


UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
776

I n t e r v i e w w i t h
I V A N L . K I T T E R M A N
S e p t e m b e r 1 7 , 1 9 8 8

Place of Interview: Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Terms of Use: OPEN

Approved: 
(Signature)

Date: 9-17-88

Copyright ©1988

**THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
IN THE CITY OF DENTON, TEXAS**

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without permission in writing from the Director of the Oral History Program or the University Archivist, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas 76203

Oral History Collection

Ivan L. Kitterman

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello Date: September 17, 1988

Place of Interviewer: Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Ivan Kitterman for the University of North Texas Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on September 17, 1988, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. I'm interviewing Mr. Kitterman in order to get his reminiscences and recollections while he was aboard the battleship USS Nevada during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Kitterman, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, start by telling me when you were born and where you were born.

Mr. Kitterman: I was born on January 5, 1922, in Larned, Kansas.

Marcello: Tell me a little bit about your education.

Kitterman: I graduated from high school in 1940 and went into the service. I later went to V-12 for two semesters at Bucknell University and two semesters at Cornell University, and that was a sum total of my education, except for Naval Law School for six months.

Marcello: Did you earn a degree at Cornell?

Kitterman: No.

Marcello: When did you join the service?

Kitterman: It was on June 6, 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decided to enter the service in 1940?

Kitterman: At that particular time, it was proof that I could do it and somebody else failed. I had two scholarships offered in May prior to that to go to either the University of Kansas or to Wichita University, both academic and one music. But I chose the service just on a dare, you might say.

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

Kitterman: Well, it was actually the Marines. I was a Marine. As I say, it was because a friend that I knew failed, and I said, "Well, I can make it," and did (chuckle). That was the way I got in.

Marcello: So you were a part of the Marine detachment aboard the *Nevada* eventually.

Kitterman: I was in the Marine detachment.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Kitterman: San Diego.

Marcello: Did anything eventful happen in boot camp that you think we need to get as part of the record, or was it the normal Marine boot camp?

Kitterman: Well, it was normal, but there were a lot of memories (chuckle), a lot of memories, of the toughness of the instructors and the drill sergeants that you don't forget.

Marcello: How long did Marine boot camp last at that time?

Kitterman: At that time it was sixteen weeks.

Marcello: Obviously, sometime during this period, you perhaps went to sea school.

Kitterman: I didn't actually go to sea school. I was in the Marine band in Honolulu, playing a trumpet and doubling on a baritone. I was playing in the dance orchestra at the submarine base night after night after night and so forth. I had an opportunity to take an examination for Annapolis. I took the preliminary examination, but I had to have nine months sea duty prior to being further eligible

for further examinations. And that was the reason I was aboard ship.

Marcello: While you were aboard ship, did you continue as a member of the ship's band?

Kitterman: No, I was strictly in the Marine detachment on guard duty and gunnery.

Marcello: Describe the process by which you went aboard the USS *Nevada*. How did that come about?

Kitterman: It was just an assignment in request for going aboard a ship. It was an assignment to the USS *Nevada*.

Marcello: So you went aboard the *Nevada* almost directly from boot camp.

Kitterman: No, from October in 1940 to October in 1941, I was in the Marine band. Then on my written request for sea duty, which I had to have for the school at Annapolis, I requested to go aboard ship. I had no particular ship in mind, and I was assigned to the Marine detachment aboard the USS *Nevada* in October. I can't remember the date.

Marcello: But it was in October of 1941?

Kitterman: In 1941.

Marcello: Nineteen forty-one.

Kitterman: I had one year in the Marine band in Honolulu.

Marcello: I see. How was it that you went from San Diego to Honolulu as a member of the Marine band? How did this come about?

Kitterman: By request. It was a request to get in the Marine band. Like I say, I had a music scholarship and so forth, and I tried out for band in San Diego. But I wasn't assigned there. I was assigned to Honolulu, to the Marine band.

Marcello: What were some of the functions performed by the Marine band there on Honolulu?

Kitterman: Well, they had their daily functions of noon meal band concerts in front of the barracks. That was the main Marine detachment there at Pearl Harbor. Then we had our functional Marine marches during parades. We also played in Honolulu at least once a month. Once a month we played in Honolulu in concerts over the radio. Then on occasions we'd meet dignitaries and so forth.

Marcello: Would those lunchtime concerts be for all of the Marine personnel?

Kitterman: All of the Marine personnel during their meals, in other words. Then a number of us formed a band and were playing at the submarine base for the Navy at nighttime.

Marcello: Was this service-related, or was this a way to pick a little bit of extra money?

Kitterman: This was a way to pick up a little extra money as well as a few drinks (chuckle).

Marcello: What other duties would you have had there at Honolulu in addition to being in the band?

