

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

#284

MARGARET GUBRUD & DAVIS OLE GUBRUD

CIVILIAN AND USS *VESTAL* SURVIVOR

**INTERVIEWED ON
DECEMBER 6, 1998
BY DANIEL MARTINEZ**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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**USS *ARIZONA* MEMORIAL
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

Daniel Martinez (DM): The following oral history interview was conducted by Daniel Martinez, historian for the National Park Service at the USS *Arizona* Memorial. It was conducted at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada on December 6 at 11:30 a.m. The person being interviewed is Margaret Gubrud?

Margaret Gubrud (MG): Gubrud.

DM: Gubrud and Davis Gubrud. Good morning.

MG: Good morning.

Davis Gubrud (DG): Good morning.

DM: For the record, Margaret, would you state your full name, place of birth and date of birth?

MG: My name is Margaret Dolly Gubrud. My place of birth was Orange County, California, November 27, 1921.

DM: And Davis? Your full name.

DG: Oh, my name is Davis Ole Gubrud.

DM: And your place of birth.

DG: Argyle, Minnesota.

DM: And the date of birth.

DG: One, eleven, twenty-one.

DM: And in December of 1941, what did you consider your hometown?

DG: My hometown was a very small city and I know my folks ran a, what you would—they call it a hotel, but I think it was more or less of a...

DM: Rooming house?

DG: ...rooming house.

DM: And where was that?

DG: That was in Argyle, Minnesota.

DM: Okay. Margaret, what did you consider your hometown?

MG: Let's see, my folks had moved to Pleasantia at that time. Pleasantia in California.

DM: So you were one of those rare native Californians?

MG: That's correct.

DM: Not so rare today. Pretty rare then. Well, I'd like to talk to you, first of all, about, Margaret, your childhood. What was it like growing up and how many was in your family in southern California?

MG: Well, I had an only brother, William, or they called him Bill. And my folks bought property in the city of Bell. So we lived at 6303 Casitas Avenue in the city of Bell, up until I met Dave and married, so...

DM: So you went to elementary school and went to high school?

MG: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

DM: When you were in high school, what were your favorite things, subjects or in extracurricular activities?

MG: Not in particular. I loved school. I enjoyed school but I was in the athletic association, so I had the athletic sweater with all the different baseball, volleyball.

DM: Did you play sports or support sports?

MG: Played.

DM: Played?

MG: Played.

DM: So this is women in sports in the early days, right?

MG: That's correct.

DM: Okay.

MG: That's correct.

DM: And did you play baseball and you played what other sport?

MG: Volleyball.

DM: Volleyball.

MG: Volleyball.

DM: Okay. What was your favorite subject in high school?

MG: I'd say bookkeeping, math.

DM: Oh, one of—certainly not my favorite subject, but I would be glad to have _____ . Davis, how about you? Where did you go to school and grow up?

DG: Well, I have to change. It wasn't in Minnesota, because during the war—not the war, but I mean the depression.

DM: Uh-huh.

DG: Wasn't much a place for any person with lots of children so my dad and my mother moved to Kindred, North Dakota and got a farm.

DM: And how many was in your family?

DG: In my family there was four brothers and two sisters.

DM: Okay. And where were you in that?

DG: I was...

DM: Youngest, oldest?

DG: No, I was the third son. They have two older than myself.

DM: So...

DG: Go ahead.

DM: Farming in, you said North Dakota?

DG: North Dakota.

DM: That's pretty tough farming out there.

DG: Yes, especially when we had no rain and it was dusty and there wasn't—and if you got a crop, it wasn't enough money to pay for the food, so you just do without. You couldn't even make any money on it. The only money we made that one year was turkeys and they just loved to eat grasshoppers. So we made a living off of turkeys.

DM: So you guys were turkey farmers for a while?

DG: And then I was graduated from Kindred High School.

DM: And let's talk a little bit about that high school. What were your favorite subjects in school?

DG: Well, it was both English and math.

DM: Did you play sports?

DG: No, wait a minute.

DM: Okay.

DG: There wasn't that many. I got out of school, I had to go to work.

DM: Okay.

DG: I worked at a cream station and I took my [*home*]work with me and when I was at the desk and not having to do any work, I would do some of my homework.

DM: And that was to support the family?

DG: Yes and I'd work all five days and then I'd go home to Kindred, and gather up enough food that I could bring back with me for the week. So for two months, two years, I was at high school. And then I joined the navy.

DM: Now what prompted you to, Davis, to join the navy?

DG: Well, there wasn't...

DM: There's not much ocean in North Dakota.

DG: No, but the thing of it was, there wasn't any money. There wasn't anybody getting jobs.

DM: Right.

DG: This is in the early thirties. Remember, depression.

DM: Right. So...

DG: So me and my one brother joined the navy. However, he was a year older so he went in and they made me wait until I got eighteen, 'cause I was only seventeen when I graduated.

DM: Okay.

DG: And then I went to school [*in*] Virginia, and [*Dick*] went to the [*USS*] *Vestal* and [*I*] stayed there until I got through with school. And they took us [*on*] a train trip, three days to go from Virginia to San Diego.

DM: And that's where you went to boot camp?

DG: No, I went to Great Lakes.

DM: Great Lakes.

