guess the, there was, Mitscher or who, but they decided....

BPW Well Mitchell said that Mitscher would not change it. He said that they had made up their mind and they would not change it. Well, that again is, in retrospect, that doesn't that indicate to you that they weren't going to be together?

HLT Yeah, yeah.

BPW And they knew they weren't going to be together. Or at least Waldron knew he wasn't going to be....

HLT Well, that's what Gay indicates. They weren't.... They were going to be last off and they were going to roll on the surface. They weren't going to climb up with the rest of them.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Which this, you know, sort of, because I've been believing all these years that torpedo squadron was right up there with us and I saw them go off. Well now, obviously, I was, that was somebody else I was talking about. It wasn't the torpedo squadron.

BPW Well, it could have been.... It could have been, or could it? Yes, it could have been the, the torpedo squadron from the Enterprise.

HLT No.

BPW They were off later.

HLT I don't think so.

BPW You don't?

HLT No.

BPW But you were off first.

HLT Oh, yeah.

BPW You were way ahead of those other people. You were way ahead of those other people. But... Well, it is curious but I'm, as I say from just, without being able to nail it down any, positively, I'm, I'm just about convinced that Waldron knew he was going out 240 and Ring knew he was going out 265 and...

HLT Yeah.

BPW Ring knew he was going to turn south and Waldron knew he was going to turn north and I think that's about how it was.

HLT Well, I mean, I know Waldron, obviously, was going 240 but that's, that's the information the ship gave us where the enemy was. Where, why else would you go any other direction?

BPW That's right. Okay, that's right.

HLT And that bearing and distance was right. I mean, the distance was a little further...

BPW Yeah.

HLT It was, that was where they, the enemy, was.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Why in the hell you'd go in the other direction, I don't know.

BPW Really...

HLT So that's... I mean that's why I say you seem convinced that everybody deliberately went 265 but, I mean, Rodee says so, but Rodee's got some inconsistencies in his conversation with you, like he says, you know, "...well we went out straight three hours, 8:30 to 12."

BPW Yeah. Well...

HLT It was more like two. Had to be two.

BPW Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Well, yeah, yeah. He turned around before that. He didn't go out three hours.

HLT Yeah.

BPW But, but that was not as, I know, when you get nailing it down, it's difficult. Tappan, you see, now Tappan was another guy who's down, that lives right down from me and I talked to Tappan really first in this whole thing just because he was right there in Baltimore. Tappan was in, was right in the middle of Rodee's bunch.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW See? So Tappan has a pretty good, and he's pretty savvy...

HLT Yeah.

BPW He's on the ball and he said, "No," he said, "We didn't find them. Hell, we didn't turn south." He said, "We turned around."

HLT Yeah.

BPW He said, "We couldn't have gone five or ten minutes south." He said, "We turned around to the left and came right on straight back." And that's what Rodee said. Rodee said, "... turned right around and came right straight back on the YE-ZB." And then, even the Hornet's log picked them up at 11:00 and there was no way they could have been any other place. They could not have flown from down below up to that radar point and come in. Furthermore, Foster said he tracked them out in the beginning. They went right straight, straight...

HLT Oh, he did?

BPW ...on their course. Right straight on their course but he didn't give me their course.

HLT Yeah, but he didn't give...

BPW Didn't give me the course, no. He couldn't give me that.

HLT But...

BPW He said they went right straight on but coming back. Now you see, Rodee and

Tappan both say they turned, went straight out, turned right around and came right back. There was no ifs, ands or buts.

HLT The Hornet...

BPW The log?

HLT No, not the log. The report of the action of uh...

BPW Battle Action Report...

HLT Yeah.

BPW Yeah.

HLT They say the squadron went out on the prescribed course.

BPW Yes.

HLT Well, the prescribed course would have been 14 uh, 240.

BPW No, I don't think there was a prescribed course. In lieu, well, all right, okay.

This, if you'd want to.... no point option given, but in lieu thereof, closing of the enemy was indicated. That's all. The whole thing we have that I can see that, that where, there's nothing that I could find that they were ever given 240.

HLT Uh, well, let's see. I'm sure you've got it here.

BPW I don't believe so. Have you got it.

HLT Yep.

BPW All right.

HLT Incidentally, Lundstrum did send me about 50 pages of some of his...

BPW Uh-huh...

HLT ... book and then somewhat later on, Dick Groves, who you've communicated with...

BPW Yes.

HLT ... he sent me another 15 or 20 pages which...

BPW Oh, for goodness sake.

HLT ... that he had copied, photostatted and...

BPW Uh-huh.

HLT ... gave me which were more about Groves' part in it.

BPW Uh-huh.

HLT Yeah, I thought it was pretty well written.

BPW Oh, Lundstrum?

HLT Yeah.

BPW I was, I was surprised. I really was. Here's something we can refer.. a, a plat we can refer to... Here's the Battle Action Report of the Hornet, plus a chart.

HLT The Enterprise sure had a lot...

BPW Now the Enterprise..

HLT ... much better...

BPW Oh, yeah. Well, she was the flagship. She was really the flagship and I think that was a, the, the trouble, the whole damn thing. I don't, I don't think that it was a coordinated thing.

HLT (inaud)

BPW It's a mess. A mess.

HLT Yeah, the Enterprise one is very, very good.

BPW I brought duplicates of that stuff. I didn't know whether I'd been sure and sent you everything that I had or not. Have you got a pilot chart? Did I send you one of

these pilot charts?

HLT No, no.

BPW All right.

HLT You didn't send me one of those.

BPW One of these things. This is an overlay of it. Was it part of what I sent you?

HLT I thought you did but I guess I ... because I also get...

BPW ... some other stuff?

HLT ... some from Dick Groves.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Do you recall whether you ever found out the status of Ensign Cook?

BPW Cook? No, I did not.

HLT Because, not Dick Groves, but Jack Nicholson, who is a, an old friend of Steve Groves...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... he, in the last letter I got from him, he wondered if I knew whether Cook was still living or not or his whereabouts.

BPW I can find anybody. I can find any of them. I have that, I have your, your flight jacket from Pensacola and everybody's in it.

HLT Oh, yeah?

BPW Everybody's in it and that's how I found everybody. I found you. I found everybody right out of that thing. It was amazing. I don't remember what you're, what you're saying here.

HLT That's what I got from Lundstrum.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Here's some more from Lundstrum that Groves sent me. Don't tell me I'm dreaming again.

BPW Well if you're not, you've got some information that I don't have. Now Lord and Morison, you understand, remember they said, "Oh yeah, the point option course is 240, 155."

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW There's no question about that. And that's true. The Enterprise, that's what the Enterprise gave their people.

HLT Yeah.

End of Tape 1/Side 1 - Fall '82

Tape 1/Side 2 - Fall '82

Empty tape.

Tape 2 (middle) side 1

BPW When I went to see Gray, he lives up in Philadelphia in a beautiful place and nice, and it was 10:30 in the morning so I, we went into a room just like this, sort of, and set up and everything. Ten thirty and all ready to start, and oh, just a second, I think I'll get a little eye-opener. Would you care for one? I said, "Well, gee, I just finished breakfast." So he comes back with a pretty good healthy eye-opener and well, a

little while later, I felt that I'd better join him. We were going to go along and so I, I said, well, it kind of went down hill and, uh, after a while. I asked questions and they had to be.... you know, interpreted, I felt as leading questions and he had given the answer that he thought that I wanted to hear; that type of thing. The conversation disintegrated a little but he had some interesting observations and again, I think he was influenced by what he'd read and other things. I had the feeling that he was trying to tell me the official story instead. Regardless of hell...

HLT Yeah.

