

Akers, Artie Interview 8-7-95

[Speaker 2]

Testing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, over. Today is the 7th day of August 1995.

[Speaker 1]

Today I will be interviewing Mr. Artie Akers of 229 McPhee Road in Farragut, Tennessee. Mr. Akers, we'd like to get for the record your experiences in World War II. And if you will, start back before you were in the service.

You know, whether you want to start at any age you want to start. But bring us right on. First we'll go from everything where you start.

Then I'll stop and we'll start again right there. And I might interrupt you over there next. You know my birthplace?

I was born in Jenkins, Kentucky. March 15th, 1920. And I attended school in Lewis County, Kentucky through the 8th grade.

Then I went to high school at Wayland, Kentucky, which is a coal mining camp. And I joined the Navy when I was almost 18 years old. And went to boot camp at Norfolk, Virginia.

And that's where I found out my name was not Archie. Not Artie, but it's Archie. It's not Archie, but it's Artie.

Yeah, due to a mistake in my birth certificate. So I re-enlisted, they discharged me and I re-enlisted under a new name. And I was first in the class for just general tests, you know, they make on you.

And I was sent to the fleet, Pacific Fleet. And I rode a transport around to the canal and up to San Diego. Okay, let's see here.

Okay, okay. Keep in mind that I had joined the service for this particular reason, to travel. And number two was I did not want to be a coal miner.

So I thought I had to roll off a little bit more. So when I got to San Diego, I volunteered for the submarine service. And so they sent me on to Pearl Harbor.

And at Pearl Harbor, I was put on an old tramp steamer they owned called the Beaver, USS Beaver. And it was very old. What year was this?

This would be in 1939. And the Beaver didn't move very much. So I was on this crew.

And then they sent me off there over to the base, to radio school. And again, I made the number one in the class of radio school. And it came time to go up for promotion.

And I didn't want to be a candidate for the first class seaman's rake, which you can get the first year you're in service. I wanted to hold out for the third class petty officer, which was 16 months in service. And so I could send any of the watches and duties of a regular radio man in the Navy.

On the fast circuits, too, I could handle real fast circuits. And so we took the exam, and I made a perfect score on the thing. But I could only get 80 points for it because you had to have so much of your time in the Navy.

So the guys who had been in 10, 12 years would get the extra 20 points. And I think I had one and a half points built up. So I had 81 and a half points that I had.

And Lieutenant Glenn Donahoe, who later became noted as an admiral, and he was my division officer as submarine squadron one. And he said, they couldn't wash the laundry for you. So another young man there in the squadron had more time than I had.

And he had made third class petty officer. But he was selected for the academy, Naval Academy. And I was up at the academy myself, but I didn't have enough seat time.

I had to have a year of sea duty to go to the academy. So this kid went on to the academy and left a rank there on field. So Lieutenant Donahoe got me that rank, third class petty officer.

And I only had 15 months in the Navy. He was supposed to have 60, but he held the rank for me for a month, until I got paid for it. So then I stayed around there and watched the bases.

I should watch it every night. Now, we were the squadron commander in our base there, submarine squadron four. And we had the whole radio watch around the clock, because when the submarines come in from sea, they secure everything.

And we took over their duties of watching for their messages and taking them to them. And so I got in a little trouble. I only had three radio men on the bases qualified to stand watches.

And I was one of those three. But one of the other three got over in town in Honolulu and got in a fight. Broke a barber's nose.

They handed him the brick. But they told him that he was on bread and water ten days. They told him every time he signed a watch that they'd give him a meal.

Well, they let him off to go to watch one night. He didn't go to watch. He went over on the beach again, you know.

And they caught him. I was on watch. I've been on watch eight hours.

And there was no enlisted men's bathroom. Upstairs, third floor of the administration building in Pearl Harbor. And the submarine base in Pearl Harbor.

So I had to go to the bathroom. And I sneaked into the officer's bathroom. And lo and behold, Lieutenant Donahoe caught me coming out.

So they held the neck cord on me for the captain. And he sent me to ten days in the brig. And that's what chewed me out, you know.

But they told him that the last two of his radio men in the brig, he only got one man left to sit. He said, okay. Even knowing why you had to go after eight hours, they still gave you ten days in the brig?

Yeah. So I was on watch and doing my job. And my uncle, who happened to be Congressman May from Kentucky, was visiting the harbor.

And my mother thought I ran the Navy, so she said, I'll be sure to help Archie when you're out there. And he did. So he gets to the base and there's all these admirals sitting around.

And he said to the admiral, I forget his name, I'll think of it in a minute. He said, hey, I've got a nephew serving here named Archie Akers. And the captain started talking around and said to the admiral, go find Akers, you know.

Well, he found Akers in the brig. Because I was off watch, so I had to be in the brig. So I walked in and I got a big P on my chest.

