

Erika Victoria (editor)

*The Real Pearl Harbor Experience:
An Interview with World War II Veteran Arthur G. Herriford*

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Oral Interview with Arthur G. Herriford, conducted by Chad Hoelker,
March 12, 2003, Van Nuys, California.

Introduction

The oral history transcribed below belongs to a collection held in CSUF's Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History (COPH), titled "Personal and Family History Collections." The interview with Arthur G. Herriford was conducted by Chad Hoelker, on March 12, 2003, in Van Nuys, California. This interview is 1 hour, 3 minutes, and 26 seconds long, and is archived as a digital recording/audio file at COPH (see "Copyright Advisory" below). The verbatim transcript edited here was prepared in 2020 by Erika Victoria.

Arthur G. Herriford was born on April 17, 1922, in Cleveland, Oklahoma. He grew up with his paternal grandparents, worked on farms, and lived through the Great Depression. He received schooling halfway through the tenth grade, when his father lost his job and suggested he join the Army Air Corps, but he chose the Navy instead for the opportunity to educate himself on all the new technology used on their ships. After basic training, he was assigned to the USS Detroit located at Pearl Harbor in Oahu, Hawaii, in 1940. He was trained for various equipment and eventually became the main battery rangefinder operator for the Detroit.

Herriford was caught up in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He describes his experience of realizing that the attack was happening and watching as other ships were attacked, such as the USS Raleigh and the USS Utah, and the sinking of the USS Arizona. He also recalls the reactions of his crewmates, and how experiencing the attack was like aging ten years. Herriford describes the aftermath of the attack, including fears of a Japanese land invasion on Hawaii, and a confrontation with a two-man Japanese submarine. He outlines his military career after the Pearl Harbor attack, including trips to the Far East, and then his eventual work in research and missile development, such as the Terrier guided missile. He retired from the Navy in December 1960 with credit for twenty-one years of service. He then explains his life after the military, working on building fire control equipment and—eventually—the Apollo program which facilitated the first lunar landing by humans. After the death of his wife, he began working for the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, which led to this oral interview.

Arthur G. Herriford's story provides a view "from below" of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II. Traditional scholarship has focused on logistics, casualties, and what the attack meant for the United States in terms of entering the war. Thanks to Herriford, what we have here is the first-hand account of a soldier who experienced the event. Herriford shares how the attack affected him as a human being who had joined the military without having any idea of what was about to transpire. Herriford also uses his interview to warn the next generation to watch out for the warning signs of potential war, and he advocates for not sitting idly by when signs of tyrants and their plans are apparent.

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Verbatim Transcript (O.H. 3066)

LAWRENCE DE GRAAF CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

NARRATOR: Arthur G. Herriford [AH]

INTERVIEWER: Chad Hoelker [CH]

DATE: March 12, 2003

LOCATION: Van Nuys, California

PROJECT: Personal and Family History Collections

TRANSCRIBER: Erika Victoria

AH: (coughs)

CH: Today is March 12th, 2003, and I, Chad Hoelker, am sitting with Mr. Arthur G. Herriford, interviewing him for the Cal State University Fullerton Oral History Department in his home in Van Nuys,¹ California, and here we go. We're ready to start. Uh, where were you born?

AH: Cleveland², Oklahoma.

CH: (repeats) Cleveland, Oklahoma.

¹ Located in the central San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles.

² City in Pawnee County, Oklahoma.

- AH: Um-hm, that's about thirty-four miles northwest of Tulsa³ (phone rings) on the Arkansas River.⁴
- CH: In what year?
- AH: Uh, 1922 (phone rings), 17th day of April, 1922.
- CH: Sounds good. What did, uh, what did your parents do?
- AH: My, uh, most of—my parents, I mean, my background, uh, was cattle industry but, uh, and farming, but, uh, my Dad was, uh, well, he worked in my grandfather's grocery store for—in his younger days, uh, as a butcher and a clerk, and later he went into the oil (background voice) field business as a, well, for a while, he was a driller of wells, and then he later became a tank builder, and he built storage tanks for the petroleum.
- CH: Right, did you work for him growing up? Out in the (both talking at the same time) farms or anything like that?
- AH: (both talking at the same time) No, no, no, that—uh, the Depression⁵ came along, uh, and few—few men had steady jobs in those days and, uh, the, uh (long pause), the emphasis was on just making a living, you know?
- CH: Right.
- AH: My, uh—I lived with my paternal grandparents for most of my teenage life, and, uh, I worked on the farm and, uh, then, later on, I started, uh, I hitchhiked out into western Oklahoma and western Kansas and made the wheat harvest out there, working the wheat fields.
- CH: Right. That sounds great. Um, did you have any formal schooling? (phone rings) Did you go to high school?
- AH: I only went halfway through the tenth grade when—my Dad at that time was a pro on a golf course in Oklahoma City, and golf course was sold and left him without a job.
- CH: Hm.
- AH: So, he suggested I go into the Army Air Corps, and I thought to myself, “No, the Navy has these highly technical ships of war that takes a lot of knowledge to build them, and it takes an awful lot more to operate them.”
- CH: Right.
- AH: And there was a place to get an education. I had an extreme thirst for knowledge in those days. I wanted to go to school or (inaudible), and my sophomore year was just, well, it was, uh, out of this world, I really—really hated to give it up, and, uh, so I did, I went into the Navy.
- CH: (repeats last part) Went into the Navy. Now, between the years like 1935 to 1940, kind of as things were starting to escalate in China and into Europe, with you being out in Kansas, Oklahoma, did you follow any of the events that were going on?

³ Oklahoma's second-largest city.

⁴ A major tributary of the Mississippi River, generally flows east and southeast.

⁵ A reference to the Great Depression of the 1930s.

- AH: Oh yes, I knew the day that Great Britain declared war on Hitler with his, uh, invasion of Poland.⁶ That it was just a matter of time before we would be into the war. And I also knew that my age was such that I would be right in the midst of it.
- CH: (repeats last part) Right in the midst of it. So, you got into the Navy because you wanted to learn ships and all that.
- AH: No. No, I wanted an education.
- CH: Right, and so did you enroll right there in the Midwest, or?
- AH: No, I enrolled, or I enlisted in, uh, Dallas, Texas. I actually was accepted for enlistment in Oklahoma City, at the recruiting office in Oklahoma City.
- CH: And what year would that have been in?
- AH: April of 1940.
- CH: Right. Um, so once you got into the Navy, you went to basic training.
- AH: Went through basic training in San Diego. The largest, uh, training company ever put through that station. It was three platoons of 186 men. Normally two platoons was sufficient, but for some reason or another my company was the largest ever to go through that training center. And they kept us, I was in the first twenty-five, uh, group contingent to arrive in, uh, what they called isolation, the isolation unit. And normally that isolation unit covered the first three weeks. You couldn't have no visitors, couldn't go anywhere outside that area, outside the chain link area.
- CH: Um-hm.
- AH: And we drilled and learned all kinds of seamanship and, uh, Navy ways and means and, uh, so as it turned out, my first group, being the first group in there, we wound up being instructors for the boundless other people coming into the detention unit.
- CH: Hm.
- AH: And they kept us and added two weeks so we were, my group was five weeks in detention, we couldn't even get out of there.
- CH: Right.
- AH: Like being in jail. (both laugh)
- CH: Thought you were in the Navy, and you found yourself, uh, in that mess.
- AH: Yeah.
- CH: Um, what are some other memories of that there in San Diego. Any good times?
- AH: Not especially. Uh
- CH: Just a lot of work?
- AH: There was a couple of fellas in the company that, uh, at our first liberty, after we got out of detention, we went over into downtown San Diego, and these two guys wanted to get tattoos, and I got them back to the base without any tattoos. And the following night (laughs), they went over by

⁶ September 1, 1939, through October 6, 1939.

