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Interview with  
JACK MARTIN  
November 15, 1987

Place of Interview: Kenner, Louisiana  
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello  
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Oral History Collection

Jack Martin

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello            Date: November 15, 1987

Place of Interview: Kenner, Louisiana

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Jack Martin for the North Texas University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on November 15, 1987, in Kenner, Louisiana. I am interviewing Mr. Martin in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was aboard the battleship USS Nevada during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Martin, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, why don't you start by telling me when you were born and where you were born.

Mr. Martin: I was born in Spur, Texas. That's up in the Panhandle.

Marcello: When were you born?

Martin: March 1, 1921.

Marcello: Tell me a little bit about your education.

Martin: Well, at the age of seven, my father died. My mother had died when I was a baby. When my dad died, I had a cousin and her husband from New Orleans who came and got me and legally adopted me and raised me. I completed high school--incidentally, my father was a professor at the high school--in 1939. At that time things weren't too good around the country work-wise. My dad offered to send me to college, but I was kind of afraid. I was kind of frisky at that age, and I told him I might waste his money, so I'd rather not.

So a buddy of mine one day says, "Let's join the Navy." So we went down to the customhouse, but he didn't make the grade because he had an overbite. I made it. Incidentally, I had a 3.5 out of a 4.0 on the entrance examination, which helped me later on. From boot camp, they sent a shipload of recruits to Honolulu to beef up the fleet.

Marcello: Let me back up a minute here and get a few more details for background information. When was it that you joined the Navy?

Martin: In 1940.

Marcello: And why did you select the Navy as opposed to some other branch of the service?

Martin: Oh, well, I guess as a young man I figured it would be more adventurous.

Marcello: Incidentally, a while ago you also mentioned that the economic factor played a role in your decision. That's almost standard for everybody who went into the service at that time. You just couldn't get a job.

Martin: That's right. I tried.

Marcello: The Navy didn't pay a whole lot, but there was a little bit of security.

Martin: Right, yes. The enlistment at that time was for six years.

Marcello: There's something else that you mentioned that I want to pick up on. You mentioned your friend being rejected because he had the overbite, and you also mentioned the entrance exam that you had to take. How difficult or easy was it to get into the Navy at that time?

Martin: Well, like I say, I was fresh out of high school, so I was pretty sharp as far as their questions were concerned.

Marcello: But on the other hand, they rejected your buddy simply because he had an overbite.

Martin: Yes (chuckle).

Marcello: You mentioned that you took your boot camp in San Diego. How long did boot camp last at that time?

Martin: Oh, I really can't say.

Marcello: Had they cut it down as short as six weeks yet, or was it longer than that?

Martin: It could have been six weeks. I really don't remember that.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened in boot camp that you think we need to get as part of the record?

Martin: No.

Marcello: So it was pretty much the normal Navy boot camp?

Martin: Normal boot camp.

Marcello: Okay, what happened once you got out of boot camp? You were talking about that a moment ago.

Martin: Well, there were two, three, maybe four companies that all graduated at the same time, and they loaded up the *Saratoga*, an aircraft carrier. We had our mattresses on our backs and were sleeping on the hangar deck. It was so crowded, you know. We

sailed out to Honolulu, and they distributed us throughout the fleet.

Marcello: How did that process take place? How do they go about distributing you to the various ships? Did they simply line you up?

Martin: Oh, I don't know. I guess they just said, "So many here, and so many there." It really didn't make any difference to them, as far as I know. After I got aboard--getting back to that entrance examination--I learned later that the fire control division and the quartermaster division officers had first pick over the recruits that were going into their division, and they examined our papers--our examinations--and so forth. Fire control was considered one of the elite divisions.

Marcello: Why was that?

Martin: Well, it concerned what you call computers nowadays and range-finders and instruments and so forth. They just took the cream off the top; they had first choice.

Marcello: In other words, these were the people that were concerned with the firing accuracy of the big guns?

Martin: Right, yes--the range-finders, directors, and so forth, which now would all be considered computers.

Marcello: So did you go into the fire control division?

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: Where specifically were you assigned when you went into the fire control division? What did you do? I'm sure that they must have started you at the low end of the totem pole doing the most menial and simple tasks.

Martin: Yes, right. That's right. We had to serve our time as a mess cook. At that time we set up tables--each division had their own compartments--and as a mess boy I had to run to the galley and get the food and bring it back. It was like family-style.

Marcello: I think they put it into tureens.

Martins: Tureens, right. Then, well, we did just general upkeep around the compartment. In the meantime, we were coached on the first details of the instruments and so forth. They schooled us, and we were assigned to a petty officer. Each one had a student, more or less. And he was...what do you call them?