And my uncle looked at me and said, what in the hell happened to you? And I told him. And he turned around to the full captain and he says, you mean to tell me that this kid, you threw him in the brig because he didn't leave the range of his loudspeaker, had to leave himself after eight hours.

He says, what kind of a damn shipper are you running here? Boy, he'd shoot him up and down. So they rescinded my ten days in the brig, bread and butter, and cleaned my records clean.

But the following week, I was transferred to the Tarpon, which is going to the 88th fleet. I'm the first guy to say, to my knowledge, I was a radio shock, you know. But I never felt anything.

That's the way they do things now. But I got to Pearl Harbor. I got to Manila.

And I went aboard the Permit. What year was this now? This would be 1939.

[Speaker 2]
Still 1939.

[Speaker 1]
And Admiral Chappell, who later became very famous too, was a very good friend of mine. And he was an engineering officer on the Permit. And I kept my nose clean and made second class.

And then I got ruptured. And I had to go to the hospital. So I went over to Kanakao to the Kibiji, to the Navy hospital.

It was operated on. But when I came back to the mothership, my submarine was in China. So they put me on another submarine, the Permit.

And we went to China also. And I stayed up in China. We went up there in the summer.

And went to Sing Tao and all those places, Shanghai. And I came back to Manila. Stayed a year in Manila.

And one night, this was in 1941, I had gotten transferred to the tender, submarine tender, Otis, O-T-U-S. And the Otis had been a commercial ship. And she had just been up to Tokyo to deliver 23,000 barrels of gasoline.

And this is about on the 4th or 5th of December, when I got aborted. And we pulled over to what later became Bataan, Maribelos, in the harbor there. Just across the distance from, water from Fort Credo.

And I was on watch. It was about 2 o'clock in the morning. And I had never received an operational priority message on an air.

And the operational priority message was always preceded by, in those days, the O-P-O-P on the air, on code. So I got this magic word, O-P-O-P, so I grabbed it. And didn't keep it on my regular log, I grabbed a message blank, and tabbed it on the message blank.

And it was to all U.S. Navy ships, and all naval stations, from the Secretary of the Navy. And it says, BT break, no count, as fast as they can get it out, you know. Don't measure count in the words, remember that.

It said, Japan has commenced hostilities. Govern yourself according to the sign of the Secretary of the Navy. It took me about a minute to realize, hey, we're at war.

So I jumped up and grabbed my deal, and it ends up on the top deck of the Oditz, and I ran around to the captain's cabin, which was around our level, and pounded on his door, and he'd come to the door, and I handed the message. He just reached and got General Forrest's bill, and he woke the whole ship up, General Forrest, you know. And we had six submarines alongside.

So he started to woke those all up, and we started loading those torpedoes on them. We didn't have a full load of torpedoes on our ships, you know. And within three hours, they were all gone.

They were gone at sea. In fact, six hours later, the sea wolf sunk a ship outside the harbor, a Japanese ship. So the next day, we went over to the Navy yard, because we didn't have a gun on, we got nothing, you know.

We couldn't get any aircraft guns, and deck guns. Again, I was called by the chief post mate to stand watch on a three-inch anti-aircraft gun, which I didn't know a thing in the world about, you know. But I'm a fine pointer, you know.

So at 1244, you can look up in the sky, out seaward, and see these little silver dots, 17 of them. No, 10 of them. 10 of them.

The first group was 10. And it was the Japanese bombers. They came in, went up through, and bombed the field dumps where the seaplanes had their base.

Then they pulled over, and got to the Navy yard, at Canadian. And they went around, did part field slugging, then left the harbor. And by this time, there was 17 more of those guys up there.

They did the same thing, except they worked the ships over in the harbor. Then in 2017, this time they had this maybe I don't know, and a lot of fires, and one of the submarines, there was two submarines tied. We were tied like this, at the pier.

And there's two submarines like that over here, and they hit one of these submarines, the sea line, the sea line, and they hit one of the straws. John D. Edwards, I believe it was.

And there was a little, a real conical, a real nickel grabber coming from Manila over to the water taxi. And a bomb hit that thing, and it just went on down. It didn't even stop.

Right in the stack, it just went right down. So they finally relieved me because we were using 3-inch guns, 3-inch 150s, and they wouldn't go high enough. You're going to shoot about 9,000 feet, and these guys were up here 120,000 feet from us.

And we had one P-40, one P-40, and he was up there getting above them and diving down through them, and he got shot down, I think by us, because he drove down into our flack. So he landed over in the salt paddy, and they left. And a few minutes, a few hours after they left, two British destroyers stood in the harbor, and they had 5-inch 38 guns, which would go high enough to hit any of them, you know.

