

The National Museum of the Pacific War

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

**Interview with
Dr. Thomas Earl DuPree
United States Navy
Air Group 16 / USS Lexington
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Interview with
Dr. Thomas Earl DuPree

Mr. Zambrano: This is Mike Zambrano. Today is June the 5th, 2007. I am interviewing Dr. Earl DuPree. This interview is taking place over the phone with Dr. Dupree who lives in Swainsboro, Georgia. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, and Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Dr. DuPree how are you today sir?

Dr. DuPree: I'm very fine Mike. I hope this interview is to your liking.

Mr. Zambrano: I'm sure it will. In our previous discussions it seems that you have quite some interesting stories to tell, but for the purpose of the interview, I'd like to start off with you telling me where and when you were born?

Dr. DuPree: I was born in Stone Mountain, Georgia right near Atlanta on November the 24th, 1919.

Mr. Zambrano: And what were the names of your parents?

Dr. DuPree: My father was John Thomas DuPree and my mother was ... actually, he was a junior; his father was John Thomas DuPree, Sr., a Civil War veteran who was shot five times in the Civil War and still lived to tell us until I was ten years old, and my mother was Effie Douglas who grew up in old Milton County which was merged into Fulton County about seven years ago where I am today.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow, that's some pretty fascinating family history! Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Dr. DuPree: I had one brother. His name was Harvey Harold DuPree. He was named after my grandfather, James Harvey Douglas, and he was also a navy pilot and was killed in a training accident about five weeks after World War II started. He never got out of the state of Florida.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that sir.

Dr. DuPree: And I had one sister who was a very successful librarian, she built something like thirty libraries in the Oconee Regional Library system down in Little Georgia and she was sent to that area for the specific purpose of making it a regional library area. She was very successful in what she did. She died at age eighty on Valentine's Day about four years ago.

Mr. Zambrano: What was her name?

Dr. DuPree: Her name was Elizabeth Moore.

Mr. Zambrano: Elizabeth Moore, okay. So can you tell me a little bit about your childhood and what it was like growing up in that region of the country?

Dr. DuPree: My dad was the county school superintendent back in the twenties in Wilkinson County and it was a very rural county. And the town of Irwinton, the county seat where his office was, was about four miles down Highway 57, which was a dusty road and, of course, my earliest recollections are more or less of the impending Depression and years of the Depression preceding World War II and we were as poor as everybody else but nobody knew we were poor because everybody was poor. The Depression days were unbelievable. I can remember sitting on our porch early in the morning and a long line of dust for as far as you could see in both directions were

people coming from as far away as they could start walking to get away from the cold weather that was coming in late '32. They had no job, no food, everything on their back they carried with them to Florida to get down there where it was warm and I can remember that most vividly.

Mr. Zambrano: What ... well, let me ask this first: did you go into military service before or after World War II had begun?

Dr. DuPree: I joined the navy in March of '41 before the war started and I think that the elimination base here in Atlanta, which was a brand new base, it didn't even have a runway when I arrived and we stayed for a while and then I went to Pensacola in May of '42 and I went through that and in about four months I was down in Miami going through the, what we call, fighter school where you learn to fly fighters and dive-bombers and torpedo planes and I finished down there and on December the 6th, 1941, the day before Pearl Harbor. I was at the movies with my roommate at Miami Beach when they stopped the movie and said, 'This is no drill! All navy personnel report to your ships and stations! The Japanese have just bombed Pearl Harbor!' And my roommate, Harry Liffner, from Westchester County, New York, pulled me aside and said, 'Pearl Harbor! Who in the hell is she?' I said, 'Well, I don't know who she is, but we better run out to the base and find out. She must be important if the Japs sent the entire fleet to bomb her!'

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, boy!

Dr. DuPree: So Harry and I went out to the base and people out there were as puzzled about what to do as we were and we stood around and finally they said, 'Be

at Captain Bogan's' now he was a commander then, he made admiral. 'Be at Commander Bogan's office Monday morning he wanted to pin the wings on and make a little speech.' So he told us that we were the best trained military pilots in the world and proud to pin those gold wings on but that he wasn't half as proud as we were, of course, and I was riding up to Norfolk with my orders to report to the USS Wasp, CV-7. I thought about that commander, what he said about me being the smartest, well trained pilot in the world and I thought, 'Well, I haven't learned anything since Friday and I was a dumb damn cadet on a Friday. I think I got I've got a lot to learn!' These were my thoughts as I was driving north to Norfolk, Virginia to join the Wasp.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I'm curious but what drew you to the navy?

Dr. DuPree: Well, my brother had been in the navy prior to me and he was an instructor in Jacksonville and he had sold me on the idea that the navy flight training program was the best flight program there was and if I could get in the navy like he had done that's what I should do. And I kind of had a fantasy of wanting to be an aircraft carrier pilot. I actually started flying in the CPT training course that the government started in colleges all over America in '39 and '40 and I had about a hundred hours and a pilot's license and though I could do acrobatics, I was restricted from flying with passengers, but I learned in the CPT civilian training course before I went to Pensacola and they gave us credit for that training course, but we started off with a

thirty-three hour check and that's the reason I got through Pensacola so rapidly. I didn't spend much time in Squadron 1.

Mr. Zambrano: Now what were you flying down at Pensacola?

Dr. DuPree: Well, we trained in Yellow Perils we called it. They were naval ... some of them were Stearman and some of them were built by the Naval Aircraft Factory in Philadelphia, because they were all trainers, N3N trainers and N2S trainers that the Stearman was. And then after we got into Squadron 2 we flew ... that's when we learned formation flying in old aircraft that the fleet had used up and turned over to the training command. I flew SBU's which is a Vought-Sikorsky dive bomber with no dive flaps and didn't even have the retractable landing gear. Then in Squadron 3 we flew the SNJ or what the air forces called an AT-6 for instrument flying and when I got down to Miami we flew fighters and torpedo planes that had been worn out in the fleet and been sent back to the training command to train cadets in.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you have a preference for flying fighters or torpedo bombers or anything?

Dr. DuPree: Well, it was a lot more fun flying fighters than anything else. They were ever so much more maneuverable. They were single seat airplanes and the ones we trained in were those old bi-planes like Roscoe Turner used to fly around doing acrobatic shows. I don't know whether you know who he was or not, but I think he carried a lion in his airplane sometimes. That was part of his show. That was the most maneuverable airplane I ever flew and one of the most fun planes to fly. The bi-plane and I think the Stearman and

then the F2F-4 and the F3F-2 and -3 and of course there's the Wildcat and the Hellcat.

Mr. Zambrano: So did you make any good friends while you were going through your training in Pensacola?

Dr. DuPree: What?

Mr. Zambrano: Did you make any good friends while you were doing your training down in Pensacola?

Dr. DuPree: I didn't quite understand your question.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, I was asking about your time in Pensacola, if you had made any close friends?

Dr. DuPree: Well, actually I didn't ... as we went through Pensacola, the people that I started out in the elimination base in Atlanta, some of them went to Corpus, some of them went to Jacksonville, and a very few of us went to Pensacola. I don't know why I went to Pensacola and not any of these other places, so the friends I'd made in Atlanta I didn't see them much anymore.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Dr. DuPree: Once you get to Pensacola they shift you around from one week to the next and you have some roommates, but I didn't maintain any close friendships with the people I flew with at Pensacola.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Dr. DuPree: I remember a lot of them and I ran into them a lot but we just didn't have a close relationship.

Mr. Zambrano: You said if I understood you correctly, that from Pensacola you went straight to the Wasp?

Dr. DuPree: Well, I was ordered to the Wasp from Miami. I didn't get my orders to the Wasp until about November of '41 and I hadn't finished flight training and I actually got my orders to the Wasp. I don't know why the orders came in like that and I went to Norfolk and the Wasp was not in port so I checked in to what they called an Advanced Carrier Training Group which was a very concentrated course in dive bombers and we learned to do carrier landing practice and finally checked out on a little boat called the Long Island which was about 480 feet long that was a converted small jeep carrier. That's what we learned to land on a carrier with as it floated around in the Chesapeake Bay, but we were concentrated on ... by this time I was assigned to Scouting 72. The Wasp didn't admit that we had a bombing squadron. It listed as a pre-World War II ship and both of the bombing squadrons were called scouting squadrons because we didn't want to admit that we were getting ready for war.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, I'm just curious but your first few carrier landings, what was that like?

Dr. DuPree: Well, you know, it's kind of scary. Your landing signal officer is of course you had to follow his signals on field carrier landing practice on a field so if you have a lot of confidence in your landing signal officer and you learn how to follow his signals, that's all you have to do and when he gives you a cut you cut it and you have a stall and you just land and it was,

uh ... they told us that they were going to give us two practice approaches and you wouldn't land until your third approach and I think the landing signal officer missed the count and I was the sixth one in the line and he gave me a cut on my first approach so I landed before I realized that I'd make a landing. It was surprising how simple it was.

Mr. Zambrano: Really and why is that?

Dr. DuPree: Pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, you said you were surprised at how simple it was.

Dr. DuPree: Well, he didn't even correct me. I made a perfect approach and when he gave me the cut I expected to wave me off and so when I cut it the engines, you know, you're flying so slow, once you cut the engine it lands and the plane came straight down and I landed it on the deck, caught the hook and I'd made a landing before I'd realized I made one.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, gosh. Let's see ... so you trained on the Wasp with landings and what else did you do when you first got to the Wasp?

Dr. DuPree: Well, on our first trip we had no idea where we were going because the war had started and we headed in a northeastern direction like we were going to Europe and we knew that was the general direction of the fleet. There was an interesting story about Admiral Wilcox who was the admiral and he was on the Washington a new battleship that was in the task force and we didn't know it at the time but we were headed for Scapa Flow to pick up Spitfires for the RAF and ferry them down to Malta for the defense of Malta and the Wasp made two trips down there and, by the way, Malta was never, never

occupied by the Germans so the two loads of Spitfires must have had some great benefit for them. But Admiral Wilcox had issued an order that no one could sound general quarters or a general alarm without his specific permission so we got into a North Atlantic gale and all the Wasp flying was secured because the weather was so terrible, the waves were breaking over the flight deck, she was pitching so in and out of that vicious North Atlantic storm and the Washington, though it was a big battleship, 35,000 tons, it was about 110 feet wide and 900 and something feet long, somebody fell off the admiral's bridge and so they couldn't sound general quarters because the admiral issued an order not to and by the time they got through searching through the admiral's quarters they realized that the admiral was missing. It kind of dawned on them that the admiral had fallen off of the bridge and that it had thrown him clear of the ship into the water and into that North Atlantic cold water. Of course, he was dead in the matter of a minute or two, but the captain of the Washington didn't know much about flying and he ordered launching planes off the Wasp to look for the admiral. Well, you couldn't hardly see the Washington from the Wasp in that storm so four people were lost from the Wasp and two had gotten back aboard safely but Ed Petway crashed into the water before he got aboard the Wasp. He was a good friend of mine and he left in his will that I would be the one to inventory his affects and write his parents a letter, which I did of course, and then they moved Commander Frank Turner who was my squadron commander over to the Washington as an advisor to the captain so he would

have someone aboard who knew about flying and then we all felt a lot more secure after Frank Turner got aboard the Washington because we didn't have to fly in a storm like that anymore. But it did turn out to be Admiral Wilcox is the only admiral that ever fell off the admiral's bridge on a battleship and drowned, but he did. And that was sometime in late March or early April of '42. We were the first total military unit of fighter planes and dive bombers and torpedo planes to come to England so a lot of the big wheels in England came up to see us fly. Admiral Montgomery and Lord Mountbatten, and there were a lot of people up there, the Shah of Iran and Phillip Mountbatten lived down the hall about two doors from him and they said that he was real mad at the princess but I didn't believe it, of course I played checkers with Phillip on a regular basis, but he did marry the princess as you well know so that wasn't scuttle butt like I thought it was.

Mr. Zambrano: Gosh, so ...

Dr. DuPree: We stayed there for about six weeks. The dive bombers and torpedo planes stayed at RNAS Hatston a little naval air station north of Scapa Flow and the fighters went on the cruise to Malta to give them fighter cover. Sometime around the first week in May we ... at four o'clock in the morning they woke us up, I think it was the 8th of May, and said, 'We're flying aboard the Wasp. We're headed for the Pacific. Something big is going on out there.' And so we left immediately, flew aboard the Wasp and came steaming back across the Atlantic and picked up a new load of SBD

dive bombers and some new ... I guess some new fighter planes too. I don't remember that for sure, anyway ...

Mr. Zambrano: I have a question.

Dr. DuPree: Okay.

Mr. Zambrano: Are you still there, sir?

Dr. DuPree: Yes.

Mr. Zambrano: I had a question. I read a little bit about the Wasp and its shakedown and it mentioned something about an accident with a Vought Vindicator. Do you recall anything about that?

Dr. DuPree: Well, no I never heard anything about the Wasp, so I wasn't aboard when they first went on shakedown cruise. The Wasp was lost in 1942.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay, alright.

Dr. DuPree: And I wasn't aboard until, uh ... actually I didn't go aboard until '42 because when it came back off cruise I had just finished ACTG and qualified on the Long Island. That's when I went aboard.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay, alright. Let's see ...

