

Interview with Ens. J.E. McInerny, USNR, 1981.

BPW Well, okay, well I hope you enjoy these, Mac. Let me just put those away a moment. And, um, let me talk to you about some things. First of all, you remember, did you, you must have gotten on at Norfolk, and stayed with the ship all the time.

McI Yes, that's correct.

BPW And so you were on the Doolittle business...

McI Yes.

BPW Do you remember the day they took off...

McI Oh, yes.

BPW ...it was the 18th of April? Where were... Did you watch them take off?

McI Oh, yeah. I thought a couple had gone in.

BPW One of them apparently went down pretty low, off the flight deck. Although it was pretty rough, as I understand it.

McI Well, one of them pulled up, you'd swear he was going to spin.

BPW Yeah, yeah. Well it must have been a rough, rough day, the weather...

McI Not particularly, it really didn't...

BPW Where were you? Do you remember where you were when you watched them take off?

McI Right on the flight deck.

BPW Right on the flight deck.

McI Oh, yeah.

BPW Yeah

McI Very interesting.

BPW Yeah. Todd, uh, Tappan, Tappan remembered it as being a, quite a rough day and I think it really was uh, because he said he was on one of the forward gun mount positions and he said it was just below, his eyes were below the flight deck so he couldn't really see, see? Except when the ship dipped a little he jumped up and he could watch very well, then.

McI Yeah.

BPW Beautifully, so, uh, but anyhow, what I'd like to ask you about, Mac, maybe you can remember a little better than some of these fellows. I, uh, this is Kelly's log, a copy of Kelly's log book.

McI I see.

BPW And uh, on, you'll see that on the 18th of April, he took off. There were, there were CAP patrols launched right after those B-25s took off.

McI That's correct.

BPW Do you recall that?

McI Yes.

BPW Were you on that?

McI No.

BPW No. Well apparently Kelly was. See this is the 18th, see, here's his entry for the 18th of April and that was the date.

McI Mmm-hmmm.

BPW Mitchell and Gray were on it also, apparently. But what I'd like, what I'd like to

try to find out about is some of these other designations. Nobody has been able to tell me what these designations were. The character of the flight, now, uh, the Z obviously must have been Combat Air Patrol but I don't know the, haven't been able to get a line on what those other designations were. Do they ring a bell at all?

McI I can't say, matter of fact, I never looked at my log.

BPW Never looked at it?

McI No, sir.

BPW No...

McI I never did look at my log.

BPW See, Mitchell signed it. He was the C.O.

McI Yes, sir.

BPW And uh, well, these damn things, K, N's, I never, I... according to Talbot, he said that, that uh, they, it depended on who was, who was keeping the damn thing. He said the yeoman kept it, or somebody....

McI That's correct. The yeoman kept it.

BPW ...and they, they didn't, there wasn't a standard procedure on this, on the thing apparently. But anyhow...

McI I've never seen anything that would say, uh, anything about it.

BPW I've never, either.

McI Maybe because I've never seen anything set up.

BPW I never have either. I never have. Well, I tell you what let's do. Now, what I like to do is this. I'd like to sort of lead you along a little bit to prompt your memory, okay? But I don't want to suggest to you..

McI Very well.

BPW ..anything, you understand? So don't let me put any ideas in your mind. You tell me what's straight...

McI Yeah

BPW ...and to the best of your recollection and I'll feed you information as we go along. Now,

McI You sound like my confessor.

BPW I'm almost that bad..

McI Okay.

BPW I'm used to cross examination.

McI Okay

BPW I'm a lawyer, you have to, there's nothing worse, I mean... Here are the guys that were on the flight, okay? Here's Ruehlow, here's Mitchell, Ruehlow, Gray, Jennings. Do you remember Jennings?

McI Sure do.

BPW You remember Jennings. He was...

McI We used to call him "Zipper"

BPW He was a J.G... Uh, Groves... Groves was another one that was lost on the 4th but he was lost on CAP. He went over to Yorktown and got his ass shot down, apparently, and he was lost that same day. Hill and Kelly were lost with you all, on your flight. Magda and you were together, uh, then there was Talbot and Tallman.

McI Um-hmm.

BPW Now, let me, before we start talking about the actual operation of the flight, let

me, uh, get a little feed back from you with respect to the set up. You had, you were in sections of two, basically...

McI That's ...

BPW ...is that correct?

McI Um-hmm.

BPW And, uh, Tallman and Jennings were together.

McI That's right.

BPW And they were the tail-end charlies.

McI That's right.

BPW They were (inaud), they were in the back. On the flight, were you and Magda next?

McI We were second section.

BPW Second section, okay. And now, is it your recollection or do you remember Talbot was wing man on Mitchell....

McI Yes he was number two man.

BPW Number two. And Hill was with...

McI Who?

BPW Hill. Remember Hill, now? Hill was lost on that flight with Kelly. Kelly and Hill were lost. Now who did Kelly fly with and who did Hill fly with? You're talking about, you only have two choices...

McI I'm trying to picture....

BPW Only Ruehlow and Gray. They were the leaders, so..

McI I think Kelly flew on Gray.

BPW Okay, that bears it out. Fine. Okay. And Hill was with Ruehlow.

McI Right.

BPW Okay. All right, well now, let's let that go for the moment. Uh, do you know how, uh, the assignment was made as to who went on the flight? Do you know who decided that? Was it Mitchell or was it Palmer or O'Neill?

McI I think Mitchell.

BPW Mitchell.

McI Um-hmm. He would tell you who was going to go. I mean, what section, what division.

BPW Mm-hmm.

McI See, there was six and six...

BPW Yeah, yeah, I see. All right now, Mac. Let's start back in the morning. Now, what has happened is this. The Enterprise, the Hornet and Yorktown were all on Zone 10 time. Zone 10 time. The Japs had their own time. It was the goddamnest time you ever saw in your life. They operated on Tokyo time, okay? So they were getting up, it was dawn and they was getting up at 3:00 in the afternoon, you know, that kind of nonsense. Well, all of the histories, uh, Morison's Official Navy record, history of the battle, Lord, Fujita.. all the rest of them. All of the times have been translated into Zone 12 time. Which, in fact, is exactly where the encounter, actual encounter, took place. It was with, it was right there at the 180th parallel. So I tell you that because, and I'm going to show you in a few minutes, a chart that's made up, that I made a run at it, and we'll have occasion to refer to it, but the Zone 10 time was, in effect, two hours later than the Zone 12 time, of course. In other words, the

Lord and Morison and all of the history books say you took off at a certain time. That's not the time that it was on your watch when you took off, see? So let's, we can talk in terms of the Zone 10 time, because that's what you're most familiar with. You're familiar with the time that you were looking at.

McI Yeah, right.

BPW Sure as hell. So, all right. Now, I won't tell you anything that is wrong. I won't mislead you, Mac, at all. Not anything at all. I won't play any games with you at all. We're not doing that at all. So don't misunderstand, see.

McI Yeah.

BPW I will tell you to the very best of my knowledge, but my knowledge is limited. My knowledge stems from the Hornet's log, the Enterprise's log and the, the Naval War College account and things like that, see. Not, nothing and, and when I tell you what one of the other guys has said, that's what it is, all right. So, see, you got the picture a little bit?

McI Mmm-hmm.

BPW Okay. So what I tell you is right to the best of my knowledge but it, uh....

McI Yeah.

BPW ...it could still be wrong, okay? But I, but that's the way it is. Now, let's go back, therefore, to the very start of things. When you went into the ready room, prior to takeoff, all right, the thing was, telling about the, where the enemy was, the course distance and the report that had been gotten, is that, is that correct?

McI Yes.

BPW All right. Now you had a plotting board, okay? Is that right?

McI That's correct.

BPW Okay. Did you... Well, all right let me ask you this. This is a penetrating question. Was any point option course ever set up for that ship to the best of your knowledge?

McI Point option?

BPW All right. In other words, did they tell you where they were going to be when you turned around to come back to the ship? The ship is....

McI A course. They give us a course.

BPW They did?

McI Oh, yes.

BPW Do you remember when it was? All right, now let's think a minute, now. Now wait a minute now. Remember the Japs were coming down out of the northwest. They were on a course of 135 or 140 going down to the southeast, as it were, okay? Now, you were going to go across and intercept them in, it was approximately 155 miles, was you anticipated distance. Now the course had to be sort of north of, north of Midway and you were north, well northeast of Midway...

McI That's correct.

BPW Substantial distance. A couple of hundred miles, approximately. And, okay, so you're gonna head sort of southwest. You don't have any recollection of that course?

McI I wish I could...

BPW Well, just let me tell you something. Let me tell you what Talbot said. He said he was waiting like hell for that course to be flashed up there. He was waiting like

crazy and when it finally came up, it said, “and the captain wishes you good hunting and god speed” or some goddamn thing like that. And he said that the, the point option course, as the histories call it, was never given to you. He said that it was left to, as far as, as far as you were concerned, it was left for you to figure out what the course to the Jap ships was to be. Now, how you were supposed to find your way back to the ship, we’ll get into that in a moment, but, he said that he never had a course given. And none of the others remember a course. Now that doesn’t mean that Ring didn’t have a course. Ring was the overall air leader of all of it. Stanhope Ring was supposed to be the overall leader of the whole thing.

McI No, because he took off long after the torpedo planes.

BPW Ah, yes, all right. Okay, let’s get on this a minute. Okay. The Hornet log says they launched CAP first, okay? And then, what was the order of launching after that?

McI Bombers and then, then fighters.

BPW Bombers? No, wait a minute, torpedoes...

McI Torpedoes, bombers, then fighters.

BPW ...and fighters were last.

McI That’s right.

BPW Okay, where’d you take off, Mac?

McI I was the last one off.

BPW You were the last one, or next to last?

McI I think I was, I was, I’d, I....

BPW Where’d they bring you up or was your plane already up?

McI My plane was up.

BPW Okay.

McI But it wouldn’t start.

BPW I see.

McI And they told, they screamed to strike it below.

BPW I see.

McI And I told the guy, put one more in there.....(laughter) I didn’t even warm up. I just hit the throttle and took off.

BPW So you must have been goddamn close to last...

McI Right. No, I uh, I remember I, when the engine turned over, I just hit the throttle all the way and took off.

BPW Just took it down the road, huh? Do you mind if I smoke a cigar?

McI No, as a matter of fact I like the smell.

BPW Would you like one?

McI No thank you. I do like the smell, though.

BPW Well, I just got one downstairs a half an hour ago but Okay. Talbot was under the impression that he was last off.

McI Could have been.

BPW But he wasn’t positive. He wasn’t really positive about it.

McI I thought I was last.

BPW It has no real significance, actually. But, I’d like you to tell me, now, Mitchell said that he went up and saw Mitscher, the ship’s captain, before they left. Then he said that, he said to Mitscher, “I think the fighters ought to go with the torpedo planes.

They ought to protect the torpedo planes.” And because apparently they got more of a beating in the Coral Sea or something, I don’t know, but that was his thing. He said that Mitscher’s reply to him was, “Hell, no. Don’t change anything now. You’re job is to protect Ring [Stanhope Ring] and you’re to protect him.” So you left and you left behind the dive bombers and behind the torpedo bombers. All right, you were going to climb up. You had a lot of climbing to do, didn’t you? Do you remember anything about that?

McI Yeah, well I remember it well.

BPW Tell me a little about that, Mac.

McI Well, climbing up, I recall that...

BPW What were your power settings or anything like that, anything at all, Mac.

McI Well, my power settings were too high as far as I was concerned.

BPW But they had been given you?

McI No.

BPW No, okay.

McI Not me. Actually, I think as you’re experienced in flying, you fly on your leader.

BPW Right.

McI And you can look through the props and you can tell..

BPW Right.

McI what RPM he’s using, very closely. Well, you set that, then..

BPW Yeah, yeah.

McI But I remember that I was sitting there, it seemed to me that I was hanging in the air. Not, we weren’t doing anything, we were just hanging there it seemed. Not ...

BPW really climbing?

McI ...not really doing what we should be doing. Uh, I knew we were off course.