DG: Great Lakes is where I started.

DM: Okay.

DG: And then I went to school and then I went to San Pedro.

DM: Okay.

DG: On a ship from San Diego to San Pedro, on a big ship.

DM: Now, when you were at school in San Diego, what school were you at? What were they training you to be?

DG: Oh, you mean, oh, it was metal. Metal or wood.

DM: Uh-huh.

DG: And I ended up being a shipfitter.

DM: Okay.

DG: Metal.

DM: Now did you have an affinity for that when you were younger, since you worked on the farm?

DG: Oh, I was the one in the family [*that was mechanically inclined*], in the [*family*] garage I'd take things apart. I even made a windmill [*type*] generator. See, they had a school [*project*], and they [*wired*] lights on it with twelve or six volts.

DM: Uh-huh.

DG: And then I could put the lights in my garage and have lights on. Of course, they didn't have it in [*the house*].

DM: Is it safe to say that you read *Popular Mechanics* once in a while?

DG: Oh, I was very much—yes.

DM: Yeah. So, you're—I have a friend that's like you, that they just like to tinker.

DG: I could make anything or work anything with metal and that's I was a ship fitter, because I did a lot of plumbing work, whatever is necessary.

DM: Now, Margaret, what did you do after high school?

MG: The old terminology used to be slung hash. (Laughs) I used to be a waitress for a long time.

DM: And where did you do that?

MG: I did that in the city of Bell in Tom's Snack Shack. And then we met a friend that was in the insurance business. And he—my father's friends used to call me Tootsie. So he said that he needed help and if he sent me to school, to the Anthony Schools of Insurance, would I be interested? And I said, "Well, that sounds like I would be."

And so I went to the Anthony Schools of Insurance and became an insurance agent.

DM: Okay.

MG: So then I went to work for him.

DM: And what would you insure?

MG: Everything.

DM: Everything.

MG: Automobiles, workman's compensation.

DM: Now, what happened to the—what was the insurance company you worked for?

MG: At that time it was Selden C. Fish and Associates, that was who I originally started out with. And he handled Aetna Insurance Company, West American Insurance Company, Ohio Casualty Insurance Company, etcetera. He had several different companies he represented.

DM: Now, he's got his career started in the navy. At the same time, you've got your career started with the insurance company.

MG: Well, at that time, that came later.

DM: Okay.

MG: At that time, I was working with wired music.

DM: Okay.

MG: Do you know anything about wired music?

DM: No, why don't you explain to me what wired music is.

MG: Okay. Wired music—in fact, I even did that in Hawaii. Wired music was where the gentlemen at different cafes or restaurants would drop a nickel or a quarter or a dime in the slot and the wire would carry it to a particular spot. And you would flip on—the old-fashioned way it was set up...

DM: Yeah.

MG: ...you'd flip the button and you would say, "Number please?"

And the person would talk back to you in a microphone and say, "I would like this record or that record."

DM: And you'd put the disc on.

MG: And you'd put the disc on and play it. Right. Now, Hawaii's type of records were very antique. In California, they were more modern.

DM: Okay.

MG: So it was a very unusual way of doing it.

DM: When you say antique, were those seventy-eight [rpm] records or was it the way they were made of?

MG: It was the way they had their set up. In other words, in California, you had a long table and your records could slide in the bottom. And you'd twirl around and your records would be in back of you. In Hawaii, they had one set up, the table was right in front of you, but your records were clear over on the other side of the wall.

DM: So you had to run?

MG: So you'd flip the button on here and say, "Number please?" and then you'd go clear over there to get your record. So it was...

DM: Well, things haven't changed...

(Laughter)

DM: How did you two meet?

MG: Well, I was chaperoned at the time. So there was a dance hall in Long Beach. And my mother would take me down to the dance hall and he was in the navy and we met at the dance hall.

DM: So your mom had to approve of Davis?

DG: Oh yes.

MG: More or less, yes.

DM: What was that like, Davis? How old were you when you guys met?

DG: Oh, let's see, 19[39]. You're in—I was [*twenty*].

MG: Nineteen, well, about twenty, I guess.

DG: Twenty. Yeah, I guess so.

DM: Margaret, you were?

MG: I was probably eighteen or nineteen.

DM: And when you saw this guy for the first time, what did you think?

MG: Oh, I thought he was quite handsome. Still do! (Laughs)

DM: And what'd you think, Davis?

DG: Well, see, my brother also was there and he did a little fancy dancing than me, I was more slow and waltzing, so she did that real well. So, that's why we started...

DM: She was a good dancer?

DG: Yeah. She could help me do a little bit better than I could do, because I wasn't really too much in dancing.

MG: Well, he liked to waltz and his brother...

DG: Something slower.

MG: ...liked to jitterbug, so he...

DM: So he'd do that swing stuff.

DG: Yeah.

DM: That's popular again...

DG: Yeah, just started...

MG: Oh yes. Oh yes, I do.

DM: Now, could you swing dance?

MG: Oh yes. I jitterbugged with Dick and waltzed with him. So we had a good time.

DM: So your brother had the action, he had the romance?

MG: Yes, that's right. (Laughs)

DM: What were you going to say, Dave?

DG: Oh, that for her to remember about your mother not going, was going to take you to a movie?

