



## **Elwin Andrew Petersen**

United States Navy

Lieutenant Commander

Pacific Theater

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Interviewer:  
Geoffrey Panos

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

**Geoff:** What is your full name?

**Elwin:** My name is Elwin Andrew Petersen.

**Geoff:** Where are you from?

**Elwin:** I'm from Newton, Utah a small town up in Cache Valley just west of Smithfield.

**Geoff:** And you grew up there?

**Elwin:** Yes, I grew up there on a small farm. We had an old tractor that I spent thousands of hours on.

**Geoff:** And you went to high school there and everything?

**Elwin:** I went to high school at Richmond, Utah, North Cache High School.

**Geoff:** Did you get a chance to go to college before the war?

**Elwin:** Yes, I went two years. I was going in for a degree in radio engineering, finally build a radio that would work but I couldn't build one today.

**Geoff:** Where were you going to college?

**Elwin:** Utah State its called Utah State Agricultural College rather than Utah State University now I believe.

**Geoff:** And how did you get into the military?

**Elwin:** Well I was walking from the main over to the engineering building and there was a sign

there that showed a good looking naval officer in his black hat and his dress uniform and above it was a biplane called the Grumbling' Wildcat, I believe. That was having a fight up there, an aerial fight and I can still see the water coming off the wingtips and I says, "That's for me." So I went in and applied and it's a long story there I don't know whether you want that or not.

**Geoff:** What year was that?

**Elwin:** That was in 1940.

**Geoff:** This was pre Pearl Harbor?

**Elwin:** Yes.

**Geoff:** Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

**Elwin:** I had been sworn in on December the 4<sup>th</sup> in Oakland Naval Air Station, no, it was at the ferry building in San Francisco and we had been moved then over to Oakland Naval Air and on that Sunday morning there was a few of us that belonged to the LDS church and we were taken into church. And right after the opening exercise there was, the shore patrol come in and excused themselves and said, "All Naval Personnel roster on the front steps." And we were told then that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and that we were at war with Japan. And the next few nights I spent quite a few nights on the beach walking with a loaded 36 rifle and gasmask. And we had a password or an identification word, if I said 'one' and he had to say 'two' if he said 'three' or some other number I was supposed to shoot him. And it was very spooky; we had very little training at all.

**Geoff:** You'd been commissioned by then on the 4<sup>th</sup>?

**Elwin:** I wasn't commissioned; I was in training to become a Naval Aviator.

**Geoff:** And when did you get your wings?

**Elwin:** When did I get them? Well it was, I think it was the fall sometime of '41; yes it was I can't remember the exact date.

**Geoff:** You ended up going to the Aleutians to what?

**Elwin:** I went from Corpus Christie after graduation to Washington State to San Point Naval Air Station. From there we trained in the old PBY, the umbrella wing with the flotation devices out on the end of the wings, I can't remember the name of them. And we went from there, flew up to the, no let's see – the squadron flew up and some of the rest of us went up on a ship, the USS Cordoba. We got in a terrible storm and the convoy had to go leave us because we was doing two knots in reverse so we was out there all alone and they was dropping depth charges every once in awhile, put a little fear in you. But we finally got up into Kodiak, Alaska and the Aleutian Islands and that's where I landed and where I spent that tour of duty.

**Geoff:** How many missions did you find in the Aleutians?

**Elwin:** Well I don't know, it was probably 45 or 50 for the two times I was up there.

**Geoff:** What's it like flying the Aleutians because people have never been there?

**Elwin:** Aleutians, they're spots of islands out in the middle of this vast amount of water and you can, it takes about five minutes for it to be perfectly clear and then completely fogged over. We lost more planes to weather than we did anything else up there. At one time we'd been out and came in and we were fogged in and the radio towers that you honed in on had a false beam and I was very lucky, I was a co-pilot then and I grabbed the controls and got it in the right turn away from Mt. Sipka which was dead ahead. And anyway, we got around and was right on the water and I believe that tail actually hit the water and tore one side of the tail loose, you could lift it up and down. And we flew around and made a landing, I got out of that plane and kissed the ground.

