



LaVell Bigelow

United States Navy

Captain

Pacific Theater

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Interviewer:
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THIS INTERVIEW IS NOT EDITED FOR CONTENT, LANGUAGE OR HISTORICAL ACCURACY

Geoff: Tell us your name

LaVell: My name is Lavell Bigelow

Geoff: And you're from Utah originally?

LaVell: I'm from Provo, Utah

Geoff: And you were born what year?

LaVell: 1917

Geoff: We're going to go through your pre-war history pretty fast here. And you went to what high school?

LaVell: Provo High School. I went to two high schools actually. Brigham Young University had a high school and I attended BYU High School for a couple of years then graduated from Provo High School.

Geoff: And you also had a degree from BYU?

LaVell: I had a Bachelors degree from BYU in geology.

Geoff: And when did you join the navy?

LaVell: 1939

Geoff: What made you want to join the navy?

LaVell: Because I had a fast-talking recruiting officer. No, I looked at the world situation and there was real trouble in Europe and real trouble in the Pacific and I studied a little bit and I thought I would like to get into it.

Geoff: And why aviation?

LaVell: Again, a fast-talking recruiter. My physics teacher really coached me on this and thought this would be a good career for me.

Geoff: Had you ever been in an airplane?

LaVell: Never had been in an airplane.

Geoff: And where did you go train?

LaVell: In Oakland, California I went there for a one month so-called "elimination training." And in Oakland, California, my requirement to go further in naval aviation was to get in an airplane and do a little training with an instructor—maybe a couple of hours, and solo that airplane as much as taking off, circling the field and landing. That put me in the program.

Geoff: And how long was your training?

LaVell: The Oakland training was only a month.

Geoff: I mean all of your pre-war training.

LaVell: Pre-war training in naval aviation was one year in Pensacola, Florida.

Geoff: And how did you get into dive-bombers?

LaVell: That was an option when I graduated from Pensacola and it wasn't any worse than the other options so I chose dive-bombers. Again, we were combat pilots, whether we're fighters, torpedo plane pilots or dive-bomber pilots and dive-bombing was the least worst in my mind because that just seemed to be the best way to go.

Geoff: And where were you in your class. Were you pretty high in number in your aviation class?

LaVell: Oh no, but I can say this, I never did get a down check in any of my check flights so that brought me up a little bit.

Geoff: Where were you on Pearl Harbor? What were you doing on December 7th, 1941?

LaVell: Have you got about a half hour? I was packing my bags and helping my dear wife of two days to go on a honeymoon. That's what I was doing. Now you have to ask, "What did you do when Pearl Harbor was announced on the radio?" I took off my civilian clothes and put on my uniform and checked into the U.S.S. Yorktown, which is my ship, which was at the Norfolk naval base, and reported in like all the other squadron did and found out what was going on. We knew that the ship would move real fast so I checked into my ship that day and cancelled my honeymoon.

Geoff: When did the Yorktown leave for the Pacific? Was it pretty fast after that?

LaVell: About four or five days.

Geoff: And when did you first see action? First real combat?

LaVell: Our ship went through the Panama Canal to the Pacific Ocean, went straight to Pearl Harbor where we took on additional war supplies, lots of bombs and lots of supplies for a long cruise into the Western Pacific. By the way, the Pearl Harbor devastation was still smoldering and smoke coming out when we got to Pearl Harbor. We went on straight to the Western Pacific

but we first went to a set of islands called the Mariana islands and we made a strike, our first strike of the war, and it was the first carrier strike of the war at the island of [inaudible] there were some Japanese ships and we bombed those ships.

Geoff: And what was it you remember about that mission?

LaVell: We flew in three-plane sections and my two buddies who were flying in that three-plane section got killed in that strike. I came through without getting hurt.

Geoff: So did you hit a ship on that mission?

LaVell: I hit a cargo ship.

Geoff: And did it sink?

LaVell: I don't know. It made a big flash. I know that.

Geoff: And so that was your first combat mission and where did you go after that?

LaVell: From there we went straight to the Coral Sea.

Geoff: Which was about how many days later?

