

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. William H. “Bill” Furrer
Date of Interview: November 26, 2012

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Interview in progress.

Charlie Simmons: This is Charlie Simmons. Today is November the 26th, 2012. I am interviewing Bill Furrer. This interview is taking place in Fredericksburg, Texas in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Now, Bill, if you would, please state your...your name; your place of birth, and your date of birth, and we'll take it from there.

Mr. Furrer: My name is William H. "Bill" Furrer. I was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, March 8th, 1922.

Charlie Simmons: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Furrer: I had...two...one...two brothers and two sisters.

Charlie Simmons: Older or younger?

Mr. Furrer: Oh uh, quite...oldest brother was ten years older than I was. I had one sister...about eighteen months older than I am, and I had one sister...that was younger and then another brother that was younger.

Charlie Simmons: Okay, and what were...what sort of life did you have growing up? Did you live on the farm, in the city, small town?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, we lived on a farm about ten miles east of Lincoln, (unintelligible) little town called Walton. And my dad was a farmer; he was a farmer up until...he was sixty years old. He was...born and raised on a farm, and...and he put...till he was (unintelligible) years old. That's when we had to move away.

Charlie Simmons: And what about schooling; what sort of schooling did you have?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, I went to school in Nebraska and then in 1937 we moved out to Washington, Centralia, Washington where we live now and I went to Centralia High School, and graduated from Centralia High School in 1940.

Charlie Simmons: So, you would have been fif...about fifteen when you moved?

Mr. Furrer: I was...I was fifteen when we moved from Nebraska to Washington.

Charlie Simmons: Okay, and then you...you finished high school there?

Mr. Furrer: I fin...yeah, I finished high school in Centralia, Washington.

Charlie Simmons: Okay, were you living on a...on a farm there or...?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, no we just had a little acreage and...so...we...go sit down. And I did do work outside and during school time or...summer times. I did work on a farm...

Charlie Simmons: Uh hum.

Mr. Furrer: ...in...just out of Centralia, a dairy farm.

Charlie Simmons: And what year did you finish high school then?

Mr. Furrer: 1940.

Charlie Simmons: 1940.

Mr. Furrer: I graduated 1940.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. And what did you do after high school?

Mr. Furrer: That's where...after high school, the first...four months or so till I went in the Navy, I worked on the same dairy farm that I was working for...

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: ...and I was getting thirty dollars a month. The farmer said, "Bill, I want you to stay for the winter, but I can only pay you twenty dollars a month." And I figured, "Well..." He said, "You don't have to stay." So, I said, "Well, I'll look for something else," and then I...in November of 1940 I joined the Navy.

Charlie Simmons: Especially just for money or did you...want to go...did you join the Navy for...to see the world or what was your reason for...for deciding on the Navy?

Mr. Furrer: Mainly the reason I joined the Navy because it was just a winding down of the Depression, and I was eighteen years old, and there just wasn't any jobs for eighteen-year-old kids.

Charlie Simmons: Uh hum.

Mr. Furrer: I mean, the...the jobs that were always opening up...went to the older people. So, I figured that was (unintelligible)...one of my friends says, "Well, Bill, why don't you go in the Navy?" I decided, "Well, that sounded pretty good to me."

Charlie Simmons: Well, you know, there...there were a lot of people in your...in your situation; I wonder why more of them didn't try to volunteer for the...for the armed services.

Mr. Furrer: Uh, well, I don't know, but...

Charlie Simmons: I never thought of that.

Mr. Furrer: ...all my buddies were in the same situation I was in that I met in the Navy...

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Mr. Furrer: ...and we had a lot of people from Texas and Oklahoma that...man, they never had it so good!

Charlie Simmons: Okay, so...so after you...you signed up for the Navy, where did you go to boot camp?

Mr. Furrer: I went to boot camp in San Diego.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: And I...and then from boot camp, uh, I was selected to go to...Aviation Structural...Structural Mechanics School in Jacksonville, Florida.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: And that took about...well, it was about six months. And...and then from there, we were told when we got out of...school in Jacksonville...by one of the leading officers there that, "Most of you guys...are going to the Pacific Fleet because we are going to be at war with Japan," and...which happened...which we were, in six months we were at war with Japan.

Charlie Simmons: So, you graduated but by the time you got out of your Aviation Structure School in Jacksonville, it was 1941, is that...correct? Okay.

Mr. Furrer: That's yes, 1941, middle of 1941.

Charlie Simmons: Okay, so...

Mr. Furrer: And...and I got transferred to...Utility Squadron One.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: Uh, on Naval Air Station...Ford Naval Air Station, Ford Is...Ford Island and...which is right in the middle of Pearl Harbor.

Charlie Simmons: Right, okay. Okay, and what sort of job did you have; Aviation Structure did you work on...?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, worked...worked on aircraft...structural part of the...the landing gear, the wings, the...the body of the aircraft.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: Mainly that's what we worked on.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. And you had all sorts of aircraft there. You had all the way from the P...they had PBY squadrons, for example.

Mr. Furrer: Uh, there was PBYs out...on the base. In fact, yeah, PBYs and the squadron I was in...had Sikorsky...amphibians, designation JRS.

Charlie Simmons: JRF?

Mr. Furrer: S...S...for Sikorsky, JRS.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. I'm not familiar with that...

Mr. Furrer: Well, there wasn't very many of them; they Navy had...very few of them.

Charlie Simmons: Okay, and that...so, they had seaplanes, so they...they could...they could take a...did they take off from the harbor or did they always have to take off from the runway there at Ford?

Mr. Furrer: Our...our planes were...was an amphibian, that's the GRS-1.

Charlie Simmons: Right.

Mr. Furrer: And we...we never took off in the water; we always took off on...on the runway.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. Okay, so...so what...what month was it that you got to Ford, do you remember?

Mr. Furrer: Uh yes, I do. I remember the...exactly the date; it was July 7th, 1941.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. And what was life like in Pearl Harbor in those days?

Mr. Furrer: Oh, we went to work at 7:00 o'clock in the morning and got off at noon, five days a week...that's what it was like (laughter).

Charlie Simmons: That's...(laughter).

Mr. Furrer: And...and...of course, we had the duty, you know, in between times every...every so often, but...basically that...that was what it was. It was just...real nice; it was, you know...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: We could spend our days off going to the swimming pool or going to the beach and things like that.

Charlie Simmons: And what sort of accommodations; did...did you have barracks, permanent barracks?

