

Douglas Hubbard, Jr. Oral History Interview

SARAH WALCH: This is Sarah Walch. Today is March 6th, 2014.

I am interviewing Mr. Douglas Hubbard, Jr. This interview is taking place in the reading room of the Nimitz Education and Research Center in the George Bush Gallery. It's in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center at the National Museum of the Pacific War for the preservation of historical information related to World War II, and also to our collection development here at the museum. Mr. Hubbard, thank you for taking the time to relate the experiences you had. And so I guess we'll do some -- do you want to do --

DOUGLAS HUBBARD, JR.: A little background?

SW: -- yeah, do you want to do a brief bio?

DH: Mm-hmm.

SW: Birthday, (inaudible).

DH: Oh, OK. Sure, yes. Born 1 April, 1945, the day that Okinawa was invaded. My dad was line officer on a destroyer escort somewhere out there. Born in Pasadena, California, educated at Fresno State. Joined the Naval Intelligence Command as a special agent of the Naval Investigative Service in March of 1968. My degree was in criminology, and that's what they were looking for at the

time. After a year's initial training at Washington field office and at Marine Corps Base Quantico, and my basic training, I volunteered for service in Vietnam and was sent to Da Nang, worked Da Nang and Quảng Trị Combat Base for my first year, then to Cam Ranh Bay for six months, then down to Saigon on the Delta, and then back up north to I Corps. Thirty-six months total service. Following that career, I went to Australia, invested in a security company. After about 18 months, I accepted an appointment as a training officer for the British South Africa police in Rhodesia; there several years. And in the years since, most of my work has been involved in the mining industry and exploration and related fields. My first exposure to New Guinea was in 1965, halfway through my degree. I decided to write a paper for one of my courses on policing remote and primitive areas. And I went across the Pacific from French Polynesia, spent some time in Fiji with Colonial police, British Colonial police in those days. New Zealand, Australia, and Australia, they sent me to New Guinea. I wanted to go anyway, but policemen there, who supported me with information I needed for my paper referred me to three or four policemen who were serving in New Guinea on the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. And those people are still alive and still my friends. But

that was my introduction to World War history, World War II history in that part of the world.

SW: So, let's see, you worked with them while you were getting your degree?

DH: Mm-hmm.

SW: Those connections were made before you went to Vietnam?

DH: Mm-hmm.

SW: And that later, did you meet those people again when you moved around?

DH: Many times, yeah. I actually spent a week in New Guinea on my way to Vietnam. I got off the plane at Clark Air Force Base, and got on the overnight Qantas plane and flew to Port Moresby. Spent a week there with old friends, and again on leave in 1971, I was there for a short while. And again in 1972, when I left Vietnam and was on my way to Australia, I stopped. And that's when I did my first reconnaissance. I actually got out of the field and looked at some of the relics that I'd been hearing about, most notably Lattimore's tank. I'd heard about Lattimore's tank. There was a pharmacist in Boroko, one of the suburbs of Port Moresby, who had an abiding history in World War II -- an abiding interest in World War II history. After he told me that the tank and the gun were still sitting right where they were, Christmas 1943, I started thinking

that would be a unique exhibit. And I told my dad about it. And I think it might have even been on that trip that I made my first trip there, commercial aircraft from Port Moresby to Popondetta, flying through the gap, which is an opening in the Owen Stanley Range, which is pretty amazing. I was flying in a DC-3, and I could look out the window and see mountains towering up on both sides of the wings when we went through. DC-3s are not pressurized, so we flew pretty low and slow. But a local policeman named Chris Cody picked me up, and with one of his constables who was from Buna, took me down the track to the seashore, where Cape Endaiadere and the plantation are, and the old air strip. And I saw Lattimore's tank for the first time, and the gun. There was another gun, another tank close to the plantation. There was an old Australian -- an old soldier who really never went home, who lived there and ran a coconut plantation. His name was [Gil Renton?]. And Gil was very proud of the fact that one of the tanks, the main gun was pointed directly at his house, and it still had a round in it. And he lived that way for 20 years, I guess. So dad and I started -- we always communicated pretty regularly. Of course it was just by the mail in those days. But I told him what was there, and told him also that there were rumors of quite a few aircraft that were

pretty unusual, and said, I know what you're trying to do at the Nimitz, is this something that you think you'd like to incorporate? And he was certainly interested. So that kind of laid the groundwork. I wrote reports for him, sent him photos from the field. I think the first pictures of the gun, some of them might be in dad's book. There's a picture, I think, of the gun still on the ground, with a couple of guys -- this is when it's being excavated.

Anyway, I took probably 36 exposures on two and a quarter black and white, high definition black and white of those things, and wrote a report for dad. And the year later, when I was free to go, we started putting a plan together to actually make it happen.

SW: OK. So the initial work that you did, it was about the time that you were already going to Australia to (inaudible) there.

DH: Mm-hmm.

SW: So you were sort of in that continental area?

DH: Yeah. When I left Vietnam, I went to Manila and got on the plane, the Qantas plane to Port Moresby, did what I needed to do, and then I flew their daily service out in New Guinea to Australia. So it was sort of on the way. Yeah.

