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Interview with

Harry Ogg

July 9, 1978

Place of Interview: Corpus Christi, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Harry P Ogg
(Signature)

Date: Harry P Ogg

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Oral History Collection

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Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Harry Ogg for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on July 9, 1978, in Corpus Christi, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Ogg in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the fleet tanker USS Neosho during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The Neosho was moored just off Ford Island during the attack.

Mr. Ogg, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature.

Mr. Ogg: Well, I was born on August 14, 1922, and I was born in Raymondville, Texas. I've been raised here in Corpus Christi since the age of six. I went through my schooling here. Of course, I quit high school during my senior year to go into the Navy--to enlist in the Navy with a friend of mine who had graduated that year.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Ogg: Well, primarily because I've always liked the water and liked boats, you know--things of that nature. Sailing has always appealed to me . . . for that reason alone; and then my friend was going into the Navy, and then I thought I'd tag along with him.

Marcello: When did you say you entered the Navy?

Ogg: On June 3, 1941.

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

Ogg: Well, it really wasn't much. We had a lot of Japanese shipping here at that time. I know they was shipping a lot of scrap metal. Of course, as I look back on that period, I was a paper boy then, you know, in those years and peddled papers and would always visit aboard ship, and that was very interesting to me. Before I had joined up, I thought they was just . . . you know. I couldn't . . . well, I'd see all this scrap metal, you know, being shipped out of here, and nobody knew why. Of course, now, after the attack and all that, we know why. Security was a little tight around foreign ships in the harbor, you know, precisely the Japanese ships. You know, you couldn't wander out of your area and things of that nature.

I took my training in San Diego, California.

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

Ogg: At that time, I think it was eight weeks.

Marcello: In other words, they had cut it down considerably over what the normal amount of time was?

Ogg: Oh, yes. They cut that down to just about practically nothing.

Marcello: At the time that you joined the service, did you possibly foresee the coming of war in the Far East, or were your eyes still turned mainly toward Europe?

Ogg: No, I was mostly keeping track of what was happening in the European Theater. I didn't have any idea that anything would ever start in the Pacific. I thought we had good relations with Japan, but evidently we did not (chuckle). We underestimated them.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened in boot camp that you think we ought to get as part of the record?

Ogg: It was good training, and they prepared you for becoming a good sailor. I always look back to that time when they had good instructors and they was really "gung-ho."

Marcello: Did they seem to indicate that there was an emergency nature to your training? By "they," I'm referring to the people who trained you and so on.

Ogg: No, they was primarily emphasizing the necessity to learn, you know--recognize ships and planes and be able to do in general what pertains to being a good seaman.

Marcello: Where did you go from boot camp?

Ogg: Well, I went directly aboard the Neosho. We were sent to Bremerton, Washington, and we caught the ship there and went aboard the ship there.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being aboard a tanker? It's not the most glamorous ship in the world.

Ogg: No. I was quite frankly . . . I was a little disappointed, but then I come from this area where we had a lot of tankers, you know, coming in and going out, and I was familiar with the operation; I'd been aboard selling papers and making errands for a lot of those seamen and all of that. So I was quite familiar with tankers, as far as operations was concerned.

Marcello: How big a ship was the Neosho? I'm not thinking in terms of the number of feet and so on; but as Navy tankers go, how big was it? Was it a big one or a small one?

Ogg: Well, it was a big tanker. There was three sister ships--the Platte, the Neosho, and the Sabine. They were all the same size, but at that time it was a pretty good-sized tanker.

Marcello: What sort of reception did you get when you went aboard the Neosho? After all, you were still a "boot."

Ogg: Yes. Well, there was about, I guess, fifteen of us there on the dock when the ship come around the point. Well, you know (chuckle), here come the "boots," and they all razzed us. But they didn't make it too uncomfortable; they just didn't mind letting you know you were going to have to get with it.

Marcello: If they were putting fifteen people on the Neosho, they must have been trying to bring it up to wartime complement as fast as possible.

Ogg: Well, yes. If my memory serves me correct, I think it was around fifteen of us that went aboard that ship that morning. Yes, I would think so; there was quite a bit of men going on one ship at one time.

Marcello: Where were you assigned when you went aboard the Neosho?

Ogg: I was assigned to a stateroom. At that time, aboard those ships, they used to have five men to a stateroom.

Marcello: That was kind of different from most of the other warships and so on, was it not?

Ogg: Well, I would think so, yes. Larger ships . . . it depends on the size of the ship, you know. The more room you have, the more space you have (chuckle).

Marcello: Were your quarters comfortable?

Ogg: Yes, it was quite comfortable.

Marcello: Did you have plenty of room?

Ogg: Oh, yes. We had nice bunks and lockers. Like I say, it was five of us to a stateroom. We had enough room that we wasn't getting in each other's way or anything like that.

Marcello: Were all five of you "boots?"

Ogg: No, they threw myself and two other recruits in there with a chief boatswain's mate.