LaVell: Five or six days later we got to the Coral Sea but I have to tell you, we went to the Coral Sea because the powers that be had intelligence that a large Japanese task force with troop ships, battleships, cruisers, two or three carriers, was going to come down south from Japan to occupy Port Moresby. They were going to make a military occupation of Port Moresby, which is near Australia and we figured that eventually they would attempt an occupation of Australia also. However, we arrived in the Coral Sea way too early. By that I mean we were required to steam around in the Coral Sea for ninety days. That's a long time to steam around waiting for that ostensible Japanese task force to come down through the Coral Sea. Eventually they did come and the Coral Sea battle took place.

Geoff: Tell us about the Coral Sea battle and what you did in it.

LaVell: Well, obviously the aircraft carriers were the main target for us dive-bombers. We, in dive-bombing, could very efficiently sink enemy ships if we got hits with our thousand-pound bombs. It would blow them to pieces and they would sink. So we saw the task force coming and of course we immediately—there was a [inaudible] launch that we had that day and we saw them coming just as the sun was coming up and I was assigned to a sector which had the Japanese aircraft carrier Shoho and we lined up at about 12,000 feet in our dive-bombing formation and as we peeled off one after the other, we dropped our bombs on that ship and the ship sank very readily—the Japanese carrier Shoho. Some of the other planes were assigned to some of the other carriers. There were three carriers.

Geoff: Tell us about what was your particular—when you went down something was happening. You told me something earlier that you weren't alone on that dive.

LaVell: As I peeled off to enter my dive, I became aware that a Japanese Zero was circling around to get on my tail and he did get on my tail. As I pushed over in my vertical dive, I had my dive flaps open and I was in a vertical dive and he settled down right behind me in my dive and followed me down in my dive. But so far as I could tell, my second seat gunner said that as far as he could tell, that Zero didn't fire a shot, but he followed me down all the way in the dive. But when I first realized that I was being accompanied by this Japanese Zero, a Mitsubishi Zero with a big red ball on the side, my first inclination was to start to jink, as we say, to evade his guns and evade being shot down. But I was given a very strong inspiration to stay in a steady dive because a steady dive was required to get a hit on the ship, which was my target—stay in a steady dive, don't worry about that Zero, he's not going to shoot you down, everything will be o.k. So I settled down in a steady dive, got a hit on the ship. The Japanese Zero followed me down all the way in the dive and pulled up along side of me. I'm not sure if he waved at me or not, but my imagination, I think he waved at me. Anyway, he went his way and I pulled out and closed my dive flaps and pulled up and regained altitude and joined my other friends in the squadron and we went back to the ship.

Geoff: Did you see the carriers burning--the Japanese carriers? What did that look like?

LaVell: There was immediately when the bombs hit, there were volumes of flame and smoke from airplanes and of course later on the ship itself was on fire and it eventually sank.

Geoff: When your bomb hits a carrier, could you feel the concussion from where you were?

LaVell: No.

Geoff: But the noise—you were being tracked the whole time shot at by the...

LaVell: Oh ya, there was plenty of anti-aircraft from the ship itself and from it's escort ships. There was anti-aircraft all over the sky.

Geoff: When did you see combat again? Did you see more during that period or what happened next in your mind?

LaVell: Well, the battle of the Coral Sea lasted for two days.

Geoff: So did you fly another mission?

LaVell: We flew a mission the next day and on that mission I think I was assigned to a cruiser and I and two or three other pilots went on that cruiser and we sank that ship also. And of course a cruiser was not nearly the priority that an aircraft carrier was in U.S. Navy.

Geoff: Was that a rough mission?

LaVell: It was not nearly as rough as the first one, but they had plenty of anti-aircraft if that's what you mean. Lots of anti-aircraft from that ship, but we weren't too worried about anti-aircraft. We were more worried about the Zero fighters.

Geoff: And you hit the cruiser?

LaVell: Hit the cruiser and along with other bombs it sank.

Geoff: What was your next action? What was the next big action in your head that you can remember?

LaVell: Well, that May the 8th was the end of the Coral Sea engagement and we retired back to the supply ships and re-supplied the carrier and I think that the next actions that we had were aircraft on islands that the Japanese had occupied—aircraft parked on the ground, and I can't remember which island it was.

Geoff: So you went after some enemy airfields? And were you successful there?

LaVell: Enemy airfields, yes. We strafed with fifty-caliber machine guns, lots of airplanes and I guess we were successful in destroying quite a few airplanes.

Geoff: And what was the next big action you were in?

