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Interview with
Carl Hatcher
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Oral History Collection

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Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Carl Hatcher for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 18, 1974, in Austin, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Hatcher in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was at Ford Island during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

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

Mr. Hatcher: I was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on November 5, 1921. I lived there a short period of time, and my family moved to Van Buren, Arkansas. From there, in 1926, we moved to Arizona, and I grew up and went to school in Arizona. In Douglas, Arizona, I had my elementary and intermediate and high school education.

Then in 1937, or '38 it was, I left there and went to the West Coast to the Oakland and Richmond, California, area and went to work for the Richmond Fisheries up there, which was the sardine industry. Then I decided to enlist in the Navy over at San Francisco. That was in 1939.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enlist in the Navy?

Hatcher: Well, one of the things in the business I was in there was . . . I was on a concrete ship, the SS Monitor, out of San Francisco Bay with the Richmond Fisheries. They were unionized under the Seafarers International Union of North America at this time, and, of course, then jobs were hard to come by, and if one of the older members decided to pay off under the table or had a good friend, they'd pull anybody off the ship and replace him. Well, this got a little disgusting after a time. I decided to look for a more permanent job I could depend on, and at that time, as you know, after the depression jobs were hard to come by, and salaries were something that just hardly wasn't there. At that time, though, they were paying us seventy-five cents an hour which was big wages.

So I went over to enlist in the Navy. When I got there I found out they had a long waiting list. Everybody,

it seemed like, wanted to get in the military service at that time because they had more future with it. So after a time I got called up for my physical and passed my physical. Then I had to get an affidavit because my birth in Oklahoma had never been recorded. I had to get affidavits of birth, and then they finally, through some old medical records of a doctor that had been deceased at that time, found that he had recorded the birth, but he had the wrong name on it. So I never could get a birth certificate. I had to get affidavits of birth which I still have, my original affidavits that I got at that time.

Marcello: I gather that the military services scrutinized all potential recruits fairly closely during this period. In other words, they weren't necessarily crying or hurting for men.

Hatcher: No, they weren't. Far from it, because they had such a waiting list that some of them were waiting eight and nine months to get into the military services off of a waiting list. That's how good of a selection they had.

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

Hatcher: Well, first I could remember back when we were living in Van Buren, Arkansas, I had an uncle, my dad's younger

brother, that was in the Navy, and he'd just come back from service off of the Blackhawk, an old coal-burning ship in the China Asiatic Fleet, and he sat down and talked with me for a long time. I was just a little fellow then, just about ready to start to school. It was such an impression that it never left me. I decided I'd give it a try some day. Of course, the unions helped me make up my mind real quick (chuckle). I was eighteen at the time when I enlisted in the Navy.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Hatcher: At San Diego.

Marcello: At the time that you entered the Navy, did you have any idea that the country would within a short period of time be entering in to some sort of a conflict or war?

Hatcher: Well, I felt that due to the unrest in the world and the situation that there was a good possibility of it. I'd even sat down and written my mother a letter and told her about it, that in the event that I was under twenty-one years of age--at that time we had to have the consent of the parents--that in case the recruiters or representatives of the Navy Department came around that she wouldn't be surprised. I felt that due to the unrest . . . I felt that I would have the advantage of going into the military service at that time, that is, to have the training and the advanced knowledge and

the experience in the event of an uprising or situation.

Marcello: At that time, however, when you thought of a possibility of war, were your eyes turned basically toward Europe rather than the Far East?

Hatcher: I hadn't really given it too much thought because, of course, at that time Hitler was coming up and getting real strong and taking over the country, and this was true that there was more eyes toward there than there was toward the Japanese. That's why I feel today that they still say that the Japanese pulled a backdoor attack on us. They knew that the people weren't looking toward them. This is where the actual element of surprise came in.

Marcello: Did you go directly from San Diego over to the Hawaiian Islands?

Hatcher: No, after I completed boot camp, I went to North Island at San Diego and went through the aviation machinist's mate school, the basic school for aviation machinist's mate. Then I went aboard a tanker, the USS Platt. It was an oil tanker. It was taken over . . . it was originally built for, I think, the Standard Oil Company, and it was taken over by the government. Then after that I was transferred to the USS Northampton, a heavy cruiser, 10,000 ton class, 1929 class cruiser. We were

the flagship for the commander of Cruiser Division 5 at that time, who was Admiral Taffinger, and Captain W. D. Chandler. It turned out that it was excellent duty aboard this ship. I was assigned to the "V" Division, which was the aviation division down there. We carried four biplanes--the SOC-1's. We used catapults fired by a fifty-pound charge of black powder to get them airborne at sea. The ship, being the flagship, was more lax than the other ships in our division because with the admiral and the captain on there all the time, we grew to more or less accept them. The other ships, such as the Pensacola, some of them that would come in alongside of us, they would always have to be in uniform of the day, where we would be up there relaxed in dungarees doing our work. They'd have to be in the uniform of the day--whites at Pearl Harbor. We really enjoyed it. Another thing, I think, that helped it is the fact that the captain and the admiral on that ship were brothers-in-law, which was unusual, and we seemed to get better assignments when it came along for the ship. The Salt Lake City was also one of the ships in our cruiser division.

Marcello: How many ships were normally in one of these cruiser divisions?

Hatcher: We had four cruisers in this cruiser division. On July 4, 1941, we were called out--us and the Salt Lake City--we were called out, and we were told that we were put to sea on the 4th of July, which we thought was unusual since it was a national holiday. We left out about four p.m. that afternoon on the 4th of July, 1941, and cruised all night. The following morning we picked up a ship, a Dutch freighter, the Jaegersfontein. It had the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina aboard, we found out later after we put a crew aboard. We had to put our quartermaster and an officer over there and a boatswain's mate to help them with the navigation and also a signalman to relay messages back and forth from the ships. And it was us and the Salt Lake City convoying the Jaegersfontein. We were then immediately told to take off target ammunition and store it and bring live ready ammunition to topside. This was on the morning of the 5th of July, 1941. Her decks and holds were loaded with Lend-Lease materials going to Holland, and it was unusual that they'd have all of this material and the Dutch queen, also, on a freighter. She wasn't a steamship. She was a motorship capable of six knots. And, of course, that hurt us because we were normally around eighteen knots, and we just sat out there and kept patrolling circles around her every morning on

this cruise that we were on. It was just, more or less, a goodwill tour, they classified it as, which we knew better.