Marcello: With a chief boatswain's mate?

Ogg: Yes.

Marcello: Was that kind of unusual?

Ogg: No, he wasn't a chief boatswain's mate. No, he was a boatswain's mate second class. He had been in the Navy for twenty years and been busted too many times and that sort of thing. He was a boatswain's mate--a good boatswain's mate, but very rough,

Marcello: What was the food like aboard the Neosho?

Ogg: The food?

Marcello: Yes.

Ogg: Oh, it was good. It was fresh all the time; we picked up fresh groceries and everything was really good. We primarily operated, you know, between Honolulu and the States, and we picked up a lot of fresh food. We always carried plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and everything.

Marcello: What sort of work were you assigned when you went aboard the Neosho?

Ogg: Well, I was assigned on the deck force, and it was mostly chipping and scraping and painting.

Marcello: This is standard procedure, isn't it, for most new personnel?

Ogg: Oh, yes . . . well, for anybody working topside. For anyone going down in the engine room, that's a different operation altogether. On topside, you did practically everything.

Marcello: How did you like being a deck hand?

Ogg: I did. I always want to see where in the heck I was going (chuckle). This is the thing. I enjoyed my work, and I wanted to be topside. I wasn't much interested in machinery at all. I just wanted to operate a boat or a gig or something.

Marcello: Did you have to serve a tour as mess cook when you went aboard?

Ogg: Oh, yes. You know, you couldn't get away from that (chuckle). That was routine. Yes, you took turns; your turn would come up, and you served in the galley.

Marcello: How long did mess cooking last?

Ogg: Oh, I don't think I spent over two weeks there, and then I rotated back to the topside--the deck gang.

Marcello: Were they serving family-style or cafeteria-style aboard the Neosho?

Ogg: Oh, it was cafeteria-style, yes. We had those aluminum . . . no, they weren't aluminum. Well, anyway, they were those trays, you know--steel trays.

Marcello: After you boarded the Neosho, where did it go from there? I assume you picked it up in Bremerton, Washington.

Ogg: Yes. We came back to San Pedro, California, and then we went over to the Shell Oil dock there in Long Beach, and from there we shipped on back to . . . we made our first trip to Honolulu,

Marcello: How did this procedure work? You would pick up the fuel in San

Pedro, and then the fuel would be taken over to the Hawaiian Islands?

Ogg: Yes. Sometimes we'd get it in Long Beach.

Marcello: Okay, where would you deposit the fuel there?

Ogg: Well, most of the time we'd go to Hickam Field, you know, the Army depot. We'd unload for the Army, and then we would move over to Ford Island for the Navy. That's what they called Battleship Row; that's where all your battleships were.

Marcello: When you went over to Ford Island, you actually didn't refuel the battleships there, did you?

Ogg: No, no. We unloaded it at a dock.

Marcello: Did you ever drop off any fuel over there where the tank farms are and so on?

Ogg: No, no, we always went to the terminal.

Marcello: You just had a terminal right there at the dock.

Ogg: We unloaded everything there.

Marcello: Would you bring anything back with you from Pearl Harbor, or would you go back to the West Coast empty?

Ogg: We'd come back empty. I don't believe we ever brought anything back . . . no, we never did that, not to my knowledge.

Marcello: So you would be riding pretty high in the water coming back from Hawaii?

Ogg: Yes, we would be pretty empty.

Marcello: How about refueling at sea? Did the Neosho do very much refueling

at sea?

Ogg: Not prior to the war--the start of the war--no. We went through drills, you know--knowing the hoses and everything and the operation and booms and all. It was only after the war started that we really started fueling at sea.

Marcello: What sort of fuel would you be getting on the West Coast?

Ogg: Well, we would pick up high octane gas--90-octane gas--and oil, and that's what we'd transport to Pearl.

Marcello: That oil is the bunker oil--the real thick stuff. Is that what you would be picking up?

Ogg: Yes, it would be thick.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of plying this route between the West Coast and Honolulu?

Ogg: Well, it was ideal. I know we made a lot of them boys on the battleships mad because we was coming back to the States every week (chuckle). They didn't like the idea of us going back because we had a pretty good run; we considered it a good run.

Marcello: How often would you make one of these runs?

Ogg: Oh, I guess . . . well, it would take us six, seven, maybe eight days to get there. It would be every third week, I guess, from the time in the States and the time we spent ashore up there. Yes, I guess it was every three weeks.

Marcello: How long would it take you to unload a tanker when you came back

to Pearl Harbor or Honolulu?

Ogg: Well, it would be no more than two days, I guess. You know, we could probably do it . . . if we'd have to unload everything in one station it would be one day; and if we had to unload at two stations, like Hickam and the Army or Navy, then it would take a little longer, because you have to change the moorings. Oh, I guess it'd take two or three days in port--something in that range.

Marcello: On a ship such as the Neosho, are you generally more safety-conscious or fire-conscious than you would be on other ships?