LaVell: Well, we weren't in any actions for a month or two it seemed like. But we then assigned targets along the eastern coast of Japan against mostly airfields, but we also went to an area in Japan called Currey Harbor where there was a battleship. And with a thousand pound bombs, the entire squadron zeroed in on that battleship with bombs and my bomb along with others sank that battleship in the harbor.

Geoff: Tell us in more detail about that mission.

LaVell: Well, we came in at about 14,000 feet and went into an attack formation which is a long, long echelon of single planes falling one after another. And we peeled off individually entering our dive so that actually from 14,000 feet, there would be five or six planes all in the dive one after another with the dive flaps open and each pilot having a good aim on the target and in the bay there. We would drop our bombs at about 1,000 feet high or 800 feet and at that height and with a good steady dive, all the bombs would hit the ship without exception. There would just be a series of big explosions on that ship.

Geoff: How long does it take you to dive from 14,000 feet to 800 feet?

LaVell: It didn't seem like it was very long, but I never did time it.

Geoff: Did you lose your stomach ever?

LaVell: We had our dive flaps open, of course that slowed our dive down quite a bit, otherwise, if we didn't open our dive flaps we would get into supersonic flight and our plane would start to

shake so we always had those dive flaps open and that slowed us down considerably. Those were great big dive flaps.

Geoff: If you could describe it. We may never see a dive-bomber again in world history, and you flew them. Can you describe what it is like to push that stick over and head down?

LaVell: It's a different view of the earth, I'll tell you that. You're flying along and suddenly you're looking straight down at a target sitting there in the water and that's a view that you don't get very often. Actually, with those dive flaps open it was to be a combat attack. It was quite a comfortable feeling. You could maneuver the plane and turn it this way a little bit and adjust your sight on the target, then turn it the other way and pretty soon you settle down on a very good sight right on the target until you got down to about a 1,000 feet or 800 feet, release the bomb and then close the dive flaps immediately, pull up and join up in formation with the rest of the squadron. It was pretty much a routine. We did this many, many times. It was a comfortable feeling actually in that dive.

Geoff: Why is that?

LaVell: Well, it seems like with those dive flaps open you were just hanging there, being able to do whatever you wanted to do. I mean as far as adjusting your dive and changing this and that so you made sure you got a hit.

Geoff: So after you sank that battleship, what other operations were you on? Do you remember?

LaVell: Well, we did strikes at almost all of the airfields on the east coast of Japan, striking with 50-caliber machine guns and 500-pound bombs, the installations and the aircrafts at each of those airfields, Japanese airfields on the east coast of Japan, I don't think we missed any of them.

Geoff: Did you get a feel for how the war was going? That you were getting closer to the end of the war at that time or closer to the invasion of Japan?

LaVell: Well, we knew that the Japanese were a ruthless, relentless military people. They had already gotten a reputation for atrocities and our feeling was that the U.S. Navy and us dive-bombers had a great mission to perform to keep those Japanese from their goals of occupying many, many of the islands in the Pacific. They had already, by the time we were there, had gone into the Philippines and General McArthur had escaped from his command at the Philippines and things were going really pretty adverse, pretty bad as far as we in the Navy were concerned. We knew we had a job to do and the Navy dive-bombing against Japanese ships was a big part of it.

Geoff: So as the war got towards the end, you're doing more strikes on Japan as you got closer and closer?

LaVell: That's what it amounted to. We just kept on working over the airfields of Japan and the Japanese ships and we sank many of them and destroyed many aircraft on the ground. Of course in my squadron, flying SBD's although I did actually shoot down one plane but I had 50-caliber

machine guns forward firing machine guns and I did shoot down one plane but mostly we weren't fighters, we were just dive-bombers. We had fighter plane squadrons quite often went with us to protect us from the Japanese fighters.

Geoff: Tell us about when you shot down this plane.

LaVell: Well, it was kind of a fluke because it wasn't much of a plane. It was a Japanese sea-plane and it was not very fast. It wasn't a big feat for me to shoot that guy down, but I did. I got behind him and I shot him down with my 50-caliber and he burned on the surface of the sea.

Geoff: Where was that?

LaVell: Well, I was on a search actually, and it was out in the Pacific maybe a hundred miles from land and what we was doing out there I don't know, but he was too-talling along and he happened to be on my search pattern so I just, without having to divert my search patter at all, I just got on his tail and shot him down.

Geoff: Were you in on any of the invasions like Iwo Jima or Okinawa?

LaVell: We protected and helped the troops ashore at Okinawa for several weeks and Guadalcanal.