At daylight, the first dawn, we had to catapult two aircraft into the air from each ship to patrol the sectors, the outlying sectors. Of course, between the planes and the ships at that time we had no radio communications. The planes would fly over and drop a message onto the ship. If we had a radioman . . . at that time we had no aviation radiomen; they were general service radiomen. They were capable of either using the blinker back to the ship and . . . this was the sole communication between the aircraft in the air and the ships.

Marcello: How far did you convoy this Dutch ship?

Hatcher: We convoyed this Dutch ship through the Straits of Torres on the Northern coast of Australia. Then we were met by a British escort there that took over the ship, the Jaegersfontein, and then our people that was aboard the Jaegersfontein came back aboard our ship, and then we turned and went to Brisbane, Australia. Brisbane is not on the coast of Australia. It's up the river. So both the Salt Lake City and us steamed up the river to Brisbane, and we tied up at the New Farm Wharf in Brisbane, Australia, and that was near the Plume Bridge that crossed over the river right there in the heart of town. Of

course, we went down there to re-provision the ship and to take on fresh provisions and also fuel. We were there two weeks. Of course, at that time, they told us we were the first American ships that had been into Brisbane, Australia, in over twenty years--warships.

Of course, you couldn't pay for nothing. The town was wide open. We was supposed to have had one in four watches, but there was never enough people aboard to man because the wharf was the same level as the main deck of the ship, and people could jump over the lifeline and go ashore. I guess the officer of the deck at times was beside himself trying to figure out what he would do in case anything came up. But the skippers of the ship, seeing that we had been at sea for quite awhile, didn't seem to be really too concerned over it because there was enough people available that they could have gotten on a moment's notice not too far from the ship. At the time when we left there, there were so many people, I guess, that had such a good time that they . . . some of them didn't make it back. There were still boats coming down the river trying to catch the ship with people aboard, you know, to get them back aboard and all of this. There were six people from our ship that didn't make it back at all. They flew them back and they met us in Honolulu when we got back to

Honolulu. But on the way back, after we left Brisbane, Australia, we went to Rabaul. No, let's see, first we went to . . . let's see, we went to Rabaul, and then we went to New Guinea, and then we headed back for Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: In other words, you were cruising around down there in the South Pacific for some time before you went back to Pearl.

Hatcher: This is true and all this time we were carrying live ready ammunition topside by our 5.38 dual-purpose guns.

Marcello: Did you ever find out what your purpose was in being down in that particular neck of the woods, other than escorting that Dutch vessel?

Hatcher: We never did find out definitely. I have a cruise pamphlet at home on this that was put out by the ship, and they called it a goodwill tour. I feel that the primary mission was a convoy duty and that the rest of the trip and the ports that we went to--like into Port Moresby, British New Guinea, and over to Rabaul, New Britain--was strictly a cover-up for the convoy duty because we know for a fact that at that time there was a lot of Japanese in those areas. We know that now. At that time we didn't realize it, especially around New Britain. I feel that those ports of visit were strictly a cover-up for the actual convoy duty.

Marcello: Did you engage in any sort of maneuvers during any of this sailing around?

Hatcher: No, actually, with the two ships there, the heavy cruisers, we had to stay fairly close within sight of the convoy that we were making there, so we just more or less kept circling to keep our speed down because we couldn't slow down like they were, at six knots. They were a motorship.

Marcello: When did you finally get back to Pearl Harbor?

Hatcher: It was August 21, 1941.

Marcello: At that time, how would you rate or describe the readiness of the crew aboard the Northampton?

Hatcher: Well, at all times when we were at sea we were always having general quarters, training missions. When I was first aboard the ship, my look-out station during battle conditions, or general quarters, was in the forward conning tower, and from up in the forward conning tower you've got a good view. You're around eighty-some feet above sea level there. Then later on, they took crews out of each division and formed gun crews out of them. Then I was assigned on the flight deck which was also in our general quarters station because we could catapult our planes off, and as soon as we got our planes catapulted off then we'd man a 5.38 dual-purpose

antiaircraft and surfact gun. Of course, we all trained for each other's positions, such as pointer, setter, gun captain, hot shellman, loader one, loader two. All of these different positions we trained for so that in the event of an actual attack and any one man was injured, another man could step right in without question. He knew the job.

Marcello: In other words, you are saying in effect that this was a highly trained crew at the time of Pearl Harbor attack.

Hatcher: It was. We also had a Marine division aboard with a captain by the name of Jorgenson, and, of course, he was, again, in the Marine Corps and a captain at that time, which, promotions for all personnel and officers was . . . they were few and far between. And I'd estimate that he had many years of service behind him even as a captain at that time. He had a scar on his right cheek that came all the way down to his chin, and I always kind of thought that it might have been a saber cut. That's the way it looked. I never did ask him or talk to him. But we had a landing force made up even a couple of years before the attack, there of Marines and sailors aboard the ship, and he would take them out and make actual landings. When we'd be in Pearl Harbor, they'd take a motor launch from the ship and, say, take fifty or sixty men that was in this landing force and

go down to the beaches down the island and make actual landings under battle conditions. This was his responsibility to train this landing force, and I feel he did an excellent job. Also, when we were at sea he would have them to rig out the boom, our hoist, where we retrieved our aircraft, and he'd have a knotted line over that. Every morning the entire Marine company of 5th Division of the Northampton plus all of the landing party had to climb down that line over the top of the boom and back down before they could have breakfast, and he checked them off. He was the first one over, and he took the list and he checked everyone else off. If they didn't get it, they didn't get breakfast. So I feel that we were always constantly training.

