

CHARLES TOMPKINS (#256)

&

DALE SPEELMAN (#257)

VP-12, KANEOHE NAVAL AIR STATION

#256 & #257

INTERVIEWED ON

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TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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(Background conversation)

Robert Chenoweth (RC): The following oral history interview was conducted by Robert Chenoweth for the National Park Service, USS *ARIZONA* Memorial, at the Sheraton Waikiki on December 5, 1996, at 8:30 p.m. The persons interviewed are Charles Tompkins and Dale Speelman, both of VP12 from Kaneohe Naval Air Station.

For the record, could you state your full name, place of birth, and date of birth, Dale.

Dale Speelman (DS): My name is Dale Speelman. I was born June 22, 1921. Joined the Navy December 27, 1940.

RC: What did you consider your hometown in . . .

DS: At that time, Toledo, Ohio.

RC: Toledo, Ohio. Charles?

Charles Tompkins (CT): Charles Tompkins. I lived in Eureka, California and I joined the Navy in '41 and traveled over here, been [we mef] over here in VP- 12.

RC: When were you born?

CT: Oh, 12-30-21. December 30, '21.

RC: And where were you born?

CT: Eureka, California.

RC: All right. I guess I'll just start with Dale. Could you talk to me a little bit about when you entered the service and why you went in the Navy and how did you get into naval aviation?

DS: I joined the Navy because it was a hard depression at the time. A kid eighteen, nineteen years old didn't stand too much of a chance of getting any kind of a job and went down to join the Marine Corps, and the Marine Corps was out to lunch. Actually went up to -- was going up to join the Army and come to the Navy place first. I walked in and joined the Navy. And was sent to Great Lakes, Illinois for training, four months training. Excuse me, six weeks training. And I keep thinking my very first meal after going -- without a meal most of the day -- was cold pork and grapes. And I thought, "I have six years of this to go."

I thought that was a typical meal. I didn't know.

RC: So you finished your training at Great Lakes and then?

DS: [Yes, *than*] went to North Island, San Diego, California for four-month aviation machinist mates' school. And from there, went over to -- I was taken first over to Ford Island, right here at Pearl Harbor and I put about thirty-five minutes at Ford Island. They loaded seven of us on a truck and took us over to Kaneohe. And we were the first seamen to be attached to the patrol wing over there.

RC: I see. Charles?

CT: Yeah, I joined in and I went to San Diego. And I think we were in Mech. School together, because it's pretty close the same time . . .

RC: Uh-huh.

CT: . . . in there and went across to Pearl. But I went on a ship first. I went to Midway and Wake Island and . . .

RC: What ship were you on?

CT: Seemed to me like it was the [USS] *HENDERSON*, but I'm not sure what it was. Anyway, it was a long time ago and we was out there for about twenty-nine days. Then I come back and -- it was a seaplane tender, is what it was actually. Then I come back and we docked here in Pearl and then I went up to the hospital up there. Got a meal and they shipped us out of there over to Kaneohe, to VP- 12.

RC: Could you talk to me a little bit about what -- when you went through aviation machinist mate training, what kind of things did they teach you? What did you learn about?

CT: Some things that we never did do after we got out of there. Like patching a fabric wing.

DS: Yeah, never seen a fabric wing on a plane after that. But you learned the basics of maintenance of an engine and overhaul of an aircraft engine. I was intrigued more or less of the instrument end of it and I tried to put my efforts toward that way, but you were kind of discouraged when you were going through the school, until you got -- after the school.

RC: Did you learn airframe maintenance as well?

DS: Oh yes.

CT: Yeah, yeah.

DS: Of course, they had aviation metal smiths for that work.

CT: Yeah.

DS: So you was more or less of a specialist just in aircraft maintenance of the engines.

RC: Did you know that when you were going through this training that you would be flying? And what kind of training did you get as crewmen?

CT: Well, I don't think. Anyway, I didn't get no training as a crewman of any kind. I joined the crew of about twelve men, if I remember right, and they wanted them to go to China on the Burma Road and work for the Chinese over there and redo their planes. And that's what I was on the ship for, I forgot to say. We was headed for there when they canceled our orders out below Midway someplace. But they taught us how to do fabric and all stuff like that. And we were supposed to go over there and help the -- I'm not sure what they call 'em -- Flying Tigers? And then -- but not them guys, we were supposed to help the Chinese.

RC: Chinese . . .

CT: Yeah, the Chinese wanted the help.

RC: Did either of you get any training in aerial gunnery or observation?

CT: Somewhat, yeah.

DS: You trained, you had to qualify on thirty and fifty caliber aerial machine guns and most of that was firing at the white caps when you was out in the PBYS and firing out of the blister, your guns were mounted in the blister. And we had one thirty up in the nose and would fire out of the nose of the plane.

RC: Now, when you got to . . .

(Interruption)

RC: So you got over to Kaneohe, what was the situation there, at Kaneohe? How many squadrons were there? Where did you guys live?

DS: There was Patrol Squadrons Eleven [VP-11], Patrol Squadron Twelve [VP-12], Patrol Squadron Fourteen [VP-14]. We each had twelve planes.

And the atmosphere over there, compared to anything we seen earlier, as far as myself was concerned, it was like country club. It was a beautiful station. We only had -- we had five barracks over there and we had station personnel, VP-11, VP-12, VP-14, and the Marines.

RC: But there was a lot of new construction going on there too.

CT: Oh yes.

DS: There was later.

CT: Well, yeah . . .

RC: When did you get over there?

DS: I got over there in May of 1941.

RC: May of '41. How about you?

CT: I was right behind him. Not too long behind him I got in there. Yeah, they were a doing a little bit of construction, but that was not too many. Later on, they started building new barracks, when they did that.

RC: When you first got over there, where were you housed?

DS: In the barracks.

CT: In the barracks. Yeah.

RC: And what were your duties? Did you do a lot of flying?