- themselves and came back with tattoos, and before the week was out they were wishing I had been with them – (both laugh)
- CH: Yeah.
- AH: – to prevent it. (laughs)
- CH: Those are irremovable. Um, so how long did you stay in San Diego?
- AH: Until the, oh, it was about the end of April, first part of May. I don't remember just, just how soon but anyhow upon – well no, it had to be in June because the, uh, when the company graduated.
- CH: Um-hm.
- AH: And finished their boot training. They offered everybody ten days of leave. And you had to have money in your pocket though to, uh, take leave, and I didn't have any.
- CH: Right.
- AH: So, I forewent the leave, and immediately they ordered me to sea. Uh, they ordered me to the light cruiser Detroit.⁷ And, uh, at that time I had no idea where she was, and, uh, she was an old four-stack⁸ cruiser built in, there was ten of those ships built in the early 20s.
- CH: Hm.
- AH: And, uh, they were, uh, all rivet hulls, 555 feet long and with a beam of 55 feet, and they weighed about 7,050 tons. (coughs) And, uh, so they shipped me and took me by boat out of San Diego training center, myself and several others, uh, to – out in the San Diego bay and put us aboard the destroyer, Anderson, the DD-411,⁹ for transportation, excuse me, to get to the Detroit. We had no idea at that time where the Detroit was. And within a couple of hours after going aboard the Anderson, we got underway, and it was the following morning we found out we were headed for Pearl Harbor¹⁰.
- CH: Cause that's where the Detroit was.
- AH: Hawaiian Islands, and that's where the Detroit was.
- CH: Were you excited to be going there? Were you –
- AH: Oh yes, yes. As a matter of fact, when – seven days later, when we arrived out there, the morning of that – we arrived, went on, went up on the weather decks and saw, the most beautiful scenery I've ever seen in my life was as we approached the island of Oahu, heading for the Pearl Harbor channel. They have a beautiful country.
- CH: So, what was going to be your job aboard the Detroit once you got there?

⁷ USS Detroit (CL-8), an Omaha-class light cruiser of the U.S. Navy, present at the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor of December 7, 1941.

⁸ Ship with four smokestacks.

⁹ USS Anderson (DD-411), a Sims-class destroyer of the U. S. Navy.

¹⁰ American lagoon harbor on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, used as a deep-water naval base for the United States.

AH: The first three months I was in, uh (footsteps), may have been less than three months, I was in the third division which was the deck division (background noise), maintained the midpart of the ship (footsteps) between the forward,¹¹ aftward¹² superstructures,¹³ and, uh, within three months, I got the stripe¹⁴ for fire control.

[00:10:00]

AH: I thought I was going down into the fire rooms¹⁵ but, uh, fire control,¹⁶ the second [?] took me and told – and took me up on the tripod mast,¹⁷ up atop the tripod mast into the forward fire control tower, and he pulled the cover off a Mark 7 Rangekeeper,¹⁸ and I seen gears and shafts and –

CH: Hm.

AH: – and mechanisms that I hadn't ever dreamed of in this little machine, not not too large a machine.

CH: Right, right, two foot by two foot.

AH: There about, yeah, well, it wasn't, uh, about two foot by, uh, maybe, uh, fourteen or fifteen inches, and, uh, 'course it was that deep.

CH: Right.

AH: But, uh, I took one look at that, and I thought to myself, "Herriford, you will never ever understand or learn this stuff." But I did.

CH: Right, and what exactly did that do?

AH: Well that, uh, it solved the surface problem for the main battery¹⁹ of the 6-inch guns.

CH: Right.

AH: We had ten 6-inch guns in the main battery, and, uh, we, uh, had to stabilize sight on that gun director,²⁰ this rangekeeper was mounted on one side of

¹¹ Toward the direction of the bow of the ship.

¹² Toward the direction of the stern of the boat.

¹³ Name given to the part of the ship that emerges from the deck.

¹⁴ Probably a stripe on the uniform to indicate rank or job.

¹⁵ Also known as boiler room or stokehold where water was brought to a boil so steam could be used to power the vessel.

¹⁶ Using fire-control systems that used such components as a gun data computer, a director, and radar to assist a ranged weapon system in targeting, tracking, and hitting its target.

¹⁷ A type of mast found on warships that use two large support columns spread out at angles to brace another vertical column.

¹⁸ Electromechanical fire control computers.

¹⁹ Usually a reference to the primary weapon or group of weapons around which a warship is designed. The main battery of the Detroit were most likely the Mark 7s.

²⁰ Also known as an auxiliary predictor, it is a mechanical or electronic computer that calculates trigonometric firing solutions for use against a moving target and transmits this data to the firing crew.

- the gun director, and it, uh, as a director, uh, swung in azimuth²¹ by the, uh, people that operate the thing, the sight setters,²² and the rangekeeper operator and the like had to, you know, follow the director, uh, that was what provided the gun orders.
- CH: Right.
- AH: For the main battery.
- CH: Did you live aboard the ship? Or did you (both talking at the same time) live onshore?
- AH: (both talking at the same time) Oh yes, yes, we lived aboard ship.
- CH: Aboard ship the whole time.
- AH: And those days, when I first went aboard, we didn't have bunks, we had to sleep in hammocks.
- NN: Excuse me.²³
- AH: Alright dear.
- NN: I'll call you about 3 o'clock.
- AH: Yeah.
- NN: Nice to meet you.
- CH: Nice meeting you, too. Have a good afternoon.
- NN: Thank you.
- AH: So, uh, along about, uh, was it Christmas 1940? We came back to the States for the Christmas holidays, and we stayed, uh, in San Diego, uh, for that period of time, I don't know, almost a week. Then we went to Mare Island²⁴ up near Vallejo.
- CH: Um-hm.
- AH: Here in California, to the naval shipyard there, and they installed bunks and, uh—oh boy that was something. They weren't very wide, just about that wide.
- CH: Right.
- AH: And they didn't have nice springs.
- CH: (laughs)
- AH: On the bottom of them. They were laced with canvas bottles and so on. But, I'll tell ya (laughs), sure beat them hammocks.
- CH: Traveling from Hawaii, then to California, then up the coast to, uh, from San Diego up the coast of California, were you guys training the whole time?
- AH: Oh, oh, all the time, all the time. It was, uh, uh, even in port you'd have various drills like, uh, damage control drills, or fire drills, uh, underway,

²¹ Horizontal direction of a compass bearing.

²² A member of the gun crew whose duty it is to keep the gunsight set at the proper elevation.

²³ NN denotes an unidentified party briefly joining the conversation.

²⁴ A peninsula in the United States in the city of Vallejo, California, about 23 miles northeast of San Francisco.