SW: OK. And then so from Australia, you could then go back up to New Guinea?

DH: Yeah. That took about -- it was probably almost 18 months later.

SW: OK.

DH: And there was a lot of work that was done in the interim, too.

SW: Arrangements and contact making?

DH: Yes. Very much so. Dad communicated pretty regularly with the CNO, who was Admiral Thomas Moorer in those days. We started off, I said I have no idea what ship movements are like in that part of the world. And they were pretty infrequent, frankly. U.S. Navy ship movements. I was hoping maybe we might start with that. And I knew that aircraft movements through the area were pretty irregular, too. So eventually it kind of boiled down to seeing what the Australians could do. And that was a lot easier than it sounded, actually, because Tom Moorer, one of his old shipmates was then the chief of the defense staff. Admiral Sir Victor Alfred Trevor Smith -- that Smith. And Tom Moorer wrote that Smith a letter and said, "This is a worthy cause. Is there any way that you can support this mission with a local command and logistics space, available flight, etc.?" And I went to Canberra and met Admiral Smith, chatted with him a little bit. And he gave me a handwritten letter to the commander of the New Guinea

defense force, as an Army Brigadier, General Norrie. And Norrie had been advised in advance that I was coming. So basically, I just flew into Port Moresby and went to Murray Barracks, where the Army Command Headquarters was, and introduced myself to General Norrie. General Norrie put me in sort of under the wing of his aid to camp; it was an infantry major named Michael Patrick Casey. And Casey was a Brit who had come to Australia on some sort of a -- it might have even been (inaudible). But he was integrated into the Army as an officer. And he had served in the Australian Army training team, Vietnam, just a year before in the same area where I'd been. So we had a lot in common. And I made a lot of really good friends in the command structure, officers and NCOs both, and it helped a lot. Basically, what General Norrie said was, I can't justify laying on an aircraft for you, but I will direct our senior (inaudible) officer to offer you space on existing flights, mostly training flights that we used to train young pilots on the hundreds of very difficult, dangerous air strips that are all over New Guinea. On those days, the Air Force flew C-7 Caribous; short take-off, landing, cargo aircraft, and C-130 Hercules. That was to be the basic way that I was to get around. Am I going too fast?

SW: No.

DH: OK. Believe it or not, the biggest challenge at the outset was, who owns the things that we want. So what I did was sort of a mixture. We had the advantage of what we would call a JAG office; I think there were four military lawyers assigned to Marine Barracks. And they liaised with the Crown Law Office -- which would be like a federal attorney's office here -- and research the issue about who owns salvage rights to these things. Because basically, after the war, there were who regions of New Guinea that salvager came to, chopped up old aircraft and turned them into saucepans, this sort of thing, and paid the local people to pick up brass artillery and small arms casings. That was all good money. And a certain amount of steel that could be recycled, too. There were an awful lot of places where things were too big and too heavy to get at, but there was a lot of salvaging that was done, too. So what we basically decided to do was that where possible, we would ask people who might have salvage rights to allow us to take identified relics. And where that was less than clear, the government, for a stipend, would issue me with a receipt that allowed me to salvage for a specific purpose. This took quite -- you know, several months to sort out. And eventually -- I made several trips to Rabaul,

specifically to Kokopo Police Station, where one of my policeman friends had accumulated a number of interesting things, including the three-barreled anti-aircraft gun, the 25mm anti-aircraft gun.

SW: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

DH: There was also a 150 millimeter Japanese field gun in his front yard. That's a long, sad story. We didn't get it back.

SW: That was -- was that the one that your father mentions, there's a Catholic priest who became -- was attached to it for some reason?

DH: He said he didn't want it to go. He said, "If you try to take it, I'll fill the road with people, and you won't get anywhere."

SW: Did he have a story? Or was there a family association?

DH: No, no. It's just because he thought that it might be a tourist attraction, I think.

SW: Oh.

DH: Eventually. And the question, you know, with all of this stuff is, sure, if there's infrastructure to display it. But how many folks can get to New Guinea?

SW: Right.

DH: And how many of them would go for that purpose? So I didn't feel real guilty about it. But General Norrie was

not interested in a fight with the Catholic Irish priest at the (inaudible) Mission. And so we left it, though we own it, technically. And it's still there, because it's so huge.

SW: Your father had mentioned -- half-jokingly, I think -- in the text that there was an eruption on the island --

DH: Oh, yeah.

SW: -- and he was worried that -- he wondered if that --

DH: No, it survived, because Kokopo is far enough away. It's about 15 kilometers around the edge of the harbor. So it's protected. And no, it was an immense volcanic eruption, and destroyed the whole town. Rabaul is pretty much non-existent these days, yeah, which is kind of sad. But what we did there was, we -- the Royal Australian Survey Corps was actively updating the topographic maps of New Britain Island. And they used Rabaul Air Strip as their headquarters. Basically, they were all under canvas. So the CO was a guy named [Alex Lang?], very smart guy, did his degree at Oxford. And Alex made a cop available for me whenever I needed to come and go through there. So what we eventually planned to do with all of those, to fly it out, because, see, 130s would come in there often enough, and the old A model C130 could lift 25,000 pounds, which was -- we could have taken the field gun in pieces that way. And

that's how we did get the -- ultimately, how we got the anti-aircraft gun out of there. But he tried several times to get to Gasmata from Lae, which is here.

