

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Telephone Interview with

Mr. James W. Metcalf

Date of Interview: March 15, 2013

Brian Murphy: Today is March the 15, 2013. Brian Murphy's name – Brian Murphy. I'm interviewing James W. Metcalf?

Mr. Metcalf: Right.

Brian Murphy: Okay; lives in Phoenix, Arizona; veteran of World War II; serving in the Navy in the Pacific Theatre. It's a phone interview. This interview is 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. And, Jim, I wanted to make sure that you understood that this interview will be part of the public archives available to the public for research here at the...

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah.

Brian Murphy: ...okay. And we will be sending you a...a copy. Now, I want to make sure ,

Mr. Metcalf: Pinnacle Peak Road, Block 130, yes.

Brian Murphy: Pinnacle Peak Road, Block 130, Phoenix, 85050?

Mr. Metcalf: Right.

Brian Murphy: Okay. James, can you state your name and your date of birth for us please?

Mr. Metcalf: James W. Metcalf. Born on September 8th of 1924.

Brian Murphy: 1924, thank you, Jim. Is it alright that I call you Jim, right?

Mr. Metcalf: Sure, sure.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: That's what I go by.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Now, Jim, I think you told me...that you had been born in Toledo but moved to Detroit...when you were a young lad...

Mr. Metcalf: That's correct.

Brian Murphy: ...right?

Mr. Metcalf: Right, and I was extremely young; I have no memory of Toledo whatsoever.

Brian Murphy: Surely, and then your...your parents moved to Detroit and...how old were you when the war broke out then, Jim?

Mr. Metcalf: Well, do-do-do-do, I would have been seventeen, I guess, when Pearl Harbor took place.

Brian Murphy: Okay, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Fact, I was...I was...(chuckle) working...a gas station...

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: ...in my neighborhood where I lived...

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: On that Sunday morning, and I had the radio on.

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: I did hear President Roosevelt come on and...tell us what happened.

Brian Murphy: What was the reaction there; typical, I'm sure.

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, it was shock and..., "What do those crazy Japs think they can do?!" And we...we thought of them as little people with glasses (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Yes, yes, the propaganda view. Had you...

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah.

Brian Murphy: ...Jim, as...as a note, did you have any inkling that the United States and Japan might have been...uh, protagonists of any sort? Had this been in the news?

Mr. Metcalf: Before hand? No, no.

Brian Murphy: Okay. So...

Mr. Metcalf: I don't remember anything really in the news having to do with...concerns about Japan.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: I know I...in reading over the years, I know that our military were aware of the problems that...

Brian Murphy: Certainly. So, you graduated high school in Detroit and you were working gas station...December 7, '41 and seventeen years old. And of course, you wanted to go and sign up I'm sure, but too young.

Mr. Metcalf: I did and my dad wouldn't sign for me (laughter).

Brian Murphy: Ah! (laughter), okay. And did you ever get him to sign for you or did you have to wait till...

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, I was eighteen when I went in.

Brian Murphy: Okay. When was that, Jim?

Mr. Metcalf: That was...well, I actually was sworn in in December of '42...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...had all my physical and stuff...possibly in November. I don't remember now, but I had...period of time before I had to be sworn in, and I made a trip to Winnipeg, Canada...

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: ...to visit relatives, and...call a girlfriend back at that time (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: I was up there...the news reported that the U.S. was going to stop all enlistments and everything would be through the draft.

Brian Murphy: Ah!

Mr. Metcalf: Took me up...I thought I might...go into the Canadian service.

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: But an uncle of mine who I admired, uh, he'd served in World War I and he told me..., "Oh, he would be happy to have me serving in the Canadian services; you might regret in later years that you didn't serve your own country."

Brian Murphy: Certainly.

Mr. Metcalf: Which was wise advice and so I ended up...going back and got sworn in.

Brian Murphy: When was that, Jim, what time?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, that was in Dec...in December, but I don't remember the actual...I remember there was a notice to report...that I found out in the snow in the front of the house...

Brian Murphy: (Chuckle)

Mr. Metcalf: ...and it was soaked... 'cause the snow had melted.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: And I figured I'm in the...deep stuff right then because...I didn't feel that they would believe me that had...hadn't gotten the notice.

Brian Murphy: Surely.

Mr. Metcalf: (Chuckles), but there was no problem from it. When I went in and gave it to them, they...they said they would give me another date which was shortly after that; I don't remember exactly what those dates were, but...

Brian Murphy: What year would that be, Jim?

Mr. Metcalf: That would be '42.

Brian Murphy: 1942, okay. (Throat clearing), excuse me. Now, uhm, you...you...where...where did you enlist at?

Mr. Metcalf: In Detroit.

Brian Murphy: In Detroit, in...March or something of...no, it wouldn't have been...it would have been...

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, it would have been...possibly November...

Brian Murphy: Of '42?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah.

Brian Murphy: Okay, in Detroit.

Mr. Metcalf: Right.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Just making a note.

Mr. Metcalf: Right after Christmas that I...and that was another thing. I was afraid they wouldn't believe me when I...that I...they thought I would have...wanted to stay home for Christmas and so I...

Brian Murphy: (Laughter)

Mr. Metcalf: ...(unintelligible) the notice, but they...they didn't give me any problem whatsoever.

Brian Murphy: Oh, is that right (unintelligible)?

Mr. Metcalf: They gave me a new date which was...

Brian Murphy: Alright.

Mr. Metcalf: ...kind of the 27th or so of...December.

Brian Murphy: Alright. So, after you enlisted, you went over to Great Lakes Station for basic training?

Mr. Metcalf: Sure did, yep!

Brian Murphy: Boy, that'd be cold if you...if that was November.

Mr. Metcalf: (Unintelligible) two months' worth in there and...a lot of snow.

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: The barracks...were brand new barracks. All the camp, I forget, it was several miles from the...base, Great Lakes base camp,...

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and being brand new, the...the barracks were, well they weren't furred...they weren't furred out, they were bare-stud on the inside...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and frost was on the windows, and (chuckles)...

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and like the obstacle course, you had to go right through the snow to run...they still put you through the obstacle course (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: The first guy in line would have to kind of dig down in the snow to get into the...the tunnel thing...you had to crawl through.

Brian Murphy: Oh boy, oh boy!

Mr. Metcalf: Oh boy! It was really something.

Brian Murphy: I bet; I bet. Fortunately, you were from Detroit, so you knew something about snow and cold.

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, but...this is...you get the winds off of Lake Michigan and...oh boy!

Brian Murphy: I've...I've heard that is...that is...bitterly cold. I've been to...Chicago when that winds blowing and it is cold! Now, how long were you in basic there, Jim?