Mr. Furrer: Oh yes, well, we had a...a three-story barracks on Ford Island, and well, they were big, big dormitories, forty or fifty people to a dormitory.

Charlie Simmons: Uh hum.

Mr. Furrer: And...in the same building, I think, we were...we were on the top floor and the bottom floor was our mess hall. We had a large mess hall, so we...we were treated good. We had...

Charlie Simmons: Well...so...okay, so, so your typical work day would be 7:00 a.m. to noon work and then you're off for the rest of the day, and...

Mr. Furrer: Yes sir, that was...unless you have the duty which was...to...you had to stay and have a...stand a watch or something like that.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, uh huh.

Mr. Furrer: But other than that, you were free to go.

Charlie Simmons: Okay, that's pretty good...that's (unintelligible)...

Mr. Furrer: (Unintelligible)...(laughter).

Charlie Simmons: ...a really good deal!

Mr. Furrer: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: So, okay, well I...I guess we're...we're getting pretty close to the big day here.

Mr. Furrer: Uh huh.

Charlie Simmons: We...we kind of know what's coming, so...what happened...on December 7th? Can you tell me about your specific case?

Mr. Furrer: The morn...the morning of December 7th, I got up, oh, probably 6:30 or 7:00 o'clock and I went...down to the mess hall for breakfast, and I believe that I had...uh, fried eggs and bacon for breakfast. It seems to me like that's what it was.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And...I went up after breakfast...I went up to see one of my buddies...who...we used to go...tennis, played tennis, and...but he was still in bed. So, I thought, "Well, I'll go out...outside of our...our dormitory, it was a pretty large, lit...lanai, patio-type area, that...we'd go out and lounge around...suntan or whatever you wanted to do. And we had, in those days, we had to wash our own clothes; we didn't have a laundry. We washed our own clothes and we had a wash rack out there, and you'd do your own laundry and hang them out on the...on the line to dry.

Charlie Simmons: Right.

Mr. Furrer: And that was what I was doing. Actually, I...I was washing my clothes out there, and there was...half a dozen other guys out there...something like that.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And then...we heard planes...planes flying; this is on a Sunday morning which was unusual. And...we looked up and said, "Oh well, they must be Army planes...making a practice run on Ford Island."

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Mr. Furrer: Well, we stood there and watched them; they got closer and closer, and all at once, we seen a bomb come off of one them, and we thought, "Well, they must be dropping water bombs or smoke bombs." And then

about that time...it exploded. It had...we seem one of them...peel off and one of the guys said, "They're Japanese!" And, so then, we stood there and watched them for a little bit. In fact, I looked up over the...walls, retaining walls. To keep from falling off, I looked over the retaining wall, and they airplane...was coming...flying down the harbor, a Japanese plane; I looked right into the cockpit of the Japanese plane.

Charlie Simmons: Uhm!

Mr. Furrer: I could see the pilot...he said...you know. By that time, well we, you know, things began to get pretty wild and they made us all go down below to the...to the mess hall for protection. And right across the street from us...was our...dispensary, the sick bay. It was a...a rectangular built...building with a...all the offices around the outside...outer edge of the...and in the center...was an open center...just wide open, and it got a direct hit...on the sick bay, an armor-piercing bomb went down into the ground...blew straight up and did very little damage except to the foundation of the...of the sick bay. It was funny, there was some people that had gotten some shrapnel, but there was no...casualties or...

Charlie Simmons: I'll be darned.

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, and...after that then, after the...and then we had a second raid. After the first raid was over, there was a lull, so they told everybody, "Go to your assigned areas." So, that's what we did; we went down to...I went to the hangar which was only...a hundred yards away or something like that, and...

Charlie Simmons: Now, did...did you practice...had you ever practiced...having an...an air raid...warnings or...?

Mr. Furrer: Oh no, sir, no.

Charlie Simmons: That was the first...that was...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: ...you...you had no battle station to go to in other words then?

Mr. Furrer: No, no, all we did was...went to our own, you know, and then...well then they want...whatever they wanted you to do, that's what you had to do.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. And there was no anti-aircraft equipment there...(unintelligible)?

Mr. Furrer: Not...not on...not on Ford Island. I don't...I don't know of any...other than machine guns.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: And they did have machine guns, but that's the only thing that I know of...as far as protection.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. And was there...from the first attack, was there any...were there any other bombs dropped or machine gun fire that...in or around your barracks?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, well, no...like...I think that the closest one was...the sick bay...right...right across from us.

Charlie Simmons: So, that was...the closest one that...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, that was the closest I got to an actual bomb...falling.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: But the battleships that were sunk, were all tied up...to Ford Island. (Unintelligible) probably as far as our barracks to the battleships was...fifty yards or something like that.

Charlie Simmons: Oh, so...so you got...the concussion from the...explosion of the torpedoes...

Mr. Furrer: Yes sir.

Charlie Simmons: ...and the bombs were...pretty...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, but...noth...no we had...my squadron, we didn't have any casualties, nothing. Nothing happened to anybody in our squadron.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: But...

Charlie Simmons: Well, a lot of planes were hit on Ford Island though, just about...

Mr. Furrer: Oh yes!

Charlie Simmons: ...all the planes were wiped out.

Mr. Furrer: The...the PBYS...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...all the PBYS were down...we were...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...there were three hangars in a row, and we were in the end one down here...next to the control tower, and the far one was right next to the harbor where they could bring the PBYS up out of the water, and they were hit *right in the middle*; I mean, they just...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...devastated that area. But they didn't have too many casualties. I mean, somehow or another...nobody...I thought it would...no...what'd it say, I think maybe only one person was killed on Ford Island?

Charlie Simmons: Well, being Sunday morning, they probably didn't have any people out...doing maintenance of the planes.

Mr. Furrer: Well, there...there wasn't thought; there was just the people in the hangars.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, okay, yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And that may have been the reason or it. But...then later, we kind of...well, between raids, and then the next raid came; we stayed in a hangar and they said, "Well, get out of this hangar," two days we instantly...sent us to the control tower which was right next to the hangar. And we sat in a...which I think was...kind of a target.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah!

Mr. Furrer: (Laughter), but we...we stayed in a...in the control tower and they seen that there was bullet holes in the control tower, but I don't know 'cause we were down below. And then after the raid was over, and we kind of...began to get regrouped, we had...our duty officer was a man; I don't know what his first name was, but he was a lieutenant; his name was Robb (sp?), and he got three planes...of the Sikorsky's...JRS Sikorskys...he got three planes and crews for the three planes to go out and search for the Japanese. And...kind of a funny part about was...the radioman, the chief radioman in charge of the radio division, said, I need three volunteers to go on these planes; one on each plane; you three guys go." He just grabbed three guys..., "You guys go!" So, and they went

out in search of the Japanese and their armament was...1903 Springfield rifles.

