

**Transcript of the Speech given in 1999 to veterans at Hill Air Force Base
by Chase Jay Nielsen**

Interviewed by David Morrell. Transcribed by Kathy Bradford

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David Morrell: Today is Monday, March 24, 2003. I have the opportunity of visiting with Chase Jay Nielsen and his wife Phyllis at their home in Brigham City. The purpose of my visit was to see if Chase would be willing to assist in making a tape of a talk regarding his experiences during the Second World War. Chase was a member of the famous Doolittle bombing of Tokyo which occurred in April of 1942, early in the war with the Japanese. Jimmy Doolittle had been selected to lead a squadron of bombers over Japan and make a bombing raid five months after Pearl Harbor. Sixteen B25 bombers, which included 5 crew members on each bomber or 80 airmen, participated in this raid over Tokyo in Japan. Mr. Nielsen was a navigator on one of the bombers and the particular airplane of which he was a member ditched in the ocean off the China coast after running out of fuel. There were two crews consisting of 10 men which crash landed in China, and the survivors were taken prisoner by the Japanese. Two crew members were killed on impact, and the other 8 were incarcerated. Of these 8 prisoners, 3 were executed by the Japanese; 1 died in the prison camp; and the other 4 were able to return home after the war. These 4 airmen were incarcerated for 40 months and suffered greatly from this ordeal.

Chase Nielsen was raised in Hyrum, Utah, attended the public schools there and graduated from South Cache High School in 1935 and from Utah State Agricultural College in 1939. He then entered the Military and was in the Army Air Force where he was trained as a pilot and a navigator. Several articles and books have been written regarding the Doolittle Flyers and the ordeal faced by these surviving airmen. A movie was produced several years back entitled "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo." Perhaps the best book regarding the prisoners was entitled "Four Came Home" which was written by Carroll V. Glines originally published in 1966.

As I visited with Chase and Phyllis, it was suggested that I take one of the videos which Chase had produced regarding his military service and time serving as a prison of war. This particular talk was given at Hill Air Force Base to a group of veterans in 1999. So what I would like to do now is just listen to the recording of Chase's talk.

Talk by Chase Jay Nielsen, Doolittle Flyer, POW

Back in '41, when the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor. . . I'm going to call them Japs. I always have; I always will. It's a matter of phonetics. I didn't have the best English teacher in school. But at any rate, back after Pearl Harbor, we were pretty upset at the Government. A lot of the head people, including Roosevelt, got together and offered a pretty good sum of money to the first people that could devise a way and bomb Tokyo and at the same time give the USA a jab in the arm, which was really needed.

The Japanese prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor had gone up through Manchuria and occupied all of Korea. They had worked over and down the coast and through Peking and all the way past Shanghai. They had occupied portions of the coast where the larger cities were. At the same time they'd bombed Pearl Harbor, they were bombing Manila in the Philippines. They went down and took over all the islands – Guam, the Marianas, the whole works. They'd gone down through the Pacific with a steamroller effect, occupying islands as they went. Yamamoto had planned this raid out a whole year in advance. From what I read in history, he wasn't desirous of maintaining all that property, but he wanted to take over a good deal of it, so that in some concession in a treaty, they would get what they wanted. He didn't really know that he had wakened up a sleeping giant and that he was in for trouble. As I said, people were very unhappy and wanted to get a reprisal raid and get vengeance back on Japan.

During all this planning, a Navy captain by the name of Francis Low came up with a scheme one day. He said, "The Army has some bombers. If we can get some bombers off an aircraft carrier and get the carrier in close enough to get bombers into China, this would be a real good deal."

The only catch was that an Army bomber could not land back on a carrier. Probably none of the bombers could take off from the carrier. None of them had enough range that if they bombed Tokyo, they couldn't fly on through Japan. Eventually, the air staff worked out a system, and they called General Doolittle in. He was a lieutenant colonel then. He was working in Research and Development at Wright-Patterson, and they called him in to test some of the aircraft and determine which of the bombers that we had in the fleet could be modified in any way to take care of this job. The carrier would take the aircraft to within about 400 miles of Tokyo. The bombers would take off then, bomb Tokyo and fly into Free China or the area south of Shanghai where there was moderate occupation by the Japanese and in some cases where the territory wasn't even occupied. This consisted of flying 2300 miles.

The B18 was automatically out. It didn't have any capacity at all for the criteria required. The B23 was considered. It had too long a wingspan to get it on the carrier and do much manipulation around the superstructure. The B26 was considered, but it really wouldn't carry a bomb load, and it didn't have the fuel capacity either. The B25 was new. We were the first operation to get the B25s. It was new into the fleet. It had plenty of power. It didn't have only about half the range, and it didn't carry much of a bomb load.

Through Doolittle's analysis of all these airplanes, he decided the B25 was the aircraft to use. It could be modified with extra fuel tanks running off the bomb bay, right on top of the bomb bay. And where we had sacrificed some gun turrets and things, an extra tank went in the aft lower part of the aircraft where the gun turret was. Then we had 10 5-gallon cans stacked in the back end. So really the 25 originally would have gone about 1300 to 1500 miles and probably 8 hours airborne. It held 640 gallons of fuel. We did modify it enough to hold about 1180 gallons and to fly about 2300 miles.