MG: Oh yes. I was upset with him one night and so I was going to go to a movie instead of to the dance and my mother says, "No. There's no use your going to the movie, honey. You really want to go to the dance, so we might as well go," she said.

DM: So she knew that you really liked this guy?

MG: Yeah.

DM: Now, what did he do to make you mad? Do you remember?

MG: Oh yes. He danced with a blonde.

(Laughter)

DM: Well, blondes have been deadly poison for a lot of people.

DG: Well, but I went over there and at that time I didn't see her, so, well, me and my brother, we just got somebody to dance. We were dancing. And she saw that and I said, waving—I kind of waved to her. I wanted to talk to her and she just put her nose up and went home!

(Laughter)

DM: Oh my god!

DG: So the next time she said we did go and I got invited to go over to her home with her father and her family.

DM: So this then took a serious turn...

DG: So that started...

MG: Yeah, from then on.

DM: Yeah?

DG: That's right.

DM: After the fight, it took a serious turn.

MG: Yes.

DM: That's interesting. What ship were you aboard when you were in Long Beach, at that time?

DG: The *Vestal*.

DM: The *Vestal*.

DG: That's the only ship I was on. I was [*on the*] ship until they finally got almost to the war over. We were in the South Pacific for two and a half years, _____, taking care of other ships and finally they got one to [*replace us*]. They had to build the ship and get it ready for [*us*]*—*you know, another ship.

DM: Uh-huh.

DG: And that was the *Ajax*.

DM: Okay.

DG: Then we got back to the States.

DM: Okay.

DG: In two and a half years, we...

DM: You were out at sea, huh.

DG: Yeah, out of state.

DM: Now, were you on the *Vestal* when she was commissioned?

DG: No.

DM: Oh, you weren't a plank holder?

DG: You know when that thing was commissioned? In 1913 as a coal ship.

DM: She was an coal ship. Okay. And then she was a turned into a training ship?

DG: Yeah.

DM: Into a repair ship.

DG: Right, that's right.

DM: So you came aboard during what year?

DG: Well, that would be after I got—that would be nineteen, eighteen...

MG: Nineteen, 1939.

DG: Yeah, '39, that's right.

DM: Now, when did you guys get married?

MG: Nineteen forty-one.

DM: And you were engaged for how long?

MG: We were engaged for a year. We went together a year, were engaged for a year and then we were married in 1941. So we went together two years.

DM: Did you ever have an opportunity to ever meet his family?

MG: Yes, in the year of 1940, my mother and father and I went back to New Jersey to see my mother's parents.

DM: Right.

MG: And we stopped in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where his parents had moved to and I met his parents at that time.

DM: Okay. So in those days of courting, that was part of the process, to get the approval of both families?

MG: I would say so, yes.

DG: Yes.

DM: Did you guys have the same religion?

MG: No. No, we were both Christians, but not the same religion. But after we were married—we were married by a Lutheran pastor here in Las Vegas, but afterwards, when I went back east to La Crosse, Wisconsin, to bring his folks to California, I studied underneath a Reverend Peterson and took the Lutheran religion.

(Conversation off-mike.)

MG: And took the Lutheran religion. So we're both Lutherans.

DM: Okay.

(Conversation off-mike.)

(Taping stops, then resumes)

DM: When you went back to—you said you went back to La Crosse?

MG: La Crosse, Wisconsin.

DM: And then you had an opportunity to meet Davis' parents?

MG: Correct.

DM: And they were still in Nebraska?

MG: No, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

DM: They lived in La Crosse.

MG: La Crosse, Wisconsin.

DM: Okay. What was that? Was that a little nerve-racking for you?

MG: No. We got along beautifully.

DM: Okay. So they approved?

MG: Mm-hm.

DM: And did you at that time announce that you guys were getting married or...

MG: Oh, they knew by letter that we were engaged and that we were going to be married.

DM: Okay. So I'm real curious, how did you end up in Las Vegas getting married?

MG: Well, I never wanted a wedding. I never wanted a wedding.

DM: You didn't want the white?

MG: Nope, never did. Never did. I always told my mother, I said, "If the lord gives me pottery, towels and four children, I'll be perfectly happy."

DM: Did you get all that?

MG: I got all that.

DM: All right, let's take you to Hawaii. You guys get married in Las Vegas. When do you ship over to Hawaii? I know that the *Vestal* made some trips out there, but when did you as a family now go to Hawaii?

DG: Well, it was right after we were married. The ship had to go again so naturally I was up there. This is before the war. And we were repairing various other ships, because that was our job.

DM: Right.

DG: And then when I got set up, we looked—or maybe I looked—looked for an apartment, not doing too good a job until she got there, then we were going to walk and find one.

DM: Right.

DG: Because we were married now. So I didn't have much of the time. She was wandering around until she finally found one place.

DM: Now, where did you find a place? In Waikiki?

MG: No, actually I arrived in November.

DM: How did you come over? By...

MG: By boat.

DM: Matson liner?

MG: Matson liner, by boat.

DM: Do you remember which one?

MG: The *Lurline*.

DM: Okay.

MG: The *Lurline*, or LOO-RA-LINE, however you pronounce it.

DM: Okay. *Lurline* is right.

