

## Lloyd Wiltse Oral History Interview

LW: -- and that was almost sixty years, there were only 4,000 people graduated from the Naval Academy before (inaudible). And I was down there for a dressed parade here about five or six years ago, and 4,000 (inaudible) walked in front of me in one parade there. Long time that's all you'll see, how these things in the Navy, probably even many things, were taken into (inaudible) of navigation. But --

DOUG HUBBARD: Now they've come up with a bunch of new names that I can't recognize them.

LW: Yeah, they spread all over the place.

DH: They've got commands like Naval Ships Command; I guess that was what, Bureau of Yards and Docks or something in the old days, and probably something else before that.

LW: Yeah, valet. They've got so many -- fingers in so many things now that --

DH: Have you been back to Washington lately?

LW: I went back in -- I went through there about six years ago.

DH: Well, you'd be lost now, because all the Navy buildings are gone; that whole -- all the main Navy and Munitions are all completely cleaned. I was in an interior building back there before I came here, and I watched them knock them down, so I guess it's all planted the grass by now, but

they were temporary for World War I; they were supposed to have been torn down in the 20s, I guess.

LW: Guess they took care of everything in that place. When I was there, and a little later on, they built one over across the Potomac there, still kept some of that I think there in the old buildings.

DH: Well, now they're moved clear over to the Crystal Plaza, they call it, over across 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge and over on the Virginia side, that's just a big complex of high rises, office buildings. That's where most of them are now.

LW: Is that right? Moving too fast for me.

DH: Well now, when you left Pearl Harbor what did you use for your flagship, what were you --

LW: My flagship was the cruiser San Diego, they were the light --

DH: Anti-aircraft cruisers?

LW: -- anti-aircraft cruisers. And, I had those about a year and then I got word to move within 24 hours, take command of the Boston, the Baltimore, and the [Quincy?] and all the big, heavy cruiser group. It was a nice command, that was the best cruiser command in the Pacific.

DH: And what action did you all get involved with?

LW: Well, I was in 13, I have 13 combat stars, there are many that got more than that, I would think.

DH: That's quite a bunch of them.

LW: Because I never came back, so many people spent a couple years and went back, come spend a year or so, and then came back maybe, or so on and so forth. But, I was at sea continuously for five and a half years, counting Nimitz's duty, sea duty, which it was, that was the air, so --

DH: Well, you got in on almost everything.

LW: Pretty nearly everything. Started out first with one combat star for Pearl Harbor, I was the only -- there were only two large ships huddled in the harbor that morning, and mine was one of them.

DH: Is that right, this was the San Diego?

LW: Yeah, wait until I show you a picture where we were there.

DH: All right.

LW: That's Pearl Harbor, that's a picture we captured from the Japanese, you've seen that picture.

DH: Yeah, that's a beautiful picture.

LW: That's my cruiser there. See her whole tack was made along here and whole tack was made along here, they were after this spot here, because that's where the aircraft goes.

DH: I see, that's the opposite side from this was battleship row.

LW: They were all -- that ship was hit, that one was hit and burned over, that one, two got away, I think at time I

think that was the old Idaho was a battleship there, or not the Idaho but the Utah, I think.

DH: Now, what's causing all the ripples right here? It looks like an explosion or something.

LW: Yeah, that probably is. And I got a full attack on my ship, but they missed on everything; the torpedoes went astern and the bombs all lasted down here, I always claimed that was due to my anti-aircraft, they were putting those things out in front --

DH: You had a lot --

LW: -- anyway, I aimed to turn around and get away from that dock which was -- no ship had ever left that dock without tugs, so (inaudible) right in here, I had to stop here for a while. Because, that Japanese sub was there, Japanese sub there --

DH: Is this the way out, down here?

LW: That's the way out around here, yeah; you don't just cut off to (inaudible).

DH: Yeah, this is a cloud of smoke going up right there.

LW: Yeah, that's what that is.

DH: Well, that's a beautiful picture.

LW: And, well, that's the way it was then.

DH: This surrender signing was the highlight in his career, wasn't it?

LW: That's me right there.

DH: Oh, you're right over his head -- right over his hat.

LW: But this is a sunset of the first day, there's my cruiser, sailor Fujiyama in the background, there's my cruiser at the beginning of it.

DH: Right at the beginning and right at the end.

LW: So I was there at the beginning and right through to the end.

DH: We got a tape recording in just the other day from the National Archives of the surrender ceremony, it was all recorded, and I had realized that it was available and we got it from them with MacArthur saying calling various people to come and stand by as people sign. We're having some little knives, some little letter openers made up, they sent us a piece of decking off the Missouri and we're having some of these made with plastic handles and little bitty fragments of the wood, and this picture reduced down to a postage stamp embedded in the handle of the thing there; we're supposed to have those to us by next week, if all goes well.

LW: When I first started -- retired here in 1949, I had those walls covered with war pictures.

DH: Gee, yeah, you've got a lot of pictures up still, now.