**Geoff:** Did flying in this awful weather help your flying skills?

**Elwin:** Well Mr. Walker who was the command pilot of that plane, not the PB4Y, the second time up there he got vertigo real real bad so I got quite a bit of flying time in because he thought we was flying upside down half the time. And yes, it did. Besides flying I had to navigate also so it helped my skills out with navigating a lot, I couldn't do it now.

**Geoff:** Did you ever have an encounter with the enemy in the Aleutians?

**Elwin:** No, the closest we came was we had to fly one of these missions where you flew in close to Attu to take pictures of them firing at you. I done that again out at Iwo Jima but its spooky to pull up and expose yourself to the gunners and have them start firing at you and then you take pictures of it. So they can be turned over and they can plop the gun repositions on the island.

**Geoff:** When did you go to the South Pacific?

**Elwin:** Well '43, I think it was probably the first part of '44. I trained in San Diego in the PB4Y1 and I selected my own crew there and I can't remember when I went over. I remember trying to get off the runway, we took off kind of late in the afternoon, Red Wine and I my good friend, he was in another plane. And my plane wouldn't get off the ground, I had to hit the, it had an emergency knob you could turn so the turbo charger would force more air into the carburetors. We were going right down to hit the revampments (?) and the positions on the north island in San Diego. But I got off the ground, come to find out they stole a motorcycle and a big table and the doggone crew had it back there, all that extra weight plus all the gas we had to carry to get from San Diego to Honolulu.

**Geoff:** So you got in the air?

**Elwin:** Oh yeah. I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't.

**Geoff:** So when did you start flying combat machines in the South Pacific from where?

**Elwin:** Well, now I carried a brand new plane out to a squadron in the Solomon Islands and I can't tell you which island I landed on. But I found out that my brother was on the island of Butanville, I hadn't heard from him for many years and I did go through the red cross and find out his name and his unit that he was with. So I landed there and they finally looked him up and he come over, and as I said earlier I developed a convenient oil leak. And so we visited all night long and the next day I took him up on this flight and then I delivered this plane and brought an old clunker home, it was many many thousands of miles home. And then I think it was, I can't remember just when I got there, it was well before my brother was killed. But anyway, I ended up on the island of Tinnian with the famous Blue Raiders Squadron, VPB116; that name was given to the squadron by Tokyo Rose, she was amazing. When I landed on Tinnian, that night on the radio they called the name of me and everyone of my crew. How she got it, I don't know.

**Geoff:** Why did they call it the Blue Raiders?

**Elwin:** I don't know. Well, the plane was blue and we had sunk so many Japanese ships and shot down so many airplanes that for some reason she called us the Blue Raiders, she had all of this stuff to say about the airplane that would fly on anyone of four engines and we was lucky if we could stay in the air on two. But she was quite a lady; I have a picture of her on my computer in my documents.

**Geoff:** How many missions did you fly during the war?

**Elwin:** Well I think I was credited with 95.

**Geoff:** Tell us about, let's begin with your last mission the one you're so well known for. What day was that?

**Elwin:** It was on January the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945, the day of the week I don't know.

**Geoff:** Tell us what your assignment was.

**Elwin:** I was awakened about 2 o'clock in the morning by a messenger from the Commanding Officer that I was to take Commander Curchlow's flight, that he was sick. My navigator was sick, so I took a man by the name of Ferdinand Jowski who was from Paris, Idaho as my navigator. And he was an LDS person and I hadn't known him at all before this flight. There's a lot of preparation before these flights, you have the ordinance man that fills all the turrets full of ammunition and he checks out the guns, he can undo one of those 50 caliber machine guns with his eyes closed and put it back together in 30 seconds. And many times you had, they would jam and he could figure out what was causing the jam and he could have them back in operation in just a very few minutes. The morning of January 2<sup>nd</sup> at 0600 hours we took off very uneventful for, I had the extended search that day and I think it...

