

**Telephone Interview with Admiral Rodee
Late 1981 or early 1982**

BPW Hello, is Mr. Rodee there?

Mrs. Rodee Who's speaking?

BPW My name is Weisheit, I'm an attorney in Baltimore, Maryland.

Mrs. Rodee Does he know you?

BPW No, no ma'am.

Mrs. Rodee What is this?

BPW I'm with the C. Markland Kelly Foundation.

Mrs. Rodee What is it all about? Is it...

BPW We are having some research on the Battle of Midway and I would like to talk to Mr. Rodee, if possible.

Mrs. Rodee Well, I'll call the Admiral. Just a minute.

BPW Is, is he, I hate to disturb him, I would greatly appreciate it.

Mrs. Rodee And what did you say your name was?

BPW My name is Weisheit.

Mrs. Rodee Weisheit.

BPW Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. Rodee Just a minute.

BPW Thank you.

WFR Hello?

BPW Hello, Admiral Rodee?

WFR Yes.

BPW My name is Bowen Weisheit. I'm an attorney in Baltimore and I'm a director of a foundation that was formed to commemorate the memory of one of the fighter plane pilots that was lost at Midway by the name of Markland Kelly. I don't know whether you remember that name or not but he was in the fighter squadron that was on the Hornet at the time on the June 4th engagement.

WFR Yeah.

BPW Does that ring a bell at all?

WFR No...

BPW Okay.

WFR Nope.

BPW Well, he was an Ensign. In any event, what the foundation is doing is some research work and, you were ...uh...I talked to, uh, Admiral Foster and he suggested that I might give you a call. We're, I'm trying to, in effect, put together that flight. Mr. Kelly, Kelly's father, who set up the foundation was never very happy with the final report with of how the flight went. And so this research is being done in order to, if possible, get any last, take advantage of the last possible chance to get any first hand information that might be available.

WFR Yeah, I didn't know very many of the fighter pilots.

BPW Yeah, I don't expect you to remember too much, sir. I have some, I have a question or so that I would like to ask if you might help. Am I calling you at an inconvenient time?

WFR No, we finished dinner.

BPW Well, all right sir. I just turn me off whenever you feel like it, Admiral. In the course of, I talked to Ben, excuse me, I've talked to Ben Tappan, you may remember Ben.

WFR Yeah.

BPW He lives here locally and I talked to him a little bit, but there were some questions in my mind. Admiral Foster said that no point option, for instance, course was ever given you, but uh, but uh, but the course to intercept the enemy was. Is that, is that your kind of recollection on the thing?

WFR No, I don't remember anything about an option. They gave us a bearing on the enemy which we flew down.

BPW I see. And Mr. Ring, Commander Ring was the leader at that time?

WFR Yeah, he was the group commander.

BPW Yes and, and then Waldron, did you ever catch up with Waldron?

WFR No, you see we were at altitude and he was on the surface.

BPW Right, but you never really saw him at all?

WFR Not after we left the Hornet.

BPW Yeah, and he left a few minutes before you presumably.

WFR No, he was off last I think, the torpedo plane.

BPW Well, I think apparently the fighters thought they were.

WFR The fighters went off first.

BPW I see.

WFR Then the dive bombers. Then the torpedo planes.

BPW I see. I see. So, okay. Well,

WFR We were on our way I guess when Waldron started going.

BPW I see, uh-huh. Well, in any event, event you, you went to the south somewhat of the course that Waldron followed, as it turned out. Is that correct? Is that your recollection?

WFR Yeah, about fifteen degrees apart, I think.

BPW You think it was about fifteen degrees. Do you think that Waldron did not take the course that was given to you or did you all not take the course?

WFR We took the given course. I don't know what he took.

BPW I see.

WFR We took the bearing and course they gave us.

BPW I got you. You don't remember what it was,

WFR It was about, uh,

BPW About 240?

WFR No, it was about 265.

BPW 265?

WFR Yeah. 260, 265.

BPW I see.

WFR It was almost due west.

BPW Yeah, and you,.. How long do you.... Remember how long you held that? Do you remember your first turn or anything?

WFR Well, we went till about, oh, noon time I guess. 8:30 till 11:30, about three hours.

BPW Yeah, I see, straight on that course?

WFR Yeah.

BPW Uh-huh. All right. And that... Is that magnetic or true?

WFR True.

BPW True, okay. Well, when... Did you ever, when Waldron, Waldron apparently broke radio silence when he started his attack or whatever. Did you ever hear anything? Any conversation between Ring and Waldron?

WFR Nope. No, we never heard him at all.

BPW Uh-huh.

WFR If he was talking, it was very, just to his squadron.

BPW Yeah, I see. I see. Do you remember any problems with the YE-ZB equipment?

WFR No, that's what got us back.

BPW It got you back.

WFR It worked fine.

BPW Okay, great.

WFR Perfect.

BPW Do you remember what the letter was?

WFR No, gee, No.

BPW Do you remember what the orientation was? What letter was North?

WFR No, don't remember.

BPW No.

WFR It was all written down on our chart board.

BPW Sure, yeah, okay. Did you follow the reciprocal of your heading out or had you..... Did you fly south or did you not?

WFR We flew south a little bit looking for them. Then we saw Midway smoking.

BPW Maybe how long? Maybe ten minutes?

WFR About, yeah, ten or fifteen minutes.

BPW Yeah, and then you headed back.

WFR Then we, we headed back east and tuned in the YE and got the homing beacon.

BPW Yeah. And but don't remember that letter now? It wasn't dit-dit-dah?

WFR No, gee.

BPW I'm trying..

