

Part 1: "The Struggle" Transcript

[**Announcer:**] Utah World War II Stories was made possible in part by: George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation, Stephen G. and Susan E. Denkers Family Foundation. Additional funding was made possible by C. Comstock Clayton Foundation, Kennecott Corporation, University of Utah, ...and the support of the continuing members of KUED.

[**Ernie Mettenet:**] I was on the front in Western Europe as infantry. I never really, never related that kind of a story to my family, to my grandchildren. And about three or four years ago, they kept asking me questions, and usually I deferred without much detail.

[**Max Gollaher:**] I never was able to say anything to anybody. I just thought, well, if you're a GI, you're a GI and you went through the same thing I did.

[**Douglas Howard:**] It took a good 50 years before I could talk to my kids or to anyone about the experiences of the war, and many of it I'm still not talking about very much. But the kids would look at some of the pictures and ask me what happened here and what happened...They were pictures that I had and briefly would talk about, but that's it.

[**Louis:Slama**] Uh, my kid says, "Dad, you know, you have to leave a legacy for your grandkids too," so when I started actually talking about my experiences, my load started to drop. I felt like all those years, you know, I couldn't talk about it because...The other guys talked about; I just joined in with something else.

[**Ernie Mettenet:**] We were young--17, 18, 19 years old. Uh, didn't think too much of the past; concentrated more on future.

[**Richard Burt:**] I'd do anything I can now to get the word out, and I wish...I hope other people would be doing the same, but... Let's face it--we're dying at a thousand a day now. We're just not gonna be here very long.

[**Rick Randle:**] There's not just one story of World War II. There are as many stories as there were men and women to fight. More than 3,600 never returned to Utah to tell their stories. These are some of the 67,000 that did.

[**Rick Randle:**] I was just six years old on December 7, 1941, when America was suddenly attacked at Pearl Harbor. I remember vividly the concern of my parents, and several months later, my mother weeping uncontrollably at the Rio Grande station in Salt Lake as my two brothers left for the Navy and a very uncertain future. Hello, I'm Rick Randle. I have made a life-long study of World War II, and I'm convinced that winning that war has done more to improve our lives than anything else in the last century. We live today in a land blessed with freedom and opportunity. We have one of the highest

standards of living on the planet, and are the envy of many nations of the world. In many respects, we owe this legacy to a generation of Americans born within five years either side of 1920. Their sacrifice and example have given us the life we enjoy today. Many grew up in poverty and endured the Great Depression in their early teen years. They established values of honesty and hard work that we hope would be embraced by future generations. But most of all, they were called up and went willingly to serve in the Second World War. They made great sacrifices in order to achieve victory. Tonight, KUED proudly presents "The Struggle" Utah veteran stories from the first difficult months of World War II, a time when the outcome was in no way certain.

[Art Buell:] It was 1935 and the depression and there was...unemployment was impossible at that time, so many of the young folks, like me, had their eye on the service--the Army or the Navy.

[Ken Potts:] I don't know, I'd seen pictures or something of the Coast Guard, and I thought, man, that looks like an exciting life. So I went down to sign up and they wasn't taking any, but they were taking 'em for the Navy, so I signed up for the Navy, and that was in 1939.

[Art Buell:] Honolulu was always a nice town. It was a mid-size town about the size of Salt Lake City. Pearl Harbor was about six miles from town. We'd spend some time renting bicycles and swimming and laying on the beach and it was nice.

[Rick Randle:] Tell us just what you were doing on infamous December 7th.

[Art Buell:] That's quite vivid. I was lying in my cot. I was awake. It was around 7:30 or something like that in the morning.

[Ken Potts:] To the best of my knowledge, I was doing nothing. They were setting up for the church.

[Art Buell:] I could hear a noise. It sounded like explosions, so I looked out the porthole and I saw smoke rising. My first thought was, God, it must be the Army holding maneuvers because there was nothing scheduled.

[Ken Potts:] On the starboard side is the 5th Division, and that's where I was at, which is the opposite side of where the torpedoes came in. Torpedoes only make a noise when they hit and explode. The strafing--you could hear the strafing once they started in. People that was outside spotted the rising sun on 'em and started hollering that they was Japs, and they was telling me they was throwing potatoes at 'em and everything else off of the fan tail.

[Art Buell:] I saw the red circle, orange-colored circle on the wing and started thinking, hey, that's a Japanese plane. What are they doing here?

[Ken Potts:] Then they sounded general quarters and everybody went to

their gun place. I was on a five-inch 51, but they was shooting at...Those low-flying airplanes was almost straight out from that five-inch 51 up on the boat deck.

[**Art Buell:**] Then the general alarm sounded and we closed the portholes and couldn't see anymore, so I climbed up the ladder and I could see the Utah. The Utah was already partway over, and I could tell it had been torpedoed and it was starting to sink. It finally capsized. It turned completely over.

[**Ken Potts:**] Right away after the torpedoes started hitting, oil started coming up, but when it caught fire, I don't even remember. I remember seeing it on fire, but I couldn't tell you at all when that first started ablaze. I think it was at least 20 minutes from the time the torpedo planes quit dropping torpedoes until the big bombers come over. And then the second wave came in about around 8:30 or 9:00.

[**Ken Potts:**] When the bomb went down and blew up all of our ammunition, that's when the damage to the Arizona killed an awful lot of people. They claim it went down the stack, but I don't think there's a chance in the world that it went down the stack. When it exploded, all it done was went down like that. It didn't tip over, it didn't list.

[**Art Buell:**] And that's what happened to the battleship California and some of the others. It went down--straight down, but they were still in sight. You could still see 'em.

[**Ken Potts:**] The Oklahoma was right in front of the West Virginia, and that's the one that rolled over on its side. There were ones trapped down in the hull of the West Virginia, which was the one right in front of us. The guys were trapped in there, which I bet was a terrible feeling.

