

C.W. "Wink" Mays

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Question: And I kind of know the answer to this one already cause I've seen your car. What do you think about the choice of dropping the bomb?

Answer: Boy, I was 100% for it. I had gotten, I was kind of screwy after four years in the Navy and so I got rotated right away. I was, Man, I was.. I'd been in five major battles by the end of... Off of Normandy was the last one but we didn't fire a shot at Normandy. Cause there were so many ships there that we were practically runnin' over each other. So I put in for shore duty and got it. I was one of the first guys to rotate when they started rotating the old guys off and I got two years at Corpus Christy. And I was on my way to China when they dropped, when Truman dropped the bomb.. and man, I was never so happy in my life. I didn't how many Japanese got killed. I would have killed them all at the time. But that's what saved me from, and they were of course they were figuring on the invasion of Japan at the time and they figured on losing many, many, many, many GI's and sailors and so forth. So I was really happy with that atomic bomb. But it's a terrible thing... terrible thing. You interviewed another guy in this Pearl Harbor Survivors group by the name of Jones, Earl Jones. Of course, he got hit, shot at, over there, you know, he'd only been over there about weeks at Kaneohe So I think of these guys like that and the guy got burned so bad, this friend of mine, and I think well, what the heck, what's the difference you know, whether you get flash burned so bad you die or get your lungs burned or get the atomic bomb dropped on you. At least most of them died fast and I guess there some of them that didn't die too fast but.. Yeah, I was for it but it really started something, didn't it? Really bad thing... I think the atomic power is great. You know the ships that are atomic power now and the submarines that can stay to see practically forever and everything, but the atomic bombs I think that's something else. This warfare that we got going on now it's scary, that's real scary. With all the germ warfare and crap like that and gas. I had an uncle, I was named after an uncle, got killed in World War I. He was a World War I hero, and, in France. And he got gassed and died. But his name was Christopher Columbus Mays and I was named after him. I was named after his nickname; his nickname was Claris and where they ever got Claris I don't know but I was named after his nickname. Like I said it made me, it made me tough. Still get letters addressed Dear Madam... all those fun things.

Question: It's interesting cause the perspective you poured in from World War II, World War I, your, was it uncle that you were named after?

Answer: Yeah, yeah.

Question: Being gassed. World War II Pearl Harbor being bombed... here we are now on the eve of what it looks like's going to happen in Saddam Hussein and back to gassing of.. When you look back, cause in just sitting with you I know I'm assuming listening to you talk that you're proud. You fought for your country. You did what you needed to do. Has anything changed?

Answer: The more it changes, the more it stays the same, you know. I'm really, really, really, really discouraged. I'm just, because it just keeps happening over and over and over no matter how much we holler.. I started on these memorials and stuff way before there was a Pearl Harbor survivors' outfit. They were formed in I think, 1961 or '59, around in there somewhere, and by then I already had got a lot of carving and stuff to.. said, hey don't do it you know, and yet I had three boys in Viet Nam, all at the same time. One was a two-step guys, one guy is, was in the Green Berets... he was working out at Dong Tam up on the Cong

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River. He got eleven kills, two of them were boys walking along the Mekong Delta and he was out on a patrol on a job and so he had his rifle and these young boys were coming towards him and he motioned with his rifle and told them to raise their hands and they raised their hands like this... just kept walking towards him so he shot them both and they fell back into the Mekong and they had percussion grenades underneath the armpits and they were gonna' come up and drop them at his feet. He said the water went 50 feet in the air but he's, has that Agent Orange now and he's got prostrate cancer and ripe old age of 53 I think he is now. So he's 100% disabled from that dam Agent Orange. Another guy he was, another stepson, he was a seal, Navy Seal and he was working out of the Subic Bay in the Philippines and he got sent up the Mekong on a suicide mission, he and one other guy and he was told that the other, they were told if one of the guys got hurt or killed to leave them and go on up and finish the job. So his buddy stepped on a mine and got his leg blown off and he couldn't leave him. I would have done the same thing. I'd have tried to save my friend. So he got him back to pickup station which was on the beach and he'd, it took him too long to get back and so they had given them up, both up for dead. But he finally got his buddy back to the Philippines, saved his life and he's never told us a word of this. My wife is dead now; she died this last October, but she went through his records when he came home and found out about it and then there was the guy that, whose life he saved, he was from Tennessee and he was going home, he landed in San Diego and he flew all the way up to Seattle, up to Issaquah to look us up and tell us the story and then he went on home to Tennessee. But the son has never told us about it. When he got back to the Philippines and this shirt tailed officer was ticked off at him for not finishing the job, he was gonna send him right back to Mekong and my son only had two months to go. He told him to go to hell. So they busted him out of the Seals and sent him up to the Aleutian Islands, up to Adak for the last two months of his hitch and that broke his spirit cause he was... They were both red, white and blue and, but they aren't now. Later on the one that was a Green Beret he came back, he's in the 82nd, 82nd Air Corps, Paratroopers, working with them. So he went back to Fort Bragg and they sent him up to Washington D.C. during the black riots and he was on a bus and a couple of black guys set his hair on fire... so he had a real, real time. Then my son, he was on the Constellation, the USS Constellation and he was over there for his entire hitch back and forth but most of the time was over there. And he was, he was a radar man and he didn't, I told him, I said, don't volunteer for nothing. So he came through okay except he... Yeah and this one that was a Seal he's been out in the woods every since; he's a, never got married, he's a logger... has his own tractor and stuff... he logs when he feels like it. He lives over here at Brennan, back in the woods.