- we'd have man overboard drills and what have you. Go to general quarters,²⁵ and, uh, anti-aircraft drills and the like, and we'd have airplanes fly out of various naval air stations and, uh, we would direct them. Uh, after two months, I was, uh, when I went into the fire control gang out of the deck force, uh, I was striking for a bargain role, and they made me operator of what they call the, uh, altimeter which was an optical rangefinder, mildly sensitive swing in the vertical plane and track airplanes, range on airplanes.
- CH: Right.
- AH: I operated that unit for, oh, three or four months. Then they made me operator of the, after, main battery rangefinder and later, uh, when the attack on Pearl come along, I was, uh, operator of, uh, forward main battery rangefinder, which was Range 1, and, uh, we manned that during, uh, battle practice, also, uh, when we got underway or entered port.
- CH: And these were all visual rangefinders (both talking at the same time) because they didn't have –
- AH: (both talking at the same time) Yes, optical, optical rangefinders.
- CH: – yeah, they didn't have radar.
- AH: They didn't have radar in those days.
- CH: Right.
- AH: Yeah.
- CH: Right, so it was all visual (both talking at the same time) rangefinder.
- AH: (both talking at the same time) Yes, you betcha, yeah.
- CH: After the port in Northern California you guys headed back to –
- AH: Back to Pearl.
- CH: – back to Pearl?
- AH: Yeah, and we operated out of Pearl Harbor then, and let's see, we, I'm trying to think if we got back to the States. We didn't. We were there until, well, let's see, after I became a fire controlman, I was sent back to San Diego to the Elementary Fire Control School for three months.
- CH: Um-hm.
- AH: And, uh, at that time, what is now the naval station, now down in San Diego, was known as the Destroyer base,²⁶ and, uh, so I went to school there for three months, learning basic fire control and, uh, when I went back to the ship, uh, in August of '41, I was elevated to fire controlman²⁷ 3rd class,

²⁵ Also known as battle stations or action stations, an announcement aboard a naval warship to signal that everyone available onboard must go to the battle stations as quickly as possible.

²⁶ Most likely a reference to what is now known as Naval Base San Diego or the 32nd Street Naval Station, currently the second-largest Surface Ship base of the U.S. Navy.

²⁷ Abbreviated FC, a U.S. Navy occupational rating. They operate weapon systems on board surface combatant ships and are therefore trained in the repair, maintenance, operation, and employment of weapons.

- uh, petty officer 3rd.²⁸ Then, uh, I was, uh, main battery rangefinder operator, until the attack, well even after the attack, my gosh, uh, well for that matter, until I left the ship in 1943.
- CH: Hm.
- AH: I was main battery rangefinder operator.
- CH: In the two or three months leading up to December of 1941, did you guys feel an increased threat? Was there any –
- AH: Oh yes, yeah, but, uh, everybody was of the opinion that “Gosh we could whip the Japs²⁹ in six weeks.” You know, they really never, uh, considered the seriousness of it. Uh, we learned a lot, I’ll tell you, we grew up in a hurry morning of December 7th, 1941. We all grew ten years I’ll tell you.
- CH: Right. How did that day, uh, how did that day start for you?
- AH: I, uh, sat down to breakfast, I got up about, uh, oh it must have been 6:30 and, uh, so I went to breakfast, and I had just sat down at the table with, uh, my breakfast tray, and, uh, about that time we heard a couple thumps, and somebody remarks some boat docks³⁰ is gonna catch hell from the, from the OD,³¹ from bumping his boat into the side of the ship, and, uh, about that time we heard another thump. Well, that happened to be the torpedoes that hit the Utah.³² And she capsized, she was two ships astern³³ of us, and our sister ship, the Raleigh,³⁴ was directly astern of us, she took a torpedo and almost capsized. And, uh, she also took a bomb through her aftward superstructure that teared through the ship, out the bottom. Fortunately, it didn’t explode, an armor piercing shell³⁵ that didn’t even explode. So, uh, she was out of action, the, uh, Raleigh. And, uh, all the time, uh, we were general quarters and, uh, firing our anti-aircraft weapons.
- CH: When did you, when you were eating breakfast and you felt those first couple thumps, how long before you realized (both talking at the same time) “Hey, it just wasn’t somebody that bumped the ship?”

²⁸ Above seaman and below petty officer second class, it is the lower rank of non-commissioned officers and the equivalent to a corporal in the U.S. Army and Marine Corps.

²⁹ An English abbreviation of the word “Japanese,” generally regarded as an offensive ethnic slur, especially during and after the events of World War II.

³⁰ Most likely a reference to crew working on the docks.

³¹ Most likely the abbreviation for “Officer of the Day,” also known as duty officer, a regularly rotational position with different duties, for example, administrative duties.

³² USS Utah (BB-31/AG-16), a target ship that had anti-aircraft guns to train gunners. It was hit within the first minutes of the attack by two torpedoes which caused serious flooding, causing it to roll over and sink, although most of the crew were able to escape. The wreck remains in the harbor with a memorial erected near the ship.

³³ Behind or toward the rear of a ship.

³⁴ USS Raleigh (CL-7), an Omaha-class light cruiser that took a torpedo in her No. 2 boiler room and claimed five victories with her anti-aircraft batteries with no loss of life.

³⁵ A type of projectile designed to penetrate body armor or vehicle armor.

AH: (both talking at the same time) Oh, almost immediately. Almost immediately. There was a chief gunner's main walking through the mess area. He looked out through one of the portholes, and he says, "This is the Japs and it's the real thing." And about that time the general quarters' alarm sounded. So, I just dropped, I didn't even take a single bite of breakfast, I just dropped my, my spoon or fork or whatever I had in my hand at the time and took off on the run to my battle station and, uh, so —

CH: And your battle station was at the view finder?

AH: Sixty-five feet up into the forward superstructure, above the pilot house, sixty-five feet above the waterline. And, uh, so, as I got up there, uh —

[00:20:12]

AH: — Homer Dates who was my assistant, he was a trainer for my rangefinder, the position on the azimuth, uh, he was squatted down, he beat me up there, and he squatted down behind the pedestal and the foundation of the unit, and he yelled at me to duck as I come up over a twenty-four-inch signal light³⁶ platform, and, uh, so I jumped and ducked into the rangefinder shield, was a complete housing and, uh, so we both got in there, activated the rangefinder, and, uh, after a few minutes we got out, well, while we were in there, uh, our forward three-inch gun, uh, the concussion from it, when it burned aft, it knocked the pipe covers off the port hole on either side of the shield, and, uh, it was an enclosed housing.³⁷ And, uh, Dates was looking out through his port toward Pearl City, well, once he put his, eh, ear, finger in his ear, and he leaned over on me, and he — tried to get him to talk, he couldn't say anything for quite a bit, finally took another look, took his fingers out of his ears, and he said, "That was the biggest fucking torpedo I ever seen in my life." And, uh, our forward machine guns are, we had four fifty-caliber machine guns in our, uh, forward fighting tower, and, uh, they were bearing down on us, right as they came in, and apparently, uh, they must have registered some hits on him because he veered off without dropping his fish.³⁸

CH: Hm.