DS: No, you just did a lot of like tool helpers. Anything they wanted you to do. We were Seamen Second Class.

CT: Yeah.

DS: And you were not given too much of the responsibilities, and you worked your way into it. You would be working with experienced fellows and you work your way into. Pretty soon you were changing spark plugs or later on you were changing the cylinder, and you just work your way around to where you felt comfortable being around that plane. And I can remember -- you probably know the pitot heater, in the pitot tube measures the air speed of an airplane. And to give you one of the little lessons to watch out for, I was told to go out and check to see if the pitot tubes were heating up, to turn the heater on. And they said to go out and check it and see if

there's heat coming through. And I assumed, which I shouldn't have done, that that would not be very hot, just hot enough to maybe take care of any moisture. I reached up and grabbed it and it was like leaving your hand on the bottom of an electric iron. So I had a hand full of blisters for a few days.

RC: Was there a lot of, or was there any kind of like shenanigan kind of stuff that went on that you recall? I mean, I remember when I was trained in aviation in the Army and you'd get these new guys in and you'd have 'em sent 'em off to go get fifty feet of flight line. Or get a bucket of prop wash.

CT: Right, that's what we used to do. Yeah, they'd have us looking on the third deck, you know, and there's only two decks in the hangar? You go, "How do you get up to the third deck?" You know. You never found it. (Chuckles)

DS: I didn't run into a great deal of that because they always (inaudible) the serious work around the plane and all that. But being a short-timer in the Navy at that time, a Seaman Second Class and I was not a goody-two-shoes anyway, but we just didn't get -- I didn't get involved in that too much. And they put me to work in a storeroom for a while.

RC: I wanted to ask you one thing because I'm thinking about it now and I may forget about it. In some of the photographs that were taken right after the attack, there are planes and I believe they were assigned to VP-11, that had a multi-colored camouflage pattern on it. Did you guys ever see those planes?

DS: Is this prior to the war?

RC: Yes. Well, in at least one of the photographs, it's in a kind of a camouflage scheme that resembled, but was much more complex than the later tri-colored scheme.

CT: I don't remember seeing them, no.

DS: Eleven and Twelve Squadrons were in the same hangar, Eleven at one end of the hangar, and Twelve was on the other end of the hangar. We were mirror images, as far as the work set up.

--: The pictures are taken right after the attack.

DS: Right after the attack?

CT: Never seen it.

DS: An attempt to go and camouflage wise . . .

--: Well, there's only one airplane that shows up like that, in a single test.

CT: That was a PBY?

RC: We've always thought that it was some kind of an experiment that they were doing.

CT: Could've been. Investigating which would be the better camouflage to go with.

RC: Yeah. You guys were all, by that time, you were all painted in the . . .

DS: Navy blue and the dark blue on the bottom, right.

CT: Yeah, I did a lot of scraping on the bottom of 'em. You know, they have to be scraped every so often and repainted. Did a lot of that and I don't remember ever being any camouflage on any of 'em.

DS: I can remember one day they brought some B-24s in and for one reason or another, we had no B-24s in the Navy. But I don't know why or however they were set out there outside of our hangar area and nobody was allowed to -- and when the planes come in like that, they had ordnance on it. And so only the fellows from the ordnance was supposed to handle the side arms for them. And they got in to pull 'em out and the first thing they would carry, the holster with the gun and the holster and climb outside the plane.

And this one ordnance man, third class ordnance man, but he pulls a pistol out of it and it had a hair trigger or a very light trigger on it and he -- the gun went off and he didn't know which way it was pointing when it went off and we were facing the hangar. The doorway was closed and we were waiting for somebody to come running out of there. Sure, he had shot (*into*) a brand new tire, shot a doggone forty-five right into it. And we're setting there wondering where this bullet went. And all at once somebody notices the end of the wing tip is getting closer to the ground and we're running around there trying to get sawhorses and everything so we can block this strut up. And all it was doing was pushing the strut down and breaking the wood, just real slow, just like slow motion. And finally the wing tip just stopped short of the ground, but there was not any damage there but the sawhorse and everything, but the threat was there with good reason for us never to touch the guns. But this was an ordnance man that took it out of the plane that did it.

--: Give us an idea of what your typical day was like. How early did you get up? If they briefed you for a flight or did they tell you what you were looking for when you went out?

CT: Well, he had most of the flight. I was mostly in the hangar on that. I didn't do much flying. Except when I had to have my four hours for flight pay.

DS: Oh they put me -- excuse me -- they put me on [as] a standby to fill in. And [you] broke in before you get on a regular flight crew so we were flying very abbreviated flights. It was a 1,600 mile patrol. And it would take roughly sixteen hours on a PBY. And to conserve gasoline and all that, we were running maybe 600 mile patrols. And if we were late, it's a shame to say it, but if we were late taking off, we'd cut [the] 600 miles short so we can get back on time, because we were going to have liberty one o'clock.

RC: When did you start flying patrols on a pretty regular basis?

DS: After the war started.

RC: After it started.

DS: And then after we got new planes also, because we were wiped out. We had thirty-six planes there and three were out on patrol that morning, and the other thirty-three were just wiped out. And it took several -- oh, I would say two to three weeks at least before we started to get replacement planes in.

--: Were most of the patrols done in the early morning then?

DS: Well, took the day. 'Cause you were flying then you went into extended patrol.

RC: Yeah, you left early in the morning and came back?

DS: And sometimes you left four in the morning and get back at eight o'clock at night.

--: What about prior to the attack? How long did -- the patrols were 600 miles?

DS: Well, now that was not official, the 600. It was an attempt -- if you could picture how much gasoline thirty-six planes could take in a given week to fly a 1,600 mile -- that's 1,600 gallons of gas on 1,600 mile patrol. And we had people out there at the memorial wanting to know why there was so many ships in the harbor. I said, "Just imagine what it would cost and the

amount of fuel you would have to have to keep that fleet at sea, just keep it there."

