We're going to start this with asking you what we've asked almost everyone as a first question, and can you state your name and rank on the morning of December 7, 1941?

Henry Davison (HD): My name is Henry D. Davison. I was an Ensign, USN.

CC: And where were you stationed?

HD: On board the ARIZONA, as officer of the deck.

CC: And maybe, when did you assume the watch?

HD: A quarter of eight.

CC: And let's go back a little before that. What time did you have to get up and what things were you . . .

HD: Oh just in time to shave and have breakfast and relieve the watch at fifteen minutes to the hour. So I would say I was up shortly after seven.

CC: Do you remember what breakfast was that morning?

HD: No, I don't. (Chuckles)

CC: And where were your quarters?

HD: They were in the junior officer's quarters on the starboard side of the deck below the main deck, just about at the break of the deck, as we called it. That's the point, if you noticed, the silhouette of the ARIZONA was, the after part was lower than the one up higher. So that's what we called the break of the deck was that.

CC: And so you had just relieved the . . .

HD: I had just relieved the officer who had the four to eight watch.

CC: And when did you first notice anything that was unusual that morning?

HD: Just about eight o'clock. I had sent the messenger down to make, to report eight o'clock to the captain and the admiral -- routine thing you do. And I noticed aircraft diving, which didn't strike me as being too unusual, because the Army had been having an alert that week, and I thought this was the sort of the culmination there. But then I noticed the red dots on the wings of the aircraft, and my next thought was, ridiculous as it may be, "Well they're kind of going to extremes to paint their aircraft red just to . . . "
But then I saw one aircraft detach a bomb which hit the WEST VIRGINIA, and I knew then, of course, it was an attack.

CC: What'd you do?

HD: Sounded general quarters and sent a messenger down to notify the captain and the admiral. The captain came out of his hatch and I met him there. On his way up towards the bridge, there's a battle station. I briefed him with as little as I had, but helped.

Dan Martinez (DM): When you sounded general quarters, how was that done on the ARIZONA?

HD: Well, we have a communications booth, which is in the break of the deck. Actually, it's a little steel -- I called it a closet. And you have all your controls there for communications and your general alarm button and so forth. So it was just a question of sending . . .

CC: Is it a Klaxon or . . .

HD: A Klaxon type, but it actually had a different tone, but it was -- it was very much like a Klaxon.

DM: Was there any verbal orders, "Man your battle stations," or was it just the Klaxon?

HD: Well, we normally passed the word, "General quarters, general quarters, man your battle stations."

DM: Over a microphone?

HD: Yes, over a P.A. system.

CC: Did you say, "This is no drill," do you remember? Did you pass the word?

HD: No, I had the bosun mate on watch pass the word. No, I don't think he said, "This is no drill." We missed an opportunity there, I guess.

CC: You met the captain. Do you remember anything particular about him or what he had to say as you were, as you were briefing him?

HD: No, he didn't have much to say except, "What's going on?" And I told him. That was just about it. There was not much to tell except that Japanese planes were attacking the ships here.

CC: And where did, and what hap-- where did he go now?

HD: He went up to his battle station, which is the conning tower, which is right at the bridge, just below us, which is in the forward, right under the foremast.

CC: What happened next? What did you do?

HD: Well, we had --- we took our first hit shortly thereafter, near the fantail, and that started small fires. So I sent the bosun mate on watch into the booth again to call the center engine room to get more pressure on the firemain.
Now, normally we use what we call the ship service phone, this is a dial phone. And as soon as I sent him in there, I thought, "Well, he's going to know, he's going to do that," so I went in myself to pick up the sound powered phone and called. And while I was in there, then we took what I thought was another hit, right opposite where I was, 'cause there was a bad explosion, a lot of smoke and flame, and we were rapidly being roasted in that oven, which it became. So obviously we had to get out of there. Well, I didn't want to charge out and blindly drop through what I thought was a bomb crater, so instead we edged out to the left and went over the side, with the idea of swimming down to the gangway and coming back on board. But as soon as I was in the water and turned around to tread water and looked at the ship, why, it was obvious that that was not what had happened. She had just been virtually destroyed right then.

CC: What'd you see?

HD: Well, the entire forward part of the ship had been collapsed, or appeared to be. And it was already just about underwater. And lots of flames, smoke and just total destruction.

