

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
206

Interview with
G. M. Hemingway
May 18, 1974

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: Open
Approved: GM Hemingway
Date: 5-18-74

COPYRIGHT © 1974 THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF NORTH TEXAS STATE
UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF DENTON

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

Oral History Collection

George Hemingway

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of interview: Austin, Texas

Date of interview: May 18, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing George Hemingway for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 18, 1974, in Austin, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Hemingway 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.

Now Mr. Hemingway, to begin this interview would you 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. Hemingway: I was born in Galveston, Texas, on March 27, 1923. I've got just a high school education. I went from high school into the Navy.

Dr. Marcello: When did you enter the Navy?

Mr. Hemingway: 1940.

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

Mr. Hemingway: At that time jobs were pretty hard to find, and it was hard to maintain a good job. All the good jobs were

taken. There wasn't too much to work at, so I figured to get more training, to get some background from the Navy.

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

Hemingway: That's hard to say. I don't guess I liked being a foot soldier. I thought the Marines were a little bit too tough, so I figured the Navy was the best for me. I liked the sea.

Marcello: At the time that you entered the service, did you have any idea that the country would very shortly be going into war?

Hemingway: None whatsoever. I had no idea at all.

Marcello: You must've been only about seventeen years old at the time, is that correct?

Hemingway: Right.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Hemingway: San Diego.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened during boot camp that you think needs to be a part of the record?

Hemingway: Nothing eventful. Just regular old boot training.

Marcello: Did you go directly from San Diego over to Pearl Harbor?

Hemingway: From boot camp I went to aviation machinist's mate school. That was at North Island in San Diego. I went through

the schooling there, and then I was put aboard USS Wharton, a supply transport ship. I was on that for several trips between San Diego and Hawaii. Then I was transferred into aviation, Fleet Air Wing Two. That's the station right at Ford Island.

Marcello: What sort of work did you do at Ford Island?

Hemingway: Well, when I was in the squadron, when I first got in the squadron, I was what they called a beach crew. We landed and beached the planes when they come in from patrol or put them in the water so they could take off for patrols. These were the seaplanes.

Marcello: In other words, these were the PBY's?

Hemingway: PBY's, right.

Marcello: When did Ford Island become your permanent station?

Hemingway: I got transferred there in September of '41, and I stayed there until the later part of December and then went to Australia.

Marcello: I gather that before September of 1941, you were shuttling back and forth between the Hawaiian Islands and the West Coast on board the USS Wharton.

Hemingway: That's right.

Marcello: Now at that particular time describe what your daily routine might be like in the months preceding Pearl Harbor.

Hemingway: Aboard ship it was pretty rough.

Marcello: I'm not referring to the ship itself. I'm referring to your time at Ford Island.

Hemingway: This squadron, we went to duty at seven o'clock in the morning, and we were to beach the . . . put the planes in the water that was going on patrol or training flights. We stayed around and re-beached the planes. Then we washed the planes down, scrubbed them, cleaned them, and got ready for flight the next day. We cleaned up the hangar area and did regular maintenance work, and whatever you was striking for, that's who you worked with--either machinists or electricians, radio, or whatever. I was striking for machinist's mate. Well, we'd take care of the tools, clean the tools up, clean the planes, clean the engines, clean the cowling. We'd just keep the general appearance of our aircraft in first class condition. At one o'clock is when our squadron secured duty and was off until seven o'clock the next morning.

Marcello: Why was it that you secured at one o'clock in the afternoon?

Hemingway: I don't know, never really did know, but from what I understand, that's the way the Hawaiian Islands service was. You'd work from seven to one, and then you'd have

the duty every other weekend. So when you caught the duty on the weekend, you'd catch it from one o'clock Friday until seven o'clock Monday morning. You stood the watches and took care of the hangar and stuff like that.

Marcello: Would you describe the pre-Pearl Harbor Navy as being a rather spit-and-polish outfit?

Hemingway: Very much so.

Marcello: In what ways?

