

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. E. Earl Newman Sr.

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Interviewer: This is Ed Metzler, today is the 15th of September, 2006. I am interviewing Mr. Earl Newman here in Fredericksburg, TX at the Museum. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies which is the achieves for the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Texas Historical Commission for the Preservation of Historical Information related to this site. Let me start out, Earl, by thanking you for spending the time with us today to share your experiences in the Pacific, and let me get you started by just telling us full name, when and where you were born, and a little bit about your brothers and sisters, and then we'll take it from there.

Mr. Newman: Well thank you, its a pleasure to be here. I was born in Galveston, TX. My father was a military man; he was a Reserve Captain in the Army, and Master Sergeant in the Regular Army. I was a member of a group of family of 7; all of his sons went to the Navy. I was 2 years old when we moved to Kelly Field.

Interviewer: Uh, what was your birth date?

Mr. Newman: July 16, 1920.

Interviewer: Okay, thanks.

Mr. Newman: Full name - Everett Earl Newman Sr.

Interviewer: What about your mother? Was she a homemaker or uh...?

Mr. Newman: Oh, yes, full time.

Interviewer: I guess so with all of those kids.

Mr. Newman: I was in college when it looked like we were going to be in a war, and I was in an infantry division of the Texas National Guard, Co. of the 141st Infantry.

Interviewer: And where were you going to college?

Mr. Newman: Southwest Texas Teachers College.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Newman: So, war clouds were forming and we were advised by the commanding officer of our unit that the U.S. Army might mobilize the guards. There was six of us there at school in the guards, and so we wanted to be able to get into something else rather than be drafted or called in. So he gave us an option of “if you will agree that when the semester ends that you will join one of the services – we’ll release you from the National Guard and you can do what you want to do.” The school (J.W.T.T.C.) was offering a flight training course at the school, so we dropped one of our subjects and the school provided us instructions that you need for ground school instructions at night. So we flew during the day and we went to ground school at night.

Interviewer: And you flew out of where?

Mr. Newman: I flew out of, out of our airport at San Marcos, TX.

Interviewer: Okay. What were you flying?

Mr. Newman: Piper Cubs (laughter). I didn’t know you could ground ‘em, but I found out you could.

Interviewer: The hard way or...? (laughter)

Mr. Newman: Anyway, we learned to fly there; we got about 40 some odd hours. And at the end of the semester, I joined the Navy in about July of 1941, and I was called into the Navy service around September or October, and I was sent to an E-base in Dallas.

Interviewer: So all of this before Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

Interviewer: So we're not even officially at war yet?

Mr. Newman: No, I didn't have to go through E-base training because I already knew how to fly. They switched us to biplanes which was the Navy's N3N – they called it the "Yellow Peril." Easy plane to fly and I took check flights in it and qualified, and so the rest of the time I spent practicing Morse code.

Interviewer: Now what was the, which aircraft was this again?

Mr. Newman: An N3N, the Navy's designation of a trainer biplane. When the rest of the group finished their primary training there, the Navy sent us all to Corpus Christi, Texas. When we got there, there was a pool of about 900 students. We were all Seaman 2nd then and waiting to be assigned to cadet training some place. And on December 7th, I was there in Corpus when the Japs attacked.

Interviewer: Tell me how you first heard about it.

Mr. Newman: Well, seemed like to me it was on a Sunday.

Interviewer: Yep.

Mr. Newman: We were still in bed; we hadn't gotten up very early. The Sergeant always came in in the morning and banged trash can lids to wake you up in the

morning to go to whatever you had to do. I don't know what time it was the sergeant came in, but we were still, most of us, were still in the bunk, and he came in banging it, and he said, "We're at war, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor." And then the sergeant turned on radios in there, and we could hear what was going on. The Navy secured the base. In about a week's time, the Navy started dividing the cadets into groups and sending us to advanced training bases; I was sent to Pensacola. I got some basic training there in a little bit larger aircraft. They were real old; they were a little heavier. They were service type aircraft from the fleet going back a number of years.

Interviewer: Now were these still biplanes?

Mr. Newman: No, no, these were single wing planes. Then we also flew a lot of SNJs, a North American plane built in some place up in north Texas. Anyway, we got quite a bit of time in those. Then we got instrument training in SNJs. Then the Navy sent us to Miami, Florida. At Miami we flew the nearest thing they had to a fleet aircraft. I remember the fighter plane was small and looked like a bumble bee, was a little ole bitty plane and the struts were still using bungee cords.

Interviewer: Oh, my gosh (laughter).

Mr. Newman: And the cadets had a hard time landing them for awhile but they figured it out; I didn't fly those. I flew a plane that you had to hand pump the dive breaks down and your landing flaps by hand. Now you're supposed to turn over and dive at about a 65° or 70° angle, and pump those diving breaks out. So it was

a pretty awkward thing to fly and do, but you got use to the principle, and so we got through that.

Interviewer: If you could fly that, you could fly anything.

Mr. Newman: I would think so.

Interviewer: What, what made you decide to be a pilot or to fly?

Mr. Newman: Well, I lived at Kelly Field (Army Air Corps Training Base) for awhile.

Interviewer: That's right.

Mr. Newman: The planes used to fly over our house all the time after we moved off the base. We lived in a little community called South San, and its just a little bit south of San Antonio, and its not but about two miles, maybe three miles from what was called Duncan Field which was a repair depot, and my father worked there. And as kids, we could ride bicycles into the hangars where they worked and stuff and we would go visit them and see planes and stuff; I was just raised in that environment and always wanted to fly. I tried to build one out of wood and run it down off the top of the barn onto a stack of hay.

Interviewer: This is just like in uh, in the movies. (laughter)

Mr. Newman: Yeah, well, I got it put together and put it on top of our hay barn as a runway, and instead of coming down like that, it came down nose first...so my mother decided that wasn't a very good thing to do, so I stopped.

Interviewer: Pretty short life.

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

Interviewer: But anyway, you were in Miami and then?

Mr. Newman: I graduated as an Ensign and a Navy Aviator. Then the Navy sent me to what they called an ATCG - that's an aircraft carrier training group. I was part of a group of 12 men training as dive bombers. And that's when you flew the aircraft that's currently in the fleet, and we were flying SBDs. I guess they were SBD1s or 2s - second generation of them. They were good planes to fly. They were easy, good dive bombers, and uh, they were real sturdy. You could bounce in hard and it wouldn't hurt them; or you could land wheels up and be pretty safe if you had to. We learned to fly the SBDs, and we learned to fly close formation which was hard to get use to when you've got a wing sticking between the rudder and the wing of your plane; you're really, really in so close. Matter of fact, after we got comfortable, these wingmen then would move in so close that they would affect the trim of your plane.

Interviewer: Aerodynamics...

Mr. Newman: Yeah, so I'd have to move them back out a little bit. But anyway, we learned to land those planes like you do on a carrier. Every plane, every landing you made in the beginning was tail first, and a 3-point landing is perfect, but the best thing to do is to land. Even the SNJ, the N3Ns, the Navy had what they called bounce drill and you'd come in and land tail first and bounce it. We did that with the planes after we got to where we could fly pretty well. They marked a carrier deck out on the practice field, and you'd go and make the same approach as on a carrier except you didn't have a landing signal officer there. Sometimes they would, but most of the time you just went out and you knew the procedure and you knew about where you were and you'd chop the

throttle and land and then before you came to a full stop, you'd put the throttle on and go back up and come around and do it again. So we put a lot of time in that procedure, and its a good thing because when it comes time to do it, reality - it gets to be a different story. But once we had gotten to a point where we could fly comfortably with a plane in bounce drill, we were sent to Chicago. And they had a carrier with side paddlewheel, you can believe that...trying to find out what they called that thing - I think it was Langley.

Interviewer: I think that Langley was the, was the very first carrier.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, okay that was it – sailing in Lake Michigan.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Newman: Anyway, it was just a flat top; it didn't have a bridge or all that stuff on...but it could move along fast enough and pick up wind where we could land it, and we landed, we flew SBDs on these landings.

Interviewer: In the Chicago area?

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you're on Lake Michigan then?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, they didn't have all the heavy armament on these planes so it wasn't near as heavy; and it didn't have all the guns either so it was easier to land that on that little carrier, even though it was small. When you pulled out and made your first turn at that ship, it looked like a little old strip like this long. I said, "I don't know whether I can do that."

Interviewer: Looked like a postage stamp down there, doesn't it?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, but you could see the landing signal officer up there waving flags at you and you figure, “well maybe I can do it.” But anyway, all 12 of us went up there that time. We all made the first 3 passes and landed and went back to the base. It was so cold with snow and ice on the lake and open cockpits.

Interviewer: You were feeling pretty good at that time?

Mr. Newman: Oh yeah, we felt we had the world by the tail then (laughter). We knew we could land it on a carrier anyway.

