

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JAMES S. BARNETT
Navy, Airplane navigator and co-pilot, World War II
2000

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Barnett, James Scott, (1918-). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 65 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 65 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 65 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

James Barnett, a Kenosha, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as an aerial navigator and co-pilot with the Navy. Barnett mentions enlisting in 1942, attending preflight training in Iowa, and learning about navigation and gunnery at the Naval Air Station (Florida). He relates his duties as a crewmember of a PB4Y squadron in Hawaii. Barnett talks about bombing missions to the Gilbert Islands, Wake Island, and Ellice Island. He recalls how he and two other crew members were grounded with dysentery the day that their plane and the rest of the crew were shot down and killed. Barnett mentions his transfer to New Guinea and missions to the Philippines and Truk. He talks about getting hit in the leg during a bombing run and doing an emergency landing on Kwajalein due to engine damage. Barnett speaks of his return to the United States and being stationed at Kaneohe Bay (Hawaii). He describes losing a plane due to landing gear malfunction. He talks about flying from San Francisco to Hawaii in nine hours and judging whether to turn around using “how-goes-it” curves. Barnett comments on his role transporting the wounded from the Pacific islands and other locations to the Naval Hospital in Hawaii. He recalls shooting down another airplane. Barnett briefly speaks of attending graduate school using the GI Bill and his career as a teacher.

Biographical Sketch:

Barnett (b. June 14, 1918) served with the Navy during World War II. He achieved the rank of Lieutenant and was honorably discharged in 1946, eventually settling in Oregon (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000.

Transcribed by Emily Johnson, 2008.

Corrected by Channing Welch and Katy Marty, 2009.

Abstract corrected by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Interview Transcript:

Barnett: Is that an unbreakable camera? (both laugh)

McIntosh: None of those have ever been invented yet, sir as you well know. Ah, there you look pretty. Back up just a trifle. All right.

Barnett: The red light is on.

McIntosh: Sir, when were you born?

Barnett: 6/14/18. June 14th, Flag Day, 1918.

McIntosh: Where?

Barnett: Pensacola, Florida.

McIntosh: And when did you move to Wisconsin?

Barnett: Uh, about 1923 or 4.

McIntosh: And the year you entered military service?

Barnett: 1942, June.

McIntosh: Where did they send you? First off.

Barnett: Well, I first went into, well even before I was actually in the Navy, they had me. I was, I flew out of, I took basic training out of Kenosha Airport. And then--

McIntosh: Private training?

Barnett: No it was Navy training, but it was for--

McIntosh: But you were a civilian.

Barnett: I was still a civilian. Actually I guess, I don't know whether I was really a civilian or whether I was half in and half out. But anyway I took the flight training and then I went to Milwaukee and trained there. Flew out of, for my secondary flight training. Then I went to Iowa City for what they called 'preflight.'

McIntosh: Preflight. So many Wisconsin and Madison folks went to Iowa preflight. Many, many of them. So, and so you got your real, regular -- you got into a Stearman there?

Barnett: Yes. Uh-huh. And then--

McIntosh: How did that go? Did you enjoy it?

Barnett: That was pretty good except it was wintertime, and they killed two or three trying to land on strips that had too much snow on 'em. But the best part about it was that I was jerked out, I guess because I guess 'cause I was a college person. I had finished college you see. Then I was jerked out, and I was sent down to the Naval Air Station down in Florida where I learned to be a navigator and a gunner and a bombardier (laughs). Take your choice.

McIntosh: You were older than the average--

Barnett: Oh yes, yes. I was usually about four years older than. And most of the fellas that were down there were quite a bit younger, yes.

McIntosh: So you learned all those skills, navigating and--

Barnett: Well, I learned how to navigate which was the most important. That was celestial navigation as well, you know, because we had a lot of our trips were at nighttime to get to a target or someplace like that --

McIntosh: I understand.

James: And back.

McIntosh: Okay. And had you been assigned four engine aircraft by that time?

Barnett: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: And then, your, the Liberator. What did the Navy call the Liberator? What was the designation?

Barnett: That's the B-24.

McIntosh: I know that, but the Navy didn't call that a B-24. I was trying to figure out what their--

Barnett: It was called the Liberator.

McIntosh: Right, but the regular official designation, like the B-24 for the Air Force was not the same in the Navy. They had another term for it.

Barnett: Oh, for goodness sake.

McIntosh: Well, whatever.

Barnett: I'm not aware.

McIntosh: Not important. So what did you do after, you formed into a crew down there?

Barnett: Yes. Naval Air Station at San Diego.

McIntosh: Oh, they moved you over there?

Barnett: Moved me, yes, yes.

McIntosh: And how big a crew were you in?

Barnett: Well--

McIntosh: Ten? That's the usual.

Barnett: Ten or eleven. Right, yeah.

McIntosh: Okay. And what was your rank at that time?

Barnett: I was a, an ensign.

McIntosh: Okay.

Barnett: Yeah.

McIntosh: All right. So you --

Barnett: I was an ensign a long time, too. (both laugh)

McIntosh: So, you did a lot of practicing on the West Coast?

Barnett: Not as much. We flew over to the Salton Sea and we did bombing practice there. And we did some gunnery run, but really I did not have very much gunnery run. I should have had more because when we went through Wake Island I could have probably killed a lot more personnel.

McIntosh: I see. It was hard to learn that?

Barnett: I thought it was hard, yes, um, actually if they had given us more tracers like one in five or something like that you would have been able to tell--

McIntosh: How you were catching up to them or not.

Barnett: (laughs) That's right.

McIntosh: Right. Okay. I understand that. And so when did you move out of the United States permanently, then?

Barnett: Well, we moved out to go to Hawaii and we went (coughs) excuse me, up into Kaneohe Bay which is on the north side of the island of Oahu. And we flew out of that with long-range search and recon and probably about three--two months, two or three.

McIntosh: Did you fly as a squadron or fly did you singly?

Barnett: We flew singly but as a squadron we were flying pie-shaped sections out.

McIntosh: I see. Out about how far?

Barnett: Well, about 600 miles, some seven, I believe. But they figured we would have enough information by--with that. We were able to fly eleven hours, and there were a very few times when we flew over nine and a half or so.

