

## Introduction

One of the legendary and tragic stories to arise from the Battle of Midway was the plight of Torpedo EIGHT. With no fighter escorts, this torpedo plane squadron was mauled by Zero fighters and faced a hail of anti-aircraft fire. No aircraft and only one pilot survived the attack. Three years and three months later, another torpedo plane squadron attempted a similar attack against one of the largest battleships ever built, the Musashi. However, this time the Japanese were not able to bring the brunt of the anti-aircraft defenses against the attackers due to the covering actions of Hellcat fighters swooping down on the superbattleship with guns blazing. Ensign Jack Taylor was one of those fighter pilots who performed not one, but two strafing runs against one of Japan's most formidable warships. With Taylor and his squadron mates suppressing the Musashi's anti-aircraft batteries, the torpedo planes and accompanying dive bombers dropped their weapons and hit their mark, sending the superbattleship to the bottom of the Sibuyan Sea.

Taylor's fighter squadron served as a component of Carrier Air Group FIFTEEN. When he arrived on the USS Essex as a replacement pilot in late June 1944, the squadron had already distinguished itself in the famed "Marianas Turkey Shoot" splashing sixty-seven of the attacking enemy aircraft. During the remaining months of the deployment, the squadron claimed the destruction of 500 to 600 more aircraft. Twenty-six pilots scored five or more kills, to earn the coveted title of "Ace." Having credit for two kills, Taylor was not among the twenty-six. However, while only mentioned briefly in Edwin P. Hoyt's McC Campbell's Heroes: The Story of the U.S. Navy's Most Celebrated Carrier Fighters of the Pacific War, Taylor's role is significant as he flew as a wingman to many of the aces, including Group Commander David McC Campbell, to insure these pilots could press forward with their attacks without fear of ambush. Consequently, Taylor's receipt of his two Distinguished Flying Crosses and other citations were well deserved.

Having flown in such an elite squadron at a critical time of the war, Taylor's recollections are most welcomed. In addition, he provides excellent insights about the flight training process that thousands of other aviators experienced.

The Naval Historical Foundation is grateful to Mr. Taylor for giving of his time to conduct and edit the interview. We also thank his son, Andy, for coordinating and setting up the interview. The Foundation is also appreciative of our volunteer John Maloney who quickly transcribed the interview.

David F. Winkler  
September 2001

## Jack Taylor

The founder and chairman of Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Jack Taylor started his company as a seven-car operation in 1957. In the ensuing four decades, Taylor's philosophy of providing customers with exceptional service and employees with well-deserved respect and ample career opportunities has led to the profitability that has made Enterprise the largest rental car company in North America.

Born to Melbourne Martling Taylor and Dorothy Crawford Taylor, Jack Taylor and his younger brother Paul grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. Although his father was a stockbroker, early on Taylor had an interest in cars and mechanics. He briefly attended Washington University and then Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese. After attempting to enlist in the Army Air Corps, Taylor came into the Navy under the V-5 air cadet training program. After working through the pilot training pipeline, Taylor earned his "Wings of Gold" and was selected to fly the F6F Hellcat, the Navy's frontline fighter aircraft. In June 1944, he joined VF-15, which would become one of the Navy's most decorated fighter squadrons. During his tour in the Western Pacific he flew from USS Essex (CV 9) and USS Enterprise (CV 6) and participated in such campaigns as the invasion of Guam, the landings at Leyte Island in the Philippines, and attacks against Formosa and the Japanese fleet. Besides downing two Japanese aircraft and destroying many others on the ground, Taylor participated in the sinking of the superbattleship Musashi.

After returning from the war, he founded and operated a truck service in Clayton, Missouri. Within two years, one truck turned into four. In 1948, Taylor gave up his truck business to work for Arthur Lindburg, the owner of a Cadillac dealership. After learning more about the automobile industry, Taylor decided that leasing presented opportunities for a new, fast-growing business, and in 1957, he asked Lindburg if he could start a car leasing business. Lindburg agreed and they negotiated an arrangement that launched Executive Leasing. Over the years the business grew and by the late 1960s, Taylor began operations outside of St. Louis and later changed the name of the company to Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

Taylor has always believed in giving back to the communities that support Enterprise. He encourages employees to donate time and money to local organizations and in 1992 he founded the Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation, a charitable organization that supports hundreds of charities worldwide. Enterprise remains a privately-held business, with Taylor's son Andrew, serving as President and CEO. In 2001, both men paid homage to the company's naval heritage by supporting the construction of a museum room on board the nuclear aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CVN 65). This exhibit chronicles the histories and exploits of all the Navy ships to have the proud name Enterprise. Taylor continues to reside outside of St. Louis.

## Subjects Covered

Growing up in St. Louis--Pearl Harbor  
Flunking the Army Aviation physical--Joining the Navy V-5 program  
Active Duty as a cadet in December 1942

Piper Cub training in St. Louis--Pre-flight in Iowa  
First solo flight--details about pre-flight  
Assignment to NAS Glenview  
More training at Corpus Christi--Selection to fly fighters  
First flight deck landing on Lake Michigan

Ferrying F6F Hellcat Fighters to West Coast  
Fire bottle incident  
Trip to NAS Barbers Point, Hawaii  
Reflections on the training process--Importance of the wingman  
Comparison with Japanese training

Reporting for duty on Essex  
Combat losses--the Ready Room  
First flight in combat

Air Group--Commander McCampbell  
Discussion of aggressiveness  
VF 15--Commander Jim Rigg  
Duties as a junior officer--plane assignments

Overview of a typical mission  
Discussion of VF-15 record  
Off duty activities--Relations with CV crew  
Port call to Ulithi

Assignment to the Enterprise

Overview of combat missions  
Guam--Palau--Philippines--Formosa  
Shooting down two Japanese aircraft  
Reputation as a good wingman  
Japanese flight tactics

Battle of Leyte Gulf  
Going after Ozawa's carriers  
Mission against Musashi

Dropping ordnance

Camaraderie--Crossing the Equator  
Kamikazes--Role of Flight Direction Officers  
Returning home--Leave in St. Louis  
Reforming the squadron--End of war--discharge  
Earning Distinguished Flying Crosses  
Marriage

Joining the Reserves--Quitting the Reserves  
Naming the car leasing company  
Reflections on naval service

9 July 2001

**WINKLER:** This is Dave Winkler, Naval Historical Foundation, with Jack Taylor, here in St. Louis. We're here to talk about his experiences during the Second World War. Thank you so much for having me out here.

**The first question I have for you is: Talk a little bit about where were you born, where did you grow up, talk a little bit about your parents, siblings, and that period in your life.**

**TAYLOR:** Born in St. Louis, grew up in St. Louis, went to school in St. Louis. Had one brother.

**WINKLER:** What high school?

**TAYLOR:** I graduated from Clayton High. Went through two semesters of college, and did not do well, was not a good student. Pearl Harbor happened. I remember the day. I was on my way to pick up my date, who turned out to be my first wife. Then, with the war occurring and with my not being a particularly good student, I thought about, well, I'm going to have to go into the military; I might as well go where I want to go. I knew I wanted to fly. Don't ask me why. I'd never been up in an airplane at this point.

So I applied to the Army. I went down to the Army Air Corps, and took the test. Everything went well until, in my physical, the doctor said to me, "Have you ever had any hay fever?"

I said, "Yes, I have hay fever."

Which was stupid, because he said, "Well, if you have hay fever, you can't fly in the Army." So I went back home, and was depressed because I didn't know what to do. And a good friend of mine said, well, why don't you try the Navy? The Navy's flying part wasn't well known. So I went down and applied to be a Naval aviator. Passed all the tests, because they didn't ask me about hay fever, so I never had to deal with it. I went into the V-5 program, and that's what happened.

