

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
242

Interview with
T. A. Roth, Jr.
August 25, 1974

Place of Interview: San Antonio, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: OPEN
Approved: T.A. Roth, Jr.
Date: 8-25-74

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

Theodore Roth

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: San Antonio, Texas

Date: August 25, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. Theodore Roth for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on August 25, 1974, in San Antonio, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Roth in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the destroyer USS Hull during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

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

Mr. Roth: Okay, I was born in Saint Joseph, Missouri, in 1923 and lived in Kansas City for a little while. I moved to Texas when I was seven years. I went through high school. I went into the Navy when I was eighteen years old.

Marcello: First of all, why did you decide to enter the service?

Roth: Well, this, I don't remember, but my mother told me-- it sounds kind of flukey maybe or something--but she said that I said that when I was about seventeen that we was going to go to war, and I decided that I was going to join. That's the reason I joined the Navy.

Marcello: What made you think that perhaps the country might be going to war?

Roth: Oh, just the way things were going, like that sinking of the Panay over there in China.

Marcello: However, when you thought of the country going to war, were you mainly thinking in terms of Europe rather than in terms of a war against the Japanese, or even at that time did you feel that something might happen with the Japanese?

Roth: I guess it was more Europe than it was the Japanese.

Marcello: When was it that you entered the service, what year?

Roth: '41.

Marcello: 1941, January, 1941. In other words, almost a year before the actual attack on Pearl Harbor. Why did you decide upon the Navy rather than one of the other branches of the service?

Roth: I don't know. It was just in my blood. I always wanted to be a sailor and that was it. I was a sailor for five and a half years.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Roth: San Diego.

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

Roth: No, nothing. Just regular routine stuff. Just learning how to get along with people, which I think any service is good for any young man.

Marcello: Where did you go after you left boot camp?

Roth: Well, I went to San Francisco first and then right on out to Honolulu. I was under the COM Hawaiian Sea Frontier all the time I was in the Navy.

Marcello: That was called COM . . .

Roth: COM Hawaiian Sea Frontier. That means Commander Hawaiian Sea Frontier.

Marcello: Did you go directly aboard the destroyer Hull when you got to Pearl?

Roth: Yes, I was assigned to the Hull then.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being assigned to a destroyer?

Roth: I thought it was great.

Marcello: What did you find great about destroyer duty or being a destroyerman?

Roth: Well, it had a little prestige with it. I don't know why. It's like some admiral said . . . when the war

broke out he said that the little ships would do all the fighting, and the big ships would get all the credit, and he was right.

Marcello: Was there a certain amount of pride involved in being a destroyerman?

Roth: Yes, there was, very much so.

Marcello: And as I recall these destroyers were divided into divisions, were they not?

Roth: That's right, yes.

Marcello: What particular division were you in?

Roth: I believe it was the 4th, but I'm not sure.

Marcello: What were some of the other destroyers that were in there with you?

Roth: Well, I'll tell you. There was the Hull, the Dewey, the Phelps. I can't remember the name of the other one.

Marcello: Were there usually four destroyers in a division?

Roth: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: And, of course, then you worked in conjunction with the cruisers and the battleships, I suppose.

Roth: Right, yes. We also did plane guard duty for the carriers.

Marcello: When you say plane guard duty for the carriers, that means that you were out there circling around in case one of those planes had to splash or something.

Roth: That's correct. Whenever they took off . . . well, mostly when they . . . well, whenever they took off and landed planes on the carrier. That's what we did, stayed behind the carrier, in the wake of the carrier, and if one did splash, we'd pick the guy up.

Marcello: What were you striking for aboard that destroyer? Of course, when you went on you were a deck hand probably.

Roth: That's true. I was second class seaman, and then I made first class. Then I struck for radioman.

Marcello: Radioman?

Roth: Yes.

Marcello: And I assume that you received your on-the-job training right there on the Hull.

Roth: That's right.

Marcello: How would you describe the training that you received?

