

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

#389

JOSEPH EUGENE STONE & RUTH GENEVIEVE STONE

PEARL HARBOR NAVY YARD, SHOP 51

&

QUEENS HOSPITAL, NURSE

INTERVIEWED ON

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BY JERRY GREENE

TRANSCRIBED BY:

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USS *ARIZONA* MEMORIAL

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

(Conversation off-mike)

Jerry Greene (JG): The following oral history interview was conducted by Jerry Greene for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial, at the Ala Moana Hotel on December 5, 2001, at 3:04 p.m. The persons being interviewed are Joseph Eugene Stone and Ruth Genevieve Stone—I pronounced that correctly? And Joseph Stone was a [*civilian working*] at Pearl Harbor [*Navy Yard*], Shop 51, instrument shop, on December 7, 1941.

(Conversation off-mike)

JG: For the record, Joseph—can I call you Joseph?

Joseph Eugene Stone (JS): Sure.

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

JS: Joseph [*Eugene*] Stone, Bokchito, Oklahoma, 1-1912, 1918, I'm sorry.

Ruth Genevieve Stone (RS): January.

JS: January. January 18, 1-2, 1-12-18.

JG: What did you consider your hometown in 1941?

JS: Bokchito, Oklahoma.

JG: What were your parents' names?

JS: My father's name was Walter. My mother's name was Olivia.

JG: Do you know her maiden name?

JS: Her maiden name was Long.

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

JS: I have one brother and I had five, four sisters. I have three now. That's not correct. I have one sister, the others are deceased.

JG: Where did you go to high school?

JS: At Bokchito, Oklahoma.

JG: Ruth, for the record, would you please state your full name, place of birth and birth date?

RS: I'm Ruth Genevieve Smith Stone. And I was born in Conneaut, Ohio, March 9, 1916.

JG: What did you consider your hometown in 1941?

RS: Oh, I guess it was Long Beach after Hawaii.

JG: What were your parents' names?

RS: Nina Smith and Chester Arthur Smith. My mother's maiden name was COL-GOR-OL.

JG: I have to ask you, was your mother, your father named after President Arthur?

RS: (Chuckles) I don't know that.

JG: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

RS: I had two sisters and one brother that was called a blue baby and did not live.

JG: Where did you go to high school?

RS: At Conneaut, Ohio.

JG: Joseph, where and why did you enlist?

JS: Well, it was the 1937, we were in the throes of a depression. (Clears throat)
After graduating from high school, I tried to go to college and wasn't able to make it financially, so I joined the navy.

JG: Can you tell us something about your military background or your navy background before you came to Hawaii?

JS: Well, I was enlisted in the navy March 11, '37, and I was discharged, as I said, in March 11 of '41, working on the fire controlman in the navy, working on fire control equipment at the shipyard. It was called a navy yard then.

JG: So you had training in that vocation with the navy. Any other training that you remember before coming to Hawaii?

JS: Well, in the navy, I attended an optical school. That was about it as far as military training. It was during the depression and the navy didn't have any money either.

JG: What circumstances brought you to Hawaii and had you in Hawaii in 1941?

JS: The navy deployed what was called HAWDET, Hawaiian Detachment in 1939. And that's when I was sent to Hawaii.

JG: Do you remember when exactly you arrived here?

JS: No, I don't recall exactly. The date that I arrived in Hawaii would be sometime after July of '39.

JG: And Ruth, how did you happen to come to Hawaii?

RS: Well, (clears throat) a friend of mine double-dated his friend and they decided to get married, so another nurse and I came to Hawaii together. And we were best friends of theirs at their wedding, and then we decided to get married, 1940.

JG: So you were married in Hawaii?

RS: Yes.

JG: In Honolulu?

JS & RS: Yes.

JG: Where were you married?

RS: The Methodist church, that's what I'd like to know, who the minister was at that time. I think it was on Second Street, the office of the church.

JS: She lived right here at the Hawaiian village and that's where she lived when we got married.

JG: You were here at the Hawaiian village at that time?