Interviewer: That’s a big step.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, well, this was at the end of ‘42, I mean December of ‘42. When we got back to San Diego which was where we went through this aircraft training; two of us had orders to go to Hawaii and join Air Group 11, VB-11. They put us on a small carrier and we shipped out.

Interviewer: It was a troop ship of some sort or...?

Mr. Newman: No, it was a jeep carrier.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Newman: Anyway, there was not only the 12 of us, and actually 2 of us were going to that squadron to Air Group 11. Two pilots went to a Marine squadron and were later killed on a raid. It was strange, the guy with me was named Raymond Earl and my name is Earl Newman, and if they yelled, “Earl,” well both of us would answer it (laughter). But anyway, uh, we went to that squadron, and the skipper was named Lt. Hardman, he was an Annapolis person and they had a guy named Lt. Max Walkey (spelling?), he was the Exec, and then they had four guys there, they were JGs when we got there but

they made senior grade lieutenants and all of them had been in the Battle of Coral Sea and Midway or other battles, so they had some pretty good experience.

Interviewer: They were real veterans already.

Mr. Newman: Oh yeah, we had about six or eight of those guys and the rest of us were just out of training. We didn't have much more than 24 pilots. At that time, the air group had two bombing squadrons. They had what they called scouts, scout bombers; we were a holdover of the old Navy. We were called Squadron 21 of Air Group because they had a bomb squadron; it was VB-11. They don't do that anymore; we were really just one squadron of dive bombers in Air Group 11.

Interviewer: Squadron which...what was the number on the squadron?

Mr. Newman: VB-21, actually it was VBS-21, and that was part of our Group 11.

Interviewer: Uh-hum.

Mr. Newman: When we got there, all we did was uh, practice as an air group. This squadron had been together before I joined. And we were there a pretty good while. We were told when we got there that we were scheduled to go aboard the Hornet, and the Hornet was sunk before it got back to port. And so we sit there a pretty good while and practiced.

Interviewer: Now where are we located right now?

Mr. Newman: Okay, we're at Barber's Point on the island of Oahu. Since the Navy didn't have any carriers for us, they sent us to the Fiji Islands. And they hauled us over there by ship.

Interviewer: How long was your aircraft?

Mr. Newman: I can't remember how we got to the Fijis.

Interviewer: Tell me what aircraft you're flying at this point.

Mr. Newman: SBD3s.

Interviewer: What's the nickname for that?

Mr. Newman: Dauntless Diver - its Douglas Dauntless.

Interviewer: Dauntless, I thought it was a Dauntless.

Mr. Newman: Douglas Dauntless.

Interviewer: Helldiver – SB2C came later.

Mr. Newman: Yeah.

Interviewer: That was another story as I remember.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, it was a horrible plane. (laughter)

Interviewer: Yes, I flew that too. Yeah, that Helldiver was one of those widow-maker type.

Mr. Newman: Oh, gees, that thing was sorry. I tell you what this is all why you can't find any of them around anymore either. Cause they all crashed (laughter).

Interviewer: Actually, we had an air show here in Fredericksburg a couple of years ago and there was one, but anyhow, I digress. Let's get back to your story.

Mr. Newman: Uh, we flew into and stayed in Fiji about, oh I guess, maybe six weeks, and we didn't do very much flying there. Uh, just hops to keep yourself involved a little, and it was an interesting island. We were living in a pineapple field in tents, and you could go outside your tent and there were pineapples growing, so we got all we wanted.

Interviewer: Just sitting up there.

Mr. Newman: Oh yeah, I never realized they were on little stems.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's a strange looking plant.

Mr. Newman: We ate a lot of those things.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Newman: Anyway, then we got a call that we were going to go to Pearl Harbor, I mean gonna go to Guadalcanal, and so they sent us island hopped from the Fiji Islands to Guadalcanal, and we got into Guadalcanal around noon.

Interviewer: So this is your whole squadron doing this?

Mr. Newman: Whole, well the whole air group.

Interviewer: The whole air group.

Mr. Newman: The whole air group.

Interviewer: And how many squadrons in the air group?

Mr. Newman: Well, there was a fighter squadron and a torpedo squadron and two bomber squadrons.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Newman: We had a pretty good group. Anyway, we got to Guadalcanal. Well it was a kind of strange feeling because we'd read so many reports about how bad the battles were, and they needed help. And of course, our question was, "Are there still Japs on the island?"

Interviewer: Good basic question.

Mr. Newman: And so they told us that there were a few; sometimes they come into camp looking for food. Locals said nobody's been hurt to their knowledge, but if you hear somebody rumbling around, well you pay attention.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Mr. Newman: But we never did see any.

Interviewer: So you were at some air field there on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Newman: We were at Henderson Field, called "Cactus Central."

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Newman: We went into Henderson Field; it had metal mats to land on, and they were pretty bumpy, but you could get on and get off of them.

Interviewer: So they weren't muddy?

Mr. Newman: No they weren't, and actually, we had lots of rains. But the bivouac area that we stayed in we all had tents with mosquito netting all around them and then you had mosquito net over your bunk itself. But the mosquitoes were terrible. If you got your arm up against the netting, the next morning your elbows would be all red from where those things would bite you. And we all took Atabrine.

Interviewer: I was wondering if they took medication.

Mr. Newman: Oh, everybody left there with yellow eyeballs. (laughter) Some of us got malaria. They thought I had it, but I don't know that I had malaria, but I didn't miss any flights of any consequence over it. And we didn't have to fly an awful lot. Most of the action was going on up in Bougainville because that was where the Japanese were still strong. We had two instances while I was

there where the island was attacked. Prior to being into that, the second night there, we were awakened by a tremendous explosion, and that's when we found out that they had 100mm cannon not more than about 50 yards from our camp. And there was an airplane that would fly over at night, and they called him *Washing Machine Charlie*.

Interviewer: I have heard this story so many times.

Mr. Newman: And, and, he'd come over about 10:30 or 11 o'clock at night about the time that you were asleep and you, his motors were not synchronized - they went *whomp, whomp, whomp* and that's where they got the name Washing Machine, I suppose.

Interviewer: Aha.

Mr. Newman: But anyway.

Interviewer: What, what do you figure that was, a bomber buddy or...?

Mr. Newman: I never did know, but it probably was; it might of, they didn't have any 4-engine planes that I encountered.

Interviewer: No.

Mr. Newman: But uh, I only saw one one time that flew over, and it was during a daylight raid. But this night plane would come over pure and simply as a nuisance.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: And it would fly by and, and they'd fire those guns at it and they'd shoot some spotlights up at it, and I never knew it to drop a bomb or anything.

Interviewer: And you never hit it, I guess.

Mr. Newman: No, huh-uh. (laughter) But we had a radio where we could hear the conversation, uh, what was going on and then after about two months, the Navy sent a night fighter in here and the next time that guy came over, they vectored him up there to it, and we could hear them talking to him – like talking to the night fighter, and they'd say, "Well, he's an angel's ten." And you'd hear the guy say, "Okay, turn degree so and so, say, hey, I got him in my sights." And then we saw them shoot him down, and you could see the tracers going from the fighter that hit it and it burst into flames and came down.

Interviewer: I'll be darn.

Mr. Newman: And they never sent another one over after that.

Interviewer: So that was the end of *Washing Machine Charlie*.

Mr. Newman: That's right. He'd come by around 10 or 10:30, 11 o'clock, and he'd make a pass across and come down the length of the island, and there was not very much big gun protection except right at Henderson Field, and they'd shoot at him a few times, and he'd go back and then maybe about 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, he'd come by again. And when the plane was spotted, they sounded a siren, and everybody got into foxholes. And only one time, and this was just about at dawn, a Jap fighter plane flew over the island real low and it was dropping anti-personnel bombs.

Interviewer: Hum.

Mr. Newman: And it just kind of run down the length of the island. They started right along where the bivouac areas were and then he went on out. And he got through

the radar screen and dropped some bombs. Then they sounded the alarm, I guess, when he crossed way over here, because we were in our bunkers when he got to us. But we could hear the bombs going off as he, as he came along. He got one in pretty close to our area, and I was told that one of the fighter pilots didn't get up to get out, and was killed – and I'm not sure that that happened.

Interviewer: Now was this a single aircraft or multiple aircrafts?

Mr. Newman: No, no it was just one airplane came over, and it wasn't any others; he came in real low. Aside from that, there was two attacks, big attacks, on the Island. I guess we'd been there three weeks, maybe four at the most.

Interviewer: What are you guys doing during the day? Are you out patrolling or practicing or just what?

Mr. Newman: Playing bridge or poker.

Interviewer: You waiting for a phone call or something?

Mr. Newman: Well, every other day, we were on stand-by. And by that I mean the planes were ready; they were armed; and we were ready to fly. We would always know the day before if we were gonna be required to fly. If something happened and they had an emergency, well they'd just call in everybody. If we were needed, we could get to our planes in five to six minutes; we were real close to the flight line. But this day, we got a message from the coast watchers that a large group of planes was about 150 miles out coming in our direction. The coast watchers were on these little Solomon islands along here from Bougainville all the way down and...