We practiced cruise control on our missions by cutting power back, and by sacrificing a little air speed, we had a lot better gas consumption. This was part of the training. The mission itself, after it was determined that the B25 was the aircraft, the mission itself would go as planned. Doolittle was then given command to take the flight. He used a little skullduggery. He went to General Arnold and told him General Spaatz had told him

he could lead the raid, and he didn't have any objection. He said, "Well, I don't see why not."

Then he went down the hall to General Spaatz's office and told him that General Arnold had told him that he could lead the raid. He didn't have any objections. As he was leaving he heard Arnold say, "Yes, that would be fine."

As he was leaving, he heard the phone ring, and the General said, "I just told him he could take the raid."

I think he really wanted to see the thing through, but I think he was the man to do it. He was a man's man. He never asked you to do a job he wouldn't do himself. A lot of it he did himself because of the classification on it. He came into the group and asked for volunteers. He merely said he was leading a mission or he had a mission to go on, and he needed approximately 25, he needed crews. It was a volunteer status. We would be out of the states about 90 days, and then we'd be returned to home base. He wanted to know if we'd volunteer. Everybody turned and looked at each other and everybody said we'd go. So the whole wing volunteered, and we had too many, so he put the training on a competitive basis and selected the best 16 crews. I happened to be good enough to get selected. That's how we really got involved in this raid.

Even on the Hornet that day we left, he said, "It's still in volunteer status." We had 25 extra crewmen on board. We had 5 total crew. He said, "It's still on voluntary basis. If any of you want to back out, someone else will take your place."

And they would have done because they were eager to go.

Down at Eglin, we were put up in the backwoods at an auxiliary field where we were to do some of our training. About the first or second day, we were gunning the engines and seeing how fast we could get off the ground. We hadn't thought about putting the brakes on and then running it up to full power. A few days later a Navy lieutenant from Pensacola came over. They marched down the runway 500 feet and made a mark and marched back. He said, "Okay, you start here. You lock your wheels and put full power on, and by the time you get to that mark, you'd better be airborne."

We'd been running at least 3500 feet of runway to get airborne. This was a little bit different. After we found out, and after we got into the aerodynamics of the airplane, you could get airborne with 8 knots of wind blowing, and you'd be indicating about 85 on the air speed meter. Of course, the needle would be switching back and forth, and you were hanging on the edge of a stall. If an engine backfired, which a couple of them did in the training period, the aircraft slid back into the ground and doubled up the fuselage.

We did a lot of cruise control flying. We also did low-level bombing. We had a Norden bombsight onboard. A Norden bombsight incidentally is one of the highest classified pieces of equipment we had. They always told us, "If you go down in enemy territory, take your 45 out and shoot it into the bombsight."

Those high-carbon steel wheels turning in that gyro about 35,000 rpm would be like hitting a shrapnel shell. It wasn't really the best deal. We found out that the bombing speed we were going to run was about 220 miles an hour at 1500 feet. The telescope in a Norden bombsight wouldn't track fast enough to stay on the target, so we did away

with that. I'm not going to explain it. It's out in the hangar. The bombsite's out there. I don't know if it's in the nose of the B25, but it's somewhere around there. It's just a piece of metal with a slide on it that goes up and down, and you just look down that thing. That's your bombsight. They called it the Mark Twain. It worked real good. But it should have done too because when you had a target that was a steel mill smelter or factory or big plants that are 300 or 400 feet wide and 1,000 feet long, it's pretty hard to miss one from 1500 feet.

We never knew where we were going. We'd always surmised with a Navy man onboard it was going to involve an aircraft carrier someday, but we figured we never could get off the deck of an aircraft carrier with that airplane. If we loaded it full of bombs and gas, we'd have over 30,000 pounds, and it's ridiculous to get that thing off the ground in 500 feet. Things went on, and Doolittle kept telling us, "This is a highly-classified mission. I don't want you talking about it off-base. It's so classified, I wouldn't even talk to my buddy about it."

We didn't. We didn't have too much discussion. There was a lot of speculation. We'd say, "Oh, they'll probably load us onto an aircraft carrier and take us up into the Baltic up north, and the reason we have to practice take-offs is in case we run into some of the German Wolf pack up there – the submarines. We'll have to take off to clear the deck so they can get their aircraft up." Or we'd think they'd take us here or there to unload us.

We were a little bit surprised then to get orders to fly to California and get loaded on a carrier. So we said that our first guess was right: "We're going on a carrier. Where are they going to take us now? They can't take us over to Hawaii and just leave us out in to Midway or somewhere out there. That's ridiculous, too." So we had about decided that we were going to go to Hawaii. We were a little bit surprised the first day out at sea when the bullhorn came on and told us that this fleet was bound for Tokyo.

We said, "I guess all our speculation is out the window now."

So onboard the Hornet, we all got maps and charts out. Incidentally the better maps we had were of Japan. We had hardly anything of China. The best maps we could find were in the National Geographic, so for the China Coast and the place we were really going to go into we used a chart just with squares on like a graph paper and took what maps we could find. Where we could get geographic coordinates of a city, we platted those in. We knew there would be a radio there. The Navy was sending out frequencies so we could use radios along the Japanese Coast and the China Coast for navigation. So we plotted all this in.