LW: But, I took them all down but they're stowed away somewhere, I rented the house and I came back but these pictures had fallen, I just repaired this, I just took it and built a new frame around that. (Inaudible), that's (inaudible) before the war.

DH: Which is that?

LW: That's the Idaho.

DH: I see. Yeah, I see the float plane on the back there.

LW: There was the San Diego, you see, my cruiser there, and the Boston that was my flagship, and that was my flagship.

DH: I think those anti-aircraft cruisers were the prettiest design of any warships.

LW: Yeah, they were -- this was the Detroit, my cruiser that couldn't get out of Pearl Harbor.

DH: Now, that was the old, what'd they call that, the marble-head class with the four stacks?

LW: Yeah, that's right.

DH: I went to New Caledonia on the San Juan, now that probably was one of yours.

LW: Oh yeah, she was, yeah, yeah, sure.

DH: It was the same design; it was how many of those anti-aircraft cruisers were there, where they all together?

LW: Not at all, not necessarily, I had about four of them. When I had command of this type of cruiser, (inaudible),

very often, we were pretty skinny in those days, I was in the crowd that went up and made to push the tack on the ball, and this ship had depth charges and it had destroyer sound gear. So, I could run with the destroyers, you see, so I was in the screen and commanded all the destroyers as well as the cruisers in the early stages. Later on when I got into this type of -- we stayed back behind the destroyers because we didn't have sound gear to attack a submarine.

DH: You were a submariner too for a while?

LW: Yeah, submarine World War I, I was at 'em eight and a half years.

DH: Really?

LW: Yeah.

DH: We thought we would try that's one of the best spans of development of Nimitz's career from the Holland boat which he sailed on as a midshipman, clear through he sailed on the Nautilus before he died, and we thought that would be an interesting -- I don't think of anything else that would show such a great development of technique and --

LW: I'll tell you, submarine was great training for officers, young officers; you have a lot of responsibility and you had command -- you've got a great admiral alive now, still alive, that is a Texan, [J. O. Richardson?].

DH: Where does he live now?

LW: He lives in Washington.

DH: In Washington, DC?

LW: He's a great man.

DH: We'd better go see him.

LW: I've seen him.

DH: J. O. Richardson.

LW: Yeah, I talk -- not normally he makes much sense, now, he's -- I think he's about 90. But, he was a wonderful fellow, and he was Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, J. O. Richardson, and he also commanded a fleet.

DH: We'll have to find him.

LW: He's the man that went back and told President Roosevelt that he wasn't ready to flight the fleet, that their plans for him to go out and go across the Pacific and fight the Japanese was all a bunk, but he (inaudible) the supply ship to supply him, the tankers, it was a physical impossibility.

DH: What year would that have been, before...?

LW: That was before [Kimball?]; so Nimitz says -- I mean Roosevelt says here, the name he's been telling they could do all this thing if we can't do that, we'll get somebody else that can. He was relieved. J. O. Richardson never talked about that, he often said, "I hope I have sense



during my life to keep my mouth shut." And he has. But, he was a great man, too.

DH: We'd like to find him. That's a beautiful --

LW: That was a gunnery officer.

DH: On the [Augustus?]? And the Mayflower? Was this --

LW: Yeah I was on the Mayflower. I went from submarine, dirty dungarees into the White House. [laughs] That's an A.

DH: This was a presidential yacht, was it?

LW: Yeah. This was another yacht. The Yangtze River.

DH: Oh. [Isabel?]. And whose yacht was that?

LW: Well, I think -- Who is the man that developed the Jeep? Willie, I think (inaudible).

DH: Willis? Like, you mean Willie's --

LW: Motor car. Motorcycle.

DH: Uh huh. It was ninety out.

LW: He was the -- I think that was his yacht. And she was the flagship of the admiral on the Yangtze River.

DH: Did they take it over in World War I?

LW: Yeah, they took it over in World War I, yeah.

DH: That's interesting. I'd never seen that one before. We've got a rather interesting note in there from Commander [Alan?], who gave us those old letters, in which he talks about the Japanese scare in 1907. When they came into

Manila Bay, I think that's where he was talking about, and they were worried even then.

LW: There's a book on (inaudible) a while ago, about Franklin Roosevelt -- about Teddy Roosevelt. That was crown prince of Denmark, I was his personal aid for three weeks.

DH: Oh, I see, Prince Frederick.

LW: He's now the king.

DH: I see.

LW: That's a press conference we're holding there at the embassy.

DH: Now is this Nimitz's office?

LW: That's Nimitz's office, yeah.

DH: And that was in the new (inaudible), or was this in an old sub --

LW: No, that was in (inaudible).

DH: So that's a very ordinary looking -- of course this isn't a security type of thing, I mean this is above the ground. Officers -- It's furnished with a glass-covered desk, and a bunch of stuff on it. That's a good picture of you.