Ogg: Oh, yes.

Marcello: I guess especially for that high octane gas?

Ogg: High octane gas, yes. The smoking lamp would be out, and you have to be very careful--very careful. They emphasize that on you.

Marcello: I guess that bunker fuel doesn't burn too readily, does it?

Ogg: Well, not to my knowledge. I just couldn't quite say, you know, just how it does burn--slower or faster. But I do know that high octane gas is dangerous.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as relations between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, did your routine change any, that is, in terms of going between the West Coast and Honolulu?

Ogg: Well, I could never quite see a lot of change in it right

prior to the attack, but I know we was getting more conscious of our ammunition boxes and everything, you know, going through our manuals and reading up on it and getting all the knowledge we could about firearms and what few guns we did have aboard. I think we had a 3-inch .50-caliber or something like that aboard. We were just a tanker and limited as far as small arms.

Marcello: Was that a 3-inch .50-caliber?

Ogg: Yes, I think that's about what the Neosho had, really.

Marcello: Did you ever participate in any fleet maneuvers or anything while you were aboard?

Ogg: Well, no, not to my knowledge. I can't recall that we was regularly with the fleet. We mostly operated in our regular run. We might rendezvous with somebody, you know, at some point to exchange mail or something like that.

Marcello: Did you seem to have more general quarters drills and so on in those weeks and days immediately prior to the actual attack?

Ogg: No. I know everybody was keeping abreast of what was going on in the European Theater. But, no, we didn't . . . I don't think that there . . . we had good officers aboard, and we were well-prepared. I think we had a darn good crew.

Marcello: What was the morale like in that Navy prior to the Pearl Harbor attack? I'm referring now to the morale aboard the Neosho.

Ogg: Well, you know, everybody that joined the Navy wants to serve

aboard a man-of-war, and a lot of them could never adjust to just being a tanker sailor. But to me (chuckle) it was the Navy, and we had a job to do. I'd been around tankers, so I adjusted to it pretty good. But morale as a whole . . . well, you have your usual gripes, you know; you can't satisfy everybody. Well, we had a good skipper to start with, and he run a tight ship; all his officers under him were, boy, first-class. There was no slacking off or no give-and-take; it had to be according to regulations, and that was it. If you violated regulations, then you just went up before the "man," that's all.

Marcello: How do you rate the on-the-job training that you received aboard the Neosho in terms of training you to become a boatswain's mate?

Ogg: Well, like I said, we had good leaders and good, qualified men that had come up the ranks, and they knew what they were doing, and you had to listen to what they said.

Marcello: I guess most of those boatswain's mates had quite a few years in the service, did they not?

Ogg: Yes, yes, yes. I know it wasn't uncommon to find a coxswain that had eight or ten years, you know, and that was as far as he had gone.

Marcello: Rank moved very, very slowly, did it not?

Ogg: Very slowly at that time, yes. A boatswain's mate could have

twenty years and still be a second class. Of course, there's no telling how many times he'd (chuckle) got up to first class; he was a typical boatswain's mate, a typical sailor, who spends most of his time on the shore. He was just a typical boatswain's mate.

Marcello: Did you have any of the old China sailors aboard the Neosho?

Ogg: Yes, we had a couple of them, but, you know, after I left the ship, I lost track of everything. I thought I knew everybody pretty well before, but, you know, your memory fades away sometimes, and you just can't . . . but I know that we did have some pretty "salty" people there, you know.

Marcello: As a group, those Asiatic sailors were rather colorful, were they not?

Ogg: Yes, yes. Well, they called them "Asiatics," you know.

Marcello: Most of them were tattooed, I think.

Ogg: Oh, God, yes! I mean, they razed you if you didn't have a tattoo on; you weren't a sailor to them, you know, that kind of thing.

Marcello: I'm sure that they could spin quite a few sea stories and especially if they had an audience like yourself and so on who had just come out of boot camp.

Ogg: Yes, they delighted in telling them stories. They could go on for hours, and a lot of them (chuckle) would exaggerate and all. But that was their life; they had to do something to

pass the time away.

Marcello: I gather a lot of those guys had to be ordered back to duty in Honolulu and the States; they wanted to stay out there in the Far East.

Ogg: Well, yes. A lot of them got recalled because of their experience. I know that right after the war started, anybody that had a little training of any kind had to go back for new construction. There was quite a demand for anybody with some seamanship behind him.

Marcello: As we get closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to worsen, did you and your buddies ever think about the possibilities of an attack at Pearl Harbor? Did you ever discuss it?

Ogg: No, really we never did. You know, there was just a peaceful sort of an atmosphere, you know; we just had our run back and forth. We looked forward to coming to Honolulu, and we looked forward to going home and that sort of thing. No, we didn't have any prior training outside of just the ordinary--just everyday life aboard ship and following the plan of the day.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese during that pre-World War II period, what sort of person did you usually conjure up in your own mind? To you, what was a typical Japanese?