CC: Anybody else in the water with you?

HD: I don't know what happened to the bosun mate. I didn't see him after I was in the water. There were a lot of people in the water. One of the other officers was in a motor launch, an Ensign Bush, and he picked me up and then the two of us picked up people that were in the water, took 'em over to Ford Island and made some more trips back and forth to the ship, until there were more boats around the fantail than there were -- but not many more than enough to handle the people that were there. So then we went to Ford Island, secured now, and went to the dispensary to get medical help.

CC: Had anybody given the order to abandon ship, do you know?

HD: No, not that I was aware of.

CC: But the crew that was still on deck was trying to get to the fantail to get off.

HD: Right.

CC: What --- this ensign that was in the whale boat, do you know where he came from, or was that from one of your own boats, or . . .

HD: It was one of our own boats, and I don't know how he managed to be in the boat or what. Of course, normally, our boats were tied up to a boat boom. So he probably went out the boom and dropped into the boat. That's just a guess, I don't know.

CC: Were you able --- were any of the ARIZONA’s guns in action, or . . .

HD: Yes. One of the --- at least one of the five-inch guns was in action because I've never seen the canvas cover flying through the air when they fired it. And the machine guns, some of the machine guns were firing. And I saw one aircraft shot down, abreast of the ARIZONA. Now, whether we shot it down or somebody else shot it down, I don't know, but I like to think that the ARIZONA did get one blow in.
DM: When you went off the ship, was it the port or starboard side?

HD: Starboard side.

DM: How close were you to the mooring key?

HD: Fairly close. I went off just about where the memorial is. As a matter of fact, underneath the wishing well really is just about where I went over. And you can judge that, then, from its relationship to the key.

DM: I understand on the mooring key, wounded were placed on top of that. Is that true?

HD: I don't know. I didn't notice any of it. It certainly could've happened, but I didn't see any.

DM: How long was it before the ship exploded? Could you estimate the time from the attack to the explosion?

HD: I would guess maybe ten minutes. It wasn't very long.

DM: When you were in the boat and picking up people and taking them over to Ford Island, were people wounded? What were the kind of people you were taking?

HD: Well, we first picked up the people that were in the water and took them to Ford Island. And then we started going back and forth, taking people off the fantail. They were just normal people. I don't know -- I didn't notice any in particular that were wounded, but.

CC: What did you feel at this moment? I mean, you saw your ship, as you said, crumpled and almost destroyed, and in flames, and do you have any remembrance of . . .

HD: Oh, many feelings. First of all, mixed feelings -- surprise. Total paralyzing effect, the surprise. About half of your mentality rejects what you're seeing, but the other half goes ahead and acts anyhow, because that's what you're trained to do. So that was that feeling, that this can't really be happening, you know. Certainly a feeling of tragedy. Here's this beautiful ship, all of a sudden, that's reduced to something that will never float again. The sadness that obviously I'm going to lose a lot of my classmates. I'm sure my roommate, for example, never escaped. In fact, I know he didn't, 'cause he's listed as a . . . not a survivor. Matter of fact, there were -- most of the members of my class did not survive.

CC: How many were on board that graduated with you?

HD: About twelve of us.

CC: Do you remember any others that did survive?

HD: Of my class, one was not on board. Of course, he survived. Another one, and that's all that I can recall, that I know of.

CC: Let's go back a little bit, the night before, the ARIZONA's band, which had quite a reputation, was competing with a bunch of other bands. Do you know anything about that, or were you part of any of this?
HD: No, I was not involved in that at all.

CC: What were you --- what did you do the night before, the day before?

HD: The day before, of course, was a normal Saturday, which is a normal Saturday routine. You were doing a lot of the usual work that you do. Your duty runs from, as I recall, ran from noon to noon, but I may be wrong on that, so that I was in a duty status, yet I did not have a watch. So I can't be too positive on those points. But whatever I did, it was a routine sort of thing.

CC: What would've been a normal Sunday, if say, you had the watch and that was, you were officer of the deck?

HD: A very boring four hours. About the only thing you did was see to it the chapel was rigged and unrigged, and that eight o'clock colors were made, and if there were any boat trips to be done, why, you saw to it that they were done. But most of the part you were parading around the quarter deck trying to look military, and trying to make the time pass.