**Geoff:** I'm sorry, was it a single plane flight or did you have other planes that were flying?

**Elwin:** Well there were other sectors, there's about 10 different sectors and I think I was in sector 3, it's almost a straight line to Okinawa from Tinnian.

**Geoff:** So you were all alone, the plane was all alone?

**Elwin:** Oh yes you're all alone, you know, the other people are out there maybe a couple hundred miles away from you or so but out in the water like that it might as well be forever. We flew uneventful and I had his plane, Curchlow's plane, because my plane had been blown up by the Japanese several nights before in a raid that they made on us. So I had to use his plane, which was a real good airplane, and we flew uneventful for about 975 miles and it was Y-shaped. You went out and then you went this way, went across back to this point and then back to base.

**Geoff:** How many hours out were you from base?

**Elwin:** We were pretty close to; I think about 7 ½ or 8 hours. As I made this turn to head back towards base and my co-pilot, Wallace Robinson, said, "Enemy ship below." And I was almost

right above it and I alerted the crew that we were going into man your battlestations and I was coming out of the sun and I had full throttle, everything was full power on everything. And I was sliding the plane back and forth and I can still in my minds eyes see those bullets splashing against the hull of that ship. And they hadn't, I guess alerted themselves to get on the guns by then, the next time it looked like a diesel engine with that big gun on the front of the ship.

**Geoff:** You said the next time, so you circled around?

**Elwin:** Oh yeah, I went around and up and up 2,000 feet and got right in the sun again and we did it again the second time. Well he didn't blow up; we didn't have any bombs so I told them we was going to make one more run. This time the ship blew up, it was a terrible explosion and it was right in front of me, I could see things flying in the air and I knew we couldn't go through it. So I put it in a steep left bank and we missed everything, how we missed it I don't know. But we got up and talked about it a minute and the crew wanted to go down and see it sink, 'cause it was stopped dead in the water, there was oil slick on the leeward side of the boat. So we went down again, and I don't know whether they fired, I don't remember seeing the smoke rings coming off of that gun or any other gun because it was ablaze all over, it was just a terrible sight. And anyway, it didn't go down yet so we went back up and I said, "That's it." And the crew said, "Can't we just make one more run?" and I said, "Well we're running low on fuel, but okay." So I don't think I used too much throttle that time and went down and I don't know how close to being down I was when we were struck. The bullet had come through the windshield on the starboard side, the right side, and hit the copilot and blew his head right off. His skull was lying right between us upside like a salad bowl and my visibility was greatly impaired, I couldn't see anyplace. I don't know how long I was unconscious, it must have been sometime because my gunner, one of my gunners Jack Gentz said that they flew over the ship and they were able to kill this gunner. And I didn't know about it then because I was unconscious. When I came to the airplane was in a left bank, not a steep one, but we were going down towards the water a little bit. So I had the course set on the repeater compass to go home and I lined that up then I turned around and hollered for Jowski who was the navigator and he was busy sending contact reports into the bays, they had to code it and look it up in the code book which is quite a long procedure. And he took one look at me, the copilot, and he tried to jump over the top of him and grab a hold

of the controls. And I actually had to beat him with my fist to get him away, I said, "Jowski I'm fine, just call Martin and we'll get Robbie out of here and we'll be going home." So anyway, and I told him to put the blind flying hood over his head along with the parts that were there. So we started to climb and I put Ash Martin in the copilot seat, he was the plane Captain and he says, "We used an awful lot of gas Commander." And I says, "Oh yeah, I am not thinking too well." So we cut it back, way back, because we knew that we used all this fuel to where the cylinder temperatures started to raise and I said, "Well just have to watch it and when it gets to hot you'll have to add a little bit more mixture to it." Which he did and we started home and I had a little worry because we used most of our ammunition and we had to fly past Iwo Jima, I don't know how close it was. In fact, when you were up the other night we tried to find Iwo Jima on that map and I don't know just where it was, but I know it was pretty close. And they had a bad habit of getting in the planes and coming after us, but they didn't. We got about 45 minutes out and I told the crew that I was going to make the landing and...