Roth: Well, it was very good because I had a guy that was very interested in me, and I was interested in codes. Don't ask me why, but I liked the code. I thought I never to this day would ever get it through my thick skull. He kept saying, "Just keep listening, just keep listening, just keep listening." He was right. One day you sit down at a typewriter, and it's just like you and I talking right now. You get it overnight, but you just have to keep after it.

Marcello: You mentioned that you did have a good teacher. I'll bet that he had a great many years in the service.

Roth: No, that's the wrong conception. He was just a young guy not too much older than I was. He was one of those natural born teachers. That's all it was. If a guy wanted to learn something, he was interested in helping.

Marcello: Was it true, however, that aboard the Hull there were a great many of what one might call old salts, that is, people with a great many years of experience?

Roth: That's true, yes. There sure were. I think our chief was about fifty-five years old. He may not have been; he just looked it.

Marcello: I understand that rank was very, very hard to come by in that pre-World War Navy, also.

Roth: Yes, it was. A lot of people were trying for the same thing, and it was very competitive, either by examination or your deeds. Mostly, there had to be an opening for a rate that you were trying to get.

Marcello: When did you become a radioman third class?

Roth: Oh, boy.

Marcello: Would it have been prior to Pearl Harbor?

Roth: No, no.

Marcello: It was after Pearl?

Roth: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, you were still, what, a seaman perhaps at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack?

Roth: Yes, I was seaman second class.

Marcello: Seaman second class.

Roth: Well, I wasn't even in the radio part of it yet. I was still on deck then.

Marcello: Oh, at Pearl Harbor you were still a deck hand? I see. You were actually a radioman striker after Pearl Harbor.

Roth: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, how would you describe the morale in the pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Roth: The morale as I can describe it was very good.

Marcello: How do you account for this?

Roth: We didn't know what was going on from what I can account for. I mean, we didn't have any idea what was going on.

Marcello: Did you have a good skipper aboard that destroyer?

Roth: Very good.

Marcello: Also, I would assume that the type of skipper one has aboard a destroyer can do a lot to determine what the morale is going to be, especially since the crew of a destroyer is so small.

Roth: This is true. He was a work hard, play hard skipper. If you did a good job for him, when he hit the beach

everything went. Whatever you wanted, he got for you.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going to the Hawaiian Islands?

Roth: Well, I was fascinated real well, but, of course, I grew up in Texas, and I went and saw big Waikiki Beach, and I was the most disappointed guy you ever saw in your life (chuckle).

Marcello: Why was that?

Roth: I was used to driving a car thirty or forty miles along the beach, and here was a beach about two blocks long.

Marcello: Now when you got over to the Hawaiian Islands, I assume that the Hull was engaging in almost weekly maneuvers with the other ships of the fleet. Describe what these maneuvers and alerts were like. First of all, how often would you go out, and how long would you stay out?

Roth: Well, we'd usually go out . . . well, we would go every week mostly, unless there was something was wrong with the destroyer that had to be repaired. Then we had to stay in longer. But we were going out, I would say, at least once or twice a week, and maybe we'd stay about ten to fourteen days. The maneuvers were firing at a target being towed by another destroyer with our five-inch guns and submarine tracking with the sonar gear that we had at that time.

Marcello: How old or how new a ship was the Hull? Would you have any idea as to when it was commissioned?

Roth: That's what I'm trying to think. There were four-stackers back in World War I. This was called a stack and a half. I believe the ship was commissioned in the late '20's, but I'm not . . . or it might be late '30's. I'm not absolutely sure.

Marcello: And as you mentioned, when you went on these maneuvers, you would be out for ten to fourteen days at a time.

Roth: That's right, yes.

Marcello: And I assume that a lot of times you would again be working in conjunction with the cruisers and the battleships and sometimes the carriers.

Roth: Yes, and sometimes the submarines.

Marcello: When you came back into port, how long would you usually stay in before you went back out again?

Roth: A week or ten days.

Marcello: Well, when you came back into port after being on these maneuvers, what sort of liberty would you usually get?

Roth: Port and starboard. That means that starboard would go one day and port side would go the other.