MG: And we found, on 1122 McCully Street, which now has been converted into a McDonald's, would you believe? But it was a two-story frame house and the only thing we could find was a really, not much bigger than this room. If you know...

DM: So it was like a little studio?

MG: Like a little studio apartment, truthfully, with a community bath.

DG: And all kinds of windows.

DM: Community bath?

MG: Community bath. Forty dollars a month. And all windows. And in the corner was a cute little campfire stove, you know the type that you pump?

DM: Right.

MG: And it had for a washbasin, it had the old-fashioned little, round...

DM: Sink?

MG: ...type sink. And the bed was in the middle of the floor and the cute, old-fashioned, long dresser type, you know.

DM: Right.

MG: And a chair and a little table. That's about the space of it. So I wrote home and told Mom. I said, "It's just as cute as it can be, Mom." I said, "Except I have BABBO in one hip pocket and PUREX in the other." Every time I went to the bathroom, I was cleaning the bathroom. But that's okay.

So we had a Filipino boy that I became acquainted with that came everyday and cleaned. Cute, little fellow. And that's when I—I had always worked at wired music in California, so I happened to find a job there for wired music.

DM: And where was that? Where was that at? Was it at a restaurant, was it...

MG: No. It was a separate building, but it's been so many years ago, I can't remember the address of it. I just memorized the address of where I lived.

DM: Right.

MG: But it was working for a Portuguese gentleman and there was two girls, two of us that always worked a shift.

DM: Now you came over in 1940?

MG: No, I came in '41.

DM: Forty-one.

MG: See, we were married in September of '41.

DG: Yeah.

MG: I followed him over, got there in November and the war broke out in December.

DM: So you're there less than a month?

DG: Yeah.

MG: Yeah.

DM: And what was life like for you before the war started in Hawaii? What kind of things did you like to do?

MG: Well, it was beautiful. I liked to walk. When I didn't work, I liked to walk. And I met a lady there by the name of Anna Watkins. "Skins," as they called him, was a shipmate of Dave's. And Anna is still a friend of mine today. We write back and forth. She lives in Portland, Oregon.

DM: Okay.

MG: And we have remained friends all these years.

DM: Who was "Skins?"

MG: Oh, his name is Ray Watkins.

DM: Okay. His nickname then.

MG: And he was nicknamed "Skins." And I have remained friends with Anna all these years. We've been very close to each other. And she was a Catholic and she couldn't go to my church, but I could go to hers, so I always went with her.

DM: Now, that's changed a little since then.

MG: Oh, I know it's changed since then. But then...

DM: But then in those days.

MG: But in those days, I said, "That's okay, I'll go with you." So I always went with her.

DM: Did you know any other *Vestal* people that served on the ship that you were friends with?

MG: No, only Anna.

DG: That was Watkins, Ray.

MG: Anna was—well, Ray I knew. And then there was a young boy that they used to call Red at the time that I knew, but for some reason, he disappeared. I don't know what happened to him. And I don't think...

DG: No, he got another ship. He asked for another ship.

MG: So...

DM: Now, here it is, it's November 1941, did you guys have any idea that there may be a war out here?

MG: No (chuckles). Not at that time.

DG: Well, not really. Of course, you get the paper...

DM: You mean the newspapers were talking about it?

DG: ...the paper says, well...

DM: Was it just because Hawaii was what it was? Remote, beautiful, that the idea of war happening there...

DG: Well, you see, because Europe was already at war.

DM: Right.

DG: So then it kind of—well, actually the navy was giving lots of old ships and giving it to England, to do their fighting.

DM: So mainly the war was in Europe...

DG: So we don't know, but it kind of made you think, well, something else can happen. (Coughs) Excuse me. Anyway, I don't really figured we were going to be into it quick unless something else happened, which it did.

DM: Let's take you to the night of December 6, fifty-seven years ago today. What did you guys do that day? Did you have the liberty that weekend?

DG: I had liberty that day, therefore we had something to eat, walked around and then we went to bed fairly early because—no, that was later then.

MG: December 6?

DG: Yeah, we didn't...

DM: Yeah, Saturday night.

DG: But later we had the blackout, but that was then.

DM: Did you guys go out to dinner?

DG: Not too much.

MG: No, not too much. We just cooked in our...

DM: And that night you didn't do anything special?

MG: No. Mm-mm.

DG: One little thing which maybe I shouldn't mention that I had a lot of friends that worked on the ship, do things for 'em. Then there was a guy that's a

butcher, see. So I'd come by and I'd take my—we had to have a mask in our box. So I took that out and put a plastic [*sac*], in it [*I placed butter*], I mean some meat and various other things that would be good for us eating and I'd put that in there. I'd leave the ship, and I'd go bring all this stuff home.

DM: Bring it home...

DG: 'Cause we didn't have much money to [*buy*] that.

DM: What was your pay?

DG: Pardon?

DM: What was your pay as a sailor, per month?

DG: Well, I was second class ship fitter. Of course, then after married, I got what they called marriage money or whatever. And I can't really remember.

DM: It wasn't a lot.

DG: It wasn't a lot. But we got [*by*].

MG: It wasn't what they made today, I know.

DG: Oh no!

DM: Now, you had no children at this time?

MG: No.

DM: Those were coming?

DG: Yeah.

DM: So December 6, you guys went to bed early?