BPW Never mind the course, yet.

McI Okay.

BPW Don’t get to that yet.

McI Okay.

BPW Keep on my climb. How high did you get? When did you go on oxygen?

McI Fourteen thousand.

BPW Fourteen thousand. Okay, do you remember the rate of climb?

McI No, I don’t. But I remember it was slow. Matter of fact, it was varying. It wasn’t a good flight.

BPW Okay.

McI It was a bad flight.

BPW All right.

McI It was hard to stay in there.

BPW Okay. And you were having a hell of a time. You were in the tail, back end, and you were...

McI and I was concerned...

BPW concerned about the guys up front and all that bullshit, and that’s why you were using gas, all right. There’s no question about that.

McI Yep.

BPW And you were climbing very heavily loaded and all, Christ

McI Well, it was a sluggish plane.

BPW Right, mmm-hmm, okay.

McI It just wasn't doing what it should be doing. It was, it was a wrong angle, as far as I was concerned, the wrong power. It wasn't efficient at all. A very, very bad flight, I thought.

BPW And right off the bat you remember thinking that?

McI Yes. Just as soon as I turned up....

BPW This has a lot of significance, Mac.

McI Yeah.

BPW Okay.

McI Well, I felt that completely. I was a, a wingman and, of course, I prided myself in staying in there.

BPW Damn right. Absolutely, I'm sure of that.

McI And uh, Ronnie Magda used to always love, because he knew I was there. Any time he looked, I was right there. And, uh, I remember a couple times looking at him, and I'd go like, you know, give him this sign. What the hell they doing?

BPW Yeah.

McI And he'd just shake his head. He didn't know either. He was, yeah, used to do it, too. Didn't know what the hell was going on. Everybody was completely confused.

BPW Okay. All right. Now let me ask you a sixty-four dollar one. What about the YE-ZB, were you on, listen to that at all?

McI On the way up?

BPW Mmm-hmm.

McI Yes.

BPW Do you remember the orientation? What letter was north? Come on now Mac, don't fail me on this one.

McI I don't know. I can't do that. I don't remember. See, it changed every day.

BPW Yeah. Go back to the ready room. What the hell did they tell you about it, if anything? They must have told you something. They had to give you the letter.

McI They gave us the ZB. They gave it to us. Matter of fact, I put it on my chart board.

BPW Sure you did.

McI That would be the end.

BPW Sure you did.

McI That's what I went by.

BPW Sure you did. That's right. And that's the reason you don't remember.

McI That's right.

BPW Because it was written down.

McI Didn't try to remember it.

BPW That's right. But try to remember it now. What letter were you listening to? How soon did you turn your radio on, Mac? Did you wait until you got up to altitude?

McI Matter of fact, I didn't turn my ZB on.

BPW You didn't?

McI No.

BPW Ever?

McI Not until I was, tried to get home.

BPW Okay. Okay. That's fine. That's fine. Okay. All right. Let me tell you what Talbot told me. Now Talbot, he was kinda rabbit on that YE-ZB. I'll tell you, he was, he uh, there were two guys in the whole outfit, I don't know about Kelly, unfortunately, but there were two guys that were radio. They, they liked the radio.

McI Yeah.

BPW They worked the hell out of the radio. And one of them was Gray. And one of them was Talbot. Now I'm not telling any tales out of school...

McI Oh, no.

BPW Gray has a little problem with his elbow, now, okay? So my interview was a tough one. I mean 10:30 in the morning. Jesus Christ, it was murder...

McI Well, he uh...

BPW Let me tell you something. He remembered, every now and then, he'd have something nailed, just nailed. There was no way that you could say anything else. Okay, now he was on that YE-ZB and so was Talbot. Now Talbot really worked it. From the minute he was off, all the way. And this is what Talbot told me. Somewhere between 30 and 45 minutes, after you all had left, the guy from the Hornet changed the orientation of that grid. He was flying straight and level in a straight course and listening to dit-dit-dah and all of a sudden it was dah-dah-dah, sixty degrees off. And I believe it happened, Mac, if you can imagine it. But be that as it may...

McI The reason I agree with what you say... I don't agree with the number of degrees...

BPW Yeah.

McI ...but I would say this, Commander King was 35 degrees off. That's what I say.

BPW Was Commander King the guy that was doing it?

McI Commander Ring.

BPW Ring. Oh, well now, let's not get to that yet.

McI Okay.

BPW Let's not, let's not...

McI He was leading it.

BPW I know, I know, you're right. Oh, babe, are you so right. Okay, he was leading it and further more, Mitchell had just gotten very, very positive, definite orders from Mitscher that his obligation was to one person and that was Ring. The fighters were to protect Ring, the dive bombers....

McI Remind me later in the interview, remind me later in this interview, I'll tell you why I agree with what you're saying.

BPW All right. Well, we'll come to it. I'll tell you, we'll come to it. Okay. You're going down the road now. You're climbing up. Waldron's taking off, he's not, he's going up to a couple thousand feet or something and that's where he's going to stay for awhile. You had about an hour and a half to get down there, he had, Waldron had. Waldron was the very first carrier plane that attacked the Jap fleet. He... you all were not, apparently, on the same inter-squadron frequency as the dive bombers

were. Does that ring a bell at all with you? Did you ever hear any conversation of the dive bombers?

McI No, no.

BPW No. Well, just as a side matter. Tappan was flying right in the middle of the dive bombers, that's scouting. He was in Scouting 8.

McI Yeah.

BPW He was flying right in the middle. He had planes, a million planes behind him, a million planes in front of him and he was right there, see. He was tuned in. He had his radio on, on the frequency where if there was any breaking of radio silence, he was going to hear it, see. Waldron, seemingly, broke radio silence first. Either Waldron or Ring did and they got into somewhat of a discussion according to Tappan. Tappan recalls it pretty strongly because Ring was not about to turn north and Waldron, in effect, said, "Stick it up your..., I'm turning north". He turned north and in ten, less than ten minutes he was right into it, right into it. Now that, on your time, let's get back to the time of take-off. What time do you think you took off, Mac? It was well after daylight and all that...

McI Oh, yes, oh yes.

BPW Kind of into the morning, right?

McI Oh, yes, I'd say eight thirty, nine o'clock, in that area somewhere.

BPW Okay. The Hornet log says 8:55, okay? Right. 9:00 we'll call it. Now that's when they started. They launched CAP then. So it took a whole hour before every, before you were off, you were the last fighter.

McI Oh, yes.

BPW So you left about 10:00 in the morning.

McI Right

BPW Does that kinda jibe...

McI I would think so, yeah. About mid-morning.

BPW ...be about right? Yeah, okay. Now remember that because poor Talbot has, had a terrible time about it. I shook him and I shouldn't have done it but there was nothing else I could do. I'll tell you about that. But, that's your recollection, that kinda jibes...

McI Yeah.

BPW ...with your thought. So at 11:20, Waldron turned to the north and he went right smack into the Japs. The Japs, their lowest degree of penetration was at 9, at, at uh, 11:17. They turned to the north. They turned to 70 degrees northeast and Waldron had, had at, 9, I mean at 11:20, see, just 3 minutes after they had turned, Waldron had turned to intercept and he turned it, Christ, he couldn't have been a more perfect turn, if, if he had been directed or something, you know. It was, turned right to it. Now he was the first, mind you now, get the picture, he was the very first carrier plane of all the carrier planes to attack the Japanese. They were sitting there with about 35 to 50 Zeros waiting for him. Just waiting. They, they had been picked up, they had been picked up by a scout plane or a plane that was out there, Jap plane, and they were notified and everything. They were just sitting there waiting and they just jumped all over him and nobody even dropped a torpedo.

McI No...

BPW And, and, uh, Talbot said, "Well, as the history comes out, you know, Lord has to

sell books.” And so it gets to be a pretty dramatic kind of a thing, but, but uh, did you ever talk to Gay afterwards? What did Gay say, Mac?

McI He never got even close. Now his argument was...

BPW You’re, you’re, you’re cooking, you’re cooking.

McI I knew him close. I was very close to him. I, you know, you know he, he was embarrassed about, matter of fact, he was embarrassed to even see us because he got the congressional medal. He said, “What the hell did I do?”

BPW Sure, sure.

McI But...

BPW Sure. That’s right. You got it. You got it.

McI I know.

BPW All right. Now, but the time is the same. See, Waldron’s entire outfit was wiped out in 15 minutes. They were gone. Every last plane was gone and there, with, with perfect, uh, they had no chance. I mean it was just murder. They were just absolute and total sitting ducks. They either should have waited for the fighters or should have waited for the dive bombers or should have done something. But he told Ring where to go and Ring told him where to go and that was how that was and apparently, well, okay. On the way out, you’re climbing, let’s suppose now you’ve gotten to altitude. Did you see the dive bombers? Were they in your sight? You watched them, the guy ahead of you, didn’t you?

McI Mmm-hmm.

BPW Basically, okay?

McI Mmm-hmm.

BPW Did you ever see Waldron?

McI No.

BPW Never saw the dive bombers?

McI Waldron? Waldron was in torpedoes.

BPW Right. Okay. But you, you never saw them and you... Did you, did you ever see the dive bombers?

McI No.

BPW No. Okay. All right. Well, what happened was, when they got down there, we’ll say to the point of intercept, where it was supposed to be, where the Jap fleet was supposed to be, all right? And there was a difference between Ring and Waldron and Ring did not do what Waldron did. Never mind what the hell Ring did, but he didn’t do what Waldron did and that’s for goddamn sure. Mitchell, well, let me ask you this before I tell you what Mitchell said. When, if ever, did you, you personally, realize that you weren’t escorting anybody anymore?

McI After we had been....

BPW How long was it? An hour and a half?

McI I would say an hour and, when it got to an hour and a half I was looking, where the hell We were supposed to be on those people, you know. And then, I’ll tell you this my way.

BPW Right.

McI What my thought was.

BPW Go ahead.

McI What in the hell’s going on here.

BPW Right, right.

McI So I broke out of formation.

BPW All right.

McI Now, climbed up on Mitchell. And I said, "Over there," pointed.

BPW Now you're pointing to the right, Mac. Careful now, which way did you point.

McI You know, I think I did to the right. I don't know what the hell... I'm in there....I knew, I knew, yes I did point to the right.

BPW Did you see Waldron go off?

McI No.

BPW No. All right, you pointed to the right.

McI That's right. I did.

BPW And what happened then?

McI He just went...

BPW Okay.

McI ... ignored me.

BPW Okay. All right. Then what did you do?

McI I went back in my position.

BPW Right.

McI Finally I went up and finally I broke out again. Went up and turned the whole goddamn thing around. I turned the flight. I told him I got it. I thought I'd be court marshaled.

BPW Really?

McI I told Johnny Magda, "Come with me."

BPW Did you turn to the right, Mac? Now wait a minute. Now, I want you to think that question all the way through. You tell me what you think you did. Did you turn to the right or to the left?

McI See, I was on the left side.

BPW You were on the left?

McI Yeah.

BPW Okay. How were they stacked? Give me the stack.

McI All right, you had Mitchell..

BPW Yeah.

McI .. his wingman, Magda and me. And the others over here.

BPW You were on the left.

McI Right.

BPW You were the southern most, as it were.

McI Right

BPW Okay?

McI Yeah.

BPW Now if you turned the whole thing around, you must have turned to the right. Is that not ..

McI To the north.

BPW To the north.

McI That's where I wanted to go.

BPW Is that right, Mac?

McI Yes.

BPW Think again.

McI I know it! I know I did! Over that way. I knew what... I figured that Mitchell, I mean, uh, Ring was 35 degrees off course. That's what I figure. You say 60. I thought it was 35.

BPW It's much closer. You're right. I think you're right.

McI Well, anyway, I, I was 35 degrees off course and then, swing over that way and then finally, and...

BPW Did Magda follow you?

McI Huh?

BPW Did Magda follow you?

McI Oh, yeah.

BPW Magda follow you and then you, you think the whole rest of the flight followed you.

McI Right.

BPW And it was, had to be a swing to the right, Mac if you were on the left.

