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Interview with  
James H. Barclay  
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Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas  
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello  
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Oral History Collection

James Barclay

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing James Barclay for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on August 21, 1974, in Fort Worth, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Barclay in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the old battleship USS Utah during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Barclay, to begin this interview 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. Barclay: Well, I was born on September 12, 1923, and I finished the eighth grade. I just went through the eighth grade in school.

Dr. Marcello: Where were you born?

Barclay: I was born in White City, Texas.

Marcello: When did you enter the service?

Barclay: May 27, 1941.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join the service?

Barclay: Mainly, I guess, to keep from getting drafted. I wanted to go into the Navy instead of the Army. I'd say this: jobs were pretty hard to get, and you needed to do something in them days.

Marcello: Well, that's kind of a standard reason that a lot of people have given for entering the service at that particular time. It was mainly a matter of economics. Jobs were still quite hard to come by. I think things were getting better, but things were by no means back to normal, even as late as 1941 yet.

Barclay: Well, I'll tell you why I really joined. I just happened to think about it. A friend of mine talked me into joining. He was home on furlough, and he was on the USS Houston in the Philippines, and he was killed down there. He was a real good friend of mine. So really, he was the one who talked me into joining. But really, I already had the idea before that, but he kind of helped me make up my mind.

Marcello: Why did the Navy appeal to you rather than the Army?

Barclay: I guess some of the movies you'd see about the Navy, probably (chuckle).

Marcello: How closely were you keeping abreast with current events and world affairs at that time?

Barclay: Pretty close. I knew what was going on. I had some cousins that had joined the service, and they knew what was going on. In other words, we knew that eventually we was going to get into a war, I think.

Marcello: Did you suspect that the war would come in the Pacific, however, or were your eyes turned basically toward Europe?

Barclay: No, we kind of suspected it over there, really. In fact, up in Bremerton, Washington, in September, we were talking about what was probably going to happen. Somebody had a general idea because there was always a rumor going on about Japan.

Marcello: I would assume that you took your boot camp at San Diego.

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: Did anything eventful happen in boot camp that you think ought to be a part of the record, or was it simply a typical Navy boot camp experience?

Barclay: It was typical, really. I don't think there was anything spectacular about it that we should have bring into it. I really don't.

Marcello: Where did you go from boot camp?

Barclay: I went aboard the USS Neosho, an oil tanker.

Marcello: Now that ship was also at Pearl Harbor later on, was it not?

Barclay: It was sunk at Midway, I believe it was. No, it wasn't Midway. It was sunk down in the South Pacific right after that, right after the war started.

Then I went aboard the Utah. I transferred from it to the Utah. Then we left there and we went to Pearl. We were a target ship out there. We towed the targets and we had thirty-six inches of lumber on top of our ship because our planes would come in and bomb us, and they had it on there so those bombs wouldn't go through.

Marcello: Now where did you board the Utah?

Barclay: In Bremerton, Washington.

Marcello: I see. In other words, you were on board the Neosho when you got out of boot camp, and you eventually got aboard the Utah, then, at Bremerton, Washington.

Barclay: That's right.

Marcello: What was the Utah doing at Bremerton, Washington?

Barclay: Just remodeling. Just kind of remodeling. They put some experimental guns on there. We were also an

experimental ship. In other words, we were radar . . . radio-controlled then. You could set a course and never touch the wheel. I was kind of in that, too. You could go from 'Frisco to Pearl and never touch the instruments. So we were kind of experimenting, and we put some new antiaircraft guns on there that we were going to go out and try out, also. But I think we lost all that (chuckle).

Marcello: At Pearl during the attack?

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: How old was the Utah? It was a fairly old ship, was it not?

Barclay: It was about one of the oldest ships, I think. I forget when it was commissioned. I did know but I don't remember now. It was really almost obsolete. If we hadn't had that repair, you know . . . the only thing that was modern about it was our guns and the ammunition we had on it. We had experimental ammunition, also.

Marcello: But actually, the main batteries and all that sort of thing had been removed from the Utah, had they not? You didn't have your main battery weapons or anything aboard, did you, while it was being used as an experimental ship?

Barclay: Oh, yes, we had guns, all new guns, you see. I think they brought them up. That's the only thing they wanted off of it. But I don't know for sure. They were going to try to get the guns off of it because they were a new-type of gun.

Marcello: I was under the impression that the turrets had been removed from the Utah and this sort of thing, where you had your main batteries--your twelve or fourteen-inch guns.

Barclay: I don't believe so. Now we had new five-inch antiaircraft, was what we were mainly interested in then. In other words, we had all new antiaircraft, five-inch, and I believe, if I remember then, it was when the shells first come out that when they'd go so close to a target, and they'd burst in the air and make shrapnel that came out. By then, I was on a machine gun. I wasn't stationed on a big gun.

Marcello: What exactly was your function aboard the Utah?

Barclay: Well, I was really mixed up in a lot of different things. Mainly, I used to be helmsman quite a lot. In other words, I was going to school on that. Also, I was taking semaphore. I wanted to be a signalman, but I never did get into it after the war started. Then they wanted gunners. I had really been trained in gunnery, and I



never did get into it. I stayed at that helm, at the wheel, quite a lot.

Marcello: What were you specifically striking for when you were aboard the Utah? What was your rank when you were aboard the Utah?

Barclay: Apprentice seaman.

Marcello: I see, apprentice seaman. Okay. When did the Utah arrive in Pearl? You'd probably have to approximate this date.

Barclay: I'd say around . . . my birthday is in September. I believe we were there. I'll tell you when we left. We left Long Beach on my birthday, I believe, on the twelfth of September, and I don't remember just how long it took us to get over there, but we were there in September.

Marcello: And you remained there right on through the attack then.

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: With the exception of going out for maneuvers and alerts and that sort of thing.

Barclay: Yes, sir. We were there all during that time.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit, then, about the alerts and maneuvers in which the Utah participated. Again, what exactly was the function of the Utah during the maneuvers and so on that were held during this period between September and December of 1941?

