

**Interviewee:** Jones, James P.  
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**Jones:** I was born in Jacksonville June 17, 1931, so I was ten at Pearl Harbor and I was eight when the Germans invaded Poland. I ended up in Jacksonville because my parents were there and it was the only place I could be born since that's where my mother was. My family had been in Jacksonville - my mother's family had been in Jacksonville - for a long time. Pre-war memories of Jacksonville. . .my most basic memory, of course, would involve my mother who had tuberculous and wasn't around a lot of time and was on the verge of death a good bit of the time. Other memories of Jacksonville. . .her brother worked for a company that unloaded ships and this had something to do with my interest in that and he used to take me - because my father worked for the railroad and he was gone all the time and my mother was in the hospital a good bit of the time - her brother would take me very often down to the docks and watch. He was the guy who ran stevedores and unloaded ships. It gave me a kind of. . .and this carries over into the war when I began. . .you know, I was really interested in those ships that came down and some of them got sunk when they. . .St. John's is about eighteen miles from the mouth of the river, I mean, the mouth of the river going into the Atlantic. So I had become aware of shipping and all that kind of stuff and I was really interested in that. As a kid it was really fascinating to be taken out there and watch all that stuff. So I also remember the creation and the construction of Jacksonville Air Station which also came late '30s or early '40s, I think, because there had never been anything like that around there. So suddenly, there were planes all over the place and any kid is interested in planes. Fortunately for me, our house was under one of the flight paths, the flight paths approaching to land at JaxNAS [??]. It was on the other side of the river but as planes came across to land they came right over our house, which made a lot of noise. My mother didn't like it very much but it was great for me.

**Vincent:** Could you tell me a little bit about your dad and the trains?

**Jones:** Well, he was an engineer and he ran the Florida East Coast Railroad. The northern division of the railroad ran from Jacksonville to New Smyrna Beach. I still have some of the orders that he. . .when they left Jacksonville there was an order saying, you know, where you go and all that kind of thing and what time. He, at least a couple of times, was engineer on the trains that had President Roosevelt on them. Once went back. . .and Truman later on. And once went back and was introduced to Roosevelt. Roosevelt asked, you know, who is the engine crew? A political move. My father was such a rabid Roosevelt fan he didn't have to do that.

**Vincent:** Did the Depression hit your family very hard? It sounds like your dad had a stable job.

**Jones:** He had a stable job and the railroad paid fairly well. I don't mean big bucks but we were in hard times because my mother had TB and my mother was in the hospital all the time and her medical bills were huge. So the Depression. . .yeah, the Depression hit us. My biggest problem as a child was I didn't have either parent around a good bit of the time. Black women took care of me, but they were great people. My memories of anything related to World War II and the coming of all that are the ships and \_\_\_\_\_[?]. One of the things I remember vividly was when we froze assets of German, Japanese, Germans and the Italians before we got into the war - Roosevelt's policies froze their assets - and one of the things in freezing assets was that their ships that were in American ports were seized and kept in American ports. I lived about, our house was about, half a mile from the river and the St. Johns is a very large, wide river there and I remember that out there there were several Italian freighters and one German freighter that were out there and had been seized and were just swinging on the anchor out there in the river. And I thought, 'this is way cool.' But, you know, the war clearly had changed things and even before Pearl Harbor there were more in the harbor. There were more of not just the usual kind of civilian ships but there were more military ships, destroyers and things like that. If you went down to Mayport, close to the mouth of the river, it. . .it's now a big carrier base. It wasn't then but there were a lot of destroyer escorts and things like that.

**Vincent:** Was there a naval base in Jacksonville at the time?

**Jones:** No. Naval Air Station but not a naval base. Except for Mayport. Mayport was a small one. It's become much larger after World War II. It's one of the big carrier bases in the East but it wasn't then. But at least there was something down there. One of the things they used Mayport for was to try to protect. . .there was an auxiliary air station down there as well as the naval base and that was, in time. . .by '42 it had become a base that both airplanes and destroyer escorts and destroyers trying to protect convoys up and down the coast.

**Vincent:** When Lend-Lease started, could you tell a big difference in shipping?

**Jones:** I don't remember it. I mean, that's something. . .I was always on top of that stuff because my parents were really interested in politics and world news so I knew about it but I don't remember, you know, any great increase in shipping in the river. There was always a lot of it.