We would fly in and bomb Tokyo, and then we'd fly down the Japanese Coast and make a turn on the 30th degree parallel north and 130 east and head in to Chuchow Lishui and another one. The Japanese had occupied this area here below the Yangtze River, and even lower than that they were down in this area. We were to fly up here and then fly from there on into Chungking. When we got the aircraft to Chungking, they were going to be turned over for use of the Flying Tigers.

We were forced into an early take-off because we ran into some Japanese picket ships way out here 800 miles out of Tokyo. Two of them were sunk the morning we took off, and I think they sank a couple after we left. By running onto those picket ships where we had intended to take off just before dark, while we could still see the horizon (we didn't

want to fly into the ocean off that bombing deck), we were forced then to take off between 8 and 9 in the morning so the carrier could get our aircraft airborne and bring their aircraft up on deck. We didn't have the Enterprise Carrier with us, but that was really the only other defense item we had with us. We had a couple of cruisers and a couple of destroyers, but if the Japanese fleet had been out there, they would want to get the carrier's aircraft up.

We had to leave early in the morning. Well, this was about 8 to 10 hours more at sea than we had anticipated, and they'd given us about 300 miles farther to fly to get into China. And we were stretching it as it was. From when we left the carrier until my props quit out of fuel, we'd flown 13 hours and 10 minutes at about 185 mph airspeed. It's a little over 2300 miles. So we had to stretch it.

One crew was having fuel problems. I think he had a fuel leak and decided he was using excessive fuel and turned over Tokyo and flew to Vladivostok, Russia. This was against strict court martial orders. We had been keyed in on some coded messages, and Stalin would never give us permission to go into Russia. At the same time we went on the raid back in April 1942, the Germans were right on his front door, and he didn't want the Japanese coming in the backside. The Japanese and the Russians never did get along anyway from the Japanese War they had back about 1800. This would have cut 600 miles off our flight. You can see the difference in flying from here to there than from here to there {indicating on map}.

When we took off, we had no trouble getting into Tokyo because as we left the carrier, we circled and came back and got the geographic coordinates of where the carrier was, and we had it plotted out on our maps and could plot our heading on in. We'd flown approximately an hour I guess or about 185 miles, and we were tuned in to JOAK, a commercial station which was a big radio station in Tokyo. We started to see the bird-dog needle get a little excited, and pretty soon it centered in on zero. We flew the direction finder from there into Tokyo. There was no sweat on navigation in getting there, but then we had other radio stations down the coast where there were shooting bearings for fixes so we would know where we were. We had planned on doing night celestial navigation, but we were flying in the daytime.

The original plan was to bomb Tokyo at night and then hit the China coast the next day at daylight. As it was – taking off in the morning – we hit Tokyo right after noon, and as we got to the China Coast it was getting dark. It was rainy. The weather was getting bad. We were out of fuel. The base we were going to get into, Doolittle was going in first, and then we would use his radio to home in on. He was forced to bail out. They sent a C47 out of Chungking that was going to land at Lanai so we could use his radio to home in on, and he was flying in the dark and hit a mountain. So we didn't have that support either. We were all on our own, and actually when we left the carrier, we went off one at a time with about a 3 or 4 minute separation because we took all 16 aircraft off within an hour's time. Six of us bombed Tokyo; some of them bombed Osaka and Kobe and I don't know what else. They were all industrial targets that we bombed.

The aircraft and crew that landed in Russia were interned by the Russians. They confiscated the airplane. They took the guys. I don't know how long they were in the area, but they were eventually moved across Russia on the Trans-Siberian railroad into the Moscow area. About a year and a half after the Russians had interned them, they finally got them over into the Moscow area. I think they were getting a little upset with the

keep and the work it was taking to maintain security on these five individuals and to feed them and clothe them and all this. They finally took them toward the Turkey area and set up an escape for them with the Turkey underground, and shortly after that, they were returned back to U.S. control.

Of the crews that reached China, 4 ditched in the ocean, 11 bailed out over land. When we crashed in the ocean, it killed 2 of the boys on my airplane. The one that was coming out of the nose down the tunnel had been a bombardier and wanted to stay there. It was dark, and we couldn't see. We had very few minutes from my estimated time of arrival. We should have been at the coastline. You couldn't see anything, and we found out the next day where the coastline was. Those people are not equipped like we are. They don't have big six-lane freeways running up and down the coast and automobiles, and they don't have lights on. They were all blacked out. They were living under puppet control of the Japanese Army, and they had a pretty meager existence.

When we crashed, it threw the pilot and his chair out through the windshield, and the co-pilot was pretty well beat up, but he climbed out through his windshield. It knocked me out about half silly as the navigator, and when I came too enough to know what was going on, I was standing in water about waist deep. I knew I couldn't get out the underside of this airplane, so I just reached up. The crash axe was just hanging up in the corner, and I knocked the window out that was right above my head. I crawled out and got on the fuselage. I saw the bombardier come up from the wing on one side and the gunner in the back came up on the other side. They were both bleeding from the mouth and from the head quite profusely. We got the life raft out. Like the best-laid plans of mice and men, we went to inflate the life raft. The lanyard on the CO2 bottle broke off flush and the raft didn't inflate. We didn't have time to get the auxiliary gear out of the kit on the life raft. We knew we were going down, and I tried to get a lanyard and got some of these supplies together.