Barclay: Well, if I understand you right, we were going out every day, and we'd either tow a flag target behind us and let ships fire at it, or if we didn't do that, our planes would come in and strike us, you see. Now we didn't man any guns or anything because our guns were all covered up. In other words, we had about a half-inch of metal over every turret on there. We couldn't have fired. It would have took us two days to get ready to fire.

Marcello: You say you had a half-inch of metal over each turret?

Barclay: Over each turret, yes. Just like a little house so the bombs wouldn't damage them. But we spent practically all the time out just doing that. That's about the only thing we ever did. Of course, we used that radio deal a lot to steer the ship. Sometimes you'd go by your degrees, and then other times they'd just turn it on automatic, but you'd still have to sit there and watch it. Then they'd change it, and all you'd have to do is turn some switches to change to a certain course.

Marcello: What kind of practice bombs were these airplanes using?

Barclay: Oh, they were just using little old incendiary bombs. They were about eight inches long and would probably

weigh fifteen pounds or something like that. They'd explode.

Marcello: They were actually using exploding bombs aboard the Utah.

Barclay: Yes, sir. Just large enough to where the planes could see whether they hit or not.

Marcello: In other words, these were not water bombs or filled with sand or anything of this nature?

Barclay: No, they had explosives. They'd burn sometimes, and if they happened to hit into a crack . . . it was pretty hard . . . we had three layers of twelve-by-twelves, and if they happened to hit in a crack, they could go through. But that only happened, I think, a couple of times the whole time we were there. But we had a couple of fires where they'd explode and catch the lumber on fire.

Marcello: Were these basically railroad ties or something of this nature that you had aboard that battleship?

Barclay: No, they were . . . it seemed to me like they'd almost reach twenty feet. They were probably twelve-by-twelve-by-twenty, if I remember right. I know they were big.

Marcello: Well, where would you go during one of those practice bombing raids? How far below deck?

Barclay: Well, I went to the second deck. Now some of them went way on down to the third deck, and that's another thing

that kind of confused some of the men. When the Pearl Harbor attack happened, they thought it was really just a practice raid, and they all ran down. That's why we lost so many men for the amount we had on there--because they thought it was just a practice--and so they ran all the way down.

A good friend of mine by the name of Bingham--his relatives lives around here--was killed there. But he went down and he talked another friend of his into going with him. He said, "Come on, let's go!" So they went way down. His job was to man the hoist that brought the ammunition up, and he went down there. There was seven of them in there, and they all went down. I believe there was seven in that crew.

Marcello: Now, you mentioned awhile ago that the Utah was going out every day on these training exercises.

Barclay: Yes, every day. We'd come in on Sundays, usually. On Sundays we'd come into port. But usually it was about five or six days a week, and sometimes we didn't come in.

Marcello: That's kind of unusual, is it not, because I think most of the other ships usually were in on the weekends, were they not?

Barclay: Yes, they were.

Marcello: But the Utah a lot of times did not come in on the weekends.

Barclay: No, we didn't.

Marcello: Did the nature of your training exercises or maneuvers change any as one got closer to Pearl Harbor and as relations between the United States and Japan deteriorated even farther, or did your training routine remain almost the same right up until Pearl?

Barclay: About the same all the way right up. No change whatsoever until after the attack. Then it changed (chuckle).

Marcello: Obviously (chuckle). How safe did you feel being at Pearl Harbor.

Barclay: You mean before?

Marcello: Oh, yes, before the attack.

Barclay: Well, I felt pretty safe up until about a month before that, and then submarines used to start coming up, and all the older guys--some of them almost ready to get out--they stopped a few of them from getting out that had already done twenty or thirty years. They started talking about what was going to happen, and we'd see those subs out there, and we'd report them, and they wasn't doing much about anything.

Marcello: Could you identify these submarines?

Barclay: Oh, yes!

Marcello: I mean, did you know what nation they belonged to?

Barclay: Yes, we knew they were Japanese.

Marcello: What procedure would you follow when one of these submarines had been identified?

Barclay: You saw them and then you didn't hear anything else about it. If you saw them again, why, you just reported them again. Some of the guys got so tired of reporting them that they wouldn't even report them any longer.

Marcello: About how many times would you say that the Utah itself spotted these submarines?

Barclay: Oh, practically every day for at least two weeks, I'd say, before the war started. The last week was really the worst, and some of the guys kind of got nervous about it, you know. I don't guess I was really old enough or knew enough about it that it scared me that much. But we had a couple of them there that if they'd see one they got pretty upset, you know. They'd want to do something about it.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy? You can, of course, only speak for the Utah, I suppose.

Barclay: Well, I think it was good. As I say, I think it was good up until the last maybe week or something like that. But there was a lot of nervousness. Everybody was nervous.

Marcello: How do you account for the high morale aboard this ship?

Barclay: Well, we had good food on there and that's one thing. They called us the "landlubbers" because we never did take long voyages, like going to Guadalcanal or what-not. It was always around the training deals, you know. I guess that's really why. A lot of people liked it, and a lot of people wanted to be on it because you had a lot of liberty off of it. But everyone on there was happy, and we were just a big happy crew, really.

Marcello: I would assume that the fact that just about everybody was a volunteer had something to do with the high morale, also. Most people were in the Navy because they wanted to be in there.

Barclay: That's right. We had no draftees at all then--none at all.

Marcello: This was going to be my next question. I know that as one gets closer to Pearl Harbor, a lot of reservists

were coming into the Navy, and I was wondering if the Utah received any of these reservists that were coming in.

Barclay: I don't believe we did because . . . they didn't after I come on board the ship. I don't think anyone came on after I got on there, as I remember right now. In other words, we had a full crew whenever we left Bremerton. Everybody that was going on it got aboard in Bremerton, Washington, and no one else came on after that.

Marcello: Approximately what was the total complement of the Utah? You'd probably have to estimate this.

Barclay: I believe it was around 600. I believe it was around 160 officers, and the remainder was enlisted men.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that the personnel aboard the Utah received very good liberty. How did the liberty run? In other words, can you remember what sort of liberty you got?