**Geoff:** Tell us about your wound, you really didn't go into that.

**Elwin:** Well, immediately I knew that I had lost my eye. I put my hand over my left eye, cupped it over there, and everything went black. I was bleeding very badly and I could feel something real big in the socket of the right eye and it was, like I say, bleeding and I had a huge cut down here that was bleeding.

**Geoff:** And you couldn't take any anesthesia?

**Elwin:** Well, they wanted to give me a shot of morphine, we had a first aid kit and I just said, "No I don't want morphine, I want to be able to land this plane when we get to Tinnian." Which was about 7 hours away, so 6 or 7, I can't remember the ETA that we got when we landed. I told them I was going to fly the plane in on the nose wheel that was a little powers setting and then try and break it and did any of them want to bail out and they said, "No." So I ordered them to get a parachute, put it behind there back and get against the balcket, I later found out that not one of them did it, they trusted me enough that I was going to make landing I guess.

**Geoff:** There was no one else on the plane that could fly?

**Elwin:** Well Ferdinand Jowski had graduated from flight school but I didn't know that, I didn't know what ability he had and all. And Ash Martin I'd given a little fight time, but to bring a plane in at night, you know, I just felt that I could do it and that I would do it, and I did. One time coming in on the drive path into the runway, Jowski said, "You're a little bit off the right side" and I'd already noticed it but I hadn't corrected. And when I got down the windshield had been so covered with blood and one thing or another, that I just smeared it, and I was flying mostly out of the little bubble window on the side. And when the runway came up I could see the white line, I could see everything and I reached over and I just shot the throttles off and brought up and landed. The glass of water that I had been drinking it had been heated to control my shock and it was still sitting on the navigation table, not a drop had spilled when I parked the plane so I made a pretty good landing I guess.

**Geoff:** We have a photo of you that someone took while you were flying that plane, tell us about the photo and how that happened.

**Elwin:** Well my crew, for some reason, they were photo bugs and they just all the time was taking pictures.

**Geoff:** I mean air to air.

**Elwin:** Oh the one, again I think that was Red Wines crew and they was the same way and the crews would sneak into the photo developing place and they'd take these pictures and go develop the pictures and that they just took a picture.

**Geoff:** I'm just saying you had some people, you radioed in, correct?

**Elwin:** Oh yes.

**\*\* Background talking \*\***

**Elwin:** Red Wine and I had flown together in the Aleutian Islands and done a lot of navigation problems and he had his navigator work out, it was called a Relitig Motion deal and he figured out my heading and my speed; and of course, you know, you can't head right from where you are here you had to, you know, go up here so that we could get our sight someplace. Does that seem to answer it?

**Geoff:** Yes, we might show that photo on the air. So that photo is Red Wine's ship?

**Elwin:** The photo is of my ship and he was taking the photograph?

**Geoff:** And he was escorting you in?

**Elwin:** Well he caught up with me and I was on my own.

**\*\* Background talking \*\***

**Elwin:** Well they intercepted the message.

**\*\* Background talking \*\***

**Geoff:** So you land, tell us what happens next.

**Elwin:** Well they had all these hours to prepare and word had got out on the base that we were coming in. When they had sent the contact message it said the ships on fire and they thought it was my airplane that was on fire and didn't think we'd ever make it back. And so we come in and landed and it was just like a football stadium, there was people all over everywhere around that darn field, watching going to watch my crew. They thought Ash Martin or one of them would be landing the plane and they was sure I was going to crash I guess. And I landed and they always had a taxi car that would guide you up, and they just took me off the runway or guided me off, and cut the throttles and they got me out of the plane and then to an ambulance.

