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Willard Wall
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Oral History Collection

Willard Wall

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

Date: July 11, 1977

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Willard Wall for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on July 11, 1977, in Austin, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Wall in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was stationed at Schofield Barracks during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the surrounding military installations on December 7, 1941.

Now Mr. Wall, to begin this interview, would you just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Wall: I was born on October 14, 1918, and I served until 1939 and re-entered again in 1940 and served until 1945.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Mr. Wall: Well, I guess, more or less at the time I entered the service, that's about all a young lad had to do.

Dr. Marcello: In other words, you're referring to the Depression?

Mr. Wall: Depression, yes. I went in first in 1937; there was no work for the young chaps in those days.

Marcello: You know, this is a standard reason that a great many people of your generation give for having entered the service. Times were tough, and the Army or any branch of the service offered a certain amount of security.

Wall: Well, it offered food, clothing, and twenty-one dollars a month; that's what you were offered by it.

Marcello: Why did you select the Army as opposed to one of the other branches of the service?

Wall: Well, I really wouldn't have a direct answer for you, except it was the easiest to get into at that time. All you had to have was muscles and very little brains, where in the rest of the services the requirements were pretty high.

Marcello: Okay, now you mentioned that you first enlisted in the Army in 1936 . . .

Wall: '37.

Marcello: . . . '37, and then you got out in . . .

Wall: Got out in '39.

Marcello: 1939. And then you re-enlisted again in 1940?

Wall: 1940.

Marcello: Okay, now in your second enlistment, did you go directly to the Hawaiian Islands?

Wall: Right.

Marcello: Were you promised this, and is this the reason why you re-enlisted?

Wall: Well, yes. At that time, you could designate where you wanted to go. Also, you could designate the branch of service, but if

they got overcrowded, they could shove you just about anywhere they wanted to shove you.

Marcello: Now you had not been in the Hawaiian Islands during your first tour of duty, I gather.

Wall: No, I was in the Panama Canal Zone.

Marcello: Why did you want to go to the Hawaiian Islands?

Wall: Oh, I had a young man's dream of hula girls and things there to, shall we say, chase. . . get on with.

Marcello: Now at the time that you re-enlisted in 1940, how closely were you keeping abreast with current events and world affairs and things of that nature?

Wall: Well, my second enlistement was probably caused . . . I got out in 1940, and I joined what they then called the Organized Reserves. It would be the regular Reserves nowadays. So therefore, when they started the draft, they were right behind my fanny, so I just went ahead and enlisted. I was to pick the safest possible spot in the country to go to; that's "Chicken George," but that's what I did. I was right in the middle of it when it started.

Marcello: In other words, if you thought the country would get into war, you were expecting it to come in Europe and with Germany.

Wall: With Germany or . . . well, anywhere in Europe was the expectations.

Marcello: Now did you go directly to Schofield Barracks after you landed in Hawaii?

Wall: Right.

Marcello: Describe what Schofield Barracks looked like from a physical standpoint.

Wall: Well, I was stationed in what they called Upper Schofield Chemical Warfare Service. Now I wasn't in the mainstream of Schofield Barracks. At that time, we were out in what they called the "boonies." There was only one barracks up there where we were at. Schofield Barracks was just--I don't know--a barracks complex, and in those days there were old buildings. There was nothing too modern.

Marcello: Well, how many people were here at Upper Schofield where you were located?

Wall: Well, they called us the 1st Separate Chemical Battalion, but we were only one company; that was Company A. Then we had a signal company on the other side, so I'm going to say roughly 500 people.

Marcello: Now had you been in the Chemical Corps during your first hitch?

Wall: No, I was in the Coast Artillery in the first.

Marcello: Okay, describe what your barracks looked like here from a physical standpoint.

Wall: Well, we had a very modern barracks--cement. They were very modern for Schofield Barracks. I believe it was built in the latter part of '37. . . or the later part of the '30's rather. So it was a modern barrack.

Marcello: Were you satisfied with the quarters that you had there?

Wall: Oh, yes. We were very happy, because we had something modern where some of them didn't.

Marcello: What was the food like here at Upper Schofield?

Wall: Well, in those days it was substantial food, but you didn't get what you wanted everytime, let's put it that way.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale in that pre-Pearl Harbor Army?

Wall: I think, myself, it was very good, in fact, where I was at.