McI That's right.

BPW Very important.

McI Yeah.

BPW All right. That's the way.

McI Because I swung to the right and, that damn, uh, I could see some ships down there..

BPW Did you see any ships?

McI Yes. A long, long, long ways away.

BPW You really think you saw ships?

McI Yes, but we was so goddamn far, had no chance. We were getting out of gas. We were getting low on gas by this time.

BPW Sure. Oh, I'm sure you were worried about it.

McI That's when I turned on ZB. I said, I'm going home. Let me....

BPW All right. Now, okay, this is a very, very critical thing. This is the most critical, one of the most critical times of the whole damn flight, Mac. So just search your memory as best you possibly can. Tallman and Jennings were behind you? They had to be. Were they directly behind you or did you know? Or were they on the right, or did you know?

McI Oh yeah, we had.... they'd have to be on my right probably. This section was, they could be flying anyplace.

BPW Okay. Now, did anybody else break formation, as it were, in any way?

McI When I turned around everybody broke formation.

BPW All right.

McI Whole goddamn thing. And I remember because....

BPW But you're, but, but you're... you said, now, that they followed you around.

McI That's right. But then we kept going and I kept...

BPW Okay...

McI ...and it no sense of being here. We gotta go home, we gotta...

BPW Okay.

McI ...it's a....

BPW So you came around in a gentle turn to the right, probably...

McI Wasn't too gentle...

BPW Not even too gentle. Uh, huh. At that point, you were saying, here we go back to...

McI That's right. Let's save these planes. That they, they need them. It's a matter of, and, and that's what I always was taught. We, we can get more pilots, but we can't get more planes. And that's what I was thinking of. Let's get these planes back.

BPW Magna went with you.

McI Oh, yeah.

BPW And that was the start of it.

McI And then I turned it back over to him.

BPW Yeah.

McI Turned the lead to him.

BPW Yeah. You fell back, then, in your normal position.

McI Right. But there was nobody ahead of us.

BPW After you turned.

McI I don't know where the hell the fighters went to. Everybody was on his own.

BPW Well, you still stayed together roughly, though.

McI Oh....

BPW According to Hump.. he said that there was a lot of jockeying around and that sort of thing, but he never lost sight of anybody. He, he said that he...

McI Yeah, but he was alone.

BPW Huh?

McI Hump (inaud)

BPW He was with Jennings and..

McI Oh, that's right, too.

BPW They and he stayed with Jennings. Constantly, absolutely, one hundred percent of the time. He's very sure and I'll tell you something. Tallman is one of the, he really remembered it back. He really remembered it. I'm telling you, he did.

McI Very good.

BPW And Tallman, I'll tell you, to this day, is a bitter man.

McI Oh, yeah.

BPW He's a bitter man and, and, his memory of what happened, woah, shit! I'm the last guy that would ever say that Tallman was wrong about what he said. All right, now. We're getting someplace. We're, we're, we're making sense now, I can tell you, babe. So you think that you saw... Let me ask you this. Gray, now, you know you guys are all very different. Everybody is a different personality, you know, very different personalities and Gray, uh.... has sort of had it, in all honesty, I think. Don't quote me, but, uh, and he was in the soup so, uh, but he, uh, did remember certain things, uh, pretty well. And what happened was I'd try to shake him and I couldn't shake him even though, you know....

McI Yeah.

BPW I didn't, I put a suggestion to him and if, he would reject it if it was, if it was not what he remembered so, I don't mean to discredit him...

McI Yeah.

BPW ...at all. It's not that, but, uh, well, let me put it this way. He said he went to

Kure. Ever see Kure?

McI He did what?

BPW Went to Kure. You know what Kure is? Kure is a little atoll well to the north, I mean well to the west of Midway, and a little bit north of Midway. Now, uh, what happened with the, let me digress a moment and tell you what happened to the scouting and bombing sections of the SBDs. Let's, let's just get off the fighters for a minute, we'll get back. This is what happened. One section of three planes stayed with Scouting 8 all the time but 14 planes of, of, of Bombing 8 went to Midway. They turned around, and they just went south, uh, down to Midway. And they landed at Midway. Two of them, three of them went in the drink. Didn't, they didn't quite make it. Okay. One of them went right in the lagoon at Midway. So, uh, but Scouting 8 and one section of Bombing 8 did not. They turned around and went back north, too. But they did not turn around at the time that you did. Now, Mitchell said that the fighters turned around first, bore you out entirely. Talbot, the same thing, uh, Tallman, same thing. You, you know, you're consistent. What you say is consistent.

McI Yeah, I thought ... I remember that day, uh, I can remember that so plainly..

BPW Sure.

McI Getting up there and telling him, "Come on, get the hell out of here", you know.

BPW Well you goddamn well, running out of gas, for God's sake.

McI Sure.

BPW You wasted, and I would stand to be corrected of course on this, but it looks to me as if you wasted an enormous amount of gas climbing.

McI Climbing. Ah, we were wasting... You know, we'd see the thing going down.

BPW Now Tallman said you might have gone as high as 22,000 feet. He said it was higher than he'd ever been. Does that kind of bear out what you're thinking?

McI Yes. When you asked me earlier, I was going to say around 20, 21, in that area.

BPW Mitchell said you went to 20 and then came down to 18, he thought. Uh, Mitchell was not, well, his, he wasn't about to do any boat rocking, Mac. He knew what the history was. He knew what the official U.S. history was like the back of his hand, you understand? No boat rocking. I mean, that's.... So, his story, I had to just take pieces out of and you know, make it right. Now, Gray, but Gray said, "Yeah, we went down to Kure Island", so Talbot took pride in his navigation and Talbot was, he felt that he navigated that whole flight. He was, he thought that he had it in hand, strangely enough. I'm just telling you what he thought.

McI Yeah.

BPW I said, "Did you ever go to Kure?" He said, well, he said he thought he saw a wave breaking off way down the horizon, maybe 60 miles away. I said, "Well, that's", I said, "that's a very low atoll, it's only 10 feet high." It ain't very big. And I said, Christ, you know, so he wouldn't swear that they had... Now, Gray, "Oh hell, yeah, we circled Kure Island".

McI Who said that?

BPW Gray did. And then he said, "We came back and we circled the Jap fleet."

McI Okay.

BPW You know. Now, I'm very much interested in your observation that you thought when you turned around that you saw ships in the distance. How sure are you, Mac?

McI I am positive I saw some. Very long ways away.

BPW Wakes or ships?

McI Ships.

BPW Ships. You could actually see the ships?

McI Yeah.

BPW And they were well off....

McI Not many. Now I didn't see many, one or two.

BPW The outer, the outer ring, obviously.

McI Yeah.

BPW That's what you would have seen,

McI Yeah

BPW first, for Christ's sake. And they had battle ships, for Christ's sake.

McI They looked like heavy cruisers or something. I don't know. We were a of a ways from them.

BPW Oh, you couldn't of tell what the hell they were..

McI We were a long way from them.

BPW No, you could never tell what they were. Well, okay. Now, but that was very soon after you turned, before you turned, or when exactly? As best you can remember.

McI As we turned.

BPW As you turned. Okay.

McI Yeah, I thought we can't get into that goddamn place, we're too far out, let's get... We're running out of gas, we don't know, maybe make it but I doubt it.

BPW You were already really concerned about getting back?

McI Oh yeah...

End of tape 1, side 1.

BPW Okay, now. Wait a minute. Let me just let it run. Uh, so, but you didn't see Waldron making his attack.

McI Never did. Now...

BPW Didn't see a damn airplane. Never saw any Jap airplanes.

McI No, sir.

BPW Never saw any airplanes.

McI No, sir.

BPW Okay. Fine. All right, and when you turned around, Mitchell said he saw the dive bombers and they were continuing on and he said, "We turned before they turned or did anything else." So he bears out, in effect, what you're saying, okay? And others did too. Uh, now,

McI From what I gather....

BPW You go ahead and tell me a little more..

McI He didn't want to turn.

BPW Okay.

McI And I got up side of him and I, come on, let's go. You know, gave him, all, everything was with hand signals, you know.

BPW Nobody broke radio silence?

McI I didn't hear a thing.

BPW Okay.

McI Didn't hear a....

BPW Do you remember what frequency you were guarding, if any?

McI I don't remember.

BPW Don't remember. Uh, huh...

McI I would not of...

BPW Christ, you were raw ensigns, what the hell....

McI I was, I was....

BPW You thought you were going to get shot or something.

McI I, was one that, I tracked on my board.

BPW Mm-hmm.

McI Uh, and as far as the radio was concerned, I'd tell the radioman to turn that thing on for me. Hell, he knew more about it than I did. Who the hell do you ask, you know? So I had him turn it on.

BPW Okay. Well, there's quite a difference. After you turned, then you fell back into position, approximate position...

McI Just with Johnny.

BPW Yeah, with Johnny, yeah.

McI But not in position. No, sir. We're no longer in formation.

BPW But you were all still pretty well together. I'm convinced of that.

McI Well,

BPW You may have been separated a bit, but...

McI I turned on my ZB...

BPW Yeah...

McI And I thought I was on the right channel, whatever the hell that was.

BPW All right. What, what did you hear? Dit-Dit-Dah, Dit-Dit-Dah? A U?

McI No.

BPW I couldn't shake Gray off of it. It was the one goddamn thing he was absolutely convinced of.

McI Dit-Dit-Dah? I don't remember. I don't.

BPW Okay. All right. Uh, okay, now...

McI See, usually, you know, the plotting board. I plotted where I thought the..

BPW intercept would be....

McI You know, and then I, I, then I turned it on.

BPW Mmm-hmm. Now, but you must have had an idea or they must have, you must have been told or something, that where, where she was going to be.

McI No, they tell you what course they're going to be on.

BPW Yeah.

McI Well, that's all you need...

BPW Yeah. All right.

McI course, and speed.

BPW Well, that's the point option course that I'm talking about, Mac.

McI The option part.

BPW Yes. Now, the Enterprise was on 240, 240 degrees and she, she.... What happened was this. After you were launched, the Hornet and the Enterprise stayed together and the Yorktown was off a ways. They stayed on 240 for the better part, oh, an hour I guess, maybe, something like that. Came right down, right where they were supposed to be. Then they had to recover from CAP, CAP planes...

McI Yeah.

BPW and they was jockeying around and this and that and the other thing, okay? So, they got off the course, they came back on it and they worked it back and forth so that they're, the distance that they progressed down that course was not what they would have made good if they had just stayed right on it and gone on...

McI True, but they were still on the same course.

BPW Still on the same course. Still on the same course.

McI So, you, you wouldn't, if they got aboard so they, how far could they be off, seven miles?

BPW Yeah, that's all. Okay. Well, more than that but...

McI No, yeah, no, no, no. Because they'd swing off then they'd swing back.

BPW That's right.

McI They zigged then they zagged and then they made their course.

BPW That's right.

McI So they couldn't be off too much.

BPW That's, that's, in effect, what happened. That's, that's in effect, what happened. So you knew they were coming down toward you.

McI Yeah.

BPW Somehow, generally speaking, toward..

McI Right.

BPW ...you. And if, do you remember what your course was going out? You don't remember that?

McI No, I do not. You know, it's a funny thing. All you... I'm trying to picture my plotting board.

BPW Yeah, right, good.

McI Trying to do it, but I...

BPW Right.

McI But it's not coming in.

BPW That's all right. That's all right. For Christ's sake, it was 40 years ago, Mac. My God, I can't, I don't even know how you can even remember the plotting board.

McI It's, I had to put a mark on every 15 minutes.

BPW Yeah, okay.

McI You know. And, uh, you could usually swing around and I believed in it. Dead reck, dead reckoning, I really did.

BPW Well, did you consciously, when you turned, did you consciously come back to the reciprocal, for instance? If you were at 240, it should have been 60 going home.

McI Uh....

BPW But you turned on the YA-ZB, didn't you?

McI I turned that, finally.

BPW All right.

McI See, I, I was listening to see if there was anything on the radio, ZB, then you listen to that, you don't hear anything else.

BPW All right. Did you have it on manual so it was getting louder as you came back?