BPW He said, "Oh, yeah, we went to Kure. Sure, I saw it. No question about that, we circled it." Here's Kure, down here.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW And then he said, "we went back and we flew over a Jap fleet. We saw them burning." "Oh", I said. "You saw them burning?" "Yeah." And, well, you know, time wise, it was a total impossibility.

HLT Yeah.

BPW See. Where was I? And the thing, it, it didn't hang together. However, he contributed something that he was no, that he was unshakable of and that is the YE-ZB signal. He said, "When we were trying to get back to that ship, I was getting a dit-dit-dah, dit-dit-dah, a U, uncle". And I said, "Well, what was the heading?" "Oh gee, don't know what the heading was", and he said they changed it anyhow and I, I couldn't imagine, God. Then when I get out and talk to Talbot, so help me, God, Talbot says the same thing.

HLT Oh, yeah?

BPW And Talbot was really hot on the YE-ZB. He said he was working. Talbot said that he was leading the flight at the time that we're talking about now, you know, last thing. And Gray said Mitchell turned the lead over to Ruehlow and Ruehlow flew over beside him and, you know, where the hell are we? Gray said he was getting a perfect signal, man, right up, plain and that was.... Well Talbot, I didn't tell Talbot that. I just sort of listened to Talbot and I asked..... So Talbot was working it like crazy. He said he was flying, he had a good signal and he would fly into the overlap and then turn right, last thing that he did and then fly back into it to get the one signal again and then, and then turn up, keep going up. But, and he said, Talbot said, that he flew right. That he flew right over the Jap ships. He saw them burning. Now time wise, Christ, it's an impossibility.

HLT I would think so, yeah.

BPW There is just.... Let me tell you, the Jap, the Japs, when Waldron, they wiped, Waldron was the first aircraft carrier planes that attacked.

HLT Right.

BPW He was the very first ones that hit them.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW They were unhurt at that point. They were unhurt. They had gone through six attacks from Midway planes. Christ, everything take, Midway had everything but the kitchen sink going after them and, and, but they caught hell from the flights coming down...

HLT Right, yeah.

BPW ... and all that. But never mind that. Waldron was the first of our aircraft off the

carriers that attacked the Jap fleet and it was at 9:28. And they had...

HLT Where did this (inaud) come from, 9:28?

BPW Uh, it, it's, came, it's absolutely unanimous with all the histories.

HLT Oh, okay.

BPW And I think that the Jap, all the Jap's reports are the same and Morison has it. They all have it and Waldron broke radio silence. Didn't say where they were but where that, when he was going in, okay? And they heard the attack with very little doubt about that time. That time is pretty well set by a dozen different ways.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW I'm absolutely convinced of that. That that's true. Even from the Jap, the Japs had it, had it well documented too. Not from...

HLT I'd think they'd have it better documented than anybody else.

BPW Oh yes, they did. And not, not just, you see, what happened was, the Japs, all of the damn carrier records gone but the other ships had it too.

HLT Sure.

BPW See? You know there were battle ships and everything and they weren't sunk. And they took a lot of all this going on and their records are in tact. The times were documented, well documented from, on, from their side and Morison got all of that and Lord picked it up too and he, Lord did a great job. He did interviews. Talked to all of them and all that sort of thing. Fujita's still alive. Anyhow, they had about, anywhere from 35 to 50 Zeros in the air, waiting for them. And they just cut him to absolute ribbons. Gay brought up the ass-end of that thing. He was the tail-end Charlie of the TBDs. Lord apparently the telling got a little bit exciting there, too, because if you want, it depends on who you want to believe with respect to what happened to Mr. Gay. I don't know whether Gay is still alive or not but Talbot says that he, Gay, was there and he talked to Gay. Gay told him in the hospital that he never saw a Jap plane, uh, Jap ship, uh carrier. He saw Jap ships but he didn't see the carrier. He never, he said he never got to the point where he, he met the carrier and was shot down. Well that's quite different from how it came out in the history books...

HLT Yeah.

BPW ...as you know.

HLT Yeah, well I always took that piece of history with...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... a grain of salt.

BPW So anyhow, but that's where they were. Now when they, then the other torpedo, the torpedo planes from the Enterprise attacked and from the Yorktown attacked at the same, uh, consecutively. They were one right after the other one. Waldron was first and then they came, and then they came again and it took approximately three-quarters of an hour to an hour before they were all wiped out. Now they weren't... the ones on the Yorktown, three of them, three or four of them got back but they were unsuccessful. They never got close enough to drop or anything. So that took it up to a little after 10:00, about 10:15 and the TBDs were gone or they had made their attacks and that was about it. Well it was 10:26 or if you want to go back to Hornet time, 12:26. 12:26 when McClusky had best dove on them and the guys from the Yorktown all in 6 minutes, from 12:26 to 12:32, the three Jap carriers were hit.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW Now Talbot says his watch stopped at 12:30 but it quit at 12:35, okay? These carriers had continued on up this way and a little bit that way, a little to the West. They were up in here about the time McClusky, Best and all of them arrived, they were about up in here. You know, like a hundred miles from over here.

HLT Yeah.

BPW This is sixty. Each one of these. A long, long, long way from over here.

HLT That's for sure. How valid do you think this position is? I mean it's... this is the, this is the latitude and longitude that was on the short-snorter bill.

BPW All right, now....

HLT This is sort of hard to believe.

BPW Right. All right. All right, let's question that. The guy the day before the same plane was on the same patrol. He picked up Talbot the day before, all right? The next day he comes back on the same patrol and picks up Gray and Ruehlow. Now his navigation, let's suppose that it was, you know, not too good but those PBY guys were pretty goddamn good navigators.

HLT Oh, yeah.

BPW I'm here to tell you.

HLT Yes.

BPW Those patrol planes. That's all they did is navigate.

HLT Yeah, and of course they knew they were back to Midway, too.

BPW They, this was their search sector out of Midway, and they flew back and forth on that and that's what they did. They all had sectors, search sectors.

HLT Yes.

BPW Now, okay, that's the only thing that I have to pin that on unless you're telling me now. You see, you saw ships right before you went down, didn't you?

HLT Well, maybe a half an hour before.

BPW All right, let's say a half an hour. How the hell far are you going to go in a half an hour?

HLT Yeah. Not too....

BPW You're not going to go a hundred miles.

HLT No.

BPW Over a hundred. Nothing like it.

HLT No.

BPW You can't tell me that this position is wrong by a hundred miles. Of course 75 or 80 miles, I can't believe it.

HLT No, no, I just..

BPW I can't believe it.

HLT I just wonder about the possibility that it was written down wrong on the short-snorter bill.

BPW Mmm.

HLT I mean, I'm sure the PBYs knew where they were all the time because, you know, hell, I know when we were picked up, zing, right back to Midway. So they knew where they were but possibly it was just written down wrong.

BPW How long a flight was it back to Midway?

HLT Oh, (inaud).

BPW What time did you land there? Was it, was it noon or when were you picked up?

Was it in the afternoon or morning or....

HLT I think it was in the afternoon, late in the afternoon. I didn't seem like too long a flight to Midway.

BPW Talbot said it wasn't.

HLT It didn't seem like too long.

BPW He said, he says he was convinced that they were very close to Midway because he kept, well, not, I don't mean close, I mean, he said that he saw a number of planes. He was apparently flown over, and I think as I recall, Mitchell kind of verified that they had, they had several times they had, been over flown and missed.

HLT Yeah, well we were only over flown once by this army plane...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... not too far away. Within a mile....

BPW Well I have.....

HLT ... apparently on a search because he was low, 500 feet or so.

BPW Now we have, we now have four guys, including yourself, that say they saw ships right before they went down. Four guys. Gray, he swears it only he was, he was looking at Jap ships, okay?

HLT Burning.

BPW Huh?

HLT Burning.

BPW Burning. Would say, hey how about putting out a lot of smoke. Oh, burning...

HLT Yeah.

BPW Yeah, okay. Talbot says, "Flew over the Jap ships right down there." Wasn't any question in his mind uh, and yet it was his watch. It was totally impossible by his watch.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Time wise even, you understand?

HLT Yeah.

BPW Impossible but there was Gray and Talbot and Ruehlow, now mind you the first report was handed down, Ruehlow says, "Oh, yes." He looked off to the North and he saw smoke (inaud) and he said, well, they translated that in his own thinking as Jap ships, all right? So that we have now four people that think they saw ships. They saw wakes. They saw something before you went down.

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW Now this indicates very strongly what the hell you saw, all right.

HLT It does. You know, on the, as far as the navigation training, say, Talbot and Gray....

BPW Gray, were the only two.... They were the only two ones that were working.

HLT Yeah, I don't recall ZB at all. In fact, as far as I was concerned, I don't recall what we were heading back to the carrier. I thought we were still milling around searching for the Japs. I wasn't aware that we were trying to find home. Never was.

BPW Is that so?

HLT But...

BPW But there was no radio silence. You didn't talk to anybody.

HLT I didn't talk. I didn't hear any....

BPW Did you hear?

HLT No.

BPW No, didn't hear. What frequency were you on? Do you remember that? 3290 or something?

HLT Gee, I haven't any idea. We were all on the same....

BPW Mmm-hmm.

HLT But I kept, you know, navigation plot...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... uh, up until the time that we started to do all this milling around. Changing course, following the air group commander. And then I, you know....

BPW Busy following along.

HLT I'm busy following my section leader and it's hard to do anything on a plot. I may have kept notes but, you know, my navigation went to pot after we got....

BPW Somewhere down the road.

HLT Somewhere where, down where I assumed we were going to find the enemy.

BPW Right.

HLT And when we started wandering off this course that, I thought we were heading for the enemy, that's when I sort of let my navigation....

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... go by the boards. So I was never aware that we were, if we were, trying to find home base again. I thought we were still looking for the, looking for the Japs.

BPW Uh-huh. But you must have been really concerned. Do you recall your concern about running out of fuel? You had to have been concerned about that, although you still think you had an hour left, didn't you?

HLT Oh, no, no, no, no. I didn't, we didn't have much. The gas gauges were way down.

BPW Yeah, I see.

HLT My main concern started when, when we, instead of heading where I thought the Japs were, we started wandering off. You know and as I say, I saw Waldron go off and I, he was going off in the direction that I would have gone on to get the Japs and I wondered why in the hell aren't we going that direction?

BPW I see.

HLT But from then on we just started, you know, changing course and what not.

BPW Yeah.

HLT I let my navigation go by the boards just trying to keep up.

BPW But Talbot verifies that. He says, "Christ, changing all the time."

HLT Yeah.

BPW But he, he was trying to get back to the ship. There was no question about that. Mitchell said, commented that he felt that he could have been faulted by not, for not trying to make Midway. He said that he thought maybe they could have made Midway. Well, that might have been depending on where in the hell you were, really.

HLT Yes.

BPW You say you saw Waldron go off to the left.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW Which and Waldron, there's no question about where Waldron was. He was here.

HLT Yeah.

BPW There's just no question about it. He flew right down that line right there.

HLT Yes.

BPW And he went right there. Five minutes after he turned to the right he turned to the right five minutes after he did he was right into it and fifteen minutes later he was down. The whole damn squadron was down. They were gone in fifteen minutes because, see, they were just waiting for him. Absolutely waiting for him. Their scout plane. Now Talbot said that he, he, personally saw a Jap float plane less than an hour out, pass underneath of him, underneath of you all. And that bears out because there was a float plane there.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW There's no question about that. Somewhere out there. Because the sight, the fleet had been sighted and they sent out a plane. There's no question about that. But it is, it's very hard to, to, you see, you say Waldron went off to the left. That means that you had to be to the right of this course.

HLT Yeah.

BPW But then you start weaving around and so you must have come back down.

HLT At that time we might have been heading, heading northerly.

BPW I see. I see. So you'd begun this weaving business back, looking around, and I see.

HLT After Waldron left...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ...and after I saw the ship's wakes, I can't, my navigation, I let my navigation go by the board. I don't know, can't recall what direction we were going.

BPW Yes, well it's easy enough to, to, to, I can buy that. This business right here is correct. I'm convinced of that. All of a sudden you're back here but it's a lot later. It's a whole lot later.

HLT Yeah.

BPW It's now 1:00, see. So all of this was a lot, a lot later. This was 11:30 when this took place, on your watches. And this was 1:00, so you know, it's an hour and a half later they were back here. Not, and, the bombing section of the SBDs had gone down here. Two of them went in the lagoon and ran out of gas. Two of them ran out of gas going in there. So to my mind, I don't see how any fighters could have made it if two SBDs or three of them ran out of gas as a matter of fact. So I don't see how the hell the fighters could have made it.

HLT No.

BPW The way you were wandering around, that's what you were doing. You said it right there, you were wandering around and changing a lot of headings.

HLT Just seemed to me (inaud) didn't know where in the heck he was going.

BPW Well, Talbot has some interesting observations about that. He said that something on the order of an hour later he heard Ring say that he had engine trouble and was going back. Waldron, Talbot says that he talked to Ring's radio operator later and the guy confirmed it.

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW That Ring himself had turned around. We have another kind of thing. Here is Navy War College, they get around to studying about what the hell went on. Look

at that for a couple of minutes. (long pause) You see what happened to the commander of Hornet Air Group?

HLT Yeah.

BPW All by himself. Well, I think that this, with respect to that plotting, is a little bit, I think, you see this business up here?

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW This kind of bears out this situation but it wasn't Ring. It was these guys or else these, see? Because this was the whole group. This was the whole bunch. This was all of Scouting...

HLT Scouting 8.

BPW ... and all of Scouting 8 and one section of Bombing 8 came in here.

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW So it, that indicates sort of that this line was really not Ring but was these guys, see?

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW And that Ring came back here, maybe, or here, see. I don't have the stuff that they used to do this, of course. But I have the Hornet's log and I'm convinced that this was pretty good, pretty good plot. Now then, Talbot, and Talbot bears out the fact that Ring turned around and left early.

HLT Mmm-hmm. Well, that I wouldn't know. He's....

BPW No, no? You wouldn't have seen an individual plane.

HLT No.

BPW Not a snowball's chance.

HLT So I mean, I don't know.....

BPW But this business, oh, there's one other thing. Talbot said that less than an hour out, they changed the YE-ZB grid. I said, "How in the hell did you ever know that?" He says, "I was flying right on it. There's no question and I heard them do it." He says, "All of sudden I'm getting another signal and I haven't changed my course, haven't changed anything at all and all of a sudden I'm getting another signal."

HLT Uh-huh.

BPW And it was 60 degrees off. 60 degrees off. Now this is how Waldron flew. This line right here. And that's pretty well confirmed, all right? Now, if that's how Waldron flew, there is apparently, Morison and Lord both verified the fact that people from either Scouting or Bombing, somebody saw Kure. And it begins to look like what happened is this, was this. Instead of coming down this line with Waldron, they were well South of Waldron.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW This is Mitchell's deal, too, strongly. How far South? Anybody's guess. But if they came down like this, see, instead of like that, this business right here, this turn, I can't confirm at all by anybody. Tappan was flying right in the middle of this thing all the time. Now Tappan is with him. Tappan, he was a younger guy, too and he, he is very suave kind of a fellow. He says, he's with it, you understand.

HLT Yeah, yeah I knew him.

