

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
246

Interview with
Harry W. Brooks
August 24, 1974

Place of Interview: San Antonio, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: Open
Approved: Harry W. Brooks
Date: Aug. 24, 1974

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Oral History Collection

Harry Brooks

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: San Antonio, Texas

Date: August 24, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. Harry Brooks for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on August 24, 1974, in San Antonio, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Brooks in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the battleship USS Pennsylvania during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

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

Mr. Brooks: I was born at Ellington Field, Texas, on July 30, 1920.

Dr. Marcello: You were born at Ellington Field?

Mr. Brooks: Texas, yes.

Dr. Marcello: Was this a military installation or what?

Brooks: Yes, it was a military installation. It was located right out of Houston, Texas. At that time General Doolittle and all of them was stationed there. Of course, I didn't know any of them. I was a little bitty young'un. My folks moved to San Antonio, and I was raised here, educated, went to Breckenridge High School, and graduated from there. I joined the Navy in 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join the Navy?

Brooks: I got tired of looking at the Army here at San Antonio (chuckle).

Marcello: Had you always wanted to follow a military career?

Brooks: At the time I did, yes. It was kind of enticing to-- for me--want to move around all over the world and get to see some sights and different places.

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

Brooks: Yes, that's right.

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

Brooks: Well . . .

Marcello: Or was it simply the normal, routine Navy boot camp?

Brooks: It was the normal routine, but when I got through I didn't have enough money to come home. So the chief in charge of it said they had a job there, and I could stay a couple of months longer or so and maybe get enough money to make a trip back home. Actually, I didn't much care about it, but . . . he said, "Yes, there are only two jobs left, and they're both plumbing." I said, "I'll take one of them. The fellow standing next to me, he did, too. So we ended up in a firehouse. We were on a fire station detail and also did the plumbing there on the base.

Marcello: When did you board the Pennsylvania?

Brooks: September 1, 1940.

Marcello: In other words, this was very shortly after you got out of boot camp that you actually went aboard the Pennsylvania.

Brooks: Yes.

Marcello: Was this voluntary duty, or were you simply assigned to the Pennsylvania?

Brooks: You were just assigned to it. You had no choice or preference, really. They assigned you where you were needed.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being assigned to a battleship? Was this considered to be pretty prestigious duty?

- Brooks: Well, I was just young and eager and green at it. It didn't make any difference what I went on as long as I was on a ship and it was going to move.
- Marcello: What were you striking for aboard the Pennsylvania? Of course, obviously, when you first went on you were a deck hand like just about everybody else.
- Brooks: Well, that was it. See, I got into plumbing, and I got around the shops there, and I got a little experience and knowledge as to what I wanted to go for or strike for. Of course, when I got aboard ship they said, "No, you're in the turret. You're going to be a primerman on a fourteen-inch gun." So I said, "Okay, but I still want to be a shipfitter." I finally . . . I guess I pestered them enough that they finally decided to let me go to the shipfitting shop. I guess I was about six months or so as a deck hand, and then I went to shipfitting. Shortly afterwards, about December 1, I made shipfitter third class. The chief told me, he said, "Well, now you're in charge of the fresh water hold since you're third class." I said, "Okay."
- Marcello: What is the fresh water hold?
- Brooks: That is the . . . you had charge of all the fresh water aboard ship, that is, maintain the pump, stand a

continuous watch during the day. Usually, your job would last about eight hours down there on watch. You had three other men that would relieve you, and then you'd divide your watches up at night, rotate your watches.

Marcello: How would you describe the on-the-job training that you received aboard the Pennsylvania during those pre-Pearl Harbor days? Was it good training? Was it thorough?

Brooks: Yes, I did a lot of plumbing work as a shipfitter and had a good chief on there. My experience . . . what he taught me then, later when I got transferred off the ship and went on to a destroyer escort, it payed off plenty. I mean, I thought he was kind of rough, but I found out when you go aboard a ship and you have 110 men on there and only twenty have been to sea before, you can figure out what you're up against.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that your training during that pre-World War II period was a rather steady thing? In other words, there was no sense of urgency connected with it. It wasn't a hurry-up type of training. The ranking petty officers had plenty of time to train you.