JS: Yes, she was. I was still in the navy.

JG: And what types of duties were you doing, Ruth, at that time?

RS: I was working at the Queen's Hospital, in the obstetrics section. So I came to work that morning and was in the delivery room at the hour that it started.

JG: Well let's come back to that in just a second. Joseph, I wanted to ask you if you could tell me something about your duties here and your activities in the weeks and days leading to Pearl Harbor.

JS: We were starting to install forty-millimeter mounts on some of the ships, which is what we should've done long before. And which we did after the attack, after it was too late. But anyway, that's what I was doing at that time, as an instrument maker. And they didn't have a fire control rate in the civil service, so they made us instrument makers.

JG: Any training activities going on?

JS: Yes, I went to six weeks school in New York at Ford Instrument Company, on the computer, Mark 1. It was about the size of a refrigerator.

JG: Do you recall if there was any atmosphere that existed among your colleagues at the time, an awareness as to the state of relations between the U.S. and Japan?

JS: I tried to keep abreast of what was going on. On the ship we received newsletters and that was informative. And the disagreements between Japan and the United States was pretty well known.

JG: Did people feel that an attack might be imminent here?

JS: Impossible. There could not, it could not happen. There was no way that it could happen. But it did.

JG: Ruth, was that the sense that you had too?

RS: Yes. There was no talk of war or anything like that at the time.

JG: Joseph, where were you assigned on December 7?

JS: I came to work, as I said before, in the instrument shop, attached to the electric shop. And I was assigned to fire control work, working at my—I had a worktable shop, desk, and I worked on that on fire control equipment. And we had some platforms in the building and we had the fire control equipment that we happened to be working on it at that time. We could also go aboard ship and work. In fact, most of the work was on the ship.

JG: And what happened? How did your day go on December 7, 1941? Can you describe what you were doing?

JS: I forget the details of what I was doing, but it was generally doing modifications on some fire control equipment. And I, at 7:55, there was this huge, thunderous explosion. The building shook and the floor shook. Some glass fell in from the ceiling that we had to use for lighting purposes. And that's what I heard and it was out in front of the building, so there was only six of us working that day because it was Sunday. And normally I think about fifty-two people worked there. So I ran out to the front of the building and I think I was the first one out there between the building and the

Pennsylvania, in the dry dock there. And so I looked, I heard a plane, I looked up and it was—I wasn't sure what it was.

And so I ran back in the building and (inaudible) there was an elderly man who was older than me. He was about forty-five years old. I was twenty-three. And he said—he called me Stony—he said, “Stony, you think they're having some kind of experiment?”

My reply was of course, “Experiment, hell, this is war!”

So that was the start of a bad day.

JG: What happened after that, that you recall?

JS: Well, what happened to me, I went back out to the, where they laid fire hoses across the street to fight fires on the *Pennsylvania*, and the *Cassin* and the *Downes*. And I tried to protect the hoses, fire hoses going across the street, cars running, trucks, and I knew where there was some scaffolding, heavy timbers. I pulled them out and put 'em on either side of the hose.

And it went pretty good for a little while and then a huge truck come by.

The thing went up in splinters. And about that time, a pharmacist—no, not a pharmacist.

RS: Medical.

JS: Military, the navy.

RS: Medical supply?

JS: Well, he was a pharmacist. I mean, that's not the right word. He was a...

[Joseph E. Stone is referring to a Pharmacist's Mate]

JG: Medic?

JS: No. It's what they call 'em in the navy.

JG: So what happened to you?

JS: Anyway, he was in this little gray van and so he hollered out for help. He said he needed help. And told me. So I got in the car with him and we took some medical supplies down to Ten-Ten dock, which was right aft of the *Pennsylvania*, the *Cassin*, and the *Downes*. And so we made two or three trips there and it was really on the second or the third trip that we made back to the hospital to get more supplies, when I, when we approached the hospital, there was a lot of smoke and fire. And stopped and just far enough away, I almost (inaudible) hospital corpsman [*Pharmacist's Mate*] ran in to get more supplies, and I stood there. And I couldn't believe what I was seeing. There was this beautiful green mess. You couldn't imagine how beautiful, around the hospital. And there were dead bodies. And one fellow with a little white uniform, he was all black. And he was trying to walk and stumbling. You know, I wanted to help him, but there's no way. So I...