The ocean was getting pretty rough. I estimated we were probably four miles off the coast where we'd ditched. We couldn't even get tied together. Within a very few minutes, we were separated. I couldn't yell and hear anyone, so I took my 45 out and put a shell in the chamber, and I fired to see if I could get someone to fire back and kind of give me an idea of direction – where they were. All I got was a wet soggy click, and after about three or four rounds of it doing that, I just unbuckled my belt and let it go. After all, a 45 and a belt with seven clips of ammo was pretty heavy. I figured if the ammunition was wet, it wasn't going to do me any good, and I didn't want to get caught by an enemy or anyone else with a gun that wouldn't work.

I floated for a while. I tried to swim, but I decided that if you swim you can't see anything whether you're going towards land or not. So I floated until I ran into some bamboo poles that were about 6 or 8 inches in diameter, and they had fishing nets hanging from them. I figured they were either the Japanese soldiers that were living in the area or the Chinese fishing nets, and they'd probably be out at daybreak to get their catch. If I could hang onto one of those, I'd be better off. After I rested and got my breath, I decided, No, that was not a good idea either because if they were Japanese fishing nets, I would really be in a fix. There were Japanese in the area. We knew there were Japanese in the area. We had been informed by intelligence on the carrier what the uniforms looked like and the difference between the Japanese and the Chinese. There was quite a difference. The Japanese more or less wore English riding boots while the Chinese wore rubber-soled canvas shoes and wrapped leggings. They had different star types. The Chinese

wore a blue and white painted 12-point star on their uniforms, and the Japanese wore 5-pointed gold stars. There were a few other little idiosyncrasies, but this was to help us to identify in case we were hid out and some troops came by.

I finally maneuvered until I could let my feet down once in a while. I finally hit bottom, and when I did, I could hear the breakers crashing on the beach up ahead of me, so I worked that way to get up out of the water. I worked up high enough to get out of the high tide line, and then I just keeled over and passed out. The next morning I woke up, and the first thing I thought was, "What in the hell are you doing over here? A few hours ago you were on an aircraft carrier with 5,000 people. It was a great life. Then you took off. Now you don't have the carrier around; you don't even have your airplane or any of your crew. You're in enemy territory. You're 6500 air miles from home. You couldn't speak the language. You couldn't understand anybody if they spoke to you. What got you into this?"

I didn't have too long to worry about it. I looked up, and I could see two orange things out on the beach a ways ahead of me. I thought it was two of my men and that it was probably the two that were beat up in the wreck the night before, which it later proved out to be. I wanted to crawl down there and find out. I thought I'd better get down there, and I looked the place over. It was in a kind of bay, and over in one corner was a black area where there were two Jap PT boats tied up with the meatball flag tied off the stern. Down the other way, the cliff went into a mountain. Back in the area in the background there were a few rice paddies, and then it looked like bamboo or willows. I didn't know it was bamboo really until I got up to it. There was a grassy area by it where you could hide out. Up by the dock area, there were probably about 50 or 60 kind of shanty-town shacks. I saw a few people around there, but when I saw this Japanese flag that froze my blood.

I thought I'd crawl down and see if I could see what this is on the beach, and then I'm getting my buns out of here. I crawled for a ways, and I started lifting my head up. I thought I was close enough, and I got my head up about that far and the first thing I saw was a pair of split-toed canvas shoes and a pair of laced leggings. I looked on up and there was a rifle pointed right at my head. It looked like the barrel had a bore in it that big around. I saw a head there on the stock of the gun with the most evil-looking face I'd ever seen, all pock marked. I took another look and thought, Laced leggings. I looked farther up and saw a blue star with white points on it.

I didn't say anything, and he didn't say anything. He finally took his head off the stock of his gun and said, "You American? You Japanese?" I guess I could look as much like a Japanese as some did.

I said, "You Japanese? You Chinese? I'm American."

He said, "Me China."

About that time, we heard a PT boat coming around the corner of the bay. I'd seen enough of it to know it had a meatball flag on it, too. He pointed to the brush up above the rice paddy and said, "You run. I run. They Japanese. They kill us."

So we ran up into the bamboo, and after we got hid up, we stopped running and he handed me his rifle and wanted to know if I wanted a cigarette, and he lit one. I thought it

was rather strange he was a pretty trusting soul, but we sat there to get our breath. I found out that he didn't speak too good of English, but he spoke enough that he could make you understand with a little sign language. He said he had been a cab driver in Shanghai, and that's probably where he learned what little language he had. He did say it was too bad -- something about the French. Maybe he spoke French better than he did English.

At any rate, after we got up in the hideout, I said, "Your boss. Your number one man."

He said, "Oh, Captain Ling."

I said, "Where are your barracks? Where's your house?"

He said, "Way up mountain there." He said something like 3 or 4 kilometers.

I said, "We go." He nodded his head, so up the trail we went.