Hemingway: You didn't allow things to get chipped or rusted. You'd keep the planes in a very spit-and-polish way. All the planes were shined down. They weren't painted. They were aluminum, and these planes had to be kept polished all the time. Each plane, depending on who it was, whether it was the commanding officer, the executive officer, or whether he was a flight officer, the cowling on their planes were painted a certain color to identify the pilot of that plane, what his rank was.

Marcello: How would you describe the training that you received there at Ford Island?

Hemingway: Very strict. We had a beachmaster. His name was Burmaster. He was an old-time Navy man. When I served under him, he had already had twenty-two years of service. He was a very strict, a very . . . well, very

crude and rough man. He didn't take any back talk, and when he spoke you did what he said. That was all there was to it. There was no argument with him.

Marcello: I would assume that during the peacetime Navy there were quite a few people like that around with a lot of experience.

Hemingway: Oh, yes. Quite a few of them. We had one officer . . . he went up to an officer's rank. His name was White. He was a pilot, an A.P. pilot.

Marcello: An A.P. pilot?

Hemingway: Yes. An aviation pilot. He was an enlisted pilot. He was transferred or advanced in rank to a lieutenant, but he broke his hip later on, and he had just given up his wings. He didn't figure he'd have the strength to risk other men's lives in the plane that he was in. He had something like thirty years service when I knew him. He was a very fine man and a very fine pilot.

Marcello: Generally speaking, do you think that the training that you received in this particular period was intensive and thorough?

Hemingway: I think so. It taught me a lot, really. It taught me to respect my elders and to respect authority and to obey orders when we'd get them.

Marcello: How about your actual on-the-job training, that is, with

regard to the skill that you were working on at that time? Do you think that you were highly trained in that way?

Hemingway: I think I was. I imagine I was because I went up in rank very quickly. I went from seaman to chief petty officer in four years time. Those tests we had to take were very, very strict. It would take an average of three or four days to take the test for a chief petty officer, and it was a very competitive test. If there was two or three rates open, there might be fifteen, twenty men taking the test, but only three men would get the rate.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale of this pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Hemingway: Very fine, very beautiful.

Marcello: How do you account for this?

Hemingway: The men were treated right. You had good quarters. You had good fellowship. You knew what was expected of you, and everyone was for the other man. They always worked together.

Marcello: I think it would also be true that the fact that all of you were volunteers would have played a part in keeping morale high. In other words, you were there because you wanted to be there.

Hemingway: Yes. Right. Everyone of us were volunteer people enlisted in the regular ranks of the service.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that in those months immediately prior to Pearl Harbor that the training that you undertook was steady and constant but that there was really no urgency or deadline or anything of that nature with the training? You had plenty of time to train.

Hemingway: Well, for instance, take boot training. The boys later on . . . I think they only had three weeks to a month. In boot training, when I went through it, we had sixteen weeks. We'd have a week of, say, just knot-tying or splicing the lines, cables, rifles. Everything that we had that pertained to the Naval service, it would take anywhere from seven days to ten days per period, per subject.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that while you were at Ford Island your job was at least in part to service these patrol planes when they went out or actually when they came in. How often did these patrols take place, or maybe a better way of asking this question would be to ask you to describe the routine that these patrols undertook?

Hemingway: I wasn't in the flight crew, but from what I understand

the crews would take off in each squadron. There was VP-22, VP-23, VP-24, VP-11, VP-12, and VP-14. Each squadron would have a sector to patrol, and they would go out in their sector and patrol, say, 350 to 400 miles away from Hawaii. Then they'd come back in. Routine things such as ships in distress or possibly somebody out in a small boat had got stranded or lost power, they would have assisted in any way they could, or even looked for submarines or foreign ships not supposed to be in the area.

Marcello: Were the patrols undertaken in a 360-degree radius?

Hemingway: On all angles or sectors from Hawaii, they would take in all angles or 360 degrees in radius . . .

Marcello: Were these patrols a daily thing?

Hemingway: Everyday, including Saturday and Sunday.

Marcello: Were there always planes in the air twenty-four hours a day, or would they go out in the morning and come back in the evening, or just exactly how would they operate?

Hemingway: They'd go out in the morning, say, roughly between six and seven right after sunlight, and depending on the sector they had, they would usually get back in between twelve and two or 2:30 in the afternoon.

