

very well, was the battle's only casualty and the first one to fall in combat with the enemy during our first engagement as such in 1942. We were pretty well trained and everything was automatic for the majority of us old, I shouldn't say old sailors, we had had enough pre World War training that it was instilled into us to react in these emergencies.

[Let me ask you this while I'm thinking about it. You were of course pre-war Navy in what we would call old Navy. Was there a nucleus of pre-war Navy on board or were most of them in after the war? In other words, how experienced a crew did you have?]

I'd say by the time we went into action we were running approximately sixty percent of pre-war Navy, at that time only USN people.

[Then it was a pretty good crew for what you wanted, fairly experienced and well trained crew, a nucleus of old Navy hands with new comers]

I believe the U.S. Navy had taken a lesson on the tragedy of the Repulse and the Prince of Wales. They had sent her out there for a show piece and she had become involved in action with even people working out the mechanical difficulties in the operating equipment. The ship of course was sent under Winston Churchill's orders and not by the Naval chief of operations, and it was not ready for combat. I believe that the U.S. Navy had realized that and was not ready to jeopardize North Carolina in the same circumstances.

[North Carolina had a relatively long and thorough training period before going through the canal into the Pacific, is that correct? You were on board when she was in the North Atlantic for the trial.]

Yes, I was.

[When they fired those guns the first time?]

Yes. In fact I was in the conning tower with the gun boss Tom B. Hill at the time, and he asked me to give him a count down for firing from my watch which pleased me as a gunner mate third year.