Geoff: Were you doing any dive-bombing on Okinawa?

LaVell: Lots of dive-bombing and lots of strafing. Doing what we could to assist the troops, which were trying to conquer the Japanese that had already occupied Okinawa.

Geoff: Give us your impressions of looking down on Okinawa. What were you seeing? I think it must have been fascinating or terrifying.

LaVell: Well, we were assigned specific targets by a controller on the ground and we would search out what he was talking about as being a target, either Japanese tanks or trucks or whatever and he would tell us where to go and give us coordinates and it was our job to find that and destroy it.

Geoff: Could you see the Marines on the ground?

LaVell: Oh yes.

Geoff: Did they wave to you?

LaVell: I think they were glad to see us whether they threw us kisses or what.

Geoff: For the invasion of Japan, were you guys briefed that you were going to do this invasion in Japan?

LaVell: No, we were never briefed about a court invasion of Japan. It was almost a forgone conclusion that the United States would never invade Japan. The talk was, an invasion of Japan would be impossible to succeed in capturing or invading Japan because of the nature of the Japanese people. We were very pleased with the atomic bombs made invasion of Japan unnecessary.

Geoff: Where were you when you heard about Hiroshima?

LaVell: We were doing our job on the coast of Japan. I think we were up in the Tokyo area.

Geoff: You were flying over the mainland Japan?

LaVell: Oh yeah, we were flying over Tokyo at the time.

Geoff: And where were you on V.J. Day?

LaVell: I was commanding officer. By that time, I had been promoted to commanding officer of VBF6, on board the aircraft carrier Hancock. I had changed over to another ship. We were flying Corsair, single seat fighter planes, but we still had dive-bombing in the Corsair, but we didn't have dive flaps. It was a different story with Corsair, but anyway you asked the question, 'Where was I on V.J. Day?' We were heading in for a regular strike against military targets in the Tokyo area and we got a message from the Hancock saying, "Drop your bombs at sea because the war is over."

Geoff: How did you react to that?

LaVell: Well we turned around and dropped our bombs and started to head back to the ship but there three Japanese fighter planes did not have the word. They came up... we saw them coming up to intercept us and I think we had six planes in one flight. We went into attack formation, we saw these three fighters coming up. They didn't know the war was over, and we shot all three of them down.

Geoff: Did you get any hits on those planes?

LaVell: Well, I shot at some of them. I'm not sure, but between the six of us, we shot all three of those planes down. A few days later, I was assigned a very pleasant mission to launch my eighteen Corsairs, and put them into a beautiful tight formation and fly fairly low altitude, maybe two or three thousand feet over the battleship Missouri in Tokyo Harbor as Yamamoto and Douglas McArthur were signing the peace treaty on the deck of the battleship Missouri. That was kind of a fun thing. We had a nice parade formation of eighteen planes flying over the Missouri during the signing of that peace treaty.

Geoff: And you had a good view of that yourself?

LaVell: Well, I was flying my plane. I wasn't paying too much attention to who was on deck but I'm sure they were there.

Geoff: And how were you feeling when that was going on?

LaVell: I felt that was a milestone in U.S. history. It was a milestone in my history.

Geoff: We're going to backtrack a little. Tell somebody who has no idea, a prop plane like the Douglas Dauntless, what's it like to take that off a carrier and land it on a carrier?

LaVell: Well, the carrier is steaming into the wind and it has enough wind over the deck to make it fairly comfortable to rev up the engine, to take off torque and you have about two or three hundred feet ahead of you to get your plane in the air. By the time you get to the end of the ship, you're supposed to be in the air. Once in a while you dip down a little bit after you ran off the end, but it was fairly comfortable.

Geoff: What's it like to land it?

LaVell: Well, landing is a different story. We had to be good friends with the signal officer. The signal officer stood there giving us landing signals with his paddles and he knew each one of us by name and by reputation and he knew what to do. He had a list of who was in the air and who was coming in to land and each one of us had different characteristics about how we'd go around and put ourselves in position to land. It was 180-degree turn. We'd fly down into the ship, turn 180 degrees into the ship and get ourselves slowed down with the flaps open and our nose rather high and into a position to cut the gun and land. Our tail-hook would catch a wire, and that was a good comfortable feeling when that tail-hook caught a wire because it slowed us right down. They'd lift our tail-hook and taxi forward. It got pretty routine but not routine enough to say that we completely sure and completely comfortable about landing. Every landing was a potential crash if we weren't careful.