Two hours, like two hours duration. So I was called away on a fire and rescue party, and I went over to the sea line, and I saw a dead guy laying there, his head was all blown off, you know. And I went to the back end of the ship, I got a fire extinguisher, and I went to the back end of the submarine, and there was a big hole back there, and you could look down and see a couple of guys laying down there, you know.

And that was, I came back, and that was my first day in the seas. And you see how we're doing here, you see how this is.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, here we go.

[Speaker 1]

Right. At the time, I got the operational party message from the Canadian Navy. I was alone in a radio shack, and within five minutes, I had two or three more guys up there with me, helping me.

And keep in mind, I was a third class pay officer, and I'm on some real fast circus, and I need help. So they came up and helped me, and the message came through, the operational priority message was from Franklin D. Roosevelt, the president, and it said, all naval stations, all men of war, everybody, execute war plan 46 against Japan.

And we knew we were into it then. And after that, I was asked to go on to the captain and give him the first message. He got this one, and we were all ready, we were fighting the war already.

Well, anyway, the next morning, we left there and went out to Manila, to the Bay of Manila, which is the base of Dewey Dry Dock out there. It's sort of a basement town. It's a nice town.

It's a nice town. And Dewey Dry Dock out there, and we were out there, and the submarines were coming aboard alongside us to get new torpedoes. We got some torpedoes.

And so we did that for two days out there. And one day, then they fed us back into the harbor, and that's when we got the bomb. A lot of things happened those two days.

And we were copying the messages, I was copying the dispatches in the news, international news, on Pearl Harbor, see? The accident on Pearl Harbor. All the ships and whatnot had sunk.

So it was a real, real bad day and a bad week. Then we took, we got our orders. After we had got into Dry Dock over at Maravelis, and didn't get any guns put in yet.

But we chose to come back to the Navy Yard and get the guns, the big guns. And that's the day we got bombed out. More Navy Yard, that thing just wrecked.

So we got underway and headed south with three or four destroyers that were really damaged badly. And we couldn't run fast enough to keep ahead of the Japs. Because they were after us.

And we got to Tel Jav Java and got there and the Japs were already beside us. So we kept on going. And we ended up down in Darwin, Australia.

North of Australia. The skipjack came in, she'd been on a short patrol run. And she needed a radio man.

So they sent me to the skipjack. And that's where I left. And I was glad to go.

To get away from those service crabs. Dangerous, no sense. So I went to the skipjack.

And I'm going to tell you how it is now. We had a captain, a commanding officer, that just didn't want to fight. And we made two runs with him and nothing.

And so finally they relieved him. And we came, this time we'd been two trips out of Australia. And in June probably, probably June of that year, 1942.

And we were operating out of Fremantle, West Australia. Which is the harbor for Perth. And some of the submarines, they got afraid to leave us there because we were so, we just weren't able to defend ourselves at all.

We got big holes in us, you know, from overhauling the ship. So they sent us down, on around the Lubin, to a place called Albany, West Australia. And there it was pretty safe because it was a long way off.

And when we got there, this young man came aboard. Lieutenant, J.G. Lieutenant, he was that. And he took command.

His name was James Wiggins Cole. Luckily his girlfriend, my girlfriend was his sister. So I got laid.

But he was, he didn't know the meaning of the word fear. And we were friends, but I was still respectful in all ways to him. He was the captain.

And he promoted me up to second class radio. And I was in charge of his groups. Second class in charge of all the groups.

And we made four runs with him. And he was a holy terrible man. So we were up off the coast of French Indochina.

And I went up to the top side to get some fresh air. And to go up there and do this, you got to be on watch. You got to get your binoculars and leave on the lookout.

And I had perfect vision, you know. And I found a little black splotch on the horizon. And I called the captain to the officer that was in detention.

I went over there and showed us a ship. But he was going into Cameron Bay, French Indochina. And there's some rocks on the port side of us.

We didn't want to get in those rocks. So we said, okay, we can't shoot him today. We'll watch him.

We'll get him when he comes out, you know. And we did. We patrolled out there for two to three days.

And finally the captain said, well, he's going to come out tonight because he's loading up. So he came out. And we escorted him up the coast at about 7 o'clock in the morning.

We were down 10 miles ahead of him coming back at him. Perfect angle, you know, on the bow, 15 degrees on the bow. And the captain said, well, anchor us to the tying tower.

We don't want to sound you, you see. And I went up there and he said, well, you found him. You shoot him.

So his rule was the guy who found the ship got to push it first. So he said, standby. Fire.

And I just pushed the button and the ship shakes a little bit, you know. And the torpedo took off. 28 seconds later, it exploded.

And it blew him out of the water. So that was our first ship was sunk. When I say when you fired, were you all submerged or on top?

Oh, no, we were down and submerged.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah, I see.