**Geoff:** I'm sorry, you were telling us about when they opened the bomb bay, what happened?

**Elwin:** Well there had been an explosion on the shells, I think there were four shells that hit the plane, the first one hit me and the copilot, the next one in the bomb bay, and there was another I think in the other part of the bomb bay, and then there was one in the tail turret which injured Moyes hand. I don't know how bad it was injured; I never did get to see him after that. But the shell had exploded and there were minute holes in the hydraulic system that goes to the landing gear and to the flaps. And I was afraid we couldn't get the gear down or the flaps down. It took a long time for the gear to get down and lock. I finally got word from Jack Gentz who said, "The gear is down and locked." And I didn't know whether it was going to collapse when it hit the runway or not because there was so much, it took so long so I knew there was an injury there someplace. And when we opened the bomb bay door to let us out, that was the way you got out of the plane, and there was all this red that looked like blood draining out of the bomb bay. People that was around, the ambulance and one thing or another, they couldn't believe it.

**Geoff:** It turned out it was just hydraulics?

**Elwin:** Well yeah, it was just they thought the whole crew had bled to death.

\*\*\* Tape Interrupt \*\*\*

**Geoff:** Okay so tell us again about the hydraulic fluid.

**Elwin:** Okay the hydraulic had leaked out and there are corrugations in the bomb bay doors where they had to fold up. Everybody thought it was blood but it wasn't it was hydraulic which is red. The big mess was in the cockpit where Robinson had been blown apart.

**Geoff:** So they took you obviously to the hospital, what happened?

**Elwin:** They took me to a Quanset Hut which is part of the hospital and put me in bed. I was checked over a little bit by one of the doctors there and that night we had a bombing raid again and there was a Corpsman there that threw a mattress over the top of me and then he crawled under the bed and it's interesting that when I was in dental school I told this story and this young man came up to me after class and he said "you know I was the person that was with you and I threw the mattress over you". That was a lot of years later, it's amazing.

**Geoff:** So did you go into surgery?

**Elwin:** I went into surgery the following day and a physician named Doctor Grey was the one that inucleated my right eye or what was left of it. What they do is they cut the four big muscles off of what's left and then they put a little ball or a little prosthesis in there and sew the muscles on to that or around it so that you have some movement of your eye so it doesn't look dead all the time. Then you have this other procedure where you put the prosthesis in where you paint the pupil and the iris on your eye.

**Geoff:** Tell us about coming home.

**Elwin:** Well after I had the eye removed I think it was about eight or ten days I was on a DC 4, it was a hospital ship or plane coming home and the whole isle was filled with marines that had been wounded and many of us sitting in iron bucket seats along the side. We got out and I don't know how many hours we were in the air when a nurse came by and said "all of you sit very still, we have one of these marines up here has gone bezerk and he's pulled...."

\*\*\* Tape Interrupt \*\*\*

**Elwin:** We were told to stay in our seats and not to do anything because this marine had lost his mind and he was going to blow up the plane. It was real trying minutes to wait. She finally talked him out of it and got him to put the pin back in that deal but that was a very trying moment.

**Geoff:** So he had a grenade?

**Elwin:** Yes, and how he'd smuggled it aboard the plane nobody knows but I guess he wanted to die. I landed in Honolulu and was taken to Ieia Heights Hospital and I was given a telegram from my wife then that my first daughter had been born on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January. While I was there I was asked by a doctor to go visit a young man from Idaho and he had been out on the range and was learning to shoot a bazooka and the dogone projectile fell off the end of the barrel and exploded. It just blew him all apart and he was dying and this doctor wanted me to come and talk with him and I did. I went and talked with him and he asked me to call his folks in Inkham Idaho (Cromwell was his name I think) and I told them that I had seen him and he would not make it home. So it was a sad moment.

