

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR  
AND  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**NUMBER**

**1525**

**Interview With**

**ROBERT HOE**

**September 20, 2003**

**Place of Interview: Kerrville, Texas**

**Interviewer: William J. Alexander**

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Robert Hoe

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Mr. Alexander: This is Bill Alexander interviewing Mr. Robert Hoe, a panelist here at the Nimitz Museum for the University of North Texas Oral History Program. I'm interviewing Mr. Hoe in order to get his experiences while he served in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II.

So, Mr. Hoe, can you tell me where you were born, when you were born, and to whom you were born?

Mr. Hoe: My mother's name was Gladys Hoe. I was born in Leroy, New York, on November 29, 1922.

Alexander: Do you have brothers or sisters?

Hoe: I have three sisters and a brother living, and one sister who passed on.

Alexander: What were the names of them?

Hoe: My brother's name is Richard. My sisters are Alma Jane, Gladys, and Susan.

Alexander: Let's start at the beginning. You said Gladys was your mother. What about your father?

Hoe: My father's name was Garnet.

Alexander: Were these folks immigrants?

Hoe: Well, if you want to call them that. My mother came from Canada, and my father was born in Buffalo, New York.

Alexander: Okay. Where did you go to school?

Hoe: At Leroy High School. Leroy is famous for being the home of the Jell-O. That is where they invented Jell-O.

Alexander: Is that right?

Hoe: Yes.

Alexander: Very interesting! All right, you started in grade school?

Hoe: Yes.

Alexander: When did you start in school? In what year?

Hoe: It must have been 1927, I guess, or 1928.

Alexander: Did you go all through your schooling at Leroy?

Hoe: Yes, through high school. I graduated in the Class of 1940.

Alexander: What did you do beyond that?

Hoe: I went to the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York, starting in 1940. I graduated in the Class of 1944.

Alexander: You were obviously at the university at the time of Pearl Harbor.

Hoe: Yes.

Alexander: What were you doing on that day? When did you hear about Pearl Harbor?

Hoe: Well, my sister, Alma Jane, was an organist in church, and after the church services were over, she was practicing on the organ. I was waiting to walk home with her, and somebody came into the church and said that the Japanese had attacked Pear Harbor.

Alexander: What was your response to it? Can you remember what went through your mind?

Hoe: Well, the first thing was that it was incredible. It was unbelievable that they

would have had the audacity to attack Pearl Harbor. I remembered at the time that in high school my social science teacher had predicted that we would go to war with Japan or China--one of the Far Eastern countries--before we went to war in Europe. This was in 1938 when he predicted that. So, it flashed back through my mind that he had predicted that and that it had actually had occurred. But at that time, remember, all of our emphasis was on the war in Europe. The war in the Far East was kind of out of the scope of our knowledge and experience. We didn't pay much attention to that.

Alexander: Did you know where Pearl Harbor was?

Hoe: I knew it was in the Hawaiian Islands, but I didn't know exactly where the Hawaiian Islands were relative to the West Coast. For some reason, I had the opinion that the Hawaiian Islands were closer to California than they actually were.

Alexander: That is interesting. What was your response in what you wanted to do? What did you think about what was going to happen now to you or

whatever?

Hoe: I don't think that I had any feelings that the Japanese attack personally changed very much of what I was doing. The year before, we were camping when the war in Europe started. My father had come to us and told us that--I think it was when the Germans invaded Poland [September 1, 1939]--the next World War was coming. He had been in the First World War, and he said that they were going to have another war. But all of our emphasis was on the European Theater. Being near the East Coast, why, we were looking eastward instead of westward, as far as the war was concerned.

Alexander: Okay, since you were in your second year in school, did you have any concern about what was going to happen in your schooling?

Hoe: Oh, no.

Alexander: There was no problem there at all?

Hoe: I figured that if I went, I went. The draft was on during that time frame. The draft had started. Since I was an engineering student, I would get an automatic exemption if I

wanted it.

Alexander: Did you get one?

Hoe: I stayed out until 1943, and then I enlisted. I went to the draft board, actually, and told them I wanted to enlist.

Alexander: In the Army?

Hoe: In the Navy. We had that prerogative. If you were drafted, you went where they told you to go. If you enlisted, you got to choose where you wanted to go. So, I selected the Navy at the time.

Alexander: Where did you go for boot camp?

Hoe: I went to Sampson, New York, down on Seneca Lake. There was a little boot camp there that they had. I think they had about 50,000 recruits in there at a time.

Alexander: Oh, they did? Is that right?

Hoe: Yes. It was a pretty good-sized boot camp.

Alexander: It was a new boot camp? It must have been.