And I said, "They probably couldn't hardly ship enough oil fast enough from the West Coast to keep 'em out there."

So equivalent out there. We had our oil or gas and of course we had underground gasoline storage.

RC: When you started flying these patrols, were you going out fully armed?

DS: They had the twin -- we had the fifties, a fifty in each blister. And we had a thirty [*in the nose*].

RC: Any kind of ordnance, bombs, depth charges?

DS: No, we wasn't carrying bombs at that time then. They figured if we spotted anything, we'd probably be radioing back. Later on, when they got into the -- not even the Battle of Midway, I don't think -- the Navy PBYS carrying anything other than your machine guns. But we got down to Guadalcanal and we were outfitted, we could carry either bombs or torpedoes. It was a little bit difference in the rack situation. And maybe that's the change of . . .

RC: And what about, well, like on December 7, that morning, when Ensign Tanner was out? He was carrying ordnance on his plane because he dropped ordnance on the . . .

DS: Well now, he was in another squadron. That was VP-14 that went out.

RC: Fourteen.

DS: And . . .

RC: So was the situation then that they were flying armed patrols prior to . . .

DS: Again now, I was there seven months and we were not completely aware of everything that was going on. I know the plane that I was flying on. I don't remember ever seeing us carrying any bombs or anything. But I do remember seeing ordnance putting the fifty caliber's in and bringing the belt ammunition out for us. The pilot and co-pilot carried the sidearm and that was just about the amount of ordnance that I ever saw on one of the planes.

--: Did you always fly the same sector, or did it vary?

DS: It varied. I always -- talks in school, I tell the children if you were going to envision a pie with your base in the center, and we'd fly out on one leg and go over so far back into the center on the other leg. And there'd be another plane out here doing the same thing, over from you, so that you're flying almost a 360, but there was about a twenty or twenty-five degree area there that we never flew in and this is where the Japanese came in, because there was no land mass in that general area for a few thousand miles, and it was very rough seas out there. And it just -- didn't appear to be any reason to fly that direction, and that just happened to be the route that the Japanese used to come in.

--: What were you looking for? What did they tell you to look for?

DS: Just anything we could see. We were told to watch for submarines, just anything that we didn't think should be out there.

CT: Any other planes or any ships.

DS: Just anything we did not think should be in those areas.

RC: Did there come a time when there seemed to be more of a sense of tension? You know, maybe like in October or November?

DS: One week is when. Well, there was rumors, talk, because those talks were going on in Washington and well, you better watch. And all this stuff increased the tension of the, purposely, of the fellows so they'd be more alert. And one week before they started the twenty-four hotline telephone. And we were told it was hooked up with Hickam Field, Schofield Barracks, Ford Island and Kaneohe. And they would man this on the weekends from Saturday morning until Monday morning, two twenty-four watches. And I had the one from eight o'clock on Saturday morning until eight o'clock on Sunday morning, on December 7.

And Ensign Uhlmann, who I still firmly believe was probably the first man killed in World War II on our side because he came in the [office], this following morning, he came in the personnel office where I was and he told me that he was relieving me to go to chow. He was a duty officer. And he said, since I'm going up to BOQ breakfast, he says, "I'll drop you off at your mess hall."

And I had been typing a letter and I didn't want to leave the typewriter uncovered and everything. I begged off. I just told him, "No, I can get up there in plenty of time," half a mile or something.

Covered up the typewriter and was getting ready to leave the office and heard a lot of machine gun fire and low-flying planes. And walked over

just to look out the doggone windows and standing there watching them come in.

Well, quite a number of our planes were out. Excuse me, our carrier were out. As they would come back in, they could launch their planes and they would make mock attacks using blank ammunition on the different military installations. And there was training for the pilots. They could fly combat conditions. They could dive down and unload their [*blank*] ammunition on you. And there was training for the fellows on the ground, because they were supposed to be looking at the insignia, the striping on the plane and tell what carrier they were from and what type of a plane it was, what armament they had.

And he wasn't out of the office, I don't believe, ninety seconds when these planes were coming in, knocked out all the windows to my right and I dropped down, because the hangars were immediately on fire. And I crawled over the doggone office and I retraced his steps. He had to go down a short hallway and down a flight of steps to go out through the hangar and his car was parked in front of the doorway, and he never got to his car. He was laying in the doorway dead. And that was about a minute, minute and a half, from the time he relieved me.

--: How did you feel at that moment?

DS: You know, they say -- and I can't remember being scared at that moment. I think when I really got scared was that night, 'cause you were kept so doggone busy, you didn't have time to reflect on anything. And you had moments, but just momentarily flashes that something was wrong.

RC: What did you think, Charles, anyway?

CT: Well, I thought it was like he said, the Army, you know. They were doing their patrol planes coming in and just making mock runs on the base.

RC: What were you doing?

CT: What was I doing? I was washing clothes. Washing my whites out on the wash racks. And there was about, oh, six or seven of us out there, if I remember right. And this first plane flew over and we didn't pay no attention to it. And we said, oh, "Probably the Army, Navy or somebody messing around again," you know.

I went back to washing clothes. Pretty soon the next one was -- I could almost reach up and touch it. It was right over the [*barracks*]. That's what it looked like. I could see a big, red ball. And I hollered, "That's got a big, red ball on it!"

And somebody else said, "That's the Japs!"

Boy, we headed for inside the barracks, you know, behind concrete. And we stayed there for, oh, I don't know, about fifteen minutes and the bosun mate come out and the master-of-arms and he made us get back in the lanai, out of the way, so in case of any bullets, we wouldn't get hit.

And after then -- I don't know -- about two or three strafings he did?

DS: Oh yeah, yeah. It was there the first attack for about forty, forty-five minutes.

RC: Did you hear any bombing or see any bombing?

DS: Not in the first attack. That was all strafing. They were making their strafing runs.