**WINKLER: I guess your initial inclination towards Army Air Corps at the time was, what, you had Scott Air Force Base?**

**TAYLOR:** No, it was just better known. You know, the Army Air Corps was just better known. And the Navy, you never heard anything about the Navy. I didn't even realize there was Naval Aviation—I don't know why.

**WINKLER: I thought the Navy had an air station out here.**

**TAYLOR:** I think they did, but this was back early on. I was sort of a naïve, kind of lackadaisical kid. I did not stay on top of a lot of things. I don't know how you would say it. I was just going along with the flow.

**WINKLER: Talk about induction. Did they swear you in right away?**

**TAYLOR:** I was inducted shortly after that. It was about March, and they said, we'll call you. So they called me to active duty in December of '42. I had signed up that spring, shortly after Pearl Harbor was December, and I think by the time I went through the Army examination and then finally enlisted in the Navy, it was, let's say, March, probably. The Navy said, we'll call you when we need you. So they called me in December of '42, and I moved into a building in St. Louis with some other guys that had been called up. We had a ground school and out to a little field in St. Louis and flew Piper Cubs.

**WINKLER: You mentioned the V-5 program. Could you elaborate on what the V-5 program was?**

**TAYLOR:** The V-5 program was the program where the Navy trained aviators. You were a V-5. V-7 was, I think, officer training of some kind. But V-5 was the aviation program.

**WINKLER: At what stage in that program did you get a commission?**

**TAYLOR:** I went on active duty as a cadet in December of '42, flew Piper Cubs out at a little field called Kratz Field out in St. Louis. Then I went to Iowa Pre-Flight. Then I went to NAS Glenview, and then I went to Corpus. Flew at a couple of fields in Corpus—they had basic, and then advanced training fields at Corpus. I flew Vultee Vindicators at one field, and then went on and flew SNJs at the next field. And I got my commission in December of '43.

**WINKLER: Going all the way back here to St. Louis—was that the first time you ever flew in an airplane?**

**TAYLOR:** Yes. I went out and got in a Piper Cub with an instructor. We went up once or twice. We had some ground school at the place we stayed, which was down on Grand Avenue, one old building. Then one day we flew, and he got out and said, "Okay, take her up."

I said, "By myself?"

He said, "Yeah." So I went up and flew around the field a couple of times, and landed. That was my first solo, in a Piper Cub.

**WINKLER: Was there some nervousness up there?**

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, there was. But I was a good driver. I wanted to be a race car driver at one time. I thought that's what I wanted to be, as a career. So I remember, sure, you were a little scared...but I knew I could do it.

**WINKLER: We didn't talk too much about high school, but were you involved in sports teams? Were you athletic?**

**TAYLOR:** I was not a great athlete. I ran track; I was a hundred-yard-dash guy. I played some basketball. But as far as being a great athlete, I was not a great athlete. Not even sure I was a good athlete.

**WINKLER: But you want to be coordinated if you're an aviator.**

**TAYLOR:** I remember when I went to Iowa Pre-Flight, I was a wrestler. I remember I was so quick that the wrestling coach commented on it. I won my weight class and almost the next heavier class, but the next class up I got a little cocky. I think I was wrestling in the 175-pound class and he was a 195-pound guy. I was really ticked off, because I should have beat him.

**WINKLER: Where was that in Iowa?**

**TAYLOR:** Iowa Pre-Flight. They took over Iowa State College, or the State University, and we had basic training there. A third of the day was military training, a third of the day was class training, and a third of the day was athletics. It was tough. They worked your buns off.

**WINKLER: That was, what time of the year?**

**TAYLOR:** It was colder than hell. It was probably February and March.

**WINKLER: That's what I was thinking. And what type of aircraft again, when you were there, up in Iowa.**

**TAYLOR:** There was no flying in Iowa. That was pure physical and military. Every Saturday you had to run an obstacle course, and if you didn't do it in a certain amount of time you had to come back and run it Sunday. I remember guys running that obstacle course and ending up and throwing up, they tried so hard. It was tough training. Iowa Pre-Flight was tough.

**WINKLER: How did they have you arranged, in brigades?**

**TAYLOR:** We stayed in the dormitories and they had us in squadrons, or platoons, or whatever. I guess there were maybe thirty, thirty-five in a platoon. They had an ensign or a jg that was head of that particular group of guys.

**WINKLER:** I guess back then they used a lot of the college professors to teach some of these courses.

**TAYLOR:** Well, I don't know who they had teaching the military classes. I know they had officers that were in charge of that platoon, or whatever they called it. They had to run with us. We used to go out on cross-country runs. I remember I knew some of the officers who said, "Jesus, these kids are killing me."

**WINKLER:** From there you went up to Chicago.

**TAYLOR:** Glenview Naval Air Station.

**WINKLER:** That was the big Naval air station there. You flew Stearmans?

**TAYLOR:** Well, they were N3Ns. But it was the same as a Stearman.

**WINKLER:** How long were you there?

**TAYLOR:** I think we were there at least a month or two—I don't remember. But that was the first flying we had after the Piper Cubs. I don't think everybody that was in the V-5 program flew Piper Cubs. I think they went right to the Stearmans. I don't even know how many hours we flew the Stearman. I guess maybe we put in a 40 or 50 hours.

**WINKLER:** It's a bigger aircraft, isn't it?

**TAYLOR:** Well, bigger than a Piper Cub. It was the two-passenger, open-cockpit biplane.

**WINKLER:** Which, I guess, in spring in Chicago wouldn't have been that bad.

**TAYLOR:** Well, it was now warming up. I think this was in March or April, and it was nice up there. It was fun.

**WINKLER:** What was the attrition rate, going through?

**TAYLOR:** I don't know what the attrition rate was, but there were guys that didn't qualify, or didn't like it, or whatever, and all of a sudden they were gone. But I don't know what it was. There was always the fear of washing out. I know I didn't want to wash out. Because the theory was that if you washed out, the only positive thing about it was they'd put you in PT boats. That was the theory at that time. I don't know whether that was true or not, but there was always the fear that you would wash out at any given level. I think there were people that washed out, but I have a tendency not to remember bad things.

**WINKLER: Okay, then you got to go to Vero Beach, in Florida?**

**TAYLOR:** That was after I got my commission. We went to Corpus and we spent about six months at Corpus. Corpus was a long deal. We flew Vultee Vindicators at one field, and then we moved over to another field. Lived in barracks. Corpus was an interesting experience. You started flying Vultee Vindicators solo and then in formation. Then you went to SNJs, which were more like a combat aircraft, and you made gunnery runs with the SNJ and did all the things that you would do with a combat airplane. If you passed all your flight checks you got wings. I got my wings in December of '43.

**WINKLER: For carrier aircraft, there are three pipelines: the bombers, the torpedo planes, and the fighters. How did you get to select the type of aircraft you would fly?**

**TAYLOR:** Well, I always wanted to fly fighters; that's the most exciting airplane. They have the Military Personnel Records Center here in St. Louis—it caught on fire one time—I went there and tried to find my files. They didn't have very much. But I was a good pilot. I had quick reflexes and good depth perception, and I think that my instructors said: He's a pretty good pilot. I don't know whether they knew I wanted fighters, but everybody wants fighters. So I got fighters. And when I graduated from Corpus and got my wings—now an ensign—I went to Vero Beach, which was an F6F training base. They had nothing but F6Fs, and you went through what we called operational training.

**WINKLER: Going back to Corpus—somewhere during this pipeline they had a training carrier?**

**TAYLOR:** No. After we went through operational training for about three months, we went up to Great Lakes for carrier qualifications. Back up, I don't know whether it was Glenview or where, but to the Great Lakes. We got into an F6F, went out, and landed on a converted carrier that was formerly a side-wheeler, out in Lake Michigan.