Hoe: It was new in World War II. I don't know for sure, but it had been around for a few years by the time I went there, I think.

Alexander: How long were you in there? How many weeks?

Hoe: Oh, I went in in July, and I was there until



September.

Alexander: That is about the ten or twelve weeks. Had you finished your schooling?

Hoe: No, I hadn't finished. I had three years in of engineering studies.

Alexander: What happened at boot camp?

Hoe: While I was in boot camp, we took a series of tests, which they gave to all of the Navy personnel when they enlisted. Then they had a selection specialist that interviewed each of the candidates. When your name was called, after you took these tests, you went into a room, and they interviewed you and determined what you wanted to do.

When they called my name, I went in where the "H's" were, and they said, "Oh, you go on down and see the gentleman [down there] who has your papers. " I went down there, and this person had noticed that I had been a student at the University of Rochester. That was part of my record. He had been there, so when he interviewed me, he asked me what I wanted to do. I said, "I wanna kill Japs!" He said, "You can't do that. You're in the

Navy. In the Navy, you have to go to school. You can't just go off. You have to go to school. The question is, which school do you want to go to?" He said, "They have anything from armed guard to going to Annapolis. You take your pick of whatever you want to do." I said, "I don't want to go to Annapolis because that'll take too long. How about Navy air?" He said, "Navy air? That'll take you another two years, maybe." I said, "I don't want to do that." He said, "How about V-12? If you go to V-12, why, you can go into Officer Candidate School." [Editor's note: The V-12 Program allowed college students to complete their degrees and thus be eligible for commissions upon formal entry into the Navy.]

So, I said, "Okay," and then I went back to the University of Rochester in the V-12 program. When I got back there, after I started there, they called me in and said, "You have already had three years of college. You're not supposed to be in the V-12 Program. You're supposed to go directly to

Officer Candidate School." So, I went down to Columbia University to midshipman's school.

Alexander: Because of the three years?

Hoe: Yes. If you had three years, they didn't send you back to school. So, I went out to midshipman's school at Columbia. I got through there...

Alexander: Did that basically get you through your university background or anything like that?

Hoe: No, I still had more to come when I got through. From there I went down to Miami, to the Navy Anti-Submarine Warfare School. I was there for several weeks.

Alexander: Did you choose submarines?

Hoe: No, it was anti-submarine warfare.

Alexander: Oh, anti-submarine warfare.

Hoe: Well, I had part of an engineering training so my commission was with a deck and engineering commission (DEVG), which was a combination that they gave to...

Alexander: Engineering and deck.

Hoe: Yes, engineering and deck. I didn't realize this at the time. I thought at the time that

that was a kind of an honor to get that, but it turns out that it gave you two jobs to do. They put you on a small ship, and you were the deck and engineering officer.

Alexander: A destroyer, for example.

Hoe: Or even smaller. I actually got assigned to a PC.

Alexander: A PC is...?

Hoe: A PC is a patrol craft. It is the next step below a destroyer.

Alexander: And up one step from an SC [submarine chaser].

Hoe: Yes. At that time, they posted a notice on the board in the Navy headquarters in Miami asking for volunteers for extra-hazardous duty. I didn't see the notice, but my roommate came back and said, "Hoe, there's a notice on the board that you would be interested in. Why don't you go down and take a look at it?"

So, I went down there, and they had pulled the notice from the board. I asked the WAVE [a member of the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, an auxiliary

branch of the Naval Reserve]: "I understand that they had a notice for extra-hazardous duty posted." She said, "Well, go in and see the commanding officer. He'll tell you about it." So, I went in there, and he said, "If you want to go there, I'll put your name in."

So, I put my name in, and they came around and interviewed a group of us. Then I was selected to go to the school in Fort Pierce, Florida, which was the start of a new classification where they combined the Navy Scouts and Raiders and the Underwater Demolition Team [UDT] training. So, this was the first group with that category. It was designated as Roger Group. We were in Roger One. Roger One was the first class that went through this combined training of Underwater Demolition Teams and Navy Scouts and Raiders.

Alexander: So, you were the first group, then, to do that. Is that right?

Hoe: To do the combined training, yes, because they had the Underwater Demolition School, and they did the Navy Scouts and Raider training there, too. So, they combined them.

We had an extended training period. I don't know if it was double the length, but it was extended over the original underwater demolition training.

Alexander: How long of a time were you there?

Hoe: I think it was from about July or August until the end of the year. We were there maybe four months.

Alexander: So, you were there into December?

Hoe: We were there until December.

Alexander: So, you were there until December, 1943?

Hoe: No, 1944, because I had gone through my boot camp; then the V-12; then the midshipman's school; and then the Anti-Submarine Warfare School before I got to the special training.