SW: Right.

DH: And Gasmata's here. And it's a pretty troubled piece of water, and the weather is often bad. And there are limited types of aircraft that could land there. I tried twice on a Pilatus Porter, the Army rescue squadron at Lae had a number of them. And the weather drove us back each time. So eventually, I went to Rabaul on a C-130, and rode a helicopter back, each model Iroquois Huey on a re-supply mission because they had survey soldiers stuck on mountaintops doing shots of the stars. This was old-fashioned map building. They did a good job; they were very capable. But they were sitting up there with their instruments taking shots, and they needed food and water. So I just rode along. And that's how I first got into Gasmata. We arrived with so little fuel that we had to think very carefully about how we were going to get out of there. Rabaul, or Gasmata is one of the wettest places in the world; it rains almost all the time there. Very soggy, wet. We slept the night in a copra ship, because the weather was bad enough late in the day that we were afraid we'd run out of fuel. And I got my photographs, which

you've seen. (inaudible) the Val sitting up on her nose there, with the tail hook and the bomb that hit under her. There was the Zero that today is private place in the Australian War Memorial was sitting there, right on the wheels alongside the airstrip. And there were quite a few other planes, mostly twin engine bombers, Bettys, and that sort of thing, pretty much wrecked down at the north end of the strip. There wasn't a lot of time, the weather was bad, and not good picture-taking weather, so I got what I could. And the next day we flew out, flew through the mountains going north to a fuel dump on the north coast where the Navy had thrown 55-gallon drums of fuel over the side and pushed them onto the beach. And that was our fuel, that we fueled up to get home. So that way, I knew that we had -- those two aircraft were of interest. I acquired title to both of them. We gave the Zero to Australia. And the Royal Australian Air Force took it apart and took it to Williamstown Royal Air Force Base in Victoria. And I think it was about a six-year restoration to get it to where it is today. I didn't know if anyone wanted to try to restore the Val or not. It would have been a huge job.

SW: Yes. It's now in display, as you know, the surrender portion of the -- the Japanese surrender portion of the

museum. And it's -- this is an artifact to represent what actually happened?

DH: Right. The reason that it has no propellers is because that was the requirement for demilitarizing aircraft at the end of the war. So they sent natives with hacksaws around, and that's what happened to it. That's why there's no propeller. In my own mind, I thought if I could find a propeller and a tail, maybe it would be helpful. And that's what took me to Cape Gloucester. Cape Gloucester is right down here on the very tip. And it was -- even today is a very remote area. There's an air strip there that was built during the war. When I was there, Caribou was the only thing that could land there. And Caribou is short take-off, landing. As I recall, I think I flew in maybe on a commercial aircraft on that one, and flew out with the Air Force. That was sort of undertaken as a separate mission. You see, the vision was as follows; we knew that the things of Buna were going to require heavy equipment and heavy lift capability, because we took title to four tanks; the four tanks that were there, and the gun. So we could see that what we were going to need is a heavy landing craft. We knew that the aircraft at Gasmata were going to require a heavy lift, too. So we built that was one mission. The items in Rabaul, basically when we were

ready to move them, we moved them by truck at night to the air strip, and pitched tents over them to conceal them.

And then the next morning, put them on a C-130 and they got to Australia. I didn't need any more hassles or drama, so we decided to do it that way. Question?

SW: Yes. Mentioning "hassles," your father mentioned an encounter with a Thomas J. [Emissary?], if you can -- I didn't get that -- his full name. He was a collector from California?

DH: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I'm glad you mentioned that. Yeah, he was -- they wanted both the Val and the Zero.

SW: So how --

DH: I acquired title to them so that there was no question about taking them. But you know, there was also an air of urgency about getting them out of there.

SW: But you had the will and the capability. You just needed to move them forward.

DH: Well, what we decided ultimately was that the Australian Army had every heavy landing craft, LCH, designed for moving centurion tanks. And centurion tanks are a very substantial piece of equipment. Did you find what you need there?

SW: Yes. His name was Dave (inaudible).

DH: I've forgotten, years ago, but good that dad remembered. Yeah, they definitely wanted them, and so did we. And since we're a government institution, the Australians were far more disposed to assisting us, and hence my desire to give something to the Australians, too. So without getting ahead of myself, the Australians ended up with Saburō Sakai Zero, which was downed. And they ended up with one of the tanks from Buna, which is displayed in the Australian War Memorial too.

SW: Uh-huh.

DH: OK, so getting back to the logistics of this as we planned it, the things that were in Rabaul could move via C-130, whenever those missions came through, and they were pretty regular. You know, a couple of times a month, there'd be a crew from Richmond Air Force Base in New South Wales up there for training, and they'd land, short take-offs and landings practice, and always there was an opportunity to load, so I didn't have to worry about that. The Army looked after that once I had looked after making sure that they got where they needed to go. So we had decided by this time that the aircraft from Gasmata, New Britain and the relics of Buna, which are across the Solomon Sea, or the Bismarck Sea, here, would be an overnight run for the LCH, overnight and most of the day.