McIntosh: I see. Carried food aboard?

Barnett: Pardon?

McIntosh: Carried food aboard?

Barnett: Oh yeah, we had lunches and so forth. And then --

McIntosh: K-rations?

Barnett: No, no it was better than that (laughs). And when we got further down, why, it was a little different.

McIntosh: Where did you, -- and you left Hawaii, then where did you go?

Barnett: We went to, um, Nukufetau.

McIntosh: What island group is that? Gilberts?

- Barnett: That's the Gilberts and that was one of the um, where king of the area, King Tembenoka was originally and that's how we met those islanders and flew out of there.
- McIntosh: Was that where you stationed when you attacked Wake Island?
- Barnett: No, it was further down from there. Yeah, we did our first bombing run and so forth up at Makin Island where the Japanese had come in and the Air Force had hit them but we were supposed to finish them off.
- McIntosh: That was your first experience at combat?
- Barnett: First, yes, first.
- McIntosh: How did that go? Tell me about it.
- Barnett: It wasn't much at all. We just went in and, uh, I did not man a gun at that time, I was not a site gunner at that time.
- McIntosh: You bombed the target, though, that was your job wasn't it?
- Barnett: Oh yes. And got home. (laughs)
- McIntosh: And got home safe. That was the most important part. Did you find it was hard to learn navigation over water when you had no landmarks?
- Barnett: I did not find it very much of a problem. I had kinda been happy to be assigned to the job. My granddad, my father's father, was a Great Lakes captain, and so, and my dad went to the water, too, for a while. So I had had all kinds of information about the water and so this was kind of nice for me.
- McIntosh: Well, you took to it then. All right. At Wake Island, what did you encounter, then? Fighter planes?
- Barnett: No, we encountered nothing. Actually, except, the strike was so fast that we caught them, evidently, coming out of the chow hall or someplace like that. And when I, I was manning the, uh, starboard gun, waist gun, so I was able to do a quite a little damage.
- McIntosh: So, you were really on a strafing run, then?
- Barnett: Right, right.

McIntosh: Came in at what, 2,000 feet?

Barnett: Oh, no. Fifty feet.

McIntosh: Fifty feet?

Barnett: Oh, sure, you come in low like that so that their radar, whichever was, back in that time, their radar was not as good as it was later on. And so, you came in under their radar as best you could.

McIntosh: Right on the deck.

Barnett: laughs.

McIntosh: How many were in your group? Your squadron?

Barnett: I think there were six of us at that time.

McIntosh: Six.

Barnett: They had us pretty close together as you might see from the pictures here. Pretty close together.

McIntosh: Did you drop any bombs or just strafe them?

Barnett: No, just strafe.

McIntosh: What was the basic purpose of your attack?

Barnett: To find out if there was anybody near, find out if there was any sub that was supplying them that was part of the deal. And, as I understood later on, we had a sub there that was keeping any of theirs from supplying them.

McIntosh: Okay. So that was your only chance at Wake Island then?

Barnett: Yes, sir.

McIntosh: Okay. What was next?

Barnett: I came in later on, after Wake was secured. When I was in naval-air transport.

McIntosh: So what was your next activity after that?

Barnett: Well, let's see.

McIntosh: Stayed at Makin very long?

Barnett: We did quite a lot of bombing up in the, uh the Lease Islands above there and over toward Tarawa and uh, tried to soften up any kind of Jap resistance that was in the area.

McIntosh: What kind of bombs did you carry?

Barnett: Most of the time, when we did any bombing, uh, we had, I don't know exactly, whether they were two-fifties or five hundreds and, uh, that was the only time we did any bombing like that was high altitude and we had to get on our electrically heated suits and all the rest of it, even though it was in the tropics.

McIntosh: So, you made a couple of runs at Tarawa you said?

Barnett: Yes.

McIntosh: What was next for you?

Barnett: Uh, I guess we. Well, we went on over toward uh, Kwajalein and Bikini [Pikinni] and so forth and, uh [clears throat] uh, Bikini I think is where they had the big test of the Saratoga. And when I came back to the States, I came back on the Saratoga before she made that run out there and was bombed. Yeah.

McIntosh: Now, Kwajalein was ours by that time. We'd taken Kwajalein by the time you were there?

Barnett: No, the first, first – oh, no. When we were doing bombing-strafting runs and where my crew was-- my first crew was lost, that was Kwajalein. It was still Japanese-held, oh yeah.

McIntosh: How did your crew get lost?

Barnett: They, according to the information that, uh, they had a -- I think the plane was a Tony firing twenty millimeters through the prop. And they came in and were able to kill the plane that I was normally flying in.

McIntosh: But everyone on the plane was lost?

Barnett: Yes, oh yes.

McIntosh: And only by chance, you weren't on that plane?

Barnett: Well, the dysentery kept three of us, normally, kept them back in sick bay because of all the Japanese red-eyed black flies and we had no screens on anything. We were subject to problems.

McIntosh: Well in this case it saved your life.

Barnett: Yes, yes, yes. Because if you, you can't have dysentery and be in a high altitude suit. Not very long.

McIntosh: Not very long.

Barnett: Not very well. Can't do much of a job.

McIntosh: So, how long were you laid up?

Barnett: Oh, about a week.

McIntosh: Then you got in the new crew?

Barnett: Yes. Then I was assigned to a new crew.

McIntosh: How was that crew compared to your first one?

Barnett: Well, my skipper was a graduate of—

McIntosh: The trade school?

Barnett: Naval, Naval Academy.

McIntosh: The trade school.

Barnett: And he was [laughs], the trade school, Okay, and ah, for a while there he didn't particularly care for me I think. But after I was able to name where we were coming in and so forth. In fact, there was a, one of the islands there that ah, we came in on, I can't remember now exactly which one. But anyway, uh, the island was named, was, uh its position was wrong. And so, two or three of us navigators were coming in ah, about twelve or fifteen miles, ah, to the side of it. And so we sat there one day and made a noon fix. Then we proceeded to tell the admiral back there somewhere or other that that island isn't where it's supposed to be. [laughs] He's of course, had lots of ships already there and he knew it but they didn't tell us first and our charts didn't show it. It's awful nice if

you know where the doggone thing is, especially if you were making a night run. [laughs]

McIntosh: That's right. It helps a lot.