Dr. DuPree: And you might be talking about the Wasp that was an Essex Class carrier that was named Wasp after the Wasp I was on was sunk. The Wasp was CV-7. It was a small carrier that was designed sort of like the Yorktown, Enterprise, and the Hornet. They were three sisters of the same design and the Wasp was about a hundred feet shorter and about ten feet narrower, but it carried the same air group. The money was appropriated for it back during peace time when we weren't desiring getting into the war. We were

still arguing about whether we were going to fight World War II or not when the Wasp was built.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. I have read that you went through the Panama Canal to get to the Pacific?

Dr. DuPree: Yes we did. I went through the Panama Canal and we were headed at flank speed towards Midway and we got about a thousand miles from Midway and the battle came off a little early. We didn't see Midway, we didn't see any Japanese, we didn't see Pearl Harbor. We turned around and went back to San Diego to refuel and reload and get ready to head out to Guadalcanal. So I didn't see any activity in the Pacific prior to Guadalcanal.

Mr. Zambrano: Now at this point you're flying the Douglas Dauntless?

Dr. DuPree: That's right. We picked up the Douglas Dauntless planes to replace the old SB2U's that we had on the Wasp prior to that. The SB2U didn't have dive flaps and the fuselage was covered with canvas instead of metal, but it was a tough old dive bomber but it wasn't anything as good as the Douglas Dauntless was.

Mr. Zambrano: So what was your impression of the Dauntless, I mean, it sounds like you liked the plane?

Dr. DuPree: It was a very stable airplane. Once you got it set in a dive you, it was like flying straight and level. It was so easy to fly and had good controls for ailerons and rudders and it didn't wobble on the dive like some planes did and you could fly it straight and make a small correction. It was a very tough airplane, too.

Mr. Zambrano: I heard that it was pretty heavily armored?

Dr. DuPree: Well, it had bullet-proof windshields and bullet-proof tanks that sealed. If you shot a hole through them it would seal it and it had a bulkhead in front of us and behind us that was bullet-proof. It only had two .50's that fired through the propeller that the pilot fired and then two .30 caliber machine guns that the gunner fired and it fired about a thousand rounds of ammunition in one long string of bullets. You could shoot two thousand without stopping. If you had a six plane section or three plane section of dive bombers you had about six .30 calibers firing in the rear and the six .50 calibers firing forward and it was a pretty well able to defend itself against a zero.

Mr. Zambrano: It sounds that way. Who was your captain at this time when you headed back to San Diego?

Dr. DuPree: You mean the captain of the ship or my squadron commander?

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I guess both. Who was your squadron commander?

Dr. DuPree: Well, Ernest Snowden was the squadron commander after Frank Turner went to the Washington. He was General 'Hap' Arnold's son-in-law, the five-star general in the air force, he married Lois Arnold.

Mr. Zambrano: Lois Arnold?

Dr. DuPree: Lois Arnold was his wife and she was the daughter of the five-star general of the air force.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay. What kind of man was he like? What kind of officer?

Dr. DuPree: Well, he was a very fearless kind of fellow. He graduated from the Naval Academy in '32 and went immediately into flying and he was a very competent pilot and he was a courageous guy and he was a real eager beaver kind of a fellow. He made me a lot better pilot than I was because of his confidence in me and his confidence in himself. He was a totally self confident man and a good leader.

Mr. Zambrano: What about the ...?

Dr. DuPree: The captain of the ship was 'Black Jack' Reeves, but he was replaced by Forest Sherman who was the captain when the ship was sunk and then Captain Sherman made four-star and became the CO of the navy before he retired.

Mr. Zambrano: Really.

Dr. DuPree: So he was a pretty confident officer too.

Mr. Zambrano: I have read that David McCampbell served on the Wasp as well. Did you ever meet him or know him?

Dr. DuPree: Oh, he was the fellow that taught me how to make landings. He gave us all carrier landing practice and he was a lieutenant at the time and later came out as commander of the air group on the Essex and there he shot down thirty-four zeros. He became the leading ace of the navy and I knew David very well. He was highly complimentary of my flying and David had been to Georgia Tech and he kind of liked having a Georgia boy to teach and he was proud of his having been to Georgia Tech before he went to the Naval Academy. He left Georgia Tech and went to the Naval Academy and

graduated in 1934, I believe it was, but yes, I knew David very well and had a high regard for him.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow, very interesting. When I was reading about the Wasp I came across a picture of him serving as an LSO on the flight deck.

Dr. DuPree: He was an LSO on the Wasp.

Mr. Zambrano: Now would pilots generally take a turn at being LSO?

Dr. DuPree: Well, before the war started most of the LSO's were pilots, but after the war started they began to train people who were not pilots to be LSO's. They finally realized that you didn't have to be a pilot to be an LSO, but I think it had a big advantage in the fact that they were pilots.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. You know before I go on I forgot to ask you, but what was the number of your air group?

Dr. DuPree: Air Group 7 on the Wasp.

Mr. Zambrano: So that would be ...?

Dr. DuPree: And my squadron was Scouting 72.

Mr. Zambrano: Scouting 72.

Dr. DuPree: We had scouting squadrons: 71 and 72. And the torpedo squadron was VT-7 and the fighter squadron was VF-7.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. I just wanted to throw a couple of names out at you and you can just tell me if you knew these men or not: Lieutenant Commander E.M. Snowden?

Dr. DuPree: That was Ernie Snowden, my commander who was 'Hap' Arnold's son-in-law that was my squadron commander.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay, alright. Lieutenant Commander Eldridge?

Dr. DuPree: He was the commanding officer of Scouting 71 and when the Wasp was torpedoed his squadron had the anti-submarine duty and scout duty and they were in the air so his squadron landed at Guadalcanal and I think John Eldridge got killed at Guadalcanal, I'm pretty sure he did, I'm not sure about that, but I never saw him after the Wasp was sunk.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, I remember seeing a site that mentioned that he was deceased. How about Lieutenant Robert Howard?

Dr. DuPree: I remember a Lieutenant Howard that was in Scouting 71. He wasn't in my squadron, I don't think.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: You know, the war is a long time ago memory to me. I didn't do much combat on the Wasp because we got torpedoed about five weeks after we hit Guadalcanal. Most of my experience was on the Lexington, but I remember a Howard that was in, I think, he was in the other scouting squadron, in John Eldridge's squadron.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. After San Diego can you tell me where you went then?

Dr. DuPree: We from San Diego to Guadalcanal. We covered the Marine landings on August the 7th, 1942. Our target was the gasoline storage tanks and bomb storage on the island of Tulagi just north of Guadalcanal. I was the fourth plane in the group that attacked and I got a hit on whatever it was that it was and it exploded and flames enveloped my airplane and I just held my breath and flew out of the flames in just the matter of a split second and a zero was

on our tail at the time and all of a sudden he quit firing and he landed in the water. My rear seat gunner said, 'I don't know why he quit shooting at us. He just stopped and landed in the water.' And so I saw his plane, it was a float type zero, after I dropped that bomb and hit the fuel storage dump. I made a strafing run on his airplane a couple of three times and I saw him swimming to the side and as I flew over his plane strafing it the last time I waved to him and he waved back and I went on back to the Wasp and that was the limit of my combat experience in Guadalcanal. After that we did a lot of searching for the Japanese fleet that was coming down but we never found it and we never got involved with the Japanese fleet and the Coral Sea. The submarine I-19 put three torpedoes, two of them simultaneously in the Wasp and one of them cracked the aviation storage fuel and it blew up and knocked the ship completely out of the water. I've seen a picture of the bottom of the Wasp suspended in midair; I think it was an aviation gasoline explosion that knocked us out of the war. And one of my first grade classmates that later became a colonel was the first Marine to step on the sands of Guadalcanal and it was our first offensive battle, you know, up until then we'd been fighting a defensive battle, but Guadalcanal was our first offensive battle and, of course, nobody cared about Guadalcanal as such, but the Japanese were building an airfield and they were going to use it to launch their attack on Australia and America felt like we had to stop them right there at Guadalcanal and that's why it was such a bloody battle.

Mr. Zambrano: You say that that was the only action that you saw while you were on Guadalcanal?

Dr. DuPree: The only action I saw on the Wasp was at Guadalcanal, that's correct.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I assume that after your run you flew back to the Wasp. How long after that was it that the three torpedoes had hit the Wasp and where were you and what were you doing when the ship was hit?

Dr. DuPree: I had flown a search and destroy mission that morning and landed back aboard about ten o'clock and I had lunch and went to the squadron office which was on the hanger deck. It was along the port side, forward in the corner of the hanger deck. All the squadron offices were kind of together and I was in there with about seven yeomen working on some paperwork when the torpedoes hit and, of course, it had a solid steel floor and a solid steel walls and solid steel everywhere. On the entrance the hatches at the forward and aft end and flame was coming in both those hatches. So we slammed the hatches and I could tell that the captain had put the ship into a turn and I assumed that if he got to 180 degrees, if he could hold it on the course, he would because it would blow the flame away from the ship instead of across the ship so I was cracking the hatch and this voice said, 'Close that hatch or I'll crack your head!' So I didn't know who it was until I closed the hatch and then I said, 'I'm Ensign DuPree, sound off!' And everybody gave there rank and, you know, their rating and serial numbers like I told them to. Well, it seems like I'm the only officer in this group so I don't know whether that's good luck or bad, but this is my plan. I said,

'We're in a turn and when we get around 180 degrees so the flame is blowing away from the ship, if the captain can hold it on that course he will and as soon as that red-hot deck cooled I plan to get out of here while and I'm going to my battle station and I invite each of you to do the same thing, but if anybody's got a better idea than I have, it's time to speak up and tell me what your thoughts are.' And the guy that was threatening me with busting my head open said, 'Well, Ensign DuPree, I like your plan!' And so I said, 'I'm going to crack this hatch in about thirty seconds and as soon as we see that deck starting to cool we're going to get out of here while we can' and so I cracked the hatch a few times and finally we walked out on the deck when it looks cool but it wasn't cool. It was so hot we couldn't walk on it even with shoes on and we went back in a waited another minute or two until it cooled some more and then all but one man evacuated with me and went to their battle stations and nobody could ever remember whether that fellow had sounded off or not and nobody had any idea what happened to him, but they thought that he couldn't swim and he was just scared to death, but I'm wondering if he didn't hit his head on something and was knocked from the bomb explosions. The concussion was so great in the upper force on the ship that ... there were forty-three planes on deck when the torpedoes hit. Every one of them their landing gear crashed and they were flat on the deck. You couldn't fly any plane off the ship at all, it was a wreck. From the very instant that torpedoes hit.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, I had read that. It was pretty amazing that the blast had done that.

Dr. DuPree:

Well it was quite a blast and about forty minutes later the captain, 'Abandon Ship!' and I went down a line about halfway down to the water and then I dropped into the water and I had a lifejacket on. You could blow it up and it also had a CO2 bottle that would inflate so I didn't use my CO2 bottle at first. I just blew up the lifejacket and floated around for a while. We lost about two hundred men, just a little bit under two hundred men, on a twenty-three hundred complement of men and eight hundred or so were injured that could return to duty but actually twenty-one hundred people were saved from the Wasp that were picked up by the destroyers in the fleet. The rescue boats that were coming around kept telling people to get in a big as group as possible so they didn't have any trouble seeing you so I began to get people to come together and if there were any injured people we'd put them in the boats and sent them on to the ship, but I guess we had two hundred people in one group and we were the largest group left so as a result we were the last group to be picked up and when I got to the Lardner, I can't remember the destroyer number but I think it was 487, there wasn't any room to go below deck so I stood out on deck and took all my clothes off and got under a shower and put on survivor clothes but I still couldn't leave the deck so I stood there on the deck and watched the Wasp burn and watch it, uh ... it was red hot, flames were going about eight thousand feet up in the air, so the pilots that were flying around it said and, of course, it was red hot, but it wasn't sinking so whoever was in charge ordered some torpedoes. I think they put about twenty torpedoes in the Wasp before it

finally sank. The bow went straight up in the air and it went down and it went completely under the water but this hot steam from the ocean, from the hot ship, blew it back up out of the water and nearly came down the second time before it finally sank. That was one of the most elaborate explosion shows I ever saw in World War II and I had a full view of it standing on the deck of the Lardner.

Mr. Zambrano: Gosh ... yeah, I'm looking at a picture of it here. It looks pretty bad.

Dr. DuPree: Well, we had a busy afternoon.

Mr. Zambrano: I can imagine, busier than most!

Dr. DuPree: But so many people survived that.

Mr. Zambrano: You said there were twenty-one hundred men aboard the ship, but ...

Dr. DuPree: There were around twenty-three hundred aboard the ship and twenty-one hundred were survivors, but eight hundred of them were injured and they got well and returned to duty. We only lost two hundred people. Now when you compare the Titanic when rode up against an iceberg, they had about twenty-three hundred people too and lost sixteen hundred people because they were not prepared for an emergency.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. I had read that you won the Navy Cross for what you did in getting men off of the ship.

Dr. DuPree: Well, I dropped a bomb on a carrier in the Philippine Sea when I was on the Lexington and I got a Navy Cross for that, yes.

Mr. Zambrano: Say that again, you got a Navy Cross for what?