Marcello: You were almost like his apprentice, I guess.

Martin: Right, yes. I was under his tutelage.

Marcello: Do you recall the name of the petty officer that you were under?



Martin: No.

Marcello: How many years in the service did he have?

Martin: Oh, he must of had a couple, being a third class petty officer.

Marcello: When you say a couple, you mean probably a couple hitches at least, do you not?

Martin: No, not necessarily. There were some old-timers. We had a chief who was in there thirty-some-odd years, and then we had some first class at eight years, ten years. But the third class usually were assigned students more or less.

Marcello: How would you describe the on-the-job training you received there in the fire control division? Was it pretty good training?

Martin: It was interesting, yes.

Marcello: I'm assuming, from what you said, that you did not really ever work on the deck force.

Martin: No.

Marcello: Describe what your quarters were like there in the fire control division. Where were they located?

Martin: We were on the main deck, which opened to the afterdeck. It was open outside, which was better than being enclosed further inboard like some

divisions had. We had a pretty good position with bunks and lockers.

Marcello: So you never had to sleep in the hammock, either?

Martin: No hammock, no.

Marcello: You mentioned mess cooking a while ago. How long did you remain as a mess cook? Do you recall?

Martin: There was a regular time, but I don't remember how long it was. Everybody had to serve their time. It might have been a couple or three months. I don't know.

Marcello: I do remember that in some instances mess cooking could be a way of getting a little bit of extra money. Evidently, if you did a good job, they would tip you come payday. Do you remember that?

Martin: Well, no, not necessarily. But I ate pretty good (chuckle), and I made some friends with the extra chow that I did get. I got to know the cooks pretty good.

Marcello: During that time that you were on the *Nevada* prior to the attack, of what importance were sports in the life of the *Nevada* and the Navy in general?

Martin: Well, we had a softball team, and I was the pitcher. Whenever we were in port in Pearl, we would go over to the playground and play ball. When I was in boot

camp, out of 300-some-odd recruits--through the process of elimination--I came out as the top swimmer. We had a summer home on the Gulf Coast as I was growing up, and I lived in the water, so I got to be a pretty good swimmer.

Marcello: Did they have swimming contests and so on in the Navy at that time?

Martin: Well, like I say, we had a process of elimination in boot camp, but I don't remember...we never had a contest aboard ship. We had boxers. Each ship had their boxers.

Marcello: Boxing was a big thing in the Navy at that time, wasn't it?

Martin: Right. Yes, it sure was.

Marcello: Did you ever attend any of the so-called "smokers" over at the Bloch Center? Do you remember when they held them over there?

Martin: No.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the liberty routine that the Nevada had after it got to Pearl Harbor on a permanent basis. Describe for me how the liberty sections were organized in that period before the war. Do you recall?

Martin: Well, it was port-and-starboard watches, and they alternated.

Marcello: In other words, on a weekend--let's say a Saturday and a Sunday--the port section would have the liberty one day, and the starboard section would have liberty the next day?

Martin: Right. Well, it was just daytime liberty--no overnight. Just the officers had overnight liberty.

Marcello: This was called "Cinderella" liberty, was it not? You had to be back at 12:00.

Martin: Right.

Marcello: Why was it that they put those kinds of restrictions on you?

Martin: Well, there was no accommodations, really.

Marcello: Probably most of you guys couldn't have afforded to stay over, either.

Martin: No (chuckle). See, the officers that were stationed ashore had big homes or houses or so forth, and most of the officers would go to them or go to a club. I don't know where they went, but they could stay overnight.

Marcello: And I guess the married personnel in general could stay over.

Martin: Yes, yes.

Marcello: When you went on liberty, what did you normally do?

Martin: Oh, just drift around and have a few drinks mostly. We went out to Waikiki a few times. The swimming was lousy; they had coral on the bottom of the damned place. For all the publicity it had, you know, it was a lousy beach (chuckle). The beach was all right, but don't get in the water! You'll cut your feet.

Marcello: Of what significance were Hotel and Canal Streets to the social life of the sailor?

Martin: Canal Street?

Marcello: Yes, Hotel Street and Canal Street.

Martin: I don't recall those. I know the streets where the cathouses were.

Marcello: Okay, I thought they were Hotel Street and Canal Street.

Martin: Well, all right, they could be. I just knew that I could get there without knowing any names. That's why the names didn't impress me.

Marcello: I guess prostitution was legal at that time in Honolulu, wasn't it?