Marcello: In other words, you would have liberty every other day or every other evening, I guess, whatever the case might be.

Roth: Unless you was a mess cook, then you was off every night.

Marcello: I see. What would you usually do when you had liberty? In other words, what was the social life like for a young sailor in Honolulu?

Roth: Well, being eighteen years old, there wasn't too much. I'll retrack that. We had lots we could do. As far as drinking or anything like that, we couldn't unless we had a fake I.D. card, which I didn't. I couldn't have passed for twenty-one for a thousand dollars. So we just . . . mostly, I would, myself . . . a bunch of guys, we'd go out on . . . young guys that couldn't drink, you know. We'd just go surfing, maybe, or mostly go swimming and take in the island sights, which there was plenty of pretty things to see in Honolulu. You know, you could go every day. In fact, thanks to the Japanese, I got gypped out of a trip of going around the island. I was going that Sunday morning.

Marcello: Is that right?

Roth: They were taking us by sections, and I never made it.

Marcello: I understand that when the fleet was in, downtown Honolulu was just packed full of sailors from all of the various ships.

Roth: That's true.

Marcello: I understand this is especially true down on Hotel Street and areas in that neighborhood, where there were so many sailors that they would even overflow into the streets.

Roth: That's true.

Marcello: Generally speaking, let's say on a Saturday night, what would be the condition of most of the men who came back aboard that destroyer after being out for ten to fourteen days or longer?

Roth: They would be pretty well crocked, is what I'd say (chuckle).

Marcello: In other words, a good many crew members would come back intoxicated and this sort of thing.

Roth: That's true, yes.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how would this affect their ability to perform their duties the following day? Would most of them recover pretty quickly, or what would you have to say about this?

Roth: Under normal circumstances, it would take them quite awhile, but on December 7, they reacted very fast, and I mean fast.

Marcello: Okay, this is something that I did want to get into the record. How safe and secure did you feel at Pearl Harbor

even as conditions or relations between the United States and Japan grew steadily worse?

Roth: To tell you the truth, I wasn't giving it much thought. At that age I was listening to the news, and it probably was going over my head. I was more interested in what was going on around me at that particular time than what was going on in the world.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind?

Roth: Well, there was plenty of them there in Honolulu. All you had to do was look. They're just an ordinary person. I had no thought one way or the other.

Marcello: Did you and your buddies in your bull sessions ever talk about the capabilities of the Japanese Navy or anything of this nature? Was there ever much thought given to the Japanese Navy?

Roth: Not to my recollection, no. Not in my particular case. We never talked about it. Like I said, at our age we were just having a good time when we could and doing our job at the best as what we thought was our ability.

Marcello: Now as you get closer and closer to Pearl Harbor, that is, the actual attack itself, did your training routine change or vary any, or was it more or less the same sort

of operation? In other words, did you do anything differently when you went out on maneuvers during, let's say, the months and weeks immediately prior to Pearl Harbor?

Roth: I wouldn't say we did anything different, but we was out more. We'd stay, I said before, fourteen days. Oh, maybe we'd stay out twenty or thirty days. Maybe we'd come back in and stay two or three days and go right back again. There was more emphasis on submarine tracking.

Marcello: Did you ever come across any unidentified submarines out there? I know from time to time some of the other ships claim that they spotted unidentified submarines.

Roth: We did, but every time we did it, it turned out to be one of ours. We never, to my knowledge, come across one that wasn't one of ours.

Marcello: How did this constant maneuvering affect the morale of the crew? I would assume that while you were out there, there were all sorts of drills and things of this nature. Did they get to become rather boring or a pain after awhile?

Roth: Yes, there was a lot of bitching and complaining and carrying on, you know, like "What do we have to do all

of that for?" and "Good God! We were just out here the other day." Of course, there was the question "What's coming off?" Of course, like I said, I'm sure a lot of the other guys or older men or people were . . . had a pretty good idea what was going on or why we were doing all of this. But me being so young, a lot of this stuff was going over my head.

Marcello: Incidentally, where was your battle station aboard the Hull?