AH: And, uh, they missed us, uh, they launched a torpedo at us and missed our stern by about ten feet and right up by the beach on Ford Island.³⁹ And, uh, there was, uh, the horizontal bombers then, you know the second phase of the attack dropped bombs straddling us and, uh, put mud from the bottom

³⁶ Signal light, also known as an Aldis lamp or Morse lamp, a visual signaling device for optical communication, typically using Morse code.

³⁷ Presumably a reference to the gun housing.

³⁸ Slang for torpedo.

³⁹ Ford Island, also known as Rabbit Island, Marin's Island, Little Goats Island, and Moku'ume'ume, an islet at the center of Pearl Harbor that became a strategic center of operations for the U.S. Navy in the Pacific Ocean and the center of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

- of the harbor up on our weather decks. But, uh, otherwise there was just one machine gun hole through the number one stack, and we didn't have, but we had one man injured that – he caught a machine gun bullet through the fleshy part of his thigh.
- CH: That was during just the first phase, or during the –
- AH: That was during the first phase.
- CH: Right.
- AH: Yeah. And, uh, so we were strafed from stem to stern several times and, uh, Dates and I got out of the ranger finder after a few minutes (coughs). We seen two tracks across the top of the pilot house, the deck above. We had seen bright, shiny steel in the midst of what looked like, you know, little divots in the grey deck paint.
- CH: Um-hm.
- AH: It'd be bright shiny steel surrounded by red lead in the grey deck paint.
- CH: Right.
- AH: All over it so –
- CH: So, you could see bullet holes right across the top?
- AH: Yeah, so when he yelled at me to duck, he seen the plane coming in and, uh, we dove into the rangefinder housing and, uh, I've always said that he saved my neck from that. So, uh, we, uh, we eventually got underway, Admiral (inaudible) our, uh, he was, uh, a Destroyer flotilla⁴⁰ commander. Actually, he was, uh, commander of Destroyer's battle force specifically. But, uh (noise), his flagship was Detroit, and, uh, he had about nineteen destroyers under his command.
- CH: And he was on Detroit at that time?
- AH: He was on Detroit, and I remember looking down unto the wing of the bridge from my position above and seeing him giving orders to various of his staff officers to get various ships underway. And, uh, with them I took great courage from seeing them, because they were operating as if it was routine. Showing no sign of –
- CH: Right, all the drills and all the training that you guys have been doing.
- AH: Yeah, yeah. Oh, I thank my lucky stars many, many times for all the drills that we had. We had, uh, we were so well drilled that, uh, I think there was no one on the ship that couldn't almost fill in for any position on, uh, the anti-aircraft or main battery.
- CH: Um-hm.
- AH: Uh, and this happened quite a bit because some people were still ashore. Uh, the, uh, anti-aircraft guns, the three-inch fifty-calibers, we, uh, had people that would come along and pass them and see if they could see and they'd just fill in the spot, you know?
- CH: Right.

⁴⁰ A flotilla is a formation of small warships that may be part of a larger fleet.

- AH: And, uh, they ordinarily wouldn't be on that position at all.
- CH: Right.
- AH: But they seen a vacancy, and they just, you know, filled the spot.
- CH: So after those first torpedoes missed, after the first planes break through, and you look down and saw your commanding officer there, were you aware what was going on around the rest of the harbor?
- AH: Oh gosh, yes, we had a ring-side seat for everything that went on in the harbor, unobstructed view, with nothing to do but watch it. We were looking directly at the Arizona⁴¹ when she blew up. We, uh, seen water geysers across Pearl Harbor, or Ford Island, that, along Battleship Row,⁴² that every time one of the torpedoes hit one of the battleships, there'd be a geyser go up about four to six times higher than their fighting tops,⁴³ and their fighting tops were 135 feet above the water line.
- CH: Um-hm.
- AH: And, uh, yeah we seen all that. We seen the Shaw⁴⁴ blow up in the floating dry dock.⁴⁵ Uh, and, scared, my God, I'll swear, we were dressed in white shorts and white t-shirts, skitty shirts as we called them, and, uh, I remember being very cold, yet it was in the tropics.
- CH: Um-hm.
- AH: And I remember shaking like a leaf, but still, I had the, the capacity to function at my job.
- CH: Right.
- AH: As I was supposed to. And everybody else I think was pretty much the same way. Now, many of the people, uh, that were below decks, for example, in the fire rooms and engine rooms and the like, and in the magazines,⁴⁶ could not see what was going on, so, uh, it wasn't, it wasn't any problem for them but my gosh, uh, for Homer Dates, and I with nothing to do but watch things blow up, I'll tell you we were, well, I was in a state of shock. I lost ten pounds in three days, and I never ate a bite of food. Well

⁴¹ USS Arizona (BB-39), transferred to Pearl Harbor as a deterrent to Japanese imperialism, was hit by torpedo bombers that dropped armor-piercing bombs of which one detonated in a magazine, exploded violently, and sank; lost 1,177 officers and crewmen. The shipwreck still lies at the bottom of Pearl Harbor.

⁴² The grouping of eight U.S. battleships in port at Pearl Harbor, moored next to Ford Island when the attack commenced, took the brunt of the Japanese assault.

⁴³ An enlarged top with swivel guns designed to fire down at the deck of enemy ships.

⁴⁴ USS Shaw (DD-373), a Mahan-class destroyer, named after naval officer Captain John Shaw, sustained major damage during the attack, including a spectacular explosion of her forward magazine that provided one of the most iconic photographs of the attack.

⁴⁵ A narrow basin or vessel that can be flooded to allow a load to be floated in, then drained to allow that load to come to rest on a dry platform, primarily used for construction, maintenance, and repair of ships, boats, and other watercraft.

⁴⁶ A place for the storage of ammunition or other explosive material.

I ate one bite of food, that I had to force down, while we were at sea. But, uh, from Saturday night, on the beach in Honolulu was the last time I had eaten anything, until Wednesday afternoon, the 10th, when we came in, back into port to offload target ammunition and to strip ship, get rid of stuff we didn't need, and to take on fuel and stores and provisions and new ammo. And that was the first meal I had eaten in three days.

CH: How long did it seem like that attack went on? From when you had your breakfast till, you know, you got to your position?

AH: (sighs) Well –

CH: I mean how long?

AH: Quite long. It, uh, just seemed like it was never going to end and, uh, it was in two phases. First phase was from about 7:55 until, oh, it must have been about 8:55, and then the next one was 9:15 to 9:45.

CH: And your Detroit, your ship stayed right there in position.

AH: Oh yes, yes, well, we, we did get underway and turned around, uh, in East Loch,⁴⁷ and, uh, we were preparing to head to sea and, uh, we were ordered –

[00:30:13]

AH: –by CINCPAC⁴⁸ to tie up again at our berth. So we did and, uh, about thirty-five or forty minutes later, they made Admiral Draymore commander of task force one and ordered us to see, to investigate possible landing – [audio cuts out here: 00:30:35-00:30:43]

CH: Alright, so you were just, you were just leaving the, leaving the harbor.

AH: We left the harbor, we were one of three cruisers. It was, uh, the Phoenix⁴⁹ and the St. Louis,⁵⁰ left the harbor just ahead of us, we followed the St. Louis out. And, uh, we went through the channel at about 20 knots,⁵¹ which is unheard of. Uh, normally, uh, you enter and leave port there, you do only about, uh, no more than 8 knots, 6 or 8 knots, through the channel, and we went out through there at 20 knots. Soon as we got clear of the harbor, one of the destroyers patrolling off the harbor channel sent us a blinker light

⁴⁷ Most likely a reference to an arm of the sea, especially when narrow or partially landlocked, located at Pearl Harbor, east of Ford Island.