Ogg: Well, I had been familiar with them, because I had friends there in California, and in most of them places there were always

Japanese people on the docks and on those shrimp boats and whatever, In San Pedro there was quite a few of them there at that time. They were just Oriental people to me. They were friendly--the people that I talked to when maybe I'd go to a restaurant or something like that. I never did pay much attention one way or the other.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us down to those days immediately prior to the attack, so let's talk about that weekend of December 7th. Now, if my memory serves me correctly, the Neosho had come in on a Saturday night, is that correct . . . or was it a Friday night? One of the other?

Ogg: To Pearl?

Marcello: Yes. Do you recall how it worked?

Ogg: Well, we left San Pedro on November 29th--I think it was late in the evening--and we arrived there Saturday morning of December 6th, and they ordered us over to the Army depot to start unloading fuel over there.

Marcello: Now, let me ask you this. I interviewed a Pearl Harbor veteran a couple of weeks ago who was aboard the Neosho, and he seems to remember that in entering the harbor the Neosho scraped something, and the crew wasn't sure what it was. He was under the impression that it might have been one of those two-man submarines. Do you know anything about that?

Ogg: We had to wait and I thought it was just for them to open the

nets, but I don't recall hearing any conversation to that effect. We might have scraped something, and then again. . . . you know.

Marcello: So far as you were concerned, you don't remember that incident?

Ogg: No, no. Truthfully, no.

Marcello: So you mentioned that you actually got into Pearl Harbor on a Saturday morning?

Ogg: Yes, sir, we came in on a Saturday morning.

Marcello: Okay, what did you do when you came in?

Ogg: Well, we waited outside until we got the nets open so that we could go in. And then we went directly over there to the Army depot, and we started hooking up the hose and pumping fuel ashore.

Marcello: Where was the Army terminal located?

Ogg: Well, I think it was at Hickam Field.

Marcello: I assume you unloaded your aviation gasoline there?

Ogg: Yes, we unloaded some. I don't know if we unloaded it all; we still had . . . well, we shifted berths that evening when we got through with what we was supposed to unload there. Then we got our orders to move over to Ford Island, and that's what we did. We went over there about dark and hooked up there, and we was still pumping fuel until the next morning.

Marcello: Okay, you were pumping the fuel from the Neosho over to Ford

Island.

Ogg: Yes.

Marcello: Where did you moor over there? Near what ships?

Ogg: Well, we was in between the Oklahoma and the California.

Marcello: When you say that you were in between them, how far were each of those ships from the Neosho?

Ogg: We was tied up with the same lines. One of our stern lines was, I think, run over to the Oklahoma, which is on the outboard side. I think the Maryland was on the dock side, and the Oklahoma was on the outboard side. So we had one of our stern lines to the battleship, and over ahead of us . . . we were wedged in there between the . . . whether we had lines running to the California, I don't recall, but I do know that we was there.

Marcello: Did you empty the tanker that night, or were you still pumping through the night?

Ogg: No, we still had our flag out there--Baker; you know we were flying our red Baker flag. Anytime you're unloading fuel, it's a danger and aircraft and other things must stay away.

Marcello: So you were unloading that tanker, then, through the night.

Ogg: Oh, yes. We was unloading. Yes, we was unloading.

Marcello: Did you have the duty that night?

Ogg: No. I was going on duty . . . I got through with my duties after we tied up, and I was supposed to go on duty that morning.

Marcello: Were you going to go ashore that night?

Ogg: No. No, we didn't go ashore that night. No, we didn't on account of transferring the ship. But I imagine they did run some liberty that evening, but I didn't go. But we had to go on duty the next morning.

Marcello: So you did not go ashore at all on Saturday night?

Ogg: No, no, we didn't, no. I didn't, no.

Marcello: I should have mentioned this earlier, and I'll just throw it in now. How did the liberty routine normally work on the Neosho when you had liberty there in Honolulu?

Ogg: Well, it went port and starboard, you know. I think I belonged to the port section. You would rotate every other day.

Marcello: What did you normally do when you went on liberty in Honolulu?

Ogg: Well, we played ball and went down there and swam and drank beer and took pictures and went to movies and played golf and whatever. We mostly played ball out there and just things like that.

Marcello: Were things getting pretty crowded in downtown Honolulu during those last couple months?

Ogg: Oh, yes. There was just a lot of activity all the time over there. There was quite a lot of activity.

Marcello: Did you visit Hotel Street and Canal Street and Beretania Street on occasion?

Ogg: Yes, I was very familiar with those places (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, let's get back and talk about the weekend liberty some more. Now many people like to say that if the Japanese were going to attack, the best time that they could have chosen was a Sunday morning. How do you feel about this? Do you feel Sunday morning was a good time for an attack?

Ogg: Yes, yes, I would think so.

Marcello: Why is that?