[Speaker 1]

When you were following him, you were submerged all the time. When you were following him, keeping track, running parallel with him, getting ahead of him, we submerged. That was nighttime.

But Captain Cole would take a hit. Yeah. So he just, he was out to win the war.

Everybody loved him. And he had an executive officer, Merrill Clemonson, who was lieutenant commander later on, was just as bold as he was. J.J. Foote, his engineering officer, was just as bold as he was. And he won the war, you know. And every man on the Cuba, I never saw a man run, or any of them, show any fear. I was probably the scariest of all of them.

I'd put them north. Right, yeah. But Captain Cole, he sank a lot of ships.

He got the Navy's. Any time he gets the Navy's cross, he can rate a man, four men, captain. Chief Petty Officer.

But even without that, he had the authority to rate any man he wanted to on that ship, up to first class. So I'd been first class for a long time. So he left the ship, but he left me chief, youngest chief ever to serve in the United States Navy than me.

I was 23 years old. Gosh, that's something. But I almost got killed with him because he was going to take me with him to the Cisco.

He went back to East Coast, he got to Cisco. A new ship. Never came back off the first patrol.

James Cole. He came back to East Coast. East Coast of what?

East Coast he said. United States. He picked up a brand new submarine.

And then he took it all over. That was the first war patrol he went on. Yeah, well he went on his first war patrol at the end.

He was the president of his own war patrol. Yeah, but he never came back. But you could stay out 90 days, you know.

Yeah, that's right. Long about that time too, the Bureau of Ships personnel passed a rule that any person in the submarine service who had made four consecutive runs on a submarine at the commanding office was directed to transfer him to a new construction in the States or give him 30 days leave to the Stateside. And I collected the 30 days leave to the Stateside and went home with my mother and father and came back.

Was that in 42 or 43? 42, 43. Yeah, 43.

Because I had a time fever. And this was back when Cole was my commanding officer. 42, right, 42.

And every day at 4 o'clock Greenland time my fever would go to 103 degrees and stay there until 10 o'clock at night. And it was just terrible. So when I was on that 30 day leave to see

my mother I got an order from the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery to report directly to the Walter Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

And I went there and they put me under all kinds of tests and had me out at Northwestern University. And I'd be walking along the street and just pass out. End up in a bridge.

So probably they gave you a tag that says this man is found in the street and he's paying for Western Memorial Hospital and don't take him to the bridge. I still have a problem. I still have a thing.

It's not nearly as bad as it was. I never asked for a pension. All I wanted was to get out of that place.

But I went to radio school while I was in the hospital and I finally got to sleep again. But the war was almost over. So the first two years of war was really a tough time for the rest of us.

That was a tough time, wasn't it? That was those first two years was a real tough time. And the submarine service I'm sure was tough to the bitter end.

You just didn't see the sun for 90 days. No sunshine. Now they've got sun lamps and everything else.

The thing that struck me about the friends up there was the grunt. Some of those so-called grunts deserved a heck of a lot more than they ever got. No, I'm sure so, yeah.

We had a gentleman, Tom Collins, I was just telling you. A gentleman, Tom Collins, was from Chicago. And he just loved the Navy.

And he didn't want to go in. He had made first-class seamen. And I was made the senior seaman on the ship because you just don't have first-class submarines.

He didn't want anything else. He didn't want anything. So we came back from one of the runs and the captain called all the department heads into the boardroom.

And we went in and he said, he said, I've got to do something about Collins. He said, he won't take an examination. And so he turned around to me and he said, Akers, can you use him?

I said, no, I can't use him, Captain, because he doesn't know the code. And he can't stand sonar watches, no, because he's got to stand double watches, no. But we all said, well, we know what you can do, Captain.

Make him a torpedoman. Make him a third-class torpedoman and that's it. And kiddingly we said, a third-class torpedoman doesn't have to do anything.

Collins is a third-class torpedoman and we call him the gentleman torpedoman, see. And so on the very next run, we were put down in a truck, a big Japanese-based tank truck. And we had tied into and sunk a tanker up off of Timor, out of Timor, and attacked another ship off a truck and Collins, our gentleman torpedoman, was in the forward torpedo room and signed up there, the chief torpedoman.

But old Collins was up on watch in the forward torpedo room and we, a tanker came by, an oil tanker, that's a big oil country, and on the sound gear we could hear him come and on the sound gear we could hear him come. So we fired and the damn torpedo took off at him and hit him in the rear end. But he had two of those little Japanese patrol boats with him and on the tube stuck in the forward torpedo room of our ship.

And we started taking all this water out of the forward torpedo room and couldn't close the pocket valve. So the old gentleman torpedoman waded through the water and closed that valve by hand and we started the pumps and pumped it out. But we were sitting at an angle like that.

So like that, and finally it was down. So here was a grunt to save that ship. We were going for it.