Marcello: How do you account for that high morale?

Wall: Well, for one thing, when it first started, they didn't have very many people that they'd drafted; it was mostly volunteers. With a volunteer, about all you get is gripes, but when the chips are down, he will come in where the one that you force in, why, he's not happy to start with. So it makes the morale point that's . . . well, you would consider it low.

Marcello: In other words, everybody was there because they wanted to be there.

Wall: Right. Yes, I was in Schofield. . . well, I guess in 1941 they started--just before World War II--started shipping in what you call draftees in those days.

Marcello: Now what sort of function were you performing here in the Chemical Corps at Upper Schofield?

Wall: Well, chemical warfare, I guess, is misleading. It was more or less an infantry company. We had mortars, rifles, and all that--normal drilling; also, taking care of chemicals, such as mustard gas, chlorine gas, and all that jazz involved.

Marcello: What was your particular function here?

Wall: I was a sergeant at the time. I would guess you would call me a platoon sergeant; it'd be the best answer to give you on that.

Marcello: Did you have anything to do with the maintenance and care of all these various gases and so on?

Wall: We all had to look after them, right.

Marcello: That's kind of interesting, and I've never talked to anybody who was engaged in that line of work. How were these various chemicals stored?

Wall: Well, just . . . at the time they were not underground. They were in what they called bunkers, but the bunker had a roof over the top of it. They were, shall we say . . . although they had a roof on them, it would be an open storage. That'd be what you would classify it as.

Marcello: Were they relatively strong, bomb-proof, and things of this nature?

Wall: No way! No, one bomb on top of it, and you would have took the islands.

Marcello: It's surprising that they didn't take more precautions with that sort of equipment.

Wall: Well, the way I see it, I guess we all were "beautiful dreamers" about there would be no war. If there were a war, it would never hit . . . well, it was a territory at the time but also a possession of the United States, see. So that was the least of the expectations.

Marcello: What was your routine like in a typical day here at Upper Schofield?

Wall: Well, normally in the morning, you'd have some type of drill or sometimes a formation; in the afternoon we'd be working usually

around what they called the chemical depot. We drilled in the morning and worked in the afternoons.

Marcello: What sort of work would you be doing around the chemical depot?

Wall: Anything that was required, from scrubbing and sanding the tanks that we stored in . . . see, some of them you had to change every so often. Like the chlorine gas would eventually corrode and eat into the metal, so they had to be watched pretty closely.

Marcello: Now was there any sort of special training that you had to undergo to work in an area like this?

Wall: Yes, we had to be . . . at that time, you had to be up on the chemicals. In other words, we were schooled into that; that was part, also, of our training.

Marcello: In other words, did you go to a formal school as such and take classes and things of that sort?

Wall: Well, it was done in the company. In other words, the whole company was involved in it.

Marcello: I gather, then, there was a great deal of what we would today call on-the-job training.

Wall: Right, what would today be considered on-the-job training, right.

Marcello: How well would you say this chemical outfit was trained?

Wall: I would say it was extremely good at that time. I would say later on it had to expand so fast that maybe we had it not so good.

Marcello: In other words, at the time that you were there, the pace was rather slow, leisurely, and there was plenty of time, and I would assume

that the non-commissioned officers could take the time to train the troops properly and so on.

Wall: Right. Right.

Marcello: And like you say, there wasn't that attitude problem, because all of you were volunteers.

Wall: Right. Volunteers, right. You had no kick-back on it: "I was forced here."

Marcello: How large a complex was this area where these gases were stored?

Wall: Well, it was an open area. . . I don't know in acreage. At that time, there wasn't anything up there. The Signal Corps was building a lookout on the mountain there, and, of course, well, that's where they got the notice of the attack coming in. They'd go up on a trail car. That was about the only construction; the rest of it was open field. It just looked like you would be looking at a modern or a medium-sized ranch, you know, say, four or five hundred acres in the complex.

Marcello: Now how close were you to the main part of Schofield Barracks?

Wall: Oh, possibly a mile or a mile and a half.

Marcello: I guess, because of the nature of your work and the sort of things that you were dealing with, they did keep you segregated or separated from Schofield.