DG: Yeah.

MG: Yeah.

DM: Did you have any plans for the next day?

MG: No, not particularly.

DG: Because it was Sunday.

DM: Yeah.

MG: I think my cousin Warren mentioned that he was going to come over or he had asked you to go up with the dawn patrol with him and you said no, you didn't want to go.

DM: What was the dawn patrol?

MG: It was a flying group that went up in the dawn.

DG: He was taking his lessons.

MG: To fly, to learn how to fly, and they called it the dawn patrol.

DM: Sure, out of John Rodgers Airport.

DG: Yeah, and he had asked me, he was solo, and he says, "Come on, go with me. I'll take you free."

DM: Did he fly that morning?

MG: He did and lost his life.

DG: He did and we never saw him again.

MG: He lost his life.

DG: We know he was dropped, but we had—it was about six...

DM: Do you think...

DG: ...about six months later...

MG: Well, we know he was.

DG: ...we couldn't find him. Couldn't find him or the ship. They wouldn't say anything to her folks, so. Of course, we knew what happened.

DM: That must have affected you terribly.

MG: It did. It did. Yeah.

DM: Did you—how—I mean, there was a lot that happened on December 7. When did you find out he was possibly a casualty of that?

MG: Well, when I didn't hear from him that afternoon...

DM: Which he had promised to come over?

MG: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Then I called the base where he was, because he was with the National Guard.

DM: Hawaii National Guard?

MG: Mm-hm.

DG: Yeah.

DM: Okay.

MG: And they said that he had gone out with the dawn patrol and that's all I needed to know.

DM: What was his name?

MG: 'Cause I knew that they were gone. Warren. Warren Rasmussen.

DM: Warren Rasmussen.

MG: Mm-hm. And he was my first cousin.

DM: And he was with the Hawaii Territory National Guard?

MG: Mm-hm, yeah.

DG: Yeah. That's when the California group all came to...

DM: Okay.

DG: Moved.

DM: Well, so then Pearl Harbor affected you as a family person?

MG: Oh yes.

DG: Oh yeah.

DM: You had a casualty. Let's take you back to that morning. We're going to switch tapes here so we have to switch, so I'm going to have Dennis stop the camera. We're going to put a new tape and we're going to talk...

END OF TAPE #03

TAPE #04

DM: On the morning of December 7, it's a bright, pretty much sunny day there in Hawaii, pretty average day. What time did you guys get up that day?

DG: Well, I don't know. It wasn't dark, for sure. I mean, we generally get up fairly early.

DM: About seven?

DG: Yeah, that would be about right.

DM: Had a little breakfast?

DG: Well, that, I don't think we did.

MG: No, we heard a lot of confusion and he looked outside and he said, "Something must have happened."

And actually he may have forgotten, but I didn't. He turned on our little square radio that we had and when he turned it on, it said, "This is not a program. War has been declared."

And he said, "I'm leaving."

And I'm telling you the truth, I never saw anybody dress so fast and leave the house so fast. He was gone.

DM: Was he in uniform when he left?

DG: Oh yes.

MG: He was in uniform and he was gone. I mean he was gone.

DM: What were you thinking when all of this was going and your husband was...

MG: Well, I just...

DM: ...was basically going off to war?

MG: Well, after he left, I just sat on the bed.

DM: And?

MG: I just sat there.

DM: You were numb or crying or...

MG: No, I just sat there.

DM: ...scared?

MG: Well, I don't even remember being scared. Maybe I was, but you've got to remember, I was twenty.

DM: Right.

MG: So if I was scared, I don't know it, because at this time when I talk to you, I don't remember being scared.

DM: Could you hear airplanes?

MG: Oh yes.

DM: Could you see them?

MG: I could hear 'em.

DM: Could you hear explosions?

MG: Yes.

DM: And this, and then...

MG: But he was gone.

DM: Now, you go, what are you doing?

DG: Well, like you said, I headed for Pearl [*Harbor*] and there was a lot of taxis bringing men to go, quick, fast.

DM: Did you initially jump in a taxi?

DG: I just jumped in there and we went. There was about two or three of us.

DM: So what about this trolley story you told me?

DG: Oh, that was right after I was headed for [*Pearl Harbor*], I got the trolley about a block down and something exploded and the trolley came apart. So he didn't—the owner—we heard that. He went over and put it back on and we got 'til we got to the taxis and then we went. And I tried, not realizing you couldn't see anything, so much smoke. [*It appears that the explosion caused the trolley boom to disengage from the overhead electric wires, the trolley operator reengaged it and they were on their way again. On leaving the trolley, the trip to Pearl Harbor was completed via a taxi.*]

DM: Uh-huh.

DG: But you couldn't really see what the ships are.

DM: Yeah.

DG: And I said, "I gotta go to the *Vestal*."

He says, "Your best bet is to go to Ford Island."

DM: Okay. So let me retrace this. You get on this trolley. There's some explosions happening which we now know as friendly fire landing all over Honolulu. The trolley is broken down. You get in a taxi to take you to the main gate at Pearl Harbor.

DG: That's right.

DM: So you get to the main gate and now what happens?

DG: Well, we went towards where they generally get the ships through, let us run back and forth.

DM: And [*Merry*] Point Landing?

