

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

#268

ATTILIO EDWARD “CHIP” CHIAPPARI

USS *ANTARES*, SURVIVOR

**INTERVIEWED ON
DECEMBER 7, 1998
BY DANIEL MARTINEZ**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

MARCH 17, 2001

Daniel Martinez (DM): Okay. The following oral history interview was conducted by Daniel Martinez, historian for the National Park Service at the USS *Arizona* Memorial. The taping was done at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada on December 7, 1998, at approximately 12:30 p.m. The person being interviewed is A. E. “Chip” Chiappari?

Attilio Edward “Chip” Chiappari (AC): Yeah.

DM: Who was aboard the USS *Antares* on December 7, 1941. Chip, for the record, could you please state your full name?

AC: My full name is Attilio Edward Chiappari.

DM: And “Chip” is? A nickname?

AC: A nickname, yeah.

DM: That you like better than your first name?

AC: Right.

DM: And you were, what was your date of birth?

AC: March 22, 1916.

DM: And could you also tell me your place of birth?

AC: San Francisco.

DM: California.

AC: California, yeah.

DM: What would you consider your hometown, then? San Francisco?

AC: San Francisco, yeah.

DM: One of the things I'd like to ask you is just basically about your family. Were you first generation Italian coming to—your parents were immigrants, or were you second generation?

AC: We're—my parents came from Italy about 1906 or a little bit, maybe a little bit after that.

DM: From what?

AC: From Italy.

DM: What city or town?

AC: In the mountains.

DM: Northern Italy?

AC: North of Genoa, up in the hills.

DM: Okay. And they settled in New York first?

AC: No, no. They came right through to San Francisco. My father's brother was already in San Francisco. So...

DM: And what business did they take up? What did your dad do for a living?

AC: At first, my father and my uncle got into the window washing business. And then later on, my father wanted to get out of it, so he got to be a janitor. And he worked about, just about every theater in San Francisco, large and small. And what else?

DM: Well, that's fine.

(Conversation off-mike.)

DM: We're just getting a little glare off your glasses. It's not a big deal. It can be fixed later.

AC: I can take 'em off.

DM: No. That's you.

(Conversation off-mike.)

DM: Okay. Chip, your dad, very hard working guy and did all of this, you know, working in the theaters, taking care of them. What did your mother do? Did your mother raise the family? Or did she have another...

AC: Yeah. No she just raised us. There was five kids in my family.

DM: Where were you in that group?

AC: Oh, there was Ernie, Laura, Emma, me, and then my small brother, [*Silvio*].

DM: Where did you go to elementary school?

AC: At first, Roosevelt was a grammar school. And then they tore that old building down and so we had to go about a mile further to school to a George Peabody, which was on Sixth Avenue.

DM: Okay. What district of San Francisco did you...

AC: Richmond district.

DM: The Richmond district.

AC: Yeah.

DM: And when you went to high school, where did you go to high school?

AC: High School of Commerce.

DM: High School of Commerce.

AC: Yeah.

DM: Was that a public school?

AC: Yes.

DM: Would it be fair to say that your family was fairly traditional Italian family?

AC: Yes, they were. Yeah.

DM: And were they Catholic?

AC: Yes.

DM: And what was the church you went to?

AC: Our church was supposed to be St. Edward's, but we used to like to go to a church named Holy Cross.

DM: Why is that?

AC: Well, whichever way we went from where we lived...

DM: Right.

AC: ...right in the middle of San Francisco, it was a long time ago. There was four cemeteries surrounding us.

DM: Okay.

AC: So we used to have to go through cemeteries wherever we went.

DM: Right.

AC: We almost had to—so we liked going through this one cemetery and just over the hill.

DM: Because it was pretty or...?

AC: No, it was an old, it was the oldest one there, I think.

DM: And when you were in high school, what were your favorite—did you play sports? What was your favorite?

AC: No, because I was so small. In fact, when I joined the navy, I was about 105 pounds and I'd say about five foot five.

DM: Okay. Did you have a favorite subject in school?

AC: Oh, I liked history and geography and typing. And I took business training and Italian, of course.

DM: Right. Did you, was there something—San Francisco is a wonderful city. Was there something you loved to do in San Francisco?

AC: Yeah, we used to like to go, in fact my extracurricular duties were to, activities was to cut school and go down Fisherman's Wharf and go fishing. (Chuckles)

DM: Okay.

AC: Or my brother and I, my smaller brother and I would go down there fishing or swimming down on the marina.

DM: Right.

AC: Yeah, San Francisco was one of the best cities in the world. Right now, I can't say the same thing.

DM: Yeah. All cities change and evolve.

AC: Yeah.

DM: But you grow up, you graduate from high school, did you know what you wanted to do when you got out of high school?

AC: Yes, I wanted to get a job. But it was during...

DM: Any job or...

AC: Any. I'd have done anything, but it was depression.

DM: Uh-huh.

AC: And there was a lot of, so many people out of work. And some of the men that should've been on jobs were out on street corners, selling apples, pencils, anything.

DM: So the depression did actually grip San Francisco.

AC: Oh yeah. Yeah. Well, my father was kind of lucky. He worked all the time. And he was kind of foolish though. He would find purses and pocketbooks and everything that had money in 'em. He would turn them in. Except if he found, you know, change and all that, he'd keep that.

DM: Right.

AC: And that's what we went on vacation with, with these nickels and dimes and quarters that he found, yeah.

DM: Well, speaks well for your dad's honesty.

AC: Yeah, I think so too but I still think he was foolish. (Chuckles) Because the guy that got those pocketbooks, he made a mint, you know. The manager there.