Mr. Metcalf: Two months.

Brian Murphy: For two months you were in basic training?

Mr. Metcalf: January, February, yeah.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: That's right.

Brian Murphy: And you went from there to where?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, I went to...Norman, Oklahoma to Aviation Ordnance School.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: That was 'cause I always loved airplanes, and I...well, I'd built all kinds of model airplanes and I also had the...gas-engine airplanes that I built and flew.

Brian Murphy: Oh, is that right?

Mr. Metcalf: I loved guns...

Brian Murphy: (Chuckle)

Mr. Metcalf: ...so, to me, that was ideal to get into Aviation Ordnance.

Brian Murphy: It's a great combination, yes, yes. And what...did they train you on...what, Jim, in Norman?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, all...all kinds of...yeah, guns, ammunition...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...bombs...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...fuses...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...bore sighting of...gun, wing guns.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see, okay. You didn't know what kind of aviation you would go into, but you were...training for aviation?

Mr. Metcalf: Right, had no idea; they didn't give you any idea where they might use you.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see. I see. Now, you're from Detroit...

Mr. Metcalf: They asked for volunteers for Gunnery School somewhere near the end of the course.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: I stuck my hand up there and...

Brian Murphy: And where did they ship you then?

Mr. Metcalf: Went to Purcell, Oklahoma.

Brian Murphy: Surely.

Mr. Metcalf: Which was...not far from Norman, Oklahoma. I don't remember the mileage now, but they were...very...quite close together.

Brian Murphy: Yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: And Purcell was the most fun I had in the Navy.

Brian Murphy: (Chuckle), okay, why is that?

Mr. Metcalf: 'Cause it was the most fun I ever had with guns.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: As we...all they did there was teach you to...fire guns. Uh, everything was...all kinds of discipline was relaxed.

Brian Murphy: Ah!

Mr. Metcalf: Fact, when we got off of the...bus, when we got there...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...the officer was a Lieutenant, said, “Your...your first order is...get to...out of those whites and into your...blue jeans and...dungarees”...

Brian Murphy: Dungarees, right, yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: ..., “and get to the canteen and get a beer.”

Brian Murphy: (Laughter)

Mr. Metcalf: That was the first order (laughter).

Brian Murphy: (Laughter), and what...when was that; what time of year?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh (pause)...July of '43.

Brian Murphy: What...I'm...I'm sorry, Jim, what'd you say?

Mr. Metcalf: July of '43.

Brian Murphy: Oh, July, okay. Okay. And they trained you with...what kind of weapons at Purcell?

Mr. Metcalf: Every kind imaginable.

Brian Murphy: Is that right?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, we used...fired Tommy guns; we fired forty-five caliber pistols; fired...uh, all kinds of shotguns, and was skeet and had shotguns mounted...on tripod with a...a spade-grip on the stock.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: Big, big sites on them...mounted on it and you would fire trap with it. They had...turrets of...they were...a mock-up turret...

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: ...had a shotgun mounted there, and you would...fire...trap...uh, clay pigeons with that as well.

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: And you'd do regular skeet.

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles)

Mr. Metcalf: Fact, if you got a perfect twenty-five, uh, the Gunnery Officer would buy you a case of beer.

Brian Murphy: (Laughter), did you ever earn that?

Mr. Metcalf: I did earn one.

Brian Murphy: (Laughter)

Mr. Metcalf: And...shared it with my buddies.

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles), of course. Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: My...

Brian Murphy: Now, did you fly...

Mr. Metcalf: ...my shoulder would be black and blue...

Brian Murphy: Yeah, I bet that's right! Now, Jim, did you find...uh, as you went into the...into armed combat, did you find that training was helpful?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh yes!

Brian Murphy: Okay, so it was an effective way of training you?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, you...you learn to lead in it, but it's more by instinct. Of course, you can mathematically figure it out...what the lead should be which (chuckle)...you're not taking time to try and figure anything mathematically.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: But...when you're actually firing at live targets...

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: ...but you do...pretty much automatically...throw in the kind of lead you'd need.

Brian Murphy: Sure. How long were you in Purcell at...doing the weapons training?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, do-do-do-do (pause), (unintelligible)...two months 'cause we left there in August and...and we were headed for Jacksonville.

Brian Murphy: Okay. this time you knew what you were going to be doing? Right aerial...gunnery?

Mr. Metcalf: But I didn't...still didn't know what kind of airplane.

Brian Murphy: Oh, is that right? Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Didn't know till we got to Jacksonville and (chuckles) we were taken down to the hangar and there was the TBMs; we were introduced to the TBF/TBM...

Brian Murphy: Right, well...

Mr. Metcalf: ...designations. TBF means that Grumman built the airplane and they were the ones that designed it.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: They were so busy with other aircraft...in the Hellcat, F6F...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...others that they farmed out; the TBF...manufacture to General Motors and so anything built by General Motors was called a TBM.

Brian Murphy: Okay, okay. And they used those Curtiss radials, right? Radial engines?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: I was introduced to a Marine Pilot...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and...somewhere...I don't think I've got the name of my Radioman, but...started flying out of Jacksonville and...

Brian Murphy: May...may I ask, Jim, did you...were they given...did they...appeared not to have given you a choice what plane to fly on, they just...pointed to you and said, "That's what you're going to be flying on," is that correct?

Mr. Metcalf: Yep.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Okay. And...you were flying on a TBF or TBM, and...you had a Marine Corps Pilot I...I think you said, and...and a Radioman, is that correct?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, uh hum.

Brian Murphy: And that's what you did in Jacksonville was fly, fly, fly...just...?

Mr. Metcalf: Yep, that was it. You'd go out over the ocean and...most cases.

Brian Murphy: Is that the same group or the same plane that that group of people...or...of...of pilots that were lost...in the so-called Bermuda Triangle?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, uh hum, in the Triangle there. Yes, that's right.

Brian Murphy: I see. I see, interesting. Okay, then you were in Jacksonville for how long training...uh, getting familiar with this aircraft?

Mr. Metcalf: See what I can come up with here.

Brian Murphy: Did...did you do aerial gunnery while you were...there at Jacksonville?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh yeah.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: We fired...I towed sleeves...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...had your ammunition tips were...painted to where they would mark the sleeves so they could identify whose...guns had...the shots came...the shots came...the hits came from.

Brian Murphy: I see. Was it difficult to get used to...shooting at that moving target?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, I thought it was a lot of fun.

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles), you're...you're still seventeen or eighteen...well, you're still seventeen, aren't you, or eighteen now, yes.

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, yes.

Brian Murphy: Yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: A lot of the flying and all through October...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...all through September as well. Log book here...(pause), yeah it was...September we...well, it was the middle of August when we went down there, but we...somehow, I don't find any...log book...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...entries for...