[**Art Buell:**] A man is either scared or he's a liar--one or the other, and we were scared. I was scared. The "all clear" was sounded, and at that time we had a chance to look around and see what had happened. It was pretty dramatic.

[**Ken Potts:**] There was men in the water and oil burning in water. Most of the ones killed was down...Most of the ones killed out on deck was by machine gun fire from the airplane.

[**Art Buell:**] Our first concern was to save lives--get the people out of the water, and so we didn't go aboard any of those ships that day.

[**Ken Potts:**] And that was the first job I had after December 7th was taking bodies...We could never get ahead of where the ammunition exploded and broke the ship--basically broke it in two almost. We could never get ahead of that. All we could do was get what bodies we could off from there aft... Get the bodies off and then they'd...Which was a nightmare way they done it, but I guess it's the only thing you could do--They'd bring 'em over to

where the hatch was and they'd load it up real quick underneath that water and bring 'em over there and let go of 'em and they'd just pop right up through that hatch and come clear out of the water. And then this crew they had would take 'em and get a rope on 'em and tow 'em through that oil over to where they tried to identify 'em and take care of 'em.

[Art Buell:] I was from the "old school" where one of the things that we were impressed with back in the '30s was a battleship is the ultimate. A battleship cannot sink, and there they were damaged by aircraft, and burning, and sinking. And it's awful hard to...looking back on it, it's easy, but at the time it was very difficult to assume that.

[Phil Shumway:] So, we came home from Sunday School on December 7th, and we came to our dorm and we heard all of this commotion, running around, and everybody saying, "The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor!"

[Max Gollaher:] I went down on a Sunday to milk the cow. We had a single cow, and my brother-in-law came out and said, "You better get your gun. "The Japanese are coming."

[Mont Mickelson:] I was just completing my newspaper route delivering the Sunday morning papers, and I was totally devastated.

[Calvin Gould:] Of course, I really had no inkling at the time what an affect it would have on my life, but I recognized that it was a serious event.

[George Wahlen:] Everybody was all concerned that we was at war, and I remember President Roosevelt declaring war on the Japanese and on the Germans at the same time on the radio.

[President Roosevelt:] "Yesterday, December 7th, 1941, a date which will live in infamy. United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the empire of Japan...I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire."

[Chase Nielsen:] But I'll tell you it was a very sobering radio broadcast. We knew better than to go on into town. We just turned around and went back, got on our flying gear, loaded up our airplanes and headed for Pendleton, Oregon.

[Phil Shumway:] We didn't know even where Pearl Harbor was, but we did know that our country had been attacked, and so, as youth would do, we just jumped in our car and went over to Phoenix and signed up.

[Bob McGregor] First and foremost, you want to get in there and defend your country.

[Ernie Mettenet:] The student body at that time, most of the guys were 16, 17, no more than 18 years old. Just a rash of enthusiasm and sign-ups

really, volunteering.

[**Bill Johnson:**] Absolutely, they rushed to the recruitment offices. You would not believe how patriotism was really high.

[**Ora Mae Hyatt:**] I wanted to be able to help. Everyone wanted to help with the war effort when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

[**Phil Shumway:**] Where we were disunited as a country, the day of Pearl Harbor we were one.

[**Byrne Fernelius**] We were ready. We wanted to go get these people that had, you know, stabbed us in the back, so to speak. That's what they really did, and so we were ready to go.

[**Walter Stewart:**] We went immediately out to Cal Aero Academy in Ontario, California, and they said, "Put away your civilian clothes. You will never wear anything but military until this war is over."

[**Newsreel:**] The die is cast. America is at war. Our enemies--Japan, Germany and Italy--are out in the open. The nation prepares to protect its traditions and its way of life, to guarantee that its children shall not become chattel of an inglorious German/Japanese state.

[**Woody James:**] My cousin that I hung with in Mobile, we worked together and roomed together. He got drafted, and then I said, "Well, what the heck. I'm gonna join. I don't want to go to the Army. I'll go in the Navy."

[**Mont Mickelson:**] And I was drawing good money as a journeyman machinist at Hill, and at the completion of that one year deferment, they asked if I wanted another deferment, and I said, "No, I'd like to be drafted."

[**M.J. Eschler:**] Got on a train there at Soda Springs, Idaho, and there were four of us. One, two...there were five of us, all volunteers.

[**Douglas Howard:**] I graduated from high school, turned 18, and I was immediately drafted into the Army, and I was shipped back to Fort Lee or Camp Lee, Virginia. For a young guy like me who had never been out of the shadow of Salt Lake City hardly, I didn't know where the hell I was.

[**M.J. Eschler:**] The United States of America was taking in millions of soldiers, millions of young men. They didn't know what to do with them. They were a hundred percent unprepared.

[**Newsreel:**] The principle of war has brought new heroes to the fore--young men whose bravery and daring rises above and beyond the line of duty, new names for the nation's hall of fame, a growing chronicle of valorous deeds that proves the red blood of courage still runs strong in American youth. With men such as these to fight our battle against despotism, America can't lose.

[Phil Shumway:] We were so unprepared to do anything, and they said, "We'll call you for active duty "as soon as we can," and it was July before they called me.

[Byrne Fernelius:] And I was looking for a place where I could get a commission to be an officer. And they were all filled up because people were getting into the service as fast as they could, so all the commissioned spots were filled up. Then they had another article in the paper that Gene Tunney, who used to be one of the heavyweight champions of the world, he was meeting people over in Denver. So my dad got me a railroad pass and Gene Tunney interviewed me and he said, "Well, if you pass the physical, we'll sign you up."

[Gale "Pat" Patterson:] It takes quite a little effort to get in the Army Air Corp, which it was called before the days of the Air Force. We had to take tests that took about six-and-a-half hours, pass a very rigid physical, answer a lot of questions, go before the Board and get hammered with questions, one after another to see if we could take the discipline; whether we could hold our heads under fire, so to speak.