Barnett: Comin' back at night (laughs).

McIntosh: Right. So you had some time off then?

Barnett: Ah, no not really, I just was assigned ah with, of course I had my own gear, the pilot, I mean the navigator that took over took his own gear in the plane.

McIntosh: Oh, I see. So you had to get new stuff.

Barnett: So I had my own gear, and I didn't have to have new stuff.

McIntosh: Where was the hospital that you were in for a week?

Barnett: That hospital wasn't much I'll tell ya. It was just another tent and, uh, with the wind blowin' off of the sand and so forth, it wasn't very happy to be there but they did have it under some trees.

McIntosh: Where was it?

Barnett: That was in, um, I can't, I guess I can't tell you.

McIntosh: Oh.

Barnett: I don't remember just which one of the places.

McIntosh: So then what was your next adventure?

Barnett: Well, the next adventure—

McIntosh: With your new crew.

Barnett: With the new crew, he was, as I say, a man from the academy, and he wasn't, I didn't think he was very nice to me for a while, but uh, after a while, why when I was able to, find the islands (laughs) coming back rather regularly with no problem why, without great changes of course to hit it, why it was much better. Of course, a lot of this flying you just don't have any references at all and no radio, of course. They don't have anything that you can come in on. There's only one thing you can come in on and lights at night, they were thrown on, just see a blip, the pilot or co-pilot will say,

“There it is we’ll have to bear left” or something like that. [laughs] Then later on, why, I flew out of, ah, I flew out of some of these other islands and uh, that’s when we got into the, uh, when the Japanese were doing a lot of shooting back at us. And that’s when—

McIntosh: What battle was this, do you recall?

Barnett: No, it was, no, it was just our reconnaissance, and we were south, I think its Ulithi, Ulithi I think. We were down there when we got hit. And we had to, I had to quickly give them a sight. I had to go give them a position that we were going to fly to in order to, uh, because one of our engines was out.

McIntosh: Tell me about how you got hit.

Barnett: Well, we had just made the bombing run as I showed you in one of those pictures. Just made the bombing run and, uh, we were not at high altitude, we were only at about I suppose a little over a thousand maybe. And the bomb bay doors stuck, and the radio man went down to clear and shut ‘em by manual or manual strip, chip, with some kind of a knuckle thing. I don’t know how it goes. But anyway, when he was down, that’s when they got hit. And there was, mm, a hole about that big and most of the shot went into the radio stuff and that’s when some of it hit me. ‘cause I was standing and trying to help him with—just actually, I was looking back to see what the score was there, and—

McIntosh: All of a sudden you’re hit in the leg. Did it knock you down?

Barnett: Pardon?

James M: Did it knock you down?

Barnett: No, I don’t think it --- according to the corpsman that took some of the pieces out, why the -- the pieces that were left were rather jagged and probably aren’t more than an inch long. And, uh, but the radioman was the guy that really took it because he lost everything, all of his—he lost everything through any part of his body, and he therefore, from there on, I think that they -- he was just cashiered. He just didn’t--

McIntosh: Oh, he didn’t get killed.

Barnett: No, no, he didn't get killed. He wasn't hit at all. When he saw the hole right along side of where he would have been. The hole was right next to his seat.

McIntosh: Oh, but it shook him up so much that he was never the same?

Barnett: No, he never. I don't know what happened to him after that, but all I know is he went—

McIntosh: So after that experience they took him off the plane , and you never saw him again.

Barnett: He never got back in, no. No.

McIntosh: Yeah, that was just too much.

Barnett: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: That was pretty close.

Barnett: Well sure, you gotta -- he was, if he had been down, if he had been up there he would have been dead. He would have had a two-inch hole in him.

McIntosh: But you didn't lose anyone on the plane?

Barnett: No, no.

McIntosh: And did you get back to your base okay?

Barnett: No, that was when we got hit, and we also, two or three of the lines on the engine, on the port engine, inboard port engine, no side, yeah, port engine. The lines were hit, and so we had to feather the prop. And we came into Kwajalein at that time, and we hit Kwajalein. We were, one of the few-- any large plane at all, some two engines had been hit, but there were no four engine planes that had come in there. And we were there for a little over a day , and that was when—

McIntosh: Did you get your engine fixed?

Barnett: Yes. The best part about it, of course, was I had one of the gunners was bunkin' underneath me. I was [laughs] I had a hammock and nobody else had a hammock and I was hung between some of the gear in the front and over on the window, and here this, not on the window on the port open side and here it is early in the morning

and the fella sees a Jap and he gets a .45 out and he killed a Jap right within, oh, twenty feet of him. He was, -- the Jap was out scrounging. He was in the piles of debris, planes and so forth—

McIntosh: This was after we had taken this island.

Barnett: Yeah, oh yeah, we were—

McIntosh: He was a leftover?

Barnett: Oh, yeah. We were -- we were this Kwajalein was pretty well secured by that time.

McIntosh: Except for this guy.

Barnett: These Japanese, some of these Japanese were still in—

McIntosh: Bunkers.

Barnett: Big piles, bunkers maybe we didn't know about, and piles of airplane parts, theirs and ours.

McIntosh: So this was your roommate who did this?

Barnett: He wasn't a roommate, he was just one of my crewmen.

McIntosh: I see.

Barnett: Yeah.

McIntosh: He looked out the window, and he saw a Japanese soldier --

Barnett: It wasn't the window it was a great big half—uh, seven-eight foot opening where, the cargo opening.

McIntosh: Was the guy armed?

Barnett: I don't know. [laughs] I didn't get out of the plane. This was just as it was getting light. Then of course the personnel from around the base came over to see what the score is. They wouldn't let us take a picture of the guy either. No.

McIntosh: So anyway, how long did you stay at Kwajalein?

Barnett: Uh, just part of a day and one—the day that we got hit and the next day we were able to fly out.

McIntosh: Did they repair or just change your--?