Barclay: Either we got two out of three or every other liberty. We may have gotten two out of three. I really don't remember that.

Marcello: Now were you mentioning awhile ago that the Utah would come in every evening, or would it stay out for a week at a time or what?



Barclay: No, we'd stay out for a week at a time.

Marcello: I see. And then you would come in and have liberty. You mentioned that usually you would come in on a Saturday or a Sunday.

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: Normally, what was it--a Sunday?

Barclay: No, normally, it was on a Saturday. We would come in Saturday evening. Now that's the way we did that day. Of course, we were getting ready to go back to the States, and they gave us . . . they might have been just using that . . . they gave us the deal of going in Saturday and unloading and taking off or going and staying all night and then unload on Sunday and go back. I think they kind of had a vote, and they figured to, well, just wait until Sunday and unload, and we was going to unload all that lumber and then take off.

Marcello: But normally, what you're saying is that when you would come in, that is, into Pearl Harbor, you would normally have liberty on Sunday.

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: And you could expect perhaps two out of every three Sundays or something like that in getting liberty.

Barclay: Yes. Even if you went on Saturday--sometimes you'd get off on Saturdays--and then we had liberty on Sundays sometimes, but once in awhile you'd have a duty and stay on the ship.

Marcello: Normally, did you come back in on a Saturday evening?

Barclay: You had to. We had to be back by one o'clock. You mean off of liberty?

Marcello: No, your ship usually got in on a Saturday evening.

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: And they had to be in at one o'clock.

Barclay: Had to be in at one o'clock.

Marcello: That would be like one o'clock Sunday morning.

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: And I would assume that this routine also didn't change right up until the Japanese attack, either.

Barclay: No, it didn't change at all.

Marcello: What was the social life like for a young unmarried sailor in Honolulu or Pearl City?

Barclay: It was pretty great, really. I liked it out there. Most of the guys didn't like the town itself, but I knew some people out there that I'd met in Long Beach, and I had a ball out there, really.

Marcello: Did you frequent Hotel Street very much?

Barclay: No, that was kind of out of my line. A lot of the guys did. I'd go down there, you know, but I didn't ever participate in that particular ordeal (chuckle). I used to go up on Beretania. A guy I knew owned a lounge up there, and I used to go up there and have a few beers, but I imagine that 90 per cent of them did go to Hotel Street.

Marcello: You mentioned that the civilians weren't too friendly toward the fleet. In what way?

Barclay: Well, the women over there wouldn't go with a sailor. I mean, that was just out of the question unless they knew you. If you had a girlfriend or something like that, why, they'd be pretty friendly to you. But they kind of treated us like dogs, really, when you get right down to it. They were very insulting to you, really.

Marcello: Normally, when you did have the liberty, would you go into Honolulu, or would you stay aboard ship, or would it depend on just how much money you had?

Barclay: I always went.

Marcello: When was payday aboard the Utah?

Barclay: The first and the fifteenth, I believe. We got paid twice a month.

Marcello: In other words, probably on that weekend of December 7, you would have had a little bit of money left then.

Barclay: I don't know. I had some money but I don't remember how much because I didn't have my clothes on, you see. If a guy gave me thirty-five cents and that's what I had in my . . . I had just my shorts on. You know, we wore shorts out there, and that's all I had then. I didn't have any money at all. I didn't even have my wallet. I had just like shorts on, was all I had.

Marcello: You're referring now to the Sunday morning of December 7.

Barclay: Yes. I always went on liberty. I never missed a time. You know, if you didn't have the money, one of your buddies did, and they'd want you to go with them, and you never missed out on anything.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese during that pre-Pearl Harbor period, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind?

Barclay: Well, if I understand what you're talking about, in other words, their attitude or . . .

Marcello: No, just what was your attitude toward any Japanese.

Barclay: Well, really, you never gave that too much thought because you didn't know if they were Japanese or Hawaiians or what they were. Now I had a real good

friend of mine out there that knew a Japanese fellow, and we used to go out to his house a lot and stay on the weekends and go fishing with him and his wife. We'd stay all night at his house once in awhile. He was a mailman out there. In fact, he was the best person . . . he was as good to us as . . . he was an older fellow, and he treated me just like his own son. His wife's folks were all killed whenever they dropped that bomb out there, and she cried for two weeks after that. I wrote to them a couple of times, but then I quit writing to them.

Marcello: Did you and your buddies in your bull sessions ever talk very much about the capabilities of the Japanese Navy?

Barclay: Not really. They never discussed that. In other words, they talked about them striking or that we was going to have war with them. They wasn't worried about Russia. It was the Japanese we was going to have to fight, but they never really brought up the strength of the Navy at all, really.

Marcello: Okay. I think this more or less brings us up to the days immediately prior to the Pearl Harbor attack, and what I'd like for you to do at this point is to describe in as much detail as you can remember exactly what you did on

Saturday, December 6, 1941. Go into as much detail as you wish.

Barclay: I'll tell you what I'd like to bring back is one thing. This is the day before . . .

Marcello: You mean December 5?

Barclay: Yes, the day that we pulled in on a Saturday.

Marcello: That would have been December 6, then. The attack itself took place on December 7, which was a Sunday. So what I want you to do is to describe exactly what you did on Saturday, December 6, from the time you got up until the time you went to bed that night.

Barclay: Well, let's see. We pulled in and it was dark. We didn't get a place because we had to wait until . . . there was an aircraft carrier docked where we was supposed to dock, and they were late getting out, so that made us late getting out. It was real dark whenever we pulled in. I was raised down in East Texas where you was kind of active, and we pulled in and docked, and I was supposed to . . . I was going to be a lea helmsman . . . not a lea helmsman. I was going to be a boathook operator on a boat.

Marcello: Now go back there again. You were first going to be a lea helmsman?

Barclay: No, I misquoted that.

Marcello: A lea helmsman. Okay.