DM: Oh, he would turn 'em over to the manager?

AC: Yeah.

DM: How did you—you came out of high school and it was tough finding a job. Is that why you joined the navy?

AC: Yeah.

DM: And how old were you when you enlisted?

AC: Oh, I was about seventeen and a half, I guess.

DM: So your parents signed for you?

AC: No, they wouldn't sign. And so I told my father—well, what happened, I went down to this Harrison Street where the recruiting station [*is located*]. I wanted to join the Marines. But then I saw that big sign up there with this burly Marine, and I says to myself, oh my god, he can pick me up with one hand and throw me against the bulkhead. And so I says, well, I'll go up to the navy, which was the next floor. I go up there and I open the door and I went to step in there and this chief yeoman by the name of Cannon—I still remember that—he looks up and he says, “What the hell do you want?”

That's how small I was. And I says, I started to walk out and he says, “Get back in here. What do you want?”

And I said, “I want to join the navy.”

And he says, “Oh my god!”

But I got in.

DM: Because you probably very youthful and you were a small guy, right.

AC: Yeah. Oh, well, what happened, I signed up. So he sent a letter home and my father got a hold of it and he says, “Hey, what's this?”

And I said, “I told you I wanted to go join the navy.”

And he said, “No, forget it.”

He tore the letter up. So another letter came. Oh no, the fellow came up and rang the doorbell and my father was there.

DM: The recruiting officer?

AC: Yeah, yeah. And my father threw him out.

DM: No kidding.

AC: Then they sent another letter and I says, “Hey Pa, you know, you don’t have to sign. When I’m eighteen, I can go in on my own,” which was not right. It was twenty-one.

And he said, “Oh.”

So just before I was eighteen, he says, “Come on, let’s go down and sign.”

So he came down and signed.

DM: Why wouldn’t your dad sign the papers? He was afraid for you?

AC: Yeah, maybe. I have no idea. He just...

DM: I bet you were fairly disappointed.

AC: Yeah. ‘Cause I wanted a job. I wanted to do something. I was trying.

DM: So your dad goes down there, you sign up and...

AC: Yeah.

DM: ...and you join the navy?

AC: Yeah.

DM: Now, where do they send you?

AC: San Diego.

DM: And what was boot camp like for you?

AC: It was pretty good. When I was in high school, for about two years, I took ROTC.

DM: Okay.

AC: So I was kind of familiar with the marching and all.

DM: Yeah.

AC: So I did all right as far as that...

DM: Any trouble when they started throwing those clothes at you, getting the fit?

AC: No, no. They showed us how to do it and I had...

DM: So the sizes, they gave you the right sizes and everything?

AC: Yeah, oh yeah.

DM: And what's the thing you liked the best about boot camp and what was the thing you liked the least?

AC: Well, I don't know. I guess the regulations. Some of the things were—it all amounts to discipline. That's why they do these things, which I understood. But some of the things were kind of silly and I didn't like that. If they were going to do something, do it and do it right and the heck with the rest of the baloney.

DM: So you get out of boot camp, are you selected for a ship or sea school, or what happens?

AC: Well, just before we were ready to be shipped out or get sent to somewhere, they asked for volunteers for medical school.

DM: Okay.

AC: So I raised my hand right away and out of 120 guys in the company, I was the only one that put my hand up.

DM: Why did you put your hand up?

AC: Because I wanted to get into something besides the deck force. I didn't care what it was, medical school or storekeeper or anything. Yeoman.

DM: Why did you want to avoid the deck force?

AC: Because you had to scrub decks and...

DM: Chip and paint right?

AC: Chip and paint, yeah, and all that. And I couldn't see any future in that. So anyway, he looked at me and says, "There's gotta be one of these guys in every organization."

Anyway, they took my name and at first they said we could not go on boot leave if we were going to medical school, you could not get boot leave. Well, I told them, "I don't care. I'll go to medical school. I'll get home sometime later."

At the last minute they said, "Well, everybody that put in for medical school can go on boot leave."

So I went home to San Francisco and ten days later, I went back to San Diego and I asked, went to this shack and I asked them if there's any more dope on the medical school. And the guy kind of grumbled and says, "Ah, I don't know."

I said, "But is there anything new?"

And he says, "Well, why, are you going?"

I says, "Yeah, I think so."

So he asked me my name and he puts his finger on this list and he goes down the list, and he says, "You know what?"

And I knew right away what. I says, "Yeah, I know what. They want twenty-five guys and I'm twenty-sixth!" (Laughs)

DM: You figured it out, right?

AC: And he says, “Well, what the heck did you ask me for if you knew?”

I walked out of there and I went to the next shack and I says, “Put me down for China.”

And the guy was kind of surprised and he said, “China?”

I says, “Yes, China.”

And in three days, I was on the way out to China.

DM: Now, why was the guy surprised you put up for China?

AC: Well, in those days, you didn’t go from boot camp right straight out to China. You had to be assigned to a ship or a station and then put in for the Asiatic fleet.

DM: Right.

AC: And they had just now allowed people to go to from, right from training center to there. In fact, I didn’t even know it. I didn’t know that you were supposed to go to a ship.

DM: Okay.

AC: I found out later. Somebody asked me, “How’d you get it?”

I said, “I just asked for it.”

“You’re supposed to go to a ship.”

I says, “I’m going to China.” And I was on the way.

DM: So what, did they put you on a ship that was going that way?

AC: Yeah, on the transport. On the *Henderson*.

DM: Oh, the *Henderson*.

AC: Yeah.

DM: The *Henderson* went from San Diego to Hawaii?