**WINKLER: Probably the Wolverine?**

**TAYLOR:** I think it was called the Wolverine or Sable. You went out and I think you shot three landings, and that made you carrier-qualified.

**WINKLER: Do you remember your first landing?**

**TAYLOR:** Yes. Here again, I had no problem, but when I landed on the carrier deck I could look at Lake Michigan on this side and this side, and I thought I had to be careful or I'd fall off the deck. That was my feeling. It wasn't the landing that was tough; it was the fact that when I landed, and they started pushing me back, I said, "Jesus, don't push me over the side, guys." Because the deck seemed so narrow. I don't think it was, in retrospect, but that was my only feeling that I can remember of the landing. I thought, Jesus, this deck is narrow.

**WINKLER: Now, as far as launches were concerned...**

**TAYLOR:** I think they catapulted you off. I'm not sure. I can't remember whether you did the deck run or whether you did a catapult.

**WINKLER:** That was also the first time you took off, was from one of those ships?

**TAYLOR:** Yes. You had to get back, so you had to take off in one fashion or another.

**WINKLER:** That must have been an intense feeling also, to realize there was no runway.

**TAYLOR:** In every phase of your training you want to do it right, you want to be good at it. You say, can I do this? Yes, I can do this, but be careful. Here again, as a pilot, I think I was a damned good pilot. As an aggressive pilot in combat, I wasn't that aggressive. I didn't want to be a hero; I wanted to get back. But I knew I had the skill to fly the airplane well, which I did.

**WINKLER:** Once you're coming out of Chicago with those traps, then was it time to go out to the fleet?

**TAYLOR:** I went back to New York and picked up a F6F. The way Grumman got the planes to the West Coast, they would use pilots like me that had finished operational training. We went up to New York and went out to the field where Grumman was. Grumman had a field near New York. They assigned us a new airplane and they gave us a lead pilot, and they gathered three or four of us and we flew new F6Fs out to the West Coast. I think we went to Atlanta the first night. I think we stopped two or three times on the way.

We were supposed to end up at some Naval Air Station on the West Coast. But the only accident I have ever had with an airplane: I landed with my four planes and we were winding around through the parking ramp, I think it was in LA. As we were going through the parking area, the ramp, somebody had left a fire bottle out in the open between a couple of airplanes. And when I taxied—I was following my lead guy and I wasn't paying much attention to the ground—my prop caught this fire bottle and knocked the top of it off. Of course, it went off like a rocket. Put a big knick in my prop. That was the only accident I ever had with an airplane.

Then I was ordered to San Diego and got on a jeep carrier and went to Hawaii.

**WINKLER:** Okay, tell us about that. You went on the jeep carrier, the White Plains. Then once you got out to Barbers Point, what was that—the replacement air group?

**TAYLOR:** You were in a squadron, I think it was called VF-100. It was a training squadron that was at Barbers Point. It was sort of a holding place where they drew combat pilots when they needed them. I was there, I would guess, for a month. Dick Davis probably knows exactly, because he found a picture of us out there, which I had never seen before. We were there for about a month. Then they got us ready to go on a carrier. But the carrier that we were supposed to go out on—I don't remember, it could have been the Kitkun Bay or something like that—needed some repairs. So we stayed in Honolulu on the beach for about a week, getting ready to ship over. Then we got on the carrier, went out, and joined the fleet.

**WINKLER: One of the reasons we were very successful in the war with our aviators was the fact that they rotated the guys with combat experience back through the training pipeline to give the new guys like yourself that—this is what you're going to be facing out there. How did you benefit from that?**

**TAYLOR:** At Vero Beach, I can't remember who our lead guy was, whether it was a combat guy or whether it was just a first-class pilot. But at Vero Beach we flew like a division, four planes all the time. We all went up and we practiced gunnery, we practiced acrobatics, we chased each other through the clouds, and got comfortable with the F6F. But I'm sure we had an experienced pilot. I can't remember who it was. I can remember a couple of the guys that were with me there, but I don't remember much about it, particularly the lead guy. But I'm sure it was one, or maybe it was a couple guys, that were old, and more experienced, that trained us. The training consisted of gunnery, acrobatics, and field carrier landings, that sort of stuff.

**WINKLER: One thing which reading this book on "McC Campbell's Heroes," is the importance of your wingman, seemed to be throughout the book honed in that people who got caught at being stragglers were the ones that got pounced on.**

**TAYLOR:** Well, the Japanese could out-maneuver us. We knew that going out. We said, don't try to dogfight with the Japanese, because they can turn inside of you. So in a dogfight, what you do is, if you're going to have a dogfight you end up scissoring. The Japanese pilots, because their planes didn't have self-sealing tanks and didn't have any armor plate, were much lighter, and they could turn inside you and they'd get on your tail. So you never had a dogfight with them. The idea was, with the "Thatch Weave," was that two planes fly together, and if one is attacked you spread and scissor. That way you've got a head-on shot at the Japanese plane, and if you hit it head-on, generally they blow up. But our planes will take some abuse and not go down. So you flew in pairs to protect yourself by shooting the Japanese off the tail of your buddy. That was the theory.

**WINKLER: So that's the tactics that they honed in on when you were over at Vero Beach?**

**TAYLOR:** Right. They used to fly, in the old days, three planes in a section. But then they started flying four planes, two sections of two. You would break off into two. Then if that system broke down, then one and one. So actually the four would weave, and then if something happened to one of the others you would weave one. That was the plan.

**WINKLER: What were some of the other things that they talked about the Japanese pilots, that word was getting back? Unlike the Americans, the Japanese were basically just sending their guys out, and the cream of their crop, by the time you got out to the fleet, was pretty much decimated.**

**TAYLOR:** Yes, by the time I was out there we were in the glory days. The cream of the Japanese pilots had been eliminated. The pilots they had, theoretically, were not that good anymore. I would have to say that's probably true, because in the few occasions that I was with them, they didn't seem like they knew what they were doing, and they were sort of disorganized.

I remember I was in a fighter sweep for the first attack on Manila. We saw a flight of Japanese planes that had the altitude advantage on us, and I thought, oh, we're going to have some problems here. The next thing you know the melee started, and they just disappeared. They were shot down. We just ate them up. And I said, Jesus, they had the altitude advantage and everything else, and they didn't use it. I just think the pilots they had did not have much training.

**WINKLER: Discuss the pipeline, now, out to the Essex.**

**TAYLOR:** We went out on a jeep carrier, and then I went over to the Essex in the back of a TBM. They said, anybody want to fly in the back of a TBM? Well, again, a TBM is a safer plane to land on a carrier than an F6F. So I said, "Yeah, I'll ride in the back of one." You know, to get over the first time. So I rode over in the back of a TBM. It was a buddy of mine that was the pilot; I can't remember his name now. So that was my landing on the Essex.

I remember going down in the Essex ready room, the fighter ready room, opening the door, and here were all these salty-looking guys in their khaki coveralls. And who's sitting right in the front row but a guy by the name of Wayne Morris. Wayne Morris was a pretty impressive movie star at the time. Bert Morris, we called him, but it was Wayne Morris. He had been in some great movies, and he was there. I said, whoa, I'm really out here amongst them. It was interesting. He was a good guy.

**WINKLER: Reporting onboard, to the ready room, you were talking about Dick Davis—I guess you arrived about the same time together?**

**TAYLOR:** I think he and I went over about the same time. There were three or four or five F6Fs and a couple of TBMs, and I don't know about dive bombers. But I think we all went over to the Essex at the same time. I think he flew an F6 over and I rode over in the back of a TBM. But we all went over to the Essex and arrived in the fighter squadron at the same time. Because they had lost a fair amount of pilots. Not a lot, but I knew they had lost their fighter skipper a few days before, in the Marianas Turkey Shoot. So we replaced pilots that were lost during the Turkey Shoot, and there were four or five pilots lost then.

