Doug Anderson was born 25 July 1925 in Minneapolis, and grew up there. After high school he volunteered for the US Navy. Doug served in the US Navy from November 1942 to March 1946.

During World War II he was an aviation machinist mate, second class, on board the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*, in the Pacific. Doug joined the crew of the *Enterprise* in September 1943 and remained with the ship until the end of the war; he saw action at __________________________

After the war, Doug returned to Minneapolis. He worked as a milkman for more than 20 years, delivering for Northland Milk Company. After 1975 he worked as a Metro Transit bus driver until retirement.

**USS Enterprise (CV-6).**

**Source:** Official U.S. Navy photo 19-N-89185, from the U.S. Navy Naval History and Heritage Command.

Interview key:
D: Doug Anderson
B: Beth Peter
[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation
(***) = words or phrase unclear
NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

B: We're here with Doug Anderson at his home in Edina, speaking to him about his experiences during World War II.
First of all, when is your birthday?

D: July 25, 1925.

B: You obviously remember Pearl Harbor.

D: Oh, yeah.

B: Where were you when you heard the news and how did you react to it? Do you recall?

D: That was a Sunday. Sunday afternoon. I had gone to a movie at the Nokomis Theater on 38th Street and Chicago Avenue [in Minneapolis] and I just got out of the movie and was walking home – it was about two blocks to my house – and some young guys come along driving in a car and yell, “Pearl Harbor was bombed!” Well, I was about 16 years old at the time, I didn’t know what Pearl Harbor was. But of course I learned fast. That's where I was.

B: Did you grow up here in Minneapolis?

D: Yes.

B: How did your family react? Do you recall from when you came home from the movie what were your parents...

D: I don’t recall any action at all. Nobody knew much about Pearl Harbor, the Navy, the destruction that had been wrought upon us, but of course we learned fast from the radio, no TV at that time, but the radio reports and newspapers several days after that. We heard President Roosevelt, I think the day after, nationwide broadcast when he declared war on Japan. He made the famous speech that we will get them from so many sides they won’t know which is the bow and which is the stern. The bow, of course, is the front of the ship and the stern is rear. I don’t know if you know that much about the Navy.

B: Were you drafted into the Navy or did you volunteer?
D: I volunteered. I could see – my friends, my brother had been drafted into the service and I think that I would rather volunteer and join the Navy as opposed to be drafted and hard telling where, if I’d have any choice then at that time to go in the Navy or what. So I joined the Navy.

B: What was it about the Navy that appealed to you?

D: I just thought it would be better to be aboard a ship as opposed to crawling around in foxholes and groveling in the dirt and whatever in the Army.

B: You were only seventeen when you volunteered?

D: Yes.

B: Was that unusually young or were there a lot of men your age?

D: There were a lot of guys my age joined at that time. Not too many of my close acquaintances but there were some. I wasn’t alone.

B: Do you remember the day you shipped out, and left for the Navy?

D: Not specifically the day, but we took – all travel was by train at that time as opposed to an airline, which it is now – I took a train with a few other guys, complete strangers, we were all strangers, took a train to Great Lakes, Illinois. Got off the train, lined up and so forth, went through the procedure of getting uniforms and a place to sleep. We found out where the chow hall was and our barracks and took it from there. On the matter of boot camp, disciplinary training, marching, obstacle courses, stuff like that.

B: How long did you spend at Great Lakes?

D: About eight weeks... about two months I believe it was. Then we had a week’s leave at that time, so I come home and after that I went back to Great Lakes. In boot camp we had a choice of multiple places we wanted to go, and I signed up for aviation training. From there I went to Dearborn, Michigan – the Ford plant. They had a small training station there. We did a lot of marching there, to and from the training area, and we worked about a half a day as I recall in the Ford plant itself. We worked helping them make cylinder blocks, drilling holes in cylinder blocks. I don’t know what they were for, but cylinder blocks were some machinery, tanks or something, I don’t know. Anyhow, then we’d have half a day of classroom. A lot of math and related subjects, trigonometry and stuff like that. There was some tutoring about how airplanes fly and why they do fly and stuff like that.

B: So you didn't have an interest in flying, you were just interested in working on the planes.
D: Yes. I knew my eyesight wouldn't qualify me to be a pilot, my eyesight wasn't that good, so I went for the next best thing, I guess, which interested me.

B: Since the military was still segregated then, did you have any contacts with any African American troops?

D: No, I think it was all white Caucasian guys.

B: As one would expect. Was that your first time away from home?

D: Yes.

B: What was it like leaving home?

D: My parents never took us on trips or anything, so you might say I'd never been away from home. The first night in boot camp, yes, I recall that. We had a big barracks, two floors and I was on the upper floor I believe. I remember the first night I was sort of homesick. What did I get into here anyway? I suppose everybody has that feeling in some respect, because everything is completely new and everybody around you is a complete stranger. I got on. I figured I wasn't going to get hysterical or homesick, so I made it through the night. After that I was okay.

B: Do you have a positive memory about Basic Training that you could share?

D: Positive? It was a positive experience, I think. Boot camp is tough and that was in the winter time and it was a beastly cold winter that winter. I went there in November, three weeks in November and December and a good share of January and you're right not too far from Lake Michigan which is colder than the dickens, and was it a positive experience? It was hard. Our barracks, we had heat but we didn't have any hot water. You took a shower in cold water and you washed your clothes in cold water. Whether they had that to make that hard on you, I don't know.

It was a new part of the Great Lakes camp. Maybe it was on purpose, I don't know. We did a lot of drilling on the drill field, marching in step, in unison, running, a lot of time in double time to build up your endurance and strength. I don't think we had any obstacle courses up because everything was full of snow except for the grinder, they called it, where we marched. They call it the grinder, a big slab of cement.