Alexander: And the special training that you had in that was what? Tell me a little bit about what that was.

Hoe: The Navy Scouts and Raiders had been formed earlier in 1942, and then later on the UDT was formed. I think it was formed in 1943 or so. The Scouts and Raiders were the people who went in ahead of the landings and scouted the beaches. They went in and examined the

profile for the landings so they would be prepared to make landings. They sent a lot of profiles so you could determine where your landings would go. They marked the beaches. They went inland. They actually did some reconnaissance inland--information and intelligence gathering.

Alexander: Did you do this just by yourself, or was there a group?

Hoe: Generally, there was a team. The group that originally started--Scouts and Raiders--was an intelligence-gathering group for the landings. They also participated in some guerrilla warfare-type things, but I wasn't a part of that. That was before I was in there. They participated in the landings in North Africa, Salerno, Sicily, Southern France; and then they landed in Normandy. The Underwater Demolition Teams were not in the landings in North Africa, but they were the first ones who landed in Normandy. They let the teams in there to blow up the obstacles on the beaches.

So, there was the scouting aspect and the

guerrilla warfare aspect, and then there was the underwater demolition aspect, which was clearing the beaches and scouting the beaches. There was an overlap where the waterline was, basically, and so when they combined the two, eventually the school was assigned to China.

Alexander: This group that you were in now?

Hoe: Yes. Roger One and Roger Two went over to China. We left at the end of 1944 and went to China. So, Roger One and Roger Two eventually ended up in the China group, which was called the Sino-American Cooperative Organization [SACO]. That is how we ended up in China. The China group had already been in existence. The SACO group had been there since 1942, and they were spread throughout China. When we got to Calcutta, India, they split us up, and we went to different camps. [Editor's note: SACO, often referred to as the "Rice Paddy Navy," was a joint unit consisting of Chinese Nationalist and American military personnel. SACO was headed by Lieutenant General Tai Li, the chief of



the Bureau of Information and Statistics  
Military Affairs Commission Bureau. The  
senior American officer in charge was Captain  
Milton Miles, USN.]

Alexander: In China?

Hoe: In China. Myself and another ensign, Ensign  
Richard Davis, traveled from Kunming, China,  
all the way over to Camp 6, which was several  
thousand miles. We flew part of the way, and  
then went by boat on the river, by truck, and  
by foot mostly.

Alexander: Just the two of you?

Hoe: Just the two of us, with a Chinese guide.  
Otherwise, we would have never would have  
gotten there. We went for a period of time,  
and then we dropped off the Chinese guide,  
and then we would pick up another one, and we  
would go forward from there. They had a  
route going for us--in fact, an underground  
railroad--to get across China.

Alexander: Was that in occupied China?

Hoe: The Japanese, of course, had a large part of  
China. They had the coast, and then they had  
what they called "the corridor," which ran

from Hankow down to Canton. A railroad used to run down there, and the Flying Tigers [the American Volunteer Group, a band of civilian pilots that flew for the Nationalist Chinese government] used to have actions against the Japanese. They were kind of fighting for control of that railroad there. The line that ran north and south was basically controlled to a large degree by the Japanese, although they were fighting back and forth. So, we went over that line, and we dropped in behind the Japanese. We were in between the Japanese on the coast and the Japanese in the corridor. There was a large pocket there.

Alexander: And what was this Camp 6?

Hoe: Camp 6. They numbered the camps. Ours was Camp 6.

Alexander: What was Camp 6 like when you got there?

Hoe: There were a total of fourteen camps set up between 1942 and 1945. They set up fourteen camps all around China. They set them up, generally, as close to the center of activity as they could so that they could do their guerrilla warfare. We worked directly with

the Chinese.

Alexander: But, it basically was for guerrilla warfare?

Hoe: Well, there were a number of factors that were involved. There was a question of the weather. The weather that affected the South Pacific came from northwest China across the Gobi Desert, down across China, across the Philippines, and then down the South China Sea. So, we made weather broadcasts for the benefit of the Navy. The broadcasts were radioed out to the fleet so they would know what weather was coming down across China. That was one thing we did--the weather. Another thing was the coastwatchers. We had people around the coast who would watch the shipping coming down. There was a channel between Formosa--now it is called Taiwan, but at the time it was called Formosa--and the mainland. They would have coastwatchers who would observe shipping. We would watch the movements of the Japanese and report it. We worked directly with the Chinese, and we trained the Chinese. We worked as a team with the Americans doing the training and

supplying the ammunition and arms, and the Chinese were supplying the troops.

Alexander: Were your co-sponsors Americans as well, or were those Aussie coastwatchers?