**WINKLER: I guess the group had been embarked on the Essex for about a month or two, and here you arrived just after one of the greatest air battles—probably the greatest air battle—in history, when you think about all the planes that were shot down, losses. Yet the squadron suffered some losses, so there must have been mixed feelings.**

**TAYLOR:** Well, you know, people ask me, how do you feel about the guys that were shot down? But what you do when you're young is, unless you're really affected by that, you just don't think about it. This squadron, VF-15, lost about fifty per cent of their pilots from the time they embarked. From the time I and Dick Davis came on board, they lost a third. You would go up and you would stand on the rail on the flight deck as the planes came back to count how many, and say, oh, where is so-and-so? Well, the last time I saw him he disappeared in a cloud, with a Japanese plane on his tail. What you did, you just didn't think about it. It was just a normal activity, like a guy not coming back from a trip downtown. Some guys were, I think, deeply affected by it, but most of the guys out there just didn't think about it.

**WINKLER: Can you give me a description of the ready room?**

**TAYLOR:** Well, we were all a bunch of guys that—we thought we were hot pilots. We would sit around. I don't know what we talked about. Some guys played bridge. You ended up with your particular group of buddies, like I had two or three or four guys I liked, and we'd all sit together. Generally the older guys, the full lieutenants, would sit together. There was a lot of camaraderie, and a lot of, I think, mutual respect. There was nobody there that wasn't treated like, hey, we're out here, guys, and we're doing our job, and we're okay.

**WINKLER: The fact that you're joining this unit in the throes of combat—was there a period where you kind of had to earn your spurs?**

**TAYLOR:** I think they watched us. But once they found out that we could land the plane okay, and that we were dependable and that we were good guys, it didn't last very long. I remember my first flight in combat was on McCampbell's wing, and he scared the hell out of me. I'm sure, in retrospect, that he wanted me to fly on his wing so he could test whether I was a decent pilot. And I'm sure there were other more senior lieutenants, operations officers, that had us new guys fly with them to see whether we were reasonably good pilots. And most all of us were.

(End of Side A, Tape I)

**WINKLER: Okay, we're picking up on the second side of the first tape. We're talking about Commander McCampbell, who is kind of a legendary figure. Could you talk about him?**

**TAYLOR:** Well, he was very remote from us. He was a full commander. He was the air group commander. I think he was the fighter skipper before Brewer was killed. Was Brewer the air group commander? He could have been, I don't know; I don't remember. When I got there, McCampbell was the air group commander. Sort of a tough-appearing guy. A no-nonsense guy. Supposed to be a really good pilot. He was fairly demanding, without being specifically demanding. In other words, when you go with McCampbell, you don't fool around. McCampbell's serious about this. I don't ever remember talking to him. He would come in before a flight and review what we were going to do, but I never had any social intercourse with him of any kind. But he was a highly respected leader of the air group, and looked upon as a really good gunner, being really aggressive, and a stalwart leader, I guess you would say.

**WINKLER: In this book, "McCampbell's Heroes," I think Admiral Sherman took over the task force later in the Philippines campaign and embarked on the Essex, and instructed him to be less aggressive and take more of a....**

**TAYLOR:** McCampbell, I think, wanted to shoot down all the planes that he could in the war. I remember one story—and this might be a negative thing about McCampbell. We had a big group going out to attack an island or something. There must have been twenty-four or twenty-eight fighters, and ten or twelve torpedo bombers and dive bombers, it was a big group. We called them "group gropes." We were climbing to altitude. Our call name was "Rebel;" that was our

group—Rebel 43 or Rebel 42. McCampbell was Rebel 99. So one of our guys picks up his mike and says, “Rebel 99, this is Rebel 43. I have a bogey at three o’clock, level.” On the horizon over there is a little Japanese observation plane, or something. Rebel 43 says, “Do you want me to get him, skipper?”

McC Campbell said, “This is Rebel 99. Stay in formation.” And with that—I’m flying in another division—McC Campbell takes off and goes over and shoots down this little scout plane, all by himself. It’s like a general who is leading a charge leaving his battalion to go kill a sniper.

I said, Jesus, Dave, you must want the numbers awfully badly to give up.... I mean, we had almost forty airplanes, and he left his post to go shoot down one. I always remember, it was a beautiful morning and I remember him doing that. I said he shouldn’t have done that. And I think that’s what Sherman was talking about. I think McC Campbell was very aggressive, and I think McC Campbell wanted to make a record for himself. And he did. I don’t know whether I should tell that about him or not, but he’s gone, so he can’t do anything about it.

**WINKLER: The fighter squadron commander at the time?**

**TAYLOR:** Jim Rigg.

**WINKLER: Okay. It talks about him in the book a little bit. He was a lieutenant commander?**

**TAYLOR:** Yes, I think so.

**WINKLER: Talk a little bit about him as a leader.**

**TAYLOR:** He was a little guy. I think everybody liked him. He didn’t try to do anything to impress you. He was looked upon as a good pilot, and I think as a fighter leader everybody had a high regard for him. I understand in some of these reunions that some people tried to undercut him. But my feeling about Jim Rigg was he was a good guy and a good fighter skipper, and I would have gone anyplace with him.

**WINKLER: What was unique at the time was, with the fighters there was just the pilots, but with the bombers and torpedo guys you also had enlisted guys who went up with the aircraft. Plus you had the enlisted guys who took care of your airplanes. What were your responsibilities besides flying?**

**TAYLOR:** As a junior ensign in the squadron, I had none. I wasn’t the gunnery officer, I wasn’t...I was one of the guys. I didn’t have any other responsibilities. We generally had full lieutenants that were gunnery officers, and full lieutenants that were, I don’t know what else—personnel officers or something like that. I had no other responsibilities but to get in the airplane and try to go shoot down the Japanese, or strafe islands.

**WINKLER: The aircraft you flew—did you have a specific airplane assigned to you?**

**TAYLOR:** No. McCampbell had his airplane. He had Mimsy II, or something. There might have been one or two of the other senior...Rigg might have had his own airplane. But we flew whatever we were told to fly.

**WINKLER: All right. Walk me through the whole process of going through a mission. Start with the pre-briefing, the intelligence.**

**TAYLOR:** Well, they would make a schedule and post where you were going to fly, generally. So you saw on the schedule that you were going to fly at 1020, or something like that. Generally there would be a leader of that particular time schedule. Let's say, it might be Bert Morris. He would say: Okay, where's what we're going to do. We're going to go out and we're going to strafe—there's supposed to be some depots around with stuff in there, and there's supposed to be some boats in the harbor. We'll go in and make sure there are no Japanese in the air, and then we'll go down and strafe this area, and this area. That's about it. Oh, and: It's about eighty miles out. Point O will move in direction 270, at twelve knots...or something like that.

**WINKLER: Point O being the carrier?**

**TAYLOR:** Yes, Point O being the carrier. So you'd plot your line out, and then you'd plot your return, because the carrier would have moved while you were out there, with the plotting board. Then you'd walk out to your airplane with the plotting board and with the general idea of what you were going to do.

**WINKLER: As far as the plane captain of the aircraft, would you chat with that fellow?**

**TAYLOR:** Yeah...how are you? I'm fine. You'd be cordial to him. You had different ones, because we...I was flying a different airplane. I'm sure McCampbell had his own mechanic and his own airplane, and was treated more like royalty than I was. I got any airplane and any plane captain, and any anything else. But they were good guys and they worked their butts off, so you treated them with great respect.

**WINKLER: Coming back, once you've completed your mission, what was the debriefing process like?**

**TAYLOR:** We had a guy by the name of Reynolds, an old, fatherly sort of guy. Well, old for me at that time—probably forty-five. He would say, "Well, did you see anything special? Were there any airplanes in the air? What do you think you hit?" And so forth and so on. Generally he would talk to the flight leaders or the division leaders.

