

Interviewer: Can I get you to start by saying your whole name and your birthday?

Hurt: John J Hurt and born what

Woman in the background: July 24, 1921

Hurt: Yeah July the 21st

Woman in the background: 24th

Hurt: July 21, 1921

Interviewer: Okay and do you remember where were you at as you were growing up where did you live?

Hurt: Right here in McEwen.

Interviewer: McEwen and what did your parents do?

Hurt: What did he say?

Interviewer: What did your parents do?

Woman in the background: he doesn't hear real well.

Hurt: Farmers and he was a teacher too my dad was a teacher too.

Interviewer: Okay do you remember anything about the great depression?

Hurt: Oh God yes.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Hurt: Well you didn't have too much to eat except what was in the garden and you eat that. But we didn't hurt it was a big family of us it was 11 of us in all over the time. But we didn't hurt too bad we had a farm and we got our groceries out of it.

Interviewer: Did you work?

Hurt: No

Interviewer: You didn't

Hurt: I don't remember working anywhere except on a farm.

Interviewer: Okay what about school did you graduate from high school?

Hurt: Eleventh grade got to the eleventh grade joined the navy.

Interviewer: Joined the navy and where did you go for your basic training?

Hurt: Norfolk Virginia

Interviewer: What unit were you in?

Hurt: What year was this?

Woman in the background: What unit were you in?

Interviewer: Like what was your

Hurt: You were just you weren't in no unit you were just put training you were just with the trainers everybody was in there. If it was one I don't know what it was called.

Woman in the background: Boot camp

Interviewer: Alright and so where did you go after you finished the camp your training?

Hurt: After I finished training?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hurt: I went to Aviation Machinist Mate School there in Norfolk I think. Yeah

Interviewer: And before WWII did you know anything about Germany and what was going on?

Hurt: No

Interviewer: You never heard anything about it?

Hurt: No

Interviewer: And will you tell me about I know you were on the Enterprise when did you get stationed on that ship?

Hurt: Get the book out Momma I can't remember.

Interviewer: Let me help him out here all the dates are here.

Hurt: January 8, 1941.

Interviewer: And what was your job on the Enterprise?

Hurt: What was my job?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hurt: Aviation mechanic I was plane captain you take of one plane that's what you do oil it and gas it and wipe down and all of that stuff.

Interviewer: How was your life on the ship? Did you get hot meals?

Hurt: Oh yeah oh yeah there were all kind of meals.

Interviewer: So all of ya'll ate good?

Hurt: Three meals a day.

Interviewer: Good and I know that ya'll were heading back to Pearl Harbor in 1941 based on the article.

Hurt: yeah

Interviewer: So was happening where were ya'll at?

Hurt: Where was we at?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hurt: We was at sea.

Interviewer: Where were ya'll coming from when you were heading

Hurt: We were coming from Wake Island I think. Wasn't that Wake Island we went to Grannie?

Woman in the background: Right

Hurt: We took some marines out there to Wake Island I think and turned around and were coming back and a storm kept us out. And that's the only reason we wasn't at the Pearl and that's the only reason I'm alive now probably.

Interviewer: Well what do you remember about hearing about Pearl Harbor? How did you hear about it?

Hurt: how did we hear about it? Over the radio on the ship the bombing yeah we heard it on the ship yeah. We sent our squadrons out that night and they went out with live torpedoes under them 2,000 pounds. And they never had landed on a ship with a 2,000 pound torpedo on them before. They went out and tried to find the Japanese elate that evening but they didn't find them. They come back and landed with that big torpedo on under the plane.

Interviewer: Wow so you rode into Pearl Harbor after it happened right?

Hurt: Yes December the 8th.

Interviewer: What do you remember seeing?

Hurt: Debreu all over the harbor the oil and the ships some of them still a smoking.

Interviewer: Wow what did ya'll do after ya'll got there? Did ya'll have to help in the cleanup?