Martin: We were told--and I'm pretty sure it was accurate--that they were what we call "government inspected." I had one tell me that they were on a

one-year contract. She told me what a ball they had when they finished their hitch--going back on the Matson Line and celebrating. They had the best in the world in my estimation.

Marcello: I suspect that the Navy had to be very tolerant of that sort of thing, given the overwhelming number of men on that island and the few number of civilian women that were there.

Martin: Right. I don't remember of anybody--including myself--as far as finding a native or anything like that. It was just strictly the cathouses there. When liberty first started, there would be lines. They would be in line waiting to get in.

Marcello: I guess that was especially true on payday.

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: Do you recall how much a trick was at that time?

Martin: Five dollars.

Marcello: Five dollars. Let's talk about a typical training exercise in which the *Nevada* might engage in that pre-Pearl Harbor period, that is before the war actually started. Was there a particular day of the week when one could expect the *Nevada* to go out, or would that vary?

Martin: We went on weekly maneuvers.

Marcello: Okay, explain how that worked.

Martin: Well, we went out on a Monday and came back on a Friday night.

Marcello: And then would another portion of the fleet go out on the following Monday, or could you possibly go out again the next Monday?

Martin: No, we went continually. I don't remember how many weeks, but I distinctly remember that that was our routine.

Marcello: So it would not have taken a very smart Japanese agent long to figure out when the ships were out and when the ships would be back.

Martin: Right, not at all.

Marcello: Okay, that's one of the points I was going to make. When you were out on those ordinary or routine maneuvers, what would you actually be doing? What kinds of exercises would be taking place?

Martin: Well, we fired at times. We fired at targets towed by tugs. Also, we had antiaircraft practice.

Marcello: They'd pull a sleeve.

Martin: They'd pull a sleeve. I remember one time they got too close to the pilot's tail with their burst of fire, and he cut the sleeve loose and came close

alongside and zoomed down and [gives gesture with middle finger] went on in (laughter).

Marcello: Gave you an obscene gesture, right (laughter)? Let me ask you this. You brought up the subject of antiaircraft practice. What kind of antiaircraft armament in general did the *Nevada* have before the war?

Martin: We had .50-calibers. They had the broadside, which was 5.25, but during the attack they couldn't elevate enough, as far as aircraft was concerned. Of course, they were firing at the torpedo planes coming in low, and the shells were landing over in Honolulu. They thought they were being bombed (chuckle), but they were being bombarded by a 5.25.

Marcello: I've read that on several occasions that most of the damage that was done over in Honolulu was done by exploding shells from the American ships. You probably didn't get back on the *Nevada* after Pearl Harbor, but is it safe to say that all of those Navy ships had a heck of a lot more antiaircraft weapons aboard them after Pearl Harbor than they did before Pearl Harbor?

Martin: Well, the 20-millimeters and the 40-millimeters came out. We spent eight months in Bremerton,



Washington. They stripped it down to the main deck and put on a complete new superstructure with antiaircraft turrets--dual mounts plus the 20- and 40-millimeters. I remember that the 20-millimeters came out pretty quick because they took us...like I say, we spent eight months in Bremerton, Washington, in the barracks while they were working on the ship.

Marcello: So you did stay with the Nevada then.

Martin: Oh, yes, yes.

Marcello: Well, we'll talk about that later on, and I certainly want to pick up on that because I think it's important.

Martin: Yes, that's four years.

Marcello: You were mentioning, also, that from time to time you would fire the big guns and so on. Tell me how the fire control division would figure in on the ship getting the "E" for efficiency in firing. Do you know what I'm talking about? Do you remember the "E" for efficiency?

Martin: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Okay, what role would you guys play in the ship getting an "E" in efficiency for firing?

Martin: There used to be some kind of little insignia that you could get, but I don't remember actually what it was.

Marcello: And wouldn't they also paint the "E" on the smokestack or something like that, or someplace on the ship?

Martin: Yes, yes, I think so.

Marcello: Again, I think that "E" for efficiency was a part of that ship against ship competition that the Navy seemed to encourage.

Martin: Yes, yes. We blew the target out of the water on one maneuver.

Marcello: Would the fire control division be concerned with the firing of the 14-inch guns?

Martin: Oh, yes. That was our main function.

Marcello: How about the 5-inch guns? Did you have very many of the 5-inch dual-purpose guns at that time aboard the *Nevada*?

Martin: No, they were more or less local fire--each one individually.

Marcello: I see. So you were concerned with the main armament.

Martin: Right.

Marcello: Okay, as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, could you--even in your position--detect any changes in the training routine aboard the *Nevada*? Did anything change?

