

Larry Brown had graduated from Tufts College in 1934 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. After Pearl Harbor he was accepted into the Navy. "I had knowledge of internal combustion engines, navigation and aviation. They needed officers with experience in electronics. I didn't but they ignored that, made me an Ensign and sent me to Harvard and MIT to study radar. In those days, radar was a classified word. At that time they needed aviation officers. Night Fighters did not exist in this country at that time. The English had developed aviation radar during their early air engagements with the Germans in 1940, 'The Battle of Britain'. The radar was used first for early detection of daytime German bombers. This allowed RAF fighters to scramble to the right place and at the right time to intercept these bombers. It was so successful that daytime raids gave way to only night attacks. The use of radar for night fighting was initiated in order to shoot down German bombers devastating London in their night raids." I asked Larry about radiation effects from the radar. "Regarding radiation. I was exposed to a great deal at MIT. I was on the research staff there after the war. One day I carried some fluorescent tubes into the lab and they lit up as if I had been plugged into a 120-volt socket. I guess I was fertile." 'Fertile' being the word that described a high degree of alpha particles present. Larry never had children. Many pilots survived the war only to fall victim of cancer, or Parkinson's disease (a nerve disorder).

The information from the British was helpful. In November of 1943, Air Group Six deployed on the carrier USS Enterprise with LCDR Edward "Butch" O'Hare as commanding officer.

During the campaign in the Gilbert Islands, enemy night air attacks on the US Fleet were a major problem. O'Hare developed a tactic of using radar to direct fighters against enemy aircraft at night. Previously O'Hare had earned the Medal of Honor as a fighter pilot early in the war for shooting down five Japanese bombers during one mission. He was a personal friend of Dad's and my mother. My Uncle Ned writes, "Your mother and I were on the boardwalk in Long Beach Ca. and we came upon a Navy recruiting poster with an oversize picture of Butch. The whole world knew about Butch's heroism- apparently all but your Mom. She pointed at the poster and said "that's Butch O'Hare!" Unfortunately Butch was later killed in a 'friendly' fire accident during night operations. His name was given to the International Airport in Chicago. Mom told me Dad took Butch's death hard and I'm sure he listened to the procedures to prevent, at least, a 'friendly fire' incident from happening again.

Larry Brown continues, "They sent me to Quonset Point R.I., as a Radar Officer with 'Project Affirm'. I met your father and his beautiful wife there. He was a Squadron leader assembled under Cdr. W.E.G. Tayler, a former Eagle Squadron Commander in England."

At Quonset Point, the pilots learned to fly solely based on instruments. The Night Fighter planes were built with 6 radars built into the wings. These radars gave the Hellcat F6U pilots a radar picture of the battlefield from up to 5.5 miles away. The Night Fighters also had a rear looking radar that would alert a pilot if a plane came within 180 yards of his plane.

Larry Brown told me, “The planes, F6Fs, were flown across the country to San Diego by the pilots assigned to them. The 18 planes flew from Quonset Point to Norfolk, Memphis, Texas, Tucson, and finally San Diego. Armed guard shipped spare parts, since they were classified. I was issued a 38-caliber revolver with orders to ‘take care’ of all the classified stuff being sent across the country. Those orders were to do it, but no explanation of how to do it. In San Diego we boarded the USS Hoggat, a jeep carrier, with our planes on board, and sailed to Pearl Harbor. We were there about a month before the USS Wasp turned up. They had sailed around from the east coast through the canal, to Pearl. We had trained with Air Group 14, which was the newly formed fighter unit on the Wasp, at Quonset Point.

Jack and I planned on taking a training plane and visiting all the Hawaiian Islands. He told me he knew where to land. The plane required parachutes as seat cushions. However, we were unable to get into the parachute locker to get parachutes. We never got another chance. But we planned on taking the trip when the war was over. I still had hopes until I learned of his death.”