

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

#393

DONALD MAURICE DILL

U.S. NAVAL RADIO STATION, WAILUPE

INTERVIEWED ON

DECEMBER 5, 2001

BY ART GOMEZ & CDR. JUDITH L. LAFLEUR

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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

Art Gomez (AG): The following oral history interview was conducted by Art Gomez, of the National Park Service and Commander Judith L. Lafleur of the Naval Historical Center, for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial. The interview conducted at the Ala Moana Hotel in Honolulu on December 5, 2001 at five p.m. The person being interviewed is Donald M[aurice] Dill, who was a radioman second class stationed with the US Naval Radio Station in Wailupe on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Dill, we just have a series of general questions to begin with. For the record, please state your full name, place of birth, and birth date.

Donald Maurice Dill (DD): Donald Maurice Dill. I was born in Darke County, Ohio on the sixth of May, 1918.

AG: What did you consider your hometown in 1941?

DD: A little town called Palestine, Ohio, just a village. About 200 population.

AG: What were your parents' names?

DD: My father's name was Omar L. Dill. My mother's name was Dora May Dill.

AG: How many brothers and sisters did or do you still have?

DD: I had seven brothers and sisters, of whom there are now six of us remaining. I was the second oldest. And my older brother and my sister who was next to me have passed away.

AG: What can you tell me about your enlistment in the navy? Where did you enlist and why did you enlist?

DD: Well, I enlisted in Dayton, Ohio. I was working in a battery factory. I had wanted to go into the navy when I graduated from high school but my folks at that time, which was 1936, they wouldn't sign my papers, so I went into the Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC] for one year, came out, went to work at this battery factory in Dayton with another friend. And I saw this movie called "*Navy Blue and Gold*", I think it was. Saw that about September or October of 1937 and decided to, again that I wanted to go into the navy.

Went down and signed up and they had a waiting list. So they called me and I went into the service then the first of March of 1938. And went through basic training at Great Lakes.

AG: So when were you in the Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC]? How long, how many years?

DD: I was in the CCC for one year at Mount Vernon, Ohio. I thought I was going to get to go to the West Coast, but—as a friend of mine had—when they did call me and let me go in, why I ended up forty-eight miles northeast of Columbus in Ohio. I was very disappointed, I don't regret the time that I spent in CCC. It was very interesting—and they did a lot of good, I think, the Civilian Conservation Corps did.

AG: How did the CCC prepare you for the transition from civilian life to military life?

DD: Well, the only thing that I can think of was that on my days off, which I had in the CCC, I used to go the recreational hall and they had an old typewriter. An old—I think it was an old Underwood, real old. I used to go peck around on that so that when I finally did go into the navy, I was able to type maybe ten words a minute. And consequently I ended up as going to the school in San Diego. It was for radiomen, quartermasters, signalmen, yeomen and storekeepers. And I thought at that time that I wanted to be a storekeeper, but since my typing was so poor, they said, “No, you've got to go to the radio school.”

So I went to the radio school in San Diego after I finished my boot camp at Great Lakes. And I think that that typing—I have always used the typing. I mean I learned to become a fairly good typist, but that was the start of it and probably had something to do with what I ended up doing in the navy.

AG: What about the physical regimen of the CCC? Were you in pretty good shape when you got to Great Lakes?

DD: Oh, I was in good shape when I got to Great Lakes. I weighed about 165 pounds and being in '36 eighteen years old, I was in good physical shape. I had been used to doing hard manual labor on the farms. I used to work

during high school for farmers and when they had hard work to do, which meant shocking wheat at that time, cutting corn and heavy stuff that they don't do any longer. They use[d] the old harvesters and it's altogether different. But it kept me in pretty good shape. So I felt I was in good shape when I went in.

AG: And what about the radio school? By the time you got to San Diego, what stands out in your mind in that particular training and how well did it prepare you for what lie immediately ahead?

DD: Well, see I went to the training station at San Diego for the radio school. I think that was about June or July...

AG: Of?

DD: ...of '41. I mean of '38.

AG: Thirty-eight.

DD: And I thought it was very interesting. The first month, they gave us classes in radio, quartermaster, signalman. We learned the semaphore and things like that, plus classes for storekeeper and yeoman. And at the end of the month, then they make an evaluation and determine whether you're going to continue on. They specialized you then whether you'll be a radioman, storekeeper, yeoman or what. So they put me in the group to go to the radio, quartermaster and signalman school, which I—that disappointed me a little bit, but I guess in the long run it didn't make too much difference. I stayed in the, from the last three months in was just concentrated on radioman, quartermaster and signalman.