[Leslie Lund:] When I found out I was color blind, they wouldn't take me in the Navy or the Marines, so I just waited until they drafted me, went up to Fort Douglas, loaded me on a truck, sent me out to Kearns.

[Allan Jackson:] Over the road when you come into Kearns off the troop train, it said, "Through this gate pass the damnedest soldiers in the world".

[Rick Randle:] There's a sign there like that.

[Allan Jackson:] Yeah, and on the sign when you're going out, it said, "Through this gate pass the best soldiers in the world". [Laughing]

[Leslie Lund:] Well, it was pretty dry and dusty. A lot of guys from Texas were complaining about it, and I thought that was kind of odd because it's probably hotter in Texas than it was in Kearns. We had wooden rifles to train with, except when we went to the rifle range, they made the issue a rifle to take.

[Allan Jackson:] Over the railroad track where we go for rifle training and all, we train by ourselves. The black soldiers would go up special, they train by themselves. We all--all we got training with was 45s, Stud 8s and M2s, M1s. We never did get trained to throw no hand grenades.

[Phil Shumway:] I got in a train and went to California. Got off the train and there was a sergeant and he took hold of the five of us that had come, and he took us over to the colonel who was in charge of the base. He was sitting there like you're sitting right now, and we just stood there, and the sergeant said, "Well, salute!" I didn't know anything about a salute, except I had been a boy scout and I knew how to...so I went like this. [Laughing] Oh, he was so disgusted with me.

[Ernie Mettenet:] I go back and reflect--we had guys from all over--the Ivy League schools...And I've often said, those guys had never been in a street fight, let alone a fire fight.

[Norma A. Day:] Well, my first morning at boot camp, this bell went off above my head and scared me so bad I fell out of the bunk, and I was in an upper bunk. Then, in our pajamas, we had to go out into the hall for muster, and the little gal from Midvale fainted, and I thought, they're gonna wonder what kind of people come from Utah.

[Ernie Mettenet:] So we took basic training...a lot, a lot of good background.

[Don Verle Breinholt:] Well, you run the rifle range, and you know, all the dry runs, as well as shooting ammunition, trained on all the small arms, as well as whatever else they had there in the basic training, which was fun for me 'cause I love to shoot the rifles and the pistols.

[Byrne Fernelius:] Then we went and hiked nearly every day, and at the noon hour we'd come in and have lunch- a real good lunch, incidentally. And then we'd go back in and have classes on ordinance work and about the war and how to identify planes and boats and that sort of thing. We had classes also in gunnery and knot tying--whatever the Navy had at that period of time.

[Ora Mae Hyatt:] And we learned to march and drill. We had a sergeant that taught us how to salute and do all the things that the Army requires.

[M.J. Eschler:] I think the biggest waste of time in all my life was basic training in the Army. Mostly we marched. We learned how to march, which in combat is strictly worthless. I remember training with four men--take a piece of 2 x 4 and pretend it was a tank. Now, that was boring. We would take a Colt 45-- empty, and go over and aim it at a building four hours after hour. One of my drill instructor-- when I was doing basic training, and I told you I spent a lot of sleepless nights-- one day he turned the rest of the platoon off in another direction and let me march off by myself and had all the rest of them follow me to see how far I'd walk before I woke up. Any little thing you did that you shouldn't do, then you got extra duty, you know, scrubbing floors and stuff like that. Finally, they sent us down to what was called Fort Young, California, down on the desert, and there we met "old blood and guts," and he was our commander then--George Smith Patton, Junior.

[Rick Randle:] Really?

[M.J. Eschler:] Yes, sir, and so I trained there under him. Now, this was good training. This was--at least we were firing weapons, we were driving tanks, we were maintaining tanks. We were training down there--110 degree heat-- and you can imagine what it was inside of the tank. I was driving at the time, and I set straddle of the transmission. We wore coveralls, and you took-- if you didn't cut them buttons off your coveralls, they'd burn your leg.

And you drove with that lousy thing buttoned up. Well, I got smart and I took a c-ration can. I had a port here with the lever on. But you're supposed to be buttoned up tight in that bake over. I took a c-ration can and put it under the--it looked like it was closed, but I had that much nose to get my nose up there and get a little air, and I never got caught. But one of the people got caught. This driver got caught--he got his idea from me. And Patton caught him, and he didn't do anything with the driver. The lieutenant was the tank commander, and he put him under arrest, put the corporal in charge, and I don't know what ever happened to the lieutenant. I don't know, but talk about discipline. He was--and you buttoned up those coveralls up to here, and oh...

[Louis A. Slama:] We finished our infantry school, and uh, we were sitting in... We're trying to figure out where they're gonna send us, so we see a big sign that says, "Join the paratroopers." "Make fifty bucks a month more." So I looked at Lambert and Lambert looked at me, and he said, "Well, what do you think, Lou?" He said, "Okay, let's try it." So we signed up with the paratrooper. They sent us to Fort Benning.

[Newsreel:] Your boys on a scaffold, but don't worry. It's Uncle Sam's new air infantry in training. That's one way of learning how to handle parachute harness and shroud line.

[Louis A. Slama:] They had these towers, you know, and they put you in the towers and they drop you off the tower and teach you how to jump, to land and everything else. And during that period of time, they teach you how to wrap your own chute, you know, and they figured when you make your first jump, that's the chute you're gonna be using. So we used to have a little thing-- who's gonna wrap the chute first, you know. But when the final time came that, you know, when you made your first jump, you said... It took me three hours to get that chute together. I packed it, unpacked it, because I was afraid... It's the same chute that, you know, you're gonna jump with.