**Vincent:** Well, anything else about the '30s?

**Jones:** Not much else that would relate very much to the coming of the war.

**Vincent:** Anything you want to talk about?

**Jones:** Not really. I just remember being aware of what the world situation was. I remember hearing Adolf Hitler on the radio.

**Vincent:** Oh really?

**Jones:** Yeah. His speeches would be broadcast and always kind of crackling, you know, what do you call it? Well, overseas during. . . transmission at that time wasn't very good.

**Vincent:** Static.

**Jones:** Static. A lot of static. But you could. . . I certainly have a memory of this kind of ranting guy. Couldn't understand him. None of us could.

**Vincent:** Do you remember Roosevelt's Fireside Chats?

**Jones:** I remember that. Everything about Roosevelt. The first memory I have. . .and Jean Conner last year, we were having an argument about this, when did Roosevelt make the "Rendezvous with Destiny" speech. I said it was in his acceptance of the nomination of '36. We disagreed and we ran it down and found it. I said, "The reason I can remember it is because I heard it." I was five years old. Roosevelt was just the greatest thing in the world in our household, so I remember, you know, almost all that stuff because I heard about it a lot, but also I would listen to the speeches. My father always listened to them. So I heard the fireside chat speeches and the "Rendezvous with Destiny" speech. When he ran in '40 I remember - by that time I was nine - and I remember that much better when he ran in '40. My father just loved the speech attacking the Republicans who were against agriculture, the Martin, \_\_\_\_\_[??] and \_\_\_\_\_[??] speeches. So all that stuff I remember really well. My memory of the Depression also is. . .we lived two lots away from a big intersection in Jacksonville. I remember the number of unemployed people hitchhiking up and down there. There was a little park across the street from us and there would be a number of people that clearly were kind of living rough over there in the park. A lot of people would come to beg. Since we were so close by they would come and ask for handouts of food or whatever, so there was a lot of that.

**Vincent:** What do you remember about Pearl Harbor Day?

**Jones:** I was playing football in the front yard and my mother was listening to the New York Philharmonic on the radio. My mother came out and in that incredible voice she had she said, "Stop playing!" and said, "The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor." We went scrambling in to listen. I remember Robert Trout - he was one of the guys, the broadcasters, who made the initial thing - and all of them talking about it so we really. . .that whole. . .radio was a huge thing in the lives of the Americans, which everybody knows because there's a lot of stuff on it now. News had now become really big stuff. There were regular newscasts several times a day. Following Pearl Harbor, of course, it became much greater. I remember the "Rendezvous with Destiny" speech the next day. I remember listening to that. So, yeah, Pearl Harbor is one of those really vivid memories in my life. And us going out, these kids going out - I was, what, ten - and going back out in the front yard and talking about it, you know, before we started football again, talking about 'what does this mean?'

**Vincent:** Kind of like young boys, like, “I’m going to join up as soon as I get old enough.”

**Jones:** Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. “Damn Japanese. Slant-eyed bastards,” you know, all that.

**Vincent:** Could you tell immediate change in Jacksonville life, experience with the shipping?

**Jones:** No, not immediately. But by immediately I mean not the next day or so, but by January you certainly could.

**Vincent:** When did they start the major ship building programs?

**Jones:** That, I think, starts in ‘42. I remember, I really remember, that vividly but in early. . .one of my first memories is early in ‘42, within a month or so after Pearl Harbor, the fact that things didn’t seem to change very much. Blackout for a while was no big thing. Baseball, when the new baseball season started they still played at night without blacking the lights out and as everybody said, sooner or later, that if you were a German submarine and you were down off of Jacksonville Beach waiting for something to come out of the mouth of the St. Johns, you had. . .you know, American ships were backlit by the lights from. . .

**Vincent:** By the lighting, yeah.

**Jones:** Right. From the city. That began to change. My mother, who by this time had gotten out of the hospital and her health was better, was always kind of a leader in the neighborhood and so she became the Warden, the Area Warden. She would go around and we would have air raid warning drills and you would know that an alarm would be. . .the whistle is what was used. They used to be seven o’clock and five o’clock whistles. Did you know that?

**Vincent:** No.

**Jones:** And twelve o’clock whistles. In a lot of cities. In Jacksonville there was this big. . .called “Big Jim,” this whistle that would blow. I mean, it would ‘whoooo’ and that was. . .once the war came that stopped because it was now going to be an alarm system. So they would do it and then you would know this was trying to simulate an air raid. So you had to shut off all the lights and my mother would go up and down the street and make sure everybody had their. . .if you had a light it would have to be covered. All your windows would have to be covered. So any light that showed. . .it always amazed me and she would sort of laugh and say, “You know, the Bachmans next door, they have some tiny little light in there and is some German plane really going to see that?”