Kitterman: That was it--100 percent band!

Marcello: So in other words, when you weren't actually performing, you would be practicing?

Kitterman: Practicing or studying music or something.

Marcello: This shows my ignorance, of course, but how would the Marine band there in Honolulu compare or contrast, let's say, with the Marine band that we see stationed in Washington, D.C. and performs for all those types of functions and so on?

Kitterman: Well, that would be the elite of the overall groups of bands. They would have to go to special music school, conservatory and so forth, for a period. Like I say, each of us dreamed of going there by the time we were in the band, but I knew nobody that went there at that particular time, although it could be possible.

Marcello: Did you have any opportunities to try out, if that's the word one might use, to get into one of the Navy music schools or the Marine music school?

Kitterman: No, because that wasn't my goal at that time (chuckle). I just changed in the middle of the stream.

Marcello: How did the process come about, then, by which you got aboard the USS Nevada? You mentioned a while ago that you go from San Diego to Honolulu and then eventually get aboard the Nevada. How does this come about?

Kitterman: This came about through a written request of mine after I had become eligible through preliminary tests and so forth and had requested to go to Annapolis, with the knowledge that I had to have nine months of sea duty. So it was a necessity on my part before I could take the final examination.

Marcello: In order to do that, I'm assuming that you had to give up any further participation in the band.

Kitterman: Only after I was assigned to the ship.

Marcello: But once you were assigned to the ship and were aboard that ship, then your music career ceased at that point.

Kitterman: Right, and I never played again.

Marcello: You mentioned that you went aboard the *Nevada* in October of 1941.

Kitterman: Right.

Marcello: What kind of responsibilities or assignments did you have as a member of the Marine detachment aboard the *Nevada*?

Kitterman: Well, as a private it was strictly guard duty and on the gunnery that we had aboard ship, the 5-inch/.25's.

Marcello: Which particular gun would you have been assigned to?

Kitterman: I was assigned originally on the...I can't remember. It was a 5-inch/.25, but I wasn't there but a short time, and I was put up in director controls for the big guns. This was on the after mast.

Marcello: What would you be doing in this function as part of director controls?

Kitterman: In director control I was a pointer. In other words, I had to get the controls...we had seven of us up there, and each of us had a different function. But I was a pointer.

Marcello: And you were a pointer for which gun?

Kitterman: For the large guns.

Marcello: And is that the function that you were holding at the time of the attack?

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: I'm assuming that that was where your battle station was located.

Kitterman: That was my battle station--where I first manned my position, yes. I was on the after deck ready to go ashore when it started.

Marcello: What kind of a relationship was there between the Marine detachment on the *Nevada* and the sailors?

Kitterman: Well, actually, it was a distant one; I mean, I had only one and possibly two friends that were Navy. The others were Marines.

Marcello: I'm assuming that you had separate quarters aboard the *Nevada*.

Kitterman: Yes, separate quarters. We had our own departmentalized quarters, and all seventy-two of us were in that particular quarters.

Marcello: And would there be a Marine officer in charge of the Marine detachment?

Kitterman: There was a captain and a first lieutenant and a second lieutenant.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale or *esprit de corps* of the Marine detachment aboard the *Nevada*?

Kitterman: High, very high.

Marcello: That was probably a dumb question to ask a Marine, I guess (laughter).

Kitterman: I think it was very high because we were all volunteers. There was nobody that was there because they didn't want to be.

Marcello: Describe what your quarters were like.

Kitterman: Our quarters were very tight. I presume this was typical of all ships. We were bunked four high in pairs of one on each side, the left and right, of each set of poles. Like I say, when you put seventy-two men in a room twice this size, you were tight.

Marcello: We're talking about that many men in a room twice the size of a motel room.

Kitterman: Yes, in just about twice the size of a motel room would be seventy-two men plus a first sergeant's quarters, which was a little office the size of the bathroom.

Marcello: Were you also served your chow as a separate group?

Kitterman: No, we ate in the same cafeteria. They had to serve us and so forth. We did all the guard duties. We also provided an aide to the captain of the ship

and so forth and so on as well as jailers, as well as gangplank patrol (chuckle), and so forth.

Marcello: I'm assuming that since you went on the *Nevada* in October, you would have participated in some of the training exercises between October and December.

Kitterman: Right.

Marcello: Describe for me what a typical training exercise would involve for a Marine aboard the *Nevada* in that period before the war.

Kitterman: A typical training exercise would be normal functions for the first few days or something like that, but with periods of General Quarters and with the starboard and port watch. You had to be actually performing duties as in wartime. There were a few times that it was almost the fear of wartime prior to that, I mean, to the actual break out at Pearl Harbor. Submarines were sighted and detected and so forth. We were usually out a week to ten days and back into Pearl Harbor, and that was it.