Brian Murphy: So, after Jacksonville, you went to where?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, there's August, but it's...no, okay. Uh, from Jacksonville we went up to...Quonset Point.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Is that Rhode Island?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: And that's where we...were joined with this...became a squadron; we all joined together there with the pilots, radiomen, and gunners.

Brian Murphy: Okay. And how many planes in a...in a squadron?

Mr. Metcalf: Eighteen.

Brian Murphy: Eighteen planes to a squadron, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: We had more crews than eighteen so, you don't...didn't...like the Air Force...we didn't have an airplane that was "our" airplane specifically.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: We were given an airplane that was for...(unintelligible) in my case, ordnance cleaning the...the guns (chiming sound in background).

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: But...you went flying, you were given a tail number to...that was your plane for that flight, and...

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see. I see.

Mr. Metcalf: And...you didn't have names on the aircraft and what have you like they did...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...in the Air Force.

Brian Murphy: No decorations?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, not at all.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Okay, and you were at Quonset for...Quonset Point rather, for...uh, joining up with your squadron...squadron number was what? You remember?

Mr. Metcalf: (Unintelligible) we were VT13...

Brian Murphy: VT13.

Mr. Metcalf: VT indicated torpedo planes.

Brian Murphy: Oh okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Dive bombers were VBs and of course, the fighters were VFs.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Later on, we became part of an Air Group Thirteen, but...at that point in time, was strictly...the squadron was...VT13.

Brian Murphy: VT13. Okay. Eighteen planes, eighteen plus crews, obviously, as you were saying, and...uh, when you were assigned this...as part of the squadron...13, did you do...continue to do flying as a squadron...maybe?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, oh yes.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Formation flying, that sort of thing?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, every kind of...yeah.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Had you...

Mr. Metcalf: But...November 15th is when we went down to...Westerly, Rhode Island.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Small base which only took care of...our squadron or...one squadron at a time.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: And...the only personnel there were...maintenance of the base chow hall and...barracks and all that kind of thing. And...only aircraft there were...squadron aircraft and...we were it (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Okay. Jim...

Mr. Metcalf: I...

Brian Murphy: ...Jim, at what time did you start practicing with either torpedoes or bombs?

Mr. Metcalf: November of '43.

Brian Murphy: Okay, at Quonset Point?

Mr. Metcalf: No, Westerly.

Brian Murphy: Oh, at Westerly, okay, that's when you started doing the training with the...ordnance itself.

Mr. Metcalf: Outright training was at Westerly, yeah.

Brian Murphy: Okay, okay. And...

Mr. Metcalf: I was looking at the November...log book here at...my first hop...with the squadron was on November the 13th.

Brian Murphy: Oh boy!

Mr. Metcalf: I told you yesterday, I've got a bunch of 13s in my (chuckle)...

Brian Murphy: Yes, yes, absolutely, you do! So, you were practicing torpedo...uh, runs, that sort of thing?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, we were doing the firing at the...towed sleeves and...some note here, fired two hundred rounds; forty-six hits.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: Five torpedo runs, uh, (pause), night flying, squadron tactics.

Brian Murphy: When did you start...practicing to land on a...a small carrier deck? At Westerly as well?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, they...I don't know when the pilots got carrier qualified.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, but from my standpoint, my first (chuckle) flights were from the carrier.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see, okay. Okay. So, Westerly...what kind of...would...you...you wouldn't use obviously live...torpedoes, but what...what kind of a...?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, they were concrete ones (laughter).

Brian Murphy: Oh concrete! Oh, see, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: But they were the...the same weight.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Did you drop them over water or just on to the land?

Mr. Metcalf: Over water, over water, yeah.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: I can swear that both...both times we had live drops of...well, they called it a live drop, but a...dropping them on a target that was a...towed by...well, it wouldn't have been a destroyer, but some kind of...what would be towing it and you'd drop it...and similar to firing at a...towed sleeve from the standpoint of...firing a gun.

Brian Murphy: I see, I see. Was it difficult to hit a moving ship, Jim? At this point, certainly you hadn't a lot of experience, but...?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, well yeah, I got...when they're coming in on that...the...the thing is you've got to get down...you got to get your speed down and you got to get down low...

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: ...right down...a hundred feet off the water...in order to not to...that the torpedo doesn't get all busted up when you drop it.

Brian Murphy: Certainly.

Mr. Metcalf: But...when you're in the...live situation, you're a real target in a...(chuckle)...

Brian Murphy: Always coming abeam...of the target?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, yep.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Which would make...

Mr. Metcalf: (Unintelligible) you would be going up over the...whatever kind of ship it was you dropped on, you'd normally be going right over the top of it afterwards.

Brian Murphy: Boy! Alright, so you started...started this kind of work over at Westerly, and from where...now you're...now you're getting...more and more training. Where do you go from Westerly?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, we went to Oceana.

Brian Murphy: For...is that near Norfolk?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: It's about...used to be outside of Norfolk.

Brian Murphy: Okay. And what was there in Oceana? What did you do there? What was the squadron? I...I presume the whole squadron went...(unintelligible)?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh yes, yeah, we...we flew down and...and I don't remember how they got the...'cause you couldn't get everybody in the...our planes. Trying to remember how the others got down there.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: Unless they turned around and flew back and then got the other...they might have done that; I can't remember now.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Was it...and Oceana...was a...a Naval airbases? Is that what that was?

Mr. Metcalf: NAS Oceana, yep.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Naval air station, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: And we were flying out over the ocean, and what have you.

Brian Murphy: Okay, more training.

Mr. Metcalf: Yep. And January 1st I had two flights...uh, first time we saw eighteen-ship convoy.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Heading north?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, I didn't put down where they were headed (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Sure, most likely...

Mr. Metcalf: They were going out.

Brian Murphy: Yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: They had...they had to be going out though.

Brian Murphy: Yes, surely, surely. (Throat clearing).

Mr. Metcalf: And we saw the USS Ranger.

Brian Murphy: Oh! Okay. This was...underway, it was underway? The Ranger was underway?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, yes, uh hum. It was, I don't know whether it was coming in or going out, but...all we were told it was the Ranger and possibly the...the number on the flight deck would tell us what it was.

Brian Murphy: Surely. And at Oceana, what were the conditions like? You had...full barracks; good food; all that sort of thing?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh yeah. Yeah. And you got good liberty from there.

Brian Murphy: Oh, you did, okay. Were you able to go and see your folks up in Detroit or...did you try?

Mr. Metcalf: Well, not...we got a leave...uh, (pause), I know we...well, this is January, but I know I had a Christmas leave.

Brian Murphy: Surely. This was...

