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Place of Interview: Corpus Christi, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: Jack L. Connolly
(Signature)

Date: Dec 22, 1974

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Oral History Collection

Jack Connolly

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Corpus Christi, Texas Date: December 22, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Jack Connolly for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on December 22, 1974, in Corpus Christi, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Connolly in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the seaplane tender-destroyer USS Thornton during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Now Mr. Connolly, 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. Connolly: I was born on July 16, 1924, in Dallas, Texas. I have a high school education. I am fifty years old now.

Dr. Marcello: When did you enter the service?

Mr. Connolly: On July 16, on my birthday--seventeenth birthday--1941.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Connolly: For adventure. That's the only reason I had. I didn't need a job; I was too young--just out of high school.

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

Connolly: Because my father had been in the Navy. He was on the USS Camden during the First World War.

Marcello: And you were just more or less following the family tradition.

Connolly: Exactly.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Connolly: In San Diego.

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

Connolly: No, there was nothing eventful that happened in boot camp. The only thing that I can think of was that I enjoyed it. I've never seen anyone else who did.

Marcello: What was it that made boot camp so enjoyable for you?

Connolly: I really don't know. I just enjoyed the whole structure of boot camp.

Marcello: How long did boot camp last at that particular time?

Connolly: I'm not sure. I believe it was about six weeks. It might have been a little longer.

Marcello: Now you said that you entered the service in July of 1941, and, of course, the world situation was rather

tense at that time. It wouldn't be too long till the United States would be in the war. Did you detect any urgency in the boot camp that you had taken there at San Diego? In other words, did they seem to be trying to hurry boot camp along so that they could get you out of boot camp and get you into the fleet?

Connolly: No, because . . . remember that we're talking about boot camp, and I'd never seen anything of the Navy before. I wouldn't know if they were trying to . . . if there was any sense of urgency at all.

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

Connolly: I knew that there was a general world upheaval, but I didn't pay any attention to it, really.

Marcello: When you thought of the United States entering war, did you think of the country going into war basically with Germany rather than with Japan?

Connolly: Yes, because that's all we heard, was war with Germany that had been going on. I'd never given Japan a thought.

Marcello: Okay, where did you go from boot camp?

Connolly: I went from boot camp . . . we got a boot leave for two weeks or something like that. I went from there and I reported back to San Diego and picked up a destroyer.

They took us to Long Beach, and we were there about a day, and they put us aboard the USS Pennsylvania and made a crossing to Pearl Harbor.

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

Connolly: I thought it was pretty great. You know, I'd read of them. I didn't know where they were. I had no reason to look them up. I'd heard of Captain Cook, and I'd read about the Hawaiian Islands in my high school education. But what I did hear of it sounded pretty romantic, and I was pretty anxious to get there.

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

Connolly: I was assigned to the Hawaiian Islands. I remember I took a test for photographer's mate. I'd been in the photography business all of my life, you know. I was almost born into it. Consequently, I thought maybe I'd follow that line while I was in the Navy. Within twenty-four . . . I passed the test, by the way. I remember I made 4.0 on the test--100 per cent. And within twenty-four hours I was underway to Hawaii and was assigned to ComDesBatFor, Commander Destroyer Battle Force. That's under CINCPAC, Commander in Chief Pacific. So we arrived and at that time I was a crew member on the Pennsylvania.

Marcello: In other words, this was just your . . . the Pennsylvania was simply your transportation over to the Hawaiian Islands?

Connolly: Yes, but I was assigned to it. I didn't particularly look forward to that because it was like a floating city. You know, I'd never seen anything that big.

Marcello: And I assume they probably put you on the deck force all the way over there.

Connolly: Yes. And we were there a very short while, possibly a day or so, and they assigned me to the Thornton. They had a name for it. I don't recall what it was. It wasn't . . . I was out from under ComDesBatFor, and ComPatWing Two was the unit that the Thornton was assigned to--Commander Patrol Wing Two. The Thornton was a 1918 four-stack destroyer.

Marcello: One of the World War I vintage destroyers.

Connolly: Yes, and they had removed two stacks and put in a 37,000-gallon tank that we carried 100 octane fuel in. The idea was we were an auxiliary seaplane tender and a destroyer at the same time. We'd fuel PBY's. There was nothing that I could see on the whole ship that had anything to do with aircraft except this gasoline. But it was quite small and very old. We weren't bothered with uniforms. It was a pretty nice thing to look forward to. I liked the idea.

Marcello: What were your living conditions like aboard the Thornton, that is, in terms of your quarters and in terms of your food?

Connolly: The quarters were cramped, and they were hot. We had no refrigeration. It had some fresh air blowers. We had forced draft blowers on the main deck. They would blow a little fresh air in the compartments. But in general they were very poor living conditions. But, you see, that's all there was. Men didn't sleep in them very much. They'd sleep on topside. Even in some of the foulest weather they would sleep on topside.

Marcello: Did you have bunks, or were you in the hammocks?

Connolly: We had bunks and hammocks, both. I had a bunk because I got on the thing before the war started, and we didn't have a full complement. Consequently, there were a number of empty bunks. I got one because it was easier to take care of than a hammock.

You asked about the food. I thought the food was great from the time I got into boot camp till I got out. We ran out of food on occasions when we went on very long cruises. We'd run out of food. We had no refrigeration to speak of. We didn't have any ice cream or sweet milk. We didn't have too much fresh meat. But we always seemed to make out in some way.

Marcello: What was the morale like in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Connolly: Well, these were all professional sailors. Most of them were older men. They were all older than me. I was seventeen years old. I never heard of anybody at Pearl at the time of the battle that was any younger than I was. So all of these men knew their business and set about it. They had a job. They were just doing their job--what they were hired on to do. Some of them had been thirty-five years or forty years on destroyers. So there was not any morale problem. They were at home. The men I was with were at home in the Navy. There were no morale problems at all.

Marcello: I assume that everybody was a volunteer, like you pointed out, and this probably had something to do with the high morale, too.

Connolly: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, everybody was there because they wanted to be there.

Connolly: At this particular time, just a few people were coming in to avoid the draft. They wanted to stay out of the Army. But we didn't have too many reserve sailors. I was regular Navy. We didn't have too many reserve men. A few of our officers were ninety day wonders--all of the younger ones. But, of course, our executive officer and our captain, I'm

sure they were regular Navy. I'm sure most of the younger officers were . . . there weren't too many--five or six . . . were reserve officers.

Marcello: I assume that if you get on a good destroyer it usually does have high morale. When I speak of a good destroyer, I mean with capable and competent officers and this sort of thing. It is like one little family, I guess, normally, aboard a destroyer.

Connolly: Yes, you know everyone and everyone knows you. On a first class . . . I'm talking about a modern-type destroyer. On a first class destroyer, well, you're going to have first class personnel. There's going to be some tailings there that everybody's going to get. You never know until you get them. But the morale is . . . morale really didn't enter into it. You could hear the bitching in the Navy like you did in the Army and every branch of the service. It's a profession almost. It's expected of you to gripe about something.

Marcello: What were you striking for aboard the Thornton?

Connolly: I was on the deck force. I enjoyed it and I never struck for anything else. I became a boatswain's mate, which is what I wanted to be. I liked the seamanship.

Marcello: In other words, you'd given up the idea of becoming a photographer's mate.

Connolly: There's no photographers on destroyers (chuckle).

Marcello: I knew that, yes.

Connolly: But I would have given it up anyway because I really liked my work on topside. It was hard.

Marcello: Why did you like working on the deck gang?

Connolly: Because there was something new everyday. Without any reservations at all, I can say that every minute was something new.

Marcello: How would you describe the on-the-job training that you received on the deck gang aboard the Thornton? In other words, did the senior petty officers and so on indicate a willingness to teach you if you were willing to learn and this sort of thing?

Connolly: No. You had to learn in order to survive. If you didn't show any desire to learn, well, you made your own life miserable, so you had to learn. This was an enjoyable experience. I suspect that . . . well, the way I've often considered my own past is that . . . as I said, I was young. I was seventeen years old. The most exciting thing, I guess, I'd ever done was go to the Saturday midnight show in Dallas or go to the State Fair or something like this. We're talking about "Join the Navy and See the World." I believed this and I still believe it. It was perhaps . . . the Navy was one of the greatest parts of

my life. It was thoroughly enjoyable to me. Now when I hear people complain about the terrible times they had in the Navy, I don't know where they were or what they could have been doing because I was in worst places than most of the people I've talked to, and I thought it was just great. It was an adventure.

Marcello: Okay, at the time that you arrived at Pearl Harbor, the Pacific Fleet was based there and had been based there for some time, in fact. It was actually undergoing daily maneuvers all the time at sea. What exactly was the routine of the Thornton during this period that you were at Pearl?

Connolly: Well, we were tied up . . . when I got there, the ship was tied up at Pearl City Landing. We weren't tied up to the beach. We were out on a buoy.

Marcello: Is this where most of the other destroyers were tied up, also?

Connolly: No, there were very few around there. I don't know what the reason for this was, but we were tied up to Pearl City. I suppose we were to stay out of the way . . . some way to keep us from going aground on our own coffee grounds. I thought we were just going to stay there forever.

It may be a couple of weeks after I got aboard that we put to sea. We would go half-way between the Hawaiian Islands and the States and watch for the passing of airplanes. There was a . . . we would go to a point of no return. Then if there were any disasters where the planes would go down at sea, we would be about the closest one to them. This is what we were there for. We would cruise on these stations for two weeks at three knots, which was pretty boring, really. I know that men did fish. We had salt water fishing gear. They'd troll behind the ship. I never saw anybody catch anything out that far. The water was so clear. It couldn't have been any plankton in the water. You could just . . . almost limitless, straight down at high noon. There was no plankton, and there was no bait fish. If there was no bait fish, there was no big fish. I never saw anybody catch anything, but they did troll. It was terribly boring. It was all just . . . it wasn't even a special sea detail. It was just routine.

Marcello: I gather, then, that you didn't work with any of the other destroyers in conjunction with the battleships or the aircraft carriers or cruisers.

Connolly: No, not at this time. We did later. But at this time we had two sister ships at Pearl Harbor with us--the Harlburt

and the McFarland. They were all converted four-stackers. We'd run two weeks on station half-way between Pearl and Hawaii. We'd come and the Harlburt would go out for its two weeks, and then the McFarland, and then we'd go out again. This was the most exciting thing we did at this time.

Marcello: Now is this the period prior to Pearl Harbor that you're talking about now?

Connolly: Just prior to Pearl Harbor, yes.

Marcello: And this was basically your routine for that entire period right up until December 7, 1941.

Connolly: Right. I got to Pearl sometime around the end of September or the first of October. This is October, 1941. So then we cruised on this plane watch station until November--the end of November. At the end of November we were in Pearl. We tied up . . . they had moved our tie-up at this time from the buoys there at Pearl City to the submarine base. I recall I was quite happy about this because they had enormous mosquitoes at Pearl City, and there were none at the sub base.

Marcello: I understand the sub base also had very good food. Everybody has always told me the sub base had pretty good chow.

Connolly: Well, they might have. We didn't eat over at the sub base. We ate on the Thornton. We were only tied up

there. On one side of us was the fleet landing . . . I mean the . . . they called it the fuel docks. The fleet landing was quite near. We were tied up with our bow pointed in toward the sub base. On our port side there must have been fifteen or twenty torpedo boats. It was just a stone's throw away. You could see them working on those things.

Marcello: How close were you tied up to Battleship Row?

Connolly: We were completely at one end of the channel. From where we were we could look straight down the channel, straight into the Oklahoma. We were at one end of the channel, and they were at the other.

Marcello: About how far away would this be about?

Connolly: I guess a quarter of a mile, possibly a little bit more.

Marcello: You see, what I'm trying to do is establish your position and the position of the battleships so that I know for my own benefit just exactly what sort of a view you would have had of the scene of action on that December 7. I gather that from what you've said that you would have had a pretty good view of Battleship Row and what took place down there.

Connolly: We had a great view. I hate to put it that way. We had a great view of it--a genuine, panoramic view. Anything

that happened at Pearl Harbor was on one side of us. You didn't have any 360-degree panorama. You could look in one direction and see everything. As far as the airplanes that did come over, they all came from one place--right behind us--and they appeared quickly. We could watch them in their entire run going all the way to the end. So it was a good view.

Marcello: Okay, we'll talk about that part a little bit later on, of course. Now you mentioned that the Thornton would be out on station for two weeks at a time. In fact, you had just come back off station prior to the attack. Is that correct?

Connolly: Right.

Marcello: I assume you were tied up there. What was it you'd do when you came back into port?

Connolly: Well, we tied up at the sub base.

Marcello: Would this be just simply a period of maintenance and this sort of thing?

Connolly: General ship routine.

Marcello: Yes.

Connolly: As a matter of fact, I believe that they wrote that on the log every day--ship routine. It was just general routine--clean up, general maintenance, paint up the rust. We had port and starboard liberty. Half the crew was on at one time. I'm not sure how it worked on weekends.

Not long . . . I think about my first or second liberty after I got to Pearl, I went to Honolulu. This is while we were tied up at Pearl City. I was about fifteen minutes late making the liberty boat, so I didn't get . . . that was at . . . I think the last liberty boat was about midnight. So I didn't make it back to the ship till eight o'clock the next morning.

We had a very strict executive officer. His name was Pete Gaviglio, a lieutenant. He gave me thirty liberties' restriction. I was restricted to ship. I couldn't leave the ship for thirty liberties, which meant fifteen days. It was at least two years before I set foot on beach again because after the war started . . . remember that I told you we were getting port and starboard liberty. So then, of course, all liberties were stopped after Pearl Harbor.

After things settled down awhile, well, you'd get but one day out of . . . two or three days or four days, whatever it was. You could go ashore if there was a place to go ashore. He held this thing over me to where I'd get . . . where you did get, say, fifteen liberties every thirty days. Then I started getting one liberty every thirty days, and it took years to work that restriction off. But I didn't have anyplace to go anyway.

Mr. Gaviglio . . . the morning of December 7, he had been playing tennis because I remember he hobbled back aboard when he could get aboard. He had evidently hurt his ankle. Possibly he had broken it. I don't know. But he had a hard time getting back aboard.

He didn't last long. He left not long after Pearl. Whoever the executive officer was then . . . I believe it was a Mr. Burns. No, it wasn't Mr. Burns. It was a man they called "Skippy" Sellers--perhaps the best captain we ever had. He held onto this thirty liberties' restriction, too. He said, "That's what you've got, and that's what you'll take." But after a year or so he relented, and I got to go ashore in some exciting place (chuckle). I can't imagine where it could have been. But we lost . . . many of the officers on there were quickly transferred out after Pearl Harbor, and we had many new faces.

Marcello: When you went on liberty, or when you had the opportunity to go on liberty, what did a young, seventeen-year-old sailor usually do?

Connolly: Well, I went everywhere I could in Pearl. I do recall I visited the Pali. Kamehameha supposedly drove the defenders over the Pali, a huge cliff. I went to all the beaches. I was sorely disappointed at Waikiki. It was a filthy place. I didn't like it. I went everywhere

I could on the island. I saw everything I could and tried to avoid knocking my eyeballs off which I'm sure were out on long stems. But I guess there wasn't really much to do. On \$21 a month there's not too much to buy. But I enjoyed it.

Marcello: What was your rank at this particular time?

Connolly: I must have been seaman second class by this time. I don't recall how long we stayed apprentice seamen. But I know that I didn't make seaman first class until a year--after a year had gone by. So I must have been a seaman second class.

Marcello: Generally speaking, would the crew members aboard the Thornton spend quite a bit of time on Hotel Street, Canal Street, Beretania Street, and that neck of the woods?

Connolly: I don't think so. I believe that most of them had homes ashore.

Marcello: In other words, you had a lot of married men aboard the Thornton.

Connolly: Oh, yes. These were older men. My first class boatswain's mate, I think, was twenty-eight years old. There were many, oh, gray-headed men among the chiefs. Our captain must have been about forty. He certainly was the oldest of the officers. Then the chiefs, as I said, they were

old, gray-headed men. We had one man . . . now the chief boatswain's mate was an old man named "Pappy" Stratton. He had been on destroyers for thirty-five years. I know that. We had a ship's cook named DiMaapi, who was Filipino. He had been on destroyers for forty years. These men, once they got on destroyers, never wanted anything else. You could always spot an old destroyer sailor because his feet and his ankles were bad. They took quite a bit of abuse. They had varicose veins. I remember DiMaapi. I never saw him in anything but bedroom slippers. I don't know his first name. We had three Filipinos and two Guamanians in the cook's department, stewards. We got to know them all quite well. This way you got handouts-- some really exciting food.

Marcello: In general, when men came back off liberty, let's say, on a Saturday evening, what would their general condition be when they came back aboard the Thornton?

Connolly: Some came back in better physical appearance than when they left. Some came back in wretched shape. I remember that you could smell them. For some strange reason, even a man that had been around in the Hawaiian Islands, it seemed like, all their lives couldn't avoid buying these flowered leis from the girls on the streets. They were

artificially colored. I'm sure they bought the cheapest perfume that they could possibly get to put on those things. When you put them on your whites, they'd fade on your whites. You had all that purple on the white uniforms, and they smelled just terrible. I can remember that smell. I can smell it now (chuckle).

Marcello: When was payday aboard the Thornton?

Connolly: The fifth and the twentieth. Some ships, I understand, were the first and the fifteenth, but ours was the fifth and the twentieth. I said a minute ago that I was getting \$21 a month. I believe I got up to \$36 a month by the time I was seaman second class. So at \$15 a payday . . . and you sent part of it home and put . . . I don't think I put any in the bank.

Marcello: I would assume that if you did get paid on the fifth and the twentieth that most of you probably wouldn't have had too much money left by . . . well, yes, you would have. You had quite a lot of money, probably, on the weekend of December 7. You'd just gotten paid right before that.

Connolly: We did have poker games, too, by the way.

Marcello: Were these legal or illegal aboard the Thornton?

Connolly: Oh, they were illegal anywhere in the Navy. You don't gamble in the Navy. But no one cared, really. There

were never any complaints. I guess if there'd ever been any complaints they'd have stopped it quickly.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less, I think, brings us up to the days immediately prior to Pearl Harbor. What I want you to do at this particular point is give me in as much detail as you can remember what your routine was on Saturday, December 6, 1941. Then from there we'll move into and talk about Sunday, December 7.

Connolly: Well, I know exactly what I did on December 6, almost to the minute, because I was a mess cook, which was a terrible thing. I hated being mess cook. It was equivalent to the Army's KP duty. You've got to get up before anyone else and prepare your compartment for breakfast for half of the men . . . one-half are going to be ashore . . . for just half of the men that would ordinarily be there. You go to all that trouble to set up for this breakfast, and most of them don't eat it anyway. So the whole labor's in vain. I resented it. I hated it.

So you'd get up at six o'clock. I would clear off the tables in my compartment and set up for my crew. I don't remember how many there were. There must have been about twenty men in that . . . in a mess at that time. We set up stainless steel trays and heavy coffee

mugs. They didn't have a ring to hold them by. There was stainless steel silverware, and cereal bowls. And then you'd go on topside and wait until eight o'clock to take your mess down. We carried it down in carriers that carried five tureens. The tureens were five inches in diameter and six inches tall. So whatever you happened to carry down . . . it'd usually be scrambled eggs. On Sunday we'd usually have scrambled eggs and bacon, coffee, and dry cereal for breakfast. So this is . . . you take care of your breakfast.

Then you'd clear that away, wash the trays, wash your equipment, and then take it to a steam room. We had a cleaning device that would blow live steam and hot water over them that would sterilize them and clean them. This would take you up to maybe nine o'clock before you completed everything, had everything policed up.

Then you'd do what work that you had to do in the galley to prepare for lunch, which certainly took peeling spuds and preparing any vegetables. That's about all you got to touch. The ship's cook took care of the rest of it. Then you'd start setting up your next mess at eleven o'clock and have everything cleared away by 12:30. Then you'd go back and help at the galley again. Of course, you'd sterilize all your equipment again. It was the same routine until the last meal in the day. I believe

we set up . . . it must have been around five o'clock. I'm not sure when it was. But it was exactly the same routine. Nothing ever changed. It was always . . . you would have to take down more food than they would eat.

It was very discouraging. Nobody liked mess cooking for any reason whatsoever. I didn't either. That's what I did on the 6th.

Marcello: And so since you were on restriction by this time anyhow, you wouldn't have gotten any liberty, I assume.

Connolly: No, I would not.

Marcello: What did you do that evening?

Connolly: On the evening of the 6th?

Marcello: Yes.

Connolly: I'm sure we sat around in the compartments and read or perhaps wrote letters. We had movies at this time that we'd show on the forecastle. There wouldn't be very many people that'd go. They were usually pretty miserable. It was something to do--better than sitting there looking at the wall. But, well, you'd go out there to watch a movie, and it'd rain on you, and you just sat in the rain and watched the movie. The rains weren't cold. You had a rainy season in Hawaii like you do in any tropical or subtropical place. But you watched the movies, and this was some way to occupy your time.

Marcello: Incidentally, during this period, when you thought of a typical Japanese what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind?

Connolly: So far as I knew, the only Japanese I ever seen at this time was a family that used to live on Junius Street in Dallas. I remember that they painted turtles. They had turtles. I don't know . . . I suppose they sold them at dime stores. But they'd paint a floral design on their back. But they were little people and quite pleasant. I remember the smell of the lacquer, and I'd just sit for hours and watch them paint these turtles. But this was the only connection I'd ever had with the Japanese besides seeing Peter Lorre and Mr. Moto movies. Other than that, I'd just had no contact with them. There were not many Japanese in Dallas.

Marcello: Now when you and your buddies sat around in bull sessions and perhaps listened to some of the old salts, did they ever talk very much or discuss the capabilities of the of the Japanese Navy?

Connolly: Never. So far as I know, I never heard anything about the Japanese Navy. The only thing I'd ever heard was . . . I believe it was in a story I read about von Luchner, the German sea raider in the First World War. He described the filthiest ship that he had ever seen was a Spanish

man-of-war. It was utterly free of any disease. I remember he described how the filth would be on deck and the men would sweep it into a corner until the corners sloped up. They were rounded because . . . it'd be from grease. He said it was the filthiest ship that he'd ever seen and was completely free of any disease. Where a Japanese ship that he had seen-- a Japanese man-of-war--was the cleanest that he had ever seen, but all of the men were suffering from scurvy and beriberi and a multitude of diseases. This stuck in my mind. I do remember it. I believe it was in the book, The Sea Devil.

Marcello: Right up until that point . . . right up till December 6, 1941, did you ever give much thought to the possibility of the United States going to war with Japan? Was it ever talked about very much?

Connolly: Never. No, some of our people had been in the old Asiatic Squadron. They had seen the Japanese and the Chinese fighting, but I don't believe any of them ever gave any thought to the possibility that we might go to war with them. I don't think they thought we'd go to war with anybody.