Generally I wouldn't get into much conversation, unless something worthwhile—I would say, "Lieutenant, there was something that I saw that I thought was interesting."

**WINKLER: How technology has changed. The guys who went in on the Enterprise against Saddam Hussein—the planes took off and then they all went into the ready room and turned on CNN and watched their strikes come in. Then you had a plane do photography reconn....**

**TAYLOR:** Photo Joe, or something like that. I even know who our photo guy was. His name was Nall. He generally didn't go out on the flight. He would go out later, generally I think by himself, but maybe with one other guy, and try to take pictures of what happened. I considered it to be a fairly dangerous responsibility.

**WINKLER:** **You're out there and you're making decisions whether or not to go back after a target, or what's in the area. Reading through the book, the amount of enemy aircraft that was destroyed by the squadron is quite remarkable.**

**TAYLOR:** How many aces did we have? I don't know. I think we had about twelve or fourteen aces.

**WINKLER:** **That's about right. But you also destroyed quite a bit on the ground. You had two kills yourself in the air, but I imagine you probably destroyed a few aircraft on the ground.**

**TAYLOR:** Well, you know, you don't know whether they've been hit before. You just go in. And particularly if there was no air resistance, we just flew around. It was almost fun, except you were worried about anti-aircraft. But you'd just shoot the socks off of everything. And later on, we would go in with the bombs and drop them, 500-pound bombs, occasionally. Then later on we started using rockets, but they were very primitive rockets.

**WINKLER:** **Well, you came back from a mission and did the debriefing. How much life on board the ship—since you didn't have divisional responsibilities—you played bridge, or you slept?**

**TAYLOR:** I think I was up to sleeping almost twelve hours a day. When you're not fighting or flying, even combat air patrol, it can be boring. I didn't play cards at the time. I would sit around and chitchat with my buddies, go down to the ready room and eat a piece of toast and jelly, which was always available. Go up and wander around on the deck if there wasn't any action, or the catwalk on the flight deck is where a lot of pilots would hang out if it was a beautiful day. Generally the weather was gorgeous. You'd sit out and if there were flights coming or going, even if you weren't flying, you would watch the landings. See who was doing a good landing and who was screwed up. Spent the day.

**WINKLER:** **Looking out on the sea around you, you had a destroyer screen, you probably had a battleship, cruisers protecting you. Plus you had the other carriers out there.**

**TAYLOR:** We were with the Princeton for a long time. The Princeton, as you know, was sunk. I remember that day. I think the guy dropped a bomb down the stack and lit off all the armament and everything down there. It sank. We saw it falling back. We did everything we could. They brought some Princeton pilots over to land on our ship. I remember that.

Yeah, we generally had another carrier with us, an Essex-class carrier. And then we had, I can't remember a battleship, but I think we had cruisers with us, and the destroyers. I remember seeing them out there but I didn't know what they were.

**WINKLER: What was the interaction between the air group and the carrier?**

**TAYLOR:** The line officers? They thought we were hotdogs. And we thought they were kind of square. But it was cordial. There was no animosity or anything. We were looked upon like a hard-drinking, partying bunch that didn't take life very seriously, but that was fine. We would speak derogatorily of the line officers. Amongst ourselves we thought we were superior. Not that we were, but we had a cocky attitude.

**WINKLER: During the time you were on the Essex, I don't know if you got into any ports.**

**TAYLOR:** Ulithi. We went into Ulithi one time. That's the only time. The whole time I was out we didn't see—except for going back to Ulithi. Then one other time the ship went back to Ulithi, I went over to the Enterprise, with a bunch of us young pilots. Dick Davis remembers—I thought there were only seven or eight of us, but he said there were more like fourteen or fifteen of us. And I thought we only stayed about five or six days; he said we stayed almost two weeks. I can't remember that.

**WINKLER: Why did you go over to the Enterprise?**

**TAYLOR:** This was, I think, around October. There was heavy fighting going on in the Philippines. The Japanese were trying to save the Philippines and kept bringing in airplanes. So there was some continuing combat in the air, although very disorganized. And there was all sorts of shipping coming in, and they needed a lot of support in the Philippines. I'm not too sure this wasn't about the time the kamikazes started.

**WINKLER: It was about that time.**

**TAYLOR:** The Essex had to go back and rearm. They were running out of ammunition. So the Essex had to go back to Ulithi to rearm. The Enterprise had lost, I guess, a few pilots. And at that stage of the game they [the admirals] were deciding they needed more fighters than anything else, because of the kamikazes. So here's the Enterprise short a couple of pilots and a few planes. The Essex is going back. So the decision was made that they would take some fighter planes and pilots from the Essex while it was back, and send them over to the Enterprise, to beef up the Enterprise's fighter squadron and to beef up the area as much as possible once the Essex was withdrawn. So we went over and flew off the Enterprise for whatever length of time it was.

**WINKLER: The Enterprise, one of the lone carriers remaining from the start of the war, had a tremendous combat reputation. What were the differences between the Essex and the Enterprise. Essex, obviously, being the lead class of...**

**TAYLOR:** Well, with our usual arrogance, we thought.... I think we had been out longer than they had been out. I think they were a fairly new squadron. I think it was Air Group 10, but I'm

not sure. We were over there with them and we were all fighter pilots, but as I remember, we sort of stuck to ourselves. Not happy about being there, and being on the ship with a fighter squadron that didn't have our record. It was okay. I don't remember a lot about it, but I'm sure that it was okay. We were not happy to be there. We treated them nicely and I'm sure they treated us nicely, but we were sort of cliquey, I think. But I'm not sure that's true.

**WINKLER: Any other recollections of your time on board the Enterprise?**

**TAYLOR:** Yes. I remember one day—and I don't know how to explain this on the tape, but the traffic on an aircraft carrier: This is “come on;” this is “slow down;” and this is “brakes, stop.” Somehow or other the Enterprise, while we were on there, decided to change the deck signals to like this. I don't know what they used for “stop.” When you taxi out of the gear—you land, you disengage your tail-hook, you generally pour on almost full power to pull up out of the arresting gear so the next plane can land. Apparently nobody got the word that this was “stop,” and a couple of planes went roaring out of the gear and didn't stop when they did this, and crashed into the back of a couple other planes on there. I think they finally saw that, hey, they don't understand what we're saying. So they went back to the old way. But I remember seeing two or three airplanes just chew up on the back of the other airplanes, because they changed their deck signals without.... They ruined three or four planes. And of course we're just sitting there, “Look at these...,” with our usual arrogance. “We would never have done this.”

I think we flew together, when we would go out, the four or eight of us Essex guys would fly together. I don't think we made the mistake that was made by some of their pilots when they landed and they didn't understand the new deck signals, that had been changed, apparently, the night before. So I think they went back to the old signals.

That's the only thing I can remember about being on the Enterprise.

**WINKLER: You arrived right after the Marianas Turkey Shoot, and you were involved initially with the aftermath of the Battle of the Philippine Sea and then with the invasion of Guam.**

**TAYLOR:** Had Guam been invaded yet, or not?

**WINKLER: I think they took Guam in July of '44, and you arrived in June.**

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, the Turkey Shoot was the 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup>, wasn't it? I think I arrived in June. I thought they had already landed by then, but I guess maybe they were preparing to land.

**WINKLER: So I don't know if you performed any missions in Guam?**

**TAYLOR:** Yes, we went out. We went out right off. I think we went to Palau. My first flight, I think, was on Palau as McCampbell's wingman. Then I guess we must have gone back to, maybe Guam. Because I remember, at the time of the Marianas Turkey Shoot, they had a field where the Japanese were ferrying their planes in; that was the reason. So at the Marianas Turkey Shoot we had not landed on the island.