Question: Did they, when they went in the service, did they come to you to ask advice?

Answer: Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah. The one that was a Seal he says, I can either go in the UDT and be a frogman or I could be a medic, which would you do? And I says, well, either one of them you're gonna be right up front, either one of them. So I says, you're gonna have to make up your mind what you do yourself. I can't, I might send you to your death either way so he chose the UDT and, was underwater demolition man. The other guy, he went in and he volunteered to go to Viet Nam right away. He was hot to trot. He got into all kinds of mischief over there in the Green Berets and I told him I says, you get hurt over there I'm gonna kick your crutch out from under you and beat the hell out of you. He says, you can try Dad but... I couldn't have either. He'd been through all that training and everything. I

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had training; Judo but never had any of the really wild stuff like they have nowadays.

Question: Have you ever gone back to Pearl Harbor?

Answer: No Sir. Only on the Indianapolis that time we had to come back and get some fresh ammunition. And I've never been back cause I, well I didn't have a hell of lot of fun there really... getting drunk and that was about it.

Question: You never, never been to the memorial, the..

Answer: No, no.

Question: Cause it's too hard or..?

Answer: I just don't want to. I just don't, I don't want to bring it back up that much.

Question: Do you have your own memorial in here (in his mind)?

Answer: You bet, yeah I do, I do... yep. This poor guy down here... his story was something else... the guy that was on the California, this Marlin Nelson, I tell you... taking four days to die ain't much fun.

Question: What do you do on December 7?

Answer: I have some youngster raise the flag down at Ft. Williams, down at the, the deal down there. You guys should take a trip down there some time and see it. It's a, it's just a rock but I've got like I say \$500 I got the guy's picture on there. The fact is I had it made down in Olympia. Had an outfit down there that does anodized aluminum pictures on it for gravestones and monuments and stuff. Had his picture made and I dug out a place by hand, set that back in the rock and then there's a, well all told I dug sixteen holes in that monument to set the bronze stuff in. I got a letter from the Park Department that any, I had, I couldn't do anything with that. It was my baby, I was responsible for it but I couldn't do anything without asking them you know. Like I said the big frogs in the little pond... they drive you nuts. But then I got a plaque on there that I bought myself, Remember Pearl Harbor. And then another plaque that it tells something about Marlin Nelson, and that picture, like I say I got a lot of money and a lot of time in it so I have to go down and keep it up and I've turned it over... I will turn over... the Rotary Club had a board meeting and they want to take it over when I expire so it'll keep going on I hope for a long time but I don't let the grownups, I don't let grownups raise the flag down there at all. I let kids in the school, like the President of the Senior Class and I had a bunch of little Brownies and raised the flag, a bunch of cute kids and then I've got some Air Force Cadets, high school cadets, that come down and help me raise the flag and march with the flag and present it and all that stuff and then I've got a veteran that's a bugler and he comes down with his bugle so we have quite a few ceremonies we've got awful lot of press for a long time and they kind of tired of us and this 911 thing came along and so, now it's real had to get anything in the paper at all but I like to give the kids some credit and get them in there because they're, there's what, they're what matter.

Question: Are you using it also an educational piece?

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Answer: Oh yeah.

Question: Yeah, yeah.