So, we get on there and, uh, first stick goes out first, and then a second stick and we shuffle up that thing. I got up to that door and I kind of hesitated, and the jump instructor saw me hesitate and he just tapped me on my leg. The jump instructor was a southern boy, and he said to me on my first jump, he said, "Lou," he says, "when you go out that door," he said, "I want you to keep your eyes open. "If you don't keep you eyes open, tell me what happens." He said, "I'll know." And he said, "It'll be about a hundred push-ups." So we got out of the thing, so I kept my eyes open, and went flapped right out of that thing, so I got out and the thing opened up. You drop about 90 feet and the chute opens up, and they tell you to check your canopy, make sure that everything's okay because you can get some blown panels and all, and came down and landed--boom--and I said, "Well, that's easy." And when I landed he said, "Okay, Slama, what happened?" I said, "Well, serge, I'll tell you one thing." I said, "When you keep your eyes open and you go down "and the tail of the plane "looks like it's gonna cut you in half, you know, "and all of the sudden it sucks you underneath the tail "and

the chute opens." He said, "You kept your eyes open."

[Don Verle Breinholt:] Then one day they had us assemble on the parade grounds that way, and General Anderson said, "3rd Infantry Division, all you soldiers are now on alert, "and the next time you shoot your rifle, "it will be at an enemy."

[Phil Shumway:] I came back from a flight and they called me over to the office and they said, "You'll be leaving for overseas tonight. "We can't tell you where you're going, "but you'll find out as soon as you get off the runway." So they said, "You're confined to the base. "You won't be allowed to go back anymore." And so I called my wife--we had a little apartment there--told her I couldn't come home, and that she'd have to go back to her people.

[Laureen Buswell:] One of the things that I recall was it was time for me to head out home. And he was on the bus with me to take me to where I was to catch the train, and then he would go back and get to his ship and that would be it. I recall him saying--excuse me-- something rather emotional. He says, "I've never, ever thought of going AOL "but boy, it would be easy right now," as we embraced and... And he went his way and I went mine.

[Phil Shumway:] That night we took off in a big old B-24 bomber. There were six of us. They were carrying the mail down in the South Pacific, and we sat around on the bags of mail in that big old plane. And as we went up over the San Francisco bridge, they said, "We're on our way to the South Pacific." Well, we didn't know what that meant, and I don't know if they did.

[William Christensen:] We went on the USS America, which was, you know, their finest cruiser at the time. But they had stripped all of the fancy things out of it and put bunks six or eight high, and so there was about five thousand of us on that ship.

[Don Verle Breinholt:] We boarded the Queen Mary as a troop ship.

[M.J. Eschler:] Well, when we got on the boat... [Laughing] There in the harbor they said, "Now men, when you get on the ship, go to your state rooms. "Don't wait there; we want to register in." State room--our state room was down below the water line with the rats, and it was great big areas just full of mess tables. And you had your choice--you could sleep in a hammock... Can you imagine me in a hammock? Or you could sleep on one of those tables.

[Gilbert J. McLean:] Tack-welded hammocks where the bunks and various things had been-- tack welded them and stacked the up. There were four layers in each room, and we slept in--slept between.

[Woody James:] The living quarters were--wasn't all that big.

[Richard Burt:] Well, there's 35 crew, so that's 350 men on this Liberty ship. One of the holds was converted for troops, and the bunks were like

this, you know, six high. Six deep, yeah.

[**Douglas Howard:**] You had maybe a foot between each bunk.

[**Leslie Lund:**] You were pretty close. If you turned over, you could bump the guy with your shoulder in the bunk above you.

[**William Wassmer:**] And there was just regular bunks with the rope and the canvas, and you put your mattress on there, and you had your blanket and your pillow.

[**Douglas H. Howard:**] And I thought, boy, I'm gonna be right on the bottom one so I just have to roll in-- I don't have to climb clear to the top. Getting out to sea a little bit, I climbed into bed that first night, and there was a guy all the way up in the top who got sea sick, and they used their helmets as "whoopee cups." Some of them didn't make it, so I got away from that bottom bunk and I never went back in that for the next 32 days.

[**Rick Randle:**] I guess the top bunk would be best.

[**William Wassmer:**] [Laughing] It was the best.

[**Leslie Lund:**] Troops on the ship were terribly sick. I've never seen so many sick people in my life.

[**M.J. Eschler:**] And people were vomiting and they were... Oh, it was horrible down there. I would take my blanket and I would... I was a goof off, but when war come, I was a heck of a soldier.

[**Rick Randle:**] I believe it.

[**M.J. Eschler:**] I took my blanket and slither up on that deck and find a bulkhead, find something, and I would sleep up there-- get some good sleep up on that deck, and then about daybreak, get back down there.

[**Douglas H. Howard:**] At 5:00 at night just before dark, everyone was ordered below. Nobody on deck, all lights out. The only place there were lights was around where the latrine and the water cooler was. It was a pretty good-sized area, and there were some fantastic dice games going on, you know, and side bets. Guys would say, "I got five bucks he doesn't make it," and another guy'd say, "I got you covered..." Somebody, "I got you covered..." So you'd have a stack of money there. And so I learned to stay up all night, and then in the daytime go out underneath the life rafts and the boats in the shade and sleep during the day.

[**Gilbert J. McLean:**] It was a miserable experience, to say the least.

[**William Christensen:**] They had chow lines that were a couple blocks long, just wind around the decks till they got to the kitchen.

[**Douglas H. Howard:**] and they'd put an apple on your tray and scoop in

a dish of beans. That was breakfast, and then a drink. You could either have milk, water or coffee.

[Ernie Mettenet:] It was a zoo. It smelled like a zoo. Every once in awhile, like three or four days, you got the opportunity to take a cold shower. The shower water was cold salt water, so you were kind of... You weren't any better off as a result of the shower.

[M.J. Eschler:] The first day out on the boat, they rang an air raid alarm, and you would run and put your Mae West on and take your rifle and go and stand on the deck, you know. That happened everyday all the way across. Well, the enlisted men had salt water showers. Can you imagine washing your head in, oooo, in salt... Well, a friend of mine and I got the bright idea-- When they'd sound that air raid alarm, everyone ran up on deck, and we learned that the officers had a nice, beautiful bathroom with sunken bathtubs and soft water. And so this boy, Martin C. Welch, and I would take our Mae West and our rifle and we'd run to that officers' bathroom. This was a British ship--British people. And oh, it was beautiful, you know, and an enlisted man and an officer look the same with no clothes on. Well, we did that everyday until the last day we got docked in Liverpool, and a British man caught us and he says, "From here out, you chaps will have to use "your own accommodations." "Oh, yes sir, yes sir, oh yeah, thank you." Well, we'd had our shower and washed our hair and we looked respectable.