Marcello: Was there a particular day of the week when the *Nevada* would normally go out?

Kitterman: Yes, but I can't remember when. But we could almost figure that we was going to be in for two to three days and then go out for a week to ten days.

Marcello: And would normally the weekend be the time when you would be in?

Kitterman: Yes, oh, yes. Probably for various reasons (chuckle) of some of the senior officers.

Marcello: Would it be correct to assume that if one were closely observing the movement of the *Nevada*, one could very quickly pick up a pattern as to when the *Nevada* would be in and when it would be out?

Kitterman: Oh, I have no doubt. I have no doubt that that's exactly right. And that's probably what happened. However, I don't have any evidence of that.

Marcello: I assume that probably not only any Japanese agents would have had that information, but given the way people frequented Hotel and Canal Streets, I'm assuming that probably every prostitute down there knew which ships were in, when they were out, and when that would be the case.

Kitterman: I'm sure that was the case. You can bet on that.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, and as conditions between the two countries continued

to get worse, could you detect any changes at all in the training routine of the *Nevada*?

Kitterman: I think it was a little bit more of general quarters. As a Marine private there, I didn't suspect the outbreak at all (chuckle), but we did know that we were on the alert more out there for training purposes. That was our clue.

Marcello: Refresh my memory. Where was your general quarters station or battle station?

Kitterman: At that particular time, it started out on the 5-inch/.25, and it later became on the director controls as a pointer.

Marcello: And where was that position located?

Kitterman: Up on the forecastle at the after mast.

Marcello: Okay, you're on the after mast on the forecastle.

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: Like you say, in other words, you have to do some climbing to get to your position.

Kitterman: Right.

Marcello: When the *Nevada* would come in off one of these exercises, how did the liberty routine work?

Kitterman: Normally, the liberty routine was port-and-starboard, and we had so many hours of being ashore. We were able to go to Honolulu. We had so

many hours that you couldn't go ashore, but if you didn't actually have guard duty, you could go...I mean, you couldn't go to Honolulu, but you could actually go to Pearl Harbor and play tennis and so forth. As a matter of fact, I was going to go ashore the morning of December 7 to play tennis when it broke out. We failed an inspection the day before and were restricted strictly to Pearl Harbor, in other words, so I had no choice but to go to play tennis that morning, I thought.

Marcello: You mentioned that normally the personnel aboard the Nevada would have port-and-starboard liberty. In essence, what that means is that you would have either a Saturday or a Sunday on a weekend.

Kitterman: That's exactly right, yes.

Marcello: And when did you have to be back aboard ship?

Kitterman: Usually by 6:00 in the morning.

Marcello: So you could stay overnight as long as you were back by 6:00.

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: That's different from some of the other battleships because I think they had what was called the "Cinderella liberty," and they had to be back at midnight.

Kitterman: No, we had until 6:00 aboard the Nevada.

Marcello: Again, that may have applied simply to the naval personnel, also. When you went ashore, what did you normally do?

Kitterman: Well, normally, I was interested in playing tennis. Of course, I'm not infallible. I was in the bars (chuckle), and I was in the houses and so forth. But I didn't have enough money to do it very often. It used to have to be a pretty cheap recreation for me as a private in the Marine Corps.

Marcello: Where were most of the houses of prostitution located at that time?

Kitterman: Down on Canal Street.

Marcello: I think Hotel Street was another one, too.

Kitterman: Hotel, too. Hotel and Canal, yes.

Marcello: Is it not true that before the war, there would even be lines to go in these places?

Kitterman: Yes, and that's discouraging, too, (chuckle) when there's a line way up beyond there with thirty and forty and fifty men or more, depending on payday and so forth.

Marcello: And it was that way before Pearl Harbor?

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: It must have even been worse later on when you had even more naval personnel out there.

Kitterman: Well, I would agree with you there. It was that way, yes.

Marcello: I guess Canal Street and Hotel Street had all sorts of other places to take a Marine's money, too. Isn't that where all those curio shops and tattoo parlors and so on were located?

Kitterman: Yes. Well, I had a little bit of an advantage because, being a musician, I was acquainted with several of the girls that were in the University of Hawaii Music Department. I and four other Marines in the band, as a matter of fact, were selected to...oh, I don't know the word I want to say...to oversee and help to...the word escapes me. In other words, it was nothing more than a judge at music contests. They didn't call it judge, *per se*, but mine was wind instruments and so forth. Somebody else was strings and so forth. I did know one girl quite well. One of my friends married his girl. I didn't.

Marcello: So it sounds like there were all sorts of things for you to do when you went on liberty during that period.

Kitterman: Right.