Brooks: Yes, that's right. It was a . . . well, they were going through the course as normal as if nothing were

going to happen, although we talked about it a lot. At night on maneuvers we'd find other submarines out there that were not ours, or we didn't know whose they were. But, of course, we said they were Japs, and they'd be in the fleet with us.

Marcello: We'll talk a little about that later on. How would you describe the morale in that pre-World War II Navy?

Brooks: Well, it was good morale, high morale.

Marcello: How do you account for this?

Brooks: I really don't know. We just . . . well, times were hard, and we were getting a good living of it. I mean, we weren't getting overpaid, but we were making out on food and taken care of--medical--and so we didn't have much to worry about.

Marcello: When did the Pennsylvania move from the West Coast over to Pearl Harbor? Was this sometime in 1941?

Brooks: Yes, January, 1941.

Marcello: Now was this part of the general fleet movement, that is, Roosevelt's decision to move the Pacific Fleet from San Diego over to Pearl?

Brooks: Well, at the time I went aboard her, which was September, 1940, we went straight from Long Beach to Bremerton, and

from Bremerton, after three-months period in the Navy Yard, we came down back to Long Beach and stayed there several days. Then we left and went to Pearl and stayed out there.

Marcello: What did you do when you went to Bremerton?

Brooks: Had a major overhaul.

Marcello: In other words, this is something that occurs periodically in order to modernize a ship, isn't that correct?

Brooks: That's right. Every so many years it's just a modernization and maintenance on a ship. Every so often they do that.

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

Brooks: I thought it was going to be real nice. I didn't know I was going to have to stay there so long.

Marcello: Okay, as you mentioned, you arrived in the Hawaiian Islands when?

Brooks: Approximately January 15, 1941.

Marcello: What sort of activities did the Pennsylvania undertake after it was assigned to Pearl Harbor? In other words, describe the alerts and the maneuvers in which the Pennsylvania participated.

Brooks: Well, by the alerts, do you mean while we were in the harbor?

Marcello: No, I'm referring now to the routine maneuvers and so on in which the Pennsylvania participated with the other members of the Pacific Fleet.

Brooks: Oh, we'd go out on maneuvers every . . . for two weeks, then we'd come in for about two or three weeks. That would continue, it seemed like, all throughout the whole year up until the time of the attack. I know while I was in that deck force, I was put on armed boat patrol. We'd leave the ship in the evening from sunset to sunrise. We'd stay in that harbor patrolling and checking sampans and whatever have you that . . . tugboats, and check their papers and so forth to see if they were authorized to be in the harbor.

Marcello: Now this would occur while you were docked at Pearl?

Brooks: Oh, yes.

Marcello: And this would occur after you had come in off maneuvers, or is this before the maneuvers actually started?

Brooks: They would go out on maneuvers and leave us there.

Marcello: Oh, I see. You usually didn't go out on maneuvers with the Pennsylvania.

Brooks: Well, at the time when I was pulling that armed boat patrol, then I got taken off of it. We only stayed on it, I think, a couple of months. Then somebody else would take over. It was just too long to keep somebody steady on it.

Marcello: And this is called armed boat patrol?

Brooks: Armed boat patrol.

Marcello: Well, describe what these maneuvers were like when you did go out aboard the Pennsylvania.

Brooks: Well, the battleships would . . . well, we'd operate at night without running lights, under battle conditions, and we'd have night firing, day firing, target practice. They'd have antiaircraft practice on a sleeve being towed by an aircraft. All your maneuvers would take a ship . . . one battleship would take another battleship in tow and just anything.

Marcello: What battleships were in this division with the Pennsylvania?

Brooks: Well, there was the West Virginia, Maryland, Nevada, Oklahoma, Arizona, and, of course, Pennsylvania. I said Nevada. There were about nine of us out there.

Marcello: In other words, all these battleships were in one division?

Brooks: No, they split up. Sometimes all of us would be out there, and then sometimes it would be just half of them out there.

Marcello: But normally speaking, on these maneuvers half of the battleships would be in Pearl while the other half were on maneuvers.

Brooks: Yes.

Marcello: And then when the one that was on maneuvers would come in, and the one that was ashore would go out on its maneuvers.

Brooks: That's right, yes. They'd just alternate.

Marcello: Now, as I recall, the Pennsylvania was the admiral's flagship, was it not?

Brooks: That's right, yes.