DG: Yeah, and there wasn't anything there. So there was a couple around there and I said, "How do I get to the *Vestal*?"

He says, "Well, we don't know yet, but you better get to Ford Island. That's the closest you can get."

So that's where I went.

DM: Let me, Davis, let me make this clear. You were at [*Merry*] Point Landing?

DG: Yes.

DM: Okay. The main landing.

DG: Main landing.

DM: Now they're saying Ford Island. That means you get on the ferry?

DG: No, no.

DM: You got on a whaleboat?

DG: No. It's just—yeah, like a whaleboat...

DM: Right.

DG: ...for enlisted people to go back and forth in.

DM: Now, you're going up the southeast loch of Ford Island, what do you see?

DG: Well, actually I think I saw the *Oklahoma* sideways.

DM: Capsized.

DG: That I could see.

DM: In all this smoke...

DG: They had so much smoke that we didn't know what was going on.

DM: What was going through your mind now?

DG: Well, spirit I guess. Just figuring you gotta get to the ship. There's no use standing looking at it.

DM: Did you have time to think about Margaret or...

DG: Oh no. Not that time, no. You had too much on your mind.

DM: Did you realize how serious this was when you saw Battleship Row.

DG: Well, oh yes. We knew that had to be real bad.

DM: Did you know who was doing this?

DG: Well, I assumed that they'd heard enough that it was probably the Japanese.

DM: Did you see planes?

DG: Well, I never really saw, but I got pictures to prove when they came in. I have some of those films by the Japanese...

DM: Right.

DG: ...showing their ships coming in.

DM: Right.

DG: And where our ships were at the time. So actually, we were just trying to get, like I said, to my ship and I knew it was tied to the *Arizona* and the guy says, "You may have a problem here, so as soon as we can later," he says, "I'll see if we can't make a—I'll go around and see if we can't find where you're at.

DM: Because of the explosion on the *Arizona*, the *Vestal* gallantly—because it had been damaged too from the explosion...

DG: Yeah, twice.

DM: Twice.

DG: The one in the first exploded and did not go through because they had a lot of steel bars for the men to do repair work and that exploded inside and that started to burn inside.

DM: Right.

DG: The one rear went through five decks and never slowed down. Went right into the mud. It made a hole in the side of the ship there that you could drop a jeep through it. And that's where Captain Cassin...

DM: Cassin Young.

DG: ...got the ships back. He says, "We got to move," and we did.

DM: I understand that Cassin Young and many men were blown overboard...

DG: That's right.

DM: ...from the explosion on the *Arizona*.

DG: That's right. He swam back and came back and he says, "No, we do not give a shit. We're going to go!"

DM: So what did they do to get away from the *Arizona*?

DG: Everybody was supposed to get a hold of—of course, I was watching it. I...

DM: You were watching this from Ford Island?

DG: I was watching this. They had to go with the axe and chop the hawsers. They're that big around.

DM: Right.

DG: And they didn't have enough steam to run the [*rudder*]. I'm not saying that right. [*There was not enough steam pressure available to operate the*

steering gear.] Anyway, the only place they go is straight, right to Aiea. And I've got a picture today of that there and sitting in the mud.

DM: Right. Ran her up on the shoals.

DG: Yeah, ran her right up.

DM: Now what was the *Vestal* doing moored to the *Arizona* anyway? What was her job? What were you guys doing to the *Arizona*?

DG: Well, many repairs, but then there's a lot of medical—not medical—the armor that they do that, which is a fireman, not per se, of oil or what, that's the firing of the guns.

DM: Right.

DG: That was my other brother's job. He was a fire, third or second fireman.

DM: Uh-huh.

DG: Of course, he wasn't home at that time, because he went back to school and was in Virginia, detached to the school, but still attached to the *Vestal*.

DM: Okay.

DG: So therefore, he wasn't there at that time. I forgot to mention that.

DM: Okay.

DG: My brother.

DM: Your brother was on the same ship as you were.

DG: Ship, but he was...

DM: Very fortunate not to be there.

DG: Not there that particular...

DM: He was in school.

DG: He was off to school.

DM: Okay. But the *Vestal* moored to the *Arizona* for a purpose. What was its job?

DG: Well, anything we could repair physically...

DM: Okay.

DG: ...above the water, basically, or something that needed to be done and not requiring a dry-dock.

DM: Right.

DG: And that's basically what the *Vestal* was designed. We even had all kinds of equipment, even a foundry and make things out of—that's basically...

DM: Did you go aboard the *Arizona* at all?

DG: Only to visit once in a while. I didn't know anybody personally.

DM: But on that weekend, on December 5...

DG: Oh no.

DM: ...you guys were berthed together.

DG: No.

DM: Let me ask you a scuttlebutt question. I talked to some *Vestal* sailors who did go aboard the *Arizona* and the *Arizona* was due to have its ammunition shifted off of the vessel on Monday.

DG: Yeah.

DM: According to their testimony, there was a lot of these shells already prepared to be moved out and were in the hallways, outside of the ammunition storage areas. Did you ever hear that story at all?

DG: I never heard of that.

DM: Okay. Because one of the reasons obviously they think that where the bomb hit her and the explosion so catastrophic, is they were already preparing to get the ammunition off the next day.

MG: That would make sense.