CT: They strafed us . . .

RC: . . . take?

DS: Oh, since we were the duty squadron, we had most of the men. VP-11 wasn't on duty. Of course, it was the same hangar. We were the new squadron, twelve and fourteen was in a smaller hangar, adjacent to us, and there wasn't too many of their men down. So the brunt of the attack was where the most men were working and our hangar door was wide open, and they were making -- they were diving down low enough so they could shoot directly into the doggone hangars without even ricocheting their ammunition. So they were just shooting right into the hangar door.

CT: They knew what they were doing.

DS: We had three planes in the hangar, each with 2,000 gallons of gas on and they told us that we had to get these planes -- now, the hangars on fire. The sprinkler system had been set off and we had some little tow motors - - small, rubber tire wheels -- to move planes around with, and we couldn't get any traction, because there was water, maybe couple inches of water on the deck. So we put so many men, all the men we could get, on each plane, to try to push 'em out. And I had photos of the guys up in my room, in an album I have upstairs, of the three planes that we shoved out of the hangar, right in front of the hangar. And they weren't out there even two minutes before they were hit. But our aim was to keep 'em from exploding in the hangar.

RC: Sure.

DS: And which we accomplished that, but we still lost the planes.

RC: After the planes attacked, the planes that were just machine gunning, what happened when they stopped? Why don't we just go ahead and just

I wanted to ask you, are you staying at this hotel?

DS: No, we're staying over at the Outrigger . . .

(Taping fades out)

DS: It doesn't matter. We can walk over there in five minutes.

RC: I was going to ask you if you wanted to go and get your photographs.

DS: Yeah, I can certainly get 'em.

RC: Yeah, okay.

DS: You want me to get it after we're through here.

RC: Yeah, because then they can shoot 'em, shoot the pictures.

DS: Yeah, okay. You want to finish this interview first, or you want to wait? Take me about ten minutes to go over there and back.

--: You've got to change the roll, right?

--: Yeah.

RC: Why don't you go ahead and go and I'll talk with Charles a little bit.

DS: Okay.

RC: Yeah. That's great.

END OF TAPE ONE

TAPE TWO

RC: Said you were washing your clothes in that.

CT: I never did get back to 'em. I got back -- I put everything, you know, first strafing [*was finished.*] Quite a few of us run down to the hangars, you know, and like he said, there was fire here and there and every place. We ran inside the hangars and tried to help out where we could and the chief told us to get out of the hangar. Well, accident that happened that always sticks in my mind, the armor gunner was taking guns out of the armory and he laid a rifle up on the counter and, butt out, you know. It had a shell in it or something. I don't know how it happened. But this kid picked it up, hit the trigger, and it shot him in the groin. And like I say, I'll never forget it because he just -- boy, he went over backwards right now. And the chief come over and asked what went on and then he seen him and called for a medic. And the guy just laid there and said, "Well, I wish you'd shoot me."

You know, he was really in pain, you know. So I just turned around and walked out. And when I did, I walked out through the door and I looked up and I thought they were having SBD's were coming over. But when I looked, closer they got, I seen it wasn't. And when I stood in the doorway, I seen the bombs leave the racks of them planes. And when I did, I turned around and ran back in the hangar and the girders stick out about that far out of the cement and I got my shoulder in behind it and when them three bombs in there, my head just rattled in that girder like I don't know what, on that thing. And I walked around with a headache for about three weeks after that.

And then I walked out of there and I grabbed a BAR [*Browning automatic rifle*] that was laying there. I walked out of there, walked around the end of the hangar and there was a caterpillar sitting there. And behind it was a young fellow with a hole right here in his arm. And the blood just spurting out. He was just sitting there in the ground, in a daze. And I'd been the driver for the squadron commander and I carried a forty-five all the time and I took the buckskin off the holster and my T-shirt off. And I wrapped it around him and then put the buckskin in it so he would, you know, quit bleeding.

Well, in the meantime, blood's all over me. But I never paid no attention. It didn't bother me or anything. So when the ambulance came down and I hollered to the corpsman to come over there and I helped him hold the guy's arm and he got it all stuffed up and put him in the ambulance. And he says, "What's the matter with you?"

And I said, "There isn't anything wrong with me."

But he says, "All the blood?"

I says, "I don't know where it came from." Then I said, "Oh, the young fellow."

Then he looked at my hand and I had a big chunk of shrapnel sticking in my hand, right in here. Never felt it. Never felt it hit me or anything. All this time and I walked out of there with that and must have been, what, twenty, twenty-five minutes anyway. And I had the piece of shrapnel in my arm, right in the palm of my hand. And I didn't know how it got there even.

RC: So what did you do?

CT: Well, the corpsman dressed it up for me and put stuff on it and that's all there was to it. It didn't amount to anything. And I had to go back to sickbay in a couple of days and have 'em check it and it was okay, but it was buried in my hand about like that. I had a chunk of shrapnel for a long, long time and then I lost it someplace, moving around. I don't know what ever happened to it.

But no, then we -- after that, when we got our planes and we all -- I went into the department that's called plane equipment. Dale was in there for a while with us. And every plane that come in, we took everything out of it and checked it on our list, and then we take it, put it back in the plane and make sure everything was in there that our captain wanted in there, you know, instead of what they wanted, like what came with the ship.

RC: So what you started doing this kind of activity as the new planes were . . .

CT: Right. But they had to have the men, you know, check the planes in and everything.

RC: The rest of that day, what did you do the rest of that morning?

CT: That morning? Well, after the bombing, we went back up to the barracks and I went to hospital and they wrapped my hand up again and checked it out and gave me a shot. And then I went back over the barracks and about that time, we got another raid, and then we went back down to hangars again, and then the chief down there made us get away from it. So they chased it up -- we have, right in the middle of Kaneohe, if you've been over there, there's a nice hill there with a tower on top of it. We spent the rest of the day on the site of that and, what, two or three days we spent there. Never stayed in the barracks. They told us they thought the Japanese were landing on the island and of course our dungarees were just like their uniforms.