LW: Yes, you know... I'll tell you another thing about him, you know. He wouldn't stand for any publicity. And he was bombarded. Of course, all the press and everybody was a point of pride of my part of the staff. They bombarded him, and the newspapers, and *Time*. They always wanted to

start doing things on him, there was pressure on me at *Time Magazine* too. Leyte got on the front of *Time Magazine*, they wrote an article about him. Well, his answer was that he had noted in the past that anybody who got the picture in *Time* took a fall pretty soon after that and disappeared.

(laughs)

DH: (laughs)

LW: He didn't want any of that. And he wouldn't have any part of that.

DH: Is that so?

LW: And to sign a thing like that, he didn't believe in that in the early stages, either.

DH: In press conferences?

LW: No, in giving people photographs.

DH: Oh, I see, I see.

LW: So my wife was back here, and she'd known Admiral Nimitz. And it was him, really, he didn't know what way the world was going at that time, and he came up to me and he said: "You get an autographed picture of Admiral Nimitz for me, will you?" So I said to the admiral, "May I borrow this picture of you," he looked kind of funny. And he dug out this picture, and he's formal as hell. He does do Captain and this is Wiltse, and so on and so forth. And he didn't want to give me that picture. (laughs) Later on, as he

got (inaudible), I was giving him a ride and get one for later on, because he'd been very (inaudible) begin winning the war, and became very generous, warm-hearted.

DH: And salutations?

LW: And salutations. He knew where he was going, and he was on the road to victory, but before that, he wasn't going to have any of this funny business and getting personal publicity.

DH: (laughs) Well, somebody commented about how his attitude towards press conferences kind of changed as he went on.

LW: A lot. He changed some during my time there, because... we were very rigid. And we never believed in publicity in the Navy in those days.

DH: Yeah, I guess he felt that whatever he went out in the way of publicity would be aid and comfort to the enemy.

LW: Yes. And not only that, it was more of us -- really a principle among military to hide the character and names of your men who are behind the big moves. Because they cited those, and they'd study their waitresses and that sort of thing. It was considered a (inaudible) men shouldn't be publicized, and that was the Navy point of view. And that went on, and of course I had all the censorship policies were laid down by my office, and they were -- I more of less hewed to the old thing of pretty strict censorship.

And he used to ridicule me -- he was right down my line of sight, (inaudible) and you got along further, and I think that he felt that maybe the public ought to know more. But also Knox was putting terrific pressure on the Navy to put more newspaper people all the time down on the ships, and down where the halls where they had enough food to carry on while the canal would let alone bolts and nuts to repair their planes, and they had all these press people running back and forth on planes and that sort of thing. And I think Nimitz kind of swung with the national tide on the thing. You know Knox seemed to be at times putting his press and the political side ahead of the military, which they often do when they're doing very strongly, these days. In the old days, military used to tell them to get out on a horse and ride off. But they can't do it now.

DH: Times have changed. Well you said something about how [Bill?] you had happened to get re-assigned to do the kind of work -- he was on active duty, wasn't he?

LW: Yeah [Utah?] on active duty. And my press man came to me with the idea that (inaudible) on the shore, and he would - (inaudible) in the Navy. It was a whole situation. I said, well, how about take it up with Admiral Nimitz and see if we can't put him out in inactive duty. Because, you know, the Japanese were in a very un-stabilized

condition there. There was to have somebody there who'd put stuff in the air once in a while, building up morale and making him a part of our citizenry. (inaudible) to get citizens. Bill did a tremendous job, and it was great.

DH: Was he on the air as well as writing? Did he broadcast or was he --

LW: Yeah, he was a regular broadcaster. That's what we put him out to do.

DH: Well he's still managing editor of the [Star Bulletin?], I called him when we got ready to release this. I just wanted to make sure that he understood what we wanted to do, so I called him and hung a little.

LW: He's a wonderful fellow.

DH: Very nice man, apparently still quite active in the paper there. [Vern Hinkley?] was a good friend of ours, I don't know if you ever knew him. He was managing editor of the *Star Bulletin Time*, we lived on the big island.

LW: What year was that?

DH: Hinkley, that was in 42 -- let's see, 46, 47.

LW: Yes, I remember his name, I can't quite recall his face.

DH: 48, 49. I kind of think maybe, Bill, you had followed him, and his managing editor. Well, lots of good --

LW: I had some old photograph books there, but I think all the pictures I've showed you, should I take a look to see them?

DH: Yeah, I'd sure think that'd be fine.

LW: (inaudible) I've got something there.

DH: You sure have.

LW: Now that's (inaudible). That's my wife. There's  
(inaudible). And I was at that painting of Pearl Harbor,  
you know.

DH: Yeah, I don't think I ever saw it. I hadn't seen this one.

LW: Well, the fellow who made that, he went ahead and made the  
first one I think. And they made a great effort to try and  
put that in the Naval Academy. And I took them down if  
they ever tried and put that in the Naval Academy, to hold  
up with defeat, a picture with defeat like that.

DH: Oh, I've seen this one now -- Oh no, I didn't, I saw one a  
loading Corregidor, something on the --

LW: On gulf?