Hoe: They had coastwatchers down in the South Pacific that the Aussies supplied, but this particular group of coastwatchers that we had was Chinese and American. The Chinese were obviously local people, and they could pass in and out of the lines, and the Japanese couldn't distinguish them from the civilian population. So, they had a lot better success than the Americans. The Americans, obviously, you could see them. So, basically we worked with the Chinese groups.

Our particular organization, the people that came from the Roger One Group, trained the Chinese troops in basic small arms-- .38-caliber and .45-caliber pistols and machine guns. We had a Thompson submachine gun, and we had Lewis guns, which were World War I-type guns. We had a lot of various small arms that we trained them in, and then we would train them in these underwater

demolition techniques--the use of explosives, setting booby traps, and blowing up obstacles.

Alexander: How did you get the guns? Were they dropped to you?

Hoe: The biggest problem that SACO had was getting the guns shipped over there, because the Americans were supposed to supply the guns and ammunition, and the Army controlled the planes. The only way you could get in there during this time frame was by air. They opened up the Ledo Road, and, subsequently, they opened the Burma Road to China. I don't know when, but the Burma Road opened sometime probably in 1944 or 1945. But most of the stuff early on came over by plane--practically all of it--and so there was a very limited amount of supplies that got to SACO people. They in turn turned them over to the Chinese. But later on, the supplies began to increase when they opened up the roads to China, and they brought in more.

But relative to what the military ordnance was concerned, originally, when they

started out, the ordnance went to Europe. The CBI [China-Burma-India Theater] was pretty much a "second-class citizen" compared to the war was in the South Pacific, which was dominated by the Navy and [General Douglas A.] MacArthur's people. So, it wasn't until later on when they started to have an influx of a reasonable amount of supplies into China, so the guns and ammunition were fairly limited, as far as we were concerned. But we were a relatively small group, too, so we didn't need that much.

The Navy in China did not require the supply chain that the Army required because we basically lived off of the land. We got food from the Chinese, so we didn't import food. We didn't ship food over; the Navy tried to limit it to the guns and ammunition.

It was quite an exciting experience, as far as the actual activity. When we got into Camp 6, one of the guys from our group--Matt Miller, his name was--had sunk a ship in the harbor of Amoy. He had taken some Chinese

that he had trained, and they had gone in and put explosives on a ship and sank the ship in the harbor. We had a Marine captain who had a group of Chinese, a small group, that had gone out, and they would attack outposts of the Japanese.

See, the Japanese were at quite a big disadvantage over there because China is so big, and they had a limited number of troops. They still had a million men that were on the coast of China and in inland China in trying to protect Japanese interests. But the Chinese were everywhere else, and so they could perform some guerrilla activity against them pretty readily.

Alexander: We didn't at that time even realize what you were doing.

Hoe: No. Of course, this whole operation was a secret operation to start with. Obviously, the Japanese knew (chuckle).

Alexander: Who was in charge of all these camps?

Hoe: Well, there was a naval officer by the name of Milton Miles, who was sent over to China originally by the Chief of Naval Operations,

Admiral [Ernest] King, with the express purpose of doing what he could for the Navy in China. In other words, he was a one-man operation. He sent him over to China to do what he could for the Navy, and basically his orders were to do that.

In the first place, he didn't have the slightest idea of how he would even get to China at that time. But he did have a friend in the Chinese Embassy in Washington, a Colonel Chou, who said, "I'll send a letter over to Chiang Kai-shek and find out what you should do over there." So, he did, and Chiang Kai-shek sent a message back and said, "I'll put him in the care of General Tai Li." Well, General Tai Li was head of basically the Chinese FBI, and he was characterized as the head of the Gestapo. [Editor's note: Tai Li's Bureau of Information and Statistics Military Affairs Commission collected military and political intelligence for the Nationalist government and also conducted covert operations and assassinations against both the Japanese and the Chinese



Communists.] Most of the people that Miles talked to in Washington before he went over there were very negative about Tai Li, that he was like the Heinrich Himmler of China, and it turned out in his experience that it wasn't so. I guess that if you were an enemy of Tai Li, he didn't treat you too kindly.

Anyway, when Miles arrived in China, he was a one-man operation over there. He met Tai Li over there, and Tai Li took him on a tour of his people. He had a large contingent of undercover guys and spies and soldiers and guerrilla fighters all throughout China under his control. So, he proposed to Miles that, if Miles would bring in the ammunition and the training help and the ordnance, he would provide the services of his troops. If Miles would train the troops, Tai Li would provide his troops to provide the basis from which Miles could gather all the information--weather information, the location of the Japanese, and so forth.