Roth: I was on the number two gun right below the bridge.

Marcello: And this was a five-inch gun?

Roth: That's right.

Marcello: What was your particular function on the gun?

Roth: Range finder.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less brings us up to the days immediately prior to the actual Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. What I want you to do at this point, Mr. Roth, is to describe in as much detail as you can remember what your activities were on Saturday, December 6, 1941. Then from there we'll go into Sunday, December 7, 1941, when the actual attack occurred. But first of all, let's talk about that Saturday, December 6. Describe what you did from the

time you got up until you went to bed that day, if you can remember.

Roth: Oh, I can remember very easily because I had the duty. I was in the mess hall. In other words, I was pulling what was called KP. I'm sure everybody knows what KP is. I got up about, oh, I'd say 5:30 or 6:00 and went to the mess hall and got everything ready. At that time we were still using plates and all that stuff. We had to get plates set out for the crewmen and get everything ready.

Marcello: Now where was the mess hall located on the destroyer?

Roth: It was up forward just right below the main deck.

Marcello: Was it right below the main deck?

Roth: The main deck and right below the captain's quarters. Well, the captain's quarters--the ward room as they call it--where the officers eat. It was in the forward part of the ship.

Marcello: So you were one deck down, in other words?

Roth: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, pick up the story again.

Roth: Of course, the last chow was Saturday. There wasn't too many people aboard. We just had to feed the crew that was there on watch.

Marcello: Had you just come in off maneuvers?

Roth: It must have been about four or five days before because we were tied up alongside of a tender, and we had all the boilers broken down, so we could not move. We were dead in the water.

Marcello: You had no steam at all?

Roth: No, sir. To go back to that day, I did not go ashore because I was broke. I had no money. I really didn't want to go ashore that night, so I took in a movie and went to bed.

Marcello: Do you recall approximately what time you turned in that night?

Roth: I'd say before midnight--eleven or twelve o'clock, somewhere in there.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were broke. When was payday?

Roth: Oh, boy. Well, the payday would have had to have been the first. But at that time we were making over twenty-one dollars then, but we wasn't making too much over that at the time.

Marcello: I know some people got paid on the first and the fifteenth or the fifteenth and the thirtieth or something of that nature. I'm not sure if that would be true for the Hull or not.

Roth: I just can't really remember when payday was.

Marcello: Okay, do you remember anything eventful that happened that particular night, that is, did the usual number of drunks come back aboard the ship that you can personally recall or anything of this nature? Or was this a more quiet Saturday night than usual?

Roth: I would say it was a more quiet Saturday night than usual.

Marcello: Was this because most of them were broke, too?

Roth: I think so. That, and there wasn't too much going on. In fact . . .

Marcello: You mentioned that the ship had been in port five days or something like that. Probably, they didn't have too much money.

Roth: No. After you go ashore so many times, well, that's it. It's there if you want to go. If you don't want to, well, you don't have to.

Marcello: Incidentally, where was the Hull tied up?

Roth: Well, it was tied up at the . . . I would have to say the west end of Ford Island, but I don't know whether the direction is right or not.

Marcello: Where were you tied up in relation to the battleships? In other words, were you very far from the battleships?

Roth: We were far from the battleships, but we wasn't far from the Arizona.

Marcello: Could you see any of the battleships, other than the Arizona?

Roth: I could see the Arizona very good. In fact, I saw the Arizona blow up.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that it was a rather uneventful Saturday night, so this would drift us into Sunday morning. Again, I'll ask you to pick up the story and go into as much detail as you can remember as to what happened on that Sunday.

Roth: Okay, I got up and I was still a mess cook. So I was up at six o'clock and got everything ready to serve breakfast again. I just got through cleaning up everything. I had just finished breakfast, so that means that everybody had eaten that wanted to eat. I had just . . . this may have something to do with it or not. I'm just going to keep on talking. It's stuck in my mind that Glen Miller's band was playing "Elmer's Tune" on the radio at this particular time.

Marcello: Glen Miller's band?

Roth: Yes.