AC: To Hawaii.

DM: And then Hawaii to where?

AC: I think to Guam, if I remember right. I can't think back that long. And then up to Qinghuangdao, in north China.

DM: Okay. Did you get seasick ever on that?

AC: Yeah, I was almost always queasy. But I always did my work. I stood my watches and did my work. I never slacked off.

DM: Okay. So when you get to China, was it what you expected?

AC: No, the first thing I saw was the *Augusta*, the flagship and I said, "Oh man, are we going on that ship?"

It was beautiful, sitting there. That was a beautiful ship too.

DM: Right.

AC: And well anyway, we went aboard there. Couple days later, they sent all us guys, all the recruits and part of the ship's company over to a rifle range. Well, at night, after everything was over with, all the rifle range business, the guys would go into town. At first, I didn't go, but a couple nights later, I figured, well, I'll go. But they had already left, about ten of the guys left. And the gunner's mate went with them and they had a forty-five. So what you did, you went up to this, a ways up toward this forest, and holler, and these Chinese would come out with their little ponies like Genghis Khan used to have. And you ride on the ponies to this little town, this village. Well, [*the guys*] were all gone, but anyway, I hollered. Two of [*the*

Chinese] came out and right away, I knew I was in trouble. So I got on one of [*the ponies*] and [*the Chinaman*] runs alongside of you.

DM: Right.

AC: And there's no lights. There's nothing out there but desert.

DM: Right.

AC: And we're trotting along and I knew something was wrong, so I was taking my Chinese money—they gave us Chinese money—and I was sticking it in my socks.

DM: Right.

AC: 'Cause I knew something was going to happen. So on the way in, the other guys [*were*] just coming back, and so I hollered out to 'em, you know, "Hey, stop it!"

And the more I hollered, the more these two Chinese would holler and so did the other ponies, the guys with the ponies. So we went into the village. They went back to camp. I get in the village and it was a ramshackle village. But I had half a beer and I didn't feel that much like drinking, 'cause I knew what was going to happen.

I go back out and these two guys are waiting. And so I got on this pony and we started back. And we stop out there somewheres in the dark, and they—and you could see a little bit. There was no moon, but you could still see. And they said, "Money, money (patting hand)."

And I said, "You go to the camp."

They wouldn't have it. So I says, "You want money?" I says, "Okay."

So I reached back like this, as if to pull out my pocketbook, then I hit this guy. I knocked him on his fanny. The other guy jumped me. Then between the two of 'em, someway they got bamboo sticks and they beat the heck out of me!

DM: Is that right?

AC: Out in the desert! (Laughs)

DM: Did they get the money?

AC: Yeah.

(Taping stops, then resumes)

DM: It's gotta come up to speed and then he'll let us go.

AC: Oh, oh, I see.

(Conversation off-mike.)

DM: So...

AC: I gave 'em the money. They got me back on the pony. And...

DM: Lucky they didn't kill you!

AC: We went a little further over and they say, "Off, off."

I said, "Oh man, here we go again!"

So they're getting ready to do battle again. As soon as I got [*off the pony*], they took off. There I am, out, I didn't know where I was. It was nothing out there. And I started looking around and finally I saw this clump of trees, so I figured I might as well walk toward there. I didn't know where else to go. And I went through mud puddles, (laughs) stumbling along. I finally got back to the camp and I went to this—oh and this one gunner's mate happened to be in the same tent that I was in. So I woke him up and I says, "Hey, feel my arms."

And he feels my arms and he says, "What the heck's wrong with you?"

I said, “You know when I was hollering, you guys were heading back?”

He says, “Yeah, I heard you.”

I said, “I got the heck kicked out of me by two Chinamen.”

And he turned on—we had the lights in there—he turned on these lights and looked at me and I had warts, one where I’d been walloped on my head and my face and my arms, my back, all over. I would pick up one of these guys by the bamboo stick and twirl them around. I couldn’t get ‘em loose. Couldn’t get that thing loose. Anyway, he wanted to go up and find these guys and kick the heck out of ‘em. But anyway, we left Qinghuangdao and we went on a cruise to a goodwill cruise down to Australia. They were having their centennial...

DM: Right.

AC: ...celebration. And that was a real good cruise. We went to Australia, the Dutch East Indies, British North Borneo, Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand. Well, it was Siam then. We went to Bangkok and Siam. And then back up to Manila.

DM: How did you get out of the Asiatic fleet and end up on the *Antares*?

AC: Well, I did my three and a half years out there. Well, during that time, the war started out there, [*between the Chinese and the Japanese.*]

DM: Right. Right.

AC: You want to hear anything about that?

DM: Well, I’d love to hear it but I’ve got to move it along.

AC: Oh yeah.

DM: But, yeah, let’s talk a little bit about it.

AC: I'll go short. We went to various ports in the Philippines and China, and Japan. We were in Tsingtao in 1937 and we got orders to go to Shanghai on account of the war developing between the Chinese and the Japanese.

DM: Did you ever see the gunboat [*USS*] *Panay* at all?

AC: Yeah, we seen 'em. Yeah, they used to come up and down the river in Shanghai. From the Yangtze, you can go into the Huangpu River, where Shanghai is. And we went to Shanghai, the day we got in, the Chinese plane dropped two bombs off our bow, but did not damage the ship. A couple days later, I volunteered to go with the Marines, the Fourth Marines and I had a machine gun nest up on a flourmill, [*in the*] international settlement. And during the time that I left there, a shell hit the *Augusta* and killed one guy and wounded eighteen.

DM: Who fired the shell?