We did a lot of marching and about face and all that. We got to be so we were a pretty good marching unit, I think. You'd have your foot hitting the ground at the same time, and that's what you've got to do, you know. And we had some, every now and then whoever was in charge would spring a deal where they'd get us up at about two o'clock in the morning and get you completely dressed, you had to be completely dressed to get out in that beastly cold weather, and we had to get out
and march on the grinder for a couple hours in the middle of the night. That was a good thing for discipline. You had to learn to do what you're told.

We'd have guard duty, two or three guys walking around the barracks all time of night, and like I said it was colder than the dickens. Lots of snow. There was a furnace in one corner of the building, it was outside the building – I don't know if it was gas fire or what – you weren't supposed to but we'd sort of duck in there every once in a while to get warmed up. If the Chief Petty Officer was driving around in a car, you weren't supposed to do that, but we did it anyway. I didn't get caught. The guys who got caught, I don't know what they did to them, a bawling out or I don't know. But I didn't get caught. I did it, but the Navy didn't suffer because of that. There wasn't any burglaries around there, I don't think they were going to carry away the barracks or anything.

B: How often did you have to serve guard duty?

D: Once a week maybe. We had a whole barracks full of guys. We must have had 30, 40, 50 guys in the barracks, I don't know how many they hold, and double bunks, too. Maybe it was more than that – 60, 70 guys, maybe. Then on every Saturday, or at least on some of the Saturdays, we had to scrub the crazy floors, the hardwood floors. Sand them down and clean up the sand then we'd wax them and then see if the ensign – I imagine he was a 90 day wonder, he didn't know what the Navy was all about – he'd say, "That's no good, you have to do the whole job over again," so we'd have to do the whole job over again. Scrub it down and sand it and wax it again. It didn't look any different then than it did the first time and it didn't look any better than it did in the beginning for that matter, I didn't think. But it's a matter of disciplining, you have to do what you're told.

Of course, you get out in the Navy aboard ship and you don't run into that kind of stuff. Anyway, we had to make our bunk real snug and all that. You've seen the Army, in the Army they snap a quarter on it and it has to bounce. I don't know if you can even do that. Never could on any of ours, but we had to have it made nice and clean and all that.

Sundays we didn't do anything, we had the chance to read the paper. Some kid would come around selling a Chicago paper usually we'd buy one. We wouldn't each have to buy one, could have shared, but we each had our own I guess pretty much.

B: After you served at Great Lakes you said you went to Detroit for further training, how long were you there?

D: Yes, that was a training school for aviation machinist's mate. I was there until – I happen to write down those dates, I didn't keep a diary. I kept a diary aboard ship, which you aren't supposed to do but everybody did, but it must have been about the beginning of June, then I was transferred to the Naval Air Station at Minneapolis, Minnesota. That was soft duty. I had to walk about a mile, mile and a half, from the Navy base to end of the streetcar line, to 54th and 34th Avenue. That's as close as you could get with public transportation. So I didn't go home every night.
But I worked in the A&R shop at the hangar, assembly and repair. We took apart the engines on these N2Ses, Navy bi-planes, primary training planes. We took them apart after a certain number of hours and washed all the parts in a big vat, soaked them for a day or so, and cleaned them and put them back together, replacing any parts that were in need of replacement. I did that for a while. That was about all I did at the Minneapolis Naval Air Station.

B: How long were you stationed there?

D: It was about, here again I’m estimating, it must have been about the beginning of August or thereabouts. Then I was transferred to Alameda, California, Naval Air Station, to a unit called CASU 6. That stands for Carrier Aircraft Service Unit number 6, and we did just what says. We served the carrier planes when the carrier was in dry dock in Navy yard and the planes were at our base. We’d service them and the pilots would fly and keep their flying talents up, so we serviced the planes there. I worked on F6Fs entirely, the only combat plane I ever worked on. That was a Navy Hellcat fighter. One day, you see that Naval Air Station was right on San Francisco Bay there, and there was a pier there sticking out into the Bay where our ocean-going ships could tie up once in a while.

One day the brand new carrier Yorktown tied up there. I went down to the dock and looked at that, brand new, never seen combat, it was nice and shiny, with new paint on it. They were hoisting planes aboard, and supplies, and I thought to myself, “That’s for me.” I didn’t join the Navy to be tied to a shore station forever. I could have been if I’d stay there. However, CASU 6 was probably transferred overseas, too. I’m not sure. I’ve heard scuttlebutt to that effect. Scuttlebutt, that’s gossip in the Navy – you’ve heard of that? I’ve heard scuttlebutt to that effect that they were wiped out in something or other, landing some place.

After I saw the Yorktown carrier... see, I was a landlubber from Minnesota, I had never even seen salt water before, so that was the first ocean going ship I had seen. There was no St. Lawrence Seaway going into Duluth to see these ships. I’d been up to Duluth. That gave me the impetus to be aboard ship. Shortly after that I was put on a hangar on an F6F, I remember distinctly it was an F6F because it was the only carrier plane I ever worked on. The word was getting around that the carrier Enterprise was in dry dock in Bremerton [Washington] for repairs and updating. Of course, we all knew the history of the Enterprise by now, everybody did, it had been through quite a bit. They needed ten guys for the air department, so I did what you’re not supposed to do in the service, I volunteered. That’s a cardinal sin if you volunteer. So I sinned; I galloped up to the personnel office and told them, “I’m one of your men.”

A few days later ten guys were on the train going up to Seattle and we got a ferry going over to Bremerton. I remember the day I walked into the Navy yard there, through the gate, and sure enough the Enterprise was sitting there in dry dock just waiting for me. I went aboard, you could come up the gangway to the hangar deck, and I walked across the hangar deck, and tied up at the next pier was the cruiser Minneapolis, in for repairs. That had quite a war history, too. So here I was on the Enterprise with the Minneapolis right next to me and I felt right at home. So
that was the beginning of my tour duty on the *Enterprise*. That was September 1\textsuperscript{st} and I was attached to the *Enterprise*.

B: 1943?

