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Interview with
Jim C. Bowers
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Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Oral History Collection

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. Jim Bowery for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 29, 1974, in Dallas, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Bowery in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the cruiser USS New Orleans during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Bowery, to begin this interview, why don't you give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me where you were born, when you were born, your education--things of that nature. Be very brief and general.

Mr. Bowery: I was born in Denton, Texas, on July 2, 1922. I went to school and finished at Sanger and enlisted in the service in 1940.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you decide to enlist in the service in 1940?

Mr. Bowery: I didn't have the money to go on to college.

Dr. Marcello: At that particular time were jobs still fairly scarce

around the North Texas area?

Bowery: Yes.

Marcello: And I assume this probably was something that influenced your decision, also.

Bowery: Well, a buddy of mine that was in school with me enlisted in the Marines, and he liked it so well he talked me into joining.

Marcello: I was going to ask you why you joined the Marines, and I guess that's probably the main reason.

Bowery: Yes, he came home on furlough, and he had been in about nine or ten months. He was strictly gung-ho and he wanted me to enlist, so I went ahead, finished school and enlisted. I had to wait till I was eighteen.

Marcello: Well, at the time that you went into the service, did you have any idea that the country might possibly be getting into war within a very short amount of time?

Bowery: No, I didn't know that for sure. They were calling up some of the National Guard and one thing and another, you know, for more training and everything. In fact, my brother tried to talk me into joining the National Guard instead of the Marine Corps. I wouldn't have it. I wanted to get into the Marines.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Bowery: San Diego, California.

Marcello: Did anything eventful happen in boot camp that you think should be a part of the record?

Bowery: Well, we had a corporal that was one of the drill inspectors, and him and I didn't get along very good. I didn't know how to stay in step. I marched to start with, and he slipped up behind me and used his swagger stick and stuck it between my legs and tripped me. I fell about twenty feet in the gravel. It was a cold morning, just at daylight. I would have liked to wrap that rifle around his head, but you didn't do things like that then.

Marcello: When did you go to the Hawaiian Islands?

Bowery: Well, I first went in 1940, last part of 1940. I went over there on the battleship Oklahoma. I went to sea school after I finished boot camp. My orders was to go to the USS New Orleans, which I joined at Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Why did you decide to become a seagoing Marine?

Bowery: Well, that was everybody's desire. You had to be the best to be a seagoing Marine. Out of sixty-four men they only picked one.

Marcello: That is, out of your company in boot camp.

Bowery: Yes, 97th Platoon in boot camp.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that you had to go to a special school to become a seagoing Marine. What

sort of school was that?

Bowery: It was a regular seagoing school. It took five weeks to go through. It was rigid. It was a lot worse than boot camp. That's where you wore the dress blues and the white gloves, and everything had to be spotless.

Marcello: What sort of duties does a seagoing Marine have aboard ship?

Bowery: Well, they have guard duty, and I spent my first fourteen months as a captain's orderly.

Marcello: What sort of guard duties do you perform aboard ship?

Bowery: Well, you have a forecastle watch and a fantail watch and a corporal of the guard, sergeant of the guard, and just regular guard duty.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that after you got out of this school for seagoing Marines that you were assigned to the battleship Oklahoma.

Bowery: That was for transportation over there.

Marcello: Oh, I see. You just went over to the Hawaiian Islands on the battleship Oklahoma, and when you got there you transferred to the USS New Orleans.

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: Would you have preferred to have stayed on the battleship, or were you glad to get on a cruiser?

Bowery: I was glad to get on a cruiser.

Marcello: Why was that?

- Bowery: Well, I didn't like sleeping in those hammocks and things. On the cruiser, well, we had regular bunks.
- Marcello: I see. I didn't realize that the battleships still had the hammocks at that time.
- Bowery: They did, and the food...you went through a line, and you usually sat on a gun caisson to eat. They didn't have mess halls and things like they did on the cruiser.
- Marcello: Why was that? It would seem to me that there would be more room on a battleship than there would be on a cruiser.
- Bowery: Well, it was less room. There was more men and everything. They even had a band on the Oklahoma. They transferred quite a few men over from the States to Hawaii on the ship. Not only myself, but there were several... I imagine there were three or four hundred guys that was on there that was just being transferred.
- Marcello: I assume that at that particular time that you arrived in Hawaii that there were quite a few people in the service being transferred there. In other words, as I recall, there were a lot of reservists, for example, coming into the Hawaiian Islands at this time. I'm sure you probably came in contact with a good many of these reservists aboard the USS New Orleans, did you not?