Marcello: Did you feel relatively safe and secure here at Pearl Harbor?

Connolly: Yes, I felt quite secure. There was no reason not to. Everything seemed to be in good shape as far as I could see. We just followed the ship's routine. Every day was the same.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less brings us up to the day of December 7 itself. Again, I want you to give me your routine on that particular day. I want you to give me as much detail as you can remember.

Connolly: Well, I . . .

Marcello: Incidentally, that night did you . . . was there anything out of the routine that happened? Was there just the normal number of drunks coming back aboard and this sort of thing?

Connolly: There was the normal number of drunks coming back aboard. The night before--this is the evening, late evening, of the sixth--I was an attendant at the gangway. I don't remember what they called us now. Later on a petty officer would have been the OD. You would stand at the gangway with . . . you would wear a pistol, and you would write in the men's names as they come back aboard so you would know who was gone and who would come back. There were men who would jump ship. They'd get away on boats and get away with it. I never saw anybody get caught, but I knew of men that did it. You'd stand there and wait for

them to come back, the legal men, to come over the gangway, and you'd check them in. I was standing by for someone.

I don't recall who it was. It was quite routine. The same drunks would come back, and you'd have to shake them down, be sure they didn't bring any liquor aboard. They all found a way to get it back. It was secreted on the ships and put it in different little hideouts, you know. But there was nothing extraordinary.

So the next day, the morning of the 7th, I remember I got up quite early. I didn't feel well because my watch ended at twelve o'clock. So when the watch ends at twelve o'clock and you get up, say, at 5:30 or six the next morning, you're still pretty tired, even the young men. So I sat up my mess, and I remembered how few men I had. I had a very small mess to set up for. It really didn't seem worthwhile, but it was my duty and you have to do that. So I sat up my mess.

There was a signalman striker that I was quite friendly with, a man named David K. Sharpee. He was Norwegian and he was from Wisconsin. Since I had my mess already set up--I got it set up a little early--I was wandering around the ship. I didn't see anyone, no one to talk to. So I went up on the bridge where Sharpee

was the standby signalman. Now this must have been about seven o'clock.

Marcello: What was the weather like that day?

Connolly: Beautiful, clear day. Beautiful, clear day as were most days there. It had thundershowers like anyplace will, and they're gone in a few minutes. Then when the thundershowers are gone, why, it's a beautiful, sunny day.

We were sitting on the flag boxes on the port wing of the bridge talking about whatever sailors talk about. I don't know what we talked about. It was just a visit. He did have to stay out on the wing of the bridge to keep a lookout on the other ships to be sure no signals came to us, you know, semaphore or otherwise. So I stayed out there and kept him company, and we talked about the order of the day.

Just a few minutes before my mess had to go down, I do recall that I was just getting ready to clear the bridge to go down to pick up my mess in order to take it to my compartment. I could see a little activity over in the direction of what I thought was North Loch. As you come in Pearl Harbor into the entrance from the sea, you come past the antisubmarine nets. Then off to the left is North Loch. There's an ammunition dump there. We

had degaussing gear. Degaussing gear was an electronic device where if you went around magnetic mines it would repel them rather than attract them. When we put on our degaussing gear and set it up . . . I don't know what they did to it. But when we prepared it . . . I do remember we had to make degaussing runs and we made them in North Loch. So we had been in there several days, several times. I knew where it was although I didn't know much other than that about it.

But this activity that I saw from the bridge on the morning of the 7th appeared to be taking place over around North Loch. Now when we were in North Loch I remembered that the Army airplanes . . . at this time it wasn't the Air Force. It was the Army Air Force. They would dive bomb over there, practice bombing, and I remember seeing the planes come down and drop their bombs. It was something to see. It was kind of exciting. There was a lot of flash and a lot of black smoke and something to pass the time of day to watch. So when I saw this . . . I could see the airplanes coming down. I could see the smoke rising over there, and I thought, "Well, they're bombing again, but it's strange that they're doing it so early. Certainly somebody's going to complain."

Marcello: Was it unusual for the Army or the Navy to do this practice bombing on a Sunday?

Connolly: I don't know. I didn't see much of it. But I thought it was unusual that they'd do it so early because you could hear these things. You could hear these bombs going off. The bombs that they'd dropped that I had heard prior to December 7 were quite loud. But you could clearly hear them going off, and you could see the smoke rising. Now I know that it was at one of the airfields. It was either Hickam or Wheeler--one of those fields. I don't know which one.

That's where they were coming down. We watched them, it seemed like, forever. You know, there would go two more and that sort of thing. Then all of a sudden, I saw a ship blow up. It must have been the Shaw because it was a tremendous explosion. So I said, "Well, Sharpee, there's something wrong there! Something's happening over there!" I said, "You better go call the officer of the deck!" Sharpee was there, too. He saw it and he knew something was wrong, so he called the OD, which was a chief . . . what was his rate . . . quartermaster. It was Chief Quartermaster Erickson. Erickson looked for just fifteen seconds, and he knew something was wrong. He called the OOD, Ensign Putnam.

Marcello: I would assume that there weren't very many officers aboard that destroyer on that Sunday morning.

Connolly: There may have been two or three. I don't believe so. I don't believe there were three there. I don't recall. I do know that Ensign Putnam was there. He, at this time, I think, was the engineering officer, but he was the OOD. He impressed me as an efficient officer. I always liked him, although I had nothing to do with him. I didn't work in any of his divisions. I never did. But he looked through binoculars.

 About this time, the torpedo planes had started coming over our fantail, over our stern, from . . . as you're looking aft from the bridge, they're coming from our port side across to our starboard side and running down the channel and dropping torpedoes.

Marcello: Now up until this time you did not know that they were Japanese planes.

Connolly: No, because we hadn't had a chance to get a good look at them. We could see them, see the planes.

Marcello: In other words, those original planes had been coming in from a different direction.

Connolly: That's right. Well, it was the distance, and we couldn't see any identifying marks on them. Now we did have in

those days . . . the insignia on the planes were the white star with a red spot in the center of it. These, of course . . . I could see these red spots. But I'd never seen a Japanese plane before, and I had no idea. I knew something was wrong, but I didn't really know what it was. I thought perhaps I was mistaken, or there was some kind of confusion. I could see these red balls on these planes. It didn't take long to get through to me, I'm sure.

But I do recall Mr. Putnam as though it happened two minutes ago. Putnam looked over our port side with these glasses and saw one of those airplanes starting that run down that channel. He didn't say anything to anybody. He turned and on the bulkhead right behind the wheel in the wheelhouse on the bridge, there are two switches. One was painted green, and the other was painted red. One of them was a bell, and the other was a klaxon. He pulls two knobs. It was a safety latch, and he moved one to the left and one to the right and released them. When you did release them, well, the klaxon started and the bell started ringing. He said, "Pass the word! All hands to general quarters!"

Marcello: Where were your general quarters?

Connolly: I was . . .

Marcello: Where was your battle station?

Connolly: I was a rifleman on the fantail. So they turned to me-- he did--and he said, "Pass the word for the crew to go to general quarters!"

Marcello: About how much time had elapsed from the time that you heard the first explosion until general quarters was finally sounded?

Connolly: I guess two or three minutes, which is an eternity to get to general quarters. It was unspeakable when later on we're talking of split seconds to get to general quarters. Three minutes is unheard of.

So I ran to my compartment, and I hollered as loud as I could, "All hands to general quarters!" I remember them moaning and griping. I didn't see anybody come out of the compartment. From there I ran aft to the petty officers' quarters, and I passed the same word, "All hands to general quarters!" Someone threw something at me, you know, "Aggravating mess cook! Get out of this compartment!"

I remember that one of the guys that griped the loudest was a ship's cook named Little. Once you pass the word, there's not too much more to do. Then I went on aft until I got to the black gang's quarters. I hollered, "All hands to general quarters!" I do remember they bolted out of there.