AG: So what was your military career from 1938 to 1941?

DD: Well, after I finished the radio school at San Diego, I think in September or late September, I was ordered to the USS *Detroit* [CL-8], which was in San Diego Bay and I was assigned to the staff of Commander [*Destroyer*] Battle Force, ComDesBatFor. And I served with that staff then until I, in 1941, when I went to the [*naval*] radio station at Wailupe. But during that, from '38 to '41, I think it was nineteen—late, sometime in 1939, all I know is it

was '39, we went around to the East Coast with the fleet and had maneuvers down in the Caribbean. And then we went up to Norfolk and we were scheduled to go on up to New York City for the World's Fair. Well, when we arrived in Norfolk, I was given I think ten days leave and I went back to Ohio, to my home, and at the end of the ten days, I went back, reported aboard the *Detroit* and they said, "We're getting under way this morning, back to the West Coast."

That's when they had ordered the entire fleet back to the West Coast and cancelled the trip to New York City, which was a disappointment. We got around then to the, back to the West Coast and the *Detroit*—and I'm sure other ships—I don't remember what one though—went on up to San Francisco, where they were also having a World's Fair. And I did enjoy the World's Fair in San Francisco in 1939. Heard Jack Benny and Artie Shaw and some of the old bands there. Benny Goodman was at Treasure Island, at the fairgrounds, and Artie Shaw was in one of the theaters on Market Street in San Francisco. And enjoyed that very much.

Then after we left there, we soon went out to Hawaii, when the fleet was ordered to Hawaii, as a precaution against the situation with Japan.

AG: What were the crewmembers thinking at that time, when the fleet was deployed from San Francisco to Hawaii? Was there any thought about a threat from the Far East?

DD: Well, I don't recall too many of 'em worrying too much about it. I do know that in October of 1940, well prior to that, the fleet which was then stationed in Pearl Harbor was divided up into three groups and sent back to the States—as we called it then—for leave for the men. Well, I was sent back, they divided our staff, the flagstaff, up into three groups. And I went back, or came back with the second group. I came back on a destroyer. I don't remember the name of the destroyer any more, from Pearl Harbor to San Diego. And in San Diego I caught a train back to Ohio. I arrived in Ohio on Friday, got married on Saturday, and about ten o'clock on Sunday evening, I got a recall to San Diego. They told me my leave expired in San Diego Wednesday noon. This was at ten o'clock on a Sunday evening.

AG: And what was the year again, I'm sorry?

DD: What? That was...

AG: What was the year?

DD: ...1940.

AG: Nineteen forty.

DD: October of 1940.

Judith Lafleur (JL): Do you remember the date, the day you were married? October—what was the date?

DD: I was married on October 26, 1940. Back there, my father-in-law had gotten the license for us so that when I arrived back there on Friday, we made preparations for our wedding on Saturday. And then I got the recall. I considered trying to get a flight out to San Diego so I could get back there on time, but I checked with the airport in Dayton, Ohio and it would've cost me \$105 at that time, which was a lot of money to me. I already had my train ticket and I was a third class petty officer and I said, well, if I go back and I miss my ship or busted back to seaman, I would lose six dollars a month. So I thought, well, in a year's time, that's only seventy-two dollars. So I decided to take the train, take my chances. So I got in San Diego Friday about noon time and reported in at the Eleventh Naval District headquarters there. And they said, well, the reason they had recalled us, me and two other fellows off of the staff, they had, they were going to send us out to, back to our station at Pearl Harbor, on the USS *Dixie* [AD-14], which had just been commissioned and was heading out there.

Well, when we got, I got there about noon on Friday, she was about thirty-six hours at sea. So they ended up transferring me and the two other friends to the USS *Yorktown* [CV-5], the old *Yorktown*. So we went back out and reported aboard her to the—I think our staff at that time was on the USS *Dobbin* [AD-3], I believe. I'm not sure now which one. They transferred us sometimes from one of the tenders or for the convenience of the ship, you know. If the ship went into dry dock or some kind of an overhaul, they'd transfer us temporarily.

Anyway, I reported back to my staff and we had a lieutenant commander, his name was Fitzpatrick. Or Kirkpatrick. And he was our division officer for the flag. And so he called each of us, we three men, down to or up to his cabin. And I remember when I went up there, he asked me what my excuse was for being late.

I told him that I had gone back and gotten married and I couldn't afford to fly out. And he said, "Boy," he said, "you'd have been missing all the fun if we'd been going to war, wouldn't you?"