⁴⁸ Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet.

⁴⁹ USS Phoenix (CL-46), a light cruiser of the Brooklyn-class cruiser family, anchored northeast of Ford Island when the attack happened. They escaped unharmed and, shortly after noon, joined the St. Louis and Detroit and several destroyers searching, unsuccessfully, for the enemy aircraft carriers.

⁵⁰ USS St. Louis (CL-49), a light cruiser of the Brooklyn-class, moored to the pier in southeast Loch when the attack happened. They escaped unharmed and, shortly after noon, joined the Phoenix and Detroit and several destroyers searching, unsuccessfully, for the enemy aircraft carriers.

⁵¹ Unit of measurement for the speeds of vessels relative to the fluids in which they travel, equal to one nautical mile per hour.

- that two torpedoes was headed our way. So our skipper,⁵² uh, Captain L. J. Wiltse took evasive action, and about six or eight minutes, maybe ten minutes later, we heard two end-of-run detonations on the horizon, from the torpedoes that were launched at us. And we investigated the, the western shores of the island of Oahu and discovered there was no enemy landing, and, uh, so then our orders was to seek out and engage the enemy.
- CH: Did you think that ground troops were going to be following from the planes, when they first sent you out?
- AH: Well, well, it was thought that that was possible
- CH: Right.
- AH: And, uh, it had been reported erroneously that there was troops landing on the western shores of Oahu. So, we investigated that and proved it was not true. And then we went looking for them. Thank God, we didn't find them, because we had no air cover and, uh, thinking their fleet had a 2-knot speed over us, I take it encouraged us to come into deep water, and then they had plenty of airplanes left. I think we only destroyed about 29 of their aircraft during the attack. And, uh, we had no air cover, so, uh, we operated at sea for the next, well, until the 10th, the afternoon of the 10th, we went back into Pearl. And, uh, we encountered, when we went back in on Thursday afternoon, or about noon Thursday, somebody spotted what was first reported as a periscope.⁵³ And, uh, somebody recalled it, "Oh it's only a swab handle,⁵⁴ swab floating in the water." But it so happened that one of our small boats put a grappling hook over the side and, uh, first thing you know the boat is being towed stern first by this swab handle. (both laugh) You might say. And, uh, Captain Wiltse, on various occasions, ordered all hands not on duty to the starboard side⁵⁵ of the ship just in the event of (inaudible) torpedoes. But then two-man Jap subs carried two torpedoes, one over the other and in the nose of the craft. And they were suicidal, you know, they, they had a big cutting guard around the nose of the thing, and they'd ram into the side of a ship and cut through the skin and detonate the torpedoes. And, uh, they would, they would do that given the chance. But anyhow, we, uh, fended this two-man sub off all Thursday evening and Thursday night with small boats and hand lanterns and, uh, Friday morning, Admiral Draymore ordered a PT boat⁵⁶ to come alongside, and

⁵² The captain of a ship or boat.

⁵³ An instrument for observation over, around, or through an object, obstacle, or condition that prevents direct line-of-sight.

⁵⁴ The handle of a mop.

⁵⁵ A nautical term of orientation that deals unambiguously with the structure of vessels, referring to the right side of the vessel, seen by an observer aboard the vessel looking forward.

⁵⁶ Short for patrol torpedo boat; small, fast, and expendable vessels for short-range oceanic scouting, armed with torpedoes and machine guns for cutting enemy supply lines and harassing enemy forces.

our carpenters mates nailed a 2 by 4 across the counter, or the stern, of the PT with white lines, fastened underneath it, and they went over to a, uh, an old four-stack Destroyer⁵⁷ and got two 300-lb depth charges⁵⁸ and just set them down on the stern of the PT, the two (inaudible) had to keep them from sliding off the stern but they'd bring the white lines over the depth charges, and a sailor would sit there holding the lines, to hold them in place, with his, sitting on his butt with his feet up against the ash can.⁵⁹ And they had a safety wire stapled to the deck, and, uh, so when they'd get a position on this two-man sub, PT boats would make a round on that spot, kick these ash cans over and get the hell out of the way, and so, that went on for all Friday afternoon. Finally the, uh, they gave up these, sub positioned itself directly under the hospital ship, Solace,⁶⁰ and, uh, set down on the bottom of the harbor. And, uh, so the next morning, couple of tugs⁶¹ come down and they towed the Solace broadside until the next, the next set of floating buoys, and they brought a floating crane⁶² down and, uh, a big barge⁶³, and some divers went down put lines around this two-man sub and hoisted it out of the water, clear up on this barge, and that's the last we seen of it.

CH: Hm.

AH: So, uh, I—to this day I've never heard specifically anything about that particular incident, but we witnessed it, on the Detroit.

CH: Right.

AH: Yeah.

CH: Once you guys dealt with that sub situation, and you guys went and redocked inside Pearl—

AH: Yeah.

CH: —and did what?

AH: Well, we took on fuel and provisions, ammunition, stores of all kind. We stored, uh, food provisions in every vacant space we can find on the ship.

⁵⁷ A type of Destroyer with three classes, Caldwell, Wickes, and Clemson, numbered at 273.

⁵⁸ An anti-submarine warfare weapon intended to destroy a submarine by being dropped into the water nearby and detonating, subjecting the target to a powerful and destructive hydraulic shock.

⁵⁹ A U.S. Navy term for a depth charge.

⁶⁰ USS Solace (AH-5), an unarmed hospital ship present during the Pearl Harbor attack, where a crew member, Eric Haakenson, captured the moment of the USS Arizona's explosion. The Solace evacuated the wounded crew of other ships and was left unharmed due to the rules of the Geneva Convention.

⁶¹ A tugboat or tug is a vessel that maneuvers other vessels by pushing or pulling them either by direct contact or by means of a tow line.

⁶² Also known as a crane vessel or crane ship, specialized in lifting heavy loads.

⁶³ A shoal-draft flat-bottomed boat built mainly for river and canal transport of bulk goods.

Chief Commissary Steward⁶⁴ opened up cofferdams⁶⁵ and voids⁶⁶ and what have you, and we loaded them up with canned goods, juices, and fruit, and what have you, canned fruit. Also, all kinds of canned goods for that matter. And, uh, because when we operated later on, up in the Aleutian Islands,⁶⁷ we had, uh, about three or four destroyers operating with us, and they didn't, they didn't have, uh, the capacity to store a lot of food and the like.

CH: Um-hm.

AH: And we had to reprovision them on occasion and, uh, refuel them. So, uh, it was, uh, quite an operation.

CH: So, once you got your ship restocked, then what was your guys' next job?

AH: We, the next job we had was escorting the first convoy of wounded and evacuees from the islands back to San Francisco. We arrived in San Francisco on Christmas, Christmas morning, 1942, '41. And, uh, we were there two days while they assembled the twenty-one ship convoy that we escorted back to Pearl Harbor. After that, we, we done a lot of escort duty, convoy escort duty and, uh—

CH: Between Pearl and—

[00:40:01]

AH: — Pearl to San Francisco, Pearl to San Diego, between those two.