Marcello: Did they ever send out any evening or night patrols?

- Hemingway: No. Later on they did, but during that time, no.
- Marcello: Was there any special reason why they didn't send out night patrols or evening patrols during this particular period?
- Hemingway: I was just a seaman (chuckle). I wouldn't know. That come under the auspices of our commanding officer. He'd be the one to assign the patrols and when the patrols would be taken.
- Marcello: Were these planes equipped to do night flying and things of this sort?
- Hemingway: No, I don't believe they really were. Not at that time.
- Marcello: So far as you know, were there enough planes at Ford Island to undertake the type of patrolling that would be necessary under the circumstances?
- Hemingway: Yes, I believe they had the right type planes to cover the areas, yes.
- Marcello: Did they have enough planes?
- Hemingway: Each plane had . . . each squadron had thirteen planes or PBY's to each squadron. Then they had other squadrons such as the OS2U squadrons, which were small, single-engine planes which the cruisers and battlewagons had. They were scout planes, small, two-seater scout planes. We had several squadrons of those which would cover the inner area of the islands.

Marcello: Actually then, there were quite a few airplanes altogether over there at Ford Island.

Hemingway: Right. Quite a few. The other squadrons, VP-11, VP-12, and VP-14, they were stationed over at Kaneohe. That was on the opposite side of the island.

Marcello: As one got closer and closer to the actual date of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, did your routine vary in any way as you recall?

Hemingway: None whatsoever. None whatsoever. We had the same routine all the way up to even the morning the attack happened.

Marcello: Do you feel that about as much was done at Ford Island as could be done in the way of reconnaissance and this sort of thing right up until the time of the attack?

Hemingway: I believe so.

Marcello: A while ago you were talking about your working hours and things of this nature. How did your weekend liberties usually go?

Hemingway: If you didn't have the duty, you wasn't on the duty sector, then you got off at one o'clock. You didn't have to come back to work until Monday morning at seven.

Marcello: In other words, you would get off on Friday at one o'clock, and you had off the entire weekend.

Hemingway: Right, right.

Marcello: During that period you could stay in town or come back

to the base, whatever you wished to do?

Hemingway: That's true. Most of the guys, they didn't have a place to stay, so they'd go into town and come back at ten or eleven o'clock at night.

Marcello: It was usually much cheaper to do that actually.

Hemingway: Sure, it was quite a bit cheaper.

Marcello: In fact, it didn't cost anything at all to come back on the base and sleep.

Hemingway: \$21 a month didn't go far in those days.

Marcello: Generally speaking, and you would perhaps have to estimate this, what percentage of the people at Ford Island might be off that base on a weekend?

Hemingway: I'd say roughly 60 per cent at least would be off the base.

Marcello: This would probably have included most of the officers, also.

Hemingway: Oh, yes. A lot of your officers lived in town. In fact, we had a lot of personnel in our squadron--the senior rated men, that is, the first and second class and chiefs--they were married and they lived in Honolulu.

Marcello: During this period, did you have very much contact with the Japanese who lived on the Hawaiian Islands? Of course, there were quite a few of them who lived there at that particular time, and I'm sure that some of them were probably civilian workers over at Ford Island. Did you

ever have much contact with these people?

Hemingway: No, I didn't. None whatsoever.

Marcello: In any of your bull sessions or idle time, did you ever talk about the possibility of sabotage or fifth columnist activities being carried out by the Japanese living on the islands?

Hemingway: I never even gave it a thought in those days.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese, what was the sort of individual that you thought about in your own mind?

Hemingway: I'd say it was a small-built man with an olive complexion, slant eyes, high cheek bones, and very black hair.

Marcello: Did you ever talk very much about the capabilities of the Japanese Navy or military in general?

Hemingway: We were never schooled too much on that until later on.

Marcello: Did you ever give much thought to the possibility of a surprise attack being carried out against the military installations there by some foreign power?

Hemingway: (Chuckle) I couldn't have visualized a thing like that at all against the United States Navy, really, or any branch of our service.

Marcello: Did you feel relatively secure at Pearl Harbor?