**Geoff:** Tell us about seeing your wife and parents when you came back.

**Elwin:** Well I got on a train in San Francisco, I'd been in the hospital for several days there and then I got the train and was going to Corpus Christi and I don't know why things just seem to happen but I was sitting near window and a little boy threw a rock as the train was speeding by and it went through the outside window and cracked the other one right next to me. But I got to Corpus Christi and saw my wife and baby and then they shipped me from there and I was in the hospital there (I don't know how many days) but then they sent me to Washington DC to the Bethesda Naval Hospital and it was amazing, President Roosevelt was in there several times and every time he'd come in they'd lock us in our rooms until he got to the place he was going. The eye was constructed there and there were a bunch of young artists from one of the Universities there that came over to paint the eye. It's quite a process to go through and I was invited over to the White House by Eleanor Roosevelt to have dinner with her and I turned it down because I was still mad at the president. I could kill myself ever since. I was also invited to go to New York by a famous lawyer, he was going to pick up the tab for a whole weekend splurge but I didn't do that either.

**Geoff:** Why were you mad a Roosevelt?

**Elwin:** Because I had to fly over that convoy at stalling speed all those hours risking my life and my crews life.

**Geoff:** This was earlier in the war?

**Elwin:** Yeah, this was earlier in the war when I escorted the convoy to the Aleutian Islands.

**Geoff:** So you had to do one mission towards Iwo Jima can you tell us about that?

**Elwin:** Well I don't know why I was picked to fly a mission in which we would fly 300 miles north of Iwo Jima and we would get down on the water – I mean down with the seagulls and we'd fly back that 300 miles hoping we wouldn't be picked up by their radar or somebody and be met by their fighters and as quick as we saw the island or got real close then we'd pull up to 2,000 feet and take pictures of the gun emplacements again. I can still see those pilots running for those Zig Fighters and I saw the first turn of those propellers of those fighters that were going to be on my tail right soon. I was able to get out of there without getting shot down and I got up into the overcast and I was never so glad to fly on instruments in my life because we didn't know where they were coming from. We were looking all over and I just had to stay on course for Tinian and never did see them.

**Geoff:** Was this before the invasion? What was your impression of Iwo Jima?

**Elwin:** Well, they were well emplaced and I didn't see much but the runway and there was a hill there, or a big mound I guess where all those gun emplacements were that they had so much trouble knocking out, you know when it was finally attacked. This was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January and that was on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February when Iwo Jima was attacked (I might be close).

**Geoff:** Tell us how you felt about the Japanese?

**Elwin:** Well a lot of the guys called them a lot of names and one thing or another and in my religion we just saw them as warriors and they were the enemy and they had to be killed and if

you didn't kill them, they'd kill you. That was my feeling and I was a little bit more disappointed when I went back to Hawaii in 1983 and saw the disrespect that the young Japanese people had for the movie that was shown of the attack on Pearl Harbor. I think I was more bitter then than I was later on. The attitude of most of the people that fought there was really bad, I mean they didn't have any respect for them at all. I knew my duty or what I had to do – I either had to kill them or get killed myself and the closest I came to that is when I attacked the ship and I felt that they were warriors like me and that they had been given a duty to perform as I had. The Japanese were fighters just like I was and they had a duty to perform. A lot of the servicemen in our Army and Navy had a lot of bad words and things to say about the Japanese but they were real good fighters, they were very good pilots and I just considered them the enemy that I either had to kill them or get killed. That's the way it was.

**Geoff:** Did you come back under the Golden Gate Bridge?

**Elwin:** I did come under the Golden Gate Bridge. We used to call it “under the Gate in ‘48”.

**Geoff:** Tell us what you thought when you saw that Golden Gate Bridge.

**Elwin:** Well, it's so exhilarating. You've been on that water for so long coming from Hawaii. I was on a ship that had been kamakazeed after my hospital stay in Honolulu and to look up there and see that big old bridge stretched out over there is just...of course all the people were out on deck hollering and celebrating and so was I.