Our ass in the rear end got out of the water in a few more minutes. But Collins landed there on his own and he had the nerve to close that pocket valve by hand. A pocket valve is located on top of a torpedo tube and it's a whole section of the tube.

And when you fire the torpedo out there's water all around the torpedo.

[Speaker 2]

You flood it.

[Speaker 1]

The front door is open or the door is open and when the torpedo moves past that slot then this valve is supposed to slot back down. But it didn't come down. And he went in and boy that's a big that long, there's a hole that long and that wide is open to the surface and we're at 100 feet.

And that's 44 pounds per square inch pressure.

[Speaker 2]

Well did he get at least a decoration with that?

[Speaker 1]

I think I left the ship at the time and I don't know what he did Are there other missions on that skipjack that you can tell me about? Let's see, we've talked about what, two or three of them. Don't worry, you know, you had some experiences there.

Well, when we we had to come back to Mount Island Navy Yard. Now this would be in early 1943 and it didn't need periscope. Mount Island Navy Yard had a periscope.

Cole was the commanding officer. No, Maluffy, Maluffy was the commanding officer. Now Maluffy was just like Cole.

He wasn't afraid of anything. We didn't dive until we looked to see Fujiyama. We didn't dive.

We stayed on the surface all the way to Japan. Maluffy, he would look to see Fujiyama. We made trim dives every morning.

But boy, he was going he was going to go to 20 knots see what you were missing and Maluffy was a good scooper. But Cole was a guy everybody loved. Clemson, his exact went and got his own submarine and he was a good scooper too.

We had another scooper which wasn't too good and he only lasted two runs. But he had been the guy had guts. He had been a hell of a service craft scooper.

But he just couldn't push the submarine down high. There was something he put 50 feet of water over his head. But I liked the guy.

He was a real nice guy.

[Speaker 2]
Oh yeah.

[Speaker 1]
He should have been a cruiser captain. Maybe a cruiser. Well, he was a tremendous Well, it must take a certain type, person and personality from the ground on up to serving submarines.

I've got to tell you one story. Well, Maude and I we came in Pearl Harbor and we got a bunch of recruits on board and of course they had to transfer 25 percent of the crew. So this young boy came up to me and he couldn't have been a day over 16, 17.

Of course, I was a big boy. I was 22. So he said, do you want to get in a radio gang?

I said, what's your name? He said, my name is Wayne Rylander from Minnesota. I don't think he'd ever shaved.

I don't think he'd ever shaved again. Okay, Wayne, I need a striker anyway. And if I'll talk to Jerry the chief of the boat will get you back here.

I said, now you're going to have to study and learn because we only have four men in this group and they've got to work. He said, okay, I will, I will, I will, chief, I will. And he called me chief but I wasn't a chief at that time.

I was the head of the department. So I taught him to call the guy in the radio watch. So he'd stand in the radio watch and I'd watch him and make sure he got it right.

And the guy where you stand someone ought to watch him. And so on that run out we, I didn't trust him on the sonar gear this quick because we were having a real tough time. We tied into a convoy and we sank one ship and then there was two Japanese destroyers up there and they were mad at us.

So we were down unquestioned depth. They didn't know how deep we could go. That's a best kept secret out there.

They thought we'd go 267 and we'd go a lot further than that. And so we were down so far, it was pathetic. And I was doing the trunking and John Bolway, as you walk in the forward you come out on a platform from an officer's country.

Back there's an officer's country or the back of a ship. And there's a little platform and four steps. But the platform's no bigger than that and there's four steps down to the main deck for torpedo rooms.

Now as you look over to the right here there's a sonar system over there and a receiver and there's a chair and that particular listening head goes up to the top of the ship. Then over here there's another one the listening head goes down and there's another one there. So I was talking.

I had been on this ship here about 14 hours. So John Bolway, my number two man, was over here on this one. So finally I went up and I talked.

I talked for a couple of hours. So I ran in and came back and I said, OK, when? And I said, you've seen me.

This ship's got a big battle on it. And I said, when that zero is dead ahead 180 is back there. And I said, I want you to show me talking.

And when he starts out he will go this way. Always go that way. And when he goes he'll always go the opposite direction.

So I said, when he starts out follow him from dead ahead to the stern. And report to the patrol room. They're plotting all these destroyers.

So he'd start down this side. And over here it's 270 degrees. And the operator would say, and he'd say, bang 270.

That's what I'd say. And then get back here and he'd say, mark. And I'd say, bang 189.

And I'd say, go over here real quick. And this guy here would start down that side. And he'd say, mark.

And I'd say, bang 015. Mark, bang 170, 160. And I'd say, right.

I would say, he'd say, mark. And I'd say, target, bang 176. And he'd go over here and say, mark, target, bang, so and so.