**Vincent:** [laughs] But she was strict, though?

**Jones:** She would go. Speaking of the Bachmans, one of my closest friends lived next door to me and their name was B-a-c-h-m-a-n. It's a German name. The father worked for the US Corps of Engineers which had a big office in Jacksonville. So he had an engineering degree from the University of Tennessee. But this is an aspect of the kind of thing that World War I is better known for but World War II as well. The woman who lived on the other side of them who everybody hated began to circulate a story that the Bachmans, that my friend J.B.'s father, was a spy. They're German and he's a spy so we really need to watch this. I don't know if she ever went to the police or anything, but it got back to the Bachmans and they were certainly aware of it and never spoke to her again.

**Vincent:** Did y'all believe it?

**Jones:** No. Never for a second. No. His father was as patriotic as anybody I've ever seen. No, never.

**Vincent:** Do you think that was a lot of immigrants and families?

**Jones:** Yeah. To make for anybody. But they weren't even recent immigrants. I mean, their family had been there forever. But, yeah, the story. . .about a mile from us, where I later became an observer to record where the planes were around Jacksonville by 1943, there was a Japanese family that lived nearby and everybody thought they. . .they must have really gone through hell.

**Vincent:** No, there weren't many Japanese in Jacksonville.

**Jones:** No, almost none. No. This Japanese family, the daughter later went to high school with me. I think they had a hard time.

**Vincent:** January of 1942, the U-boat threat begins. What do you remember about the beginning of it? Were you surprised?

**Jones:** No. Well, surprised in the sense that. . .I mean, in early '42 two things happened in Jacksonville that really were kind of shocking because it brought us close to the war. One was the U-boats and the other was the dropping of those German saboteurs, those German spies at Ponte Vedra just south of Jacksonville.

**Vincent:** That was in the summer, right?

**Jones:** Yeah, a little bit later on. But they were captured. But still, I mean, god, we're liable to have German spies swarming around all over the place.

**Vincent:** I'll ask you more about that later. I have that question written down. Going through the Jacksonville newspapers of the time, you see there's something about a U-boat

sinking a ship every day. Something in the newspaper about it every day. Did you appreciate, as a young child, how important this was and what a threat it was?

**Jones:** Oh yeah. Without a doubt. Without a doubt. Two things that got me into that, my uncle, the one who used to show me around unloading all the ships, he went in the Navy and actually became involved, for a brief period, in anti-submarine stuff and then eventually he was sent to the Pacific. But he was involved in that so I knew a lot about that, so I knew a lot about that through him. He would tell me about it. The other one is that summer, the summer of '42, I had a really good friend whose family had a place at Neptune Beach. You know, Neptune, Jacksonville, Ponte Vedra, there are a number of beaches down there. Well, they had a place at Neptune Beach. So I went down. We spent, I think twice, we spent a period of like two weeks down there. I'd go down, he and I, and his mother or father, mother, and would stay down there. I remember when you cross the intercoastal, you know, the intercoastal waterway there, when you cross the intercoastal to get onto the beach, the car or the bus - I'd occasionally go down there on the bus - but the car stopped. You were stopped. I don't remember what happened because nobody ever had - maybe the adults did but I didn't - a card indicating that you were thus and so. Maybe they looked at driver's licenses. I don't know because I wasn't driving obviously. But we were always stopped coming and going. I don't think they ever searched a car or anything that I remember but we were stopped as some matter of security before you went on over there. Then went on over there and there was an atmosphere of tension down there. Nobody ever thought the Germans were going to invade. I mean, nobody ever thought 'we're down here and some damn German landing force is going to come here', but you certainly were. . I believe, I believe that I saw a ship sunk. The more I think about it the more it might be a warning to say it, but I really believe that. Gordon, my friend, and I were down on the beach one night. Certainly it happened and it had happened.

**Vincent:** Do you remember when it was?

**Jones:** No, I don't. I was hoping that you might find out if any ships were sunk off there. But I don't remember when it was. It could be that. . .this is kind of embroidering the whole thing and I do know that ships were sunk.