McI Yes.

BPW Did you notice any of that? You notice that?

McI I knew it was building.

BPW Okay.

McI Not, not much, though.

BPW Not much, okay. But it wasn't, it wasn't going down.

McI But it wasn't fading.

BPW Wasn't fading, okay. So you were generally going the right way. Now, so you are convinced that you saw ships down there of the Jap fleet.

McI Yes.

BPW At the time you turned.

McI The time we turned.

BPW Okay. Now twenty thousand feet, you could have seen forever. They were easily within your reach of sight.

McI Oh, yes.

BPW One point three two times the square root of your height and feet, Christ, you could have seen 150 miles, theoretically.

McI Long, long ways.

BPW Long, long way, right. Okay, now when uh, but did you, after you turned to go home, okay? Everybody was turning around and heading back and that bears out pretty well what everybody says. And from all I can gather, it looks like you, you, you turned before anybody else turned. Christ, you were lower, you had less fuel than anybody else, it was perfectly logical that you, when you figured you'd reached the outer limits you were going to turn around. It was the only sensible thing to do. All right. When you turned around, uh, Mitchell, Ruehlow and Gray, we'll say, were ahead of you? Beside you?

McI They were, I think, yeah, I pulled around in front of them.

BPW Okay. Now you're around and then you fall back?

McI I fell, went right around, kept....

BPW Yeah, okay. Now you...

McI ...Magda came with me.

BPW Yeah. Now when you fell back...

McI I didn't fall back then. No, I kept going.

BPW All right. Uh, where were the rest of them?

McI They were starting to turn.

BPW Okay. Now you're all the way around. You've turned all the way around. You're at that point. Where were they then?

McI Behind me.

BPW Behind you. When you fell back, then, they would have come up...

McI No, no. They never did get ahead of me. Johnny Magda came up and I flew on him.

BPW All right. Okay. Did you see, did you see...

McI Now....

BPW ...the rest of the fighters? When, when did..

McI I didn't see them again.

BPW Never?

McI Never.

BPW You never saw them again.

McI You see, we were at twenty thousand feet. We had a long ways to go.

BPW Sure.

McI When Johnny come up on me, I gave him the pull back signal.

BPW Right.

McI Turn down, come on, come on, slow, slow, slow, you know. Now, we were just hanging there but we were, we were coming down, you see, to keep air speed.

BPW Yeah. Losing air, losing altitude.

McI Losing altitude but with very little power.

BPW How long was it, did you go off oxygen after a while?

McI Oh, sure.

BPW Okay. How long was it before you went off oxygen? 10 minutes? 20 minutes?

McI Uh, golly... I'd say, I'm gonna say..

BPW ..half hour?

McI ...might of been. We weren't coming down fast.

BPW No, no.

McI 200 feet a minute. Something like that.

BPW If that much.

McI Yeah.

BPW Mmm-hmm, all right. But you never saw them again.

McI I had decided then we were going to land in the water.

BPW Yeah. All right.

McI Most beautiful, most beautiful formation landing you've ever seen was me and Magda.

BPW All right...

McI We landed within five feet of each other.

BPW All right, Mac...

McI With power on.

BPW Power, you still had power?

McI Oh, hell yes..

BPW Some power? Mmm-hmm.

McI That was the hardest thing in the world to do was pull that thing back.

BPW Did Magda have any power, do you think?

McI Yeah, he had power, too.

BPW He did.

McI But we, with, through hand signals, we decided we were going to land.

BPW I see.

McI And the best way to do it is to land together.

BPW Oh, yeah. The sea was not very rough.

McI Not bad at all.

BPW No. Uh, uh, so you, in effect, separated, to the best of your knowledge, from the rest of them.

McI I knew they had turned, but I didn't look back.

BPW Yeah.

McI Hell, you either come or you don't. I couldn't help it.

BPW Okay.

McI I felt all the time that Mitchell didn't want to turn.

BPW Right.

McI And he wanted to go...

BPW Well,

McI ...was told to go in such and such a...

BPW He had pretty definite orders...

McI Yeah.

BPW ...there was no question of that. Now let me, all right, Mac, this is very interesting. This is a new angle, here. Uh, did you ever see any ships again?

McI No. Yeah, uh, when we were in the water. I don't know what kind they were. One. I don't know whether American or Japanese.

BPW You saw a ship when you were down?

McI Yeah.

BPW First day?

McI Yes, as matter of fact. The next morning, next day. Way, a long way along the horizon, to the north.

BPW To the north?

McI Mmm-hmm.

BPW That's interesting as hell. That is interesting as hell. All right, so you don't, you couldn't really be sure whether you were the first, the last or whatever of the fighters that went in to the water, actually. You don't know. Uh, how long after you turned, do you have any idea when you hit the water, time wise?

McI No idea, whatsoever.

BPW Okay.

McI I know it was early in the day.

BPW Right, uh-huh. Now ordinarily you would of had maybe, on ordinary situations where you had to do all that climbing and all that bull shit, and jockeying around and everything, you'd of had maybe four hours of flight time.

McI I agree.

BPW But, what do you have to say about that. How much time do you think that you were actually in the air? Do you have any idea on that? Did you have a wrist watch on?

McI Yeah, but I took it off. I mean I, and I lost it....

BPW Did you notice the time at all?

McI No, I didn't, no.

BPW Didn't, okay. All right. Let's uh, so you're going down and you're hitting the water together, uh, tell me about your situation. Now it was a reasonably calm sea. You landed into the wind. You jumped out on the wing?

McI No, I just got..

BPW What did you do?

McI No, I knew where my raft was.

BPW It was behind you, right?

McI That's right. I got my raft.

BPW Now, how, how'd you get that out?

McI Just open it, open it. Pull....

BPW All right. You had two wing nuts you had to pull out.

McI Right.

BPW But you had to be on the wing when you were doing that. Standing on the wing.

McI I guess you were.

BPW Sure you were.

McI Yeah.

BPW You had to be. You had to be standing on something, Mac.

McI Someplace.

BPW Yeah.

McI All right. I didn't get wet yet.

BPW All right, right. Okay. How long did the plane float?

McI I would say between 10 and 15 seconds. Around in that area, I'd say.

BPW You hadn't fired your guns or anything? You had a full load of ammo?

McI No, before I went into the water, I shot them.

BPW You did.

McI Yeah, oh yeah. Lighten, lighten the plane. Better believe it.

BPW Did Magda?

McI Yep. I told him, come on... we had good sign language and it was funny..

BPW That's the way to do it, man.

McI ...funny, when I, well he was... Johnny was a different personality than I. He was a hell of an athlete and a hell of a....

BPW Must have been.

McI ... hell of a good looking man.

BPW Uh-huh.

McI But he had trouble with his life raft and I have never heard a scream like that in my life. He was screaming for me... Mac...Mac..... Hey wait a minute, Johnny. I swam over to him and he couldn't open his raft. So I said, "Johnny, you get in mine."

BPW All right. Now wait a minute. You got your raft out first, then...

McI Yeah.

BPW Let me ask you something, Mac. There wasn't any water in those life rafts.

McI It was a pint.

BPW Didn't you have a canteen?

McI Yeah.

BPW That's where your water was. It wasn't in the life raft, was it?

McI No, its, the canteen was in the life raft.

BPW Sure?

McI Positive.

BPW God damn. One of these little gray cans about that big was about a pint of water, right?

McI Yeah.

BPW In the life raft with the provisions.

McI Mmm-hmm.

BPW Is that correct?

McI Correct. There wasn't much provisions, though.

BPW Not much, hey. Oh, not much, hey. No, not much.

McI We ate better tonight.

BPW Let me ask you, Mac. Did you have a canteen?

McI Yes.

BPW You had a canteen, too? In addition to that. Did you have a .45 with you?

McI No.

BPW Didn't have your .45? You had one issued to you.

McI Right.

BPW Didn't have one on you, with you? Okay. Did Magda?

McI What the hell would I do with that thing?

BPW Right. Well, I'll tell you. I'll tell you what we did, Mac. I'll tell you a little funny side story. I was with SCAT and we, and uh, uh, later on, this was some long time later. But the guys, I taught a little survival course even then at Cherry Point for a while.

McI You don't say.

BPW And uh, what happened was that our, we devised a little system to make those .45s worth a little more. Uh, you couldn't hit the goddamn side of, if I'd aim for that wall with a .45, I'd of missed. I mean...

McI Yeah.

BPW I mean, that's how it was. They wasn't any good. But what happened was that we, and I'm not sure who really devised it the first time, but I sort of put it in with their, with the first wing navigation procedure later. We'd pull the nose out of those .45s, you know, and stuff it with bird shot...

McI Oh!

BPW ...and then reseal it, see? And use, and have that. Now, there were a couple of guys, were shot down, they, they were in B25s. We had a, we had a skip bombing technique later on and uh, and some of these guys that I've had to do with, uh, went in the drink down there near Rabaul and, and all and, and uh, they were very successful. Two of them, that I know of, in killing birds with that damn .45. And the only reason they could because the goddamn thing was loaded with, we put number seven and a half shot in the thing.

McI Oh, for God's sake.

BPW And it worked pretty well. Well, you know. Uh, that was a lot later and it was a refinement but I thought it was a good one that would have, would have been a much more practical thing than having just a goddamn .45 because they were impossible to hit anything, practically. Well, so, okay. You'd gotten your life boat and paddled over to Magda. Okay. He got out. He got the, the life raft....

McI He got in mine.

BPW He got in yours? Did he ever get his out?

McI I got, he got it out. But he never, had it inflated.

BPW Never got it in inflated?

McI I got it. He was all excited.

BPW Yeah. Well, uh, did it ever inflate?

McI Oh yeah, we finally got it.

BPW Oh, you finally got it going.

McI Oh, yeah.

BPW Yeah. Then tied them together?

McI Tied them together.

BPW And sat there. All right. How long was it before you all were picked up?

McI We had five and a half days that we were....

BPW Five and a half days. Do you remember the name of the guy that picked you up?

McI I believe it was Armstrong.

BPW Armstrong? PBY?

McI PBY. I'll never forget him because...

BPW Do you know how far he was from Midway or the courses or anything like that?

McI Most beautiful sight I ever saw. But he was, he, he had, he and I had had trouble at uh, Jacksonville. He was senior to me and he was, he had the duty one night and he came down to my room and giving me hell and oh, we had a few words. So, when I, when I got into the plane I looked at him and he looked at me and just, "Hey, you wanted to get back?" You know, "Come on."

BPW Beautiful. Beautiful. I bet he said, "Come on". He wasn't about to kiss you good-bye. That was never going to happen.

McI No way.

BPW Uh-uh. Now. Okay, now you went down. I'll tell you what time you went down. You went down somewhere between, uh, 12:30 and 1:00, about, I think.

McI Had to be, because we flew for about four hours.

BPW Well, that wasn't four hours, Mac.

McI Yeah, a whole lot. We used a lot of, a lot of gas climbing. Because we should of had, we should have been able to stay up for about six hours.

BPW Right. Right. And there was, there was no way that it happened. No way that it happened.

McI No.

BPW No way that it happened. It was one of the things that upset Talbot. Talbot had an interesting kind of an episode. He had a watch on and as I say, he was more preoccupied than anybody else that I talked to with navigation, with the possible exception of Tallman. Tallman was sharp as hell. He was just dogging along in the ass-end Charlie, but boy, he, he was with it, I'll tell you. And he was confused about what was happening, he had the same kind of reactions you had, same guy, "where in the f*** are we going?..... what in the heck is this", I mean, it just, you know, that kind of thing. But, Tallman's watch stopped at 12:30. He was in the water at 12:30. That meant you'd only been flying for two and a half hours and he couldn't believe it. He could not believe it. But, it, uh, say two hours and forty-five minutes, you might have gotten off fifteen minutes earlier, you know,

McI Yeah.

BPW Ten o'clock, time, you know, that kind of thing. But it had to be under three hours, you know, something, had to be. You all probably were... all the rest of the planes went down in that same half hour period so you all probably were, even though you weren't right there with them.