DM: That day when you were on the watch, colors were getting, the Marine detachment was going to raise colors?

HD: Yes.

DM: And on that day, what was your uniform like? Were you wearing gloves, or what were you wearing?

HD: I was wearing white service -- that was our normal white uniform -- with gloves, although I had taken my gloves off, which is -- I received burns on the hands because of it. That uniform protected me, really. I was burned every place I had exposed skin, flash burns. No really serious burns, these were mostly first and second degree burns, but enough to be incapacitated for a while.

CC: When did you realize you were burned?

HD: Oh, I realized I was burned when I was getting burned, because that's, that was the hottest place I've ever been, was in that officer of the deck's booth. I knew of course that I was burned while I was doing this, but either the shock or the excitement, whatever it was, I wasn't particularly uncomfortable. I was able to go ahead and do whatever had to be done.

CC: When did you finally get medical attention?

HD: When we finally went over to the hospital, after the attack had subsided. I would say that was probably two or three hours after it began. And they took us over to the hospital in various boats and then they started tending to us.

CC: At what point did you realize just how extensive the loss of life was? Was it right away?

HD: Well, I think when I saw the forward half of the ship totally destroyed that, in such a short time, I knew that very few people had the chance to get out, and that the loss of life must have been terrible. That plus the very relatively small number of survivors that were on the fantail, were a clear indication that this was a real disaster, as far as the ARIZONA was concerned.
DM: You talked about your burns, what about the burns of your crewmembers? How extensive was that, the wounds?

HD: I didn't see them afterwards, so I don't know. But I imagine he was just about the same as I, 'cause we were right together in the same environment.

DM: How about the rest of the crew?

HD: Well, I'm sure that others were burned worse. Again, I have no direct knowledge of that, because I didn't see any afterwards, but I'm sure that many were. Because I'm sure that many of them were not -- well, they had arms exposed, for example. They were not protected as I was.

CC: As you were transporting people back and forth and doing that kind of work, were you able to observe what was going on around you, what other kinds of things did you see in terms of the attack, and things like that?

HD: Just more bombing and plain strafing, and just general pandemonium, really, of activity. Specific items -- no, I can't say that I saw a torpedo plane make an attack, for example. But it's just that bombs were falling and there was noise, and there was smoke, and there was flames. And as I said, pandemonium. That's about the only way I can describe it.

CC: How long were you hospitalized?

HD: Until shortly after Christmas, about a day or two after Christmas, and then I was assigned to a destroyer, which pleased me very much, 'cause I'd wanted to go to a destroyer from the beginning.

CC: What was the destroyer?

HD: CRAVEN, USS CRAVEN.

CC: What was its number? Do you remember?

HD: Three eighty-two.

DM: When you said you took wounded to Ford Island, can you be specific where you took them?

HD: To the nearest point on Ford Island, which is just about opposite where the ARIZONA was. There wasn't any . . .

DM: Directly ashore.

HD: Yes, directly ashore. There wasn't any real landing but there wasn't any real need for a landing because of the terrain. It was not much of a problem to get 'em ashore.

CC: Who was on shore working that part of it?

HD: Just various people, it was not organized. I think there was even some wives there, because there were quarters on Ford Island. Wives and civilians, and military. Just a mishmash of people, not too many of them.

CC: They all pitch in?
HD: They all pitched in and then they became more organized, transportation was provided. That sort of thing.

CC: Do you remember who else was with you in helping to collect survivors off the ship and things? Do you remember who else was in your whaleboat?

HD: Just Ensign Bush and I.

CC: Just the two of you.

DM: Can you tell us about the officer named Fuqua, and your relationship with him?

HD: Well, he was a more senior officer. He was --- he had the command duty. See, your duties are structured. You have the officer of the deck, for a four-hour period, is responsible of the safety of the ship and so forth, is under the command of the Command Duty Officer [CDO], who has a twenty-four hour duty, who in turn is directly responsible to the captain. And Lieutenant Commander, then, Fuqua, was the Command Duty Officer. And he, of course, was up and about and was alerted to the, by the general alarm, and so forth, and he survived, as you know. But he was actually a senior surviving officer of those that were on board, and received a Medal of Honor for his upper standing during the attack.