Wall: Yes, but I didn't realize it at the time, being young and foolish, I guess, but where they had us, we were uphill from Schofield. Which, once again, if we'd had a bomb any . . . well, your liquid

gases would have flowed just like water right down to Schofield. To my knowledge, it's never been corrected yet; it's still flowing that way.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the liberty routine here at Upper Schofield. How did it work for you personally?

Wall: You mean time off on liberty?

Marcello: Yes.

Wall: Well, at the time the war started, we were what you call 60 per cent restricted and 40 per cent on leave. In other words, probably I had every other weekend off.

Marcello: Now this was before Pearl Harbor.

Wall: Before Pearl Harbor, right.

Marcello: And when you say you had every other weekend off, what would a weekend liberty entail? When would it begin, and when would it end?

Wall: Normally around two o'clock on a Saturday afternoon and end normally at midnight Sunday night. Because in those days, you always had the GI inspection on Saturday morning. You had to have everything spit-and-polished.

Marcello: Now was this the routine all during that time that you were there at Upper Schofield up until the time of the actual attack?

Wall: To the time of the actual attack.

Marcello: In other words, the liberty routine did not really vary then.

Wall: Very little. They had us on restricted alert. In other words, 60 per cent had to be always available.

Marcello: When you went on liberty, where did you go and what did you usually do?

Wall: Well, usually to Honolulu. If you didn't "bend an elbow," then you were chasing a girl. That's about the way it added up.

Marcello: And normally would you go into Honolulu everytime that you had leave, or would it usually be that leave around payday?

Wall: Well, most of the time around payday; that's the only time you had any money to get into town on.

Marcello: In other words, other than that, you would spend the time on base, I assume. Or did you go over to Wahiawa?

Wall: Wahiawa? Yes, that was a little city. About all they had was a couple of bars.

Marcello: Did you go over there very much?

Wall: Not very often, because normally if you were going to have a beer, you would have it on base because it was about one-third the price if you had it anywhere else.

Marcello: How difficult was it to get from Upper Schofield into Honolulu for liberty?

Wall: They had buses that went a regular run. You did all right until about midnight, and then they started knocking them off.

Marcello: I've heard it said that a lot of the Army and Air Force personnel didn't necessarily like to go into Honolulu on a weekend because of all of the sailors that were there. In other words, the fleet would be in, and there would be virtually wall-to-wall sailors.

Wall: Well, that is true. If you knew the fleet was going to be in, then you would probably pass up a weekend. There used to be a jealousy, because a sailor, he would be out to sea--I'm going to use sixty days for a reference point--save up his money--come and blow it all in one night. The GI was unable to afford it, so that was a hassle all the time with that.

Marcello: Now normally when you went into Honolulu, would you stay there overnight, or would you normally come back to the base?

Wall: Normally I would come back to the base. It would be an exception . . . in other words, the only way I'd stay over if I got an extended pass, which even after I got to Hawaii was hard to get.

Marcello: Also, I would assume that there wasn't very much hotel space in Honolulu, was there?

Wall: Right. Very little.

Marcello: And you didn't have very much money anyhow.

Wall: Well, the hotels were there. A GI . . . there was no way could he afford it.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were a sergeant around this time. How much money were you making a month?

Wall: Oh, probably, if my memory serves me right, about sixty bucks a month. That was about it.

Marcello: Now the next question I'm going to ask you is kind of important, and I want you to think carefully before you answer. Many people say that if the Japanese were going to attack the Hawaiian Islands,

the best time they could possibly choose would be a Sunday. What many people seem to think is that Saturday nights were times of a great deal of partying and carousing and so on and so forth in Honolulu and so on, and consequently these troops would not be in shape to fight on Sunday. How would you answer that?

Wall: Well, basically that would be true, because you would have 40 per cent that would be on liberty, plus you would have a Saturday night even if you were on base. You had your NCO clubs; you had your officer's clubs; and the basic private had his post exchange. So that's quite true; that would be . . . in other words, you wouldn't have a very efficient Army the next morning.

Marcello: In other words, there was a great deal of drinking and so on on a Saturday night and a lot of drunks coming in? Is that safe to say?

Wall: It's safe to an extent. I wouldn't say it was over, you know . . . but you have your normal . . . in other words, what you had was a rough-and-tumble bunch. When you have that, you're going to have that. So basically, that is true.

Marcello: Also, is it not true that Sunday mornings were normally a day of leisure for most troops?