WFR I'm sorry, I don't remember.

BPW I'm trying to jog your memory.

WFR I know it took us right back to the carrier.

BPW Uh-huh. Well, let me say this. Apparently, you didn't miss by far, but it would seem, according to the Hornet's log, which I now have a copy of, the radar picked you up at about 60, uh, 59 miles out on a course that was a little bit north or on, in a position that was a little bit north of the original course out. Does that ring a bell? And then you had to make a right hand turn there to come on in.

WFR Well, I don't remember.

BPW Huh? No?

WFR I don't remember any change of course. I know we came right back down the alley.

BPW You came right straight.

WFR Yeah.

BPW Uh huh. Ring was not with you?

WFR No.

BPW He, when had he left?

WFR I don't know.

BPW All right.

WFR He left us when we turned around I guess.

BPW I see.

WFR I took my squadron south.

BPW Yeah.

WFR I guess he headed back to the carrier.

BPW You had one section of VB's with you.

WFR Uh, of what?

BPW Three planes, one from the bombing section, you, you were the leader of the scouting SBD's right? Scouting 8?

WFR Right, I had my eighteen.

BPW Yes, but you also had three more, apparently, no?

WFR No, not on that day. I had some the next day from the Enterprise.

BPW Oh, I thought... well, okay, all right. But, only fourteen hit, went to Midway of the bombing group.

WFR That was Bombing 8.

BPW Yes, Bombing 8.

WFR They, they went into Midway.

BPW But didn't three planes of Bombing 8 come with you?

WFR No, not that I recollect.

BPW No, okay.

WFR They all went into Midway as far as I know.

BPW Well....

WFR They had to refuel.

BPW Yeah, that's right. Then they came back on out.

WFR Yeah.

BPW And they didn't have any trouble with the YE-ZB either?

WFR I guess not, they all got back.

BPW Let me ask you, did you see, on the way out, did you see any planes? Any other planes?

WFR No.

BPW No?

WFR No. None at all.

BPW Did you see your own fighters?

WFR No they left me. See, they were short on fuel and left.

BPW They left early.

WFR Yeah.

BPW Right. How did you know that?

WFR Well, I couldn't see them.

BPW I see.

WFR They weren't overhead.

BPW You did see them then, at sometime.

WFR I know about half way out, yeah, they were overhead.

BPW I see, I see, uh-huh. But then they left a little early, that's right.

WFR They didn't have enough gas.

BPW Yeah, that's right. How about fuel consumption? What did the SBD's burn in the the first hour or uh, in the climb, taking off, do you remember?

WFR No.

BPW No, okay.

WFR No.

BPW All right. The, Do remember whether there was ever any problems with respect to the to the ship's compass or anything?

WFR No, you mean the Hornet?

BPW Yeah.

WFR No, I don't know anything about any ship trouble.

BPW Why, do you have any idea why her radar was replaced when she got to Pearl?

WFR No, not unless she got a better one.

BPW I see. In other words...

WFR The original was that old English thing.

BPW Is that right?

WFR Like a big mattress.

BPW That was installed at Norfolk.

WFR Yeah, the British mattress.

BPW I see, and you think that maybe it was an upgrading project.

WFR Yeah, I know it was better.

BPW Yeah. Admiral Foster said that he tracked you out when you left the ship and indeed you stayed as far as he was able to follow you which must have been the better part of an hour. You just stayed right on course all the way down and which bears out your memory that you didn't make any changes on the way out.

WFR Right.

BPW Is that right?

WFR That's right.

BPW Until you made a short turn to the south and then came on back.

WFR Yeah.

BPW Did you see Kure?

WFR No.

BPW Did you see Midway burning?

WFR Yes, I saw Midway burning.

BPW You never saw the Jap fleet.

WFR Nope.

BPW Even coming back or otherwise.

WFR None of them.

BPW None of them. Okay. Well all right, Mr. Rodee, I uh, I appreciate very much your kindness in talking to me. I have talked to all of the surviving pilots which are five of the fighters and of course they were never interviewed, and, uh, nobody seemed to really pay very much attention to what happened to them but... A very funny thing happened, well, a number of things that were disquieting to Mr. Kelly. A short-snorter bill showed, showed, showed up of all things that Ruehlw, Mitchell

and Gray had signed...

WFR Yeah.

BPW and given to the PBY pilots to pick them up, a guy by the name of Sisler, I don't know whether that name rings a bell or not, but, uh, he was later killed out at Vella La Vella, but, in any event the bill had uh, had very carefully documented where they were picked up.

WFR At Kure?

BPW Uh, no, it was no where near there at all. They were coming back.

WFR Yeah.

BPW And as a matter of fact, they had gotten back. You would barely know it, I'm afraid, apparently. It's quite an interesting sort of a thing. I went to talked to these fellows all around and got their stories and put it all down and now I'm about to try to plot out the thing. I am knowledgeable about it. I was flying in the Marine Corp., and I, as a matter of fact, I used to teach for old Captain Weems down in Annapolis right before the war started.

WFR Mmm-hmm.

BPW So, it's been an interesting kind of a thing. Well, all right sir, thank you very much. Again, I appreciate it, I hope I haven't inconvenienced you.

WFR No, I'm sorry I couldn't give you more definite information but that's all I can recollect.

BPW Well, you've done a great job. I don't know how you did that well, to be honest with you, Admiral.

WFR Remembered the best I could.

BPW Yeah, you've done a good job. Thanks ever again.

WFR Okay, fine.

BPW Right'o.

WFR Nice talking with you.

BPW Nice talking to you, sir.

WFR Bye-bye.

BPW Bye-bye.