**Vincent:** I know that some people were rescued off Neptune Beach.

**Jones:** Right. So it could have been. I have this vague memory of that happening. But things like being stopped and all of that and knowing that and you'd see planes all the time close to the coast, civil air patrol planes and JaxNAS, since it was so close, you'd see planes. Do you know what PBYS are? Catalinas?

**Vincent:** Yeah.

**Jones:** The Catalina has always been, to this day, my favorite plane. It looked like dragonflies. I just loved those damn things. They used to be over there.

**Vincent:** Are they the ones that land on the water?

**Jones:** Yeah, right.

**Vincent:** Okay.

**Jones:** They used to be over the house all the time. It's a Catalina, sooner or later, that catches the *Bismark*, a British Catalina. But the Catalinas were out there all the time. So you'd go down to the beach and, you know, there'd be all kinds of stuff up there, the planes over and you were aware they're searching for German submarines and all.

**Vincent:** Were you ever frightened to go to the beach or anything like that?

**Jones:** No, no. I remember no feeling of fright at all. I remember early in the war because I knew things were not going well. I mean, I knew about what was going on in the Philippines. And I knew that Germans were. . .I had this huge map - the Bachman kid and I had this huge map - and every day we had pins and we'd stick pins in it. We'd listen to the news and I can remember to this day all the names, Russian names. Valuyki[??] and \_\_\_\_\_[??] and all those places where the German Army was moving. So we would keep track of that and also in the Pacific, too. I remember the fall of the Philippines and, you know, being. . .the Philippines is a long way away and the Japanese are winning and we're not doing well on the other side, so I remember a kind of vague distant uneasiness about it but never any fear that there was going to be any air attack on Jacksonville or anything. Never had a fear of going to the beach.

**Vincent:** Well, through reading the paper there seems to be a lot more concern about airplane attacks than submarine attacks, which is kind of ironic because the submarines were much closer to attacking.

**Jones:** Right, right. I think I was never worried about that because I think my parents just poo-pooed it. The idea was 'where are the Germans going to get a damn. . .the Germans don't have any planes that can come over here.' So I think that was it because I don't remember. . .now later on, I guess it was '43 or '44 when they put up these observer posts. The idea was to make sure that. . .it may have begun in '42. I'm not sure because I've lost a lot. I even had an armband that I wore and the discharge papers from being discharged as part of the Ground Observer Corps, I think it was called. But we had to call in every plane that went over, what it was, what direction it was going, and how many of them there were and all of that. Occasionally - they never did it while I was on - occasionally they would run. . .'cause we had captured Zeros and captured Messerschmitts and once I remember a Zero was flying over Jacksonville and nobody called it in right. I remember no real imminent fear that we were going to be attacked or anything like that, no.

**Vincent:** Okay. I guess the blackout started in effect really about March or April of '42, but what do you remember about the black out? What did y'all do to prepare for them? Did you

have the shutters?

**Jones:** We didn't have any shutters. We had enough curtains and drapes to black it out. But I remember shutting off almost all the lights. My room was on the side away from the street and I remember going in there with a very small bed lamp or a candle or something like that. It was cool. It was cool as hell. I mean, when you're a kid, that's really cool to go in there with a candle and read something or other or whatever it was. I remember that. It was an interesting thing, kind of an exciting thing, but not a big thing. When did they end? I don't remember when they ended.

**Vincent:** I don't know. I'm not sure.

**Jones:** My memory is that it was not very long. I mean, we didn't do it all that long. Maybe with Torch, certainly with Torch and Guadalcanal in the summer and fall the feeling was we were now on the offensive and so we don't need to do that, but, it wasn't really. . .by the end of '42 I'm sure we weren't doing it.

**Vincent:** What about the ship building industry?

**Jones:** That was really exciting. Jacksonville had always had some ship building but with the war it really expanded. Merrill-Stephens [??] was the ship building company and it really began to expand. It was really fascinating because, as you know, in the beginning of the war it took 'x' number of days and the end of the war they cut it to just a small number of days they could finish it. My most vivid memory was going to the Gator Bowl. The Gator Bowl is now in the opposite direction of what it was then. It then ran east and west and going to high school games and occasionally a University of Florida game and Jacksonville Naval Air Station games, which I went to a lot. We would go up to the top of the stands and look down because right behind us, just across Bay [??] Street was Merrill-Stephens [??] Shipyard. So you'd stand up there and about half the time I wouldn't even be looking at the football game. I'd be looking the other direction because down there they would have. . .well, I can't remember how many but my memory is of the keels of maybe three or four liberty ships that were, you know, racked up along there and in the various stages of construction. It was just great to watch all those welders and all those \_\_\_\_\_[??] and everything going down there and the impression of just an incredible beehive of activity. If there's anything in my personal experience of the war in which kind of symbolizes to me still the idea of preparation and the idea of what we were doing in this country and of course it's a good example to prepare for the war and the whole business of the Arsenal of Democracy, you know, it's that because it was incredible. It was at night so all of it was brighter, you know, all that stuff. It was really, really. . .