D: Yes, 1943. Then November 1\textsuperscript{st} we left the United States. Well, we took a couple of sea trials out on the Puget Sound to see if everything worked okay, landed a couple of planes and it seemed to work, so then we headed to Pearl Harbor. November 1\textsuperscript{st} of ’43.

We got out in the middle of the ocean and landed some planes. Some plane was towing a target across the ship and fired all the guns at it to see if the guns worked and thank goodness they worked, because we needed them later in the war, of course. So everything seemed to work fine. We stopped at Pearl Harbor for a day or two and then we took on some more ammunition, fuel, food, what not, and then were loaded and off to the war. We went out to sea and met up with a bunch of other ships. We didn’t have any carriers at the time. I think we had maybe the *Lexington* with us. I didn’t write down what ships were with us, but at that time we didn’t have too many ships, but we had the *Lexington* and at least a couple of these CVLs – converted cruisers to aircraft carriers, light aircraft carriers – but they were fast carriers, too, as opposed to the Jeep carrier.

We raided and then we took the Gilbert Islands and then I think we came back to Pearl Harbor for a short stay and then we went out again for a long time. Took the Marshall Islands.

B: So you were involved with combat now.

D: Yes. The Gilbert Islands, when we took them, we’d launch a plane and sort of brace ourselves, we figured we’d be under attack by a lot of Japanese planes, but attacking wasn’t too much, as I recall. We had some, but not overwhelming. They did come out at night, though, especially when we got to the Marshall Islands. They apparently had run out of planes there, I don’t know, but we got attacked mostly at night. They wanted to keep us awake all night for one thing, which they did, but they didn’t instill much damage on the fleet, as I recall.

One very interesting thing I saw, I think it was at the Marshall Islands in the middle of the night. It was a dark sky, no moon as I recall. There was one Japanese plane way up high, you could hear him, and he was dropping flares. I don’t know if you’ve heard about flares, but you could almost sit on the flight deck of your ship and read a newspaper by it, they are really bright. They wanted to light us up so their planes could find us. The whole fleet had apparently been given orders to not fire, but all of a sudden one destroyer was ordered to fire one round, five inch round, fired one shot and blew him right out of the sky. That was the last of his dropping of flares. That’s the only time I saw any flares being dropped. That was a magnificent sight. Sharp shooting.

B: What’s it like to see a plane come crashing down like that?
D: It’s a fiery mess and sometimes an explosion and lots of fire when it hits the water. That’s the end of it. You’re always glad it’s one of theirs instead of one of ours.

B: The Gilbert Islands are probably further south and you’re continuing moving north, are you?

D: The Gilbert Islands are a little south and east and the Marshalls are a little west and a little north. From the Marshalls they had a good fleet anchorage we could use. Majuro is the name of the island. We anchored the whole fleet. I thought it was a little soon for that as far as safety, but there was no problem. We anchored there for a short time, provisioned up a little more and then we moved up to Truk Island. We were told Truk was to Japan as Pearl Harbor was to us. A very big, large, important navy fleet anchorage.

(Tape shut off while Mr. Anderson goes to retrieve some notes he has. This causes a bit of a review of his war experience.)

We had some counterattacks at night at the Marshalls and Gilberts [Pacific Island groups]. In fact, one night they attacked with their planes just at dusk so they’d see us against the setting sun. They flew in with their medium bombers, they called them Bettys [twin engine Japanese bomber], for identification purposes, similar to our B-25s or B-26s. They flew in real low, they could easily have carried bombs or torpedoes, but I don’t think they did any damage really. They flew in, they did a torpedo run on our ship for several planes but they fly so low, if they hadn’t pulled away I’m surprised they didn’t crash into the island structure, they’re so low. You could see the cockpit and the canopy, but as I recall they didn’t do any damage.

Then we anchored in Majuro. We secured the Marshall Islands and Truk was our next target. As I recall we didn’t land any troops there but we did a lot of bombing there, day and night. By this time we had a few night bombers, night torpedo planes. They had a big bulb on the starboard wing and they could fly out at night. They’d guide some of our fighter planes around. That’s the time when we lost Commander O’Hare, Chicago’s O’Hare Field is named after him. I think it was Thanksgiving night. F6Fs were not radar equipped at the time, so TBFs [avenger dive bombers] would have to guide him into whatever the target was. He got shot down there, never found, to my knowledge.

We maneuvered across the Pacific, lots of action in Saipan. Then we’re getting up to June of 1944, when we landed troops at Saipan and took Saipan. The carriers were out of range and that was called a Marianas Turkey Shoot. The carriers were really out of our range. We launched our planes late in the day and some of them found the Japanese fleet and did some damage, but our planes ran out of gas, a lot of them, and they had to land in the water. That’s the time we were given permission by the admiral in charge to light our ships so our planes could find a carrier. Our planes were landing on any carrier they could see, so we were landing planes from every carrier in the fleet and all of us were doing that. We had a lot of carriers by now.
That was quite a chaotic night, I have that written here, too, chaotic and hectic. We were landing planes, in fact at one time, we were landing these guys at night and they were so thankful just to get down, the guys that did make it back, and some of them like I said had to land in the water. The destroyers picked up a lot of them. We all had destroyers close by when we were landing planes, or launching, too. This was the time when we used to listen to Tokyo Rose during the night on our ship, on the hangar deck. They broadcast that over the ship. Tokyo Rose said one or more times, made the announcement claiming they’d sunk a lot of American carriers, one of which was the Enterprise, but it wasn’t the Enterprise. That’s one reason our ship got the nickname “The Galloping Ghost”—they claimed they sunk it so many times.

Our ship was easy to identify because the superstructure was entirely different from any of the newer ones. It had a silhouette of its own. (Shows a picture from his book of the USS Enterprise.) The Essex class carriers were straighter up, but if you see this from the side you know it’s the Enterprise. We were the only one left of that class.

B: With the structure in the middle that stood up like that.

D: Yes, you could easily identify it.

B: How long was the Enterprise?

D: 809 feet and six inches, and 83 feet wide.