Marcello: In terms of morale how would you describe it aboard the Northampton during this period?

Hatcher: I would say that the Northampton's morale was extremely high.

Marcello: How do you explain the high morale?

Hatcher: Well, I'd explain the high morale on that ship especially . . . a lot of people said, "Well, your ship is lax." I don't feel that it was lax because . . . this proved to be true later on after the war broke out, even though I wasn't aboard it during the actual time of the war,

and especially when she was sunk. But they only lost somewhere around seventy men out of 1,100, and those were all below decks on their actual jobs. So I feel that they had good morale because we had very few people that ever got involved in town. We had cases of them, you know, people that would get drunk and get out of line in different places. Of course, they would be diciplined aboard the ship.

Marcello: You've also mentioned that . . . well, from what you said you were constantly doing something aboard that ship.

Hatcher: This is true. There was never a lax moment, really.

Marcello: In other words, there was no way that one was going to get bored. Boredom can many times lead to morale problems.

Hatcher: This is true. When you have boredom you have people that have nothing to do, and they get around and they have too much time on their hands, and they do a lot of thinking. Usually it's an adverse condition. As long as you've got an active crew, you've got a happy crew.

Marcello: And we're talking about volunteers, also. These were not draftees. They were in the Navy, supposedly, because they wanted to be there.

Hatcher: This is true, and at that time when I first went aboard the ship, we had 580 men and officers on a heavy cruiser

which . . . of course, we had the old cafe-style dining halls in there where the mess cook brought the food and put it on the table for you. There were no cafeteria styles at that time. Then during February of 1941, we had to come back to the States to go to Mare Island for a ship conversion and have our ship updated and modified. At this time they took out all of the regular mess halls that we had enjoyed. They put in berthing compartments. Before we went in we were sleeping in hammocks. They put in bunks. They put them four and five high in a compartment there that actually shouldn't have been anymore than three high, and you had to kind of slide in sideways. You couldn't hardly roll over because they were so close together. Then they went into the cafeteria-style feeding because then they increased our complement from 580 men to something like 1,120.

Marcello: This brings up a very interesting point. Now at 1,120 men was this . . . did this still represent a full complement aboard that ship?

Hatcher: At that time it was supposed to have been our full complement, including the additional guns they had mounted on the ship. See, we went into the pom-pom nests which were water-cooled guns. They modified our main batteries which was triple turrets of eight-inch mounts, and then our secondary batteries which was the

5.38 guns. They changed around stores, our provisioning on the ship. Our magazines were modified so we could get the ammunition elevators more readily to the topside.

Marcello: When did all of this take place now?

Hatcher: This took place in February of 1941 at Mare Island.

Marcello: Okay, this was before you had escorted the Dutch freighter and before you had been moving around down in Southeast Asia and had finally gotten back to Pearl Harbor.

Hatcher: This is true.

Marcello: That ship was outfitted for war by December of 1941.

Hatcher: This is true. And they changed the color. Prior to the war we had an old blue color on the ships, a dull blue, and then they put a lighter color on with the wake on the bow, and this was also an indication that they were expecting something because at sea at a distance it was hard to see the ship, and you couldn't judge the speed through this false wake that was painted on the bow of the ship.

Marcello: From the way that you describe the ship and speak about it, I gather that you were quite proud of it, and this is an indication, I think, of the morale that was present aboard that ship.

Hatcher: This is true.

Marcello: You apparently have fond memories from your tour on the Northampton.

Hatcher: Yes, and I think that you'll find that most everybody --if you ever talk to anybody else--had the same feelings toward her. We had a real close-knit crew throughout the ship.

Marcello: Now when you got back to Pearl Harbor after this jaunt down through the South Pacific, what sort of maneuvers and exercises and alerts did your ship undertake?

Hatcher: Well, at this time, when we got back, we found out they were forming task forces at this time. And that we were going to be . . . we were joined in with Task Force 17, of which the Enterprise carried the admiral over there. Then we had some destroyers and battleships also assigned to our task force. We'd usually leave out to sea either Sunday evening or Monday morning, and we'd spend all week at sea training and working as a task force unit. We'd go out on our gunnery. We always got the award . . . the excellence award, which was the "Big E" award, for our gunnery on our different batteries because the people there took pride in their jobs, and they put out every effort that they possibly could. And some of them . . . I know people that was actually so sick they should have been in the dispensary that would still go up there

when it come time for gunnery practice. They felt that they had to be there.

Marcello: I gather that from what you've said these maneuvers and exercises were a weekly occurrence, and you were out for a week at a time. Perhaps you came on a Friday, had the weekend off, or at least a port and starboard liberty on the weekend, and then Sunday or Monday you went out again.

Hatcher: Well, this is true to a point. Normally, we didn't have just a weekend off though. Nobody had the full weekend off. Every Saturday morning without fail, whether we were at sea or whether we were in port, we had an inspection, captain's inspection. And all . . . that was all hands. There was no exceptions to it, and any of them that didn't pass the inspection or that had any discrepancies against them, they could forget the weekend. They were assigned to duty for the complete weekend with the duty section.

Marcello: Now was this an inspection of both the personnel and the ship itself?

Hatcher: We had a . . . normally, our ship's inspection was every Friday. We cleaned ship and had the preparations made for the compartment inspections every Friday. The personnel inspection was every Saturday morning.

Marcello: I would assume that after the personnel inspection was over some members of the crew had liberty on Saturday.