Barclay: In other words, you've got a helmsman and a lea helmsman. You've got one guy that's running it, and if something happens to him, you've got the lea helmsman. I was that quite a lot. Then I was also helmsman quite a lot.

Anyway, we pulled in and I had a liberty. The guy had already told me, "You can go on liberty tonight." Something came up--I forget what--and the boatswain's mate of my division told me to get in the boat. Then, it was kind of an old-time Navy, and you got hold of a rope, and you swung onto this rope, and you landed down in the boat. Well, I had nothing to do with it, but someone didn't secure the rope. So I jumped onto this rope and caught it and swung, and I went right on down in the water. So the division officer ate me out and told me I was stupid and all this stuff, and he said, "That's the poorest sailorship I've ever seen in my life." And he told someone, he says, "Restrict that guy. Pull his liberty card." So that kind of made me mad because I wanted to go. So it ended up, finally, the boatswain's mate had already promised me if I'd do something--I forget what it was--he would give me liberty, which I don't think I was supposed to have. But if I'd do something special, I could have liberty that night.

So anyway, after it was kind of late, I got liberty. I was going ashore with a guy by the name of Chestnut. He was from back East. He didn't like the Navy, so he was trying to talk me into going over the hill with him. Anyway, we went ashore.

Marcello: About what time was this?

Barclay: It was probably 9:30 or ten o'clock at night before we got off. We went over there, and neither one of us really knew too much about drinking, so we bought some . . . I don't remember that whiskey . . . it's kind of a sweet whiskey. I got sick. Otherwise, we probably would have stayed. We probably wouldn't have been there, but I came back to the ship.

Marcello: You had to be back by one o'clock anyhow, didn't you?

Barclay: Yes. So we came back to the ship, but we was late getting back.

Marcello: In other words, you got back aboard the ship after one o'clock.

Barclay: We finally got back about two o'clock, but we never heard anything about it. Anyway, we went to bed.

Marcello: What sort of condition were you in when you came back aboard that ship?

Barclay: I was sick, really. I wasn't used to drinking, too. In other words, it kind of made me sick. I wasn't used to drinking that whiskey.



Marcello: Generally speaking, what would be the condition of the men who came back aboard that ship after liberty on Saturday night?

Barclay: Well, they'd be in pretty good shape ordinarily. In other words, if they were used to it. But I was kind of sick in my stomach for that morning, you know. I couldn't eat any breakfast, I know that. I went by the chow table and looked at it and turned around and walked off.

Marcello: Okay, about what time did you get up on Sunday morning? Now Sunday was a day of leisure, and I guess you could have actually stayed in bed as long as you liked.

Barclay: Yes, you could have stayed in bed, but this guy came down and had bought some magazines and woke me up and wanted me to go up topside and read with him. We was going to lay up on topside and read. So I told him to go ahead, and I'd be up there in a few minutes. Well, he went on up and that's the last time I saw him.

I went on and, as I say, I went by the chow table and looked at it. I don't know what time it was. It was probably 6:30. So I went back and I got my stuff, and I went to the bathroom and was cleaning up and brushing my teeth and whatnot.

I heard this big thud. Some guy stuck his head up to the porthole because on Sunday morning usually a tug is liable to bump into you or something and wake you up. This guy hollered, "Watch where you're going out there, you son-of-a-bitch!"

Marcello: What deck were you on?

Barclay: I was on the second deck, in the extreme bow of the ship. Then another one hit a little bit closer, and I said, "Man, that isn't a tugboat!" And I walked over and looked out the porthole, and I saw about seven . . . six or seven--I forget--planes coming right in on us.

Marcello: Did you recognize these planes?

Barclay: Yes, sir. We'd been taught to identify them by the rising sun and everything on them. I turned around and yelled, "The Japanese are attacking us!" So I was going to run down to the compartment and warn my buddies that I knew was asleep. Now they were sleeping on the third deck. I started down and it was a bomb, I guess, that hit in front of me, and it blocked this passageway.

So then I started to go on the other side, and a guy I knew was down on the third deck in a little store-room or something down there. He was an engineer, a fireman, and his name was Atkinson. I hollered at him.

I told him, "You better get off this thing! The ship's sinking! We're being attacked!" He said, "Well, I've got to get my money. I've got about \$600." Water was already pouring in by then.

Marcello: Oh, by this time? About how much time had elapsed?

Barclay: Oh, two minutes. We sunk in about seven minutes, I think it was. We sunk real quick. I think we were hit by six torpedoes and four of them went off.

Marcello: What did it feel like to be hit by these torpedoes or these bombs? What sort of a sensation or feeling did you have aboard ship?

Barclay: Well, it's not too good a feeling. In other words, it shakes you up pretty bad. It quivers you a little bit.

Marcello: In other words, that ship was really jolted.

Barclay: Yes, and it kind of does something to your ears. In other words, it makes you kind of numb, you know. Anyway, by the time I talked him into . . . I finally grabbed hold of him and said, "Come on, let's get out of here!"

Marcello: Had general quarters been sounded or anything of this nature?

Barclay: No, no general quarters at all. Oh, yes, there was, too. I'm sorry. It was sounded. It sure was.

Marcello: Where normally was your battle station?

Barclay: I was kind of split in between . . . I was supposed to man a machine gun in case of an air attack, and then in case of ship attack or torpedo attack, I was in watertight integrity, and I was supposed to go down and close a bunch of doors, hatches.

Marcello: When you say you were supposed to go down, down to which deck?

Barclay: All the way, all over the ship. That was my job. I mean, I think there was about twelve of us in that. But in the meantime on Saturday--Saturday evening--they gave us orders for Sunday morning, and they told us to go open all watertight doors, all bilges, and everything, so they could air out because we was going to have an inspection on Sunday, which we never had before. But we had orders to do that. I went, my crew . . . that might have been why I got liberty. I've forgotten now. But I remember they gave me orders to do that and we did it.

Marcello: Now I do know that when a ship is in port watertight integrity is usually at a minimum, except maybe for those compartments below the waterline or something of this nature, and your armory and probably your engineering spaces and things of this sort. But you say that even

on that Saturday night of December 6, there was virtually no watertight integrity at all aboard that ship.

Barclay: No, sir, none at all. That's why we sunk so quick.

Marcello: I'm sure. Okay, take up your story from this point then. All this had taken place in about two minutes, and during that two or three or four minutes, you'd already been hit by five or six torpedoes and several bombs and this sort of thing.

Barclay: Right. Anyway, I was by a laundry, and it had a metal outside, and that thing was wet, and I had to get down and crawl to get up to the high side of the ship because it was sinking to the ocean side, in other words.

Marcello: In other words, it was listing.

Barclay: Yes. It was probably about, I'd say, a thirty-degree list by then. Finally, I got on to the other side, and there was an officer . . . I can't remember his name . . .

Marcello: In other words, you were actually inside this laundry . . .

Barclay: On the second deck.

Marcello: . . . on the second deck, and you were actually having an uphill climb, you might say, is that correct?

Barclay: That's right.

Marcello: Where were you trying to go?

Barclay: I was trying to get out of the hatchway.

Marcello: I see.

Barclay: It was about twenty from me. But I got on the up side, and I leaned back against that laundry where I could stand up good. There was a bunch of guys trying to get out, but anyway, my officer--division officer--came by and told me to come go with him to close these doors, and I said, "Sir, I'm not going with you. This ship is sinking, and we'd better get off of it." But he got some more men and took them with him and left. Right where I was standing, the water was about to my ankles on the high side.

Marcello: How about the third deck? Was it already flooded by this time?

Barclay: Oh, I'm sure it was.

Marcello: In other words, water by this time was coming up to the second deck.

Barclay: It had been, yes. It had been flooded because it couldn't have gotten to the second deck otherwise. But anyway, these guys were hitting that hatchway trying to get out, and about the time one would get to the top, somebody would grab him and pull him back. So I said, "Shoot, I'll never get out of this thing." So I just backed over to that corner and sat down.

It seemed like it was for an eternity, but it was probably a minute, and I started looking at those guys, and I said, "Gosh dog, I'm not that scared. I'm going to get off this thing." I hit that hatchway, and I guess what I didn't knock plumb out on the topside, I knocked off, and I got off. I got to topside and only one guy jumped about the same time I did, and then the ship just flopped over. I don't think but very, very few people got off after I did. I know one guy that said he started to jump--a friend of mine--and he couldn't jump, and he slid all the way across the ship, and he grabbed one of these twelve-by twelves and floated right down the stream, right down to the ocean there.

But then whenever I hit the water, the suction from the ship was pulling me under, and by the time I got to the top, I was just about pooped. So I just took my time-- I was a pretty good swimmer--and this guy swum up to me and said, "I can't swim! Help me!" I said, "Man, you're swimming!" And he was just hysterical, you know. So he grabbed hold of me, and finally I knocked him loose, and I started swimming, and he caught me twice before I could get to this little old quay, a little old dock built out there in the water. I got him loose from me again, and I

got to the dock and I had my hands up in the air, and he pulled me off so many times my fingers were just raw.

So I got up on this quay and went to help him up, and he grabbed me by the wrists and was about to pull me in. There was about fifteen guys on there, and I couldn't do a thing. I knew as tired as I was, if he got me back in there, he'd probably drown me. So I turned and there was a bunch of big five-inch rope, or six-inch, laying there, and I hollered at these guys, I said, "Somebody come help me pull this guy in, or I'm going to take that rope and knock all of you off of here!" So they ran over and helped me.

Marcello: Generally speaking, from what you said, there was a great deal of panic aboard the Utah.

Barclay: Oh, yes, there was a lot of panic. I mean, everybody was just scared to death. It had never happened to them before.

Marcello: Okay, pick up your story then from this point.

Barclay: Well, anyway, I . . . that's all then. The Japs started . . . no, a boat came by and picked us up. Well, they machine-gunned us. They had a strike across there with machine guns one time. A boat came by . . .



Marcello: What did you do when this Japanese plane . . . did this Japanese plane strafe while you were on this quay?

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, what did you do when this plane came by?

Barclay: I just ducked down as low as I could get.

Marcello: But you were still basically out in the open.

Barclay: Yes, we were right out in the open. Then this boat came by, and I couldn't get on it. So then they came by and they strafed again, and I jumped out in the water and started swimming toward the shore, and a boat came along and picked me up. I don't know why they didn't go straight to the shore. They didn't have that training, I guess. They headed for this dock, and they started strafing this boat, so I jumped off the boat and swam ashore.

Marcello: What does it feel like to come under a strafing attack?

Barclay: It's pretty scary, really.

Marcello: Can you watch those machine gun bullets follow you in?

Barclay: You can outrun them (laughter). I had one right on me, but I'll tell you what, I was "picking them up and laying them down." Anyway, after that, there was a trench out there that was dug for this purpose, and I got in this trench and pulled dirt in on me so they couldn't see these white clothes. I knew that. My

brother was in the Army, and I learned a lot from him.

Anyway, some guys came over and lay down by me. Not by me, but we were laying head to feet down this trench, and a bunch of them didn't pull dirt in on them. So they spotted them there and started machine-gunning us again.

I was the first one that jumped out of there and started running, and that's whenever that bullet was after me. I got to this big old hangar deal over there, and I got in that and I was sitting there by the edge of the door as I got in. As soon as I ran in--people will follow you like goats; if they see one guy do something they do it--and I'll bet you there was 200 men that came right in behind me. There wasn't no one in there whenever I ran into that building, and it just filled up.

Marcello: Now where was this building located?

Barclay: I guess it was Ford Island, was the name of the island.

Marcello: Yes, this was the island in the middle of the harbor.

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: This is what I thought you were referring to. I gather, then, that this was where the Utah was tied up--over at Ford Island.

Barclay: Yes, we were at Ford Island. That's right.

Marcello: Where were you tied up in relation to the other battleships?