Dr. DuPree: I bombed a Japanese carrier in the Philippine Sea battle. Tell these people that the name of the ship was the Hayitaka, but I don't know for sure what the name of the ship was. All I know was that it was a big carrier and Air Group 16 hit that carrier and several bombs got close misses, some of them missed, but I got credit for a hit on that carrier and Vice Admiral Weymouth still calls it the Hayitaka but I have heard that the Japanese didn't have a ship named the Hayitaka so I'm sure it wasn't the Hayitaka, but I was something that we called the Hayitaka.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Now before we go into that and the Philippine Sea, where were you taken once you got off the Wasp and you were on another ship. Where did you go?

Dr. DuPree: Well, they took us up to Espiritu Santo and we shifted over to the Salt Lake City and we went to Noumea, New Caledonia and sailed to Noumea on the Salt Lake City and then we transferred to a Dutch transport called the Brestagi and we came from Noumea, New Caledonia to San Diego, California. It took us seventeen days on that slow boat without an escort of any kind and we didn't run into any Japanese ships or submarines although that thing was so slow a submarine could have outrun it if it got up on the surface. And it scared us all to death. One day we were all up on the deck and they were showing us that it had one five inch gun on the fantail and one on the bow. That's how much firepower we had on that Dutch transport. Even the compass was in Dutch and we stood watch up there and I couldn't even read that compass. The people who were on the ship who

were standing watch were pretty well versed in maritime sailing and they kept us on course. They showed us about how that gun fired and you could fire it by hand or you could fire it by just stepping on a button and one of the sailors ... you know how sailors are ... you say, 'If you step on that button the gun will fire' ... he had to check it and see so the gun went off and it made a hell of a noise and everybody below decks came tumbling up on deck because they thought we'd been attacked. But, of course, it wasn't anything but a five inch gun going off when the sailor stepped on the button.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, gosh! So when you got to your destination, what happened then?

Dr. DuPree: When we got back to San Diego we went to a center there. We didn't have any ID, didn't have any uniforms and I was twenty-three years old and looked about sixteen, I guess because I tried to go to a bar and they wouldn't let me in because they didn't think I was twenty-one and I didn't have an ID card until finally a Marine captain who had been on the ship with us coming back, I remember his name was Glidden, he said, 'This young man has had more combat than I've had and he's a naval officer and I vouch for him and I'm taking him into the bar with me. So he and I had us a drink. Pretty soon we got ID cards and that's when I was ordered to the Lexington with Commander Snowden.

Mr. Zambrano: Now where was the Lexington when you joined her?

Dr. DuPree: The Lexington was under construction at Quincy Navy Yard and we went to Quonset Point, Rhode Island and spent about four or five months of

training and forming an air group while they were completing the Lexington and it was lost in the winter of '42. I don't remember if it was February or March, and we went on a shakedown cruise to Trinidad with it for about a month immediately after.

Mr. Zambrano: Were there a number of members from your old air group going to the Lexington?

Dr. DuPree: Well, Jim Sybert the fighter pilot came to the Lexington and Sybert from Washington State to the torpedo squadron and Cook Cleland was my roommate on the Lexington, was in my squadron. He came to Scouting 16 and that's when it merged with Bombing 16 so we only had one squadron so they took us all back to the same squadron and then we and then we flew in the same squadron for all of our combat duty. Cook was the only fellow that was a navy pilot that won the Thompson Trophy Race up in Cleveland, he won it twice, in '47 and '49, and he had a reserve squadron that combined Pittsburgh and Cleveland navy pilots and they got called back into duty to the Korea War and then he stayed in the navy and retired as a captain. In fact, Cook's still living, he's in Pensacola, but he's a little bit foggy brained now, he's about ninety years old. He lost his leg to bad circulation a few years ago so they say he can't walk with just one leg.

Mr. Zambrano: Right.

Dr. DuPree: The last time I talked to him on the phone I said, 'Cook, how you doing?' He said, 'Well, I can't chase women because I don't have but one leg and I

wouldn't know what to do with them if I caught one and I can't drink anymore liquor, but I got a hell of a good attitude!'

Mr. Zambrano: It sounds like it! Oh my goodness! Did you say he won two Navy Crosses?

Dr. DuPree: Pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: Did you say that he won two Navy Crosses?

Dr. DuPree: I thought it was one Navy Cross. Cook Cleland got a Navy Cross on the same flight.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay. Actually, that's what I was asking about. I thought you said that Cook had won two.

Dr. DuPree: He won the National Air Races twice.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, the National Air Races, okay, okay.

Dr. DuPree: As a civilian ... Admiral Halsey had declared three of these F2G fighter planes, they were F4U's that Goodyear had built, with four rows of pistons and a 4000 horsepower engine and they were the fastest propeller built airplane that was ever made and Cook purchased three out of surplus and he got me to buy one part and Jim Sybert who was a fighter pilot he knew well on the Wasp and the Lexington bought one and they wouldn't let Cook buy all of them so he got me to buy one and ...

[Interruption]

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, okay, we're back on. Now you were saying that he had won these races?

Dr. DuPree: He won the Thompson Trophy Race in '47 and he ran in '48, but somebody had brought in some fancy carburetors to put on his airplane that was

supposed to increase the power and every one of them failed and it blew up before he got around to racing, he had to force land it so he couldn't even and so he didn't even place in the '48 race, but he put his old carburetor back on them and won the race again '49, and '49 was the year that an air force pilot in a P-51 got caught in Cook's slipstream and flipped upside-down and crashed into some houses in Cleveland and they moved the Thompson Trophy Race from Cleveland out to Lake Tahoe and they never ran it in Cleveland again. But Cook never liked to talk about that because he felt like his slipstream is what turned that P-51 upside-down.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. I understand that.

Dr. DuPree: There was anything Cook could do about it. He was flying behind him trying to get by him and somehow in slipping around behind him he hit the slipstream and it flipped it upside-down and he hit the ground before he knew what had happened to him.

Mr. Zambrano: Right.

Dr. DuPree: Now that fellow had won the cross-country flight speed record in the P-51 before but I can't remember his name right off the bat. But he had never had a race in close pylon turns and he got into a tight turn behind Cook's three F2G's and with three 4000 horsepower engines blaring on him on that P-51, it really wasn't much of a contest, it just flipped it upside-down.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. Gosh. You know I guess air races and speed records; they were pretty big back in the 40's, am I correct?

Dr. DuPree: I didn't understand your comment.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, I was just saying that it seems that air races and air speed records were a very big deal back in the '40's?

Dr. DuPree: Oh, yes they were! Everybody wanted to win them and the only navy pilot that ever won the Thompson Trophy Race was Cook and that original trophy is in the Smithsonian Institute with his name on it twice along with Jimmy Doolittle and Roscoe Turner both of whom won it more than once and Cook's name is on it for '47 and '49. Now Cook got a replica of the trophy, actually it's a paper machete replica. It was a tall trophy, maybe two or three feet tall, and it was painted bronze and it looked like a metal trophy but really wasn't, it was paper machete and some collector offered Cook \$25,000 for his trophy and he called the Daytona Museum in Pensacola and said, 'Hell, if you give me a tax credit for about \$50,000, I'll just give it to the museum and not sell it to this fellow!' So the museum gave him a tax credit of something like \$55,000 for it. He gave the trophy to the Pensacola Naval Air Museum.

Mr. Zambrano: Really!

Dr. DuPree: And so his paper machete trophy is on display in Pensacola, but the original metal trophy is in the Smithsonian.

Mr. Zambrano: A paper machete trophy. That's interesting. Let's see ... where was I here. I just have this list of questions ... okay, so you joined the Lexington on the east coast ...

Dr. DuPree: I remember the day the Lexington left for sea. They called out and wanted six experienced pilots to come out and shoot some landings so the next

crews could get some experience in handling aircraft and Commander Benny Wright also made the first landing and Commander Sheik Southerland, the Air Group Commander, made the second landing and the other people that were the squadron commanders, Ernest Snowden and Paul Buie and Commander Lydell and Ernie Snowden took me along and it was the only lieutenant in the crowd and I said, 'Ernie, how in the hell did I get mixed up with all this high ranking stuff. He said, 'Well, to tell you the truth, Dupe, these other commanders been down at the Bureau for the last two years haven't made a carrier landing and when I fly I'd rather take somebody with me that I knew could get aboard!' So I made the number six landing on the Lexington the first day that anybody ever landed on it.

Mr. Zambrano: Really. So what did you think of the Lexington?

Dr. DuPree: Pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: What did you think of the Lexington? What were your impressions?

Dr. DuPree: The Lexington was a lot bigger ship than the Wasp. It was about nearly nine hundred feet long and a hundred feet wide and had big elevators that stuck out over the side plus one forward and one aft and those things would go up and down in about two seconds with three big planes on it loaded with bombs, it was quite a ship. You know it was the sister ship of the Essex and the Yorktown and the Hornet, the Wasp, the Ticonderoga, the Intrepid, and all these big Essex Class carriers. I think there were eleven in them in all. Not one of those ships was ever sunk in World War Two. Some of them

were hit by kamikazes, some of them were damaged in typhoons, but not one Essex Class carrier was ever sunk.

Mr. Zambrano: That's true.

Dr. DuPree: They learned a lot about building ships in the early part of the war. We always felt like the paint inside the ship is what caused Yorktown and the Hornet and the Wasp and old Lexington, CV-2, to sink because once the paint on one wall gets hot, red hot, then the paint in next room catches on fire and then it goes over to the next room and you just can't put it out. Once it gets to burning, it'll burn and then you need to sink it so it won't be a hazard to shipping.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. So I assume you must have had a shakedown cruise in the Atlantic before you went through the Canal again?

Dr. DuPree: Now the Lexington was a new ship so we took it on shakedown cruise to Trinidad and we flew down there for about a month in the Gulf of Paria. And while we were down there, we had a young fighter pilot by the name of Nile Kinnick, I don't know whether you ever heard of him or not, but Nile was the only Heismann Trophy winner at the University of Iowa. He was only 5'9" and weighed about 172 pounds, but he was about as strong and well coordinated as anybody I ever saw. He could do one armed push ups half the afternoon if you wanted him to and he played tailback and I think he played safety and as a matter of fact when Nile got killed down there on the shakedown cruise, which I'll tell you about in a minute, but they named the stadium after him at the University of Iowa, it's the Nile Kinnick

Stadium. And I'm told that the Big 10 has a big coin with Nile's picture that they use at every ball game. I've never seen the coin, but I've read about that in Life Magazine and I believe it's true. I was on the catapult ready to be launched and Nile came by to make a landing and his old F4F fighter was an old airplane, it was skipping and kicking black smoke out and he flew straight ahead and landed about three miles out in front of the ship and his wingman tracked him for a little while and he left and came back because he was about out of fuel and they launched me right behind him and I followed Nile out until he landed in the water and after his wingman left I kept checking and he, Nile, got out of the airplane and walked out on the wing and gave me a thumbs up and waved to me and I thought everything was fine and Nile sank with it. He didn't make any effort to pull his life jacket, the CO2 bottle, or to get a life raft out of his parachute seat. I think he bumped his head on the instrument panel and he was, you know, just dazed and confused. Anyway, when the plane sank, Nile sank with the plane and of course he drowned. We were never able to rescue even his body and when I came back and wrote my report they said, 'Well, we were wanting to send a report that said he was still in that cockpit.' I said, 'Well, here's my report. I'm not going to change it. You can send it if you want to or put it in the trash or do whatever you want to with it, but this is what happened after his copilot left. He got out, walked out on the wing, waved to me and gave me a thumbs up and I had no idea he had a problem, but when the plane sank he sank with it.'

Mr. Zambrano: I'm sorry, but was it the copilot that came out on the wing or was it ...

Dr. DuPree: Not a copilot no, he was in a fighter ... his wingman.

Mr. Zambrano: His wingman.

Dr. DuPree: The guy that turned around and left before Nile got out of the cockpit. He go out of the cockpit, walked out on the wing and waved at me, I was circling him when he did that.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. So Nile never even opened his canopy or ...

Dr. DuPree: Well, he opened his canopy but he didn't make any attempt to get a lifeboat out of the ... see they had a lifeboat in the parachute seat and another lifeboat in the side of the airplane that he could have gotten out if he hadn't been confused or he could have pulled the CO2 bottle on his lifejacket but he just stood on the wing waiting and when the plane went down he sank with it and that was the end of Nile.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh my goodness.

Dr. DuPree: He didn't even realize what was happening to him. He was a Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Iowa and an honor graduate in law school. He finished one year of law school.

Mr. Zambrano: So you think he might have hit his head and just didn't realize what was going on?

Dr. DuPree: No. I'm sure he was confused. He had to be, you know, pulling that lifejacket was a simple sort of thing and he didn't even think to do that.

Mr. Zambrano: That's a tragedy. What next? Where to from there?

Dr. DuPree: Well, we came back after shakedown cruise to San Diego again and from there we headed out to Tarawa. The Lexington's first combat mission was the landings at Tarawa.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: And that was one of the bloodiest two or three day battles I've ever heard of. We killed, I think, ten thousand Japanese and lost about six thousand Marines in seventy-two hours at Tarawa.

Mr. Zambrano: What was your assignment during that battle?