AC: Oh, they don't know really. It could've been anybody. The Japs, the Japanese or Chinese. Couple months later is when they sunk the *Panay*. And that's when we thought we were going to war with Japan, was in 1937.

DM: Did you guys go on full readiness?

AC: No. The admiral said to the captain something like they didn't want to start an international incident, so they better lay low. And we got some of the survivors from the *Panay*.

DM: What did they say happened out there?

AC: Oh, they just got shot at, dropped bombs. A couple of [*the survivors*] were still in shock when we got 'em. I didn't see too much of them. They went to the sick bay, the few that we got.

DM: So it didn't come to any surprise to you probably later that we ended up...

AC: No, we knew in 1934 that this was going to happen. I'm going to send you some stuff that I got on there. There's one [*clipping*] that I have that's dated 1934 or 1935, where the Japanese say they can kick the hell out of the

United States Navy. And one of our admirals says, “Well, we’ll give you every ship we got. We’ll give you everything except the men and we’ll still beat you.”

And I’ll send you a copy of that. And I’ll send you a copy of my log from the December 7[*th attack*].

DM: Okay.

AC: Anyway, go ahead.

DM: Now, so these incidents, the incidents between the Japanese, the Chinese and the Asiatic fleet, started to build a tension that’s going to eventually erupt to war four years later, from ’37 to ’41.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: Obviously you served over three years with the Asiatic fleet. How did you come to get transferred out of the Asiatic fleet to the Pacific fleet?

AC: Because...

(Conversation off-mike.)

DM: So how did you come to be transferred out of the Asiatic fleet to the Pacific fleet?

AC: Well, a tour of duty out there is two and a half years. I extended for a year. So I was there three and a half years, then they’ll automatically transfer you back to the States, unless you re-extend your tour of duty. And some of those guys were out there thirteen, fifteen years. They really liked it. And we didn’t have much of a fleet. We had the *Augusta*, the cruiser, thirteen destroyers, six submarines, the old “S” type and a couple, a few tugs and about six, five or six river gunboats, including the *Panay*.

DM: Right. So you got your orders and did you know you were going to a ship, or did they send you to receiving station, or what did they do?

AC: Oh, coming back, I got on the *Trenton*. I didn't get on a transport. And on the way back, there was the *Trenton*, the *Memphis*, and the *Milwaukee*. And I was on the flagship, the *Trenton*. (Coughs) And I volunteered to stand signal watches, just to have something to do. And I was up on the bridge on watch and one of the kids says, "The captain wants to see you on the wing of the bridge."

So I went over there and the admiral was sitting there, and the captain says, "Where are you going?"

And I says, "I'm not going anywheres. I'm on watch."

I kind of figured something was coming. And so he says, "I mean when you get back to the States, what are you going to do?"

I says, "I'll be assigned. I'll go to receiving station and be assigned to some ship."

And he says, "Oh. How would you like to be ship's company on this ship?"

And I told him, "No, sir."

That ship was a madhouse. Oh, I tell you. And that was the first time in all this time, four years, that I ever thought of deserting. Yeah. That's the type of ship it was. And luckily I got sick. When we got to Pearl Harbor, I got transferred to the [USS] *Relief*, [*Hospital Ship*.] They took me back to the States. I went to the recruiting station and reenlisted there. So they sent me down to San Pedro and I got on the *Antares*.

DM: What kind of ship was the *Antares*?

AC: It was a stores issuing ship, like a supply ship.

DM: Right. What was your feeling once you got aboard her?

AC: I thought it was all right. It was an old Hog Islander, World War I ship.

DM: It ride pretty good?

AC: Oh yeah. It was a good ship.

DM: What job were you assigned?

AC: I was a signalman, up in the signal bridge.

DM: Okay. Now, what's a signalman do?

AC: Well, we send messages from one ship to another.

DM: By lantern or flag or both?

AC: By semaphore flags, by flag hoist or by flashing light. By Morse code.

DM: Blinking lantern, right.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: Okay. So you had to know all that stuff.

AC: Oh, I knew then, yeah. Oh, I knew. I learned it on the *Augusta*. Yeah. I went up on the signal division on the *Augusta*.

DM: Did you like that duty?

AC: Oh yeah. You see everything, everything that goes on, you're right up there.

DM: And you know what's going on.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: Okay. What was, when was the *Antares* transferred to Hawaii? Or was it ever part of that transfer?

AC: No. We were in what they call commander service force, Pacific fleet. Well, in 1939 there was New York's World Fair, so all the ships, a lot of ships started going around Panama Canal with us. We went with 'em to go

to New York. We got as far as Norfolk and from what I know, we were the only ship that got orders to go back to San Pedro. We never got to New York. We got to San Pedro and a while later, they gave us orders to go to Pearl Harbor.

DM: So you must have been disappointed, 'cause...

AC: Well, to me, one port is like another.

DM: It was New York.

AC: Yeah, but I didn't think nothing of it.

DM: Now, can I clarify one thing? What, how did the *Antares* fit in the fleet? What would it carry? What would it dispense?

AC: We had not—we didn't carry food, but we carried everything else.

DM: Like?

AC: We carried ammunition, basketballs, footballs, fishing rods, everything and anything that ships would want.

DM: Dry goods? Would you say it would be like a dry goods store?

AC: Yeah, yeah, sort of.

DM: Towels.

AC: It was a stores issuing ship. Not really a supply ship.

DM: Okay.

AC: We didn't have meat or vegetables or anything like that, like some of the ships did.

DM: Okay. So you get these orders to return back to San Pedro.

AC: Yeah.

DM: And then what happens?

AC: We got orders to go to Pearl Harbor.