Charlie Simmons: (Laughter)

Mr. Furrer: *That* was the armament that they had.

Charlie Simmons: Well now, the...the JRS-1s...was...was that...just a reconnaissance plane then?

Mr. Furrer: It was a transport plane.

Charlie Simmons: Transport plane?

Mr. Furrer: Strictly a transport; it was not a war plane. It was strictly a transport, and it had seats in it and it could carry, I don't know, a dozen people or so.

Charlie Simmons: Two...two engines?

Mr. Furrer: Two...two engines, uh huh. And single wing, and...that...that's what they did.

Charlie Simmons: Wow, okay.

Mr. Furrer: But they (unintelligible) flew for about six hours, but didn't see anything. But a Japanese plane got saw then; one plane, he made a dive on him, but he thought probably he was out of ammunition or something and flew off. And so, they got back okay, but...but they were expendable. That crew...the crews that went out...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah!

Mr. Furrer: ...were expendable that day.

Charlie Simmons: Well, it...yeah, that...that was...they...they had some PBYS that were flying...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, yeah...(unintelligible).

Charlie Simmons: ...but the two...

Mr. Furrer: There wasn't too many PBYS that survived.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: I mean, I'll...actually...my squadron survived better than any squadron out there.

Elaine: Lieutenant Robb's name is R-o-b-b.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: And he...he...received the Navy Cross.

Charlie Simmons: Oh really?!

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, he received the Navy Cross.

Charlie Simmons: Well, I hope those guys that went out in those planes got something out of it, too.

Mr. Furrer: I...if I remember right, I think they all got advanced in rate.

Charlie Simmons: Oh okay.

Mr. Furrer: ‘Cause I...I know we had some...real young First Class Petty Officers that were advanced to Chief.

Charlie Simmons: Well...

Mr. Furrer: So, you know, which was unusual in those days. And my first flight on a patrol plane in...in...the Sikorsky...was...was on December the 9th...

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: ...two days after the war started.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. And what...what was that like? Now, you were...you were sitting in as an...an observer, is that correct?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, well, no. We...we went as gunners.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: We...they sent us to the ordnance department to get our rifles to go on the...on the flight. We got the rifles and said, “Well, how do you *use* these things?!”

Charlie Simmons: (Chuckles)

Mr. Furrer: And they guy says, “Don’t worry about it; somebody’s going to show you; next man.”

Charlie Simmons: (Chuckles)

Mr. Furrer: I mean, that was...was...that’s the way it was. I mean, we...

Charlie Simmons: Did they give you any ammunition?

Mr. Furrer: Oh, yes sir! (Laughter)

Charlie Simmons: (Laughter)

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, we had...we had ammu...they were clips (unintelligible).

Charlie Simmons: Sounds like you were maybe more dangerous to yourselves than you were to the Japanese!

Mr. Furrer: (Unintelligible)...just about! (laughter)

Charlie Simmons: (Chuckles)

Mr. Furrer: And...yeah, the...Sikorsky has...an entrance hatch on each side, and we had...the gunners, we were gunners, supposedly, and we sat in the open...open hatches; sat on the deck of the...of the plane with a gun across our lap.

Charlie Simmons: That...that is a mar...remarkable story; I have *never* heard this story before; this...that's...that's amazing!

Mr. Furrer: (Laughter), that was...that was right...that is...the gospel truth; I mean, that's what we did.

Charlie Simmons: Do you...do you have any idea of the route that you took in...in your...on your scouting expedition out there looking for the Japanese?

Mr. Furrer: Well...

Charlie Simmons: How...how far out from the islands did you get for example?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, I...I think...probably around Oahu. We probably pretty well flew...all around there, you know, and out so many miles that...actually, the main thing we were probably looking for...was submarines.

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Mr. Furrer: Because the fleet, the Japanese fleet, had already high-tailed it back towards Japan.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: But one thing...that we always remarked about...was the Japanese bombed...they did not bomb any runways or they never bombed any fuel stations and the fuel tanks. In other...they looked like...are they ready for a landing, you know?

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: But we...we flew over the island except for Hickam Field which is right next to Pearl Harbor, the gate of the...the fence line of...Hickam Field at Pearl Harbor...is the dividing place between the two bases.

Charlie Simmons: Uh hum.

Mr. Furrer: And it...it looked like a junk yard. It just...they just...mutilated that place.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: But...and the same way on...on the...the end of Ford Island were the PBYS were; they just (unintelligible) every airplane.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, yeah. Well, well, they...well, luckily, they didn't get everything but they could have.

Mr. Furrer: No, no, they didn't, no, huh uh, no.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, so...so how...how long were you in this...this going out on...on patrol mode for?

Mr. Furrer: Oh, about...about six months (unintelligible).

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: I...I probably flew...probably thirty-five to forty missions.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: Every...every fourth day.

Charlie Simmons: And that was with...and that was all in the JRS-1s?

Mr. Furrer: Yes, yes sir. Yeah, we never had...we finally got two machine guns mounted on the aircraft in...in the open hatches where we...they built a...a mount...mount for the machine gun so we could use it. Then...as that worked, but we never did see anything to fire at.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. Were they...were they carrying any bombs or depth charges?

Mr. Furrer: No, no.

Charlie Simmons: There's no kinds of weaponry at all that...?

Mr. Furrer: No, that was it; no, we didn't have anything.

Charlie Simmons: So, if you saw a submarine, what were you going to do – crash into them or...?

Mr. Furrer: (Chuckle), oh well, really radio back and say, "There's a submarine at a certain location."

Charlie Simmons: Okay (chuckle).

Mr. Furrer: And I think that was the only thing.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: But that...that...actually, that was all we could have done.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: But later on, I understand that...I was there six months, and later on, I understand that they *did* put depth charges on the airplanes. So, but I thought...I don't know...that's what I just...heard (unintelligible), you know?

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, yeah. 'Cause I know the...the PBVs carried...

Mr. Furrer: Oh yeah, they'd car...they'd carry out; they were the war plane. And as a reward for this flying, the flight crews got to stay at the Royal Hawaii Hotel for twenty-cents a night. (chuckles)

Charlie Simmons: Whoa!