Marcello: How did this make your life aboard the Pennsylvania different from that of the sailors aboard the other battleships?

Brooks: Well, it was a little stricter regulations on clothing and the areas of the ship you could go into. In other words, at certain meals you'd have to be in white uniform, no dungarees. You had your regulations laid out to you, and you went by them. That's all. No variations anywhere. Like, such as destroyers, why, you didn't know what you could do from one day to another.

Marcello: Generally speaking, did you enjoy life aboard the Pennsylvania?

Brooks: Yes, I did. I was with a good group, and we all got along good together.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that you would go out on maneuvers for two weeks and perhaps come in for two weeks at a time. Did the nature of these maneuvers change any as relations between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate, or did the maneuvers usually stay the same right up until the end?

Brooks: They stayed pretty close to the same as far as I could tell. Now I don't know what it was . . . I was not an officer. I was an enlisted man. Of course, we didn't know too much what was going on up there in the officers' circle.

Marcello: You mentioned that on some of these maneuvers you did spot--or you did allegedly spot--submarines from time to time. Could you describe any of these spottings?

Brooks: No, they'd come up. You could see them in between the ships out there, and you wondered who they were or what they were. Nobody seemed to know definitely, except they were not ours.

Marcello: And, of course, there wasn't really anything you could do about it either since it was the open seas, and no war had been declared or anything of that nature. So they had every right in the world to be there.

Brooks: No war, no. That's right. They could lay out there and watch you all they wanted.

Marcello: But you said at that time the speculation was that they were probably Japanese submarines?

Brooks: They probably were. That was the suspicion of it.

Marcello: Let's just go back here a minute. When you first entered the service, how closely were you keeping abreast with world events? You mentioned that you entered the service in 1940.

Brooks: Yes, 1940. Well, in high school before I graduated, I knew . . . well, we knew that the . . . Germany was pretty well pressing on these other countries--England, Poland, France--and we more or less knew we was going to have to go into the service sooner or later. So I felt I might as well get in and get organized--be ready for it.

Marcello: When you and your buddies ever sat around in bull sessions after you entered the Navy and certainly after you got to Pearl Harbor, did you ever talk about the possibility of war between the United States and Japan?

Brooks: Oh, yes. That was a common topic.

Marcello: How much regard did the American sailors have for the Japanese Navy? In other words, did you talk very much about its capabilities?

- Brooks: We didn't think much of it. We didn't think they had the ability to really do much until we saw what they did to us the first day.
- Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of an individual did you usually conjure up in your own mind?
- Brooks: Well, I don't know. It was kind of a ragamuffin kind of thing, I guess you might say. You kind of had pictured in your mind of their Navy, which we never saw much of. We never did see much of it, really, or had any idea what they had. No Americans were ever allowed to go into Japan and come out with any information.
- Marcello: Okay, again, let's get back to something we were talking about awhile ago. Usually, you would be out for two weeks, and you would come in for two weeks. Of course, then you were into your liberty routines. How did the liberty run at this time?
- Brooks: Usually, from about four o'clock in the evening until midnight. You had to be aboard ship at midnight. That was the enlisted personnel.
- Marcello: Did this liberty routine change any as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941?
- Brooks: No, it stayed the same. The only difference is that some of the married men that had brought their wives

out there were allowed to go ashore and come back at eight o'clock in the morning.

Marcello: How often could you get liberty?

Brooks: Every other day.

Marcello: In other words, you had a port and starboard-type liberty?

Brooks: Yes.

Marcello: Which meant that on a weekend . . . well, you would always be assured of at least one day off every weekend.

Brooks: Yes. One weekend you'd get Saturday, and the next weekend you'd get Sunday.

Marcello: But you never really got a full weekend off.

Brooks: No, no. There wasn't a . . . I don't think they had enough . . . one reason is that when the fleet was in like that there was not enough facilities to take care of that many people in that small of an area. All you had was a Navy YMCA there.

Marcello: Okay, what was the social life like for a young, unmarried sailor in the Hawaiian Islands in those days prior to Pearl Harbor? What did you do when you were on liberty?

Brooks: I'd usually go over and have a good meal and drink a lot, or either you went on out to Waikiki Beach to go swimming.

Marcello: Was Hotel Street a rather favorite . . .

Brooks: King Street?

Marcello: . . . well, Hotel Street also was a favorite watering spot for the fleet, I think, when it was in.

Brooks: Yes, it was quite a wild place there.

Marcello: And I'd never heard King Street being mentioned before.

Brooks: Well, King Street's the main street downtown. Most of them just roamed up and down the street there.

Marcello: And from what I gather, on a weekend the sidewalks were simply overflowing with sailors.

Brooks: That's right.

Marcello: In fact, they were overflowing out into the streets.

Brooks: Walking into the streets, really (chuckle). You couldn't . . . it was just packed with sailors and Marines mostly.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what would be the condition of sailors who went ashore, let's say, on a Saturday night and then came back aboard the ship? In other words, would most of them be drunk, or would it simply be a cross-section of what you could expect even in civilian life?

Brooks: It's be pretty much a cross-section of civilian life. After you're there awhile, why, you just go ashore to get away from the ship for awhile and get a change of scenery. The one thing that I know . . . we usually

went to shore mainly because if you had liberty and didn't go, especially on a Saturday and Sunday, why, you had to work. In other words, we worked seven days a week. You asked about the training earlier there, why, that's how we got it. We really had to put out.

Marcello: And I gather that you didn't have a whole lot of money to spend when you were on liberty anyhow.

Brooks: No, you didn't.

Marcello: When was payday?

Brooks: Between the first and the fifth and the fifteenth and twentieth.

Marcello: So, in other words, on that weekend of December 7, 1941, sailors would have had a certain amount of money.

Brooks: Yes, we were paid, I think, approximately on the first of the month, December.

Marcello: Now I do know that during that weekend of December 7, 1941, the Pennsylvania was in dry dock, was it not?

Brooks: Yes.

Marcello: When did it go in dry dock, and why was it in dry dock?

Brooks: I can't recall just right now what date she went in, but I do recall that I asked the engineering officer if he wanted me to pump all the water overboard.

Marcello: This would be the fresh water?

Brooks: Fresh water, yes. And he said, "No, leave it all aboard." I told him, I said, "Well, I've got somewheres around 60,000 gallons of water on hand." And he said, "Well, we'll leave all the ammunition, fuel, water, and everything aboard. We're not taking anything off." This seemed like an unusual thing for a ship to do--go into dry dock with all that explosives and stuff aboard. He said, "Well, we're just going to take off to repair our strut bearings," I believe it was, on the screws of the ship. And we also had the Cassin and Downes in there with us. They seemed like they had all their fuel and ammunition aboard, too.

Marcello: What were you particularly doing, then, while the Pennsylvania was in dry dock? Did you have any particular function?

Brooks: Yes, I still carried my duties out down there in the fresh water hold. We tied onto the dock to take on fresh water from the dock. We didn't pump any on ship there at all.

Marcello: I would assume that while you were in dry dock, you were drawing your power and so on probably from shore, were you not?

Brooks: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us up to the days immediately prior to Pearl Harbor. What I want you to do at this point is to describe in as much detail as you can remember exactly what your activities were on Saturday, December 6, 1941, from the time you got up until you went to bed that night.

Brooks: Well, I had the duty on Saturday. I didn't rate liberty. I rated liberty on Sunday. My normal function, why, was to get up about six o'clock in the morning. I forgot whether I was on watch . . . what watch I had that night. But normally, I'd go eat breakfast, come back, and write out my report--check how much water I had on hand. And being in dry dock as such as we were, all I did was report what water was in on storage and just continue a carbon copy of it, more or less, into the engineering office. And I cleaned up the compartment, checked the pumps down there to see that they're alright. We did keep flushing water to the heads and stuff like that, but being in dry dock, why, you don't do that either. The rest rooms are out on the dock. So all the showers taken, why, that water is alright. It runs on into the dry dock and goes on out. The rest rooms are located on the dock.

Marcello: Now what would be the state of watertight integrity when a ship is in dry dock? Not that it makes a whole lot of difference because a ship's out of the water anyhow, but were most of the doors and hatches open at that time, except perhaps those to some of the storage spaces such as the ammunition lockers and things of that nature?

Brooks: Oh, yes. They open all voids and cofferdams and so forth and check them or inspect them. That's a good time to get it done. Of course, like you say, with the ammunition and the magazines, why, you keep those closed at all times.