Hurt: No we nothing while the ship all they did was get us fuel on the ship they had to get their oil to run it and supplies and everything and went back to sea again just the next day or so. Yep

Interviewer: Did ya'll hear from Roosevelt did ya'll hear the speech after Pearl Harbor that you knew you were going to be in war then?

Hurt: No

Interviewer: you didn't hear that?

Hurt: You talking about being in war

Interviewer: Yes sir

Hurt: We had live ammunition in our planes before December the 7th.

Interviewer: Really

Hurt: Yes sir. When we took the marines to Pearl Harbor Admiral Halzie said we'll be we'll be under war conditions. And all the planes had live ammunition in them.

Interviewer: So after you left Pearl Harbor where did you go on your ship? Where were ya'll sent to?

Hurt: That's a good question. Well I don't know we just went to sea and

Woman in the background: This is hard to remember. I had a time writing this article because he had to pull it out of his mind I wrote the article but he kept giving me

Hurt: We went to sea and then just in a little while the Hornet come up with Jimmy Doolittle General Doolittle with his planes on it. And we was escorting it to almost to Japan until it took off and when it took off oh Doolittle was the first one that took off. And he went down with his wheels and almost touched the water.

Interviewer: Wow

Woman in the background: Did you see the movie Pearl Harbor?

Interviewer: I have seen that.

Woman in the background: Okay John went when he saw it he said watch that plane. It did exactly like he remembered you know.

Hurt: She went right down on the water.

Interviewer: Well I know that the Enterprise was the most decorated ship.

Hurt: In WWII

Interviewer: you were in all but two battles as I

Hurt: No I wasn't after the Battle of Midway I left the Enterprise and never went back on it.

Interviewer: Oh really so I knew the Enterprise was in a lot of battles.

Hurt: Lots of battles after that yeah.

Interviewer: What do you remember about some of the battles? What were some of your wartime experiences?

Hurt: Oh you mean well I guess you'd call that the High Altitude Bomber come over and hit the Enterprise and that was before the Battle of Midway. And it knocked me off the wing of the airplane and I hit the deck and knocked me out. And this is what I told the officers the next day when I come to I jumped up and started to run and I fell over a water hose and I reached down and picked it up. He said that's enough I don't want to hear no more Admiral Halzie give me second class for putting out the fire.

Interviewer: That was a great job. So when you were when a battle was going on that the Enterprise was engaged in what was your main what was your job while the planes were coming in?

Hurt: I didn't have no job. After my plane left the carrier my job was over with.

Interviewer: you waited till that plane

Hurt: To come back. I didn't have to do nothing I could go anywhere I wanted to. Didn't have no battle station or nothing I just waited for my plane to come back.

Interviewer: Well how was how were all the soldiers or all of the navy men how were they how did ya'll react to one another did ya'll have a good time?

Hurt: Oh yeah sure we had a good time. Yeah oh yeah plenty good times yeah.

Interviewer: Okay you said you were in Midway and that was your last battle.

Hurt: That was the last on the Enterprise.

Interviewer: Right where did you go what do you remember about Midway before we

Hurt: Huh?

Interviewer: What do you remember about Midway on that?

Hurt: All I know is we lost our planes. We sent off I think it was 9, 10, or 11 I don't know which one exactly. But all of the torpedo planes on the Enterprise the Hornet and the York Town I believe was the other carrier wasn't it? I believe it was anyhow all the torpedo planes were shot down except two or three. One came back aboard my ship Smith he was a warrant officer he landed and when he landed he

come out of the cockpit with his pistol in his hand. Wouldn't even take his plane up on the deck see you land and then you go on up with the plane. He just let it sit there he headed for the pilots ready room he was going to kill him some pilots because the fighters were supposed to protect the torpedo planes when they went in. And our planes were up 10,000 feet the fighters was up there with the dive bombers and they didn't protect our torpedo planes. And all of them got shot down except one of ours come back it had 92 bullet holes in it I counted them.