Hatcher: The liberties after the inspection . . . of course, we run port and starboard liberties in port so that we had at least 50 per cent of the crew aboard at all times during this . . . back in '39 President Roosevelt had declared, more or less, an emergency situation for the fleet and all the military, and as a result of this, very rarely did we ever have four-section liberty. Even though we carried four sections for duty purposes aboard the ship, we had port and starboard with a primary duty section and a stand-by duty section at all times, but, of course, this was always supplemented in addition to this by people that failed their personnel inspection on Saturday. They could look forward to working that weekend. They were assigned to the duty section, not the standby section. As a result of this, the people that really wanted liberty put a little more effort forward and put out a good personnel inspection, which we had very few people who ever had to stay and work aboard ship.

Marcello: Normally speaking, I would assume that most of the officer personnel had liberty for the full weekend.

Hatcher: Not at all.

Marcello: Is that right?

Hatcher: Not at all. The officers also stood their duties watching watch right aboard. Even the "V" Division, the aviation officers, of which we had five aboard . . . a senior aviator, which was a lieutenant junior grade, Michael Reeves, who later became an admiral . . . but he was a lieutenant junior grade, and at that time he had been out of the Academy over nine years and was still a lieutenant junior grade. So that kind of shows you just about how the promotions were at that time. And his father was an admiral called "Blackjack" Reeves, nicknamed "Blackjack" Reeves. So even with this as a background, promotions still were hard to come by.

Marcello: How about your skipper? I assume that he usually was ashore on the weekend.

Hatcher: No, he was . . . between him and the executive officer, they managed to have one aboard at all times--aboard the ship. Either the executive officer or the skipper was always aboard.

Marcello: Now we were on the subject of inspections, both personnel and ship inspections, and I would assume that during these inspections--and probably during the whole time that you were in port--that the watertight integrity aboard that ship was at a minimum.

Hatcher: This is true. When you're in port, you had more of relaxed conditions because you feel that you're in a

protected area and you don't expect to need your watertight integrity near as much as you do when you're at sea. So as a result there is a relaxed condition when you are in port.

Marcello: And I would assume that the doors and hatches are kept open, perhaps, for the whole weekend while you were in.

Hatcher: This is true. Very few of them would ever be dogged down and secured anywhere throughout the ship.

Marcello: Quite obviously, that made movement much more easy, and it helped to air out the ship a little bit, perhaps, and at the same time it was really a pain to dog down all those hatches and what have you all the time anyhow.

Hatcher: This is true because at that time they had . . . they didn't have the convenience of dogging them down. You had . . . it must have been at least eight dogs around the hatch to secure them down. Nowadays, most of them just have a single wheel in the middle where they can dog them down with a turn of the wheel, and it's geared for reduction purposes or to make it quick.

Marcello: Where were you normally anchored when you were at Pearl?

Hatcher: We usually tied up off of Aiea Landing at Cast 4. That's also in the area where they finally built the Tripler General Hospital up at Aiea. It was named after an Army general. It's a tri-service hospital for the Air Force, Army, Marines, Coast Guard, Navy, all of them. And of course, they had . . . after they built the

the Tripler General Hospital, they had a medical staff from various services to staff it.

Marcello: Normally speaking, did all of the cruisers tie up in the same general location?

Hatcher: No, they didn't. Some of the cruisers . . . we had . . . like the Trenton, they usually tied up off the end of Ford Island on the far end of the island down there near where the hospital ship Solace tied up. And they were tied up in that general vicinity and then you had the Quincy, the Vincennes, and the Astoria, which were the 1934 class cruisers that tied up over toward the Navy yard more. And in the same locality you usually had the Indianapolis, which was a 1929 class cruiser. She had a cruiser division, also, that tied up up in that general area, too. They were dispersed throughout the harbor.

Marcello: Generally speaking, where were you in relation to Battleship Row?

Hatcher: The Northampton was across the harbor between the submarine base and Aiea Landing from Battleship Row, but we could stand on our deck and see the entire Battleship Row.

Marcello: Approximately how far in terms of distance were you from Battleship Row?

Hatcher: Oh, I would say that it was less than a quarter of a mile.

Marcello: In other words, you had a pretty good view of what was going on over there?

Hatcher: This is true, even though at the time of the attack I wasn't aboard the ship. I had left the ship in the middle of November of '41 and was transferred to Ford Island to the A and R Department, which was the assembly and repair of aircraft. They came through the fleet, especially through the cruiser division, and just about wiped them out of all of their experience and their rates--third and second class petty officers, of which I was a second class petty officer at that time--and took them over there because they were enlarging the A and R Department. They were building it up. Whether this was due to expectations of what was going to happen or not is not known by me, anyway. But they had some reason why they were enlarging the complement there. I know they were getting more aircraft all the time, so they were increasing the complement. They just about wiped us out on my ship, I know--all of our qualified petty officers except maybe one first class petty officer and one second class petty officer and the non-rated people. The seamen . . . of course, at that we didn't have the airman's rate. They were seamen whether they came through from trade school or whether they came out of deck force. They took them from both places because they were having trouble getting

enough personnel into aviation in those years from the schools. So I was transferred over about the middle of November to Ford Island and was assigned to the assembly section of the Assembly and Repair Department. I wasn't in the shops themselves. I was in the assembly section where we accumulated all the parts and assembled the aircraft and rigged them out there.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how did your routine vary after you were transferred from the Northampton over to Ford Island itself?

Hatcher: I found that as far as Ford Island was concerned it was more relaxed than the ships were. Usually, we were working hand-in-hand with some civilians. The civilian population in the assembly and repair was a minority at that time, not as it is today. It's a majority today, and very few military personnel work in around in your overhaul departments for aircraft now. They were on a five-day schedule, five work days, and, of course, we worked pretty much the same hours that they did, except we caught military duties at night. We were standing one and four watches, and we would either catch petty officer of the watch or we would catch . . . some of our people would have posts in the hangars or on the ramps and in different areas around the department. I thought it was quite a relief to get into an activity like that

where you weren't under the pressure. You didn't realize you was under pressure at the time, but when you get over there and everybody seems so relaxed . . . you've got the big mess hall there to go to. It probably covered half of the ship, the space that we had allotted there.

Marcello: What sort of liberty did you usually get while you were here at Ford Island?