[Rick Randle:] In December 1941, Wake Island and the Philippines were the next targets of the Japanese.

[Thomas Harrison:] They attacked the Philippines by air the same day as Pearl Harbor. We were on the other side of the International Date Line, so for us it was the 8th of December instead of the 7th, but it was the same day.

[Bill Taylor:] It's a Monday over where we were and we were working, and I was a civilian. And there was 1,087 of us over there and a few Marines. And the Marines didn't have anything. We were living in tents. And so we were absolutely unprepared.

[Gene Jacobsen:] We were at Clark Field, and we fell out every morning for roll call as we always did. Our squadron commander, a young lieutenant-- he was very stern that morning and he told us Pearl Harbor had been bombed by the Japanese. And he said, "We can anticipate the same kind "of treatment, I'm sure." But he said, "We've been preparing for this, "this is our business, and I'm sure we're gonna be able "to make a good accounting for ourselves."

[Bill Taylor:] And the superintendent came down and he said, "They've hit Pearl Harbor "and they've practically ruined our fleet over there. "They've knocked everything out." The Japanese...Oh, it couldn't happen.

[Gene Jacobsen:] I had that called really wrong. I said the Japanese will never attack us. They've got better sense than to take on a country like

America. But I found out that I was wrong that first morning.

[Rick Randle:] Did they tell you that there was a chance that then Wake Island would be attacked?

[Bill Taylor:] Oh, sure. He came over and he said, "We've been attacked "by the Japanese and it's war." But he says, "Do you want to go home "or do you want to stay or what do you want to do?" I says, "We'll stay. "We'll take care of the Japanese in nothing flat."

[Rick Randle:] Did anybody opt to go home?

[Bill Taylor:] You couldn't go home. You're two thousand miles out in the ocean. That's what I was thinking, so... You're not gonna go any place.

[Gene Jacobsen:] He said, "Go about your business "and don't miss any meals." He said, "Be sure you have breakfast. "If we get into war, "you never know when the next meal's gonna be."

[Bill Taylor:] I came out and sat on the back end of this truck. It was about noon on this--on this eventful day, and I looked over the Islands and I could see these bombers coming in. And they were--they were just coasting in. They had their motors-- They were not revved up or anything. I'm about two miles away, maybe two-and-a-half miles away. But when these bombers came in, I was sitting on the back end of the truck and I thought, boy, Uncle sure got here real quick. But it was the Japanese Uncle. Wrong Uncle. Wrong Uncle.

[Gene Jacobsen:] I heard a huge noise overhead and I wanted to see what that was and looked up and it was a great big flight of bombers and in good formation, and I thought, my gosh, Uncle Sam is on his toes. The war's only been going for a few hours and here's this great flight of bombers. It was Japanese.

[Bill Taylor:] And when they came in, why, to me it's like cyclorama. I mean, you could see this whole thing. I'm sitting on this truck and I could see the whole thing, and I'm probably the only one that could see everything. And they came in and they dropped the bombs, but you couldn't hear anything. All you could see was the flashes and flashes and flashes. They were after the airport.

[Gene Jacobsen:] But I watched them coming, and when I got looking up and saw the rising sun on the undercarriage, the bombs would start to fall, and I just dropped to the ground. And then the sky was filled with fighter bombers. I don't know how long they were there. It seemed to me like they were there forever.

[Bill Taylor:] And so it was serious when they hit us because they killed over half of our VMF 211 people. They took most of our planes out. We only had twelve, and when we ended up we only had about five planes left.

[**Gene Jacobsen:**] When the bombers came over, it took out our entire squadron.

[**Rick Randle:**] All those B-17s stacked up there?

[**Gene Jacobsen:**] All the B-17s and all of our squadron, except the squadron commander got off. He just heard them coming or saw them and got his plane in the air.

[**Thomas Harrison:**] They bombed Clark Field, they bombed Nichols Field, and a couple of other areas, and in doing so, pretty well wiped out our Air Force, so during the rest of the battle, series of battles, we had no air support.

[**Bill Taylor:**] On the 11th of December, they sent a task force in, and the Japanese made a big mistake. Instead of staying out about 1,600--16,000 yards out, they kept encircling, encircling and coming in closer and closer... Let 'em come on in! So we just had those three-inch guns and five-inch guns, and when they got about 7,000 yards out, why, we let them have it. Well, they withdrew because the task force was annihilated, and it shocked them. This was a big thing for our country because it's the first time we've been able to come back, and so it was big news that Wake Island was still resisting and they're fighting.

[**Cannon Blasts**]

[**President Roosevelt:**] There were only some 400 United States Marines, who in a heroic and historic defense of Wake Island inflicted such great losses on the enemy.

[**Bill Taylor:**] But they had bombing raids everyday. We didn't realize that our fighter planes were inferior to the Japanese fighter planes. They had these Zeroes and the Zeroes didn't have so much weight to carry and they were faster and they were very good pilots, and so the beginning of the war was tough on America.

[**Bill Taylor:**] So on the 23rd of December, the Japanese came in the early darkness. Commander Cunningham, a Navy man-- he was actually the executive officer, and Major Devereaux--he had the Marines, he had the only fighting force there. Now, Major Devereaux, when he stepped out of his compound, he could see the communications lines were broken. He looked across at Wilkes Island and he could see that the Japanese had raised some flags. Then he talked to Cunningham and he says, "What do you wanna do?" And Cunningham says, "I-I don't know." Cunningham finally made a decision--he says, "I think we better surrender "because they're gonna wipe us out. "They're just gonna come in and whhoot-- "they'll kill everybody on the island." Nobody wanted to say--especially the Marines...They're gonna say, "We're gonna fight to the last man."