Geoff: What's it like to land at night?

LaVell: Well, the lights on a night landing are pretty good and you just have to follow the lights and just trust the fact that there was a deck under you when you cut the gun.

Geoff: We wanted to go over that story again... you told us a very interesting story about that first mission, and that Zero was on your tail and you were very frightened at first and then you lost a lot of your fear.

Geoff: In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, we believe that the Holy Ghost is a comforting influence, and can give you guidance in your decisions, the Holy Ghost can give you comfort that is very comforting and I was confronted with a very important decision there at 14,000 feet with a Zero plane getting on my tail. He was right there, circling around and there he was right on my tail. Ordinarily, a violent maneuver on my part would throw him off so he couldn't fire at that moment and the continuing bunch of jinking like that might prevent him from shooting me down. But in dive-bombing, it's essential that the pilot enter the dive in a very smooth maneuver and keep in the dive in the very, very smooth dive with your eyes on the side—a telescopic sight right in front of the pilot zeroed on the ship that is the target. If you're

not holding a steady dive, you're for sure not going to get a hit with your bomb. So with a Zero on my tail and that requirement for a steady dive, I had a dilemma. I couldn't jink. Rather, what happened, the Holy Ghost told me, "Lavell, your country is depending on you to get a hit on that ship, ignore the Zero, and I promise you that Zero is not going to shoot you down and you've been told in your prayers and your wife's prayers that you will not be harmed during the war." So I took this at face value, straightened out my dive, ignored the Zero, put my sights exactly on the ship in the steady dive and got a hit on the ship and the Zero just went sailing on by me. As I pulled out of my dive, he pulled out of his and as far as I and my tail-gunner could tell he didn't fire a shot. But furthermore, this admonition from the Holy Ghost stuck with me. I had a promise that I would go through WWII, all the things ahead of us, without ever being injured. So it gave me a confidence that stuck with me all through the many, many strikes that we had all the rest of the war. Lots of fighter opposition, lots of anti-aircraft opposition and it comforted me all the way through the war and I never was hit by any anti-aircraft or never did have any bullet-holes in my plane all the rest of the war. That was truly a comforting knowledge on my part and it gave me confidence to do nothing but concentrate on my attack and not worry about being shot down.

Geoff: Did you win any decorations in the war?

LaVell: I was awarded a Navy Cross, which was the highest award that the Navy gives except the congressional medal. For an attack at Tulagi, we sank a Japanese cruiser in Tulagi, I took part in that and got a Navy Cross for that. I won a Navy Cross in the battle of the Coral Sea and a navy cross for the attacks against the Yamato in the Correy Harbor. So I have three Navy Crosses which is probably as many as anyone has in the Navy.

Geoff: Quite remarkable sir. (going back) Were you afraid at the battle of the Coral Sea?

LaVell: Was I afraid? Yes, I was confidently afraid. I was quite afraid when that Zero came around. The Zero's reputation puts fear in anybody. The Zero had a reputation of being a very powerful fighter. I was afraid, but I learned to forget about fear and just believe that I could get through all of these attacks without any problem, and I did.

Geoff: Describe for someone who doesn't understand the complexity and the dangers of open-ocean navigation.

LaVell: You have to picture yourself in this aircraft carrier. We were mostly out in the open ocean many miles from land and most of the time a squadron operated on searches for the enemy. Our searches were usually a triangular search. We'd go out on a leg, then come to the end of a leg and take a cross leg and then a third leg back to the ship. But the third leg had to be adjusted to compensate for what the ship was doing while we were in the air. So our navigation involved, on that third leg, to adjust our course so we would get back to where the ship is suppose to be and it didn't make a perfect triangle. It was a rectangle actually, a three-sided rectangle. The ship initially, before we took off, was suppose to give us in the ready room before we're going to take off, "This is what we're going to do pilots, we're going to go on a course in speed and this is where we'll be on your return." Well usually, or sometimes that might happen, but most of the time the ship would change their mind during the time we were in the air and

sometimes it became a matter of searching around a little bit to find our own ship. But the navigation became a little complicated when we'd go out for 300 miles and the wind would change and things like that. Our compensation for wind had to be taken into account. We got good at looking at the surface of the ocean to see which way the wind was blowing and how big a wind we had. So navigation out in the open sea became an art and to survive we had to learn that art.