DG: Well, anyway, it went right through the thing though, right down into the magazine, practically.

DM: Right. Now, the *Arizona* had already exploded by the time you got there, right?

DG: Oh yes. Oh yes. We were trying...

DM: Could you believe the destruction that you were seeing?

DG: Well, yes, I could see it.

DM: But could you believe it?

DG: You couldn't believe it. You didn't know what it was. I mean, it was terrible. And then when I was coming up, trying to get to Ford Island, I could notice the *Oklahoma* sideways in there.

DM: Capsized.

DG: I knew we got lots of problems here.

DM: How did you eventually get to the *Vestal*?

DG: Well, eventually I said—after probably an hour, when things had calmed down a little bit. There was a few—well, you know, someone had to pick up

some of the fellows from the *Vestal* that jumped, just like the captain did. So they got him out, because there was a lot of oil in there. And anyway, there was some small ships coming around and I said, from Ford Island, I said, "Can I get to the *Vestal*?"

He said, "I think I can. You better come over this way and we'll try to come around Aiea and see if we can get over."

DM: So you did this right in the middle of the attack?

DG: Yes. I mean, some of those guys that just went around. They figured that they was too small to get hit on whatever exposed.

DM: But the Japanese were strafing and all of that?

DG: Strafing, yes. Now there is the only killed people on the *Vestal* and they were going to church.

DM: Tell me about that.

DG: Every one of those [*Sailors*] were dressed to go to church and they worked as a group and they came through and killed all eight of 'em.

DM: Were they aboard a boat?

DG: No, walking.

DM: Walking.

DG: Walking. Walking the beach, they're going to go to church. And if you notice, Danny, you'll see on that...

MG: You call it the Round Circle.

DM: The Remembrance Exhibit?

DG: Yeah.

MG: On the Round Circle, you'll find the eight of them.

DG: Above the *Arizona* is the USS *Vestal* and given those eight men's names.

DM: And those were all killed strafing.

MG: They were all strafed, going to church.

DG: They were all killed from strafing.

DM: That's interesting. We'll talk about that a little because I need—I've worked—that was my exhibit I worked on and when I found out how people lost their lives, that's really important. Let me ask you, Margaret, while he's gone, you just—did any friends, did anyone come over or did you...

MG: No. I, after I got up off the bed, I got myself put together and I went to work.

DM: You went to work?

MG: Mm-hm.

DG: Question, she didn't know or hear from me for how many days?

MG: Oh, I can't remember now, but it was at least a week.

DG: Before I could get...

DM: What did you think—did you think something bad happened to him?

DG: No, I thought it was about five days and they get...

MG: It was the Red Cross.

DG: ...gave a...

MG: And someone knocked on the door and they said, "Let us in."

And I said, "I don't let anybody in." I said, "I don't know who you are."

And they said, "Well, we have something from the Red Cross."

I said, "Shove it under the door."

DM: What were you afraid of?

MG: Well, I just didn't know anybody and I was alone and I was just a kid and my dad said you just don't open the door to strangers.

DM: Okay.

MG: So I just didn't open the doors.

DM: And what was it they shoved under the door?

MG: It was a Red Cross note that said that Davis is safe aboard ship. Please do not worry about him. That was it.

DM: And how did that make you feel?

MG: Well, better of course because I didn't even know if he made it back.

DM: One has to ask you this, you had to speculate what you were going to do if something bad had happened to him.

MG: Well, there was nothing I could do, was there?

DG: There was no other alternative.

MG: You just have to work and then somehow get back home. I wrote to my mother. She went every day to the mailbox, she told me later on. And she finally got my letter on Christmas Day, she said they delivered it.

DM: Was it censored?

MG: I don't remember if hers was censored or not. But I remember my aunt was censored.

DM: Do you remember—oh, is that right?

MG: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

DM: Do you remember the first time you got to lay your eyes on him after the attack?

MG: I would say it was approximately a month to six weeks, and then it was every fourth day.

DG: Then seconds.

MG: And then pretty soon it was they let him come home every fourth night. And then pretty soon it was every other night. And then pretty soon it normalled off.

DM: It was pretty scary, wasn't it, with the blackout?

MG: Oh yes.

DG: Oh yeah.

MG: Oh sure.

DG: Oh yeah.

DM: Rationing?

MG: And that is the humor part. That's the humor part.

DM: How's that?

MG: Is when we lived upstairs and we had this studio apartment, the owner had to put up dark shades because the whole studio apartment was windows.

DM: Okay.

MG: And so Dave come home one night and he wanted to get something out of the refrigerator and he had put a blue light in it because he realized no lights at night. So we opened up the refrigerator and you could hear from downstairs, “Douse that light!”

DG: Or I’ll shoot it! (Chuckles)

MG: Or I’ll shoot it out!

DG: (Laughs) So I shut the door! I took it off, really.

DM: Yeah.

MG: He just took it out.

DM: In wrapping this interview—and we could go on and I hope that we have an opportunity maybe at another time to do some more, what does Pearl Harbor mean to you?

MG: Well, I wanted to live there.

DG: Yeah. We thought we’d like to live there, but times...

MG: He said no. He says, “I think we better go home.”

DG: I said, “We got...”

MG: I said, “I’ll live here.”