Marcello: Well, didn't they hear the klaxon or the bell or anything?

Connolly: They could hear it as clearly as I could.

Marcello: But they weren't . . .

Connolly: With general quarters on Sunday morning and half the crew there, that was another drill, you know, and nobody was anxious to go to a drill. We were . . . the jobs that we did . . . we were trained quite well, but not for general quarters. We did have gunnery practice on some of these trips to sea. We knew our business. We weren't too anxious to get to it that morning, you know. It was too early. Wars don't start early. It was a matter of convenience.

So by the time I had passed the word the entire length of the ship, I went forward to the chiefs' compartment. It was already empty. There weren't too many chiefs aboard. That was all the way forward--the chiefs were. So I had made two trips to pass the word.

Then I went by the armory and grabbed a rifle--Springfield .30-06--and ran to the fantail. As soon as I got to the fantail, one of the airplanes coming over . . . let me make this clear first. Our big battery for fighting airplanes was four water-cooled .50-caliber Browning machine guns on our galley deckhouse. This is the highest part of the ship--the highest deck area of the ship excluding masts and things like this. There was one man on each to handle

ammunition boxes and a gunner. Along both our port and starboard sides on the stanchions we had .30-caliber Lewis guns. We had some aircraft-type air-cooled .50-caliber and .30-caliber machine guns on our fantail. We had two Lewis guns on our forecastle. We had . . . our main battery was four-inch .50-caliber rifles. There were not . . . they were surface rifles. They were not dual-purpose. They were later cleared off, and we put on three-inch .50-caliber dual-purpose rifles. But back to my run to general quarters, when I finally got to the fantail, there was a tremendous explosion. One of these torpedo bombers going over our stern had been caught by our .50-calibers. Evidently, they hit the torpedo.

Marcello: Now did . . . the .50-calibers were not necessarily on your boat.

Connolly: They were on our . . .

Marcello: They were on your ship?

Connolly: Yes, the four that were on our ship hit him. There was no question about it because we were the first ones . . . we were at general quarters before the Harlburt and the McFarland. You could see the bullets hit this airplane. It was this close! When I say close, I could hit him with a baseball--any of them that came over. So you tried to shoot them with this .30-caliber rifle and you couldn't . . . I couldn't tell if I was hitting him or not. I knew

that I must be hitting him, but I was quite ineffective. I'm sure of that. Somewhere in the next little while I got some incendiaries or some tracer .30-calibers. I could put them in that thing and shoot them, and you could see where it was going. But it was ineffective. I didn't do any good.

When this airplane up there exploded, it knocked everybody on the fantail down--the concussion. It was a tremendous explosion! By the time the echo of the explosion had cleared away . . . I remember the ship's cook, Little, who wouldn't come out of his compartment, was on the fantail. He must have gotten back there with the speed of light because this, of course, awakened everybody. They were wild-eyed and excited.

The machine guns were operating off the fantail, and you could see them hit the airplanes. You could see our .30-calibers and .50-calibers hit the planes, but they didn't knock them down. I know we knocked one down, and I know we shot a lot of them full of holes. Possibly we killed some of the pilots or the gunners or whatever that man . . . there were two men to the plane.

It seems like they just came across there for hours. They would strafe the fleet landing as they came over. Next they would run down this channel. I remember that you could see them clearly drop the torpedoes. I remember

one of the torpedoes ran wild and ran under the docks. There was a name for the docks. I believe they called them the 1010 Docks. You could see the torpedo run under the dock, and you could see water splashing around. Evidently, they went aground or something. They did not explode. You could see men running away, getting out of there. Very clearly, I could see that. But I never saw anything explode under those docks. Then I remembered that I had a camera in my footlocker.

Marcello: This is simply one of those coincidental things that you think about when you're in the heat of battle.

Connolly: Right. Now I saw the Oklahoma get hit. You see all those big battleships. You knew where the torpedoes were going. There was no question about that. You saw the Arizona blow. I thought, "This is . . . I've got to get a picture of this!"

Marcello: Well, before we go down there to get your camera, describe the turning of the Oklahoma and then the blowing up of the Arizona, since you were an eyewitness to both of these events. Let's take the Oklahoma first of all.

Connolly: Okay, the Oklahoma . . . you could see the airplanes . . . dive bombers were what we saw. I understand some high-level bombers hit them. I remember the high-level bombers. But that was the last thing we saw during the

day. The first thing we saw coming were the dive bombers.

Marcello: Before the torpedo planes?

Connolly: Oh, yes, long before. They came in waves. The dive bombers were coming from very high. I thought from the movies that I'd seen and what I'd heard of dive bombers, I thought that they were just up a little ways. These guys were way up there. They would come out of the clouds. I remember that I couldn't see them above the clouds even at the great angle that we had over the battleships. They looked like they just fell right out of those clouds. They were really smoking it. They were really coming down. You could see them drop their bombs and pull up. Well, with the distance there between us and the battleships, it would just make a dull thud, not an explosion. It was almost like you could feel the ship shake, but you couldn't hear an explosion. You could feel it more than hear it. There were puffs of smoke. Then I noticed that the Oklahoma was settling noticeably. It wasn't on an even keel. It seemed to me that it was down by the bow a little bit. It's rather obscure right now, but it was down by the bow. It suddenly showed a little pitch, a little tendency to roll over. This, by the way, was

what made me think of that camera. I've got to see this thing going over. Then the Arizona went.

Marcello: What were your feelings when you saw the Oklahoma turn turtle?

Connolly: Disbelief. Anything that big can't possibly just go. Absolute disbelief! I couldn't believe that a thing that big was going to go. But there it was. There was a lot of fire, a lot of smoke--smoke like you couldn't believe. I had seen oil burn. Not much, you know. I've seen rubber tires off of automobiles burn. They make a lot of black smoke. These things were making smoke. They were really burning. All the ships were lined up there . . . of course, they were a source of awe for a seventeen-year-old sailor. The size of those things! Tremendous! You never got over looking at them. They were monsters. I couldn't imagine how deep that harbor was. I never had any reason to wonder. So I thought first that perhaps they were just going to sink and go out of sight like the Titanic or something. But they just settled to the bottom. So then I ran to get my camera. I had a Brownie Reflex 127.

Marcello: In the meantime at this particular point, how would you describe the reaction of the men on the destroyer Thornton? Was it one of confusion at this point? Panic? Were they

acting with a degree of professionalism? By the time you'd decided to get your camera, how would you describe the reaction of the men?

Connolly: Once they got to general quarters, then there was a sense of urgency and a high degree of professionalism. They were . . . these men were trained fighting men. Although it didn't show at the very beginning, later it brought out the best in them because more than the excitement that certainly was there, it was very quiet. I had, as I said, seen these movies. I got an idea there was a lot of yelling and hollering and all this sort of thing. But there wasn't--never was. You could hear airplane engines coming by very loud. Explosions that were close stuck in my memory because they were so loud. I had no idea they'd be so loud. The guns that we were shooting were quite loud. We've got to remember that as this fight wore on the things came in waves. Between the waves I don't remember anybody saying anything. It was just a curt order. Then silence. As I said, they knew their business and they set about it. Silence is one thing that you demand in fighting men.

Marcello: Why is that? I've never heard that said before.

Connolly: Yes, as a matter of fact, you can look at the confusion that you can bring on by saying something you shouldn't say. If you get an airplane coming from one direction,

and five men are saying it's over here, where are you going to look at it? So as a matter of fact, in case of a misfire on a Naval rifle . . . and they're going to have to unload. They've got to get that shell out of there. You don't know but what the powder's burning in that shell. You get the picture?

Marcello: Yes.