Marcello: I think that is kind of interesting and significant that you remember that.

Roth: About that time I went topside, and some guy come running down deck and said, "The Japs are attacking!" I said, "You're nuts!" About that time I looked over, and the Arizona just blew up.

Marcello: That's the first thing . . . you had not heard any noise or explosions or anything else?

Roth: No, sir. I never heard a thing till then.

Marcello: Describe the blowing up of the Arizona.

Roth: Well, to say the least, it was the most . . . there's no words to describe it. It's just . . . it just didn't happen to an American battleship, but it did.

Marcello: You actually didn't see the bombs fall or anything. You just happened to see it blowing up.

Roth: I just saw the ship itself break in half because they threw a bomb right down its stack, and when they did that, it went right down into the bottom of the ship and it cracked.

Marcello: How far were you from the Arizona when this took place?

Roth: I'd say approximately half a mile, maybe a little farther.

Marcello: What sort of a day was this climate-wise or in terms of visibility?

Roth: Very clear and very . . . well, the sun was up, and everything was . . . well, you could see everything. There were no visual problems whatsoever.

Marcello: Okay, so what did it look like when the Arizona actually blew up? Was there a lot of smoke and things of this nature?

Roth: A big ball of smoke was coming out, and fire, and then there was oil all over the water, and burning. Of course, I could not see anybody on it. I was too far for that. I didn't see any men, you know, being burned or anything of that nature. All I saw was the ship. Then I got scared. Then I really got scared. But by the time they got around to us, we were able to shoot back.

Marcello: Okay, so you saw the Arizona blow up.

Roth: Let me just put in a little injection here. By this time the tender which we were alongside of had gone to a condition of "Affirm." That means it shut down everything. They closed all hatches. We had no power whatsoever aboard our ship.

Marcello: They went to a condition called "Affirm."

Roth: Yes, that means that everything is . . . in case you get hit what . . . if you get one hole blown into you somewhere, one compartment will keep from flooding . . . will only flood one compartment. "Affirm" is to close everything off that you possibly can.

Marcello: In other words, just talking in terms of watertight integrity.

Roth: That's right. You took the words out of my mouth. I couldn't think of what to say. You make it as watertight as you can. So in that respect about, I'd say, three decks down--and I don't know how far it was from the deck where I was or from the bridge to the magazine where all this ammunition came from--there was two guys down there that cranked by hand five-inch shells and powder to go with them. By three o'clock that afternoon we had five-inch shells and powder laying all over that place. Of course, the powder was in a can which won't explode. You have to put the powder in first and a projectile in front of it. Then you breech it and it fires. But these two guys must have worked themselves to death down there because, man, they really had the ammunition up there! We lacked for nothing.

Marcello: Okay, well, let's just go back a minute now. You mentioned that you saw the Arizona exploding. Then what was your next move from that point? What did you do then? I assume by this time general quarters had been sounded.

Roth: That's true. They had, definitely.

Marcello: Well, I was already on my gun or was going to my gun or my battle station, we'll say, which was on the gun.

I just watched the Arizona going. By that time I was looking up in the sky, looking to see what was coming over. As I looked up, here comes a plane.

Marcello: This is actually before you got to your gun position.

Roth: Yes, I was between the bridge and the outside and coming to the gun. As I looked up, I looked right into the barrel of an old Lewis .50 caliber machine gun from the rear seat of an old Japanese biplane. It looked like a World War I plane. Why he never fired, I don't know, but he didn't.

Marcello: How low was this plane?

Roth: Eye-level to me, practically.

Marcello: Could you actually get a good view of the pilot and the gunner?

Roth: Yes.

Marcello: What did they look like?

Roth: All I could see was goggles and that's all. I wasn't too much interested in what they looked like. All I was interested in was getting the hell out of there (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you know by this time that they were Japanese planes that were doing the attacking?

Roth: Yes, we knew this before we went to general quarters.

Marcello: I see. Okay, now you saw the Japanese plane, and I assume from that point you went into your gun position.

Roth: That's right.

