

DeShazer, Jacob D. Interview 5-31-94

[Speaker 1]

B-U-C-K-1-6-4-7 McCauley Road, Cookeville, Tennessee, interview.

[Speaker 2]

The following tape was recorded on 31 May 1994 in Portland, Oregon. The speaker is Jacob DeShazer, one of the do-little Tokyo raiders of 18 April 1942. DeShazer was the bombardier of the last plane to be launched on 18 April.

A total of 16 planes, or 80 men, took part in the famous raid. This is his story told at a USS Hornet, USS Mustin reunion.

[Speaker 1]

Thank you for your nice welcome. I want to thank you for giving us a wonderful time. It's been a great time together.

I enjoyed it very much. I enjoyed you folks when we were on Hornet. I used to sit beside you, but I didn't recognize you when you came here this time.

It's been quite a while. It's wonderful to have you and your good wife you married, and the children that I see here. I'm thankful to be part of your group now.

Well, I'm going to try and tell my story as quick as I can, because I know you want to get on with your program. But I just don't already know how to start. I was in the group with you, and we were facing something that was pretty bad.

I know two years before I joined the Armed Forces, I found out that the Japanese had 11 million in the Armed Forces, and Germany had 11 million, and America had 200,000. So it looked pretty bad to me, and I thought we got to get those people stopped some way, and I went and joined up. Then when I got in there, I got training to be an Air Force mechanic, taking care of airplanes, you know.

Then they wanted me to be a bombardier, so I got that training. One day I was in the hangar, and the sergeant came up and he said, Jake, get in the Jeep and go down and see the captain. Well, I thought, well, what's the captain got against me?

I have been AWL, but I thought I got away with that. I'm not sure he'd found out now I was going to get demoted and have to do KP duty for a long time. But when I got down there, the captain had about 25 men in the room, and they were all lined up against the wall, and he started talking.

He talked real fast. He said, we're going to form a dangerous mission. Some of you fellows are going to get killed.

How many of you will volunteer? I thought, boy, not me. But I was older than most of them.

I was 29 years old by that time. I joined when I was 27. I've been in two years.

So the captain started in over at the other end of the line. I was cleared down at one end of the line. He started in at the other end, and he said, will you go?

And the fellow nodded his head. Will you go? He just kept going, each one, will you go?

And he all nodded his head. Yeah, I'll go. And here I'd made up my mind not to go.

He got clear down to me, and not a single one of them said he wouldn't go. So I was too big a coward to say no. I said, I'll go.

That's the way I got in with Jimmy Doolittle and Tokyo Raiders. And one time, Doolittle was down there at Carmel, and he told the people in the compound where he was staying, you know, the old people home, and he said, the Raiders are going to come. I'll introduce you to the Raiders.

And so when we got there, we walked into the room, and we were gray-haired and looking like old people. They thought it was the Los Angeles Raiders that were coming. But we were out on that ocean for 18 days with you fellows.

And that morning, why, they said, in 10 more hours, we take off. You Army men have your airplanes all ready. And just after they made that announcement, they said, well, we looked out, and there was that Japanese ship out there.

And right away, they said, Army personnel, man your airplanes, take off immediately. So I was watching everything. I was up on the flight deck, and Doolittle had his outfit on.

He was walking over to his airplane. And he didn't give us any pep talk or anything. He had told us what to do before, and he was ready to go.

He didn't hesitate at all. And, boy, when he got in there and got off that aircraft carrier, we sure felt a lot better. All of us felt like, well, it can be done.

He showed us that he could get up in the air and didn't look like any trouble at all. That old aircraft was performing real good. It was a strong wind.

They say now that that must have been God helping us to get off because that wind was blowing, you know, and there was about 40-mile-an-hour airspeed just sitting there on the deck. And that old aircraft carrier was headed right straight into the wind, and all of the airplanes got off all right. But ours bounced around quite a bit, and one hall got his arm.

Wall. Wall. Bob Wall.

Yeah, Bob Wall. And so I had to carry him over to one side. I was the bombardier in our airplane, and I had that job of seeing that everything was out of the way of the wheels.