Hemingway: I sure did.

Marcello: Now being at Ford Island, you apparently were able to observe the movements of the fleet and things of this

nature as it went in and out of Pearl. Describe what the activity was like so far as the Pacific Fleet itself was concerned. You didn't have a direct hand in this, but quite obviously, being there at Ford Island, you could observe ships coming and going from time to time.

Hemingway: Oh, yes. All the ships that came in. All the ships that came in, they came right past the main island, the barracks, the administration office. If they were going to the destroyer base or if they were going to the sub base or if they were going to the repair base, they came right past the hangars and the barracks. Especially when the battlewagons come in, everybody knew when they came in because they were big. It was quite a sight to see a battlewagon come down the channel and go to Battleship Row.

Marcello: From where you were located at Ford Island, how close were you to Battleship Row?

Hemingway: From our barracks it was less than 100 yards away from two of the main piers where the battlewagons . . . let's see, the USS California was tied up to the first pier which was right off the corner of our barracks, which was less than 100 yards maybe . . . well, I'd say about 100 yards away.

Marcello: The California was usually tied up alone, was it not?

Then most of the other ones were tied up two-by-two.

Hemingway: Sometimes as many as three would be tied up together.
It depends on the ships.

Marcello: I gather that they usually tied them up that way in
order to save space there in the harbor.

Hemingway: That's true. Because they didn't have really that big
of an area for all the ships to dock right alongside
the piers.

Marcello: What was social life like for a young, single sailor
in Honolulu during your liberty hours?

Hemingway: The downtown part of Honolulu wasn't too much. Every-
body was trying to get your money. But if you'd go
out to the outlying towns--Wahiawa, Kailua--up around
Diamond Head, the people were more cordial and more
friendly. You had a lot more fun, especially out around
Waikiki Beach. All the girls were down there, naturally.
That was where you'd try to make contact with friends
and try to meet some young ladies. They only had two
hotels--the Moana and the Royal Hawaiian. The Royal
Hawaiian was the hotel in those days.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that there was enough to do
either on the base or off the base to keep one busy?

Hemingway: Oh, you could have things on the base. They had hobby
shops if you wanted to participate in that. They had

a big swimming pool. You could go swimming if you wanted to, and they had baseball teams, soccer teams. They had tennis courts. They had a recreation hall where you could go to spend your time.

Marcello: As relations between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, did you participate or experience any alerts or maneuvers or any other extraordinary precautions or anything of this nature?

Hemingway: No, I didn't. I never participated in any of that before that.

Marcello: This, I think, more or less brings us up to the actual Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and what I want you to do now is to relate to me as best you can all of your activities on Saturday, December 6, 1941. This, of course, would be the day before the actual attack itself.

Hemingway: As I said before, if you was on the duty section, you caught it for the whole weekend. My section was on the duty, and we had watches to stand. Naturally, at seven o'clock in the morning you mustered down at the hangar, and you were assigned your different hours of duty and what post you was going to stand. I caught the twelve to four watch that afternoon and the twelve to four watch that night.

At seven o'clock the next morning, it was the same

thing. We mustered down at the hangar and got your assigned duties.

Marcello: What time did you go to bed that night?

Hemingway: When I got off my first watch, which was about four o'clock in the evening, I went down to the chow hall and had something to eat, went to the barracks, and went to bed about six o'clock. Then the security officer or a man in the barracks would wake up the men that were supposed to go on watch usually around ten o'clock to give you time to get up and get dressed and get down to the hangar for your duty section because you had to report to your duty officer at least one hour before going on watch.

Marcello: So in other words, on that Saturday you had the duty up until four o'clock. You went to bed, and then you had the duty again beginning at . . .

Hemingway: Twelve o'clock, midnight.

Marcello: . . . twelve o'clock, midnight.

Hemingway: To four o'clock the next morning.

Marcello: You were at the stage in our conversation where you had mustered for your twelve o'clock duty.

Hemingway: Right.

Marcello: Now take it over from that point.

Hemingway: After I got off watch at four o'clock that morning, I

went back to the barracks, went back to bed, and they had general reveille at six. I had to be back down to the hangar again at seven . . .