Wall: Right. Right. We could get up, and, well, we could have breakfast until ten o'clock on a Sunday morning, so that's the way that we got out of the sack or out of the bunk.

Marcello: And I guess you didn't really even have to get out of the sack if you didn't want to go to breakfast and so on?

Wall: No, if you had twenty-five cents and wanted to go down to the PX later on and have breakfast, you never even bothered to get up.

Marcello: Now the Hawaiian Islands have a large population of Japanese-Americans. At that time, that is, during this period prior to the attack, how much thought was given to the possibility of these people committing any sort of sabotage or espionage and things of that nature?

Wall: None to my knowledge. We had them around Schofield. In fact, if you wanted to get a haircut, you had it cut by a Japanese girl, and they had some Japanese barbers on Schofield Barracks. So to my knowledge now, it would be . . .it was no thought given to it.

Marcello: I was wondering that if you did take certain anti-sabotage measures there at Upper Schofield as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate. You know, it would seem to me that the area where you were located would be a prime target for saboteurs or fifth columnists and things of that nature.

Wall: Yes, but up until the war, they only had a guard that consisted of three men per shift at the chemical depot.

Marcello: Were they using live ammunition?

Wall: No, you wasn't loaded; you had live ammunition with you, but your weapon wasn't loaded.

Marcello: Okay, I think this more or less brings us up to those days immediately prior to the attack, so let's talk about that weekend of December 7, 1941. But in going back a little bit, let me just ask this. As

relations between the two countries continued to deteriorate, did your routine change any? Did the training intensify and so on?

Wall: No. The average troop--I'm going to say and stick my neck out--the average officer didn't know that it was deteriorating. See, I guess the movie--what was it? Tora! Tora!--that just about explained the communications between anything of any importance or to expect a way was about as good as it could come up. Because we had inclination that . . . we knew Europe was tight, but as far as Japan, there's none to my knowledge.

Marcello: Did you feel rather safe and secure, then, in the Hawaiian Islands?

Wall: Yes. Just like I said, that's why I went there, and up until the minute it happened, I still thought I was in the safest spot in the world.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk then about that weekend of December 7, 1941.

Let's start with the Friday, which would be the 5th. Describe what your routine was on that Friday. I want you to go into as much detail as you can possibly remember.

Wall: Well, on Friday night I was strictly in the barracks. I remember this. We had a volleyball game that evening, and I turned in because the next morning I was to be the charge of quarters over the weekend. So my Friday night was really . . . just a routine. We played volleyball until we could not see any longer, and then that was the end of the day for me on Friday, December 5th. So then I got up on December 6th, of course, started in as charge of quarters.

Marcello: And you had the inspection on the 6th, is that correct?

Wall: Right. We had an inspection of the barracks on the 6th of December. Then at about two o'clock, the ones that were going to get liberty started and went downtown.

Marcello: Now when was payday here at Upper Schofield?

Wall: First of the month.

Marcello: December 1st. Now that would have been what day of the week?

I'm trying to think back now.

Wall: Well, let's see, the 7th was on a Sunday, so we went back to what . . . about . . . that would have been a Monday, wouldn't it?

Marcello: Okay, so would have there been a lot of money available yet during that weekend of December 7th?

Wall: Yes, normally it would, because on a weekday it was pretty hard to get into town. Well, if you went in and got a big head, it was pretty hard to get rid of it; you just didn't do that. So normally, it was held until the weekend. With a few exceptions, payday money was still available.

Marcello: During that period prior to the actual attack, were you undergoing any special alerts or maneuvers of anything of that nature?

Wall: No. No. It was just . . . it was a hold on, like I said, 60 per cent of the personnel.

Marcello: Your particular unit just must have been a complete community by itself.

Wall: It was. It was called . . . we were called Company A, 1st Separate

Chemical Battalion, but we were not a battalion. Even after World War II started, they thought we were a battalion and kept requesting the manpower from a battalion. But we were isolated in Upper Schofield barracks. We had a signal company next door to us, and that was about it as far as being what I said in the mainstream of Schofield. We were up on the hill.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do that afternoon and that evening while you were charge of quarters?

Wall: Well, the day went by simple and easy. Along about six o'clock that night, we had . . . one of our boys was picked up for being drunk, and he was held in Wheeler Field. So that was about the only thing; I had to go down there and sign him in and check him in, and then I came on back to the barracks. Then it was just a normal day until lights out.