**WINKLER: Then you mentioned you went up for some raids against Tinian, then came back to Guam. There were raids against Rota. I've actually been to Rota, and I've been to Guam.**

**TAYLOR:** I understand it's lovely out there.

**WINKLER: It is. Palau is mentioned there. Then in September you get into the Philippines preparations.**

**TAYLOR:** Well, we went to Palau. And then we went to Iwo Jima, I forget when that was. We went to Formosa. We went to Okinawa. I don't know whether we did those to cut off some of the supplies to the Philippines, or whether we did the Philippines and then went up to those islands. I don't remember the cycle.

And, unfortunately—you were a lot at Lambert Field, you said, for a while. I flew weekend warrior. And when I was coming back from overseas I took my logbook and tried to write in every flight, what I remembered about that flight. Left my logbook out there when I was flying weekend warrior, and when I stopped being the weekend warrior, being young and stupid, I left my logbook out there. I would love to get my logbook back. I don't have it.

**WINKLER: In early October you went to Formosa. I think the idea was, Formosa had been a Japanese territory, I guess, since the turn of the century, and there were numerous air bases that the Japanese were ferrying aircraft down to Formosa and then to the Philippines. So I think the strategy there was to keep the Japanese guessing whether you were going to attack Formosa, invade Formosa, or the Philippines.**

**TAYLOR:** Yes, I remember reading that that was a finesse.

**WINKLER: But Formosa, that was the one time you actually knocked a few Japanese aircraft out of the air. I think it was October 11, or so. It seemed like: boom, boom. Is that how you would describe it?**

**TAYLOR:** Well, first of all, I considered it one of my better flights, because I stayed on my section leader's wing the whole flight. Even when we came back, he said, "Nice flying, Taylor." Because he's supposed to basically do the shooting, and you protect to see that nobody shoots him down. I stayed with him during the whole melee, and it was a serious melee. I remember shooting one plane down, from an overhead run. I don't remember the other one, but he remembers another one. You know, you were just going around and squeezing off bursts. But I remember that. That was a big melee, and I don't know whether we lost any planes or not, but I know we shot down a bunch. Because the Japanese, they came at us; that's what we called a melee, with planes going every way, shooting at everybody.

**WINKLER: You brought out a good point there, flying wingman. I guess the lead pilot gets the opportunity to engage, but without you there protecting.... You doing the protecting**

**work enables him to get the kills. So, even though you don't have a high kill count, is there kind of like a sense of pride amongst folks who have reputations of being good wingmen?**

**TAYLOR:** Yes. Good wingmen feel good about what they do. You're not supposed to see how much of a score you can run up. It's nice if you do, but your main deal is to protect your buddy. And your buddy, if he's your division leader or your section leader, that's your responsibility. If you go off and he gets shot down, the question is, "Where were you?" And I didn't want to be in that position. I remember during that particular melee, with all the twisting and turning that he was doing—we had broken away from our division leader, the other two planes, so there were the two of us—and the fact that I stuck with him. When he was going that way, I was there, so if something happened we could scissor. That's what we were supposed to do.

**WINKLER: Kind of like being a lineman in a football game.**

**TAYLOR:** Yes. I remember that particular fight because, number one, I knocked down a couple of planes. But more importantly I protected my section leader, which I was supposed to do, and I remember he said, "Nice flying, Taylor." Because he knew I was there the whole time.

**WINKLER: There was one formation that they talked about in the book where the Japanese—I guess this was a defensive maneuver—would fly in a circle.**

**TAYLOR:** I never came across one. McCampbell did, when he got his nine planes. I don't know what the Japanese were trying to do with the circle—they fly in a circle and one guy, he's supposed to protect the other guy's tail if somebody comes in. I guess it's sort of a modification of the scissoring act. But theoretically if we're flying in a circle and there are a bunch of planes, and somebody tries to hit the circle, the guy behind him or ahead of him would go off and take that plane. But McCampbell would roar right through them and shoot them down, and go over them and recover. He wouldn't stay around to be a target. McCampbell was very, very aggressive and very good—I think a very good gunner.

**WINKLER: You had the Battle of Leyte Gulf, a dramatic episode to the war. I think the Essex was involved, going after, what, Ozawa's carriers?**

**TAYLOR:** We went on Bull's Run, yes. It was the first time in the Navy that anybody—the squadron, Rigg or somebody—asked for volunteers. We were running to try to get that Northern Japanese fleet. I read a biography of Bull Halsey. Bull Halsey had always envisioned a great sea battle, a ship to ship battle. I think he was one of the old Navy guys. And I think that he thought that the major part of the Japanese fleet was up north and he was going to go up and engage them, and that it would be the biggest and best sea battle, with battleships and everything else. Not knowing he was totally feinted out of the action. It was a bad decision. He should have sent the carriers up and left the battleships. But he didn't know that at the time. He did what he thought best at the time.

But that afternoon I think we were steaming north to catch that fleet, and we were going to make a long-range flight to try to hit them before it got dark. It was fairly on into the afternoon, and there was a good chance, as I recall this, that we would come back after dark. We

didn't like after dark. We were not trained for night landings, and night landings scared the hell out of a carrier pilot. You remember Mitscher endeared himself to all carrier pilots forever when he turned the lights on after a battle when he had pilots returning after dark.

So they said: We're going to have a long flight here, we're going to go and get blah blah blah blah blah, and we'd like to have some volunteers. Nobody volunteered. I didn't, because my dad, who was in the Marine Corps, said, "Let me tell you one thing, Jack. Don't volunteer for anything." So there were no volunteers. Well, a couple of people, maybe, tried to fake a volunteer.

So they said, okay, we're going to make up a flight. So they made up a flight. It had a lot of fighters, and I was assigned on that flight. I remember we had a rendezvous and were heading out to attack this fleet. McCampbell was leading. As we were climbing out, somebody picked up his mike and said, "Rebel 99, this is Rebel 43. My engine is running rough, and I request permission to return to the carrier."

McCampbell picked up his mike and said, "This is Rebel 99. Stay in formation. All of our engines are running rough." Because we all thought we were going to have to come back and land after dark. But we got back before dark. So we attacked the Japanese fleet late in the afternoon, and got back to our fleet before dark. Our ships were steaming north fairly fast, so if we were out two, two-and-a-half hours, our fleet would have come fifty or sixty miles closer to the returning planes.

**WINKLER: One of the Air Group's success stories was the sinking of the Japanese superbattleship Musashi. What was your role?**

**TAYLOR:** Our Air Group was on a flight with a large group of planes. At least 20 or 24 fighters, probably 15 or so dive bombers, and 10 to 12 torpedo planes. I think intelligence had been received about the Japanese coming with one or more fleets through the west side of the Philippines and we were basically on a search mission in hopes that we would find part of that fleet.

As I remember, we were at an altitude of 24,000 feet, which would have been unusually high so maybe it was 17 or 18,000 feet, and we spotted the Northern Japanese fleet which included the Musashi, which at the time I thought was the Yamato.

We prepared for an attack and started our run in. One of the things that I remember is that as we were approaching the Japanese fleet, the anti-aircraft fire started coming up and it was all sorts of different colors. There was a blue burst, there were red bursts, there were orange bursts, and I wasn't aware at the time but different ships have different anti-aircraft bursts so they can track their firing from that of other ships in the formation. Whatever the color was there was a lot of it.

The fighters, as is the usual plan, went down first to strafe and reduce as much as possible the anti-aircraft fire on the bombers and torpedo planes. I remember that I thought the anti-aircraft fire was going to be big time so I went down as vertically as possible and I chose to

attack the largest ship in their fleet which happened to be the Musashi. When you strafe, the more vertical you are, the safer it is because it is harder for the anti aircraft gunners to raise their guns up in a vertical position.