Interesting sidelight, after I retired in 1963, I accepted a teaching position at St. Petersburg junior college. And low and behold, Admiral Fuqua was also on faculty at junior college, so that's the first I'd seen of him, after the attack.

CC: Is this the first time you've been back to Hawaii?

(Conversation off-mike)

CC: Oh, we're going to put another tape in.

HD: Okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CC: Says here you went on to the ROGERS, what was the ROGERS . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes, at first off camera)

HD: [DD] 562, that was some years later.

CC: Where were you based on the ROGERS.

HD: On the East Coast, I recommissioned her out of the mathball fleet in Charleston, [South Carolina].

CC: Oh Hum ...

HD: During the Korean War and we were operating out of Norfolk, mostly I had her for ...

CC: Yah, Yah!
HD: About a year and went ashore.

DM: There are two areas I think Chris can ask this, but I'd like ... don't answer these but I think I like to ask these. Controversy surrounds the ARIZONA history?

CC: ... do that. Why don't you give us a little bit of the history of the week preceding and try to help us shed some light ... 

HD: Well, our normal operating schedule would be two weeks at sea and a period of time in port. And while we were at sea during our two-week period, they, one of the destroyers, made a submarine contact, and so we were immediately returned into Pearl Harbor, which indicated that they feared submarines as a primary threat. And so therefore we were in Pearl Harbor sooner than our normal time. We were also scheduled to go back to the States, sometime in December, because we had been rammed earlier by the OKLAHOMA, which had done some damage, and I think they wanted a ship yard, a repair on that.

DM: When did that ramming occur?

HD: It occurred -- I can't tell you exactly when, what it was doing -- in that period at sea, or the period before then. It was just a fairly modest ramming, but it doesn't take much of a ramming to really cause structural damage. It may have occurred during that period, but I can't be sure of that. But whenever, we were still going back because of that, or we expected to. So on the basis of that, it indicated that perhaps we were going back right away, and of course, we would, in that case, fuel. Of course you fuel anyhow. When you come in, you fuel because you always maintain a state of readiness and you keep your fuel topped off so that, I am sure, without recalling specifically seeing barges come alongside, I am almost positive we did refuel after we came in. It would be most unusual if we had not.

CC: And that would have been that week before.

HD: Yes, that would have been probably Friday or maybe even Saturday. Probably Friday, because the vessel came alongside to do some repairs. But not the damage from the OKLAHOMA, but you do get tended periodically to take care of repairs that the ship's force cannot handle and are not necessarily of a magnitude that would require a ship yard work. So I would be almost positive that she was topped off with the fuel.

CC: What about the ...

(Conversation off-mike.)

CC: Oh.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HD: I'm sure all of the normal tanks were full.

DM: The oil that's coming up from the ARIZONA today is, we've charted, it's coming up through the deck on the starboard side, gun turret number three. And so from our plans, apparently it's from one of the fuel tanks directly underneath.
HD: And I think that would be not so much a direct result of the attack, perhaps deterioration or something of that nature.

CC: The other point that we're trying to clarify is the nature of the hits that ARIZONA took that day. Do you recall any torpedo attack, or . . .

HD: I don't -- I have no knowledge of any, but I would not have because I was on the opposite side. I was on the starboard side and the torpedo would have come in from the port side. Whatever it was, whether it was a torpedo or a major sized bomb, it either hit into the magazines or hit into the fuel tanks. And my feeling would be it hit into the magazines and detonated, and that, of course, caused the subsequent instantaneous blowing up, because I don't think a weapon of itself would cause that sort of an explosion. I think it would trigger off the only type of explosion. Of course, I'm certain that, as predicated earlier, that they dropped the bomb down the stack. I don't think that happened at all.

CC: What was life like for a young officer here in Hawaii at that time? What was it -- what would go on if you had liberty? What was good about it? What was bad about it? What . . .

HD: Well, I liked to body surf, for one thing. We would go over to the windward side and -- not surfboarding, I mean, this is -- you're familiar with it -- and that was a lot of a fun. Just the normal things that you do. Yet, I think all of us felt that there was something in the wind, something was going to happen, that we all knew we were going to be involved in a war. And one thing that, perhaps, led to that is the fact that, oh, for about the last two or three months, we would practice steaming under battle conditions, that is darkened ship and standing condition watches and so forth, to gain experience. And that, of course, had its effect on me, an impressionable young officer. I said, "Well, something's going to happen, because why are we doing this," you know.