Mr. Furrer: We...

Charlie Simmons: You're making war sound like...a really...a really nice way to make a living...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, (chuckle), so...

Charlie Simmons: ...so far, anyhow.

Mr. Furrer: It...to start off with, (unintelligible) is November of 1941, I made Third Class Petty Officer which raised my pay up to sixty dollars a month. The war started on the 7th; I immediately started drawing fifty percent flight pay, so my pay went to ninety dollars a month, and I was probably the wealthiest sailor in the Pacific Fleet!

Charlie Simmons: (Chuckles)

Mr. Furrer: I had more...I had more money than I could spend.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. Well, that was...that was pretty good...pretty good duty then.

Mr. Furrer: Oh, it...it was...yeah, yeah.

Charlie Simmons: Well, what...what sort of...impact did the...gearing up after...after the...battle was over and harbor had been cleaned up a little bit, uh, did your...any other parts of your lifestyle change there on the island? Did they start bring in more people to your base, for example, and start getting more crowded conditions?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, no it...it was pretty...pretty well routine. Oh, one other thing I wanted to tell you. The night, evening, of December 7th...one of our carriers was coming into Pearl Harbor and for some reason or another, they sent the airplanes off the carrier into Pearl Harbor ahead of the ship. And it was dark; I was out on a...a ramp doing maintenance to one of the airplanes, and somebody...it was quiet; you could have heard a pin drop, and somebody fired...fired a shot...and every gun on that island went off! I laid flat on the ramp and could see tracers going right through airplanes landing on the runway!

Charlie Simmons: Uhm!

Mr. Furrer: And we...they killed...killed some people out of that...

Charlie Simmons: They did; they did.

Mr. Furrer: ...pilots. I don't know how many, but it was...maybe two or three, something like that.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, I think that was a squadron of SBDs that was coming in from...

Mr. Furrer: It was something that...

Charlie Simmons: ...the Enterprise.

Mr. Furrer: ...yeah, the...the carrier planes that came in.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And...but I did, I just (throat clearing)...I...I actually seen tracers going into the airplane. And I just laid flat on the concrete.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, that...that was...that was really tragic.

Mr. Furrer: It really was; that was one of the real tragic things of it.

Charlie Simmons: Uh, they had some B-17s that came in...

Mr. Furrer: Yes sir, I seen one of them (chuckle).

Charlie Simmons: ...and some of them got shot up, too. It's...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, they got shot up, but I don't think they shot any of them down. But they...they were shot at, and I know...during...during the bombing, when I was in the con...control tower, I looked out and I seen a B-17 coming in...and because it kind of flew...towards the end of Ford Island into Hickam Field.

Charlie Simmons: Uh hum.

Mr. Furrer: But...they seemed...they made it alright.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: I don't think any of them got shot down.

Charlie Simmons: We have an audio/visual exhibit in the Museum that you'll see when you go through there...about the...Pearl Harbor...the...the attack, and it's mostly about the air...the air battle.

Mr. Furrer: Uh huh.

Charlie Simmons: Pretty incredible story. Going out with a Springfield 03 rifle and...for protection.

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, we...we did that. One...one other thing. That was...two...two other things. One thing was...they cut the main water line...from...Pearl Harbor station...made Pearl Harbor station over to Ford Island, and we had a swimming pool on Ford Island and the cooks...you had to use water...out of the swimming pool to cook with.

Charlie Simmons: That's...that's right! One of the ships settled...on the...on the...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, I think so.

Charlie Simmons: I think it was the Arizona.

Mr. Furrer: I think that's what they said...that...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...it settled on...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...on a water line and probably the Oklahoma or...

Charlie Simmons: Well...

Mr. Furrer: ...the California.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. And...so, there wasn't a whole lot of hardship it doesn't sound like. Uh, in your particular portion of Ford Island...

Mr. Furrer: No, and...no, and...in...in our squadron, well, it was...within a day or so it just started to be routine.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: (Unintelligible) except our...our work day got longer (chuckles).

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. Did they...did they send out any of the people from your squadron to help out with the wounded, uh, the survivors (unintelligible)?

Mr. Furrer: No, not that I know of.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: No, and everybody pretty well stayed at their own assigned stations. On...on that day, we didn't get anything to eat except sandwiches because they had turned...the...the mess hall into a casualty area. And...and that's where I learned to...to eat...peanut butter and jelly sandwiches because that was our meal on a flight. We had peanut butter and jelly sandwiches all because of...we had no refrigeration or anything like that, you know, in those days.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: So, I still like...I still like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (laughter).

Charlie Simmons: (Laughter) Okay, well, for...so for six months, you're basically doing a lot of aircraft maintenance and...

Mr. Furrer: Yes.

Charlie Simmons: ...and then going out on patrols?

Mr. Furrer: Yes, every fourth day...just as regular as could be...we'd go on patrol on every fourth day. We slept in a hangar at night, and took off right at daybreak for about a six-hour flight.

Charlie Simmons: Was there any change when Admiral Nimitz took over the base there?

Mr. Furrer: Not...not as far as we could tell...or the people coming (unintelligible).

Charlie Simmons: So, it really didn't impact your life? You didn't have a meeting in...?

Mr. Furrer: No, no, not...nothing like that, no.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, okay.

Mr. Furrer: So, he just took over...took the band.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And as far as the ordinary sailor went, he never knew the difference...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...who was in command.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. Okay, did they start bringing a lot more ships into...the harbor?

Mr. Furrer: Oh, yes, yes, we...yeah, that was a...was probably about the main operating...area, you know, for the...and then of course, the Battle of Midway started, and I think it was May, and it was all operated out of...well, Nimitz was in...in Pearl Harbor then.

Charlie Simmons: Uh hum.

Mr. Furrer: And...the story I heard...and I think I read it even, you know, a history book...that...the United States had broken...the Japanese code...

Charlie Simmons: They did, yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...and they knew...the people in Pearl Harbor had...almost a hundred percent...idea that the Japanese were going...going to hit Midway, but Washington D...D.C. wouldn't believe them. And I guess Admiral Nimitz just defied them.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. Well, I don't know about them not believing, but...they had broken the Japanese code, and they knew that the target...that the Japanese were going to attack was...was the code name for...and the Japanese code was...AF, but they didn't know what island that was.

Mr. Furrer: Uh huh.