RS: Is that the one with the burned skin?

JS: You couldn't touch 'em, you couldn't _____. So hopeless. And I spent the rest of the day, I went back to the *Pennsylvania*, *Cassin* and *Downes*. And to my shop and found my boss. I didn't know where my boss

was, he didn't know where I was all during the attack. I was down with ALLAN PANGUAN. Then anyway, we spent the rest of the day doing various things including _____. Someone in the Marine Corps, I think, issued some rifles. And since I'd had some military training, then I knew how to use a rifle. Well, I was issued one. And I don't know how long, and then they took 'em back. And then finally everything got quiet, but we still expected them to return. I came home, I got home about ten o'clock and I had the blue paint on our lights and all that. And it was pretty hectic.

JG: What do you recall about that night?

JS: That night, it was just unbelievable, the silence, and yet, it would be occasionally punctuated with a rifle fire. And we had to put all the curtains down and tape everything because we were told that the Marines were ordered to shoot the lights out if they saw any lights. I understand they did. We lived above Waikiki at that time.

JG: Did you live on the base?

JS: No, we lived in Honolulu.

JG: Honolulu.

JS: Thirty-three-oh-eight Campbell Avenue. I don't think it exists any more.

JG: Ruth, if we could ask you about your work and you were in the obstetrics ward the morning of December 7?

RS: Yes.

JG: Can you tell me what happened, what you recall of that event?

RS: Well, I did come out of the [*Queens Hospital*] delivery room about eight o'clock, to get a pair of forceps for the doctor. And I saw the billowing smoke. I knew he had gone to work and I didn't hear 'til nine or ten at night that he was still alive.

JS: We were both in that boat.

RS: Yeah. We did sedate our patients in case we had to evacuate, 'cause we heard things going on all day, you know. But we didn't have to. So in some manner, it was a quiet day.

JG: Did they bring any of the wounded into your hospital?

RS: A few, but mostly they came to the Hickam Field [*Pearl Harbor*] navy hospital. We had a few accidents in town. And had a few patients brought in. But I don't get to care for them 'cause we can't contaminate the different departments, especially obstetrics, you have to be very clean. So I wasn't near the emergency rooms.

JG: How did you find out that Joseph was safe and when?

RS: He called me late that night. And between nine and ten o'clock, I recall it was very late. Know that he should've been home at five o'clock, you know. So I was very happy to hear that he was okay.

JG: Joseph, can you tell us something about what happened and what you were involved in, in the days immediately following the attack?

JS: Well, it was interesting in one aspect, in that even though I was an instrument maker, we didn't have enough work to keep a number of people in the shop that busy on stuff that was already in the shop. So we went out and worked not only doing our work, but we would do electrician's work. Everybody was trying to help out.

JG: Were you involved in any of the other operations following Pearl Harbor, or did you stay here?

JS: I stayed right here. I thought I would probably be called up the next day, and I inquired. They said, "No, what you're doing here now is more important than shipping you back somewhere else." So I stayed at Pearl.

JG: And you stayed here until when?

JS: Until '44, November?

RS: Yes.

JS: And I transferred to the Long Beach [*Navy Yard*].

RS: We had our first child December 20 in '43, so she was eleven months old when we returned to Long Beach.

JG: Tell me something about your subsequent life and career.

JS: Well, I was at the Long Beach Naval Shipyard for four and a half years or so. And then the shipyard closed down and I transferred to China Lake Naval Weapons Center. And then we _____ rest of my career...

RS: Twenty years.

JS: Twenty years and six kids.

JG: So you retired in what year?

JS: In '71.

JG: And how about you, Ruth?