Marcello: Did you have to muster for reveille?

Hemingway: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Even though you'd just gotten off your watch?

Hemingway: Oh, yes. Then I'd go back . . . went to the hangar and had our general quarters, raised the flag, got assigned duties for that day. I caught the twelve to four and twelve to four again. So after I was assigned my duties, I went back to my barracks, and I was writing a letter home to my mother about the time the first bomb hit.

Marcello: About what time was this?

Hemingway: I'd say right at about five minutes to eight. Well, I was on the third level of the barracks on the north side, north end. I could overlook the airstrip. When the planes flew over and hit . . . well, they hit our hangar first, got one of our planes and our hangar first.

Marcello: Could you witness this yourself?

Hemingway: No, I couldn't see it from my barracks where I was located because I was located more to the center of the island where the barracks is, and my duty hangar was right on the point of the island, which was west of where I was.

Marcello: But you did hear the explosion?

Hemingway: Yes, very definitely. Well, I didn't know what it was. I had no idea it was a bomb. It just so happened that one of the men in our squadron had served duty in China or in that area, and he recognized the planes. He said, "Japs!" I still didn't understand what was going on.

Then finally we fully realized what was going on, and we tried to get back down to our hangars because everybody was to report to their duty stations. They wouldn't let us out of the barracks. They kept us blocked in, the Marine guards did.

About that time the California, which was sitting right off the point of the barracks, her guns were ready to open up on the Japs. It was just about ready to fire their antiaircraft guns when they took a torpedo. The ship lurched, and when it did, the gun fired about that same time. Instead of the bullet hitting that plane, it hit the corner of the barracks and blew out the top of the barracks.

Marcello: Was this a five-inch shell?

Hemingway: No, it was more like a pom-pom. It's a smaller anti-aircraft shell. It hit the corner of our barracks and just blew it off. That's when everybody broke for the doors and the windows and everything else to get out of the barracks because we didn't know what was going on.

We thought the whole barracks was going to cave in on us. You figure that there's at least six squadrons and an average of around 200 to 250 men per squadron, not counting your personnel that maintains the base, which you call the ship's company, I'd guess there was between 5,000 and 6,000 men in that barracks, and we were all trying to get out at the same time. Well, we finally broke out, got past the Marines . . .

Marcello: Do you mean there were 5,000 or 6,000 men in the barracks that day or normally that's how many were there?

Hemingway: It's normally that, but I imagine there'd be about 3,000 men. On that day it actually happened because a lot of guys were ashore. Maybe some of the boys were still in church. We went to our duty stations. Me and a couple of other boys which are gone nowadays . . . one of them died at Wake and another guy we lost at Midway, and the rest of them I don't know what happened to them.

Marcello: Where was your duty station?

Hemingway: At the hangar. So I was running for the hangar, and I guess I was about 300 yards away . . . and we had what we called an A and R mount repair shop, which repairs the side mounts for these PBY's. Well, it took a direct hit from a bomb. I guess I was maybe twenty-five, maybe thirty, yards from it when it blew up. The three of us

running together, we were blown flat on our stomachs, but we got up and kept running. When we got to our hangar, our hangar was on fire. The duty officer--I can't remember who he was. He was a lieutenant--he told us to get in there and get the equipment that was in the hangar, get it out as fast as we could. We had a gasoline truck, an oil truck, oil bowser, and roughly 20,000 belted rounds of ammunition. The oil bowser was full of waste oil which is highly explosive. It's got a lot of fumes in it. It'd cause a lot of fire. It'll hold about 1,500 gallons of waste oil.

We had to get in the hangar. The doors were sprung--the big, steel doors. So me and another boy by the name of Sparks, we got on what we called our tractors which we pulled the planes in and out of the water with. We hooked onto the doors with those tractors and pulled them off the rails, and the doors just fell. Then we jumped onto trucks and drove the trucks out.

Marcello: How intensely was the hangar burning?

Hemingway: Some of the ammunition was caught on fire, and it was exploding in there in their boxes. After we got the equipment out as much as we could, then we had to go to the parachute loft which was located in the top of the hangar and get as many of the parachutes out as we could.