Barnett: That's a good question. The, uh, the one of the gunners and our mechanic were trying to fix this thing, and I said, "Well, why don't we go over and see if we can get some of this Jap plane, a couple of pieces of metal and tie those in there?" And we did. We were able to get gasoline, hundred octane. We were able to get the gasoline, we were able to get off, and about half, three quarters of an hour later we lost the engine again. So we had six hundred, almost six hundred miles to fly on three engines. You can make it alright, but it's slow. [laughs]

McIntosh: Yeah, you just can't use up your gas. You gotta slow it down, don't ya?

Barnett: Right.

McIntosh: Okay. So where did you go from there?

Barnett: Ah, I think then, after Kwajalein, we went to Bikini, and we were based at Bikini for quite a long while.

McIntosh: What about the other planes in your squadron? Are you the only one that dropped in at Kwajalein?

Barnett: I think so.

McIntosh: So you're, you flew these six hundred miles by yourselves then?

Barnett: Oh yes, oh yeah. We were—

McIntosh: I mean there was no escort, no other --

Barnett: No, no, no. We didn't worry about an escort because anything Japanese anywhere near there would already have been taken, pretty well taken care of by the, by the fleet.

McIntosh: Sure.

Barnett: The carrier based stuff. Or the, uh, 24's from down in New Guinea, someplace down in there.

McIntosh: I see.

Barnett: Yeah.

- McIntosh: Okay. And then you stayed in this Bikini did you say?
- Barnett: In Bikini we stayed for quite a while, yes. We were catching almost all of those northern islands up into the northern end of, uh, what do you call the big group? [laughs] Sorry.
- McIntosh: The Marshalls? Marshall Islands?
- Barnett: No, these were the Marshalls.
- McIntosh: Oh, the Solomons?
- Barnett: The Gilberts and the Marshalls and then over into where our, ah, big push would have been in the Philippines.
- McIntosh: Ah.
- Barnett: So we were in the northern part of that.
- McIntosh: Where you flying reconnaissance missions then?
- Barnett: Oh, yes, not very many bombing missions. We were recon no, recon. Because we were worried about what the Japanese were going to find when our-- our, uh, our landing craft. That's one, the one picture that I have there of the landing craft coming in. And that's also when we were, we hit Truk.
- McIntosh: Ah, yes.
- Barnett: And I was the first one to put a great big mine in Truk . (laughs) I had that, that static cord for awhile, but I don't know what happened to it.
- McIntosh: How many did you—how did you drop those mines? At a low level?
- Barnett: Oh yes. We, -- the reason why I was the first one was because when this Muldre (??) , my skipper said, "They're turning"—there were six of us, he says, "They're turning." I said, "My stuff doesn't say so." He says, "How much?" About a minute more, minute and a half. And so, whether they wanted to miss it or what (laughs) Truk being what it was in those days. But anyway, we were able, just at sunset, to, we came in on a sun line and just at sunset, why, we were able to drop it.
- McIntosh: Tell me about these mines. How big were these mines?

Barnett: Well, they were, oh, about four feet across and maybe seven feet long and they had a timing salt wafers on their timer so that the mine, if the Japanese tried to do any, uh, killing off of the mines, they would bring their magnetic, wooden boat, a magnetic, whatever they'd use to sweep, and the mine would not have gone off for a couple of days or more, and then when a big metallic ship came by, why evidently—

McIntosh: So how many did you carry of those?

Barnett: Only one at a time.

McIntosh: Just one at a time.

Barnett: Oh, yes.

McIntosh: That does sound like pretty big. Had trouble fitting it through, out of that bomb bay didn't you?

Barnett: I don't know. All I know is that I was up there and that's when the skipper—

McIntosh: You just fly where, about twenty-five feet, and just dump it in?

Barnett: Oh, it was more than twenty-five feet. Maybe a hundred feet.

McIntosh: I see.

Barnett: Yeah. Oh no, we didn't get down that low.

McIntosh: How did it get armed, then? You didn't, you know—so the concussion from you dropping it in didn't explode --

Barnett: The water, uh, would dissolve the salt wafers until, and I don't know which ones were which. But anyway—

McIntosh: Once that was done, then our mine was armed.

Barnett: Then the mine was armed, yes.

McIntosh: That was a direct contact mine, did you say? Or did it, was –

Barnett: Oh no, I think it was magnetic.

McIntosh: Metal - so you just get within twenty feet of it and it would go off or something like that?

Barnett: That's -- I couldn't answer that one.

McIntosh: Yeah, okay. So you salted the bay there with how many of those things?

Barnett: Well, I was the first one to drop a mine, but the other guys had to go again (laughs).

McIntosh: Had to make a circle around and do it the right way?

Barnett: Oh, no.

McIntosh: Oh, they didn't?

Barnett: They had to drop 'em before. They had to, they had to deep six 'em. They had to come in empty. No, they, Uh-huh, they wouldn't want to land with 'em

McIntosh: No, I didn't—I thought they'd come around and follow you and drop in the right place. Oh, they dropped 'em --

Barnett: They decided that they wanted to get out of there and (laughs) we were trying to get out of there, too. Because this was quite a large Jap base, and that's why it was done right at sunset.

McIntosh: Were you under fire at the time you were dropping those?

Barnett: No, no. We didn't see any, nothing.

McIntosh: Any activity or no other planes?

Barnett: No, no, no.

McIntosh: Okay.

Barnett: That, that Truk base is quite large.

McIntosh: Huge.

Barnett: I think it must be forty-fifty miles across at least. Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: So, um, what was your next adventure?

Barnett: Uh, I think that we got into the Philippines, and ah, we were going around the outside edges of the Philippines a little bit.

[End of Tape 1, Side A. Ca. 30 min.]

Barnett: And uh, we landed in the Philippines only a couple of times. That was pretty well secured. And uh, ah, let's see. I think we were north of the Philippines a little bit for awhile, uh, coming into the areas there. But I can't remember much more than that (laughs). Sorry.

McIntosh: Did you get up to Okinawa?

Barnett: Not until after I worked on my second tour when I was in naval air transport.

James M: Oh well, finish up your first tour before we get into that. How did you get back to where?

Barnett: Well, we came back to, ah, to the to Kaneohe Bay and we uh—

McIntosh: In Hawaii.

Barnett: In Hawaii, that's the northern side of Hawaii.

McIntosh: That's what I thought.