So we'd been up there for a day, or a night and a day, I guess, and they brought us down and told us to go get our whites, our white uniforms. They took 'em in and put 'em in coffee grounds, coffee water, and dyed 'em brown. And that's what we wore from then on. We never wore our dungarees.

RC: Who told you that your uniforms, your dungaree uniforms were like the Japanese?

CT: The commander of the base. We have a -- well, what do you call it? Microphone and stuff, you know, on the building?

RC: The P.A. system.

CT: P.A. system, that's what I was trying to think of. And of course, we heard it up on the hill.

RC: You're talking about your whites?

CT: Our white uniforms, yes. We took 'em down and they made us take off our dungarees, you know, blue shirts, chambray shirts and that. Made us take them off and put on our stained whites. And they were anywhere from light brown to dark brown. All depends how long they kept 'em in the coffee grounds. Then later on, they got some other kind of dye brought in and then, oh, they'd be a pretty brown. Almost like that, some of 'em were, reddish brown like that.

--: Was that Commander Martin? Commander Harold Martin in charge of you guys?

CT: I don't remember his name for sure. I was under Commander [*Buckley (VP-12)*] and the other guy, I can't even think -- Ames, Commander Ames, I think his name was. That was our patrol. But the man for the captain of the base, I don't remember his name, no. That part of it. But I drove for them, and boy -- oh, that's right, I was in town about one o'clock that afternoon. I took them to Pearl Harbor and then they stayed at Pearl all night. I drove the station wagon back to the base.

--: In the weeks following the attack, were you wearing these stained, dyed . . .

CT: Oh yeah. We wore them for, I think, a couple of years, if I remember right.

--: Now, what else would you wear?

CT: Nothing. That's it.

--: Sidearms?

CT: Well, I did because I was a driver for the two skippers, you know. The operations officer and the skipper for patrol wing too. I wore a forty-five. I didn't like to wear it. I'd leave it in the seat and of course -- I can't think of the SP officer there. He is from the island -- Cooke, I think he was named. Big, redheaded fellow. He was lieutenant commander and he made me wear the gun -- and you always had to wear it right in here. Well, I didn't -- I wore it out here. And you can't drive a car very good with it laying in there, you know. So I'd just take it off and lay it on the seat.

--: What about leggings? Were you guys required to wear leggings?

CT: No. I wasn't. No. When we went on -- when we come into town to -- the Secretary of the Navy come in and then we had to put on leggings and strap a forty-five on there. We took him to Royal Hawaiian [*Hotel*] when he come in. And then somebody shot -- we don't know whether they shot at him or there was something going off. But anyway, boy, we all hit the ground. We thought we were being shot at, you know. We don't know whatever happened, because we never found anybody, that I know of. But this lieutenant commander and myself and another SP [*shore patrol*] went around the building to see where the shot came from.

RC: Did you ever see the Japanese plane that was shot down at Kaneohe?

CT: Yes. Oh yeah. I aimed a BAR [*Browning automatic rifle*] at him. I aimed it. Yes. I emptied it at him, but I don't know if I ever hit him. But a fighter pilot was supposed to have got him down. An Army fighter, I think it was.

(Background conversation)

RC: Okay, let's stop for a second.

(Taping stops, then resumes)

RC: . . . attack was unfolding and you saw this fellow killed?

DS: I didn't see him killed. I saw him dead in the doorway right after.

RC: What happened after that?

DS: We set about just fighting the fires the best we could and trying to gather up any of the destroyed planes, any usable parts of 'em and stockpiling them by instruments in this pile and whatever n the other pile. And did that for quite a while and then we hit about, oh maybe, twenty minutes,

twenty-five minutes, heard another flight of planes coming over, and everybody said, "Well, these are our planes this time."

And it turned out it wasn't. It was the second attack. And during that second attack is when they start dropping the bombs. And I was inside the hangar, probably towards the middle of the hangar and the, while like I said (mumbles) you have your escort dive bombers with them and the doggone -- I heard a real loud bang right above my head, like somebody hit it with it a ball peen hammer or something. And then something fell down, hit me on the shoulder. I should've brought that over. I have a -- it was a fifty caliber machine gun bullet, armor-piercing job. Like I said, I started to pick it up, realized it was hot and I kicked it over by the bottom of the I-beam. And maybe twenty, twenty-five minutes later, I happened to be in the same area, picked it up and put it in my pocket and not thinking too much about it.

And just a few minutes later, our ordnance shack blew up and guys were ducking every place because bullets were flying everywhere. And there was a fellow named Carl Otterstetter, another guy named Irving Gerben, and myself right outside the shower room door. A bomb came through and blew the three of us back into a shower room, up against the far wall. More or less knocked us out. And we were piled one on top of the other. And attempting to get up, Carl was on top and in our movement, he fell onto his back, on the shower room floor. And we were able to get up and he was still -- we thought knocked out -- and we started to try to pick him up and everything. His back had been blown away.

And like I said, after the end of the attack, in just a few minutes, I was given a set of keys to one of the trucks and told to grab anybody I could grab and go over to Pearl Harbor, out to Ford Island and see if we could get some plane parts, not knowing when we left -- 'cause communications was almost nil. And not stopping to realize or thinking with the rationale, we took off for Pearl Harbor. And as we approached the harbor -- reminds you a lot of Desert Storm over there at that time, with all the oil well fires on. The area was just covered. [*With smoke*] you'd see guys with headlights on, but not for him to see, because he couldn't see, but for you to see him, keep you on your right side of the road.

RC: Sure.