Barclay: We were way around the bend, around the harbor from them. Most of them were in kind of a little cove back there.

Marcello: In other words, from where you were you couldn't see them very well.

Barclay: Yes, you could see them pretty well, but they were quite a distance from where we were at. We were on one side and they were . . . well, say like we were here (gesture), and you was going around and it curved, and most of them were back up in this area (gesture).

Marcello: Going back just a little bit, what was the condition of the water when you jumped in as the Utah was sinking?

Barclay: Well, I don't remember that, whether it was hot or cold, but the only thing was that I knew what was happening. I could feel that ship filling up, and it was sucking me back, in other words, towards these holds that was filling up.

Marcello: What I was actually asking was if the water was already full of oil and all that sort of thing yet?

Barclay: No, it was clean. On that side it was because everything hit on the inlet side, whereas we jumped off on the other side. Now if it was, I don't remember it. I probably wouldn't have noticed it (chuckle).

Marcello: Were you able to observe any of the other damage and activity that was taking place while you were on this little quay there?

Barclay: No, I was watching those planes. The main thing I was doing was watching those planes. In other words, if they came in that way, I was going to try to get out of the way. But as far as damage to any of the other ships and things, I didn't notice that for quite awhile, in other words, until I got on land. Then I started noticing that kind of thing.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were on the quay, you finally managed to get a boat, and you were on your way toward Ford Island, I suppose, and then you mentioned that you actually jumped into the water when that boat was being strafed, and then you swam over to Ford Island. Is that right?

Barclay: Yes, I swum. I didn't wait for it to get in.

Marcello: Okay. So then, like you mentioned, you were in that ditch, and then from that ditch you ran into this hangar.

Barclay: Yes.

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

Barclay: Well, then they started strafing the hangar. You could hear the bullets hitting it. It was huge. I was sitting

there and I looked across, clear across the hangar, and I saw a friend of mine, and I hollered at him to come over here. His name was Craig. He was from Utah. He was from Salt Lake City, I believe, or a little town out of Salt Lake City there. But he waved for me to come over there, and so I got up and I got about halfway across this thing, and a bomb hit right in the entrance-way. We were tied up in there and couldn't get out.

Marcello: Still inside this hangar.

Barclay: Still inside this hangar. Finally--I don't know how they knew it--but some big truck come by there, and a guy got out and pulled that debris and everything out of there, and everybody got out of that thing. Then I stood around for awhile, and it got kind of hot, so I started running up through this . . .

Marcello: When you say it got kind of hot, do you mean the action or . . .

Barclay: Yes, the planes started coming in again.

Marcello: They were still strafing and bombing.

Barclay: Yes. There was one thing. You were talking about damage. I did see a torpedo shoot, and it didn't hit anything until it come up on the beach and hit a bunch of lumber. There was a bunch of guys up there, and it done a little damage to a bunch of them.

After that I caught this truck. I got on this truck. I outrun it, I imagine, about thirty miles an hour, and I got on this truck and we run over to . . .

Marcello: You didn't know where this truck was going?

Barclay: No. So we went over to some kind of Marine base, Army or Marine. I think it was a Marine base. I started loading rifles. My feet was bleeding and everything, and by then I was getting cold. I guess being scared, I was pretty cold. I was sitting there loading those rifles, and I loaded them until my fingers was so sore I couldn't do it anymore.

From there, some captain come up to me and told me to go report to a certain post, to take a rifle and go to a certain post. I told him that my feet was so sore that I needed a pair of shoes to walk that far. I forget just how far it was. It was quite a ways. So he said, "Well, you go down to the dock then and start helping them rescue those people." I didn't have any clothes on or anything, and after being wet, why, it was chilly then.

Marcello: By this time I assume that the attack was over.

Barclay: Yes, the attack was . . . well, it wasn't over on the Army side. On the other side there was still a little

bit going on. As far as the Navy side, it was already over with. So then I went down and took a boat hook and started pulling these guys in out of the water that had died and burned out in this water and oil. It was still burning. There was still fire out there.

Marcello: Were you on shore or were you in a boat when you were doing this?

Barclay: I was on the shore, standing on the beach. We'd just reach out as far as we could. It was the ones we could reach and drag them in. I don't believe there was any boats in the water at that particular time. Most of them was so burnt you could hardly get them out. In other words, they'd just come apart when you'd try to pull them, you know.

Marcello: What were your feelings or your emotions when you had to perform this type of job?

Barclay: Oh, it was kind of sickening, really, to smell that flesh and everything. I finally got sick and had to quit. I got so sick at my stomach that I told the guy I couldn't do it anymore.

So then I started helping them load these coffins onto these trucks, you see. In other words, they had the coffins there to put them in, and stretchers.

They had some coffins and some stretchers, and we was putting them on stretchers mostly, and those trucks were just going in and out of there. But then I loaded I don't remember how many onto some of the trucks because down by that water was where it really stunk. But you know, I don't know what they did with the ones that was already dead. Some of them were still alive, and they'd put them on an ambulance. They wouldn't do that to all of them, but if a guy was still alive, why, they'd put him on, and they'd fill the truck, and then they'd fill an ambulance with the guys that they knew were dead.

Marcello: When you got over to Ford Island, what sort of resistance was that island putting up? Did you notice any of the resistance that the personnel on Ford Island were putting up?

Barclay: Not very much. They were putting up a little bit, but it wasn't very much right then. I don't know. I can't understand how we got as many of them as we did with the condition everything was in. No one could get to the ammunition. You had to break the locks on all the ammunition and everything to get in there.

I did see a Marine shoot one down with a rifle. I guess he hit the pilot directly. But I standing right



next to him, and this plane come by, and he just up and fired one shot, and that plane just (snaps fingers) fell. I suppose he's the one who hit it, you know, the way it acted just as he fired. It acted like he probably hit the pilot. That's how low they were flying. They were forty feet high.

Marcello: Could you actually distinguish the pilot and the co-pilot and this sort of thing in those planes when they were coming in?