CC: At the academy, had there been any discussion about the current world scene and what you might look forward to doing?

HD: Not too much, no. Of course, we were trained to fight at the academy. You were trained how to fire torpedoes, and you only fire torpedoes if you're doing it in anger. We were trained in ordnance, and of course ordnance is an offensive weapon. So that's natural. That's part of being a Naval officer. You had to be prepared to do whatever is called upon you. As far as saying, "Look fellas, you're going to be involved in a war in the next two or three years," no, there was nothing like that.

Other things we did to further answer your question, I played golf occasionally when I had time, over at Oahu Country Club, up in Nuuanu Valley. I understand that course is still there, I don't know though.

CC: Yeah, golf is still a real popular pastime. Matter of fact, you'd probably get this whole crew to go out and spend the day with you out there. What about recreation? Were there clubs or movies, or things like that?

HD: Well, we had movies on board, every night, and particularly in port. Officers' club in the base there. We were eligible for other officers' clubs if we wanted to go to the Army, Hickam Field, or other places, but I think most of us pretty well stuck around with the Pearl Harbor. We had a gunnery officer that once in a while would have the young officers out to his house -- he lived
on the windward side -- for dinner. And that was part of the spirit of the ship. We had very good spirit on the ship, particularly after Captain Van Valkenburgh came on board, because he was a real fine person. I can't say enough about him.

Just to illustrate, his predecessor was quite nervous or reticent about letting the young officers take the responsibility. If you were officer of the deck under him, you'd have to call him up before you ever had a course change, because he had to be on the bridge. And sometimes he'd call the navigator up there to be on the bridge, which kind of kept an air of tension all the time. First time we were under way and I had the watch with Captain Van Valkenburgh, we were steaming in column at night and that's something that's a little bit tricky with a battleship. But we received a signal to make a course change, so I notified the captain and his reply to me was a classic, "Very well, let me know when you've steadied down on the new course."

Well, that was just like a fresh breeze. We loved it for that. That's the kind of a guy he was. But he was an ex-destroyer skipper, so that explains it.

CC: Well, that probably does.
HD: They're a breed apart, as you know.
CC: I understand.

DM: Can you describe the last night of the ARIZONA, December 6, Saturday night? What was it like aboard ship?
HD: I can't really answer that because it was like any other night aboard ship in port. There was nothing unusual about it.

DM: Can you tell us what a typical night was like?
CC: Yeah, what'd the routine would be, sort of?
HD: Watch some movies, turn in. That's about it. There's not much else to do.

DM: Well, what time was chow and what time did movies start?
HD: Well, the movies were started after dark, whenever that was, depending on the time of the year it would be. Maybe, let's say, in round numbers, eight o'clock. Dinner in the J.O. mess would probably be about six o'clock, 6:30, maybe.

DM: How was the food aboard ship?
HD: Good.

DM: Were weekend meals different than weekday meals?
HD: In this respect they were different, Sunday morning was sort of like an open brunch. That term wasn't used in those days, but that's what it amounted to. It wasn't a certain hour for breakfast on Sunday morning, you just came in when you felt like it and ate whatever was available. But that's about the only difference. The crew's mess, as far as I know, was also very good. You didn't hear too much complaining about it. You always hear some of course, but.
CC: Was the spirit, I mean enlisted men, in all, I mean, pretty good. I mean, did you have . . .

HD: Yes, I thought it was unusually good for a ship that size. Because -- and I attribute this to Captain [Van] Valkenburgh too, because he was much more aware, apparently, of the essence of leadership and showed it in the way he did things.

CC: Is this your first time back?

HD: Yes. Well, during the war, we were in and out, but this is the first time since the war, yes.

CC: When you --- have you been out to the ARIZONA yet?

HD: Yes, I was out yesterday, or the day before.

CC: What kinds of feelings did you have when you paid that visit?