- Bowery: No, the detachment of forty-two men in the Marine detachment was all regulars. There was no reservists in there.
- Marcello: Certainly there were Naval reserves coming aboard that cruiser, however.
- Bowery: Right. There was Naval reserves, but we had no Marine reserves.
- Marcello: Now when approximately did you arrive in Hawaii?
- Bowery: It was around the first of December, 1940.
- Marcello: In other words, you were there approximately a year before the war actually broke out.
- Bowery: Well, no. We came back to the States in 1941 and had an overhaul at Bremerton, Washington. I was over there nine months, and we came back for an overhaul at Bremerton Naval Yard at Bremerton, Washington. Then we went back over and got back over there nine days before the Japanese attack.
- Marcello: Well, let's talk about some of the activities and events that you perhaps took part in prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. What was the social life like for a young Marine in Honolulu in the pre-war days?
- Bowery: There wasn't much to do. Being a smalltown boy and everything, I didn't know my way around too well. There was a picture show, or you could eat out or

go to Waikiki Beach.

Marcello: Now surely you must have wandered around Hotel Street on occasion.

Bowery: Well, I got acquainted with it.

Marcello: What sort of liberty did you get aboard the USS New Orleans?

Bowery: Every other day.

Marcello: Was this true right up to the actual attack on Pearl Harbor?

Bowery: Right. We had a port liberty and a starboard liberty.

Marcello: In other words, one day perhaps half the Marine complement would have liberty, and then the next day the other half would have liberty.

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: How would this work out on the weekends, or would this continue right on through the weekend?

Bowery: No, they worked. . .every other weekend you was off then before the war.

Marcello: I see. In other words, it was a port and starboard liberty during the week, and then you had every other weekend.

Bowery: Well, you either had a port or a starboard watch on the weekend.

Marcello: But on that weekend you had off the whole. . .you had the whole weekend off when you had liberty.

- Bowery: Sometimes. In other words, sometimes you'd stand watch for someone else or trade off or something else.
- Marcello: But under normal circumstances, you would have a full weekend off every other weekend.
- Bowery: If it was possible. We'd spend the night in town.
- Marcello: Now as you know, the Hawaiian Islands have a relatively large population of Japanese ancestry.
- Bowery: Right.
- Marcello: Did you ever come into very much contact with these Japanese during your stay on the Hawaiian Islands, that is, prior to Pearl Harbor?
- Bowery: No.
- Marcello: I was just wondering because, as you know, there was a lot of talk from time to time that this Japanese population represented a potential threat. There was a feeling on the part of some people that they, of course, would engage in fifth column activities or sabotage activities in case war ever broke out between the United States and Japan. Was there ever much talk about something like this occurring?
- Bowery: No, not to my knowledge. Of course, the war with Germany was going on with England, and we had an idea that we would get into it, and we was schooled not to say anything.
- Marcello: You were schooled not to say anything about what?

- Bowery: Oh, what ships was in the harbor and so forth.
- Marcello: Were these orders that came down from Pacific Fleet headquarters or from whom?
- Bowery: It was just a local order on our ship. I don't know where it came from higher up.
- Marcello: Actually, though, was it pretty easy to find out what ships were in port and what ships were out?
- Bowery: Well, that was part of going to sea school. We had to memorize all the ships and everything pretty well in the Pacific Fleet. That was part of the schooling. . . the battleships and the aircraft carriers and things, and we could just see them off at a distance and tell you which one it was.
- Marcello: Well, what I'm saying is, is it not true that perhaps somebody who frequented the bars on Hotel Street would know fairly well what ships were in and what ships were out?
- Bowery: Oh, yes.
- Marcello: In other words, it wouldn't be too hard to find out, really.
- Bowery: No, because all the ships had liberty the whole time. They estimated the fleet over there at that time was 88,000.
- Marcello: 88,000 men?
- Bowery: Yes, and they estimate now that half of us are still

alive.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the Pacific Fleet that was based here at Pearl Harbor. Describe in your own words what impressions you have of Battleship Row when you used to see it during that particular period.

Bowery: Well, I think they made a big mistake in tying up the battleships like they did over at Ford Island. That's where they anchored them, and they were perfect targets. I think that they shouldn't have had as many in port that was. There should have been more out at sea.