Ogg: Well, the element of surprise was there for one thing. You take the Navy . . . well, all right, you go ashore on a Saturday night, and you're going to do a lot of drinking, and you ain't going to be worth a damn, and you may not even come back the next day for all that matter (chuckle). Everybody--enlisted men and officers alike--went ashore and, by God, they was going to do their thing and that was all. I would think that, yes, Sunday would be the most likely time for a surprise attack, which they did. Hell, you know, people hadn't even woke up. We was up that morning was because we had to go on duty. We was up early to have breakfast about 5:30 or something.

Marcello: Was there a great deal of drinking that went on on a Saturday night?

Ogg: Ashore?

Marcello: Yes.

Ogg: Yes, by all means . . . all the time. There was parties and

this and that and just a lot of . . . yes, there was quite a bit of that. It was a typical night on the beach in Honolulu. The times that I went ashore, why, of course, I always had two or three running mates with me. It would depend on the mood, you know. We would drink if we wanted to or played ball, went swimming, or whatever.

Marcello: When you had liberty, what time did you have to be back aboard the ship?

Ogg: Well, before midnight, I think it was, or seven o'clock in the morning--depending on departure time or what your duties were the next day.

Marcello: I guess there were not too many places in Honolulu that you could stay overnight?

Ogg: No, that's why mostly, you know, a lot of us would be back by midnight. There wasn't too many flophouses, you know, or places. You could probably sleep on the beach for all that matter. Well, (chuckle) you know, that kind of thing.

Marcello: At the same time, you probably wouldn't have had that much money to stay ashore, anyway.

Ogg: Yes, that was the thing. That was one of the things. Of course, a dollar went a long way then, but you could really go through your little pay pretty fast.

Marcello: When was payday aboard the Neosho?

Ogg: I think . . . let's see . . . every two weeks. They paid us

every two weeks. They paid us every fifteen days.

Marcello: Was it the first and the fifteenth or the fifth and the twentieth?

Ogg: The first and the fifteenth, I think it was.

Marcello: Okay, let's get back to that Saturday night of December 6th. You mentioned that you were aboard ship. What did you do that night?

Ogg: Well, I think we seen a movie. We used to rig a screen up there, and I seen a movie, and then we turned in. You know, we had to get up early; reveille was at five o'clock or something like that in the morning.

Marcello: Did anything else eventful happen that night that you can think of?

Ogg: No. No, everything was normal as far as I can recall. Everything was normal.

Marcello: Well, this brings us into that Sunday morning of December 7th, and again I'll ask you to pick up the story and go into as much detail as you can remember concerning the events of that Sunday morning. What time did you say that you got up?

Ogg: Well, it was about five o'clock or 5:30, and we went and had breakfast and cleaned up our bunks and all that before, you know. Well, we had breakfast, and then we had roll call for muster. They read us the plan of the day, and I was supposed to assist my third class petty officer in raising the flag.

Marcello: In the meantime, are you still pumping fuel?

Ogg: Oh, yes, we were still doing that. Yes, we were still pumping . . . the hoses were still connected, let's say. Whether they had the pumpers going or not, I can't . . . but we was hooked up; we had our hoses on.

Marcello: Now, in a situation like that, what sort of power is the Neosho operating under? In other words, do you have up enough steam that you could possibly get out of there very quickly after you disconnected the hoses and so on?

Ogg: I don't know whether we had auxiliary power or we was hooked up to the dock. I can't recall. I wasn't associated with that function. The electrical gang did that. I don't remember just how they operated that aspect. They might have had auxiliary power or they was taking it from the shore.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned that you mustered in the morning and you were assigned to the flag raising detail. Continue the story at that point.

Ogg: Well, they dismissed us and we was walking up, you know, from the main deck . . . walking up the catwalk to start to where they had the flag for the mast. As we was walking up, right straight above us there was about five planes, you know. It was the first indication of anything. It was just planes right over the ship. They were way up there, but they started coming into a dive formation. We couldn't understand why in the hell

they were doing anything like that. Of course, we were blaming our Air Force for that because they knew we were unloading fuel, and you're supposed to stay away from that area when you're flying Baker and all of that. But I think at the time them first planes start releasing their bombs, they were hitting on the tank farms to my recollection.

We started back up there, and as we got to the end of the catwalk, these officers heard this explosion, I guess, and they come out . . . they were having their breakfast. They were coming out of the wardroom. I remember one officer. He was a chief warrant officer. He looked up and said, "Well, those are Japanese planes! This is war!"

Me and this other boy were up there, and we was trying to unfold the flag so that we could . . . I looked over there at the Oklahoma, and they had their band ready to have colors, and they didn't know what . . . well, when me and this petty officer was trying to hook the flag up, you know, and stand at attention, the first torpedo planes come in. They leveled off with the water and headed straight for the Oklahoma. You know, we were just seeing this from here to across the street.

Marcello: You were that close to the Oklahoma? So you weren't any more than maybe ninety to a hundred feet away from the Oklahoma.

Ogg: Yes, we was from here to across the street or less than that . . . just to about the middle of the street there. You could

see the guys.

Marcello: Did you say that the Oklahoma's band was getting ready to play?

Ogg: Yes, either the Oklahoma or the Maryland, I don't recall rightly which of the two had their band, but I'm pretty sure it was the Oklahoma. They were going to, you know, present their morning colors.

Marcello: Did you stand there and watch those torpedo planes come in?

Ogg: Yes, they come in, and I looked at the boys over there. I could see them . . . I could see that big torpedo underneath there--that big old black thing. He released it and I could see the guy--the Japanese pilot. He just had a white tassel on his helmet, you know. I'll never forget that as long as I live. He was their leader, and he released his torpedo, and them boys on the Oklahoma just . . .

Marcello: Describe what happened when the Oklahoma was hit.

Ogg: Well, we finally managed to hoist the flag, you know, and everybody went . . . I don't think the band ever played a note that morning. I don't know . . . was just too hazy from then on.

Marcello: In other words, you still raised the flag despite the fact that you could see that these were Japanese planes coming in.

Ogg: Yes. Now we didn't wait . . . you know, we just . . . you know, we had it hooked on the eyes, and we just secured it, and,

of course, we took off. Boy, we didn't know what the heck was going on except that hell just broke loose.

Marcello: How many planes did you see release their torpedoes against the Oklahoma?

Ogg: I could see about three or four Japanese torpedo planes come in. They came in in formation, and they released and all of them were directed for the Oklahoma; and I know the Oklahoma got two that I seen, actually.

Marcello: What effect did those torpedoes have upon the Oklahoma?

Ogg: Well, there was, you know, a big explosion, and the next time I ever got back aft again, I could see just a mess of people out there and the water burning.

Marcello: And you said that these Japanese pilots were flying low enough that you could distinguish them?

Ogg: Oh, yes! The leader, you know, the first Japanese torpedo pilot, came so low that you could see him. He had a white tassel--a scarf--on his helmet, and you see him like he was just passing by.

Marcello: In other words, they were not really coming in at a very fast speed, were they?

Ogg: No, they had already dropped, you know, and was on their release runs. They executed well. It was well-executed; I mean, these guys were good pilots, you know.

Marcello: So what happens after the torpedoes slam into the Oklahoma?

Ogg: Well, everything's just one big mess there. We couldn't find ammunition and . . .

Marcello: Was general quarters ever sounded on the Neosho?

Ogg: Yes, yes. Well, we knew we was at war, you know; it was quite evident that we was being attacked (chuckle).

Marcello: So where was your battle station?

Ogg: Mine up there on the stack deck. I was supposed to help with the ammunition boxes--handing out ammunition.

Marcello: Now where normally is the ammunition stored aboard the Neosho?

Ogg: They had those lockers--steel lockers, you know--spotted throughout the ship on the deck. But nobody knew where the keys was, and we had to bust locks and take out ammunition. They handed out .30-30's or .30-06 rifles, is what they had. Brownings was all we had to fight with.

Marcello: They had Browning rifles or are they Springfield rifles?

Ogg: No, they were Browning rifles.

Marcello: Automatic rifles?

Ogg: No, they gave you a clip.

Marcello: Was there any hesitancy in breaking the locks for the 3-inch ammunition?

Ogg: No, we had to do it; we couldn't find the people responsible. There was a lot of confusion, and we just took the axes off the bulkheads and just tore the locks off, and everybody helped themselves and, you know, do the best they could.

Marcello: In the meantime, are people trying to disconnect the hoses and so on?

Ogg: Well, yes. The skipper . . . our captain was John S. Philipps of the Class of 1918 at Annapolis--a very good captain and commanding officer. He was always in starched uniform and very regulation. He gave word to start disconnecting the hose. He wanted to get his ship out of there, which he did. He gave the orders to chop the hoses, because there was nobody on the docks to cast off. So we took the axes off the bulkhead and we just chopped the hawsers. We had to back her out, because by that time the Oklahoma was already on her side or going to her side.

Marcello: How long after the attack started were you beginning to move out of that position?

Ogg: It wasn't too long because, like I say, we had a very good skipper. We had all our officers aboard, I believe.

Marcello: That was unusual, I guess, wasn't it, in contrast to a lot of the other ships?

Ogg: Oh, yes.

Marcello: I guess most of your officers were aboard because you were still pumping fuel.

Ogg: Yes, we were pumping. I think we had most of our complement. He took his ship out of there under very difficult conditions, because they was dropping bombs all around us. He was trying

to get his ship out of there and take it over to Merry's Point, which he did. I've always said that that man should have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Of course, he was awarded the Navy Cross, but for his deeds I think the man deserved the nation's highest award.

Marcello: Why was it important to get the Neosho out of there? Did you still have quite a bit of aviation fuel aboard?

Ogg: Yes. We would have blown . . . we had quite a bit of fuel and high octane gas. It was just a miracle we didn't get a direct hit, because we would have probably . . .