Marcello: At this time how would you describe the general reaction of the men? Was it one of panic? Confusion? Fear? Professionalism? How would you describe their reaction?

Roth: I would describe the reactions just as you did. It went from fear to panic to "Let's get them right now!" "The next one over ain't going to make it!" That's how fast the morale came from, I would say, almost zero to almost 2,000 per cent, if you want to say that, as high as it could go. In other words, you're going to say, "Let's get that next son-of-a-bitch that comes over because here he comes!" And we did.

Marcello: Were there any targets around the Hull that the Japanese might have been after?

Roth: Yes, there were.

Marcello: What other ships were around the Hull?

Roth: Well, there was the old Utah, which was almost out of commission.

Marcello: But which looked like an aircraft carrier from up above.

Roth: That's true, and they threw everything they had at it. In fact, it rolled over but they didn't lose any men, thank God. They just walked off of that into Ford Island because it was tied up there. They went after that real good. Of course, we was in between them.

Marcello: You were what? You were in between . . .

Roth: Well, we were not actually between. We were kind of off to the side of them, but they could get to this . . . they could bomb it from a high level, or they could torpedo it from low level or dive bomb it or whatever they wanted to. They did a good job of it, but I think we got two or three planes. I don't know how many we got, but I know we got some. It was just the fact that . . . to put a little humor in this thing, you take nine destroyers tied up along our . . . or eight. It's eight or nine. You're firing five-inch guns. Now remember all of these five-inch guns are all trained the same way. If they're coming from the right, they're shooting over your head, and if they're coming from the left, you're shooting over their head. So everytime they shoot over your head, you just get knocked flat on your fanny, see, and the same thing happens to them. Well, everybody would take credit for hitting them, but irregardless, we got some. They didn't all get away.

Marcello: How many shells would you estimate that that five-inch battery that you were on threw up that day?

Roth: I would say somewhere in the neighborhood of two to five hundred. We fired at everything that was moving in the air, including sea gulls, I guess.

Marcello: Now I would assume that there was no ammunition at the gun itself.

Roth: No, there was none there.

Marcello: This was standard procedure, was it not?

Roth: Yes, that's right. They kept the ammunition in the magazine down in the hold.

Marcello: And as you mentioned, this hoist actually had to be operated by hand to get that ammunition up to the gun. How tough a job was this?

Roth: Very, very tough. Of course, if you just do it manually . . . and it was . . . I wish I could remember the guy's name. He was a great, big, husky Swede. I say there were two. Maybe somebody was . . . I don't know what was going on down there because I wasn't there. All I know is there were two guys normally down there during general quarters when we was doing all the practicing. In case the gear broke down, that's what they were there for--to get the ammunition to us by hand.

Marcello: Now when you say that they were getting the ammunition to you, are you referring both to the powder and to the projectile itself?

Roth: Right, because we'd put one on top of the other.

Marcello: How much does this weigh?

Roth: Well, the five-inch . . . I would say the shell would weigh anywhere from seventy-five to a hundred pounds.

Marcello: And how about the powder?

Roth: The powder was very light. It was just in aluminum casings. You could take one in each hand and throw it.

Marcello: But to lift those projectiles all day was a superhuman effort.

Roth: Right, and I don't think anybody ever got tired. I'll tell you how fast the day was. We went to general quarters at 7:45. I went to the galley for a cup of coffee, which I thought was noon. It was six o'clock that night. That's how fast the day went for me.

Marcello: How many five-inch guns did you have aboard that destroyer?

Roth: Four.

Marcello: So those guys were really hoisting a lot of shells up there.

Roth: Yes, they were. Well, each gun had its own magazine, and like I said, when you don't have any juice or anything to get them up electrically, somebody's got to do an awful lot of work.

Marcello: Did you have any other antiaircraft weapons aboard that ship, that is, 20 millimeters or anything of this nature?

Roth: No, we only had .50 caliber machine guns, is all we had at that time. They soon after installed 20 millimeters. There was one ship, the Phelps, that had what the British called pom-pom guns. They was trying them out very good. Knocking our heads off, too.

