

Hale Burge: So anyway, prior to going up to the mainland, in November, a B-24 had come in from the South end of the runway and they would [couple of words unclear] about 8x8 structure, there were a couple of little antennas off the end of the runway. The pilot come in low and he hit the right main landing gear on this structure and broke the right wing and gear so that it wouldn't hold up the airplane. So we went on down and landed on the main – on the left main – the left main and nose gear. And in the process it made a huge turn and it was headed south, southeast just opposite the way it was going. And the right wing tip hit into a dirt bank that was on the ... off the edge of the runway and this little stream of ... just pond water there had settled about four feet wide and wasn't too deep, two foot deep maybe at the most. And anyway in the process of that the pilot had not shut the engines off or nothing the whole time. He never shut ... chopped throttles.

But anyway, the navigator was attempting to get out of the top hatch right behind the pilot and when he did and that wing hit the dirt bank the number two engine was still running and the pilot was ... the navigator was thrown in there and it cut him about half in two. So the thing was on fire, the fuel line comes loose on the number 2 engine and it was on fire. And I'm there with our little bit of equipment of CO₂ and all that stuff. I mean, the base fire chief got over there with his equipment which wasn't a whole lot more, just a tank truck bigger than ours and some five gallon cans. So I worked right behind him because he trained us earlier, about fires and how to control them and how dangerous they were.

So anyway, I'm working on top of the wing and I slipped off and slid into the water feet first and stepped on something and I reached down and feel it out and it was that guy – that Lieutenant I guess he was – and I put my hands under his arms to pull him up and I saw that he was cut through the middle and I yelled at the medics. The medics had got there by then. They were on the other side of the airplane. The airplane didn't break in two when it crashed like that. But they come around and took him out of there. He was the only one that died on that airplane that day. So, I was fighting fire with water from under the fire was burning and spraying it on top. I never did worry about the airplane blowing up because that civilian fire chief he knew his job pretty well.

Anyway, we got the fire out and that was one thing that I was worried about that day coming from ... from Attu on this B-24. That weather was gonna do us that way, were we gonna crash or what have you. So thank God the young Lieutenant flying the airplane knew what he was doing on the next go around and he made a perfect landing.