Marcello: Why was it that there was so many of them in port?

Bowery: Well, we was innocent of the Japanese attack because we didn't know. There were the Enterprise and the Chicago and several ships out at sea that were on gunnery runs and training. The captain of our ship was out there for the schooling of this gunnery school when the attack came.

Marcello: That's interesting. In other words, your captain was not aboard when the attack occurred.

Bowery: No, just the commander.

Marcello: Was the commander a regular, or was he a reserve officer?

Bowery: No, he was a regular officer.

Marcello: What sort of duties did a seagoing Marine have aboard the USS New Orleans during this period immediately

prior to Pearl Harbor? Was it the same sort of duty that you always had? In other words, you pulled the guard duty whether you were at sea or in port.

Bowery: No, at port we stood watch. . .like you had the gang-plank, checking liberty cards of men coming and going. At sea we stood watch on guns. We had a gun crew. We had starboard and port watches four hours on and four hours off. In port, why, we had it every other day. In other words, you stood a four-hour watch and were off eight and then stood another four-hour watch.

Marcello: In those days immediately prior to Pearl Harbor, did you give much thought to the possibility of the United States going to war against Japan?

Bowery: No.

Marcello: Was this generally true for most of your buddies, also?

Bowery: Well, I expected them to be just the same as the Chinese and the Hawaiians and. . .they were just people.

Marcello: And I suppose that you really didn't think that they had the capability of mounting an attack such as they did.

Bowery: No, we didn't think so.

Marcello: Now during those days immediately prior to the attack, what sort of alerts or maneuvers did the fleet undertake?

Bowery: Well, we had training runs when we'd go out to sea. One

destroyer would pull a sea sled, and we'd fire our gunnery at the sea sled towed by the destroyer. We had nine eight-inch .55 caliber heavy artillery on board. There'd be ships over the horizon, and we'd be over there, and we'd shoot at one another. Of course, we always missed. In other words, it was a gunnery drill. Then we had the drone planes that are radio-controlled. Then you had your antiaircraft batteries. We would try to shoot it down, which we usually did.

Marcello: When was the last of these maneuvers prior to Pearl Harbor? In other words, what was the last maneuver that you were on? How long was it before Pearl Harbor?

Bowery: Well, it seems like that was in Bremerton, Washington. We had a shake-down run and gunnery practice going back over to Hawaii, so that was the last that we had.

Marcello: Now were these maneuvers going on constantly among the various units of the fleet at Pearl Harbor?

Bowery: Yes.

Marcello: In your own mind, how would you describe the readiness of the personnel in the fleet if and when war eventually came?

Bowery: I'd say that we was trained well and would have been ready if we knew that this was coming. It would have been a completely different story, in other words.

Marcello: Are you saying, in effect, that the crews aboard these ships were highly professional, highly motivated men?

Bowery: Yes. I'd say 90 per cent of them was regulars. They knew what they were doing.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that the morale among these regulars was quite high?

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: Well, this more or less brings us up, I think, to the actual attack on Pearl Harbor itself, so let me start by asking you to describe your activities, that is, what you did on Saturday, December 6, and then we'll lead into Pearl Harbor. So go back and think as best you can of what your activities were on the day before Pearl Harbor, that is, on Saturday, December 6, 1941.

Bowery: Alright, I had the twelve o'clock watch.

Marcello: That's twelve noon to four o'clock afternoon or. . .

Bowery: Afternoon. That night I had the twelve p.m. till four a.m. watch. It was my weekend to stand watch.

Marcello: What did you do during that interim? You were off at four and you didn't have to go back on duty until twelve that night. Did you stay aboard the ship, or did you go into town, or what did you do?

Bowery: We stayed aboard ship and ate and grabbed a little shut-eye. In other words, you had to sleep in there

somewhere, so that was what we did--we'd sleep--
and then they'd come in and wake us up and tell us
it was time to go to watch, and we'd put on our uniforms
and go on watch.

Marcello: Generally speaking, was it business as usual that day?

Bowery: Yes, routine.

Marcello: What particular watch did you have that day and that evening?

Bowery: Well, knowing that you were coming here, I have knocked myself out trying to figure out which watch I was standing. I don't remember. I don't know whether I was standing regular watch or on the ship. It was somewhere on the ship, but I can't remember what watch I had. I had the twelve to four watch--I can remember that--but I can't tell you where it was because I don't know--bow of the ship, or the fantail, or the captain's orderly, or the quarterdeck, or what. I do not remember.