**Vincent:** Are there any other. . .you said your uncle was in the Navy. Did you have any other family members or friends of the family involved in the military?

**Jones:** Yeah. Well, he's the only one that I remember that. . .there was nobody else exactly the

right age. He eventually went to the Pacific. He was in the SeaBees in the Pacific because he was into construction and offloading ships so he went to the Pacific. Didn't see him for a long time. I got a lot of stories after the war. There were people in the neighborhood, there were kids in the neighborhood, and one of them was, when I was a little kid, played football for the high school that I mentioned we went to. He was the kind of local. . .I remember girls my age just oohing and ahing. He would walk by going home, walk by after football practice and [draws in breath] and all this stuff about him. He was killed. He was a tanker and his tank landed at D-Day and he was killed. He hit a mine and it blew up and killed him very quickly, but that was in 1944. But not much. Most of what I remember is the stuff around me in Jacksonville but not much of that. There's something else I was going. . .I thought of it a minute ago. I can't remember right now. Go ahead.

**Vincent:** You had told me a story about the scrap metal drives. Could you just talk about that a little bit?

**Jones:** Yeah. Have you ever seen "Radio Days," that Woody Allen movie?

**Vincent:** No.

**Jones:** You ought to look at it because it's got a lot of stuff about the scrap metal drive and other things. We were, the kids I grew up with in my neighborhood, we were really big into that, into scrap metal stuff. So when that began we really got into it. We went out and everywhere we could find we would. . .two or three times we were stopped because we were taking something off of somebody's. . .I mean, part of a fence. I remember trying to uproot this fence, which was a metal fence, and it was kind of not in great shape. It was falling down a little bit, so I thought, hey this is a good idea. This woman came out of the house and nailed my ass. "Don't be taking my fence away!" [chuckles] Yeah, I remember a good bit of that. Scrap paper. Scrap of all kinds of stuff and going to. . .I think we put it all in my car or in friend's parents cars and took it off to the thing and dumped it in. I think you would get some kind of recognition or some kind of slip indicating that you've done this. But that was really big.

**Vincent:** What about rationing?

**Jones:** Yeah, ration cards. I've still got a couple of ration cards. I remember that. Gas, it was hard. . .we got a slight exemption because my father worked for the railroad. He was in a strategic industry, but not much. When my mother was around before the war, when she wasn't in the hospital, and my father was around we would, you know, like everybody did, take drives on Sunday. Drive around and go to the beach or whatever. That really pretty much stopped. There was some of that but not very much. The other stuff, I don't ever remember any real hardships. I remember sugar was rationed and a lot of things were rationed but I don't ever remember feeling this was some kind of terrible hardship.

**Vincent:** Something I forgot to ask you regarding the U-boats - going to the beach, do you

remember any beach patrol system?

**Jones:** Oh yeah. Both on land and on sea as well. I remember some of those. I'm sure they all came from Mayport, but small ships that were up and down the coast and also the Catalinas. One thing also in Brunswick, there was a lighter-than-air base and there were blimps up there and I'm pretty sure I remember blimps. Blimps were one of the great things of my childhood. I mean, I just loved blimps. I'm sure there were some of those because they were used for \_\_\_\_\_[??] up at \_\_\_\_\_[?]. I know what I was going to say. One of the things that really became interesting to me was in '42 - I don't remember the month but I think it was early '42, at least before football began in September - I took flute lessons when I was a kid and I had a couple of awful teachers who were pain in the ass people and so we were looking for another teacher and advertised in the paper was this guy who was a musician in the Navy and who was stationed at JaxNAS. His name was Joe Vasella [?]. He was from Portland, Oregon. I discovered very quickly that he was stationed on the USS *Arizona* on December 7. He was not on duty. He had leave overnight so he stayed off the ship. Musicians got. . .they all had duty positions. They didn't just play. They had duty positions. The guy who was his fellow flute player who was in his duty position that he would have been in was killed in the attack. But I remember that and I remember him. . .I mean, I just pumped him for information because he was in the Pacific Fleet for a while and he had been all over the place. He was a really nice guy. He used to take me out to JaxNAS all the time. He was married. I don't remember if they had a kid or not, but they were really nice to me. So I would go out there with him and he would show me around and here would be my two favorite planes, Catalinas and Corsairs, out there and I would go up and occasionally even get in one. So that was really great doing all that. He would take me. . . JaxNAS had a football team. I mean, many of the best football teams in the United States during World War II were service installations, Great Lakes. . .