Charlie Simmons: And...they suspected it might be Midway because that was a key...a key point, and so, they had the...the radio operator on Midway send a...a message in the clear and plain English, it wasn't encrypted, saying that their water tower...their water purification system had broken down, and they were running short of water. And a day or so later, they intercepted a message...in Japanese naval code that said the...AF is having problems with their water supply, so they knew that Midway was AF, and that's why they were able to ambush the Japanese fleet there.

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, that's right, yeah, I...I...

Charlie Simmons: That's very...so...well, uh, it...it just...what were you doing then later after this first...this initial period was over, and...and you...were still...did they keep the JRSs in service for...(unintelligible)?

Mr. Furrer: Oh yes, yes, they did. I think...probably the greater part of...of...1941, and it...I know when I got transferred...about six months later, they were

looking at...a B...B-25s or something like that; they...they finally wound up with...with a...more...with a war plane.

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Mr. Furrer: (Unintelligible), and I think they, well, in fact, I...later on...I seen one of the...one of the guys when I was down in the South Pacific from that...when I was on the island there, and they had a...a twin engine...Mitchell or...or one of those aircraft.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: A twin-engine bomber.

Charlie Simmons: Uh hum. So...so, you were only at...stationed at Ford for what...six months or so?

Mr. Furrer: Oh, after...after the war, yes (unintelligible).

Charlie Simmons: After the war started?

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, I got transferred along...about...well, right after the Battle of Midway.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. And...

Mr. Furrer: In fact, during the Battle of Midway...I worked in the ammunition dump on Oahu to load ammunition for the Battle of Midway.

Charlie Simmons: Oh okay. And what did...what did you do after that then; what was your next assignment?

Mr. Furrer: My next assignment (throat clearing), excuse me, my next assignment was...they called the jeep carriers, uh, the...the...(unintelligible) converted from...merchant ships or whatever they were.

Charlie Simmons: Uh hum.

Mr. Furrer: They were real...real small carriers, and I...I think we carried probably I don't know, twenty-five or thirty aircraft.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And we went on down to the...South Pacific.

Charlie Simmons: Now, were...were you assigned to this ship at Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Furrer: No, no sir; we came back to...Seattle.

Charlie Simmons: You...so, you went back to Seattle?

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, we was in Seattle for three months for training.

Charlie Simmons: What was the name of the ship?

Mr. Furrer: [USS] Altamaha...L...CVE...

Elaine: The ship was A-l-t-a-m-a-h-a, Altamaha.

Mr. Furrer: CVE...number 18, I believe.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. Well, that was in '40...

Mr. Furrer: '42.

Charlie Simmons: '42.

Mr. Furrer: Uh hum.

Charlie Simmons: I didn't realize they had those small carriers...in operation that fast.

Mr. Furrer: Oh yeah, they...they had (unintelligible).

Charlie Simmons: Well, they...they...

Mr. Furrer: In fact, we were scheduled...to go out on one...earlier, the USS Bogue, but it...we weren't ready when the ship was ready, so we had to wait for the...

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: ...and went aboard the Altamaha, and from San Diego we went down to New Caledonia just off the coast of New Zealand, and I spent Christmas Day on...in the harbor in New Caledonia. And we kind of hung around down there in...went out on patrol, you know, things like that...around...in the New Hebrides island.

Charlie Simmons: And this is Christmas...'42?

Mr. Furrer: 1942, yes sir.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. Okay, and...what...what was your assignment onboard the...?

Mr. Furrer: My assignment on there was...on...on the flight deck, and I was a barrier operator. In those days, in the barriers, as the plane would hit...to stop it if it couldn't stop and hit the barrier, our...my...job was to lay the barrier down as...so they could taxi to a parking area.

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Mr. Furrer: They were man-operated barriers; got a guy on each side of the ship on the (unintelligible), lay that cable down and set it back up for the next

plane to land. In fact, on Thanksgiving Day, our planes were in the air and we were having Thanksgiving Dinner up front near as I can remember; a really, normal, bodacious Thanksgiving Dinner, and right in the middle of it...flight quarters sounded, and I had to...run up and get on my flight...my flight status...and I never did get any dinner (laughter).

Charlie Simmons: (Laughter), okay. Now, this was a barrier, not the arresting cables, is that right?

Mr. Furrer: No, no, no, this...this...well, they had the arresting cable, but also this was a barrier...

Charlie Simmons: This was the...one of the...

Mr. Furrer: ...in case they...missed arresting cable, they would hit the barrier.

Charlie Simmons: Right. Do they have more than one or was there just one barrier cable on your ship?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, I...I can't remember.

Charlie Simmons: 'Cause the fleet carriers used to have two or three barriers.

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, they...they could, yeah, but...but these were...

Charlie Simmons: But...but...

Mr. Furrer: ...how high, I really don't remember.

Charlie Simmons: Those were such smaller boats...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: ...just ships that...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, uh hum. Okay.

Mr. Furrer: And then...later on, I got...they broke the squadron up and sent part of the squadron to Guadalcanal. Our Squadron number was VGS-11; they sent part of them to Guadalcanal, and then they took...two Chief Petty Officers...had twenty-three white hats, twenty-five of us, to the island of Funafuti to a Marine squadron.

Charlie Simmons: Why?

Mr. Furrer: An Air Squadron. And we stayed there for I guess about six months. But I spent my twenty-first birthday on the island of Funafuti.

Charlie Simmons: And with a Marine squadron?

Mr. Furrer: With a Marine squadron, yes sir. Well, we went...through the (unintelligible) command, it was a...actually a Marine-occupied island, and there's a Marine Colonel...in command of the island, and it's...all it had on it was an airstrip and a few barracks that the Seabees had built...quarters, you know, but mostly we lived in tents.

Charlie Simmons: What...what sort of...squadron was it; what sort of planes?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, fighter and a bombing squadron – the old SBDs and the F4Fs; I think that's what they were.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: And we stayed there till...they got a Marine crew in their maintenance crew.

Charlie Simmons: Well, now they don't have barriers on islands, so what were you doing there?

Mr. Furrer: On the is...on the island?

Charlie Simmons: Yes sir.

Mr. Furrer: Well, after the...the...we...kind of maintained the runway, and...

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: ...took care of maintenance...like...

Charlie Simmons: (Cough)

Mr. Furrer: ...refueling aircraft and...and things like that. And...we...we got our...got our gasoline in fifty-gallon drums, and we had a pump station that I had to work in...that pump station pulling out of the fifty-gallon barrels into a large...uh, fuel tank.

Charlie Simmons: So...