Marcello: Were people drifting in that evening?

Wall: Drifting in and out; it was a usual Saturday.

Marcello: What was the condition of the people that were coming in?

Wall: Well, some of them were flying pretty high; a lot of them was coming back just normal; a lot of them had been down to the movies. I would say probably 25 per cent had been out drinking; 25 per cent to the movies; the rest of them hung around the barracks.

Marcello: But again, when you say that 25 per cent of them were out drinking, that doesn't necessarily mean that 25 per cent of them were coming back drunk.

Wall: No, no, I wouldn't say that.

Marcello: I think we need to make the record clear on that.

Wall: Right. Well, the record should be clear on that, because if he was able to get back to the barracks, he was sober. Because if not, the MP's or the SP's or somebody was going to have him.

Marcello: Also, I gather that Honolulu was far enough away that you could almost sober up by the time you got back if you had too many beers.

Wall: Right. I'm going to say it was approximately thirty miles; give me a mile or two one way or the other. No, you had time to sober up.

Marcello: Okay, it was a rather uneventful Saturday night, so I guess this brings us into Sunday morning. Once more I want you to go into as much detail as you can remember from the time you woke up until all hell broke loose.

Wall: Well, this will probably make me a comedian, but we'll go into it. No, I got up at approximately six o'clock on that Sunday morning.

Marcello: Was this the usual routine for a charge of quarters?

Wall: Charge of quarters, yes, because you had certain guard details that you had to be sure to get up, get to breakfast, get out, kick out a few cooks to get that breakfast. That was about the normal time on a Sunday morning.

So at approximately seven o'clock or maybe a little after seven, I headed for Wheeler Field. In those days, we had a . . . well, it was before your time. . . we had a Model-A open . . . I guess

you would call it a sedan or a touring car; we called them command cars in the service. But you had no side on it--just the top on top. So we headed in that and headed for Wheeler Field. Well, I went down, and I picked up my prisoner.

Nothing happened, but we got back . . . Schofield has a golf course, which was between us and Wheeler Field, and I heard all hell break loose. Now this was about 7:30, maybe a little later . . . somewhere in the neighborhood of that. All hell was breaking loose at Wheeler.

So being a dummy, I heard a plane, and I stuck my head out from under the top and looked up, and about . . . oh, I'm going to say 100, 200 feet above us was a plane with a Japanese marking on it. So I figured, "What the hell are those dummies at Wheeler Field doing? They're having a maneuver this of all mornings--a Sunday!" I didn't realize nothing until then I started noticing the plane going in and coming back up and coming around. So then one of them, he come out across the field, and he still had his machine gun popping, and I figured it was time to get the heck out of there without no more armor than I had.

Marcello: Was he firing at you specifically?

Wall: I don't think so, no. He was just firing at anything that moved, and we were moving.

Marcello: How low were these planes flying when you saw them?

Wall: Oh, some of them, I'm going to say, was down within seventy-five feet of the ground.

Marcello: Could you distinguish the pilots?

Wall: You could tell there were pilots in there. But once again, like I said, I believe this stupidity was all over. Nobody seemed to recognize what the hell was going on on the day it went on.

Marcello: Is confusion a good word to use to describe the situation here?

Wall: I believe confusion would probably be the only word you could use or just . . . I don't know what the heck would really fit in there. But nobody believed it, let's put it that way.

Marcello: At this point, you really didn't know what was going on over at Wheeler Field other than that you had heard a lot of noise, and you had observed these planes strafing.

Wall: Yes. Then I looked back, and, of course, the black smoke and all this was going up to the sky. But still, it was my impression until we got within, I guess, a quarter of a mile of our barracks. . . then I figured something was wrong, because I had been drilling or helping . . . they had recruits--that was our draftees--and I had helped take them out of some tents on a Friday and put them in the barracks. Then they started strafing those tents with the machine guns; then I realized something was wrong, but I didn't know what. In fact, I guess it was about an hour later before we really got the message that the Japanese had attacked it. I think we were about one of the last to get any message through on that.

Marcello: Okay, now from the time that you saw the first Japanese plane until you got back to Upper Schofield, how much time had elapsed?

Wall: Oh, I'd say probably twenty minutes.