Marcello: Could you detect that the Japanese planes were actually trying to hit you, or were they just mainly interested in the more glamorous targets?

Ogg: They had every chance to hit us if they wanted to. Why they didn't, I'll never know. But their primary targets was the battlewagons--the big ships. I imagine they were kind of disappointed that we didn't have a few aircraft carriers there, you know. But they did their job on the big ships; I think they got them all.

Marcello: So what happened when you got over to Merry's Point?

Ogg: Well, we tied up the best way we could and did just the best we could--firing our rifles and trying to calm down. The first attack came and went, and then the second attack come. Then we went on up through that evening, when somebody heard some

planes coming in, I think those were the B-17's that we read about. They was coming in from the States--a flight of them--and they shot half of them down. We did it ourselves, you know. They was running out of fuel, I understand. They was our planes coming in, because they had the markings; you could see them when the tracers fired.

Marcello: Let's back up here a minute. Did you actually have one of the rifles, and were you firing at the Japanese planes?

Ogg: Yes! Yes, that was the only thing. Whether we was doing any good or not (chuckle), that was the only weapon that we had.

Marcello: How many rounds do you figure that you squeezed off?

Ogg: Well, gosh, I don't really recall. I remember just firing at everything (chuckle); there was just all kinds of targets.

Marcello: Did the 3-inch gun of the Neosho ever hit any Japanese planes?

Ogg: Well, not to my knowledge. I know they were firing what little those water-cooled machine guns they had on the deck, and a lot of times they got too hot and were out of operation.

Marcello: So you don't remember the Neosho shooting down any Japanese planes?

Ogg: No, sir, not to my knowledge.

Marcello: Did you stay over there at Merry's Point the rest of the afternoon?

Ogg: Yes, we stayed there and regrouped. By that, I mean, after we did get a chance to get ourselves together, we started to clean up.

Marcello: Were you pretty much out of the way over there? Were you out beyond the action when you were over at Merry's Point?

Ogg: Well, we moved the ship there for that reason--to try to get away from the main targets, you know. Like I said, Commander Philipps' idea was to get away from where would not endanger the whole operation if we got hit. He done a wonderful job there.

Marcello: What did the harbor look like in the aftermath of the attack?

Ogg: Oh, Lord! It was just one big mess. There was a lot of oil in the water and bodies and just . . . everything was just tore up, and you couldn't imagine.

Marcello: What did you do that afternoon and that evening?

Ogg: Well, nobody wanted to go down below decks anymore, for one thing; they wanted to see (chuckle). We was all wanting to see if we were going to be attacked again. And then the word spread out that they had these two-man subs coming in the harbor, and I don't know what else. And then we were on alert and shooting at everything that moved and that sort of thing (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you ever go out in any of the motor launches and so on to pick up bodies?

Ogg: Yes, as I recall, I think we had our launches already in the water. I think we had one or two of the big ones.

Marcello: Did you personally go out in these launches?

Ogg: No, I didn't. My job was to stay aboard and get all the gear all hooked up and lashed up again and just wait to get the word to see what we was going . . . well, you know, we had our work parties that went out to help recover bodies and all; we participated in that.

Marcello: I assume there was a lot of smoke and fire in the harbor, also, during and after the attack.

Ogg: Yes, there was quite a bit of smoke and fire. The Arizona and all of them, of course, was all blistered.

Marcello: What sort of thoughts or emotions did you have when you saw this sight?

Ogg: Well, it's funny. I just said to myself, "Boy, if my grandmother could see me now!" Why I said that, I'll never know. No, I said, "I wonder what my grandmother would say about this!" Why I said that, I'll never know. I guess it was just something that happened.

Marcello: Did you say awhile ago that you could detect a first wave and second wave of Japanese planes?

Ogg: Yes. Well, we had the first attack, and then . . . I don't know . . . it was a thirty-minute interval, I guess, and then there was another one. And we was better prepared for the second one than we were for the first (chuckle).

Marcello: In what way were you better prepared?

Ogg: Well, we had our guns--and most of the ships had their guns--

manned pretty well.

Marcello: That second wave met quite a bit of flak when they came in, did they not?

Ogg: Oh, yes. We were just better prepared.

Marcello: By the time the second wave came, had the Neosho already moved over to Merry's Point?

Ogg: I can't recall clearly in my mind whether we had or whether it was in the middle of the second wave, but we was getting the ship out of there. I remember the commander standing up on the bridge, and we was looking up at him, and he was very calm. He had his binoculars surveying the scene and everything. He just relayed word down to the deck to start chopping the hawsers and that we was moving. He had the engine room going, and we backed out of there and headed on--steamed over to Merry's Point.

Marcello: What did you do that evening?

Ogg: Well, you know, it's hard to remember just what we did there. Everybody was getting what few things together. Lifejackets became something that was part of you, you know, if you were going to have to hit the water. For some reason or another, your helmet and your lifejacket became part of you; you know, you couldn't do without them and your rifle.