Martin: No. I've thought about that quite often, and there is nothing I remember. Things were just routine. Like I say, we went out for a week and came in for the weekend. But that's all that went on. Like I say, it was routine.

Marcello: So you trained hard, but it was still routine training.

Martin: Right, yes.

Marcello: This brings us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and we want to go into this period in detail. The record seems to indicate that the *Nevada* was in for maybe as long as four days before the attack took place. Do you recall that being the case?

Martin: No, I don't believe so.

Marcello: You think you came in on a Friday as usual?

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, when the *Nevada* would come in, almost like any ship it would be getting most of its power and

so on from land, isn't that correct? I believe at that time, for instance, the *Nevada* had one boiler lit.

Martin: Right.

Marcello: This means that under normal circumstances, if you want to get up steam and get out of there, we're talking about somewhere in the neighborhood of maybe two-and-a-half hours if it's done according to the book. Okay, so you're on one boiler, and you're getting your power and so on from that one boiler. Do you recall where the *Nevada* was tied up on that day?

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: Tell me. Where was it?

Martin: We were on the rear end of Battleship Row. I think it was the *Vestal* that was tied up against the *Arizona*, which was right ahead of us.

Marcello: You, in essence, were then at the northern end, I believe, of Battleship Row--over there near Ford Island.

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, when you're tied up like that, essentially doors and hatches are open. The ship is open, is it not?

Martin: Oh, wide-open, yes.

Marcello: Okay. What did you do that Saturday of December 6, 1941? Do you remember?

Martin: No, I sure don't.

Marcello: Do you know whether or not you had liberty?

Martin: No, I really can't say. I never have given that a thought, really. I remember everything after that. Well, mostly, I mean (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, so give me a blow-by-blow account of what happens the next morning from the time you wake up until all hell breaks loose. Give me your routine.

Martin: Well, they were getting ready to raise colors, and, like I say, we could step out of our living quarters, and we were out on deck. You could see the stern, and that's where they were raising the colors.

Marcello: Now, when you say "raising the colors," who was out there?

Martin: Well, some Marines and the color guard.

Marcello: And I believe the whole band was out there that day.

Martin: Yes, the band was there, too--the whole band.

Marcello: Okay, pick up the story.

Martin: Well, when things started clanging for general quarters, automatically down I went. I was down in the guts--midships, way below deck in the main battery plotting room.

Marcello: Okay, now...

Martin: And then we were all locked in--dogged in.

Marcello: Okay, what time...were you up and around when General Quarters sounded?

Martin: Oh, yes. I had just finished breakfast when I heard the call.

Marcello: Okay, do you recall the band and so on having started...no, it hadn't started playing yet, had it, when General Quarters sounded?

Martin: I don't think so. It was way back there, and I wasn't paying any attention to it.

Marcello: How was General Quarters sounded? How did you get the word? Did somebody announce it over the P.A. system?

Martin: I think the gong went off--GONG! GONG! GONG! Then maybe they got on the P.A. system and said, "General Quarters! Man your battle stations!" I guess I was gone by then--heading down.

Marcello: Okay, so you're fully dressed.

Martin: Oh, yes--regular attire.

Marcello: Okay, you go to your battle station. What happens at that point? You're dogged in, which means watertight integrity is being maintained.

Martin: Well, being in the main battery plotting room, there wasn't any actual action for us. We were just more or less sitting there.

Marcello: What are you talking about? What thoughts are going through your mind?

Martin: Nothing, really, until I felt the ship shudder.

Marcello: Okay, now this must have been the first torpedo that it took.

Martin: Yes, it took a torpedo first, and the switchboards and so forth were flickering and flashing and shorting out. I remember one first class petty officer who was on this one big board over there. He was an old-timer. He was a comedian. He had found some kind of pillow or something, so he strapped it on top of his head. That's after you could hear booming. Like I say, the ship shook some when the torpedo hit.

Marcello: It took that first torpedo, evidently, in the port bow, and I believe it listed the port.

Martin: Yes. I understood later on that it dented in the bulkhead to the main battery magazine--14-inch

powder bags. That's how close it hit. If it had been a little farther over, we'd have been another Arizona.

Marcello: Okay, so you take this torpedo, and you feel the ship shudder. Is that all you could feel from that torpedo? I'm sorry (chuckle). That was a stupid question. But that's the sensation you had?

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, it didn't knock you off your feet or anything like that.

Martin: No, no, no--just the shudder.

Marcello: Did you know what it was?

Martin: No, not actually. We wouldn't have known if it were a torpedo or what.