So we threw those out.

Marcello: In the meantime was the ammunition still exploding in there?

Hemingway: Yes, it sure was.

Marcello: You didn't make any attempt to get out the ammunition, quite obviously.

Hemingway: Not while that was exploding. We left that alone. All they tried to do there was to try to get it under control by squirting water on it to put the fire out, but that didn't last long because the Japanese hit our power station and we lost all the water. So we didn't have any water to put that out unless we'd have had a truck and would have dropped the suction hose into the channel and got water that way, but we didn't have any. They had too many other fires to contend with, such as aboard the ships.

So after that it was just general routine work. Whatever came up we had to do. We had thirteen planes in our squadron, and out of the thirteen only two of them were left. The rest of them were destroyed. So that's the only planes we had left. One we did have in the hangar, and we got it out before it was damaged too bad, and the other one was up in the A and R shop for a re-fabric job. That's the only two planes we had left when

the attack was over with.

Marcello: Was the island ever able to put up any sort of resistance at all?

Hemingway: Oh, yes! They came through. Everybody started firing what they had, whatever they had ready. Mostly, I'd say the firepower came from the battlewagons and the cruisers and the destroyers that were in port. As far as the island goes, we didn't have too much firepower.

Marcello: What sort of makeshift firepower did you have to use?

Hemingway: The guns we had, they wasn't in mounts, so we put them in a vise on work benches, and had one guy feed the gun and the other guy firing from a vise in a bench.

Marcello: In other words, could you move these vises out of the hangars to fire them?

Hemingway: Yes, we could push the whole bench outside the hangar. Then two guys would push the bench around where he wanted it to the best vantage point, and that's the way they'd fire that gun. One guy . . . it was a boy by the name of Vajdak, who was from Dallas, Texas, and who was third class at the time, I believe, he grabbed a .50 caliber machine gun, cradled it in his arms, and fired it like that. He shot down one plane and damaged another one. He got a promotion to first class after that, after it was all over with.

Marcello: What were you personally doing during all this time?

Hemingway: I was just trying to clean up the mess and salvage what we could. I was working under a chief and a first class. Whatever they told me to do, that's what I did.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how would you evaluate the reaction of the men there at this time? Was it one of panic? Fear? Professionalism? Confusion?

Hemingway: I'd say at first it was shock because a lot of people didn't realize exactly what happened. Then when they realized what happened, there was a slight bit of confusion at first, and then the military bearing of the men that was in the service at the time seemed to take over, and they took care of their routine jobs and just sprang into action and did what they was supposed to do just by natural ability and what was brought into them through training throughout the time they'd spent in the service. Then the younger men picked this up from older men.

Marcello: Did you feel a sense of frustration or futility in that you had very little to throw back at the Japanese?

Hemingway: At the time, yes, I did. I was frightened. I didn't know what to expect next. We didn't know if they was going to follow in with troops or what. We didn't have

too much to fight with at the present time, and we were running low on what we did have. So I'd say I was angry, frustrated, not being able to do anything in return for what they were doing to us.

Marcello: You yourself didn't have any weapons to fire back with, did you?

Hemingway: No, not myself, no.

Marcello: I do understand--and I think this was at Ford Island--that they actually had to break into the . . .

Hemingway: Armory?

Marcello: . . . armory . . .

Hemingway: Right.

Marcello: . . . and distribute the small arms, at least, to whoever happened to be there at the time.

Hemingway: The armory was located on the opposite side of the island from our main barracks and from the hangars. It was located on the opposite side over there. Each squadron would designate so many men to go over and try to get the ammunition or whatever equipment they had. I made one trip over there with another fellow. We picked up what they had left, which wasn't much. Some .30 caliber rifles, .30-06's, and about five boxes of ammunition, but that's all they had left when we got there.

Marcello: Did you ever have the opportunity to fire these at any

of the Japanese planes?

Hemingway: No, but (chuckle) I think that evening they put me on a plane out of the utility squadron to go on patrol--me and another fellow--and we sat up in the open hatches with .30 caliber rifles as defense weapons. We didn't have . . .