Interviewer: Referring to a map that he's got here and the outlying islands from Guadalcanal.

Mr. Newman: The coast watchers were Australians living with natives on some small island. They radioed that there was a flight of planes and they'd describe the planes and what not.

Interviewer: So you got advanced warning.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, now we had on the island at this time, our fighters from Air Group 11; we had some New Zealand fighter pilots and their planes; and Army P-38 pilots and planes at Henderson Field.

Interviewer: What were they flying?

Mr. Newman: I don't know; they were American planes, but I can't remember.

Interviewer: That's okay.

Mr. Newman: It wasn't one of our super fighters. I thought it was P-40s but I don't think they had any of those left by then. But they had what might have been P-39s which is ...

Interviewer: Cobra, yeah.

Mr. Newman: They're good at low altitude but they weren't much for high altitude. And then they had a whole squadron of P-38s, those were great airplanes. And then on the other side of the Island, there were a whole lot of Army fighter planes, but they didn't have the Mustang then I know; they covered our flank.

Interviewer: No, no.

Mr. Newman: They flew a pretty good plane and I don't, not familiar with Army aircraft.

Interviewer: Yeah, I know there were some P-47s over there.

Mr. Newman: I think, I think that's what they did fly, radial-engine planes.

Interviewer: Big radial engine...big aircraft.

Mr. Newman: But when spotters reported this, our guys probably met them about 100 miles out from Guadalcanal.

Interviewer: So how many hours notice are you getting when you...?

Mr. Newman: Oh, we figure we had better than an hour.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Newman: And they may not have alerted us until, they may not have called us because a lot of times the Japs sneak around, this is what I was told, that Japs didn't come all the way down. But they didn't have anything for them to bomb in these islands between here and Bougainville to Guadalcanal.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: Now the Japanese did build and we also built support fields on Russell Island about 100 miles from Henderson Field. I don't know why we did it unless it was just to have as an emergency in case Henderson Field happened to be damaged so we couldn't land.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Mr. Newman: But I'd say, referring to the time to meet the oncoming air attack, we probably had the most of an hour and that's plenty of time to get up. Those not flying go up to their area around the Henderson Field tower to be ready to get in their planes, if they needed them. And we had our planes stashed around in bunkers when the fighters took off. All the fighter planes that would fly probably took off. I don't know how many we had in the air, but we had a

whole lot. On attack, we put air cover above the field and still had a whole bunch of fighter planes to meet the Japs. But these Japs got through, and we saw our guys shoot down a whole lot of planes. We could see from where we were in a bunker with an open top, and we could see the stuff going on.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: And that's a thrill to watch fighters up there; they were probably in the 10,000 ft. to 15,000 ft. range which isn't real high, because that's about the height that Japanese planes came in. We probably would come in around 14,000 ft. to 15,000 ft., but these planes probably started coming down when they got close to Guadalcanal.

Interviewer: So these are your fighter squadrons of your air group that are going up?

Mr. Newman: Our air group and New Zealand Army and our Army planes and a squadron of Aussies.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Newman: And we had those P-38s. We saw a number of them chasing the Zeros, because they could get up on top faster than the rest of our planes. I don't know how many were shot down – these figures I don't have the exact numbers. But I was told that there was nearly a hundred planes between fighters and dive bombers that they had shot down. We could see them falling at 50 miles out. But our guys were making dives into them by then. And about three or four of the Jap dive bombers got in and hit a couple of ships in the harbor. Of course we had all the harbor facilities that you would expect for an island this size. A lot of the materials and stuff that was forwarded on

up to the island for support was here but really didn't do a whole lot of damage. I think they hit one of the ships but didn't do much damage to it. They dropped single bombs – kinda like what we do, but they bombed and went on out still being chased by our planes. This was the first time I'd seen a twin-engine plane in our area that was Japanese. We were looking up, we looked up and we saw a twin-engine plane flying over us; it was probably about 5,000 ft. or 6,000 ft. Everybody got in a dug out that had a cover on it (laughter). We didn't know what to expect; we looked up and it was up there. Well they didn't drop anything, I guess, it was taking pictures to see whether they had any damage 'cause it came kinda aftermath of the bombing.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: They'd already made their runs and were going out. But the coast watcher said that our pilots shot them down coming and a going when they intercepted them and when they unloaded and started back.

Interviewer: Got them.

Mr. Newman: And the coast watcher said, "I don't know how many of them they shot down, but it was about half as many going back as there was coming forward." And they didn't go back real high; they would do like we do and go back down close to the water.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: You are a little bit harder to hit because attack planes you can't go past at close range.

Interviewer: You can't do a nice clean dive.

Mr. Newman: The Japanese made one more attempt, and this time they came when I was on the little Russell Island about 50 miles from Cactus Control. I'd flown somebody over there to get some construction information. The Seabees were just finishing the construction of a landing strip. It was a beautiful little island, big runway with just one strip. While we were there, I was at the Russell control tower and the tower operator told me, "There's a flight of Japanese planes coming this way; you'd better get your plane out of sight." So I taxied it away from the visibility point and put it in a little abutment and got out there and watched them go by. I could hear our control, turned my plane radio on to the channel we were on, and I could hear a vectored call or two but it didn't last long. I don't know how much damage was done and I don't remember how many planes we shot down; but as soon as it was all clear, I took off. As soon as I got up in the air, I called Cactus Control, and they gave me permission to come in and land. I asked them about the condition of the strips, if there was damage and they said, "None!" I went back and landed and that's the last time we saw any Japanese planes come around and that was probably in July of '43.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: Now, the Army Rangers landed; they had a whole support group for a landing operation and then I think they were Rangers from some Army group and they stayed on the island for about a week, and you had to nail everything down (laughter).

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: Those guys were tough. (laughter). Anyway, they were going to land on a little island up from the chain of islands we bombed it. I don't remember which one it was, but we bombed it from time to time. But the last time I remember flying over it, we had to go fly over it and drop a bomb on what we thought was something military, and then we'd fly back by and go real slow to see if we could see anything. And I never remember seeing more than one or two flashes of light, so there wasn't very much armament there. And when the Army landed, they didn't have any problem taking the island. The object was to have a closer spot from here to Bougainville.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: The Army had it under control within two or three days after the time of the landing, and we didn't make any effort to assist them. MacArthur's guys were coming on some of the sights, and they landed there. They had a tough time with that island because it was so remote and it was so dense. They had a hard time; it was close to a place called Rabaul, and Rabaul was a real strong base for the Japanese.

Interviewer: Right, they had a naval base and...facilities.

Mr. Newman: And you know, they went off and left all their people there when McArthur's group closed in.

Interviewer: Isn't that something?

Mr. Newman: And they were just isolated there. There's a number of islands that they just left, that we were told, and I guess its true, some of the islands we didn't take because we would skip an island and they'd be isolated there, and I don't

know what happened to them after the war. Or if, they may have been there a long time and not even know the war ended.

Interviewer: Yeah some of them.

Mr. Newman: You might remember Nimitz Museum had some people here at some of the symposiums that were there and they said, "Well, we just waited until somebody came to get us."

Interviewer: Right, I mean they were there for years and years living off the land.

Mr. Newman: Uh hum.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: Anyway, we finished our tour of duty here at the end of '43, and I was sent to join another air group that was being formed on the west coast at Los Alamitos, California.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: What is the name of that little old base? I'm sorry, Los Alamos is the air base and it's close to San Pedro dock area. Anyway, I got sent along with two pilots from VB-21 squadron and one from another air group - all Lt. JGs.

Interviewer: How did you get back to the States? Just put you on uh ...

Mr. Newman: The Navy flew us from Guadalcanal to Alithia, I believe is right, and then we got on a ship, a jeep carrier; we left all of our planes and stuff at Guadalcanal. We didn't take anything out but our clothes and pistols. When we got to Alithia, we were there for about a day and they put us on a ship and we went to Pearl Harbor. And then they put us on another jeep carrier and took us to

San Diego. And then when you got there, they gave you orders to go wherever they were going to send you. As I said before, Los Alamitos.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: And all those other pilots and crew members who had been in the war before didn't have to go back out because they'd been there twice and shot at twice, although some of them went back again in charge of squadrons. They were good pilots and they were good officers and they were fine people to fly with. I go to the next squadron – there's only four people in the squadron that has ever seen combat. The skipper of the squadron and the four JGs that they sent there and all the rest of them had been instructors and they were going to the fleet for the first time or they were ensigns and just out of training. So we had a whole lot of senior officers (10). The pilots were senior grade lieutenants when we got there which was unusual at that time. When I went to the first squadron, our skipper was a senior grade lieutenant.

Interviewer: Now which air group was this?