The Japs came in and I guess tied up the PT boat, but at the same time he said, "Your men." And pointed at them. "We bury soon." They were fixing coffins and some wood shavings and were getting ready to bury them. They wanted to get them out of the way. I found out that they figured that if the Japs found them, there would be hell to pay. They were getting ready to bury them, so the next morning we did bury them. During the afternoon, they brought in Hallmark, my pilot, and Meder the co-pilot. Hallmark's leg was all torn up in the knee. It looked awful. They put some medicine on it, Chinese medicine -- whatever they had. I don't know what they put on it, but they put some bandaids around it. Later it got infection in it.

We talked to Captain Ling. We didn't tell him who we were. We just told him we were Americans. Our aircraft had gone down. We knew where we were, and he had kind of a map. We told him we wanted to get down to Wenchow, so we could go up the Wenchow River. If we could get into there, we'd be into Free China, and that's what we wanted to do. So he agreed to take us down on one of their smaller boats, and we spent one day travelling down the coast. We got down to Wenchow and went inland. He went down to make these arrangements. We wanted him to leave us in the boat in the estuary in the river because there were a thousand other Chinese boats out there. We wanted him to leave us out there, but he wanted us to go into this one port in the city. He was getting pretty anxious about it, and we thought that it was his plan and we had to go along with him. Maybe we'd better go. We went in with him, and when we got in there, he'd been in ahead of us. He'd contacted a Chinese fellow. I don't know if he was a Presbyterian missionary or what, but he had worked with some of the Christian missionaries there and he spoke pretty good English. He was supposed to stay with us and take care of us and cook us a meal while Captain Ling went in to get the boat ready. We'd only been there about five minutes after Captain Ling left when some young Chinese children came running in and talked to him in Chinese. He looked at us and said, "The Japanese have come in."

We tried to hide out. We even crossed an alleyway where they had a bunch of Chinese together along the road. We got behind them and squashed down and crossed the alleyway and got over into the other side of the area. Finally the Japanese soldiers spread out and searched the whole area. They were definitely looking for something, and when they found us, they found Hallmark first. He was down in the corner of the

building covered up with a bunch of old rice sacks, cardboard, lumber, and I don't know what else. The Japanese walked over, and when they found out he was there, they grabbed him by the shirt and raised him up. The first thing they said was, "Where's your two buddies?"

Dean looked at him and said, "Two buddies. I don't know what you mean."

He said, "I know there were three of you. Where are the other two?"

When they looked around, we had climbed up into the rafters of the building. With that many eyes of a dozen soldiers, I guess, they finally located us. They got us down, put handcuffs on us and told us we were now prisoners of the Imperial Japanese Army. I'll tell you that really takes a lot of wind out of your sail. I'd always said if anything happened to me, the last thing was capture because I'd shoot myself first, but I never had a gun to shoot myself with. I'm glad I didn't. I don't think I would have anyway.

They took us down and put us in a PT boat and ran us up to Shanghai, and when they got to Shanghai, it was about 3:30 in the afternoon. They took us into their MP headquarters in Shanghai and started to interrogate us. I mean they got rough. Two or three of the guys, we found out later, were with the Japanese Imperial Marine Unit, and they knew what they were doing. They beat us. They put a bamboo pole 2 or 3 inches in diameter back of your legs and got you down on your haunches. Then they put their foot on your thigh and bounced up and down on your knee joints. They burned the bottoms of your feet with charcoal. They took bamboo splints about the size of toothpicks and would stick them under your fingernails, and then they'd light them afire. That's fun. They put me down on the floor and spread my arms out and put a big guard on each side with hobnailed shoes – boots with hobnails in. Then they'd pull your arms out. They took a wet Turkish towel and would wrap it around your face and leave kind of a cup in the middle. They'd pick up a bucket from over in the corner of dirty water and I don't know what else was in it. They'd pour that in there until it would get so full of water you were about ready to drown. They'd jerk you up to your feet and beat you on the back and throw you back down and start over again. They beat me with a rubber hose on the back. I talked to an interpreter a few days later. He said, "They use that quite often. It doesn't leave any marks."

The amazing thing to me was, Why did they care whether it left marks or not? We thought they were going to kill. We just didn't know if they were going to skin us first or not, but they had all kinds of mean things they'd do. They'd take their hobnailed boots and get over and get hold of your shoulder up under your arm and back over your shoulder and then take the boot and run the hobnails down over your shinbone and mash your foot. They'd slap and knock you down.

In interrogation one day, this one lieutenant was talking about Roosevelt. He said, "Oh Roosevelt has got a bad leg. He's got a bad mind, too. He's nothing but a big goofball."

About that time I went so far as to hit him, and I found out that wasn't the thing to do either. I don't know whether it was broken ribs or not, but they sure felt like it. I sure got worked over. I learned in a hurry to be a little respectful. One thing I learned in Japanese meant I don't understand. They'd ask me a question, and I'd give it to them right in their own language. They interrogated us. They wanted to know where we came from and

about our airplanes. "We know there's more out there. What's your base? What's your unit number?"

I'd say, "All I can tell you is my name, rank and serial number."

They'd keep going through that and keep walking all over you, and they didn't buy that. They said, "Well, if you're not going to talk, we'll take you out and you'll be executed."