SW: OK.

DH: And we would do that that way. So that basically left the question of the relics at Cape Gloucester. I decided since we were very unsure what was going to be done with the Val, and the Val is a very rare aircraft. I don't know that there are more than a half dozen left in the world; I couldn't tell you. But I knew it was rare. I had -- I constantly spoke to people who had served in the field in New Guinea; policemen and district officers were the best sources of information. And there was one district officer, they were called Kiaps, K-I-A-P, is a district officer. This Kiap had served at Cape Gloucester, and he said, "I know where there's a Val tail and wings and a propeller."

SW: Mm-hmm?

DH: And he said, "This is the name of the village, and this is the name of the village headman. If you go there, I'm sure they would show you." So that sounded pretty good. And I found my way to Cape Gloucester, with a letter of introduction to the local Kiap, who very kindly shifted his kids out of a bedroom and gave me a place to sleep -- I wasn't expecting that -- there being one house, that was it, and a tractor shed, that was it, and his office. This

is very remote. The only other white face in the area was one of the nuns at the nearby mission.

SW: Hmm.

DH: So I came with a wad of cash. Well it seemed like a lot, but it wasn't, a few hundred bucks. And the Kiap was very helpful. He converted my notes to shillings, because the locals don't use notes. If they can't chew it, they're not interested. It's not hard, it's not good. And I chartered the work boat from the Catholic Mission. We went down the coast with a couple of helpers, and anchored off the village. Went ashore, spoke to the people, and the first thing I saw when I went into this village was a live 500-pound bomb stuck in the ground, right there. It had been there since the war. And no EOD team had been near to it. They were talking about digging it out for the brass on the fuse. And I asked them please not to, and I did report that.

SW: (inaudible).

DH: Yeah. Sure. The old man in the village knew where the wreck was, and he briefed a couple of the kids. I hired six or eight of them -- not kids, young men, to go with me. And we hacked a trail from the beach through where this plane was. The story that I got was that the tail had ripped off when the plane crashed. And it spent nearly 30

years in the top of the tree. And then a cyclone came through and blew it down. But it didn't really damage it very much. It was just sitting there.

SW: Your dad, when he mentions the tail, he said that some of the children found a parish ring and some teeth? I was not sure what the teeth were referring to.

DH: Yeah. The remains of the pilot and his gunner were there.

SW: Oh, my.

DH: Yeah. To describe the wreck, the tail was in a tall tree. It fell down, maybe 50 yards from where the plane actually finished up. It burned when it hit. The wings were in pretty good shape, the Japanese markings were very clear. And because it had been sitting under a jungle canopy for all these years, it didn't have much exposure to anything. And yes, the pilot's four-way aviation seatbelt was there, with the ends clipped into it.

SW: Oh, my.

DH: And there were (inaudible) there, ones that I could find easily. I just put it in a bag and took it back and gave them to the authorities in Port Moresby.

SW: Oh, OK.

DH: But the engine was sitting in front, and thankfully the prop and hub had separated from it. I don't know how I would have gotten it off the engine.

SW: Mm-hmm.

DH: So we basically had two separate pieces of equipment there. We had the tail and we had the prop. Both heavy, but the prop's heavier.

SW: OK.

DH: And we widened the trail enough, and then cut bamboo and used the bamboo to form a sort of a carrying stretcher for each one. So it took about seven or eight guys to carry them separately down to the beach. And we loaded them onto an outrigger canoe. And that was pretty scary, because the canoe maybe had three or four inches of freeboard, and it was starting to blow up. We took it out. We had to reinforce the roof of the work boat because of the weight, we were afraid it was going to collapse, so we shored it up on the inside. There was -- yeah. And we got back to the district office's place late in the afternoon. The only vehicle was an old Massey Ferguson tractor and a farm trailer that they used for moving things around. So they offloaded the stuff and took it out to the airport. Airport -- the air strip, on the day that the next Air Force training mission was through. Actually, the raft -- the Air Force brought an air frame fitter, a mechanic with them, so that they could take the tail apart, both because they knew they were going to have to clean it in Port

Moresby, or it wouldn't be allowed into Australia for quarantine reasons, but also so it would fit. So they disassembled the tail, and somehow or another got the prop on and flew it to Port Moresby. And the local newspaper made a big thing of it, but in a good way, about how the -- I remember the headline, "Tail on the Trail to Texas."

SW: We had a copy of the newspaper. I was going to --

DH: Good.

SW: -- go grab it to see if you (inaudible).

DH: Good. Good. I'm glad it survived. Yeah, so that found its way to Australia separately, too. It stayed, I think, at RAAF Base Richmond for quite a while, until they were ready to consolidate it all for shipment. So now we're really getting down to the nitty gritty here, because we had to do the final recovery in consummates with the movements of his landing craft. The landing craft was up there to support surveyors, so it did things like move rations, vehicles, that sort of thing, around.

SW: OK.