Barclay: You could see the pilot. In other words, you could tell he was Japanese, you know.

Marcello: What did he look like? Describe what he looked like so far as his clothing or his features and so on were concerned.

Barclay: Well, you couldn't tell by his clothing, but you could by his face. In other words, you could see their faces. They had a different-type helmet from what we had. Mainly though, it was the face that you could see. They didn't hardly look around or anything. In other words, they were concentrating. They didn't look around and pick a target. They had too many without having to do that.

Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack, what did the harbor look like?

- Barclay: Oh, it looked pretty rough, really. It was oil and debris and things all over it. It was just horrible, really, especially right in where the Arizona and the Oklahoma was sunk. I mean, it was just a solid oil mass out there. It was horrible.
- Marcello: Did you ever witness any of the ships exploding such as the Shaw or the Arizona or anything of that nature?
- Barclay: No, I saw . . . I believe it was the California, whenever it exploded. It might have been the Arizona. It just blew up and flames and everything came out of it. I remember there was three guys up on the crow's nest on there, and I wondered why it didn't get them, but they were still on there the last time I looked over there. It didn't kill them because they were still standing up. That was the California, I'm sure.
- Marcello: How long were you working with this rescue party, either pulling out the wounded or the dead?
- Barclay: I really don't remember. I know I worked up until . . . I imagine it was around six o'clock.
- Marcello: What did you do the rest of the evening then?
- Barclay: Well, after we got through with that, they put us on an oil tanker and just locked us up inside. In other words, we stayed on there that night, on this oil tanker.

I was on that when they shot our planes down that night, and we thought the Japanese were attacking again. You didn't have any guns, and you didn't have nothing. There wasn't nothing you could do. They told us they didn't have anything for us, no guns or nothing, so it was about, I imagine, 200 of us in this one compartment. I've heard--now I don't know this for a fact--but these guys that were on that crow's nest on the California shot through this tanker that I was on.

In the meantime there was a bunch of explosions and whatnot, so some guy in there said, "Everybody lay down." Well, I walked over . . . and we were all laying down just in rows there. First, I walked over and got under a table, and I don't know why I moved, but I went off toward another place and laid down, and there come this real big explosion and everybody jumped up. About this time the guy next to me grabbed his arm just like this (gesture), and blood was just squirting out of it. This machine gun bullet had come through the side of this oil tanker, shot him through the arm, went back about twenty feet, ricocheted off of two walls, and came back and killed a guy about twenty feet away. It hit him right in the chest and killed him. Just one bullet did that.

But then that was all the action that night. We stayed on that tanker all that night and part of the next day. I forget what time. Then we went into these barracks up on . . . I know it was up on a hill, but that's all I remember. They took us off that tanker, and we went into this barracks. I stood guard one night in this particular post.

Marcello: This would have been December 8 when you were standing guard? You were on that tanker the night of December 7.

Barclay: No, it was about the ninth. Anyway--I forget--but it was the same night that this pilot escaped out of this hospital because they gave us warning to be on the lookout for him because he had escaped.

Marcello: This was a Japanese pilot?

Barclay: No, it was a German.

Marcello: A German pilot?

Barclay: Yes.

Marcello: Where did he come from?

Barclay: He was flying one of the planes, so they say.

Marcello: One of the Japanese planes?

Barclay: Yes. The guy right next to the post that I had shot and killed him. I didn't see that but that's what they told me. I knew what post I was on, and I knew that it

was the post right next to me. Well, I got off guard duty at one o'clock, and I believe it was around two o'clock when they killed him. That would be in somebody else's records--somebody would know that--or in Navy records. It would be there. But I forget about that time, but I believe that was on the night of the ninth. It might have been the night of the eighth, but I don't remember.

Marcello: What were some of the rumors that you heard floating around in the aftermath of the attack? I'm sure that that place must have been one big rumor mill.

Barclay: Oh, it was! You mean about why we didn't do so and so?

Marcello: No, what were some of the rumors going around about what the Japanese would do next or what they were up to?

Barclay: Well, we kind of figured that they might try to come on in, and that's why they were really trying to get everything ready. Of course, we didn't have anything really left after they got through that could do any good other than the aircraft carriers that were already out to sea.

But they really expected them to come back, and the Army was really building up and ready for them.

That's why they had all of us loading all those rifles. I don't know how many rifles we loaded, but it was, I'd say, 500 or 600 Navy men loading rifles because we had nothing else to do. We didn't have any guns on our ships and no ships to fight from. I guess they just gave you something to do to help them out. I think the Army and the Air Corps was probably really busy getting ready because especially that night we expected them to come back. That's what the rumors were.

Marcello: What was your attitude toward the Japanese now, that is, in the aftermath of the attack? You mentioned that before the attack you really didn't think about the Japanese too much.

Barclay: Well, I used to kind of hate them for a long time, but after you get older and you get to thinking about it, why, they were just like me. They were doing what they were told to do. I don't hate them. I don't want anything to really do with them, but I mean as far as blaming them, I used to. But I don't blame them anymore. It's just kind of cooled off. But I used to rather kill one of them than eat, you know. I had a lot of friends that was killed over there, you know, and I had a lot of them killed since then.

Marcello: When you had a chance to survey the damage that was done there at Pearl Harbor, that is, when you looked out over the water and you saw all those ships and the oil and the fires and so on, what sort of thoughts were running through your mind? What sort of emotions did you have?

Barclay: Well, I thought at first, I guess, if that's what you're referring to, it was pretty stupid to let them do this to start with, because after all, we'd been reporting those subs and everything, and somebody was bound to know what was going to happen. It was just a disaster. Even then, although I hadn't been in the service too long, I knew that we'd lost a lot of good men. Whether I knew it then, it didn't take me long to realize it after you get around you a bunch of guys that didn't know what they were doing.

I figured we were doomed, really. I figured that they would come back in and take us. Of course, I had no idea what the Army was doing because I wasn't familiar with that. In other words, all I was really familiar with was from my ship into Honolulu on liberty and what we were doing out at sea. As far as what the Army was doing, you see, they were on the other side from where we

were at. But then you think again about all the rifles that were going out of there, so somebody was getting ready for something. But it was just sickening just to look at it, and I really had a lot of respect for that old ship that I was on, and I hated to see it go down.