This goes on for about an hour and a half, two hours. Finally the Japs got discussed in Memphis. So we'd had a tough day down there.

They had dropped the tip to our address. So I was in the radio room doing something. And the radio room was right next to the captain's office, you know, captain's quarters.

So he just haunted me through the petitions. He said, I went over and he said, who was talking that last 20 minutes or so, 40 minutes or so? I said, that's Ratner, the new kid in Minnesota.

He said, that's his battle station from now on. He said, you don't know what that quiet voice of his did to the morale of this ship. Huh.

He was just as calm as they were. And I made him third class.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, yeah. And I walked out and he said, hey, come back in a minute. He said, tell Wynn, or tell Rylander, that when we're shooting, they're the targets.

But when they're shooting, we're the targets. I thought that was cute. I thought it was called us, it was called love the target.

We really had some experiences. When they depth charge, depth bomb, that's no fun, do you? Oh, God, they, we were sitting there, we had a depth charge one day, I don't remember which one, Paul Lusitano, Lieutenant Lusitano, was the first division officer.

And he and I were standing in the sound section over here, when you come out of, when you come out of the office corridor back here, over there. And he was standing in the sound section over here. And he was standing in the sound section over And he was standing in the over here.

was standing in the over here. Had he located you all? Oh, yeah love had he...

... Lusitano and I were talking and Lusitano and I were talking 250 feet Everest 250 And it couldn't get off the deck, good thing it couldn't because it got below us there. So we went down, it blew us to 400 feet, and we went to the top side to check the damage and the three-inch gun was like that, and the bell was gone, the ship's bell was gone, the planking was all torn up in the planking seat, but he and I were standing there, and he was standing on one leg and going, you know, like, that really hurts, and you're standing like that, and you hit the, it broke the clock in the radio room, broke the clock, and got us in concussion, and we lost the cork off the walls, you know, and the only thing we ever figured out, he had just dropped it on the deck.

[Speaker 2]

Gosh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

So, anyway, when it blew 250, that's when it went off, it blew us to 400 feet. But that was the kind of deal you had going, you had some, but you know, I never, I couldn't be scared, I couldn't, I never saw a man after a radio break-up, I saw a couple of them, and I was scared, don't even get me wrong, 200 dams would have been enough if you weren't scared, but, yeah, it was, the grunts really put it down to some people. Well, you see, that's the point of what Dr. Johnson is trying to do, is to get people like you, and can tell your story, tell their story for them, you might say, you know, and he's already had researchers coming in there, going through those things from big universities, you know, listening to that, and people that are really interested more than, you know, the everyday guy's job in the Navy, the Army, the

Air Force, rather than, I don't even talk to colonels, I won't even interview them. I'll tell you a thing I saw on the 8th of December of 41, 10th of December of 41, there was an ensign on the Otis, and his name was Mason, Ensign Mason, unlike he would have shaved, no kidding, he was such a young guy, but he was an assistant gunner officer on the tank, you know, and this guy showed more bravery than any man I ever saw in the Navy, any, you'd have thought he was out for a cakewalk, and he's directing the fire of those four in there, which doesn't do any damn good, because they'll go high up, but he was, his face was black as coal, whether it was powder or smoke, but boy, he kept going.

I always respected him, I always had a tremendous amount of respect for that guy, he was as cruel as a cucumber was, and the battle was going right after him, Ensign Mason. Well, you know, when this thing first started, a couple of lieutenant colonels called in, so I went out to see them, I guess more than call in, but I was there to interview too, but you began to get a different perspective.

[Speaker 2]

We're time over.

[Speaker 1]

The books that you wrote, have you got some of those? Yeah, they're technical books.

[Speaker 2]

They're what?

[Speaker 1]

They're technical books.

[Speaker 2]

Technical books?

[Speaker 1]

About the war. I see. I have a book, a manuscript copy, of a strange thing that happened.

The books were all factory, and that's after the war. I see. I was working for Jim Wing, when he came to go to Boston, you know?

[Speaker 2]

Uh-huh, yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Well, Jim Wing went out on his own and started an electronics company, and he became the leader in vibrational testing, digital control vibrational testing, and I was one of his designers, and I'd gone to school before. I was the principal designer from there.

[Speaker 2]

Where did you go to school?

[Speaker 1]

University of San Diego. Oh, San Diego. I went to the University of New Mexico, and I have done more.

But I was designing for Jim Wing, and he came and had this shooting neck one day, and said to me, he said, can you write? I said, I don't know, I've never tried it. And he said, well, listen, he said, the chief writer they got was in Tennessee, with a broken leg on vacation.

And he said, we've got three books, we've got to get out of here and get going. So I went and started writing on my own. A couple of days later, I got all three books done.

It was awesome. And a week later, I got a stand-in. My secretary had an offer, and I said, I'm the chief introducer.