The pilot can't see you right in close, and they didn't even know what was going on, I guess. We just carried him over, and then my pilot pulled up into position. When I got up to where the bombardier sits, right up where the front part of the airplane, why, I see this hole in the factory glass, and it was way out on the end, you know, and it bounced around a lot more than the other airplanes.

Right in the center of the aircraft carrier is pretty stable, but way out on the end it was pitching way up and then way down. And evidently our airplane had bounced so far ahead, it was on hydraulic wheels, and it must have hit the tail end of the airplane right in front of it and knocked the front end where I sat. Well, I had to make up my mind, and I could have gone out of it maybe right there, but I thought, well, shall I tell my pilot?

And I looked at the way things were going. The Navy man had the flag up, and all the pilot had to do was kick the brakes loose and let her go, but he was concentrating on that, and I thought, I'll just give him a lot of trouble, so I'm going to let him go. We got up in the air, and I called him on the interphone, and I said, we got a hole in this thing about one foot in diameter.

He said, what did you say? I told him again, and he sent the co-pilot up to see what we could do, and we stuffed our coats in there, but it just blew them right out. We couldn't do anything.

So we had to fly with that hole in the front end of our airplane, but it flew about as far as any of them. But we were taking off 10 hours too early, and my pilot said before we got in, he asked me if I was a good blower. He thought probably we'd land out there in the ocean without any gas, you know.

But we got to China at 10.30 at night, and the pilot said, we're out of gas. We're going to have to jump. Well, here we were way over in China.

It was a rainy night, and I looked at the aluminum. It was 3,000 feet high, and I went back there where the door that was right at the bottom of the fuselage was kicked out, and boy, I knew I was going to get killed, and I was headed for hell for sure because I had good Christian parents, and they told me all about what the Bible says, and somehow or other, I must have known that was right, but I hadn't been living right, and I couldn't get it to come. I tried to think of what the evangelist said in the church.

I couldn't get anything to come. All I could think of was you've got to count to 10 before you pull the ripcord. If that parachute opens too quick, it'll catch on to the airplane, and you'll be in real trouble then.

So the co-pilot was there, Bobby Hite, and Bobby Hite said, Jake, you're the first one.

[Speaker 3]

Boy, I hated it.

[Speaker 1]

I thought if somebody go first, it'd make it a lot easier, but I had to do what the lieutenant said. I was just a corporal, you know, and so I tried to get out of that thing, and it just held me right up there against the fuselage. I had to push real hard to get away from it, and I got away, and then I pulled the ripcord, and the parachute opened all right, but it was dark, you know, and I couldn't see the ground.

I couldn't see anything. I thought I was just sitting up there in the air. There wasn't any way I could tell I was coming down.

It was just holding me up there. Maybe they'd shoot me down in the morning, but I got down in an area where it was all underwater, but this place where I landed was right on a little knoll, and the Chinese had put the graveyard there, so I landed right on top of a Chinaman's grave. I gave it a real good hug, too.

I was glad to be back on the ground. I thought, I can take care of myself now, and I didn't need to bother about what the Bible said anymore, so I got... You know, God gave me another chance because I don't think I ever would have become a Christian if I hadn't had this experience happen to me, and it's a wonderful thing how wonderful God is.

I just feel thankful in my heart every time I think about it, and I got into the little apex place there where they were burning incense to their idol, you know, and I shoved all that stuff to one side and crawled up in there and got out of the rain. Then about daylight, it was April 18, 1942, and it was beginning to get daylight I think around 5 o'clock, and I started out then, and I walked all morning until almost noon, and I found a road, and down that road I saw a camp, but I didn't walk right into that camp. I didn't know whether it was Chinese or Japanese.

I'd ask the pilot, are we in free China or occupied China? He said, I don't know. Well, I went back away from where that camp was, and I found two military men.

They were dressed in uniforms. They were just boys. They looked like they were about 16 years old, and they were playing with some children, Chinese children there, and I asked them, are you Chinese or Japanese?

I said, I'm American. They said, me, China. So I thought, that's pretty good.