CH: Um-hm.

AH: To, uh, the Samoan Islands⁶⁸ and, uh, several trips down there. So, uh, well, we were quite busy in that regard.

CH: Is that how you spent the rest of your military service on the Detroit after Pearl?

⁶⁴ The senior crew member working in the steward's department of a ship, responsible to direct, instruct, and assign personnel performing such functions as preparing and serving meals, overseeing cleaning and maintaining the officers' quarters and steward department areas, and receiving, issuing, and inventorying stores.

⁶⁵ Essentially an empty compartment between tanks to prevent two different liquids from mixing if there is a leak.

⁶⁶ An enclosed space, usually in the cargo area, also the result of constructional arrangement for strengthening the ship's structure, otherwise it has no commercial or operational use.

⁶⁷ Also known as the Aleut Island or Aleutic Islands, known before 1867 as the Catherine Archipelago; a chain of 14 large volcanic islands and 55 smaller islands mostly owned by the U.S. state of Alaska, but some belong to the Russian federal subject of Kamchatka Krai. They extend about 1,200 miles westward from the Alaska peninsula toward the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia and mark a dividing line between the Bering Sea to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south.

⁶⁸ An archipelago in the central South Pacific, forming part of Polynesia and the wider region of Oceania.

AH: No, no. I, uh, I left the Detroit in May of 1943 at the island of Adak⁶⁹ in the Aleutian Islands (dog barking) What she yapping at? [audio cuts off and immediately returns] Operator then, uh, we went from the Equator to (dog barking) Kodiak, Alaska,⁷⁰ in eight days. We stopped in San Francisco for about four hours to pick up foul-weather clothing. And, uh, got underway from there to Kodiak, Alaska. We went from a temperature, well in the Equator, to 29 degrees below zero in eight days.

CH: Hm.

AH: And, uh, I don't mind telling you, that was bitter, bitter cold. Our heating system, our compartment heating system in the ship failed first time we hotted it up, because somebody had assembled steel tubing and the like in the heating system with brass fitting, so the incompatibility of the two different metals, expansion coefficients, just didn't match (laughs).

CH: And what were you doing up there? (phone rings)

AH: In the Aleutians?

CH: Yes. No, going from the Equator, (phone rings) going up.

AH: We, uh, went from the Equator into San Francisco.

CH: Right.

AH: We were there in port for four hours, took on foul-weather gear and got underway again for Kodiak. [audio cuts out, then in again] And we, uh, we got to (sighs) Kodiak, and all our guns and, and search lights and what have you, the dry trains, the gear box and so on were frozen, full of ice, the lubricants in them had frozen up. We had to dismantle them and put diesel oil –

NN: (inaudible) excuse me. Mom said to, for you to check for two more tears out in the shed. [audio cuts out and in]

AH: City of Hope⁷¹ thing. The chapter that scares up, uh, donations and the like.

CH: Right.

AH: City of Hope. So, uh, anyway, we operated in the Aleutians, up there, for all, during the winter of '42 and '43. Got ashore once for about four hours in Dutch harbor,⁷² otherwise we were at sea continuously.

CH: Wow.

AH: We'd go into Adak, after dark, reprovision alongside a tanker⁷³ was in there. And, uh, be out and back over the horizon before daylight. That went

⁶⁹ An island near the western extent of the Andreanof Islands group of the Aleutian Islands in Alaska, houses Alaska's southernmost town of Adak.

⁷⁰ Kodiak is the main city and one of seven communities on Kodiak Island in Kodiak Island Borough, Alaska.

⁷¹ A reference to the National Cancer Institute, a designated comprehensive cancer center and a founding member of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, founded in 1913.

⁷² A harbor in Amaknak Island in Unalaska, Alaska.

⁷³ Also known as a tank ship, designed to transport or store liquids or gases in bulk.

- on all winter long of '42 and '[4]3. Average temperature was 34 degrees below zero. All that period of time and, uh—
- CH: Wow.
- AH: It was miserable. That's why (both talking at the same time) I live in Southern California.
- CH: (both talking at the same time) I was about to say, no wonder you live here now (both laugh). So that's '42 and '43, and then?
- AH: Up until May of '43, and then I was ordered back to the advanced fire control school in Washington, D.C. And, uh, from there I (coughs), I was, finished fourth in a class of thirty-six, and I made the mistake of writing a hundred percent on a hydraulic exam, for a GE hydraulic gun mount, and they decided to make an instructor out of me. They put me through two weeks of instructor training and sent me to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to (coughs) Fire Control Operators School that they had established down there, and I was there for, oh, about eighteen months I guess it was. And I made chief petty officer down there and, uh, back to Fire Control, the Advanced Fire Control School again (coughs), and from there I—the war was over by the time I finished school and, uh, they ordered me to a new Destroyer that was being constructed. (yawns) Excuse me.
- CH: No problem.
- AH: And, uh, at the top Pacific shipyard in Harbor Island,⁷⁴ San Francisco or, uh, Seattle rather. And, uh, so I commissioned, uh, Hollister⁷⁵ there and, uh, following underway training in San Diego I was, I was sent—transferred to the Destroyer leader, uh, the division, flagship,⁷⁶ and, uh, since they had no chief fire controlman and, uh, we went to China, the Far East. China, the Philippines, Japan, Korea, and this was before the Korean War.⁷⁷ We operated for a period of time out, uh, Pusan,⁷⁸ I think they may pronounce Pusan, I don't know. But, uh, we operated out of there, uh, South Korea, for, I don't know, a month or six weeks, interdicting, uh, gun runners⁷⁹ up

⁷⁴ A reference to Harbor Island in the U.S. state of Washington in the city of Seattle; an artificial island in the mouth of the Duwamish River which empties into Elliot Bay, has been used for commercial and industrial activities, such as secondary lead-smelting, shipbuilding and repair, bulk petroleum storage, metal fabrication, and containerized cargo shipping.

⁷⁵ Probably the USS Hollister (DD-788), a destroyer manufactured in 1945 and commissioned in 1946.

⁷⁶ The ship in a fleet which carries the commanding admiral.

⁷⁷ A war (June 25, 1950, to July 27, 1953) between North Korea, with the support of China and the Soviet Union, and South Korea, with support of the United Nations, mostly from the United States; ended unofficially in an armistice.

⁷⁸ Busan, formerly Romanized as Pusan, now officially known as Busan Metropolitan City, is South Korea's second-most populous city located on the southeastern portion of the peninsula.

⁷⁹ Most likely a reference to those who take or send guns into a country secretly and illegally.