That is when they formed this

organization, which eventually became the Sino-American Cooperative Organization. For a brief period of time, it was under the OSS [Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency], but when they first started, OSS hadn't even existed at the time. In late 1942, it came under the control of... it was associated with...I don't know exactly what the relationship was, but it was associated with the OSS. In fact, when they generated this agreement, it was signed off by the top-level people of China and the United States. Major General Bill ("Wild Bill") Donovan, who was the head of OSS, signed it. So did Frank Knox, who was the Secretary of Navy. Well, this document was signed by the top people, and basically it spelled out the operation of the Americans and the Chinese for this Sino-American Cooperative Organization. From that time on, they expanded and built up these camps. By the end of the war, there were fourteen of these camps throughout China.

Then we had some other organizations that

we were associated with. They would send out a group from the camps--for example, survey parties. One of the major purposes of going over to China, really, was to scout the coast and see whether a landing of American troops in China was feasible. In fact, as part of the planning process, they were planning on landing because one of the alternatives was to land on the coast of China and set up the staging for an attack on the main islands of Japan from China. If you will look on the map, you'll see that China and Japan are much closer together than, say, the Philippines and China, or the Philippines and Japan. It made sense to do it, except that near the end of the war, when they dropped the [atomic] bombs, of course, it changed the ground rules entirely.

Alexander: Thank heavens! What was your duty by itself? Did you have a crew that you worked with?

Hoe: When we got into Camp 6, we were given different assignments. One of the assignments I had was the training of a group of Chinese troops that was there in underwater

demolition techniques. We had an interpreter. Each of us had an interpreter or a group of interpreters. Sometimes you needed several to interpret because of the various dialects. I had a group that I was teaching swimming and carrying explosives. We had a river there, and we were working in the river. That particular assignment that I had was one that Matt Miller had had before me. Unfortunately, he lost a Chinese swimmer, and so they took the job away from him and gave it to me.

Alexander: You say he lost a swimmer?

Hoe: In the river, yes, in the training program. But then he took a group of the swimmers that he trained, and he went down and sank this ship in Amoy harbor. So, he vindicated himself for that.

The other thing we did was that we trained them in the small arms. We had .30-caliber carbines, and we had bazookas. We trained them in the use of explosives. We had some TNT. We used TNT and set out booby traps.

All of us worked directly with the Chinese, and then after we had done that, then we went on some missions with the Chinese. On the first mission that I was directly on, we took a group...I think we had about 120 Chinese and maybe twenty Americans in the group. We had several sampans, or boats, that we took when we were making this raid on this island off the coast there--the island of Wosu.

Alexander: What was the river again?

Hoe: I don't know what the name of the river was. There were so many rivers down there, but the island was named Wosu. I remember the name of the little island that was out there. When we made this raid on this island, we were told that there were about a hundred Japanese there. There was a garrison that was south of Amoy, maybe a mile, a mile-and-a-half, or two miles south. It was within sight of the city.

When we came close to the island, they started opening up with machine guns, so they obviously had advance warning that we were

coming. So, when we pulled back from there, a Japanese gunboat came out from Amoy, and they started shooting at us with a 40-millimeter or 3-inch gun or whatever they had. But they were diverted by the machine gun that we had on the shore, so they turned off.

We got into the shore, and when we got back into shore, they told us that they found out that there were something like several thousand Japanese on the island, and the Japanese were moving to evacuate Amoy--at least a portion of their troops--to move them down to South China. So, they were using Wosu as a staging area to land them on the coast.

We regrouped and together with the elements of the Chinese 75<sup>th</sup> Army, and we set up various battalions to intercept the Japanese and harass them as they moved out of the Amoy and down the coast of China.

Alexander: The word "harass" has a whole lot of things to be said about it.

Hoe: Oh, yes. See, they were walking in a line

across the rice paddies, and we were in the hills and mountains around there, so they would have a hard time getting us. It was very similar to what is happening in places like Afghanistan. You send a line of troops or a convoy down the road, and the other guys off to the side have a tactical advantage over you if you are trying to go from one place to another.

Then we had planes that would come in from the Philippines--these big Navy PB4Y2s, which were, I think, B-24s [Consolidated Liberator land-based heavy bombers] that they modified the twin tails on. They had one single big tail, and they would come swooping down on the Japanese and strafe with these bombers. They killed a lot of the Japanese that way. The Japanese were coming across the rice paddies, and they were in the wide-open when they came in. The American Navy pilots came down the valley and up over a hump and then dropped in on the Japanese. They would just scatter them. We were up in the mountain. We laid out an arrow--a lot of

cloth--to point to where the Japanese were, and they went down and strafed them. We were pretty successful in harassing them as they went south out of Amoy.