DM: And what year was this?

AC: It must have been the end of '39, 'cause in [*early*]'41, we got orders to go to Midway and to bring out there some guns, ammunition, and like I said, toilet paper, all that sort of stuff.

DM: Now, that was for the Marines out there, right?

AC: Yeah, yeah. And we brought—couple of places we brought guns out there and Marines and that was the start of it.

DM: Start of what?

AC: Of fortifying these islands out there.

DM: Right.

AC: And we didn't have any guns on [*the Antares.*]

END OF TAPE #17

TAPE #18

(Conversation off-mike.)

DM: Yeah. Okay, so you deliver those stores to Midway. It's obvious now that the Pacific is preparing itself for maybe what you think is going to come eventually after your experience in China.

AC: Yeah.

DM: Would that be safe to say?

AC: Yeah. Well, I figured that it is. We were—about the second island we went to, we were already camouflaged.

DM: You were in your measure paint scheme, right?

AC: Yeah, we knew something was going to happen.

DM: Yeah, because you and the ship was painted all dark gray and anything above the stack was light gray.

AC: Yeah.

DM: The battle colors, that whole fleet had been turned into that. Let's take you to the events of December 7. And I know you probably have to build up. The *Antares* was headed back to Pearl Harbor. December 6, where were you guys?

AC: Oh, we were about a hundred and something miles away from Pearl Harbor.

DM: Where were you coming from?

AC: Canton, well, we left Canton Island and started out with the *Selfridge* and the *Ralph Talbot* escorting us.

DM: Right, destroyers.

AC: Yeah, and then we got orders to go back to Palmyra to pick up a barge.

DM: Okay.

AC: 'Cause we towed barges loaded too, besides.

DM: What was on the barge?

AC: The same stuff that we had, ammunition and guns and...

DM: It wasn't an oil-lighter, it was just...

AC: Yeah, all dry store stuff.

DM: Okay.

AC: Anyway, we picked up that barge and headed back to Pearl Harbor.

DM: Okay.

AC: And well, you know, while we were at Canton Island, we couldn't, like I said, we couldn't anchor and we couldn't—there were no docks. So at night time, we would steam out directly west and the two destroyers were astern of us. The *Antares* had all their lights on; every light on the ship was put on. The two destroyers were darkened ship. If there was anybody out there, they were supposed to attack the *Antares* and then these two [*destroyers*] would get whoever attacked at us, 'cause they figured somebody was out there. Anyway...

DM: We're going to stop right now, 'cause I know we have to. And what happens is we're right at the elevators and they come off the elevators...

AC: Yeah.

(Conversation off-mike.)

DM: So the *Antares* is now coming up to Pearl Harbor. When did you approach Hawaii? When were you there?

AC: It was about five in the morning. I had the four-to-eight watch, signal watch that morning. And approaching it, I'd say it was about 5:30 or quarter to six.

DM: Was it light or...

AC: It was light.

DM: Okay. Just the beginning of light.

AC: Yeah.

DM: And what kind of morning was it? Do you remember?

AC: It was a beautiful morning, typical Hawaiian morning.

DM: When the sun came up, was it kind of reddish or...

AC: Oh, I don't remember that.

DM: Okay.

AC: It was, I know it was a nice morning.

DM: What was the seas like out there?

AC: Calm. Calm seas. And I looked toward Pearl Harbor through the telescope and there was one ship out there. And usually when we used to come in, there'd be a few ships around. This morning [*there*] was one, it was the *Ward*.

DM: Destroyer *Ward*?

AC: Yeah. So I called them, exchanged calls with them to see who it was.

DM: How did you do that?

AC: By signal light, the twelve-inch signal light. And they answered. I forget what their call is, DD-132, or whatever it is.

DM: One-thirty-nine.

AC: One-thirty-nine, yeah. And we kept going and we got near the entrance to Pearl Harbor, the channel, and we laid to because we were towing this barge [*HDS-2*] and we were waiting for the *Keosanqua*, a tug, to come out and get this barge. And they would take it into this narrow entrance. Well, there was already a [*anti-*]submarine net that was already installed there at the entrance at Pearl Harbor.

DM: Right.

AC: So anyway the *Keosanqua* came out and they came alongside us and during my watch, I had my usual cup of coffee and a cigarette. And I was looking out on our starboard beam and there was this object out in the water. I just...

DM: Now, were you the first, do you think, to notice this, since you...

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: So you sighted something.

AC: Yeah.

DM: What did it look like?

AC: It looked like a black buoy. And well, I was just looking at it, without binoculars or anything. I was just staring at it. The boatswain's mate, [G. R.] Vargo [BM2/c], came up to me and he says, "Hey Chip, what the hell is that out there?"

And I told him, "I don't know what it is. It looks like a buoy to me."

DM: Now, did you get the binoculars and look at it?

AC: Well, yeah. And he said, "Oh."

So he left and I looked at it for a couple of minutes and I figured, well, I'll go up on the flying bridge. We have a telescope up there. And if there's a number on this buoy, I'll report it, 'cause it's out of position. It shouldn't be out there. It should be over toward the channel, the entrance to the harbor.

DM: Now, paint for me the picture. Where was it approximately? Where was it in relationship to the *Antares* and the barge? In between or aft?

AC: No, the barge was already, the *Keosanqua* already had the barge.

DM: Okay.

AC: Yeah, but [*the Keosanqua was*] still alongside us. And [*the sub*] was about midship, on the starboard side. About 1600 yards, fifteen, 1600 yards out. And when I looked through the telescope, I saw these two lines coming down from this thing. And I thought to myself, hell, that's a sub. And look again, sure as hell, it was a sub!