Marcello: Now since you were on duty that night between twelve and four, perhaps you can answer this question. I'm sure you had had that particular watch previously as well. What, generally, was the condition of the sailors and the Marines when they came back on board ship on Saturday night after having liberty in Honolulu?

Bowery: Well, they were just a regular Saturday night liberty, in other words. There was some that was in good shape, and there was some that was a little bit tight. They

drank a little too much, or. . .usual routine, in other words.

Marcello: If you were Japanese and you were going to plan an attack of that nature, do you think that a Sunday morning would have been the best time to do it?

Bowery: I think so.

Marcello: Why do you think that?

Bowery: Well, because it was a day off, and everybody that wasn't on watch or didn't have a duty to do was sleeping in.

Marcello: In other words, the state of readiness of the fleet would be somewhat lax on a Sunday morning.

Bowery: Completely.

Marcello: Under normal circumstances how large a crew did the New Orleans have?

Bowery: 1,100 men.

Marcello: That was at full time complement?

Bowery: Yes.

Marcello: And was this the complement aboard the ship at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack?

Bowery: Pretty close to it.

Marcello: Generally speaking, on a weekend of this nature what percentage of that crew, or how many of those crew members, would still be aboard the ship? You would have to estimate this, of course.

Bowery: Well, I'd say that there was three-fourths of them aboard the ship on Sunday morning.

Marcello: But this would have excluded the commanding officer who was at sea taking part in some of the other maneuvers. Is that correct?

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: Would it also be safe to say that there would probably not have been too many officers aboard that ship on a Sunday morning?

Bowery: Well, there seemed to be a pretty good crew aboard the ship on Sunday morning, and we had two Marine officers assigned to the detachment, and they were both aboard.

Marcello: Now I do know that during this weekend of December 7, a fleet inspection was scheduled. Do you have any knowledge of what took place? In other words, how did the USS New Orleans prepare for that inspection?

Bowery: Well, after the overhaul in Bremerton, Washington, we pulled into Pearl Harbor, and we had a turbine to go out in one of the engine rooms. So while they were working on it, we moved all the ammunition from the 1.175 millimeter antiaircraft guns, which was forward and which I was assigned to as a pointer. We done some welding up there. So we were still being worked on so we were not in position to be in a fleet inspection.

Marcello: Generally speaking, in one of these fleet inspections, was it not true that most of the hatches and doors were open?

Bowery: Right. There's no reason to close them.

Marcello: Could you explain what you mean by that for the record?

Bowery: Well, we would come and go just like we do in a house. What I mean is, why lock the doors and everything? You just have to unlock them as you went through them, and being in port we felt safe. We didn't have any idea that we were going to be attacked. We had no warning whatsoever.

Marcello: Is it not true that during one of these fleet inspections the doors and hatches would remain open for the entire weekend?

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: And usually they were not closed until a Monday morning. Isn't that correct? Well, some of them would be closed anyhow. Quite obviously, all of them wouldn't be closed. That would have been very, very inconvenient if that had been the case.

Bowery: Right. We were not at war, so we had no reason to keep them covered.

Marcello: Which meant that in case of an attack, the watertight integrity **aboard those ships** left a lot to be desired. I'm sure this is especially true with regard to the battleships in particular.

Bowery: Right. We were wide open.

Marcello: It was also a pain, was it not, to open and close those dogs and what have you on those doors and hatches?

Bowery: Right. There were six or seven of them on there.

Marcello: In fact, I think there were eight of them on most of the doors, aren't there?

Bowery: I don't remember exactly, but approximately that.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned that you had the watch that night, and you were on duty from twelve o'clock midnight until four a.m. in the morning, and I assume that when you got off duty at four o'clock you hit the sack.

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: Okay, pick up the story from that point then.

Bowery: Well, at four o'clock I went and sacked out. Then I had to attend a color guard for the day, so I got up and ate breakfast at seven and put on full uniform and made the formation for the color guard, so I was on the aft part of the ship, stern of the ship, at ten minutes of eight.

Marcello: And what happened from that point?

Bowery: Well, we were standing there in parade position with our rifles. There was eight of us Marines plus the sergeant of the guard and the bugler, and then the boatswain's mate and another sailor raised the flag.