I'm with the Chinese, and maybe it's free China. I'll get out of this all right after all. But one of them went away, and I was talking to this other one, trying to get all I could out of him, but it didn't go too good.

He just had a piece of paper, and he wrote on the paper. Well, pretty soon here came about seven or eight, maybe nine or ten of them, and they came around the corner, and they had their bayonets and their equipment, and I had my gun, a .45. They'd give me a pint of whiskey and a .45, and I had that .45 out, and I had the hammer back. I had the bullet right there in the chamber, and I hollered, China, Japan.

They all hollered back, China. So Doolittle told us on the aircraft carrier, don't get in trouble with the Chinese, and don't get in trouble with the Russians. We don't want any international incident, he called it.

So I didn't know what to do. I let them come on and take me, and we walked down towards the camp, and on the way down there, they said, we think you might get in trouble. We'd better take your gun.

I looked around, and they had their bayonets right close to my back, and I let them have my gun. So we got down to the camp, and they questioned me for a while, but finally they told me I was in the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army. I felt lower and the bottom of a snake.

You know, I had felt like I was a traitor right away. I hadn't shot it out with them. That's what I wished I'd have done, but there wasn't anything I could do, and that night, the fellow came.

He said, I'm the kindest judge in all China, and I'm going to ask you some questions, and he had an interpreter there. So he said, you're a very fortunate man to be questioned by the kindest judge in all China, and I'm well known as the kindest judge in all China. He kept telling me that, you know, and he said, if you answer my questions, I'll give you a nice glass of warm milk, and so he said, 16 B-25 flew off the Hornet aircraft carrier and bombed Japan.

I was really surprised, but he had all the information. He just kept asking me those kind of questions. Jimmy Doolittle was your commanding officer, and he got awful mad at me because I'd say, I'm not going to talk.

No, I'm going to talk, and I'd say, I won't talk every time he'd ask me questions. Finally, he pulled his sword out, and he said, how do you pronounce H-O-R-N-E-T? I said, Hornet.

He said, that's the aircraft carrier you flew off of to bomb Japan. Is that true? I won't talk.

Boy, he held that sword up, and it was shining and sharp-looking, and he held it up there, and the fellow that was interpreting said, what do you think about that? Well, I couldn't think of anything, but I kept trying to think for a while. Finally, I realized I had to say something, so I just said what was in my head, and I said, well, I think that'd be a great honor to have the kindest judge in all of China cut my head off.

They laughed, too, and they even gave me a glass of warm milk. But the next day they took us to Tokyo, and they kept us there for 60 days, and they were really mean to us there in Tokyo, and the lice were crawling all over us, and there were rats and bedbugs and all kinds of bad things. But they hung Nielsen up on the wall for about 10 hours, and it really hurt him awful bad.

I don't think he was rational for quite a long time after that. And then George Parr was put down on the floor in a straitjacket with a towel around his nose and mouth, and they poured the water then around his mouth and nose, and boy, he was in awful bad shape. Well, they had me down on the floor and had a sharp piece of wood there and had me across that.

My shin bones were holding my whole weight on that piece of board, and this fellow had a big club there, and I squirmed around and finally got off of that thing, and he hit me on the head with that club, but it didn't hurt hardly at all. It was a hollow piece of bamboo, and then he didn't hit as hard as he's acting. He acted like he was going to knock my head clear off, but he just gave me a little tap.

I thought, well, he's just trying to scare me, and he was having good success. I was plenty scared. After about an hour of that, they let me alone.

I don't know just why. They didn't treat me near as bad as they did the officer. I was an enlisted man and didn't have a very high rank.

I was only a corporal, so I didn't get near as bad as the other fellow, but they did keep us up 24 hours for one week. They didn't give us any sleep at all. They just kept asking us questions, and they'd have 8-hour shifts and just keep questioning us.

Well, that went on for a week. They kept us awake that way, but then after that, it wasn't quite as bad, but they kept us there for 60 days. Then they took us on back to China where they'd captured us, and they built a special prison for us in Nanking.