Mr. Newman: I'm referring to Air Group-11. Air Group-19 (AG-19) consisted of a bomber squadron and a torpedo squadron and a fighter squadron. And all of us flew out of the same field, we all trained together. We'd train separately and then we'd have group trainings where we would attack places at, in the same format that we would if we were at sea. So we got a lot of good training. We lost one pilot during flight training; he was one of our young ensigns, nice young man. He went into a dive and he either went into what they called a

high speed stall or he waited too late to try to pull out, and he went into the water and killed himself and his gunner.

Interviewer: Now you still flying Dauntless?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, still flying SBDs. We flew them for a good long while, and we had a new version of it and it was a good airplane to fly. Had a four-bladed prop, and a little more horsepower. We trained at Los Alamitos for several months, and then the Navy sent us to the island of Maui in the Hawaiian chain, and that was a beautiful place.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: Fine, good training facility and we got the SB2C; we called it the *Beast*. And the first series of them that we got looked like a clumsy plane. It was hard to fly compared to SBDs and it was very difficult to maneuver in a dive.

Interviewer: It was a Curtiss aircraft, wasn't it?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, Curtiss Helldiver, they called it.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: And it was a difficult plane to fly, because it was big; but it could carry a bigger bomb load; it could go further and it could go faster. And the main part about it was that it's wings would fold. And SBD's wings wouldn't fold, and that was probably the problem with it. Admiral Mitscher was having a problem getting enough planes on the ship because we had three squadrons of 30 plus odd planes in each squadron and the wings won't fold on SBDs.

Interviewer: I didn't know the wings didn't fold on the Dauntless.

Mr. Newman: No. They did on the SB2C, and then they put all the planes on the carrier – the wings would fold then. They sent us about four of those planes for a starter, and we started flying them and they had a whole bunch of little valves and stuff. If this went wrong, you turn this off, and a needle would flash if you were having a problem with some of the hydraulics. There was a valve you could turn to shut it off so that you would still have hydraulic power to lower wheel flaps.

Interviewer: You wouldn't lose all the hydraulics.

Mr. Newman: Yep, and uh, it took 52 turns to shut it off. (laughter)

Interviewer: Oh my!

Mr. Newman: 52 (*cuss word*), and I'm telling you we cussed that plane and it had a three-bladed prop; it was underpowered for its size; and it dove like a rock. The diving flaps when we'd roll over to dive seemed like it took forever to get open and then we were concerned about being able to pull out. So our first bunch of dives on it we probably released at 3,000 ft. – you're not going to hit much there. It took a long time for us to get enough confidence to go lower.

Interviewer: To go...?

Mr. Newman: To go down lower and actually under 2,000 ft.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: Actually, I guess, what we did is instead of diving so straight, we changed our angle. We tried to dive around 70°, but all of this was done just visually, I mean there was no gauges to judge by.

Interviewer: Right, you just did what felt right.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, and the old SBD had a telescope that you had to put your eye on to see the target. Now the later SBDs had the reflector sight, like a gun sight, and you could turn the light on and then you had a gun sight there. And it didn't have to completely oblivate yourself from your surroundings to get on the target. But we tried to dive between 60° and 70°, and you could drop it around 2,000 ft. If you had gotten down less than 60° in the dive, you could probably drop it 1,500 ft. and not be too cramped to pull it out. And you really need to get it down around 2,000 ft. to be accurate. If you dropped at 2,000 ft. at 60° and at the speed you were going, I don't think that you would miss very many times unless it was a destroyer that could dart and turn. You could hit a big ship pretty well.

Interviewer: Yeah, what kind of air speed were, were you experiencing in those deep dives with those aircraft?

Mr. Newman: (Laughter)...to tell you truth, I never looked.

Interviewer: I guess it doesn't matter, does it? (laughter)

Mr. Newman: We just judged it, how fast the target was filling up the gun sight, and some of the pilots had their gunners read the altitudes off as they went through it. Uh, we generally approached the target somewhere around 12,000 ft. – 13,000 ft., sometimes higher than that. And you got right over the top of the target and you just rolled over on your back where you could see it, and then you just flew upside down until you got about where you wanted and then you finished the rollover, and when you rolled over you should be around 70° because you're going to lose a little angle as you go in. But as far as I was concerned,

I judged my altitude more by how much of the target and the gun sight was used up. And I'd try to release around 2,000 ft. Uh, a couple of times, when we got flat and we had a ground target to bomb, where it doesn't have the concentration of gunfire, you could get down lower. We bombed a lot of air fields and buildings and harbors and ships in the harbor. And you could come in a little bit less of an angle because you don't have as much shooting at you. The theory in the dive was, if you got right over the top of it, they can't raise their guns straight up, so you get in that little cone.

Interviewer: Right, they can't elevate to...

Mr. Newman: But I tell you, I didn't know where the shots were coming from.

Interviewer: Did you ever find that cone? (laughter)

Mr. Newman: I don't think I did, because a couple of times one or two planes ahead of me would get hit and you could see it knock it off course. And sometimes it was hit bad enough to cause the pilot to ditch the plane, but there was a number of times when they did get hit in the dive. I got rattled a few times and I had shrapnel go into the plane a few times. I was the fourth plane to dive. But I never got a direct hit on the plane itself from ground fire service guns that was enough to hurt the plane or stop its flying or hurt me or my gunner.

Interviewer: So, you're in Maui, and you're practicing on, with, I mean you're flying Curtiss Helldivers.

Mr. Newman: Yeah. And, and we're trying to learn how to get them where we could hit the targets. We got a few more planes that didn't have as many problems. My father died and I was still flying those clumsy planes. The Navy flew me

back home to San Antonio, Texas. I thought that was a real great service because I was the oldest son and my mom had never handled much of my dad's stuff and we had joint accounts, and so they let me go home and help get things straightened out and get my sisters involved, and...

Interviewer: What caused his death?

Mr. Newman: Huh?

Interviewer: What caused his death?

Mr. Newman: Well, he had a heart attack a couple of times. Actually, he smoked and chewed tobacco from the day he was big enough.

Interviewer: Right, right, most people did back then.

Mr. Newman: Let me tell you a true to life story here. There was a kid that I was raised with that went into the Navy, and he got assigned to the Saratoga. He was several years behind me in high school, and when I got home and was talking to my mother, she said, "Well, Lyman Morenas is in the Navy, and he was here when Dad died." And I says, "Well, I'll be durned." So anyway, I got back to the squadron, they flew me from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor and when I got to Pearl Harbor, they put me on a PBV that does scouting and stuff and mail delivery.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: And so I flew with them for a couple of days, and they finally got to, they didn't tell me where...

(end of Tape 1, side 1)

Mr. Newman: The PBY pilot said, "The Saratoga carried your squadron out, and we loaded all your gear in there. I said, "Well, how am I gonna find it?" And he said, "Well, when you get up there, you ask Officer of the Day to tell you where they put Air Group 19 gear." So I get up there and so, he says, "You're with Ensign Morenas." That was the kid that was sitting at my dad's bedside when he died.

Interviewer: You are kidding!

Mr. Newman: Isn't that unusual?

Interviewer: What's a small world!

Mr. Newman: So, I tracked him down, and of course, he told me how Dad died – that he was sittin' there talking to him and all of a sudden he started getting stiff, and he died. He said, "I called your mother in there, and of course, there's no doctors handy." I told you we lived out in the country. He knew Lyman real well, and Lyman could tell him something about carrier life 'cause Dad knew I was on a carrier. And so at least he had a good idea what happened before he died. But anyway, when I got to that island where they had the planes and I looked out there and I saw those monsters, but they had 4-bladed props. And one of our pilots said, "This is a lot easier plane to fly; we don't have all this problem with the hydraulics." He said...

Interviewer: These are still Helldivers but a later version?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, later versions, SB2C3s and they were easier to fly. The C.O. told me, "We are gonna fly to the ship. We're going to be on the Lexington, and its gonna come by and we're gonna fly our planes aboard. I had never flown an

SB2C3 to a carrier, the plane captain told me, said, "Ah, you're not gonna have any problem." He said, "Its actually an easy plane to land now because its got a wider wheel base." And he said, "The landing flaps seem like that they're easier to control the speed of the flight than they had before."

Interviewer: Well, I guess they'd gotten a lot of negative feedback.

Mr. Newman: Oh, I'm sure they did.

Interviewer: So they made some quick changes.

Mr. Newman: But this plane captain said, "We haven't flown these but a few flights ourselves, but they said it was a lot easier plane to fly." So, I took off in that thing and landed it on the carrier and that's the best landing I think I made the whole time I was in the service. (laughter)

Interviewer: Really?

Mr. Newman: I, I landed that thing and I said, "Man, this is easy to fly." But anyway, we, we went on the Lexington and our first combat experience was at Guam.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: Guam was still in the hands of the Japanese. And so we went to Guam and from there we bombed a whole lot of different islands.

Interviewer: You were part of the fleet, a task force?

Mr. Newman: We were assigned to Task Force 38.3 or something to that; you know pilots don't get any information.

Interviewer: Why?