Interestingly enough, when we got to the border of the province of Fukien, the southern border, the Chinese troops stopped. The reason, we determined--at least we thought that was the reason--was that we came to the end of the territory that was the territory of that warlord. When we got to Fukien territory, that was turned over to the warlord in another district.

The SACO troops included Chinese generals who had their own particular...it would be like a National Guard unit here. In other words, when you would get to the border of California and jump over to Nevada, well, that is a different National Guard group over there. That is the analogy that I use, because it was kind of surprising to us that they stopped--because that ended their territory. Besides that, they were stretched pretty thin.



We basically carried our own food or scavenged for our food from the local people there, who were all friendly to us. We were honored as the saviors of South Fukien. They had big parties for us. They had big silk banners that they made to present to us.

Alexander: Do you have some of those?

Hoe: I never got the banners. I think the commanding officers got the banners.

Alexander: Where were you...you were there, then, in July and August, weren't you?

Hoe: Yes. In fact, after the Japanese had moved out a large contingent...there were about 3,000 or 4,000 of them that moved out of that garrison in Amoy and moved down to South China. We think that it was for one of two reasons. Either they were planning on evacuating that whole section of China, or they were moving them down to support the Japanese action in Southeast Asia. We thought either one of those reasons was the reason they decided to move the troops out of there. In Amoy they were pretty much just there to prevent any action from Chinese.

But at that time there was not that much action, so they may have been sending them down to South China as a reserve. We never really knew the reason why they moved out of there.

But in the meantime, we had been planning a raid on Amoy. The raid was scheduled. There was an airfield in Amoy and on Quemoy, which was another island adjacent to Amoy. We were scheduling a raid on that where we would go in with the Chinese troops, and there were some documents and plans that we had hoped to retrieve from there.

The man who was in charge of that operation was a guy by the name of Phil Bucklew. Phil Bucklew was a guy who had been in the invasion in North Africa, and he had earned two Navy Crosses over there. He came over to China, and he and some of his Navy Cross people from Europe had ended up over in our camp, and we were planning this raid on Amoy. My assignment was to attack the power station on Kulangsu, which was a small island between the mainland and Amoy. There was a

power plant on Kulangsu, and the idea was to go in and blow up the power plant and perform a diversionary attack so that the Japanese would be attracted over there. Then they would swing around to the north and attack the airfield and get the secret information that they were looking for.

That raid was scheduled for September 1, 1945, and they dropped the bombs [referring to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and August 9, 1945] while we were in training and preparing for it. We were building some boats. We had some boats with 90-horsepower Johnson outboard motors that we were going to use for making the attack on the island. When they dropped the bombs, well, this action was cancelled, obviously, and we moved in.

Alexander: Tell me something about that. You were in an area where nobody even knew where you were.

Hoe: Yes, except the Japanese (chuckle).

Alexander: Tell me about how you heard about the bomb. Do you remember?

Hoe: Well, our main objective of being in China

was to gather information for the Navy. We provided information to American submarines going up and down the coast. The main corridor for Japanese shipping that supplied their troops in Southeast Asia was from Japan down in what they called the Straits of Formosa, or now the Straits of Taiwan--the sea between Taiwan and the mainland. That was where the main shipping was, and that was where the American submarines came in and sank a lot of Japanese ships. So, we had radio contact all throughout China, and our main objective was to provide weather information, coastal information, and meteorological data to the Navy in the South Pacific. Also, we were to prepare for a landing. That was another objective that we were looking for.

But in the process, in order to be successful in that, we had leaned very strongly on the Chinese, and this alliance with Tai Li and Chiang Kai-shek really was instrumental in the success of the whole operation.

Alexander: Let me stop this now.

[Tape 1, Side 2]

Alexander: Since we were talking about the bomb, can you remember how you responded to it? We didn't know how big the bomb was or what it was about. I don't even think we knew what they called it.

Hoe: Let me go back to my junior year in high school, because my teacher said that we might expect an attack from the Japanese--"a Yellow Peril from the East"--before we got into battle. He also told us about the nuclear fission process and how they were developing a tremendous energy source, and this energy source was a result of the division of atoms. This had been done, I think, in 1935 or 1936--somewhere around that time. He was discussing the social problems of the time. This was something that he had talked to us about--this tremendous energy source.

Well, the first reaction I had when I heard the bomb...and then I didn't think anything more about it. From then on, it was just quiet everything for years. But some of

the guys that I had gone to school with at the University of Rochester had gone to work for Eastman Kodak Company, and they were all exempt from the draft, and they went to work down in Tennessee. The guys that were in my class in engineering went to work in Tennessee. [Editor's note: Oak Ridge, Tennessee, was an important work site for the Manhattan Project, the agency which designed and constructed the atomic bombs. The radioactive isotope U235 necessary for the fission process was developed there under the supervision of Robert J. Oppenheimer.]