BPW He says that this way, he says that the first guy to break radio silence was Waldron and Waldron said he was turning to the North. Ring opened up and Ring, and where the hell Ring was, never mind but Ring said, "No", he's not turning to the

North". He didn't... and he got, there was some words back and forth, according to Tappan and in a couple of moments, Waldron, in effect, told Ring where the hell he could go and he turned and was into it, okay?

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW Now Tappan is very sure about one thing, too. Tappan is sure that within a very, very short time, he said five minutes, and I tried to make it 15. I tried to make it a half an hour. He said, "No, I'll give you ten minutes but no longer than ten minutes from when we turned around."

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW In his book, they turned around very shortly after Waldron...

HLT took off.

BPW ... took off. All right, now, that is, in terms of your time, okay? That was 11:30, 11:35, something, something like that, they, they turned right around and he said, again, the courses, you know, were not going to be wandered and said they'd milled around and all that sort of thing. He didn't....

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW ... he wasn't about where, he said there was a lot of wandering around and milling around. I said, "Did you see Kure?" He said, "No, I never saw Kure." I said, "Did you see any waves breaking or anything like that?" "No, no". I said, "Well, here's where you were back here." "God, how in the hell did we get way up there!" He couldn't understand it, okay? Now then, now when I talked to Talbot, Talbot says, "Yeah". He thinks they were, when they turned around, you were about, he estimated 60 miles from Kure. North up here. But he said, "I thought I saw the waves breaking on it and the change of water." You know (inaud), that sort of thing. So he said, I said, "But you didn't see the island?" "Oh no, no, uh- huh, no." He said, "I thought I, I'd seen the waves breaking on the shore." Something like that. And he said, "We weren't near it. We were a long way from it as far as I was concerned." Then he looked at this. I have other, well, all right. No this doesn't show it but see these thousand little things. There's one close up here. That's much closer up in there than here. I whited it out when I made this up. These are the charts now, see? The chart in Morison's had Midway about 40 miles (inaud) What can you say? But that wasn't, I guess, critical at that point. But this chart is where Midway is now. I mean this chart is right now. This is the very latest chart that we have. Its got to be right. There's even a landing field now. A strip that's on Kure. Kure has a strip there but this, and Talbot saw this fathom indication up here. Now the water is very deep there. I don't know how much it is but it's uh, you know, several thousand (inaud) and he said, "What's that there?" I said, "Well, that's, there is undoubtedly a peak that comes up and doesn't come anywhere near the surface but, you know, it's there." The water, would there be a change, difference in the water or the.... I said, well, I guess probably that might be.... Well, he says, that might have been what we.... You know, that seemed to satisfy him better than saying, "Well, I saw Kure."

HLT Yeah.

BPW Which, and again, time wise, it's very difficult to get all the way down to Kure, then back to the Jap fleet, then over here, you know.

HLT That's for sure.

BPW I mean, hell, you were only airborne for two hours and forty-five minutes.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And practically everybody is unanimous on that. Now I don't have anything but what Ruehlow told Morison and Lord, that's what he said. He confirmed the time down as being maximum 1:00 your time, point in time, maximum. So from ten to one is three hours and everybody was in the water three hours after takeoff. So that didn't give you time to go down here, to mill around, go down to Kure, mill around, go back to Jap fleet, way up here then and then come back down here. There's no way that it could have happened.

HLT No.

BPW Now when I pointed that out to Talbot, it shocked the hell out of him.

Mrs. T Can I make somebody a sandwich?

BPW Oh, gee.... Uh, listen. I am fully prepared to invite you to lunch. I would be delighted if you can tell me where we can go. I'd be very happy to have you as my guests for lunch.

Mrs. T That's up to him.

HLT It would be simpler to have a sandwich here.

BPW Well, I hate to do that. I don't want to impose on you any worse than I already have.

HLT No imposition at all.

BPW I'm not very much of a lunch eater, to be honest.

Mrs. T. Okay, we'll just fix some sandwiches then.

BPW Well, that's very kind of you, Mrs. Tallman.

HLT You can't eat? You can't eat sandwiches?

BPW I've never had that problem at all, to be honest with you.

HLT It's no imposition. In fact, I find this fascinating.

BPW Well, I'd hoped you would.

HLT Very interesting.

BPW I'm trying to be helpful to you, too. I have some, I'll leave you all this kind of information and I have some blanks of this and I have some of these and I'll leave that with you and you can cogitate about it a little bit. These questions, this was done back in February you see, right after I had talked to, I don't think I'd talked to Gray by then but I'd talked to Mitchell and Tappan. And this was my initial, just sort of a run at it.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW And I have a lot more information. I'm going to up.... I'm going to try to go at it all together, of course, after we, after I've talked to everybody that can be talked to and there's only one left and that's McNerny. I can reach him. I, uh, I think that your information is, and your reflections are very good and very helpful.

HLT Not too much help though.

BPW Well, I'll tell you. It doesn't seem to you but, you see, I'm looking at it with a different.... I've had so much more, you know, input and the significance, for instance, of your, of the business of milling groping around assumes a far greater impact because the time sequence, uh, the time sequences fit much better. Thinking of it in those terms, some things and I, I, of course, this is the thing that is really...

HLT It's puzzling to me.

BPW ...is really puzzling. But I, but I, you see, what apparently happened as I visualize

it and it's no longer... I'm no longer able to confirm it, Ruehlow must have hauled that ten dollar bill out of his pocket...

HLT Yeah.

BPW ... and given it to them. Had Gray and Mitchell sign it and given it to them and wrote on it the information that they wrote on it. So, I, and those guys were, my experience with the PBY boys, they were pretty good navigators.

HLT Oh, yeah. Well, I don't doubt they knew where they were. My only problem was that it might have been written down wrong.

BPW The question was whether it was written down right. The problem there is, let's assume that it was written down wrong. How wrong would it have been written down? What, you know, that.... You can make any conjecture but it wasn't too far wrong, maybe, probably and four of you now say you saw something in the way of...

HLT Yeah.

BPW ... wakes, ships, something. Gray and Talbot say, "Oh, hell, that's the enemy." "We were right there.." and all that. That's not true. It simply isn't true. You guys did not go down over here, a hundred and some miles away.

HLT That was my assumption.

BPW Yeah, uh-huh.

HLT Because I mean I know we took off in the right direction and went for an hour or more in the right direction.

BPW Yeah.

HLT After that, why, I don't know.

BPW Well, you see, what you're doing, that's very helpful in itself. You're not saying that you saw the Jap fleet burning.

HLT Oh, no.

BPW You saw, your impression is that you saw some wakes...

HLT Just saw wakes.

BPW ... and you were damn sure of that.

HLT Yes.

BPW And it wasn't very long before you were swimming after that.

HLT Yeah, half an hour, maybe.

BPW Yeah, well, there you are. I haven't told Mr. Mitchell that I think that (inaud).... He's going to die! But what I plan to do is to kind of draw it all together as best I can and to then make up a plot and I'm going to send it back to all you guys and say, "Well, now what do you think?" and see. But I'm getting, you know, I'm accomplishing what I, to some extent, what I'd hoped to accomplish. In other words, I'm getting information about VF8 that no one else has at all because Lord and Morison simply did not go into it. They just....

HLT Well, you said earlier, you got the impression that people that you had talked to didn't want to rock the boat and give you a straight answer. Well, maybe the reason is the, the same reason....

BPW There wasn't any straight answers.

HLT The same reason that I have never talked much about this. It was a (inaud) in VF8.

BPW Well I don't think history treated you right. I really don't. Listen, really look, look at it. Okay, what the hell did you guys do that was less deserving. Christ, you

put your necks right on the line. You did every damn thing that you were supposed to do. You did, you gave it your best shot, okay?

HLT Well, I never thought so because, you know, our job was to protect the torpedo planes and we watched them go off...

BPW Let me tell you...

HLT ... and we kept milling along.