DH: Yeah, I thought so.

LW: Well that's me, that's gulfed. Now that's -- I'm taking  
that off for someone [Raymond?] bought it from Corregidor.

DH: Uh huh, so that is the same -- it looks like the same  
picture. And which was your -- were you on submarines at  
this -- no, that wasn't --

LW: No, I had commanded the cruiser.

DH: I see, and they were trying to --

LW: They'd come from Pearl Harbor, and I was convoying a group of ships back to San Francisco. And I took all, oh, about 21 million dollars' worth.

DH: Gee, oy.

LW: And it came aboard to me, but no inventory. Nobody had known anything about it.

DH: (whistles)

LW: I'd made the first inventory. I demanded an inventory as I took it aboard.

DH: Boy, I would think so.

LW: Half those buyers had got no papers on them.

DH: (laughs)

LW: Didn't know who they brought them to. It was all Hong Kong money, you know -- and I was in Hong Kong about a month ago, and I then there went into one of those banks to see the President, and tell him that he owed me a commission on -- You know, that's salvage. By law, in salvage, you're entitled to (laughs) -- You could draw...

DH: You should've done that.

LW: Yeah. I think that's the southern ring coming along side, I believe.

DH: Yeah, it looks like the same one. Sold on the Detroit.

Gee whiz. There's another one of --

LW: Oh, there's a picture of Nimitz.



DH: Right, yeah.

LW: Have you seen that one?

DH: I sure have.

B: Howdy do?

DH: Hello, how are you?

B: Sorry to have to leave before I got here --

DH: Very nice to meet you. We're just enjoying some reminiscences here.

B: Oh, that's nice.

DH: Yeah, I mentioned [Stuart?] -- that was the name, and this was his friend, and that as when they were mid-ship, and this is Nimitz here.

LW: (inaudible)

DH: How about that. Looks like he's mounted on a bulkhead or something, this...

LW: Look at that, flag from Admiral Nimitz --

DH: Battle of Midway, June 42. Japan was past, trying to save face, to Admiral Nimitz, and paid compliments to Marine defense forces. Somebody, Colonel U.S.M.C. Commanding. "Dear Admiral Nimitz, now that things have quieted down somewhat, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for my promotion. The Eagles and the dispatch, which transmitted the promotion. I would also like to thank Captain Davis, who the Eagle... two cent I think it was

grand of both of you, I shall (inaudible) dispatch always. And I'm sending you under separate cover, drawing made by our battalion artist. I think it's good, and thought you'd enjoy it. It symbolizes things very well, I think.

Respectfully and sincerely yours"... Shannon, it looks like. The frame on the drawing is made from a wing of Jap plane brought down from near C.P., your command post, I guess. That's what this is, I was trying to figure out what the thing was mounted on. That's great, well when we get to the point where we are trying to do the book on Nimitz's humor, maybe I can borrow this long enough to take a photograph of it --

LW: Yes you can.

DH: And print that in the book. But that's...

LW: I think that's the first regular book that came back.

DH: Carlson's Marine raiders return from first raid of war. Make it out. I've heard of that.

LW: It's a striking picture.

DH: Isn't it a very, almost like a posed on, isn't it? Gee.

LW: They landed in the middle of the night, you know.

(inaudible)... the Japs had a hell of a time. Got out, and they went in the submarine, in the middle of the night.

DH: Well now, this looks like a submarine deck right here.

And looks almost like, this must be a canvas or something.

I can't figure out why it's so white. But here's a big...

LW: Ship there.

DH: Yeah. Gee, that is a good picture. Carlson presents Jap arms Nimitz from American Raid (inaudible) Now, I tell you who I got in touch with, and got a nice note from just a couple weeks ago is General Vandegrift. He lives in Florida now. And the reason I -- I wrote and said every picture we found lately has had you in it, and where are you? So he wrote back and what this reminded me of was, there was a picture of Nimitz presenting a medal to Carlson on Guadalcanal. Now this is Marine -- no that's an Army general here, apparently.

LW: Oh yeah, that's that one, the tee with the air. Airman. He had command of the Air Force in Honolulu at the time. I know his name very well but I can't think of it right now.

DH: I was thinking of Richardson was the Army --

LW: General, yeah. No, he followed Richardson.

DH: I see.

LW: Although he was an Air Admiral, for a while there he was the senior army then. Well now there's --

DH: Honolulu women leaders in the war effort. Yeah, there he is.

LW: There he is there, too.

DH: They were apparently -- somebody was telling about how they were trying to get him to let the gals go out into the forward area. And he always was real resistant to that. And so they put all the prettiest girls they could get in uniform around him, and he was very uncomfortable, because he couldn't get used to having them salute him.

LW: Well, this was dropped over in Guadalcanal, by the Japs.