And I said, well, boy, they went crazy over this. Really, the guy had analyzed the system. He got a circuit of systems.

And so I finished up, and he made me the chief role writer. And I wrote quite a few. Army, Navy, Air Force.

I wrote three for NASA, which changed NASA's way of writing. NASA's way of writing. They were \$96,000 a billion or something like that.

I didn't get the money he got. But I had the stuff there to do it with. And so what I did, I had another instance where the big lab up outside Chicago.

Right here. Harvard, Massachusetts. I was told that it was going to fail.

But I was fine until I was told. And they sent me home to write the book. So when I got through writing the book, I sort of figured out that this system won't work.

I said, well, if someone sends me home, I don't care if Harry Truman sends me home. It just won't work. It doesn't matter.

If you're asking a system to sit there and work on signals as low as 9 millivolts, in the whole lab, I've got 20 millivolts in there. You can't do it in the lab. And so then they called you.

And I said, well, I'll do it. I'll do it. You'll do it?

I'll do it. I'll do it. The last time I mentioned it.

The best time. No, it's been a long time. I mean, what's that for a system?

It's for the monitoring radiation. Usually, you're in an environment. In fact, there was a man who had worked at this lab.

I don't know what the name is. But it was a man who used to work on radiation. Why so?

A lot of stuff is left. I don't know. I don't know.

Lifestyles. I still don't know where all of it came from. If one of them is shed- JW I'll be glad, but what you want is, the list is, you've written a lot of these letters.

You've written the rest in English. This past, I'm sorry, I have five years of self-time, still have a bit more years. That's good.

Did you say you'd written one book on something when you said it was happening in the past? Had he told you about that in the archive? No, he hadn't.

But, we had not heard from him for a long time. And after the war, in 1962, I had a radio accident. A what?

It's a radar. I had to be on the planet. Suddenly, it had gone off the radio.

It had a channel on it, and it was a big dinghy. All I needed was a meal and a couple of dinghies. So, I went back to ship.

So, I went to the ship later, and I said, Don't worry, I'll give you some time. I got in the back seat of the dinghy, and I said, There's a dentist. I wish I could give him a kiss.

It's not a good place. And, there was a dentist there. And, I missed him.

[Speaker 2]

Whoo, whoo, whoo. Let me ask you a question that I don't know. I don't want to have to be sensitive to a change in the radio and television.

Still, can we adopt the bomb?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I think it's a very good idea. I don't think it's a good idea. You know, we'll see what happens.

But immediately, you know, immediately, we're going to adopt the bomb.

[Speaker 2]

I think it's okay, you know. I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you about it. No problem.

I am ready to go home to eastern China. We will be preparing you in June 25 for a low-level bombing and invasion of China. And brother, my heart and my stomach are choking up right now.

I have points to go on later. And then, you know, a short time later, the bomb is dropped. Well, you're home, you know.

How long have you been there?

[Speaker 1]

Nobody's going to get home. Even I get kicked 80% of the time. Oh, you know, they were the wiped-out generation.

I got to tell you, when I was in the first three years, I had a friend, he was a leader, he came back. He said, you know, you've got all that history, so you've got to figure out how you're going to be deployed and how you're going to deal with the same things. And he talked to me about it.

He said, okay, well, don't have to do it here. He said, no, no, no, go back. I said, well, I'm not going to talk to him.

He said, go and talk to him. I said, I'm not going to talk to him. He said, go and talk to him.

You know, from now on, I'll shoot you out. He said, you haven't had a heck of a kid. He said, you haven't had a heck of a kid.

He said, you know what I want to do? He said, what?

[Speaker 2]

Well, you had an insane one-of-five, didn't you? Oh, yeah. When did you retire?

[Speaker 1]

I didn't retire. I didn't retire. How many years?

How many years? They were 83. 83?

I had a son for 18 years. Oh, I bet. where they carried two 500-pound warheads, depth bombs, and put it on the side of a merchant ship.

And that's all you had to have, launch it on there and then take it off. You land on it. It's a pair of davits, you land on it.

And you could hover and see a submarine, and drop it, drop it, drop it. Sure? Yeah.

Well, that was back in years when they thought that missiles were the answer to everything. And they were, they're not, though, that's for sure. But they, after we landed in the Pentagon, I was briefing some guys over in the Pentagon, we were all admirals and colonels and generals.

And I told them, I'll give you a contract for \$250,000, I'll put you a moon in orbit. Is that right? Yeah.

Who in the hell wants a moon in orbit? Because we got all the equipment we need to do it. It's all there.

It's all right there. All we had to do was strap on a couple of Hawk motors, Goddard missile motors. We couldn't have gotten it back in that time.

But we got down there and put it in orbit. We stayed in orbit for hundreds of weeks. Very good.