Mr. Metcalf: And...

Brian Murphy: ...at Oceana you are at January of '44, is that correct?

Mr. Metcalf: Right.

Brian Murphy: Yeah, okay. Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Bussed me...to Norfolk.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: I'm flying from the Norfolk airbase. Then we were taken down to the docks in Norfolk, and...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and to...alongside the USS Franklin. I remember it was CV13.

Brian Murphy: How amazing! Another 13!

Mr. Metcalf: Standing there next to something that big...is...it was just...you were in...awestruck (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: I bet, I bet! Do you...do you recall the tonnage of the Franklin, how big a boat it was?

Mr. Metcalf: Well, it was an Essex class carrier which is as big as we had back in those days.

Brian Murphy: Surely.

Mr. Metcalf: They were...eight hundred and seventy-five feet long, the flight deck was.

Brian Murphy: Right. And did you...become part of the Franklin's air crew at that point?

Mr. Metcalf: We were part of the air group.

Brian Murphy: Air group, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Called the Air Group 13 (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: We were not ship's company; we were just assigned to the ship. But we went out on the shakedown cruise.

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: We became...plank owners of the ship; I had my Plant Owner's certificate framed here...(unintelligible).

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles), okay, right. What is that...who issues that?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, the Captain of the ship.

Brian Murphy: The Captain of the ship issues a Plank Owners, is that what you called it?

Mr. Metcalf: It's everybody that's on her when she...her first...time out which is a shakedown cruise...which we were heading down...towards Trinidad.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see. It...and on...on the shakedown cruise, did you...uh, cruise itself, did you...fly from the plane?

Mr. Metcalf: We got down in the vicinity of Trinidad...we (chuckle) my very first flight...

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: ...carrier...in the drink.

Brian Murphy: Oh my! What happened?

Mr. Metcalf: Well, the engine was flooded.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Didn't have good power, but...in fact, he really should not have taken off; he should have turned it down...but he thought he could make it, but we...didn't have the air speed. And after we got off the...we got no trouble...getting off the carrier...

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: ...then we were losing power, and the...cabinets...there was a new radar system and it had a big ball out on the starboard wing, the right wing...

Brian Murphy: By big ball...how big do you mean?

Mr. Metcalf: (Unintelligible) up there.

Brian Murphy: Jim how big do you mean when you say big ball?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, (pause) about two feet...

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see.

Mr. Metcalf: ...diameter.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: About a hundred and fifty pounds, so that...had to be trimmed when it...but when we didn't have the power...

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: ...started turning over. And I hadn't been paying close attention, then I happened to look up...and I'm seeing water.

Brian Murphy: (Laughter).

Mr. Metcalf: (Unintelligible), "My life is over! (chuckles)." It goes through your head...immediately. Fact, and if we'd of gone in upside down, inverted, none of us would have got out.

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: But the starboard wing hit the water first and it spun the aircraft around instead of going on in that way, and so we were upright.

Brian Murphy: Oh!

Mr. Metcalf: All three of us did get out, and...

Brian Murphy: The Radioman...was able to climb up...through the plane?

Mr. Metcalf: Went up and came out the canopy right behind the Pilot.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: He had discussed this and there was a hatch down below where he was at, but that would be...letting water in immediately, so the plane would sink even quicker.

Brian Murphy: Certainly.

Mr. Metcalf: 'Cause he was...crawl up through that tunnel, it was kind of a tunnel...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...up there. I had an escape hatch on my turret which I would...I had a lever on my right hand and it pushed that forward and pushed the...the whole side of the turret out.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: I got caught on the harness on the armrest and it made me think I was...

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles)

Mr. Metcalf: ...in the panic you think you're going down with it.

Brian Murphy: I bet!

Mr. Metcalf: But that...that's what it was, and back up and unhooked myself and got out.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: All three of us jumped in the water basically at the same time.

Brian Murphy: Now, Jim, what was the procedure? Obviously, it's a shakedown cruise, uh, the Captain obviously if he's the Captain of an aircraft carrier, he's experienced. What was the procedure? You went off the...was it a straight...flight deck or angled flight deck like they have now?

Mr. Metcalf: Had an angled flight deck...they all were straight in those days.

Brian Murphy: Okay, and you went straight out...the front of the boat into the water. Did the boat then veer off or...?

Mr. Metcalf: No, we had...we had cleared the ship...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and we were off to the...right...to the starboard side (unintelligible).

Brian Murphy: I see, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: But we were within sight of the ship. They saw us go in and...fact, I don't know who or how they got a picture, but years later a squadron member sent me a picture of when we were in the water. He said he checked the tail number and it was verified it was...our plane...as...when we went in the drink.

Brian Murphy: Is that right? Wow, wow. You still have that picture?

Mr. Metcalf: I sure do!

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles), I bet you do, yes. Went swimming on your first flight.

Mr. Metcalf: Right.

Brian Murphy: After your shakedown cruise, uh, well how long were you with the...uh, the Franklin, uh, until you were heading out to combat?

Mr. Metcalf: Well, we came back into Norfolk and the...various repairs that the ship might have needed...

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and we...and we just got rid of those airplanes that had that...radar ball on it.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Was that a discontinued modification?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, it was something that they apparently tested out and...(unintelligible) worked out very well, so...we got rid of them. I didn't...I never saw them on any other aircraft...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...squadron, so I don't...as far as I know, that was the only time they used it that way.

Brian Murphy: What kind of air...uh, radar was it for? Uh, aircraft or...for...surface radar, what...what was it for?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, but it was...it had like a...a scanner that was out there that would...sweep back and forth underneath the housing...

Brian Murphy: Yes. Huh.

Mr. Metcalf: ...the aircraft or it could be on surface ships.

Brian Murphy: Surely, okay, okay. So, you were in Norfolk, and then...maybe by April or so you were...heading out or what?

Mr. Metcalf: (Pause)...December we got a five-day leave; that's when I flew to Winnipeg.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Actually, got ourselves engaged at that time...with my...friend there.

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: Uh (pause) after we got back from Christmas, I'm not sure the...somehow my entries ended.

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: Headed down...through...to...to go through the Canal.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: Got down...when we got...near the Canal, we...the whole air group took off in an attack on the...a simulated attack on the...Panama Canal.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see (chuckles).

Mr. Metcalf: 'Cause torpedo planes were going to be dropping depth charges on the...the dam to...to...

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: ...the dam that supplies the water power.

Brian Murphy: Surely.

Mr. Metcalf: And the...(unintelligible) the...the dive bombers, I guess, flew around the airport with the anti-air...arm...Air Force is supposed to be defending it, but there was no Air Force planes that came up while we were doing that (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles), oh okay.