RS: Well, I had six children, total. And was working at both the navy hospital and the one hospital at Ridge Crest in between and we were lucky to be able to have naval housing and food, you know. Our rent was only fifty-five dollars, and that included your electricity and water. And so that's how we got along with six children!

JS: We were very conservative.

JG: Now, I understand that you have some artifacts here today that you'd like to display for the camera and maybe discuss. Maybe we can bring some of those forward and then we're going to change the tape right now, before we do that.

END OF TAPE ONE

TAPE TWO

(Conversation off-mike)

JG: Well, you don't look any different!

(Laughter)

RS: Yeah, we've been married sixty-one years.

JG: Okay. We're rolling and Joseph and Ruth have brought some artifacts to share with us and Ruth, why don't you talk about the picture and what you remember of it.

RS: This is the sailor that I met on Long Beach who came ashore because he didn't approve of the food they had...

JS: The menu.

RS: ...the menu on ship was so he came and got a hamburger. So we blamed that on our meeting, at the dance hall.

JS: So I put a quarter in my shoe—ashore, you always do that so you'll be able to get back to the ship. And I had my hamburger and stopped by a dance and that's where we met. Subsequently she came to Honolulu and we were married.

RS: I came over with my friend to be her best person at her wedding and ended up getting married myself.

JG: Now, can you talk about that item that you're holding, this item here, which is, I believe, from a plane?

JS: Yes.

JG: You want to talk about that and I'll hold this for you.

JS: All right. Well, the last trip that I took with the hospital corpsman, taking medical supplies down to the docks, I stood there, as I said, in amazement, looking at that terrible scene, dead people. And I looked down and close to my feet was this item here and I knew it had to have come from a plane that had been shot down, which I didn't know what it was at that time. And so I kept this and I sometimes, after the war was over, I couldn't believe that it actually happened. I still couldn't believe it, but I'll go and get this out and look at it, it did happen and I did experience it.

JG: Can I see that? This appears to be a piece out of a cockpit, I assume, a little lever.

JS: Yeah. Some...

RS: Or is it one on the Japanese planes that hit the back of the hospital?

JS: The first, that was the first plane, Japanese plane, shot down, landed near the hospital and that came off of it.

JG: And this is your Pearl Harbor Survivors' medal.

JS: Yes. I was somewhat dismayed and disenchanted with not having received a medal, which the military people did receive, who were there December 7. In fact, they could be within 400 miles of Pearl Harbor, I understand. And they were in the area and so they was awarded this.

And so I brooded over it for all those years and about ten years ago I started trying to get what I thought I earned. So I wrote a letter to a Congressman, Bill Thomas, and he was very helpful. He sent me that follow-up correspondence between his office and the navy department. And he found there was a lady, a Barbara Wilson, in the Pentagon, who was extremely helpful. And she, they came back with the fact that the medal was issued by the navy, but, or implemented by the navy, but—I'm sorry. Getting mixed up now. The medal was issued by the navy for those that qualified, met the criteria. And, but they were not funded. It was a congressionally mandated

award. So it was not really military, per se, so I thought civilians should be given that same right if they were there. And it was on its way. So we finally, it was okayed, authorized, and so I was very happy and proud to receive this, what I call a prestigious medal.

JG: For those who served, the Bronze Medal medallion.

(Conversation off-mike)

JG: This looks like the reverse. I think—I can't get it out of there.

(Laughter)

JG: There you go. (Pause) Okay.

JS: And I hope that this fact that I was awarded this, the act was changed, I hope that it will be publicized by any and everyone who has a voice in that others who I feel were qualified, that don't know they're qualified, that they too can receive that award.

JG: Joseph and Ruth, do you have anything else that you'd like to add to your accounts of this afternoon?

RS: I don't think so, but we are enjoying our sixty-first anniversary from October 19, 1940, and back here to Hawaii is wonderful, but it's cemented, cemented, not like 1940!

JG: Well, I want to thank you on behalf of the National Park Service for contributing your remembrances this afternoon. It's going to be a big part of our program. Thank you so much.

RS: Thank you.

JS: Thank you very much.

JG: And...

END OF INTERVIEW