Marcello: In what way?

Roth: Well, the noise was all.

Marcello: Now during most of the actual attack, I assume that you were inside that turret and weren't able to observe too much of what was going on outside.

Roth: That's true.

Marcello: When you were in there, did you mention that you were a range finder?

Roth: Yes, sir.

Marcello: And this is what you were doing that day.

Roth: A ranger finder, for anybody that don't know what it is . . . they send the range down from the bridge on a little

calculated disc thing that has two pointers on it. If they want the shell to go fifty feet in the air and explode, they put it there. You match it up on the gun. Then you ram the projectile and the powder in the casing, and then you fire it. You don't have . . . well, we fired it . . . no, we didn't fire it. Yes, we had to fire it then because it was manual. Normally, it's fired by the control up on top of the bridge. That's where the firing control center is situated, but we had to do everything manually. Our phones did work because they ran off of batteries instead of off of electrical parts, which we had to have our generators running. So they could talk to us on the guns which I also was . . . I was a talker along with being a range finder. In other words, I'd tell a guy . . . they'd send down a point or they'd give us a mark, and I'd put the mark on it and then tell them what it was. When you do this, you have a place on top of the nose of the five-inch shells to put the mark at, like five or ten miles or fifty feet or 150 yards or whatever you want. They have an instrument to set that. That's antiaircraft, and then the other type . . . if you're just going to

shoot at something that's not flying, well, you just leave it alone and fire. Then it becomes a armor piercing shell, that's all.

Marcello: What were conditions like being inside that turret and firing away at those planes? Did it become hot or sweaty or anything like that in there?

Roth: No, like I said, the only thing was that I was scared. Then I got humiliated, and then I got damn mad.

Marcello: When you say you got humiliated there, what do you mean by that--just the fact that the Japanese had done all of this damage?

Roth: Because they caught us with our pants, that's just what I mean exactly. I don't think it should have been that way.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do then in the aftermath of the attack?

Roth: Well, the aftermath of the attack was . . . we stayed there and looked till sunset practically. By that time we had gotten our boilers put back together and in working condition, and we got underway and cleared the harbor by sundown or before they closed the submarine nets.

Marcello: In other words, did you leave with a few of the other destroyers in an attempt to try and locate or find the Japanese fleet?

Roth: This is true, but we didn't leave with the other destroyers. We left by ourselves, period.

Marcello: Was this the general rule, that is, as each destroyer picked up enough steam it left on its own?

Roth: That's right.

Marcello: What would you have done if you had found this Japanese fleet?

Roth: Well, let me tell you something about that. This is the next day about sundown. We came upon about two cruisers, three destroyers, and one, big, huge aircraft carrier, and we gave them a recognition signal. Now keep in mind that we were coming from the sun, and we had very little radar at that time, very little.

Marcello: And you were still alone?

Roth: Yes, we were alone. They did not answer the recognition signal. So the old man, the skipper as he's called, started calling for more knots. So this particular tin can I was on, at thirty-five knots you were vibrating very good. He was getting thirty-eight out of it, and it was about to shake apart. He

sent another recognition signal, and he still didn't get no answer. So they trained all the torpedo tubes on the carrier, and we pointed all the guns toward that carrier. He said we were going to go in as close as we can and throw all our fish at them, at the carrier, and ram the first son-of-a-bitch that gets in our way. Of course, he was not our skipper. He was a commander of the division force.

At that time you could have heard a pin drop all over that ship. Nobody wasn't saying anything except good-bye to each other. We sent one more recognition signal. It came back that it was the Lexington. So we went "Pheeew! That was good." But, now, we didn't find any carriers or anything else in answer to your question.

Marcello: I knew that you hadn't. I don't know what you'd have done even if you had found them really (chuckle). There's one other question that I have about the actual attack itself. I would assume that on that Sunday morning there weren't too many of your officers aboard. Did most of the officers usually go ashore for the weekends?

Roth: Yes, most of them did if they didn't have the duty.

Marcello: Were most of them back aboard that ship by the time the Hull had enough steam to get out of the harbor?