This is about the time we had Commander “Killer” Kane. His name was William Kane, but you called him “Killer” Kane. He was a fighter pilot. He was the commander of a fighter squadron. He never flew with any of his other pilots, he flew by himself. In fact, it was at Saipan that he went out a lot by himself, on reconnaissance, to check things over and see what was going on. He flew a F6F. He’d come back to the ship... he must have had a pretty good war record to be commander of a fighter squad... he’d come back to the ship, lots of times when the planes come back to the ship they’d make one big circle around the ship along the starboard side, make a big landing circle and come back to land on the ship. He’d come along all by himself, about hangar deck level, and he’d do a slow roll... he was a big showoff... slow roll and then he’d come out of it and get in the landing. But he’d never let his pilot’s do that. That was very dangerous. One mishap and you’re in the water.

End of Side A. Side B begins.

B: You were at Saipan. Where did you head from there?

D: We took the Caroline Islands, too, which is in that group or not too far from it. We took the Caroline Islands and then we used Ulysses as a forward fleet anchorage instead of Majuro. We could repair ships there, supply ships, ammunition ships and everything there. Big fleet anchorage there, and that was a good thing we had.
because we could get some repairs done to our ships without going all the way back to Pearl Harbor.

B: Which would have been a long way across the ocean...

D: Oh, yes, it was a long ways away, we were a long way from home. We went in there several times for some repairs of different [things]. One time I remember we were leaking oil, I think a plane had crashed into our hull towards the rear of our ship and we were leaking, I’m not sure, aviation gas or fuel oil. We went back to Ulysses [repair ship] and they patched it up so it wasn’t leaking anymore anyway. That was September of 1944 we took the Caroline Islands.

October 24th we were heading down to the Philippine Islands now. October 24th and 25th we were in the group that chased the Japanese fleet north, but we were decoyed away from where some of the battleships of the Japanese fleet mauled some of our carriers, Jeep carriers, in the Philippine Islands. We had had a pep talk from Tom Hamilton the night before that, us and some other carriers were chasing the fleet. We were going to sink them; we were over the Philippine trench which was seven miles deep. He said the Enterprise would set the pace. Well, it turned out we were decoyed away from there. Good strategy by the Japanese apparently. (brief second pause while he reviews notes.)

At what point, let me see... we went back to Pearl Harbor here at one time and got a different air group. We got a nice camouflage job painted on the ship. We were there a couple of weeks, a nice long stay. We were in dry dock and we lost one of the screws. We had four screws that propel the ship, you know. We knew it was missing from the vibration. It was the outboard port side, that's the left, it was missing.

B: What else did you do in Hawaii during your leave? Were you on leave for those weeks?

D: We were at Pearl Harbor but we didn't have any leave. We could have had liberty about every third or fourth day. Ten in the morning til four in the afternoon. You had to be back by four. A few of us would go off the ship at night after supper and get refreshments, you could buy a pint of ice cream and stuff like that in the Navy yard.

B: Did you make it back to the Philippines?

D: From there we had a trip we took through the Formosa Straits, between Formosa and Japan. Us, and I think it wasn't too big of a group, a couple of CVLs [light carriers], I believe, and maybe another CV [carrier]. We were bombing a place in China and French Indochina, which is now Vietnam. We were making a variety of raids there. Attacked a lot of shipping in the China Sea and assorted targets in China and Formosa. We got a lot of air attacks going between Formosa and the southern tip of Japan. And now we had a whole air group that was night planes. Fighters and diver bombers, everyone was night equipped. So we were keeping planes in the air.
at one time for 175 hours without a stop. At that time that was a record. Seven days and seven hours.

B: Again, what was your role in this? When the planes would come back you’d make sure they were still in working order?

D: Yes. Your job as a plane captain was to see if it was air worthy again. If it’s not, you easy fix it yourself or get it fixed with the engineers if the job required more than one man. Mainly the only job the plane captain does by himself is replace the air bottle, the oxygen bottle, which was a hard job for one thing, and do 30, 60, 90, and 120 hour checks on the engine. Replace spark plugs and oil and what all... it was a long time ago.

B: During this 175 hours of planes constantly going, would some pilots come in and others go out on the same plane?

D: No. We launched a bunch of planes and then we’d launch some more and the first group would come back. We’d service them and they’d take off, then the second group would land. We had them in the air for a long time. We were at sea for quite a while there, too. This must have been the time when we were off of French Indochina there, that’s way in the western part of the Pacific. Then we came back through the Straits of Formosa and got hit pretty hard by counterattacks, but we made it. Then we went to the Bonard [spelling?] Islands and made a lot of raids off there and then we finally got back to Ulithi to refuel and a short stay. We’d refuel at sea sometimes, too, complete tanker.

B: What was Ulithi? Is it an island?

D: Yes, it’s in the Caroline Islands, east of Saipan a ways. That was about the time we were making raids on Okinawa. Now we’re getting to Japan. The Philippines had been secured by now and we started raiding Okinawa. The Japanese were running out of first line pilots, they’d train guys how to take off in a plane but not land it and just tell them to crash into a ship. Of course, they don’t come back then. So they were crashing into a lot of our ships then. They’d aim for the carriers to get the air power knocked out, but they hit a lot of our ships.

B: Did that happen to the Enterprise?

D: First of all, on May 11th of 1945 the Bunker Hill, that was a first line carrier, too, they were right on our starboard beam. We had all our planes in the air at the time and they had all their planes ready to take off, I suppose they were loaded with bombs and rockets and ammunition and everything. And this one Japanese plane came, and everyone was firing at him, of course, he crashed right into that and it was the biggest hit I’d ever seen. Tremendous explosion and fire and all that stuff burning. It killed about 270 guys, I believe it was. That was on May 11th. On May 14th of 1945, three days after the Bunker Hill got hit, we got hit. I’ll show you a
picture of it. *(In his book is a picture of the Enterprise after it was hit.)* It was really quite an event for me. I was sitting in my plane, my F6F, we were re-spotting the deck.