[**Rick Randle:**] Right.

[Bill Taylor:] I mean, that's the way the Marines are. I love 'em. And, uh, it was a very bitter thing because we killed a lot of Japanese. But they just kept pouring in. When the surrender came, Major Devereaux had to take that white flag and walk around the island. Everybody had to put their guns down. The Marines that were on Wilkes, they thought that the... They didn't know what was coming off. They thought, well, we've driven the Japanese off because they had taken care of theirs, and so they did come in. They took the men out there and they stripped them all, take their clothes off; made them kneel down, their feet behind them; wired them up with telephone wire, their wrists and so on. Then they put a wire from their back around their neck and tied it to their hands so that you had to stay in a certain position. If you went to slump like that, the wire would be in your neck. I mean, that's the way it was. And finally they took us out on the airport. My brother was there and he was on a truck and he didn't have any clothes on. And I walked over to the truck and he said, "What do you think they're gonna do, Bill?" And I said, "They're gonna kill us."

[Rick Randle:] And you felt as a 24-year-old that that was your last day on the planet.

[Bill Taylor:] This Marine colonel--he was so angry that we shot so many of his troop, he was gonna take everybody out and kill 'em. Kajioka came out and he was driving one of our trucks, and he came out and he had a resplendent white uniform on, you know, with the sword--the Samurai sword and all that stuff, and they had an argument. They argued probably for 15 or 20 minutes, but he's a superior, and they went to Tokyo with this and the word came back from Tokyo--don't kill 'em. That's how close it came.

[Rick Randle:] From January to April 1942, American soldiers on the Philippines were holding off the Japanese with World War I equipment, and surviving on half rations or less.

[Thomas Harrison:] Under those conditions, it was a matter of time only before you had to throw in the towel, simply because you had nothing more to fight with.

[Gene Jacobsen:] Early morning, there was down on the beach one Navy tunnel, and we went down there to see if we could get some food--if they had any food. And they gave us some bags of white navy beans and some gallon cans of prunes. And when we took these up, everybody was so happy to see that food. And the only thing the cooks had to put with the beans--water and salt, and they could open the gallon can, and when they served that food, I'll never forget how good that was-- that we could have all we wanted. We were having--we were eating, in fact, when that tank came down the road, a Japanese officer standing in the tank and told us that for us the war was over-- we had been surrendered. And told us where to stack our guns and ammunition and where to report. Uh, you know--are we really surrendered? I can't believe that. Nobody could believe it. I mean, we didn't have any food. But they were still telling us, hold in till help arrives.

[Rick Randle:] You were still expecting reinforcements?

[Gene Jacobsen:] We were still expecting that, yeah. You talk about loyal people--we were loyal. And, uh, you know, we were doing the very best we could. We weren't ready to give up. But nobody asked us if we had a vote, see. And it came as a real surprise and a tremendously sad surprise for us.

[Gene Jacobsen:] They said they were gonna bring trucks and haul us off Bataan in trucks, but no trucks came, but the Japanese soldiers came. And they just swarmed over us like bees...bees. They swarmed over us bayoneting, beating...

[Thomas Harrison:] They ran a very quick strip search of everybody and confiscated anything that happened to take their fancy.

[Gene Jacobsen:] If you made any attempt to say, "No, you can't have that," you'd be run through with a bayonet. We learned fast--don't say no. My best friend, Dick Watts from Tremonton, Utah, had glasses--I think I still have the glasses-- glasses that were tinted a little bit, and one of the guards, a Japanese wanted those, and he said, "I have to have these." He just took the butt of his rifle and smashed him in his face. We were moved down into a big field along side of the runway that they were building, guards put around us and we were out in the wide-open space. We were there for three days, and the third night--no trucks came at any time-- we began to march.

[Thomas Harrison:] That was the beginning of what has been called "The Death March."

[Gene Jacobsen:] We had no food or water for three days, and... Except what we had in our canteen, you know,we had that.

[Thomas Harrison:] Then they started us north--walking. The trip, ultimately, entailed about 63 miles, and it seemed much longer, because there was only one road, and that was the one we took out. It was also the same road the Japanese were using to bring in their material for the ultimate bombardment of Corregidor.

[Gene Jacobsen:] And they were firing on Corregidor, and Corregidor was falling on them, and we saw them hit guns head on. I mean, Corregidor-- they were accurate with their artillery.

[Thomas Harrison:] So there was a constant turmoil, constant confusion on this road, and we had to stop, wait, stand in the sun for hours on end while troops went by. People fainted, uh, Japanese didn't know, I guess, what to do, so there was a lot of brutality. People were bayoneted; people were shot.

[Gene Jacobsen:] It's the worst feeling... It's the most you could do is to carry yourself. That's all there was to it.

[Rick Randle:] And what happened to these guys that...

[**Gene Jacobsen:**] They--as far as we know,they were shot in the head, or bayoneted--killed that way. We got one canteen cup of rice--our group-- going on the Death March until we got to the end of it, and they gave us another cup.

[**Rick Randle:**] Which was about six days, as I understand.

[**Gene Jacobsen:**] I don't know. I'll tell ya, I was in a real dilemma all the way. I had no idea how long it took.

[**Thomas Harrison:**] There weren't very many supplies. Some people managed to get a drink out of a carabao wallow here and there, which proved to be a poor choice. Contamination of those puddles, if you want to call them that-- The result was that, in addition to all of our other troubles, there was a great deal of dysentery and that sort of thing.

[**Gene Jacobsen:**] And then what they would do is get us up early in the morning and start us down the road. When the sun got out and started to get hot, then they'd move us into field--a big field, and make us crowd all together standing up, then they'd have us sit down. If we had any hats, take your hats off, and they'd give us the sun treatment. They were punishing us. That was the purpose of that was to punish us.