Marcello: When the planes went out?

Hemingway: Right. In what they called the VJ squadrons. It was the old Sikorsky planes then. We sat back there in the open hatches with .30 caliber rifles.

Marcello: You apparently didn't have too many planes left, did you, to go out on patrol?

Hemingway: No, not too much. Most of them were destroyed or damaged so bad that they couldn't get them in the air.

Marcello: When you were rushing into that hangar and bringing out the vehicles and the parachutes and the other equipment, did you ever have time to stop and think about the danger that was present there?

Hemingway: If I'd have stopped and thought about it, I probably wouldn't have done it. I didn't have time to stop and think. We had so much to do, and as I said before, I guess I was in a little bit of a state of shock. I was just following my orders as I was supposed to do. That's what I did.

Marcello: Well, describe what the base looked like, so far as the physical damage was concerned, after the attack took place.

Hemingway: Actually it was one helluva mess. Oil was all over the channel. As far as you could see up and down the channel was slicks of oil. Battlewagons were laying on their side or turned turtle. The USS Nevada had made it down to the mouth of the channel, and she had sunk on the opposite bank right across from where our hangar was, but she had her guns pointed right down the channel. Nothing could have come up that channel without her say-so. The Arizona was still burning. The Shaw in the dry docks across the channel, it had blown up.

Marcello: Did you see that spectacular explosion?

Hemingway: I was standing right across the channel when she blew up.

Marcello: Describe what it was like when the Shaw blew up.

Hemingway: She was in the floating dry dock, and I think she took a direct hit from, I'd estimate, maybe a 250-pound, maybe a 500-pound, bomb. Now where it got it, I don't know. It must have hit the magazine because when she blew it was just . . . there was just a tremendous roar, then a vibration, then the concussion, and then the big ball of fire. Now how the men that was on it, any of them, lived it out, I don't know how they did it because there was nothing but massive pieces of metal and fire, and

that was it.

Marcello: What is amazing is that they actually put a temporary bow on that ship, floated it back to Bremerton Navy Yard, put a permanent bow on it, and that ship went all through the war.

Hemingway: I don't see how they did it.

Marcello: I've seen pictures of the Shaw, and I don't see how anything ever could have walked away from that thing, let alone that ship living to fight another day.

Hemingway: The Shaw, I thought we had lost her. The Cassin and the Downes and the Arizona, the California, the Nevada, the Oglala, and the old Utah was sunk. That was the old gun-ship.

Marcello: Did you actually see the Oklahoma turn turtle?

Hemingway: No, I didn't see it turn turtle. I saw it later on when she was laying on her side.

Marcello: What did the base itself look like--your base at Ford Island?

Hemingway: Two of our hangars were burned pretty bad. The old squadron VP-23 and squadron VP-22's hangars were gutted. They were completely afire. There was holes throughout the area where bombs had hit and blown up, and the OS2U squadron just east of our hangar, all their planes were messed up, burned up, wings gone. They were all messed

up. In our hangar area all our planes . . . only things that were left were probably the wing-tips or possibly part of the tail. The rest of the plane was just burned. It was blown up or torn apart or melted down. So that area was useless to us because there was too much rubble and trash around. I don't think the airstrip was hurt. I don't believe they hit it at all. If they hit it, it was machine gun fire only. It was still usable. The barracks had lots of windows busted out of it. In fact, I didn't get back to the barracks for four days.

Marcello: What did you do during that four-day period of time?

Hemingway: Worked day and night getting everything cleared up, receiving other planes that was brought in to us, and then getting the squadron ready to go south. Most of our squadron left and went south. Roughly, the first planes left ten days after the attack. Then our whole squadron was gone before the first of the year and went to Perth, Australia.

Marcello: When you looked out over the area and saw the damage that had been done in Pearl Harbor itself and then in Ford Island, what kind of emotions did you have?

Hemingway: At first I was very downhearted, very disgusted, and to tell the truth I didn't know what was going to come off next. What gave most of the guys a big lift was when they saw the Maryland, the Tennessee, and one other main battlegewagon get underway and sail down the channel and take to open seas. They made it with very superficial damage. A little fire damage, that was about all.