It didn't dawn on me at the time, but when I heard about the bomb, I immediately remembered that was that energy source he was talking about. I had remembered it from high school, that he had talked about that tremendous energy source. He was pretty prophetic for a high school teacher; he was pretty good.

But we had a mixed reaction because from our standpoint--the group that was there down in Camp 6--when we heard about the bomb, we

were really getting geared up to attack the Japanese, and we were very enthusiastic about it. So, we had kind of a mixed reaction. You know, it was kind of a disappointment that we missed that raid.

Alexander: One of the best missions you might have had?

Hoe: Yes. Then, on the other hand, we said that maybe we were lucky that we didn't do it because then we might have not survived it. So, that was basically my reaction. About dropping a bomb, I think that generally the feeling was somewhat of relief, but I don't think our particular group was...it didn't come across as being the end of the war. It came across as the Japs being bombed. It wasn't until they dropped the second bomb...and that was sometime later, and we didn't have any idea what the amount of devastation.

Alexander: No, I am sure of that.

Hoe: As far as we knew, they had a new weapon, and they dropped it, so it wasn't something that hit us as: "Man! That's the end of the war!"

Alexander: I was stenciling kids coming into boot camp

when this happened. All I can remember is that somebody came in and said that we had dropped an incredible bomb, and it looked like the war was going to be over. I kept on stenciling.

Alexander: When the second the bomb hit, what came with that?

Hoe: Oh, then we realized that it was over, probably, because by that time we had some idea that the destruction was pretty tremendous. The first time they dropped the bomb, it was a big bomb, but we had no concept of what that meant. In fact, we never had a concept of it until we actually came back to the United States after the war and saw the movies that were on television. It wasn't something that we knew about at the time.

Alexander: You're right. When you are thinking about the invasion [of Japan] in November, a lot of people assumed that all of the Japanese troops were in the islands themselves. So, you know, what I am coming to here...obviously, there were millions of



Japanese infantry outside of the home islands.

Hoe: Oh, yes!

Alexander: Where you were--the area that you were in and so forth--was it a rather large Japanese-held area?

Hoe: Oh, yes. The Japanese had contingents all up and down the coast and inland. There was still a large garrison even though they had moved 3,000 or 4,000 out of there around Amoy. There was still a large contingent left there. I don't know exactly how many, but I would imagine in the thousands. On the coast of China before the war, there were a number of what they called "treaty ports." The treaty ports were where the countries other than China had had extraterritorial rights. In other words, people who were in there were citizens of, say, France, United States, or Germany. They had rights that were dependent upon the laws their country. They were not under Chinese law, so in these treaty ports, the treaties allowed the Americans and the other foreign countries to

use these ports with this proviso that they had these extra rights.

Well, when the war ended, all of that was out the window [ended], and everything reverted to Chinese law. In fact, when we moved into Shanghai, they told us: "Hey, look! You no longer have the protection of the United States Navy. You are now under the Chinese government. When you are off the base, you are susceptible to Chinese law." Before that, they had the special privilege of the extraterritorial rights. That was a major change. It affected--at least what they told us--how we were supposed to act when we were there.

Having come from dealing with the Chinese inland for the past many months, why, we were very respectful of the Chinese, anyway. We were more concerned with the people who were landing from the outside. From the inside, we moved into Shanghai and other major ports, and I was given the assignment as an operational duty officer and the port director.

Alexander: How many of you were there?

Hoe: A couple of thousand, I think, of the SACO people.

Alexander: They came back in the same group?

Hoe: Most of them, yes. Some of them went out a different way, but most of them came back through Shanghai.

Alexander: Did you have any duty at that time? What was going on?

Hoe: Well, I was the operational duty officer--one of the operational duty officers--in the port director's office. The Navy controlled the port until they turned it over to the Chinese. Initially, we were responsible for assigning the pilots and doing the berthing of the ships. We had a pilot vessel that was at the entrance of the Wangpu, which is a river that runs from the Yangtze into Shanghai. We had another pilot vessel at the entrance of Yangtze, and some of the more experienced pilots we used for bringing the ships from the Wusong Anchorage up the Wangpu to Shanghai. The other pilots were river pilots. A lot of them either Chinese or

Russians who were piloting the ships from the entrance to Yangtze up into Wusong Anchorage. So, I got a lot of those. It was a very interesting job working with the pilots.

Alexander: Let's say one thing about the pilots. What did they do?

Hoe: These were the pilots that brought the ships into the harbor. This contrasts with the ones that flew the airplanes.