Marcello: Everything from tennis to recreation downtown to judging in these band competitions and so on there at the University of Hawaii.

Kitterman: Right.

Marcello: Okay, I think this brings us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and, of course, we want to go into that period in as much detail as you can remember. When did the *Nevada* come in that weekend?

Kitterman: I think it came in on Friday night, and we had an inspection on Saturday. As my memory comes back to me, it was Friday.

Marcello: And where did it tie up?

Kitterman: Ford Island. We were the last on Battleship Row.

Marcello: You mentioned that there was an inspection on Saturday. What kind of inspection would that have been?

Kitterman: That was the inspection of the Marine detachment and certain divisions of the Navy there. Admiral Kidd was the inspector. It was strictly a personnel dress inspection, and we failed. Why we failed, we weren't told; but we failed, so that's the reason we didn't get the Honolulu liberty.

Marcello: What did you do, then, on Saturday, December 6?

Kitterman: Well, on December 6, I didn't have any opportunity to go ashore because it wasn't my section's turn. I can't even remember whether I was port or starboard at the time (chuckle). But it was strictly duty aboard ship, which was very minor-- guard station. I think I had the watch. I had the watch on the gangplank, and I don't know when. I think it was Saturday about 12:00 to 4:00 or something like that that I caught the watch.

Marcello: Do you recall anything eventful happening on your watch on that Saturday?

Kitterman: That was Saturday after the inspection. No, I don't recall anything that would be unusual.

Marcello: What did you do that Saturday evening aboard ship? Do you recall?

Kitterman: I think I played poker. I think I played poker a little bit in the head.

Marcello: Is that where they usually played the poker games (laughter)?

Kitterman: That was usually the place, yes--on the floor of the head.

Marcello: I'm assuming that gambling aboard ship was frowned upon.

Kitterman: Yes, it was frowned upon, but it went on.

Marcello: I was also going to add that I suspect there probably weren't too many efforts made to actually control it.

Kitterman: No, not unless it got out of hand in size. When I say size, I mean the amount of dollars won and lost. This penny ante stuff was not discouraged. I don't recall of anybody getting put in the brig, and, like I say, I've caught the brig watch many a time.

Marcello: How did you make out that night playing?

Kitterman: I think I won.

Marcello: Do you remember how much you won?

Kitterman: It was less than five dollars, I remember--two or three dollars, I think--but it was money when you were just making \$21 a month.

Marcello: Other than the poker game, was there anything eventful happening aboard the *Nevada* in the Marine quarters that night?

Kitterman: Not that I was aware of.

Marcello: What time did you go to bed?

Kitterman: I think I went to bed between 10:00 and 11:00. I think I went back into the poker game after we ate that evening. Yes, it was before 10:00, I think, approximately.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into the Sunday morning of December 7, and obviously we want to go into that day in as much detail as possible. Why don't you describe for me how events unfolded that day from the time you got up and so on.

Kitterman: Well, actually, from the time I got up, I got up and had breakfast and got ready with another buddy to play tennis. We had the tennis rackets in hand out on the deck of the ship and were ready to go ashore. It was about five minutes or ten minutes until 8:00 and so forth, and there wasn't any movement until after the ship's flag was unfurled.

Marcello: How were you dressed?

Kitterman: In shorts and a khaki shirt.

Marcello: From everything that I have read, at the time that the attack occurred, the band was out on the quarterdeck or wherever it played.

Kitterman: Our band was.

Marcello: It was getting ready to play the National Anthem, I guess it was, wasn't it?

Kitterman: Right.

Marcello: Okay, pick up the story. So you're about to go ashore.

Kitterman: Like I say, I was standing by to go ashore. They were on the after deck, also, to play.

Marcello: Typically, as was true of most servicemen, I'm assuming that you remained under cover so that you didn't have to go outside and salute before you went ashore.

Kitterman: Right.

Marcello: Okay.

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: Pick up the story.

Kitterman: Then all of a sudden, they started...well, as a matter of fact, I didn't see the first plane when we were being strafed. I didn't even see it. Then there were multiple planes--three or four of them--coming in strafing. At that particular time, two guys fell right there on the deck, and I started to my general quarters station.

Marcello: Had General Quarters sounded?

Kitterman: They was just starting to sound it, yes.

Marcello: And how did General Quarters sound?

Kitterman: But I was ahead of it; I mean, I was on the way up when I heard it sound.

Marcello: So you did know right away that this was the real thing.

Kitterman: Yes, right. You could see that when they already hit two guys.

Marcello: How low were those Japanese planes coming in?

Kitterman: Between the mainmast and the forecastle, between the two stacks.

Marcello: So they were that low?

Kitterman: Yes, at that particular time when they were strafing.