Marcello: How shortly after the attack did they head for the open sea?

Hemingway: I think the first one that got out was the Tennessee, and she was gone within, oh, I'd say during the first . . . well, right at the end of the first attack. She took to sea because she was safer at sea than she was in harbor. She was too vulnerable. Then I think the Maryland was the next one to go and then the West Virginia.

Marcello: Did these battleships go to sea unescorted?

Hemingway: They went out by themselves, yes. They took to the open sea to give them more maneuverability and . . . well, the sea offered them a better chance than being couped up in a harbor.

Marcello: I'm sure that in the aftermath of the attack there were all sorts of rumors floating around as to what was going to happen next.

Hemingway: Oh, yes. We expected an attack that night from some forces that was formed in Honolulu. We expected to be attacked that night again.

Marcello: When you say from some forces that were formed in Honolulu, are you referring to Japanese sympathizers on the islands themselves?

Hemingway: Japanese sympathizers and possibly some of the men that . . . like the men off that little two-man sub. They never did find those two men as far as I know. We figured that maybe they had come in to form a resistance force against us. That was probably their purpose. I don't know.

Marcello: And I'm sure that you believed every one of these rumors you heard.

Hemingway: Oh, yes! I was scared to death! Everytime somebody made a little noise or something, we'd shout and scream at them, "Who is there!" Then we'd fire.

Marcello: I'm sure that first night there were a lot of trigger-happy servicemen around.

Hemingway: Yes. In fact, we shot down three of our own planes that night.

Marcello: Did you happen to witness this?

Hemingway: Yes, I did. I saw it.

Marcello: Describe this incident.

Hemingway: The planes came in, and all you could see was the blue flames from their exhausts. They flew down the channel and made a swing, and when they made their swing up over Ford Island . . . I don't know who fired first, whether they fired by accident or somebody else fired not knowing who they were, but anyway, the first guy fired, then everybody cut loose. It just looked like the Fourth of July with the tracers going up after those three planes. They were pretty good marksmen. They got all three of them, but I didn't have a gun because I was on duty in the hangar trying to put out little fires and stuff that was still burning and salvage what we could. But I saw the three planes get hit.

Marcello: I'm sure that the smells must have been suffocating.

Hemingway: All the oil was burning. Some of the bodies were burned pretty bad, some of the men that was caught in the water that was on fire . . . it was especially bad up around the barracks and around where our main hospital was. They took over the barracks for a hospital for all the men off the ships, and they were loaded with burned personnel and men that were wounded. Some of them were in pretty bad shape.

Marcello: Were you on any of the rescue parties that went around the next day in the small boats looking for the wounded and the dead and that sort of thing?

Hemingway: No, I never got in on that. I stayed right at the hangar for two days. Two different times I was in that Sikorsky plane on short patrols. Then after the patrol would come in, I'd report back to my squadron for duties down there.

Marcello: What was your attitude towards the Japanese now that all this had occurred? You mentioned awhile ago that you really hadn't thought too much about the Japanese at all before the attack.

Hemingway: My opinion wasn't too good of them, I'll tell you. I didn't think they were very honorable people to pull a thing like this. I just didn't have too much use for them, and for a long time after that, even after the war was over, I still didn't have too much use for the Japanese people.

Marcello: As you look back on that experience--and this is the only time I'll give you the opportunity to use hindsight--how do you think the Japanese were able to pull off that attack?

Hemingway: They're pretty diplomatic people. I read after the war was over with that they were the type of people

that prepared for something way in advance under very, very secret ways and places, and the only way I could see that they really did it is by coming in from the far north, way above Midway Island, which we had patrols out there, too. They had to come way past the range of our patrols and had to pass them at night. Then they steamed into the northern part of the Hawaiian Islands. They were well-prepared, well-trained, and they went through a lot of training to do it. They were just very, very diplomatic about it. That's all.

Marcello: Did you ever blame any individuals for the disaster that occurred?

Hemingway: I don't see how you can blame any one individual. Who could you put to one individual the blame for it? There was too many people that was in command, but I couldn't put the blame on any one person, no.