**Vincent:** Like baseball teams, too.

**Jones:** \_\_\_\_\_[??] had a big one. But way bigger than baseball was football. So JaxNAS had a really good team. They had the Bears best running back, George McAfee[?], who was from. . .?

**Vincent:** I have no idea.

**Jones:** Duke.

**Vincent:** Oh, okay. So I would go out there with him and see these games. It was great. You know, I go out there. I'd spend the day and we would go to the game and I'd spend the night with them. They were Italian and I remember great food. Then we'd go home. That really gave me a look inside what JaxNAS looked like. All I remember was this really scurrying activity and planes all the time. Planes. One of my most vivid memories - whether I was at home or over there or whatever - was the presence, because of JaxNAS, the presence of aircraft. Also a vivid memory was the presence of service personnel everywhere you went because we had Camp Blanding which was at Starke which wasn't very far away. So everybody that came

into Camp Blanding - everybody who came into Florida at that time - came through Jacksonville because the four major railroads into Florida all came through Jacksonville, so no matter where you were going you came through Jacksonville. I would go over there with my father sometimes to see him off on the train and the place would just be full of service personnel - Army going to Blanding, a few Marines, Navy people at JaxNAS. Occasionally - one vivid memory was - a Scotch unit came through and they all had kilts on and they marched through to get on the train, so, you know, you got a lot of that. All over Jacksonville were. . .you know, on Saturday night. . .my parents did not have very close control over me. I guess they trusted me. So I'd wander around all over the place and we'd go to a movie or go whatever downtown and there would be. . .I will never forget when I ran into my algebra teacher downtown who was a real kind of slutty person. She and a friend of hers were going down Bay Street - which was one of the sleaziest places in the world - going down Bay Street with about five service guys just all over them.

**Vincent:** Did the service guys reek havoc or did they behave themselves okay?

**Jones:** Well. . .  
[pause in tape]

**Vincent:** Okay, we're resuming. Tell me about the spies that landed at Ponte Vedra Beach.

**Jones:** You know, I really don't remember much about them. All I know is that the word circulated that some spies landed and were caught. But I'm not really sure that's true. It may be the first time I knew anything about it was actually when I read about. *Life* magazine had a story because some landed on Long Island, too. *Life* magazine had a story so I have a vague. . .I don't have a very clear memory of this, but I do have a kind of vague memory that we first found out about it from *Life* magazine and everybody was 'ooh,' you know, 'this happened really near us.' I don't. . .there was certainly no great panic that this was going to be the first wave many people coming over there. One of the other things you asked about was the story - never about Jacksonville but I always heard it about Lauderdale and Miami - the story that German submariners were. . .I think - what's his name? - \_\_\_\_\_[??] says it was not true, never provable at all. But the story was fairly widespread at the time in Jacksonville that German submariners had actually gone off the boat and gone into - Lauderdale is the one I always heard - a movie theater and the submarine was sunk later on and taken off of their bodies were (their bodies were looked at) were theater ticket stubs from movies in Lauderdale that they had gone to see. I don't think that ever really happened but it was certainly something that. . .nobody. . .I don't remember ever anything like panic or fear that these guys were come in here and do anything to us. In that case it was just kind of interesting kind of thing. I never had a feeling that next time I went to the Florida Theater in Jacksonville than 'Hans' was going to be sitting next to me. Also we knew that there were - and I did see once - German POWs being. . .

**Vincent:** I was going to ask you that next.

**Jones:** Yeah, I saw them, again, because I hung out in the train station all the time. Not only the Scots I told you about walking through there, or parading through there, and all that

kind of stuff, but I saw German POWs being taken, too. They were handcuffed and they were being. . . I think they were handcuffed. But, anyway, it wasn't a large number and I remember wondering 'who the hell are these people?' and my father saying, "Those are German POWs who are being taken down to Blanding," and I think somewhere else in Florida. But, yeah, I did see German POWs, but there was no. . . I never remember a single time anybody saying, "Aren't you worried those German POWs are going to break out?" Nothing like that even.