B: What is re-spotting?

D: Re-spot means we landed all planes and the guy in the air control says, “Last plane landed re-spot.” That means push them back to the aft part of the flight deck to prepare for launch again. Here’s a picture of our ship. This *kamikaze* hit right here at the forward end of the flight deck. Knocking out a couple of planes up here, ruined this plane. So we couldn’t launch plane if you look close (*at the picture*) at this part of the elevator about 400 feet up in the air.

B: So by crashing into the deck the Japanese more or less prevented you from flying because you didn’t have the long take-off areas anymore, correct?

D: Yes, we were out of action then. This is a picture from October 30th, 1944 and this is the carrier *Franklin* in the back burning. Here’s my ship [plane]. If you had microscopic eyes you could see that’s a 77 on that plane. That was my plane. I was riding the brakes and looked up to the starboard side and saw this guy coming in and thought he had my name written all over him. He came in right over my plane. The guys chocked up the plane and we all ran up here (away from the direction the plane was flying), and the plane, this *kamikaze*, went right over my plane into the water. It was estimated that about 15 to 20 feet he missed me by. Missed my plane.

B: Looks like he missed the ship entirely and just hit the water.

D: Yes, he made a big splash but didn’t hurt us any. So that was quite an event. That [the attack of May 14] put us out of action for the rest of the war. We could still move, maneuver, so we went back to Ulithi and unloaded a lot of our stuff that other ships could use, bombs and rockets and some of the ammunition, too, I don’t recall, but then we stopped at Pearl Harbor and unloaded some more stuff and we went back to the Bremerton Navy Yard.

B: Where it all started.

D: Yeah, going back home again. So that’s about the exciting part of my Navy experiences.

B: As far as combat, as a machinist you didn’t actually fire any guns.

D: No, I never got to fire any guns. Our instructions were stay with the plane if it’s on the ship, if it’s not on the ship be available for manning fire hoses or manning, firing some of the guns if those guys got killed or something. We had fires on the ship that we all helped out on. Some planes would crash and we’d have to man fire hoses.
B: So you were assigned to a specific plane.

D: Yes. If you're plane got shot down, which sometimes they do... we lost a lot of planes, lose them in the drink for some reason or another... well, you get another plane when you go back. Sometimes we'd get other planes from other ships which were going back to Pearl Harbor for some reason or another. We'd get a plane that way.

B: You said you were off of Saipan in June of 1944. Did you hear about the invasion of D-Day? How did that impact you and the people around you?

D: That was June 6, 1944. We were all glad to hear about it but we were pretty busy at the time. That was the time we were off of Saipan and thereabouts and we were pretty busy in our own right. As I recall we didn't get too many reports on whether things were going good or not. We knew it'd be a long hard grind, which it was.

B: The Enterprise got hit in May of 1945 and you came back to Bremerton eventually. How did you end up your naval career, since you served til March of 1946? Did you just stay on land in the Seattle area?

D: No. I had been sort of... I wasn't wounded in action and it wasn't a very glamorous thing, but I was sent to the naval hospital in Bremerton for a while. I had a problem on the ship. You have all these gasoline engines starting up and they blow out an oily film, and you get an oily film on the flight deck. I slipped on the flight deck one time and I fell right smack dab on my tailbone on one of these Ressinger [spelling?] cables. These cables are about that big around (4-5 inches). That doesn't give. It stung me momentarily and the doctor checked me and there didn't seem to be any problem at the time. But it festered up in a couple of weeks, so I had a couple of operations on the ship when we weren't in a combat zone and it never healed up right. It kept leaking. The first time the doctor told me I could go back on full service I said, "I don't think so. It feels like it's going to break open." So the first time I crawled under the wing of the plane or something... you've got to be able to crawl under a wing or be up in the cockpit... sure enough it broke open and was draining fluid.

B: How were the medical facilities on the ship?

D: Pretty good. It was good, actually. We had a small sick bay, a dozen beds something like that. So anyway, they operated again on me. You see, I wasn't immobilized but I couldn't really do anything so I was taking it easy best I could. They gave me different duty. I was master of arms for a while. You take your turn taking care of the prisoners. Once in a while we'd get prisoners on. The destroyers would pick up some of these Japanese pilots they'd shot down and we'd have to escort them to the chow hall and back to the brig and stuff like that. I did that for a
while; I didn’t care for it. At least it was easier than crawling around under airplanes and stuff.

B: After you docked in Bremerton you had surgery.

D: Yeah. I landed and went to the hospital and they fixed me up right, fixed me good. From Bremerton... the war was over now and my ship was long gone out to sea again. That was the time they went through the Panama Canal and up to New York and made a couple of trips to Southampton, England, which I would have liked to have been on.

I went to the naval air station in Pascal, Washington. We had a couple of Piper Cubs, small light planes, we didn’t do anything but sit around the hangar. We’d warm them up and gun them up a little. Of course, one of those, you gun the engine like I did on an F6F, it would probably take off. We didn’t do much of anything, just marked our time.

Then I went to the naval air station in Minneapolis to be discharged. But you see you get another physical before you’re discharged and that morning I was taking a shower and I could feel I had hemorrhoids, that was my diagnosis. You have a physical when you get out of the navy and the doctor said, “You’ve got hemorrhoids.” They didn’t discharge with me that, so I then I had to go back to Great Lakes for another operation. So that’s how I spent my time after the war. I went back to Great Lakes for about a month. They don’t let you go back. Now of course you almost walk off the table with the system they have now, but they didn’t let you go until you were well, and I was well and then I came back to Minneapolis and was discharged.

B: In all your experiences in the war were there any enlisted men or officers who made an impact on you?

D: In boot camp, that ensign that would come through our barracks and nothing was right for him. Nothing was right; he could pick everything apart. He made an impact on me – we all hated his guts. We figured he was a ninety day wonder. You get out in the navy and he probably didn’t know what the navy was all about. You join the navy, like I did, then you find out what it’s all about. I’m glad I did.