Barnett: Kaneohe And we flew out of that, and that's where I lost an airplane. (laughs) We were at long range patrol. There was supposed to have been down out of the south, let's see, that would be the southeastern end of Hawaii. Is that Barbers Point or something like that?

McIntosh: Yes.

Barnett: Barker's Point? And uh, we, were told that they had had a, a sighting of a Jap sub, they thought. And so we, with our tired old airplanes were enlisted to go and find out and do a lot of searching. And when we came back to Kaneohe, why, my co-pilot was not flying again.

McIntosh: I don't understand.

Barnett: My co-pilot was not flying again because he had too much to drink.

McIntosh: Got it.

Barnett: And so, we were, I was flying right seat. I was flying as a co-pilot

McIntosh: Instead of a bombardier.

Barnett: Well, we didn't worry about the--

McIntosh: And the phantom (??) navigator.

Barnett: Yeah.

McIntosh: What about the pilot?

Barnett: The pilot was okay, but he was, uh, that was Muldro (??), the pilot. That -- we had gone out, we had come back, and, uh, I knew pretty well what to do, but I wasn't handling the aircraft. He was handling the aircraft.

McIntosh: The pilot?

Barnett: Yeah. The pilot was handling it. And so, as we came in, ah, and the gear went down, I said, "I got a red one." That is a red portion about that big out on the aircraft, ah--

McIntosh: Wing?

[Approx. 3 sec. gap in tape.]

Barnett: On the landing gear.

McIntosh: Oh.

Barnett: Where you can see that the landing gear is down and locked. I said, "I got a red one." He said, "I got a red one."

McIntosh: Meaning they're not locked?

Barnett: No. They're locked, that was uh, it's kind of a reddish-orange if I remember correctly.

McIntosh: But that's what you wanted if you were coming in—

Barnett: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: Okay.

- Barnett: In other words, it's down and locked. He says, "I got a red one." Okay. We got down to about seventy miles an hour, and his side collapsed and we slewed into two F4Fs which are the little, the early fighter, early fighters. –
- McIntosh: I know them.
- Barnett: We slewed into two of those, and uh, the whole ha--outside oh, maybe twelve feet of that wing collapsed. But, there was no fire.
- McIntosh: Hmm. Fortunate.
- Barnett: And of course, I was not the first one out of the bomb bay where the bomb bay was torn loose enough. Because it's nothing more than, you know, a big, big piece of metal that, it's got three or four different sections to it for ever, for every foot there's about two sections. And when this comes down like that, why it bends and comes in to close on the walkway in the middle. There's a catwalk in the middle, about that wide. And so, what happened was that was torn away enough so that these boys could get out (laughs). So I had to kinda wait my turn. But it was okay.
- McIntosh: Huh. What about the co-pilot?
- Barnett: I was it. No he wasn't there at all. He didn't even fly that day.
- McIntosh: Oh, because he was—
- Barnett: By the way, uh, I think I have some place in my notebook there, in my book there. He was later, I think, cashiered out.
- McIntosh: Is that right?
- Barnett: He was just--
- McIntosh: Too much problem with the alcohol?
- Barnett: He was just--he was just nothing. Yeah.
- McIntosh: Yeah. That's a shame. Okay. So were we severely reprimanded upstairs by the higherups for this or not?
- Barnett: We were happy (laughs).
- McIntosh: I know you were happy, but --

Barnett: And that tired old aircraft, who cares?

McIntosh: I know, but –

Barnett: They probably just shoved it off, deep sixed-it.

McIntosh: How did you figure that happened? If the red light was on that meant the wheel was locked, and it wasn't.

Barnett: The red tag was there, yeah. I don't know. I didn't bother much about it. Came in and got my gear later on.

McIntosh: So that put you up on the shelf for awhile after that experience.

Barnett: Ah, well, we were on our way home anyway.

McIntosh: Oh.

Barnett: Yeah, we were about--

McIntosh: On your way back home to the States?

Barnett: Right.

McIntosh: So what happened then? You didn't have an airplane.

Barnett: No. That's right, and we just rode with somebody else.

McIntosh: Where did you go?

Barnett: We and all my gear, all my nice stuff, which I got from down on the islands. I got a whole lot of stuff down on the island. I had a couple of cruise boxes, and I still have, which didn't burn in our fire. I still have a big sleeping mat, cocoa sleeping mat. It's all rolled up, about that long. It's about eight-nine feet long, and my daughter's going to get that. I had it in, when we were in Kenosha, when I was living in Kenosha I had it hanging as a wall hanger with a whole lot of nice bird pictures on it. What do you call them? Anyway.

McIntosh: Yeah. So you went back where in the United States?

Barnett: Then I went back, I was given thirty days leave, and then I went down to both, first to Pensacola, and they tried to teach me something down there, which was, all of which I had already learned. I knew more about it than they did. (laughs) And then they

said, "Get outta here." They sent me over to Corpus' and it was almost the same thing except I was learning more about how to fly. And, uh, then I went out to naval air transport.

McIntosh: As a pilot?

Barnett: As a pilot.

McIntosh: Ah, did --

Barnett: I was a co-pilot (laughs). I never was--

McIntosh: Never made pilot?

Barnett: No. I was a pilot, but I --

McIntosh: That's right. I understand.

Barnett: I was not a command pilot.

McIntosh: Got it. And, uh—

Barnett: PPC (??).

McIntosh: They didn't care for anymore navigators? Is this why they're? Just needed more pilots--

Barnett: By that time there was a lot of the whole. The problem that we had is navigation. By that time, was pretty well taken care of, and we could fly radio and so I had stuff aboard so that I could but I don't think I took more than a few shots. Uh, navigation shots. I, we had it pretty well, and the radio was, the radiomen told us where we were going. (laughs) And where we'd been.

McIntosh: I see. Yeah. So now you're in command situation here, almost.

Barnett: Yes.

McIntosh: How was that different for you?

Barnett: Oh, much. We had um, well, uh, I had a rather interesting thing. Because of my former navigating, and uh, playing the wind and all that. We had a situation where we were flying out of San Francisco, um, we were flying to get to Hawaii and the big island. Most of the time we were flying to the big island. So we wouldn't have to bother with Hawaii itself. And so, that's a long hop. And a

lot of the planes, you know, they even had to turn around if their “how-goes-it” curves. Do you know what I mean?