Mr. Newman: They don't tell you nothing. I mean they don't tell you what ship's off your bow or anything or how many ships are in the task force. But anyway, we

joined a big task force, learned there was four carriers, big carriers in it, and each carrier section of it had a battleship; and several heavy cruisers; and a whole bunch of destroyers and stuff. And we flew out and had some group, organized training sessions off of the ship before we got to Guam. The procedure, as I saw it, was if we had two carriers in the group, they would send both groups. One would go in just a little ahead of the other, and the second group would evaluate the damage if it was for landing forces. And they would hit some where's else and then we'd come back and reload and put another group in, and we'd go back. We very seldom ever had to fly three flights a day. Generally, we'd fly two, and it was very seldom that you'd fly two flights a day yourself. There were a couple of times where we did, where we were sent out three and four. Most of them would be scouting trips. We'd come back and we'd send a late group of planes out on submarine patrol we called them. And actually they were to try to find out if there was anything else out there. And we would fly out in pie-shaped patterns.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: And fly across, and then there'd be another plane and we'd probably cover an area 190° from the direction of the ship, and we could fly out about oh, probably 150 miles, maybe a little more than that without putting a strain on our fuel supply. And the plane would fly pretty fast. I don't remember exactly how much per hour, but it wasn't like a fighter, but we could cruise at a pretty good speed. We had no fighter cover.

Interviewer: So now you're starting to get comfortable with the Hellfighter.

Mr. Newman: Oh yeah, yeah, by the time I flew it a few times, well it wasn't too bad. And we learned to use it. It still wasn't like you flew SBDs in a dive, you could corkscrew in the SBD; you could get up and actually just like a corkscrew. I never was able to do that with the SB2C3 plane – you'd slide around and you had to get on the target a lot faster 'cause you were coming down a lot faster, and we got to where we could use it pretty well, and it carried a bigger bomb. You could carry a 1,000 pound bomb in the bomb bay and two 500s on the wing. If you were gonna go into a area where you were gonna bomb air fields and stuff, well it was good to have those extra two bombs, 'cause if you needed to, you could make a dive and drop the one and swing back around and come in at a lower level and drop the next one.

Interviewer: The Dauntless had just the single large bomb?

Mr. Newman: Single one. Now you could put a 250 on the wings and 500 in the harness, but if you got very much heavier loads, I don't think you could get off the ground. (laughter). On the SBDs we had to carry two fuel tanks on each wing a lot of times to go the distance, and we had to carry fuel tanks a couple of times with the SB2Cs. I don't know if the torpedo planes carried wing tanks, but the fighters carried wing tanks a number of times. And, and we went to the Pescadores which was pretty close to the China coast and had to take wing tanks.

Interviewer: Now was that the next after Guam?

Mr. Newman: No, um, we bombed a lot of islands and the Pescadores was the only ones that we had to use wing tanks during the process. We were making island hopping on short flights 200 to 300 miles out.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: By the time the landing force got one island secured, we'd fall back and regroup and re-ammunition, and supply ships would come by and then we would cruise along for two or three days if nothing would happen. And then the Navy would call up and say okay they gonna have a landing at this island on this day and we're to go in four days ahead and we'll hit it for four days with the whole fleet and then we'll drop back and support the landing for three days, and then we'll get another assignment. And so we did that from island to island. I have something that's unusual for pilots to have because my roommate was a non-flying officer, an interrogation officer, and he took all of the results of each flight and interrogated the pilots.

Interviewer: Roommate where?

Mr. Newman: Huh?

Interviewer: On the Lexington?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, he was my roommate on the Lexington. We did not have one for Guadalcanal, but there was a flight report for every flight that we took except the sub patrol flights.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: The report from the Lexington would give us the number of planes, and the areas that we hit, what happened. On the first island flight the squadron leader, Lt. Stradley, was hit at Guam.

Interviewer: My gosh.

Mr. Newman: Got hit and landed in the water and a destroyer picked up him and his gunner. It didn't hurt anybody, he came back. Matter of fact, he made the full tour. But this thing here got our attention.

Interviewer: Boy, that is a huge book!

Mr. Newman: Yeah, well, this was for every flight we took off through the period of time we were on the Lexington. I got these reports after the squadron broke up and made them into a book for each survivor.

Interviewer: Okay. So, we're talking 1944, mid '40s?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, yeah, we didn't get out into the fleet until July of '44. See they even gave information on the weather.

Interviewer: Oh my gosh! Okay, you follow...after Guam, it looks like you went to Palau?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, Palau group. This wasn't for a landing, we'd just go by those islands ever so often and to let them know we were still here and they may be next.

Interviewer: You knew they were Japanese, hell.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, and we'd just go by them and bomb them, and then go on down to the next one and bomb it. And we made a whole lot of islands. We bombed a whole lot of places before landing, long before landings, and a lot of them we bombed and air group commanders by-passed.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: So we would bomb them, and I don't remember, I don't think we were, I don't remember whether we were an air support for the landing, or even if we took it.

Interviewer: Well, what, what islands just do you remember off the top of your head, just, I mean without...

Mr. Newman: I can tell you the whole...

Interviewer: Boy, you have got the documentation for it.

Mr. Newman: Well, this is comments from all of the guys. Oh, (looking through documentation). The fellow that drew cartoons for Reader's Digest, he did this and sent it to us (laughter). And uh, we thought it was kind of funny.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Newman: Sling shot to get them all. (looking through documentation again.) I gotta thing that has all of the stuff as to where we went. Why don't you turn it off a minute.

Interviewer: Okay, you got something there, huh?

Mr. Newman: I, I don't have everything - it's secret, but I know one of the difficult ones that we went through is when we went into the Bonin Islands and we just went by and paid them a visit, sort of. We hit Iwo Jima and Chi Chi Jima, and uh, those were well fortified islands, and we had to dive down onto a horseshoe shaped island, and when you pulled out, well, they were shootin' at you from both sides.

Interviewer: Yeah, tell me about the Iwo Jima, Chi Chi Jima. What do you remember most about that?

Mr. Newman: Well, we got an awful lot of fire power from the ground.

Interviewer: So you're softening things up before the invasion?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, this is long time before the invasion. I say long time – several weeks. We had actually bombed ships at Okinawa which is pretty close in to Japan.

Interviewer: I'll tell you what, let's go more by what you know, what you remember rather than worrying about all of the other information there.

Mr. Newman: Well, we went to a whole lot of those islands.

Interviewer: Uh huh, so you doing the island hopping and uh...

Mr. Newman: Yeah, and, and then when they were ready for landing, we'd come back and support them.

Interviewer: What about enemy aircraft?

Mr. Newman: I didn't ever encounter any until I got shot down by enemy aircraft. Uh, I was in this commanding officer's section and we went in first. And the first flights going in you didn't encounter very much aircraft fire. The Japanese didn't have good radar.

Interviewer: So they hadn't really had a chance to get in the air?

Mr. Newman: No, by the time we bombed and left, they could not get to planes or ground fire. Now the second group that came when they pulled out, a lot of times they'd pull out right in the middle of Jap planes, and the dive bombers are told you don't fight planes, you drop your bomb and you get in your section and you return the plane and you to the ship so we can send somebody else out there. So, if dive bombers saw a Japanese plane or something going, then he's not gonna go dive down and try to shoot him.

Interviewer: No, no, its not their job.

Mr. Newman: Now, if they get right in front of you when you pull out, well, of course, you're gonna shot at him. And two or three of our guys shot down planes, and a couple of our rear-seat gunners shot down planes. But in each instance when they pulled out, Jap planes were everywhere around them. And none of our pilots got shot down by Jap planes because our fighter planes were good at protecting us. As a matter of fact, our, our group commander says as a fighter squadron we never lost a fighter plane going or coming from a target from enemy aircraft. And that's true except for one instance. On October 24th, and this is getting at the Battle of the Philippine Sea which was the only really battle that we involved ourselves with the Japanese fleet. All the rest of the time we were out there, we had air support for the landings.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr. Newman: We just went around and paid visits to these islands that were occupied by the Japanese. But when we got to Leyte, we encountered the uh, Japanese fleet, and of course, our ships were getting a lot of attacks on the air group from land base planes there. We had a lot of instances where the air group would be attacked from the base that we were bombing. We had, uh, I don't remember how many, but there was a number of times when we'd be called to our duty station. The pilots' duty station was a ready room, and that was only a few in the part of the squadron that was on alert, because we didn't have to always do it. We weren't assigned to any particular battle station, as, as a pilot on a ship. We were kind of a visitor and we, we didn't stand any duty

watches or do anything, and we just flew. And uh, as a result, when the ship was under attack, nearly all of us being young kids, we would go get where we could watch it. And we did that a number of times. I've seen planes make torpedo runs at the carrier, and I seen them moving away from them or seen them making runs at some of the outer screen. And you could see them coming in. And we, most of the time as far as I was concerned, I'd go down in the hangar deck – it had big wide open doors where you could see out and watch our planes attack.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: And the big steel walls that protected gun fire from the planes.