DH: Japs here, under Guadalcanal, summer 42. (laughs)

LW: (laughs)

DH: Oh, that's wonderful. And what is that -- Oh, Jap translation, surrender ticket. "The bearer of this ticket is surrendered. It's strictly forbidden to kill him."  
(laughs)

LW: (laughs)

DH: Oh, gee, how about that. And there was a torpedo home in the battles here. Oh, there's the staff. And what'd they say, that that grew to something like 600.

LW: (inaudible) it's Bronx. And this is a medical officer.

DH: I see.

LW: And this is (inaudible) -- my voice sunk, I gotta get rid of the thing. My voice is not too good. But he came through here, and I saw him down at the beach club. And he was a guest of Bill Kellogg, who was the president of

the club, and (inaudible). And he, Kellogg, asked him for an autographed picture, you see. And I was across the room, and I'd been over and talked to him. Later on, Bill Kellogg said that he'd gotten the autographed picture, and he had a stipulation that I would sign it too! Well, I told Bill Kellogg I was never going to put my name along his on his picture. He could just take that away. I didn't have the nerve to sign that thing, but he wanted to include me in anything he did! And he had a wonderful personality in that way. He was a very -- well, he wasn't a retiring man, but he was a very modest man. And if he had reaped any laurels at all, he wanted everybody else to enjoy it with him. And he wanted them to have the credit, too.

DH: Well, that's pretty unusual in a leader.

LW: Yes, it is.

DH: We've gotten the reminiscences of Hal Lamar, and he brings this -- do you remember his flag lieutenant, [Artson Lamar?], he lives in Dallas now.

LW: Oh, he does?

DH: Yeah, and he wrote up a whole bunch of these little, mostly amusing things that happened when he was a flag lieutenant.

LW: Oh, well I was there at the same time in the city. He didn't have any jokes on me, did he? (laughs)

DH: No, I don't think so.

LW: I was Assistant Chief of Staff when I was right there in the hall and the office right next to his. And his was right next to the Flag Lieutenant right next to the Admiral.

DH: Was it in [CINCPAC?] Headquarters?

LW: Yes. Folks in Honolulu.

DH: This was up above Pearl Harbor, as I recall, was it?

LW: Well, when I joined as staff, I joined as staff in I think in April of '42, I had command of a cruiser at Pearl Harbor day. And he brought me over there, and incidentally I didn't want to go on his staff, to be perfectly frank, and he called me over. Because I had a command at sea, and that was his biggest thing for me. And I ran over to save my (inaudible) in the Navy department. And he said he wanted me to come over as Assistant Chief of Staff. And I said to him, "Admiral, I've been with you before, you know, I'm a little dumb. And I haven't been to the war college." And I said, "I think you could get somebody a lot more talented. I have." He had put the funniest expression on his face. He put it over, he says, "Back up and come over here, you'll do."

DH: Very nice. Well, is it true he kept the whole staff when he got out there on Christmas day, after the Pearl Harbor,

they said that most everybody was pretty uneasy and anxious because they thought they'd all get transferred. And that he didn't move any of them, I heard that story.

LW: No, he didn't move any of them. I don't know why the assistants (inaudible). He really had two assistants (inaudible) before I got there in the lower months of the war. And one of them was Smith, who had been Chief of Staff to Kimmel. And I think he went out anyway, with Kimmel. And then there was a man in 1910, I've forgotten his name now. He was there for a while. He was about four years senior to me. He'd left, and I don't know why he left.

DH: Who was Chief of Staff at the time you were there?

LW: [Draemel?] And Draemel had been my skipper -- or, my admiral on the Detroit. I'd been Captain of his flagship.

DH: Was his name [Milo?]?

LW: Milo. Milo Draemel. Now, he died. You should've gotten a hold of him, well I don't know him, though.

DH: It's funny how little bits and pieces kind of fall together. These are letters from an old retired commander who served with Nimitz on the Decatur, apparently the only officer left alive. This is on the [Shawmut?], going from Seattle to Yokohama, March 1906. Draemel M.F., mid shipman. So he's, I don't know which one he is, but he's

in that picture. We can probably figure it out, he may say from left to right. But I wondered when I saw that, it's an unusual name, I wondered if that was the same man.

LW: You've got these people clouded in your mind, a lot of them, I can tell you that.

DH: Well old Commander Alan, they gave me these -- these are the letters he wrote to his mother from the Decatur, when they were out in the Philippines. And that was the cruise -- it was the destroyer that Nimitz ran aground, you remember?

LW: Oh, he did? I never knew that.

DH: He got court marshaled for it.

LW: Oh, I know, I believe he said he was court marshaled once.

DH: It's kind of a funny yarn, he says that -- the way he told it, Secretary Forrestal called him in after the loss, was it the Indianapolis that was torpedoed, where they lost so many people? --

LW: Yes, yes.

DH: And the captain was being court marshaled. His name was [McVey?], I think. And Forrestal asked Nimitz if an officer had ever reached flag rank after being court marshaled, he said yeah, you're looking at one.

LW: Ah, yes. They didn't in those days, though.

DH: I'm sure of it.



LW: But they did... Well, there's a fellow alive now who had a big battleship that ran aground.

DH: The Missouri ran aground one time, was that it?

LW: Up in Maine, I think, or someplace up there. (inaudible)

DH: Well, one of the things we planned to do down here --

LW: Oh, that might be him back there, I can't quite identify him.

DH: Let's see if I can figure out which one he is. One of the things we planned to do down here at Fredericksburg is to tell the story of the Second World War in the Pacific, in a way that doesn't -- I mean, war is not a popular subject, but I think we can tell it as part of history, and I think we can tell about the good things that come about as side effects of the increased technology, the increased medical knowledge and things as a result of the stimulation of having a war going on. And we thought maybe we could restore -- to tell a story about how Nimitz was sent out there right after Pearl Harbor -- restore a room there in the CINCPAC Headquarters. And I'd like your advice, if you were going to select one, that we would reproduce as a planning room, I don't know what they would have called it, but there were rooms underground, weren't there?

LW: Yes, they were the -- well, it was the operational and planning room, I'd say. I don't know if that's where...

all the strategy and tactics and study of the war was made, and then the planning happened. I was in the, I'd say the staff was divided up in half and half in number of desks. And I had all the administrative bent, you see. And they had all the planning and operating below. And Draemel came over from under, he got out to my ship right away when the war started. And he went over there and became Chief of Staff. And he was a very fine man. I don't know just what the situation was after Midway. He planned and developed Midway to a great extent (inaudible). But he came ashore, and then [Spruance?] came over and took his possession. That was not long after Midway.

DH: I don't suppose there's been a great change -- I'm thinking again about how we would find out how this room, whichever room we choose, a planning room found under the ground, that we could make a replica of, probably looks pretty much the same, unless... I don't know, when you left CINCPAC --

LW: I left CINCPAC -- let's see, I went to them in April of '42, and I left in August of '43. I was about a year and four months with them. But in August of '43, I was made an admiral.

DH: And then where did you go?

LW: And I had asked for a command at sea where I'd come from, and so he gave me a cruiser bush. And then I was at sea

the whole rest of the time during the war. I had a year and a half at sea there just before the war started, just ready to come ashore, and the war broke out, and I was in the Pacific the next four years! So I had five and a half years out in Honolulu, or west of it.

DH: Operating out of Pearl Harbor as your home base?

LW: Well, no, I was largely with the commanding cruisers and the air craft task forces. I was right out in front all the time. But when I first went to Nimitz's staff, we had nothing but a few rooms, you know, on top of the old submarine building there, the upper floor. And then we developed that section up there, where the CINCPAC is --

DH: [Malakalapa?]

LW: [Malakalapa?], that's it. And we built all that, that command post and the surrounding houses, there.

DH: And that is CINCPAC headquarters to this day, isn't it?

LW: I think it is. I think it still is, (inaudible).

DH: I was out there the tag end of '45 on a D.E., and I can remember having a friend up there, and he took me someplace in that building where I remember looking through a door, and he said "That's the latest thing we've got," and it was that high speed reader projecting information on a screen of some sort. It was a teletype sort of a thing. But it was a visual -- somehow you could read these things as they

were coming on, a whole room full of people could. Well, can you remember the type of furnishing in any one of those rooms? We might be able to find some old photographs from CINCPAC, but maybe not. Whether it would've had a plotting board and blackboards or stuff like that, or if it was a pretty simple kind of a room.

LW: Well, I don't know... I don't believe I have any old pictures of it. The only thing I've got is pictures of staff of the time I was there.

DH: Well I imagine that somewhere, somebody probably does have some photographs of how the building was. I'm thinking again about how we would find out how to furnish it --

LW: Well I wonder if the civil engineers wouldn't have it in their files?

DH: I bet they would.

LW: Because they was down under their supervision.

DH: Well we're pretty lucky if the present CINCPAC is Admiral [Clary?], and he was a submariner, and we've got the fairwater off of his old submarine there at our center now. So he's kind of interested in what we're doing, so I imagine he could probably help us dig out some photographs.

LW: How do you finance your --

DH: Well we're a state operation, but we're going to have to go to a foundation, there's an Admiral Nimitz Foundation

that's helping us, a non-profit foundation, and they're going to start tapping other Texas foundations to see if that won't be a possible way of doing it. We're figuring on it costing about four million dollars by the time we get everything restored, and all this stuff back to build -- we're going to build a landscaped history garden out in back, where the chronology of the Pacific War will be told, starting with Pearl Harbor, then going to Midway, and step by step, tell the progress in an interesting way, by showing actual objects. If we can find a Catalina, for instance, we'll have that suspended somehow out there, and we'll get a landing craft for [tarwood?] perhaps, and then a tank for Guadalcanal, and have actual objects.

LW: Oh yeah, that'll be very nice.

DH: It'll be a different way of --

LW: And this will be right in Fredericksburg, in Texas.

DH: We're planning on using a --

LW: They make quite a shrine for him there.

DH: Yes indeed.

LW: They have the University of Washington up here, they picked up a room there for him.