Hatcher: We had liberty three out of four.

Marcello: How would this stack up on the weekend? In other words, in a month's time how many weekends might you get off--complete weekends?

Hatcher: You'd have approximately three weekends out of the month off.

Marcello: In other words, you could perhaps leave on a Friday evening or Saturday morning and be off until Monday morning?

Hatcher: Well, they also had their personnel inspections at Ford Island on Saturday mornings. This was more or less following a standing procedure throughout the entire Navy at that time--to have inspections on Saturday morning.

Marcello: About how many people might there be in your division?

Hatcher: Well, there might be . . . in my duty section? We probably had as many as eighty people in our section there because each department had its own duty sections, and approximately eighty we had. Of course, on December 6,

our section had the duty the night of December 6, and we'd been relieved that morning. We were up in the barracks changing our clothes and taking showers. In fact, when the first bomb hit I was in the shower.

Marcello: We'll talk about that in a minute. That's getting just a little bit ahead of the story. But here again, the question I want to ask is, normally speaking, on a weekend at Ford Island, what percentage of the complement might be ashore?

Hatcher: Well, for the full weekend I would say probably 30 per cent would be ashore. Now a lot of them would go ashore for liberty for a short time, two or three or four hours, and then they would return because it was cheaper for them in those days to come back aboard and sleep than it was to try to get them a place in town because they didn't make that type of money. But you started off in the Navy making \$21 dollars a month, or any military service at that time--it was all of \$21 a month--and then you went from the \$21 to \$36 a month and to \$54 a month and then \$72 a month. And that was about average pay. So you kind of looked after your money because if you had an insurance allotment out--taking out an insurance policy, which I did--it was costing you \$8.65 a month. Then your other incidentals that you needed didn't really leave you a whole lot of money over a month's time for spending.

Marcello: So normally speaking, then, there always was at least a skeleton crew in your particular section even on a weekend.

Hatcher: This is true. This is true. A lot of them wouldn't have . . . they knew they had the liberty when they wanted it on their off times, but a majority of them would rather stay aboard, read, or go over and work out in the gym.

Marcello: When did you usually pick up duty? Was it in the evenings for watches and things of this nature?

Hatcher: No, our watches . . . our duty section ran around the clock, and we had people available, say, from eight o'clock till eight o'clock. Even though a lot of times we would be relieved as much as a half hour early or so, but still our duties were from eight to eight. If we had the duty . . . we knew the day we had the duty . . . even though we were working during the week a normal eight hours, we still were in the duty section, and we had muster that morning with our duty section and then go on to work, and then that afternoon at 1600 we would also muster again. Then, of course, the watch lists were all posted at that time so people definitely knew then. Then again at 1800 we had a muster, and then at 2200, just about time to turn in, we also had a last muster at night.

Marcello: But three out of four weekends in the month you normally wouldn't have any duty. Is this correct?

Hatcher: This is true.

Marcello: Things were rotated in such a way that you did not have duty at all during the weekend, and theoretically you did not have to be on that base at all during that weekend.

Hatcher: This is true. You didn't have to be aboard at all because actually we only stood duties within our own department, the A and R Department. We did not stand the air station duties at all because on the air station they had a section called the seaman guard. This was primarily their function to stand all the military duties for the air station itself.

Marcello: Getting back to the subject of liberty once again, or keeping on the subject of liberty once again, when you were aboard the Northampton and you were receiving the port and starboard liberties after being at sea for a week, what type of recreation did most of the crew engage in when they got ashore?

Hatcher: Well, most of them . . . the first place they would head for would be a bar where they could sit and gather and drink.

Marcello: On Hotel Street probably.

Hatcher: Well, Hotel of Beretania. Some of them would go out as far as Waikiki area there. They'd go out to dinner, maybe to Trader Vic's or _____, a Chinese restaurant. Then some of them like to go over to the windward side of the island--to the Kaneohe Bay side--to some of the smaller towns over there, and they'd visit. They had good friends. You know, after you've been out there a short time, it didn't take long at that time to start making friends.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what was the condition of a lot of the crew members when they came back aboard that ship after one of their liberties?

Hatcher: Well, now we had a certain percentage that, regardless whether they had been ashore one hour or four hours, they all would come back flat on their face, but that was usually a small percentage of them because most of them had a lot of activities that they took part in. They'd go to the beaches for surfing, swimming, such as this. Or they'd go out and meet families, and they'd be invited to the homes--spend the weekend there. They had better control of themselves than just the average guy that would run up and down the streets all hours of the night.

Marcello: Generally speaking, however, is it safe to assume that even those who perhaps returned to the ship drunk after

liberty were normally young enough and had done this enough times to the effect that they were usually ready to fight the next day, perhaps, if the situation arose.

Hatcher: Oh, I would say that probably the next morning all hands aboard ship was able.

Marcello: I think this is an interesting observation, and it's certainly one that we need to get into the record.

Hatcher: Because back then the situation--I don't know--seemed to be so much different than it is today. I think today there's more put-on with it than there is actual intoxication. I think that there's something lacking today, where people have to try to make such an impression. They couldn't care . . . they could care less what people thought about things.

Marcello: Awhile ago you were talking about the civilian workmen who worked over at Ford Island. Were there many people of Japanese ancestry who were among these workmen over on Ford Island?

Hatcher: I would say that there was a percentage of them that were. In fact, I knew one fellow there real well that was a civilian there, that was married to a Japanese woman. Of course, just about the time that the attack was coming closer or just afterwards--I forgot now which it was--they separated, for what reasons I don't know. I never did inquire because I felt that was

personal business and it was none of mine, although I liked he and his wife both. They were real nice people, and I had been invited to their home several times. I'd always enjoyed my stay with them.

Marcello: Did you and any of your buddies ever discuss the possibility of any of these Japanese committing sabotage because there was a high percentage of Japanese ancestry on the Hawaiian Islands?

Hatcher: Well, prior to the attack, we didn't give it much thought because we felt that these people were all friends and were doing this because they enjoyed the company of the people that they were inviting out to their homes. I imagine that they gathered a lot of information this way with just general discussions going on that wasn't even realized at that time from different people.

Marcello: When you thought of the Japanese, did you think that they had the capabilities of pulling off what they ultimately did pull off?

Hatcher: No, I never thought that they could have done it.

Marcello: When you thought of the typical Japanese, what was the sort of individual that usually came to mind?

Hatcher: Well, having spent time out there in the islands prior to the war, you got accustomed to the different people-- the different races there--and you really didn't separate

the races out as such because you had your Hawaiians, you had Chinese, you had Japanese. And the Japanese did make up a big part of the population there. You more or less just accepted all of this as general because it was all mixed with the races there.

Marcello: This brings us more or less, I think, up to the actual attack itself. So what I want you to do now is to describe as best you can your routine on Saturday, December 6, 1941, and then from there we'll go into the actual Sunday and the Japanese attack itself. But let's start with Saturday, December 6, 1941.

Hatcher: On Saturday, of course, we had the duty on Saturday, and at that time we were dogging the watch. At that time we were dogging the watch which . . . our duty section and our standby section which split the watch on the weekends. The duty sections had the Saturday duty at eight o'clock in the morning, and, of course, I was petty officer of the watch that day. Everything went normal throughout the day on Saturday. Then on Sunday morning. . .

Marcello: What time did you turn in on Saturday night?

Hatcher: I went to bed, oh, I guess about eleven o'clock Saturday night.

Marcello: And you had been on base just about all day on Saturday.

Hatcher: Oh, we had been. Our duty section had been. Then the standby section in our watch took over Sunday morning. They relieved us a little after 7:00 on Sunday morning. It was a little earlier than usual, so that relieved us and we went up to the barracks to turn in and clean up or sleep or whatever we wanted to do.

Marcello: Sunday was generally a day of rest and relaxation, was it not, for everybody?

Hatcher: Generally so. Generally so. I was planning on going into town after going to church services. I was in the process of taking a shower when I heard the first explosion. So you could say I was caught with my pants down and off (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, describe what happened from this point. Here you were taking a shower on Sunday morning and you heard explosions. What were your first thoughts when you heard the explosion?

Hatcher: Well, first thing, I couldn't understand what it was, and there was no windows or anything in the area where I was showering, so I grabbed my towel and ran out into the dormitory part where our bunks were and looked out the window. Just about that time, I saw a plane circling, and I felt if I'd even had a .22 . . . at first I didn't know what it was, but I saw the rising sun, and then I knew it wasn't one of our planes.

Marcello: Were your first thoughts that it was some crazy Army planes on maneuvers or something?

Hatcher: Well, it was hard to say just what the first thought was because of the location where I was and the blind spot that I was in, but I knew there was an explosion, and I don't know just exactly whether the ammo dump had blown up or whether something had gone off because we had been handling live ammunition and bombs down on the end there. But when I ran out and looked out that window and saw that plane circling around the buildings by the runway there, I saw the rising sun, and I knew exactly it wasn't our plane. I couldn't identify the plane at first, but I knew it wasn't ours. When I saw the rising sun, I knew it was the Japanese plane. I didn't know whether a Jap carrier had come in there or what.

So I grabbed my pants and shirt and shoes and was putting them on as I was running out the building because by that time there was other explosions happening. I went out the other side, and then I could see the ships--the battleships--and there was smoke coming out of them and everything.

So I ran over to get a gun, and there was no guns available. They were all stored and packed in cosmoline--all the rifles were--so then we ran down to the hangar

on the end of the island there, the Kingfisher repair unit which was near the PBY's, and they got the .50 caliber machine guns out of the planes, and we put them in vices . . . clamped them in vices on these portable work benches and pushed them out onto the ramp. It took two men to hold the work bench while one was trying to fire the gun and then run all over the ramp trying to keep up with it there. At that time, when we were right there by the Kingfisher repair unit, there was a 500-pound bomb come right into the hangar and buried into the concrete and didn't explode. It just laid there.

Marcello: How far were you from this bomb when it fell?

Hatcher: I guess I was about 200 feet at that time because I was outside on the ramp. But then we grabbed one of these portable A-frames that we'd been using to change engines with down there, and we wheeled it into the hangar and hooked onto it and pushed the A-frame and all right over the sea wall with the bomb in it to get it away from there because it was a delayed action. We got it out of the hangar.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how would you describe the reaction of the men during this initial phase of the attack? Panic? Confusion? Perplexity? Professionalism? How would you describe the reaction of the men?

Hatcher: Well, at that time there was so much going on that you didn't have too many feelings. You didn't stop and give

much thought to what was going on because you'd holler at somebody, and you had more people around you to help you than you knew what to do with. There were so many people that had never had shipboard duty and hadn't had the training that I'd had that I felt that by getting something going it was helping them because some of them just seemed to be lost. They just stood there and wanted to look up. They didn't know what to do. It was a surprise. Of course, everytime I hollered, well, I had all the help I wanted down there in the area where I was at.

Marcello: What were you personally doing?

Hatcher: I personally was down . . . I went . . . just like I said, I went and tried to draw a rifle because I could have shot down planes with a rifle if I'd had one in my hands--they were that low--but since they were all in cosmoline, I just said, "Well, hell, it's going to take me two or three hours to get one of those things ready to fire." So I knew the planes down there . . . we had the guns in the planes, so we got .50 calibers out and started mounting them in the vices on the work bench, and we wheeled them out of the hangar. And that's where I was--down there on the ramp there at that time. And then they bombed the big hangar right

over there where the PBY's were and set all of those planes on fire with strafing, and the PBY's were burning.

Marcello: What did it feel like to be under this particular attack and with all of these bombs falling? Did you have time to think about it?