Alexander: That's right. How long were you there?

Hoe: Well, for eight months after the war, I was in Shanghai. We had a chance to get a temporary increase in rank if we agreed to stay on for a period of time. Since my plan was to go back to school in the fall, anyway, I stayed from the first of the year, when I would have been eligible to go home, until July, when I went back.

Alexander: July of 1946. What was your rank at the time?

Hoe: Well, I temporarily got up to lieutenant, and then when I got discharged, it went back to lieutenant junior grade (j.g.). I was a lieutenant with the temporary rank for the

rest of the time that I was in China, and then I was dropped to (j.g.) when I was discharged in the Reserve.

Alexander: That is the other thing. There was something else I wanted to ask you. First of all, let's do a little bit more. When did you leave China?

Hoe: I left China in July, 1946, I think.

Alexander: So, that was when you got out of the Navy and when you got home?

Hoe: I got my formal discharge, I think, in September, 1946.

Alexander: I would like to go a little bit further here so we will know more about you. Where did you get your discharge?

Hoe: In New York City, at 90 Tripp Street.

Alexander: You were close to home? You went back to school?

Hoe: I went back to school and got my master's in engineering. I got my undergraduate degree first, and then I went down and worked in the oil fields in Texas for a while. I worked down south of Houston, worked the Friendswood District. Do you know the Friendswood

District?

Alexander: Yes, I do.

Hoe: We were drilling wells down in Alvin, Texas.

Alexander: In good ol' Alvin--lots of snakes.

Hoe: There are a lot of copperheads down there. A lot of snakes is right. I was working as a roughneck and a roustabout down there, and then my wife got pregnant.

Alexander: I didn't know you got married.

Hoe: Yes. We got married in 1947, when I was finishing my undergraduate work at Rochester.

Alexander: Were you sweethearts for a long time?

Hoe: No! No! No! No! I knew her about three or four months. She had graduated from the university and was working in the registrar's office. We got married while I was still in school. We honeymooned in Buffalo, New York. The strange thing about it was that, when we got up the next morning in the hotel in Buffalo, the Statler Hotel, we went down to Clark's Dining Room for breakfast, and there was one other couple in there. That was the guy from the school who just had got married the day before, too. He was the captain of

the basketball team, and I was captain of the football team (chuckle).

Alexander: Well, that was good.

Hoe: There are not too many people that you ever knew who honeymooned in Buffalo. This was, like, twenty miles from Niagara Falls, and we didn't even go to Niagara Falls.

Alexander: What time of the year was it?

Hoe: That was Thanksgiving. We ran into a snowstorm.

Alexander: Children?

Hoe: We have two children.

Alexander: What are the children's names?

Hoe: Jennifer and Rebecca.

Alexander: Oh, you have two gals. Are they out and gone?

Hoe: Well, Rebecca is a lawyer. She is in New York City. Jennifer--her nickname is "Heidi"--is in San Diego. She lives a couple of blocks from where we live.

Alexander: When you got out of school, you didn't go back to roughnecking, I don't think.

Hoe: Well, I had already graduated when I went down there to work for Humble Oil Company,

which was the predecessor of Exxon. I went back and went to work for Eastman Kodak, and then I went back to graduate school and got my master's.

Then I went to Cornell [University, in Ithaca, New York] and got my Ph.D. in nuclear physics and engineering with a minor in physics and math. Then I went to work in the Navy nuclear program and worked for Admiral [Hyman] Rickover's program for ten years with General Electric in the design of the Navy submarines and surface ships. I worked on the USS *Bainbridge*. [Editor's note: Launched in April, 1961, the *Bainbridge* (CGN-25) was the U.S. Navy's first nuclear guided missile frigate.] Then I went to work in San Diego for General Atomic building the commercial nuclear plants.

Alexander: You have had quite a career.

Hoe: So, interestingly enough, I told you about Phil Bucklew because I wanted to emphasize the name there. Phil Bucklew continued in the Navy. He left and then came back in. He was instrumental...one of the persons that



was the driving force in forming the SEALs. [Editor's note: Bucklew helped to establish and train the Sea Air and Land Teams, the Navy's elite special warfare units, in 1963.] So, in fact, they named the Naval Special Warfare center in San Diego at Coronado after him. It is the Phil Bucklew Center. I was invited to go over there; I guess they sent an invitation out to the veterans in the area. So, I went over there, and, lo and behold, in the program they had a little article on Phil Bucklew's biography. Remember I told you about the raid that they had anticipated? Well, it mentioned that in the article.

Alexander: Well, sir, this has been a very, very interesting interview, and the University of North Texas and the Nimitz Museum are very happy to have it in their archives.