It was a maximum security prison. Guards were walking by the door all the time 24 hours a day. They had us guarded with 2 or 3 guards on duty.

After 6 months of that kind of treatment, they executed 2 pilots and the gunner. There were 8 of us captured, 5 from our airplane and 3 from another airplane. The other airplane had crashed and run out of gas right at the coast of China, and they were out in the ocean when that happened.

3 of them got to shore, but the other 2 were drowned. There were just 5 of us left after they executed those 3, and they sentenced us to life imprisonment with special treatment. After we were in prison 2 years, another fellow died from malnutrition, from starvation, and that was Bob Meader.

After Meader died, the Emperor of Japan wrote a letter to him and told him to treat us better. I guess the Emperor must have scolded them. They came and told us that they were going to treat us better.

They said that he didn't really die from being starved to death, but he died because his heart stopped, which is probably scientific. After they told us that they were going to treat us better, they gave us bread and they also brought literature for us to read. We were in solitary confinement.

40 months we spent in prison, 3 years and 4 months, and 34 months of the 40 months we were in solitary confinement in maximum security prison. It was a terrible thing, but you know, I got the Bible out of that. After Meader died, here they came with good books, theological books, that I guess they got from the libraries of the missionaries that had to leave Japan.

I got this American Bible, it was American Standard Edition, and it had a \$1.95 price mark in the front of it. Well, I read that Bible clear through. I thought, I've got a chance now to find out where the mistakes are in the Bible.

I'd heard about a lot of mistakes in the Bible. So I started writing it at first, and I noticed how it said that God spoke to Moses. It says that many times.

Well, I thought, did he or didn't he? I don't see any evidence, but pretty soon I got on to the prophecy. There's lots of prophecy in the Bible.

Of course, the main prophecy is that Messiah was going to come. Messiah was predicted right from the very beginning. And the Bible says that God sent his prophet right from the beginning.

And Jesus said that in the beginning, when God created Adam and Eve. Well, we went up to St. Helens here the other day, and they were talking about 16 or 17 billion years ago. I don't know where they got that information from some of the scientists.

But they don't know what the Bible says, I guess. Because Jesus said that your word is truth. In that 17th chapter of John, in the 17th verse, it said, thy word is truth.

The word of God is truth. And Jesus said that he was the way, the truth, and the life. So, that don't hardly sound like the same thing that's in the Bible to me.

That there was all these years. God sent his prophet right from the beginning. And Adam and Eve were created in the beginning.

When God created Adam and Eve, they were made male and female, the Bible says. Well, I read the Bible clear through, and I thought that prophecy of Jesus actually came to pass. And Isaiah predicted just what was going to happen 700 or 800 years before Jesus came.

It said that Jesus would be born of a virgin. He would be born in Bethlehem, it says, in Jeremiah. And Isaiah said that all our niceties would be laid on him.

Well, you know that Abel made atonement for sin, and that's a prophecy. That the atonement for sin would be made by blood. And Jesus Christ came, shed his blood on the cross.

And that was predicted way back when Adam was still on earth. So, we have a record right from the beginning. I believe that.

I believe the Bible is the word of God. And Jesus indicated that all the way through. That God's word is the truth.

And God inspired to write the right thing. They all agreed. And here it came.

And I saw that the unity and the way it was written in a logical way. And 40 different men, they say, wrote that Bible. And they all had the same idea.

That the atonement for sin would be made by the Messiah. The one that was coming. And surely Jesus did that on the cross in a wonderful way.

In a dramatic way. And we're all could see. And he called himself son of God.

And they said that's the reason why they wanted to crucify him. He was blaspheming and a liar. And he was claiming to be God.

The son of man and the son of God. He was a man. He was perfect man.

He was made the way Adam should have been. But Adam sinned. And all of us have sinned.

And the penalty for sin is death. The Bible makes that very clear. But Jesus came and paid that penalty.

And he was perfect man and perfect God. He was wonderful. God incarnate was what Jesus really is.

And he walked here on this old planet earth. Well you know I saw him a lot different than a lot of people do. I don't know what President Nixon thought.