Marcello: Okay, the instrument board is flickering and so on. Do you ever lose power?

Martin: I don't believe so.

Marcello: Or lights?

Martin: No, we didn't lose lights.

Marcello: Okay, what happens next so far as your being down there in the plotting room?

Martin: Well, things were kind of quiet; we were just sweating. I can't really remember...the only thing...I don't know how long or what position the



ship was in when we were told to come topside. Next to us was a compartment which was below the conning tower, and there was an escape tube that went all the way up into the conning tower, and then you went out from there, you see. So we got orders to come on topside. I don't know how long that was into the attack, but when I got topside and got outside, I think the tug had already come alongside. From what I remember...well, actually, it was like a dream. The day went like that [snaps finger]. It was getting dark, and I asked the guy, "What in the hell is happening?" He says, "It's dusk." And what we did when we got topside was just obey orders--fighting fires, picking up hunks of bodies, and trying to help the wounded. So we were in more or less in a trance. They beached us stern first on...I think they called it Hospital Point at that time. I believe it's called Nevada Point now.

Marcello: Let me ask you this. You are evidently down in that plotting room...

Martin: Way down in the bowels.

Marcello: ...from the time General Quarters sounded until the whole process of grounding it and so on took place.

Martin: When we got topside there was no more attacking. The bombs had already clobbered the bow, mainly.

Marcello: Now in the meantime...

Martin: Seven bombs.

Marcello: That's what I was going to ask you.

Martin: One hit the galley deck.

Marcello: Could you down in the plotting room feel the effects of any of those bombs hitting the *Nevada*?

Martin: Not especially. Not that I can remember or anything.

Marcello: As you mentioned, you are way down in the bowels of that ship.

Martin: Right. That's why they located it there--to keep it protected.

Marcello: Yes, because if it's knocked out, then all your main armament is gone.

Martin: The main battery...well, you're not a battleship anymore.

Marcello: Yes, right. I should have asked you this a moment ago. When that ol' boy put that pillow around his head, did that kind of release some of the tension a little bit down there?

Martin: It could have; it could have. We laughed, I guess.

Marcello: But what is everybody...

Martin: We really didn't know what was going on out there.

Marcello: So is anybody talking, or are you keeping your thoughts to yourself while you're down there?

Martin: No, the senior officer--I think he was a lieutenant commander--was more or less a jolly fellow, and I guess he was trying to keep morale up. But I don't think he knew any more than we did about what was actually going on.

Marcello: Were you getting any kind of...did you have any kind of communications with topside?

Martin: I don't know whether we did or not, but I don't know who...of course, there was an ensign on the bridge--that was Mr. Taussig--and I believe there was a chief or a first class (I don't know what).

Marcello: Yes, Taussig was an ensign.

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: And all through this you really never lost your lights down there. You had lights all the way.

Martin: Yes. I don't remember them floundering around in the dark, so we had to have had lights.

Marcello: Do you remember the ship actually hitting the mud over there at the Hospital Point?

Martin: No, no, there wasn't any real shock. It must have just eased into the shallow mud.

Marcello: And then it was after that...

Martin: Then she settled until the bow was just flush with the water.

Marcello: Did you say that you do remember the tug that came alongside and pushed around the stern?

Martin: Yes. Yes, I seem to remember that.

Marcello: Why was it that the stern was pushed around? Why did the tug do that? Was there a particular reason?

Martin: I don't know, unless it was just the most convenient position at that time--to keep it out of the channel. I understand that there was orders from the control tower not to enter the channel, which is a damned good thing they didn't. The cruisers and destroyers were streaming out, and we was crying and waving them on.

Marcello: Now you, in essence, had been converted from fire control to damage control when you got outside.

Martin: Right, yes.

Marcello: Describe what the fires were like aboard the *Nevada* from those bomb hits and so on.

Martin: Well, I actually don't remember what in the hell was burning. On a lot of stuff, the paint was burnt off. Possibly the biggest part of the fires were out by the time we got up there.

We didn't know whether they were coming in with a landing force. All the mattresses were shoved against the handrail all around the side. We figured they might be coming through the cane fields. We didn't know.

Marcello: Sure.

Martin: I ran by the armory--they were issuing all sidearms--and I got a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle], and I never had even fired one (chuckle)!

Marcello: I'm assuming that you did hear all sort of rumors that night.

Martin: Oh, yes, yes.

Marcello: What were some of the rumors you heard?

Martin: Oh, that they could be coming at any time--the landing force. We were helpless.

Marcello: Considering what happened, I guess you had no reason to doubt those rumors at that time.