McIntosh: Yes.

Barnett: “How-goes-it curve” where you plot how what you are making and much gas you have and so forth. And when the “how-goes-it curve” was bad why they turned around and came back. And they didn’t mind. ‘Cause then you had another couple of days stateside. (laughs) But anyway, one time I said, “Well, let’s see if we can do something a little different,” to this guy Johnson. He said, “Okay.” I said, “This great big high that sits out here has beautiful winds, would be tail winds instead of you cutting across the middle of it and cutting half into headwinds both ways. “ So I said, “Let’s cut south, and then see if we can change. Besides, we can cut south and we can get a point down there which was a ship.” They had a ship that goes around in a one-mile circle all the time, standing there as a navigator helper. So, we aim for the, (laughs) I aim for the ship. A little aft-- a little over nine hours, when it’s a normal ten-and-a-half or eleven hour flight and everybody (laughs) who ever heard about it will tell you because from then on, why, the guys would sit there if the weather was not good the guys would say, “Well there’s something wrong with the plane.” And so, they wouldn’t fly until the weather was a little bit better and they could make it in nine, nine-and-a-half, ten hours instead of eleven, eleven-and-a-quarter, or something like that.

McIntosh: So we made it?

Barnett: I did it first, I think.

McIntosh: Great, great.

Barnett: I didn’t hear of anybody else. Johnson didn’t hear of anybody else either.

McIntosh: I flew from San Francisco to Honolulu on that Mars.

Barnett: Oh, really?

McIntosh: That two deck flying craft. It took eleven hours from San Francisco to get to Honolulu.

Barnett: You know I just saw that. You know where it is?

McIntosh: Pensacola.

Barnett: No. Yeah, it's at Pensacola.

McIntosh: Yeah, at the Naval Air –

Barnett: It's down there--

McIntosh: At that museum.

Barnett: I got a picture of it down there.

McIntosh: Yeah, I was there. I saw it.

Barnett: Oh, I see.

McIntosh: Yeah, that's the plant. It took me eleven hours flying that old tub.

Barnett: Yeah, I saw that at one time--

McIntosh: That was the strangest airplane I was ever in.

Barnett: Yeah, and I saw it taking off from Kaneohe Bay with JATO [jet-assisted-takeoff] bottles.

McIntosh: That's the way we got up.

Barnett: Okay. And now here I am a school teacher and I open a book, and it says, "A picture of a jet plane." And I wrote to Mifflin or company whatever, and I said, "That is not correct. That is a jet-assisted take off, and they drop the bottles afterwards." (laughs)

McIntosh: The problem was that we took off at night and I never heard anything about JATO units. I never knew anything about them.

Barnett: Did they scream?

McIntosh: No. I said, "The wing's on fire." I could look out and "Holy Toledo!" This thing was coming out of the plane. I said "Well, we're not even going to get out of the water," you know, because it took a long time to get up on that thing. And I thought, "Well, my career in the Navy is going to come to a screeching halt." Finally, we lifted up, and they dropped that thing off. That was a first, scary experience. I thought for sure the wing was on fire. I didn't know anything about—Well, whatever. So, anyway--

Barnett: So, anyway.

McIntosh: Here we are back in Hawaii.

Barnett: The next best thing is I am flying naval air transport. I am going down to um, Henderson, I'm going to various spots all over and we are bringing wounded back. We're taking some people down. But most of my —

James M.: From where -- from Henderson Field in the Solomons?

Barnett: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: Oh, you're way out there.

Barnett: I was going to —

McIntosh: You brought them to Hawaii?

Barnett: We brought them to Hawaii for treatment or whatever.

McIntosh: Right, but that was your run, between those two islands.

Barnett: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: Is that correct?

Barnett: Right. No, no, no. To various places.

McIntosh: Oh, you picked up --

Barnett: Quite a number. Oh yeah, to Japan and to China, Shanghai—so forth.

McIntosh: Oh, this was after the war.

Barnett: Oh, yes. No, no, this is still war.

McIntosh: Well, you didn't take them to Japan during the war.

Barnett: Well, it was at the end of, it was at the end of. Yeah. So—

McIntosh: Same airplane though.

Barnett: Well--

McIntosh: Just configured differently?

Barnett: It was a R5D which was a four engine transport. Most of it was just seats along the side. No, no—

McIntosh: R5D, --

Barnett: Yeah, right. Yeah.

McIntosh: That's what this Liberator is in the Navy.

Barnett: What?

McIntosh: R5D. That's the same plane.

Barnett: I'm sorry. I don't know.

McIntosh: The R5D, is a—

Barnett: Isn't that a transport?

McIntosh: Well, isn't it-- it's just a Liberator that's configured differently inside for troop transportation.

Barnett: Oh, is that it?

McIntosh: That's where that airplane -- I knew there was a name for that. Well whatever.

Barnett: Anyway.

McIntosh: So how big a crew this time?

Barnett: Oh, just four. Sometimes two nurses and a co-pilot, pilot. Sometimes an engineer if they'd been having any problems at all or whatever. And uh, we'd fly out empty and come back with oh, fifteen, twenty cases.

McIntosh: That was interesting.

Barnett: The best, the most interesting part was Johnson again.

McIntosh: Uh-huh—

Barnett: We are flying into Manila. We have, a ah, a co-pilot, navigator, whatever, is taking a little bit of a nap you know. He's back like this. – [Approx. 20 sec. gap in tape]

McIntosh: He heard what?

Barnett: He can hear that the pilot has started to cut back on the power.

James M: So what --

Barnett: "Hey Johnson, what are you doin'? What's the problem?" He says, "Well, we're going to coming in over uh, to, uh, land in about an hour or so, and I just thought I'd cut back on the—" I said, "Look the navigational aids are. I (??) have been told that the navigation aids swing around that big mountain there east of Manila, and we should not be down below 7,000 feet." He says, "Oh yeah? Oh, don't worry about it." I proceeded to take my sheet, put some copies, I have some carbons, and I wrote out that I am no longer the navigator of the aircraft. I hereby decide that I --

McIntosh: Resign your commission?