But he made the statement one time when I was doing missionary work over in Japan. Nixon made the statement that when Armstrong stepped on the moon. That was the greatest event that ever happened in the history of mankind.

That's quite an event I'll admit. But the greatest event was when the creator of the world came down here in the gospel of John and says he was in the world. The world was made by him.

Without him was not anything made that is made. So they're saying that the very one who created this universe was right here on this old planet earth. He came as a human being.

He paid the penalty for all of our sins. And it says whosoever believeth on him will not perish but will have everlasting life. Isn't that a wonderful good news to us?

It's the greatest thing that ever happened in the history of mankind. We don't have to perish. We don't have to pay the penalty for our sins.

It's already been paid. But we need to believe on Jesus Christ. It says there's no other name under heaven whereby men may be saved other than the name of Jesus Christ.

It's in the God's word. And God has had his hand on that book ever since the beginning of time. And he's seen to it that it's handed down to us just as he wanted it to be.

And those prophets of Isaiah, those prophecies, some people were saying that they were written a long time after they happened. They went and found those Dead Sea Scrolls in 1948. They found those Dead Sea Scrolls.

There was Isaiah's writing. It's just the same as the one that's been handed down to us. The very same thing is written in Isaiah.

And so we know that God watches over everything. The Bible says he knows the thoughts of our mind, the intent of our heart. There's nothing hidden from God.

He knows when a sparrow falls to the ground. My mother prayed for me when I was falling out of that airplane. I was coming down that parachute.

She kept track of that time when she prayed. And she agonized. She said, Oh God help him.

And she felt like I was in great danger. And when I got back, my mother showed me that where she had written it down, that time that she prayed that way. And there it was the same time.

And when I jumped out of that airplane God can witness to us. The Bible says that he that hath Jesus said this, he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. He that loveth me will be loved by my father and I will love him.

And we will manifest ourselves to him. So that's one thing. We have the truth and we have the opportunity to have God manifest himself to us.

I was sitting there in that Japanese prison and it was the 8th of June 1944. I was sitting in that prison and I was thinking, well how can God manifest himself to me? How can I be born again?

It says except the man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. How can that happen? It's something that God does because the Bible says that we're not born of flesh or of the will of man but we're born of God.

We're born of God. So that's what it means to be born again. We're born of God not something that other people do.

I felt like, well man I don't have a preacher here. Don't have any Sunday school teacher. I'm all alone in this Japanese prison.

But I looked down at the Bible and there was Romans 10-9. The Bible was open. It was laying there on the floor and I was sitting on the little stool they had in that prison.

And I saw, if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, you believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you'll be saved. And you know what that means. Why that's happened to me.

I do confess with my mouth. Jesus is Lord I believe in my heart. God raised him from the dead.

So there's God's word. I'm saved. And I remember that old song they used to sing in the Methodist church standing on the promises of God I cannot fail.

It was a wonderful thing. It came to me, you know, there in the prison and I knew right then that God knew everything. And I just sensed the presence of the living Christ right there in that old Japanese prison.

And I thought, I know that God knows everything that's happened to me. There's nothing hidden from him. And he knows I believe.

He knows our heart. He knows what we believe. And I had to make a confession then that Jesus is Lord.

He's my boss. Just like Bobby Height was my boss when he said to jump out of that old airplane. I had to do what he said.

He was my boss. And I knew what it was to have a boss. So I knew that whatever Jesus wanted me to do, that's what I was going to try and do from now on.

I made up my mind to do that. And you know, it was just wonderful. I changed right away.

It made a big change in my life because I was mean before when the guard told me before I was a Christian, he said, hurry up, clean up yourself. I said, you're going to jump in the lake. Well, he didn't know what I said.

I said it in English so he didn't understand it. But he knew I had a bad attitude. He opened up the door and he gave me a hit on the head with his fist.

I kicked him in the stomach. I didn't have my shoes on. And it felt good when my bare foot hit his soft stomach, you know.

And I was feeling like fighting. And I was kind of crazy, I guess. I was angry.

And I hated the Japanese. And it was just getting miserable all the time because I couldn't control my temper. But this guard pulled his scabbard off and hit me with the scabbard.