McI There's one thing though, that I remember that, I don't recall anybody said. I can remember in the ready room...

BPW Yep.

McI ...guys saying, "We're going too far". "We'll never get back".

BPW Mmm-hmm

McI I remember this comment.

BPW Well, uh, who said that?

McI Who knows?

BPW Who knows. Okay. You never saw any ships after you turned except after you were in the water?

McI After, yes. It was the next day, though.

BPW The next day. What time the next day? Early Tuesday?

McI No, I'd say it was in the afternoon.

BPW Afternoon.

McI Yeah. As I am very susceptible to sunburn and I kept myself covered pretty much all day long.

BPW Yeah. But the sea was not bad.

McI No.

BPW Calm, pretty much. Yeah. Gray said you flew right straight over the Jap fleet and Talbot did too. Said you flew over the Jap fleet and saw the ships burning.

McI Well let me say this. If you would of have interviewed them right after that thing, you wouldn't have paid a goddamn bit of attention to what either one said.

BPW Okay.

McI 'Cause, I have nev.. 'cause neither one of them are rational. Like Stan Ruehlow, same way. They were the little guys that could take it, I think Talbot was alert.

BPW Okay. I'll buy it.

McI He was, he was all shook up. Ruehlow, he didn't want to fly over water again. Never would he fly over water again.

BPW He came back to the States. He got banged up on landing pretty good. He, his head hit the gun site or hit the side of the plane or some goddamn thing. He got all smashed up a little, he said. But, uh...

McI You say he died?

BPW He's dead now.

McI I'm sorry to hear that.

BPW Well, uh, no, I just think he, you know, died a natural death.

McI Yeah.

BPW Umm, all right,

McI There's a little side line here.

BPW Okay.

McI I don't know if anybody told you. It's something, uh, probably it has no relevance but it did with the Battle of Midway. We had a, a guy named Steve Guereca(sp?)

BPW All right.

McI You ever hear that name?

BPW On the ship.

McI Yeah.

BPW Uh, ship body, uh

McI Company

BPW Company, yeah, okay.

McI Guy named Steve Guereca (sp?)

BPW All right.

McI Former intelligence, Navy intelligence from Japan.

BPW Uh-huh. Was he a lieutenant commander?

McI Yes, at that time he was a lieutenant commander.

BPW Okay. I've got him.

McI He, uh, he and I locked horns two or three times. But anyway, he had a meeting the night before the Battle and he gave out the word. The Japanese do not have a damn plane that's any good. You bombers will be able to shoot down their fighters. Our bombers are better than their fighters. You'll have not a worry in the world. That was Steve Guereca. I wish I had a tape of that. And when I came down here to go to training, and he was the head of the training at Ft. Lauderdale...

BPW Oh, yeah.

McI ... I wanted to get out of there. I didn't want it. I said get me back to sea. I don't want to be in with this son-of-a-gun. He doesn't know what in the hell he's talking about. 'Course, I forgot who flew me down from Jacksonville, one of the...my skipper up there, Ed Parker,

BPW Yeah.

McI ...he flew me down. I had three days to get here. So I didn't... I went to the bar for two or three days. So, Guereca, he tried to court martial me, you know. But Capt. French was, well, yeah, he says, the guy didn't show up, you know, he knew I hated him.

BPW Ohhh.

McI Well, he and I had....

BPW Crazy.

McI Anyway...

BPW Well, let me ask you this. One of the guys, I forget who it was, said, uh, that, uh, in a jocular vein, that he was joshing with some of the guys in the torpedo uh, planes, and they only had thirties in the torpedo planes. Apparently...

McI Thirty caliber.

BPW Yeah. And, uh, I don't know whether it was, I, I forget..

McI And it was a synchronized gun.

BPW Yeah. And this guy, whoever it was, it was, I don't know whether it was Tallman or Gray or one of them was saying how he was telling them, "Well, we'll look out for you. We've got, we've got the fire power"... and all that bullshit. But, there were these little side things. Let me ask you this. Did you ever hear the remark, Kelly landed down wind?

McI No.

BPW No. Okay.

McI I could never understand why he didn't stay with his, why they didn't land together. At the time I thought whoever, whoever his leader was, I think Dick Gray, I think, was his leader.

BPW That's right, yeah.

McI I felt Dick left them.

BPW Gray, Ruehlow and Mitchell were the last ones flying. They flew off into the sunset.

McI Well, I tell you what. U.S.N.

BPW That's right. That's how that came down.

McI We had heard this, too.

BPW That's how that game got played. Uh, Talbot, Mitchell said that Hill fell out first.

McI Who?

BPW Hill, Ruehlow's wing. Mitchell said that Hill fell out first. Now he had no idea what in the hell was going on in the back. He didn't see anybody else. And that's all he could really contribute to the goddamn thing. Outside of the episode with he and Gray and Ruehlow. Uh, and that was a little something in itself, too. Mitchell never got his life raft out, even. But...

McI How the hell, how did he get saved? Who got him out? Someone else?

BPW Ruehlow and Gray got out and they saved his ass. There's just no question about it at all. And Ruehlow and Mitchell were smaller guys and they got into one f***ing life raft and Gray was six foot two or three, big guy and he filled, he filled his own up pretty good. So, but, Talbot said that he went down with Kelly and there was one other thing that was said and it was a consensus. Mitchell said it. Ruehlow quoted it and Lord interviewed one person in the fighter group and that was Ruehlow.

McI Who interviewed him?

BPW Lord.

McI Uh-huh.

BPW Now, what Mitchell said was this. He said that after he turned around and was coming back, he didn't know where the f*** he was. You know, he was very potent about it. He said..... So he flew over beside Ruehlow and said, "Number one, you're it". This doesn't agree with Talbot's version at all but uh, Gray said, "Well, no, Ruehlow's YE-ZB wasn't working either". But he said, "Mine was". Okay. So, uh, he said he flew over beside him and said, "Okay, this way". Now Gray said, and, and I'm sure that it's true. He very, very positively and clearly heard and had a good signal on his YE-ZB for a while and it was a U. Dit-dit-dah. Well, I have been unable to orient the grid at all. Not even from the beginning and the Navy, and that's one of the things that I don't like to input from these guys from the war college and the headquarters in Washington and everything. They won't, they're very skittish about this. Very skittish about it. Uh, so, but their, Mitchell, Ruehlow, Gray and Talbot all said that they saw the Jap fleet and flew over it. Okay? Now, the time...

McI Well, let me, let me...

BPW the time...

McI Let me make a point.

BPW Go ahead.

McI Is anybody, any naval pilot will fly over a Jap fleet, that's the enemy, and not do something? Now we had four fifty calibers on there.

BPW Six.

McI Six. Enough. Well, that's right. The later ones had six.

BPW I don't know whether you had four or six.

McI I think we had four on these.

BPW Yeah.

McI and uh,

BPW The sixes had, F6s...

McI Yeah, but these were only four. We had four.

BPW I see.

McI And we had armor piercing.

BPW Oh, yeah.

McI And had tracers.

BPW Oh, Christ, yeah.

McI You could sink a cruiser with those damn things.

BPW Oh, my God, yes.

McI Now who, what red blooded American is going to be up there in a fighter, twenty five thousand feet, or twenty thousand, and look down there and see a target and not go after it.

BPW All right.

McI That's all I have.... I, I, I don't believe it.

BPW All right. Now, let me tell you what Tallman said. Now Tallman is a low key kind of guy.

McI Oh, yeah. I know he is.

BPW And he, you know, he's, uh, he's really into this thing, hard. I'm telling you.

And I'll tell you, Tallman, he's insisted on working with me and you know, he wants to get the... What I'm going to do with Tallman is this. And I'll tell you. I haven't said anything to anybody else. I'm going to release these tapes to Tallman and I'm not going to say a goddamn thing, and all my other information. All of it. And I'm going to say, now listen. This is everything I have. I want you to plot this thing out. Now, I'm going to plot it out and then we're going to see, we're going to compare and see just what, what the thing was.

McI Yeah.

BPW And, and we're going to have our little arguments about who did what to whom but that's how it's going to be. And the reason I'm doing that Mac, is because I have a lot of confidence. Tallman was very, very careful about just, he was, he didn't say anything that was, uh, he didn't enlarge anything or he didn't... he was careful and precise and, and that sort of thing. He said one-half hour before he hit the water, he looked off far to his left, to the northeast and he saw wakes. There was no question. He saw wakes. One-half hour before he hit the water. Now the rest of them, it looks like, interpreted those wakes as Jap ships. They weren't.

McI Oh.

BPW You know what they were?

McI American ships.

BPW American ships.

McI Sure they were.

BPW You guys had made it and didn't know it. That's the goddamn truth. I'm, I'm almost convinced of that, Mac. But what happened was, the YE-ZB was so f***ed up, it was, must have been awful. You kept flying and Talbot, Tallman, Tallman said, yeah, he saw the wakes, but he said there was no possible way of identifying whose

ships they were...

McI Damn right.

BPW or anything else. He said, "I'm positive I saw the wakes and I saw that they were ships, but that's all." Now, the other guys said, "Oh, that was the Jap fleet."

So instead of going for them they thought that our fleet was, you know, on the other side of them, so to speak, and they kept bearing down to the southeast and in effect, going away from them. Now that's why, if you could nail down when you hit the water or how long it was after you turned, or anything that would give an indication, time wise, it would be helpful. But you all apparently had cut off and out of the formation, as I,... and that's your distinct impression, is that right?

McI Yeah, yes.

BPW You never, you, they were not in sight or anything.

McI No, I just gave a direction to Magda and gave him the lead and and I just sat there.

BPW And when you turned around, it would have been logical to turn 180 degrees. Is that what you think you did?

McI Yeah, just about.

BPW Yeah.

McI But, uh, not quite because it, the ship had moved.

BPW Yeah, yeah.

McI See, we were....

BPW But you never saw any airplanes, you never saw any ships and you didn't even see the fighter squadron.

McI No.

BPW Okay. All right. Okay.

McI I didn't know what in the hell had happened to them.

BPW Sure, I understand that. And you were looking at the goddamn gas gauge like you were going crazy. Like there's no tomorrow.

McI Yeah.

BPW So, all right. Okay. Mac, I'm telling you. I've gone into this thing pretty thoroughly.

McI Yeah, I've gathered that.

BPW Here are wind and currents of the, what was going on after you were in the water...

McI Oh, for goodness sake.

BPW ...and things like that. You understand? I've, I'm really into this thing. I, when I pin down, and I can pin down, I think, now where the rest of the people hit the water. Not you, you're throwing me a curve but that's all right. But these things tell you what happened after you were in the water and Tallman bears out the fact that he had three days of practically calm weather and there was no waves at night or whatever.

McI Yeah

BPW There were no storms. There was no violent things until the day he was picked up. Now, now I'll tell you why I'm so goddamn sure that I know where these guys went down. And this is what the Navy does not have and why they're curious as shit. Now Ruehlow, Gray and Mitchell... Ruehlow must have reached in his pocket and pulled out a ten dollar bill and got Fisler and the whole crew on the PBV that

picked them up and they put down the course and the distance from Midway that they were picked up at, at the exact spot when they were picked up. And it's a short-snorter bill and I have it! I don't know where in the hell Kelly ever got it, Mr. Kelly, but he's got it and we've got it and there's and those PBY pilots... if you're telling me that there navigation was f***ed up, you're going to have to, you're going to have to talk very strong to.....

Mcl We felt that Ruehlow, uh, Mitchell were not in the water where we were. They were on a different course. They were flying a different course than we..

BPW No question about it. No question about it.

Mcl And they weren't even picked up close to us.

BPW Apparently not. Tallman said that when Jennings... Jennings engine quit. He still had a little power. Okay, but maybe for just a few...

Mcl Oh, yeah.

BPW She was out. So he said, "Well, shit, I'm going down with you." So he just, they peeled out but one plane had gone down ahead of them. See, he was tail-end Charlie.

Mcl Yeah.