One thing I didn’t say – the first time I saw planes Japanese diving on our ship was at the Gilbert Islands, first action we saw, we had some attacks. When you see these guys diving right on your ship and dropping bombs and trying to hit you, then you realize, hey, this is for real. There is supposedly another human being up there quite a bit like me trying to kill us. That’s when it really sets in. When I talked about this when I was out at air guard (Doug was part of a panel discussion at Fort Snelling a few years ago) I wound up by saying, “I wouldn’t trade my navy experience for anything, but I’m lucky and I’m glad I came out of it alive.” A lot of guys were killed on my ship. One of the guys I came aboard with was killed and he was killed by a stray anti-aircraft shell that hit our ship and caused quite a fire. (Looks for a picture of this fire in his book) No, I don’t have one. But it caused a fire right by the forward end of the island structure. Ruined a couple of planes and caused quite a fire and we
had to have some repairs done by Majuro. The flight deck was damaged somewhat. One of my friends who came aboard was killed in that. That’s one time when I for one had to man the fire hoses to help get that fire put out. Of course, you have aviation gasoline and fuel oil and everything, especially aviation gasoline. Had to use a lot of foam on it as opposed to a stream of water, because then you’d really spread it around. That’s a mess, cleaning it up.

B: Not your favorite activity.

D: No.

B: Since your ship was at sea so much was it possible for you to keep in touch with your parents, your family back home, or even your other brother who was in the service?

D: Well, we sent letters. One time we were out about six weeks, I believe, that was when we to French Indochina. It was a long time. We ran out of food, almost. At one time we ate chili beans and rice three times a day, and we were glad to get that. At a time like that we, being a capital ship, we sent food over to some of our destroyers, too, which couldn’t carry as much as we could. We had to supply them at times, too. Now, what was your question?

B: How you kept in touch with your family...

D: When we were at Majuro or Ulithi, we’d have mail leaving the ship once in a while. One time, I forgot where it was now, we had an SDD flew over rather low and dropped us some mail on our ship. That was only once though, I believe. But we got mail once in a while and mail would go off of the ship once in a while, too. I’d get a letter from my mother and once in a while from my brother, he was in the European Theater, in Italy. And from my bride...

B: Were you already married at the time?

D: No, she was just a girlfriend. I mean the bride I married.

B: So you heard from your brother as well?

D: Yes, once in a while, of course he was busy, too, in the army. When we got back to Bremerton at the hospital... my wife, she was my girlfriend at the time, she was convenient. She just happened to have her favorite cousin, Margaret, who lived about 60 miles south of Seattle. She was married at the time. How conveniently that she just took a train out to Seattle to visit Margaret. Well, she took a bus up to Seattle a couple of times to see me, too. Actually she wanted to come out and see me and I wanted to see her, so that was fun. We took a side trip to Mount Rainier, that’s some distance away. I was in the hospital at the time, but I was ambulatory, I could get leave for a weekend I guess. Of course, I wasn’t supposed to go more than 25
miles from the hospital. Mount Rainier was more like 80, 90, 100 miles from Seattle. We got up to the top of Mount Rainier, and who do I run into but one of my favorite nurses. She knew me by name and everything, but she didn’t turn me in. I wouldn’t trade my Navy experiences for anything. I wouldn’t. No way ever to live anything like that. But I’m glad and lucky that I came out of it alive. When you see all this first hand then you know that war is hell.

B: Do you keep in touch with anyone who served with you on the Enterprise? Do you have reunions?

D: We’ve had a lot of reunions, but I haven’t gone to any of them, though. My family and my work and everything at that time. The kids were small and so it wasn’t easy to get away and they were usually on the east or west coast. Nowadays they have them in Indiana every once in a while. I kept in contact with one guy that married a girl and stayed in Seattle. We visited him one time on a trip we took to Hawaii, my wife and I. That was 32 years after the war, must have been 1977. He’d said that he’d gone to one of the reunions and he didn’t know a soul. So I haven’t made any big effort to go to them, because all these guys are older and grayer and more crippled up. The Enterprise had a complement of about 4000 guys on the crew of the ship.

End of Side A. Side B begins.

D: That one fellow, it was 32 years after the war and he didn’t know a soul so I haven’t made any big effort to go. He died 3 or 4 years now, so I don’t contact him anymore! I do have one buddy that I talk to on the phone and he comes to town once a year. He lives in West Fargo, North Dakota, but that’s the only one I communicate with. But I’m a lifetime member of the Enterprise Association.

B: What does that group do?

D: That’s the group that meets every couple of years or so, but I get all the literature and reports on it.

B: So you don’t attend the meetings but you get updated.

D: Yeah. This (he has a book in his hands) is a complete history of the Enterprise from the time it was approved by Congress, so that’s something I save. I still save it.

B: A lot of memories on that ship.

D: Well, I was on the ship for a year and a half or better, so you get to know a lot of the guys. Another guy lives in South Minneapolis, but I haven’t seen or heard from him in many years so I’ve lost track of him. Another fellow in St. Paul I tried to find after the war, I couldn’t find him either. Nothing in the phone book, and I never had an address. I probably wouldn’t know him now, either.
B: A couple of more questions about what happened closer to the end of the war. Specifically, when Franklin Roosevelt in April of 1945, you were still overseas?

D: I was still on the ship then. I remember when he died and we got the report.

B: What was your reaction? What were your thoughts on President Truman...?

D: Being a three term president, of course, you get to know him as a country’s leader forever. We hoped Truman would turn out to be a good man, too. In my eyes, he did. In a lot of people’s eyes he did. That was a question that was asked me at the air guard museum – what was my opinion of the dropping of the bomb on Japan. Would you care to hear that?

B: Yes, I’d love to hear that.