[**Thomas Harrison:**] By the time we got to San Fernando La Union, the end of the Death March, we had lost, oh, I think two or three thousand people, mostly through brutality, some through illness, that sort of thing.

[**Rick Randle:**] Did you witness any atrocity?

[**Gene Jacobsen:**] Lots of atrocity. So you saw Japanese bayonet... Lots of times... People dropped down... Yup. And we saw four men dig their grave and they were told to get in it and they shot them. And I know at least one man, because we were watching, they hadn't killed him and he tried to crawl out of it and they just kept battering him down with a shovel. It was unbelievable.

[**Thomas Harrison:**] San Fernando was a railroad point. They had a narrow gauge railroad that went from there--I don't know where it ended, but it took us to a town called Capas.

[**Gene Jacobsen:**] And there they put us in box cars, made us stand as close as we could together. They'd do that at night too. At night when we were in the field-- stand close together, sit down and spend the night that way.

[**Thomas Harrison:**] But we'd packed nearly a hundred of us in each car, and we were packed so densely that nobody could sit down or lie down. There was no fresh air. Fortunately I was close to a door and I could get a little air from a crack.

[**Gene Jacobsen:**] When they opened the box car doors, there were dead

among us who had died and...

[**Rick Randle:**] Standing up. Standing up, and they were in so tight that he couldn't fall down.

[**Thomas Harrison:**] It was a very, very traumatic situation which lasted for, oh, I don't know, several hours.

[**Gene Jacobsen:**] And we walked about five miles up the road to the first prison camp, and that was Camp O'Donnell. An old Filipino Army training camp. It was in--it had been abandoned. And, uh, anyway, we stayed there. It was tough.

[**Rick Randle:**] Despite losses in the Pacific in early 1942, in Columbia, South Carolina, a mission was conceived to strike back against Japan. Jimmy Doolittle was to lead this extraordinary mission.

[**Chase Nielsen:**] Of course, most of us knew who Doolittle was. We knew about Doolittle and Lindberg and everybody else who'd ever flew an airplane, including Rickenbacker and what not. Jimmy came in and started across and I thought, is that really Jimmy Doolittle? He didn't look big enough. To have a name like that, you know, and the record he had, you looked for some big guy. He walked up to the pulpit and he says, "I'm Jimmy Doolittle." He says, "I've been assigned a mission. "It's very dangerous. "It will take us out of the states "for probably 30-60 days. "It could mean your life, it's that dangerous. "That's all I can tell you about it, "except I need volunteers. "Who'll volunteer?" Well, that isn't a whole lot to volunteer on. We all looked at each other--what's going on?

[**Rick Randle:**] How many volunteers?

[**Chase Nielsen:**] The whole wing volunteered.

[**Rick Randle:**] A whole wing volunteered.

[**Chase Nielsen:**] Yeah, and the guys that went on the raid-- they all have a different story why they did. The one said he was so little he didn't think they'd even take him, but he volunteered because everybody else did.

[**Rick Randle:**] The mission they had volunteer for was top secret, and Doolittle made sure it stayed that way. When the boss would hear anybody speculating, he'd say, "I don't want you guys to even talk about this. "This is highly classified, "and if word ever leaks out on this,"you'll never get out of Sing Sing."

[**Rick Randle:**] While the pilots trained to make short-field takeoffs, the USS Hornet, the country's newest and largest aircraft carrier, conducted tests of their own.

[**Robert Shaffer:**] We loaded two B-25 bombers, and went back out into the Chesapeake and launched them. Now, we were told at that time that we

were going to take these bombers to Hawaii. There wasn't anything about Doolittle's raid at all.

[**Rick Randle:**] Eventually, nineteen B-25 bombers were loaded on the Hornet.

[**Chase Nielsen:**] The day they moved the carrier out, we went out from under the Golden Gate bridge, and I can remember everybody standing there giving a big old salute, saying we hope we see you soon again. We got outside of land, the bullhorn came on and said, "Now, hear this..."

[**Robert Shaffer:**] These planes are going to attack Tokyo.

[**Chase Nielsen:**] This convoy is given for Tokyo.

[**Rick Randle:**] Was there a big cheer?

[**Chase Nielsen:**] Oh, yes. Every Navy guy that was on board threw his hat in the air. You might know one of the guys came down the deck with a whole fist full of green money that he'd won from the Navy. The Navy were good poker players, but they weren't that good. He had a whole fist full of green. He wanted to buy anybody's seat. He didn't care whether it was a tail gun or a waste gun or who it was.

[**Rick Randle:**] And he had no takers?

[**Chase Nielsen:**] No takers.

[**Robert Shaffer:**] So like I say, we joined up with Admiral Halsey. He was on board The Enterprise. We had some cruisers and destroyers. And we headed west. Have you ever been in the Pacific?

[**Rick Randle:**] Oh, yeah.

[**Robert Shaffer:**] It's big. It's big!

[**Chase Nielsen:**] Then all at once, kaboom! Kaboom! I thought, what the world's going on out there? And then they said over the speaker we had contacted the Japanese and I thought, oh, boy.

[**Robert Shaffer:**] And all of the sudden I heard gunfire and looked over the port side, and there the cruiser Nashville was firing at a couple fishing boats. Their gunnery was rotten, so Admiral Halsey ordered two destroyers of the screen to go around them, which they did, and sank the boats. But by that time, we figured that they would have alerted the Japanese headquarters that we were coming. Well, they were smart enough they'd put a picket line out there 800 miles out of Japan, and they figured... I guess we'd gone by some of them in the dark. They knew we were on the way, but what they thought was that we would have to launch carrier aircraft from about 200-300 miles. They didn't realize that we could launch land-based bombers.

[Chase Nielsen:] Then Halsey said, "Man your bombers, Army," so we said, "Well, this is it. "We gotta go. "I hope we can make it."

[Robert Shaffer:] And at that time we were about 800 miles out. The plan had been to get in to about 600 miles, and then the planes, of course, were to bomb Tokyo and then fly on to China.