Everybody was edgy and irritable, and nobody knew . . . rumors and everything got out that they had landed a landing

force at the other end of the island and that they were coming in from every which way. You didn't know what to expect; you sat there and just waited and wondered what the heck had gone wrong.

Marcello: I assume that the ship was one big rumor mill that evening.

Ogg: Oh, yes! Oh, Lord, yes! You know, there was one where they had landed on the beach and that they had taken over Honolulu and that they were going to board the ships and they was going to do this.

Marcello: Did you believe most of those rumors?

Ogg: At that point, we would have believed anything (chuckle). Of course, you know, we really didn't know any different. We couldn't survey the whole situation from our standpoint, because we had disassociated ourself from the main fleet. We was in a more protected area and in less danger than most everybody else.

But everything was just a lot of confusion at that point. Even at that point there was uncertainty; you didn't know what you were going to do.

But like I say, we had good officers, and the old skipper himself would come down and talk to his crew, you know, to calm the situation down. He was a remarkable man.

Marcello: And did you mention that you did observe those B-17's being fired upon that evening?

Ogg: Yes, yes! I'll never forget that. We shot some of our own planes down; there was no mistake about that.

Marcello: Describe that incident.

Ogg: Well, we was all edgy, of course, and we was . . . calmness prevailed throughout the harbor by that time. Somebody sounded general quarters somewhere or a gun went off. We heard the planes approaching, so they just opened fire. When one of them opened fire, then everybody opened fire. You know, with all the tracers going up there, you could see the big star--insignia--and they was our planes. I seen one or two or three of them just disintegrate. They were trying to land, according to the story.

Marcello: Did you get very much sleep that night?

Ogg: Nobody slept, not for two or three days afterwards,

Marcello: Did you have very much of an appetite that day?

Ogg: No. Mostly we had oranges and apples and candy bars. Nobody wanted to go down below decks, you know. They had the crates up there, and you could just go pick you up an orange or grapefruit or whatever (chuckle) . . . a raw potato. Nobody is going to go down and eat, you know.

Marcello: So what did you do the next day? What did you personally do?

Ogg: Well, we just had cleaning operations and were waiting for word, and we was finally told that we was forming a task force, and we was to get more fuel.

Marcello: Where did you get the fuel? Did you have to go back and pump it aboard ship?

Ogg: I think we went back over there . . . if I'm not mistaken, I think we did. We went back to Ford Island and got the fuel back or whatever. Yes, we refueled and we was heading out.

Marcello: That must have been a helluva mess over there at Ford Island when you went back there.

Ogg: Oh, yes! It was one helluva mess. But we went out of there, and some of the destroyers depth-charged the harbor because of that two-man submarine business; and they was throwing cans--depth charge cans--all over.

Marcello: This was the next day?

Ogg: Yes, a day or two after. I don't remember. I think it was the next day, if my memory serves me correct. We had to get after them, and the word was that we had a task force formed. We were supposed to be the tanker force, which we were; we were the only ones there. We set sail and we rendezvoused with one of the aircraft carriers by that time. We had whatever ships that was available, you know--men-of-war--and that included whatever was left (chuckle).

Marcello: So where did this task force then go?

Ogg: Well, I don't remember whether we went straight to the Marshall and Gilbert Islands or if we rendezvoused somewhere up there. But really we didn't run into anything; you know, all that time

we were out, I don't believe we ever run into anything.

Marcello: How long did you stay out?

Ogg: Well, I don't recall. I think we stayed out several days. We done a lot of fueling at sea. I worked primarily at keeping the ships fueled. We had escorts at all times with us, you know, in case of an attack.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Ogg, is there anything else relative to the Pearl Harbor attack that we haven't mentioned or that you think that we need to get as part of the record?

Ogg: Well, no, Dr. Marcello. It's just like I said. It was quite an experience. I'll say in closing that I was glad that I was assigned to a tanker that was less glamorous. They called it the "Fat Lady" or the "Fat Girl." They always ribbed us on that. But then again, you know, we had good officers, and I know that . . . myself, I owe my life to my commanding officer because, like I said, he should have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. His nation's highest award should have gone to him, because of the work and performance that he did--the way he carried out his duty. If it wouldn't have been for him, we would have never got out and got that ship underway. We would have been bombed and probably got hit right there. We were the only tanker in that area, and we went out with the first task force, and from then on we really knew what it was to work fueling ships and all that. It just became . . . and

like I said, I don't think anybody slept below decks any-
more (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, listen, Mr. Ogg, I want to thank you very much for
having taken time to talk with me. You have said a lot of
, interesting and important things, and I'm sure that scholars
will find your comments very valuable when they use them to
write about Pearl Harbor.

Ogg: Well, Dr. Marcello, I forgot a lot of it, you know, because
throughout the years . . . I stated just what I could recollect
to the best of my ability.

Marcello: Well, again, thank you very much.