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Interview with
Charles J. Lawson
December 20, 1974

Place of Interview: Corpus Christi, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: Open
Approved: *C. J. Lawson*
(Signature)
Date: Dec 21-74

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Oral History Collection

Charles Lawson

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. Charles Lawson 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. Lawson in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was at Soldier's Beach near Schofield Barracks during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Now Mr. Lawson, 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. Lawson: I was born on January 12, 1918, in Madison, Indiana. I have a high school education. I've had some college, some technical institute training, and so forth.

Dr. Marcello: When did you enter the service?

Mr. Lawson: I don't remember very well. Well, it had to be . . . let's see . . . it must have been about August of '41.

Marcello: Okay, and I assume that you were a draftee.

Lawson: Well, I was in the first draft, in fact, of the Second World War.

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

Lawson: Well, I thought fairly well. Of course, that was a period that I don't think anyone knew what was really going on. But I think fair, I would say.

Marcello: How did you greet the news that you were going to be ultimately assigned to the Hawaiian Islands?

Lawson: Well, this is another question. We didn't know that. In fact, we were drafted. We were sent to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, for about two months for training. We were sent directly during the day and at night from Fort Belvoir to San Francisco. At that time we were not told where we were going. We got on a ship that night. We were not told until two days out of San Francisco where we were going.

Marcello: How did you greet the news that you were going to the Hawaiian Islands?

Lawson: Well, it was mixed emotions, I would say. No one really knew in the group, of course, I was with. We particularly wondered why we weren't told beforehand.

Marcello: Did you perchance think when you boarded that ship that you might be going to the Philippines rather than the Hawaiian Islands?

Lawson: We had no idea--none whatsoever.

Marcello: When you did think about the possibility of the United States entering the war at that particular time, is it safe to assume that you were thinking more in terms of entry into the war in Europe rather than getting into war in the Far East?

Lawson: At that time I don't really . . . personally, I don't think I was feeling that we were really entering the war. We were draftees. I mean, I don't think that entered our minds, really, one way or another.

Marcello: But it would be safe to say that you probably thought the likelihood of war in Europe would be something that might occur faster than getting involved in a war in the Far East.

Lawson: Not really. I wouldn't say that.

Marcello: What made you think that war might possibly come in the Far East?

Lawson: Well, that was another thing that, really, we didn't know. But I don't think we gave it that much thought. Again, I think we were wondering why we were in the Pacific at that time.

Marcello: Now when you got to the Hawaiian Islands, did you go directly to Schofield Barracks?

Lawson: Yes.

Marcello: Describe as best you can remember exactly what Schofield Barracks looked like at that time.

Lawson: Well, as I remember . . . in fact, we went into an area where the barracks were not completed. This I remember real vividly.

Marcello: In other words, you were living in a tent city?

Lawson: No. The barracks were there, but we had to do a lot of work on the barracks to make them livable. That's where we were. In fact, our outfit was formed there. As I said, we were draftees and we formed the 34th Combat Engineers at that time.

Marcello: Now had you received your basic training back in Fort Belvoir?

Lawson: Yes, we were there just . . . I think about a month and a half or two months. A very short time, really.

Marcello: In other words, after you formed into your permanent outfit here at Schofield Barracks, you probably underwent some sort of advanced training.

Lawson: Very little, very little. In fact, we were assigned field duties pretty shortly--very shortly, in fact--after that.

Marcello: During these months immediately prior to Pearl Harbor, just exactly what sort of a routine were you undertaking? In other words, what would your daily routine be like during the pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Lawson: Well, as I said, we spent a lot of time preparing these barracks to make them livable. We did, of course, have . . . we had some training. One thing I think was a little unique was that all of the noncommissioned officers were all cadres from the old 3rd Engineers, which was an old outfit on Hawaii. In fact, noncommissioned officers from corporal on up . . . and, of course, we did get some training, you know.

Marcello: What sort of relationship existed between these cadres and all of these draftees?

Lawson: Well, again, we were young people. We were all pretty young then. These were all, I would say, older men that formed the cadres. They were regular Army men as opposed to draftees. This, I think, presented some problems at some time.