They took me outside, pegged me up to a brick wall. They had stanchions every 2 or 3 feet with a 2-inch chain on a handcuff. They stretched me out, pinned something on my shirt here and put a blindfold on, and I heard a squad of people march out. When they halted, you could hear the steel butts of the guns hit that flagstone or brick sidewalk.

I said, "Well, I guess these guys are serious. Two more commands or three or anything higher and it's all over."

I got to thinking, Who would ever find out? How would anybody know what happened to me? I don't know if there's really any consolation in people knowing you're facing a firing squad while you're going through it or not. At any rate, it wasn't long until someone walked up and kind of laughed and said, "I guess you know we're Knights of the Bushido of the Order of the Rising Sun. We don't execute at sundown. We execute at sunrise, and if you don't talk by morning, we'll execute you in the morning."

Then they ran me back into the cell. It was dark then, and they took my handcuffs and hung them up over a peg on the wall so my toes barely touched the floor. I hung that way all night. Then next morning they came in and let me down. I don't know how long I'd been through in the night. When they let me down, I thought my arms were going to drop off my shoulders. They took me down and tied me up to the wall again.

I thought, These guys are getting serious. I stood there for a while, and finally an officer came running up and talked to an interpreter in Japanese, and then the interpreter came over and said, "Well, you have a last reprieve. We just got orders to fly you back to MP Headquarters for interrogation."

I thought, Well, if you do this, I'll never get out of there. I said, "If you're going to shoot me, do it now and get it over with."

He said, "Shoot you? We don't intend to shoot you."

So they put us in an airplane and took us back to Tokyo. We thought the guys in Shanghai were bad, but the ones in Tokyo they really worked us over. They'd ask you 2 or 3 questions and then about kill you if you didn't talk. Name, rank and serial number. And it went on for about 4 or 5 weeks. They wanted to know where you came from and what was your unit number. One night they took me in for interrogation, and there was this little 4 or 5 inch stack of wet, soggy papers sitting on the corner of the table. They set me down at the side of it. The interpreter stood there and leafed over a few charts, and they were watching my reflexes. All at once they turned one over, and here was the stationery with the picture of an aircraft carrier, and right below it, it said USS Hornet.

He said, "What's a hornet?"

I gave him my interpretation of what I thought a hornet was, like a bee. He kind of shook his head and started peeling off a few more. There was a piece of 8 by 10 stationery with the crew roster off the carrier. It had every crew listed by airplane tail number, crew position. Number 1 of those airplane tail numbers showed Colonel Doolittle, his serial number, rank. It went down to crew number 6.

He put his finger under Doolittle's name and said, "Do you know this guy?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "We captured him and executed him."

I said, "Oh."

He went on down to crew member number 6 and put his finger under my name. Then he turned around and smiled and said, "I know you know this guy."

The only interpreters they used were all college graduates of the U.S. They said, "They didn't come over here to get an education because our school system wasn't that good. They came over here more to be spies."

And he said, "We have a lot of information."

So a few days later, they took me in and set me down and gave me something with Japanese writing on the front of it. It had the silhouette of the aircraft carrier. They opened it up and they had the master plan of the USS Hornet. They had pictures of it from the day they laid the keel until the night of the christening, and the night of the christening they even had pictures of the Navy guys in their Class A uniforms dancing with their wives in the hangar bay. He said, "This carrier brought you over, didn't it?"

I thought, Well, this is more rubbish than I'm going to take. I said, "Yes, I did. You bombed Pearl Harbor with carriers."

He didn't like it if you'd ever say anything about Pearl Harbor. Then I thought I'd get him a little more irritated, so I told him about two of the big Japanese subs that were patrolling the West Coast after war was declared. They had 5 big submarines out there that we classified as 85-men subs. They had 21 or 22 little 2-men subs. The little submarines were in Puget Sound, and they were out around Bremerton and the Seattle area. They'd surface at night and make observations. The coast artillery that set over at Bremerton could see them sitting there against the Seattle nightlights. They'd just blast them out of the water. I don't know how many they sank. Out of the 5 big subs, we sank 2 of them -- one of them had shelled the coast at Santa Barbara. The other one, one of the boys happened on on sub patrol, flying about 800 feet with patchy clouds. He came out through the clouds, and the submarine was sitting right in front of him. They just dumped 400 or 500 pounders on him. When he came into Portland and landed, they had about 6 chunks of bomb casing about that big sticking in his wing. It must have blown out in the air.

Then they had a little guessing game. How many gun emplacements did it have? What size were the guns? What was the fuel capacity? How many aircraft were on it?

You'd guess one day it was 2000 feet long, and then next day it was only 480 because that's what we used to get off on.

So they moved us back to Shanghai. A few days after we were back at Shanghai, they took us in front of a Court Tribunal. They conducted the whole court trial in Japanese. They never said one word in English. They had an interpreter there. We asked him to interpret, and all he would do was shake his head.