D: Well, I said that if the war had progressed and we had to invade Japan it would take as many years to invade a country like that which was so fanatical and suicidal and to really subdue the whole country, would have taken comparatively speaking forever. It would have certainly taken a lot of American deaths and a lot of Japanese deaths. My opinion is that I take my hat off to Harry Truman for okaying that dropping of the bomb. A lot of politicians would have backed off on that because of the political ramifications, but Harry Truman – “The Buck Stops Here.” He was a blood and guts guy and he didn’t mind speaking his word and toeing the mark and doing what he should do and I feel in this case he did what he should do and he wasn’t afraid of political ramifications like I’m sure a lot of politicians would. I think he did right.

B: Was there a lot of surprise about the power of the atomic bomb? It was August of 1945, so you would have been back home or at least back at Bremerton.

D: We saw pictures. I was surprised by the devastation it caused in Japan. It almost leveled those two cities from what I’ve seen. It incinerated people momentarily, which is a very tragic thing. But it made a quick ending of that war, which I felt was for the best.

B: You felt that way in 1945 and you still feel that way now.

D: Yes. It may sound sadistic or something, but I felt it would have been much more tragic if we’d had to continue.

B: From what I read it would have meant a lot more American lives lost. By the time Japan surrendered you were back in the Bremerton. Had you thought at that point you might have to go back out to sea?
D: Before the war ended? At that time I didn’t know. I didn’t know if I’d be transferred back to the ship or not. But the war ended and so that ended that.

B: You made it back home to Minneapolis in 1946. Had the city changed much as a result of the war? Had life at your parent’s home changed?

D: One thing I remember changed. As far as the city itself, structures, you still had the Foshay Tower, the biggest building, I believe. One that I do remember, my wife and I were standing on the corner of 38th and Chicago Avenue and we were waiting for a bus. Here comes the bus and I was sort of startled because it was a lady bus driver. I had never seen that before. I exclaimed, “A woman bus driver” and I guess my wife was sort of embarrassed. I’d never seen that before! But now of course it’s a common thing.

B: So that was one thing that had changed.

D: I guess that’s the only change I can think of, otherwise it was pretty much the same.

B: What was the first thing you did after you got discharged?

D: The first thing I did? We got married in May of 1946.

B: That was pretty quick.

D: Yep. She didn’t want me to get away, and I didn’t want her to get away. And I had to look for work.

B: What kind of job did you get right after the war?

D: The first thing I did was work in oil stations. I liked working on cars. I worked on airplanes and I liked to work on cars, so I got a job working at an oil station down by Lake Calhoun. It’s tore down now, but it was by the boathouse that’s on the east side of Lake Street, where they rent canoes now. There used to be a Standard Oil Station on that corner, across from the boathouse. We sold a lot of gasoline there, and a lot of gasoline there at that time, I recall was about 20,000 gallons a month. That was considered quite a bit. I think we hit 30,000 maybe once in a while during the summer months. I worked for a guy, he was a good guy to work for, I didn’t make a lot of money but it was a start.

The question for every guy working at an oil station is that you ought to get your own station, so I applied for a gas station and I got my station of my own but it was pretty hard. I didn’t make enough money to hire anybody full time, so I finally got rid of that. I put about a year into it but I didn’t make any money. Gave it a good try. Then I got a job at Northland Milk Company, delivering milk. That was a good job at those times, I was making more money than a lot of guys. Even when I was a kid I thought I’d like to drive a bus. But everybody told me you don’t want to drive a
bus, with rowdy people and so on, so I got a job driving a milk truck. I delivered milk to homes and restaurants and some stores and so forth. I did that for 27 long, hard years. That’s hard work, you had to trudge through a lot of deep snow. It seemed that winters were harder then. A lot of blizzards and cold weather, ice and snow, but I did it for 27 years. Finally the company lost enough money so they closed the doors. At that time there was no severance pay, we didn’t have a pension plan to speak of, we had just joined a pension plan with the Central States Teamsters, so I walked away with almost nothing.

I was 50 years old now. I found out then... I had a GED, because I quit school early, which I’m not proud of, but I worked for my GED when I got out of the Navy at the encouragement of my wife and I found out that most employers value that as much or even more as a high school diploma. Several told me that. Because that shows that I went to bat and worked for it and got it. I found out then that everyone isn’t clamoring to hire a 50 year old male, so I finally got a job as a night custodian with Edina public schools, which was comfortable work. Easy, out of the weather. I was working nights. I had already applied at the MTC (Metropolitan Transit Corporation), but people frowned on that. All my friends thought it was terrible. I had a couple of other guys who were sort of knowledgeable helping people get work. One guy said to me, you want to route sales now, well I had had route sales for 27 long years and I knew what that was. That’s not easy. Quotas, collections, new customers and all that. I’d had my fill of that. I told him, “No, I don’t want that.” I worked out at Edina public schools, Edina West High School, for five months and then lo and behold the school board cuts back the budget so of course I was one of the first to go. I got the nice little letter. My favorite cousin was working in the office at the time, and she was the one who had to type up the letter for me.

In the meantime, a guy from MTC had called me. He had a place for me in the bus company. I thought long and hard on that. I thought, gee, I was working at the school, easy work, inside, some day I’d get on days, so I turned him down. I kicked myself all over the place when the school board laid me off. I galloped right over to see Mel Sholten [at MTC] I told him my story, and he said, “I’ve got a place for you in two weeks,” so he hired me and told me to report back on such and such a day, I did, and they took me on as bus driver. I spent almost 20 years doing that and I think I was probably the happiest bus driver in the fleet.

B: So you got to live your dream of driving a bus!

D: Yep.

B: That’s great, you never gave up on it.