Martin: They had some planes coming off of Ford Island--some of them catapult planes--and I remember seeing one. But I understand one came in and came in at the wrong position or angle, and they shot him down off of Ford Island, where they had set up some machine guns and so forth.

Marcello: Did you actually see that fireworks when that took place?

Martin: Well, we could see them. That was at night--that night.

Marcello: Describe the scene.

Martin: Well, it was a good ways from us. It was on the south end, where the seaplanes came in--the south end of the inlet--and we couldn't see too much. We sat up all night and all day just waiting for anything.

I didn't get any kind of injury, but sitting on a cold steel deck, I ended up with a bad case of hemorrhoids and ended up in the hospital. Five "External rosebuds!" And that's the only place it could be--after sitting on that cold deck all the time.

Marcello: And they didn't give you a purple heart for it, either (laughter)!

Martin: No (laughter)!

Marcello: So you were out there all night with that BAR.

Martin: I didn't end up with that. I must have given it to somebody else or something. I don't remember what happened to it.

Marcello: Did you have any kind of an appetite that day?

Martin: No, I don't believe so.

Marcello: Could you hear gunfire off and on all night? Small arms fire?

Martin: Yes, I heard small arms fire quite a few times. Like I said, it seemed like they...well, not too much, but I remember hearing quite a bit when we understood that they shot one of our own planes down (chuckle).

Marcello: By the way, when you came up on deck finally, and it was dusk and pretty soon would be nightfall, were the fires and so on still burning over in the harbor itself on Battleship Row and so on, or had they been put out?

Martin: They had been pretty much put out, yes. There was...I don't know what kind of boats, but they were dropping depth charges because they had heard there was two-man submarines, and one or two of them had gotten in. They had beached one at the mouth of the channel. There's a funny thing about that. On the maneuver right before Pearl Harbor, one of our boys claimed he'd spotted a periscope, and he took a lot of kidding. They'd go around and would give him that number (gesture), you know (chuckle).

Marcello: They'd hold their index finger above their heads, right?

Martin: Yes, yes--laughing at him, see. Evidently, he really saw one. There were supposed to be three or four. They were launched from a mother sub, I understand.

Marcello: Describe for me what the harbor looked like the next day or in the following days when you were able to look over there and survey the damage. Describe what you saw.

Martin: Well, it was a pitiful sight, and I think I kind of grew up a little bit.

Marcello: You were twenty years old at that time. Is that correct?

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: What did the *Arizona* look like? Can you remember it specifically, that is, what you could see of it?

Martin: There wasn't much sticking up. The *Oklahoma* was on its side, and the *West Virginia* and *California* was just down, I believe.

Marcello: Sitting on the bottom.

Martin: Yes.



Marcello: In your wildest dreams, did you think you would have envisioned one of those huge battleships such as the *Oklahoma* having been turned over?

Martin: No, no, no. I never dreamed of anything like that. Like I say, that first day was like a dream to me. It just passed by quickly.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that you have a combination of emotions under those circumstances? First of all, you've been trained to do a job, so there's a certain amount of professionalism. At the same time, you have to be maybe scared or concerned a little bit. Then finally is there anger at the Japanese for what they'd done?

Martin: I had quite a bit of vengeance in my heart toward the slant-eyed bastards.

Marcello: And did you detect this to be the general attitude of most everybody else, too?

Martin: I think so.

Marcello: What did you personally do, then, in the days following the attack?

Martin: Well, they put us to work. They built the cofferdam and got civilian divers--built the cofferdam around the torpedo hole--and then began pumping. The crew,

as it slowly came up...in other words, we gutted it right down to the bulkheads--bunks and all.

Marcello: You took all excess weight off.

Martin: Stripped it. We stripped it as it came up--deck by deck, which took quite a bit of time. When they finally got it afloat enough to get it to the dry-dock, I remember one instance when they got way down in the hold. They went down to a compartment where you go down a straight-up ladder, you know. It was a storage compartment. They opened this storeroom and were going to clean it out. I believe it was a chief who was the first one. When he opened that hatch, he keeled over. Another fellow went down to see what the hell was the matter with him, and he keeled over. So they got a...what do they call those things that you use to test for gas or test for toxic or poisonous gas or something? Anyway, they found out they had a bunch of kapok stored in there, and that water had mildewed it. Anyway, it formed a gas--a deadly gas.

Marcello: These are like kapok life jackets?

Martin: Life jackets, yes.

Marcello: Were you personally involved in that particular detail?

Martin: No, no, no.

Marcello: What were you doing? Helping to strip the ship and so on?