Mr. Metcalf: We flew up and down the Canal sightseeing and then landed at...uh, Panama City...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...Air Force Base.

Brian Murphy: Yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: And we purposely did not...fold the wings on any of the aircraft, and we put our wing tips to wing tip...down, uh, taxiway. (Chuckle) and the Air Force guys were saying, "How many ships are out there?!" (laughter)

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles), yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: They couldn't see there was just the one ship.

Brian Murphy: (Laughter), how many...how many...planes were in the air group?

Mr. Metcalf: About...ninety-five or so.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see! I see. All TBFs or...TBMs?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, no, there'd be eighteen TBMs. You'd have SB2Cs, and I think there was eighteen of those, and we had thirty-six of the F6F Hellcats.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Okay...

Mr. Metcalf: So,...flew into San Diego, I don't know, I think two weeks was about all we had there, and we headed out for Pearl Harbor.

Brian Murphy: Oh okay. Okay, from San Diego?

Mr. Metcalf: From San Diego, yeah.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum, uh hum. That must have been a busy...naval base at that point? That would be what...April or so of '44?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, right.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum. More training flights, that sort of thing?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, we were always doing that.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Then you went to Pearl Harbor; what was there, Jim, describe that.

Mr. Metcalf: Well, it was...the...the ship docked...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and they had all the hula girls...were there...

Brian Murphy: (Laughter)

Mr. Metcalf: ...(unintelligible) with us.

Brian Murphy: (Unintelligible), yes of course.

Mr. Metcalf: But they off-loaded our aircraft...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and then we were...(unintelligible) the aircraft and we took off and we flew to Maui.

Brian Murphy: Oh!

Mr. Metcalf: Though we didn't get ashore at Honolulu at all.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: We were supposed to be there a couple of months or more for...further training. However, uh, after...oh, a couple of weeks, I forget exactly how long, but it wasn't too long and the [USS] Intrepid got badly damaged and they had to pull it out.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: So, we were called in to take its place.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: And so, we...headed out to...actually, we joined the...Task Force 58 in...actually, in Saipan Harbor.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: And Saipan was not fully secured; it...it was called secure, but there was all kinds of...Japanese on the island that they were still trying to flush out.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Who was the Admiral of Task Force 58 at that time, Jim?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, would have been either...Halsey or Mitscher; I don't remember when we arrived who was in charge right at that time, but...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...it was...it...they alternated the command between those two at that time.

Brian Murphy: I see, I see.

Mr. Metcalf: It was...58 and 38. I believe Halsey was 38 and Mitscher was 58, if I remember that correctly.

Brian Murphy: Okay. So, you were...in Pearl in June and now you're...joining up with Task Force 58 in Saipan; when did you begin your...missions?

Mr. Metcalf: July 4th was my very first combat mission.

Brian Murphy: July 4th, wow!

Mr. Metcalf: Was...I was going to bomb Iwo Jima.

Brian Murphy: Ah!

Mr. Metcalf: Never had even heard that name before.

Brian Murphy: I was going to say, you had...had you even heard of it before, no?

Mr. Metcalf: No.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: We had to...before we had gotten here, we had to...memorize the island, the shape; we had to be able to draw the shape of the island because they wanted us to mark any kind of installations that we...saw...

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: ...because their intel...their intelligence was very poor at that time. Didn't know we didn't have any friends down there.

Brian Murphy: Right, right.

Mr. Metcalf: And there was no civilians of any kind; it was all military.

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: They weren't noted for...for...keeping prisoners.

Brian Murphy: Yeah, I've...I've read that, yeah, yeah. So, how many missions to...against Iwo Jima? I'm...I'm presuming airfield bombing, right?

Mr. Metcalf: Primarily that's what we were doing because it was...there were two operating the airfields and one that was under construction.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: They hit that for a couple of days and we left...uh, the...then...bombing Guam and covered the invasion at Guam, and we went back up and bombed Iwo again, and then we came back and we were bombing Peleliu.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: And covered the invasion of Peleliu.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum. Now...

Mr. Metcalf: And...

Brian Murphy: ...now, Jim, did you still have that Marine Corps Pilot?

Mr. Metcalf: No, no, no; I had a Navy Pilot, Lieutenant Lawton (sp?). Well, he was an Ensign when I first joined with him.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: Jack Lawton.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: A real nice guy. We stayed in touch all through the years. In fact, uh, just...he passed away a year ago this past December.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: But we had been in touch all...essentially through the years. Well, actually from 1995 on, we had been in touch 'cause I had lost track of everybody, but a squadron member found me back in 1995.

Brian Murphy: Ah, okay! For reunions, that sort of thing?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: And that's when I...got back in touch with Jack Lawton...

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: ...for a reunion in South Bend, Indiana. He was there. When he knew I was coming, he said he would come.

Brian Murphy: Sure. Now, your Radioman...uh, from...back in the early days, was that the same Radioman or had you, you know, got a new Radio...?

Mr. Metcalf: I had the same one, but he...he...passed away in his 50s at some point in time.

Brian Murphy: Oh darn! Okay, but...when you were...when you reached Pearl, that was still the same Radioman?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh yes! After Jack Lawton...uh, Marty Martin was the Radioman and myself, we were together all through all of that.

Brian Murphy: I see. When did you pick up...Jack?

Mr. Metcalf: Back in Quonset Point.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: When we joined the squadron, we were assigned...or the pilots were assigned crews, I guess, is the way it worked back at that time. But anyway, we were it.

Brian Murphy: Right. So, now you're...you're...uh, participating in the invasions of Guam and Peleliu and back to Iwo Jima. Uh, more...more bomb runs on those airfields.

Mr. Metcalf: Then we...we hit Okinawa, and we also went from Okinawa up to Formosa and we were bombing there as well.

Brian Murphy: What were you bombing up in Formosa? More airfields or installations or what?

Mr. Metcalf: Both.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Again, we had...oh, these cards that were similar to what the...Flying Tigers had on their jackets.

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: Flying in a...uh, (unintelligible) information (unintelligible). Formosa...did have a...a civilian population; they said you might get help from...you could hope to get help from them if you went down.

Brian Murphy: Right, right.

Mr. Metcalf: They normally told you if you can't get to the water and get out, then go to the hills.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: And in Formosa, our Intelligence Officer said, "Don't go...too high because they have head hunters up there."

Brian Murphy: Oh, gosh!

Mr. Metcalf: "They don't care who you are," they said.

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles), yeah, right! You're just...dinner! (Laughter), oh boy, oh boy!

Mr. Metcalf: That was rather exciting...to go and...fly over the mountains to get there and back, but...