DM: How many yards aft of the ship was it, would you estimate?

AC: Aft, I'd say it was very little bit aft. It was more midship, right on our starboard beam.

DM: Oh, it was? It was on your starboard beam.

AC: Yeah. Yeah. And so I took another look...

DM: Did you see the periscope or what?

AC: No, no periscope. Oh, I didn't see any. All I saw was this object that [*was*] a little narrower at the top and then down, a little wider.

DM: And your estimate on the yardage, 500 yards?

AC: No, no, about fifteen, 1600 yards.

DM: Okay.

AC: So I dashed over to the railing then and the navigation bridge where I had been was one deck down. And about that time, the captain walked out on the wing of the bridge, Captain [*Cdr.*] Grannis. And so I hollered down to him that there's a submerged sub out here on our starboard beam.
(Chuckles)

So he took his binoculars and he looks, and he says, "Yeah, that's a sub. This is a submarine operating area out here."

And I says to him, "I know that, sir. But that's not one of our subs."

And he looks up at me and says, "Well, how do you know?"

And I says, "That's one of my jobs as signalmen is ship identification. That's not one of our subs!"

And he said, "Oh." And then he said, "Tell the *Ward*. Tell the *Ward* there's a suspicious looking object on our starboard beam. Would they please investigate?"

DM: Now, Chip, the area you were in was called the defensive sea area.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: Standing orders were that no submarines were to go into this area submerged. Were you aware of that?

AC: Yeah, oh yeah. Well, I should qualify that. The subs, from what I understand, our subs used to stay out there in this submarine operating area and just with their periscope up and when our ships would come in, they would take a beam on 'em, just practice, as if they're going to fire torpedoes. But I never did see [*any U.S. sub periscopes*]

DM: So this sub was suspicious to you, but you didn't have any idea that this thing could be Japanese or anything.

AC: No, no.

DM: How much of the sub was sticking out of the water?

AC: From what I could see, I'd say about maybe four or five foot, something.

DM: Some of the conning tower that was sticking out.

AC: Yeah, it was just a little conning tower, yeah.

DM: Okay, so you're the one that signals the *Ward*.

AC: Yeah, the *Ward* didn't even know that sub was there.

DM: Right.

AC: They didn't know it was there.

DM: Yeah.

AC: The thing is they'd been patrolling and from what I read in books, one of the tugs had gotten sub contacts.

DM: Right.

AC: And so had the *Ward*...

DM: Right.

AC: ...but when we came up there, why the hell didn't they tell us? We didn't get any message from them saying, "Hey, we've been getting sub contacts."

DM: As the history (inaudible) Chip, that they had an early contact around 3:30 in the morning.

AC: Yeah.

DM: And I think that's accurate. And they investigated and didn't find anything. So now you signal them and what's the signal you send them?

AC: I said, "BT," which is break, the start of the message, "there is a suspicious looking object on our starboard beam. X."

DM: So you didn't say sub, you said object?

AC: Yeah, "Would you please investigate?"

And I was hardly through with the message when, boy, the bow came up out of the water and they came up partly around us, 'cause they were sitting over here and we were here and the sub was over here.

DM: Now, you said the bow came out of the water, this sub?

CA: No, no, the *Ward*.

DM: Okay.

AC: Yeah, the *Ward*. They took off.

DM: They picked up speed.

AC: Yeah. And they made a kind of a sweep.

DM: What was their response? What did they send you back?

AC: They didn't send nothing.

DM: They didn't send anything.

AC: No, just a receipt, you know, receipt for the message.

DM: They received the message.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: And they closed in?

AC: Yeah, and then they took off. The bow came up out of the water and they really took off.

DM: Now describe to me what happens next.

AC: They—I kept watching. I had a beautiful view. They fired at it from the galley deckhouse gun. And I think the first shot missed, but the next one hit the conning tower and the sub started to go down.

DM: Okay. This action is taking place on the starboard side of the *Antares*?

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: How far? About 1600 yards out?

AC: Yeah. Well, they were, I'd say, well, they were about the same, about 1600 yards and going over, you know.

DM: Okay. And how far was the *Ward*, in your view, away from the sub? Thousand yards, or had they closed?

AC: When? When they fired?

DM: When they opened fire.

AC: Oh, I'd say less than a thousand yards. Yeah. But they hit that conning tower and the sub started to go down. They went over it and dropped depth charges.

DM: At any time Chip, did you say, "What the hell is going on here?"

AC: What? I didn't get that.

DM: At any time, did you say to yourself, what in the hell is going on here? These guys are firing!

AC: Yeah, no, because I think part of my deal in China, I was in on some of, all this firing, and I didn't—to me, it was just normal. Normal things that happened.

DM: Okay. Now, I understand a PBY plane was flying over.

AC: Yeah, that's what I—I really don't remember. I might have seen it or not. I can't remember.

DM: But you were pretty well transfixed on what was going on out there.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: Okay. So they fired the depth charges. Now there's a lot of noise taking place.

AC: Yeah.

DM: Right?

AC: Yeah. Well...

DM: Describe to me that depth charge attack, as you witnessed.

AC: Well, when they went over it, we didn't know they were dropping depth charges until it went off. And then that plume of water came up and we couldn't see anything. They said they spotted oil there, but we couldn't see it from where we were.

I went to the captain, and I says, "Sir, can I call the signal tower and tell 'em what happened?"

I'd have done it visually, see. Because the signal tower was just a few blocks from us, you know, on the beach.

DM: Right, right.

AC: And he thought a minute and he says, "Well, the *Ward* sunk the sub. They'll tell them."