We were standing there in formation, and we heard the planes. We heard planes flying, and I turned and looked to my left, and I saw three planes come over Ford Island. I seen them drop their bombs. I made the remark, "I wonder what those guys are doing up so early and drilling?" And somebody says, "Yes, they're dropping sandbags." When the sandbags hit the hangers, we knew better then. As the sunlight hit the planes, well, we could see the rising sun on the side of them.

Marcello: You mentioned the bombs from these planes hit the hangers. I assume you're referring to the hangers at Hickam Field, which was next door to Pearl.

Bowery: No, they'd already hit Hickam. They'd already been at Hickam. Another group had already been there. This was Ford Island, a Naval Air Station, and they blew up the hangers there.

Marcello: Where was your cruiser in relation to the battleships?

Bowery: It was tied up next to a dock, next to the hammerhead crane. There was a destroyer tied in behind us, so they couldn't get into us. Only the dive bombers was the only thing that could get into us.

Marcello: In other words, the position of your cruiser was such that you could not be attacked effectively by torpedo-carrying planes.

Bowery: No, they couldn't get to us.

Marcello: So what happened when you saw these planes and you saw the bombs drop and you heard the explosions? What happened from that point?

Bowery: Well, we were just paralyzed, in other words. We didn't know. And then the torpedo planes come in over the sub base toward the battleships. The first wave come over and we were still in a paralyzed position. A motor launch was coming in loaded with approximately twenty-five sailors in their dress whites to the liberty landing, and a torpedo plane flew over our heads. They came in so close that the gunner was standing up, and he had his choice of us eight Marines there standing in line for him, or that motor launch, and he took the motor launch. I could have hit him with a baseball. He was that close.

Marcello: In other words, you could even see the face of the Japanese gunner.

Bowery: Right. He took the motor launch and just sort of blazed away. At the same time, I saw that silver fish swim out from the bottom of the plane, and men was falling over the side of the motor launch, and it was just a bloody mess.

Marcello: Now during this call of the colors ceremony on board the USS New Orleans, I would assume that all of the ship's crew did not have to attend it.

Bowery: No.

Marcello: In other words, it was just the color guard plus a couple of sailors.

Bowery: Right. That was all.

Marcello: Well, what happened from this point? You mentioned that the plane came in, and it was very, very close to you--so close that you could see the faces of the crew. The plane machine-gunned the motor launch, and at the same time they dropped this torpedo.

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: Now what happened from that point?

Bowery: Well, a torpedo hit the Oklahoma, and it went up in the air and seemed like it just jolted it in the air.

Marcello: In other words, it looked to you as though the Oklahoma actually came out of the water.

Bowery: Right. Raised it plum out of the water. By then we'd come to our senses that we were being attacked, and we was at war. So they run the flag on up without sounding colors.

Marcello: They did run the flag on up?

Bowery: Yes. Our bugler sounded general quarters. He sounded the first general quarters at Pearl Harbor. He lives here in Richardson, and I know him real well. We run down below decks waking everybody up and getting men for gun crews. I run to the Marine compartment and

set my rifle down and grabbed my helmet and headed for my antiaircraft position.

Just as I started out--I had to go up two ladders-- and just as I started out on deck, why, something told me to hold it just for a second. I grabbed the bulkhead with my hands like this (gesture) and held on. A Zero had come across and machine-gunned the deck. If I had run on out there, why, he would have cut me down, but something told me just to hold it for a minute, and guys just packed up against me at the back. If I had run on out there, why, he would have got me. Then after that, why, I went on up to my gun crew.

Marcello: Now by the time that you got up to your gun position, had the first attack already passed by, or was the first attack still going on?

Bowery: It was still going on.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do when you got to your first gun position?

Bowery: Well, in my gun position our ammunition. . .they had been doing some welding up there, and it was at the back, and so we all ran back to the back and started carrying two clips of ammunition, which had eight shells in each. We were carrying four and five. As I say, we had these new 1.175 millimeter antiaircraft guns on there which

was just. . .well, we adopted them from the British.

Marcello: These were 1.175 millimeter?

Bowery: Four barrels on each one, and we had two of them, and they were new to us. We had fired them at sea beforehand and knew how they worked. We got ammunition up there and started firing. The USS San Francisco was tied up just across the dock from us. They were stripped plum down. They didn't have any guns or anything to shoot, so their crew came over and joined us to help carry ammunition and everything.