Brian Murphy: Right, in all of the steam of the ship, the Franklin, I'm presuming you're still on the Franklin, right?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh yes, yes.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: (Unintelligible) with that.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Now, had you...run into any of these typhoons that I've read about?

Mr. Metcalf: No, we...I can remember...pretty rough sea, but we were...when we were out there, there was none of those typhoons that came on...in like Okinawa...later on.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: Fortunately for us.

Brian Murphy: Certainly!

Mr. Metcalf: But, after the Philippine in...invasion, we hit in there, and then...Admiral Halsey's group when we were chasing after the Jap fleet, right there at the end of October.

Brian Murphy: Right. Now, were the (throat clearing), were the Japanese able to bring their planes up against your formations?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, the only one that...were...the Jap...Zero came through to us in our...our formation, our four-plane formation...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...was when we were over the Jap fleet...

Brian Murphy: Ah! Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...there...somewhere, oh, ten or twelve thousand feet...

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: ...near...we were soon going to be peeling off to go down.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: We had bombs; we didn't have torpedoes, we had bombs.

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: And one came through...any...I was firing at them; I could see smoke coming from them, but...I don't know what happened to them after that because...nobody could...was going to try and...

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: ...watch them go all...all the way down...if he went all the way down or not.

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: We had too many other things going on, and the anti-aircraft fire over the fleet was...just like a big umbrella, and...we felt, "We're never going to get down through that alive."

Brian Murphy: Well, that...that's right.

Mr. Metcalf: But we did.

Brian Murphy: Was the...was the...anti-aircraft fire from like the forty millimeters, the one that you worried about the most or...was it...does it matter?

Mr. Metcalf: It didn't really matter.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: They were just...exploding all over the place, and it was...was hard to see how you were going to be able to fly down through it, but...somehow, we did, and the Good Lord was looking after us, and...

Brian Murphy: Did you have losses of...of crew in that...combat?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, in fact, the...the fourth man in our...formation...we've got...that Zero apparently got him because he didn't return, and of course, we didn't see him. We didn't know that...what had happened to him or anything that happened.

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: Wasn't till...we got back to the ship that...then we...count heads and...find out who's not there anymore.

Brian Murphy: Well, what...were your losses reasonably high, Jim, (unintelligible)?

Mr. Metcalf: Well, we had...better than about thirty-five percent of losses or something like that.

Brian Murphy: Wow. Now, when you were attacking Iwo, going back a little bit, did you ever...attack that place called Chichijima?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, uh hum, we did.

Brian Murphy: Okay. I understand that's where...President Bush...

Mr. Metcalf: Yes.

Brian Murphy: ...uh, was shot down.

Mr. Metcalf: (Unintelligible)...got hit with anti-aircraft there and he had asked...and they told...he gave the order to his crewmen to bail out...

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: ...didn't know whether they did or not, but he ended up...bringing...riding the plane down and ditched it in the ocean.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Had that, of course, and he got picked up by the submarine.

Brian Murphy: Now, was the same type of plane you were flying?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh yes! Absolutely.

Brian Murphy: Okay, okay. He was picked up by a submarine?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, one of our submarines. They...we always had...a submarine that was on patrol, but they would post it off of an island, any of the islands that we were hitting like Guam or then Peleliu; there would always be...a submarine in the area. And so they, if you went down, your other members would...report the coordinates...

Brian Murphy: Yes.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and the sub would...come and get you. And if you were too close to the shore, they told you to watch for a periscope 'cause they would come in at...with a periscope...out, and you'd grab a hold of that, and they'd tow you out to where it was safe.

Brian Murphy: Is that right?! Well, I'll be! I was wondering why they would use that...uh, submarine.

Mr. Metcalf: Well, it (chuckles) was very comforting to know that they were out there. I didn't have any desire to be on a submarine, but...if I were (chuckles) down in the water, I would be...welcome them (chuckles)!

Brian Murphy: I bet that's right! That's right! I'd read that book, Fly Boys, and...

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, I have it and I've read it as well.

Brian Murphy: ...it was a well written book and talks about President Bush's...uh, anguish about not knowing whether his crew got out or not.

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, yeah. And, of course, and in later years here, I...I bought his book...on his wartime service...

Brian Murphy: Oh.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and he described being picked up...and he names the crew...another flight crew that the seven picked up before him...

Brian Murphy: Yes.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and it was one of our crews.

Brian Murphy: Well, I'll be!

Mr. Metcalf: All three of them were...picked up by that same sub. We knew they had been picked up, but we didn't know anything other than that.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: And...then of course, we didn't know...anything about...Bush. Nobody knew he was anyway.

Brian Murphy: Certainly, certainly...certainly.

Mr. Metcalf: In the book, the name just jumped out at me (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: I...bet they did! I bet they did. Now, Jim, did you ever suffer from any kamikaze attacks? I think they were starting to get pretty...pretty...

Mr. Metcalf: We were hit by one of the very early ones.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: He dropped his bomb and flew down into the hold.

Brian Murphy: Uhm!

Mr. Metcalf: Later on they were making the air...whole aircraft (unintelligible) a bomb...just fly it down into the...the ships. But...yeah, we were hit right after the second battle of the Philippine Sea when we...I mean back to...protect the Luzon...

Brian Murphy: Invasion there?

Mr. Metcalf: ...yeah.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: And...(unintelligible) down our flight deck...

Brian Murphy: Were you aboard?

Mr. Metcalf: ...made a big hole in it.

Brian Murphy: Jim, were you aboard when the kamikaze hit your boat?

Mr. Metcalf: Unfortunately, I was.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: I had...hoped that I would be fine whenever we came under attack. It turns out I was on board the darned ship *every time* we came under attack.

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles), oh I see. I see, I see. And this kamikaze, did it put the...Franklin out of action or what?

Mr. Metcalf: Sure did. I had to...we...sat in Ulithi while they evaluated the...what they would do with it, and then...then they...after a while, it was announced that we were going back to the States. Then we...broke out the torpedo juice and...everybody got smashed that night.

Brian Murphy: (Laughter), what...what do you mean by torpedo juice?

Mr. Metcalf: Well, it was a ... hundred and eighty percent or ninety percent alcohol that was used in torpedoes, also was used in the Norton (sp?) bomb site...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...which we had a Norton bomb site for every one of our...TBMs.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: But we never used them. They were never used by us.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: But we had a...assigned...technician on the Norton bomb site and he had is own little...compartment where they had them on shelves and what have you, and he could draw the alcohol...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and he...for the torpedoes the...they had put a coloring in it to try and keep the guys from drinking it, but...they...being...uh, oh, necessity of the mother of invention, uh...

Brian Murphy: Yes.

Mr. Metcalf: ...they found they could strain it through bread.