And I picked up the can of dirty mop water that I'd been mopping the floor with. And the mop was inside that can. I just picked it up like that and threw it.

And you know, I'm a bombardier so I made a pretty good shot. That mop landed right on his head. That old guard he didn't do anything to me because he was one of the nicer guards.

I guess I knew that. But after I became a Christian, the mean guard was there. And he said, he told me to hurry up and get back in the cell.

I had put the food in and I finished that char and it was time for me to get back in. That guard would slap me on the back and say, Hayako, Hayako, hurry up! Well, I was going as fast as I could.

But I got my shoes off and then I started to go through the door. And I went in sideways because he held the door he didn't hold the door open very wide. I got my one foot in and I'd bring my other foot in and he slammed that door and caught my foot in the door jam.

And he was kicking my foot with his big shoes, you know. And I was caught there. I couldn't get my foot free for a while.

Finally I pushed back and got my foot free and I got inside. The first thing I thought of was, he's too mean. Jesus don't expect us to love those real mean ones.

But that didn't work because I'd memorize that scripture, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. If you don't forgive others, he won't forgive you either, it says in the Bible. So, I knew that wasn't right.

And I wished I hadn't memorized that right at first. But finally I got around to it and I realized that's what God wanted me to do. So, I went up the door the next morning and that guard came on duty and I said Ohayou gozaimasu!

Good morning, sir! And that guard looked really surprised. But he beat it out of there real fast.

And the next day I said the same thing to him. I worked that way for about six days. And on that sixth morning, here came that old mean guard and handed me in a nice, juicy boiled sweet potato.

And he was really a mean one, you know. I was really surprised. But I thought this way really works.

It works a hundred times out of a hundred. And it's what God wants us to do. It isn't a hard thing, you know.

God isn't mean. God is love. And God isn't willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and live.

And he just wants to give us this eternal life that he's promised through faith in Jesus Christ. So, before I got out of prison, God just filled me with the Holy Spirit and made me feel so wonderful. And I promised the Lord I'd go back to Japan.

And after I finished college, or got back to college, I got in the college there in Seattle. They had nine girls for every boy. And they all looked nice to me.

And I thought, I want to get married and live a normal life and go back to Japan and be a missionary. And I asked the Lord which girl I should go with. All I could get out of him was just go with the best.

That's what I did. I got the best one. And we got back there and spent 30 years doing missionary work.

And it was just wonderful the way the Lord helped us. The Japanese knew that something had happened to me there in the prison. And we saw the man that led the attack on Pearl Harbor come to my house and say he wanted to be a Christian.

And we worked together there in a big evangelistic meeting in Osaka where we were. And they said that 600 people made decisions for Christ that night when Fuchida and I were given our testimony. And Fuchida went all over the world and telling people that he was a Christian.

And a fellow, one of his old flying comrades came up and said, I'm going to cut your throat. He said, you're a traitor. And Fuchida told him who Jesus is and told him all about it.

And they said that fellow became a pastor with pastoring a church when they wrote that book. It's called God's Samurai. And it's a wonderful book telling about Fuchida and how God got a hold of him to be a Christian.

We saw wonderful things happen but I'm just so thankful to be here with you and I hope that I didn't bore you. I got some books out there. If any of you want a book you're welcome to pick it up.

Yeah, there's videotape too. And I'd like to pray though before we leave. Shall we just bow our heads for a prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, we know that you're on the side of righteousness and we're so thankful Lord that we can be here together and that we can realize that God is on our side and helped us and protected us. We pray you'll put down the evil and protect our military people the naval men and the women and all the people we'd like to see America become a great and wonderful country because they trust in God. And we know that righteousness exalts the nation and sin is a terrible thing.

We even have to have policemen and military people to put down the evil that's here in this world. We pray you'll help and bless our country bless each one that's here tonight and help our relatives and friends and help us all as many as can become Christians and have this great eternal life that we're looking forward to after this life and we know it's by faith in Jesus Christ. We thank you and ask it in Jesus' wonderful name.

Amen. God bless you.