Somebody got the word over on the San Francisco that we were getting underway. They started chopping our air lines and unplugging our electricity and everything from our ship, which was wrong. We was not going to get underway. So instead of running the ammunition up the hoist and everything like we would normally do with the electrical power, we had to do it by hand.

Our chaplain wrote this song, "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition."

Marcello: Was he aboard the USS New Orleans?

Bowery: Right. Chaplain Forgy. He was the one that wrote that song. He'd pat the men on the back, and. . . that's where he got the idea, I guess, for "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition."

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that you couldn't use the hydraulic system, I guess you would call it, to haul up the ammunition, and I assume that you're referring to the five and to eight-inch ammunition.

Bowery: Yes. We didn't use the eight-inch guns in the harbor there. See, that was strictly. . .they were in turrets, and that was for battles at sea, in other words, with other ships.

Marcello: But this was five-inch ammunition, probably.

Bowery: Five-inch twenty-five, and then the 1.175's. That was before the forty millimeter was adopted.

Marcello: Okay, so you got to your gun position, and did you then proceed to fore at the Japanese planes?

Bowery: Yes.

Marcello: Were there very many targets?

Bowery: Plenty.

Marcello: okay, describe the actual battle itself, the firing at these planes and so on.

Bowery: Well, one come in from across the Marine barracks, and I got a line on him, and he went down.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that your job was that of being a pointer. What exactly does a pointer do?

Bowery: Well, he's the one that elevates the gun and sights it.

Marcello: What sort of feeling came over this gun crew when they saw this Japanese plane going down?

Bowery: Well, there were so many of them in the air. One would just. . .one of three or four hundred planes in the air there at the time.

Marcello: But it must have done wonders for your morale to have shot down one of these planes.

Bowery: Yes, it did. Knowing that we were getting hits meant something to us, yes.

Marcello: How long would you estimate that the first attack took? Now I'm sure it must have seemed like hours to you, but of course, it wasn't hours.

Bowery: It seemed like two or three days (chuckle). Offhand, it didn't last but about. . .I'd say offhand just more or less an hour.

Marcello: Now during this first attack, what were some of the individual acts of bravery or anything else of an unusual nature that you saw take place?

Bowery: Well, I was concentrating on my gun crew, and as far as being a hero is concerned, nobody thought anything about it. As far as the medals were concerned, we knew nothing about them at that time. Before the war started, there was no such thing as giving medals and one thing and another. You just very seldom ever heard of it.

The captain of the Marine detachment pulled me off my gun because I had studied ordnance. A piece of shrapnel hit the number three barrel of the number two gun of the 1.175's and caused it to explode, and him and I replaced that barrel with that gun still firing with hot _____ falling on our arms and things.

Marcello: Now was this during the first attack, or was this during the second attack?

Bowery: No, this was during the first attack. And then he sent me below decks to get machine guns, .50 caliber machine guns, and set them up. We had them in the storeroom. We just set them up all over the decks everywhere and got them lined up and got them started and then turned them over to the man nearest to us, sailor or whoever it might be, and he fired it.

Marcello: I assume that in those pre-Pearl Harbor days that ships didn't have nearly as many antiaircraft pieces as they were to have later on during World War II.

Bowery: Right. They didn't have nearly the antiaircraft guns they later had.

Marcello: And as you mentioned then, sometime during that first attack or immediately thereafter, you were sent down to the storeroom, and the machine guns were broken out, and these were distributed among the various sailors.

Bowery: Right. We had them sitting up all over the deck, and I was carrying one machine gun forward to the number two turret to set it up, sailors was using rifles and everything else and laying there on the decks and underneath the turret shooting, and I drew up a machine gun, and one of those dive bombers crashed in beside us, and his bomb went off, and shrapnel went through the side of the ship and through the bulkhead of the ship. I seen it coming and I fell and hit the deck and lay flat. If I had been standing up, a piece of shrapnel would have went through me.

Marcello: Now the dive bomber did not crash into the ship, however, did it?

Bowery: No, it hit in the water. It did not hit us.

Marcello: Well, you might describe what. . .was this during the first attack again?

Bowery: Yes.

Marcello: All this took place in the first attack now. The gun mount had been hit by shrapnel, and you had replaced the barrel on it.

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: You had gone down in the storeroom to break out the machine guns, and now you were caught on deck when this dive bomber crashed.