Well, the *Ward* did, but they did it by radio. See, I'd have done it visually, by light.

DM: Chip, tell me if the captain said, "Yes, signalman, send the message," what message would you have sent?

AC: I would have told them that, just sent a message to the *Ward* and that we sighted this sub, submersed sub, and the *Ward* sunk the sub.

DM: Okay, so—and this is really important—in signalman’s language, how would you have sent that message?

AC: Well, I’d have called them and said, “BT,” like “break.” It all depends on what the captain would’ve told me.

DM: Right. Because you wouldn’t have sent your own message, right?

AC: Oh, I’ve done it. (Chuckles)

DM: Okay. I want you, just for the record, if the captain said, “Well, send a message,” what would you have sent? What information would you send the signal?

AC: Well, I’d have said that a submarine, a submerged sub has been sighted. The *Ward* has attacked the sub. The sub has sunk and the *Ward* has dropped depth charges on it. And that’s it.

DM: And then you would’ve waited for their response too.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: Okay. It’s all over. This all takes place around 6:30 in the morning.

AC: Yeah. When the captain said, “No,” I was about to do it anyway and I should’ve. I....

DM: You think you should’ve because later you know what happened?

AC: Yeah.

DM: Chip, do you feel a weight of responsibility on your shoulders for this?

(Pause)

DM: Have you, Chip, carried this around for a long time?

AC: Yeah.

DM: Have you talked about this before?

(Pause)

DM: Who'd you tell about this? Your wife?

AC: Oh, in my chapter, Santa Rosa, we go to schools to keep this up, keep this going. We tell them what happened. Anyway...

DM: You tell them this?

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: And you—excuse me for asking this, but this emotional response you have to it, is it something you try to keep under control? Because you feel if you sent that signal, the fleet would've had a chance.

AC: Yeah, in a way. In a way, they're lucky they got hit there, because they sunk to the bottom. If they'd been out to sea, they would've lost everything.

DM: But maybe we could've saved some lives. Is that what bothers you?

AC: Yeah. They could've been ready. 'Cause when they, even when these soldiers with their radar—radar had just come out.

DM: Yeah, they picked 'em out at _____.

AC: They picked 'em up, yeah, and they said that they have all these blips on the screen. And there's a hell of a lot of planes headed for Pearl Harbor. And they told them, "Oh, it's these B-17s that's coming from [Hamilton Field], Novato, [California]" where I live.

DM: I interviewed all those radar guys.

AC: Oh yeah? Yeah.

DM: Yeah, they have—let me tell you—Kermit Tyler, who made that decision, feels a little like you do.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DM: Now, Chip, this is the tough part. Not this has all been easy for you to tell. You realize that, I guess, when the raid started, that what you guys had witnessed an hour and a half before was the opening sequence to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Where were you when the planes started coming in?

AC: They went—I had been relieved of the watch [*at 0730.*]

DM: Okay. What time were you relieved?

AC: About 7:30.

DM: Were you still bothered by what you saw?

AC: No, not really. It's just part of your job.

DM: But that message business, did you let that go and just, okay, well, the captain didn't want to send it?

AC: Yeah, yeah. I went below. I hardly ever ate breakfast. In twenty years, I must've eaten breakfast five times. But I was in the washroom, brushing my teeth and I could feel the thump-thump-thump-thump, and I thought it was our engines revving up to go into the harbor. So I thought to myself, geez, I better get up on the goddang bridge. And 'cause there was only—we only had three signalmen on that ship.

DM: So you got up there and went to see.

AC: I didn't get up there. I finished brushing my teeth (chuckles), went back to my locker, put all my gear away, and I started to go up to the forward ladder and about that time, a bunch of the guys come tearing down the ladder. And they says, "They're bombing Pearl Harbor!"

I knew right off the bat it was the Japs. I knew it. I knew it had to be them. And I couldn't go up there. They passed the word, stay below. We didn't have any guns on there, you know. We had a...

DM: You were unarmed.

AC: Yeah. We had rifles, a couple, a few rifles and a couple of Thompson, [sub-]machine guns.

DM: Now, were you still laying to outside the harbor?

AC: Yeah, yeah. And so they said, "Pass the word, stay below decks."

They were strafing us.

DM: Okay.

AC: The fighter planes was strafing the *Antares*. We didn't get any bombs, 'cause I figured they didn't want to...

DM: Was anybody injured on the *Antares*?

AC: No. No, not a soul.

DM: When did you finally get a shot at looking at what was going on?

AC: When I went all the way back aft and went up that way, so that when they would strafe, I could get behind something, you know. I finally got up to the bridge and about that time, the first attack was about over.

DM: Could you see smoke billowing?

AC: Yeah, oh yeah.

DM: Could you look from there...

AC: No, we couldn't see in, but...

DM: Were you hearing any radio traffic about what was going on?

AC: Yeah. Yeah, there was radio traffic.

DM: Were you...

AC: In fact, I'll send you a copy of all that.

DM: Good. Were you in communication with the signal tower? Were they just too busy?

AC: Yeah, no. We, the captain—I happened to be—the captain says, “Send a message to the signal tower that we want to go in.” [*I sent the message “BT Request permission to enter harbor.”*]

And right away, the signal tower answered back and says, “Under no circumstances enter the harbor,” ‘cause if we’d have gone in and then got bombed, we’d have blocked the channel. Nobody would’ve been able to get in or out.

So we stay out there. We didn’t want to stay out there, ‘cause we figured there was more subs out there. And they finally told us go to Honolulu Harbor. So we went there and they had a [*anti-*]submarine net there too.

DM: When did you leave for Honolulu Harbor?

AC: Oh, about, oh, a couple of hours after. It was after the second air raid started. But by that time, even though the ships were on fire and, you know, damaged and all, they were firing back at these planes, so these bombers had to stay way up, way up high. So they didn’t do too much damage after that. But anyway, we got into—this was still going on when we finally got into Honolulu Harbor. They wouldn’t let us in at first. And we demanded to be let in, so they let us in. And there was a—I think it was a Swedish ship in there.

DM: [*Dutch passenger cargo ship*] *Jagersfontein*.

AC: Yeah. They had guns and they were firing at the...

DM: Yeah.

AC: ...at the planes.

DM: They were the first Allied vessel to come to our aid.

AC: Yeah. And I says, “Goddangit, here they’re not even American and they have guns and we don’t have a damn thing on here!”

But after every trip that we made, Midway [*Island*], Wake [*Island*], Palmyra [*Island*], Johnston [*Island*] and Canton Island, all those trips, they kept saying, “After this trip, you’re going to go into the...”

DM: Yard?

AC: “...navy yard and we’re going to put guns on the ship.”

I left the ship the following year, they still hadn’t put guns on there. I hear that later they put ‘em on.

DM: Chip, we’re going to wrap up this interview and it’s been, really been enlightening. What, in your view—you’ve joined this organization, you’ve been a member for some time. How many years you’ve been involved?

AC: [*In PHSA: 16 years*].

DM: [*Sixteen*] years? What are the lessons of Pearl Harbor that our kids need to know?

AC: Well, we should, I’d say we should always be prepared. The—peace comes, peacetime comes and people just figure, oh, the heck with it. You know, we don’t need anything. We can stay here by ourselves. We don’t have to go overseas. And I keep telling people, when you go overseas and you go on vacation, who the hell do you think is running around over there that’s going to protect you if something happens over [*there*]? Oh, well, that’s something different, you know. But when you tell them here, you know, people go—they’re all over the world, our people are, and they need protection. But

when it's peacetime, they can't see it, not until they get hit. Then they say, "Where the hell were you?" (Laughs)

DM: The navy was your home for how many years?

AC: Twenty years.

DM: And that is probably one of your fondest memories?

AC: Yeah. I liked, I enjoyed all the years. See, I was fortunate. My last two years, I did flying. People can hardly believe this. I was a signalman and then a quartermaster. And then, my last two years, I did navigating airplanes from...

DM: What kind of plane were you on?

AC: The passenger planes. I was [*in*] Air Transport Squadron Eight [*as a navigator.*] It was—in the navy, we called it an R4D. I think they call it a C-54. Four-engine transport plane?

DM: Right.

AC: And then we had the super constellation, the one that had the...

DM: Super-con?

AC: Yeah, I flew that too. And the way I got [*transferred to Hickam Air Force Base*], I was in Korea, my second tour, and this family that was behind our place in Pearl Harbor kept asking my wife, "Where is Chip?"

Well, I was either in Alaska, Guam, Korea, Kwajalein, Alaska. That ship never stopped. And I was in Korea for the second time, and so this guy said to my wife, "He's never home, is he?"

And she says, "Oh, we see him once in a while."

So he says, "I'll fix that."

He was yeoman second class. He goes back to—he had shore duty there with Commander Service Force Pacific Fleet. And he wrote up a set of orders for me and put it in front of this captain, and this captain signed it!

DM: Never looked at it.

AC: No. So I went to Hickam Air Force Base to navigation school for pilots. And I was supposed to run ‘em through this school and then they could navigate. So this captain, this commander one day walked in and he says, “How’s your school going, Chief?”

And I says, “Oh great.”

“Are these idiots doing what you’re teaching ‘em?”

And I had said, “I guess so. I don’t know.”

And he says, “What do you mean, you don’t know?”

And I says, “Well, I don’t know. I don’t go up.”

“Who checks on ‘em?”

And I says, “I guess the skipper of the flight.”

And he says, “That’s a helluva note. Do you want to fly?”

And I says, “I can’t, Commander, I’m a surface sailor.”

“Do you want to fly?”

I says, “Commander, I can’t.”

And he almost hollered, “Do you want to fly?”

And I says, “Yes, sir!”

So I flew.

DM: That's how it all got started?

AC: So I flew for two years and got flight pay, which was great for us because we didn't have anything, you know.

DM: Well, Chip, it's obvious you had a wonderful military career and you were at—the defining moment in your life was Pearl Harbor.

AC: Yeah, just about, I would say, yeah.

DM: And this fifty-seventh year, you've come here to Las Vegas with your comrades. And you have all of this, this event is part of your lives. Is—the Pearl Harbor survivors, what does that mean to be a member to you?

AC: Well, you see all these guys. A lot of times they won't say anything. But when they're with—when we're together, then we tell stories, you know.

DM: So you share the experience?

AC: Yeah, yeah. And it seems like it's always something new, even though you heard it so many times, you know, from these same guys, it's still new. You know. So I think it's a hell of a good organization, yeah. And the women get into it too.

DM: So there's something for them.

AC: Yeah. At our chapter, they do a lot of the cooking and bring it in, the potluck. And we have some hell of a good meals. Real good meals, you know.

DM: Well, Chip, I want to thank you so much. We've run a little over. We had a couple, few interruptions, but I want to thank you so much for your interview.

AC: Oh, okay.

DM: And for your service.

AC: Well...

DM: Fifty-seven years ago today.

AC: Yeah. Well, twenty years, I kind of enjoyed it all, you know. So...

DM: Thank you.

AC: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW