

***THE ADMIRAL NIMITZ HISTORIC SITE -
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR***

***Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas***

***Interview with Jim Sturgill
USS Dale***

Interview With Jim Sturgill

This is Peter Hammerson. Today is November 6, 2001. I am interviewing Mr. Jim Sturgill, and this interview is taking place at Bethany Lutheran Church, 110 West Austin, in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks & Wildlife, for the preservation of historic information relating to this site. And with that as an introduction, a little background.

Mr. Hammerson: Where and when were you born?

Mr. Sturgill: I was born in Harrison, Arkansas, January 24, 1921.

Mr. Hammerson: And the names of your parents?

Mr. Sturgill: D. H. Sturgill and Minty Mae Sturgill, her maiden name was Cowan.

Mr. Hammerson: What were you doing before you entered the service ice?

Mr. Sturgill: I was in the CCC camps.

Mr. Hammerson: Good old CCC. That's another history that we need to keep. And when did you enlist?

Mr. Sturgill: I enlisted July 18, 1940.

Mr. Hammerson: So you beat the deadline of 7 December. Why did you happen to choose the Navy?

Mr. Sturgill: I don't really know. I just thought I'd like to go to sea.

Mr. Hammerson: See the world, right? Where did you take your basic training?

Mr. Sturgill: San Diego, California.

Mr. Hammerson: And would you consider that training good at that time?

Mr. Sturgill: I think it was real good. I got acquainted with some of the things that you'd do on board ship, and some of the things on the ocean.

Mr. Hammerson: What was your first ship? How did you happen to get over to Hawaii?

Mr. Sturgill: I left the basic training at Long Beach, California. My records show I was on board the *New Mexico* battleship. Yes, I was, for a few hours. Then they decided that they wanted us over in Hawaii and I was taken from there and went on board the *Saratoga* for further transportation to Honolulu. during that time they had a high speed test run, I don't remember the exact figures, but it made a record time trip leaving Long Beach

and getting to Hawaii, and I guess that was to see how quick they could get troops from somewhere to somewhere else. I think that's what the idea was.

Mr. Hammerson: I take it as you would go from one ship to another, you weren't going as a unit. You were going as an individual?

Mr. Sturgill: As an individual.

Mr. Hammerson: What was your rate? What were you training to go into?

Mr. Sturgill: At that time I was just an apprentice seaman. When I went on board ship I had in mind going into the engine room from the start. Of course, I went into several other things before I got in the engine room.

Mr. Hammerson: Did you consider the training good at that time?

Mr. Sturgill: Oh yes, I had very good training. I feel like the training I got there has helped me throughout my adult life, because in one way or another I have been associated with and operating steam driven equipment almost all my life. Even when I went out on my own, put in a business, I had steam boilers and steam presses and things I had to take care of, so yes, it made a basis for my livelihood.

Mr. Hammerson: When you got to Hawaii were you assigned to a ship there, or were you shore based?

Mr. Sturgill: I was assigned to a ship, I suppose from the time I got there. I went from the *Saratoga* to the *Dale*. I remember my first assignment on board that ship. I got on board something like ten o'clock in the morning, and a bosun's mate by the name of Porter asked for somebody to volunteer to paint the yardarm. Nobody'd volunteer. I looked up that yardarm and said "Hey, I'd like to go up there." So I took the challenge and went up there. I guess I got more paint on me than I did on the yardarm. But anyway, I got it painted, and when I came back down he looked at me and he said "As soon as you get yourself cleaned up, here's your liberty card, you can go ashore. The way I remember it, I was the only one who got to go ashore that day, from the group that got on board that day.

Mr. Hammerson: I take it Hawaii was a very nice assignment at that time.

Mr. Sturgill: Yes, it was. We'd go ashore there, and Honolulu was a pretty nice liberty point. I don't know whether I did anything spectacular, but it was just a nice place to go swimming, and there were several little parks around there.

Mr. Hammerson: You said the ship you went over on, the *Saratoga*, was doing a run at high speed in anticipation that some day this might be important. Was there any indication of

preparation in Hawaii for the attack that came?

Mr. Sturgill: None whatsoever. At least I never knew of anything like that.

Mr. Hammerson: Where were you when you were aware that you were under attack?

Mr. Sturgill: Asleep. I'd been ashore the night before and got back to the ship somewhere between ten and twelve o'clock. First thing I knew, a fellow named Jack Pettit shook me and said "Wake up, the Japs are bombing hell out of us." I looked at him and thought, well, that's a hell of a thing to pull on a guy on a morning like this. He reached over and opened up a locker and pulled out a gas mask and a helmet, and I could tell from his reaction there was something wrong. He left, and I got up, put on a pair of pants and a pair of shoes and went topside. The first thing I saw was a torpedo bomber coming right behind the ship. He dropped that torpedo and I stood there and watched it go into the old *Utah*. While I was standing there watching it it capsized. There was a nest of destroyers out here, and the torpedo bomber came across this way and dropped it somewhere along in here and it went into the *Utah*.

Mr. Hammerson: That was the first awareness that you had, outside of being told that you were being attacked. How long did it take for it to really register?

Mr. Sturgill: As silly as it might sound, I first thought the Army was pulling raids on us, which they had done occasionally. They had pulled mock raids, practice and whatnot. When I finally came to and decided there was something to this, I looked over and asked a gunner's mate why number five gun wasn't firing? He said "The keys are locked up in that locker there, the firing keys. The captain has the keys ashore." Well, I picked up a hammer and broke that lock, and reached inside and handed him the firing keys for that gun. He said "Sturgill, you'll be court martialled for this." Court martial, hell.

Mr. Hammerson: There seem to be too many cases of that. In the Army they'd say "I've got no authority to open the locker."

Mr. Sturgill: I guess that's one reason I'm wearing a hearing aid today, I was around those guns firing all the time. In those days they didn't know what an ear plug was, or what an earmuff was for. We stood there and took it. So yes, I've got a hearing problem.

Mr. Hammerson: that initial raid seemed to be concentrated on Battleship Row, but then on that second attack, and apparently there was no delay between the first and second flights that came in, everything else was getting involved.

Mr. Sturgill: I didn't notice any delay between the first and second attacks. We were trying to get underway, trying to get out of that harbor, and we finally did. On the way out we dropped a depth charge, they got a sounding on a submarine. Perhaps we did sink a submarine, I don't know for sure.

Mr. Hammerson: It might have been one of the midgets that slipped in there?

Mr. Sturgill: Yes, we know there was a submarine there, at least the sounding said it was.

Mr. Hammerson: You underway very rapidly in that case, to get up steam and the rest of it.

Mr. Sturgill: That was one of the things that was harmful to the ship, because when engines of that size are put in operation they generally have oil circulating for several minutes. I believe the manual on that said about 20 minutes before you'd even start. We got underway in less than 20 minutes, so there wasn't much oil to those bearings. The bearings in the low pressure pinion were the furthest from the oil pumps, and they both burnt out that low pressure pinion. We laid to that afternoon and pulled that pinion out, pulled it up, took it to the machine shop. It was a 10-inch lathe, I don't remember the exact size, it was something an eight-inch journal on that pinion, and it just wasn't enough room to get the cutting head back where I could make a cut on that. I actually took a file and filed that pinion. We got through filing, then I took a stone, worked on it awhile with that, and put that back in there. We put it back in and got underway that night. You talk about being leery, even our captain was pretty leery, because we had to lay to out there, we couldn't do anything. They got the largest flag we had on board ship and tied it down on top of the torpedo tubes. The torpedo tubes were 24 feet long, and that flag would lay on top of there and could be seen from the air. There were a few planes flying around, so they wanted them to know that . . .

Mr. Hammerson: I understand that some of the American planes coming in from the aircraft carriers unfortunately . . .

Mr. Sturgill: There were some planes coming in from the States that morning, too.

Mr. Hammerson: And they turned out to be targets, or some of them did.

Mr. Sturgill: That's the reason they put that flag out there, so they could see it was an American ship.

Mr. Hammerson: You mentioned that you had been awakened by this friend of yours. Had general quarters been sounded, or did everybody just go to stations automatically?

Mr. Sturgill: General quarters were sounded, yes, and everybody went to their battle station. I didn't have a battle station. I did have, yes, I was in what they call the repair party. I didn't do anything until something needed fixing. I guess I was a Jack of all trades.

Mr. Hammerson: You repaired their engine.

Mr. Sturgill: I don't remember which raid it was, it might have been somewhere in the South Pacific, we needed more speed and we were having problems with one of our main

boiler feed pumps. We had the emergency boiler feed pump on. It just wasn't putting out enough water, so the chief engineer wanted to know if there was any way we could get more water out of that pump. I said "Yes, the governor on there has it throttled back, it won't let it go but so much." He said "Can you get more water out of it?" I said "Yes." I picked up a bar, took it in that governor's frame and opened it wide open. Well, it stayed wide open for several minutes. It got enough extra water to those boilers that we got out of the trouble we were in, but in the meantime, about the time we were out of trouble, the turbine flew apart. We didn't have any emergency boiler feed pumps after that.

Mr. Hammerson: Now the attack, you'd apparently gotten out of the harbor during the attack if you got out in the first 20 minutes. Did you come back in . . .

Mr. Sturgill: We came back in that night, yes. They opened the gates for us to come in—when I say "gates," there were submarine nets across. The destroyer tenders had equipment for taking care of the equipment on destroyers. They went alongside and within minutes there was a crew on pulling that pinion out. They already had the information, it had been radioed in to them, and they had four new bearings, undersize bearings. They took that pinion into their machine shop and put it back in, and those bearings that they had put in, and we were underway the next day.

Mr. Hammerson: That's fantastic, with everything that was going on there at that time.

Mr. Sturgill: Well, everybody just seemed to know how to do it. Of course, those destroyers' tenders had more blueprints on their ship than we had.

Mr. Hammerson: When did you become aware of what had happened on Battleship Row?

Mr. Sturgill: Probably the day we came back in.

Mr. Hammerson: Could you believe what you were seeing? What was your impression . . .

Mr. Sturgill: I sure couldn't, because I could see that all those battleships were a mess. My thoughts were at the time, well, we've got a hell of a mess on our hands, because we formed our battle tactics around battleships, and every one of our battleships was tied up there. Other than losing a lot a men, it was probably the best thing that ever happened, in my opinion, in light of the fact that they got away from the idea that the battleship was the basic of all battle tactics. They went to the aircraft carrier. The aircraft carrier today is the basic for all battle. We had, I believe, just three carriers, and we didn't have enough to do any good. All we could do for several months was just get around the corner someplace, hit and pick. It was scary times out there because we knew that we didn't have enough equipment out there.

Mr. Hammerson: What about the organization? Everybody was working as an individual initially.

The first, second, third day—when did you seem to get organized as to what was going to happen next?

Mr. Sturgill: It was pretty well organized by the time we went back out to sea with what we had to work with. When you go to sea and you know you haven't got what you need . . .

Mr. Hammerson: Were you short on ammunition, fuel, anything else?

Mr. Sturgill: No, we had plenty of ammunition, and seemed to have plenty of fuel oil. We would go alongside a cruiser or carrier and maybe an oiler, sometimes we'd go out and fuel at sea. I don't know how they did it, but it was there when we needed it. "Tomorrow we'll take on fuel from a cruiser," and there was a cruiser. We'd take on fuel and it would disappear, we'd go our way and they'd go their way.

Another thing that made it pretty bad out there was Tokyo Rose.

Mr. Hammerson: She did seem to have good information.

Mr. Sturgill: They had better information than we had.

Mr. Hammerson: They missed on the *Pennsylvania*. They didn't realize she was sitting in the dry-dock she was in, and they took out the ship where she had been, but it certainly was last minute information, a last minute change.

Mr. Sturgill: They even told us a couple of times, Tokyo Rose said "You boys, what are you going to do, your tanker was sunk, bringing out the fuel to you." Well, it wasn't, that one time. They gave information like that, sometimes it was true.

Mr. Hammerson: Was there any feeling that the Army and the Navy were at fault in not being aware that the attack was coming? There's been so much discussion about that.

Mr. Sturgill: We wondered why, didn't we have better intelligence than this, didn't we know what was coming on? But then I have since learned why. I am reading a book now, I just got it last week, *Deceit at Pearl Harbor*. I still think that President Roosevelt was one of the better presidents we ever had, but he was also the biggest damn liar we ever had, including Bill Clinton. He covered up a bunch of things, he and his staff covered up. They knew those people were coming. Even Churchill and Hitler knew they were coming, but they did not give us any information, didn't give us any warning.

Mr. Hammerson: There wasn't much discussion of it at that time, was there, wasn't scuttlebutt discussion of "Hey, should Admiral Kimmel have known, should the general have known?"

Mr. Sturgill: I went in the Navy as an apprentice seaman, in the fire room as a fireman, and a

machinist mate coming up. We didn't get in on the planning of what was going on. We heard about it after it happened mostly, in general. About all we could say was "Boy, that was a bad one last night." But we never knew what we were going to get into.

Mr. Hammerson: When you were scuttling in and out, when were you able to get information to your family that you were still afloat?

Mr. Sturgill: Within a few days we were allowed to write letters. I think it was probably 30 days or so before they actually knew. Of course, everything we wrote was censored, and they censored it with a razor blade, so you couldn't tell what was underneath it.

Mr. Hammerson: Of 7th December, what was the major visual image you have of that day? Was it the planes, was it Battleship Row, was there something that stands out in your mind.

Mr. Sturgill: That day, I didn't really know for sure what had happened. I knew there were fires over there, but I didn't know there was that much damage. We didn't know until we got back in the following day that those ships had been sunk. They tried to censor a lot of that, too. We were not to write home how many ships were sunk. And of course, if we had, it would have been censored. It was probably a year, at least several months, before the people here in the States actually knew what the damage was out there. I have some clippings from papers, shows how little they knew, that said there were six deaths and several injuries.

Mr. Hammerson: Did you get ashore at all during that time, or were you at sea, moving all the time?

Mr. Sturgill: We were at sea most of the time. We didn't get to go ashore for several months. I went into the Naval base, but we didn't get to go into Honolulu. It was kind of hush-hush. Another thing, I think one of the biggest highlights in my Naval career, was in the Komandorski Islands. The Aleutian Chain. If you project that out about 500 miles, there are small islands there called the Komandorskis. We got into a battle up there close to that, the Battle of the Komandorski. We were supposed to be looking for four troop transports and four destroyers. We had two, the *Salt Lake City* and the *Raleigh*. The *Salt Lake City* was a heavy cruiser, and the *Raleigh* was a light cruiser, and four destroyers. We made contact with them before daylight, made a run on them, I don't know how much damage we did, but some, and they opened fire. It was then we realized that we didn't have four troop transports out there, we had four heavy cruisers. We started running for it. We ran for quite awhile. They hit the *Salt Lake City*, blew it dead in the water. We laid a smoke screen around the *Salt Lake City*, I don't know if it did much good or not, but we did. We laid another smoke screen out there and the destroyers came through the screen and fired torpedoes. I don't know how much damage it did, but some. This all took place in about four hours. At the end of that four hours, there were some air force bombers came over, U.S. bombers. We had already shaken them off by that time. The bombers came over, we saw them come over and turn

back. We were surely disappointed, because they should have gone after them, we thought, anyway. Supposedly they didn't have the right kind of bombs on board, they had antipersonnel bombs or something like that.

A few months later—I believe it was the 43rd Air Force that did that—a few months later we were down in Pearl Harbor and I did go ashore in Honolulu at that time. I was sitting in bar, and somebody said “That’s the 43rd Air Force over there.” There was one of the damnedest fights there that night. It wasn’t just the ship I was on, there were other ships in there too. MPs never did a thing about it, let it go.

Next day or so after that we went into Cold Bay, Alaska. All there was there was a bar and gedunk stand and probably supplies. The whole crew got pretty well lit because the bar tender and the people there had instructions, “Give that *Dale* crew whatever they want. If you haven’t got it, get it.” We didn’t know that at that time, but we did know that everything was free. “You can’t pay for this, this is on the house.” Came to find out that the skipper of the *Salt Lake City* was grateful enough that we went in there and shielded his ship and put our fanny on the line, he said “Bill that to the *Salt Lake City*.”

Mr. Hammerson: There was camaraderie that went on then that you don’t find in civilian life, in peacetime. You’ve certainly indicated that you’d done the Pacific, from the north to the south. I see you’ve indicated you’ve also done the Solomon Islands.

Mr. Sturgill: I don’t remember much about that. Part of this comes from my 2-4D, I believe they call it, the paper that says what I did. I don’t remember what I did all the time. I know we were out there and we got into a battle down there, I don’t know where we were. I guess I had faith in the skipper and the navigator that they knew where we were.

Mr. Hammerson: You weren’t listening to Tokyo Rose at that time? She’d have told you.

Mr. Sturgill: Yeah, Tokyo Rose gave us a lot of information. I remember one time we were down close to the Solomons and we had an air raid alarm. I was down in the engine room for some reason or other that night. All of a sudden we got emergency stern, a hard left rudder I believe it was, and I thought, oh boy, dive bomber attack. That was one of the tactics they used for evasion of dive bombers, emergency stern and a hard right or left rudder to try to throw them off. Come to find out, they were high level bombers all right, but no dive bombers, and our steering gear went out and we were heading right for one of the carriers. That was a good reason for putting on emergency stern.

Mr. Hammerson: I would think that would really have tied your engines up, to go from forward to reverse.

Mr. Sturgill: It was kind of a funny feeling. I had seen that on a shakedown cruise, when they commissioned a new ship. That was one of the things, full speed ahead for four hours,

then emergency stern for one hour. That thing shook and shivered like a wet dog.

Mr. Hammerson: It would seem to me that you'd have to come to a stop before you could reverse.

Mr. Sturgill: Yes, it did.

Mr. Hammerson: There wasn't that much time.

Mr. Sturgill: I wasn't topside at that time to see what was going on. By the time they got it straightened out and we settled down from general quarters, everyone had to go back and help out with the steering gear. I don't know what had actually gone wrong back there, but the steering gear had gone out. They corrected it and got back in formation again.

Mr. Hammerson: The ability to do repairs when you can't get into dry-dock has always seemed quite amazing.

Mr. Sturgill: Yes, we could make a lot of emergency repairs out there. I remember one time, this was another ship, I got on the *Everett F. Larson*, and I went on watch at midnight. Within a few minutes I noticed the salinity indicator was going up on the main condenser, which meant there was a salt water leak somewhere. I called the bridge and told them we had a salt water leak and I'd like to take the main engine off. The officer of the deck refused, he said "You can't take that engine off." I told him, "Get the executive officer." He got the executive officer and he said, "No, you can't take it off." I said, "If you will give me a written order I will leave it on. But if not, I'm going to take it off." And of course that raised all kinds of hell up on the bridge. We finally got permission to take that engine off, and we opened up the condenser and found two tubes had leaks in them. What caused them to start leaking, we didn't know, they just started leaking. In a few hours, the salt water leaking around those engines will have the thing fouled up so it's almost useless. We opened up that condenser, went in, found where the leaks were and before daylight we had those two tubes plugged and back on.

Mr. Hammerson: And meanwhile you'd been what, dead in the water?

Mr. Sturgill: Yes sir, dead in the water.

Mr. Hammerson: Did you get back to the States any time during the war?

Mr. Sturgill: Yes. We got back in December of '41, and the girl of my choice met me in San Francisco and we got married. We've been married now for—the 19th of this month it will be 51 years.

Mr. Hammerson: What was your reception when you came back during the war, good?

Mr. Sturgill: Yes, we had good reception. It wasn't like the VietNam War. We went to L.A., we got married.

Mr. Hammerson: What about the end of the war. Did you come back and get into anything then? What was your reception after the war was over?

Mr. Sturgill: Really it was pretty good. We were accepted because, somehow or other, we'd been able to help pull the United States out of the mess. Since then we found out that our President sold us out, and that's not hearsay.

Mr. Hammerson: Did you stay in the Navy after the war was over?

Mr. Sturgill: No, I served my enlistment and got out.

Mr. Hammerson: Had you finally decided why you'd gone into the Navy in the first place?

Mr. Sturgill: I'm glad I went in the Navy because it was a good experience for me. In one way or the other I have been associated with steam ever since I got out of the Navy. I went to work for the power company, went to work for the railroad first—steam engines. I went to work for the power company operating steam driven equipment. During that time also I put steam driven equipment in a laundry. Somehow or other it just seemed like I associated with steam all the rest of my life.

Mr. Hammerson: Being with the Navy, didn't you miss the opportunity the Army had with USO shows and whatnot, or did you get to see any of those?

Mr. Sturgill: No.

Mr. Hammerson: They didn't get on board too often.

Mr. Sturgill: No, and I didn't know much about those. What's a USO show? I guess I knew about them at the time, but I don't remember.

Mr. Hammerson: Did they give you a break in-between times, did you get to a port during the war when you could let off a bit of steam?

Mr. Sturgill: Yes, we got back to Pearl Harbor. Went ashore in Alaska, too. This fellow came back on board with a salmon. We cooked it, went down to the engine room and cooked it. I went to the officer of the deck and told him I'd like to go ashore and get enough salmon for the whole crew. He first balked on it, but then he said "All right, go on." We went ashore and, I don't remember how many salmon we brought back, but here's a soldier over there with a hand grenade, he threw it in this creek, we got all the salmon we wanted. We brought those back on board and first off the cook said "You're not

bringing them in here,” and the officer of the deck said “You are.” I’ve gotten with this cook several times since then.

Mr. Hammerson: Have you had an opportunity to meet many of the people you knew?

Mr. Sturgill: Yes, our ship has been having reunions. This coming year it will be in Silver Springs, Maryland. This is the first time it’s ever been in the Washington D.C. area. This past year it was in—I don’t remember. We had one in Salt Lake City, that was a good reunion. We had a good time up there.

An Unnamed Voice: One other reunion, they got to go aboard the *Dale*, a missile cruiser, it had been decommissioned and then recommissioned as a missile cruiser.

Mr. Hammerson: Where were you, and how did you hear when the war was over?

Mr. Sturgill: We were on our way to the Panama Canal, we’d just picked up a new ship. We were anchored just outside of Balboa, and we had to wait until daylight to go through the canal. “Hey, the war’s over.” I had stashed aside in the refrigeration—I took care of the refrigeration—I had stashed aside a five gallon tin of grade A alcohol. I sent the messenger up where I had it, and he brought back a pitcher full of alcohol. Somebody else knew where they could get—they had keys to the lockers up there—so we got some orange juice.

Mr. Hammerson: The missionary’s downfall.

Mr. Sturgill: Sometimes when they called the watch, which should have been at four o’clock, nobody could get out of that engine room. Finally somebody woke up and came down there, and they joined the party too. Before long a whole bunch was down there. I sent the forward engine room a pitcher of alcohol. This wasn’t that rotgut alcohol, it was that grade A medical alcohol.

Mr. Hammerson: Had you heard about the atomic bomb? What did you understand about it? Had you heard the stories?

Mr. Sturgill: I just couldn’t understand. I couldn’t fathom any bomb doing everything like that. No, it’s a fairy tale, it can’t happen that way. But when I realized maybe it did, it was quite a deal.

J. E. McIntyre is here in Fredericksburg today. He was with me and I haven’t found him yet, my wife saw him a little while ago. We were sitting on the fantail of this destroyer and I said, “Look at that mop head out there.” To bring a long story short, a Navy mop when thrown overboard will float with the mop head down and the wooden handle sticking out of the water about 14 to 16 inches. From a distance you don’t know what that is. Is it a periscope or what is it? I said to this fellow McIntyre, I said “Look at that mop head over there.” He said “Mop head hell, that’s a periscope.” We never did for

sure make that that was a periscope, but within minutes a carrier took a torpedo and sunk right there, within minutes.

We were down there in what was supposed to have been a secure area. It was a day of rest. We had brought out bedding topside, everything was supposed to get aired out. I imagine the carrier was the same way. Also, the battleship *Washington* took a torpedo. It didn't sink the *Washington*, but put about a 35-foot hole in the bow, I've heard since then. We were dispatched to go with the *Washington* to Australia. We got down there close and some of the Australian ships came out and escorted the *Washington* in. We were detached and went back to the fleet. We had thought all along that we were going to Australia, we're going ashore there. That's as close as I ever got to Australia.

Mr. Hammerson: Which carrier was that, do you recall?

Mr. Sturgill: I don't recall. It was one of the older carriers. At that time we only had a few carriers: the *Yorktown*, the *Lexington*, and the *Saratoga*. I think it was the *Yorktown*, but I'm not sure.

Mr. Hammerson: Did you do any rescue work on that? When you're an escort, presumably you're going to go look for the people.

Mr. Sturgill: The way I recall, the carrier capsized and sunk right there. *Washington* took a torpedo and we were dispatched to go with the *Washington*, somebody got on the ball and said "Get them out of here." Perhaps they were looking for it, I don't know if they ever found the sub or not, but they went out there.

Mr. Hammerson: The first thing, of course, is to save the ship, for it not to go in harm's way. Of course, you were going in harm's way all the time.

Mr. Sturgill: Of course they wanted to save that battleship. Save a battleship, but a destroyer is expendable. Save that battleship. The carrier's already gone. Two or three times out there we got in the position where, save that ship, to hell with that destroyer. They didn't say the hell with it, but do the best you could.

Mr. Hammerson: They were a submarine screen, actually, trying to be between the submarine and your battleship.

Mr. Sturgill: There was a submarine out there somewhere.

Mr. Hammerson: But this, you say, was supposed to be in a secure area.

Mr. Sturgill: We were in a secure area. I don't remember where it was, we were way south of the actual battle zone. Perhaps that submarine had followed us down there. They probably knew, maybe cracked our code and knew what we were doing, going to a secure area to

get a few days rest. We had been through hell up there for a few days. We'd go topside, sunbathe, air the bedding. We had a lot of bedding on the—you ever seen a ship airing bedding?

Mr. Hammerson: You certainly covered a tremendous amount of distance there from the Aleutians to Alaska, Australia to the Panama Canal. You must have been steaming wide open most of the time.

Mr. Sturgill: We went from the Hawaiian Islands all over the Pacific, the Aleutian Islands, back up to Bath, Maine, the yard building up there, put a new ship in commission, brought it through the Canal and back out to the Pacific.

Mr. Hammerson: What about your communication with your new wife? Was your mail service fairly decent on that?

Mr. Sturgill: Of course, she said I didn't write but once every three months. I think I did, but who knows.

Mr. Hammerson: Do you have any regrets about that period? If you had it to do over again . . .

Mr. Sturgill: I think I'd do the same thing over, yes, because I came through it without a scratch. the ship I was on I believe led a charmed life. We have been having ship's reunions since then and one of our leaders in the reunions said the *Dale* had a charmed life because we went through everything in the Pacific and it was destroyed by the Navy Yard in Brooklyn. We literally wore it out.

Mr. Hammerson: You'd done everything in the Pacific on that, it had had a charmed life.

Mr. Sturgill: Yes. I don't remember where we were, we had gone into some little port, I remember people sitting around as if they were in a daze. They were in a daze, because they'd come out of some kind of battle and it was just unbelievable, the things on that ship.

Mr. Hammerson: There were some things that were quite intensive, obviously. There were some funny things that went along with it.

Mr. Sturgill: All kinds of funny things that happened out there.

An Unnamed Voice: The bulletin board. That's funny.

Mr. Sturgill: The bulletin board. That ship was searched several times trying to find out who was taking things off the bulletin board. It was a locked bulletin board. Things were put up on that bulletin board, perhaps secrets that shouldn't get out. I'd let it stay up on the bulletin board for a short while, then I'd take it off. I had keys to the bulletin board. they searched the ship several times trying to find out who took things off that

bulletin board. I took them home, I'd send them back to my wife—you remember it because you saw that scrapbook. She made a scrapbook out of the things I took of that bulletin board. One of the things at the battle of the Komandorskis. The next day, K. G. Robinson was the executive officer, and he put it on the bulletin board that thank the Lord those engineers kept those screws turning over, because we got out of there. I took that off, that was important to me. I still have it. And several incidents like that that happened.

Mr. Hammerson: There were wheels within wheels. Bu I think the interesting thing was that you were able to keep your stash of good G.I. ethyl alcohol.

Mr. Sturgill: We had a lot of things happen out there.

Mr. Hammerson: There's no regrets for how America responded at that time.

Mr. Sturgill: No, my biggest regrets have been recently. Because I got this book, *Deceit at Pearl Harbor*, written by Lt. Commander Landis. He was part of the admiral's staff out there at the time. He tells it like it was. I knew there was a lot of skullduggery going on, but he spells it out how Roosevelt knew about this.

Mr. Hammerson: Probably the only way he got the country into the war.

Mr. Sturgill: Yes. He wanted them to make the first strike. And I think in his mind, they couldn't do much damage. They could sink a couple of ships or do some damage out there, he didn't realize they had what they had. Six carriers and several—of course, the carriers were the only things that made any difference as far as Pearl Harbor was concerned. And those six carriers had something like 200 planes, I believe it was, loaded with the right kind of arsenal. They did a lot of damage out there.

Mr. Hammerson: Any final thoughts you'd like to leave?

Mr. Sturgill: I hope that somewhere down the line some high school or grade school person will read this within the right light. Yes, Roosevelt kept us in the dark, but he also gave us a purpose. He wanted the country to know that we had to go to war.

Mr. Hammerson: Thank you so much, it's been a very interesting interview.

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