Marcello: How would you describe the on-the-job training that you did receive here at Schofield during this relatively short period before Pearl Harbor?

Lawson: Well, it's pretty hard to remember, but then again I don't . . . it wasn't, I would say . . . well, not really

a qualified-type training, really. No one thought that. In fact, as time went on there were very few of the original cadres left in the organization.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale in that pre-Pearl Harbor Army? I'm referring to you as a draftee.

Lawson: Oh, I think . . . I would say good to fair. In fact, I think in some cases it was excellent.

Marcello: How do you account for the relatively high morale?

Lawson: Well, again, I think people being there . . . I think Hawaii in itself was a little enchanting. Just being there--everybody heard about it. It wasn't really that bad at that time before the war started, of course. In fact, you had time off and so forth. You were able to go to Honolulu. I think we had . . . in fact, as I remember, I think we had Saturdays and Sundays off. It wasn't that bad, really. Waikiki Beach, everybody liked that.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what the liberty routine was like here at Schofield Barracks during this pre-Pearl Harbor period. When did you usually have liberty?

Lawson: As I remember, I think, oh, about five or six o'clock in the evenings, from then on. Of course, you couldn't get out of Schofield Barracks, as I remember, without a pass. But I think you could go into Honolulu on the weekends--Saturday and Sunday.

Marcello: Theoretically, I suppose you probably could have gone into Honolulu during the week, but it was about twenty-six miles away, was it not?

Lawson: That's right, yes.

Marcello: And given the pay that you were receiving at that time, you couldn't make too many trips into Honolulu, I guess.

Lawson: That's for sure. I think there was about \$21 a month, as I remember--something like that. You couldn't do much.

Marcello: Were you a private at this time?

Lawson: Yes.

Marcello: What did you usually do when you personally went into Honolulu on the weekend?

Lawson: Well, again, the monetary thing stopped you. But we visited the beaches, of course. There really wasn't a lot to do other than that, as I remember. But there were the beaches and looking at curio shops and so forth. We did spend a lot of time on the beach.

Marcello: When you had liberty on the base what did you usually do? I mean, when you had liberty and didn't go into town and had free time on the base, how did you usually spend your time?

Lawson: Well, this was a pretty short period of time as far as we were concerned. At Schofield Barracks there just wasn't that much to do. We were kept pretty busy, so

you didn't have a lot of spare time in the evenings. The beer gardens, I think, were probably the most popular place. They had a swimming pool. If I remember, there was one swimming pool.

Marcello: Is this where they had the beer garden that was sometimes known as the "Snake Ranch?" Was it here at Schofield Barracks?

Lawson: It may have been. I don't remember that term.

Marcello: When was payday?

Lawson: As I remember, either the first or the last of the month. I don't remember the date.

Marcello: You got paid once a month, in other words.

Lawson: Yes, I believe we did.

Marcello: Theoretically, then, since you did get paid once a month, either at the end of the month or at the beginning of the month, you would have probably had a . . . you or any of your buddies probably would have had at least a significant amount of money, perhaps, on that weekend of December 7, if you had wanted to go into Honolulu.

Lawson: Well, they would have had some money. Nobody had a great deal unless they were getting it from some other source, not their pay.

Marcello: Yes, I say significant, and I mean one has to keep in mind that the pay was low. But the point I'm getting at is that probably if you were going to go into Honolulu

on a weekend, the weekend of December 7 perhaps may have been the weekend that you would have gone in, or else the weekend before that perhaps.

Lawson: There were people that were in there at that date, yes.

Marcello: Normally, when people came back off liberty on a weekend, what sort of condition were they usually in? You know, there is a myth, for example, that everybody who went into Honolulu on a Saturday night got knee-walking drunk and came back on the base drunk and was not in any condition to fight on a Sunday morning. I think that is a myth and I think we need to get that into the record.

Lawson: Well, there were probably cases, but I think that was very few, particularly in our outfit, because there were young people. This may have occurred with older people. I don't know. As far as we were concerned, no. I wouldn't say that was true--very few cases.

Marcello: Okay, during this period as relations between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate, how safe and secure did you feel on the Hawaiian Islands?