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: Obviously, there must have been a great deal that happened during that one-hour period of time.

Bowery: Every gun was firing as hard as they could, and as soon as I got the last machine gun out, I went back to my position on my gun.

Marcello: Now was this after the dive bomber crashed?

Bowery: After the dive bomber crashed, I went back.

Marcello: Okay, well, describe a little bit more about this dive bomber crashing alongside the ship. I think this is a rather interesting story. It needs to be a part of the record.

Bowery: Well, he was shot down, and that's where he hit. He just come right down and. . .right in between us. He was just leaving a stream of smoke as he come down.

Marcello: You actually saw the plane plummeting out of the sky?

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: And when you saw what was happening, did you simply hit the deck and lay flat?

Bowery: I thought it was going to hit the ship, so I just did the only thing I could do. I was in the open, in other words. The only thing I could do was just fall flat, and if the plane had hit the ship, well, of course, I wouldn't be here talking to you now.

Marcello: So after the dive bomber crashed then, you mentioned that you got up and you went back to your original gun mount.

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: Okay, how much time elapsed between the first and second attack? Can you recall?

Bowery: No, I can't.

Marcello: Were you fairly well. . .

Bowery: It seems like it was constant to me. I don't know. It seemed like a continued thing, in other words.

Marcello: In other words, you couldn't distinguish between one attack and the next.

Bowery: The second wave, no.

Marcello: Did you seem to be perhaps a little better prepared when the second wave came in?

Bowery: Yes, we were more prepared, but we were still in a state of shock. We never had completely recovered.

Marcello: Well, what happened during the second attack? Describe it.

Bowery: Well, we were more ready for them. We had more ammunition and everything up there, and we did a lot more shooting. We shot down more planes and everything else. Of course, the whole harbor was on fire by then, just about. All the battleships and everything had already been torpedoed

and hit, and they were coming in, and one or two of our seaplanes tried to take off, and the Zeros came in and got them and so on. We didn't. . .one or two of our planes got off the water.

Marcello: I assume it must have been a rather sickening feeling when you saw those battleships being hit the way they were.

Bowery: Oh, yes, it was a sickening feeling, seeing fire all the way around them and everything, guys out there in the water splashing around and trying to get out from under it, and men trying to swim around with the fire and everything. I'll have to admit I was scared, but the training that I had, why, as our captain said, we took it faithfully and well.

Marcello: How many planes would you estimate that the New Orleans shot down during that period?

Bowery: I'd say four or five.

Marcello: Incidentally, this is something that I should have asked you before and didn't. What was the weather like on the morning of the attack?

Bowery: Perfect. Clear as everything.

Marcello: In other words, here again, things were favoring the Japanese on that particular day.

Bowery: Right.

- Marcello: Okay, so what happened now after the attack was over and the planes went away? What seemed to be the reaction or feeling among the men at that point?
- Bowery: We were all numb, just completely numb. Naturally, we sent boats and things that we could to battleships and things over there and tried to help out as much as we could. Of course, they did not leave any guns unmanned aboard ship.
- Marcello: In other words, probably when you sent out those launches to help the battleships, you probably still remained at the gun yet, since you were a part of the gun crew.
- Bowery: Yes, I stayed aboard. All day long we stood on them gun crews without any relief or anything else. We stayed right there. That night we were still. . .what we anticipated was that they were landing troops on the island, and we knew that if they did in any force whatsoever, they could take it, which they could have, because they'd done the damage. They could have taken the island if they would have went ahead and landed the troops.
- Marcello: I'm sure that within the aftermath of the attack there were all sorts of rumors floating around on board that ship and all over Pearl Harbor. What were some of the rumors that you heard?

Bowery: Well, that they were landing troops on the north side, and all of us Marines had our rifles and bayonets and everything ready to go out on land and fight from there if necessary.

Marcello: What actually did the Marines do that evening and, let's say, the next day, that is, December 8?

Bowery: We were still on the gun crew.

Marcello: You were still on the gun crew.

Bowery: That night about nine o'clock, well, the aircraft carrier Enterprise sent in two F-4F fighter planes, and they give us no warning that they was coming in, so we shot one of them down before he let us know. . . the other one let us know who he was before he tried to land, but we shot down one of our own planes.

Marcello: When you say we, was it your particular gun crew or one of the gun crews or several of the gun crews on the New Orleans?