DS: And as we got into the harbor area, got down to the landing, at that time they had barges and a little tug would pull the barge out. That's the way they get their supplies on the island. I drove the truck onto the barge and we were being towed out and we were passing within fifteen or twenty feet -- probably yards I should say -- of these ships that had just been hit. And you could hear screaming coming from the ships. And you're sitting there

doing nothing. You can't do anything. And it hits you harder then, as if you'd been involved and you had something that you could do. But we were sitting there in the doggone truck and the compartment doors on the ships, you know, they close 'em for any kind of emergency, to keep the watertight compartments. And bombs had gone off on the ship and it was messing everything up, threw it out of alignment. And it was just like welding those doors shut and the guys in couldn't get out. And the guys outside couldn't get in. And there was guys jumping off the ship with maybe a leg missing, or an arm missing, jumping in the burning oil around the ship. [*The ships were anchored very close*] to Ford Island -- very easy to swim for a twenty-year old kid that could swim at all. And but when you're handicapped like that, with a leg missing or arm missing, badly injured, you can't do it.

And I met a Corpsman there that was supposed to give us shots after we got there. He was there, and he told us "just come up", he had to upgrade our medical records.

And before – like I said, they took seven of us, before we got a chance to go up there, they took it. But we saw who the Corpsman was, and I don't know why, but when I drove off the barge, this Corpsman was up there with an SP [*shore patrol*] badge on. He was directing traffic and he stopped me and wanted to know where I was going. And I said, "You're a corps man?"

He said, "Yeah." And he says, "Oh, okay," I reminded him about it. He said, "Yeah, you want to see something?"

I said, "What are you going to show me?"

Well, he took me a lot of bodies that had tarps thrown over 'em. Way down to one end and he pulled a tarp back and there was a fellow laying there and he was cut in like four or five sections, right across. You know, sections about that wide, right straight up. And I said, 'What in the world happened?'

He said the only thing they can rationalize is he was climbing up a steel ladder and the bomb went off in back of him and blew him threw the ladder.

CT: Really something.

DS: But we didn't have too many [*plane*] parts that we could use. We had a couple of generators and a couple of the instruments, because they had lost all their planes too, and this is what they had in one hangar that hadn't been bombed. So they had some [*parts*] and that's what they gave us.

We hauled it back over. But our planes were too far gone to do much with 'em.

And just about the time of the attack, they would not let us go. Something comical happened, in fact, that evening. We was sleeping up on Kansas Hill where the Kansas radio tower was, below the tower there. And we were all, most of us had our whites on, it was a Sunday. And I had my whites on because I was on guard duty.

CT: I remember that. Yeah, we did. I think that's where we met each other, wasn't it?

DS: Might have been.

CT: Yeah. That's where I met him, on that hill. We was under the same piece of canvas.

DS: As we were coming down off the hill, over the P.A., over the administration building P.A. system outside told us, "You guys have to get your whites off. You're too visible." They could see. It was three o'clock in the morning and they could look up on the hill and pick us out.

So they told us to get back into dungarees. And we no sooner got into dungarees, and they came back and told us we couldn't wear those either because -- now, how they got the information -- they resembled a Japanese landing party uniform.

--: There was a report that Japanese wearing blue dungarees were . . .

CT: Yeah, there was a report . . .

--: . . . parachuting into Ewa.

DS: So we had to take these off and the only alternative to them, they said, "Well, we're going to have to have dyed whites."

And so they got a couple of garbage cans and they made some ultra, ultra-strong coffee and you walked by those garbage cans and threw your whites into the coffee. Shook 'em around, wrang 'em out and put 'em back on. I smelled coffee for eighteen hours before I could get a cup. I was going around, chewing on my cuff.

CT: How long did we wear 'em?

DS: I think for a week or two.

CT: Oh, it was longer than that, wasn't it?

DS: Might've been.

CT: Seemed like it was almost a year or two.

DS: Well, we had 'em there, but we were be able to go back to our regular uniforms after they found out there was no – [*landings*] -- we got down in front of the administration building the following morning they let one-third of the fellows at a time come down off of the hill. And I think up on that hill we might have had 300 guys with maybe thirty rifles, tops. And each rifle had three rounds of ammunition. And they gave us a couple of shovels, I think maybe two or three shovels on the side of the hill and we're supposed to dig holes deep enough to get into in case there was a return strafing pass.

And one-third went down and had a pretty good breakfast. They set up an outside kitchen in back of the administration building, 'cause they didn't want too many people in a building. And so they got a pretty good breakfast.

And the second group they got maybe coffee and a piece of hamburger, or whatever they happened to have for breakfast that morning. And the third group didn't get nothing but coffee.

And I had been over and had coffee and I came down. I was standing with a fellow and he said, "Here, take my rifle." He says, "I'm going to go back and get coffee."

And I'm standing there in dyed whites and a rifle and the P.A. system says, "Anybody with dyed whites and a rifle, climb on the trucks that's pulling in front of the ad[administration] building."

So I tried to find him real hard (chuckles, inaudible speech). But we got shoved up on the truck and I happened to know the driver, and I leaned over the cab and I asked him where we were going. He says, "Kailua Beach."

And I'm thinking the only thing that could happen to Kailua Beach is a landing party. We were told several times during the night and all that there was a landing party five miles from us, ten miles from us, coming into Kailua Beach, coming in all around the place. And here I figured there must have been twenty or twenty-five of us guys in two trucks, going out to Kailua Beach and we thought to repel a landing party. We thought there were going to be several hundred guys well armed. And that gave you pause. You said, "Were you ever scared," that was one of the times,

because you had that ride out there and you're thinking about what you're going to have to do. Turned out . . .

--: What kind of gear did you have on? You were wearing Dixie cups or were you issued helmets?

DS: I didn't have anything on. I didn't have any on. Most of the time I didn't have any of it. But I will say in relation to your asking, during the first part of the attack, we had run across the street from the hangar to get out of the target zone and there was a grove of trees over there. And a bunch of us back in the trees and little while later, I think it was a bomb truck that carries these bombs, pulled up and said, "Anybody in there?"

We hollered, "Yeah!"