The only thing I remember about my run was that every time I started firing, it seemed to me that the anti-aircraft fire stopped. I am sure it was a figment of my imagination, but I kept firing and came in so low that it seemed like I was going to fly down the smoke stack of the Musashi before I pulled out. I pulled out and got out of range of the anti aircraft fire and joined up with my section leader, Lieutenant George Carr, and we circled and gained altitude. It then became obvious that the torpedo planes had not cleared the fleet on their run and were taking a lot of anti-aircraft fire. Carr, either by picking up his microphone and saying "let's go back in" or nodding to me, we made another strafing run.

I remember we completed that run, pulled up out of the fleet and by that time the torpedo planes had completed their torpedo run. With that we had a rendezvous with the rest of our planes, or at least as many that were still around, and flew back to the Essex. We knew we had done much damage to the Japanese fleet but we didn't know how much.

When we landed on the Essex, neither Carr nor I had a scratch on our airplanes but as the torpedo planes landed, several of them had rather obvious damage. I think one or two of them did not return which was not surprising because they were taking some real abuse going through the Japanese fleet to drop their torpedoes.

Three things I remember most vividly about the attack, and remember this is over 50 years ago, was the color of the anti-aircraft bursts, my first strafing dive that was almost vertical, and how I pulled out at the last minute because I did not want to stop firing, and having to go back in a second time which frankly scared the hell out of me.

(End of Side B, Tape I)

**WINKLER: We're picking up with the ordnance changes. Initially you were just flying with your guns. You then evolved into fighter-bombers?**

**TAYLOR:** Well, I think what happened later on in the war is, we wiped out more and more of the Japanese aircraft. There just weren't that many more coming at you. They were going more to kamikazes. So when you attacked a specific island, or something like that, they just didn't have any more airplanes on the island. So when you attacked an island—let's say you attacked the Philippines—practically all the enemy aircraft were out of the air. So what you would do—you were going in and bombing and strafing everything. So if you're going there anyway, rather than just go strafe, why don't you take some rockets, and why don't you take some bombs and try to bomb some things. So that's what we did. We started strapping bombs on, and in addition to being pure fighters we were, I guess, fighter-bombers. Later in the war they came with the Corsairs, and the Corsairs were looked upon as fighter-bombers.

**WINKLER: What was the initial reaction amongst the fighter pilots about the idea that some of you were going to be dropping this....**

**TAYLOR:** Okay. It's okay. It's part of our job. I'll try to drop it on someplace important, you know.

**WINKLER:** **The one thing is, if you did wind up in a melee, though, the ordnance....**

**TAYLOR:** Well, if you were going to be in a melee, you wanted to get rid of the ordnance. If you were going into an island and you see a bunch of fighters, the first thing you'd do is get rid of your bombs. Rockets? You'd probably fire the rockets too. Remember, we had belly tanks too, and very rarely did we ever drop the belly tank. Because we thought it was identification. The F6F with a belly tank was very discernable. An F6F without a belly tank could be mistaken by another pilot that it was not an F6F. So we very rarely dropped our belly tanks. But we used the fuel out of them first, so they had practically no weight. And they were designed to be wind-resistant. So we very rarely dropped the belly tank. If we saw a guy come back without a belly tank, we knew he'd gotten into serious problems.

**WINKLER:** **In the book it mentions some of the tactics the Japanese would used to try and lure—wiggling the wings or something—trying to make you think that it was a friendly aircraft. Did you ever run into situations where the Japanese were very clever?**

**TAYLOR:** The only time I ever really did, I remember making a head-on run on the enemy one day, and didn't fire because I wasn't sure it was a Japanese plane. And, I don't know, he didn't fire either—he was out of ammunition, or he didn't know what I was. We crossed like this and he went underneath me, and I looked down and saw him looking up at me. I don't know where he went. That was the only time I ever saw one close in the air. I didn't see anything where they were trying to lure me.

**WINKLER:** **Okay. As part of the camaraderie in these squadrons, sometimes you have some levity during the non-flight time. Do you recall anything humorous?**

**TAYLOR:** Yeah, we had a guy by the name of Dick Fowler. He became an admiral; he just died. A good guy. He had a rather serious nose. And we had a guy that was a good buddy of mine by the name of Wayne Doolan, who has died too. Wayne, somehow or other, took the butt of a revolver and fashioned a fake nose. He put it on and landed with that nose on, acting like Fowler. I remember, everybody knew he had it, and knew he was going to do it, and watched him land with this big honker that looked like Fowler, and everybody totally cracked up. I don't remember the details, but I remember he made the nose, and Fowler was a good guy; he didn't get mad about it.

Then you had the deal where you went over the equator. And they had the pollywogs, or whatever.

**WINKLER:** **Well, on an aircraft carrier that's probably quite an operation.**

**TAYLOR:** It is. That's a big ceremony, and we had that. But in the squadron we just had some guys that were fun. This Wayne Doolan, I remember one time.... He had two fake teeth. He never

got these teeth, and he wore a bridge. He got sick one night and threw up, and threw up his teeth down the john, and went around in the squadron for a long time—I don't know whether this was on the carrier or what—with his teeth like this. He looked like a chipmunk. It was high hilarity mixed with very serious business.

**WINKLER: My dealings, meeting with these aviators—a lot of them have got a good sense of humor. Now, you were on the Enterprise and then you went back to the Essex. Then I suppose you flew some more missions off the Essex, and then it was time to go back to the States?**

**TAYLOR:** Yes. I think the squadron was relieved about the first part of November. Around the 10<sup>th</sup> of November. And I understand that about two weeks after we were relieved, a kamikaze crashed into the fighter ready room.

**WINKLER: That's about right.**

**TAYLOR:** I knew by the time we left the kamikazes were coming.

**WINKLER: What was the thought about that?**

**TAYLOR:** Well, we just thought it was a bunch of irrational nuts trying to do dumb things. And they weren't having much success early on. I don't know when the Franklin was hit. I think the Franklin was hit by a kamikaze.

And of course.... Well, the Princeton was not hit by a kamikaze; it was hit by a bomb. We weren't seriously worried about them, although we knew they were coming. We thought that we would be able to stand them off. And the chances of them getting through and doing any damage.... You didn't consider that they might kill you. They weren't very heavy.

**WINKLER: One of the questions I wanted to ask is—I did an article about flight direction officers. It's kind of interesting, because you have these young guys who basically are directing the course of battles. The admirals on the bridge are really dependent on these guys. What was the communications like with these guys in the CICs?**

**TAYLOR:** Generally, you thought that they were just great at their job. You knew they were working their butt off, like you hoped they knew you were working your butt off, trying to do the job, which was win the battle, or win the war, or win the day, or whatever. But you would hear communications occasionally with "Vector 270 buster," which is, you know, as fast as you can get there. And you just had confidence that they had the enemy picked up, they were vectoring you in the right direction, they had the altitude, and you paid very close attention to them. Generally, they did a hell of a job of getting you out there to the enemy. Here again, we didn't have much experience with them, because this was early in the kamikaze, and that's where they were the most valuable. But I just thought they were highly competent guys doing a good job, just like I, at my young age and at my low rank, was doing a good job. That was my feeling.

**WINKLER: The further out you met the oncoming attack aircraft, the more success you had, especially when it came to the kamikazes.**

**TAYLOR:** Oh, yes. We had them from many bogies bearing—normally they would be bearing 360 north or whatever, forty miles, or eighty miles, or something, and then they would vector you in that direction. That's generally combat air patrol. I only had one incident on combat air patrol—that's with the half-plane I got, which I shared with my section leader. Again, I was talking about how you protected your section leader—when we went after that plane my section leader went in first. I was behind. And of course with that plane you have to worry about them turning on you. But you just assumed that he was the boss, even though your rank would have been almost the same. But the combat information, they were great.