This was October of 1940. And they didn't charge any one of us for being late, but they could have. So I appreciated that! (Chuckles) I didn't lose my rate. Consequently...

AG: Let me go back to that, the deployment of the fleet to Pearl. How did they deploy? Did they deploy in three groups as well?

DD: No, no. The entire fleet went out and we...

AG: At one time?

DD: Yes. We had some maneuvers in the summer of 1940. North, mostly as I recall, north of Hawaii and then we, when maneuvers were completed, we went on into Pearl Harbor.

AG: What were your impressions of Pearl when you first...

DD: Oh, I loved it. I loved it and I still do. I still love the islands. And I'm so glad to be able to come back here this time. I was afraid for a while I wasn't going to be able to make it. But worked out my health isn't too good right now, but I'm glad that I was able to get out here.

JL: When did the fleet first arrive in Pearl Harbor?

DD: Oh, I think probably, I don't recall exactly. I think around June or maybe early June or July of 1940, after the completion of the maneuvers. I remember that there were two destroyers that collided during the maneuvers

that year and our flagship, the admiral the next morning—they did a pretty big gash in this one destroyer. And the next morning the admiral wanted to circle the destroyer that was damaged and we did. And then we took her in tow, [by] the *Detroit*. Took her in tow back towards Pearl until a tug came out and took over and brought her on in to Pearl Harbor.

AG: You often hear comments about the first commanding officer, Robinson I guess, or Robertson—that the Pearl Harbor was not the best place for the fleet because of the narrow entry. Did any of the enlisted personnel ever think in those terms...

DD: I don't think...

AG: ...was there an uneasy feeling about being in Pearl at all?

DD: I don't think so before the war. After the war, of course, looking hindsight, I think there were quite a few comments, but I don't recall people discussing it very much before. I think they were too happy to be in Pearl Harbor and always enjoyed coming here.

AG: Tell me a bit about daily life on the *Detroit*. What were your duties? What was it like on ship?

DD: Well, my first duty as I went aboard ship, I reported aboard and was taken up to the radio shack, as we called it, and introduced to the chief in charge and later met the officer in charge. And my first job was as a messenger. You'd be on watch for four hours or eight hours, whatever it was. I think we stood four-hour watches, I believe at that time. And my first job was to deliver messages to the staff and being on the staff of the Commander Destroyer Battle Force, we had a lot of communication for the staff officers, because they were in charge of the whole, all of the destroyer force of the Pacific. And I consequently was able to meet many of the officers and I kind of enjoyed that

Then the next job was to maybe some of us were given jobs to typing up the messages in report form, after they were brought in. Some of 'em were in code, why they were decoded. We'd deliver them in the final—they were

finally written up. So I was on the job for a while too, typing up the messages.

And then I was put on a circuit. First circuit was copying the, what we called the old fox schedule, which was a low-frequency schedule that was put out by, well, here NPM, where I later served. NPM had a schedule every other hour and they put out all the traffic for the fleet. And that fox method means it was a fox broadcast. Every ship was required to copy that schedule and then according to the way it was addressed, those to whom it was addressed would write it up and deliver it to their appropriate officers or whoever it was addressed to. And if it was not addressed to your ship, you didn't have to worry so much about it. But I was on that [*circuit*], copy[ing] those fox schedules, for a long time.

And of course we had several other circuits. We had a staff, had a Commander Destroyer Battle Force circuit. We had—well, I think they had about three circuits we normally had to man besides the fox schedule and we communicated with the other staff, the other Commander Base Force, Commander Scouting Force and every other command. It was an interesting job.

AG: When were you assigned to the [*naval*] radio station at Wailupe? What year?

DD: At Wailupe, that was in June of 1941. The reason, well one of the reasons that I put in for that, my wife, I hadn't seen her since we were married in October, so she made arrangements to come out. She was going to come out for two weeks. So [*she*] got reservations on the [*S.S.*] *Matsonia* and came by train across to California and then she came on the [*S.S.*] *Matsonia* out to Honolulu. And while she was en route, I had the opportunity for this job at Wailupe at NPM. And I asked my communications officer about it and he agreed to let me go and consequently I got orders to that station.

AG: Just for the record, can you tell us where that station is located exactly?

DD: It was located right along the shoreline road between Diamond Head and Koko Head, probably about one or two miles out of Kaimuki. The station is no longer there, but at that time it was in a big, red wooden building, which

sat out over the water on stilts. And on the other side of the road, they had the mess hall and the barracks for those men who were single. I think we had about fifty men at that station and I would say probably maybe twenty of 'em were married. I was one of the married ones.