Marcello: Could you distinguish the pilots?

Kitterman: Oh, with ease.

Marcello: Describe what you saw.

Kitterman: Well, to me, I mean, I saw the machine guns firing before I even saw the pilots. But I also saw the pilots. I saw the red bursting sun. They looked like mean devils to me. That's all I can call them.

Marcello: Did the pilots have their canopies pulled back?

Kitterman: Pulled back and their helmets on.

Marcello: Were they looking over the side to see what was going on?

Kitterman: Well, I didn't see anybody looking over the side, but they were full view. That's what I do remember. They were just in their open canopy when they were coming down. Like I say, I was on the way up the ladder. The guy ahead of me got splattered--I mean,

got strafed--and I had to climb through his body, as several others did coming after me. The guy behind later got strafed. A bomb blew up on the deck of the ship and got the second man, I think, along with others.

Marcello: This all occurs within a matter of minutes.

Kitterman: Just on my way up the ladder.

Marcello: You mentioned that the person in front of you actually got hit.

Kitterman: Strafed, yes.

Marcello: Did he fall off the ladder?

Kitterman: No, he fell into the ladder.

Marcello: What did you do at that point?

Kitterman: Climbed through him.

Marcello: You just climbed directly through him? You didn't stop to check him out or anything?

Kitterman: No.

Marcello: Okay, how long does it take you to get up to your battle station, would you estimate?

Kitterman: I would say about four to five minutes. You couldn't do it in one minute, that's for sure (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, what happens when you get up to your battle station?

Kitterman: Well, then you go to your position, and I sat in my chair and started pointing.

Marcello: Now I'm assuming that the batteries for which you were pointing weren't going to be of much use because weren't you on the big guns?

Kitterman: That's right, yes. They weren't of any use, but I was on my station. They were of no use.

Marcello: I do know that it's very shortly into the attack that a sailor up in one of the masts, the area called the "bird cage," I think, did get a .50-caliber machine gun operating and actually shot down a plane. Do you remember seeing that?

Kitterman: No, I do not. And that is below me where the machine guns were positioned. That was below me considerably (chuckle).

Marcello: So what are you seeing while you're up there?

Kitterman: What I saw when I was up there, immediately almost, was the *Arizona* and then the other ships. I had plenty of time to observe that.

Marcello: Describe what you remember from what was happening over at the *Arizona*.

Kitterman: Well, what I remember from that was seeing somebody jump from the very position I was in and splattering on the deck.

Marcello: Of the *Arizona*?

Kitterman: On the *Arizona*.

Marcello: How far from the *Arizona* were you located?

Kitterman: We were just aft of them, tied to them.

Marcello: Describe the explosion aboard the *Arizona*.

Kitterman: Well, the explosion of the *Arizona* was just a "WHOOOF!" To my ear--maybe because I was deaf or something--it was just a puff. It wasn't as big as some of the explosions around.

Marcello: It was muffled instead of ear-shattering.

Kitterman: Right.

Marcello: And you think that's probably because the explosion was, for the most part, internal?

Kitterman: I would guess that, yes.

Marcello: And then what do you see around the *Arizona*?

Kitterman: Well, then, like I say, I saw the bodies, the people trying to get off the ship and so forth.

Marcello: What do you see in terms of smoke and flames?

Kitterman: Well, nothing but smoke and flames.

Marcello: Are you able to feel any of the heat from the *Arizona* as far away as you are?

Kitterman: Oh, yes! Yes, you could feel the heat. I suppose we were two hundred feet or more probably from the *Arizona*. In our position of being up high, we could

still fell the heat. But we were also getting heat from the fire of our own ship. We were hit, too.

Marcello: Very shortly into the attack, the *Nevada* takes...

Kitterman: One.

Marcello: ...a torpedo.

Kitterman: Yes, that was what got there, was the explosion there.

Marcello: And it lists to port.

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: Can you remember that torpedo hitting the *Nevada*?

Kitterman: I saw it.

Marcello: Describe that. Describe the entire incident from beginning to end.

Kitterman: Well, I was going to say it is an unbelievable scene. I can't put into words what I felt, but I don't think I was even afraid at that time. You could see the torpedo running and then, there again, the explosion and so forth.

Marcello: Describe what the explosion is like and how it affects you.

Kitterman: There was this vibrating. The vibration was the only thing I can really describe as what I felt. I was sitting on a seat that was up pretty high, and it was a narrow pedestal seat. I felt the

vibration more than hearing the sound or anything like that. I didn't get any effect of the fire or anything. As I say, I didn't have a sense of fear. But knowing that it was what it was and that it was coming directly at us was a sensation (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you actually see the Japanese plane drop or release the torpedo?