He said, "Do you need helmets?"

And we said, "Yes."

And he threw off a bucket of these cardboard sun helmets. Keep the sun off of us. But no, I didn't have that. Maybe a white hat, you know, the kind that the guys were wearing. We didn't have those -- later on, we had to dye those.

CT: Yeah. Yeah, we did too.

DS: As it turned out, at Kailua Beach, that the local natives there had three Japanese fellows tied up to pilings out there in the doggone water and they were hacking at 'em with banana knives. Operating on 'em pretty good. But it was just they were Japanese and it was just silly, it seems, in retrospect. It seemed like, being a small town like that, they probably knew these fellows, or knew of 'em, or seen 'em at one time or other.

RC: Did you see this?

DS: Yeah. When we got there, they sort of backed off from us because we all got out with our rifles. And we started down towards the water and they backed away and we got two of 'em. We heard later that one guy died. We got the other two without [*them*] getting hurt.

--: The Honolulu Police Department records are still sealed on that day, by the way.

DS: Are they?

--: I can't get 'em open.

DS: Yeah.

CT: Oh yeah. Well, there was a couple of Japanese in Kailua lost arm too, from machetes, from Filipinos getting after them. They cut off an arm on one guy, that I remember. I didn't see it now, but I was told that. Some guy went in there, like he did, on an MP or SP duty, or something, you know. They caught these guys hacking on these two Japanese.

--: As it turned out, the only spy in Kailua was German.

CT: Yeah.

DS: Said there was no proof in cases of sabotage, but there's lots and lots of espionage.

CT: Yeah.

--: Oh yeah. Did you hear about a midget submarine . . .

CT: Oh yeah.

--: . . . at Waimanalo?

CT: Yeah.

DS: That first of prisoner-of-war that came out? The one that died, they said, held a grenade against his chest and just blew his chest out. And the other fellow tried to swim ashore and he got wrapped up in the rocks on the beach and I guess he went unconscious, according to his later testimony. I believe, as they said, he went unconscious a couple times and finally passed out on the beach and that's where they found him there.

CT: One of the planes got one submarine. What was that? One of the . . .

--: The [*USS*] *WARD*

DS: That might have been.

CT: Could've been. One of 'em got a submarine, anyway. One of the midgets.

RC: It worked with a destroyer to nail one just before they attack.

CT: Yeah.

DS: They said that they lost their gyros, lost their steering and they surfaced to get a bearing on the beach and then they submerged again and they'd lose their bearings again, and they had done this several times and that's how they ended up way clear of the channel and landed next to the harbor entrance.

--: They thought they were at Maui.

DS: Pardon?

CT: Oh they did?

--: Thought they were at Maui, yeah.

CT: I'll be darned.

--: They were lost.

CT: Lost is right.

DS: There was a big story, one of the Japanese planes landing or crashing on Niihau. You probably heard that story. And they got [*to*] the Japanese pilot and he had a sidearm, trying to hold [*them*] away from [*him*]. This one Hawaiian fellow, great big guy, I guess. He said he didn't mean it in a threatening way. This is early. They didn't know anything had been happening over there. And they wasn't too aware of what was happening over there. And this Japanese, whether it was on purpose or not, he fired the gun and hit the ones [*of*] the natives over there. And this big guy picked him up and threw him headfirst into the rocks and that was the end of him.

RC: Yeah, well that's a long story. This guys knows that . . .

DS: Well, maybe I can hear it later.

--: You're pretty close though.

DS: All I know about that was what I had heard. And a couple -- I think a couple of articles were pertaining to that in the local paper and all that.

RC: So, in the next few weeks, what did you guys do?

CT: Clean up duty.

RC: Cleaning up.

DS: There were no planes to patrol, except for the three that came back in that evening, after the attack. They were told to stay out because if they were back, they were going to lose 'em, so they stayed out. They come back in that evening. And that was the only three planes we had for patrol until we got new planes.

--: What about PBYs that were moored offshore during the attack? Was there a scramble to get 'em on shore?

DS: They were some of the first planes hit. They burned up.

CT: Yeah, right in the water.

DS: I can't remember the fellow -- Newman, I think his name was. Newman.

CT: Yeah.

DS: They named a ship after him. He was killed. That was one of the VP-14 planes and he vacated the plane, was trying to swim ashore and they strafed him in the water.

--: Did you see the Japanese . . .

DS: Alfred G. Newman, I think it is. And they named a ship after him.

--: Did you see the Japanese plane that crashed at Kaneohe?

DS: I didn't see any parts of that. I saw the pilot. He was just in chunks. And the only reason I saw him, I happened to be up to sick bay for -- we were sleeping on the floor in the ad[ministrat]ion building and the sick bay was behind the ad[ministrat]ion building. And they had a hallway cut through there. And I, for one reason or another, was cutting through and went down this hallway. And I didn't realize at that time what I was seeing. There was a cardboard box, probably about that big a square and about that tall. And I seen the chunk of meat sticking up out of the box. They had thrown an old tarp or something across the box and I seen a chunk of meat sticking out and I didn't think too much of it.

And later on, somebody said, "Did you see the pilot up there in the box?"

I said, "Which box?"

And they said, "The sick bay, at the hospital there." It wasn't a hospital, it was a sick bay.

And I said, "Yeah, I saw that."

And then there was a rumor that one of the guys had got a finger or something and put in for alcohol and had it sitting up in the window of the shop that he worked in and they came down and confiscated the finger. But there was -- you didn't know what to believe, really, after a while, and what not to believe.

--: What was it like, rumor-wise? You know, there must have been rumors flying around . . .

CT: Oh yeah, all over the place.

DS: Some of them seemed so doggone logical. I mean, why couldn't he have had a finger? And the temperament of the moment is . . .

RC: What were some of the other things you heard? What were some of the other rumors that you heard?

DS: Oh, that basically I heard more, that there was a landing party almost any place on the islands.

CT: Right.

DS: And paratroopers had been seen.

CT: Yeah. Paratroopers dropped up in the mountains, above us there, you know.

RC: Uh-huh.

DS: I mean that was basically the main rumor. And then the rumor went around about there was some confusion or something like that between the guys that spotted them on radar and at that time the non-reporting of it. And I wondered if they didn't report it, then how would then know? See, 'cause they (mumbles).

CT: Well, to be able to come out of the ad[ministration] building was they called over to Pearl and told 'em that we was being attacked by Japanese. They told 'em we were drunk, go back to bed.

DS: Sunday morning, go back to bed.

CT: Yeah.

DS: And then they had to go into . . .

- CT: That's what I -- now, I'm not sure but I heard it in the ad[administration] building, you know. They'd come right out of the room and said that's what they told 'em, you know, on the phone.
- DS: Our reading when it was on the radio system there, the fellow that relieved them had to take his fingers off the key. His hand had been cut. You know, machine gun fire. Yeah.
- : In the weeks following the attack, did the nature of the patrols change? Did you guys start going north a little bit more? With what you had.
- DS: Yes. We --- to an extent, we flew longer patrols and was a little bit more serious about it. If we were late taking off, we were late getting back. It used to be if we were late getting off, then we just cut the patrol short, but there was no more of that. And everything was under a much more serious thing. But they thought, due to how much power we had at Ford Island and the bay over there, in the waters around Pearl Harbor anyway, and that we were too strong to be hit. What did we have? Thirty-three or thirty-seven warships over there. Ninety-two ships altogether, counting all the auxiliary vessels, the barges and everything. Counting every canoe and everything else.
- : What about Japanese submarines? Were you guys instructed to watch out for those things? Did you operate . . .
- DS: Yeah, as we were taking off on patrols, they said especially be on the alert anywhere within a one or two hundred-mile radius of the island. And as we got out further, into deeper water, you probably are not going to, you guys are not going to run close to the surface at that time, as they're trying to get in anyhow. But we still looked out there. And we used to fly our patrols between four and six hundred feet. And because they were . . .
- RC: After the attack, when you were flying your patrols, were you armed with bombs or depth charges?
- DS: Not initially. I mean, maybe it came into being one or two at a time because they had to install the bomb racks on 'em. And the planes that we got had already been manufactured. It came from Consolidated [*Aircraft Corporation*] already. And they had the new paint, like I mentioned before.
- : Is that . . .
- DS: Pardon?
- : Is that pre-camouflage?

DS: Probably.

CT: When we did put on some bombs on the planes, I think it was just something special they did. I don't think they did it on all the patrols. But like, say, it was a special radio come in and they wanted a certain plane, put a bomb on it or something and take it out. It seemed like I remember seeing something like that once or twice. But a regular patrol, I don't remember seeing much bombs on.

--: Now, my understanding, when a PBY had a patrol and it spotted something suspicious on the surface, they would drop smoke bombs. Now, is that something that the pilot would drop or someone in the waist gun would throw?

DS: Usually somebody in the waist gunnery. Probably would signal when to drop it and they would drop it and that was to give 'em bearing on it, to make a circle to come back. Easy to get disoriented. So when they gave 'em a target area to fly back over, at a lower altitude and they'd make probably two or three runs on that.

RC: What were these smoke pots? What was that like?

DS: Exactly what they were, I don't know. You -- like a flint almost. They'd squeeze something or did something and just ignited that and almost at the same time, you dropped it. They released it. And that smoke started trailing down after [*they left*] the plane fifty or sixty feet, just started smoking.

CT: One of 'em, I remember, had almost like a beer cap on it that you took off and threw it out. I remember seeing a couple like that.

RC: Was it like a canister or . . .

CT: Yeah, something like that. Yeah.

DS: Just something that would . . .

CT: It was -- I don't say they were about, oh, maybe, what, four or five inches long?

DS: Oh, they were about six or eight at the utmost.

CT: Yeah.

--: Like great, big hand grenades?

CT: No, they were slim.

DS: Probably about that big around. And what the element in there that causes smoke, I do not know. But it was similar to this, I won't say similar but we related it at that time to the magnesium was in the explosive bullets.

CT: Yeah.

RC: Uh-huh.

--: Looking back at the attack, what's the primary emotion you feel, that comes back over the years?

DS: Now?

--: Yes.

DS: So many at times and other times you're a complete blank. I think it's we're so far removed from it now it's just like in another lifetime, or almost.

CT: Right, yeah.

DS: And it doesn't affect you that much any more. On our first visit out here, in 1966, there was a lot of animosity in our association. And especially when we started going out to the memorial and the memorial was there and there was no visitors' center there. Everyone lined up out there in the rain. You see these Japanese guys, they were pulling up in big limousines to go out and visit.

And when Fuchida came back, he wanted special treatment. He wanted to be escorted out to the memorial. He wanted to go on the memorial. We heard a rumor [*he wanted the*] memorial be closed while he was on it, which was probably 100 percent rumor. But I said there were so, like I mentioned, so many doggone things going on and you didn't know what to believe and what not to believe. But if you wanted to believe it, that would rouse your animosity just that much more.

RC: Sure.

CT: Right.

DS: Over a period of years, I think you just gradually mellow out and accept it.

CT: Right. As the older you got, like you said, you mellowed out.

DS: And it gets to a point that you're not hurting anybody but yourself if you try to carry this doggone grudge business from one generation to another generation that had nothing to do with it. And there was some of that. We had some hard-nosed guys in there that . . .

CT: Oh yes.

DS: . . . maintained that they would never have anything to do with 'em. But still they go to the hotels where they own a big percentages of hotels. But you're forced into that [*situation*].

But I can remember -- it had to be '71 or '76, when the hotels were begging for investment capital, so they could renovate and enlarge. Most of the answers they got back was . . .

END OF INTERVIEW