Incidentally, we never did get in any prison camp with any other Americans or any other civilians – nothing – just military people. They held us in the military prison. The next day they took us in to the tribunal, and there were only 5 of us. They conducted the court in Japanese and interpreted it in English, and they told us that we had been sentenced for execution. But we had been commuted to life imprisonment due to the leniency of the Emperor. We were sentenced to the condition of solitary confinement – no packages out or in, no Red Cross packages, no correspondence, no work detail. If anything like a prisoner of war exchange came up, we were not considered for that. We were sentenced to life imprisonment, so that's what it would be. Then they threw us in solitary confinement and we sweat out the next two years and nine months in solitary. If you don't think that's fun, lock yourself in your bathroom for a week. Don't talk to anybody. Don't have anything to read, and you might as well drink tap water for food because that's about as good as what we got. I was born and raised on a farm up here in Hyrum, and I know the pigs I slopped ate a lot better than I ever did in prison camp.

When I came out and got in Walter Reed Hospital on September 3, 1945, I weighed 103 pounds. Normally I weighed around 180. Right now I don't. Phyllis cooks too well.

Anyway life then was kind of monotonous. We had a few things going that were a little entertaining, but mostly it was fleas, bedbugs, lice, and trying to survive. Once in a while, they'd let you out to get a little exercise. Some of the Japanese would talk to you if they were trying to learn a little English. The others would just ignore you, but the ones that did – you'd get outside with them, and they'd get a little bit friendly and they always wanted to try Judo on you. They were little, not quite big enough to throw you. They'd grab hold of you, and if you'd just relax a little bit and fall, you could stick one foot out and trip them and flop on top of them. That was always a good joke.

Another one was to get your hand around their shoulder and steal all the pencils and papers out of their shirt pockets and stick them under your belt and then go do it to another guy and stick them all back into his pockets. They never knew who was stealing from who.

The building we were in they put two guards on in the day. One would sit in a chair up on front, and the other one just walked up and down the hall. There were just 5 of us in there. They walked past and didn't have very far to go. In the room they had a shelf built up about 2 feet, and it was back in from the wall about 2 feet. It would get so they could sit on it and hang their feet down, or they'd put their grass mats on it and their blankets, and 2 of them would sleep on it at night. They all smoked cigarettes like mad. They'd take one of you out of your cell once in a while in the morning to go up there and sweep up the ashes and the litter they'd made and fold up their blankets and their grass mats. If you could get up there and there were still some burning cigarettes in the ashtray, it was nice to fold up the grass mat and set it on top of the ashtray. And fold up a couple of blankets and set it on top of that. You'd get it all swept up, and they'd take you back to

your cell. By the time that they'd get you back to your cell, they'd have a Chinese fire drill.

Life as a whole was pretty monotonous until V-J Day. They'd moved us up to Peking and 4-engine bombers flew over the prison up there. We were in a prison that would accommodate 10,000 prisoners, but this B24 flew over. I got to see part of it, and I knew it wasn't Japanese because it didn't sound like it. The ones they had sounded like they ran on diesel. Everything was quiet. About a week after that, I heard a noise out in the hall, and I looked up the hall and there were about a dozen GIs out there in sunbaths. They had a 2 or 3-day growth of beard, and they were armed to the teeth. I thought, Hell, now what? Some subversive Americans that are going to come down through here and wipe us out. They came down to my cell and stopped. Of course, my hair hadn't even been combed for 3 and a half years. I hadn't shaved since I left the Hornet. Every once in a while they'd give us a pair of clippers and let us clip all the way around, so I'd clipped it all off. But I had a real growth of beard and a real growth of hair. A major stopped by my door and turned to one of his troops and said, "He looks like an American. Are you American?"

I didn't say a word.

He said, "He must be an American. Let him out." So they got the guard over there and opened the door, and when I got out, he said, "When were you captured?"

I said, "I was with a lieutenant colonel by the name of Doolittle, and we bombed Tokyo back on April 18, 1942. There's three other guys down the hall here, too."

He turned to his paratrooper and said, "You've got to watch him. He's clear off his noggin. Those guys got killed years ago."

And I said, "No, we were not."

Anyway we went out to the airport and cranked up the auxiliary power unit and got a radio message into Chungking. Chungking came back about an hour later and verified name, rank, and serial number and said, "They are Doolittle's boys. An aircraft is on its way to Peking to pick them up. Have them ready."

So we got out of there as fast as we could go. We went down to Chungking intelligence and gave them a bunch of names of things and people we wanted picked up. They told us about what could happen in war crimes trials.

Then we came on home, but just before Christmastime, they called me and asked if I wanted to go back to Shanghai and work, and I said, "You bet!" So back to Shanghai I went. I went to the war prison in Shanghai and walked into the rotunda in one cellblock as this Japanese was coming up the other way. It was Captain Tatsuta the prison commander at Kiangwan Military Prison. He was also in command of the firing squad that executed the 3 guys. They had 4 Japanese that were being tried in the trial I went back to testify in. There were a lot of others that were responsible for our torture and treatment, but they were wanted by a higher tribunal. They figured it was no use spending time trying all these little trials. They would try them in a higher tribunal, and whatever the sentence is that would be it.

I think there were 2 that received execution sentences. Out of the 4 that were tried in my trial, one was Lieutenant General Sawada who was in command of the 14th Expeditionary Army in Shanghai, and the reason they had him is because he was the commander. Everybody had said, "We're taking orders from the higher ups now." He was the higher up. They wanted to see what he had to say about it. He had plenty, but he didn't get off scott free. Two of them were on a court tribunal, and Tatsuta, who was in charge of the firing squad. It really didn't matter what they sentenced them to anyway because six years after the war crimes trial, the Emperor declared an amnesty and turned them all loose.