So since, when my wife arrived out here, she found out that I had gotten a job ashore, she decided to stay. So we got an apartment in Kaimuki and lived there then and we were there when the war started.

AG: What kind of equipment were you using? Was it dated or was it pretty modern equipment?

DD: Well, it was pretty dated, I would say. This is prior to the time that they started using radio teletypes. All of our equipment was strictly CW, dots and dashes. And we had the circuits, the fox schedule, as I mentioned before. That was my first job out there, was putting out that fox schedule. We also had high-speed circuits that we used to NPO in the Philippines, NPG in San Francisco, and NSS in Washington, D.C. So I served, I worked on the Washington-Frisco-Honolulu circuit for quite a long time, after I got off that fox schedule. And I was on the Washington-Frisco-Honolulu circuit when the war started. I was on the receiving side. We put—it came in on tape and if we had good signals, we could send, oh, maybe a hundred words per minute. But it all depended on the quality of the radio signal that—if we were communicating with Washington, D.C., for example, throughout the day you'd have to change frequencies in order to communicate, because you'd lose your signal at certain times of the day and so we went from low frequencies up to fairly high frequencies in order to communicate. And it was the same way with our circuit to NPO in the Philippines.

JL: Was that in an effort to be secure or was it because frequency would be lost and you needed to switch?

DD: I'm sorry. I didn't understand.

JL: Did you switch circuits or frequencies in an effort to be secure in your communications?

DD: No, in order to be able to receive the signals with enough quality that we could—these things came into our receivers and then the signal was converted to an ink—we had an ink, pen and ink [*recorder*] that would put it on tape, dots and dashes on tape. And...

JL: Morse code?

DD: Morse code. And the receiver had to run that tape through a typewriter and you had a foot pedal and you could type that message out as you read it off the tape.

JL: So you'd read the Morse code and type it?

DD: Mm-hmm. Read the Morse code and type it.

JL: Transcribe...

DD: Put it on the paper. And that was very interesting. After the war started, we started receiving messages from the Philippines. They started sending in the names of all their men who were, I guess they were drafted in, put on active duty and they were sending their names back to Washington for the insurance, you know, to make sure they were on the insurance rolls of the navy. And all of those Filipino names that came in, you could imagine if you'd get a message with a couple of thousand names on it there and if the signal strength wasn't good enough, you might miss a letter here and there, so you did the best you could. Put it down as the best you could. And I often wondered how those names came out to Washington because they, sometimes there'd be two or three letters missing.

And finally the traffic was so heavy, we got that every [*day*] for quite a while after the war started. And finally it got so heavy that they discontinued taking them by CW and finally sent them back from Hawaii here by mail. That was a big relief. I often worried about that because if you lose a letter here and there between the Philippines and Honolulu, and then in the retransmission, sending it on from Honolulu to Washington, if you lost another word or letter or two, no telling how that name could turn out by the time it got to Washington, so I've often wondered how those names came out when they...(chuckles).

AG: Who did your unit report to?

DD: Who did we report to? Well, we, the command, we had an officer in charge there. I guess he was responsible to the Fourteenth Naval District commander. He was here in Honolulu, based in Pearl Harbor. I'm sure we came under him. I wasn't too much involved in the chain of command at that time, but I do remember the morning of the seventh that I had gotten off watch at midnight the night before and the man who took over the circuit or was on the circuit the next morning, when the attack occurred, the name was Clyde Rudy, C[lyde] W. Rudy. And we got the first word about the attack, he immediately got on the—we had a hand-key that we could—if we were sending to Washington or if we were receiving from Washington, the signals were becoming kind of bad, why we'd get on that hand-key and we'd talk to them manually. Well, when he got this message, he got on that hand-key and broke in, whether we were sending or receiving at the time, but he tried to convince them back in Washington that this was not a drill and he had quite a time convincing them that this was not a drill.

AG: When you say that, that implies that Washington—did Washington just not respond or did they respond and say...

DD: Well, they did eventually, after the, after he finally convinced them, but he was talking to a radio operator there at NSS in Washington and trying to convince him, the guy. We frequently had, if we had a little time, we have communication with the operator at the other end and talked to them and you know just chit-chat, more or less. But when he finally did get the word across to them and he sent the official message that he had received, we had received and sent it on then to Washington.

AG: Did he have to send that several times?

DD: No, I think after, once he convinced him that this was not a drill, he sent it one time and I think they received it. Yes.