Lawson: Well, I don't really . . . I know as far as I personally am concerned--I think that's probably true with most of them, most of the people in our outfit--I don't think they gave it a lot of thought. We were not in on all of the news. We didn't hear news broadcasts and so forth,

so I don't feel that that really . . . it didn't enter your mind too much.

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

Lawson: Well, being from the Midwest where you didn't see Japanese before--very few, if any--and in Hawaii there were lots of them. Then, of course, this is something new as far as individual people and a race was concerned. Of course, the Hawaiians themselves were different--Chinese and so forth. So I think after a period of time, this really didn't mean a lot, really. After the first association with them, no. Filipinos were there. In fact, I think that was considered the cross-section of the world as far as different races.

Marcello: If war did come with Japan, was there ever much scuttlebutt or talk about the possibility of these Japanese acting as fifth columnists or saboteurs or anything of this nature?

Lawson: Are you talking about before the war?

Marcello: Yes.

Lawson: There may have been. I think probably there was some. This was a short period of time after we got there that the war started. I think there probably was some. I can't tell you to what degree or how much.

Marcello: Were there very many Japanese who were on the base as civilians?

Lawson: As I remember, there were quite a few, yes.

Marcello: Usually in what capacity did they work?

Lawson: Oh, I think they were laborers and truck drivers. They may have been in other positions. We just were not associated with them that much. But you did see quite a few, yes.

Marcello: Okay, now as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, how did your routine change in terms of alerts and maneuvers and this sort of thing?

Lawson: Well, as I remember, I think we did have at least one alert about . . . maybe a few weeks before Pearl Harbor . . . before the attack on Pearl Harbor. There was, of course, naturally, some conversation among the individuals in our particular unit as to why, you know.

Marcello: What seemed to be the scuttlebutt as to why the maneuvers were being held?

Lawson: Well, everyone wondered, you know, what was going on. But, still, again, there you were pretty well isolated. Again, you didn't hear this much as far as radios and news broadcasts, particularly as you would now.

Marcello: Now as I recall, that alert or maneuver--whichever you wish to call it--wasn't terminated until right before December 7. In fact I believe it was on that Friday--

either that Friday or that Saturday--that the last alert was finally called off.

Lawson: Well, I don't really remember, but I do remember that there was either one or two alerts. Maybe they called them training maneuvers or whatever. But as I remember, they were . . . and after you'd think about the thing, of course, you remember it a little more vividly. But at that time they did have one or two alerts.

Marcello: I would assume that when these alerts were held, there was no liberty or anything of this nature mainly because you were out in the field.

Lawson: I think probably that's right.

Marcello: Okay, now in that last alert that you participated in, I think that just about . . . well, a great many of the troops, anyhow, at Schofield Barracks moved out into the field to pre-planned positions. I assume that these were the positions that each particular unit was to man in case there ever was an attack or an invasion or something of this nature. Now in your case, do you recall where your particular outfit went?

Lawson: Well, it wasn't . . . now if you're speaking before . . . if you're speaking of an organized alert directly preceding Pearl Harbor, we were . . . in fact, I was with A Company of the 34th Combat Engineers. We were assigned a job. What we were doing at the time was replacing . . . we were

rebuilding railroads. These were small-gauge tracks going through cane fields and so forth. We had been on this particular assignment, I think, about three weeks to a month before, probably. We were in tents in the field at that time. So as far as our company was concerned, I think probably we were in this particular position at that time. Well, I know we were on December 7. But we were in the same position several weeks before, but it was due to the fact that we were in the field on this assigned job.

Marcello: In other words, you were probably actually in the field before the alert was even called to begin with.

Lawson: We were.

Marcello: And you just happened to be there at the time of the alerts.

Lawson: We were. That's right.

Marcello: Okay, now I think this more or less brings us up to the actual days immediately prior to the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. What I would like you to do at this point is to give me in as much detail as you can remember--as much detail as you can remember--what your routine was on Saturday, December 6, 1941, and then from there we'll go into and talk about the Sunday itself, that is, December 7, 1941. Let's start with the Saturday first of all.