BPW All right. You know why? Let me tell you something.

HLT That's what made me so bitter.

BPW All right. Let me tell you one more little thing and, okay, this is a fact. Mitchell said that when they were ready...

End of Tape 2 (middle) Side 1

Tape 2 (middle) Side 2

BPW Now, Mitchell said before he took off, he went up the bridge, saw Mitcher, Captain of the ship and said "Hey, don't you think that the fighters should accompany the torpedo bombers. He said he thought that they were the ones who really ought to have it. (inaud) protect the torpedo bombers, follow Waldron. And he said that Mitchell said, "It's too late to be changing the deal now." "You fly. Your assignment is to follow and protect the dive bombers and in particular, Ring." So that's what it was.

HLT I wasn't aware of that.

BPW Well, you know...

HLT I'd just assumed that....

BPW Right, well....

HLT .. protect the torpedo bombers.

BPW Well, that's what Mitchell said and I have no reason to, there's no reason to doubt that. I think he did do that. He made some reference to the Coral Sea battle in which the, it was evident, apparently that, I haven't studied that battle very much like this but, there's evidence there that the torpedo bombers needed protection too. And, and so they did. There's just no question about it. As events, this one turned out certainly. The TBFs that were to be on the Hornet got as far as Midway. They were left behind you may recall?

HLT Right.

BPW And Larsen, I believe it was...

HLT Yes.

BPW And (inaud), remember him?

HLT Oh yes, very well.

BPW He was left behind. Well they ultimately, they were ferried out to Honolulu and then they flew them up to Midway right in time. And they attacked and they were pretty well wiped out, there were two or three of them left and that was all.

HLT Yes. Curtis, Curtis was the only.... you know he got back as....

BPW Yeah.

HLT I knew him and he relieved me as a squadron commander a few years later.

BPW Uh-huh. Well, there were two or three of them that did get back but they were ineffective. I mean they just ran into a hornet's nest.

HLT Didn't accomplish anything, no.

BPW A total hornet's nest. That was, this, these zigzags here, these are all spelled out. We have much detail on that. On that I just put on there. There are some curious things. Now Tappan said that he never saw a single damn airplane. Nothing, okay? Nothing. He didn't see a single airplane. There was a hell of a lot of planes going.... good night! I'm telling you, it was all kinds of airplanes flying back and forth here. Further more, the Japs went in. When they flew, all flew up here, they went up at about 150 knots. All of them. Bombers, everything; I mean they were really hauling down the road, time wise. And they hit, of course, Midway right at 150 knots from where they left the carriers. There's no question about it. They, the bombers and the, practically the whole flight came right on through. The, there were some fighters intercepted and the group was attacked by the Midway planes but it wasn't effective.

HLT Yeah.

BPW It was just, hell, there were too many of them in the first place and so it wasn't a very effective thing. The Japs came through, the last plane here was a fighter plane. That was a hot dog and he over flew the field upside down at 7:00 or 9:00, Hornet time and they thought he was going to get away but apparently they got him right at the end of the damn.... he got shot down and he almost made it but he was a hot dog. They started back and they rendezvoused a very short distance back to the North, 315, but they were a long time getting back to the carrier, very. They, this southernmost penetration was right there. That was where these ships ended up. That was the southernmost penetration latitude and longitude of, right here, of the Jap fleet; right at that point. They then turned and a few minutes later Waldron found them. But they, they... they and the reason they hadn't come down here was because of all of this carrying on that they were going through up here, these Midway planes... Well, but that was a lot earlier but when the Jap fleet came back, then these Midway planes were coming back again flying through them so to speak and it took them, time wise, this only comes out at about 100 knots. How was it about it, it took them so long to get back. You know, it only came out at about 100 knots or something like that, which is a, there's no... I can't figure anything yet, an explanation about it.

HLT Going downwind.

BPW Yeah. It just... Now, the only reasonable explanation is again, they attacked or were attacked or something. The last ones to get back at the end were the fighter planes, see? Now they had plenty of fighters. They kept one-half of their entire fleet in reserve, planes, carrier fleet. One-half were kept back and never, never all flew to Midway at all.

HLT Yeah.

BPW So they had a whole raft of planes, of Zeros flying CAP, all four carriers. So they had a lot of planes. And they were just.... And they had... Their scouting planes had picked up, uh, Waldron, and the fleet was just sitting and waiting for them and it was just murder. He had no chance whatever and there's a very (inaud) question in my mind as to whether any torpedoes were directed to carry... I don't think they ever got through the screen to be perfectly honest with you, but Gay says he did. Well, okay, maybe. You know, this, I have a feeling Lord is such a good writer and a

good, you know, and he wants to sell books and things like that so, you know, I, I kind of get, it's a little bit....

HLT I always thought that Gay exaggerated his...

BPW Well, it's, Talbot certainly thought so.

Mrs. T What can I get you to drink?

BPW Water is just fine.

Mrs. T Just plain water?

BPW Just plain water.

Mrs. T Tea? Milk? Coffee?

BPW Well, I like, a cup of tea would be swell.

Mrs T Cup of tea, okay.

BPW That doesn't change much as time goes by. That doesn't change much. Well, I certainly do thank you very much for that nice lunch and I hate to impose on you,

HLT No, no.

BPW ...as I say. But what I thought I should do is to... you can hold on to those if you would like and I'll send, I don't have any more of this.... A fellow by the... I'll send you one of these. I'll send you some others. A fellow by the name of Dean, uh, what in the hell's his name... over in the Naval Historian Archives, Historical Archives over there in Washington, something to do..... I've, he's interested in knowing about my conclusions, of course.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And the fellow that wrote his book, a man by the name of Reynolds down in Charleston. The Yorktown, the new Yorktown, CB10, was, they must have put in, well they made a museum in the city. Charlestown apparently down there has put her into mothballs or something and dedicated it to Stover and he was very much interested in knowing about the, about what I have, determining the saga of fighter squadron. I, here, here is a, there is a blank if you want to play around with, or not. It is the, it is a new chart, I mean things are right on here. As I say, Morison, the chart, Morison's book even has Midway a distance out of place which was not too, in my experience a little farther out in the Pacific. I was at the Solomons a lot and I've found some rather interesting locations of islands and things out there. It didn't quite seem to match up where they were supposed to be. Here is the, here is the, the Toshida, book out of, uh, page out of Toshida's book. Showed where they were.... see we were here. They subsequently, after this plane reported this right here. He came back, they sent out others and undoubtedly one of those (inaud) planes that they sent out was off the, uh, you know, the Tone, or the, uh, it was Chikuma or something, heavy cruisers that they used for scouting and it was undoubtedly the plane that Talbot saw because it was certainly down that way.

HLT Yeah. I know I never saw any other planes at all.

BPW Tappan didn't.

HLT No. Well, its.....

BPW You know, it would believe....

HLT When you're that altitude....

BPW Oh, boy.

HLT ... you've got the clouds and of course the sea was with white caps...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... and if the plane is, you know, like ours that blue color, why you know you could miss them.

BPW There's no question about it. Well, look, McClusky and his entire batch missed them too. There's no question about that. Here is the, see this is what, my things are all.... are pictures of.... the new arrangements and all that. They're right on here but this is the source of these things. These are the brand new flight, long range flight charts that we have out here now. So, but now here's... this is out of Morison, and it says, okay, the island bears 53 knots due South of this point, well you've got 53 miles (inaud) but that doesn't change things too much either. But more and more the indications from your (inaud) seem to be that certainly at some time or another you were North of that, we'll call it a point option line, and certainly the scouting SBDs were up there at the end.

HLT Mmm-hmm. Guess that's not too far.

BPW No, no. Your not....

HLT Doesn't take too...