Geoff: It's not like today with GPS and all sorts of...

LaVell: Well, even if we had GPS if we were near the enemy, they would turn that off. It was complete radio silence, electronic silence so we were on our own to navigate and get back to the ship most of the time.

Geoff: I try to impart to people, younger kids, what the war had been like to the world and that moment of victory and the end of that war. Tell us about that and why it was so important to the world.

LaVell: This is a very important thing. When you consider what the Germans were doing in Europe, and what the Japanese were doing in the Pacific, the Japanese were relentlessly trying to occupy all of the islands in the Pacific. They had methodically gone into, well they had already gone into the Philippines and the Philippines had been captured by the Japanese. McArthur escaped but the Japanese had the Philippines and they had Guam and they had very effectively gone into several other islands, Okinawa.

Geoff: And they were threatening Australia and they were threatening the United States.

LaVell: In the battle of the Coral Sea they had troop ships, surface ships of all kinds, landing ships coming down through the Coral Sea to occupy Port Moresby and our actions against their forces prevented that invasion and that was our job. It would have been a matter of not very long and in a few weeks they would have occupied Port Moresby and we think they would have plans to occupy and capture—make a Japanese country out of it—Australia. We couldn't prove that I guess, but that's what we thought. Port Moresby is right next to Australia, so our objective was pretty clear. We wanted to stop the ruthless advance of Japan. Their reputation for atrocities and terrible treatment of the people on those islands that they captured was pretty well known by then and that was not the only reason. We didn't like the idea of living in a world where a country like Japan could just go in and occupy another country without any compunction at all, just walk in and take over, so we had a pretty high motivation and moral as far as fighting the Japanese. We wanted to lick those guys. We really did.

Geoff: What would have happened to the United States if we had lost the war to Japan? Do you have any speculation on that?

LaVell: I recall myself, the blackouts in the West Coast. I believe that the people of the United States feared an actual invasion from Japan on our West Coast. There was no other reason for the blackouts. I know that Pearl Harbor was routinely, completely blacked out at night and the defenses of Pearl Harbor after the main attack of Pearl Harbor were pretty stiff—radar and

fighter and search planes making sure there wasn't a repeat of... The Japanese hierarchy was very, you might say, dissatisfied with the results of Pearl Harbor in that they didn't have in place an invasion force to go right in and invade. I've read in WWII literature that they felt that a second Pearl Harbor strike was called for along with troop ships to occupy Pearl Harbor and they did occupy many islands in the Pacific.

Geoff: When you went into Pearl Harbor right after you sailed in on that aircraft carrier, tell us what you felt.

LaVell: Well there was a good old ship, Utah. It didn't have any guns but it was at one time a mighty battleship. It was upside down. All you could see was the bottom. There were two or three battleships tied side by side and one of them was still smoldering and smoking. Several of these smaller ships were smoking. Lots of the destruction was still smoldering and smoking and that was a couple of weeks later.

Geoff: Were you angry when you saw that?

LaVell: Oh yeah. I thought that was terrible. It motivated me to get going with our doing something about the Japs and their aggression. There was naked aggression all through the Pacific.

Geoff: The future of the world was in balance. Did you feel that you'd actually stopped...?

LaVell: Well yeah, the Navy had several aircraft carriers. The Japanese had several aircraft carriers. In the Coral Sea battle it was aircraft carrier versus aircraft carrier. That's all it was. We had cruisers and destroyers and all that, but they never saw each other. No ship ever sighted an enemy ship. It was all aircraft. We felt that this was the smartest thing our Navy could ever have done was to have built these aircraft carriers and trained us guys to do this dive-bombing and attacking because we could carry tremendous loads of explosives long distances and the ships never did see each other. So the Japanese felt the same way. Their aircraft carrier fleet was very powerful.

Geoff: Can you speak philosophical? The profound words are very important coming from someone like you because again, you were there and you saw so much of what could have happened to us here in the United States and how you were protecting us.

LaVell: The Japanese invasion involved a tremendous amount of harm, destruction, pain and death of the victim, and the islands, time after time, showed this. The Japanese were ruthless in their invasion and treatment of the population. This was well known among us. We were like, how you say? Riding a white horse? We felt that it was a moral necessity to prevent and stop the Japanese. I personally felt very strongly that it was my part to stop the Japanese and my friends felt that way too the way we talked about it.

Geoff: Thank you.