Marcello: Now how would you describe your drive up to Upper Schofield? In other words, were you going fast? A normal routine? How would you describe it?

Wall: No, we was going normal. When we heard all the noise, in essence I guess the vehicle was almost stopped, because the driver and myself, we were curious; we were wondering what the hell Wheeler Field was doing. In other words, the "fly boys". . . what they were doing on a Sunday morning. That was the first thing, and then the Japanese planes were flying over it. So I'm going to say in the group probably there were . . . I'm going to say maybe seven or eight Japanese planes that was circling our area. Now I also realize there's a controversy on that. There wasn't too many of them.

Marcello: Now as you were going back to Upper Schofield, what sort of resistance did you see being put up, either at Schofield Barracks or over at Wheeler Field and so on?

Wall: None. I'll have to put it this way--I was in open country; it was a golf course. The golf course was between us and the main post, so I was not where, shall we say, any of the action would have been. I was off from that, so I'll have to say that, really, I don't know what they were doing. But they did . . . about eleven o'clock is the closest that they actually called us all and said there was nothing . . . you

couldn't leave; you couldn't go anyplace; you wouldn't be allowed to move; we were stuck.

Marcello: What sort of a scene did you see over at Wheeler Field? Describe what you saw over there.

Wall: Well, like I said, all I seen . . . and then after while, of course, the burning buildings and all that, you could see all the blazes and all of that coming up. First, it was just a big, black billow of smoke going up to the sky. I'm assuming now--and I'm not an Air Force man--but I'm assuming that the bombs were busting that they had in storage or in the planes, and it was an awful noise.

Marcello: Now I would assume that there really was not a whole lot of damage done at Schofield Barracks. There had been some strafing there, I believe, but that was almost the extent of it.

Wall: That's almost the extent of it, and to my knowledge there were no casualties at Schofield itself.

Marcello: And did you mention that there was no damage at all done at Upper Schofield where your post was?

Wall: Not a bit, no. They made one pass by, and he shot some holes in a few tents that was out there, but there was no one in them. So he was just . . . I guess he figured he was going to get somebody.

Marcello: Okay, what sort of a scene confronted you when you finally got to Upper Schofield? What took place there?

Wall: Well, a lot of just confusion all around. Nobody knew where to go, how to go, or what to do. Like I said, they just froze us.

Marcello: Now as charge of quarters, were you the ranking person at the time?

Wall: Well, you're in command of the quarters. But in our . . . Captain Leach, our commanding officer of that company, he showed up . . . well, I'm going to say 10:30 or eleven o'clock; at that time he was living off base.

Marcello: But up until that time, you were essentially the person in charge?

Wall: That's right. You were it.

Marcello: What sort of instructions and orders and organizing were you doing when you finally get back to Upper Schofield?

Wall: Well, like I said, I tried to make contact to find out what was going on. When I did that, then I got an order from Lower Schofield--it came through headquarters--that all troops and all personnel were frozen until further orders. When those came in, then I had a Lieutenant Odenweller who came in, and he . . . of course, the minute the rank above you is there, then he takes charge, see. So therefore, I didn't have anything else to do with it.

Marcello: Did you break out the ammunition and the small arms and so on at this point?

Wall: No, that was done in the afternoon, not in the morning. We were all issued live ammunition.

Marcello: How come it wasn't done in the morning? Is this just part of the confusion?

Wall: Part of the confusion. Of course, we all had live ammunition, but you didn't have it . . . you didn't carry it in your ammunition belt or in your gun. But we were ordered at approximately twelve or 12:30 to get live ammunition and be ready.

Marcello: So what did you do at that point then?

Wall: At that point . . . in about mid-afternoon about half of us were shoved up to the chemical depot. They put almost solid manpower around that.

Marcello: And I assume your principal function was to guard that depot.

Wall: Guard it, right. Right. So nobody could get in.

Marcello: Okay, describe what took place that night.

Wall: Well, that night it was . . . you could hear all kinds of shooting, but you didn't know what they were shooting at. Now that was all around the Island of Oahu. . . shooting . . . including some in Schofield Barracks. But it was imaginary targets.

Marcello: I've heard it said it really wasn't safe to move around at night.

Wall: No way! I did have to move around some, but in no way were

you safe. We were allowed no lights, no nothing; so it was an unsafe situation.