**Vincent:** Did you believe those rumors about the submariners coming ashore?

**Jones:** No. Well, at the time, yeah, I think probably so. Yeah.

**Vincent:** Okay. Let's get to your job as an air observer. What was the technical department?

**Jones:** Right. Ground Observer Corps. There were posts, and I don't know how many of them there were in Jacksonville. One near my house in south Jacksonville was about a mile away from where I lived so it's about two miles south of the St. John's, where the bridge crossed the St. John's. There were two people up there at a time and they had a lot of teenagers. I was, I guess, fourteen and fifteen when I did that.

**Vincent:** So you did this in, like, 1944?

**Jones:** '44 and '45. May have done it in '43. May have done it the first time then. I doubt it. I bet you it was '44 because I was thirteen at the time. I would be up there with usually another kid like me and often a friend of mine who lived next door to me - Bachman the spy boy. [chuckles] Occasionally an adult. I don't remember how long. We were on for several hours. We would go up there about two or three times a week. There were a whole bunch of people, of course, who did it. You were on, I guess, it was more than two hours. Maybe as much as four hours you'd be up there. Everything that came over you were supposed to report. Our first designation was Nan49 - I don't know how they hell I can remember this - and the second was Nan91 and the next one \_\_\_\_ [??]49. We would call in, "One," I guess "bi" for two motor, "One bi, high or low, seen Peg49 overhead southeast," or southwest to southeast. You were supposed to tell them. I don't think you identified the plane, the Catalina or Corsair or whatever. I don't remember doing that. But you told them it was a plane. You told them how many motors it was and you told them what direction the plane was going in. You just had a phone, I just had a phone, and somewhere or other in Jacksonville there was a \_\_\_\_ [??]. I think they were women. There were a bank of people. I would call in and they would say. . . I don't know what the hell they would say but they would answer and I would give them that report. It was everything. We were, however, since we weren't far away from my house and we were in the flight pattern of JaxNAS, we were told not to report planes that were clearly doing nothing, clearly were landing, in JaxNAS. So we would report on planes that were farther away or higher. Most of it was the same damn thing so there was a kind of routine which initially was kind of romantic and then as time went in became less so.

**Vincent:** I was going to ask you, did you ever think you were going to see some enemy plane come by?

**Jones:** No. See, I never thought about seeing an enemy plane. I don't think anybody did. What I wanted to see was a different kind of plane. Occasionally you would see B-17s. I remember flying B-17s that were very high and that were clearly not going to land anywhere around us. So what we always wanted to see. . .we saw. . .almost everything we saw was Naval Air Corps, Wildcats, Hellcats, Corsairs, you know, all those things. So what we always wanted to see was an Army. There were B-17s in the area, so occasionally you'd see B-17s. Rarely a B-24. Rarely . . .only once in my life I think I ever saw P-38, you know, the ones with two fuselages. So that's what we really were always hoping we'd see. We had to take - before we got to do it - we had to take a test in identification of planes. We had a book. It was handed out a book that the Air Force had created, or maybe Civil Defense, I guess, had created it. The book had a picture of the plane and then you had to tell quickly what that was and then you also got a silhouette of the plane, an overhead silhouette and a side silhouette and a head-on silhouette of the plane. You had to identify the plane. So there'd be a test. They'd flash it up there and you'd get not very long. You'd just get a matter of seconds and you were supposed to say what it was.

**Vincent:** How'd you come upon this job?

**Jones:** You know, I really don't know. I think some man in the neighborhood worked out there and did that and knew something about it. Maybe my mother. It could have even been my mother who worked for Civil Defense as a warden. I really don't remember. I don't know how many of them there were either. I know it was kind of a cool thing to do.

**Vincent:** Anything else about Jacksonville during the war that you would like to share or what you knew was going on at the time?