Connolly: You don't know what's happening in that shell. You're going to have to throw open that breech and pull that shell out of there. The hot shellman receives the shell and puts it over the side. The order is silence. Now why silence at that particular time, I don't know. But it was an order. That means no one moves, no one breathes, until that breech is opened and that shellman has that thing over the side. It was an order. Concentration, I suspect, is the reason for silence. You just don't . . . you keep your mouth shut and do your job. There are orders that are to be said, and everyone has to hear them, so why wouldn't there be silence? There's one man that's supposed to do the talking--gun captain.

Marcello: Well, anyhow, the Oklahoma turned turtle. Then you rushed down to your locker to get your camera.

Connolly: The Oklahoma had started to turn turtle.

Marcello: I see.

Connolly: It had started to settle. So I ran to get my camera, and it was loaded.

Marcello: In the meantime had you expended all of your ammunition from your rifles?

Connolly: No, the ammunition was limitless. How fast can you fire a rifle? I suspect that rifle was more to repel boarders than anything else. But it was a general quarters station. Later in the day as I come to . . . that was put aside . . . we put the rifles away.

But I ran down and got the camera as quickly as I could, ran back to the fantail--this was in one of the lulls in the fighting--and I took a picture of the Oklahoma just starting to settle. It rolled outward from the island. I got a picture of it when it was about forty-five degrees off the vertical. This is quite awhile . . . it seemed like it took forever. Possibly it took ten minutes. I don't know. Then I took a picture when the masts were horizontal, right along the water. Then I took pictures of whatever else I could take or whatever I thought would be large enough on the negative to take. Then when I had completed my roll of film, twelve exposures, I put it away.

Somewhere in here, we saw that the rifles were doing absolutely nothing.

Marcello: Incidentally, what is happening to the Arizona at this point?

Connolly: She's blown already.

Marcello: Okay, well, describe the blowing of the Arizona since you were an eyewitness to it.

Connolly: Alright, they . . . you know, everybody was fighting the torpedo planes and the few dive bombers that came down. But everybody's eye was on those battleships because that was where the whole fight seemed to be centered. We saw an extremely large explosion. Of course, you couldn't tell which one of these ships it was. We knew the number of ships that were tied up there, and we knew their relative position. But you couldn't look at that distance and tell which one was which. When it blew it made, as I said, the dull thud. There was a lot of smoke, but it blew straight up. The explosion went straight up as it had on the Shaw, but the explosion wasn't as fiery as the one on the Shaw. The one on the Shaw was a great fireball.

Marcello: You saw the one on the Shaw, also?

Connolly: Yes, this was the one that I described earlier. This was perhaps what brought more people to general quarters than anything else. The Shaw got it pretty early. The Shaw was in a floating dry dock. It was tied up quite

near the regular dry docks where the Pennsylvania and the Cassin and the Downes . . . the battleship and the two destroyers were in this dry dock, and they blew and burned. But the Shaw really blew. I didn't see . . . what I heard later was that they'd rigged a jury bow on the Shaw and sent it back to the States, and I couldn't believe my ears. But we saw it later. I've never seen an explosion like that anywhere at anytime. It really blew. When the Arizona blew there was a lot of black smoke. It was a fiery explosion. But I didn't see any debris in the air like I did when the Shaw blew.

As I said, no one knew which one it was. They could tell . . . some of the masts were tripod masts, and some were bird cage masts. They were rapidly replacing all of the bird cage masts at that particular time because they were so obsolete. We knew possibly which ships they were, but we really didn't know for sure. We didn't know because it was on the far side of the island that the Utah had been hit and rolled over. But it was a target ship anyway. We knew where the ships were, and we knew what they seemed to be after.

Well, this fight lasted four hours. It seemed to go on all day. I remember that right in the middle

of the battle, a big tanker--high speed tanker--came in, the Neosho. It came right up the channel, and it seemed like the torpedo bombers almost had to move out of their way to avoid it, you know, go around the thing.

Marcello: The Neosho was heading for the sub base, was it not, or the docks over there?

Connolly: It was heading for the fuel docks right across from the sub base. I don't know where it came from. It was tied up somewhere else. It must have come up all the way up that channel. I don't know where it was. It might have been tied up behind Battleship Row or by the Vestal or one of those ships. But, whatever, all the way dive bombers were trying to hit it. We knew it was just a matter of time till they hit it. It was high in the water, so this meant that the fuel was almost expended or it had been pumped out. We felt that if a bomb hit that thing and went off while it was partially empty that this was going to be a real bomb. It was going to really go. But it came all that distance and tied up against the fuel docks. It was fighting all the way--guns going all the time, dive bombers going all the time--and it didn't receive a hit as far as we could tell. Of course, everybody breathed a sigh of relief because if it went down, it

would have gone down right astern of our ships, and we would have never gotten out of there.

Sometime during this period a tugboat came alongside--some kind of a tug or a utility ship of some kind, small. I remembered that amidships they had a little-bitty cannon. It was a three-inch .25-caliber shell gun--shell as opposed to a bag gun. A shell gun is where the projectile is in the shell. The shell that they put in there looked like it was about a foot long. I remember I called over there to ask them if that thing was a sample or something because it was so little (chuckle). I thought possibly it'd pop, you know, and that a little cork would come out of the end. But when they shot that thing, I guess it was the loudest sound I've ever heard in my life. It was the difference between "pow," "bang," and "boom," you know. Our ship would go "bang," and a big sixteen-inch rifle would go "boom." But this thing was an ear-shattering crash, and a long green flame came out. It was a dual-purpose gun. They were shooting at aircraft. I don't know if they ever hit anything with it. But the explosion was so loud that it would make you giddy everytime it went off. They later pulled away and went somewhere else. I was sure happy to see them go. I don't think they hit anything, but they were doing their job.

Marcello: In the meantime, is your destroyer trying to get up steam or anything of that nature?

Connolly: Yes, that's the first thing the black gang did. They started . . . all of our ships started trying to get up full head of steam. None of us were . . . we all had cold boilers. We were fuel burners. We received our steam that we used in the galley from the docks. We got our water from the docks and our electricity from the docks.

So they lighted off our boiler. I don't know how long it takes to get a head of steam up. I'd say an hour, maybe more. I don't know.

While all of this was taking place, most of the torpedo planes were through now. The battleships were all in terrible condition. The torpedo planes had evidently done their work. If there were any coming . . . there were still a few coming over us. Most of them, if there were any more coming, would have been coming from somewhere else because they didn't come over us.

I put my rifle away in the armory and went to the galley deckhouse because I had heard that they needed ammunition passers. When I got to the galley deckhouse, I remember that the shells, the empty shell cases . . . I can honestly describe them as being knee-deep.

Marcello: Now these were from your five-inch guns.

Connolly: No, these . . . we didn't have five-inch guns.

Marcello: Oh, you didn't have five-inchers on this destroyer.

Connolly: No, we had four-inch .50's.

Marcello: I see.

Connolly: But they were surface guns. They weren't dual-purpose.

Dual-purpose means antiaircraft or surface target.

These were 50-caliber, water-cooled Browning machine guns. I can't imagine how many barrels they must have shot out that day because they shot at everything. The shell cases were knee-deep. You actually had to kick through them like snow. You couldn't walk on them. You'd fall down. They couldn't push them over to the side fast enough. If you pushed them over the side, they rained into a passageway on the port and starboard sides. So this was the main thing. They were trying to get somebody to push those empty shells out of the way so they could bring up more boxes of ammunition.

Marcello: In the meantime, I assume that none of the destroyers over on your end were coming under direct attack from these Japanese planes.

Connolly: None ever did. The only damage we sustained were from the Harlburt and McFarland. They would catch a plane coming over the fuel docks or the fleet landing and start

tracking him and shooting all the way. They'd shoot right through our stacks. They shot our radio antenna down. They shot down our . . . I don't know what you call that thing. It's a little gadget that records the wind velocity. They shot that thing off. They shot our mast all full of holes and shot our crow's nest all full of holes. We shot their's all full of holes, you know, just tracking planes. If something interferes like a big stack, you don't quit shooting. You just keep shooting because you can pick them up on the other side.

The only damage we sustained during the whole fight was by our sister ships shooting at us and perhaps some debris from this torpedo plane that blew up over our stern early. But if there was any damage to the ship from that thing, I never found it. Nobody was hit by debris. There were a few bloody noses because of the explosion--the concussion. The only man that we had that was injured in any way during the fight was a first class shipfitter named E. D. Brown. One man was running up the ladder to get on the galley deckhouse, and he was carrying a Browning automatic rifle with the barrel pointed back. Brown ran up under it and the barrel gouged him in the forehead, and he picked up blood poisoning from it. That was the only man we had injured.

But back to that galley deckhouse and trying to push those shells over the side, there must have been hundreds of thousands of empty hulls. They'd pass up boxes of linked ammunition. These were metal links in these things. I'd never seen them before. On occasion and accidentally, a box of .30-caliber linked ammunition got up there. They wouldn't push it aside; they'd just throw it over the side. I imagine underneath that sub base right now there's many boxes of ammunition sitting there from that thing.

By this time, the high-level bombers had started to come over. They were being hit. I read somewhere later that there were something like forty-six airplanes brought down. I'm sure there must have been. But I didn't see them. We saw some, without question.

Marcello: Well, actually, there were only twenty-nine Japanese planes shot down during the whole attack.

Connolly: Is that right?

Marcello: Yes.

Connolly: I saw about three or four definitely get . . . one of them stuck in my mind because he was tumbling. It was a high-level bomber that somebody hit. I thought they must have knocked his engine out because he was going end over end coming in. You could just watch him come forever. Then he

hit the water out there. Then the one we shot . . . and I saw some falling into the water . . . the torpedo planes farther on down the way, you could see them go in, and some were coming in smoking. I'm sure they had been hit. But I couldn't see any . . . I didn't see that many planes get hit, so it's interesting to find out there were twenty-nine.

Another thing that clearly stuck in my memory was some planes coming over, and they were going from the direction of, oh, say, Hickam Field over toward the mountains. So this was . . . if you're looking up from the airplane, it would come from starboard to port from where I was--looking up from our galley deckhouse. They dropped some bombs. I could watch the bombs. At first, I was curious about where that bomb was going to go. As you watched this bomb, it seemed to be coming straight down at me, you know, and there's no place to hide. I watched it. I'm going to guess he released them--it's a guess--at 5,000 feet. But you could see that bomb fall for an eternity. It looked like it was coming straight at me so long that when it started getting close enough that you could see the veins on the back of it, I was sure it was going to hit us somewhere around that ship. But there was nothing to do but watch it, and there was

no place to go. Just as it got to the part to where it looked like it was going to go right down your throat, it moved across the sky and fell over in the mountains miles away. I'm sure it's got something to do with the rate of closure, but I've often wondered why it was . . . really, it was a genuine optical illusion. But every bomb that they dropped was like it was going to hit me personally. Nothing even came close.

But I remember this plane that was hit and tumbling so bad. It was one of those planes that had dropped those bombs. The ones that they did drop, I never saw where they hit. I didn't know what they were hitting. But we saw them drop many, so there must have been an awful lot of them in the water. They might have been hitting battleships. But it seemed like they were too close to us to be falling on battleships.

These things did come in waves. I'm going to guess there were four or five minutes between the waves. In the meantime, occasionally you'd see a dive bomber.

Marcello: How many waves do you think came over that day?

Connolly: I don't know. I'd have to guess. I'll say maybe a dozen, maybe twenty, maybe six planes, maybe nine planes, maybe two or three. I don't recall how many were in the bunches. But they were quite high. There were still, as I said . . .

an occasional dive bomber would come down. They were all coming down over Ford Island. I never saw anything other than the ones that were working on the Neosho. The ones that came down over in the Navy Yard over around 1010 Dock and the floating dry docks, you could see those coming down. But I didn't see anything in the direction of town, which was quite far away. You could only tell about where it was by the Aloha Tower. You could see about where the street that was . . . I guess it was Kamehameha Boulevard that came all the way out there. I don't know what it was. You couldn't see much activity out there.

Marcello: Did you see any individual acts of heroism on that particular day?

Connolly: No, I saw . . . heroism?

Marcello: In other words, it was mainly everybody doing his job and this sort of thing.

Connolly: Yes, everybody was doing his job. I know that we put some motor launches in the water to see if we could pick up anybody in the water. They came back terribly distraught, I know this. Evidently, they had seen a lot of things we didn't see because they went around where the battleships were trying to get people out of the water. They pulled out some badly burned up and shot up people, I understand. But evidently, they had seen

things that would make you believe that it was a whole lot worse than anything we saw.

Marcello: Did you see any individual acts of cowardice as opposed to heroism.

Connolly: Yes, I saw . . . well, first thing, let me tell you about the heroism. It's not heroics, I don't think. We had a man named "Rebel" Phillips. I believe he must have been from Mississippi or somewhere. I remember that he fired a Lewis gun, which is a .30-caliber machine gun, air-cooled. It has a stock on it like a rifle and a pan that sits on top for the shells. He shot it like a rifle. He'd run around everywhere trying to shoot at something. This is no simple feat. That thing's heavy. He must have been very strong. He would shoot that thing just like a rifle. He'd hold it up and shoot it till he'd shoot a whole pan out of that thing. It was just battering him terribly all around that deck. He must have been in pretty bad shape the next day. I was impressed with him.

We had one man named Argo, a chief gunner's mate, who was terrified. I'll have to get away from Pearl Harbor for just a minute to describe Argo. He wouldn't come out . . . couldn't get him out of the armory because it was covered. He was almost incoherent. I was shocked because this was a long-time Navyman. Later . . . we were

one of the earliest ships out of Pearl Harbor. We went to an island called Palmyra. I understand it's about three degrees off the equator or something like that. We took a load of Marines down there. From the time . . . from the morning of Pearl Harbor till we got back-- I guess it was maybe two or three weeks later--Argo never closed his eyes. He never slept, and he turned into a genuine basket case. They moved him off. I don't know what they did with him. He must have gone to a Naval hospital somewhere, but he was really scrambled. Something really happened to him. I'd have to call him coward.

Marcello: I'm sure everybody had a certain degree of fear.

Connolly: I don't believe it.

Marcello: You don't think so?

Connolly: No, I've never believed it. This was a show. I'd never seen anything like it--instant war. I'd never seen a war before. This was exciting to me. This was far more exciting than a high school football game. What can you think of that a seventeen-year-old boy could do that would be more exciting than this? I joined the Navy for excitement, and look what I got--plenty of excitement. No, there's no place for . . . if you're trained at all, you never know fear. I never saw anybody that was really afraid. I've read somewhere many times that you're afraid

like anybody else but that you learn to override it. Well, I don't believe it. If you're trained at all, you never know fear. You never have a chance. The only thing you know is your job. It's like Pavlov's dogs. When the general quarters bell sounds, then you think about your job. You don't think about what's going to get you. If this were the case, when they say "general quarters," you know it's got to be an aircraft. You'd run out and start looking for an aircraft. You wouldn't go to your gun station. I was never afraid. I never saw anybody that I thought was afraid except for that one case.

Marcello: What did you do in the aftermath of the attack?

Connolly: Well, the first thing we did . . . as I said, we tried to get underway. The destroyer Litchfield came in there. It was a regular. I don't know what their job was, but it was a ready destroyer. It was a four-stacker; it still had all four stacks. Evidently they had . . . there was what I would refer to as a regular Navy ship. That thing had come into Pearl Harbor, it looked like, maybe at thirty-five knots. It looked like a gold cup hydroplane coming in there, it came in so fast. It stopped and there was never any confusion. You never saw anything like this ship.