**WINKLER: One of the things which your squadron took pride in was the fact that the Essex was not scratched the whole time you were embarked. Afterwards, you're right, it got hit.**

**Now, leaving and heading back: there was one incident in the book we were talking about. A lot of the dive bombers took some heavy losses towards the end of October, one of the squadrons.**

**TAYLOR:** A dive bomber squadron lost their skipper. He was just hit by anti-aircraft while when he was dive bombing in Manila harbor. He was the guy from Webster Groves—I can't remember his name. But I think he was the dive bomber skipper. And I think the dive bombers are more susceptible to anti-aircraft fire because they come in lower and go slower, and pull out slower.

**WINKLER: The air group was out there for a period of four months. Could you see there was fatigue there?**

**TAYLOR:** You've got to remember, I was young, and I was not maybe as sensitive as I should be. I was going along. I knew I had to be here; I knew I had to put in my time. And I just didn't think about things like that, whether people were getting stretched out. We were out almost six months. The air group was out for, I think, over six months. I got on the end of June, so we were on July, August, September, October, and into November. So that was four and a half months, and they'd been on...yeah. I think at that time they were trying to get the air groups replaced every ninety days, figuring after ninety days of hard combat, people start to come unraveled. I never saw it. I never saw it.

**WINKLER: Now, discuss coming off combat and what happened for the rest of your Naval career.**

**TAYLOR:** We came back to the states; we got on a carrier—I forget what it was—and we came into Bremerton. I got back to St. Louis by DC-3—I think we had to stop and take a train part of the way. Spent about a month in St. Louis, a month leave. And then went back out to Los Alamitos to re-form the squadron. When you came back to the states, you were asked what you wanted to do. Do you want to stay with the squadron, or do you want to go someplace else?

Well, I liked the guys, and they were my buddies, as far as I was concerned. So I said I would like to stay with the squadron. A lot of guys stayed. I would say at least a third stayed with the squadron. So we re-formed at Los Alamitos, which was a wonderful place to be. Got an apartment in Anaheim; my wife came out and we got married during that time. It was good duty, good training. I being one of the older, experienced pilots, we had some young guys that came in and looked up to us. It was a lovely period.

Then when the war was over, I had enough points, because I'd gotten a DFC, that I got out. And for some reason, being a home-town boy, I got out immediately and came back home.

**WINKLER: The DFC was awarded specifically for...**

**TAYLOR:** The Formosa attack. If you shot down more than one plane, I think they gave it automatically. But then again, in the war, because the Army was doing it, they gave you a DFC for so many combat missions, and an Air Medal for so many shootdowns.

**WINKLER: So you have two DFCs?**

**TAYLOR:** I don't know how many I got, because I didn't pay attention. I counted up my combat flights, and it was about thirty-two to thirty-five combat, where I actually went out and attacked an island or got into a melee. But I had eighty-two carrier landings. I counted this one day, and I had eighty-two. I said, well, what's the difference between my combat flights and my carrier landings? It must have been the combat air patrols, and training flights, because we did do some training flights. I had eight-two carrier landings; that may have included my three at Lake Michigan. And thirty-five combat flights. The thirty-five did not count the combat air patrols.

**WINKLER: Did you ever tally up all the hours?**

**TAYLOR:** Yes. I had about 1000. I had 400 hours when I left Corpus. And I think that's one of the problems with the Japanese. They didn't have the fuel or the training set up. And I understand some of their combat pilots were going out with barely 100 hours of training. When you've got a guy with 400 hours against a guy with 100 hours, generally, all things being equal, he's going to beat him up.

**WINKLER: The other thing is what you do with those hours of training.**

**TAYLOR:** Yes, and our training was very intense.

**WINKLER: So you got out and you joined the reserves for two years?**

**TAYLOR:** I flew, yeah. And the only reason I stopped that...I was getting a little.... I liked the extra money originally. They paid you the equivalent of two or three days pay. And then the Navy started coming out with jets. My wife at that time was pregnant. And jets were looked upon as being dangerous, because they took a long time to spool up and all that kind of stuff. So she said: You will not fly jets. So, with the fact that I had done it for a couple of years, and she

was pregnant, and I was getting more involved in business, I stopped flying. But I forgot to get my logbook, which I'm still pissed about.

**WINKLER: So you were out of the system by the time the Korean War came around.**

**TAYLOR:** I resigned my commission. I went for a physical one day—I think when you're in the Reserve you have to take a physical every year or two—and I went down to take my physical and it was such a humiliating experience, I resigned my commission. In the physical there were about fifteen or eighteen of us and they lined us all up stark naked, which I hated, painted a number on our chests with mercurochrome, and then had us sit down on a bench while they did various things to us, and then as the guy at the end of the bench would finish, they had us all move down a notch on the bench, and we were naked. I thought that was a very, very unpleasant experience, and I said: Screw that; I'm not going to do that anymore. So I resigned, which I think was one of the things that kept me from being called back for Korea. Most of my buddies, many of them were called back to Korea.

**WINKLER: The name of the car company is Enterprise Car Company. Is there a connection between that and....**

**TAYLOR:** Enterprise Rent-A-Car. This is because I was on the Enterprise.

**WINKLER: But you spent more time on the Essex. Why is it not the Essex Rent-a-Car Company?**

**TAYLOR:** All right. We had an "E" logo. And our original name of the company was Executive Leasing. "Executive" was very big after the war. We decided to branch out and go to another city; we were going to Atlanta. There was already an Executive Leasing Company in Atlanta. So we said we have to get another name in Atlanta. Because we have the "E" logo, we want it to start with an "E." We were thinking about "Essex." But "Essex" is kind of a ponderous name. So then we thought: I was on the Enterprise; let's think about "Enterprise." So we started talking about the name "Enterprise," and "Enterprise" has an upbeat, go-go, positive image. So we went to "Enterprise." And that's how we got the name. Because we had the "E." And when I name things, I try to name them where there's some sentimental attachment.

**WINKLER: You must have been very delighted with the series "Star Trek."**

**TAYLOR:** It was, that's right. That was "Enterprise" too. Actually, other people are using it, and it gets a little obscure. There's an Enterprise Bank up at Clayton. "Enterprise" is a common word that can be used. It's not a word like Taylor Rent-a-Car. So that's how we got it.

**WINKLER: Okay. Any final thoughts? Is there something about your experience that I overlooked?**

**TAYLOR:** My whole Naval experience—I think one of the best things that happened to me was the Navy. My whole Navy experience—the people, the way people conduct themselves, the

basic morality of it—I look upon my Naval experience as one of the best things that have happened in my life.

**WINKLER: Do you think it helped to prepare you for your later career.**

**TAYLOR:** I'm sure it must have. I'm proud of my Naval experience. I feel very positive about it. And I love to talk to you about it. I don't know what more to say about it, except it was a very positive experience. Other than the fact that a lot of my buddies got killed.

**WINKLER: You mentioned that you guys do get together from time to time. Could you talk a little bit about the first time you had a reunion with the squadron and how often you meet up with them?**

**TAYLOR:** Well, the squadron has had several, maybe four or five or six reunions. I've gone to three of them. Will I go to another one? Don't know. It depends on where it is, and so forth. I like to see Dick Davis. There are some other buddies that I have that I like to see. And I think we all carry over our high regard for one another, even this far after the war.

**WINKLER: What was the first reunion?**

**TAYLOR:** I don't know; I went to Washington and McCampbell was there, although I didn't get to talk to him. Maybe eighteen years ago.

**WINKLER: That must have brought a lot of memories back.**

**TAYLOR:** And I think I've been to two or three others.

**WINKLER: Okay. I think that's a good place to close. I appreciate your time.**

**TAYLOR:** I've enjoyed it.