JL: How did he convince them that it was not a drill? Did he just type, "This is not a drill," several times?

DD: No, he just did this with his hand. He said...

JL: (Inaudible)

DD: I don't remember what they said back there at the time, but he kept telling them that this is not a drill and I think they finally, after a couple of times, they finally believed him, but it was pretty hard to believe for us out here though! I'm sure it was pretty hard for them to believe back there too, at the radio station. Maybe at the White House it might have been different but (chuckles)...

AG: Okay, take a breather. We're going to change a tape.

END OF TAPE ONE

TAPE TWO

AG: ...before we move onto the seventh, and you've already alluded to that, I just want to talk about a few things, couple of things before that time. In that six-month period, from June '41 to December '41, was there any indication that you knew of, in terms of traffic received or communication with Washington, that would indicate that there was a problem at least developing in the Far East, if not necessarily Pearl Harbor.

DD: Well, I don't think so. We often got messages from—what was his name? Mr. [*Joseph C.*] Grew [*U.S. Ambassador to Japan in Tokyo, Japan*], I believe it was, the...

AG: Right.

DD: Forgotten what his first name was any more. But he was the ambassador out there. Got messages from him which were addressed to Washington, but I don't recall seeing anything that would've indicated that there was anything coming up, anything pending. But I can remember just a week before the seventh—I think it was the weekend before—Admiral [*Kichisaburo*] Nomura [*Japanese Ambassador to the United States*]...

AG: Right.

DD: I think he was an admiral. And then the other man's name was [*Saburo*] Kurusu [*Special Japanese Envoy to the United States*], they came to Honolulu here and they were given a grand welcome. They were—I think they had a big dinner for them out in the Waikiki area.

AG: This was en route to Washington?

DD: They were en route to Washington, the last time and that was all of course written up in the [*Honolulu*] *Star-Bulletin* here. But no, I don't recall anything to make me suspicious. I had no idea.

AG: What were the enlisted men thinking at that time? Knowing that these fellows were on their way to Washington, was there a feeling of hope that actually something could be worked out, negotiated or was there even any concern?

DD: Well, I think that most of the enlisted men that I knew and I associated with felt that the diplomacy would take care of any problems. I don't think we had any idea that they would fail and that we would be—although we did realize or believe that President Roosevelt wanted us to get into the war eventually. I mean he was determined, I think, to help out, thinking about the war with the Germany more than with Japan. And that's my idea. I may be wrong, but I think most of the men felt that the diplomacy would win out.

AG: December 7...

DD: Yes.

AG: ...'41. You said you got off what time?

DD: I got off watch at midnight that night. I had an old '32 Chevy. I got off watch at midnight and I normally had a man by the name of Baker who—we lived close together out in Kaimuki. We rode together and we were on the same schedule. So I took him home and went on home and went to bed. Woke up fairly early, I think around 6:30, quarter to seven the next morning and was going to go down to Kaimuki to a shopping area there, open-air

market and buy some fresh vegetables. Well I got outside the house and down, went down to get my car and I could see out over the harbor and I could see the smoke coming up, billowing up and I didn't pay too much attention. I noticed the smoke but I thought, well, it looks like an oil fire or something like that. And I asked this lady who had the house and the garage where I rented my, had my car parked. "Oh," she said, "I think somebody set fire to one of the oil tanks out there."

Well, I went on, drove on down to Kaimuki and to the shop there and went into get some groceries and come back out and looked out and I could see the planes flying over and about this time, the shore patrol came driving down the street advising all service personnel to get back to their station.

JL: Were you alone?

DD: I was alone.

JL: Or did you bring your wife?

DD: What?

JL: Your wife was still at home?

DD: My wife was at home. So I dashed back home and I told her to turn the radio on. And I'm not sure at that time if the military had already taken over the station but they soon did if not. But soon as we turned it on, we knew, we found out what was happening, that we were being attacked by the Japanese. So I went ahead and got my uniform on and went out to the station.

When I got out there, they had seventeen rifles and they issued those out to the [*men*], as far as they would go and the rest of us had nothing. But my wife then with this friend who rode back and forth with me, his wife had had a baby on November 28 and I think that was at Tripler [*General*] Hospital. I believe at that time it was called Aiea Naval Hospital. I'm not sure.

[Note: Tripler General Hospital at the time was at Ft. Shafter and was a U.S. Army facility, Aiea Naval Hospital was under construction on 7 DEC 1941, and not commissioned until November 1942.]