Answer: Yeah, yeah, I had a couple of teachers with the handicapped classes come down. They were a lot of fun but then you know, they couldn't do much but I was going into Safeway and this little girl came up and gave me a great big hug and you know it's nowadays, if you like kids you'd better watch it or somebody's going to accuse you of messing around with their kid. But this little girl came up on the street, going into

Safeway and gave me a great big hug and I didn't know who it was and her Mother was with her and so she told me who she was. And she was thanking me for letting her raise the flag down there. It's real gratifying. This last January 1st the Senior Class President is a Japanese young lady and she's a doll. Her name is Mary Yamamoto and she's a 4.0 student and so I had her raise the flag. Her Dad is a Youth Minister, a Japanese fellow... he's a fine, fine fellow and he's a minister down at a church down by the Three Crabs down here. She wrote me a real, this is what I like that makes it real worthwhile, she wrote me a real thank you letter and I took her through my house. You guys have to come, come go through my house some time because it's too much stuff to bring down here. So you both have my card and some time you're over why bring your wives if you want to or your kids, especially your kids cause I've got a house full of carvings... I've got seventeen paintings and a whole bunch of stuff.

Question: So it sounds like you don't hold an animosity towards the..

Answer: I don't anymore, I don't anymore. I hate Roosevelt worse than I hate Japanese by a lot, you know. That SOB was sneaky... he was sneaky, him and Churchill both. I used to think Churchill was great but no more. He said after the Pearl Harbor attack, said he got the first good nights sleep he ever had after they attacked us. So he was instigating it, he and Roosevelt, they were instigating it right along. Of course they cut off their oil shipments because of China. My wife had an uncle that was over there when they raped Nanking and he was in Nanking and he, there was dead babies all over the place those Japanese had bayoneted and dogs eating the babies in the gutter and disgusted him... so he went back to barracks and got a 30 ought six and went out shooting dogs. Said it was really bad. He died in World War II; he was an aircraft photographer over in England.

Question: What about your brother? Did he make it home?

Answer: My brother made it home too. We both got off the Indianapolis. He, I got off after the Sullivan brothers got killed because it separated the brothers and so I, and he, before the Indianapolis got sunk he went back to, got to go back Washington D.C. to further schooling on the radar and range finders and that sort of thing. So he was back there when the Indianapolis got sunk and then he got out right away cause he had his six years hitch in.

Question: Did you, you talked a lot about your carving. Did you whittle while you were in the..?

Answer: I've whittled since I was seven.

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Question: Did you whittle during the war though, did you have..?

Answer: Yeah, there was some, yeah, yeah. I did what I could. That was the reason, I was what they call a boatswain mate, Boatswain's locker boatswain mate. I was in where they made all the cargo nets and the deal for the planes to land on, the sled, they had a sled that we rigged a yardarm out and then the ship would turn and make a slick place for the sea, the scout planes to land and it had a cardinal net in the, and the pontoon would come up and it had a hook on it, hook in the cardinal net and then we could hoist them up. Pilot had to hook the crane to the hook to the plane and then we hoisted them back up on the ship... stuff like that. And awful lot of, I learned an awful lot of knots, spliced wire, I still use all that stuff.

Question: What type of things did you whittle while you were..?

Answer: When I could get a piece of wood, you know, knife handles and that sort of thing and then you know, hunting knives. I always had a knife strapped to my leg all the time cause we weren't supposed to have, take anything like that ashore but I did. I got in a real fight one night, the USS Sailfish, which was a Squalus and you know they raised the Squalus which got sunk, and we were in, I can't remember what town it is by Mare Island there.

Question: Vallejo

Answer: Vallejo, right. And I as in the battle of Georgia Street. Georgia Street you go up Georgia Street from where you get off the ferry and you get up to the top without getting drunk and back around... there was bars all the way up and so we'd have a drink in each one and try to go up and back and like that.. Well one night the Sailfish or the what was the Squalus, they were in town and it was in the Golden West Café and Bar and this little submarine sailor come up and grabbed my hat and took it and put his dirty old hat on my head. It was all dirty and cruddy and I whammed him one and that started it. The whole place exploded and went out into the street and we called it the Battle of Georgia Street. And the Sailfish was supposed to sail at midnight. These guys were all over drunk and in jail and it couldn't get underway until the next day.

Question: What's, now you do a lot of work with the kids and all that today, is there a message that you want to leave with them?

Answer: That I want to leave with the kids?

Question: Yeah.

Answer: Keep your flag flying and tell the truth. War isn't fun. I had the privilege of talking to a class with my little granddaughter in it when she was in grade school and she's between 35 and 40 now. And so I was trying to scare the heck out of the kids that war is no fun you know and blowing things up... just, just no fun. And then of course I told them about the sharks eating, 880 guys off the Indianapolis, and so the kids after I was out there... it was out in North Bend. And the kids made up a book... each one of them drew their thoughts of it and you should see that. I still have that. You should see what they thought. They had sharks drawn in there and the whole bit and everything blowing up and blood running and I was trying to scare the heck out of them so they wouldn't think that war was so much fun.

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Question: Now were you on the Indianapolis when it went down too?