BPW ... well, sixty miles, you know here, you know..... It just, you know, I didn't, I'm afraid I left poor Talbot in a... in an awful quandary. His, he was sure of the 12:30, the 12:35 time on his watch when he went in the water. It was, there was no shaking him on that at all. But he was also sure that it was at the end of four hours. Well he thought that they had, you know, taken off much earlier than they really had. What happened was there were kind of seemingly some false starts or something or indecision about taking off but there's no question at all about when, when it was done.

HLT Sure was lots of indecision.

BPW Yeah, I'm sure there was, too.

HLT Seems to me we waited, seems to me we waited in our planes for an awful long time. You know (inaud), a long time before we actually

BPW But they were on deck as you recall?

HLT Yeah.

BPW All right, then you were all the way out. Is that right?

HLT Gee, I couldn't say when I was all out. I'm sure the fighters were aft of the SBDs.

BPW Now this was in contrast to the Enterprise. McClusky went off first or I think he did. But he stewed for 45 minutes. He was off there. He took off from the Enterprise when it was there and he stewed for 45 minutes and he took off at 7:45 instead of 8:06. He left about 20 minutes before the official take off here was. That 8:06 is the time, seemingly, when Mitcher or whoever was doing it, said, "Go". But in that, all the planes had been launched and were in the air by that time. And then she came right down here which was this point option thing, see. She made good, generally speaking, her, her course but not the distance. She went zigzagging around here so she should have been down here. Uh, if she'd just gone right straight on down. But even so, that's, you know, here we go, that's 70 miles she made good. So that was better part of 30 minutes less time that you should have had to get back to her then going out. But it's... I don't see how you could have been North and have continued for an hour and a half without getting into them. You must have come back down somehow. You must, if, indeed... Well, and as you say, the fact that you saw Waldron

go off to the left....

HLT Would indicate we weren't still on this course.

BPW Yeah.

HLT Well I don't think we were because by the time he took off we'd....

BPW That was some little while.

HLT ... we were milling around. I mean....

BPW I see.

HLT I know we were right on course for a long time but then we started this, going this way and that way and Waldron said, "The hell with this, I'm going...."

BPW Listen...

HLT "... I'm going." And he went.

BPW Listen, Tappan, Tappan, there's no question Tappan (inaud). Now Tappan heard the conversation. You all were not on their frequency I don't think.

HLT Well, of course I couldn't swear that my radio was working because I never said anything. I never heard anything.

BPW Right, right.

HLT I couldn't say if it was. We never even had a chance to test our radios because there was always radio silence. You assumed it was working.

BPW Mitchell said he never, he never broke it. He said he.... But he said that it was but he said when he decided to come back, he didn't know which way to go.

HLT Yeah.

BPW I mean he practically, perfectly honest about that. He said, God, he went over to Ruehlow and says, "Look, you're it."

HLT Well, yeah. At that time I wouldn't know which way to go either.

BPW Well, I, I think that you're memory of which way you were landing and which way the wind was blowing bears out. It's got to be right. The wind was blowing up this way. I'd bet anything on that. So you would have landed coming down this way and been blown up that way.

HLT And that's the general direction the squadron was headed....

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... when we went down, we went to change course right (inaud) went in to land.

BPW Yeah, I see. Yeah, well if, as Gray said, you flew over, and Talbot said you flew over the Jap fleet, okay?

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW And then Talbot says you turned right and he said he was leading and there's no question about it. He, you know, he's positive he turned right because he ran into a overlap on the, in the YE-ZB and turned right to get back on the clear signal again.

HLT Oh.

BPW And uh, you know, to just kind of dog leg it and keep picking it up as you get closer and he said he was on manual, said that the signal was increasing, coming on up. Now he didn't remember what the signal was. Gray, Gray had his on and he said there's no question whatsoever, dit-dit-dah, dit-dit-dah.

HLT Yeah.

BPW Now, after he told me that I got hold of this fellow over in Washington who's the

hot shoe in charge of everything, I guess. I said, "Listen, I'd love to get the orientation on that card to the YE-ZB signal. What letter was North?" You know, and what was the range on it. All right, well he said that he'd try to find it. Well, about a week, two weeks later he called me up. Said, "Damn, doesn't seem to be anywhere." He said, "The records might have been lost with the Hornet." He said, "I know that's easy to say" (inaudible) and he felt a little chagrin about that. But he said he hadn't been able to find the things that they, it was available. You see after each one of these encounters, of course, the air officer, navigation officer, the commanding officer and everybody has to file a report. Okay. So I have Mitcher's report and so on but I said, "Well, look. How about getting me some of these, you know, lesser officer reports, in particular the navigation reports." Nothing. So I said, "Well, look, tell you what. You know the Enterprise was right there. How about getting, finding out which one, where it was on the Enterprise." I said that they might not be the same, I realize, but they might have been the same, too. Oh gee, didn't think about that. All right and he's trying to see what he can find out about that. But I just have a feeling that, and on the name, you know, I gave him these four names, how about, how's the Navy if they want to find somebody, how the hell do they find and catch up with them? Well, he said there is a place where we have a lot of names and all that but he says he, the pool of information act or something prohibits him from giving the names out. You can write a letter and they'll forward it to whoever, the last address they have if they have any but I said, "Well, I don't know whether they'll - if I don't get a reply right a way, I won't ever know..." "Yeah", he says, so I went back and I was fortunate to find the way I did but he didn't, I didn't get the right feel out of the whole thing, you understand? If I wanted to drag my feet, that's not the way I'd have done it.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And you see there's never been anything that I've found. Any real investigation or report or anything from, about the fighters. Nothing.

HLT No.

BPW Just never happened, been a damn thing. It's, you know, just a little short account in Morison. A very short account of it and it was, it was an interview with Ruehlow and that was the end of it. And of course Lord, he doctors it up a little bit and then, and throws in a few expletives here and there and the other place and kind of as you could, might expect, but it's still nothing. It's a zero and I, I, that's disquieting to me. As I see the damn thing, why, you know, it was a hell of an effort and you guys, my God..... and it was a pretty, looking at it today, of course it was a pretty, sort of, almost a naive kind of an operation but in those days, by God, it was numero uno. That's how it was. It was the best... Everybody was doing the best damn thing that they could do and I don't like to see, you know, any short shrift on it and I take, I tell you, I take my foundation activities seriously. You know, this business of, it's all very well and good to say well, gee, and give money away but we have bequests, uh, requests for these bequests and I, well, one time we had a bequest from a camp and a, they had a school and a camp and a thing out in West Virginia. It was a kind of an outdoor type of thing and it was done in conjunction with, well, a lot of it comes with the secondary schools in Baltimore city, Baltimore city area. So they wanted some new buildings out there and they, so, we were interested in it. Well, it was

in the middle of the winter, January or something and hell the snow was up to your ears and it was out in the mountains of West Virginia. They had 6,000 acres that the state had given them to operate on. They had quite an extensive program. A nice kind of thing. Well there was no way to look that property over, look the place over by tromping around, I mean, so, okay, I rented a helicopter, all right. Well, then I went out and I investigated and I came back, well the bill came in for about \$1,500.00. I'll never forget my secretary. She said, "Mr. Weisheit, what are you doing renting a helicopter?" She said, "I know you had to determine if it was a worthy cause," but she said, "Did you spend \$1,500.00 just to see if somebody was worthy?" I tell you the story to tell you, you know, I take the matters seriously.

HLT Sure.

BPW And that's what has occasioned the, an investigation. Well, I think that I've probably and hopefully I've at least given you a little information as well as I'm most obliged and appreciative of your help and as I say, I'm going to try to pull it all together and I'll come back to you. Drop you a line and show you about things if you don't mind. If I have any...

HLT Sure, appreciate it.