Martin: Just everything in general. Just stripping.

Marcello: Did that work begin immediately following the attack, that is, the day after?

Martin: I wouldn't say the day after.

Marcello: But shortly thereafter.

Martin: Shortly after, yes.

Marcello: Was there any kind of a cheer that went up once that Nevada was finally floated?

Martin: No, I don't believe. They moved us...see, they moved us into barracks ashore on the base there, and we'd just go out and work our tails off all day long.

Marcello: Now I'm assuming, since the Nevada really hadn't sunk to the bottom as such, that most of your personal belongings and so on were still intact?

Martin: Oh, yes, ours were. Like I say, we were on the main deck.

Marcello: About how long does this whole process take to refloat the Nevada and get it over to the dry dock?

Martin: Oh, it must have been weeks. I really don't remember. Like I say, we moved to the barracks and

ate ashore--ate good--and just went back and forth. It was just like a job. We had a little board gangway to shore for sanitary needs--go out in the cane field. (Chuckle) That was the toilet.

Marcello: But your whole purpose in being over there during this period was to strip it.

Martin: Strip it, yes. And then they put her in dry dock, and then they got her to where she could struggle along. I can't remember how long that took. I don't really have any idea. I don't remember. We chug-a-lugged into Bremerton, Washington.

Marcello: Now you've been on the Nevada for about a year.

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: Does one get attached to a ship?

Martin: Oh, yes. You take pride in your ship.

Marcello: It's your home.

Martin: Yes, sure.

Marcello: You were talking about this a little while ago. So what happens to the Nevada when it get over to Bremerton, Washington?

Martin: Well, they put her in dry dock and stripped her right down to the main deck--everything, superstructure and all.

Marcello: So from the air, it would almost look like a flattop, I guess.

Martin: That's right. That's right, yes. They rebuilt her--gave her a modern superstructure with new antiaircraft dual mounts.

Marcello: How about the main armament? Did they still have the 14-inch, or did they put on 16-inch now?

Martin: No. no.

Marcello: They kept the 14-inch guns on?

Martin: Oh, yes. I don't imagine they could hardly do that. Well, maybe they could, but, I mean, there wasn't any reason for it.

Marcello: So when did the *Nevada* then get back into action again?

Martin: When we invaded Attu, the *Nevada* bombarded Attu.

Marcello: Yes, up in the Aleutian Islands.

Martin: Aleutian Islands, yes. Like I say, we spent eight months in Bremerton, and then they sent us out to the 20-millimeter range and different schools to learn to use new armament and so forth and so on. We were schooled in anything that came up.

Marcello: All this was being done while the...

Martin: ...while the ship was being rebuilt, yes. Anyway, we stayed at sea--in the fog--up in the Aleutians

for about six weeks, and we cruised all the way over into the Bering Strait. And what we were trying to do--as we understood--was lure the Japanese northern fleet out--trying to bait them to come out, see. But we never did. So when the time for the invasion came, to start with they showed us a relief map of Attu. They were going to send in a spotting party--what you call "frogmen"--at night from a submarine, and they were set up on some hill there as a spotting party for the main battery gunfire. In other words, they were to give us the range and so forth. And we heard a rumor that the Japs broke the code and lured our information right down onto the U.S. Army going on into that boggy island. It was supposed to be terrible. I don't know whether that was true or not, but we heard that rumor. That was the first action we had had since Pearl, see.

Marcello: Were you still in fire control?

Martin: No. I had gotten transferred to the deck force with the First Division. Being from the Fire Control Division, my station was as a pointer on the turrets. The pointer is like a wheel that's...

Marcello: Like a hand-cranked device.

Martin: Yes, yes. This is more important than a trainer. The trainer has to match his points. In other words, we were firing blind, see. The fire director was getting information, you see, and setting the range for the main battery. Then we would have to match these pointers, and when they both matched up, I'd pull the trigger. That's called "local fire."

Marcello: You were on a 5-inch gun at this point?

Martin: No, no, this was in the number one turret.

Marcello: I see, yes.

Martin: I was controlling the whole turret. When we would fire, I was getting my kicks (chuckle). We was finally getting back at them for the first time, and I was just laughing and matching them things up (chuckle).

Marcello: What were some of the other actions that the *Nevada* participated in during the rest of the war?