Hatcher: I didn't even think while it was going on, really. Afterwards is when the effects came on because I feel that when you've got all of this going on that you're so busy that you don't stop and think.

Marcello: What particular acts of bravery did you witness at this time? Now it seems to me that it took some guts to go in there and use that A-frame and get that bomb out of there.

Hatcher: This is true but we didn't consider it acts of bravery at that time. It was a necessity that had to be done. And also there was a small tanker, a harbor craft oiler, that was down at the fuel docks right down below the Battleship Row. We could see it down there, and somebody had taken an ax and cut it loose to get it away from the fuel docks in case of an explosion there. I later learned that it was a first class petty officer down there in that fuel section by the name of Thatcher that did this. Of course, he received the Navy Cross for his actions down there, I understand, later. There was many things that I felt that went on out there that

went unrecognized. People, I don't feel, were really looking for the recognition. They had a job to perform, and they were doing it.

Marcello: Can you think of any of these little things that you think ought to be a part of the record?

Hatcher: Well, not offhand there. It's been so many years now, and it would be kind of hard to recall because when after the attack was over, you know, we were going out on launches, and, of course, the harbor was on fire, and we were trying to pick up people that were in the water out there. Some of them were burnt awful. They had big blisters, and their eyes were completely closed with blisters on their head. Their arms were burnt from trying to swim through the fire. I remember one fellow, especially, trying to fight his way through the fire, and we reached over the side and grabbed him by his arm, and the meat and all just slid right off the bone into our hands. We got him aboard, and, of course, over at Ford Island they'd converted the mess hall and the dining tables, and they brought all the mattresses and bedding and everything. They just stripped the bunks up topside. All the doctors came in that they had available. The corpsmen and other people were using the mess hall to bring all of the injured in that they could--even from the ships--from the Oklahoma

and the Arizona and all of these.

Marcello: So in the aftermath of the attack, then, you were engaged in rescue work and things of this nature.

Hatcher: This is true.

Marcello: Were you given orders to do this, or again was this simply one of those professional things that you and your group decided had to be done?

Hatcher: No, what they did, they passed the word that they were going to send launches and whale boats out and start doing rescue work around the harbor and everything, and they asked for volunteers. They had more volunteers than they could even get in the boat that showed up down there. I was one of them that . . . I actually was one of the first ones there to get going with them. Of course, we had our regular coxwains that were assigned to the launches, and then we worked with crews in rescue work and brought them in just as soon as we could.

Marcello: I'm sure that a great many of those men were in bad shape that you plucked out of the water. You mentioned this one, for example.

Hatcher: They were, especially the ones that had been trying to swim through the fire because at that time . . . they don't do like they do today. At that time they never taught people how to swim through fire on the water.

If a guy's just swimming through normally through there, he gets burnt real bad because they didn't teach them the methods they use today, and this is one of the things that brought about some of the methods that they teach today.

Marcello: And I gather that water was thick with oil.

Hatcher: It was. There was oil all over the place, and most of the people were covered solid with oil. Of course, when they hit that fire, they burnt just as easily as the oil on top of the water was burning.

Marcello: Generally speaking, was this the nature of the casualties of the people that were plucked out of the water? Were they usually suffering more from burns than anything else?

Hatcher: I think that this was generally true of the ones that we were rescuing. There were very few of them that we were picking up out there that had shrapnel wounds or direct wounds related to the actual attack, and this was caused in the aftermath of the attack on the majority of them. Like today, I'd say, it would be a lack of proper instruction and training in the situations.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how long did it seem to you as though the attack took place?

Hatcher: I didn't think it was ever going to end.

Marcello: Were you a target of both waves? You know, it's usually considered that there were two waves during the attack.

Hatcher: Oh, yes! But actually, even though they say there was two waves, it just seemed like there was one continuous thing to us because it seemed like it went on all day, really. In reality this is the way we felt because by then the tension had gone so much, and we were so much on edge by the time we realized what really was going on that we wouldn't even recognize anyone that come around us.

Of course, we didn't even go back to our quarters or anything throughout the day. We stayed in the areas where we were in and working out of. Then after we got pretty much slowed down on the rescue work out there, we went on back to our normal duty stations as a regular workday and even though . . . and by that time they had a lot of the guns and ammunition ready to be used, and they started issuing it out. We took this equipment, gas masks and all, and went right on back to our areas, our departments, and then our mission was to try to get out all the aircraft we could and make them serviceable. This started right on around the clock.

Marcello: How would you describe the damage that had been done to your particular area of Ford Island during the attack?

Hatcher: Well, of course, after the attack we found out that they had also dropped one bomb right in the middle of the dispensary there. It was a new dispensary that had just been completed, and it was built in a Spanish-style, and it was a bomb that went down into the middle of . . . right into the patio that didn't go off, which was real fortunate there for our dispensary. I understand they didn't even break a window in the building.

Marcello: Were many planes destroyed?

Hatcher: The planes on the end of the island were destroyed, where the patrol planes were, where the PBY's were at that time. In general, I didn't get out and tour the rest of the island, but I don't think that the destruction was so bad there as it was like over in the Hickam Field area and the other areas around us.

Marcello: How about the buildings? How much damage was done to the buildings?

Hatcher: Oh, we had a lot of damage to the buildings down there, especially on toward the end of the island.

Marcello: Were there many fires?

Hatcher: Just a big fire on the end was the main one down there, and whatever . . . how they missed our fuel dump there on the island, I'll never know.

Marcello: Well, I've seen some theories about this, and one historian said that the Japanese pilots were suffering from medal fever. You don't get medals for blowing up oil tanks, but you get medals for sinking ships and things of this nature.

Hatcher: But this would have done more damage to us than anything.

Marcello: Absolutely.

Hatcher: If they had concentrated on that fuel depot that we had there . . .

Marcello: Absolutely. If they had concentrated on the fuel depot and also the repair installations, they could have crippled or paralyzed that base more than what they actually did at the time.

