

ORAL HISTORY #321

Kazuo Mauranaka
Zero pilot IMS *Akagi*

Daniel Martinez (DM): This Oral History interview [*was conducted by Daniel Martinez (DM) of the National Park Service/USS Arizona Memorial*] on the *Nippon Maru*, on June 13,1986 with Kazuo Muranaka (KM) [*who was a pilot in the Japanese Imperial Navy and flew from the IMS Akagi during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The interpreter is Mr. Ondo.*]

(DM): What is your full name?

Kazuo Muranaka (KM): Kazuo Muranaka

(DM): What is your present residence?

(KM): Oita prefecture, Beppu City, near [*the*] hot springs beds in Kyushu.

(DM): What is your age?

(KM): 67 years old.

(DM): How old were when you first flew?

(KM): 22 years old.

(DM): Where were you born?

(KM): Fukuoka prefecture, Hosoi City, Kyushu.

(DM): What is your [*birth date*]?

(KM): February 27,1919.

(DM): Where did you grow up?

(KM): Where I was born, in Fukuoka.

(DM): When did you want be a pilot? When did you want to fly?

(KM): January 23,1938 was my first flight in an airplane. Started flying at Kasumigaura [*Naval Aviator Training Center*] Air Base.

(DM): When did you first want to fly? As a boy? As a child did he think about flying?

(KM): [*At*] 19 years old, after graduation from school

(DM): Where did you go to school?

(KM): He entered the navy at 16 years old after graduating from primary school [*in Fukuoka*]. Did not go to intermediate school (In

Japan elementary [*school*] ends at 8th grade.

(DM): [*What was the composition of your*] family?

(KM): 6 girls, 5 boys.

(DM): Were [*your*] parents alive at the time of [*the*] attack?

(KM): [*My*] mother died 46 years ago and [*my*] father [*died*] 26 [*years ago.*]

(DM): [*What were your*] parents names?

(KM): [*My*] father[*s name was*] Yoshinatsu, [*and my*] mother[*s was*] Mitsu.

(DM): What was training like in flight school?

(KM): Entered pilot training program at 16 in Kasumigaura [*Naval Aviator Training Center*] in 1935.

(DM): How long did training last?

(KM): First went into naval training, and then went to Oita after a year.

(DM): Did you fly in combat in China?

(KM): Yes.

(DM): Did [*you*] fly against Chinese pilots?

(KM): Yes.

(DM): Did [*you*] fly against American pilots in P-40's, the Flying Tigers in China?

(KN): [*I*] don't know..

(DM): How were you selected?

(KM): I was serious and I liked flying.

(DM): Were you a serious man?

(KM): Yes.

(DM): How did you feel fling your first combat?, Were you afraid?

(KM): I was not afraid.

(DM): When did you first go on a carrier?

(KM): September 1941, *Hiryu* was my first carrier.

(DM): Was *Hiryu* your carrier [on] December 7, 1941?

(KM): Yes.

(DM): Were you in the 1st or 2nd wave?

(KM): 1st wave.

(DM): What was your assignment?

(KM): (Much discussion on Pearl Harbor)

(DM): Were you afraid, any problems taking off?

(KM): No, not at all.

(DM): Have read [that] the seas were rough. How did you feel, were you afraid?

(KM): We trained very well and seas were not so rough [so] there was no problem. No, not afraid.

(DM): Did you know you were going to war?

(KM): Yes, of course, but couldn't be helped, we were ordered to go.

(DM): [With the] other pilots, did you talk about this?

(KM): Yes, but we all felt things would fall into place and work out once we were in the air.

(DM): Who was your friend?

(KM): I had many friends.

(DM): What was your target?

(KM): I was a fighter pilot so my primary concern was to protect the attack force. And of course destroy AA fire.

(DM): Were there any planes in the air?

(KM): No planes engaged us so we went to Wheeler [Field] and then to Barbers Point.

(DM): Did you engage in combat with American planes?

(KM): Not in my group.

(DM): Who was your commander?

(KM): Lieutenant Okajima.

(DM): Anybody lost in your squadron?

(KM): Not in my group but [Airman 1st Class *Shigenori*] Nishikaichi did not come back.

(DM): What happened to him?

(KM): He went down [*and crash landed on the island of Niihau*] and was captured by “natives”.

(DM): Did he crash?

(KM): By accident I think.

(DM): What happened to him?

(KM): He was about to be captured as a POW and later was killed along with another Japanese [*who was an Island resident*] on the island [*of Niihau*] by the natives of Niihau.

(DM): How long were you over Pearl Harbor? (Or in the air?)

(KM): About 45 minutes.

(DM): What time did [*you leave*] to fly back?

(KM): I don't remember.

(DM): What did you think of your plane?

(KM): Very good for a fighter plane at that time, very fast, flew 250 miles per hour.

(DM): [*Were there*] any close calls over Pearl Harbor?

(KM): Nothing over Pearl Harbor, but discovered he had 8 shell holes, one near his seat after flying over Barbers Point.

(DM): Did you see what was happening at Pearl Harbor?

(KM): Yes, and later was busy dodging fire from below. Yes, through the smoke, I caught occasional glimpses of Pearl Harbor.

(DM): Did you see the *Arizona*?

(KM): No.

(DM): What color was your plane, gray?

(KM): Do not remember clearly, I think it was striped.

(DM): Do you remember the number of your plane?

(KM): No.

(DM): Was it your plane for a long time?

(KM): No.

(DM): [*What was the*] color of your plane again?

(KM): Dark green almost black green.

(DM): When you flew back to your carrier, how did you feel?

(KM): I felt we had completed our mission, but we had to maintain our planes and reload our guns. We were told that the *Lexington* and the *Enterprise* were near by and there was a possibility of an attack to the task force, so we had to be ready on the flight deck.

(DM): Did you want to go back to Pearl harbor?

(KM): No ... Our concern at that time was the whereabouts of the *Enterprise* and *Lexington*.

(DM): [*What are*] your feelings about Pearl harbor?

(KM): [*I*] did not go to the [*USS Arizona*] Memorial because it was painful to see the remains of [*the*] *Arizona* and the result of our attack. Mr. Nakamamura.

(DM): I was asking about your feelings?

(KM): I believe relaying my feelings about Pearl Harbor. More than 40 years have passed and it's very difficult.

(DM): What would you like to tell Americans. Americans want to know how you feel.

(KM): We have good relations with the US and.... (could not understand beyond that.)

(DM): Did you fly at Wake [*Island*]?

(KM): Yes.

(DM): How long did he fly during the war, and not be wounded?

(KM): Lucky?

(DM): Did you fly till the end of the war, from 1941 to?

(KM): I flew about 1900 hours.

(DM): Was he shot down?

(KM): At Midway he was shot down at sea by AA [*Anti Aircraft*] fire.

(DM): How did he survive?

(KM): He was picked up by a Japanese destroyer.

(DM): How did he avoid being killed?

(KM): (Much discussion over meaning of “avoid”, but no answer.)

(DM): Has his story been published in a book?

(KM): Yes. His story about the Battle of Midway was published in a military magazine.