BPW ... questions, I'll do that too. But I, every time, every interview helps to broaden my perspective of the thing and you've been very helpful. I mean there's no question in my mind about the ditching business at this point. The, do you think that you were second down or Jennings was second...

HLT Well, Jennings and I went together.

BPW You went together and you didn't see anyone else.

HLT No.

BPW But that Kelly was first.

HLT Yes, pretty sure of that.

BPW Yeah, and there was no breakup of the squadron with respect, at any time, with respect to being out of, really out of sight of one another.

HLT No.

BPW In other words, you could always see everybody and...

HLT Yeah.

BPW There was no, if indeed you flew over the Jap fleet, we'll say, there was, there, you never saw any airplanes.

HLT No.

BPW You never, if you were fired on with anti-aircraft fire, you didn't know it. And that's (inaud). And that within a half hour or less after you detected wakes, you were down.

HLT I would, I would guess so, yes.

BPW About then. And that's a reasonable time frame.

HLT Yes.

BPW And that bears out exactly what Talbot said. Only he said that it was the Jap fleet burning. Mitchell said it. Ruehlow said it. But they didn't, they, their story was much closer to yours. Talbot and Gray, they were, I think, a little bit too strong on their identification.

HLT Of course, I don't know. I mean if, you see if they were still....

BPW The time frame didn't work at all. That's why Talbot, he was (inaud) and that's,

you see, and I don't mean to do that. I didn't mean to do it I wanted the straight scoop though, see. But...

HLT Well, of course I couldn't say what they might have seen after Jennings and I went down. I mean, say they were still airborne 15 minutes after we left.

BPW Right.

HLT They could have seen things that I never saw.

BPW Yes.

HLT In that 15 minutes.

BPW Yes.

HLT It couldn't have been....

BPW That's true. It couldn't have been the Jap fleet, though.

HLT No.

BPW There's no way that that could happen.

HLT And I doubt if they were airborne a heck of a lot more than 15 minutes after we were because we all....

BPW Right. No, no, the planes were all the same. It, it, there's no way...

HLT Maybe a half hour at the most. I would say difference between planes first and last...

BPW Maximum, absolute maximum. Absolute maximum. And you see, Talbot sort of, he killed himself. He did it to himself, you understand. I didn't feed it to him. He did it to himself. He was positive about the time that he went in the water about the watch story. He was sure as hell about that.

HLT Yeah.

BPW So, but he was very indecisive about when they'd taken off, see. That was the open question in his mind. He took it, he thought they had taken off, you'd taken off much earlier than you did.

HLT Yeah.

BPW The take off time was nailed too many ways. We're positive of that.

HLT Yeah, yeah.

BPW And that's what just crucified Talbot because he thought he was going for four hours.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And he hadn't flown four hours, he'd flown two and a half to three at the total outside.

HLT I don't even remember whether I had a watch. I assume I did but....

BPW Well, he had it and took it off and threw it away. That's how it figures. The time frame as far as Mitchell and the others are concerned is that he's right.

HLT Yeah.

BPW He's right. I mean they said they were down at 12:30, between 12:30 and 1, everybody was down as far as they were concerned; and they were. So, you know, he's right. Talbot's right about the time. He's just wrong about how long you were in the air.

HLT Yeah.

BPW That's all. And what that does when you project it backwards, what it does is it's impossible to be over the Jap fleet. It was impossible for him to have been over the Jap fleet it would seem to me because the Hiryu, which was the fourth carrier, had gone on,

off even further to the north and west. She went off, off up this way soon after the attack here. She launched and they came up and hit the Yorktown, the Yorktown up here, right there and this, at 12, 1, be 2:00, Hornet time, see. In other words, well, and the truth of the matter was, this, Waldron's run-in was at 11:30, okay?

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW Well you were damn well down in the water long since, see. The Jap, in other words, it couldn't be over here and have a burning ships, looking at burning ships and be down in the water too.

HLT No, but I think that....

BPW That was the problem.

HLT ...that's 11:30, so Talbot's time is right. It was an hour later before we went down.

BPW Yeah. Talbot's time was...

HLT 12:30.

BPW 12:30, Hornet's time and this would have been 11:30, Hornet's time.

HLT Yeah.

BPW That's when, when he ran it. They weren't hit until, until 12:30, exactly 12:30 by the dive bombers. Ten, twenty, sixty, 10:32 is when they were hit. Exactly where you would have gone in the water when they were hit. So, you know, he never saw the Jap ships. It's a tough deal to, to see that. And Gray, I think Gray, I think he, I think he saw what you saw.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And I think Ruehlow saw what you saw, too. That's what I think. It's too damn bad but you had it just... Talbot's convinced that this is where you went down. He says you went, were in down here.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And he, he was working the YE-ZB like crazy and he said he just, make it a little bit more and you'd of been there.

HLT Mmm-hmm.

BPW That's, that's how he felt. But it's quite a jigsaw puzzle.

HLT Yeah.

BPW It's, it's surprising that you weren't even picked up by our own fleet people. They didn't come this far but they came over right around in here, see. All, both the Enterprise and Hornet, right in here. And then they started almost, no they started to the South, they started to the Southeast and then swung around and went back up North, uh, I mean, to, to the Southwest and then swung around and went back up this way the next day, on the 5th. And they sent out scouts all the way, way the hell up and they almost got up as far as the Yamamoto and that's the whole, you know, support crowd but they didn't, and they didn't see anything and then they, the reports of the two heavy cruisers way to the west of Midway that had banged into each other were picked up by the PBYS. They found them again and then we all went after them. Tappan got a TFC out of the thing.

HLT Yeah?

BPW He dropped a bomb....

HLT Something else strange that, I think was the first night that we were on the raft it was fairly quiet.

BPW Yeah.

HLT And we heard what... engines, you know....

BPW Yeah.

HLT ... fairly loud and it didn't sound like airplanes. They sounded to both Jennings and I like PT boats but we had no..... sounded like that... loud...

BPW Yeah, pretty loud...

HLT Loud engines. We could hear them for quite a long time through the night.

BPW Huh!

HLT And it was very puzzling, you know, and they really didn't sound like airplanes to us.

BPW Yeah. How far away? Some distance away?

HLT You know, we couldn't see them. This is after dark.

BPW No, I mean could you judge the distance at all or did they sound like they would have been five miles away or, or only one?

HLT Oh, more than one. We didn't know distance but definite engine roar. I remember we were very puzzled with what the heck was making that noise.

BPW Yeah, well, Gray came up with a new wrinkle after he went down.

HLT There weren't any PT boats out there that I know of.

BPW Not that far. Gray said, loud as hell, there was a Japanese submarine that surfaced near them. Mitchell doesn't say so and Ruehlow never did apparently. Gray says there was a Japanese submarine. I said, "Did you see it?" "No, it was after dark", he said. How did you know... Well, he says, "I heard them talking." Now...

HLT Possible.

BPW ...there's a possible on that, all right, because that guy did sneak up there and he was the one who got the Yorktown. That could have been it. It could have been possible. That would have thrown....

HLT It's possible that that's the engine we heard.

BPW Maybe, I don't know. Do those things, when are they... When they run on the surface at night are they, are they loud?

HLT I don't know. I don't know.

BPW I've never heard of submarines....

HLT Diesel engines. I suppose if they are going full out trying to get somewhere,...

BPW Yeah.

HLTwhy they might make quite a noise but I don't really know. Never heard one.

BPW They're pretty good sized boats at that. But I've never heard one. Well, you being right on the water, you'd hear it if there was anything...

HLT If it were an airplane, you know, it would....

BPW Oh, yeah. Oh you could identify the airplane, right.

HLT This was sustained for such a long time that it was quite puzzling.

BPW Well, I don't know. That's, that is a, that is a good question.

HLT I'm pretty sure it was the first night.