**Jones:** Well, I can't think of much else about Jacksonville. We've been through rationing and all that stuff. As the war went on, of course, the possible threat of submarines and all that just disappeared. By the end of '42 all you were doing really was thinking about the rest of the war and how soon it would be over and how we were doing in various places. The reporting was pretty good. Radio was the major way you kept up with it and my family liked the newspapers and *Life* magazine. *Life* was. . .you know, the pictures - and I bet this is true of a lot of people like me my age in that period - the pictures in *Life* magazine are just indelibly stamped in my head. I've actually done this, Kathy - I have a bunch of things I've taken out of them and my daughter who is nuts about World War II stuff and she would sit down and flip a page and ask me what battle this is. I couldn't see the captions and I wouldn't be right on top of it or 'who is this' or whatever and almost always I know what it is because I can just remember it from that. One thing I was thinking about a while ago, too, is before the US got in the war was the radio broadcasts from Europe. I mean, between September 1, '39 and Pearl Harbor, we aren't in the war yet and the British are holding on and I remember vividly Edwin R. Murrough's [??] broadcast from London because we would listen to them. It was like 6:00 every night. We would listen to them and you would hear Big Ben. It always came on with Big Ben in London,

'bong, bong' or whatever and then the voice, "This is London." Occasionally he'd say, and I guess he was, broadcasting from the tops of buildings and you could hear bomb bursts and things like that. But as the war went on the major attention was either on the radio or *Life* or the *Times Union*, just reading to see what the hell was going on and looking at maps and, you know, as I said, keeping our map constant as to where things were going. In that one of my most vivid memories is D-Day, is what happened the morning of June 6. I got up really early in the morning and of course, given the time difference, they had landed about six hours or so before I got up, but the news reports were on. George Hicks, I guess, was on the \_\_\_\_\_[??], I think, it was Bradley's ship off of Omaha Beach. My friend next door, he and I sat there and we got out maps. We always had maps. We always had maps we could get out. I was in his house that day and on the dining room table I remember we were listening on the radio and it was hard because the beach designations were sometimes used and on the maps we had there was no Omaha or Utah or Sword. But they would say it was near \_\_\_\_\_[??] or the near towns and so we focused on that and knew basically where it was. So we followed that really closely and the rest of the war, too, in Europe we followed all that stuff closely. I think most. . .well, most everybody I know did. I mean, it was something that you were not going to let slough off. It was something you always were on top of.

**Vincent:** Do you remember V-E Day?

**Jones:** Yeah. I remember V-J Day better than V-E Day. V-E Day I remember a real kind of exaltation that the war in Europe was over but also the realization that the war in the Pacific was still going on. The Japanese had become for most people I knew. . .the Japanese had become somebody that terrified you more than Germany because of all that stuff, the Kamikazes. By this time the kamikazes had begun. I remember not ever being able to imagine why anybody would do something like that. So V-E Day, I don't remember that clearly. V-J Day I remember really well. I was playing baseball on V-J Day and sirens began. Everybody knew the war was about to come to an end. So the sirens began and I remember saying. . .people started honking horns all over the place, so that is a pretty vivid memory.

**Vincent:** Do you remember news of the atomic bomb?

**Jones:** No, that was the next thing I was going to say. No. That's something I'm sure I heard it and was aware of it and we heard it and I might have gone to my mother who knew a lot about a lot of things and asked her what this was to explain to me, but I don't remember it at all, not at all. I think a lot of Americans when they heard it the only two things that were their response was, one, "Oh my god this has got to be a big thing because they're saying it had more explosive power than all this other stuff," and, two, by far the most important thing was, "this going to bring the war to an end." Nobody, I think, had any idea what the lasting after-effects would be. I think most everybody didn't really know what an atomic bomb was. Really didn't have any idea. And certainly didn't have any idea of a bunch of people running around over there with radiation or anything like that. That just really was something that nobody knew much about.

**Vincent:** Do you think your experiences in keeping up with World War II and keeping track with all the maps, do you think that pushed you into history a little bit?

**Jones:** Civil War pushed me into history more than anything because my family, my grandmother was, great-grandmother, was at Charleston when Sumter was fired on and my great-grandfather was really interested in the war. He had all these books and so I read all that. That's why I got more than anything, but it certainly didn't hurt. It made me continue to read World War II books, even when I had a Ph.D in Civil War and in 1989 when Earl Beck [??] retired from here and I got a chance to teach, was told they weren't going to hire anybody else for World War II and 'do you want to teach it?' that's what made me do it. I probably wouldn't be doing this now if it weren't for all that because it was so memorable. Obviously for anybody I think, an impressionable child, and impressionable child with a political family, with a family who was in to that kind of thing and was always on top of that, I think it really had a huge impact.

**Vincent:** Any closing remarks or thoughts?

**Jones:** No. No closing remarks.

**Vincent:** Well, thank you very much.

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