Barnett: (both laugh) Control. I handed him one. Handed the gunner, the engineer one. (makes a creaking noise) Here we are, about twelve o'clock, eleven-thirty, we're coming along, and here you can see the trees--

McIntosh: Oh that mountain?

Barnett: On that mountain. The best part, a couple of days later, we are on our way back from Shanghai or some place, and I'm in breakfast, and a guy without wings came in, sat down, and he says, "Are you Lieutenant Barnett?" I said, "Yes." I was a JG (junior grade) by that time (laughs).

McIntosh: Ah. Big promotion.

Barnett: He says, "Are you Lieutenant Barnett?" "Yes." "Uh, where's Johnson?" I said, "He's over getting some coffee." "Okay." He sat in on us, and he said, "We've had a crash on that mountain, and some of the boys were dead, and some of them were okay, and they had somebody able to walk in and tell us about it." And he said, "Now, you tell me." Johnson says, "Well, I owe my ass to him." (laughs)

McIntosh: Right. That could have been us.

Barnett: So, that was about all.

McIntosh: Tell me about going to Shanghai. What was that like?

Barnett: Well, you, it was just secured. I have a little Japanese fan that they had a little shop there with some stuff in it and they didn't want to have anything to do with you. They didn't want to do anything and I couldn't speak. I didn't. We had to go in, four of us in a Jeep and side arms. Okay.

McIntosh: You were after prisoners and take them back to the States?

Barnett: No, no, no.

McIntosh: What were you after?

Barnett: We were just able to go into town.

McIntosh: What were you doing in Shanghai?

Barnett: We were picking up.

McIntosh: Oh, that's what I was saying—

Barnett: But we had about three hours, while they loaded.

McIntosh: Oh, so you'd want to do a little sightseeing?

Barnett: Yeah, whatever.

McIntosh: But the Chinese had --

Barnett: You couldn't take a camera. Couldn't take a camera --

McIntosh: No, sure.

Barnett: No, they wouldn't allow you to take a camera. And so, I got this little fan, one of these little--

McIntosh: Chinese fans.

Barnett: Chinese fan. Japanese fan. This is Yo— uh, Shanghai, uh, Yokosuka was where I got the, the big Japanese telescope, um binocular.

McIntosh: But what about Shanghai? You--

Barnett: I'm in Shanghai, and so I got this, and we didn't have any, anything but our own money, and so I got in and got a handful of change and put it out there. (breathes heavily) That's all she would

--, something. I don't know what she said. But anyway, she was very happy to get that. (laughs) But I brought that back and I gave that to my wife, but that burned in our fire.

McIntosh: Oh my. When did you come back to the States?

Barnett: Um. February, February '46. '42 to '46.

McIntosh: You were discharged shortly thereafter?

Barnett: Yes.

McIntosh: Did you use your G.I. Bill?

Barnett: Yes. I came back here to Madison to school.

McIntosh: I see.

Barnett: Yes. Yeah. Got a whole lot of nice books that I never opened. (laughs)

McIntosh: Oh really? Didn't care for it? Picked the wrong course or?

Barnett: No, they just suggested that these were some of the books that we could get on the G.I. Bill, and--.

McIntosh: I see. What courses, I mean, what school at the University were you in?

Barnett: Well, then I went into. See originally I'm an ag school graduate.

McIntosh: Yeah, I was going to say, you had a degree already didn't you?

Barnett: Yes. Oh yes.

McIntosh: So you come here for a master's?

Barnett: Yes.

McIntosh: Oh.

Barnett: Yeah.

McIntosh: Okay.

Barnett: And so I got a Master's in Education.

McIntosh: In education. Yeah. That's what your degree was in.

Barnett: Right.

McIntosh: Okay, so what did we do with that?

Barnett: I went back to my hometown of Kenosha and was a teacher.

McIntosh: High school?

Barnett: Oh, no. I started in as a fourth grade teacher.

McIntosh: Oh? Okay.

Barnett: In elementary education and I taught a, in a school, Durkee school there where my principal was a former teacher of mine. (laughs)

McIntosh: I see.

Barnett: And then they switched me over, after I came back and got my master's degree, they switched me over and I went into the Lincoln Junior High school and I was a biology teacher in Lincoln Junior High and took over the position of one of my former biology teachers because the principal at that time was one of my former teachers, too. (laughs) I was railroaded into the job.

McIntosh: How long did you stay there?

Barnett: Let's see. About nine years, I guess. And then, uh, the kids were grown up enough so that I wanted to get them into the University so we moved to Madison.

McIntosh: That was your reason. So did you find a place to work here in a school, in the school system here?

Barnett: Well, there again is another problem. My pay in Kenosha was such that the high mucky-mucks here couldn't find a place for me because of my, my pay. Madison was not paying what they were in Kenosha.

McIntosh: Supply and demand.

Barnett: Yeah.

McIntosh: Madison's a better place to live, and so they didn't have any trouble getting teachers.

- Barnett: Exactly. You got it.
- McIntosh: Right.
- Barnett: But the situation was just at the right time when evidently they got into something with somebody here, and I can't remember the name. But anyway, some of the people here were real hot on getting pay raises, and they were able to work through something and as I came here with four hundred dollars less. Uh, what's the name of the fella? Oh gosh, I wish I could—anyway, he was the former, uh, teacher who was the skipper of the new school up in northern Wisconsin of the, oh gosh, -- summertime I went up there on a scholarship. I went up there and so I knew him, and he got a bat, came to bat for me, and I got in a job with four hundred dollars less than I had in Kenosha, but it made it up in three years because of the big push to increase the salaries of Madison teachers.
- McIntosh: Oh, that worked out.
- Barnett: And then I went to uh, East High School and finished over there.
- McIntosh: Teaching what?
- Barnett: Teaching, ah, eighth, ninth and tenth grade. Chemistry, physics.
- McIntosh: Chemistry?
- Barnett: Not much.
- McIntosh: How'd you get –
- Barnett: But mostly biology. Yah, I was primarily a biology teacher in ninth and tenth—uh, eighth and ninth grade. Yeah.
- McIntosh: You finished your career doing that?
- Barnett: Right, yeah.
- McIntosh: Okay. Did you--what decorations were you awarded? You said they were supposed to give you a Purple Heart, but forgot.
- Barnett: They didn't forget.
- McIntosh: Oh. They didn't count it?