Dr. DuPree: The fighters had gone in and destroyed all the airplanes on the runway and we were assigned gun positions to try to knock out the guns. I had an interesting experience. My first flight at Tarawa when I started down the flight deck I realized that instead of getting fifty-five inches of mercury in manifold pressure, I was only getting thirty, but I didn't realize that until I was over halfway down the flight deck so I knew as I approached the end of the flight deck I didn't have flying speed and I felt that I was going to crash in the ocean that I closed my flaps and counter flaps and I knew I was just going to fall off the end of the flight deck and I hoped I would pick up enough speed before I got to the water because I was hitting the flaps again and it would fly and I had a thousand pound bomb on it. I couldn't drop the bomb because I was afraid that the ship might hit the bomb and blow it up although normally the bomb would have to fall for several seconds to arm. You can't take that chance when you're talking about dropping a bomb in front of your own ship.

Mr. Zambrano: Right.

Dr. DuPree: So I kept the bomb and as I rolled off the flight deck I didn't have flying speed and I just dived towards the ocean and just before I got to the ocean I hit about forty percent of flaps and to my great surprise it flew but it took me about fifteen minutes to climb up to a thousand feet. I didn't have just thirty inches of mercury, no power at all, so I called the ship and told them I couldn't keep up with the squadron because I couldn't catch them with this thirty inches of mercury and they just told me to fly away from the fleet and drop the bomb and circle if I could ... they asked me if I thought I could keep it in until the flight got back and I said, 'Well, so far so good. I think so' and I flew around for three hours until they got back from the mission and when they landed I was the last plane to land and I stayed in the plane and we went down to the hanger deck to try to find out what the trouble was and they had changed the oil in there the night before and it had a dime draft carburetor and they stuck cotton wadding in the carburetor to keep the oil from leaking out on the decks so they wouldn't have to mop it up and somebody forgot to pull the cotton wadding out of the carburetor so I'm the only pilot I know of that successfully took an SBU loaded with a thousand pound bomb off the Lexington with the carburetor stuffed with cotton wadding.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh boy.

Dr. DuPree: Well, it was just a, you know, an accident that could have been a serious accident that didn't happen.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, it sounds like it was a close call.

Dr. DuPree: It was a very close call, but all it did was keep me from flying in the first combat mission at Tarawa. I was scheduled for the next flight and my target was a gun emplacements. You never know whether you knock them out or not because they quit firing when you fire at them and whether we knocked them out or not I never knew, but the Marines took the islands in about seventy-two hours.

Mr. Zambrano: How many runs against the island did you have?

Dr. DuPree: I think I had three flights against the island, but by the end of the third day it was over with.

Mr. Zambrano: Did your plane sustain any damage?

Dr. DuPree: No, I never got any damage on that mission at all.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you recall anything else about that battle?

Dr. DuPree: Well, it was, from a dive-bombers point of view, the fighters had already wiped out all of the zeros before we even got there and the Marines ... we had some bad weather information and I'm not sure whether a tsunami across the Pacific caused it or not but tide was much higher than we expected and only the short Marines under 5'6" probably drowned instead of being killed in combat because they weren't tall enough to keep their head out of the water. A lot of them lost their lives due to that high tide and of course they had a sixty pound pack on them, so there wasn't any possibility of swimming. The LST's and LCI's brought them up close to the shoreline and they all ran out within the time that the tide was a lot higher

than they expected and the little short Marines were not tall enough to stay above the water. So that was a tragedy for the Marine Corps.

Mr. Zambrano: After Tarawa do you recall where you went next?

Dr. DuPree: I can tell you the islands we hit, but I can't remember the exact sequence of it. We hit Wake Island a couple of days, we hit Palau and Peleliu, we hit Makin Island, we hit New Guinea, Hollandia, and we hit Truk, but I think that was after we came back on the second mission on the Lexington, and then we went to Kwajalein around the first of December and that night I got into a scrap with a zero and my gunner who happened to be a Chief Petty Officer in the squadron that had asked to fly, he had wanted to get a shot at them, he shot down a zero a Kwajalein and I got a hit on a cruiser. I got an Air Medal for that and then the cruiser ran ashore to keep from sinking and I later read that this cruiser patched up the hole in the bow and they went back to Tokyo and repaired it and somebody else had to sink it. I was hoping that I sank it but I didn't. They ran it aground to keep it from sinking, but I did knock a hole in the bow.

Mr. Zambrano: And that was at Kwajalein?

Dr. DuPree: Kwajalein, yes.

Mr. Zambrano: Now I know that Dauntless takes two men, did you have a regular crewman that flew with you?

Dr. DuPree: I had a regular gunner. His name was Dan Dowdell, but he Chief had asked Dowdell to let him fly in his place and he, Chief Stafford, was flying in my rear seat at Kwajalein. That night we were retreating from Kwajalein, it was

a cloudless sky and a bright moon that was like broad daylight and a twin engine Betty came right up the wake and stuck a torpedo in the fantail of the Lexington and knocked a hole in the ship and destroyed all of the frozen food in the freezer and wrecked the screw on the one side or the other so the Lexington had to come back home with two forward screws at about less than twenty knots and because you couldn't run the screw on the one side, I don't know if it was the one on the right or the left, but the rudder was jammed in a turn and there was a little chief petty officer that had about a six foot wrench he was able to turn ... by hand put the rudder back in a neutral position and he stayed down there under the water until we got back to Pearl Harbor and drydock and they got him out of there and but he put the rudder back in the neutral position and the Captain cut off the power from the after screws on both sides so the boat wouldn't be going in a turn and came back with the two forward screws. On the Lexington, it had four screws, something like forty-five thousand horsepower in each screw so it had a total of about one hundred and eighty thousand horsepower.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Let me just go back a second. The name of your gunner, if that's the term, that was Dan what?

Dr. DuPree: Dowdell, D-O-W-D-E-L-L.

Mr. Zambrano: D-O-W-E-D-E-L-L?

Dr. DuPree: That's right, D-E-L-L. Dan was about a nineteen year old kid from Jackson Heights, New York. He never went to college and he was a wild Indian. He'd get into a fight with Marines or army or, if he couldn't find a

Japanese, he'd fight every time he was on shore leave, and finally the skipper decided to kick him out of the squadron. But I had trained my rear seat gunner, his name was McElheney, to land an airplane and he flew with the skipper one day and when he found out that Mac could land that plane from the rear seat he took my gunner and so I didn't have a gunner and Dowdell came up and said, 'If you let me be your gunner, I won't even go on leave anymore. I'll stay on the ship until we go back home.' And he did not leave the ship for the next six months and I agreed to take him as my gunner and he flew with me for the rest of the war.

Mr. Zambrano: Was he a pretty good gunner?

Dr. DuPree: Pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: Was he a pretty good gunner?

Dr. DuPree: Oh, yeah, he was a good gunner. We had a mid-air collision about ten miles from Pearl Harbor and Dowdell and I both got hit by the tail of the airplane. At that point we were firing at a towed sleeve and he did a loop around the sleeve while I was making my firing run and Ralph saw what the fool was doing I just pulled up and flew straight ahead. I hoped he would jar up on me but I guess he was fixing to do another loop and his head was out of the cockpit and he flew up straight through my wing and he knocked it off, but we were up at about four thousand feet and Dowdell jumped out and his legs hit the tail of the airplane and tore out a couple of panels of his parachute. Well, I didn't jump out immediately because I wanted to be sure that the plane had gotten away from all falling debris and I was having

trouble pushing out because when the plane was spinning like it was with no wing and it cut the throttle controls so the engine was running wide open too and it was just spinning like a top. And I get almost to the top of the cockpit trying to get out of there and when I relaxed my hold on the side of the plane, the wind would knock me back in my seat. That happened a couple of times so I decided I needed to figure out how to take advantage of that centrifugal force spin and just slide over the side and it would throw me out and that's what happened. My leg hit the tail of the airplane. I had a big scar under my knee and that's the only accident, the only damage I ever had in combat and that wasn't in combat that was ten miles out from Pearl Harbor. But when I finally got out of the plane and pulled the rip cord I was down to about twenty-five hundred feet and Dowdell passed me on the way to the water and he waved to me and I waved back and I asked him if he was hurt and he said his legs were beat up a little bit, but he was fine. And then I looked at the water and the Fletcher had already launched a boat to pick us up. They saw the action on the radar and stopped the boat and put the life rafts over and came over to me and I told them I wasn't injured but Dowdell was. 'Pick him up and take him back to sickbay' and they did. They came back and picked me up and both of us were on the Fletcher within twenty-three minutes so that wasn't a long journey.

Mr. Zambrano: So you weren't in the water very long, then?

Dr. DuPree: No, not at all. And of course I had a life jacket and all I had to do was ... and I knew they were going to come back and pick me up as soon as they

got Dowdell into the sickbay so that was a quick experience. It was terrifying to be in an airplane with no wings, spinning with a full throttle, but once we got free of the airplane it was no problem. Well, you know Dowdell and I ran out of gas in the Philippine Sea battle and we were in the water a second time and it was after that experience that I learned that Dowdell didn't know how to swim. He got his friend Bentley who was his height to take his ID card and go take the swimming test for him so he had a green card that said he was an expert swimmer, but he couldn't swim a lick!

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I guess lucky for him that he had a Mae West, right?

Dr. DuPree: Right! And Dowdell stayed in the squadron on another cruise and they assigned him to a young ensign and on one of the first flights he made with him, he landed with his wheels up and Dowdell saw these hot sparks coming up and he tried to jump out of the airplane until it rode to a stop and he pulled his ripcord and the parachute flared out and went all over the runway and he picked it up and walked into his commanding officers office and said, 'That guy is no DuPree! I ain't flying with him anymore!' And the skipper said, 'Well, Dan if you're not going to fly with him I guess we'll have to get you a non-flying job.' He said, 'That's fine. I'm going over to the tower and see if I could get a job.' So he worked in the tower after that. He never flew any more.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh gosh!

Dr. DuPree: Anyway, Dan became the vice-president of Sears Roebucks lady's ready-to-wear for the eastern half of the United States and he didn't even have a

college education. And after he'd been successful for several years in sales they brought in some Harvard MBA graduates and of course they didn't speak Dan's language and he didn't speak theirs so he walked in one day and said, 'Well, you've made a decision to turn this over to these fellows until I don't even know what they're talking about. Here's my resignation!' So they took it and he started home and when he got home he had a call from Montgomery Wards to take the same job. So he was executive vice-president of Montgomery Wards for the eastern half of the United States to for lady's ready-to-wear, and that's what he did until he retired.

Mr. Zambrano: And that was Mr. Dowdell?

Dr. DuPree: Right.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow!

Dr. DuPree: He got into kidney failure and had to take dialysis and one of his friends from up in Boston, I can't remember the boys name now. He was a rear seat gunner that used to play a sax in one of the big bands before the war, Van that was his name! Van called me and said, 'Dr. DuPree, sir, you need to call Dan' he says, 'He's fixing to come off that dialysis and die. If anybody can talk him out of it you can so I called him and I told him that my mother-in-law had painted a picture of a dive-bomber with my number on it and his name on it and I wanted to send him a copy of the picture'. And I said, 'Don't do anything about your dialysis until you get this picture.' He said, 'I'm familiar with that picture. My wife drew that same picture. I have a painting that she did, but I won't do anything until I get your picture.' And

so then his grandchildren came to see him and spent the month with him so he lived another year and then he called me and said, 'I have lived for a miserable year. This dialysis is absolutely the pits. I have one decent day a week and I can't live like this anymore. I'm going to check in the hospital and I'm not taking any more dialysis. I'm going to stay there until I die!' And he walked in there, didn't take his clothes off and stood by the side of the bed. When he was unconscious he fell over on the bed and he died right there in that position. I wrote a letter to the fire department that used to take him to emergency sometimes to the hospital on the weekends when his dialysis needed to be done on an emergency basis and I sent a little contribution with the letter. I got a letter from the chief that said, 'I'm so sorry we didn't get to know Mr. Dowdell when he was well because he sure was a hell of a man when he was sick!'

Mr. Zambrano: Oh boy. How long ago was this that he died?

Dr. DuPree: About three years ago.

Mrs. DuPree: Longer then that!

Dr. DuPree: Jeannie said longer then that. How much longer Jeannie?

Mrs. DuPree: Probably about five years.

Dr. DuPree: Jean estimates five years.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Dr. DuPree: I know he died in August, but I'm not sure what year it was. His wife remarried about a year ago and she's still living up in that area in Illinois.

When he moved to Montgomery Wards he moved to a little town right near the Iowa border along the Mississippi River across the river from Iowa.

Mrs. DuPree: Lanark!

Dr. DuPree: Lanark, Illinois, Jean says.

Mr. Zambrano: Lanark?

Dr. DuPree: Lanark, yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. I wanted to ask you about the Philippine Sea. You mentioned a little earlier that's where you won your Navy Cross ... I'm sorry, you received your Navy Cross when you dive bombed a carrier.

Dr. DuPree: That's right.

Mr. Zambrano: Can you tell me a little more about that?

Dr. DuPree: Well, that was the first Battle of the Philippine Sea. Now we hadn't had a fleet battle since Midway which was in June of 1942 and this was June of 1944, two years later. You know, I need to stop a minute. I'm going to hand the phone to Jean and I'll be back with you in just a minute.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, well, I'll tell you what; I'll stop the recording for now and just let me know when you're back on.

Dr. DuPree: Okay.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

[Interruption]

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, we're back on!

Dr. DuPree: You know I want to tell you a story about some things that happened while we were at Maui waiting for the Lexington to be fixed.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Dr. DuPree: One day we had some old thousand pound bombs that had been in storage there at Maui for years and they decided that they didn't want to put them on ships because they were afraid they wouldn't explode so they decided we'd have a dive bombing practice hitting them just south of Maui and I got in the airplane and cranked it up and all of a sudden I could smell gasoline and it started skipping and the engine cutout and then it bust into flames with that thousand pound bomb on it. Of course I put on the brakes and cut off the gas but it was too late. The airplane burned and finally the heat cranked that bomb casing and the TNT went off, blew it up in the air two or three hundred feet and I had run over to a steel hanger and got behind it with Dowdell. I was the gunnery officer at the time and I had just lectured on the difference in a low order detonation and a high order detonation. High detonation means that the fuse sets off the bomb and it blows with total force, but low order detonation is when the bomb fuse doesn't work and the TNT goes off from fire like that one did. I said, 'This is going to be a low order detonation. It probably won't even blow a hole in the ground, which it did not. It didn't blow a hole in the ground, but it blew that airplane way up in the air and the old chief looked at me and said, 'Well, I'm damn glad that was a low order detonation!' Because it shook the hanger and it shook the island, everybody on the island heard the explosion. They thought the Japanese had started bombing Maui.

Mr. Zambrano: My goodness.

Dr. DuPree: So I had to go around town talking to the sailors club explaining to them what happened to their island, that the Japanese had nothing to do with that bomber explosion.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, gosh.

Dr. DuPree: Well, I'm very fortunate that it caught fire while it was still sitting on the ground because all the other planes just scrambled to the peripheral of the field to get out of the way, but if that thing had happened fifty feet of the ground you can imagine what a tragedy that would have been.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, I can! Did you ever determine why it did that?

Dr. DuPree: Had no idea, but it ... I don't know whether the gas line ruptured or just came loose or what, but it was something wrong with the gas line and of course it had an electric fuel pump as well as a manual and the fuel pump hooked to the engine and one of the first thing you do when you crank the engine is turn on the electric pump to build up the gas pressure before the engine catches.

Mr. Zambrano: Right.

Dr. DuPree: When that happened, that gasoline started flowing out around the hot engine and it caught fire and it exploded and burned. But by the time it got through burning up and blowing up and falling into pieces there was no way to determine what really happened.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. Gosh. You said you had a couple of stories about the time before the Lexington got out to the Pacific?

Dr. DuPree:

Well, I was going to tell you another story about how I met Admiral Nimitz. Bucky Waterhouse was the chief civilian defense officer for the island of Maui. He and Pappy Cook were both Cornell graduates and raised horses over on the plantations down there, that's sugar cane plantations and pineapple plantations. Now Pappy was a descendent of Admiral Cook who found the islands and his father owned the island of Molokai, where the leper colony was. Bucky's father and mother lived on Pearl Harbor and they owned land all over the islands. Anyway, Bucky came over to the hanger one day and said, 'Dup, today is mother's birthday and I've never missed her birthday and I can't get a flight until tonight, but she wants me to come and have lunch with her. Do you suppose you could get a dive bomber and let's fly over to Pearl Harbor and have lunch with mother?' and I said, 'Well, I've got to ask Ralph' and he said, 'Sure.' So we got in the dive bomber and we flew Pearl Harbor. He said, 'Just fly to the house and she'll come pick us up.' I said, 'You don't want me to ask for transportation?' He said, 'No, mother will pick us up at the runway.' So we flew over the house and I realized when we flew over her house that she lived right next door to Admiral Nimitz, right out there at the naval air station at Pearl Harbor and by the time we landed and taxied over to the where they park the planes, here comes this black Cadillac across the end of the airfield along the taxi strip right up to our airplane and I notice a Marine officer with his crew and in a carryall coming toward the Cadillac at the same time and I'm wondering what he was going to say about Mrs. Waterhouse driving down

the taxi strip. But he pulled right by the back door of the Cadillac, jumped out and opened the door for her, saluted and said, 'Good morning, Mrs. Waterhouse. How may I help you today? How may be of service to you? And she said, 'No, I just came over to pick up my son Bucky's and his friend Lieutenant DuPree. Today is my birthday and they're going to have lunch with me.' And then the Marine captain saluted and that was the end of the problem. But I wondered about all that, you know, you're saluting a Cadillac riding down the runway and the Marine captain knew who she was before she even got out of the car.

Mr. Zambrano: Really.

Dr. DuPree: And we were having a conversation about Admiral Nimitz and she asked me if I'd like to meet him and I said, 'Sure I would!' So she picks up the phone and she dials one number. Somebody answered the phone and she said, 'Chet, this is ...' and she told him her first name, they were on a first name basis, obviously, she said, 'Today is my birthday and my son Bucky and his friend flew out from Maui to a birthday lunch with me. Are you busy for lunch? Would you join us for lunch?' And Admiral Nimitz apparently said, 'Well, sure.' He'd be happy to have lunch with us. So he came over in his full dress whites with ribbons all the way down to his belly button and I was just dressed in a khaki uniform with no tie which was the uniform of the day for the summer time in Maui, and Admiral Nimitz said, 'Have a seat, son. This is a social call.' And he was about as friendly and nice a gentleman as I ever met. In fact, he offered to let me use his

apartment over the BOQ, if I came into town and didn't have a place to stay. I never got back to Pearl Harbor and had an opportunity to use that kind invitation, but he did make that offer to me. And we had a very nice lunch. He asked me a lot of specific questions about how things were going in the Pacific and I believe I answered most of them to his satisfaction, but after he left I asked Mrs. Waterhouse if she was living in Pearl Harbor when the Japs hit and she said, 'Oh yes' she was and she planned to stay here until the war was over. I said, 'Well, I'm amazed that you were here during the attack and had never left.' She said, 'Oh, I don't plan to leave.' And Bucky said, 'Well, mother never likes to talk about this, but they gave Pearl Harbor to the US government and reserved a lot to stay in their home and she's going to be living next door to Admiral Nimitz as long as she lives.' But I thought that was an interesting story, how the government came into the possession of Pearl Harbor. They lived there before the naval base was built.

Mr. Zambrano: So their family gave them the land?

Dr. DuPree: Pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: So their family gave them the land?

Dr. DuPree: The Waterhouse family owned Pearl Harbor before they gave it to the US government.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh! So that explains how she was there.

Dr. DuPree: Yes.

Mr. Zambrano: Gosh! So was that the one and only time you saw Admiral Nimitz?

Dr. DuPree: That was the only time that I met him and talked to him personally. I saw him, you know, in different ... Admiral Nimitz was very much in view when a big boat came in to drydock at Pearl Harbor and you saw him but I never spoke to him other than that time.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow, what a story to tell. That was quite a meeting.

Dr. DuPree: Now we'll get back to the Philippine Sea battle, in the meantime, before the Philippine Sea battle we hit Truk, we hit Hollandia at New Guinea, we covered the landings there, we covered the landings at [unclear], at Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. Now Saipan was a tough battle, but Tinian didn't have much opposition. We just landed and built an airstrip there for the B-29's to take off from. The last combat mission I flew was at Guam. On this last flight, Joe Bryan who wrote the book *Mission Beyond Darkness*, about the Philippine Sea ...

Mr. Zambrano: Right.

Dr. DuPree: ... requested that he ride in my rear seat. He had never flown with our squadron, in our air group, and here he was just staring at them. He had twelve flights down in the New Guinea and Guadalcanal area. Well, he'd never flown with any of us and I did not know that the gentleman was superstitious about the number thirteen. The reason he hadn't flown is because it was going to be his thirteenth flight and we walked out on the flight deck that day. He looked at the number and we were the number thirteen airplane and it was his thirteenth flight and he said, 'You don't know how much courage it took me to get in that airplane!' He said, 'I was

determined to fly with you, but I'm superstitious about the number thirteen and I sure didn't want to go.' Anyway, we bombed and strafed gun emplacements on the Orote Peninsula in Guam and I turned around and firing at us and Joe got a good feel of what anti-aircraft fire was. They were firing behind us, they didn't hit us, but they fired very close behind that rear seat where he was sitting and he didn't tell anybody his superstition until we got safely back.

Mr. Zambrano: What was his last name again?

Dr. DuPree: Pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: What was Joe's last name?

Dr. DuPree: Joe Bryan, Joe Bryan III. He was an editor for the Saturday Evening Post and he wrote movies a good bit too, he came out to the Lexington to write the life history of Admiral Mitscher and Admiral Mitscher wouldn't even talk to him. He said, 'I'm not fighting this war, I'm running the fleet! You need to talk to these boys that have got some stories to tell you!' And he ended up writing the book *Mission Beyond Darkness*. He never wrote the life history of Admiral Mitscher, he also wrote a book about Admiral Halsey, and he wrote a book called *Sword Over the Mantle*. That one of his ancestors got from, uh ... it was said that the sword is the sword that General Lee gave at the end of the Civil War and he had a descendent and that he gave it back to a descendant of Lee, one of Joe's ancestors and that sword is hanging over the mantle of his ancestral home at Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Mr. Zambrano: Really!

Dr. DuPree: I have a copy of the book *Sword Over the Mantle*, it tells that story. Jim also wrote a story called *The Windsor Story* that's about a five hundred page book. He lived with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor in France and wrote this long story the Duke and the Duchess called *The Windsor Story* and Jean's aunt gave me a copy of that book for Christmas one time, not realizing that I knew the author and Jim and I used to exchange Christmas cards and all of a sudden I lost track of hem and when I got the book I wrote a letter to the publisher and they forwarded it to Joe and I got a letter back from Joe that he's been in France for six years writing this damn book. And apologized for losing contact with me, but I have that letter in the flyleaf of that book at home. And I asked him what he thought about the Windsor's and he said, 'Well, which one do you want me to tell you about the Duke or the Duchess?' I said, 'Tell me about the Duke first.' He said, 'He was the biggest wimp I ever knew and the people of England should be glad that he didn't continue as there king.' I said, 'Well, what do you think about the Duchess?' He said, 'That's absolutely the biggest bitch I've ever know and the people of England should be delighted that she was never their queen.'

Mr. Zambrano: Oh boy! Well, that's an interesting piece of information from someone who knows! So he thought he was the biggest wimp?

Dr. DuPree: By the way, Jean asked me if you would send us a copy of this recording.

Mr. Zambrano: Sure, I could have that done.

Dr. DuPree: Well, our box is 745, Swainsboro, Georgia, 30401.

Mr. Zambrano: Say that just one more time?

Dr. DuPree: Box 745 Swainsboro, Georgia, 30401.

Mr. Zambrano: Alright. Yeah, we can do that. Let's see ... back to the Philippine Sea and you dropping that bomb on the carrier, what was that like?

Dr. DuPree: Let me tell you about the battle. We had picked up some evidence that the Japanese Fleet was coming in force towards Guam and all the carriers were about a hundred miles off of Guam between the Japanese Fleet which was coming out of the Philippines and from Tokyo in a position to intercept them. Now what the Japanese didn't know was that we had broken their code and we had the enigma machine and we were kind of reading their mail even at Midway so we knew that they were going to bomb Midway and we knew they were planning on launching their fleet of planes and hitting our fleet and landing at Guam and rearming and refueling at Guam and hitting our fleet a second time and then go back to the carriers. The only problem was that we intercepted their messages and we knew what their plan was so we had a lot of fighters on combat air patrol ...

[Interruption]

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, I'm sorry. Go on please.

Dr. DuPree: Well, the Jap planes started coming towards the fleet, but fighters intercepted them several miles away and they shot down over four hundred Jap airplanes, most of the planes of the Japanese never got to Guam. My squadron had the job of dropping bombs up and down the runway at Guam so they would have no safe place to land even if they made it to Guam. And

the fighters had a combat air patrol over Guam. Two or three of them go to flying around the around an airport at Guam, they shot them down. I think the only time that it was done by a fleet was a delayed action bomb with a delayed action fuse on it, I think it was the South Dakota, it hit one of the gun mounts on one of the big sixteen inch guns and bounced up in the air before he the fuse went off and it went off in mid-air and didn't even knock the gun out of commission as I was told. But that was the only ship damage we had from that from that big fleet and we shot down over four hundred planes and I think lost less than fifty of our own. So the planes that the Japanese had were mostly gone by the time we got to the ships. Now the next day we were tracking the ships by PBY and submarine and Commander Snowden had the idea that he could lead a search mission with fighter planes and head towards Tokyo because he thought the ships would go back to Tokyo after they lost all their airplanes on June the 19th, but they didn't. They went towards the Philippine Islands which put them under the protection of the Japanese Air Force flight cover. When we finally found them, we launched 225 planes off of about a half dozen carriers and we got in the plane and started to take off a little fellow came up to each plane and said, 'New position of Jap fleet!' And it was about 60 miles further then they had said when we were still arguing about whether they were in range. Then we took off and rendezvous and headed out to the Jap fleet and then we got our second collection of positions and, by the way, that first position was incorrect. 'Those were tankers, the carriers are 75 miles further then we

thought so you're well out of range. All of you can't possibly get back. You don't have to go if you don't want to, just turn around and come back'. To my knowledge not one person turned around and we proceeded to the fleet and we found them and hit their carriers ... I think ... I'm not sure how many ships were sunk, but they've got a record of it in the history of this battle. But anyway our target was the Hiyataka and I don't believe they had a ship by that name, but that was what our intelligence people called it and that's what they thought it was and that's what we thought it was when we hit it. We got several hits on that carrier. I don't think we sunk it, but it was later sunk, but it was damaged severely. And I know one of the carriers in that fleet was the ... either the Shokaku or the Zuikaku, one of them had already been sunk and they were sister ships that sat very low in the water and if you saw them the fleet, even at a distance, you could tell the difference in the Shokaku and the Zuikaku from the other carriers because they didn't sit up fifty-five feet out of the water like all the other carriers. They were about no more than about twenty-five or thirty feet out of the water. I know that ship was in the fleet but it wasn't our target so we didn't bomb it. But after we hit the ship we were coming out of the dive a lot of ships were firing at us and I was firing back at those guns and of course when you fire back at the guns they stop firing because you won't shoot on it anymore if they're not firing and they know that. But I ended up shooting up all my ammunition. As we got on out in the western sky it was almost dusk, sunset, and it was getting kind of dark, but it was still light enough to

see. We were trying to join up and I got a zero making a run on me and I had no way of getting out of the way of it, because he had the altitude and he had a zero and he was a lot faster than me, so I just put the plane in a slight turn and with a little bit of a skid on it so that when he made his point of aim he missed me about twenty or thirty feet to the right. So he pulls up and makes another run on me and this time I took it and put it in a left turn with a skid in the opposite direction and this time he missed me twice because he tried to correct and of course he over corrected and he missed me and then he flew straight at me and of course with a bullet proof windshield and a bulletproof bulkhead that was the safest place I could be was just flying straight at him because I had protection against his bullets if he flew straight at me and I flew straight at him, but if I turned away from him, he'd have a direct shot into my cockpit. So I just flew straight at him and he pulled up right over my head and I said, 'Dan, I don't think we missed him over five or ten feet'. Dan said, 'We didn't miss him over six inches'. He said, 'I could have touched him'. He said, 'That was a close call!' But anyway I saw as him was making that second pass he was going right towards the water so I just turned sharply to the right and flew down under him and finally caught up with him and flew a formation on him and I was right on his tail, but I couldn't shoot him because I didn't have any ammunition. And he began to lean over and look and try to see my airplane and I flew back away from him on the other side and he looked. So he turned several times and I realized that he wasn't going to keep looking so I

just moved off and waved to him and he waved back and I got back in formation behind him and I called the fighters. I never knew whether it was accidental or if they got my call but anyway I saw a couple of F6's over us and getting ready to make a run and when they started their run I just pulled out of formation and turned my wings up so they could tell that I was an SBD and they shot him down. And I could always brag that I was the only SBD pilot that ever beat a zero in a dogfight and got him shot down without any ammunition. It was a rather exciting experience for me. Of course, he didn't shoot me down.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you at anytime during the war shoot down any Japanese planes?

Dr. DuPree: Pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: During the war did you at any time shoot down any Japanese planes?

Dr. DuPree: Well, my gunner shot one down at Tulagi. I didn't shoot one down and my gunner, Stafford, shot a zero down at Kwajalein and this third one was shot down by the fighter planes. I didn't shoot him down.

Mr. Zambrano: Right.

Dr. DuPree: But I did beat him in a dogfight. He didn't shoot me down. No, I never shot down a zero.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. You said Stafford, was that the Petty Officer that flew with you that one time?

Dr. DuPree: At Kwajalein.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. His last name was Stafford?

Dr. DuPree: Paul Stafford.

Mr. Zambrano: Paul Stafford. Okay, anything else that you can tell me about Philippine Sea?

Dr. DuPree: Well, we finally got joined up into squadrons and I was leading the second section behind Ralph Weymouth. As we got joined up I saw the zero coming down. He looked like he was aiming at me and I pulled over to the right and started making evasive action so he changed his aim to Jay Shields who was Ralph Weymouth's wingman and I tried to call Ralph and warn him but I don't know whether the zero dented my aerial or not but anyway Ralph didn't take any evasive maneuver and Jay stayed right in formation and the zero shot Jay down. I saw Jay hit the water.

Mr. Zambrano: That was Jay Shields?

Dr. DuPree: Jay Shields. He was the only pilot we lost on that mission. We got back to the Lexington I had conserved my fuel pretty well and I had about forty-three gallons left in my tank, that was my estimate, between forty and forty-five gallons in my main tank. All the others were bone dry. And people were screaming and hollering about how they're out of gas so I just pulled up about three thousand feet and circled for what I thought was just a few minutes but it seemed like a good while but finally I got down to about half of that and I came down to land, I made one pass and I got cut off by a plane just cutting in front of me and we both had to take a wave off. And then my second pass and SB2C landed on the Lexington and crashed and tore up the flight deck and damaged a few planes and killed a couple of people.

Mr. Zambrano: Now these were the night landing that Admiral Mitscher had ordered?

Dr. DuPree: On my second pass the SB2C crashed and the deck was out of commission for a while and I had to pull back up again and I circled, I thought, about an hour and I later looked at the ship log and it was only eight minutes that the deck was out of commission, it just seemed like an hour. So my fuel gauge had gotten down to about zero so I just dropped down and the minute they turned on the lights again and said, 'Land aboard' I started making a pass and on my first pass after that I ran out of gas right at the end of the deck. And I had to turn to the right to miss the ship I was so close to it but I didn't have enough speed to get aboard. I would have crashed into the end of the ship if I hadn't missed it and landed in the water with Dowdell.

Mr. Zambrano: Had you had much, if any, practice with night time landings?

Dr. DuPree: We had not qualified for night landing. I had come in late in the evening on the Wasp and the Lexington when I had been out on a search and landed at dusk ... you know I don't know how to describe it. It was dark then and the lights were on when I landed but most of the pilots had not ever made a night landing of any kind and I had made not more than one or two.

Mr. Zambrano: I'm curious but you said you had about forty-three gallons of gas at one point; how much fuel could the Dauntless carry?

Dr. DuPree: We had two main tanks and two wing tanks, a total of about two hundred and sixty gallons. I think there were fifty gallons in both mains and the left main tank was the one where the fuel flowed back in, the excess fuel from the carburetor, so that was the last one that I would use. It was better

to take all the fuel out of the other tanks, because that excess fuel would run back into the left main.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay ... another question. When it came to rearming the plane, did you have anything to do with that or were there special crews that actually took care of that for you?

Dr. DuPree: They did what now?

Mr. Zambrano: When it came to rearming the plane?

Dr. DuPree: You mean putting the ammunition in it?

Mr. Zambrano: Yes, sir.

Dr. DuPree: Yeah, well the gun crews did all that. We didn't have anything to do with that.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, now other than the time that you would actually fly, what would you and your gunner and other pilots, how would you spend your time on the carrier?

Dr. DuPree: Well the pilots had a ready room that had a teletype with all the fleet information that came down on the board. We could sit there and we knew where we were and where we were going. The gunners had a ready room but I don't think they even had a teletype in their ready room. They would get there gear ready and ammunition and their pistols and check their life rafts and Mae West and they knew when they were going to fly because that was posted on the bulletin board too. They did have a bulletin board that posted their flights so they knew when they were going to fly.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: And they'd meet us at the plane. When they'd said, 'Man your planes', the pilots would go to their planes and the gunners would go to their rear seats.

Mr. Zambrano: What kind of survival equipment or uniform in general would you take when you got into your plane?

Dr. DuPree: They had flight suits that they wore and they had life jackets that could be inflated by blowing it up with your mouth but also by pulling the CO2 bottle. They had life rafts that were part of the parachute seat and they had a two man life raft in the side of the airplane. We had knives and we had a .38 pistol with ammunition and a shoulder harness. And the gunners also had pistols as well as knives but that was pretty much what we had. Of course in the life rafts we had a die marker and some food that was in the raft, you know, high concentration calorie food that was in a waterproof container.

Mr. Zambrano: How many times did you end up in the water?

Dr. DuPree: That first time on the Wasp I spent about five hours in the water and the second time was a mid-air collision off of Pearl Harbor when Dowdell and I went in the water and the third time was the Philippine Sea Battle when I ran out of gas.

Mr. Zambrano: What was the longest time that you spent in the water?

Dr. DuPree: Well the Wasp was about five hours. We didn't get picked up until about eight. It was dark when they picked us up. Have I mentioned to you we had gotten a large group of people together and we were the largest group and the easiest to find so we were the last one's picked up.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: But most of the people spent several hours in the water.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you ever see or speak to Admiral Mitscher?

Dr. DuPree: Well, of course he was on the Admiral's bridge. Every time we flew I could see him up there. One time when I got to be a senior lieutenant, you know you start off the ladder, from the bottom, you assume that if there's somebody waiting at the top, and if you're a senior lieutenant, senior is about ninety percent of the people on the ship. Well, I went up the ladder one day and I got to the top and Admiral Mitscher was standing at the top of the ladder, so I saluted and started backing down the ladder and he said, 'Come on up, Dupe. I can remember when I was a senior lieutenant'. So he motioned me up, but I came on up and apologized to him. I knew him and he knew me.

Mr. Zambrano: What kind of man do you think he was? Can you describe him?

Dr. DuPree: Well, he was a very small fellow and he had a tough sort of wind-blown face. He'd been a dive bombing pilot on the old Lexington. He was commanding officer on the Hornet when it took Jimmy Doolittle to Tokyo and he was an admiral that enjoyed being an admiral and we liked having him because he had been a pilot himself and he appreciated the situation we were in. He had a very warm feeling for the pilots and he would do anything in the world he could to save his pilots. If you remember, he's the man who turned on the lights on all the carriers the night we came back and were low on fuel and some were having to hunt for a carrier. He had the

searchlights on the carriers and all the other big ships had their red and green travel lights on. They didn't have any searchlights on anything but aircraft carriers, so you didn't have to look for a carrier, you just find the searchlight and fly to it and you knew that was a carrier.

Mr. Zambrano: Right.

Dr. DuPree: Now there were dangers of him doing that. We should have run into a Japanese submarine. They wouldn't have to look for carriers either. All they had to do was to launch a torpedo, so the risk that he was taking with the fleet was unbelievable. That he was willing to risk the fleet to save the pilots, and you know all the pilots loved him, but I know that he saved a lot of pilots that wouldn't have been saved at night if he hadn't turned on those lights on the carrier.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, I've read about that. That was pretty amazing that he had done that. I've also read that he had a great amount of loyalty for the men under him.

Dr. DuPree: Everybody loved Admiral Mitscher because he really did ... he felt like a pilot and acted like a pilot from his position as vice-admiral. Admiral Radford was doing a great job as an admiral and he wasn't a pilot but there was always a little bit of feeling among the pilots that Admiral Mitscher had our [unclear].

Mr. Zambrano: You said Admiral Radford?

Dr. DuPree: Yes, Admiral Radford. He was a very successful admiral and in the overall operation of the 58th Task Force.

Mr. Zambrano: Now I've got a question about, uh ... I hope it doesn't seem odd, but I've read about the term 'brown shoes' and 'black shoes'?

Dr. DuPree: Well, the black shoes were the line officers that were not pilots and the brown shoes were the aviators.

Mr. Zambrano: Was there much conflict between the two?

Dr. DuPree: Not that I can recall. You know, I wasn't jealous of the black shoes, I was glad to be a brown shoe. You would have to ask the black shoes if they had any. I remember one time I was having dinner in the wardroom and one of the black shoe officers said, 'You know Dupe, I used to be jealous of you because of that flight pay and all the extra money you make, but after a while of being on the Lexington I realized that y'all don't make more money than I do, you just make it a lot quicker!'

Mr. Zambrano: He sounds like he was quite the comedian.

Dr. DuPree: Yeah, he was admitting that he was glad to wear the black shoes and getting his pay a little slower. We lost a hundred and six pilots and gunners in Air Group 16 in the twenty-two months that we were on her. And that didn't count the ones that were lost after the squadron went out on the Randolph and the Lexington had other air groups. That was just during the time that...

Mr. Zambrano: Are you still there? Hello? Dr. DuPree? Okay, just a second.

[Interruption]

Mr. Zambrano: Alright, we were talking about brown shoes and black shoes.

Dr. DuPree: Oh, yes. I never did feel like there was any great problem between the brown shoes and the black shoes, but you know after World War Two was

over they did away with the green naval aviator uniform and the brown shoes. Naval aviators wear dark navy blue and water just like the line officers do and our pilots do now. They don't even have uniforms that are different. We had a green naval officer's uniform that all pilot wore as their working uniform but that doesn't exist in the navy anymore, so they must have had a feeling of jealousy about more than I even realized.

Mr. Zambrano: I've got another name I want to throw out to you and I want to see if you recognize it: Alex Vracui?

Dr. DuPree: Vracui.

Mr. Zambrano: Vracui, okay.

Dr. DuPree: Yeah, I knew Alex very well. He shot down nineteen airplanes. He had a brother in Chicago that gave a hundred dollars every time he shot down a zero so he really worked at it. In fact Alex's wife, Kay, and he got married when they were in college and I've got several stories to tell you about Alex, but I think Kay is dead now. I hadn't talked to him in a few months PBS should have contacted him and include more about it in the movie, but I don't think they ever talked to Alex.

Mr. Zambrano: Really! I'm surprised they wouldn't have.

Dr. DuPree: Well, Alex was so devoted to his wife, the last time I talked to him about it he told me that they had contacted him more than twenty-five times and tried to get him to agree to cut-off the ventilator support system and said that he just absolutely couldn't do it. Now here is the guy that shot down

nineteen zeros and when the doctors recommend that his wife is brain dead and not ever going to recover, he absolutely could not cut it off.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, that's understandable.

Dr. DuPree: Well, when Alex was in college he was in a psychology class and he found it boring and he and his fraternity brothers made a plan to go down to the fire department and get a fire department net and during the middle of a boring lecture he was going to jump out the window into the net ...

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay!

Dr. DuPree: His fraternity brothers were going to be standing out on the ground holding up the net so that next day in the middle of one of the most boring lectures he'd ever heard, Alex jumped up and said, 'I can't stand it anymore!' He ran to the window, raised the window and jumped out the window. Of course he landed in the net. The whole class rushed to the window to see Alex's brains splattered all over the ground and he was standing with his hand up in the air smiling. He didn't know what the professor was going to say about it. He gave him an 'A' in the course and said that he was the only student that ever created any excitement in his psychology class.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, my goodness! That's certainly a way to get some attention! So you knew him?

Dr. DuPree: I knew him very well.

Mr. Zambrano: Now, he was fairly young.

Dr. DuPree: He was and he was Butch O'Hare's wingman in the night-fighter squadron and he requested to be moved to the Lexington and our air group because he

really didn't like night flying and that's how we got old Alex. He had been Butch O'Hare's wingman and by the way, the night we went on the very first mission on the Lexington ... oh, what was the name of island. I told you about it. It slipped my memory for some reason.

Mr. Zambrano: Was it Guam or Saipan?

Dr. DuPree: No, no. It was the first island we hit.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, Tarawa?

Dr. DuPree: Tarawa! That night Butch O'Hare's night fighters took off from the Enterprise and he got shot down that night and the intelligence officer asked me to come up to the CIC center. He wanted me to listen to a recording of the wingman's conversation and they were vectoring him up to a plane that didn't have their IFF turned on. I did not know at the time that twin engine Betty's were flying around the fleet and they were firing stray bullets all the time and after reading the book called *Fatal Rendezvous* about Butch O'Hare's final flight I think that the general opinion is that a stray .20 caliber bullet from a twin engine Betty might have shot him down.

Mr. Zambrano: Really.

Dr. DuPree: I do think that a stray bullet accidentally hit Butch. Anyway, he was shot down at Tarawa and they named the airport in Chicago, O'Hare International, after him.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, that was what I was going to ask you next. His name sounded familiar. So he was ...

Dr. DuPree: Commanding officer of the night fighter squadron on the Enterprise.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: Butch was already an ace. He had shot down five zeros flying off the old Lexington or the old Saratoga. I don't know which ship he was on even, but he shot down five zeros in the Coral Sea battle when the Lexington was sunk.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow! So ...

Dr. DuPree: He came back and organized the first night fighter squadron.

Mr. Zambrano: But he died at Philippine Sea.

Dr. DuPree: No, no. He was killed at Tarawa.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay. Could you tell me anything more about Alex Vracui?

Dr. DuPree: Well, I think Alex was recommended for the Congressional award, but when they found out that his brother was paying him for every zero he shot down, I'm not sure if that had anything to do with it, but he never got the Congressional award for some reason. But I think he deserved it. He was the top ace in our air group.

Mr. Zambrano: Let's see. After Philippine Sea what happened then? Where did you go? What did you do?

Dr. DuPree: Well, we were in the process of landing at Guam when this battle came off and the last flight I flew was against Guam on the Orote Peninsula. That's when Joe Bryan flew in my rear seat and after, I think ... I wish I had my log book. I think the last mission I flew was August the 5th, '44, and we came up to Eniwetok and we came up to Enterprise then came to Pearl Harbor and then we shifted over to a small jeep carrier called the Makin

Island. Came back to San Diego and then I went to Miami as a combat tactical instruction in ACTG, that's Advanced Carrier Training Group in Miami and I spent the last year of the war down there. In six months I was the Chief Night Flying Officer for the fighters and torpedoes and dive bombers. We went six months when I was the Chief Night Flying Officer without having an accident. I got a letter from the admiral saying that never had happened in the training command before.

Mr. Zambrano: That what?

Dr. DuPree: That we'd never gone six months without an accident in the training command in night flying before.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay. So it sounds like it was a letter of commendation?

Dr. DuPree: Yes. Well, I was complaining about so many accidents in night flying, the commanding officer's name down there was, uh ... I can't remember his name, but he said, 'Well, why don't you take over the night flying'. I said, 'Well, give me a few days to think about it and look it over' and I looked in the night flying manual and I found two or three errors in the manual and I went over and talked to the superintendent of the ground school and said, 'The only way I'll take this job is if they'll let me do the lectures before we fly. Once they get on their flight gear in the ready room ready to fly, because I know I'll have a captive audience and they'll listen to everything I say'. And they said, 'Well, we can't do that without getting permission from the admiral in Jacksonville'. So they called the admiral and they told him that I wanted to do the night flying lectures as well as teaching the flying

and Paul Buie who had been the fighter commander on the Lexington, he knew me very well, he said, 'If Dupe wants to give the lectures, let him do it.' So the admiral agreed and then we went six months without an accident when we had been killing somebody about once a week in night flying. It really impressed the admiral. It had a letter of commendation and I responded to it and I had another letter from him. And when I came through the separation area he had a warrant officer stationed at the end of the line. He said, 'Don't let DuPree sign out of the navy until he talks to Paul Buie. We want him stay in the navy'. They realized that most of the combat pilots were leaving and they had decided to find the right two in each naval district that had all necessary mathematics and at least three years of college and then go to Annapolis in grade. And I could have gone to Annapolis and get my senior year in college in grade and they offered me one of those positions, but I was already so convinced I wanted to go medical school I didn't accept it. I've wondered many times if I would have been better off if I had stayed in the navy. I could have finished Annapolis in grade and I made lieutenant commander the week I got home and I really was frustrated about it then.

Mr. Zambrano: So you couldn't have gone to Annapolis and taken medicine there?

Dr. DuPree: Oh, no, no. Not medical school. If I had signed up for the navy I'd have gone to Annapolis and done the senior year as a student in Annapolis and graduated from Annapolis without giving up my rank. I wouldn't have been a midshipman; I would have been a lieutenant commander in the senior

class. There were two such jobs that they gave out in each naval district in the country to combat pilots to stay in the navy.

Mr. Zambrano: So you didn't finish college before you entered the service?

Dr. DuPree: No, I was in my senior year and I joined the navy in March in my senior year when I got accepted as a naval cadet. I just dropped out of college and went straight to flight training.

Mr. Zambrano: What college were you attending at the time?

Dr. DuPree: I was going to Mercer University in Macon.

Mr. Zambrano: And what were you specializing in?

Dr. DuPree: I was taking pre-med. I came back and went to Mercer for another year just to be sure I was going to be serious about med school and I ended up, I think the first quarter I came back I took quantitative analysis and comparative analysis and biology and organic chemistry and the registrar wouldn't let me take them without the dean's approval and he said, 'These are the three toughest courses at Mercer. Nobody ever takes them all at one time'. I said, 'Well, I've been teaching celestial navigation and I think that's a tough a course as any of these. If I can't do well in these courses, I don't have any business going to Emory Medical School'. But I made three A's and sent my transcript to Emory and I got a letter of admission to Emory the next week.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow!

Dr. DuPree: So that was a good decision on my part. Fortunately I didn't fail any of those courses.

Mr. Zambrano: So what happens next? You're a lieutenant commander at this point.

Dr. DuPree: Well, I'm out of the navy under a [unclear] and being a lieutenant commander they wouldn't let me resign until I was thirty-seven years old so I stayed inactive for the next twelve years until I was thirty-seven and I resigned from the navy.

Mr. Zambrano: So what year did you get out of the navy?

Dr. DuPree: Well, I can't remember now, but when I was thirty-seven, that was twelve years after the war ended and it ended in '45 that would be about '57 I guess.

Mr. Zambrano: And what was your final rank when you left service?

Dr. DuPree: Of course I didn't get promoted anymore. I never had anymore active duty.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay. So you go to medical school instead of Annapolis and what medical school did you go to?

Dr. DuPree: I went to Emory in Atlanta.

Mr. Zambrano: Emory?

Dr. DuPree: Yes.

Mr. Zambrano: And were you a general practitioner, did you specialize in something?

Dr. DuPree: I interned in surgery at Grady which is a big teaching hospital downtown here in Atlanta and then I went into general practice and one of my partners was a board surgeon so I learned a lot of surgery from him while I was in general practice that seven years. We gave anesthesia to each other; we didn't have an anesthesiologist and didn't have a nurse anesthetist, so the doctors in my practice gave anesthesia. Now we had done that as interns in

surgery at Grady. We gave anesthesia and we knew how to do spinal taps and all that kind of anesthesia. In 1958, I came back to Emory. I thought I wanted to be an ophthalmologist and took a year of ophthalmology, but I didn't particularly like it and I had a hard time divorcing myself from being a general practitioner. People would come into the clinic wanting their eyes examined and glasses changed and I'd find something like an incurable cancer that was a lot more important and I just finally resigned and went back to medical practice.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: One of the hospitals in Macon called the Riverside Clinic and went back into general practice.

Mr. Zambrano: You weren't called back up for the Korean War?

Dr. DuPree: No, no. I wasn't called back. They didn't call back people that had a Navy Cross that had all those points to get out of the navy and of course I wasn't on active duty. They would have liked it if I had resigned my commission back in 1948 or 49 or 50 and taken a commission as a lieutenant JG or an ensign in medicine. That would have saved somebody else from having to go. But I just refused to do that and I said, 'If the navy needs me on active duty they've got my serial number. They know where I am. They'll call me'. But I'll be a [unclear] corps. I won't be a doctor and a JG.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. So you graduate from medical school and where did you decide to settle down?

Dr. DuPree: Well, I went down Bainbridge where they accepted me in a hospital down there which I hold an interest in and then I came back to do an ophthalmology residency and when I left that, when I finished in the course I went back to Macon, Georgia and bought an interest in the Riverside hospital and reopened it. It had been closed a few months and I practiced twenty years in Macon.

Mr. Zambrano: Twenty years. When did you retire?

Dr. DuPree: 1964 to 1984.

Mr. Zambrano: As a general practitioner?

Dr. DuPree: Yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: And were you just in business for yourself or did you have another doctor that you partnered with?

Dr. DuPree: Well, it was an open staff hospital and there were a lot of doctors on the staff that used the hospital, but I was not in partnership with any of them. I did have a partner in the hospital who ... we bought it from Dr. Clay. His nephew was a lawyer that made a good partner for me in the ownership of the hospital and we finally gave his brother an interest in it and another doctor, Dr. Daniel, had a small interest in it, too. But mostly it was a private hospital with an open staff and it had all kinds of doctors on the staff. One of the first staff residents was Dr. Fields who was a neurosurgeon and he did most of his neurosurgery at that hospital.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you think ... let me put it this way: did the war have any affect on you?

Dr. DuPree: You know I never had a nightmare about World War Two and until this zero attacked me in the Philippine Sea battle, I'd never gotten a hole in my airplane. I had dived down many times and everybody was all shot up and we'd get back to the ship and land and I wouldn't have a bullet hole in my airplane and everybody else looked like they were shot to pieces, but I don't have any explanations for that other than they just didn't hit me.

Mrs. DuPree: [From another room] The Lord looked after you.

Dr. DuPree: Jean says the Lord looked after me.

Mr. Zambrano: It sounds that way.

Dr. DuPree: It's kind of a joke. A lot of times a young ensign would come up and want to get in my section if we had a big battle coming up and one time one of them claiming to be an atheist. I said, 'I don't know whether I want you flying with me or not. I thought you were an atheist?' He said, 'Well, I'm not sure what I am but I know what you are. I'm going to fly as close to you as I can get!'

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, boy. Well, what's the old saying, that there're no atheists in war or something like that?

Dr. DuPree: Even an atheist, his faith is shaken when he gets into battle. Jean says to remind you that I used to say a short prayer every time I got into a dive bomber before I took off and I always said a little thank you prayer when I landed safely on board.

Mr. Zambrano: Really.

Dr. DuPree: And I'm not claiming that the Lord loved me any more than he did anybody else, but I am telling you what happened. I did do that and I did not get hit ever by a bullet in my airplane until the Philippine Sea battle.

Mr. Zambrano: If you don't mind me asking, what faith are you?

Dr. DuPree: Well, I'm a Baptist. My grandfather graduated from Mercer in 1868 after the Civil War and my dad graduated from Mercer, which is a Baptist college in 1902, and I graduated finally in '46, but I used to laugh and tell him that Mercer was a tougher school than Emory med school. It took me ten years to get through Mercer and I finished Emory med school in four years. I neglected to comment about the fact that World War Two intervened in my Mercer education. But I tell that at alumni meetings sometimes.

Mr. Zambrano: Now, other than the Navy Cross and I think you mentioned the Air Medal...

Dr. DuPree: I got that Air Medal when I hit that cruiser and I hit a troop transport at Palau and got a second Air Medal and I got a Presidential Unit Citation, uh ... I'm not sure what all that included but it mentioned a lot of battles that I was in.

Mr. Zambrano: I guess you just went back to Georgia after the war, right?