Marcello: How do you think the Japanese were able to pull it off?

Barclay: Oh, it was very simple, really, I think. I think that somebody knew it and just didn't care, or they really wanted it to happen. I might not should say this, but I think really someone--whether it was the President or who--I think they wanted it to happen so they could make the American people mad so we could go into war. That's what I really think, and that's what everybody else's opinion was--the same thing. Because there was no reason why we shouldn't have knew it.

Marcello: Was that your opinion at that time, or is this an opinion you have formed in later years?

Barclay: That was my opinion at that time, and it was also my opinion before it happened--that somebody didn't care about what was going on.

Marcello: You're basing this on your having sighted those submarines and nothing ever having been done about it?



Barclay: Well, here's something else which I didn't bring up, but here's something else. In other words, we were offered a \$25 reward for any kind of communist activity that we might report, and you'd go into a lounge . . .

Marcello: You mean fifth columnist activity, not necessarily communist activity.

Barclay: Yes. In other words, if you went into a lounge, a girl would come up there and say, "Let me see your ID." She'd take your ID, and she'd take in the back, and she'd be gone for fifteen minutes with your ID, and the rumor was out that she was back there making a photostatic copy of it so they could use it. That was way before this happened that they were doing it.

Marcello: Were most of these bar girls usually Japanese?

Barclay: Japanese, yes. It's just the same thing . . . of course, I didn't know it at the time, but the next day the rumor was that there was no officers on the ship. They were all on parties that some big organization gave for them over there. In other words, they estimated that 75 per cent of the officers wasn't even on the ship. They went to this party. I didn't see my captain for three days after that.

Marcello: When you say 75 per cent of the officers . . .

Barclay: They wasn't aboard ship.

Marcello: . . . do you mean 75 per cent of the officers aboard your ship or all the ships?

Barclay: All the ships. That's the rumor that went around because everyone you talked to said that all the officers but about three had gone ashore to a special deal that they were invited to, and they claim--I wasn't there--that whiskey and everything was really flowing, and none of them came back to the ship. They stayed on land that night.

Marcello: Were there any individual acts or things of this nature that actually stand out in your mind during the attack? In other words, were there any funny things that occurred? Were there any specific tragic things that occurred? Did you see any acts of heroism or bravery or cowardice--things of that nature? Let's start with the funny things that were involved. Did you witness any funny things happening during the attack?

Barclay: Yes, I saw this friend of mine . . . actually, people wouldn't believe it unless you see it. The only thing that you could see . . . he was at about a forty-five degree angle, and the only thing that was touching that water, I believe, was his feet, and he was just practically

running on top of this water. A lot of guys made comments about this and was laughing about it, about how scared he was and about how fast he could move.

Marcello: Now was this after the Utah had gone down and he was in the water?

Barclay: As it was going down. In other words, about the first thing I saw whenever I got on top of the ship . . . and I didn't recognize him. I mean, he was on land and he didn't stop for nothing. He didn't stop for that quay or nothing. He was from Louisiana, and he went right on past that quay and got on land, and I didn't see him again for . . . oh, the next day sometime I saw him, and they say that whenever he hit that land he just kept running. But you can't blame him.

I also saw a colored person get shot right half in two. This was something else. It was just like you took a knife and cut him right in two. One part of his body fell here and one part over there.

Marcello: He was shot with machine gun bullets or what?

Barclay: I suppose machine gun bullets. The planes were firing and hitting the deck. They were still strafing us whenever the ship went under.

Right after that . . . it was only a few seconds that we were together there . . . we had this chief

boatswain--he got killed on Guadalcanal--that was a good friend of mine, a guy by the name of Wolf.

Marcello: Wolf?

Barclay: I'm sorry, that wasn't his name, either. It was . . . yes, it was Wolf, but they called him "Smitty" for some reason or another. I don't know why he got that name. But anyway, he gave away \$7,000 right there. No one had money, you know. Ninety per cent of them didn't have any money and he did. He was a chief boatswain's mate. No, he was just a first class boatswain's mate then. He stood right there and gave away \$7,000.

Marcello: Was it on the quay that he did this, or was it on Ford Island?

Barclay: It was on Ford Island. It was just before I crawled in that ditch. In fact, he was giving it away whenever they started strafing us because there was quite a few guys ganged around him.

Marcello: This was his own personal money?

Barclay: Yes, it was his own personal money.

Marcello: And he was giving it away because none of the other guys had any money there?

Barclay: Right. So he gave it away, and I think I took thirty-five cents, I believe, and stuck it in my watch pocket.

Now this was something I really should have brought up a long time ago, but I missed it altogether. The most important thing that happened, I believe, was this: that I was walking up, I don't remember just when it was . . . it was after I got out of that building. I was walking up this street, and a guy was coming along, and he was eating something, and I asked him where he got it at, and he says, "Right up there." I said, "Well, how much did it cost you?" And he says, "It's nothing." So I went up there and walked in this grocery store, and I got a quart of milk, and the guy opened up a loaf of bread and made me a bologna sandwich, and I walked back down and everybody that would see me would ask me, and I would tell them where I got it at. Now that guy gave away all of his food in that grocery store, and I went back in about an hour and was going to get me some more, and I found one can of turnip greens left in that store. People had just ate him out. Now I don't know why we didn't turn that guy in and tell what he done. I don't know who he was or anything else.

Marcello: Was he a civilian?

Barclay: He was a civilian, yes, and he gave his food away right there. What made me think about that was old Smitty, who

told everybody, "You don't have any money, take it. You may need it. If they invade this place you may need some money, and I don't need it. I'll keep some myself." You could take what you wanted, but you didn't see any greedy people grabbing a lot of money because it didn't mean anything. Just enough to maybe get you a bite to eat on was all they cared about. I guess that's about it.