DG: Yeah, but we got too much family that we gotta be with and go home.

DM: When did you make this decision?

DG: Oh well, after we bought our first house, I guess. And then...

DM: Because you loved Hawaii.

DG: Yeah.

DM: And you wanted to live there. Pearl Harbor changed that?

MG: No.

DM: It was at the end of his career.

MG: Well, I would've lived there probably even before we bought our first house. I wanted to name our first child Leilani. He says, "Honey, you can't do that."

I said, "It means, 'the wreath of heaven.' Why not?"

DM: When did you make this decision, not to stay in Hawaii? What year? Was this during the war or after the war?

MG: I don't know. He just says, "No, we have too much family here," so.

DM: At home.

DG: Yeah.

MG: So we're at home.

DM: When you look back at the attack on Pearl Harbor, Margaret, what does—and I'm asking you this question with the idea that generations that are far removed will look at this tape, whether it's this year or twenty years from now, what did Pearl Harbor mean to you and your generation? The event.

MG: Well, it means a lot to me because I can remember starting out in one room with shades. I don't know what it'll mean to my generation, but to me, I don't think the young kids know today what it means to start out at forty dollars a month in one room and a community bath. I think it's fantastic. I think it's a good way to start your life and to love and to share with each other. Remember, you have no one but each other.

DM: The event of Pearl Harbor, the attack itself, what lesson does it teach Americans?

MG: Well, it really should teach Americans to love one another. It really should. I think that's what's wrong with the world today. I don't think they take time out to love one another.

DM: People from other nations?

DG: Well...

MG: Everybody! I think there's too much rudeness in the world.

DM: Davis, what does Pearl Harbor mean to you as a navy man?

DG: I have a lot of memories of it. I enjoy going to it, seeing it. Not necessarily just on the particular days of December 7 and so forth. But we always did enjoy most anything. A couple of times we took some of the island trips. Let's see, we went to Maui and we went to—what?

MG: Kauai.

DG: Kauai, or a couple of the islands. 'Cause we enjoy going there and being there.

DM: You know, it really looks like you do have a great love for Hawaii.

DG: I have.

DM: I guess the point of my question though is, the event, the attack. As I asked Margaret, what does this event and what do you think it should mean to the younger generations and to Americans, the attack on Pearl Harbor? It changed us forever that day, so...

DG: Well, it changes me, but as far as other people, I think they could care less. There's too much people today that are worried too much about making too much money and not living good. I don't know.

DM: Is there a lesson from Pearl Harbor attack?

DG: Well...

MG: I still think people should learn to love one another. I think that's the answer.

DM: What's the lesson for us as a nation, as a military man?

DG: Well, I don't know if I could really put that into words, what we should do. But we gotta go back to the early, early start of America, with what George Washington and several of the other ones...

DM: The founding fathers?

DG: ...that founded this country and what they stood for, and we're not [*like*] that any more. What they wanted [*us to have and what we have today are not the same*]. Listening to somebody like Lincoln and [*the*] few words [*he says, is*] something that's a whole book should be done [*on*].

DM: You joined the Pearl Harbor Survivors—and this is my last question to you—why did you join the Pearl Harbor Survivors and what does the Pearl Harbor Survivors mean to you?

DG: Well, it means to go to friends that you've been with before and it's just good fellowship. In my estimation, we enjoy 'em, we have our get-together once a month and generally the women help put food on. We have a regular little meeting. We have a little bit of other type of doings for us, each other. And sometimes we get to go on parades with our hats on and Pearl Harbor Survivors. Incidentally, if you want to mention, with my sister and brother-in-law, we went up to—with Beverly and Har?

MG: Yeah, in Nevada City.

DG: They had a doing there of the—actually it was about the Civil War, where they had battles between the...

DM: Sure, they have reenactments.

DG: Only they...

MG: They were with the Sons of the Revolution and we represented Pearl Harbor...

DG: So our group, Pearl Harbors, I think we had probably about ten of us.

MG: Well, they took second place.

DG: Yeah. And that's with the women and us and of course right now with the winter, I should be in uniform. Uniform is white shoes, white [*trousers*], Hawaiian shirt and your hat.

DM: Right.

MG: But we walked over in the snow, today. (Laughs)

DM: The rarity of snow. So the Pearl Harbor Survivors, really, that one day has tied you guys together for the rest of your lives.

MG: Oh absolutely.

DG: Perfect example, we all—not all of us, a great bunch of us went to *Pearl Harbor* commission.

DM: Of the ship?

DG: And when the captain...

MG: Mm-hm.

DG: ...looked at that, he says, "You know, of all you guys dressed up this way," he said, "I think there's 3000 of you standing there for Pearl Harbor."

MG: And there was.

DM: How'd that make you feel?

MG: Good.

DG: Just good.

MG: Good.

DM: Well, I'm going to close this interview here in just a second. Is there any last thing that you'd like to say before we close this? I don't think this is the end of it. I think I—I'm thinking of how I'd like to get you guys back and do another interview, but.

DG: Well, remember, we got the 55th, 50th, fifty and now we're looking for the sixty, which is not too many more years.

MG: If the lord wills it, we'll make sixty.

DG: Yes.

DM: Thank you very much.

MG: Maybe we can find you there.

DM: I hope so. Thank you.

DG: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW