

Lawrence Warren Oral History Interview

MIKE ZAMBRANO: This is Mike Zambrano. Today is the 17th of April, 2011. I'm interviewing Mr. Lawrence E. Warren at his home at 123 Serenada Drive in Georgetown, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Good morning, sir. How are you doing today?

LAWRENCE WARREN: Pretty good for a [sailor?].

MZ: Well, let me start off with the very first question, and that is where and when were you born?

LW: Well, I was born May the 2nd, 1922, about six or seven miles west of Round Rock, Texas. At that time it was Route 3, Round Rock. Later it was Route 1, Round Rock, and now it's an Austin route.

MZ: Really? Well, Austin and Round Rock have changed quite a bit over the years.

LW: Yes.

MZ: What were the names of your parents?

LW: My father's name was William Oscar Warren. My mother was Cora Agnes [Glenn?] Warren. Her maiden name was Glenn. Her father was John Ashley Glenn.

MZ: Did they live in the same area where you were born for many years?

LW: Yeah. My dad was born in Somerset, Kentucky, well, right out of Somerset in a little community that the Warrens owned the community, owned the store, the post office, and everything, in Ruth, Kentucky, R-U-T-H, Ruth, Kentucky, and still owned by some of the Warren family.

MZ: To this day?

LW: To this day.

MZ: Wow.

LW: The lady lives in Las Vegas, but she has it rented out to some people. The old Warren homestead is still there. They grow a lot of tobacco at that place. But my grandpa was James [Raleigh?] Warren, and his wife was Mary Martha Eastep Warren, and they were born at Stockdale, Kentucky, which is another community close to Somerset. He was a schoolteacher up in Kentucky before he came to Texas in 1890.

MZ: Really? That far back?

LW: They loaded all their belongings on a boxcar and got hooked onto a freight train and came to Round Rock in 1890. My dad was two years old when they came to Round Rock. Then they stayed with the Bradley family in Round Rock, who Grandpa was kin to, the Bradleys. They had lived in

Somerset before they came to Round Rock, the Bradleys, and he stayed with them a few days until they found a place to move to at Leander, Texas, and they moved to Leander. Then in 1905 he bought a place at Route 3, Round Rock, at a little community west of Round Rock about seven miles called Rutledge.

MZ: Rutledge?

LW: Rutledge. It used to be a kind of a railroad stop, had a little gazebo where people could get under there and wait for the train to go into Austin.

MZ: Okay. Does it still exist?

LW: Pardon?

MZ: Does Rutledge still exist?

LW: No. The city of Austin has a substation there now, electrical substation where Grandpa's old store was. He had an old country store there.

MZ: Well, what did your father do for work?

LW: Well, he farmed up until about 1935, and then he went to work for Texas Power & Light Company. And then when he retired in 1953 from Texas Power & Light Company, he was a labor foreman. There were six of us boys. All six of us at one time or another worked for Texas Power & Light. Then two of my brother-in-laws also worked for Texas Power & Light.

MZ: Well, I was going to ask you. So you have six brothers?

LW: I've got five brothers. I did have. Of course, my two older ones passed away. I got one brother older than I am that's 91, and I'll be 89 the 2nd of next month.

MZ: Okay. I thought you were a little younger, but you look good. So are you the second oldest then?

LW: No, the second oldest son got killed in a car wreck. He was in Patton's Third Army and went through all that over there, come back and got killed in a one-car accident at the edge of Round Rock --

MZ: I'm sorry.

LW: -- in 1946, December the 8th, 1946. My oldest one was a farmer. He moved out to West Texas. He lived out around Tahoka, Texas, close to Lubbock. That's -- when he was farming -- was Route 1, Wilson, Texas. He moved into Tahoka when he retired. Then later they moved to the Baptist retirement deal in San Angelo, Texas, and that's where him and his wife both lived when they passed away. She passed away about May the 23rd, I believe it was, in 1996, and he passed away September, I believe, the 27th of 1996. And my first wife passed away November the 7th, 1996.

MZ: What were your brothers' names?

LW: My oldest brother was Oscar Harold Warren. He went by Harold. My next brother was William Horace Warren, and he

went by Horace. Then I had a sister, Cora Blanche Warren, but she fell out of a tree and died when she was six years old. Then my next sister was Mary Opal Warren McCann. She married Raymond Robert McCann of Round Rock. Then my next brother was Glenn Warren. That was his full name, Glenn Warren. I'm next under Glenn. Then the next one, William Oscar Warren, Jr. He lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico. His wife just passed away just this last year. She's buried in the National Cemetery in New Mexico.

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah, in the National Cemetery, because of him being a veteran. See, he'll be buried there also. And then the next one under William Oscar Warren, Jr., is Beulah Elizabeth Warren McDonald. That's my youngest sister. She lives in South Austin. The next one is Lester Harlan, and his nickname is [Collie?]. He goes by Collie all the time. We had a little Mexican fellow working for us when we was ranching, and he couldn't say Harlan. He'd say Collie, and so it stuck. (laughter) That was his nickname. He lives in Round Rock. He's the only one of us that stayed in Round Rock, but he married a girl from Round Rock and lives on their old home place, the old [Priem?] home place out around Pflugerville. Actually he says his bedroom is in Round Rock, and his wife's bedroom is in Pflugerville.

They're just about where the Willlliamson County and Travis County line --

MZ: Oh, that's funny.

LW: -- divides there. (laughs)

MZ: [Until?] pay taxes in two different counties.

LW: I think they tried to tax him both ways, like they did me when I lived in Austin. Because the children used to go to Round Rock out where I lived on Spicewood Springs Road there in Austin, and they would send me a tax notice, even after our kids started going to school in Austin. Round Rock wanted its school taxes off of me, and Austin, too. But after I called them and explained everything to them, you know, we voted to send our kids to Austin, after I explained all that to them, well, they finally quit sending me those tax notices.

MZ: Good. Did your mother ever work?

LW: No, she was a housewife all the time. Of course, she worked in the fields, and we had a dairy when we lived out close to McNeil. You know where McNeil is?

MZ: Yes.

LW: Okay. We lived, oh, about half a mile back this side of McNeil or maybe a little further. Right where we lived there, there's a big hole there now where they dug out, getting rocks to get lime.

MZ: Okay. I think I know where that is, yeah.

LW: Across the railroad track there's a house there, and that was our fields there where we raised all kinds of vegetables and corn. My dad would plant two rows of corn and one row of peas, two rows of corn, a row of tomatoes, two rows of corn and a row of beans, and like that, all through the field. When I was young I got stung by a stinging scorpion gathering corn there a few times.

(laughs) My dad would keep a cigarette in his mouth not lit, just moist. He'd take that cigarette that he'd chewed on and stick it on that bite. It'd never hurt you. They'd draw that poison out.

MZ: You said it wasn't lit though? That the cigarette was not lit?

LW: No. No, he'd just keep it in his mouth there. He'd doctor his kids. (laughter) But that tobacco would draw that poison out after a stinging scorpion had stung you, and it would never swell up.

MZ: Were they very big, these scorpions?

LW: Oh, they're about the size of my thumb, some of them. They were a pretty good size sometime.

MZ: So you grew up in Round Rock. Where did you go to school?

LW: I went to school in Round Rock. There was an old three-story building there, and everybody in Round Rock went to

school in the same building, from the first grade to the eleventh grade. We didn't have twelve grades; we only had eleven. Of course, I didn't graduate. I left school in about 1939 and went in the Civilian Conservation Corps at Bartlett, Texas. That's about 25 miles north of Georgetown, northeast of Georgetown. It's on Highway 95. I went in there in 1939, on October the 7th, 1939. I was in there nearly two years. I left May, about May the 26th or [27th?], something like that, of 1940. And then in the early part of 1941 I went to Big Spring, out in West Texas. My oldest brother was living out there and working on a farm for his brother-in-law, working in a cotton gin that his brother-in-law owned the cotton gin. So I went out there and went to work in the cotton gin, and then working on some of the ranches around there. The farming out in that area was pretty big farms. Me and him would [poison?] the cotton at night.

MZ: Poison cotton?

LW: At night, you know, to keep boll weevils and stuff off of it. They had a mixture that you'd mix with water, and I was running a pickup truck. I'd go get big barrels of water and put a board on it so it wouldn't slosh out too bad and haul it down there. Then we'd mix it with those granules and had sprayers on an outfit that would spray

several rows of cotton. I don't remember just how many, but it'd spray several rows of cotton as we was pulling it along. The rotation pumped the water out.

MZ: Why at night though?

LW: Well, in the daytime it was hot, and it'd dry, you know, real quick, but at night it would settle in on the cotton, and it would give it time to dry on the cotton to where when the boll weevils started eating on those leaves, there wouldn't be no more boll weevils. (laughs)

MZ: What was in the other (inaudible) of the school that you were telling me about?

LW: The school?

MZ: Yeah. What was the name of it?

LW: Round Rock High School. They called it Round Rock High School, although all the children went there, the first grade on up. They named the school after my first grade school teacher, Xenia Voigt. They had a Voigt School, but I don't know if -- I think it's closed now.

MZ: But why did you drop out of school?

LW: Well, I just wasn't getting nowhere in school.

MZ: How did you hear about the Civilian Conservation Corps?

LW: Oh, well, there was a lot of advertising about it, because it was an outfit that Roosevelt put in, Franklin Delano Roosevelt put in to keep kids off of the street and winding

up in jail, which is probably what I would have done if I hadn't gone in there. (laughs) But (inaudible) after Roosevelt put that in, they also had the WPA, workman's [Works] Progress Administration, and so that was all about the same time. They put in a lot of sewer line and water line and stuff like that in Round Rock, the WPA. Then they had the NYA, National Youth Administration. After I left the Civilian Conservation Corps and went to Big Spring and came back to Round Rock, I worked for the NYA for a little while there in Round Rock when they was building a new schoolhouse. I was busting rock with an eight-pound sledgehammer. They was sawing that rock to build the school. But I was making smaller rocks out of big ones. (laughter) Then I went in the Navy. There was six of us boys from Round Rock that went in the Navy at the same time, and I'm the only one still living. The last one besides me just passed away, lived in Lampasas, a guy by the name of [Boxy?] Elam.

MZ: Boxy Elam?

LW: Yeah. Well, his name was Walter Perry Elam, but he went by Boxy was his nickname. One of the guys that went in the Navy with us tried to send him after some box stretchers when we were in school, told him, "You go ask the coach for

some box stretchers." I think he went and asked him, and that was his nickname then. That stuck. (laughter)

MZ: What was the Depression like? I mean, you obviously grew up in it. As a child, did you even -- I mean, some gentlemen tell me that they didn't even realize there was a depression going on. They focused on their family life.

LW: Yeah. We always had plenty to eat. My dad had a dairy, carried me up to the cheese factory there in Round Rock where the American Legion is now, used to be a cheese factory there.

MZ: Okay. I know where that's at.

LW: Okay. Then he hauled me up to the cheese factory. Then we farmed and grew our own vegetables, and my mother canned them. Neighbor ladies would come in and help her can them, and then she'd go help them can their stuff. Women back then socialized a whole lot more I guess than they do nowadays, would work, on the work stuff, you know. Of course, people would come in and they'd help my dad thresh oats when it was threshing time. Then my dad would go help them on their place. If they needed equipment, they'd loan each other equipment, you know. My dad, I don't think he owned the thresher. I think it belonged to someone else that would come in with my dad would go help them thresh in other places.

MZ: So they would kind of share resources --

LW: Yeah.

MZ: -- to get things done or put food on the table?

LW: Yeah. My dad was sharecropping and running a dairy. It was 640 acres on that farm. Part of it was pastureland, but quite a bit of it was cultivation. We raised cotton and corn and oats mostly. And then we had a big garden by the house, too, at the house. Then my dad had a big turkey pen where he raised turkeys, and, of course, we let the chickens just run wild. But they would hang around for food, you know. In the afternoon my dad would feed them. My mother would get up and milk a couple of cows in the morning before she'd fix breakfast, by lantern light, because we didn't have any electricity. We had a big bathtub, but to pack -- we didn't have water in the house. You had to pack water from the windmill. When the windmill wasn't running, of course, we had a tank there, too, and then had a water trough there, too, for the cattle. But if the windmill wasn't pumping water, well, my dad had an old Dodge. He got a 1922 Dodge, and he backed that thing up and jack up one wheel, and he had a deal where he could put a belt on there and pump -- we had a pump house there with a pump in it and put that belt on that pump and put water with that old Dodge. You'd just crank it up. It wouldn't

move with that one wheel jacked up. He'd pump water with that old Dodge. Then when we needed to saw cordwood, we always cut cordwood and bring it to the house and then saw it up for cooking, cause we didn't have electricity or gas or anything. We cooked with wood all the time. Dad would hook that old Dodge up, and we had a saw. He'd put that wood on there, and he'd push it up, like that, and cut that wood, and then he'd slip it back and cut another [tongue?], and then he'd push that cordwood up each time to cut it, and cut it for the fireplace and the cook stove, especially in the wintertime, you know, you need it for the fireplace. We even burned cow chips in the fire -- not the fireplace, but a potbelly stove. My dad had a potbelly stove, and we'd burn cow chips in there sometimes, if we didn't have enough wood, cause we was on a dairy, and we just take them dry cow chips, and they'd burn just like wood.

MZ: Would it smell funny?

LW: No, you had a [funnel?] on that thing where all that went out, you had a flue pipe where all that went out, outside.

MZ: Why did you decide to go into the Navy?

LW: Well, my feet's been [kind?] to farm all my life, and I didn't want to march. Simple. (laughs)

MZ: Did you join after Pearl Harbor or before?

LW: After Pearl Harbor. I was working in Big Spring, and that Sunday I was in a picture show, and they stopped the show and told us they'd attacked Pearl Harbor. Right after that a couple of guys shot a firecracker in the show, and everybody went outside, including me. Them two guys sat there, and they knew who shot the firecracker was them two guys sitting there laughing. So they kicked them out, so never come back. (laughs) Well, I come home then for Christmas, and then I went to work at the school, like I say, you know, busting rock to build that school. There was six of us boys kind of got together and got to talking, and we all wanted to go in the Navy. They were like me; they didn't want to march. So we got to talking and we went down to Austin on January the 15th and signed up for the Navy. You know, they were taking so many then and drafting them and all that. It was February the 17th before they called us back to Austin, and they told us to be ready to come back down there on the 19th of February. They were going to send us to Houston, just to come back and don't be wearing anything that can't be shipped back. Well, we caught the train that evening and went down to Houston, and they put us up for the night in a hotel and everything, and then swore us in on the 20th of February of 1942. Then they sent us home and told us the same thing they'd already told

us in Austin, come back with nothing that can't be shipped back, because if we had brought a bunch of other stuff to ship back, we'd have to pay for it. But just for our clothes and what we were wearing, they'd ship it back free of charge. So we went back on the 23rd of February. They put us on a train, and we left there, and we had layovers in El Paso, Texas, and we had layovers in Yuma, Arizona. We had a little layover, well, just in Yuma, Arizona. I'm thinking about when I come home on vacation one time, on leave. But that's the only two layovers we had going out there. We got there on the 26th of February at San Diego. The lieutenant commander come by there and a bunch of them guys had their cowboy boots on to be shipped back (laughs), and one of them movie stars was a lieutenant commander. He was in charge of the calisthenics and stuff like that, exercise. I can't think of his name. George O'Brien.

MZ: George O'Brien.

LW: George O'Brien was the movie star, and he was a lieutenant commander. He come by and he says, "You all boys from Texas?" I don't know where he was from, but they could tell by our boots and everything on, you know, he figured we were all from Texas, which we were. (laughter) We was laying out on the grass waiting to get shots. They give me my shots there in San Diego, but when I got over to Pearl

Harbor on April the 4th of 1942, they gave me then shots again because they didn't have my records that I had already had the shots. So I had to take all them shots again. (laughter) Then the *Enterprise* was gone with the *Hornet* on the Tokyo raid. The *Enterprise* was the flagship of that. Admiral Halsey was on the *Enterprise*, the admiral in charge of all that, the *Doolittle* raid. They came back to Pearl Harbor, and I went aboard it on the 28th of April of 1942. But I worked in the ammunition dump from the 4th of April. When I got there they sent us to a place called Camp Andrews, out of Pearl Harbor, and then up in the mountains above Pearl Harbor there they had an ammunition dump underground.

MZ: Like inside the mountain?

LW: Yeah. They dug out in that mountain and cemented all around and had a dugout in there where they stored ammunition. We worked in that ammunition dump. I got separated there in San Diego from all the rest of the other five that I went in with. Then I got in a boot camp with a bunch of guys from Alabama. Of course, some of them were from Texas, too, but most of the ones in that boot camp that I went in, Company 111, 1942, and most of them, the biggest majority of them, was from Alabama. I had some

good friends there from Alabama, but most of them passed away now.

MZ: I forgot to ask you one thing. Before we start talking about when you actually joined the *Enterprise*, when you heard about Pearl Harbor do you recall having any particular reaction or any -- do you remember how you felt?

LW: Well, I felt like we'd just kick the hell out of them just in a few days. I didn't think they was that strong really. Of course, I knew we'd been sending scrap iron to them for several years. I'd seen trainloads of it. And we'd make the remarks that it's going to Japan or Germany, and they'll be shooting it back at us one of these days. We made those remarks when we was kids. Sure enough, that's what happened. We sent scrap iron all over the place. You'd see trainloads of it when I was a kid. The train track run between our farming part and our pastureland. I had to drive the cattle in in the evenings for Dad and Mother to milk them, and they'd keep them penned up at night. But I'd drive those cattle in. I had to get them across the railroad before what we called Sunshine Special come through there, a freight train. Then a passenger train would come through there about five o'clock in the evening. Most of the time, well, about 5:15 I believe.

Most of the time I had to get those cattle across the railroad before that train come.

MZ: Do you recall what other people might have said about Pearl Harbor being attacked?

LW: Well, not really. Most people were pretty mad, you know, pretty mad about it. Of course, back then, just kids, we didn't think that much of it really. But -- excuse me. I got a little bit of sinus.

MZ: Okay, I just want to go back to the *Enterprise* again. Now when you first saw the ship, what impressions did you have?

LW: Oh, it was huge. (laughs) It was huge. You know, I went across from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor in four and a half days on the *S.S. Lurline*, a Matson luxury liner. There was about 10,000 on that thing. But I was seasick all the way across. I went aboard the *Enterprise* April the 28th, 1942, and I was never seasick again. I was in two typhoons, and I seen some of them sailors been in the Navy 20 years seasick, but I never got seasick again. Some of them was seasick in that typhoon. Of course, I was kind of scared in that typhoon, which I guess everybody was. You never know. It sunk a couple of our destroyers and knocked I think they said about 60 or 70 foot of flight deck off of the *San Jacinto*. That was between a jeep carrier and a first-line carrier.

MZ: Right, the escort carriers?

LW: No, it wasn't an escort carrier. That escort carrier is what we called a jeep carrier.

MZ: What carrier?

LW: They called it a CVL.

MZ: Oh, carrier -- oh, so then it was a light carrier?

LW: Yeah, that's what it was, a light carrier. CVL. I think that's what it was, a carrier vessel light. Of course, I was on just a carrier vessel, CV6. We had them typhoons down there in the China Sea. I don't remember the dates of the typhoons. I wish I had kept a ledger like some of them did. Some of them got rich off of that stuff. They wrote down everything that happened every day and wrote books when they got back.

MZ: So you joined the *Enterprise* on the 28th of April, 1942. Does that mean that you were on her when she headed out to the Coral Sea?

LW: Yeah. I celebrated my twentieth birthday going to the Coral Sea.

MZ: Really? Okay.

LW: I was 19 when I went in the Navy.

MZ: So were you anxious? I mean, did you know you were going to be going into combat?

LW: Well, we got there a day late. We didn't get to fight in the Coral Sea. We got there a day late, so we come back to Pearl Harbor and got ready for the Battle of Midway.

MZ: And when you say you got ready, what division were you in, or what section?

LW: I was in the 2nd Division, 2nd Section. I was on a quad 40mm, passing ammunition, and at the end of the war I was a battery officer on a twin 40mm. Of course, I was just a boatswain mate second class, but they used boatswain mates for battery officers when they didn't have enough officers.

MZ: Is that the rank you were when you got out?

LW: I was boatswain mate second class when I got discharged.

MZ: Okay. So what did you do exactly to get ready?

LW: Well, a lot of times if we had kind of bad weather, misty weather, we had the guns covered up. We had ducking that slipped over the gun barrels that kept them with some kind of a stuffed padding on them that preserved them and keep them from rusting. Then we had gunners mates that cleaned them. A lot of people think the gunners mates were the ones that shot the gun, but that's not true. They were the ones -- they might have on some ships, but on our ship the deck force, boatswain mates and seamen, seamen second class, apprentice seamen, all were the ones that fired the 40mm guns. The marines, we had 126 marines at one time or

another, and the marines fired the 20mms. On those 40s there, we would have target practice a lot of times, when we'd be leaving the port and going out, you know, we'd have target practice. We had an airplane that would come by and tow a sleeve. A lot of times we'd shoot that sleeve up pretty good, or even shoot the line he was dragging.

(laughs) We got to where we was pretty good shots with that.

MZ: So, you know, I made the connection now, because the picture you have on the wall up there is the one that was in the *Community Impact* newspaper. I've always wondered about those helmets being so large. Why are they so large?

LW: I had on [battle phones?].

MZ: Oh, okay.

LW: They were only large for the battery officers. I was a battery officer when that picture was taken, and that's a sight there. When they first come out, they were a Mark 14 sight, and then later they went to a Mark I think 54 or something like that sight. You would watch tracers when the director-operator -- we called that a director -- the director-operator would fire the gun, but I'd watch the tracers. Every fourth shell we shot was a tracer, and you can watch it and see how much you needed to lead that plane. I would set the range on there and the elevation

and everything that needed to be set. That was my job during battle, as the battery officer. Of course, I was in charge of the gun and everything. But we were in another little turret up above the gun a little ways, and I could look down on the crew that was loading the gun and everything. I had pointers and trainers, but they didn't need it unless we lost power to this. We had two sources of power. Then if we lost power to this director here, well, then they had a knob on there that they could operate down there. The trainer had a wheel to where it could turn it and bring it around, and they could elevate it and everything with that. They could turn it.

MZ: Was it like a wheel where you turn like that?

LW: Yeah. They had the wheels on there to turn it and everything. If we lost both sets of powers, they had to do it manual, everything manual with those wheels on there. Actually, we had three sources of power, the two electrical powers and then the manual power, you know, if we lost electrical power. But they had two sources of power on the *Enterprise*, one on each side of the ship. They would cross. At different points they would cross, so you'd have two sets of powers in case we got hit, and you lost one source of power, then [we?] would still have power.

MZ: Right. It's interesting, the design incorporation.

LW: Yeah. They thought of a lot of things that way. They [were?] talking about the asbestos causing cancer. I worked with asbestos when I was on the *Enterprise* quite a bit. We would build stuff out of asbestos and plaster. We would form it, and then they would take and put it over those electrical wires and stuff. I guess they taped it or did something. I don't know just how they put it on there, because the job I had was just putting that plaster in there and letting it form, you know, to put over the electric wires and over the water pipes and all that kind of stuff, to deter any kind of fire that we might have.

MZ: Okay. What do you recall about the Battle of Midway?

LW: Well, the Battle of Midway there was one of those Jap planes come out by us there. It was a kind of an observation plane. They had him on a loud speaker, and you could hear him, and he could talk English. So one of them pilots tried to talk to him on the radio, and all he'd say is "What's up, Doc?" so he shot him down. (laughter) He was trying to report our position and all to those other carriers. That was before we attacked the other carriers. That tickled all these sailors, "What's up, Doc?"

MZ: Was he repeating it over and over again?

LW: Yeah.

MZ: What's up, Doc? Okay.

LW: I guess he watched some of that on cartoons.

MZ: Probably. Do you ever remember seeing Admiral Spruance?

LW: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Admiral Spruance, you know, I watched them carry Halsey off, Admiral Halsey off of the ship in a stretcher when Admiral Spruance took his place for the Battle of Midway. They took him off right after we come back from the Coral Sea. I was back aft. I don't think I was on watch back there at the time, but I was just back aft killing time or something on the flight deck, and I watched them carry him off with a stretcher.

MZ: Was it known that he was sick?

LW: Yeah, he was sick. He had psoriasis. They said they gave him some oatmeal baths. I don't know what the oatmeal had to do with it.

MZ: Probably some ingredient to help soothe it.

LW: Might be, but that's what they were saying, that they were giving him oatmeal baths to help him with that psoriasis. And then --

(break in recording)

MZ: Okay, so you were saying about Admiral Spruance, that he what?

LW: He'd come up on the flight deck sometimes and exercise, you know, walking back and forth. I'd be on gun watch. A lot of the sailors, when they'd see him coming they'd duck into

a compartment or something, turn their head, you know, so they didn't have to be saluting him and everything. He didn't really want everybody saluting him. He'd wear his arm out (laughs), you know, saluting all the time. He'd come up on the flight deck there pretty regular. One time, during the Battle of Midway, I quit smoking and started chewing tobacco, and I made a mistake of spitting over the side of the gun tub, and that wind caught that and it went up and hit the admiral. (laughs)

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah. He'd come out on the [final?] day, the next day, no more tobacco chewing on gun watch. We had to go to the latrine to chew tobacco. (laughter) Or if you had something to put it in and throw it away, you could spit in a can or something, you know, and throw it in the trash, because you weren't allowed to throw anything overboard.

MZ: Did it have something to do with the Japanese finding out the location of the ship or a task group?

LW: Oh, a lot of times their submarines would spot them and report them. And then they had airplanes, observation airplanes, just like we did. We had I think they called them old C2s that the cruisers carried, and the crews would launch them a lot of times just right around the area, you know, where we would be. They didn't fly out as far as our

scout planes did. See, we had scout planes, bombing planes, and fighter planes, torpedo planes. We had the old TBMs, which were awful slow. During the Battle of Midway we lost all of our torpedo planes except four. The *Hornet* lost every one of theirs, Torpedo Squadron 8 off of the *Hornet*, they lost all of theirs, and they lost every one of their men on that torpedo squadron except Ensign Gay from Waco, Texas. Of course, later, after the war, he stayed up north somewhere, but originally he was from Waco. His nickname was Tex. That was my nickname, too.

MZ: Oh, really?

LW: Yeah. (laughs)

MZ: So Tex Warren?

LW: Yeah. That was my nickname in the Navy. Of course, my nickname in Round Rock was Peanut.

MZ: Peanut?

LW: Yeah. A lot of them didn't even know my first name.

MZ: Why Peanut?

LW: Well, that's another story. When I was about three years old, we lived out there in a log cabin, just pretty close to 183, which was Highway 29 at that time. It wasn't 183. It was Highway 29. It became 183 when they built Camp Hood, when they first built it as Camp Hood. It wasn't Fort Hood. Well, when they built Camp Hood up there at

Killeen, they changed that to US 183. But before then it was State Highway 29. My dad worked on it in 1929, when they was doing some paving. At one time the highway went between rock walls out there and had gates. When you can go through there, you'd have to close them gates. Some of them had cattle guards built with logs and stuff. But some of them had wire gaps. You'd go through there, and then you'd have to close that wire gap. But some of them would leave them open because they had them rock walls there where cattle couldn't get, you know, in the road. And it wasn't paved. It was old mud road. I tried one out in a buggy, going to my uncle [Nat's?] place when I was a young kid. I could barely, faintly remember that, going that in a buggy, down that old road there with that rock wall on each side. That was after they built 29, Highway 29.

MZ: I think, isn't part of it still -- I thought there was a 29 around here still.

LW: Well, 29 now runs; it comes on through Georgetown. It goes over and hits 95. But back then, before the war, that wasn't 29. They just called that Georgetown-Liberty Hill Road or something like that. But 29, they'd go from [Surrey Junction?] up through there, back before the war. But it also went down to the coast, 29 also went down to the coast, too, just like 183 goes now, down through

Refugio, Gonzales, Refugio. It's not pronounced like it's spelled. It's spelled sort of Refugio, but it's pronounced Refugio. I had an uncle that was stationed there during World War I.

MZ: Was there a camp out there?

LW: There must have been a camp somewhere in the area, because he was at Refugio during World War I.

MZ: Let's see. Was there anything else you'd like to add about Midway?

LW: Well, that was a pretty hard battle on our... The *Yorktown*, I didn't mention them. They lost all of their torpedo planes but two. I didn't mention that. The *Enterprise* lost all of them but four. The *Hornet*, you know, lost all of theirs. Our air group really caught more problems there at Midway than the *Enterprise* itself. Of course, the *Yorktown* was sunk there -- the old CV5 was sunk there. I seen it that evening when it left. It had about a 15 degree list on it that evening late, after it got hit, and I seen it. We went by it going I guess. I guess we were going to intercept some of the Japs to try to bomb some more of them, because there were some cruisers and destroyers that they were trying to bomb even after they sunk those carriers, all four of those carriers.

MZ: Did the *Enterprise* take on any planes from the *Yorktown*?

LW: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had planes from the *Yorktown* and some from the *Hornet* most, because they told them to land on any ship they could, because, you know, a lot of them were short on gas. A lot of ours were short on gas, because they didn't find the enemy right to start with. Actually they followed a destroyer is how the *Enterprise* found those carriers. They were -- the torpedo planes had already found them, but our bombers hadn't. They were kind of busy, the Zeros were down there kind of busy with the torpedo planes is one reason that our bombers got in to make the kills they did, [near enough?] to bomb those three carriers. *Enterprise* sunk two of them, and the *Yorktown* sunk the other one, of the three, and then the combined air groups sunk the fourth one. The *Enterprise* helped sink the fourth one.

MZ: Was this the first action that you got to, in your battery, fight fire?

LW: That was my first battle was the Battle of Midway, and then I had a little to do in all the rest of the battles till the end of the war. I received 18 battle stars.

MZ: You know, I forgot to ask you, because we skipped over -- we went from your enlistments to the ship that took you to Pearl Harbor. But where did you train and how did you end up performing the duty with the battery that you did?

LW: Well, I trained by just carrying a rifle at San Diego, from the 26th of February till about the 26th of March. We trained there at San Diego. Then they woke us up at midnight. We were sleeping in one of those deals right close to the San Diego Zoo. I think it was kind of a church or something there, some kind of a big building that we had bunks in there. Of course, we'd been in a camp at San Diego. It had wood up so high, and then they had ducking over the rest of it. That was our barracks. Then just before they shipped us out we moved up to that big building, the whole bunch that went with me. They come in there at midnight and woke us up and put us in buses, carried us to the train station and put us on a train, and we went up to San Francisco. Actually we went to -- they put us on buses again after we got up there to Oakland. Then they put us on buses and carried us over there to put us on the *Lurline*, the *S.S. Lurline*. We sat there in the harbor for a few days. That was the 26th when we left San Diego and went up there, the 26th of March. And then we had trained there in San Diego and took shots and all that kind of stuff, up until the time we left.

MZ: Okay. But in regards to your training for, like in the picture, when you're on the Quad 4, where did you -- well,

how did that come about? Did they train you in the United States?

LW: No, we trained on the ship, like I told you before. The airplane would tow that sleeve through there. That was our training. At Guadalcanal we had on-the-job training, so to speak. We were attacked by about 30 dive-bombers, and we had on-the-job training then. (laughs)

MZ: I guess at Midway, too, right?

LW: Well, at Midway we were never attacked, the *Enterprise* itself. Our air group had most of the work there at the Battle of Midway. About the only planes that come in toward us were snoops, snoopers that we called them. Our pilots shot them down, so the ship's crew didn't have to shoot any. We did shoot one of our own planes come in. It come in gliding like a lot of those Jap bombers. Some of them would come in and gliding, especially the torpedo planes. So this one come in out of the sky there a gliding. At that time they had that white star with a red circle in it. Well, that's what the Japs had was that red circle. It didn't take them long to paint them red circles white, because we shot that plane up, but we didn't knock it down before they got us stopped, you know, told us it was a friendly plane. But it did injure the rear seat gunner, you know. But they started painting those red

circles then, they started painting them white. They just had a white star.

MZ: Let's see. August of '42 I had read that the *Enterprise* had supported some amphibious landings in the East Solomons.

LW: Yeah, Guadalcanal was part of that Solomons. But we were in the Eastern Solomons whenever we got hit on August the 24th of 1942 by three bombs and four narrow misses that did damage below the waterline. I don't know if you have that.

MZ: Oh, I have it right here. I guess there were 77 killed and 91 wounded.

LW: Something like that. It was quite a few.

MZ: And it was below the waterline?

LW: Well, the narrow misses were below the waterline that did damage down below the waterline. But we got hit with three direct hits, bomb hits. And then we come into Pearl Harbor and went in dry dock at Pearl Harbor and got patched up. That was August 24th of '42 when we got hit there. We went back down there, and we was at Santa Cruz Island, which is -- I think it's part of the Solomon chain, because we went back down there around Guadalcanal and got hit again on October the 26th, October the 26th of 1942. We got hit that time by two direct bomb hits and about three narrow misses that did damage below the waterline. Of course, there was

a lot of other narrow misses, you know, but they didn't do damage like the three narrow misses did.

MZ: Right. Just going back to Guadalcanal for a moment. You said that that was where you got a lot of your on-the-job training.

LW: I was talking about shooting at Japs.

MZ: Right. What's that feel like? I mean, you have this plane that's coming towards the ship, and you're in this huge ocean. You've got someone trying to shoot at you, and now you're going to fire back. I mean, what's that like? What does it feel like?

LW: It's a little scary, but then you don't have time to get scared when you're busy loading ammunition or passing ammunition, which at that time I was passing ammunition. But on October the 26th I was loading then. I'd been advanced a little bit. But it's kind of scary. You look up and see them planes up there. (laughs) They look like a bunch of geese trying to form up to go on their journey, you know, and then they's -- but once you see them up in the sky there, then you don't have time to look at them anymore, because you're too busy.

MZ: Do you just kind of go into, oh, well, I've heard some people describe it as their training kicks in, that they get in a particular mode, like you said, and they don't

really have time to think about it and be scared. You just do your duty and you just keep going?

LW: You do your job (bangs table). Of course, I, at one time I did have a guy freeze in front of me. [He?] was supposed to be loading a gun when I was passing ammunition, so he froze in front of me, and I had to move him out of the way and load the gun myself, instead of passing ammunition. Of course, we had another fellow passing ammunition to me out of the ready room down there where we kept our ammunition down below the gun. I was on the elevated gun. Later that gun got hit and killed seven of the 2nd Division people, the division I was in, killed seven of them and wounded quite a few. Wounded some good friends of mine. Well, it killed some friends of mine, too. Of course, at the time we got hit, I'd been transferred to L Division. That was in 1945 though. I got transferred to L Division because they were training them on the 40mm guns, so they sent some of us from 2nd Division to L Division to train them on those 40mm guns. They'd added so many guns and everything that the 2nd Division didn't have enough personnel to man all of them.

MZ: Right. Is there anything else about Guadalcanal that you recall just generally about the battle?

LW: Well, we could see them over there shooting. We were sailing between Guadalcanal and [Tulagi?], because it was

kind of cloudy, and we were wanting to get in under those clouds where the Japs couldn't find us. Underneath the clouds you could see them shooting over there on Guadalcanal. We were that close.

MZ: There was a name I came across. It's okay if you do or don't remember it, but there was a Commander James Flatley. Does that ring a bell at all?

LW: James what?

MZ: Flatley. He was a --

LW: Oh, Jimmy Flatley, yeah. He was a pilot I believe on the *Yorktown* and *Enterprise*, too, or maybe the *Lexington*, I'm not sure. But he was on the *Enterprise* also.

MZ: I guess he was a leader of one of the fighter groups?

LW: Yeah.

MZ: The Grim Reapers?

LW: Yeah.

MZ: I thought that was kind of an interesting name. They called him the Reaper leader.

LW: Yeah. But I don't know if he was on the fighter group or the bombing group. It might have been the fighter group.

MZ: Yeah.

LW: But Jimmy Flatley, yeah.

MZ: It sounded like kind of a dangerous bunch for the Japanese.

LW: (laughs) Yeah, he was a pretty good pilot. Of course, they didn't want us socializing too much with the pilots, because then if they got killed and you'd become friends with them, then it would have an adverse effect on you. Of course, we lost friends anyway, you know.

MZ: That's true. Okay, so Midway. You go back to Pearl Harbor for repairs. It looks like you were there for about a month. So what do you do in Pearl Harbor? I mean, are you actually -- you and your battery weren't really helping with the repairs, or were you?

LW: Well, yeah, we was watching the welders, you know, in case of fire. We sat there with a fire extinguisher, with the welders. Matter of fact, I kind of got a deck court martial for going to sleep.

MZ: You just went to sleep?

LW: (laughs) Yeah. One of the commanders come by and put me on report. I wasn't even supposed to be on watch. I'd been ashore that day drinking beer and sat down there on that hot deal. I was sitting down there with my fire extinguisher and dozed off to sleep, which could have happened to anybody. It happened to a lot of the others, but they didn't get caught like I did. That was my mistake, was getting caught before I woke up. (laughs) A deck court martial, what they did is I think they took one

or two day's pay and confined me to the ship, you know. I couldn't go on liberty. We'd go out to Honolulu on liberty every other day, and every other day we'd have to stay aboard ship and pull duty. But I'd been on liberty that day and wasn't -- I was supposed to have been off duty for another four hours before I went on watch. But I was just a green kid back then, and the guy, the boatswain mate that went up to the captain's mast with me said, "Hell, they can shoot you for that." (laughs) You know, "They can put you before the firing squad for that." He had me scared [to death?]. He said, "You better plead guilty." He's the one that put me on that watch [that other time?].

MZ: Well, I guess they want to kind of get it through to you that, you know.

LW: I told him, you know, when he put me on that watch, I told him, I said, "I'm not supposed to be on watch for another four hours." "Oh, you go ahead and go do that watch." I never did get along with him after that. He made chief later. At that time he was a boatswain mate first class.

MZ: Was this -- well, let me ask it this way. When you were with 2nd Division, who was your -- did you have an officer that was your officer's charge, a supervisor?

LW: Yeah. When I went aboard it and went on that quad, well, the division officer was my Navy officer also on the quad, 40mm, a guy by the name of James V. Rouney.

MZ: James V. Rouney?

LW: Uh-huh, R-O-U-N-E-Y, James V. Rouney. He lived in California. I talked to him after they had that earthquake out there, and he said it drained all the water out of his swimming pool, cracked it, cracked his pool and drained all the water out.

MZ: A lot of water.

LW: I talked to him. But later he went to flight school to become a pilot. And then a guy by the name of Kenneth [Eck?], he lives in Lexington, Oregon, and he was my division officer later. Then I had another guy by the name of [LeGrande?]. It was one of them. But Eck was in charge. He was a lieutenant. This other guy was an ensign, LeGrande. And another guy by the name of [La Follett?].

MZ: La Follett?

LW: Yeah, Ensign Follett. Follett was his name I think, and his first name, I don't remember his first name, but his middle name was L-A.

MZ: L-A.

LW: La Follett. But his last name was Follett, F-O-L-L-E-T-T. He lived, I don't know where he lived at that time, but now he, last I heard of him he lived in Florida. I think LeGrande also lived in Florida. But I think they lived up north somewhere at that time though when they were in the Navy. One of them lived at Jacksonville, Florida. I can't really remember which one. I went to a reunion in 1997 at Melbourne, Florida, and I seen LeGrande there. I don't think I saw Follett there, so it must be LeGrande that lives at Jacksonville.

MZ: What else did you do in Pearl Harbor while repairs were being done? You'd go into --

LW: We'd go skating at a skating rink or go to watch TV and go swimming, out in the ocean. Sometimes we'd rent a surfboard and go out there and ride that surfboard back when those waves come in. That was a lot of fun. Of course, I'd lay down on it. (laughter) I might have tried to stand up a time or two, I don't know. Some of the things are kind of hard to remember. You might not want to put this in there, but they had a lot of prostitutes over there.

MZ: Well, I guess there was a lot of business with them.
(laughter)

LW: Yeah.

MZ: So you leave Pearl Harbor, and you head on out to, like you mentioned, the Battle of Santa Cruz. If I read right, it said that at that time that the *Enterprise* was the only carrier in the fleet in the entire Pacific?

LW: Yeah. Yeah. The *Saratoga* had got hit August the 31st of '42 off of Guadalcanal, and the *Wasp* had got sunk on September the 15th of '42, while we were in dry dock from getting hit August the 24th. Of course, they didn't have the new carriers then. They didn't come out till '43.

MZ: So I guess it's when the *Hornet* gets sunk.

LW: Yeah, the *Hornet* got sunk October the 26th.

MZ: I had read that somebody hung a sign from -- I'm not sure if it was the bridge -- that said something like "*Enterprise* versus Japan."

LW: Yeah.

MZ: I thought that was interesting.

LW: Yeah. Yeah. Getting back to the Battle of Midway, one of them ordinance men was loading them bombs on, and took a piece of chalk and wrote on there "Tojo, might as well sell your outhouse, because you done lost your rear end." But he put it in plain English. (laughter)

MZ: It's those little subtle messages to the Japanese. Well, you'd say morale was pretty good?

LW: Pardon?

MZ: Would you say that morale was pretty good?

LW: Oh, yes. Yes. Yeah, that was teamwork on the *Enterprise*. That's one reason it was never sunk. It was a lot of teamwork, and our helmsman maneuvering the ship when we were under attack. The people, the lookouts, letting them know where the bombs were coming down and everything. It was just, it was teamwork is the reason we were never sunk. Of course, we was hit. And then another thing is our captains and admirals would launch our planes when we would pick up the enemy on radar, so we wouldn't have a bunch of airplanes on deck with all the ammunition and gasoline and everything, where if we did get hit we wouldn't have the fires that some of them did have, like the *Franklin*. The *Franklin* had all those planes on deck loaded with gasoline and bombs and everything. They had about 32 explosions on there. I was watching them. I could see them, cause it was over close to the horizon from us, but I could see those explosions and everything going up.

MZ: Did you think it was going to go down, the *Franklin*?

LW: Well, I don't see how it kept from it really, with all those explosions. It killed over 700.

MZ: Yeah, I've read a little bit about it.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: I'm curious, did you have like a damage-control function, should the *Enterprise* be in the same situation?

LW: We had damage-control personnel. Matter of fact, the guy that was gun captain when I went aboard, that was one of his jobs. Two of them actually, they had made chief, and they were in charge of damage control when we'd get hit. One of them, he was from Rhode Island. We called him [Gabby?] -- [Gabera?]. His last name was Gabera, and he married a girl from Texas and lived down close to Houston when he passed away. I corresponded with him and talked to him on the phone. But he and his wife and I think his daughter has passed away, too. He lived in California for a while, but then his wife had property down there, and she wanted to move back to Texas, so he moved down there. He was working at one of those sawmills that made plywood and stuff like that. Georgia Pacific was who he was working for.

MZ: And so he was like chief for damage --

LW: He was chief petty officer.

MZ: But damage control for like that section of the ship?

LW: Yeah, for wherever we got hit, maybe, if they could get to it. Of course, they had different chiefs that were in charge of damage control and even some warrant officers.

Matter of fact, I think both of them might have made warrant officer before the end of the war.

MZ: But if they needed extra hands, I mean, and they came to you and then your battery -- was it just what they would tell you to do, or did you have like a specific assignment, for example, fire hose or something?

LW: No, they didn't get nobody off of the guns. No, we manned the guns, period. We had cleaning stations when we weren't around the battle area, but when we were at general quarters we stayed on those guns. We might send somebody down to the galley to get a bucket full of spaghetti or something like that to eat, or go down and get K rations or something like that. We might send one of our passers down to get it. But the personnel that really manned the gun and everything and did all the shooting, we stayed on the gun all the time.

MZ: Even all the time that the ship was out to sea, there was always somebody there?

LW: Yeah. Well, yeah, on gun watch. We had four sections. You'd stand four hours on and four hours off. At night that four hours is off, you could sleep. Even on gun watch, you stood watch, lookout, for one hour at a time. Even the gun captain. When I was gun captain I stood lookout. Even after I was battery officer I stood lookout.

I only had about five men under me when I was battery officer on a [twin mount?]. Of course, I had a gunner's mate, too, that was there with me, taking care of cleaning the gun and making sure it was operating all right and everything. But you had those four watches there. The second and the fourth section would take watches for four hours, then they'd be relieved by the first and third section for gun watches, on the same gun. I was battery officer on a twin 40, but I stood my gun watches on a quad 40mm.

One time when we were underway, landing aircraft, there were six of us standing watch on a gun, and there was one guy standing there that was a fire control man that used to be in the same division before he went to fire control division. We were standing there talking and looking, watching them land the airplanes. Well, this TBF come in and missed the tail hook and landed on top of us and caught afire. They shoved it overboard with them three people still in it. Had to, because if it had made all that ammunition and everything start catching afire and blowing up, there'd have been a lot of damage. But all three of them got out. It hit the water and then come right back up, so they all got out. But I run into the two lookouts

and knocked them down. If I hadn't, it would have killed both of them. I never told nobody that much until I got out of the service.

MZ: So you pretty much saved their lives.

LW: Yeah, a couple of them. They were on lookout and didn't see what was happening. It cracked one of them's rib a little bit, but it would have cracked more than his rib if I hadn't a knocked him down. (laughter) I don't know if I was scared, or I just thought at the last minute to do that or what. But anyway, I knocked them down and fell down myself, and that plane landed on top of us and then went in the water. They said they shoved it overboard. Now, I thought it just fell over myself, but some of them told me later that they shoved it overboard. I don't know whether I believe all that or not, because I think it just, from the momentum of the plane I think when it hit on the gun mount, that it went over. It damaged the gun and everything. They had to do some welding.

MZ: Well, you know, I think sometimes happened in such a quick fashion.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: If you're standing in different areas, you kind of see them differently.

LW: Well, myself, I wouldn't know, because I was down under the thing, and I really wouldn't know what went on.

MZ: Really. You know, you said that (inaudible) the ship took three hits, and at Santa Cruz it took two. What does that feel like? I mean, there are a lot of these movies -- they're all bombing all sorts of things.

LW: It jars the ship when them things goes off. Even when that kamikaze had us on May the 14th of 1945, getting ahead a little bit, it jarred the ship pretty good. A piece of that Jap plane hit me on the leg. I still got a knot there where it hit me. But I never did turn that in either.

MZ: I guess anything that hits the ship with such force, I mean, everyone, the whole ship's going to feel it.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: I mean, you think of the ship being so large, but --

LW: Yeah, you can feel the jar. It jars it pretty good. That kamikaze hit us, it blowed our elevator 400 foot in the air. Our forward elevator, where they carry airplanes up and down.

MZ: That was pounds of metal flying around, not knowing where it's going to land.

LW: That's the picture I gave you.

MZ: Yes. Yeah, I read that, too. Wow. Let's see. So after the damage at Santa Cruz you pull into Noumea, New Caledonia, for repairs?

LW: Yeah, after Santa Cruz we went to Noumea, New Caledonia. It was a French island, had a bunch of French people on it.

MZ: What was that like?

LW: Well, it was a pretty good liberty. It was interesting to go in there and talk to some of those French people. Some of them could talk a little English. Some of them would get in trouble. They told us some of them would get in trouble over in France, and they'd send them to that island. (laughter) But they had a lot of girls on there, too, you know. You can cut some of this out if you have to. But they had a line a mile long. (laughs)

MZ: Well, that's a lot of men. How many men were there on the *Enterprise*?

LW: They say when they were pretty well loaded they had about 2,800 plus the air groups.

MZ: The air groups and like their mechanics and so forth?

LW: Aviation, machinist mates, yeah, and aviation ordinance men. The aviation ordinance men are the ones that loaded the bombs and stuff. And the machinist mates would work on it. They had aviation mechanics, too, that worked on the planes. A lot of those guys were assigned to a certain

plane, and they would take care of fueling it, ammunition. Of course, the ordinance men would do the ammunition part of it. But they had guys that would make sure that plane was ready for that pilot to take off, where all he had to do is get in it, check all his compasses and stuff like that, and then one of them signalmen who was an aviation -- he may be an ordinance man that made chief or first class or something like that, and he would wave that deal. When he did that, that pilot [would?] take off.

MZ: What was I going to ask? I understand that I guess the Japanese were making some thrusts back into the Solomon Islands, so the *Enterprise* has to leave New Caledonia while it's still under repair?

LW: Yeah, we had to leave with that ship [fettters?] and everything on it.

MZ: So they were just working away as --

LW: They was still working on it whenever we went back on the 16th of November. We went back down there around Guadalcanal. That was in '42. The Japs were trying to retake it, and we were the only carrier left down there at that time.

MZ: That's a lot of --

LW: And we were damaged pretty good. They had sheets hung up between the officers -- it got hit in the officers' section, and we had sheets hanging up there.

MZ: That's a lot of duty for one carrier.

LW: Yeah. Well, you know, we had help from Guadalcanal itself. They had marine pilots and some Navy pilots that were stationed on Guadalcanal. Of course, we had help from them.

MZ: From like it's Henderson Field?

LW: Yeah.

MZ: Okay. Let's see. So these repair parties, they were seabees?

LW: Well, not on the ship. The repair parties on the island were Seabees, construction battalion.

MZ: I had heard, or I had read --

(break in recording)

MZ: Okay.

LW: Where were we?

MZ: Oh, I guess we were talking about the damage that the *Enterprise* received. You said that was when one of the forward elevators got hit?

LW: Oh, well, that was in 1945. I just got ahead of myself a little there.

MZ: Okay. All right, well, now I recall. Do you remember what the name of the ship's captain was?

LW: Name of what?

MZ: The name of the ship's captain?

LW: I've got a list of those names somewhere, but I don't know... I got so many books; it would take a little time to find it.

MZ: Does Hardison ring a bell?

LW: Yeah, Captain Hardison, yeah.

MZ: Okay. Yeah, like I said, I was reading, and it just happened to mention that he was captain right after, well, I guess during Santa Cruz, and New Caledonia, and when you went back to the Solomons.

LW: Yeah. Before him I believe it might have been S. P. Ginder, Captain S. P. Ginder.

MZ: Ginder.

LW: Ginder was the captain when we got the presidential unit citation, on May the 27th, 1943 in Pearl Harbor. We were on our way to dry dock, because the *Essex* had come out to relieve us.

MZ: Right. I had read that.

LW: And some of the *Essex* carriers had gone out and come out, plus the *Essex*.

MZ: There were a little bit bigger than the *Enterprise*, weren't they?

LW: Yes, they were.

MZ: Okay. Do you remember, I ran across this name, and he was the damage control officer. It was Lt. Commander Herschel Albert Smith.

LW: Yeah, Lt. Smith, yeah. Yeah. He's the one that gave me a talking to one time. (laughs)

MZ: Not because of the falling asleep, was it?

LW: Well, no. We were down there at Espiritu Santo in New Hebrides Islands. I was running a boat. I was running a LCVP that had a ramp on the front of it. I was carrying a work party over on the island, the Espiritu, and they were clearing off a lot of stuff there and making a recreation area. That was before a lot of the other people come in there from different places. Matter of fact, later on I had a brother-in-law that was stationed there on that Espiritu Santo. I think the way he said it, you know, but that's the way we always said it. He called Espiritu or something like that, but we all called it "Espiritu Santos."

MZ: Okay. That works.

LW: I carried this work party over there, and they were slow getting off, and the tide went out, and that boat I was

running was sitting up on dry land. Then that Lt. Commander, I don't remember if it was Smith at that time, but later on another [incident?] Smith kind of got on me. But anyway, that evening when the tide started coming back in, they had to send about 20 men over there with a rope and hook on that boat and pull it back in the water (laughs) for me to [send?] it back. But they didn't say a word to me about it. They confined that officer to his quarters that was in charge of that work party. Because I kept telling him, "Sir, you need to get these men off so I can get out, because the tide's going out." I told him that more than once. It probably made him mad, I don't know. But he cooled down when they confined him to quarters. (laughs) That was one incident. But another incident I was running an admiral's barge, and I carried the admiral over to the battleship *Texas*. That was later on, after the *Texas* come around to the Pacific side. I was carrying the admiral over to the *Texas*, and we were tied up there at Pearl Harbor. I was supposed to put this barge in there where we had a deal, I forget what they call them, a [flint?] or a skid or something there where the ship wouldn't hit the dock when the boats and stuff come by and cause waves. Anyway, when I started to put that barge in there, a boat come by and made that ship come over there

and mashed that barge. Commander Smith -- I think at that time he was a Lt. Commander -- he jumped on me about it. He said, "That's the reason a cat's got them feelers. So he'll know not to go through a place like he can't get through there." He didn't know exactly what happened about the ship or something coming along there caused that wave, was the reason it got smashed. But anyway, he got on me about that. But they had other barges. You had to get those. When we come in port, you had to get those barges and stuff out of the deal they had where they kept a lot of those things, you know, for different officers and stuff, captain's [gig?] and admiral's barge.

MZ: Do you recall what admiral that was?

LW: I don't -- oh, yeah, that was J. W. Reeves.

MZ: J. W. Reeves.

LW: "Black Jack" Reeves, we called him.

MZ: Oh, okay. I recall the name. J. W. Reeves.

LW: I believe he was one maybe at that time. I used to carry him fishing when we was down there in Marshall Islands, after we took them over from the Japs. I'd carry him fishing. It might have been -- it was either Marshall Islands or Gilbert Islands, I'm not sure. It was at Kwajalein, whichever chain that Kwajalein's in. I would carry him fishing in an admiral's barge. They had barges

scattered all around the Pacific, you know, after we would take over an island, to carry them admirals between ships and stuff like that. But he would be trolling right at the edge of a coral reef, trying to catch redfish. He done pretty good. But he'd sit back there on the back of that boat in a lawn chair. He'd tell me, "Slow it down a little," (inaudible), or "Speed it up a little."

MZ: Well, I guess even an admiral has to do some relaxing.

LW: That was Black Jack Reeves that I carried fishing all the time.

MZ: Interesting. Let's see. What is next on here? Okay, well, after Espiritu Santos, let's see, I hadn't heard of this one. The Battle of Rennell Island? I think it was one of the last battles in the Guadalcanal campaign.

LW: It's possible. I don't remember if [Truk?] was in that or not, but one of the battles that we had was Truk Island, where a lot of the Japs would fly from Truk to try to sink us with torpedo planes and stuff. See, we went in. We were in 20 campaigns, but we were in 40 something battles, you know, but you might have two or three battles in one campaign. Like when we were down around Guam, just about every evening there'd be four or five or six torpedo planes come in and try to sink us, just about every evening around

sundown. We'd shoot them down. What the pilots didn't get, we would.

MZ: About how many planes do you think your battery shot down?

LW: Oh, it would be hard to say, because everybody that could was shooting at it. We had automatic stops on there where you couldn't shoot any part of the ship. The last plane that hit us, that kamikaze that hit us on the 14th of May, I couldn't shoot at it when it was coming in. I shot at it a little bit, but they stopped us from shooting at it with the 40s because it was out of range. That thing come in on the starboard side of the ship, which is the right hand side. It come in over there at midship, and we started shooting at it. Next it'd come in back aft, but they'd already stopped the 40s, and told the five-inch guns to shoot at it, because they had radar control, and we didn't. So the five-inch guns were shooting at it when it come in, back out even. Then it come around, just after the port side, a little aft. A lot of them will tell you it come in astern, but it didn't do that. It come in right just a little, a very little bit aft of the midship's on the port side. I couldn't shoot at it, because there was a crane right in front of me, and those automatic stops wouldn't let me shoot at it at all.

MZ: Okay. Now is this the first kamikaze or the second?

LW: That was -- well, they'd had kamikazes before that tried to crash us, but that's the first one that hit us, the first one that hit and did that kind of damage. We'd had -- even off of Guadalcanal there, we had one that come in. I think it was off of Guadalcanal, but I'm not sure, but one come in, and that wing hit the side of the ship. A wing flew up and caught afire, caught a -- we had a fighter plane on a catapult, and it caught that fighter plane afire. So they shot that thing off, with the catapult. Part of the motor stuck in the ship off of that Jap plane. But the wing come up and set that afire. The plane was on fire when it hit the ship, but they put it out, you know, the fire control man. Well, not the fire control man, the --

MZ: Damage control?

LW: Yeah, damage control and stuff like that put it out. You kind of get confused on fire control men. The fire control men took care of the automatic part of the guns, like those directors, like the director there that I had my hand on. See, I had my hand on them knobs that I turned for elevation, variation, deviation, and anything like that I needed when I'd watch that tracer.

MZ: Let's see. All right. You told me about the presidential unit citation, and that was at Pearl Harbor?

LW: Yeah. We got it at Pearl Harbor.

MZ: Was that Admiral Nimitz that presented that?

LW: Admiral Nimitz presented it on behalf of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

MZ: I think I read something about being the first carrier to ever receive it.

LW: Right, and the only carrier to receive that and the Navy commendation, the Navy unit commendation.

MZ: I can imagine, I mean, the battles and the citation, and the Navy commendation, that the crew, well, I imagine you're pretty proud of all that.

LW: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MZ: Especially being the only carrier for a while.

LW: See that hat?

MZ: Yes, I do.

LW: It's got that on it.

MZ: Wow. Okay, the Asia Pacific Campaign medal?

LW: I think, yeah.

MZ: This one says Liberty on it.

LW: Well, that is the [LP?] Liberation.

MZ: Oh, okay.

LW: That's why it says liberation.

MZ: Do you know all these by heart, all the different ribbons?

LW: No, I'll have to think a minute. This is the Asiatic Pacific with the 16 stars in it.

MZ: Sixteen?

LW: Yeah. And this has got two more battle stars. That's the Philippine liberation bar with two more.

MZ: And the one with the gold around it is the Presidential Citation?

LW: Right, Presidential Citation with a blue star. Now, everybody didn't get that blue star.

MZ: Why is it blue?

LW: Well, I was on there when we received it, and I was on there for the battles that we received it for. Anybody that come on later could wear it, but they didn't have the blue star.

MZ: The one with the stars and the stripes on it, I've never seen that ribbon before.

LW: Well, that is the dedication of the memorial in Washington, DC. One of the band members that was there for that ceremony wore that, and then they sent it to me.

MZ: That's very nice. Wow. Let's see. So after you get the Presidential Unit Citation for the ship, it goes back to Puget Sound for an overhaul?

LW: Yeah. Yeah, that's right. We got in there about the 20th of July I believe.

MZ: Okay. So you're there for about three months.

LW: Yeah. Everybody got a 30-day leave. The second section and the fourth section got the first leave, and then the first and third section got the next leave, after we got back.

MZ: How was it to come back to the States? I mean, you've been, I mean, thinking about it, you've been in New Caledonia, you've met these French people, you've been in battle, you've seen a lot of things that, well, before you left you hadn't seen before. So how is it to get back to the States?

LW: It was pretty nice. (laughs) There were times when you didn't think you were going to make it back. Yeah. Several times when you didn't think you were going to make it back. Of course, we got another leave later on, after we got hit. On May the 14th we had to come back to the dry dock again in Bremerton, on May the 14th of '45. See, we were in dry dock when the war ended, getting patched up. The only way we could launch planes was to shoot them off with our catapult, and they had so many new carriers down there then that they didn't need us really. Some of the admiral and the captain wanted to stay there. [It was?] why we got hit. They said, "You know, we can still launch planes and land them. We can stay here." But they were

outranked by some higher ups, higher than they were, Admiral King or Admiral Nimitz. Probably Nimitz.

MZ: Okay. Well, so did you come all the way back to Texas for your leave?

LW: Yes. Yeah. I had a 30-day leave. Actually it wasn't a leave the second time. They called it a rehabilitation leave. I wasn't -- as a matter of fact they didn't penalize me for that leave. They did the first 30-day leave. But see, at the end of the war they paid us for any leave we had coming and didn't get to take, they paid us for it later years, after the war.

MZ: Well, okay. Well, I guess that makes sense, I mean, because you were -- had you ever thought of staying in, or were you pretty set on getting out?

LW: No, I hadn't given any thought to stay in. They tried to get me to. They were going to advance me up another notch in rate if I'd stay in and help train some of the new ones, but I told them I hear Texas calling. (laughs) I wanted to come home. I never gave it any thought. Then I didn't join the reserves on account of when I went to work for Texas Power & Light, one day I might be working out of Dallas somewhere, the next day I might be working in Taylor, Texas. The next day I might be in Tyler, Texas, or the next day I might be out in Stephenville, Texas, West

Texas. So, you know, I was on floating construction. They would send our crew wherever they needed us. I had built the high line up there for Lake Whitney.

MZ: The what line?

LW: The transmission line for Lake Whitney. We had to move our transmission line out of some of the places, when they was building the dam, that would be under water, so we had to build a complete new line from Meridian to Whitney, then from Whitney to Hillsboro. We built a complete new line and put in heavier wire. We took out some old [four ought?] aluminum wire and put in some 336 wire. Then later they come out with some 795 wire that was even bigger than that for high lines, for transmission lines, which we referred to as high lines, you know, transmission lines. Of course, I worked on distribution and transmission.

MZ: So all the moving around, it wasn't really a feasible idea to be a reservist?

LW: Yeah. I went to work up there for Texas Power & Light April the 4th of 1946. Then I married a girl from Dallas December the 14th, 1946. My two boys were born in Dallas, and then along about July of 1946 I quit Texas Power & Light and went to the city of Austin. Then I went to work August the 4th of 1946 for the city of Austin. I worked here in Georgetown a little while for the electric, you

know, and down there at the Austin, I went to work. They was only paying a dollar and a half here for a lineman, and they was paying \$1.75 in Austin, so I got a quarter raise by going to Austin. Then I wasn't there very long until we got a raise to about \$2 an hour or something. Well, no, a 96 I believe, raised from \$1.75 to \$1.96. A pretty good raise back then.

MZ: Twenty cents, yeah, I've heard.

LW: That was August the 24th that I went to work, August the 4th that I went to work for them, 1954, and I worked there until April the 29th, when I retired, 1983. Over 28 years.

MZ: That's a long time to be with one company. You don't hear of that anymore, or at least not so much.

LW: Well, I had eight years and four months for Texas Power & Light, but 28 years and eight or nine months with the city of Austin, doing electric work. I was the supervisor when I retired. I had a crew working for me. I had one, two, three, four, four vehicles under me. I had a truck that I drove. Actually it was a pickup. It had the beds and everything on it, the bins where you put tools and stuff. Then I had a hydraulic lift gate where I could load transformers on it and take them wherever I needed them. Then I had two bucket, what we call bucket trucks.

MZ: Oh, the [arming?] center that could [arm?].

LW: Yeah. I had two of them. One of them started with gas and then switched over to propane. Then I had what I called a brush truck that I carried my wire and stuff like that, and tools, carried different kinds of equipment on it that we might need, on that brush truck, that cross arms and stuff like that.

MZ: Right. Okay. Okay, after you leave Puget Sound in '43, I'd read that the *Enterprise* supports the landings, or provides air cover for the 27th Infantry Division, which is landing on Makin Atoll.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: Anything come to mind with Makin Atoll?

LW: Makin and Tarawa, around in there. But those things like that didn't ring much of a bell to me, you know. They were kind of secondary to Guadalcanal and Guam and Tinian and Saipan, you know. They were kind of secondary to that. It was just kind of a mop-up deal really on those. Of course, we'd get attacked a lot of times by maybe one or two planes. A lot of times they'd come out at night, and they'd try to mess up our radar by dropping a bunch of tinfoil and stuff.

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah. Try to mess up our radar. We started night fighting later on during the war.

MZ: Yeah, I had heard that, begins night operations. Yeah, it was, what, November of '43 that it says the *Enterprise* begins night operations.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: So what was that like?

LW: Well, it wasn't any change much to us. We stood our watches the same, our gun watches. Of course, sometimes they would get us up in the middle of the night if we were off for the four hours. They'd call us to general quarters when they'd pick up some old enemy planes, but that was about the only change for us. But for some of the pilots, you know, it was a lot different. That's when we lost Butch O'Hare. That O'Hare Airport in Chicago was named after him. That's when we lost him, on that night-fighting deal, pretty well along about the time it first started. They seemed to think maybe that one of our own planes might have shot him down thinking it was a Japanese.

MZ: Yeah, I've heard that.

LW: It's a possibility, you know, that something like that could have happened.

MZ: O'Hare didn't fly off the *Enterprise*, did he?

LW: Pardon?

MZ: Was O'Hare --

LW: Yeah, he was on the *Enterprise* when he got killed, yeah.

MZ: Yeah, I've heard --

LW: He'd been on the *Lexington*. That's where he got the Medal of Honor, off the *Lexington*, you know, when it got sunk in the Coral Sea. He shot down several Jap planes in the Coral Sea Battle. But he was on the *Enterprise* whenever he got killed.

MZ: When the *Enterprise* would support landings like on Kwajalein or Makin, was the island usually in sight at all? I mean, even a speck in the distance?

LW: Not really. About the only ones that we could really see there was when we was between Tulagi and Guadalcanal, and then later on in the war when we were down there off of Japan we could see, you know, we could see Japan. We were down there in April, you know, landing on -- they landed on Okinawa in April. We were 30 miles off of Japan there at one time, down there in April, and it was snowing, just like, like it's a snow out on the ocean, in April. I don't know how their winters run, but...

MZ: I've never thought of it snowing on open sea.

LW: Oh, yeah. But we could see I guess it was Japan. It might have been Okinawa, I don't know, but you could see kind of a mountain deal, wherever it was. Some of them said it was Japan. We were bombing Japan at that time and Okinawa, too. Of course, they landed, you know, April the 1st on

Okinawa. I had a cousin that was killed there on May the 1st on Okinawa, and he was in the Army. He wasn't in the marines. So, you know, what they say about the marines landing on all them islands is not true, because a lot of the other ones was Army personnel, too.

MZ: Right. No, I've heard that, too. Either way it was a terrible fight for both. I'll put out some names, and if you recall something, that's fine. If you don't, that's okay, too. Kwajalein?

LW: Kwajalein, we used that for our harbor a lot of times. That's where I carried Admiral Reeves fishing a lot was Kwajalein.

MZ: Was it like a big atoll?

LW: No, it was just kind of an island, but it had a good harbor there where you could -- kind of a horseshoe-shaped deal for going in there to drop anchor.

MZ: Right, okay.

LW: So we didn't have a place to tie up to. We dropped anchor in there in that place. Of course, we did that in the harbor there at Espiritu, too, and [Orey?] -- Orey Island was there in the New Hebrides, right across the harbor was Orey Island. We'd go over there sometimes and go in a cave there. There was a cave over there full of bats (laughter), and we'd go over there and walk in that cave

and look around. Then we'd go over there -- we'd go over there on Orey Island, too, for beer parties sometimes. They'd give you two beers.

MZ: Is it true it was kind of a watered-down type of beer?

LW: No, it was regular beer. We'd get Pearl beer, made in San Anton.

MZ: Is it still made today?

LW: No, Pearl Brewery sold out to some outfit in Olympia, Washington. I don't know if they even make Pearl anymore. I'm not sure. They might. Then there was Grand Prize Beer that was made in Galveston.

MZ: Grand Prize?

LW: Yeah. Then there was Southern Comfort. Southern Comfort was another beer. There was a beer that was made in New Orleans. I can't remember the name of it. It had a horse on it. They said that's the only beer with a picture of the brewery on it. (laughter) They used to kid around and stuff like that.

MZ: Let's see. Truk?

LW: Truk Island. Yeah, we bombed it for quite a bit there. Like I said earlier, you know, Truk was where the Japs launched a lot of their attacks from Truk. That was one of their main deals for trying to sink ships and everything,

launching planes from Truk. We bombed it quite a bit there.

MZ: I bet there was some -- was the first night radar bombing on Truk?

LW: Yeah, I believe it was Truk where they went in there at night and caught some ships in the harbor and sunk them, five or six ships. The *Enterprise* did that at night.

MZ: Let's see. I haven't heard of this one. Jaluit Atoll.

LW: Huh?

MZ: It looks like it says Jaluit Atoll.

LW: Oh, [Jeriat?]?

MZ: That's the way it's spelled?

LW: Jeriat Atoll. That's the way we pronounced it. Of course, you know, it was probably pronounced different ways, but we called it Jeriat.

MZ: Okay. Anything about that?

LW: Not really. We probably bombed it, you know, and it had Japs on it. They might have landed troops on it. We'd go in and bomb those places three or four days, you know, before they'd land on them. Sometimes more than that. Like at Iwo Jima, we bombed that thing day and night, too, for a long time. We had -- even as a night carrier, we still flew daytime flights, too, bombing flights.

MZ: Hollandia?

LW: Hollandia. Yeah. We were around Hollandria [sic], too. Matter of fact, that brother just younger than me, I think he landed some troops on Hollandria. He landed troops on Jeriat, Hollandria, Leyte, and Okinawa. When he landed troops on Okinawa, the guy next to him was having trouble getting his ramp back up after he let them troops off, and he went over to help him. And it was a guy that he went in the service with. There was another guy come over from the other side to help him, and there's another guy that he went in the service with, that he'd gone to school with, both of them. Of course, I knew both of them myself. My brother had run across them. He was in the amphibious, my brother just younger than I am, the one that lives in Albuquerque. He just lost his wife this last year, and he's got Parkinson's disease himself. My dad died with Parkinson's.

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah, and my oldest brother.

MZ: I'm sorry.

LW: Of course, people live a lot longer with it nowadays. My dad wasn't but 78 years old when he died. But my oldest brother, he had it, too, and he was 85. But now this brother, let's see, he was born in 1925 in a log cabin.

MZ: Log cabin.

LW: Yeah. We lived in a log cabin in 1925 out off of 620. I was born back toward Round Rock where we lived when he was born. A lot of that property out there belonged to my great uncle, a fellow by the name of Jim Walton, James Alexander Walton. Even where that Pond Springs Cemetery is, that's part of my great uncle, Jim Walton's place. I don't know if you're familiar with that. Across the street over there is a Walmart.

MZ: You mean just down the road here?

LW: Out off of 620.

MZ: Off of 620.

LW: Out at Round Rock. Go out of Round Rock on 620, out past Beck Funeral Home and all out. You know where Beck Funeral Home is out there?

MZ: Yes.

LW: I [knew?] old Eugene Beck when he was a little kid.
(laughs)

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah. I've known him a long time. He and his wife run that funeral home.

MZ: Oh, they're very successful.

LW: Pardon?

MZ: He's been very successful.

LW: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

MZ: Let's see. Battle of the Philippine Sea.

LW: Yeah, that was when they had that turkey shoot. Just about all the carriers were kind of involved in that, you know. Some of them claimed they shot them; all 400 and something down, but about all the carriers were involved in that. That's the reason they shot down 400 and something, because one carrier is not going to shoot down that many planes.

MZ: I suppose you had an opportunity to fire your weapon during that. I mean, the Japanese did attack the fleet at some point, or attempted to.

LW: Well, you know, that happened when we were out around Guam, Saipan [and Tinian?] happened. Like I said earlier, about every evening around sundown we'd have torpedo planes come in trying to launch torpedoes at us. Of course, we never had too many of them get close enough, because we'd shoot them down, or our screeners, our screening ships would shoot them down before they'd ever get to us. But if any of them ever got through, then we'd shoot them down. They never had much luck on that.

MZ: I am sure you must remember when, well, [I don't mention there?], was the *Enterprise* Mitscher's flagship?

LW: No, he was on the *Yorktown*, and then later he went on a battleship and directed everything from the battleship. Marc Mitscher, I think. No, he wasn't on the *Lexington*, I

don't think. He was on the *Lexington* at the Coral Sea, and then he was on it for the Battle of Midway. Of course, you know, it got sunk in the Battle of Midway. Then he come back out. If I'm not mistaken, he was on a cruiser for a while, directing everything from a cruiser. And then later he went back on one of the carriers, and I think he was on the -- not the *Franklin*. Oh, I can't remember the name of the one he was on. *Bunker Hill*. Later he was on the *Bunker Hill*, and when it got hit he come over to the *Enterprise*, and we got hit three days later. So then he went back on some other ship, I don't know exactly which one.

MZ: Do you remember when they were trying to -- I guess he sends an air strike out in the afternoon, and they're starting to recover in the evening. Do you remember what that was like?

LW: Oh, yeah. Yeah, everything run pretty smooth. Most of the pilots we had were pretty good at landing, and everything run pretty smooth. They'd come in and their tail hook would catch those [rested gears?]. Sometimes we'd have one that would miss it, and we had crash barriers up, you know. They had cables that run across the flight deck that raised up about six foot high, cables, and they would run into that, and they'd have to repair it or toss it overboard,

whichever one was the best sometime. We carried a lot of extra parts up in the overhead on the hangar deck. They would let some of those parts down. They had them rigged to where they could hoist them up or let them down. We had a hoist that run back and forth on the hangar deck, through the middle of the hangar deck, and they could pick airplanes up and put them up there, lash it down.

MZ: Do you remember when the lights, all the lights in the fleet came on?

LW: Oh, yeah.

MZ: What did that look like?

LW: Oh, that was pretty nice. We enjoyed it, even though there might have been a sub in the area. We enjoyed it, because them pilots were about to run out of gas and everything. Matter of fact, seemed to me like maybe some of them did have to ditch their plane, couldn't make a landing, didn't have enough gas. But they'd get -- usually they'd get picked up. You know, they'd make a water landing, and they had their raft that they could inflate, and they had those what we called a Mae West life jacket, and they'd inflate those. A lot of times they'd -- most of the time they'd pick up that pilot like that when they run out of gas.

MZ: Did you see any [things?] like that in the water?

LW: Oh, yeah. I was right there where I could see it all the time. I was on the gun watch. They had general quarters a lot of times when something like that was taking place.

MZ: Did you see very many ditch?

LW: Oh, yeah, quite a few. Yeah, quite a few of them. Some of them would never make it back to the ship and have to ditch, and they'd send out a plane maybe from one of those cruisers to try to pick them up, float planes.

MZ: Right, with the pontoons on the bottom.

LW: Yeah. But then a lot of times submarines would pick them up. If there wasn't any Japs in the area, a lot of times those submarines would be on the surface. They would dive if they picked up something on their radar.

MZ: Right. So, well, I guess, what, after the Philippine Sea, then the return to Pearl Harbor? Yeah, after battle, yeah.

LW: Oh, I guess. We were in and out of there several times, you know, to pick up supplies and stuff. Of course, we would get supplies a lot of times at Espiritu Santos, when we were battling around Guadalcanal. Then later we'd get supplies at Noumea. They'd send supplies to Noumea when we were in there. There would be a lot of ships around Noumea, getting repairs. They had regular construction people there that would patch up on the ships and stuff.

MZ: Did you ever see any of these -- someone had told me about there were like these floating platforms that would lift the ship up literally out of the water, and the ship would just sit in it so they could work on I guess areas below the -- [02:22:34]

(audio fades out)

MZ: -- transcriber. Okay. So we were talking about those devices. I'm not sure what they were called. Did you ever see them?

LW: Oh, well, what we did, you know, when we went over to Noumea, after we got hit there October the 26th of '42, they would pump oil and gasoline in the [opposite?] tank on the opposite side of the ship and throw a list on it. Then they had some underground welders, all undersea welders also, that could weld under the water. But they would do that to help them, you know. And they had platforms that they could get on to weld after they put a list on it. But that's how they patched us up there at Noumea, was throw a list on the ship. And then when they'd get through patching that side, they'd pump that back and throw a list on the other side and move that pontoon around to the other side for welding.

MZ: Interesting. I've never heard of that.

LW: Yeah. That's what we did there at Noumea. See, they'd bring pontoons over there a lot of times. We weren't allowed to drink on the ship. They'd give us two beers when we would be in one of those harbors. They'd give us two beers, but we had to get on a cargo net, and the crane would hoist us down on those pontoons to drink that beer. Couldn't drink them [on?] ship. Of course, we did, and they didn't know it. (laughter) When we got hit there October the 26th, I had a whole lot of beer, because it hit right there. The beer locker was just right forward of the officers' quarters, and that's where one of them bombs hit us. I was in charge of a work party. No, at that time I believe I was just a seaman first class, and I was on the work party. But I was a good friend to my boss (laughs). He drank beer, and I knew he drank beer, so I hid a bunch of that beer at our workstation. We had beer even when we was underway, we'd have beer. (laughs)

MZ: October 21st, 1944? Is that Okinawa?

LW: No. Okinawa was April the 1st of 1945.

MZ: So when you say that the area of the beer locker was hit?

LW: Oh, that was in 1942. That was October 26th, when we went to Noumea, New Caledonia. That's when it hit the officers' quarters, one of the bombs. We got hit by two. One of them was back aft. Some of them said we got hit by three,

but then later they said that the one that hit back aft split in two and exploded, both parts of it exploded and caused damage. They said it was either that or the other bomb went in the same hole, which seems unlikely that two bombs would go in the same hole.

MZ: Yeah, that would be unlikely.

LW: On the flight deck, see. That thing would go through the flight deck and then explode down below decks, armor-piercing bombs.

MZ: Was the deck armored?

LW: Huh?

MZ: The deck of the *Enterprise*, was it armored?

LW: The flight deck was steel with wood on top of it. The hangar deck was one inch thick, and it was an armor deck, the flight, the hangar deck. That's the only armored deck we had.

MZ: Right. Let's see. The Battle of Leyte Gulf? What do you recall about that?

LW: Oh, not really a whole lot. They was talking about kamikazes starting in 1945, but actually they started before that. We probably had kamikazes around when we were bombing them for Leyte, landing in the Philippines.

MZ: Who was the admiral then?

LW: I don't know. I'd have to look up. Somewhere I've got the name of the admirals and the date they served. I may have it in this book. I believe it's going to be in one of these others. They just give the captains, I'm not sure. Yeah, this just gives the captains. I don't have the admirals here, but somewhere I think I've got a deal. This gives all the captains.

MZ: Okay. Does it have the dates there as well?

LW: Well, the captain, N. H. White was the first captain of the *Enterprise* when it was commissioned in 1938, 12th of May, 1938, to the 21st of December, 1938. Captain C. A. Parnell, the 21st of December, 1938, to 21st of March, 1941. Captain George D. Murray, 21st of March, 1941, to the 30th of June, 1942. He left after the Battle of Midway. He was the captain when I went aboard. George D. Murray. Captain Arthur [O.?] Davis, 30th of June, 1942, to 21st of October, 1942. Captain Osborne B. Hardison, 21st of October, 1942, to the 7th of April, 1943. He was captain for a pretty good while.

MZ: Yeah, I'm surprised at that. They had quite a few captains it seems throughout the war.

LW: And then Captain Carlos William Weaver, 7th of April, 1943, to the 16th of April, 1943. He wasn't on there very long. Then next it was Samuel P. Ginder, 16th of April, 1943, to

the 7th of November, 1943. He was on there when we got the Presidential Citation in 1943 in Pearl Harbor. But then he left on the 7th of November, 1943. So he left probably while we were in dry dock, because we went to dry dock, you know. We went to dry dock July the 20th. May the 27th was when we got the Presidential Citation in 1943.

MZ: Okay, so you (inaudible).

LW: Then we went to Bremerton to dry dock there at Bremerton. Because we got in there on the 20th of July, and that's when I caught a train to Round Rock. Of course, I had to catch it to Austin and then thumb a ride to Round Rock.

MZ: Let's see. Trip to [harbor?].

LW: It's got all them others listed here, too. We had a commander that was captain for a little while till they put a new captain on. Thomas J. Hamilton. He was a famous football player.

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah. Some of them said he played for Texas. I don't. I didn't know that, but I've heard someone say he played football for Texas. See, we had some more that played football. Bud Wilkins.

MZ: Bud Wilkinson?

LW: Bud Wilkinson. I've got some papers in here on him somewhere. But he was a lieutenant on the *Enterprise*. He

was a hangar deck officer, took care of planes on the hangar deck. Bud Wilkinson, you know, he was an Oklahoma football coach for several years. And George Sauer was a football coach at Baylor, up in Waco, and he was a lieutenant on the flight deck. He was a flight deck officer.

MZ: Sauer?

LW: George Sauer.

MZ: Is it S-A-U?

LW: S-A-U-E-R.

MZ: At Baylor, you said?

LW: Pardon?

MZ: He was a coach at Baylor?

LW: Yeah. He was a coach at Baylor. I don't know how many years. That's after the war. Both of those were in football coach. Marshall Fields -- owned that Marshall Fields store in Chicago.

MZ: Oh, really?

LW: He was one of my division officers. He got wounded October the 26th of '42 and sent back to the States, sent back to the United States.

MZ: How did he get wounded?

LW: By one of them bomb heads, shrapnel, the one that knocked out the officers' quarters and stuff. He was right up on

the focsle, down below the flight deck. Most of the guns were up what we called flight deck level. Of course, they were depressed a little from the flight deck. He was down on the focsle, right on the very front end of the ship. We had an old 1.1 gun left on there that they didn't take off, and he was the battery officer on that gun. When we got hit there, he got shrapnel and got wounded. Several of the other guys got wounded with him that was on that particular gun. That's the only 1.1 we had left after we got hit on August 24th of '42, because when we went in dry dock in Pearl Harbor, they took them old 1.1 guns off and put on 40mms, which was a lot better gun, a whole lot better.

MZ: Were there any other notable people on the ship?

LW: Well, then you know Butch O'Hare and Jimmy Flatley. Oh, let's see. I'm trying to think of our air officer, our air officer's name. He was from Alabama, and he had about four brothers. There was five of those boys in there, and he was our air officer. Then he got promoted to executive officer. Then later on he got transferred, and he made admiral and got transferred, and he had his own ship, and it got sunk down there in the Philippine Sea. It got sunk down there off of Philippine Islands, and he got burned, but he lived. I visited with him in 1987 up in Arlington,

Texas. We had a reunion, a national reunion, in Arlington, and I visited with him some up there.

MZ: And what was his name?

LW: Huh?

MZ: What was his name?

LW: I'm trying to think of it. (laughs) Oh, I don't know.

Maybe I can think of it later, but I'm getting, you know, getting to where I can think of a lot of [this?].

MZ: Let's see. Okay, I read that the beginning of 1945 that the ship was doing a lot of patrolling off the waters of Luzon in the China Sea.

LW: Yeah. Yeah, Luzon and Leyte, too. We did a lot of patrolling and bombing, too, before they landed there.

MZ: Yeah, you mentioned something about bombing Japan. I guess it said something about night raids on Tokyo.

LW: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we did that. And then when we were out around Guam and around in there, well, them B-29s would come by us a lot of times, and B-26s. We shot down I don't know if it was a B-26 or a B-25, we shot down one cause one day we were, a lot of us were down eating chow. Of course, we had the watch, but they sounded general quarters. We got up there, and here come these airplanes that they hadn't picked up on the radar. But when they sighted them, they didn't know whether they was Japs or what, because

they hadn't -- they'd come in too low to pick up on the radar. Before they could get us to stop shooting, we'd done shot one of them down. They'd lost one man off of it. The others got out. I think it was a seven-man crew on that B-25 or B-26, whichever it was.

MZ: That was kind of dangerous, to be flying in so low to --

LW: Yeah, especially around the fleet. You have to... Because we didn't know whether they were Japs or what they were, you know. If they'd been up high enough we could identify them. But down low like they was, we couldn't identify them. And when they sound the general quarters, we don't -- we never did wait for orders to commence firing. We just started shooting. So we shot that one down, and then they figured out that they were friendly planes, and they stopped us from shooting then, but it was too late. That was when we was around Saipan and Guam, around the Philippine Sea and stuff.

MZ: What can you tell me about Iwo Jima? I'm sorry, what can you tell me about Iwo Jima?

LW: Iwo Jima? Oh, we were doing a lot of night fighting around there, and the *Saratoga* was kind of with us around Iwo Jima. But the *Saratoga* got hit by four kamikazes and put out of commission. They had to leave. I think the *Saratoga* got seven or eight battle stars. But I got a

book; they got a write up in about it -- about a guy that I went into the Navy with. According to that book, the *Saratoga* won World War II.

MZ: Oh, really?

LW: (laughs) Yeah.

MZ: How did they know that?

LW: Well, we called it the [Faratoga?], because a lot of times when we'd lose airplanes, it would bring new ones out to us, and it would take off again. But around Guadalcanal we had to have it, because we didn't have that many carriers. They'd gotten sunk, you know, the *Hornet*, the *Wasp* had got sunk. So we had the *Saratoga* there, but on August 31st it got hit by a torpedo and had to leave. That was in '42.

MZ: So I had read that I guess *Enterprise* had been involved in air operations over Iwo Jima for 174 straight hours.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: I mean, that's constantly with planes flying off the deck and flying back in?

LW: Yeah. Well, they would launch them, so many of them, and they'd be flying, and then before they'd take them back aboard ship, they'd launch some more, and then they'd bring them back and re-arm them, and then they would launch. They might even let them go eat chow, and then they'd launch some more. Then them that had come back, maybe they

might launch them after they'd launched a couple of more.

But we did that continuously, day and night.

MZ: Wow, that's --

LW: Day and night.

MZ: Seven days?

LW: For how many hours it says there.

MZ: Yeah, yeah, it's like seven days straight.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: Wow. And the carrier couldn't see the island. It was pretty far out.

LW: Well, we did get close enough that we could see Mount [Suribachi?].

MZ: Suribachi?

LW: Of course, that Suribachi on Iwo Jima, yeah, we got close enough we could see that, but that was after they pretty well secured it, because we didn't go into those islands, you know, like that. About the only one was Guadalcanal and Tulago. But the reason we went in there, between those two islands, was on account of the clouds, to keep the Japs from locating us. But we went in there to be under those clouds.

MZ: Let's see. After Iwo Jima, I guess it looks like night raids again on Honcho and Kuchu. Those are the main Japanese islands again?

LW: Yeah. Yeah, we were bombing them day and night.

MZ: Were there a lot of planes coming out from the islands to try to fight back?

LW: Yeah, we had kamikazes around there, but we were shooting them down pretty regular. That one that hit us, he was pretty sneaky. Like I say, he come in right off the starboard, mid ships. We opened up on him with the five-inch guns and the 40s. My gun was shooting at him, too, but they stopped us from shooting at him with the 40s, because he was out of range. We was just wasting ammunition. Then he went around and come in the clouds back aft, and the five-inch were still shooting at him then, because they were radar controlled. But they never hit him, and then he'd come around just slightly aft of mid ships on the port side, and that's when he started to dive. I've got a picture on him somewhere here.

MZ: Is this the one at Okinawa?

LW: Yeah, Kyushu, Japan. We were off the island, well, we were off of Kyushu, Japan. I don't know if that's an island or part of Japan proper, but that's where we were at, Kyushu, Japan. They had a kamikaze base there. We were bombing it at night, and daytime, too, trying to do away with all their planes they were using for kamikaze attacks.

MZ: But this particular one that you're describing, it did hit the ship or it did not hit the ship?

LW: Yeah, it hit the ship and blowed our forward elevator about 400 foot in the air.

MZ: What about the one that hit at Okinawa? Let's see, 11 April, 1944.

LW: Well, actually that was the one they're talking about. Oh, April of '44. You know, that might be the one that the wing went up and set that fighter afire.

MZ: Oh, okay. The one you talked about a little earlier?

LW: That was a kamikaze also tried to crash us, but he couldn't get up high enough, because we had him set on fire. He hit up forward by our catapults, and we had a fire on our catapult, and that wing come off of him when he hit the ship, and his motor stuck in the side of the ship there. Our repair crew got -- took that motor out, you know, dumped it off in the water. But that's why we shot that fighter off that caught afire, when he hit us. We shot that fighter off with the catapult. I think that was about April the 21st. Is that what that says? In '45.

MZ: Eleven April, '45.

LW: Eleventh of April.

MZ: Yeah, 11th of April, '45.

LW: Well, that could have still been that one. We got hit again April the 21st. We was hit 16 times during the war, and I was on there for 15 of them. They got hit one time before I went aboard it.

MZ: With bombs, you mean?

LW: Well, with airplanes, some of them. Some of them were bombs.

MZ: Okay. So then --

LW: We had one sneaked in on us. They didn't even pick it up on the radar. He sneaked in on us and flew right over the flight deck and dropped a bomb, and it was too low for the bomb to arm, and the bomb just exploded out and killed one guy that was standing there not too far from it, and started a fire. But they put the fire out pretty quick; it didn't spread. At that time I was on gun watch on that quad that was the first quad just forward of the island structure that was raised. It was raised up. Below it we had a storage room for ammunition -- full of ammunition that the gun just forward of us, on the flight deck level. They [hit his ass?]. They had a door where they could get ammunition out of there, and we had a door to where we passed that ammunition up to the gun. I was on that gun up [there?], you know. Of course, when we got hit sometimes I had gone up on the port side and was on a twin mount of

40mms. Then when we went to training the L Division on guns, they sent me back aft on mount 13 back by the sail locker, where they fixed the parachutes. I was a gun captain on mount 13. I'd become gun captain when I was on the quad right forward of the island structure. They renamed some of the guns and put some of the even numbers on the port side and the odd numbers on the starboard side. So they renamed mount 4 and moved me up there, just like rest a little from flight deck level on a twin mount. I was gun captain there. Then they sent me back aft on the quad on mount 13, and I was gun captain there. Then they sent me on mount 16, which was an elevated gun, and behind that after crane, to where I couldn't shoot to the port side.

MZ: Right, because of the crane.

LW: I could shoot aft and shoot starboard side. Then I was battery officer on that one, on the twin 40.

MZ: Let's see. On the 6th of May I guess the second kamikaze hits the *Enterprise*, and it damages the forward elevator.

LW: Actually that was the 14th of May that it hit the elevator.

MZ: Fourteenth?

LW: The 14th of May it hit the forward elevator. We were bombing Okinawa, Japan proper, and Kyushu, where they had that kamikaze base. They'd give one of them Japs a big jug

of sake, and he was elected to kamikaze. But they were sending out several of them, and we were bombing that thing day and night, that kamikaze deal. But they were bringing in new planes and new people all the time to launch at the fleet. They did a lot of damage with those kamikazes.

MZ: Yeah, they did. It seemed that they started that program later than they should. So that's the hit that knocks the *Enterprise* out of the war, at least for the time being.

LW: Right.

MZ: What exactly did -- okay, there's a forward, well, I guess if the forward elevators had been working, that that increases the amount of planes that can actually bring them to the top and get going. I don't think you could even use --

LW: We had two more elevators, one back aft, and one right mid ship.

MZ: Okay. But can you launch planes if the front elevator is -

LW: No. We had to shoot them off. That's the only way we could launch them is just to shoot them off.

MZ: With the catapults?

LW: The catapult.

MZ: Okay. So then you're back to, going back to Puget Sound then again.

LW: Yeah. Yeah. You know who that is?

MZ: Willie Nelson.

LW: That's my niece, my sister's daughter. See, their great grandparents, their great-great grandparents were brother and sister. My great grandmother was Nancy Nelson, and her brother was old Willie's great-great grandfather.

MZ: (laughs).

LW: She was my great grandmother. I'm a little older than Willie. Of course, he's 70 something years old now.

MZ: Yeah, yeah, he is.

LW: He was born in 1933, April 29th, 1933.

MZ: Wow. That's something else.

LW: Some accounts say he was born in Abbott, but some say he was born in Fort Worth.

MZ: Oh, really?

LW: Yeah. He claims Abbott -- he was born in Abbott. This is me and Bobby. This was taken at one of them reunions. I think this was taken in Laughlin, Nevada.

MZ: Oh, well, yes. You're wearing -- I think there was some other picture, like right here. Was that --

LW: This was taken down in, yeah, in Corpus Christi. We had a reunion there in 2005. Then in 2007 we had one in San Anton. The same lady put it on.

MZ: But the bolo, does it say *Enterprise* or something on it?

LW: Oh, no.

MZ: It's just one that you have.

LW: I've got a suitcase full of them. I used to sell them. That's a silver dollar. Nineteen twenty-two. There's another one. Here's one mostly for a lady. I got...

MZ: That's nice. So you used to sell them?

LW: Yeah. I used to, but I kind of quit. They got so high on [replacement?]. I'd have to charge so much for them that I just quit fooling with them.

MZ: Let's see. So the *Enterprise* goes back for repairs. I guess you mentioned earlier that the decision was made that you had to go back, that she wasn't going to stay in the Pacific.

LW: Well, when we got hit down there on May the 14th?

MZ: Yes.

LW: Yeah, the admiral and the captain wanted to stay, and they said they could launch them planes, you know, by shooting them off, but I guess Nimitz outranked them on it and told them they had to come back. They didn't need them, because they had so many carriers down there, you know.

MZ: Right. I don't suppose -- at any point did you or the crew ever think about the actual invasion of Japan?

LW: Oh, we wouldn't have been in on that. We'd have been in on just the bombing, with our planes, and shooting down any of their planes that tried to attack us.

MZ: Right. That's what I meant.

LW: But we wouldn't have been in on that. Oh, yeah, we did assaults, you know, a lot of us gave a thought about how many we'd lose, because they'd commit suicide, too, down there. Like they did on a lot of them islands, you know. They would, even on Guadalcanal they knew they was going to get killed. A lot of them commit suicide. If they knew they was going to get killed, they'd go ahead and commit suicide. Then on Saipan, even a lot of civilians committed suicide. I don't know if you've ever seen any film of it, but they were jumping off of them cliffs.

MZ: Right. No, I've seen film of it. It was pretty terrible.

LW: Yeah. The Japanese had told the natives there, you know, that they'd do a lot of different things to them and all kind of stuff like that, and had them committing suicide.

MZ: Do you remember what you were doing when you heard that they dropped the atomic bomb on Japan?

LW: Oh. Well, we were out there bombing someplace. I don't really remember exactly where we were at the time. But we stayed pretty busy there bombing places. Offhand I can't remember exactly where we were, but it was pretty good news

to get that news that they was dropping that atomic bomb. They had told us, you know, that they figured it would shorten the war. That was the good news report, that it would shorten the war.

MZ: Were you surprised that they dropped the second one?

LW: Not really. Her first husband worked on that atomic bomb, Bill.

MZ: Really?

LW: He was out there in New Mexico where they were testing that thing.

MZ: What was his name?

LW: Luther Ramm.

MZ: Ramm, like R-A-M?

LW: M-M.

MZ: Luther Ramm.

LW: Luther Ramm, R-A-M-M. He grew up around Dessau, Texas, if you know where that is.

MZ: Dessau. That's not too far from Round Rock, right?

LW: Dessau is kind of between Pflugerville and Austin.

MZ: Yeah, that dance hall is down there. Dessau Dance Hall, I think it is.

LW: What?

MZ: There's like a dance hall (inaudible) place.

LW: Oh, yeah. Yeah, Dessau Hall.

MZ: Yeah, where they say Elvis Presley had played years and years ago.

LW: Yeah, I used to go dancing there back, years back, me and my first wife.

MZ: Oh, yeah?

LW: Yeah. We were over there one night when that thing caught afire, and a guy that I went in the Navy with was over there, too. He put that fire out.

MZ: Wow. Probably saved everybody. That's been there for a long, long time.

LW: Yeah. What he did is he run and got a towel or something. The fire started on the outside of the building. He run and got a towel and wet it right quick and run back out there and got a ladder from somewhere -- I guess the ladder was handy there somewhere -- and climbed up on that ladder and put that fire out. It was a guy I went in the Navy with. Matter of fact, I was in the Civilian Conservation Corps with him, and we went in the Navy together, and we went to work for Texas Power & Light. Of course, not at the same time. He come up a little after I did. But I had a job with Texas Power & Light when I got out of the Navy, but I didn't go up there right away because I had a broken hand.

MZ: From what?

LW: A fist fight.

MZ: Oh.

LW: That's another story.

MZ: You didn't fight a lot, did you?

LW: Well, I had a few.

MZ: Oh, okay.

LW: I went to an old football coach that I had there in Round Rock. I went to his funeral here in Georgetown. I was talking to some of them guys I went to school with in Round Rock, and they was talking about me getting in fights. I told them, I said, "Well, every time I got in a fight I always made sure it was somebody bigger than I was, so if he whipped me he couldn't brag about it." And an old guy said, "Hell, everybody in Round Rock was bigger than you was." (laughter)

MZ: That's an interesting way of looking at it. Do you remember where you were when the war ended? Do you remember where you were?

LW: We was in dry dock in Bremerton, Washington, when the war ended. We had a dance planned that night, and we were the only ones around there that had beer. They'd shut down all of the beer and whiskey. The only thing you could buy was wine. There were a lot of them sailors running around with a jug of wine. (laughter) But that's the only thing you

could buy was wine, because they wouldn't sell -- they couldn't sell beer or whiskey that night. Everybody was celebrating. But we had a dance in what they called Craven hall in Bremerton, over by the Navy yard. But we were in dry dock there in Bremerton.

MZ: So it just so happened you had this dance that night, and then you hear that the war is over.

LW: We had already had that planned, you know. So they went ahead with it. They had the beer and everything already ordered, set up in kegs, where all you had to do is touch a little button there and hold your glass under there. Well, actually we had paper cup, paper glass, paper cups I guess you'd call them, for getting beer.

MZ: Did you have any part in Operation Magic Carpet with the ferrying of the troops back from the Pacific and from Europe?

LW: No, I'd already left. They told me they'd give me a raise in rate if I would stay in to train them, but I had already left. I had enough points to get out. You needed 42 points to get out, and I had 45 and a half or something like that, maybe 46, I'm not sure.

MZ: Wow. More than enough.

LW: I had more than enough on account of the battles, you know, and I was 19 when I went in there, and about 20... Well, let's see, in May of 1945 I would have been 23.

MZ: Wow. That's quite a few years.

LW: Well, and your age and the combats you were in and stuff like that. I had the 18 battle stars. Back then they said I had 17, but later on they figured that we had another one. The *Enterprise* had 20 battle stars for people that were on there all the time. The only other ship, the next closest ship had 16 battle stars, was a cruiser, *Minneapolis*, had 16 battle stars. There's a guy died here in Georgetown that was on the *Minneapolis*, and they put in the paper that he had 18, but what he was thinking was he had those 16 plus the two for the Philippine liberation, but that doesn't work that way. Because I've got 16 in the Asiatic Pacific, and I've got two in the Philippine liberation. That gives me 18 battle stars. He only had 16. He had 14 for the Asiatic Pacific, plus he had two for that Philippine liberation.

MZ: And the other, was it, what, one battle star per battle? Was that the way it worked?

LW: Campaign. You may have two or three battles in one campaign.

MZ: Okay, so Guadalcanal would have been like one battle star?

LW: One. One battle star for Guadalcanal itself, for August the 7th, 1942, till about the 9th. Of course, we were there before the 7th bombing, but we got a battle star for that. Then we got one for Eastern Solomon Islands. That was August 24th when we got hit. Then we got another one for October the 26th. Then we got another one for the 15th and 16th of November, when the Japs tried to retake Guadalcanal, and we were the only carrier left down there. In this book here, I've got a history of the *USS Enterprise*, in this book right here. A guy that lived here in Georgetown, in Sun City, he wrote several books. I've got a copy of some of his stuff that he wrote. He was a good friend of mine. Me and him both belonged to the VFW here in Georgetown, but when he retired he was a schoolteacher up in Fort Worth at two or three different schools. His three daughters still lived in Fort Worth, so he moved back up there. He didn't live but a couple of weeks after he moved back to Fort Worth. He passed away.

MZ: What was his name?

LW: Barney Barnhill.

MZ: Barney Barnhill.

LW: He was the one that blowed the bugle on the *Enterprise*. Whenever they attacked Pearl Harbor, they told him, right here. Actually that's his nickname, Barney.

MZ: James Barnhill.

LW: James [Carol?].

MZ: At Pearl Harbor he's the one who blew the bugle for general quarters?

LW: Yeah. When they told him that, at Pearl. See, the *Enterprise* launched the planes to fly in there, and they run into that attack. They lost about seven planes in there, or something like that. Some of them probably by our own people, because they was shooting at anything they could.

MZ: Yeah, I had read that, too.

LW: But he got a history here. All of this is about --

(break in recording)

MZ: When you got out of the service, did you take advantage of the GI Bill?

LW: Well, I took advantage of one of the bills that was kind of an unemployment deal, where you could draw \$20 a month, or maybe it was \$20 a week. I think it was \$20 a week for 52 weeks, unemployment, and I drew that for a while, till I went to work for TP&L, then I had to quit drawing it. If you got a job, you had to quit drawing it. Of course, I drew it and did a few odd jobs, but you didn't want to get cut off just doing odd jobs. But I drew that for a while. I went to Big Spring and went to work out there in

a cotton gin again, where I worked before I left, you know. My brother was still living there. Then later they sold that gin and moved up between Tahoka, Texas, and Lubbock, in Wilson, Texas, Route 1, Wilson, Texas, and started running another gin. My brother bought a farm up there, and his brother-in-law bought a farm right there close. Actually I think my brother-in-law bought that from my brother, and he was paying him, you know, so much, because his brother-in-law was pretty rich, pretty well off. His brother-in-law, they were married to sisters, and this younger sister that my brother, oldest brother, was married to was raised by this older sister and her husband, because their parents had divorced there in Round Rock. She had moved up there and was raised by her sister and her sister's husband. That was my oldest brother's wife. So when they moved up there to Wilson, they bought the farms that were right there close together. My brother retired, and they moved in to Tahoka there for a while, and he went to work for the county, driving a truck for the county there out at Tahoka. But I can't remember the name of that county, but it joins Lubbock County, and Lubbock's the county seat of Lubbock County. And then in later years, here his wife got cancer, and they moved to San Angelo to that Baptist retirement deal in San Angelo. She lived a

pretty long while after she found out she had cancer.

She'd go to Dallas and take treatments, and then they'd go down to Galveston and take treatments. She lived a pretty long time. I think I gave you the dates before when they passed away.

MZ: Yes.

LW: They both died the same year, but my brother lived a little longer after she passed away. The last reunion that we went to in San Angelo, when he was still living, she was in the hospital at the time we had the reunion around the 1st of April, because my brother was born April the 1st of 1911, my oldest brother. My next brother was born April the 1st, 1912, the same date. The same date, but not the same year, like April the 1st of 1911 and 1912. Just a year apart is what I really meant. (laughter)

MZ: Let's see. What was the food like while you were in the Navy?

LW: Oh, it was good on the aircraft carrier. The food was pretty good. We had a mechanical cow where they put powder in there and water and made milk. (laughter) Then we had a washing machine instead of having the holes that punched out thataway, they punched in, the rough part punched in. You put potatoes in there and turned it on, and it peeled the potatoes. You didn't have to peel potatoes. Chow was

good, pretty good. It was better for the chiefs and the officers. They had better chow than we did, than the regular sailors. At one time I was on KP for the chiefs, and I was a third class petty officer, and they didn't realize it. Soon as they realized it, they took me out of there. But I liked that job, because I could eat chow, the same chow them chiefs was eating, and it was pretty good chow. (laughs) You'd get steaks and everything.

MZ: What rank were you when you got out?

LW: I was just a second class petty officer, boatswain mate second class.

MZ: Okay. Did you write a lot of letters home?

LW: Well, I wrote a few. Sometimes you didn't have time to write letters. I've still got the letters. My mother saved them, every one of them.

MZ: How did you get mail out there?

LW: Well, some mail I got was scorched.

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah. They had mailed some letters. During the Battle of Midway they had mailed some letters, and I got them after we went to Guadalcanal. Sometimes it would take you a while to get them. I wrote a letter one time, I believe I wrote it to my sister, my oldest sister, my oldest living sister, and I told them that -- see, they'd censor all that

mail. I told them in that letter I was going to see Marshall Ferrell in a few days. Well, they knew Marshall Ferrell lived right there in Round Rock and was too old to go in the service, so they knew that I was going to the Marshall Islands. (laughs) They got a map out and figured that out.

MZ: Really? So they didn't catch that?

LW: Then later I wrote them and told them I was going to see Philip McNeese, who was another older man there in Round Rock, too old to be in the service, still lived in Round Rock. Matter of fact, I went in the Navy with his son. But they figured, looking at the map, they figured I was going to the Philippines, which is what I was trying to tell them. If I'd a put down on there we were going to the Philippines, they would have cut it out. They might have just tore the letter up and throwed it in the trash.

MZ: That's kind of odd that they would go through every letter like that.

LW: Huh.

MZ: That's a lot of work to go through all those letters.

LW: Oh, yeah, but they had officers that did that. Some of the officers did that, went through every letter that was written. You couldn't seal it up. They sealed it after they -- and some letters that you sent might be cut up and

parts cut out. Of course, I knew better than to put the regular stuff in there, like "We're going to the Philippines" or "We're going to Marshall Island" and stuff like that. It never would have got through. But the way I put it in there, it got through.