BPW He thought he had everybody else in sight. He saw one plane fall out. He thought it was Kelly. And I, to this day, I don't know whether it was Kelly or not, but according to Talbot it was not and according to Mitchell it was not. According to them it was Hill. Now Mitchell had a very good view of him because he was right beside Ruehlow and Hill was wing man on, he saw, he says Hill fall out first. But this is what the thing looks like, Mac. Take a little look here. Here we are launching. This is the start of the launch. Now mind you, these are zone 12 times. See, I say down here...

Mcl Mmm-hmm...

BPW ... and I'm going to leave this with you. That, you have to, the time that you were on was two hours later than all these times on here.

Mcl Mmm-hmm.

BPW All right. In other words, this says 7:00, it was 9:00, it was 8:55 according to the Hornet's log and it's, according to your thinking it was about.... and, and.... 9:00 and by the time you were all through, all the launching, the Enterprise and the Hornet had come down here like this into the wind. The wind was four to five knots out on 138 degrees, okay. Blowing up like this, gentle wind. Not much wind. This was the course which the Enterprise had given to their people to fly down. This was the intercept. Here were the Japs coming down here. This was 240, 155 miles. All right? Now, this was what Ring had without any shadow of a doubt. I'm sure that's what he thought he was flying, or he must have thought that. I'm sure that he was not flying that. I don't think his f***ing compass had been swung or something, I don't know what..

Mcl Yeah.

BPW ..but it wasn't, he was, you know, way south, south of this. No question about it. But, be that as it may, I'll... see, what happened was this. After they had launched, they turned right down the course. Right down here and for another hour or something, came right down here like this. Then they had to recover CAP or whatever it was. They jockeyed around here. They came back here. Came back to get on the course.

They jockeyed around here. And at this point, right in here, the Hornet's radar picks up the dive bombers in Scouting 8 and one section of Bombing 8, right here, 59 miles out. In... up here. All right. They were sighted right here in, uh, 20 minutes later. Whatever it was, 15, 20 minutes later. So, okay. Some credence to it. They were sighted and here is where they recovered during this time. This, on this heading they recovered the incoming flight, okay? Now then they went off around here, right down here and they turned around and they did, went this way for a while. You remember Spruance, criticized for going the wrong way, apparently during the night and he didn't want to have a night engagement with the rest of the goddamn Jap fleet, logically enough. So that's what happened. Now, what happened was they turned around and came back like this, see? Came right back. Why the hell they didn't run over you guys, I'll never know.

McI Yeah.

BPW Now, what you say is very interesting because, I think, you goddamn well saw that fleet come by you the next day, going the other way, you see? That's what it looks like.

McI Yeah.

BPW It kinda hangs together, you know. Now, what happened was this. You came down here and at this point, Waldron was just about right on course. This is the farthest most penetration, the southern most penetration of the Japs was down in here and, no right here, right here and they came back. This is only 20 or 30 miles away, see? And when Waldron turned this way, he turned to, right up to the north and they were coming, he just busted right the hell into them. There was just, I mean, there wasn't any question about it. He just smacked right into them. In no time at all. 10 minutes, there they were, the whole gang. And he was only 1500 feet. There was no chance of him missing...

McI No.

BPW .. none at all. So meantime, of course, McClusky and the whole gang had gone on by. But he was way south, too. He was south, too. But he started to box search to the north. Apparently the word is from the other people that they turned south and Bombing 8, 14 planes of Bombing 8 went on down to Midway, refueled and came on back. Uh, Tappan says, that isn't quite the way he remembered it. He said that very soon after the intercept failed, they started milling around. All the scout bombers. They didn't know what to do. Where in the hell, whatever. Waldron, they had been through the business with Waldron. Waldron has said, "Well, screw you guys. I'm going up this way." And that's

how that was. Ring said, "No, I'm going the other way", or whatever and so I don't know what happened. We have the, we have the official line, here, from the war college, okay? We have all that. It shows that they turned around, hit, went down here, flew down here, within sight of Kure. Here's Kure down...

McI Yeah.

BPW ...right down there. Uh, and then realized that they had missed the fleet so they came on back and came back like this. Well, the Hornet picked up here with their radar. Now, talking about that... (End of tape)

Tape 2

BPW ... point out a couple of things. This track that shows where the Hornet and Enterprise went is verified by a whole lot of things. Not just the Enterprise and the Hornet. This is Morrison's. They went into it in detail. They went and looked at the North Hampton's log and then all the rest of the ships, you know, that were with them. You understand? So, this is a pretty authenticated thing. It doesn't hang on one ship's interpretation or whatever. This course right here, 138 degrees, the Hornet's log said 158 degrees. 20 degrees off. Okay? There, she's on the same course as the Enterprise and all the rest of them. Now, down here, what do we have? Same 20 degrees difference between her log and everybody else's. This angle across here? Radar? Picked up from the radar, 20 degrees. I think, and I'm not ready to say anything at this point, but I think, oh, one more thing. As soon as the Hornet got back to Midway, several interesting things apparently happened. One, it took all of her brand new radar gear out. Replaced it at Pearl before she went out again. Brand new, brand new shit, Christ the thing wasn't even six months old.

McI Yeah.

BPW Okay. Took all the radar out and replaced it. Another thing, the navigation officer was replaced. Ain't that something? Talbot says that the YE-ZB was f***ed up worse than Hogan's goat and...

McI If they're off 20 degrees, it'd have to be.

BPW You begin to see... it begins to look like there were a lot of problems here, Mac. I believe, and I'm beginning to, the only plausible explanation to me, you know, I was very experienced with stuff. I mean, I swung compasses in the air with an astro compass, you know, I, I was good at it once upon a time. I knew how to take care of compasses.

McI Yeah.

BPW When you show something like this to me, it's like hitting me right in the nose. Why in the hell was that magnetic compass, the gyro, the YE-ZB, the radar, everything, that much off? Now...

McI Couldn't be.

BPW Couldn't be, right? Well, I'll tell you something.

McI How the hell could it be?

BPW It could be. I'll tell you how it could be.

McI It was all swung wrong.

BPW You got it.

McI They started from the wrong spot.

BPW You got it. You got it. And the goddamn navigator was stupid enough not to, to be able to get the goddamn thing right. All he had to do, even at Pearl, anyplace for God's sake, were even out on the thing, all he had to do was take bearings on the sun he could get it within 2 or 3 degrees. For God's sake, I did an... Airplanes, I could do it so that, you know, if he'd been, it just seem like incredible to me and then when they tell me that, oh, well the whole goddamn brand new, the whole brand new radar was taken off the Hornet and replaced.

McI It's a cover.

BPW I think that, that the lubberline (?) was put on wrong, the magnetic compass was, must have been wrong and was not checked. Was never checked after it left Norfolk. And the guy who did it at Norfolk was screwed up. That's what happened and

it was never corrected. Don't quote me but I'm, I'm just, you know, I'm talking out of school now.

McI Yeah.

BPW But all these things are pretty logical when you get right down to it. Now, So.... I'm going to leave you this and if you get any ideas or any other things,... Think about it a little bit if you get time, sometime and here was where Ruehlow, Mitchell and Gray were picked up and there isn't any goddamn doubt about it. Now furthermore...

McI Way over here?

BPW Yeah. Okay. One-half hour before they hit the water, they had seen ships off to the left and it was the Jap fleet they say, okay? That's hard. That's hard. Tallman says, "Jap ships? Shit, it was just ships". "We saw wakes, nothing else". Ruehlow tells Lord that he saw the Jap ships so, okay, that's how it comes out in the history books. Talbot, he says he saw Jap ships, well he flew right over them and that was one of the tough points with Tallman, uh, with Talbot. I said, "Well, look, listen. You went in the water at 12:30 by your own watch, right?" Now, at exactly 12:30 was when the Jap fleet was hit by McClusky and the guys, the dive bombers off the Yorktown, away over here. That's where they were hit at exactly the time that Talbot was hitting the water down here and he was picked up very close to these guys.

McI Where in the hell was I picked up? I don't remember knowing.

BPW There's no way of telling. I can't nail you. That's what I want you to think about. I want you to think about it. And you might.....

McI They brought us into Midway.

BPW Yeah, okay. Fisler was the name of the pilot and Crawford was the JG on the PBV that picked up Talbot and Mitchell, Ruehlow and Gray the next day. Same plane, you know. Same, same...

McI Yeah, they picked me up...

BPW Well, I don't know whether that was, that's who it was or not. Now that was not who picked up Tallman. It was the next sector over, next search sector over, I figure that picked up Tallman. He went down before they did. Some little time before they did. Now your true air speed at 20,000 feet, mind you, was pretty good.

McI Oh, yeah.

BPW See. You were doing somewhere in the neighborhood of 160 miles an hour, probably, at that point. Now you weren't doing that flying down the road because, unless, well, Tallman says that he saw the dive bombers and the others confirm that you were with them. They were way down but they were in sight, okay? Mitchell and Gray said that they saw him and so did Talbot and uh, but Tallman has.... Their story, Talbot, Gray and Mitchell's breaks down when they get down here. It's your story and Tallman's story comes right out. Same story, identical. Those guys say, "Well, these, we were, you know, milling around and I was telling Ruehlow to, which way and take over the lead.." and all this, that and the other. In other words, it didn't hang together, see? Now your story of swinging around to the right, coming around, turning around when you got down there and there weren't any goddamn...

McI Well, you see, you asked me did I turn to the north or which way did I turn. Well I had to turn to the north to get around them. How is it going to, I can't

pull this way and turn. I had to go around that way.

BPW That wouldn't have turned them. That's why I say, it had to be to the right.

McI Had to be.

BPW Had to be to the right. Now I want to show you one more. That's Hump's version right now. That's not his final version, that's his first run at it, the same as mine. See what happened? See the dotted line? See the dotted line?

McI Mmm-hmm.

BPW Now, Hump had one more thing that he contributed and he was very sure. Couldn't shake him. No question. He saw Waldron and he saw Waldron go what he thought was right where everybody else should have been going but you didn't go.

McI Well you know this bears out what I thought. This one here, more. This one here bears out what I was thinking, see. We were coming down here, we were supposed to be coming down here to this place here. Coming down here.

BPW Yeah, that's right.

McI That's right. But we were coming down here.

BPW Now the Japs did not make good their distance because the planes out of Midway gave them hell. They had to fight off six attacks from the planes at Midway so they didn't make good their ...

McI Yeah.

BPW time coming down. That's why they were short, see. That's why they were short. And they turned at 11:17 and turned back up this way and just a few minutes later, Waldron was into them. And he was the very first carrier plane to hit them. No question about that. And then all three of the other torpedo planes land by themselves, too. All three, and yet the ones off the Yorktown hadn't started until, oh, a half hour or so later but they came down direct. They came right, see, the Yorktown was up here farther.

McI Mmm-hmm.

BPW Actually the Yorktown was hit here by the Hiryu, which was the fourth carrier that got away. She launched, she was way up here. She launched and got the Yorktown. They nailed the Yorktown. The Yorktown was right here. She was hit here and abandoned there, and that was that. But she was up here when she launched. Now her planes went down this way, too but they went right direct, see, because she was north of this line, see. And they went right smack into them.

McI I can picture this now. I'm clear where I'm thinking about. What was going through my mind.

BPW Right.

McI It was we've got to go over that way. We're off. I remember turning to Pat Mitchell, over there, but he wouldn't turn, wouldn't do it.

BPW Well, Mitchell..

McI I remember my board. I remember my board, now.

BPW Mitchell's, Mitchell's version was, and he was locked into it, that his orders were to follow Ring and he said that's what he did until he was, figured he was out of gas and then he's very unsteady about the turn around.

McI Well, Mitchell....

BPW He doesn't know how he got turned around or any other goddamn thing. I mean,

you know....

McI He was all shook up.

BPW Your version is solid, now. I mean, this, you know, look at Hump. I mean that's... Hump agrees with you 110% and just no question about it and uh, Talbot said well, uh, he was kinda fuzzy about the turn around, too, you know. He said well, we were milling around and I was trying to work the YE-ZB and, and he wasn't definite. It wasn't, you know, it didn't hang right.