Bowery: It could have been any number of gun crews (chuckle).

Marcello: You mean on any one of the many ships?

Bowery: The whole harbor. The whole harbor looked like the Fourth of July.

Marcello: I'm sure that it would be an understatement to say that all of the gun crews on all of the ships were trigger-happy that evening.

Bowery: We were very trigger-happy. We were ready to shoot at anything.

Marcello: Did you actually see this F-4F fall into the harbor?

Bowery: Yes. He went down. So we don't know who shot him down. We had no idea because. . .

Marcello: I guess nobody wants to take credit for that one, do they?

Bowery: No, they didn't want to take credit for it, but they didn't give us any warning. So as far as we was concerned, the Japanese was back and some more shooting was going to go on. But all the antiaircraft guns including the ones that were on the battleships was. . .they just settled to the bottom. Those above the water was shooting, too.

Marcello: That's interesting. I hadn't realized that. Even the gun crews aboard the sunken battleships were still firing.

Bowery: Right. There were several. Every gun above water, in other words, that had ammunition was still in action.

Marcello: Did you perchance witness any of the explosions or sinking of any of these ships during the attack? Now obviously, you were busy doing a great many things here.

Bowery: I was pretty busy. I saw several of them hit with

torpedoes, tossed out of the water and everything, and I believe that it was the USS Nevada that tried to get underway and got half-way out in the harbor. She was hit so badly that they beached her to keep her from blocking the harbor.

Marcello: Yes, that was the best thing that they could have done with the Nevada, that is, to have beached it because if that ship had been sunk in the harbor, it would have lost the whole harbor.

Bowery: Right.

Marcello: Did you perchance see the USS Shaw when it exploded?

Bowery: No.

Marcello: I've seen several of the pictures of the Shaw, and it seems to me that it was perhaps the most spectacular of all of the explosions that took place at Pearl.

Bowery: Well, at the time that it might have happened, I might have been doing something else. I don't know. In other words, I don't know whether I was on my gun or carrying up .50 caliber machine guns or what.

Marcello: What were the thoughts that ran through your mind when you were able to get your first good view of Pearl Harbor and the damage that the Japanese had done?

Bowery: Well, I thought, "Boy, they'd got us and have us where they want us." As I say, we anticipated them coming

in and making a landing and taking the island.

There was a story that several two-man submarines was in the harbor. We was also watching over the sides of the ship for them ramming into us and one thing and another. I think one or two did get through to us.

Marcello: A couple of them did get through, but I don't think they did any damage. They were all sunk, as I recall.

Bowery: Right. There was so much oil and debris and everything on the water that it was just. . .oily and debris and stuff all over the water. You couldn't see or anything anyhow.

Marcello: I gather that Pearl Harbor was a rather sickening sight. In fact, it did take several years before they actually cleaned up all the damage and so on.

Bowery: Right, yes.

Marcello: And even to this day, oil slicks still come out of the USS Arizona.

Bowery: Well, in 1971, I went over there for the Pearl Harbor Convention, my wife and I. We're going back in 1976. We flew over there and stayed eight days. We went aboard the Arizona. We took a tour of the harbor because she had never seen it and I had. We took the tour of the island, and when she got on the Arizona and saw the gun mounts and things where the tourists

had been sitting and the fresh air vents still above the water, why, she was ready to get off of it, knowing that there was over a thousand men still in there dead. I wanted to take pictures, which I have of the Marines at. . .about seventy-five Marines aboard that ship were killed. I wanted to see if there was any of them that I knew. That's why I took my camera and got as close as I could to the thing and took pictures of the names of the ones that went down with the ship.

Marcello: How close was the USS New Orleans to the battleships?

Bowery: I'd say about 200 yards.

Marcello: In other words, you had a pretty good view as to what the fate of those battleships actually was. You could view the action there fairly well.

Bowery: Yes, and torpedo planes kept coming in over at the sub base and hitting them broadside. They just kept coming and coming and coming. It looked like it would never stop. Every time one of them torpedoes would hit one of them battleships you could see it shake.

Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack what was your attitude toward Japanese now?

Bowery: Well, as far as answering that question is concerned, at that time I had no use for them. In other words, it was a sneaky deal in everything they said. After spending

thirty-seven months in the South Pacific fighting other battles and everything, it'd take me several years to get over it. I was very cautious about what I bought that was made in Japan and everything.