DH: Is that so?

LW: And it's called the Admiral Nimitz Room. And they did a little donation of that.

DH: I probably ought to get in touch with them. Now, you mean University of California.

LW: Yep, yeah.

DH: Up in Berkeley?

LW: Yeah.

DH: Because he started the first --

LW: R.O.T.C.

DH: R.O.T.C.

LW: That's right.

DH: I see. We went up and saw Mrs. Nimitz a couple of months ago.

LW: She's living there now.

DH: She lives in Berkeley.

LW: How is she?

DH: She's fine. She's bright and chipper, and she told us some of his better stories. We had the little recorder going, and she read a couple of things... his favorite prayer...

LW: Who's -- Of course, when I started the war, I decided to keep a lot of papers. And I wrote some of these things and they'd always get larger and larger, and pretty soon I'd be getting orders to take command air, here I shipped in cruisers... I went from commanding one lighter group to a heavy group of cruisers. And I bounced around. Every time I moved, I had six pounds of notes to take. And all the

papers I ever had, I just threw it out the window when it was over. But I don't if already you know it or not, but Nimitz had some idea of maybe future study or future instances of the war. Now, I don't think he ever kept a diary. But what he did, he had a drawer in the lower-right-hand desk of his, where he threw every paper he wanted to save. And he told me several times that when I retire, "I may go back in the mountains and get a home in the California mountains, which I love very much, and I might write." And when it came to it, he would never write his -- he was that type of man, he said there was too many books. Too many people had written too many books about the war. And he was not going to be one of them. Now, somebody must have those --

DH: They shipped a lot of -- Mrs. Nimitz had most of his stuff, went back to Annapolis, and I imagine that's... They're just finishing a new Nimitz Library, as you know.

LW: Of course, he had the official records, which I suppose the Navy department has, of all the operations. You know, that sort of thing. And I don't remember what form they've ever put those things in, but I imagine they've got some of those things in a lot of decent form, where they're all accessible. But he loved a good joke. And he had carried on quite a good correspondence with a number of his old

cronies, and there were a number of them who were real joke tellers. And he had piles of odds and ends like that thrown in that desk, and I guess he emptied it out every once in a while. Because I'd just see him throw stuff in there all the time. I don't know what (inaudible)

DH: Well, it'd be a shame if he hadn't save them all. I bet he shipped them home and she said they had sent most of his stuff back to Annapolis, so I hope maybe the Naval Institute or somebody there may have it. Now, do you remember any favorite stories? Anything come back to you?

LW: Now, I don't quite remember any of his particular stories. He had a lot of them.

DH: Did you know a Harry Hill? Admiral Hill?

LW: Yes, yes.

DH: He's a cousin of ours, and we were back at a --

LW: I played on a lacrosse team as a plane, but he was a first class one. He's class 11, I'm class 14. And so I got to know Harry very well, because I was the only one in the plebe class that made lacrosse team, so they all used to take good care of me. And Harry Hill was always very nice to me.

DH: Great man.

LW: Yeah, but I never (inaudible) with him, in the Navy.



DH: Well, we went to his idea of a birthday party back at the club there, in Annapolis, we were living back in Washington then. And, when he heard that we were coming down to join the Nimitz Project, he said, well let me show you something. And he pulls out his wallet, and there he's got the last joke that Nimitz said to him. The one about piles for peers was the name of it. And he had to take that thing out and unfold it, and he ended up giving it to me, finally, but he said that was the last, and he must've been on this exchange list with Nimitz --

LW: Not at that time (inaudible)... They were mostly old classmates. I remember one fellow that used to send me all kinds of -- I've forgotten his name --

DH: Stuart? He and George Stuart, apparently, were classmates who were close, but I think maybe he died before --

LW: I don't remember him. He died before World War II --

DH: I think so.

LW: -- Because I don't remember him. (inaudible) the admiral talk about him.

DH: Well, we're collecting humorous stories that we're going to put into a little book. We're collecting another one -- we're going to call it "I Remember Nimitz" or some title like that. People remembering incidents of kindness or

something that he granted was a very considerate, kindly thing --

LW: He was always doing things for people. He's quite a remarkable man, too, in that he never fastened on to anybody. You know, a lot of men who get their favorites around them, and they keep them, and they stay there, and that's it. That's the ball. But he was a wonderful man in that respect, that he never tied anybody to him, or tried to develop a personal loyalty to him. A lot of the great command people do that, you know. They build it almost into a club. And it's probably maybe a very good thing, but Nimitz never felt that way. He felt a man should move, or do what he wanted to. And he would never tie anybody down to him. And he had a roll of people through his staff. Now, he told me -- I used to walk the deck with him a great deal. What we called the deck, especially out in the, before we went over to Makalapa. It was a place up above. And he could, especially the middle of the morning, he couldn't stay in that place all morning. He'd come into my office, and say "Come on up and walk with me." And I'd go up and walk with him, back and forth on the top. Sometimes he'd walk, but sometimes he wouldn't -- or, talk, I mean. Sometimes he wouldn't. But he had to break that strain of tension -- break that off by walking for 15

minutes or something like that. And walking one day with him, he'd said, "What would you like to do?" I said I'd rather have command of a ship than any job in the Navy. I says, you're a king on a ship, you're right in the midst of things, you handle your ship, and you have a fighting unit that is something compact, and a joy to have for a professional man. I told him I didn't think flag rank could compare with the prestige of captain and the position where he is, and still being in contact with people. Being right down in the Navy, it would get to be (inaudible) nobody talks to you. Where you don't have any personal contact. But anyway, I told him, I'd rather have command of a ship. And he said "Well, I'll tell you one thing. Whenever you feel you want to go back to sea, you always hope that I'll let you go." When I made flag rank, I didn't have any business staying there anyway. I moved out of the Assistant Chief of Staff. But he had treated all the people like that. He never hung on to them. And if there was a better opportunity for the individual than being on his staff, let him go. It shows what great confidence he had in himself, what a great understanding he had for other people. We ran into people all the time (inaudible) lots of staff during the war, people wanted to get away and get into more active combat and that sort of

thing. Got to let them go. I was kind of that way myself

--

DH: (laughs)

LW: (laughs) I had a good man, I didn't like to let him go!

But he wasn't afraid to change horses with him at any time, or would ever lose his (inaudible). He had one little episode, probably. I don't know if anybody's ever told you that he kept a pad by his bed at night. And every time I opened it, he awakened during the night, which he did a great deal. His mind would (inaudible) can you write down the notes on my pad. And he'd have it in the morning, when he got up.

DH: That's good.

LW: Did you ever hear that?

DH: No. But he could quit worrying about it now.

LW: He also used to break his -- later on he used to break the tension in his daily life by setting up a little pistol range. And he had a little pistol range set outside there, where he'd come in, take you out and challenge you to a little shooting, you know.

DH: Right next to headquarters?

LW: Yeah, right next to headquarters. And he was a hell of a good shot, too, he could beat on almost everything. And

his other intention getting home, he used to play horse shoes a lot. Nobody could ever beat him at horseshoes.

DH: I've seen pictures of him doing that.

LW: And, of course, he used to go swimming the other side. And he was a very good swimmer. And he liked to swim down the coast, you know.

DH: Go out from the beach.

LW: By the way, he'd swim long distance. Spruance came there, and Spruance was a slender man. He didn't look like he had the know-how. He was willowy, and slender, but he didn't look like he was a powerful man at all. I'll never forget the day we went over there and Spruance had just come to the staff, and he said well let's swim down the coast. (inaudible) So his chief of staff, little cute little things about the darts and they swam down there. And when they got to a point where Nimitz got tired and stopped, Spruance went on and on. (laughs) He was quite a surprise type, he usually was prettier in everything he did.

DH: But I guess Spruance and Halsey were quite a wide contrast of personalities. I'm thinking about the third fleet and the fifth fleet. I mean Halsey -- from what I've read, I was out there too but I never did see him, but thinking about the rather blustery Halsey, compared to the scholarly type that Spruance was.

LW: Yeah, they were two different types entirely. Both of them were superb men, but in a different way.

DH: That's what I mean.

LW: Well, Nimitz said that -- he said that Spruance, or that Halsey should've had the battle. You know, the battle after we took the Guam group.

DH: Yeah, the Mariana.

LW: And the fight came from the --

DH: Saipan to Guam.

LW: He said that Halsey should've had command of that battle. And Spruance had had command of the battle at the Philippines -- you know, Leyte Gulf.

DH: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's when Halsey went up north.

LW: Yeah. Spruance was the man who selected himself and protected the landing boards as a primary thing. Halsey was a destructive man who wanted to go all out and destroy and forget about the [landing?]. (laughs)

DH: Yeah, I just was reading about the -- I guess the battle of, what is it, Leyte Gulf? The second battle of the Philippine Sea?

LW: (inaudible)

DH: San Bernardino Straits?

LW: Yeah, I guess they call it that.

DH: They said that was one of the greatest naval battles that ever was fought, that it was spread over more area.

LW: Yes, yes it was.

DH: And that's where they crossed the [T?].

LW: Yeah, where Oldendorf crossed the T down below. And Nimitz wrote that the force was coming in, but then went up to strike the air force that was coming down. The Japanese came in from three angles: they came in from the south, they came in from the west, and they came in from the north. It was quite a well-planned little thing, but it didn't get them anywhere.

DH: That was just about the end of their active naval participation.

LW: Yeah, their debut was ruined after that.

DH: Was the T ever crossed in World War II except that one time that you know of? I never did hear --

LW: No, I think that's the only time. Some of the minor engagements might've, or some of the destroyers getting together.

DH: We thought we would try and work out a visitor participation kind of a game there at our museum, where people can see a problem, about here comes the enemy forces, and here you go, and what would you do?

END OF AUDIO FILE