Hatcher: This is what I think, too, because if that fuel depot had gone up, that total thing would have just about gone, I felt, with the high explosives in that general area there.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that you did have some sort of a view of what was happening at Battleship Row. Is there any particular incident concerning Battleship Row and its part in the attack that you think ought to be a part of the record?

Hatcher: Well, now I forget which one of the ships it was--whether it was the Oklahoma or the Arizona--when I saw it going down. It went down right across our water supply to Ford Island, which eliminated any fresh water or any

water at all we had there. We had no drinking water whatsoever.

Marcello: I would assume this would have hampered fire-fighting activities, also?

Hatcher: It did, except for what water they had in storage. We used . . . so then right away . . . what they did, they closed off the swimming pool and was drawing water out of the swimming pool and taking it to the galley and boiling it for drinking water. That was our drinking water supply, and that's all we had there. Of course, they were making sandwiches down there in the galley and carrying them to us up there.

Marcello: Now all of this was taking place during the attack?

Hatcher: No, this was right after the attack. Then they started looking up the resources they had available.

Marcello: I gather that you really didn't have too much time to witness or to view that which was happening to the battleships and things of this nature.

Hatcher: This was true from where I was at, except across the way I saw the Utah, the old target ship--the battleship that had been converted to a target ship-- I saw her roll over on the far side, and at that time I didn't know just exactly what type a hit she had had, whether it was from a torpedo or a bomb.

Marcello: Now in the aftermath of the attack, I'm sure that you heard all sorts of rumors floating around. What were some of the wilder rumors that you heard?

Hatcher: Well, we were told that the landing forces had already hit and there was a follow-up of the attack, but . . . which could have been real possible, and that there was to be an alert for the landing forces that was following up. I feel now that if they had had this landing force there would have been no problem for them to completely take the island, but this is where I felt that the downfall of the Japanese was in their attack. Even though they did a lot of damage, they didn't gain a whole lot because they lacked the landing force follow-up on it.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago, also, that in the aftermath of the attack that you were issued small arms. I would assume that there were a lot of trigger-happy servicemen around that area that evening.

Hatcher: This is true, especially after dark. We were manning gun emplacements around . . . we had set up sand bags around the hangar, and, of course, they had planes coming in from the carrier, the Enterprise out there for one, coming in without identification. And they didn't have the system set up then to identify a plane coming in after dark. I know for a fact that we fired on our planes coming in that night. We saw one going

off in flames, but . . . it was bad because we didn't know they were our planes. As far as we knew, the Japs were coming back.

Marcello: You also mentioned before we started the interview that you took part in the recovery of Japanese planes and so on that were shot down.

Hatcher: Yes, we did.

Marcello: What were some of the more interesting things that you were able to observe in recovering these planes?

Hatcher: Well, quite a few of the planes that we recovered still had the Japanese bodies in them, and this was taking place as much as two weeks after the attack when we were still recovering Japanese planes. We had crews set up down there. We'd hoist a plane off and bring it in up there and hoist it off onto the dock, and we'd move it up by the hangars there and then put it in a hangar. Then we'd start . . . we'd put a sling around the bodies and just cut the belts loose and hoist them out, and they laid them over there. Then they had corpsmen that would just take a knife and cut their clothes off, cutting the pockets out, and checking the contents. Then we were washing the planes down and disassembling them and crating them and shipping them to Washington.

Marcello: Did you mention, also, during our pre-interview conference that you did come across some of the maps that these Japanese pilots were using?

Hatcher: Yes, there was a lot of them, and even though they were waterlogged, they were still readable. Some of them had . . . some of the pilots also had class rings on from the University of California and different things there we noticed, too, on their bodies. They still had their rings. Of course, the crabs had got to a lot of the bodies and everything. They were eaten up pretty bad. All of the exposed areas of the bodies were gone, but they were able to identify quite a few of them through their rings and different things they had on.

Marcello: What struck you as being peculiar about these maps?

Hatcher: Well, they were so accurate. They were extremely accurate even right down to the buildings and what was contained in some of the buildings on them there--the way they had it laid out there. I was also impressed by the amount of American currency that these people had on them--US currency. They had a tremendous amount of US currency on them, and most of them had civilian clothes on under their flight suits when we were taking them off.

Marcello: What did all of this add up to so far as you were concerned?

Hatcher: Well, I felt that they had thought that if they'd been shot down--and even though that they weren't expecting them to return back to their ship--had they parachuted out, they could get rid of their flight gear and go out and mix in with the populace as a civilian and would never be found out.

Marcello: How did your attitude toward the civilian Japanese population now change? Or did it?

Hatcher: Well, it kind of . . . it gave everybody a change, and it made you view things in a different light, different situation completely, and put you on the defensive every time you even became close to one of them.

Marcello: I assume that from this point on, they were scrutinized very, very closely whenever they came on the base.

Hatcher: They weren't . . . they restricted them from the base (chuckle). They moved them off--any in that general location.

Marcello: Looking back on it now in retrospect--and this is the only question that I'll give you the benefit of using hindsight--how do you think the Japanese were able to pull off this attack?

Hatcher: Well, there has been a lot of speculation on this. I was told--I don't know how accurate this is--by a member of the patrol squadron that there was one sector

that morning that wasn't patrolled, and this was the sector that they came in on. I don't know whether you've ever had this come up before or not, but this was the information I gathered from a very good friend of mine that was in the patrol squadron down there. That plane developed mechanical trouble at the last minute and didn't go out, and that was the sector they came in on.

Marcello: How do you view this particular incident? As something deliberate or as something simply as one of those coincidences?

Hatcher: Well, it looks in a way like it was deliberately not patrolled because it looks like they'd have pulled a standby aircraft in if that was the case and taken another plane out anyway for that patrol.

Marcello: Where were these patrol planes flying from?

Hatcher: Ford Island. They were launched off of the end of Ford Island down there.

Marcello: Were these PBY's?

Hatcher: PBY's, yes.