DH: It's a pretty good-sized vessel. Her name was Balikpapan. A warrant officer, skipper, Army warrant officer, skipper, whose name I might even remember in a few minutes, we decided together that he would do Gasmata on his own, because Gasmata was the simpler of the operations. We

arranged to have an Air Force Huey there with swinging equipment on the day that he was supposed to beach.

SW: OK.

DH: So basically, they flew -- they took the Val apart, took her wings off. And the engine, of course, was separate, so they swung each of those into the well deck of the Balikpapan, and wrapped it in tarps and strapped it against the wheelhouse, to keep as much of the rest of the well deck free for the stuff at Buna. Does that all make sense?

SW: I'm trying to put it all together into images.

DH: Yeah. So by this time, I had already gone with Captain Brian [Kowald?], whose picture you saw there, Royal Australian Engineers with a couple of New Guinean sappers. A sapper is an engineer in the British Army.

SW: OK.

DH: A couple of local sappers, we flew on a Caribou. We have explosives for destroying a lot of ordinance around the place, wrecking bars, gallon cans of WD-40, chains, shovels. We had Land Rovers from the survey squadron waiting for us, so we loaded all this stuff up and headed down there. I made arrangements to hire from a logging company, an old D-6 Caterpillar dozer, because we had to have something to move the stuff with. So it all had to work. We knew when the skipper pulled anchor at Gasmata

that the following afternoon, who was going to be there at Buna. And the tides are so extreme, that we had a window of, I think it was about four and a half hours --

SW: Goodness.

DH: -- to do everything.

SW: You mean, you had to come pick it up or (inaudible).

DH: Well, I did. And the southerlies have a tendency to blow up at that time of day. The LCHs have got ballast tanks, so they sit, they run around the beach, and they flood the ballast tanks so it won't move. But it also means there's some challenges of getting it out after you load it, so you have to be very careful about buoyancy issues. And the master said, "Fellas, good luck, but at 1600 I'm gone. If you're not loaded, I'm sorry, but that's it. You're going to have to wait another year until we're back." So yeah, because he was going all the way to Australia. Once he got to Port Moresby, he was going to fuel up and sail down the Queensland Coast, all the way to the city. OK. So Kowald and I were pretty conscious that we really had to do this thing right. And we were all down at Buna at dawn. And the dozer arrived right on time. And it was a funny little New Guinean who spoke no English at all, was the dozer operator. And the truck was operated also by a PNG guy. So there was no one to talk to there. It was a gentlemanly

arrangement; I was going to see the timber -- logging company owner at the club that evening and pay in cash. That was it.

SW: Mm-hmm?

DH: So and I can't even remember, I think we might have paid \$300 or \$400 a day, considering you had to drive 30 miles to get there, that was a pretty good deal. So we hired a labor line of about 20 villagers to dig, cut, do all of the things that we needed to do. And we sent them, first of all, to dig out the gun. The base of the gun was about four and a half feet below the surface, because when the Japanese had placed it, they placed it such that the actual mount and barrel were pretty close to the ground for cover; it made good sense. They weren't using it for anti-aircraft, they were using it as artillery, even though it's a three-inch Naval gun. So it required a lot of digging. And the ground water was all soft, too, and we had to dig a ramp up on the side so we could tow it out. So I had a whole team under one of the sappers doing that. In the meantime, Brian and I went back to Gill Renton's place, where the high explosive round was still in the barrel of the gun. And we put a guncotton primer down the barrel and packed it full of mud, and blew the round back into the inside of the turret, so it was clear. So it was ready.

That was two. There were two other tanks in the plantation, one of which had burned out. And there were interesting relics in it, too. There were buttplates from rifles and old equipment that had melted.

SW: Why would it have melted?

DH: From fire.

SW: Oh.

DH: Yep. Yep. I'm just trying to remember, there is an excellent book called *The Vital Factor*. It was written by an Australian armor officer, and he traces every single one of those tanks, and the crew members, who they were, where they were located. It's something that belongs in your library if you don't have it, Paul --

SW: Yeah, I'm going to check if we have it.

DH: Paul Handel, as I recall, and it's called *The Vital Factor*. He's a very nice man. Retired now, in Australia. I corresponded with him off and on, because I so admired the book, because the book helped me remember. This was a long time ago now, you know, this was 1973 when we were pulling the stuff out.

SW: Mm-hmm.

DH: So basically it turned into a huge rat race. We moved the closest tanks that were closest to where the LCH was first.

SW: Mm-hmm?

DH: And then we went out and hooked up the gun. And basically, we pulled the two about, and attached a chain to it, and pulled the base up on the rippers of the Caterpillar dozer, and we did it in one run. But the problem was that we wrecked the bridge over Simemi Creek in the process, and pretty well broke out one side of it, which got the locals pretty upset. And we basically agreed that we'd leave a sapper there to supervisor the repair, and we'd pay for it. It wasn't expensive, it was mostly a matter of labor and a half dozen sacks of cement. But that didn't help, either, to have that when we were in such a hurry. I just told the dozer to keep going. We eventually pulled all of these vehicles down to the beach. And Lattimore's tank, we had doused the bogies, the grouzers, with WD-40. And they actually were turning. So it made it a lot easier. It was almost like pulling a truck, whereas some of the others that had nothing under them at all --

SW: Was just dead weight.