Brian Murphy: (Laughter)

Mr. Metcalf: But what he...he...when he (unintelligible) bomb site guy got was the pure, wasn't colored or anything.

Brian Murphy: Yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: So, we broke that out and drank it with lemonade. The lemonade we got from...the...kitchen. It didn't take very much; that stuff was awful strong!

Brian Murphy: Oh my! Oh my! Be horribly strong!

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah.

Brian Murphy: Now, aboard your ship...what were the conditions like? Did...were your crews separate from the ship's crew?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, we had our own sleeping compartment, and then we had our own ready room.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Fact, in those day, actually our ready rooms, the pilots and ours as well, we were right side by side. We just...a head between us.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: But they were air conditioned.

Brian Murphy: Oh!

Mr. Metcalf: The rest of the ship was not.

Brian Murphy: Oh boy.

Mr. Metcalf: I don't know whether officers' quarters were or not, but...we...in our ready rooms at least, they were air conditioned.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see.

Mr. Metcalf: Used to spend a lot of nights there during...when we were out in the Pacific (unintelligible).

Brian Murphy: Boy, I'll bet it'd be hot and muggy if you didn't get there, boy!

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, yep.

Brian Murphy: Now, did the fighter pilots, the F6 pilots and your pilots all use the same ready room?

Mr. Metcalf: No, they each...each squadron had their own ready room.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see.

Mr. Metcalf: So, they were...

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: We had the two ready rooms, and the bomber pilots had the...there was two ready rooms for them, and then of course, only one for the fighter pilots, but...

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: ...they were right under the...flight deck.

Brian Murphy: Oh, is that right?! And did that kamikaze...where did...hit...that...that plane...where did it hit your boat...your ship?

Mr. Metcalf: Just after of the island section.

Brian Murphy: I see, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Along side of the five-inch guns and...bigger part of the island section. Fact, it...came against...one turret, and the guys in that turret...they just got roasted.

Brian Murphy: Yeah. Yeah, did it...did that kamikaze affect the steering of the boat or...start taking water or what?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, oh, we were...we were...we were running to get out of range, and of course, with a kamikaze, you got to look at double the range because (chuckles) they're not figuring return flights; they're only going one way.

Brian Murphy: I was just going to say, yeah, they're...they're just going one direction, yeah. What kind of planes were they using at that time; that was an early one you said. What...what were they using?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh, it was a...as far as I remember, it was a Zero.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Only thing I saw of it, and I...I saw the tail wheel from it, and it happened to say...Goodyear Rubber.

Brian Murphy: Are you serious?! Well, I'll be! Well, I'll be.

Mr. Metcalf: They had it there and they didn't bother changing it.

Brian Murphy: Yeah, yeah. Now, once...uh, did you say you were at...where were you when they did the evaluation...rather...of the seaworthiness of the...Franklin?

Mr. Metcalf: Ulithi.

Brian Murphy: Ulithi, okay. And they decided it had to go back to depot for repairs?

Mr. Metcalf: Right, and so they didn't...they went back to Bremerton. Yesterday I couldn't...remember the name Brem...Bremerton, but I have it written down here now (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Okay (chuckles), yeah. Did you go first to Bremerton or Seattle?

Mr. Metcalf: Oh we...well, we went into the bay and down through the Sound and...

Brian Murphy: Yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and the bay in front of Seattle...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and they offloaded the air groups onto a...a ferry that came up alongside and took us to the...air station in Seattle.

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: And the next day the ship went on up to Bremerton.

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: I never did see Bremerton. We were just...on the...air base and waiting for our orders and we got to...a thirty-five-day leave. We had the thirty days and five days travel.

Brian Murphy: Oh, was that the way it worked? Okay, alright. And where did you go? Back to Detroit or...Winnipeg or...?

Mr. Metcalf: Well I went to Winnipeg and we got married (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Oh, is that right?! Well, I'll be, I'll be. Now...

Mr. Metcalf: Married on the...27th of December (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Is that right (chuckles)? Alright...(chuckles) in Winnipeg. That's be a chilly...

Mr. Metcalf: My father in law said we got married on a cow. He had...a...a farm that was a family farm; he didn't...but...and they sold the cow and (chuckles)...

Brian Murphy: (Laughter), I see, and the cow paid for the...wedding.

Mr. Metcalf: ...that's...what they told us anyway.

Brian Murphy: Surely.

Mr. Metcalf: Told me.

Brian Murphy: Surely. Now, how long were you in...in Seattle at the air station waiting for the Franklin?

Mr. Metcalf: Well, I don't have the date that we got to Seattle on anything in here unfortunately.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: But it was in the late...it was...it was in the latter part of November 'cause I didn't get to...uh, Winnipeg till the latter..., uh, November.

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: About (chuckles) the 21st of November we were at Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, so...

Brian Murphy: Oh boy! Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...that's (pause)...

Brian Murphy: And you steamed straight from Pearl Harbor...to Seattle?

Mr. Metcalf: Right.

Brian Murphy: Yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, we had...a...a small escort and...

Brian Murphy: I was going to say were you...were you escorted...destroyer or...?

Mr. Metcalf: Yeah, we had some...uh, I don't remember, it might have been one or two destroyers we had or...destroyer escorts, but...we could get pretty good speed. And you know, you...you couldn't...get...you couldn't have any lights on at night because of the...shades that came down, metal shades that came down on the sides; they were all blasted away from...all the damage to the ship and so they...you couldn't have any lights in the hangar deck or up on the flight deck or anything, so...

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: ...we got in Pearl Harbor we took on a whole flock of people, military people going back to the States.

Brian Murphy: Okay, sure.

Mr. Metcalf: They were just laying...here and there on...on...right on the deck.

Brian Murphy: Oh, is that right? Okay (chuckles).

Mr. Metcalf: Once in a while, you'd kick one with your foot if you were walking somewhere (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: "Sorry," and (chuckles) keep on going.

Brian Murphy: Sure, but you weren't conducting flight operations of course.

Mr. Metcalf: Oh no, there was no way you could do that.

Brian Murphy: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Metcalf: (Unintelligible) were taking off in Pearl and...those that were any good and...thought we'd jettison any of them that were damaged to which there had been a bunch of them damaged...pushed them over the side.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see. Now, what...you got married in December.

Mr. Metcalf: Yep.

Brian Murphy: And you had a little bit of leave left?

Mr. Metcalf: Yes, I had another...week or ten days. We flew to Detroit.

Brian Murphy: Uh huh.

Mr. Metcalf: Stayed at the Staten (sp?) Hotel in Detroit, and...even though we could have been at my folks, but...

Brian Murphy: Yeah, sure.

Mr. Metcalf: ...our own. And then I went from there to...Norfolk, uh, the receiving station for re-assignment.