Sometime during the fight they got underway. That's when they started getting submarines coming up on the far side of Ford Island where the Curtiss was tied up. Some little submarines started coming up there. They were sinking those things. Evidently, they were coming in under ships and getting into the harbor. The Litchfield went out on a submarine call. They had a submarine pinned to the bottom. It was one of ours. The submarine was calling for assistance. Evidently, they had a way to radio the Litchfield. They said, "Let us off the bottom. We're a friendly submarine." The Litchfield wouldn't do it. They wouldn't let them up. Why this was, I don't know. They certainly knew their work. But they sent us out with the Litchfield . . . to get the Litchfield to bring that submarine in. He was still on the bottom when we got out there. There were a bunch of radio messages and blinker light messages and semaphores going back and forth. Finally, the submarine appeared between us. We brought him in.

This was late, late on the afternoon of the 8th when this occurred. I don't think we could have gotten out on the evening of the 7th because I remember those fires burning so bright down there. I remember that we stayed at our general quarters station all that day. I

remember we ate chicken. They brought food to the gun stations.

Marcello: Did you have much of an appetite?

Connolly: Not really. But our food had already been set up for the day, which had been chicken--we already had roast chicken on Sunday--and lemonade, terrible lemonade. I don't know what they made it out of but it was bad, but it was cool and so you drank it. But they brought . . . we could have had fifty chickens per man, I guess. There was all we wanted. But they did get that food there. They kept the coffee coming and the chicken. I never ate so much chicken in my whole life. I remember they had iced tea. They'd bring it to you. They didn't let you off your general quarters station. We stayed at general quarters twenty-four hours.

Marcello: I assume that there were a lot of trigger-happy servicemen around that evening.

Connolly: Yes. All of the rumors started coming in about paratroopers landing. I remember they described them. They had blue denim coveralls with a big red ball on the back. So we immediately had to put a cordon of men across the pier that we tied up to with machine guns in case they tried to get in. We heard that they were blowing up the oil storage tanks near there, so we put men out there real quick. Rumors were really flying that they had landed all over the island. I thought they were. Then it occurred to me that if they were,

we wouldn't be tied up to that dock. But there were rumors. We didn't know what we had lost.

Marcello: I'm sure you believed all of the rumors no matter how absurd they were.

Connolly: I say I believed them. I'm not sure if I believed them, or if I just listened and paid attention, you know, because you couldn't say, "Well, that's not going to happen," because if you had told me at 7:30 the morning of the 7th, "We're going to have a war that day," I don't think I'd have believed you.

Marcello: Did you witness the planes coming in from the aircraft carrier Enterprise that were shot down?

Connolly: Yes.

Marcello: You might describe that incident.

Connolly: Well, at this time . . . now we know we have silhouettes that we study. We know what our planes look like and what their planes look like. Then, any airplane I saw looked like a Japanese airplane to me after all that. These planes . . . flights of them came in, and we shot at them. I remember a B-17 coming in. I'm not sure which series it was. It must have been an A, B, C, or something like that. I don't believe it was a B-17E. It didn't have a tail stinger. But whatever it was that came in, it looked . . . I never saw anything that looked more Japanese than that, so we started shooting at it. Everybody shot at them.

Marcello: This was on the 7th?

Connolly: Yes, in the afternoon or early evening of the 7th. We really got after them--really shooting. Everybody was shooting. I remember that the crewmen started hollering, "Oh, no, hold it! Don't shoot at those! Those are ours." We didn't have a loudspeaker system at this time--a P.A. system. We'd pass the word. I don't know whether the word came from the bridge or where the word came from to stop shooting, but we stopped shooting. I couldn't see the planes go down, but I learned later that they shot one down.

Marcello: They did that that evening--those fighters off the Enterprise?

Connolly: How many did they shoot down?

Marcello: I'm not sure. It was either two or three of them, anyhow, that they shot down. Apparently, the skies just lit up like the Fourth of July when those planes came in from all of the tracers and so on.

Connolly: Yes, I do remember this.

Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack, now, how did you feel about . . . how did your attitude toward the Japanese change?

Connolly: It didn't, really. I still hadn't seen any Japanese. You see an airplane, and you see some people sitting in them, and they get quite close. Torpedo bombers--you see two men in them.

Marcello: How close could you distinguish those people in the torpedo bombers?

Connolly: I could see their faces. You couldn't distinguish their features. They were this close that they'd turn and look at you and you could see their faces. I've argued with other men. I know that in some of those planes that came down that channel, the man was facing . . . the man in the back was facing aft. I've had them say, "No, that man was facing forward." But the ones that I saw, I'm almost positive, were facing aft.

Marcello: That's probably true because a lot of planes did . . . the second man was actually a machine gunner as well. Chances are he would have been facing aft, it seems to me.

Connolly: Another thing that impressed me was that they didn't have any great show of excitement. I would think they would be moving around, you know, but he was sitting there like he was along for the ride. I do recall that they turned over and looked in our direction. Whether they were looking at us or the submarine base, I don't know. But they turned and looked. We were shooting at them. The ones that I saw, they never shot back at us anyway.

Marcello: The next day when you were perhaps a little bit more calm and you looked out over the harbor and surveyed the damage, what did you see? What did it look like? What sort of a scene was it?

Connolly: Well, we managed to get underway. We did get underway the next day. We got underway that night and tried to get out. We couldn't get out. We could get as far as the Nevada, where it had gone aground. As we were starting out toward seaward, it would be on our port side. We couldn't get any farther than . . . I remember we had to back around and go back in. We tied up again. When we made that turn, when we made our port turn to start to go to sea, we went right by the battleships. It was a sight to see--all of those big ships burning. There were hundreds of motor launches and whaleboats in there, I guess trying to pick up men in the water. The oil was very thick on the water. I was surprised at how high it would ride in the water. I don't know how deep it was. But all of those bunkers had been broken open, and they had black oil. It is black and gummy. It was burning. Flotsam, jetsam--all this stuff was on the water. I didn't know what we were going to do, really. We were in bad shape. I could see this. But I didn't know

what we had to look forward to--whether they'd try to come in and finish us off or whether that was it.

Of course, I don't know. I still don't know. I've read a few things, and I tend to not believe very much of it because I don't know what really was happening. I don't to this day. I hear from my children in school that President Roosevelt knew all about it and hatched part of the plot. I hear lots of strange things. I try to argue with them, and they look at me like I'm an idiot and . . . "What would you know about it?" So you have to let them go.

But I knew we were in trouble by what I could see--the nice job they had done on us. You couldn't see anything you'd done to them--a few airplanes down.

Marcello: What sort of emotions did you experience the next day when you saw all of this damage and so on?

Connolly: Depression, actually. I was very depressed because I knew that all . . . like I said, we sent out some motor launches to try to help them--the people down on Battleship Row. I knew by talking to the crews that they were really in bad shape. There was just a great loss of life. Ships that were gone that I didn't even know had been hit--Oglala and these. Some of those

old ships down there had gone over. I didn't even think about the Utah being around there, and it was over. Every battleship . . . they said they didn't see a single battleship that wasn't hurt. So that was it. There was nothing left--a few crummy destroyers, a few torpedo boats. Ford Island was a shambles. We heard that they tore up the town barely--shot the town up. Now I hear that . . .

Marcello: I think most of that was falling shrapnel from the ships and so on in Honolulu.

Connolly: Well, that's what I heard. I've heard this just recently. I don't know. But there were people that were shot. I read they were shot. Pictures show they were shot. Surely they shot someone. I can't believe all the shrapnel in the world fell in downtown Honolulu.

Marcello: Okay, Mr. Connolly, you've really given us a very good description of your account of Pearl Harbor on that day. I'm sure that historians will find your comments to be most valuable later on.