While I was over at the war crime trials, I had the opportunity to work with grave registration and a branch of the Army gathering up all the remains of everyone they could find. I got all the urns of ashes home and the guys that had been buried down the coast. One urn got mixed up in going through forensics in Hawaii, and one fellow that was executed was buried in a national cemetery on the Diamond Head in Hawaii. The others were all buried in Arlington.

Now I guess you all know what all this means to me. Sometimes I even wonder myself. I don't think I was mentally prepared to be imprisoned by the Japanese when I volunteered for the raid. We hadn't received any formal instructions on the Geneva Convention and what the treatment of prisoners of war should be, but I didn't realize how much a human body and mind could take and still survive. If you have a reason to do things and a will to live, I think you can do it. Many years have passed, as a matter of fact 58, since we blasted off the carrier and bombed Japan. I've learned quite a few things about myself, and that might seem strange to you, since I spent 2 years and 9 months in solitary. You can think of everything you can think of, and in 6 months, you're through. You're just a living vegetable. You need mental food as well as physical food. We did on one occasion when Meder died get Christmastime in '43. I had a good talk with the prison governor and got a few books to read. None of the food conditions picked up, but we did get some books to read, and one of them was the Bible. I think that was a lifesaver for a lot of us. A lot of the scriptures in the Bible really came home to me. We spent a lot of time trying to learn and repeat. I did anyway, and go through documents and things I learned in school. One of them was the Declaration of Independence. I quote, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that to secure these rights, governments are installed among men that derive their powers from the consent of the government"

I'll tell you these things really come home to you when you're held in confinement by a brutal enemy who doesn't think anything at all and even rejects the idea of individual liberty. Like I said, when I got the Bible, I wasn't really what you'd call a religious man. When I was growing up, I attended my church functions. We had family prayers. We said grace. I graduated from Seminary. I never went on a mission. I thought it was more important to get through college, but through this reading of the Bible, I began to recognize the true meaning of religion. I found out that in the ripped and faded pages of that Bible was a source of faith and courage that I had never felt before. I guess I accepted and put my trust in a God that I really hadn't accepted before I discovered that faith in His word would carry me through the greatest perils of my life. I've talked to a lot of youth groups, and I've asked them if they've heard about men that pray morning, noon, and night. They said yes.

I said, "Well, have you ever heard about one that prayed all day long?"

They said, "No."

I said, "Well, I did."

And they said, "Why?"

I said, "Because I didn't have anyone else to talk to."

Anyway, Abraham Lincoln once said, "Our alliance is in love of liberty that God planteth in us."

I think that statement should be indelibly engraved in the minds of all Americans. I think that our beloved nation formed on a trust in God will only survive as long as we are ready to fight and die if necessary to defend it. I concluded that my buddies didn't die in vain. They died to perpetuate those ideals.

Thank you.

David Morrell: A personal observation: Chase Jay Nielsen and his wife Phyllis currently live here in Brigham City at 806 Highland Blvd. After the war ended, Chase stayed in the military, retiring in about 1961 after 23 years of active duty. He then moved to Brigham City where he raised his family and was employed at Hill Air Force Base during his professional career. Of personal interest, when the war started back in 1941, my parents Lyman and Florence Morrell and their young family lived in Hyrum, Utah. Our home was located just west adjacent to Chase's grandfather and grandmother Jonas and Augusta Nielsen's home, and several of the Nielsen family lived in the neighborhood.

Incidentally, I may refer to Chase Jay Nielsen as Jay because when he was growing up in Hyrum, he was known as Jay among his family and friends. Anyway, Jay's parents Floyd and Carrie Nielsen lived through the block from where my folks lived. After the Doolittle flight and Jay had been captured, his mother used to come over and visit with my mother quite often that summer, and more or less cry on her shoulder. Jay's mother, I guess, had a mother's intuition that Jay was still alive. In fact, she knew that he was, and she knew that eventually he would return home. I think they did know that he had been a Doolittle flyer and that their plane had gone down. There was some possibility that he was a prisoner of war, and his mother carried this faith and hope that Jay was alive and would eventually return home.

One day she was talking to her bishop, Joseph W. Wright, there in the Hyrum First Ward. He tried to console her a little bit. He said, "Now Sister Nielsen, you've got to face reality. You must realize that Jay may not return home."

She became quite angry at the bishop; down deep she knew that he was still alive and that he would return. I guess she basically chastised Bishop Wright for his lack of faith, saying, "If you don't straighten out, you can't be my bishop any more."

In November of 1942, our family moved to Brigham City where my father took employment at Bushnell General Hospital. Jay's father Floyd also worked at Bushnell, and shortly before the war ended, he met my father one day at the hospital and made the following statement: "Lyman, we will soon hear from our son Jay."

The Nielsens had a great deal of faith and assurance that Jay was alive and would return home. During this period, many personal and family prayers were said by the Morrell family for their friend, neighbor, and war hero Chase Jay Nielsen.