- and down the coast, bringing spies and gun runners and what have you into South Korea, before the Korean War.
- CH: When you were in school down there in Fort Lauderdale, how did you actually, where were you at when you found out the war was over?
- AH: Well, uh, I had left there, I made chief petty officer from there, I was ordered back to school, and it was when I was, before I finished school, that, uh, the war ended, and I was in the Advanced Fire Control School in Washington⁸⁰ at that time.
- CH: Back, when you had come back from Washington.
- AH: Yeah, and, uh, following that, well, I commissioned, uh, Hollister in Seattle and went aboard the James E. Kyes⁸¹ for a tour of the Far East (coughs), and while out there, I was ordered again back to the Advanced Fire Control School in Washington D.C. And I, I flew from, uh, four-engine plane from, a propeller type, from Japan, from Haneda Airport⁸² outside Tokyo, to Guam,⁸³ Guam to Johnson's Island, Johnson's Island to, to Pearl Harbor and, uh, then from Pearl Harbor to Moffett Field,⁸⁴ and, uh, Moffett Field and, uh, back to Washington D.C. National Airport, and I went through school there, again, and while in that school I took the entrance exam for the Fire Control Technician School. The Advanced School, by the way, was a thirty-three week course, and then the Fire Control Technician School was a fifty-two week course, and uh, normally, and I, uh, while in the Advanced School, I took the entrance exam for the Fire Control Technician School, took a day and a half to take that exam, and they only considered the top ten percent, of the grades, on that exam for the technician school. So, when I finished the Advanced School, two weeks later I was in the Technician School, and my particular course stretched an extra six weeks –

[00:50:03]

- AH: –because they introduced, uh, a Fire Control Radar⁸⁵ course to the Technician School, for my –at the beginning of my class. When I finished that, a year and a half later or over a year later, I was ordered into guided

⁸⁰ Washington, D.C.

⁸¹ USS James E. Kyes (DD-787), a Gearing-class destroyer of the U.S. Navy, named after Commander James E. Kyes (1906-1943).

⁸² Haneda airport, officially known as the Tokyo International Airport, is one of two primary airports that serve the Greater Tokyo Area located in the Ōta District of Tokyo, Japan.

⁸³ Guam is an organized, unincorporated territory of the United States in Micronesia in the western Pacific Ocean.

⁸⁴ Moffett Field, known officially as the Moffett Federal Airfield, a joint civil-military airport located in an unincorporated part of Santa Clara County, California, between northern Mountain View and northern Sunnyvale.

⁸⁵ Same as the fire-control systems, except with the use of radar sighting once it became available.

missiles at the Applied Physics Lab at John Hopkins University,⁸⁶ Silver Spring, Maryland.⁸⁷ And I was, uh, nine and a half years in research and development for, uh, the Terrier guided missile,⁸⁸ uh, out of which came the, the, uh, Talos,⁸⁹ and, well, the Talos was a ramjet⁹⁰ missile that was being developed at that time, and the Tartar⁹¹ was a shorter-range version of the Terrier. So, uh, nine and half years in that program, and, uh, in the meantime, I was, while in that program I was sent to—from the Applied Physics lab to China Lake,⁹² California, a naval ordinance test station.⁹³ And then, from there, to the USS Norton Sound⁹⁴ out of Port Hueneme⁹⁵ out here, near Oxnard,⁹⁶ and then back to the ex-battleship Mississippi⁹⁷ which was an experimental ship then, at that time to shake down the first automatic loading system for the Terrier missile, launchers, and the firing, more firing of, uh, Terrier.

⁸⁶ Private research university in Baltimore, Maryland, founded in 1876 and named for its first benefactor, Johns Hopkins. It revolutionized higher education in the U.S. by integrating teaching and research and was the first research university in the U.S.

⁸⁷ Silver Spring is a census-designated place in southeastern Montgomery County, Maryland, near Washington D.C., officially unincorporated, but in practice an edge city.

⁸⁸ A reference to the RIM-2 Terrier ship-to-air missile, part of the development of the Bumblebee Project, the U.S. Navy's effort to develop a surface-to-air missile to provide a middle layer of defense against air attacks. It was first test-launched from the USS Mississippi in 1953.

⁸⁹ A reference to the RIM-8 Talos, a long-range naval surface-to-air missile. Talos was the end product of Operation Bumblebee in its development for protection against guided anti-ship missiles that used radar-beam riding for guidance to the vicinity of its target and semiactive radar homing for terminal guidance.

⁹⁰ A ramjet, sometimes referred to as a flying stovepipe or an athodyd (aero thermodynamic duct), is a form of airbreathing jet engine that uses the engine's forward motion to compress incoming air without an axial compressor or centrifugal compressor; useful in applications requiring a small and simple mechanism for high-speed use, such as missiles.

⁹¹ A reference to the RIM-24 Tartar, a medium-range naval surface-to-air missile, part of the development of the Bumblebee Project. The Tartar was the third of the so-called "3 Ts" which were the three primary surface-to-air missiles the Navy fielded in the 1960s and 1970s, the others being the Terrier and Talos.

⁹² Located in Kern County, California.

⁹³ Located in the Mojave Desert in inland Southern California.

⁹⁴ USS Norton Sound (AVM-1), a Currituck-class seaplane tender, named after Norton Sound, a large inlet in West Alaska.

⁹⁵ Port Hueneme is a small beach city in Ventura County surrounded by the city of Oxnard and the Santa Barbara Channel. Port of Hueneme is the only deep-water harbor between Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area.

⁹⁶ City in the state of California in Ventura County, approximately 60 miles (97 km) west of downtown Los Angeles; part of the larger Greater Los Angeles area.

⁹⁷ Most likely a reference to the USS Mississippi (BB-41/AG-128), the second of three members of the New Mexico class of battleships. After World War II, it was converted into a gunnery training ship and also used to test new weapon systems, including the RIM-2 Terrier missile.

CH: So after that nine and half years did you stay in the military or—?

AH: Oh yeah, yeah. Then I, uh, I was ordered from the Mississippi back to China Lake, and I stayed about, oh, three years there. I was ordered then to, when I—back to ship, ordered me then back to the Norton Sound out of Port Hueneme, and all the time, this is, uh, Terrier guided missile, firings and the like, fired about 50, 60 missiles, I guess. Then, uh, and I was missile guidance radar crew chief for all that period of time but, uh, then I made Warrant Officer on the Norton Sound and they sent me to the USS Helena,⁹⁸ the CA-75, which was a heavy cruiser, an eight-inch gun cruiser (coughs), of the Baltimore-class, as fire control gunner on the Helena, and I was there for, uh, a couple years. We made a trip to the Far East, uh, and was flagship with the seventh fleet out there and, uh, when we returned from that, I was ordered into the Polaris⁹⁹ missile program. And then I helped introduce the Polaris missile to the fleet. I was, uh, I was missile assembly and checkout officer for, for the Polaris missile and we outloaded the first three submarines for patrol, uh, for Polaris patrol before, before, uh, I retired from Navy, I retired from the Navy.

CH: What year was that?

AH: That was 1960, first of December 1960, I retired with credit for twenty-one years' service.

CH: Where'd life take you after the Navy?

AH: Well I went to work for Northrop Corporation¹⁰⁰ in Anaheim¹⁰¹ (coughs), building fire control equipment for the Polaris submarines. Uh, following that, I went into—went to North American Aviation¹⁰² into the Apollo¹⁰³ program where, uh, we built the second stage¹⁰⁴ and I, I was test equipment

⁹⁸ USS Helena (CA-75), a Baltimore-class heavy cruiser, built and commissioned after World War II.

⁹⁹ The UGM-27b Polaris was a two-stage solid-fueled nuclear-armed submarine-launched ballistic missile, the first of its kind in the U.S. Navy.