AG: I believe that's right.

DD: So he asked my wife to go with him out to the hospital, to get his wife. Her name was Tommy. Get Tommy and their son, Billy. And they brought them out to the station then because our commander had sent out vehicles to pick up the wives of all the men who were married. They brought 'em out to the station and they stayed there all day long, intending to take them into the hills if the Japanese landed. Of course that didn't happen.

So we were there all day and I went back on watch, I think—I'm not sure now what time, but anyway, at midnight again, I was permitted to go home. So my wife and I got in this car and I don't remember whether Bill Baker was with me and his wife at that time or not, but we had, couldn't use any lights or anything. We started up the coast road there and of course the soldiers were stationed at intervals along the highway and they challenged us as we came along. But my wife was trying to—she'd stick her head out the window and tell me if I was in the middle of the road or where I was, but we finally got home and it was (chuckles) quite an exciting time. That blackout business was bad, you know, the first night we had to go home and weren't supposed to have any lights on. So we had to blackout everything.

We soon got used to that though. And I remember the next night, the next—I guess it was the next day sometime. Maybe it was midnight the next night that I had to go back on duty. So I go down the steps of the house where we lived at 728 Ocean View Drive, and there was a soldier stationed right across the street. It's a narrow street. Right across the street, this soldier challenged us. And I don't know who was more scared, we or he! He came across the street and talked to us then for a minute and I told him I was going down to get my car and go on duty. So that's the way it went with the blackout. (Chuckles)

And an interesting thing happened a few months ago. I had a telephone call. I live in Seal Beach, California. And this phone rang and I answered it and the guy said, "My name is Baker," and I've forgotten what his first name was. And he said, "I'm trying to locate someone who knew my father out at NPM, Wailupe."

And I said, “Was his name Bill?”

He says, “Yes.”

Well I said, “Well, I did know him,” and I said, “as I recall, the boy that was born on November 28 was Billy. They named him Billy, after his dad.”

He says, “Oh yeah,” he says, “that’s my older brother.”

And it turned out that there were three brothers. They had three boys. I never knew this until this time.

So I talked to this fellow a while and I says, “Well, where does your brother Bill live?”

And this first call was from San Antonio, Texas. The next call was from around Portland, Oregon. I mean, his brother Billy lived in Portland, Oregon. So I hung up the phone and about a half hour later, the phone rang again, here was this Billy. And they were so glad to get in touch with me because I had known their father and mother and he said they had both passed away. But they were from Oklahoma originally. But one boy lives in Portland, the other one in San Antonio and they had one other brother and I have the addresses at home, but it was three different states. I don’t know whether it was Idaho or Wyoming, but anyway they were scattered. And I thought that was very interesting after all these years. I hadn’t heard from Bill for all this time.

AG: Bringing you back to December 7, during the course of the day, you were back out at Wailupe. Were you or anyone in your unit, were you aware of the severity of damage that had been caused by...

DD: Oh yes. In fact, my wife and I drove down by the harbor on December 8. Yes, on the eighth we drove down by the harbor and we could see the devastation there. In fact, we got pretty good reports during the day on the seventh, of what the damage was out there. And then to see it, it was really devastation.

AG: Did you make any inquiries about the *Detroit*? Was it in port that day?

DD: It was in port, yes. But they had, they didn't have any hits. I think there was one man that was wounded by strafing or something. But they were very lucky. There was no...

AG: Did you have any contact with former shipmates?

DD: Not right, not for a few days. I don't recall how long it was, but I had a lot of friends on the *Detroit* and in fact I have friends to this day who I kept in touch with. More friends from the *Detroit* than any other ship that I ever served on.

JL: Can you talk at all at any level of specificity about what you observed when you went down later in the day or the next day?

DD: I'm sorry, I didn't get...

JL: Can you talk at all about what you observed?

DD: Well, I can just remember that we drove down there, by the harbor, the next day and like I said, I couldn't be too specific, but I could see the ships that were over, turned over and the *Oklahoma* and the *Utah* and...

JL: Was there still any burning on that...

DD: Oh, there was still burning, yes, on the *Arizona* and the *Utah*. And we heard, I think at that time, we heard about the men who were still in the ship, entombed in the ship, and how they were trying to get them out with blow torches and so on.

JL: Did you see any of that work going on?

DD: No, I didn't get close enough to. I didn't try to go into the base because I didn't think I had any business in there.

JL: Could you still see a lot of sort of smoke?

DD: Oh yes. Yes.

JL: Oil on the water?