Barnett: The corpsman said that I didn't want—"You shouldn't go back to Hawaii and have them dig around in there and kill off the use of your leg."

McIntosh: You mean he was intimating that if you accepted the award you would have to do something differently?

Barnett: I didn't let them know. He didn't let anybody know.

McIntosh: Okay.

Barnett: I guess.

McIntosh: All right. Well, what did—did you win some medals otherwise?

Barnett: Well, I've got the air medal for—the one which I showed you where we shot down that plane.

McIntosh: Sure. Yeah, that was great. You didn't really tell me about shooting that plane down, though. Where was that?

Barnett: That was as we were uh, patrolling the four, the landings at, oh gosh, I'm sorry. I --

McIntosh: Tarawa?

Barnett: No, no this is beyond that.

McIntosh: Okay.

Barnett: The landings at --

McIntosh: Iwo Jima?

Barnett: In the Philippines or some place like that, yes. It was later, you see, 'cause this was with Muldro (?). on my second pilot --

McIntosh: Right.

Barnett: Second crew.

McIntosh: So it could have been any one of those islands.

Barnett: No, it was one of the big pushes into --

McIntosh: Probably Saipan then, that's about the only one left.

Barnett: That's what it was, yes. Saipan. I'm sorry. I'm--

McIntosh: That's alright. So, tell me how it happened.

Barnett: Well, uh, (clears throat) we were just proceeding out, and one of the fellas says, hey there's a plane and so immediately they got me out of the way. I was looking out and he says, "Back Barnett." So I got back on my little stool and hung on, and they increased the power, and then I grabbed the camera that I showed you the picture of. Grabbed that big camera and I proceeded to take pictures as we came in underneath that twin engine plane. And uh, of course, everything came down out of the ceiling when the gunner up over us, that's just the nacelle, is back of the navigation table, and when those --

McIntosh: Right. Your top gunner shot 'em down.

Barnett: Oh no, the front, bow gunner and top gunner were both were in on it. And uh—

McIntosh: Between the two of them they shot this plane down from underneath.

Barnett: Well, we came down along side of it.

McIntosh: Oh. I see.

Barnett: That's what the pictures show, too. Pretty well. We didn't really get in underneath him much I don't think.

James M. I see. Anyway, they shot him down rather promptly.

Barnett: Oh yeah, very nicely, yes. Yeah. He started to burn--

McIntosh: Smoke and then --

Barnett: Oh yeah. Right.

McIntosh: Turned on his side and down he went.

Barnett: And then the wings were floating, but the body sunk.

McIntosh: Right, so that was a kill then. That was your one experience with that sort of thing?

- Barnett: Yes.
- McIntosh: That was a great one. It turned out right.
- Barnett: Other than Wake Island and uh, some of the other—
- McIntosh: Well, when you got shot, though, was that at Wake Island?
- Barnett: No, no. That was down at; uh Ulithian I believe is the name of it.
- McIntosh: All right. But that was an anti-aircraft shell.
- Barnett: Yes. It was their A-A. yeah, right. Yeah.
- McIntosh: All right. I can't think of any more questions to ask you. Anything you can think--
- Barnett: Am *I* done? (laughs)
- McIntosh: I can't think of any. Did we cover everything of interest in your experience?
- Barnett: The best part, I think, was having so much time in, naval air transport before I left that was not uh, much of a problem. Yeah. We did lose engines; I'm sorry (laughs). We lost three engines, in -
-.
- McIntosh: Just running out of gas?
- Barnett: No, poor maintenance. Everybody was going home that could get out.
- McIntosh: Got sloppy.
- Barnett: And so they just couldn't take care of 'em. And so, although, generally speaking we didn't have any trouble because we had short hops. They were, -- the engines were lost from Hawaii east. Yeah, right. So it wasn't too bad.
- McIntosh: No.
- [End of Tape 1, Side B. ca. 30 min.]**
- Barnett: It wasn't something that you would like to have happen, but the problem of (laughs) --

McIntosh: Not uncommon.

Barnett: As soon as I could get out I got out. (laughs)

McIntosh: Did you join any veterans groups?

Barnett: Uh. I was, -- I stayed in the Navy, as a naval --

McIntosh: Oh, as a reservist?

Barnett: As a reservist, yes. I stayed in the Navy. And, ah went to Racine, and we had various kinds of training stuff and so forth when I was still living in Kenosha at that time. Yeah.

McIntosh: And, ah -- but after that there's no veterans organizations of any kind.

Barnett: I have not. No.

McIntosh: So the Navy didn't have any, your air crew?

Barnett: Oh I have. Yes I've been to a couple of the get togethers. Ah, the only, the bad part about the. One of my crew men was the fella who was now starting these yearly get together or every other year get togethers, and he was Pollard who's an insurance agent down in Kansas City. And uh, I went to two of those. One was down in San Antonio. Had a very nice trip down there. The second one uh, was in Kansas City, and I don't remember what happened, but it wasn't a very happy situation. Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: Any from your plane that you still keep in touch with? Either crew?

Barnett: No, not anymore. There was a fellow up in, um, northwestern Wisconsin in -- oh, come on. Anyway, I met with him, and we went out to dinner. He and his wife and my wife and I went out to dinner once uh, but I haven't corresponded with him since. And uh, he was with another group. He was not -- he was with our first group, but I did not know him at that time.

McIntosh: Oh, I see.

Barnett: And when he went out on the second tour, that's the second tour of duty when I was going back to get my wings, get my regular Navy wings.

McIntosh: Sure.

- Barnett: All I had before that, of course, was my navigator's.
- McIntosh: Did you wear both of them then when you had them both? (both laugh) That'd been kinda silly, I suppose.
- Barnett: Oh, no, no. Regular wings are better. (laughs)
- McIntosh: Yes, they are. So you got more money?
- Barnett: Yes. Yes.
- McIntosh: That's better. That's better. All right, sir, I thank you. I appreciate it.
- Barnett: I don't know how you would consider (laughs) how I did, but--
- McIntosh: You did fine. You did just fine.

[End of Interview]