DH: -- were just dead weight. And the ground was very soft. Every time we turned in the plantation with the dozer, the dozer would dig down, and something would come up. A couple of Japanese light machine guns, we destroyed probably 15 81 millimeter mortar rounds that were still very much alive. The place was just full of it, and even

all these years later, the palm trees were still all shot up from the battle. Got them down to the beach, and the skipper and his crew were out there. Basically, we were trying to avoid putting the dozer onto the LCH, because it's not real good for the deck. And we used dunnage and whatnot, and the blade of the dozer to try to lift the front of the tank up, then we'd push it, and hope that their windlass was strong enough to pull it aboard. It never was. I mean, at the end of the day, the skipper said, "Don't worry, just put the dozer on." We pushed all four tanks on, and got them away with 15 minutes to spare. Yeah. And I could have ridden Balikpapan around the Cape, around Milne Bay and that way, but I decided I should probably get back to Port Moresby and make sure there were no headaches with the final part. There weren't. The Army did their usual great job, made sure that everything was steam cleaned. Balikpapan then sailed with the Val in pieces, and three of the tanks. I think that's right. I'm actually only remembering three tanks.

SW: Right, and actually I was going to ask you about that earlier, because your father mentioned three in his interview, so not four.

DH: Father's right, because the tally doesn't work. One of the tanks stayed in Port Moresby, and it's still there. It's

the one pointed at Gil Renton's house; that's the one that stayed at Port Moresby. The one that went to Australia with Lattimore's tank was given over to the armor repair shop at Puckapunyal. And they, sadly, just decided that the underside of the tank was in such bad shape that there wasn't any point in saving it. So they just took the turret off, put a new barrel on it, spray painted it, and gave it to the Australian War Memorial. So all they have is a turret. And it's scarred, and it looks like it's been in a battle, but it could have been ever so much better if they'd done it like they'd done here with Lattimore.

SW: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. I was curious, you contracted with a company to do the interview with (inaudible)?

DH: Yes. Yes, indeed.

SW: We have the original copy, not just the edited copy, right?
OK.

DH: Yep. You do. I can't remember, there was some sort of terrible time constraint surrounding this. I found Lattimore through the Return Services League, and the second 6th Armored Association. As you'd expect, Lattimore was pretty well-known, he had a wooden leg, but he wasn't in bad shape. And they took pictures of them coming down to see his tank. I always wished I'd seen them, but the Australian newspaper took pictures of him with his tank

aboard Balikpapan when she came in. Yeah. He said it was kind of a tender moment. But basically, what I did -- now, this is the year when Sony Betacam was the best there was.

SW: OK.

DH: And it was the only things that was available.

SW: We do have Betacams, so it should (inaudible).

DH: And there was only one place in the whole of Australia that had the equipment to do what we wanted to do, and that was the Sony in Sydney. I basically arranged for Jack Lattimore to come in and sit and be interviewed. I couldn't be there. I never got to meet him. I spoke with him, I wrote to him, it just didn't happen. I can't remember why. It must have been a departure date, or something that I couldn't move, because international air travel was a lot more difficult than it is now, and the planes were smaller, too. So and sure enough, those folks in Sydney did a wonderful job. And their airmailed the whole thing across here to dad. And the rest you know.

SW: So you didn't actually accompany the ship when it went across to Long Beach, no?

DH: No.

SW: OK.

DH: That was some time later. That was HMAS Melbourne. And Melbourne was the last of Australia's aircraft carriers;

she's a full-sized aircraft carrier. They used to have A-4 Skyhawks assigned to her, and they had a fleet airway that flew [Fivers?], the Australians did, right up until that time. Melbourne was sent to Long Beach to pick up the dozen CH-47s, the Chinook helicopters, heavy lift helicopters that the Australians bought, and which are still -- I don't think they lost a one. The Australians take very good care of their aircraft. So she was pretty empty, and I was not around. Dad took all the pictures, he was there. I don't remember where I was, but I was not in the States when Melbourne arrived in Long Beach. That's not something I can tell you much about.

SW: So when did the Australians decide to donate -- I know they talked about -- you had talked about an entire -- crates of the entire sample of every single weapon that they used.

DH: I did a little bit of logging. And they said, you know, we have equipment that's surplus to requirements. And if it's going to a credit area, we'll give it everything that you need. I mean, I can't remember if they even demilitarized the full automatic weapons, I can't remember. But things like a three-inch mortar, all original. They offered us a 4.5 inch gun turret, which is huge. I mean, it's bigger than your five-inch .38s. And it sort of turned into a logistics issue, more than anything else. The 25-pounder

was part of that. The mortar Bren gun, I don't know if you -- I can't even remember if you've got the Bren down on display. But there were some machine guns, too.

SW: I believe that -- I was discussing it with Mike this morning. I believe that's accurate. We do have that on display.

DH: Everything, boots, uniforms, the whole smash, as I recall. Yeah.

SW: And then -- I'm sorry --

DH: Keep going.