DD: Oil on the water. It was just terrible, terrible devastation, I think.

AG: Did any thoughts go through your mind about what comes next? And your wife was on the island, did you ever have a thought about how am I going to get her off if I have to?

DD: Well, really, she wanted to stay out here. She wanted to go to work. We didn't have any children at the time, so she told them that she was willing to work. But they said, "Since you are not working, you'll have to go back."

But she was one of the last group to go back. She left on April, on Easter Sunday in April of 1942. And she went back on a British troopship, the *Aquatania*. And I don't think that they had any escort or anything. I think they probably zigzagged, but she went back with her friend, whose husband was stationed with me, this Rudy that I mentioned earlier. And they too arrived in San Pedro [*California*] (coughs)...

(Taping stops, then resumes)

DD: What were we talking about there?

AG: Well, we were talking about your wife, she stayed on 'til...

DD: Oh yes. She left...

AG: ...sometime in April...

DD: ...on April, Easter Sunday in April of '42. I don't remember what the date was, but she had told 'em she was willing to stay out here and work.

JL: You were saying that she was driving cross-country after arriving in San Pedro?

DD: Yes, oh yes. She drove cross-country with Myra Rudy. They went back to Ohio. Myra's husband had come from Cleveland and my family lived in

western Ohio, near Dayton, northeast of Dayton. So they drove cross-country and my wife soon went to work as a navy inspector for forty and twenty-millimeter shells. She worked in a place in Richmond, Indiana during the war then, in this, inspecting those shells, shell casings. She stayed there until I came back in January of 1944, to go to school in Chicago and Washington. I was in Chicago about three months and then Washington about three months. And she met me in Chicago. And she quit her job and stayed with me.

I had had an ulcer operation in November of 1943, at the Aiea [*Naval*] Hospital. I was in the hospital for a month. So I was down to 120 pounds when I got back there. And I asked the doctor before I was dismissed from the hospital what caused the ulcers and he said, "Well, we don't know what causes 'em, but we know the thing that irritates 'em, like alcohol and coffee and cigarettes."

Well, I gave my cigarettes away when I left his office. I never smoked a cigarette since then. And I didn't drink coffee for a year and I never did drink to amount to anything. But my wife, when I got back to the Mainland, she gave me lots of hot chocolate. So I started gathering back my pounds that I had lost.

AG: What was life like on the island immediately after Pearl Harbor, for the next year?

DD: Well, being—we moved on the fifteenth of December out to the new radio underground communications center at Wahiawa. And so we were rather isolated from the rest of the island there. And I didn't leave there too much, occasionally go into town, but most of the time I spent right out there, so it was rather isolated. And well, sort of lost my track there.

JL: What life was like on the island.

DD: Yeah. One interesting thing that happened in June or January of '42, my wife's allotment check didn't arrive. I had a—I wasn't making much money, 113 dollars a month, or something like that. And I had an allotment out to her for fifty dollars. Well, we moved from Kaimuki into the new housing there at Wahiawa and her check didn't come in. So I think around

the last of February, I started checking on it. And didn't hear anything until she left in April—we still hadn't heard anything about it. And some time after she left, I received a call from the treasury agent's office, right downtown by the Iolani Palace, wanting me to come in to see him. Didn't tell me what it was all about or anything.

So I came down and went to his office and went in. When I came, he asked me to come in and sat down and he pulled open his desk drawer and he pulled out this check, a copy of this check. And it had been signed. Of course my wife's name appeared on it, Helen E. Dill. And he, whoever cashed it didn't have my name, so he put down John S. Dill and cashed the check. This treasury agent, he grilled me, trying to make me confess that I had cashed that myself and tried to get double pay for the thing.

Well, they can be, they can really grill you. When I got through that day, he said, "Well, you're okay here unless,— " but he had me sign my name, John S. Dill and my wife's name, I don't know, a lot of times, twenty-seven times or something like that, on different paper. And he said, "We're going to send these back to Washington D.C. to the handwriting experts."

So he finally let me go that day and called me in a couple weeks later and he took me over to the bank where this check had been cashed. And we stood in line, and in those days, after the war, everybody is working and there were a lot of people in line. We got up to the window and this treasury agent showed his badge to the cashier (clears throat). The man said, "Well," he says, "I don't know," but he said, "I believe this is the man that cashed the check."

And I said, "Well, what kind of I.D. did he have?"

Well, he says, "I can't remember that," but he said he wasn't sure.

So we finally left and this treasury agent said, "Well I can't take that as positive identification because," he said, "you probably noticed as I did that he didn't ask half the people for any I.D.," which was true, he hadn't asked.