Kitterman: No, no. But I saw after it had been released.

Marcello: I'm assuming that most of these Japanese planes are below you.

Kitterman: Yes, they are below us. They are below us in the main, except the bombers coming over late.

Marcello: So you have a pretty good shot at almost all these pilots, at least where they are coming close to your position.

Kitterman: Right. It was memorable.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that if you had had, let's say, even a rifle or a .45 that...

Kitterman: Yes, I would...

Marcello: ...you would have had a possibility of hitting some of them?

Kitterman: Oh, yes! Yes, with a rifle, sniping, you could hit some from my position or any of our positions up there in that particular height.

Marcello: Very shortly thereafter, the *Nevada* also took a bomb somewhere around the starboard antiaircraft director. Do you remember that?

Kitterman: No, I don't and I don't know why I don't. But I don't recall that.

Marcello: Then a second bomb hits the *Nevada*.

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: What is the difference between the torpedo hitting the *Nevada* and the bomb hitting it?

Kitterman: Well, this was after we got underway.

Marcello: And what is the difference between a torpedo hitting the *Nevada* and a bomb hitting the *Nevada*?

Kitterman: Well, I think the torpedo being underwater was more muffled than the bombs were. I was on the topside when the bombs hit and went down and exploded out. While I didn't get hit, many of them did, of course. But the sound was much louder. My knowledge of casualties was that we had more from the bombs than there was from the torpedo. That's all I can say from there.

Marcello: What were you able to see in your position way up in the mast when you looked down at these bombs? Again, by the time the bombs start raining down on the *Arizona*, we're into the second wave.

Kitterman: We were in the process of coming down because we were knocked out. Our controls were knocked out, and meanwhile they needed more men on the 5-inch/.25's for manual loading. So when we were actually midway underway, I was down on those guns when we caught a bomb right between guns, knocking out twelve people and knocked out our gun.

Marcello: Describe that incident in as much detail as you can remember. You were up in the mast, and how did you get the word to leave that post and go down and man the gun?

Kitterman: Well, this was strictly verbal from my captain, who was also in the pointer controls up there. That was his station, too, as captain of the Marines. We were useless up there, and they needed any help they could get down there for manning and using the 5-inch/.25's for loading purposes and so forth there against the bombers that were coming in. Like I say we were ordered down there by our senior officer.

Marcello: Describe your progress down the ladder.

Kitterman: Well, I can't literally remember any incident happening because the strafing had been over, and it was between the bomb and the torpedoes. Somebody had already cleared the bodies away except for the blood and the slime and so forth. So I think it was without incident, actually, until I got down to the gun.

Marcello: During this process, is the Nevada getting up whatever steam it can to get underway?

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: Normally, it take about two-and-a-half hours, I think, for a battleship to get out.

Kitterman: We were observing their trying to get underway before we came down.

Marcello: There was a quartermaster, a chief quartermaster, I think. Sedberry was his name.

Kitterman: Sedberry. And Ross was the warrant officer, I think.

Marcello: Anyhow, so you come down, and the Nevada is trying to get out.

Kitterman: Just trying to get underway.

Marcello: And where is this 5-inch/.25 located?

Kitterman: It's just at midships on the top deck.

Marcello: Which side?

Kitterman: I was on the port side.

Marcello: Now describe what happens next. By this time the horizontal bombers are coming over, is that correct?

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what happens there at your gun position.

Kitterman: Well, we were just throwing everything we could into it and so forth. Of course, a lot of our 5-inch/.25's were probably going into Honolulu and everywhere else but where they were needed. But the fact remains we were loading as fast as we could and burning up the ammunition in firing at planes. I never saw any plane hit that we were firing at. Let's put it that way.

Marcello: Those 5-inch guns were not very effective under the best of conditions, were they?

Kitterman: (Chuckle) No, that's what I was going to say. They weren't that effective. I never saw anything that was hit.

Marcello: Now in the meantime, bombs are hitting at other places on the Nevada, and there are fires.

Kitterman: Right.

Marcello: Okay, describe this bomb that knocked out your gun. Describe what happened.

Kitterman: Well, the only reason I was saved was probably that it went within a couple of feet of me, less than three feet, I would say, down and then exploded and then came out in multiple raises. In other words, before it detonated it actually penetrated the steel into the next compartment there. Like I say, twelve were knocked out at that particular gun and the other one. I wasn't touched but probably because I was on solid steel there, and the explosions were five, six, eight feet away from me.

Marcello: Did you actually see the plane that dropped the bomb, or all of a sudden is there just an explosion?

Kitterman: No, I did not see the plane that dropped the bomb because, like I say, I was just loading.

Marcello: Were you affected in any way?