Lawson: Well, again, as I remember, we were on a . . . this was a priority project. I'm not real sure, but I believe that we . . . everybody . . . we were working on that Saturday.

Marcello: Can you pinpoint, more or less, exactly where you were working?

Lawson: We started this project from Pearl Harbor across the mountains to where we were.

Marcello: That is, it started at the Naval base itself.

Lawson: Well, close to that. It was pretty close to the harbor itself. We had this project going clear across the mountains and over to this area where we were. As I say, I don't really remember the direction from Honolulu or Pearl Harbor. It was quite a distance.

Marcello: Approximately how far do you think you may have been from Schofield Barracks?

Lawson: Oh, I would say--still this is a guess--probably fifteen miles or something like that.

Marcello: What sort of work was this? In other words, was it hard work, easy work, taxing work? Did you work long hours?

Lawson: Yes, we worked long hours. Well, it was nearly everybody as far as we were concerned. I think it involved all the officers in our command. Again, like I said, it was replacing these small-gauge tracks that ran through

pineapple fields and cane fields. In fact, they used them to haul sugar cane and pineapples down to their plant. But we were laying heavy ties and heavy rails from one end across and over the mountain.

Marcello: Is this specifically what you were doing? You were on one of the track gangs?

Lawson: That's what we were doing--the entire company.

Marcello: Do you recall what time you knocked off that day?

Lawson: Now which day? Saturday?

Marcello: Saturday the 6th.

Lawson: No, I sure don't. I don't know.

Marcello: What did you do that evening?

Lawson: Saturday the 6th? Well, we were . . . of course, we were in the field, and we were in tents--this company, just the one company. The other part of the regiment was in Schofield Barracks. But we were on the beach, really. In fact, we were camped . . . well, our camps were set up rather between an emergency landing field and the ocean. We were right on the beach. As I remember, probably most everyone was either laying around or swimming or something because the beach was just right near. So we spent a lot of time in the water--at least I did.

Marcello: And given the nature of the work that you were doing here, I assume that you probably would have turned in relatively early that night.

Lawson: Well, most . . . they were pretty tired. I think everybody was pretty tired because this wasn't easy work.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less brings us in to the Sunday of December 7, itself. Once more I want you to give me in as much detail as you can remember what your routine was on that Sunday of December 7, 1941.

Lawson: Well, as I said, we were . . . where we were located--our tents and so forth--was between this field and the beach. About the time the attack occurred, I think we were probably in the chow line or eating . . . just about that time some of them were in line. I think most of them were. So when the attack occurred there was no notification--none whatsoever.

Marcello: What was your first inkling that something out of the ordinary was taking place?

Lawson: Well, as I remember, there were . . . of course, there were always planes flying in the air, so you didn't look up everytime you saw an airplane.

Marcello: In other words, you were fairly close to Wheeler Field, also.

Lawson: Well, we weren't too far. The morning of the attack, no one really realized that it was occurring until we were strafed and bombed. They strafed our area, plus they bombed this field that was pretty close to us.

Then we realized that something was going on, but we still didn't know what was going on.

Marcello: Why is it that the Japanese would have wanted to have strafed your particular area?

Lawson: Well, in all probability it was because we were so near this emergency landing field. In addition, they probably saw tents and so forth. I'm sure they saw some activity around there.

Marcello: Okay, so describe what happened. You saw all this air activity, but you still really didn't think about the possibility that these airplanes were the Japanese. Did you hear any explosions or noises or anything like that in the distance?

Lawson: You could hear a few. This all occurred about the same time. About the same time they were strafing our area and dropping a few bombs . . . this was not a great deal of bombing but a lot of strafing in our area. Then, of course, you realized something. You knew that this wasn't American planes strafing or bombing us. Again, there was no official notice or any word from any high command or any notice whatsoever that this was an attack on us.

Marcello: Okay, so again, give me a blow-by-blow of what happened. Here you were in the chow line, I assume, when thing happened to you directly.

Lawson: Well, there really wasn't that much you could do. Naturally, this was something . . . under the circumstances, you didn't know what to do. You didn't know where this was coming from, who it was, or anything else. But your instinct told you to take cover if you could, which everybody did.

Marcello: Were these planes coming in at a glide, or were they diving at a relatively fast speed?

Lawson: They were diving. These were mostly fighter-bomber-type planes. They would come in very fast from high altitudes. As far as our particular area . . . this was not a prolonged attack. I would say it lasted not more than thirty minutes, so they were in and out.

Marcello: About how many planes are we talking about that were doing this? You would probably have to estimate this, of course.

Lawson: Oh, I think not more than ten or fifteen planes. It may have been the same plane circling. I don't know. But as far as the runs they made on us, yes.

Marcello: Okay, so here you are--standing in the chow line. You were coming under a strafing attack. What do you do at this point?

Lawson: Well, there was nothing . . . there was just nothing you could do. You didn't know what to do. There was no orders to do anything whatsoever, so I think your just natural human instincts are to take care of yourself, which most people did.

Marcello: And what did you do in your particular case?

Lawson: Well, as I remember, I think that I tried to get under a tree or . . . I mean near a tree, not under a tree. Of course, after these planes started coming in, then you, of course, were looking skyward to see what was coming. I know I was behind one tree. That's where I stayed during most of the attack.

Marcello: Approximately how many men were there at this encampment?

Lawson: Well, the engineering company has about . . . as close as I can remember, about 350 to 400 men?

Marcello: And there were that many camped here?

Lawson: Unless they were on pass, but I would say at least 300 to 350 men.

Marcello: And up until this point, even while the attack was going on, did you know yet that these were Japanese planes?

Lawson: No.

Marcello: Were you able to recognize the rising sun on the wings?

Lawson: After a few passes. Well, I don't know whether I did or someone else did, but somebody recognized that they were Japanese planes.

Marcello: What sort of a resistance, if any, did this group put up? Did they try and fire back with rifles or anything of that nature?

Lawson: Well, it's amusing now, but it wasn't then. We didn't have a rifle. The rifles . . . the ammunition and rifles that we had, they were back at Schofield Barracks. Another interesting thing happened at the time that we took our basic training in Fort Belvoir. We were on the rifle range with what was called then an Enfield rifle or a bolt action-type rifle. The morning of the 7th--December 7--the ordnance department came out to our area about an hour or so after these initial attacks with M-1 rifles. We had never seen an M-1 rifle. So the ordnanceman stands on a truck instructing everybody, showing where the safties were and how to load them and all the bandoleers . . . you take your bandoleers and ammunition. That is the first time we'd ever seen an M-1 rifle, plus . . . that's the security we had. No one had a rifle; no one had a gun.

Marcello: In other words, in the case of your particular outfit, it was simply trying to find cover someplace and get out of the way of the attacking planes.

Lawson: That was the only thing you could do.

Marcello: What sort of emotions did you experience while the attack was going on? Was it one of fear? Panic? Confusion? Professionalism?

Lawson: Oh, as I remember, I don't think there was a lot of . . . there was no panic as far as I remember. In fact, I don't think there was anybody that showed a lot of emotion. It was more wonderment and just really trying to put together what was going on. This was the whole thing.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do in the aftermath of the attack? You mentioned that it lasted for about a half-hour.

Lawson: Right.

Marcello: Did the unit suffer any casualties?

Lawson: Yes, we had some casualties. We didn't have any fatalities, but there were some they had hit during that time.

Marcello: Do you remember if any of the strafing occurred very close to you?

Lawson: Well, as I remember, yes. They covered our area quite well. Some of the tents were destroyed and so forth. There was no great damage as far as to vehicles and so forth.

Marcello: I would assume--and that's all I can do here--that the Japanese attack on your particular encampment was really an afterthought more than anything else. The main targets

were the fighter bases and, of course, the ships at Pearl Harbor and all the other Naval and air installations. For example, even Schofield Barracks . . . most of the damage that was done there was by strafing and this sort of thing. In other words, these planes had dropped their bombs, they were loaded with ammunition, they saw some personnel running around below there, and . . . why not let them have it?

Lawson: Well, as I say, we were close to this emergency landing field, the fighter strip. This was between us and the ocean or the beach. They were trying to at least do as much damage there . . . although there were very few buildings.

Marcello: Were there any planes at this field?

Lawson: None at that time, but the interesting thing is that there were some . . . I think three or four B-17 bombers that were coming in from the States that morning. They landed at this field which was really too short for them. I mean, the runway was not long enough, but they did land there.

Marcello: Did you witness this?

Lawson: Yes, we were out there.

Marcello: You might describe this particular incident because I think it is a very interesting one. Again, go into as much detail as you can remember.

Lawson: Well, again, of course, we talked to some of the men afterwards. But the fields, Schofield and Wheeler Field, and, of course, the Naval fields were all bombed thoroughly, and they couldn't land there. So they had . . . this was the only field that they could land on. As I said, the runways were too short for them, but they did manage to land without too much damage to the planes.

Marcello: Were they being shot at or attacked by Japanese fighters as they were landing?

Lawson: Well, as I remember, they said they had been before. I think this was probably thirty minutes, maybe to an hour, after the initial attack, so they were relatively safe, I think, after that.

Marcello: What sort of landings did they make here in this emergency field?

Lawson: Well, I didn't . . . I don't know that I really saw the landings. Of course, you heard a lot about it. But they managed to land them. It was quite a feat, I suppose, because these were short fields as far as bombers were concerned.

Marcello: Did those crew members then come over to your encampment, or where did they go?

Lawson: We talked to them--some of them, not all of them, of course, There was no place for them to go either. They were there.

Marcello: Okay, how shortly after the attack did you finally receive instructions as to what you were to do?

Lawson: As I remember, there was at least three hours after the initial attack before we got official notice that the island had been attacked. Now this was from the high command that the Japanese had attacked the Hawaiian Islands.

Marcello: What did you do in the meantime? Simply mill around and speculate?

Lawson: Well, there wasn't anything to do. It wasn't confusing. There wasn't a lot of confusion around. But then again, I think the word would be more wonderment--what to do, what we should do, and so forth.

Marcello: Okay, so what were your instructions after word finally did reach you?

Lawson: After word finally reached us . . . the official command or the official order came in that we had been attacked. Then, as I said, we did receive our rifles.

Marcello: Now this would have been the next day.

Lawson: No, no, this was the same day, the same afternoon. Then we were assigned, I believe, about twenty miles of beach to protect with rifles. They told us at that time that the Japanese had landed paratroopers. Now this was official that they had landed paratroopers, particularly in our area.

Marcello: You mean the official word was that they had landed paratroopers?

Lawson: Official word, "Paratroopers have landed!"

Marcello: What sort of individuals did they tell you to be in the lookout for? In other words, how were these paratroopers supposedly dressed?

Lawson: Well, this I remember because we were on this work detail and we had blue denim. They said that the Japanese were dressed in blue denim. This is the only uniform we really had, so this was a problem. The orders were, of course, that evening and from then on, "Shoot anything that moves!" Everybody was pretty much concerned about this uniform bit because of the orders we had. We received the information that they were dressed in blue denim.

Marcello: So did you proceed to dig trenches and this sort of thing?

Lawson: Yes, we did this on the beach.

Marcello: I would assume that there were a lot of trigger-happy people around that night.

Lawson: Quite a few. They shot at everything. Fortunately, we didn't hit any of our own men at that time, but it was pretty risky. You didn't get up. I'll tell you that!

Marcello: While all of this was going on, had you ever had any food or anything? Now you'd been caught there in the chow line, I gather.

Lawson: We were caught . . . yes, we were in the chow line that morning. I'm not real sure. I think there was so much going on at the time that I don't know if anybody was even worried about eating at that time.

Marcello: You probably didn't have much of an appetite.

Lawson: I don't think so, no (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you hear any other rumors floating around that night or any sort of scuttlebutt supporting the fact that paratroopers had supposedly landed?

Lawson: Well, rumors started flying every way from then on, of course.

Marcello: Can you recall what any of those rumors were?

Lawson: Well, not really. They were . . . well . . . not real definitely. The paratroopers, as I remember, were the biggest thing. Of course, then again, there were a lot of rumors that Japanese had landed on the island. This, of course, wasn't true, but there were rumors to that effect.

Marcello: With regard to those paratroopers allegedly landing and having blue denim coveralls, were there any steps that you could do to get rid of your particular uniforms or anything of this nature?

- Lawson: There wasn't that day, but we eventually did. We went to brown khaki-type the next day.
- Marcello: You did have other uniforms with you there in the field?
- Lawson: As I remember, we did or at least they were issued. But we did get rid of the blue denim. That's for sure.
- Marcello: Now when you got back to Schofield Barracks--and I assume that eventually you did get back there--how much damage had been done back there?
- Lawson: Quite a bit, quite a bit. Particularly in our area, they had bombed and strafed. Again there, we were pretty close to a training field for fighter planes. They did bomb and strafe our area. Of course, there were other units of our outfit there. There were casualties.
- Marcello: Now in the aftermath of the attack and as you began to speculate and gather your thoughts a little bit, what was the scuttlebutt at that time as to how the Japanese were able to pull off that attack so successfully?
- Lawson: Well, again, being draftees, we were not really with what was going on. But there were, of course, lots of rumors. The Japanese personnel on the island, of

course, came into a lot of conversation. And, as you know, probably, that they did . . . all Japanese were quarantined. In fact, they were put in stockades or ' at least detention camps--all Japanese. But there were, of course, lots of rumors about what the Japanese had done.

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

Lawson: Well, as I remember, there were lights, mirrors, radio contact with the planes and so forth from Japanese on the island. Whether that was true or not, well, that's speculation, too. I don't think it was ever proven, but all Japanese were detained.

Marcello: How did security precautions tighten around Schofield Barracks?

Lawson: Vry much, very much. In fact, everything tightened up from then on. I think security was very good from then on. Of course, we had to go to Pearl Harbor that next morning.

Marcello: Did you go down there to serve as part of the clean-up detail and this sort of thing, or what were you doing down there?

Lawson: We were assigned . . . well, in fact, I think the following day or the day after we were under the command of Admiral Nimitz.

Marcello: By this time Kimmel had already been replaced?

Lawson: I believe so. I think Nimitz was in command at that time. One of our responsibilities then was to start building antiaircraft positions around Pearl Harbor. As far as antiaircraft positions or anything like that around the harbor, there wasn't too many at that time.

Marcello: Well, I guess for the most part they probably had depended upon those planes based on the islands to serve as a great deal of protection.

Lawson: That's right.

Marcello: Of course, the Japanese took care of that in a hurry.

Lawson: That's right.

Marcello: Is there anything else that you think we need to talk about to get as a part of the record?

Lawson: Well, of course, a lot of things happened afterwards, but . . . oh, there were so many things that happened that particular morning. That's been a long time ago, of course, to try and remember everything that happened.

Marcello: Well, if there's anything you can think of I still have the tape running.

Lawson: Well, one thing I'd like to say about our particular unit, the 34th Combat Engineers. We were . . . as I said, we were draftees. We went . . . from there, we

stayed in the Hawaiian chain for about a year. Our jobs were . . . responsibilities were building pill-boxes all around Honolulu and then around command posts and so forth.

And then we went on down through the Pacific-- Central Pacific. We didn't get home until the war was over. As far as I'm concerned, that's pretty unique as far as units. I haven't heard of very many outfits that spent that much time. We were at Saipan, Tinian, and quite a few islands. We were attached to the Army, Navy, and Marines during the war. Again, this unit was one regiment or two battalions. We operated primarily as companies with different Marines or Navy or Army.

Marcello: Did you work basically in a combat capacity, or did you continue in a construction capacity?

Lawson: Well, both. We would go in on the islands usually with the fighting units and act as shore party for them. Then as the islands were secured . . . and this was our problem. After the island was secured, then the fighting units would move out and go back to Honolulu or somewhere for rest, and we would be assigned to the island command for construction work. We were on most of the airfields and . . . in fact, we helped, at

least, build the first B-29 field on . . . well, the first one, I believe, was on Saipan and Tinian and so forth. And then, of course, we went on down. We were on Okinawa when the war was over--forty-seven months and two days, I think, overseas.