Dr. DuPree: That's right.

Mr. Zambrano: So when did you get married?

Dr. DuPree: I got married in 1945 before the war ended. In Canton, I had four children and we were married for about seventeen years and we got a divorce in ... oh, I guess '62, I'm not sure. I married again, Barbara Turner Trammel for

ten years and she and I got a divorce in, I guess it was '89 or '90, and I married Jean about fifteen years ago in September. So that must have been '92.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay. So it sounds like you have an anniversary coming up soon.

Dr. DuPree: We've been married for about fifteen years, but I knew Jean for years. She was married to my second cousin who was an undertaker and a Baptist minister.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow.

Dr. DuPree: I was there family doctor and somewhat business advisor for many years. I knew Jean since she married Josh back in 1962 and she was a real sweet lady. After Josh died I went down to help her figure out what she wanted to do with that funeral home and we finally decided that she needed to sell it which she did.

Mr. Zambrano: Right.

Dr. DuPree: I won't go into all the details of the things that I advised her about but ...

Mr. Zambrano: That's fine.

Dr. DuPree: ... she had a bookkeeping company that wasn't giving her very good advice about her business. She was paying corporate tax in a C corporation that she owned all the stock in. It should have been a Chapter S that would have avoided all that tax.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, let me just flip the tape here quickly.

Dr. DuPree: Pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, I just have to flip the tape over here before it runs out, so I'm just going to stop this for just a second here.

Dr. DuPree: Okay.

[Interruption]

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, we're back on. So you retired when again?

Dr. DuPree: I sold the hospital in 1984 to Charter Medical and it took me about two years to wind down that hospital. I had to rent a building to put the records in and I had to keep records for several years until they could get them all dispensed to the people that wanted them and I couldn't destroy any of the records of the minor children until they reached maturity and when I got to the point that I was able to dispense with all the records, we destroyed the rest of the records and I got out of the hospital business completely, but it took me about five years to wind that down after I sold it to Charter Medical because they didn't want the records. That was just too big a problem for them to take over that responsibility of the records and they wouldn't take them. But they used the fifty-two beds to build Northside Hospital in Macon and they gave up about twenty beds that the majority would have owned and they built this new hospital out on the north side of town.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Something that I forgot to ask you now that it comes to mind: do you recall where you were and what you were doing when you heard that the atomic bomb had been dropped?

Dr. DuPree: I was in Miami teaching night flying and I was tickled to death to know it because I thought that was the kind of thing that it was going to take to get

the Japanese to quit fighting. I never ran into anybody that was fighting in combat that was sorry about the atomic bomb because it ended World War II.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. Did it come as a complete surprise? I mean, the war just kind of stopping.

Dr. DuPree: Well, I did not know about the atomic bomb. I knew that the B-29 had been developed and I knew that it was so fast and could fly so high that they would go to Japan without a fighter escort. And I didn't know that they'd dropped a lot of incendiary bombs before they dropped the atomic bomb and they probably burned up more of Tokyo from dropping regular incendiary bombs, than the atomic bomb did.

Mr. Zambrano: Right, yeah, I think you're right.

Dr. DuPree: The atomic bomb was such a classical disaster for Japan and of course when they dropped the second one, the Emperor just interceded and said, 'Hey, we're going to stop this foolishness right now'.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. Do you recall what you were doing and when you where you were?

Dr. DuPree: Well, not specifically. I don't remember like I do when the war started. I just remember that I was in training command in Miami until they quit doing dive bombing training in Miami and I moved to Sanford Naval Air Station where I was a fighter pilot instructor in ACTG, although I never flew fights in combat I instructed in fighters. That was what I was doing when the war ended.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Well, actually that was my next question. When you heard that the war was over, where were you?

Dr. DuPree: I was at Sanford Naval Air Station instructing in ...where a little fighter plane called an FM2 that General Motors had built in an F4F type frame and they put a little powerful motor in it and I guess it had an Curtis electric propeller, but it had about 1300 horsepower. It flew up to 10,000 feet, I think you can beat an F6 in that little FM2 although I never tried, but it was so maneuverable and so good that under 10,000 feet it was a very fine little fighter plane and built by General Motors.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you continue flying on your own personal time after the war?

Dr. DuPree: Well, yes I got a multi-engine rating and I finally got one of those twin engine airplanes. I owned an airplane, a Cessna 210 and I owned a Beechcraft and I owned a twin engine Piper.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you still fly?

Dr. DuPree: Not since I had heart surgery and my vision got so bad. I don't fly anymore but I won't take a physical because I know I'd fail it, but I do still have a multi-engine license. If I could pass the physical I could keep flying. I actually had a friend that owned four engine planes that I flew to Cuba and I ... no, I flew to San Juan and Nicaraguan with him a lot and I have quite a few hours in those four engine airplanes so I even flew one ... he had an Electra which was a turbo prop four engine cargo plane.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: I flew DC-6's and DC-7's that were four engines.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, let's see. I don't think I have many more questions left. Is there anything that you'd like to add about your war experience, any stories or anything?

Dr. DuPree: Well, I never had a sleepless night over what I did or what happened to me. Even when the Wasp was sunk and oil came out of my skin for weeks and weeks and weeks because of the oil that was floating on the water that we were stranded in for several hours. It was a month later before I got home and oil was still coming out of my skin. Mother was fussing with me about what in the world I was doing to her sheets and she changed the bed and all this oil would come out on the sheets, but it took several weeks for that to stop after I got out. When I came home on leave for a month and I guess I still had oil in my skin when I went to report to the Lexington air group. I never even had one bad dream about World War Two.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, well, that's good! Just a question: I don't know if pilots and their gunners are involved in this, but I've heard about a navy tradition that involves crossing the equator?

Dr. DuPree: Well, the first time I crossed the equator was on the Wasp and I was going through one of those sleeves that we tow to fire at and a big sailor came charging through a sleeve behind me and stepped on my shoulder and dislocated it so I was incapacitated from flying for about two to three weeks because I didn't have enough strength in my left arm to put the tail-hook up, but I got well enough to fly in that first combat at Guadalcanal and it had

been about four weeks since my shoulder had been dislocated. Actually, I had surgery on that shoulder about two years ago. It still gives me trouble.

Mr. Zambrano: Really! And how was it that you got it injured again, he stepped on it?

Dr. DuPree: Well, we were crawling through a towed sleeve ...

Mr. Zambrano: Towed sleeve.

Dr. DuPree: ... right up on the flight deck and I was a pollywog being initiated when we crossed the equator on the Wasp and they were hitting us with sandbags as we crawled through this sleeve. They didn't know who was where, they just hit people in the sleeve and a big sailor was crawling behind me and he climbed over the top of me and his knee hit my shoulder and dislocated it and he climbed on out of the sleeve and so did I and I went to sickbay and the doctor on the Wasp relocated my shoulder and put me in a sling and I was not able to fly for about four weeks, but I made the first flight to Guadalcanal on August 7th, so we must have crossed the equator about four weeks before August the 7th.

Mr. Zambrano: Gosh. Here's another question that comes to mind. When we spoke before you mentioned that PBS had done a special on Air Group 16?

Dr. DuPree: That's right and it was shown on PBS last Sunday night at 9:30 on PBS and most of the country, but Georgia didn't show it for some reason. They'd already scheduled something about the Iraq people that can call their families and they wanted them to know how to get in touch with them and they wouldn't show it and they still haven't shown it in Georgia, but they

showed it in Texas and they showed it in South Carolina, Alabama, and Florida, and parts of California. Southern California I don't think showed it.

Mrs. DuPree: It was shown nationally.

Dr. DuPree: And, uh ... what Jean?

Mrs. DuPree: It was shown nationally.

Dr. DuPree: It was shown nationally on PBS, I think. I had a cousin that lived up in the upper peninsula of Michigan who called me about it and I asked her to check it up there and see if they were showing it on PBS in Michigan and she did and they did show it up there even.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, good!

Dr. DuPree: I'll have a copy of that Hugh Dresher, Dresher Films made the movie and I'll send a copy of it to you when I get it.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, thank you, I appreciate that.

Dr. DuPree: And also my local library in Swainsboro, interviewed all the World War Two veterans and my interview lasted about an hour and a half, but they cut it to an hour and they sent it to the Smithsonian and I had a card from the Smithsonian last week that they had received it, but for me not to bother to check it for at least six months because there had been such a big response to it that it would be at least six months before they got it all in the database, but they gave me the number to check out on the computer on email to find out in the Smithsonian if I wanted to see it, but suggested that I wait six months to check it because it would take that long to get everything on the database in the Smithsonian.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: I can give you a copy of that interview too.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, that would be great. I'd appreciate that. You know Dr. Conklin, of course.

Dr. DuPree: Oh yes. He was a young ensign in our air group and I think Conklin might have stayed in the reserve until he made commander but I'm not sure about that. I know he flew in the reserves up in Iowa for a long time after the war was over.

Mr. Zambrano: How did you come to meet him, just as being part of the air group?

Dr. DuPree: He flew in our squadron and I knew him the whole time he was in combat in the first group of Air Group 16. I think he stayed in the air group and flew a second tour on the Randolph and I didn't know him during that period but I knew Conklin very well when he was a young ensign in the squadron.

Mr. Zambrano: You did a little time on the Randolph too, is that correct?

Dr. DuPree: I'm pretty sure he did, but I don't know. You'd have to check with him about that.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh no, I meant you. Did you do any time on the Randolph?

Dr. DuPree: No, I left the Lexington, left the air group. I already had one tour on the Wasp when it was sunk and I went back on the Lexington and you couldn't do but two tours and then you had to come back for shore duty.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: So I got my two tours in and came back and flew in the ACTG and then I was a Chief Night Flying Officer and I flew an ACTG at Sanford when the war ended.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Well, I think that pretty much covers all my questions, sir. Is there anything that you'd like to add?

Dr. DuPree: Well, I would like for you to send me a copy of this interview ...

Mr. Zambrano: I can do that.

Dr. DuPree: ... and if I ever get back to Fredericksburg, I'd like to see how you can hear it at Fredericksburg at the Museum.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, you mean the interview?

Dr. DuPree: Now, it would be called the Nimitz Museum or the World War Two Museum or what is the name?

Mr. Zambrano: Well, its formal name is the National Museum of the Pacific War.

Dr. DuPree: In Fredericksburg.

Mr. Zambrano: Yes, sir.

Dr. DuPree: Well, I had been there and I didn't realize that was what they called it at that time. When we had an air group reunion in San Antonio we rented a bus and drove up to Fredericksburg to that museum.

Mr. Zambrano: Some folks refer to it simply as the Nimitz Museum. Oh, speaking of reunions, is there one planned for this year?

Dr. DuPree: We don't plan to have anymore, but a lot of people had wanted a second one. Actually Jerry Pinicky who was married to a torpedo pilot and they lived in Springs, Texas, she had agreed to have a mini-reunion and I talked

to the lady that arranged our World War Two interviews in Swainsboro and she and the photographer and cameraman agreed to meet with our air group and give all of the other pilots an opportunity to record their history and if we have this mini-reunion in Georgia, I'm going to invited everybody and let them know that Miss Bolton and the photographer with her will come to the reunion and of course they're history if they want it recorded.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Dr. DuPree: And if you'd like to be invited to that reunion, I'd be glad to let you know when we have it. I have a stroke and developed diabetes and I had a lot of things happen in my health that prevented me from pursuing this reunion but I hope to do it sometime within the next year.

Mr. Zambrano: Alright, well I'd appreciate an invitation. That would be wonderful!

Dr. DuPree: Well, I'll let you know if we ever get well enough to do it. And I thought about having it at Callaway Gardens in Georgia which is just south of Atlanta. We had a reunion their once and everybody seemed to enjoy it and I think that it's close to the Atlanta airport and it's easy to get a car and drive down to Callaway from the Atlanta airport. We're not going to have a big formal reunion like we've had with a lot of speakers and so forth. We just going to sit around and let everybody talk to Miss Bolton about their World War Two history and have a ready room set up in the Callaway Gardens Inn so we can just have a place to just sit and meet and talk with old friends.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, that sounds good. You said her name was what again, Miss Bolt?

Dr. DuPree: Pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: You mentioned the lady's name, Bolt or Bolton?

Dr. DuPree: Yes, Bolton, yes. She works for the library in Swainsboro and she arranges all these interviews of World War Two folks and she agreed to come to this reunion and offer that opportunity to everybody that wanted to make a recording of their history.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. That's a very good idea.

Dr. DuPree: Miss Bolton teaches mathematics at East Georgia College in Swainsboro and she works part time at the library now.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow. Well, I guess I've said this a couple of times ... I guess I'm out of questions on this end sir.

Dr. DuPree: Well, send me a copy of this at your convenience.

Mr. Zambrano: I can do that.

Dr. DuPree: I'll get back in touch with you when we have another ... if we ever have this mini-reunion.

Mr. Zambrano: Alright.

Dr. DuPree: And thank you so much.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I thank you for your time, sir, and your service to our country and it's been a pleasure speaking to you.

Dr. DuPree: Thank you so much. Glad to have met you Mike and I'll be in touch with you.

Mr. Zambrano: Alright, thank you, sir.

Dr. DuPree: Bye, bye.

Mr. Zambrano: Bye, bye.

Transcribed by

Mike Zambrano, Jr.

Round Rock, Texas

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