Interviewer: So you wouldn't get shot up.

Mr. Newman: You couldn't get hit.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: And uh, we did that for, oh, for a good long while.

Interviewer: Any close uh, calls for the Lexington?

Mr. Newman: Well, you know the Lexington got hit, but the closest call for me was on the 24th of October. We had spotted the Japanese fleet – what we thought was the real fleet, and that was a time when Halsey had diverted some of the carriers and air groups in another direction.

Interviewer: What was the outcome?

Mr. Newman: I didn't know anything about that until I got back to the States. I was a part of a flight that took off a little before noon; we were going on an attack. And

that would be the first time we ever had a chance to dive on enemy aircraft carriers and other warships.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: And so there was our section of planes 6 each. We had a 12-plane division. We put 18 planes in the air. And out of ours, the first section of 6 planes, the skipper didn't get there, he had to come back. I didn't get there, I had to come back. My wingman didn't get there, and he had to come back. And there was another one of the pilots we think got bad gas. The plane I flew didn't have any power, I couldn't keep up, and I kept flying further back, and so I finally had to radio the commander and told him I was going to return to base. And they were gonna send someone, and then, I said, "Na, I'm not that far away." I probably wasn't more than 75 – 80 miles away from the carrier.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: I just couldn't catch them. So I went back and when I got back in range of the carrier, probably 20 miles, I called in for permission to land. And they said, "We're under attack." And so I dropped down to about 1,000 ft. I guess, and I was just cruising along there, and I could see the black puffs coming from the carrier. I was out far enough where I could see it, but I couldn't really tell very much. So I'm going along at about 1,000 ft. and I hear my gunner's guns go off, and then I looked up and then just out of the corner of my eyes, I saw a Japanese plane fly past me. And about that time, a shell exploded in the cockpit.

Interviewer: It was a Zero, I guess, going by you?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, he shot and he hit the instrument panel of the plane, and it exploded at my feet. And, and fluid flew up over my face and, and all over my goggles and I couldn't see, and I waited until it got through spraying. I raised my goggles up and I was about 10 or 15 ft. above the water, and I didn't have any power. So I looked to see what the direction of the wind was from the waves of the whitecaps they made, I really couldn't tell. I didn't have very much time, so I just picked out a spot and just held it right above the water and then just landed into one of the swells, and it, the plane went under water and came back up.

Interviewer: Hum!

Mr. Newman: And I don't remember getting out of the plane. But I remember standing out on the wing and telling my radioman to throw out the life raft; we had a big 2-man raft. And he couldn't get it out. I think he inflated it when he was trying to pull it out of the canister. And I got, I jumped off the wing and we got together and I told him, "Let's don't inflate; we've got life vests on, uh we got parachutes hooked to us and everything, but we can stay afloat." I said, "They sometimes can come back and strafe you, so let's wait a little while." And that's the last thing that I remember in a conversation with him. I came to a little bit later, and I was in a one-man raft with two of us in it. And I had put out a lot of dye marker. They had this dye marker, and I was a materials officer, so's I had several packages of it in my flight suit. So we hung those out.

Interviewer: So what was causing you to pass out?

Mr. Newman: Well, I must have been in shock.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Newman: As I look at it now, I saw one of our planes diving down and coming up which they were telling somebody that there was a plane down.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Newman: And the guy that saw me was Bud Thorman, and he and I were in the other squadron together and were real good friends. And he was out going on a sub patrol late that afternoon, and he saw us, and he flew back over to the carrier and wrote a note and dropped it on the flight deck and said there was a plane down, and he gave them directions from the carrier.

Interviewer: Wrote a note and dropped it on the flight deck?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, uh huh. He flew back... we had those little bags with a red tag on them. See we, we observed air silence; they were very insistent that you don't use your radio if, if, unless its an emergency or you're reporting something like that. Anyway, he came back and dropped a note and then he found out he was having trouble with his compasses, and he knew he was going the wrong direction 'cause he was going into the sun. He spotted me by pure luck, and lucky for me! He shouldn't have been going on that heading. I guess, it was getting close to late, late in the evening. I don't know how long I was in there – 4 or 5 hours, but I looked up and here's a big ship, about from here to that wall from me.

Interviewer: Oh, my gosh!

Mr. Newman: The ship dropped a rope ladder down the side with two sailors hanging on it, and handing their hand down, and I looked up and gave him my hand, and he pulled me up, and they got me up on the deck. I don't remember how I got to anywhere. I don't even remember how they got me up the rope ladder. I just remember seeing him, and, and smiled, and he grabbed me and pulled me up there, he was a big husky guy. I didn't weigh but about 135 pounds, 140 pounds. Anyway, they got both of us aboard the destroyer, Dartch, was the name of it. And uh...

Interviewer: D-a-r-c-h?

Mr. Newman: D-a-r-t-c-h.

Interviewer: Right, Dartch.

Mr. Newman: I learned some history about it. Anyway, that night I came around and I was up in the bridge, and I asked the sailor that was with me, "What, what are we doing?" And he said, "Well, we're gonna make a torpedo run on a crippled Japanese cruiser." And I said, "By ourselves?" And he said, "No, we've got a squadron of destroyers that's gonna make a run on this ship; and you know you gotta get in pretty close to launch those things." And then about that time, I could see these big tracer shells coming over us, and he says, "They're shooting at us." And you could see the big tracer shot coming from way off, and those ships will shoot three to four miles.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: And we watched those big old yellow balls go by; I saw two or three of those. I'm sure that encouraged me to forget where I was. (laughter) But anyway, I

don't remember anything happening after that. The next thing I'm alongside the Lexington and I'm getting in a boson chair, you know those things they swing between ships?

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: So, a sailor told the chair operator that was standing by me say, "We're going to put you aboard ship." So, they put me in that little bucket and moved me over to the carrier. And when I got to the carrier deck, there were two guys there, big husky guys, that were members of our squadron and they lifted me out of the chair, and I don't know how they got me down to the hospital. They told me later that they carried me down the ladders. You had to go down two ladders to get to the sick bay.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: I came around then and there was Dr. Fox, our flight surgeon, and he was treating me. And the only thing I remember was looking at my toe and it was swollen and purple. And he said, "We're gonna have to cut your toenail to relieve the pain."

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: And so he stuck the scissors through there and cut my toenail, and I, I think I'd a punched him if I could have reached him.

Interviewer: Oh, I bet that didn't feel good.

Mr. Newman: Oh, no, but I tell you, I was probably pretty numb. But anyway, they treated me there, and the next day I came around and I was in bed. They had my legs wrapped with gauze and they were wet. And he told me, he said, "Well you

had a lot of holes in you.” And he said, “We had to put sulfur in the holes.”

They put sulfur in the holes and punched the powder down into the holes with Q-tips.

Interviewer: Just to keep them from getting infected?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, uh huh, and he said, “You had about 20 wounds.”

Interviewer: Shrapnel, I guess?

Mr. Newman: “Yeah,” he said, “We pulled out a lot of shrapnel.” He said, “You had about 26 or 27 holes between both legs.” And he said, “We got some of it out, and we didn’t get all of it.” And I still got some of it in my left foot.

Interviewer: So you still make an interesting x-ray.

Mr. Newman: Yeah. (laughter). I go to the Vets Administration for the first time. I went to the V.A. Hospital when I was having trouble with my legs, the x-ray person brought the picture and he said, “You got something in your feet.” And I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Well, you didn’t tell me.” I said, “Well, I forget that its still in there, it doesn’t seem to bother me very often.”

Interviewer: That’s good.

Mr. Newman: Anyway, I was in ship’s hospital for a full five days and I’m laying in bed one day and I hear this terrible sound. And, it sounds like a fog horn, Oh- Oh-Oh, and that means the ship had been hit. And I’d heard an explosion before that.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: And so the ship had been hit by a Kamikaze. And it knocked out some of the control systems, and we’ve got planes in the air. We had a group of planes in a strike force the morning that the ship was hit, and we didn’t have probably

more than two hours to get the ship fixed or they were going to have to send the planes to another carrier. Within that two hours of time the ship was going in circles. When the ship got hit, a corpsman told me to get up above the water line, go up on the hangar deck because they needed the room there. There was a lot of people hurt. So I went up on the hangar deck, and a bunch of our guys were coming down – they were up on the flight deck, and they told me that a number of people were bloody; they'd been out trying to help. And the plane that hit us was up above the flight deck, but it hit the side of the island that's away from the landing area.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Mr. Newman: The damage that was done was that the explosion and the heat killed a whole bunch of men that was in the gun turrets. We had 40mm and 20mm guns all along the sides. As young kids, we always got up there and watched the landings coming in. And, and, when they sounded the alarm that we were under attack, they ordered everybody to their battle station. Matter of fact, I think we were at battle stations before that plane came in. They generally put you at battle stations when you were in a range area for land base plans. And our guys were up on the walkway area on the bridge walk. But it was open, and they were on the opposite side of where the plane hit, and the explosion evaporated them. We never found any of the bodies. We lost six pilots, and we were only able to identify one. And so some of our pilots had gone up after the hit and started looking, and they started to help people and the crew send bodies down, and, and one guy came down. And one of the ship's crew

came down and he said, "I went to one of the turrets," and he said, "I bet you there was an inch deep in blood." And he says, "It's a horrible sight." And I was trying to go up, and he said, "No, you don't want to go up there." So I went to my room with the help of ship mates. I guess it didn't take but maybe an hour before they had the communications going and the ship underway and cleared the flight deck. We brought our planes aboard, and I didn't fly anymore. Matter of fact, this carrier fell back and let me revert back a little bit here.