McI Yeah, well, so.. I remember because, I remember I said to Johnny we get, boy, I said, well if we get picked up, they're going to court martial me.

BPW That's what you said.

McI I pulled rank on that guy.

BPW Yeah. That's beautiful. That's beautiful. Now, yeah.

McI Oh, we had some pretty bad. I could tell stories that'd make your hair stand on end.

BPW Oh, I'm sure of that.

McI In confidence?

BPW Complete. No question about it. Listen, when that goddamn Hornet, I'm convinced that navigation on the Hornet was horrendous, it had to be.

McI It had to be pretty off, because I remember I put on my ZB and I was falling, and I had it headed, and I knew I wasn't, didn't figure I was that far away. We never did get there.

BPW Well, you know what happened to these guys on my current and wind charts? Hit the water down here and without knowing this, without knowing this, Tallman puts it right down there. Without even knowing it. Can you believe that? Yeah, he did. He says what, he says, this is his chart, he says, "Great, this is where they were picked up of the ditch", and he said that right in here is where all those planes landed. And it is absolutely, if you apply this, the current and the wind was coming up this way, was blowing them back...

McI Yeah.

BPW ... and uphill. Okay. Twelve miles a day current then just a little bit of wind, nothing much in the way of wind.

McI Yeah.

BPW Five days, sixty miles, okay, you're back up here where the...

McI Mmm-hmm.

BPW ... see. It hangs together pretty damn neatly and I think that what happened, apparently, from, that you and Magda must have cut that a little shorter. Hump said that he was following along with what he thought was all of them but apparently he missed you and Magda when you went out. But he said that the curve around like this was fairly gentle. It wasn't of a rapid...

McI No, no.

BPW ...kind of a thing. It was a fairly gentle turn to the right, but a positive, definite turn around to get back to the ship and he says that one-half hour see, which puts him right up here. They saw, four of them swear they saw ships, okay. And Tallman says he saw wakes, so, Christ, it's as obvious almost as the nose on your face.

McI Seemed to me when I made this turn I saw...

BPW You saw the Jap ships.

McI Saw...

BPW That's possible, that's quite possible. It was easily within theoretical range.

McI Yeah.

BPW Easily. I mean, you were only, I'll say, thirty, forty miles away, something like that. That's all.

McI Geez, I can't see we used all that gas going that little distance when I think of it now.

BPW Right. That's the thing that's a sticker. That's a sticker and Talbot is just, he's tearing his hair out. He can't believe it. He says.. you're telling me we were only in the water, I mean in the air for three hours or less. He says, "How in the hell is that possible?" I said, "Well, Christ, I don't know how it's possible". But I know one thing, that you use out a hell of a lot more fuel, heavily loaded climbing to 20 thousand feet...

McI That same plane...

BPW ...than you do flying.

McI Same plane. On take-off power uses 300 gallons a minute.

BPW All right. 300...

McI 300 gallons an hour, excuse me.

BPW 300 gallons an hour.

McI 300 gallons an hour.

BPW How much was your total capacity?

McI Now ..

BPW How many gallons did you have, did it hold?

McI pieces, I got...

BPW Don't, don't remember that?

McI Wish I knew. I knew we had about six hours.

BPW Yeah.

McI 300 gallons. That's what it was, 300 gallons. But our most economical cruising speed at about 160 knots was at a rate of about 42 gallons an hour.

BPW I see.

McI So that gives us six hours.

BPW I see. I see.

McI That's why you get off your high...

BPW Yeah.

McI ... off your high power so fast.

BPW You brought your manifold pressure back, and lower RPMs and everything, yeah, see it was... You had an automatic lean on the thing,

McI No.

BPW ... on the plane, didn't you?

McI (inaud)

BPW (inaud)

McI No, no automatic things.

BPW Well, listen. Kelly's log book. Not that that's any, I mean, Christ, that could be anything, but he had 3.7 hours on that CAP patrol after the Doolittle plane took off.

So he must have been in the air a hell of a long time, 3.7 hours. There it's in the log.

McI Well, that couldn't of run the same flight.

BPW It was on the Doolittle flight. Not this flight.

McI The Doolittle flight.

BPW Doolittle flight.

McI Yeah.

BPW He flew CAP. He, Gray and Mitchell and I don't know who else. Maybe Talbot, but Kelly was on it, no question. And they got 3.7 hours in his log book.

McI Oh, I think I was on that flight. I really do. Now that I think of it. We were the first one's off.

BPW Yeah. Oh, yeah and you took off immediately. Gray said you followed them down the runway, but I don't know. He was not too positive about it.

McI Gray had a lot of wild-assed

BPW No doubt about it. Gray's a funny guy. He's a nice guy but he, well, I mean, you know, he flew over the burning ships and all. Christ, and he was in the goddamn water, he...

McI I wonder, I wonder sometimes how long it would take a man to keep repeating that to himself to believe it....

BPW Yeah, that's the problem. That's the problem.

McI You tell a story enough times...

BPW You begin to believe the damn thing yourself and that's what the problem was with Talbot.

McI I can actually picture myself on that flight now.

BPW Yeah.

McI I can actually picture it. I feel the plane being wishy-washy, not responding to the way it should.

BPW Yeah.

McI It was just a, almost felt as if I was going to spin in, you know.

BPW Stall...

McI A mush goddamn thing, nothing was reacting right. Give it power, nothing. And you try to hold back on your power.

BPW Yeah.

McI And you pull up there to stay in position, you feel it. Oh, it's a crazy flight. I never could figure out that, why, and....

BPW It must have been a crazy flight because....

McI I'll tell you, when I, things that ran through my mind at the time. I hope they get rid of Mitchell if we get back because.... Let me put it to you this way. I went up at least to try to get the boot ensign or something, I wanted to do dog fighting with them. We could all beat his ass. He was terrible. And Ruehlow, he was a flight officer. I went up in a fighter with him coming in. Come back and whipped his ass and know what he said? I was cheating. I said, "What do you mean I was cheating"? He said, "You put your flaps down in that turn". I said, "That's right, I did a goddamn flaps" I left them down. I'd turn them inside you. That was cheating, huh? I said that's one of the attack tricks, that's what they're good for. Tightens your turn.

BPW You'd better goddamn sight believe it is. If you don't know that, what kind of fighter pilot..... Well, you know, I'll tell you something, Mac. A funny thing in Stover's book. Stover ended up at Guadalcanal. He got back on...

McI Yeah, I know he did.

BPW ...the wall.. not the, I forget which one. But he ended up on Guadalcanal for about a couple of weeks, two or three weeks and uh, he had a wild experience. He had a wild experience. I don't know. At that time I don't think he was the greatest pilot either. I mean,...

McI That doesn't make any difference.

BPW But, it doesn't make any difference. He got three or four planes and uh, ... got him down there so he was pretty goddamn good. But, one day he got up there and he saw a float plane, a zero with floats on it so he went out ahead of him, way out ahead on him and coming toward him, see. So he says, "Well goddamn, I can outmaneuver a float plane, here we go", see. So they must have been playing Russian roulette or something.

McI Yeah.

BPW He hit that f***ing float plane. He hit it and tore the, a section of the wing off and his wing didn't come off and he landed with the damn red ball on his airplane. He landed on that field wrapped around the front, leading edge of that wing. Can you imagine that? Actually happened.

McI You know it's a funny thing that happened. I went out in the..... guy named Parker was my skipper and he was mad because he didn't find anything but he didn't go far enough.

BPW Yeah.

McI Now why in the hell these guys, they won't believe their goddamn... you know, you've got to believe it.

BPW Right. You've got to...

McI Anyway, he broke... he went out and he saw a little goddamn fishing boat. I guess he was going to practice some bombing. Took his goddamn... I didn't go with him..

BPW Yeah.

McI I went north. I found a ship up there. I'd never seen it before. What the hell is that goddamn thing? And it was kind of in a dry dock thing..

BPW Uh-huh.

McI Shit, I made a dive on that bastard, shit, I called my boy, goddamn it, what in the hell are you doing... he said, "Christ, we gotta do this again". So I, nothing was happening so I said, "All right, I'm going to drop these one at a time.

BPW Uh-huh.

McI I had four of them. I came down...

BPW What were you in, now?

McI Torpedo plane.

BPW Oh, the TBF?

McI Yeah.

BPW Yeah.

McI And we had four or five hundred pound bombs on it.

BPW Yeah.

McI So I, I missed it first, got it right close, then I pulled up again. All a sudden, I hear these goddamn sea planes coming after me. But nice cloud cover and all I had to do, I don't like to fly in clouds. So I just pull up in the clouds and come

right back down out of them. I made four runs, I hit it twice.

BPW Oh, geez..

McI And was saying, "Get your ass out of here". Well, now, I saw this thing come back and here my skipper's still f***ing around with this little boat. So I tried and I tried and tried and after a while, I had a hell of a time and I'm pointing up there, you know, radio silence, up there.... Well we got back in..

BPW Was this in the Soloman's?

McI Yeah. Ruehlow, we were having a meeting after the flight because they screwed up so badly and I came in and I said I saw, I described the ship to them.

BPW Uh-huh.

McI He said they don't have anything like, it's another encounter with Ruehlow. He said they don't have any ships like that. You, know, I got mad and of course, I was lieu... uh, ensign, I said, "Tell you what you do, lieutenant. Get you ass in my back seat and I'll take you right back there." My skipper, what's his name, (inaud), he says, "Mac, come on, get the hell out of here". So anyway, back we go to, we're back in San Diego. Here identification. They're flashing these things on, who's doing it but Ruehlow again. Now this guy has been my nemesis. All of a sudden they flash these things and I let out a.. "There's that goddamn ship you said they didn't make". "Hey, put that back on". I said, "What the hell is that?. He said, "That's the sea plane carrier".

BPW A sea plane carrier.

McI I said, "That's the goddamn thing I hit". Jesus, I was mad at him. Oh, he was awful.

BPW Well, I..

McI Stan Ruehlow..

BPW Well...

McI No, Steve Jureka, Jureka

BPW Jureka, yeah.

McI Yeah, he's that guy. Oh he was a ass. I bet you he's up in age, he's in one of the age or something like that now.

BPW Well, was he a flight officer?

McI Yeah, but he was also the, a secret service of the Navy in Japan and he knew nothing.

BPW Intelligence, yeah. Oh, God.

McI They showed him nothing. It's amazing. You know those of us that come out of it unscathed, we'd say what a lot of fun it was, you know. He laughs at scars who'd never felt the wound, you know, that type of thing.

BPW Damn right.

McI You know. And that's to get back to what I was thinking about Mark coming down tonight. All he fought for was for the Japanese. For them, not against them. They're the ones that are getting everything out of this whole goddamn thing. What's the American getting out of it?

BPW It sure is a... That's a good question.

McI It's the same thing that's happening right here in Miami. What's the American getting? But, oh hell. You know I'm old enough to go up for the social security. When I see that 80% of the people that are up there are in their 30's and

40's..

BPW Oh, my God! They are?

McI Well, certainly. Sickness, all that kind of, all these government things. Oh, they have all kinds of things with the social security. That's why it's going broke. It's not going to the people that have been putting their money in.

BPW Uh... I never realized... I haven't really even looked into the damn thing.

McI Oh, it's a crazy thing.

BPW Shit, I, I know goddamn well I'm going to do the same thing you do. You're going to die with your boots on and so am I. Hell, we'll never get any social security.

McI You might as well. You go in there you'll get, oh hell, eight or nine hundred dollars a month.

BPW Yeah.

McI It all spends.

BPW Let me show you one more thing, Mac.

McI All right, sir.

BPW And I'll let you go and I appreciate very much your kindness.

McI I don't know whether I've been helpful or not.

BPW You sure as hell have been helpful. You sure as hell have been helpful. I wanted to show you...

McI When you look through another person's eyes, it's a lot different, you know.

BPW Yeah, that's right, exactly right. Here is the Naval War College person. Okay. This goes on, it took in the fifth and sixth but also because...

McI Oh, yeah.

BPW ...they hit the people over there, but actually the fourth was back in here, of course. But you can see they draw the VF8 down here and say, well they went around in circles and that was the end, that was the end of that. They just stopped right there. Nothing's ever, in other words, there was just nothing, just....