Answer: No, no, I got off of it when the... we separated when the Sullivan brothers... I got off and my brother stayed on there. He got off just, oh a month or two, before it blew when they came back to the states and then they took the atomic bomb to Tinian and then they went from there. They were going to the Philippines and they asked for destroyers of course. They didn't have any sound equipment on that ship and that's the craziest thing I ever seen. They should have had some sub, you know, equipment on there. And they got sunk about midnight and they were in the water for five days. And there was a big mix up on the contacts in the Philippines and I guess the sharks were something else. If you've ever read that book, All the Drowned Sailors, that gives the real, real stuff on it. I got a copy of it at home. And it was, a ship turned on its side and the screws were sticking out of the water and still turning and some of the guys jumped into those. And then they had to go and court martial the Captain, Captain McVeigh for not zigzagging. He had asked for destroyer escorts and they wouldn't give him any. He finally committed suicide. After he committed suicide, of course, they cleared his name and all that stuff but it didn't do him any good. He did his best. He didn't even have time to send an SOS it happened so fast. And then back in the hearing they had the skipper of the Japanese sub that sank them, he was at the hearing and he said he couldn't have possibly avoided them. They even had guys on that submarine, it was one of the newer submarines and they had guys on there that would ride the torpedoes in and they were really ticked off he said because they couldn't, didn't get a chance to ride those torpedoes into the Indianapolis. They got 'em the first spread they fired. That was something... I don't how many of the guys that I knew died or anything else but..

Question: Is that the hardest part of war?

Answer: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah that's, so many young people never got a chance... never had a chance. The average age I think was nineteen or twenty, something like that, Navy sailors... cause we were all new, came in the Navy instead of starving. But there was patriotism there too, a lot of it, a lot of it. Of course we had, thought we'd whip the Japs in six month and be back home. That didn't work out too well.

Question: What's the, on your badge the..?

Answer: Which one?

Question: A man is not free?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Remember Pearl Harbor, 2403, does the number..?

Answer: That's the number of guys that got killed. And the guy designed this sold a bunch of them; he lived in Massachusetts and he designed the monument that went on the USS Massachusetts back there. And you know, so I got a hundred of these and sold them and gave them away and so forth. And this is my pride and joy here, this.. Remember Pearl Harbor and I got a black pearl in it... they come with a

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white pearl, imitation pearl. It says Remember Pearl Harbor. This ribbon here is for Pearl Harbor. That was in five major battles all total.

Question: I was going to say, I'm seeing five battle stars

Answer: Yeah, yeah.

Question: So you were in Pearl..

Answer: New Guinea, Aleutian Islands and then Normandy and that's four. Five, where is the other one? I don't know.

Question: Well that was sixty years ago.

Answer: Yeah, a while back, a while back. I still remember the one though was, Eddy O'Hare. That was, I had a ringside seat to that. There was one of the planes got shot down and it was going to crash into the Lexington and boy, they opened up and the machine gun and stuff and it crashed just before it got to the Lexington. From where I was standing it looked like 30 feet from the Lexington and the Japs started coming, climbing out of there and the guys machine gunned him. Boy we got an order out right away, don't machine gun the prisoners. We want to talk to them. But the guys were so, you know, they was ready to kill anything with slanty eyes. Yep, a lot of things happened like that. Saw a guy get eaten by sharks. I had my, the Lexington lost a sailor over the side and we were the nearest ship so he started swimming toward us and I had my binoculars on him and splash, splash, shark got him and that was it. Saw something when I was a kid. We were out fishing, had cane poles down on the river and we come up on this rattlesnake all coiled up, his old head sticking up, his rattle rattling and so we thought it'd be fun to catch him. And so we got a forked stick and a loop on the end of one of the fishing lines that we had on the end of the cane pole and dropped a loop over his head and then we drug him up fairly close to the house. And this guy had three hound dogs and so he called the dogs and he turned that snake loose and let the dogs kill him. They formed a perfect triangle around that guy, the one would jump in and the snake jump at him and he'd jump back and this one would get him and shake hell out of him, then he'd jump back and that went on until they tore that snake all to pieces. Well when I was on the Indianapolis in the South Pacific I saw three destroyers get a Japanese sub just like that and I thought of those three dogs, three hound dogs that killed that rattlesnake. The destroyers, one would go in and drop his depth charges, then he'd go on over here and come back around to his side and stay there and they'd listen, these two guys would be listening with their sound equipment. Pretty quick that Jap sub came up, and nose up and then back down. Of course we all cheered. Guys dying and you cheer... that's something else, isn't it?

Question: (Inaudible)

Answer: That's it.

Question: Thank you very much for coming in today. This is real..

Answer: You're welcome.