D: I worked there driving a bus, I enjoyed it a lot. It’s not without problems, of course, and it’s not for everybody, but it was a good job for me and I enjoyed it. In October of 1994, just before winter sets in, I thought, “Gee, I’ve been working outside” – that’s also working outside, driving a bus outside. Where we lived, it was uphill to get out of our street, it was a dead end at the other end of the street. We’d get a lot of heavy snowfalls sometimes when I was driving bus and sometimes I’d get
out there and break it up at about 2 o’clock in the morning, so I could get out in the morning. Needless to say I didn’t get much sleep sometimes. I never scratched – scratching is when you show up late for work, then they can give you any run they feel like or they can send you home with no work – I never once scratched in my almost 20 years of driving bus. Almost a couple of times. One time, a young girl was on duty that morning checking you out and getting you your bus assignment. She called me up on the phone and said, “Where are you?” I’d overslept. “I’ll save your work for you but you get down here.” She had another, it happened to be a girl, bus driver fix my bus for me so it was all set to go, so all I had to do was hop on the bus and away I went. I didn’t scratch. That was pretty nice of her. She did me other favors, too. She was in the lost and found one time and I had turned in a purse that had some money in it and the lady whose purse it was claimed it and so she left an envelope with a $10 bill in it, she said, “Give this to the driver.” So she gave me the envelope. I told her I could split it with her and she said, “No, that’s yours.” I told her that she could have kept it and I wouldn’t have known a thing about it and she said that she would have known! That was pretty nice of her.

B: All your years in the military when you were working on planes, did you continue to work on engines or anything like that?

D: No, I didn’t try to work for Northwest Airlines. Sometimes I wonder if I should have, but they are laying off, too, all the time so I don’t know. But I’m glad I got to drive bus. I enjoyed it. It was such a treat after driving a milk bus. That was such a hard job; you always have to get more sales, quotas to fill, collections to make, new customers you have to get. When I was driving bus I enjoyed that. I did that for a little short of 20 years, and October of 1994 came along and I had over 19 years in, which was good for retirement. I was 69 years old then, I was one of the oldest guys hanging around there. My wife told me, “I didn’t think you were ever going to retire.” I was going to bed early and she was sitting up late watching the late news all alone and she didn’t enjoy that too much, so now we can sit up late and watch it together.

B: That’s good. My final question is, when you look back on the war now, what does it mean for you personally. Has it changed your life in anyway, your experience in the Navy?

D: I guess I never thought about it that way. It taught me to appreciate life more. I got through it all alive, a lot of guys didn’t. It made me toe the mark more, better, as far as doing your job and doing what you’re supposed to do. Of course, I was brought up in a very strict home, I was brought up to do that anyway, regardless. I don’t know if it changed my life necessarily, I just appreciate life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and I think we live in the best country there is. I’m glad of where I am now.

B: Do you have any favorite personal memories of the war?
D: I’m glad I got aboard ship in the Navy, and I’m glad I was on what was called a first line carrier. Fast fleet carriers they call them, as opposed to jeep carriers. I’m glad I was on a first line carrier and we operated all the other first line ships. I got to see what the navy was all about; the navy had always appealed to me. I didn’t get to see much of the world really. I saw a little of Detroit, never did get into Chicago, but we got to go to Detroit once in a while. When I was out in Alameda I got into Oakland once in a while and San Francisco. And Seattle, that’s a nice city. I spent some time there when I was first attached to the ship I went over to Seattle once in a while, toured and rode the busses around and see the town. They used to have a minor league baseball team there, on Rainier Avenues. Minor leaguers as compared to the Minneapolis Millers we used to have here. I used to go to a baseball game once in a while. I’d see some of the players that I’d seen in Minneapolis at times, because that was the same class of baseball. I enjoyed Seattle. We have a son that lives 180 miles southeast of Seattle so we get to Seattle once in a while.

B: So you got to see a bit of the world because of the Navy?

D: I enjoyed Honolulu, when we were at Pearl Harbor. One time we were in dry dock for two weeks, they had to repair the screw that was missing and had a camouflage paint job. I used to enjoy going to Honolulu, take a bus ride. I didn’t realize it was so far from Pearl Harbor. I think it was a quarter it cost us on the bus. In fact, you could ride all around the island for a quarter. I enjoyed going to Honolulu, but of course Honolulu now is not what it was then. There was no such thing as all the hotels on Waikiki Beach. Waikiki Beach was there, of course, but the only thing that was there was the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. I took a bus once to the end of the line of the downtown area, which the Royal Hawaiian was on, about another half mile or so. I walked out there once or twice. It was all nice and grass out there. At that time they used the Royal Hawaiian for submarine crews. At that time submarines were not nuclear powered, they were submerged almost all the time during the day, so these guys never hardly saw fresh air or sunlight. I went out there [to the hotel] to see it. There was a beach in front of the Royal Hawaiian that had big rolls of barbed wire. They were ready for an invasion of Japan. If we’d lost the Battle of Midway, we’d have really been stepped back. They might have taken the Hawaiian Islands, imagine them invading Honolulu and the Hawaiian Islands. So they had big rolls of barbed wire along the seashore. You could get to the ocean but it was a zigzag course through the barbed wire. It was a beautiful lawn and everything around the Royal Hawaiian. We’ve been there a couple of times since. Waikiki Beach is completely full of high rise hotels. You’ve probably seen pictures of it. Well, I saw it when it was just the Royal Hawaiian, that’s all. At the end of the bus line there was an Army/Navy YMCA. That’s where all the sailors, and the guys from Hickam Field air base, they’d be there too. There’d be a bunch of Hawaiian kids there who had a spot and they’d shine your shoes for a quarter or something. So most of us would have our shoes shined. Another thing, they had a big cereal bowl, about a half a pineapple, and they’d fill it with ice cream for a quarter. I didn’t do any boozing like some guys did.
B: You just ate the ice cream...

D: ...And walked around. At that time they had outdoor meat markets and everything. You’d see sides of beef hanging up on a hook, full of flies. People eat that, I guess, but it was just eye opening to me to see some of that. Of course it’s all cleaned up now.

B: It must have been quite the sight.

D: It was very interesting.

B: I don't have any more questions, unless there is anything else you wanted to share specifically. You have wonderful detail about your time on the Enterprise.

D: Like I say, it was a long time ago and I have to refresh my memory (with notes from his speech).

END OF INTERVIEW