McI Well, maybe Mitchell made this up.

BPW I'm telling you. Well, the guy who is responsible for this, they're very interested. They want to know.

McI Well, let me ask you.

BPW I don't know what to do about it. I really ...

McI What are they doing with Ring? You know they demoted him up, you know.

BPW Oh, yeah. I think Ring's going too, though. I think he's going now. I believe, I'm not sure.

McI I can tell you one incident that will tell you his exact, what type of person he is. They had the cameras on one day and he was taking off and as he goes down the flight deck, he goes like this. It's exactly what I did. I said, "I'll be a son of a bitch". Honest, and to this.... and I can still just picture it. And I thought, "Oh, no".

BPW I'm the hero, look at me....

McI They know what they did. Oh, hell, we had a sighting of ships going in one day. They had seen the wake and they came from another carrier, okay. Who was our skipper? Parker, Ed Parker. Okay, I'm going to take you, you, you and

you, you goddamn Irishmen, let's go. We're going to put some torpedoes on there. We're going to the rest of them ships, okay. Goddamn. Know what it is? Guy named Sanchez, a fighter. He was up observing, he spotted them.

BPW I see.

McI So we go down there. What are they? They're rocks. And the tide what he saw a kind of a wake, you know, rocks. We called them Sanchez rocks. And the skipper was so pissed off that he had us fly over, around and around that carrier. Just sitting on our ass, round and round and round. Wouldn't let us come aboard.

BPW Here's a picture of the wording that was on the short-snorter bill. You see until you and Tallman have really come up with a more logical picture of the thing, I didn't, there was no way of kind of getting everybody together with this. But now, you know, it looks much more, much more sensible. There's no question about where those guys were picked up. You know goddamn well that PBY navigation was good. They went back and picked up the three, they picked up Talbot one day and went back the next day and picked up the other three. You know damn well their navigation was pretty, pretty damn good.

McI Yes.

BPW It had to be. And those guys, those PBY boys, they were either good navigators or that was the end of that.

McI That's right.

BPW They didn't get back because they were way out. I mean they really went out. And they were going 700 miles out of Midway at the beginning.

McI You know, as a navigator, you wonder sometimes about navigation. Put us out on a vector, on anti-sub patrols, they had us all around.

BPW Yeah.

McI You would go out 50 miles, across and back in. Well, actually you could fly around the ZBX if you want to.

BPW Yeah.

McI Just go out on one letter and come back in on the other.

BPW Yeah, sure.

McI I was always practicing navigation. I never listened to the son of a bitch.

BPW Yeah.

McI I always figured, goddamn it, learn to fly. Learn to pick your wind, learn to pick your direction and, goddamn it, down here you can dead reckon or you can make it.

BPW Right, right.

McI This day it was real bad weather. Of course, I was out on the starboard quarter, my skip was on the, I think it was, yeah, the starboard. It was aft. And uh, starboard quarter, way back. And came around and I come out of this kind of soup. It wasn't, you could see some, but it wasn't very bad.

BPW Yeah.

McI All of a sudden here he is, above me. And he goes, his radio was out. (Inaud) He goes like this.....and I give it right back to him. Oh, he gave me hell when I got back in. You son of a bitch, I said, "What the hell". I said, "You gave us all kind of lectures, don't you". About that time, said, "Hell, the first one... I'll put

them back on the hanger in a minute. The first hop as a torpedo pilot, 300 miles out and over and back. Well I was kidding the guy in the back. I said that this was my first hop. I said now we're starting back home, I said, "Better start looking". One kid said, "What the hell are we flying with here?" I said, "Well, I'm trying to save myself so go along with me". You know, what the hell.

BPW Don't go away mad.

McI So anyway, we get back in and I was looking. Finally I spotted the goddamn thing and I am right, hitting that son of a bitch right in the stern. And I'm supposed to be hitting it right on the quarter.

BPW I see.

McI Holy shit! What the hell kind of this is... I look at the goddamn water. I looked at the heading and I think, Jesus Christ, can't be. Finally, all of a sudden I get off the zigging, went into the zagging, bang, I'm right on it. I said, "Oh, Jesus, they were making a zig." I was coming in at the right spot but they were in the wrong, just the wrong uh,

BPW attitude.

McI yeah, wrong attitude.

BPW Mac, do you remember on that YA-ZB, those uh, segments, how wide that was? Was that a 15 or...

McI 15 degrees, I think.

BPW ...15 degrees.

McI Yeah.

BPW I thought it was.

McI Yeah. They were pretty good. You could pick that up pretty far out.

BPW Oh, sure, salvation. It was a salvation normally. Christ...

McI There was nothing there.

BPW But that was a bitch. But it's funny that nobody would have remembered, and nobody has at all, remembered what the orientation was. What letter was north, I mean, you know... that... and I can't find it out.

McI What end is up, you know. You know, the reason for that is, I believe, was we didn't give a damn. At that time, we had more important things to think about. And it doesn't stick in one's mind.

BPW Yeah.

McI Now when you put, you see, you could remember something better if you say I've got to remember that and repeat it, you say, I've got to remember... but if you write it down, what the hell is that number...

BPW Then all you have to do is look at it.

McI That's right. So that's what you do on your chart. And, uh, that was your bible.

BPW Yeah.

McI And just look at that and spin it and say, "oh, yeah", okay, you know. I thought it was the greatest thing in the world, like this. Spinning board, they....

BPW Oh yeah, they were good. There's no question about that. Well, listen. What do you say we have a night cap. Are you good for one?

McI Ahh, go to bed. I can go home.

BPW I want you to be happy. I really appreciate...

McI I enjoyed meeting you and it's kinda brought back memories. I'm very happy for these.

BPW I tell you what I'm going to do now, Mac. I think you'd be interested. Let's say, I'm going to work with Tallman on it a little bit....

McI Yeah.

BPW Because two ideas, you know....

McI Say hello to the old fart for me.

BPW He wanted me to be very careful to say hello to you. I tell you, he remembered you so well. In fact or truth, all of them did. You were as well known and well liked as anybody in the whole damn ship, as far as I can see. Even old Tappan, he remembered you very well. He says, "Oh hell, yes, say hello to Mac."

McI Yeah, those guys... I'd like if you can think of it, to send me the names and addresses. I'd like to, you know, I go up that way, you know, I can stop by and ...

BPW I don't think, I tell you what I, uh, let me see. Yeah, I ought to have.... Look at all these guys, something's here.

McI Ruehlow, yeah, here's.....

BPW All right, now Talbot, you want me to write these down. I got Talbot's address and thing...

McI Ronald Ford and Lt. J.G. Gray....

BPW The only ones that I have are these. Now, let me see. I'm not sure that I brought those with me.

McI Hank Carry, he's out in ... Chapman, gee, I don't remember him...

BPW You see, Mac...

McI (inaud) I'd forgotten about him...Gordon, Groves, Hill, Kelly, Magda, J.P. Moore, oh yeah, Morris, Waterman. I remember him. Cy Satterfield, goddamn, Cy was a (inaud) I remember him, too. Cy....

BPW Mac, I'll send you this.

McI I'd appreciate it.

BPW I'll send you all those names and addresses. But, what I started to say was this. I'm going to send you the end product, also.

McI Wonderful.

BPW And, uh, and as I say, the way I'm going to do it and really reach my conclusion is, I'm going to detail the flight out, on my own with all my information and I'm going to send every bit of it to Tallman, see. And I'm going to say, and I've already talked to him about it and he's all for it. And he's going to work with every single thing. All the input that we have. Every.. and the tapes and the whole goddamn thing I've duplicated and all... And he's going to come out with where the flight went, what happened and all that too and then we're going to have that's the best thing we're going to be able to do.

McI (inaud)

BPW But it's going to be, you know, quite a different picture from the Naval War College and Mr. Howard, who's the head of the Operations Archives Branch of the Naval History Division and all this, that and the other thing. You remember a guy by the name of Foley? Now he was a air officer on the Hornet, or assistant or something of that....

McI I wouldn't know him for sure.

BPW He's a friend of Ben Tappan and I'm going to see him and he's going to be my last guy that I talk to and is going to be a touchy conversation that I have with him.

McI Oh, yes. I imagine so.

BPW Very touchy, indeed.

McI This is amazing. You know, all these guys, I remember Grady.

BPW You want that?

McI Uh, oh, I'd love to have that.

BPW I've got duplicates of that. You can have all that.

McI Remember, bring back memories, Grady. He was burned on the Hornet. He got killed. I gave him his last cigarette, I remember.

BPW Oh, geez.

McI Yeah, he was all burned to hell, but smiling.

BPW Did you, where, what happened to you after the, after you got back on active duty, you know, or out of the hospital. Where did you go?

McI (inaud)

BPW TBS?

McI Yeah.

BPW Uh-huh. Well Tallman was there, too. Wasn't he?

McI Sure.

BPW Yeah, right.

McI Yeah. Oh, Hump was there, yeah. Over on, we went to...

BPW You never got back on the Hornet, did you?

McI Sure.

BPW You went back on the Hornet? Were you on the Hornet when she was sunk?

McI Yeah.

BPW You were? Oh, is that right?

McI Oh, yeah.

BPW Oh, I see. That must have been a wild episode. My god! That business of getting that line over to the North Hamptonoh, Christ, I have the battle damage report on, on the Hornet. That is a fascinating goddamn thing.

McI I had a guy on there. He's probably one that took pictures. He had, his cameras were worth thousands of dollars.

BPW Yeah.

McI I said if this son of a bitch goes down, I've got some pistols. You want those? If this goes down, you get my pistols and goddamn it, I get your cameras. But, the son of a bitch, when he's coming across the goddamn thing, if he didn't drop the cameras...

BPW Oh, no!

McIson of a bitch. Could have surveyed them right away... Hey,

BPW You know when he was transferred to a destroyer, or something.

McI Yeah.

BPW Yeah. Oh, Jesus.

McI Oh, man.

BPW That's too bad.

McI When they sunk the Hornet, I thought and we landed on.. you might get a kick out of this,...

BPW How many people got killed in that damn thing?

McI I don't know. We landed on the Enterprise, you see.

BPW Oh, I see.

McI I was in the air when..... We came back and Ed Parker was our skipper.

BPW Yeah.

McI And I remember one time we discussed how long will these goddamn things stayed in the air and Ed said, "Oh, depends on pilots." So we came back after this flight, I was in his flight. No, I flew the second division. We get back there and anyway, they can't take us aboard. Too many planes on and Christ, they're trying to fuel some and get them off and strike some below and doing all kinds of things. All night long we were sitting on, just holding, you know, you never see those props turning...

BPW Yeah

McI ...so slow. And uh, I was sitting in about 68 knots, I remember. Just like that, 68 knots...

BPW Oh, would it stay in the air?

McI ...and, let's see, I know, Ed goes (inaudible) in the drink, see. Naturally, I flew around and came up and..... (inaudible) anyway, it got to a point where they had to take us, see, they saw it going into the water.

BPW Yeah. Well you had three men in those planes.

McI Yes. The, uh...

BPW Not the TBDs but the TBS had three.

McI The uh, number two elevator was down...

BPW Uh-huh.

McI ...and we landed aboard.

BPW Oh, my gosh.

McI And we landed aboard. Goddamn, I'll tell you....

BPW Everybody make it all right?

McI Yea. Torpedo planes, (inaudible) planes particularly were the most stable things you've ever seen.

BPW Yeah.

McI I'd picked up on (inaudible) one time, I had bombs on. You always carried them.

BPW Yeah.

McI The bombers had gone down. I don't know, I was always sent on these crazy goddamn hops for some reason or other. You know what it is? See them. See who was there and what was going on and I thought, well, every, each one of those goddamn bastards got in that plane. They were like sardines. And this, the runway was sand, you know, dirt. I said, "Well, we'll try it".

BPW Shit.

McI I took that whole runway. We get off and I get back to the ship. I was coming around and goddamn, the signal officer was giving me this.....

Tape2 / Side 2 inaudible