HD: Well, other than a feeling sadness, coupled with natural curiosity of trying to identify key points. Of course turret three, which is my turret, was there, obviously, available. I say it was my turret, I was catapult officer on that. But looking at the spot where I went over trying to identify that and show it to my wife. I think the most awesome and sad part is reading the names of my classmates on that list there. Seeing 'em again, mentally, as I read their names, and again the thought that, gee, here they were, just at the beginning of their career, and that was ended, and I was spared, and I had the chance of a full career and a full life, and I was one of the lucky ones.

DM: Can you tell us about your last wish?

HD: Well, I want to be buried on the ARIZONA and through the courtesy of the park service, why, I have received permission, authority, for that to happen. And I think it's just sort of fitting that I rejoin my classmates, that's my feeling on that. That's why I want it.

CC: What about the feelings you have about the people of Japan today, forty-five years later? How do you -- what kind of perspective do you have, having been at war with a people and now it's peace time?

HD: They make good automobiles. First of all, I never had, at any time, any feeling of anger towards the Japanese. Many other people have, but as a naval officer, I had to admire the consummate skill with which they executed that attack. It was just, tactically, it was a beautiful operation. And even while it was going on, you couldn't help but admire the fact that they had achieved total tactical surprise. At the same time, feel some disappointment that we had let it happen. But again, I had no anger towards the Japanese people.

Immediately after the war, as a matter of fact, we were in Tokyo Bay when they signed the surrender papers and I spent a year in Japanese waters, and subsequently the Korean War, I was back in Japan. So I had a chance to be with the Japanese people a little bit more and, again. I have a lot of respect for 'em. I have no feeling of anger towards them at all.

CC: Did you ever have a chance to meet with veterans from the other side?
HD: No, I have not.

CC: If that were to happen, say at the fiftieth reunion, would you enjoy that kind of opportunity? What would you feel about it?

HD: I think so. I'd like to talk to 'em.

CC: What would you ask 'em?

HD: Their viewpoint of it, what their feelings were and --- I read the book, "AT DAWN WE SLEPT", and though I don't necessarily agree with everything he said, he certainly did his homework and with respect to the preparation, a tremendous amount of preparation the Japanese put into that attack. And there again, you have to admire 'em for it. That's really doing what you have to do in order to have the success you have.

CC: So you can respect an enemy?

HD: Yes. I think you're very foolish if you don't respect an enemy, their capabilities, certainly. We did manage to turn the tables on the Japanese -- by we, I mean the unit I was with -- in the battle of Vella Gulf, which unfortunately isn't recorded too much in history, but six destroyers had an opportunity to go up the slot in the Solomon Islands one night, with no cruisers around to spoil the works, as far as destroyers. Usual thing, a cruiser would open fire at maximum range, and then tell the destroyers to go ahead and do a torpedo attack. When you eliminated all that effect of surprise, we this night we had no cruisers with us. And we made contact with the enemy and we used full radar control, and had a land background, which masked their radar, and so we were able to achieve total tactical surprise in return. It was quite effective. And there again, I felt no anger or no great elation other than the fact that here we had done something professionally that was well executed. But it did surprise me when we tried to pick up survivors, that none of them would be willing to be picked up. They didn't want to be rescued. So . . .

CC: What was the outcome in terms of their ships? What did you accomplish?

HD: One of them escaped. The other -- it was a cruiser and three destroyers came down, and one ship escaped. We liked to think it was a destroyer and not a cruiser, but I don't know. I never saw any official report of it. It's the Battle of Vella Gulf, on the sixth of August, 1943. It was never written up in your various archives or books, but we . . .

DM: Maybe it needs to be done.

CC: Well, we got a little bit of it right here, so that's good. You have any more, one more question?

DM: Just one comment. As a ARIZONA survivor, what is your feeling and impression of the memorial that's placed above your ship?

HD: Well, I think it's more than just a memorial to the ARIZONA, I think it symbolizes the entire attack on Pearl Harbor, where the ARIZONA is a logical site for it, and a logical point of departure. So as I say, I don't feel it as just an ARIZONA memorial.

DM: How do you react to the architecture?
HD: I think considering the topography and the sunken ship being underneath, that they had to have something similar to that. It had to be something running a fort ships. And whether it's modern or not, I don't think that's really too much of a point, and I think it's designed effectively for you, for viewing. So I have no complaint about it. I think it's probably the best that can be done.

CC: Okay, thank you.

HD: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW.