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Interview with
Walter W. Loyd
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Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
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Oral History Collection

Walter W. Loyd

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Corpus Christi, Texas Date: December 21, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Walter Loyd for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on December 21, 1974, in Corpus Christi, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Loyd in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the Navy tanker USS Neosho during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Now Mr. Loyd, 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. Loyd: I was born in Uvalde County near where former Vice-President Garner was raised. When I was a small boy we moved to South Texas.

Dr. Marcello: When were you born?

Loyd: May 28, 1924. We came down here. My dad was hunting work. He went to work at a cotton gin here in South Texas. I went to school right out here at Driscoll, which is a little farm community near Corpus Christi. It's about thirty miles from here. It's in Nueces County here. I went to school out there at Driscoll from the time I started until just before the war broke out. In May, 1941, I joined the Navy right here in Corpus. Three of us boys went in here.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Loyd: Well, I really didn't know. There were several of the boys a little bit older than me. I was only seventeen the week that school was out--May 28th was my birthday. There were several of the older boys that had already went in the service. They came home on boot leave. That made an impression on me. School didn't interest me much. I wanted to go out and look around a little bit, so I joined the Navy right here in Corpus, and three of us went from here to Houston, then, and took our finals in Houston. We were inducted there and sworn in on June 3, 1941.

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

Loyd: Well, I don't know. Like I said, it probably was because of the fellows that were home on boot camp leave that made an impression on me. There wasn't many Army personnel in this location. The Navy was the coming thing in Corpus. They had just started building the Naval base out here at Flower Bluff. It was a coming thing, the Navy was, to everybody in this vicinity, so it seems like they all joined the Navy around here.

Marcello: At the time that you joined the service were you keeping very closely abreast with world events?

Loyd: A little bit. We were studying history at the time in 1939 and early 40's. We were keeping fairly close to it with the conflict in Europe and Poland and France and Germany and Balkans and over in there. That was a current event in school history. We knew that it looked like the Germans and the Japanese were preparing for war. That was the general talk among all the school kids of our age at that time. It looked like war was a coming thing.

Marcello: Generally speaking, when you thought of war, however, were most eyes usually turned toward Europe rather than toward the Far East?

Loyd: Yes, mostly so. The only thing that we had any reckoning about war with Japan was when we sold our junk iron and

scrap and stuff around here. Everybody said, "Well, they'll send it to Japan, and we'll get it shot back at us." But that was as far as it went. We didn't really think much of Japan as being a war power nation because they were so small. I think that's the thing that everybody overlooked--their being so small that no one considered them to be a major war power. All of the attention was in Europe and Germany.

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

Loyd: Right.

Marcello: Was there anything that happened at San Diego during your boot camp days that you think ought to be a part of our record here?

Loyd: Oh, I don't suppose there's anything historical that happened out there. We suffered through the blistering hot sun during the day in July and August and froze at night in the fog, slept under two blankets, and the next day we were back out on the grinder again in the hot sun. It was pretty hot.

Marcello: Did you notice any sense of urgency in the boot training that you were undergoing at this particular time? Now, again, we're talking about the summer and fall of 1941. I assume that there was a tremendous influx of recruits into San Diego.

Loyd: Well, at that time that I was out there, it took three days to form 277 men, which I was told later they formed

twice that many in one day. But this was the peacetime Navy. We didn't have any indication whatsoever that we were preparing for war because we weren't trained at all in the methods of using gas masks. We only went to the rifle range one time. We weren't issued anything in the way of field equipment or trained in the manner of survival. It was generally just thought that the Pacific Fleet, of which we were almost sure we would be assigned to, would just be a kind of a standby fleet. We didn't have any idea that war would start that soon, particularly in the Pacific theater. But we just kind of thought we were standbys out there.

Marcello: Did you ever hear any talk that perhaps they were cutting corners on your training in order to get you out to the fleet as quickly as possible, or in conversations with the old salts and so on did you get the impression that you were being trained in as much detail as, let's say, recruits had been a year before?

Loyd: No, it didn't strike me as being any rush-up deal out there. It seemed like it was on a routine matter more than anything else. We just came and went as we pleased. Everything generally in the Pacific Fleet was fairly calm. It was no impression that war would come. There was no preparation being made. There were no corners

cut or nothing to indicate whatsoever that there would be war in the Pacific.

Marcello: Where did you go from San Diego?

Loyd: We graduated from boot camp. There were two of us from Corpus here that stayed together at boot camp, Harry Ogg and myself. He's from Portland here. He and I went from San Diego by train. We went up through Portland and Oregon and on into Seattle. We went to Bremerton to catch our ship that we was assigned to. We was assigned to the Neosho. I assume she was scheduled to dock there at Bremerton Ship Yard because that's where they sent us. Normally, her home port was Long Beach, California. It would have been easier for us to have been down there had she been down there.

But, anyway, we went to Bremerton. That was quite an experience. I liked Seattle. I didn't realize that water was that cold till a bunch of us went swimming out there in the Puget Sound. We stayed up there two weeks. I recall the apples were green on the trees. We were there in August. We were there just long enough to have a good visit and really see the thing. I liked the Northwest. It was real nice.

Marcello: What did you think about being assigned to a tanker such as the Neosho was? Tankers aren't exactly the most

glamorous duty in the Navy, and you were a relatively young man at the time.

Loyd: No, they're not. I wasn't disappointed, though, because while I was down at San Diego there were several cruisers out there in the harbor. The Concord was one of them. It was a light cruiser built during the First World War. We would go out and visit some of these ships on liberty. I saw the conditions that these fellows were living under out there on those old ships. They were old.

But, anyway, when I was assigned to the Neosho . . . she was built in 1939 by Standard Oil Company in Bath, Maine, I believe it was. She was relatively new. We got a little history on her as quick as we could. It was one of the newer ones that had forced electrical ventilation. So many of the old ships had wind scoops-- funnels, wind funnels--on them and natural ventilation, and they were fairly hot down below deck. But this one had electrical air blowers. We were quite enthused about anything that we could get.

Marcello: What was the normal complement of men aboard the Neosho?

Loyd: About 300.

Marcello: Were you up to full strength at that particular time?

Loyd: No. In sea duty during peacetime, yes. That was full complement, about 300 people. We noticed while we were

in Bremerton that they were taking on a few extra people aboard the ships that wasn't in line with the full peacetime Navy. They were taking on a gunner's mates and artillery people that we didn't have much of. We had a few antiaircraft guns, and we had one coastal artillery battery, a five-inch. There was a few indications that they were preparing for self-defense on this type of a ship. We had the newer type of antiaircraft weapons being installed. They were training these people which we didn't see in San Diego, but after we went to sea we did see them. When we got on the ship they had a little later model of sophisticated stuff that we didn't know anything about. You could see . . . after we got aboard ship . . . and we also noticed in Bremerton that the Utah was there for repairs and the Colorado was there. We noticed they were updating their antiaircraft artillery. So that was our first indication there that it was being modernized a little bit.

Marcello: What exactly was the function of this tanker that you were assigned to?

Loyd: It was a fleet supply tanker. They were assigned to divisions of the fleet in units. The Lexington, carrier

Lexington, was the aircraft carrier assigned to one unit. We operated with the Lexington. We provided their aviation fuel and their ship's boiler fuel. All ships were steam. They had to have boiler oil. We carried a lot of aviation octane gasoline. So that was . . . we could do this at sea. The ships didn't have to come into port to be fueled. We could meet them at sea at any given destination or any given point and fuel them at sea. Particularly, this was done in exercises several times to simulate the probability of combat conditions, you know, and to acquaint people with these conditions. So we went through this exercise several times of refueling at sea, which would save a lot of time and prevent the ships from having to come into port.

Marcello: I would assume that the Neosho went from Bremerton ultimately to Pearl Harbor.

Loyd: Right, yes. We left Bremerton, and that's my first seasickness right there. It was a good one. Coming down the Pacific Coast along the offshore of Oregon and Northern California, the water is awful rough. But anyway, like I said our home port was Long Beach. So we came from Bremerton down to Long Beach and took on some more fuel there and went out to Pearl and

discharged our cargo at the fuel tanks at Ford Island at Pearl for aviation purposes. Then we went back to Long Beach and got some more fuel. It took about two weeks to make a round trip--one week out and one or two days to unload and then a week to go back. We shuttled back and forth for, oh, a month or so there in the fall of '41.

Marcello: This is between Pearl and Long Beach?

Loyd: Yes. Occasionally, then, we would go to the fleet at sea.

Marcello: This is while the fleet was on maneuvers?

Loyd: Yes. They were on, really, peacetime maneuvers. There were lots of battleships assigned to the fast fleet at that time. That was a thing that was changed, then, after the war started. The battleships . . . there weren't many left after Pearl. Consequently, it was a different-type Navy. The battleship wasn't used as much in open seas against aircraft and aircraft fleet, is what it was. It was aircraft carriers and antiaircraft cruisers and destroyers to protect the carriers. That's the type of fleet the Navy saw after the war started.

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

Loyd: Oh, I liked it real well. It was a most amazing thing to come up off of the islands and be able to see Diamond Head and see the tops of the buildings in Honolulu, then look up on the sides of the mountains and see the contrasting colors of the pineapple fields and the sugar cane fields and range land. They had pasture land. One pasture would be cleared. The pineapples would be in harvest, and after they were in harvest they plowed the fields. It was an amazing color. It was a beautiful thing. The tops of mountains were all kind of clouded over at times. It was cool. It was a good, cool breeze blowing in there all the time. The sun was hot but the breeze was cool, you know. The water was clear and cool, different colors. The water was so many different colors. It changed colors the closer in you got, coral bottoms, you know. During the day it was a beautiful thing.

Marcello: What were you striking for after you got aboard the Neosho?

Loyd: I thought about boiler rooms and engine rooms all along for some reason. I helped my dad in the cotton gin some here at home when I was a boy, and I worked around a boiler. I was enthused about steam-driven machinery and boiler power and stuff like that. So when we went aboard the Neosho, we were at sea about the second day, and they

called us all out--all of us that had transferred in to the Neosho. Lots of them, I didn't know. Just Harry Ogg and myself were the only two that were acquainted with each other. There were several others that went up there with us from San Diego. But they weren't from Corpus. But anyway, when they called us all out on the deck--all of us newly assigned men--they said they wanted six men for the engine room service--boiler room and engine room--what they called the machinery below-deck. So I stepped out right quick. I thought, "Well, that's what I thought I wanted all along." So that was where I went, was to the boiler room. I was striking for fireman, then, when I did that. So I just took the white stripe off of my right shoulder and put the red one of the left side, which indicated fireman. I stayed below deck, then, on feed water pump watches and water tender, boilermaker's helpers, you know, just striking for fireman.

Marcello: How would you describe the on-the-job training you received there aboard the Neosho?

Loyd: It was fairly strict on-the-job training. There was no permitting . . . of this type-ship, you would think . . . not being a combat ship, you would think they'd be a little bit lenient, and maybe they wouldn't be as strict as the

combat ships, so to speak--the regulation ships. They all had stricter regulations on the cruisers, destroyers, and so forth. But they were fairly strict with us but not to the point to where we had any dress inspections and stuff like that weekly or daily and so forth. This was more or less non-combat fleet assignment. It was ideal for not to be under pressure of any kind. It was good duty in the Navy.

Marcello: Did you feel that the training was thorough? By that I mean, did you find that the senior petty officers and so on would take the time and were willing to train you if you were willing to learn?

Loyd: Oh, yes. They could tell the people that were mechanically minded or had a gift to grasp this stuff. It didn't take them long to see the ones that were adapted to that certain thing. There were some of them that thought they wanted to be something, and it turned out that they didn't materialize in that aspect, so they had to make moves. But I didn't. I grasped it right off. I was well satisfied.

However, along in this time--about the time you think you're going to get familiar with your duties--then you go on KP, so to speak, in the Army, and mess cooking in the Navy. So I had to pull ninety days--pulled three months--up there in the scullery. A fellow, Johnny Hudson from Oklahoma, he and I were in the scullery together.

It was a two-man deal. We spent three months up there. In fact, we were there when the Japanese hit us at Pearl Harbor. I was on mess cooking duty.

Now in this training aspect, my combat station was the ammunition party on the forward . . . up on the bow. It was the number one ammunition detail, they called it. The ammunition hatch was right in the bow, right near the anchor windlasses. You had to unlock the hatch to open it. The ammunition was stored right down in the keel, right down in the bottom of the bow of the ship. That's where my detail was at for combat. So we had our training up there, and every so often they would train us in this ammunition detail, handling and one thing or another and what to be careful with and how to handle it and one thing or another. We didn't know anything about explosives or armor or anything like that or very little about the shells themselves. We had some three-inch antiaircraft shells that we handled out of that ammunition locker. Then later, we had some larger . . . well, some smaller ammunition came in--the 37-millimeters and 40-millimeters and 20-millimeters--that were stored in there.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy? I'm referring now to the morale aboard the Neosho.

Loyd: Real good. We had a real good captain and executive officer. Most of our junior officers in the engine room and boiler room were what we called "old salts" that worked up through the ranks. They were experienced in young boys like myself. I was just seventeen at that time. I signed up on what they called a "minority cruise." At that time the seventeen-year-olds could sign up for four years with their parents consent, so to speak, and signature. So that's what I was in on, was the minority cruise. The division officers, they understood the young fellows real well because they had been over this line themselves. Some of them had been in the Navy twenty years and so forth. The lieutenants that were promoted up through the ranks was what we mostly had. It was a good life. We had a good time.

Marcello: How was the food and living quarters aboard the Neosho?

Loyd: It was real excellent. The ship was built for Standard Oil. The crews' quarters bunked six men to the compartment and had a rest room between two compartments, which twelve men shared one rest room. There was no handicap. The bunks were ideal. They were folding metal bunks. Like I said, six men were not too many to the compartment. Later on, on the ship you had as many as 150 in one

compartment. But this was built--the ship was built--for peacetime commercial use. It was a maritime ship that the Navy took over. Like I said, it was built in 1939, and it was modern. It had General Electric air-conditioning fans on it. We had good steam tables. The food was good. The refrigeration lockers were modern. The storage compartments were all modern. It was an ideal setup.

Marcello: Well, if you had good living quarters and good food, that certainly does help a lot to promote high morale.

Loyd: It sure does. So many of the older salts that we bunked with in our living quarters, they kind of led us young boys around and showed us one thing or another. We respected them. They had more rank and more age. You had to toe the mark with them. You'd get in trouble if you didn't. But as far as Navy was concerned, this is what we all referred to as the auxiliary fleet. They had a multitude of ships in the auxiliary fleet, which was a non-combat fleet. It was just like all the rest of the Navy, though, in most aspects. You still had your watches to stand, and you still had your physicals to stand and your inspections and your lockers and your living quarters and your personal inspections. Your shoes had to be shiny. It was still Navy.

Marcello: Okay, let's go back and talk just a little bit more about your training routine. From what you've said, I gather that you were more or less shuttling between Pearl Harbor and Long Beach. Describe exactly how this training routine would work--when you would leave, how long you would be gone, what you would do, and this sort of thing.

Loyd: Well, like I said, it took a week at sea to make our delivery or to go pick up our delivery. We carried some cargo on the ship back and forth to the fleet. There wasn't much room to carry cargo on the ship because they had so many large hoses and pipes and pumps on the deck and one thing and another primarily for tanker use. We done our training at sea. We had some antiaircraft practice. We had coastal artillery practice with our five-inch gun, which was nothing more than just a self-defense weapon. It was on the stern of the ship. The only thing it would have been good for would have been another ship trying to catch us from behind. But we had a lot of fun out of it. They made a lot of racket, I recall that. My ears were always bad, and any of the antiaircraft or coastal pieces like that would sure tear me up. Of course, we had medical training, you know, and first aid and all that kind of stuff, on-station casualty training, below

deck training. We had that for flash fires or boiler explosions and so forth--first aid. We had all of that.

Marcello: I assume that aboard a ship such as the Neosho, everybody was very, very fire-conscious.

Loyd: Yes. You had only one place that you would be permitted to smoke. I didn't smoke, but the men that did were only permitted on the fantail, we called it, which was above the boiler room right aft. There was a walk-around back there on the main deck that . . . you could smoke back there. Otherwise, it was strictly a no-no for smoking anywhere on the ship at different places. When the red flag was up--the Baker flag, which meant there was loading or unloading fuel--there was absolutely no smoking anywhere because of the vapor possibility of explosion. But the ship was reasonably safe. It was built with compartments divided . . . individual compartments below deck. It was fairly safe. The type of fuel that we carried when we carried fuel oil, boiler oil, it was an almost thick substance that would take a lot for it to burn. It would take an extremely hot fire to get it started to burn. It had very little vapor. When we carried the aviation gasoline, everybody was a little bit leery of that because of the vapor possibilities. It was very strict in that aspect

about smoking and the open fires and the caution about that.

Marcello: Let's talk about a typical voyage or trip that the Neosho would undertake. Let's say you were docked at Pearl Harbor. Okay, you've got to go back to Long Beach to pick up another supply of fuel--whatever type fuel it might be. Just more or less give me a general description of what such a trip would be like. In other words, when would you . . . let's start this way. When would you usually leave?

Loyd: It seems like that they worked up a real good routine. For some reason or another, we traveled during the week, and we arrived in port on a Friday or Saturday. Now I don't know whether this was scheduled like that because the ship would only run so fast. Like I said, it took twelve to sixteen hours to load. Okay, they split the ship in watches or standbys. They had four sections aboard ship--A, B, D, and D. Three sections were allowed liberty at the time that one section was required to stay aboard. The one section staying aboard would only stay aboard four hours and pull his duty. When he pulled his duty he could go ashore. This worked real good because that gave you twelve hours off or sixteen hours off, and then you had to come back aboard and pull one duty.

Marcello: Okay, so normally, then, when would you leave Pearl Harbor to go back to Long Beach to get the fuel?

Loyd: After two days--normally two days. We would arrive at either Long Beach or Pearl Harbor and take about twelve to sixteen hours to unload and another twelve hours, for some reason or another, to get our schedule, to get our assignment. It seems like everything was on a two-day layover for some reason. That was normal routine.

Marcello: You're still not answering the question that I want you to answer. When, normally, would you leave Pearl Harbor? In other words, on what day of the week would you normally leave Pearl Harbor?

Loyd: There was no certain day.

Marcello: I see.

Loyd: There was no certain day that we would leave. We would leave during the week at most any time and arrive at most any time. Now when we were assigned to refuel a fleet at sea, then there was no system worked out to where people would have a good liberty, so to speak, like they were when we would get back to Long Beach. For some reason they would try to get the men weekend liberties--Saturdays and Sundays. So many of the fellows were married and had their families at Long Beach and San Pedro and Wilmington and in there. That

being the home port, the families would move as close as they could to their home port. But operating out of the fleet into Pearl, there was no system. You'd just go out and unload and then come back in and take on a load. We didn't always pick up our load at Long Beach. Sometimes we'd pick up our load at Pearl and go right back to the Pacific Fleet, and probably the same fuel that we'd already unloaded previously.

Marcello: Sometimes when you came back from the West Coast, would you meet the fleet out there on maneuvers and refuel them while they were undergoing their training exercises?

Loyd: Yes, several times they would be in their training exercise, and they would initiate a refueling program during actual combat conditions. We would refuel the fleet under these conditions--under combat conditions. This was before the war started.

Marcello: Was this normally the only time that you were with the fleet?

Loyd: Yes, the only time. Actually, the only time that we were actually with the fleet was just during this time that they needed fuel. Otherwise, the only time that we were with them would be at anchorage or in Pearl, you know. Like on December 7, the entire fleet was laying in there. We just happened to get in there on December 6 to unload our cargo.

Marcello: I gather, then, that this routine that we've been describing here really didn't vary or change any right up until the actual Japanese attack itself.

Loyd: Oh, no, it didn't change any. The only time you had a change would be if one of the ships had an accident or was in trouble or needed repairs--one of the sister ships, one of the fuelers. The Cimarron and the Platte and the Neosho were three sister ships. The three older ones were the Tippecanoe and the Brazos and the Pecos. So the three later ships rotated their responsibilities to the fleet. Once in awhile one would have to go in for a repair--major overhaul or repair--and the two others would be left with full responsibility. That kept us pretty busy.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about your liberty routine at this point. You have already talked a little bit about it. From what you've said, I gather that you had basically a four-section liberty aboard the Neosho.

Loyd: Right.

Marcello: And, as you mentioned when you were in Pearl Harbor, normally three sections would go ashore, or could go ashore, and the duty section, of course, would remain aboard. Now I would assume that when you were in Pearl, you had a port and starboard-type liberty. Is this true?

Loyd: Yes, that's true. You'd have a rotating liberty. However, like I said, you could have A and C sections on port liberty and B and D on starboard liberty. They would let three sections go. They'd let three sections go on liberty because it didn't take very many people to operate the ship loading or unloading. There was very little to be done. The detail that done that were senior enlisted men, first class water tenders and first class pump men, that were on this detail to handle that. So they had their own system worked out among themselves for their liberties. You could trade off. You could switch liberties with a man anytime, or you could buy his liberty if you wanted, or you could sell yours. We done that several times. If you took his watch, in other words, you had to stand yours and his both. But that worked out pretty good. Sometimes it was worth ten dollars (chuckle).

Marcello: Under most circumstances, then, there was always a quarter of the crew aboard the ship.

Loyd: Right.

Marcello: How about the officers? Well, let's just take the officers. Normally, when you were in port, I would assume that most of those people went ashore, did they not?

Loyd: I would think that probably three-fourths of the officers would go ashore. We didn't know much about that department of the ship, but we could see them coming and going. I was an enlisted man. And they had an officer's club there at Ford Island. Sometimes we would tie our ship at the submarine base and discharge fuel at the submarine base. Sometimes it would be at Ford Island. These were the two major sources for unloading fuel. Where they went, we never did know, but I'm sure that they'd go to the officer's clubs there on the base. I'm almost certain that they would have the same responsibility that we had--one-fourth of the duty officers had to stay aboard. We didn't have a large complement of officers aboard our ship. I don't know how many we did have. I don't think over fifty, probably.

Marcello: Describe what a typical liberty in Honolulu would be like for a young, unmarried sailor such as yourself.

Loyd: Well, that's not hard. That's real easy because we were on \$21 a month. There was very little you could do. You would catch a cab. You would go to fleet landing. If you're docked at Ford Island, you either ride the ferry over to fleet landing or you ride a liberty boat. All ships had their own boats, and they

ran the liberty boats back and forth to the dock at the fleet landing. That was quite a hassle. That dock was only about 100 feet long and there was about 150 boats waiting to be loaded and unloaded.

But anyway, after you got over on fleet landing there were buses and there were taxi's and there was a train. You could ride this little old train. It was a narrow-gauge, pineapple deal. They had passenger cars on them, but it was dusty and dirty on the train. The windows were all up on it. So we all rode a cab. It was quicker. They carried nine passengers in these old, long tandem three-seat taxis. That was the best bet. It cost you a quarter to ride the taxi and only a dime to ride the bus. You'd go to town. You'd go to Honolulu. It was about a fifteen or twenty-minute ride into town.

On the \$21, like I said, you had to take out a little bit for your insurance. You had to pay for that. Then you had to pay for your ship's service supplies that you had to buy aboard ship. Out of the \$21, you probably wound up with about \$15 a month. So you could go to four picture shows. They started at nine o'clock in the morning. You could see four features in one show

and then go across the street and see four more features in another show and get out of the picture show about midnight. You could eat a great big steak with potatoes and all the lettuce and tomatoes and trimmings on it for sixty or seventy cents.

Then by then it was time to go back. You went to YMCA . . . was where . . . there in uptown Honolulu was where the cabs and the buses all congregated--right around the "Y." That's where you looked for your transportation back to the base. When you got back over there, you went through the same routine again, except out of those thousand or fifteen hundred people trying to get on the boat, they were all drunk trying to get back to the ships. Instead of the ones coming off sober, why, it was quite an ordeal yet.

Marcello: Let's just go back here a little bit. When normally was payday aboard the Neosho?

Loyd: The first and the fifteenth of the month. They paid twice a month. We lined up just like everybody does, and you made out your little pay slip of how much money you wanted to draw. Your pay was posted on the bulletin board the day before payday, or two days, as I recall. Your name and rank and serial number and how much money you had coming to you was posted on that board. When

you made out your chit for your withdrawal, you put down whatever you wanted, and you went through the paymaster's . . . went by his table, and he gave you whatever you had on this slip and left the balance on the books. That was it.

Marcello: So, consequently, on that weekend of December 7, you would have had a small amount of money left over then, since you would have gotten paid on the first.

Loyd: Yes, probably so. You'd have had a little bit left, but very little. We were so short of money that some of us had an allowance made out--an allotment. I did. I had a twenty-dollar-a-month allotment made out, which took a little bit out of my check after I went up to second class fireman, which gave a little bit more money. I didn't do this while I was on the \$21. I couldn't afford it. But after I got up to \$54, I did make out the twenty-dollar-a-month allotment. I was still short.

Marcello: What rank were you at the time of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor?

Loyd: I was a first class fireman.

Marcello: Now when you went on liberty, did you, like most of the other sailors, frequent Beretania Street and Hotel Street and Canal Street and those places?

Loyd: No, our bunch didn't much. There were a few of the older ones that did. But the young ones, with what we went through in these lectures about the venereal diseases and one thing and another down at San Diego, they scared the wits out of most of us young boys. So we stayed clear of most of those kind of places. We'd hunt for roller skating rinks and bicycle rental outfits. It was too good to miss--to rent you a bicycle and ride up and down those hills and through the parks and places like that. I could see some of the guys getting drunk and coming out of those little old dives and puking all over themselves and everybody else. They'd be on the bus drunk and sick. It was very disgusting. That didn't appeal to me very much.

I couldn't see it, and I didn't have the money to put into that kind of nonsense. I was the type to enjoy myself, I thought, in a cleaner way of living than that. Even though I didn't have much money, I'd go to a picture show and get a good meal. We always buddied up--two or three of us. We'd go down to Waikiki Beach and look around, maybe go swimming down there, rent some bicycles and ride around a little bit. Sometimes we'd get a chance to go to a football game. This being in the fall of the year, the football season had

started out there. It was the same thing they had back here at home. They had football at that time of the year, so we'd get to go to a football game if we were fortunate. They mostly played in the afternoon. I don't think any of the football fields had lights.

And the Navy played some ball. We had recreation teams in the Navy. The fleet all had quite an athletic competition program. They had boxing among . . . all the ships had what they thought were pretty good boxers. On Friday nights they had the smokers over at Pearl. They had a large boxing arena. The fight started, oh, about six o'clock, and they went on till about eleven o'clock. Every weight classified in the world was there in competition. Each ship . . . each man had his robe on that had the name of his ship on there. There were some bloody brawls in those rings among the cruisers and destroyers and the battleships. One of the world's . . . Jack Sharkey was one of the Navy's world contenders in the boxing championships. There were several good boxers who came out of the Navy. It was a major event . . . was the sporting events in the Navy. They had boat rowing earlier in the Navy before . . . well, during what we called peacetime Navy

up before the war in Europe broke out. They had several different events in the Navy that they didn't have a little later on. But they had boxing and wrestling right on up until the very last.

Those smokers were just what they said they were. Everybody was smoking big stout cigars and watching the boxing matches. They had a beer garden out the back there. It was a large concrete-covered patio with palm trees all around it. It was nice. It was ideal. It was real good. Fellows sat out there and drank their beer if they wanted to. We'd take a break once in awhile from the boxing matches. We'd get us an ice cream or something. We enjoyed Friday nights, though, at the base there at Pearl. There was a lot of excitement around there on Friday night right there on the base. It didn't cost you nothing.

Marcello: Normally speaking, did you have to be back aboard the Neosho at midnight? I know most of the sailors had to be back aboard at midnight if they had leave. Did that routine also apply to the Neosho?

Loyd: No, our liberty was set for 7:30 in the morning, I think, primarily because of the married men. This program was set up mostly for the Long Beach married families. The duty started at 0800 in the morning, and you had to be

back aboard ship by 7:30. That was normally when our liberties expired, was 7:30 in the morning.

Marcello: Then I gather that since you were receiving such a low pay that you probably would have spent your nights aboard the Neosho rather than, let's say, staying in one of the hotels or the YMCA or something like that in downtown Honolulu.

Loyd: Right. Yes, we made it a policy to try to get back to the ship by midnight because your ferries quit running. Some of the ferries quit running at midnight. Liberty boats were getting scarce, and at certain times of the night you'd have a little trouble getting your liberty boat to pick you up. So nearly everyone tried to get back around ten or eleven o'clock at night. Like I said about the smokers on Friday night, that was always . . . they tried to terminate that around ten o'clock so the people could get back to their ships. That was generally . . . on the base liberty, normally, like out there at Pearl, I think they probably had a midnight curfew system worked out. But stateside, they didn't have. With so many of the ships, I think they had the 7:30 a.m. expiration.

Marcello: And this is the way your liberty routine worked when you were docked at Pearl, too.

Loyd: Yes, normally it would be because we had our own liberty boats--we didn't have to rely on the other boats--and we could ride the ferry. I don't recall now what schedule the ferry had that docked at Ford Island. But we had our own liberty boat, and it was no trouble for us to wait at the dock till it showed up. It'd run about once an hour. It gave the guy aboard ship time to go aboard and drink some coffee and come back and pick up another load. They ran about once an hour.

Marcello: From your own observation, what would normally be the condition of the men who came back aboard the Neosho after a Saturday night of liberty in Honolulu?

Loyd: Well, there would be a few polluted ones, but not many because they were saving their money for their weekend back at Long Beach. So about the only ones that you'd see that would go all-out would be the unmarried ones that had a little more money and rank . . . received a little more money. A few of those would come back polluted, but very few. I didn't see hardly ever any that would do that because, like I said, they would save their money for their trip back to Long Beach. It seemed like that routine was looked forward to--going back to Long Beach. Most of the people would just "rat-hole" their money out at Honolulu and Pearl and wouldn't go all-out out there.

Marcello: Well, the reason I asked that question was because a great many people assume that Saturday nights in Pearl Harbor and Honolulu were times of drunken debauchery and orgies and this sort of thing. Consequently, those men would not be in any sort of condition to fight the next day, that is, on a Sunday. I simply wanted to get your opinion on this, or your observation on this point, in order to dispell that argument as much as anything else.

Loyd: Well, I don't think they were. You'd see lots of the guys coming back to the ship that would be asleep. They'd come to the fleet landing waiting for their boats to come back, and they'd be sleepy and tired, maybe had a few drinks. But they'd lay down on the dock over there, and it was mostly the type of weather that you could sleep right out there on the dock at night. But, anyway, they would . . . you'd see a lot of the guys coming back in the morning that had been out all night. That was just because they had lay down on the docks or on the grass. They had a golf course right there on the edge of the fleet landing where the officers played golf. But, anyway, you'd see lots of guys coming back late, and you'd think, well, maybe they'd stayed in town all night or something. It wasn't

anything unusual to see a whole lot of them laying around asleep on the docks over there, too, because they didn't care if they got back to the ship and went to bed or not because the bunks were up at eight o'clock in the morning. You couldn't sleep in the daytime aboard ship.

However, on Sunday morning the fleet had a permissible late bunk policy that . . . I think it was nine o'clock that you could sack in on Sunday mornings if you were docked in port somewhere. I think that was the reason so many of the guys got killed at Pearl on December 7, was because of the late bunk policy that was permitted--permit the guys to stay in their bunks below deck.

Marcello: In other words, Sunday was a day of leisure.

Loyd: Yes. I know I was on mess cooking duty in the scullery with this fellow, and you could bet that there wouldn't be over fifty people that would eat breakfast on Sunday morning. That was our easy day on Sunday morning because you didn't have many trays to wash and clean and bowls and coffee cups and one thing or another because most of them would sleep in.

Marcello: Let's talk about another phase of life at Pearl Harbor during this period now. How safe and secure did you feel

at Pearl Harbor, even as relations between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate? Did you feel relatively safe and secure there at Pearl?

Loyd: Well, I probably was ignorant of anything in the nature of war machinery or war powers because, like I said earlier, I came from a little farm community here, and when I went in the Navy everybody was at peace except Hitler. I didn't have any idea that we were sitting in a dangerous situation out there. It didn't mean anything to me to be right in the vicinity of 200 or 300 first-class combat ships sitting in the harbor like that.

It was a policy that was permitted out of Washington that was brought about, I think, by President Roosevelt. Some of the congressmen and senators were complaining to the President that so many of the men weren't getting enough weekend liberty in the Pacific Fleet--that some of them were fussing about it, and they thought they should get a little more free time off on weekends and so forth. That was a known fact in Washington that they thought maybe there ought to be a little more freedom among the fleet personnel. So this was along about the time that the fleet started arriving in Pearl for the weekends due to the congressional

pressure in Washington. That's a known fact that President Roosevelt permitted this thing to work up to weekend layovers if at all possible. You had your fleet exercises and maneuvers maybe three or four weeks of continuous day and night at sea, but that was a scheduled thing. Then when you weren't at maneuvers, you'd come in during the weekend. You'd go out on daily maneuvers for maybe five days at a time. Then the ships would all come in for the weekend to relax and take it easy.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese during those pre-Pearl Harbor days, what sort of an individual did you usually conjure up in your own mind?

Loyd: I don't know that I ever knew the difference between a Japanese or a Chinese. I didn't know until years later. The only association with any of the Oriental people was in Los Angeles. Once in awhile we'd go into an Oriental place to eat or something like that. We had a few Orientals in the Navy. We had Filipinos in the Navy. They were mess stewards--officers' mess stewards. But then out in Honolulu you could see the Oriental people. You pretty well knew they were either Japanese or Chinese. I never could tell the difference until later on. There were so many of the native

Hawaiians that were mixed-blood people that you couldn't tell. They were all Hawaiians as far as we were concerned. You couldn't tell a Japanese from a Chinese or anything else. They were all Hawaiians--Kanakas is what we called them. But an Oriental was an Oriental. There was no difference between any of them.

Marcello: Did you ever hear any of the old salts talk about the capabilities of the Japanese Navy or anything of this nature?

Loyd: Well, no. We knew a little bit of history about what had happened. We knew about the Panay in the Yangtze River and things like that. But those were what we called Asiatic Fleet people down there. They didn't apply to us. That Asiatic Fleet was operating some out of the Philippines and different places over there. Their duties and their responsibilities down there didn't apply to us. We thought we was mid-Pacific Fleet, and we didn't pay any attention to what they were doing much down there.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less brings us up to those days immediately prior to the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. What I want you to do at this point, Mr. Loyd, is to give me in as much detail as you can remember what your routine was on Saturday, December 6, 1941. Then, after

you describe your routine on the 6th, we'll do the same thing for that Sunday of December 7. Let's talk about December 6, 1941, first of all.

Loyd: Okay, we left Long Beach, probably, on December 1, being about a six-day trip over there. We got to Pearl the night of December 6. We first anchored around the back side of the harbor, and then we moved back into the dock the night of December 6 there at Ford Island. It was already dark when we got there, but we could see there were a lot of ships in the harbor.

Marcello: What ships were you tied up to or docked near?

Loyd: We were docked between three of the battleships. There were two to the stern of us and one to the bow. The California was to our bow, and to our stern was the Oklahoma and the Tennessee. So we couldn't tell much about what there was in this harbor that night when we got in. Like I said, it was late when we got in. We couldn't see many of the ships. We could tell there were some of the larger ships in there. But it was strictly peacetime liberty that everybody was expecting for the following day.

Marcello: Did anybody have liberty the night of December 6 when you finally did dock there or near the battleships?

Loyd: No, there wasn't any liberty that night because of the late arrival. They were scheduled for eight o'clock the next morning. This being Sunday morning, well, they were just preparing for liberty--the ones that was going ashore.

Marcello: What time did you go to bed on Saturday night?

Loyd: Oh, probably around eight or nine o'clock. I thought it was awful beautiful scenery and all at night even though, you know . . . out there in the islands the moon is so bright you can see the islands. You can see the mountains in fairly clear detail. You can see the fields on the landscape and all. You could sit up there on the deck in the cool breeze and shoot the bull--two or three of you. Normally, around eight or nine o'clock, ten o'clock, why, you started sacking out.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less moves the story into the Sunday morning of December 7, 1941. Once more, what I want you to do at this point is to give me your routine on that day in as much detail as you can remember.

Loyd: Okay, I was on mess cook duty. We went to work at 6:30 in the morning. Mess cooks all had to be up there at six o'clock and start feeding in the chow line at 6:30. Johnny Hudson and I was in the scullery, and normally we were the last ones to get through and the last ones

to go on duty. So we would have time to eat before we went on duty. Normally, he and I would get right in the mess line with the rest of them. The ones on the serving . . . the mess cooks on the serving line, they went ahead and served, and Johnny and I would eat with the rest of them. That was, oh, about 7:30 or 7:45.

We had just finished eating and were sitting there talking and waiting for the trays to stack up on the table by the scullery so we could go wash them. That's when the first bombs and torpedoes that landed . . . hit about . . . well, at 7:55 was when it happened. So they sounded general quarters alarm while we were . . . just as soon as the first torpedoes hit, which was right behind us and right forward of us, both. It really shook this ship that I was on. Although we were loaded, we didn't hardly have time to hook up the hoses. They hooked up the hoses that night to prepare for unloading, and they'd just started pumping fuel off when this started.

Marcello: In other words, you were in the process of refueling those ships when the attack occurred.

Loyd: Unloading--we were in the process of unloading our ship.

Marcello: Oh, you were unloading but not really refueling one of the other ships.

Loyd: No, we were unloading into the fuel tanks on Ford Island-- the supply tanks. So we went to general quarters, and my detail was on the bow, of course. Boy! By the time I got out of the . . . the mess hall was on the stern of the ship above the boiler rooms and above the sleeping compartments. It was on the port side aft. My detail-- ammunition party--was right up on the bow. I recall as soon as they sounded general quarters, well, away I went.

Marcello: Did you know at this time that it was a Japanese attack, or did you think it was a drill?

Loyd: I really didn't know. I didn't have any idea what it was until I ran out of the hatch of the mess hall and looked up and saw this Japanese torpedo plane that had just dropped its torpedo and made a port side bank to the left up and away, and I saw the rising sun under the wings of the plane. At the same time, I saw the gushers and oil and water come up from the Oklahoma. I knew this was it. At that time, a few of the antiaircraft artillery had already started opening up.

In contrast to what a lot of people thought they remembered that a lull had taken place along in there before the shots was fired, that's not true. The first shots were fired almost immediately. Even while I was on

my way to the ammunition up on the bow, there was firing going on among some of the ships. The men on watch and the gun batteries were right there, and some of the guns were loaded. The antiaircraft guns were loaded and armed, and the men were on detail. This was part of the Pacific Fleet policy, was to have men at stations for this purpose. That was a firm policy to have so many on antiaircraft details on each ship.

About the second plane I saw was coming right at us, it looked like. It came in over the submarine base. Of course, this being a little long narrow channel going up towards the submarine base, that gave them more room to drop down lower over the water without any ships being in their way and left them a clear open shot for torpedo aiming. They just dropped right down right on top of the water, you might say, and turned those torpedos loose, and that was a phenomenal thing to me. It was amazing to see those torpedoes drop out of those planes, and there was nothing we could do about it.

Marcello: When you saw the torpedoes drop from those planes, are you more or less mesmerized? In other words, are you kind of awe struck? Did you just stand there and watch it?

Loyd: You are. You're dumbfounded. This torpedo will drop down nose first, and it will dive just like Olympic swimmers will dive headlong into the water. They'll go down to a certain depth, and they'll come up to a certain elevation and level off. You could see the white churn of the water behind that propeller. You could see it coming, and there was nothing you could do about it.

Marcello: What were your immediate emotions when you witnesses these first two torpedo bombers coming in?

Loyd: I didn't really have any fear that I knew of. I knew we was in a predicament. I knew I was trained what to do, and I knew the consequences of being a deserter or abandoning my detail. I knew better than to do that. At this time, we didn't even have helmets or any kind of protection. So I just kept trucking on up toward my ammunitions party. When I got up there, there was one fellow there ahead of me.

Our locker wasn't locked. We had a lock on this ammunition box, but it wasn't locked. How it got unlocked, I never did know. But we didn't break it. I've heard stories about some of the guys breaking the locks off, but we didn't break this one off. A fellow named Dunn . . . he wasn't the same Dunn as from Corpus

here. I don't know where this boy was from. But anyway, his responsibility was down in the hold, so he slipped the lid open on this hatch and down that ladder he went. He swung what we called the davit . . . swung it over the hold. It had a rope block on it. We let the rope down. There was another fellow, a little Italian fellow, named Mundi . . . anyway, he was up there with me, and he and I hoisted ammunition out of that locker all during this excitement. I can't recall how many boxes we hoisted out. I also can't recall missing any of the action because all during this time we was hoisting this out was was also watching, too, you know, to see what was happening and to see if we were going to get hit or what to do. The ships were already on fire behind us and forward of us. The California right forward of us had already been hit once.

Marcello: About how far away were you from the California?

Loyd: I would say about 500 feet of clearance was between the bow of our ship and the California, and also between the stern of our ship and the Oklahoma was probably about 500 feet.

Marcello: Well, describe some of the action you saw unfolding before you during this period.

Loyd: On the California, looking right down on the port side quarter-deck where the torpedo had hit aft, just about where the number three turret was at, they had evidently sounded abandon ship because a lot of the people were leaving the ship over the gangway. They had their whites on. I saw an officer which I presume was the captain come down. He walked over to the handrail, and he looked down in the water, all of the bubbles and the oil coming up out of the water where the torpedo hit, and another one hit right nearly in the same place and just covered him with oil and water and smoke and everything else. He literally got drenched.

Marcello: What happened when . . . did you actually see the torpedoes hit the California?

Loyd: Yes, I saw them hit.

Marcello: What did those torpedoes do to the ship physically?

Loyd: When I saw the planes turn that torpedo loose, I watched it all through the water. When it hit, there was a momentary delay. This was a delayed action-type torpedo, I'm sure. They were set deep. I've been told that the armor belt on these battleships was about eight feet high. In other words, the width of the belt around the sides had a width of about six or eight feet. I know they were wide because people could walk on them. They were that thick. You could walk on top of that armor belt around that side.

Anyway, the torpedoes were set to hit below the armor belt. They were very deep--about twelve or fifteen feet deep, I would suppose, that they hit. There was a momentary delay after this thing had vanished until it exploded, which would indicate to me that it was a delayed action thing. But it didn't appear to do any surface damage on the ship. Anything above the water line of the ship wasn't affected in any way. There was no indication above the water line that it had been hit. It all came up beside the ship--the water and the gusher and all came up from outside the ship.

Marcello: When the torpedo exploded, did it appear as though the California was actually lifted out of the water a little bit or anything of this nature? Was there a jolt of any type?

Loyd: Some of them that were on these ships that got hit, they said that. They said it was literally lifted up off the bottom and turned sideways and shifted sideways. But, to me, it didn't appear that it moved much because they were tied to the docks there, and they didn't break any of the lines that they were tied to. I'm sure there was quite a shock aboard the ship that was hit. Without a doubt it did shake the ship, and it was shaking the ship that I was on because anytime you have an explosion under

water it's going to shake everything that's in the vicinity of it.

Marcello: I would assume that the Neosho was not coming under any direct attack itself.

Loyd: No, it wasn't. We've never understood, really, why they never concentrated . . . why they didn't change their orders. Evidently, they were operating under strict orders for combat ships only, battleships only. The pre-war days were emphasized on battleships.

Marcello: I don't think anybody simply realized the potential that the aircraft carriers possessed or just how valuable a tanker was.

Loyd: Right. So evidently, they were under strict orders to torpedo the battleships only. They probably had secondary targets--options on secondaries. Well, there wasn't any need of secondaries because the harbor was full of battleships.

Marcello: Also, I think you have to keep in mind that pilots usually don't get medals or promotions for sinking a tanker, but they do for sinking battleships and aircraft carriers or cruisers.

Loyd: Right. The only thing they would have accomplished there if they would have hit the Neosho, they'd have set the harbor on fire with oil because the oil that was coming to the surface from the ships that were being hit by

torpedoes . . . the oil was on fire. It was causing quite a disturbance around the West Virginia behind us, and the Maryland and the Tennessee, because of the oil that was coming to the surface on fire. The Arizona was losing a big majority of this oil because she was split down the middle, and so was the West Virginia. The Oklahoma had capsized. I don't think the Oklahoma had lost a whole lot of her oil. I think it was trapped in the bunkers after it capsized. Most of the oil was coming up from the West Virginia and Arizona.

Marcello: Okay, let's get back to the California again, since that was the one that you'd been describing awhile ago.

Loyd: That's the one that I could see the clearest because it was on my end of the ship.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk just a little bit more about it then. So the second torpedo had hit it, and it obviously increased the amount of damage that was being done to the California.

Loyd: Yes, you could see it leaning a little. You could see it dropping by the stern and huge bubbles coming to the top which, without a doubt, was signs of her sinking.

So along in this realm of time was when the abandon ship alarm was sounded because the men were just literally

lined up leaving the ship all in their whites. They were leaving the ship. She was tied to the docks, and she had taken a severe punishment, and I'm sure that the officers of the California seen there was no need for the men to stay aboard.

However, a little bit later they mustered a detail of antiaircraft people and brought them back aboard when they seen that the California wasn't going to capsize. They did man their antiaircraft artillery, and the California did a good job trying to defend with her antiaircraft weapons.

Marcello: I gather that it wasn't too long after the California was hit that the word was given to abandon ship.

Loyd: Well, to me there was a . . . yes, there wasn't much lapse of time until the word was given, probably. We couldn't hear what was given. We didn't know that they were ordered to abandon ship or whether they ordered a detail of the antiaircraft crews all stay aboard until the last minute. Sometimes this is the case, to where if a ship is damaged severely below water they'll give the warning for all below deck personnel to abandon ship and antiaircraft people to remain at their stations. I don't know the circumstances of theirs, but they left their antiaircraft personnel all aboard. It appeared

to me that they all stayed right with the ship and probably with orders to stay until the last minute. In the event that she was going to capsize they could abandon ship.

Marcello: Did you witness any of the action aboard any of the other ships during this period? Obviously, you mentioned your best view was the one that you had of the California.

Loyd: Yes, the viewpoint I had upon the bow of the ship was real good. I saw the Oglala across the harbor. I saw it tilting over.

Marcello: And about how far away would the Oglala have been?

Loyd: The Oglala would have been, oh, a quarter of a mile across.

Marcello: This is the old ship that apparently, as they say, rolled over because of fright.

Loyd: Yes, she was an old minelayer. One of our members of the Corpus Christi chapter of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association was aboard the Oglala. Mr. Dunn was aboard the Oglala. But the story is that the Enterprise was supposed to have been tied up there according to their intelligence. Anyway, the torpedoman that thought that was the Enterprise, he was badly mistaken because he torpedoed an old ship that wasn't much.

The Helena was tied up right in front of the Oglala at the dock. Of course, in front of the Helena was the Pennsylvania and the Downes and the Cassin in the dry docks. I saw the dive bombers hitting them. The Pennsylvania was in the dry dock. I saw the dive bombers come down and hit it.

Also, about the time they were hitting the Pennsylvania, the Nevada, which was back near the Arizona, had steam up and was trying to get out of the harbor. The Nevada was right near the same vicinity as the Pennsylvania when these dive bombers came down. They also hit the Nevada. They missed with two or three right outside the port waterline but there were several that hit--one up on the bow and two along midships. There were several of the bombers that hit the Nevada in her trying to get out. We watched her slow down in the center of the channel leading out to the deep water. It appeared that the Nevada was going to sink in this channel. The senior quartermaster was a chief warrant officer or chief petty officer that was handling the Nevada, and he saw that she was about to sink in the ship channel, so he had her to back astern up on part of the rocks out of the ship channel. She was almost in the channel. The bow was protruding out in the edge of the ship channel when she sunk.

I saw the Shaw, which was in a floating dry dock-- a metal floating dry dock. I saw the bombs that hit there.

Marcello: That was a rather spectacular explosion when the Shaw blew up.

Loyd: That was a spectacular explosion when the Shaw blew up. It blew the bow plumb off of it. The one bomb sunk three ships right there. It sunk the Shaw and the _____ and the dry dock and all. It sunk everything.

There was a dredge operating across the outlet of Pearl. It had these . . . dredging out the channel. When I saw the Nevada starting out, I thought, "Boy, she's going to have to go around that dredge!" But . . . or go through it--go through those pipes they had floating, you know. But it went around. Evidently, there was people aboard the dredge working. Now I suppose they were working on a weekend emergency deal, which would be easier for the dredge to clear the channel out during the weekend than it would be during the week. This was probably the reason there was people aboard the dredge. Anyway, it very nearly got in the way because the Nevada had to go around it.

Marcello: How close were you to the Shaw when it exploded?

Loyd: Oh, probably a half a mile.

Marcello: Did you have an unobstructed view of the explosion itself?

Loyd: Yes, it was very clear, very plain. The Shaw was to the south of us, and I was up on the bow. The Neosho was facing the south. All of that action over there was very clear. Some of the action behind was clear because the way this fuel dock was situated, it isn't directly parallel with the battleships' dock. It's at an angle. The pictures will show you this. The fuel docks are pointing with the stern outward toward the harbor right near the fleet landing and near the ferry landing. It was probably a little slip of water in there--a little inlet--that they built this fuel dock next to because it's not parallel to the other docks. Consequently, the ship wasn't squared to the point to where we couldn't see behind. We could see behind fairly well. I saw the Oklahoma when it capsized. I saw it going over.

Marcello: That must have been a rather sickening feeling.

Loyd: It was very sickening. The Oklahoma had taken several torpedoes below the waterline--below the armor belt. It had started down on the port side, and I assume that they had the watertight compartments and everything all closed because it took water on one side

and had air on the other side. Consequently, it rolled over. It was very sickening to see that thing rolling over, bottomside up, and all of those people in the water covered with oil. You couldn't tell whether they had whites on or what they had on. They were just covered with oil, and the oil was on fire. People were trying to get out by just crawling on the rocks.

Ford Island has a large shoreline of big boulders or big rocks. Of course, this oil was already up on the rocks, and people were trying to crawl up on the rocks. They were jumping off the ships and swimming over there. It was quite a swim for some of them. Some of them didn't make it, especially with oil in their windpipe and soaked with oil. I saw lots of them go under the water that weren't the result of direct injuries of any kind. They just couldn't make it. They were too far out. The ones that went over to the outward side of the ships that had to go around the bow or the stern, that's a long swim under any condition without being covered with oil and so forth. I saw lots of the guys go under that couldn't make it and that's sickening.

The helpless ones out there in the boats and so forth, some were trying to pick up a few people. There

were some liberty boats coming back that was out there trying to pick up people. The water was just full of all kinds of debris. There were life rafts and cork and burning oil and burning people and burning cork and burning wood. There were boats out there was burning.

Smoke was drifting our way. We were . . . from the Arizona there was a tremendous amount of smoke coming our way. And, of course, the West Virginia was on fire and had sunk.

Marcello: Did you actually witness the Arizona going down?

Loyd: No, no, the Arizona was right behind the four ships and forward of her to where we couldn't see the Arizona. The only thing that we could see was when the horizontal bombers went over and dropped those . . . from high altitude they dropped their bombs . . . five or six, it looked like. There were probably six or seven planes, and each one probably dropped one bomb apiece. They looked like they came from the south. It looked like they overshot their target because instead of the bombs hitting the two inside ships that torpedoes couldn't get to, which was the Tennessee and the Maryland . . . they were tied up next to the docks, and the Oklahoma and the West Virginia were on the outside of these two ships. Consequently, the two outside ships took all of the torpedoes,

and the bombers were supposed to try to get the two inside ones. Well, they overshot because the bombs went to the stern of these two ships and hit the Arizona. She took a full load back there. I don't know how many of the bombs missed the Arizona in hitting the water, but you could see the gushers coming up. So several of them missed. I don't think over one or two hit the Arizona, but it hit right in the vital spot, and she just literally erupted midships and came apart. She just busted wide open right at midships.

Marcello: But you actually couldn't see too much of what was taking place aboard the Arizona.

Loyd: No, we couldn't. We could see the mast sticking up, cage mast and the tripod masts of the ships behind. The Arizona had a tripod mast--three-legged tripod mast. We could see it, and we could see the tremendous fire and also saw the lookout cage above the tripod mast . . . we could see it leaning over when it collapsed and came forward. We could see that.

But all in this time we were still at our battle stations. We were still handling our ammunition. You wouldn't believe that a person could do this job and still see everything, too, but I suppose you can. It was quite an effort.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that the California was off your bow, and you mentioned then that there were a couple of battleships off your stern. Now which two were off your stern?

Loyd: The Oklahoma and the West Virginia were the two outside ships that took the heavy torpedo attacks to our stern. The Oklahoma was the nearest one to us.

Marcello: And that's the one . . . well, if it were the nearest one to you, you probably didn't have a very good view of the West Virginia then.

Loyd: Not too good, no.

Marcello: Not until the Oklahoma went over, anyhow.

Loyd: Right. When the Oklahoma went over and capsized, then I could see the West Virginia fairly well. I had a friend aboard the West Virginia that was from my home here over here at Driscoll. For some reason or another . . . we were able to identify these ships through the numbers that were on the bows and sterns of the ships. You knew what ship was in your vicinity. Some of them had their names painted on them to where you could identify them. Anyway, I could see the West Virginia, and I knew this fellow was aboard it. I could see that she had sunk and went straight down and wasn't going to capsize. It settled straight down on the bottom, but she took a heavy broadside--probably four or five torpedoes.

Marcello: Were you able to witness any of the activity over on Ford Island itself?

Loyd: Well, we saw a lot of the hangars exploding over there to our south, which was on our end of the ship. We could see the hangars and the aircraft on the ramps out there that was burning and, of course, the fuel tanks exploding.

Marcello: Did you have a clear, unobstructed view of Ford Island, that is, the hangars and the aircraft?

Loyd: Yes, we had a real good view of the southern end of Ford Island where all of the aircraft were parked and the hangars all were. We had a good view of that.

Marcello: About how far were you from that scene of action?

Loyd: From the main hangars we were probably a half-mile. Ford Island would be--my guess--a mile long. We were right near the center of it. The fuel docks were right near the center of the island on the east side, and the hangars were all on the southern end, and all of the aircraft and the maintenance shops, repair shops, were all on the southern end. The northern end are mostly living quarters. Around the edges of the island is officers' quarters and living quarters and administration and one thing or another on the northern end of Ford Island.

Marcello: What sort of activity did you see over there at Ford Island?

Loyd: I saw a lot of people running in different directions and fire trucks going in different directions. It seems like there was a little confusion going on as to which direction was the most important for the drivers of these fire trucks because you can understand where bombs are hitting in different locations around and different places. You try to . . . if you are a driver of a fire truck or a crash crew, you try to ascertain which is the most important. I'm sure they had two-way radios. They probably had some directions, too, which would conflict with his own thoughts.

So there was a lot of confusion. There were people trying to put fires out. There was hoses being . . . water being sprayed on planes and buildings and places where ammunition was stored. You could tell they were trying to keep that cooled off and covered up and one thing or another. And you could see the planes coming down on Ford Island. They were strafing, too. I assume that some of these planes that dropped their torpedoes and bombs probably made strafing runs later. Now the torpedo planes themselves were larger than the bombers--than the dive bombers were--

and I didn't ever see any of the torpedo planes come back, so probably they went back to their carriers.

Marcello: Well, it would have been tough for those torpedo bombers to have made a second raid because of all of the smoke and so on. They had to come in fairly low, I gather, and their vision would have been obstructed quite a bit.

Loyd: Right.

Marcello: In fact, I think we know now that the Japanese plan was to have those torpedo bombers come in first, if at all possible, so that they would have a clear, unobstructed view.

Loyd: That is right--to make the first hit--to make the crippling hit--and to put them out of action. Then the bombers come along and pick up stragglers that had got missed, like I mentioned--the Tennessee and the Maryland. They were probably . . . they could see that they weren't damaged as severely as they had hoped they would be. So they had to bring these bombers in to try to wipe those two out. All of the single ships, nearly, were hit--the ones that weren't protected by land or another ship. They all suffered. The ones that were over at the docks--the cruisers that were all over at the maintenance docks--they didn't seem to care too much for the light cruisers and heavy cruisers. They were strictly a battleship knock-out.

Marcello: Now we know that there were supposedly two waves of Japanese planes. At the time that you were there, could you distinguish one wave from another, or in the emotion of the battle did it seem as though there was simply one continuous attack?

Loyd: I would say there was three phases of it. The torpedo planes came in first. Along about the time the torpedo planes had left, dive bombers showed up--the ones that were hitting the Pennsylvania and the Nevada and several of the cruisers. There was a group of dive bombers coming in. The third phase was the high altitude bombers coming from south to north. And then right at the last, there were . . . after the biggest part of the main phase of the fighting had died down, there were two or three planes came in strafing--machine-gunning and strafing. I assume these were probably camera planes. We had proceeded to move when the oil all caught on fire around our ship. We decided we'd move over to the submarine base.

Marcello: Were you able to get up enough power to move over there?

Loyd: Oh, yes. We had steam up because we just got in there that night. We had steam up and had people aboard. Everybody was still aboard. So we did. We got away as soon as the fuel detail disconnected all of the hoses and stuff from the dock. We backed out of there and got away from

there because that was a real hot spot. We went over to the submarine base over there to get out of that hot spot. They didn't bother the submarine base much at all. And there was one plane that came in while we were right over near the sub base preparing to dock. He came straight down at us--straight down, right at us--and then he banked off and machine-gunned the receiving station. That was quite a relief because he had us in his sights there for a minute.

Marcello: I'm sure that in the heat of the battle it looked as though every plane were aiming directly at you, at least when they first came in.

Loyd: Yes, well, you would . . .

Marcello: If they came close, you thought sure that they were after your ship.

Loyd: Well, we kind of thought two or three times that maybe they were trying to direct something at us, but why that guy changed his mind there at the last, I'll never know. But probably he had already dropped his bomb, and on his second run he started down at us thinking he had a bomb, and then he remembered he didn't have one. This big old building, this receiving station building, was a two-story or three-story building right there by the fleet landing--big old white building--and why he banked

off and machine-gunned that building, I'll never know. Oh, there was a thousand GI's in this building waiting for transfer, but it had no military value to it. But he did. He turned off of us and machine-gunned that old big two-story building.

Marcello: Were these torpedo bombers coming so low that you could observe the pilot?

Loyd: Yes. When they banked off, you could see the pilots. Now most of the time you couldn't. You could just see the bottom of the plane, the way they banked off. But about the time they dropped their torpedoes, which I would say was probably in the vicinity of 1,000 feet out . . . that would be, oh, roughly a quarter of a mile, say, which is not far. That's fairly close. But you could see the pilot in the cab of this plane. You could see him, but you couldn't tell he was Japanese because he had his goggles on and his helmet and all of that. The only identification you could see was the big red bull's-eye under the wings. Then, of course, they had them on the side of fuselage.

But the most clear thing to us was the bottom of that plane because he had done dropped his torpedoes and pulled up right over us. When they pulled up over us, why, there he was. It was very clear.

Marcello: What did you do after the Neosho got over to the submarine base?

Loyd: We docked over there and got all of our wits together on our ammunition details and antiaircraft details--got everybody organized and checked on the wounded and injured. There weren't many. We had three or four injuries. That was from fragments of antiaircraft shells bursting in the vicinity and some falling. Anyway, that was the extent of our injuries--just antiaircraft shrapnel more than anything else. We stayed at battle stations until about noon, and then they let some of us go eat. We came back then. They fed them in small groups at a time, and we'd come back to our stations. They gave us a life jacket then.

Somewhere along that afternoon after dinner, a soldier or a Marine--one--came aboard the ship. We were issued leggings and canteens and helmets with the expectation from the upper echelons that maybe the invasion force was coming. If they came, the first thing they would do would be to block the entrance of Pearl Harbor and bottle the ships all in, see. If they came with an invasion force, that would be the first thing they would do. So it would be assumed then that we would have to go to the hills. So that was the

reason that this field soldier came aboard. I think he was an Army man, probably. I don't recall now.

They gave us a little briefing on not to use your water unless you absolutely had to, and we were to stay together and pay attention and keep a medic in our vicinity, in your groups. We were always to make sure we had our medic. We were to take orders from our division officers. Each division would have to have an officer in charge of so many men and so forth.

We laid right there on the deck all the rest of the day and that night, just laying there waiting and waiting and waiting. We could see all of the anti-aircraft shells at night, people getting their armor boxes all opened. Some of the guns had been dismantled, and they were getting them put back together and getting their tracers organized. In their rotation of their firing, every fourth shell was supposed to be a tracer. I think that night some of the guns had every shell for a tracer because when someone would try out a fieldpiece or try out their .50-caliber, either intentional or accidental, when he shot everybody else thought he saw something. So all the harbor would open up at whatever it was he thought he saw. So it was a

very nerve-racking deal. Everybody was edgy and easy to spook, so anytime somebody pulled a trigger, everybody else opened up.

Marcello: And I assume that you were there when those planes off the Enterprise tried to land.

Loyd: Yes. We had moved from the submarine base back out to the northern anchorage of Pearl Harbor--back out near Pearl City--that night. We had a bird's-eye view of what was happening out there. We could see that they had shot something down. We didn't know what it was. But there were some of the planes from the Enterprise that came in, and they had shot them down.

Marcello: I gather that the sky just lit up like the Fourth of July when those planes came in.

Loyd: Right, it did. It lit up. But they came in at intervals, which would be a normal pattern for planes to come in behind each other. I don't know why the trailing planes didn't abort and go back or why they didn't stay away from there after they saw all the gunfire at Pearl. I don't know why the remaining planes kept coming on in. Why didn't they go back? See, the carriers always flew their planes off before they got in because they had the wind and the carrier speed. So they would fly their

planes off at sea, and they'd land them on Ford Island. Then the ship would come on in without the planes. Then after she went to sea, they'd fly them out to sea to the ship and land them out there. This was general policy. Without a doubt the Enterprise was still at sea, so why didn't the planes go back? We'll never know.

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

Loyd: We didn't hear a whole lot of rumors aboard the Neosho. We were small in comparison to the larger ships. We knew we had been at war, and we were told by our division officers--battle station officers that were in charge of our battle stations--we were told that the Japanese had declared war against the United States and that Franklin Roosevelt, in turn, had declared war against the Japanese and that we were at war. So far that our observation planes--our scout planes--could ascertain, there was not any ships in the outer perimeter coming in--Japanese ships. They had no indication of ships being out there, but we were told to be ready in the event they did come. So we stayed in that condition all that night. We slept right at our battle stations that night.

Marcello: What sort of an appetite did you have?

Loyd: As I recall I didn't have any--very nervous, very scared. However, you didn't get much to eat. You went to the mess hall, and, as I recall, you didn't get a lunch of any kind. You didn't get anything but sandwiches and fruit and milk, coffee, and stuff like that. They didn't prepare any meals because of the blackout. All of the lights were out. Every light was out, and there was no way they could feed people after dark other than grope around in the dark and try to make a few sandwiches. I don't even know that they had any lights at all below decks. They probably did but we never did see any lights up there anywhere. I don't know how they prepared those sandwiches that they fixed because they were bound to have been . . . we didn't know what we were eating or anything else.

Marcello: What sort of attitude did you have toward the Japanese in the aftermath of the attack?

Loyd: Well, I really didn't form a personal opinion in any respect. I wasn't mad. I thought, "Boy, they sure tore us up! They caught us with our pants down!" That's the only thing I thought about. I thought, well, it was just a one-day deal. It was temporary, you know. They just came in to knock us out.

Our scuttlebutt got into the phase that they were after the Philippines, see. So that was the extent of our information that we got, was that they had invaded the Philippines and Corregidor and Bataan and in through there. So we just kind of come to the conclusion that they wanted to knock our fleet out temporarily so they could go ahead and take the Philippines and in through there. We didn't have any idea they was escalating a full-scale war.

Marcello: What sort of emotions did you have the following day when you were able to perhaps take a more objective view of the scene before you in the harbor?

Loyd: It was a sickening thing. It was very destructive. Everything that had been hit was still smoking. None of the fires, hardly, had been put out the next morning. Nearly everything was still smoking, oil all over everything, smelled bad. Everything smelled bad as you can imagine it would. Very few people moving--you couldn't see many people moving around at all. Probably they were afraid they would get shot if they did. And a very few ships were moving. Some of the destroyers the next morning were preparing to leave the harbor and get out of the harbor. But it was . . . what I would say, it was . . . to concede defeat was what it looked like at the moment, that "Well, we've had it." They just sat there the next morning. Everybody was still

just sitting there trying to get their wits together and admit we'd been beat. Very few people were attempting to start a retaliation of any kind. It seemed like they were trying to nurse their wounds, so to speak, and get their wits all together the next day.

Marcello: How long was it before the Neosho left Pearl again?

Loyd: We left the next day. We left the day of the 8th-- the morning of the 8th, the following day. We still had our fuel. We discharged some of it there at the submarine base, I suppose. But anyway, we took our fuel, and we went down to the fleet that got caught at sea. They wasn't going to let any more of the fleet come to the harbor. So the fuel that we had, we had to take it to the fleet. We refueled the fleet at sea. We refueled the Lexington and the Enterprise and some more of the tankers rendezvoused down there and fueled some more of the ships. We unloaded every bit of the oil we had. We went straight to Long Beach and got another load and went back out there and refueled the rest of them. They wasn't going to let any of them get caught in the harbor.

Marcello: I assume that that was a rather jittery voyage from Pearl to Long Beach, and then from Long Beach back to Pearl again.

Loyd: Yes. After we left Pearl the morning of the 8th, we went to sea and we was refueling the cruiser Chicago. I had a friend aboard it that was from Corpus here, Howard Olsen. I saw him aboard ship, and I waved at him. While we were refueling the Chicago at low speed, which is from six to seven miles per hour, just slow enough to maintain maneuverability, a submarine fired a torpedo. It went across the bow of the two ships. That interrupted the fueling detail for a short period awhile. But anyway, we got back in line and finished unloading our fuel. We left there and went back into Long Beach and got another load of fuel.

On each one of the trips back to Long Beach after the war started, we brought all kinds of military cargo back on the decks of the ship just as high as they could stack it and pile it and wire it and tie it down. We brought landing boats. We brought them all kinds of landing craft back on the deck of the tanker. It was quite a job for them to load that stuff because this ship wasn't built to haul cargo. But they did. Boy, they loaded it and they loaded it right in where our movie screen . . . we had our open deck movie screen out on the main deck. We were a little disappointed that they fouled that up (chuckle).

Marcello: Mr. Loyd, I want to thank you for giving us your time to talk to us about your experiences at Pearl Harbor. You've said a lot of very unique things that I think are going to be of historical significance when researchers look at this material.