Brian Murphy: Oh, I see, okay.

Mr. Metcalf: I was a...we were...about a third of us...uh, were sent to...be re-assigned where the other...about two thirds or so of the squadron stayed together, and then they added personnel and they were called to reform...or be a Squadron 13.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: They were in...Nevada...uh, I was never there anyway, but I was offered in...interviews in Norfolk...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...while we...we were offered shore duty, my Radioman and I...and I both...

Brian Murphy: Yes.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and we both elected to take it.

Brian Murphy: Ah!

Mr. Metcalf: (Unintelligible).

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: Next thing we knew, here was our pilot...

Brian Murphy: Jack?

Mr. Metcalf: ...he wanted to know what happened. He was expecting us to join him and he found out we weren't.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: Of course, he wanted to win the war all by himself, and I told him...

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles)

Mr. Metcalf: ...and I told when...I got through one, I didn't want to have to go back out on another if I didn't have to.

Brian Murphy: Right. Jim, uh, I understand in the Air Force there were so many missions a man was required to fly before he could be...uh, taken out of...of flight line; was it the same thing with the Navy?

Mr. Metcalf: No, we did not have any...any number to go by on that. It was a whole squadron...

Brian Murphy: I see.

Mr. Metcalf: ...that's why I...went to...we...we'd lost enough of them that they didn't feel that adding new ones that...you couldn't go back in combat with that many...(unintelligible) ones that...that weren't trained with you.

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: That's when we got sent back. If they hadn't had this high loss of...ratio, they would have re-assigned us to another ship.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: And sent another squadron...in there longer than...than...there were one or two of them that had been there a month longer than we had. We weren't that far off, but...anyway, we got to come back.

Brian Murphy: Okay. Now, you were...assigned shore duty in Norfolk, and...that would have been in '45. Where did you de-mobilize? Where did you...uh...?

Mr. Metcalf: Uh, I ended up in Floyd Bennett Field, New York.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: And...that's where I was when V-E Day came.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: Then we got down into...Manhattan on V-E night...

Brian Murphy: (Chuckle), yes sir. I've seen pictures of that.

Mr. Metcalf: ...(unintelligible) which is...the final...

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: ...couldn't get past downtown Brooklyn.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: And my wife was...then pregnant.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: When I knew I was going to be discharged, she wanted to be...back home to...to have the baby at...at home with her...and have her mother on hand (chuckles).

Brian Murphy: Back in Winnipeg.

Mr. Metcalf: So, there was no other reason not to...

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: ...so she went on back to Winnipeg.

Brian Murphy: Right.

Mr. Metcalf: And eventually I got...sent back to Great Lakes to get discharged.

Brian Murphy: Okay, you were discharged at Great Lakes, okay. And then met your...were you there...when your son was born?

Mr. Metcalf: No, I was discharged before he was born; he was born in January and I got out in...the end of December.

Brian Murphy: I see. So, but you were there when...you were with your wife when your child was born at least?

Mr. Metcalf: I was in Winnipeg...I had...gone home to Detroit for...I don't know, a week or ten days and...and then I...actually (chuckle), I got a flight...Northwest Airlines to go to Winnipeg...

Brian Murphy: Uh huh.

Mr. Metcalf: ...go to Winnipeg, and we got grounded in...Minneapolis because of...weather.

Brian Murphy: Yes sir.

Mr. Metcalf: So, I had to take a train...

Brian Murphy: (Chuckle)

Mr. Metcalf: ...and I was (chuckle) I didn't...wasn't wearing a uniform, so I didn't have any priority (chuckles)...

Brian Murphy: Right, right.

Mr. Metcalf: ...and it was jam packed, and I ended up sitting...seat next to a sink in the bathroom...

Brian Murphy: Oh!

Mr. Metcalf: ...for quite a ways; I don't remember how far, but people kept leaving the train and so...eventually I got a seat in the coach, but I...(chuckles)...

Brian Murphy: Right. Did...did the servicemen, active service personnel, have priority seating normally?

Mr. Metcalf: Boarding, they had priority boarding.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: And they could board before any of the civilians would board.

Brian Murphy: Okay.

Mr. Metcalf: There were...seats were available and they had first shot at them.

Brian Murphy: Sure, sure.

Mr. Metcalf: I had..., you know, I just...I don't want my uniform now, and so I didn't take it with me (laughter).

Brian Murphy: Right (laughter). You were out; you had done your time. Okay. Well, any comments regarding these...the time in the service?

Mr. Metcalf: Well, it was...I'm...I'm glad I had the experience. Uh, I...praise our Lord that He saw fit to see me through it without...I had no scratches that...and the one mission at Peleliu...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...our bomb bay window which was right in front of where the Radioman sat...

Brian Murphy: Yes.

Mr. Metcalf: ...but he could look up into the bomb bay when the bomb bay doors were opened...to check out whether anything was hanging up in it or not.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: Well, that window got blown out, and it had to have been some kind of shrapnel that...that had hit it.

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: And it...all kinds of crap was hitting me in my legs...up in the turret. I thought sure I was getting...shrapnel in my legs...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...but I didn't have...nothing but...my Radioman and I looked down and his...top of his helmet's all blood.

Brian Murphy: Oh!

Mr. Metcalf: So, I told the pilot that...Marty was...injured, and when...I couldn't get out...I couldn't get out of the turret and...and help him until we got it...clear of...

Brian Murphy: Uh hum.

Mr. Metcalf: ...Peleliu or it would be safe to...get out of the turret. So, I get down there and I can't find where he was cut (chuckles); ended up...when we were back on the ship...with the band...well, they put a band-aid on it, and...

Brian Murphy: (Chuckles)

Mr. Metcalf: ...but when we...when we landed at...well we...Jack Lawton had called the ship to tell them we were bringing a wounded man aboard.

Brian Murphy: Sure.

Mr. Metcalf: So, the medics were there and they're grabbing my legs; he had gotten out before they got to him. "No, it's not me." And...but (chuckle) when I saw Marty next he had a band-aid on his head.

Brian Murphy: (Laughter), oh.

Mr. Metcalf: He was entitled to a Purple Heart but he never asked for it.

Brian Murphy: (Laughter), well...yeah, well there's some people that would have, I guess, but...well, Jim, all I can say is thank you for your service, of course, and thank you for the time to do this interview...twice.

Mr. Metcalf: (Laughter), well, maybe we got it right this time, I hope.

Brian Murphy: I hope so, the recorder's still going, so...I wish you well, Jim, thank you again.

Mr. Metcalf: Alrighty.

Brian Murphy: Bye bye now.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy

CD – #OH03895 – Mr. James W. Metcalf

Transcribed by: K. Matras

Houston, TX

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