And he, after that date, the guy told me, he said, well, he had done a lot of checking on me here. He said, "You're okay, and unless we get the word

from the handwriting expert that that's your handwriting, your wife won't get her check until they get the person who cashed it."

Well, she got a check about a year later. And they said it was someone—the Coast Guard had taken over the station out there in Wailupe when we left. And someone at that station had...

AG: Returned the check?

DD: ...taken the check and cashed it.

AG: Let me bring you back again to your military duties after the attack. How did that change? Was it more...

DD: We immediately...

AG: ...security, was it more rigorous? Was there a lot more alert?

DD: A lot more rigorous. We immediately went on watch on, watch off, eight on, eight off. And we stayed that way for a long time. And then after that, after we'd move out to Wahiawa, we still continued in that kind of a schedule. And every time they had some battle coming up, they would increase the time that we were on and so we'd—sometimes they'd put us back on the three-section watch. But when any battle was on, we were in at least a two-section watch.

And we were very busy. We had a lot of new circuits. We did a lot of circuits that we just monitored, to try to pick up. We monitored some of these commercial people at that time. I've forgotten now who they were, but I was on a monitoring job for quite a while, trying to pick up anything that people were, you know, putting out information that they shouldn't be putting out and it was a busy, busy time. Of course, they brought a lot more men to the station and we had all these extra circuits.

JL: I'm sorry. How long did you remain in Hawaii after your wife returned to the Mainland?

DD: I remained out here until January of 1944, when I—when I went into, in November for that operation at Aiea [*Naval Hospital*], the doctor told me

when he released me, he said, “We can send you back to the Mainland and you’d go on limited duty,” but he says, “if you’re interested in staying in the navy, then go back to your duty station from here.” He said, “If you don’t have any more problems, why,” he said, “you can probably stay in.”

So I decided to do that because I was expecting orders at that time. I had put in for this radio materiel school in Washington D.C. and that’s what I did. I went, I was released around December, around Christmas time I think, and then the, I received my orders sometime in January, early January, to go back to school. So I went back with my khaki. I was a chief petty officer at the time. I went back in my khaki uniform and got to Chicago and you can imagine, in January? It was cold!

JL: Now right after the Pearl Harbor attack, in your communications that you were doing, as a radioman, did you, what did you observe the changes were? Did you observe any changes in the content and the frequency of communications or in the secure...

DD: Well, the only thing I can remember basically that we were so much, we handled so much more traffic. For instance, the Fox schedule went on, rather than every other hour, we went on every hour. And to get communications out to the fleet. And later on, not too long after that, they built a new alternator, Alexanderson alternator they called it, for another low-frequency Fox broadcast. The antennas were...

(Taping stops, then resumes)

JL: Okay, so you were talking about installation of the new antenna?

DD: They installed a new antenna out at the place they called Haiku. This was probably in early 1942 or I think sometime in ’42. And they were going to put this additional Fox broadcast circuit up. And I think that was mainly for weather, for pilots and ships, weather information. But they called this the Alexanderson alternator and it went on the air and so we had two Fox broadcasts, plus all of the other circuits and each one of ‘em were loaded. They were just all we could handle, to San Francisco and to Washington. And we also, until the Philippines fell, we were in some communications with them. I can remember the night that they told us, “Well, this is it,

goodbye,”—‘cause they used to do the hand signals, I mean the hand messages to us from out there in Cavite [*Philippine Islands*]. I can remember when they fell. I can remember when during the Battle of Midway, I can remember that very distinctly. I was on watch there during the main part of the battle and we were getting a lot of the voice communications from Midway. We could hear the pilots talking. And that was very interesting.

(Inaudible)

AG: Okay, I want to bring you to the present now. It’s sixty years later. I don’t know when you first visited the [*USS*] *Arizona* Memorial.

DD: Well, I was out here for the fiftieth reunion, but I think I was out, well I know I was out here in 1980 and ’81. My wife and I came out and visited the [*USS*] *Arizona* Memorial together. You know, I can remember it was a very emotional thing to—sitting there in that visitors’ center and very emotional.

AG: Well, I want to thank you for sharing that with us.

DD: It was emotion.

AG: Your story and your part of it. We thank you very much for your service to this country.

DD: Well, thank you. And I was worried about this, but I’m glad I was able to come in.

JL: Well, it’s been our honor spending this time with you, so thank you very much.

DD: You’re welcome. Okay?

END OF INTERVIEW