Roth: Everybody but the skipper. The captain didn't get back for some reason. I don't know why. I was told when we came back in port he was there, but . . .

Marcello: Now as you were steaming out of the harbor, did you get a chance to survey the damage that was done there?

Roth: Yes.

Marcello: I guess this might have been your first chance, would it not?

Roth: That's right.

Marcello: What did it look like? Describe it in your own words and what your feelings were when you saw it.

Roth: It was the most pathetic and devastating thing I ever saw in my whole life. In fact, we passed the old Detroit, which was a four-stack cruiser. I don't know whether she got hit or not--I can't remember--but I know she was sitting dead in the water alongside Ford Island. In fact, that's the only ship we did pass because we went on the opposite side of it. We could not go around where the battleships were because there was too much debris and stuff in the water over there, and they wouldn't let us go that way.

Marcello: Was the water still on fire or anything of that nature?

Roth: Oh, yes, still burning. It burned all night long.

Marcello: What were your feelings when you saw all this?

Roth: Outrage, mad, let's go get 'em. That's all.

Marcello: Did the Hull ever become involved in any of the scares involving the midget submarines on your way out?

Roth: No, we didn't. We weren't involved, but that scared me a lot, too. I just heard over the intercom. They said there was a submarine in the harbor, and I said, "Oh, my God! What else?"

Marcello: I would assume that in the aftermath of the attack there were all sorts of wild rumors running around that ship.

Roth: Oh, yes.

Marcello: What were some of the rumors that you heard?

Roth: Well, a lot of rumors such as "How come somebody didn't tell us?" and "Why weren't we notified?" or "We were let down."

Marcello: Did you ever hear the rumors about the Japanese landing troops, paratroopers, or things of this nature?

Roth: Yes, yes, same thing, yes. We heard that all over, yes, especially that night.

Marcello: You mentioned that prior to the actual attack you didn't have really any feelings one way or the other toward the Japanese as a group of people. Did your attitude change any after the attack itself?

Roth: In about five seconds. That's all it took, especially when I looked up and saw that plane flying over there. I didn't have very good feelings for them at all. In fact, I hated their guts.

Marcello: You mentioned that the Hull went out that evening of December 7. When did it return?

Roth: Oh, about ten days as to my recollection. We may not have stayed out that long, but I think it was about ten days.

Marcello: Did anything eventful happen other than coming into contact with those American ships.

Roth: That's the only eventful thing that happened. That's all.

Marcello: When you came back in, was there still a great deal of evidence of the destruction that had been done at Pearl? In other words, was there still fires going or anything of this nature?

Roth: No, the fires were out, but the damage was still all there. Every battleship had been hit. We came around

that side that time when we came in. We could really see what was done then. I think it was just about as bad, or worse, coming back to that than it was when we left as far as, you know, feeling "My God! Look what they've done."

Marcello: Well, by this time I guess you would have had your wits about you just a little bit more probably than when you had gone to sea that evening of the attack. You were still probably excited and really didn't have the inclination to view in a great deal of detail what had been going on around you.

Roth: That's true, yes.

Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack did you ever blame anybody for what happened, or did you try to find a scapegoat, that is, you and your buddies when you got together in a bull session or anything of this nature?

Roth: We think it came from the highest place in the United States--the President on down. It just happened, and it was let happen. That was our conception. That was the way we always felt. A couple of guys got blamed for the whole thing, and that was Kimmel and Short. They took the brunt of it, but it was not their fault because we was on alert till the Friday night before, and they called

us off for Saturday. That doesn't make very good sense to me.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were on alert that Friday before Pearl Harbor.

Roth: Yes.

Marcello: This, of course, would have been December 5. What sort of an alert was this?

Roth: Just nobody could go ashore. Nobody could do anything. You were just on a standby alert. That's all.

Marcello: How long had you been on that alert?

Roth: Twenty-four hours.

Marcello: It was just on that Friday of December 5.

Roth: Right. Whether it had anything to do with Pearl Harbor or not, I haven't the slightest idea.