Interviewer: Alright.

Mr. Newman: I was away from the ship on the 25th, and that's when the real Battle of the Philippine Sea took place. We finally found the Japanese fleet, and all our guys went out and, and everybody takes credit for sinking something even though there may be three different squadrons involved. But we got hits - on a carrier and a battle ship and a cruiser; they were all sunk.

Interviewer: And you were in the water?

Mr. Newman: I'm, yeah, I'm out there, I made a note in my logbook that I'd flown all of those flights in two tours. I've never had a plane that had to return. I had about probably 80, 90-100 sorties in, in my Navy career, and the first time I'd ever had an opportunity to bomb a Man-O-War, and I didn't make it to the target.

Interviewer: Oh, gosh.

Mr. Newman: And I didn't get back in time to help any more.

Interviewer: You still don't know what the mechanical problem was, do you?

Mr. Newman: Never did find out; dropped the plane in the water and anyway, our guys really did a job on them. And after the suicide plane hit it our ship, well the ship was disabled enough that it fell back and they regrouped and repaired it like it should be. And then we came back for a couple of flights, I guess. Not much more. And then we were relieved and the squadron sent us home. And none of the guys, none of the three of us that had uh, joined the squadron as a second tour of duty, we didn't have to fly anymore at all and got back safe. And of course, I couldn't. So uh, we went on back home.

Interviewer: So you were pretty banged up then after all this.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, I couldn't walk for awhile. They had me doing exercises on the flight deck - I mean on the hangar deck. And they put up a basketball court and, and we could play one end. I wore house shoes. I was in pretty good shape by the time that I got home. We had a lot of guys burned, pilots and gunners. We had two or three pilots that they took to the hospital ship when we fell back. And I could have gone to the hospital ship, but I knew that the damage to the ship and the length of time we'd been out there that we ought to be going home pretty soon. And I got home two months before those guys on the hospital ship. So, I elected to go stay with the squadron and go on home. And they gave me some duty in Corpus Christ, TX which is not very far from San Antonio where I was raised. And the war was coming to and end, and if you had any certain citations or points they gave you for things, I'd gotten a Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart so that gave me enough

points to get out. I got out actually a little bit before the war ended. And that ended my Navy career. I've never flown an airplane since (laughter).

Interviewer: That was enough, huh?

Mr. Newman: Well, military flying and civilian is so different. Nearly everything that you did as an aircraft carrier pilot was training to do what you were gonna do and you do it. I was sent to Kingsville as an instructor, and I'd never been an instructor, and I didn't want to be an instructor. So they made me ground gunnery officer, and I learned to shoot skeet (laughter), 'cause the pilot cadets came over there and they teach deflection shooting.

Interviewer: Uh hum.

Mr. Newman: So, I got to shoot skeet a lot. But I tried instructing; I rode with one cadet, he was at college when I was there, and I knew him. And he was having a hard time landing. Now how he got that far and was having trouble landing the plane I don't know. He may have been able to 'cause that was probably his first experience in an SNJ, and they had a built in ground loop. You really had to be careful with some crosswinds because they ground loop easily. Anyway I said, "Well, I'll take him for a flight and see what his problem is." So we made a pass at a outlying field and I had to take the controls and get him up over a fence, he was coming in too low. And so,...

Interviewer: My goodness.

Mr. Newman: We went back around again and he did something else that scared the snot out of me – he almost stalled. So I went back to the squadron and I said, "I'm not an instructor, and I don't know too much but I can't help this kid any." And I

said, "I don't want to do any more of this." I said, "I spent a lot of time out there, and I don't want to get killed trying to teach some kid how to fly this close to the end of the war." So they didn't give me any more duties. And I didn't look for any more.

Interviewer: Yeah, I guess not. Well, you had a real round of action there, didn't ya?

Mr. Newman: In my entire career, I never got a land based assignment that wasn't preparatory to go into war. When I, when I finished Pensacola, I went through a training station that prepared me for aircraft group. When I finished that, I went to the group. When I finished the first tour of duty, I went back to another group and went back out, and by the time I got back home, I'd put four years in the Navy and I'd spent nearly all of it in combat units.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Newman: And so I was ready to get out.

Interviewer: Did you always uh, fly with the same guy in the second seat or was it different people?

Mr. Newman: No, no you had a gunner assigned to you. Now in order to get everybody some flight time, 'cause we had more gunners than we had pilots, or it may be that a gunner hadn't gotten enough time in to qualify for flight pay, so every now and then you would take a different gunner, but aboard ship. And when I was on Guadalcanal, we went on a combat flight, I had the same guy.

Interviewer: Who was that?

Mr. Newman: I had a man named Buckley on Guadalcanal, and I had a man named Stanley on the Lexington.

Interviewer: Did you get pretty close to those guys?

Mr. Newman: Well, you know...

Interviewer: Or, or not?

Mr. Newman: You know the Navy has, kind of funny, they kept you separated all the time.

Interviewer: Really.

Mr. Newman: And I knew them pretty well. On Guadalcanal I got to know them a lot better than I did on the Carrier because we were bivouacked close enough together, and, and we had a lot of time off to wonder around, but you know, there was such a distinction drawn between officers and enlisted men. You know if you went on a carrier, well this was officer country, and enlisted personnel wasn't even supposed to be in there, things like that. It was real different to me. I, my dad was a sergeant, and uh, master sergeant when he made him first lieutenant when he retired, and uh, I wasn't accustomed to having that much segregation.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: And at Pensacola, when I got there – December of 1941, I don't think the base even knew the war had already been declared. I didn't realize that they had not realized that we were at war. They still had BOQs, and you wore white uniforms to go to town and to the officers' club. Everybody was in uniforms of the day, and when it was time to wear blues, you wore blues. We didn't have greens at that time. I guess I'd been there a good long while before everybody could go into the clubs with khakis. Whenever you got to all the other stations, you could go into the officers' club with flight gear, and

nobody bothered you. But boy, when I got to Pensacola, it was Navy, and I'm talking about *all* Navy. And it was good because reserve guys never did accept Navy as with the Navy traditions that go with it. It was hard to do.

Interviewer: They weren't true Navy, yeah.

Mr. Newman: Well, they had not been exposed to it like the guys do that go through Annapolis. Uh, when our squadron left VB-19 when we first started, we had our commanding officer was an Annapolis graduate, and our executive officer was an Annapolis graduate. Everything else was reserve pilots, all of them. And both of those guys got killed. And we were an all reserve unit, including the commanding officer by the time we came home. As a matter of fact, most of the action at uh, on the 24th and 25th when we sent all these pilots out, we didn't have an Annapolis man in the squadron; both of them were killed. Uh, the skipper got killed and died the same day I went down on the 24th. And from then on, we were an all reserve squadron. And the senior officers that we had were senior grade lieutenants. They were good pilots and good leaders and they did the job. But all the squadrons were made up, in the beginning, with Annapolis people, more than anything else. Not that they were any better pilots, I guess, since in some instances they weren't as good because they didn't fly much during the early stages of their life. All of us that came into it as late teenagers or early 20s, and a lot of them had graduated from colleges. My roommate was a lawyer in Tennessee, and uh, he wasn't a flier, but he was a good mature man. We had a seaman get in trouble on Hawaii, on Maui, and he got put in the brig. And so the island court asked our

commanding officer for an officer or a lawyer to defend him. We sent George T. Lewis. And so he goes back to his lawyer days and he looks up the law, he goes before this Army court marshal, and he says, "You have no authority to do this." And if you don't think that caused a rout (laughter). He presented this case and it was a big stink, and the court called the air group commander up; air group commander called the squadron commander up, and they had a conference with George T. Lewis Jr. And he said, "Well, I've got the documentation here," and he said, "I have researched this," and he says, "This command is not set up properly to do this." And he was right; I mean theoretically he was right. But they had not taken over command of the islands and so they could do pretty well what they wanted to. But legally, as far as George was concerned, they were wrong. And he got the kid off, and it wasn't long after that that they got us off of the island. (laughter)

Interviewer: Yeah, uh what's your feeling about the Lady Lex that you flew on, as a ship?