BPW Yeah, and it was a calm night.

HLT The sea had calmed down.

BPW Yeah, uh-huh. And then you had a couple of calm days and then it started sprucing up again.

HLT Yeah, we had a couple of, a couple of rough days.

BPW Mmm-hmm. You were taken back to Midway?

HLT Yes.

BPW And you saw Talbot there?

HLT He was there, yes.

BPW And who else? What? You think Magda was?

HLT I think so. Whether he was already there or

BPW Had passed through or something...

HLT And I think we were all in the underground dispensary for some time.

Jennings and I and...

BPW Yeah.

HLT ...and Magda, Talbot. Talbot was there when we got there.

BPW Yeah.

HLT We saw that awful sunburn he had. He (inaud)

BPW How about Ruehlow?

HLT I saw him back in...

BPW Pearl Harbor?

HLT ... Pearl Harbor. He had a scar on his face.

BPW I think they flew him back.

HLT He hit his gun sight when he landed.

BPW Uh-huh. So, you know, what kind of a restraining thing did they have in the, for...? Why didn't you hit your head all of the time?

HLT I can't remember whether we had shoulder harnesses at that time or not. I know we didn't in TBFs which was right after that. We went into a (inaud) but whether we had shoulder harness in the F4F, I don't, I don't know.

BPW God, you must have had something.

HLT I don't know. If you were cinched up in your shoulder harness, why you wouldn't...

BPW Couldn't go....

HLT you wouldn't go forward far enough to hit the gun sight I wouldn't think.

BPW No. Mitchell said his hand was cut or he said that was another little thing I kind of put a little salt on it and swallowed it. The shark episode. Lord played that up pretty good and...

HLT Yeah.

BPW ... I've had a lot to do with sharks. I know about sharks.

HLT We were very concerned about sharks. I don't think we saw any. There were dolphins we saw.

BPW You didn't have to be too concerned about sharks.

HLT Well, we will call you here on it. We were, we were worried.

BPW You'd better believe you were.

HLT Particularly at night when you couldn't see....

BPW You'd better believe you were. You better believe you were.

HLT And I got a terrific fright sometime during one of the nights. Something came up...

BPW Bumped you?

HLT ... under my raft and hit and I was sure it was a shark and...

BPW Yeah, yeah.

HLT .. it was kind of dumb, you know?

BPW Yeah, yeah.

HLT But I think he was a dolphin because we defiantly saw dolphin.

BPW Far more likely. Those porpoise, they come around. They do that all the time. They're far more likely to be along there.

HLT I remember, hell, I remember eating a flying fish.

BPW Did he come in the raft?

HLT Came right in the raft. It was during the night.

End of Tape 2 (middle), Side 2

Tape 3 (end), Side 1

BPW Do you have any questions that you'd like to ask me or anything? I'd be happy to tell you anything that I can.

HLT I can't think of anything at the moment.

BPW Well, all right.

HLT Did you say you had checked with Holy Cross on McInerny?

BPW No, I'm going up there and I'm going to try to find him.

HLT You know, he'd have an alumni record if he's still around.

BPW Keep your fingers crossed. Keep your fingers crossed. I'll leave you my card.

HLT I think I have it.

BPW Yes, well all right. Well, as I say, I am very appreciative of your help and you've been very constructive and every little bit helps so if there's anything here.... I don't really have, I didn't really bring very much with me in the way of things but I'll send you along what my conclusions are and ask you to look at it and check it over and if you see any glaring errors, point them out or if you have any further thoughts about it.... I find that these interviews kind of sometimes, kind of jog your memory a little bit later.

HLT Yeah, yeah.

BPW You get thinking about it a little bit and if you do think of anything that might be constructive, if you just drop me a line or give me a call, I'd be very, you know, happy to talk to you any time and....

HLT I wonder if the PBY squadron's logged things like that, pickups and sightings and all that.

BPW Yes, they undoubtedly did.

HLT I would think so. I don't know.

BPW Well they could be....

HLT Might be possible that those things are still around somewhere in some....

BPW Well I'm going to try to find them. You can believe that.

HLT Squadron logs, plane logs....

BPW You see, they were stationed at Midway.

HLT Yeah.

BPW They were stationed at Midway.

HLT You'd think the log would show, you know, the names of people picked up

and their position and all that stuff.

BPW Oh, yes. Oh, yes. That's.... there's no question about that, they would. But catching up with it....

HLT Yeah....

BPW ... as I say, I'm afraid I've been very lax waiting 39 years and 11 months or something.

HLT Yeah, it would probably take quite a lot of digging.

BPW If... I don't... I wish I had a little bit more confidence in the Naval history people. I'm not quite sure how they're looking at me at this point. I, I plead very innocent but I don't, I just have a kind of a funny feeling about it. Not, you know, whether it's, whether I should have any feeling about it at all, I... that's open to question, too. But I just have a funny feeling, you know... Lord, of course, see, he got, I would certainly say, total cooperation in every way. But he was investigating the whole scene. The only real variance that he had with Morison was this position of the Jap carrier after the turn, but that was inconsequential, and he devoted a great deal of time, probably justified, I guess, to make the story good to, uh, who attacked which carrier and you know, Best saw the island on the starboard and McClusky saw it on the port and so all this, that and the other thing and, but, I suppose that will never be resolved but he did a nice job and he's a professional writer. He's, hell, I don't have any pretense of it but I know how to plot and I can tell you one thing, I know how to handle that aspect of it better than Lord ever dreamed of. So I'm going to reach some conclusions. Do the best I can with them but it's been a very interesting investigation and I say, you've written off Jennings for me so that saves me a great deal of time, effort and thought there. That was almost worth the trip up here, Mr. Tallman, to be perfectly honest with you. So I only have one more to go then.

HLT You know, I'd be interested to know if you contact McInerny.

BPW I'll, I'll be back to you. I've enjoyed this conversation, I'll tell you, as much or more than any other one at all.

HLT Well, it's been... I've enjoyed it too.

BPW You've been very helpful and very I feel that, you know, everything I can, I can rely on what I have. I wish the hell I could, you know, had the same feeling after every other, uh, every other interview. It would have been much better. You know like my son says, "Dad, what the hell are you doing? Why don't you just go see one of these guys and ask him what happened?" I said, "You'll find out."

HLT You know, it's distressing not to be able to.... to have a bad memory of some of the specifics.

BPW Well, you left it on the life raft I'm afraid.

HLT They almost picked it up because I remember one of the guys....

BPW Is that so?

HLT Yeah, they saw it all written on there and they, but I guess it was rough and they wanted to get going and what not.

BPW Yeah.

HLT After the confusion of dragging two guys in and...

BPW Sure.

HLT ... boat's going like this, why they decided to let her go and put a few bullets into it with a waste gun and that was it.

BPW (inaud) It must have been a different plane.

HLT Yeah.

BPW And, well if you were picked up... But you think you were picked up on the 9th, too.

HLT I think so.

BPW Now that would have been one sector...

HLT Five, Six, Seven.... Well, no, I don't know. I guess maybe four, five, six, seven, eight. Eight. I'd say it was the 8th because I

BPW Uh-huh. Well that's when Talbot was picked up. Well that means that you were picked up either one section west, that's what it means. You were picked up one section west of Talbot. One, they had either, what were they? About 15 or 30... Thirty degree sections, search patterns, I think they were about 30 degrees, something like that and you would have been the one to the west. First one to the west (inaud) these other fellows were picked up on. And Talbot, Mitchell and Gray, they were picked up on the same, same thing by the same plane. So that guy knew his navigation. He did his navigation. The question is whether it was written down right as you point out.

BPW This was the end of the interview with Mr. Tallman on Monday, the 5th or 6th or whatever it was at his house in Rochester, Mass.