SW: Another thing that your father talked about is some of the interviews you were talking about doing when you were down there.

DH: Yeah, I was going to cover that for you.

SW: OK.

DH: OK? Dad and I always had an abiding interest in coastwatchers. It's a very interesting story. And especially Nimitz and the Marines were emphatic about the value of the coastwatcher contributions to the early days of the Solomon Campaign. And so I asked around about coastwatchers. Now I met -- the first coastwatcher I met was when I flew on my way to Vietnam; I was on the same aircraft with a coastwatcher. Actually, the truth is that we got drunk together in Manila before the plane left.

This guy was older than my dad, but he was -- his name was McCasker, and if you look in *The Coastwatchers* -- McCasker at that time was the comptroller -- he was the equivalent to the treasurer of New Guinea. He was a pretty important guy, but he was a wild man, I can tell you that. He had been the coastwatcher on Ontong-Java, which is -- it does a good show here -- somewhere out here. A very, very remote atoll. I think at some point, I interviewed him. In fact, I'm sure I did.

SW: OK.

DH: I remember going to his house, and interviewing him and taking some photos of him. McCasker and I got drunk, anyway, before the flight to Port Moresby from Manila. And it'd be wrong to characterize us as close friends, but he certainly welcomed me back when I came, and treated me well, and told me where the other guys were. Now my policeman buddy in Rabaul told me about [Snowy Rhodes?]. Ashton [Rhodes?] -- Ashton Rhodes was a plantation owner, I think he had copra and cocoa. At that stage, he was an old man. To give you an idea of his vintage, he served as a mounted infantryman in Palestine in World War I. He was in some pretty wild stuff. He was the genuine thing. Kind of a born killer, frankly. Ashton Rhodes killed more people than many people know. He was a real warrior. Didn't talk

that way, but, you know, it came out after I got to know him.

SW: Hmm.

DH: There is a pen and pencil set that's disfigured by a bullet, one of the Japanese officers that Rhodes killed on Rendova, New Georgia, Kelly Turner, Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, the amphibious warfare guy, kept Rhodes with him for the New Georgia campaign, because Rhodes knew all of the passages to get vessels in. Rhodes was one of the original coastwatchers with Martin Clemens in Guadalcanal as well. So he's a very interesting guy, and I liked him a lot. The diary of *The Coastwatchers*, he went into his old foot locker and dragged that thing out, and said, "I know you'll take good care of this. I don't need it anymore." And that's why we have that. Yeah. So basically, what I did with these guys, I had a cassette recorder, not dissimilar to that, that I bought at a trade store, and I'd sit and talk with these guys, and I shot a roll of Kodachrome or Ektachrome, just head shots because, obviously, I didn't have anything like a Betacam. And the idea was that we would turn those into, someday, some sort of an exhibit that would tell the stories of the coastwatchers. So that's McCasker, and that's Rhodes. The third guy, Jack Reid, and that's R-E-I-D. Mason and Reid

were on Bougainville. And theirs was one of the most dangerous of all assignments. And [Yowega?], the policeman with one eye, was with both of them.

SW: Mm-hmm? OK. OK. Here he is. (inaudible).

DH: That's Yowega. He lost a hand to some sort of illumination ordinance that was dropped out of a seaplane, in a landing zone. They were trying to get re-supplies. And it blinded him. And they flew into Australia, and his blue eye came from a young Australian motorcyclist who'd been killed the night before, so they transplanted the eye so that he has one eye that worked. He was a pretty hard old man, too. Very interesting guy. And held in very high esteem by his colleagues; he was a (inaudible). So we had the three guys. Mason was dead. I just missed Dave Mason. Mason had a plantation called Numa Numa on the East Coast of Bougainville. And I think malaria killed him. He's a very interesting guy, too. But Reid was in remarkably good shape, and had a great memory. I think the interview lasted an hour and a half or something. There was a lot. He spoke about rescuing nuns and putting them aboard U.S. Navy submarines. I think most of this is probably cataloged in the felt book called *The Coastwatchers*. But it sounded a lot different coming out of his mouth. I do hope that those tapes come up sometime. The only one

that -- portions of have survived is the tape that dad made from Snowy for the coast -- we built a coastwatcher's exhibit. I suppose that's history too. As I recall, before the steamboat hotel was restored, there was a front window. And I think Snowy wrote to dad and sent him a line drawing of what a radio shack would look like. And they put the -- a bush radio shack -- and they put the radio set in there, and the generator and all that sort of thing. Then it was one of those press the button, and a story comes out of it, type of thing, and with Rhodes' voice broadcasting messages to the Americans in Guadalcanal. It was pretty good. I'm sure that's around somewhere.

SW: Yeah.

DH: One of the original message repeaters.

SW: Yeah, that's what I was -- I read more of your father's book, and he mentions message repeaters several times. And I know we have, actually -- it could be a separate issue, but we have the clip from (inaudible).

DH: OK.

SW: I believe it must be, because it's shorter, it must be from another message repeater.

DH: Good get.

SW: We have that one.

DH: Good.

SW: And I'm sure we have the others.

DH: You probably have the other one. OK.