Marcello: Even when you're in dry dock?

Brooks: Yes, and keep a check on temperature. I understand that that ammunition deteriorates under heat.

Marcello: Did you remain down at your station most of that day?

Brooks: On December 7?

Marcello: No, on December 6.

Brooks: I think I probably did.

Marcello: Where was it located on the Pennsylvania?

Brooks: Down in the bottom of the ship.

Marcello: Down in the very bottom? Which is how many decks down?

Brooks: Approximately six.

Marcello: Do you remember what you did that evening of December 6, 1941?

Brooks: Oh, probably about the usual. Sit around the shop and talk to the guys in the shop or whatever we'd normally do.

Marcello: Where were your living quarters?

Brooks: Down there, six decks down.

Marcello: In other words, you bunked down there as well as worked down there.

Brooks: There was four of us. We bunked down there. Three of them worked out in the shop, and I stayed down there during the day. That was my duty--to stay there.

Marcello: Okay, do you remember what time you went to bed that night of December 6?

Brooks: No, not really.

Marcello: Would it have been relatively early, do you think, since you didn't have liberty?

Brooks: Oh, it was around ten o'clock, taps.

Marcello: Can you remember what the general condition was of any of the other crew members who came aboard that ship on that evening of December 6? Being that far down in the hold of that ship, I assume that perhaps you didn't have a chance to observe the activities of too many other people.

Brooks: No, not really. It was like usual, I guess. Whatever came back might have had a few drinks and went to bed early like the rest of us. They had to be back at twelve o'clock.

Marcello: Okay, this kind of brings us up to December 7, 1941. What I want you to do here again is to describe exactly what you did on Sunday, December 7, 1941, from the time you got up until all hell broke loose.

Brooks: Well, I got up like usual--about six o'clock. I went up and had breakfast, oh, about seven o'clock, the normal time for breakfast. I took a cup of coffee up and sat on the barbette of the turret there for a few minutes in the cool of the morning. I looked out over Battleship Row out there. Of course, like I say, we were in dry dock.

Marcello: How far were you from Battleship Row?

Brooks: Oh, I guess it was about a quarter of a mile--right across the harbor there.

Marcello: And I assume that you had a pretty good view of Battleship Row.

Brooks: Yes, I had a good view of it.

Marcello: What was the weather like that day?

Brooks: Well, it was kind of cloudy that morning--little clouds, normal clouds, around that area. The sun was coming up, and it was nice and cool.

Marcello: Now generally speaking, Sunday was a day of leisure even for those who were aboard the ship, isn't that correct?

Brooks: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, you could get up just about anytime you wanted to, I think.

Brooks: No, we had to get up.

Marcello: You had to get up. You didn't have to go to breakfast or things of that nature.

Brooks: Well, if you didn't go to breakfast, you didn't get any. In other words, they served from about seven to eight o'clock, and that was it. Then lunch was about 11:30 to one o'clock or something like that. It was home-style serving. You'd sit down at the same place everyday at the same table.

Marcello: At that time were you sleeping aboard in the hammocks yet?

Brooks: No, I'd gotten out of the hammock. I was sleeping on an Army cot down there. When I got charge of the fresh water hold, I was sleeping in a bunk. They stacked us four-high down there.

Marcello: Okay, so anyhow, on that Sunday morning you were out on one of the barbettes on the turret drinking a cup of coffee.

Brooks: Yes.

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

Brooks: So I looked at my watch, and I said, "Well, it's about fifteen till eight. I'm going to go down and make out my water report and iron my whites." I did. I made out my report and called it in and started . . . I had the ironing board out and was ironing my white uniform. I was fixing to go ashore about nine o'clock or so. It was a long time after that before I got to go ashore again (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, what happened in the meantime?

Brooks: Well, they sounded air and torpedo defense. I said, "What in the hell is going on? It's Sunday morning and they decide to have a drill on Sunday morning?" One of the guys said, "Well, I will go on up and see what's going on." I said, "Yes, I guess we better." My battle station was right there where I was at. They started up the ladder. About that time we heard a gunshot. It sounded like a three-inch antiaircraft went off. The three guys going up the ladder, they just took on off then. That was the last I saw them until that evening late. I stayed down there during all that time.

Marcello: Okay, so you were still down in your usual station when everything took place.