MZ: And they were clever enough to pick up what you were trying to say.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: Probably not, but did you ever see any POWs at all?

LW: Yeah, we brought a bunch of them back.

MZ: Oh, really?

LW: Yeah. From Pearl Harbor. After the war. We went back. After we left dry dock, after the war ended, we went to San Francisco and picked up a bunch of new people, sailors, soldiers, and everything, and took them to Pearl Harbor. Then we picked up a bunch of those people that were in Japanese prison camps and brought them back to New York. We didn't go to San Francisco when we brought them back. We went down through the Panama Canal and had liberty down there in Balboa, Panama, and Panama City. Then we come on around to New York and dropped anchor there on October the 17th of 1945. Then I got transferred to a receiving station there in New York on the 25th, I believe, of October, 25th of October, they sent me to a receiving station. They give me

a little old card with my name and everything on it for a liberty card, so I got liberty on the 26th, 27th of October, and then I caught a train back to Texas on the 28th. I got discharged on November the 1st at Camp Wallace, Texas, down close to Galveston. November the 1st. I got a picture somewhere in one of these books of that old place there where they discharged us. I don't know just which one it's in.

MZ: The POWs, how did they look?

LW: Huh?

MZ: The POWs that the *Enterprise* brought back? How did they look?

LW: Skinny. Oh, some of them looked half dead. Nearly all of them had lost a lot of weight. But they were in pretty bad shape.

MZ: Were they -- at least were some of them in good spirits, knowing that they were going home?

LW: Well, they were overjoyed, a lot of them. See, what they did, put in bunks on the hangar deck. We left all of our airplanes back over there I guess, most of them over there around Pearl Harbor. They didn't have any airplanes on the hangar deck, and they put bunks all on the hangar deck, had a bunch of them on the hangar deck. I don't remember how

many we brought back. Some of my papers, I might have it on there.

MZ: You never saw any Japanese POWs?

LW: Yeah, when they'd shoot one down, and he lived, well, a lot of times they'd bring him over on the *Enterprise* or whatever carrier one of the admirals was on and interrogate him.

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah.

MZ: But you actually saw, what, bring him up, bring him across the deck?

LW: Well, I'd see them when the destroyer would pick them up, and I'd see them whenever they'd send them over on what they called a boatswain buoy, a boatswain chair. Put them in that boatswain chair and send them over to the *Enterprise*. They'd bring them in back on the fantail, back on the rear end of the ship. I'd go back there sometimes when they'd bring them in. One of them there that they brought in, he was some kind of a colonel or something, and he talked just as good a English as me and you. He said he went to school in San Francisco. The first thing he wanted was an American cigarette. They gave him a cigarette, somebody give him a cigarette, and let him smoke it back there on the fantail, before they carried him to the brig.

The marines would carry them and put them in the brig. Then when the admiral got ready for them, that marine would take them. There were a couple of marines would take them to the admiral so he could interrogate them. That admiral had an orderly that followed him everywhere he went, and that orderly could talk Japanese. The orderly was from Guam. One of the orderlies he had been on the *Lexington*. It got sunk, and then he was on another one that got sunk, and then he was on the *Enterprise*. He was on two or three of them that got sunk and then come on the *Enterprise*. He was an orderly for the admirals, you know, and could speak Japanese. He was raised on Guam, and he could speak that Japanese. They had them people like that for nearly all those admirals. Those [orderly?] had his own, you know, that could translate for him and everything.

MZ: Yeah, I would imagine for situations like that, interrogations.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: Did you take part in that initiation when you crossed the equator?

LW: No. When we crossed the equator, they said a lot of them do that. They said we'd been through enough punishment, so they called it off.

MZ: Oh, interesting.

LW: Yeah. They did it some to some of them, all right, but they didn't do it to that group I went in with. They said after going through some of those battles, they said we'd been through enough to -- that we didn't need to go through that harassment. That's all it was is a bunch of harassment. (laughs)

MZ: Yeah, I've heard that. I've heard stories about it. They still do it today, from what I understand.

LW: Yeah, some of it they say was pretty rough. It made enemies. We didn't. We did kind of teamwork. We didn't want to make no enemies. We had enough with the Japanese. We didn't need fresh enemies.

MZ: A good point.

LW: (laughs).

MZ: How would you describe the weather, for the most part?

LW: Well, most of the time it was pretty nice, but hot. It was always hot down there in the Pacific, except when we had those typhoons there in the China Sea. It wasn't real hot then, but it was raining, you know, with them typhoons. It would be raining all the time. The whole ship had what they called suspension joints. You could hear them things creaking. Over that wind blowing you could hear them suspension joints creaking.

MZ: How long did these last, the typhoons?

LW: Oh, hard to say really. I just don't remember. But it seemed like it lasted for days and days. You know, it seemed like it. But I'm not really sure about how long [they?] lasted. You want a piece of candy?

MZ: Oh, sure. Yeah, thank you.

LW: Yeah, hand me one while you're at it.

MZ: Here you go.

LW: Thank you.

MZ: You're welcome. Okay. What did you do with your extra time aboard ship?

LW: Well, you'd write letters, or you had a cleaning station, or you had to do cleaning. Down by the officers' quarters you'd have to chip paint and put on new paint. We did a whole lot of that after so many of them had fires. They tried to develop some paint that was kind of fireproof, so we had to chip off a lot of the old paint and put on new. Supposedly it's fireproof, but when stuff got so hot it's going to burn.

MZ: I've heard about that. The *Wasp*? But it was another carrier where they had problems with the paint catching fire, but that was early in the war, I think.

LW: Yeah. They had trouble like that on the *Lexington*, *Yorktown*.

MZ: Let's see. Was there any particular memories that stand out about the war? This is kind of odd. It always says "humorous incidents." Anything that's --

LW: Well, I seen the kamikaze that hit the *Smith*. That was earlier in the war. That was October the 26th of '42. The destroyer *Smith* was one of our screening ships. This kamikaze come in, and I guess our screeners had already set it on fire. It couldn't make it to us, because we were in between all those screeners. It caught afire and it crashed into the *Smith*, the destroyer. I was watching it the whole time. Of course, we wasn't shooting at nobody at that particular time. And then the *Porter* stopped to pick up one of our pilots, and there was a submarine in between us and the *Porter*, and shot a torpedo and hit it mid ships. I was looking at it, too, when it blowed up.

MZ: When you say the *Porter*?

LW: It was a destroyer.

MZ: Oh, okay. All right. So there was a submarine between the *Enterprise* and the *Porter*?

LW: Yeah.

MZ: And who shot the torpedo? The *Porter*?

LW: The Jap submarine shot it and hit the *Porter*, the destroyer. They stopped in the water to pick up one of our pilots that had gone in the water.

MZ: Did it sink it?

LW: Yeah.

MZ: Did the *Smith* also sink?

LW: Uh-uh. No, they put the fire out on the *Smith*, but the *Porter*, it blowed it about half in two.

MZ: Did it hit it about mid ships?

LW: Yeah.

MZ: You weren't ever wounded during the war, right?

LW: Pardon?

MZ: Were you ever wounded at any time?

LW: Yeah. I got hit on the leg.

MZ: Oh, okay. Part of the piece, one of the kamikazes, you said?

LW: Yeah, May the 14th, 1945. They said a plane hit me. That piece of the plane was supposed to be in a museum in Pensacola, Florida.

MZ: Really? Huh. Did you get the Purple Heart for it?

LW: Never turned it in.

MZ: Oh. [They?] didn't think it just wasn't worth it?

LW: I didn't want to go to sickbay.

MZ: Oh. Why not?

LW: Because the Japs were attacking us. And the kamikazes.

MZ: A good reason.

LW: I didn't want to be below decks when they was...

MZ: No, that's understandable. I'd want to be at my station, too. Better to contribute than not. How many of your brothers went off? I think you mentioned at least one of them.

LW: No, there was four of us in there during the war.

MZ: Were they all Navy or were they different branches as well?

LW: Yeah. My next oldest brother was in Patton's Third Army, and my brother just older than me was in the air force, the Army air force at that time. Then I was in the Navy. My brother just younger than me was in the Navy in the amphibious force. He was the one that landed at Tarawa; he landed troops at Tarawa, Hollandia, Leyte, and Okinawa.

MZ: That's kind of (inaudible), because the *Enterprise* was taking part in some of these landings. Did you have an idea that he would be there? Or did you just find this out later?

LW: No, I found it out later.

MZ: And you all turned out okay?

LW: Huh?

MZ: And you all made it through the war okay?

LW: Yeah. Yeah. My oldest brother, he was a fireman at Fort Sam Houston. They wouldn't take him. He was married and had two kids.

MZ: This was the one that was born in 1911?

LW: Yeah. And he was a fireman at Fort Sam Houston. He left the farm out in Big Spring, moved back to Round Rock, and then he got a job down there at Fort Sam as a fireman. They were assembling jeeps when they didn't have no fires to fight or anything. They were assembling jeeps to send overseas. He was down there. Then my youngest brother was too young, but he went in the Navy in 1947 after he graduated school there in Round Rock. He went in the Navy, and they sent him to Pensacola, Florida, and California. Then they come along and was going to make all the military smaller, so they said anybody that wanted a discharge, they'd give them a discharge, so he took the discharge. He didn't stay in there very long.

MZ: Well, I think we've just about covered everything.

LW: We all have a brick up here at Sun City, even the one that got killed in the car wreck there in Round Rock, on December the 8th of '46. I put a brick up there for him.

MZ: Why do you say Sun City? Is there a memorial or something up there?

LW: Oh, yeah, there's a big memorial deal, a World War II memorial at Sun City?

MZ: Really? Okay.

LW: Yeah. They got a lot of brick in there with people's names on it. Barney's in there, the guy that wrote a lot of this

material in here. Barney Barnhill's in there. All my brothers are in there. We put a brother in for that in Albuquerque. I don't remember if I put it in there. I think my sister-in-law put that in there. Well, she sent the money to me, and I had it put in there. She sent the money to me for the brother in Albuquerque, and then her husband, who's my youngest brother. She got a little extra money and still working. She was born in 1930. She worked for the lime kiln there in Round Rock till it closed. You didn't know that was a lime kiln in Round Rock, did you?

MZ: Isn't there a big pit over by --

LW: It's where they make it. It's concrete blocks now.

MZ: Well, I know there's a lime pit, or at least it looks like it.

LW: Well, they make concrete blocks out of where the old lime kiln used to be.

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah, right there off of the McNeil Road.

MZ: Oh, it's kind of a big structure. Okay.

LW: Yeah. My next-door neighbor's the manager of it.

MZ: Really?

LW: Yeah. Lives here in Georgetown.

MZ: I always thought that was associated to mining lime.

LW: Well, they didn't know they got the lime till (inaudible) still got that one on up on McNeil. She worked there at that lime kiln in Round Rock, and it closed on a Friday. That Monday she went to work at McNeil lime kiln. She's been working at those two lime kilns ever since she got out of school. She was born in 1930, between Round Rock and Pflugerville. Matter of fact, they still live on their old home place. They built a new house there and still got the old house with all the furniture and everything in it that belonged to her parents. I went over there and put in some electric lines for an electric stove for her parents before they passed away. I think I put that in probably while I was still working for the city of Austin electric department. That youngest brother, he's not in real good health. He's having health problems. And she just had an operation in San Anton. She just come home from San Anton after having a back operation.

MZ: That can be tough, those back operations.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: I want to ask you about the reunions. When did they start?

LW: Oh, I think they started in, I think maybe in the 1970s or something like that. I'm not really sure. I've got the date and everything in some of my papers, but I've got 20 or 30 books like this with *Enterprise* stuff. I've got 150

books with family tree. I've been doing family tree since 1970.

MZ: You're keeping busy.

LW: Yeah.

MZ: How many members show up like in the last five years to the reunions?

LW: Well, it's hard to say, because you have family and members. I think we had just 40 something that showed up at Corpus Christi and probably about the same amount that showed up at San Antonio.

MZ: Of family and members?

LW: No, just the crew, regular crew. But used to we'd get two or three hundred of the crew. We've had five or six hundred people that showed up in Laughlin in Nevada, five or six hundred of them, because a lot of them in California, Washington, Oregon, all around there, come to Laughlin. A lot of them from California. I run across some of my buddies there from California when we were in Laughlin, Nevada. Even one old boy that lives in Florida. No, let's see, more than one. Two or three of them from Florida that had moved down there, you know, since the war's end. Some of them had lived up north and then moved to Florida when they retired. I still got a couple of friends that live in Florida, three of them that was in the

same division with me, in the 2nd Division. A lot of times it depends on the location to where we have the reunion. At this one here that we're having probably a whole lot of it will be family instead of the --

MZ: The members.

LW: Instead of the members. I got a friend that lives up about 10 or 12 miles south of Muskogee, Oklahoma. He was in the 2nd Division with me. He'll be 90 years old when we have this reunion. He's not in real good health. He has a hard time getting around, but he swears up and down he's coming. His son brings him, and his two daughters usually come. They just put the last one on that we had last year in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He lives at Oktaha, Oklahoma. It's just a little small place. His daughter runs the post office there. She's the postmaster in Oktaha. His other daughter lives not too far from there in Oklahoma, and his son and grandson are firemen up in Muskogee. They live in Muskogee. They usually come to the reunions, too, his son and grandson. His son is a fireman, but his son has some kind of appliance equipment store, selling lawnmowers and stuff like that up in Muskogee.

MZ: Good business.

LW: When he's not on the fires, you know, fighting fires.

MZ: Well, they could use him down in South Austin right about now. Anyway, I think that pretty much covers everything.

LW: Did my granddaughter tell you where they was having that reunion?

MZ: Either she or you had written the website down, and I went to it, and I looked it up. It says on there. I forgot where, but it says on there. Of course, it's in Austin.

LW: Yeah, it's right by the old Highland Mall off of Airport Boulevard.

MZ: Highland Mall. In the hotel in there?

LW: Yeah, a hotel kind of back behind the Highland Mall.

Actually the best way to get to it, if you're going from Round Rock, hit Airport Boulevard off of Lamar, or if you're going the interstate, you turn for the Airport Boulevard exit, off the interstate, and you come all the way out to Airport Boulevard, and go down on the Airport Boulevard to the Highland Mall exit. Where you can turn right into their parking lot and go right around the edge of that parking lot and kind of back behind the mall, is where that hotel is.

MZ: Okay. Yeah, it shouldn't be too hard to find.

LW: That Holiday Inn bought it out, and they're remodeling it. It was some other hotel before that. They got a pretty good deal on it and everything, you know. A lot of them

things have been running over \$100 a night, but they're getting this for \$79 a night. I think that's what it is, 78 or \$79 a night. Plus, they put a tax on all of them.

- MZ: Yeah, they usually do have tax for this and that. All right. Well, I think that pretty much wraps it up. On behalf of the museum and myself I just want -- thanks for the time. Thank you for the time that you made today. That's a good long interview. I think we've been at it for about four hours [while you've been in talk?]. (laughter)
- LW: We should get overtime. (laughter)
- MZ: Well, I'm going to shut the tape off here.

END OF AUDIO FILE