Kitterman: No, I wasn't. I wasn't hurt. By that time there was fires. You were helping with bodies and trying to put out fires and seeing the scorched bodies and so forth.

Marcello: Do you have time to think about the horrors at that moment?

Kitterman: I don't think I was conscious of the horrors other than when I reached down to pick up a body that had been in the fire, and my fingers came through the rib meat. Then I think I had a sick, sick feeling. That was my first feeling of horror or sickness and so forth.

Marcello: The *Nevada* is still moving and trying to get out the channel. In the meantime, are you continuing to assist with the dead and the wounded?

Kitterman: The wounded and putting out fires. I wasn't actually doing any one thing there. I was just assisting.

Marcello: There obviously has to be a certain amount of chaos and confusion, but, generally speaking, overall would you say that things were being done professionally, or was there mass confusion?

Kitterman: I think there was an unusual amount of calmness considering the situation. Maybe it was not through training, but it was just through "what can you do!" I don't know.

Marcello: Describe the grounding or the beaching of the *Nevada*.

Kitterman: I think I wasn't really conscious of our being grounded until such time as we had already felt the stop (chuckle). They backed it into the ground, and then it settled down there. Like I say, I was still busy up until quite late in the afternoon with the fires and so forth, and so I don't think I was really conscious of what had happened. I knew something had happened, but I wasn't at that time conscious of it. I don't think I was even conscious of it until I was ordered to go ashore and man a gun.

Marcello: Did you mention a moment ago that the *Nevada* was actually beached from astern?

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, it did not go in bow first?

Kitterman: No.

Marcello: It just kind of swung around.

Kitterman: It swung around, and it was the stern position.

Marcello: And this occurred over at Hospital Point, I believe.

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens then at that stage? In the meantime, are the Japanese still working over the *Nevada*?

Kitterman: Yes. Well, not with great hostility, but they were trying, I mean (chuckle), and so forth. Like I say, you lose contact of what's happening up there when you're busy amongst smoke and fire.

Marcello: Okay, so what do you at that stage after the ship has beached.

Kitterman: After she was beached. Well, I don't suppose it was four or five hours until I was even conscious that we were beached. Time passed very quickly and so forth through fighting the fires and getting the bodies and so forth. Then four of us took Lewis machine guns ashore, and positions were made and embankments were placed out on the point there with the idea that we knew they were coming in that night (chuckle).

Marcello: What time...

Kitterman: I was off the ship after that.

Marcello: What time is it by now?

Kitterman: I think it was about 5:00 in the evening, 4:00 or 5:00 in the evening. All afternoon I was fighting fires.

Marcello: Oh, so you actually fought fires aboard the *Nevada* before you went ashore?

Kitterman: Yes.

Marcello: Did you get those fires under control?

Kitterman: Pretty well. All under control, yes. I think there were some deep down below and so forth going, but the ones topside and so forth were put out.

Marcello: Okay, describe what you do that evening once you're ashore and you have this Lewis machine gun set up.

Kitterman: Well, I think there's where terror set in because we were told in all probability they would invade. We're out there with a Lewis machine gun, not even a water-cooled or an air-cooled machine gun--a modern convenience. It was just a little .30-caliber Lewis. I and Campbell were in one hole, and then probably a hundred yards further were another pair. And that was the size of the original defense because we didn't have any real equipment.

Marcello: Were other people being armed with rifles and so on?

Kitterman: Yes, they were but they weren't yet ashore. We were the first line of defense.

Marcello: What do you guys talk about that afternoon and into that evening?

Kitterman: Well, (chuckle) I can't actually remember except, like I say, the feeling of fear and terror. We were both young, just nineteen and so forth. I

think we had no doubt that we were going to be invaded and that they could push through us.

Marcello: Describe what happened that evening.

Kitterman: Nothing that I know of, as far as my job was concerned.

Marcello: Were you still out there at that post?

Kitterman: Yes, all evening. One of us slept while the other one manned the gun.

Marcello: Did you hear sporadic gunfire all night?

Kitterman: Oh, yes. Yes, you did that, but I think that was just nervousness, of course.

Marcello: I guess it wasn't too safe to walk around.

Kitterman: (Laughter) No, I was going to say that I liked my hole.

Marcello: Do you remember when all that firing took place later in the evening, that is, when the planes off the *Enterprise* were coming in?

Kitterman: No, I cannot recall that. I read about it and so forth, but it doesn't come back to my memory.

Marcello: What did you do the next day and in the days following the attack?

Kitterman: Pretty much the same job for several days. Then I assisted on trying to get the *Nevada* raised and

patched up on the outside to where we could get her afloat.

Marcello: More specifically, what kind of work were you doing there aboard the *Nevada*?