Brooks: Yes. Right there was my battle station, so I just plugged in the phones on the jack and sat there and waited, trying to find out what was going on.

Marcello: How did it feel being six decks down while all of this action was taking place above you?

Brooks: I felt pretty sick till I found out what happened (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, so describe exactly what you did during the attack itself.

Brooks: Well, the only thing I could do is . . . on a repair station you have to wait until the damage has happened and then ordered by the central station to take care of it, or you have to report the damage.

Marcello: By this time did you know that these were Japanese that were attacking the base?

Brooks: Well, I asked the repair station there . . . I asked them, "What's going on?" They said, "Well, we're under attack by the Japs!" And I says, "Do you want me to stay down here or come up there?" They said, "No, orders are to stay where you're at on your station." And I said, "Well, there's nothing I can do down here." They said,

"Well, just stay there anyway." So finally, we lost all of our power. The lights went out and everything.

Marcello: In the meantime, could you feel the Pennsylvania being jarred by bombs or anything of this nature?

Brooks: A concussion coming down the hatches, yes.

Marcello: What did it feel like?

Brooks: It didn't feel too good. You kind of get scared as the devil. I mean, you don't know . . . the phones squeeze your ears. You don't know just when it's going to be you or what's going to happen.

Marcello: Did you say the phone would squeeze your ears?

Brooks: Yes, the earphones.

Marcello: In other words, they would compress against your head.

Brooks: Yes, and, of course, being by yourself, you had no one to talk to and had no knowledge of what's going on. You just had to sweat it out. So finally, when we lost our power, I talked to the phone talker in the repair station. I asked him if he could send somebody up there to . . . I don't know . . . something about the pumps or water, to see if we could shut that off. And when the power came back on, it'd start the pumps up. Our hose had been shot off from the dock, and that's the reason I wanted to cap that off so when we did get our power back, I could turn the water on. He said, "Well, nobody's up

here but us." I said, "Well, do you want me to go?"
He said, "No, you stay where you're at." So I stayed
and finally got to come up about twelve o'clock.

Marcello: By that time everything was over, is that correct?

Brooks: Yes, and . . . well, of course, they were trying to
get all of the damage . . . we had been hit once with
a five-hundred-pound bomb and were trying to get the
damage cleared away and start to get to work on it.
So I asked the chief what he wanted me to do, and he
said, "Well, you just stay down there and take care
of fresh water. That's all you've got to do."

Marcello: In other words, you were down below decks during the
entire attack.

Brooks: Yes.

Marcello: Did you have any idea at all what was taking place
other than what you heard over the telephone?

Brooks: Well, like I say, the telephone told me very little
except that we were under attack. Of course, I could
hear all this gunfire and stuff, and so all I could do
was just sit there and wait till I was relieved from
my station.

Marcello: And as you mentioned, you never did get to come above
deck until around twelve o'clock noon.

Brooks: Around twelve noon, yes.

Marcello: What happened after you . . . well, what sort of emotions or feeling were you experiencing while you were down there on the sixth deck all alone, nobody around you, nobody to talk to. The ship is obviously being jolted by bombs or near misses, and you are experiencing some of the concussions. What sort of thoughts were going through your mind during this period?

Brooks: Well, I don't know. You kind of realize you're so little and helpless at that time. You're kind of a newborn baby, I guess. You just more or less hope to God that you come through it, you know. There's no way . . . you think you're a pretty big man until something like this starts. Then you find out you're not.

Marcello: How would you describe the reactions of most of your shipmates that you came in contact with at this time? Would you say it was one of panic or confusion, or did they act in a professional manner as they had been trained to do?

Brooks: Well, more or less, they were kind of surprised and working hard to try and get things under control. You

just don't have time to think about what can happen and what is happening. You just go after it the way you were taught and trained to. That's the reason for the training of any military.

Marcello: What did you do after you were finally relieved down there and got up above decks again?

Brooks: Well, I got up there and . . . well, this guy was relieving me so I could get something to eat. All I got, I think, was sandwiches--jellybread sandwiches--and an apple or something like that. Of course, our galley was damaged, blown up. That was the main thing, really, why I was relieved--to go up there and start helping on the galley, work on the galley, to help get it back together. I think about midnight we got things pretty well put back together. Everybody went back to their own station. Of course, we did have kind of a semi-attack--or thought we did--when our own planes came in, and we shot a few of them down.