[Chase Nielsen:] We all knew that we were gonna have to scrimp and go like mad, but first we had to get off the carrier-- you think of that. Then you gotta find Tokyo and you gotta bomb it without getting shot down, then you gotta find China, then you gotta find the air base that you're going into, so you got a lot of things to think of before you think about landing. We took off between 8:00 and 9:00 in the morning, and that was a pretty good job getting 16 airplanes off the carrier in one hour.

[Robert Shaffer:] Most of 'em gave it so much gas they kinda jumped. It was quite a stormy day and the ship was pitching, you know, up and down. Colonel Doolittle flew off. We got all the planes off without any incident except the last one. It was back on the fantail, and the seaman pulling the chocks from under the left wheel slipped, and the propeller cut his left arm off.

[Chase Nielsen:] In my work on my maps and stuff to navigate, I had plotted every big city that I could plot on the China coast and all the way up the coast of Japan, and then I'd gone through two or three other books the Navy had that listed these cities and the radio stations. JOAK was Tokyo radio station and what its frequency was. And that way I knew what all these frequencies were and I knew what city they came out of. I just followed the radio station in until we could visually pick up Tokyo in the bay area. We were so low we hedge hopped from the point of Inubo-saki where we first hit the island into Tokyo bay, and you could see the farmers all down there in their rice paddies, and they'd take their hat off and wave it at you. And then with the help from the bombardier was getting down in the nose, we both had a set of maps and what the target was, but he said, "If I drop two on that first big target, "and then I go 1, 2, and drop the other one, "it's gonna hit the other target right in the middle," and I said, "Fine." And then Dean came in, the pilot, and he says, "I've already figured out what he's going to do with the incendiary. "I'm gonna circle and come back "and we're gonna go over the target area "and spread it all over."

[Rick Randle:] And so he did?

[Chase Nielsen:] And I kidded him and I said, "You're sure you're not gonna circle "and go over the Imperial Palace," 'cause when the guys found out we were going to Tokyo, they were gonna cut the cards to see who got the high card and who got to bomb the Imperial Palace, and Doolittle about went out the roof. He said, "You can bomb anything but the palace." He said, "You bomb that and kill the emperor "and you'll have those people so knitted close together "that we never will get the war over."

[Robert Shaffer:] We had a Lieutenant Jurika aboard who'd been a Naval attaché in Tokyo and he could understand Japanese, so he turned on the radio to pick up the Japanese stations, and after awhile you could hear this babble of Japanese. Of course, none of the rest of us could understand it, but he told us basically what was happening, that the Japanese realized that we were attacking their capital. And I think that all of us applauded or yelled or something like that.

[Chase Nielsen:] Shots come up. Most of it was coming up from the ships that were anchored in the bay. I don't think they had much anti-aircraft or anything else home for home defense. We dropped back down to 50 feet and went right out the bay, and after we'd cleared the bay by about 10 miles, we just turned south-- southwest and went on down the island. And that's when Dean wanted to know how much time we got before we crossed the coast, and I said, "Three minutes." About that time, the left engine quit, and the right engine went clunk, clunk and it quit. When it hit, that running into water is just as hard as running into ground. It tore the airplane up, tore the left wing off and split the fuselage open, and I hit my head on something. I don't think I even got in belted down. I whacked my head pretty good. It was bleeding around my ear and that, it was bleeding on this side, but when I come to enough to know where I was, I was in water right up to here. I was standing right in the navigator well, and I grabbed the crash ax, which was hanging up here, and knocked the top window out, and then I went out the top window. That's when I found out the other guys were already out there. Finally I felt bottom, and I crawled up onto the beach, and the damn waves would break over me and haul me right back out again. And I thought, well, maybe I oughta let the air out of my Mae West, and I thought, yeah, then it will drag you out and drown you. So I let all the air out of one side of it, and then after the one wave had drug me down, then I crawled as fast as I could go and I finally got up to where I was in the shrubbery, and I thought, well, I must be at the high tide line, so I just keeled over and quit, passed out. I thought, boy, this is a fine pickle. Here you are 6,500 miles from home, your aircraft carrier is gone, your airplane is sunk, you don't know where your crew is, you're in enemy territory and you don't speak Japanese or Chinese. I looked around and I thought it looked like two bodies with Mae Wests on and I thought, well, it must be two of my crew. I wondered which two it is. And the more I thought--I've gotta get up in the mountains, I've gotta get inland, I've gotta get out of here. But I thought, well, I better find out who that is before I go, so as I got down there and I started raising my head up to look at it, the first thing I saw was the toes of a pair of split-toed canvas shoes, and above that was a pair of laced leggings, and above that was a rifle barrel looking right at me and it looked like there was a big enough bore in it to shoot golf balls. And I looked on up and here's this most evil-looking face I've ever seen, but right on the front of his cap was a blue badge with a white 12-point star. The Japanese wore a badge about that big around with a circular 12-point white star in it. So that kind of slowed my heart up a little bit, and I looked at him and he looked at me, and finally he pulled his head off the stock of the gun and spit and he says, "You American? You

Japanese?" And I looked back at him and I said, "You Japanese? You Chinese?" And finally he raised his head and he says, "Me China." And I says, "Me American." And then he pointed at the two bodies and he says, "We know. "We see last night. "We bury in short time. "Don't want Japs to see."

[Rick Randle:] Doolittle and his 79 airmen volunteers successfully completed their mission. They all ran out of fuel and crash landed on beaches, and some parachuted in the mountains of China. With the help of the Chinese, Doolittle and 69 of the airmen returned home safely to the United States, April 1942. Two of these brave men died and eight were captured. Three of those captured were executed, one died of illness, and the remaining four, including Utah's Chase Nielsen, were prisoners for the duration of the war. America's morale was lifted by the brave Doolittle mission. It provided the first glimmer of hope to an anxious U.S. population as the nation prepared for the terrific struggle to come.