Interviewer: Wow

Hurt: And there was a piece of steel behind his head we put it on after the war started. It was about 12 inches by 12 had twelve bullets slapped against it. We just pushed that plane over to the side. There's none of them planes in the world today.

Interviewer: Wow so after Midway where did you go you said you left the Enterprise?

Hurt: Went back to Pearl Harbor and reformed our squadron got new pilots new radiomen and everything. And then we got trained and went aboard the USS Hornet.

Interviewer: The reason you left the Enterprise is that because your plane was gone?

Hurt: No we didn't have no planes. The squadron didn't have no planes see and we had to reform in Pearl Harbor. Yeah we didn't have no planes in torpedo six no more they were all gone.

Interviewer: So you had the same job on the Hornet?

Hurt: Yes

Interviewer: So where did you go from Pearl Harbor when you left you went back to sea?

Hurt: Went back to sea and stayed 90 days without seeing land.

Interviewer: What is that like?

Hurt: That is terrible. Beans for breakfast beans for supper and beans for everything. That's all we had left 90 days three months no land just water.

Interviewer: I can't even imagine that. So did the Hornet what battles were you in?

Hurt: The Battle of Santa Cruise the Hornet was sunk but it didn't sink till the next day. And my like I said I don't have no job when my plane was gone.

Interviewer: Right

Hurt: So all I had to do was find me a place to hide. So I took off up towards the bowl from the hanger deck and there was a passage way there with steel all around it. I said this will be a good place to stay. Well I sat down there a little while and I got nervous and I just went on up on the bowl and I laid down between two anchor chains two they have two of them two big capsules they bring the chains in. I laid right down in between them and I stayed up on the bowl the whole time. They brought their tow cable

up from the hanger deck and would shovel out over the destroyer or cruiser and was under tow and the Japs come back and they cut the cable and let that other ship go maneuvering see. Of course we couldn't maneuver and then they got back about two hours later they come back and shot another line from the cruiser over to us. And I helped pull it over there and we tied it off was towing Japs come back they cut that cable. That is the end of it they didn't try to tow it no more.

Interviewer: How would they cut the cable?

Hurt: With a big ole ax like.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Hurt: Yeah they whacked her yeah. But that was late late in the evening then see it had been going on all day. So I told the boys with me I said we better go back to the hanger and see what's going on. Somebody tells me that they blew up an abandon ship but I never did hear it. And we stayed up on the bowl the whole time of the attack and everything the crew I was with. There was about seven, eight or ten of us I don't know exactly. And we went back this passage way that I was going up to bowl before the Japs started coming and there was a corps sitting right where I was sitting burnt to a crisp. Right where I was sitting before we went on up on the bowl.

Interviewer: Right

Hurt: There was a corps sitting there.

Interviewer: Wow

Hurt: Burnt to a crisp black. Went on back on the hanger deck we hadn't had nothing to eat all day they broke out a can of pineapples we'd stick our fingers in the middle of it and eat them pineapples. And we looked around and I said we better get on that little ole destroyer there said there was about seven or eight of us. And I said we better get on that thing. We jumped on it and it pulled away about as far as from here to your truck right there and a bomb hit right where it was at. Water went all over me and everything else and we were the last ones to leave the ship. I don't know of anybody else unless they swam. I don't know.

Interviewer: Wow did you have to go reform your squadron again after that?

Hurt: Yeah went to New Caledonia and that's where we got seven or eight new planes that's all they had and had that many pilots. Then we went aboard the Nassau and it was a little jeep carrier and Commander Powell was in charge of the squadron he was the skipper. Well when he was an inson I was his plane captain you know they call it a plane captain where you take care of the plane.

Interviewer: Right

Hurt: And he became the skipper and he wanted me as his plane captain. Well I said yeah I'll take it see I was second class then so then he gave me first class. I got first class because he was commander and he could do it see.

Interviewer: Wow

Hurt: I got first class out of that.

Interviewer: So where did ya'll go did ya'll go right back out to sea?

Hurt: Just out of New Caledonia there a little ways and never did do nothing much. But they had a wrecked plane over on an island and Commander Powell wanted me to go over there and take the instruments out of it. I did and I come back and just in a little while two days or something we come back to the states and I had that the instruments in my sea bag. I've still got them down here navy clock they were real expensive you know. But he never would tell me what to do with them I didn't know what to do with them so I'm still waiting for him to tell me.

Interviewer: So I guess the war was drawing to a close by this time.

Hurt: Yeah the war was that was 43 and we come back for 30 day leave with Admiral Halzie's approval. Got back to San Diego and the old man in charge of the west coast wanted to cut it back to ten. He didn't have the power Halzie had we got our 30 day leave.

Interviewer: I guess that was nice.

Hurt: Oh yeah look what it done.

Woman in the background: We married in 43.

Interviewer: That's' where ya'll met?

Hurt: Oh we went to school together and everything and then we got tangled again.

Interviewer: Okay so where were you at when you heard about the war ending?

Hurt: Oh Lord Pasco wasn't it. Yeah I went when I come back off of leave I went to San Diego went to Seattle and then I went into the hydraulics shop. And that's the first time I had been in the hydraulics shop. The hydraulics is what raised your wings your landing gear and all of that stuff. Well they had a we call them goony birds in charge of the shop. He was first class and he was a feather back he come in the navy as first class in other words he was just appointed first class from outside. And I didn't like that worth a penny so I started studying the planes hydraulics system see and I studied and I studied and I didn't go ashore didn't do nothing. I studied and studied until I learned everything and six months later I was in charge of the shop and he was gone to sea.

Interviewer: Wow so you spent the rest of the war

Hurt: No not in Seattle no. I stayed there as first class then I went to Wood Be Island wasn't it? Yeah Wood Be Island and then went to Pasco. And when we moved to Pasco Washington it was in the desert and they had that's where they could fly every day. Planes could fly they wanted training planes there see but the sand blew there and it was hard on the hydraulic system because it hit them little shiny cylinders shafts you know and back up the seals. I had 29 men under me and three chiefs I made chief just before I got there. And I got that job and that's the most men I ever worked in the navy and we took care of the planes and everything there. And I stayed there until after the war and that's where I was when the war ended wasn't it? Yeah Pasco

Woman in the background: That was August of 45.

Hurt: yeah

Interviewer: So what did you think of the decision that Truman had made to drop the atomic bomb?

Hurt: What did I think? I thought it was a damn good thing he done it.

Interviewer: I see so I guess you knew that a lot of your friends and stuff would probably have to go to Japan had that not happened?

Hurt: Yeah didn't none of us have to go then see. But when I got back to the states in February of 43 ole John didn't go back to sea no more.

Interviewer: So that's when you started

Hurt: To 59 and I retired I retired I stayed in the states.

Woman in the background: You were testing sea going squadrons training squadrons.

Hurt: Oh yeah but we never did go. But we left Pasco went to school in Chicago went to a school in Chicago as school in Kingsville Memphis and Norfolk. I went to hydraulics school for six months and mechanics school for six months I just went to every school I could get. And I went to recruiter's school and I was a navy recruiter.

Interviewer: Right and that was after you worked

Hurt: After I worked on the planes and everything I was a navy recruiter for about two and a half three years. And I had to learn how to type and these old mechanical hands never had to take the typewriter. Now I learned it I didn't hunt and peck I learned it the hard way.

Interviewer: That's pretty good

Hurt: I learned to type. And they put me in the home office in Nashville and I had to type up every man. You've got a whole lot of paper work goes in to the navy when you go in the navy. And you have to type them all up see and I typed them up. I stayed there six months then I got the route right through my home town.

Interviewer: That's pretty convenient then.

Hurt: Yeah

Interviewer: So did you feel that Roosevelt did a good job throughout your service?

Hurt: Oh yeah he done about as good as anybody else could have done I guess. Yeah

Interviewer: Okay well I think that's about it.
(Tape ended)