They didn't, they didn't, who in the hell wants that? Who in the hell wants that? But we flew it 165 times, and it had an accident.

Exactly. Yeah. It's always amazed me, of course, it's more true in wartime than it is now, in the comedy of eras and the waste and the good ideas that are never used and the bad ideas that they try to promote.

Of course, that's going all right today.

[Speaker 2]

Well, you know what?

[Speaker 1]

What we need is more of those stealth bombers.

[Speaker 2]

Sure.

[Speaker 1]

You know, it's, every pilot, from what I've heard, thinks they're a joke anyway. Yeah. But the cost is fantastic.

I know, the cost is fantastic. Now, the fighter, it's okay. But the bomber, I've been able to pick up, you know, from guys that are like my, not my son, but a good friend of his that's still working with that sort of stuff.

You know, it just never has proven out. And it can't possibly be worth that tremendous cost. Well, I'll tell you, I'll tell you what you did.

I was reared up at Ryan at the time, and there was two of us engineers, electronic engineers, and Roger Feingold and myself. And the Petriarchs were there. They were another thing in the history of development, I can't explain it.

I had primarily to do with stabilizers.

[Speaker 2]

Mm-hmm.

[Speaker 1]

But I died 10 deaths, everything flew anyway. But when we got through, we had a system where we could take the tailpipe and deflect the tailpipe.

[Speaker 2]

Mm-hmm.

[Speaker 1]

10,000 pounds thrust engine, Rolls-Royce Avon. Mm-hmm. And we could move that thing up to 100 feet and sit there, and it would move a quarter of an inch in any direction.

Just straight-up blades, you see. And General Yeager, you know, Chuck Yeager, came down. And I let the General fly.

We had an engine to put down and harnesses, and it could only move two feet this way, two feet this way, two feet that way. I let him fly. He could fly.

And I turned the system on, and they let him fly. Anybody could fly with the system on, but nobody could fly without that system. Really, really.

Well, they gave Conrad \$350 million contract to develop a guideable tailpipe. Mm-hmm. And we got one.

Yeah. Everybody paid for it. Right.

And Conrad would never see the day they'd get that action. That thing would go up until it equals 10,000 pounds thrust, equals 10,000 pounds of weight.

[Speaker 2]
Mm-hmm.

[Speaker 1]
And it was fantastic, what it did.

[Speaker 2]
Well, what did Conrad do with that \$350 million?

[Speaker 1]
They built the Atlas Missile. The Atlas Missile.

[Speaker 2]
Mm-hmm.

[Speaker 1]
You steer it.

[Speaker 2]
Yeah, I see.

[Speaker 1]
We got the same system. We cut the damn thing open. A man trained.

A man did the rest. That's why it's my only job.

[Speaker 2]
Yeah.

[Speaker 1]
Well, I'll tell you, I didn't hear him, but they said Peter Jennings, the number one newscaster, just tore the American veterans and crewmen apart the other night on dropping that bomb. I don't see how anybody that wasn't there at that time can use hindsight to say what they should have done. You had to be there at the time.

You had to know. You can't tell. You can second-guess anything in the world, you know.

Hindsight is 20-20. I'll guarantee you one thing. I'll guarantee you one thing.

If the Japs had it, they would have done the same thing to us. We used to kid each other on a ship that night. It was going to be a hell of a fight.

The Japs beat the Germans, and the Japs beat the Russians in St. Louis. Yeah, right. Because they were both just unstoppable.

We could not outrun them. We could not outrun them. No, you don't.

No. And, of course, we didn't have a fleet, which didn't get there in time.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

We had our aircraft, but we didn't have enough of them.

[Speaker 2]

Well, it's, well, I'll tell you what.

[Speaker 1]

And my comments to them was this. We were at war, and we were to win. And you have no right to consider us for not using the bomb.

That's one of our weapons.

[Speaker 2]

That's right.

[Speaker 1]

We didn't actually bomb Pearl Harbor, you know. Right. And a lot of people agreed with me, but they were wrong.

Well, I heard Schwarzkopf the other night. I read a little article that he wrote. It wasn't very big.

I happened to see it in the New York Times. He says it will happen again, since we can't decide, we don't have enough money to build up, to defend Japan and so forth. They're going to let them do it on their own, you know, build up their Air Force, fleet.

And he said it will be a sneak attack, so it won't be like the last one, but, you know, he thinks, he says, it will be some kind, he said, because the military faction gets going in Japan again. They're going to want to fight. Right, yeah.

[Speaker 2]

Well, I guess I better get on out of here.

[Speaker 1]

This completes my interview. I did see some of the technical manuals that he had written, especially the one that he says completely changed NASA's way of writing those instruction books, or booklets, whatever you want to call them.

[Speaker 2]

But he's a fabulous character and one of the most interesting people I've ever talked to.