Mr. Furrer: So, that...that's mainly the thing we did. It was just...

Charlie Simmons: So, just general ground...ground crew duties then?

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, just ground crew, yeah, uh huh.

Charlie Simmons: Okay. Well, what...what...was like...life like on a...on a tropical island in the South Pacific?

Mr. Furrer: Well, at first...it was nice (laughter). I mean, once the Marines got there, it...the squadron Marines, we had a movie and everything. And...

Charlie Simmons: (Cough)

Mr. Furrer: ...it was just...

Charlie Simmons: (Cough)

Mr. Furrer: ...we didn't do an awful lot of anything, you know, we just...like I say it was just...kind of routine, a nice, warm day, we were just below the equator, the Ellis Island group. It was a...British island, and our...our...(pounding sound)...(unintelligible)...somebody said the other day, the island was about, oh, it was a...a mile...mile long and maybe...three-quarters or something, a half a mile wide or something like, it was just...just...(unintelligible); it was used for an airstrip.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: In fact, the...Air Force, Army Air Force, came down there and used our island with the B-24 bombers to bomb the Japanese. Well, the Japanese retaliated. And...I got to tell you about...a Marine Corporal. We...one night...after the...they stirred up the Japanese, we...we hadn't been bothered at all by Japanese, and...after they bombed the...the Japanese, uh, we had an air raid go...air raid siren went off in the middle of the night. So...and the Colonel had told everybody to have foxholes. Well, we had...a little...kid named Jimmy Carter and I lived in a tent together and we dug...a shell...foxhole; we heard the planes come in, the Japanese planes coming, and we both dove in that foxhole, and I know we were both below ground (laughter). And...and we had a church on the island that was a...a missionary church, and it...it was...it really stood out; you could see it. And there was a Marine Corporal named Ladd (sp?), Corporal Ladd; everybody knew Corporal Ladd on that island. The natives...on the island...uh, gathered in the church for protection; Corporal Ladd went in there; he had got them all out and got them into...a safer place; where he put them I don't know, but anyway, they got a direct hit on this church, and it would have killed...

Charlie Simmons: And nobody got hurt?

Mr. Furrer: Nobody got hurt.

Charlie Simmons: Oh okay. Well, that's...

Mr. Furrer: Nobody got hurt, no.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: We had casualties from...but none as far as I know; none of the natives got, you know, from the church episode...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...they...they all survived.

Charlie Simmons: Well, did...did you have more than one bombing by the Japanese?

Mr. Furrer: Oh, yes sir, yes sir.

Charlie Simmons: Really?

Mr. Furrer: Yes sir.

Charlie Simmons: So, they...bombing pretty regular over there then?

Mr. Furrer: Oh yeah, uh huh, yeah. Well, in fact, in...in 1942...in July, I think it was, in July of 1942, there was an article in Life magazine about one of the bombing raids and how the General in charge of the...Air Force...said, "It was every man for himself." (laughter)... 'cause he didn't like it any better than we did.

Charlie Simmons: Well, uh, so, were...were your planes...were...were these on night raids?

Mr. Furrer: Pardon?

Charlie Simmons: Were...were these...these Japanese...air raids...were they all night raids...or...were they at night?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, yes sir, yes sir.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: We...we...like Carter and I...we heard the airplanes coming; we said, "Oh, that's our torpedo...uh, boats." We had some torpedo squadron, torpedo boats. They said, "Oh, that's the torpedo boats...out there running around at night." And then we heard them; we could hear the bombs coming...off the airplane; they just went (*swishing* sounds)...like that.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And we...and then that's when we dove into the foxhole, you know, 'cause we...knew that was the real thing then.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, oh!

Mr. Furrer: But, yeah, they...they killed...I...I think there was probably...our casualties probably...people who were killed...was probably around a dozen people...were killed in that first raid we had.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And...because we had no protection really. I don't know it was just a...the island was just a coral reef is what it amounted to.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. Pretty hard to dig a foxhole in that stuff.

Mr. Furrer: It was, yes sir, it was, uh huh.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Elaine: Was that when they came Nauru? When the Japanese came from Nauru?

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, yeah, I...I think so. At least, that's where they bombed, they bombed us...uh, big chemical plant or something...on the island of Nauru.

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Mr. Furrer: And...and that...they said after they...they bombed that, that the Japanese could ever use that...whatever it was...that they were using on that island.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: So...

Charlie Simmons: Well, how long were you...on Funafuti?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, about...I...I think...around six months.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: And...and then...we got transferred...to a Navy maintenance outfit...on...one of those islands; it was another island down there, (pause) and...Tommy [s/b Jimmy or Tommy ?] Carter, the one...the man I used to work with...he was from Portland, Oregon, and we were out on the runway...(unintelligible) the runway one day...working, doing some

maintenance on one of our aircraft...uh, Marine bomber parked...right alongside of us, and Eleanor Roosevelt got off of it.

Charlie Simmons: Hum!

Mr. Furrer: And she waved to us.

Charlie Simmons: Huh.

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, she was on some kind of a mission for...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...the President, you know, so...

Charlie Simmons: I'll be darned!

Mr. Furrer: Yeah. Well, I...I got to see her.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. Well, did you have any other celebrities...visit you while you were there?

Mr. Furrer: No, no, not...well, we had a couple of...USO shows, but nothing like Bob Hope or that kind of...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...we were kind of lower...lower grade...people that...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. Well, yeah, So, you were there for six months and then you were transferred to a Navy maintenance...?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, yes, it was a...a maintenance squadron of the place we patrolled, and we were just the maintenance people on the...and...I can tell you a kind of a funny story about that.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: We were...we'd...after fly...go along and fly on test hops or something after the maintenance, and...I was on one of these flights one day and we had a...a twin-engine Lockheed bomber; I forget the designation of it, but it was...it was built by Lockheed, it was twin-engine, and we had a...it was a crew of about four or five on a six...(unintelligible) like that. Anyway, we were flying along, I believe, and I believe...it was somewhere in that area, and the pilot got on the intercom and he says, "Hang on guys and watch this." He had seen a...a native canoe, outrigger canoe on the water and he dove that plane...towards the canoe,

and those poor natives...just all went over the side of the...into the water (laughter), and he peeled off and flew away.

Charlie Simmons:

Yeah.

Mr. Furrer:

But...but then...the pilots were all just young people anyway like the rest of us.

Charlie Simmons:

Yeah, sure! And they...just...pretty bored...just flying along...