¹⁰⁰ Northrop corporation was an American aircraft manufacturer from its formation in 1939 until its 1994 merger with Grumman to form Northrop Grumman, which is an American global aerospace and defense technology company.

¹⁰¹ City in Orange County, California; part of the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

¹⁰² Most likely a reference to the North American Aviation plain in Downey, California, where the Apollo 11's Command and Service Module and the second stage for its Saturn V launch vehicle were designed and built.

¹⁰³ The Apollo program, also known as Project Apollo, was the third U.S. human spaceflight program carried out by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). It landed the first humans, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, on the moon in 1969.

¹⁰⁴ A reference to the stages in a multistage rocket, or step rocket, which is the launch vehicle that uses two or more rocket stages, each of which contains its engines and propellant in order to assist the rocket to reach its final speed and height.

- engineer, and we were, uh, we were building automatic test equipment for the second stage of that Saturn V¹⁰⁵ rocket, that big—
- CH: Hmm.
- AH: — thirty-six story rocket, that put the Apollo on the moon.
- CH: Right, right.
- AH: And, uh, after that, I went to Hughes Aircraft Company¹⁰⁶ in the F-14, the Navy F-14 Tomcat program,¹⁰⁷ building, designed, uh, shore, or, ground support equipment for the F-14, the computer and weapons' control systems in the F-14. We built a computer test station that, that checked out the computer subsystem in the F-14 and the weapons control and interface systems in the F-14.
- CH: Besides that one stop that you told me back, when you were flying back and you stopped at Pearl Harbor, have you been back since?
- AH: Yeah, yeah I, uh, been back several times with the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association.¹⁰⁸
- CH: Right, how did you get involved with that?
- AH: Well, being a Pearl Harbor survivor I, uh, I just quite by accident got into it after my wife passed away and, uh, somewhere here I have— here we go. I, uh, just kind of got involved with it.
- CH: Right.
- AH: And it's one of the finest organizations that I will ever— had ever hoped to be involved with.
- CH: Yeah, this is actually how I got in touch with you 'cause I contacted them through their website.
- AH: Yeah.
- CH: And the gentleman was nice enough to email me—
- AH: Yeah.
- CH: — your name and number and what not.
- AH: Well, right now I'm first district director, uh, in the National Administration and, uh, I have, my responsibility is Alaska, California, Hawaii, and Nevada.

¹⁰⁵ The Saturn V was an American super heavy-lift launch vehicle, certified for human rating and used by NASA between 1967 and 1973, consisting of three stages and developed to support the Apollo program for human exploration of the moon and later used to launch Skylab, the first American space station.

¹⁰⁶ The Hughes Aircraft Company was a major American aerospace and defense contractor, founded in 1932 by Howard Hughes in Glendale, California.

¹⁰⁷ Most likely a reference to the creation of the AN/AWG-9 and AN/APG-71 radars that were all-weather, multi-mode X-band pulse-Doppler radar systems used in the F-14 Tomcat.

¹⁰⁸ The Pearl Harbor Survivors Association (PHSA) was founded in 1958 and recognized by the U.S. Congress in 1985. It was a World War II veterans organization whose members were at Pearl Harbor, or three miles or less offshore, during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. In December 2011, the organization was officially disbanded.

CH: Is that keeping track of all of –

AH: Yeah.

CH: – Pearl Harbor survivors? And how many?

AH: We've got, uh, well in California alone we've got about, uh, about sixteen-hundred survivors left.

CH: Right.

AH: My God, we're losing them at a rapid rate though. Uh, the average age is about eighty-one for all these people.

CH: And nationally?

AH: And nationally we had, uh, well initially about, uh, twenty-five thousand, and that's down now to, oh, less than eight thousand.

CH: Looking back at Pearl Harbor and your experiences there, you know over this many years, what would you like future generations to think about, to remember?

AH: Well, we got, we've got a very serious situation right now. Y'know, our motto in that organization is "Remember Pearl Harbor. Keep America Alert." And there is not a one of us that wouldn't walk ten miles out of our way to avoid a war or anything like that. But right now, this situation that is going on in the U.N.¹⁰⁹ and with Iraq¹¹⁰ (coughs) – Excuse me.

CH: Bless you.

AH: Anyway, uh, that son-of-gun over there,¹¹¹ that tyrant has had almost thirteen years to comply with U.N. resolutions. He's snubbed his nose at the U.N. for about seventeen of them, seventeen resolutions that, uh, he hasn't complied with. Now France, Germany, and several of these other countries, China, they all have monetary interests in Iraq. France has been, well both, France and Germany have provided equipment and instruction to Saddam Hussein over this past, uh, twelve or thirteen years. There's a lot of money involved, for both those nations. And, uh, that's the one reason I think that they're lobbying so hard against a, uh, resolution by the U.N. to, to go in and take that guy.

[01:00:02]

CH: Lesson should be, be prepared and not let something like this happen again?

AH: Listen, if you give him more time, that's just more time for him to, to generate his, uh, weapons of mass destruction. He's had all this time that he's, uh, he's done this, we know he has them. And, uh, you know the, after

¹⁰⁹ Abbreviation for the United Nations, an intergovernmental organization that aims to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations.

¹¹⁰ This interview on March 12, 2003, occurred days before the Iraq War started (March 20, 2003), which involved the United States overthrowing the government of Saddam Hussein.

¹¹¹ A reference to Saddam Hussein.

- all you get along so far, and the guy keeps thumbing his nose at, at everyone outside his regime, it's time to call a halt to it. And the only thing he knows, I mean, here's a man that had used some of his, uh, biological weapons on his own people, in the north of Iraq.
- CH: Right.
- AH: Killed many thousands of them.
- CH: Did you attend the fiftieth anniversary of, uh, the Pearl Harbor festivities that went on.
- AH: Yes, sure did. And the fifty-fifth.
- CH: Right.
- AH: And the sixtieth.
- CH: Going back every five years.
- AH: Every five years, yeah.
- CH: Did you still keep in touch— [audio cuts out here until 1:01:22]
- CH: I was just asking if you still keep in touch, obviously through your organization, with all the people in California, or what not.
- AH: Oh yes. At one time I think I knew every, uh, every survivor within the state of California and, uh, I still know many of them. A lot of them we've lost through death and, uh, so, well, even a lot of them on the national level I'm very well-acquainted with. Uh, not so much in Hawaii, they've become a little aloof to us. But, uh, we have to attribute that to one or two individuals out there that didn't want to be bothered so, uh, I'm taking steps to rectify that situation. But, uh, no we have, uh, I travel all over the state. We have twenty-five chapters active here in the state and, uh, they're some of the grandest people you'd ever, ever hope to meet.
- CH: Right.
- AH: And, uh, they— there's no B.S.-ing with them, you know. I mean they're, oh, we kid around a lot and the like, but I mean, when it gets down to serious business—
- CH: That's a very unique bond you guys have.
- AH: Oh, you betcha, you very well know. We all have one thing in common, and that was that we were there.
- CH: Well, I'd like to thank you for allowing me to be here and share this time with you.
- AH: Well I hope, I hope it's been beneficial to you.
- CH: It has. And that concludes our interview of 3-12-03. Thank you very much.
- AH: You betcha. You betcha and uh— [audio cuts off]

[01:03:26]

END OF INTERVIEW