SW: One thing -- oh, I cataloged some of the oral histories, and I've only done about 50 so far.

DH: Uh-huh?

SW: But one of the ones I did was the woman coastwatcher, Ruby Boye-Jones.

DH: Yeah.

SW: I don't know if you had a chance to talk to her.

DH: No. No, she -- I remember when that all sort of came to pass. She -- they refer to her as a coastwatcher, but she wasn't really. She did the job, and she wasn't really in a very active area.

SW: OK.

DH: You see, the big difference was that these guys, the ones that we're talking about, actually -- I think they technically worked for the Allied Intelligence Bureau. But they're all members of the Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve. And the reason they did that was because they hoped they had a fighting chance if they were captured --

SW: Right.

DH: -- if they had a (inaudible).

SW: There was some (inaudible).

DH: Right. Yep. Not that that would have mattered at all, but it made everyone feel better. And Snowy was a lieutenant commander when he finished. Snowy actually finished up as the hangman at Manus. When the Australians did all of the war trials at the end of the war, there was a prison on Manus -- Manus sits here. And those that were dispatched were dispatched by Snowy. That was, you know, in those days, they had military scaffolds that you could just set up, put all the pieces together -- yeah. Oh, there's a mention in there of Sergeant [Saga?], too. Saga was from a place called Garaina, which was south of Lae. There are pictures of him in there. He was an interesting guy. He was a policeman's scout, another kind of a ferocious character. There's a nice picture of him in there. His medals found their way to the American Consul in Port Moresby. And I think they named a room or something after him, because he served as a scout to the US Army.

SW: Oh, yes. He also mentions some of the interviews were recorded in pidgin English?

DH: Yeah, neither Yowega nor Saga could speak English. So yeah. If you ever find the others, the pidgin will be there.

SW: Right. Those (inaudible), facility in Port Moresby to Saga.

DH: Yep.

SW: And then they had a celebration, that helped coordinate the plaque.

DH: I saw the plaque some years later.

SW: Oh, you did?

DH: Yeah.

SW: It sounded like you did a lot of work to make this happen.

DH: Yeah, it was a labor of love. And I wanted to do a lot more, and I could have if I'd had more assets and more time. I suspect my dad probably financed quite a bit of it out of his own pocket. There sure wasn't much money for anything else in those days. But I don't know that. I think I spent -- I worked -- I had a part-time job in Port Moresby in a photo lab, just to help pay the bills, because it wasn't a cheap place to live. And that was the -- we got in just in time, because the country was independent the next year, and it would have meant an entirely different set of rules and regulations to try to operate under. You don't get anything out of Papua New Guinea now, or the Solomons. That's done. Finished.

SW: Hmm.

DH: Yep.

SW: You had the best timing.

DH: Yeah. It was -- well, we knew that we had to move, if we were going to do it. We had one shot.

SW: And it made a big deal with the museum as well. I just this past week was looking through box from our institutional archives, and I came across, I guess, the showpiece book that your father, or whoever, was active in Nimitz at that time that they used to show potential investors.

DH: Ah.

SW: And the very first thing that came out of it was the article about Rabaul.

DH: Hmm. OK. OK.

SW: It meant a lot to this (inaudible), clearly.

DH: Well, I'm really glad to see Lattimore's tank so well displayed, too. That's good. That and the gun.

SW: And it's impressive, I mean, I went on a tour with her education direction which was some time ago, and it's -- you know, you have the (inaudible) almost as it looked. They're trying to recreate the original (inaudible).

DH: Yeah.

SW: And then you have Lattimore directly above you, giving his account.

DH: The funny thing is that all the time I was there, you could never see one from the other, because of the scrub.

SW: Right.

DH: And it was not easy to find the gun.

SW: It was very dense?

DH: Yeah. Well, just low scrub, and lots of bad stuff around.

I mean, stacks of mortar shells and stuff, dangerous, bad stuff. There was a lot of ordinance that came out of the hole when we dug it.

SW: So how did the locals know what to stay away from? Or --

DH: It's a good question. A lot of them got hurt, and they still do. Not so much anymore, because it's money.

SW: Right.

DH: Sell it to a scrap dealer.

SW: Right.

DH: I think that most of it, they probably knew to stay away from, someone told them about mortar bombs, and mortars are really dangerous. Unpredictable. And the thing is that they're seasonal fires through there, too.

SW: Mm-hmm?

DH: So these things had been heated -- yeah. And some of them probably did cook off. But it just made them more unstable. So yeah, that was always a risk. Yeah, I think that's just about it. There were -- I was hoping that -- I actually recovered the seats out of Lattimore's tank, and

some of the other things. And they never made it. I can't imagine if someone pitched them, stole them, whatever.

SW: That's interesting.

DH: Yeah. I also bought some of the brass fittings off of the three-inch gun, which someone had vandalized, because brass is worth money. When they heard we were coming, I bought it back. That didn't make it, either. But we didn't do too bad, considering. I think it must have taken nearly two years to get all that stuff here.

SW: Mm-hmm.

DH: I can't think of anything else, really, I think that's probably it.

END OF AUDIO FILE