Mr. Furrer:

Yeah, just flying along, yeah, it was funny.

Charlie Simmons:

Yeah, so, what was life like...with the...with the maintenance...with the Navy maintenance group; how long were you there?

Mr. Furrer:

Uh, let's see, prob...probably about...six or eight months or something like that.

Charlie Simmons:

Yeah.

Mr. Furrer:

And then I got...I got transferred back up to...Hawaii again, and for another...three months. And then...back to the...continental...limits of the United States to...Seattle. And I was...it was just...kind of a receiving station is what it amounted to. Anyway, they gave me orders...to Jacksonville, Florida and...I had thirty days leave, and this was in...uh, June of 1944 and that's when Elaine and I got married. And we left...(unintelligible) and left for Jacksonville, Florida the same day.

Charlie Simmons:

Now, were you...you were in communication; were you writing letters pretty regular?

Mr. Furrer:

Oh yeah.

Elaine:

All the time.

Charlie Simmons:

Yeah?

Mr. Furrer:

In fact, this...friend, Jimmy Carter, or...Jimmy Carter (laughter)...

Elaine:

Tommy.

Mr. Furrer:

Tommy...Tommy Carter...I got a letter from her one day and he didn't have any mail. And he said, "Bill, do you care if I read your letter?"

Charlie Simmons:

(Laughter)

Mr. Furrer:

And I let...I let him read the letter (laughter).

Charlie Simmons:

Well, mail call was pretty important, I think.

Mr. Furrer: Oh, it was, yeah.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, back in those...in those islands; those islands got pretty...pretty lonesome.

Mr. Furrer: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: So, you got...you got...married on your thirty-day leave and then you left the next day from...?

Elaine: Same day.

Mr. Furrer: Well, we left the same day for Jacksonville, Florida. We got married on the 4th of July, and...told her mother about...a week before that we were going to get married, and...

Elaine: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...and then...then we left and...and then we stayed at Jacksonville for the duration of the war then.

Charlie Simmons: Okay, so...

Mr. Furrer: In fact, our...daughter, oldest daughter, was born...on the day the treaty was signed in Japan.

Charlie Simmons: No kidding!

Mr. Furrer: Yeah.

Elaine: On the...in the newspaper, it said, "War's end is set tonight," the day she was born.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Elaine: That was September...2nd...was...was it September 2nd or...1st...1st?

Mr. Furrer: Well, I think it was 1st here, but 2nd out there.

Elaine: Yeah. September 1st, 1945.

Charlie Simmons: Well, what was your job in Jacksonville?

Mr. Furrer: The same thing – maintenance.

Charlie Simmons: Same thing – maintenance?

Mr. Furrer: Same, yeah, maintenance, yeah. We had...

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: ...a...a training squadron...pilots were...oh, mostly training, I mean in advanced training.

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: And we just...just maintenance in the...in the squadron. And we stayed there two and a half years then went to...Pensacola and...for another six months and then...I elected to stay in the Navy, and we had...various stations...on the east coast. And...then went to...uh, out...I came out to California and...and we had...about...two or three years in California. And then the Korean War started, and I...got transferred to Japan to another maintenance squadron; that's what mine was...always in the...in the maintenance.

Charlie Simmons: Alright.

Mr. Furrer: And our...and our airplanes flew from Japan to Korea, patrol planes, DBM...Doug...yeah, Mar...Martin PBM...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...uh, sea planes.

Charlie Simmons: Were you...now, what...what air station were you at in Japan then?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, I was at...well, right...it was...it was a town...just a little town called...

Elaine: Oppama.

Mr. Furrer: ...Oppama...which is right on... Yokosuka harbor. It...it was an old...World War II Japanese station. Fact, our job...our hangars were Japanese...hangars that we stayed in.

Charlie Simmons: So, it was sort of in the Tokyo Bay area then?

Mr. Furrer: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: Only about...yeah...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...about...from (unintelligible)...it was about thirty miles.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Elaine: We were on a harbor.

Mr. Furrer: We were between Tok...Tokyo and Yokosuka. And Yokosuka is a big...our Navy operated base.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, yeah. Well...

Elaine: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: ...so, you stayed in...how many years...did you get in the Navy then?

Mr. Furrer: Uh, twenty years, six months and...five days or something like that. So, I get...I got retirement pay for twenty-one years.

Charlie Simmons: And you got to go with him to...to Japan (speaking to Elaine)?

Elaine: I didn't get to go with him, but...fourteen months after he got there, the girls and I...we had had another daughter by then...

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Elaine: ...we got on a troop ship in Seattle and sixteen days later, we landed in Yokohama harbor, and...we went by way of...

Mr. Furrer: Adak.

Elaine: ...Adak, yeah, I couldn't think...Adak, and let some other people off of there whose husbands were stationed there.

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Mr. Furrer: And so, we had sixteen days aboard...the troop ship...from Seattle to...Adak to Yok...Yokohama harbor.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Elaine: Then we lived in...Tokyo for a little while and then we moved to Yokohama, and we lived there until...he was transferred back to...the mainland.

Charlie Simmons: Well, that's great to get your...be able to take your family with you!

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, we...we...well, what we did...we lived in...in government housing, United States government housing...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...and...and we just had to wait for a vacancy. A lot of people did live in Japanese...housing though.

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Mr. Furrer: And as far as getting along with the Japanese, it was fine. We had no problem; we went any place...we went...and had...nobody ever, you

know, bothered you or anything like that. I mean, in fact, she had a maid, a Japanese girl, all the time we were out there.

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Elaine: My youngest daughter was three when we got there, and our...our maid just loved Laurie (sp?). And when we left, she was...she came to see us off...our maid.

Charlie Simmons: Uh huh.

Elaine: She just cried, "Oh, Laurie Laurie!"

Charlie Simmons: Oh well, that was...as I said...what...what year was this...that you went over?

Elaine: 1953 and '54.

Charlie Simmons: '54... '53 and '54.

Elaine: Uh hum.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. Well, yeah, that was pretty...pretty nice living there...

Elaine: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: ...than I would imagine with the Americans...

Mr. Furrer: We...

Charlie Simmons: ...the American dollar was very strong and...

Mr. Furrer: Uh huh, yeah.

Charlie Simmons: ...pretty...pretty cheap to live.

Elaine: It was...very different, too, and...and I look at pictures of downtown Tokyo now, and I even drove on the Ginza and I...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah (chuckles)

Mr. Furrer: But...

Elaine: ...wouldn't do that now.