**Geoff:** Did you ever think you'd see it? Did you ever have doubts that you wouldn't come back?

**Elwin:** You know it's funny, I never had one bit of fear when I was attacking that ship. I never doubted that we wouldn't get through. I don't know why. If I had to do it today I'd be scared to death. But I flew that plane down around that ship and made those big tight turns with the ship burning and firing at us and not a minute was I afraid for some reason.

**Geoff:** Did your squadron lose a lot of men?

**Elwin:** I was a replacement squadron – I think we lost three or four crews and there were 11 people in a crew.

**Geoff:** How would the rest of you talk about them or think about them when that happened?

**Elwin:** Well in the Aleutian Islands, one of the crew that went down there was a kid that wanted me and another Navy officer to swear that he was killed accidentally if he went down and he did, he did go down, he spun in and was killed – so his wife would get a big insurance policy that he had. But of course we could not do that and did not do it.

**Geoff:** How would you people feel about that, was it accepted? Was there a sadness?

**Elwin:** Well when we had Robinson's (my copilot) funeral, yeah there was sadness. You do feel bad. You know you've lived with them, you've flown with them, you've eaten Spam sandwiches, you know the whole works. It's like losing a family member. It certainly is.

**Geoff:** A lot of the people today don't know what the country was like during that war. What was the feeling during the war?

**Elwin:** I think the American public was wonderful! Everybody was working, they were putting out these planes with thousands of women working putting rivets in the planes to hold them together and assemble the parts. I think it was really good. My people up in Cache Valley, they were really glad there were three of us in the service until my brother was killed and I was wounded – everybody was doing the very best they could. There was the problem with the ration stamps and the gasoline problem, getting tires for cars was a problem but everybody took it in their stride. There was very little complaining. I thought the attitude of the American people was absolutely wonderful!

**Geoff:** Was there any idea that you might lose the war?

**Elwin:** I don't think so, not the people I talked to. We were ready, we were all ready to fight the Japanese until we were killed off. There were no if's and's or but's about it. There were a few people even in our squadron that went AWOL and you know they were rounded up and put in the brig and some of them stayed for years I guess.

**Geoff:** Tell us again about that determination to fight the Japanese and win.

**Elwin:** The Japanese made that horrible attack on Pearl Harbor and most of us in the country didn't know that they...you know some of us knew they were having a little problem that they needed fuel and one thing or another but nobody suspected they were going to bomb Pearl Harbor and when they did that and killed all those people and those beautiful ships that went down with all those people on it and one thing or another and people made up their mind that they were going to fight until they dropped. That was my feeling of all the guys that I knew. We were just anxious to get in there and do every bit you could do to defeat them.

**Geoff:** You were flying out of Saipan?

**Elwin:** I was flying out of Tinian which is just across about a mile or two away with Saipan. We could watch when the Japanese came in to bomb and one thing or another and we could see those thousands of guns over on Saipan shooting at them and when they'd get hit the Japanese planes would come spiraling down and it was a beautiful sight. I was on top of Quanset Hut when that was happening and a bomb came down and hit my airplane. I ran down the side of the Quanset Hut and I think I was the first one down in the bottom of the foxhole. I was sure glad to have all of those people on top of me.

**Geoff:** Is there anything more you'd like to say?

**Elwin:** One thing, I don't know how many people would be interested in this or not, but I had Ferdinand Jowski (he was an Elder in the LDS Church) and I had him lay his hands on my head and give me a blessing when we had started home. And I didn't know this until about five years

ago – Jack Ginz who was not a member of the LDS Church and he had tears in his eyes when he told me, he said “you are the third person I’ve told – after you had a blessing” (he walked through the bomb bay back to the back) and a voice said to him “Jack don’t worry, you’re going to make it home safely”. He said to the men in aft station “did you guys hear that voice”? and they said “no”. And he said “don’t worry, I’ve been told that we’re going to make it back safely”.