Martin: Well, when she went to Europe, that was four years later. We went around to the East Coast...well, from the Aleutian Islands, we went into San Francisco and cried like a baby when we went under the Golden Gate. We were back home (weeping). We had a ball. We had all the liberty we could stand

in San Francisco, and, boy, we had a ball. Our division rented the whole floor in a hotel (chuckle), and we had some balls. They broke the crew down to three watches--one going, one coming, and one still there. There'd be overlapping. Them guys would just be coming ashore fresh, and some of them were staggering back after finishing their two days ashore. But a new bunch would come in and just take over the same rooms. The rooms were rented by the week (chuckle).

Then we went around to the East Coast, and they had just commissioned the *Missouri*. They selected what they called "key men"--experienced people. My buddy was a division officer, and we...well, we were all friends, I mean, after all those years. Like I say, seasoned or experienced people were put around the *Missouri*--spotted in all different divisions, see, to give experience. Then they filled it up with a bunch of recruits.

Marcello: So you were transferred to the new battleship *Missouri*.

Martin: Right, yes.

Marcello: That was some ship, in a sense, compared to the *Nevada*, was it not?



Martin: Whew! Whew! We took her on a shakedown to Trinidad. After being on a little chug-a-lug eighteen-knot Nevada, when they opened that baby up and she cut that water at thirty knots, boy, it was like flying.

Marcello: I guess they made those fast battleships to keep up with the fast carriers, did they not?

Martin: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Which the Nevada couldn't do.

Martin: No (chuckle).

Marcello: Were you in some of those Pacific campaigns, then, with the *Missouri*?

Martin: No.

Marcello: That's too bad because I was hoping you were going to be on it at Tokyo Bay (chuckle).

Martin: I was on the *Iowa* at Tokyo Bay.

Marcello: Is that right?

Martin: Yes, yes.

Marcello: So you eventually go from the *Missouri* to the *Iowa*. Were you in some of the engagements aboard the *Missouri*, or weren't you simply on it long enough?

Martin: No, I wasn't on it long enough.

Marcello: Well, the *Iowa* was a sister ship, was it not?

Martin: Right, right.

Marcello: Okay, so you are aboard the *Iowa* in Tokyo Bay when the war's over.

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: You've got to explain that to me. You've got to describe what takes place. Describe what Tokyo Bay is like and what you're doing and all that sort of thing.

Martin: Well, we were way out, and you just could see Mount Fujiyama.

Marcello: So you were outside the...

Martin: Way out.

Marcello: ...the bay itself.

Martin: Yes. I'm running a little boat. What the hell do they call it? It wasn't a lifeboat.

Marcello: A gig?

Martin: Well, it wasn't really a gig. It wasn't the captain's gig. But I got ashore in Yokosuka--I had to go in there on a trip to take some officers or something--and me and my deckhand strolled around Yokosuka. It was just flattened. We took K-rations with us for lunch--something to eat--and when we stopped to eat, I remember we threw the can down. Naturally, we had little Japs following us around. They grabbed that can and were trying to get that

grease out of there. They were starving to death--  
starving to death.

Marcello: Did you actually see all of the airplanes and so on that flew over Tokyo Bay when the surrender was signed and so on?

Martin: Yes.

Marcello: I was also wondering if any of the proceedings that were taking place aboard the *Missouri*, which is where the surrender took place, were being transmitted or radioed or piped over to the *Iowa* or anything.

Martin: No, I don't believe. Not to the crew, anyway, I don't believe.

Marcello: Were there a large number of ships patrolling outside the bay?

Martin: I don't know whether they were patrolling or not, but there was a pretty good-sized fleet in there.

Marcello: When did you finally get out of the Navy, Mr. Martin?

Martin: Well, in 1946. I kind of bribed my way out. You see, after the war people were going home on a point system. I had enough points for five or six people for the time I had in, see. But I conned my way to get me on a discharge list and get me on a

cargo ship. I went back to San Francisco, and they caught up with me there. I still had time to do--a few months. So they put me on a...well, this was...I'll tell you when it was. It was when they were taking the target ships out for the first blast.

Marcello: First atomic bomb blast?

Martin: Yes. I got hung up in that because I had time to do yet. I got hung up in the crew of an old cargo ship--the *Canberra*--and we took her out and anchored her in that place where they were going to leave her. I came back on a small ship. I got back to San Francisco and got sent home to the New Orleans Naval Station. I still had about a month to do, so they put me in a motor pool down at the Federal Building; and I finished out there, and that was it.

Marcello: Okay, well, I think that's a pretty good place to end this interview, Mr. Martin. I want to thank you very much for having participated in our project. You've said a lot of interesting things relative to your experiences aboard the *Nevada*. I've heard some things from an angle that I hadn't heard before, and I'm sure that people who read this

transcript or listen to the tape are going to find  
your comments interesting and important.

[End of interview]