Kitterman: At that particular time, I was holding the hose for welders, keeping them free of the debris. That was not a glamorous job, but somebody had to do it, I guess.

Marcello: How long was it before they got the *Nevada* off that beach?

Kitterman: That I don't recall either, but I would guess it to be two weeks or such a matter.

Marcello: Were you still working on the *Nevada* when that occurred?

Kitterman: Yes. Yes, I was. I stayed with her all the time. I never went ashore. Most of the personnel and so forth went ashore, but the Marine detachment didn't.

Marcello: What did you do for quarters and so on during that period? Did you stay right there at Hospital Point?

Kitterman: Yes. We never went to special quarters. Most of the people aboard ship had temporary quarters in Honolulu and so forth, but we didn't.

Marcello: Were you provided with any sort of tents or shelters of that nature?

Kitterman: No, no.

Marcello: So you were just sleeping on the ground.

Kitterman: Yes, either on the ground or on the deck.

Marcello: How did they supply you with food?

Kitterman: There again, we had very little food. It was just whatever was brought to us and so forth. There was food brought to us periodically, but it was limited amounts and at limited times. But we didn't have C-rations, didn't have K-rations, or anything else. It was just as somebody would bring us food.

Marcello: I'm assuming that you didn't have an opportunity to take any baths or showers.

Kitterman: No, we didn't take any baths or showers. We did that ten days later, I'd say, probably.

Marcello: What happened to your personal gear aboard the *Nevada*?

Kitterman: I lost most of that because we had a fire in our quarters. I guess I lost all of it. I don't know of any I had.

Marcello: Well, you mentioned that the bomb that hit that broadside gun that you were working on.

Kitterman: That's one of them that blew up the Marine quarters.

Marcello: And the Marine quarters were, I think, almost directly off those broadsides, were they not?

Kitterman: Right. That's what I say. It was fire that got at that. But while we were out there on the point with the guns...my wife has got the picture yet of the *Life* magazine coming out and taking the photographs. They were published in January sometime, a January issue, but I can't remember what issue. An aunt got it out of the *Life* magazine, and that's my only claim to fame (chuckle).

Marcello: How long did you stay with the *Nevada* in total?

Kitterman: I stayed with it through Attu and Kiska. We took it for repairs to Bremerton and then down to San Francisco and then back up to Attu and Kiska into the bombardment up there. As a matter of fact, I had probably more of a fear up there than I had at Pearl Harbor because all we were doing up there was manning our guns on the port and starboard and bombarding. All of the Marine officers were ashore, and I was the senior sergeant at the time they asked for Marines to come ashore to help the

Army. I'd never been in land combat *per se* or getting the men ready to go ashore. I guess there were three or four Marine detachments from the fleet that was going to go ashore and organize to assist the Army. But before I went ashore, and only hours before I went to shore, well, they called it off--we wouldn't be needed--so I was thankful for that (chuckle).

Marcello: I'm assuming from what you said, then, that at some point during the war you left the *Nevada*.

Kitterman: Yes, I left the *Nevada* just prior to it going over for the African invasion. I was selected to go to V-12 and went to V-12 at Bucknell University for two semesters, was all.

Marcello: When you were done with the V-12 program, did you come out as an officer at that point?

Kitterman: Then I went to officer's training at Quantico, Virginia, and I came out as an officer--second lieutenant, of course. Then after I came out as second lieutenant, I was shortly sent to Naval Law School and completed that. I was then at Camp Pendleton in the legal department of the base there. I think I spent about a year in it as a legal officer there.

Marcello: And where did you end your World War II period?

Kitterman: There.

Marcello: Did you make the Marines a career?

Kitterman: No, I did not. I came out after six years and one month. In other words, I came out and stayed out until...I was a regular, but when I was commissioned I was a reserve officer. So I was still in the reserves when I got out, and I was called back in for Korea, and as not a legal department thing but as an infantry officer. My "spec" was still infantry. I mean, my base "spec" was still infantry, and they needed infantry officers over there badly.

Marcello: I just assumed that every Marine was considered infantry (laughter).

Kitterman: Almost, right. That's just about right. I didn't make the Marines a career, regretfully. I didn't stay in the service. Hindsight is good, but I had no desire of staying in.

Marcello: Well, I guess after what you'd been through and then Korea, that's kind of understandable.

Kitterman: Yes, especially since I was single when I first went into the Marines at the age of eighteen--one week out of high school or ten days out of high

school, I guess it was. When I was called back in for Korea, I had two boys. I was bitter, but I went (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, well, Mr. Kitterman, I think that's a pretty good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for your comments. You've given me some interesting slants on the Pearl Harbor attack, and, of course, we are always looking for that sort of thing. Again, thank you very much for your time.

Kitterman: It was a pleasure.

[End of interview]