Mr. Furrer: ...the...well, this was in...(unintelligible) it was seven years...after the war ended, and they had just begin...pretty...begin to rebuild...'cause it was just a lot of...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...vacant spots out there; a lot of...the cities had been destroyed, so...but as far as...with the Japanese people, we had Japanese...men working in our squadron.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: We had aircraft painters and...and people like that, you know, so...it was...just like we'd been...friends for years.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, it's...it's amazing how...how rapidly...the...all the animosity and the hatred...and the blood hatred...went away for a lot of people. I know some people that were in combat that...that never did forgive the Japanese for...what they did.

Mr. Furrer: Oh, that's right, uh huh.

Charlie Simmons: But that was...a very personal thing for them.

Mr. Furrer: Yeah. Well yeah, they...they were pretty brutal people...

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: ...I mean as far as their army went.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: Especially in...in...in the prison camps.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: That...that our prisoners...were just, you know, they never knew whether they were going to live the next day or not.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, yeah, they were...they were pretty...pretty bad. Well, so after you got back from Japan, you're...you finished out your career in...?

Mr. Furrer: Well, I came to Corpus Christi, Texas (laughter).

Charlie Simmons: Okay.

Mr. Furrer: We was down there for...and in various stages after that...we were down there for a couple of years...then we...went to Hawaii...was stationed in Hawaii and...and then...back to California where I finally got out of the Navy.

Charlie Simmons: Did you ever have any more shipboard duty or were you all...

Mr. Furrer: Well, the last year, I was in...I was aboard...assigned to...the (unintelligible words) and I was in the carrier squadron, and we only

went out for...two weeks at a time or something like that for training.
And so, I never made a long cruise on a carrier.

Charlie Simmons:

Yeah.

Mr. Furrer:

So, I went from...1942 on that little jeep carrier till 1961 when I got out...before I got aboard another carrier.

Charlie Simmons:

Yeah (chuckles).

Elaine:

He was never a seagoing sailor.

Charlie Simmons:

Yeah, doesn't sound like it, yeah, and you were always in the air wing.

Mr. Furrer:

Yeah, I (unintelligible).

Charlie Simmons:

You always...you always...aviation.

Mr. Furrer:

I was an Airedale.

Charlie Simmons:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, well...well, it sounds like it was an exciting way of life...for both of you.

Elaine:

It was...it was...

Mr. Furrer:

Well, it was; we...we had a good life. It was...

Elaine:

And a good life since...

Mr. Furrer:

Yeah.

Elaine:

...you know? Bought a farm.

Charlie Simmons:

So, sixty-nine years...that...that sounds...sounds pretty good.

Mr. Furrer:

Yeah, we...still get along pretty good (laughter).

Charlie Simmons:

Well, it...it looks like it. Well, bless your heart.

Mr. Furrer:

Yeah.

Charlie Simmons:

Well, it sounds like we're...I'm...we're kind of...I'm running out of questions here, and so...if you've got any more anecdotes well, we can...be glad to put them in the record here.

Mr. Furrer:

Yeah, let's see...

Charlie Simmons:

But...

Mr. Furrer:

Well, I think I...

Charlie Simmons:

...I think we've got a...we got a pretty good set of information about you, so...

Mr. Furrer:

Uh huh.

Charlie Simmons: ...well, I want to...wrap it up then, and tell you how much we appreciate you coming over and spending...this time with us today, and...

Mr. Furrer: Well, I...I'm...real...happy in...like I...I said...this was awesome (chuckles).

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, well, well I think...I think you're awesome, and I thank both of you for what you've done for the country. I...you know, I don't think we say it...enough, but I want to thank you on behalf of the Museum and...and all the people...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, could I add one more thing?

Charlie Simmons: Yes sir.

Mr. Furrer: About three weeks ago, our other daughter up in Washington, had made arrangements...for her and I...to take one of these Honor Flights to Washington D.C.

Charlie Simmons: Uh hum.

Mr. Furrer: And we spent...one day touring Washington D.C., and...it was all paid for!

Charlie Simmons: Oh wow, wow!

Mr. Furrer: And we spent...well, we left...well we were gone three days, you know, two days air traveling...and stayed in a...Baltimore Hilton Hotel and (laughter).

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, well, well that's marvelous! That is...that is...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, it was...it was for World War II veterans...yes it was.

Charlie Simmons: And you went to the World War II Memorial...

Mr. Furrer: Yes sir.

Charlie Simmons: ...on the Mall? Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And I got a picture of...and he asked me to come and get his pic...he asked me to come and get a picture with him...was Bob Dole, and...

Charlie Simmons: Really?!

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, and...and as I said...at the Memorial.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah.

Mr. Furrer: And he...motioned me to come over and...and let me...and I got...a picture with...with Bob Dole and...

Elaine: And Elizabeth.

Mr. Furrer: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: Well that's...well that's pretty special.

Mr. Furrer: That's what I thought of that.

Charlie Simmons: Boy, I tell you, yeah! Well...

Mr. Furrer: And my daughter, Margaret (sp?)...uh, Mrs. Dole took a picture of her...with her sunglasses on, and then she said, "Well, honey, come back over here; I want a picture without your sunglasses on!" (laughter)

Elaine: Bob is not well, you know?

Mr. Furrer: Oh no, Bob...Bob Dole is...

Elaine: Crippled up.

Mr. Furrer: ...bad shape.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah, well yeah, that's what I...I'd heard.

Mr. Furrer: Yeah, it...

Charlie Simmons: (Unintelligible words).

Mr. Furrer: ...it took two people to get him out of the car and two people to hold him to get him onto a chair.

Charlie Simmons: Yeah. Well...

Mr. Furrer: But he's...

Charlie Simmons: ...well, I'll close this off now then without further ado, and...and again, (unintelligible), I want to thank you and...and you, too, Elaine, very much for...

Mr. Furrer: Well, this...this is...

Charlie Simmons: ...for both of you for the service you've done...

Mr. Furrer: Yeah.

Charlie Simmons: ...for the country...because you served just as well as he did then.

Mr. Furrer: (Unintelligible words).

Charlie Simmons: You didn't wear the uniform, but you were doing all the heavy lifting in a lot of cases.

Elaine: Yes, yes.
Charlie Simmons: So, thank you very much.
Mr. Furrer: It's been a pleasure for us to be here.
Charlie Simmons: Thank you very much, sir.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
CD – #OH03837 – Mr. William H. “Bill” Furrer
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