Marcello: Did you personally witness this?

Brooks: No, I was like a mouse. I headed back for my hole down in the . . .

Marcello: In other words, general quarters was sounded again, and you went back down . . .

Brooks: That's where you're supposed to go.

Marcello: . . . to your battle station.

Brooks: To your battle station. There's no excuse for not being there. You see, mine was there, and the guy that was on watch, he would leave . . . would have to leave my place unattended if I didn't get there in time. So that's the reason you more or less get to your stations--so nothing's left unattended.

Marcello: Now when you emerged from down below at noon on that Sunday, describe what the harbor itself looked like from the standpoint of the damage that had been done by the Japanese.

Brooks: I came up there and all I could see was our sister ship, the Arizona, over there just erupting and blowing up--I don't know--just like all the internals were just taken and tearing it up inside. The Oklahoma was upside-down. All you could see was the bottom. I looked over there to the west, and the Nevada was sitting over there in a cane field. She'd tried to get out. The West Virginia didn't look like she'd been hurt. The Maryland and . . . I don't know whether the California was hurt or not. They was all still sitting over there. It was just a big mess. It

just looked like cars after a collision. Everything was just . . . it was just a horrible sight to see.

Marcello: Were there all sorts of fires and this sort of thing?

Brooks: Yes, well, the fires were still burning and going on and exploding.

Marcello: How about the Arizona? Had most of the damage been done to the Arizona by the time you emerged on deck?

Brooks: Oh, yes. Well, she was just settled there and just burning internally, like I say. An explosion every now and then would take place. Of course, I guess your eyes kind of open up. You kind of wonder if . . . after not seeing any of it take place during the battle, why, it's really a surprise.

Marcello: What sort of feelings or emotions did you have after you were able to see all of this damage?

Brooks: It kind of made me mad. Of course, the Japs . . . we always thought we could whip them in two or three months. When we saw that we knew it was going to take several years, if we did.

Marcello: How did your attitude toward the Japanese change as a result of surveying this damage and experiencing what they had done there?

Brooks: Well, I figured they could fight a pretty good battle if you'd get into it with them. They did have the equipment to do it with at the time.

Marcello: In the immediate aftermath, I would assume that the ship was one big rumor mill, was it not?

Brooks: Yes, there was quite a bit of it on there.

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

Brooks: Well, we didn't know . . . well, you'd hear any kind of a rumor. It'd start out . . . you could even start a rumor yourself, and when it got back to you, you'd believe it yourself.

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

Brooks: Oh, we were going to go into Bremerton, and then we was going to go one place or another and go out and join up with a fleet. The next thing we knew, we were headed back up north and coming down into San Francisco.

Marcello: Did you ever hear any rumors of the Japanese landing troops or paratroopers or anything of this nature?

Brooks: Oh, well, yes, that was our constant fear that day of December 7. If the Japanese would have only known what they'd done to us and if they'd had back-up landing troops, they could have taken us.

Marcello: What did you do the days immediately after the attack? Were you continuing on with the repair parties, or what?

Brooks: Well, no, after the attack we just went on back to our normal routine and carried out our daily routines like we normally do.

Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack did you ever blame any of your superiors for what happened, or did you try to find any scapegoats or anything of this nature?

Brooks: Well, I kind of blame the President of the United States for it, mainly.

Marcello: Why was that? Did you blame him at the time?

Brooks: Yes, we knew that . . . well, we figured that if they had enough knowledge that . . . they wouldn't have had us out there on an armed boat patrol that I told you about previously because . . . there was a reason for it. And they also had machine gun watches all during . . . from sunset to sunrise. So someone knew plenty about it.

Marcello: You mentioned those armed boat patrols awhile ago. Did you ever detect anything unusual while you were on any of them?

Brooks: No. We checked a lot of boats and papers, but there was nothing unusual about them.

Marcello: Were a lot of these Japanese fishing boats and so on?

Brooks: Some were. Some of the sampans down there were Japanese, yes. They had access to the harbor the same as everybody else.

Marcello: How close could they get to the fleet?

Brooks: They was right in there with us. In the harbor
they'd run right alongside the ships and everything.
They operated in there like they was part of it.