Marcello: About how many of you were there up here at the depot?

Wall: Oh, I'd say half of the company. We had about 250 in the company.

Marcello: And most of these people were put on sentry duty and that sort of thing.

Wall: Put on sentry duty, right.

Marcello: What were some of the rumors that you heard in the aftermath of the attack?

Wall: Oh, we heard everything about them coming in. "They're taking the island." "They're already in fighting in Honolulu," and all that, see. The comical part about it was that on December 7th at the radio station, he kept saying, "I'm voluntarily going off the air, but I'm being ordered off," (chuckle) so it was hard to figure him out, see. Then our communications was shot; we didn't have any. We had no radio, and I don't really know when that came back on the air to give us. . . I know it come back in the middle . . . they didn't let it come back on. He'd come back on for a few minutes and then go off again.

Marcello: Was the full realization of war beginning to hit you by this time now?

Wall: By mid-afternoon, you got the message that it was here.

Marcello: Did you kind of realize the gravity of your situation, that is, being up at that chemical depot with all those deadly chemicals and so on?

Wall: That's right. You wondered if they were going to come back, were they going to aim at you. I'm assuming they probably had the knowledge of where it was at, because they seemed to have everything else. So it was kind of touch-and-go there for the first week, really.

Marcello: Did you stay out there at the chemical depot indefinitely? In other words, did you stay out there in the field?

Wall: Yes. I'll put it this way--I didn't stay there but about a week. After the first week, I was relieved at Schofield, and I was put on . . . well, I don't know what kind of duty you would call it. I issued gas masks to all the civilian population; I was one of the few that was in on that. So I only spent about the first week at Schofield; then I was going from island to island.

Marcello: I guess at that time, the spectre of World War I was still pretty well instilled in people's minds. I'm referring now to the experiences with chemical warfare and so on in World War I.

Wall: Right. That's the first thing they started doing; well, within a week after it happened, they started issuing gas masks to all the civilian population. That's when I realized that the

Japanese had never been scrutinized or checked up on as to loyalty or, "What were you doing," because I was in some situations to see where they were removing them at that time and bringing them back to the mainland here to put in . . . what kind of camps would you call them?

Marcello: I think they call them relocation camps.

Wall: Relocation centers or relocation camps. That's when I realized, you know, that . . . before World War II, no one had ever got around to saying, "Are you loyal, Yamamoto or Yamaguchi, to the USA?" It never had been done.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were distributing gas masks to the civilian population. The Army must have had a hell of a bunch of gas masks!

Wall: They sure did. They gave them to the whole island, and everybody that showed up got one.

Marcello: How did that word . . . did you announce that they would be distributed at a central point and so on?

Wall: It was done by the civil defense; they went around, see. What we did was issue them and give instructions on how to use them. Basically, I don't myself think it was very effective, because I was talking to Filipinos, Japanese, and Puerto Ricans and all, and I was doing it all in English. We would have sometimes one interpreter, and I was having problems getting the interpreter to put my viewpoints across. So whether we accomplished anything, I don't know.

- Marcello: Well, Mr. Wall, is there anything else relative to the attack that we need to talk about that we haven't covered at this point?
- Wall: I guess we've more or less covered most of the attack. That's the way I noticed it. It was just a hell of a mess, and nobody knew what they were doing. I guess the only other thing I would say, I believe, is that injustice was done to the two commanders that we had over there--Short and Kimmel. I didn't realize it at the time, and it probably was fifteen or twenty years later that it dawned on me that they didn't know nothing. How in the hell could they do anything? So that's the way it worked out.
- Marcello: Now in the situation and the position that you were in, did you have a chance to get emotional about the damage that was done there?
- Wall: No, I got mad, see. We all had the idea that we could kick the heck out of Japan within one week. That didn't materialize, either. I was sitting over there some four years later. . . almost five years later (chuckle).
- Marcello: Well, Mr. Wall, I want to thank you very much for having taken time to talk with me.
- Wall: It's been nice to come in and talk to you.
- Marcello: You've said a lot of interesting and, I think, important things, and I'm sure that scholars are going to find this material valuable.

Wall: Well, maybe one word or so will help someone out along the line. If they don't let it happen again by listening to one word I said, then it's worth it.

Marcello: Well, again, thank you very much for participating

Wall: Thank you very much.