Mr. Newman: Oh, it was a great ship. We were, as just being guests, you couldn't have been treated nicer by ship personnel. The only complaint I ever had about it is that they put a first lieutenant of the Marine Corps in charge of the ward room, and for the providing of the food; and we didn't have very good food. It was good, it was healthy, but the only thing that I enjoyed was every Wednesday - we had beans for breakfast.

Interviewer: That's as good as it got?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, that's as good as it got. (laughter) I never learned to eat powered eggs and they never would cook bacon crisp enough. And we'd have pancakes every now and then, and that was pretty good.

(End of Tape 1, side 2)

Interviewer: Okay, we're starting Tape 2, Earl Newman, go ahead, Earl.

Mr. Newman: We had a difficult time adjusting to powered and condensed foods. They never tasted real.

Interviewer: Not good.

Mr. Newman: They never did taste good. The first time that we had peanut butter it would stick to the roof of your mouth, and the same thing with some of the butter. But the food wasn't really that bad, it just didn't have much taste. We had a ward room assigned next to our ready room which was our battle station, and it had a mess cook in there, and we could get sandwiches made anytime during the course of the day. And they had salami, and bologna and cheese and bread and stuff, and that was good and they always had coffee. And they had lemonade, but it was so strong that you couldn't drink it; I didn't like it anyway. But they had other kind of juices, and so a lot of times you may be in the ready room all day and you didn't want to go down to the mess hall. Or if you were stand-by, they'd feed you there from their little ward room, and it wasn't too bad. But the personnel on the ship was great; you never had any encounters at any time with either our enlisted personnel and their personnel that I know about. Now, unlike a lot of units, we were totally dependent on them for support.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Newman: And they did a great job. All of our guys really thought a lot of them.

Interviewer: Now this is the Lexington that is moored in Corpus Christi, is that right?

Mr. Newman: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Have you been down to see her?

Mr. Newman: Yes, as a matter of fact, we've held two reunions there.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Newman: And the first reunion we had uh, I, I visited the ship before we had the reunion, and I went down and met the curators and what not. And uh, they didn't have a whole lot of stuff. They didn't have a ready room made up like the squadrons had. So I talked to him, and I asked him, "If we get you enough stuff to do a ready room, would you do it?"

Interviewer: Would you do it?

Mr. Newman: He said, "I tell you what, if you'll get enough stuff to do a ready room, we'll do it, and we'll call it VB-19 ready room." We had all the chairs and black board. And so I started writing to these guys, and then we got all kinds of stuff, and most of the stuff in the ready room came from our people. And they set the ready room up and they got it like that now. When the movie people filmed the movie, *Pearl Harbor* there'd been a number of them, but...

Interviewer: The last one.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, they used the, our ready room as the Japanese ready room.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Mr. Newman: And, for taking the filming of the picture.

Interviewer: I'll be darned.

Mr. Newman: And its still there, but uh, they changed it up a little and, but if anybody visits and goes to that room, you can, its, its really set up typical ready room. As a matter of fact, they let us have a flight board, a schedule flight board. And we put the names of all the pilots that went up and their gunners on the 24th and the 25th of those two main strikes. So the guys that flew that day are up there on the bulletin board and we've had two squadron reunions there. The last one was last year. And uh, we enjoy going there, and they take real good care of us; they just do a great job. And...

Interviewer: Oh, I've been to the ship, and its uh, I didn't, didn't know, of course, the story about the ready room.

Mr. Newman: Yeah, it'll say VB-19 ready room. I don't think they've set up another squadron ready room. The torpedo squadron was talking about having one. But basically, this was set up as our ready room as it was used condensed size during the war. We got plotting boards for them, and they had all the chairs and stuff, 'cause they had arms on them, so you could raise them up and write on them. We did all of our plotting and everything in there before a flight. We had flight gear and Mae West helmets on the walls.

Interviewer: Yeah, looking back on that whole experience, and my, you had an experience – how did that change you as a person other than pieces of shrapnel?

Mr. Newman: I always felt like that I was immature for my age, and I probably was. I was small all of my life, but I become a more responsible person. I think that I really didn't mature real well until I got into the business world, and I found

out in a hurry that I wasn't near as smart as I may have thought I was.
(laughter) And I'd do it again tomorrow. I mean, and every one of our guys would. We never had any qualms. You didn't have to go out and solicit people for an attack. If you didn't make one, if you missed two, the guy was up there fussing with the air officer because, flight guy that was in charge of arranging the flights, they got a flight officer because he wasn't getting to go on the strikes. I mean when we were assigned that flight, boy, we were anxious to get off and go do it. And it never bothered us. I don't think at any time anybody ever thought they were gonna get hit.

Interviewer: Course not.

Mr. Newman: And we were real optimistic. We, we were fatalists to a point, where it was any concern. I never gave any thought that I wouldn't turned over and go into a dive that I wouldn't get back to the ship. It was that, it never entered my mind. And it never entered my mind that, that I didn't go do something that they needed us to do. And I don't necessary say it, it was for God and Country or anything like that. It was just that something, it was the right thing to do.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Newman: And, and we looked at it that way, and we do today. We still have reunions; I'm going to one this September. Its going to be in Bismarck, ND. We've been doing this since the 25th anniversary; this will be, oh, it gotta be formed in '43, and this is what - '06?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Newman: That's going to be what, 6...?

Interviewer: 63 years.

Mr. Newman: 63 years. And we started out going every five years, and then went to every three years, and now they're down to every two years. The last one that we had, we only 13 people that were fliers or gunners left. And there's still a number of them still alive, but they don't know their health is such that they can't get there.

Interviewer: Yeah, right, right.

Mr. Newman: As a matter of fact, last year, uh when I started contacting them to go to the Lexington, and I was the organizer for it. From the time I started until we were able to go, we lost three people. But you gotta remember, I'm 86 and we were all about that age. Some of them are a little older than that. We've got, I think, the oldest guy we got now is Jack Meeker and he can't come this year; he's 90. He's in Arizona; I think he's in a nursing home now, and he just can't get around.

Interviewer: Well, its good that you've been able to stay together and...

Mr. Newman: And real close. We had a, we had a guy, Wally Griffith, a retired captain, and he took it upon himself to keep the squadron together. And he has done a magnificent job. And all these years he keeps us posted when somebody dies; he sends out a newsletter twice a year – “how you doing?” – you know, that kind of stuff, and we've stayed real close together. We were probably the only squadron that met independently of the air group. A lot air groups have reunions as air group squadron fighters, torpedoes and stuff like that. We

never had a reunion as an air group. We always met as an independent squadron. And, and the other, I know fighter squadron had some reunions, and they, the air group would have reunions, but very few of us ever went to them. But we were real close to each other in the squadron, and always have been. Been friends from the word go. We never had any problems. We did a lot of screwy things, and I'm sure that we drove our commanding officer crazy because nobody ever two-blocked their tie. (laughter). We were just kind of raunchy kids that flew, but we were good at what we did.

Interviewer: Well, that's what was important.

Mr. Newman: He learned to tolerate us. (laughter) He was a good commanding officer.

Interviewer: Well, what else can we cover here, Earl, before we shut it down? This has been a...

Mr. Newman: I don't know, I...

Interviewer: Fascinating story.

Mr. Newman: I, support this Museum. I belong to it, and I enjoy coming back here. I come to nearly every symposium they have, and have for a number of years. And I've contributed some stuff to it that I hope they're able to use. We gave the Lexington an awful lot of the stuff that our squadron's guys had as a reminder. They turned stuff over to the Lexington that, I know, the families would like to have. I gave them my leather flight gear that had squadron insignias on it, and my daughter's still mad at me. A lot of those guys had pieces of the Japanese plane.

Interviewer: That hit the ship?

Mr. Newman: Yeah, and they gave it to them, and they're on display. This - its just been a real, I guess, it was more a part of my life than anything else. I got, I guess, I still have a lot of military in me because that was my life as a kid and I went through this. But uh, I worry a little bit now about Americanisms that seem to be forgotten now in, in the criticism of the services. Golly, I just can't understand why people wouldn't respect or do everything they can for these guys. They don't understand. I think they take for granted that guys are supposed to go out there and get shot at and killed to make life easier for people. And, and they do it because they think it's the right thing to do, and I do too. And I will always feel that way. I just hope that kids today who get a lot of criticism because of the few that are way out believe in the USA. I've got four grandsons that are great kids, and they'd go tomorrow if they had to. And I know that a high percentage of America's youth still got the same thing that I had, and that was a desire to protect our country - and not because it's a gung-ho thing to do, but because it's the right thing to do. And I just hope that they'll continue to do that. And I sure appreciate your giving me this opportunity to talk to you.

Interviewer: Well, I'm honored.

Mr. Newman: Thank you. I get a little emotional sometimes.

Interviewer: Well, don't we all? Let me just close, Earl, by thanking you for what you did for our country 60 some odd years ago. It wouldn't be the same today without you guys.

Mr. Newman: Okay, well thank you.

Interviewer: We'll close it at that.

Mr. Newman: Okay.

(end of interview, Tape 2, side 1)

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